

# The Book Sale and How it Began

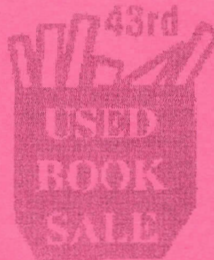
by *Ruthe Sicherman*

AAUW



AAUW

Buffalo Branch  
Established 1890



AAUW



BUFFALO  
CONVENTION  
CENTER

May 27 - 30, 1987

ADMISSION CHARGE  
MAY 27, ONLY  
Noon - 5 p.m. \$3.00

TRI-MAIN CENTER  
2907 Main Street  
Buffalo, NY 14214  
(See location map on back)

ADMISSION CHARGE  
Friday, April 10, 1985  
10 a.m. - Noon \$1.00  
Noon - 5 p.m. \$3

TRI-MAIN COLLEGE  
RECREATION CENTER

April 6 - 9, 1984

FREE PARKING  
ADMISSION CHARGE  
April 6, ONLY  
Main Noon - 3 p.m. \$1.00  
Noon - 5 p.m. \$3

ADMISSION FREE  
April 7 - 9

AAUW



JULY 26, 27, 28, 1991

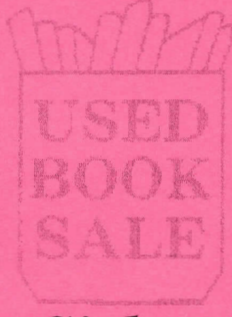
MEDAILLE COLLEGE  
RECREATION CENTER

FREE PARKING  
ADMISSION CHARGE  
FRI, JULY 26, ONLY  
\$5.00 - 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

ADMISSION FREE  
Saturday, July 27, 1991  
10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Monday & Tuesday  
July 29, 30, 1991  
10 a.m. to 7 p.m.

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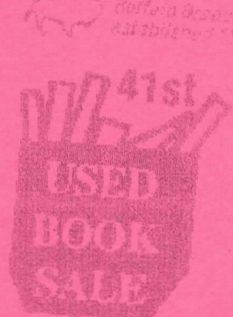


CONVENTION  
CENTER

April 12-17, 1985  
(closed Sunday)

Friday, April 12  
10 a.m. - Noon  
Admission \$3.00  
Noon - 5 p.m.  
Admission: \$1.00

AAUW



July 7-10, 1995

TRI-MAIN Center  
2907 Main Street  
Buffalo, NY 14214  
716-831-3200  
(See location map on back)

FREE PARKING

Admission Charge  
Friday, July 7, only  
9 a.m. - Noon \$ 10  
Noon - 5 p.m. \$ 5

# Buffalo Branch AAUW Book Sale

In 1954 President Margaret Warwick McCullough returned from a regional convention with the news of a New Jersey branch which was raising large sums of money with an annual used book sale.

The board of directors was enthusiastic about the idea, since previous fundraisers had included fashion shows, bridge parties, sale of magazine subscriptions, calendars, etc. A book sale seemed more in keeping with the image of the organization.

It also became evident that a more productive means of raising funds was necessary, since the emphasis of the Association was now on fellowships rather than scholarships.

The first sale was held on April 23, 1955, at 68 Niagara Street and raised the magnificent sum of \$209.72. The one-day sale, attended mainly by members, was pronounced a success, which justified making it an annual event. Little did the board know what a monster it had created!

By today's standards, the first sale was a poor thing. A few hundred books hurriedly collected, a few dedicated members to "make it go." However, it set an important precedent when the Park Hall realty firm donated the site. For the next 25 years the branch held sales in the downtown area and never paid a rental fee.

As the sales grew, and grow they did, it became increasingly difficult to find adequate space. "We need at least 7,500 square feet of space," we boldly told building managers, "and we've always had it donated."

Finally, in 1981 we succumbed. We rented space in the Convention Center, since downtown Buffalo was in a state of renewal and space was at a premium.

Here we had all the amenities formerly lacking, such as adequate washrooms, an outdoor lighted sign advertising the sale, a separate room for the sealed bid sale (to be explained later), and many tables supplied by the center. Tables for the books had to be rented and have always been an expensive item.

But all this was costly, and as the costs continued to grow, our profits fell. Obviously, we needed cheaper quarters, and after much searching by a committee, in 1988 we moved into the Medaille College recreation center.

Lois Jarrett has coordinated more book sales than anyone in the Buffalo Branch organization. During six sales, she flitted from 270 Pearl St. to the Liberty Bank Building, the Ellicott Square, back to 270 Pearl Street, and finally to the completed Convention Center (formerly 270 Pearl Street).

Jarrett recalls the year she was offered the entire contents of a small bookstore. Elated by the call, she later was crushed to discover that the inventory consisted of pornographic books.

When members told Ellie Lawson, former member, to "break a leg" running the sale, they didn't mean for her to take it literally, but she did. She did most of her coordinating by phone with on-site help from Jarrett. The following year she broke her wrist, but again managed to run the sale efficiently. Both "bad breaks" made splendid publicity pictures.



*AAUW Book Sale 1973*

In 1973, dealers interested in first crack at the books advised us to charge first-day admission. We started with a \$1 charge, which we gradually increased to \$3, later to \$5, and this year \$10 until noon, and \$5 after noon. While some people are aware of the charge, some are surprised, and some wait out the time until the lower charge goes into effect. Dealers never object to the cost, and it was back in 1973 when a dealer told a member, "You should charge \$10 to be in here." Now we do.

In 1967, we discovered the Ellicott Square and spent five years there in various parts of the building.

Dr. Carol Collins, former fellowship awardee, chaired the sale in a back corner of the lobby. It was a large space, very plush, and it seemed to the workers that they had as many questions about the space as they had about the books. It was rented before we moved out, which may have made Mr. Paladino consider us a good luck token.

In '68 we occupied a vault in the basement, but in '69 we were back on the first floor in a former flower shop. The glass cases were still on the walls when we set up, and we had difficulty avoiding them with the boxes of books. Luckily, nothing was broken.

In '70, Lois Jarrett was back in the basement in the former GOP headquarters. The entrance was somewhat obscured, so I pasted yellow foot prints from the lobby to the sale site.

Jarrett appeared again as a coordinator in '71; this time in the Dixie hat shop in the Liberty Bank building. Here the many support posts made excellent display spots for the pictures, maps, and other Sealed Bid items.

Jarrett was back in '72; this time on the sixth floor of the Ellicott Square. We were worried that no one would find us there, so we took an ad in the *News* with a coupon for a free book. We didn't have to worry, because we had one of the biggest crowds ever.

We had a parade! In 1981 we began warehousing books at the YWCA on Franklin St., just a hop, skip and a jump from the Convention Center where the sale was to be held in April. I had visualized a small parade from the Y to the Center, but after talking to Connie McGillicuddy, who had led many St. Patrick's Day parades, his helpful suggestions made it grow.

I had asked the marchers to dress in old-fashioned clothes and to bring every kind of "wheels," from the VW van to wagons and baby buggies, to move the books.

Through the magic of Connie's name, I was able to get Mayor James Griffin to lead the parade. He was flanked by four mounted police and followed by the Buffalo Traditional School marching band. The mayor proclaimed the week of the sale "AAUW Book Sale Week."

This was April, but the evening before the parade it began to snow.

After all, this IS Buffalo.

The next morning, I frantically called the streets department and asked to have Franklin Street cleared from the YW to the Convention Center. "You have to let us know two weeks ahead of time," the woman informed me. Impossible! However, when I explained that the mayor would be leading the parade, she relented and got the job done.

The Buffalo News photographer didn't get a picture of either the mayor or the band, as both were late arriving. Instead, he got a good picture of Suzanne Grossman and missed all the hoopla!

Some strange and interesting things happened during the early years. The second sale was almost wiped out by a two day blizzard. Fortunately, the sun shone on Saturday, and the branch showed a profit of \$623.

During the third sale someone contributed 15 volumes of the Foundryman's Journal, which were unlikely to sell. On the last day of the sale a man discovered them and purchased the whole set. He had just bought a small foundry.

When Mrs. Wilson B. Gragg chaired a sale on upper Main street, she was surprised to find a number of slot machines in a back room. A day later, when the police came to investigate, the machines had disappeared. One year we almost had a baby for sale. Two women came in the store, one carrying a sleeping baby in a basket, which she put under one of the tables in the back of the room while she selected books. After a while the women left, did some shopping, and returned to collect their books and the baby. The workers, who had discovered the baby after the women left, breathed a sigh of relief.

In the early 70's the William Hengerer Company set up depots in all their stores where books could be dropped off. The area YMCA's also had places set aside for collection. The Butler Library at Buffalo State College aided in the collection process, as did the Emma Bookstore, formerly run by Anne Montes, AAUW member and sale co-chair.

AAUW's Buffalo Branch Used Book Sale has been a successful endeavor for forty-three years. However, it went through some evolutionary changes.

One addition, the sealed bid sale, was established in 1964 when Dr. Margaret McCullough suggested to me that a few notable people be contacted who might contribute items which could be used for bids.

The first donations included an autographed steel engraving of the White House from Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson, a Monterey bowl sent by Mrs. Berry Goldwater, wife of the Arizona Senator; *The Future of Federalism* signed by Governor Nelson Rockefeller; a copy of *Argentina and the United States. 1910-1960* signed by Dr. Harold Peterson, Buffalo State College Professor, and a copy of Ruth M. Rasey's book of poem's, *Out of the Saltbox*. A few other items were added.

The bids were very low and the auction was abandoned until 1970, when, with the invaluable help of Penwomen of Western New York and Patteran artists, I assembled a large collection of arts and crafts.

As the sales grew, it became impossible for one person to collect all the sealed bid items. At this point, Mollie Fleysler volunteered to take over soliciting everything except sports items. It was then that the "sealed bid sale"

really took off!

When Mollie Fleysher volunteered to help with the sealed bid sale, the profits soared. She was a pleasure to work with, cheerful, energetic, enthusiastic, and very cooperative.

She scoured the papers for possible donors, and organized a committee to call them. She arranged for another group of members to spell each other during the sale, although she spent much of the time there herself. She also had the foresight to have members who were picking up books pick up donated items as well.

Her efforts to stock the sale were so successful that people were as eager to place bids as they were to buy books. Sales rose from \$600 in 1963 to almost \$2,600 in 1981.

The sale grew from a dozen items to more than a hundred, and we required a separate room to house the collection. Included were works from such noted artists as Lorna Berlin, Rixford Jennings, Marion Dodds, Lawrence McIntyre, Tasha Turk, and Gladys Martin.

Books were sent by Omar Sharef, Bob Hope, Dr. Ralph W. Loew, Bishop Edward D. Head and Billy Graham. Craft items included afghans, puppets, hand-painted plates, pottery, needlepoint, a signed Alfred Hitchcock Silhouette, and cartoons by Bruce Shanks, Toles, and Ricig. The variety was amazing.

Many members donated, including Lucille Peterson, Lynn McClive, Sally Pecoraro, Olga Lindberg, Ruth Muck, Lorna Berlin, Bunny Blackstone, Sarah Sterrett, plus relatives of the members.

Shocking as it may seem, there was pilfering from the sealed bid area. Several pieces of donated jewelry disappeared from an early sale, and some very old and valuable Valentines and post cards donated by Lucille Peterson were purloined from another sale. A James A. Garfield 1881 ribbon, which the Buffalo News publicized in the 1978 sale, disappeared one day when a lone member was policing the area. She reported that the only visitors during the time she was on duty were two well dressed gentleman (?).

Another time, a book was missing, and a box of notebook paper which we had priced at \$1!

Mollie Fleysher recognized many of the bidders as they came in, and knew what would interest them. She was so enthusiastic and lively in her presentations that she often convinced them to bid on extra items, and thus increased our sales.

The number of donations Mollie was able to collect was staggering. In 1984 in a sale in the Convention Center, with Bunny Blackstone and Amelia Sherrets as co-chairs, she amassed 122 oils, prints, water colors, collages and photos among the art items, books worth almost \$100, crafts valued over \$55, and sports items ( a slim year!) more than \$155.

Some of the donations were pretty sad. Elvis painted on velvet became a standard, and strangely enough, people continued to buy it. Much of the "art" did not deserve that name, and yet it sold.

When the sale ended, Mollie and I took home the left-overs and continued to phone buyers who has expressed an interest. Additional funds were accumulated in this way.

With two avid sports fans in The Sicherman family, and my own interest as well, I was assigned to snare the elusive sports item. I went to Rich Stadium for signed footballs. Later Carol Battle did this for me on many occasions.

I went to the Aud for a Braves basketball, and to the Sabres office for signed hockey sticks and pucks. I was often able



*Sealed Bid Items - Book Sale 1978*

to get several of these, and Mollie and I played games with the buyers.

In the newspaper publicity, I mentioned only one hockey stick. When we called the buyers to notify them of what they had "won" (WON? They were paying for the items!) we also asked the approximate time they might come in. In this way we could put one hockey stick out for each winner and hope that they wouldn't run into one another.

I visited Joe McCarthy in his Ellicott Creek Road home and had him sign baseballs and his Hall of Fame pictures. I wrote Billie Jean King, who sent a blue suede shoe, and to Arnold Palmer, who sent a golf glove; to Buffalo Bob Smith for an autographed picture, and to Tom Toles for a signed original cartoon, which sold for \$100.

We had assists from other members. Marion Elmer helped pick up paintings from the Pen Women; Carolyn Iadovito brought her electric typewriter and wrote letters to possible sports donors, and recognition should go to all the members who picked up books, and items for Mollie at the same time.

Although she had no interest in sports, Mollie Fleysher did make two forays onto the sports scene with me.

In 1982 the Buffalo Bisons were the farm team for the Pittsburgh Pirates who were coming to Buffalo to play. Mollie accompanied me to an Aud Club luncheon where we planned to get baseballs autographed. We circulated among the players, and Mollie, with her sweet smile and charming manner, got the autographs, although I'm sure she didn't recognize any of the players. (I didn't recognize too many either.)

But we got our autographs, and picked up some memorial mugs for the sealed bid.

On another occasion we met with Bob Lanier at a senior center on Kensington Ave. to get an autographed basketball. I had met him earlier when he was still at St. Bonaventure, but was home with a broken leg. He signed several items for us at that time.

When I read that Jesse Owens, the Olympic star, would be in Buffalo in July 1976, I arranged for Myra Menti and me to meet him at the Sheraton East. He agreed to have Arco, his sponsor, send a large framed poster of his Berlin

win for our sealed bid sale, which would be held the following April. A week before the sale opened, it still hadn't appeared. Finally, the morning the sale opened, it was delivered. It brought a bid of \$100, a substantial price in those days.

With Ruth Warren, a member now deceased, I had the pleasure of visiting Joe McCarthy in his Ellicott Creek home. He signed baseballs, Hall of Fame cards, and even a memorial edition of Grantland Rice's book for us. He took us to the garage and showed us his custom-made Cadillac, which he

seldom used except for trips to the doctor.

He was very vocal about his dislike for the two-platoon system in football, and the designated hitter in baseball. He had a beautiful big dog, which was his constant companion. He seemed lonely, and we visited him several times, which seemed to please him.

I wish I had taken my camera!

When the News sports pages said Mickey Mantle would be at Kobackers at the Boulevard Mall in 1980, I was



*Joe McCarthy with Ruth Warren - '76*

there and second in line to meet him. I gave him a letter explaining the reason for our fund-raiser, and handed him two baseballs to sign.

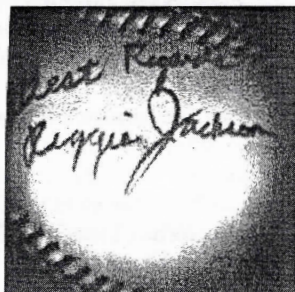
A guard standing beside him said, "you can't have two," and the Mick said, "Oh, yes she can," and signed them both. The sealed bid buyer snapped them up for \$25, and today they're worth at least \$300.

When the Russian hockey team came to play the Buffalo Sabres in 1976, I was able to get a program for the game, but how to get it signed? In desperation I called Chuck Healy, sports announcer at WBEN, and he told me the Russians would be practicing at an obscure YWCA in Hamburg.

I had a friend whose daughters had taken tumbling lessons at that "Y" and I persuaded her to take me there. When we arrived, the practice was already in progress. When the practice ended I dashed out to the bus which had brought the team from the Hotel Statler and mimed my desire to have the players sign the program. They all seemed pleased to comply.

I was more than half way down the aisle when the driver closed the door and started back to Buffalo. "Wait, wait," I shouted, "my car's back there!" In the rush to get off the bus, I neglected to get the autograph of the outstanding Soviet goalie, Tretiak. After all this exertion, the highest bid price was \$25.25.

A recent Buffalo News article said most



autographed baseballs today are fakes, but in all the times we sold them, there was only one person who asked me to write a letter stating that I had witnessed the signature. The list was impressive, and all authentic-Reggie Jackson, Joe McCarthy, Willie Stargell, and a group of Kansas City Royals, among others.

By 1990 Mollie had ceased to stock the sale, and we called our effort that year "A Sale Within a Sale." We took bids on a few special items, but most objects were sold outright. We did this again in 1991.

The last sale was held in 1992 with donations from the members, and Mollie grumbled, "It looks like a flea market." She was right.

And thus ended the sealed bid sales.

The big lament of all former chairs, coordinators and facilitators of book sales had been the number of nonmembers who wander into the site before the sale starts, and want to "help" sort the books. That means they want first crack at buying them, and we've always discouraged the practice.

Some of the sales had names, not just numbers. There was the Lucky 13th, The Silver Anniversary Sale, Book Sale 19 and 27 (I'm not sure why they had special designations) and the Centennial Sale in 1990.

Not everyone bought books for their contents. One woman wanted almost three feet of bright red covers to fit with her decor, and a male customer was in the market for any sets bound in Morocco. Another was interested in books which contained silhouettes.

At the close of the sale in 1981, in the Convention Center, the remaining tables of books were auctioned off. Instead of taking them home for sale, one enterprising bidder, immediately after making his purchase, began selling books from his table to those remaining customers who had not bought tables.

Don't miss the first day of the sale. The customers line up outside as much as an hour before opening time, they dash in with their money shouting "where's this?", "where's that?" and often stay all day while they fill carton

after carton.

Man the mops  
and buckets!

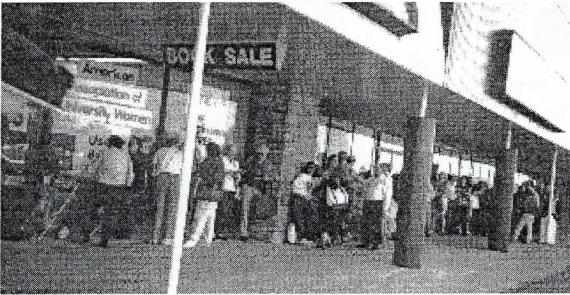
That's what Ann Hicks and Bobby Ross had to do when the plumbers turned on the water before the book sale could be moved into the Clarence Mall for the 1997 sale in June.

After a long, cold  
winter the pipes burst

and the only two available for swabbing were Ann and Bobby. Unlucky them. But the floors were sparkling clean when we finally moved in.

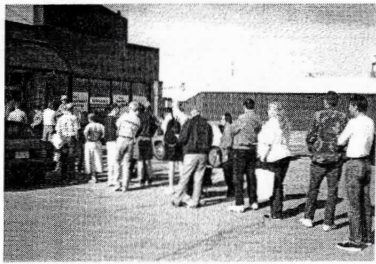
The collectibles section showed a healthy total, with Jill Brown, Jackie Trace, Myra Menti, Lynn McClive and Carol Paskuly spearheading the effort.

On opening day a wise guy saw a book in collectibles marked \$50. He went to the dollar tables and found another edition there, which he took back to



*Transitown Plaza-Opening Day 1996*





*Clarence Mall - 1997*

the collectibles to gloat. He was informed that the \$50 book was a first edition, and his was not, thus the difference in price.

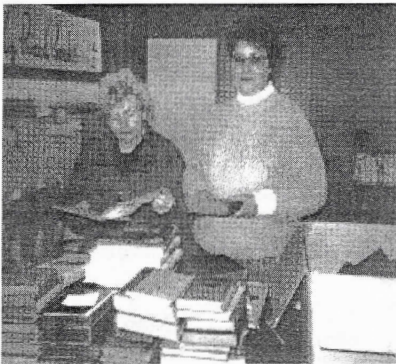
In our basement I found a tall, thin atlas my son brought from my husband's law office when it closed. Tossing it in with other books I was donating, I was pleased to learn it sold for \$150.

Judy Weidemann arranged for a performance by some puppeteers on Saturday. They were delightful, but the crowd seemed more interested in the

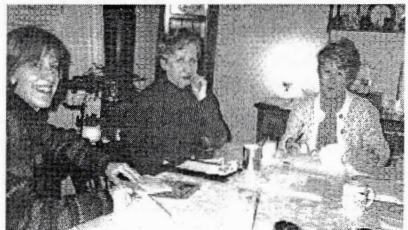
books, which had been marked down.

A small group wearing their AAUW logo tee shirts appeared on TV May 31 to advertise the sale. Workers wore the shirts throughout the sale.

Facilitator Bunny Blackstone was annoyed to learn that there were restrictions about the size and height of signs in Clarence, as well as the cost of a town permit. Even after all the bills were in, the sales showed a profit of \$11,124.66.



*Nancy Garver & Roberta Ross  
Book Sale 1997*



*Ann Hicks, Chris O'Connor  
& Bunny Blackstone*



*Jill Brown and Mollie Fleysler  
Centennial Book Sale - 1990*



*Carol Paskuly, Judy Weidemann  
& Karen Noonan*

*The information in this program was originally printed in a series of articles in the Buffalo Branch Newsletter.*