FROM A HENRY ROTH MEMOIR

Call It Writing:
A City College Epiphany

Ten years before publishing his classic novel Call It Sleep in 1934 to mixed reviews, Henry Roth (pictured right at about that time) began his freshman year at the City College of New York. In one of several volumes of memoirs Roth wrote late in life under the umbrella title Mercy of a Rude Stream, he devoted more than 130 pages to his collegiate days. This volume, A Diving Rock on the Hudson, was published by St. Martin’s in 1993 (Picador paperback, 1996), which was also the year he died at the age of 89. His college days began on an exultant note: “Boy, beautiful, how glorious, the first hour or two spent in the environs of CCNY was! An academic cornucopia it seemed, so bountiful and promising from the outside” that Roth said he was convinced he had “made the right choice after all” (he had turned down Cornell in favor of the City on a hill). But depression soon followed when—“was ever thus on registration day”—Roth found most of the classes he had planned to take were already full.

Roth graduated in the Class of 1928 (Emanuel Streisand, Barbra’s father, was a classmate), married and fathered two children, and then spent many decades, first in Boston and then in Maine, working in various jobs such as woodsman, schoolteacher, attendant in a mental hospital, and waterfowl farmer while suffering from writer’s blocks. Enormous acclaim, how one of American letters’ most famous and waterfowl farmer while suffering from teacher, attendant in a mental hospital, in various jobs such as woodsman, schoolteacher, attendant in a mental hospital, and waterfowl farmer while suffering from writer’s blocks. Enormous acclaim, how one of American letters’ most famous and waterfowl farmer while suffering from teacher, attendant in a mental hospital, in various jobs such as woodsman, schoolteacher, attendant in a mental hospital, and waterfowl farmer while suffering from writer’s blocks. Enormous acclaim, how one of American letters’ most famous

By Leslee Oppenheim

Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Adult and Continuing Education, Office of Academic Affairs

Eleven hundred new NYPD officers, day-old graduates of the Police Academy, file into darkened auditoriums at four CUNY campuses on July 2. The crackle of a police radio can be heard. As the lights dim, the volume rises. In total darkness now, the graduates hear a woman’s voice screaming rapid-fire Spanish at two police officers seated in a radio car. Extremely agitated, she warns the officers her assailant is armed with a gun. A chase ensues; the situation rapidly escalates; shots are fired.

A dangerous situation—and it is made even more perilous because, unfortunately, the police officers do not speak Spanish. Having truly secured the attention of the rookie officers, a CUNY-led instructional team then proceeded to unfold unique, simultaneous, day-long training sessions. Titled “Streetwise: Language, Culture and Police Work in New York City,” this program is a first-time collaboration between CUNY and the NYPD, and was based on the campuses of Bronx Community, Baruch, LaGuardia Community, and Medgar Evers Colleges. (A simultaneous training session focused on the African-American community and developed by John Jay College was offered at York College.)

The officers soon learned the fundamental theme of this initiative, developed by CUNY for the NYPD, from Police Commissioner Howard Safir’s opening remarks: police officers who know about the language and culture of the communities they serve, equip themselves with powerful tools for ensuring the safety and well-being of themselves, their colleagues, and the public at large.

The newly-assigned officers in the audience that day are about to plunge into their first command, where they will encounter the unique sights and sounds of the community and the atmosphere and personalities of their precinct house. Immersed in this flood of impressions, they will begin to form ideas about local ethnic groups and develop personal ways of interacting with the public.

The Streetwise training was designed to give new officers strategies for rejecting ethnic stereotypes and bias by encouraging them to seek the guidance of culturally and linguistically knowledgeable colleagues and local residents, and by studying the language and culture of the community they serve. Each campus focused on one of three linguistic and cultural communities—Mandarin Chinese, Haitian Creole, and (at two campuses) Spanish speakers—and drew on reality-based experiences of seasoned police officers.

Among the day’s sessions was one called “Word of Mouth.” Officers were introduced to a C-minus average in [my] scholastic work,” Roth wryly remarks in A Diving Rock.)

Though his academic performance at City College was less than nondescript, Roth learned the most important lesson of his life there. The events leading up to it are recalled from two poignant angles in the closing pages of A Diving Rock. Here Roth mingles a recreation of his debut as a published writer (Part I) with a retrospect on the moment from the end of his life, sixty years later (Part II).

The scene is the classroom of a young Composition 1 teacher, Arthur Dickson, a Columbia Ph.D. student who went on to a long career in the CCNY English Department. At a memorial service in 1962 he was recalled as a “stern professor” and one impatient with such “educationist flimflam” as the newfangled notion of a “survey course.” “No one was late twice” in his classroom. Roth’s impression was a bit of an academic cornucopia at once, so bountiful and promising from the outside” that Roth said he was convinced he had “made the right choice after all” (he had turned down Cornell in favor of the City on a hill). But depression soon followed when—“was ever thus on registration day”—Roth found most of the classes he had planned to take were already full.

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Imaging the Enemy

Remarkable strides are currently being made by researchers at the City College Institute for Ultrafast Spectroscopy and Lasers in the development of optical mammography and tomography methods for breast cancer screening. Tomography is a technique for imaging a cross-sectional slice of an object, like the human body, to reveal its internal structure; combining these slices produces a three-dimensional image of the object.

This research uses light to image and diagnose tumors in the human breast, a much less invasive and far less expensive approach than x-ray mammography, currently the most common screening method. X-ray mammography employs harmful ionizing radiation, cannot distinguish between benign and malignant tumors, and is not sufficiently effective in detecting tumors within dense, young breasts. Optical methods such as those being used at City College have the potential to overcome these limitations and provide diagnostic information utilizing the color of light.

Ultrashort pulse duration (a billionth to a trillionth of a second) and wavelength tunability (from 1150 to 1300 billonths of a meter) are two key properties of light used by the CCNY researchers. The team—directed by Dr. Robert Alfano, Distinguished Professor of Science and Engineering, and including Dr. Swapan Gayen, Manuel Zevallos, and Mohammed Alrubaisa—makes use of light transmitted through breast tissue to form images of its interior. Light transiting through tissues undergoes multiple scattering that results in a loss of information. The team employs various techniques to sort out image-bearing photons and discriminate against image-hearing, multiple-scattered photons.

Light also takes different amounts of time to transit through different types of tissue (normal or cancerous, fatty or fibrous), even though the thickness may be the same. Alfano's group exploits this difference in transit times to highlight normal and cancerous breast tissues, as shown in the accompanying figure.

Color of light provides another key advantage. The interaction of light with tissues depends on the color of light and type of tissue. This now makes it possible, for example, to highlight fatty tissue in the middle of an excised breast tissue specimen from fibrous tissues adjacent to it.

This technique has the potential for use in mapping out the distribution of fat, water, hemoglobin, and cancerous lesions once the wavelengths of light that resonate with these constituents of tissue are identified. If successful, this research will also make it possible to make cancer diagnoses without taking biopsies.

The research team is working to identify the "fingerprint" wavelengths and optimal "slices" of time that will help determine whether a tissue is cancerous or normal.
CUNY Helps Satisfy a Crave

More than a hundred years ago, Jane Addams observed, “It will be impossible to establish a higher political life than the people themselves crave.” CUNY’s award-winning graphic designer Bill Freeland found many different type fonts and student faces for this wisdom in preparing the focal image for the 1998-99 CUNY Voter Registration Project.

Since the Board of Trustees resolved to establish a University-sponsored system of voter registration in May of 1987, CUNY campuses have collaborated with the City and State Boards of Elections, student government leaders, and faculty organizations to encourage and facilitate the craving to vote. Among the initiatives sponsored by the Project have been a media campaign (funded by Barnes & Noble) featuring such authors as Alice Walker and Stephen King and the establishment, in 1996, of a voter registration site on the CUNY homepage on the Internet. For further information on the current Project, contact Voter Registration Coordinator, Eileen Doherty at 212-794-5325.

Italo-Americans Honor Trustee Paolucci

The glittering Waldorf-Astoria Grand Ballroom provided a dramatic backdrop recently when CUNY Board of Trustees Chairwoman Anne Paolucci joined distinguished Italian-American artists, businessmen, and political figures to receive Leadership Awards from the Coalition of Italo-American Associations (CIAA) at its 15th annual dinner. More than 1,000 guests looked on at the black-tie gala as Dr. Paolucci received the Leadership in Education Award, the accompanying citation singling out her accomplishments as a playwright and noted scholar of Luigi Pirandello, the great Sicilian playwright and Nobel Laureate. Paolucci was also a founding member of the 16-year-old CIAA.

Paolucci shared the dais with Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and fellow honorees, the actors Danny Aiello (Outstanding Achievement in Film, Television, and Theater) and Susan Lucci (Leadership in Business); Andrew Spano, Westchester County Executive (Leadership in Government); Franco Mistretta, Consul General of Italy (Leadership in International Affairs); and Francis La Maina, President and CEO of Dick Clark Productions (Leadership in Business).

In her remarks following the Sept. 18 presentation, Paolucci spoke passionately of the Italo-American experience, and the common threads it shares with so many races and groups who have found both continuity and renewal in America. “We all come to know who we are through an ever-changing awareness of what we have been historically and biologically as Asians, Africans, Europeans, whatever—coming from diverse regions, languages, dialects, and ways of life that remain deeply rooted in us.”

William Fugazy, left, and New York State Senator Serphin Maltese presenting a CIAA Leadership Award to Trustee Chairwoman Paolucci. Photo, André Beckles

NICKLE ODE

When a fare reduction for students was instituted on the elevated railway that went to the old Free Academy Building, the College Mercury, a student newspaper, waxed poetic in 1880:

O happy student, who can be
In happiness compared to thee.
The only mortal who can dare
To ride the el for a five cent fare.
Long did thy noble, suffering soul
Contend ere it could reach its goal;
Long did thy pocket-book so bare
Submit to pay a ten cent fare.

A CITY COLLEGE EXHIBIT

Tracks With Tenure

When the first Chancellor of the newly created City University of New York took office in 1961, Time magazine billed him as head of “Subway University” and made particular reference to City College.

Taking this phrase as a badge of honor rather than a snide remark, the Archives of City College has just opened an exhibit of more than 70 images that reveal how the building of the New York City rapid transit system affected the College, first at its original location at Lexington Avenue and 23rd Street and then at the St. Nicholas Heights campus.

“Subway University: Making Tracks to City,” which will be on view through January 14, features hand-drawn street cars, trolleys, and elevated railroad routes that have served the College. Particular attention is paid to the construction of the IRT Broadway line (now the 1 and 9 trains) and the opening of the 137th Street station, which was named for the College in 1922.

The station is pictured top right as it looked until the mid-1980s, when remodeling took place. The name and terra cotta plaque of the College seal are still in use. Images from the New York Transit Museum also document construction of the IND A line, which took place within view of the towers of Shepard Hall.

City College alumni who helped develop the system are included, as is a photograph of the College student who was “Miss Subways” in 1949 and images showing use of the subway to publicize college programs, as well as for sleeping and studying. Also highlighted are outstanding graduates who have written about riding the subway to City, among them Lewis Mumford and General Colin Powell.

Pictured above is an example of the extensive advertising campaign for City College’s first general adult education program, begun in 1944 in collaboration with the New York Public Library.

Author Vivian Gornick (Class of 1957), who has written eloquently on traveling between her immigrant neighborhood and the world of intellectual discourse, will be the guest speaker at the opening of the exhibit on Nov. 9 at 4 p.m. in the Atrium of the College’s Cohen Library in the North Academic Center. The exhibit will be on view during regular Library hours (for which call 650-7292). For more information, call 212-650-7609.

—Barbara Dunlap. City College Archives & Special Collections
LaGuardia Bagels In With New York Stories

Elegantly tailoring his tennis commentary to the Big Apple during the U.S. Open final, John McEnroe observed that Mark Philippoussis was trying not to "bagel out"—lose a set 6-0—at the end of his match with Patrick Rafter (he did, though).

One is tempted to coin the phrase "bagel in—to produce a lot of "Ohs"—for the new nationally-distributed LaGuardia Community College literary magazine, New York Stories. In the inaugural Spring 1998 issue. Prof. Michael Blaine, editor in chief of NYS, describes it as "a fiction magazine for an international city" but hastily adds, "we gravitate toward work set in the five boroughs, but we are by no means a regional review. . . A New York story can take place anywhere."

The seven-story first issue featured short fiction from such writers as Teresa Sloboda, author of the novel Cannibal, and frequent New Yorker contributor, Carolyn Cooke, whose short stories have made the Best American Stories and O’Henry Award series. Also in this issue was an interview with Pulitzer-winning memoirist Frank McCourt.

The second issue, which appeared October 1, presents a story by Ethan Coen (film-maker best known for Fargo and Raising Arizona) and an excerpt from John Updike’s new novel Bech at Bay. The full magazine-size format is replete with striking black and white photography that relates to each story, and it will be available at Barnes & Noble, Borders, Tower, and other chains in the U.S., Canada, and Australia.

Aiding NYS editors are LaGuardia student interns chosen from the College’s cooperative education program. "The magazine is part of the educational process," says Blaine. "Students participate in many crucial aspects of our day-to-day functioning and we are always explaining why we are making decisions about whether or not to buy a particular piece."

Oh. . . one other thing. Also in the October issue is a non-fiction account by Tom Reller, a former New Yorker staff writer, of life in—you guessed it—a New York bagel factory.

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Student Media Conference Draws Praise, Pros

More than 120 CUNY student journalists, advisors, and faculty recently shared a spirited day-long program of strong opinions, amusing anecdotes, and no-nonsense advice with "a who’s who” group of professional journalists at the first annual City University Student Media Conference, held at the Borough of Manhattan Community College on October 2.

Joining CUNY’s conferences was an all-star cast of professional journalists, all of whom appeared gratis. The professionals included Michel Marriot (New York Times) novelist and journalist Pete Hamill, Pulitzer Prize winners Jim Dwyer (Daily News) and Jimmy Breslin (Newsday), Elinor Tatum (Editor-in-chief of The Amsterdam News), Terry Golway (New York Observer), WCBS NewsRadio88 co-anchors Harley Carnes and Deborah Rodriguez, columnist Gerson Borrero (el diario La Prensa, radio WADO), Carol Anne Riddell (WNBC-TV), and Patrick Healy (Chronicle of Higher Education).

The conference, titled “Campus Coverage Today. Career Opportunities Tomorrow," saw student editors, journalists, radio station personnel, and educators gather on the College's Richard Harris Terrace. Following welcoming remarks by Interim Chancellor Christoph M. Kimmich, the day's events included a series of panels on such subjects as "Student Newspaper Survival Strategies: Funding and Running A Student Newspaper," "Campus Radio: Getting on the Air. Staying on the Air," "News And Opinion: The Important Difference," "Covering Higher Education," and "From the Class-

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NEW YORK Stories

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ROOM: What’s Available at CUNY and Beyond."

"The conference provided a wonderful opportunity for CUNY’s student journalists to meet one another and also have a dialogue with some of the giants of the profession,” said Miranor B. Biswas, Chair of the University Student Senate and a University Trustee, after extending greetings to the student media.

"The important difference," says Blaine. "Students participate in many crucial aspects of our day-to-day functioning and we are always explaining why we are making decisions about whether or not to buy a particular piece."

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CUNY’s Gershwin Connections

Ray Allen, Acting Director of the Institute for Studies in American Music at Brooklyn College, reports briefly on the ambitious centennial festival “The Gershwins at 100” that unfolded under his direction from Oct. 28 to Nov. 8 on several CUNY campuses.

The centennial of his birth, Brooklyn-born composer George Gershwin presides as one of America’s most intriguing cultural figures. His best-known orchestral works, the “Rhapsody in Blue,” “Concerto in F,” and “An American in Paris,” are mainstays of the repertoire. Porgy and Bess, his opera composed in collaboration with his brother Ira, and numerous songs—among them “I Got Rhythm,” “It Ain’t Necessarily So,” and “Embraceable You”—have entered the American consciousness.

The Gershwin’s story includes several notable CUNY connections. In 1914, Ira enrolled at City College as an English major. During his two years there he contributed humorous vignettes to three campus publications: Cap and Bells, The College Mercury, and The Campus. Although George never attended CCNY (he dropped out of high school to enroll in Tin Pan Alley), he visited the campus regularly in the late 20s and early 30s to perform and conduct at Lewisohn Stadium. On Lincoln’s Birthday of 1924 he premiered his legendary “Rhapsody” at the Aeolian Concert Hall, a prominent music venue of the day located on the site of the present CUNY Graduate School on 42nd Street.

Highlights of the festival included a conference of prominent Gershwin scholars, a screening of the controversial 1939 Otto Preminger film version of Porgy with Dorothy Dandridge and Sidney Poitier (not publicly screened in nearly 40 years), a performance focusing on Gershwin’s “Jazz Connection” led by CUNY’s Distinguished Bassist Ron Carter, a staged outing for Gershwin’s short “chamber opera” Blue Monday, and the world premiere of George Gershwin: Sun/Vision Craft, stills by BMCC Media Center.

Streetwise, continued from page 1 here. via video-tape, to the precinct locker room conversations of three experienced officers who described actual situations in which knowing, or not knowing, something about the language and culture of the community either threatened their safety or impacted their effectiveness. One veteran (in this case an actor), portrayed as disgruntled and isolated from the community provided a different perspective: “The City and the PD bend over backwards for immigrants. People come here from all over the world because we have the best system—and then we try to change our ways to meet their culture? It doesn’t make sense.” In a precinct house filled with differing perspectives, a new officer’s choice of who to listen to and emulate is critical. The videotape served as a springboard for the probing discussion that followed.

A session called “Word from the Wise” featured videos shot from the back seat of a patrol car, which provided a tightly focused virtual view of the three ethnic communities through the eyes of a veteran cop. The rookie officers got a chance to see the streets of the community, how members of the community interact with one another and the police, and how seasoned, highly respected officers use knowledge of language and culture on the job. One example of shrewd advice: “You may see people waving swords around in a park in Chinatown early in the morning. This doesn’t mean that they’re attacking someone; they’re practicing ‘t’ai chi.”

Yet another officer advised avoiding repeating your commands or questions in English: “Saying the same thing, only louder, doesn’t do it. Get somebody on the street to translate.”

Another veteran bluntly expressed the bottom line: “If you’re not going into a Spanish-speaking neighborhood to do whatever is necessary to interact with the people in the community, then you need to find another job.”

Officers who have become seasoned veterans in ethnically unfamiliar neighborhoods were then assigned as mentors to small groups. They described their initial impressions and spoke of how they learned about the community—whom they sought out for advice, how they learned to tell good information from bad, how they learned to ask questions on the street and in the precinct house without looking insensitive or nosy.

They also shared stories and advice about language and culturally sensitive situations they encountered on the job. One highlighted a person with a machete running down the hallway toward a police officer. He was shot because the officer—understandably fearful for his life—could not make his “drop it” command understand in English. Another cop shared how his life was very likely saved when he got into a scuffle with a “perp” who suddenly pulled a gun. Because he had earned the respect of the community, a bystander called 911 for back-up, and the situation was resolved safely.

The remainder of the session included role-playing and a problem-solving exercise based on a real case. The scenario begins in a Chinese community as two officers respond to a radio call about a traffic accident. An ensuing dispute involving two Asians. Soon dozens of other residents join in, taking sides. Not only are the officers unable to make themselves understood, but they also misread numerous cultural cues, overlook opportunities to use a volunteer translator, and, finally, inadvertently cause the incident to escalate dangerously. Drawing upon suggestions from the group, as well as their own professional experience, the mentor officers mapped out a “better way” to defuse the situation.

An afternoon session. “Say the Word,” featured interactive language instruction provided primarily by CUNY experts in Mandarin, Haitian Creole, and Spanish. Officers were introduced to linguistic and cultural “tactics”—both verbal and non-verbal—useful in greeting members of the community, expressing courtesy and respect, and issuing common police-related warnings and commands, such as “Don’t move” or “Drop it.”

The new officers learned how to ask simple questions that require easily understood answers, such as “What’s your name?” and “Is everything OK?” Key phrases which allow the officers to use basic language knowledge strategically in police encounters were taught and reinforced through a scripted scenario about two police officers responding to a domestic violence report. Phrase card inserts for police memo-books and audiotapes were created and included in the Streetwise materials to encourage further practice.

At day’s end the officers were asked for a written evaluation of Streetwise, and for comment on its value. The response was positive, and many officers voiced the need for more such training during their six months at the Police Academy. On all four CUNY campuses, there was an especially enthusiastic response to the language training. Officers readily appreciated the importance of knowing at least some crucial vocabulary words and phrases in language spoken, and the cultural do’s and don’ts, on their beat.

Clearly, neither Streetwise planners nor participants believe one day of training is sufficient to introduce the language and culture of a community. But all agreed it is an important beginning. Increasing the cross-cultural sophistication and linguistic skills of police officers—to enhance community/police cooperation—will require a variety of ongoing learning opportunities for police officers, coupled with substantial incentives within the NYPD for officers to take advantage of them.

The positive response to Streetwise suggests that, if semester-length, specially-tailored language courses were offered, many officers would enroll. A multidimensional approach is required. Distance learning technology would make it possible for officers to learn in the precinct houses; websites containing culture-specific information could be rapidly developed; foreign-language film listings and novels about specific cultures (already included in the participant handout package) could be made available at precinct houses; CD-ROMs of police-specific phrases could be developed and distributed for language practice.

Discussions are now under way between CUNY and the NYPD to begin at least some of this work in the spring semester. As an outgrowth of the Streetwise collaboration, arrangements are being made for CUNY faculty members to provide a series of guest lectures at the Police Academy as part of the training of the Spring 1999 graduating class.

The Streetwise initiative, led by John Mogulescu, CUNY Dean for Adult and Continuing Education, was developed by Greg Donaldson, Assistant Professor of Developmental Skills at New York City Technical College; Ellen Marson, Professor of Spanish, John Jay College; Douglas Muzzio,
Intel Chair, Honored by City College,
Reminiscences About Grove of Academe

I n 1956 Andrew S. Grove, Chairman of Intel Corporation, fled Hungary in the aftermath of the uprising in that country. Four years later, he graduated first in his City College class with a degree in chemical engineering and subsequently earned his doctorate at the University of California at Berkeley. Dr. Grove is also the author of the widely used text, Physics and Technology of Semiconductor Devices, and his take on successful corporate culture, Only the Paranoid Survive: How to Exploit the Crisis Points that Challenge Every Company and Career,

Not to be outdone by Time Magazine, which named him Man of the Year for 1997, his alma mater honored Grove with a special program at the Starlight Roof of the Waldorf-Astoria on Sept. 23 for his contributions to the digital revolution. In remarks made at the gala black-tie event, Grove admitted he was "a guy in a hurry," even missing his graduation ceremony because "I was high-tailing it to California at the time." The result of that exodus is an amazing chapter in American corporate history. Following is an excerpt from Grove's eloquent reminiscences about his City College years.

Arrived in America from Hungary in January 1957 on a horrible winter day, and I found myself surrounded by the grey marshes of New Jersey. I was having serious second thoughts about coming here, but I was soon hauled out by my uncle. He worked at Brooklyn College for 27 years before retiring, but lived in the Bronx. I didn't realize it then, but he had, so to speak, laid the tracks for my acceptance into Brooklyn College in record time. My uncle and I made the 1-1/2-hour subway ride down to the campus to register in time for the new semester. I was stamped and approved, and got all kinds of credit for courses I had taken in Hungary. But then I rapidly figured out that, though I had left very early in my sophomore year, I was matriculating on the other side of the ocean as a beginning senior. I was happy at first, but as the day wore on, I began to see there was something wrong with this picture. They will give me a degree in nine months' time, I thought, and somebody will actually think I'm a chemist!

I knew how little I knew to be a proper chemist, and when I calculated that I only needed two more courses to graduate in chemistry, I really panicked. My English wasn't very good, and I struggled to explain my situation to an official. He leaned back with a big sigh and said, "Andy—may I call you Andy?—if you want more technical courses, maybe you should go to an engineering school." Yes to "Andy"—it's been Andy ever since—and yes to engineering school! "But Brooklyn College doesn't have one."

A lot of what is good in America I learned at City College. . . My time there was for me the quintessential American experience. —Andrew Grove

Where is one? He gave me directions to Brooklyn Polytechnic.

The next day I went there and announced I was a Hungarian refugee and wanted to become a chemical engineer. But they said the two scholarships they had in that field were already given away, and the tuition was $2,000. Well, that might as well have been $200 million! The two gentlemen saw "unthinkable" written on my face and suggested I look into City College. They have a pretty good engineering program there.

By noon I was in the registrar's office of Shepard Hall. I asked how much the tuition was and was told "there is none, just a $39 fee or so." I concluded I was in the right place.

But then I was asked for my transcript, which I had not thought to pack when I left Hungary. My heart sank, but the official said, "That's OK—just tell me what you took and what your grades were, so we can go into the right courses." That became my "transcript." Coming from such a different society, that level of trust really impressed me. Shocked me. That's how I entered City College, and it has been a love affair from the word go. It was "tough love"—it was not an easy journey, but it was warm, it was interactive, it was caring. Among the people who left an enormous impression on me was Professor Morris Kolodney, my faculty adviser.

I remember his asking me once, "Andy, how do you like New York?" And I said, without thinking much about it, "I hate it." This was mainly because the weather was god-awful that winter. He was shocked, but when I explained, he said "If it's weather you want, you should go to California." Ladies and gentlemen, that was it! When I was asked later about my plans for life, I always said, "Move to California."

Another life-forming experience was with Professor Alois V. Schmidt, the epitome of a tough teacher and a caring teacher. He helped me to develop as a young man, an engineer, and a manager. I am very sorry he never saw what happened to me subsequently in life, since he had a lot to do with it.

Carnegie Foundation Honors Queens Professor For Work on F1Y

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching annually honors as Professor of the Year outstanding undergraduate teachers in each of the states, as well as a national winner. It was recently announced that this year's New York State Professor of the Year is Judith Summerfield, Professor of English at Queens College.

Notable among the achievements for which she was saluted was being instrumental in creating the campus's Freshman Year Initiative—a response to what had been a high dropout rate of 30% in Queens College freshman classes. The program has grown from an initial 32 students and five faculty members to more than 600 freshmen and 60 faculty members.

Judith Summerfield engaged with her students at Queens College.

Professor of Public Policy, Baruch College; Sandra Postter, Professor of Speech, Communication and Theater Arts, Borough of Manhattan Community College; and myself, Rebecca Katechis of the Office of Academic Affairs, was the Administrative Coordinator. Funding for the project was provided by the New York State Regional Policing Institute, with additional support from the New York City Police Foundation.

Streetwise was not easy to either develop or plan. Imagine arranging four simultaneous weddings or satellite launches. But we came away with a great deal of respect for the work of police officers, the veteran officers whose stories inspired and informed the new graduates, and the Department’s administrative and training “brass.” Some of us, to be perfectly honest, were almost tempted to change careers and become a cop. Being waved past a long line of drivers waiting to enter the Municipal Parking Garage due to “official police business” was very nice indeed.
Eleanor Roosevelt: First Lady Activist and Agitator

Until she died in 1962, Eleanor Roosevelt consistently made herself available for advice to students, often inviting them to meet with civil rights and peace activists at Sara Delano Roosevelt House, her mother-in-law’s house on 107th Street, which was eventually donated to Hunter College. Distinguished Professor of History at John Jay College of Criminal Justice Blanche Wiesen Cook—a Hunter undergrad and Student Council President in 1960-61—had hardly known, when she met ER on several of these occasions, that she would end up devoting more than two decades of her life to writing what promises to be the premier biography of the woman many consider our greatest First Lady. “She lit up the room and was very charismatic,” Cook recalls. Volume 1 of Eleanor Roosevelt 1884-1933 (Penguin) appeared in 1992; Volume 2, covering the pre-war White House years 1933-38, came out this spring; and Volume 3, which will explore the war years and ER’s pivotal role in creating the Declaration of Human Rights (“The Magna Carta for the 21st century,” says Cook), will appear in the near future.

After receiving her doctorate at Johns Hopkins University, Cook taught briefly at the historically black Hampton Institute (now University) in Virginia, then for three years at Stern College of New York’s Yeshiva University. In 1967 she came to John Jay and has taught there ever since (with occasional appearances in classrooms at Rikers Island). Among her previous works are The Declassified Eisenhower: A Divided Legacy of Peace and Political Warfare (Doubladay, 1981) and Crystal Eastman on Women and Revolution (Oxford, 1978). She is also a senior editor of the Garland Library of War and the Nation.

Cook considers her work as a student assistant for two of the greatest women in City University history—Mina Rees, then Dean of the Faculty at Hunter, and Ruth Weintraub, Dean of Graduate Studies—as her most important formative experience. “From Ruth, who died just this year at 95, I learned about politics and power. From Mina, who also died recently at 95, I learned about diplomacy and determination.”

CS: Toward the end of Volume 1, you quote ER’s remark, the day after her husband was elected President, when she turned down uniformed protection: “Wants to hurt me. I’m not important enough.” She also said, “I’m just going to be plain, ordinary Mrs. Roosevelt.” What catapulted her into becoming perhaps the most extraordinary of all our First Ladies?

BC: Well, it was not sudden—she had been head of the Women’s Democratic Committee, a major fund-raiser for many causes, owned a school and a monthly women’s newspaper, and wrote a monthly column since 1925, even had her own radio program. And finally she was a very skilled organizer...a real activist.

CS: So she was being a bit falsely modest?

BC: Her modesty was very real. Even in the 1930s, near the end of her life, when she was called the First Lady of the world, she flew into a Midwestern city with a U.N. official, saw a red carpet on the tarmac, and said: “Oh, there must be somebody important on the plane.” There’s something painful—as well as marvellous—in how she never really appreciated how important she had been to so many as a galvanizer of political action.

CS: Speaking of her galvanizing gift, you reveal a wonderful detail about perhaps the most memorable moment of FDR’s early presidency. It was ER who gave her husband a book of Thoreau’s that had in it the line, “nothing is so much to be feared as fear.” FDR’s variation will probably be his one line that lives in whatever the opposite of infamy is.

BC: And she really did represent the best of the New Deal. I must say, by the way, that Volume 2 was a very painful book to be writing now, when all the hopeful visions of that Deal are being destroyed. Just consider housing, which was ER’s real passion. She created Arthurdale, a model community down in West Virginia, which I discussed at length. It was built in 1934 in a mining region where workers had been out of work for years, they lived in caves and cuberets. The project was mocked and ridiculed, but my partner Clare Cook and I visited it two years ago and were astonished at what a splendid community it was—and it is still thriving.

CS: This sounds strangely like the Habitat sites up in the Bronx.

BC: Yes, it’s exactly what Jimmy Carter has been doing. But that is totally private and voluntary, the government has walked away from public housing. ER’s goal was such housing for every American; now we have three to seven million homeless and no one talking ER’s kind of language. Imagine her insisting, 60 years ago, that everyone have indoor plumbing! And remember, this was when 80% of rural Americans didn’t have that. Some of FDR’s Secretaries, like Harold Ickes, were aghast at her boldness. “If she has her way,” he said, “how will we be able to tell the rich from the poor?” To which ER characteristically responded, “Well, in matters of simple dignity and decency we should not have to tell the rich from the poor.”

Another reason I’ve been writing curled up in a hall of agony is the present plight of refugee populations around the world and the widespread need for missions of rescue from ethnic, racial, and religious violence. ER was among the first to move on this front. She was among the first to “read” such impending crises as fascism and racial segregation, and she passed her views along to government officials. Indeed, she created a kind of parallel administration to pursue issues she cared about—notably issues FDR was cautious about or even sidestepped, particularly issues of race.

GS: And the source of your anguish here?

BC: Well, it’s amazing how the situation is replicated today, with the current anti-democratic, anti-feminist, anti-gay, anti-refugee backlash—and these theocrats working to take over the nation.

GS: Your remark about Volume 2 being painful to write in the 1990s leads me to wonder whether this extends to the Presidency, or at least the First Ladyship, amid the recent events in Washington. Have we created a kind of parallel administration to look at the Hickory-Rothman Clinton?

BC: ER set a crusading style for the First Lady that no other presidential wife has emulated, though Hillary at first said she intended to do so. In an unprecedented way, Eleanor said, “This is what you can do with power and influence. Watch me work!”

GS: Speaking of work, how long have you been scrutinizing her life?

BC: About 18 years, and I hope the third volume, which will cover ERs work on the Declaration of Human Rights and her last years, will not take too many more!

GS: Can you recall a specific moment when this enormous labor of what is quite obviously love was born?

BC: Yes, when I read a dreadful book that purported to be a biography of Lorena Hickok...

GS: The distinguished and very colorful journalist with whom ER had a long and profound relationship from 1932 to ER’s death.

BC: Yes—an important, intense, and passionate relationship that was diminished by that mean-spirited, woman-hating book that caricatured “fat, ugly Hick” and “buck-toothed, ugly Eleanor” as “two, lonely women” so unhappy that they became friends. But not lovers, because Eleanor would never do that. The author’s denial was so pervasive that I wrote a very angry and blunt review for Women’s Studies. It was widely reprinted, and everyone started saying, “You have to write Eleanor’s biography.”

But my field was diplomacy and foreign economic policy. My dissertation had been on Woodrow Wilson and militarism vs. the American Union (parliamentary body of the ACM) and I had just published my Declassified Eisenhower in 1981. Still, I was in the market for a new project, so I went to the Roosevelt archives at Hyde Park. I soon discovered that ER had a completely independent political life in the 1920s—had written wonderful political and feminist articles that no one had much attention to. And her letters to every member of FDR’s cabinet reveal the extent to which she was an activist First Lady, something largely ignored previously.

GS: Are all her papers at Hyde Park?

BC: Yes, and the nice thing is that she donated them to the public, so they are “available.” Thus, a very useful collection of the Hickock-ER correspondence has just appeared. Though, unfortunately, it does not give us “full” letters as advertised. Large chunks are missing—the editor seems not to have heard of ellipses! I emphasize the Hickock materials because she was a very political person; her pungent, peppery observations were very important in the creation of ER as a public figure. It was her idea to sit down in the women-only press conferences, for instance, and her idea that ER’s long letters to her become the enormously popular newspaper column “My Day.” Hick, as ER called her, was like Louis Howe to FDR—one of the most significant political mentors of her life. The others in ER’s life were Howe and Marie Souvestre, her great teacher. A native of France, learned linguist, and deeply concerned about social issues, Souvestre was the first to recognize ER’s spirit and talents.

GS: And, as you clearly show, much more. Hickock comes across as quite a bold-breaker in her own right—the first woman sports reporter and an extremely prominent journalist.

BC: She was, in the late ’20s and early ’30s the outstanding woman journalist in America, a high-paid AP writer who was widely admired.

GS: Sounds like she’d have been right at home on a Front Page set.

BC: Yes. But lately there’s been a shocking effort to degrade, make fun of her. In fact she was a very powerful woman.
GS: No proper biography has been done?
BC: Oh, no. And it would make a great but bitter and sad story, because she eventually sacrificed her professional eminence for ER, gave up her job—the way so many women in love have always done.

GS: Were they the same age?
BC: No, Lorena was about 10 years younger. She left her big hiccups for various low-profile positions in FDR's administration. She got very depressed in these gofer jobs, like doing PR for the World's Fair. War correspondency was what she really wanted, but ER discouraged this, wanting her to stay in the U.S.

GS: Your revelations raise a furor?
BC: I have been fascinated by the reaction of so many who claim to love ER; they do not want to know anything about Hick—or love in ER's life. But this was absolutely one of her most important and absorbing relationships. And it was one that went through many times, especially after the brutal summer of 1933. The summer of 1934 proved difficult because ER's face had become so familiar that privacy was impossible.

GS: Yes, you quote some poignant dialogue in which ER insists on her privacy to a reporter (see box). It speaks volumes on the importance of that silence. Until I discovered this page, I had no idea how much ER cared about privacy, to the point of insisting that privacy was impossible.

BC: It was one in need of a voice. ER spent the rest of her life sharing her thoughts only with Hick, and Hick was in a position to hurt her. Her correspondence makes it clear that Hick was her true confidante, her confessor. One true thing is that ER always loved FDR, which is why he was in a position to hurt her. Her correspondence makes it clear that Hick might have saved her. No one used their differences to independent friendships to destroy the couple as part of a political agenda, as the Taliban does today.

GS: If ER were alive, what advice do you think she would give to Hillary?
BC: I cannot say. Who is your next president?

GS: I am not asking about the president. I am asking you. What advice would you give to someone who could have been the next president of the United States?

BC: My favorite ER advice, which I quote on page 5 of Volume 1, is that "every woman in political life needs to develop skin as tough as rhinoceros hide."

GS: That reminds me of Walt Whitman, who figures so charmingly in the Lewinsky affair. Reminiscing about all that the 19th-century poet Leaves of Grass eddies, he said, "I have the hide of the rhinoceros, morally and in other ways—can stand almost anything."

GS: What a wonderful image: Eleanor reading Whitman to Lorena Hickock.

BC: Regarding Hillary's situation now, ER also had to deal with—and did with grace several times—ER was very tough. From the 1920s Missy LeHand was a resident in the Roosevelt households and was really the "junior wife." Everyone close to the family knew she was his companion—the house at Warm Springs was Missy's place—and ER treated her with great respect and consideration...much as the second "wife" has routinely been treated in aristocratic homes through history. By the White House years, the couple essentially had separate quarters and courts—ERs included, quite openly, her circle of tie-dye and flower-power-wearing, heavy-smoking lesbian friends. This scandalized her mother-in-law and aunts!

GS: The constant challenge of biography is monitoring or negotiating the "distance" between author and subject. In my own biographies, though, I found myself coming down on the side of Ann Douglas, the author of Terrible Honesty, a study of New York in the 1920s. She said, "I can't see doing a book that isn't all tied up with who you are." Where do you stand on this issue?

BC: I really tried very hard to let ER speak in her voice. But insofar as what concerns me is reflected in the book, well, a while back I wrote an essay on your question titled "Biographer and Subject: The Critical Connection." I said there that biographers are always writing their autobiography, always writing about what we care about.

GS: Another Whitman connection! One of his friends observed once, "autobiography is the only real biography." And Walt himself agreed.

BC: I must say this is the first book that allowed me to pursue everything I am inter-

Continued on page 12
Unique B.T. Degree Consortium Commands the Stage

Professor Charles E. Scott, Director of the Stage Technology Program and Lighting Designer at New York City Technical College, reports on the Bachelor’s in Technology for Entertainment Technicians at the College and an interdisciplinary collaboration with the Brooklyn College Theatre Department.

Tullah Bankhead used to say that the only person in show business who could count on steady work was the night watchman. Much has changed behind entertainment industry curtains since her time: the solitary watchman of old could not have visualized today’s night watchman. Much has changed behind entertainment industry curtains since her time: the solitary watchman of old could not have visualized today’s.

Today, the ranks of the entertainment business who can anticipate steady employment have swelled—thanks to a technological revolution far beyond the horizons of film and theater production. Advances in electronics, optics, high-power propulsion systems, and other technologies have produced High Definition Television, interactive cable, and live satellite transmission. The development of robotics and computerized control systems has made possible the fantastic worlds of event simulations at theme parks. Such new technologies are also playing a big part in the growing casino industry’s reliance on show business to attract guests that keep hotels and gaming rooms humming.

The same technologies produce the spectacular light shows that have transformed the rock concert into an event that can rival the grandest Fourth of July pyrotechnic extravaganza. Even the nation’s most prestigious cable, and live satellite transmission. The development of robotics and computerized control systems has made possible the fantastic worlds of event simulations at theme parks. Such new technologies are also playing a big part in the growing casino industry’s reliance on show business to attract guests that keep hotels and gaming rooms humming.

The same technologies produce the spectacular light shows that have transformed the rock concert into an event that can rival the grandest Fourth of July pyrotechnic extravaganza. Even the nation’s most prestigious...
Teaching English at City—A Perspective from 1916

Following is an editorial that appeared in The Campus, the City College of New York student newspaper, on February 24, 1916:

City College men are handicapped in one respect—the majority are of foreign-born parents. One of the greatest advances in our curriculum was the establishment of a four-year requirement in Public Speaking. The various improvements that it has wrought are of inestimable benefit. But the success of this department has been far below what it might and should be. And there is but one reason for this deficiency—the lack of a sufficient English requirement. The vocabulary to supply words and the facility to use them—the foundation upon which the Public Speaking courses build—is lacking.

The present English requirements presuppose a knowledge and training which the average Freshman has not received. Course One is a course admirable in all ways, except that it is not an English course. It is a course in the History and Appreciation of English Literature. The old Course Two, in a desperate attempt to remove in six months a deficiency which four years of high school training had failed to wipe out, became too general to be of any value. And an upper class man is discouraged by his concomitant from electing Course Three, a really practical course, when he reads in the register that the course is “primarily for Sophomores.”

The present English Two is a step in the right direction. It is a course in spelling, punctuation and composition. It lays particular stress on letter-writing, especially the business letter. But it has not sufficient time to accomplish its aim. It can hold the student for but two terms and then loses him for the rest of his college course. And it is useless to deny that those who are especially weak in a subject are the first to avoid it.

Make English, that is, practical English, a four-year requirement. Devote at least two hours a week to a practical training along the lines of the present English Two. And the results will justify the change.

F

From agnolotti to zabaglione, the mouth-watering world of Italian cuisine was theirs for the taking when 300 fortunate diners feasted on the donated specialties of nearly 50 Italian restaurants, bakeries, and caterers recently at restaurants, bakeries, and caterers recently at the donated specialities of nearly 50 Italian restaurants, bakeries, and caterers recently at restaurants, bakeries, and caterers recently at restaurants, bakeries, and caterers recently at restaurants, bakeries, and caterers recently at restaurants, bakeries, and caterers recently at restaurants, bakeries, and caterers recently at restaurants, bakeries, and caterers recently at restaurants, bakeries, and caterers recently at restaurants, bakeries, and caterers recently at restaurants, bakeries, and caterers recently at restaurants, bakeries, and caterers recently at restaurants, bakeries, and caterers recently at restaurants, bakeries, and caterers recently at restaurants, bakeries, and caterers recently at 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more colorful: “a tall, angular Ichabod Crane sort of character, academically sedu-
sive, academically sere. . . a man with cury, rusty hair, and with the funniest
darn habit of screwing up his face into a
quizzical gnarli, at the same time reaching
over the top of his head with his long arm
in order to scratch the back of his ear”.

The scene Roth describes is the last class,
at which Dickson is to return six-to-eight
term papers on the assigned topic of
descriving the construction or operation of a
complex mechanism. Roth has
chosen to ignore the assignment and write
“Impressions of a Plumber,” and he frets
about the consequences (verse: throughout
his memoirs, which are billed as novels,
Roth writes of himself in the third person
under the pseudonym Ira Stigman): “Doubt
Roth refers at one point to an “Edith.”

The publication of his sketch, devoted to
least to him, that in spite of the booby
negligence of its author to follow clear
instructions with regard to the treatment of
subject matter?”

“Then you’ll have to be satisfied with the
low mark you’ll receive for your term paper.
And, I’m afraid, in the course as well.”

But no reproach, no matter what the
magnitude, or potential penalty, could
diminsh the swell of exaltation Ira felt. He
was going to be in The Lavender! He! A
Nobody! Wow! What an exonation of his nonentity!
The years, the hours, the days
during the swollen shlemiel [Yiddish for
bungler, fool] who was himself. And worse
than that: a shlemiel perpetrator. Re-
prive. A refi of reprieve. Ah, wait till he
told Mom, told the family.—Mom’s bosom
would heave with joy. And what would Pop
say? He’d have to admit that there was
something more to his son than the
kalykeh [cripple] he appeared to be. And
Larry [Roth’s best college buddy, a transfer
from NYU]? And Edith and lo! The maga-
zine was due to appear during exam week,
but he couldn’t wait to tell them! Wow! Minnie
would beam: my marvelous brother! Exploit that adulation for what it was
worth, of course. Oh, boy! And [his first
cousin] Stella—she was too dumb, mable-
leable, to require extra incitement. Admire,
go ahead and admire. And with vast, cyni-
cal gratitude, accept [his aunt] Mami’s
proffered reward of a dollar afterward.

“Here. Intelligent coltich hiyo. Take.”
Jesus, wasn’t I the world wonderful!

They were surprisingly
good, Mr. Dickson com-
tended—and commended:
some were exceptionally good.
And one was of such unusual
quality that in his capacity as
faculty adviser to the staff of the
magazine, he had recommended
the inclusion of the piece, at the
last minute, in the City College quar-
terly, The Lavender. Who was that
white? Ira wondered if he was, and
then for some reason, listlessness gave
way to an abrupt sharpening of attention.
Was there, could there have been
any substance to that zest he had felt,
that lift, when he was writing the piece
apart from Minnie’s extravagant, though by
herself patenting discounted,
praise of how “wonderful” it was when he
accorded her the privilege of reading the
typescript at breakfast in the morning?
The term paper Mr. Dickson had recom-
manded for inclusion in The Lavender was
entitled “Impressions of a Plumber,” and
the author was Ira Stigman.

“Wow!” Ira had exclaimed.

Classmates turned to locate the recipi-
ent of the distinction.

“Is that you?” someone nearby asked,
with gratifying incredulity. “He means
you?” And another fellow student, “You
mean to say you wrote it.”

Ira grinned, elated; he had fooled these
wise guys...

Mr. Dickson manifested his displeasure
at this ruffling of classroom decorum. He
grimaced in disapproval, and lost the grin-
case go unnoticed: he framed it by arch-
ing an arm over his leaf-brown poll and
scratching the opposite ear. “You realize,

O
riginally when Ira would tell the story of
“The Impressions of a Plumber,” he
always treated the sequel as the climax.
And what was the sequel? He received a D
in the course. What a delicious contrast,
he felt, between having won inclusion of his
term paper in the college Lavender, re-
ceived inclusion in the college literary quar-
terly because of its literary merits, at-
least, because of its narrative merit, and the
ignominious D he received for the

Thanks for Record Giving

The CUNY Campaign extends grateful appreciation to all those do-
nors who participated in the University’s 1997-98 voluntary charita-
tive giving initiative. More than $266,000 was raised—a CUNY Campaign
record. Your generous and caring spirit will provide vital funding to
more than 900 agencies serving the diverse needs of the people
of New York City, the nation, and the world.

—Stella Cortijo
University-wide CUNY Campaign Liaison
Professor Joe Cuomo, Director of the Queens Evening Readings, has been organizing these events for 23 years. Cuomo, who was a member of the 1960s rock band The Simples, said that the sight of the audience during the readings is one of his favorite things about the events.

Cuomo has hosted a variety of authors, including Nobel Prize winners and Pulitzer Prize winners. He said that he enjoys the challenge of selecting authors and topics that will appeal to a wide range of people.

Cuomo also said that he enjoys the opportunity to connect with his audience. "I love the idea of being a bridge between the writers and their readers," he said.

Cuomo said that he hopes to continue hosting the Queens Evening Readings for many more years to come.

For more information on the Queens Evening Readings, please visit the website at <http://www.queens.edu/reading/>.