



***ALBERTINA BLOOM***  
***1904-1984***

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Founder of the  
Albertina Bloom Fund in

The New York Community Trust  
909 Third Avenue  
New York, NY 10022



*Albertina Bloom's  
high school  
graduation, 1922*

**A**lbertina Bloom's high school yearbook picture shows a sturdy young woman smiling self-confidently at the future. The quotation printed above the photograph saluted her: "Never idle a moment, but thrifty and thoughtful of others." This, as it turned out, characterized her entire life.

She was born on June 23rd, 1904, in Morristown, New Jersey, the only child of John and Hannah Bloom, who were both immigrants to the United States. Her father was born in Sweden in 1869 and her mother in Ireland in 1871. In 1917 her family moved to White Plains, New York, which was to be her home for the rest of her life. "Tina" was a good student and an active participant in extracurricular activities, the student government, the Junior Red Cross, the Girls' Glee Club and the Mandolin Club. After her graduation from White Plains High School in 1922, she attended the New York Training School for Teachers which was later incorporated into Hunter College. She received her bachelor's degree in education in 1924.

### Shall I teach?

Tina Bloom then faced that age-old question: "What shall I do with my life?" It took her a year to decide, but when she reached her conclusion, it was a resolute one for a girl in Westchester

— she would become a teacher in the midst of the City's brawling streets. Her first job was at P.S. 139 on 119th Street in Harlem. Two years later she was posted to P.S. 170 where she remained for almost 20 years, teaching children in the fifth and sixth grades. At the end of World War II she moved to P.S. 103 in the northeast Bronx where she instructed fifth and sixth graders until 1954, when she became an art and science teacher in the seventh and eighth grades.

Miss Bloom was soft-spoken, with great reserves of inner strength, a sensitive and caring person who strove to make every day in her classroom an adventure in imaginative intelligence. Her former students remember her with fondness.

### More than teaching

Frank and Howard Accurso, who attended P.S. 103 in the late 1950s, remember Miss Bloom as someone who went out of her way to encourage her pupils and was always ready to help them with their problems. One day young Howard was having difficulty assembling a project for a science fair. After struggling for a while, he went off to lunch somewhat discouraged, but when he returned, he found that Miss Bloom had quietly given him a helping hand to get him back on the right track.

Howard also remembers the enjoyment he derived from her art classes when he was a ninth grader, particularly one assignment that Miss Bloom had devised — with typical cleverness — to take advantage of the students' trip to the Shakespeare Festival in Stratford, Connecticut, under the auspices of the English Department. Each student was told to choose a Shakespearean play, research the clothing of the appropriate historical period and design costumes for the play's characters. Almost thirty years later, Mr. Accurso can still remember the fun he had drawing costumes for *The Tempest*. "She was much more than an art teacher," he says, "because she

was interested in rounding out her students intellectually." His brother Frank speaks of her with the same admiration: "In science she really opened a world picture for us."

Mrs. Elsie Accurso, the boys' mother, appreciated Tina Bloom's willingness to spend time "publicizing" her pupils' achievements: "As a parent, I noticed that she decorated the lobby of P.S. 103 with her students' art work, rotating the pictures to show off the work of as many children as possible. I knew my older boy had a painting on display, but when my husband and I visited the school to see him in a play, we were thrilled to find a large picture done by our second grader hanging on the wall of the main lobby. Miss Bloom was the art advisor for *The Parkway Explorer*, a school journal put out by the students. I still treasure my copy because both boys were involved in it."

Although she had to commute a long way from her home in White Plains, Albertina Bloom was in her classroom before 8 a.m., preparing her materials for the day. In all her years of teaching, she was hardly ever absent. Aside from her duties in the classroom, with their attendant clerical work, she was at various times administrator of art and science supplies, member of the graduating class committee, art coordinator in charge of exhibits, art director for school publications, and coordinator of school entries in the District 24 Science Fair.

When she later left the Parkway school, the principal, Mr. Bernard Berne, said: "When I consider the number of people among whom I have had to distribute your assignments for the coming school year, I appreciate more fully the tremendous burden you have carried so magnificently!"

### Big change

In June 1960, P.S. 103 was converted from K-8 to K-6, which meant that children in the seventh and eighth grades were transferred to a junior high school, J.H.S. 113, also in the Bronx,

along with most of the teachers who instructed upper grade children, including Albertina. This was a big change. The surrounding neighborhood was a much tougher one, even in those years, and students on their way to and from school were sometimes robbed of their lunch money by knife-wielding bullies. The school was seriously overcrowded with about 2,000 students, and teaching conditions were difficult. Classes were held in the workshops and spare rooms of the school, and even in the auditorium. Miss Bloom said that her first assignment in Harlem had been easier than teaching at P.S. 113, a Special Service Title 1 school with a large number of underprivileged children, many of whom needed special attention.

Otto Schmitt taught social studies in a classroom next door to Miss Bloom's for many years and he recalled: "She taught some of the toughest and roughest classes in our school. I remember we had a class of about 20 boys who all had severe behavior problems, the real hardcore headaches. They had been culled from other classes and assigned as a group to our most experienced teachers. Tina had them for art. They were wild when they entered her class, and she tamed them, got them to work and draw. With her guidance, they produced things they never thought they were capable of."

### Student escort

Tina Bloom got along well with her students, who recognized and returned her affec-



*Albertina Bloom 1967*

tionate kindness to them. They learned more from her than arts and crafts; she herself was an example of goodness and generosity in action. Dolores Cardon, her next-door neighbor in White Plains, remembers when Tina Bloom would stop in to chat over a cup of tea after a shopping trip downtown. Her packages would be full of art supplies she had purchased for the children in her classes, materials she had bought for them with her own money because she knew that not all her pupils were able to afford them. A few of her pupils found a practical way to show their gratitude and concern by escorting her to her car in the school parking lot whenever there were any disturbing incidents in or around P.S. 113. Marge Paladino, one of Tina's friends in White Plains, remembers Tina telling her gleefully about a surprising gift she had received from her students: they had made her a pair of "brass knuckles" out of a trashcan handle and made her promise to carry it with her at all times!

Tina Bloom was old-fashioned, strict and yet considerate of her students' feelings and

problems. She had a strong sense of humor, which helped her to talk to her pupils as a friend. She was a deeply religious woman and intensely patriotic, qualities that even the toughest students learned to respect.

### Harmony singing

When she finally retired in June 1967, the principal of J.H.S. 113 saluted her for having exemplified "the highest ideal in the teaching profession."

Albertina Bloom retired to her home at 11 Ralph Avenue in White Plains, where she had lived for fifty years. She soon found that she was not content to putter around in her tidy garden or sit back in an easy chair with her needlepoint and her beloved cats while the rest of the world went by. Her energy and desire to serve others found a new outlet in her work as a volunteer at the White Plains Public Library. She began working in the Music Section of the library, under the direction of Clarice Wilson, who recalls her as "a

*Albertina Bloom (left) at J.H.S. 113  
with a display of her students' art work*



really special volunteer because of the wonderful attitude she brought to her work. She was enthusiastic about everything she did for us, however routine the task, because she understood that it was important and useful. She was completely reliable: in bad weather or good, you could count on her to turn up, and that's so wonderful in a volunteer! She was a good person to work with, good to have around, and everyone liked being with her. When she was finished with her library work for the day, she would embark energetically on projects for her friends at the Senior Center."



*Albertina Bloom (center)  
with "The Harmony Singers"*

Along with the library, the White Plains Senior Citizens Center was the main focus of the last years of Miss Bloom's life. She served on the advisory board at the Center, suggesting programs that the Seniors themselves wanted to see offered at the Center. She supported the Center's many arts projects, worked in its library, and belonged to "The Harmony Singers," a group of Senior Citizens that performed at nursing homes and schools in the White Plains area. She found songs for the group at the Public Library, and did research for the plays and singing performances put on at the Center.

Debby Eichman, a former director of the Center, said: "I was touched by her, because she was a very kind woman. And she was a very educated woman: she was knowledgeable about the arts, writing, reading, history. She had a lot of interests and shared them readily. She was always bringing things in, such as plants, her own watercolor paintings, historical items. When the Seniors went on a trip, she would research the historical background of the area."

### **Battle of White Plains**

She loved the history of White Plains and collected a wealth of photographs, documents, and books about the city. She enjoyed telling how, a hundred years before the Revolutionary War, a group of colonists purchased from the Westchester Indians 4,000 acres of land which became the city. She recited the names of Indian chiefs which are still street names in White Plains. She told how the members of the Provincial Congress of New York assembled at the first Westchester County courthouse in White Plains on July 9, 1776, and there received a copy of the Declaration of Independence sent by the Continental Congress, then sitting in Philadelphia. The document was approved that same day, and instructions were sent to New York's delegates in Philadelphia to sign the Declaration.

Another favorite story was about the battle of White Plains, fought on Chatterton Hill between the rebel forces under General Washington and Sir William Howe's British regiments, ending in Howe's withdrawal to Dobbs Ferry. She pointed out that if Howe had succeeded in capturing Washington and his army in White Plains, the "birthplace of the State of New York" might have become the graveyard of the American Revolution.

In Tina Bloom's eyes, White Plains had not only a distinguished historical past, but a dimension of personal history as well, for when her family had moved to the city in 1917, its frontier-

town aspect of hitching posts and horse blocks was not long gone, while automobiles and trolley cars still shared the streets with horse-drawn wagons and the occasional carriage. She was a "saver": her house was filled with treasured memorabilia documenting a lifetime of change in her beloved White Plains.

### Quiet donations

As she grew older, Tina Bloom made a special effort to befriend the less popular Seniors at the Center and listen to their troubles, or simply chat about what was on their minds. She donated money to the Center for such things as magazine subscriptions, and Peggy Pierce, the director of the White Plains Senior Citizens Center, recalls that she contributed her own money on numerous occasions — very discreetly — so that some of her fellow Seniors would be able to participate in a particular activity or field trip even though they could not afford to pay the sign-up fee.

Miss Bloom was generous with both time and money. When her old friend Otto Schmitt became involved in several charitable projects in the Philippines, Tina joined in enthusiastically by helping to support an impoverished parish priest and by contributing to the Mount Carmel Mobile Clinic at Holy Child Hospital in Dumaguete City. Each Christmas she sent a substantial check for the poor of the Philippines. She volunteered to tutor students from the Eastview Junior High in White Plains. As time went by and her health began to fail, she remained cheerful and independent, but it was clear to her that her life was drawing to a close. And she still had one more good deed up her sleeve.

### The good deed

Tina Bloom had been an only child, and she left behind no immediate family when she died on January 19, 1984. Teachers, however, are

very special people, and a dedicated teacher like Albertina Bloom has many "children" in her life. Miss Bloom had always lived modestly, saving her money and investing it carefully, and she found a way to ensure that the students of her community would continue to benefit from her love and support even after her death. Her will bequeathed her entire estate to Community Funds, Inc. for the establishment of the Albertina Bloom Memorial Fund, and she asked that the funds from this Memorial be devoted to "providing scholarships for members of the graduating classes of one or more high schools in Westchester County, my wish being to aid students of promising educational potential and good character, who have need of assistance and who might otherwise be unable to avail themselves of the advantages of collegiate training."

So many of the good things Albertina Bloom did, she did quietly. She didn't tell even her friends of her plan to bequeath her estate to the children of her community. Marie Spadero, one of her friends at the White Plains Senior Citizens Center, remembered a day when Tina had told her about a story she was planning to submit in a creative writing class offered at the Center. It seems that when Miss Bloom was very young and was teaching in Harlem, a little girl

*Albertina Bloom (right) working on an art project at the Senior Center*



brought her a present on her birthday: it was a small piece of colored glass. With tears in her eyes, the child had apologized for offering such a simple gift: "This is all I have, and I would like to give it to you." Tina told her friend that at that moment she had resolved to find a way to show her lasting gratitude to the children who gave such meaning to her life.

She found the way. Through her fund with us, she gave higher education opportunities to young people for generation after generation.

*Never idle a moment, but thrifty  
and thoughtful of others.*



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