



**Beverly Ann O'Neill Carpenter**  
**ROBS History Project**  
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Beverly Carpenter was born Beverly Ann O'Neil. When she started teaching she was Beverly Ann O'Neil until she got married when her last name became Carpenter. As a child she was given the nickname Bubbles by one of her aunts, but she didn't like it, so it was only used by family. She wouldn't allow her friends to use it.

Beverly got married late in life at age 43. This was her first marriage and her husband John's second, so in one day she got married and became a wife, a mother and a grandmother. Her husband had three children, a boy Frank, and two girls Sheila and Susan. The youngest, Susan, passed away about five years ago, and she left a little granddaughter who lives with her father and her new stepmother. Beverly said that being a stepmother came in handy while teaching, because she understood how her students who had stepmothers felt. Every once in a while she would get a student who would complain that he or she was getting a "wicked" stepmother, and Beverly would explain that she was a stepmother. She would talk to them about how it felt to be a stepmother coming into a new family and how she understood how they felt, and that things would go along. She specifically remembers a girl she really did help. The girl would come in to school just about every day and speak to Beverly about something her stepmother had said or done. They talked about it, and Beverly would explain to her that her stepmother was doing things for her own good.

Beverly was then asked to speak a little bit about her stepchildren. Her stepson Frank is in his late 40's now, and he has three children, a set of twins, Jonathan and Jennifer who are now 18 and Lindsay who is 16. He and his wife Debbie met in the Air Force. Frank resigned from the Air

Force while Debbie stayed in. As soon as he left he was going to continue his schooling and go into paramedical or medical profession, but since Debbie was sent to Germany, he had to follow later. Beverly and her husband got married during this time and a year later went to Germany so that Beverly could be introduced to the family, since they were unable to come from Germany to the wedding. Being a military family they moved from Germany to Oklahoma, England and now they're out in Montana. Frank's wife is retired from the Air Force, and they have made Montana their home where Beverly and her husband have visited. They also visited them in Germany, Oklahoma and England.

Sheila, Beverly's stepdaughter is single, never having been married. She is a social worker for the employees of the EPA. She has been working for the State for quite a few years and really enjoys it, because she loves helping people. Beverly's step children were in their 20's when she and her husband got married. Susan, the youngest, who was also single lived with them. Beverly said that she and Susan got along just like Beverly and her mother did. Susan was a very easy person to live with. Susan would get angry with her, go in a room and slam the door and five minutes later come out and it was all forgotten.

Beverly was born in West Hempstead in February 1939 and had just turned 60. She was born and raised on Long Island. When asked what some of her early childhood memories were, she recollected walking to school that was close to where she lived. She always loved school and her teachers. She just remembered one year in second or third grade where she had a teacher she did not like. She remembered deciding when she was in second grade at about seven or eight years old that she wanted to be a teacher. Every once in a while she would change and think about going with the airlines or something like that but would always come back to wanting to teach. She was very active in school. She graduated from West Hempstead High school in 1957 and went to college in Buffalo at the state teachers college. Beverly decided to go there because it was one of the few places that

offered special education. She felt that it was the teachers that she had early on in elementary school who influenced her to want to become a teacher. She found out many years after she was teaching that her mother had also wanted to be a teacher but never finished high school, so she never became a teacher. Beverly's parents gave her a lot of support, but the only thing they didn't like was her going into special education. She had made the decision to go into special education while she was a freshman in high school. At the time she was babysitting for a family who had a mentally retarded son. They had another child a daughter who was younger, and they couldn't get anyone to babysit for them when they went out, because the babysitters would be afraid of the son, but Beverly got along well with him. It was working with him while she babysat that made her decide she wanted to help children like him and work with them.

Beverly started teaching in Brentwood after graduating college in 1961 and while teaching attended graduate school at Columbia University where she got her Masters in Educational Psychology. She couldn't recall the names of any of her favorite professors but did recall her social studies teacher in high school, Manny Kafka, who eventually became the representative to the retirees for NYSUT. With Beverly's involvement in the BTA and NYSUT, she later ran into Manny on several occasions. They kept in contact up until the time of his death. There was one friend from elementary school right on up to high school that she kept in contact with, although they had lost touch for a while but then reconnected again in Sayville. She has very little contact with former students but said that every once in a while she hears from one or two. There is one student now who is working part time with her stepdaughter. The student recognized Beverly's daughter from a camping trip that Beverly had taken her class on where her daughter was one of the chaperones. It was always a hard time getting chaperones so her daughter and even her husband one time was a chaperone.

Beverly was then asked to speak a little about her parents. Her mother was very much a homebody, although she did first work in the school district in the cafeteria when Beverly was in elementary school so she would have the same hours as she and her younger brother. Then she had many jobs in between where she could keep an eye on them at the same time. When her brother was in high school her mother started working as a clerk in the high school. Both her mother and father were interested in education. It was important to them, and they were very happy that Beverly wanted to go to college, so much so that they put her through college. Her mother left school as a senior in high school, and her father was basically kicked out of school in the eighth grade. He was a self-taught man who read a lot, all kinds of magazines and books. Her mother was a reader too, so Beverly believes this is where she got her enjoyment of reading. Of her childhood memories, she can remember her mother always being there. She was very happy because both her mother and father's families lived close by. One aunt lived next door and her mother's sister and her grandparents lived a couple of blocks away. She remembered her father taking them to the firehouse since he was a volunteer fireman. He belonged to the Lakeview Fire Department in West Hempstead. She remembered him having to leave and taking them on a few fire calls with him. He worked for a fuel oil company and drove the delivery truck for a living. She especially remembers Christmas Day. In the morning they would get up, and while her mother was cooking Christmas Dinner, her father would take her and her brother for a ride to visit all the relatives stopping at each house for about a half an hour or so. They loved this since they would be getting so many presents. Later in the day they would all get together for a great big family meal. They used to spend Christmas Eve at her maternal grandparents' house where they had what was called "The Poor Man's Supper" in the Polish tradition. It was far from a poor dinner with so many Polish dishes. Beverly's mother's parents were born in Poland. Her father's family was from Ireland. His mother lived in Donegal County, Ireland that is up along the North Western coast of Ireland.

Just this past summer, she and her husband, John went to England to visit his relatives and from England rented a car and decided to drive to Ireland, because Beverly was in contact with a cousin there. They visited her father's family and got to see the house where her grandmother was born, which is now used for storage, and their original farm. Her cousin is still in the farming industry and has the old Homestead. Beverly's paternal grandparents left Ireland and came to the U.S. as immigrants, but her father was born here. His father was a New York City fireman who died in an accident having something to do with a fire.

Beverly had one brother who was about four years younger. She remembers how they were constantly arguing but later became very close. When Beverly left and went to college, he later graduated from high school went into the Marines. When he came home from the Marines and Beverly was teaching, they would go out together and they remained very close all along until her brother passed this November at age 55. He also became a fireman, but her parents had always wanted him to go to college even telling him that if he went to college they would buy him a car. He worked for the gas company down in Washington DC where he had been stationed most of the time. He liked that area, so he decided to stay there. He couldn't stand Long Island, because he said it was too crowded, and whenever he came up to visit he would say, "This is the last time I am," and of course he always came back.

When asked if there were any other adult influences in her formative years besides her parents, Beverly remembered a 2nd grade teacher she had named Mrs. Carway. She wanted to be a teacher like her.

What was it like for you in the in the 40s? Beverly remembered very little of the war. She did remember the blackouts and the black blinds on the windows that would be pulled down. She remembered her uncles, one in the Navy and the other in the army, coming home in their uniforms to visit them. In the whole town where she grew up everybody

knew everyone, so you had to behave, because you knew somebody was going to see you and they would tell your parents if you did something wrong. People prevented you from doing something wrong. Beverly said that in some ways she takes after her mother. She has become interested in the children in her neighborhood, and if she sees someone doing something wrong, she will say something. Beverly remembered when the war ended and everybody being very excited and happy. Her family planned on having a big family get together to celebrate the coming home of her uncles and being able to get chocolate again.

Beverly was asked if she had any chores to do as a child. She said she never had been one to like any of the domestic chores and was not interested in cooking or cleaning, but she did have to do chores. She remembered having to clean the bathroom when she was in high school on Saturday mornings and couldn't go out with friends until finished.

While in high school she worked a year or two at a five and dime store in Hempstead, and from there she went and worked in the supermarket as a cashier in order to save money for college. Beverly enjoyed school, and her main interest was in student council in high school and college but was also involved in other activities like the pep squad. She believes that being politically inclined came from her parents, because they always discussed everything, and her mother was an inspector at the board of elections poles for many years.

When asked if she was a morning or night person, Beverly said that she has always been a night person and still is. She doesn't like getting up early in the morning. She remembered all through college and while teaching she disliked having to get up, but once she got to school, she was fine. She really enjoyed school and all of her years of teaching. She remembered starting school in the middle of the year because she didn't turn 5 until her birthday in February, so she had a year and a half of kindergarten. Her least favorite subject in school was history and her favorite subject was

math. Her high school teachers didn't think she should be a teacher, because they said she was too quiet and shy. They thought that if she should teach, it should be math.

She was then asked what year she came to teach in Brentwood. She came in 1961 and chose Brentwood, because there weren't that many school districts that had special education, and Brentwood was known for its special education program. She had an interview with Garden City and Brentwood. While interviewing in Garden City, they said that they only take experienced teachers and said they hoped that she would come back after getting her experience. During those years, there was a turnover of teachers in Brentwood. They would get their experience there and then leave. After about 10 years in Brentwood, Beverly had thought of leaving and going up to Buffalo with some college friends, but she would have had to take such a big cut in salary and she said no, because she was not willing to do that, plus the special education department was continuing to grow. She remembered being interviewed by Gabe Simchez, who was the director of special education. She met him at Northwest Elementary School, and for part of the interview he took her out for lunch at a hotdog stand. One of the questions he asked was what made her go into special education. He also asked what was the difference between teaching a regular class and a special education class. She responded that as far as the curriculum goes, although you did try and teach the children academics, it was important to teach them self-care skills and taking care of themselves.

Beverly was asked if her opinion of special education had changed at all over the years. She felt that children have more complex problems today in the classroom. Previously if she had a problem it was easy to go to the principal and talk to him or to Gabe Simchez. There was more accessibility when you had a problem and needed help. The administrators had a real interest in the problems that you were having in the classroom and in helping you. The special education department was very small in the early years and you knew all of the teachers in the department. When Beverly left

Brentwood and retired, she didn't know half of the teachers.

Brentwood had a reputation far and wide for really doing something for kids who are challenged, so much so that parents would bring their children and move to Brentwood to be able to take advantage of the support system. When Beverly started teaching they were required to make home visits and at least once a year had to go and visit each child's home. She remembered speaking to parents and parents telling her that they moved to Brentwood specifically for the Special education program. Another change that Beverly saw in the department was all of the new state mandates and regulations causing much more paperwork now than before. Previously Beverly had very little paperwork other than what was created she had created for herself. Her plan book wasn't turned in until the end of the year. She could choose if she wanted her observations to be announced or unannounced.

When Beverly first came to Brentwood, she and a few teachers shared a house in Central Islip. There were a lot of young teachers in Brentwood, and there were a lot of parties at that time. There was a Special Education party and the BTA used to have a Christmas party where all the teachers could attend. The district was much smaller then. Beverly was certified to teach the mentally retarded or the mentally handicapped and also elementary education Kindergarten through six or eighth grade, but she taught in Special Education having a class with the mentally retarded and mentally handicapped all of her 33 years in Brentwood. She was asked if she remembered some of the people she worked with over the years. She said that the principal she had was Lou Lotito who didn't like special education that much. She remembered Nancy Due, Jane Kachendauer and the Sustrin Twins who were there at Northwest Elementary. Beverly taught for 4 years in the elementary school then moved up to the junior high school. While she was in the junior high school she used to take one or two of her students, two girls on the weekend, or some of the boys after school to a game or something that they would be interested in, because they had no way of getting to it. She used get their parents' permission



and take them to the games. They would stop at McDonald's or something like that afterwards and she would bring them home. On Saturdays she used to set it up with the girls and take two of them to come and spend the night at her home. She would pick them up Saturday morning, take them grocery shopping to choose what they wanted to have for dinner and then cook together. They would also go to the movies and in the morning after breakfast, she would take them home.

Beverly was asked to define what she felt her purpose was for being a teacher. Beverly said she really wanted to help the disabled. She had grown to know the handicapped boy that she babysat for and really wanted other people to accept the handicapped and to treat them as they would the non-handicapped. She feels that we have to change our perspective on how we see the special education students. Some people feel that by labeling them, it puts a stigma on "Special Education". Beverly feels that you need a label on each type of handicap so that teachers will know what difficulty the student has, and the label describes this. Beverly also believes in having the segregated special education classes, because there are some students who cannot work in a regular classroom, but they do need to be in the regular school. Beverly remembered one regular classroom teacher she had gotten to know quite well whose class had recess the same time as hers. Some of the students would come over to play, because even on the playground they would be segregated. Several of the regular students asked their teacher about the special education students, but since she didn't have the answers, she asked Beverly to come to her class to speak to them. She did, and she answered their questions and invited them to come down to her classroom. So, a few of the students one at a time came down for a half an hour and worked with her class, which made a lot of understanding between them.

Beverly was then asked when she first started to get active with the teacher's union. When she first came to Brentwood, the BTA was much smaller. At first it was through the BTA socials, end of the year school parties and holiday

parties. First Beverly was elected as a building delegate and attended all the meetings. She then became very involved as a chief delegate for her building (Twin Pines) getting the teachers involved and holding meetings. Beverly's father was involved in a union, so she got an early education in what it meant to be in a union. Beverly thinks that unions are very, very important but finds it unfortunate that many of the younger people are growing up with the idea that all unions are bad, because with some of the big unions the heads are crooked. They think that unions are just out to take advantage of people and that unions are therefore bad. The new teachers coming in think that the unions are not necessary, because they have all the benefits that we didn't have when we first started teaching. They don't realize that we got all the current benefits through the union. Beverly's starting salary her first year was \$5250 before taxes. When Beverly first started, the special education teachers were with their classes all day. You ate lunch with them and even had to stay with them during physical education, which was the only enrichment class they had. There was no art, music or any other enrichment class. It was the union that brought about all the changes.

What is one of Beverly's professional accomplishments that she is most proud of? She was proud of the fact that in teaching other teachers that she work with looked up to her and would come to her for advice, and she would give it to them. When she first retired she would get calls from some of the teachers telling her that she was missed.

She was asked what she has been doing since retirement. Beverly retired in 1994 and became an active member of ROBS (Retirees of Brentwood Schools), serving as recording secretary. She has continued her involvement in local politics as a Democratic Committee person. She is involved with The Grey Panthers of Suffolk County, a very little known group, and she is one of the co-conveners and Co-President. She continues doing her quilting in County Cross-stitch. Beverly said that she is basically a home body and loves to stay at home reading and watching television although, she does like to get out once and a while. She, like her husband, is

interested in getting universal healthcare and has become a source of information for the members of ROBS on the subject.

Beverly has been a very gifted teacher and has given so much to the Brentwood School District and continued to give so much to the community, both the professional community and the community as taxpayers until her death on June 29, 2012.