



# PORT OF CALL

The newsletter that keeps Port's retirees connected and informed.

**PWTA RETIRED EDUCATORS CHAPTER  
PORT WASHINGTON, NEW YORK**

**Winter 2017**

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**NYSUT NO. 19 080R Visit our website at: [www.pwta.us/PWRE](http://www.pwta.us/PWRE) AFT NO. 9591-R**

## A 20 YEAR DECISION

It has happened in New York State every twenty years beginning in 1976-77. It will happen again in November 2017. "Shall there be a convention to revise the constitution and amend the same?" will be the question before New York State voters.

What will New Yorkers have to consider before voting on November 7, 2017? A constitutional convention is a long-drawn-out and expensive process. Delegates will have to be elected, 15 at-large delegates and 3 from each of the Senatorial Districts. The delegates will be compensated at the same rate as members of the New York State Assembly for pay and expenses. If the delegates happen to already be members of the Assembly, they will be compensated twice. Whatever the delegates come up with for a new or changed constitution will have to be put to the voters in a general election. The New York City Bar Association estimates that such a convention will cost between \$35 million and \$65 million.

The history of constitutional conventions in New York State is an interesting one. There have been nine constitutional conventions, and three occurred in the twentieth century. The voters rejected the results of two of these three. The last constitutional convention was held in 1967 at a cost of \$50 million at that time. 186 delegates were elected and met between April 4 and September 26, 1967. The results were disappointing. Most of the controversy centered on opposition to the repeal of the 1894 Blaine Amendment. The Blaine Amendment prohibits direct state aid to parochial school(s), and there was a vocal movement to repeal the amendment and allow direct aid. When the proposed constitution came up for a vote, the state's voters overwhelmingly defeated it 3 to 1. It is likely that the 1967 defeat left such a bad taste in the mouths of voters that calls for conventions in 1985 and 2005 were defeated, and no conventions were held.

Does New York need a constitutional convention in 2017? Definitely not! While the state constitution is very long, there is a much cheaper and easier way to amend it. The legislature can place a specific issue on the ballot anytime. It must be passed in two successively elected legislative sessions and then put on the ballot during a general election. (Such an amendment will appear on the ballot this November.)

A constitutional convention at this time will be as divisive as the one in 1967. Issues concerning pensions and other retiree benefits will be foremost in the minds of many. For these reasons, it is probably best to once again say **NO** to a constitutional convention.

## An Invitation



The Port Washington Teacher Center appreciates our retired educators, whose experience and dedication to education is an inspiration to all teachers!

You are always welcome to participate in Teacher Center activities and events as our guests.

Please visit our webpage to view our current in-service workshops and informational sessions:

<http://www.portnet.org/teachercenter>

Follow us on Twitter: [@pwteachercenter](https://twitter.com/pwteachercenter)

Contact Susan McAuliffe, Center Director, if you have any questions or would like to share your knowledge with Port educators. We would love to see you at the Teacher Center!

*Susan T. McAuliffe*  
Director  
Port Washington Teacher Center

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## Hello from Grace Bellomo

I would like to introduce myself to you. I was an education assistant in the Port schools for 18 years. I have worked in 3, different schools. I spent my last years in Guggenheim. I spent the last 9 years of my career working in kindergarten with Mrs. O'Donnell. During that time I started writing down what the children said and what went on in our classes. Upon my retirement I told Mrs. O'Donnell I wanted to write a book. She said, "Go for it". This was something I always wanted to do .... Write, illustrate, and publish.

We named my book The Day We Killed the Pasta: and Other Kindergarten Tales. I published the book in 2001. It can be found on amazon.com

## Join us - April 5th at 1:30

If you have never visited the Morgan Library and Museum, now is the time. If you have enjoyed it enough to want to go again, join us for a one-hour Docent Tour. The cost will be around \$25 depending on how many people participate. Please let me know, as soon as possible, if you would like to join us. Thanks!

Barbara Blum  
[LBBLUM67@gmail.com](mailto:LBBLUM67@gmail.com)

## Come to the P.W.R.E. Book Club



*All are welcome whether you've read the book or not. If you plan to attend, please RSVP to the host. (Check member directory for address & phone number, or email.)*

Date: Wednesday, March 1st, at 11:30  
Book: *The Mare* by Mary Gaitskill  
Hosted by Tessa Jordan

Date: Wednesday, April 19th at 11:30  
Book: *The Underground Railroad* by Colson Whitehead  
Hosted by Ute Johnson

[http://www.pwta.info/PWRE/pwre\\_news/news\\_book\\_club](http://www.pwta.info/PWRE/pwre_news/news_book_club)

### PORT OF CALL

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## FRIENDSHIP/ REMEMBRANCE COMMITTEE



*Norma Ziegel*

### Get Well Wishes Were Sent To:

Gail Femmel

### Condolences Were Sent To:

Maria Carpinelli on the loss of her husband  
Louise Pennisi on the loss of her brother  
Lydia Rab on the loss of her husband  
Joann Somma on the loss of her mother  
Alice Teepe on the loss of her husband  
The family of Penny D'Antonio  
The family of Ernie Meyer

### A \$100 contributions was sent to the PWRE Scholarship Fund in memory of

Penny D'Antonio

Ernie Meyer

# The Tenement Museum - Barbara Blum

On a lovely October day a group of Port Washington Retired Educators went on a tour of an apartment at 97 Orchard Street, a lower east side tenement and then a walk around the neighborhood. Both the apartment and neighborhood tours were given by the Tenement Museum. Our docent explained that the Tenement Museum organization researched the immigrant families who lived in the apartment, shared their personal experiences with us, and gave us a glimpse of life, living conditions, challenges, and hardships that these families dealt with daily. The three small rooms often served as work rooms as well as living quarters. The docent shared the names of families that had lived there and recounted a reconnection with a family whose grandparents had lived here. This tenement was home to Irish, Italian, Jewish, and German immigrants during its history from the 1850s through 1950s.

Today the neighborhood is pricey, and the tenements are either being torn down or renovated as co-ops. Buildings that were home to lower middle class people are becoming new luxury apartments. Galleries and trendy restaurants line the streets. These same streets used to house stores whose merchandise would hang outside, and shopkeepers hawked their wares. Vendors would sell off carts. You could find fashion, luggage, dry goods, and much more.

In the 1950s my father had an office on Broome and Suffolk on the same block where Gutterman's had a funeral home, and there was an umbrella factory. Those were the days when you went to Ratner's for a fancy dairy meal or Gluckstern's for a marriage celebration. The only places for lunch were the Garden Cafeteria near the Forward building or the corner luncheonette. The luncheonette had only a counter with stools. The same people frequented it daily. Everyone was on a first name basis.

Later, my father moved his office to Grand Street, near Essex - two doors away from the bialy store! But he still ate lunch at the same luncheonette. These were 1960s and 70s, the years when Orchard Street housed the best hosiery and lingerie at discount prices. Grand Street was the place to buy towels, linens, and bedding. Harris Levy was where I shopped when I got married. Pickles came from Gus's barrels and candy from Wolsk on Ludlow (the owner lived in Great Neck) or Economy Candy which used to be on the corner of Rivington & Essex, but has moved into the block, just across from the new blue Richard Meyer building. Both places shipped anywhere, even to kids at college! A few places like Katz's Deli have survived.

On the day of our excursion, Joan Bernhard joined us and regaled us with stories about when she was a young adult and lived in a tenement similar to the one we visited. She answered many of our questions and helped make tenement life come alive.

## Hello from Frank Thorp

Contrary to a report on Facebook about my demise I am alive and well. Paula and I still live in East Marion out in eastern LI. I have retired from my job at the marine hardware store, but Paula still works as a nurse at a local nursing home. Son Charlie moved to South Carolina, but his son still lives in Greenport. Ann lives in Port with her younger daughter, a senior at Schreiber. Another daughter is a nursing student at Penn State. Jill is in her second term as a Southold Town Councilwoman. Her daughter graduated, last year from Fredonia and her son is a sophomore at Purchase. Frankie lives in Southold with his wife Shannon and works as a shellfish inspector for the NYS DEC. All my children are former Port Washington Public School graduates.

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## Kidnapped by Jim Jones

My expectations for the Christmas weekend were not unusual; there would be some hectic running around trying to get all the pieces necessary to entertain and feed my visiting family, but nothing I had not done before. Friday morning I was even able to do my four hour shift at Volunteers for Wildlife, a very enjoyable part of every week for me. What I did not expect and could never prepare for, was the call that I received from the wildlife hospital later that day. On the other end of the line was one of our wildlife rehabilitators. I could hear her sobbing as she cried, "They've taken Buster."

Buster is a bird, a male American kestrel, our smallest North American falcon. He is one of our permanent residents, wild creatures that, after being rescued, cannot be released due to some physical or behavioral damage. We use all of our permanent residents in our wildlife programs where they act as ambassadors for their species. Buster is imprinted, raised by a foolish human at the critical time when birds identify just who they are; as a result he thinks that he is a person. To say that he is one of our most loved residents, by both staff and program viewers alike, is an understatement.



I rushed right over to our facility at Bailey Arboretum. The state of shock and concern was palpable with both staff and volunteers alike. We called the police. They came quickly and did all of the things that they could. Someone had come in and taken Buster. He is normally attached to the top of his cage with a long leather strap - that had been cut. Since Buster is easier to handle than our other raptors, he would go into a box and then be easily stolen away. Our wildlife staff are young and media savvy. They put out the word on Facebook and other websites. I contacted the local newspapers and Newsday; they have always cared about our organization. The bottom line for us was simple: we did not wish to prosecute. We just wanted Buster back!

The waiting began, a period when you have no control and are constantly thinking of the bad things that could so easily occur. Buster is an older bird that cannot survive on his own. Without proper care or if he was set free, the results would be deadly. I spent hours chasing down leads from concerned people who had 'spotted' a bird that looked like Buster. All turned up empty. On Christmas day, as my family was coming over for the day, I went out to chase another lead - it also went wanting. Buster's face was out there, people were looking, we just had to keep hoping.

Christmas evening, as we were all trying to relax while eating dessert and surrounded by opened presents, I got a call: "We got him back!" Leaving my family for the second time that day, I rushed over, and entered an exam room filled with staff and volunteers. They were all centered around a small box on the table. Inside was our found little falcon, feeding energetically on a fresh mouse and chattering away. He was very hungry and noticeably rattled. Buster had been anonymously dropped off at the center in a box with a note attached that read, "We saw this box on the side of the road, stopped to check, and found this bird inside, so we brought it to you." Of course, that is what I always do when I see a box on the side of the road. No matter, Buster was back.

For the next couple of days, we kept him in a separate facility so that he could relax and recover. Then, he was back in his favorite spot, watching us all come and go while eating his daily mouse. One difference was that now he was being watched by one of several surveillance cameras that were installed for free by a very caring soul who had read about Buster's plight. Some good does, indeed, come (sometimes) from all bad. A true gift from the spirit of Christmas Present!



## A Woman in Action - Judith Schutzman

Like many of you, I marched on January 21 in Boston. We sang America the Beautiful with full hearts. It felt good to hear the speeches of union presidents as well as the spirited Elizabeth Warren. People around me included an elderly woman in a wheelchair and members of the Dirty River Brass Marching Band. My daughter stood somewhere 175,000 people away, near a large group of women in matching pink hijabs. The following weekend my daughter, granddaughter, and I went together to the Muslim demonstration at Copley Square, and like the Women's March, the experience was uplifting in its camaraderie and joyful presence.



Meanwhile I had been sending out inquiries for volunteer work on behalf of refugees for months, and in early January the minister of a multicultural organization asked me to teach English two days a week to Syrian refugees at an Islamic Center in Worcester. I thought I had left teaching behind, but it was like putting on a familiar shawl, warm and easy, and I recognized the old feelings of love and responsibility for my new students: thirteen, sometimes sixteen Syrians—one a nine year old boy whose mother was killed by a sniper as they shopped in the market, another who came to work in the family bakery one morning to find a crater where the bakery had been. Another told me wistfully that he had four beautiful walnut trees in Aleppo.

The group liked and trusted me; things seemed to go well, except for one hitch. The Lebanese interpreter was as likely to hijack conversation as facilitate, and her husband, an aging American truck driver, came to the mosque wearing a Trump button and NRA cap, attempting to engage me in verbal combat and later flooding my email box with Trumpian propaganda. I found out quickly that reasonable interaction on the issues was useless, but my feelings were under assault as well. What helped was remembering my Buddhist vows.

This week I showed up with phonics lesson in hand to be told that the whole thing was off. The facts were murky, alarming in their violence, but truth seems a malleable thing these days. Currently I am planning an English curriculum with an ESL teacher and will, I think, teach refugees again.

## A Woman in Action - Cheryl Dodes

Since I retired in 2007 a lot has happened. My son Michael, who interned in the Weber library is now a Library Coordinator for the City of New York school system. His territory is all of Queens and part of Brooklyn. Michael and his wife have been blessed with a daughter, Alyssa, who is now three years old.

Bob and I moved to Florida shortly after retiring, and we love it here. We live in Boynton Beach now, after living in western Boca Raton for many years. I am involved in a lot of volunteer work and other activities: I am on the Board of Directors of Retiree Council 43 of NY Teachers Retired in Florida (TRIF), on the Board of Directors of the Southeast Chapter of TRIF, and on the Board of the Boca Raton Orchid Society. I publish the newsletter for all three groups.

I volunteer in the Joint Replacement Center at Broward North Hospital, where I had both hips replaced a few years ago. I also write for our community magazine, "Times of Your Life," doing the cover article, the Garden Spotlight, and the column for the Garden and Nature Club in our community, Valencia Isles.

In my spare time I teach visiting school and camp groups about South Florida animals and the importance of wetlands in the ecology at Green Cay Nature Center, a created wetlands that mimics the Everglades. Green Cay is a part of the water purification process. The plants in the wetland remove phosphates and nitrates from partially treated "used" water, so that the water that re-enters the aquifer is clean.

Bob and I go bowling in leagues at least two to three times a week, and we also go square dancing. The square dancing is a bit difficult for me right now because I need knee surgery, having torn the meniscus in my right knee. Bob and I love being active and being able to "give back" whenever we can. For us, retirement is a very busy time.



Merry-Go-Round by Merry Gilbert


## Immersive Avant Garde Art (in an interesting space)

We visited “Pipilotti Rist: Pixel Forest,” a retrospective of the artist’s 30 years of work, at the New Museum on the Bowery. The entire museum was given over to Pipilotti Rist’s work. According to the New York Times’ review (October 22nd), the artist “... has seen her mission almost from the beginning to demolish the boundary of the art world and the world.” And so, we jumped into the art.

According to our guide, Andrew, she began with single channel videos, evocative of the MTV era in which she created them. She moved on to double channel videos in which different series of images are projected on adjacent walls, on adjoining giant screens, in the very large space. Moving to double channel videos enabled her to present the juxtaposition of ideas she wants related.

For example, in “Ever is Over All,” we see a young woman in (according to our guide), a “Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz style dress,” complete with red shoes. No yellow brick road, however, as she is seen joyfully smashing car windows using a poker that is an imitation of the plants of the nature scene on the corresponding wall. Curiously, a police officer comes by, sees her at work, and simply walks on.

Next, into the pixel forest composed of chains of 3,000 roughly-cast plastic sculptures, each containing a single colored pixel



of the videos on the surrounding walls. You are truly immersed in the art, as you walk through the fragments of the work. I heard, “unearthly, relaxing, dreamy, amazing,” as we wandered through.



On the fourth, and last, floor, there are wall to wall beds (which I found out were sterilized, as visions of bed bugs and head lice danced in our little teacher heads—interfering a bit with our enjoyment) the better to appreciate the art projected on the ceiling. The organizer of the show, Massimiliano Gioni, is quoted in the Times as saying, “...this is Monet’s Water Lilies, except from the other side, below the surface.” They are images of the Rhine from under the water.

The music throughout the galleries (which some of us recognized), enhanced the feeling of immersion that the art created.

Our group photo was taken under a chandelier composed of underwear.

Lunch at the nearby Paulaner Brew House and Restaurant gave us ample opportunity to discuss our reactions.

Thanks to Barbara Blum for arranging this wonderful trip off the beaten art path.



## We Asked To Hear From You and We Did...



Garrett Illiano graduated from SUNY Maritime College July 1, 2016, with a Bachelor of Science degree in International Trade and Transportation. Garrett is our first college graduate.

Another family milestone Gerry and I celebrated was our 35th wedding anniversary in Hawaii! Summer 2016 has been a wonderful one for all of us.



Weber teachers who try to meet for lunch once a month. From left to right: Don Voss, Barbara Schmidt, Merle Colchimiro, Lori Goldstein, and Howie Ehrlich. The photo was taken on 1/18/17 at Ben's in Greenvale.



Ray has been making jewelry boxes for the last few years. He recently had a video made of them to be posted on YouTube and photos that will be on Facebook and Instagram. He is hoping to have a show. The links will be found on "Art of the Box". <https://youtu.be/SRIIEEnLB3I8>



Nancy Heller, Nance Hinchliffe, Pat Lynch, and Vicki Field hiked up to the top of Bear Mountain in early October 2016.



Judy Keller celebrated her birthday this summer with Lois Baslaw, Elaine Berman, Gail Femmel, and Sally Reinhardt while rehabbing from a hip replacement. Judy now has an artificial hip to go with her knee. The left leg is totally bionic, just like her spirit.



**Port Washington Retired Educators Chapter**

Meetings will be held on Thursdays at the Port Washington Library on the dates and times listed below, **unless otherwise notified.** **Please check your e-mail or the website for any meeting changes.**

**These meetings aren't just for the PWRE officers. All members are welcome to attend.**

**2016 Meeting Dates**

**March 9@ 10:30 am**

**April 13@ 10:30 am**

**May 11 @ 10:30 am**

<http://www.pwta.info/PWRE/index.shtml>

**PLEASE NOTE: Checks for contributions to the PWRE Scholarship Fund should be made out to the PWRE. Put the name of the honoree on the memo line or in a note.**

**Please mail to:**

**PWTA**

**99 Campus Drive**

**Port Washington, New York 11050**

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