

# Woman quietly takes helm of 103-year-old club in SF

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Delores Homisak with her children, Elizabeth and Erik Iverson. Beth Spotswood

Delores Homisak didn't make a big deal about it in her speech on Saturday night, Jan. 19, but she was making history. The 61-year-old Belmont resident simply took the

microphone at the Verdi Club's monthly dinner dance and detailed the club's ambitious goals for the coming year. Wearing a sequined navy dress and holding a bouquet of roses, Homisak had just been inducted as the first female president of the Verdi Club in its 103-year history. The milestone wasn't mentioned once in her remarks.

Breaking barriers is nothing new for Homisak. In eighth grade, she was suspended from her Pennsylvania middle school for wearing pants — specifically bell bottoms. The move was a sartorial protest against the public school's skirts-only policy, one the young Homisak felt needed to be changed. Years later, in 2013, Homisak applied to become the first female member of the Verdi Club, the century-old Italian social club in a fabulous old-school venue just off Potrero Avenue.

Homisak, an executive at Visa in Foster City, first attended the club as part of her ballroom dance class, a fact that is one of the many very likable things about her. Homisak possesses a quiet confidence, a rare quality that allows her to succeed in business and leadership roles while also showing up to her first ballroom dance class alone and agreeing to join a very old all-male club. After all, a number of the club's oldest members were staunchly opposed to the inclusion of women.

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"There were definitely people who were against it, but I think they've seen over time the benefit of it," Homisak said. "I think people realize the importance of new blood."

As part of her application, Homisak had to stand in front of a group of 12 men and explain why she wanted to join the Verdi Club as opposed to its Women's Auxiliary. Approved for membership, Homisak was the first of about 20 women who've now joined the Verdi Club, likely dropping the club's average age by a good two decades. Now that other women can follow in Homisak's footsteps, the club's Women's Auxiliary has since disbanded.

The amateur ballroom dancer soon found herself on the club's board of directors, taking on a variety of officer roles before Saturday's induction as the club's president. She plans to focus her tenure on growing membership, citizenship and stewardship of the Verdi Club's gorgeous venue.

Barney Glaser, 93, has been a member of the club for nearly 50 years and served as the club's president twice. He was seated at one of the 11 formal dinner tables set up in the Verdi Club's vintage ballroom. Glaser was casually open-

minded when sharing his thoughts on the club's first female president.

"Hey, why not?" he said with a shrug and a smile.

"Everything has changed throughout the years, whether you like it or not."

I asked Homisak if any of the dozens of club members milling about us in the club's bar area were opposed to her reign. She casually looked around, possibly for someone specific, and never really pointed anyone out. If a detractor was in our midst, Homisak didn't seem to care. One past club president, Homisak recalled, was vocal about his initial disapproval. He later apologized and admitted he had been wrong.

Before the induction, dinner and dancing began, Homisak introduced me to her proud children, 28-year-old Elizabeth Iverson and 25-year-old Erik Iverson. Both had flown in for the occasion and both, like their mother, were smart and friendly. Elizabeth noted that, appropriately, the induction fell on the same day as the Women's March.

The threesome posed for a photo in front of a list of the Verdi Club's past presidents. Naturally the list was exclusively male, and many on it had great, long Italian names. We wondered how those long-gone past presidents would feel about Delores Homisak's name soon to join their

ranks.

Again, I don't know that Homisak would be deterred by what someone else thinks. She isn't taking on the role of the club's president because she wants to make a point. Homisak plans to bring her skills and energy to this role just as dozens of club presidents have done before her. She simply hopes to open the doors of the Verdi Club a little wider.

"We are open and anxious to welcome new members," Homisak said of the club she now leads, "of all shapes, sizes, colors and creeds."

*Beth Spotswood's column appears Thursdays in Datebook.*  
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