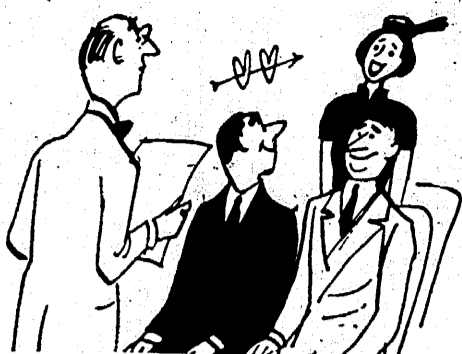


# She Rules The Nation



—Examiner Photo by Steve Essaff

Parliamentarian Alice Sturgis



AFTER A LONG PAUSE

In meetings, I love  
With a special devotion  
The person who finally  
Seconds my motion.

—From "Learning Parliamentary Procedure"

the course. To my horror, 525 students turned up.

"But it was fascinating and great fun. I had a real taste of it and did more teaching as I got my M.A. at Cal and my Ph.D. at Stanford."

The former Alice Fleenor married attorney Eugene K. Sturgis and had three children as she continued her parliamentary research. "I was writing a college textbook using some of Robert's rules when it dawned on me so many of them were unnecessary, emphasizing little tricks instead of big principles. Tricks are fun but they boomerang. Also Capt. Henry Robert, of the Civil War Army Engineer Corps, did not base his rules on law."

A series of books, "Texts of Parliamentary Procedure," "Learning Parliamentary Procedure," for high schools, and "Your Farm Bureau," to show a model organization plan, followed.

Light-hearted verses by Richard Armour, with cartoons by Leo Hershfield,

such as the one shown, gave her books a lift.

But "Sturgis Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure," first published in 1950 by McGraw Hill and now in a revised second edition, speedily became the

"bible" of the nation's organizations.

Former American Bar Association president David F. Maxwell hailed her for reversing the trend toward complication and marking "the return of parliamentary procedure to the field of law."

Working with the country's major organizations, Mrs. Sturgis flies off to one session on a ship — for the Seafarers' Union — or stays in her French-antique-filled home for a long-distance phone conference — to revise the bylaws of the Electrical Engineers. Always she pushes for simplicity and efficiency in serving changing social needs.

Her latest, and possibly greatest, contribution is the time-saving reference committee system. "Robert would say, 'Add another day to the convention,' but try to tell that to the Hilton or the airlines. Convention time, involving hundreds of reports and resolutions, is

costly — often \$45,000 a minute."

Under the Sturgis system — on which a new book will soon be out — advance committees are named, business divided, open hearings held with recommendations made at a closed committee

session. These are reported to the main body and only then is a vote taken.

"This is the democratic way. Even at the biggest meeting, everybody can have his say and the majority vote makes the final decision."

By Mildred Hamilton  
WHEN ANY group — whether it is the American Nudists' Association or the American Bar Association — has a parliamentary problem, the only expert with all the answers is a Piedmont housewife.

She is Alice Sturgis, the nation's No. 1 parliamentarian. With her "Sturgis Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure," this petite authority has pushed the circa 1878 Robert's "Rules of Order" into obscurity.

There's nothing personal in Mrs. Sturgis' takeover. "It's all for the good of the order," said the personable specialist, whose interest in the subject started in high school in Oakland. She has now invested 50 years seeking simplification and understanding of the rules by which a democracy functions.

"Writing on the principles of organization is my way of working for democracy," said the authority who pointed to the network of governments and volunteer associations that survive through

a code of rules and ethics for working together.

"Get 10 people together and organize — that's the American way. That's how this country runs. When we want to do something, we organize and go about it. Even the militants now follow this plan."

Mrs. Sturgis, who works with both the Democrats and the Republicans, attends at least 40 conventions a year and once averaged 140 a year. She's usually introduced as "the greatest living parliamentarian." "This," she said with a

grin in a recent interview, "is to demonstrate to people they can't play fast and loose with parliamentary law." Not with the president of the American Academy of Parliamentarians, whose advice is sought by the United Nations and the Girl Scouts.

"When I was a sophomore at Cal," she pinpointed the start of her career, "someone was needed to teach a summer session on parliamentary law. I boldly volunteered — I had a lot of nerve at that age — the dean accepted me and announced

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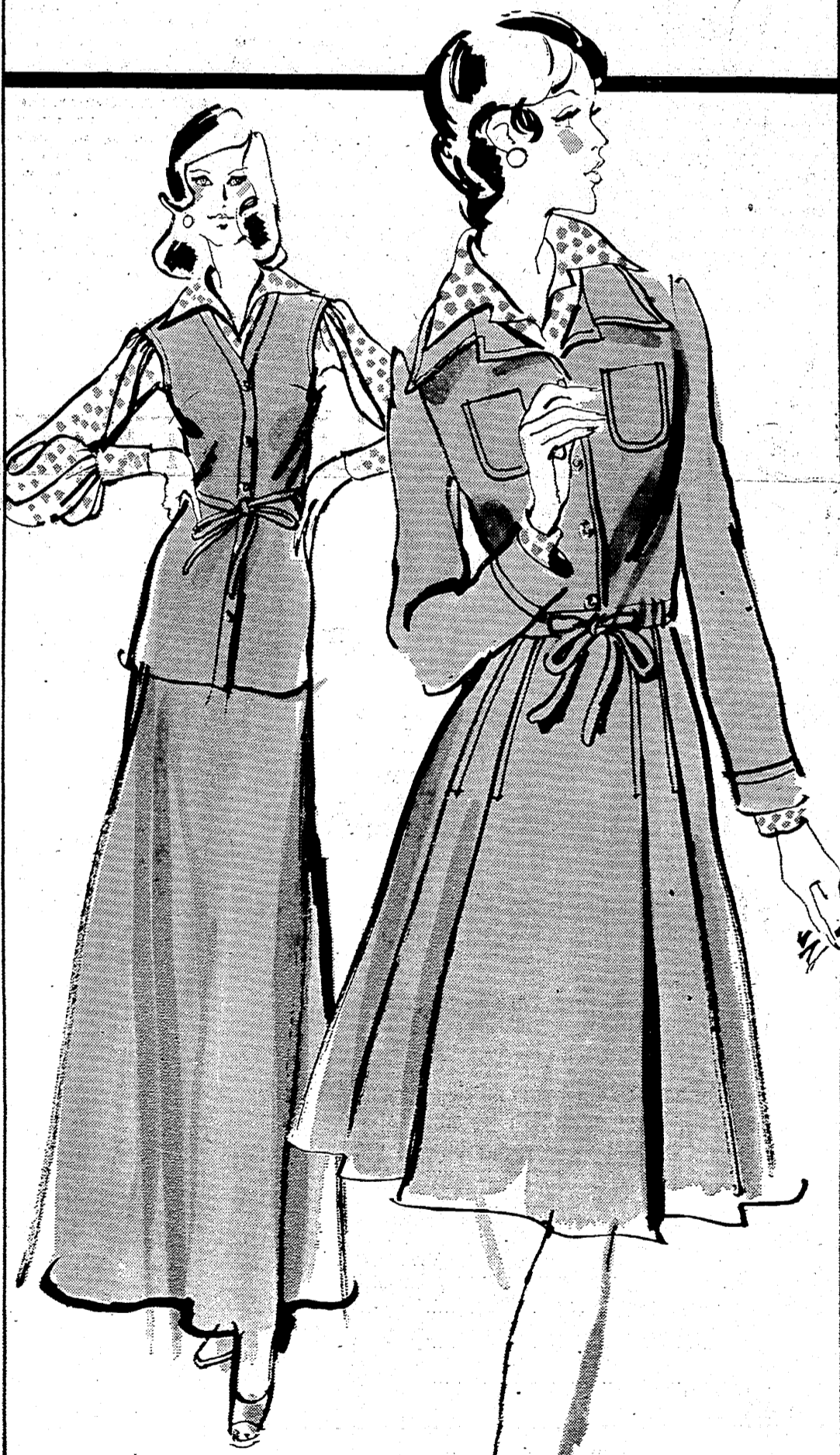
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