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Ruth Roberts, 'Meet the Mets' Songwriter, Dies at 84

By PETER KEEPNEWS
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Ruth Roberts, a songwriter best known for her cheerful and durable baseball anthem ["Meet the Mets,"](#) died on Thursday night at her home in Rye Brook, N.Y. She was 84.



Ruth Roberts

The cause was lung cancer, said her brother, Sam Roberts.

Among the many songs written by Ms. Roberts and various collaborators were "First Thing Ev'ry Morning (and the Last Thing Ev'ry Night)," written with and recorded by Jimmy Dean, and "Mailman, Bring Me No More Blues," originally done by Buddy Holly and [recorded by the Beatles in 1969](#) at a session for their album "Let It Be," although their version was not released until 1996. But she is probably best remembered for "Meet the [Mets,](#)" which beat 18 competitors to be chosen as the New York Mets' official song in late 1961, before the team ever played a game, and was introduced to the public in 1963.

Written with her longtime collaborator Bill Katz (she provided the music and worked with him on the lyrics), "Meet the Mets" was described last year in The New York Times as "memorable" by Dave Howard, the Mets' executive vice president for business, and as "endearing" by Bob Thompson, founder of the Baseball Music Project. It has also been described in less charitable terms.

In a tongue-in-cheek analysis in The Times in 1963, Leonard Koppett wrote: "There is little in the score of interest to a mid-20th-century audience. The harmony is traditional; no influences of atonality or polytonality can be found. In fact, it's sort of un-tonal."

Certainly the upbeat, sing-songy melody of "Meet the Mets" is not complex. Neither are the words, which originally began "Meet the Mets, meet the Mets./Step right up and greet the Mets," and included the claim — optimistic in the Mets' early days, when they were the worst team in baseball, and unrealistic now that they play in the cavernous Citi Field — that "the Mets are really sockin' the ball,/Knockin' those home runs over the wall."

The lyrics were largely rewritten in 1984 (Ms. Roberts and

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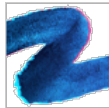
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Swoan Parker for The New York Times

"Meet the Mets," written with her collaborator Bill Katz, is featured at the Mets Hall of Fame in Citi Field.

Mr. Katz were not involved in the rewrite). The reference to home runs was removed, as were the arguably sexist words that preceded it: "[Bring your kiddies, bring your wife/Guaranteed to have the time of your life.](#)" But the insistently high-spirited tune remained virtually unchanged, and it continues to be heard regularly on radio, on television and at all of the Mets' home games.

"Meet the Mets" was not the first sports-themed song by Ms. Roberts and Mr. Katz. Their previous collaborations included "Mr. Touchdown, U.S.A.," recorded by Hugo Winterhalter's orchestra in 1951; "[I Love Mickey.](#)" recorded by Teresa Brewer and Mickey Mantle in 1956 (Ms. Brewer did almost all the singing, with Mantle occasionally interjecting "Mickey who?"); and "It's a Beautiful Day for a Ballgame," which was played for many years at Los Angeles Dodgers home games.

Ruth Mulwitz was born on Aug. 31, 1926, in Port Chester, N.Y., to Robert and Lillian Mulwitz. (The family later changed its name to Roberts.) After graduating from Port Chester High School, where she began writing songs, she studied at Northwestern University and the Juilliard School of Music.




Later in her career she wrote and produced musical pageants for schools.

Ms. Roberts's marriage to Gene Piller, who occasionally helped her write songs, ended in divorce. In addition to her brother, she is survived by two grandchildren. Her son, Michael Piller, died in 2005, and her sister, Constance Markoff, died this year. Mr. Katz, her songwriting collaborator, died in 1988.

Friday's Mets-Yankees game at Citi Field included a tribute to Ms. Roberts — ending, of course, with a singalong of "Meet the Mets."

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





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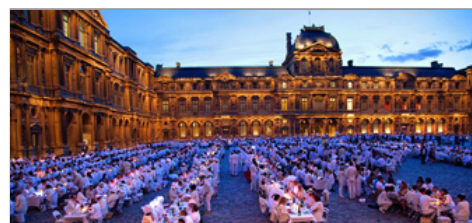
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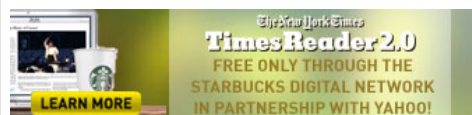
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