

## THE SCIENCE AND ART CLUB 1980-2000 TWO DECADES OF CHANGE

The Science and Art Club of Germantown has probably changed more in its last two decades than it had in the previous 100 years of its existence.

When the Science and Art Club was founded in 1880, the world of course was a very different place from what it is now. Queen Victoria ruled over an extensive British Empire, and Rutherford B. Hayes occupied the White House. America's women were not permitted to vote for their political leaders, and in Philadelphia people still traveled the streets in horse-drawn vehicles. Science and Art was thus founded as a men's club, and its membership was limited to "gentlemen of Germantown and vicinity," according to its Rules.

The world changed, of course, and eventually the Science and Art Club also changed. During the 1980's, the Club overturned three long-standing traditions. The most obvious change was the decision, in 1984, to admit women as members of the Club. The Club also changed two other traditions that presumably were also inherited from its 19th century founders: its procedure for selecting new members and its dress code for meetings. These three changes transformed Science and Art from a conservative Victorian men's club into a lively, modern, and diverse group of men and women.

The admission of women, particularly, in the words of former president Maurice C. Clifford, M.D., then also president of the Medical College of Pennsylvania, gave "this venerable organization a new lease on life."

Women had, however, participated in the Science and Art Club virtually from its beginning. Since 1903, at least, the Club's Rules have stated, "The member entertaining the Club shall send notices of the meeting to the members, including the wives of such as are married."

Throughout the years women also frequently addressed the Club. The first time was in 1889, in the first decade of the Club's existence, when a Miss Beaston spoke to the group about "The Victories of the Liberals under Gladstone" on April 23. The Club records do not tell who Miss Beaston was, but she was popular enough as a speaker that she was invited back within less than a year. On January 14, 1890, Miss Beaston discussed "A Glimpse of the 18th Century," and on April 27, 1897, she talked to the Club for a third time, about "The Land of the Vikings."

Other women spoke to the Club or entertained musically---singing or playing the piano or other instrument---on more than 110 other occasions in

the 104 years prior to 1984 when women became members. Among the notable women speakers was Catherine Drinker Bowen, who has written biographies of Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Francis Bacon and the composer Peter Tchaikowsky, among others. On December 8, 1947, Mrs. Bowen talked to the Club about "Making a Biography."

And on November 28, 1955, Elizabeth Gray Vining addressed the group. Mrs. Vining had tutored Emperor Akihito of Japan when he was a boy and wrote of her experiences in a book called *Windows for the Crown Prince*. At the Science and Art Club, Mrs. Vining discussed "The Place of Poetry in Japanese Life."

Among current members of the Club, several of the women gave presentations to the group before 1984. Stephanie Wolf, Ph.D., who is an historian, spoke about "Germantown Past" on November 26, 1973, and "Germantown Past and Present" on May 19, 1980. Charlotte (Chim) Stokes discussed "Fish of the Caribbean" on May 23, 1977. Chim is an artist who has illustrated a book on this subject. She is also a talented sculptor, and she made a second presentation, on "The Art of Casting a Bronze Statue," on April 25, 1983. Martha Mertz, who designs and makes jewelry and is an expert on gems, discussed the tantalizing question, "Will This Ruby Buy a Ferrari?," on October 25, 1982.

And when it was a man's turn to make a presentation, "the women really did most of the work," says Cynthia Root, whose late husband Charles (Chuck) became a member in 1964. "The men scheduled the meetings, but it was the women's job to take care of all the mechanics. We addressed the invitations, and we got the refreshments. That was really more of a job than deciding what to talk about."

Bernice (B) Mitchell, whose late husband Robert Buchanan Mitchell became a member in 1948, agrees. "The wives did everything. We arranged all the social part of the evening. The men did not do that."

It was in 1920, of course, that American women attained the right to vote, and it was in the 1960's that a new feminist movement flared up in the U.S. Exactly when the gentlemen of Germantown first considered the possibility of admitting women to the Science and Art Club is not known, however, because the Club's records are very incomplete. The Club's Executive Committee did start discussing the subject at least by the early 1970's and then discussed it on and off for more than a decade. However, the record of the substance of these discussions as preserved in the minutes is sketchy.

In March 1973, "one benighted member," according to the minutes, did suggest "that consideration might be given, the prohibition against sex-discrimination being what it is today, to the Club extending membership beyond 'gentlemen' to 'gentle ladies.'" (Webster's Third New International

Dictionary defines the adjective "benighted" as meaning "in a state of intellectual, moral or social darkness.") "The suggestion," the minutes continue, "was quickly, decisively and negatively disposed of without more than a minimum of discretion."

In March 1977, the subject came up again in the Club's Executive Committee, and after some discussion, the committee decided to put it off, agreeing "to discuss it at a future meeting."

In October 1979, the question was again discussed "at some length. ... The membership is still divided on the matter and it seemed best to let the matter ride." However, "It was decided to retain the male membership aspect of the Club but henceforth have all mailings be addressed to Mr. and Mrs. to avoid accentuating the male membership." Apparently no one noticed that that's what the Rules had said all along.

At the very same time in 1979 that the men were maintaining the men-only status of the Club, however, their wives were actively involved in planning the Club's 100th Anniversary celebration, the gala Centennial Banquet held on May 19, 1980, at the Wharton Sinkler Estate in Wyndmoor. Heidi Schumann, Elizabeth Anne Hord and Sarah Dees were on the Dinner Committee. Stephanie Wolf, Elizabeth Barber and Martha Gummere were on the Booklet Committee. And Cynthia Root, Margaret Doms, Patricia Clifford and Narcissa Hargroves were on the Entertainment Committee.

At the Centennial Banquet itself, two of the speakers---in front of the full membership of the Club---raised the issue of women becoming members. Club President F. Joseph Stokes, Jr., in his opening remarks, mentioned "the importance of the ladies to the success of our gatherings" and added, "Many of us feel that it is now time that the ladies, if they so wish, be included in our Club in some way other than just as guests."

And Master of Ceremonies Charles D. Root, Jr., in his closing remarks, said, "I hope and expect that this Club will eventually recognize its responsibilities and accept into full and equal membership women as well as men."

As it turned out, it would take the gentlemen of Germantown another four full years to realize Chuck Root's hope.

There were actually no specific objections to women as members, recalls Edmund B.(Ned) Spach, Jr., former President Judge of the Superior Court of Pennsylvania, who was an officer of Science and Art and a member of the Executive Committee from 1981 to 1984. "It would be unfair to say that there was anti-woman sentiment."

One concern was what to do about widows of members. Should they continue to attend meetings? Should they be invited to become members? Or should they become members automatically? And what if a widow remarried?

Should her new husband be invited to join the Club? What if he did not fit in? And what if a couple separated?

"These were obviously not very substantial objections," points out Judge Spaeth.

"The discussions that I remember," he continues, "were brief and perfunctory, and there wasn't anybody who felt like forcing the issue. Inertia, I think, was the main thing. Some of the men felt, 'What is wrong with the Club as it is? We have always done it this way. We've been going along fine, so why make the change?'"

Albert (Ted) Wolf, who was also on the Executive Committee during these discussions, agrees that there were no specific objections to including women. "It was only tradition," Ted says. "It was only the fact that the by-laws read 50 gentlemen of Germantown."

"Once a group has been around for 100 years, people have a very hesitant approach toward making any changes," Ted adds. "It becomes kind of sacred. It's very difficult to get anything changed."

To William Zucker, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania and also a member of the Executive Committee, the forces that kept women out of the Club "were male chauvinism and Victorian pique."

There was in the Club, at this time, a group of older men who had been brought up in a conservative fashion, explains Earle (Bud) Barber, Jr., who was on the Executive Committee from 1969 through 1983 and president of the Club from 1981 to 1983. "So many times in our discussions, these men would just say that it's not the way it's been done. Actually, it wasn't necessarily a matter of age; there were some young men who kept to the old ways, and there were some older men who were very progressive. But a lot of men felt that adding women was going to be the demise of the group."

The situation, not surprisingly, angered a number of the wives. Chim Stokes, particularly, says, "I felt very strongly about it. The work all fell on the women, but it was the men's club. Joe knew how I felt; I wasn't shy about saying what I thought." Cynthia Root recalls, "Chim and I used to complain about it a lot."

Finally, in 1983, when Judge Ned Spaeth became president of the Club, "I thought that the time was long overdue," he says, "and that the membership should do something about it. And I brought it to an issue." In December that year a questionnaire was mailed out to all the men in the Club, simply asking, "Should women be members of the Science and Art Club?"

A few men did vote against including women, recalls Bud Barber, chairman of the committee that tallied the votes. One man, who refused to vote yes or no on the issue, replied, "I'm sure that the time and energies of all of us were better devoted to more pressing social causes." However, the

overwhelming majority of the men voted in favor of including the women as members.

To accomplish this, it was necessary to revise the Club's Rules. A Rules Committee, with Bud Barber as Chairman, and George Denniston and Joe Stokes as the other members, mailed the proposed revisions out to the men in April 1984. Rule III, which had said "The number of members shall be limited to fifty and shall consist of gentlemen of Germantown and vicinity" was changed to "The number of members shall be limited to about one hundred and shall consist of ladies and gentlemen of Germantown and vicinity."

While the Rules Committee was at it, they also proposed some other changes to the Rules. See page 24 of this booklet for a copy of these new (and current) Rules. See also page 27 for a copy of the previous Rules marked with the 1984 changes.

At the annual meeting of the entire membership on May 21, 1984, the gentlemen of Germantown formally adopted the results of the two mailings: they welcomed their wives as full members of the Science and Art Club, and they also adopted the revised Rules.

It was further decided that the wives' memberships would be retroactive. That is, the date on the membership list of a woman's joining the Club was to be the date that her husband had originally joined. And it was to be the same with widows: their dates of joining would be the years that their late husbands had joined.

With the women now fully on board, the ladies quickly began to play a prominent role in the Club's leadership. That fall of 1984, Cynthia Root was appointed to the Nominating Committee. A women first became an officer of the Club in 1986 when Catherine (Kitty) Fessenden became secretary. She served as secretary from 1986 through 1988, as vice-president from 1988 through 1990, and was president of the Club from 1990 to 1991. Cynthia Root followed in Kitty's footsteps and was secretary from 1988 through 1990, vice-president from 1990 to 1991 and president during the 1991-1992 season.

The first time that a single woman joined the Club---not as half of a married couple---was in 1994, when Janet Mitchell Krejs, daughter of Bernice and the late Bob Mitchell, became a member. By this time Science and Art Club members were so used to women members that no one noticed she was a first.

About the same time that women became members of the Science and Art Club, the Club also opened up its method of selecting new members.

For as long as anyone could remember, the Club's procedure for electing new members was a lengthy and time-consuming process. "It always involved prolonged discussions about each candidate for membership," says Bud Barber "The process sometimes could go on as long as a year."

These discussions were followed by a secret ballot on each candidate. "There was actually a beautiful, antique, wooden box," Ted Wolf recalls, "which was passed around from hand to hand. The box had black balls and white balls in it. You could pick out either a white or a black ball and put it in the other compartment. And then at the end, if there was even one blackball in the judgmental compartment, that was the end of that person."

Many of the Club members objected to this blackball system, particularly the secrecy. "It was outrageous," says Judge Spaeth. "If you are going to object to somebody, you should do it openly, not anonymously. And you should explain your reasons. That would be only fair to the person being considered, and actually it would also be only fair to the Club, because the members should know what they are doing."

Many members also objected to the fact that a single black ball could defeat a candidate's election. "That shouldn't be," says Bud Barber, who is a lawyer by profession. "The majority should rule." (Actually, the Rules said, "Two adverse votes shall defeat any election," but again, apparently no one looked at them.)

And of course it was "cruel to turn somebody down," says Cynthia Root. "A lot of the women thought it was a terrible system. A lot of us worked on getting rid of it."

It was rare that someone was actually blackballed, but it did happen occasionally. There were several men who were turned down, says Bud Barber, "because of their reputation in business or because their personality was felt to be incompatible with the group. I always felt more at ease, when the ballot box was used, if there were three or four black balls in it, because then it showed that there was more thought given to the vote."

It further developed that some of the black members of the Club found the very word "blackball" offensive. "Several found the term objectionable," Bud Barber recalls. "Finally, we just decided to do away with the box."

In the spring of 1984, when the Club revised the Rules to allow for the admission of women, the men also formalized the change in the procedure for selecting new members. They got rid of the secret ballot by striking out the sentence in the Rules that had read: "All elections shall be by ballot." And they also increased the number of adverse votes that would defeat a person's election from two to four.

The ballot box itself was retired with some ceremony and some humor. In May 1985, at the Club's First Annual Dinner at the Germantown Cricket Club, George Denniston, Nominating Committee Chairman, formally presented the box---which, according to the minutes, "had been dressed up to look like a person"---to Chuck Root. No one now remembers what Chuck did with the box or what ultimately happened to it.

Since then the procedure for admitting new members to the Science and

Art Club has been totally open and very simple. Prospective members are invited by their sponsors to attend at least one meeting of the Club. The sponsor writes the Club a letter of recommendation about the person, including biographical information. Then a note with a brief biography of the candidate is mailed out to the full membership, asking for any comment.

Presumably if four members objected to a candidate, the Rules would be invoked and the person would be turned down. This has never happened, however. No member has ever commented, and no prospective member has ever been turned down.

And if a member who is single marries, or a widowed member remarries, the new spouse automatically becomes a member of the Science and Art Club if he or she wishes.

Finally the president of the Science and Art Club sends a welcoming letter to the new member, together with a packet of information about the Club. Another note is also mailed to all the members, notifying them about the new member and providing them with his or her address and phone number to add to the membership list.

The third major change of the 1980's---the relaxation of the dress code---seems to have been more contentious than either the admission of women or the demise of the ballot box. Again, for as long as anyone could remember---presumably since the Club's founding in 1880---men had worn tuxedos to meetings, and women had worn long, formal dresses.

As times were becoming busier, however, and more and more of the women were working outside of the home, many members were finding that changing into formal dress was becoming a nuisance. "It was always a squeeze," Cynthia Root recalls. People had to get home from work, have a quick supper, struggle into evening clothes, and those who had children had to deal with the baby-sitters. "A lot of working couples just wouldn't go," says Stevie Wolf, "because it was just too much trouble."

More importantly, "the members of the Club were becoming concerned that this requirement might be discouraging some people from joining," explains Ted Wolf, president of Science and Art from 1986 to 1988. "It got to the point that when we would look for new, and particularly younger, members, some candidates didn't have tuxedos---and weren't about to get them."

Everyone was surprised, however, when they looked at the Club's Rules, to discover that not only did they not specify tuxedos, the Rules actually state, "Evening dress is not a requirement of the meetings of the Club."

In late 1987, while Ted Wolf was president, another questionnaire was mailed out to all the members, this time asking whether the dress code needed improvement and if so how. (The Science and Art Club is a very democratic organization: the entire membership does like to vote on such issues.) "A

definite majority" of the members, says Ted, voted in favor of dropping the requirement for tuxedos.

Accordingly, at the April 1988 meeting of the Executive Committee, it was decided "that the dress code for meetings should be relaxed to something like 'informal and appropriate,' which will allow suits, shirts and ties for men and less formal dresses for women."

"Most people were happy," Ted says, "but there was still a lot of objection to the termination of tuxedos. Some people were really upset, because they felt that it was tradition and also that it lent a touch of class to the meetings." As president, Ted says, "I got some nasty letters."

To this day some members feel that something was lost when the Club dropped the requirement for evening clothes. "It was very much a party every month, because we were so dressed up," says B Mitchell. "The organization lost its uniqueness. The formal dress gave a distinction to the Club that is missing now. Yet I wouldn't want to go back, because it is very much easier to do it this way."

These last two decades of the 1980's and 1990's have also seen a number of less momentous changes in Science and Art Club procedures.

In 1987, the Club changed its usual location for meetings. It is up to the host and hostess for a given meeting to choose and make arrangements for a meeting place, but for a long time the group had most often met at the Unitarian Society of Germantown, 6511 Lincoln Drive. The Unitarian church was becoming more expensive, however, and in mid-1987, the group decided to change. Since then the Club has most often met in the Social Room of Germantown Friends Meeting at 47 West Coulter Street.

In 1992, the Executive Committee voted to abolish the office of vice president---without bothering to change the Rules. By tradition, a person who was elected secretary automatically served for two years in that position, two years as vice president and finally two years as president. The committee felt that it was too much to ask a person for a commitment of six-year's time. Also, the committee noted, the vice president's only duty, other than to be president-in-waiting, was to substitute for the president when he or she could not attend a meeting, a role others could easily fill.

The Executive Committee also did away with the tradition of a person's automatic succession from secretary to president. The reasoning was that the qualities in a person that make a good president do not necessarily make a good secretary and vice versa.

The committee also began a new tradition of having a husband and wife serve together as co-presidents. From 1992 to 1994 Nancy and Steven Bauer were the first couple to so lead the Club. Since then, the Club has continued to elect couples as co-presidents. See page 30 for a listing of the presidents and



other officers during this period.

The Club has also expanded its membership geographically, again without bothering to change the Rules, which limit membership, it will be recalled, to "ladies and gentlemen of Germantown and vicinity." Germantown itself has changed, of course, and travel has improved significantly since this Rule was written in the 1880's. If people "are interested in its objects," as the Rules specify, and are willing to come to meetings, the Club now places no limit on where members live. If someone wants to drive to Germantown from the Main Line or New Jersey or elsewhere, that is fine.

One longtime tradition somehow just got lost. The host and hostess for each meeting, their guests, and the outside speaker (if any) used to form a formal receiving line near the door, greeting members as they arrived and introducing their guests. Season after season, the Club's secretaries, in their instructions to presenters, would plead, "Please form a receiving line," but it has been a long time since this has happened.

Another change made without bothering to revise the Rules was in the procedure for scheduling presentations. The Rules say, "The secretary shall assign the meetings to be held to members in rotation." Today it has become a major duty of the Club's presidents to make these assignments. The presidents attempt to shape each new season, balancing presentations by old and new members and trying to ensure a variety of topics.

The fact that the Club dropped the automatic succession of officers, from secretary to president, means that in a given season both the president and secretary can be new to the Executive Committee. This means that the Club has had some loss of continuity and loss of institutional memory. Some traditional Club procedures have disappeared simply because the incoming officers did not know about them.

The Club used to routinely keep attendance at meetings. The Rules specify, "When a member is absent from eight successive meetings, official inquiry shall be made by the Nominating Committee as to the cause of such absence; and unless satisfactory reasons for it exist, such member shall be considered as having resigned from the Club." This has not happened in a while.

The Club also used to keep summaries of members' presentations. The summaries from January 1980 through April 1990 are published on pages 37 to 72 of this booklet, but since then the summaries have not been kept because no one knew that this had been done. It was also forgotten that the officers used to keep fat record books, in loose-leaf binders, which included not only the program summaries but also the membership lists; attendance records; minutes of Executive Committee meetings; and correspondence about new members, resignations and other matters. These record books were handed on from officer to officer and saved for the Club's archives.

These procedures---taking attendance, keeping summaries of programs and

keeping record books---are now being reinstated.

Some long-standing Science and Art Club traditions, however, have fortunately not changed. Participation in the Club often tends to be a family affair. Over the years, there have been, among others, six Yarnalls, five Perots, five Rhoadses, five Whartons, five Wistars, five Spaeths, and four Strawbridges.

Among current members of Science and Art, a number are second-generation members. William Hord is the grandson of Frank J. Firth, a member from 1881 to 1882 and again from 1884 to 1903. Elizabeth (Betty) Bodine is the daughter of Stanley P. Reimann, M.D., a member from 1948 to 1968, and Elsie Reimann, a member from 1948 to 1988. David Fischer, M.D., is the son of current member Dorothy Fischer and the late Keith Fischer, M.D., a member from 1967 to 1995. Janet Mitchell Krejs is the daughter of current member Bernice (B) Mitchell and the late Robert Buchanan Mitchell, a member from 1948 to 1993. Oscar E. Mertz, Jr. is the son of the late Oscar E. Mertz, a member from 1935 to 1962.

And the late Charles H. Haines, who was a member of Science and Art from 1980 to 1989, was the son of one of the founders of the Club: Reuben Haines, who was a member from 1880 to 1886.

The prize, however, goes to Sally Smith Kise, who is a third-generation member. Her mother, Eleanor Houston Smith, was a member for 37 years, from 1950 to 1987. Her father, Lawrence M.C. Smith, was a member for 25 years, from 1950 to 1975, and her maternal grandfather, Samuel F. Houston, was a member for 16 years, from 1936 to 1952.

Another continuing tradition is that Science and Art members tend to remain members of the Club for long periods of time. Among current members, 10 people have been members for 30 years or more:

Bernice A. Mitchell, 52 years.  
 Elizabeth Anne Hord, 51 years.  
 William T. Hord, 51 years.  
 Elizabeth R. Bodine, 49 years.  
 Jonathan E. Rhoads, M.D. 47 years.  
 Charlotte C. Stokes, 39 years.  
 Cynthia C. Root, 36 years.  
 Earle N. Barber, Jr. 33 years.  
 Elizabeth H. Barber, 33 years.  
 Dorothy S. Fischer, 33 years.

Three of these people---Bernice (B) Mitchell, who joined in 1948, and Elizabeth (Bizanne) and William (Bill) Hord, who joined in 1949---are

approaching the all-time record of 54 years, set by Harold L. Davis, Jr., a member from 1906 to 1960.

This tendency for people to remain members of the Science and Art Club for many decades means that many members have organized numerable presentations. Betty Bodine; Bizanne and Bill Hord, and Dr. Jonathan Rhoads have given presentations seven times. Chim Stokes and B Mitchell have planned six presentations. And Betty and Bud Barber, Dorothy Fischer, and Cynthia Root have all arranged presentations five times.

As The Science and Art Club of Germantown celebrates its 120th Anniversary this year, and as the world celebrates the new century and the new millennium, the members hope that this venerable Club will persist for another 120 years and more, and that descendants of its current members will be celebrating Science and Art Club anniversaries well into the future.

Marion Steinmann Joiner