

Eleanore Skoldberg (1934-2025)

Eleanore (Ellie) Skoldberg began her 22-year career at The Brick Church School as an assistant teacher in 1976. She was a close friend of Joyce Dupee, Brick's director from 1975 - 1983, with whom she had worked at the small cooperative nursery school at Union Church in Bay Ridge, which both of their children (Ellie had 4 sons!) attended. When a teaching spot at Brick opened in '76, Joyce naturally thought of Ellie, and hired her at the yearly salary of \$3000 (daily, 8:30 till 12:30)!

When I asked Joyce to share her memories of Ellie, she responded: "She was such a loved and trusted friend for so long that I find it hard to distill the multitude of memories into a few anecdotes. Our lives were intertwined over decades - whether or not we lived in close proximity to each other - and I still feel her presence. She gave meaning to the definition of the word friend."

Though my friendship with Ellie did not stretch quite as far back as Joyce's, I loved Ellie very much. I began teaching at Brick in 1977 and was so excited to learn that Ellie would become my assistant in 1978.

But life and love interfered; I had just spent the summer in Italy with Walter, and we had decided to get married. One of the saddest parts of telling Joyce that I would not be returning to New York or to Brick that year was missing the chance to work with Ellie. Joyce hired a friend of mine from Teachers College, Denise O'Hara, and Denise and Ellie taught together for two years.

Ellie had a wonderful sense of humor. Denise's most vivid memory of Ellie is of her laughter. She got such joy from the 3-year-olds they taught, and they laughed so much at the things they said and did. Since Denise was Mrs. O'Hara, Ellie became Mrs. O'Skoldberg. The children automatically made that change to her name and she just went along with it. Joyce also remarked on Ellie's sense of humor and reported that they laughed at things no one else found funny.

In 1978, Ellie taught in the morning and began helping Holly Burke in the office in the afternoons. In those days, typewriters were used- no computers. Brick was very lucky that Ellie's typing was impeccable. In 1983, I became director and Ellie continued to teach in the mornings and work in the office in the afternoons. She shifted to the job of roving assistant teacher, working in several different classrooms - and she was greatly appreciated in all of them!

Eleven years later, in 1987, I wrote this to her at the end of the year:

"Ellie, you are a great asset to this school in every way. As an assistant, you can go into any classroom and fit in with each different teaching style. I have never heard another teacher complain about you. You are always helpful and never intrusive. You relate so well to the children and teachers. You are also a wonderful secretary and sounding board. I respect your wisdom and experience. I am very grateful for all you do for this school. What would we do without you?"

Those afternoon hours gradually extended and in 1994, Ellie became a full-time administrative assistant. I was so grateful for her skill in her administrative duties, but even more for her wisdom. Time after time, I turned to her for advice and support.

During her time working at Brick, Ellie experienced two tragedies: the death of her oldest son and the death of her husband. Even though she suffered deeply, she never lost her sense of humor, and her light continued to shine.

The commute from Bay Ridge to the Upper East Side gradually became too much for Ellie, and she left Brick in 1998. It was a huge loss for the school and for me.

All of us who knew her miss her deeply.

Lydia Spinelli
Former Director 1983-2019