



FWC History The 1980s

“Fashions Along the Way, Baby” was the theme of FWC’s Spring Luncheon and Annual Meeting on Wednesday, April 15, 1981. This well-attended event (21 past presidents were there!) recognized the Club’s 60th anniversary and included models in decade-specific dress, historical displays, lunch, election of officers, and a fashion show featuring Club members modeling clothing supplied by Michigan-based department store, Jacobson’s. (Jacobson’s being Jacobson’s and 1981 being one year after Lisa Birnbach’s *The Preppy Handbook* was published, we can assume the “current fashions” tended toward pastels, polos, and plaids...rather than the cropped top, lace, and visible brassiere/corset look ushered in a few years later by onetime U-M student and future pop sensation Madonna.)

Just as quickly as 80s fashions shifted, so did the appearance of U-M. On December 24, 1981, the oldest classroom building on campus, along with the valuable books and manuscripts it contained, was destroyed by fire. When it opened in 1856, that building was the first in the world to be entirely devoted to chemistry instruction; later, it was turned over to the economics department. The early 80s also saw the start of the Replacement Hospital Project (RHP). At that time, the RHP was the largest construction project in the state and the largest hospital project in the country. Related work included razing Old Main Hospital (the site of today’s Cardiovascular Center), an Albert Kahn-designed facility, which meant a farewell to color-coded floor lines directing patients and visitors to its myriad departments.

Campus change wasn’t limited to the physical. Other memorable moments from this decade include:

- Red Berenson, former U-M hockey player and MBA grad, returned to Ann Arbor to coach the team in 1984 (Red’s wife, Joy, served as FWC President in 1996-97);
- Carol Hutchins became head coach of the U-M softball team in 1985;
- Long-time FWC member Anne Duderstadt, along with her husband, moved into the white house located at 815 South University when Jim was appointed the 11th president of the University of Michigan in 1988;
- Blenda J. Wilson became the first female chancellor of UM-Dearborn in 1988; and
- The U-M men’s basketball team, under the direction of newly-appointed coach Steve Fisher, was crowned NCAA champions in April 1989.

FWC sections remained busy throughout the 80s. Antiques Study Group split (a happy result of high section membership), forming Antiques I and Antiques II in 1980. In 1981 International Cooking celebrated their 10th anniversary year by reprising their 1971 Italian and Russian dinner menus. That short-lived 1970’s section, Red Carpet, was reinvented as Hospitality for World Visitors in 1985. (We know this section today as Friends from Around the World.) Book sections multiplied, bringing us Contemporaries Meet Classics, Afternoon Book Discussion, Monday Evening Book Discussion, and Evening Book Review.

One FWC section even granted degrees! In December 1985, long-time FWC Square Dance caller Dave Palmer retired and was conferred with a Doctor of Philosophy of Square Dance by the grateful section members.



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When not immersed in section-based and Club-wide activities, our members might have been doing the Jane Fonda workout; puzzling over a Rubik's cube; shopping for Teddy Ruxpin and Cabbage Patch dolls; or tuning in to a new cable channel called MTV to watch music videos (or perhaps telling their kids, "Turn that off!") The nightly news was bringing us updates about a mysterious illness we'd soon call AIDS, President—and former actor—Ronald Reagan, the 1984 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

We'll close this decade with a look back at where it began for FWC, with another quote from the Club's 60th celebration, a [poem](#) written by Harlan and Hope Bloomer:

“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.”