

This evening the Harvard Travellers Club holds its 750<sup>th</sup> meeting just a few months after celebrating its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The first meeting was held on Saturday, November 15, 1902, in the Harvard Union on the corner of Quincy and Harvard Streets. An invitation had gone out to Harvard men and others interested in considering "...the formation of a Harvard Travellers Club, with the object of promoting intelligent travel and exploration." The invitation was signed by Professor William Morris Davis, Archibald Cary Coolidge, Copley Amory, James H. Kidder and Roland B. Dixon. Thirty men in all—students, alumni and professors—showed up. Of these thirty, the mix was close to even between students (graduate and undergraduate—12), Harvard academics (10) and others (alumni—8).

At first, the Club's meetings were only talks, perhaps with light refreshments before or after. The Union and on several occasions the Fogg Art Museum were used for meetings, also the private houses of members (on 22 occasions). Clubs were also used, particularly the University Club (23 meetings) when it was on Beacon Street and the Boston Athletic Association (8 meetings), then on the present site of the Boston Public Library addition. Between 1931 and 1949, the Club held 13 meetings at the Institute of Geographical Exploration at 2 Divinity Avenue in Cambridge. The Club also had its office and library in this building which was built by Club member A. Hamilton Rice. But without question the Club's most frequent venue has been here at the Harvard Club of Boston. The first meeting at 374 Commonwealth Avenue was on November 28, 1913, 16 days after the building's dedication. The Club has met here 640 times since. It is unlikely that any group has convened here more often or started doing so earlier than the Harvard Travellers Club.

Club meetings only began to be numbered starting with the 415<sup>th</sup> meeting (October 10, 1961). In actual fact there have been more than 750. At least 56 other non-regular gatherings of the Club have been held, ranging from meetings of the Fellows to "Practical Talks" about a variety of travel topics to Exhibitions that were open to the general public to special luncheons or dinners (ones were given to Roald Amundsen, Sir Ernest Shackleton and Norman Vaughan, coincidentally all polar explorers). Glover Allen, who authored the History of The Harvard Travellers Club 1902–1932, was the one who going through the Club archives numbered the meetings through the 208<sup>th</sup>, May 13, 1932, the end period of his History.

At these 750 meetings, talks have been given by 942 persons. Some evenings in the early years of the Club would feature three speakers. In 1993 once-a-year Club or Members' Nights were introduced sometimes resulting in as many as seven speakers. For those talks that are easily classified as to geographical area, Asia is far and away the leader at 26%, followed by Africa (15%), The Pacific (9%), South America and the United States (each 8%), Canada (7%), Europe and The Arctic (each 6%), Central America and the Middle East (each 4%), The Antarctic (3%), and The Caribbean, Australia and Space (each 1%).

With respect to subject matter, mountaineering is the most often presented (29%) and has been consistently since the Club's founding, followed by natural history (23%). Others include Nautical subjects (13%), Public Affairs and Hunting (each 7%; the talk at the Club's first meeting was on hunting; the last program on the subject was in 1963), Flight (5%), Exploration (4%), Health, Historical and Anthropology (each 2%), and Architecture, Glaciology, Archaeology and Science (each 1%).

Who has spoken to the Club the most times? Our member of longest standing, joining in 1931, Club Medallist H. Bradford Washburn, Jr. He's spoken on 16 occasions, the first on December 3, 1929, when he spoke on "The Ascent of the Grépon," and most recently (with David Roberts and Robert Bates) at the 748<sup>th</sup> meeting on March 11, 2003, when the subject was "Escape from Lucania."

There have been many memorable meetings and speakers over the years. There have been the anniversary meetings, more frequent in recent years than in the past. Perhaps the early members thought the Club might not last too long. The first that seems to have been recorded was the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, held on November 16, 1952 (Meeting 344). Geo. H.T. Kimble spoke on the "The Changing Face of Central Africa." Then, on the 21<sup>st</sup> of March, 1972, the 500<sup>th</sup> Meeting was held. A hundred meetings later, on November 13, 1984, the "Roosevelt Dinner" was re-created with Kermit and Jonathan Roosevelt the featured speakers. The 650<sup>th</sup> was on January 15, 1991, and featured Rob Perkins and Chris Knight speaking on "Kamchatka: The Unknown Land." The Roosevelt menu was recreated once again when Tweed Roosevelt recounted his "Return from the River of Doubt: The 1992 Rio Roosevelt Expedition" at the 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary meeting of November 10, 1993. On March 11, 1997, the 700<sup>th</sup> Meeting was held, H. Bradford Washburn, Jr., speaking on the "Matterhorn, McKinley and Everest." And, of course, last November 15<sup>th</sup> we celebrated our 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, our 744<sup>th</sup> Meeting, with our speaker Jonathan Shackleton, the third Shackleton to address the Club. And now here we are at the 750<sup>th</sup> Meeting, on the 27<sup>th</sup> of May 2003, with Astronaut Story Musgrave.

Anniversary meetings sometimes coincided with appearances of famous speakers. And sometimes not. Among those who have spoken to the Club who either were famous at the time or became so, were (with appearances in parentheses): Carl E. Akeley, Father of Modern Taxidermy; Roy Chapman Andrews, Explorer of Mongolia; Captain Robert A. Bartlett, Arctic Explorer (4); Hiram Bingham, Discoverer of Macchu Picchu; Barry C. Bishop, Mountaineer (2); Carleton S. Coon, Anthropologist (9); Frederick E. Crockett, First Byrd Antarctic Expedition (2); Charles W. Eliot, President of Harvard; Anthony Fiala, Arctic Explorer; Edward E. Goodale, First Byrd Antarctic Expedition; Laurence M. Gould, First Byrd Antarctic Expedition; Brigadier-General Adolphus W. Greeley, Arctic explorer; Sven Hedin, Explorer of the Himalayas; Heinrich Harrer, Mountaineer; Sir Harry Johnston, African Explorer; Owen Lattimore, Asian Explorer (5); Donald B. MacMillan, Arctic Explorer; George Leigh Mallory, Lost on Everest; John P. Marquand, Novelist (2); Robert Cushman Murphy, Naturalist (2); Otto Nordenskjöld, Polar Explorer; Noel E. Odell, Mountaineer; Commander Robert E. Peary, Arctic Explorer; S. Dillon Ripley, Ornithologist and Director of the Smithsonian (3); Kermit Roosevelt (2); Kermit Roosevelt, Jr.; Jonathan Roosevelt; Quentin Roosevelt; President Theodore Roosevelt; Tweed Roosevelt; Governor Sumner Sewall of Maine; Eric Shipton, Mountaineer (2); Joseph Linden Smith, Artist of Egypt (2); Frank S. Smythe, Mountaineer; Vilhjalmur Stefansson, Arctic Explorer (4); Major-General Sir Percy Sykes, Explorer of Persia; Bertram Thomas, First to Cross Arabia's Empty Quarter; Alan J. Villiers, Author and Sailor; Sir Hubert Wilkins, Arctic and Antarctic Aviator; Frederick R. Wulsin, Anthropologist and Explorer (3); and Colonel Sir Francis Younghusband, Explorer of India and Central Asia.

## A Harvard Travellers Club Meeting Timeline

**November 15, 1902** – First meeting of the Harvard Travellers Club at the Harvard Union.

**January 16, 1903** – First recorded instance of food being served. Second meeting of the Club. “A light supper will be served at 9.30.”

**January 29, 1904** – First dinner before a meeting. Harvard Union. Price \$2. Attended by 23.

**March 25, 1904** – First meeting held in a private home, the house of George B. Dorr, 18 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston.

**May 18, 1905** – Probably the first Annual meeting as such; held at residence of Dr John L. Bremer, 416 Beacon Street. Boston.

**April 27, 1906** – First showing of motion pictures at a Club meeting, at the house of Mr. Edwin H. Abbot, 1 Follen St., Cambridge.

**February 14, 1908** – First Annual Dinner Meeting. Held at the Hotel Brunswick, Boston.

**March 18, 1908** – Exhibition Meeting at Horticultural Hall. First attendance of a Club event by women.

**May 7, 1909** – Probably first Ladies’ Night. Held at Horticultural Hall. 200 present.

**December 12, 1911** – Col. Theodore Roosevelt speaks at Meeting 72 held at the Exchange Club, Boston.

**January 17, 1913** – President Charles W. Eiot speaks on “The Social and Political Condition of China”

**November 28, 1913** – First meeting held at the newly opened Harvard Club. Professor Roland B. Dixon, “Twelve Hundred Miles through the Northern Himalayas.”

**December 13, 1938** – First showing of color motion pictures at a Club meeting. December 13, 1938.

**January 16, 1940** – First woman speaker. "She is the only woman to have addressed the Club in the thirty-eight years of its existence, and signally deserves that honor." Mrs. Laura Bolton, “Africa in Sound and Film.” This was also the first showing of sound motion pictures at a Club meeting.

**February 25, 1947** – 300<sup>th</sup> Meeting. Held at the Institute of Geographical Exploration.

**November 16, 1952** – 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Meeting.

**October 10, 1961** – First meeting to have the meeting number on the meeting notice. Number 415.

**March 21, 1972** – 500<sup>th</sup> Meeting.

**February 20, 1973** – "A loud speaker public address amplifier was used with considerable success." First such use.

**October 6, 1976** – Only known instance of a speaker not appearing. Eugenie Clark failed to show because of weather and two members each of the Harvard Travellers Club and the Women's Travel Club spoke without slides. Precursor to Members Night.

**January 11, 1977** – First African-Americans to speak to Club, S. Allen Counter, Jr. and David L. Evans, "Surinam's Ex-Slaves: African Settlements in America".

**January 11, 1977** – Nametags first instituted at meetings.

**November 13, 1984** – 600<sup>th</sup> Meeting. Kermit and Jonathan Roosevelt, "East Africa: A Roosevelt Retrospective."

**January 15, 1991** – 650<sup>th</sup> Meeting. Robert F. Perkins, Jr. and Chris Knight, "Kamchatka: The Unknown Land."

**November 10, 1992** – 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Meeting. Tweed Roosevelt, "Return from the River of Doubt: The 1992 Rio Roosevelt Expedition."

**February 9, 1993** – Club (later Members) Night first held. Meeting 667.

**October 10, 1995** – Club starts using its own slide projector.

**November 15, 2002** – 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Meeting. Jonathan Shackleton, "Shackleton Returns! The Antarctic, Ireland, the Shackletons and One Hundred Years of the Harvard Travellers Club."

**May 27, 2003** – 750<sup>th</sup> Meeting. Astronaut Story Musgrave, "Earth as Art."