

In Memoriam

Irene LaBorde Neuffer

ANS life member Irene LaBorde Neuffer died December 11, 2004, a week short of her 86th birthday. For many years she and her husband, Claude Henry Neuffer, who died in 1984, studied placenames in South Carolina; and for thirty years they published *Names in South Carolina*, an annual collection of legends and history about names in their native state.

Names in South Carolina grew from a few mimeographed pages in 1953 to a printed journal of over fifty pages when Claude's failing health brought the project to an end in 1983. The journal published hundreds of articles over the three decades of its existence, with explanations of name origins and related stories for thousands of placenames in South Carolina. Contributions came from both scholars and amateur onomasts. In the early years, especially, the writers were often people whose personal and family memories extended well back into the nineteenth century. Claude was always listed as editor, but Irene was crucial to the continuing success of the publication through her work as editor, correspondent, and author, writing a number of articles under the name Rene (pronounced /REE-ny/) LaBorde.

The Neuffers collaborated on several books about names. Probably the most popular of these is *Correct Mispronunciations of Some South Carolina Names* (1983), a playful reminder that the way a name is spelled is not always a good indicator of how it is pronounced locally. This is a brief dictionary of about 450 names, both of places and of families in the state. The book is more than a pronunciation guide: the Neuffers comment wittily about the places or the families whose names befuddle outsiders. The fastest way to determine if someone is from elsewhere is to ask for the pronunciation of *Huger*, the name of one of Columbia's major streets; it's /YOO-JEE/. The coastal town of Beaufort is /BUE-fuht/, while another town

over in North Carolina with the same spelling is /BOE-fuht/. And the popular coastal resort Myrtle Beach is in Horry /OH-REE/ County. Family names that confuse those who are not from here, to name just a few, are Belin /BLANE/, Bethea /buh-THAE/, Buyck /BIKE/, Pegues /puh-GEEZ/, and Simons /SIM-unz/ (same pronunciation as *Simmons*, the one-*m* version a Huguenot name). This charming little book is the culmination of the careers of the Neuffers and makes use of the large amount of material they had collected over the years and the vast knowledge they had of the state and its people.

Earlier collaborations are *The Name Game: From Oyster Point to Keowee* (1972), a young person's history of South Carolina through its placenames; and a facsimile reprint of *Purely Original Verse*, in which the Neuffers, with charming irony, championed the "poetic" efforts of J. Gordon Coogler, the "bard of solemn absurdities." Coogler achieved fame when H. L. Mencken opened his diatribe against the South in his famous 1917 essay "The Sahara of the Bozart" with this classic Cooglerism:

Alas, for the South! Her books have grown fewer—
She never was much given to literature.

The reprint of Coogler's 1897 book, long out of print, sold surprisingly well. Some years later Irene (1985) followed that up with a little volume called *Coogler Revisited*, an account of the results of making that writer's products widely known.

Irene Neuffer had an interesting life beyond her involvement with names. She was a graduate of the University of South Carolina, Phi Beta Kappa, with a journalism major. Early in her career she was a high school teacher and basketball coach and during World War II was a captain in the Army Air Force. She was also an assistant professor of English at the University of South Carolina, a columnist for *The State* newspaper, a member of the governor's Commission on Women, and an elected member of the Richland County Council. After Claude's death she continued

her research in names, and into the middle 1990s, when her health began to deteriorate, she wrote a regular column on South Carolina names for the statewide magazine *The Sandlapper*.

—Thomas J. Gasque, Columbia, South Carolina

Arthur Berliner

Arthur “Art” Berliner, one of the most influential though underrated students of American placenames, passed away on October 16, 2004, at age 77. In a varied career of over fifty years as a taxi driver, English and history teacher, vocal coach, telemarketer, editor, licensed paralegal, and theatrical performer, Art was, in the words of his neighbor and colleague, Millie Willis, “truly an American Renaissance man.”

Yes, as a taxi driver in his native New York City for seven years, he worked his way through college, acquiring an impressive firsthand knowledge of the city’s places and their names. With two famed “Macs” (Wallace McMullen and John McNamara) as his mentors, he parlayed his knowledge of named places in The Bronx into a series of papers for Wallace McMullen’s newly inaugurated American Names Institute at Fairleigh Dickinson University in Madison, New Jersey. Under McMullen’s guidance he produced a master’s thesis on Bronx County’s street names and helped John McNamara compile his definitive work on Bronx placenames, *History in Asphalt* (1978), which was dedicated to him. At McMullen’s invitation Art joined the American Name Society in 1961 and spent the next forty or so years proofing and co-editing onomastics publications for McMullen and other lights in the onomastics establishment.

In 1967 Art and his wife Gina moved to eastern Connecticut and continued his interest in street and locality names with research in Willimantic, the seat of Eastern Connecticut State University. In 1974 he helped launch the