

# New York Helps the United Way

BY MARITA BEGLEY

P

ick a New York City street and walk one block in any direction. Odds are you'll pass at least one nice restaurant, one executive with a six-figure income, one careening taxi, and one man huddled in a doorway, a dirty coffee container before him, occasionally collecting change.

To tourists, the homeless are proof of the callousness of New Yorkers, who hurry past beggars in rags on their way to three-martini lunches at Benihana. And the homeless aren't the only, or possibly even the most desperate, of New York City's people in need—just the most obvious. New York is a big city with problems to match.

Truth is, the apparent indifference of New Yorkers is actually another kind of despair. In this city, it doesn't take long to comprehend the futility of a dollar in an outstretched hand or rusty cup.

Enter a 50-year-old organization that, on the level of public relations, excites most New Yorkers about as much as Ed Koch on "Meeting the Mayor". It's the United Way.

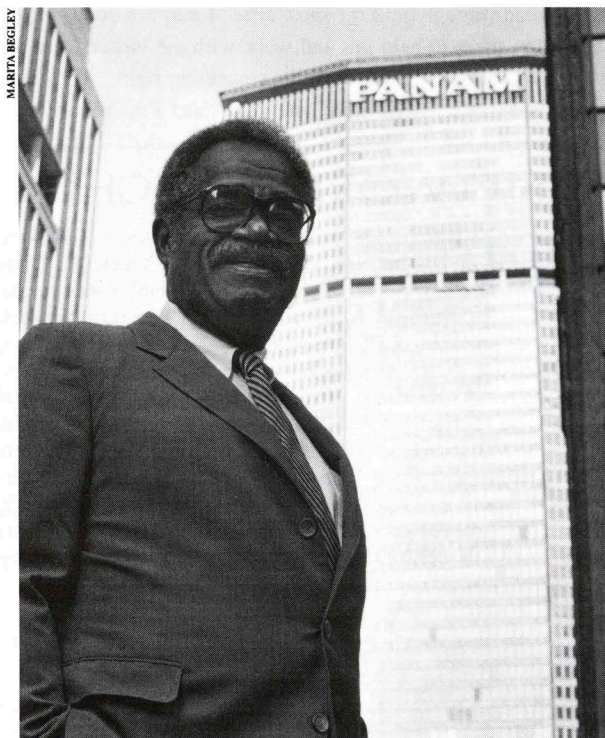
Widely misunderstood and often ignored, New York's United Way nevertheless manages to dole out \$30 million a year to important social service agencies and programs in the city. It is, according to director **Horace Morris**, one of the most valuable conduits by which the up-and-coming help the down-and-out in metropolitan New York.

If the United Way has an image problem in New York, it stems partly from the same ho-hum reaction anything more than 15 minutes old gets in a city that runs on hyperspeed.

"This is probably the most media-saturated place in the world," says Morris, executive director of the Greater New York Fund/United Way and a 1949 SU graduate. "The challenge is to keep your cause before the public and to establish its value." He shakes his head and smiles, "But that's New York and that's what makes it exciting."

While trying to weave a glitzy, attractive image in a town where producers of the Statue of Liberty's 100th birthday party spent millions, Morris has to win the charity war, too. After all, why should your check go to the United Way instead of the Museum of Modern Art, Covenant House, or a favorite politician?

"Fortunately, there's a lot of money in New York City," Morris says. "But the competition for support in this town is so great, you have to



HORACE MORRIS

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work to remind people that you're here and that what you do is important."

What the United Way actually does is apportion more than \$30 million a year to some 400 agencies and hospitals in the five boroughs. The only criteria for getting a United Way grant is that an agency provide a service and that the people it helps live or work in New York City. Park your ideologies at the door.

"New York City is different from a lot of places," Morris begins. "We fund agencies that together serve a lot of different groups—Jewish Institute for Geriatric Care, Catholic Big Brothers, Associated Black Charities, Women's Prison Association and Home, Senior Action in a Gay Environment, Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York. . . . We will fund an agency depending upon the services they provide. We don't care *who* they serve. In a city as diverse and cosmopolitan as New York, everybody needs services. Our list of agencies is as ethnically, socially, and religiously diverse as New York City, and we're proud of that."

As for evangelical or quasi-evangelical organizations, Morris says the United Way's only concern is that people are getting food, clothing, or some social service. The care and feeding of the soul alone doesn't cut it. "But if in the process of running a soup kitchen, they say, 'Let's pray,' that's up to them," Morris says with a smile.

Not everybody is as blasé about the United Way's ideological disinterest. "There are people who disapprove of some of the agencies we fund," Morris says. Then he adds, "People here *always* disagree with something. . . . If we didn't get complaints, we'd think we were doing something wrong."

One United Way-funded agency that raised some donors' eyebrows is the Gay Men's Health Crisis, which helps people with AIDS. Morris says he got some mail complaining about the sexual preference issue. His response: "We just sent all of them a nice little letter saying, 'These people live in New York City, and they need services.'"

Morris estimates that his organization helps three million New Yorkers each year. That's about as many people as live in Los Angeles. Of course, the \$30 million or so, derived mostly from voluntary payroll deductions, couldn't possibly go that far if a huge staff had to be paid. That's why the United Way leans so heavily on its nearly 200 volunteers.

"Less than 6 percent of our annual budget goes for administration," Morris says. "Last year, our total operating budget was \$2.1 million." Compare that with other famous charities that spend 50 percent or more on administration.

At the United Way, volunteers are involved in every level of the actual allocation process. They review agencies' funding requests and perform on-site evaluations of everything from day care centers to job-training programs (an organization called Non-Traditional Employment for Women, for example).

Their recommendations are put before a 36-member, all-volunteer board of directors that reads like a Who's Who of prestigious New Yorkers: the chairman of the board of Tiffany and Co., the assistant vice president of Merrill Lynch, CEOs of the Bank of New York and D'Agostino Supermarkets, the presidents of Bloomingdale's and Chemical Bank, and the vice president of Con Edison, among others. This board has final say on allotments, and later makes sure the money went where it was supposed to go. "The board also hires and fires me, and decides how much I'll get paid while I'm hired," Morris adds.

Back in 1945, when Morris became one of 15 blacks on the Syracuse campus and the first black to get an athletic scholarship, he wasn't planning on managing charitable organizations. He just wanted to be a teacher and to coach football.

## In the city of success and riches, need runs just as deep. So nowhere are the activities of the United Way more essential, as executive director Horace Morris is quick to point out.

He also wasn't anticipating the barriers the color of his skin would present following his graduation from SU. "How can anybody warn you about plain old racial discrimination," Morris asks, adding, though, "I



AFTER-SCHOOL CARE AT THE GIRLS CLUB OF NEW YORK

wasn't starry-eyed about it. You know if you're black you're going to have problems."

When Morris left SU in 1949 with his B.A. in education, there were 50 blacks on campus—the early beginnings of a new era. In the real world, though, things had changed little. Morris was turned down for teaching jobs all over New York state and in his home state of New Jersey. "I was told many times that they didn't have any black kids so they didn't need any black teachers," Morris remembers. "I was advised to try down South."

For nine years, Morris settled for blue-collar work, first as a machine operator for General Motors and then as a stockkeeper with U.S. Steel. In 1958, he decided he'd had enough and went to Rutgers University and began working on a master's degree in education management. He also got a job teaching at a New Jersey high school, finally. He coached, too. After seven years, his team's record stood at 48 wins, one loss. Then came Martin Luther King's march on Washington; it led Morris to civil rights work and a sequence of Urban League appointments around the country. He was executive director of New York's Urban League when the United Way found him.

"When I got out of college and couldn't find work teaching and coaching, I got angry," Morris says. "But that didn't last once I got a job. I think I'm basically a positive, optimistic person, and I had some goals. Otherwise, I wouldn't have made it through some of that nonsense."

His philosophical outlook could probably go almost as far as the \$30 million in helping some of the people the United Way serves. "Sure you have anger, frustration sometimes," Morris says. "But it doesn't make you quit. It makes you tougher."



**NO TRESPASSING**

**W**hen Michael Sergio parachuted into Shea Stadium during the 1986 World Series, he got the publicity he was looking for. But Queens Criminal Court Judge **PHYLLIS ORLIKOFF FLUG G'63** grabbed headlines of her own when she sentenced Sergio two months later.

Flug's judgment, titled "Ode to a Criminal Trespasser," was picked up by the *New York Times* (front page) and other dailies:

*'Twas Game Six of the Series when out of the sky  
Flew Sergio's Parachute, a Met banner held high. . . .  
So a week before Christmas, here in the court,  
I sentence defendant for interrupting a sport.  
Community service and a fine you will pay.  
Happy holiday to all and to all a good day.*



The judgment: a \$500 fine, 100 hours of community service. "I think I treated it the right vein, . . . in the spirit [Sergio] intended it," says Flug, "but it was a good legal question."

Flug was elected to a 10-year term four years ago and now sits on the Queens civil court; she has presided in the Bronx and Manhattan, too. "There is no doubt that what goes on in New York City is unique," she says. "New York [courts] suffer from volume that no one else can match." —RGL

**SPECIAL CLASS**

**I**n 1986, the New York Institute for the Education of the Blind became the New York Institute for Special Education. With the name change came a new mission, according to executive director **Robert L. Guarino G'71**.

The school is dedicated to making it easier for all types of disabled and disturbed children in the New York area to attend school. Most of its services, including education, support, and residential programs, are provided without charge to the parents. Guarino spends a great deal of time in fund raising.

About 80 percent of the students enrolled at the school live on its



17-acre campus during the week; the others attend day programs only. Those students who are capable are also actively mainstreamed into public schools for some of their classes. —MEM

**OUR MAN IN WASHINGTON**

**W**hen U.S. Congressman **Ted Weiss '51** says he represents the most diverse constituency in the country, he's not exaggerating. "My district runs from the Brooklyn Bridge to the New England Thruway and includes every ethnic, racial, religious, and economic group in the nation."

Accordingly, Weiss is concerned about problems of education, housing, employment, and foreign affairs—all of which matter to his constituents.

"My committee assignments reflect that," Weiss says. He serves on the foreign affairs committee; a select committee on children, youth, and families; and an operations committee with jurisdiction over health and human resources problems. He is also involved in oversight of the Food and Drug Administration.

A 15-year member of the city council, Weiss feels he knows his constituents. "I think I understand where they're coming from, what their interests are, and where they'd



like to be going," he says.

One concern is AIDS. "When I first got involved, there was nobody else in Congress—or even in society at large—focusing on AIDS," Weiss remembers. "We tried to get some sense of urgency from the federal government in responding to the crisis.

"Over the past five years, we've seen an increase in research funding from \$5 million up to nearly \$1 billion. . . . And that's just research money," Weiss points out. "We've not really begun to address care and treatment, which is the next crisis." —CNS

**I DO, I DO**

**L**awyers are kind of like voyeurs," says **Norman Sheresky '50**. "We like to tinker with other people's lives."

Sheresky, partner in the firm of Colton, Hartnick, Yamin and Sheresky and a member of the board of the International Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers, is a specialist in family law, which he considers "utterly fascinating. Every case is different," he says. "I've been practicing over 30 years and I've never seen the same case twice."

Family law consists principally of divorce and custody suits, and what Sheresky calls "a considerable amount of hand-holding. . . . You see people at their worst. If you do a good job, hopefully you see them get better."

Sheresky believes divorce is on the downswing. "Marriage is one of mankind's most durable institutions," he says. "I recommend it highly." —RGL

**The Mighty Pen**

**K**en Auletta G'77, columnist for the *Daily News*, knows politics.

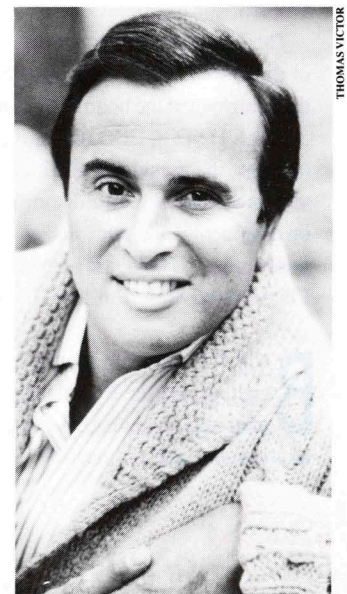
Every Thursday, Auletta gets up early, goes to his *Daily News* office, and reviews the political events he might cover that week. By noon on Friday, his column is done and he's ready to start his next job.

Usually he heads to WCBS-TV, where he is a weekly political commentator. After taping his weekly spot, he prepares for yet another job. He's also a contributing writer for the *New Yorker* and author of five books.

For these projects the topic isn't always politics. Auletta's first book, *The Streets Were Paved With Gold*, was about New York City's near financial collapse in 1975. Since then, he's written *Hard Feelings*, *The Underclass*, *The Art of Corporate Success*, and *Greed and Glory on Wall Street*. His current book, scheduled for September 1989, is about television networks.

"I get the most satisfaction out of longer forms like books," says Auletta. "I find when you have the time and the space that a book affords you, you can get below the surface. You're no longer ice skating."

Auletta began his journalistic career writing for *The Village Voice*, *New York* magazine, and *Esquire* during the seventies. —MEM



THOMAS VICTOR



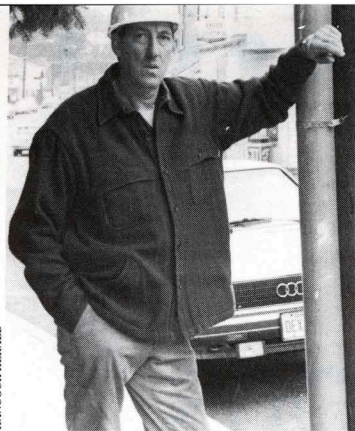
## DROPS TO DRINK

**P**aul Wadeson '61 wasn't around when half of New York City burned down in the 1890s. But he knows how the water supply worked in the crisis: it didn't. "All they had coming out of the hydrants was worms and mud," he says.

Wadeson hopes that never happens again. He is a senior project coordinator for the Bureau of Water, inspecting tunnels to make sure contractors use proper materials and adhere to sound engineering practice when building the city's intricate water system.

There are more than 100 miles of deep water tunnels feeding water to New York. Two tunnels exist, and Wadeson is working on the Roosevelt Island project, the first part of an effort to increase water flow by building a third city tunnel.

"New York City has always grown faster than anyone ever dreamed it would," Wadeson explains. "Good planning was done, but how can you plan for something when your demand doubles every 10 years?" —CNS



HANCOCK HERALD

## JEWISH RELATIONS

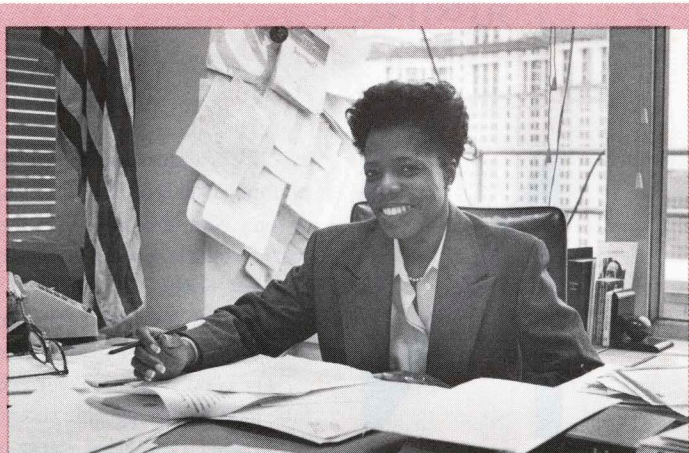
**W**hen you've just finished celebrating your 100th birthday, what do you do? Why, start thinking of ways to celebrate your 200th, of course!

That's what Cheryl Bernstein Gurin '79 is doing as director of public relations for the Jewish

Theological Seminary. "We're gearing up for our second century," she says.

According to Gurin, the Jewish Theological Seminary of America is the spiritual and academic center of Conservative Judaism in the United States. Its New York campus houses four schools, one for rabbinic studies. Gurin is in charge of press relations and publications used in fund raising.

She enjoys her role in the promotion of Jewish religion and culture. "In this job I feel part of the continuing history of the Jewish people," she says. "This is a very altruistic atmosphere and people are very committed to helping others. They not only go out into this community, but they serve the Jewish community worldwide." —CNS



STEVE SARTORI

## LIQUOR LAWYER

**L**egislation about alcoholic beverages doesn't get passed in New York State without GLORIA DABIRI '76 looking at it first. She's general counsel for the New York State Liquor Authority.

As the agency's chief legal advisor, Dabiri not only reviews hundreds of bills each year, she also drafts bills (10 in 1987 alone) and offers technical assistance to legislators creating bills. Dabiri and the Liquor Authority bring disciplinary action against licensees who violate the law, and Dabiri's office represents the authority in litigated matters heard in the Supreme Court.

Dabiri, who works out of the Liquor Authority's head office in New York, says the city has the largest number of licensees per square mile in the state. —MEM

## Comings and Goings

**T**wo years ago, New York's waterfront had a bad reputation. But the city hired Barbara Jackson '78 as deputy commissioner for operations and administration of Ports International Trade & Commerce, and the reputation is being forgotten.

"We were really devastated by scandals. People distrusted each other and authorities because a lot of people had been turned in," Jackson says. "One of my first priorities was to restore some morale."

That done, Jackson is taking an active role in managing several departments and 250 staff members within Ports International Trade & Commerce. She oversees a building and construction department that ensures that port projects are built to standards, a private ferry unit, an engineering department, the administrative department that does budgeting and forecasting, and a

real estate department that leases property and issues permits.

One legacy of Jackson's involvement is the operation of private ferry boats in the waters around New York. Two years ago, there were no private ferries operating in New York City. Today, 85 companies and seven landings are in operation. Jackson hopes to have 10 more landings running by the end of this year. —MEM



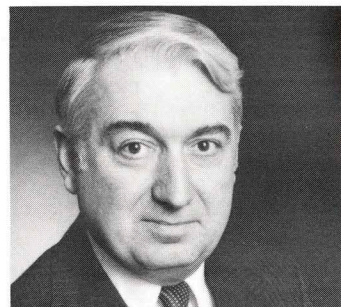
FLYING CAMERA

## TO JERSEY AND BACK

**I**f you've found it easier to get from New York to New Jersey lately, thank Louis Gambaccini G'56.

As assistant executive director of Trans-Hudson transportation for the Port Authority, Gambaccini deals with all transportation needs between the two states.

His challenge is bringing together institutions and financing to address massive problems. "We've made progress by creating some efficient new entities: Transcom for highways and Transitcenter for transit. We're optimistic that these will enable us to work together better than ever."



Gambaccini's term with Port Authority is ending, however. On June 1, he becomes president of the Manhattan-based Institute of Public Administration. —CNS