



‘Green Is Everyone’s Business’

That’s the motto of the infant U.S. Green Chamber of Commerce, led by Irene Berkowitz Stillings ’61.

By Karen McCally ’02 (PhD)

FOR EXACTLY 101 YEARS, THE U.S. CHAMBER OF Commerce has enjoyed a reputation as a widely accepted representative—some would say *the* representative—of the American business community.

But according to **Irene Berkowitz Stillings** ’61, the former executive director of the nonprofit California Center for Sustainable Energy, that reputation doesn’t capture

much of what’s going on in business today. There’s a “green industrial revolution” on the horizon, she says, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce has been slow to get on board.

“Most of them perceive their job as representing the needs of the business people in an advocacy role,” says Stillings of the branches of the Chamber she’s worked with in California. “And the advocacy role, particularly in California, is to fight against any additional regulations or taxes or mandates.

They don’t represent the businesses within their fold that make their living by helping others become more efficient, or who have, in fact, decided that they were going to be sustainable.”

In 2009, a number of high-profile businesses, including Nike, Apple, and Pacific Gas & Electric, left the Chamber in protest against the organization’s position against climate legislation. In San Diego County, a group spun off to become the Green Chamber of San Diego.

And in February 2011, the Green Chamber of San Diego, after forging alliances outside the state, renamed itself the U.S. Green

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targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions throughout California and a host of regulations to compel businesses, municipalities, and residents to meet them—Stillings seized on the opportunity to develop the office, which had supported the legislation, into a resource to help institutions comply with the new rules. In a few short years, the seven-person outfit, renamed the California Center for Sustainable Energy, had grown more than tenfold, offering courses, workshops, consulting, and other services to businesses, municipalities, and residents.

David Steel, CEO of the Green Chamber, says he “couldn’t be happier” to have Stillings at the helm of the infant organization.

“She took an organization that was very small, that nobody had heard of, and created something very powerful,” he said of her work at the center.

Gail Welch, the senior manager of sustainability at Qualcomm, a telecommunications firm that worked extensively with the center and now with the Green Chamber, notes that Stillings “knows how to engage people to bring about action.”

“She has a reputation for making things happen,” Welch says.

As for going national, Stillings says, “I think that the concept is ready to take off. Various kinds of green business organizations are popping up all over the country. The movement is very fragmented. And our purpose is to find a way to bring it together.”

Her commitment to environmentalism has been long-standing. “I remember reading Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* as that came out,” she says of the classic book, published in 1962, that many credit with helping launch the modern environmental movement. “I remember being horrified.”

Today, she’s equally clear about what motivates her. “I have nine grandchildren.”

So far, the Green Chamber has established branches in Texas and Florida and launched an initiative called the “100 Cities for Change” challenge to sell its mission and drum up membership. Stillings says the organization will focus on providing

resources and networking opportunities to help small- and medium-sized businesses develop sustainable practices.

“They’re the hardest people to convince that they should take action,” says Stillings. “And it’s for good reasons. A lot of the things that are going to make a business efficient and sustainable take some time and take some money.”

The goal of the Green Chamber, Stillings says, is to help business owners weigh financial, health, and environmental benefits in their decision-making processes.

Anyone who’s observed Stillings’s career over decades may recognize a pattern. In 1975, she got her first job in the energy industry as an assistant in customer service at New York State Electric & Gas. As a utility, it faced no competition. But Stillings drew the company’s attention to costs it hadn’t recognized: the time and money spent responding to customer complaints to the New York State Public Service Commission. Stillings collected and read customer comments. “We put on the back of the bill a place where they could write things. And it had been there before I came, but nobody ever looked at it,” she says. She used the comments as a springboard for a bimonthly report to management called “The Voice of the Customer,” which became a launching pad for new customer service initiatives.

By 1984, she’d been named an assistant vice president and by 1990, a vice president. Shortly after that, she retired—for the first time. She took on some private consulting projects and, her children grown and her friends retiring elsewhere, picked up with her husband, Tom, and moved to San Diego, the home of many of her clients, in 1999.

Rob Wilder, CEO of Wildershires, creator of a clean energy index, says she’s kept a bit of the East Coast with her. And that’s good, he thinks, for San Diego and for the organizations that she’s run.

“She’s got an East Coast persona,” says Wilder, a native of Baltimore. “We’re not as laid back as Californians. We tend to get to the point.” **B**

Chamber of Commerce, launching its campaign to go national.

Leading that charge is Stillings, who several people associated with the Green Chamber say is uniquely suited for the task. In 2002, she left the corporate world to become the executive director of a small nonprofit called the San Diego Regional Energy Office. In 2006, when then Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed into law the Global Warming Solutions Act—a bill establishing

▲ GREEN LEADER: Stillings, the new president of the U.S. Green Chamber of Commerce, founded in 2011, is an experienced and effective institution builder as well as an energy industry veteran, colleagues say.



What Time Is It?

It's complicated, says anthropologist Kevin Birth '85.

Interview by Karen McCally '02 (PhD)

ASK **KEVIN BIRTH** '85 WHAT TIME IT IS, AND he just may give you a history of the watch.

Birth is a professor of anthropology at Queens College, City University of New York. He's been studying time since he was a graduate student at the University of California at San Diego more than 20 years ago.

While the 24-hour clock and the Gregorian calendar are nearly universal, how people experience time differs substantially across cultures. Some societies are more dependent on timekeeping devices than others—and perhaps none more so than ours.

In his most recent book, *Objects of Time: How Things Shape Temporality* (Palgrave Macmillan), Birth explores the ways in which timekeeping devices such as clocks and calendars are only approximately

▲ **COUNTING THE HOURS?** Birth, a Queens College anthropologist, says it's misguided to measure productivity in terms of clock hours, or “the assumption that one hour is equivalent to any other hour.”

related to the astronomical cycles they purport to reflect. Moreover, he argues, we've allowed them to “think for us,” organizing our lives in ways we might not realize with consequences we don't fully understand.

What is a clock actually measuring?

Your clock is measuring something called the International System second. And that second is defined by an atomic standard. Now you take 86,400 of those seconds and you get something that is roughly like what's called the mean solar day, a solar day being the time it takes for the Earth to rotate 360 degrees on its axis.

So the 24-hour clock does not actually correspond to a 360-degree rotation of the Earth on its axis?

No. The 24-hour day is an approximation, not an exact measurement, of a single rotation of the Earth on its axis. Imagine the Earth spinning in space, and imagine it moving in its orbit at the same time. The orientation toward the sun has shifted slightly from one day to the next. So in fact

only four days a year are even approximately equal to 24 hours.

How does my clock account for the variation?

There is something called the leap second, which occurs about every 18 months. But as we speak, the international regulatory agency in charge of these sorts of policies is considering dropping the leap second, at which point there would be no relationship between clock time and rotational time.

In what ways do we allow our clocks, as you say, to “think for us”?

We've allowed our clocks to dictate the organization of our daily lives, even as we're diurnal mammals whose hormonal cycles are tied to light. We need so much sleep, and we need to sleep at a particular time—basically, night. But we no longer develop our schedules in relationship to daylight. We go to bed based on clock time. And most of us use an alarm to wake up in the morning. So we're getting up at the same time of day regardless of the amount of daylight. And

we're going to bed at the same time of day regardless of the amount of daylight. And what often determines when we're going to bed is not how tired we are, but when our shifts end, which is defined by the clock, or when that television program we want to see ends, which is defined by the clock, or when some evening meeting ends, which is defined by the clock.

How might we think differently about time?

We can think of it in terms of points of time, or timing. The people with whom I worked in rural Trinidad, for example, displayed a lot of sensitivity to the timing of things. Not the duration so much, not the clock time so much, but the right order in which to do things, or the optimum time for doing something. They use clocks—the same clocks we do. But they have this sense that not all activities can be adequately represented by minutes and hours. Certain activities take more time if you do them at the wrong time. And you can't necessarily measure work in terms of a clock hour. You definitely can't measure productivity in terms of a clock hour. Yet we've created a work regimen; we've created an educational regimen; we've created all sorts of things based on this assumption that one hour is equivalent to any other hour.

Doesn't globalization compel even more reliance on the clock?

Yes. But one of the ironies of this age of globalization is that we're increasingly compelled to ignore the fact that we live on a rotating globe. In globalization, we erase the globe. We just deny its existence.

What are some of the most worrisome consequences?

Some of the most famous accidents—like Three Mile Island, Chernobyl, Union Carbide, Exxon Valdez—are all in that period of night when, as daylight mammals, we're worst in our functioning ability.

What can be done?

A lot of us are in positions where we don't have the ability to make choices for ourselves. The boss says this is what we need to do. In order to be competitive, we need to be up at three in the morning for the opening bell of a European stock exchange. For those of us who can, the more we can learn to control our schedules and defend what's good for our minds and bodies, the better off we are. **R**

In the News

AND THE WINNERS ARE . . .

Eastman School alumni **Renée Fleming** '83E (MM) and **Robert (Bob) Ludwig** '66E, '01E (MM) walked away winners at the 55th annual Grammy Awards in Los Angeles in February. Fleming was awarded Best Classical Vocal Solo for *Poèmes*, her album of four French orchestral song cycles, and Ludwig received a Grammy for his role as mastering engineer on *Babel*, by Mumford & Sons, which was named Album of the Year.



Renée Fleming

Bob Ludwig

WHO'S WITH THE WHO?

Hornist **J. Greg (J. G.) Miller** '06E served as the brass section leader on the Who's "Quadrophenia and More Tour" from November 2012 to February as well as during the band's performance at the "12-12-12" benefit concert for the victims of Hurricane Sandy, held at Madison Square Garden last December.

For the past several years, Miller has been an active freelance teacher and performer in the Los Angeles area while working toward his doctor of musical arts degree at the University of Southern California. He's performed on film scores for *Parental Guidance*, *The Amazing Spider-Man*, *Snow White and the Huntsman*, as well as *Oblivion* and *Monsters University*, both to be released later this year.

Most recently, Miller has won a place in the U.S. Army Field Band. He'll begin later this year, after completing a course of basic combat training.

ENERGY SECRETARY CHU RETURNS TO ACADEMIA

Steven Chu '70, who served as secretary of energy during the first term of President Barack Obama, resigned in January in order to return to academia. A Nobel laureate who studied mathematics and physics at Rochester, Chu served on the faculty of the University of California at Berkeley and led the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory prior to joining the first Obama administration.

An avid proponent of wind and solar energy, Chu made the pursuit of clean, renewable energy sources the centerpiece of the department's agenda. In a statement, Obama said, "As a Nobel Prize-winning scientist, Steve brought to the Energy Department a unique understanding of both the urgent challenge presented by climate change and the tremendous opportunity that clean energy represents for our economy."



MR. SECRETARY: Appointed at the start of President Barack Obama's first term, Chu served as energy secretary until January, when he announced plans to return to academia.