

Radcliffe Alumnae Lectureship / Professor - history

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Ellie Zuckerman and I started on the Professorship idea in 1979. When Cassandra Moore joined us late that year, the club and the college decided we should shift our efforts to raise \$250,000 and endow a Visiting Professorship. The Radcliffe College Trustees had reservations about the SF Club's initiative because they worried the Alumnae Professorship project's possible popularity might take away essential fundraising strength from the College itself. After wrangles of ridiculous detail with the college trustees, this finally developed into a much smaller project of \$30,000 to fund a "Radcliffe Alumnae Lectureship." The fund raising would be limited to California only. The two clubs, ours and the Radcliffe Club of the Peninsula, opened the effort with a gala dinner at the Culinary Academy on Polk Street in San Francisco and we were off to a good start. Within two years of dedicated work the \$30,000 target was achieved and on April 10, 1988 the first Alumnae Lecture was given by Representative Pat Schroeder in Cambridge. (All of these details and more can be found in the "Years of Turmoil" chapter of Sarah Gregory's book detailing the first 100 years of the Radcliffe Club of SF entitled " We are Not Extinct", see pages 30 to 32.)

When Harvard decided to change Radcliffe College into the Institute, we got another chance to fund a Professorship. Because Harvard was taking over the Radcliffe endowment, they reduced the cost of a chaired and tenured Professorship. It was to cost us now "only" one million and a half. At the Radcliffe Club meeting of October 30, 2000 the following resolution was voted upon and adopted:

"1 Recognizing the historic and continuing underrepresentation of tenured women on Harvard University's Faculty of Arts and Sciences, the Radcliffe Club of San Francisco will enter into negotiations with the Radcliffe Institute of Advanced Studies and Harvard University to create joint tenured professorship funded by existing funds designated for the Radcliffe Alumnae Lectureship and other funds to

be designated or raised with preference for the appointment of women to Harvard University's Faculty of Arts and Sciences .

The title 'Radcliffe Alumnae Professor' shall remain with the individual as an honorific as long as that individual shall remain on the Faculty of Arts and Sciences..."

And on that day we formally joined forces with the New York based Committee for the Equality of Women at Harvard (CEWH). We had collected close to \$250,000 which the club put into the pot for the Professorship and the New York women gave us \$100,000 and an anonymous donor in Cambridge gave us \$300,000. By the time small amounts of gifts had been added up we had "only" about \$900,000 to raise. I had a long conversation with then Harvard President Neil Rudenstien. He sent me a wonderful letter wishing us all the best. With his blessing we "were off to the races".

In the first year, 2001, we appointed Mary Maples Dunn and Carol K. Pforzheimer as honorary co-chairs. Ann Rabinowitz, president of the New York based Committee for the Equality of Women at Harvard and I (as then President of the Radcliffe Club of SF) became the working co-chairmen. The national Committee included SF member Kathleen Gregory Henschel, Mary Dix Kneip (of the Peninsula Club), Mathea Falco (of the SF Club), Cassandra Moore, Miriam Bopp Pachaki (president of the Peninsula Club) and Lida Naprstek Urbanek and Anne Carson Berry along with many distinguished Radcliffe supporters. The SF Club was the biggest source of enthusiastic support. They had been waiting twenty-two years!

At a time when we were losing Radcliffe as a college, emotions ran high. Lots of women across the nation joined in our efforts to leave an alumnae mark. The money came in with remarkable speed and we over achieved our goal by almost one quarter of a million dollars by 2003. The college then began searching for the first Radcliffe Alumnae Professor and in the Harvard University Gazette of 12/16/04 Carolyn Abbate, described as " a wide-ranging humanist who ranks among the world's foremost authorities on opera" was appointed a tenured Professor of Music, holding the first Radcliffe Alumnae Professorship.

The Professorship supports two of the first five years of the position for research at Radcliffe. This makes the position very much more valuable because it gives the professor a clear time for her pure research away from her teaching duties of the Chair. They are a factor IN the Professorship.

They come along with the appointment. In the official language: "...during the five year term of the appointment, The Radcliffe Alumnae Professor will spend four semesters as a resident fellow at the Radcliffe Institute. In addition to engaging in research, the professor is expected to be an active member of the Institute's intellectual and academic community."

There have been three Professors, the first, Carolyn Abbate; the second, a math guru from Princeton's Institute for Advanced Study, Sophie Morel, who works at the intersection of algebraic geometry, representation theory and number theory. Recently the third Radcliffe Alumnae Professor has been appointed. Tamar Herzog is Radcliffe Alumnae Professor at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study and Monroe Gutman Professor of Latin American Affairs in the history department of Harvard University's Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

Our over-achieved goal of extra money for the Professorship went to help establish a Radcliffe Alumnae Fellow appointed each year for someone who is working for tenure but has not yet achieved it. This year (2013-2014) that fellow is Radhika Nagpal, a professor of Computer Science in the Harvard School of Engineering and Applied Sciences. She's working on robotic devices that act similarly to living systems.

The Schlesinger Library has requested my documents about this history for their history of Radcliffe College. If any club members have records or documents to contribute, please let me know.