

New Press Club, Thanks to Tom

To Tom Hewitt, a public relations specialist at Firestone Tire and Rubber Co., what may have merely seemed like a nice idea in the interest of fraternity is now a part of Akron's professional communications history. For several months in the autumn of 1970, there had been casual talk among people in the press: "Akron needs a press club." Everyone seemed to think it was a good idea but no one took the initiative to follow through. Then Tom turned the idea into action.

Tom came from Detroit, where he had belonged to a very active press club that met for lunch and, from time to time, to hear interesting speakers. Most of all, the Detroit Press Club provided a popular place for people from newspapers, television, radio and public relations to get together after work.

Since Tom was in public relations, he didn't think he should be the one to promote the idea of a press club. Rather, he thought it should be someone from the media so he called Mickey Porter at *The Akron Beacon Journal*. The two of them invited a few colleagues to form an organization to meet at a favorite watering hole after work. The place: the Mayflower Hotel Bar.

No one seems to remember everyone at that first get-together, but, besides Tom and Mickey, some of the attendees were Tom Duke from B. F. Goodrich's public relations department; Jerry Healey, WAKR radio personality; Dale Antram, Firestone Tire & Rubber public relations; Loris Troyer from the *Record-Courier*; and Ben James, Ken Cole, Murray Powers, Ralph Iula and Dick McBane from the Beacon. Everyone agreed that the name of the new organization should simply be the Akron Press Club.

Mickey said that he did not want to be an officer but he would be glad to act as chairman pro

tern to get the club started. He then asked Jerry Healey and Tom Hewitt to do some research and to present a plan of organization within four or five weeks. Among questions they should consider were: Where should the Press Club meet and how often? Who should be on the Board of Governors and should this include women? Torn and Jerry contacted several press clubs about such matters but mostly the Akron group was modeled after the Detroit Press Club.

Those attending the pre-organizational informal meetings were about equally divided in number between the print media and the rubber companies. There were also a few people from social services and civic organizations, from a hospital, and from businesses such as department stores. Loris Troyer remembers that everyone pitched in some money to establish a letter-writing project for prospective members.

Tom Hewitt and Jerry Healey finally had enough suggestions to present at an organizational meeting. On January 11, 1971, Mickey Porter sent a letter to all prospective members calling a meeting four days later at the Pewter Mug in downtown Akron. He enclosed a slate of officers.

At the meeting, attended by 65 communicators, Mickey presided as chairman pro tern. He explained that the proposed slate tried to encompass various types of the press. He presented the candidates for each office and asked for nominations from the floor. There being none, Mickey declared the slate unanimously elected and installed.

The Akron Press Club was on its way.

Membership

After the club's officers were elected and installed, Jerry Healey conducted the first official meeting. Taking office were:

President	Jerry Healey	WAKR
Vice President, Membership	Bill Whitney	Tire Review magazine
Vice President, Programs	Tom Suchan	<i>Akron Beacon Journal</i>
Vice President, Activities	Tom Hewitt	Firestone Tire & Rubber
Secretary	Mike Todd	Naegle Outdoor Advertising
Treasurer	Dick McBane	<i>Akron Beacon Journal</i>

The first action of the new president -- he declared it one of gratitude and pleasure -- was to ask for a standing vote of thanks to Mickey Porter for his initiative in organizing the Akron Press Club. Jerry explained that Mickey would take no further responsibility in the club; he wanted just to be a member.

The new president then asked each member present to make suggestions to help build the Akron Press Club into a truly vibrant organization, one that would serve the community as well as the press. The election and installation of officers was just the beginning, a most important start. What was the Press Club all about? What was to be its purpose? What directions would it take? Several press clubs around the country had been started and after a year or two ceased to exist. Akron's first officers were determined and worked hard to see that this did not happen here.

The first decision of the officers was that the Board of Governors should include women -- a progressive notion at the time. Quite a few women had attended the election and shown interest from the start. The officers decided a fair way to name the first women board members was to

name one from each of the press categories. So it was that Joan Rice of the Beacon Journal, Marie Covington from Goodrich's public relations department and Joyce Lagios from WAKR Radio joined the Board.

The Board of Governors voted that the corresponding secretary should write personal, individually typed letters to everyone who joined and membership cards should be enclosed. Tom Duke agreed to get the membership cards immediately.

It would be a safe assumption that a press club formed in the 1970s in Akron, Ohio, would have dominant representation from the rubber companies and the local daily paper. In fact, the club had 136 members in 1974, the first year for which a roster still exists. Of that total, 13 percent worked at four rubber companies: The Firestone Tire & Rubber Company, General Tire, B.F. Goodrich and The Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company. Nineteen percent were from *The Akron Beacon Journal*. Dick McBane recalls that Bill Schlemmer was an enthusiastic behind-the-scenes recruiter of a sizeable number of new members from the Beacon.

Over the years, the club's membership became more diverse, probably due to such factors as economic, industrial, demographic and even societal changes. By 1985, rubber company representation had dwindled to seven percent, the result of downsizings and relocations within that industry. Today, in 1998, Press Club members employed by the rubber companies account for only two percent of the membership.

Likewise, Beacon Journal representation has varied from approximately 19 percent of the club's membership in 1976 to 21 percent in 1986 to 7 percent in 1995. While some of this decline is attributable to loss of members, it has more to do with the growing diversity of the organization.

Early in the club's history, the issue of the Beacon's representation actually showed up in the newspaper. An article about a Democratic Party dinner included the following tidbit about Sheriff Robert Campbell: "And some of the diners snarled in agreement when Campbell noted that he wasn't allowed in the Press Club because it 'belonged' to the Beacon Journal."

Within days, Sheriff Campbell received a letter from club president Jerry Healey, excerpted here:

"First of all, you would be most welcome to join the Press Club. Public officials are eligible for membership and many already are members. Some of those who snarled are also probably eligible.

"Secondly, the Press Club does not belong to the Beacon Journal. Our records indicate that only about 25% of our members are BJ employees. Further proof can be obtained by considering the business affiliations of the officers: president is Jerry Healey, WAKR; vice presidents are Tom Hewitt of Firestone public relations, Bill Whitney of Tire Review and Tom Suchan of the Beacon (got us there, Sheriff!); secretary is Mike Todd of Naegle Outdoor Advertising, and the treasurer is Dick McBane (got us again). Add it all up and only two of the six elected officers are BJ staffers. Hardly an ownership. "We look forward to having you join the Press Club. Even if you decide not to, we will be happy to have you join us as a guest speaker in the near future."

A copy of the letter was sent to Abe Zaidan, who wrote the Beacon story about the sheriff's remarks. Sheriff Campbell's letter was included in the letters to the editor column, which caused PR veteran Tom Hewitt to comment that "at least it gives the Press Club more exposure." There are no records that the sheriff joined the club or came to talk.

In 1978, Akron Press Club held a contest for recruiting new members. Gary Hart won a trip to Toronto for getting five new members and Lyle Schilling won a television set for recruiting three. Dave Poeppelmeier had no applications for membership in 1979, but he questioned whether the contest for new members should be repeated; he felt it too expensive. The Board agreed that if the club held a contest, the prizes should be dinners, tickets to sporting events or something reasonable. By June, club membership passed 200 for the first time.

A 1980 membership application on Press Club stationery includes this introductory pledge: "I hereby apply for membership in the Akron Press Club, and agree to exert every effort to maintain the high level of professional ethics for which the Akron Press Club is emblematic."

The one demographic group that steadily increased over the years was females. In 1974, women represented 25 percent of the membership. By 1984, 36 percent were female and by 1994, approximately 47 percent. As of this writing, the total had climbed another percentage point. Women have shied away from the leadership position, however. There has been only one female president in the history of the club: Rosemary Cozart, director of public relations for the Summit County Red Cross, who served in 1989 and 1990.

To help increase the club's visibility and create a sense of pride among members, in 1995 Russ Sibert, vice president, recommended establishment of a merchandising program. Items included high-quality mugs, pens and coaster sets, all bearing a new Akron Press Club logo. They were used as thank-you gifts for speakers, scholarship winners, major donors and others friends of the club. In addition, club members could purchase the items for their own use.

While the club's total membership has gone from a high of 205 members in 1978 to a low of 101 members in 1986, the club has maintained an average of about 145 members.

A bright moment in the Press Club's history occurred in 1992 when Bill Reynolds proposed awarding Ludel Sauvageot, revered public relations veteran, with the club's first "Member Emeritus" status. No surprise here: The Board's vote was a resounding "Of course!" The meeting's minutes reflect she returned to the room with a demure smile and genuine thanks.

A Place to Call Home

Before anything else the club's first board wanted to be sure of a place to meet for luncheons -- a place that welcomed the Press Club, "that really wanted us," Jerry Healey recalls. He and Tom Hewitt made the rounds: Sanginitis, the Pewter Mug, Iacomini's, Anthe's, the Brown Derby and Tangier.

The first meeting was held at the Pewter Mug on S. Main St. in Akron. However, Dick McBane remembers that "the Pewter Mug didn't want us on a regular basis, so we went to Tangier." The club worked out a deal for a downstairs room, the Casbah, which was not being used. It had a stage and a bar and besides, Ed George, the owner, really wanted the group. Mr. George was not sure he could serve food down there, which was a most important consideration if this was to be a luncheon club. He said he was sure something could be worked out, and it was.

Some prospective members thought the Press Club should meet downtown -- but where? Some people thought Tangier was too fancy; they'd rather have hamburgers and french fries, but Tangier was finally chosen.

Even though the Press Club was meeting at Tangier there was always discussion about the location, the prices and the food. Would the persons doing the most griping come to lunch anyway? Ed George, Tangier owner, offered soup and sandwich specials at lower prices than anything served in the dining rooms, which quieted criticisms for a while. The Board decided the club should also think of the prestige the Tangier gave, especially when inviting outstanding speakers.

By 1973, the discussion and controversy about lunches at Tangier had not gone away. The

simple fact was that not enough members *came* to lunch and the Press Club had to supplement the waitresses' wages; the tips didn't pay what she would earn working in another part of the restaurant. Club members griped about the subsidy and Tangier was unhappy with the lack of business almost every day. Something had to give.

Thus in early 1973 the Press Club moved to the Tower Motel Inn downtown where the waitress subsidy was more reasonable. The club thought that moving downtown would attract more luncheon business, but this didn't happen.

Even after the move, the perennial topic discussed was why more members didn't come to lunch. It was disappointing that new members were not getting in the habit of coming. Board members agreed that the Press Club lacked personal touches; money was collected for dues but there was no follow-up. In early 1974, the Board voted that the corresponding secretary should write personal, individually typed letters to everyone who joined and membership cards should be enclosed. Tom Duke agreed to get new membership cards immediately.

Changes were made in offering free lunches to lucky winners whose names were drawn each day. The treasurer said the whole idea was being abused with excessive lunch tabs and, in one instance, a non-member ate free. The Board decided to limit the free lunches to what the recipients had ordered at the time their names were drawn. Also, if the person had a drink with his meal, the bar tab could be no more than three dollars.

Throughout 1974 there was a recurrent discussion on Press Club's cost of tipping, which was supposed to supplement what members were supposed to tip -- but they didn't. One month the Tower Motel billed the club for \$155. Some members left no tips at all. This prompted the Board of governors to send this letter to all Press Club members:

"We are advising you that there is nothing wrong with tipping; there is no rule against tipping. Although our treasury is in good shape, its money should not be squandered needlessly for the sake of the low types who think tips are out of style." No mention is made of who wrote the letter or whether it had any effect. There still was the ongoing question of why more members didn't come to lunch. Although there is no mention of the move, somewhere along the way it was decided to leave the Tower Motor Inn. So sometime in 1974 the club moved back to Tangier.

For meals at all programs, Tangier charged just three dollars for the buffet, plus tips. Tangier had just started to remodel and when everything was completed the club would have its own room labeled -- what else? -- Press Club. In the meantime, the club griped about being billed \$10 for the waitress, who was also waiting tables in the restaurant.

How the possibility of a move from Tangier to the Akron City Club (ACC) transpired is not recorded but in November 1980, Roger Sherman, ACC manager, presented an attractive offer to the Board of Governors. The Akron Press Club could have its own room, special menus, free parking and the use of the ballroom for special occasions. The ACC was a prestigious private men's club and the Board of Governors hoped more Press Club members would be attracted to regular luncheons. On November 14, 1980, the Board voted unanimously to move

Sometime during the next five years, the club was "kicked out" of the City Club, according to Abe Zaidan. Though the records do not reflect the change, by 1985 the club was meeting for lunch at the University Club, located at The University of Akron. Dave Poepfelmeier announced plans to talk with University Club management about arranging to have the Press Club room open for daily lunches at least twice a week. If the club couldn't have enough people attend regularly, the University Club would be compensated for set-up efforts. In February, the "Press Club

Lounge" opened for Wednesday and Friday informal gatherings by club members.

In 1987, the University Club ceased to operate as a private facility and opened to the public April 1. Although this change created a bit of a stir, the Board voted to continue to hold program luncheons at the University Club. Through the club's 25th anniversary, the University Club, now called the Martin University Center, is the site for most club-sponsored lunches and programs.

Bylaws

Throughout both 1971 and 1972 the Board had luncheon programs from time to time but mostly discussed plans and new ideas for the Club, implementing some, discarding others. From these discussions the Akron Press Club purpose evolved:

"The purpose of the Akron Press Club is to promote the free exchange of ideas in fellowship, fraternity and understanding and thereby advance the profession of those who disseminate information."

The bylaws defined the charter members as the "original members who attended the first election." Three memberships were also spelled out:

ACTIVE MEMBERS would be individuals employed by the press, radio or television whose chief occupation is gathering, writing, photographing, analyzing or illustrating news. The media covered shall include the metropolitan Akron area newspapers, radio and television stations and news services.

ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP -- Eligible for Associate Membership shall be individuals in professions associated with journalism, especially those in public relations or press relations activities.

AFFILIATE MEMBERSHIP -- Eligible for this category shall be individuals who are newsmakers not involved in news gathering or public relations,

NON-ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP shall be available to members in good standing who are obliged to reside, for business reasons, out of the area. Upon their return to the area they may resume their former membership in good standing.

The original bylaws were specific about who could hold office, stating:

A. Only active members in good standing shall be eligible for the office of President.

B. Active or Associate members in good standing shall be eligible for the offices of vice presidents, secretaries, treasurer and the Board of Governors.

C. Affiliate members are eligible to serve on committees only.

The bylaws even had a section on the admission of visitors who could only be admitted to club events in the company of members. The members "shall be responsible to the Board of Governors for the conduct and any financial obligations incurred by said guests. On regularly scheduled program days, except by prior written notice from the Board, there shall be a one-guest-per-member policy. All speakers will be limited to six guests per program."

To those who didn't pay their dues promptly: "No former member expelled or dropped for failure to pay dues shall be admitted to the Press Club except upon the invitation of the Board of Governors."

Dues for the Club were set at \$20 for Active members, \$30 for Associate and \$40 for Affiliate.

The bylaws stated that "the fiscal year of the Akron Press Club shall begin on the first day of January of each year and end on the last day of December." The annual meeting was to be the second Friday of November with the election of officers and members of the Board of Governors at that time.

The Board of Governors decided the Press Club needed legal counsel on a regular basis so in 1974 it hired Bill Scheub and made him an ex-officio member of the Board. His first duty was to review the bylaws and recommend changes, if needed.

The first request by the Press Club of the legal counsel was to review the bylaws and make suggestions for change. The original officers and board had anticipated when the bylaws were adopted that there would need to be changes in three or four years. The process of a new organization writing bylaws was somewhat of a hit or miss proposition; there was no way of knowing what would -- or would not -- work.

The first recommendation for change was in regard to Article V, section 2, which read: "Only active members in good standing shall be eligible for the office of president." The recommended change would permit Associate members to also be eligible for the office of President. This proposal was defeated. Evidently the majority of members still felt that the "working press" should fill this office -- no public relations people or publicists could do it adequately.

Another recommendation concerned Article XIV, section 1, which read: "The entrance fees to be paid by applicants for membership should be: Active, \$20; Associates, \$30; and affiliates, \$40."

Section 2 of Article XIV read: "Dues for members shall be Active, \$20 per year; Associates, \$30; Affiliates, \$40."

The suggested change in Article XIV combined sections 1 and 2 and eliminated set fees; it read: "The entrance fee to be paid by applicants for membership in the club, as well as annual dues for current members, shall be set annually by the Board of Governors."

The recommended changes to Article XIV were approved.

A special board meeting was called to determine dues for the year. After spirited discussion of full dues versus half dues it was voted to charge full dues for 1975. Members had paid only

half dues for 1974 and no dues in 1973. The Board voted to have new members pay the initiation fee upon acceptance for membership, with dues for the year payable within 90 days. The Board also agreed that those who joined after June 30 should pay half-year dues but no initiation. Nowhere is there a record of the amount of the initiation fee.

Another task of the legal counsel was to ask the IRS for confirmation of the Press Club's tax-free status. An attorney some time ago had filled out forms sent by the IRS so the Board could follow up on what had happened to the original request in 1972 for tax-free status. Also, during this year the corresponding secretary sent \$4 to the Secretary of State asking for a copy of the club's Articles of Incorporation. Minutes don't reflect whether the club received a new copy and, if so, what happened to it.

In 1983, Press Club President Al Fitzpatrick of *The Akron Beacon Journal* appointed Bill Scheub, attorney; Rick Reiff, *Beacon* reporter; and Chris Collins, of The University of Akron, to examine and clarify the bylaws on the status of new members. The committee suggested restructuring the categories of membership: Category I -- working press; Category II -- public relations, advertising, journalism teaching, etc.; Category III -- other; Category IV -- student. Student membership would be \$10 a year with no initiation fee and must be sponsored by a journalism instructor. The Board of Governors approved the adoption of the proposed changes unanimously.

The most significant bylaw changes occurred late in 1984 when Board members proposed changing them to allow Active and Associate members (Categories I and II) to be eligible for the office of president. Previously, only Active members (the working press) could hold the office. Abe Zaidan presented a written proposal to the Board, a portion of which read:

"In recent years, the restriction has had the effect of limiting presidents to the Beacon Journal. In Akron, the pool of those eligible to run for president is not large and it has generally meant recruiting someone from the BJ staff to serve as president. By my experience with the club tells me that there are many members in Category 2 who have worked hard to sustain the club and who, in my opinion, deserve the opportunity to serve as president. The club's success in the past has derived from a strong working relationship between news people and those in related fields. The club cannot survive without the support of both groups."

A majority of the club's membership returned ballots unanimously approving of the bylaw change. A subsequent ballot extended voting rights to all "paid-up members in good standing of Active, Associate and Affiliate categories." It, too, received unanimous approval by those who voted. At an Election Party held soon after these votes, the 1985 officers were announced. Dave Poeppelmeier became the first Associate member to hold the office of president.

Board members expressed concern at a 1985 meeting that the club's bylaws had been repeatedly violated. There are no details, but a committee headed by Chris Collins of The University of Akron accepted the task of reviewing the bylaws. In February, based on his committee's recommendations, the Board suspended the bylaws pending revisions. In April, the new recommended bylaws were sent to all members for review.

There is no mention of the bylaws again until January 1988, when Board members discussed causes for termination of membership and adoption of a non-discrimination clause.

In 1995, the bylaws came under new scrutiny due to information received about IRS regulations. There was concern that the club may have a problem with its non-profit organization designation, based on a similar situation involving the J.S. Knight Memorial Journalism Fund, Inc.

President Howard Tolley expressed additional concern regarding a section of the bylaws that called for an annual treasury audit. Russell Sibert, 1996 president, began his term by forming a committee to prepare an updated, formal document of the correct and current bylaws. Committee members included Russell, Diane Steinert, Howard Tolley, Ron Kirksey and tax attorney Stu Horwitz.

The most significant changes made to the bylaws assured that the club met IRS requirements to be classified as a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization. To qualify for this status, the club had to adopt a legal name to be used for tax purposes. The new name, Akron Press Association, was adopted in early 1997. The Board received assurance, however, that this name would be used only for tax purposes. For all other business, the club would use its original name.

Other changes to the bylaws included:

- expanding the club's purpose to include promotion of education by various means, including contributions and lecture series
- revising the classes of membership to include student membership for students of higher education in related fields of study
- creating a board position for an archivist who would work with The University of Akron in maintaining the club's records and other artifacts
- addition of an indemnity section to protect officers, Board members and employees of the club from all liability in the event of a lawsuit.

The amended bylaws were approved at the Board's March 3, 1997, meeting. Concurrent with the new bylaws, the Board voted to implement new membership rates, which represented the first dues increase in more than 15 years. The Board also voted to eliminate the new-members

initiation fee, which equaled one year's dues. They hoped this would help the club attract new members. The new rates were:

\$35 for retirees

\$45 for communicators

\$55 for members in non-communications fields.

Auction

The first Akron Press Club auction was held in 1976 and chaired by Joyce Lagios. Though small in scale, the early auctions raised between \$2,000 and \$3,500 each year.

A 1979 Press Club newsletter column titled "Strictly for the Nosey" received much attention. Some people boasted about the bargains they got but the Board members pointed out that bargains didn't fill the scholarship coffers. After all, the auctions were fund-raisers. But just to be a little noseey ... here are a few of the items:

golf for four at Firestone, purchased for \$155 by Bruce Rab

glass blowing lessons, purchased for \$28 by Paula Drope

Cavaliers loge, purchased for \$81 by Bob Troyer

ride with P&S ambulance, purchased for \$28 by Dieter Dambrowsky.

Joyce chaired the yearly auction for 10 years. In 1984, treasurer Dieter Dambrowsky recorded net auction proceeds of \$3,411.23. "This was by far the best auction we have ever had, both in attendance and in revenues," Dieter wrote on the auction financial statement. "I suggest a special thanks be extended to Joyce Lagios for an excellent job done. Her new ideas and approaches turned out to be winners."

Inactivity on the part of the Press Club Board caused president Dave Poeppelmeier to call a special meeting in October 1986. For the previous two months, the Board had not had a quorum present, and Dave cited problems including "a lack of programs, no planning for the annual auction or elections and a general apathy." The Board agreed that there was now too little time to plan for the fall auction. It was therefore tentatively scheduled for February or March of 1987, and Dave asked Abe Zaidan to chair the event. Since the auction was the club's only

source of revenue for the scholarship program, treasurer Eva Poinar said existing funds would handle the fiscal responsibilities for 1986.

Always one to throw himself into a project, Abe set up the 1987 auction as a "team event." Abe Zaidan appointed key players to handle auction arrangements such as dinner, publicity and finances. "I wanted to make sure we had a really nice dinner, so I asked Polly Paffilas to handle the food and other University Club arrangements," Abe remembered. "Phyllis Boerner would call with with reservation updates: 'Up to 38,' and Polly would groan. 'We're at 62, and Polly said she was sure it couldn't be that high. Then the count went over 130 and all she could say was, 'Wow!'" That first year, the auction grossed \$11,852 and netted \$7,910, a tribute to Coach Abe and his team.

Subsequent years' auctions all were sell-outs, with waiting lists of people who wanted to attend. In the February 1990 newsletter issue, Phyllis Boerner cautioned members to make reservations before auction invitations were sent out. She wrote, "1. Remember: We only reserve full tables and, 2. We always sell out." The March 1994 meeting minutes show that 15 Board members and their guests agreed to dine in the Grille Room to free up more dining space at the auction. Best of all, proceeds grew with each auction, rising to \$25,000 by the club's 25th anniversary in 1995.

In 1991, our Board unanimously voted to give Abe Zaidan this official commendation:

"In the midst of his own personal challenges, Abe Zaidan managed to pull off the best Akron Press Club Auction to date."

Other resolutions, passed in 1992 and 1993, commended Abe and Robbie Stillman for their commitment and dedication in helping make the auctions successful. Their hard work as

auction chairs continued until 1997, when they handed the auction gavel over to Russell Sibert, chairman, and Tim Bryan, vice chairman. That first year at the helm was bittersweet, for the event commemorated Ludel Sauvageot, beloved by all who know her, who had died April 18, 1996. The evening's auction celebrated her life and brought in a record \$31,376.

Book Sales

The club's annual book sales have become synonymous with its auctions. The event dates back to 1990, and has been another profitable way for the club to raise scholarship and programming funds. For that year's auction, members were invited to donate "gently used" books for a book sale. In addition, *The Akron Beacon Journal* generously donated copies of newly released books sent to its book-review editor. The first book sale netted \$178. By 1998, the two sales held raised more than \$4,000.

In July 1994, Robbie Stillman proposed holding a fall book sale in addition to the one at the auction. She correctly predicted this event could be "both profitable and fun." Robbie set up the sale, which was held at Martin University Center and included refreshments of rolls and coffee. Total proceeds from 1994's two sales were \$3,802. At the 1995 book sales, new hard-back books sold for \$4.00. There also were videotapes, cassettes and priced-as-marked coffee table books. Both sales netted \$4,495.

Over the years auction supporters and book lovers alike have enjoyed the opportunity to buy good books at great prices, knowing that the money would be going to a great cause.

Scholarships

Although the Press Club began holding auctions to benefit scholarships in 1974, the scholarship program had not yet been established. Instead, auction proceeds were held in the club's Educational and Philanthropic Fund established in 1973.

President Fred Anthony appointed Joyce Lagios, Mike Terrell and Dick McBane to investigate how best to start a scholarship program. After looking at different programs the committee recommended that Press Club establish an annual \$500 scholarship award for "an eligible Summit county high school senior intending to enter an Ohio college or university with journalism or communication as the major field of study, the award payable upon receipt of evidence of acceptance and enrollment in such college or university." The Board voted to accept the committee's recommendation, but the program would not be started until the following year. The committee collected sample scholarship application blanks from several sources and borrowed from the best of them to develop a Press Club application.

There was a major change in the scholarship awards program in 1975. Ludel Sauvageot chaired the Scholarship Awards Committee with Ken Cole and Mary O'Neil as members. Dick McBane chaired the Scholarship Selection Committee with Joyce Lagios as co-chair. The Board approved the recommendations to award two college scholarships of \$250 each for the 1975-76 school year.

Nominations for the awards had to be made by the directors of the journalism or communications schools -- or the head of a department -- and students awarded scholarships to have majored in some phase of journalism. Each applicant wrote a cover letter, gave three references and sent samples of writing. Schools contacted about the awards were The University

of Akron, Bowling Green State University, Kent State University, Ohio State University and Ohio University.

There had been many questions about the scholarship program, chaired by Ludel Sauvageot. By 1978, the club had more than \$8,000 in the scholarship fund since the annual auction, chaired by Joyce Lagios, had produced almost \$2,000. The perennial question was: Should the Press Club work only with Akron University and Kent State in providing scholarships? A motion was made, and passed, to change the name of the Scholarship Committee to the Education Committee, which it had been early on. It should have two parts:

1. Offer scholarships to qualified candidates from all Ohio universities and colleges having schools of communications and
2. Offer educational grants for qualified students enrolled in recognized communications programs at Akron and Kent State. Money for this purpose should be sent to development foundations in the schools with the foundations then giving it to the students, thus removing the Press Club from any liability. If any of the money is given to students to attend meetings or seminars in other cities, the students should report back to the Press Club.

In 1979, Ludel Sauvageot said -- and the Board agreed -- that there could be no blanket rule regarding the distribution of funds for scholarships or for other purposes for journalism schools. Since the requests for funds may vary it was thought best to ask Board approval for each one.

The auction at the University Club in April 1980 netted \$1,844.50 and enabled the Press Club to give four \$500 scholarships instead of three. Joyce Lagios chaired the committee assisted by Bob Troyer, Jim McCloskey, Linda Cinson, Mimi Hunt and Ludel Sauvageot. They

reviewed 16 applications for scholarships. In 1981, the club increased the number of scholarships to five \$500 awards.

Minutes reflect that the 1983 auction was not well-attended, raising only \$2,867. However, there was money enough in the Education and Scholarship Fund. Ludel Sauvageot, scholarship chairman, recommended that the club give six scholarships from \$500 to \$700 each. The Board approved.

By 1996, the Akron Press Club had raised more than \$174,000 for scholarships. In celebration of its 25th anniversary, the club donated \$25,000 to the John S. Knight Memorial Scholarship Fund. This donation allowed the fund to increase the amounts of five scholarship awards to \$2,500 each. It also assured that the fund was at a sufficient level to sustain itself, and the Press Club could explore new philanthropic avenues.

Much Ado About Merging

Paul Poorman of the Buckeye Chapter of The Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ), Sigma Delta Chi, first presented in 1984 the idea of merging the organization's scholarship program with that of the Akron Press Club. There was heated debate in both camps; in fact, so much so that no decision was made for two years.

In late 1985, someone recorded Press Club members' opinions about the proposed merger. The 26 comments apparently were randomly solicited, perhaps at a club function, and the majority were negative. Here is a sampling:

"Our club is independent and should hold on to its identity."

"Our club works very hard on the auction -- if we are going to accept help from another club -- we should split the money and each club do as they wish."

"I do not see that Press Club would benefit from the merger."

"It is apparently felt that it's more prestigious to give a \$2,000 scholarship as a combined effort vs. individual clubs giving smaller awards."

"I like the Press Club -- it's grown over fourteen years -- I have the same negative feelings about this merger as I did about the Cleveland Press Club wanting to merge our clubs' awards programs"

"We should have a meeting of the entire club's membership or somehow have the entire club voice an opinion on this issue."

At the December 1985 Board meeting, Dave Poepelmeier, Press Club president, presented copies of the resolution adopted by the Press Club and the Buckeye Chapter of SPJ, Sigma Delta Chi. It addressed the formal merging the two clubs' scholarship funds into one.

On January 21, 1986, Press Club and the Buckeye Chapter of SPJ, Sigma Delta Chi, merged their scholarships into one, the John S. Knight Memorial Scholarship Fund, Inc. Abe Zaidan, who supported Paul Poorman in promoting the merger, said this single event probably caused the greatest uproar in the Press Club's history. One longtime member resigned and several were upset because of the change. Primarily, those who disagreed with the merger felt the Press Club's contributions to the fund would far surpass anything SDX could possibly raise. It should be noted that the Buckeye Chapter initially transferred approximately \$30,000 to the combined funds. This money came from memoriums designated to the Buckeye Chapter at the death of John S. Knight in 1981.

Trustees named the presidents of each sponsoring organization, plus an at-large member of the Press Club, to the fund's board. In addition, trustees appointed Press Club members Joe Bobbey Jr., Ludel Sauvageot and Marjorie Schlaeppli to the scholarship screening committee, along with SPJ members Ralph Darrow, Dave Zielasko and Katie Byard. Students in journalism programs at any of the fifty colleges and universities in Ohio were eligible for the scholarships, and the first joint awards program was slated for May 6, 1986. Press Club's contribution to the fund was \$5,500, which would result in five students receiving \$1,500 each.

Press Club President Dave Poeppelmeier planned to strongly encourage members of the new scholarship committee, along with other SPJ members, to get involved with the Press Club's annual auction in a show of good faith for the merger.

Apparently, adequate SPJ involvement did not occur. In January 1988, Press Club Board member Dieter Dambrowsky expressed concern about SPJ and its lack of participation in the auction. Abe Zaidan suggested that president Dave Boerner contact the president of SPJ, Russell

Sibert, to discuss the matter. Boerner sent a letter later that month to Sibert, stating that the Press Club felt SPJ was not "pulling its share of the load." Sibert and two other members of SPJ were the only ones willing to help. Boerner warned that the Press Club's working relationship with the scholarship fund board may come to an end. "If the Press Club Board is not convinced that the 1988 auction is more than a one-way street, I'm sure there will be a reconsideration of our participation," Boerner's letter read. Included with the letter was a full-page list of ways SPJ could help with the auction.

Although Sibert and fellow SPJ officer Dotty Lane made a substantial effort to solicit donations, theirs was the extent of the club's efforts. Abe Zaidan noted in an auction wrap-up memo to the Press Club Board that the auction grossed \$12,500 and \$729 of that came from SPJ solicitations. At its April 6, 1988, Board meeting, the Press Club voted to contribute \$3,500 to the John S. Knight Scholarship Program. The Board also voted to discontinue any joint scholarship effort with SPJ.

On May 6, 1988, the Press Club Board held a special meeting to further discuss the joint scholarship fund. Also attending the meeting were Dave Cooper and Dave Lieberth, representing the John S. Knight Memorial Journalism Fund, Inc. While expressing empathy with the club's concerns about SPJ involvement, they requested consideration of these points:

- the prime concern of all involved should be providing needed scholarships for area students
- the name of John Knight on a scholarship gave it high integrity
- the fund had "a sense of permanency not possible with either Press Club or SPJ"
- many people had joint memberships in both clubs

Cooper asked for suggestions for improving the relationship between the Press Club and SPJ, and asked the Board to reconsider its action to disassociate from the joint fund. Pete Geiger, Press Club Board member, presented a motion to continue with the fund, provided the Press Club receive accurate recognition for its fund-raising efforts. The motion passed unanimously. A second motion rescinded the April 6 motion that halted joint scholarship efforts. In July, the Board unanimously approved the following motion:

"That the Akron Press Club continue its association with the John S. Knight Scholarship Fund if the following changes are implemented:

1. The scholarship awards program be separate from the annual SPJ John S. Knight Awards Dinner and held as a special event headed by the fund with representatives from both Press Club and SPJ.
2. The Akron Press Club will have top billing in this event.
3. With these changes, Press Club will make a full financial commitment to the fund. reflecting that commitment will be Press Club's awarding of the balance of its scholarship funds to the John S. Knight Memorial Scholarship Fund.

The motion carried unanimously, and the club presented an additional \$11,416 to the fund.

Dissatisfaction about the scholarship fund once again arose in 1991. Bill Reynolds, Press Club president, accompanied by Ralph Iula, treasurer, met with John S. Knight Scholarship Fund representatives. They related these Press Club concerns:

- There was a lack of communication between the fund board and the Press Club Board.
- An independent committee should be appointed to handle details of the scholarship awards luncheon. The Press Club Board felt this event had not been well-managed.

- There should be larger awards given to fewer recipients.
- There should be no repeat winners.
- More *Akron Beacon Journal* staff should be involved in the Press Club.

By 1992, the J.S. Knight Fund was nearly self-supporting and five \$2,000 scholarships were awarded. In February, Loris Troyer, David Cooper and Katie Byard, representing the J.S. Knight Fund Board, met with the Press Club Board. Troyer reviewed the history of the fund, which to date had awarded 54 scholarships totalling approximately \$50,000. Cooper said he believed the journalism scholarship program was probably the most ambitious in the country. The minutes do not reflect resolution of the Press Club's previous concerns; however, they do reveal that Abe Zaidan asked how much of the fund's total dollars were contributed by SPJ. David Cooper's answer was "I don't know. There is a space on applications and on dinner receipts for donations for the fund."

By 1994, The J. S. Knight Scholarship Fund was awarding five \$2,000 scholarships each year. In August of that year, Press Club treasurer Ralph Iula suggested devising a new scholarship award, since the Knight fund had more than enough money. He proposed giving one scholarship each year to a student from Kent State University and The University of Akron. The Board decided this proposal would require further deliberation before members could act.

In December 1994, President Ron Kirksey proposed forwarding \$10,000 of the year's \$35,000 auction proceeds to the J. S. Knight fund. The remainder would be used for future scholarships and related purposes, such as a grant program for communications studies at KSU and UA. For the grant program, he recommended accepting applications for up to \$2,000 per year per institution. The proposal's motion passed unanimously, and Ralph Iula was appointed

chair of a committee to oversee the program.

Representation on the J.S. Knight Fund Board changed in 1995 with the addition of one Press Club member to the Board. This change, added to the fund's bylaws, raised Board membership from seven to eight people. Press Club representatives now included the current and past presidents, plus an at-large member. Ron Kirksey was chosen for the at-large position.

Other merger proposals came before the Press Club Board over the years; the results of which should surprise no one:

- In June 1986, president Dave Poepelmeier received a contact from the board of the Akron chapter of the Public Relations Society of America. That club's board was concerned that its \$150 dues for national membership plus local costs were keeping people from joining the organization. PRSA wondered whether the two clubs should join forces as a communicators' club. According to Press Club Board minutes, "The resounding decision was for them to join Press Club!"
- In February 1992, Jim Crutchfield, president of SPJ, proposed that the Press Club and SPJ cooperate in joint programs and activities. Board minutes reflect no interest in pursuing such a proposal.
- In February 1993, Howard Tolley, vice president for programs, was approached by members of PRSA wondering about one or more combined meetings. No action was taken. In March, the Board addressed the topic of combined meetings with the Akron chapter of the Public Relations Society of America, SPJ and Women in Communications. Ed Kalail suggested this would present an opportunity to bring major speakers to Akron as all four groups could share the costs. No action was taken.

In the late '70s and early '80s, however, area communications clubs did collaborate for one event. Akron Press Club joined SPJ, PRSA and WICI to celebrate the holiday season each December for about six years.

Akron Press Club Donations to the John S. Knight Memorial Scholarship Fund, Inc.

1987:	\$7,500	1993:	\$10,000
1988:	\$3,750	1994:	\$10,000
1989:	\$11,225	1995:	\$10,000
1990:	\$13,000	1996:	\$15,000
1991:	\$14,000	1997:	\$12,000
1992:	\$12,485	1998:	\$6,250

Programs

Unfortunately records of the club's early years have been lost, but some of the initial programs included an appearance in 1971 by Phil Palumbo and his band, who were a popular Akron-based group that had just returned to the area following several years in Las Vegas. Their performance for the Club was their first in Akron after their return. It was an even more meaningful homecoming for Palumbo, for the band had originally played in Tangier's Casbah room, where the Press Club was now meeting.

Another 1971 program that created quite a bit of interest was provided by the Akron District Heart Association. The speaker was Louis Russell, Akron's first heart transplant patient. He had recovered well, was leading a normal life and had lived longer than any other transplant patient. Transplants were rare in the early 70s so members of the Press Club heard the speakers and asked many questions. Nowhere is it recorded how long Mr. Russell had survived, but it was evidently noteworthy.

Charter member Loris Troyer remembers a Press Club program held in the early years that drew one of the largest crowds he could remember, save for the annual auction. Fannye Fox, famed for bringing an abrupt end to the political career of long-term Arkansas congressman Wilbur Mills, spoke to the club. "[Mills] really was a powerful man in Washington," Loris remembers. "He also was an alcoholic who took up with Fannye and made a fool of himself. He and Fannye one night landed in the Potomac Basin in D. C., an event which made every paper in the country.

"... When she appeared to speak to the Press Club, one would have thought she had just come from a PTA or church meeting. She was wearing a frilly, white, high-necked blouse and a

dark skirt. Very modestly dressed for a stripper," he writes. "Funny, I don't remember what she said. Anyway, that Tangier room was bursting at the seams that day. Standing room only."

As early as 1973, the club's Board learned to expect the unexpected when organizing programs. Dick McBane had scheduled a United States congressman from southwestern Ohio who was running for U.S. Senate as a luncheon speaker. The luncheon was set for noon and at 11:45 only Dick and the candidate were there. Dick's frenzied telephone calls to club members at the Beacon and downtown rallied 10. There were plenty of red faces!

The Press Club had tried with little success to tag on to celebrities who were going to speak to other organizations. When Dick McBane heard that Charles M. Schulz, creator of the "Peanuts" comic strip, was scheduled to speak at Kent State he dashed off a letter to the world- renowned cartoonist inviting him to talk to the Press Club. Schulz's reply is in the Press Club files -- he had canceled the Kent engagement. The colorful answer came from Schulz, whose address was Number One Snoopy Place, Santa Rosa, California. The air mail postage on the letter was 11 cents.

In 1974, good programs were frequent and popular. There were speakers such as Ara Parseghian (tagged on to his appearance at the annual Dapper Dan dinner); Dr. Gates Morgan appeared twice, speaking about acupuncture and then hypnosis; and Sheriff Robert Campbell finally came to talk despite his earlier criticism of the Press Club.

The biggest program that year was a roast honoring two Press Club charter members who were retiring: Eddie (Edward) Butler, corporate director of communications, The General Tire & Rubber Company; and Scotty (A.E.) Brubaker, vice president and public relations director, The Firestone Tire & Rubber Company.

The program was held at the Firestone Country Club and Jerry Healey was master of ceremonies. Two popular radio personalities, Bob and Ray, came from New York to act as "roast masters," plying their droll humor throughout the evening. Fred Anthony and Joyce Lagios chaired the evening with the help of a sub-committee: Tom Koch, Jerry Healey and Ludel Sauvageot.

Averaging two programs per month, 1976 was a stellar year for the Press Club. Sports programs were especially popular. One noon event was billed "The Indians Are Coming!" -- and they came: Frank Robinson, the new manager, and with him six Indians. Because Indians programs were so popular, Press Club members were limited to one guest each and even so, there was standing room only.

The Press Club and the Akron Advertising Club held a joint meeting when the speaker was Nolan Ryan, super pitcher for the California Angels. He was supposed to promise a "big international announcement" but whether he made an earth-shaking announcement, no one said.

Race car driver A.J. Foyt came to Press Club in August and everyone enjoyed his remarks, especially during the question and answer period. In October the Cavaliers came down from Cleveland and the Press Club went up to one of their games. Bill Fishburne, activities chairman, tried twice to arrange some snowshoe golf but the weatherman refused to cooperate by providing some of the white, flaky stuff.

The Press Club was pleased to have Dorothy Fuldheim, Cleveland television personality, come to speak. Tom Koch, club president, worried about not having the room filled. He attached notes to the notice that she was coming: "Bring your wives, husbands, neighbors and friends." Tom needn't have worried, the room was bulging.

An outstanding speaker was the internationally famous mystery author, Robert Ludlum, whose latest novel, *The Rheinman's Exchange*, had just been printed in paperback. Everyone got a copy. Dr. Ken Olsen was a popular psychiatrist whose paperback had appeared on best-seller lists. He spoke on the topic of one of his books: *How to Hang Loose in an Uptight World*.

Dick Feagler spoke to the club in January 1977 on *Kucinich, the Media Shaft*. In March, the speaker was Kucinich himself. A tax seminar proved popular, with April 15 fast approaching, the first of its kind for the Press Club. A speaker from the Greater Akron Council on Alcoholism showed a graphic film, "Life, Death and the Recovery of Alcoholics." The speaker for October was Ray Geiger, publisher of the Farmer's Almanac, who predicted weather for the coming year. People at the luncheon said they'd see if his predictions were correct, but then forgot to do so.

A great many community leaders joined the Press Club for a panel discussion on politics by Alex Arshinkoff, county Republican chairman, and Al Teodosio, Democratic chairman, and their Cuyahoga County counterparts, Bob Hughes and Tim Hayes.

Throughout the club's early years, there were many appearances by sports teams, including the Cleveland Barons, Indians and Browns. In 1980, the Cleveland Indians made their annual trek to Akron and the ballroom was filled. Along with the six unnamed players came three notables: President Gabe Paul, General Manager Phil Seghi and Announcer Herb Score. The Press Club must have known an inside joke for President Rick Reiff presented Herb with suntan lotion to take to Arizona when the Indians went for spring training, and gave Phil Seghi a box of tobacco.

A big event of 1980, which involved the community as well as the Press Club, was the "Roast and Toast" of former Mayor John Ballard, who had recently gone out of office. The Press

Club's invitations read: "We don't have John S. Ballard to kick around anymore, so let's get the last kick in." Tom Koch was master of ceremonies at the dinner, which was chaired by Rick Reiff and Joyce Lagios.

Though there must have been many "roasters," only one is recorded in the club's files.

Submitted by Dot and Bill Brandstetter and dated February 10, 1980, it reads:

"Having been indulged in the luxury of a new car *loaded* ... our friend John Ballard drove home last year in his brand new Chevrolet Caprice. Arriving in his own driveway he found he had a problem with the overhead light and was unable to find the knob to turn it off; each time he tried to close the door without disturbing the light, the light refused to turn off. ... he finally decided to 'leave by the back door' so he clambored over the seat and had just accomplished the role of Artful Dodger ... when his wife suddenly appeared ... saying, 'What in the world are you doing, climbing over the seat?'

Of course the light immediately came on again. (Darn new-fangled delayed lights!)"

Another banner year for programs was 1984. Ralph Iula, program chairman, scheduled about two a month except in the summer. The first one, in January, was another visit by the Indians -- 225 people attended. *Beacon Journal* columnist Kenny Nichols' talk was not only entertaining, but told of many historical events that were new to most people in the large audience. Kenny had just retired after 50 years working on Akron newspapers, first on the *Times Press*, then the *Beacon Journal* when the two papers merged.

A program that was popular with Press Club guests and with many from the community: Ohio's new governor, Richard Celeste spoke about his first 100 days in office. Naturally, he boasted of his early achievements and plans for the future.

There was a full house when Helen Thomas, UPI White House Bureau Chief; spoke. Helen was the first woman reporter to close presidential news conferences regularly with, "Thank you, Mr. President." Her prepared talk was brief and informal but she answered a myriad of questions from the audience.

Bishop Gilbert Sheldon, head of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Cleveland, reported to the Press Club about the National Conference of Bishops, which he had recently attended. It covered an unusual range of subjects from celibacy to nuclear missiles.

The topic at the next luncheon was quite a contrast: What Makes the American Male Tick? The speaker was Eli Belil, director of research for *Playboy*. He gave his view of new concepts for marketing in the 1980s.

Paul Poorman, editor of *The Akron Beacon Journal*, talked about changes in newspapers during his colorful career that ranged from news editor of the *Harrisburg Patriot*; news editor of the *Philadelphia Bulletin*; managing editor of the *Detroit Free Press*; and visiting professor at the Northwestern School of Journalism.

Al Fitzpatrick spoke on his three trips to African countries and he showed slides of his latest visit to Uganda.

Dan Moldea talked at one luncheon about his new book, "The Hoffa Wars," which covered teamsters, rebels, politicians and the mob. He had also written a book about the murder of Akron businessman Dean Milo. Moldea is a graduate of The University of Akron and while a student was president of Associated Student Government, which advocated that students should bargain collectively.

A formal debate was held between two candidates for mayor of Akron: Tom Sawyer and

Bob Otterman. After Sawyer won the Democratic nomination another formal debate was held between Sawyer and Roy Ray. The debates were informative but the luncheon itself was a disaster logistically as an unexpected crowd of 154 showed up! Service at the University Club was almost nil, not enough food and few waitresses.

Another program during the year featured Gladys Toulis, director of the growing and successful Fashion Design and Fashion Merchandising School that had opened at Kent State the year before.

At the outset of 1985, president Dave Poeppelmeier stated he would like the club to sponsor one major and one minor program per month. In this way, the club would strive to offer a variety of programs that would appeal to the membership. Some of the programs included the Cleveland Indians, Mayor Tom Sawyer and Dennis Kucinich, who was the Democratic challenger to Governor Richard Celeste.

The Akron Press Club sponsored Akron Mayor Tom Sawyer's State of the City address on February 19, 1986, in the University Club ballroom. The event was taped by Warner Cable. On March 12, the Press Club was one of five sponsors of a program on the new Freedom of Information Act. It featured a panel on objective reporting and correct application of the First Amendment. Panelists were Akron Mayor Tom Sawyer; 9th District Court of Appeals Judge Joyce George; Mark Masse, director of LFS Communications Inc.; Carl Schierhorn, associate professor of journalism at Kent State; and Carl Monday, investigative reporter for WJW-TV. Other co-sponsors were Women in Communications, Buckeye Chapter of Sigma Delta Chi, the Akron chapter of Public Relations Society of America and the Cleveland chapter of International Association of Business Communicators.

A mini-program held in October 1986 had to have piqued members' interests. Titled "Olive Oil and Ouzo," the luncheon program featured slides and dialogue about a junket to Italy and Corfu by Abe Zaidan, Dieter Dambrowsky and Russ Musarra. According to the Press Club newsletter, "At the end of a dirt road through an ancient olive grove on the Greek island of Corfu is a beach where women of all ages, sizes and shapes unabashedly peel off their clothing and swim topless. Regardless of anything else your speakers say ... just remember that that beach is the real reason (they) went to Italy and Corfu a year ago. Zaidan will show his slides and he and his coconspirators will offer commentary about Italian traffic jams, the desolate-looking Albanian coast and the smooth taste of Ouzo. Believe what you will. But remember the beach." One can only imagine the outcome of the question-and-answer session that followed that program!

In the mid-1980s, as membership declined, so did the number of people willing to volunteer their time on the club's behalf. President Dave Poeppelmeier bemoaned problems facing the club following two meetings where no quorum was present. This was the same time that the auction was postponed to spring because of lack of planning. Robbie Stillman and Abe Zaidan suggested hiring someone to handle programming and the newsletter. Abe suggested Phyllis Boerner for the position, and so began her successful 10-year stint as the organization's director of programs and communications.

A highlight of 1987 was when Bill Newkirk, vice president of public relations for Goodyear, addressed a standing-room-only crowd. His self-prepared news release, printed in the Press Club's newsletter, was telling:

"Bill (Just Plain) Newkirk, Goodyear's single-voice public relations spokesman during the recent attempted takeover of the company, revealed to the Akron Press Club today that the heart

of the PR strategy was 'kicking and screaming' ... commented on what he called the 'dog pack or party line' style of reporting that emerged during the struggle and made a thinly veiled suggestion that local media may be overstaffed. In an obvious bid for mercy in the Q & A that followed his remarks, Newkirk concluded by thanking the Akron media for its coverage, which he said had a good bit to do with the fact that Goodyear still is around."

As a frequent vehicle for political speeches and debates, the Press Club tried to give candidates equal opportunity to use its programs as a forum. When Dave Meeker, a longtime Press Club member and an Akron mayoral candidate, asked to speak to the club in May 1987, the club's Board decided to wait until after the filing deadline and invite the mayoral candidates to a debate. Soon after, the Beacon Journal ran a short story saying the Press Club would be a good forum for a debate. Unfortunately, from the very start, Democratic incumbent Don Plusquellic had concerns about the fairness of the debate. Kevin G. Davis, Plusquellic's campaign manager, spelled out his concerns in a letter to club president David Boerner:

- "1. Our Democratic opponent is a member of the Press Club. The Mayor is not.
2. The Moderator, who you insist on, has both publicly and privately indicated his leanings in this election.
3. Your organization states that there is 'no interest' in having the Republican Candidate also debate.
4. Your refusal to require that the questions asked in this debate be asked of, and answered by, all candidates."

The club had asked Abe Zaidan to moderate. To this day, Abe insists, "The staff of Plusquellic objected wrongly that I would favor Meeker in the debate." He added that he felt the

staffs objections were no reflection on Don.

In spite of the controversy, the debate was held August 21, 1987. All three candidates, including Republican Larry Poulos, participated. Abe served as moderator. WKSU radio carried the debate live, and it was covered by Warner Cable, Channel 23, Channel 5 and the Beacon Journal.

Plusquellic, of course, won the Democratic primary. In October, the club again hosted a debate between Larry Poulos and Plusquellic. The event apparently went off without a hitch.

Other programs held in 1987 included appearances by: *Akron Beacon Journal* Editor Dale Allen, former Congressman John Seiberling and Carousel Dinner Theater owner Prescott Griffith.

In March 1988, the Press Club joined forces with other area communicators to sponsor a program in celebration of Freedom of Information Month. Sally Chew, a member of the Committee to Protect Journalists, shared a global perspective on press freedoms.

Other speakers in 1988 included: Ron Feldman, an anthropologist from Kent State University, who spoke about his journeys to Anarctica; and Ed Sobey, executive director of the National Invention Center.

William Muse, president of The University of Akron, was one of the first speakers to address the Press Club in 1989. His topic: the university's proposed capital funds program. Gilbert I. Sheldon, auxiliary bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Cleveland, spoke in May about perceived areas of controversy between the U.S. Catholic churches and the Vatican. Kent State University Professor Jerry Lewis, whose passionate pleas quelled student riots at the university in 1970, spoke in October about his research on controlling crowds, such as the frenzied masses who populated the Cleveland Browns' Dawg Pound.

When Hurricane Hugo hit Puerto Rico and South Carolina in 1989, the club donated \$100 to the Akron-area Red Cross. Two members of this admirable organization, including one who was on the front lines of the disaster, addressed the club in February 1990. There are minimal records of other programs held in 1990, but two included a talk by Architect Tom Dillon, who designed the Cuyahoga Falls Sheraton Suites, and a visit from members of Carousel Dinner Theater's cast of "Oliver."

Highlights for 1991 programs include:

- Dr. John Fink, Akron vascular surgeon, who spoke on the issue of national health care
- Anton Sipos, internationally acclaimed artist and winner of a 1961 Academy Award for best animated short subject
- Andre Sauvageot, government advisor in Vietnam and Ludel's son
- Paul Michael, actor appearing in *Fiddler on the Roof* at Carousel Dinner Theater

An outstanding event in 1992 was a joint press conference held just before Election Day. It featured the chairs of the Summit County Democratic and Republican parties, Alex Arshinkoff and Nancy Treichler, respectively. Both guests gave brief opening statements and then answered questions from the audience.

Programs held in 1993 included:

- Dick Nichols, Invention Center board president and CEO
- Mickey Wittman, manager of airships promotion for Goodyear
- Russell Sibert, a club member and presidential history buff, speaking on the assassination of President John F. Kennedy
- Alex Machaskee, president and publisher of *The Plain Dealer*

The club's 25th anniversary year was marked by excellent programming, thanks to the efforts of Russell Sibert, vice president of programs. These included:

- Mike Bobinski, athletic director, The University of Akron
- Casey Coleman, TV-8 sports anchor and "voice" of the Cleveland Browns
- Bob DiBiasio, vice president, public relations, Cleveland Indians
- Ralph Regula
- Tom Sawyer

Programs in 1996 and 1997 included appearances by author Dan Moldea, economist George Dagnino, TV-3 President and General Manager Paul Trelstad, *West Side Leader* editor David Samuelson and University of Akron President Dr. Marion A. Ruebel.

In May 1996, the Press Club Board began discussing ways to commemorate the late Ludel Sauvageot's dedication to the club and to the communications field. After much thoughtful discussion, the group decided to hold an annual Ludel B. Sauvageot Speakers Series. Christine Curry of The University of Akron did an outstanding job of coordinating this program. The first Speakers Series, held November 17, 1998, featured William Kristol, a well-known Washington political analyst. The event, held at the Martin University Center, was well-attended, informative and a fitting tribute to Ludel.

In 1998, members heard Pat Munka, executive director of the Downtown Akron Partnership, speak about her vision for the future of downtown Akron. Other speakers included Summit County Executive Tim Davis and newly appointed *Beacon Journal* editor Janet Leach.

Activities

From baseball outings to bus tours, group activities have always been an enjoyable part of Press Club membership. Some, such as the Cuyahoga Fall train ride attended by 183 adults and children in 1974, were successful one-time events that allowed club members to get to know one another's families. Others, such as Christmas and Chinese New Year celebrations, quickly became Press Club traditions.

The club has celebrated Chinese New Year nearly every year since 1974, with attendance varying from 40 to 104. Restaurants that have hosted the event include Golden City Restaurant, House of Wong, China Garden and China Gourmet. The food has always been delicious and plentiful, and the camaraderie outstanding.

Sporting events, especially baseball and football, also have been historically popular with the club. One event in 1978 was a Cleveland Browns-Denver Broncos football game on one of the coldest days of the fall, attended by 40 members and guests who sat the top rows on the west end of the stadium. Dave Poeppelmeier remembers that it was 55 degrees when the group left Akron, and in Cleveland the temperature dropped to 25 degrees. Members faithfully supported the Cleveland Indians during the team's darkest years, both with frequent trips to the ballpark and sponsorship of speaking engagements in Akron by Indians ballplayers and management.

Just as popular were annual treks in the '70s and '80s to Pittsburgh for Pirates baseball games. Abe Zaidan and Dieter Dambrowsky were responsible for promoting these yearly bus trips, which nearly always sold out. The 1985 trip was dubbed the "Abe-and-Dieter show," and 38 people filled the tour bus. In 1987, Board minutes show Abe as once again arranging "the Pirates-Mets excuse to go to Pittsburgh." Not to be outdone, Robbie Stillman promised to

arrange a trip to see her beloved Cleveland Indians.

Most often, though, Press Club members like to party. Attendance records and membership questionnaires consistently supported parties that celebrated any occasion. The most popular, though, were holiday-season gatherings.

For the club's first 15 years, it participated in the Akron Communications Christmas Party. This event was co-sponsored by SPJ, WICI, PRSA and the Press Club. Although the locations changed over the years, from Kent State University's ballroom to the Firestone Country Club, the opportunity for celebration was always popular.

In 1985, the last multi-organization event was held at the new Oliver R. Ocasek Government Building and was catered by Larry and Jerry's Catering. Following the event, Constance Jenkins of WICI sent out a memo declaring it a fiscal failure that left each club with a "whopping deficit" of \$612. Attendance, estimated at 150 attendees only came to 89. Each club had to pitch in and make up the difference; however, there was still talk of repeating the event in 1986. Unfortunately, there is no record of a Christmas event in 1986 and the following year, the Press Club began hosting its own holiday celebrations.

The vice president of activities held the responsibility for planning and executing activities for members' enjoyment. Here are some of each year's highlights:

Year	Events
1971	[no record]
1972	[no record]
1973	[no record]
1974	Toboggan party at Bear Creek Lodge, two picnic outings to concerts at

Blossom Music Center

- 1975 Mid-April Christmas party for chapter members' kids, snowshoe golf outing
- 1976 Cuyahoga Valley train ride attended by 180, complete with clown, musician and refreshments; trip to Indians game; evening at Blossom Music Center featuring Bobby Vinton; Press Club 6th anniversary party that coincided with opening of new Press Club room at Tangier
- 1977 [no record]
- 1978 Tennis party at Towpath Racquet Club
- 1979 Trip to Pennsylvania to visit Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater
- 1980 "Fiddler on the Roof" at Carousel Dinner Theatre, trip to Toronto, dinner at Akron City Club followed by Chicago Symphony concert at E.J. Thomas
- 1981 "Mummenschanz" at E.J. Thomas
- 1982 [no record]
- 1983 "Talley's Folly" at Weathervane Theatre, trip to Cleveland Museum of Art
- 1984 Dinner at University Club followed by ballet show at E.J. Thomas, wine-and-cheese party and trip to Weathervane Theatre
- 1985 Cleveland Orchestra at Blossom Music Center, dinner at Carnaby St Inn followed by Weathervane revue of revue of Cole Porter music
- 1986 Trip to Malabar Farms
- 1987 Lunch and shopping in Amish country
- 1988 Pittsburgh Pirates game

- 1989 Nooks and Crannies tour of Stan Hywet followed by picnic dinner at Chris Szalay's house, Carousel Dinner Theatre trip
- 1990 Trip to northern Ohio wineries
- 1991 Trip to Roscoe Village, picnic at Sand Run Metropolitan Park featuring "Press Club chefs," Halloween party and Edgar Allen Poe readings at Sand Run Metropolitan Park
- 1992 Breakfast at Granger Lake, Halloween Party at Granger Lake
- 1993 Evening at Mystery Cafe Dinner Theatre in Canal Fulton
- 1994 [none recorded]
- 1995 Inventure Place tour, Canton/Akron Indians picnic dinner/game, trip to Rock and Roll Hall of Fame
- 1996 Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad trip, Nautica Queen trip
- 1997 Fourth of July party at University of Akron penthouse
- 1998 Trip to Akron Aeros game

Akron Press Club Awards Program

In 1976, the club finally took action on the long-time discussion of establishing some sort of recognition or awards program. Although media awards seemed to be favored by most of the Board, four alternatives were suggested: an award for an outstanding achievement by an individual or a group; a Press Club person of the year; an annual achievement award and an award for an outstanding young journalist.

After thorough discussion of the alternatives, the Board voted unanimously to establish the Akron Press Club Awards Program. President Tom Koch appointed a committee to write a proposal as to categories for the awards, a date for the first program, geographic area to be covered and other details.

The Media Awards Committee was chaired by Joyce Lagios assisted by Tom Duke, Rube Faloon, Joyce Gabriel, Pat Latshaw, Dave Poepelmeier, Bruce Rab, Joan Rice, Ludel Sauvageot, Judith Schwartz and Abe Zaidan.

For the first awards program, held in 1977, Chuck Ayers, Beacon cartoonist, drew the cover for the dinner program. It depicted a happy press photographer loaded with cameras and notebooks boasting a large PRESS sign stuck in the band of his hat. The committee agreed that the club and the 23 award winners would be honored if John S. Knight, Beacon Journal editor emeritus, would be dinner speaker.

When President Abe Zaidan first approached him about speaking, Mr. Knight rejected the idea out of hand; he simply couldn't do it. He gave as his reason: too many pressing matters in his life -- but at the same time he showed a little interest.

Mr. Knight asked questions: Again, what was the date? How many people would be at the

dinner? Abe explained that the Press Club could accommodate the date to Mr. Knight's schedule, the number attending would depend on whether he would be the speaker.

A few days later Abe told him the dates the main dining room at Tangier would be free and he asked Abe to write the dates on his desk pad. He looked at the dates and said one of them was his 83rd birthday so that was out of the question. Abe detected that Mr. Knight was trying to disguise his interest. Was this worldly publisher getting skittish about appearing before large crowds? Did he feel (wrongly so) that he was losing his grip as a public speaker? Why was his 83rd birthday out of the question?

Abe eventually persuaded him that his speaking was essential to the Press Club's success and the night of his birthday anniversary was a perfect time to launch the media awards program. From that time on Abe recalls that getting ready for the event "was hell for me." But Abe tells the story best.

"Mr. Knight labored over several drafts of his speech, sending each one to me for editing. I never felt comfortable suggesting changes in the text, but bless his soul, he seldom resisted the changes. When my wife, Nancy, spotted a quote that Jack attributed to the wrong poet, I called it to his attention. He glared, wheeled around in his chair, pulled out Bartlett's and after a deadly pause, nodded silently. He sent a thank-you note to Nancy.

"For the dinner itself, he insisted that he would not stay a minute after 10 p.m., that all questions from the audience be submitted on three-by-five cards and there should be adequate lighting for him to read his speech. (His ego forbade him from wearing glasses.)

"During the dinner he fidgeted, complained that journalists always make disasters out of routine social events and he seemed eager to leave quickly. But when the lights were turned

down and the waiters rolled in a large birthday cake, his disposition changed quickly; he seemed deeply touched, reached over, squeezed my forearm and asked 'Who's responsible for this?' When I told him the entire Press Club had something to do with it, he smiled.

"After his speech, I received about 50 cards from the audience (more than 300 people) with questions for Jack. At two minutes until 10, I whispered that the witching hour would soon be upon us and I would read one more question. He shoved me aside and said, 'This is fun,' and then went on for another 40 minutes."

In 1978, Dave Poeppelmeier chaired the Press Club's second annual Media Awards Program and Ohio Edison's art department designed the programs. There were more than twice as many entries -- 104 -- as the year before. Twenty-eight first, second and third place awards were given plus 17 honorable mentions. Because there were so many awards, the Board decided not to have a speaker. David Lieberth was master of ceremonies; Father Joseph A. Rogers gave the invocation.

When the media awards program was scheduled for November 10, 1979, there was much discussion about reducing expenses. Walter Mirapaul suggested approaching the Cleveland Press Club about somehow sharing our two awards programs since we were tapping the same markets. One idea was to alternate years in holding the presentations: one year in Cleveland, the next in Akron. However, Cleveland was not interested.

In 1983, the Media Awards applications had been mailed late in December, and February 1 was the deadline for entries. Ohio State and Ohio University would do the judging for the awards dinner, which was scheduled for April 14. The Cleveland Press Club approached Akron about combining programs, which had been suggested before. The Board declined, saying it was too

late to consider for that year. Dave Boerner was named chair of the 1984 awards program.

At a 1985 Board meeting, the Board discussed the future of the program. Apparently, the Cleveland Plain Dealer no longer participated in the competition, which left Beacon Journal members competing among themselves in the daily print newspapers category. In addition, the Akron broadcast media didn't like competing against Cleveland. The general consensus was to not have this program in 1985 and take a closer look at holding it in the future. It appears the matter was never again discussed.