



# ROBS - RETIREES of the BRENTWOOD SCHOOLS

Since 1991 - Still Serving

Issue 3/2010-2011

April, May, June

## MEETINGS

General Meetings are held at Brentwood Public Library, 2nd Ave., & Third St., at 10:00 a.m. on the first Friday of the month.

**May 6th - Speaker**

**June 3rd - Luncheon**  
see page 8 for details

## ROBS CARES CONTRIBUTIONS NEEDED

Pronto, the community action group we support, is in need of dry or canned goods, paper products and toiletries.

Please bring your contributions to each meeting. Thank you.

## OFFICERS

Nick Siciliano - President  
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Kathy Guleksen - 1st V.P.  
Harriet Pepine - 2nd V.P.  
Lucille Fink - Secretary  
Marge Kirchner - Treasurer  
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## AFFILIATIONS

ROBS is proudly affiliated with NYSUT, AFT, NEA, AFL/CIO, RC21 & NYSARA.

[www.robsny.org](http://www.robsny.org)

## RALLY IN SUPPORT

## OF EDUCATION

## WE MUST PRESENT OUR SIDE

by Phyllis Goodwin



Demonstrators on March 22, 2011

On March 22, 2011, bus loads of NYSUT members, students, CSEA workers, AFL/CIO unionists, SUNY and CUNY members called on Governor Cuomo to restore the \$1.5 billion in cuts to state education and \$1 billion to SUNY, CUNY and community colleges of New York.

In the West park, surrounded by the Capitol building and the Legislative offices, a crowd listened to NYSUT President Dick Iannuzzi, Lee Cutler, Kathleen Donahue and Maria Niera as they exhorted members to be the voice of democracy. Signs with statements like, "This is what democracy looks like", "Tax the Rich Not the Poor", and, "Stop the War on Teachers", all to the accompaniment of a very shrill whistle blowing and a drum. Terry Melvin, Treasurer of the AFL/CIO, stated that \$5 billion is being given to millionaires under the New York State proposed tax breaks. This is money taken from middle class working men and women. NYSUT estimates that cuts would result in 13,500 teacher and staff cuts in 230 of the state's 700 school districts. They expect an additional 500 cuts when all of the districts are tallied. NYSUT is asking the state to reverse the tax cuts, extend the millionaire's tax and reject the tax cap.

Please show your support in every way you can.

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The phone numbers, addresses  
and e-mail addresses of all the  
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the Directory should you wish  
to contact us.

**NICK'S NOTES** by Nick Siciliano**THE ATTACKS CONTINUE**

For well over forty years we have heard about the "Crisis in Education". Why are our students not performing as well as students in other countries? Well finally, government officials have discovered the answer...**IT IS THE TEACHER!** The argument continues with "let us hire teachers who can teach and get students to pass the state exams". Along with getting better teachers, officials also want school districts to do away with the parts of teacher contracts that call for the letting go of teachers who were hired last. We have seen several states wanting to do away with collective bargaining for teachers and other public employees.

If only it was that simple, hiring teachers who can have students perform well on exams, and the problem would be solved. Simple. Of course, this is utter nonsense! There are many factors that go into students succeeding in school. Society, parents and the students are among the factors that all go into making a student successful, but only teachers are being viewed as incompetent and not being held accountable, among other factors.

Teachers and their unions have been more than willing to work with administrators, parents and government officials to improve education. Recently UFT President Randi Weingarten submitted a proposal for a better system of evaluating teachers. In addition, teachers are constantly seeking ways to improve our educational system.

To demonize teachers today is the wrong way to go seeking a better educational system in this country. We are all in this together. The attacks on our profession (unfortunately some of the attackers do not view us being in a profession) must stop!

I call upon all of our members to take whatever action they deem necessary, be it writing letters to politicians and newspapers, attending Board of Education meetings or rallies or working with our active members to stop these scurrilous attacks on our profession.





The Great Wall and Beyond: My Trip to China

By Ronda Brooks

As my retirement became imminent I started looking for activities to keep me occupied and to fulfill my wanderlust. I signed up as a delegation leader with the People to People program. This is a program that takes school-aged children as ambassadors to countries around the world. My very first assignment was to travel with a delegation of high school students to China! We were a delegation of 39 students and 4 adults and the trip lasted 19 days. We saw some amazing sights that I thought I would never see in my entire life. Our first stop was Beijing where we saw many local sights, like Tiananmen Square and the Forbidden City. We ate local fare including Peking Duck! We took a bus ride outside of Beijing and were able to climb on the Great Wall of China. It's an incredible piece of architecture that stretches for almost 4000 miles. I can't believe I was standing on the Great Wall. We traveled by rickshaw through the older neighborhoods of Beijing and visited with a local family and artist. As the days passed, our travels took us by bus, overnight train and plane to various other cities. We traveled to Xi'an where we saw the Terra Cotta Warriors, a virtual army of 6000 bigger-than-life clay soldiers. No two are alike. We were fortunate enough to meet the local farmer who discovered the underground army in 1974 and he shared his story with us. We stayed overnight in the homes of families in the village of Dongzhen where we celebrated at an evening party with singing and dancing. We stayed also in the water village of Wuzhen where we shopped at local stores, drank tea and hot chocolate in local eateries and learned how they color fabrics with indigo dye. Our journey took us to various schools where our delegates met Chinese students who exchanged email addresses with them so they could keep in touch. We visited a pearl factory and a silk factory. We traveled to the metropolis of Shanghai and observed the beautiful skyline. At night, there was a music and laser-light show across the rooftops of the buildings that lined the waterway. Our last visit stop was to Hong Kong, a very cosmopolitan city. We took water ferries to visit fishermen who live on houseboats. We traveled to Mount Victoria, the highest point, where we were able to look down on the island. We had plenty of time for shopping at all our stops and brought home loads of souvenirs. The students were unbelievably well behaved and planned to stay in contact when we returned home. I feel like I had the experience of a lifetime. I am now looking forward to my People to People trip for the summer of 2011 to Italy, France, Austria and Switzerland.

Ronda on the Great Wall of China



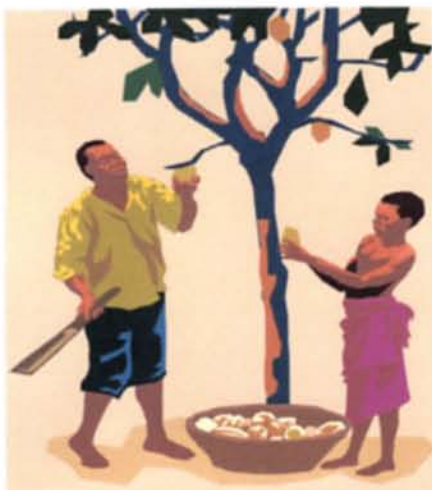
The Terra Cotta Warriors



Ronda and the children of the host family







## THE TREE OF LIFE

### One Family's Story

by Paula Moore

The tree stands tall and proud, its roots firmly anchored in the soil of North Carolina. Its branches reach across the nation to New York, Nevada, California, Hawaii, Alaska, Connecticut, New Jersey, Maryland and Washington, D.C. The leaves are plentiful the with newest added on March 18, 2011, with the birth of my latest grandchild, Christopher Daniel, born to son Daniel and Laura.

My family tree is the saga of one African-American family in America, but also the story of similar African-American families who were brought to these shores, as well as Europeans who came to escape oppression or the grinding poverty of the old country. Some came reluctantly like the Chinese brought in to build the railroads for the rapidly expanding frontiers. My ancestors were abducted from their homeland and forcibly brought over in the holds of unspeakably vile slave ships where many died before ever setting foot in America. They were taken to provide cheap labor for the cotton and tobacco fields in the South.

In 1855 Henry Ward Beecher Shaw was born to Amy, one of three young female black slaves on George Washington Bannerman's plantation. His white father, Colin Shaw, was the overseer and son-in-law of Bannerman.

He was given his name by his mother. It is a powerful name. He's the namesake of the fiery abolitionist Henry Ward Beecher, brother of Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of the politically-charged novel, "Uncle Tom's Cabin".

Amy, if it was Amy, was probably a house slave or personal servant to one of Bannerman's daughters or one of Shaw's ten white children. She was probably not formally educated but given the choice of her son's name was socially aware of the events of the time.

On the 1865 slave register of the Bannerman plantation 22 of the 23 slaves are listed by age and worth. Henry Ward Beecher Shaw is the only one listed (age 10 and worth \$45) with his full name. In 1863 he had become free with the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation but would have to wait until 1865 and the end of the Civil War to enjoy that freedom. Even so it was not a complete freedom because blacks were deemed only 3/5 human until the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1868 granted them full citizenship and acknowledged the obvious fact that they were indeed fully human.

Henry married Sarah Merrick and the family in time grew to include the Anders members. It was an Anders who bought acres of the now defunct plantation to farm. The house had been burned by the Yankees during the war.

There has been a Shaw presence on the land for over 155 years. The white descendants of Colin Shaw's other children also hold land from the original plantation and while the two branches communicate and work cooperatively on farm matters, there is little social contact. My mother met her white relatives in the 1970's and was cordially greeted by them. This was unusual by the standards of the South at the time.

The northern migration started after World War I, as there were few opportunities in the South for African-Americans other than farm work and domestic service and also to escape kidnappings,





lynchings and firebombings. Still many of my relatives opted to remain in the South and attended segregated schools and colleges.

My generation sought opportunities far from the hometown, a speck called Tomahawk, North Carolina, so small it doesn't exist on most maps. It was to Tomahawk that my cousin, Corrie Anders, came to research our family. He was deeply influenced by Alex Haley's novel, "Roots". He found old pictures, notations in family Bibles, church records, tax rolls, census records, tombstones in old cemeteries (including the plantation plot on Ollie's farm), and by listening and recording family stories. With this information he wrote a lengthy article for a San Francisco newspaper. Another cousin, Patricia Anders Johns, put the family tree on the computer and continues to do research on Ancestry.com and other similar websites. It helps that names such as Henry, Ward, Beecher, Shaw, and Sarah, are repeated through the generations.

It was the Baltimore, Maryland, branch of the family who started the reunion tradition. It is so very large a project that a committee needed to be formed because the cousins number over 300 and growing. They took over the Marriot Hotel in Raleigh, North Carolina, for our last reunion.

My mother was very proud of her family. She always related stories of growing up on the Shaw farm in Tomahawk. My mother would say that her family never felt the effects of the Great Depression. They were able to feed themselves as well as nearby sharecroppers and other poor families.

When we visited the old homestead, Cousin Ollie showed us around the farm and the family's Baptist church where each stained window had the names of eleven of the sixteen children of Sarah and Henry Ward Beecher Shaw, including my grandfather, Marcellus.

As Ollie Shaw talked of the family burial grounds with the tombstones and grave markers noting the names of my forebears, it brought them to life. I wondered what life must have been like for them at that time in our nation's history. Would they have ever imagined that future generations of the family would have risen from slavery to have successful careers in medicine, business and finance, education, law, journalism, ministry, social work, theater, with some working for Fortune 500 companies, some



Henry Ward Beecher Shaw holding an unnamed child, unknown date

traveling the world as servicemen and women, merchant seamen or just for leisure? What a wonderful legacy it is.

What is history? It is not just a series of dates and events, battles and monuments. It is the activities and lives of people. Henry Ward Beecher Shaw's story gives us insight into a time of tremendous importance to all Americans, and it adds to our identity as a people.

## HOW TO GROW YOUR OWN TREE

There is an old advertising line for the Biography Channel a few years ago along the lines that "every life has a story". Research your own family story through the archives at Ellis Island, Ancestry.com, census records, the Mormon records, family documents and other sources.

If you are an elder in your family, relate the stories of the past. If you are a younger member, record the old-timers.

Think about all the momentous events, personal and global, that you have witnessed in your lifetime. Pass the richness of those experiences to others. History is like a giant million-piece jigsaw puzzle, and being able to put a piece in place is invaluable to understanding the whole.





## **IT'S ALL ABOUT US** by Carmela Criscione

Spring is finally here! No matter where you live it's been a hard winter. I thought I would have to put pastel ribbons on my outside frozen-in-the-ground Christmas decorations and pretend I was all decked out for Easter.

Birthday greetings to **Ivy Rosenthal**, 90 years young on March 7th. Friends held a small surprise celebration for her. Many more happy years to her.

Get well wishes to **Joe Purcell** recovering from a heart attack and to **Lois Morella** recovering from by-pass surgery. We hope to see you at the luncheon.

The March 4th General Meeting was well attended, and we were treated to a terrific program on eye care by Dr. Vivian Renta of the NY Eye Care Office in Brentwood. **Letty** and **Sheila Sustrin** have known Vivian from kindergarten days and suggested her as a guest speaker. Thank you ladies. Vivian gave a comprehensive and entertaining program.

**Shirley Stamm's** daughter-in-law, Dr. Sheila Wright has been appointed by Governor Mark Dayton as head of the Department of Higher Education for the State of Minnesota. Shirley's son, Richard Stamm, after careers as a nuclear engineer and patent attorney, is also now a secondary science teacher in Minnesota. **Adrienne Eastman's** grandson, Geoff, completes his army reserve training at Fort Benning, Georgia, this month. Congratulations to all!

Sadly we report to you the passing of **Gertrude Manning** (Elem/SE) and **Victor Mojica** (Buildings/ Grounds Foreman), and **Ruth Walker** (Cafeteria/Laurel Park) in March. **Janet Anderson** (clerical/HS) lost her grandson. **Carmine "Chuck" Puleo** (HS Principal) lost his wife Theresa, **Janet Carroll** (Special Ed) lost her husband James, **Eileen Kolano** (Clerical/HS) lost her husband and **Denise Variello** (Elem/Loretta Park) also lost her husband. Tom Tarantowicz, Director of the Library, lost his dad. Our sympathies to all the families on their loss.

**Ruth McCalla** also lost her husband "Mac" in February. Ruth and Mac moved to Maryland about a year ago. Mac was a delightful man who came to many **ROBS** events. He was an aeronautical engineer and worked for many years at Grumman's and was still keenly interested in aviation. He and Ruth were married for 55 years and have a lovely family of four children and six grandchildren. Our sympathies and thoughts go out to them.

Christopher Daniel born on March 18 and weighing a whopping 9 pounds 1 1/2 ounces, is **Paula Moore's** newest grandchild. Congratulations to son Danny and Laura and, of course, to the proud grandparents, Paula and Jim.

**Carole Bruno's** son Alex is the new sales manager at Smithtown Toyota. Stop by if you're in the market for a new set of wheels.

**ROBS** sends out "thinking of you" cards every three months to approximately 24 members who need to know that we think and care about them. Do you know someone who could use a bit of cheering? Contact me and I'll send them a card from all of us. Is there someone you've lost touch with? Give them a call and reconnect and make their day.

Please remember that the Newsletter comes out quarterly and most time we are informing you of events past. You can go to the website, **www.robsny.org**, and get up-to-minute news of members.





### THIS COULD BE YOUR SPACE

Costs are rising all the time, just look at gas prices or your grocery receipt. We are considering including paid advertising in our newsletter and/or website as a source of income.

Many of our members have branched out in businesses or services that may be of interest to others. Local businesses like restaurants, specialty stores and community professionals might also be interested in your patronage.

What do you think? Would you be interested in placing an ad with us? Would you use the services/businesses we advertise? Let us know. **ROBS'** motto is "Still Serving" so let's support one another and our local business people.

### HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

#### TO THE

### RETIREES OF THE BRENTWOOD SCHOOLS

**ROBS** will be celebrating its twentieth anniversary during 2011-2012.

We plan on having special events, speakers, articles in the newsletter as well as the website.

Do you have any pictures or stories about the early days of **ROBS**, or remembrances of colleagues, that you would like to share with all of us.

Please contact Carmela (tecnouquen@aol.com) or Gloria at the website, [www.robsny.org](http://www.robsny.org).

### ROBS SCHOLARSHIPS

#### A Future In Education

The **ROBS** Scholarship Committee will be meeting soon to review the applications of Brentwood High School Seniors who are seeking a career in education.

The fact that teaching as a profession is under attack is an understatement. Every year, however, the Committee reads through dozens of letters from students who want to pursue their dream of being a teacher.

Please consider a contribution to the **ROBS** Scholarship Fund. You can bring a check to the general meetings or send it directly to **Marge Kirchner**, our Treasurer. The check should be made out to **ROBS** with the "scholarship contribution" noted on the memo line.

Thank you.

### WANTED!

Ideas for articles or columns are always welcome. Please consider writing about a trip, or reviewing a book recently read, or a great new restaurant that just opened.

It's spring...any gardeners willing to write an article about flowers or veggies?

# ROBS JUNE LUNCHEON

June 3, 2011 12 - 4 PM

## MOLLY MALONE'S

124 Maple Avenue Dock, Bay Shore (631) 969-2232

### Menu

Penne Ala Vodka

Mixed Greens Garden Salad with House Dressing

### Entrée with Vegetable & Potato

Salmon Dijon

Shepherd's Pie

Sliced Steak with Peppercorn Cream Sauce

Chicken Marsala

Served with Irish Soda Bread & Rolls

Apple Pie & Ice Cream

Soda, Coffee & Tea - Cash Bar

\$25 PER PERSON

Please make your check payable to ROBS and send to:

Lynda Romano, 18 Danville Drive, Greenlawn, NY 11740

(631) 757-9450 Deadline May 27<sup>th</sup>

There will be no refunds as we have to give a count  
and full payment a week prior to the luncheon.