

Esther Kiviat

At 90, Esther Kiviat is the grande dame of Bard Lifetime Learning Institute at Bard. An author and photographer, she is an active participant in classes and a past and future presenter of a popular outdoor class. Her book is *Changing Tides: Tivoli Bays, a Hudson River Wetland*, published by Purple Mountain Press in 1999.

Esther's career as a writer began in Grand Rapids, Michigan when she was 10 years old. She entered and won a jingle contest on "Why I like Keds." The prize was a typewriter. That same year she received the gift of a Kodak Brownie box camera and she was on her way. After college at the University of Missouri, she embarked on a career in publicity with the TB and Health Society in St. Louis and four years later was lured to NYC. There she became the information chief for the Veterans Service Center, a position that allowed her to meet many interesting people.

It was shortly after World War II that she met her husband, Charles Kiviat, who had just returned from India. In 1950, they came to this area (Clinton) to start a farm camp. The first year they accepted parents and children, but decided never to do that again, and for the next 30 years they worked exclusively with children. Charles died in 1995.

As a photographer, Esther progressed quickly from her brownie. As an adult, she acquired a Rollaflex and one day in Santa Fe, she spied a second-hand Hasselblad, in those days an icon among cameras. These days, she uses a 35mm Nikon. In her home in Rhinebeck, she has a full professional darkroom and still processes her own black and white pictures.

Esther became interested in Tivoli Bays through her son, an ecologist with Hudsonia, a non-profit environmental group. Her

book is a four-season study of the area. She spent three or four years working on it. A reviewer on Amazon.com gave it 5 stars and said "Mrs. Kiviat obviously has a full grasp of nature at its best. Her talents as a writer, journalist, and photographer keep the reader fully motivated to keep reading further. Any reader of any age and background will not only be greatly educated about this wondrous area but also enticed to visit it. Her self-taught background would rival the efforts of any research biologist, and to personally speak with her in itself becomes an adventure."

LLIers will have a chance at that adventure. She plans to do another class in the fall, taking her students through the Bays in September, October, and November.

Midge Russo

LLIfe: Trudy Coons The Voice Behind the Voice

When you dial 758-7314, Information Please for LLI, you will hear a voice relating bits of current LLI news—and an invitation to leave a message. Trudy is one of the volunteers who will return your call.

Active in LLI since it began five years ago, Trudy was member of the Marist College Center for Lifetime Study for the 11 years preceding. She and her husband Frederick moved to the village of Rhinebeck in 1988, not as newcomers, but as long-time visitors

who often stayed with Fred's aunt. From 1948 to 1988 they vacationed here, first in Upper Red Hook in a house that is now a school for special needs, then in Rhinebeck at a farm next to the Starr Library.

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Trudy Coons continued

Trudy was born in Cedarhurst, Long Island. Her father died when she was two months old, and she went to live with her mother's family, a Brooklyn household that included her grandmother, grandfather, an unmarried uncle, two unmarried aunts—and Trudy, who was basically raised by her grandfather while her mother worked as a live-in governess.

She met her husband when he was just out of the service following World War II. Though they had grown up only a few blocks apart, they were first introduced at a party. Fred walked Trudy home in the rain. His new blue suit (bought at a store called Big-Hearted Harry's) was soaked through, his white shirt stained with blue dye. They made a date for dinner. Again it rained. This time the suit was brown, and so was the ruined shirt. Fred's uncle

said, "You'd better marry her—she's too expensive to take out."

They lived in Brooklyn, then Stony Brook, Long Island, raising two children, Christine and Donald, while Fred worked for New York Telephone. Trudy went to work at a cooperative nursery school as an assistant, then teacher, then director. She took courses at Queens College and New York University, finally earning a degree in English through Fordham University's Life/Work Experience program. "It was a long struggle, but it was fun," said Trudy.

In 1978, Fred took early retirement. Leaving Stony Brook, they bought an apartment on the East River. "Fred promised me two years in New York City," explained Trudy, "but we stayed for 20." Trudy took a job with a newly established attorney (the former owner of his practice left for California to run a Chinese noodle factory), doing fieldwork

in guardianships and conservatorships, helping the elderly who are under the court system. She also worked as a volunteer in the city's Ombudsman Program, as an advocate for residents in nursing homes and adult homes. "I have worked with the caretaking needs of both ends of our lifespan, the very young and the very old," said Trudy, whose favorite LLI classes have included discussions on health, financial and other problems of aging.

Trudy continued her path as a volunteer ombudsman after she moved to Rhinebeck, where she worked as an advocate for residents of Ferncliff Nursing Home and Thompson House. She has also been an active participant in the Rhinebeck Garden Club and the Friends of the Starr Library, where she was one of a hard-working group of fundraisers whose activities provided \$90,000 for the new library wing.

Donna McLaughlin

Len Bard on the Fiesta

My wife, Elaine, was asked by LLI President, Sara Hardman, to ask me to write something about the party celebrating the fifth anniversary of LLI at Bard College. If Sara had asked me, my answer would have been, "I'm not a writer." But Elaine asked me and my answer was, "I'm a writer?" Yes, when Elaine asks me I can't refuse. It's not out of respect, or love or even sympathy. It's the same as if she said "Take out the garbage." It's the result of a lifetime of training and adapting

that achieves agreement. But, more importantly, it is fear. So, here it is. I agree.

I could talk about the good food, which I was told was good. The many food tasters present agreed. I could talk about the DJ and the music he played, and the dancing, which was energetic and in most cases, singular. I could talk about the coordinated decor of table and floral arrangements, all beautifully done. Let's not forget the ongoing raffle of items

donated by many local merchants and organizations.

But, what I really want to talk about is the LLI group. Of course, as Groucho once said, "I wouldn't join any group that would have me as a member." This group of wonderful people, mostly female, really went all out in organizing and producing a successful event!

LLI can be proud of its accomplishments, both for the party and for the learning institute itself.

Len Bard