



ROTARY VOTARY

The Rotary Club of West Chester

Bhichai Rattakul, International President 2002-2003



Bulletin #34

www.rotary7450.org/westchester

March 20, 2003

This Week's Program: March 20, 2003

**Speaker: Martha Carson- Gentry
Ghana Experience
arranged by Ron Ginns**

Next Week's Program: March 27, 2003

**Classification Talks
arranged by John Kehner**

MINUTES by Fran Luft

Today's meeting was held at Westtown School. Kristi Blake gave the invocation.

There were no visiting Rotarians. We were graced with the presence of the following guests: twin girls who are 1st grade students at Westtown, Matt Bradley, Barbara Stonestrom, Rita Filano, Dr Arnold Fletcher, Frank Helms, Elaine Deaver, and Lois Bassett. Birthday greetings were extended to Dick Yoder, Steve Founds, and Bill Bunch.

Charles Streitweiser announced that the Polio Eradication Committee will meet next week. Sue Casso announced that the Rotary Club of West Chester Spring Auction will be held Saturday, May 3, 2003 6 P.M. at the new home of William H. Bunch Auctions/Appraisals One Hillman Dr. Chadds Ford, PA \$20/person, \$35/couple Light Dinner, Beer, Wine, Soda.

SPEAKERS PRESENTATION

by Bob Connolly (abbreviated)

Westtown School is honored to host the Rotary Club of West Chester today. I want to acknowledge a few people who helped put this event together. Ernie Schoch and the Food Service staff for preparing a delicious meal. Mary Brooks and Kevin Gallagher, who work in our Archives. Mary provided invaluable assistance in preparing this presentation. Today I would like to share with you some of the history of Westtown School, I would like to focus attention on the Lower School where we are sitting today, and talk about the farm land that we see surrounding the building to our south, and conclude with a profile of the School today, all in 15 minutes.

Westtown School opened in May of 1799 with 20 boys and 20 girls. The School added 10 boys and 10 girls each month, so at the end of the year there were over 200 students with two dozen teachers and staff living together on the 600 acre property. It was a monumental undertaking to house and supply a school community of that size on the sparsely populated farm country

The idea for Westtown School came to life among Philadelphia Friends at precisely the same moment that our new nation was choosing its largest and most prosperous city as its capital and the crucible of

American democracy. We may remember from our history that the Constitutional Convention was held in Philadelphia in 1787.

The Quaker perspective of American history in the latter half of the 18th century may differ somewhat from what we have been taught. After the American Revolution, life for the members of the Society of Friends became increasingly difficult in their beloved city of Philadelphia, which they had founded 100 years earlier. The new political leaders of this new country were suspicious of Friends who did not take up arms in the war of independence. The American Revolution was a great crisis for the Society of Friends. Their principle of pacifism was under great assault. Many Friends were conflicted and thus creating a schism in Philadelphia Quakerism when some Friends who supported the Revolution were exiled from their Meetings. They formed a group called Free Quakers, informally known as Fighting Quakers.

One of those Free Quakers, Owen Biddle, who served as a Quartermaster for the Continental Army, published a 50-page pamphlet, "A Plan for a School" in 1790. This document opened the discussion and decision that brought Westtown School into existence. The central theme of Owen Biddle's pamphlet was the need for Friends to provide their children with a "guarded education." Friends gathered in 1794, a committee was quickly appointed to take up the matter of building a school. Soon thereafter, 600 acres were purchased from the Gibbons family for \$16,359. Land that had been given to the Gibbons family by William Penn, and today we hold that deed. In 1798, at the cost of \$26,431.52, a building was nearing completion.

In 1799 the first students arrived. Westtown is now thought to be the oldest continuously operating co-educational boarding school in the United States. It was not commonplace to educate young women in the 18th century, and certainly not along side of young men. The curriculum was practical (surveying, bookkeeping, sewing). We have here some of the artifacts of that time - samplers from young women, maps by young boys. The globe sampler teaching geography as well as sewing. The academic subjects (reading, writing, math) and, of course, religion. In the late 1800's, a more prescribed curriculum was beginning to be recognized towards the earning of a high school diploma. Yet there was still the need to

educate the younger children, both faculty children and neighboring children who lived locally.

In 1904, a school began and operated intermittently in various buildings and homes on the campus. It was noted in our records that in the early 1930's there was a striking increase in Lower School children commuting by automobile from as far away as Downingtown and Media. In 1936, an old barn on School Lane was turned into an elementary school. additions were made in the 1950s and 1970s. In 1999, the building was completely renovated and modernized. The remnants of the old barn in between the two additions was literally removed. That space is the main entrance and library. The roof design with the concrete pillars pay homage to that early barn. In 2002, the Lower School doubled in size because of the increasing interest in our program. The Lower School currently has 213 students. There are 2 classes for each grade, K through 5th, and one class of pre-K. There are approximately 18 students in each class. Principal, Susan Temple, herself is a graduate of Westtown School and attended the "Lane School."

As we gaze out the windows facing south, we see the farm that stretches out before us. This pastoral setting has been an integral part of the school for 200 years. Quakers have worked and farmed this land since the founding of the Commonwealth nearly 350 years ago. The School has held this land in trust for over 200 years, and has been faithful to its mission of providing a guarded education and to live in harmony with the surrounding environment. In the founding of the School, the farm was an integral part of the School's survival. Crops were grown, and I am sure students worked on the farm and learned valuable lessons in agriculture and other practical skills. The operation of the farm by the School continued up through the 1960's. (picture) The School operated its own dairy farm and produced milk for students and faculty as well as selling it to the community. There was an orchard, which sold fruit to the public. In the 1960's those options were discontinued. A local Quaker farmer, Evans Hicks, farmed the property faithfully for about 25 years. For the last decade the School has entered into a relationship with Pete Flynn. Pete manages over 250 acres and operates Pete's Produce on Street Road. The farm is protected in the Pennsylvania Agricultural Security District. The School works actively with the Natural Lands Trust in advising it how to preserve the farms, woods and wetlands.

Today, under the leadership of Head of School, John Baird, the School serves 750 students and has 175 full-time employees. 300 students board at the School, students from all over the world. As many as 26 countries and 20 states are represented. It has been said that Westtown School is a living vision of William Penn. He envisioned a community where people from different countries could live and work together in harmony. He called this a "holy experiment."

DATES TO REMEMBER

May 3- Spring Auction @ William Bunch Auctions
May 20 - W.C.Community Night at the Blue Rocks
June 2 District 7450 Golf Outing
June 5 - Rotary Club of West Chester in the Cafe @ the Blue Rocks.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS - THE ROTARY CLUB OF WEST CHESTER - DISTRICT 7450

Carl Werner, President; Charles Streitwieser, President-Elect; Steve Quigley, Vice-President; Jeffrey R. Sommer, Past President; Jim Gasho/Amos E. Bassett, Jr., Secretary, M. Robert Clarke, Treasurer; Steve Karp/Annalie Lorgus, Sergeant At Arms; Phil Sacks, Assistant Sergeant At Arms; John Hall, Gary Hewitt, Carol Hanson, Ken Hickman, John Olszewski, John Schwab, and Michelle Venema

Dan Guyon, District Governor
Thomas Gibson, Asst. District Governor Area 8
Robert Poole, III, M.D., P.D.G. 1980-1981

EXCHANGE STUDENT

Gustavo Giacomini - Palhoca, Brazil
Hosts: James and Linda Hicks 610-347-2134
1072 Glenn Hall Rd. Kennett Square, PA 19348
Unionville High School
Future host families are needed.
Please contact Joe Polito or Linda Hicks

NEW MEMBERS

The following persons also have been proposed for membership and have indicated their desire to become members:

Shannon Cassidy, Mediation Consultant; Classification-Business Service/Mediation; Sponsored by Deborah Ellenberg

Matt Bradley, West Chester Friends School; Classification-Education/Administration; Sponsored by Charles Streitwieser.

Written objections must be received by the Club Secretary within three (3) days of this notice. Otherwise, a date will be set for their inductions.

"HOW TO GET IN TOUCH"

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Web site maintenance: Mark Sammarone