

Bob-E and the Book Fair.mp3

Stephanie Krusa [00:00:01] This is a recording of the recollections of Bob-E Metzger, who for 40 years volunteered for the Friends of the Montauk Library, most significantly as chair of the Friends Annual 4th of July Book Fair. Thus, it's titled Bob-E and the Book Fair.

Stephanie Krusa [00:00:22] First, a disclaimer. I have pages of memories, but after 40 years I do not have all the names, statistics, or even the chronology in my head or at hand. Most of the details should already be in the archives, with minutes from Friends, meetings and reports I wrote when I first became chairperson after the early years.

[00:00:44] Second, the history of the book fair is a mix of four ingredients: Books, of course. We always had more than we needed. Even when we said no more donations, people still brought them. No one ever wanted to throw them out and few libraries accepted used books. Storage. Where to put the literal tons of books. This was a problem from beginning to end with adventures and disappointments and mice. People. Volunteers to help before, during and after. People to donate their time and efforts, businesses to support us. It truly took a village to make this a success story, and Montauk always showed us its best. Money. Also of course. We worked so hard to help the library and we got rewarded sometimes beyond expectations for such a small group in a small town. Sheer gratification. So we kept on. And where we eventually did so much at the library for free, from adult programs to puppet shows, the book fair was meant to be a fundraiser.

Stephanie Krusa [00:01:55] So, to start at the beginning. First was the bookmobile, with dear Mr. Guildersleeve, who brought me books he thought I would like that no one else wanted to read, and wooden ornaments he made because I was a craftsperson too. Then the bookmobile program was dismantled. Instant dismay.

Stephanie Krusa [00:02:13] An amazing group of people devoted to books and Montauk were determined to get us a library of our own. They were the first trustees, but they couldn't do it all. So the Friends were born. At first, we were a lot of retired couples who knew the value of a library, young mothers who saw what their children were missing, and a bunch of avid readers like me. We met at the Catholic Church school and had home-baked cookies. Stephanie Krusa was first president. I met people I would not have met ordinarily, some becoming lifelong friends. Somehow I became an executive board member, helping to write a constitution from a handful of samples from other Friends groups. And I volunteered for a book committee.

Stephanie Krusa [00:02:58] Plans for a library were underway thanks to the trustees and the Community Church, which owned the little cottage next door. But we were offered books from the library system and the bookmobile, so we decided to hold a sale before there was an actual Montauk library.

Stephanie Krusa [00:03:17] The first book sale committee meeting was at my house. Steph knew all about book sales, how we could borrow fish scales to sell books by the pound. And she already had another volunteer working to organize the books. That volunteer arrived early at my house with a punch bowl, bottles of ginger ale and iced tea, cartons of sherbet, and a large bottle of liquor. The meeting went downhill from there. But I still wanted to help, with only a few weeks before we were scheduled to be on the Green.

Stephanie Krusa [00:03:47] At that point, we somehow had use of an empty office upstairs at the Security Building on the Circle near White's. The door was open and

cartons of books were in the hall ... and piled in the center of the room, in unsorted, unboxed, unaccountable mountain of books.

Stephanie Krusa [00:04:05] It got done and I got promoted. Now all we had to do was get the books down the stairs and over to the reGen. This is where Brian Coen comes in. And stayed in, invaluable, irreplaceable and so important to any success we might have, for 40 years. A carpenter, a builder, a family man who reads history books and plays in a brass band, he was in charge of moving the books, borrowing trucks, renting, renting them when needed, getting everyone he knew with strong backs to come help. He also built and carried tables for the cashiers and the books, braces for the scales, stairs to help load, shelves and flooring when we had storage rooms of our own, even installing windows in a shed so we could pass cartons of books through. I would have been lost without him. (And his wife, Debbie, who gathered our first yard sale section in their backyard, and came to be our official National Anthem singer.).

Stephanie Krusa [00:05:07] But back to the first sale. Brian had pickup trucks and tarps to cover the cartons, and strong friends to set up a bucket brigade line on the steep stairs. We were in business. People came the next morning to unload cartons, to buy books to help the new library. I have no idea how much money we made, but it was enough encouragement that we decided to have another sale that same summer.

Stephanie Krusa [00:05:33] This time, Steph and Suzanne Gossman made it into a real book fair, with baked goods and an auction and kids games. We needed fences and banners and signs, posters and publicity and lots more volunteers. And this time Brian brought a really long plank of wood to go down the stairs. So we could slide the cartons instead of carrying them. We did this for a few years, but one year no one showed up except Brian, the plank, and his two little daughters. "We can't do this," I said. He looked at me, then the little girls and said, "It's them or us."

Stephanie Krusa [00:06:09] But people eventually arrived, and kept coming wherever the books were stored. Maybe they came for Brian, or the snacks Donna Etzel provided for break time and last carton loaded, for decades. Donna also brought generations of family to do the lifting, father, husband, brothers and children. And like magic, scores of other people, Friends and strangers, showed. Up early on the Green the next day to unload the cartons of books. Community effort at work.

Stephanie Krusa [00:06:41] In coming years, we learned what worked and what didn't, like fortune telling with clamshells, selling silver dollar seeds so people could grow their own, having authors come in to sign books, live auctions, selling sweatshirts in summer, rustic handcrafts, or having fire engine rides around the Green, with bells and sirens. (magine what that did to traffic on Main Street.) And taking checks without proper IDs. (An unfortunate but unforgettable lesson when someone bought a huge amount of books, but asked if he could leave them on the Green until a friend came back with a truck. I thought not, but Bob Silverstone, another Best Friend and future Friends president, had the check and he said yes. He sat with those books until dark, covering them with a tarp, and he called the number on the check. No answer, of course, because the man was in Montauk, not at home. He and his friends must have come in the middle of the night and fetched the books. The check bounced, and we all had a good laugh but we learned.) We tried lots of new things, got new volunteers, made new friends, and kept growing until we filled the Green and made it a true annual country fair, with books.

Stephanie Krusa [00:07:56] Meanwhile, storage. The little library had none we could use and the Security Building was going to be renovated. We had use of two tiny storage buildings at a motel for a year or two. No heat, no lights, but no choice. Then we were given the use of a unit at the abandoned Ocean Science Lab apartments, which later became the Avalon, near the train station. Lots more room and no stairs, but no heat, no lights, and no one anywhere nearby. No cell phones yet either. Spooky, except for the sparrows nests, until they started falling down in every storm and needed rescuing. But we all survived. By now, plans were being made for a real library, so money and the book fair became even more important. Once the land on Montauk Highway was purchased, the Friends were able to contribute to the search for the perfect architect. Not all of the land was buildable because of drainage ditches and wetlands, although they were deemed acceptable to place a dilapidated housing trailer that the Coast Guard offered. Brian helped stabilize it above the swampy area and built the stairs for access. We could never do anything about the mice, except wear gloves and sturdy shoes, and tap every carton before putting your hand in. When the new library was finally built, we had a room of our own at last, and space nearby in the unfinished lower level. Eventually, we paid to enclose the open area opposite our room, for storage and donations. We also helped pay for the shed in the back of the new library, to share more storage space for the tables, street signs, umbrellas, fencing, and yard sale boxes.

Stephanie Krusa [00:09:41] Long before that, the book fair itself grew up.

Stephanie Krusa [00:09:47] I got promoted again, this time for keeps. We changed the colors to red, white and blue and made all new signs and banners for me to letter bought at a discount from a canvas company in town, and a professional wooden sign for the entrance to town. (Putting it up was always a comedy, needing a pickup truck, two strong men, Bob Schorr for years, and a committee to supervise the right angle, the best location.) And enough flags and swag so no one could miss us, thanks to Carole, my sister.

Stephanie Krusa [00:10:18] The books got divided. Our donations ran from used paperbacks to elegant coffee table books that were way too valuable to sell by weight. So books by the pound got almost half the Green, with every carton categorized and labeled and signs along the fencing, tables in the center. There were even maps and Shirley Katz at the entrance, handing out bags with handles to go on the scales. We got rave notices for the largest and best organized book sale in the Hamptons. Four cashiers worked in shifts and two weighers (Bob Schorr usually being one) worked the hanging scales. There were long lines waiting to pay until we set up baby scales for small sales.

Stephanie Krusa [00:11:04] Sets were tucked into a corner by themselves, so they stayed intact, and prices could be negotiated. Ann Kubik ran it for years. Then our librarian, Karen Rade, did.

Stephanie Krusa [00:11:15] Special books had a fenced-in area on the west side of the Green, and included collectors' editions and signed books. Pricing them was a problem. You could not just check on Amazon or eBay in those days, but well-read volunteers were always ready to guess, in pairs so they could consult. I have memories of Ada Gigante and Milly Shapiro singing opera while they priced. A job that should have taken two hours, took four, but they had a wonderful time. I put the price stickers on and packed the boxes. Then came Sally McGraw, Monica Brennan, Eileen Bock, Jean Fischer, Jane Warr, and so many other loyal friends who are all sadly gone now. A few were of a generation who were shocked at some of the art books (not that they didn't turn all the pages), but we had a

policy of not censoring any books. Then I made an adult only category, one of our most popular.

Stephanie Krusa [00:12:11] At some early point we realized our prices were too low when we saw the number of book dealers, not yet an internet-extinguished breed, waiting online to get in first, hours before we opened the gate. They bought a lot of books but caused a lot of problems, too, with dangerous handtrucks and some aggressive attitudes. The cashiers sent for me, but I called for our security detail, none other than our Bob Schorr, retired Suffolk County policeman, who was also in charge of putting up umbrellas. Instant detente.

Stephanie Krusa [00:12:45] We needed an expert, especially when we started getting whole important collections like the one from the artist Ossorio's estate. We needed someone who read the trade papers and auctions to know what was currently in demand by collectors, and what author signed too many books to make the first editions valuable. In other words, a professional appraiser. Eventually we found Bill from Sag Harbor, who even knew what famous signatures looked like, and which were just stamped on. The most valuable lesson I could learn from Bill was that condition mattered. He gave me the prices, I put on the stickers and packed the boxes. The deal was that he kept some of the books to research prices, and some to sell through his shop or mail order business. He always brought a substantial and fair check when he came the next year.

Stephanie Krusa [00:13:39] Here's one memorable story from the Bill the Appraiser days. He took with him a signed Chagall art book, saying it could be worth a great deal of money, way more than anyone would spend at an outdoor sale, and too valuable to leave unguarded or exposed to the weather. When he couldn't find a buyer, he handed it to a larger operation, with the understanding that he would get a percentage, and so would we. Meantime, someone saw it at the other store and claimed it was theirs, dedicated to their father, and donated in error. They wanted to sue the library, and the Friends. Lawyers got involved. They lost, and refused to buy the book at the going price. I have no idea if we ever saw our share, 25 or 30 years ago. We knew just that if something is donated, it was ours to sell unless I could find it among all the cartons before the sale. This happened frequently. When Bill moved away, he referred us to George, another wise and wonderful book man.

Stephanie Krusa [00:14:40] The big problem with the books was that we could not sell them all. The leftover special books got brought back to wherever we had storage room at the time, and saved for future sales. But the by-the-pound books had to be discarded. Brian arranged for free dumpsters. People were outraged and wrote letters to the newspaper without understanding that the books had been in open-back trucks, stacked on the damp ground, out in the Montauk fog, and offered for free at the end of the day. We got that many books every year. Dumpster diving became a team sport until we get could get Mickey to come fetch the containers.

Stephanie Krusa [00:15:19] The children's books in excellent condition had to be taken from the better books section before any little reader got trampled. They were moved to the Kiddie Corner.

Stephanie Krusa [00:15:30] In the early days, the children's section was large and fenced in to protect the kids. Because of so many of our members and volunteers had children, they made sure there were lots of games and story hours and photo ops, even Steph's puppet shows. We sold balloons with the Friends logo until we became aware of

environmental evils (also, the nozzle for the helium tanks was always getting lost and face painting until the paints were declared toxic. The problem was how many volunteers it took to run ring toss, beanbag tic-tac-toe, and Go Fish. I happily painted the seascape that hid someone behind it -- not me, thank goodness -- hooking each kid's fishing pole to a prize. So much space, so many helpers, so many prizes to buy for the little money we could charge children. As our original members' kids outgrew the games, we found that the next generations of parents volunteered less, which I never understood since they enjoyed all the free activities the Friends provided for their families.

Stephanie Krusa [00:16:37] Eventually, the area got winnowed down to a few games behind a fence with books in front on tables, and someone's great idea to have a lollipop game that the kids loved and that made us money. The lollipops (ones that did not melt; we learned that early) were stuck in a styrofoam paddle board, their colored ends down. The color determined the prize: a book, plastic toy, a little stuffed animal, or a special big one, all from yard sale donations, and the kids got to keep their lollipops. It became a favorite and lasted for decades, along with surprise bags, all from yard sale toys and games that also ended up there until the older helper boys were found playing with naked Barbies.

Stephanie Krusa [00:17:26] It took special volunteers to organize and run the Kiddie Corner, and we always found them, whole families and former teachers and Rachel, the Montauk School librarian, who brought her own volunteers from the school. Then storytime moved to the gazebo.

Stephanie Krusa [00:17:44] Speaking of the yard sale, it became the White Elephant section, a classier term for people's discards and what I found at the dump. The best treasure at this area for years was Joyce Whitman, longtime corresponding secretary, story hour reader, and refreshment hostess for programs and special events. Joyce also brought donuts donated by John's Pancake House for the volunteers every year. The funny part was she had never even been to a yard sale. She washed every piece, packed it carefully and saw it stowed neatly in the shed. She had her own helpers, found her own truck and driver, enlisted the honor society from Montauk School to help unload, and made my job that much easier.

Stephanie Krusa [00:18:31] When we lost Joyce, Sally Krusch took over and used her own garage for storage as there were mice in the shed. She even expanded to having a real yard sale for the Friends at her house every fall, and she became president.

Stephanie Krusa [00:18:46] The first raffle, with Peter Beard as auctioneer, was disappointing. By the next year, chance-taking split into a silent auction, a standard raffle where people bought tickets and hoped to win, and an instant raffle, which some of our group considered gambling and wanted to outlaw. Way more of us thought it was great fun and a great money maker, and less work because we did not have to make a lot of phone calls. Jane Liebell took this one over, making it a book fair favorite for decades. A true game of chance, each prize got a numbered ticket. The lucky customers picked a number from a covered basket. Everyone else picked a blank one and got a consolation prize, a free book from the pound, a plastic keychain, etc. The odds were something like 4 to 1, good enough to keep lines forming for Jane and her helpers. Not all the prizes were gift certificates or restaurant vouchers, but whatever the incredibly generous businesses in town wanted to offer. (My mother won a shark jaw.)

Stephanie Krusa [00:19:51] Getting the prizes was harder. At first before Jane, someone thought to make each board member collect some. Not everyone appreciated the assignment. Jane divided the town into segments and asked for volunteers. She always found the right people who liked to do it, and had the time to go back "when the boss was there," or when the restaurant was open. Almost no one refused Cecilia, but Cyril offered her a \$100 gift certificate if she had a drink with him, and she did.

Stephanie Krusa [00:20:20] Only one or two establishments declined outright. Their names got mentioned at our next board meeting. Only two real estate agencies gave us prizes, surprisingly, because they were making money and none of the other charities were asking for raffle contributions. Bob Silverstone took over the corporations, and wrote letters. We got gifts from such as the Jitney, Bay Street, Target, even gift bonds from banks. We found that some people placed a lot of money there, not just to gamble, but to make a contribution to the library. They often gave prizes back, which is often threw off Jane's lists and numbers.

Stephanie Krusa [00:21:00] The same generosity showed at the silent auction, which got placed at the new Friends section with Charlotte Schorr. Bidders placed such a high amount for the jar of beach glass, for instance, that no one wanted to go higher, then that high bidder gave the jar and beach glass back for the next year. The other tangible items, as opposed to gift envelopes, often included baskets of pottery from my craft show friends, baskets of cheer filled with stray bottles from board members, donated Tiffany glass and jewelry, sometimes a dollhouse from my sister or one of her large blooming houseplants.

Stephanie Krusa [00:21:40] Charlotte also managed the quilt raffle. At one time, a group of expert quilters got together to make a quilt with a different Montauk scene by a different seamstress in every square. When it was put together, raffle tickets were printed and sold at the book fair, the library, local craft shows and the post office. The winner was drawn on Labor Day.

Stephanie Krusa [00:22:03] The problem was, the sewing ladies wanted it back, to give to the library. The winner loved it too much, so they made another, which is now permanent in the library. We sold postcards of it instead. Meanwhile, Charlotte went to Amish country and bought a beautiful, inexpensive handmade quilt and one every year for a long time. None as beautiful as ours, of course, but still profitable.

Stephanie Krusa [00:22:29] Amazingly, Charlotte also took charge of the t-shirt business. At first we started with navy blue ones that the t shirt printer in town did at cost for the volunteers to wear. They had to pay (even me) because there were so many volunteers. The Green looked wonderful, with so many wearing matching tees, non-volunteers wanted them too. Then the navy blue was too hot, or not on 100% cotton, so others got made and sold. Then they wanted new designs and children's sizes. We put my story hour poster designs on the kids, bookish sayings on adults, "read to me" on baby onesies, more of my drawings on others, because that's what I did, new offerings every year, in new colors, styles and sizes. One of my favorites was Read, White and Blue on white shirts, except the red and blue had to be hand-painted on because color printing was too expensive. Charlotte handled them all -- even ironing those creased from storage -- at the Friends tables, and expanded to hats, mugs, our cookbooks, whatever we thought we could sell. The generous t-shirt store in town closed, but we missed Charlotte more.

Stephanie Krusa [00:23:43] What started as a small bake sale at the first fairs turned into the farmers market with goodies from the best bakers in town. But no cupcakes. They

melted. Others donated their jellies and pickles or early crops from their gardens, peas and lettuce and herbs and such. We got plants from local master gardeners and from Suzanne and her nursery contacts. We also had dried bouquets of silver dollar or money plant, that ran wild around my house. Willing board members came to my deck to peel off the seed coverings from the shiny center. And we always had a good laugh, along with farmstand strawberries and iced tea and gossip, to think that five or six of us worked for two hours to earn less than \$100. But the bouquets looked pretty and became another book fair tradition that customers looked for.

Stephanie Krusa [00:24:36] Soon the plants and the baked goods each needed more room, so they expanded into side-by-side displays with more helpers than I can name here, or remember.

Stephanie Krusa [00:24:45] We needed food to feed our volunteers and so that customers wouldn't leave for lunch. The fire department loaned us a hot dog wagon, so that's what we did. Jane Bimson got Gosman's to donate the hot dogs and Eileen Bock cut up watermelon. Whole families, the Fischers, Barrys, and Vogels took turns cooking and serving. We tried to offer alternatives, but no one wanted hard-boiled eggs. We had to charge the volunteers, even me, because some of us ate hot dogs three at a time and fed our grandkids too. When the fire department retired the weenie wagon, Jane Bimson and her crew took over, bringing their own grill. And Donna brought donated ice from Duryea's, many trips each day, for most of the 40 book fairs, along with water for the volunteers. We sold cold drinks to the customers.

Stephanie Krusa [00:25:37] The Green was big, our volunteer list was long, and the new library needed copiers and other non-budgeted items.

Stephanie Krusa [00:25:45] Kathleen Ernst had been helping people by fixing broken chains and bracelets, so she ran the new jewelry section. Donations poured in, sometimes whole estate collections from heirs, sometimes real 14 karat gold pieces that Kathleen took to a dealer who paid way more than we could ever ask. We also made bracelets out of glass fish charms hung on fishing gear and earrings, the dangled miniature books. We added pocketbooks, scarves and hats, all things that came to us for free. Another great money-making keeper, unlike the last short-lived adventure.

Stephanie Krusa [00:26:23] We got lots of audiovisual donations. Of course we did. These were already obsolete and no one wanted the old technology except a few collectors. Despite Norma and Mary Anne's best efforts, we ended up giving the stuff away for free or adding it to the dumpster.

Stephanie Krusa [00:26:42] Speaking of free, we set up free-with-donation jars, my favorite part of the book fair. People loved to give donations, from putting in their change at the book pound to an extra dollar at the food stand, their generosity with the raffles, everything they donated for us to sell. We tried to make it even more rewarding. At first, we made things: tiny wooden books tied to bookmarks that said, "I helped buy books for the library." Another time we made little bricks because I had a kiln and clay, with a tag that read "I helped buy bricks for the new library" even though the new library was not made of brick. Other times, we offered flags, posters of the lighthouse, and artist-rendered maps of Montauk, all donated. The Suffolk County Library System provided us with pads, colored pencils, little puzzles. We used whatever we came upon that cost next to nothing and pleased the charitable shoppers. No effort, instant money. How good was that?

Stephanie Krusa [00:27:44] We realized we needed to announce sales, story hour times, etc., so we started with a bullhorn that no one could hear except when it squealed. Then came Sima, life-saver in dreadlocks and caftans. She arranged to borrow speakers and microphones before we bought a used karaoke machine, and she announced everything, talked to the customers standing in line, read for story hour, directed visitors to find the yard sale and the cookbooks. She could talk for hours, for decades.

Stephanie Krusa [00:28:18] We also needed better protection from the weather for our volunteers and merchandise. We bought lightweight, inexpensive canopies for their one day a year. Others were my own canopies from craft shows. Now we looked professional and more visual to anyone driving by. The canopies, though, involved more time, more carrying, and different skills. So we hired Mike, another friend from craft shows. He worked with some of my neighbors -- one who became a library trustee -- and whoever showed up early in the morning, and tied and staked and bungeed the weights that he carried from my garage in his old truck. Then Mike helped whoever needed him all day before doing canopies in reverse. In return, I paid him a modest amount, gave him the guest room, and fed him dinner. This worked for years until someone found him slumped in his truck, and we had to get him home and then back to his own home for open heart surgery. I called on the Coast Guard after that. Young and strong, but with no idea how to open or fold up a canopy, but they called me ma'am, and they learned.

Stephanie Krusa [00:29:28] By the late 2010s, we were making \$20,000 -- in one day! The lines to get in wrapped around the Green to past White's. We had over 100 named volunteers. I knew because I made the name tags and counted them. Lots more unnamed helpers showed up briefly to load or unload or clean up without tags. The people in charge of the various sections knew what they were doing, had enough of their own helpers and all the supplies they'd asked for. So after the Friday set-up, when we measured and marked the grass so Suzanne's crew, and then Eileen's gardeners, could put up the fence, loading my car with all the tablecloths, banners and signs and extra supplies, then back to the library for moving the books, Saturday was easy by 10 am opening. I had nothing left to do but walk around collecting envelopes of money and bringing them to whoever was our treasurer at that time, kept inconspicuous on purpose behind some bushes.

Stephanie Krusa [00:30:31] At 4 p.m. came cleanup, packing tables and books and fish crates of flags and signs and reusable tablecloths to go back to the library, tossing more books than anybody wanted, even after they had been offered for free. Meanwhile, the fence crew packed it up to take it back to the shed, and Bob Schorr took the money to lock up. (He may or may not have had a gun, but the money was surely well guarded until we could use a safe at the library).

Stephanie Krusa [00:31:01] We were done by 6, leaving the Green as clean as we found it. Now all that was left was for another committee to count the money on Sunday and to thank everyone. I loved this part. We got a celebration cake and made fruit salad. (I always claimed bringing the blueberries rather than cutting up endless melons) until we felt prosperous enough to order a platter from Herb's. We had a party with and for all the volunteers who came, and I got to announce our success and credit each section, then announce our gift to the library and sometimes hand a check over to the trustees. Once Bob Silverstone made a huge cardboard replica of our check, we were so proud of ourselves.

Stephanie Krusa [00:31:49] After the first two fairs, the trustees invited the Friends executive board out to a thank-you brunch at Bill's Inn, now ENE. But some of the

executives didn't work half as hard as volunteers like Brian Coen, o that ended quickly. Then Bill Depouli, one of the very first trustees, sent me flowers, twice. And then after maybe ten years, Susanne and Stephanie presented me with a beautiful Tiffany bowl at the celebration party. Maybe 20 years later, trustee Linda Bostrom gave me chocolate bars. Before and after they sometimes forgot to thank me in the hurry to get to the cake. It seemed a little rude, but funny. I never cared, because I loved what I did and loved seeing all come together, with so many good people.

Stephanie Krusa [00:32:38] As time passed, less people came to the party and some on the board decided we should hold programs to get more people to this mandated general meeting. They were right that more people would come for a Beatles retrospective or the Fish Guy, but the book fair announcement (of money that paid for it all) seemed to be just more Friends business to be mentioned before the program.

Stephanie Krusa [00:33:00] Times changed. People and Montauk and the library's needs changed. The book fair experienced a few down years: the weather was too hot, a storm destroyed some of the canopies and we scrambled with umbrellas again. Our volunteer base was getting older, busier with company and jobs, and tired. The town got so crowded there were no parking spaces anywhere. Store owners complained. The locals stayed home and the town wanted to ban use of public places altogether. The new tourists had their Nooks and Kindles and were not as interested in quaint country fairs. We still sold literal tons of books, and there were still lines to get in and pay, just not so many and not so long.

Stephanie Krusa [00:33:45] At the same time, the library was growing to meet new demands, and the trustees decided it needed a staff room. They wanted our second storeroom, the one the Friends had paid to have built. When we marched on one of their meetings and complained, they eventually took the original book room, home for umpteen cartons of used books for the Pound.

Stephanie Krusa [00:34:07] Two perfect storms. One solution. We moved the book fair to the library's lower level and the backyard, knowing early that without books by the pound, nearly half of our income was gone. We aimed for that half, and we got it, with new signs and lots of advertising that the fair had moved.

Stephanie Krusa [00:34:28] In a way, this was easier. The Coast Guard only had to move the books from one room to another. Brian would have to move less tables, and fewer canopies had to be erected. The children's books went in the staff room with Marcy and Eileen M, the good books went in the new staff room, Norma and Terry's baked goods shared the front hall with Carolyn's silent auction. Also the remains of t shirts, painted boxes and miniature arrangements, calendars and mugs outside Sally's yard sale was near the shed, plants were near the flagpole that, incidentally, had been dedicated in memory of my mother when the new library was built. Kids games and Jane B's hot dogs and jewelry were on the paved parking area. So was the raffle resurrected by Pat Shea into a bucket raffle with such great prizes that sold tickets so well it helped make up the shortfall in income. My sister still strung flags up and down the driveway, mostly with Tom Rutkowski, to be visible from the highway. Donna still fetched ice, and Debbie still sang the National Anthem by the flag. Best of all, we could sell the books and plants for half price on Sunday because they were safe where they were.

Stephanie Krusa [00:35:45] The not so good parts were less people came, there was little parking, we still had to throw a lot of books away, and I still had to be there Friday,

Saturday and Sunday with all new signs and the current lollipop game and the surprise bags from my neighbors, which they helped put together. The big banners still had to be attached to the guardrails on the Montauk Highway amidst poison ivy and ticks. And there were just less envelopes of money to collect.

Stephanie Krusa [00:36:13] Then the library closed for renovation. When the temporary modulars were installed, there was no place to collect books for future sales. Then, when Covid hit and no one wanted to touch old books anyway, I got sick.

Stephanie Krusa [00:36:28] When the library finally opened and people were not so cautious, our book room was now a small meeting room, and the Friends had a bookstore in the old archive room, with enough volunteers to help Sally organize and run it. She managed a holiday sale and then a pared-down book fair, with most of it indoors. Lots of baked goods still, but no yard sale, no hot dogs, little jewelry, only mugs and bricks for the Friends table. The engraved bricks for the front entrance were so elegant and so successful the Friends were still making money. People still loved the library and wanted to contribute.

Stephanie Krusa [00:37:06] My deepest regret was that I was unable to help after 40 long and rewarding years. All I managed was to change the dates on the big road sign. They named the new meeting room after me anyway.

Stephanie Krusa [00:37:23] The one question that I think did not get answered was if I helped the library in other ways than the book fair. Here is some of what I did.

Stephanie Krusa [00:37:31] With help, shelved the books before the little library in the manse opened and shelved the mezzanine books for the new library,

Stephanie Krusa [00:37:41] Designed the poster for story hour (little animals reading) and, with help, built it in my garage in papier maché for our first Saint Patrick's Day parade. You'll want to talk to Jane Liebell about the floats. Especially ask about Bob Schorr, the weather balloon and the claw hammer,

Stephanie Krusa [00:38:00] Was the guest at the first book signing,

Stephanie Krusa [00:38:02] Conducted arts and crafts sessions for older children, rock painting, poetry and drawings. And we made a coloring book to give out or sell,

Stephanie Krusa [00:38:11] With help, started and edited the first newsletter to publicize Friends and library programs and schedules and information about how to join. This had poems and puzzles, cartoons, and quotes, some anonymous,

Stephanie Krusa [00:38:26] Contributed to the cookbooks,

Stephanie Krusa [00:38:29] With others, helped both libraries for holiday and special gatherings, like hanging Christmas stockings in the meeting room, and provided candies for patrons,

Stephanie Krusa [00:38:40] Rescued books from donations for the library's archive collection,

Stephanie Krusa [00:38:46] Researched and oversaw the Friends purchase of a display case, and curated the early exhibits, including some of my sister's magical and popular displays, like mother Goose in Miniature. Later did the same for a matching case for found archival artifacts so people could see more of Montauk's history,

Stephanie Krusa [00:39:06] Sat on several authors panels and talks,

Stephanie Krusa [00:39:08] With help, started two small holiday books sales at the library for Thanksgiving and Easter,

Stephanie Krusa [00:39:14] Started and with help managed the free-with-donation shelf with books not worthy of the sales, but perfect for the beach or for visitors without library cards,

Stephanie Krusa [00:39:25] Started and ran contests for all ages with winning bookmark drawings printed with library hours, winning poems posted on bulletin boards, winning photos shown in the display cases.

Stephanie Krusa [00:39:38] Helped design some of the quilt blocks,

Stephanie Krusa [00:39:39] Spray-painted years of plastic beach combed shovels so everyone at the groundbreaking for the new library had a gold shovel with the date on it,

Stephanie Krusa [00:39:48] Helped at the large memorial for Sally McGraw in the meeting room,

Stephanie Krusa [00:39:52] And, finally, recruited Jim Donna for trustee.

Stephanie Krusa [00:39:59] This concludes a reading of Bob-E Metzger's recollections of her 40-year involvement with the Friends of the Montauk Library, respectfully read by Stephanie Krusa.