



ROBS - RETIREES OF BRENTWOOD SCHOOLS

Since 1991 - Still Serving

Issue 2/2012-2013

December 2012-March 2013

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.

February - no meeting

March 1 - TBA

April 5 - Book Signing
by Letty & Sheila Sustrin

May 3 - History Project

June - Luncheon TBA

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



photo credit: earthobservatory.nasa.gov

SANDY

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

by Carmela Criscione

They called her the "Super Storm", "Frankenstorm", a hurricane, a tropical depression. Those were just some of the names applied to the monster storm of the century. Since we are only twelve years into the century. This is not reassuring. She swept through the eastern seaboard on October 29-30. New Jersey and New York, especially Staten Island, the Rockaways and Long Island, were hard hit.

Twenty-four hours before the storm we sat in our comfortable, solid houses watching the reports on television. They were bad and getting worse. Nothing Peter-and-the-Wolf about these reports. Twenty-four hours later many of those houses were destroyed or severely damaged. Basements were flooded, roofs torn off, cars were floating in the street, the lights were out. Cell phones didn't work nor did the landlines. Our culture so invested into technology was experiencing the dark ages.

The prudent and practical among us had batteries for radios (remember transistor radios?), and the commercials for the Old Brooklyn Lantern made us long for the foresight to have ordered a couple.

Years before when we watched the coverage of Hurricane Katrina we were stunned at the devastation. Neighborhoods were flooded or swept away. We sent money or supplies to those affected two thousand miles away. With Sandy we could get into our cars and travel fifteen minutes to find neighborhoods that were destroyed. Breezy Point and Staten Island looked like cities bombed in World War II, and hi-rises in mid-town Manhattan were suddenly waterfront properties. Fire Island was breached, Ocean Parkway became part of the ocean and Dune Road was washed away, again.

I was fortunate. I was only inconvenienced, with my power out for five days. My damages were small branches strewn across the backyard, sections of fence knocked over and my next door neighbor's front tree rested gracefully against my pear tree. Further down my street trees were across the road, on top of cars or on top of houses. When I



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Barbara Mascaro - Archivist &
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Paula Moore - Photographer
Lynda Romano - Hospitality &
Programs
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Letty Sustrin - Project Hope
Sheila Sustrin - Project Hope
Ellen Edelstein, Paula Moore and
Jim Nanos - Delegates at Large

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tecnouquen@aol.com
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Nick Siciliano

TALK TO US

The phone numbers, home addresses and e-mail addresses of all 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

WHAT IS ROBS?

We sometimes forget or take for granted what our retiree organization is and what it does. As we enter a new year I would like this opportunity to once again write about who we are and what we do.

We are the **RETIREES OF BRENTWOOD SCHOOLS**. We are the voice of the retired teachers and secretaries of the Brentwood Schools who, along with other retiree organizations in the state, work toward looking out for the welfare of retirees and active members to maintain our benefits and support our interests.

We are a social organization for retirees to get together once a month. We present speakers that keep you informed on issues of importance, as well as speakers on various different topics that you might find interesting. I would like to thank several people who are responsible for these meetings. First, Lynda Romano, who is responsible for providing the speakers for each meeting and for setting up our annual luncheons and breakfast. I would also like to thank Sheila and Letty Sustrin, Johanna Kane and Harriet Pepine, who are responsible for setting up the refreshments for each meeting.

ROBS is also an organization that seeks to help others in the Brentwood community. At each meeting we collect canned goods to give to the **PRONTO** Food Pantry. Frank Spencer has been in charge of this and deserves a great deal of thanks for its success.

We have just completed a very successful project of adopting four families comprised of 6 adults and 18 children providing them Thanksgiving dinner and gifts for the holidays. Sheila and Letty Sustrin were in charge of Project Hope this year and did an admirable job. In addition, I would like to thank Phyllis Goodwin who was responsible for shopping and delivering all the food for Thanksgiving dinner to these families. Lastly, I would like to thank those of you who were kind enough to contribute funds to these two programs.

Our scholarships over the years have provided money for students who are pursuing careers in education. This year due to your generosity we were able to increase the number of scholarships from four to five.

I would also like to thank Carmela Criscione, the editor of our newsletter. You may be aware that our newsletter has won a number of awards from NYSUT over the past several years. In addition, Carmela is responsible for sending out cards to our members, be they sympathy, get well or just thinking of you.

I also want to thank the entire Executive Board for their time and effort in helping make **ROBS** a success.

A special thank you goes to Lucille Fink, who serves as Secretary. She and her husband are moving to North Carolina in the near future. She will be sorely missed for her skills, insight and willingness to participate or initiate projects.

We have tried to make this organization be viable and have meaning for you. Think about becoming more actively involved. There are many projects to participate in. You are **ROBS**!

May the coming year be a good one for all of us.



A LETTER TO SANTA

by William Lane

I know the holidays have passed and all the decorations are down but this letter to Santa that Bill Lane wrote maybe 30 years ago is appropriate. Turn on the television and all you hear is bad news. Bill was Brentwood's poet laureate and a very intuitive person. His view of things still holds today. And so,

Brentwood High School

Dear Santa,

Thought I'd write to you on this December day.
I hope you'll really listen to what I have to say.

Please give to all the children the sense we adults lack.
Then maybe later on the doves of peace will come back

Next, give to all the adults the hopes and dreams of youth,
and hopefully, forever we all might learn the truth. Now
Santa, please just picture this; it's really not too wild. Just
let the leaders of the world observe things as a child.

There's one more gift that you could bring that would surely
not be wrong. Please let the Christmas spirit abide with us
the whole year long.

Now if you'd bring us all these things, it would not be in
vain. The world awaits with bated breath.

Sincerely,

William Lane



We lost Bill and his wife, Polly (Home Economics/East MS),
a couple of years ago, but his wit and humor lives on in the many
poems and essays he wrote over the years. Visit the Writers'
Group section of the **ROBS** website for more of his work.

NYSUT RELIEF FUND

NYSUT has established a Disaster Relief Fund to aid the victims of Hurricane Sandy.

Please send contributions to the attention of:

Jeff Lockwood
Accounting Department
800 Troy-Schenectady Road
Latham, New York 12110

Sandy is long gone from Long Island but the devastation she left remains.

ROBS sent a donation of \$500 to the Relief Fund. If you wish to send a personal contribution please contact NYSUT today.

STORM STORIES

Do you have a storm story you would like to share with our members?

Please send Carmela an e-mail at tecnouquen@aol.com or forward a story and/or picture to Gloria Hannemann at the **ROBS** website, www.robsny.org.





IT'S ALL ABOUT US by Carmela Criscione

Happy New Year! I hope that 2013 is a happy and healthy one for everyone...after all we did survive the Mayan death calendar. Each new year is a clean slate. We leave all the blots, crossouts and erasures from the previous year's pages and hope what gets written in the new year is positive and good.

Since the last ROBS newsletter members have had a lot to say.

Letty and Sheila Sustrin released the fourth book in their The Teacher Who Would Not Retire series. This installment is titled, The Teacher Who Would Not Retire Becomes A Movie Star. It was launched at the YMCA Bolton Center in Bay Shore on Sunday, November 18th with a Hollywood-style premiere. There were snacks and popcorn. Letty and Sheila presented the book via PowerPoint. Mrs. Belle is apparently tech savvy. As they read, the audience would respond every so often with a chant. Tom Bone, the illustrator, was there with his family. He spoke about his work on the series and did a quick drawing of Mrs. Belle and her cat, Kitty Belle. The drawing and a book were given to two lucky people as door prizes. The authors and the illustrator stayed for about an hour signing books. If you are interested in purchasing any of the four **The Teacher Who Would Not Retire** books, please contact Letty and Sheila directly at twinniesls@optonline.net. The twins are hard at work on the next in the series but would not give a hint as to what Mrs. Belle would be up to.

Congratulations to **Lucille and Mark Fink** on the birth of their second granddaughter. Parents Daniel and Chelle and big sister, Madeline Noelle, welcomed Allison Paige on September 18th. **Phyllis Goodwin** is the very proud new Nonni to granddaughter, Reese Goodwin Rivera, born to Traci and Emilio. Reese was born on 12/10/12 at 12/10 p.m. No one is going to forget her birthday! **Barbara Mascaro** also welcomed a second grandson, Charles Thomas, born in June. The happy parents are her son, Billy and wife Erin. We will expect to see pictures at the next meeting.

Get well wishes go out to **Donna Marie Ragonese, Lynda Romano, Marge Kirchner, Pat Landry, and Jeff Wolfe**. We hope you are all doing better, and all our best wishes go out to you.

Italia Pirro sent ROBS a wonderful holiday card of a stylized tree covered in ten gallon hats with a sheriff's badge as the tree topper. She spent Thanksgiving in Texas. She writes that she rode in a Jaguar for the first time. Italia is in her nineties, but is truly young at heart and spirit.

Loretta Ellington is a proud mom. Her son, Joe C. Ellington, Jr., was re-elected to his legislative seat as a state representative in the West Virginia House of Representatives. Her granddaughter, Erica, will be attending Acadia College in Pennsylvania, but her first year will be in Scotland. Another granddaughter, Dana, will be getting married in August. And Alyssa will be an intern at the West Virginia legislature. All three will be graduating from either high school or college this spring.

Edie Filosa and her teen-aged granddaughter Schottzi (Helen), are travel buddies who have gone to Paris, London, and on cruises over the past few summers. This summer they went to Ireland. They were rained out of visiting and kissing the Blarney Stone but Schottzi was able to learn Irish step dancing. Maybe she will come to a meeting and get us up and dancing.

We will all miss **Lucille Fink** when she and Mark move to North Carolina in the near future. The storm and the pull of two little granddaughters proved to be the deciding factor. Lucille has served as the ROBS Secretary for about six years. She's also worked on the 20th anniversary projects and contributed many articles to the Newsletter. Her article on antique shopping won a NYSUT Journalism Award. Everyone will miss her greatly, but we know she will stay in touch. Matter of fact, she told Nick Siciliano if we got Skype, she could still be in attendance at meetings and take minutes. Best wishes to Mark and Lucille.

Adrienne Eastman had several happy surprises this Christmas. Youngest grandson Geoff was home after completing his tour of duty in Kuwait. On Christmas Day, with the whole family present, he went on bended knee and proposed to Stephanie, who accepted. Her son Bob, who lives in North Carolina, surprised family with a lightning fast visit. It was a very happy holiday for the Eastman family.



IT'S ALL ABOUT US con't

Maria Canale has turned her love of cooking and good food into a catering service. She will cook individual dinners or cater a party. She will even give cooking lessons in your home. I've heard for years what a great cook she is and now we all can experience her delicious dishes ourselves. She can be reached at www.fromourkitchentoyours@chef.net. Look for her ad in the classified section of the **ROBS** website, www.robsny.org.

Ronda Brooks (Social Worker) and her husband, Alan Smith celebrated their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary in November and we wish them many more.

Nicki DiPietro sent in this marvelous note about her granddaughters. In the summer of 2012 her granddaughter, Rebecca Monastero, was chosen as a Simon Research Fellow at Stony Brook University. She conducted research on "Interactions of Mercury and Omega 3 Fatty Acids in Avid Seafood Consumers". The research study involved statistical analysis of the identified data linking seafood consumers with Mercury and Omega 3s and health effects. Rebecca is a national finalist for the Neuroscience Research Prize. Her sister Sarah is a sophomore at Sayville High School. She conducted a water quality study correlated to land use in Green's Creek, Long Island. As a result she was the recipient of many awards including the first Young Conservationist Award granted by the Great South Bay Audubon Society. During summer 2013 she will participate at Brookhaven National Laboratory through the High School Research Program. The objective of the project is to design and build a small cloud monitoring apparatus to measure solar energy potential on Long Island. This is very impressive, and grandparents, Nicki and Gaetano, and mom, Dina Monastero (a teacher in Brentwood) are very proud.

We are sorry to report the passing of several of our colleagues or members of their families. In September, **Amy Leftenant** (Home Economics) lost her sister, Joan. **Jack Goldstein** (Reading Consultant) died. In October, **Poppy Comunale** (School Nurse Teacher), **Ruth Lange** (Secretary), **Bruce Van Dwyne** (Social Studies) and **Rhoda Stamler** (Reading Consultant) passed away. In November, **Matt Fay** (Business), George Keeley, **Kate Corkery's** father-in-law died. **Ann Binford** (Business) lost her husband **Bob** (Buildings and Grounds). **Ronda Brooks** lost her mother-in-law, Doris Brownstein, just after Thanksgiving. In December we lost Peggy Field (Business Administrator's Secretary).

We send out "thinking of you" cards every four months just to tell members who are under the weather we think of them often. If you know anyone who would welcome a card, please let me know.

If you have any news you, would like to share please call or e-mail me at tecnoquien@aol.com.

Happy new year to all!

SANDY/WHAT'S IN A NAME? con't from page 1

was able to get out, I found a Dunkin' Donuts serving hot coffee. I got six containers of coffee and what baked goods they had and went around my neighborhood looking for a repair crew. I knew they had been working long hours or had come long distances to help, and I wanted to say "thanks" because my electricity was back on. I collected warm clothes and canned food for a local church. I know many of you did the same. There seemed to be so little we could do for people who have had the bottom drop out of their lives.

Sandy moved on and so do we. There is still great need before many of us can feel the normal routine of our lives again. We will rebuild. We will remember how awesomely destructive Mother Nature can be. NYSUT has a relief fund (see the box on page 3). Please contribute what you can. Thank you.

SCHOLARSHIPS FOR FUTURE EDUCATORS

Before we know it, graduation time will be here, and there will be several graduates pursuing careers in education. For the past twenty years **ROBS** has helped them on that path.

In June of 2012 we gave five scholarships totaling \$3000. We hope, with your generosity, to do that again.

If you would like to make a contribution, please send a check to **Marge Kirchner**, Treasurer. Her address is in the directory. Make the check out to **ROBS** with "scholarship fund" on the memo line. Thank you.



TIME TO SAY GOODBYE

February, 2012

Clara Cannavo (Elementary)
Gabe Gengler (Administration)
Doug Lennon (Math)

March

Shirley Walker-Lloyd (Speech)

May

Vivian Gaitin-Nelson (Secretary)
Shirley Hodges (English)

June

Marie Allen (Teacher Assistant)
Beverly Carpenter (Special Education)
Annette Clarke (Monitor)
Gerald Duff (Elementary)
Melenese Hamilton (Physical Education)

July

Mildred Fagan (Elementary)
Eileen Kelly (Secretary)
Fanny Landro (Teacher Assistant)
Mary Villar (Superintendent's Secretary)

September

Jack Goldstein (Reading Consultant)

October

Bob Binford (Buildings and Grounds)
Molietta "Poppy" Comunale (School Nurse Teacher)
Ruth Lange (Secretary)
Rhoda Stamler (Reading Consultant)
Bruce Van Duyne (Social Studies)

November

Matt Fay (Business)

December

Peggy Field (School Business Secretary)



Where there is sadness,
love plants a garden of
memories.

Wishing you moments of peace
and tender reflections..
sending you heartfelt sympathy.



**BTA PRESIDENT
VISITS
ROBS EXECUTIVE BOARD**

Kevin Coyne, President of the Brentwood Teachers Association since July 2012, was a guest at the ROBS December Executive Board Meeting.

Kevin has been a teacher in Brentwood for the past seventeen years, and active in the BTA for sixteen.

He takes the helm at a time of great pressure on public education, teachers and school financing.

We welcomed the opportunity to communicate with our in-service colleagues.

Kevin accepted our invitation to address ROBS members at a general membership meeting in the near future. As soon as we have a date we will post it on the website. When it is scheduled, please try to attend and show that, although retired, we still have strong ties with the currently serving teachers and secretaries of the Brentwood Schools.

**SAY, THAT LOOKS LIKE
AN INTERESTING BOOK**

Have you read anything interesting lately? Want to share that with others? If you are interested in starting a book club or book discussion group please let us know.

Also, if you would like to volunteer to read to elementary students contact Carmela at tecnouwen@aol.com.

There is such joy in seeing rapt little faces hearing wonderful stories. It sparks their imagination and sets them on a life-long love of books. Be part of it.



**HOLIDAY PARTY
AT
454 GRILL**



Dot Zuckerman, Vernell Spencer, Phyllis Goodwin, Ida Donald

Our annual holiday get-together was on Friday, December 7th, this year at the 454 Grill (formerly Charlie Brown's in Commack).

We had about 50 people attend. It was a great meal and of course catching up with colleagues was wonderful.

Here some photos of just a few attending. Thanks to Lynda Romano for another outstanding luncheon.



Pat Stuhler, Kathy Guleksen, Gloria Hannemann, Marty Hochheiser



STORM STORIES



HOW SANDY AFFECTED SOME OF OUR MEMBERS

A SENSE OF ISOLATION

by Lucille Fink

Following Sandy, I felt a total sense of isolation. We were without power and cell phones, and every shop in Smithtown was closed down. For the first time in my life I understood why you need to get gas and money before a storm.

As I was cleaning the storm's residue from my yard, I started talking to a stranger walking through my neighborhood. I was explaining how ridiculous I felt since my phone wasn't charged because the towers in our area were not working. She offered to take my phone and charge it since she had a generator. I collected it a few hours later and felt so much better, even though I still could not make a call.

The next day my neighbor came over to tell me that it was time to take a break from stacking downed branches. He and his wife had lunch ready for me: penne ala vodka, Caesar salad, and steak tips. What a delight to feel pampered and cherished just when I was so worn out.

I learned that having caring neighbors made such a difference when disaster strikes. We on the north shore were mostly inconvenienced. I really feel so bad about our fellow Long Islanders on the south shore whose lives have been drastically altered.



A STUBBORN LITTLE BUILDING

by Ellen Edelstein

Brentwood is, financially, a poor community. It has one of the highest mortgage foreclosure rates in the state and has very little industry to support its tax base. However, Brentwood is also a very rich community. It is rich in history, culture and heart. It's the community that nourished a homeless student and allowed her to blossom into an Intel semifinalist who appeared on the Ellen Degeneres Show as well as at the President's State of the Union message. It's the community that came together and took back its streets after a rash of gang violence. And it's the community that has the only remaining octagonal one room school house of Long Island.

The Modern Times school house is on the National Register of Historic Places. It was built in 1857 and served the village of Modern Times until 1907, when it became a private residence. During its time as a residence, it underwent some changes. Rooms were created, plumbing was upgraded, and the exterior was "gussied up" to include a portico over the relocated entrance. An effort was made to restore this treasure in the early 2000's but, due to a series of unfortunate events (my apologies to Lemony Snicket), little was accomplished. Since then, it has been sitting and deteriorating, but it remains standing.

Two months ago, Long Island suffered the devastation of Superstorm Sandy. When I was finally able to get out, I drove to the Administration Building to see how the school house made out in the storm. Although I passed many downed trees and houses that sustained serious damage, that **stubborn little building was still standing!**



Ellen is the president of the Brentwood Historical Society. If you are interested in joining please contact her. The school house is just one of the projects they will be pursuing in the future.

**NYSUT RETIREE CONFERENCE****NEW DATE**

Hurricane Sandy forced the cancellation of the 2012 NYSUT Retiree Conference.

The good news is that it has been rescheduled. Please mark your calendars.

Conference date is
Monday, February 25, 2013

It will be held at the Cradle of Aviation,
Garden City

Topics will include:
Pensions
Retirement
Medicare
Social Security updates for 2013

Flyers will be mailed out shortly. The Conference is expected to be well-attended. Make sure you RSVP early.

For further information contact Dot Zuckerman at 631-273-8822.

IN 25 WORDS OR LESS**THE HISTORY PROJECT NEEDS
YOUR HELP**

Over the years John Sherin has conducted over 150 video interviews of Brentwood retirees. Many of these people are now gone, but their images and thoughts live on through those interviews.

John has taken all the VHS tapes and converted them to DVDs. The jacket covers will have the name of the person interviewed, where they worked, what they taught, and the years they were employed. Interesting, but dry.

We are looking for volunteers to say in "25 words or less" something about them. We will shortly be posting the names of all those interviewed on the **ROBS** website, www.robsny.org. Take a look at it. We would love to have a friend or colleague or family member give a personal comment.

If you are interested in contributing a short statement please contact John Sherin. His telephone number and e-mail address is in the Directory.

Thanks for your help.





BRENTWOOD HIGH SCHOOL

IS ALIVE WITH

THE SOUND OF MUSIC

The Brentwood High School musical for 2012-2013 is the Rodgers and Hammerstein hit, *The Sound of Music*.

Evelyn Sekac may be retired as secretary at the Music Department, but she still has maintained strong ties with them. She has given us all the information necessary to see a wonderful performance.

SOUND OF MUSIC

Sonderling Auditorium

Friday, February 8
Saturday, February 9
at 7:30 p.m.
Tickets are \$7

Senior Citizen Performance
Thursday, February 7
at 3 p.m.

This is a free performance.

Reserved seating tickets may be obtained
from the Music Department
631 434-2238

Limited tickets available at the door
with no specific seat designated.



CHALLENGE OF CHANGE

A GROUND-BREAKING FILM

by John Sherin and Carmela Criscione

ROBS presented to Ellen Edelstein, Brentwood Library Trustee and President of the Brentwood Historical Society, a copy of the movie *"Challenge of Change"*. The subject of this movie was the new role of the guidance counselor in the public schools.

It was produced in the early 1960's and had **Gilda Mantin** and **Stan Yankowski** as the parents of a troubled youth being helped by **Dr. Helen Smith**, **Everett Reese** and **Dr. Gerard Smith** of the guidance department.

Eli Acosta was a face in the crowd, and a young unknown (but paid) actor by the name of **Martin Estevez** was the troubled youth. **Martin Sheen** is now his name.

The guidance counselor in the film was played by a professional actor using the screen name of "Mr. Warner". **Edgar "Jack" Warner** was a social studies teacher in the Ross Building. Jack was a rarity on Long Island. He was a male African-American teacher and one of several the Brentwood School District had hired to teach its students when few other districts were providing similar professional employment opportunities for minorities. He did not have a role in the film, but his name was used and truly represented a highly respected teacher Brentwood students liked and trusted.

The movie had a Washington, D. C., premiere as well as a Brentwood premiere in the Ross Building auditorium.

We were able to rescue the film for all of us to enjoy. We are hoping that it can be screened for our members, still-in-service colleagues, and possibly the Brentwood Historical Society. Fifty years have passed since it was filmed, but the importance of counselors is still as relevant today as it was then.

HELPFUL HINT

Having problems getting a sample of spaghetti from a boiling pot of water? Does the sample keep slipping from the wooden spoon or fork? Use a serrated steak knife. The slippery pasta will adhere to the serrated edge so you can test for the al dente texture you want. It works.