

Right Angle Club January, 2021 Newsletter

On December 4, we heard from Jim Friedlich, Executive Director and CEO of the Lenfest Institute for Journalism. “The Inquirer’s status as a public benefit corporation owned by the nonprofit Lenfest Institute for Journalism means it is not beholden to anyone looking to profit off of its work. This is a rare and coveted position given the many pressures facing the news industry.” Quote from lenfestinstitute.org/inquirer/. Mr. Friedlich served previously as CEO of Empirical Media Advisors, a consulting firm focused on the digital transformation of major news organizations. Empirical has advised Bloomberg, Tribune Media, Reuters, The Dallas Morning News, Time Inc., Business Insider, The Sydney Morning Herald, The Wall Street Journal and an array of other major media concerns. Mr. Friedlich was responsible for starting the Lenfest Fellows Program, which chooses six young journalists of color each year for a two-year program, supported by the Lenfest Institute, which aims to diversify both the Inquirer newsroom and its coverage. The pandemic has grown the readership substantially and the majority of advertising has gone digital. The Inquirer has recently discontinued its own print operations and has contracted with a Gannett-owned plant in New Jersey, which should result in a savings of \$19 million/year. In July, the William Penn Foundation awarded the Inquirer, and its owner the Lenfest Institute, a \$500,000 grant to support a year-long project on the “Future of Work” in Philadelphia. Mr. Friedlich told a story where Mr. Lenfest questioned his choice of taking the Acela versus Amtrak’s commuter rail on his trips to Philadelphia from New York. Quote from Mr. Lenfest: “I figured out how to be a millionaire newspaper owner. I started out as a billionaire and bought a few newspapers.” There were 38 participants.

The Board of Control met on December 11, prior to our regular meeting. We voted unanimously to increase our annual donation to the Children’s Scholarship Fund to \$2,000. Tom Williams presented a proposed budget for 2021, which was unanimously approved and will be presented to the membership during our January 8, 2021, annual business meeting. Some important parts include our decision to maintain reduced quarterly dues for the first three quarters in 2021, and resume the fee of \$255 for the fourth quarter. There will be no Spring Fling. The President’s dinner has been moved to May 14, and will be held outside at the Merion Cricket Club. The Pyramid Club has continued to be very flexible in considering when we may return for in-person meetings, the general feeling being this will not occur prior to June, 2021. It was agreed that we will continue to invite our Zoom speakers to certain special events. Steve Bennett reported that the Historical Society of Pennsylvania remains closed. Bob Haskell reported that he continues to work with Ralph Shicatano to update the member database on our website. Bob continues to pursue potential members that have originated from our pipeline database. Peter Alois is coordinating the transfer of his Zoom invitation list for easier use going forward. We discussed recording our Zoom speakers, subject to their permission. We are sad to report that a former member John Fulton has deceased. Jack Nixon presented the list of 2021 Board of Control nominees to be presented at the annual business meeting. Bob Haskell provided a proposed meeting calendar for 2021. Thomas Woods was approved as a new full member.

On December 11, Signe Wilkinson discussed her career as an editorial cartoonist, primarily by reviewing a series representative political cartoons that spanned her 35 year tenure with the Philadelphia Inquirer, and that illustrate her unique style and famous irreverence. She

has won many awards, including a Pulitzer Prize for Editorial Cartooning in 1992. In all, she presented 20 cartoons that highlighted (satirized) significant political people, events, and issues over the last 35 years, starting with the MOVE bombing in 1985 and ending with today's December 11th cartoon about Donald Trump's attempts to delegitimize the election results. She stated that editorial cartoons are meant to cause controversy . . . to start conversations, not to end them. In this regard, a key lesson she learned was to never "hang out" with the politicians and people she drew. Although fun to do, it didn't mix with the need to be independent. Other examples of editorial cartoons discussed included the Philadelphia school system, Pennsylvania state legislature, Mayor Frank Rizzo, religion, Pope Francis, sensitivity to offensive speech, racial disparity, race/crime/policing in Philadelphia, women's rights, and the death of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. In a loss for the Inquirer, Signe announced that she will be retiring in two weeks. But she plans to continue addressing the public on issues she hopes will work toward bringing the country together. There were 41 participants.

On December 18, we listened to a recap of our Zoom speakers as well as upcoming speakers through November, 2021. Some of the Zoom highlights for me were: Dr. Bob Kunz's presentation on "Pandemics"; Dr. Gerald Kreider's presentation on COVID-19; Timothy A. Lenderking's (Bob Haskell's nephew), presentation entitled "U.S. Diplomacy in the Middle East During COVID-19"; Becky Diamond, author of *The Thousand Dollar Dinner*, appealed to all of our appetites with her presentation on this miraculous dinner in Philadelphia in 1851; Jean-Paul Dardenne discussed *Major League Soccer and the Philadelphia Union*; Victoria Wyeth's presentation on her grandfather, Andrew Wyeth; Walter Borys presentation "U.S. International Broadcasting - I didn't know we did that!"; Maria Bomersbach's presentation on "The Justice Bell"; Sam Freeman provided a historical overview of Freeman's Auction House; Ben Fileccia's presentation on "Hospitality Industry Update - Past, Present and Uncertain Future of the Philadelphia Dining Culture"; Eric P. Zahren (President) and Mark Laskow (Board Member) of the Carnegie Hero Fund Commission presented an excellent overview of the Commission, its origins, recipients and some tear-jerking stories; Karen Weaver, PhD, presented *What Will College Athletics and Higher Education Look Like in 2021?*; Jean-Francois Seznec, PhD, presented *Will China Replace the USA in the Middle East?*; and Bryan Alexander, PhD's presentation entitled "*The Future of Higher Education*".

Going back in time, it was March 11, when I sent an e-mail to the membership informing everyone that we would not be meeting in-person at the Pyramid Club until further notice. It was only after consulting with some of our members that I felt any degree of comfort reaching this decision. After the e-mail was sent the supportive e-mails started pouring in. Thank you. Whenever I make a decision that affects many others, I struggle with ensuring that it is the right one. In this instance, I had the luxury of relying upon so many members that care deeply about our Right Angle Club. I am not shy when it comes to asking for advice and every single time I reached out, answers were provided.

Not only did the Board of Control keep all of its regularly-scheduled meetings, we had quite a few special meetings to specifically address the longevity of the Right Angle Club in these unique times, and we almost always had 100% attendance with many meaningful comments and suggestions. One overriding concern was how to avoid the expected attrition of

membership. This did not happen. In fact, we have gained four new members and only lost one during 2020. This was not happenstance. Our Speaker Chairman provided an outstanding cadre of speakers, and figured out overnight how to have them appear via Zoom. He had help. It was not as if we had a team of tech-savvy Millennials available to make this conversion, although thanks to a very active member, we were provided with the expertise of his son to consult on how to use Zoom. Also, our First Vice President not only headed up membership efforts (quite successfully), he lent his technical expertise to conducting our Zoom meetings. Membership stepped up and provided suggested speakers, and speakers provided other speakers. After all this, what happened? The membership showed up! We had as many as 48 members and guests appear for a Zoom speaker presentation. There were so many reasons to attribute the successful continuation of the Right Angle Club, but I feel the determining factor behind our ability to thrive in these uncertain times is the quality of our membership. A testament to our friendship was shown at our Fall Fling at Merion Cricket Club. So many were so happy to see one another!

We all have desires which we hope to achieve in 2021. I look forward to meeting in the Pyramid Club. I look forward to my rides to and from during which I am provided with camaraderie with some of the finest people I know. I look forward to visiting with my friends where I can ask technical legal questions, find out how spouses are doing, make plans to visit Parc after a meeting in the warmer weather and just find out how all of you are doing! Thank you for the friendship, hard work and participation during 2020.