



Lilian J. Kelly
ROBS History Project
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Her name for all official American purposes is Lilian Jean Bartolo Kelly. Bartolo was her maiden name. She claimed that at her Baptism everybody gave her the name they wanted. Her father gave her Lilian. He liked the name Jean as well. While she was growing up Lil was given several nicknames.

When she was very little before World War II, she remembered her mother used to call her Lulu. Everybody in her family spoke with different accents because they'd all gone to different schools. That's where they'd learned English. Lil's accent was the result of the private school she attended. Her mother's accent was more French sounding and her mother was a teacher too. Her father, who was a shipwright, had been through English schools, had been taught by Scotchmen and spoke English with a Scottish accent. Lil's regular nick name was Lilly; actually Lil and that was because her younger brother couldn't pronounce the whole word *Lily* and when he would stammer, "*Lil, Lil, Lil, Lilian*", her dad would get very angry with him. Once she said to her brother "*instead of saying the whole word, why don't you just say Lil.*" That stuck.

In the United States; in New York, in Brentwood - they would call her Kelly. That was because, being at South for her Brentwood life, and to distinguish her from "*Big Lil*" anyone remembers "*Big*" Lil Thompson. She was at South too. Even though Lilian Jean had been there first and was chronologically older, in order to distinguish them one from the other, she became *Kelly*.

Asked about her current family situation, Lil responded by informing us she was a widow and has a daughter Eileen, Eileen Kelly who lives in Deer Park. While they don't see each other "*a lot, a lot*", as Lil said, they talk to one another almost every day. They communicate on the internet and by telephone quite a bit. She's single, an only child and a long time ago was once married.

She works for Northwest Airlines where she's been employed since 1984 as a Customer Service Agent. What that means according to Lil, was "*When you have someone with an air rage melt down at the airport, she's the one who gets punched in the nose.*" Fortunately today, Lil said, the law now permits her to sue whereas years ago she wouldn't have been allowed.

She's also been trained as a trainer and gets called upon to provide in-service training for other employees as needed. When a new need arises she's flown to Minneapolis to receive training and comes back to provide training in what she's learned for others at LaGuardia Airport. She also does operations duties which means she is down in an office and is the one who tells their people how to load cargo so that it's well balanced. She also informs people in management that they can't fill the plane because the runways at LaGuardia are so short. Then you'll have passengers complaining that the plane is half empty and they want someone to explain to them why they are not being allowed to board. She can tell a Captain when they can board but they don't like that. She's also very gung-ho union and, said Lil, "*she's worse than I am*".

Lil was born in 1933, the same year FDR came into his first term as President. Her e-mail address clearly states it, Malta1933. We wanted to know how she happened to be born in Malta at that particular time and she explained.

In her parent's social class ladies and gentlemen were not in the habit of being born in a hospital, they were born at home. Lil's birth was different in that, she was the second child born in her family. Her sister had been first but as she was being birthed at home at the very last second a mistake was made and tragically she

was strangled by the umbilical cord. She would have been one year to fifteen months older had she lived.

Then her mother became pregnant again with Lilian. Her father was adamant. *'This one will be born in the hospital. We're not taking any more chances'*. And she was born in the hospital following which it became fashionable and socially acceptable for ladies and gentlemen to be born in hospitals rather than at home.

Her parents were both native born citizens of Malta. Her maternal grandfather was a band master in the British Mediterranean fleet, born in Catania and was orphaned. He subsequently died in WW I in the Battle of Jutland. Her mother had been the youngest in the family. There were four children.

Lilian lived in Malta all during the thirties and forties and during World War II. One of her earliest memories from a time when she was about two, not quite three, was of her, her mother and baby brother going to see her grandfather for the last time while he was in bed and dying. Her dad was standing next to her and holding her hand, Her mother was holding her brother and they were saying hello to her grandpa.

She remembers David, the Duke of Windsor, who was King for Three Hundred Days. She remembers his coronation and the ceremonies. She remembers the whole group of them, her mother, father, his brother, his cousin (my uncle) who was my godfather, myself and my aunt and uncle going in this huge car up to the capital to participate in the festivities. That is all she remembered, not the festivities only the trip. The King was being crowned in England and we were in Malta and it was about 1937 maybe. She remembered a lot of little nice things that happened before the war; like playing with her parents at the beach, beach pictures, going to baptisms. She tried to make us understand that she was born in 1933. The war had begun in Europe in 1939. It didn't start in Malta until 1940 when Mussolini declared war against the allies. He made the mistake of thinking he could take Malta in two days.

My parents told us *“Don’t go into the playroom and be very quiet because mommy and daddy have to listen to something very important on the radio”*. That was to be the declaration of war by Mussolini. Her dad told her mother, *“It’s going to be a couple of days before he gets going.”* Wrong! The air raids were the next morning by 6:30am. From then on it was constant blitz. She told us she had met a fellow who was in London during the war. She met him at a graduation party of one of our Brentwood’s kids. The mother said, *“Oh, Mrs. Kelly is from Malta”*! He said, *“Oh, you were one of those who was bombed worse than London and I was in London”*. She looked at him and said *“You’re the first person I’ve met who even knew where Malta was except for my students.”* Lil said they were bombed constantly for over two years and because most of the food was imported they starved. She has vivid memories of being raised in a very nice house with her own room, her brother had his own room and then all of a sudden everything was gone. Everything! It was all gone, bombed. They stayed with her grandmother for a while. Most people divided up homes so that others could have a place to stay. She was raised by having a summer home and a winter home. If you had one and it was safe you could go there. Otherwise you’d divide what you had to accommodate those who didn’t have anything. If the summer home was safer you went there but if it wasn’t you split what you did have so people had a place to stay. Her parents had been materially comfortable, you might say, well off. She described them as being educated and well off.

Malta was the only place in the world that had made a conscious deliberate decision to join the British Empire and did so because of its consistently strategic location. Napoleon also made the mistake of thinking he could come and take Malta over, one, two, three. Well he tried. He over ran some sections of Malta, but eventually, the Maltese kicked him out. The Maltese aren’t stupid people. No people are stupid people. They knew they could not survive without being under the auspices of some large super power. Believe it or not, probably the most democratic country is England. As Americans we derive our laws from English common law. We all know that. So after the Maltese kicked out Napoleon, they went to one of the admirals who had been floating around the Mediterranean at that time, they sent some people over to talk and

said, why don't you come over and talk because we'd like to become part of the British Empire. So, they retained local control. The local government would become Maltese. They would provide the British with their strategic position in the Mediterranean; their foreign problems would be handled by the British. Lilian's mother had been born in 1904 and her father in 1908. The joining with the British Empire had happened back in the 1800's. Her grandmother had been born of Italian parentage in Malta, and she was also an orphan. As I said earlier, my grandfather was born in Catania. He was an orphan too. I don't know how he met my grandmother, but it was probably through his travels in the British Navy.

Before the First World War, her grandfather was band master of the Mediterranean fleet but as soon as war was declared in 1914, everyone got everything taken away and they became ordinary sailors. Now there was a war to win. He found himself in the Battle of Jutland. It was one of those situations where they lost the battle but won the war. Jutland is in the North Sea off Denmark. The German fleet had gone to hide in that area and in order to bring them out, the British Admiral Sir John Jellicoe, had sent a "*red herring*" in. Her grandfather was on the *HMS Defensive*. They were the bait. They went in and were immediately surrounded by the Germans who were then surrounded by the British who won the battle. But in the meantime the people who were in the middle never came out. Each one of those large ships was manned by nine hundred and ninety nine men and not one of them survived. While wars today are disastrous so also were the wars that took place back then.

And then she discovered something. She thought that everybody knew how to read and write – but her grandmother who knew how to read and write at the end of the First World War there were no pensions for the widows of the people who had died in any country. The way my maternal grandmother kept the family going was by writing letters for the people who couldn't read or write. Her cousin could tell you one way and she will tell you another. She was also a go-between, between the people who were money lenders like a nobleman who had money to lend but he didn't want it to be known that it was his money and she was the go-between and she

would come to her and make a salary for that, like a broker. Her cousin got more of the story out of her than Lil did. In other words she was like a *shylock*.

This was during the 1920's and that was the way it was doneback then when they didn't charge any higher rate of interest than Visa or Master Charge does today. She was able to keep the family going until about 1921 when the British government passed a pension law to care for widows and children. Otherwise she would have been without support from 1917 or 1918 when grandpa died and until 1921 or 1922 when the pension started to take effect.

Lil's mother thought about becoming a teacher. Remember she was born in 1908 and the First World War killed so many people that her mother was able to find work teaching when she was only sixteen years of age. They would take the equivalent of seniors who intended to become teachers and put them in a classroom. When they graduated from the equivalent of high school they went to the Normal School. Her mother was teaching and going to Normal School at the same time. Wearing high heels her mom wasn't quite five feet tall. Her name was Mary, and her friends would say there was no one who could control the bully's like the ones she had in her class like she could. There was one case in which a big bully who was in the back of the room talking in a loud voice until Mary confronted him and said, "*What did you say? What are you all talking about?*" Until he replied very respectfully by answering, "*Miss, we were only trying to decide which one of us was going to carry you out in the event of a fire*". As a result of listening to her mother and her friends talking about their experiences in the classroom, Lilian never wanted to be a teacher. In those days once a teacher married they weren't allowed to teach anymore. Even though, they were all very good, close friends. This had to be before the war, and she remembered her mother and the ladies having tea with friends and a close friend who was Superintendent of Schools. She reminded her of Aunt Peggotty in Charles Dickens, erect with black hair all pulled up and piled on top of her head. Lil was precocious because she was the oldest and only child her mother had to teach for a long time. At three years she was already reading and writing.

She remembers, at that one particular Tea get together, the Superintendent patting her on the head and in a very condescending manner addressing her by saying, *"Now little dear, when you grow up, you're going to be a very good teacher like your mommy, aren't you?"* And then Lil looked up at her and said, (mind you this was 1930 -1935 - 38. *"I'd rather scrub floors."* And there was this sudden hush over the whole room, as she got patted on the head once again by the Superintendent who followed up her original gaff by saying something like, *"Oh I'm sure you didn't mean that my dear, I'm sure you didn't mean that."*

Lilian added her own aside by saying, *"Now she's probably up in heaven looking down on me and saying "You've spent thirty five years doing exactly what your mother did and when you retired you couldn't even stop. You're still doing it".*

And then the war came and she went to what they called a Convent School, a fantastic school called *St Joseph's of the First Apparition* at the Mother House in Marseilles. They found out after that that one of the Mother Superiors there who also became the Mother General of Malta, turned out to be a distant cousin of Lil's father. Most of the nuns would have come from England and Ireland because one of the subjects they were being taught was English. A couple of Maltese students became nuns. Then because of the war, they couldn't get any more nuns from England or Ireland. Crossing the Mediterranean was impossible. The Mother Superior went to her mother and asked, *"Mary, can you do us a very big favor?"* *Out of the goodness of your heart, would you please come and teach in the boy's school through eighth grade?* So my mother did come and teach in the boy's school for two or three years in Malta during the war.

My father had a great deal of influence on us. He was trained the old fashion way as a shipwright. For a long time, the American counterpart was Naval Architect. His teachers and instructors had been Scotsmen and they belonged to the old guilds. Her dad had been one of the people who were *"guild type union members"* until during the war when everything normal was suspended until after it was over. When it ended in 1945, her father became one of those

who fought to reform the general workers union. The people who joined the new General Workers Union were the same people pretty much who had comprised the OLD Malta Labor Party. After the war they also reformed the idea of voting again.

Between her mother and father, both of them used to write as pro-union supporters in *NEWSPAPERS going back over the years*. They never thought to save any of their writings. Lil and her brother had been aides who made sure people who wanted to vote could vote. They accompanied adults in wheel chairs to voting places. They baby sat for people with small infants who wanted to vote and otherwise would not have been able, even as scouts and aides at the age of 13 and 11. Right after the war there had been a turnout rate of something like 97 or 98 percent. The first government was excellent but subsequent governments were not. She no longer considers herself to be a Labor Party member. It changed to be something less than it had been.

One of the first places I lived in the United States was in the city of Detroit and the radio station used to come on the air with an announcement that sounded something like, *"I'm a union man from a union town"* It had been the capital of the automobile industry when unionism came back to a place of dominance. They went to Canada first and then emigrated to the United States and Detroit.

Without a doubt the nuns at St. Joseph played a formative role in Lilian's early life. She went back to Malta in 1980 to visit for the first time after having left. One day *Gary Mintz (RIP)* came to her and said, *"Kell, I need someone to teach Health at night. "You know you'd be able to save enough money to go to Malta? Now she returns every couple of years. Given that she's retired, she'll be going back every year. When she gets to Malta, the first thing she does is go to sleep to rest. The next morning the first thing she does is go to visit her old school. There were about three girls she went to school with that became nuns. One of them became a Mother Superior and is now retired. They are all still in the same Convent School. Lil says, "They are a real bunch...a real bunch."* Their ideas were so far superior to those of the Americans. She was taught when she was little, that if you were a good person you would go to heaven. Then

she came to the United States and she learned from Irish Catholics in Pennsylvania that she was lucky if she got into heaven because she was Maltese. The mitigating fact was that she was Catholic.

She worked down town in Manhattan in a commercial real estate company. It was a very large company that is still there today. The longer she worked with them, the more she realized – they called themselves brokers – she called them parasites, five percenter's, they weren't doing the work, they were taking a percentage of the value of the work.

She moved to another subject speaking of her work in Detroit after graduating from Wayne University (Wayne State) after Governor G. Mennen Williams bankrupted the state in 1955. She worked for *Material Handling Sales Corporation* towing tractors, forklift trucks, stuff of that sort while Detroit was experiencing what in New York City they called a recession. It was a full depression in Detroit, and from it the city has yet to recover. So with a couple of friends and roommates who along with Lil realized what was happening, they decided to pick up and move to Florida where they lived for a short while before coming to New York. That's when she started working for the commercial real estate company in New York as a temp. She worked for them for ten years and realized that some of the people (brokers) she had started out with had become millionaires. She was doing their actual work, while they made money getting a percentage. She figured "*the heck*" with this sort of thing.

About that time they were looking for teachers *Science Teachers*, because of *Sputnik*. It was closer to the 1960's and she was thinking, all she'd been doing was making money for other people. Perhaps she should see what teaching might give her.

She went to down town NY to the Board of Education at 110 Livingston Street, and enquired. She'd graduated by then from the University in Detroit with a degree in Liberal Arts and very heavy in sciences. She was told, *Yes, they did need a lot of Science teachers*. However, she needed a sequence of education courses because she had a Bachelor of Education degree in Art, which would take her

two years to attain. She couldn't do it any faster than that. She went in to see her boss and said to him very seriously, don't think I'm joking but *"I'm giving you two years notice"*. What do you mean two years notice? *"Charlie, I'm giving you two years notice because I'll be taking these courses that will take me two years to complete and when I'm done I'll be leaving to teach, so, I'm giving you fair notice so that you can look for someone because I'll be going"*. Well he called in all his friends *"Ha Ha"*, and said, *"look at this, when someone gives you notice you get two week's notice from your Secretary or your Manager and she's giving me two years, Can you imagine?"*. They still all thought she was joking. Two years later when she quit, she didn't just leave like that, because they hadn't yet replaced her. She started to teach, got a substitute teacher's license because in those days that's all you needed in New York City. She'd go to teach because you had to take the class immediately. They'd give you two weeks or they would cancel everything. When she'd finished school, she'd go down to the office and get caught up on things. After a few months the teaching position became full time for which she'd take a cut to something close to \$5,000. It would then have been 1965 or 1966.

Lilian has always been a morning person and has been that way since she's been a child. It's the way she was raised. She's been all over the globe between where she's worked and the experiences she's had. She's lived in St. Thomas, Ontario, Canada, Detroit and New York, and in the northeast Bronx.

When she lived in Pelham Bay, right over the Throg's Neck Bridge, the area was covered by potato fields and a few summer homes. Then came the influx of building in the late fifties when they also built projects, very nice almost coop type arrangements that had lines registering to get in from here to Tim-buck-two with people wanting to live there. Then they were allowed to fall apart.

Eileen went to PS 14 on Bruckner Blvd., an excellent school where NYC had a system of junior highs into three year accelerated courses, *Special Progress Kids*. Of course Eileen was in that program and in their infinite wisdom the NYC public school System sent the SP kids to Junior High 124, in Park Chester. Half the kids

were Special Progress Kids, the other half were called 600 kids and put them all in the same Homerooms. Fortunately, the Chairman of the Math Department in that particular school (Lil was already teaching at PS 123 and was a friend), kept an eye on Eileen and said what they were doing was crazy. Either she goes to the Villa Marie Academy, or we're going to have to get out of here. Lil read an article in the New York Times about some of the better school districts on Long Island, among them Seaford, Massapequa and Wantagh with which she was not familiar. Realizing that they would shortly be moving and even before she had a driver's license, she bought a car and began taking driving lessons from a security officer at the school where she worked who owned a driving school. She was anticipating house prices would be affordable and readily available unfamiliar as she was with Long Islands geography.

They left the Bronx and rented a place in Massapequa. Shortly thereafter, another house up the street from where she was renting became available for sale and Lil and her husband bought it. It was supposed to be an interim house. That was 30 years ago, and she's still in that same house. She was still teaching in the school (PS 123) in the Bronx that she loved. It was like Brentwood and it had a homey atmosphere. Driving from Massapequa to PS 123 in the Bronx would take an hour and a half because Bruckner Blvd wasn't finished yet nor were the local roads paved yet. She just couldn't do it anymore. She determined that she had to find a place closer to where she lived and she was not going to teach in Massapequa because that was where Eileen went to school. She found a job the first year in Wantagh. It was a terrible experience. She almost gave up on teaching; the attitude of the administration, "*the whole nine years*" was awful. She put a compass down and circled a twenty mile radius and found Brentwood. She'd never heard of Brentwood.

She drove out to Brentwood in 1970 and applied for a position. In those days they sent you from Central Administration to the Principal who would be interviewing you for the position. She was sent to South Junior High and was to be interviewed by Mr. Michael De Bellis. When they met, he reminded her very much, of her Principal in the Bronx who she'd adored, Dr. Louis Fleishman. "*What a brilliant man he was*". Mike was about half way through his

interview when he paused and said, *"You know Mrs. Kelly, What's your accent?"* She told him she was born in Malta. He said, *"Oh, the priest that married Helen and me was a Maltese priest"*. After that, she was afraid she was not going to be hired. She drove home and almost as soon as she arrived the phone rang and it was Mike De Bellis telling her she had the job if she wanted it. She spent her entire thirty plus years in the same building at South Junior High, much of that time working with Mike De Bellis.

She taught Science for most of her Brentwood life, although she was hired as a Math teacher because they needed Math teachers. She was certified in Math, Science, General Science, Chemistry and Health. By the time November came around, Ralph Sneider, a Math Teacher, was elevated to the position of Assistant Principal. Mike then came to Lilian and said, *"You know Math Teachers are a dime a dozen because of all the engineers who are being accessed. Would you consider taking a Science position instead?"* She went into Science and stayed there permanently. After all, she'd been a Science Teacher to begin with and only taught Math because that's what they needed. Her certification status had been provisional because she'd come from NYC with Day to Day Substitute Teacher status. By the time she got her Permanent Certification she'd already sat for a battery of tests that in addition to Permanent Certification gave her subject matter certification in Health. Mike had recommended that she and all of her colleagues go to C.W. Post to sit for the battery of exams qualifying them to teach Health. That way they would always have a job. Once she had the license she applied for a Health position in Summer School. The person who interviewed her at Summer School was Mike Welch. She hadn't applied while Fred Weaver was Principal there because it was generally understood by district female teachers that Mr. Weaver would not hire female candidates, especially for positions teaching Science or Math. Those jobs were given first to the male teachers. When she'd applied before Brentwood to other districts on Long Island, there were a couple of administrators that told her point blank, there were males who had applied for her science or math position and in one particular case she didn't remember the name anymore of the man she knew from PS 123 in the Bronx who had moved to Long Island too and was

looking for a job there where she was told, *"He got the job because he's a man, however he may be drafted (for Viet Nam), and if he's drafted then you've got the job."*

These were times when if you weren't the right skin color, or gender, or religion, though you were an American, you could easily be discriminated against when looking for work. One time while being interviewed for a teaching position by a very nice man at Hunter College she was asked, *"Who would you like to teach?"* She looked at him and tongue in cheek said, *"Kids"* and he said, *"Oh, you remind me of my wife. I like you."* She asked for advice as to what she should do and that's when he said, *"Don't quote me because I'll deny it, but if you have an accent you'll never make it in Elementary School."*

She was then asked the question that caused her to become silent and momentarily reflective as she contemplated what her response should be. *"What was there about PS 123 in the Bronx and Brentwood on Long Island we asked, that made teaching there so special?"* After a few minutes she continued – *"Now, you're going to make me Cry"*, she said, to which I replied, *"Cry if you must, but please tell us in your own words, what was it that made you love teaching in Brentwood?"*

She spoke, *"Junior High 123 in the Bronx and Brentwood are real places. Real Places! Alright? I came from a very comfortable position before the war. A lot of us came through a lot of starvation, a lot of hunger, came to the United States, worked our way through school, there were no scholarships, no loans, no nothing. We worked our way through school. We really worked! And I got someplace. I got exactly where I wanted to go, but it was hard. It was very, very, hard work"*.

Her uncle who worked in the steel mills of Canada when he first arrived came to the United States and took a job with American Airlines before he eventually retired and died, was told once when he was looking for a job to go back to where he came from. *"You're not an American. Go back to where you came from"*. Her uncle who

died recently and was eighty five years old said to that person with a very straight face, “*Sir, in your head, I don’t see a feather*”.

“*So many people are talking like that*”, she said, and they don’t realize that their own ancestors came out of *Hell’s Kitchen* if they were in New York. If they were in Detroit, they came out of Cork Town. That’s where they started, all of them. If people were to go into New York City today to the Tenement Museum they will see and experience what the tenements were like. Those tenements are where their ancestors came from; the Vanderbilt’s and Rockefellers too. That’s where they all started. This is simply another group of immigrants who are working two or three jobs to keep themselves going and they can find them now in PS 123 in the Bronx and in Brentwood. I said to her, and that touches you, to which she replied “*Yes, because they’ll make it. They’re a first generation. There’s a young girl right now who’s student teaching with Angie Germain, one of my former students. She was an immigrant. So was her sister. The Madrid girls. I don’t know if you know them? Now, they’ve made it - all by themselves and their children will even be better off than they are. It’s the American Story*”.

How would she define her purpose teaching for all the years she has? In spite of what the mass media has to say, she would like them to know, they’re living in the best country in the world. If they don’t believe that, let them take a look at how many immigrants we have, legal and illegal. (1.) If they can find the number of those that are emigrating, who are not old people retiring to the country of their birth, then tell me they can prove this is the rotten country they say it is. (2.) If they really work at what they want to do, they can get there. (3.) We are here to help you get there. She tells the kids in summer school, “if you have a problem get in touch with me” – which she says they do from time to time. The kick-line Captain told her just yesterday “*Mrs. Kelly, I saw Mr. Holland’s Opus on television and I said to my mother, that’s Mrs. Kelly.*” (*The bus driver is one of her former students, the Head Custodian is married to one of her former students*), *They all come in to say hello, and there’s a hug here and a hug there.*

She had another child in summer school, (She gives them a project report to do.) And after she had done it she said, (*"You know, I know now what I want to be when I grow up."* She went into Biology, Research Biology. You find out when these kids come back or you read about them in the papers, (*"Oh my God, I know that kid!"*). You know they've gotten there, you know they've made it. A lot of her kids now are children of her former pupils, and they are normal, average, successful, family people. Some are going to be very important.

To roll back the years, she was a *Girl Guide* when she was a child and one of the last surviving people to be invested by Lady Baton Powell. She hastened to mention at the age of sixty-six, that Lady Baton Powell was much younger than Lord Baton Powell who was the originator of the Boy Scouts. It was Lady Baton Powell that started the Girl Guides. Lilian was a little kid just after the War ended and things were only starting to come back together. She was being vested and present were the Governors wife, and somebody else probably the Girl Guides Commissioner and this old lady. It was the first investiture after the war. *"I promise on my honor"*, with her right hand raised, *"to do my best to do my duty to God and the King"*, as one of the youngest she turned to her girlfriend next to her and said, *"Whose that old Biddy in the middle?"* She was told it was Lady Baton Powell. When my own daughter was little she entered the "Brownies." When she was a little older she became a Junior. By that time she'd decided she was going into teaching. Then Mrs. Delecce who was the Chairman of the Math Department at PS 124, was simultaneously the Girl Scout Leader in the Bronx. She said to me, *"Lil, you're going to have to participate in this kind of a thing, because when my daughter get's to be a Junior, there's no leader and if I take it then Eileen won't have a leader"*. So I got into Girl Scout Leading in the Bronx for as long as I was there, about three or four years.

She was reminded that she was also in Kick Line at South, from the very beginning, Student Council and the Travel Club. In addition to working with students she became active with the Union at Brentwood though not until and after she achieved Tenure. As a realist, as soon as she got tenure she began attending BTA Meetings

and speaking out before and after becoming a Delegate to the Union. This would have been about 1974 or 1975. Eileen was now old enough that she didn't have to be home with her all the time then either. Then in 1979, Les Black and his group were looking around for a Treasurer. Very active in the Union at the time was Joe Palozollo. She had gotten to know him much earlier about 1973 when he would drive to Brentwood very early like her all the way from Astoria because he didn't like to be late either. They would both arrive about an hour early and they had classes right across the hall from each other in the summer and talk about Italian food, that his mother always cooked and Maltese food that she loved. He knew a few more people from Astoria and our garden. We always talked about our gardens. So we got to know each other fairly well. When Joe found out the group was looking for a Treasurer, it was he who suggested Lilian to them

Mike Fascullo and Les Black came down to South to interview her. She had had some monetary experience working in an office and managing business affairs so when they ran for office in 1979 they were elected. She'd been Treasurer of (BTA) the Brentwood Teachers Association ever since. Even after retiring she continued to serve as Treasurer. More recently she had taken on additional responsibility by becoming (ROBS) Retirees of Brentwood Schools Treasurer so that in retrospect she'd been working with numbers for the past twenty years. She watched the union evolve from being militant, which was necessary in those days, to becoming more fraternal and benevolent. She wrote a little column in IMPACT the Union NEWSLETTER, *Getting the Most for Your Money*.

She took notice of how many teachers were so young with little or no knowledge about how to handle things. On the other spectrum we had older teachers who are ready to retire, so she puts information in there that is necessary for them. She's been a delegate to the Retirement Convention when she was in the BTA and now calls herself a Senior Observer to the Retirement Convention because she's no longer an official Delegate of the BTA she attends the Retirement Convention anyway because she brings back important and needed information.

She said undoubtedly we've had some of the most brilliant people here like Joe Hogan who in her opinion has the equivalent of more brains in his pinkies metaphorically than most people have in their skulls. The same can be said of Les Black. Mike Fascullo, a Science Teacher, and Guy DiPietro. She had met him in the early days when she was BTA Treasurer. The Union used to have monthly meetings with the Superintendent, whereas now it's no longer necessary. I remember saying, "*My God, what a brilliant man this is, so intuitive and so realistic*". Due primarily to his leadership and example, Brentwood has enjoyed a process of negotiation that avoided all the negative and cantankerous wrangling between warring individuals and factions on the Board or in the Community that other districts have had to overcome. He was calm and decisive in all crises and the children of Brentwood were always the priority when conflicts arose. There was never any vindictiveness involved. The only end purpose was always the betterment of the kids.

She retired in 1996. She was sixty three years old and the only reason she retired was the winter of 1995-1996 which was horrible. Every Monday morning there was a new snow storm. She never intended to just disappear. She was still staying with her kick line, student council, summer school, etc. She lived almost 20 miles from Brentwood and with the icy roads, was constantly reminded how her dad was killed in an icy storm when he was 53. Whenever she went on an icy road she was terrified. She knew how to drive safely on ice, but the other person didn't. She took the incentive at the last moment saying "*This is it.*" She took it and never looked back. She's still doing all the fun stuff and is at South Elementary sometimes as often as five days a week. Practice with her kick-line is twice a week. Her girls perform for the basketball games, she runs a dance once a month and is there almost 24 hours, The only thing she doesn't do is all the hard work the bubble cards, report cards, and the stress is all gone.

Professionally, what has made her feel most proud? Her students. Several of them have come back to teach. Right off hand she could think of three former students who were Chief Delegates to the BTA right then.

Since becoming inactive Lilian has joined ROBS, hook, line and sinker. She attends many RC21 functions and meetings. She abhors what she sees as the abuses of big business at the expense of poor and middle class full time working people in banking and the air line industries and the return of the Carl Icahn “*Greed is good*” mentality. It’s the reason she is so thoroughly dedicated to the union. She hopes to start going to Malta once a year. This Easter she was planning a three week vacation and a visit to see and enjoy her father’s family and is leaving on the 25th of March to return on the 14th of April.

More of her father’s surviving family members are in Australia now, than in any other country. She is intending to show them around Malta to introduce them to the land of their forefathers. She’s promised herself that there’s going to be a lot more of that. She would not have traded any of her decisions for any others. Everything she has done has enabled her to become who she is today. Her father and mother’s house had many books including a set of encyclopedia and a dictionary all of which she read from cover to cover. During the war years listening to the radio for news, music and reading, reading, reading, books was all there was to do for entertainment.

Lilian J. Kelly left this life earlier than she expected on September 8, 2005. The memory card in her honor read;

*God saw you getting tired, and a cure was not to be,
So he put his arms around you and whispered, “Come to me”.
With tearful eyes we watched you, and saw you pass away.
Although we loved you dearly, we could not make you stay.
A golden heart stopped beating, Hard working hands at rest,
God broke out hearts to prove to us, He only takes the best.*

Eileen, her precious daughter was born on the birthday of her mother’s adopted country, July 4th and she died a mere seven years following her mom on July 19, 2012. A fitting footnote to both journeys, her memory card spoke of the loving force of two lives. It read:

A mother’s love is something that no one can explain,

*It is made of deep devotion and sacrifice and pain,
It is endless and unselfish and enduring come what may,
for nothing can destroy it or take that love away....
It is patient and forgiving, when all others are forsaking,
and it never fails or falters even though the heart is breaking
It believes beyond believing when the world around condemns,
and it glows with all the beauty of the rarest brightest gems
It is far beyond defining, it defies all explanation,
and it still remains a secret like the mysteries of creation,
A many splendor miracle man cannot understand
and another wondrous evidence of God's tender guiding hand.*