

## Fifty Years of Heights Library FRIENDship

Have you ever stopped to wonder how our library can afford so many programs, speakers, equipment, refreshments, etc.? Well, the short answer is that it can't, by itself. Behind the scenes, it is often the FRIENDS of the Library that can legally accept gifts and provide needed volunteers for time, money, and political support.

The year 2012 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the FRIENDS of the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Library! (Both the library system and the FRIENDS added UH to their official names in 1965 and 1966, respectively; before that, the UH branch was part of the CH library.) Today we celebrate not only our charter members but also all of the volunteers following them over five busy decades. We have a proud history and owe it to every FRIEND along the way. We thought it would be enlightening to share some history and highlights, focusing on the lesser-known early years. Files of meeting minutes, an old scrapbook, newsletters, book-sale and annual-meeting reports provide a treasure trove to mine and savor.

It was at a library board meeting in June, 1961, that trustee David Apple first suggested creating a FRIENDS group similar to one at Cleveland Public Library. On January 8, 1962, he said that FRIENDS were needed to help promote library programs for occasions like National Library Week and to recruit community volunteers to help the library. The charter members--trustees, civic-minded residents, and library staff--organized quickly and reached out across the growing cities of CH and UH. They sent out 1,000 membership flyers, targeting community and club leaders in schools and PTAs, service clubs (Kiwanis and Rotary), women's clubs, the Jewish Community Center, the League of Women Voters, churches and synagogues, and several corporations. Tremco Manufacturing donated the printing cost. By February 20, the charter members had chosen nine trustees from both cities. Aileen Maccracken (wife of library board member Brooks Maccracken) was elected the first FRIENDS President.

**Charter Members** (and the nine board members they elected, marked by asterisks; club affiliation is given when it is listed in the minutes)

David Apple	*Mr. and *Mrs. William G. Hall
Edward S. Bale	*Mrs. Fred C. Hope (La Rue C.)—Hts. Women's Club
Mr. and Mrs. Harold E. Boehm	Major B. Jenks
Mrs. Hilda Bogomolny	*Harold L. Klarreich—the JCC
Mrs. Douglas Bond	Mr. and *Mrs. Brooks W. Maccracken (Aileen)
Ronald Brown	Reverend W. Chave McCracken
Gayle D. Clark (librarian)	Mrs. Philip Saginor (Esther)
Dr. and Mrs. Rudolf O. Cooks	*Mrs. Irving Sunshine (Helen)—Your Schools
Clinton E. DeWitt	Rachel Wayne (librarian)
Malon H. Dickerson	*Max Wohl
*Charles Adams Hall—Kiwanis Club	*Dr. and Mrs. Walter Zeiter

(Esther Saginor and Rachel Wayne Nelson are the only remaining charter members. Mrs. Nelson was at the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration. She was involved with the creation of the FRIENDS from the very beginning, was named library liaison, and attended monthly meetings until her retirement in 1988, including her ten years as library director. She also instituted the tradition of the newest library board member's attending FRIENDS meetings for a year--which led to many personal friendships and staunch board support. In 1998 Harry Koppel suggested that FRIENDS reciprocate by attending library board meetings.)

In keeping with the spirit of community outreach, in the early days the FRIENDS board met at Coventry Library (the main library until 1968), at Fenn College, at Tremco Mfg., and at Wiley Jr. High School. In January, 1963, the number of board members would be increased to fifteen, with five elected each year in staggered three-year terms.

The first Annual Meeting was held on May 9, 1962, at Coventry Library. Mrs. Ralph Schmidt of the Friends of CPL spoke about their projects, including chamber-music concerts and celebration of National Library Week. Early annual meetings were springtime affairs, timed to coincide with National Library Week, and they included luncheons in the Mayfair Room at May's on the Heights, later the site of Kaufman's and now Macy's. (Invitations for the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary event showed one of them, with Mary Parker in the left foreground.) At the 1966 dinner, honoring the library's fifty years of service, the FRIENDS officially changed its name to FRIENDS of the CH-UH Public Library. Until 1975, the membership year began on April 1 and ended March 30.

In those first years, the FRIENDS established aims that we mostly still follow today. They hosted library receptions and provided refreshments; they established annual book sales to raise money (the first was chaired by Major Jenks in June, 1963, and brought in \$1,030); and right away they began to give it all back--to provide library equipment (a phonograph and records to add to the collection, ten folding tables, and a coin-operated photocopier), to fund programs (a classic film series and a puppet show), and to award staff scholarships for library school (Miss Ethel Gantz and Mrs. John T. Sweeney received the first ones). They began a newsletter about FRIENDS and library activities. Tax-levy support and political advocacy would soon follow. In 1965 FRIENDS canvassed the city helping to pass a bond issue to build a new library--the first of several successful tax-levy campaigns with FRIENDS help that continue today.

Construction for the new Main Library at the Lee/Dellwood branch site began in 1966, and suddenly the FRIENDS realized they had a new role. Lots of individuals and clubs wanted to honor the new library with gifts of money, art, and special funds, and the library turned to the FRIENDS to accept and hold the gifts. Legally, the library cannot itself solicit gifts. One of several gifts was the wonderful painting Destiny by Paul Travis, donated by Mr. and Mrs. Harold Fallon. (It hangs next to the Main Office door upstairs today.) The FRIENDS gave to the library Viktor Schreckengost's painting, Afterglow of the City IV. Among other clubs, the Heights Women's Club, the Weavers' Guild and the Heights Citizens for Human Rights established funds for donating books. When the new building's grand opening was held in September, 1968, guest speaker was Ruth Warncke, Deputy Executive Director of the American Library Association. FRIENDS must have enlisted the help of half the city because they donated 400 dozen cookies for the week of receptions! Over 2,000 residents poured in to visit and admire. The library board commissioned a metal hippo by sculptor William McVey for the children's room. The FRIENDS paid \$1,200 for it and held a contest to name it. Canterbury School second-grader Peter Benkendorf won by dubbing it Peter Potamus. You can find the hippo in the Children's Room today. Other stoneware animal sculptures were made by John H. Seymour. FRIENDS paid for Ken Suarez, Cleveland Indians catcher, to speak to the children in the summer reading program.

From the beginning, all FRIENDS board members were expected to help with publicity and book sales. In the 1966 minutes is a suggestion that each member of the board "might write personal notes to 25 friends and thus build up the number of members." Melvin Rose, President in 1967, told the board that it was vital to involve the community in FRIENDS committee work. Sarah Cody, Library Director, established a Junior FRIENDS group in 1968 but there is little mention of their activities thereafter. In 1968, Rachel Nelson reported that "the librarians would like small

groups of FRIENDS to help their own specific branch”—something that we seem not to have followed up on.

In the 1970s, now settled into Main and three branch libraries, the FRIENDS found book sales to be their biggest fundraisers. They had two very large, successful sales at the city pavilion near the old city hall and at the high school, but transportation, rental costs, and little time for setup were drawbacks. Two large semiannual sales at Main and three paperback sales at the branches became the norm. Walter Cleaveland (from Kiwanis) and David McMillan were the face of the sales to many FRIENDS. Newcomers learned quickly that the response to almost every book-sale question was, “Ask Walter.” Bob and Anne Levine of Publix Bookstore helped with pricing. Book sales brought in new members as well as money; by 1975 there were 356 member units (some were couples and families). Already FRIENDS were averaging two thousand volunteer hours a year. They funded programs that are still popular today--children’s programs at all the libraries; music co-sponsored with Young Audiences, films and senior-citizen programs at UH; music and opera-appreciation classes and Cleveland Council on World Affairs and current events discussions at Main; sign-language classes and poetry programs at Coventry; and Great Books discussions at Noble.

The official program year was changed circa 1975 to begin on October 1, a practice we still follow today, and the Annual Meeting was changed to October. To celebrate the country’s bicentennial, the FRIENDS produced their first cookbook, which was named an official bicentennial project by the Heights Community Congress, and in 1979, they published Marion H. Kelly’s history of the library, More Than Just Books. In 1977 the FRIENDS celebrated their fifteenth anniversary in the new upstairs space; Helga Sandburg, a Heights resident, spoke to 170 guests!

The 1980s were packed with FRIENDS activities. The Heights system reached one million items circulated in a year, and it was named one of fifty outstanding libraries in the nation. In 1981, over 40,000 people attended library programs, most of them sponsored by the FRIENDS. The twentieth-anniversary celebration was a dinner program with Baltimore County Library Director Charles Robinson as speaker. The FRIENDS also paid half the cost of a new blue and white library van.

The heady process of automation began, and FRIENDS volunteered to help patrons get their new plastic library cards. Equipment we bought included a TRS80 computer and a VCR, exotic machines then, and a \$7,000 Showcard Machine for the library to create professional-looking posters. Our circulating video collection was the first in the county.

The FRIENDS continued to grow, moved into their own office and in 1983 hired their first part-time secretary, Arleen Twist, to help with membership and book-sale volunteers. Two librarians, Ann Douglas and JoAnn Vicarel, began working in the 1970s as “Pickers,” looking for items to add to the library collection from the mountains of donations. What they did not select went to the volunteer “Boxers” to be counted and boxed in categories for book sales. By 1985 we had over 825 member units and a budget of nearly \$24,000. Fine-arts radio station WCLV for at least a decade publicized book sales by awarding telephone callers with free FRIENDS memberships with sale-preview privileges. Quarterly newsletters included lists of programs and gifts, staff interviews, library news, and thanks to volunteers--until the system began publishing Check Us Out. FRIENDS created a policy handbook and a book-sale manual. On a “working board” everyone helped with publicity and book sales and an occasional emergency “Basement Blitz”--just like getting ready for a book-sale setup today! In the ’80s inventiveness led to hinged, take-apart wooden frames to hold books on sale (created by Steve Goodman and Al Swearingen) and to a bank-teller system of

checkers that we still use (David Richardson's idea). Separating checkers from cashiers saved us a world of grief.

In 1986 FOLUSA (Friends of Libraries U.S.A) declared October to be "Friends of the Library Month," and the CH-UH library board drew up a resolution honoring the FRIENDS. They calculated that "Over 100,000 children and adults have participated in programs funded by the FRIENDS." Some of the most popular program speakers in the '80s were Syd Hoff, Daniel Pinkwater, the storyteller Jackie Torrence, and concerts co-sponsored by Young Audiences. Friends funded many a staff member with library-science scholarship aid and helped to run the popular annual Library Fitness Walks. Dorothy and Reuben Silver read to an enthralled audience from To Kill a Mockingbird for the gala 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

CH-UH librarians, trustees, and FRIENDS were increasingly active on the state level. Library directors Sarah Cody, Rachel Nelson, and Stephen Wood each served as Ohio Library Association President. In 1974 Walter Smoyer helped to found and lead the Ohio Friends of the Library (OFL). Lenore Koppel served a term as Secretary-Treasurer. In the '80s and '90s, Anne Cook and Sharon Richardson each became OFL President and later each was named to the Ohio Library Foundation (OLF), where Rachel Nelson, H. Baird Tenney, and Harry Koppel also served. In 1988 the Ohio Friends began to hold regional workshops in conjunction with the OLA Chapter conferences. For several years, Heights FRIENDS led meetings and visited libraries to share ideas on making money, recruiting members, improving public relations and marketing, and advocating politically for the library. Heights FRIENDS were active in advising and founding new chapters, including a FRIENDS group at Cleveland State University. In the mid-90s, Tom Flechtner was named Ohio Friend of the Year for his work with CH-UH and CSU.

When Rachel Nelson retired, donations went into a new Art Fund in her name. The first juried art competition was won by Alberta Parkinson in 1989 for her weaving Cascade, and it was purchased and hung, many of you will remember, above the central stairway landing in the "old" building. (Today it hangs in the upstairs hallway leading to the bridge across Lee Road.) Award-winning art in the next few years was purchased for display at the library--Fauve Landscape, the 1999 mixed-media photograph by Penny Rakoff at UH, and the Marvin Smith outdoor sculpture, Open Book, at Main. FRIENDS sold variations of the Parkinson, Rakoff, and Smith pieces as fundraisers.

When FRIENDS Secretary and charter member Helen Rogoff Sunshine died in late 1983, weeks after chairing the Annual Meeting, her husband and the FRIENDS established a fund in her memory. The Helen Sunshine Memorial Award for Outstanding Volunteer Service recognizes work for the FRIENDS and also in the larger community. Anne and Bill Cook were the first winners, and since then five others have been honored. At the Fiftieth Annual Meeting on October 21, 2011 Sherri Appleton and Adaora Nzelibe Schmiedl received the award.

Library programs of all sorts and staff scholarships continued to be funded by the FRIENDS. In 1990 the FRIENDS bought a printer for the library and "a microcomputer for our own use." Library Director Stephen Wood, who led the library system into the computerized world, helped the FRIENDS put membership and mailing lists into a database--a step up from the familiar box of index cards! Membership reached 902! President Matt McGinty thought this a good time for the FRIENDS to examine its own future and arranged for a 1991 board retreat with the Gund Foundation. They looked at possible directions for the FRIENDS to focus on and selected volunteer recruitment as a prime goal. A new logo said "Be among Friends," and Sheila Tew visited a lot of Lee Road and neighborhood businesses to get discounts and perks for FRIENDS members. Nelson Klein became the first Lifetime Member. At the 30-year meeting in 1992, A.

Grace Lee Mims was the speaker. We enjoyed many years of support and continuity with the help of office secretary, Gertrude Kleiner.

In the early 2000s, as the library prepared to move temporarily to the former Taylor Academy during the renovation of Main Library, the FRIENDS gave \$1,000 toward the cost of the Coventry Arch. In 2004 they held their last large book sale for a while. They were faced with the daunting challenge of retaining members and raising money for programs and scholarships without holding book sales. (Book-sale income had averaged over \$13,000 in the eight years before the move.) They sold canvas bags and published a second FRIENDS cookbook, Taste of the Heights: A Friends Culinary Collection (2006), with an image of the new library on the cover. It became increasingly difficult to enlist volunteers and board members in the years without book sales. Only in the late 2000s, when ongoing sales were begun by Ann Douglas and Anne Wilson near the reopened library's entrance, was substantial income possible again.

Nancy Levin became Director in 2008 and was determined to revive the FRIENDS. Three public meetings were held in 2009 to rekindle community enthusiasm. Nancy asked Adaora Schmiedl and Sherri Appleton to organize a basement book sale and to recruit volunteers for a new board. They and Chantal Akerib organized the sale, and a host of former FRIENDS emailed, telephoned, and cajoled members for renewals and sale help. At Nighttown, Derdriu Ring and Regina Brett organized Wise Up, a Literary Feast fundraiser that brought in lots of community support and nearly \$8,000. Lots of customers showed up at the book sale and joined the FRIENDS.

In late 2009 eleven new trustees were named at the Annual Meeting, and the FRIENDS were back in business. In the three years since, we have recruited members and volunteers, sorted and sold thousands of books, helped with community and garden festivals, revived the scholarships, paid for another library van, provided thousands of dollars for children's and adult programs and staff support, and set aside money for future tax levies and a library foundation. We helped with the reception reopening Noble Library and paid part of the cost of the "tree" in the new children's room. In 2011 we moved the thriving ongoing sale to an upstairs bookshop, Harvey & FRIENDS, named for Harvey Pekar, local author of the autobiographical comic book American Splendor. We sponsored the application for a Literary Landmark Status bronze plaque for Harvey Pekar, and earlier in October, have seen it installed upstairs. We are working hard to make the bookshop succeed as the new major fundraiser for the FRIENDS.

Now known as FRIENDS of the Heights Libraries, we continue to help the library through service, money, public relations, political leverage, and community involvement. Fifty years of FRIENDSHIP for the Heights Libraries is a noble accomplishment and we are thrilled to share the celebration with you. Help us to carry on a fine tradition.

### **Presidents of the FRIENDS**

1962, '63, '64	Aileen Maccracken (Mrs. Brooks)
1965	Major Jenks
1966	Paul Rolnick
1967, '68	Melvin Rose
1969	Mary Parker (Mrs. Robert)
1970, '71	David Veit
1972, '73	Walter M. Smoyer

1974, '75	Tobi Goldoftas
1976-77	Lawrence D. Davis
1977-78	Walter Cleaveland
1978-80	Anne J. Cook
1980-82	Nelson Klein
1982-84	Sharon Richardson
1984-86	Harold Sicherman
1986-87	Elizabeth Jarvey
1987-88	Harry Parkman
1988-90	Tom Flechtner
1990-91	Carren Nembhard
1991-93	Matthew McGinty
1993-95	Charles Oberndorf
1995-98	Mary Margaret Brennan
1998-2002	Mary McMillan
2002-06	Sara Baker
2006-08	Alexa Sulak
2009-11	Adaora N. Schmiedl
2011-12	Sharon Richardson

### **The Helen Sunshine Memorial Award for Outstanding Volunteer Service**

1984	Anne J. Cook William R. Cook, Jr.
1985	Walter Cleaveland
1986	Sharon Richardson
1991	Thomas Flechtner
1992	Carren Nembhard
1994	Mary Lee Scriven
2012	Sherri Appleton
2012	Adaora N. Schmiedl

### **FRIENDS Board of Trustees, 2009-2010**

Chantal Akerib  
 Sherri Appleton, Treasurer  
 John Jarvey  
 Michael Jerman (replaced by David Robbins, May, 2010)  
 Richard Montanari  
 Ann McCulloh (added as twelfth trustee, March, 2010)  
 Christine Nestor  
 Joey Nicoletti  
 Kirsten Radivoyevitch  
 Sharon Richardson, Secretary  
 Adaora Nzelibe Schmiedl, President  
 Craig Wilson