



**Edward Van Lier**  
1904-1967

**Sally Van Lier**  
1906-1978

Founders of the  
EDWARD AND SALLY VAN LIER FUND in  
The New York Community Trust

THE NEW YORK  
COMMUNITY TRUST



On October 7, 1906, a daughter named Alma Kriebel was born to two Hungarian immigrants in New York.

Alma was the granddaughter of a Hungarian lawyer who brought his family to the United States at the beginning of the 20th century. He was a cultivated man who wrote poetry and encouraged his children to pursue their intellectual and cultural interests as well. Each of his children spoke several languages, and most were musicians. One son named Ludolf (known as John in America) played the piano and painted. He became Alma's father.

Alma's mother, baptized Mary Margaretha Mihalesik, was also born in Hungary and emigrated to the United States alone, leaving behind two sisters and a brother. Soon after she arrived in New York at the turn of the 20th century, she met and married John Kriebel. Despite his education and talent, finding work wasn't easy for a young immigrant, so John waited tables. Eventually he became a head waiter, working at fashionable restaurants.

However, that didn't stop John and Mary from encouraging the artistic talent that Alma showed from a young age. Young Alma's special love was the stage, and she read every book and magazine on the subject. Her parents also brought her programs from the theater, ballet, and opera.



Sally (then called Alma) was five when her family posed for this portrait. From left to right: John, her father; Alma; Edgar, her brother; and Mary, her mother.

A beguilingly pretty girl, Alma grew into a beautiful young woman. In 1923, Alma won a local beauty contest, which let her make the necessary connections to launch a career in show business. Adopting the stage name "Adrienne Armand," she joined the Ziegfeld Follies. She did not become one of the long-legged chorus girls, but one of the shorter "Ponies." She also was cast in Flo Ziegfeld's hit musical Showboat.

Alma had a number of friends who either worked, or simply were interested, in the theater. One of them was a young man named Charles Sell, whom she married. He gave Alma the

nickname "Sally" from the title of the Jerome Kern musical in which she had a role. The nickname endured, but the marriage did not. After ten years, they divorced.



Theatrical portraits of Sally taken in the late 1920s.

In 1935, when Sally was 29, she married again. This marriage, to Edward Van Lier, was to last more than thirty years.

Edward's career was in real estate. When they got married, he was a broker; later he worked for a private real estate company, acting as liaison between the owners and the agents hired to manage the separate buildings.

Edward Van Lier came from an affluent family of Dutch origin. He was born and raised in Manhattan, where he received a private education at The Walton School. He had a capacity for friendship that was special. One friend remembered Edward as having "made more close relationships than anyone I've ever known. He had a talent for this. It was something that was inside him." It was through a group of friends—theater people—that he met Sally.

The early years of their marriage were Depression years, and the Van Liers did not have a great deal of money. Their first home was a fifth-floor walk-up apartment in a converted brownstone on East 51st Street; their second apartment was on East 48th Street. Sally loved decorating their apartment and, after a few years, a cottage in Connecticut. But though the Van Liers spent many weekends building and refurbishing their country place, they remained closely tied to the City. They enjoyed its bustle and weekends spent seeing new exhibits at galleries and museums or attending the theater and concerts. They also were both interested in fashion: Sally's beauty was complemented by her taste in clothing; Edward was nattily dressed, with a pipe as his emblem.

When the United States entered World War II, Edward became a ground officer in a Marine aviation unit in the South Pacific, and Sally worked as an executive secretary to the chief expediter of small ships and carriers built in the United States.



Captain Edward Van Lier, c. 1942

After the war, Sally worked for a time for theatrical producer and industrial designer, Norman Bel Geddes. Edward returned to a career in real estate and investments. With two friends, he bought a building on Sutton Place, converted it into apartments and later sold it. He and Sally began to have more financial security and started doing more of the things they'd always enjoyed—and some things they had not been able to afford in the past, such as traveling abroad.

On these trips they made many new friends, as was usual for this outgoing and sociable couple. One friend, a woman from Munich, had a daughter who came to New York and resided at the YWCA near Grand Central Station. The Van Liers, according to one friend, "sort of adopted her," along with a number of other young women

from various countries who were staying at the "Y." Sally and Edward introduced these girls to their New York friends and shared their insiders' knowledge of the City. Escorted to performances and exhibitions by the Van Liers, many of the girls came to think of Sally and Edward as their "New York parents."

Through the years, at home and as they traveled abroad, Sally and Edward made many friends and delighted in entertaining them. They especially enjoyed taking younger friends to concerts and museums and encouraging those with special talent to develop their gifts. So it was not surprising that Edward and Sally Van Lier established a fund that would survive them and would provide financial support for the professional education of young people with artistic promise.

By setting up a fund in The New York Community Trust to "provide education assistance and training to gifted young persons who aspire to a career in the arts," Edward and Sally Van Lier made sure that, in the future, young people would continue to benefit from their help.



Edward in his "civilian uniform," a pipe and a well-cut suit.

**The New York Community Trust  
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respond to the needs of our City.**

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