

COUNCIL OF UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA EMERITI ASSOCIATIONS

Historian's Report - April 26, 2007 (Irvine)

The first meeting of the Council of University of California Emeriti Associations to be held on the Irvine campus took place exactly seventeen years ago on April 26, 1990, completing the third year after our official establishment at Berkeley in October of 1987. The Council's Bylaws specified that "Meetings shall be held twice a year, alternating north and south on the last Thursday in October and the last Thursday in April" -- and Irvine's turn to host a southern meeting came after Santa Barbara's in 1988 and San Diego's in 1989.

The University's Irvine campus, like those at San Diego and Santa Cruz, had opened in 1965, and so was a comparatively youthful twenty-five years old in 1990. A number of the CUCEA delegates would have been visiting Irvine for the first time, and April 26 obligingly showed the pleasant ranch setting at its spring-green best. Mid-day temperature touched 75°, refreshed by a gentle breeze. The Council met, then as today, in the University Club, although the Minutes do not tell us in which room. In all, fifteen Council members from the nine campuses had gathered, joined as usual by Morley Walker and a colleague from the Office of the President. Continuing and new participants were evenly balanced, and for the first time a woman represented a campus (UCLA's distinguished botanist Mildred Mathias, for whom their botanical garden is named, then past-president of the UCLA Division).

Henry Fagin, Irvine's divisional vice-president who had made the day's meeting arrangements, was on hand to greet arrivals, and at 10:00 a.m., after a round of self-introductions, Chairman John Adams of San Francisco launched the morning's general discussion, which focused primarily on the necessity to clarify CUCEA's role within the University and to establish effective channels of communication, especially with the statewide Faculty Welfare Committee where at that time both CUCEA's chair and chair-elect were ex-officio representatives. The matter of assuring permanent funding through the statewide Senate was also discussed, as was the fact that simple demographics was a force already accelerating retirements and that this in turn was creating specific needs for more comprehensive counselling, more uniformity in recall procedures, and better provision of space for ongoing emeriti research.

Morley Walker then reported briefly on his compilation and analysis of data received from campus chancellors in response to a letter from John Adams which had inquired about local continuing emeriti activity. No specific findings were noted in the Minutes concerning this, nor were details given on a "better survey" conducted at UCLA by Claude Fawcett and Moses Greenfield, or on another at San Francisco by John Adams himself -- but all of this interest has clearly coalesced in CUCEA's present impressive biennial Emeriti Biobibliographic Survey, so ably coordinated by Charles Berst.

Following a lunch enlivened by presentation of a short film on Elderhostel, the question of selection and preservation of CUCEA archives was discussed by Information Officer David Heron of Santa Cruz. It was decided that the early (pre-establishment) records should be kept by the UCLA Emeriti Association which had played such a major role in bringing the campus divisions together, but that current records "should be passed from each officer to his successor." It was not until these became too bulky for comfort that an Archivist was added to the roster of officers in 1995,

As a further matter related both to activity-surveys and to archives, Henry Fagin was asked about the progress of his efforts to collect short accounts of emeriti, "Fagin's Stars," who had "done distinguished work" in their retirement years, particularly in fields outside their own academic specialties. At the preceding meeting in San Francisco Professor Fagin had requested that such information be sent to him for inclusion, suggesting as an example that Chairman John Adams was "now 6th in the country among over-75 tennis players." He had not received much response, he reported, and repeated his request. This collection was unfortunately never deposited in the main CUCEA archives, but, however incomplete, it would be welcomed now with enthusiasm if it could still be obtained.

The round-robin of campus reports had already been established as a set feature of CUCEA meetings, allowing a useful biannual sharing of news of progress and concerns. Speaking for Irvine, Henry Fagin explained that their combined Retirees and Emeriti Association, founded in 1983 before the advent of CUCEA, included both staff and faculty annuitants, but that the proportionately few emeriti members, then 41 but increasing rapidly, were already forming a subgroup which in time might function independently. Representation in the Academic Senate was through the University and Faculty Welfare Committee which had an emeriti subcommittee, he said. The full Retiree-Emeriti Association had become an official Campus Support Group, having been "advised to do so as a way of helping the campus and to avoid any possible IRS and California Franchise Tax Board trouble." "He closed," the meeting's Minutes teasingly confide, "with an amusing story about Gimbel's charge accounts" -- no details divulged.

Chairman Adams initiated a final open discussion by asking Chair-Elect Moses Greenfield about his plans for the coming year. He replied that his first priority was "the demonstration of the achievements and activity of the emeriti." Comments, questions and opinions came too quickly for the Secretary's full recording. Although the term "VERIP" was not yet in use, the concept was understood and its consequences foreseen. Could we make a case for emeriti space? How might we influence the recall process? What about assessment of competence? (Here Past-Chair Claude Fawcett tossed in a reference to the university president who conceded that some of his faculty should have tombstones reading "Buried at 65, died at 30.") Would the definition of "emeritus," until then quite clear, be the same after 1993? Stimulating times indeed!

Three closing formalities remained. First Ralph Nair of Santa Barbara offered the Nominating Committee's slate of new officers, which was unanimously approved: the chair-elect would be Adrian Kragen of Berkeley; the next secretary would be Edward Barrett of Davis; and Henry Fagin, himself to serve for seven years, would become the father of the unbroken dynasty of Irvine treasurers which lives on in our own Lyman Porter. Next, there were motions of thanks and appreciation to John Adams and the other 1989/90 CUCEA officers, and to Henry Fagin for hosting the day's successful and enjoyable meeting. And lastly, John Adams, noting that "the only thing CUCEA lacked was a gavel," produced... a genuine Babinski reflex hammer from the San Francisco Medical School and presented it to incoming Chair Moses Greenfield "amid a good deal of hilarity." Mo's wife Bella assures us that it is still in use on his desk as a paper weight.

Meeting participants dispersed in high good spirits, looking forward, despite the many challenges on the horizon, to CUCEA's re-convening in October at Santa Cruz.

Norah Jones
CUCEA Historian