



ROBS - RETIREES OF BRENTWOOD SCHOOLS

Since 1991 - Still Serving

Issue 2/2013-2014

January, February, March 2014

MEETINGS

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

February - no meeting

March - 7

April - 4

ROBS CARES CONTRIBUTIONS NEEDED

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

OFFICERS

Nick Siciliano - President
kpnici1@aol.com
Kathy Guleksen - 1st VP
Harriet Pepine - 2nd VP
Nancy Churchillo - Secretary
Marge Kirchner - Treasurer
Dot Zuckerman & Phyllis Goodwin
Presidents Emeritas

AFFILIATIONS

ROBS is proudly affiliated with
NYSUT, AFT, NEA, AYL-CIO,
RC21 & NYSARA.

www.robsny.org

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

AND A

HAPPY, HEALTHY, PROSPEROUS

2014 TO ALL



There are more holiday pictures on our website, www.robsny.org.



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tecnouwen@aol.com
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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.

This newsletter is all about us.

www.robsny.org

Visit us today!



NICK'S NOTES by Nick Siciliano

KEEPING INFORMED AND INVOLVED

As we begin a new year I would like to remind you that we need to be aware of issues that are important to those still active in teaching as well as to retirees.

Among a number of issues confronting our active colleagues is the Common Core Curriculum which is causing problems throughout the state. We should all be aware of the problems with this program and provide assistance to our active colleagues when called upon to do so.

As retirees, I urge you to be informed on issues that might have an impact on us such as any proposals to change Social Security or Medicare. Budget negotiations will begin in Washington sometime this year and we all need to follow what changes may be proposed that will have an impact on us.

As I have said previously, this organization is only as effective as your participation in it. If you have the time I urge you to become more involved in our activities as well as in running this organization. Consider running for office. Offer your assistance when asked with the various activities that we are involved in, and most importantly, let us know what needs to be done to make this a better organization. Attend ROBS meetings. We love to see you at the luncheons and breakfast, but the meetings are informative, and we have interesting speakers and activities.

Become more physically active. It doesn't take much. You don't have to go to a gym to walk. If you don't want to walk in your neighborhood, go to the mall. It doesn't matter what the weather is outside you will always be warm and dry. The mall has become Main Street, USA. Meet friends, grab a coffee or some hot soup. Enjoy the surroundings and interact with people. Today's technological advances have made us solitary beings attached to iPhones, iPods, tablets and notebooks. Keep up the human connection. It's much more rewarding.

We are always looking for our members to write articles for our newsletter and web site. Your article can be on your most memorable experience when teaching or on any item currently in the news. If you read Newsday on Saturday, you have seen some of your fellow teachers writing on various topics. Get involved and write something. Send your articles to kpn1@aol.com.

Finally, I would again like to thank you for your continued support of ROBS and its various activities such as our scholarship fund and Project Hope.

Best wishes for the New Year and another successful one for ROBS.



A Celebration of the Non-Party

by Claire Geraci

This was a personal choice. I retired from elementary education in Brentwood in 2012 after thirty-three years of working with children. In the last two years before retirement, the faculty began inquiring as to where I would like my party to be.

"Party?" I thought, "I don't want a party. I don't do *party*". My reaction was one of fear. For starters, I dislike being the center of attention, I'm terrified of large crowds and I don't dance..don't ask me.

I have been to lovely retirement parties where the guest of honor has waltzed across the dance floor with a rose between her teeth. This was a moment they had dreamed of. This dream, however, was not mine. What could I say to a faculty that wanted to give me a loving send off? Then it hit me. Who do I want to be the focus? Children.

I worked with a colleague whose child was very ill. She spoke in glowing terms of the Ronald McDonald house, where she stayed while her child was hospitalized. I began researching the facility in New Hyde Park and what I found was extraordinary. This is a home away from home for families of seriously ill children. Here, families can sleep, shower, have a meal and find comfort in the care given by the volunteers at the Center. Meals are prepared daily and donated by private groups, various restaurants or churches. They are a few minutes walk to the Cohen Children's Medical Center, formally known as Schneider Children's Hospital. Families from all over the world have been through their doors, and all visits have been funded by donations.

My decision for a non-party was made. In lieu of a party, I asked that donations be made to this amazing home. Thanks to the Sunshine team at Twin Pines, the request went district wide. Donations made to this facility are recognized in either a single thank you, a golden leaf inscribed with the donor's name and set into a "Tree of Love", or an inscribed brick on the walkway that leads to the building. To my surprise, I received a personal invitation, not only to tour the house, but also see my leaf and my brick!

When I went to "The House that Love Built" in March, my husband, daughter and I were greeted by the supervisor and a few of the volunteers. The home has forty-two bedrooms, each with a private bath. There are life-size dollhouses that children can play in, eight kitchen stations, fully stocked pantries, laundry rooms and, most importantly, a Great Room where families can talk to each other for support and encouragement.

The volunteers who showed us around took us into an unoccupied bedroom where we watched a DVD presentation that explained a little more about Ronald McDonald House. Many of the families who had originally stayed at the House were in the presentation. What impressed me was how these volunteers knew, by name, each and every child and parent. Thousands of families had walked through those doors and these volunteers knew them by name!

When we returned to our car, no one could speak for the first thirty minutes. There was a lot to take in. All from donations for a non-party. Wow.



www.rmhiongisland.or

The Ronald McDonald House of Long Island
267-07 76th Avenue
New Hyde Park, New York 11040



WANTED!

THIS MEANS YOU!

Got your attention? Good. We need you to look through old photo albums, pictures in envelopes or frames, yearbooks and scrapbooks. Look in your garage, attic, basement, boxes, and file cabinets.

ROBS' goal is getting pictures of everyone. To do that we need material from the following schools.

South Middle
East Middle (except 1967)
Southwest Elementary
Southeast Elementary (except 1958)
North Elementary
East Elementary
Northwest Elementary
Pine Park (except 1968 & 1974)
Hemlock Park (except 1968)

Material from any school or office is very welcome also.

Please help us by finding those treasures for us. All original pictures or yearbooks will be returned. Pictures will appear on our website.

Contact John Sherin for further information.

Thanks for your help.

THEY NEVER FORGET

by Carmela Criscione

My family moved to Bay Shore in 1962, and I enrolled as a junior at Brentwood's Ross Building. We were on split session, and I did not have much of an opportunity to get to know my classmates. When my 20th High School reunion came along, I did not want to attend.

I did, however, want to thank one of my teachers, Bernadette Urbanchick. She was my typing teacher and literally taught me everything.

At the time I was a secretary in the Personnel Office with a half-hour lunch break. I asked Mr. DiPietro if I could have an extra long lunch one day and explained why. He said it was fine with him. I called Ms. Urbanchick and made arrangements for her to come to the Administration Building and we would leave together to have lunch at Captain Bill's.

When she arrived Mr. D came into the hall and said, "See, Bernadette they never forget." And we don't. We always remember those wonderful teachers who sparked the magic of learning for us.

If you have a "They Never Forget" story please send it to the Newsletter.

2014 SCHOLARSHIP DRIVE

ROBS' scholarship committee will be reviewing applications shortly for graduating 2014 Brentwood High School seniors attending college with a career in teaching as their goal.

ROBS has supported the efforts of these young future teachers for many years in the form of scholarship grants. Last year we were able to give out five scholarships. We hope to do that again this spring.

This is only possible with your generous help and support. Please send any donation to Marge Kirchner, Treasurer, at 666 Hawkins Road East, Coram, New York 11727. Please put "scholarship" on the memo line of your check. Donations will also be accepted at any ROBS meeting.

As always, thank you for your generous support to the Brentwood students and community.



Remembering

Melenese Hamilton

Friends gathered at Twin Pines on a blustery cold day in mid-November to honor Melenese "Mel" Hamilton, their friend and colleague, by planting a tree in her memory.

Here are a few remembrances of Mel Hamilton.

PETER VERCILLO

When you work with someone all your professional career, there is certainly a good chance you will get to know that person. When the days you start and then retire from your job are exactly the same as hers, there is a good chance you share more than a casual bond. Melenese Hamilton taught physical education in the Brentwood Schools for 34 years. One could talk about her service to the children of Brentwood. We could mention that every year she held gymnastic classes on her lunch hours and after school, unpaid, sometimes in both Twin Pines and Pine Park in the same years. She even held jazzercise classes for teachers and parents. You might recall that she grew up in Florida, where by the way, she once dated NY Knicks superstar Willis Reed.

As glorious as her teaching career was, Mel will be remembered for her kindness, empathy and understanding. There have been many times many of us have turned to Mel for guidance and encouragement. Honestly, she never failed us. She was always there, always available. Her spirituality and faith got her through her own very difficult challenges. Like everything she did, she handled them with patience and grace. We are so better off from knowing our loyal friend.

ANGELA GERACI

I remember being about 6 years old, running through TP at full speed from my mother's classroom, all the way to the gym, my pigtails and curly purple shoelaces bouncing with every step. Counting the paintings that hung on the walls from one door to the next, I'd end my run at Mel's office. There, she had a huge wall of photos of her TP "babies" (the faculty's children). Mel always made us feel like we belonged there, like we were her family. And

we were...we were her family. I'm certain that picture on her wall of me from when I was very small stayed up there for as long as she taught at TP (and I'm certain I had chocolate around my mouth).

I'm a teacher now, and from time to time, I think about what I saw Mel do and reflect on how amazing it would have been to be on a Special Areas Team with her. Hearing stories about Mel from my mother helped me figure out what type of educator I should be. May Mel be an example to the new generation of what an educator really is.

KRIS DOUGHERTY

My friend, Mel Hamilton, was a powerful example for a good woman. Her gentleness and kind spirit was inspirational to us all. She had a serene aura about her that made her friends want to know her better. We all cherished her friendship. She taught me how to forgive and to treat others with respect, and for this I will never forget her. Thank you Mel.

CLAIRE GERACI

I met Mel in 1988 when I transferred to TP. She took me under her wing and became my friend and mentor. She became Auntie Mel to my children. I have many stories about this warm, compassionate, spiritual, and sometimes even a little bawdy woman that I'm having difficulty choosing just one. She wore so many hats for her "babies", as she called us, that I can only smile whenever I think of her. The most important story that I can relay is one that I wasn't going to talk about. I realize now that I must.

I received my final check at TP and had just come home, beginning my life as a retiree. There was a knock at my door, and a beautiful, floral bouquet was delivered. Needless to say, it was from Mel. I called that evening to thank her and let her know that now I could finally fly to St. Augustine for a visit. The message was left on her answering machine. I assumed that she was probably out, maybe having dinner with friends, or doing something at her church. It wasn't until the following day when I received a call from her neighbor who, after not hearing from her that morning, came in to find her sitting comfortably in her chair, near her phone, having passed away sometime during the evening. The last message on her answering machine was mine. Apparently the last thing that Mel did before she passed was to congratulate one of her babies for retiring. That was our Mel.

Melenese "Mel" Hamilton passed away June 2012.



A PART OF BRENTWOOD HISTORY FINDS A NEW HOME

by Adrienne Eastman

After the original one-room, octagonal school house was built in Brentwood in 1857, another school house was built in 1906. It was known as the Second School House. A large bell, which was manufactured by the O. S. Bell Company of Hillsboro, Ohio, was installed on the roof.

The second school house was converted to an Administration Building for the school district in 1940. The bell was removed from the roof and installed in a wishing-well-type structure in a corner of the lawn located at the juncture of Third Avenue and Fourth Street.

It stayed there until the building was absorbed by the newly renovated Brentwood Public Library in 1985.

The bell was then removed from the wishing well and put in storage at the Buildings and Grounds site where it was forgotten. My son, Edward, who worked at the site, found it in a trailer resting on top of a coil of wire. Forgotten, neglected and in need of polishing. This was the case until recently.

Enter Elvin Amadeo, Eagle Scout candidate, to the rescue! Elvin, who is a Brentwood graduate, happened to hear his previous Scout Master mention the bell. Elvin's interest was piqued, so he contacted Ellen Edelstein, President of the Brentwood Historical Society. Ellen explained that the bell was in storage. Elvin told her he would like to make it his Eagle Scout project to restore the bell to its rightful place of honor.

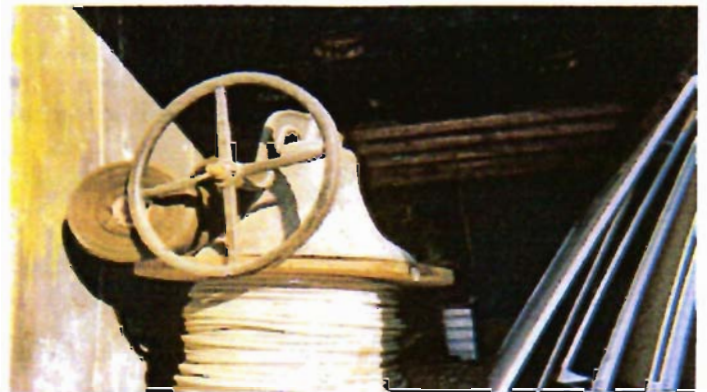
He proceeded to get permission from Joe Bond, Superintendent of Schools, for his project. Elvin's job was to coordinate and supervise the project. He assigned jobs to members of Scout Troop 25 who actually built the new wishing-well structure with the assistance of the Scout Masters.

The bell is now on the grounds of the Felicio Administration Center on Third Avenue.

With the help of monetary donations, Elvin was able to purchase the materials and transport them.

Below are pictures showing the bell and its condition when it was in storage and then installed in its new location with Elvin standing beside it. The picture of the second school house with the bell on the roof can be accessed on the ROBS website, www.robsny.org.

We are too casual about our historical places and need to know that they are precious and need our help to survive and be a valued resource for new generations. A **BIG THANK YOU** to Elvin and his helpers for resurrecting a part of Brentwood history.



Forgotten bell in a trailer at the Site. Photo by Edward Eastman



Elvin Amadeo, Eagle Scout, at the Bell's new home.
Photo by Ellen Edelstein.



HOW WELL DID WE KNOW THEM?

We passed them in the halls and
perhaps we nodded or passed
pleasantries.

We saw them at faculty meetings.
Maybe they expressed some views
of a subject of interest.

We may have seen them in the
teachers' cafeteria. We might, but
rarely, engage them in conversation.

Did we really get to know them?

They were our colleagues.

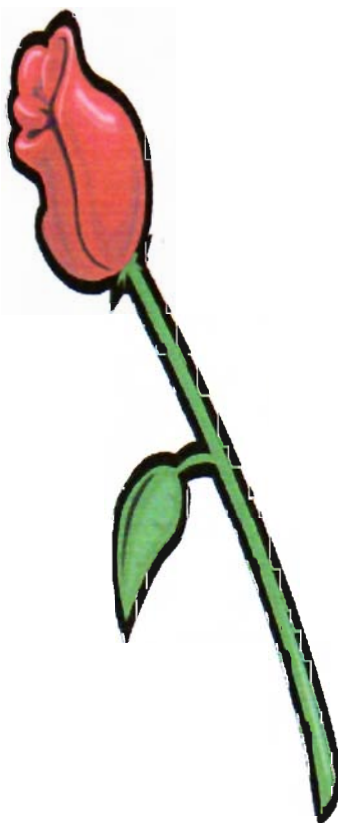
Time passes. We retired.

Now we read obituaries. They are
passing on one by one. Our turn will
also come.

Perhaps we will meet them all in the
spiritual school in the sky and get to
know them better.

Nick Siciliano

April 2004
Writers' Group



TIME TO SAY GOODBYE

January, 2013

Jeff Wolfe (Social Studies)

February

Arthur Ackerman (Elementary)

eva efron (Librarian)

Ethel Tarkan (Elementary)

July

Fran Koch (Elementary)

October

Ida Donald (Business)

Bob Hoppey (Phys. Ed. &
Coach)

December

Ann Doherty (Secretary)

Gilda Mantin (English Dept
Head)

To everyone who lost someone
dear to them this year, our
deepest condolences.



IT'S ALL ABOUT US - by Carmela Criscione

Well now, 2013 is over, gone in a flash it seems, and 2014 is before us with pages unblemished. I hope the New Year is good to all of us, keeping us healthy and happy.

The Project Hope holiday drive was a big success thanks to **Letty and Sheila Sustrin** and their band of elves. Thank you for all your hard work and shopping savvy.

Get well wishes go out to **Shirley Stamm** (Secretary/PP) recovering from asthmatic bronchitis (nasty). She's on the mend and says she feels stronger every day.

Marge Kirchner underwent a second back surgery recently and is recovering at home. We hope that she's pain free and will be back to her regular routine. Even though she is confined to home for her recovery, she continues to attend to her **ROBS** duties as Treasurer and says that our membership ranks and treasury are strong. Her address is in the directory if you want to send get well wishes.

We received this recollection on President Kennedy's assassination too late to include in the last newsletter, but it is too interesting not to report. It is from **Roy Horne** (Music). "I remember it well. **Peter Cerullo**, Brentwood Music Supervisor (and a high level bassoon player) invited Arthur Fiedler, conductor of the Boston Pops Orchestra to conduct the "All Suffolk High School Orchestra". Arthur Fiedler honored Peter's request by scheduling a rehearsal and performance at Ross High School 11/22/63. Peter and I listened to the afternoon rehearsal and eagerly awaited the evening performance. The news that our President had been shot in Texas boomed through the cafeteria speaker system. Maestro Fiedler wanted to continue but the rehearsal and performance were cancelled."

We are sorry to report the passing of **Ida Donald** (Business Ed/HS) and **Bob Hoppey** (Phys Ed and Coach/HS). Both Ida and Bob made life-long impressions on their students and will be missed very much. In November, Donald Andwood (Media Specialist/E MS) and **Betty Stousuy** (English/HS) lost their mother Agnes Andwood. Our sincere condolences to their families on their loss.

In closing, some remarks forwarded by Marge Kirchner on notes our members made on their Project Hope checks. **Stephen Bencze** (Math and Language/HS), "In gratitude to the Brentwood community!", "Glad to be able to do my part. I'm proud to be a member of ROBS," from **Ruth LaRocca** (Secretary). **Florence Briggs** says, "Thank you for all you do!". The newsletter is all about us, and everyone on the Editorial Board says thank you for your support and interest. If you have anything you would like to share with us or would like to write an article, please contact me.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

PROJECT HOPE 2013

Dear All,

The shopping was done! The presents were wrapped! Everything was delivered to the four families! Hopefully they had a very happy holiday due to the generosity and caring of our **ROBS** members. Kudos to all of you!

We both truly enjoyed chairing this committee. It was both challenging and very rewarding. We couldn't have done it by ourselves. There are so many to thank. Firstly, a very special thanks to **Lois Morella** and **Loretta Ellington** for devoting so much time and effort with helping us shop for 19 people. They really know how to find great bargains. We also must thank **Kris Dougherty** for giving her house once again to be used for the "Wrap Party"! It was a fun time for all. We had many **ROBS** Elves showing up to wrap with us, and they did a wonderful job. We look forward to seeing a picture on the **ROBS** Gallery.

And of course, there is **Phyllis Goodwin**. She has always been there for us, and this year was no exception. Phyllis handled the shopping and delivery of food to the four families so that they could all have a Thanksgiving feast.

Lastly, but not least, was the support given to us by our **ROBS** president, **Nick Siciliano**. He was there constantly for us to answer our questions and give us advice.

We hope that all of you will have a Happy and Healthy New Year. We're already looking forward to the 2014 Project Hope challenge!

Letty and Sheila Sustrin