

***The Year Without an Autumn : PORTRAIT OF A SCHOOL IN CRISIS* by Robert Rossner.
Richard W. Baron [Publisher]. New York. 1969**

**Rossner's Part 1. Spring, 1968. Summer, 1968
Rossner's Part 2. September-November, 1968
Rossner's Part 3. Winter, 1968-69. Spring, 1969**

"Of a normal enrollment of 3,200, and a normal absence rate of fewer than ten percent, 1,500 BxSci students are absent this day, and half that number are marching in front of the school. The smaller group that parades there is composed of teachers---30 of the school's normal staff of 180." [Page 4]

"The school---Bronx High School of Science---is known to the outside world for the studious sobriety of its children, and for a highly selective, highly pressurized education that gives its graduates an edge on the college scholarship market. In 1968, the building is new---bounded on the north by De Witt Clinton High School; on the south by the campus of Lehman College; on the east by the train yards of the Independent Subway line; on the west by a city reservoir." [Page 6]

"The students have always been younger than their counterparts; Jewish; middle class and unathletic; overprotected, provincial and unworldly; and provided with a set of excellent, experienced teachers who perfectly mirror their backgrounds, attitudes and values." [Page 6]

"There is more of a mix now at Bronx Science. There are numbers of students---and teachers---who refuse to buy the old order. There are students who are interested only in the humanities and have nothing but contempt for the sciences." [Page 7]

"This story starts on the day the rocks were thrown: April 26, 1968.
' When the day finally arrived," student Dana Driskell said, "and there were 700 out there, nobody was more surprised than I was.' " [Page 9]

"What accounted for the turnout was the event that shook all of America on April 4, 1968---the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr." [Pages 9-10]

"One student, in his social studies class, complained that he'd ' heard nothing but Martin Luther King ' since arriving in school, and wondered whether the death of one man was really worth the disruption of all classes." [Page 11]

"There was no sign of decorum in the teachers' cafeteria that day. Teachers were muttering. ' Taffel is letting those kids run over him,' Nat Glikzman said. A large number of teachers drafted a strongly worded letter of protest to the principal. Joe Cotter, a member of the English department---and one of the two deans of discipline---complained that nobody had a right to force students and teachers to sit through a speech, and added, ' It is presumptuous for a sixteen-year-old girl to tell me how to run my country.' " [Page 13]

"Dr. Alexander Taffel, who was appointed principal of Bronx Science in 1958 after many years as a successful teacher (his physics textbook is a classic in its field) is a rather attractive, intelligent, smooth-spoken and somewhat antiseptic figure. Basically a decent man, seeing himself as the voice of the middle way (i.e., the middle class) he has consistently antagonized both ends of the spectrum at the school. Taffel's primary efforts have been aimed at reducing tensions, measuring the velocity and direction of the winds of change. It has been his wish that change would just go away---not because he personally is opposed to change but rather because he senses that the majority of the teachers and parents are." [Pages 13-14]

Students, parents, teachers---can you spare some changes ?

That's the question asked by Robert Rossner, teacher of English at Bronx High School of Science. According to Rossner, author of this book, change is something they---students, parents, teachers--- do not want.

"Of course, we have our special types" (as Tevye the milkman of Anatevka says, in "*Fiddler on the Roof*) :
a few rebellious students at Bronx Science...
a few unconventional teachers, also at Bronx Science...
a few involved parents...
a few peace-makers...

...and among the peace-makers was Dr. Alexander Taffel, physicist and school principal (1958-77) who bore the brunt of efforts to introduce change moderately---and not so moderately.

Who else bore the brunt ? Miniscule groups of peacemaker-parents, peacemaker-teachers and peacemaker-students.

Peacemaker-alumni ? Hardly.

As it turned out, the peacemakers had to bide their time until the tide of public opinion, ebbing and flowing, began slowly---ever so slowly---to turn in the direction of moderate change.

Other changes occurred : Mayor (1966-73) John Vliet Lindsay stepped down at Gracie Mansion. Governor (1959-73) Nelson Aldrich Rockefeller concluded his service in Albany. President (1963-68) Lyndon Baines Johnson chose not to run for re-election and Richard Milhous Nixon entered the White House.

One major problem---a conflict in far-away Vietnam--- finally came to an end, with the USA on the losing side.

So what remained during the 1970s and later ?

Among other things, a continuing struggle to overturn slavery and its consequences, with Obama's election---two generations later--- a sign of change.

Also : efforts to gain parity for Latinos and Asians with the dominant group, the Jews of Bronx-Science, were partly successful. As Jews (including author Robert Rossner

) abandoned the Bronx---and the Bronx High School of Science---more Latinos and Asians saw new opportunities : Latinos become dominant in the Bronx, as Asians became dominant at Bronx Science.

But that is another story, which continues even today the onward-moving saga of sporadic changes in the Bronx, and at the Bronx High School of Science.

Robert Rossner's book may well be the only non-fiction book about BxSci ever published in the USA or possibly anywhere else in the world. Perhaps the one and only non-fiction book in the entire history of BxSci, beginning from 1938.

Rossner focused on a period of about one year : from Spring 1968 to Spring 1969.

This analysis (below) focuses only on the 39 teachers he mentions.

Frequency of mention:

How many times each of the 39 teachers is mentioned by Rossner

HEITNER 155 mentions

MAZEN, H. 91 mentions

SCHWARTZ 74 mentions

STROM 50 mentions

GLIKSMAN, N. 48

ROSENFELD 34

CAFARELLA 32

RIFKIN 27

BECKENSTEIN 17

COTTER. NADEL. RAE 15 mentions each

SLACK 12

ROSSNER 11

GOLDMAN 9

BONACCI. HOLZMAN, J. 8 mentions each

LITTMAN 6

NEUGEBAUER 5

HOROWITZ 4

FALK. LEVY. RUDICH 3 mentions each

ALEXANDER. EDLITZ. KARPf. LAWNER. MAZEN, B. 2 mentions each

One mention of :

Falkenstein, Feingold, Feit, Force, Gelfand, R. Gliksman, E. Holzman, Jaffee, Lumish, Traister, Walsh

Five teachers (of the 39 mentioned) were on the same side of the controversy: "Should BxSci remain *open* during the work stoppage or should it close ? ")

The five are : Heitner, Henrietta Mazen, Schwartz, Strom and Rossner. They wanted Bronx Science to re-open, and remain open, during the city-wide conflict.

Twenty-seven persons in various positions of authority---influencing the Bronx HS of Science during 1968---and specifically mentioned by Robert Rossner in his book.

This list reflects the complexities of the power struggles and the decision-making process affecting the Bronx High School of Science in 1968 and 1969, when much of the USA was rent by assorted conflicts and crises.

Listed alphabetically

***Allen, James E.* State commissioner of education...Albany**

***Bloom, Mrs. Max* District School Board member...Bronx**

***Breinan, Al* administrative assistant to the principal, BxSci**

***Brown, Nathan* City deputy superintendent of schools [in New York City] ...110 Livingston St., Brooklyn NY**

***Cotter, Joseph* co-dean of discipline, BxSci**

***Degnan, Walter* the elected president, Council of Supervisory Associations [in New York City public schools]...also Office of the Principal, DeWitt Clinton High School. Bronx NY**

***Doar, John* president, Board of Education [for New York City schools]...110 Livingston St., Brooklyn NY**

Donovan, Bernard E. City superintendent of schools [in New York City]...110 Livingston St., Brooklyn NY

Galamison, Milton A. member, Board of Education [for New York City schools]...110 Livingston St., Brooklyn NY

Heitner, Louis coach, track & field team, BxSci

Hopkins (first name ?) City associate superintendent of schools [in New York City]...110 Livingston St., Brooklyn NY

Houghey (first name ?) school-building custodian-in-chief, BxSci

Johnson, Lyndon Baines the elected president of the United States, and advocate of USA involvement with the French colonial war in Vietnam during 1964-1968

King, Martin Luther, Jr. religious advocate for mass passive resistance and civil disobedience in the 1960s; assassinated in 1968

Leary, Howard the appointed commissioner of police...New York City

Lester, Seelig associate superintendent of schools, and appointed the person-in-charge of Brooklyn Tech, BxSci, LaGuardia and Stuyvesant high schools on October 18, 1968...office at 110 Livingston St., Brooklyn NY

Lindsay, John Vliet the elected mayor of New York City, with authority to fill vacancies on the Board of Education, and to declare public schools closed (or open)...City Hall, Manhattan NY

Mazen, Henrietta the acting department head, Mathematics, BxSci---and later appointed acting principal of BxSci, by Seelig Lester [see above]

Nadel, Max the department head, English, BxSci

Rae, Giles a co-dean of discipline, BxSci

Rivkin, Theodore the elected chairperson, steering committee, BxSci unit of United Federation of Teachers

Rockefeller, Nelson Aldrich the elected governor of New York

Rossner, Robert appointed in 1968 as one of three co-deans of discipline at BxSci, by the school principal, Alexander Taffel [see below]. Taffel disappeared for a while during the conflict in the autumn of 1968 at BxSci but Rossner remained at his post

Shanker, Albert the elected president of United Federation of Teachers

Shapp (first name ?) the appointed superintendent of one neighborhood school district in the Bronx that includes the 75 West 205th Street school-house we call Bronx Science

Taffel, Alexander the appointed principal at BxSci, 75 West 205th St., Bronx NY, during the 1960s

Wilkinson (first name ?) the elected president of BxSci Parents' Association

Amazon had no new or used copies of this book (by Robert Rossner) for sale on June 16, 2010.

Abe Books has no new or used copies of this book.

Barnes & Noble : no copies for sale.

alibris.com has one used copy for sale. Asking price : \$144.62