

2013 Citation for Long and Valued Service to the Assembly

Jane Cooper - August 4, 2013



The Citation for Long and Valued Service to the Assembly is given to someone who exemplifies the spirit upon which the Congregational Summer Assembly was founded. The recipient this year is a fine example of the “CSA Way” – **Jane Cooper**

Jane’s family has a long history with the Assembly dating to the first years here on Crystal Lake. Her grandmother, Mary Deas, was the secretary/bookkeeper for the Schauffler Missionary Training School in Cleveland, Ohio, and she babysat for Margaret and Grace Schauffler during the CSA’s earliest summers here. She tented with others from the school and after marrying Anton Sicha, a widower with two daughters, they rented and subsequently bought the Cooper cottage on Lion Lane now owned by her brother. They had three more daughters – Ethel, the eldest, and her sister Jean passionately loved Crystal Lake. Ethel married Clark Cooper who became a physician with the US Public Health Service and they had four children, the eldest of whom was Jane. Because of Clark’s work they moved regularly and the Assembly became their “constant,” as it is for many of us.

As a teenager Jane worked from 1953-56 as a waitress in the Assembly Dining Hall and then in the office from 1957-59 (the Assembly owned so little office equipment that she had to bring her own typewriter from college to type the Western Union telegrams and all the office documents and letters). A couple of her more mischievous pranks were leaving footprints on the wet clay tennis courts and painting polka dots on the doghouse (it was scheduled to be repainted anyway!).

She has always loved the music here – and this marks her 62nd year of singing in the senior choir – first under Tom and now Ken. Jane started appearing in operettas in 1947 and has been in most of them since, not only as a performer but also as a set and costume maker. One year while she was living in New York City her work kept her away and she missed every rehearsal of *The Mikado*, including dress rehearsal. She arrived on opening night having learned the music on her own and Jean Petrick was responsible for seeing to it that Jane was in the right spot at the right time.

Jane attended The University of Michigan, graduating in 1960 with a Bachelor’s Degree in English. She worked in Washington, DC, that summer replacing the secretary to the Director of the White House Conference on Aging which was to be held in January of 1961. Returning to Ann Arbor in the fall she was hired by the Division of Gerontology at the University as an editor to edit conference proceedings.

The next year Jane married Michael Baity. When he finished dental school they moved to Galveston, Texas, where Mike fulfilled his military obligation with two years in the Public Health Service and their daughter Jennifer was born. They then moved to Evanston, Illinois, where they lived for four years and Susie was born, and in 1968 they moved back to Ann Arbor. Meanwhile, in 1964 they were delighted to be able to buy the Noyes Cottage on Fortune Avenue, practically next door to Jane’s family cottage.

Jane completed a Master’s Degree in Educational Gerontology at Michigan in 1972 and worked in that field at the University doing training in retirement planning. This led to a job with Equitable Life in New York City where she worked for 16 years doing retirement planning and management development programs. AXA, a large international insurance and financial conglomerate in Paris, acquired Equitable and Jane became part of a team based in France doing management development. She retired as Director of Corporate Training at Equitable in 1998 and returned to Ann Arbor.

Jane has been very involved at the CSA since 1966 when, with a newborn and a 3 ½ year old, she was asked to become President of the Women’s Association. She has served two 3-year terms on the Board of Trustees – 23 years apart – serving as Vice President during her second term. She has also been the Secretary to the Board of Trustees, chair of the Long Range Planning, Citations, and Membership Committees; and has served on the Executive, Personnel, Waterfront, Youth, and Ad Hoc Survey committees. In addition to committee work, over the winter she has digitized the oral history tapes for the archives and made CDs of them. She values being able to give back to the place and the community that means so much to her.

Jane and her brother have taken on the family job of recording daily the temperature of Crystal Lake – at the same time and place each day. She has swum across the lake three times, most recently (and for the final time, she says) at age 71 – without getting swimmer’s itch. In her spare time she works at the Art Fair, waters the Meeting House flowers, pulls garlic mustard and at the cottage runs the Cozy Curtains Internet Café and Showers for the benefit of her extended family. She is the family historian and traveled to the Czech Republic to do research on the family genealogy.

Jane’s love of hiking has taken her to many European countries in the past eleven years and last summer she traveled with her daughters and grandchildren, Emily and Fletcher, trekking in Switzerland.

Jane’s life in Ann Arbor is also a busy one. She has been chapter advisor and, subsequently, House Corporation President of Tri Delta sorority where she lived during college. She is on the board of Lurie Terrace, a high rise apartment building for seniors, where her brother Clark, Jr. – known to us as Corky – lives, and she is an avid supporter of the University of Michigan and its sports teams. Nearly every year since its inception Jane has taken part in the Women’s Football Academy which raises money for the University Cancer Center – and she says there’s nothing like the thrill of playing nose tackle in Michigan Stadium!