

*A. Rosen*

# The Institute for Retired Persons

A Quarter-Century History

IRP

*Do not*

2006

2015-2016 - Matey  
2016-2017 - Matey

### Presidents of the Institute for Retired Persons

Judy Marshall, 1980-1983

Annabelle Insley, 1983-1985

Doris Stair, 1985- March, 1986

Jack Lynn, 1986-1988

Julia Loreman Chapin, 1988-1990

Shirley Rinnggold, 1990-1991

\* Florence Nutter McDonald, 1991-1992

Elsie Northam, 1992-1993

\* Hilda Williams, 1993-1994

\* Sibyl Bruce, 1994-1996

\* Marie Williams, 1996-1997 *we joined*

\* Sara Lee Poore, 1997-1998

Eleanore Mulligan, 1998-1999

\* Florence Avis, 1999-2000

Alan Kenney, 2000-2001

\* Marjarie Brownell, 2001-2003

\* Jane Daytom, 2003-2004

Vernon Rivers, 2004-2005

\* Dan Polasiak, 2005-2006

\* John Golden, 2006-2007

2007 - 2008

2008 - 2009

2009 - 2010 - ~~Edward Henry~~ Dot Trätt

Nearly everyone listed above served as Vice-President/ Program Chairman before moving to the position of President.

2010 - 2011 - Edward Henry

2011 - 2012 - Henry

2012 - 2013 Jarvis

2013-2014 ?

2014-2015?

\* Deceased

The objectives of IRP shall be to enable the members to learn for the joy of learning by sharing in the experience and knowledge of other members and of visiting speakers; provide its members opportunities for physical exercise through a swimming program and other appropriate activities; encourage and support the University in programs and projects that are particularly appropriate to the needs and interests of Salisbury University students and of senior citizens.

By- Laws, Institute for Retired Persons.  
(revised April, 2000)

There are few small American cities more favorably endowed than Salisbury, Maryland. Among other things we have a university, a regional medical center, a symphony orchestra, a highly-rated zoo, a baseball stadium, AND the Institute for Retired Persons! This organization was the idea of Dr. Harold O. Schaffer, former Director of Continuing Education at Salisbury University (or Salisbury State College as it was known then).

In the late 1970's there was a movement across the country to offer coursework to those no longer in the workplace. The population was coming back to the campus; people now had time to learn, refresh, and ponder. Dr. Schaffer realized this, and tinkered with the name of another organization he had known- Institute for Retired Professionals – and thus was born the Institute for Retired Persons. (This title really came about on the campus tennis court. Hal Schaffer had been taking lessons from Ed Hobbs, an expert in tennis umpiring. The two became friendly and they discussed some of Hal's ideas. A little later Ed joined the group, and for some 18 years he and his wife, Mickie, have been very popular IRP members.)

And so, in 1978, a small group – 5 to be exact – began informal class sessions on the campus to share opinions and information garnered in a lifetime.

The IRP was officially recognized by the College administration in 1980; there were 62 paid members, the fee being \$10.00 per person per semester. Our first president was Julia P. (Judy) Marshall. In perusing the Minutes of those formative years there are frequent references to "President Judy Marshall." But gradually this phrase distilled into an affectionate "President Judy."

These early Minutes also include what are now endearingly familiar names in the IRP family: Sibyl Bruce, Francis Brueckmann, Gladys Downes, Laura Elzey, Elizabeth Hopkins, Annabelle Insley. In addition, the Minutes already note a move "to investigate some use of our funds for charitable purposes" to help the College.

In 1983, Dr. Schaffer moved away from Salisbury, and Dr. Darrell G. Hagar, Professor of English, became the Dean of Graduate Studies and Continuing Education. It became clear to Dr. Hagar that retired people in Salisbury, a population increasing all the time, comprised a vital part of the community, and that the IRP would one day grow to become an effective organization with which the College might be associated. The membership consisted of retired professionals, educators, white collar workers, and homemakers – the gamut of the citizenry.

The then President of the College, Dr. Thomas E. Bellavance, had been contemplating disbanding the IRP, but in discussing the situation with Dr. Hagar, came to realize how meaningful the Club could turn out to be, both to its members and to the College, and agreed that the organization should remain on campus.

In 1983 our President was Annabelle Insley and her tenure, like that of President Judy, would be pivotal in the life of the Institute. The meetings were held on Tuesdays and consisted of two one-hour sessions with a break between. Each hour was on a different

subject so that there was something for everyone. At first space was a problem. In spite of being shuffled around from room to room and even from building to building, we began to grow. One great impetus to growth was a project in Eastern Shore Historical Traditions, funded by the Maryland Endowment for the Humanities. (This entire project was arranged by Judy Marshall.) Six programs were presented to the public: Folklore and Linguistics, Writers and Poets, the Ward Wildfowl Museum, Dance and Music, Rural Life on the Eastern Shore, and a field trip to Snow Hill to visit the Purnell Museum One-Room Schoolhouse and Nassawanga Iron Furnace.

We soon realized that we needed a fitness component to the organization, and so was born the swimming program. The instructors were Elsie Northam and Frances Brueckmann. In educational programs, those who had a special talent put great effort into the organization; for example, Sibyl Bruce taught conversational French for three semesters, a true labor of love. Other members gave book reviews and addressed subjects pertinent to everyday living.

We had slide programs, working with the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., some "show and tell" sessions, and several of us recall a rather singular meeting about the Salisbury Zoo, when a member brought in one very large snake. Several women ran screeching from the room. On another occasion the same member, Jack Lynn, brought with him a plush, velvety chinchilla – but this time the ladies stayed.

The IRP was accorded rent-free space for meetings and limited access to the University pool. The Registrar's office provided expert secretarial support in Julie Hart, who, while a staff member, was able to absorb these relatively undemanding tasks into her University work. Mrs. Hart quickly became – and remains – of the most gracious, valuable friends the IRP has ever had.

At the start of the organization all our funds were deposited with the University, but in 1983 we were granted permission to manage our own finances. Soon thereafter we inaugurated field trips, one per semester for educational purposes, and managed to have great fun at the same time. We traveled to the Baltimore Museum of Art, the National Aquarium, to Philadelphia on historical visits, the Brandywine Museum, Winterthur and the Longwood Gardens.

Ed Hobbs suggested that some of the trips be nearer home because the Shore provides so much interest, and local forays were added. Ed organized a few intriguing local trips by chartered bus to the Eastern Shore of Virginia. Since then chartered bus trips have become a regular part of the IRP schedule.

Another benefit of managing our own money was to award scholarships to Salisbury University students. This scholarship program was unfolded as one of the most important of the IRP.

During the latter years of the 1980s, the Club diminished in membership, but in the 1990s we experienced a resurgence of interest in the programs and an affirmation of the motives



of the organization. Consistent with the Institute's mission, we have donated money to a number of University programs. In the spring of 1999, the IRP was invited into membership in the Salisbury University President's Club.

This intent to be of help to the University community and to learn as much as possible about myriad subjects has impelled many members of the Institute to attend regularly the weekly meetings, to keep abreast of University events, and to find enormous satisfaction in associations within the group. In 1998 a number of sub-groups were formed on a social basis. They are quite enjoyable, but at the same time they have offered their own brand of education. A Bridge club, an Outing club, a Book club, and a Touring club are thriving. (The Touring club handles IRP trips. Prior to its formation, Hilda Williams conceived of and managed every IRP trip for 6 years. This makes 24 trips! A remarkable feat.) Professor Hagar has remarked, "The Institute for Retired Persons is the only program we have at the University that still reflects the philosophy of Continuing Education...." The IRP programs over the years have been quite varied while never obtruding on the philosophical sensibilities of anyone. We have learned a little about the amazing world of silver, the Red Cross, Eastern Shore folklore, heart disease, bank scams, and the life of bats. We have heard a great deal about China, India, Russia, and the little island of Malta.

From the excellent University faculty, we have become acquainted with subjects as varied as ancient Greece and Rome, the world of business, a view of Iraq, the basic elements of astronomy, the origins of the First World War, film classics, Maryland's role in the Civil War, the Eastern Shore Writing Project, criminal psychology, the country of Turkey, and many others.

The staff members of the University are, as far as we are concerned, a national treasure. These busy people render such marvelous support in the way of media services, dining services, and facility planning that we would have no way of holding our meetings were it not for this resource. The IRP membership is deeply grateful to the University Faculty, administration, and staff for extending such provision and for the immense good will associated with it.

The story of the IRP is unique. Like Topsy, it "just grewed." But what is certain is that friendships have been forged while knowledge of the choicest sort has been received (we are inquisitive sponges) simply because the members of the Club are interested people. This is probably what makes them such interesting people!

Judy Marshall, Historian

(Darrell Hagar, Juliette Hart, Ed Hobs, Annabelle Insley, and Eleanor Mulligan contributed to this article.)