



The Altrusa Tradition

Revised 2005

PREFACE

No matter who we are or in what part of our world we live, each of us is directed in our thoughts and our behavior by tradition – the set of customs and actions passed down from generation to generation.

As Altrusans, we have the benefit of an added tradition, *The Altrusa Tradition*, carefully and lovingly handed down to each of us by Hazel P. Williams and Lucille E. Hecht, co-authors of this booklet, dedicated to Natalie Gabriel, a charter member of Altrusa's initial club, the Altrusa Club of Nashville, Tennessee.

Hazel P. Williams became a member of the Altrusa Club of Indianapolis, Indiana, in 1919; was elected national secretary in 1921; served as chairman of the committee which created the first *Classification Guide*, adopted in 1926; was elected the national association's first vice president in 1930; and became executive director in 1946 – a post she brilliantly held until her retirement in 1967.

As editor of the *International Altrusan* from 1945-1979, Lucille Hecht brought great distinction to the organization with her keen insight into emerging trends and her sense of history; both so vividly reported in the pages of our magazine.

Because of their active roles during Altrusa's past, International President Verona Bordok (1983-1985) asked them to share the inspiration and dedication they observed throughout Altrusa's history, so: "we can build upon and carry forward the important truths of our heritage."

This booklet was first distributed at the 1985 International Convention in Boston, Massachusetts, was revised as Altrusa prepared to celebrate its 75th anniversary in April 1992 and was updated once again in 1995.

It is now 2005 and time for another update. Much research has been done on the early history of the organization since a group of Altrusans in District Six found our beloved Mamie L. Bass buried in an unmarked grave in Crown Hill Cemetery in Indianapolis in 2002. Some of it has been included in this updated edition.

OUR HERITAGE

The Altrusa story is a remarkable tale of how a pioneer organization started out to be the first-of-its-kind for businesswomen, took a 180-degree turn, and became the first women's classified service club as well. Why it came to be a major force in the organization world today lays higher claim on the retelling.

A young red-bearded Kiwanian, Dr. Alfred Durham, had set out on a business venture. His idea was to sponsor a national chain of clubs for business and professional women and call it the "Altrusa Institute." The women who would be members would meet and exchange ideas and pay dues to the organization. Dr. Durham would collect a per capita share of all the dues.

The idea was novel and the time was right. It was 1917 and women's organizations of this type did not exist and women were not allowed to join men's civic clubs. The momentum for change was there, however, fueled by the demands of the war abroad. For three years, Europe had been in the throes of conflict and now the United States had entered into it as well. Businesses across the country were adjusting to labor shortages caused by the military drafts by hiring women to take the absent men's places. For many women, this was the first time they had ever been called on to serve as the primary breadwinners of their families.

Dr. Durham chose to start his venture in Nashville, Tennessee, because he had kept in contact with a fellow classmate from Osteopathy School, Dr. Sonora Whiteside, who lived there. She introduced him to Julia Hindman, the dean of businesswomen in Nashville, Tennessee. Julia had grown up on a farm. When her parents died, she moved to Nashville and began studying "speed-writing." When her money began to run out, she took a job as a clerk in an insurance office. She soon convinced her employer to let her get a license to sell insurance. It was not long before she passed the exams for a broker's license. When the opportunity presented itself, she bought the agency.

The first Altrusa club was formed on April 11, 1917. Julia was the first club president. Clubs in Louisville, Kentucky, and Dayton, Ohio, quickly followed. In Indianapolis, Dr. Durham met Mamie L. Bass. Mamie had lately served as the superintendent of the Women's Division of the U.S. Employment Service where she had helped to coordinate the processing of 11,000 applications within six months. Mamie had also been visiting factories employing women and giving inspirational talks to women telling them about her experiences. Mamie herself was captivated by the possibilities just then afforded women by emerging career opportunities and, even more, by the great potential she saw for women in the future.

Mamie infused Altrusa with its inspiring philosophy of service and personal achievement. The name, "Altrusa," was coined from **ALTR** from *altruism* and the **USA**

for *United States* –possibly because of high-running World War I patriotism. Mamie was enchanted with the name for its “devotion to the interests of others” concept.

At about this same time, Mamie was being familiarized with a club her brother was helping to charter locally, Rotary International of Indianapolis. Deeply impressed by the organization’s aims and objectives, Mamie worked with her brother when he served as the club’s first membership chairman to find just the right man for each Rotary classification. As she said, she became a “confirmed Rotarian-by-proxy.” More important, however, was that Mamie began to envision a similar club for women, one that would be “an adventure in practical idealism.” The idea of an organization dedicated to the service of others seemed to her to be the key to helping women unlock their potential and, at the same time, help others and improve their own way of life.

In June 1918, the Altrusa Institute held its first convention in Indianapolis. Forty members were present representing six clubs. In addition to discussing the problems confronting women in business, the first Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws were adopted.

As the first elected president of the country’s first national organization of business and professional women, Mamie challenged each convention participant: “With the position of women such as was unheard of before, we stand in this convention as sponsors of a great women’s movement, convinced that organization is the tool to use where great needs exist. The individual is valuable to society only as she harnesses her energy to that of her associates who work with the same ideals and noble purposes as she also has glimpsed and moves on without thought of self to a high goal of helping society.” This speech was a clear reflection of Altrusa’s early determination to help women find their rightful roles in the world of work.

Other important issues at this first convention included the adoption in principal of Mamie L. Bass’s proposal to make the Altrusa Institute a “classified” service organization. With this, Dr Durham relinquished his connection with the Altrusa Institute. The clubs no longer bore any resemblance to his original idea and he surrendered all rights as an organizer. The original contract was for Dr. Durham to receive \$3,750. Altrusa made a final settlement with him in 1925 in the amount of \$1,800.

Over the next seven years, under the leadership of four national presidents, (a U.S. Employment executive, two attorneys and a lumber company vice president), Altrusa’s internal structure solidified and the foundation of the modern-day Altrusa was laid. In addition to issuing the original Bylaws and Constitution, the association changed its name to the National Association of Altrusa Clubs, hired a club organizer, expanded to include 1000 members in 40 clubs in 20 states, employed a paid secretary, and started a magazine.

This is amazing progress, considering the times in which the dedicated Altrusans were building the foundation. In an effort to create unity, the national president traveled

by train and car to visit the clubs. National headquarters was in the home of the president until 1931, when a permanent office was established in Chicago, Illinois. The national board was composed of a president, two vice presidents, an immediate past president, and one representative from each Altrusa club. By 1930, Altrusa had 104 clubs with 2,877 members. The board was so unwieldy that the association resolved to activate its carefully worked out district plan. In 1930, the board divided the organization into ten districts, with an elected governor from each district representing the clubs on the national board.

But the changes Altrusa wrought were not just internal adjustments. While each club was busy with its projects of service to its own communities, a survey showed that the young woman and her status was the primary concern. It seemed necessary that Altrusa club activities should be unified if a strong organization were to be formed, and the convention delegates in 1924 were requested to consider the establishment of a "National Policy." It was logical that this Policy should follow the trend of club interests and so the National Policy of Altrusa became "Vocational Guidance." Since 1924, Altrusa has been active in the vocation field by providing assistance to both the young and mature woman.

The impact these pioneer career women made on their communities was soon noted by the press. One Nashville newspaper wrote, "Altrusa numbers among its members many women who have made reputations for success in various constructive and executive positions. But they make no great ado over such success, taking it rather as a thing such confidence can always attain, and that without need for argument or fuss. Their attitude is one of dignity and poise. Altrusa is an organization that our people are proud to have here."

The timeless philosophy of Altrusa, expressed in its set of Twelve Principles and in its Statement of Ideals fires the Altrusa spirit. The Altrusa Key, first formulated in 1925, states Altrusa's reason for being and well could have been written in 2005, as the following excerpts indicate.

- "The woman in business and professional work needs friends whose interests differ from those which keep her busy during the working day."
- "Self-realization means, first of all, loyalty to one's own ideals, then loyalty to one's friends, to all women, to one's work and to one's country."
- "Talent needs recognition. No matter how great a person's ability may be, it never reaches its most effective level unless it is understood, encouraged, and developed."
- "Each woman needs not only contacts which will aid her, but a chance to give corresponding benefit to others."

- “When individuals form a unit which is so big in its aims that self is forgotten in the common purpose of the group, the next step in the evolution of womankind is accomplished.”

The sound structuring of Altrusa, with its local club/district/international channel, its vital committees and farsighted directives, is already well documented in organizational manuals and publications. It would take many volumes to report the thousands upon thousands of service projects clubs have sponsored for the betterment of their communities and the multi-millions of dollars raised to fund them over all of the years. The purpose of this little commemorative volume is, rather, to reflect on Altrusa’s heritage so as to appreciate anew the farsighted vision of Altrusa leaders and the way each succeeding administration creatively guided the organization through upheavals of change. Altrusa’s heritage is a story of Altruism in Action.

ALTRUISM IN ACTION

When World War I Armistice bells rang out on November 11, 1918, the then handful of Altrusa clubs had performed far in excess of their numbers. They had compared their home front service activities at the first national convention the previous June in Indianapolis, Indiana, and were fired up to go and do more. War’s end opened the way to focus their combined leadership thinking on service for the drastically different post war lifestyle to come.

With men at war, industry had been forced to take more women workers and when the men came home, the women did not want to give up their jobs. In the next several years, morals, mores and fashions quickly changed from Victorian decorum, long skirts, high necks, high-buttoned shoes and pompadours to the “Flapper” mode of the Roaring Twenties, with short skirts, high-heeled pumps and bobbed hair.

Altrusans who had made their own individual ways to the top without benefit of even the right to vote (until 1920), saw that they could be mentors to the young women who now had the opportunity of going to college and could now make many more career choices. Here was a way to act on a main objective stated in the first constitution and bylaws: “Be of service to young women entering business and professional fields.” It was only natural, therefore, that vocational guidance was adopted at the 1924 Kalamazoo, Michigan, national convention, as the first overall project to be shared by Altrusa clubs.

As early as 1922, clubs were pioneering in service projects. They initiated programs for the handicapped, promoted better education and quality health care and sponsored cultural events.

- The oldest recorded major project is the day nursery the Altrusa Club of Battle Creek, Michigan, started in 1922. Not only flourishing in 2005, the group sponsors two Child Learning Centers. Every member of the Altrusa Club in Battle Creek, Michigan, is a member of Altrusa Day Nursery, Inc., a separate non-profit entity that manages the facilities. The Board that oversees the

operation of the day care centers is elected from within the membership of Altrusa of Battle Creek.

- The first big fundraiser reported was the Altrusa Club of Topeka, Kansas' carnival mask dance. Altrusa rented the city auditorium, invited the entire town, at 75 cents a ticket, and held a street parade preceding it with cars from other civic clubs.

National's stated criterion for each Altrusa club was to find and alleviate people's needs not served by any other group and to do it in a creative way. In responding to this directive, Altrusans found themselves caught up in a rare enthusiasm for whatever the endeavor, large or small.

So, when vocational guidance was adopted in 1924, and a national committee assigned, clubs were ready for the pioneering challenge to serve this developing field. Altrusa professionals in counseling helped the committee evolve guidelines for the clubs. The clubs followed through with career conferences in high schools and colleges, promoted counseling services in cities, set up vocational bookshelves in libraries, offered scholarships and loan funds, opened their places of business for student visits and held lecture series for adult workers. One club even started an employment service!

Bimonthly, even weekly, club program meetings featured talks by experts on vocational guidance and on other social issues of the day. The Altrusa emblem displayed at each meeting – "Patriotism, Efficiency, Service" encircling the western hemisphere – served as a subtle reminder of expected performance. In defining "Patriotism," the founders directed each Altrusan to "be good citizens of the world." It was a courageous stand in a time of isolationist thinking.

Speakers on world subjects often were Altrusans returned from travels, study or professional conferences abroad. *The National Altrusan* published many of the key speeches, such as one on a women's conference held at the British Empire Exhibition in 1925, at which Lady Astor, the first woman representative in the House of Commons, gave opening day greetings. Altrusan Elsie Eaves, a civil engineer who attended the conference as a delegate, shared this observation: "On the other side of the Altrusa world, women are working for the same purpose and ideals and to the same ends as are we in the U.S. They, too, know that they must depend upon organization to gain their goal and they have put their knowledge into practical achievement, the holding of the International Conference of Women in Science, Industry and Commerce at the British Empire Exhibition."

The spirited national Altrusa conventions were clearinghouses for program and project ideas. As an early Altrusan reported, "The air fairly crackled with creativity as enthusiastic lady tycoons discussed what to do to make things better in their cities and the world." Convention speakers focused on international as well as domestic issues and one particularly brave bit of programming was a talk on the League of Nations, when the subject was domestically considered taboo.

National Altrusa persisted in planting seeds of world mindedness with statements such as this one that appeared in the national magazine: “The world has just become conscious of itself, not as a composite of nations, but as a world. What can we as individuals do in order that internationalism may become part of the texture of our lives? First, we must work on our own thinking.”

The U.S. Stock Market crash of October 1929, and the depression in its wake, put heavy new demands on Altrusa’s vocational work as unemployment soared. Job cutbacks dismissed older women in preference to young men. Facing the problem, Altrusa leaders saw the impact age prejudice played and were determined to do something to counteract it. Job clinics for older women workers and *National Altrusan* articles on finding jobs in later years laid the foundation for what would later develop as a Founders Fund in the 1940s; the 1946 publication of a booklet, “Women Go To Work At Any Age,” by Gerontologist Dr George Lawton; and the 1953 establishment of Founders Fund Vocational Aid as Altrusa International’s second major funding project.

As community business and professional leaders, Altrusans were acutely aware of the dramatic technological changes taking place around them. Realizing that radio had entered households on a broad based scale, Altrusa clubs used the new medium to promote community service projects. As the automobile increasingly urbanized society and radically altered the pattern of family life, Altrusans looked at the soaring death and accident toll (over 20,000 Americans killed by cars in the mid-1930s) and clubs embarked upon counteracting measures, most notably traffic safety campaigns.

In 1935, an international dream was achieved: Altrusa became international with extension into Mexico. The addition of Mexican women leaders into the national organization enabled it to appropriately change its name in 1935 to the International Association of Altrusa Clubs, Inc. (This name was later shortened to Altrusa International, Inc., when the emblem also underwent the subtle, yet significant change of replacing the center map from the western hemisphere to one depicting the world.) To celebrate its new internationalism, Altrusa held its 1937 convention in Cuernavaca, Mexico.

By 1938, the scope of Altrusa’s vocational guidance services qualified the organization for membership in the Council of Guidance and Personnel Associations. This prestigious professional body nationally acknowledged that across the United States, Altrusa was assuming a significant role in establishing vocational guidance in high schools and colleges and in initiating on-the-job training for students.

Expanding their horizons beyond vocational services, in 1936, Altrusa clubs welcomed the formation of a national committee to direct community service work. An international relations committee followed in 1937. Like the two previously established committees, Education (now Communication) and National Policy/Vocational Guidance (now Service), these new committees worked directly with the clubs and districts, until 1940, when all four-program areas were united under the program coordination plan. Members with expertise in one of the four program areas were selected as program

chairmen. They, along with a program coordinator, served for two-year terms and were challenged to change the program annually under a different motivating theme each year. (It was not until 1951 that program planning became biennial.)

WAR! The December 7, 1941 Japanese attack on Pear Harbor catapulted the United States into World War II and caused an abrupt shift in Altrusa's service program to community wartime demands. Over the next five years, despite curtailed travel and gasoline restrictions, Altrusans made heroic contributions in time and talent to war work. Simultaneously, the planned program projected farsighted action for the peace to come. The 1943 and 1945 Altrusa conventions had to be cancelled, "freezing" the international officers in their posts for four years, until successors were elected by mail ballot in 1945. But the international board met annually, the international program coordination committee kept communication lines humming between district and clubs, and the total organization progressed. Altrusa unsinkable!

4,528 members in 186 clubs celebrated Altrusa's Silver Anniversary in 1942, during Altrusa's Birthday Week. On April 11th, from dawn to sunset, clubs sent anniversary telegrams, each sending personal club greetings to a preassigned club. The telegrams began in the East and ended in the West, forming a complete circle of Altrusa friendship at day's end.

Altrusa's first international grants program, Grants-in-Aid, was initiated in 1944 with a fundraising campaign for money to help defray unforeseen expenses incurred by Latin American women earning graduate degrees in the United States needed for nation-building back home. The first grants of \$250-\$750 were given in 1945, along with Altrusa friendship. From this sound base, the Grants-in-Aid project was expanded later to include women graduate students from Asia, Middle East, Africa, Polynesia and Melanesia. Primarily funded by Altrusans, over the years, grants totaling nearly \$1.4 million have enabled 2,500 women to complete educational goals.

Altrusa entered the mid-century decade with a membership more than double that of 1940: 9,005 members in 277 clubs in 1950, compared to 4,424 members in 160 clubs in 1940. Altrusa International now intensified its cooperation with major national and international organizations in fields pertinent to Altrusa's program. Delegates were assigned to participate, share Altrusa's experiences, and bring back findings to update and keep viable Altrusa's service program. Among these organizations have been: White House Conference on Children and Youth; White House Conference on Aging; University of Michigan Annual Conference on Aging; National Council on Aging; Mental Health Association; World Food Congress; National Safety Council; President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped; International Cooperation Year; Non-Governmental Organizations Conferences at the United Nations, where Altrusa first assigned its representative in 1946 (2005 finds us with three representatives at the United Nations)

For Altrusa, the 1950's were particularly notable. Growth in the number of clubs meant redistricting appeared on the agenda of the 1995 International Convention. Where

there had been ten, as of June 1, 1956, there were twelve. Its now 20-year-old vocational guidance expertise matured with the launching of the Founders Fund Vocational Aid (FFVA), the organization's second international funding project. Unique in that only aptitude and need determined an applicant's eligibility, with preference given to older women, the program filled an immediate void. As the FFVA word spread, women who had generally been passed over in life applied for their chance-of-a lifetime opportunity. Those motivated to train for better jobs and women for whom personal rehabilitation could open job doors applied as well. The \$50-\$350 awards were enhanced by personal encouragements of Altrusa clubs assigned the initial screening of applicants in their respective cities. During the duration of the fund, the International FFVA Committee has awarded nearly \$1.3 million to 5500 deserving women.

The world around Altrusa included a burgeoning television age that opened new educational opportunities. The new National Citizens Committee on Educational TV (NCCETV) invited Altrusa to be on its advisory board and Altrusa Clubs nationwide helped organize community resources necessary to the establishment of public broadcasting stations. This dedicated involvement earned for Altrusa International a distinguished service citation from the NCCETV.

Attuned to the rapidly changing environment, Altrusa clubs swiftly shifted service gears for space exploration, communication satellites and the nuclear 1960's. Its international service world extended to Asia, Europe and Oceania, as clubs were organized in India, the Philippines, England, Ireland, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Australia and New Zealand. The growth of clubs in England, Ireland, Scotland and Northern Ireland led to the formation of District Thirteen in 1965.

In 1962, to better administer its two international funding projects—Grants-in-Aid and Founders Fund Vocational Aid—Altrusa International, Inc., created the Altrusa International Foundation, Inc. This 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation is chartered to receive funds contributed by clubs within Altrusa International, Inc, individual Altrusans, businesses and interested members of the general public and to administer those funds for the exclusive support of educational, scientific, literary and charitable projects and programs. It was a farsighted decision, with potential and benefits still to be discovered.

ASTRA Clubs were introduced in 1966—a new Altrusa service project to help girls between the ages of 12 and 21 become active, involved, fulfilled members of society. ASTRA, an acronym for Ability, Service, Training, Responsibility and Achievement, with Altrusans as sponsors and role models, provides service projects in schools and communities as its members embrace the Altrusa philosophy of serving and growing. Through the years, ASTRA members have later become Altrusans, the most notable of which is Corinne (Chee Chee) Israel, 1985-1987 International ASTRA Chairman!

On April 11, 1967, the brightest star in the Altrusa galaxy of around-the-world cities simultaneously celebrating the Golden Anniversary was Nashville, Tennessee, Altrusa's birthplace. Hosted by Nashville Altrusans, the day-long event began with

Charter Member Natalie Gabriel's unveiling of a bronze plaque in the lobby of the First American National Bank building, where Altrusa was founded, and ended with the Golden Anniversary Banquet for 325 Altrusa leaders, local dignitaries and heads of other major service organizations at the Hillwood Country Club. Minnie Pearl, of country music fame, underscored Altrusa's Nashville beginnings as the evening's featured entertainer.

This same celebration spirit permeated the 50th Golden Anniversary Convention at Miami Beach, Florida, the following July, and caused Altrusans to discuss forces creating great change in the decades which lay ahead. Aviation, with soon-to-come jumbo jets that could fly 500 people at a time, and the new marvels of communication were viewed as exciting vehicles for bringing people into closer relationship. The early goal to "build understanding among people of all nations" seemed all the more attainable in 1967.

The 1970's brought a search for a new, major international emphasis. As other organizations were known for their work for the deaf, the blind and the disabled, clubs wanted Altrusa to be identified with a cause. Accordingly, nutrition was explored in the 1973-1975 biennium and the strengthening of family life became the focus for 1975-1977. When "Action for Literacy" was introduced in 1977, Altrusa knew it had found its ongoing crusade. Conquering illiteracy, one of the world's most debilitating "ills," through a unified international program, was decided to be the direction Altrusa should take. The program was voted upon at the Brighton, England, convention in 1977, and "Action for Literacy" took its place next to Grants-in-Aid and Founders Fund Vocational Aid as the third funding project of the Altrusa International Foundation, Inc.

As Altrusa was growing in its service emphasis, the number of clubs in the international network was growing too. Altrusa's growth in Puerto Rico was particularly significant and resulted in the inauguration of District Fourteen in 1974. While initially created for the Puerto Rican clubs, District Fourteen also included the Caribbean Islands and the Dominican Republic. Central America's El Salvador became Altrusa's 16th country with the organization of San Salvador in 1979.

The high tech 1980's brought about a computerized, instant, information society. Altrusa, well experienced in adapting to change, was ready once again to deal with these new challenges. The women's movement of the previous decade had helped to open doors to executive and managerial opportunities, and clubs had within their ranks, young women who thrived on the rewards of volunteer service and the fellowship offered by professional women who paved the way.

In 1982, Altrusa's ongoing fight for literacy was carried beyond local clubs when the International Foundation agreed to fund classes in ten village literacy schools in Keralla, India. In 1987, the Foundation made literacy its major focus and the ABC Literacy Grants Program was established: To provide financial assistance to Altrusa Clubs introducing literacy projects into their communities, to enhance existing local

programs and for literacy projects which can be replicated by clubs in other areas and to assist individuals to complete education in Literacy Fields.

A significant change in Altrusa came at the 1987 International Convention in Palm Desert, California, when the delegate body amended the Bylaws to admit men into membership. In the mid-1980's the major "men's" organizations were changing their Bylaws inviting women to join their ranks, and by the close of the decade, the service club movement had eliminated membership requirements based upon gender. It was at the 1987 Convention that the Foundation presented its first "Lamplighter" awards, a program designed to recognize Altrusans who contribute \$500 or more annually.

Dublin, Ireland, was the site of the organization's 41st Convention. There, delegates adopted a resolution calling upon all clubs and members to take an active part in environmental issues. In 1990, the "Recycling Achievement Award" was instituted through which International recognizes businesses, agencies and individuals for achievement in this area.

Growth, both in membership and in new clubs, is a constant challenge to Altrusa and all service organizations. To assist clubs in their recruitment efforts, a color video program, "This is Altrusa International," was produced in 1990.

As Altrusa was changing, global developments were impacting lives everywhere. In 1989, the Berlin Wall came down, and Germany moved toward unification. Marxist governments in Eastern Europe fell and were replaced by democracy and the will of the people. With "glasnost" and "perestroika" in the Soviet Union, the Cold War came to an end, followed by the astonishing collapse of communism in the USSR in 1991. The Middle East erupted into war when Iraq invaded Kuwait, but with the concerted efforts of the United Nations and its members, Kuwait was liberated in the spring of 1991. With communist domination of Europe ending and serious discussions being held between Israel and its Arab neighbors, the citizens of the world began to hope that peace among nations could become a reality in the next century. Extension across the Atlantic occurred during 1992 and 1993 when clubs were established in Novorossiysk and Krasnodar, Russia. Then clubs were established in Uzhgovod and Zolotarevo, Ukraine in 1994.

Chicago, Illinois, was host to the 1991 International Convention and at the opening session, Chile was welcomed into the Altrusa family of nations. Delegates in Chicago amended the Articles of Incorporation and the Bylaws to add the words, "Altrusa International of" to the name of each Altrusa Club to better illustrate the worldwide scope of the organization. The Chicago Convention launched the observance of Altrusa's 75th Anniversary that was marked by a weekend celebration on April 11 and 12, 1992 in Nashville, Tennessee, where Altrusa was founded on April 11, 1917. During the 1991 Convention, the Foundation initiated its Endowment Fund to honor Altrusa's "Diamond Jubilee," and to raise funds to ensure the Foundation's ability to fund club service projects in the future.

The 75th Anniversary celebration concluded when Altrusans gathered in Nashville, Tennessee for the 43rd Convention in July 1993, which was the largest Convention held in many years. In 1995, Altrusa again displayed its “international” scope by holding the 44th Convention in Christchurch, New Zealand, with the installation of our first International President from that country.

In 1999, the development of a Strategic Plan was adopted by the membership at the International Convention in Seattle, Washington. Each district chose a member to be trained as the Strategic Planner Trainer with the purpose of helping each club develop their own plan. Each District was also charged with developing their own plan. Evaluating the Long Range Plan of Altrusa International, the size of the International Board of Directors came under discussion. During the International Convention that was held in Dallas, Texas, in 2001, the membership adopted a proposal to have International Directors elected at the District Conferences serve on the International Board, instead of the sitting Governors. The elected International Directors from the even numbered districts served 2003-2005 with those from the odd numbered districts serving 2005-2007. A Governor’s Council is being developed to facilitate discussion among the sitting Governors concerning matters common to all.

On September 11, 2001, terrorists struck the United States by flying commercial airliners loaded with people into the Twin Towers in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington, DC. A third airplane was also hijacked but it crashed in Shanksville, Pennsylvania. Not since December 7, 1941, has America been so shocked or our lives changed so much. Altrusans joined together to help the country and each other.

At the International Convention held in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, July 2003, Literacy was adopted as the International Focus.

As we moved toward the 21st Century, the communication age became a reality. We not only had our “desk-tops” at the office but we carried our “lap-tops” with us. Cell phones became a necessity for every person instead of only used by the professional people “on call.” Information could be sent around the world with the speed of light. Websites for Altrusa International, Districts and Clubs became linked thus closing the communication gap. Newsletters, membership information, forms for Awards and much more are just a click away.

Did they ever dream that little band of 40 members that met in 1918 would be, in 2005, a living, driving force of more than 12,000, still guided by the principles and objectives they established? Well it has happened, and as Mamie L. Bass said in a letter written just a few months before her death in 1962:

“What we have already achieved is magnificent. But Altrusa is not static...It is dynamic. New fields shall open unto us, and we will achieve new goals of helpfulness. In the past, in the present, and in the future, the strength of Altrusa is in the individual member, her vision, her character, her kindness and her desire for service.”

And, what of the future? Altrusa and Altrusans will be busy at new tasks in the interest of a better world. The Altrusa of the future will continue to attract to its ranks the leaders and the doers; those who seek more than material success; those who know that by united effort they can make a greater contribution to humanity. The Altrusa of the future will be carried through good times and bad by the vision of its leadership, by the strength of its program, and the aims and ideals for which it stands. It will grow because splendid women and men will build upon the original groundwork and efforts even surpassing the work of the organization's founders. It will grow because it is a sincere expression of the ideals and aspirations of business and professional people and because it fulfills their need for service.

NOTABLE INFLUENCES

Altrusa's classification system of selective recruitment of women leaders proved its point by attracting top echelon members.

Eleanor Roosevelt is one whose name became a household word. An active member of the Altrusa Club of New York City, she was classified under Furniture, as owner of a factory, and maintained her active interest right on up to the White House, when she became First Lady with the election of her husband, Franklin, as President of the United States. When he was Governor of New York, Eleanor helped organize the Altrusa Club of Albany by inviting prospects to dinner at the executive mansion to finalize plans with the national field representative; the documents were signed with the Governor's pen in his private sitting room.

Among countless early Altrusans who had risen to high places considered unusual for women are the following, selected at random from early issues of the Altrusa magazine. Notable in their careers, they were notable influencers in their Altrusa clubs as well, in developing needed service projects with scope. Behind their job titles can be appreciated the pioneering that they had to do in their 1920's time frame:

Dr. Lillian Gilbreth, charter member, Altrusa Club of New York City; internationally known personnel management engineer, first woman professor of management engineering, Purdue University; and the mother in *Cheaper By The Dozen*.

Julia Hindman, first president of the Altrusa Club of Nashville, Tennessee; insurance agency owner and dean of business women.

Natalie Gabriel, a charter member, Altrusa Club of Nashville, Tennessee, bank executive.

Belle Benchley, Altrusa Club of San Diego, California, only woman zoo director.

Mary Grossman, Altrusa Club of Cleveland, Ohio, judge of the municipal court.

Katherine Giles, Altrusa Club of Winston-Salem, North Carolina, only woman cotton statistician in the United States.

IDA Wilcox, Altrusa Club of Salt Lake City, Utah, foremost portrait photographer in the West.

Nellie Tayloe Ross, Altrusa Club of Cheyenne, succeeded her husband as Governor of Wyoming, upon his death in 1923; ten years later became the first woman director of the United States Mint.

Edith Jarvis Alden, Altrusa Club of Chicago, Illinois, as secretary/treasurer of the Burlington Railroad was the first woman in American rail history to be given a top position with a major railroad.

Ruth St.Denis, Altrusa Club of New York City, foremost interpreter of dances of the Orient.

Bess Streeter Aldrich, Altrusa Club of Lincoln, Nebraska, novelist.

Hattie Green Lockett, Altrusa Club of Phoenix, Arizona, owner-manager of an extensive sheep-raising operation; named "Sheep Queen" by the National Wool Growers' Association.

Elizabeth Gilmer, Altrusa Club of New Orleans, Louisiana, more famous under the column pen name of "Dorothy Dix."

Dr. Sara Jordan, Altrusa Club of Boston, Massachusetts, foremost woman surgeon.

Margaret Wheeler, Altrusa Club of Boston, Massachusetts, curator of Egyptology, Boston Museum of Art.

Margaret McGill, Altrusa Club of Boston, Massachusetts, president of the Women's Industrial and Educational Union.

Teresa Fitzpatrick, Altrusa Club of Boston, Massachusetts, general manager of the *Atlantic Monthly*.

Margaret Park, Altrusa Club of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, official of National Bank of Philadelphia.

Mary Dam, Altrusa Club of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, curator of education, University of Philadelphia Art Museum.

Jean Crawford, Altrusa Club of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, women's director, University of Pennsylvania.

May Middleton, Altrusa Club of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, superintendent of Methodist Hospital.

Dorothy Grafly, Altrusa Club of Philadelphia, *Philadelphia Ledger* art page editor and daughter of Sculptor Charles Grafly.

Soester L Anthon, Altrusa Club of Yakima, Washington, managing editor, *Yakima Daily Republic*.

Mary Barber, Altrusa Club of Battle Creek, Michigan, home economics director of the Kellogg Company.

Alva Ellisor, Altrusa Club of Houston, Texas, consulting geologist and paleontologist, Humble Oil Company.

Gladys Pyle, Altrusa Club of Huron, South Dakota, Secretary of State.

Margaret Cheney, Altrusa Club of Lafayette, Indiana, only woman head of a bank in the United States.

Katherine Fisher, Altrusa Club of New York City, *Good Housekeeping Magazine's* director of the Good Housekeeping Institute.

Angela Morgan, Altrusa Club of New York City, poet.

Ruth Pratt, Altrusa Club of New York City, the city's only woman alderman.

Gertrude Lane, Altrusa Club of New York City, editor of the *Woman's Home Companion*.

Lucille Hecht, Chicago, Illinois, an Altrusan since 1944 and was editor of the *International Altrusan* for over three decades beginning in 1977. She is a past president of the Illinois Woman's Press Association and was their "Woman of the Year" in 1973.

Joella Terrell Butler, Wichita Falls, Texas, was a wildcatter and an independent oil producer. Time Frame: 1950's – 1960's

Lena Clauve, charter member of the Altrusa Club of Albuquerque, New Mexico, composed the fight song for the University of New Mexico in 1930.

Bonnie Cone, PhD, Charlotte, North Carolina, was one of the founders of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte in 1965.

Ray K. Daily, MD, Houston, Texas, an ophthalmologist who served on the Board of Directors that formed the University of Houston. She was also noted for her work with the Independent School District in Houston. Time Frame: 1940's

Zada Haws, Ogden, Utah, was the first president of Utah Association of Adult Education and Community Continuing Education in 1989.

Renilda Hilkemeyer, Houston, Texas, pioneer in the field of Oncology Nursing. Time Frame: 1950's.

Carol Haberman Knight-Sheen, San Antonio, Texas, was the first female District Judge in Bexar County Texas. She was appointed by Governor Dolph Briscoe in 1977.

Virginia Morriss, Sherman, Texas, was the first woman Mayor of Sherman in 1979

Jacqueline Noonan, MD, Lexington, Kentucky, was one of the founding faculty members of the University of Kentucky. She was also the first person to describe Noonan's Syndrome, a genetic multiple malformation syndrome that affects one in 1,500 infants. Time Frame: 1960's.

To this small sampling of notable influencers in Altrusa's formative years must be added the National and International presidents presented here, with the positions they held at the time of their presidencies, and whose devoted leadership has made Altrusa International, Inc. what it is today.

ALTRUSA HALL OF FAME

The past presidents, where they lived, and the positions they held at the time.

NATIONAL PRESIDENTS

- 1917-18: *Mamie L. Bass, Indianapolis, Indiana, architectural firm business administrator
- 1918-19: *Morna Hickham Knipe, Kokomo, Indiana, director, women's division, U.S. Employment Service
- 1919-21: *Bessie D. Moore, Dayton, Ohio, attorney
- 1921-22: *Mary M. Buehler, Indianapolis, lumber company vice president
- 1922-24: *Anna H. Settle, Louisville, Kentucky, attorney
- 1924-25: *Dr. Gillette Hayden, Columbus, Ohio, dentist
- 1925-27: *Amanda H. Heppner, Lincoln, dean of women, University of Nebraska
- 1927-28: *Margaret Turner, Lexington, Kentucky, bank executive

- 1928-30: *Dr. Helen Johnston, Des Moines, Iowa, physician
- 1930-31: *Elizabeth F. Gardner, Austin, Texas, automobile agency owner
- 1931-33: *Janette B. Briggs, Kalamazoo, Michigan, drug company co-owner

INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENTS

- 1933-37: *Chase Going Woodhouse, New London, Connecticut, director, institute, women's professional relations
- 1937-39: *Halette Quisenberry, El Paso, Texas, department store public relations director
- 1939-41: *Dessalee Ryan Dudley, Battle Creek, Michigan, assistant superintendent of schools
- 1941-45: *Dr. Nina Fay Calhoun, Dallas, Texas, dermatologist
- 1945-47: *Mamie D. Larsh, Indianapolis, Indiana, attorney
- 1947-49: *Corinne V. Loomis, Boston, Massachusetts, executive, John Hancock Insurance Company
- 1949-51: *Ruth Kramer, Marion, Ohio, sanatorium purchasing agent
- 1951-53: *Lena C. Clauve, Albuquerque, dean of women, University of New Mexico
- 1953-55: *Gretchen Vanderschmidt, St. Louis, Missouri, secretarial school owner
- 1955-56: *Erma B. Christy, Muncie, Indiana, supervisor and vocational guidance expert, public schools
- 1956-57: *Marjorie Lamb, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, founder-head, The Alert Service
- 1957-59: *Edith Wood Nelson, Richmond, Virginia, real estate executive
- 1959-61: *Dr. Viva Boothe, Columbus, Ohio, director, Bureau of Business Research, Ohio State University

- 1961-63: *Ernestine C. Milner, Greensboro, North Carolina, head, psychology department, Guilford College
- 1963-65: *Edith DeBusk, Dallas, Texas, attorney
- 1965-67: *Lucille S. Alexander, Jacksonville, Florida, senior reviewer, Internal Revenue Service audit division, Jacksonville District
- 1967-69: *Mary S. Resh, Washington, D.C., deputy assistant manpower administrator, U.S. Department of Labor
- 1969-71: *Joella Terrill Butler, Wichita Falls, Texas, independent oil producer
- 1971-73: Ethel Boyle Blanco, Springfield, Illinois, assistant state purchasing agent, Department of General Services, State of Illinois
- 1973-75: *Muriel Mawer, Seattle, Washington, attorney
- 1975-77: *LaVora E. Conklin, Detroit, Michigan, probate court analyst
- 1977-79: *Letha H. Brown, San Diego, California, corporate secretary, Ratner Corporation
- 1979-81: *Jen Henson, Carlsbad, New Mexico, co-owner of a silver and turquoise jewelry manufacturing firm
- 1981-83: Marie Knuebel-Colantino, Ashtabula, Ohio, capital investments
- 1983-85: *Verona M. Bordok, Barstow, California, principal, Barstow High School
- 1985-87: *Norma Jean Najim, Springfield, Illinois, controller
- 1987-89: Stella T. J. Nyhan, Dublin, Ireland, executive, Irish clothing industry
- 1989-91: Barbara Ann Hughes, Ph.D., R.D., Raleigh, North Carolina, registered dietitian
- 1991-93: Norma Hiner, Ashland, Ohio, pharmacist
- 1993-95: Joyce Delabar, Lexington, Kentucky, director of graduate education, University of Kentucky School of Medicine

- 1995-97: Margaret Inch, Wellington, New Zealand, director,
Strand Natural Fibers. Ltd.
- 1997-99: Dr. Alexinia Y. Baldwin, Ph.D., Mansfield Center, Connecticut,
education/professor
- 1999-01: Barbara J. Chinn, Eugene, Oregon, family community/leadership trainer
- 2001-03 Phyllis J. Corman, Bellefonte, Pennsylvania, banking executive
- 2003-05 Judy Atkinson, Enterprise, Alabama, insurance executive
- 2005-07 Linda Nichols, Austin, Texas, chief operating officer
American Lung Association of Texas

* deceased