

The Weeders  
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1968 has been getting top billing in museum shows, newspaper and magazine articles, and TV coverage. Deservedly so. It was a year when we listened to Walter Cronkite give nightly updates on the Viet Nam war, sang along to the Beach Boys and the Beatles, watched Rowan and Martin's "Laugh In," ogled at photos of the earth rising above the moon that were taken by astronauts aboard Apollo 8, and saw riots in Paris and Chicago. I was in Washington that April when Martin Luther King, Jr. was killed in Memphis and saw the city in flames as I flew away in a small plane from National Airport. And two months later to the day Robert Kennedy was killed in California. No wonder transcendental meditation gained popularity and folks went off to ashrams in India seeking enlightenment.

So, what were the Weeders up to? Here's where I get to give a plug on the value of minutes and preserving our records, which, as you know, are in the collections of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania on Locust Street. A comprehensive inventory accompanied our donation. Unfortunately, there are no minutes for the years 1965 to 1975, with the exception of the Annual Meeting in June 1975. Thanks to the late Nancy Lisle and Betsy Roberts we have a more or less complete run of programs and they offer a glimpse into Weeder activities in 1968. The programs follow our Weeder year and I consulted two: 1967-1968 and 1968-1969. "Learn to labor and to wait" appears on green paper above a line drawing of what looks like a chrysanthemum but could be a daisy. Six members are with us still - Bea Bast and Weezie Johnston joined in 1962, followed by Phoebe Driscoll in '63 and Floy Ervin and Margaret O'Malley in '66. All these worthy Weeders are outdone, however, by Cynthia Wallace, a member since 1941.

The distinguishing feature of the membership listing is the inclusion of exchange names with the telephone numbers – thus MU (Murray) for Wayne, LA (Lawrence) for Bryn Mawr, EV (Evergreen), VE (Vernon) and CH for Chestnut Hill. There were two categories of membership, active and sustaining.

The other, rather quaint, item of note is that the Weeders had a secretary. For sure, members filled the roles of corresponding, recording and assistant recording secretary, but Mrs. Darthea V. Trik of Haverford was on the payroll. She served faithfully for some time and is not a suspect in the matter of the missing minutes.

Committee structure is much the same as today with Bowman's Hill and the Neighborhood Gardens Committees as stand-in for our Community Affairs. The program lists only three Weeder representatives to the GCA – Bulletin, Medal Awards and National Parks because most Weeder energy went into the Rittenhouse Square Flower Market where "Every Weeder Works." I thought it interesting the club had a Novice Committee that sponsored workshops on house plants and miniature arrangements. There were four flower shows: a house plant show in February, a narcissus show in April, rose show in June, and fall flower show in September. Weeders were encouraged to participate in PHS's "Harvest Fair Flower Show" in October and every other year the club put in a big garden at the Philadelphia Flower Show.

As for programs, the Weeders met at some of the same places we go to today – St. Martin's, for example, and scheduled some similar activities - a Christmas decorating project sponsored by the Neighborhood Gardens Committee. They also met at one another's houses for lectures (azaleas) and walks (daffodils), had tea at the Barnes Foundation, went to PHS and Pennsbury Manor and joined the

Gardeners at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. They got down to business only twice a year in February and November, three times if you count the annual meeting in June, and the box lunch was the order of the day, even at the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

All in all, it appears as if life in Weeder-land offered a respite from the news grabbing headlines of 1968 and then as now a chance to spend time with people we enjoy gabbing about plants and learning from one another.

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