The fall Visiting Committee meeting was held on October 21, 2009, at the Quadrangle Club, with Yorke Rowan giving a presentation on his current Galilee Prehistory Project in Israel. Cocktails and dinner followed the meeting.

The spring meeting was held on May 3, 2010, at the Fortnightly Club in downtown Chicago, thanks to our host Carlotta Maher. Two faculty guest speakers attended the meeting: Nadine Moeller presented on her excavations at Tell Edfu, Egypt, and Chris Woods provided a preview of the upcoming special exhibit on the origins of writing, which he is guest curating.

We had a number of changes to the makeup of the Visiting Committee at the end of the year. Jim Sopranos will step down as Visiting Committee Chair but remain on the Executive Committee. Throughout his tenure, Jim has provided us with the firm leadership, guidance, and support needed to successfully run the Visiting Committee and Oriental Institute programs. We look forward to continuing to rely on Jim’s advice and support in the coming years.
Harvey Plotnick was appointed as a new Visiting Committee member and will serve as our new Chair. Harvey Plotnick was President and CEO of Paradigm Holdings, Inc., until his retirement in 2007. He was formerly President and CEO of Molecular Electronics Co., and previously he founded and was President and CEO of Contemporary Books, Inc., which was one of the largest publishers of adult basic-education instructional materials in the United States. A 1963 graduate in English literature from the University of Chicago, Plotnick has chaired a number of its major fund-raising campaigns, including the $650 million Campaign for the Next Century, which ended in 1996. He chaired the College and Student Activities Visiting Committee and was a member of the Alumni Association’s Board of Governors and Chair of the College Visiting Committee. Plotnick has been a member of Argonne’s Board of Governors since 2001. He is also a member, since 1994, of the University of Chicago’s Board of Trustees. He and his wife endowed the Elizabeth and Harvey Plotnick Scholarship fund for undergraduate students, as well as a fund for graduate students in the Physical Sciences at the University. Please join us in welcoming Harvey to the Visiting Committee.

Patrick Regnery and Mary Shea will be leaving the Visiting Committee this year, and I hope you will join us in thanking them for their many contributions to the Oriental Institute.

Lastly, Janet Helman received special recognition this year as a Life Member of the Visiting Committee. This is in honor of her many years of support for the Oriental Institute both financially and in her role as Docent and volunteer. Congratulations to Janet on this wonderful honor.

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The Oriental Institute Visiting Committee 2009–2010

O. J. Sopranos*, Chair

Marilyn Alsdorf  
Kathleen G. Beavis  
Guity Nashat Becker  
Gretel Braidwood*  
Alan R. Brodie  
Andrea Dudek  
Emily Huggins Fine  
Dr. Marjorie M. Fisher  
Margaret E. Foorman  
Joan Fortune  
Isak V. and Nancy Gerson  
Margaret H. Grant  
Lewis and Misty Gruber  
Howard G. Haas  
Deborah Halpern  
Thomas C. Heagy*  
Janet W. Helman*  
Arthur L. Herbst*, MD  
Doris B. Holleb*  
Neil J. King  

David Kipper  
Daniel and Lucia Woods Lindley  
Jill Carlotta Maher*  
Janina Marks  
John W. McCarter, Jr.  
Kathleen Picken  
Crennan M. Ray  
Patrick Regnery  
John W. Rowe*  
Robert G. Schloerb  
Lois M. Schwartz*  
Mary Shea  
Toni Smith  
Norman Solikhah  
Mari Terman  
Walter Vandaele  
Marjorie K. Webster*  
Anna M. White  
Nicole Williams

*denotes Life Member
Remembering Rita Picken

This year also marked the passing of Rita Picken, a true friend and generous supporter of the Oriental Institute.

Rita showed her love for the Oriental Institute not only through her involvement with the Docent program for over thirty years but also through her sponsorship of the Robert F. Picken Family Nubia Gallery and the recent special exhibit The Life of Meresamun: A Temple Singer in Ancient Egypt. At our 90th Anniversary gala in 2009, the Institute honored Rita with the James Henry Breasted Medallion — the highest honor that we give our Members and supporters to recognize their service and commitment.

Rita and her daughter, Kitty Picken, have been part of the fabric of the Institute for decades; Rita saw the people in the Oriental Institute community as a second family. She will be greatly missed.

In memory of her mother Rita, Kitty Picken and the Oriental Institute announced the endowment of the Rita T. Picken Professorship in Ancient Near Eastern Art, which will be supported by a $3.5 million gift from Kitty. The professorship will enhance the work of the Oriental Institute by adding a faculty member whose expertise in ancient art will complement the Institute’s strengths in languages and archaeology. The endowment of this professorship is a fitting tribute to Rita’s love of art history and will be historic, given that it is only the second endowed chair in the Oriental Institute’s ninety-year history.

In closing, we at the Oriental Institute thank you all for your continued support as Donors and Members. Your contributions help keep the Oriental Institute at the forefront of research and scholarship of the ancient Middle East.

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