



CHAPTER SIX 1980-1990

MOVING SMOOTHLY ALONG

In October, 1980, while the Berkeley Garden Club went about its orders of business (upping the memorial donations for husbands to \$15; urging members not to use pennies in the collection boxes), and deciding on civic projects (planting raised planter boxes in front of the Senior Center on Grove Street – now Martin Luther King Blvd; continuing Garden Therapy at Prudhomme and Shady Lane Rest Home), one club member, Rose Glavinovich, embarked on a cruise that proved much more stimulating than she had anticipated. The ship, the *Prinsendam*, caught fire off the shores of Alaska and ultimately sank.

While there were no injuries, it was nonetheless a harrowing experience. One Club member who knew Ms. Glavinovich claims that the woman was formidable. She approached everything with vigor, often came very close to the person she communicated with, and had trouble keeping her saliva under control as she spoke! The Oakland Tribune, which had employed Rose Glavinovich for 40 years as a reporter, featured an article about her experiences on the ship. Below is an excerpt from the *Tribune/TODAY* section on Wednesday, October 8, 1980, by staff writers Angel...and Joan...

“SAN FRANCISCO – Rose Galvinovich of Berkeley, 89 years of age and sure as salt, looked like a “bag lady” as she march off a jet at San Francisco International Airport Tuesday afternoon.

She was wearing a man’s jeans, a man’s shirt and, she confided, ‘even a man’s underwear.’

Dangling by her side was a plastic garbage bag stuffed with newspapers and ‘everything I own in the world – I’m going home to an empty closet.’

After 10 1/2 hours huddling with others on a storm-tossed lifeboat, Glavinovich was lifted by helicopter to the deck of the tanker, which had set out from Valdez with a cargo of North Slope oil.

‘I didn’t have a penny to my name and hadn’t combed my hair for two days – it was all stuck up with salt.’

...

‘There was a very touching sight as we landed in Valdez,’ she said. ‘It was raining, and there were men, women and children standing out in the rain saying, “Welcome, welcome.”’

“One of the first things we did ashore was run to the bar,” she said, eyes gleaming. “And then the drugstore was ripped clean of cosmetics.”

Now that she’s back, will Rose Glavinovich ever toss on the high seas again?

‘I’d go tomorrow,’ she said with a smile.

‘Well, not tomorrow. I’ve got to get some clothes.’



*Rose Glavinovich speaking at Women in Albany History Tea. 1983
Image is from a scan of a photocopied document.*

Meetings were now being held at the St. John Presbyterian Church. Unfortunately not all things ran smoothly between the BGC and the church. One problem was that there was insufficient storage available and as a result, some of the Club’s archives were moved off sight or given away. Janice Stewart gave scrapbooks with newspaper clippings to the Presidents in office at the time. Hand-carved scrapbook covers were auctioned off and Mary Compton’s scrapbooks were given to the San Francisco Arboretum. The Club continued to store Historians’ reports, minutes and civic reports for the past 50 years.

An annoyance that arose with the St. John's site was the tap-dancing school on the floor above the meeting room. Classes were regularly conducted during Garden Club meetings, subjecting members to a constant barrage of heel/toe, heel/toe overhead.

A third issue with the site was of a more serious nature. The church had homeless people living in the basement. Members reported having to walk around them and feeling unnerved. The city tried to deal with the problem but ultimately they found it easier to evict a "fussy" Garden Club than it was to relocate the homeless. Fortunately, club members Jean Brown and her husband, Bob, belonged to the Epworth United Methodist Church on Hopkins and the Club was able to move into its present home.

In 1985 the Club was approached by the Berkeley Parks Department to participate in the Berkeley Beautification Project. They requested that the Club judge properties nominated quarterly in four quadrants of the city. The following newspaper article appeared in *The Berkeley Voice*, announced the project and explained the purpose and procedures in February of 1986.

"The city of Berkeley Parks/Marina Division, the Berkeley Garden Club and the City of Berkeley Parks and Recreation Division announce a new program designed to improve the beauty of Berkeley by recognizing home and property owners who maintain properties and landscapes.

The program is called the Berkeley Beautification Project and will each quarter recognize four property owners for their contribution to the overall beauty of the city. Each quarter, teams of judges from the Berkeley Garden Club will look at nominated properties in each of four quadrants of Berkeley and will select one in each quadrant for recognition as one of the Berkeley Beautification Award Winners of the quarter.

Each property will be judged on the basis of landscape design, maintenance, color and overall interest. The winners will receive a temporary recognition sign on their front laws, and a certificate as a permanent record of the honor.

As conceived by the Parks and Recreation Commission and adopted by the Berkeley Garden Club, the project intends to give credit to those throughout the city who maintain gardens, homes and apartments which are a joy to behold and a credit to the city.

It is also intended to motivate all to improve their surroundings for the benefit of the entire city.

Persons interested in nominating a property for an award should send the address, owner's name (if known) and reason for the nomination to the Berkeley Beautification Project, Berkeley Parks/Marina Division,

....

Nominations for the first quarter are due March 1. For further information call ...”



Berkeley gardens awarded for beauty



Scan of newspaper clipping from the Berkeley Voice, September 3, 1986 ...and the winners were: Upper right 2274 Cedar St., Upper left 216 Ellis St., and 3017 Wheeler St. bottom.

Leonora Strohmeier's husband, Erwin, was an excellent wood and metal craftsman. He made and donated the signs that were placed in the front yards of the winners' homes. As a result of his generosity, the Club presented him with a Club honorary membership.

When asked to give an account of her year (1985-86) as president to the 75th anniversary committee, Virginia Jenner presented us with the following charming account written in longhand.

"As far as my memories go everything went quite smoothly. I had an excellent Board and everyone did her part. There was a variety of good programs. My only problem was the old microphone. As President it was my job to set up the microphone and get things ready for the meeting.

The first meeting, while I was speaking, I watched as the microphone slowly lowered and I was talking into thin air. I pulled it up and continued. The next meeting I was determined that this would not happen again so I tightened the screw with all my might when I set up the speaker system. What do you know, when it came time to dismantle the set-up, I couldn't! Fortunately, Bob Brown was there and had some tools so he helped me. The same thing happened in all the following months.

The next year, we bought a new microphone.

P.S. When I read the minutes for 1985 I was reminded that Hazel Lawry resigned due to illness. Everything went so smoothly that I forgot that Jean Brown took over the job and the year continued uninterrupted."

1986–1988, according to President Roberta Ghertner, were also two smooth years. In her own words, "Gracious! What a quiet term of office. Nothing happened! It was two fun years for me – everyone carried her load – a wonderful group of ladies."

It's hard to tell who authored the following note pertaining to those two years but it may have been Rebecca Cason.

"Two easy (no problem) years.

We were very active with Berkeley Beautiful Program. The City worked with us in giving awards each month to the best front yard gardens in the entire city of Berkeley.

At our March tea we had Soho Sakai, a renowned floral designer and teacher, do a floral arranging program, Ikebana style. The

room was packed with people standing around the walls – very successful!

Each December we were volunteers at the Dunsmuir House Christmas open house.

I will never forget May 11, 1987. The Succulent and Geranium Section met at Roberta Ghertner's home. We then went to Michael Barclay's garden in Kensington. Afterward I set up for 12 for lunch at Roberta Ghertner's house and 32 arrived!!!!!"

By 1986 the Club enjoyed the respect and recognition of the City of Berkeley and had many people interested in becoming members. A discussion was held about how to handle phone inquiries about attending meetings. It was decided that inquirers be told about membership and attendance requirements, and attaining sponsors which were required by the Bylaws. The Club member screening these calls was encouraged to find out as much as possible about the interested party. It was suggested that in the future, press releases should state "Guests by invitation only."

The following is a portion of the Historian's Report for that year, less the nominations and descriptions of the Christmas party and the Spring Tea.

"This has been a very successful year starting in September with a program by Alice Waters of Chez Panisse and Theresa Shere who grows much of the produce for the restaurant. It was fun as well as very successful.

The October meeting had Dr. Robert Raabe [at that time, a professor at University of California – now professor emeritus - and UC Plant Pathologist] telling us how to put our gardens to bed for the winter with suggestions for controlling virus in the gardens. Alma Herbert's Tour Committee planned an excursion to the Winner's Circle ranch to see the miniature horses, lunch at Streamers Gold Landing and on to the Keoto Koi Bonsai Garden Center. The bus was full and the trip was great.

Lawrence Brooks, president of General Hydroponics Co. talked about the new way of gardening. It was very interesting. [If you remember, the inventor of this farming method spoke to the group in the 30s.] If members have tried this system, a report on their success would be encouraging to others. ...

In January, Gary Bush, District Landscape Architect for the nine Bay Area counties spoke on the reasons and problems of highway beautification. His talk clarified some of the reasons for the plantings along our freeways.

The Conservation Program in February covered the East Bay Regional Parks. The slide show revealed interesting areas throughout the parks.

At the April meeting, Mr. Montgomery, representing the City of Berkeley, thanked the Berkeley Garden Club, Marie Moynihan and her Civic Beautification Committee for the sponsorship of the Berkeley Beautification Project.

Dr. Andrew Gutierrez's talk and slides on biological control of pests was excellent and proved again the error of moving plants to other areas where the natural controls are missing.

Berkeley Garden Club and its members have been receiving more recognition for their activities and their volunteer work, with Roberta Gertner and Marie Moynihan receiving special notice. Roberta was quoted in Herb Caen's column recently.

The Garden Notes given each month provided worth while, useful information. It would be great if Jettye Fern [Grant] would combine them in a folder for the Club Library.

Of course, there was the California Garden State Convention at Concord. This was our year to help, which we did beautifully – everything from running the election to attending meetings, providing arrangements for the halls and baskets of flowers for the post-convention luncheon. This last effort sent Sheila Pearce running wildly around Concord to successfully find another basket of flowers as we had been given the wrong table count. As a direct result of the convention, the Succulent Study Group will become the Succulent/Geranium Study Group starting this fall.

Certainly we have been fortunate to have such excellent leadership and willing followers. Our leaders have earned two months rest and we all have two months to practice everything learned this year. We will all be happy to return in September."

-Betty Heath, Historian

There has been mention of "Garden Notes" since the early days of the Club. It was referred to by different names along the way but this segment of the meeting was a popular one. A history committee mem-

ber collected Garden Notes as presented by Jettye Fern Grant for the 1987/88 year. The following two are a sampling of the type of material provided and the length of the segment.

“9/15/87 – Dealing with spider mites, aphids, thrips, white flies, etc: Use 1 to 2 Tbsp of dishwashing liquid detergent to a gallon of water, and spray your plants carefully, particularly under the leaves. Leave the spray on the plants for an hour or two and go back and spray off with clear water. Detergent can be mixed with contact or systemic sprays also, bearing in mind that systemics are not recommended for fruits or vegetables. Spraying should be repeated every 7-10 days.

10/20/87 – Making a carrot box: Fill a box, the deeper the better, with a mixture of 1/5 garden loam, 2/5 clean sand, and 2/5 compost. Sprinkle the carrot seeds on top and cover with 1/4 inch of peat moss. Water or spray carefully and keep moist. This method will produce straight, sweet carrots. For anyone growing collards or other greens, use ammonium sulphate along with the planting to avoid bitter flavor.”

As more environmentally safe methods became known, the presenters of “Garden Notes” were quick to include them. Even in the 80s, however, the Club was encouraging the use of more environmentally friendly solutions like Ivory Soap detergent and rinsing with clear water.

During that year (1987), the Club experienced some tightness in its budget which stimulated a search for ways to generate more income. Fourteen new members joined bringing the membership back up to 100 active members and the dues were raised to \$25.00. It was decided to apply for District and State award for the Berkeley Beautification Project, which the Club won later that year. Jettye Fern Grant was awarded District Horticulturist of the Year and Sheila Pearce was awarded District Flower Arranger of the Year. The Bylaws were changed that year to add the addition of a second Vice President, who would be in charge of programs, the Librarian would be appointed not elected and finally that the dollar amount for dues would be stricken from the Bylaws. The dues and initiation fee would be determined by the Executive Board.

From the birth of the Berkeley Beautiful Project in 1986 until 1989 the Garden Club attacked this commitment with enthusiasm. The applications were kept in a folder with the judges’ rankings. Photographs

of the winning properties that ran in *The Berkeley Voice* and *The Daily California* were some of the pictures kept in a scrapbook of achievements along with the "Certificate of Award" from the City of Berkeley/Parks and Marina Division that recognized the Garden Club for its commitment to the project. In minutes from April 1987, however, some question arose about the benefits of the program.

"Mr. Montgomery of the Berkeley Parks and Recreation Department announced the winning gardens in the Berkeley Beautiful project.

It seemed none of the winners were present, so Mr. Montgomery said his office would send each winner a letter of congratulation. Also, he would have a discussion over the summer with Club President Claudine Read and Leonora Strohmaier (chair of the Civic Beautification Committee) as whether to continue the Berkeley Beautiful project. In answer to question from the audience as to whether the project was having an effect on the neighborhoods, Mr. Montgomery said there was no way to document such an effect. He would guess that seeing a winning garden did affect "to a small degree" the neighbors. Mr. M. felt that the lack of a local newspaper works against the project. When the project was mentioned in the city Newsletter, his office received three calls."

1989-90's study groups were Bonsai, Flower Growing (formerly Botany and Horticulture), Herbs and Spices, Kitchen Gardens, and Succulents and Geraniums. \$994 was raised at the November Silent Auction that was earmarked for the Scholarship and Conservation Fund. At the East Bay Garden Centers awards dinner, the BGC and the El Cerrito Club provided table decorations, and Berkeley Garden Club member, Betty Fawkes was presented with "Woman Gardener of the Year." In the general meeting in November, Jettye Fern Grant offered the following Garden Notes:

"10/17/89 – Three tips: 1) When planting bulbs in pots, putting the flat side of the bulb towards the outside of the pot will encourage the leaves to grow straight up; 2) It's time to start your spraying program for dormant fruit trees, remembering that apricot trees are treated differently from apples, pears, etc. when it comes to kinds of spray. Do not spray any fruit tree after flower color appears; And, 3) When cooking dried beans, soak them overnight with baking soda added. In the morning, pour the water off, rinse the beans thoroughly with fresh water and cook as usual.

She promises that by following this formula, beans will no longer be ‘the forbidden fruit.’”

In 1990, it was suggested that in addition to Garden Notes, some time be given each meeting to Historic Notes, a brief look back at earlier times in the Club’s history. According to the minutes, in June when Evie Humphrey presented her Historian’s report for the year, she “gave a brief account of Club activities in 1951 and 1952, and had the Club scrapbook opened up to newspaper pictures and articles of that time. It was a delightful look back to the ‘olden days.’”

The 80s were indeed years jam-packed with activities and projects. Membership was consistently high and individual members and the Club as a whole received much recognition from the City and from umbrella garden club associations. In fact, there was so much buzz in the Club that by the end of the decade, the incoming Social Chair petitioned the Club for a Social Committee with twelve members.

The Club had been hosting Flower Arranging competitions at the church since the 1970s which were open to the public and which followed official rules and had both artistic and horticulture divisions. The Flower Arrangement Study Group hosted several Standard Home Flower Shows which were conducted in private homes. There were 13 classes of four entries each with the Horticulture Division set up according to categories of plants. Two such shows were held in the 80s. “Gold is Where You Find It,” was held in 1981, and “Flight” was held in 1983. Both shows were held at the home of Mildred Bennett. The following poem is a reflection of the times and of the Club’s interests.

Take Time To See

It seems so hard to understand
As I look out across the land
That all I view belongs to me:
I ought to take more time to see!

The distant hills and mountains high,
The rolling clouds and bright blue sky,
No one can take these views from me
As long as I have eyes to see.

A timid deer with haunting look
Who stands refreshed by yonder brook

Knows not that he belongs to me.
Oh what a thrilling sight to see!

The song birds so gay and clear
That fill the morning air with cheer,
And fragrant flowers of every hue,
That stand erect bedecked with dew.
All these things belong to me,
But I must use my eyes to see.

When evening shadows gather nigh
And twinkling stars light up the sky
I hear My Master say to me
“I made it all for you to see.”
My heart grows warm with faith and pride
To know that He is by my side.

-Ray F. Zaner



Below, Home Flower Show “Sheila Pearce, winner of the tri-color award (l.) and Mary Hall, creativity award winner, display their ribbons.” Clipping scanned from the Times Journal, Wednesday, November 9, 1983. -Photo by Erwin Stromaier



*Arlene Riasanovsky in Russian costume for the Christmas Gala, "Barzaars Around the World"
-Snapshot from BGC's Scrapbook*



To celebrate 50 Years of Gardening, the Berkeley Garden Club held a tea at Epworth Methodist Church March 21, 1982. Pictured from the left are Sheila Pearce, chairman; Leonora Strohmaier, past president and co-chairman; Evelyn Humphrey, past president and co-chairman; and Jean Brown, current president.- Photo by Michael Russell. Scan of clipping from BGC's Scrapbook, March 21, 1982.