

Q NEWS

A QUEST Publication

Fall 2012 Vol. XV No. 1

QUEST IS THRIVING

The Holiday season, it seems to me, is an ideal time for a bit of introspection and appreciation for all the good things in our lives. Particularly after witnessing the devastation caused by Hurricane Sandy to so many of our neighbors and friends, we should all be grateful for the many blessings that we enjoy and often take for granted. And certainly for me, Quest is a key blessing for which I am grateful every day!

Here at 25 Broadway we lot to be pleased about, not the least of which are the approximately twenty new members that I am delighted to welcome into our ranks (thanks to Beverly Francus and the Membership Committee). And with more and more members taking an active role in the organization, I can say with certainty that Quest is thriving.

Thanks to Bob Hartmann and the Curriculum Committee, we have an incredible array of interesting courses from which to choose. And next semester we will introduce a “Quest Encores” program, which will enable us to hear some of the lectures we may have missed, in part because there are just too many good classes running simultaneously. Our presentations have never been better, and I thank everyone who has either presented, or assisted, or both!

And, of course, Sandy Gordon continues to find amazing speakers for our Wednesday Guest Lecturer series. We are all enriched by her superb work.

But – and it seems that there is always a ‘but’ – our demographics dictate that we must continue to seek and recruit new members. We lose something on the order of 10 percent of our members each year; we need not only to replace them, but to continue to grow our membership as well. Ideally, I’d like to see Quest’s membership reach 225 at the beginning of the 2013-14 academic year, which starts next September. In the course of the next few weeks and months we will embark upon a comprehensive program to reach that goal. And we’ll be asking for your help. Stay tuned!

For now, let me just wish each of you a wonderful Holiday and a heartfelt “Thank You” for all you do for Quest – and for making it the premier Lifelong Learning Community in New York City.

Michael Wellner
Vice-President

QNEWS
A QUEST Publication

Editor
Myra Nissen

Associate Editor Bob Reiss
Contributors Barbara Blakemore
John Hood
Photo Editor Lila Heilbrunn
Photos Ruth Kovner

QUEST, a community for lifelong learning, is affiliated with City College of New York (CCNY), the Center for Worker Education (CWE) and Elderhostel Network

25 Broadway at Bowling Green
New York, NY 10004
212.925.6625 Ext. 229
www.questonline.org

Meet Lila Heilbrunn
By Eileen Kelly



QUEST GETS BETTER ALL THE TIME ...

... says Lila Heilbrunn, our resident photographer. She should know: Lila's been at Quest about six years and attends three days a week. Some of her favorite courses are: Supreme Court, Jazz, Human-Animal Connection, Great Plays, Faces of Anthropol-

ogy, Artists and their Work, and History of New York City.

Lila came to NY from Chicago after college and became interested in teaching the deaf. She pursued a master's degree in teaching both the blind and the deaf, but chose the deaf as her vocation. Her interest in photography began during a trip to Sicily with her husband, Martin. Someone there showed her an intriguing camera feature and Lila was captivated. She began taking photography lessons and does so to this day. We know from her work for us here at Quest, that Lila's an expert and even does her own printing.

She has been the Art Editor of *Q Review* for the last two years. Remember the 2011 cover photo of the young woman playing the fiddle? That was Lila's work.

After 9/11, this busy lady joined a Community Emergency Response Team, or CERT and received her license as a ham radio operator as well. At Quest, her emergency training helped prepare her to be one of our Fire Wardens. Yet, Lila still has time to enjoy the culture of New York and spend time with her husband, family and friends.

Remember to smile when you see Lila with her camera!

Spring Schedule

- Feb 4: Classes begin
- Feb 12: Lincoln's birthday - school closed
- Feb 18: President's Day - school closed
- March 25 - April 1: Spring break
- May 16 - Last day of classes



Memories of a beautiful day in June, when a group of Questers took a ferry on 34th St. to explore DUMBO in Brooklyn. We discovered old cobblestone streets, new modern buildings next to old warehouses, funky stores, including one selling paper dolls, all dominated by the magnificent Manhattan Bridge.

The views of Manhattan were glorious, and we all had a great day.



Storm Stories

East Village Diary

Lowell and Elaine Berman

- 8:15 PM Monday: electric service blacked out
 - all water pressure gone
- Tuesday: walked down 7 flights in the dark
 - no stores open, city like a ghost town
 - no cars, few people, nothing near 10th St and Broadway
- Wednesday: our daughter and her friend climbed 7 flights to bring us canned goods and other items
- Thursday: daughter and friend walked to 34th St to find food and drinking water, climbed stairs again with 4 large jugs of water
- Friday afternoon: power restored
- Saturday: water restored

Miracle on 36th St.

Bob Reiss

When Sandy blew out our lights, Debra and I realized we had been derelict in our preparations despite Mayor Bloomberg's admonitions. Two dinky flashlights were just not doing the job. "What about candles?" Debra asked. Yes, "what about candles, do we have any?" The desperate search in the dark began; after a half-hour, I finally discovered on a really *really* top shelf – a menorah with what seemed to be a rather small number of Chanukah candles. Well it was all we had, so we began our Chanukah celebration a little early this year. We thought we might have enough candles for one or two nights. None were to be had in the neighborhood so these would have to last. After all, the lights would come back on in 24 hours at most, wouldn't they? As the darkness persisted through the week, amazingly we were able to keep the menorah lit. And guess what - miracle of miracles - we used our last candle on the fifth day of the blackout. That's the day we finally got power.

Arlene Brown

Our hearts go out to Arlene, whose Long Beach house was ravaged by the storm. Questers fervently hope that she can restore her home of several decades.



Help was Here

Joan Briller

I was moved by actually seeing all the utility trucks from out of state down here in the Battery Park area, especially on Rector Street (which still had dark buildings several weeks after the storm).

They bore names like Dominion, Duke Energy, and Sun Belt and had license plates from Illinois, Virginia, and even Oklahoma and Kansas City, Missouri. It's one thing to read about these out-of-state trucks, but to see them working in NYC streets conveys the real meaning of helping out.



More Storm Stories

Marooned on the 15th Floor **Ralph Shapiro**

I was on the 15th floor of an apartment on West 24th Street when Hurricane Sandy hit. I felt sanguine knowing the electrical grid was underground — no danger of trees falling on power lines and disrupting service. Despite my innate skepticism of cataclysmic weather reports, I did make some preparations: water, soup, canned tuna fish, flashlights, batteries, candles, etc. A point of concern for the future: having stopped smoking, I found that the question of an adequate supply of matches soon became acute. The answer to this shortage and a hedge against future blackouts: resume smoking.

I felt a sense of betrayal when on Monday at about 8:15 P.M. blackness descended on Apartment 15B. My feeling of a double-cross by a malignant fate was strengthened when I looked north out of my bedroom windows and lo! the buildings were ablaze with light. I soon learned the reason for this act of clear discrimination but decided in view of the circumstances to do nothing about it.

Two acts of generosity and kindness must be noted. A young man I know was kind enough to climb the 15 floors to my apartment, after walking from the 60s (subway and bus were both inoperative) with some food. Most important, he appropriated my cell phone to take to a friend of his living in an unaffected area, where he would recharge the phone, then make his way back to my apartment, climbing 15 stories to return a charged cell phone — my lifeline to the outside world.

The second act began with a phone call Friday afternoon from a couple living on the West Side. They told (did not ask) me they were bringing dinner for that evening. All my efforts to dissuade them went for naught. “How will you get here?” “We will walk from 34th Street,” (then the last stop on the subway). “You will have to climb 15 flights!” “So what!” “I don’t have power.” “We love to eat by candlelight.”

In light of their intransigence, I gracefully yielded. As I was getting out the candles and setting the table, their thoughtfulness was rewarded. The power had been restored, the elevators were working and the lights were glowing.

The visit lasted over two hours, the food was delicious, and two bottles of wine were consumed to the accompaniment of delightful conversation — and the welcome sound of water running in the kitchen sink as the dishes were washed.

The Dog Ate My Breakfast **Dolores Dolan**

I was not totally prepared for Hurricane Sandy. We lost power in Stuyvesant Town Sunday evening. I did have flashlight and candles, but no battery-operated radio. My daughter Moira and her husband rescued me the next morning. Off I went to their apartment on the Upper West Side where I indulged in such amenities as a phone, TV, and a computer. It was a five-day mini-vacation for me, with one of my granddaughters home from school. And I bonded with the family's black standard poodle, Susie. Apparently she liked my taste in food. She ate half my ham and cheese sandwich when I left the table for a second to get a napkin. I laughed and told Susie that was a no no. I fared no better at breakfast. I set a bowl of Cheerios, sliced banana and milk on the table, and went to get my coffee. Susie was lapping up the milk in my bowl when I returned. Sharing my food with Susie was a small price to pay for living with all the luxuries we take for granted: heat, light, TV etc.

East Village Angels **Eneida Cruz**

And Eneida tells us of her friend Tamara, who on a mercy errand herself, was felled by Sandy's fury. Two passersby helped her get up and then served as escorts while she delivered a meal to a friend. On the way home, Tamara was again offered assistance by a kindred soul in overcoming the force of the storm.

Poetry Power - It's All the Power We Had

Sandy Eva Shatkin

It came and went a-roaring
and made its presence clear;
before and after coming
it sought to domineer.

Trees came crashing all around
their roots ripped out uprear
they bedded down on roofs
and roads
and tore at power gear.

Rapidly the water rose
along the shoreline near;
some climbed to the attic,
as resident garreteer.

Lights were all extinguished,
life became austere:
batteries and candles
necessities most dear.

The freezer stocked with food-
stuffs
we then began to fear
would quickly prove inedible
unless we cooked them here.

Children thought it fun at first
to be young pioneers
but as the days grew colder,
it was hard to persevere.

Our subways inundated,
under water were the piers.
They were rowing in the
streets,
like New York gondoliers.

Days are past since Sandy
advanced into our sphere,
forewarning global warming
a cause we should revere.



After the Storm Donna M. Rubens

Sullen gray sky
hovers over the scene
of Sandy's devastation.

Wind diminished, still-standing
trees shiver, left leafless
or with only brown leaves
to register the season.

Some people out, but careful
to skirt the arbors of parks,
not trusting that trees have
done
with falling branches.

Recovery perhaps, when
sun returns, but only
for some. Others, left
homeless, or taken in flood.
What of them, then?

The apocalypse now —
or more to come?

Sand / Sandy Carole Cronig Abrahams

Rocks are
frozen, cracked, tumbled
slung against each other
smacked into pieces
worn down, smoothed

metamorphic
sedimentary
igneous

minimized
rocks become sand
the stuff of deserts
the stuff of beaches
the stuff flung at land
along rims of seas

and so the name of the
monstrous storm
resounds
with the name of tiny rocks

water hurled sand
and was called Sandy.

QUEST DISTINGUISHED GUEST LECTURER SERIES

Thanks to **Sandy Gordon**, our distinguished guest-lecturer series continues to excite and amaze us. Some highlights from Fall 2012:

GUEST: Professor **Laura Greeney**, Fordham Univ.
LECTURE: American Voices: American Literature and Opera

Professor Greeney traced the history of American opera and the literature on which it is based. Examples included: Bristoe's *The Big Sleep* based on Washington Irving's Rip Van Winkle; *The Scarlet Letter* by Walter Damrosch and George Parsons Lathrop, based on Hawthorne's novel; and Marc Blitzstein's *Regina*, based on Lillian Hellman's *The Little Foxes*. (The musical style of *Regina* is considered to be the new American *verismo*). *McTeague*, a novel by Frank Norris, was adapted as an opera by Robert Altman.

GUEST: **Nikole Beckwith**
LECTURE: An Interview with the actor, singer, dancer, artist and playwright



What a treat! Through Sandy Gordon's insightful questions, we learned how Nikole got a foothold in the theater, working as an assistant to Eric Bogosian and later with Charles Bush in *Vampire Lesbians of Sodom*.

"Working with these people was like a mini class in playwriting," says Beckwith. Her 30 second monologue at the Bowery Poetry Club led to numerous opportunities as offers to do small parts starting coming in. But playwriting was where her heart was.

Questers were treated to a reading of two of Beckwith's short short plays, performed by our own **Marilyn Rosen** and **Bob Hartmann**. Beckwith's dark humor came through beautifully; in one play, two people are standing on a bridge contemplating suicide. But first they have to leave to buy chewing gum. In the second play, a woman isolated in a cave looks at her dead companion with cannibalistic desires. Yes, it's funny!

GUEST: **Kathleen Chalfant**
LECTURE: In Performance and Conversation

Sandy Gordon recounted Ms. Chalfant's outstanding performances in *Wit*, *Angels in America*, *M. Butterfly*, *The Vagina Monologues*, *Endgame*, *Henry V*, *Painting Churches* and most recently, *Red Dog Howls*. Asked how she creates such diverse roles, the actress recalled being raised in her parents' boarding house and meeting a vast array of unforgettable characters. Invariably she can conjure up one of those boarders to play any part. She then performed a scene from *Red Dog Howls*. In 5 minutes, without sets, without makeup she showed us what real theatre is all about.



Kathleen Chalfant with Sandy Gordon

GUEST: **David Rohde**
LECTURE: An Intimate Encounter in the World of Terrorism



"Insights, intrigue, and shivers" describe the experience of listening to David Rohde. Kidnapped by the Taliban in Afghanistan, he faced the daily possibility of execution during seven months of captivity. While his wife and our State Department negotiated in vain for his freedom, he finally managed a daring escape. His talk proved more fascinating than an 007 movie!

Quest Moments

What is a “Quest Moment”? It happens in class when the presentation and a member’s life trajectory intersect to create a learning moment unique to our organization. Examples:

The Course: History of Architecture

The Presentation: Urban Planning

The presenter: Franz Friedrich

The moment(s): Franz was discussing an article on Louisville, KY, by Michael Kimmelman, architecture critic for the NY Times. Franz speculated that Kimmelman might have been raised in Louisville, but **Ruth Robbins** immediately assured the class that he is a New Yorker through and through, having gone to PS 41 in the Village with her son.

The Course: Science and Math for Everyone

The Presentation: The Higgs Boson

The presenter: Steve Allen

Steve made a valiant attempt to explain all the hoopla surrounding discovery of the Higgs Boson. But **Lila Heilbrunn** noted that her brother, Sherwood Parker, is an experimental physicist who has designed with others the underlying technology for the particle tracker of the Atlas experiment at the Large Hadron Collider near Geneva, Switzerland. When Lila asked him why he wasn’t excited about the Higgs Boson, he told her, “It will be another year of running to know that it is the Higgs. In the future we will learn more about Higgs-like bosons. We do not now know anything about the makeup of dark matter and dark energy, which constitute about 95% of the mass / energy of the universe.”

The Course: History of Architecture

The Presentation: I.M. Pei

The presenter: Sondra Lipton

Following Sondra’s in-depth talk on I.M. Pei, **Lynnel Garabedian** recounted her 37 years in an apartment house designed by Pei. Although the bedrooms were small, she extolled the spacious living room and the children-friendly design.

The Great Debate

October 25, 2012 - The Quest Election Debate (QED) took place before a goodly crowd of likely voters, not an undecided one among them. A panel of three each spoke for 15 minutes presenting his or her case. **Steve Allen** represented President Obama, **Jay Lipow** stood in for Governor Romney and **June Zaccone** led the charge for "None of the Above."

After the presentations, questions were taken from the floor and many insightful opinions were tossed around. (None were caught, however). Perhaps not many voters (ed note: meaning *none*) changed their minds but some light was shed on the choice to be made.

Recruiting Guest Speakers

We are always on the lookout for interesting speakers for the Distinguished Guest Lecturer Series. If you’ve heard a talk recently that you think would interest our group, please let Bob Reiss know (bobreiss42@gmail.com) and we will follow up.

Yoga is the practice of tolerating the consequences of being yourself.



Madame Editor discoursing on Melville