

# New York Public Library Retirees Association Newsletter

Spring 2018

Issue 41

## ***HAPPY 50TH ANNIVERSARY LOCAL 1930!***



At the December 10, 1968 General Meeting of New York Public Library Guild Local 1930, Secretary Iris Pettiford Cox presented President David Beasley with a gavel and briefcase.

## EXECUTIVE BOARD

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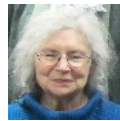
Larry Petterson



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Emily Cohen



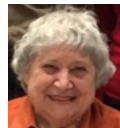
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Mary K. Conwell



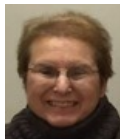
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## PRESIDENT'S NOTES

Spring 2018! Here is another wonderful newsletter for you, packed with great articles you will definitely enjoy reading.

Do you remember that at NYPL in the 90s, *Staff News*, the newssheet printed in-house, came out every Friday and was given to each staff member? In August 1992, it contained a short paragraph from Juanita Doares. It read, "A group of retirees is interested in forming an independent retirees association...open to any NYPL retiree regardless of position held at time of retirement." The purpose of the group would be to explore areas of common concern for retirees. By June 1993, the NYPL Retirees Association had been formed, Juanita was president, and it had published its first newsletter.

Here we are today with your latest newsletter, and we have close to 270 members!

Get out your calendar and please save the date; you are invited to the NYPL Annual Spring Reunion on Thursday, June 21, at the Celeste Bartos Forum. Retirees, longtime staff, friends, and colleagues will be welcomed. Time 3:00 – 5:00pm. There will be delicious snacks, small sandwiches, and wonderful sweets served with lemonade. Invitations will be sent soon.

Our new 2018 Membership Directory listing all current members has been mailed or emailed to you. Be on the lookout for it. Remember, if you change address, phone, or email, let our Membership Chair, Jane Kunstler, know at [j.kunstler@att.net](mailto:j.kunstler@att.net) or 212-799-9753.

Now enjoy your newsletter! Our Board, Committee Chairs, Newsletter Editor, and I wish you all a good summer. Do keep in touch. We all love to hear from YOU!

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Visit us at the new address for our website:  
[www.nyplretirees.org](http://www.nyplretirees.org)

Please submit articles, letters and information to the Newsletter Editor: [ecohennypl@aol.com](mailto:ecohennypl@aol.com)



# Golden Anniversary Celebration



Yes, it really has been 50 years since New York Public Library Guild Local 1930 officially began on May 1, 1968. We were made aware of this by David Beasley, a founding member and the first president.

As David recalls, “our union activity began late in 1965. Some cataloguers in the Research Libraries asked me to attend a meeting with DC 37 recruiters. After a couple of meetings, we wanted a chairperson for an organizing committee. People pointed to me. Our committee had to sign library workers on green cards signifying desire for a union. We had to work hard to get a majority because of the large turnover of staff. When I spoke to a full house of library workers on 40<sup>th</sup> Street, the enthusiasm was tremendous; I knew we would reach our goal, but it took almost two years and much scrutiny by Mrs. Luthy of Personnel to verify that the green cards were legitimate.”

Union activist Angeline Moscatt, when interviewed for the Oral History Project by Despina Croussouloudis, related the difficulty in persuading professionals to sign up for the union because this was seen by some as “unprofessional.”

Thanks to the tip from past union president Sally Campbell that Local 1930 papers had been donated to the Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, this reporter requested to look at several boxes of them. It was as if I had been transported back in time. A flyer in a folder there advertised a meeting to be held on Tuesday, November 1, 1966, at Freedom House. It was to be a general meeting for all NYPL personnel. “Bring questions, suggestions, and coworkers,” it said. There was a list of demands that the union could make upon decision by the membership. At the bottom of the flyer was printed, “FLASH: Librarians win 35-hour week.” It had been announced on October 24<sup>th</sup> that, as of January 1, 1967, this reduction from the 40-hour work week for librarians would take effect.

Another flyer advertised the Giant Rally for Research Libraries to take place on Saturday, May 17, 1969. As of May 12, 1969, it said, they would not be open after

6 pm weekdays and would be closed all day on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays. Famous people would be there, including Tony Randall as M.C. James Earl Jones, Hal Holbrook, Betty Comden, Theodore Bikel, Ruby Dee, and Cleveland Amory would also participate. Folk singing, readings, and talks would be part of the program. Co-sponsors were Concerned Citizens Committee to Save Our Libraries and New York Public Library Guild Local 1930.

This photo of the rally is also from the Archives.



Julia Brody is in center foreground. Carol Thomas, who was to become the 7<sup>th</sup> president of the Union, is holding the banner for the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. Sam Memberg is the man with dark hair and beard at the upper left near the “Help Save” sign. Ray Markey tells us that the man slightly to the right of the lion looking down with a light colored coat and wearing a tie looks like him. If you look carefully, you’ll see a hand-lettered sign for Port Richmond to the left of the “Help Save” sign.



This photo from the Archives shows the December 13, 1978, demonstration for the 1978 - 1980 contract. Fourth from right is Victor Gotbaum (DC 37 Executive Director). Next to him are Joe Zurlo (DC 37 President) and John Toto (DC 37 Representative).

Elsewhere in this Newsletter, you will see more photos of our union activities. Some show serious events and others show social ones. All of the old photos, except for the one on page 6, are from AFSCME, Local 1930; PHOTOS. 017; Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University. They are used with permission.

Please let us know if you recognize any unidentified person in a photo by contacting Emily Cohen at (718) 984-3790 or [ecohennypl@aol.com](mailto:ecohennypl@aol.com).

## REFLECTIONS

Our NYPLRA membership includes all living past presidents of Local 1930. A complete list of all presidents who have served to date with their years of service is on page 10. This Golden Anniversary is an appropriate time to thank them for their dedication to service, willingness to work hard, and pride in being entrusted with the responsibilities of the highest office of the Union. Past Executive Board members of Local 1930 are similarly thanked. A number of them are among our membership.

## THEN AND NOW

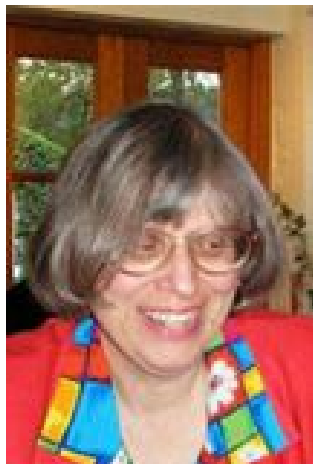
It was in 1972 that the Agency Shop was initiated at NYPL. At that time, staff who were not union members but benefited when the Union negotiated gains for all staff began to pay the equivalent of union dues less the amount that covered personal services benefits which are for union members only. This past winter the U.S. Supreme Court heard the Janus v. AFSCME case and the decision is expected by summer. Public service unions such as ours would face financial problems if AFSCME loses this case because such payments would end.



## TRIBUTES TO UNION ACTIVISTS

Over the past several months, our Association has been saddened to learn of the deaths of several of our members who were active in the Union. Here are some remembrances of them.

### From the obituary sent by NYPLRA:



During her career at NYPL, **Jean De Rubini Peterson**, who died on December 28, 2017, served as branch librarian of the Hamilton Grange Branch as well as librarian of the Education Collection at Mid-Manhattan. She remained at Mid-Manhattan until her retirement on July 31, 2009.

Jean was active in Local 1930 of DC37, holding the positions of shop steward, trustee, and secretary. She served as 1930's delegate to the DC37's Delegate Assembly and attended conventions of AFSCME and the Coalition of Labor Union Women. She was a member of the Committee for Real Change, which worked against corruption in DC37. As a campaigner for social justice, Jean marched with Local 1930 in demonstrations against the Vietnam War and in favor of the ERA.

From David Beasley:

The sad news in recent Retirees Association communications of the deaths of two friends, **Abe Fox** and **Angeline Moscatt**, brings me to praise them for their long good service to the Library and for their service to the staff as officers of Local 1930.

I last heard from Abe Fox in 2013 when he sent me his newly printed detective novel featuring a hard-nosed, big, burly detective. This was in stark contrast to the author who was small in stature, mild-mannered, and kindly attentive. His wife of many years had just passed away, and he was 96. I met Abe when I began in the Cataloguing Division of the Research Libraries, and we became friends. His poor eyesight was a challenge that he overcame with

dedication. When no one wanted to fill the union position of librarian trustee for the Research Libraries, I persuaded Abe to devote time to it; he did this reluctantly but devotedly. He had served in the army in World War II. In later years, he enjoyed traveling

with his wife. He liked reading and had a good private library. Robert Louis Stevenson was his favorite author.



Angeline Moscatt was librarian vice-president of the Local for years. I am told that she was an excellent librarian in the children's library.

Her mild manner and calm, reasoned personality were touched with a wry sense of humor, and her concern for people distinguished her also in her work for the Union. She bore the ups and downs stolidly and gave good advice conservatively. She was 92 when she died—a long life well-lived.

From Alan Pally:

When I was a part-time clerk in Central Circulation (Room 80—now Bartos), **Angeline Moscatt** was running the Central Children's Room in Room 73. She encouraged me to run for Union office. We worked on the Union newsletter together in the Local's tiny office on West 43<sup>rd</sup> Street before DC37 got that building downtown and gave us space there.

## IN MEMORY OF NYPLRA COLLEAGUES

Abraham Fox

Arleen Geller

Ann Mock

Herbert Thorne

## **LYNN TAYLOR, SIXTH PRESIDENT OF LOCAL 1930**

Lynn Taylor worked for NYPL from 1977 to 2008 and was president of Local 1930 from January 24, 2005, to January 16, 2007. She served out the term of Ray Markey following his retirement. He called her a “dynamo in action.”

Because of her untimely death in 2014, those who knew her best have stepped forward to talk about Lynn and her association with the union. They are Glenn Mills, Lynn’s husband; Ray Markey, her closest associate in the union; and Angela Lindo, who worked with Lynn briefly at Seward Park and for many years at New Amsterdam.

Glenn talks about Lynn having grown up on the Chesapeake Bay in a union family and about one of her first jobs as a union organizer in Baltimore for AFSCME 1199, now known as the National Health Care Workers Union. As far as Ray knows, she is the only person in the library who had been a former union organizer, and he is sure that if there had been a union meeting the day she arrived at NYPL, Lynn would have been there.

While she had received her MLS degree earlier, she didn’t work as a librarian until she relocated to New York and was hired by NYPL under the CETA [Comprehensive Employment and Training Act] program. Although new to the Union, she immediately activated a CETA committee in both Local 1930 and DC 37 and began working with Ray Markey and others to ensure that CETA employees would be rolled over to permanent library positions. That effort eventually met with success.

Lynn was active in women’s issues, the civil rights and anti-apartheid movements, and the fight against the Viet Nam war. As those who knew her best said, if there was a committee, she would be on it. She went to Nicaragua as part of the labor committee with Marion Porro and gave a report about it the Central Labor Council. She worked with Ray on the Committee for Real Change to fight corruption within District Council 37.

According to Glenn, Lynn had memorized the union contract; it was her “bible.” When she became a shop steward, this made her particularly adept when defending employees at hearings. Staff always knew “Lynn was on their side,” as Angela and others put it.

In 2000, Lynn ran for vice president with the slate on which Ray Markey ran for president. Lynn served as vice president for librarians, represented the Union at conferences and conventions, and was part of the negotiating team, all the while pushing for higher salaries and better working conditions. Demonstrations were her bread and butter, and Glenn remembers many evenings at the kitchen table making signs.

During Lynn’s short two years as president, she was instrumental in getting tuition assistance reinstituted for trainees, a raise for information assistants, and a raise for new librarians who, during budget cutbacks, had been hired at a lower rate than previous new hires. The raise for librarians turned out to be a contentious issue because clerical staff felt it was finally time for them to get a raise. Lynn sought the advice of the legal counsel of Local 1930 and felt accepting the library’s offer of the raise was the right decision. However, she decided not to run for president in the 2007 election and returned to her former position as branch librarian at the New Amsterdam Branch.

Lynn adored the library as an institution and viewed it as a portal for everyone, a public space with free and open access, a part of the social fabric of society. Ray called her a “fighter who had the knowledge and experience to do the job right.”



Marion Porro (left) and Lynn Taylor at an early Union meeting.

## IN THEIR OWN WORDS

### DAVID BEASLEY

(Editor's Note: We thank David for his generous contributions of union memories to our newsletter, too many to fit into our little newsletter. However, he has published several books about and based upon his union experiences. For example, his autobiography, *Episodes and Vignettes*, Volume Two, includes many tales of his union activities along with photographs. He has also written a trilogy of New York Library Detective Mysteries in which composites of union people are used as some of the fictional characters. More information is on his website [www.davuspublishing.com](http://www.davuspublishing.com).)

### KATE TODD

I was president of Local 1930 during the New York City fiscal crisis of the mid-1970s. As NYC teetered on the edge of bankruptcy, library workers and union members faced budget cuts, wage freezes, layoffs, and branch closings. The Union responded with political action, negotiations, and support for community Ad Hoc Committees to Save Our Libraries.

I particularly remember the spring of 1976. Because of announced cuts to the New York library budgets, nearly a third of NYPL staff received layoff notices to be effective the last day of the fiscal year. NYPL management also announced a plan to permanently close many library branches. Letter-writing campaigns targeting elected representatives were organized at every branch. A coalition of union negotiators met with City officials and eventually agreed to a plan to avert the crisis by lending employee retirement funds to New York City.

On June 30, the last day of the fiscal year, many branches were holding farewell parties for their co-workers who were losing their jobs. Negotiations continued down to the wire when the final budget included a restoration of sufficient funds for NYPL to reverse the layoffs. Each branch received a phone call and the farewell parties were converted into victory celebrations.

I was honored to be elected president of Local 1930 during those turbulent times. For more details about unions during the fiscal crisis, read the 2017 book *Fear City* by Kim Phillips-Fein.



Negotiating committee planning strategy: Standing is Stanley Propper (DC37 Representative). Seated (wearing head scarf) is Alice Adamczyk. Kate Todd and Bart Cohen (DC37 Negotiator) are at right.



Also included were additional DC37 staff and leadership from Queens Local 1321 and Brooklyn Local 1482.



Even presidents get to enjoy a break from hard work at times. Kate is at left with Judy Brill in the center at a Chinese dinner. Can you identify the woman at right?



## SALLY CAMPBELL

When I first came to the library in 1966, librarians worked 40 hours but clerks worked only 35. A while later I came across a study the library had done to explain this. They found that librarians could not get their work done in so few hours. Somehow, with no explanation that I ever heard, we librarians went to 35 hours, too. Perhaps it had to do with the union that David Beasley was working so hard to form. I began going to union meetings and got involved as a shop steward, as a representative to DC 37, and on the Executive Board. I went to rallies and to hearings to save our libraries.

Then in the summer of 1978 I worked on Carol Bellamy's campaign for President of the City Council and she won! That night I realized I should and could run for president of the union local. I would not have to do it alone but could ask for help. After all, the song says "what force on earth is weaker than the feeble strength of one, but the union makes us strong."

I won by a slim margin. At the same time I became President, I also became a Quaker (and still am one). From them I learned how important coming to unity is, and I did my best to find a way we all could come to agreement. One example had to do with raising the union dues. We had to keep coming back to ask for small amounts. I suggested we use a percentage instead, so if we won raises, the dues would go up; but if we didn't, they wouldn't. It passed overwhelmingly.

Though there were areas where we could work with the library such as rallies and lobbying to gain funding for the library, we were no sweetheart union. The workers needed us to stand up for them. For instance, we would not budge in negotiations on the THI agreement, though it was very costly for the library. I believe it pushed the library towards air conditioning the branches more quickly than they otherwise would have. In this way we also helped the public.

Individual members needed us to defend them as well, both in grievance hearings when we saw that the library was being unfair and in discipline hearings when members had gotten into trouble. Kate Todd had worked with the library to gain us a large number of CETA workers to enlarge our much diminished staff. It was one of my jobs to defend those the library felt were not working out.

At this time there was a wage freeze, but instead of raises we would get Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA). These payments often came long after the period of time they covered. I asked the library if they were automatically sending payments to people who were no longer on the payroll. They said no; such folks would have to request their money. I got the DC computer team to give me a list of those who were in this category, and, even though it was only about 20, I sent them all letters. One person wrote back and said "I was only owed a very small amount, but I got it!"

DC 37, though far from perfect, did provide us two excellent people to help us. Norm Adler shared his extensive knowledge of the political scene and was not only a great ally in saving the library, but I also loved working with him later in fighting to get the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped computers, more staff, and a new building. In our negotiations over our contract, Bart Cohen was, in my opinion, superb: clear and calm and smart and strong.

We found ourselves deadlocked with the library over our contract at the end of my first year as president and felt we needed to have a demonstration on the library steps. It was a great show of solidarity, and we did gain a reasonably decent outcome. At that rally, I saw Marion Porro giving her all as she spoke out from her love of the union and the library. It was for that reason I was not surprised that she became the next president.



Ray Markey (left) and Marion Porro at the 1980 AFSCME Convention.



## RAY MARKEY

## NEW NYPLRA WEBSITE

by Polly Bookhout

The Local was founded in the turmoil of events that took place in 1968. There was the Civil Rights Movement that saw the assassination of Martin Luther King, the Democratic Party Primary when Robert Kennedy was assassinated, the struggle for women's rights, and the fight against the war in Vietnam. Organizing drives made Local 1930, DC 37, and AFSCME a major force for good in our country. Many of those who organized our union took part in one or more of these struggles. To those founding members of Local 1930, we tip our hat.

Today similar struggles are taking place. The fate of our Republic is on the line. To all the current members of Local 1930, we know you will continue to fight for social justice and a better world that the founders of your union struggled for 50 years ago.

(Editor's Note: Ray is the subject of an extensive, photo-illustrated cover article, "Ray Markey, Librarian & Union Activist," in Issue #33 of our New York Public Library Retirees Association Newsletter. In excerpts from his Oral History interview, he discusses many events. You can read it on our website [www.nyplretirees.org](http://www.nyplretirees.org).)

## CAROL THOMAS

I will say CONGRATS to Local 1930 for 50 years of hard work. And may it have continued success.



A Local 1930 picnic at the Platzl Brauhaus in upstate New York. Carol Davies-Gross is at right wearing her Union tee shirt.

## Visit our new Weebly-created website

at [www.nyplretirees.org](http://www.nyplretirees.org). This has most of the features you know from the earlier website, [www.nyplra.org](http://www.nyplra.org), plus new features.

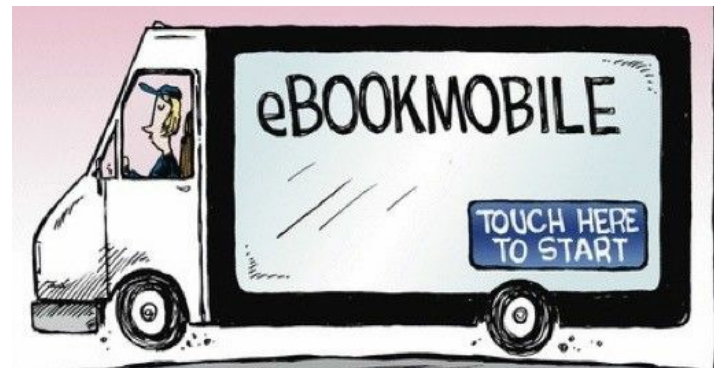
Weebly formats the website so it can be viewed effectively on either a computer or on a smart phone or tablet. With more and more people spending lots of time on their phones, this is a plus. The index to the website on a computer is different from the index on a smart phone or tablet. This is explained on the first page of the website.

The new "People" page links current and former NYPL employees to information about them. There are already over 800 employees listed. Your name may be there. You are effectively the copy editor of your page. Let us know if there are errors or omissions.

The website can be edited by several people. Larry Petterson and I are editors of the entire site. Editors can be added to work on an individual page, such as the "People" page, the "In The Media" page, or the "Photos" page.

The website can be updated online with either a Mac or PC. This can make developing the website a communal enterprise.

**A personal note and plea:** I am eighty years-old with arthritic fingers. I don't know how long I will be able to work on our website. I hope some of our members will accept the challenge to work on one or more of our website pages. If you are interested, I can send you pdf manuals: one for the whole website, a second for the Photo page, and a third (in preparation) for the People page.



## **LOCAL 1930'S ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION DINNER-DANCE**

New York Public Library Guild Local 1930 held a gala 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration at the Astoria World Manor on May 6, 2018.

Our small group of retirees who attended included the very first president David Beasley. He and his wife Michelle had come all the way from Simcoe, Ontario, Canada!



David (at left) with Val Colon who is the eighth and current president of the Union.



David with the third president Sally Campbell. They enjoyed reuniting.



Asa Rubenstein's wife Fortune snapped this photo of him with David. Asa is a past Executive Board member of Local 1930.



David with Joe Zeveloff. Joe is a past Executive Board member of Local 1930 and current Advocacy Committee chair for NYPLRA. Retiree Janice Quinter is seen at right chatting with Michelle Beasley.

### **LOCAL 1930 PRESIDENTS**

- David Beasley 1968 - 1976
- Katie Todd 1976 - 1978
- Sally Campbell 1978 - 1980
- Marion Porro 1980 - 1992 (deceased)
- Raymond Markey 1992 - 2004
- Lynn Taylor 2004 - 2006 (deceased)
- Carol Thomas 2006 - 2010
- Valentin Colon 2010 - present



## WELCOME NEW MEMBER

Jacqueline Bausch

## RETIREEE NEWS

### DONNA ABBATICCHIO

I cannot believe I am going into my tenth year of retirement. Last summer, I made what was, for me, a really big change. After almost 40 years of living in a walk-up studio apartment, I treated myself to a studio alcove apartment in a building with a doorman and elevator. People would ask if I was downsizing, and I had to say, unfortunately, this was up-sizing for me! Carrying heavy groceries up three flights of stairs was



becoming more of a challenge, but giving up a rent-stabilized apartment was difficult as well. I wanted to stay in my familiar neighborhood on the Upper East Side, so it is only a few blocks away from my old address. I am enjoying more space, wide windows with a view (of too much snow this past season), and doorman assistance.

Retirement has been great. As with other NYPL friends, I spend time going to the theater and museums and dining at new restaurants. Walking tours and classes about New York City history are among my favorite activities, but I have also enjoyed volunteering at the animal shelter and on various New York Cares projects. Travels include Vietnam and an upcoming tour to Eastern Europe. Shorter trips included cruising to the Caribbean, volunteering at a Florida animal shelter, Disney World for my sister's wedding anniversary, and Hilton Head, SC.

### CAROL ANSHIEN

I am pleased to let you know that I had a song produced in September 2017. The song, titled "The World is Changing," is #10 on the CD album *Elul: Songs for Turning* and can be found online at <https://elulmusicproject.bandcamp.com/album/elul-songs-for-turning>.

Originally written a long time ago (1991), I introduced it in August 2016 at a weekend retreat called "Let My People Sing" [LMPS]. One of the retreat organizers later sent it to the CD producers, who accepted it. I am so very grateful to all involved.

Voices: I am singing with a small group of young women from the retreat who got together in NYC for recording. This album of songs is intended for contemplation and "preparation" during the Hebrew month of Elul, before the Jewish High Holidays ("Days of Awe"/Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur), which usually fall in September. The songs are meant to "inspire reflection, feeling, and the strength to change and grow." Some songs are in English only (like mine), others are a mix of Hebrew and English.

You can listen online to each track free of charge. Lyrics (transliterated) can be viewed on the website, too. Various purchasing options are also available there.

ENJOY!



## DAVID BEASLEY

Michelle and I left Simcoe, Ontario, in mid-December to cruise the Douro River in Portugal and visit the old towns along the way. I was stopped by a lady, when boarding the bus in Lisbon, who said I resembled a colleague of hers in the New York Public Research Libraries: "Oh! What Division?" —"Economics and Public Affairs." It was Lucy, who was cruising with her husband. The ship went to Santander, Spain, and Coimbra University where a scene from a Harry Potter film was shot, thus eclipsing the fame of this 15th century icon. It then returned to Porto, after which its famous wines are named.

From Santiago de Compostella and its massive Cathedral that hosted pilgrims from the middle-ages to today, we made it to Agadir, Morocco, and beautiful weather on the Atlantic coast. I enclose a photo taken there on New Year's Eve when we danced to an orchestra and the French Frank Sinatra. We spent time in a resort outside Marrakech and visited the Berbers in the Atlas Mountains before visiting Casablanca and dining at Rick's Cafe. "Sam" played the piano next to our table, and Michelle coaxed me to dance between the tables while "Sam played it again." Neither Bogart nor Bergman was in attendance.

In London, we stay at the Rembrandt Hotel across from the Victoria and Albert Museum, which had a marvellous exhibit of 400 years of Opera. Harrod's was down the street and left me poorer, but Agatha Christie's "Witness for the Prosecution," playing in the old London County Council Hall, restored the feel of "working" London. We returned in mid-January to a snowstorm. Michelle swears that next winter she wants to escape the snow and grey skies for months—so I guess it's Mexico and avoiding the narcos.

Greetings to all, David

P.S. When in Spain, we spent a day in Corunna where I surveyed the harbour from which an ancestor, Edward Zealand, served as a seaman under Admiral Nelson and helped rescue the British army led by General Moore, who was retreating from Napoleon's forces in 1809. Moored in the harbour was the magnificent Queen Victoria cruise ship recently renovated to carry over 2000 passengers.



My 86th birthday cake with two of my grandchildren, Haley and Alexander.



Michelle and I applauding the orchestra on New Year's Eve in Agadir, Morocco.

## JOE BOONIN

As I approach the fifteenth anniversary of my retirement, I am still busy with my retirement gig as indexer for the "Index of Printed Music" online database. This large, subscription database now comprises over a half-million index entries, and I am proud to acknowledge authorship of over 100,000 of them.

I still continue to travel a lot and am looking forward to Japan in May. I also remain active in the Music Library Association and will be in Portland, Oregon, for the 2018 meeting.



## **PHYLLIS HOFFMAN**

On January 29, 2018, Jane Kunstler and I attended an orientation at the METRO 599 Studio on Eleventh Avenue. METRO, the Metropolitan New York Library Council, “is a non-profit organization where New York’s libraries and archives come together to learn, share ideas, and collaborate.”

Molly Schwartz, Studio Manager, gave us a brief introduction to the equipment available for digital conversion of old format materials and a demonstration of the soundproof Metro Audio Booth.

Among the many services available, some for a fee and some free-of-charge, are the following:

- The A/V transfer area contains equipment to convert magnetic media—VHS and audio tapes, deck sets, CD’s, and reel-to-reel audio material—to a digital format.
- The media migration and recovery equipment converts data directly from storage devices. People are required to bring their own hard drive to which the material will be downloaded.
- There is also equipment to digitize such things as photos, badges, and medals and produce preservation grade image files of archival and library material.
- Laura Forshay demonstrated how to use the Vinyl Cutter Machine which is used to create decals that can be used in signage and displays. It can replicate logos and other visual items.

Molly Schwartz explained the equipment in the Metro Audio Booth to us, and Jane conducted a brief interview with me. We both wore headsets/earphones and spoke into a mike. We could watch a digital display showing our voices being recorded.

Jane mentioned the NYPLRA Oral History Project and Molly expressed great interest in it. She said, “We always love good stories!” She suggested that perhaps she could do a podcast about the project—something for our Oral History Committee to consider.

For more information about METRO, go to [metro.org](http://metro.org).



## **JESSIE LEE JOHNSON**

Note: Jessie Lee now lives in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

I received the NYPLRA newsletter and would have really enjoyed those trips to view the Philharmonic Archives--I was a music major--and the Lighthouse Museum. My uncle, Morton M. Palmer, was the keeper of the westernmost lighthouse in the United States in Mendocino, California, many years ago. The famed lens for that lighthouse was shipped around Cape Horn before the Panama Canal was built. My uncle died the best way: he was out in the beautiful redwood forest gathering leaf mold for my aunt's garden when he had a fatal heart attack. I never knew him, but my twin sisters spent two unforgettable years there when they were very young; they attended a little one-room schoolhouse. There were no hippies or cannabis in Mendocino in those long ago days.

## EDWARD KASINEC

I contributed the preface to the catalog *Crown Under the Hammer* (Hoover/Cantor AC, 2017) and served as one of the Curators of the bi-venue exhibition of the same name (October 18, 2017-March 4, 2018).

I also convened and chaired two sessions at the ASEES (Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies) National Convention in Chicago in November, 2017: “Collecting the Revolution!” and “Visualizing and Exhibiting the Revolution.”

On November 21 I spoke at Sodertorn University in Sweden on “The Russian Imperial Cultural Heritage: Interwar Collectors and Dealers” and the following day at the Icon Society, Stockholm University, on “From the Lavra to London: The Fate of the Royal Doors.”

My co-authored article on the Zhukovsky-Belevsky collection at the NYPL Art and Architecture Division appears in the current issue of the prestigious Moscow journal *Nashe Nasledie* (*Our Legacy*).

On February 20, I spoke at the Bohemian National Hall on “Czech New York” and included my recollections of the NYPL’s Webster Branch.



## ALAN PALLY

I’m a Trustee of the Noël Coward Foundation and travel to London three times a year for meetings. We spend a chunk of the Coward royalties on grants to theaters and educational institutions in the United Kingdom and the United States and look after the Coward legacy. (The grants are not necessarily related to Coward’s work — a recent grant that I shepherded was for educational programs related to a new documentary about American playwright Terrence McNally.) Sometimes friends who are also NYPL retirees are in London when I’m there, most recently (March 2018) Bob and Adele Bellinger. We enjoyed dining out as well as an excellent production of *Julius Caesar*, which we saw on the eve of the Ides of March.

I’ve also been busy down on Bank Street, where I am on the Board of Directors of HB Studio and the HB Playwrights Foundation. Next year marks the centennial of Uta Hagen, who ran HB until her passing in 2004, and I am organizing various events in her honor. In addition to programs at HB, I am working with NYPL’s Performing Arts Library, which houses Uta’s archives; the Al Hirschfeld Foundation; the Montauk Public Library; the Paley Center for Media; and Ten Chimneys, the Wisconsin home of Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne.

In May 2017, in conjunction with the Performing Arts Library’s exhibition “*Curtain Up: Celebrating the Last 40 Years of Theatre in New York and London*,” I presented a lecture on Sir Peter Shaffer, in LPA’s Bruno Walter Auditorium. I talked about Sir Peter and my experiences working with him and showed clips from *Amadeus*, *Equus*, and *Lettice and Lovage*, from LPA’s Theatre on Film and Tape Archive. Of course I pointed out that Sir Peter, who worked in NYPL’s Acquisition Division in the early 1950s, is the only former NYPL staff member to have been knighted. As a result of my talk, I was invited by Mark Lamos, Artistic Director of the Westport Country Playhouse in Connecticut, to be guest speaker after a Sunday matinee of *Lettice and Lovage*.



## PAT PARDO

Every so often, I meet Phyllis Hoffman and Emily Cohen for lunch at Evergreen Chinese Restaurant in Midtown. We worked together when I was Branch Librarian at the Kips Bay Branch. Although we enjoy reminiscing about the old days at work, we spend most of our time catching up with one another's many retirement activities. Fortunately, the restaurant staff allows customers to linger over lunch. We're each so busy these days that catching up requires quite some time!



We added a second event after our lunch on Friday, November 3, 2017. Emily had noticed that Mid-Manhattan Library at 42<sup>nd</sup> Street was advertising an intriguing program. It was described as a “book social.” When Mid-Manhattan held these programs in its own building, now closed for renovation, they were known as “Open Book Night.” The current program is called “What Are You Reading?” and the theme for the day was “Food, Family, Feuds”. Each participant was asked to bring a favorite book related to the theme to share with everyone. No registration was required.

Much of what keeps me busy is leading book discussions. Actually, it was an interesting twist for each of us to be a participant in a book discussion instead of the leader! Gamely, we made our way to

room 67A. Librarian Elizabeth Waters welcomed us. We admitted that we three were retired NYPL librarians. Soon, along came Melissa Scher to assist in leading the program. We were excited to greet one another, as we knew her from our working days. However, it seemed that Phyllis, Emily, and I would be the ONLY participants! Two leaders and three participants, all three participants retired librarians! As we talked about our books, two latecomers joined our group. They were the only “civilians” among us.

The program was very enjoyable. We'd consider repeating this combination of getting together for lunch and discussing books afterward. The problem is that this program takes place on the second Friday of each month from two to three p.m. It is a major feat to find a date for our lunch that fits into our busy schedules. It was just good fortune that the three of us happened to be available for lunch on Friday, November 3<sup>rd</sup> and that the program was moved up from its regular date because the library would be closed then for Veteran's Day.

## ARTHUR RUHL

My house is located on the outskirts of Loie, Thailand. Loie is located 271 miles north of Bangkok by airplane. However, I am fairly close to the border of Laos, about an hour away from Loie. Every three months, as a condition of my one year Thai visa, I have to go to a border crossing. Then I sign out of Thailand for the day and cross the border into Laos, where for about \$50 I get a Laotian visa stamped into my passport. Then, I turn around immediately, check out of Laos, cross over the Mekong River and reenter Thailand. Then I get checked in at customs, and I am good for another three months. The whole procedure takes about an hour (on a not so busy day) once you learn how to do it.

Many of the people living in Loie are ethnically Laotian, or partially so. My wife, who identifies 100% with the Thai people and culture, had a Chinese father and a Laotian mother.

When I go to the border crossing, I always see road signs pointing the way to Luang Prabang Laos, indicating a distance of between 300-400 km, about six to seven hours by car. Luang Prabang is sometimes called the jewel of South East Asia. It is

a UNESCO World Heritage site because of its abundance of beautiful Buddhist temples and French Colonial architecture. I visited Luang Prabang several years ago, as well as with the Laotian capital of Vientiane (pronounced somewhat like “Viencheang”). Laos and Myanmar are two of my favorite world travel destinations.

### **BOB SINK**

I continue to work on my social history of the librarians who worked in the Circulation Department, 1901-1950. Last November, I presented a paper entitled “Friends, Dear Friends, and Lesbians” on women’s friendship networks in the branches, and the Staten Island Museum has asked me to present a longer version of that talk at the museum in June.

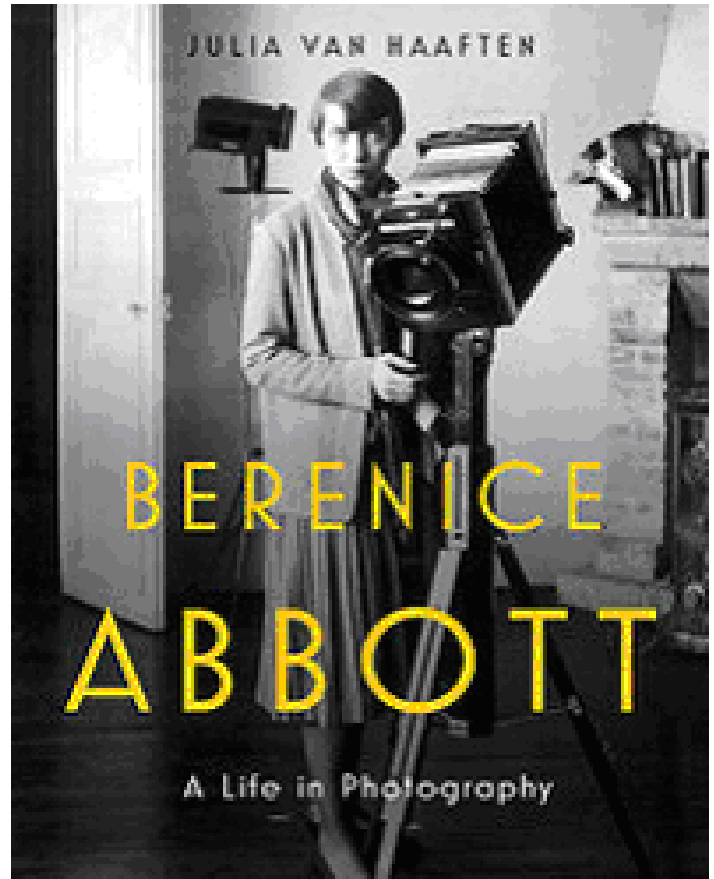
It has been especially interesting to work with a documentary filmmaker over the past few years. Dawn Logsdon is making a film entitled “Free for All: Inside the Public Library.” In 2014 she met Alan Pally, and he put her in touch with the Retirees Association. As a result, Jane Kunstler and I sat down with Dawn in Bryant Park to discuss the Library’s ethos and history. Two years later, she contacted me with a number of questions about NYPL history, especially its librarians and users. Last year, she filmed in the Seward Park Branch and interviewed me on camera. Dawn is now editing the film and hopes it will be released later this year. It should be worth waiting for.

### **JULIA VAN HAAFTEN**

At long last, my biography of American photographer Berenice Abbott (1898-1991) was published by W. W. Norton on April 10:  
<http://books.wwnorton.com/books/detail.aspx?ID=4294994454>

It would not have been possible without NYPL--first the collections and then the honor of being the first staff member to receive a Cullman Center fellowship, though it took another decade plus retirement to produce a final manuscript. Though I went on to hold a few new positions at NYPL during my thirty plus

years there, it was really in fall 1968, when I joined the staff, that I found my life’s calling.



On April 18, I presented a program at the 42nd Street building:  
<https://www.nypl.org/events/programs/2018/04/18/berenice-abbott-life-pictures>. Other events and updates appear on my Berenice Abbott Biography Facebook page:  
<https://www.facebook.com/BereniceAbbottBiography/>



Anna Craycroft (l.) and Julia Van Haaften (r.)  
at the April 18<sup>th</sup> NYPL program.



## **HISHI VELARDO**

When my children were small and I was working, I wasn't able to do much traveling. Now that I've retired, I'm enjoying visiting many fascinating places worldwide. I have been to New Zealand, Nepal, Peru, Iceland, Denmark, Sweden, Germany, France, England, and Scotland.

Among my favorite experiences were visiting Cusco, Peru, and hiking the Inca Trail to Machu Picchu; seeing the Hans Christian Andersen hut and the Little Mermaid statue in Denmark; and going to the place of Buddha's birth in Nepal.

I loved Scotland. Edinburgh was my favorite place there. It was sad to see the destruction from the recent earthquake in Iceland. During my travels, I stayed at two castles that had been converted to hotels. Now I am going to visit North Carolina in April. Next on my "wish list" is a trip to Bhutan. I hope to go there.

During my time at home, I had a wonderful, long telephone conversation with Henry Sumfleth who is the retired, longtime branch librarian of the Tottenville Branch Library.

## **SARA VELEZ**

I visited family in Bantry, West Cork, Ireland, this past July. I lived on a farm with forty-one cows and three dogs. The scenery there was perfectly beautiful, and I loved the cows and enjoyed watching some of their milking sessions. My family took me to some wonderful historic sites nearby, including rebel monuments.

There was a literary festival going on in Bantry while I was there. I attended some poetry and short story readings in the local library and bookstore. One of the poets doing a reading was the University Librarian from Cork University whom I met and from whom I also received a signed copy of his book. The question and answer sessions after the readings were particularly animated and stimulating. The people were so friendly everywhere, and I was received with great warmth by the Irish librarians

once I identified myself as a retired librarian. I felt so at home there!

For the past two years, I'd been working as a volunteer librarian in a private, elementary, Church school. It was a lot of work, but I loved the children and introducing them to new literature. I purchased a lot of books myself to add to the library's collection. I also created a newsletter for the school's staff and parents to apprise them of the goings-on in the library.

I also registered to take a beginning course in Yiddish this fall, but unfortunately, I fell and fractured a bone in my back in October, so I was not able to continue volunteer library work or begin the language course. I'm finally feeling better and am undergoing physical therapy. Hope to continue with my travels and language studies in the near future.

## **SUPERVISING CLERKS MAY 21, 1993**



B. MacDonald with newly promoted supervising clerks. Shown are (bottom row, l. To r.) Carmen Torres, Gretchen Haseltine, B. MacDonald, Margaret McGrory, (middle row) Renee Stevenson, Gloria Johnson, Azalee Williams, Petra Rodriguez, (top row) Theresa Middleton, Elton Bryant, Roberta Boozé.

This photo was taken on the staircase at Donnell that led to the Nathan Strauss YA room.

Thank you to Anne Hofmann for sending this picture. Anne's mother was Margaret McGrory.

## THEATER PARTY TO SEE FEEDING THE DRAGON

Twenty-one of us took a trip down memory lane on Sunday, April 8, 2018. We were transported to the St. Agnes Branch of The New York Public Library during the 1960s and early 1970s where Sharon Washington, now an accomplished actress and playwright, spent part of her childhood living with her family in the custodian's apartment on the top floor of the library. The Cherry Lane Theatre was the setting for Sharon's autobiographical one-woman play. The strange title became comprehensible when we learned that the bright, imaginative child thought of her father's constant "feeding" of coal to the old-fashioned furnace in the library's basement as "feeding the dragon."

Everyone was taken by Sharon's acting and storytelling abilities, but some in our group found even more to appreciate because they had worked at St. Agnes or at Yorkville, another branch at which Sharon's family lived while her father was its custodian.

There was a talk-back after the performance, during which it was revealed that young Sharon did not always check out the books she brought up to her apartment. She did have a library card and once had to pay a fine with her allowance for a late book. Her mother, she recalled, chided her for having an overdue book when she lived right in the library building.

among the stacks at St. Agnes when the library was closed to the public.



Childhood friend Esther (l.) and Sharon (r.)

Now Sharon is working on a children's book about her life living on the top floor of a library. You can find out much more about her acting and playwrighting careers at [www.sharonwashington.com](http://www.sharonwashington.com).

Chuck Schultz, who is Sharon's husband and a filmmaker, has been documenting Sharon's experience in writing the play. For the film, he is interested in talking to retirees who may remember George King Washington. If you are one, please email Mary K. Conwell at [mkconwell@yahoo.com](mailto:mkconwell@yahoo.com).



When Sharon emerged from the theater, she gave a warm hug to a woman she introduced to lingering theatergoers as Esther, her best friend from those days. The two had enacted dramatic scenes of make-believe



After enjoying the performance, some of our retirees posed by the poster outside the stage door.

Left to right: Larry Petterson, Carol Anshien, Jennine Porta, Estelle Friedman



## **FASHION INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY TOUR**

On Friday, March 16, 2018, nineteen retirees were privileged to take a tour of the special collections library at the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT). Professor N.J. Bradeen, the Director of the Grace Marcus Library, graciously received us and spoke about himself and the history of the library. FIT is both a junior college and a senior college that also offers graduate courses; it attracts students from all over the world.

Prof. Bradeen then turned us over to Assoc. Professor Karen Trivett, who is in charge of the Archives special collections. There are over 7500 volumes documenting the H

history of American fashion design and New York's 7th Avenue Garment District, as well as costume designs for stage and screen. The Archives also contain oral histories, scrapbooks, and unpublished manuscripts of designs from such artists as Givenchy and Christian Dior. We saw early issues of *Vogue Magazine* dating from the 1800's, as well as periodicals from other countries in French, Spanish, Czech, and other languages, spanning the 18<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. It was breathtaking.

Our tour concluded with an invitation to view exhibits in their museum, which is free and open to the public.

The whole experience conveyed to us the multiple talents and original ideas of the people who dress us and determine much of the beauty of this world.



LEFT: Jim Huffman, Lillian Zwyns, Gail Morse, Bob Foy

ABOVE: Jim Huffman, Janice Quinter, Walter Grutchfield, Bob Foy

## **NYPLRA ANNUAL LUNCHEON ARTE CAFÉ MAY 18, 2018**



About 60 of our New York Public Library Retirees Association members enjoyed a lovely lunch at this charming Upper West Side Manhattan restaurant. How delightful it was for them to savor delicious food and drink while talking about old times and current doings!

We'll have photos of the event in the next issue of this newsletter.

## **FORGET-ME-NOTS**

Odd, almost comical, to have forgotten them,  
until, just now, coming on their name  
in a poem and they, insistent,  
unearth a garden left to others' care  
long enough ago.

They will not allow me to forget.  
With the name and its recollection  
of their own blue haze  
below a row of sumacs,  
come others: plumed astilbe,  
the velvet bronze  
of Queen Sophia marigolds,  
white impatiens nesting among the roots  
of a century old black maple.  
(A night garden, I remember thinking,  
a moonlight garden)

In fact, it was a borrowed garden,  
never really mine.  
But it may be all are borrowed,  
only briefly ours.  
Abandon one and see how quickly  
wildness makes its claim.  
Leave one unwillingly to strangers  
and time will blur the names,  
body-memory lose in self-protection  
the pungency of onion-grass,  
comradeship of tools.

Marjorie Mir



## **IN CASE OF A RETIREES DEATH**

In the event of a retiree's death, it is important that the following be contacted by the next of kin.

NYPL Human Resources Service Center (212) 621-0500, prompt 4, for general NYPL questions.

DC37 (212) 815-1234, for union benefits information.

New York State Retirement System (866) 805-0990, toll-free, for pension questions and to inform NYSRS of the person's death date. A death certificate will be required as proof of death. Callers will need to listen to several prompts and choose the option that best suits their needs. The NYSERS website is:  
<http://www.osc.state.ny.us/retire/retirees/index.php>

The New York Public Library Retirees Association would also like to be contacted so that we may inform the deceased's former colleagues. This may be done by emailing or calling President Becky Koppelman at [blekopp@gmail.com](mailto:blekopp@gmail.com) or 212-874-6199.

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