

RUTH STEINKRAUS-COHEN AMBASSADOR OF PEACE



A HISTORY OF THE
UNA-USA OF CONNECTICUT
AND THE
INTERNATIONAL HOSPITALITY COMMITTEE
OF FAIRFIELD COUNTY

JANE R. SNYDER

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Published by United Nations Association Connecticut Division



UNA-USA VISION STATEMENT

A WORLD IN WHICH HUMANITY IS SPARED THE SCOURGE OF WAR, HUMAN RIGHTS ARE HONORED, THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT IS PROTECTED AND THE UNITED STATES IS A CONSTRUCTIVE MEMBER OF THE UNITED NATIONS FOR THE WELL-BEING OF ALL HUMANKIND.

UNA-USA MISSION STATEMENT

THE UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA IS DEDICATED TO EDUCATING, INSPIRING AND MOBILIZING AMERICANS TO SUPPORT THE PRINCIPLES AND VITAL WORK OF THE UNITED NATIONS, STRENGTHENING THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM, PROMOTING CONSTRUCTIVE UNITED STATES LEADERSHIP IN THAT SYSTEM, AND ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS OF THE U.N. CHARTER.

RUTH STEINKRAUS-COHEN / AMBASSADOR OF PEACE
A History of the UNA-USA of Connecticut and the
International Hospitality Committee of Fairfield County.

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For more information please visit: www.una-connecticut.org
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FRONT COVER: The Ambassador of Peace in 1995, surrounded
by the symbols of the organization she supported for more than half
a century. (PHOTO: Courtesy of the *Westport News*)

BACK COVER: A poster featuring artist Peter Landa's popular
Bluebird of Peace, a pictogram of hope and commitment to furthering
international friendships. (Courtesy of the Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen Archives)

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In a speech at The Hague on the Centennial observance of the first International Peace Conference, United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan declared, "We meet at a time of war to reflect on the price of peace."

Reflecting on the possibility of peace was something that Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen did on a daily basis. You might even say that it was etched in her DNA.



Ruth welcomes a West African family on their first visit to Westport.
(PHOTO: Courtesy of the Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen Archives)

FOREWORD

Ruth's life and work and love comprised an electromagnet, which drew in thousands upon thousands of people throughout the world. Her passions were peace and justice.

She fell in love with the magnificent goals of the United Nations from its founding in 1945. She assisted Eleanor Roosevelt in her work on behalf of the U.N. and thousands of U.N. and other international visitors enjoyed her home hospitality in Westport, Connecticut.

I first met Ruth when I was a young legislator in the 1970s when she sought support for a United Nations Day observance each year on or around October 24. Our friendship grew in the 1980s when I became Speaker of the House of Representatives in Connecticut and she recognized we shared common interests.

After I retired from the state legislature, Ruth commandeered me to take over the leadership of the United Nations Association of Connecticut. She did that with everyone. She absorbed people, and her enthusiasm and energy were radiated to and through them.

Her energies were boundless. She led the United Nations Association in Connecticut. She had overseen growth of the local chapter in Southwest Connecticut and the International Hospitality Committee of Fairfield County, both of which she anchored for years. She was a leader of the Westminster Branch of the United Nations Association in London, where she maintained a flat.

For some seventeen years she spearheaded and funded the printing of the United Nations *Calendar for Peace*, which focuses on peace and the family of nations of the world. Our Connecticut Division of the United Nations Association continues to publish this excellent resource, which lists the national days of the world and key dates of the U.N. and its work.

She originated jUNe Day in Westport by welcoming hundreds of U.N. staff, from ambassadors to interns, to enjoy breakfast, lunch, tennis, soccer and boating, surrounded by the Connecticut ambiance. The Southwest Connecticut chapter of UNA continues this effort in remembrance of Ruth.



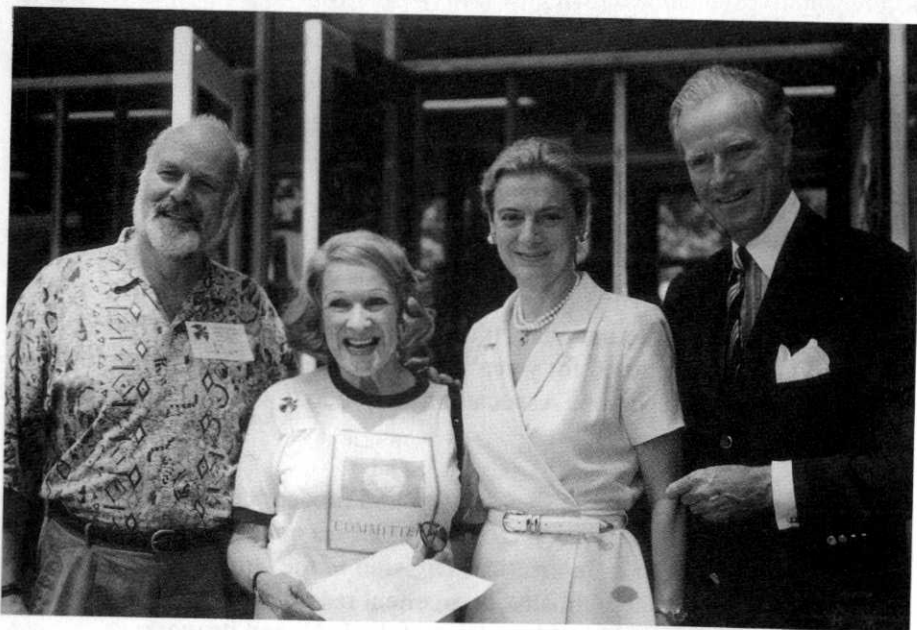
Paul Mrazek, UNA Westminster Branch, stands behind Ruth at a gathering of UNA-USA Connecticut Division leadership. (PHOTO: Mijanou Bourdelon, Courtesy of the *Secretariat News*)

International Law was one of her many devotions. She was an expert on Hugo Grotius, considered the father of international law. I remember one day during a joint visit of the Connecticut and Westminster chapters to the International Court of Justice in The Hague, Netherlands, when she took me by the arm and we wound our way through the back streets of the city until we found the home of Grotius.

Ruth made Westport and Connecticut virtual annexes of the United Nations. She visited there weekly and she involved thousands of Connecticut residents in the work of the U.N. and its non-governmental groups. Several Secretaries General of the U.N. knew Ruth and expressed their gratitude for her devotion.

Always recalling Ruth, the United Nations Association continues its work supporting the U.N. as the last best hope for humanity. This is one of the ways our love and dedication to Ruth continues. All readers of this book are invited to join us.

Irving Stolberg, President
United Nations Association Connecticut Division



Basking in the jUNE Day sunshine are (L. to R.) Irving Stolberg, Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen, Nane (Mrs. Kofi) Annan and Ambassador Joseph Verner Reed. (PHOTO: Courtesy of the Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen Archives)

PREFACE

Much to my sadness, I only knew Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen for little more than the last year of her life. Though she was ill during most of that period, I saw the sparkle in her eyes, heard her play the piano and witnessed her complete dedication to the United Nations, the UNA-USA of Connecticut and the International Hospitality Committee of Fairfield County (IHC). I had no idea what an extraordinary journey I would take when I set out to write the history of Ruth's work with these organizations.

History, I thought, simply meant putting the essential bits of information in chronological order. I anticipated a somewhat dry process, but my expectation was soon proved wrong. With the help of Ruth's scrapbooks, letters, journals, clippings, lists, notes and photographs, lovingly saved for more than fifty years, I came to know her quite well. Thank you, Mrs. Cohen, for being such a pack rat. The interviews I conducted with her friends and family members only added to my understanding of this fascinating woman.

Even if you are already familiar with the work of the United Nations, there is a much deeper story here. It is a universal tale in which I have tried to honor Ruth and her colleagues – all ambassadors of peace – who truly embrace the idea that the world is changed one smile, one handshake and one hug at a time.

The work they continue to do will always honor Ruth's efforts toward creating a more peaceful planet. In some fashion, whether formal or informal, I hope this story may inspire you to join them in that quest.

Jane R. Snyder



In this PHOTO from 1962, Mrs. Cohen welcomes her smiling guests Mrs. N'Goua (Gabon), Mrs. Andriamaharo (Malagasy) and Mrs. Dadet (Congo-Brazzaville). (PHOTO: Courtesy of the Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen Archives)



Clearly enjoying their 1973 visit are Sher B. Mishra (Nepal), Candie Formacion (Philippines), Rosette Nguyen Thi Hong Lien (Vietnam), Prapapen Suwan (Thailand), Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen (USA) and Abubakar Abdulkadir (Nigeria). (PHOTO: Courtesy of the Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen Archives)

RUTH STEINKRAUS-COHEN EMBRACING THE GLOBE

The Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen Memorial Bridge across the Saugatuck River in Westport, Connecticut honors a woman who was herself a living, breathing, energetic bridge to thousands of people, cities and countries during a life that spanned nearly eighty-two years. Ruth's satisfying existence included hundreds of thousands of miles traveled plus the exchange of an immeasurable number of handshakes, hugs and kisses, all complemented by her radiant smile. The constant curiosity in Ruth's eyes only served to brighten each encounter.

Empowering, inspiring and totally giving are just a few of the words friends have used in trying to capture her unique personality. Ruth's family, friends and colleagues talk about her amazing ability to motivate everyone around her to jump in and help. Whether she was promoting international justice, global peacekeeping, music or art, Ruth focused her dynamic intellect in ways that inspired all. She shared her talents with both young and old. And she managed to accomplish more in a single day than many people do in an entire week or month.

How did Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen become a force to be reckoned with? How did her concern for people come to expand beyond the quiet town in Connecticut where she spent most of her life and reach around the globe?

"We must speak out against ignorance, isolation and distrust and guard against them in ourselves."

Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen

Ruth was first inspired by her father, Herman Steinkraus, a prominent civic leader and businessman. An active supporter of the United Nations mission, he served as President of the American Association for the United Nations (AAUN) from 1964 to 1967. In 1964, Ruth's father helped the AAUN merge with the United States Committee for the United Nations (USCUN) to form the United Nations Association of the United States of America (UNA-USA) as it is still known today.

His work on behalf of the United Nations brought Steinkraus into close contact with Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, who first joined the AAUN as a volunteer in 1953. Elected chairman of the AAUN Board of Directors in 1961, she served in that capacity until her death the following year.

An important turning point for Ruth arrived in 1956, when Mrs. Roosevelt asked her to act as her personal secretary on a rescue mission of the World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA). Already an active member of the Westport-Weston U.N. Committee, Ruth seized the opportunity.

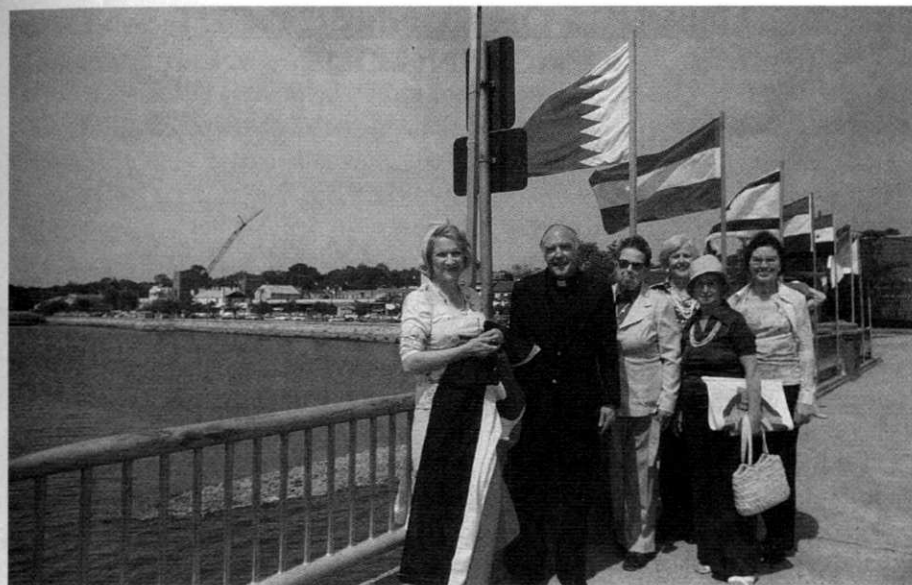
During their travels to Poland, Germany and Hungary, the first lady proved to be both a role model and an apt mentor. Ruth rose to this challenge and this one experience, in the truest sense, lit a pilot light that ignited all of her future efforts to further the work of the United Nations.

Their trip to Kraców became particularly memorable when the husband of a female interpreter was arrested for merely purchasing a copy of a banned book. This not only shocked Ruth, but stimulated her imagination. Using her Westport home, located only fifty miles from United Nations headquarters in Manhattan, as a base, she envisioned a way to give foreign diplomats and politicians a chance to meet ordinary people, help them to stay in touch with everyday life and learn about America from its own citizens.

On her return to the United States, Ruth founded the International Hospitality Committee of Fairfield County (IHC). This group eventually grew into a 23-town consortium that provides ongoing hospitality and an ever-expanding chain of friendships to people from almost every corner of the world. With the help of her dedicated volunteers, the International Hospitality Committee has welcomed more than 50,000 foreign visitors to Fairfield County since it began.

Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen worked tirelessly on behalf of the United Nations. She served as president of the UNA-USA Connecticut Division, chairman of UNA-USA's Southwest Connecticut Chapter and founder and chairman of the International Hospitality Committee until shortly before her death on May 26, 2002. For more than fifty years, Ruth's single-minded determination and innovative thinking enabled her to create programs such as jUNE Day and, her proudest accomplishment, the U.N. *Calendar for Peace*.

Ruth's world view was reflected in her interest in the philosophy and writings of Dutch jurist Hugo Grotius (1583-1645), father of the law of the sea and pioneer of natural law theory. She not only founded a Connecticut chapter of the Hugo Grotius Society, but served as its secretary. Over time, Ruth amassed a sizeable collection of his writings, many in rare contempo-



On jUNE Day 1976, Ruth and her committee members join Father Morrissey of the Assumption Church as he prepares to bless the U.N. flags. (PHOTO: Courtesy of the Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen Archives)

rary editions, and of books and documents relating to his life. She believed deeply that if the world had accepted Grotius' ideas more rapidly the state of the planet might be far more peaceful today.

In accordance with her wishes, the contents of Ruth's Hugo Grotius archives are now available to scholars in the library at Quinnipiac University School of Law in Hamden, Connecticut. Other portions of her vast personal library and her collection of rare music scores and manuscripts are now divided between the Yale University School of Music, Western Connecticut State University, Norwalk Community College and the Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Library in Hyde Park, New York.

Through her entire life, Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen embraced almost every country and people on the globe. How this passionate volunteer managed to achieve so much is the story you will read as you turn these pages.

UNA-USA OF CONNECTICUT REACHING OUT

On March 10, 1957, Co-Chairmen Pro Tem, John Fistere and Ben V. Luden, circulated a letter from the Westport-Weston Committee for the United Nations in which they invited friends of the U.N. to a gathering on March 25th to explore joining the American Association for the United Nations (AAUN). Clark Eichelberger, Executive Director of AAUN, who had been a consultant to the American delegation at the San Francisco Conference which wrote the U.N. Charter, came to address the audience that evening. Ruth and her father, Herman, attended that evening.

Active U.N. supporters, who had welcomed their first United Nations delegates to a ball at the Longshore Country Club the previous year, turned out in force to hear Mr. Eichelberger's remarks. Even more excitement would surround the forthcoming visit of another prominent American who believed in the value of international relations.

On May Day of 1958, Eleanor Roosevelt lectured before some 900 people at Long Lots Junior High School in Westport. Mrs. Roosevelt, quoted in *The Westport News*, said, "*In the United Nations lies the machinery to work for world peace and by believing in and actively supporting its ideals, we can lead the world and answer the challenge between the communist and non-communist worlds.*" Ruth Steinkraus, an active member of the Westport-Weston Committee, served as the chairman of the dinner prior to Eleanor's speech. On that evening the UNA Chapter of Westport and Weston was formally established and her interaction with Mrs. Roosevelt served to inspire Ruth yet again. This local U.N. committee would eventually gain its official UNA-USA accreditation on November 8, 1967.

Caroline Bridgman-Rees, who followed Ruth as president of the UNA-USA of Connecticut, remembers,

"Ruth's devotion to the U.N. and to peace were most important. Her mind was open to the world. She was a fountain of ideas."

The six official languages of the United Nations are English, French, Spanish, Chinese, Russian and Arabic. Ruth's effectiveness was always enhanced because of her fluency in English and French, working knowledge

of Russian, and some familiarity with Italian and Spanish. Later, she studied Chinese in classes taken at Berlitz. Once, during an era when Americans were not readily welcomed within foreign embassies in New York City, Ruth simply knocked on the door of the Chinese Embassy and, after making her request in their native language, she won admittance without hesitation.

In the spirit of its slogan, "*Working together for peace, freedom and justice,*" through the years, UNA-USA programs have been open to members as well as to the general public. The efforts of Ruth and her colleagues to further the U.N.'s important work remained consistent. Some of the activities organized and produced by the committee include the following events which garnered wide recognition:

- A 115-piece student orchestra from St. Julian's School, Newport, Gwent, Wales, under the baton of conductor John Oliver, spent three days enjoying Fairfield County hospitality in 1976. Their command performance at the Levitt Pavilion, and the open rehearsal which preceded the concert, were standing-room-only for audience members and floating-room-only for the curious ducks that swam in the Saugatuck River behind the open-air band shell.

- In honor of United Nations Day in 1977, an all-day conference, called "Beating Swords into Plowshares," co-sponsored by the Connecticut League of Women Voters, was held at Fairfield University. Created to address how local companies could achieve prosperity and full employment without manufacturing armaments, highlights included two panels comprised of leaders representing Connecticut's Department of Commerce and major industrial companies in the region. Herbert L. Cohen and Nolan Kerschner served as moderators for these sessions. British historian and author, Anthony Sampson, who wrote "*The Arms Bazaar: From Lebanon to Lockheed,*" made a stirring presentation as the keynote speaker.

Rev. Samuel N. Slie offered a prayer that read in part, "*Almighty God, in whose sight all humanity is equal and called to reconciliation and mutual caring for one another, we thank Thee for the opportunity to draw all peoples together in the work of the United Nations Organization. Increase our trust, goodwill, respect and honesty in the dealings of nations with nations and persons with persons.*" Outside the conference venue, making the most powerful visual statement of the day, a local blacksmith, Joseph Volz, toiled to forge a sword into a plowshare.

- A public invitation was extended for a lecture by journalist Inder Kapur entitled "Whither Goest India?" on Sunday, June 5, 1977 at the First Congregational Church in Stamford. This specialist on Indian affairs spoke about his reflections on and impressions of Indira Gandhi, the state of the then new democratic country, India's elections and its future. A question and

answer period followed his remarks and the gathering came to a close with light refreshments for all.

- To celebrate the 40th anniversary of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) with the general theme of "Think Globally and Act Locally," the UNA-USA gathered at Southport's Pequot Library to hear a speech by John E. Fobes, the deputy director general of UNESCO. His 1985 address "Is UNESCO Doomed?" cited the importance of determining what type of multilateral cooperation would be required for the 21st century. Bulgarian-born violinist Maria Radicheva performed works by Bach and Brahms.

- Their international tour in the spring of 1993 enabled thirty members of the Hirosaki Bach Ensemble to visit Fairfield County. To thank their local hosts, this talented group of amateur musicians, formed in 1985 by Kazuko Shimaguchi to perform music by J.S. Bach, provided a wonderful concert to which all were invited. Special arrangements for these guests included the rental of both a harpsichord and an upright bass.

"I've been lucky, I've met kings and emperors and presidents – gotten to know some of them. I met Eleanor Roosevelt one time, Nelson Mandela, several United States presidents, several European leaders, President Havel of the Czech Republic and I'd put Ruth right up there in that category."

"Ruth had the same quality of just an obvious excellence. She had knowledge. You can't only have passion and be effective, you also have to have knowledge to back it up. Ruth combined knowledge and passion very well."

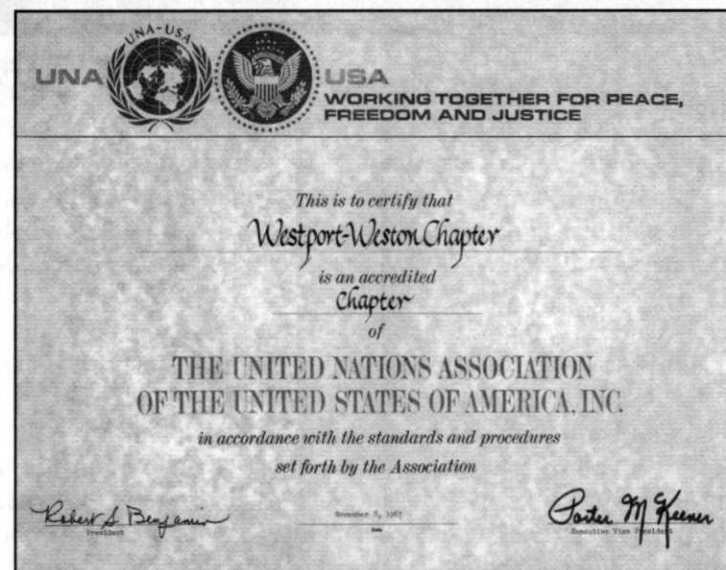
Irving Stolberg
President, UNA-USA of Connecticut

Ambassador Joseph Verner Reed, Under Secretary General and Special Adviser to the Secretary General, knew Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen for more than 40 years. He called her, "a Superstar of the NGO Community for the U.N." No one who knew her even slightly would disagree with his assessment of her dynamic personality.

With Ruth's help, a twinned connection between the UNA-USA of Connecticut and the UNA-UK, Westminster Branch in London, was created and sustained. Mrs. Cohen served as Vice President of the UK chapter and trekked back and forth to London, where she kept a flat, multiple times each year. Many of the UNA-USA programs held in Connecticut welcomed members and guest speakers from the active Westminster Branch. Often, members of the Southwest Connecticut UNA chapter visited London to participate in events held there as well.



At a dinner preceding her May Day lecture in 1958, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt (seated center) is welcomed by (L. to R.) Herman Steinkraus, Ruth Steinkraus, chairman of the dinner; and Dr. Leonard Mayo, chairman of the Westport-Weston Chapter Committee for the UN. (PHOTO: Courtesy of *The Daily Town Crier*)



The Certificate of Accreditation for the Westport-Weston Chapter of the UNA-USA. (Courtesy of the Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen Archives)



The UNA Connecticut Division Board gathers in New Haven in 1999. (PHOTO: Courtesy of Irving Stolberg)

In 1990, Harold Dunning arrived from London to speak during U.N. Week. He addressed schoolchildren, university students, Rotary Clubs, public and private meetings and those who gathered to celebrate U.N. Day. He wrote to the editor of the *Westport News*: "...it has been a pleasure and an honor to follow in the footsteps of such eminent predecessors as the late Lord Caradon, Gordon Evans, OBE, and Brigadier General Michael Harbottle [all dear friends of Ruth's], and I hope you will allow me to express to the citizens of Westport, to the devoted UNA volunteers and especially to their President, Mrs. Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen, who was my hostess and guide, my deep appreciation for their kindness and hospitality."

"Westport is known for many things, but Ruth continued to keep us on the international map. We've the longest-running UNA-USA chapter and JUNE Day is the longest-running continuous event.

"While we are a suburban community by definition and population, we really are much more than that; much more sophisticated, much more globally oriented and, to a large degree, that is Ruth's contribution."

**Diane Goss Farrell
First Selectwoman, Westport, Connecticut**

An avid communicator, Mrs. Cohen also carved out time to explore ways in which to facilitate the exchange of information between civil organizations, the United Nations and the public. In the late 1940s, she helped to transform the existing Speakers Research Committee into the Communications Coordinating Committee for the United Nations (CCC/UN), one of the oldest civil society organizations working with the United Nations. The CCC/UN has successfully produced conferences, sponsored training programs, provided speakers and been active in the planning and presentation of the annual United Nations Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations.

The range of foreign guests welcomed to Connecticut encompassed individuals from many different fields of interests and professions.

- The work of William Shakespeare has been performed around the globe, but in mid-June of 1964, fifty-five U.N. delegates came to Westport for the "Shakespeare Theatre U.N. Weekend." Hosted by UNA-USA families in Westport and Weston, the group spent a sunny Saturday enjoying a cruise on Long Island Sound skippered by Captain Randy Eaton, plus tennis, golf and fine dining at the Longshore Country Club. After a change of clothes and time to catch their breath, everyone headed to Stratford for a fun-filled presentation of "Much Ado About Nothing."

- In early August of 1968, a group of West African artists came to Westport from the nations of Togo, Ivory Coast, Tunisia, Morocco, Gabon, Senegal

and the Congo. Co-hosts who coordinated their activities were local art lovers Burt Chernow and Giselle Ganz. This talented group of travelers toured the Hirschorn Collection in Greenwich, The Yale Art Gallery and Yale School of Art and Architecture in New Haven, The Famous Artists School in Westport, the Aldrich Museum in Ridgefield and the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in Manhattan.

- On a Friday morning January 10, 1969, United States Ambassador to the United Nations, James Russell Wiggins, spoke to an audience of students, civic leaders and school officials who filled the Staples High School auditorium in Westport. After an introduction by Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen, Ambassador Wiggins, the former editor and executive vice-president of *The Washington Post*, spoke about the issues that faced U.N. member nations. After a newspaper career that spanned forty-six years, the Ambassador had a worldly and educated perspective to share.

Quoted in *The Daily Town Crier*, Wiggins said, "*Oppressed by the hatred in the hearts of men towards one another, the major problem is to keep the world together – to bring together and keep together nations which are diversified in background and culture.*" His belief in the integrity of all nations underscored his remarks about the social and economic problems that breed hate between people of different cultures.

- Ten golfers aged fifteen through eighteen from Bristol Grammar School and Clifton College arrived from England in mid-April of 1977. Led by schoolmaster, Eric Dehn, and golf professional, Peter Green, their Golf Tour included stops in Philadelphia, Boston, New York, Westport; and relaxing visits to the campuses of Yale and Bucknell universities. With golf handicaps ranging from 3 to 9, the young sportsmen found warm welcomes at homes throughout Fairfield County.

- Nine traveling Chinese scholars from universities in Shanghai, Nankai, Beijing and Tianjin joined Fairfield County residents who had visited China for a unique program at the Fairfield Library in August of 1981, including Zhai Qihu of the Academia Sinica, Beijing, zoology department, an authority on lady bugs. The afternoon included original compositions sung by Winifred Keane based on Chinese folk songs.

- An energetic exchange took place during the weekend of October 14-15, 1995 when twenty-one young journalists from developing countries came to visit Connecticut. The News Director of News 12 Connecticut Cablevision, Tom Appleby, gave them an extensive tour of his station. After a relaxed evening spent with their Fairfield County hosts, a farewell reception took place at the offices of Save the Children in downtown Westport. Countries that sent representatives for the trip included Bolivia, Pakistan, Honduras,

Romania, Angola, South Africa, Ethiopia, and the island nations of Sao Tome and Principe.

From time to time, prominent Westport residents have pitched in to help at UNA-USA events. In 1968, serving as the "Yankee Ambassador of Goodwill," actress Bette Davis presented the trophies to award winners for tennis, golf and other competitions held on jUNE Day. Sonny Fox, a popular children's television host, volunteered to lead the UNICEF/Halloween costume parade for many years as well as to serve as master of ceremonies for some jUNE Day celebrations.

Ruth's typed notes concerning the order of the parade march for UNICEF Day, October 26, 1975, included: "*Grand Marshall Sonny Fox; Does Teddy Lurie, our baton twirler go first? or now?; Wilton baton twirlers; musicians (drum? flute player?); Mrs. Heneague, First Selectman of Westport with Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen and United Nations flag; United Nations children with their host families; town's children; other musicians; Boy Scouts of Stratford; children, baby carriages, parents, etc.*"

Ruth always welcomed help from any direction that it originated and she offered it just as readily. During the summer of 2001, Yevgeniy Tsifrinovich, a student at Connecticut College, served as an intern for UNA. He worked with Ruth four days a week and her written evaluation for the college, as direct as always, revealed, "*He was reliable, eager to help, confident, charming. His English is excellent, his French O.K. He likes to talk, but he also listened. Our UNA was fortunate to have such an excellent intern this summer. Thank you for giving him to us!*"

Long after his internship had ended, Yevgeniy stayed in touch with her, as did so many others who had crossed her path. Back in New York that fall, Yevgeniy managed to get a fax to Ruth after the 9/11 attacks, when cell phone service in Manhattan was erratic, to ask her to please contact his parents and brother to let them know that he was safe.

That she did this favor, and many others, comes as no surprise. In fact, once a day, besides playing piano, Ruth tried to do one anonymous good deed. This was something only a few people who worked closely with her knew about, but it really wasn't out of character at all. Ruth's strong, positive nature infected everyone around her. She wouldn't let herself be negative no matter what disappointments or difficulties came along.

Even after she became ill, Ruth continued to conduct meetings, draft letters and make phone calls. Paul Mrazek of UNA-UK, shared one example of Ruth's determination when, shortly after arriving at her home from England, he accompanied her on an ambulance ride to Norwalk Hospital. "*There was no sense of panic. She simply grabbed hold of her papers and continued*

working. Ruth was always looking to her next assignment and the pace never slowed."

Anne Chernow, whose work hangs in the United Nations Permanent Art Collection, recalled her visit to Ruth only three days before she died. The artist said that upon her arrival, Mrs. Cohen, still totally focused on the U.N., promptly asked her to locate 300 postage stamps that had been squirreled away in a drawer for the next UNA-USA mailing. Under Ruth's less-than-able-bodied, but ever-spirited direction, Anne went right to work applying said postage onto the envelopes.

Just remember Ruth's example, even if times get tough, simply repeat to yourself and to everyone around you her own oft-repeated mantra, "K-G, K-G," and just "Keep going, keep going."



Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen and Grand Marshall Sonny Fox admire ten-year-old Leslie Casson dressed as the Statue of Liberty for Westport's UNICEF parade on October 26, 1975. (PHOTO: Jeff Munk, Courtesy of the Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen Archives)

TWELVE MONTHS A YEAR U.N. CALENDAR FOR PEACE

Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen said she wanted everyone, both lawmakers and laypersons alike, to "understand that the principal mission of the U.N. is to maintain the peace, not sanction a war." In 1987 she created the annual U.N. *Calendar for Peace*, which commemorates no battles, to try and further this understanding in a concrete way.

"I always contributed ideas for her beloved U.N. Calendar of Peace although she had very firm views about what should be included. In truth, she wrote almost all of it herself."

"Ruth regarded it as her most important achievement. Though she may have been outspoken at times, she always spoke with conviction and from the heart."

**Paul Mrazek
UNA-UK, Westminster Branch, London**

Published in English (and in years when the budget allowed for it in all six official languages of the United Nations) the calendar provides a daily reminder of significant steps in international law, national holidays of the 191 member states of the U.N., and accomplishments of international cooperation in United Nations history. In addition, the document also recognizes individuals who have acted courageously in the unending quest for global peace. In addition to the work of the United Nations, the calendar also includes global issues such as those relating to children, women and the environment.

Never one to let unfinished business be pushed aside or forgotten, Ruth used the calendar's content to focus on timely issues. President Irving Stolberg of UNA Connecticut Division has kept the calendar in her tradition. The 2005 Calendar, stressing "rule of law," highlighted in red the many important treaties and covenants not yet ratified by the United States.

Though she would probably have disapproved of the choice made by members of the committee to include her birthday in the calendar's listings, Irving Stolberg said, "We overruled her." After her death, Ruth Steinkraus-

Cohen was added on June 8th where she is described as an “*advocate for world peace and founder of this U.N. Calendar for Peace.*”

Ruth took tremendous pride in the calendar and she thrust herself into its widespread distribution with great gusto. Mailed each year, with a carefully-composed cover letter that she prepared, a sample of Ruth’s sentiments, including one significant exclamation point, follows. She sent this text to religious leaders only three months prior to the 9/11 tragedy.

June 15, 2001

Dear Leader of your Congregation,

Enclosed is the 2001 Peace Calendar published by the United Nations Association of Connecticut.

Perhaps never in its history has the United Nations been more in need of understanding and support.

This calendar, giving historical facts about the UN for each day of the year, is an invaluable reference tool. We hope it will be useful to you in preparing your sermons or planning special events and discussions in your place of worship.

We think the United Nations is doing God’s work on earth!

**In peace,
Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen**

In a letter dated 24 January 1990, sent to thank Ruth for sending a copy of the U.N. *Calendar for Peace*, Lisette Perlea wrote, “*I was very touched by your special feelings for my country. God bless you and protect you in this trouble [sic] world!*” Lisette and her husband, Greater Bridgeport Symphony conductor Jonel, came from Romania.

The UNA-USA Connecticut Division continues to receive dozens of letters of thanks from around the globe which praise the value of the calendar. To acquire copies of the U.N. *Calendar for Peace* please contact Beverly Stern at 1-203-777-5217 or via email at bstern98@aol.com; or visit our web site: www.una-connecticut.org

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY **UNITED NATIONS WEEK**

Each year since the mid-1960s, to commemorate the establishment of the United Nations on October 24, 1945, UNA-USA of Connecticut has organized special events, often held during the entire week that leads up to the actual date of the United Nations’ founding.

In 1968, Bob A. Aylward, the Executive Director of COSERV (National Council for Community Services to International Visitors which became the NCIV or National Council for International Visitors), mailed Ruth a particularly light-hearted postcard which pictured a lone woman sitting beside Sun Moon Lake viewed from the Evergreen Hostel in Taiwan. He wrote, “*The lady is waiting expectantly, but there are no guests in the hostel. They’ve all gone to Westport for U.N. Day. Good luck, good weather and have a wonderful day.*”

These gatherings, combining ongoing education and entertainment, have included speeches, music, art, dance and conferences. On Westport’s Main Street, an international bazaar is set up. The costumes, foods, dolls, souvenirs, posters and printed material from different nations are featured. Many shop owners organize special display windows to support the celebration. One year, Taylor’s Flowers pleased everyone when they created an attractive U.N. flag made up entirely of blue and white blooms.

Many local organizations that maintain non-governmental status as observers at the United Nations set up exhibits. They include the Girl Scouts, Hadassah, the League of Women Voters, the Red Cross and World Peace Through Law. Other regional groups – the World Affairs Center, the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, the Democratic and Republican Parties and the Youth Adult Council – present the international aspects of their own programs. At some events the high school band plays “Happy Birthday to You” before candles are lit on a huge cake that is then cut and enjoyed by all in attendance.

At Westport’s Town Hall, the familiar blue and white U.N. flag is raised beside the Stars and Stripes. According to Ambassador Joseph Verner Reed, the United Nations flag is, as President Harry S. Truman once described it, “*A combination of U.N. blue – the blue of hope – and white for peace.*” The flags of all U.N. member nations decorate Westport’s bridge, a custom that

began in 1968 when volunteer seamstresses from local towns produced the first group of 128 flags. As new nations joined the U.N., their flags have been added to this array.

Since they were first put on display, due to wear and tear, theft, and occasional vandalism, some of the flags have needed to be replaced. With great fortitude, the committee always managed to locate replacements donated by U.N. missions and regional businesses or cut and sewn by local volunteers. Some of the groups that have produced flags by hand were the Sewing Circle of Christ and Holy Trinity Church, the Reading Group of the New Neighbors, Girl Scouts and senior citizens from Westport and surrounding towns.

In her appreciative letter of July 17, 1969, Ruth wrote to Westport's Cadette Troop #538, *"Thank you for the flags you helped make for our United Nations Day celebration. I hope you saw how beautiful they looked lining the entrance avenue to Longshore. We had over 200 United Nations guests. When they arrive here and see the flags we have put up it makes them feel at home, and starts the day off in a wonderful way."*

"We're a small town, but we think globally and we act locally. Yes we are an internationally-minded town. We have our hearts and minds set on one thing and that's a world without war."

Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen, U.N. Day 1997

During the 1970s, IHC member George H. Landes successfully took on the task of asking U.N. missions to provide flags of their countries, but, sadly, some flags have proved more popular targets than others. After Brazil won the World Cup championship, a local teenager tried to make off with that nation's standard. Caught in the act by a witness who saw him removing the wooden stanchion, the young perpetrator simply waited for the police to arrive.

Despite all kinds of hurdles, these colorful flags continue to wave proudly beside Westport's tranquil river. To prevent problems, in addition to the watchful eyes of Westport Police officers, community volunteers, including members of REACT, a citizens band radio group, have stood guard during less highly-trafficked overnight hours when the bridge and flags are most vulnerable.

After Ruth's death, a group of her friends approached the Town of Westport to suggest that the Route 1 Bridge be renamed in her honor. Westport's First Selectwoman, Diane Goss Farrell, supported the idea as did Connecticut State Senator G. Kenneth Bernhard. Despite some limited opposition that garnered



Lord Caradon, UNA Connecticut Division's guest speaker for U.N. Day ceremonies in 1979, relaxes with Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen prior to delivering his speech. (PHOTO: Courtesy of *The Bridgeport Sunday Post*)



Flags of the United Nations member nations stand at attention in the breeze on the Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen Memorial Bridge in Westport, Connecticut (PHOTO: Courtesy of the Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen Archives)



Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen and fellow UNA-USA members help Connecticut Governor Ella Grasso (center) hoist the United Nations flag on U.N. Day in 1976. (PHOTO: Ed Lescoe, Courtesy of the Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen Archives)

coverage in local newspapers as well as in *The New York Times*, the proposal won final approval.

Some time later, James F. Sullivan, the Commissioner of the Department of Transportation for the State of Connecticut, sanctioned the addition of a donation of 180 permanent brackets to the Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen Memorial Bridge to make displaying the U.N. flags a much simpler operation.

The week after United Nations Day, UNICEF Day is observed on Halloween, October 31st. Once again, U.N. families with children are invited to join local families for a Halloween party in the afternoon which may include bobbing for apples, pinning the tail on the donkey, relay races, singing and play-acting. Following dinner at the homes of their hosts, children from U.N. families join their local counterparts to trick-or-treat for pennies for UNICEF.

"When I first met Ruth I had no idea who she was. I was just amazed by this woman who had boundless energy, was clearly extraordinarily talented and so brilliant intellectually. I really felt as if I was sitting with a Renaissance woman."

"Naming the bridge after her was something we wanted to do so I brought the concept to the RTM. No one ever questioned Ruth's genuine sincerity, but it was surprising that the idea would prove to be controversial."

Diane Goss Farrell
First Selectwoman, Westport, CT

This fun-filled program has a serious theme in that it helps to support the good work that UNICEF does for needy children throughout the world. That Ruth could convince the Connecticut State Police to stop traffic on the bridge until the entire parade of ghouls, goblins, cats, clowns, pirates and pirouetting ballerinas had crossed the Post Road safely is just another example of her negotiation skills.

One sweet curiosity discovered in Ruth's files were several happy drawings obviously rendered by a young child who signed her name, Randa. The Magic Marker® images were paper-clipped to the original application for a permit for the Halloween parade which was sent to the State of Connecticut State Traffic Commission by then First Selectman Jacqueline P. Heneage. Permission was promptly granted in a return letter penned by William W. Stoeckert, Executive Secretary to the Commissioner, Arthur B. Powers.

That Ruth loved children is evident in hundreds of photos taken of her with smiling youngsters at U.N. events through the years. In a 1979 letter to

UNA-USA national headquarters she enclosed a check to purchase 1000 copies of the "Children are the Future" pamphlet. There is no doubt that every last one wound up in the hands of someone who Ruth hoped would take its message to heart.

• To celebrate the 15th anniversary of the U.N.'s founding, on U.N. Weekend in 1960, Westporters welcomed the families of delegates representing fourteen of the eighteen new African member nations. The visitors traveled to Connecticut on a special train with French-speaking hostesses. They were greeted at Westport's station with an eager group of local residents holding up a huge sign that read, "*Délégues des Nations Unies Soyez les Bienvenus.*"

As quoted in *The Hour*, Remi Andriamaharo, Ambassador from Malagasy, who attended with his wife and their two daughters, said, "*It is a real pleasure for us. We had heard that America was mechanized, with mechanized people, and we are finding this is not true.*" Another African diplomat added his feelings about the meaningful, two-day visit to suburbia, "*Here in Westport we see the warm heart of America.*"

Ousmane Soce Diop (1911-1973), Ambassador to the United Nations and to the United States from Senegal, a famous poet in his native country, sent to his Connecticut hostess the following poem, his first composed in English, as his thank you.

The Foreign Night

*I was alone in the foreign night
And I was lost
In the foreign darkness;
Then I met
Your welcome, so warm,
A compass of hope
For the foreign night.*

*Then I retrieved sunshine,
Light of friendship and brothership,
Road of courage and ambition,
Through New York, Powerful City
Soaring to the skies
Over Manhattan.
Trembling in the embrace of
The fragile arms
Of her throbbing rivers.*

*I was alone in the foreign night;
I was wondering where is the heart
Of the overwhelming city;
Then I met your welcome
So warm....*

By Ousmane Soce Diop

In her thank you letter to all of the local families who opened their homes for guests, Ruth wrote, "*Last weekend you showed an African U.N. delegate that the 'easy friendliness' of the United States is not a myth.*"

Later, back at the United Nations, when a delegate from Nigeria who had not experienced Fairfield County hospitality insisted the U.N. be moved out of New York because of racism and a campaign of hate letters, a Westport guest, Mr. Chedre from Togo, spoke up in the General Assembly and said, as reported by *The New York Times*, "*...the United States was not at fault.... he could not blame the United States whose people have been so hospitable to us for such an act.*"

Eliminating myths is something that Ruth tried to achieve with every effort, both small and large, to build personal bridges between nations. Good news travels fast and, in 1960, publications as prominent as *LIFE*, *The Boston Herald* and *The Herald Tribune* also took note of this successful event and lauded the international welcome mat at Westport's front door.

• In 1967, Abdul Rahman Pazhwak, a one-time journalist and Ambassador to the U.N. from Afghanistan, addressed 250 people who attended a public dinner held at Fairfield University. In his remarks he reminded his audience, "*The United Nations is a moral force, pressing home hourly its message of the new world order. It is thus an educative influence. It, alone, represents the aspirations of all the peoples of the world.*" Each year, U.N. Day celebrations continue to support that effort to educate and inform.

• To celebrate the U.N.'s 31st anniversary, a day-long conference on the theme "World, Media, and People" was co-sponsored by UNA-USA of Connecticut, the Fairfield University Graduate School of Corporate and Political Communication and The Post Publishing Company. Held at Fairfield University, the principal speaker for this event was Brian E. Urquhart, U.N. under secretary general for Special Political Affairs. The 1976 sessions addressed topics from local and regional media to "cultural ethnocentrism."

• In 1977, at Staples High School in Westport, the student body observed U.N. Week with a program entitled, "Youth Looks at Global Problems."

Separate topics had been chosen as the focus for each day, for the entire day's class schedule. These were Monday – desertification; Tuesday – water; Wednesday – habitat; Thursday – population; and Friday – disarmament/peace. All students were exposed to films, discussion groups, guest speakers, and even a musical performance by “The Streets,” who were described as a classical rock group.

“Ruth was so excited about life and she was always ready to include music. I remember several times being the last person at jUNe Day – Ruth wouldn't be exhausted at all – she always seemed so satisfied. Those were the times I enjoyed the most; just being together and being able to talk to her.”

**Mary Marquardt
UNA-USA and IHC committee member**

• Given Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen's love of music, it seems inevitable that on Saturday evening, the 25th of October, 1980, the Ridgefield Orchestra, under the baton of conductor Beatrice Brown, premiered “Six Fables for All-Time” by Vaclav Nelhybel. This work for narrator, eight solo vocalists, chorus and orchestra, commissioned by Ruth to honor the U.N.'s 35th anniversary, represents the composer's “experiences and responses, coming to this country from war-scarred Europe, discovering the freedoms of American democracy and working through his music for peace,” as reported in *The Bridgeport Post*.

The final movement of the work by the Czechoslovakian-born composer is called “The Last Soldier.” Nelhybel told *The Bridgeport Sunday Post*, “I believe in the U.N. because it is the only place where nations are still negotiating before they start shooting.” Skitch Henderson served as narrator and the Pro Arte Chamber Singers, directed by Arthur Sjögren, performed the vocal parts.

Ridgefield Press critic, Noel Regney, described the ambitious piece as a “monumental prayer of hope and peace, through all the ups and downs of human life.” Those who attended the premiere remember a poignant and moving work, but, sadly, the composition remains an unpublished piece by the late composer.

THURSDAYS AT THE U.N. **WEEKLY NGO BRIEFINGS**

Ruth traveled into New York City by train almost every Thursday for briefings held in the Dag Hammarskjöld Auditorium by the United Nations Department of Public Information. These gatherings feature presentations on compelling global issues such as disarmament, apartheid and hunger. Mrs. Cohen and her colleagues returned to their communities each week to share the new perspectives they had observed.

“At the U.N. Ruth would see me and introduce me to all her friends. She just made everybody feel wonderful,” says Caroline Bridgman-Rees. *“I always remember she wore a scarf over her hair and she looked like a European peasant. She had a light blue U.N. bag, which was all worn out, stuffed with all her peace materials, but she was totally happy. She put such passion into everything. There was something about Ruth's spirit that makes us all miss her.”*

“Ruth had the ability to make all feel welcome and she taught everyone she met the value of true hospitality. That is her most important legacy.”

**Ambassador Joseph Verner Reed
Under Secretary General
Special Adviser to the Secretary General**

Ruth's U.N. badge, the identification that allowed her to enter the building freely, was an extremely difficult credential to garner. She always wore it with pride and an equal amount of purpose and she held a position on the National Board of the UNA-USA for many years. No matter where Ruth traveled, she always thought about the impact her actions had on the world around her.

In notes from her journal kept during a UNA study trip to Geneva in 2000 she wrote, *“We're a new kind of global nomad, bringing hard currency in dollars. We had a briefing at the U.N. recently on the effect of tourism on member states. It is apparently after War (!) the biggest industry – or does oil come first?”*

Helen Maxie, who often joined Ruth for these Thursday excursions, remembered them well. *"Nothing stopped Ruth, not the weather, not even a sprained ankle."* This is not surprising considering the inspiring quotation from Rilke that hung beside her desk. The cherished missive, often repeated by committee members who worked closely with Ruth read, *"Love the difficult."*

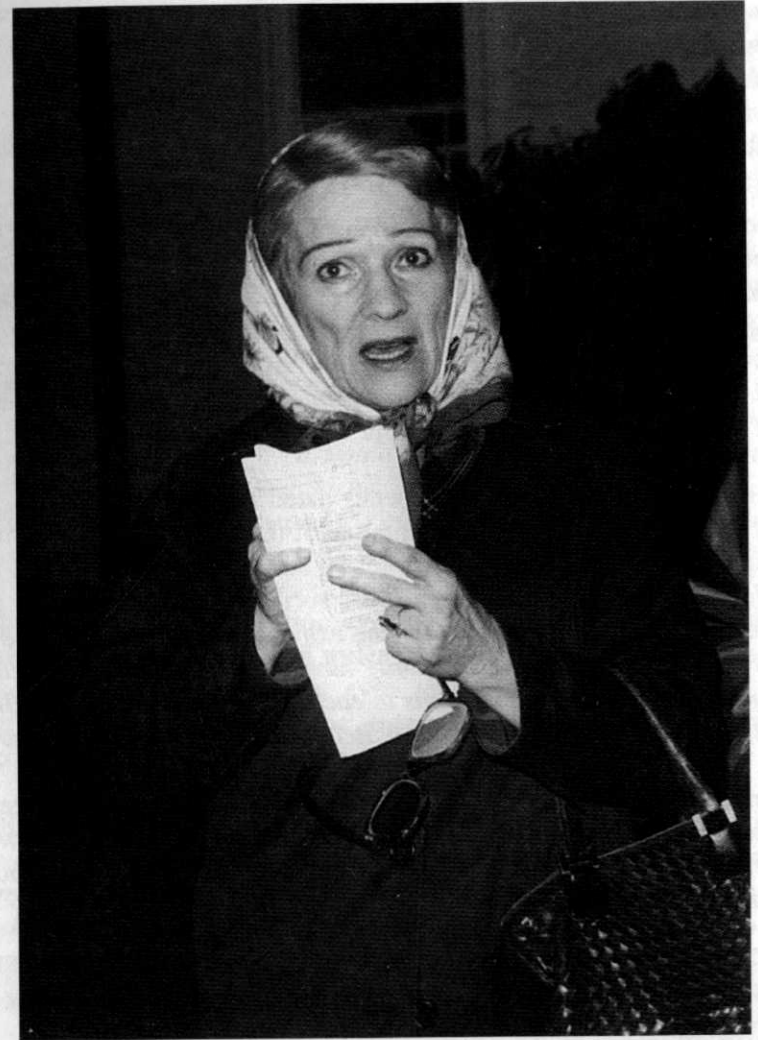
"There was a magic about Ruth. She was so bright, so quick and so natural, both utterly devoted and humble. The UNA is an NGO (non-governmental organization), the main NGO representing the UN. That's what was so exciting for Ruth."

**Caroline Bridgman-Rees
Past President of UNA-USA of Connecticut**

At the United Nations, Ruth knew everyone and she made her way around with ease. Many of the people who accompanied her on these trips say it was such fun to walk through the U.N. building with Ruth -- even the janitors knew who she was and they greeted her as enthusiastically as did United Nations administrators, international diplomats and embassy staff. *"Ruth literally stormed into my office, but I told her that any time she was in the building she could feel free to use my conference room as her own,"* Ambassador Joseph Verner Reed said with a smile.

Joseph P. Arcudi, who served as Westport's First Selectman from 1993 through 1997, called his first journey to the United Nations with Ruth, *"Quite an experience!"* Although Joe had visited the U.N. as a child, she took him on a truly memorable tour. *"Ruth was clearly in charge. 'Follow me,' and 'Come this way,' she instructed. She knew where every door was and she just marched right in. Everyone not only knew her, but welcomed her. When we finally left the building, although I had three hundred dollars in my pocket for cabs and such, Ruth insisted that we all get on a bus to head to Grand Central Station. I didn't have any quarters with me and Ruth just passed out change for the fare box as if she was somebody's mother. She moved so fast Ruth left us all in the dust... zoom... just like a rocket!"*

Her ability to make everyone feel comfortable, regardless of contrasting beliefs, background or circumstances, made Ruth unforgettable. Her efforts were based upon a fiercely-held belief that, *"If we had friends in each country of the world we would have a stronger foundation for peace."* She truly felt that people might come to know a lasting peace if they would simply reach out and try to understand each other as human beings and fellow inhabitants of this planet. Ruth's colleague and friend, Mary Keane, said, *"Peace was such a passion for her."*



Ruth leads the way into United Nations headquarters with yet another ubiquitous list! (PHOTO: Courtesy of the Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen Archives)

INTERNATIONAL HOSPITALITY COMMITTEE WEDNESDAYS AT RUTH'S HOUSE

In a report Ruth wrote in 1998, she explained, "Our work with COSERV and NCIV began in 1955 when the First Selectman of Westport, Herbert E. Baldwin, an apple-grower and a Sunday School teacher, was asked by Washington to accept in his office a young Iraqi intern to learn about small town government. Mr. Baldwin asked me to be the cultural hostess for Ali Suwaidi. He appointed me Chairman of International Hospitality for the Town of Westport, a position I still enjoy!"

First Selectman Baldwin received a letter dated November 13, 1962, from Adlai E. Stevenson, then the Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations, in which he wrote: "A surprising number of delegates have told me of the pleasant weekend they recently spent in Westport and I am moved to thank you personally for the extraordinary friendship and help you and the citizens of your community have shown our foreign friends. I hope you will convey these sentiments to each of the participating families in the Westport program and to Miss Ruth Steinkraus who initiated the plan."

The International Hospitality Committee of Fairfield County (IHC) meetings held every Wednesday in Ruth's Darbrook Road home – whether she was in Westport or abroad – were enjoyable gatherings with a varying group of stalwarts and new attendees.

"You didn't say 'No' to Ruth, 'no' was not in her vocabulary. The only 'no' in her vocabulary was K-N-O-W!"

**Virginia Ruebensaal
Vice President, UNA-USA of Connecticut**

UNA-USA Connecticut Division's "Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen Award" winner, Caroline Bridgman-Rees, added, "And 'NO' to war."

According to Miriam Bergamini, "Ruth would gather everyone around her and, much like a mother, say, 'Children! Who has looked at the U.N. Calendar of Peace today?' Following an elaborate luncheon, prepared and served by Joseph, Ruth's loyal, right-hand man, the week's business

eventually got addressed. If Mrs. Cohen was traveling, Joseph always welcomed and fed the IHC committee members in her absence.

Despite the serious nature of the committee's work, it often got augmented by a smattering of local gossip. "Ruth was always promoting romance and she was actually responsible for some successful matchmaking through the years," Jane Fix recalled. All in all, Jane described those memorable Wednesdays at Mrs. Cohen's house with two simple words, "Quite something!"

Each week there were projects to complete such as finding housing for groups being sent by the United Nations or by other international sending agencies. One of the early IHC brochures encouraged potential host families to, "See the world... through your own front door!" Ruth and her colleagues kept that mandate in mind week after week after week.

As she explained in 1974, "It would be very hard for me to condone a war in a country in which I have a friend. This is one small way each of us here in Fairfield County helps toward the overall goal of world peace. We can be a friend and make a friend."

Ruth's mother had set a fine example for her daughter of how a proper hostess makes her guests feel welcome. Gladys' eldest child had learned that lesson quite well. One might even give Mrs. Steinkraus some credit for inspiring the good works the International Hospitality Committee has accomplished.

Ruth's brother, Bill, said, "Ruth learned a lot by doing and she found that she could motivate people as my father could, and get them as a group to do things that far transcended what they could do alone. She could motivate all kinds of people. She was not fussy about who you were or how you spoke the language, what you looked like or even what your interests were. Ruth took people as they came and she enlisted them in her cause. It was a remarkable talent and it was a skill she developed through the years with the hospitality committee."

The IHC encouraged guests to visit Fairfield County on the last Sunday of the month throughout the year, and to experience American celebrations on Memorial Day, July 4th, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day. The list of people that have been welcomed by IHC volunteers include U.N. delegates and Secretariat staff and their families, visiting youth orchestras and choirs, foreign students, journalists, refugees, State Department invitees, soldiers, artists, dancers, teachers, bankers, actors, politicians, statesmen and special professional groups.

Miriam Bergamini remembered, "If you skipped a meeting, you might receive a phone call during the morning asking you where you were!" Other committee members recall similar queries from Ruth who reached out to her ever-widening circle 24/7. This practice became familiar to everyone who understood how much value Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen placed on just showing up. With her strong, positive attitude she set a good example.

An early, but undated, document entitled "Do's and Don'ts for Host Families Receiving Guests Through the International Hospitality Committee of Fairfield County," listed five "do's" and five "don'ts" for prospective hosts. They were advised to be sensitive to a wide range of needs and customs of foreign visitors. These thoughtful recommendations included:

"DO have available at your home snacks of fruit and cheese or milk and crackers for guests who are often too hungry to wait until your regular meal-time. People from other countries do not regard cola or soda-type drinks as food."

"DON'T feel that continuous conversation with your guest is necessary. A silent guest can be a happy guest. An occasional companionable silence will be understood and valued by your visitor."

In addition to the United Nations, guests are directed to Fairfield County by the Visitors Program Service of Meridian House International, Washington, D.C.; the U.S. Information Agency, Washington, D.C.; The International Center in New York, Inc.; Metro-International, New York; People-to-People International; Operation Crossroads Africa; ConcertWorld; Japan Productivity Center; African-American Institute; Institute of International Education; Concert World, London; the YMCA International Program Services; Council on Leaders and Specialists; sister committees within the National Council for International Visitors (NCIV); Governmental Affairs Institute; Eisenhower, Fulbright and IREX fellows; and foreign hospitality committees at many Connecticut colleges and universities.

Manfred Noetzel, the Supervisor of Staff Activities and Housing for the U.N. Secretariat, remembers Ruth quite well. "Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen was a hostess with the ability to draw people in and make them feel welcome immediately. She shared her world with all – a world of culture, science, thinking, collections and hobbies – in an intriguing and welcoming way.

"She was also an internationalist in the most positive manner, able to think beyond the United States and reach out from Westport to the entire world. Politics apart, Ruth set an example to make everyone welcome. This is

something that we need more of and I am so glad that this tradition continues with the International Hospitality Committee."

Committee members do far more than just arrange for home hospitality. IHC volunteers fulfill speaking engagements and many are often called upon to act as translators for foreign guests. Some of the most memorable programs that have helped to foster international friendships and understanding include the following:

- On Sunday, March 16, 1969, members of the United Nations Drama Club came to Westport. With their host families, they attended a special matinee of "The Chinese Wall" by Max Frisch. Presented by the Westport-Weston Community Theatre on the Fairfield University campus, a lively discussion with the play's director and cast took place after the performance. This theatrical outing generated an interesting exchange of ideas between audience and performers.

- In early June of 1974, twenty-seven German government officials and members of the German Bundestag (German Parliament) came to Fairfield County on a study group tour. Their itinerary, with stops in Washington, D.C., New York, and Boston, was highlighted by a long weekend in Wilton, Connecticut where they all became "honorary citizens" of the town. The politicians toured the new town hall complex (including the police station, animal shelter and fire department), attended a picnic on the Center School lawn, and witnessed an all-American square dance. On Monday, Richard Minnig of the *Bulletin* staff escorted them all through the offices and printing plant of the Acorn Press Inc., which publishes *The Wilton Bulletin*, *The Ridgefield Press* and *The Redding Pilot*.

- The IHC rose to a unique challenge in July of 1979 when they welcomed a group of thirty-six handicapped young men and women and their aides from Denmark. Host homes with doors wide enough for wheelchair access and ground floor sleeping spaces were located and the guests enjoyed a pleasant and memorable time in Fairfield County. The visit was highlighted by a barbecue given for them at the S.T.A.R. (Society to Advance the Retarded) Center in Norwalk and a jazz concert held at Staples High School.

- French and American students participating in "The Meaning of Liberty" project, which celebrated the centennial of the Statue of Liberty and the bonds of friendship between France and the United States, came to visit Westport in 1986. This was such a successful event that Charles Z. Wick, Director of the United States Information Agency awarded a "Certificate of Appreciation" to the International Hospitality Committee of Fairfield County.

- Through the auspices of the Japan Productivity Center, a study team came from Shiseido Co., Ltd., including 16 members plus an interpreter. Although their early 1990s stay included only one night's home hospitality, they were welcomed and entertained by local families who shared a desire to learn more about life in Japan.

- On a beautiful, sunny day in July of 1996, the International Hospitality Committee honored female Ambassadors to the United Nations and all of the wives of their colleagues. A large group turned out for the event which was held at the home of Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen. Photographs of the gathering pictured cooperative weather and everyone taking great advantage of her carefully-tended garden.

In her capacity as chairman of the IHC, Ruth kept up constant correspondence with politicians, diplomats, world leaders and other interested parties who might help her expand upon the success of the committee. Her archives are filled with letters sent, as well as received, which define the group's goals and celebrate its achievements. Even those people whose "prior commitments" forced them to decline IHC invitations were all well aware of the impact the Fairfield County group had on the world stage.

Adults are not the only people who work to further the quest for peace. In 1977, Chris Marquardt, the then 12-year-old son of active IHC host family parents, Don and Mary Marquardt, wrote an untitled poem inspired by his mother's work as IHC Chairman for Wilton. Obviously cherished by Ruth, his original, hand-rendered text is glued to a page in one of her bursting-at-the-seams scrapbooks.

*O splendid dove, with wings of white,
Answer me this question:
What is peace, when people fight
And cities have congestion?*

*Peace is beauty, that you see,
And everyone being nice;
Peace is people living free,
Just like woodland mice.*

REFRAIN

*When countries war, and people kill
Friendship is not with them.
To Peace you must give strengthened will;
For Peace is just the stem
To the flower of contentment.*

By Chris Marquardt



Mrs. Cohen poses with members of the International Hospitality Committee in front of her back-to-back grand pianos. (PHOTO: Courtesy of the Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen Archives)

In 2001, in an attempt to honor the impact of their important work, United States Senator Arlen Specter nominated the International Hospitality Committee of Fairfield County, along with 97 sister organizations from 44 states across the country who were a part of the National Council of International Visitors (NCIV) at that time, for the Nobel Peace Prize. This prize is awarded by the Nobel Committee to reward the champions of peace, with no consideration given to the nationality of the candidates. Though the NCIV was not selected by the prize committee, Senator Specter's action brought significant attention to the work that is accomplished by all of the tireless IHC volunteers.

The International Hospitality Committee's efforts have been noted by many prominent individuals since its founding. In one particularly poignant letter sent to Ruth in June of 1982, then President Ronald Reagan wrote, "I commend your members, staff and community sponsors for their commitment to improved international understanding and cooperation."

In another offering, Harold R. Munhall, Executive Vice President of the Westport Chamber of Commerce, noted the huge economic impact international visitors have on the region. "Your committee of volunteers deserves a standing ovation for the great work they have done, and are doing. On behalf of Westport's business community we wish you continued success."

This type of recognition serves to sustain the enthusiasm of IHC members and supporters alike. Ruth's personal magnetism and the strength of the relationships she had established helped to propel the work forward even after she became ill. In 2001, when she was unable to make a scheduled trip to lobby members of Congress about the United Nations' dues owed by the United States, Helen Maxie went in Mrs. Cohen's place. *"When we arrived in Christopher Shays' office, he asked us where Ruth was. I explained that she was ill and he immediately asked for her telephone number to call and speak with her himself. I'm sure this delighted Ruth once he finally reached her."*

On behalf of the IHC, Ruth always remembered to acknowledge national holidays celebrated by each of the foreign countries that were members of the United Nations. She sent a formal card that read, *"We offer our sincere felicitations to your Mission and to the people of your nation on the occasion of your National Holiday. A warm invitation is herewith extended to all members of your Mission and their families to visit with families in our area on the last Sunday of the month throughout the year. A visit may be arranged through your Hospitality Committee or by calling us direct."*

Her scrapbooks are filled with touching thank you letters written by ambassadors from around the globe who appreciated this gesture and complimented the IHC on the value of their good-will operation to welcome those who needed a respite from the demanding work that took place at both U.N. headquarters and in the offices of foreign missions all over Manhattan. Through the years, sending organizations also sent enthusiastic letters following each successful home hospitality visit. Clearly, all lines of international communication were kept wide open from behind Ruth's crowded desk on tree-dotted Darbrook Road.

The thoughtful feelings expressed by many foreign guests speak for themselves in these five excerpts from just some of the charming correspondence Mrs. Cohen received.

"You do so much for others and make such happy differences in their lives. Thank you for your kind thoughtfulness of me."

"I would personally like to thank you, and I am sure everyone would totally agree with me, for arranging for us to stay with families. This was so much more pleasant and interesting than staying in hotels or schools."

"I would admit that it was more than a hospitality program; there was a human touch and a good approach for more understanding and good-will among peoples of different tradition."

"You have been most kind and gracious in extending to me your hospitality during my visit to your beautiful small city. May I express to you my heartfelt gratitude for this kindness? Thank you again."

"I surely enjoyed making new acquaintances myself and do hope you know how much I do appreciate what you have done for me."

The data that are maintained by the International Hospitality Committee on host families, as well as potential guests, help to guarantee that good matches are made. Ages of children, language skills, travel, professions and hobbies of the families are all carefully noted. Prior to each visit, host families receive written information about the country their guest comes from, or a copy of "At Ease with Your International Guest," a brochure from COSERV. Every effort is made by the committee to assure a satisfying encounter for all foreign guests.

Following each visit, hosts are phoned to be thanked for their cooperation and asked how the day went. They are also requested to fill out a questionnaire to provide information about what they planned for their guests, what actually happened, how the committee might assist them more, any unexpected problems, whether they would like to join the IHC to work on future events, whether they are UNA-USA members, and if they would welcome an international visitor in the future.

Members of the committee were often called upon to find hosts for visitors at the very last minute. One example occurred in 1982 when *Les Petits Chanteurs de Paris*, a 25-member choir of French boys, got stranded on the East Coast due to the high value of the U.S. dollar. Given the emergency circumstances, their revised schedule required accommodations as well as an appropriate performance venue in Fairfield County.

Within 24 hours, Anita Houston and Miriam Bergamini found lodging with French-speaking hosts for the entire group. To the delight of a large audience, the boys lifted their exceptional voices in a free concert held at the First Presbyterian Church of Stamford. Mrs. Houston said, *"I remember later that evening we took the entire choir to a friend's swimming pool... after supper... at about 10:00 PM. All of the young boys dove right in and it was a wonderful scene!"*

In a report on the IHC, written several years before her death, Ruth said, *"The central fact remains: our unflagging enthusiasm for our work! We constantly attract new volunteers. It is an inspiration for us to receive guests. We love the interaction, the sharing of our homes, the intimacy, the long-lasting friendships that have developed, how a stranger in the morning*

becomes a treasured friend by the end of the day! Then we receive lovely Thank-You letters like the one which arrived this morning from the leader of a group of Russian youth leaders who recently spent several days in Westport."

"I met Ruth, it must be about four and a half years ago, through a mutual friend. After hosting a Filipino family, Ruth invited me to the Wednesday lunch. I got hooked by her she was so charming. She had a group of Welsh students coming in and she asked me to find host families. Then I discovered it was seventy teenagers who needed host families for four days. But we did it! That was my first project for Ruth. That's how I started."

**Michaela MacColl
President, International Hospitality Committee**

Although Ruth thought decisively and moved forward quickly, she did not care for the impersonal aspects of computers and email, despite their speed. After her death, when Michaela MacColl assumed the presidency of the IHC, all housing plans were updated to spreadsheets. Michaela, who has created an ongoing platform for the group, says, "*Ruth would have gotten past her issues with technology if she could have seen us do all of the housing in an hour and a half!*"

One day, with great excitement, Mrs. MacColl's young daughters, who had grown up with only computers in their house, dragged their mother to the desk in Ruth's den to show Michaela a strange-looking machine. It turned out to be a typewriter – something they had never encountered before.

It is still astounding that so much good was accomplished using Ruth's typed or handwritten notes on hundreds, if not thousands, of index cards that she often filed in a discarded shoe box. As founder and late chairman of the International Hospitality Committee of Fairfield County, Ruth would be proud of the work that continues to be achieved by IHC members today.

THANKSGIVING IN CONNECTICUT A UNIQUE AMERICAN CUSTOM

The headline in Stamford's *The Advocate* on Friday, November 23, 1984, read "*Foreign Visitors Taste Thanksgiving Warmth*" to encapsulate the spirit of more than 100 foreign guests who were invited to share this all-American holiday with families in lower Fairfield County.

Years back, Mary La Chapelle and her family welcomed guests from Japan who wanted to experience this uniquely American custom including all of the tasty preparations. Mrs. La Chapelle simply invited them to stay overnight so they could rise early and witness the turkey and all of the fixings make their journey from refrigerator to stove to table.

On another occasion, Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen served a traditional meal of turkey with chestnut stuffing, cranberries, sweet potatoes, cider and apple pie for dessert, but, to honor her guest, the head of China's Shanghai Symphony, everyone ate their turkey with chopsticks.

Achyut Vaze, the editor of "Economic Scene," a business newspaper in Bombay, and his wife, Chandra, were in the United States for their very first time. "*When I heard about Thanksgiving, I didn't know what it would be like, but I think it is a fantastic tradition. I feel it is even more beautiful because all the family comes – cousins, nieces, uncles – under one house and share their experiences.*" After eating turkey, which he feared might be bland compared to Indian food, he admitted to the *Westport News*, "*I helped myself twice.*"

"Ruth's philosophy was very simple: all were welcome."

**Ambassador Joseph Verner Reed
Under Secretary General
Special Adviser to the Secretary General**

Discoveries such as these, whether new foods or unfamiliar customs, have generated occasions like this for many decades since the IHC first welcomed foreign guests to Connecticut in the mid 1950s.

• Mary Keane shared her memories of one Thanksgiving during the height of the Cold War when a high-level Russian diplomat brought his family to the Keanes' table in Trumbull. After a sumptuous meal, Mary and Bob's daughter sat down at the piano to entertain everyone present.

Mary said, *"The coffee and conversation that followed the meal changed my daughter's view of the world. She has never looked at Russia in quite the same way since that night."* The value of similar gatherings and rich dialogues held in hundreds of homes in Fairfield County remains something that IHC committee members work to encourage all year long.



In the dining room on Darbrook Road, Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen and Aye-Aye Thant make sure their peaceful visitors have enough to eat. (PHOTO: Courtesy of the Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen Archives)

CHRISTMAS IN CONNECTICUT **YULE LOGS AND SWEET POTATOES**

Santa's sleigh notwithstanding, the most familiar vehicle sighted in Westport on Christmas morning turned out to be Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen's dark sedan with an oversized United Nations' flag lashed to its ice-cold bumper. She waited with an expectant grin and her list-covered clipboard in her gloved hands.

Up early to welcome the first train filled with smiling visitors, Ruth worked hard to ensure that everyone made a successful connection with their host family before she headed home to her own holiday dinner. Thanks to a lot of advance planning – and the occasional last minute invitation – according to Perry Joseph, *"The Cohens' dining room table rarely had an empty seat."*

In between their round-trip, Metro North journeys, all the international guests had a chance to see how Americans celebrate this joyous holiday. At Christmas, when coming together can provide so much emotional satisfaction, host families gladly rounded out their tables with representatives from the widest circle of the "family of man" to create a truly satisfying experience for all.

In a season when the spirit of giving is so cherished, IHC volunteers who welcome potential new friends into their homes wind up receiving far more than they might be offering. Some of these memorable visits included:

- The State Department's Agency for International Development (AID) sent thirty-six professionals from developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America to Fairfield County in 1971. The Christmas guests included Doon Hyun Kim, of Korea, supervisor of Korea's deep sea fisheries; Ratanajarana Khate, of Thailand, head of the English Department at Yala Teachers College; and Phan Hoang Guy, of South Vietnam, chief librarian of the University of Hue Central Library.

- In 1976, foreign visitors were particularly interested to experience our customs all year long due to ongoing commemorations of the United States Bicentennial. You might say that this Christmas celebration proved to be even warmer and a bit more historic than usual.



Just one of thousands of happy signs that greeted foreign visitors when they stepped off the train to meet their host families at the Westport station. (PHOTO: Courtesy of the Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen Archives)

- For Christmas Day in 1981, IHC host families welcomed graduate students from Africa, Asia and the Middle East to share their holiday celebrations. The guests were all studying in the U.S. for Master's or Ph.D. degrees in chemistry, civil engineering, biology, nutrition, public administration, agronomy or nursing. *"These are the people who shortly will be part of the governments of their faraway countries, and hopefully will impact their knowledge of Western technology and know-how in the fight against starvation, disease and poverty,"* read the press release for the visit. More than two decades later, those fights go on as the IHC continues its important work.

- Spending Christmas more than 6,000 miles away from home was made far more enjoyable when Stephen Kebakile, from Williams College, and Ntebaleng "Tabby" Kgosimokgalo, from the University of Arizona, arrived in Connecticut. The students from Botswana spent the holiday with the Wardell family of Greenwich who were welcoming IHC guests for the very first time. Stephen and Tabby were just two of the sixty-five people placed in American homes for the 1992 Christmas festivities.

Everyone who wants to spend Christmas making new friends has that opportunity thanks to the efforts of the International Hospitality Committee of Fairfield County.

MAKING CONNECTIONS FACE TO FACE TO FACE

Even beyond the "last-Sunday-of-the-month" visits, holiday dinners, June Day and U.N. Day celebrations, more good work gets accomplished by the creative and dedicated members of IHC and the UNA-USA of Connecticut. Here are some examples of the type of projects and programs that have been completed.

- In April of 1961, the Citizens Committee of the Westport-Weston Chapter of the American Association for the United Nations (AAUN) published *"A Welcome to New York, a selective guidebook of introductions to New York compiled for old friends and new Delegates to the General Assembly of the United Nations."* The book, written in both English and French, enabled U.N. diplomats and their extended families to find French-speaking services in New York and, therefore, feel less "lost" in a foreign city.

- Hundreds of representatives to the first World Youth Assembly, conceived by Secretary General U Thant to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the United Nations, traveled to Connecticut towns on July 11, 1970 for a day in the country. The IHC found 300 host families including many with foreign language skills including Japanese, Swahili and Albanian.

That day in New Canaan, a wonderful reunion took place when guest Charles Katungi, head of the press for the World Youth Assembly, arrived at the home of his host to face an immediate flash of recognition. The New Canaan man had once lived in Kampala, Uganda, and had known Charles when he was a small child! And, as New Canaan committee chairman, Anita Houston, recalls, *"The biggest thrill for the guests was not found in the picnic or fireworks, but in the Good Humor truck that arrived with desserts for all!"*

- Throughout the years, UNA-UK members have represented the organization at Model U.N. Assembly programs held in local schools. Supporting these events is a good way to instill in the next generation the importance of extending one's hands and hearts to those who share in the struggle to secure a lasting peace. In 1977, Lord Caradon, British statesman and co-author of U.N. resolution 242 which followed Israel's Six-Day War, addressed local students before he headed to Fairfield University to deliver a

lecture on "The World's Three Danger Spots: Southern Africa, the Middle East and Cyprus" that evening.

- Members of the U.N. Camera Club ventured to Connecticut for a visit at the Brookfield Academy of Photographic Arts (BAPA) in 1977. They were invited by photographer, Gloria Laposka, "to share a day of fellowship and a common interest in photography." After a joint luncheon, all of the avid photographers were accompanied by their hosts for a shooting expedition – with cameras, of course! – in the country. Following a late afternoon seminar on the craft of portrait photography, the enthusiastic U.N. group enjoyed a relaxing dinner with BAPA members.

- The UNA of Westport-Weston hosted a public forum at the Unitarian Church in Westport called "How Can Peace and the Security of All Be Achieved in the Middle East?" on Sunday, June 4, 1978. Author and professor, Dr. Mattiyahu Peled, Major General (ret.) in the Israeli Army and the Chairman of the Department of Arabic Studies at Tel Aviv University addressed the gathering. A question raised on the promotional flyer for the event – "Is there a contradiction between Israeli security and a Palestinian state?" – is one that, sadly, remains unanswered to this day.

- In October of 1986, members and dignitaries from England traveled to Fairfield County hosted by their sister organization. Gen. Michael Harbottle, a founding member of Generals for Peace and Disarmament (now called the International Centre for Peacebuilding), spoke at the Y's Men of Westport meeting. Sunday morning at the Saugatuck Congregational Church, Myriel Davies, British UNA Regional Director, delivered a moving sermon called "One World." The group's home hospitality included many cups of tea raised to toast these friends from across the pond.

- On many occasions, foreign visitors arrived in Connecticut to study the structure and process of local government. Three leaders representing the Ivory Coast, Haiti and Tunisia visited Westport, Norwalk and Bridgeport in July of 1987. Entertained by area families, they enjoyed informational meetings with town officials including a sit down session with Norwalk Mayor William Collins and an opportunity to attend his weekly press conference. Once again, a sharing of knowledge served as the backbone for the day.

"If they meet Americans at our best, to learn how this country, a democracy, works, the socializing is just as important as the programs."

Michaela MacColl
President, International Hospitality Committee

- A similar stopover took place in the mid-1990s when twelve mayors arrived from their hometowns all over Israel, a country Ruth and Herbert Cohen had visited shortly after their marriage. The six Israeli and six Arab mayors were welcomed to a gathering at the Cohens' home one Wednesday afternoon. According to Jane Fix who was present that day, the discussion centered on "...the deep and bitter conflict within Israel." During their stay, the Mid-Eastern politicians also had an opportunity to meet with the First Selectmen of both Westport and Weston in order to learn more about local administrations and their community policies.

Aye-Aye Thant, a UNA-USA member and director of the U Thant Institute, says, "Ruth did this consciously to share her knowledge in an informal way. She taught me that education is the most important thing. Every time I have a chance to share my knowledge, I do. I learned that from Ruth. Her passion to do something good inspired me along with all of her peers, the other women in their seventies and eighties who have done so much." A great deal of informal education took place in Ruth's own living room.

From "A Most Unforgettable Day of My Experience in the United States," an essay by John Huang about his July 4, 1990 visit to Westport:

"At last, it was the time we had to leave. We took the train back to the New York City. We were so reluctant to part: people are so friendly, the food is so good, the air is so fresh, the scenery is so beautiful...."

As most people know, Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen's devotion to her loyal pets – especially her dear cats, Alice and Bröderlein – was as fierce as her commitment to global peace. On one occasion, when the IHC's guest of honor was a Buddhist monk, Alice, who normally favored only her mistress with her affection, spent several minutes circling the monk's sandal-shod feet before she jumped into the holy man's lap and promptly snuggled down among the folds of his russet robe.

The peaceful monk just stroked the purring feline as he continued to share his enlightened view of the world. Those in attendance that afternoon were simply amazed, but many still remember that Ruth never hesitated to ask her visitors to "scootch" over a bit and make room on the couch for Pushkin, her beloved mongrel pup. And no one really seemed to mind.

THE LAST SATURDAY IN JUNE WESTPORT CELEBRATES "JUNE DAY"

Founded in 1965 as U.N. Club Day, one of Ruth's most significant contributions to the promotion of world peace and international understanding celebrates the signing of the U.N. Charter on June 26, 1945. In 1972, it was renamed jUNE Day. This annual event provides an opportunity for hundreds of U.N. civil servants and diplomats to get to know each other, and their Westport hosts, on a personal basis in relaxed social settings. The intention is to build enough trust, confidence and friendship to override political differences.

"Whilst it is not easy to measure the impact of her work in empirical terms, given the scale of Ruth's operation, which continued for over forty-five years, one wonders how many international disputes or misunderstandings may have been averted through the benign influence of the First Lady of Westport with the catchphrase, 'Let's talk.'

Paul Mrazek
UNA-UK, Westminster Branch, London

Even inclement weather did not dampen the success of this much-beloved endeavor. Tennis matches could be played on indoor courts, soccer competitions went on despite the mud, and although boat trips occasionally got cancelled, conversations in many languages enable this global community to gather and make friends in Westport's picturesque and hospitable surroundings.

Due to heavy rain and flooding from Hurricane Agnes, jUNE Day of 1972 actually wound up being postponed until July 30th when everyone finally brought their families to Connecticut. On one memorably wet jUNE Day in 1984, Cleo D'Cruz from India said, *"The weather doesn't bother me."* Commenting on the attempts to salvage the day's program, Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen added, *"This kind of day teaches us all to open up and work with each other to try to solve a disastrous situation."*

This is not at all unlike the cooperative work that occurs at the U.N. when facing any global crisis. When the rain finally subsided, to conclude the day the U.N. Singers conducted by John Motley, in glorious native costumes,

entertained everyone at the Levitt Pavilion. Performances by this talented group have been enjoyed at many UNA-USA events.

Occasionally, too little precipitation proved to be the rule. In February of 1968, based upon a solid prediction in *The Old Farmer's Almanac* for 15 inches of white flakes, Ruth and her committee had planned a weekend of play in the snow for U.N. families. She later wrote to a friend, *"We had no snow, but it had been promised to us up to the minute! Who can one trust to predict the weather? Anyway, I think the idea was a good one and I think we will try it again next year."*

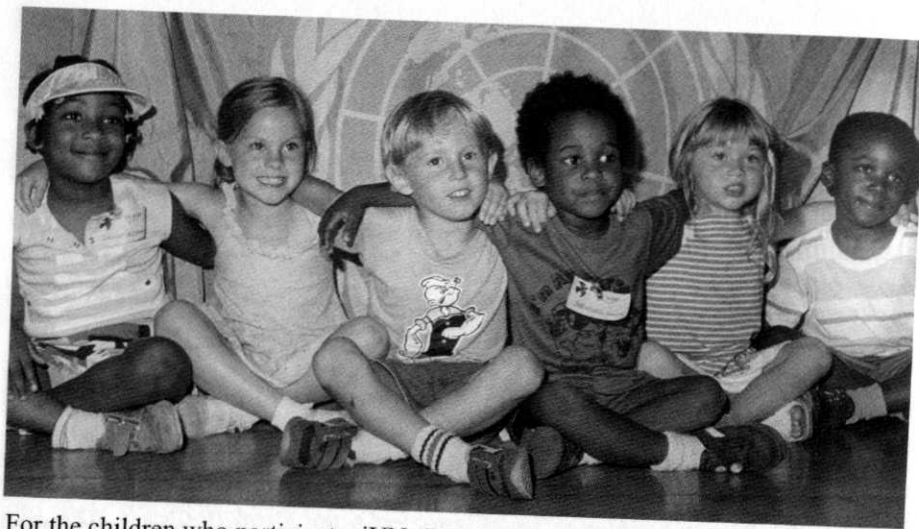
With a festive luncheon, a nature film, visits to the Museum of Art, Science and Industry (now called The Discovery Museum) and a square dance, everyone still had a good time and Ruth's spirit remained indefatigable. With a touch of good-natured humor, the *Westport News'* headline, *"United Nations Snow Weekend a Sunny Success."* The newspaper article concluded with, *"Snow or no, the weekend was a wow."*

In a 1997 letter saluting the annual event, Secretary General Kofi Annan wrote, *"Days like jUNE Day – on which official business may be set aside but when the business of international understanding and cooperation is very much in mind – have great importance for United Nations staff members and supporters alike."* The high point of this annual gathering, especially for Ruth, was the ceremonial rededication to the principles of the United Nations. Most years excerpts from the United Nations Charter were read aloud by children of members of the committee.

"Over the years, the town of Westport and its United Nations Hospitality Committee has shown steadfast support and friendship to the United Nations delegates and staff.... You are a small town, but you share the global vision which inspires us at the United Nations to achieve the goals of the Charter. Thank you for being a grassroots partner in this great challenge."

Boutros Boutros-Ghali
United Nations Secretary-General

In the early years, Ruth funded the costs of jUNE Day herself. In later years, as jUNE Day grew in size, others began to contribute more. However, Ruth would often pick up the tab without a moment's hesitation for something that she felt needed to be done. According to Paul Mrazek, *"Money meant nothing to her except as a means to an end. She was, like her father to whom she had been devoted, an old fashioned philanthropist. She believed that good deeds were a reward in themselves."*



For the children who participate, jUNE Day is a wonderful opportunity to make some new friends. (PHOTO: Courtesy of the Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen Archives)

Seeing the bridge across the Saugatuck festooned with the flags of the U.N. member nations always ramped up the excitement level for hosts and guests alike. Virginia Ruebensaal who has worked on jUNE Day for many years explained, "Just knowing Ruth was an inspiration. Those flags used to be stored in her garage. She paid Staples students to put them up, but Ruth was the one who inspired those flags."

In 1984, three-year-old Maria Rachelle Reyes, of the Philippines, was officially designated the 25,000th U.N. visitor to come to Westport for the annual jUNE Day event. Her mother worked in the Department of Information of the United Nations Secretariat and her grandfather served as Ambassador to the U.N. from the Philippines. The adorable youngster, whose picture wound up on the front page of the *Westport News*, received a globe of the world as a gift from the Committee.

Through the years attractive posters have been used to promote jUNE Day activities. In 1975, artist Peter Landa designed an original Bluebird of Peace that became an instantly recognizable symbol of hope and commitment to furthering international friendships. His soaring symbol, used originally to promote the U.N.'s 30th anniversary, has also been seen flying high to promote other special events.

After many happy celebrations, the jUNE Day committee began the tradition of presenting gifts for the United Nations' Permanent Art Collection. This started with a quilt produced by members of the Westport Historical Society. Since that time other artists and photographers in Fairfield County have donated works that remain on display at United Nations headquarters in

Manhattan. In 2001, Larry Silver shared remarks at the jUNE Day celebration about his work, a black and white photograph called "Runner at Longshore."

"The jogger image is filled with many messages that apply to our lives. The long path in which this person is traveling is filled with many pitfalls. There are ditches and water in the person's way causing great obstacles. He has passed them and through the fog and the uncertainty he is still moving ahead just like the United Nations. He is following a straight and just cause just as you are. Despite the uncertainties ahead and his pursuit on this uncharted road, he will continue to run and forge ahead, as will you."

On jUNE Day of 2005, the International Hospitality Committee presented Linda Merk-Gould's serene painting "Waterfall" to the United Nations. A suggestion was made by a volunteer to reproduce the peaceful canvas on bookplates to be placed inside the books presented by the United Nations for the Town of Westport's library. In this small way, Linda's work will remain on view in Westport each time one of the volumes on the U.N. bookshelf is opened.

"She was a really empowering person, empowering and gracious. I've always been a very capable person, but through Ruth I learned how much more I can do. She had very high standards. Even when saying goodbye to people. You had to wave until the bus was out of sight so... we all waved until the bus was a speck."

Michaela MacColl
President, International Hospitality Committee

In addition to those pieces mentioned above, other works presented by the Town of Westport since the exchange began include Alberta Cifoletti's mixed media acrylic and pastel, "Peace Path"; Andrea Maritzer Fine's color photograph, "National Hall"; Anne Chernow's mixed-media etching, aquatint and watercolor, "Rise 'n Shine"; Jean Woodham's welded, brushed brass sculpture, "Peace Prayers"; Tracy Sugarman's charcoal sketch of three children praying; Barbara Rothenberg's oil on paper, "Bindu - A Seed for Peace"; and Kassie Foss' watercolor, "National Hall."

On jUNE Day, one of the most satisfying aspects for everyone is watching the young children who represent countries from around the globe. When a chubby two-year-old from China with watermelon juice all over his chin meets a blonde peer from Sweden who is consuming a sticky, chocolate-covered donut, smiles fill the entire room. Nothing is more internationally endearing than the spontaneous laughter of children who are having a good time.

OUTSTANDING WOMEN OF CONNECTICUT **THE RUTH STEINKRAUS-COHEN MEMORIAL**

Virginia Ruebensaal's granddaughter actually puts pins into a large world map to keep track of all of the international guests her family has welcomed to their home and turned into friends through the years. Many others who participate have stories about similar relationships that began on jUNE Day.

It was impossible to separate Ruth's love of music from her love of the United Nations. With great delight, she combined both on jUNE Days through the years. In 1997, a concert, "The Symphony for United Nations," took place in the Bedford School auditorium. Conducted by Joseph Eger, the premiere of composer Curtis Bryant's "Cantata for One Earth" was featured.

Shortly after Ruth's death, on jUNE Day 2002, music once again took center stage. A performance by *Musica Plenti*, a vocal chamber ensemble, included a new work by Robert Puelo titled "Cry of the Children." The piece set to music poems written by students of the United Nations International School in New York City. Ruth, who believed that music could give voice to feelings beyond the limitations of language, was honored by this presentation on the first jUNE Day observance after her demise.

From the sweet taste of French pastry for breakfast to the ice cold bottled water consumed after a winning game of soccer or tennis, the flavor of jUNE Day stays with everyone long after the sun has set. "This is my tenth jUNE Day," said one woman from Russia. "We can't wait to come back next year," said another happy guest from India. They leave tired, perhaps a little sunburned, but always reluctant to head home to Manhattan. Even the crew of bus drivers who ferry the hundreds of jUNE Day visitors throughout the day admit they enjoy showing off Westport and its attractions to such curious and grateful passengers.

An event such as jUNE Day cannot succeed without the support from many different sources. The thank you letters Ruth sent each year embraced a wide range of people and organizations: the Town of Westport, Westport Police Department, Westport Recreation Commission, The Westport Historical Society, the Minute Man Yacht Club, Longshore Country Club, Levitt Pavilion, Save the Children Foundation, Earthplace, YMCA's Camp Mahackeno, Bogey's, Dunkin Donuts, Gold's Delicatessen, Great Cakes, Peppermill, Walter Stewart's Market and dozens of other vendors, committee members and host families.

But this is, by no stretch of the imagination, a complete listing of all the generous contributors who make jUNE Day an annual success by opening their hearts, hands and wallets to welcome new international friends. Everyone who has shared the joy experienced by all at a jUNE Day program looks forward to the next one all year long.

The "Outstanding Women of Connecticut Award" was first presented in 1976 as a result of the United Nations Conference for Women that had been held in Mexico City, Mexico the previous year. The awards are co-sponsored by the UNA-USA of Connecticut and UNIFEM, the United Nations Development Program for Women. One hundred honorees were recognized for their work in the fields of development, peace and equality throughout the state. Selections were made by an advisory panel and the awards were bestowed by then Governor Ella Grasso during a special ceremony in Hartford.

The next United Nations International Conference for women took place in 1985 in Nairobi, Kenya. Once again, it was decided to renew the "Outstanding Women of Connecticut Award" using the expanded categories of development, peace, equality, education and health. Winners were publicly honored in 1987 at the Senate Chambers at the State Capitol in a gathering hosted by then Governor William O'Neill.

After the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China in 1995, the UNA-USA of Connecticut decided to select honorees from among the latest generation of women making contributions in the state. A much wider list of strategic objectives including poverty, education, health, violence against women, the economy, power and decision-making, human rights, the media and environment was used to determine the winners. Planning was delayed by Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen's death in 2002, but a dedicated committee, chaired by Michaela MacColl, saw the event to completion the following year.

A decision was made to name the awards in Ruth's memory. All of the women who received the "Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen Memorial Award for Outstanding Women" in 2003 embodied, as did Ruth herself, the talents that enable a determined woman to set clear goals and stay on course until those objectives have been met. A large percentage of the honorees of that year had worked closely with Mrs. Cohen on a wide range of shared passions and causes. Ruth would have truly enjoyed the gathering held in Hartford that day.

RUTH STEINKRAUS-COHEN A PASSIONATE LIFE

Born on June 8, 1920, in Cleveland, Ohio, Ruth was raised there and, from 1929 on, in Westport, Connecticut, by her loving parents, Herman and Gladys Tibbetts Steinkraus. As their eldest child, Ruth was followed by her sister, Marjorie, born in 1923, and her brother, William (known as Bill), who arrived to complete the family in 1925. Hers was an active home where learning and the exposure to, as well as active participation in, the arts held equal value for all three of the Steinkraus children.

Ruth's father, whose family had emigrated to the mid-West in the mid-1880s from East Prussia in Germany, was a graduate of Western Reserve University and a highly decorated veteran of World War I. After the war he married and started his own small business which he dissolved in order to join the Bridgeport Brass Co. as a sales executive. He eventually rose to become its President and Chairman of the Board and a nationally known authority on labor/management relations.

A director of many major businesses and business organizations, Steinkraus' leadership skills were recognized by his election to the Presidency of the United States Chamber of Commerce in the 1940s. Following World War II he also became a co-founder of the Barnum Festival, still a major state highlight, and was a co-founder of the Connecticut Symphony. An active supporter of the United Nations, from 1964 to 1967 he would serve as the president of the American Association for the United Nations (AAUN) which was the precursor of the UNA-USA.

According to his son, "*My father was very dynamic, very magnetic in dealing with people and very successful in business because of it.*"

Ruth's mother was born in Dover, New Hampshire and became a Boston University Phi Beta Kappa, a school-teacher and an early suffragette. She had an unquenchable interest in people and in scholarship and passed these interests on to her children. Gladys believed that children should be encouraged to pursue activities that they selected themselves, and thus she ended up as a very active supporter of Ruth in her study of piano and singing, Marjorie in acting and the piano, and Bill in the violin and horseback riding. Her own special interests included acting, the study of comparative religions, Gilbert and Sullivan and the breeding of English collies.



A formal publicity portrait of the young pianist taken early in her career. (PHOTO: James Abresch, Courtesy of William Steinkraus)



Ruth poses for a school portrait from the 1930s.
(PHOTO: Courtesy of William Steinkraus)



Ruth often referred to music as *"the true international language"* and she demonstrated the validity of this description throughout her long and fruitful life. (PHOTO: Courtesy of William Steinkraus)

As a teacher, Gladys was much impressed by the progressive ideas of Mabel Thomas, founder of The Thomas School in Rowayton (now part of King & Low-Heywood Thomas) and all three children spent some years at The Thomas School from which Ruth graduated. Miriam Bergamini, who first met the Steinkraus siblings there during the 1934-35 school year, remembers Ruth as *"an impressive young lady, very scholarly and very bright. She was always very gracious and kind."*

According to Ruth's brother, *"The Thomas School had a big influence on all of us because they emphasized languages, music, arts and stressed creativity."*

Ruth's love of languages, evident in her extensive library filled with numerous foreign texts in their original languages and well-worn foreign language dictionaries, was to become a great asset in her later work on behalf of the United Nations. In addition to fluent French she had good working knowledge of German and Russian, some fluency in Italian and Spanish and phrase-book skills in many other languages, including Chinese.

After Thomas, Ruth spent two years studying liberal arts with a major in musicology at Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, New York. While singing in Vassar's choir, she met First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt when the student performers were invited to sing at the Roosevelt's stately home in nearby Hyde Park.

"Ruth probably learned to be a people person from my mother and father. She was not necessarily innately inclined that way because so many of the things she loved – reading, studying and doing her work – were, in a way, solitary pursuits. Ruth did not start out to be the person she would become, but gradually evolved into that person over time."

William Steinkraus

After leaving Vassar in 1942, Ruth studied writing, music, and international affairs at Columbia University. She also furthered her music skills under the tutelage of celebrated pianist, Sascha Gorodnitski, in the Music Performance Department at New York's world-famous Juilliard School. Her love of music and her pianistic gifts became a theme that ran through everything else she did. Mary Keane, her close friend and fellow UNA-USA member, said, *"Ruth never held a program without music."*

Her vocal training and choral experience led Ruth to audition for Robert Shaw's Collegiate Chorale, which became Toscanini's chorus of choice for

performing and recording works like the Brahms and Verdi Requiems and the Beethoven Ninth Symphony. Thanks to the recommendation of a fellow Chorale member, Ruth became the literary editor for the New York music publisher, G. Schirmer, and also edited non-fiction as a freelancer for such firms as W.W. Norton and Dodd, Mead & Co.

While living in Manhattan, Ruth's formal education also encompassed courses taken at New York University and The New School, but her informal studies continued for the rest of her life while traveling and reading. The walls of her home were filled with thousands of books and Ruth was once asked whether she had read them all. She promptly explained that she wouldn't consider owning a book that she hadn't read. When Mary Marquardt asked her where she found so much time to read, Ruth immediately replied, "At stop lights."

Though she always spent weekends with her family, Ruth returned to live in Connecticut permanently in the mid-1950s. There, whether in her family's home or eventually her own, she played the piano for several hours a day, as she was to do for the rest of her life. Her talent as both pianist and harpsichordist led to innumerable concert performances and recitals, recordings, weekly chamber music sessions with several different groups of musicians, and later, teaching.

For several years she hosted her own classical music program, "Music for a Sunday Evening," on WICC in Bridgeport and also wrote a weekly music column, "Music as it Sounds to Me," for the *Bridgeport Sunday Herald*. To share her passion with others she lectured on music for a decade at the University of Bridgeport's Shakespeare Institute and was a co-founder and program director for many years of Westport's "Friends of Music" concert series.

Ruth said that her many musical activities, far from being exhausting, were actually very energizing, and had taught her the skills she needed to accomplish so much. It was the concentration and self-discipline she learned at the keyboard, she believed, that enabled her to undertake and complete such a wide range of long-term projects. During the course of a long life, many thousands of people were able to derive pleasure and knowledge from Ruth's talent and love of learning. She often referred to music as "*the true international language*" and demonstrated the validity of this description throughout her long and fruitful life.

A mutual love of music brought Ruth into contact with prominent attorney and avid amateur violinist, Herbert L. Cohen. A Yale College and Law School graduate, Cohen was a founding partner of the noted Bridgeport law practice, Cohen & Wolf, and was Board Chairman of the Connecticut Symphony Orchestra when Ruth appeared as a soloist with it, and also at the

Connecticut Pops concerts, in the 1950s. Common interests, and a shared belief in the critical importance of the United Nations, gradually brought them closer together, and on December 26, 1963, Ruth and Herbert were married.

Several months later, they received a hand-calligraphed scroll that reads in part, "*Therefore, the directors of the American Association for the United Nations of Westport, Connecticut do hereby proclaim to Mr. and Mrs. Cohen their gratitude, their love and affection, and wish many exceedingly happy and dedicated years to these united people.*"

"Ruth didn't see boundaries between nations. She saw the entire world as one community and she united people using music, art and literature."

**Mary Keane
UNA-USA and IHC member**

The Cohens' shared intelligence, humor and love of music, art, travel and world politics enabled them to sustain an active partnership that thrived until Herb's untimely death in 1983. Ruth's family life included Mr. Cohen's two daughters from his first marriage, Mary-Lou and Carol. In addition, Herb and Ruth developed a close relationship with the family of Om Prakash Sharma, a noted Indian painter and sitar player. This included his daughter Mukta, whom Ruth always affectionately referred to as her "adopted" granddaughter, and Mukta's children whom Ruth considered her great-grandchildren. Her roles as step-mother, mother, grandmother and great-grandmother brought Ruth great joy and complemented the relationships she had with friends around the globe.

In 1965, Ruth and Herbert attended the Conference of the World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA) held in India. After the gathering concluded, Mr. and Mrs. Cohen spent six weeks touring India. Ruth told the *Bridgeport Sunday Post*, "*We saw working democracy at the grassroots level, in the small, poor villages, closely paralleling the New England town meetings.*" Just one of countless trips the couple took to further their knowledge, they said they found off-the-record relationships between East and West to be "*most cordial.*" In the *Post's* photograph of the couple, Ruth is wearing a big smile and a flowing sari.

Traveling brought them both great pleasure and a talented new addition to their household. During a two-week vacation to Haiti in 1965, Perry Joseph, who worked on the staff of Hotel Ibo Lele in Pétionville, stepped into their lives in what would eventually become a lifelong association. Won over by

Mr. Joseph's warmth and professionalism, the Cohens asked him if he would consider coming to America to work for them. Flattered, he said, "Yes," but he also told them other guests had made similar offers, but had ultimately forgotten about him once they left the island. Nothing could have motivated Ruth more than hearing those words.

With some additional help from their friend, Connecticut's Senator, Abraham A. Ribicoff, it still took two years to arrange for a green card so Mr. Joseph, whom Ruth would lovingly call "Joseph" until the day she died, could come and accept his challenging position in Westport. With great excitement, he finally left his homeland and flew to the United States on a chilly December 27, 1967.

Perry Joseph ran the Cohen's household with a gigantic smile – and some very memorable recipes – that made an impression on every guest who walked through the door. Whether he was cooking, cleaning, gardening or dropping off the U.N. *Calendar for Peace* at the Westport Post Office, he enabled Mr. and Mrs. Cohen to set ambitious goals and reach them easily. Haiti's loss became, as Bill Steinkraus once said, "*an indispensable general factotum*" loved by all.

Although Ruth and Herbert had seen exotic places such as Nepal, Cambodia and Sri Lanka, her favorite cities were London and Paris where she told the *Bridgeport Sunday Post*, "*The roots of the democratic process began.*" She described her philosophy on the real *art* of traveling with these words, "*Don't think of getting away from it all, but more about getting into the middle of it all.*" With that succinct explanation one can easily understand why Ruth welcomed "*the middle of it all*" to visit Westport.

"Ruth was so intuitive. She had the ability to recognize everyone's unique gifts or talents and then let you put them to work. Ruth made all of us stretch and she was constantly telling us 'You can do it!' Through her generosity of spirit Ruth taught us all the value of giving and receiving."

**Helen Maxie
UNA-USA and IHC committee member**

An avid hostess, Ruth always welcomed visitors to her own home. In her guest books, between signatures of international as well as local visitors, she occasionally recorded a menu. One, presented to eighteen people on Easter Sunday, April 23, 2000, noted a meal of lamb, baked potatoes, asparagus, carrots, peas and onions; avocado, arugula and tomato salad; three different strudels (apple, cranberry, walnut); and wine, coffee, orange or cranberry juice. She also added a notation regarding an Easter egg hunt which must

have been a delightful exercise on the grounds of the Cohens' beautiful Darbrook Road property!

Anyone who had ever been entertained there might tell you if the Easter Bunny had chosen to dine at anyone's table, it would surely have been that of Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen. This skillful hostess even posted signs on the changing room doors beside the swimming pool at her home that read "men" and "women" in ten different languages! As you might expect, comments scribbled in her guest books reflect how gracious Ruth could be to both lifelong friends as well as to strangers who had arrived for their very first visit. One greeting left behind – "*Endeavor forever*" – seemed to capture the essence of Ruth's entire life.

During her final months, when each visitor became more precious than ever before, Ruth's front door, left unlocked during the day to speed each guest's entry, sported the messages WELCOME and BIENVENU, as well. The bronze statues that guarded that well-trod portal – silent, but steadfast Chiengmai dogs – were beloved by all of her guests.



The Steinkraus siblings Ruth, William and Marjorie share a smile in 2000.
(PHOTO: Courtesy of William Steinkraus)

RUTH STEINKRAUS-COHEN **TAKING HER LEAVE**

Some believe that Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen accomplished more than any politician and – by not running for office – she did it by simply being herself. During her lifetime she received many awards for her unstinting efforts to better her community and communities around the globe.

These include: Westport Citizen-of-the-Year Award, 1967; Westport Bar Association Liberty Bell Award, 1980; Judeo-Christian Women's Association, Profile in Courage Award, 1980; Outstanding Woman of Connecticut Lifetime Award, from Governor William O'Neill, 1987.

Never one to slow down, even beyond her seventieth birthday, Ruth added honors as a Community Leader, *Stamford Advocate*, 1990; Metro International Fulbright "Volunteer" Award, 1991; "Point of Light," President Bush, 1991; Sacred Heart University Community Service Award, 1990; Westport "Sunrise" Rotary Paul Harris Award, 1997; UNIFEM Award presented at Fairfield University, 1999; and Volunteer of the Millennium, U.S. State Department and *USA Today*, 2000, one of only thirty-two chosen in the United States.

"I truly miss her as if she were part of my family. She made us all feel important and loved and part of a grand enterprise."

Caroline Bridgman-Rees
Past President, UNA-USA of Connecticut

As Ruth's eightieth birthday approached a celebration was planned to be held on the evening of June 11, 2000 at Westport's Town Hall. In Ruth's typically all-embracing fashion, the invited guests included every resident of the town. The joyous event is still talked about by those who turned out to help honor the community's Ambassador of Peace. Westport's First Selectwoman, Diane Goss Farrell, said of Ruth, "I always felt I was so lucky to be in her presence." The festivities concluded with Ruth playing the piano followed by a standing ovation and a well-deserved champagne toast.

The following year, a long, un-credited birthday poem found in Ruth's archives ended with the words, "Happy Birthday, Ruth! You've worked for peace, not war! Happy Birthday, Ruth! And, many, many more!" No one who knew her even casually remained unaware of the focus of Mrs. Cohen's lifelong passion.

Each year the UNA-USA organization presents the "Arnold Goodman Award" to the most outstanding member in the country. Presented to Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen in 2000, it is the highest award given to anyone on the grassroots level.

Ruth's community involvement was not limited to the United Nations. She also found time to launch and serve as president of the Westport-Weston Arts Council; co-founder and chairperson, Friends of Music; co-founder and board member, Performers of Connecticut; co-founder, co-chair, Opera New England; board member of the Opera Company of Boston, Young Audiences of Connecticut and the University of Bridgeport; and a member of the Arts Advisory Committee for the Town of Westport.

Prior to her death on May 26, 2002, the Connecticut Division of UNA-USA honored her achievements by creating the "Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen Award." Given annually, the recipient receives a formal certificate and has the opportunity to meet with a prominent individual connected to the United Nations. To date, honorees have included Lisl Standen, Richard Griffis, Miriam Bergamini and Caroline Bridgman-Rees.

In July of 2000, to honor Ruth's work that put Westport on the map as a welcome place for United Nations members to visit, the town officially made the IHC a formal part of the town's government. This decision enabled Westport's First Selectwoman or Selectman to appoint members to the committee and guaranteed that the work of the group would continue long after Ruth could carry on. This also transferred to the town the responsibility for storing all the U.N. flags that had resided in Ruth's garage for so many decades.

Having set countless numbers of people on new paths, one of the phrases that Ruth heard most frequently was, "You have changed my life." Guided by the United Nations Charter, she did that by consistently reaching out to touch the world around her. Ruth's timing, often flawless, remained evident even at the end of her life.

"When I learned Ruth had died," says Paul Mrazek of UNA-UK, Westminster Branch, "my first thought was to check the entry for the day in my U.N. Calendar. It was the anniversary of a landmark decision by the International Court of Justice in the Thailand-Cambodia temple dispute.

Ruth regarded the I.C.J. as potentially the single most important part of the U.N. system."

A Memorial Meeting in the Chapel of the Church Center for the United Nations took place on November 7, 2002. In between a musical prelude and postlude, the speakers included James A. Paul of the Global Policy Forum; the UNA-USA's Liz Marmanides and Harry H. Lerner, CCCUN; followed by personal remembrances by many of Ruth's friends. Beneath a contemplative photograph of Mrs. Cohen on the program were the words from *Desiderata* (1692) that had hung in her office, "...Whatever your labors and aspirations, in the noisy confusion of life keep peace with your soul. With all its sham, drudgery and broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world...."

"Ruth's interaction with every aspect of her life from the U.N., to Hugo Grotius, to her cats, to her piano, were all infused with enthusiasm. The depth of her spirit had an impact on people. Ruth's rewards were magnificent and reverberated in everyone she left behind."

**Irving Stolberg
President, UNA-USA of Connecticut**

During U.N. Week of 2004, the Town of Westport held a Town Hall concert in Ruth's memory. In addition to remarks by Anne Marie Flynn and William Steinkraus, the New York Chamber Soloists, an ensemble that Ruth had loved and supported, performed moving works by Handel, Albinoni, Saint-Saëns, Mozart, Rossini and Telemann. The quotation that had been inscribed on the sundial in Ruth's beautiful garden, "*Use well these bright but fleeting hours,*" appeared on the commemorative program distributed at the event.

A compassionate condolence note, written to the husband and children of a close friend in 2000, revealed Ruth's own feelings about the end of life, something she rarely, if ever, talked about in public. "*Knowing, what we close to her knew. That her life had lost some of its quality because of what will come to all of us! – a worn out body – and eternal spirit.... We talked a lot about getting into our 80s and passing on. I am following her quickly – although I don't want to – she is now at PEACE. How lucky you are to have lived with such a remarkable, caring human being for so long. My sympathies spring out to you! What can I do for her memory?*"

Many people who worked with Ruth knew that she believed she had a guardian angel watching over her. When deadlines were fast approaching, an event budget was tight, or yet another host family needed to be found within the hour, she often said, "*My guardian angel will take care of it.*" Inevitably, whatever Ruth needed seemed to appear just in time. One might wonder if

simply by surrounding herself with like-minded, dedicated volunteers, Ruth herself didn't grease the skids for all of those "angelic" manifestations.

One touching bit of irony, left behind in Ruth's wide-ranging archives, lay at the bottom of a carton beneath a pile of thick scrapbooks. One gilt-trimmed, green leather guest book, filled with dozens of empty pages, rested there all by itself – save for Ruth's ubiquitous "RSC" initials jotted in ink inside its front cover. Anticipating the next welcome visitor never abated for this optimistic citizen of the world.

The highest tribute Ruth can be paid is for us to guarantee that the ideals she believed in are furthered; the peace she longed to sustain be sought; and the life she lived to the fullest continue to serve as a shining example of what one truly passionate human being can accomplish.



Ruth relaxes at home with her beloved Brüderlein. (PHOTO: Robin Fellows, Courtesy of the *Westport News*)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In addition to my research in her archives, this text grew out of exchanges with many individuals who knew and worked with Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen. I offer my sincere thanks to everyone who helped to make this project a success. I believe that Ruth - with her "guardian angel" beside her - are watching over all of them still.

The Honorable Joseph P. Arcudi, former First Selectman of Westport; Miriam "Hoppy" Bergamini; Caroline Bridgman-Rees; Anne Chernow; Mollie Donovan; The Honorable Diane Goss Farrell, First Selectwoman of Westport; Andrea Maritzer Fine; Jane Fix; Richard Griffis; Anita Houston; Perry Joseph; Mary Keane; Dr. Harry Lerner; Michaela MacColl; Chris Marquardt; Mary Marquardt; Helen Maxie; Paul Mrazek; Manfred Noetzel; Barbara Raymond (Westport Historical Society); Ambassador Joseph Verner Reed; Virginia Reubensaal; Stephanie Rosenblatt; Barbara Rothenberg; Ann Sheffer; Greta E. Solomon; William Steinkraus; Irving Stolberg; Tracy Sugarman; Aye-Aye Thant; Mary-Lou Weisman; the extraordinary, skillful reference staff at the Westport Library; Eileen Wiseman (Westport Arts Center) and Jean Woodham.

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Jane R. Snyder

UNA-USA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Students. Teachers. Everyday citizens. Business leaders. Policymakers. Local and international civil servants. These are only a few of the faces representing the global community that is the United Nations Association of the United States of America (UNA-USA). In cities and towns nationwide, UNA-USA is determined to educate, inspire and mobilize Americans with the goal of broadening their knowledge, interest in and advocacy on the work of the United Nations. Our vision is a world in which humanity is spared the scourge of war, human rights are honored, the natural environment is protected and the United States is a constructive member of the United Nations for the well-being of all nations. UNA-USA is a not-for-profit, nonpartisan organization that encourages active civic participation in the most important social and economic issues facing the world today. As the nation's largest grassroots foreign policy organization and the leading center of UN policy research, UNA-USA offer Americans the opportunity to connect with issues confronted by the UN. www.unausa.org

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"Use well these bright but fleeting hours."

The quotation that was inscribed
on the sundial in Ruth's garden.

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A DAY OF PLAY

WESTPORT JUNE DAY
SATURDAY JUNE 24, 1978



HOST FAMILIES OF FAIRFIELD
COUNTY WELCOME UN
FAMILIES TO A FULL DAY OF
TENNIS, GOLF, SOCCER,
BADMINTON, BASKETBALL AND
SWIMMING AT LONGSHORE COUNTRY
CLUB
AND A FREE CONCERT BY THE
UN SINGERS AT THE LEVITT PAVILION.
8:00 P.M.