

Elizabeth Egbert Memorial  
September 21, 2014  
Henry Arlin Salmon

Sparkly,

Always a smile,

Ultimately got to the end of the story, but getting there in a circuitous route,

If she wanted something, she went after it,

She was very protective of her family and her life outside of the Museum,

She was very intelligent and could remember small details years after she learned them,

She was an optimist.

Elizabeth and I had a unique relationship from the first day she arrived at the Staten Island Museum. I told Elizabeth that I was not strong on the arts or sciences, but I knew something about running a business, and my repeated line was, “The Museum is a business!” Elizabeth came to the Museum strong in the arts, and then attended the Executive Level program of the Institute for Not-for-Profit Management at Columbia University's Business School. While going through the program she would quote what her professors taught her and started incorporating the “business model” into everything she did at the Museum. She got it! Elizabeth had a unique characteristic – she had two brains. You know about left side vs. right side thinkers. Elizabeth could do both, and it benefited us tremendously. She knew when we needed to cut back spending and when we could find the dollars to do special events.

It also benefited us when we were among 400 organizations that Bloomberg Philanthropies supported with Capacity Building grants. Due to Elizabeth’s winning ways, we soon advanced to

be among the 50 organizations to participate in a Strategic Planning Initiative lead by Michael M. Kaiser, founder of the DeVos Institute for Arts Management and director of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. The following year, Bloomberg Philanthropies selected the Museum to be among only 20 organizations to participate in Strategic Planning Master Classes with Michael Kaiser, helping us complete our 2013 – 2017 Strategic Plan, which reflects much of Elizabeth's vision. Elizabeth was a shining light among NYC Cultural directors because she understood and implemented at the Museum what was being taught. She was not shy to ask questions of Michael Kaiser in front of her peers, nor did she hold back relaying the accomplishments to all that listened. Michael became so interested in what we were doing with our initiatives with Snug Harbor Cultural Center, that he came to this campus at least three times to consult on-site with us. We all marveled at how Lynn Kelly and Elizabeth were moving the relationship between Snug Harbor and the Museum forward with Michael's consultation. Elizabeth and Lynn forged a partnership that will live on and be a lasting testimony to both institutions and both individuals. Oh, I forgot to mention that Elizabeth insisted that I come to all these Master Classes, representing the Museum Board. When we first started I thought I would do it for one or two classes and be done. Well, not only did Elizabeth not let me off the hook, but she also volunteered my services to be part of a presentation about the Museum's accomplishments in front of over 1000 people from the cultural world of NYC! It was video taped and I think it is available on YouTube. I was the potted plant for Elizabeth's "coming out party." From then on, Elizabeth spoke, and other cultural directors listened. I went to 5 classes each year for 4 years and Elizabeth would smile at me after each class and tell me in her special way to teach the rest of our Board what we had learned.

When Elizabeth decided she needed to accomplish something, she went after it full bore. She had a big heart and would use it to her advantage to ingratiate herself for the cause. If that didn't work, she talked you to death. She didn't give up. For some years before I became chairman of the Museum Board, Elizabeth would seek out my wife, Linda, and tell her the Board needed Henry to be its next Chairman. No one else on the Board told Linda they needed me. Members of the Board didn't even tell me they needed me. Elizabeth knew we needed succession planning and if no one else did it she would. She also figured out the way to get me was to first convince my wife.

When she was sick and I was under strict orders not to put any pressure on her about the Museum, I would text Elizabeth and tell her to call me if she was up to it. She always called back the same day or the next and I would exchange pleasantries. She would talk about the Museum. I was constantly amazed she knew everything that was going on and what the priorities were. She told me what to do on her behalf that she couldn't do or that she shouldn't do "under doctor's orders."

I miss Elizabeth. She was my friend, colleague, mentor, collaborator and sounding board. I treasure our achievements and special times. I know she is looking over us with that Elizabeth smile and will be present in spirit when we "cut the ribbon," opening the new Museum building. We will open the doors because Elizabeth got us the doors.

Elizabeth Egbert, a life well lived, to be admired and cherished!