

# QUEST Q NEWS

A Quest Publication

February 2018

## A Note From the President



**I**t is hard to believe that I am starting my second semester as Quest president. I want

you to know that if you have a problem or concern, you can see me in the office most mornings between 9:30 and 10:30 and you can contact me via email at any time. I believe that the last semester was fine, but there is always room for improvement.

As our new term starts, I want to share a few suggestions that I believe will contribute

to all Quest members having the best experience possible:

1. Try to get to class before it starts—late-comers can be disruptive. We realize that problems in train and bus service can sometimes make this a challenge. If you do come late, or if you need to leave in the middle of a class, please try to do so as quietly as possible, including opening and closing the door very slowly to minimize noise.
2. Turn off your cell phone, or put it on vibrate, while class is in session. If you must take a call, leave the classroom before speaking to the caller.

3. Do not talk to your neighbor during class time. Even when you whisper, it can be very distracting for other members and for the presenter. Similarly, please refrain from looking at mobile devices during class time (unless you're looking up information you are going to share with the class).

By following these guidelines, we all will have a better Quest experience. I wish everyone a healthy and happy new year.

— Bob Gottfried

## A Salute to the Tech Committee

**A**s we begin a new semester, we would like to salute the unsung heroes of Quest—the members of Quest's Technology Committee. As most of you know, two tech committee members are assigned to sessions each morning and afternoon to ensure that presenters' technology needs are being addressed.

Each Tech Committee member has a working knowledge of the podium, external microphones, the DVD players, PowerPoint and much more. Almost every day Tech Committee members face an unexpected technology glitch. Their job is to ensure that a glitch does not become a crisis.

The same tech members are assigned to each session throughout the semester. In other words, the two techies assigned to

Monday morning of A Week will continue to be assigned to Monday morning of A Week throughout the semester. If you are giving a presentation, make sure you know who the assigned techies are and contact them in advance if you anticipate problems.

Last fall the members of the tech committee were Steve Allen, Wayne Cotter (Chair), Doreen DeMartini, Marian Friedmann, David Judlowitz, Bob Reiss, Howard Salik, Art Spar, and Michael Wellner (Vice-Chair). Over the winter break, the Committee added at least a half-dozen new members who will be training during the first part of the spring semester.

If you have any technology-related questions, please do not hesitate to contact members of the Tech Committee, either in person or by email.

## Q News Staff

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## CultureQuest *by Bob Reiss*

Quest has initiated an exciting new program, *CultureQuest*. Building on our occasional Friday museum tours, we will now strive to fill at least half the Fridays and some Saturdays during the school year with group tours to some of our treasured New York cultural institutions.

Linda Downs, who brings unsurpassed credentials to the task, will chair this activity. Linda previously served as Curator of



Education at the Detroit Institute of Arts, Education Director at the National Gallery of Art and Executive Director of the Figge Art Museum in Davenport, IA. On her committee will be Renee Woloshin, Helen McMahon, John Hood and Bob Reiss. So, if you have suggestions for tours, contact Linda or one of the committee members.

Currently scheduled tours include:

- **Friday, February 9**, Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Michelangelo: Divine Draftsman and Designer*, self-guided tour, limited to 40 people
- **Friday, February 23**, Museum of Modern Art, *Tarsila du Amaral: Modern Art in Brazil*, guided tour, limited to 40 people
- **Friday, March 9**, Whitney Museum of American Art, *Grant Wood: American Gothic and Other Fables*, guided tour, limited to 20 people
- **Friday, March 23**, New York Historical Society, *Hotbed*, guided tour, limited to 20 people

In addition, John Hood will schedule two Saturday tours and serve as docent at the Folk Art Museum. Watch NWAQ and the Bulletin Board for sign-up instructions. We are looking forward to having CultureQuest become a popular feature on the Quest schedule.

## Nan McNamara Cuddles Babies in Need

*by Dolores Dolan*

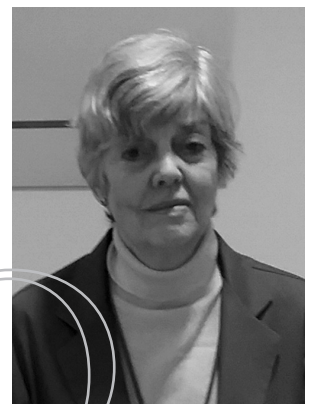
Many Quest members are grandmothers and grandfathers and we all love cuddling our tiny grandchildren. But many of our grandchildren in high school or college are no longer in the cuddly stage. One Quest grandmother, Nan McNamara, has the pleasure of cuddling infants for four hours every Thursday. She holds tiny babies as part of a Cuddler Program in the neonatal intensive care wing at Columbia Presbyterian Hospital.

Before she was accepted as a volunteer,

Nan went through background checks, letters of recommendation, many interviews and a 30-page manual. She said it was all worth it. She finds that holding, rocking and singing to the babies brings lovely responses like a smile or a quiet time after fussing. It is mostly women who volunteer as Cuddlers in New York but Nan has heard of a Cuddler grandfather somewhere in the Midwest.

Nan retired from a 20-year career as Admissions Dean of NYU Law School and

has been an active member of Quest for three years.



## A Tour of Microfinancing in Oaxaca

by Marc Kouffman

Ten of us plus a volunteer guide and translator visited three fledgling businesses in San Miguel village outside Oaxaca City, Mexico. We were on a tour of entrepreneurs who had received microfinancing. Fundacion en Via supplied \$2500 interest-free loans with a three percent default rate to female business owners in Oaxaca State.

Our morning visit was to a woman in her 60s who made and sold chocolate squares. Her husband, sporting a sombrero and moustache, interrupted her presentation to shake our hands while his entrepreneur wife kept chasing him away. I asked if she'd be taking the new English and business classes offered locally (financed by crowd sourcing). She said she would and that her two daughters were in the University. "They know they have to depend on themselves."

Our second visit was to a tortilla maker who sells 150 tortillas a day for 5 pesos each. The ingredients cost three pesos. Her husband left her with four kids two years ago. She works from 9 p.m. to 4 a.m. and then tends to her children.

Last stop, a double header, was to a restaurateur and a talented weaver. The restaurant fed us and the food was okay. The owner was a little fuzzy on numbers and profit margin but upbeat in year three about growth prospects for 2018. The talented young weaver learned her craft from her grandmother. She makes beautiful handbags and I bought one for Lana for \$27. She averages about one sale per week. In the off season, she markets flavored Mescal but didn't have any unopened bottles left to sell.

The tour proceeds, \$50 per person, go to the microfinance pool. I asked the guide why no loans were being made to men. There was a smirk or two but nobody bothered to answer my question!

## Frank Lloyd Wright for the Holidays

Phil Gisser celebrated the holidays and his 93rd birthday at Brandes House, his daughter's Frank Lloyd Wright home in suburban Seattle. He enjoyed quality time with his daughter, son-in law, grandson and his grandson's girlfriend. He woke Christmas morning to a rare (for Seattle) scene, a landscape of snow-covered trees and shrubs. It all melted in a few days, but is memorialized in these photos.



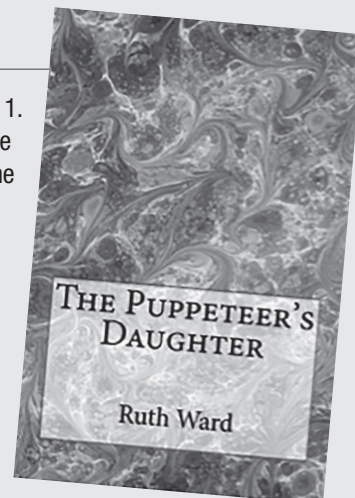
## A First Look at My New Novel

by Ruth Ward

To get 2018 off to a good start, I launched my new novel, *The Puppeteer's Daughter* on January 1. A motherless seven-year-old collects nickels and dimes in 1950s Brooklyn Heights from the street urchins who frequent her papa's Old-World refrigerator box puppet theater. Riveted by the children's fascination, she decides to become a writer and struggles to find her place in the world.

Years later, at *The Village Voice* and *The New York Times*, she ploughs through an obstacle course of passionate relationships while reporting on the difficulties of people challenged by poverty, gender, race and religion. As she strives to come to terms with the outer world, she reaches a deeper understanding of her loved ones and herself.

*The Puppeteer's Daughter*, which deals with a Brooklyn girl's long time coming of age, is now available on amazon.com in paperback and on Kindle, as well as at Barnes and Noble as a new release.





## Who's Doing What



**Judy and Pete Weis** traveled west between Christmas and New Year's. They visited the San Francisco area with some of their family (son, daughter-in-law and grandkid) and then went down to sunny Los Angeles to visit their daughter, son-in-law and teenage grandkids, one of whom was away at school and not in the picture. They got back to NY just in time for the blizzard.



**Joyce West, Sheryl Harowitz** and a friend at the Women's March in January.

## Maiden Voyage On A CitiBike

*by Art Spar*



My body is quivering  
Skin and bones shivering  
Lungs hyperventilating  
Mind anticipating

Tension level shrill  
Events about to spill  
It's all about the thrill

Caressing the bike key  
Touching it reassuringly  
Striding to 72nd Street  
Where my chariot and I shall meet

Shake off the morning chill  
This is not a drill  
Consummate the thrill

But fearful thoughts abound  
A bike will not be found  
My key will not work  
Ride into a tree  
Endure a broken knee  
The ER doctor giving me the stare  
Discovering my orange underwear  
Banned from using bikes  
No more biking Facebook likes

Nightmares last until  
Fear is told to chill  
And I embrace the thrill

So will this be for good  
A blur of motion whence I stood  
A fluid body exercised  
Lungs and heart energized  
The vast Hudson sliding by  
Ancient piers rotting where they lie  
New York waking from its sleep  
Workers with promises to keep  
Seagulls screaming ferries barging  
Sated garbage trucks discharging

I am a capsule gliding through  
the shadows  
Of Carnival and Intrepid as they pose  
For tourists questing something new  
Women and men running in lycra  
Revealing all they yearn for  
Pick-up hoops where young men  
practice  
Who they are becoming  
Lovers on a bench  
Closing a veil of intimacy before  
watching eyes  
And the Freedom Tower grows larger  
Commanding the heavens

I marvel at all this still  
Waiting for the time until  
I return to relive the thrill

• • •

**Arthur Spar** has been given the Poster-Boy award for CitiBike here in the Big Apple. They will be featuring his poem this week about the adventures of a CitiBike member.

Art retired after a career in market research. When he is not commuting to QUEST to teach a course in Oral Interpretation of Poetry, he is with his wife Shelly riding all over the upper West Side. He has been a member of CitiBike since its launch and his passion for CitiBike is reflective in the poem he writes on his CitiBike experiences.

## Quest's 2017 Holiday Luncheon



On Friday December 8th, nearly a hundred Quest members and their guests enjoyed a wonderful holiday luncheon (arranged by Bob Hartmann and Michael Wellner) at Scaletta Ristorante (located on West 77th Street, just across the street from the American Museum of Natural History). With decent weather, delicious food, attentive service and unlimited red and white wine, what could possibly go wrong? Everyone had a wonderful time, and thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to mingle in such a festive setting.

But the highlight clearly was the surprise presentation by Mary Ann Donnelly of "2017: A Year of Angst," seventeen poems composed by a dozen of Quest's talented poets, who artfully expressed the concerns felt by almost all of us since last year's election. If you could not attend the luncheon you may pickup a copy of these poems in the Quest office or in the lunchroom. Congratulations to all who contributed—well done, indeed!

Now we are busy looking at potential venues on the East Side for next year's holiday luncheon. Stay tuned for more information—and feel free to give Bob or Michael any suggestions that you may have.



### Profile

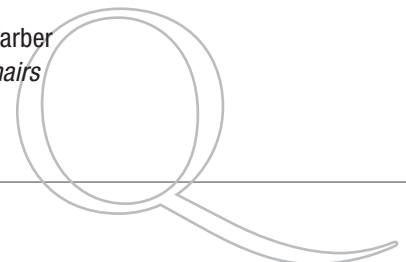
**Linda Downs** retired last year as the director of the College Art Association, an international learned society for art and art history professors. Her career has also included being the director of the Figge Art Museum in Iowa, the curator of education at the National Gallery in Washington, DC and curator at the Detroit Institute of Arts. Linda currently lives in Brooklyn. She has returned to piano and voice lessons and tutors immigrants at the English Speaking Union. Her diverse interests include Baroque and classical chamber concerts, dance concerts, hiking, dancing, traveling and all kinds of literature. During the winter, she spends some time at her home in Tucson.



### Calling All New Quest Members

Welcome Freshman! Welcome to our 2018 spring semester. We will meet the last Tuesday of each month at 12 noon in Room 27. Please take the opportunity to meet our officers, coordinators, and other fellow new members. Join in our conversation. Share with us what you expect from Quest. All suggestions are welcomed. Schedules will be posted each month.

Pam Gemelli & Betty Farber  
*Freshman Class Co-chairs*



## The Roaming Reporter

By Bob Moore

**B**ob Moore is curious about a lot of things, including holiday customs around the world. If you're brave enough for international holiday air travel, you may run into these surprising traditions:

- **Scotland and Northern England:** You will find *first footing* on New Year's Eve/Day, which in Scotland is referred to as "Hogmanay." The custom is to knock on a neighbor's door, usually carrying a lump of coal. Your greeting might be "Lang may yer lum reek," a Hogmanay greeting, implying, "Long may your chimney smoke." In Scotland, New Year's is more important than Christmas. January 1st and 2nd are both holidays and January 24th is *Burns Night*, time for eating haggis and drinking whisky.
- **Shetland Islands:** Further north in the Shetland Island town of Lerwick they celebrate "Up Helly Aa" on the last Tuesday of January every year. Up Helly Aa is a lot more than a subarctic bonfire and booze-up. It's a superb spectacle, a celebration of Shetland history and a triumphant demonstration of the islanders' skills and spirit. This northern Mardi Gras lasts just one day and night. But it takes several thousand people 364 days to organize. Much of the preparation is in strictest secrecy. The biggest secret of all is what the head of the festival, the *Guizer Jarl*, will wear and which character from the Norse sagas he'll represent. At the end of the event a wooden boat is burned.
- **Sweden:** Here, a kind of dried cod called lutefisk, dried in the summer and reconstituted for the Christmas meal, is eaten. Another Swedish tradition is to watch Donald Duck cartoons on Christmas Eve afternoon. Donald Duck is called *Kalle Anka* by the Swedes. Since 1966, a 13-metre-tall Yule Goat has been built in the center of Gävle's Castle Square for the Advent, but this Swedish Christmas tradition has unwittingly led to another tradition—people trying to burn it down. Since 1966 the Goat has been successfully burned down 29 times—the most recent destruction was in 2016.
- **Japan:** Christmas has never been a big deal in Japan. Aside from a few small, secular traditions such as gift-giving and light displays. However, a new quirky *tradition* has emerged in recent years—a Christmas Day feast of the Colonel's very own Kentucky Fried Chicken.
- **Norway:** Perhaps one of the most unorthodox Christmas Eve traditions can be found in Norway, where people hide their brooms. It's a tradition that dates back centuries to when people believed that witches and evil spirits came out on Christmas Eve looking for brooms to ride on. To this day, many people still hide their brooms.
- **New York:** the classic Jewish Christmas day tradition is Chinese food and a movie.

To all at Quest: "Long may your chimney smoke."

## Creative Corner

### Fairy Tales Will Get Me Through the Winter

by Betty Farber

This winter will not last forever.

The warm spring days to come will bring me gifts

Like food to grandma from Red Riding Hood

But with no wolf to frighten me.

This winter will not bring me to starvation.

I'll eat my porridge from the largest bowl.

I'll doze in my cozy bed through dark nights

Waiting for the kiss of summer sunlight.

I will get through this frozen winter

While crooked branches, dripping with icicles,

Scrape the window like long fingers of the witch

Poking Hansel and Gretel's soft young flesh .

No fairy tale — winter will disappear.

Spring will find me rejoicing in bright sunshine

My heart will overflow with love while singing

Praises to this winter's happy ending.

### More Good Press For "The Elusive Baboon"

**Jennifer Jolly** was delighted when her book, *"The Elusive Baboon: A Ugandan Odyssey,"* was chosen as one of the books for Hoboken's novel night in late 2017. In this annual event, people across Hoboken volunteer to host dinners centered on the theme of a book to raise funds for the public library. This was a wonderful evening with terrific guests, outstanding food and hospitality provided by our Australian hosts, Marcia and Ted Stohr. Jennifer also read a chapter of her book to an enthusiastic Hoboken crowd at the Symposia book store in December. More recently, January 14th, her book was positively reviewed in an article for *The Hoboken Reporter*.

