

**A CONTINUATION
OF THE HISTORY OF THE
UNIVERSITY ARTS WOMEN'S CLUB
2000 – 2020**

Compiled and Written

By

Sue Russell

Foreword

This is the third history to be written about the University Arts Women's Club (UAWC). This volume covers the years 2000 to 2020, while the first two cover the years written by Helen P. B. Smith, from 1929 until 1974, and 1975 to 1999. All three volumes are available on our website, <https://uawc.artsci.utoronto.ca>, as well as being archived at the University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services.

The year 2019 marks the 90th anniversary of UAWC and the executive felt that a brief history should mark such a special date. I was asked and agreed to write a brief summary of the highlights of the past two decades.

This short history has been augmented by some members who have added their memories, sincere thoughts, and feelings about their favourite Club.

I have used the same format for this third chapter of our history as Helen Smith used in her histories.

Sue Russell

Introduction

During the past two decades much has been accomplished in fulfilling the purpose of our Club, as described by Lady Falconer, wife of Sir Robert Falconer, President of the University, in 1929:

“...the formation of a club for wives of professors and members of staff not affiliated with any college, faculty or special department. The main purpose was to be that of mutual acquaintance which would be just as profitable to older members as to younger.”

As time passes, changes are inevitable. In recent years we have seen alterations in our membership, a reduction in the number of monthly general meetings, and modifications to our interest groups. We have maintained most of our traditions but taken full advantage of the computer systems of e-mailing and websites. Financially, we continue to benefit from annual donations from the Office of the Dean at the Faculty of Arts and Science and from our members and benefactors. But most importantly, in this year of our 90th anniversary, we have amalgamated with our “sister” organization, University of Toronto Women’s Association (UTWA).

Christmas Party

For many years, our members have enjoyed the annual Christmas Party held at the University of Toronto (U of T) President’s beautiful house. The traditional evening time has been changed to a lunch party to accommodate elderly members who prefer to go out in the afternoon. Until recently the meals have been provided by our Gourmet Lunch interest group and latterly by an informal committee with the help of many active and talented members. But for the past three years we have benefited from a complimentary lunch provided by Delmanor Retirement Living, Don Mills.

The very worn out Christmas Carol books have been replaced by shorter, easier to read versions of the most popular carols prepared by our current piano accompanist, Christine McClymont. Depending on the weather, we expect a maximum of 50 members to attend. We are greatly indebted to the President’s wife, also our Honorary President, for allowing us to enjoy her home every year.

Changing Times

Our interest groups, established many years ago, still play a necessary role in maintaining and supporting our mandate. Although the French and German Conversation, Bridge, and Outings groups gradually folded, we have maintained the Antiques and Art Appreciation, Gourmet Lunch, Reading Club, and Theatre-going groups. Any costs required by the interest groups are paid by those members involved.

“Faculty Wives”, as the group for whom we exist, are a thing of the past, and so we have had to open our membership. Our constitution has changed to include female senior administrators, faculty members, and alumnae. Under certain circumstances friends of full members are invited to join an interest group if they pay the going fee.

The changing times have raised the cost of everything. Our fees have jumped to \$45.00 annually. This covers the price of our three or four lunches with speakers as well as some of the costs incurred by our Annual General Meeting (AGM).

The AGM is held at the Spring Luncheon in the dining room of The Faculty Club, of which many of our UAWC are members. After lunch, the business of the year is quickly dealt with, and followed by a “lucky draw” of books donated by the U of T Press. The speaker of the day, selected by the Programme Convenor, gives a talk of interest to all. Some of the recent AGM speakers include Eva Stachniak, Canadian novelist; Peter Russell, Political Scientist at U of T; Luba Goy, Canadian actress and comedian; and the Honorable R. Roy McMurtry, retired Attorney General. Both the Christmas lunch and AGM lunch are paid for by the attendees.

Our membership, which originally stemmed from the wives of Faculty from Arts and Science, now includes the U of T community and their friends. Working women have little time or interest in the programmes that UAWC used to organize. Retired women have the experience, skills and knowledge gained through employment which they bring to our meetings and to our executive committee.

Amalgamation of UAWC and UTWA

The greatest change experienced by UAWC in 2019 was the amalgamation of the Club with the University of Toronto Women’s Association (UTWA). UTWA was founded in 1982 by Marjorie Ivey with the goal of fostering “fellowship in the overall university community” and of “welcoming both administrative and Faculty staff as members.” A decade later, the idea of amalgamating the two women’s Clubs began to be discussed. The merger of two women’s Clubs on the U of T campus was suggested and rejected three times! The idea was not acceptable to either executive in the 1990’s, in 2003, nor again in 2010.

One big problem holding back the merger of the two Clubs was the issue of differing financial structures. UTWA evolved as a fundraising organization whose members were volunteers, while UAWC was an educational and social Club to which members paid fees. There seemed to be no way to solve this conundrum.

A big factor that eventually encouraged amalgamation was declining membership in both Clubs. This caused a shortage of volunteers able to serve on the executives. When Kirsteen McLean agreed in 2019 to chair a committee to explore the idea of amalgamation once again, progress was made. After several hard-working meetings, the committee produced a blueprint which was acceptable to both executives.

The vote by the membership on the new Constitution of the amalgamation was held online in March 2020, for this was the year of the COVID-19 pandemic and in-person meetings were prohibited. The final vote was 100% in agreement. Now in 2020, after a year and a half of discussion, planning, and voting with the membership, the amalgamation of the two women’s Clubs has been achieved.

Fundraising and Charitable Donations

UAWC For many years, UAWC members supported the University Settlement House, but we are no longer directly engaged in this kind of charitable activity. Instead, current UAWC Presidents choose a range of different charities for our support. We invite a representative from the chosen organization to join us at the annual Christmas Party and talk about their activities. In 2019, for example, President Gay Thomson picked out St. Stephen's Community House. Their Executive Director, Bill Sinclair, explained, "We serve the neighbourhood by offering care and support to children, youths, seniors, and newcomers, as well as providing housing services and many more." After listening to his presentation our members made generous donations (with the promise of receiving a tax receipt for a gift of \$20.00 or more). Mr. Sinclair returned to his office with donations totalling \$680.00.

UTWA For over two decades, UTWA members enhanced their fundraising efforts by selling roses. From 1986 until 2016, UTWA raised well over \$100,000, mainly through the sale of the roses at convocation. Some UAWC members assisted in the preparation of the flowers. Many of us from both Clubs remember fondly the industrious but social times we spent arranging beautiful roses. Money that was raised was donated to the University for student scholarships and bursaries. It has been invested, and the interest accrued is awarded annually to designated students in twelve Faculties. Investment of the endowments is handled by the University, and individual departments designate the recipients.

UTWA's tradition was to invite scholarship winners from the Faculty of Music to entertain members at its AGM. In 2019, at the amalgamated meeting of UAWC and UTWA at our Christmas Party, we were joined by six scholarship winners including Maeve Palmer, soprano, and piano accompanist Vlad Soloviev. They presented two arias for our enjoyment. This recital was followed by our traditional carol sing led by Lorna Teare and assisted by Maeve Palmer with Christine McClymont at the piano.

Programmes Reflect the Times

The speakers we invite to our lunches are always highly entertaining or provocative. Currently they are invited to address the Club by the Programme Convenor, Christine McClymont. Our speakers are not always Faculty members, as was the tradition at the outset, but are professionals in their subject and frequently well known public figures. Some of our recent popular speakers were Emeritus Prof. Bill Found, Geography and Environmental Studies at York University; Alison Mackay, long-time first Double Bass Player in Tafelmusik; and Rev. Dr. Cheri DiNovo, a well-respected MPP.

For the past 50 years we have held our general lunch meetings in the Parish Hall of St. Thomas's Church. The renovated kitchen suits our needs beautifully, as we serve tea, coffee, sandwiches and desserts to as many as 40 members and guests. Our stand-up lunches have become "sit down if necessary" meals. Colourful tablecloths invite those who wish, to sit down. Our delectable pastries have been supplied by our exceptional baker, Shirley Zaky, for 29 years.

Getting the Word Out

The skills of our younger colleagues have enabled UAWC to communicate with our members, as well as the rest of the world, on the Internet. We are no longer dependent on the post office, nor do we have to lick stamps to send newsletters to our membership. Our website, <https://uawc.artsci.utoronto.ca>, contains historical essays, a page to welcome new members, and announcements of the annual programme of events. We also advertise our Club through the retirement package which all Faculty and administrators receive, and a flyer we distribute to The Faculty Club and Senior College to attract new members.

Contents of the Moving Tent

Although we haven't moved locales in the past 50 years, our possessions have expanded. When the Parish Hall at St. Thomas's Church was renovated about 10 years ago, we had to remove our precious silver tea sets and table linens from the storage cupboards in the Parish Hall. These have been stored in the homes of members and are brought out when needed. The large silver tea and coffee urns are used at the Christmas Party, and the smaller pieces come to the lunch meetings in the Parish Hall. The church will soon be undergoing a complete renovation, so we will be seeking a new home for them and our meetings some time soon.

Reminiscences of the University Arts Women's Club

Barbara Manchester (2019)

All I can say is that I felt honoured to be asked to serve the Club as President and I had a most interesting and fulfilling year performing the functions required.

My fellow Executive members were wonderful, helpful and enterprising, and I felt that all our speakers for the meetings were much appreciated by the group. I believe the last UAWC Dinner and Dance we organized was well-attended and enjoyed by everybody at The Faculty Club.

Of course, it is the individual members of the Club of whom I have the most memories. I could talk about many people whom I met, both at meetings and in the French and German conversation groups to which I belonged. But if I talked about some, many of whom had the most interesting or difficult backgrounds, I would unfairly leave out others. I can only add that belonging to UAWC and meeting all the members was one of the most inspiring and rewarding times of my life.

Margaret Blair (2019)

A major change I noticed during my time was the radical broadening of the programmes under Nancy Young. The general meetings became much more interesting and fun. I remember the one for Peter Robinson, the mystery writer whom I had suggested. He was speaking on his birthday, so Shirley Zaky made a cake and decorated it with miniatures of his books. Also, we have been able to help those widowed by lending them Betty Jane Wylie's book *Beginnings: A Book for Widows*.

Judie Arrowood (2019)

The Club was very important to me as a young wife in a strange country. Lila Delury's leadership in the '60s was instrumental. There was a large influx of new professors during this time. I attended the Christmas Party and Spring Luncheon as often as possible. The singing at the Christmas Party is still important, as mentioned in previous histories. Speakers at the Spring Lunch have always been excellent. Speakers and programmes at Thursday's general meetings have continued to be impressive. The one that made the longest lasting impression on me was presented by the costume producers at the Canadian Opera Company in approximately 2017-18. Since we stopped supporting the University Settlement, a selected charity each year introduces us to needs in the community.

Maureen Rudzik (2019)

In my husband's retirement package was an invitation for his spouse to join UAWC, so I thought that I would try it. The very first presentation which I attended was on October 18, 2001, when Dominico Pietropaulo presented *Politics and Culture in the Silver Age of Venice*, and I was hooked. When I was asked to be programme convener I responded with pleasure.

The members of UAWC were accustomed to hearing from superb speakers and I wanted to continue bringing them the "cutting edge of research" here at the University of Toronto and beyond.

For five years I was able to engage such remarkable speakers as Nobel Prize winner John Polanyi. Professor Robert Abrahams presented *The Big Bang Theory* and Michael Wilson, U of T Chancellor, spoke to us about mental health issues that affect aging people. We were lucky to end the year with the Honorable R. Roy McMurtry's talk about his rewarding life in the public sphere. My 20 years of membership in UAWC have been wonderfully rewarding and far exceeded my expectations.

Helen Myers (2002)

UAWC gave me and all of us friendship, inspiration, and a sense of belonging to the University of Toronto. I have many fond memories of the years since I joined as a young bride in 1932.

Acknowledgments

Both UAWC and UTWA have thrived through the past 20 years due to the dedicated and enthusiastic hard work of its members. The newly merged organizations, known now as the University Arts Women's Club/University of Toronto Women's Association, will continue to thrive. We welcome the support of the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, who provided \$800.00 to support the launch of our combined organization. In addition, the financial support that both Clubs have received from our members and donors has assured the continuation of the two Clubs. Our united mandate is still to promote "mutual acquaintance" among its members.

Appendix

List of UAWC Possessions

5 lace tablecloths
2 large white tablecloths
1 red tablecloth
2 aluminum pitchers
2 sets of silver sugar bowls and creamers
2 small silver trays
1 small brass bell
2 large tea and coffee urns
2 silver trays and urns
1 shallow silver bowl - about 10" diameter
1 Gavel

UAWC Presidents 2000 - 2020

2000-2001	Marguerite Hunt	2010-2011	Gloria Seaquist
2001-2002	Sue Russell	2011-2012	Jean Fennell
2002-2003	Dr. Beth Bentley	2012-2013	Lorna Teare
2003-2004	Margaret Blair	2013-2014	Anne McLean
2004-2005	Nancy Young	2014-2015	Sue Russell
2005-2006	Dr. Catherine Ukas	2015-2016	Patricia Nevins
2006-2007	Dr. Maureen Rudzik	2016-2017	Christine McClymont
2007-2008	Lorna Teare	2017-2018	Maggy Stepanian
2008-2009	Joan Winter	2018-2019	Maggy Stepanian
2009-2010	Barbara Harrison	2019-2020	Gay Thomson