

QNEWS Q DIGITAL

A Quest Publication

Issue 46

December 2023

A Note From the President

The Winter solstice comes on the heels of the end of our Fall semester, also a time when our thoughts turn to evermore holiday activities, Winter getaways and, of course, our Spring presentations and committee responsibilities.

So at our Annual Fall General Meeting, held the afternoon of Wednesday, November 29, our auditorium was full and another 40 members joined via Zoom for an update on our financial status from Quest treasurer **Peter Fleischman**, and new technologies from **Wayne Cotter**. Membership committee member **Mary Ann Donnelly** explained how the membership committee continues to reach prospective members and how, once again, we're closing in on our 270 cap (we now have 249 members). We also were treated to previews of a few other publications and off-site activities from **Ruth Ward**, editor-in-chief of QReview, as

well as **Madeleine Brecher** and **Arlynn Greenbaum** who highlighted Culture-Quest outings and Guest Lecturers, respectively. As president, I noted the collaboration among committees, which furthers our sense of community.

A highlight of our semi-annual meetings is the preview of the coming semester's new courses (see sidebar). Our thanks to curriculum committee members — **Arlynn Greenbaum**, **Penelope Pi-Sunyer**, **Richard Byrd**, **Bob Gottfried**, **Ellie Schaffer** — and especially **Judy Hampson**, who stepped up as interim chair while committee chair **Paul Golomb** was in India; and **Andrea Irvine**, who, once again, created a course catalog with a captivating cover. Arlynn is hard at work on our Summer Encores program (don't forget to send her your Fall 2023 favorites) and the committee has started accepting proposals for Fall 2024 so, if

you have an interest in a specific topic, discuss it with someone on the committee. You never know: you just might be standing at the podium in May tantalizing us with your own spark of genius.

It was also inspiring to see the many hands raised when asked: "Who is a presenter? Coordinator? On Council? Committee member?" More than half the room of new and long-term members had their hands up, and we know there were more very active members on Zoom who raised their hands as well.


And one final note: There also was a personal shout out to **Barbara Gelber**, editor-in-chief of QNews, and editors **Gale Spitalnik** and **Michael Wellner**, who graciously accept articles, jokes and other items to keep us informed and entertained year 'round.

See you all soon.

Donna Ramer

New Courses and Lead Coordinators: Spring 2024

- AI: A Brave New World: **Wayne Cotter**
- All the King's Men: **Lynell Garabedian/Sandy Kessler**
- Daisy Miller and Washington Square: **Andrea Irvine**
- Essays: **Steve Allen**
- Noontime Mondays: **Andrea Irvine**
- O Pioneers! **Harriet Finkelstein**
- Women Spies: **Penelope Pi-Sunyer**
- Young Beethoven: **Arlene Hajinlian**



Happy
New Year.
May 2024 Be
A Better Year
For All

City Wandering

by Frank Montaturo

New York Botanical Garden

A little flora-identifying link popped up on my photo and led me to this fascinating bit of information: “*Medinilla magnifica*, the showy medinilla or rose grape, is a species of flowering plant in the family Melastomataceae, native to the Philippines.”

It looks very ripe... but also very magnifica. In fact, a bit creepy... I wouldn't want to be locked in overnight in the greenhouse with this fellow.

Evidently, King Boudouin of Belgium was a big fan... growing them in royal conservatories. They even appeared on a Belgian banknote.



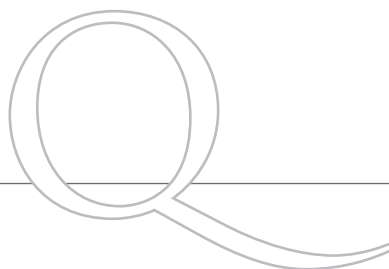
Book Club

The Quest Book Club's final meeting of the Fall semester will take place on Wednesday, December 13, from 12:10– 12:55 pm, in-person at 25 Broadway.

We'll be discussing *Lessons in Chemistry* by Bonnie Garmus. A *New York Times* Best Book of 2022, this witty, shrewdly observant novel tells the story of single mother Elizabeth Zott, a brilliant chemist thwarted in the all male world of research science in 1960's America. She becomes the unlikely star of a highly successful cooking show where, as it turns out, she isn't just teaching women to cook — she's daring them to change the status quo. Joan Vreeland will be presenting.

Is there a book you love that you'd like to introduce to others? The Book Club is looking ahead to the Spring semester and developing our reading list. Each month a different person leads the discussion of that meeting's book, and we're looking for people to present books that meant something to them. It's a great way to try your hand at presenting for a single session. Let us know either in person at the December meeting, or by emailing any one of the group's co-coordinators listed below:

Jan Goldstein
Susannah Falk Lewis
Joan Vreeland



In Memoriam: Phil Gisser

by Michael Wellner

Phil Gisser, beloved member of Quest for ten years, passed away recently after a brief illness. Phil was special in so many ways, it's hard to know where to begin. But we can begin with his driver's license: Birth date: December 18, 1924. That's right: Phil would have turned one hundred in exactly 13 months! When I first saw his license one evening at dinner a few years ago, I could hardly believe it! Despite his age, he was lively, vibrant, intelligent, full of wisdom, and truly an amazing guy!

Although he was 90 when he first joined Quest, he was an active and very intelligent contributor to so many of our classes. And a kinder soul would be hard to find. Shortly after Covid struck, my (Philadelphia) granddaughter, who had just graduated from college, was scheduled to begin a one-year internship at NY Hospital, and she needed a place to live here in the city. I sent an email to our Quest Community, asking if anyone had any thoughts. Immediately, Phil replied to say that he was going to his daughter's home in Washington State for an extended period, and my granddaughter was welcome to stay in his apartment — just a block away from the hospital. When I asked how much the rent would be, his reply was “nothing! She is more than welcome to stay there while I am away!” No matter how I insisted that I pay something, he refused.

Needless to say, my granddaughter was delighted, and Phil and I became quite close after that. We would often have dinner together with my granddaughter, his grandson, and a few friends, at a place in our neighborhood. And it was a joy each and every time. Despite his age, and his use of a walker towards the end, he never really seemed to get any older. His mind was as sharp as ever, and he was always a joy to be around. I, and I know all of us at Quest, will miss him tremendously.



This photo of Phil, out and about, was taken 10 days before his death.

Guest Speaker Jesse Green by Karen Levin

Jesse Green, the Chief Theater Critic for the New York Times, was our guest speaker on November 8, 2023.

Jesse was interviewed by **Karen Levin** and spoke about his most recent book, *Shy: The Alarming Outspoken Memoirs of Mary Rodgers*, the daughter of the theatrical composer, Richard Rodgers. Jesse co-wrote the book with Mary Rodgers.

Jesse amused our audience with wonderful stories about Mary's personal and professional life. She knew many famous theater personalities — including Stephen Sondheim and Hal Prince — during a time when she was the only female composer writing songs for off-Broadway and Broadway productions.

He also discussed his role as a theater critic and mentioned that he reviews between three and four shows a week.

At the end of his talk, Quest members asked many interesting questions regarding the New York theater.

The talk was recorded; if you were unable to attend, feel free to watch on our website.



Questers & Chautauqua: A Perfect Match

We are delighted to report that we have close to a dozen Questers who will spend the week of June 23rd, on a Road Scholar trip to the beautiful Chautauqua Institution in upstate New York. The theme that week focuses on The American Presidency, and features John Meacham as the lead speaker.

We still have room — and we'd love to have you join us. Just let any of us know. We promise you won't be disappointed!

Toni Dickenson, Stan Lieblein, Leslie Goldman, Karen Levin & Michael Wellner

PS: We are working on plans for 2025. If you have ideas for any other trips, please let any of us know. Thanks.

CultureQuest Schedule for Spring 2024

The CultureQuest Committee is pleased to announce the schedule for Friday events during Spring 2024. We welcome your suggestions for next Fall.

January 19 *Social Consciousness in Contemporary African-American Painting* Art Lecture by **Deborah Goldberg** Zoom docent tour

February 16 *Picasso in Fontainebleau* In-person docent tour

March 1 Subway Art Aboard the MTA In-person docent tour

March 15 *Arte! Arte! Arte!* Jewish Museum **Marta Minujin**: Zoom docent tour

March 22 *La Rondine* Metropolitan Opera In-person

April 12 Palace Theater NYC Wonder Theater In-person tour

May 3 The Glass House National Trust New Canaan, CT In-person tour

CultureQuest Committee:
Madeleine Brecher, Coordinator
Linda Downs
Dena Kerren
Lois Klein
Bob Reiss
Estelle Selzer
Hedy Shulman
Renee Woloshin

**“It Is Amazing What You Can Accomplish
If You Do Not Care Who Gets The Credit.”**

— President Harry S Truman

**“The Years Teach That Which
The Days Never Knew.”**

— Ralph Waldo Emerson

Who's Doing What

Shirley Ranz is a member of Shir Chadash: The Brooklyn Jewish Community Chorus, and will participate in *Reaching for the Light: A Hanukkah Concert of Light and Hope*, on December 12th at the Park Slope Jewish Center.

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Arlynn Greenbaum and her friend Cindy Hoddeson enjoyed Thanksgiving week at



beautiful Club Med Turks & Caicos. Much to be thankful for!

• • •

Sybil

Cohen, her grandsons, Benjamin & Matthew, grand-daughter



Molly, and son Adam, saw *How To Dance In Ohio*, and discussed the challenges of autism common to everyone.

• • •



On Friday night, November 3rd, three members of Poets' Workshop

went to open mic night at Brooklyn Poets in Brooklyn Heights. **Len Neufeld**, **Helen Saffran**, and **Judy Winn** started with pizza at Dellarocco's and then signed up for open mic spots to read their poems. Len, Helen and Judy each read three poems and heard poetry readings from many new, young poets. They were by far the oldest readers of the night!

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A Walk in the Woods

by Dena Kerren

Roy Clary and **Wayne Cotter** presented an interesting, timely, and engaging reading of Lee Blessing's "A Walk in the Woods." Well done gentlemen!



Q News Staff

A Quest Publication

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Barbara Gelber

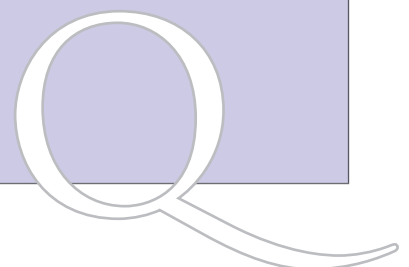
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Articles submitted to QNews may be edited by the Staff. The Editor-in-Chief is the final arbiter of the publication's contents.



CultureQuest: "The Rise of Life"

by Renee Woloshin

In this fascinating tour at the American Museum of Natural History on Friday, November 10th, 20 Questers explored the rise of life on planet Earth from the beginning of the universe over 13 billion years ago to the evolution of the most advanced life form — us. Our amazing guide through this journey was Quest member and museum docent **Michael Hamburg**.

The tour began with a stop at the Big Bang Theater in the Rose Center to experience an immersive and virtual display of how the universe was created, narrated by Liam Neeson. We then progressed through halls in the museum such as the Hall of Planet Earth, the Hall of Biodiversity, and the Hall of Human Origins, to name a few.

Throughout the Halls we saw very interesting exhibits as Michael told the story of the rise of life from a single celled bacterium floating in the water which, over billions of years and despite several mass extinctions, gave rise to the myriad of plant and animal species we have today. There was a discussion of some of the critical issues facing us now — endangered species, climate change, and the future of life. The tour was not only highly informative, it was fun as well. Many thanks to Michael for a fabulous tour.

Quest Spook-Tacular



In Memoriam: Eva Shatkin

by Anne Shatkin Hoyer

My mom, Eva Shatkin, died peacefully of pneumonia on Thursday, November 30. She was such an indomitable spirit that I think we tricked ourselves into believing she would live forever. As her doctor told me, “she had a remarkable life and squeezed every possible drop out of it.” Quest played a major role in her later life and it enriched her with friends, a sense of purpose and intellectual engagement. Thank you all for your caring and for keeping her involved through Zoom. Our family will always be grateful to you.



by Donna Ramer

We are all saddened by the passing of Eva Shatkin, one of our founding members who held multiple positions, presented often and brought joy to all through her poems and prose.

Her daughter, Anne Hoyer, told me Eva’s burial will be a private service for family and close friends only. In lieu of flowers, etc., a contribution could be made to one of her two favorite charities: the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) or Quest.

We all know how important Quest was to Eva. I hope she knew how important she was to us. May she rest in peace.

New Members

Quest welcomes new members this month. Look for their red lanyards, indicating a new member, at 25 Broadway, greet our new members, make them welcome, and include them in our wonderful Quest.



Debbi Honorof



Gary Weitzer



Robert Shick

TV Trivia Quiz

by Steve Rubin

A number of noted television actors and actresses have lived past age 90. Can you identify four such performers from the sets of clues below? The clues relate to the performers’ mostly memorable TV shows, some originally broadcast in the 1950s. Extra credit if you can name each of the shows.

1. Actress

- Played “Elizabeth,” half of a married couple involved in many comedic situations.
- Played the man-crazy host of a TV cooking show.
- Played a pollyanna who shared a Florida home with three other women.

2. Actress

- Played a farm wife and mother. The family had a very smart dog who wandered off quite a bit, but always managed to “come home.”
- Played half of a married scientist-couple. Together with their children and a talking robot, they travelled from Earth in a rocket ship. The rocket had been sabotaged by a diabolical “Dr. Smith,” who became an accidental stowaway, “oh dear, oh dear.”
- Played a country doctor whose office was located in the lobby of a rural hotel. The hotel was run by “Uncle Joe,” “come and be his guest.”

3. Actor

- Co-hosted a morning news program with Walter Cronkite.
- Played a head comedy writer, who repeatedly tripped over an ottoman.
- Played a medical doctor who helped the police solve crimes.

4. Actor

- Played “Pete” to Cara Williams’s “Gladys” in a show that was spun off from *December Bride*.
- Played a police officer whose partner’s last name was the same as a day of the week, “just the facts ma’am.”
- Played the second of two commanding officers of a military medical facility south of the 38th parallel.

The Answers

1. Betty White (died in 2021 at age 99) — *Life with Elizabeth*, *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, and *The Golden Girls*.
2. June Lockhart (still alive at age 98) — *Lassie*, *Lost in Space* and *Petticoat Junction*.
3. Dick Van Dyke (still alive at age 97) — *The CBS Morning News*, *The Dick Van Dyke Show*, and *Diagnosis: Murder*.
4. Harry Morgan (died in 2011 at age 96) — *Pete and Gladys*, *Dragnet*, and *M*A*S*H*.

General Meeting After Party

by Gale Spitalnik

A great time was had by all who attended the wine and cheese party following the general membership meeting. A big “thank you” to helpers **Lauren Gee**, **Andrea Irvine**, **Lois Klein**, and **Raquel**, our new office assistant.

