

## HAPPY 60<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY TO THE FACULTY WOMEN'S CLUB

By Eleanor Wernette

Sixty years ago, on October 26, 1921, a beautiful fall day, Mrs. Marion LeRoy Burton, wife of the then president of the University of Michigan, gathered together fifty women – wives of deans, administrative officers, department heads and professors – to consider forming a Faculty Women's Club similar to one functioning at the University of Minnesota. On that auspicious October day, the Faculty Women's Club of the University of Michigan was born in the president's house at 815 South University. Then as now the purpose of the Club was to promote acquaintance and friendship among its members.

Mrs. Burton was elected the first president and served for four years, the longest term of any president. Since 1921, there have been 44 presidents, most of whom have served two-year terms, but in 1959 the term of the president was changed to one year, with a previous year as president-elect.

What can you say about 60 years of club activities? The answer is “It takes a stack of tea cups for 60 years of talk!”

A quick look back over the years shows a few changes – dues were \$1 in 1921, \$5 in 1981; three interest sections were formed in the first few months, 67 exist in 1981; and the original group of 50 members is over 1,000 today, having reached a peak of 1,638 paid members in the year 1968-69. The activity within the sections stretches from Art to Yoga currently. Think of the fun these women have enjoyed over six decades hiking, painting, acting, cooking, reading-and-reviewing, bridging, antiquing, touring, investing, dancing, golfing, tennising, hostessing, teeing, and laughing with friends.

The FWC was designed so that wives and women faculty members could get acquainted and share similar interests, and make close friends in the small groups. Each section from the beginning has permitted a limited number of guest members from the community creating a Town and Gown atmosphere.

The Newcomers Section has been one of the most important groups since 1926. Resident wives who are available to provide information about the University and living in the Ann Arbor area warmly greet new wives and

women faculty. Information by faculty wives can help new arrivers with doctor, lawyer, merchant and schools. This friendly approach in early September makes Newcomers feel welcome as they settle into the Ann Arbor area.

At the other end of the spectrum from Newcomers, there is a Longtimers group, which is of more recent origin and consists of members who have been active for many years in the FWC. The Golden Members are very “special” since their group includes women who have belonged to the club for 50 years.

Over the years the minutes of the FWC bring up the problem of “Where will the club meet? Where will the sections meet?” It is an on-going discussion and the reason the sections are often limited in size is to accommodate them to meeting in homes. In the early years, the University provided a red brick house on South Ingalls where Burton Tower now sends forth its carillon music. However, when the Michigan League was completed in the spring of 1929, the FWC shortly moved its activities to the League rooms. Even today most of the main events are held in the League, but the meetings of the Board of Directors of the club are held monthly at Inglis House.

The Faculty Women’s Club progressed through the twinkling twenties and then met the challenge of the depression years of the 1930’s by seeing membership rise to 468 in 1940. Then World War II emptied the campus for five years, but following 1945 the G.I. Bill of Rights brought veterans to the campus. A brief statistic to show this: In 1945 there were 11,800 students at the University while one year later there were 19,000 students. How the University grew – more students, more professors, more exciting courses and more building! And the FWC was nearing 1,000 in membership by 1950.

There was a surge of interest in “theater” as the club’s wives and husbands joined to produce “Cabaret Extraordinaire”. Then came three years of Faculty Follies – 1951, 1952, 1953 – and an Anniversary Skit in 1961 “40 Years in Song and Rhyme.” There was a mood for parties and the FWC and the Men’s University Club joined for Holiday Teas several years in the men’s club library at the Michigan Union. What a switch these teas were: the men wearing boutonnieres served at the tea tables pouring tea and passing cakes! The last joint FWC – University Club party was a welcome to the Flemings when they came to the Campus in February of

1968. Those were great years and many professor and administrator trod the boards.

Faculty-Alumni Dances were sponsored by the Faculty Women's Club for many, many years and both Town and Gown turned out to "trip the light fantastic". The bands were exceptionally good and the candlelit Michigan Union ballroom added magic to the gathering of happy couples. There were small parties all over Ann Arbor prior to the drop of the baton at 9 p.m. Not until the mid 1970's did enthusiasm for the dances wane.

At the time of the FWC Golden Anniversary, celebrated at the Annual Spring Luncheon in 1972, the club received "A RESOLUTION HONORING THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN FACULTY WOMEN'S CLUB" from the House of Representatives of the State of Michigan, which ends with this RESOLVED:

*"That the University of Michigan Faculty Women's Club by accorded unanimous tribute by the Michigan House of Representatives in recognition of its half century of promoting fellowship among faculty women and wives of faculty members, and further join in wishing the members of the University of Michigan Faculty Women's Club continued growth and accomplishment as they celebrate their Golden Anniversary. (Adopted by the House April 11, 1972).*

The years often bring delightful surprises! In 1977, former President Gerald Ford was here on Campus giving courses and the Faculty Women's Club had the privilege of asking his wife, Betty Ford, to become an honorary member. She accepted and was asked to be guest of honor at the April Annual Luncheon. The chairman of the Luncheon had difficulty keeping up with reservations. However, at the last minute, Betty couldn't make it. Disappointment reigned until the silver-lining department pointed out that our club treasury benefited EMORMOUSLY: You have to be a paid member of the club to make a luncheon reservation!

The Faculty Women's Club in 1974 was delighted when asked to join the Senate Advisory Committee on University Affairs (SACUA) as co-hosts of the State of the University Address and Reception. Husband and wife teams help seat the audience for the meetings and ladle punch following the reception.

In recent years the Faculty Women's Club has sponsored four main gatherings a year: the fall membership tea when sometimes as many as 700 women come to greet friends and join sections, a reception before the

holiday break, a mid-winter dinner-dance, and the annual spring luncheon.

The 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the club was celebrated at the April 1981 Annual Luncheon. Six models representing the decades from 1920 to 1980 brought back the styles of these years. Historic memorabilia of the 60 years were displayed on 12 large panels in the Vandenberg Room of the League. Featured were pictures of various club events through the years; past FWC presidents and University presidents; the President's House – birthplace of the club in 1921; U M families past and assorted news articles about FWC events. April 15, 1981 was a very special day with a wonderful celebration to which twenty-one past presidents of FWC came.

True, what's to come is still unsure,  
But lift your glass-don't be demure.  
Each challenge meet. If you don't blow it,  
At 70, the Club won't show it.