

MIT
WOMEN'S
LEAGUE

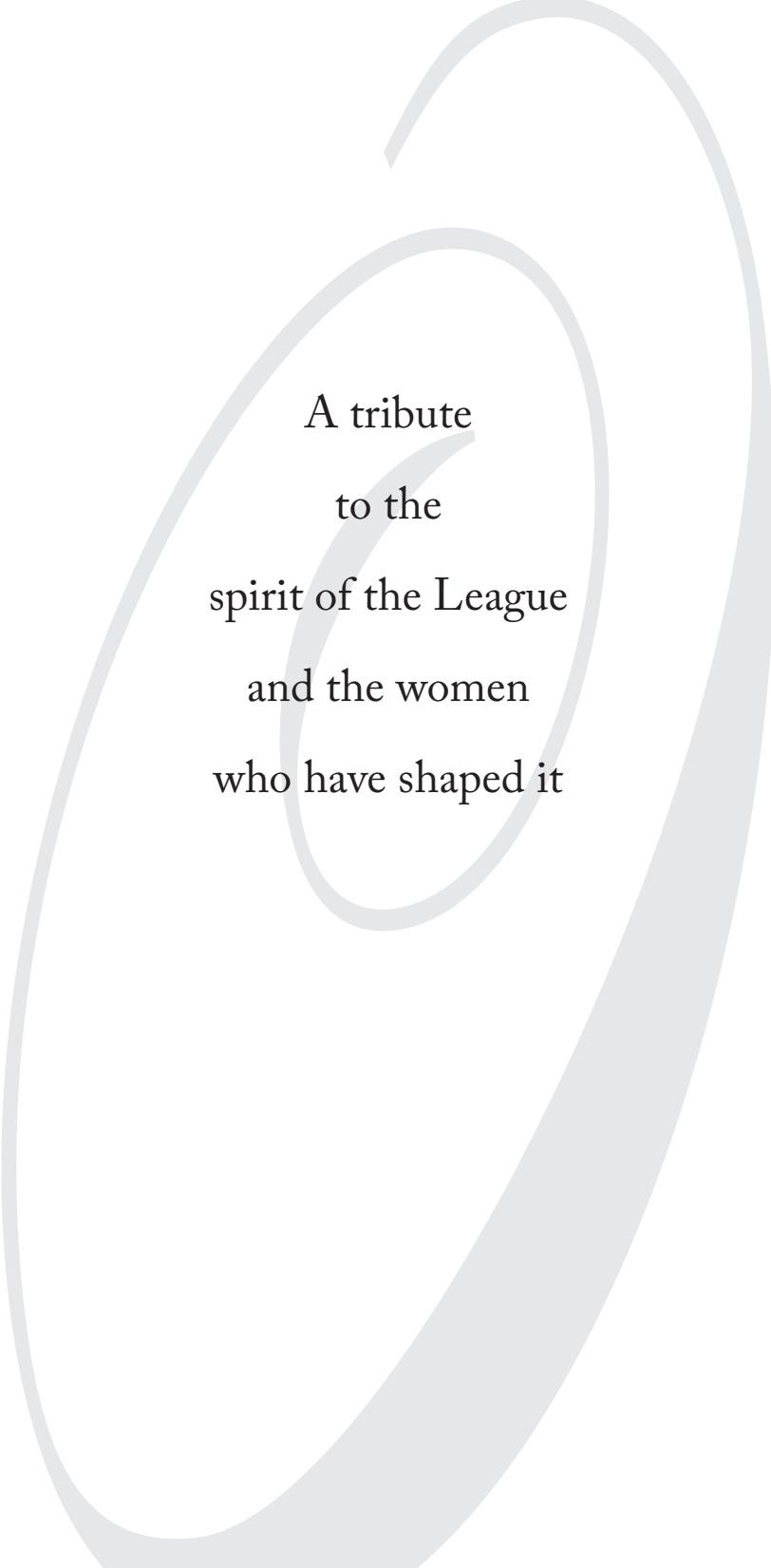
A century of
community service



MIT
WOMEN'S
LEAGUE

The logo for the MIT Women's League. It features the words "MIT", "WOMEN'S", and "LEAGUE" in a bold, sans-serif font. The "WOMEN'S" word is larger and centered between the other two lines. The entire text is contained within a light gray, stylized oval shape that has a slight gradient and a subtle shadow, giving it a three-dimensional appearance.

**A century of
community service**



A tribute
to the
spirit of the League
and the women
who have shaped it

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P R E F A C E

From early in the Institute’s history, there was a clear and important role for women. Originally, the role focused on service, which took the shape of social events—teas and dances—for faculty and administrators and their wives. Today, decades later, the roles for women have greatly expanded, even extending to the presidency. What hasn’t changed, however, is the importance of community service, a role with which the MIT Women’s League has identified itself throughout its 100-year history.

An archive search for material about the League uncovers a wealth of information about its origins and growth, and the remarkable volunteers who have shaped the organization over time. It wasn’t until 1994 that the League identified the need to chart that growth. The result was a concise, easily readable booklet and a narrative that distilled 80 years of the League’s story. A decade later, in 2004, the history was updated with an addendum that concluded the Vest years. This year, in honor of its 100th anniversary, the League has undertaken a fresh redesign and update of the publication to capture the full century of community service.

This new booklet is organized into sections based on the Institute’s leadership, since each presidency provides a readily recognizable time frame and the president’s wife has served as honorary chair of the League. So, for example, the Stratton years from 1958 to 1966, when Catherine (Kay) N. Stratton was the League’s honorary chair, form one section. Each section begins

with a list of the board chairs who served during that time period, along with a few select events of the era, at the Institute and world wide. The background sketch is a partial view of the Ionic column capital, as seen from the Emma Rogers Room. The following narrative describes the activities of the League in some detail. Accompanying quotations, drawn from the recollections of its members, reflect the spirit of the many women who have made the League a dynamic, vital, and positive force serving the MIT community.

Although this portrait encompasses only a portion of the League's history, it does reflect the collective experience. While it isn't possible to name all the women who have contributed so much to building the organization, this publication is a tribute to *all* of the women who have shaped the League over its rich 100-year history.

JANUARY 2013



BEGINNINGS

1898 - 1930

CHAIRS

Mabel Jackson	Edith Spear
Florence Spofford	Bertha Williams
Alice Pender	Frances Talbot
Mary Dewey	Mary Goodwin
Edith Spear	Sara Robbins
Mary Sumner	Florence Owen
Harriet Clifford	Carrie Langley
Alice Tyler	Eleanor Jack
Mrs. Heinrich Hofman	Mary Dewey
Elizabeth Cram	

1861	MIT incorporates
1898	MIT tuition \$200 per year
1902	Wright brothers' first airplane flight
1920	U.S. women gain right to vote
1929	Stock market crash; depression begins

HIGHLIGHTS

MEMBERSHIP 100 TO 500

- 1898 • Ladies of the Institute meet informally
- 1913 • MIT Technology Matrons formally adopt constitution and by-laws; board consists of chair, vice chair, secretary, and social chair
- 1916 • Emma Rogers Room dedicated for use of Matrons
 - First tea held in the Emma Rogers Room
 - Mrs. F. Jewett Moore (Emma) initiates fund for Matrons' teas
- 1917 • Matrons volunteer with MIT War Services Auxiliary
- 1918 • During flu epidemic, four convalescent homes established—MIT women volunteers perform 1,399 days of nursing care
- 1919 • Foreign Students Committee created
- 1922 • Technology Dames, an organization for student wives, begins as a Matrons sub-group
 - By-laws amended; board positions raised to two-year terms

B E G I N N I N G S

~ 1898 – 1930

REACHING OUT IN FRIENDSHIP

Although the MIT Women's League dates its formal beginning to 1913, it evolved from a tradition established as early as the Institute itself. Emma Savage Rogers, wife of MIT's founder and first president, in her tireless devotion to the Institute, personified what the League has come to stand for. Throughout her husband's two terms as president (1862 to 1870 and 1879 to 1881) and until her death in 1911, she generously opened her heart, her home, and her resources to help make the Institute a more friendly and congenial place.

Recognition of these origins is reflected in the designation of the Women's League home on campus and the center of its many activities—the Emma Rogers Room. This richly paneled room, with its large windows overlooking Killian Court and the Charles River, houses the portraits of three past honorary chairs. As members of the Women's League enter this room they are reminded that they are part of a rich, vital, and unique heritage. The familiar portrait of Emma Rogers that hangs outside the Emma Rogers Room was painted in 1906 by artist Ernest L. Ipsen.

Since the late 1880s, wives of MIT professors and administrators had been meeting informally for tea and other social activities in Boston. When the Massachusetts Institute of

"The League has always been a strong force at MIT. Presidents' wives have given time and effort to its affairs and have worked closely with each chair."

– Betty Rentjes

Technology opened its doors in Boston for classes in 1865, there were five faculty and fifteen students, but both numbers grew steadily. Records of early faculty wives, though scant and undated, describe events such as teas, dances, and a “pleasant thimble party.” There is also a reference to “a possible 70 ladies” participating at one of the early teas. These get-togethers, uniting wives of faculty members and administrators, were the seeds of the Technology Matrons.

By 1913 the faculty numbered 106 and faculty and administrators' wives continued to meet informally. Mrs. Richard C. MacLaurin (Alice), whose husband was president of MIT from 1909 to 1920, recognized that formalizing this association of women would benefit both the women and the Institute. A constitution was drawn up and by-laws were adopted. Initially, the name, The Emma Rogers Organization of Technology Matrons, was chosen, but within a month it was abbreviated to Technology Matrons—a name that endured for sixty-two years. The objective of the “Matrons,” as they became affectionately known, was stated in the by-laws: “to promote sociability among families of the administration and instructing staffs of MIT.”

Until 1916, funding for the Matrons' activities came from dues and a modest charge for teas. At that time, Mrs. F. Jewett Moore (Emma), first vice chair, who had been instrumental in developing the aims of the Matrons, generously provided a \$2,000 fund for the Matrons' social activities. Mrs. Moore made additional donations during her lifetime, specifically requesting that no dues be required of members, and that the income be used to further Matrons' affairs, social or otherwise. Today the Moore Fund, increased by member donations, continues to support many League activities, and in keeping with Mrs. Moore's wishes, no dues are charged to members.

Both Alice Maclaurin and Emma Rogers are remembered with appreciation by the Women's League today. Next door to the Emma Rogers Room, separated by a kitchen that serves both, is the Alice Maclaurin Room (formerly the Margaret Cheney Room). Initially allocated for MIT women's use, the Alice Maclaurin room is now mainly used by the administration. The Margaret Cheney Room, endowed in 1884 by Miss Cheney's parents for women students, was relocated to building 3, room 310, in 1940.

Social activities remained an important part of the Matrons' agenda, although it was not long before they began to undertake service projects. The early 1900s was a time of vast expansion and change for MIT. In 1916 the Institute moved from Boston to its present location in Cambridge. In 1917, when the country entered World War I, the inherent nature of the Matrons to respond to changing needs and circumstances was first set in motion.

The League is valuable for me as it provides an opportunity to get to know faculty, administration and students, and to understand the purpose and values of MIT.

— Jean Brown

REACHING OUT IN WORLD WAR I

Under the auspices of the MIT War Services Auxiliary, the Matrons joined other MIT women in a multitude of war-related activities. Through the war years they collected, packaged, and arranged overseas shipments of "comfort bags"—clothing, towels, books, soap, and other items for distribution to MIT servicemen. In 1919 there were 1,759 MIT servicemen registered with the MIT Technology Workroom, and their appreciation of the Matrons' efforts is noted in the files. A cable from the Tech Bureau Director in Paris reads: "Sweaters etc. causing great rejoicing. Tech only college doing it. All envious. Don't stop sending." A soldier from overseas wrote: "I wish I could convey the value of the work your auxiliary has done for the men abroad...Tech

women are taking the lead over all other colleges. The material and moral value are great...we really feel the women we left behind are backing us up."

During the period from the end of World War I to 1929, the Institute enrollment grew to 3,066 with a faculty of 515. Unfortunately, Matrons' records of this period are not available. An extensive search for early files was made in 1962 but to no avail. It was surmised that they had been inadvertently destroyed when they were removed from the Emma Rogers Room during the 1958 redecoration. Subsequent to the war, however, it appears that the Matrons returned to an emphasis on social activities and reaching out to students' wives.

R E A C H I N G O U T T O S T U D E N T S ' W I V E S

Many faculty wives, then as now, came as newcomers to Cambridge. If they chose to join the Matrons, a welcoming community introduced them to an Institute beyond their husbands' departments and provided social contacts and opportunities for volunteering. But what of students' wives, many of whom were also newcomers? Mrs. James R. Jack (Eleanor), a Matron recently arrived from Scotland, empathized when she visited one shy young wife and learned that she had spoken to no one from MIT but her husband since her arrival in Cambridge three months earlier. In 1922 the Matrons responded to Mrs. Jack's concern by formally establishing a students' wives' subgroup—the Technology Dames. This group provided a structured setting for students' wives: lunches, formal dances, dinners, and evening meetings with Matrons filled the early years. Service projects followed.

Mrs. Jack became "La Grandma" to the Dames and rarely missed a board meeting or social event until her 90th year. Her loyalty to MIT never faltered, her enthusiasm never dimmed, and her death in 1965 was deeply mourned.

The Matrons' history is filled with such women—loyal, encouraging, noble, and dedicated to serving the aims of their organization.



The Emma Rogers Room in the early 1900s



MARGARET HUTCHINSON COMPTON 1930-1949

CHAIRS

Mary Dewey
Anne Norris
Esther Schell
Eugenia Blanchard
Louise Horwood

Martha Whitman
Emily Porter
Elizabeth Killian
Steena Soderberg
Hester Pitre

1930	MIT tuition \$400 per year
1933	F.D. Roosevelt elected
1938	MIT united under one campus
1942	Pearl Harbor attacked
1945	World War II ends
1945	United Nations established

HIGHLIGHTS

MEMBERSHIP 500 TO 1,484

- 1931 • Foreign Students Committee subdivided into the Foreign Student Hospitality Committee and the Foreign Students Housing Committee
- 1933 • Interest groups started; enrollment high
- 1935 • First *Bulletin* printed and mailed to all members
- 1938 • Secretary-Treasurer board position created
- 1941 • New Members Committee Chair established
- 1943 • *Bulletin* editor becomes member of board
- 1946 • Over thirty Matrons honored with Red Cross "100 Hours" awards
- 1949 • Matrons celebrate 50th anniversary of the "Ladies of the Institute" coming together for tea
 - Program Chair established
 - Red Cross program ended; 43,000 hours volunteered, 67,000 items produced
 - A play, "The Academic Life of Margaret Compton," written by Matron Mrs. Richard Bolt (Kay) is presented by the Cambridge Playhouse at the Matrons' annual meeting

COMPTON

~ 1930-1949

REACHING OUT TO

A GROWING ORGANIZATION

The 1930s were a busy time for the Matrons' organization, which had grown to over 500 members. As the membership increased, however, it became increasingly difficult for so many individuals to become acquainted. In 1933, Margaret Compton chaired a committee of Matrons that established special interest groups. She believed these groups would not only provide a fresh focus for women of like interests to come together but would also add a new dimension to the organization. Time has confirmed those views. Throughout the years, additional groups, formed in response to members' interests, have varied in content from crafts, sports, and education to social activities. Some flourished for a while and others have endured over the years.

The first interest group, the Chorale, was established by Mrs. George Scatchard (Billie), an assistant professor of music at Smith College and a Matron. The Chorale has met weekly since 1933 and has had only five conductors in its more than sixty-year existence. Membership is international, representing more than twenty-five countries. Everyone who wants to sing is welcomed. Today, under the skillful direction of Nancy Wanger, the voices of women from the entire MIT community, as well as neigh-

boring Harvard, continue to delight listeners with their concerts throughout the year.

"The very first group I joined was the Chorale... Mrs. Scatchard's conducting was a musical education in itself."

— Ann Holden

Conversations from this early period with Matrons Katherine Hazen and Esther Edgerton indicate that when the Institute was smaller most socialization occurred within departments. Department heads frequently held teas for their students and faculty, and the department head's wife, often a Matron herself, vigorously encouraged faculty wives to participate in the Matrons' activities. Matron Fran Elliott recalls Margaret Compton telling the story of a personal call she received one night from a student's wife who spoke little English and had become suddenly ill. Not knowing where else to turn, she called the president's wife. Shortly after this incident (1931), the Foreign Student Hospitality Committee was formed. This committee consisted of one Matron from each department who saw that new foreign students in her husband's department were known by name and entertained in a faculty home in the autumn.

There was a large influx of new arrivals following the end of World War II, many of whom lived far from campus. Distance and gas rationing made it difficult for women to get into the Institute frequently. Ingeniously, the Matrons chose to bring MIT to the community and the area hospitality program was born. Local communities were divided into small neighborhood areas, based on the number of women who could gather in an average living room. Neighborhood teas helped many young wives living under difficult conditions find friends locally.

The *Bulletin*, initiated in 1935 and mailed to all members, kept them in touch with the Matrons' calendar and MIT special activities—"happenings," as they were called. The *Bulletin*, published with a subsidy from MIT six times a year, underwent changes in format over the years, and was replaced in 1988 by the *Newsletter*.

REACHING OUT TO THE WAR EFFORT

As World War II became a reality, the Matrons responded with their characteristic spirit. Early contributions included gathering hats, baseballs, cards, dominoes, and books for the American Ambulance Hospital in Paris. A Matron representative with the Red Cross took responsibility for collecting similar articles for the boys in camps. Throughout the war the Matrons worked closely with the Red Cross making surgical dressings and organizing blood drives. The "Red Cross Patchers" prepared 77,500 surgical dressings in the Alice Maclaurin Room in 1944. The MIT wartime blood drives began a program that continued with two or more drives annually in which the Matrons provided nontechnical assistance to the Red Cross. In 1994 the Technology Community Association, which had increasingly worked with the League on these blood drives, took over full responsibility. In a recent telephone conversation, Gary Ouellette, the Red Cross Regional Director of Donor Services, New England Region, said:

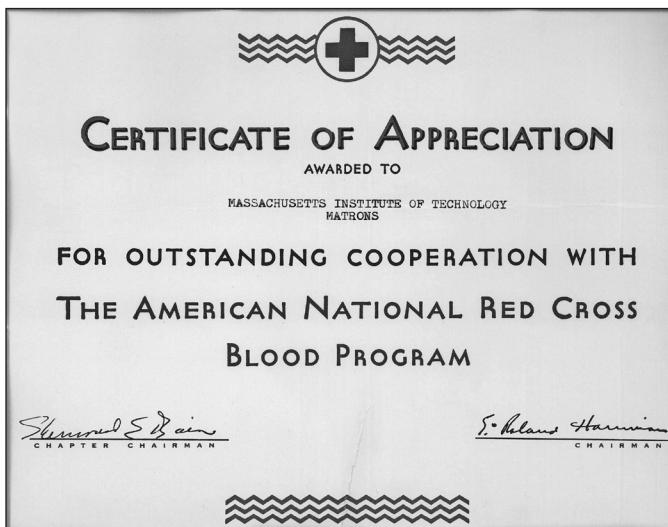
In the last five decades MIT has donated over 100,000 pints of blood that have saved scores of lives. MIT recognizes that blood is a resource that must be constantly replenished. We depend on and appreciate their continued support of this vital community service.

In addition to providing the opportunity for vital service, the war effort also enabled Matrons to become better acquainted, as this poem, from the *Bulletin* suggests:

"Teas were in vogue...the largest was the welcoming tea held in the president's house...a gracious occasion and always very well attended."

*Four years of war, while we stitched and folded
More things than snowy dressings have been molded.
Our chance acquaintances, based on knowledge slender
Have grown to glowing friendship, warm and tender.*

Enrollment and faculty at MIT grew dramatically after World War II because of the influx of veterans taking advantage of the G.I. bill. Numerous interest groups and volunteer opportunities helped the Matrons grow, also, during this time, yet the organization retained its focus on service to the MIT community and camaraderie among members.



Commendation to Matrons for running blood drives, one of the League's many services in support of U.S. soldiers in World War II.



ELIZABETH PARKS KILLIAN 1949-1958

CHAIRS

Jean McAdams
Rose Norton
Alice Taylor
Louise Bryant
Kay Bolt

1949	MIT tuition \$800 per year
1951	Korean War begins
1952	Lincoln Laboratory established
1954	Jonas Salk develops polio vaccine
1955	MIT Chapel dedicated
1957	U.S. first civil rights bill enacted

HIGHLIGHTS

MEMBERSHIP 1,484 TO 2,150

- 1950 • Technology Community Association advisor represented on board
- 1951 • Treasurer established as board position
 - Women staff and wives of members of the Industrial Liaison Program and the Division of Industrial Cooperation (now Office of Sponsored Programs) invited to join Matrons
- 1952 • Matrons volunteer to assist nurses at the MIT Infirmary
- 1953 • Calling Committee renamed the Hospitality Committee
- 1956 • Women staff and staff wives of Lincoln Laboratory, the Instrumentation Laboratory (now the Charles Stark Draper Laboratory), and the Research Laboratory for Electronics invited to join the Matrons
 - Technology Matrons' *Family Guide to MIT* first published
 - Service Committee catalogues, marks trees and shrubs, and plants perennial beds at Endicott House
- 1958 • Furniture Exchange founded
 - First dinner for foreign student wives hosted by Matron

KILLIAN

~ 1949–1958

REACHING OUT WITH HOSPITALITY

During the 1950s, membership grew considerably following the expansion in 1951 to include women staff members and wives of members of the Industrial Liaison Program and the Division of Industrial Cooperation (now the Office of Sponsored Programs). A further expansion occurred in 1956 when the wives of the Lincoln Laboratory, the Instrumentation Laboratory (now the Charles Stark Draper Laboratory,) and the Research Laboratory for Electronics staffs were welcomed into the Matrons.

Now, with over 2,000 members, many of whom lived in separate communities, Matron leaders saw their role in unifying the MIT community as more important than ever. But in spite of excellent speakers and programs, attendance at teas began dropping. In response, the Matrons again successfully “took the meeting to the Matrons rather than the Matrons to the meeting.” As in the 1940s, area hostesses were organized and the neighborhood gatherings they planned became very popular. The 1957 annual report records eighty-five neighborhood hospitality parties attended by over 900 people. These area parties promoted social and intellectual connections among different departments and laboratories. Matrons were also busy in other areas of hospitality. They served as silent hosts at student-faculty “smokers” where

*"The expansion
proved to be a
wise decision...
It brought in
many talented
women, ready
to volunteer
their time
and leadership
abilities."*

— Mary Pinson

donuts, coffee, and apples were served; sponsored “mixers” for all freshman sections, at which faculty advisors and faculty members were invited by students; and entertained new Matrons at a luncheon before the annual opening tea for all Matrons at the president’s house. *The Family Guide to MIT*, a forty-eight-page booklet designed to orient newcomers to MIT and the external community, was first edited by Matrons in 1956 and sent to new students by MIT. “We adopted a massive approach to the problem of hospitality. We tried a big answer to a big problem,” recalls Louise Bryant, Matrons’ chair from 1955 to 1957.

REACHING OUT TO FOREIGN STUDENTS

Helping foreign students feel at home was not a new undertaking for the Matrons who had been reaching out to these students since 1919. As the international student population grew, however, its need for rental housing increased. Under the direction of Katherine Bitter, Matrons volunteered with the Technology Community Affairs Office and the Office of the Dean of Residence to help house and counsel both single and married students. At the start of the 1956-57 academic year, Matrons Edith Taylor and Greta Uhlig attended the desk at the housing office and drivers helped couples find apartments. Volunteer Betty Reintjes recalls a time during the busy month before school started:

*Almost daily from August 15th to September
15th, I met students in the office at 9:00 am,
studied the listings, made choices, and then
drove them to select a suitable place. It made a
full day and sometimes continued into the evening.*

Inadequate on campus housing for married and older students, and several landlords who charged exorbitant sums for so called "furnished" apartments were the impetus that led to the establishment of the Furniture Exchange (FX). With inexpensive furniture obtainable at the FX, students could rent less costly unfurnished units. Founded in 1958 under the direction of Carol Brooks, the FX continues to be a popular and valued League service project. It sells home furnishings to students at prices that fit student budgets. Stock is acquired through donations by friends of MIT and purchases from auctions, estate sales, and individuals. Initially the FX operated on a volunteer basis until it reached a point in 1969 where a paid shop helper became desirable. Today the FX is open two days a week plus one Saturday a month and is staffed by a paid manager, Ruth Milne, and volunteers.

The FX opened in the old Westgate apartments, but because of MIT's growth it made two moves, to Albany Street and to Windsor Street, before settling in 1993 in its expanded quarters with parking at 350 Brookline Street. MIT generously provides the space rent free. Since 1993, all profits, initially given to support the MIT Student Loan Fund, have been applied to the MIT Women's League Scholarship Fund. Since its beginnings, the Furniture Exchange has contributed over \$150,000 in scholarship assistance. Twenty-five-year volunteer Betsy Whitman remembers her days at the Exchange:

The Furniture Exchange was often the students' first contact at MIT. It was important to make them all feel welcome and attempt to find just the right item. We enjoyed seeing them return. One who was a graduate student for about seven years (two degrees),

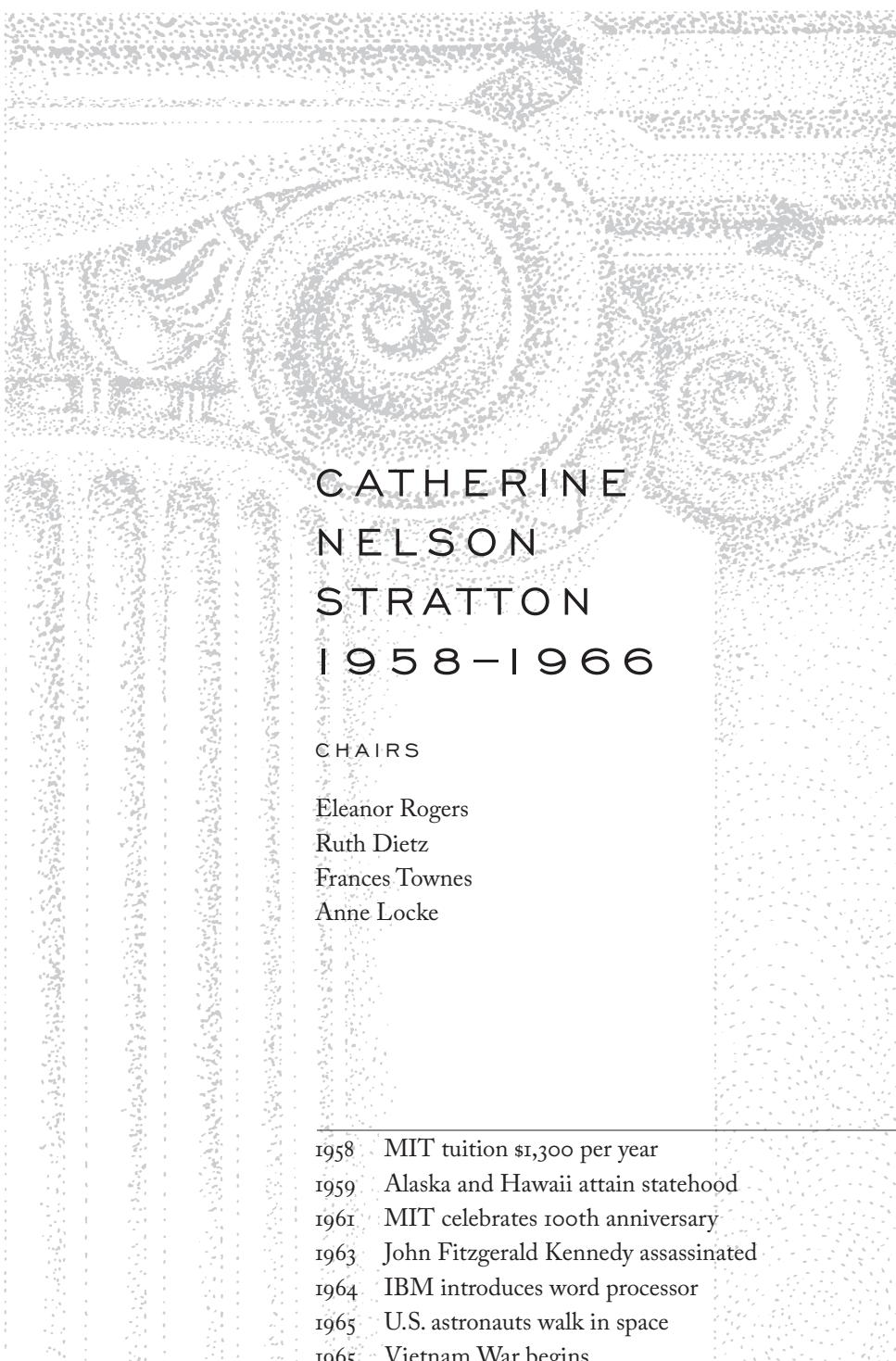
The Matrons afforded me an opportunity to join a group of women who turned out to be very community minded and progressive in their thinking.

*described his decor as “early Furniture Exchange.”
When he married we thought our unique,
dusty quarters would be splendid for a reception.
Needless to say, he didn’t see it that way!*

By the end of the 1950s, the Technology Matrons began to feel the first pangs of the decreased volunteerism that would persist in the decades to come. Unwavering in their commitment, however, the Matrons were poised at the edge of a decade that promised new challenges and new opportunities for service.



Betsy Whitman (left) and two League volunteers at the Furniture Exchange in the early years.



CATHERINE NELSON STRATTON 1958-1966

CHAIRS

Eleanor Rogers
Ruth Dietz
Frances Townes
Anne Locke

1958	MIT tuition \$1,300 per year
1959	Alaska and Hawaii attain statehood
1961	MIT celebrates 100th anniversary
1963	John Fitzgerald Kennedy assassinated
1964	IBM introduces word processor
1965	U.S. astronauts walk in space
1965	Vietnam War begins

HIGHLIGHTS

MEMBERSHIP 2,150 TO 3,000

- 1959 • Office assistant hired for first time
- 1961 • Host Family Program initiated
 - Matrons involved in preparations for the MIT centennial celebration
- 1962 • Newcomers Coordinating Committee formed
 - Careerists and Fine Arts interest groups formed
 - Mixers established to promote inter-school/inter-lab socializing
- 1963 • English Conversation Classes established
 - Matron Carol Brooks instrumental in establishing the Technology Nursery School (TNS) located in Westgate; incorporated in 1965 as a nonprofit corporation
 - Travel Club formed
- 1965 • Honorary Matrons founded
 - Music, Art, and History interest groups formed
- 1966 • 2,300 students and 1,130 faculty make 7,500 visits to the Community Housing Office
 - Matrons' housing program turned over to MIT

STRATTON

~ 1958-1966

REACHING OUT TO FOREIGN STUDENTS

(CONTINUED)

The late 1950s and early 1960s saw accelerated growth in the numbers of foreign students and an increased awareness of their particular needs. In 1958 MIT enrolled 762 foreign students, 12.4% of total enrollment and the largest percentage of foreign students of any major U.S. university.

Matron Helen Padelford saw the need to extend hospitality to these students beyond holiday entertaining. Working with the Advisor to Foreign Students, she initiated a revised plan for hospitality—the Host Family Program. Incoming foreign students who expressed interest were matched with a host family. Host families would write to their assigned students; meet them on arrival; provide them assistance in getting settled; and take a friendly interest in them throughout their stay at MIT. Many of these students were young, would not return home for two or more years, and usually stayed with the program until they left MIT. The majority of host families were MIT alumni although Matrons were not discouraged from participating. This arrangement did not eliminate the Foreign Student Hospitality program, and Matrons still invited foreign students who did

not participate in the Host Family Program to their homes for holiday celebrations.

Housing, however, was still a troubling issue, especially for foreign student families who often did not understand American customs and had little or no knowledge of English. The Matrons continued to reach out to help these families find housing. Volunteers Mary Covert and Mary Smith worked practically full time in August and September with the Office of the Dean of Residence for off campus housing. They wrote letters welcoming incoming students; explained the housing services; sought out and listed off campus housing; matched family needs with available rentals; organized volunteer Matrons to drive the students to find accommodations; produced a “Required Reading for Renters” handbook; and provided informal counseling as needed. Mary Covert recalls:

We steamed the stamps off the students' letters and pasted them onto a stamp board. It was colorful and the first thing the students saw when they came into the office. How they loved to find stamps from their country on the board. I think it gave them a sense of connection.

As the demand increased with faculty and non foreign students requesting similar services, MIT took over this well-run program in 1966 and extended it to the entire MIT community.

An enduring and significant project the Matrons undertook was the English Conversation Classes. Established in 1963, these classes eased the language and cultural difficulties encountered by wives of international students and visiting staff. Initially the classes were taught by paid teachers, but as enrollment grew, the

“The response to the Furniture Exchange has been terrific. What's more, we're having a whale of a good time.”

– Carol Brooks

Matrons took over full responsibility for instruction and administration. Former language teacher Betty Reintjes, along with Frances Townes and Greta Uhlig, established the curriculum and a format that accommodated differing levels of ability. In 1966 babysitting was added, and, under the direction of Keiko Kanda, it is still an integral part of the program.

Well over 4,000 students have benefited both educationally and socially from these classes, and more than seventy dedicated women have volunteered as teachers. Today, under the direction of Jan Kirtley, classes meet on Tuesdays and Thursdays, with a coffee hour on Thursdays that encourages students to practice their newly learned skills. This program offers not only instruction, but a warm and friendly introduction to America and to the international women's community at the Institute. Louise Licklider reflects on her experience in the program:

I had a class of beginners, with no English, shy, tongue-tied. During a coffee hour I noticed four of them together, gesturing, speaking, apparently communicating. I wondered what language they could possibly share: Zehra from Turkey, Sachie from Japan, Sunetra from India, and Helen from Greece. I joined them and asked, "What language are you speaking?" They looked shyly at one another; all began to giggle, and then Helen, with an eloquent shrug, said, "English?"

"I'm thrilled when someone from MIT tells me how much a person they met overseas enjoyed the English Class."
- Jan Kirtley

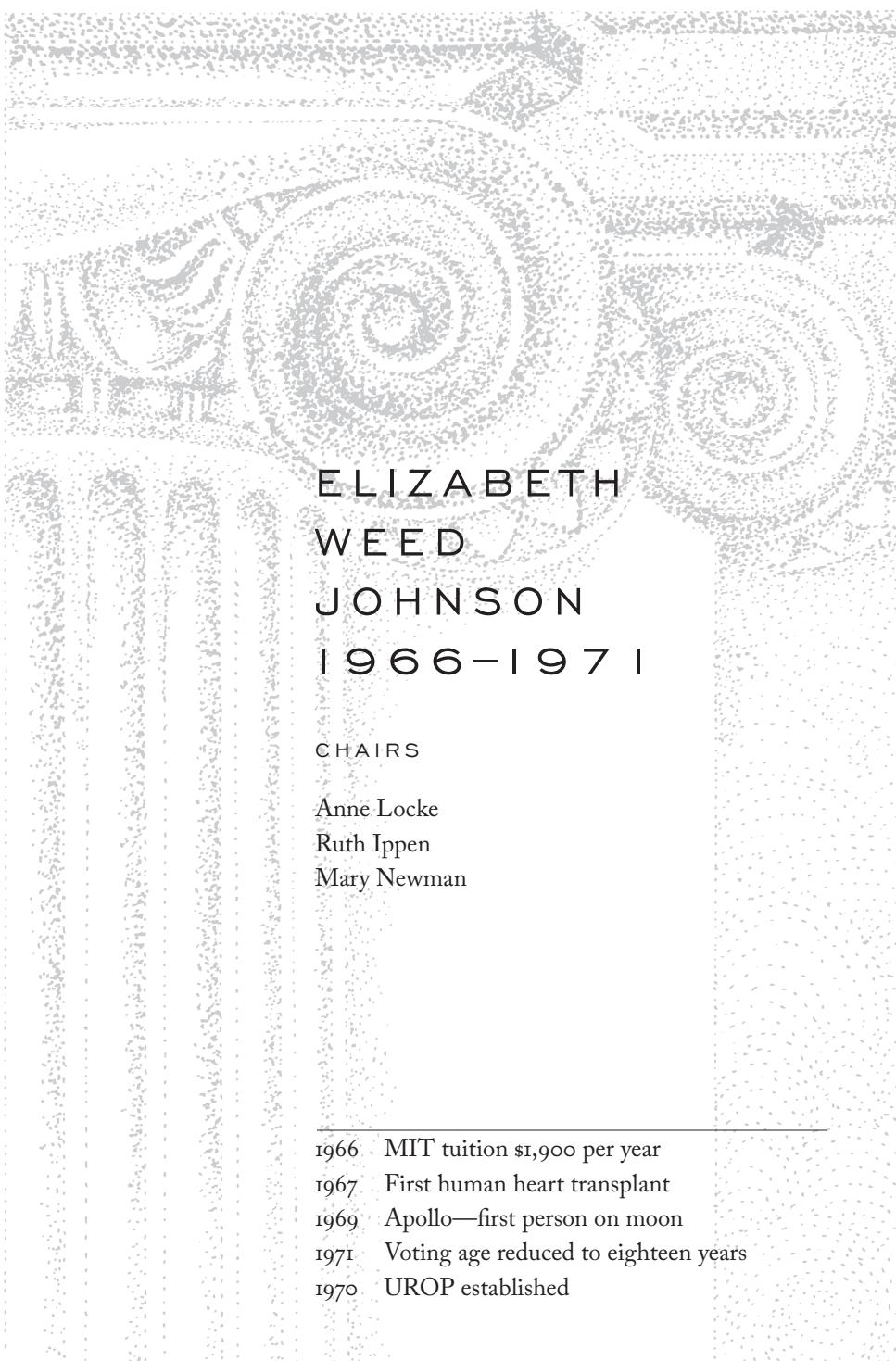
Friendships made in the program endure to this day. After students leave MIT, they reach out in their own communities—young women who have learned that friendship and understanding can be achieved across language barriers and political boundaries.

The Matrons also played a key role assisting in the MIT Centennial Celebrations in 1961. The two Kays, Kay Stratton, former honorary chair, and Kay Bolt, former Matron chair, with a \$10,000 budget from MIT, jointly planned a great celebration. Dinner parties were held, campus tours arranged for delegates from all over the world, and visiting dignitaries entertained. The week-long celebration culminated in a grand ball.

In 1965 the Honorary Matrons were established to provide Matrons whose husbands had retired or passed on an opportunity to keep in touch and meet in smaller gatherings. Two luncheon meetings with guest speakers are held annually.



English Class Coordinator and teacher Jan Kirtley (right) talks with her students.



ELIZABETH
WEED
JOHNSON
1966-1971

CHAIRS

Anne Locke
Ruth Ippen
Mary Newman

1966	MIT tuition \$1,900 per year
1967	First human heart transplant
1969	Apollo—first person on moon
1971	Voting age reduced to eighteen years
1970	UROP established

HIGHLIGHTS

MEMBERSHIP 3,000 TO 3,700

- 1966 • Male spouse of a member threatens suit if refused membership; threat removed when he left area
- 1967 • Emma Rogers and Alice McLaurin rooms refurbished
- 1968 • Long Range Planning Committee established by board; 320 questionnaires sent; 112 responses received
- 1969 • Monday afternoon teas in the Emma Rogers Room resumed
 - Annual Meeting at McCormick Hall; selected furnishings and art from Katharine Dexter McCormick's estate exhibited
 - Interest groups transferred from vice chair to newly created Interest Groups chair
 - First fall plant sale on steps of Student Center
- 1970 • Largest Blood Mobile drive to date; 215 members volunteer 1,206 hours in eight day drive; 2,269 pints of blood donated
 - Biannual publication of the *Family Guide to MIT* superseded by *How To GAMIT*
- 1971 • Program and Social chair positions combined

JOHNSON

~ 1966-1971

REACHING OUT TO A TROUBLED CAMPUS

“The years 1966 through 1971 were anything but uneventful,” remembers Elizabeth (Betty) Johnson of her tenure as Honorary Chair. The escalation of the war in Vietnam, drug use on campus, and the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy in the spring of 1968 had a significant impact on campus life. The Matrons’ individual programs were largely unaffected by the unrest on campus, but the Matrons did attempt to generate light from the heat of the issues.

In response to growing interest in expanding service activities beyond Institute boundaries, the board in 1966 voted to sponsor a Community Services Project in which speakers would discuss relevant issues. In 1968, luncheons known as the Brown Bag Sandwich Seminars began and continued into the eighties. Each year the seminars focused on a distinct theme such as national priorities, community social concerns, urban affairs, and women’s issues. Three, four, or sometimes five meetings were held and featured panel discussions and distinguished speakers. The seminars were well attended and chair Edith Ruina reported “this type of program reaches a new audience of young Matrons.”

"Without the social support MIT now gives students, personal hospitality for foreign students was an important undertaking for us."

The 1969 Annual Meeting held at McCormick Hall was a highlight for the Institute and the Matrons. Artifacts from the home of Katharine Dexter McCormick ('04) were displayed in the public spaces. The Flower Arranging Group orchestrated the decorations and won praise for the floral arrangements that complimented both specific artifacts and rooms. It was the group's first "professional" job on campus and the beginning of subsequent contributions to Matrons' events. Today, Mabel Nevins, chair of the Flower Arranging Group, is often called on to employ her considerable skills in providing arrangements for Women's League events. With volunteers, she also continues the holiday tradition, started in the Compton years, of making three evergreen wreaths for the main entry to MIT at 77 Massachusetts Avenue and working on artificial decorations (because of fire laws) for the lobby of Kresge Auditorium.

Another high point of this period was the Matrons' role in the tag sale of furnishings from the McCormick house at 393 Commonwealth Avenue. Under the leadership of Ruth Ippen, Anne Baddour, and Betty Johnson, the Matrons spent countless hours cataloging and pricing the furnishings and art collection. These furnishings were displayed for the MIT family by invitation and sold to them in December 1970. The proceeds from this sale (\$27,133) benefited the MIT Student Loan Fund.

REACHING OUT IN CHANGING TIMES

Membership in the Matrons was automatic when one joined the MIT community. Although membership had increased in 1971 to 3,700, not all members became active. The Matrons were faced with the nationwide reality of reduction in volunteerism. In

precomputer days, for instance, it took seventy hours to address invitations to the teas by hand, and not many women in the late 1960s and early 1970s wanted to devote that kind of time to such a task.

The year 1969 was a particularly difficult year for the Furniture Exchange because of cramped space at the Albany Street location, inadequate stock supply, and sporadic staffing. The wisdom of keeping the FX open was debated. A study by Sloan School fellows added expert business analysis to the discussion. In the spring when the FX chair resigned, Ruth Ippen, not wishing to see the Exchange close down, added its management to her considerable duties as chair of the Matrons. In spite of the difficulties that year, the FX thrived and donated profits of \$5,560 to the Student Loan Fund. When it relocated to larger quarters at 25 Windsor Street, the situation eased considerably and a paid helper, Bill Clark, was hired to assist the manager.

The Technology Matrons' *Family Guide to MIT* had been updated every two years since its first publication in 1956. However three similar MIT orientation publications existed. Rather than continue this expensive duplication, Constantine Simonides, Vice President, Administration, determined that only one such publication was necessary. In 1971, with a Matron on the editing staff, the four separate publications were united into an expanded *How To GAMIT* (How To Get Around MIT). This booklet, updated annually, includes information on the Women's League and is sent to freshmen and new graduate students.

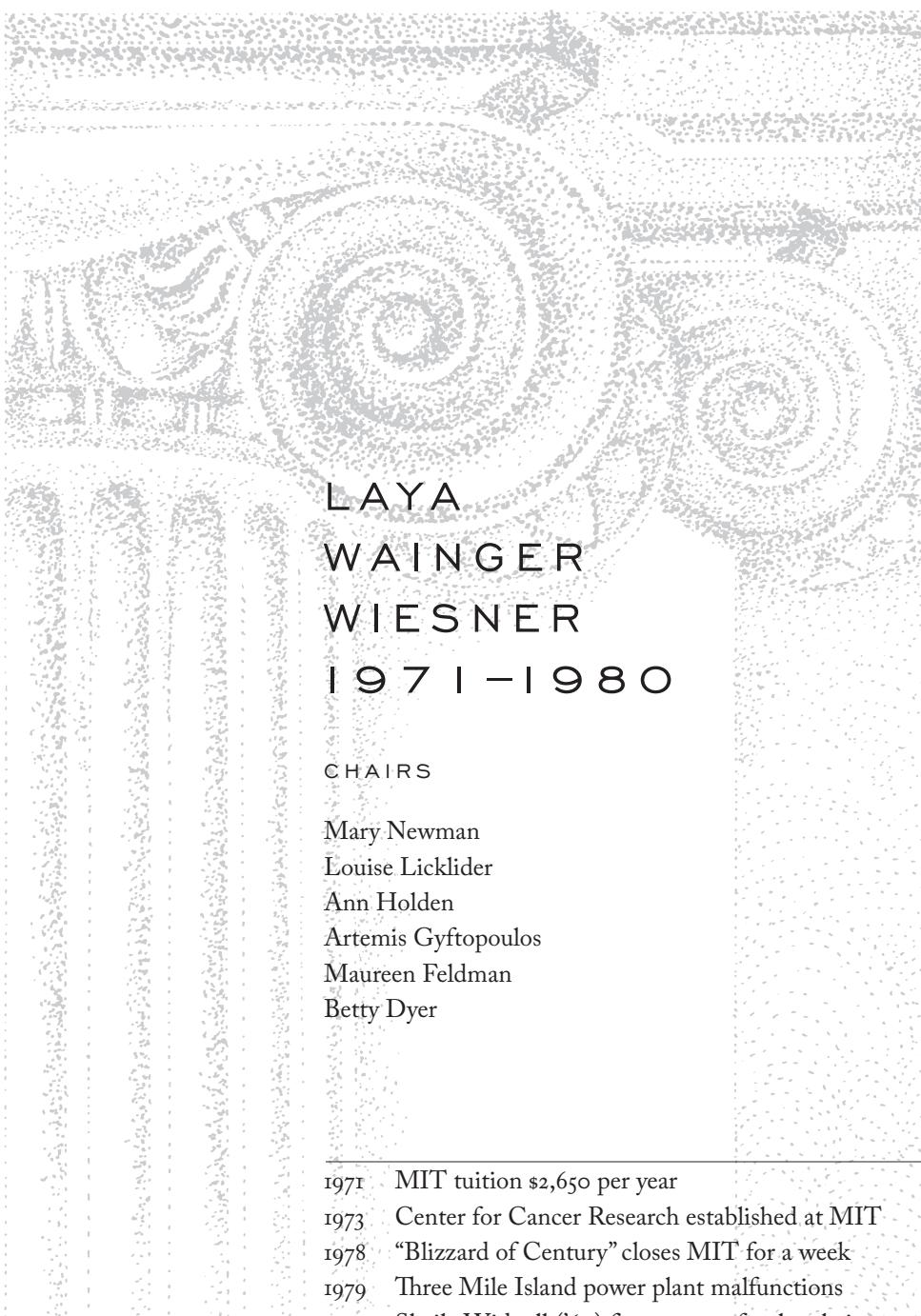
These years were a time of adjustment for the Matrons. Honorary Chair Betty Johnson and Chairs Anne Locke, Ruth Ippen, and Mary Newman led the League through a complex period with grace and dignity. A Long Range Planning Committee was

"The Matrons' organization is valuable for the help it gives to young wives, many from far away in the U.S. or foreign countries."

convened in 1968 to examine the Matrons' goals and direction, and to suggest new activities and changes in structure. With their report in hand, the Matrons looked forward to the challenges of the decade ahead.



The longstanding tradition of making large holiday evergreen wreaths to adorn MIT's 77 Mass. Ave. entrance continues to the present. Shown here are some of the early participants, (left to right) Lennie Haus, Maureen Miller, Ann Holden, Marty Harleman, Mabel Nevins, Fran Elliott and Rose Carmichael.



LAYA
WAINGER
WIESNER
1971-1980

CHAIRS

Mary Newman
Louise Licklider
Ann Holden
Artemis Gyftopoulos
Maureen Feldman
Betty Dyer

1971	MIT tuition \$2,650 per year
1973	Center for Cancer Research established at MIT
1978	“Blizzard of Century” closes MIT for a week
1979	Three Mile Island power plant malfunctions
1979	Sheila Widnall ('60) first woman faculty chair
1981	Sandra Day O'Connor appointed to Supreme Court

HIGHLIGHTS

MEMBERSHIP 3,700

- 1971 • Over 2,000 foreign students experience family hospitality in first decade of the Host Family Program
- 1972 • Name changed from Technology Dames to Technology Wives Organization
- 1973 • On behalf of the Matrons, Betty Reintjes accepts MIT's prestigious Stewart Award for the English Conversation Classes (the Stewart Award honors those who have made outstanding contributions to extracurricular life at MIT)
 - Technology Children's Center, Inc. (formerly TNS) opens full-day, full-year program in Eastgate
- 1975 • Name changed from Technology Matrons to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Women's League
- 1979 • The Margaret Hutchinson Compton Fund established to provide income for the MIT Museum's Compton Gallery
 - *Bulletin* mailing changes from first class postage to bulk rate—a 600% savings
- 1980 • League sponsorship of fall foliage tours turned over to MIT Activities Committee (MITAC)

WIESNER

~ 1971 - 1980

REACHING OUT TO A NEW DECADE

Laya Wiesner in her opening address as honorary chair of the Matrons noted, “how enormously successful the Sandwich Seminars are in providing information on issues of particular interest to the MIT Community.” She reiterated the same thought at the end of her tenure, saying that the 1980 theme for the seminars, “Changing Lifestyles,” was particularly appropriate for this time.

The Matrons were feeling the impact of the national “back to work” trend and an increased exodus to the suburbs. There was also difficulty at this time getting department heads to provide newcomer lists to the Matrons’ office, thus reducing the number of newcomers who learned of the Matrons. To counter this, workshops for department heads’ wives were held to share ideas on ways to involve new faculty wives in the Matrons’ activities. In addition, the Matrons’ chair began participating in MIT Vice President Simonides’ Information Group meetings to extend the Matrons’ visibility and describe their activities to members of the MIT administration responsible for internal and external communication.

Several other changes occurred during this period—some minor, some not so minor. The minor ones included loss of

*"More faculty
and staff wives
had begun
to work outside
the home with
less time and
interest in
putting on hats
and gloves to
go to tea parties."*

— Louise Bryant

parking on the Memorial Drive grass divider, turning the Fall Foliage Tours over to the MIT Activities Committee (MITAC), and sending invitations to the president's opening tea through the *Bulletin* instead of addressing them individually by hand. As many active members of the organization looked for greater meaning in their volunteer activities, the Matrons reexamined their programs and image. The *Bulletins* of this period took on a more cultural tone, featuring photographs and descriptions of the sculptures around the Institute and announcing the "Meeting of the Month" rather than the "Tea of the Month."

The major change in image that occurred during this period was the organization's name change. A decade earlier the *Bulletin* reported on a proposed name change to the "MIT Women's Society" with the admonition, "Speak out or forever hold your mop and pail." The Matrons did speak out in an opinion ballot and voted against the change. In 1975, although the notion of a name change was still controversial, the idea was more acceptable. One Matron stated the case for change as follows:

Our organization is recognized by deeds rather than titles. "Matrons" often takes a lot of explaining to newcomers, and the committee considering the name feels that the title, charming and dignified in 1925, has changed meaning fifty years later.

Suggestions for a new name were solicited. The October 1975 *Bulletin* announced a formal business meeting to consider changing the name from Technology Matrons to the MIT Women's League and included a ballot to be returned by the members. On November 2nd, "with great intelligence and well prepared

arguments on both sides,” the name change was approved by a two-to-one majority—a mirror reversal of the opinion poll conducted in 1965.

The League then looked to more substantive changes to address the needs of its members and took on unique projects. For the women exploring new opportunities beyond their home responsibilities a New Pathways workshop was convened. Three weekly seminars—“Educational Energy: How to Recharge,” “Volunteer Energy: How Sparks Light Candles,” and “Professional Energy: How to Plug into the Outlets”—led by nationally recognized leaders illustrate the board’s priorities in these times.

In 1978 “salons” were organized by Lucy Nedzel “to bring the intellectual challenge and social warmth of the eighteenth-century salons into the twentieth-century living rooms.” These salons allowed League members to focus on topics of broad interest and invite faculty and staff to participate in related discussions. Held at the MIT Museum, the salons were popular for several years.

An especially gratifying accomplishment was the establishment of the Margaret Hutchinson Compton Fund to generate income for the MIT Museum Compton Gallery (gift of the class of 1938). In the course of these efforts, an oral history of Mrs. Compton was recorded. This delightful tape is available in the League office for anyone who would like to hear a firsthand account of MIT in the 1930s and 1940s.

The League continued successfully with its longtime service projects: the blood drives; the Host Family Program; the Furniture Exchange; and the English Conversation Classes. The interest groups thrived, and as the decade came to a close, Mrs. Wiesner remarked, “the long time Women’s League activities prosper, new ones now flourish, and the Women’s League continues to be a very special presence in life at MIT.”

*I wanted
to keep the name
Matrons....
It meant a
lot to me.
However, now
I agree that
the name
League is more
appropriate.*



Wiesner Award winners Barbara Smith (staff, left) and Fiona Hughes (undergraduate, center) celebrate at MIT's Awards Convocation with League chair Kate Baty.



PRISCILLA KING GRAY 1980-1990

CHAIRS

Betty Dyer
Anne Berg
Margaret Mann
Elizabeth Campbell
Eleanor Kennedy
Dorothy Mark

- 1980 MIT tuition \$6,200 per year
- 1981 First space shuttle Columbia launched
- 1982 Harvard/Yale game balloon hack
- 1987 Dow plummets 508 points
- 1987 U.S. first trillion dollar budget

HIGHLIGHTS

MEMBERSHIP 3,700

- 1980 • Laya Wiesner fund established to honor an outstanding woman student annually
- 1981 • Anne Berg initiates Museum of Fine Arts tours
 - Jan Kirtley becomes coordinator of the English Conversation Classes
- 1982 • Board votes to contribute \$2,000 to the Eastgate Children's Center playground
- 1986 • By-laws changed at annual meeting to open membership to include all MIT women and alumni
 - Computer purchased for League office
 - Open House held in Emma Rogers Room in lieu of fall tea
- 1987 • Fund established to provide furnishings for Elizabeth Parks Killian Hall
 - Kate Baty appointed HISP coordinator
- 1988 • *Newsletter* and annual *Activities Guide* replace *Bulletin*
 - Dr. Robert Ravven establishes Lucille M. Ravven endowment for purchase of Chorale music
- 1989 • Portraits of Catherine Stratton, Elizabeth Johnson, Laya Wiesner, and Priscilla Gray commissioned

GRAY

~ 1980-1990

REACHING OUT IN TIMES OF CHANGE

The 1980s were a time of transition for the League, especially during the latter half of the decade. The League's strengths resided in its programs and community services, but the pool of volunteers had reached its lowest point. For three years there was no vice chair and several key board positions were periodically unfilled making it difficult to operate League programs successfully.

When Honorary Chair Priscilla Gray came into office she convened a committee to survey the policy and direction the League might chart for the 1980s. This Committee for the Future, led by Margaret Mann, examined not only the philosophy of the League, but that of other women's groups on campus and other major universities. Changes made as a result of the committee's study included automating the League office, upgrading the secretary's position to administrative assistant, and most importantly, revising the by-laws to broaden membership to include *all* women in the MIT community and alumni.

Priscilla Gray was committed to the total MIT community—faculty, students, and staff—and she made the president's house available for many gatherings. In a revitalized newcomers' program early in the decade, Jackie Villars led a major effort to

*"The League is
in the enviable
position of
becoming
'The Volunteer
Organization'
for the Institute."*

– Anne Berg

contact newcomers in each department. Invitations to a welcoming reception for newcomers and their spouses were hand delivered. Personal contacts with department head secretaries helped considerably in this effort. The newcomer receptions, held before the traditional opening tea at the president's house, were a great success in helping newcomers get acquainted. Sadly, the opening teas were less well attended and were dropped for a while. When reinstated, they were held at a later hour to permit working women to attend.

League members firmly believed in the League's goals:

*To personalize a large institution and humanize
a technical institute by fostering friendly
relations amongst MIT women, and providing
an effective volunteer body and an arena for
sharing mutual interests.*

To explain the value of its activities to the community, the League successfully launched a public relations effort. Members who had been active in the League earlier were enlisted to help in membership expansion. The *Bulletin* was replaced with a newly designed *Newsletter*, and an annual *Activities Guide*.

In the two decades since the Host Family Program began, foreign student registration had grown to approximately 1,600 (19% of MIT's total enrollment). In 1980 to better reflect its purpose, this program was renamed the Hosts to International Students Program (HISP). Typically, HISP matches 150 to 200 new students representing over seventy countries with hosts each year. Several of the original hosts are still active in the program, and many of the hosts remain in contact with their students who have left MIT.

The English Conversation Classes experienced an unexpected problem when an inspector from the City of Cambridge questioned the babysitting service held in the student center. The League never intended to run a day-care program, but rather to make babysitting available for mothers during class time. The city thought the mothers should be in the same room with their children—not a good mix for holding serious classes. The problem was circumvented when the League, the MIT Safety Office and the City of Cambridge agreed that the babysitting service could continue as long as the mothers' classes and babysitting occurred in adjacent rooms.

The League continued to make an impact on the lives of many individuals and in the MIT community. For example, the Infirmary Project was born after Kay Stratton was a patient in the infirmary. Describing her experience at the infirmary, Kay wrote:

The League undertakes as a rule only projects that are needed, wanted, and can be done by no one else at the Institute.

This small, superb, accredited hospital brings a unique and important dimension to MIT. Here one feels at home in a serene and cheerful environment, near one's friends and colleagues, strengthened by a supportive staff of doctors and nurses...I want very much to do something to express my gratitude to the Medical Unit.

In addition to a generous gift from Kay Stratton, the League raised funds and, with Medical Center approval, purchased bookshelves for patient rooms, shelves and shower stools for the bathrooms, and plants and new furniture for the solarium. This collaboration with the Medical Center led to the jointly-sponsored League/Medical Center "Aging Successfully" program. Initiated

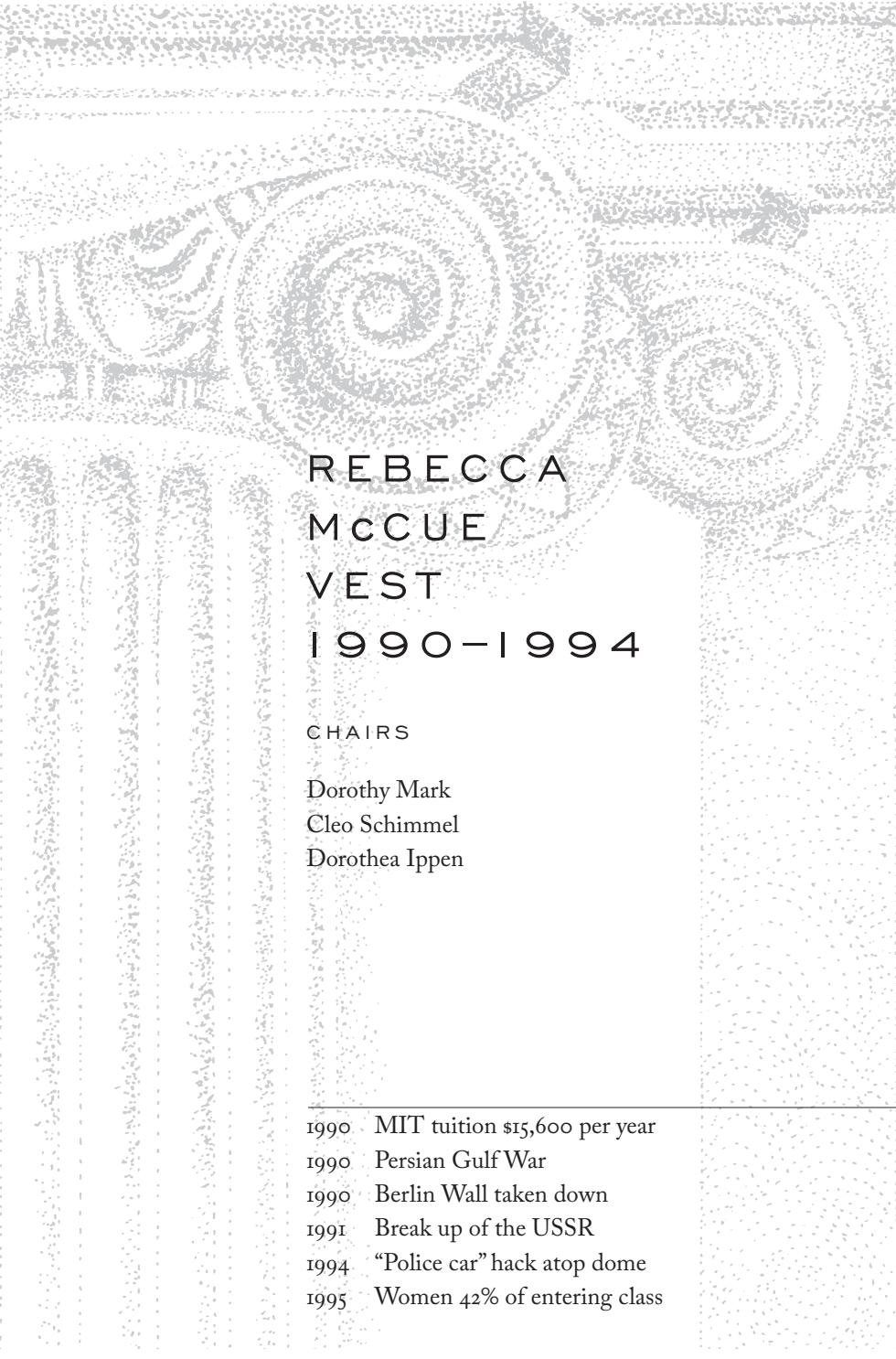
by Kay Stratton, these programs, with panels of experts, address a wide range of health and related issues and have attracted a wide audience.

At the end of the eighties a Long Range Planning Committee, led by Dottie Mark, examined how the League might grow in the nineties. Their work resulted in obtaining additional money from the MIT administration to initiate new programs, and in upgrading the position of administrative assistant to administrative coordinator.

New seminars such as art museum curating, finance, and women's health issues were organized as the League moved with confidence into the nineties.



MIT First Ladies (left to right) Catherine Stratton, Elizabeth Killian, Elizabeth Johnson, Margaret Compton, and Laya Wiesner gather in the garden at the president's house.



REBECCA MCCUE VEST 1990-1994

CHAIRS

Dorothy Mark
Cleo Schimmel
Dorothea Ippen

- 1990 MIT tuition \$15,600 per year
- 1990 Persian Gulf War
- 1990 Berlin Wall taken down
- 1991 Break up of the USSR
- 1994 "Police car" hack atop dome
- 1995 Women 42% of entering class

HIGHLIGHTS

MEMBERSHIP 1,200

- 1990 • McCormick linen sale in Emma Rogers Room nets \$2,368 for volunteer services programs
- Priscilla Gray's portrait unveiling
- 1991 • HISP taken over by MIT
- 1992 • Emma Rogers Room redecorated
 - Women's League logo and stationery designed by Aileen Burk of MIT Graphic Arts
- 1993 • All-day seminar on Violence and Abuse sponsored by the League, MIT Medical Department, and Harvard Medical School
 - Contribution made to the Ruth Ippen Memorial Garden
- 1994 • MIT Student Loan Fund redesignated MIT Women's League Scholarship Fund
 - Women's League tote bag available to members
 - Catherine N. Stratton fund for Lecture Series on Critical Issues established

VEST

~ 1990 – 1994

REACHING OUT ACROSS CAMPUS

The 1990s thus far have been industrious and prosperous years for the Women's League, which has responded to contemporary women's lifestyles while maintaining the old-fashioned hospitality for which it is known. In 1993, Chair Cleo Schimmel wrote:

The League is reaching out in unprecedented ways. Through careful planning and hard work demonstrated by past leadership, we are poised and ready to define a new and more vital role in community life. Our volunteer pool has increased, revenues are up, new programs have been implemented, ongoing projects have been given more support and encouragement, and our visibility has increased.

These years have been a period of unprecedented network building. The League reached out across campus and to the greater community to initiate and co-sponsor common interest programs with other campus organizations. For example, the League joined with the MIT Medical Department and Harvard Medical School to present a Symposium on Abuse and Violence

“Despite the changes in society I don’t think anyone would consider what we did was idle or insignificant.”

in Relationships for the entire university community. As a result of this symposium information racks were installed in some women’s lounges on campus and at Lincoln Laboratory. They are maintained by the League office.

In this networking spirit the League also invited representatives from several Institute departments to give brief talks and answer questions at the fall newcomer receptions. While in a lighter vein, the League invited the MIT Athletic Department to join with them in sponsoring “The Sporting Woman” art exhibit. Prints collected by MIT artist Sally Fox depicting women in athletics through the ages along with photographs of MIT women’s athletics were hung in the MIT Museum’s Compton Gallery.

Ongoing service programs continued to be a vital component of League activities. The Furniture Exchange, with ample parking on Brookline Street, became even more accessible to students and extended its services to students from Harvard, Boston, and Suffolk Universities. The added clientele and expanded floor space for more furniture greatly increased sales and profits. In 1994 these profits were transferred from the MIT Student Loan Fund to the MIT Women’s League Scholarship Fund which generates annual partial scholarships for one or more women undergraduates.

Today’s English Conversation Classes consist of six or seven classes of twelve to sixteen students. Eighty-five to one hundred students per term study English at three ability levels.

HISP, which along with its predecessor Host Family Program had successfully found host families for foreign students for almost thirty years, outgrew the capacity of the single-staff League office. Interest did not wane, however, and for a while Kate Baty ran the program from her home. In 1991 it was taken

over by the Institute and Kate continues as its director. The June 1993 *MIT International Hospitality Guide* shows the value of this program to all involved. A host wrote: "...sharing our culture and customs gives our celebrations greater meaning;" a student wrote: "...my host family gives me a sense of security ...I can always talk to my host Mom;" and a parent wrote: "...until our son came in contact with you he missed a feeling of family atmosphere. You have been a marvelous friend."

More recent League programs, such as outings initiated by League chair Dee Ippen, have attracted new and younger women with walking tours of the MIT art collection and the Newbury Street galleries, as well as local museum visits. The "Focus on the Arts" luncheons showcased MIT artists who presented and discussed their work. The popular January Museum of Fine Arts tour and luncheon initiated by Anne Berg in 1981 continued to delight participants. Evening dinner programs, featuring dynamic women such as Jill Ker Conway and Diana Chapman Walsh, provided opportunities to include friends and spouses in stimulating evenings.

The League marked its 80th anniversary in 1993-1994. To launch the year of celebration members of the MIT community were invited to participate in a competition to create a wall hanging that would reflect the League's eighty years as an integral part of the MIT community. All entries were exhibited at the MIT Museum, and the winning entry by Susan Podshadley now hangs in the Emma Rogers Room. Another 80th celebration was Kay Stratton's 80th birthday. To honor her contributions to MIT, the League established the Catherine N. Stratton Lecture Fund to underwrite annual lectures on social and political issues. The existing Aging Successfully programs were folded into

"MIT has been generous with its support; and the organization has been a valuable resource to the Institute."

- Artemis

Gyftopoulos

this funded series. The anniversary year concluded with a gala CABARET in Walker Memorial at which League members and friends enjoyed an excellent tapas-style dinner and musical entertainment by some seventy-five of MIT's talented musicians.



Outings often take us off campus to neighboring cities and towns. These League members enjoyed a visit to Boston's Chinatown for dim sum and a tour of a local grocery store there.



REBECCA MCCUE VEST 1994-2004

CHAIRS

Dorothea Ippen
Paula Cronin
Mary Hill
Ellen Shapiro

Barrie Gleason
Marlyse Lupis
Ellen Shapiro

1994	MIT tuition \$19,000 per year
1996	NATO troops deployed to Bosnia
2001	September 11 terrorists strike at three U.S. locations
2001	U.S. troops invade Afghanistan
2003	U.S. troops invade Iraq
2003	Campaign for MIT meets \$1.5 billion goal and raises \$2 billion
2004	Tsunami devastates Indian Ocean lands and population
2004	MIT tuition \$29,400 per year

HIGHLIGHTS

MEMBERSHIP 1,400

- 1995 • MIT affiliate ID cards available to League members
- Catherine N. Stratton Lecture on Critical Issues inaugurated
- “The MIT Women’s League: A Rich Heritage” published
- 1996 • *What’s Cooking Under the Dome* published
- 1997 • Women in Academe (née Power Breakfasts) series established
- 1998 • MIT Japanese Wives Group established
- Daffodil Days at MIT, national annual fund-raising activity, initiated
- 1999 • Laya W. Wiesner (d. 1998) Community Award established
- World AIDS Day, annual fund-raising event, established at MIT
- 2000 • Women’s League website launched
[<web.mit.edu/womensleague>](http://web.mit.edu/womensleague)
- Celebrating Graduate Women at MIT annual reception established
- 2003 • MIT Women’s League marks its 90th birthday
- 2004 • Mission statement revised

VEST

~ 1994–2004

CROSSING INTO Y2K

The MIT Women's League, founded in 1913, strives to connect women in the MIT community through activities, interest groups, and volunteer opportunities, enriching their lives and the broader MIT community.

— Mission Statement, revised 2004

Decades ago, when men's and women's roles were more clearly defined and class lines more clearly drawn, the wives of MIT's male-dominated faculty and administration began meeting together informally "to promote sociability" among themselves.

Today, American society is a great deal more egalitarian. So is MIT and so is the MIT Women's League. Today the League, alone and networked with other non-academic organizations at the Institute, is a resource for women whose affiliations with MIT range from being wives of presidents and faculty to women who work or study here (or used to) as well as women who are the partners of men who do (or did).

Sociability is still an important part of the mission; the number of women who have made lifelong friends through the League is large. But so are activities such as welcoming receptions for

"The League provides a forum for meeting and making friends, learning new skills, and hearing new ideas—through this, we broaden our minds as well as our horizons."

newcomers, teaching English to foreign wives, raising money for compelling causes and awarding money to deserving students, informing the community on important critical national and health-related issues, chorale singing and performances, hosting fairs for local craftspeople, and an evolving array of special interest groups that have been coming and going in response to women's creative impulses ever since the League had its first inchoate beginnings nearly 100 years ago.

The next few pages present a brief description of a few of the volunteer service opportunities, activities, and interest groups that have energized the League during the Vest years. Some of these were initiated decades ago and others are very new. Whenever a woman joins one or talks with a participant, she taps into a contagious enthusiasm and a profoundly chauvinistic loyalty to MIT.

Daffodil Days. Every year the American Cancer Society sponsors Daffodil Days, a national campaign to raise funds for cancer research, treatment, and education. In 1998, Janet Plotkin brought Daffodil Days to MIT for the first time and raised \$6,376. In 2004, Daffodil Days at MIT raised almost \$23,000. An important reason for the growing popularity of this campaign is the increased involvement of women at the Institute in its execution—soliciting orders, collecting payments, bundling the bouquets and then distributing them. After each Daffodil Days is over, the League invites these women to an appreciation luncheon. In 2004, 90 women were invited.

MIT Student Furniture Exchange. For nearly fifty years, the Furniture Exchange (FX), est. 1958, has attracted MIT students with its bargain-basement-priced used furniture and housewares

plus new mattresses and futons. In the early Vest years, the all-volunteer FX operated out of cramped space on Windsor Street near campus and netted approximately \$5,000 annually that went directly to scholarship aid. After the 1993 move to the cavernous space on Brookline Avenue and the addition of new clientele from BU, Suffolk and Harvard, the FX began to take off. With paid part-time managers Ruth Milne and later Judy Halloran, reliable delivery service run by Judy's husband Rick, ingenious handyman Jim McGurl on site for repairs, all supplemented by a loyal and spirited volunteer corps—net income soared to a record \$60,000 in FY 2005. FX profits go to the Women's League Scholarship Fund, an endowment that provides financial support for undergraduate women. By the end of 2004, that fund had reached a market value of nearly \$1.5 million and was generating close to \$50,000 annually in scholarship aid.

*As we extend
ourselves in
friendship,
we enrich
the MIT family
and strengthen
the MIT culture.”*

—Rebecca Vest

Fashion Night. In 1995, knowing the financial strains on international and scholarship students from warm countries, Kate Baty in the Hosts to International Students Program, International Students Office, sent out a request for donations of winter outerwear. Then she invited students to try on the donated items and keep anything they found suitable. An instant success, this activity soon included business attire for job interviews, formal wear and accessories, and bicycles! Now, every October, the Emma Rogers Room is the locale for the “Fall Fashion Free For All,” when students find what they need from a year’s collection of donated goods. The clothing that doesn’t leave that evening is sent “home” with Kenyan students to villages and high schools where it is greatly appreciated.

"It has been a privilege for me to be a member of the League and to participate in its efforts to build community, in its many service activities, and in fostering connections among women at the Institute."

— Marlyse Lupis

English Conversation Classes. The League began offering English-speaking classes for foreign wives in the MIT community in 1963. They were instantly popular, and in the early to mid '90s, expanded to seven classes at three competency levels serving more than 100 students each term. These numbers declined after 2000. Was it the post 9/11 political climate that discouraged foreign students from bringing their families to the US? Were foreign families less inclined to travel to the US as they saw opportunities increase in their home countries? Or were foreign wives arriving in the US with better English to begin with? Whatever the reasons, the League offered only five classes per term in 2004, with fewer students per class. But the fact remains, this Women's League service is of incalculable value. For these women, who may otherwise be isolated in their homes by their lack of English fluency, these classes are a bright light, particularly when a parallel babysitting program further ensures their ability to attend. The coffee hours that follow the Thursday classes are often the source of lifetime friendships. For more than twenty years, Jan Kirtley has managed the challenge of securing rooms and teachers with energy and humor, and Keiko Kanda has managed the babysitting with the same endless good will.

What's Cooking Under the Dome. In 1997, after two years of collecting, testing, and retesting, the League published this cookbook of favorite recipes from about 250 members of the Institute community. It has been a fixture in local bookstores, a popular gift, and a good seller at MIT events. Copies can be purchased at the League's office. Profits go to the League's Scholarship Fund. The project represents many years of hard work by many League members, notably Sis de Bordenave, Martha Harleman, Mary Hill, Elizabeth Kleiman, Alyce McLaughlin and Cleo Schimmel.

Catherine N. Stratton Lectures. For more than half a century, Kay Stratton, wife of the late MIT President Julius Stratton, has been regarded as the First Lady of MIT. For more than a decade, the League has honored her annually with two lecture series named in her honor. In the Fall, the Catherine N. Stratton Lecture on Critical Issues has brought international leaders to the Institute to share their points of view on issues such as National Security and Personal Freedom, America—An Empire?, Gene Therapy, China Today, Privacy in the Age of Information, Greenhouse Gamble: Responding to the Risk of Climate Change, and Global Financial Crises: Dangers and Opportunities. In the Spring, the Stratton lecture addresses issues of “Aging Successfully,” which are explained by members of the MIT and greater Boston medical communities. In the Vest years, these issues included The War on Pain: Who’s Winning, Who is Managing Your Health Care: Your Physician? Your Insurance Company? Your HMO? Or You?, Hormones and the Hands of Time, and The Aging Ear. As with the Fall lecture, Kay’s lively presence is always a highlight for both the speakers and the audience. All Stratton lectures are free and open to the public.

An important relationship exists between public service and enriched community life at MIT: this is where the League contributes to the greatest effect.”

Breakfast Series. Barrie Gleason established this early-morning breakfast series in 1997 to give women in leadership positions in the MIT community an opportunity to talk frankly about their career paths and other relevant work-family experiences. The talks are always interesting, the food is always delicious, the company at each table is always engaging. Speakers have included Rosalind Williams, Kathryn Willmore, Pauline Maier, Ellen Harris, Barbara Stowe, Martha Gray, and Elizabeth Garvin. This series is one of several programs, initiated during the Vest years, that focused outreach on women who work at MIT.

World AIDS Day. Since 1999, through the initiative of Ellen Shapiro, the League has coordinated the Institute's annual observance of World AIDS Day and staged its own contribution, a day-long chocolate buffet and raffle in Lobby 10. In 2004 the buffet raised \$4,700.

Interest Groups. If one were asked to explain the longevity of the MIT Women's League in just a few words, those words might be "the Interest Groups." The League's Interest Groups come and go, form and disband, wax and wane in direct response to current interests of women in the MIT community. They are the venue where many women in the MIT community begin their involvement with the League, often without even realizing the connection.

During the Vest years, other popular Interest Groups have included Needlework with Priscilla Gray, Flower Arranging with Fumiko Masubuchi, Looking Together with Ann Allen, the MIT Japanese Wives Group with Kimie Shirasaki, and art workshops with Ruth Milne. Ballroom Dancing comes and goes as do various exercise programs, Adventures in Eating, Birdwatching, the Writing Group, and the Charles River Striders, to name a few. Each December, Mabel Nevins leads a long tradition of making holiday wreaths in December for MIT's main entrance at 77 Massachusetts Avenue. For several years, the League's Scholarship Fund has been a beneficiary of craft fairs that Brenda Blais stages in Lobby 10 for the Technology Community Crafters.

Any list of League Interest Groups must begin with Chorale, the League's oldest Interest Group. Founded in 1933, this choir of women drawn from across the MIT and Harvard student, faculty, and staff communities rehearses weekly and performs

public concerts in December and May. For more than thirty years Nancy Kushlan Wanger has been the director.

Social Activities. Most of the League's social activities have been established in response to perceived needs at MIT. Many pre-date the Vest years. Important ones that continue include an International Wives' Dinner to welcome new women; a Holiday Open House where President and Mrs. Vest have greeted the MIT community in their home, Gray House; and an Annual Meeting (including luncheon and a guest speaker). More recently, Marlyse Lupis initiated Connections, informal late afternoon noshes in the Emma Rogers Room where women in the MIT community can meet and get to know each other.

Tours. In the last few years, Carolyn Parker, a longtime member of the Chorale, now a Board officer and chair-elect, has brought new meaning to the word Tour. Following her lead, League members have toured Boston's Symphony Hall, the United States Courthouse on Fan Pier, Longfellow House, Orchard House, Trinity Church, the Athenaeum, Mount Auburn Cemetery, and other Greater Boston landmarks that have been so near for so long but always seemed too far to go. Dee Ippen has continued a longstanding tradition of arts oriented programs by arranging tours and activities with a specific art focus, for example, a tour of MIT's new Stata Center.

The much heralded entry into the new millennium focused attention on the history of the League and its future. In the spring of 2000, a working group representing past and present Board chairs and members met for a retreat at Endicott house to explore

*"The millennium
year was an
opportunity
for the League
to reflect on
and assess
the role it plays
in Institute life:
we call this
effort 'building
a bridge to
the future.'"*

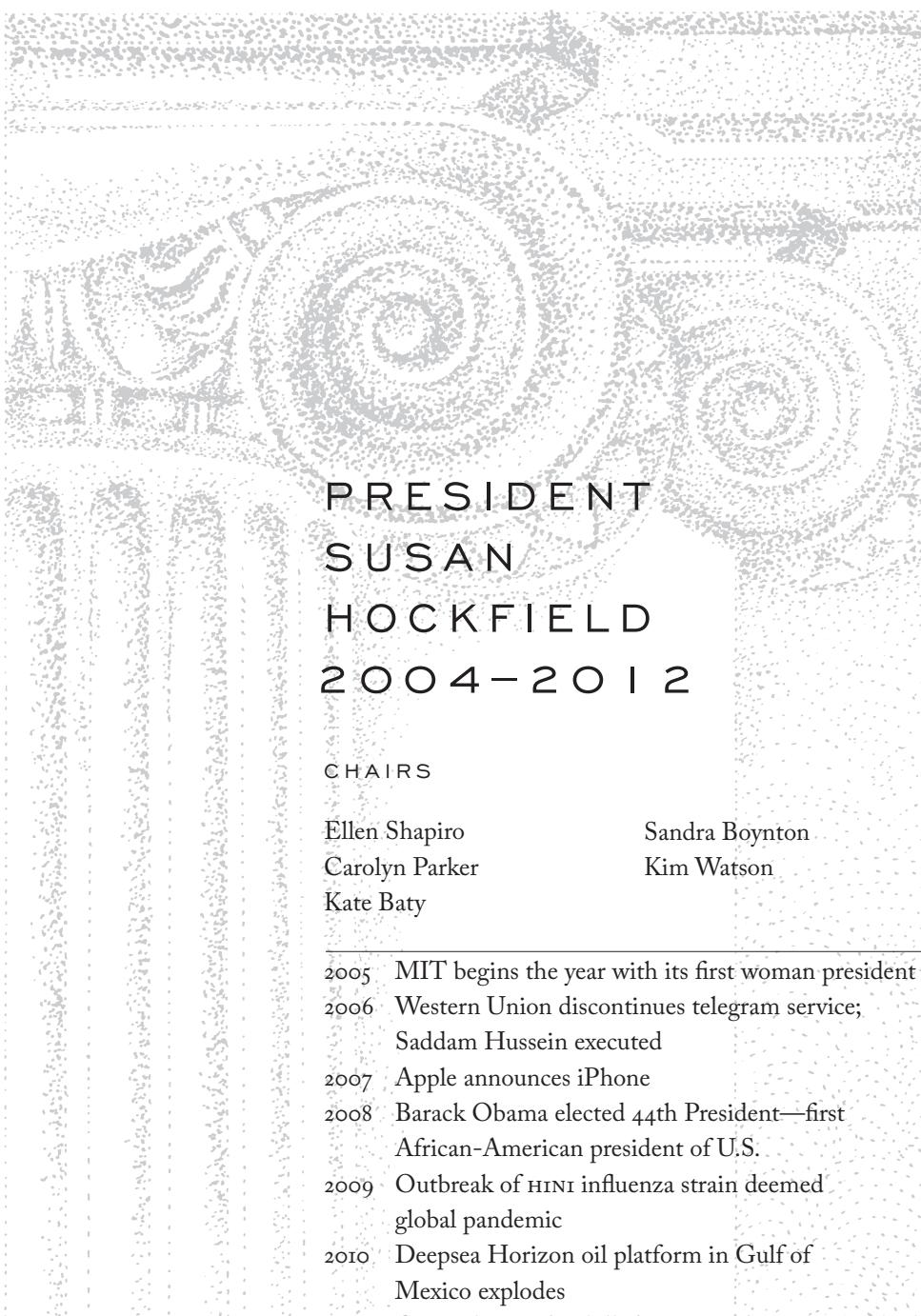
— Barrie Gleason

the theme, “Building a Bridge to the Future.” These discussions became the impetus for long term strategic planning and creation of a “blueprint” for the work ahead, a three-year effort that transformed how the Board conducted business. Over time, the Board created a new committee infrastructure and developed a training manual for old and new members; developed its website and introduced a new visual identity, lending a fresh look to its business papers and other publications.

With the closing of the Vest years, the League marked its 90th anniversary. Interest in the League’s services and activities is high. The selection of the Institute’s first woman president brings close to home the dynamics of the world around us. To borrow a phrase from the MIT Sloan School of Management, which in turn borrowed the phrase from Alfred P. Sloan, Jr., its eponymous founder, the League’s work “is not finished. It will never be finished. It is only on its way. Nothing is finished in a world that is moving so rapidly forward.”



Since 1998, League volunteers have coordinated the American Cancer Society’s Daffodil Days campaign at MIT, bringing the Institute community together to raise funds to help fight cancer. Gracie Dorneus is one of five “super” coordinators who organize this effort.



P R E S I D E N T
S U S A N
H O C K F I E L D
2 0 0 4 – 2 0 1 2

C H A I R S

Ellen Shapiro	Sandra Boynton
Carolyn Parker	Kim Watson
Kate Baty	

2005	MIT begins the year with its first woman president
2006	Western Union discontinues telegram service; Saddam Hussein executed
2007	Apple announces iPhone
2008	Barack Obama elected 44th President—first African-American president of U.S.
2009	Outbreak of H1N1 influenza strain deemed global pandemic
2010	Deepsea Horizon oil platform in Gulf of Mexico explodes
2011	Osama bin Laden killed; MIT tuition \$40,732

HIGHLIGHTS

MEMBERSHIP 1,300

- 2005
 - Daffodil Days raises record \$34,000
 - Furniture Exchange contributes \$60,000 to League Scholarship Fund
- 2006
 - English Conversation Classes, offered twice weekly, attended by 57 students, including first male student
- 2008
 - Chorale celebrates its 75th anniversary
 - MIT Japanese Wives Group organizes ten group events
 - League's website introduces freshly redesigned logo and visual identity
- 2009
 - ESL classes offered to MIT Service Employees
 - More than 200 women volunteer for League service projects
 - At Catherine N. Stratton's request, her portrait is moved from the Stratton Student Center to the Emma Rogers Room to join portraits of other First Ladies
- 2010
 - Critical Issues Lecture attracts record audience with panel discussion "On Corruption"
 - MIT Japanese Wives Group directs support to Japanese people after tsunami
 - ESL Program for MIT Service Employees expands to include basic computer skill building

HOCKFIELD

~ 2004–2012

A CENTURY, LOOKING BACK

The MIT Women's League, née Technology Matrons, was established nearly 100 years ago "to promote sociability among families of the administration and instructing staffs of MIT." Funds and staffing for its activities came from volunteers.

Since then the League has grown in size and in stature, but its dedication to bringing women at MIT together to enjoy shared activities and interests has remained the same. At 100 years, the League can look back on a century of community-building initiatives that enrich the lives of women at MIT. Many of these initiatives have also enriched the entire MIT community, often to such a degree that the Institute has assumed responsibility for their administration and continuation—"institutionalized" them if you will.

For example, in 1931, the League established a Foreign Students Hospitality Group to meet the needs of the families of foreign students who often found themselves isolated and baffled in a strange new country. After various permutations in response to the varying needs of the growing population of foreign students and their families, the Institute took over this service in 1966. The Furniture Exchange (FX), founded by the League in 1958 in a

*"If community
is where our
everyday routines
overlap, where
opportunities
arise to connect
with others,
then the League's
public services
truly enhance
community life
at the Institute."*

— Barrie Gleason

small Westgate apartment to help students furnish their temporary digs, now enjoys ample space on Brookline Street and draws customers from Harvard, and Boston and Suffolk Universities, as well. During the 1950s and early '60s, some League members worked nearly full-time to find off campus housing for foreign students' families; in 1966, MIT took over this program. In 1963, the League established a part-time Technology Nursery School in Westgate; in 1973, MIT took over this operation and expanded it into a full-day, full-year program. In the 1970s, the League's Chair was invited to join the monthly Information Group lunch meetings held at the MIT Faculty Club, where information officers from the Institute's five schools and myriad departments regularly share their concerns and insights. Since its inception in the 1980s, the League's annual Catherine N. Stratton Lecture on Aging Successfully has enjoyed the financial support and participation of MIT Medical Center. In 1995, League members became eligible for MIT affiliate ID cards allowing access to MIT libraries and to campus and MITAC events. In 2010, MIT assumed partial responsibility for Daffodil Days, the League's labor-intensive participation in an annual, national fund drive to raise money for research into causes and cures for cancer. Fees paid by participants in the twice-annual Technology Community Crafters Fair in Lobby 10 go to the MIT Women's League Scholarship Fund. For years the League has had the use of a suite of offices in Building 10 with a grand view on to Killian Court. MIT also contributes to the cost of some new League programs and the salary of the League's irreplaceable Staff Associate, Sis de Bordenave.

From the League's formal beginning in 1913, MIT First Ladies—wives of MIT presidents—have served as Honorary Chairs, attending the League's monthly meetings when they can. In recognition of their involvement, the League's Emma Savage

Rogers Room is named for the wife of MIT's founder and first and third president (1862-1870; 1879-1881), who devoted much of her life at the Institute to making it a more friendly and congenial place. The League's Elizabeth W. Johnson, Laya W. Wiesner, and Rebecca M. Vest Awards and Fellowships honor those wives of former MIT Presidents. For decades, Catherine (Kay) N. Stratton, whose husband Julius (Jay) was president of MIT from 1958 to 1966, has been intimately involved in the execution of the annual Lectures on Aging Successfully and Critical Issues. Priscilla Gray regularly attends the League's monthly meetings, is the resource of its popular needlework interest group, and chairs the League's 100th anniversary fund drive.

In 2005, for the first time in its long history, the League began the year without an Honorary Chair, historically and by bylaw the wife of the MIT President. Bending the bylaw a bit, the League nevertheless extended an invitation to Susan Hockfield, MIT's first woman president. In the face of her enormous new responsibilities, Hockfield graciously declined. The bylaw stands—not all future presidents of MIT would be women as is seen with the selection of L. Rafael Reif in 2012 as MIT's 17th president. Priscilla Gray served as the League's Honorary Chair, during the Hockfield years, and Christine Reif is Honorary Chair as of September 2012.

Just as the selection of a woman to be President of MIT is clear evidence that the social environment has changed dramatically since the early 20th century, in 2005, the League changed its bylaws to make membership, originally for "families of the administration and instructing staffs of MIT," automatic for "all women affiliated with MIT, past and present." Janet Plotkin, one of the League's most energetic entrepreneurs and participants, whose affiliation with MIT is as the wife of an MIT alumnus,

"The story of the League is about women, service, students, programs, and the Institute.

The scope of our activity continues to be time-tested and innovative."

— Sandra Boynton

"I am constantly inspired by the lifelong friendships that have been formed by the members, how active they are in the community, how involved in life."

— Miriam Boucher

illustrates how broadly the word “affiliated” can be interpreted. Although in 2011 the League had to cut its budget seven to 11 percent as part of an MIT-wide financial contraction, members of the League do not pay dues.

The League’s ongoing mission is to offer programs and activities that appeal to women of all ages and passages in life. These include ongoing service programs and interest groups, and stand-alone events.

The League’s service programs, old and new, thrive. English Conversation Classes, offered since 1963 and more recently complemented with simultaneous, next-door child care, regularly enroll more than half a hundred young wives of foreign students in twice-weekly classes Basic to Advanced. League member Jan Kirtley has managed these classes, sometimes a cat’s cradle of scheduling, space, and staffing, almost from the beginning. Attendance is close to perfect. The newer (2009) English as a Second Language Program for MIT Service Employees has attracted so many participants that it has triggered a couple of splashes in the media. The Furniture Exchange (1958) has long-since outgrown an all-volunteer staff and now employs two paid workers and even has its own website (web.mit.edu/womensleague/fx).

As long as there has been the MIT Women’s League, there have been interest groups, waxing and waning in response to current members’ interests. Currently, several subsets of Adventures in Eating (a.k.a. CitySide Dining) bring members—often strangers when they arrive, friends when they leave—to ethnic and neighborhood restaurants all around Boston and the suburbs. Needlework sustains as does the Japanese Tea Ceremony, a Gardeners’ Group, and a Book Group. Other interests that have come and gone (or are still here) are described elsewhere in this book.

The MIT Women's Chorale stands alone. Established in 1932—the League's 100th birthday overlaps with Chorale's 80th—women from the very broadly defined MIT and Harvard communities meet weekly in the Emma Rogers Room to rehearse and twice, before Christmas and in the spring, to sing for the public. Some women have been singing with Chorale for decades. Some are alumnae (or friends of friends of alumni/ae) living in the area, some are students, and some are wives of students. Several sing with a virtuosity that earns them solos. Birthdays and births are celebrated. A few years ago, Chorale exchanged its historic but cramped venue, the Elizabeth Killian Hall on the MIT campus, and had to seek a larger venue to accommodate its growing audiences. Under the direction of the locally celebrated director Kevin Galiè, the repertoire has grown more international, and musicians playing instruments less traditional than the standard piano often play pieces while Chorale is offstage. Performances are SRO.

Unlike the interest groups, the League's programs, both old and new, usually require a lot of building out but take place only once a year. The Catherine N. Stratton Lectures on Aging Successfully and Critical Issues seem to be perennials. So are the Fall Reception for New Women, the International Wives'Dinner, the Fall Fashion Free for All, Focus on the Arts, and Daffodil Days. The Breakfast Series and the Honor Circle take place a couple of times a year. The League's partnership with Transition House is ongoing as are sales of the League's cookbook, *What's Cooking Under the Dome*. Scholarships and Fellowships are awarded close to Commencement. All of these activities are described elsewhere in this book.

The League's finances are sound, its programs and interest groups attract a kaleidoscope of women in the community,

"My job (as Chair) was joyful because so many shared their passions and gave their time and energy to fulfill the 100-year-old mission of the Women's League."

— Sandra Boynton

and members of its Board arrive early to meetings and stay late. Members are looking forward to celebrating the League's 100th birthday and to participating in activities in as many of the next 100 years as possible. Whatever is coming next, the League's website (web.mit.edu/womensleague) keeps everyone up-to-date. Leaving no possibility overlooked, one of the League's many website entries is Connections, once-monthly late afternoon, informal gatherings in the Emma Rogers Room where women in the MIT community who might not otherwise know about the League can come to meet and talk with League members in an informal setting of tea and cookies. Along with the old faces, there are always new ones.



First Ladies Priscilla Gray (left) and Christine Reif (right) launch the League's centennial celebration by cutting the 100th birthday cake.

EPilogue

At the 1994 annual meeting, then Honorary Chair Priscilla Gray said that “every first lady must bring with her three things: a sense of herself; a sense of humor; and a love of people.” Not only does this apply to honorary chairs, but it embraces the many women who have led the League as well as those who have participated in its activities. Looking back over 100 years, all these women have helped to shape the League and made it the unique and remarkable organization it is today.

The League’s women of tomorrow can be proud of their heritage, firm in their resolve to further the ambitious goals of the League and instrumental in bringing the League into its second century. Although the organization has evolved significantly from a handful of women meeting for tea, today’s challenges are not dissimilar to those faced 100 years ago. The League strives to find the best way to extend hospitality to students, faculty, and staff members, address mutual interests, and remain an effective body in the service of the Institute.



“Don’t miss the opportunity to be part of a wonderful community of remarkable people.”

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Too numerous to list are the hundreds of volunteers who have enriched this unique organization over its 100-year history. The MIT Women's League wishes to express its warm thanks to one and all and to acknowledge a few important contributions to this booklet.

Each of the authors of this history offers a unique voice and perspective. Kitty Weiss and Ann Cocks told the story through the 1994; Paula Cronin completed the narrative through the present.

Former League Chair Cleo Schimmel was the original champion of this important history project. From the beginning, it has been Sis de Bordenave's quiet commitment that has insured its success every step of the way.

League volunteer Carolyn Latanision created the artwork which graces the front and back covers of this booklet, as well as the pages that introduce each section.

Two friends of the League earn a special thank you for their contributions to this new edition: MIT's Emer Garland-Scott, Communications Specialist, for her steady and thoughtful guidance throughout; and Tim Blackburn, designer, for his keen attention to intent and his delightful creative solutions.

Tim Blackburn of Tim Blackburn Design created the cover and page designs for this booklet and selected Caslon type for the main text and sidebar quotes. The font's popularity dates from revolutionary America, when Caslon types were used in historic documents such as the Declaration of Independence, and continues today.

Arlington Lithograph Co., Inc. printed 1,000 copies of this edition on #80 Finch Fine Smooth White for text and cover papers.



web.mit.edu/womensleague



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