

QNEWS Q DIGITAL

A Quest Publication

Issue 71

February 2026

A Note From the President

Welcome back to our spring 2026 semester!

The gods appear to be smiling down on us—after dumping inches of snow and icy rain, they’ve cleared the way just in time for our February 2 start date. That said, legend has it the gods also have a mischievous streak, so please keep an eye on your email this Sunday in case the forecast (and their mood) changes on their godly whim.

As always, the spring semester is packed with engaging courses and activities so please mark your calendars for these special events.

Quest Membership Cap: February 10 & 11, we will hold hybrid Q&A meetings to discuss a proposal to increase the Quest membership cap from 270 to 285. These sessions will be recorded for those unable to attend live.

NYC DOT Pedestrian Safety: Wednesday, February 18, when two members of the Senior Safety Education and Outreach team from the NYC Department of Transportation will present pedestrian safety tips and best practices, followed by a Q&A. As with all lunchtime programs, bring your lunch (except in the auditorium), along with your curiosity and questions.

Council Candidate Forums:

March 25, 26, 30 & 31, with electronic voting April 3–5. This year we have six open seats to be filled: Treasurer, Secretary, Vice President, and three Council-at-Large positions. If you are contacted by a member of the Nominating and Elections Committee, we hope you’ll consider serving. Reminders: NEC members are **Tamara Weinberg** (Chair), **John Davis, Bob Gottfried, Lynnel Garabedian** and **Bob Schick**.

We’re looking forward to seeing everyone — whether at 25 Broadway or on Zoom — as we begin another lively and enriching semester together.

Donna Ramer



Creative Nonfiction Book Club

by *Debbi Honorof & Carole Blane, Lead Coordinators*

Here is the full schedule for the semester. We hope to see you at the Book Club meetings!

Feb 11: *Gods of New York: Egotists, Idealists, Opportunists, and the Birth of the Modern City: 1986-1990* (464 pages) by Jonathan Mahler [who will be a Quest Distinguished Guest Lecturer on Wednesday, March 25]

Mar 11: *When Women Ran Fifth Avenue: Glamour and Power at the Dawn of American Fashion* (416 pages) by Julie Satow

Apr 8: *In Cold Blood* (343 pages) by Truman Capote

May 13: *Taking Manhattan: The Extraordinary Events That Created New York and Shaped America* (408 pages) by Russell Shorto [who was a recent Quest distinguished speaker]

CultureQuest Met Opera Backstage Tour *by Carole Kolber*



The Metropolitan Opera Backstage Tour on January 23, 2026 offered a fascinating behind-the-scenes glimpse into the rich history and artistry of this world-class opera house. The Metropolitan Opera Company dates back to the 1880s, when it first opened its doors in midtown Manhattan as a cultural landmark for New York City. In 1966, the Met moved to its current and iconic home at Lincoln Center. It was thrilling to learn that our 18 Questers were walking through the same hall and even standing on the same stage where legendary stars such as Enrico Caruso, Luciano Pavarotti, Plácido Domingo, and Joan Sutherland once performed. (Maria Callas also performed numerous times at the original Met midtown location.) Equally impressive was discovering the immense collaboration behind every production, involving designers, carpenters, seamstresses, stagehands, hairdressers, makeup artists, and technicians, without whom the magic on stage would not be possible.

Tour highlights included the carpentry shops where massive sets are constructed, the costume and tailoring shops, wig and hair rooms, dressing rooms, and, of course, the stage area and the vast auditorium. The auditorium accommodates approximately 3,975 people, with about 3,800 seated and 175 standing, making it the largest repertory opera house in the world. Our appreciation to Elspeth David, the Senior Coordinator, Tour and Volunteer at the Met and our two wonderful tour guides for this very noteworthy experience. Following the tour, a number of Questers also enjoyed dinner and conversation at Rosa Mexicano, across from Lincoln Center.

**The Two Most Important Days In Your Life Are
The Day You Are Born And The Day You Find Out Why.**
— Mark Twain

**The Heart Of Man Is Very Much Like The Sea:
It Has Its Storms, It Has Its Tides, And In Its Depths
It Has Its Pearls Too.**
— Vincent van Gogh

Urban Wanderings *by Frank Montaturo*



Walking my baby..."
Williamsburg, Brooklyn

This corrugated painted fence always caught my attention whenever I ventured out to Acme to indulge my taste for smoked fish. The day I first went was not so bright as in the photo. The facility... smokehouse/warehouse is only open for retail on Fridays. It has become well known and attracts smoked fish mavens from all over. Prices can be as much as a third to a half less than other purveyors... some of whom might very well be supplied by Acme.

I learned about this so very NY institution from a small item in The Times. It was perhaps ten days before the Christmas holidays at school. With two free periods back to back I had time enough, I thought, to go... to come... to slip back unobserved unmissed. I had an address... but no real sense of how to find it... no GPS... no handwritten directions... certainly no cell phone.

It started to snow a veritable blizzard of a ferocity unexpected. I was totally disoriented.

A quick end and a blue clearing and looking around I saw wrapped by the lingering clouds... the onion domes of the Russian Church of The Transfiguration. For the briefest of moments I indulged the thought... Dr Zhivago... Omar Sharif and Julie Christie.

I made it back to school late... not unobserved.

Who's Doing What

Roy Clary joined the crowd in Union Square on January 24 to help "Keep ICE Off Our Streets" and show support for the citizens of Minneapolis and elsewhere. He left the rally with tears in his eyes in recognition of the many good people who are fighting for peace and justice

...



Estelle Selzer, Lynnel Garabedian, Arlynn Greenbaum, Pete & Judy

Weis, and **Sandy Gordon** enjoyed the lovely weather on a Road Scholar trip to San Miguel de Allende in January. All were very happy to have escaped the cold New York City weather.

...

From Christmas into the New Year, **Sybil Cohen** and family vacationed in Key West. They stayed in a rented townhouse and toured the entire island. Hemingway, Twain, and Truman preceded them.

...



Madeleine & George Brecher and family spent a rousing evening singing and

dancing at Sammy's Jewish Romanian restaurant on the LES celebrating all the kids' return to "school" after the holidays.



Special February Dates

Black History Month

American Heart Month

1 National Baked Alaska Day

1 No Politics Day

2 Groundhog Day

3 The Day the Music Died

4 World Read Aloud Day

6 Ice Cream for Breakfast Day

8 National Boy Scouts Day

8 Super Bowl LX

11 International Day of Women and Girls in Science

11 Inventors Day

14 Valentines Day

14 National Organ Donor Day

15 Susan B. Anthony Day

16 Presidents' Day

17 Random Acts of Kindness Day

17 Lunar New Year

18 Ash Wednesday

18 Ramadan begins

19 National Chocolate Mint Day

20 World Day of Social Justice

20 National Love Your Pet Day

22 National Margarita Day

26 National Pistachio Day

26 National Set a Good Example Day

Creative Corner

LONGING FOR LAUGHTER®

by Betty Farber

I long for refreshing laughter —
Not boisterous hilarity —
Pratfalls and pie-in-the-face —
But a playful wit like yours
That tickled the imagination
And delighted the mind;
The clever quip that showed
The intelligence behind the jest —
I miss your upbeat spirit,
And I'll always love
The way you made me laugh.
Now I look each day for laughter
Smiling with surprise when I find it.
Weeping only while walking in the rain
Where tears don't show.

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A Quest Publication

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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.

Juilliard Chamber Fest

by Steve Alllen

For the fourth year in a row, Quest members had the opportunity to join the audience for the Juilliard School's annual Chamber Fest. The Chamber Fest is a series of recitals by Juilliard music students who return early from Winter break for intensive coaching in a collection of chamber-music masterpieces. As we did last year, we chose a 4:30 concert preceded by a leisurely lunch at the nearby Italian restaurant Arte Cafe which offers a three-course prix fixe lunch menu with a wide variety of choices. This year we had about 40 members in attendance. Arte Cafe was able to give

us a private room with tables that sat six people each — private enough that all six people at the table could hear one another, so conversation was quite lively.

This year's recital featured a Beethoven piano trio, a Shostakovich string quartet, a Benjamin Britten quartet with oboe, and a Brahms piano trio. All our members agreed that the student performers were outstanding.

We look forward to continuing this Quest Winter Break tradition in coming years.



IN MEMORIAM

Helen Neilson

by Mary Ann Donnelly

Helen Doris (Mcfarlin) Neilson

A no-nonsense woman. 1929 – 2025

Helen became a force in my life in the late '70's when my parents moved next door to her in the Bay Ridge coop that became my home in 2002. When retirement beckoned, Helen started recruiting me for Quest. When I mentioned I wanted to study poetry, she told me about Poets Workshop and Contemporary Poetry. I was sold. September of 2009, I accompanied Helen to Quest and have been a member ever since. Thank you, Helen.

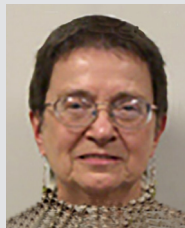
Traveling to Quest on the R train together, I got to know Helen. She was born in Franklin, Kentucky and moved to New York in the early 60's. She met and married a Brooklyn man, George Neilson, and they settled in Bay Ridge. She never gave up her ties to Kentucky and made an annual trip back home, driving solo and fearlessly, even approaching ninety — until her health began to fail. Something about Helen always suggested Kentucky blue grass and horses — even in Bay Ridge.

Helen was involved in many Quest activities but notably was Editor of *Q Review*, presiding with a mechanical pencil and a sure hand. According to Sheryl Harawitz's remembrance, Helen "would commandeer the lunchroom to lay it out — back in the days before digital design — when sheer determination did what software does now, only with scissors, glue, a long table, and far more patience than any of us realized we had."

Helen was also the long-time coordinator of Poets Workshop, where similarly, she kept a sometimes-rambunctious group on time and on topic.

Helen could be prickly, but she was very generous. She sponsored a needy young girl, providing financial support through private school to college.

Looking over many years of *Q Review*, you can find her exquisite collages and heartfelt poetry. Helen had her collages and *Q Review* editions with her in her residence in the memory care unit of Harmony Village, where she spent her last few years. The staff there arranged a showing of her work, and her *Q Review* copies have been made available to the residents. A wonderful legacy to a well-lived, long life.



IN MEMORIAM

Bob Hartmann

Bob Hartmann was a man whose love of theater was not a pastime but a lifelong devotion. It lived at the center of who he was: how he learned, connected and gave meaning to the world around him.

He was a gentle soul, and the deep, enduring friendships he gathered over the years speak quietly but powerfully to his character.

He also was a fine actor himself. Many remember his luminous performances at Quest, especially his turn in *The Gin Game*, where he and the late Myra Nissan brought the play to life with brilliance, sensitivity and grace. His enthusiasm for theater was infectious and he was a treasured partner in countless theatrical adventures.

Bob's generosity extended far beyond the stage. A founding member of Quest and its first president elected by the full membership, he served in numerous capacities including Council member and co-chair of the curriculum committee. When Quest transitioned from The New School to CCNY, Bob's leadership was instrumental in establishing a strong and lasting relationship that allowed the organization to thrive.

A passionate advocate for education, he was deeply involved in the scholarship program and inspired others to support it, including the endowment of a CWE scholarship in his honor, an inspiration that will continue to bear fruit for generations of students.

Bob was also a gracious host, welcoming friends and colleagues with panache to his home where conversation, laughter, and ideas flowed as freely as the wine. He was caring, generous, and unfailingly kind.

He leaves behind cherished memories, a legacy of learning, and a community enriched by his presence and friendship.

Bob's generosity of spirit and care for others will be deeply missed by all who had the joy of knowing him.



This tribute is an amalgam of comments by numerous Quest members.

