

# *Woman's Club of Douglaston*

*Established 1916*



## NEWS BYTES

- February 2020-



**IN MEMORIAM - LIBBY SKALA**

Approximately one and one half years ago Madame President and I attended a one-woman show at our local library -- a portrayal by **Libby Skala** of her beloved grandmother, Lilia. We were so captivated by Libby's riveting performance that we attended a second of her one-woman shows. Each time we were able to speak with Libby and after both encounters we walked away touched by her genuine warmth, natural grace and beauty.

Fast forward a bit of time and we, the Woman's Club of Douglaston, were treated to the performance piece "Lilia" based on the life of Libby's determined Austrian grandmother and their special relationship. (*Thank you Helene, for arranging this engagement.*) Libby and her performance were so well-received by our members that we decided to bring her back for another one of her one-woman pieces.

With very heavy hearts, we are saddened to inform you of the passing of Libby Skala (52 years of age). Her death was untimely and unexpected. We have no details to share. We mourn her loss and send our deepest sympathy to her devoted husband, Steve, and to her family. We are blessed to have met this gracious, lovely, talented young woman whose persona touched us so.

*Her bright light has dimmed, but rest assured she is now a bright and shining star in Heaven. Rest In Peace dear Libby.*



1967 -2020

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*From the Editor..*

***PONDERINGS – MUSES – IDLE THOUGHTS***

With the sudden and unexpected passing of our friend of the Woman's Club of Douglaston, [Libby Skala](#), age 52, our thoughts turned to what this young woman has accomplished in too brief a life. *(If anyone cares to research her name it is evident she lived a full, rich and rewarding life sharing her talent and her gift with others. Suffice to say she lived her “dash” fully, joyfully, lovingly and completely.)*

*On the much more publicized passing of a sports giant and legend, [Kobe Bryant](#), age 41, again we pause and think about the fragility of life and the unexpected aspect of death. (He too has earned a well-lived “dash”)*

**“What matters most of all is how we live our “dash”.**

**”For it matters not much what we own, the cars, the house, the cash. What matter is how we live and love and how we spend our “dash.”**

**“You come into the world with nothing and the purpose of your life is to make something out of nothing.”**

**We believe you get the message!** Obviously, we are speaking of two dates: **the date you are born and the date you die.** But what about that pesky little “dash” in the middle signifying all those years in between those two dates that you actually lived your life?

**How significant is that little “dash”, your “dash?”** Does it mean you had to have found a cure for cancer or any other terminal illness? Does it mean you had to have painted the Mona Lisa? Does it mean you had to explore the depths of the ocean or travel in space? What is it exactly we have to do in order to give that “dash” the ultimate stamp of approval in defining how well we lived our lives? **The answer my dear friends, is simpler than you might think.**

**Either great or small, this is “your” dash.** Live it fully, respectfully, deliberately, passionately, and purposefully -- inspiring our Woman’s Club family by **living a life of joy and kindness.**

We women juggle lives, relationships, families, finances, work, caring for our elders, our mates, our siblings, our children, coping with old age, loneliness, etc., often neglecting to pause and missing the moment – **the “now”.**

**Let us attempt to stay in the “now” while we are going about our day – catching that flash of an instant that makes us**

pause to observe our surroundings, to smile, to laugh and to engage. Know, that that one seemingly small, insignificant instant will ultimately boomerang and thereby affect in a positive way, not only you, but anyone else with whom you come in contact while you are merely going about that “ordinary” day. *Now THAT is a monumental event to add to your dash!*

So, let us try to live in the moment – living with an awareness of our surroundings, consciously taking notice and enjoying all the things we take for granted: our beautiful trees, the chirping birds, the fragrant flowers, a gentle breeze, the falling rain, our footprints in the snow – all these things that we overlook or look through as we go about our day.

If per chance you discover a cure, or build a monument etc., etc., that's great, but remember your greatest accomplishment is just living your life, enjoying the little moments, noticing the beauty around you, thanking God for being alive in this gorgeous crazy world we have been blessed to enjoy, carrying on and just doing the best we can for ourselves and others. *And, this is how your “dash” will be defined.*

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## LEAP YEAR – 2020

*“Thirty days hath September, April, June and November. All the rest have thirty-one, except February which has 28 and stands alone”.*

Leap Year, however, brings an extra day to February making February 29<sup>th</sup> a special day. Leap years are years divisible by

four. The purpose of Leap Year is to keep the calendar year in line with the Earth's movement around the Sun. We can all "google" the rest of the scores of information regarding Leap Year.

### Some fun thoughts and facts:

- If you are born on February 29<sup>th</sup> (aka Leap Day) do you celebrate your birthday every four years?
- If yes, if you are eighty years of age, are you actually twenty?  
*(Unfortunately, it does not work that way!)*
- People born on Leap Day are called "Leapers"!
- The odds of being born on Leap Day are 1 in 1500! Karin Henrickson of Norway gave birth to three children on consecutive February 29<sup>th</sup>(s).
- 187,000 Americans have been born on Leap Day and another 4,000,000 worldwide share this special birthday.
- Our own WCD member Patricia Yoon is a Leaper!

*What will you do with this extra day?!*

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The Woman's Club of Douglaston

will meet on

Thursday, February 13, 2020

at 1:00 p.m.

at the  
Douglaston Club

600 West Drive Douglaston, NY

## **Program and Meeting Highlights:**

### **Louis Armstrong, Jazz Legend, and Queens Resident**

Jazz history comes to life in Corona, Queens, where [Satchmo](#) chose to live with his wife, Lucille, from 1943-1971. Although celebrated and world famous, he lived in a working-class neighborhood, was unpretentious, and enjoyed the company of neighbors—especially the children who lived near him on the block. The house is now a museum owned by the City of New York and run under the auspices of Queens College.

Lucille generously bequeathed the house to honor her beloved husband's life and perpetuate his memory and extraordinary achievements.

You will be given a video tour of the museum and see interesting artifacts, unusual furnishings that reflect Lucille's decorating tastes (*which were at times extravagant*), and an array of appliances from the period that will bring back memories and feelings of nostalgia in many of us.

Overall, the museum is an amazingly, well-preserved time capsule of the period.

We will examine the life of this acknowledged musical genius

and humanitarian through narrated video and discussion.

*Ricky Riccardi is the Director of Research Collections for the Louis Armstrong House Museum. He is a radio commentator and author of [What a Wonderful World: The Magic of Louis Armstrong's Later Years](#).*

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**The Book Club** will meet at 12:15 p.m. Join Joan Curran and other Book Club members in the Bar Room prior to our General Meeting. *This month's selection is ["Pearl"](#) by [Mary Gordon](#).*

*NOTE: We urge all members to read this compelling book prior to Mary's appearance at our March meeting!!!*

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Next Meeting

**Thursday - February 13, 2020** – [Louis Armstrong](#), Jazz Legend and Queens Resident.

**Thursday - March 5, 2020** – [Mary Gordon](#), acclaimed American writer will discuss *Pearl*, her novel about the “time of troubles” in Ireland.

**Thursday - April 2, 2020** – *Underneath the Paramount Hotel* – You will be swept away on a night club adventure while watching a screening of an award-winning documentary about the *Diamond Horseshoe Night Club*.

**Wednesday - April 29, 2020 – [Come From Away!](#)** – Enjoy a fun day in the city for lunch and a Tony-award winning show. Contact Miriam Albert at [miriamalbert@gmail.com](mailto:miriamalbert@gmail.com)  
Seating is limited!!

**Friday - May 8, 2020 - Annual Meeting and Luncheon!**

A sumptuous themed lunch event at the Plandome Country Club is coming up with raffles, vendors, friendship, and fun all included. *Stay tuned for more details.*

*Raffles and donations from members, friends and merchants are welcome.*

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**AS THE WCD GOES DIGITAL MEMBERS WHO DO NOT HAVE EMAIL WILL RECEIVE NOTICES BY MAIL.**

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**Spotlight On...**



**Marian Ales- Non-Agenarian**

**Marian was born and raised in Flatbush, Brooklyn.** Her Dad was Dr. S. Lloyd Fisher. He was what we call a general practitioner, with a busy practice and often was called in the middle of the night to deliver a baby.

Those were the days! Marian's Dad actually patented a "bone saw" which, unfortunately, due to his untimely death, never was able to experience its usage.

Marian's Mother, Maud Bouker, was of Dutch descent, whose father was a Contractor who imported brownstone – a much-used product of the time. Marian was named in honor of her Mother's younger sister, who tragically fell from a window at the age of three or four and died. Her Grandfather's name was DeWitt Clinton who had eight children.

Marian attended local schools in Brooklyn and graduated from *N.Y.U. with a Master's Degree in Education/Literature*. Rather than "process" in her graduation, she and a College roommate decided to take a trip to Europe.

As fate would have its way, Marian, sitting on the bus in an aisle seat, and across the aisle was a gentleman. They began chatting and soon discovered that he was a Professor of Psychology at N.Y.U.! His name is Victor Woodrow Ales. (*An aside: Victor's mother was of Sicilian descent. On the date Woodrow Wilson was inaugurated, so was Victor "Woodrow" born.*) Sadly, Victor passed away in 1999. They have one son,

Lloyd.

An interesting tidbit from Marian: After she obtained her degree in Education/Literature and was sent to “student-teach”, she discovered she hated it. Teaching was not for her; so she took a job as a secretary where she was told if she intended to be a secretary, she should get some secretarial skills: typing, shorthand, etc., and so she did, quite successfully. She became Secretary to Council of Foreign Relations on Manhattan’s Eastside.

Shortly thereafter, Marian and Victor married; enjoyed traveling to Europe (where else) on their honeymoon.

Once they were home, it was then that “*fate*” again interceded and while driving with Victor in Douglas Manor, a place she had never seen, nor did she know anything about any part of Queens, she became enraptured as so many of us have with our hometown. She said it felt like home to her – *the homes; the trees; the gardens*. And so in 1955, they settled in a house on Forest where Marian resides today.

After suffering a miscarriage, Marian and Victor had their son, Lloyd. Marian became a “stay at home Mom”, which was quite the norm for those times. To Victor’s credit, he made many improvements to their home (all beneficial), even adding a garage. Although he had a brilliant mind, Victor enjoyed using his hands to create, change and construct.

Young Lloyd attended the local schools, P.S. 98, M.S. 67. He attended Oswego College and now resides in Syracuse, where Marian's brother also resides.

In 1955, the "Manor" was a bit different than it is today. One actually knew all their neighbors. As it turns out, Marian's neighbor, Dorothy Murphy, introduced a young Marian to the neighbors and then introduced her to the Woman's Club of Douglaston and the Douglaston Garden Club.

Marian loved gardening – even though she admittedly made an error in planting not one but three weeping willow trees. She subsequently had to remove two of them! In those days of the Garden Club when Catherine Richardson ruled, every member was told they were there to work, and work they did, particularly at the railroad station (both sides) where they showed up with rakes, gloves and bags (much like our Clean the Park Day) which Park ironically is named for Catherine Richardson.

Marian remembers the Woman's Club with not so many members. Meetings were held in members' home and the hostess was responsible for the "tea service". Marian held the position of Historian and was Hospitality Chair for many years.

Unfortunately, Marian can no longer garden, but she does

enjoy “*reading*”. Although Marian is legally blind, she is able to listen to books on tape, which are sent to her by the Library via mail. She enjoys reading non-fiction. She is so pleased to be able to “*read*” in spite of her inability to read. There is nothing disabled about Marian. She is a devout member of the Community Church and attends Services on Sundays and days of worship.

Members of the Woman’s Club of Douglaston, feel blessed. Marian is articulate, intelligent, humorous and an inspiration to me personally. We laughed much and shared much.

Marian, she is a delightful, charismatic, witty, strong woman. She is fiercely independent. I don’t think she gives much thought to being 95 years of age, other than it is what it is. If you know her, I’m sure you love her; if you don’t know her, introduce yourself to her and you will be enthralled as I am.

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**Here's What's Happening...**

Aida Ieraci, Mary Taylor

Linda Akers



Ian Lewis, Mary Taylor  
Aida Ieraci

At NY Library Central Branch,  
Jamaica and Archives Office.



The active and newly appointed members of our **History Committee**, co-chaired by **Aida Ieraci, Mary Taylor and Maria Di Chiara**, and assisted by **Past President Linda Akers** and Board Member **Miriam Albert** have spent many days and hours organizing our historic documents in order to preserve the 105 year history of our **Woman's Club of Douglaston**.

After numerous meetings and discussions, a decision was made to donate our archives to the **New York Public Library at the Central Branch in Jamaica, Queens**. On Wednesday, January 29, 2020, our enthusiastic “*historians*” met with **Mr.**

**Ian Lewis** of the **Central Library** and delivered hundreds of documents, which included letters, minutes, programs, etc. dating back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

These archives from 1916 to 2019 documenting the **past activities and achievements of our pioneering founders, past presidents and committee chairwomen**, will be made available for viewing, research and educational purposes at the **Jamaica Central Branch of the NY Public Library**.

Some excerpts of our history of the last decade will also be available for viewing on our WCD website [www.womansclubofdouglaston.com](http://www.womansclubofdouglaston.com).

*Our profound thanks to all the ladies of the WCD History Committee for having the foresight and stamina for taking on this herculean task!*

*The WCD History Committee is currently very busy updating our History Booklet.*

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***Sunshine News...***



After a very long stay at a Rehabilitation Facility, I am pleased to announce that **Ann Cavaseno** is at home. When visiting with Ann, she was upbeat, fully dressed (*fashionably*); makeup on and red polish adorning her nails. She informed me she had read 5+ books during her stay. Amazing gal!  
*Welcome home Ann!*



Another bit of good news: I was so pleased to speak with **Marylyn MacKay**, who of late, has been unable to attend meetings. She sounded quite good, is in very good spirits and is taking life a little bit easier these days. Hopefully, we shall see her soon at one of our meeting. *I just let her know we missed her and we are all thinking about her.*

*On a sad note, our Programs Chairwoman of many years, **Stella McQuirk**, passed away at the end of January. Stella was a*

**Board member for most of her membership years with the WCD, for at least for 20 something years. She was a doer, and never procrastinated, by the time August 1 came and we held our Budget meeting, Stella would already have all the programs lined up for the next six General Meetings. She was very organized and articulate, loved to introduce the speakers or performers at our General Meetings. R.I.P. Stella.**

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**Remember: "A good friend is a connection to life -- a tie to the past, a road to the future, the key to sanity in a totally insane world. More people are focusing on friendships later in life -- and research reveals the many health benefits".**

***Stay socially connected at the Woman's Club of Douglaston!***

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**Looking forward to seeing you all again on February 13<sup>th</sup>.**

Warm regards,

***Johanna Abramo***

**President**

**Woman's Club of Douglaston**

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