



ROBS - RETIREES OF BRENTWOOD SCHOOLS

Since 1991 - Still Serving

Issue 3/2011-2012

April, May, June 2012

MEETINGS

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

April 13 - Dr. Beryl Dorsett

May 4 - Video Presentation Election

June 5 - Luncheon

July and August - no meeting

ROBS CARES CONTRIBUTIONS NEEDED

Pronto, the community action group we support, is in need of dry and canned goods, paper products and toiletries. **Please** bring your contributions to **every** meeting. Thank you.

OFFICERS

Nick Siciliano - President
kpnice@aol.com
Kathy Guleksen - 1st VP
Harriet Pepine - 2nd VP
Lucille Fink - Secretary
Marge Kirchner - Treasurer
Dot Zuckerman and Phyllis Goodwin - Presidents Emeritus

AFFILIATIONS

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

www.robsny.org

RETIREES OF BRENTWOOD SCHOOLS

ARTIST SHOW

March 2, 2012

by Lucille Fink



left to right: Lori Sopp, Phyllis George, Lucille Fink, Dot Zuckerman, Rick Mundy

What could be a better way to continue the 20th Anniversary Celebration of **ROBS** than by celebrating the talents of some of our Brentwood retirees? An art show at the Brentwood Public Library was scheduled and the artists displaying their works were asked to speak at the March 2 meeting. Phyllis George, Rick Mundy, Lorraine Sopp and Dot Zuckerman graciously agreed to take part in our celebration. The artists will have some of their paintings displayed at the Brentwood Public Library during the month of March. Look for their work on the walls to the left of the main entrance.

Phyllis, Rick, Lori and Dot captivated **ROBS** members as they spoke about their experiences as artists. Phyllis George, who currently teaches art classes privately and at the Babylon Arts Council, displayed two vastly different portraits and spoke of her experiences as a portrait painter. Rick Mundy's favorite medium is transparent watercolor and he specializes in seascapes and landscapes. Rick displayed many thumbnail sketches and panels of drawings that he made prior to creating the final watercolor he had on display, an Adirondacks landscape. We were fascinated as he described the thought processes that went into determining the final content of the painting. If you want to view more of Rick's work, contact him at www.RickMundy.com. Lorraine Sopp's PowerPoint presentation enabled us to see the wide range of ceramic pieces that she has created. It was very interesting to hear her views on commercial art versus fine art. Dot Zuckerman spoke of the pleasure she derived from painting as a hobby. She spoke of the training that she received in folk art painting and showed us how her paintings reflected events in her life. She also showed us how to find Jack in each of her paintings. How fitting that there was a way that Jack could be part of this 20th anniversary event!

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TALK TO US

The phone numbers, addresses and
e-mail addresses of all of the
Officers, and Executive Board
Members are in the Directory
should you wish to contact us.

Stories, ideas for stories or
columns and news items are
always welcome.

www.robsny.org
visit us today!

**NICK'S NOTES** by Nick Siciliano

When **ROBS** began one aspect of the organization was to have an ongoing history project. One part of this project was to interview the retirees. The head of this project was John Sherin. As of this January John has completed one hundred and fifty interviews. These are not just remembrances of retirees' time in Brentwood, but a history of the Brentwood School District for over fifty years.

It's a wonderful project. Copies of the interviews will be preserved at the Brentwood Public Library and at Hofstra University as part of their history archives.

Another part of the history project has been the Writers' Group which was begun by Tom O'Connor. This group of retirees met once a month and wrote on various aspects of their time in Brentwood. These writings will also be archived at the Library. You can access essays and short pieces on our website, www.robsny.org, as well. This project is not only a snapshot of us at Brentwood, but also what was happening during the last fifty years.

Take a look at the website. It will be well worth the visit.

As you are aware, each year **ROBS** gives out scholarships to students who plan to pursue careers in teaching. We rely on all contributions to the Scholarship Fund for this endeavor. As membership in **ROBS** is down this year, we rely on your contributions to maintain this worthwhile program.

It would be appreciated if you could contribute any amount to the Scholarship Fund by giving us a check if you attend our monthly meetings or by sending a check.

Please send your checks made out to **ROBS** (Scholarship Fund on the memo line) to me at 39 Jeremy Circle, Nesconset, NY 11767. Thank you for your generosity and continued support.

This newsletter issue highlights some of the talented people in **ROBS**. The March 2 meeting was well attended and showcased four retiree artists: Phyllis George, Dot Zuckerman, Lori Sopp and Rick Mundy. Their beautiful works were different in style from each other but again showed us how many ways there are to create and appreciate art.

Thanks to the anniversary committee, especially Lucille Fink, who brought the program together. Gauging from the audience reaction, I think a future show would be welcome. Would you be interested in a meeting displaying the musical abilities of our fellow retirees? Also, a meeting with members of the Writers' Group reading some essays or short stories might be very interesting. What do you think?

Please note that the election of officers will take place at the May meeting. Enclosed within the newsletter is a sample ballot for your consideration.



IT'S ALL ABOUT US by Carmela Criscione

Ed O'Neill is alive and well and enjoying his retirement. Last issue we reported that Ed had passed away in November. **WRONG!** I am truly sorry for the distress this has caused him and his family. They were inundated with cards and calls. The report had been from what I had thought was a reliable source but as you can see was not.

Toni Acunzo (Elem/HP) is recuperating from hip surgery. We hope to see you up and at meetings soon.

We sadly report that **Gabe Gengler** (AP/HS), **Doug Lennon** (Math/E MS), and **Clara Cannavo** (Elem/Laurel Park) all passed away in February. Also, **Don Kubisko** lost his brother in February. **Lois Heinley** (Elem/Laurel Park) lost her son, **Ronnie**, in January after a long illness. Our sincere sympathies to all the families on their loss.

Thinking of you cards have been sent to 24 retirees to make sure they know that their colleagues still think of them and wish them well. These cards go out quarterly. If you know of someone who would benefit from one, please let me know.

Get well wishes to **Marge Kirchner**, recovering from surgery and also to **Shirley Stamm** (Secretary/Funded Programs) who took a spill and broke a bone in her knee. We wish them speedy recoveries.

The outing last June to the Bayport Flower House was so well received that Vice President, **Kathy Guleksen** is planning a repeat this June. We will have information with all the particulars at a future meeting. I made a pot with cherry tomatoes, basil and parsley. The parsley is still green!

The Brentwood Writers' Group essays and short stories are on our website, www.nysrobs.org. Visit the site and browse through some very interesting, entertaining and perceptive thoughts by our own colleagues. Also check out more pictures of the art work presented at the March 2 meeting.

Loretta Ellington (Elem/Laurel) is a very proud mom. Her son, **Joe E. Ellington, Jr.**, is a representative for the state of West Virginia. Loretta's other son, **Robert**, his wife **Sue** and their daughter, **Jenna**, daughter-in-law **Sharon** and grandson, **Joe E. III**, attended a session of the state legislature in the Capitol Building in Charleston where Rep. Ellington had a third reading of a bill he was presenting. He was able to have Jenna and Joe III become pages for two days, which was a thrill. They also were able to meet the governor, **Earl Ray Tomblin**. Rep. Ellington is a member of the doctor, health and education committee as well as being a doctor with a private practice. The sacrifices that are made by citizens like Rep. **Joe E. Ellington, Jr.**, are many, and his commitment to the public good is much appreciated.

Our retirees are always busy. **Deborah Berkman**, a very recent retiree, has gotten her real estate credentials and is working at the Coldwell Banker office in Babylon. Please view her ad on the website advertising page. Good luck in your endeavors!

Wedding bells will be soon ringing out for **Paula Moore's** daughter **Michelle**. Paula also wants us to know that her youngest grandchild, **Christopher Daniel**, can count up to three, and he isn't a year old yet. Congratulations!

Adrienne Eastman's granddaughter-in-law, **Jennifer Eastman**, has been appointed a school psychologist in Chicago. **Miriam Massucci's** granddaughter **Sarah** works on an island off the Maine coast protecting the piping plover from marauding wild mink. She even totes a gun.

Carole Bruno's good news is that son **Alex** and his wife are the proud parents of **Gianna Nicole Bruno** born on January 23. She has lots of dark hair and was 8 pounds, 4 ounces and 19 inches at birth. She is, of course, as her grandmother says, **GAWJUS!** Congratulations.



SHOWCASING ROBS ARTISTS

Inspired by Folk Art

DOT ZUCKERMAN

by Phyllis Goodwin

I have been a friend of Dot Zuckerman for over 40 years and I am always amazed at the amount of energy she possesses. Somehow between meetings, conferences and life in general, she has found the time to paint.

Dot and Jack attended workshops at the New York State Historical Society just outside Cooperstown, NY. In 1993, Dot signed up for a workshop in American Primitive Art. Arriving at Glimmerglass Lake, Dot seriously considered not participating in the workshop. Sanity prevailed and she took part in the most exciting workshop the society had to offer. Dot took her source of inspiration from Grandma and Will Moses, Americana artists from the area. Thus began a series of paintings that recorded her family life with her children, their spouses and grandchildren. Dot uses the "Where's Waldo Technique", to place Jack in all her paintings. **ROBS** can consider itself lucky as Dot has only shown her paintings twice, once in 2004 for the **ROBS** Hobby Day and March 2, 2012 at our Artists Program.

Well done!



Art In Many Mediums

LORI SOPP

by Ronda Brooks



Lori Sopp has been an artist since she was a little girl. She was initially inspired by television artist Jon Gnagy and her father who early recognizes her talent, and along with her mother, encouraged her to continue in art studies. She was the class artist in her parochial school and later on attended Pratt Institute. Though she has worked on canvas, Lori does primarily three-dimensional art and uses various mediums to craft her pieces. She has had several exhibits of her work, most recently at the Brookhaven Arts and Humanities Council's Tribute to 9/11 where she displayed and sold a piece called **Tower Pod**, done in a ceramic called raku.

Lori recognizes Gauguin, Monet, Egon Schiele and April Gornick as influences on her art. Her advice to anyone who wants to be an artist is "Become well versed in many mediums. Decide how to use your art, skill and talent."

Since retiring from Brentwood, she has been working as a grant coordinator for Eastern Suffolk BOCES. She has no shows coming up as she is currently in the process of renovating her house, but we will surely be hearing from this talented artist again in the future.



A "Brush" With Fate

by Jim Nanos

RICK MUNDY

Rick's interest in painting started when he was 9 years old and he entered a contest. The challenge was to paint a Babylon storefront window in a Halloween theme. With the \$65 prize he won and art in his heart, his "fate" with a "brush" was sealed.

Today, his art work inspires awe in those who view it. He works in his favorite medium, water colors, employing the "wet in wet" technique. Rick will be happy to return to us and share this style which, when the paint is applied to the moist paper, allows him to achieve the desired blend of colors.

When we view his paintings, natural panoramas of upstate New York and others which include African-based art and New York Cityscapes, we are amazed by the color and detail. What one does appreciate is the attention to detail his work entails. This retired science teacher has never retired his scientific skills. Perspective, color, light vs. dark, spatial relationships, attention to season, time, space and many more observations are preplanned into each work of art. We are amused to see that Rick has "graded" his own work and that only those concepts given a check plus are incorporated in his artwork!

Rick draws inspiration from the peace and seclusion he and his wife, Ann, enjoy on their long hikes through the Adirondack region of New York. He paints the ponds, woods and streams he witnesses that are miles off the beaten path. He loves to paint so that he and others can "step through the paper" to experience and enjoy the location.

Rick suggests that anyone interested should sign up for a night school class. Enjoy yourself. "Paint for your home walls", he says. "It's feel-good art".

You may have viewed his art at shows at the Gallery North Art Fair, the Montauk Fair or shows in Bay Shore or Huntington. Perhaps we can coax Rick back to share more of his technique and works of art at another **ROBS** meeting.

Thank you Rick for sharing your gift with us.



A People Artist

by Adrienne Eastman

PHYLLIS GEORGE



Phyllis George was an art teacher in Brentwood for 30 years working mostly on the elementary and middle school levels.

She has had a life-long love of art, and many things have inspired her, even drawing portraits of students in her classes and her grandchildren.

Since retiring she has become an instructor at NY Tech, a judge at art shows such as the Art Students League in Garden City, and libraries. Her paintings have been exhibited at Drew Patrick's in Bay Shore and the Hampton's.

She enjoys painting portraits the most, and her expertise is spread by word-of-mouth. She has a large gallery in her home which she shares with her husband, Dave, who also taught in Brentwood. Dave also teaches design at the New York Institute of Technology. Phyllis paints live models every Friday and teaches pastels and portrait painting at the Babylon Council on the Arts.

At the **ROBS** meeting of March 2, Phyllis displayed two portraits and a still life painting. One of the portraits was of her adopted grandson done in pastels, and the other was of a homeless man. She wanted to capture the suffering reflected in the man's eyes. The still life was of red flowers in a blue vase.

I was very impressed with the portrait of the homeless man and hope that if we ever have another art show at a **ROBS** meeting, Phyllis will honor us with more of her excellent work.



SUFFOLK COUNTY FAMILY COURT MONITORS HONORED

by Carmela Criscione

More than a year ago several ROBS members agreed to be volunteers for the Suffolk County Family Court and monitor the proceedings to be sure that all parties participating were being treated equally. Their recommendations were published in the September 2011 issue of Reuters News & Insight.

By participating in this project, **ROBS** members were able to help promote fair and effective administration of justice for families in Suffolk County as well as in all of New York State.

ROBS won a NYSUT journalism award for the article about court monitoring project (see issue 3/2010-2011 newsletter for the article).

The Suffolk County Family Court Monitors have been awarded the Samuel J. Duboff Memorial Award. This award recognizes non-lawyers who serve to improve the quality of justice for all of New York State. It was first presented in 1986 and is named after Samuel J. Duboff, the Chair of Modern Courts' Executive Committee for almost 20 years.

A cocktail reception was held at the New York State Bar Association offices on December 14th. Paula Moore represented the **ROBS** group that included Dot Zuckerman, Loretta Ellington, Edie Filosa, Harriet Pepine, and Phyllis Goodwin. It was an enlightening activity and one which, as citizens, we applaud.



pictured: Paula Moore, Connie Lynch, Director of Court Monitoring, Milton L. William, Jr., Chair, Board of Directors

AN INTRODUCTION TO OUR APRIL GUEST SPEAKER

DR. BERYL DORSETT

By Paula Moore

It is an honor to introduce Dr. Beryl Dorsett, whom I consider my sister, role model and a really fun traveling partner, who will be our guest speaker at the April 13 meeting.

Dr. Dorsett was born in Harlem, New York. She is the proud mother of two children and grandmother of two. She received her Doctor of Education degree at Fordham University and worked as an educator and administrator for thirty years in the New York City educational system.

She gained national attention by turning around a school in the South Bronx that was ranked 618 out of 622 elementary schools in New York City. Media coverage brought her to the attention of the President of the United States, Ronald Reagan, who nominated her to hold the White House position of Assistant Secretary of Education in Washington, D.C. She was responsible for serving 18,000 school districts in the United States and handled a budget of more than 6 billion dollars.

Dr. Dorsett is the International Governor of the NANBPWC, Inc. or the National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women's Clubs, Inc. During her travels she implements programs in health, education and economic development. As an NGO (Non-Governmental Official) delegate and speaker at the United Nations, she addresses issues affecting women on the African continent.

There is so much more to this extraordinary and dynamic woman. Dr. Dorsett's accomplishments in the field of education, her humanitarian work throughout the world, and honors received are too numerous to mention.

We are fortunate to have her as our guest speaker at the April 13 meeting. She will tell us about her work and bring and describe artifacts she has collected over her many travels. Please mark the meeting date I feel it will be a most enlightening and entertaining one.



**NORTH MIDDLE SCHOOL
CELEBRATES
50 YEARS**

by Marty Hochheiser

The 2011-2012 school year marks the 50th anniversary of North Junior High School, now North Middle School. For me it was an unforgettable beginning of a career in education.

John Mrowka, the first principal, had a goal for the school. He stressed the self-concept of having students focus, recognize and honor excellence. He started the tradition of helping the needy in the community with food drives and fund-raising for worthwhile causes. Mr. Mrowka always had a warm heart. This tradition continued with Principals Bill Kiriluk, Mark Nizewitz, Gail Gomez (a former Brentwood student), Mae Lane and now Luis Velasquez.

Successful lives for a vast majority of our students have been well noted. To mention a few examples: in education we have Paul Casciano, Superintendent of the William Floyd Schools, in law George Roach is President of the Suffolk County Bar Associations, in medicine is Elsburch Clark helping train future emergency room physicians, in sports is Gary Brown, a guard for the Green Bay Packers, a Super Bowl team. Rebecca Galanza is a circus performer, and Erin Furey was a semi-finalist on "American Idol". These few examples merely scratch the surface of thousands of success stories which began at North.

We must not forget our former students who made the supreme sacrifice for our country. In Viet Nam was Gary Guasp, Danny Hommel, Frank Sardina and David Scolnick. In Afghanistan we lost Michael Esposito, and in Iraq, Ramon Matteo.

Fifty years of pride of accomplishment will always be remembered.

NOTE: Do you have stories about your school experiences, students and colleagues that you want to share? Please contact us.

GRAB YOUR POPCORN

COMING TO A SCREEN NEAR YOU

We will be screening the latest video of interviews at the May 4 meeting. John Sherin has completed one hundred and fifty interviews and related videos of history project subjects.

He started documenting the union activities of retirees and it spread and branched into an amazing archive of union activities, education, cultural mores, and life in Brentwood in the second half of the 20th century.

He has prepared DVDs of all the interviews. Copies have been given to the interview subjects or their families. Sadly many have died over the years, but we have a small part of their story preserved. A full set of videos will be given to the District and another set to the Brentwood Library or Hofstra University for scholars in the future to study.

The latest compilation to be shown to the members at the May meeting will contain parts of the following interviews:

Kate Corkery, Language Arts Coordinator
Mike Fasullo, Associate Superintendent
Joan Lange, Assistant Superintendent
Barbara McNicholas, Reading Consultant
Patricia Monsen, English
Ken Moss, Maslow-Toffler School
Karen Scharf, Language Arts Administrator
Evelyn Sekac, Secretary

John is closing down the project after 20 years. He has done a phenomenal job. We all give him our thanks for a job well done. He deserves an Oscar.





SAVING MEMORIES

by Kathy Guleksen



This year **ROBS** is celebrating its 20th anniversary by holding a number of special events throughout the year. The kickoff for the 2011-2012 year was a special high tea at the Bayard Cutting Arboretum on September 21. Fascinators and gloves were encouraged, and I thought it would be fun to attend. Planning my outfit brought back many memories for me, and I know that somewhere my mother-in-law, Edith Guleksen, was looking down on me, proud and smiling.

According to my father-in-law, Norman, it was love at first sight when he was assigned the seat next to the pretty little blonde girl in his kindergarten class. Norman and Edith were friends throughout their school years, sometimes seeing each other more, sometimes less. When they were teenagers they began to date. By all accounts, Edie was an extraordinarily beautiful young woman always looking pretty sharp when she was dating Norman. World War II interrupted their courtship, but they were married in January, 1945 in Brooklyn one week after Norman came home from serving in Italy and North Africa. A few years later they bought a house on Long Island, as so many returning veterans did, and raised two sons.

In the summer of 2005, after 60 years of marriage, disaster struck Edie and Norman. In July Norman suffered a stroke and 12 days later Edie had a heart attack. Although they both survived those events, life would never be the same for them. They were forced to give up their beloved home of almost six decades. Edie turned to her two daughters-in-law, Theresa and me, to clean out her house.

After bringing Edie the things she wanted, Theresa and I began the arduous task of clearing one room at a time, dividing belongings into 3 categories: donations, toss and save. Among Edie's belongings were many photo albums, one of them labeled "Before Marriage". This album contained many pictures of Norm and Edie dating. We were surprised at Edie's beautiful clothes because she always told stories about how difficult things were during WW II and said they never had any money. Yet there she was, beautifully dressed in all the pictures, always wearing stylish outfits, complete with beautiful hats and shoes.

As Theresa and I worked through the house we came upon several very old, deteriorating hat boxes. Surprisingly, for all these years, Edie had saved many of the gorgeous hats in those pictures. Although Theresa and I agreed we would never have an occasion to wear one of those hats, we could not bear to place them in the toss out pile. So we carefully repacked the hats and gloves in new boxes. Today Theresa stores the hats and I store the pictures. By the way, I am working on scanning the pictures and writing stories about Norman and Edie for their 3 grandchildren and 5 great-grandchildren to read someday. Naturally, when I learned **ROBS** would be hosting a high tea, I called Theresa immediately. Together we looked through a few boxes. As soon as I saw the vintage black hat I knew it would be perfect for the occasion.

I didn't know that prizes would be awarded at the high tea, but I do know that Edie, who passed away in 2007, would have been so very proud when her daughter-in-law accepted the "Best Hat" prize while wearing her vintage black flat-top crown wide-brim hat complete with its dotted Swiss net black veil. The hat dates probably from the early 1940's and is still in perfect condition.

Editor's note: a fascinator is a hair accessory consisting of a clip, or comb or band with flowers, feathers, jewels or ribbons attached. It was most often worn in the evening at dinner parties, cocktail parties, the theater or the opera. It was very stylish and elegant.

