



Elizabeth Swift, spring 1978

## **ELIZABETH SWIFT, NÉE ALLEN**

**CONDUCTED BY  
ALICE STONE**

**January 17 and February 14, 1978**

**ARCHIVES  
CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY  
Pasadena, California**



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### **Preface to the Caltech Women's Club History Project Interviews**

The interview with Elizabeth Allen Swift was done as part of a series of oral histories conducted by Alice Stone in 1978 to document the early history of the Caltech Women's Club and social life of the campus. They capture the observations and perspectives of the times.

### **Subject area**

Caltech Women's Club, chemistry

### **Abstract**

An interview in January and February 1978 with Elizabeth Allen Swift, wife of Ernest H. Swift, instructor of analytical chemistry, 1920-1926, receiving his PhD from Caltech in 1924; professor of analytical chemistry, 1928-1967 and chair of the Chemistry and Chemical Engineering Division, 1958-1963.

### **Administrative information**

#### **Access**

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**CALTECH WOMEN'S CLUB**  
**ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS**

**INTERVIEW WITH ELIZABETH SWIFT, NÉE ALLEN**  
**PRESIDENT OF THE CALTECH WOMEN'S CLUB 1929-1930**  
**[WIFE OF ERNEST SWIFT, PROFESSOR OF ANALYTICAL CHEMISTRY]**

**CONDUCTED BY ALICE STONE**

**JANUARY 27, 1978**

**FEBRUARY 14, 1978**

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**WOMEN'S CLUB  
OF THE  
CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY  
HISTORY PROJECT**

**Interviews with Club Presidents serving from 1916 to 1931**

**1979**

**INTRODUCTION**

When Roxana Anson was president of the Caltech Women's Club in 1977-1978, she noticed that though the Club was founded in 1916, there were no records dating before 1931. She asked me to establish some form of historical record for that period.

We decided to limit ourselves to informal interviews of women who served as president from 1916 to 1931. Tapes or notes would be transcribed and excerpts published in the monthly Club *Bulletin*. To ensure continuity of possession of at least one copy of the Project, the Caltech Archives agreed to become the primary repository, with a duplicate to remain in the Club files.

The Project assumed a pattern and identity stemming directly from the Women's Club, which was formed as a purely social organization and still sees itself as such. In this context, it seemed inappropriate to ask for personal details that were not volunteered and to pursue apparent inaccuracies.

Caveats should be noted. First, not all the living 1916-1931 presidents are included. Hazel Bates (Mrs. Stuart J. Bates, Chemistry), was unable to complete her interview because of illness, though it is hoped she will be able to at some later date. Second, we interviewed a gracious lady we mistakenly believed to have been the first Women's Club president, Mrs. Walter Adams. Unfortunately, the first Mrs. Adams died shortly after she served as president, and we were unaware of Mr. Adams' second marriage until after the interview appeared in the *Bulletin*. Third, the Project has been completed without the benefit of several pairs of eyes checking for errors. Therefore, there are probably many, and are all mine.

We hope the Project will be viewed as being both complementary and complimentary: complementary in that it concentrates on the Institute's social—as opposed to scientific life—through memories of faculty wives; and complimentary in that through the Project we spent some time with—and thus paid homage to—those women who established traditions of helpfulness and friendliness that make our lives more pleasant.

Alice Stone



**Elizabeth Allen Swift, spring 1978**

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# **TYPESCRIPT OF REMINISCENCES OF ELIZABETH ALLEN SWIFT**

## **President of the Caltech Women's Club 1929-1930**

**Dictated to her husband, Ernest Swift**

World War I was responsible for my arrival at Throop College of Technology in 1918. I was in college when the U.S. entered the war. In the first flurry of patriotism, the boys enlisted; and the girls felt that education could be delayed for a while.

To help the cause I took a very brief business course and after three or four months I heard of an opening at Throop College. I applied and was accepted on a trial basis. Mr. Barrett, the secretary of the college, put me to work addressing envelopes. At that time the office force consisted of Inga Howard, secretary to President Scherer; Miss Sage, who handled the routine bookkeeping; a secretary to Mr. Van Buskirk, the registrar; and Miss Spinning, the one and only librarian.

Eventually I was promoted to a position in the main office which occupied an area to the right of the front entrance to Throop Hall and contained the secretarial and bookkeeping staffs as well as the telephone switchboard and the bookstore. My duties were varied and among others consisted of the following: taking dictation and writing letters for most of the faculty; handling the telephone switchboard; selling books and other supplies to the student body; acting as an information source; and assisting with the bookkeeping. One of my first assignments was a request from Mr. Barrett to "please take a trial balance of the books." Only by some careful questioning did I find out what was expected. I should add that another of my less pleasant duties was trying to encourage students to keep their loan payments up to date. I still remember having to ask one of these students, who was going to school during the day and then working at night at the Pasadena Power and Light Department, if he could possibly make a small payment on his loan—he was Frank Capra.

Perhaps you will be interested in knowing that for these services I received the munificent salary of \$45.00 per month—and this was for an eight-hour day Monday through Friday and Saturday to noon! When I first arrived, the "facilities" for women

consisted of a very small room containing a toilet, wash basin, and two small, stiff chairs. This was subsequently enlarged to include a couch and facilities to making tea or coffee.

During the World War I years there was much unusual activity on the campus. Because of the trench warfare in Europe our embryo engineers were being trained by a SATC [Students' Army Training Corps] program in the construction of trenches of various kinds and the campus west of Throop was dotted with mounds of dirt and trenches in simulation of the European war area. The students were in uniform and paid by the government. Another of my jobs was to dole out their monthly checks. During this period a "temporary" army barracks was moved in back of Throop Hall. This "temporary" structure remained there for thirty years! The only other structure on the campus was a frame house where the Athenaeum now stands, called the "Faculty House."

The transition from Dr. Scherer to Dr. Millikan involved an incident which I remember clearly. Dr. Scherer called me into his office one day and announced that there were great plans for the future of Throop College, and that when these went into effect, he would like for me to be his private secretary. I have never known just the sequence of events, but shortly thereafter Scherer had departed, and Millikan arrived.

A very vivid memory of the war years was the visit of [Austrian contralto Madame Ernestine] Schumann-Heink to Throop. She was visiting army camps in the U.S. and giving concerts for the soldiers—you may remember that she had four sons, two in the German Army and two in the American. The day we were told that she would sing that afternoon in the Arroyo [later the Brookside Park Area], the offices were closed, and we were taken about sundown to this beautiful wooded area. This was before tennis courts, golfing, or snack bars. I still remember with chills up my spine her marvelous contralto voice filling that delightful spot as she sang the songs of that period and finished with *Ave Maria*.

I met Ernest, then a graduate student in chemistry and newly arrived from the effete East, in 1919 when one day I was sent over to the Gates Lab with some papers for Dr. Noyes. We were married in 1921 and I continued to work for a while since thereby we would have a combined income of approximately \$2,500. We found an apartment on South Lake in an old house which stood where Bullock's [now Macy's] parking lot is



now. It had several inconveniences, such as no hot water or central heat. In addition, one had to go through a large old-fashioned kitchen to get to the bathroom. The saving grace was that we had all this splendor for \$28 per month and were within walking distance of Caltech. After a couple of years, our financial condition improved, and we bought a home on Lura St.; and I left my job.

You can understand that until then my interest in the Women's Club was very casual although I knew one existed and I was acquainted with most of the faculty wives. Once settled in our home and with few duties, I began to attend meetings more regularly.

I was president in 1928-1929. And among those preceding me, I remember Mrs. Bates, Clapp, Hinrichs, MacMinn, Bell, Lacey, Burt, and Smythe. These were the days when every new faculty wife was paid a formal welcoming call. In my best afternoon dress, hat and white kid gloves and armed with a card case of my husband's and my calling cards, I would sally forth to greet the newcomers.

Another important duty of the Women's Club at that time was the welcoming dinner for all new staff members, which included postdoctoral appointees and graduate students and their wives. The dinner at which I presided, held in Dabney Lounge, was the final Women's Club dinner. The administration decided that handling such a large group was becoming too large an undertaking for the Club and was more properly an administration-faculty responsibility. Thereafter the dinner was replaced by the present afternoon functions.

One of the social events of that earlier era was monthly faculty dances held in the basement of Culbertson Hall. You would be surprised by the beautiful dancers of the old school type. I would like to have one more waltz with dear old Jimmy Bell.

## TRANSCRIPT OF ALICE STONE'S SHORTHAND NOTES

**During interview with Elizabeth Allen Swift**

**Conducted by Alice Stone**

**January 27, 1978, San Marino, California**

[NOTE: This would have been a transcript of a tape-recorded interview, but the tape jammed. — ed.]



The following comments relate to this photo taken at Caltech ca 1918, describing the women in the photo. Left to right.

**Miss Spinning, Librarian for the whole college**

**Eleanor Clemens, Secretary to Registrar Van Buskirk**

**Little squirt in the middle is me. [Mrs. Elizabeth Swift]**

**Mrs. Collins came in to help part of the time in the Registrar's Office. She is the one who got me my job. She told me that there was an opening here.**

**The next lady is Miss Sage. She was a sort of general office worker. She took dictation, general office keeping. She finally did just routine work on the books, keeping track of the invoices and general bookkeeping.**

I came to California when I was six years old—to Long Beach. Both my brother and sister had had diphtheria; and the doctor said they should come to a warmer climate. We came out about 1904.

We lived on Oakland Avenue for years. There was only one black boy in the whole school [McKinley Elementary] at that time. [Pasadena] was a town of tourists and their chauffeurs. You expected the tourists to come in. Pasadena was always an average town.

Maryland, Green, and Raymond Hotels were the big ones. During my high school days, there was a big dance at the Maryland Hotel. The Maryland was where the Broadway [Department Store] is now [northwest corner of Los Robles and Colorado, since demolished. -ed.]. A string of bungalows back of it. A social spot for people to go out.

**Regarding an invitation to lunch with Margaret Sanger  
after she had spoken to the Women's Club:**

If I had not happened to be president of the Caltech Women's Club, I would not have had any personal contact with [Margaret Sanger]. Imra Buwalda, Dorothy Raymond of the hotel family, and a couple of others [went] to lunch with her. She and her husband had rented a house in San Rafael [area of Pasadena]; and we went over there and had lunch with her and sat around and chatted about birth control. Apparently when she married Slee it was the first time in her life she had money; and he supported her ideas. She was so charming and so sweet. She looked like anything but a crusader.

Her reception was wonderful. The Women's Club was thrilled to have her. This was a little later than her first flurry into the birth control movement. I cannot think of any unpleasant incidents [that] I know [of]. This dinner was over in town [and] was attended mostly by doctors. The doctor I had at the time was there. It was a charming interlude, really. She was making a general tour of different areas. I think she came out here to spend the winter months.

“I do not know how soon after she came a clinic opened here.”

Helen Millikan presided at this meeting, and she had a great deal of flair. Took a room at the Roosevelt [where the dinner was held for them, to change clothes]. Helen Millikan had a perfectly beautiful white satin dress, a very slinky sort of thing.

[Note: For more regarding Margaret Sanger's visit to Pasadena, see pages 4-5]

#### **Regarding association with Upton Sinclair:**

My husband has always enjoyed tennis. And my brother was very interested in tennis and was sent to Forest Hills. He used to play on public courts in Pasadena, near Carmelita [Park]. He picked up Upton Sinclair down there. Then, when Ernest and I started to go together, and Ernest liked tennis, my brother said, "Come down and we will make doubles."

As far as my contact with Upton Sinclair, I just met him. I went to his house once or twice. Ernest can tell some funny stories about his technique in tennis. He could not play just for the fun of it.

He [Sinclair] lived in Monrovia. When I knew him, he lived in an area overlooking the Rose Bowl. Eleanor Huse happened to know him. She went to visit him one time; she said you went in through the bathroom. The only thing he had to do with Caltech: he offered to give all his manuscripts to the Huntington [Library]. Herbert Hoover was at that time a trustee of the Huntington and he did not want that trust. So, Sinclair went and left his manuscripts to someplace in Indiana [Indiana University]. He had oodles of things—books and manuscripts and letters from all over the world. Sinclair had two wives; one he finally married out here.

#### **Regarding programs at the Women's Club:**

"I do not remember having very many men speakers at the Women's Club. We mostly dug up somebody. Ruth Lacey had a sister who sang—far from professional.

"Mostly we gathered and talked about who was going to have the next meeting. It was an era when everybody was pregnant. We were a young faculty then."

#### **Regarding past Women's Club presidents and members:**

[Mrs. L. H.] Gilmore [1922-1923]: She always was so meticulous in her clothing and dress, and neat and proper. She was a charming person.

[Mrs. F. W.] Hinrichs [1923-1924]: was friendly and outgoing. We used to play badminton with them during the years when it was a big craze. Was a great family feeling about Caltech. There was a time when I knew everybody and everybody's children.

Mrs. [Ruth] Tolman had done undercover work during WWII [as a clinical psychologist with the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) –ed.].

Mrs. [Romeo] Martel [1925-1926] was a very sweet woman. [Regarding her husband] A lot of people thought he was very handsome. He was in engineering. They lived for a good many years on Fairfield Circle. I will always remember how well she cooked chicken livers.

Mrs. [William N.] Lacey [1926-1927] was the first person who called on me after we were married. We took a trip to Alaska with them. She was a home econ [home economics] major.

Mrs. [George R.] MacMinn [1927-1928] was a character. I remember her taking me over to this East Indian cult that was over in La Canada or someplace. She became very interested in yoga and East Indian philosophy. They had one boy who never married. He was an English teacher. Beatrice Wulf knew them very well. Neither of the MacMinns are living.

Mrs. [William R.] Smythe [1928-1929] is a mystery woman. I knew her for years. She went with her husband to the Philippines when he was teaching over there. They came back here, I met her, and we became very friendly. The son teaches somewhere in Colorado. We were at a dinner party at the [Richard W.] Suttons and Mrs. [Royal] Sorenson asked about her daughter. [Alice's recollection of Elizabeth's words: "and Mrs.

Smythe just said, 'Oh, she committed suicide about three months ago'.'] She was a Christian Scientist. She had all these friends at Caltech, but she has cut them all off. I think she is a Christian Science practitioner now. Turned her back on anything that has to do with Caltech.

The [W. Howard] Clapps had two sons; one wrote something in *E&S* [Caltech magazine] about the days when his father was there [at Caltech]. I do not remember too much about her [CWC president, 1930-1931].

### **In reference to great occasions on campus:**

It seems to me there was a dedication party at the Athenaeum. I cannot remember just what, but it seems to me there was something.

About the Balch's golden wedding anniversary party: "Everything was draped in gold."

Regarding the Athenaeum, I remember being so impressed when we went down there to eat. [Stone's recollection: "The service was so good, with the white linen and heavy silver, and the food was so good and so reasonable."]

### **Working at Caltech and the environment:**

"I worked all told about five years—from 1919-1921, when we were married; then I worked for another three years while my husband was getting a PhD."

[Regarding the working environment]: To the right of the center door in Throop [Hall] was the Business Office. A little corner of the original was the switchboard, and another corner where the bookstore was—[there were] two desks where Grace Sage and I sat. Handled the switchboard and the bookstore; 8:30-5:00; and to noon on Saturday. For all this work I got \$45 month.

I think that was probably the normal pay. Caltech was a little tight-fisted at that time. Mr. [Arthur] Fleming [Board of Trustees President] was ruling the roost at that time and would arrive in his big Duesenberg or whatever it was. [Stone's remembrance of this anecdote: "I remember him coming in one day and looking at the stamps on some letters and asking, 'Have you weighed this, Miss Allen?'" ]

Dr. Scherer was there the first time when I went. I remember being called into his office one day. "There are going to be big changes. In the next set of plans, Miss [Inga] Howard will have a publicity job. I want you to come in as my private secretary." It was shortly afterward that Dr. Scherer left. There was an interim period and then [Robert A.] Millikan arrived.

I knew his daughter and his son, Scherer.

### **Miscellaneous personal recollections:**

Madame Ernestine Schuman-Heink [Austrian contralto] was making a tour of colleges during the war [WWI]. She had two sons fighting for Germany, two for the U.S. One day, we were told we were being taken down to the Arroyo. We went down to what is now Brookside Park. It was then just a rustic area. In the latter part of the day, I remember to this day the chills that ran up and down my spine as she sang war songs.

I left school when the war broke out.

We honeymooned on what is now Bullock's parking lot [present-day Macy's on South Lake Ave.], a ratty old house. A Caltech man was living there, and we heard he was leaving. We went and snapped it up—three rooms, no central heat and no hot water. Back of that was an old-fashioned kitchen. Our joy was that we could get the whole thing for \$28 month.

We bought a little place on Lura Street about three years later, and I stopped working. That was the beginning of my life in the Caltech Women's Club. From then on, I started taking an interested in the CWC. Those were the days when you called on any new person that came, with your cards and your husband's cards. They came back and called on you.

One interesting thing that should be noted. In the 1920s, in the spring or Christmas, we would take off on trips. You did not go alone in those days. Two or three cars would go together, and we would camp out. One I remember particularly was a Christmas day, having dinner on the beach below Ensenada with the Beckmans [Arnold

and Mabel]. The men wanted to go swimming and went in in their shorts, so we turned our backs modestly. We made many trips to Death Valley.

We went up to Sequoia when it took hours and hours to get up there.

Our first investment was to get a \$500 car.

Regarding the Rose Parade, my era goes back to the chariot races. My father was a director of the Tournament of Roses.



**INTERVIEW WITH ELIZABETH ALLEN SWIFT**  
**President of the Caltech Women's Club 1929-1930**

**Conducted by Alice Stone**  
**February 14, 1978, San Marino, California**

**Begin Side 1 of Tape**

STONE: I have a couple of questions that I missed the last time I was here. Where were you going to college?

MRS. SWIFT: Occidental. I was all set to go to Stanford or Smith. And then the war [WWI] was breaking out and my mother had to have a very serious operation. So I thought, "Well, I'll go here where I'll be near home for a year and then transfer." And I never did.

STONE: What were you studying toward?

MRS. SWIFT: English.

STONE: Where did you go to business school? Where did you take your business course?

MRS. SWIFT: Oh, gosh, I don't know. Can't even remember the name of it. Something over in Los Angeles. I happened to get a scholarship to it, so I took it. I was at Occidental. I knew some [friends]—they had taken a scholarship to a business college or something like that. It was over Ralph's Grocery Store on South Hill or something like that. I don't remember exactly where it was. I was only there just a very short time until this job opened up.

STONE: How did you know Mrs. Collins [already working at Caltech who mentioned the job in the first place]?

MRS. SWIFT: She lived next door to us for years. Incidentally, I came across a couple of pictures. [Showing a picture.] This is where we lived on Oakland Avenue; and they lived right next door. This [picture] was when we first moved there.

STONE: Is that you.?

MRS. SWIFT: No, it's my mother. I was just a girl then. That was the house we had. You can see it was a three-stories thing. These upper rooms were maids' rooms. The famous attic, which I never will forget—we had all kinds of stuff and we'd play in there. We had a wonderful time in the attic. Then we built on and there was a tennis court where this [open space] is now. And we added to that. And that went right through pretty much from Oakland to Los Robles, back up around where the Shakespeare Club was for years.

STONE: [Looking at a photo] Did your mother ride the horse that she's holding?

MRS. SWIFT: No, they came up from the livery stable, Tanner's Livery Stable. The man who had the horse was the one that guided us around town on these donkeys. We thought we were just very grown up. We were just little kids, and they'd bring a string of donkeys down and then he'd come with the horse and leave the horse there. Mother was very fond of horses. She's just out petting the horse. Taking donkey rides on a Saturday afternoon was quite the thing to do—get a bunch of kids in the neighborhood and just ride around.

Tanner's Livery Stable used to be halfway down the hill on Marengo, on the south side of the street—and, of course, that developed into Tanner's Garage and Limousine Service and all that later; but it started out as this livery stable.

STONE: You came to Caltech in 1918. Were you on campus during the flu epidemic?

MRS. SWIFT: Yes. That was horrible. I think it was during the Student Army Training Corps [SATC] period, and they set up sort of a hospital or infirmary, and several people died. There was one darling boy that was so sweet. He was just as nice as could be.

When I was first there, he said he was going to war. He said, “Miss Allen, would you object very much—I don’t want to impose on you—but would you object if I just wrote you a letter? I haven’t anybody to write to.” I said, “Why that’s lovely, I’d love to hear from you.” And then he got the flu before he went; and he died. I will always remember that as kind of a nostalgic thing. They were awfully sick. I had the flu and I was out for quite a while with it.

STONE: They bedded the boys down on campus then?

MRS. SWIFT: I think there were several infirmaries somewhere—old barracks buildings.

STONE: I saw pictures and have read that people wore masks.

MRS. SWIFT: Oh yes. People went around town with these masks on.

STONE: Do you think it helped?

MRS. SWIFT: Nope. If you were gonna get it, you were gonna get it. I thought I’d gotten through so beautifully without getting it. I was so happy. I went to a dinner dance at the Huntington [Hotel]; and in the middle of it, I began to feel awfully woozy and had my boyfriend take me home. That was it. I just came down with it and was awfully sick.

STONE: How long did that last?

MRS. SWIFT: I know I was awfully sick and home for about three weeks; and I think for a long time afterwards you felt kind of weak from it. It was a nasty bug. My husband, who was in the East at that time, had it while he was in Officers’ Training camp. It was an epidemic all over.

STONE: Another thing that I didn’t ask you about the Women’s Club was: Did you ever hear any stories about the specific circumstances of the founding of the club?

MRS. SWIFT: No, I didn't. The club wasn't of any interest to me at first because I just kind of grew into it. I don't know how it was started. Mrs. [Walter H.] Adams, who was the first president in that list you brought, was from the [Wilson] Observatory. And I think a group of people just kind of wanted to get together; and they'd go to people's houses to chat and sew, and that sort of thing.

STONE: Did she serve twice?

MRS. SWIFT: I think so.

STONE: If you'll notice on the list [of Women's Club presidents]—

MRS. SWIFT: There's a blank.

STONE: Right. And we have never been able to figure out exactly what that meant.

MRS. SWIFT: Well, I think she probably served for a couple of years. She was a very dignified and very lovely woman. I remember her. Her sister—I guess it was Dr. Adams' sister—if I'm correct, Miss [Grace] Henley or somebody, who was head of Polytechnic Elementary School for years [1915-1946].

I was talking to Eleanor Huse about having to do this and she was very interested. She was born in Pasadena on Pasadena Avenue, sort of in back of the Huntington Hospital. Later they moved to South Orange Grove and her family was very well connected. Her grandfather was Governor [Henry Harrison] Markham, who was governor of California at one time [1891-1895].

STONE: He was from Pasadena, was he not?

MRS. SWIFT: They're an old, old Pasadena family. And we had a jolly time talking about some of the fun things that she remembered, and I remembered in the early days. She went to Westridge [School] and went back to Vassar and came back and married a Caltech man. [William] Huse was an English teacher. He died rather suddenly of a heart

attack. And since then, she's been working at Vroman's [Bookstore] in the paperbacks. She really knows her Pasadena history, the beginnings.

STONE: Do you remember any of the names of other officers of the club, secretaries or treasurers, from about that time?

MRS. SWIFT: I don't remember exactly, no. I could not offhand dig it out.

STONE: We're still looking around for possible people who might have some records. I gather, though, that there just weren't any kept until about 1930.

MRS. SWIFT: I doubt there were. I think they probably just took minutes and they were destroyed; or nobody intended to keep those things. As I say, one of the earliest people was Imra Buwalda; but she came around 1924 or 1925 or something like that, so she wasn't as early as I was by any means, and she was very much interested in her police work and so forth.

She graduated from California at Berkeley and went into something like—in crime and that sort of thing. I don't remember just exactly what she did have, but it was something to do with law and order. She was very active in her field, much more so than in the Women's Club. Though she always came to the Women's Club.

I remember when the DuBridges were here for a year Around the 1920s—'21 or something like that. He was a national research fellow. Doris and Lee came back as president. When she met me, she said, "Oh, I'm so glad to meet you. You know, the two people I remember from the Women's Club before are you and Mrs. Buwalda. I used to just love to see you and your red hair, and to see Mrs. Buwalda. You both always looked so fashionable. I just wanted to meet you both." Then she took a look at me and said, "Where is your beautiful red hair?" The years have taken it, I guess. Evidently, Mrs. Buwalda and I made an impression on her. I guess we're the only ones left from that era that are around.

STONE: We're still trying to find out which of the presidents are still around from that era. Was it Helen Gilmore?

MRS. SWIFT: Helen Smythe. Edith Gilmore—I think she died; I'm pretty sure she did.

STONE: What about Mrs. [Harry C.] Van Buskirk?

MRS. SWIFT: Oh, she's been dead for ages. I think about the only ones that are left are Helen Smythe— Who are the other ones?

STONE: Eleanor Burt, Hazel Bates, and Helen Smythe.

MRS. SWIFT: Hazel Bates [CWC president]. Her daughter is in touch with her. She always sends me a Christmas card, her daughter does. She was one of the few people who was here when I arrived, or my husband arrived. Stuart Bates was the only person in the chemistry department. He was the first one [Ernest] knew when he came out here, and Hazel is still living. Stewart has been dead for a long time. I think [Hazel] is lucid. They were both quite religious. We weren't terribly congenial with Hazel Bates or had anything particular to do with her, but I knew her for years.

STONE: What happened to you and to the Institute—that you saw—when the Depression hit? What changes came?

MRS. SWIFT: The Depression didn't hit really until after I left. It didn't come till '32.

STONE: Ernest was at the Institute, and that must have done something to you.

MRS. SWIFT: I think they cut down salaries, for one thing—10% or something like that. I remember they went back and did some cutting here and there.

Ernest gave a talk one time to the faculty at the Faculty Club on the olden days of Caltech, how he happened to come out to California and how he'd seen it grow and

things that he remembered about that time. I have still a copy of it somewhere. I don't think that is of any particular interest to this Women's Club business.

STONE: No, but I was just curious. You hear stories that the Depression caused such great changes and dislocations in some peoples' lives or that they saw things that affected them so much.

MRS. SWIFT: I think we were kind of a sheltered group down at Caltech. I don't think we were out selling apples or anything. I remember a general salary cut with promises that it wouldn't be for long.

Of course, Mr. [Arthur] Fleming, when he was there, kept a lid on everything—all the expenditures, every cent that went out. So much so, he kept count of how many pieces of toilet paper they used. It wasn't necessary to use more than so many sheets.

STONE: Ernest was division chairman, '58 to '63. This doesn't have anything to do with the Women's Club, but how did that affect you personally? Did you have more responsibility? Did you feel you had more responsibility?

MRS. SWIFT: We moved here from a house out on California Street, which was much larger and had more room. I felt I should try to entertain everybody, and I did take them in groups. I didn't try to have everybody at once. That was one thing that Helen Pauling [CWC president, 1940-1941] did. They had a big place and she could entertain them all and have the whole group and get it over with. I felt I had to break them up in little groups and had a series of Sunday afternoon parties.

STONE: This was faculty? Graduate students?

MRS. SWIFT: Yes, all of them, anybody connected with the chemistry department.

STONE: Helen Pauling had the whole crew over at once? That must have been a big job.

MRS. SWIFT: They had a big place—You know, have them outside and inside. I knew we were there sometimes, and she would have some visiting professor and she would ask people to help and so forth.

Really, here I could not. I opened up the patio and let people roam around. This was the best I could do. I enjoyed it. I always enjoyed doing things in a social way.

STONE: We talked before about changes at the Institute. I can't remember if I asked you this before or not, but you said that it's not quite as familial as it was.

MRS. SWIFT: Well, I think just by process of numbers—when it was a small faculty, a small number of people in the department where you knew everybody—you'd just meet at chemistry picnics and things like that. And you knew the family and when they were having a baby; you knew all these little intimate details. I know I know the names of them; but actually, the faculty now is so changed in chemistry—so many new faces.

We've known Fred Anson for years. The [William N.] Laceys we were very close to for years, but they both died. So, I feel we're kind of the Grandpa and Grandma.

STONE: Do you sense any other changes in the Institute, in temper or outlook? I know it's hard, one step removed, not working there.

MRS. SWIFT: Yes, I think it is. I get more of an impression from Ernest, that he gets a little discouraged at times about it. He was a meticulous person and interested in personality, and [in] people who were not only interested in what they were doing but had a contact with the student, a closeness between the teacher and student that he always liked, and that I think he absorbed from Dr. [Arthur A.] Noyes, because Dr. Noyes was interested in them. He was interested in them, in everything they turned out. And I think Ernest feels that there's a—I'm putting words in his mouth maybe—I think he just feels there isn't that closeness between the faculty and the student as there used to be.

STONE: Any reason for this?



MRS. SWIFT: I think it makes a difference who the person is who's guiding them. And I think we've had a succession of a few who didn't have too much of an interest in the individual student and what they were doing; and there wasn't that close contact between the student and the professor.

I don't know if it's true in every case, but I knew Ernest would come home kind of discouraged at times from a chemistry department meeting. I'd say, "Did you go?" He'd say, "I stayed for a while, but I couldn't stay for the whole time." Something he felt was lacking.

STONE: How do you feel about the Institute after all these years that you've known it so well?

MRS. SWIFT: It's been my whole life for years. I've been in very close touch with it for years. I know when Ernest finished his work here, getting his PhD [in 1924], I didn't know if he'd stay long. He had offers from the East and so forth, and he said, "Now listen, I can make a lot more than I can here." And I said, "All right, but you've come to love California, you love the desert. You love to play tennis; you like to do the year-round types of things that you do here. Aren't you going to miss it?" He admitted he was. I said, "Isn't it worth something to be happy and doing what you want to instead of getting twice the money somewhere else?" So, we stayed; and we've been staying ever since.

We had a very interesting trip one time, when we went around the whole United States visiting at different universities. Ernest was on a Guggenheim and was giving talks at different universities. There were so many of his former students who were heads of departments at various colleges around the country. It was most interesting to find out how they felt about Caltech and how they felt about Ernest and so forth. It was a delightful trip.

STONE: How did they feel about Caltech?

MRS. SWIFT: Oh, I think they felt it was a unique place.

STONE: Does this mean they had affection for it?

MRS. SWIFT: Oh, I think so. I think a great many of them did—certainly they showed us a very good time. It was lots of fun, seeing how all these universities compared.

There was no place we went that had anything comparable to the Athenaeum. In type and luxurious atmosphere, the faculty clubs in general were very dreary. They'd take you out to some club in town. We felt very proud of the Athenaeum when we came back.

Having gone through the Millikan era, and a touch of the Scherer era— And now we don't know what we're going to have [referring to the search for a new president for Caltech]. Ernest goes to faculty meetings to find out what's happening, but he hasn't found anything as yet.

I think it takes a unique person to do a job out here. I think Dr. DuBridge was really my idea of a perfect president because he had the scientific background; but he had the human touch with the students, which I think is terribly necessary. I was terribly fond of him.

And Doris, his first wife, was so darling. She went just along her own natural way and she made more friends. And the students loved her. And she was always just the same. And she was just tireless in what she did. She was just very outstanding. I was always very fond of her.

### **Begin Side 2 of Tape**

STONE: I gather that Doris did a lot to make the Institute a cohesive family. How did she do that? Was it just her personality?

MRS. SWIFT: Just being herself and being so natural. Mrs. Millikan was a very formal person. Everything had to be just so. She was a very warm person and she had a great many things to contend with, but she didn't have the ability to just kind of— She was a little austere, let's put it that way. Everybody was a little bit in awe of her. I don't think she ever made the students feel just at home. I poured many and many a tea at her house.

She gave a series of teas for the students. She would ask me always to pour because I was working then, and I knew the students—and the faculty as well—so I was sort of a natural pourer for that sort of thing.

When Doris came, she didn't try to be anything different than what she was; and the students just loved her. She was so natural with them and friendly with them. I was very fond of Doris.

I don't know where we'll go from here [again referring to the Institute's presidential search].

Dr. [Harold] Brown never had the touch with the students that DuBridg had. And he was a different type. I didn't know him really—of course I met him and so forth—but I never had any close feeling about him at all. I think he's in a good job now [became Secretary of Defense for President Carter, 1977-1981], which he can do much more effectively, probably.

STONE: It's interesting to see all the different personalities sweep by over the years when you back off a little bit, think about how they affect the temper of the Institute.

MRS. SWIFT: I feel very remote from the Institute these days. Don't get out so much. So many new faces when I go someplace.

I don't see how it can go much farther than it is. We should have, at the time when property was so cheap, bought out to Allen Avenue and continued.

The little book that you suggested I read [referring to John Espey's *The Anniversaries*, published 1963, a fictional treatment of the history of Pasadena]—I was so interested in the chariot races [in the early Tournament of Roses] because I remember so well the crash in that chariot race that they told about in that book.

STONE: About what year was this?

MRS. SWIFT: I think it was around 1910. I was just a small child. My father was a director of the Tournament of Roses and at one time I was a princess. This was a thing when they didn't go through this business they do now. The principal of the Pasadena High School—where PCC [Pasadena City College] is—the principal on his own, talking

with a committee, made a choice of people he thought would be good to represent the people of the Rose Committee. And so, I was asked if I would be a Rose Bud, I think they called us. I have a picture that you might be interested in. Would you be interested in seeing me as a Rose Bud? That is me, [referring to picture].

STONE: This looks like it's in front of the Huntington [Hotel].

MRS. SWIFT: It is. We'd gone there for a luncheon and those were the Knights of the Tournament in their red coats which they wore at that time.

STONE: From the Hunt—[the Valley Hunt Club, originators of the Tournament of Rose].

MRS. SWIFT: Yes. These were the girls who were selected. I said to my daughter one time—I think she was talking to me about the Rose Tournament—“I was a princess once.” “You were what?” So I dug this thing out, and she said, “Well, that looks like the Huntington Hotel, and that may have been you. I don't know.”

Look at those dresses. Isn't that ridiculous?

STONE: What year was this, about?

MRS. SWIFT: About 1917 or '18, I think it was.

STONE: And you rode in the parade?

MRS. SWIFT: No, darn it, we didn't ride in the parade. We didn't have anything to do with it. They selected one person to be queen, and I don't know who it was, I can't remember. There was a queen, and the princesses and this picture taken and a writeup. I wish I'd kept that writeup. Anyhow, that's when I was a princess in the Rose Parade.

STONE: So, they fed you lunch.

MRS. SWIFT: Oh, they gave us a luncheon and we had a very nice writeup in the paper, and that was all.

STONE: It was much simpler in those days.

MRS. SWIFT: Much simpler, yes. We didn't have to parade around in a bathing suit or have our dimensions taken or anything like that. It was the principal, head of the English department, and the football coach, I think were the three who selected the girls.

STONE: Such a strange combination of people.

MRS. SWIFT: I was pretty good in English, and the principal of the school liked me. He was very nice. And I don't know how the football coach got into it.

Now tell me, are you going to write up something of our conversation?

STONE: Let me tell you what is in the works. Taking the thing that you wrote, and our conversation from last time and the conversation from this time, I will put a piece in the Women's Club *Bulletin*. And then after that, the conversations I have with Hazel Bates, Eleanor Burt, and Helen Smythe. And you will all be put in two notebooks. One will go to the Women's Club archives, and the other will go to Judy Goodstein, the Caltech Archivist, along with the tapes. We will be bringing you back transcripts of these things for you to read over and correct my spelling and typing errors—this kind of thing—and probably ask you to sign a release, meaning that the Women's Club or the Archives can use this material however they see fit.

MRS. SWIFT: Let me give you one hint. I don't think you can get anything out of Helen Smythe. She has completely severed all connections with Caltech, the Women's Club, and everything. I understand she's a Christian Science practitioner now.

STONE: What does "practitioner" mean?

MRS. SWIFT: Like a doctor of medicine. They go around and hold the right thought and so forth. When you would call a doctor normally, you would call a practitioner if you were a Christian Scientist.

She used to be very close and we used to have long talks and things together. And then she just completely dropped out of everything.

I was at a dinner party one night at the [Richard W.] Suttons—he was a physicist at Caltech. And Ralph [Smythe] was there; and I think Mrs. [Royal] Sorenson said, “How is your daughter, Ralph?” And he said, “Oh, she committed suicide.”

STONE: What year was this, do you remember?

MRS. SWIFT: About ten years ago. I think it’d be kinder not to contact her at all.

STONE: You really think then I shouldn’t make any attempt?

MRS. SWIFT: No, I don’t think so. It wouldn’t hurt to call her and ask her.

STONE: That’s what I thought I’d do—call and tell her what we’re doing and ask; and if she says no, then she says no. I would hate to talk to everyone else and leave her out without trying.

MRS. SWIFT: I think that’s perfectly all right, but I thought maybe it’d be better to warn you a little bit.

STONE: I will let you know what happens.

MRS. SWIFT: Who knows, she may. If you’re talking with other people, talking to past presidents, talking to me, and Hazel Bates.

Hazel—I think she’s probably all right mentally. I would imagine she is. She’s no spring chicken; she’s probably ten years older than I am, which would bring her up around ninety.

**[A break in the conversation]**

I've seen Pasadena change so. From the simple town, a nice little residential place, to a big and milling—where nobody knows anybody else. Freeways going this way and that way.

I just long for the days when we could go camping, pull off by a creek and just sleep without thinking about anybody taking anything. We were down at Palm Springs and threw our bedding roll down, it seems, in the middle of Palm Springs. Palm Springs now!

In that respect I think we hit a kind of peak time in California. I know my husband, just after we were married, one holiday over New Year's, with two or three men from the chemistry department in an old rickety Ford went down into Death Valley. And Death Valley wasn't open then. They practically slid down the hill, following an old prospector who told them how to get there. It took them ten days to get in and out of Death Valley—those kinds of things! Now, you sweep down through Death Valley, with motels, and hotels; it just doesn't seem at all the thing.

I guess when you're young and you could do those things together and enjoy them together and so forth— We certainly had a lot of beautiful, beautiful trips. I remember many of them so well.

## TYPESCRIPT OF NOTES BY ELIZABETH ALLEN SWIFT

### President of the Caltech Women's Club 1929-1930

#### Part of talk prepared years earlier that dealt with two rebels, Upton Sinclair and Margaret Sanger

I began by saying that I have known two rebels. It happens that one was male and one female, so now the female gets her chance.

In discussing the male, the primary emphasis was on the effect of his early environment on his subsequent life. I will do the same for the female. Each of these rebels was strongly influenced by their early lives, but as I will point out later, there seem [to be] interesting differences in the source of the effects.

My female had written an autobiography and had many books written about her. My main source has been a biography which I chanced upon that is both terse yet comprehensive. It is entitled, *Margaret Sanger: Pioneer of Birth Control*, by [Lawrence] Lader and [Milton] Meltzer [published in 1969].

Because many of you are quite familiar with Margaret Sanger's struggles to advance both the techniques and legality of birth control, I will as with Upton, focus mainly on her early life.

But first I would like to digress and tell you about the chance events that led to my brief acquaintance with her. In about 1929, I happened to have been President of the Women's Club at Caltech. In planning for speakers for our meetings, I think that either Imra Buwalda or Helen Millikan [Clark Millikan's first wife] suggested Margaret Sanger, who was then in the LA area talking to women's clubs, sympathetic doctors, and anyone interested in forming Planned Parenthood groups. She accepted and subsequently invited Helen Millikan, Imra Buwalda and a few others to lunch in a home she and her second husband, Mr. [James Noah H.] Slee had rented in the San Rafael area [of Pasadena]. It was a pleasant and interesting experience because I began to realize her rare combination of feminine charm and strength of purpose that enabled her to fight the odds against her. After lunch she gave each of us an autographed copy of her book, *Happiness in Marriage* [published in 1926], which I had hoped to bring with me, but a search of my bookcase



only resulted in a mysterious disappearance. It developed that the purpose of her luncheon was to organize a committee to sell tickets and act as hostesses at a dinner to be given at a then popular Hollywood hotel. At this dinner, Helen Millikan [Clark Millikan's wife] presided and introduced Margaret to a large masculine audience. I sold tickets at the door—and felt very much a crusader for women's rights.

I believe the best way to give you a feeling for Margaret's early life will be to read some short excerpts from Lader and Meltzer's book. But first a brief statement from the Preface.

Now some excerpts from Chapter One, which is entitled, "A Houseful of Higgins."

Now from Chapter Two entitled, "Breaking Free." Because of time limitations these excerpts will have to give you an impression of her early life. If interested, there is much more information in this biography. For example, Chapter Eight is titled, "Woman Rebel."

Now, in concluding, I would like to say that when reflecting on the development of the early attitudes of these two persons, I sense that different influences were responsible. With Sinclair, the activating force was the contrast between the poverty of his home and the ostentatious wealth and snobbery of that of his relatives. It seems to me that the personal influence of his parents was minimal.

However, I think that Sanger's independence and crusading spirit was largely due to the influence of her father. The genetic factor could have been significant, but she could have hardly escaped being strongly influenced by his independence of thought and his efforts to inculcate a similar independence in his children. However, these are just my impressions and I leave you to draw your own conclusions.

After these thumbnail sketches of two extraordinary people, I ask you if Upton Sinclair and Margaret Sanger would not stand at the head of rebels of our times in the best sense of the word? Their lives and contributions made such an impact on the world that I thought it worthwhile to jog your memories with a bit of their history.

B-2 STAR-NEWS, PASADENA, SUNDAY, JANUARY 21, 1979

### *Evening of honor*

There were 130 friends, some of them former students and colleagues who'd come from as far away as New York, Michigan and Indiana, gathered at Caltech's Athenaeum a few eves ago to toast 81-year-old chemist Ernest H. Swift and his wife, Elizabeth, of San Marino.

Swift, a professor emeritus who taught at Caltech for 47 years, still comes to his campus office daily. He's a familiar figure on the tennis courts, both on and off campus, playing his "gentlemanly and diplomatic game" (in the words of crony Harry Gray, Caltech chemistry division chairman) several times a week.

Gray gave Swift a special tennis racquet made in the chemistry workshop in the form of a ringlike benzene molecule — it had a hole in the center. "Swift never uses the center of the racquet anyway," he told partygoers.

Humor was a large part of the evening arranged by the chemistry and chemical engineering division which Swift had chaired from 1958 to 1963.

In the gathering were Mrs. Swift, the former Elizabeth Allen of Pasadena whom the chemist married in 1921, three years after coming to what was then Throop Institute of Technology; their daughter, Mrs. Mortimer Kline of West Los Angeles, and their granddaughter, Sandra Kline.



**A PAUSE FOR A POSE**  
... Ernest, Elizabeth Swift at party.