



How Has FWC Celebrated the Holidays Together for the Past 100 Years?

Remarks by Robin Richstone, FWC 2021-22 President

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for the*

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So, how has the FWC celebrated the holidays together for the past 100 years? Marcy Breslow has searched our archives and found out. It began in 1922, in an evening meeting with plays, dancing, and cards in Sarah Caswell Angell Hall, a theater located in Barbour Gymnasium. In 1924 it was a wonderfully named “thimble party” at the Club House, a University building where we met before the League was finished and that building was demolished. The thimble party seems to have combined sewing, performances by the Music Section, word games, and of course, refreshments. No record as to whether they had lemon bars.

In 1927 the Holiday Event was a formal reception and dance, starting a tradition that persisted for several years, broken in 1938 when the program was a lecture by Avarad Fairbanks, Associate Professor of Sculpture. This is a digression, but I looked him up and can't resist. Fairbanks, already a successful sculptor, came to UM to head the sculpture department as well as to study anatomy at the medical school. He drove an old car that wouldn't start on cold winter mornings, and he couldn't afford a new one. So he made a deal with the Chrysler Corporation to design a new radiator cap for them, in exchange for a new car. He designed the Winged Mermaid for their new “Floating Power” Plymouth, and was rewarded with a handsome red 1932 Chrysler Royal Eight. I imagine he was still driving it when he showed up for the 1938 FWC Holiday Event.

World War II interrupted the festivities, but in 1944 dancing returned, accompanied by bridge. In 1946 there was a Dance Revue at the League; in 1950 a Cabaret show at the Union. The 1954 event, called “Faculty Frolics,” was a show entitled “Man in a World of Women.” Too bad they didn't film that.

1957's home-oriented event was called a “Coffee Klatch,” at which members demonstrated how to make Christmas crafts and decorations. Coffees became the way to go. The 1960 event was Coffee with the Faculty Men's Club at the Union, 1965 was a Christmas Coffee at the University Club, a faculty organization that

met in the Union. Apparently, there was a performance by a handbell choir, so coffees weren't limited to coffee. Marcy also discovered that when they had the coffees at the University Club, the men wore boutonnieres and served the refreshments. Maybe that tells us something about the "Man in a World of Women" program. The 1966 event was also a Coffee, with a tree trimmed with edible ornaments and a performance by the Ann Arbor High School Choraliers.

There was a break in coffees in 1967, when the event was "Winter Holidays Around the World" at the UM Art Museum, but coffee rebounded in 1970, with Christmas Coffee at Clements Library, husbands encouraged to attend. The next year was a "Gala" at Clements with food prepared by four members of the Kitchen Scholars section.

As the 70's got underway, emphasis shifted from "Christmas" to the more inclusive "Holidays," and shifted form, looking for a place to settle. In 1977 it was an Open House at the President's House. In 1979 coffee was out, and it was a "Tea and Dinner Dance." Through the 80's there were receptions at the Ford Library, the Alumni Center, and probably other locations, with cookies and treats brought by members.

Then in 1983, Vivian Shapiro invited members and their spouses to a reception at the President's house, and a new tradition was established. This year and last will go into the archives as the famous Pandemic Zoom Holiday Events. And – you are here!

Toast and Limerick

Now, pick up your Centennial Swag stemless wineglass, or your coffee mug or teacup, and let's have our toast. It only occurred to me yesterday that I might write a poem for the toast, so a limerick was all I could do. Please raise your glass:

*The group called FWC
Is as friendly as friendly can be,
sharing joys, sharing tears
now for one hundred years,
Here's a toast to our next century!*

Thank you.