



FWC History The 1940s

World War II changed life at the University of Michigan. As men- and some women- joined the armed services, enrollment gradually decreased, from almost 20,000 to 11,800. In the meantime, there was increased interest in courses such as naval tactics, military law, and the Japanese language. The University substantially stepped up research programs which could aid the war effort, contributing to developments which included the PT boat, radar jammers, and depth bombs, among many other things.

The Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) had students marching through the streets of Ann Arbor and on U-M athletic fields, as well as hiking and skiing in the Arb (as training for the mountain ski divisions).

While the Faculty Women's Club was able to maintain its traditions, it, too, saw membership decline, from 526 to 395 during the war. The Club raised money for a station wagon for the Red Cross, bought and raised thousands of dollars of War Bonds, had programs on topics such as "Wartime Food Preservation" and "Fix It Yourself" (reflecting the shortage of repairmen and replacement appliances), and entertained and sewed for servicemen on campus.

One of the projects some of the FWC members participated in was the creation of [windbreaker jerkins](#) (vests). The servicemen wore wool uniforms which quickly became sodden in wet weather or aboard a small boat. Using 23 tons of leftover leather upholstery scraps donated by the Hudson Motor Co. plus 75 pounds of leftover bookbinding leather donated by the University, they sewed 1,140 patchwork leather vests. They even included cigarettes, hard candy, chewing gum, trinkets, etc. in the pockets. In London, the vests were given to servicemen and the "fighting women" of America, Britain, and Norway, who greatly appreciated them.

Thanks to the GI Bill, U-M enrollment exploded after WWII, from the wartime low of 11,800 to 32,770 by 1949, and FWC membership grew along with it, from 395 to almost 1,000. The Club continued its philanthropic projects through the 40s. For example, in 1946, the Club donated \$100 to Gingling College in Nankin, China, to help them repair damage done during Japanese occupation. In 1947, the Club donated books and magazines for the library at Willow Village, inexpensive housing the Ford Motor Company had built to house the extra workers during the war and used by U-M's married students after the war, when housing in Ann Arbor was very scarce and consequently expensive.

The Club also reflected the post-war cultural changes. Dances were moved from weekday evenings to weekends. Coffee was served as well as tea. White gloves were no longer required apparel at formal functions. In 1948, there was a Club meeting introducing our members to television, with sets loaned by local businesses and a speaker from WWJ to explain how broadcasting worked.