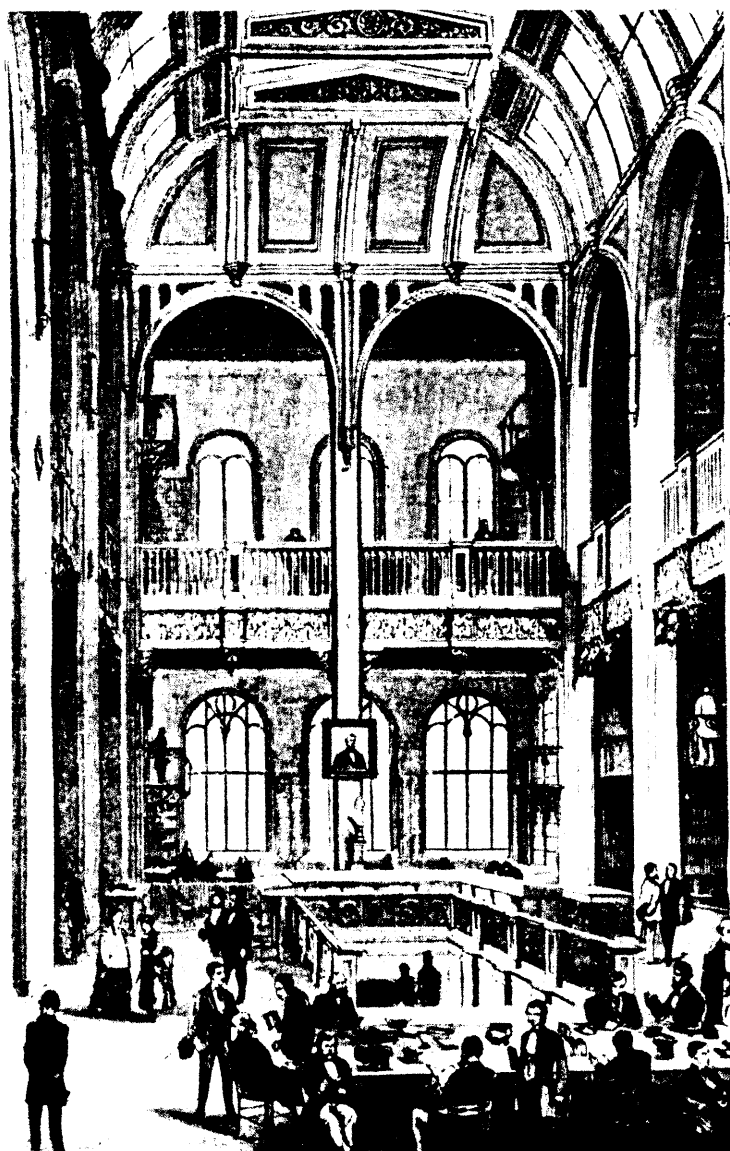


The New York Public Library Retirees Association Newsletter

Issue 5, January 1995

FIFTY YEARS IN THE LIBRARY



Interior of the Astor Library, where Fred Noeske began working on June 30, 1903. The first installment of his account of his fifty years at the Library begins on page 4

COLA AND PENSION SUPPLEMENT UPDATE

Juanita Doares

We reported to you in the July issue of the *Newsletter* that legislation which would have given a cost of living adjustment or pension supplement is still bogged down in the legislature. We also told you that we had urged the legislature to come back into session to act on the legislation. That return did not happen, although we were told they would probably reconvene after the election.

The Alliance for Public Retirees Organizations (APRO) and the Retired Public Employees Association (RPEA) have continued their efforts to get some action on COLA for public retirees of New York State.

We commend Ed Curran, President of APRO for his tireless efforts in behalf of all public employees of New York State. APRO has had several meetings in Albany since our July report to you. Belle Weinberg represented the NYPL Retirees' Association at its October meeting.

Ed Curran succeeded in getting appointments with the leadership of the State Legislature. He met with Ralph Marino, at that time President Pro Tem and Majority Leader of the Senate. I joined

Continued on page 2

Continued from page 1

him in meeting with representatives of Sheldon Silver, the Speaker of the Assembly. We also met briefly with Speaker Silver.

Apparently the Senate and Assembly agreed on bills A12165 and S8842A, the limited supplementation bills, on which we reported to you in the July *Newsletter*. We made it known we were unhappy that these bills had not been amended as requested by APRO and its member organizations. Since that time, the New York City Retirement System has been included among the backers.

In summary, the Assembly-Senate bills would

- raise the present cap from \$10,000 to the first \$12,500
- change the present retirement year eligibility from 1983 to 1990
- keep the eligibility of age 62
- include all New York Public Retirees (New York State Retirement Systems, New York State Teachers, and New York City Retirement Systems)
- make the effective date for retirees under the New York State Retirement System September 1, 1994
- have a two year sunset clause
- establish a temporary task force on the sufficiency of service retirement benefits.

Our hope now is in the appointment of a temporary task force to study the sufficiency of service retirement benefits. The member organizations of APRO have voted, and it has been recommended that Ed Curran, the President of APRO be appointed to the task force.

We will have to continue our fight for pension justice when the legislature convenes its 1995 session, and we call on all of our members to be active and join us in this effort.



Legislative Insights 1995

Don Hirshorn was our guest speaker at our first meeting of the 1994/95 year in September. He is a lawyer and longtime legislation activist in Albany who serves as RPEA Legislative Liaison.

Mr. Hirshorn warned that the state legislature cringes at the word COLA, and it will be impossible to get a 100% cost of living bill through the legislature. Likewise it will be impossible to obtain a permanent bill, one that does not have to be renewed every few years.

Whatever is accomplished in the future will be influenced by the political power of the state's retirees. RPEA is an alliance of 34 different organizations with 500,000 dues-paying members. One of the reasons a bill got to the floor of the legislature was probably due to the strength of the organization and the fact that 1500 of its members appeared in Albany to lobby for it; never before had there been such a large number. Mr. Hirshorn told the association members that already there is 300 million in the state's supplemental retirement holdings, but the average state pension is only \$8,000.

Library Legislation

Juanita Doares

The mayor's proposed budget modification would reduce spending in the current fiscal year by \$850 million dollars. This proposal says that the City's three library systems will receive a onetime cut of \$5.1 million. The New York Public Library's proposed funding cut is \$2 million for The Branch Libraries and \$291,000 for the Research Libraries. There is no reduction in the six days of library service.

As we go to press, the Library is still reviewing the impact of these reductions. According to a memo released by President LeClerc on October 26, it will be necessary to reduce City-funded staff positions through attrition in The Branch Libraries, The Research Libraries and Central Administration. Cleaning and security services in Library buildings will also be cut back. Other onetime cuts are also being considered.

If there is good news, it is that the budget cuts to libraries are onetime cuts and will not affect the base-level funding.

Jean Blackwell Hutson to be Honored

The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture at its annual Heritage Weekend, January 27-29, 1995, will honor Jean Blackwell Hutson on the occasion of her 80th birthday. Mrs. Hutson, an Association member, was Curator, later Chief, of the Center for 32 years. At her retirement in 1984 she had worked for The New York Public Library for 48 years.

On January 27-28, the Center will host a symposium on Africana Libraries in the Information Age. A dinner will be held on Sunday,

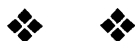
French Government Honors Retiree Ella Bing Survivor of D-4 and Battle of the Bulge

At the November meeting of this association Ella Bing was the speaker. Around her neck she wore the medal the French government had presented her on June 7, 1994 to commemorate her services fifty years before, when she had landed as a nurse on Omaha beach during D-Day 4, while the Germans were still shooting from the cliff above it. She and the other nurses had been made up to look indistinguishable from the men. Even the Red Cross markings had been obliterated, and they lived the same lives as the soldiers, climbing hills, swimming rivers, and digging foxholes. With the army she went into Germany, and during the Battle of the Bulge she was the lone nurse in charge of three wards, where she was trapped by the Germans until the battle turned.

Raised on a thousand acre farm, she came to New York City to study nursing and was licensed in 1942, the year she enlisted in the army. After the war she married a marine, raised a daughter, and received a BS in education. She taught in various schools and

then went to Rutgers where she received a library degree. At the Library she worked in The Branch Libraries, including St. George and finally Donnell.

Now that she is retired, she works harder than ever. She tutors students in Staten Island schools, helps prisoners in jail, goes to the homes of veterans who need nursing help, works with veterans in two nursing homes, helps at a Jewish Community Center, and works with people who have AIDS.



Retirees in Action Frances Frisca

Agnes Babich

Frances Friscia, Assistant Chief of the Accounting Office when she retired in 1974, has been elected president of the Auxiliary, Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula in California. Ms. Friscia has worked as a volunteer with the hospital for many years,



Fran Friscia

serving as treasurer and, most recently, as editor of the Auxiliary's publication, "Currents."

Ms. Friscia's ability to motivate people and her enthusiasm for any job undertaken while at NYPL has carried over into her retirement and volunteer services.

White House Conference on Aging

Juanita Doares

The White House Conference on Aging is of special interest to our Association. To bring our members up to date, the White House Conference will be held in Washington, May 1-5, 1995. The Conference is being preceded by many state and local meetings. The New York State Governor's Conference will be held in Albany, March 6-8, 1995.

The White House Conference on Aging will focus on the following issues: Health Care Reform; Economic Security; Housing; Serving Minorities and Older Persons with Disabilities; and the future of Aging Programs.

Several of our members have participated in local programs and forums in the New York City area:

Continued on page 7

FIFTY YEARS AT N.Y.P.L.

by **Fred Noeske**

edited by **Eleanor Herling**

This account of the author's many years of employment at The New York Public Library reached the Retirees' Association via the good offices of a number of people. We thank the author's family, which preserved the manuscript through the years and sent it to the Library. We thank also those in the Library who forwarded a copy to your Association: Mr. Tom Bourke, Mr. Dick Browers, Ms. Beth Diefendorf, Ms. Juanita Doares. If there are any whose names have been omitted here, we should like to receive notice of their involvement. Their efforts will be duly acknowledged. A copy of the manuscript is on file in the Library's Archives.

—Eleanor Herling

[This is the first installment of Mr. Noeske's article, which will run in successive issues of this newsletter.]

When I left school on June 30, 1903, little did I think that on the next day, July 1, I was to find a job and that it was to be the first and only job I ever had, and still have today [1953].

I was only fourteen years old, and working-papers were not required as yet. On the next day, July 1, a friend and I went looking for work at Wanamaker's, but there were no openings. My friend then went home, but I went to a Sunday School teacher who lived here in the neighborhood, and she told me they were looking for a boy in the Astor Library, in Lafayette Street, near Wanamaker's.

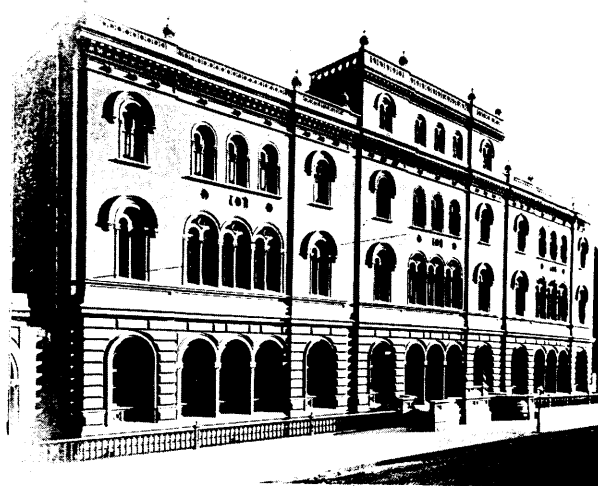
So I went over there, and I was immediately put to work in the Shelf Department, a forerunner of the present large Stacks Division of the Central Building of the new York Public Library. This division was in the charge of Dr. F. Weitenkampf, who was with N.Y.P.L. for sixty years. When I got this job, there was only one other boy and myself. I even remember his name, John Aston, and he, as well as Mr. A. Bonn, who was with the Library 50 years, broke me in on my work.

Mr. Bonn showed me how to shelve books, a duty I was to do several years later, for about four-

five years, and John broke me in on my daily duties. They were to stamp all books with the Library stamp on back of the title-page, plus the current year indicated on bottom of stamp, and stamp all plates, if any, minus the date; also to cut pages in books where pages needed cutting.

We had also to classmark each book on the fly-leaves, letter the backs of books in white ink with author, title, classmark and date of publication. Unbound material that was not bound by the Library we put in "manila rope," or very thin ones in light wrapping-paper held together by clamps. The manila rope material was wrapped up with manila rope, lettered, then tied up with cord, and sent to the shelves. The paper material was also lettered and sent through.

In those days we also used envelopes of different sizes for very thin unbound material, and they were also lettered on the outside and sent to the shelves, but have for many years now been superseded by pressboards, a better and more lasting method for such unbound material.



The Astor Library, circa 1890

Other duties were to shelve newspapers each morning, run errands in different parts of the library, and do some trucking each day with the Library trucks in use in the building. Also, one hour a day I had to relieve at the reader's desk, and also do this every Saturday noon to 6:00 p.m., and one night a week from 5-6. My hours then were 9-5 one month and 8-4 the next month.

John and I had to alternate each month. We both preferred the 8-4 month and were most happy when it was our turn for this month. These hours of work being so very pleasant and short, why, I just enjoyed them. When I took the job and was told that we work from 9-5, I could hardly believe it. In those days most people worked from 8-6, or even 7-6. Very few had shorter hours than that, and none as short as the library's, excepting perhaps only teachers.



Pictures taken in the Astor Library in 1910. LEFT: Frank Weitenkamp, who was in charge of the Stacks Division when Fred Noeske was hired. When this picture was taken, Dr. Weitenkamp was the first Chief of the Art and Prints Division. He worked sixty years in NYPL. RIGHT (seated) Helen R. Trowbridge, an Indexer in the Catalogue Department, who was the first woman librarian employed by the Library after consolidation. She and Fred Noeske would have known each other.

Our schedules, then, were different. We worked one week 38 hours, and the next week, 42 hours, making an average of 40 hours, the same as we now have every week. We only got a half-day off every two weeks then, namely, in the 38-hour week, and I had to take my day off Wednesdays, as we were not allowed to take off Saturdays.

I'll never forget, when I started my work, that the man who I worked under part of each day, said to me, when he went on his vacation, "Well, Fred, next year you, too, will have a vacation." Well, that seemed so far off, one year away, but I must say I not only got that vacation, but many more, and I

hope still a few more to come. In those days you already got three weeks' vacation after only one whole year's service, and one whole calendar month after three years service, and I sure have enjoyed everyone of them. And where, outside of the Library, the teachers or some civil service positions, do you get a vacation as long as in the Library?

Even today, all types of workers get only one or two weeks with pay, although I favor that every worker should have at least two weeks' vacation,

but would favor a month's vacation for everyone after a few years of faithful service. Within the last twenty-five years of so, the Library has even added a longer vacation of two months after twenty-five years' service, and also two months every five years after that. I, therefore, have the great pleasure of enjoying for the fifth time a two months' vacation, and am most thankful for that.

After I had worked for about one to two years, the Library became so filled up with books that we had to look for more room for books, and wherever possible, in corridors, on top of regular presses. If there was room, wooden shelves were put in, to relieve somewhat the crowded condition of the Library. Even a whole new floor

was built over the Duplicate Room on the ground floor. It helped very much, but still not enough, as the collection of books grew more and more. Thousands of documents, rarely used, were boxed and stored in the cellar, till the Library finally moved to the Central Building in May 1911.

On account of this, we had to shift books all the time, but this work had to be done before 9:00 a.m. and after 5:00 p.m., as we were not allowed to disturb the readers. In the old building (Astor), there were only all wooden shelves, so we had to change them with a hammer and double-pointed tacks, and adjust them as needed for the different sizes of books.

Continued on the next page

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This we did between eight and nine a.m. when necessary, and shifted also if we had time left for it, and continued shifting from five to six p.m. Two to three, and sometimes four, boys did this work, and I had charge of it.

I said there were only two of us when I joined the Library, but this was gradually increased to three to four boys, as time went by. In this way the Library got some relief for its already large book collection at that time. We did this work of shifting on extra time, with extra pay, namely 15 cents per hour. Later, it was raised to 20 cents, and as I had charge of the work, I received 30 cents per hour. Although it seems very low pay now, it was fairly good then, and some of us were always anxious to do it.

It kept up, on and off, till we moved to the Central Building, and so, lasting for about five or six years, gave us boys who worked at it some extra pocket or pin money, which we sure enjoyed very much at that time. One month I made as much as \$9.00 overtime. It was in the summertime, and another friend and I made a trip to Niagara Falls on a special excursion rate of \$9.00, good over the Fourth of July of that year. We both sure enjoyed seeing the wonderful falls.

To be continued in future issues



John Shaw Billings in 1910, the first director of NYPL. A brilliant man, he came to the Library in 1896, a year after the consolidation, and is the founder of the present library. He was in charge for the first ten years of Fred Noeske's employment, a time of tremendous activity in the Library. Billings died in 1913 while still in office.

EDITOR'S NOTES:

Study of Retiree Needs

Those who try to get cost of living (COLA) bills passed by the legislature have needed more documentation of the need. It is therefore gratifying to see that the new COLA bills include money for a study.

We have not heard how the study will be conducted, but we hope the investigators will look at more than just today's needs, for an adequate pension today may not be the same tomorrow. Any study must consider what happened to those who suffered greatly because of the double-digit inflation in the 1970's. Many of these people are no longer living, and their troubles may be easily overlooked. This would be the fault of a study based only on the usual questionnaires. One must look into the past as well as the present to see how much a COLA is needed.

Media Confusion

When the state legislators or the Mayor talk against pension increases, the media usually infer that these representatives have saved the citizens from being ripped off. Seldom does the media mention that the obnoxious requests are for *a cost of living increase* that merely keeps the pension at the same buying power. Nor do the reports usually describe the condition of pensioners whose incomes have been curtailed by inflation. The average pension received from the New York State Retirement System is only about \$8,000, which even with the addition of a Social Security payment is below the poverty level. This truth might be a surprise.

We have recently talked to people who assume that all New York State pensions have a COLA, which is true for most state pensions and all federal pensions. We have also heard tales of army officers, firemen, teachers, and government administrators who retire with far higher pensions than librarians, and the public assumes that we too receive relatively large amounts.

L. Murphy

BAZAAR AT LIBRARY FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

Retirees were among the volunteers who worked at the annual bazaar, and they helped the Library gross a record-breaking \$70,000—an almost unheard of amount in these days of reduced contributions. Next year the bazaar will be held on October 1, 1995.

New Members

Ella Bing
Polly Bookhout
Lucia Burke
Helen Chin
Lisa Cleveland
Claire Dienstag
Alma Fields
Telza Gardner
William Helm
Elnora Jackson
Phyllis King
Ellen Kohl
Isabelle Maiorano
Sophie Mitrison
Hannah Nuba
Mildred Sage
Loretta Siebenhoven
Faye Simmons

This list is complete only to December 1994. Additional names will appear in the next newsletter.

Report of the Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee met, in accordance with tradition, at lunch at HBO and remained in session courtesy of NYNEX for five days. The following motions were passed:

1. That the resignations of Agnes Babich, Vice-President, Fred T. Gee, Treasurer and Betty Gubert, Executive Board member, be accepted with regret.

2. That the Nominating Committee place a motion at the next membership meeting thanking the above named officers for all their work, which contributed so much to the founding and successful growth of the Association.

3. That the Nominating Committee submit the following slate of officers for one year terms starting January 1995.

President: Juanita Doares

Vice-President: Catherine Marquard

Secretary: Mary Ann Altman

Treasurer: Mary T. Brady

Executive Board for two year term 1995-97: Belle Weinberg

(Note: The following Executive Board members' terms end in January 1996: Moritia Leah Frederick and Lawrence Murphy.)

Respectfully submitted,

Mercy P. Kellogg, Chair

Theresa K. Casile

Catherine Marquard

These nominations and any submitted by the general membership will be voted upon at the February meeting of the association.

Continued from page 3 Conference on Aging

—Mercy Kellogg attended a forum on the impact of health care reform on older persons. This forum was sponsored by the New York Citizens Committee on Aging.

—Dolores Noyes and Juanita Doares attended a meeting sponsored by the Older Women's League (OWL) on the major issues facing mid-life in older women.

—Dolores Noyes and Juanita Doares also attended a one-day conference on minority elderly in an urban environment sponsored by the New York Community

Trust.

We urge our members to participate in local area conferences and meetings so that you may give your input on issues to be decided by delegates at the White House conference in May.

You can find out what events are being planned for your area by calling the White House Conference in Washington at (202) 245-7116 or by writing to the White House Conference on Aging, 501 School Street S.W., 8th floor, Washington, D.C. 20024. They will send you a list of meetings for your area. You may also call your

local City or State Department of Aging.

Since we have many members in California and Florida, the contacts there are:

Florida: Shelley Evans (904) 922-5297

California: Catherine Arlette (916) 324-2941

Be active, and let your voice be heard! Let us know about meetings that you attend so that we can include them in the *Newsletter*.



*The New York
Public Library
Retirees Association, Inc.
An Independent
Association*

Officers

President: Juanita S. Doares
Vice-President: Agnes Babich
Secretary: Mary Ann Altman
Treasurer: Fred T. Gee
Executive Board:
Moritia Leah Frederick
Betty Gubert
Lawrence Murphy

*To join the NYPL Retirees Association,
send annual dues of \$10 to:*

NYPL Retirees Association, Inc.
Fred T. Gee
45 Adrian Avenue, 4-B
Bronx, NY 10463

*Subscriptions to the newsletter (only
for those not eligible for membership),
send fee of \$5 per year to:*

NYPL Retirees Association, Inc.
Fred T. Gee
45 Adrian Avenue, 4-B
Bronx, NY 10463

Send information for the newsletter to:
NYPL Retirees Association

Newsletter
c/o Larry Murphy, Editor
137 E. 36 St., #16-B
New York, NY 10016

All other information and inquires:
NYPL Retirees Association
c/o Juanita Doares
401 W. 118th St., #3
New York, NY 10027
(telephone: 212 666-5737)

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*Schedule of
Association Meetings*

Thursday, January 19,
Central Children's Room,
5:30 p.m.
Monday February 13
Wednesday March 15
Monday April 17
Wednesday May 17
Monday June 19

All meetings, except as noted, are in
Mid-Manhattan, first floor. meeting
room

*The Association's
Committees and Their
Members*

Health Care Committee
Moritia Leah Frederick, Chair
Agnes Babich
Mercy Kellogg
Ann Moy

Legislative Committee
Belle Weinberg, Chair
Lucy Eldridge
Nora Gorchoff
Theresa Casile
Ruth Kronmiller

Membership Committee
Lucy Eldridge, Chair

Social Committee
Rose Marie O'Leary, Chair
Betty Gubert

White House Conference on the Aging

If you would like to serve on one of these
committees, please contact Juanita
Doares: 212 666-5737

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*Membership
Renewals*

Members will receive renewal notices
one month before the date of their mem-
bership expiration.

❖
*Association Trip to
National Museum of the American Indian*

The Association is planning a trip for Thursday, February 9 to the National Museum of the American Indian in the former custom house at Bowling Green. Lunch at a nearby restaurant is planned. Anyone interested should call Agnes Babich for details at 1-718 335-3881.

Directory of Members

This association will soon be issuing a directory of its members. If a retiree does not want to be listed in it, or if the retiree's address should not be included, please telephone or writer to: Mary Ann Altman, Secretary, NYPL Retirees Association, 170 West End Avenue, Apt. 19-F, New York, NY 10023. Please note that the address was misprinted in the last issue of this newsletter. It should be 170 West End Avenue, not 70 West End Avenue. Telephone 212 362-7634. The deadline for making a request is February 1, 1995.

*The Last Column of
Anna Quindlen*

With sadness we heard that one of our favorite columnists, Anna Quindlen was quitting. Here are some of the words in her last column in *The New York Times*, Wednesday, December 14, 1994: "The great issues are the same as they were when Charles Dickens created the ghost of Jacob Marley,...'Mankind was my business...The common welfare was my business.'

"That is the most important thing I have learned in the newspaper business, that our business is one another. Time after time, story after story, I have learned it from everyday angels, Mr. Brown [Harold Brown, Sr.], who saw the homeless on midtown subway grates and, instead of looking away, organized a small shelter in his parish church, was one. So was Arlene Carmen...; she spent her nights in a van on Eighth Avenue, bringing coffee and cake and a place to consider the future to street prostitutes.

"Like Ebenezer Scrooge, I've walked the streets, seen goodness in the dark places....I've visited the Holy Apostles Soup Kitchen... the York Street Project....They do dazzle, the everyday angels, just as the angel did in the Christmas story, scaring the wits out of the shepherds. But the angel said 'Fear not,' and that's what I've learned from its contemporary counterparts—the rape counselors, the good cops, the nuns, the librarians. Life will be hard, politics will be mean, money will be scarce, bluster will be plentiful. Yet somehow good will be done."