

# **A SHORT HISTORY OF THE WOMEN'S NETWORK, ASSOCIATION OF PACIFIC COAST GEOGRAPHERS**

Professor Joan Clemons, Emerita  
Los Angeles Valley College and University of California, Los Angeles  
April 2002

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Association of Pacific Coast Geographers (APCG), founded in 1935, had 44 charter members (35 men and 7 women). The Women's Network of APCG began in 1984 at a retreat hosted by Professor Margaret Trussell, newly elected Vice President of the Association. Trussell's major goal for her tenure in office was to support women in geography, especially graduate students. She wrote to graduate schools in the Association's geographic area seeking participants for a Bodega Bay Retreat (where Margaret owned a cottage one sand dune removed from the ocean). Women professors in geography were few, and women graduate students even fewer. So began the network of women members of the Association of Pacific Coast Geographers.

## **FORMATIVE YEARS**

In 1984, the retreat at Margaret Trussell's Bodega Bay home, on Whaleship Road above the Bay, brought together graduate students Nancy Wilkinson, Susan Hardwick, and Virginia King. Faculty members Debbie Elliott-Fisk (University of California Davis) and Ann MacPherson (University of California Berkeley) were present as was Bonnie Lloyd (editor of *Landscape*). After much talk and many walks on the beach, the group made plans for forming a support group for women called the APCG "Women's Network".

Trussell's election as Vice-President of the APCG was only the third time that a woman was nominated and elected an officer in the Association. Trussell was preceded in her role as President by Frances M. Earle (University of Washington) in 1941 and Ruth E. Baugh (University of California, Los Angeles) in 1949. At the same time that Trussell became President of APCG, the Association of American Geographers (AAG) elected its second woman president (Risa Palm, University of Colorado, 1986). The first woman president of the AAG was Ellen Churchill Semple in 1921.

Beginning in 1985 either a reception or a retreat for women faculty and students was held on the evening prior to the first day of the APCG annual conference. The main purpose of the function was to welcome women geographers, especially students, and to make them feel comfortable before facing the "big guys" the next day. By 1993, func-

tions were either breakfast or lunches, and special sessions or field trips scheduled to coincide with the annual meeting. From the very beginning, all functions were open to all members of the APCG, and men were encouraged to attend any and all gatherings. And some did!

#### 1986 TO 1988

At the annual meeting in Eugene, Oregon, in 1986, Margaret Trussell gave her presidential address on "Five Western Women Pioneer Geographers." In the front row sat the members of the Network, smiling and assuring Margaret of their support. Having received her Ph.D. from the University of Oregon, Margaret's return to her alma mater was a roaring success.

In 1987 at the meetings in Davis, the Network sponsored its first special session entitled "Women in the West". Margaret Trussell and Barbara Cragg were two of the presenters.

A second Women's Network Retreat was held at Margaret Trussell's house on February 14, 1988. One topic of the Retreat was how to make new women students and faculty members more comfortable in their departments, at professional meetings, and in the discipline in general. The most significant moment of this Retreat was Margaret's saying to the group, "We could have a lot of political power in APCG if we decided to seize it." Thereupon, Margaret asked each of the women present what they would be willing to do for the organization. It was decided that each woman would run for APCG president, vice president, or AAG Councillor in the next few years. Women attending were Nancy Wilkinson, Susan Hardwick, Debbie Elliott-Fisk, Teresa Bulman, Deidre Busacca and four graduate students from San Francisco State University.

These "founding" members of the APCG Women's Network are now well established professionally. Nancy Wilkinson is chair of the Department of Geography and Human Environmental Studies at California State University, San Francisco and the current president of APCG. Teresa Bulman completed her PhD; she is currently chair of the Department of Geography at Portland State University and Vice President of APCG. Debbie Elliott-Fisk moved into the directorship of the University of California's Research Centers and is now chair of the Graduate Group in Geography at UC Davis. Susan Hardwick held an AAG Councillor position for APCG and is now a faculty member at the University of Oregon.

#### 1989 TO THE PRESENT

At the annual meeting in 1989 in Fairbanks, the Network hosted a breakfast for 15 energetic members to discuss workshops and panels for the coming meetings. Topics suggested included paper sessions on women explorers, mentoring women, and a workshop on analyzing the treatment of women in an atlas or geography textbook.

In 1990, the third Women's Network Retreat was held prior to the annual meetings at Chico at the home of Susan Hardwick. Approximately 30 women attended this retreat, including Janice Monk who was a Distinguished Visiting Professor at Chico that year. After a potluck dinner, the group sat in a circle and responded to the question "What would you like to be doing in five years"? At the breakfast meeting, 19 women discussed their role in APCG with then AAG President Susan Hanson and AAG Committee Status on Women Chairperson Barbara Bailey.

The fourth Women's Network Retreat was held prior to the 1991 annual meeting in Tucson at the home of Lisa Graumlich, attended by about 50 women. More women faculty and graduate students mingled and brainstormed than ever before. The main concern was lack of funding for the network and the lack of information about women in geography within the region. As an example, Joan Clemons (Los Angeles Valley College and UCLA) was nominated for APCG Vice President, however, many of the women attending the Retreat who were members did not vote, while others were not members of the organization. This led to a long discussion involving priorities for the Network and just how to engage young women in Network activities as well as the APCG.

The fifth Women's Network Retreat, held in Bellingham in 1992, was poorly attended and the Network decided that their planned activities could not conflict with other APCG activities nor occur ahead of the annual meeting. The women attending the Retreat decided that in the future, the Network activities should be part of the annual meeting calendar. The Network was recognized by the APCG Executive Council and given a position on the Council. Joan Clemons served two years as the first representative of the Women's Network on the Council. However, this position was not officially recognized since the Constitution designated only officers and the immediately past president and regional councillor as members of the Executive Council. In subsequent revisions of the Constitution and By-laws, the composition of the Executive Council did not change; currently, the Women's Network is a special committee of the APCG and its representative is the coordinator of the Network. Unlike other special committees the Network coordinator is not appointed by the Executive Committee.

At the UC Berkeley meeting in 1993, the Network sponsored two paper sessions, and in conjunction with the local arrangements committee, hosted a reception honoring the Society of Women Geographers (an organization formally begun in 1925 in New York). Margaret Trussell was honored for her contributions to geography and to APCG as well as her membership in the Society of Women Geographers. This was the largest reception ever held at the APCG meetings. This was also the year that the nominating committee, chaired by Joan Clemons, nominated two women for the position of Vice President of APCG (prior to this, only five women ever appeared on the ballot running against a male candidate). Elizabeth Burns, Arizona State, and Robin Datel, UC Davis, ran for the position; Burns won this election and was the fourth woman to serve as President of APCG, 9 years after Margaret Trussell and 50 years after Ruth Baugh served.

At the Berkeley meetings, the first contribution to the Women's Network by an APCG member was received. David H. Miller (Emeritus Professor, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee) and his wife Enid made their initial contribution to the Network to honor Myrta Lisle McClellan (a charter member of APCG) who David felt was the best teacher on the UCLA campus. In 1994, the Millers recognized Margaret Trussell in their contribution to the Network. The Millers support has continued every year, and has been a major reason for the Network's ability to fund travel grants for students.

In 1994, the Network co-hosted with the Society of Women Geographers and CSU Northridge campus the annual barbecue at the campus (the only event held at CSUN). The barbecue was followed by a walking tour of the earthquake-wracked campus.

In 1995, the Network sponsored its first field trip "Women in Wine", visiting a number of important Sonoma wineries and vineyards where women enologists and viticulturalists are contributing to the growing wine industry of California. The Network also hosted a breakfast to encourage women to meet briefly before the sessions to share news, recap activities of the last year, and plan projects for next year. Teresa Bulman, long-time coordinator of the Network, resigned her position and Megan Ashbaugh (San Diego State University) was appointed the new coordinator.

In 1996, the Network sponsored a breakfast and their second field trip, "Sacramento Delta" led by Megan Ashbaugh, Network Coordinator, and Marsha Dillon and Tom Krabacher, California State University, Sacramento.

At the 60th Annual meeting of the APCG in Spokane, the Network moved its business meeting from an early morning breakfast to a luncheon. This was very successful and encouraged more APCG members to attend. The first travel grants for students were awarded at the luncheon.

At Flagstaff in 1998, again the Network held its annual luncheon attended by recipients of travel grants and interested members of APCG. In addition, Tina Kennedy hosted a Women's Network gathering at her home, attended by more than sixty members of APCG (both male and female).

In December 1998, Margaret Trussell died following a struggle with cancer and Parkinson's disease. She had served the APCG as Secretary-Treasurer (1977-1980), Vice President (1985), and President (1986). In 1996, she received the Association's Distinguished Service Award.

At the annual meeting in Sparks in 1999, the Network luncheon attended by about 30 people discussed how to structure Margaret Trussell's recently received bequest of just over \$49,000 to be used for scholarships for women in geography. Robin Datel agreed to lead the committee to consider how to best allocate the funds in keeping with Margaret's spirit.

In 2000, at the annual meeting in Arcata, the Network received an additional donation from David Miller in the amount of \$1500. Forty people attended the annual luncheon. Six travel award winners were introduced, each speaking briefly about her background and goals. The group considered and adopted the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Margaret Trussell Scholarship Fund Committee; the Fund will offer annually two scholarships of \$1500 each to women students of geography. Two new coordinators of the Network were announced; they are Dolly Freidel and Jennifer Helzer at Sonoma State University, and CSU Stanislaus respectively. Megan Ashbaugh was commended for her years of leadership of the Network. The APCG Executive Committee appointed three faculty members to serve on the Trussell Scholarship Committee for three-year terms. They are Susan Reynolds, Barbara Fredrich, and Susan Hardwick. The Network's long-time support for women in geography became a reality at the President's Reception where APCG President Tina Kennedy, AAG President Susan Cutter, and California Geographical Society President Carol Cox celebrated the role women are playing in the profession, both locally and nationwide.

## SUMMARY

In Spring 2001, David Miller's wife Enid died. He sent a check to APCG in the amount of \$2500 in memory of Enid, "...a true geographer and my partner through her skills in writing and editing of geographic books." The Network, and the APCG, has benefited enormously from the generous contributions of the Millers.

There have been sixty-three presidents of the APCG, seven of whom were women. Two women have held the position of editor of the Yearbook of the APCG (Frances Earle, 1957-1964, and Robin Datel, 1988-1992, who was co-editor with Dennis Dingemans). In contrast, since 1940 the AAG has had sixty-one presidents, fifty-five men and six women; the first of those women served as AAG president in 1921 (Ellen Churchill Semple). The Annals of the AAG, from 1911 through 2000, have had 18 editors. Susan Hanson, Clark University, served once as co-editor (with Edgar Conkling), and from 1985-87 served as editor—and the only woman to edit the Annals.

By 2001, at the 64<sup>th</sup> annual APCG meeting held at the University of California, Santa Barbara, the Women's Network organized a panel discussion and forum on "Networking for the Future", followed by a luncheon; and offered two award categories for undergraduate and graduate students in geography—the Women's Network Travel Grants and the Margaret Trussell Scholarship. Ten travel grants were awarded and two Margaret Trussell scholarships. Although in existence for less than twenty years, the Women's Network of the APCG has continued to grow in its determination to assist women in geography. The Network has consistently maintained its open policy to every member of APCG and has always solicited and encouraged participation by men at luncheons, retreats, field trips and special sessions.

## APPENDICES

### Women Presidents, Association of Pacific Coast Geographers

1940-41	Frances M. Earle, University of Washington
1948-49	Ruth E. Baugh, UCLA
1985-86	Margaret E. Trussell, Chico
1994-95	Elizabeth Burns, Arizona State University
1996-97	Joan Clemons, UCLA
1998-99	Robin Dattel, Sacramento State University
1999-00	Christina Beal 'Tina' Kennedy, Northern Arizona University
2001-02	Nancy Wilkinson, San Francisco State

### Women Network Coordinators, Association of Pacific Coast Geographers

1988-95	Teresa Bulman, Portland State University
1995-2000	Megan Ashbaugh, KEA Environmental, San Diego
2000-present	Jennifer Helzer, CSU Stanislaus and Dolly Freidel, Sonoma State University