

Astrid Pulver



This interview on April 12, 1982 is part of an oral history of West Islip project sponsored by the West Islip Public Library. I am Ethel Morris of the library staff and I will interview Astrid Pulver.

Morris: Mrs. Pulver, when did you come to West Islip?

Pulver: Oh, over 40 years ago.

Morris: And when you came to West Islip, what served as a library here?

Pulver: Well, some people knew about it and others didn't. There was a shelf in the Higbie Lane School in the principal's office and adults were allowed to use those books.

Morris: One shelf served as the library for the whole community?

Pulver: Right.

Morris: And, I understand that you were active in the community and the PTA particularly, and can you tell me when and how the idea for a community library started?

Pulver: Well, we were a one unit PTA so that all the new people were coming into the community were coming into one unit, and I was the president in 1954-55 and I had Grace Lindenburgh as my program chairman.

Morris: That was the Higbie Lane PTA?

Pulver: The Higbie Lane PTA.

Morris: Right.

Pulver, And, she set up the program and one of our programs was to speak about books and after it was over, we asked if anyone would like to sign up to begin a library. And, about 15 people signed up. And I think this was in November, and the beginning of December, Grace Lindenburgh had a meeting for the people who had signed up in her own house.

Morris: So, December 1954

Pulver: and from that point on she began working with Mr. Flower and Mr. Babitz, who were lawyers, and they contacted Albany and found out what legal matters had to be done before we could start a library association. The legal matters were finished by May at which time they had to be presented to the school board so they could be put on the agenda for the vote which was then in July. And this was done, but it was too soon for the community to really realize what was happening, so it wasn't voted in, so we then had to proceed to be a library association. The Board of Regents granted a provisional charter to 7 trustees who then started to get a building which we did get from Mr. Dzus on Hawley Ave. And we put out a brochure so there would be questions and answers about the library could be distributed to the community and we went from door to door getting out subscriptions for membership and that is how the library association got its first funds.

Morris: I see, and I see you have one of the brochures there. What are some of the things it says?

Pulver: Well, where would the library be located? On Hawley Ave. And would they be ready to lend books? How soon would they be ready? Early 1957. Would they have a trained librarian in charge? Well we would have to have the money for that and her salary would be about \$3,800 per year. And, how would we get books. Well we'd get them from our neighbors and our state traveling library promised 500 at first and then another 500, so we'd have 1000 books from them.

Morris: So you anticipated many of the questions that the community would ask and you put them in the brochure.

Pulver: The contribution was tax deductible. And we also asked for oh, filing cabinets, typewriter, and things to furnish the library with, and volunteers. Anyone who wanted to assist was welcome.

Morris: And, so in that way you got members for your association. How did you raise funds?

Pulver: That was the way we raised it, through those contributions. The membership was \$3, \$5, \$25 - whatever they wanted to give.

Morris: Oh I see. Did you have any fund raising activities, besides.

Pulver: No, we just went to our neighbors and asked them to help us start a library.

Morris: And what was the money used for?

Pulver: Well we had to start out by cleaning up and painting the building. It had been used as a workshop.

Morris: Who did that, the painting?

Pulver: Volunteers, well I painted half the ceiling myself. Of course we had to get stacks for the books. Then we had the book drive. I'm sure the boy scouts helped. We also had a paper drive and the money from that, we sold the paper and the money from that was put towards the library and finally we opened.

Morris: And how many books did you have when you opened?

Pulver: Well, I think we had 5000 all together so we could start.

Morris: What was your greatest problem in the early days?

Pulver: Well, personally I felt that it was, we were volunteers so we couldn't spend all of the time in the library so the hours were sort of short.

Morris: What were the hours when you first opened?

Pulver: Tuesdays we were there from 9:30-11:30 and then in the afternoon from 1:30-4:30 and then at night from 7-9 pm. Thursdays we were just there in the afternoon 1:30-4:30 and then Saturday morning from 10-12 noon.

Morris: And that was the total hours for the library?

Pulver: yeah, that was it.

Morris: Did the people come to the library right away, I mean was it a very used facility right away?

Pulver: We did have 1000 borrowers, so they were coming.

Morris: And how did you learn the library procedures and what to do with the books, the cataloging?

Pulver: Well we had Grace Lindenburgh went to Bay Shore to the the librarian there, and sat down with her and found out how to catalog books and how to list them in our card catalog. So we all worked with her and learned how.

Morris: And who was the first librarian?

Pulver: The first librarian who was hired was Miss Julia Sullivan of Bayport and she had a masters degree in library science from University of illinois and had taught out there and also at the Queensborough library.

Morris: Did you have any story hours for children?

Pulver; There was a Mrs. Frederick Kirsch, who was a librarian trained in story telling who had a Saturday morning story hour at 9:30 am and a Thursday story hour for small children.

Morris: She came to visit the library, so was not part of the staff?

Pulver: No, she was a volunteer I believe.

Morris: I see.

Pulver: When Ms. Sullivan became the librarian the library went right ahead quickly and the community voted to have the library be on the tax rolls. A school district library.

Morris: Then it was supported by taxes rather than voluntary contributions as before. And, before the library became a school district library and it was an association library, do you recall what their budget was at that time.

Pulver: It was about \$2,500

Morris: About \$2,500, so the money was raised?

Pulver: Through the \$3 memberships mostly.

Morris: Most people paid \$3 membership contribution, and other donations I suppose.

Pulver: There were other donations.

Morris: How many members were there when you first started?

Pulver: Well, it's really hard for me to say. We did have 150 people signed up who were friends of the library.