

RNA HOUSE

Cooperative

Historical Documents

历史文件（英文）

Documentos Históricos (en inglés)



50 Years
1967 – 2017

RNA House History Club

RNA House Cooperative 50 Years 1967 --- 2017

Historical Documents

Table of Contents

	page
1) HISTORY from the RNA House Cooperator's Handbook	1
2) Lafayette Quarterman: 25th Anniversary Historical Overview	2
3) Alan Chartock about his Mother, Sarah Chartock	4
4) What was Life Like when RNA House Opened by Jennifer Baum (excerpt)	6
5) The Handbook Committee (1999) by Jeanette Hainer, Chair	8
6) PROCLAMATION by Charles B. Rangel	9
7) As We Look Toward the Future (Handbook 1999)	10
8) Cooperator Memories and Thoughts	11
9) RNA House History Club Sessions November 2016 to October 2017	15

RNA House History Club
October 1, 2017

HISTORY from the RNA House Cooperator's Handbook 1999

RNA House was developed by a West Side community organization, the **Riverside Neighborhood Assembly**, led by Shirley Chartock as director and Philip Michaels as chairman. It was conceived, with financing by the newly enacted Mitchell-Lama State Bill, as one of the key housing developments in the West Side Urban Renewal Project.

The Urban Renewal Project, a 20-block enclave (87th Street to 97th Street, Amsterdam Ave. to Central Park West) was, and is, one of the most innovative and successful initiatives of our time in urban redevelopment. Its goal was to rehabilitate a deteriorating area of our city – crowded with decaying brownstones and tenements – and to create in its place a viable community of mixed-use and mixed-style housing for a broad range of the city's people – a true multiethnic, economic and social mix.

RNA's residents have always been proud to be a part of the dream. In 1965, RNA House was initiated at a groundbreaking ceremony at which Mayor John Lindsay* officiated. In April 1967, our first cooperators moved in – an event for which many had waited for over ten years. Within the year, 207 families came to join the vital moderate-income cooperative that we share.

From its inception and over the years that followed, many cooperators (individuals and committees) have invested, and continue to invest, much effort and talent in developing and improving RNA House's physical plant, financial management and the many amenities which contribute to our pleasant quality of life.

A major step was the decision in 1982 to switch to self-management – to achieve more satisfying operation and to cut costs. The Board leaders undertook this bold step - which has, we feel, achieved its goals. The full Board, representing the cooperators, accepted the responsibility of Management. We have been fortunate in having through the years dedicated and competent leadership – Board and Committee Members willing to undertake the hard work of self-management including fiscal responsibility.

The Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), the Supervisory Agency, cited RNA as being one of the best run self-managed Mitchell-Lama cooperative developments in the City.

July 1999

* It was Mayor Robert Wagner who was at the Ground Breaking ceremony on June 6, 1965. John Lindsay was elected Mayor of NYC in November 1965 and took that office in January 1966.

[Speech by Lafayette Quarterman at the RNA House 25th Anniversary Celebration Dinner, June 6, 1992]

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW
RNA HOUSE TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY
(1967 - 1992)

It has been an eventful quarter-century that has brought RNA House to this milestone day. Here are a few major high lights of those years - years that were sometimes turbulent times of struggle, sometimes triumphant in solving problems and overcoming obstacles.

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The Urban Renewal Project - a 20-block enclave (87 St. to 97 St., Amsterdam to Central Park West) - was, and is, one of the most innovative and successful initiatives of our time in urban redevelopment. Its goal was to rehabilitate a deteriorating area of our city - crowded with decaying brownstones and tenements - and to create in its place a viable community of mixed-use and mixed-style housing for a broad range of the city's people - a true multi-ethnic, economic and social mix.

RNA's residents have always been proud to be a part of the dream. RNA House was initiated at a ground-breaking ceremony at which Mayor John Lindsay* officiated. Soon after in April, 1967, our first cooperators moved in - an event for which many had waited for over ten years. Within the year, 207 families came to join the vital moderate-income cooperative that we share.

In the years that followed, many cooperators invested much effort and talent in developing and improving RNA House's physical plant and the many amenities which give us our pleasing quality of life. Some of those who have made major contributions are mentioned below. Unfortunately, space does not permit the listing of the many others who also gave significant service in these twenty-five years.

A major step was the decision in 1981 to switch to self-management - to achieve more satisfying operation and to cut costs. The Board leaders who undertook this bold step - which has, we feel, achieved its goals - were Sol Rabinowitz, Lynn Stone, Paul Buttrick and the undersigned. The full Board, representing the cooperators, accepted the responsibility of management.

Enriching our physical surroundings has been the task of many dedicated cooperators. We take special pride in our gardens, inspired and started by Lynn Stone, one of our original cooperators. The Garden Committee, now chaired by Ursula Pitilon, continues to do a superb job in maintaining and enhancing the gardens.

Beautifying our lobbies - with tile walls, plants, art, blinds, etc. and adding benches and chairs to our terrace - were made possible by fund-raising efforts conducted by hard-working

committees. A major improvement was the installation of a fence so that our children might enjoy the terrace and its play spaces, and to provide privacy. .

We have been fortunate in having through the years dedicated and competent leadership - Board and committee members willing to undertake the hard work of self- management including fiscal responsibility. We make special acknowledgment to those responsible for maintenance of our physical plant (notably Eli Carp, and now Erich Strauss). And we are fortunate in our present manager, Ed Hall, who works closely with the Board in carrying out RNA policies. The quality of service provided by our security staff and maintenance men adds to the quality of life in our cooperative.

The social aspects of our cooperative are enhanced by the existence of the "Neighbor Help Neighbor" committee and the real concern neighbors have shown for each other. The atmosphere of cooperation and friendliness which characterizes RNA is a pleasing fact of daily life. It is underlined by our celebrations of Christmas and Channukah, New Year's, children's parties, anniversary parties- and now this special 25th anniversary party.

We have good reason to celebrate 25 years of living together, 25 years of unceasing effort to maintain the goals of the founders of RNA.

The goal of maintaining and achieving a viable cooperative and a satisfying quality of life is the continuing responsibility of all of us as we begin together our second quarter century.

Lafayette Quarterman
President, Board of Directors
RNA House, Inc.

* It was Mayor Robert Wagner who was at the Ground Breaking ceremony on June 6, 1965. John Lindsay was elected Mayor of NYC in November 1965 and took that office in January 1966.

Introduction

Our neighborhood was included in a housing construction boom in the 1920s. Apartment buildings were constructed for upper middle-income and wealthy people. For example, 50 West 96th St. was completed and occupied in 1929.

But the depression that started with the stock market crash of that year put an end to the construction boom. Also, unemployment spread so more people could not pay their rent. Adding to the problems, as banks crashed, home repair loan money was not available. This took a toll on the older housing stock. A photo taken in 1931 of a building on 96th St shows the windows are broken.

No new housing was built during the depression or during WWII. During the war many people migrated to NYC from Puerto Rico to find work. Brownstone houses in this neighborhood were divided up so landlords could get multiple rents from each building.

After the war, more workers and their families migrated to NYC. Many Puerto Rican families moved into the UWS. The neighborhood became crowded. The Federal government made money available for housing in the suburbs making it attractive for long time residents to move out of the cities. The Riverside Neighborhood Assembly was formed with the dual purpose of making the newcomers to the UWS welcome and the long time residents comfortable enough to stay. The stated purpose was to facilitate democratic integration of all people in the UWS. Sarah Chartock, working for the NYC Board of Education, helped organize and direct the Riverside Neighborhood Assembly, a school-community council.

The following is a story Sarah Chartock's son Alan tells about his mother and this neighborhood.

My Involved Life: How I Started and Why That Matters

by Alan Chartock, July 16, 2007

<http://archives.cityandstateny.com/my-involved-life-how-i-started-and-why-that-matters-by-alan-chartock-2/>

I grew up at 50 West 96th Street. My mother, Shirley (later Sarah), was a power on the West Side of Manhattan and my twin brother Lewis and I went to West Side schools. I distinctly remember the day we all got marched over from the old and degenerate P.S. 93—on 93rd Street, of course—to the brand new Emily Dickinson School (P.S. 75) on West End Avenue. Our friends went to Horace Mann, Dalton, Walden and Riverdale. We both went on to become full professors, if you take my point.

My mother, the school community coordinator, came up with one of the original Mitchell-Lama houses on 96th Street between Columbus and Amsterdam Avenues (Riverside Neighborhood Assembly House). Interestingly, there is a plaque on the outside of the building. The names of all the big politicians are listed on that plaque. But not my mom's name, and she did the whole thing.

Those were amazing times. I saw first hand the crumbling of the old West Side Machine to the reformers (William Fitts Ryan, Al Blumenthal, Ted Weiss and Fred Ohrenstein). I was the president of the Student Organization at Joan of Arc Junior High School, which was run by the .

legendary Dr. Stella M. Sweeting. She was really something. She would stand outside the building in the morning, and if you were not wearing the compulsory necktie (take that, you charter school uniform people!), she would rent you one and give the money to the United Nations Children's Fund. Joan of Arc had the best orchestra teacher in the nation, Eugene Steiker, who by example taught me more about teaching than any school of education could possibly have done.

We had a Boy Scout troop run by one Arnold Frankel, who was to scouting what George Patton was to the Third Army. Frankel had no real job, having been left a little money by his mom, so Scout Troop 579 was his job. He was always landing these great events for us, like blowing Taps on Memorial Day on top of the Hotel Astor in Times Square while traffic was stopped. We went to three Boy Scout meetings a week. Doing that honed social work skills just as much as going to social work school ever would. Likewise, taking the D train to Hunter in the Bronx from 96th Street was a big part of anyone's education.

So here we are, all these years later. I went to work for Fred Ohrenstein as a consultant when he was in the State Senate. I've been a college professor, a newspaper columnist, a public radio executive and run the Legislative Gazette newspaper, which brings young people from all over the United States to learn journalism in Albany. My story is hardly unique. It was easy to be a political scientist when you grew up with the types mentioned above drinking coffee in your living room. I remember once coming into the living room on West 96th Street all full of myself as a fledgling political science student and there they all were: Ted Weiss and Fred Ohrenstein and Blumenthal, and I listened for a moment and then ventured an opinion. Ohrenstein looked up and said something like, "Oh, God, not another one who is going to want my job."

My mother always spoke of her relationship with Mayor Robert F. Wagner, whom she loved. I was never quite sure whether she was, as Pete Seeger once sang, "Puttin' on the style." But one time my friend Gerald Benjamin, the dean of New Paltz College, where I taught for many years, got me on a study trip to Japan that was being led by then- Comptroller Ned Regan. We were standing around at the airport waiting to leave when the old and long-out-of-office Mayor Wagner came in accompanied by his son Bobby Wagner, a prominent politician in his own right. Well, Regan made a bee line to chat up the old mayor and I ambled over. I don't think Ned appreciated my butting in, but maybe I'm just projecting. I was, however, determined to see whether he remembered my mom or whether she might have been gilding the lily just a bit. So, I stuck out my hand and I said, "I think you may have known my mom, Mayor. I'm Alan Chartock." He said, "Wait a minute, are you one of the twins?" Relationship confirmed. Tear in the eye.

Alan Chartock was the president and CEO of WAMC/Northeast Public Radio and the executive publisher and project director of the Legislative Gazette.

What was life like when RNA House opened?

The following is an excerpt from an essay by Jennifer Baum written in 2012, online at <http://www.newfoundjournal.org/current-issue/nonfiction-jennifer-baum/> with the title *A Different Set of Rules*:

"We went to a party that summer at Lilliane and Frank's apartment on the west side of the building. While my sister and I ran up and down the hallway in our matching A-line jumpers, my parents rang the bell. Lilliane, sporting shiny, orange bell-bottoms and a yellow sequined, low-cut blouse, greeted us with hugs and kisses, "¿Qué tal?" She led us through a black and red beaded curtain into a smoke-filled living room, where our neighbors were sitting on chrome bar stools with red vinyl seats, sipping sangria and puffing cigarettes.

She handed my parents drinks and they mingled with other families while we played with their kids and a fluffy white cat named Ethan. Every now and then, my sister Erica and I snuck some liquor-soaked fruit from the Sangria bowl and sucked it dry.

My mother laughed. "The kids are getting drunk." "It's good for them," my father said.

Lilliane put a Willie Colón record on the turntable, cranked up the volume, and broke into salsa steps, dancing with a friend. Soon a large group joined in, including Paul and his partner Elliot, who tapped, kicked, turned, dipped, and gyrated their hips to the rhythm of the clave and Colón's spirited, elegant trombone. My parents were not ones to let loose on the dance floor, so they contentedly watched from the sidelines, clapping their hands to the beat. The movements reminded my mother of the euphoric Horah dancing at Jewish weddings—participatory, exuberant, unabashed, communal engagement.

It was 1967 and we had just moved into our new apartment in the recently built Riverside Neighborhood Assembly (RNA) House, a government subsidized, Mitchell-Lama middle-income housing cooperative at 150-160 West 96th Street, between Amsterdam and Columbus Avenue in Manhattan. The city was near bankruptcy and the Upper West Side was so slummy, crime-ridden, and graffiti-scarred that people were fleeing to the suburbs. Challenged by newly radicalized Black and Puerto Rican communities reeling from previous dislocation, the West Side Urban Renewal Area (WSURA) provided affordable apartments to ousted families by building coops and rentals, and rehabilitating decaying brownstones. The idea was to create a just, economically balanced society and retain the integrated character of the Upper West Side, which was populated by wealthy, white families living in luxurious buildings with doormen on Central Park West, West End Avenue, and Riverside Drive, and working class minorities and whites living along Amsterdam and Columbus Avenues in dilapidated tenements. RNA House attracted families like ours, drawn to the

proximity of Central Park, the integrationist social agenda, and bookstores and movie theaters, who considered subsidized housing an opportunity.

We chose an apartment high up with southern exposure, opposite the noisy 96th Street thoroughfare, with a view of the backyard, abandoned brownstones, decrepit tenements, and the Empire State Building. Our building was a fifteen story low-rise concrete block, wider than it was tall, with beehive windows, terraces along the corners, and a tree-lined garden in front. It was set back from the street, giving tenants and pedestrians breathing room from the traffic.

We bought our apartment for \$3,800, below market rate. Because we had a family of four, we were allotted three bedrooms and charged maintenance adjusted to our family income. Those with earnings above a certain amount were disqualified. It was a liberal scheme of its time and place—postwar America, when money was abundant and fair play and collectivism were dogmas.

Some of the original tenants at RNA House included Jane Lazzare, a Jewish novelist and memoirist and her African-American husband, Douglas White, who became Deputy Commissioner of the NYC Fire Department. Lazzare wrote “Beyond the Whiteness of Whiteness,” about being the Caucasian mother of black sons. Catha Abrahams, who grew up with my mother in Brooklyn, led feminist consciousness-raising groups in her apartment. Betty Gubert, author of “Invisible Wings: An Annotated Bibliography on Blacks in Aviation, 1916-1993,” and co-author of “Distinguished African Americans in Aviation and Space Science,” moved into the building with her family. Among my other neighbors were Helen Freedman, a lawyer who became a Civil Court judge; Mirra Ginsberg, a renowned translator of Dostoyevsky, Mikhail Bulgakov, and Isaac Bashevis Singer; and Robert Brown, a reformed murderer who worked with the Fortune Society, a non-profit run by ex-offenders devoted to helping convicts re-enter society. The tenants created an atmosphere of inclusiveness, tolerance and cooperation in times when such attitudes were lacking. Some people may have disliked each other at 96th Street, but disputes were personal, not based on religion, race, or sexual preference.

The residents made group purchases of dishwashers, stoves, and air conditioners to bring down prices. A board of directors and committees formed to manage the garden, the cleaning, the garbage, and each floor of the building. When school began that fall of 1967, a crowd of kids and parents walked down the hill to P.S. 75, a communal sea—black, white, Puerto Rican, and all variations of mixed races. Inside the building, however, we were all alike. . .”

RNA House Cooperator's Handbook Committee (1999)

Sometime in 1997, Berniee Lorde asked me if I would volunteer to put together a "manual" - later changed to "handbook" - for RNA incoming and current cooperators. She provided me with names of those cooperators who expressed an interest in being part of such an endeavor.

Areta Arlen and Hedy Dentz came to the first meeting called. We decided, as a first step, in January 1998, to send out a memo to all RNA residents asking for suggestions as to what to include. We also asked interested persons to join us at the next scheduled meeting.

As you can see, this was a major project. The committee met next to establish criteria for what would be included. Each of us took topics to research and write up. These were then coordinated and typed in draft form.

A copy was sent to each committee member, the Manager, the secretary and each Board member, for additions, corrections, editing, etc. Each response was integrated into a master copy, reviewed with the Manager and retyped. A second and third typing was again distributed to those above.

A final copy and format were completed - which you now hold.

Your eyes may see things we missed, things in the neighborhood may have changed - this is our finished product at this time.

Warm thanks and appreciation for their commitment, hard work, and responsiveness to my many memos to all who made this a reality.



- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| Areta Arlen | Committee |
| Paul Buttrick | Committee & Board of Directors |
| Hedy Dentz | Committee |
| Sherry Fahn | Board of Directors |
| Esther Feinberg | Committee |
| Betty Gubert | Committee |
| Ron Hainer | Board of Directors |
| Asta Hairston | Board of Directors |
| Edward Hall | Manager |
| Kathy Hyde-Rooks | Secretary/Typist |
| Al Kurchin | Technical Consultant |
| Bernice Lorde | Board of Directors |
| Isabel Medina | Board of Directors |
| Felix Mora | Board of Directors |
| Maureen Moran | Board of Directors |
| Ursula Pitilon | Committee |
| Evelyn Rosenstein | Board of Directors |
| Ruth Sadler | Board of Directors |
| Steffi Weisman | Committee |

*Jeanette Hainer, Chair
July 1999*

CHARLES B. RANGEL
16th CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
NEW YORK
DEPUTY WHIP
COMMITTEES
WAYS AND MEANS
AIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON
SELECT REVENUE MEASURES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT
CHAIRMAN, SELECT COMMITTEE ON
NARCOTICS ABUSE AND CONTROL

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PLEASE RESPOND TO
OFFICE CHECKED

PROCLAMATION

- Whereas: RNA House has provided affordable housing for hundreds of moderate, middle and low income New Yorkers; and
- Whereas: The residents of RNA House have expended much of their valuable time to improve the quality of life for the entire West Side community; and
- Whereas: RNA House has helped revitalize the West Side Urban Renewal area and its immediate surroundings; contributed to the beautification of 96th Street; and
- Whereas: This day, I commend RNA House for adhering to the program Mitchell-Lama originally proposed to achieve; now therefore,



BE IT KNOWN, I, CHARLES B. RANGEL, Member of Congress, 16th Congressional District, by the power and authority vested in me, wish RNA House a happy 25th Anniversary and warmly extend my most sincere gratitude for the services its co-operators have rendered the community, this, Saturday, June 6, 1992.

Charles B. Rangel
CHARLES B. RANGEL
Member of Congress

As We Look Toward the Future...

RNA House is our home. We want to continue enjoying our pleasant quality of life and continue the tradition of... "being one of the best run, self-managed Mitchell-Lama cooperative developments in the City." *The beauty of cooperative living, the cooperation between and among cooperators, is up to us.*

Our unique features include: (1) a multi-generation mixture [a balance between youth (our leaders of tomorrow) and our seniors (their wisdom and continuity)], (2) economic and ethnic diversity co-existing here in peace and in harmony.

Our success as a cooperative is attributable to the fulfillment of the goals and objectives below:

- Appreciating the value of what we have (the location; reasonable maintenance charges; a spacious lobby and backyard; security; easy access to medical facilities, transportation, parks, and playgrounds; shops, etc.) compared to other communities.
- Encouraging all cooperators, especially young people, to share ideas and points-of-view with the Board of Directors and be willing to serve.
- Being available to help on a variety of committees (garden, library, etc.) that work tirelessly to maintain and increase the quality of life in our building.
- Supporting and volunteering for the "Help Your Neighbor" program.
- Supporting the collaborative effort of staff, cooperators, Management and the Board of Directors working together as a team to keep the building *clean and safe* for all.

Cooperator Memories and Thoughts

Kelunni Menon: I first moved to RNA House in 1972 and it has been my home to this day. Having observed the Upper West Side evolve and change over the years, it is extremely comforting to know that RNA House is one of the few constants still around after all this time. Regardless of whatever issues that I sometimes face at work or elsewhere in life, the thought of having a safe and comfortable home to return to every evening always provides me with refreshing solace in no small measure. I've also had the privilege of getting to know as well as being inspired by other residents who have contributed to the betterment of our building in their own way. Happy 50th Birthday, RNA House.

Jay Hauben: I moved into RNA House in 2014. After being on the waiting list for 13 years, it was our chance to live in Manhattan again. I found on the internet that this Mitchell-Lama co-op was originally sponsored by the Riverside Neighborhood Assembly. Thus began my interest and study of RNA House history. Since the History Club started, I have seen the 25th Anniversary Journal, The Cooperator's Handbook and other indications that RNA House cooperative has an interesting and important history. I have met some of the original cooperators and hope to learn more history and enjoy life for a long time as an RNA House cooperator.

Julian Gaa: Returning in 1950 to NYC, the Westside has been a good part of my life. I have worked both as a laborer and HRA community organizer. During this time I lived on 138th St and then to the present on 96th St. Fortunately, I found this Mitchell-Lama co-op. Despite past claims of people fleeing NYC, I marveled at the young and old moving in. There was Basic Relief in our RNA cooperative, we had the energy and the talent. Generally, it was true for the entire Westside of Manhattan. Naturally, in the Reagan 1980s there was a reactionary change. Even today, amongst growing towers and stock market, the keeping of human cooperation and the seeking of security and happiness is challenged. To my Mitchell-Lama RNA neighbors who now are filling the apartments, we continue to face the meaning of Home. Happy 50th Birthday RNA.

Lysa Hall: I lived my whole life in the UWS. I moved into RNA House 18 years ago this month with my two boys. Tyler was 2 and Che was 9. From the very beginning the people here were very friendly. I loved raising both my sons in RNA House. Eventually Che graduated from Holy Cross University and Tyler is now a senior at Lasell College in Massachusetts. Both my sons appreciated living here. For me too, this is a clean, safe building in a beautiful, diverse neighborhood. I will do what I can to keep RNA House what it has been for me.

Bonnie McKoy: I came to RNA House from uptown, Manhattan. I have been living here for 13-years or more. I find it to be a very nice, clean, safe and upkept building with a Laundromat. Thanks to all the security, maintenance, super people for doing such a great job.

When I first came here, I missed my old neighborhood, family and friends. Shortly thereafter, two very nice and friendly Ladies greeted and welcomed me into the building, that is just what I needed at the time. My neighbor across the hall also welcomed me.

My Grandson, Jeremiah (7) - who is autistic; the playground and the backyard is good for him. I feel more relaxed knowing I don't have to worry about him running into the streets (he likes to run). The neighborhood is good for shopping and transportation. Now, I am a Senior Citizen on a fixed income, "thank God" RNA is an affordable building for me to live here.

Happy 50th Anniversary to RNA House. I am happy to be a part of the celebration.

Hanna & Henryk Jakubowski: We are lucky enough to live in the greatest place in the world, NYC. Thanks to moving to RNA house we are living in place that is very close to all that we love so much: close to Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall and theater district. Now we can do what we really like to do best: enjoy theater, shows and music, everything within 5 minutes from our home. We came to the area that we knew from the program hosted by John Schaffer entitled "New Sounds". We had been listening to "New Sounds" every Friday night since 1982, on NPR, while commuting to Catskills to see our two sons, who were spending summer vacations in bungalow colony in Ellenville. Program was recorded in the old Symphony Space at the 95th Street and Broadway on UWS. We parked our car very often in front of RNA house, when attending various concert in old symphony hall, what is now our home RNA house is nice and clean. We have beautiful garden and back yard, where we can relax and have a chat with others

This is great and safe neighborhood with a lot potential for being even more attractive, full of nice people and great shopping. Trader Joe's is moving to 92nd Street and Columbus Ave. Wishing that our co-op will be example for others. Happy 50 anniversary RNA house

Joseph Melendez: Fifty years ago, I came to RNA as a teenager. My mother and father picked me up from military school and told me they had a surprise for me. The surprise was my new home at RNA House. It was more than just a new home, but it was a symbol of hope, especially for a Latino family during that time to own real-estate. Through its Mitchell-Lama program, it gave my parents the opportunity to afford to live the American dream and because of that opportunity, I was able to pass that on to my own family.

Here is to 50 years of celebrating the place I have called my home, celebrating the memories of not only my parents but the many people who were a staple of this building who are no longer with us. Celebrating the loving neighbors and RNA staff, but most of all, celebrating hope to future generations to afford to live their American dream that may last a lifetime.

Happy Anniversary RNA and Happy One Year Anniversary to the History Club.

Barbara Jacobs: We moved into RNA House in 1972, when I was 9 months pregnant with my first child. Many of those first shareholders were also young families with one or two children, living as we did on one low or modest salary. Usually the mother stayed home raising the children while the father worked at entry level or civil service jobs, and/or pursued degrees in law, medicine, finances, etc. The mothers and children socialized in the backyard and park playgrounds, made good friends, shared babysitting and had a strong support group.

In my 45 years in RNA House, my maintenance has not even doubled while market rate rents in the area have exploded. On the money I have saved living in a three bedroom apartment in a nice, well kept building, in a great area, on one civil service salary, I have been able to send both my kids to college and graduate school, made the down payment on my son's house, and done many other things that would have been impossible if not for Mitchell/Lama. Ironically, several of my neighbors who moved in at the same time and have benefited as I did in the Mitchell/Lama program, now wish to privatize.

Ronda Hauben: Having moved into RNA House in August 2014, it is a bit fascinating to realize the many people over the years who have contributed to make RNA House a relatively rare but impressive institution on W 96 Street.

RNA House appears to be just another apartment building on the Upper West Side. But fortunately some cooperators have written documents over the years which other cooperators have saved and made available. These documents demonstrate that RNA House has an interesting and - valuable tradition and set of experiences to build on. For example, in an article found on the Internet,

Alan Chartock documents his mother Sarah's work to propose and then get support for building RNA House. Yet his mother's work has gone largely unrecognized. Also, the RNA 25th anniversary book offers a taste of the community and cooperator contributors to RNA House development up until 1992.

I suggested the Club include in this 50th anniversary booklet a list of the topics taken up over the last year at the monthly meetings. The readings and discussion have helped to give me some little taste of what has made RNA House what it is today.

Lorraine Poe: Many wonderful cooperators have given their time and talent to build up RNA House in the past 50 years. We have always had superb gardeners. This year the planters are more luxuriant and beautiful than ever. We have paintings in the corridors and lobbies. Committees have worked on elevator decorations, planned the paintings of corridors and built a playground, for example.

I was always amazed by the legendary Ursula Pitilon who organized periodic flea markets to fund the garden and also ran the large committee of volunteers who did errands for sick cooperators and also headed the garden committee for years. Super lady! Maureen Moran revised the By-laws and spent hours helping with the office work. I apologize to the unnamed dozens of heavy-duty volunteers who should also be thanked.

I feel very lucky to live here, and at a low rent too!

David Kaplan: I moved into RNA House with my husband, Jerry Stacy, in 2007. My grandmother and aunt lived together in a Mitchell-Lama apartment beginning in 1967. [Their apartment was on Avenue C and East 11th Street; RNA house is, of course, on West 96th Street but Mitchell-Lama building materials were ordered en masse, uptown or downtown.] Fifty years later, much was familiar to me in RNA House: the eccentric closet doors and the inexplicable metal bulge in the bathroom. It felt as if I had come home, as in a fairy-tale, to grandma's house. But with this difference: I had come home to grandma's house because a man who loved me had entered the housing lottery.

I remember overhearing that my Aunt Lillian, who lived a very full life in a wheel-chair, had suggested changes to the architect of her building to make it wheelchair accessible: ramps, elevators, and a wider bathroom door. The doors to Mitchell-Lama housing have grown yet wider by including my husband and me.

Alan Chartock: In 1967, the Riverside Neighborhood Assembly House opened on the West Side of Manhattan on 96th Street between Columbus and Amsterdam Avenues. It was one of the first, if not the first, of the Mitchell-Lama buildings in Manhattan. The idea was to make sure that common folks who could not afford the high rentals could remain in the neighborhoods of New York. I recently heard that the average rental of a one bedroom apartment on the Upper West Side of Manhattan runs \$3,400 a month. That's a lot of money. People I know in the RNA House are paying about \$600 a month for a one bedroom. To this day, the Mitchell-Lama program has some pretty strict rules. In order to get one of these apartments, you have to be on the waiting list and meet certain criteria. You have to fit between certain economic guidelines and because there aren't enough apartments to go around, you may have to wait on the list for years to buy shares in a cooperative building. Like other co-ops, you don't own your apartment. Rather, you own shares in the building but you get to use the apartment. If you are allowed to buy into the building, the rule is that when you leave, you have to

surrender your shares at the price you originally paid in plus a prorated share of the amortization while you were there.

You may wonder why I am writing about the RNA House, now an incredible fifty years old. It is so important to me because it was my mother who thought up and gave birth to the place, just as she gave birth to my brother and me. My mom, Shirley Chartock (later reverting to her given name of Sarah), was the school community coordinator on the West Side of Manhattan. She thought up the Riverside Neighborhood Assembly (after whom the building is named) whose job it was to bring the people and the schools together and she sponsored an awful lot of conferences and theater parties to make it all happen. She worked incredibly hard at it and then she taught in the evenings at Hunter College in the education department. She founded the Fire Island Youth Group and ran that for many summers.

My mother was at the forefront of those folks who believed that there should be a place, an integrated place, where people could live when so many were being forced out of their neighborhoods. When the Mitchell-Lama program originated, thanks to Mayor Robert Wagner and a cadre of assistants (Warren Moscow and Robert Moses among them), my mom saw an opportunity for the Riverside Neighborhood Assembly to sponsor a first. I seem to remember Bob Wagner laying it all out in our living room. That's why I'm not happy about the latest development in the long history of the RNA House -- they are trying to mess with my mom's legacy.

All these years later, there is a move to change the Mitchell-Lama co-ops so that the apartments people could actually afford would be privatized. That means some of the people who are the cooperators want to own their apartments and sell them at current market prices and, of course, make out like bandits. The whole idea of affordable housing was to make real middle class, integrated housing a reality. After twenty years in the program, the law allows the cooperators to vote on whether to privatize. In most cases, people have been true to the mission but in others, they have been understandably greedy. Soon the RNA House will have to decide. My mom, whose name is not up there on the plaque even though it was her project from start to finish, will be rolling in her grave if the cooperators fighting the privatization should lose. Then a good idea would have gone sour. Too bad. [This appeared as **Messing with mom's legacy** in *Troy (NY) Record*, The Capitol Connection, 10/19/2017].

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(The next printing will contain more Cooperator Memories and Thoughts. All cooperators are invited to contribute something to add here. If you have a contribution, please give it to any History Club member or Jay Hauben, 8S.)

(这本小册子的下一版将包含更多的合作者回忆和思想，所有合作者都被邀请在这里添加内容，如果您有贡献，请提交给任何历史俱乐部成员或 Jay Hauben, 8S)

(La próxima impresión contendrá más Recuerdos y Pensamientos del cooperador. Se invita a todos los cooperadores a contribuir con algo para agregar aquí. Si tiene una contribución, por favor, entréguesela a cualquier miembro del Club de Historia o Jay Hauben, 8S.)

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RNA House History Club Sessions November 2016 to October 2017

1. History of the People and Housing in the Upper West Side
2. Early Life at RNA House and Some History of Middle Income Housing in NYC
3. Life at RNA House and Some History of Middle Income Housing in NYC (2)
4. Life at RNA House and Some History of Middle Income Housing in NYC (3)
5. The RNA House By-Laws: What History Do They Contain
6. The RNA House By-Laws (2): The 1983 By-Law Changes
7. The RNA House By-Laws (3): Why is RNA House Under BCL Rules?
8. Vibrant Community Survives Slum Clearance Tragedy: Some History of the West 98th-99th Sts Neighborhood (1905 to the Present)
9. A Brief History of the West Side Urban Renewal Area (WSURA) (1950s-1980s)
10. A Brief History of the West Side Urban Renewal Area (WSURA) (2)
11. Who Was Jane Jacobs: What Did She Do of Importance
12. Memories and Documents from Fifty Years of the RNA House Mitchell-Lama Cooperative

The readings and videos from all these sessions can be accessed on the **RNA House Co-op History Club Sessions and Documents** website

: <http://www.columbia.edu/~hauben/RNA-House/history/>

Special thanks to Joseph Melendez who made available many RNA House historical documents.

To contact the History Club send email to hauben@columbia.edu or call 347-602-5592

