

QNEWS Q DIGITAL

A Quest Publication

Issue 70

January 2026

A Note From the President

As 2025 all too quickly gave way to 2026, we have reason both to look back with gratitude and forward with anticipation. In a crowded sea of lifelong learning programs, Quest has become a rare and lustrous pearl — crafted by time, shaped by shared effort and polished by the steady currents of curiosity and community. Another successful year is behind us and one of awe and wonder lies ahead.

The turn of the year also brings the familiar ritual of resolutions. Like many, I could recite the usual list: lose a few pounds (or more), conquer the ever-growing stack of

books, get an early start on presentations. Yet for nearly a decade, I've used this moment for a different kind of reckoning, inspired by New York Times columnist David Brooks and his distinction between "résumé virtues" and "eulogy virtues." Résumé virtues are the skills and accomplishments we bring to the marketplace; eulogy virtues are the qualities we hope will be remembered when we are gone: kindness, empathy, compassion, honesty, courage, generosity of spirit, and the capacity for deep love. This year, we said goodbye to several members of our community. What lingered in our conversations

and emails was not what they did, but who they were and how they made us feel. Their eulogy virtues endure.

As some of us spend the winter break hibernating, traveling, or quietly preparing what comes next, let's pause to reflect on what others might one day say about us. As we welcome 2026, we are already living our future — and without being maudlin, we know we have no more time to squander.

Happy New Year.

Donna Ramer

Distinguished Guest Lecturer Series

by Estelle Selzer

On Wednesday, December 9th, the Jan and Stuart Eisler Memorial Guest Speaker was Dr. Danielle Ofri. She is an internist at Bellevue Hospital. Dr. Ofri spoke about the doctor-patient relationship and how a doctor confronts medical error, the subject of her latest book.



Quest Book Club: Fiction

by Jan Goldstein

Winter break is a great time to get a head start on our Spring reading list! The fiction book club meets once a month in-person on Wednesday of the first A Week of the month, from 12:10–12:55 PM. We hope you'll join us!

Feb 4: *The Lion Women of Tehran* by Marjan Kamali; presented by Arlynn Greenbaum

Mar 4: *Theo of Golden* by Allen Levi; presented by Gale Spitalnik

Apr 1: *How to Read a Book* by Monica Wood; presented by Joan Vreeland

May 6: *A Little Luck* by Claudia Piñeiro; presented by Shirley Ranz

The Rise Of Life In 105 Minutes

by Madeleine Brecher

On a crisp Friday morning in early December, 20 Questers made their way to the American Museum of Natural History to view the story of The Rise of Life, the CultureQuest event of the month. Of course, we heard our own Michael Hamburg “tell” the same story a few short days before in the Universe course at Quest. But this was a unique opportunity to follow the story by “viewing” it at this amazing museum here in NYC. It was magical. We looked inside the Earth’s crust, we spotted single cell organisms two miles deep under the ocean, we saw how these critters ultimately made it back onto land. It was mesmerizing. Watching the hundreds of New York school kids on class trips laughing and learning right beside us was exhilarating. Yes, they were very noisy, but we heard Michael clearly with our personal audio devices.

We ended our tour in the Hall of Human Origins to see a model of

the famous 3.5 ft. Lucy skeleton found in Ethiopia about 50 years ago, and the footprints found by Mary Leakey in Tanzania in the 1970s proving upright walking existed long before the large brains evolved. We got to see the development of the skull through the millennia, and finally, two extraordinary dioramas comparing the Neanderthal to the current Human today. Thank you, Michael!

What, we asked, might be in store for the “senior scholars” of the future to witness a million years from today? Will it be here in NY at the AMNH or somewhere out in space where conditions have been found for human survival?

After an extraordinary morning, seventeen of us marched over to Gazala’s for a wonderful Druze lunch. We sat at small tables, and from the sound of it, the conversations were going strong. Many vowed to return to Gazala’s for another super meal.



New Members

Quest welcomes five 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.



Julie Hatterer



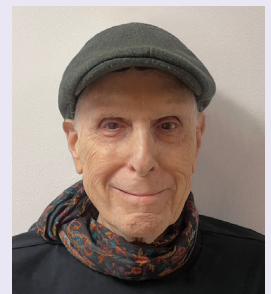
Susan Jormark



Carol Teten



Bob Wander



Alan Wolf

Broadway Guest Speaker John Kenrick

For the final class of “Give My Regards to Broadway,” Theater Historian John Kenrick gave a knockout presentation about “How Musicals Get to Broadway... And Why Tickets Are So Darn Expensive!” The presentation elicited rave reviews from audience members!

John worked for many years in the professional theater, serving as personal assistant to six Tony Award winning producers. So he brought real experience to his informative and irreverent multimedia discussion of the various paths musicals take to the Great White Way, and why we pay such outrageous prices to see them.

John has taught musical theatre history at New York University's Steinhardt School, The New School University, and Philadelphia's University of the Arts. He is also the creator of the educational website Musicals101.com, and is a founding curator of the Museum of Broadway.



CultureQuest Spring 2026

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION
Feb 27:	Tour of Temple Emanuel Lois Klein	In-person
Mar 13:	Hayden Planetarium “Milky Way” Show + AMNH Gilder Center tour Madeleine Brecher	In-person
Mar 27:	Park Avenue Armory Tour, Carole Kolber	In-person
Apr 3:	MET Opera Rehearsal: “Innocence”, Estelle Selzer	In-person
Apr 24:	NYC Art Deco Walking Tour Debbi Honorof	In-person
May 8:	Woodlawn Cemetery Trolley Tour Estelle Selzer, Bob Reiss	In-person
Jun 10:	Studio Museum of Harlem Tour Linda Downs	In-person

CultureQuest Committee:

Madeleine Brecher, Linda Downs, Debbi Honorof, Sharon Katz, Dina Kerren, Lois Klein, Carole Kolber, Bob Reiss, Estelle Selzer

Urban Wanderings *by Frank Montaturo*

The snow and heavy clouds had almost blotted out the city... but not quite... enough remained for interesting shades of volume and tone. The doors to the balcony were locked; transfixed by the view two visitors sought to capture the moment on their phones. One... a more permanent fixture... turns her back on it.



End of Semester Luncheon

by Michael Wellner

On a cool but thankfully dry and sunny Friday, the day after the fall semester's classes concluded, just about a hundred Questers and guests from City College, including President Boudreau and Dean Mercado, gathered at Barbetta's Restaurant on West 46th Street, for an end-of-the-year luncheon. (For those who are not aware, Barbetta dates back more than one hundred years, and is the oldest restaurant in New York that is still owned and run by the founding family!).

We were treated to an absolutely delicious three-course meal, accompanied by (nearly) unlimited red and white wine, interrupted only very briefly

by a few remarks from Quest President Donna Ramer and City College President Vincent Boudreau.

And there was near unanimous agreement that this was one of the best luncheons ever: great food, great service, and an absolutely beautiful setting. (If, for some reason, you were not able to attend the luncheon, we encourage you to try it on your own; it's perfect for either pre- or post-theater.)

Many thanks go to our Special Events committee, **Marian Friedmann, Leslie Goldman, Bob Gottfried, Marilyn Ostrow, and Michael Wellner.**



Who's Doing What



New member **Marsha Porcell** enjoyed some of the winter break visiting Antigua.

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Lisa Bu sang soprano 1, when Cantigas Women's

Choir held a winter concert on Sunday 12/14 in Hoboken, New Jersey. The house was full and there was **Jennifer Jolly** in the first row of the audience!

"Ode to the Moon," the title of the concert, is inspired by lyrics from Rachmaninoff's "Now the Waves are Drowsing." The moon symbolizes a diverse range of concepts, including femininity, intuition, mystery, and the cyclical nature of time and transformation, due to its changing phases. These themes were explored in the programmed music, with themes of sisterhood in "Will the Circle be Unbroken," transcendence in Harry Einhorn's unique "Seven Line Supplication to Guru Rinpoche," as well as music from Ukraine, Malaysia, United States, Russia, Greece, and China.

• • •



Sybil Cohen escaped the cold weather by vacationing with family

in Key West in a rented townhouse. They are enjoying southern hospitality and the warm weather.

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Special January Dates

- 1** New Year's Day
- 1** National Bloody Mary Day
- 2** World Introvert Day
- 2** International Science Fiction Day
- 4** National Braille Day
- 4** National Trivia Day
- 8** National Bubble Bath Day
- 8** Elvis Presley's Birthday
- 10** National Houseplant Appreciation Day
- 13** National Rubber Duckie Day
- 14** World Logic Day
- 15** National Bagel Day
- 15** National Strawberry Ice Cream Day
- 16** National Nothing Day
- 18** National Winnie the Pooh Day
- 18** National Thesaurus Day
- 20** Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- 20** National Penguin Day
- 23** National Handwriting Day
- 24** National Peanut Butter Day
- 24** National Compliment Day (that's nice)
- 25** National Irish Coffee Day
- 26** National Spouses Day
- 28** National Lego Day
- 30** National Croissant Day
- 31** National Hot Chocolate Day

Creative Corner

WORK®

by Betty Farber

My mother left school at thirteen,
 Wrapped her braids around her head,
 And went to work for a milliner.
 She didn't have working papers,
 So when the inspector came,
 They hid her in a storeroom.

At eighteen, she applied for a job
 At Metropolitan Life Insurance Company.
 "We don't hire Jewish girls," they told her,
 But the manager said, "I'll give you a try,"
 And they liked her work so well
 They asked her to recommend a friend.
 "I have a cousin who's a good worker,
 But she's Jewish too," said my mother,
 And that's how she broke down barriers
 At the Brooklyn office of Met Life.

**Nothing in Life is to Be Feared;
 It is Only to Be Understood.
 Now is the Time to Understand More,
 So That We May Fear Less.**

— Marie Curie



IN MEMORIAM
John Clark Hood

John Hood, much loved and respected Quest member, passed away December 2, 2025. Our deepest condolences to his wife, Laima, and the rest of his family.

John has received an outpouring of remembrances from more than a score of Questers on the QuestCommunity email group. I will attempt to summarize some of these expressions of grief and admiration.

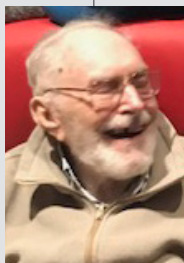
John was frequently referred to as a gentleman in the true sense of that word. One member wrote “the term ‘gentleman’ was coined for John Hood.” Another added “a lovely, kind man, full of enthusiasm for people and ideas.”

His intellect was truly exceptional. “He loved poetry and dug into the literature we studied in the many courses we took together. He could read a poem aloud as well as any Hollywood or Broadway actor.” Without any external chemicals, we got a high when he presented classics such as *Ulysses* and *The Brothers Karamazov*.

John presented on a canyon-wide array of subjects, especially on his specialty, American folk art. He led us on several fascinating tours as docent at the Folk Art Museum. Remembered always will be his presentations on the folk artist, Henry Darger, and on the famous art dealer, Joseph Duveen. We also remember his insightful reviews in the Cinema Quest movie class.

One of the highlights of Quest’s 30+ year history is when John, in full fencing gear, brought in his epee and gave a fencing demonstration for the History and Rituals of Sports course. John was known as a die-hard football fan of his alma mater, Notre Dame. Born in Pocatello, Idaho, he told us stories of fishing and hunting like he came from another place and time.

“He was a man you could sit with in the lunchroom, and whatever the topic, he made you feel like he was thrilled to be with you.” He had a beautiful spirit and was a wonderful role model for aging gracefully.



All in all, a genuine scholar, deeply passionate about the arts and classics.

The overwhelming tributes to John are a testimony to Quest where at the later stages of life new fulfilling friendships can still be made. All who knew him will never forget John Hood.

We looked up to John, and wish him sweet passing to wherever his final journey takes him.

Note: Thanks to all our members who wrote remembrances on QuestCommunity and thus contributed to this article.

– Bob Reiss

Judy Garland was not really born in Pocatello, Idaho, but that’s where **John Hood**, a truly remarkable person, was born and bred. John was a genuine scholar, deeply passionate about the arts and the classics.

We bonded over our mutual love of theater, and at Quest, we shared a memorable scene from *I Never Sang for My Father*. From that moment on, he became “Pops” to me, and I was “Son” to him.

Those who attended a memorable Quest Halloween event will never forget John’s grand entrance in full fencing gear (he was an expert at it), epee in hand — ready to challenge all comers, showcasing his expertise and flair.

John was an original member of Quest’s film class, and his reviews rivaled those found in “The New Yorker” for their insight and wit.

And he was an essential contributor to Joe Nathan’s “Ulysses” class, frequently adding additional insight to the great novel.

My wife Doris and I enjoyed a wonderful dinner with John and Laima at their beautifully decorated home in the Village, adorned with rare Native American Art.

I and others who knew him will never forget John Hood.

– Howard Salik

Thank You

The Editors and Staff of QNews send our appreciation to all members of Quest for sending us your news, photos, and creativity (which make our job much easier), and for sending us your positive comments and rave reviews of each issue (which make our efforts worthwhile).

May 2026 be a year of good health and peace.

– Barbara Gelber
– Michael Wellner
– Gale Spitalnik
– Robbii

**I’m Confused. Oh Wait,
Maybe I’m Not.**

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A Quest Publication

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