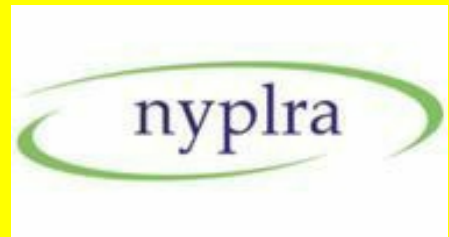


New York Public Library Retirees Association Newsletter



Fall 2017

Issue 40



THE IMPORTANCE OF VOTING ON THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

Our union, DC 37, is one of many groups urging members to vote NO on a question that will appear on the ballot in New York State on Election Day, November 7, 2017.

(If you vote in another state, please contact friends and family in New York and urge them to vote no!)

The ballot question—the first of three—will read:

“Shall there be a convention to revise the Constitution and amend the same?”

The New York State Constitution is the document in question. We, as public retirees, are directly affected by two specific sections. One protects our pensions from being diminished; the second ensures that our pensions remain exempt from N.Y.S. taxation. If the Constitutional Convention is approved by a majority of the votes cast on Election Day, everything in the Constitution would be up for discussion and possible change.

Other provisions in the New York State Constitution include free public education; environmental protections, including “forever wild;” and rights to workers’ compensation and to belong to a union and bargain collectively.

A Constitutional Convention would be very costly to N.Y.S. taxpayers. Three delegates would be elected from each of the sixty-three Senatorial Districts. An additional fifteen delegates-at-large would be elected statewide. Those two hundred and four delegates would each be paid a salary equivalent to that of a State legislator, currently \$79,500 per year. Elected legislators are eligible to be delegates and to keep their elected offices as well, thus “double dipping.” In the past, they have also been allowed to add in their delegate service toward their pension. Additional money for staff, travel, and other expenses could bring the total cost to perhaps \$100,000,000 per year. The delegates themselves decide when their work is over. The sum expended on this work could better be spent on important needs, especially at this time when the State likely faces lower federal funding.

(Continued on page 15)

PRESIDENT'S NOTES



I have just been vacationing on Tybee Island, Georgia, a small barrier island off the coast of Savannah. It is a lovely island with a little over 3,000 friendly residents. It is a good vacation place with wonderful beaches, lots of water sports, and other activities. It has great restaurants, too, such as The Breakfast Club (great breakfasts with grits and homemade waffles) and Bubba Gumbo (a neat beach joint with plenty of good fresh seafood). I have family in Tybee now and can go there almost anytime, only a two-hour flight away. However, you don't want to go there when there are hurricanes around like the recent ones—Harvey, Irma, and Maria—that hit and devastated Florida and other areas. Tybee was spared this time.

I hope you all have had good, safe summers. Now it seems as if no matter where you live or go, there are a lot different conditions to contend with: forest fires, high winds, landslides, etc. Some of us believe it is global warming.

Our Retirees Association is doing quite well. For one thing, new members continue to join. We are happy to

have them. In fact, if you know retirees who have never joined, send me their names, addresses, and email. I will get in touch and make them an offer they can't resist.

Our Oral History Project continues to make steady progress. Our few stalwart volunteers are concentrating on transcribing and editing the over 100 narrations that have been recorded. A few interviews are still taking place, so if you would like to add your story to our history, please let us know.

I want to mention the Constitutional Convention vote that will be on this year's ballot on Election Day, Nov. 7. An article about the vote starts on the first page of the newsletter and is a thorough explanation of why this is so important to members. It is exactly the kind of issue the founders of the organization had in mind when they listed the first purpose of the Association: "to advocate in areas of common concern for retirees." Please read the Constitutional Convention article carefully, and please vote!

But for now, enjoy your newsletter, and do keep in touch! We all love to hear from YOU!

Becky Koppelman

212-874-6199 (h)

347-325-3713 (c)

blekopp@gmail.com

NEW MEMBERS

Louis Amato

Ethel Chen

Christine Coulombe

Brian Hurley

TOUR OF THE BOOK STACKS UNDER BRYANT PARK

On August 22nd, two groups of retirees toured the book stacks beneath Bryant Park; our guide was Denise Hibay of NYPL. We also caught a glimpse of the original stacks in the Stephen A. Schwarzman Building. These photos, taken by NYPLRA members Polly Bookhout and Larry Petterson, reveal what we saw.



Retiree Rose Marie O'Leary is shown passing by part of the original, now empty, book stacks. When asked by one of our group what the future use of the old stacks would be, Denise replied that the architect working on the current remodeling of the Mid-Manhattan Library would be asked, at a future time, to do a study on the possibilities.

Retiree Estelle Friedman poses with a portion of the old pneumatic tube, recalling the time when that system was used to send patrons' request slips to the stacks.



Our group walks under Bryant Park, having entered this passageway from the basement of the Schwarzman Building. We are passing the individually-motorized carts of the Book Train, which are parked on their track up above. This new book delivery system cost \$2.6 million dollars, we are told.

Denise demonstrates to our group how the compressed book stacks on Level 1 are separated electrically to form an aisle by pushing a button such as the one seen here next to her. Safety devices prevent the stacks from accidentally closing on a person in the aisle. This upper level of stacks under Bryant Park was put into use in 1991. Level 2, thirty feet below Bryant Park, was raw space in 1991. Only recently has it been put into use, with about 1,500,000 books shelved there.





Here, on Level 2, Denise has turned a lever to separate the book stacks to create an aisle. The manually operated lever system was used here because of occasional breakdowns of the electrical system used on Level 1. In these Milstein Research Stacks, the barcoded books are shelved by size in archival quality cardboard boxes. The date that a book first arrived helps to determine where it will be shelved.

Denise looks on as Robert, an NYPL staff member, explains to our group how the correct book is located when a reader's request has been received on the office computer.



While heading down the hallway to the office, we see a truck of "problems." Don't we all have memories of similar scenes from our NYPL careers!

This board with color coded rectangles is used by staff to determine the size of a book for shelf assignment purposes. Oversize books are sent to the storage facility in Princeton, N.J., where they can be accommodated. It takes 24 hours for a requested book located there to be delivered to the Schwarzman Building.

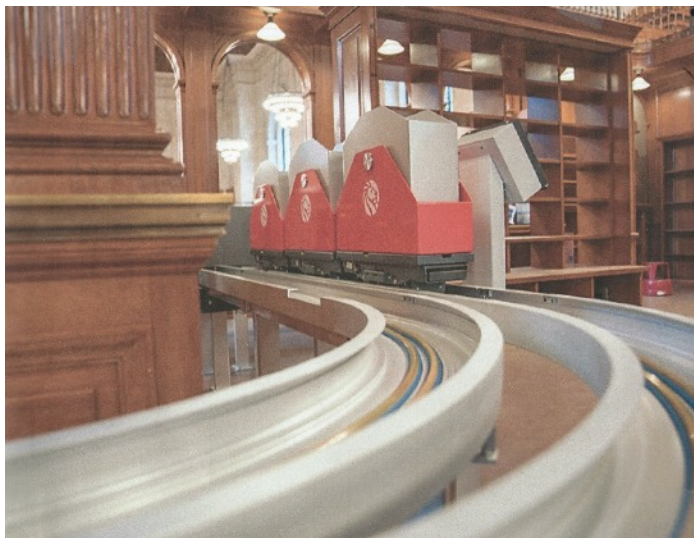


Carts are on the track in the office, ready to transport a retrieved book to the Rose Main Reading Room. Here is a good view of the control pad used by staff to start the loaded cart on its five minute journey.

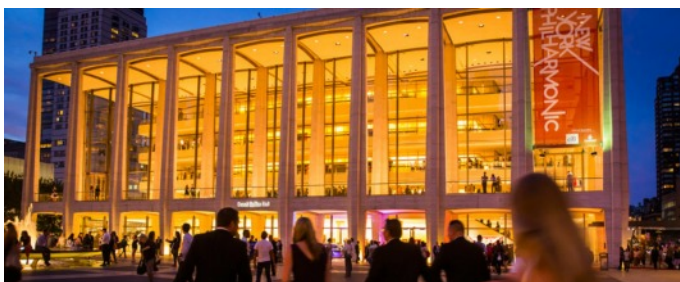


Robert has handed the requested book he had retrieved from the stacks to retiree Rose Marie O’Leary’s friend, Rosamund Tota, allowing her to have the experience of sending it. She is shown at the control pad, having put the book into the gray section of the cart. This inner part has been designed to swing so that the book won’t fall out on the vertical segments of the track system. You can see videos of a Book Train cart making its way along the track by doing a computer search for [Youtube New York Public Library Book Train](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NewYorkPublicLibraryBookTrain).

Here is the Book Train at its terminal in the historic Rose Main Reading Room. This delivery system is one year old this month, having first been used on October 5, 2016, in conjunction with the reopening of the renovated Reading Room. What a contrast between old and new!



TOUR OF PHILHARMONIC ARCHIVES



On Wednesday, September 6th, we were privileged to view some of the special archives of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, the oldest orchestra in the United States. We gathered in front of the Library for the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center where we met the Assistant Archivist, Gabryel Smith. He led us across the bridge to a room in the Rose Building, which also houses the Riverside Branch Library. We sat around a conference table, and Gabryel told us about the history of the orchestra and brought out several interesting items. One document was a program for the first concert that was given in 1842 and included Beethoven’s 5th Symphony which, at that time, was known as the Grand Symphony. We also handled the vocal score of the Ode to Joy

movement of Beethoven’s 9th, which had been translated into English and was played in 1846. We held the ledger that included the attendance records of the members of the original orchestra, together with a list of the first subscribers. We also passed around the lead printing plate of a composition by Leonard Bernstein from which the sheet copies were printed, as well as one of his original scores, on which he made copious notes. We handled Bernstein’s baton, which was broken off at the top and was very light. But for Estelle Friedman, who organized the tour, the *piece de resistance* that gave her the biggest thrill was holding in her hand Arturo Toscanini’s baton.

Gabryel spoke for about an hour, and everyone felt very privileged to have been able to share in the wonder of seeing these marvelous mementos. The Archives are in need of volunteers to enter metadata into their system, and staff would be thrilled to have retirees helping them. Anyone interested can contact Gabryel at smithg@nyphil.org. The digital archive can be found at www.archives.nyphil.org.

TOUR OF THE NATIONAL LIGHTHOUSE MUSEUM

Our tour of the National Lighthouse Museum on Staten Island on Friday, October 6, 2017, was enjoyed by 13 people, most of us NYPLRA members. Some arrived via the Staten Island Ferry on the perfect early autumn morning, then walked to the nearby museum with Emily Cohen leading the way on the rather convoluted route. The ferry riders included retiree Arthur Ruhl, who had recently arrived in New York from his Thailand home for a few weeks' visit, just in time for this event.

Tina Cuadrado, our guide, explained that Staten Island was selected to be the location for this museum because the site of the U.S. Light House Service General Depot was here. It was in service until 1939, when the Coast Guard took over responsibility for our nation's numerous lighthouses. Tina gave us a walking tour past a number of historic buildings, now in disrepair, that date from 1864 to 1912. She explained their original functions as well as their planned uses when they are restored as part of the mixed-use Lighthouse Point development. Her lively narration was filled with an amazing number of fascinating details. One tidbit was especially of interest to our group of library devotees. It seems that when boats made their periodic delivery of supplies to each lighthouse keeper, they brought with them a "traveling library." They'd replace the previously delivered crate of fifty books with a crate of fifty new titles. Everyone smiled when we heard that the books were supplied by a religious society so were "moralistic in tone."

Next, we entered the building that has been restored and houses the Museum. There, Eleanor Dugan gave an illustrated talk on the many, many different shapes of lighthouses, some on land, others in water. Not only the seas, but also rivers and lakes, have lighthouses in them. The lighthouse colors are chosen to contrast with their surroundings. Each lighthouse has its own pattern of flashing light. Ship captains have directories to aid in identification.

Jack Vokral, President of the Board of Directors, spoke to us next, relating the true tale of his purchase of the New Dorp Lighthouse when it was taken out of service in 1964. Everything metal had been stripped from it by

thieves. However, Jack said, he had been house-hunting for a "fixer-upper." He still lives there.

Following the talks, we explored the exhibits. Among them was a lighthouse-shaped structure filled with model lighthouses from many places. One was pagoda-shaped. That lighthouse is in China. Becky Koppelman, our NYPLRA president, could hardly believe it when she discovered the model of the Tybee Island, Georgia, lighthouse. She'd just returned from a visit to Tybee Island!

Most of us continued our enjoyable outing by lunching and socializing at Beso, a Spanish restaurant. There, Arthur Ruhl extended an invitation to retirees who may travel to Thailand, offering a room at his house near Loei. He assured us that his wife is very hospitable. No dropping in, though! "Reservations" are necessary.



Emily Cohen beams because every name on her list is checked. Ready to explore this "hidden gem" is retiree Alice Roach. Emily and Alice, along with Alice's friend Mary Bryant and Emily's husband Allen were the only Staten Islanders on the tour.



After our walking tour of the site, we are entering the Museum. Arthur Ruhl, in plaid shirt, brings up the rear.

LIGHTHOUSE TOUR (CONTINUED)



These are some of the hundreds of lighthouse models on display in the Museum.

RAFAEL (RALPH) REYES HONORED AS WORLD WAR II VETERAN MEMORIAL DAY 2017



Rafael Reyes Sr. with sons Rafael Jr. (left), Richard (right), and grandson Jason

Each year, the Lindon City, Utah, Police Department, with the support of the Mayor and City Council, holds a Memorial Day ceremony honoring all Lindon veterans for their military service. The event, a one-hour program, includes a special message from an honored veteran, patriotic music by a Lindon Youth Choir, the reading of the role of honor, a 21-gun salute followed by the playing of taps, and the solemn placing of a traditional wreath upon the monument by an honored guest.

The veteran honored this year—in his newly adopted city—was Rafael (Ralph) Reyes, NYPL retiree and Retirees Association member. Rafael's wife and fellow NYPL retiree, Carmen, was given the honor of placing the wreath. Their son, Rafael Jr., also a veteran, gave the final benediction.

Both Rafael and Carmen retired from NYPL in 1985, he from the Special Investigators Office and she as Senior Clerk at Hunt's Point. Each was interviewed for the oral history project in 2012.



Rafael, Carmen, and Jason accepting the flag from Sgt. John Lloyd



Rafael speaking in front of the monument where his name will be engraved

A STORY FROM THE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT



Virginia Swift with Ronald Chan
2010 at the Annual Luncheon at Forlini's Restaurant
Photo by Jacob Azeke

Virginia Swift was one of three retirees featured in a short talk by Mary K. Conwell at the recent Spring Reunion in the Bartos Forum. Among other distinctions, Virginia was one of the early interviewers for the original NYPL Retirees Association Oral History Project. One of the surviving audio tapes from that time was Virginia's 1998 interview of Naomi Noyes.

Virginia was born, grew up, and still lives in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn. She graduated from Columbia library school in 1948 and began as a children's librarian, a specialty she kept throughout her career. In fact, Virginia was one of the first children's librarians to become a branch librarian. She held several branch positions during her 47-year career and eventually became the regional librarian for the Lower East Side Region at Chatham Square in Chinatown, where she had already worked for many years. In her own oral history interview for the current project, conducted in 2012, she tells of an incident that took place shortly before she retired.

One day, Virginia came out of the Grand Street subway and saw a sanitation truck with a worker tossing bags into the back. As she went past, he called to her, "Librarian, are you still over there?" She said,

"Yes, I am!" He said, "I remember when I was in fourth grade, you used to read us stories." She said, "We still do, just come over and see." They parted happily, and she went on her way. A little later she turned the corner headed for the Bowery, and there was the truck again. This time, the young man caught her eye and said to her, "Once upon a time there were five Chinese brothers, and they all looked exactly alike." Not missing a beat, she replied "And they lived with their mother in a little house not far from the sea." In telling this story, Virginia said, "I felt like I wanted to dance in the street! All I could think is: Great! You've got a City job, you'll get a pension, your children will go to college, and the Library was there!"

RETIREE NEWS

BRIGID CAHALAN

At the end of August, I donated a kidney to kick off a chain of kidney transplants. I was a non-directed donor, meaning I had no one who needed mine; it was available for anyone who matched me on the National Kidney Registry's list. But the catch: they had to have someone willing to donate for them but who didn't match them; that person's kidney went to someone else who had a non-matching donor who would give for them, and so on. When I heard an NPR report back in 2015 about these chains, I was captivated and started the process to do it myself.

It feels a little weird writing about this, and I don't want anyone to see it as heroic, selfless, or amazing. To me, it's just a fairly normal type of thing that we can do for others, and being able to potentially help several people live better, longer lives is a wonderful opportunity. It's five weeks since the surgery, which was laparoscopic, and I feel great; as a matter of fact, I'm planning to go out for a run shortly to start getting in shape to run my second 5K, maybe in late fall or spring.

And I just have to add: kidney donation is a great fit for those of us in later life. I was concerned that my kidney wouldn't last as long as a younger one, but the surgeon said it could easily last 20-25 years; a more important factor is how the recipient watches *his or*

her health. All costs are borne by the recipient's insurance, and in the screening process, donors get the best check-up of their lives!

Another activity that's been taking some of my time is more lighthearted and definitely more book-related. My local Jersey City neighborhood association wanted to build a Little Free Library in the park across the street. I've been part of the team to get that accomplished, and



"The Owl" finally went into the ground on June 21st. I'm the steward of the library and spend some time each day restocking, stamping, repairing, and edging the books--all *very* familiar tasks! Our Little Free Library has only children's books, as there's just one shelf and an explosion of babies and young children in the area.

The local public library did have some trepidation about this development, but I think they've come around to what I see as the NYPL mantra: children (or anyone) enjoying reading anywhere, and as much as possible, is a good thing.

EMILY COHEN

My husband and I attended the 37th IAJGS International Conference on Jewish Genealogy in Orlando, Florida, in July. Each day was filled with fascinating seminars, films, exhibits, and experiences. We each were given a flash drive containing the handouts from all of the seminars given during the week, and we ordered the DVD set of the entire conference, so we'll be continuing to "attend" this conference indefinitely!

A highlight for both my husband and me was the opportunity we had, thanks to a feature of the technology of the conference, to meet there with other attendees who had ancestors from the same town in the "old country." Allen met two with ancestors from Kurshan in present Lithuania, the hometown of his maternal grandparents. One new contact had been there in recent years and had photos to show! I was excited to discover two people with ancestors from Orla, Poland, the hometown of my paternal grandfather. To the right of me in the photo are Eli Rabinowitz of Perth, Australia, and Marilyn Okonow, a

fellow American. Eli has been to Orla twice! We shared stories, documents, and photos.



Warsaw, Poland, will be the location of next summer's conference. Were we the globetrotters some NYPLRA members are, we'd go there!

MARY K. CONWELL

In late August, I went to a reunion of the Modoc High School classes of '61 and '62 in Alturas, CA



(population 2,537). Dan Hill and I, pictured here, were classmates from kindergarten through high school.

The event took place, as all reunions seem to, in the outdoor space behind the Elks Lodge.

The structure was built in 1917-1918 to serve as the headquarters of

the Nevada-California-Oregon (NCO) Railway and has been an Elks Lodge since at least 1974. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



The outdoor space in the rear definitely leaves something to be desired. One enters through the gate in a chain-link fence

and encounters lots of loose gravel before arriving at a

cement slab where well-worn plastic tables await decoration. We members of the decorating committee had our work cut out for us in 100 degree temperatures, with smoke from surrounding forest fires wafting in as the strong afternoon winds started to kick up. Lovely purple table cloths and purple and white crepe paper went flying. Balloons tied to the fence to welcome guests began popping as they hit the hot metal. However, nothing could dampen the joy of seeing our classmates as they began to arrive. At least there was no rain!

CHRISTINE COULOMBE

I love Greece, and after I retire, I'd like to spend a couple of months of the year there—even though I'm not Greek.

I love dogs and like to paint furniture. I like to read about economics and social trends and healthy living.

ESTELLE FRIEDMAN

Ever since I was little, I've wanted to see the Northern Lights but was never successful. We would travel to places in the northern hemisphere such as Iceland, James Bay in Canada, Kirkanes (around the northern tip of Norway) – all to no avail. This year, the year of my 90th birthday, was going to be the year of my wish fulfillment. Northern Lights, here we come! I flew to Helsinki and met my son and daughter-in-law, who were coming from Israel. We flew north to a town called Kittila and then drove farther to a town called Yllas in Finland, about 40 degrees north of the Arctic Circle. The weather in March was wonderful—clear and crisp, about 20 degrees—and the snow was pristine. Evergreen trees dotted the landscape, and I felt as though I were in fairyland. Our hotel was very small, about 30 guests, all Finns. That same night we took a sled to the middle of an evergreen forest and looked up. There, among the stars, were the lights flashing blue, green, and some red. My son had set up his camera and was able to capture some of this. Afterwards, we warmed up in a nearby tent by drinking hot cider. The next day, we went dog sledding. Each team was pulled by a team of eight dogs. I was fortunate to be in the sled with the guide while my kids had to maneuver their own sled. Hard work but fun.

The next day we went reindeer sledding. The reindeer are smaller than I imagined and definitely not domesticated. It seems that they have no sweat glands, so when they are overheated, they roll in the snow to cool off. They ate lichen from our hands.

I had often heard of the Ice Palace, but in my wildest dreams I could not have imagined how such a palace could be erected. A whole crew starts to build the palace in September, and it is finished in about a month. There were 30 bedroom suites (all of ice) with



ice sculptures on the walls, an ice movie theatre, an ice toboggan for children, and an ice restaurant. Reindeer skins were provided for us to sit on while we ate dinner. We had hot drinks and lovely reindeer meat with vegetables. I will admit to being a bit cold, but the hot drinks did sustain us. This was quite an experience. (See photo) The palace starts to melt about June.



One night we walked to a local restaurant and had a choice of reindeer filet, heart of bear, or rabbit stew. I had the reindeer.

PHYLLIS HOFFMAN

The chandeliers were held up by reindeer antlers. It seems that once a year the reindeer shed their antlers and grow new ones, so the old antlers are available for those who care to pick them up.

That night, from my picture window, I again saw the Northern Lights. Unfortunately, our adventure was coming to an end, and we had to make our way back to Helsinki where I discovered many Finns who had never seen these wonderful phenomena. It was a joy to have experienced this—a dream fulfilled.

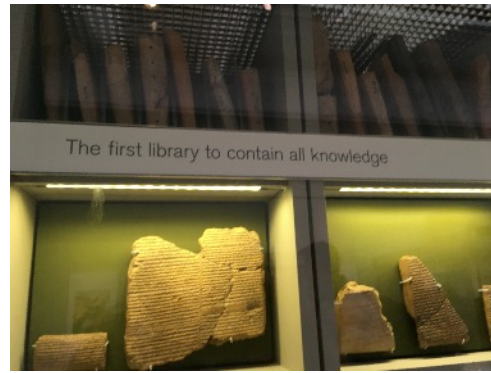
My granddaughter, Ma'ayan, decided to have her wedding on May 5, 2017, just one month after I returned from Finland, so my daughter Wilma and I flew to Israel for the event. It was a small affair with just the bride's and groom's immediate families.

The ceremony was held in the Arbel Forest, which is in the north of Israel near the Sea of Galilee. An ancient synagogue, one of the oldest in the world, had just been excavated there; it dates back to the second century B.C. (See photo) The weather was beautiful, and the outdoor wedding was quite informal with the bride and groom holding hands throughout the ceremony. The traditional wine cup, though not as old as the excavation, did date back 100 years.



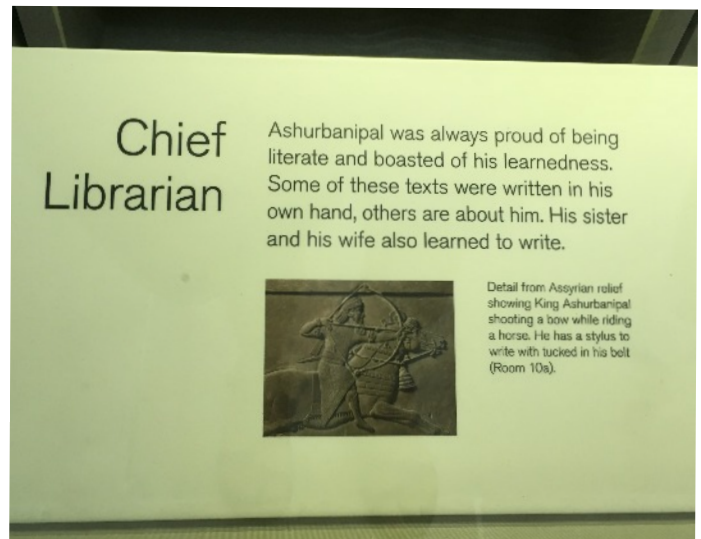
Ma'ayan's friends prepared an outdoor barbecue that we ate while we sat and enjoyed looking out over the Sea of Galilee. Serenity and informality was the name of the game that day because the following week Ma'ayan had to prepare for her board exams to finish Medical School!

My friend and I were in the British Museum in London, on our way to the Medieval Room, when we just happened to enter a room in which one of the exhibitions was dedicated to the Royal Library of King Ashurbanipal. He lived in Assyria during the 7th century B.C., and his library in Nineveh is thought to



be the first systematically organized one in the world. Thousands of tablets and fragments from it are preserved in the museum, and I loved seeing some of

the tablets arranged like books on a shelf. I was captivated by the caption, "The first library to contain all knowledge." Another favorite item on exhibit was the picture of the Chief Librarian—and the copy that goes with it about his wife and sister who also learned to write. We ended up spending an enjoyable hour in this room!



I've been volunteering in the office of Big Apple Greeter, a wonderful program that offers volunteer-led tours of New York City, especially places off the beaten path, to tourists. Fellow NYPL retirees Bonnie Farrier and Jean Paul Michaud also work for this agency, she in the office and he escorting visitors around the city. Find out how you, too, can become a volunteer by contacting the organization at (212) 669-8281 or looking at www.bigapplegreeter.org.

JESSIE LEE JOHNSON

I am now in a beautiful Continuing Care Retirement Community:

Inverness Village, 3800 W. 71st St., Apt. 2306, Tulsa,
OK 74132

My life has totally changed in one month. My nephew from Colorado, a Tulsa native, came to New York, made all the arrangements, and charmed everyone, including the Superintendent and Managing Agent of my building. I am now trying to cope with everything new. My deceased sister and brother-in-law lived here for the last ten years of their lives, and I have a niece and her family (Tulsa natives) here. Best wishes to all my wonderful friends at NYPLRA. I have many memories to share with my new friends, four hundred of them here, who all greet you with smiles and a "hello." Jean Shen and Donna Davey (former NYPLers) gave much help and support during the transition. With fond memories, Lee.

MARCIA LOYD

I am very busy and had a good summer. My co-op is going through extensive renovations. I am on the Board of Directors, and we had a great number of meetings. I still work two days a week at HRA in the Children's Division; therefore, I am extremely busy. My oldest grandson is graduating from John Jay School of Law in May, and then he'll be off to Law School. My youngest grandson will be pursuing his goal next semester at Buffalo. My fondest memory was at LPA as the Coordinator of Volunteers. As I still live a block away from the Atlantic Ocean, I enjoy that very much. The hurricanes did hit my home—the U.S. Virgin Islands. I continue to pray.

MARJORIE MIR

Poetry—reading and writing it—has always been one of the joys of my life. Retirement has allowed it the time and space it was waiting for. Alerted by an article in the New York Times about eight years ago, I joined the Poetry Caravan, a group of Westchester writers who share our work and that of other poets with residents of care facilities in the county.

By another lucky chance, a friend introduced me to the online quarterly journal, *Eclectica*, where I found a poetry editor open and sympathetic to my work. Since then, and for the last three years, my poetry has appeared in almost every issue. I would like to think I would continue writing without this support, but there is no doubt that it nurtures the experience and the flow. My church in Bronxville has also provided an audience by inviting me to give readings several times a year. All of this is to say that retirement has offered satisfaction in many ways, new friends, new ventures and, best of all, a continued exploration of poetry.

OCCASIONAL VISITS

"Don't dwell in the past," the daughter
said,
turning to go away.
Not dwell, her mother thought.
"Visit" is a better word, as returning
to a country house a little while,
a refuge. an escape,
distance no difficulty,
the place wished-for or once known,
remade, if I like.
Never mind, for now,
attic and cellar, locked doors.
Sleepless nights will open those.
What is it called? Being in two places?
I can be here, sweeping crumbs
from the kitchen floor, looking out
at last night's snow
and there, in summer,
outside a rented cabin, close by
a mountain lake
or on our stoop and street,
in the frenzy of games between
supper and darkness,
chanting tribal rhymes.
No need or wish to dwell.
I will come and go when I please.

Marjorie Mir

ROSE MARIE O'LEARY

I have lived all my life on Charlton Street, which is in the southwest part of Greenwich Village. After I retired, I turned my attention to a small plot of land between Charlton and King Streets on Sixth Avenue that had become an eyesore and had troubled me for some time.

In the nineteen sixties, the Department of Parks had put some benches and tables on this piece of land that belongs to the Department of Transportation and was created when Sixth Avenue was extended south from 23rd Street in the late 1920s. You can see from the photo what it had become.



I longed to turn it into a garden. After many meetings with the Community Board, the Parks Department agreed to put in some topsoil and a fence. That was all they could provide, as they had spent a great deal on the larger parks to our north. With the aid and support of my husband, Ian, and a neighbor, Harry Schroder, we raised some money for some plants and tools with the help of our block association. Over



time, we transformed it into the lovely spot it is today.

It is still a lot of work but gives us a great deal of satisfaction in knowing we have changed a very small part of the city we all love.

MARCIA PURCELL

From July 9-22, I had the pleasure of a great and interesting cruise. I include information here because on two recent retiree tours, this cruise was mentioned, and several folks asked for booking details. Here's the very short version.

I traveled with Carol Alabaster, former NYPLer (Inwood in the '70s, Phoenix PL later). We started in Toronto, visiting the five Great Lakes, and ending in Chicago. This cruise is from Pearl Seas, and the ship, *Pearl Mist*, holds two hundred plus guests. The ship is delightful, the food outstanding, the crew wonderful. Highlights of the itinerary included Niagara Falls—I've rarely been so wet, as it was literally pouring!—the Henry Ford Museum/Greenfield Village, the Bush Plane Heritage Center, and Mackinac (fudge) Island. It was a terrific experience in a section of the country relatively unknown to me. Full details can be found on the Pearl Seas website.

There were two great tours courtesy of the retirees. I hadn't visited the stacks of the Central Building in decades, and those "old" empty stacks look forlorn as plans are formulated for them. The "new" Bryant Park stacks are a marvel with Dewey and LC long forgotten—only size matters now!

The archives of the Philharmonic were extremely interesting with various precious items and their history revealed.

Finally, try and see *Ex Libris*, the Wiseman documentary on NYPL. Very worthwhile, quite moving in parts. However, it could have been edited to good advantage—197 minutes was a tad lengthy, and I also regretted that there was no mention of a Staten Island branch.

KARLAN SICK & MA'LIS WENDT

Karlan Sick and Ma'Lis Wendt are happy with progress made by Literacy for Incarcerated Teens in bringing programs and books to young detainees on Rikers Island. Our board raises funds to provide material for the presenters who have won the acceptance of the prison staff. Programs also continue in the school libraries of the detention centers.

ZAHAVA STESEL

As we are coming closer to the conclusion of 2017, some of us may be thinking of an event that made the year special. For me, that was a journey last May to Germany.

I visited the infamous camp called Dachau where many innocent people were prisoners of the Nazi regime. Its location close to Munich, where the Nazi Party had its official headquarters, made Dachau a convenient site. Intended to hold political prisoners, some German, it eventually was used for the imprisonment of Jews. Among those prisoners were my husband and his brother Salomon, who died there. We visited an underground bunker, still in use, that Salomon paid his life building along with many other Jewish slave laborers.

It was a sad journey for me, walking on the grounds upon which men suffered so much cruelty. As an Auschwitz survivor, my vision extended even farther than the public ground, inside the barracks. Luckily, my daughter, Dr. Miriam Shenkar, accompanied me, and I could smile within my tears.

Being a former librarian, I looked forward to an appointment at the camp Archive. There I was surprised to see the large number of heavy memorial-



Zahava (left) and daughter, Miriam

type books. They contained lists and lists of victims who died and those who were liberated by the American forces.

Shortly, a friendly archivist who spoke excellent English greeted us. I was amazed as he asked whether we had any documents or photographs of those relatives who were recorded in the books. The archivist was very interested in collecting personalized additions to the names in the list. Luckily, I had a photograph of my late husband, Meier Stessel, which I was pleased to give the archive. Later I learned that the archive also obtained the German translation of my book, called *Snow Flowers*.

Unfortunately, there were no photographs to give of my husband's brother, Salomon, who perished in Dachau, or of his wife and four children, who died in Auschwitz. Only the memory remains.

BONNIE WILLIAMS

I completed three years as president of Penn South Social Services, the NGO that funds the senior program here. My last volunteer job!!! Trips are to family now for high school graduations or holidays; lunch or dinner with friends; occasionally the theatre. I plan to start visiting museums while the weather holds. I met a Muhlenberg reader last week at a West Chelsea restaurant. It is nice to be remembered from the 1980's. I miss the contact with staff and public but have many memories. I have a good life after a life of work.

FROM THE EDITOR

Our next issue will be Spring 2018. We'd love to know what you've been doing. Please send your stories and photos to share with your fellow retirees.

Emily Cohen

473 Jefferson Blvd, Staten Island, NY 10312

718-984-3790 ecohennypl@aol.com

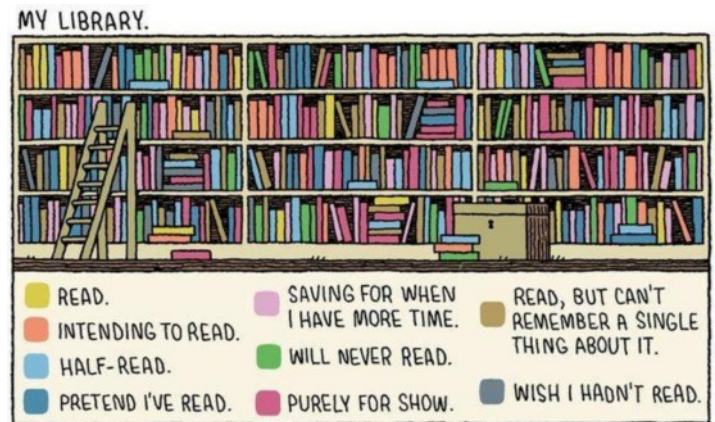
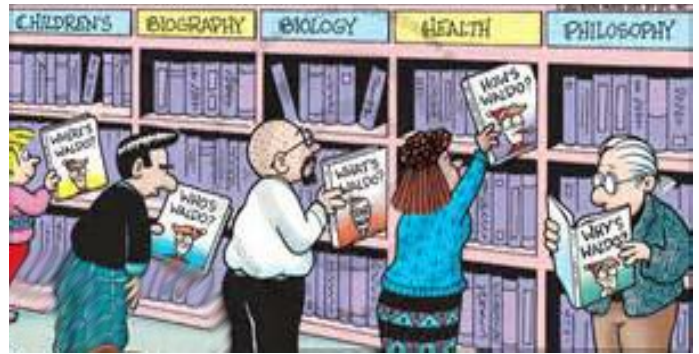
CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

(Continued from page 1)

In order to run for a delegate position, a person needs to collect signatures. Only those who have collected enough may run. The fear is that moneyed special interests will support the campaigns of those who agree with them. For example, there are those who oppose public pensions and those who would like to diminish the “forever wild” nature of the so-designated acreage of the Adirondacks in order to reap profits from the natural resources there.

Some argue that a Constitutional Convention is needed in order to achieve ethics reform in state government. However, particular changes to the Constitution can be enacted without the expense of a Convention and without “putting everything on the table.” The method is for the proposal to be passed by two consecutive elected legislatures and approved by voters. In fact, the second question on the ballot on Election Day appears as a result of this mechanism. It asks if an amendment should be made to allow a court to reduce or revoke the public pension of a public officer convicted of a felony that has a direct and actual relationship to the performance of the public officer’s existing duties.

Far fewer voters bother to vote on ballot questions than vote for elected officials. **THAT IS WHY EACH VOTE COUNTS SO MUCH!** It is worth one’s time to look for the questions and to make an informed vote. It is even possible that the questions will be printed on the reverse side of the ballot. Find them, please, and **VOTE NO** on the Constitutional Convention!



OUR LATEST NEWS OF MARIE ROHAN SPICER

When we learned of the widespread destruction caused on St. Maarten, especially on the Dutch side of the island, during the recent hurricanes, those of us who knew Marie Rohan Spicer from her time working as a clerk for NYPL on Staten Island worried about how she and her family had fared. Marie moved to the island after retiring.

During the October 6th NYPLRA trip on Staten Island, it was a relief to hear from retiree Alice Roach that she had just seen Marie here the week before. Unfortunately, six houses belonging to Marie and her family were casualties of the storm.

NYPLRA HAS A NEW WEBSITE!

At last we have a new improved website, www.nyplretirees.org, that has more photo pages and additional pages about our members, past and present. This website replaces www.nyplra.org, which crashed last year and could not be updated. Take a look at the new website and let us know what you think.. Email your comments to nyplra@earthlink.net.

POEMS BY MARJORIE MIR

FROM MARS, AN ENVOY

Beached, stranded,
a rounded pebble
tells of water's presence,
a story of immersion,
movement, shaping
just as, in age,
a memory will arise
from waters past,
sun-warmed
or washed in coolness,
lifted, turned, returned
to its furrowed bed
or palmed and pocketed.

SUPPER

for Emma Cohn

To sup, partake and, taking, share

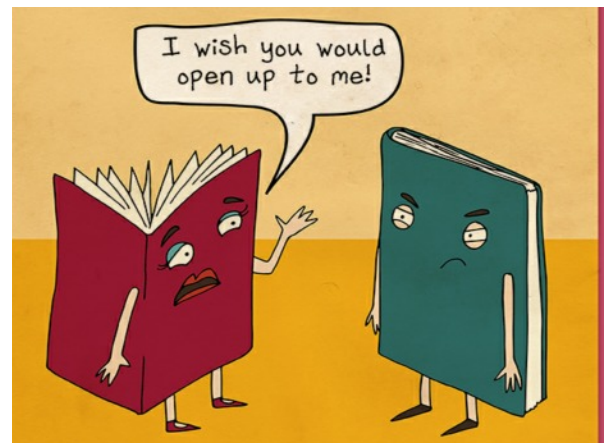
This evening,
trees outside yellowing to winter,
inside, the ceiling lamp
lit against too-early dark,
round table
with papers pushed aside
to make room for a meal,
this evening descends
from one spent in your kitchen
where, at your round table,
pendant shade decanting light,
I learned a sturdy truth:
thick soup, contentment brimming
in the spoon,
salted, buttered baked potato
breathed and taken in,
are themselves the blessing,
themselves the perfect meal.

IN THE MEDIA

To keep up with library news in our city, visit our website, www.nyplretirees.org

On the **Library Advocacy** page, you can find links to active organizations, Citizens Defending Libraries, and others.

The **In The Media** page will direct you to articles in newspapers, blogs, and magazines



NYPLRA Retirees E-mail: nyplra@earthlink.net

NYPLRA Website: www.nyplretirees.org

NYPLRA Facebook Page:

<https://facebook.com/pages/The-New-York-Public-Library-Retirees-Association/123598427801504>

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Newsletter Editor: Emily Cohen
(718) 984-3790,
ecohennypl@aol.com

Technical Assistant: Allen Cohen

Copyeditor: Jane Kunstler