New York Public Library
Retirees Association
Newsletter

Spring 2020 **Issue 44**

IT ALL STARTED AT STAPLETON

Stories on pages 3 and 4

Stapleton Library in Staten Island in the early 1900's. It was designed by Carrere and Hastings and funded by Andrew Carnegie.

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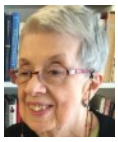

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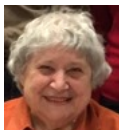

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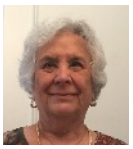

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PRESIDENT'S NOTES

Greetings from Becky!

Here is your May 2020 Newsletter!

As always it is a great one, filled with interesting articles and items from members of our association. Our editor, Emily, and those of you who have contributed and written something have made this newsletter special indeed!

It has been quite a year so far, much is going on. All our activities ceased during the middle of March when the City, and much of the country, was locked down. It was lucky we managed to have our tour of Radio City Music Hall before all that happened! All our other plans are on hold for the time being, but we hope to resume our outings and get-togethers—including our annual luncheon--when this strange period in our lives is over.

I hope all our members and their loved ones are staying safe and well.

Our board, committee chairs, and the Oral History Project committee, wish you all a good summer. Do keep in touch, as we all love to hear from YOU!

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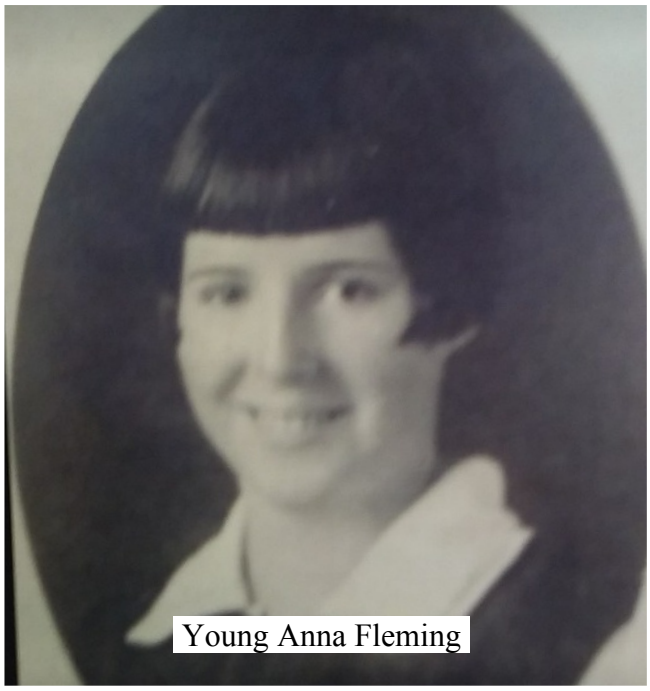
Kathy Wou

NYPL RETIREE LIZ TIEDEMANN'S STORY AS TOLD TO EMILY COHEN

Editor's note: Liz Tiedemann had a 21 year career with New York Public Library, starting as a clerk at Dongan Hills, then at Great Kills, and ending as the senior clerk at Todt Hill.

Anna Fleming was my mother, and she was born on

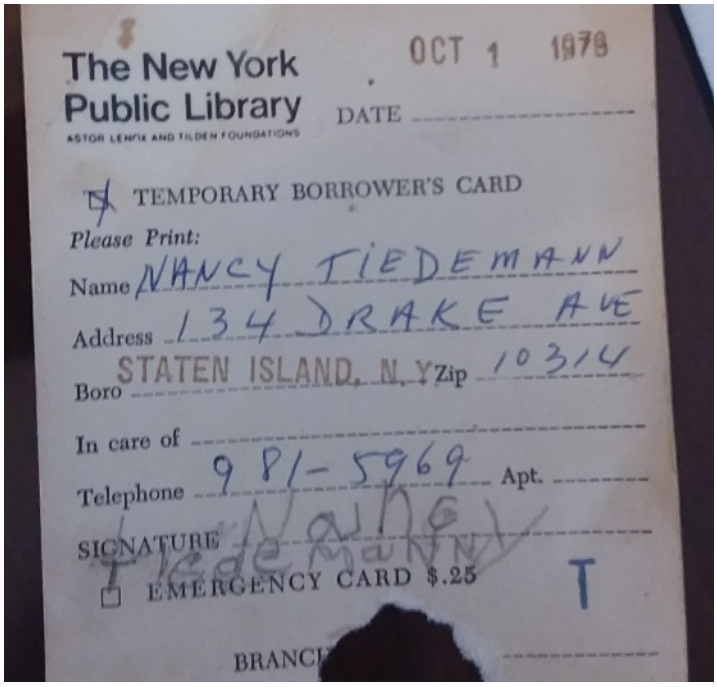


Young Anna Fleming

Staten Island and lived in a house on William Street, not far from Stapleton. From there, she would walk to the Stapleton Library. She lived until her 90s and always would say "That was my library. It was built in 1907, the year I was born."

Across from the Stapleton Library was the R & H Brewery with its big clock, and my mother would say, "Stapleton people can't get away from the clock."

Instead of remaining in the family house when she married, Anna chose to live in a modern apartment in St. George on Hamilton Avenue where she raised her five children. Mostly she took us to the St. George Library where *Johnny Tremain* and Mark Twain's books were among those she chose for us children. When we went for our shots at the Public Health Center, we walked up the steps of the Stapleton Library.



The New York Public Library
ASTOR LENOX AND TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

OCT 1 1978

DATE

☒ TEMPORARY BORROWER'S CARD

Please Print:

Name NANCY TIEDEMANN

Address 134 DRAKE AVE

Boro STATEN ISLAND, N.Y Zip 10314

In care of

Telephone 981-5969 Apt.

SIGNATURE Nancy Tiedemann

☐ EMERGENCY CARD $.25

T

BRANCH

Liz

As a teenager, I would walk to the Teen Room in St. George. They opened a Record Room. I don't remember if you could borrow the records.

Across from the library in Stapleton was the 5 & 10. I would walk there with friends.

When I married and had my daughter, Nancy, she shared the love of books and reading. We went to the old Todt Hill branch. I remember reading *Blueberries for Sal* and *The Little Red*

Left: Anna and her five children.

LIZ TIEDEMANN (CONTINUED)

Lighthouse and the Great Gray Bridge to her. Recently I found her temporary borrower's card, dated 1978, in the attic. She was just about four years old then. The clerks would fill out and submit forms and the library card would be mailed to the patron. It's so much easier now when cards are given right away. She would go to all the programs at the library.

My husband, Anton, and our daughter and I visited libraries in many places while on our vacation travels, including San Francisco; Woodstock, Vermont; and Hawaii, where we discovered that one of the librarians working there had worked for NYPL. Several of the libraries we visited were Carnegie buildings, which can be recognized by the style of the buildings and their interiors no matter where the library is located. We felt at home at our NYPL library branch and the many libraries in our travels, no matter where they were.

Although they usually go to the Todt Hill branch, I've recently been trying to get my two grandchildren, Emma, age twelve, and Kate, to visit the Stapleton library where their great-grandmother used to walk to get her books. Unfortunately, libraries were closed before we could make this happen.

STAPLETON LIBRARY

by Loretta McMillen

Editor's note: Loretta McMillen is an old friend of Liz Tiedemann. She worked as a page at Stapleton and was the one who encouraged Liz to work fo NYPL.

I grew up on Fingerboard Road, one block from the #2 bus route, which was our lifeline to the Ferry, St. George, and to Stapleton. The Stapleton Library nurtured my love of books.

As a youngster, I would take the bus to Stapleton weekly and always brought home the allotted six books. I would line them up on my kitchen table in order of the number of pages each book contained. I did that because they all held such promise to me. I would find it difficult to choose which one I would first read. I began with the shortest one.

When I was a freshman at New Dorp High School, I asked the Stapleton librarian if she had openings for pages. She did not, but that did not deter me. The coveted position as a page fascinated me. When I was a sophomore and a junior, I would approach Miss Bedell, the head librarian, and each time I was disappointed. When I again asked her as a high school senior, she hired me. I was overjoyed. I worked there from September 1960 through June 1961.

I was assigned to the children's room, which was just to the right of the entrance. The main library desk where books were returned and checked out was to the left of the entrance.

The librarian was, I believe, Mrs. Bechtoldt. It was a charmed time for me. My duties included maintaining the books on the shelves in order, and I remember repairing them as best I could if they were returned frayed or damaged.

I remember that the librarians, in the afternoons, would enjoy coffee and tea accompanied by a slice of cake from nearby bakeries.

When I graduated from high school, I left my position to prepare for life as a college student, but I still have such nostalgic memories of my one year as a page. As I said goodbye to Miss Bedell, she gave me a beautiful handkerchief with my initial on it from a famous New York City department store to which I had never been. The memory of that simple graduation gift has withstood the test of time and is still vivid to me.

My love of books has continued to this day. Naturally, I became a language arts teacher and loved reading and discussing novels with my middle school students.

I married a man who was also a book lover and historian, and gradually we began buying and selling old and rare books. As time went on, we opened a charming bookstore on Jewett Avenue in Staten Island called "The Bookend" and for eight years maintained the store. A day hardly went by when one of our children was not there--and at times also our dog.

LORETTA MCMILLEN (CONTINUED)

Ultimately, the store gave way to online sales, the children became adults, and the number of our books increased to almost ten thousand.

All four children are insatiable readers, and two sons have also become booksellers. For me, my love of books can be traced back to my mother, who encouraged my love of reading, and to the Stapleton Library which welcomed me through its doors to explore all that the world of literature had to offer.

FROM RETIREE ED GILES

I have been trying to reach Clifton Allen, who worked in the photo lab for many years. If anybody has information on Clifton's whereabouts, please get in touch with me. My contact information is:

toniandbud@aol.com

631-667-2323

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Ann Heller
Congratulations to all involved in the creation of this newsletter!! I enjoyed the oral histories, the piece on the bookmobiles, and all the photos. Great job!!

Bosiljka Stevanovic
I want to thank you and your team for the wonderful retirees newsletters. I enjoy them very much and always look forward to the next one. This year's spring issue is going to be particularly appreciated because of the crisis we are living through at this moment. Personally, my family and I are okay, and I hope to hear that we are all doing well.

B. MacDonald
I am happy to respond to your invitation to offer my opinion about the NYPLRA Newsletter. In a word, it is terrific. Is there a Pulitzer for newsletters?

For me, each issue has been a total delight, and this current one seems to reach a new high. I recognize the huge amount of work that goes into it, so I don't suggest any additions. I only hope you, and all those who contribute, can continue this excellent level of accomplishment.

Fred Giordano
Thanks to the board for keeping the group going. I enjoy hearing about former colleagues and what they're doing. The last newsletter was particularly interesting. I particularly enjoyed the bookmobile article, having worked with Marcy, Wendy, and Telza, Unfortunately, I don't get to New York too frequently and coordinating with the annual luncheon just doesn't seem to pan out. Anyway, the newsletter keeps me in the loop somewhat.

OUR LONG TERM VICE-PRESIDENT' STEPS DOWN

The members of the Executive Board of NYPLRA were saddened by the announcement by our Vice President, Polly Bookhout, at our February 2020 meeting that she would be stepping down from the Board. Polly has been fulfilling many roles in the Association, and her shoes will be hard to fill. Here is the story, in her own words, of her relationship to NYPLRA.

THE NYPL RETIREES ASSOCIATION AND MY PART IN IT.

An article in the August 20, 1992, NYPL *Staff News* read, "A group of New York Public Library retirees is interested in forming an independent retiree association. The association would be open to any NYPL retiree regardless of the position held at the time of retirement. The purpose of the group would be to explore areas of common concern for retirees, including health care, the question of some form of NYSERS permanent pension supplementation, and other issues." On August 17, a letter went out to all Library retirees inviting them to join. It was signed by Agnes Babich, Juanita Doares, Moritia Frederick, and Betty Gubert.

I joined in the late 1990s because I was very interested in having a strong organization. I remembered that in the 1960s the Library assured us that it was unable to manage libraries without librarians working a forty-hour week. Clerks were working a thirty-five-hour week because the Library couldn't hire clerks willing to work a forty-hour week. The union began organizing in the middle of the 1960s. Suddenly, the Library changed its tune, libraries could be managed with librarians working a thirty-five-hour week. In the late 1970s, on a hot July night, there was a general meeting of our union local to approve a contract. DC 37 representatives presented us with a contract that would have eliminated THI, time off for working under high temperature and humidity readings. Though the DC 37 representatives threatened us with the consequences of not having a contract, we would not approve it. We kept the THI provisions in the contract.

My participation in the association began when I became a retiree in 2000. I followed Agnes Babich as Social Activities Coordinator in 2001. Later, I followed Larry Murphy in providing a membership database, an annual directory, and a newsletter. I added email service, developed a website, and organized the archives of the organization. Now that I have retired from the executive board, we need members to step up and help those who are shouldering the association's work.

We must have a strong association to deal with the Library and the state legislature if needed. I am a depression baby, born in 1937, a year when I was the only one in my family with a full stomach. I valued my salary, and I value the defined pension I have now.

We retirees need a strong association. We don't know what life will be like in a post coronavirus time. Our association can continue only if younger generations of members participate in making it strong.

TRAVEL WITH A GOAL: DIGGING UP ROOTS

by Brigid Cahalan

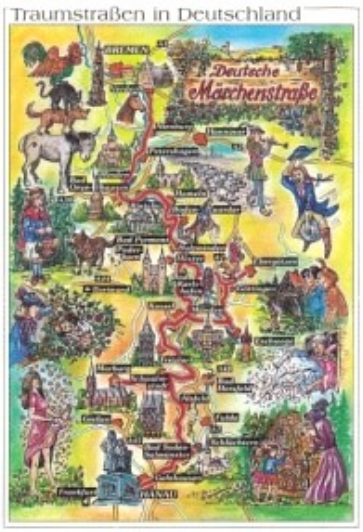
My father came from Ireland as a young man in the 1920s. Over the years, we went to Ireland, meeting all nine of his siblings and dozens of cousins. I visited his youthful stomping grounds and family graves. Plus, a young Irish cousin developed an interest in the family and dredged up every tidbit available, subsequently writing a Cahalan history book and putting together a family reunion. My curiosity about my Irish family was sated.

But my mother's parents were far more of a mystery. Her mother came over to the U.S. as a child around 1880 and her father as a young man in 1899, both from Germany. Her parents, aunts, and uncles died long before I was born. We never met any of her cousins and had no connection with anyone remaining behind in Germany. Upon marriage, she quickly grew to love our father's family and pretty much became Irish by choice. Questions remained, especially about her father. From all accounts, he was a kind and well-respected man, but what was his life like before emigrating and making a home in Manhattan and, later, in the Bronx?

One cousin shares my curiosity, and together we made a two-week trip to Germany this past September to see what we could discover.

A few highlights:

Some relatives were from Hanau, native town of the Brothers Grimm. For anyone with an interest in the Brothers, the 370-mile German Fairy Tale Route, which stretches from Hanau north to Bremen, includes locations where the BG lived, worked, and set their tales.



Our grandmother hailed from Bonn, as did Beethoven some 100 years earlier. His birthplace, a museum, and many statues and busts with his famous scowl grace the city.

Our grandfather was born in Mainz, as was Gutenberg (born around 1400). His museum is a must for booklovers.

We learned that as a result of Napoleon's incursions into what would later become Germany, early 19th century records from western cities such as Bonn are in French. Also, Napoleon changed the whole address system. Rather than using street names, he decreed that each dwelling would be given a unique number, hence the famous (and first) cologne—4711—named after the Köln address where its creator lived.

I sought out old buildings, statues, and other landmarks so I could be pretty sure these would have been known to the earlier generations.

As to my mysterious grandfather... In Mainz, we met a most helpful archivist who took our quest on as her own. After a brief meeting, she followed up with emails detailing the sad back-story she uncovered: multi-generational illegitimacy, adultery in the form of a simultaneous second family, and the early death of his father and several siblings. My theory is that he somehow got a good education and emigrated in order to send money back to his poor, widowed mother, identified in documents as a seller of fruit, late in life. The researcher seemed pleased when I told her he went on to live a worthwhile life,

CAHALAN (CONTINUED)

marrying a young widow and adopting her child, then having two more.

For anyone with the slightest interest in family history, I strongly recommend heading to the land of your forebears. There's nothing like walking the streets they walked and seeing the sights they saw to let you feel a connection with ancestors.

PRINT

By Marjorie Mir

It has fed and sustained me
since I first broke through its gates,
learned its inmost secret, those
neatly edged and ordered plots,
tended monochrome rows
contain (how else to say it)
everything humanly perceived:

Atolls and continents,
granules and mountains,
Friday's footprint,
another left in lunar dust,
otherwise blown away,
Ulysses' return to Ithaca,
Dorothy's to Kansas,
abandoned folk-tale children
and the girl lost for days a week ago,
found sleeping under a tree.

Though we treat them carelessly,
dispensable as time,
domestic as weather,
these small, ground-hugging habitants,
tamed and cultured though they are,
are, in fact, hallucinogens,
healing balms, dream potions.
And, yes, soporifics.

Old typesetters wore on their heads
yesterday's news as tricorns,
weddings, funerals, arrests,
scanned and forgotten in a day,
while, in their rooms,
Austen, Flaubert, Keats, their like,
scratched out cursive furrows
in hope the seeds would flourish,
give rise to generations.

RADIO CITY MUSIC HALL TOUR

We then took the elevator up to the top so that we could sit in the last row of the balcony. This was Roxy Rothafel's—the developer of the theater—favorite place from which to watch the shows. Although the theater has over 6,000 seats, we were able to hear conversations from the stage without a microphone. On either side of the orchestra section are two organs. The pipes are completely hidden in different places in the ceiling, but the sound reverberates throughout the theater.

The Radio City Music Hall tour we retirees took on Feb, 26, 2020, was as exciting for a native New Yorker as it probably was for any out-of-towner. The theater was built in 1932 as part of the Rockefeller Center complex. The first feature that was pointed out to us by our very knowledgeable guide, Abby, was the carpeting on the floor of the main lobby. It is the original design, and the unusual pattern is of musical instruments, including harps, guitars, and clarinets . If any part of the carpeting wears out, it is replaced with an exact match.

We then walked down carpeted stairs to the gigantic lounge and rest room area in which everything was designed in luxurious Art Deco style, as was the entire building.

Next, we were led via a winding passageway to an area underneath the stage. This, as well as the Hydraulic System, is part of the original structure and has never been replaced. They were both built very sturdily and are still in working order so that to this day they are able to hold up elephants, camels, and anything else that is part of the stage show. (see plaque on next page).

We also visited the Roxy Suite, a private space that was once Roxy Rothafel's private residence. It is now used for special events. One impressive feature is the dome over the huge, round dining room table. The placement of the dome allows sound to be distributed equally to all diners, so no one is left out of the conversation!

Our guide told us that the first movie shown in 1932 was "The Bitter Tea of General Yen" together with the stage show featuring the Rockettes. We were privileged to meet one of the Rockettes, a lovely woman, (see photo) who explained to us that each Rockette must be between 5'6" and 5'9" tall and must be proficient in all types of dance–tap, ballet, and modern.

There were once other theaters around the Rockefeller Center complex: the Roxy, which had the same format as Radio City and preceded it, and the Center Theater, which featured concerts and ice skating shows. Neither of these theatres has survived. Our guide told us that Radio City was scheduled to be razed, but just in time—a few days before this was scheduled—it was declared a landmark.

THE RETIREES GROUP

THE GOOD OLD DAYS AT THE LIBRARY

by Dorothy Henderson
November 2019

This essay was inspired by a young reference librarian who asked me about my experiences at The New York Public Library. It is my impression of the Hunt's Point Branch. It shows that I am definitely not an "organization person," given at least one transformational decision I made, and shows what a good service library should be.

I often laugh when people talk about libraries. They usually mention the quiet and that I really picked a nice lady-like career. Little do they know what it was like working at the Hunt's Point Branch of the New York Public Library when I was there.

It was quite chaotic–a group of people trying to do their jobs while the place exploded around them. The administration of The New York Public Library system had eventually decided that they really didn't care about that branch in the Bronx, with all of its problems. The real success would be to move all of the books in Hebrew and Yiddish from that branch to the central foreign collection in Manhattan and close the branch. The people who read these books loved having the books near them because they were older survivors of the Holocaust who couldn't travel downtown on the train. I thought that they should wait a little while to move the books. The neighborhood had been very Jewish, so much so that the Catholic Church had given up hope of expanding the church and sold the land on which the library had been built to the City of New York. Now, to everyone's surprise, with the advent of airline travel, Puerto Ricans had arrived and moved into the homes around the library. The Administration wanted to shut the branch down and concentrate on branches with people who read books in English.

I lived about two blocks away from the library, and I stubbornly decided that they were not going to shut it down. I would save it for the people of the neighborhood. Now that I am older, it seems like a wild idea. It was something that would take a long time!

There were two things necessary. One, to make sure that the place functioned as a full-fledged library and that everyone knew his or her job. Two, to make sure the branch was in order so that there were no problems in helping each reader to answer their questions, as well as meeting their needs as a fully-functioning library.

I had come up through the ranks doing every job there was. I knew all of the jobs as well as the person whose job it was, and I could teach any job to any staff member. I made manuals for every position, with the cooperation of the person who did the job and the senior clerk for the clerical jobs, and the entire staff of librarians for professional positions. This assured that, if a person was not there that day, anyone else could make sure that the job was done correctly by following the procedures manual.

There were also responsibilities manuals that told you what your job was so that there were no questions about who did what; nothing was left out. Of course, I sent a copy of everything I wrote to my supervisors, assuring them that I was NOT running my own small NYPL there in the Bronx.

The Clerks

The most important element of success was the clerical staff. I had a group of clerks who were super. Everyone knew their job, and knew it well. Everyone did what I asked of them and more. I could not have managed without them. The first was Miss Joubert (Matilde) from Puerto Rico, who also lived two blocks away. She was the senior clerk and was excellent. The second was Mrs. Reyes (Carmen), also from Puerto Rico. She lived two blocks away in another direction and had worked at the Aguilar Branch, where Mrs. Matthews was the branch librarian. She was my advisor on the paper I had to write as one of the requirements for becoming a branch librarian, so that is how I met Carmen. The third was Mrs. Wright (Evelyn), whose family was from Barbados. She was excellent and was determined to become a librarian. The fourth was Mrs. Ingbar whose family was from Russia. She treated the young people like her own children and expected the best of them. Then there was Mrs. Snodgrass who typed all of the manuals. Mr. Lowenstein (George) worked part-time. He attended school in the evening and was also excellent. Then there was a clerk whose name escapes me. He had figured out the telephone company's code for making calls, and he used to go into phone booths and make free calls all over the world. Unlike Jobs and Wozniak, he went to jail. They should have grabbed

this genius on the computer and given him a top position with AT&T. Now I think that they recognize true talent, but that didn't help him then. The clerks were a wonderful group; they saved my sanity.

The Boys

The library was the only place to go to hang out and find girls–so the boys went there every afternoon. I remember one day the boys, whom I had thrown out, came back by the far side of the charging desk. So, George, my hero, took the desk apart using a screwdriver, turned the piece around, and closed off the other side. I never told the administration that I had made the change, and they didn't notice.

The tea break was a major part of the day. It gave pause before the afternoon rush and also provided a way for the staff to ask a question about a procedure or something else in a casual way. I would answer it so that the person who had made the mistake or done something wrong would be corrected with no stress.

The Librarians

Then there were the librarians. The administration sent me many people who had failed in other positions or needed someplace to be stationed while waiting for a "real job" in a nicer branch. The most important one was Bob Calese, a trombonist. He served as the assistant librarian, working part-time in the afternoon and going out on gigs during the evening. He was wonderful with the boys, took time with them, and talked to them when no one else cared. It was the start of the drug epidemic, and we did very unique things that were not usual for a library staff, such as going to visit "the boys" at the nearby youth center (jail). Bob would write letters for them to arrange entry into the drug center at Lexington, Kentucky, to which some of them had been sentenced. He helped keep peace in the room.

The boys would come in at 3:00 pm when school let out and sit down at our tables just to chat. About eighty boys would come in and wander around the library looking for the girls. My job was to walk around the room calming things down and trying to keep things quiet. I became an expert on young adult psychology. The smaller boys were called "little Johnnie," or some variation of that, and were terrible because they were constantly trying to prove how tough they were. I would walk away from them, turning my back, and then they would speak to each other using their names. The next time they came in, I would greet them by their names. They were stunned and asked how I knew their names; I would smile. I came in early and left late because when I wasn't there things deteriorated quickly.

The one thing I noticed was that when the boys hit sixteen, they mostly calmed down, dropped the sad-sack girls who were in the library, and brought a girl to meet me who had a family that cared about her and was very strict. I would tell her that we were old friends and that I was very glad to meet her. He would take her home and return to ask if I liked her. Of course, I did. It was very rewarding to have this happen.

One of the librarians who made a big impression on me was Pat Bean from Bermuda. They sent her to me because she was too quiet. I think they regretted their decision. She blossomed and took over Hunt's Point after I left. She was a young adult librarian who could handle and understand the young people in the same way I did.

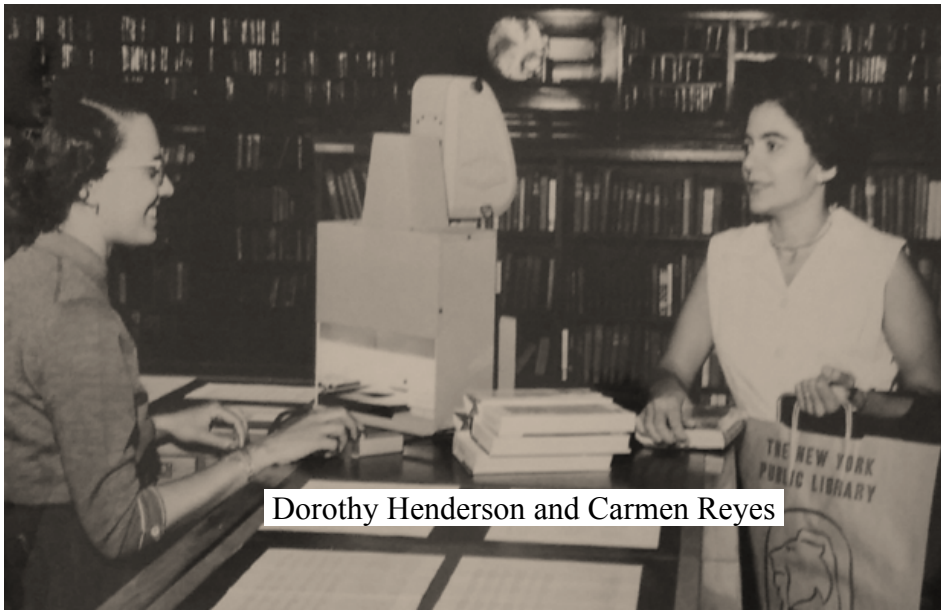
Some of the staff who came to me were all right but had failed at another branch. It was my job to help them or to help make the decision on firing them. Most of them were perfectly okay, but something had gone wrong at their previous branch. They didn't know their jobs and were confused. What we provided was an environment with a positive attitude from all of the staff and good training so they knew what they were supposed to do. Everything cleared up, and they moved on. The administration took advantage of my ability to work with people but never rewarded me for that skill.

What the place needed was enough staff to cover the very large building, but with the administration's firm determination to close down the library, I never had enough staff to do the job. As soon as I got them up-to-snuff, they were transferred. I remember Miss Rice as one of those who came with a bad review, but there was nothing wrong with her. As soon as I taught her how to be a librarian, she blossomed and, of course, was transferred.

I set up a training program for the new librarians. I made sure that they learned the clerical jobs by assigning the job to them on the work schedule.

Naturally, since they were "professionals," they couldn't believe that I could mean that, so they would casually watch the clerk do the job and decide that they knew enough. I insisted, much to their disgust, that they had to do the clerical job for two weeks. I am sure that they complained to the office about my degrading them. I had many people who moved on tell me that they were assigned to a branch where no one knew what to do, and they could step in and teach the job.

So many people who had worked with me asked me for the procedures manual for whatever job they were faced with and thanked me for the training they had received. They always did this after they had left and were out in the cold, cruel world.



Dorothy Henderson and Carmen Reyes

Two of the staff members who became my friends after they left the branch were Charles Churchwell, who went on to the University of Chicago School of Library Service to get his PHD, and Wendell Wray, who became head of the Library's Schomburg Collection.

The Pages

Then there were the pages. Pages were usually between fourteen and seventeen years old. They were under the supervision of the senior clerk. Their job was to pick up books left on the tables, along with returned books, and place them back on the shelves where they belonged.

One of them, Beatrice, married one of the librarians. I put in the procedures manual that there should be no personal relationships between the staff and the pages. The administration said that was not necessary. It couldn't have taken place or could only have taken place at Hunt's Point.

The Custodian

At that time, the custodian lived on the top floor of the Library and did stair duty at the children's entrance every afternoon from three to six. Mr. Walsh was wonderful. He and Mrs. Walsh would invite us up to their apartment every Christmas to celebrate. When he retired, he was replaced by a man who had been a seaman for many years and spoke fluent Chinese. His wife would not consider living in such a neighborhood, so he went home every night.

The Library Security Staff

The men from the Special Investigator's Office would stop by to check on our situation. Things would calm down, but the moment the investigator left, before he could get into his car, the boys were back.

Before and After

I went to Hunter College High School, one of New York City's special schools. Going there added a lot to my life, much more than college or library school. It was a wonderful experience, and I loved it. They taught us a lot but not how to manage in the real world. One example was when the head of the Bronx libraries asked me if I wanted to transfer to the Clason's Point Library because she had a problem there. I thought it over, talked to other librarians, and we agreed that I could be more useful in the larger branch, so I told her that I would stay at Hunt's Point. Naïve!!! She okayed my choice, but from then on, she never did anything that I requested or anything to make my life more endurable. Nowadays, anyone would go if requested to, but I thought that she really wanted input from me. Then there was the new Regiscope charging machine. Carmen and I did all of the testing on the machine. They built the entire advertisement for it around us, complete with a picture. I am sure that someone was paid a hefty sum for the publicity for that work but not Carmen and not me.

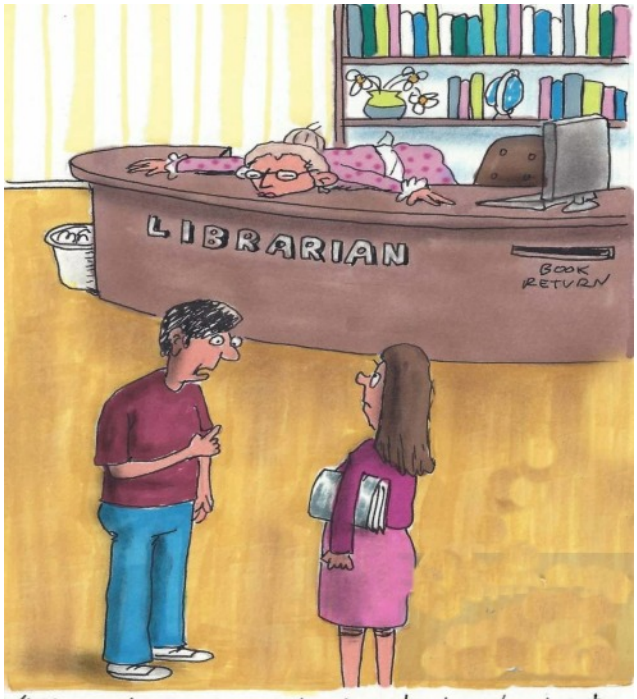
I was in awe of Mr. Cory, the head of the library's branches. He had a brilliant mind and could conduct a meeting with great skill. He could take the comments of all of the participants and pull them together in a few sentences, answering all of the questions asked by those who didn't understand or didn't listen. He interviewed me and told me that I would get the next big branch in Manhattan. That was the one in Greenwich Village, Jackson Square, a real plum. He felt that I could be valuable to the library. Alas, he died suddenly, and that was the end of that. Some of the upper level supervisors recognized my work, but that was not enough. I remember one day the new Bronx Coordinator, Mr. Gold, came in and stood next to me as the boys came in. Each one said "Hello, Miss Henderson" as he came in and took off his hat. The coordinator was amazed at the cooperation. It took a lot of time and strength, but I calmed the branch, and it worked as a smooth unit. The administration sent me a lot of new librarians for testing. Things were calm, and I could move on.

The time finally came when they set up a new program, the South Bronx Project. This project was a large one, with a chief who was a lot higher than me in grade, and a large staff, but the chief had to speak Spanish. I spoke Spanish. Carmen and I used to do classes in the evening. A class of people new to the city would come to the library every week, and we would register them so that they could borrow books. I usually spoke French to the people who came from Haiti, and Carmen would speak Spanish to the people from Puerto Rico. Of course, I could also speak Spanish; I used it every day, talking to the readers who did not speak English. At any rate, it had been decided that there would be a Latina as the head of the project.

After ten years of struggle and final success at Hunt's Point, I was transferred to another branch, in the North Bronx, the Westchester Square Branch, where the problems were the same, just not talked about. The boys were Irish and Italian in this branch, and they loved to break the windows at night. In those days, if you were in charge of a branch, you had to go there to protect the books when the police called. I never worried about being there because the boys who had broken the window would come by to keep me company until the person from the window company who worked on emergencies would leave. The friend who would drive me to my job at two in the morning finally refused to do it any longer, but at that point the Investigators Office decided to take over the job of midnight service.

I look back at my experience at Hunt's Point with some pride at what I accomplished in terms of staff development and patron success, and I also note that in all those years I made some success in the lives of so many people. I am happy that I was able to keep Hunt's Point Branch open, to calm it, and to make it a place to come to, both for the boys, and for the readers who lived in the neighborhood.

"This book on speed reading is due back in ten minutes."



"She actually tried to donate her body to Library Science, but all they could use was her spine and appendix..."

BOOK REVIEWS

In the Stacks: Short Stories about Libraries and Librarians. Edited and Introduction by Michael Cart.
New York: Overlook Duckworth. c2002

A collection of nineteen fiction stories written by popular 20th and 21st century authors including Munro, Cheever, LeGuin, Calvino, Borges, Saki, and Bradbury. Prim and stuffy stories they are not. Readers will find tales from the dark spheres of the occult and crime to the brighter orbs of life's daily meaning. The anthology is a worthy source for Short Story and Book Discussions Groups. Michael Cart is past Director of the Beverly Hills Public Library in California.

- Reviewed by Pat Pardo

Out of Circulation: A Cat in the Stacks Mystery. by Miranda James.
New York: Berkley Prime Crime. c2013

A universally disliked board member of the foundation which supports Charlie Harris's academic archivist position is murdered. Fallout from the board member's demise lands heavily upon Charlie, plunging him into the tangled threads of moral and ethical dilemmas of both a personal and a librarian nature. How is he to solve the crime and not breech his own principles? As always, his house boarders and family extend their help. Even Diesel, his thirty-eight-pound Maine Coon cat, contributes: if Diesel does not reciprocate your attempt to pet him, watch out, you become a suspect of serious moral flaws! Miranda James is the pen name of *The New York Times* bestselling author Dean James. He is past Director of a large Texas Public Library system.

- Reviewed by Vesa Nelson

The Library Book. by Susan Orlean.
New York: Simon and Schuster. c2018 (c2016)

Orlean offers a highly-detailed account of the unsolved 1986 mysterious fire at the Los Angeles Central Library that decimated almost one million books. It reads like a novel. She interweaves a subplot of her mother's battle with dementia, which parallels the loss of knowledge once contained in the burnt volumes. Orlean explores the possible reasons why a suspected, but never convicted, arsonist set the fire. Though no witnesses were present at the actual fire's setting, Orlean attempts to describe a scientifically-based pyrotechnical drama. Her book's main thesis is the effect of a library fire's socio-psychological impact on its community, especially in an economically deprived area. Her historical survey of LAPL is interesting. She mentioned that in 1880, Mary Foy was eighteen-years-old when elected as the first female director of the system. Ms. Foy was nudged out of her job by Charles Lummis, a non-librarian who walked all the way from Ohio with the intention of dethroning her.
b/w photos, sources

Susan Orlean is the author of *The Orchid Thief.* Her love for libraries and books was first engendered by her mother. Together, they spent countless hours at their neighborhood's suburban Cleveland library.

- Reviewed by Pat Pardo

The Giver of Stars. by JoJo Moyes

During the Depression, Eleanor Roosevelt promoted a traveling library. In this historical novel, five women become known as the Packhorse Librarians of Kentucky and bring books to people who have never had any.

- Reviewed by Liz Tiedemann

The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek

By Kim Michele Richardson

A *New York Times* bestseller with over 13,000 five-star Goodreads ratings: The last of the Kentucky Blues, Cussy becomes a horseback librarian — and struggles to find her place amid danger and prejudice. "Unputdownable... holds real cultural significance" (#1 *New York Times* bestselling author Sara Gruen).

Literary Fiction

RETIREE NEWS

DAVID RICHARD BEASLEY

March 28, 2020

The Coronavirus epidemic has reached Norfolk County, Southern Ontario, in which my town of Simcoe can be found. We have two cases. We are ordered to stay in our homes. The tardy preventive measures in the United States, which have been watched daily on TV around the world, alarmed local authorities. We have a grandson who works in a grocery outlet now that school is closed. He brings us the groceries from a list that we email him. Since I spend time reading and writing, I welcome being forced to stay home as an excuse to do what I like best and escape criticism. Michelle does the spring cleaning—from which I cannot completely escape.

News of the epidemic reached us when we were cruising the Caribbean and visiting Mayan ruins in Belize and Mexico. Since President Trump claimed it was a hoax cooked up by the Democrats to embarrass him, and some gullible souls considered he might be right, there was little alarm and no urgency. We stayed in a time-share in Weston, Florida, for two weeks, enjoying the sun, the pool, the beautiful weather, and the shopping at the Sawgrass Mall. I now wear some brand-name clothes from which the price tag has been quickly removed.

Our voyage along the Norwegian fjords into Lapland and the Arctic Circle in May has been postponed till 2021. Will we be alive then? Those over 60 watch out! At that time I shall be 90. I feel sprier this year than last when I played strong tennis, but the net recently put up has been taken down, probably to prevent a foursome from forming.

In looking through old papers, I came across a poem I wrote in 1957. [The date was in the title—"On the occasion of a friend's departure from Vienna, August, fifth /57"]—It is a wrenching love poem, quite stark in its erotic spiritualism and alarming to an octogenarian! Shall I give up writing doggerel celebrating special occasions such as grandkids birthdays and devote myself to baring the soul and trying for meaning in the years to come? After Trump, can there be meaning?

EMILY COHEN

There was to have been a "Senior" Prom for senior citizens at New Dorp High School here in Staten Island on Friday, March 27th from 4 to 7 p.m. (not too late for the old folks). Needless to say, it was cancelled because of the coronavirus pandemic. I was disappointed because my husband Allen had surprised me by accepting my invitation to take me to the prom and had said that he would wear his tuxedo. Neither of us had ever attended a prom.

We decided to have our own private prom at our house with just the two of us. We got all dressed up, and Allen set up the video camera on a tripod to film us at the "prom." This we would share with our family and friends to give them a smile. Allen chose the song to be played in the background. Because we were the only man and woman there, Allen and I were, by default, King and Queen of the Prom. We had made paper crowns for the occasion.

DOROTHY HENDERSON

I worked for the NYPL for forty-three years and retired in 1989. I am in the Oral History Project. Angela Filomena Calderella did the interview.

Since I ceased working, I have started a writing career. My first book is about my grandfather's service in the U.S. Navy during the Civil War. The

title is On Blockade. It is at Barnes and Noble and Amazon.

I am almost finished writing a second book, for my relatives, on growing up in the Bronx. It is about the Hendersons and O'Loughlins so that when I am no longer around they can do research on them.

ARMAND ISIP

My hobbies are photography, researching New York City history, railroad history, etc.

I photograph whatever catches my eye and review the techniques I used to take those pictures.

I have an HO shelf-layout and model of the Long Island Rail Road. I grew up near the Atlantic and Montauk branches and remember the different passenger cars, such as double-decked coaches and combines used for morning and evening commuter trains. Seeing a freight train during daytime hours was a rare treat.

I drove the Valley Railroad locomotive #40 during their Hand on the Throttle program. This experience was a gift from my family, and I recommend it highly! See https://essexsteamtrain.com/experiences/hand-on-the-throttle/

JOAN JANKELL

In November, I took a far too short trip to Japan. I went with ArtTable, an organization of women who work in the arts. (I'm not a member but my sister is, and I am at least a museum docent.) It was an immersion course in contemporary Japanese art. From Tokyo to Okayama to Osaka/Kyoto, we visited artists' homes and studios, private collections, and the two art islands of Teshima and Naoshima. There was also magnificent fall foliage wherever you looked. And we were entertained by the singing and dancing of three geishas at our farewell dinner. Altogether, a fabulous fulfillment of a top item on my bucket list!

PHYLLIS MACK

The New York Black Librarians Caucus was founded in 1970 and became a New York Library Association Roundtable in November 2018. NYBLC will celebrate its fiftieth anniversary this year. The Annual NYLA Conference was held November 13-16, 2019, in Saratoga Springs, New York. At the closing dinner, I was presented with a Resolution approved by the NYLA Council. The Resolution acknowledged and honored me for being the longest active financial member of the New York Black Librarians Caucus (forty-plus years), for my contributions to the New York community, and for my commitment to libraries and librarians. I edited a fifty-year history of the NYBLC to be published in their journal at the 50th Scholarship Anniversary Gala, to be held Fall 2020.

I had the opportunity to attend the ALA Annual Conference, June 2019, in Washington, DC. My eldest granddaughter accompanied me; however, due

Photo courtesy of NYLA.

to unforeseen circumstances in New York City, my eldest daughter registered but was unable to attend. My bibliophile daughter and granddaughter enjoy attending ALA conferences with me, and our last attendance was Las Vegas, 2014. I've been an ALA member for over twenty-five consecutive years and wish to continue learning the latest information. It was wonderful to see and meet so many librarians–young, older, and in-between, from all over the United States–who remembered me.

While in Washington, DC, we took a brief trip to the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC), a Smithsonian Institution Museum. I'm a charter member, and it was our first visit. I was determined to see all levels; therefore, we started at the top level, a lighter experience filled with pop culture and displays, and worked our way to the bottom level where it depicted the melancholic Middle Passage, Slavery, and Jim Crow. Our schedule was tight, but we were able to accomplish this in two hours. Of course, we didn't stop and read everything or look at all the videos. We plan to return soon with other family members. What an eye-opening experience!

I continue to research my family tree, both paternal and maternal branches, and recently joined the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society, Jean Sampson Scott Greater New York Chapter. The organization previously held meetings at the Countee Cullen Branch when I was the regional librarian, and I was always encouraged to join. My first cousin, who resides in California, discovered our maternal great grandmother, who was a mystery to all of the family. Who was she? There were many interesting tales. Her husband, my maternal great grandfather, was well known to the family and documented in the census records. He was a landowner, farmer, and preacher, with a deceased wife. The 1860 Federal Census - Slave Schedules identified her as a slave in Washington, DC, born in 1853, died in 1895, and listed the slave owner. Mystery solved!

COVID–19

I love the hustle and bustle of New York City and enjoy its many cultural, educational, and informational activities. I was born and raised in the "Wild and Wonderful State of West Virginia" with its country roads and very limited activities. I discovered after college that New York City was the place for me. My normally busy schedule has been curtailed during this global pandemic. All my scheduled activities, exercise/dance classes, galas, Sisterhood Retreat, conferences etc., for March, April, and May were either canceled, postponed or rescheduled. I try to take a few walks during the week around the perimeter of the park across the street from my apartment building. My family wants me to stay home. I am grateful to be an active Septuagenarian. My two (Generation Z) college-student grandchildren also were disrupted from everyday college life. My grandson, a sophomore student at Morehouse College, Atlanta, Georgia, had to pack up quickly and return to

NYC. Classes are online, but he is disconnected from campus resources and communities as well as the structure and rhythm of classes and the academic year. My granddaughter, a senior at Baruch College (CUNY), is also completing her studies online. Her commencement exercises, scheduled for June 2020, have been canceled. I know that this is very disappointing to all college seniors who wished to walk across the stage in front of their proud family and friends. We certainly hope plans will be made for them in the future. We are proud that she will be the fourth-generation college graduate from our family. Each day we listen to the dire COVID-19 news and hope for the best in the coming months.

ALAN PALLY

I'm on the Board of Directors of HB Studio, the acting studio founded by Herbert Berghof and run for many years by Berghof's wife, Uta Hagen. This year marks HB's 75th anniversary, and I curated the inaugural celebratory performance, which took place on February 3. Among the actors with whom I had the pleasure to work was Mark Blum, the award winning theater and film actor, who sadly died of the Coronavirus on March 25.

How we cope during the pandemic is a challenge for everyone, perhaps even more so for those of us who live in New York City and are of a certain age. One of my strategies has been to walk up to Zabar's, properly masked and distanced, and buy at least three or four loaves of bread each week, slice them myself and freeze what I don't use. Zabar's is well stocked, so my hoarding is not depriving anyone else.

I attribute my devotion to bread to the fact that I (like Juliet Capulet and Harry Potter) was born on Lammas Eve. Lammas is an ancient holiday when people traditionally celebrated the first wheat harvest. A loaf of bread was customarily blessed, followed in olden days by various protective incantations. I haven't taken to making corn dollies yet.

It's not going to be easy, going back to Pepperidge Farm 45 calorie bread after this.

JEAN PINCKNEY

Hi. I am Jean Pinckney, living in South Carolina, one of the most beautiful states, full of history and restaurants. You will not go hungry here. Even in this coronavirus season, restaurants are willing to deliver or have you drive up like at a bank and place your order and stay in your car while you get what you want.

Last year, 2019, was a busy year for me. I had to return to my native Guyana, South America, three times in three months to settle some business with my older cousin who is showing signs of Alzheimer's. Apart from that, Guyana is still beautiful especially now that we have resorts on the Essequibo River. They say we are one of the poorest countries in South America, but I doubt that, what with the natural resources that we export, such as gold, diamonds, rice, sugar, bauxite, and now oil. Maybe because we never had to depend on tourism and are now opening to that, there are always lots of good fresh fruits and vegetables and delicious food. So when this is all over, think Guyana for a vacation. We do have lots of hotels: large ones like Marriott, Sleep Inn, Ramada, and Pegasus; and smaller ones like El Dorado Inn, Herdmanston Lodge, and Cara Lodge, all offering free breakfast.

KARLAN SICK

Literacy for Incarcerated Teens keeps me busy. We spend donations as quickly as possible and need to apply for new grants. Some of the forms are time-consuming. The Library of Congress gave LIT a small award in the fall, and friends and strangers kindly contribute, too.

During this period at home, I'm happy to read, play the piano, exercise, and spend too much time online.

BOSILJKA STEVANOVIC

I had a chance encounter with a former NYPL employee who recognized me in Grand Central Station some months ago while I was boarding a Metro North train. She stopped me to ask if I had worked for the NYPL. "Yes," I said, and she said that she had as well. Her name was Sakisha, if I remember correctly, and she was on the staff of the Manhattan Borough Office as well as Clerical Operations and also worked at Mid-Manhattan. We exchanged a few warm reminiscences; she had very nice things to say about her work at NYPL. Since she was one of the conductors on the train, she did not take my payment for the ride in spite of my objection. I have not seen her again but keep a fond memory of our meeting.

It touched me that someone whose path did not cross with mine in direct contact would remember me from just seeing me at Donnell.

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 NYSRS 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 or 212-874-6199.

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