

# ROBS - RETIREES OF BRENTWOOD SCHOOLS

Since 1991 - Still Serving

Issue 3/2013-2014

July, August 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.

July - no meeting

August - no meeting

September 5 - Welcome New Retirees

October 3 - Judge Peter Cohalan  
Town of Islip History

November 7 - Linda Metzger  
Genealogy

## 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  
kpnici1@aol.com

Kathy Guleksen - 1st VP

Harriet Pepine - 2nd VP

Nancy Churchillo - Secretary

Marge Kirchner - Treasurer

Phyllis Goodwin - President Emeriti

## AFFILIATIONS

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

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



Phyllis Goodwin, Barbara Mascaro, Ellen Edelstein, Joan Perrini

## CONGRATULATIONS TO THE NYSUT COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD WINNER

### ELLEN EDELSTEIN

by Barbara Mascaro

What does it take to be a NYSUT Community Service Award winner? According to the nominating form: "The person must be a union member in good standing who has rendered outstanding volunteer service to the community during the previous calendar year." Well, in the case of one of the 2014 award winners, Ellen Edelstein, she is all that and so much more!

As a retiree, Ellen has been an active member of the Retirees of Brentwood Schools (ROBS) and has been an Executive Board member since 2009. Ellen has a keen interest in community affairs as evidenced by her long history of community involvement.

She has been an active member of the following organizations:

- The Brentwood Public Library where she has served as a Board of Trustees member since 1977.
- Temple Beth Am where, as Board member since 1983 and Vice-President since 1999, she oversaw the merger of Temple Beth Am into the Commack Jewish Center in 2006. She also serves as webmaster.
- The Bay Shore Interfaith Council serving as its chair and treasurer since 2010.
- The Suffolk County Citizens Police Academy Alumni Association since 2007. She created their website and is currently the webmaster.

And if this wasn't enough, Ellen initiated the re-establishment of the Brentwood Historical Society in February, 2012 and currently serves as its President. In less than two years it has grown into a vital community organization with nearly 75 members. She is currently working to restore the original Brentwood one-room school house which is on the National Register of Historic Places. Ellen has taken steps to acquire grants to begin the restoration of this schoolhouse. Given its historical significance, once completed it will be a tremendous source of pride for the entire Brentwood community.

Ellen uses her many varied talents to help these organizations thrive. She is always cheerful, giving, and kind. She is truly an inspirational volunteer and well deserving of this award.

We, in ROBS, are so proud of her!



## EXECUTIVE BOARD

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 Vismale - Delegates at Large

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Carmela Criscione - Editor  
 tecnoquien@aol.com  
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 John Sherin  
 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.

This newsletter is all about us.

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

Visit us today!



## NICK'S NOTES by Nick Siciliano

Those of you who attend our General Meetings see the **ROBS** banner in the front of the room. It states at the bottom "**Still Serving.**"

What does this mean? Although retired, we are still contributing to those still in service. We support legislation to maintain not only our benefits but for those in service also. We attend meetings and rallies to show our support among other actions.

The woman who epitomized the phrase "still serving" was Dot Zuckerman. When she retired she could have spent time with her family and just enjoyed herself. Instead she remained committed to staying involved in helping retired and active teachers.

Along with her husband and former long-time BTA President, Jack, she helped to organize **Retirees of Brentwood Schools (ROBS)**. In addition, she continued her work with **NYSUT** and **RC21**, always working in our interest. She ran various workshops and kept us informed on issues affecting us.

Dot was still serving when she became ill and worked until the end of her life.

"Still serving" led to Dot having **ROBS** start a scholarship fund for those students who plan to become educators. She also was concerned about the community in which we taught, and this has led to our monthly food drives for **PRONTO's** pantry as well as, when we can, making donations to other activities in the community. As you are aware, we adopt several families for the holidays.

As Dot was very proud of what we do. As the banner states "We are still serving", let us continue to honor this great lady by continuing what she would want us to do--serve our members, those still in service and the community of Brentwood.

Dot was an inspiration to all of us and we will great miss her as a friend and colleague.



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

A long hot summer begins following the long cold winter. Did we see spring around anywhere? If we didn't complain about the weather we would have to complain about politics and who wants to do that?

**Eleanor Lipkins Steffen**, High School Art teacher, is having a solo show of her very recent work including paintings and drawings at the Dog House Gallery in Saugerties, New York. If **ROBS** holds another Artist Meeting, we will be sure to ask Ellie if she can come down and show us her work.

Get well wishes to **Harriet Pepine** (First Vice President) who broke her arm while on vacation in California. Get well wishes to **Marilyn DePlaza** who underwent knee surgery recently. Both ladies are on the mend and, hopefully, back to their regular routines. Sheila Sustrin will be having surgery in August. Letty says she is in good spirits. We send our good wishes to both of them.

We received word in April that Anthony Messina (Math/HS) had passed away. In May we received word that **Edward Swensen** had died. Ed was an administrator during the Eugene Hoyt/Leigh Stuart days in the 1960's. He did not retire from Brentwood but still had ties through his brother Warren, English Teacher at the High School. June was a bad month for **ROBS**. We lost some dear people: **Mina Lynch** (secretary in Special Services), **John Galaris** (Principal of the 10th Grade Center), **Carmine Puleo** (Principal of the High School), **Bill Cowan** (Principal Northeast School and Assistant in Special Services), and we lost **Dot Zuckerman** (too many roles to even name). We have devoted several pages to her, and if you have any special memories you would like to share, please send them to me (tecnouen@aol) or to the website ([www.robsny.org](http://www.robsny.org)).

Mark your calendars for **ROBS** meetings coming up. There are some very interesting speakers scheduled as well as a few surprises!

Congratulations to Sam Smith, **Ronda Brooks'** son, on his graduation from Hofstra's Law School. Sam has just taken his bar exam and is awaiting the results. Good luck!

**Gerry Cohen** sent me an e-mail regarding his amazing length of service to the Brentwood Schools. He started in 1963 and is still working at the Evening High School and Summer School. He has completed 50 years in Brentwood. About his service he says, "I am still working at the Evening High School and Summer School and still find pleasure in the fact that I feel that I am doing something that is right." He is an example of still serving.

Twin Pines Elementary School is celebrating its 50th anniversary. If you have a story you'd like to tell or pictures you want to share, please let me know. We will keep everyone posted regarding any special event that may be planned.

A scholarship has been created in **Dot Zuckerman's** memory. If you would like to contribute towards it, please send a check to Marge Kirchner, our Treasurer.

**ALERT:** **John Sherin** turned over to Hofstra University's film school over 150 DVDs of interviews he had done for the **ROBS** History Project spanning 20 years. **ROBS** will be presenting the Brentwood Library with a set as well. We are asking everyone who was interviewed to attend a Spring General Meeting (date to be announced), when the official presentation is held. We would like to take a group picture, putting faces to the stack of DVDs. Congratulations John on a monumental achievement.

Here are a few words from **Harriet Pepine** about **Dot Zuckerman**: She led a life dedicated to others. She would never leave anybody behind. Once, in Turkey, we couldn't find someone from our tour. She spent hours looking for her and not seeing the sights we went there to see. When we got back to the hotel she found the person sitting there, relaxing, she had returned by taxi. In Albany we traveled by bus for a rally. She turned the bus around and went back several miles to pick up two of our group who didn't get on the bus on time. Several years ago at the Huntington Hilton her foot went through a hole in the stage. She continued with her speech and then got medical attention for a broken ankle. That was Dot; conscientious, thorough, uncomplaining and focused. We always knew we were in safe, competent hands when we were with her.

Congratulations to **Lucille and Mark Fink** on the birth on July 23, 2014 (an early birthday present for Dad) of their grandson, Evan Alexander, who weighed in a 10 pounds 9 ounces and was 23 1/2 inches long. He joins dad, Daniel, and mom, Chelle, and two big sisters, Madeline Noel and Allison Paige who are thrilled with their baby brother.





Adrienne Eastman, Ellen Edelstein, Phyllis Goodwin, Gloria Hannemann, Ronda Brooks, Barbara Mascaro

## WINNERS OF THE 2013-2014 NYSUT JOURNALISM AWARD

by Carmela Criscione

At the RC21 annual luncheon the 2013 Community Service Award was given to Ellen Edelstein.

Joan Perrini also gave out the NYSUT Journalism Awards.

Ellen Edelstein's article "A Stubborn Little Building" about the first schoolhouse standing up to Sandy's wrath, was awarded a First Place Award of Distinction in the category of Best Creative Writing (December 2012 issue).

Marge Kirchner received a First Place Award of Distinction in the category of Local or Chapter Issues for her article "Tooting Our Own Horn - A Round of Applause" (April 2013 issue).

Ronda Brooks received a First Place Award of Distinction in the category of Social Justice for her article "People to People Ambassador Programs" (April 2013 issue).

Adrienne Eastman received a First Place Award of Distinction in the category of Best Graphic Design for her entry "...And Let Me Play Among The Stars...Remembering the 1960's" (April 2013 issue).

Gloria Hannemann has again received a First Place Award of Distinction for **ROBS'** website. Gloria has won each year for the best website and very deservedly so.

Our newsletter received a First Place Award of Distinction for its overall and consistent content.

The judges also gave complimentary comments on other ROBS entries.

My thanks to all the contributors and the Editorial Staff for making the **ROBS** Newsletter so informative and enjoyable.

A job well done.

## NICE GUYS DO FINISH FIRST

### NEWSDAY RECOGNIZES CLEM STANCIK

by Phyllis Goodwin

Congratulations to Clement "Clem" Stancik of Brentwood who recently received the Arthur Ashe Multicultural Award from the U.S. Tennis Association's Long Island Region, in recognition of his efforts.

Clem "embraced diversity, served as an ambassador for the game and exhibited unmatched sportsmanship," the organization stated.

Clem is a retired English teacher from the High School and began coaching the tennis team in 1962 and is now in his 52nd year of coaching. He has more than 437 wins to his credit, has coached more than 1,400 varsity boys and has garnered seven league titles during his tenure.

Clem was chosen as a Winner in Sunday's (July20) section "Around Town" in Newsday.





*In Memoriam*

*Dorothy A. Zuckerman*

*August 26, 1932 – June 3, 2014*

It is with great sadness and a heavy heart that we announce the passing of Dorothy Ann Sugarman Zuckerman on June 3, 2014. Dot had been extremely ill for the past year and a half and her biggest concern was that she continue to function at her best possible level for everyone. Her greatest accomplishment was as a wife, mother, grandmother and friend. Dot made it known to all that she was first and foremost a sixth-grade teacher. As a member of Phi Beta Kappa, she was easily the smartest person in any room with the ability to see all sides of any given situation. We have been privileged to know her for her diligent work for the teachers of Brentwood, Long Island and New York State. All of us remember attending the Ready Or Not workshops in preparation for retirement. Dot was an advocate for teachers' rights and legislative representation for seniors. So many of the contract guarantees that she helped negotiate became the basis for other school district contracts. In 1991-92 as founder and first President of the Retirees of Brentwood Schools and RC 21, Dot set the course for Long Island retirees. She was present at all general meetings and updated the membership on matters of concern. In 2000, Dot was chosen as the NYSUT Retiree Representative for Suffolk County. In this capacity, she planned a yearly conference to update retirees on the latest in political action, member benefits and assisted in forming new retiree groups. Dorothy served as President of the Long Island Association of Retired Americans which represented many retiree groups. Three years ago, Dot was chosen to advocate for seniors on the Governor's Commission on Aging. Dot attended these meetings in Albany and since there was no direct flight there, she had to travel via Baltimore, where she gladly dined on crabcakes during the layover. She served continuously on the ROBS Executive Board. No one will ever comprehend how much she gave up in support of us.

Dot was tireless, courageous, artistic, humorous and fearless. **And She Was Ours.**

There is no greater example of a life well-lived.

Phyllis Goodwin





## A FRIEND FOR ALL SEASONS

by Marge Kirchner

In early May of 1999, when I heard that there was going to be a "Retirement Day" meeting, I decided I would go and gather some information. I spoke at length with Dot Zuckerman who was armed with more than papers and brochures; she was armed with genuine interest in me. She asked a simple questions "Would you like to be retired?" I didn't have an answer, but she told me to think about it and to call Albany to set up a video conference to go over my options. I did that, and decided to retire the next month.

Within my first month of retirement, Dot called and asked me if I would consider being involved with ROBS. I said I would, and she invited me to the next Executive Board meeting. Then she called and asked if I would consider being on the Board of ROBS. After my positive answer, I told her I was honored that she asked me.

What a joy it has been to serve ROBS all these years. At first, Jack was my mentor. Then "Spunky" took over and helped me all along the way. She has been my friend, my fellow Board member and a woman I've always admired.

I learned about her love of reading, traveling and the opera. She introduced me to Masterpiece Classics and told me she didn't like Earl Grey Tea. We laughed a lot about how she met Jack in a college music class and how surprised she was to find herself falling for him. I learned how devoted she was to her precious Jack, her children and grandchildren. I also learned about her steadfast religious beliefs and customs.

Dot was more than intelligent; she was aware! She was dedicated to equality and justice, and loyal to her friends and colleagues. She had more energy than anyone I've ever known, a ready smile, a hearty laugh and warm, loving hugs.

I will miss her beyond words.



## ON THE ROAD WITH DOTTY

by Carmela Criscione

Dot was my travel buddy. Whenever she called about a trip I only said "sign me up". We spoke about going to Australia while waiting to catch a flight to Egypt.

We sailed down the Volga and Neva Rivers on a Russian river cruise. The crew threw all the Americans a special Fourth of July celebration with a lot of vodka toasts. By the end of the trip we had had our fill of Russian icons so the guide arranged for us to get in front of about 5,000 Chinese tourists waiting to see Lenin's tomb.

On our Alaskan trip we booked a special tour on a cloudy rainy day on rough water to spot whales. We saw no whales. At dinner that night we saw whales and dolphins cavort through our windows for free.

Recently, while in Slovenia we thought our credit cards had been demagnetized. Between us (Edie Filosa, Dot and me) we had no ATM card. We had plenty of US dollars, but the banks and money changers were closed, and the hotel did not change money. We maybe had enough money to pay for the soft drinks at the outdoor cafe but no more Euros. Lots of dollars but nowhere to change them...but wait, down the street was a casino. Dot and I went in, changed dollars for Euros. We played the slot machines a little, but our goal had been reached. We rescued Edie from the cafe, had money for dinner and more.

I loved shopping with Dot because she was interested in everything. We brought back floppy hats for the High Tea and then worried about how to pack them. We wondered if drug sniffing dogs at the airport would mistake Croatian lavender for something else. We laughed a lot.

She was a marvelous friend...and my travel buddy.





## **DOT Z** **THE CONSUMMATE** **UNION PERSON**

by

John Sherin\*

Born Dorothy Sugarman, she was known informally as Dot, Dotty or "Spunky", as her vanity plate informed one and all while on the road in the sports car that spoke her name and nature. She changed her name to Zuckerman (not much of a stretch) at the time of her marriage to Jack, her husband and life-long partner. They had two children, Rick and Geri. She also had five grandchildren, four boys and a girl.

She attended Queens College because its campus was beautiful and "out of town". She had to take a variety of transports, and it took two-and-a-half hours to get to that beautiful campus, but it was worth it. Her favorite teachers were those demanding the best she had to give.

Her first teaching job was in Bay Shore for a total of \$3,200 a year and was paid only once a month. She took a nine year hiatus to raise Rick and Geri before returning to work, this time in Brentwood where Jack was also a teacher.

The Dot and Jack Team began work in the late 1960's and early 1970's. She became involved with the Democratic Party and the Brentwood Teachers Association. The first union contract had been approved in 1968, shortly after the Taylor Law became final. Jack became President of the BTA around the same time. They were a team. It was then that Dotty confronted one of her greatest challenges in her career; defining a new role of a professional person while continuing to wear the mantle of organization leadership as well as a modern woman, wife and mother.

She jumped into union affairs becoming Coordinator of Communications, and editor of the first IMPACT newsletter. She was a member of the union's negotiating team for years. The most satisfying and demanding task of all was undertaken when she took charge of grievances for the BTA. Acting in the capacity of semi-lawyer, her work led her to greater union involvement and further association with NYSUT.

Elected a delegate to represent Brentwood teachers at its Representative Assembly, she began to serve on a multitude of committees and task forces. Upon her retirement from teaching in 1991, she began exclusively to represent retirees for NYSUT.

With a small group of fellow retirees she helped organize **ROBS - The Retirees of Brentwood Schools**, in October of 1991. Soon thereafter NYSUT established Retiree Councils throughout the State of New York based upon geographical areas. Brentwood became part of Educational District 21 that included eleven school districts. Dot was elected President of ED 21.

In the Spring of 1991, seeing the benefit of creating such groups, a Long Island Retiree Delegate Council (LIRDC) was formed with Dot as chairperson. Its purpose was to coordinate the work and focus of seven retiree councils. In 1999 **ROBS** had a membership of 400 members. It was a constant struggle to gain acceptance and trust of active chapters. In time NYSUT would boast a retiree membership of 25% of its 400,000 members statewide.

When the COLA Retiree Rally in 1998 had 10,000 members turned out in support of a cost-of-living adjustment, it was plain that retirees were a force to be reckoned with. Dot stepped from her leadership roles at LIRDC and **ROBS** (although she remained on the Executive Board) and served as a representative for retirees at the NYSUT office in Hauppauge.

She continued to offer Ready or Not workshops for 20 years, helping people work through the intricacies of the system prior to making their decisions.

In her off-times she displayed artistic folk art talents that were displayed at a **ROBS** meeting featuring retiree artists.

She was a world-wide traveler often organizing trips to Egypt, Slovenia, Turkey, Australia, Central Europe, and Alaska just to name a few.

She always kept abreast of the challenges of the day affecting education, educators and students alike. She said that the point of survival for young people is "do what you know in your heart is right for you."

She was, and remains, a **Woman of Valor**. A force unlike many others. She will be sorely missed. We were blessed to have had her.

*\*This article is made of excerpts of Dot's video interview with John for ROBS' History Project. You can read the entire article on ROBS' website, [www.robsny.org](http://www.robsny.org).*





YOU LIT UP MY LIFE

A "THEY NEVER FORGET" STORY

by Claire Geraci

My husband and I needed some major electrical work done in our home. We called a number of electricians, many of whom didn't even return our calls. Finally, we spoke with Jim Kelly from Kelly Electrical. He was there the next day. As he and his colleague began their assessment of the problem, he asked us if Ellen Edelstein had recommended him to us. (We had gotten his name from the phone book.) He had heard our name from the Brentwood Schools and shared that he been a student at Twin Pines. He lovingly remembers Mrs. Bloomfield, Mr. Vercillo, Mrs. Price, Mrs. Simuel and on and on. He talked of his years at Twin Pines with great fondness.

The next day he came with two more workers. I was in our family room when a tall young man asked me to turn off all electrical appliances as they were about to start their work. He looked at me for a minute and then went off. This young man went into the basement to begin work on the electric box.

All of a sudden, I heard, "It is you, Mrs. Geraci!!!" Flying up the stairs was that same tall young man, a successful electrician who asked, "Do you remember me?" I always respond with, "Help me..." He told me his name. I not only remembered him, but his brother as well. He had been in my fifth grade class in 1990. I quickly did the math and realized that he was thirty-five years old.

I had thirty-three years of class pictures framed on my classroom wall. The children loved to see themselves, their siblings and sometimes, even their parents in the class photos on that wall. When I pulled out the class pictures, still framed, he was overwhelmed that I still kept all of those pictures and remembered him.

To me, this is what teaching in Brentwood was all about.

*If you have a "They Never Forget" story, please send it to Carmela at [tecnouwen@aol.com](mailto:tecnouwen@aol.com).*



TIME TO MARK YOUR CALENDARS

2014-2015 MEETING DATES

Get out your calendars and trusty #2 pencils and mark the dates for the 2014-2015 **ROBS** meetings.

September 5	Welcome New Retirees
October 3	Judge Peter Cohalan on Town of Islip History
November 7	Linda Metzger on Genealogy
December 5	Luncheon (to be announced)
January	Breakfast (to be announced)
February	no meeting
March 6	to be announced
April 10	to be announced
May 1	to be announced
June 5	Luncheon (to be announced)

We look forward to seeing you at the General Meetings as well as the Luncheons and Breakfast.

Urge a friend to join **ROBS**. By joining **ROBS** you will receive our award-winning newsletter, support education through our scholarship fund and help make the holidays happy for families in need in Brentwood. Also, the Executive Board passed a resolution that anyone not a **ROBS** member will be charged an extra \$5 to attend the Luncheons and Breakfast.

P.S. If you have any ideas for a program or speaker please contact any of the Executive Board Members. Thanks.