

Ruth Katz

New York City was Our Oyster

Ruth Katz memories were a series of enchanting images, ping ponging from the 92<sup>nd</sup> Street Y to her friends and school and back to the Y, a teenager navigating New York City in the 1960's. "Every place in the city has a memory for me."

These memories start pre-Muriel, almost like pre-history, when her mother signed her up for classes at the Henry Street Settlement and piano lessons at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Street Music School. She grew up in Queens View, a middle-class development in Long Island City where artists were brought in to teach ballet, dance and acting to the children - a fertile ground for a young girl interested in the arts.

Queens View was "extremely well situated to the city" and so began her life as a teenager, where, along with a neighbor, Janis Nelson, she took classes at the Y with Muriel. She remembers the commute to and from the 92<sup>nd</sup> Street Y more than she did the classes! In particular, she remembers one warm January day when she walked from Hunter High School with her classmates Janis Nelson and Maia Danziger all the way to the Y.

As a youth she loved hanging out backstage at Broadway shows, "I was a stage door groupie" and it was *The Servant of Two Masters*, one of the annual Production Workshops at the Y, that was her next brush with a professional company. She wasn't in it, but she remembers it vividly and has photos to prove it! There was the Tuesday acting classes where a classmate "was so darn good as a monkey, one of those things you remember," Abby Imber, the mime teacher "with her blond hair in a pony tail and her floor exercises" and Muriel whom she "didn't feel any pressure from, she was very easy, she had concepts."

In *The Unborn*, the only film that Muriel directed at the Y in 1964, she remembers the dance scene at a townhouse and brainstorming with the other students, "improvising about what is good in life" and remembers sitting on a bench in Central Park and seeing Boris Kinberg and Sidney, Muriel's husband, walking into the park during the shooting. "He was very thin, very poetic."

As Ruth spoke, I hear a girl on the threshold of adulthood and I hear Janet Nelson, her friend from Hunter High School and the Y and other students who became entwined and tangled in her memories of Muriel Sharon and the 92<sup>nd</sup> Street Y - a different time, a very different era, when "New York City was our oyster."