CHAPTER TEN
The Techno Noughties 2000 - 2011

It will be recalled that back in 1987, a new Director of Housing & Student Life, Mr. Garth Wannan, had been hired to, among other things, bring law and order to a somewhat rambunctious Taché Hall.

Shopping Lists

After a time, the students were looking for communication and consistency in order to understand the Director’s management style.

Mr. Wannan set up a program of Director’s Luncheons whereby interested students could join him to discuss any issues or concerns they might have had. It is unclear just when this practice was activated, but it was definitely in place by the 1999-2000 academic year, during which four lunches were held in Speechly/Taché and two at University College. Attendance varied from seven to fifteen students.

Items raised with particular regard to Taché Hall included:

- desire for an ice machine in the Club Condo
- desire for an arcade in the Club Condo
- insufficient attention to men’s washroom on 3rd East (needed more frequent cleaning)
- need for signs reminding students to flush the toilets
- University’s policy on smoking marijuana (Residence policy was to place students on probation; further violations led to expulsion)
- longer hours for Pembina Hall Cafeteria (referred to Food Committee)
- SkyCable, DSL high-speed Internet access rates
- desire for computer-friendly desks for Taché
- need for more clothes dryers
- new cable TV connections for Taché lounges
- out-of-date Taché computer lab
- unavailability of DSL in certain rooms
- article on the missed meal factor in Residence newsletters (referred to Food Services)
- required repairs to the ping pong tables
- slowness of building maintenance
- deficiency of the small meal plan

An arch-shaped window in the Auditorium’s main level.
Another Horror Story

Hollywood has come to Winnipeg quite a few times over the years. Within the last few, the University of Manitoba has seen car chases, weddings, medical mysteries, and family dramas. All of it has been caught on film as the University of Manitoba enjoys its share of attention in Hollywood North.

Many of our historic buildings attract the film industry since they can be set into different time periods and locales. We have already mentioned the Royal Winnipeg Ballet shoot in the West Gym of Taché Hall, and the building’s role in the filming of The Diviners.

In 2001, a horror flick was released titled Wishmaster 3: Beyond the Gates of Hell. This movie was filmed at the U of M and includes scenes showing the Administration Building and Taché Hall. Interior portrayals of the latter, however,
were not always true to form, as in the instances where closet doors lead into full rooms, not closets. On the other hand, certain details are presented with remarkable realism by using the central Taché Hall staircase as a backdrop and the scenes in the Oak Room.

The plot: Everyone has a secret wish, but if it is granted to you by the devil, the price may be your very soul. Baxter College student Diana Collins learns this horrific lesson when she unwittingly releases the Djinn from his puzzle-box prison.

In his review, Ryan Cracknell described the heroine as “a beautiful, innocent and studious teenage girl,” always a familiar sight in Taché Hall. The villain, on the other hand, is black-listed as a “dangerous demon.” In the hundred years of Taché history, how many Residents perceived their roommates in precisely these terms?

**Friendly Competition**

Things went “global” in 2002 with the inaugural “Inter-Residence Challenge.”

On a March weekend, Resbians from the U of M (Taché Hall, Mary Speechly Hall, and University College Residence), the University of Winnipeg, and Brandon University got the opportunity to compete in volleyball, floor hockey, basketball, 8-ball, academic challenge, cribbage, and bowling.

Social events were held on Friday and Saturday nights, while the games themselves ran through Saturday and Sunday. Points were tallied for all of the events, and the residence that earned the most points was crowned the Inter-Residence Challenge Champion at the end of the weekend.

The U of M hosted the first tournament, Brandon University the second. The road-trip to the Wheat City cost $25 a head, which paid for meals, accommodations, social activities, and any costs incurred in the events. This program continues on to this day, with additional “contests” added yearly with additional universities participating.

**Another Neighbour for Taché**

By 2002, the University of Manitoba was on the threshold of a construction boom that would add new buildings and give some of the older ones a new lease on life. The workload was due to the Building on Strengths Campaign for the University of Manitoba and a series of other projects.

The list of new buildings included a 316-bed Residence. The new apartment-style structure was built along MacLean Crescent across from Taché Hall on the grounds hitherto occupied by Hut J.

And indeed the situation was rather acute, especially for aspiring returnees. The standing practice was to try to achieve a balance between new and returning students—60 percent new, 40 percent returning. In 2002, the administrators were faced with an unprecedented number of returning applicants (405 for 290 spaces) and the system simply could not accommodate everyone who wished to come back.

In the end, the names of those eligible to return were placed in a random draw (lottery). Those who were not so lucky were advised to begin looking for off-campus accommodation as soon as possible, with the assurance that failure to obtain a room for 2002-2003 would not affect one’s chances of being accepted the following year should the applicant wish to return then.
To accommodate the construction of the new Residence and the redevelopment of the Agricultural Engineering Building, parking Lot F was closed at the end of April 2002.

During the construction of the new Residence, the University erected the “Bisoncam,” a webcam located in the Powerhouse overlooking the construction site of the new Arthur V. Mauro Student Residence (AVM). Images were captured once every 60 seconds and could track the progress of the construction.

The new Residence opened in September 2003, with a full house. Students were thrilled to have their own kitchenette and washroom in their suites, to be shared with only one other suitemate. Only students who had completed one year of post-secondary studies were permitted to apply. Meal plans were optional.

The old model of a student residence, as exemplified by Taché Hall, was well and truly a thing of the past. The fact that a substantial portion of the University's student housing was of the “old model,” however, did not deter customers from applying for it, and the spring “lottery” for a room has continued to this day, as there are many more students who wish to live in Residence than there are available spaces.

Recycling

In 2003, the Waste Prevention Office (WPO) and the University of Manitoba Recycling and Environmental Group (UMREG) undertook to drastically improve campus recyclables recovery by introducing recycling services to the University's Residents. In 2002, a waste audit at St. John's College had shown that the Residence students produced approximately 27 metric tons (MT) of waste with only 1 MT being diverted to recycling. That was only 4 percent of a potential 34 percent.

Each dormitory was supplied with a series of recycling bins in which to deposit their beverage containers and paper products. Actually, the UMREG program was not unprecedented on the campus; as far back as 1990, a group in Speechly/Taché had been working toward providing each floor with its own recycling box for aluminum cans. That initiative was called REACTT (Residence Environmental Awareness Council for Today and Tomorrow), and the idea can be seen as the forerunner to the more encompassing UMREG initiative.

Swap, Shop, & Save

The opening lines of the message read: “Do you make hemp bracelets or any other knick-knacks? Do you have good clothing that you just don't wear anymore, or CDs you've gotten sick of?” Well, now was the chance to buy some new accessories, snap up some used goodies, and save some money.

Rat Alley held its first-ever “Swap, Shop, & Save” event on Thursday, December 4, 2003 between 8:30 - 10:30 pm. All and sundry were invited to book a table, bring their friends, hang out, and score on some “awesome” prices.

Shall We What?

Another recent movie—Shall We Dance?—with Richard Gere and Jennifer Lopez was filmed in 2004 in the East Taché Gym. In the movie, the room was unrecognizable due to...
the beautiful blue paint job on the walls … except for the spiral staircase that Richard Gere comes down in the ballroom dance scene.

The plot: An overworked accountant (Gere), tired of the boring routine his life has become, sees a beautiful dance teacher (Lopez) through a window and decides to start taking dance lessons. As the joy of dancing enters his life, he discovers that it might just be the secret to saving his troubled marriage.

So the Waste Prevention Office and UMREG had teamed up with the Salvation Army Thrift Stores to set in motion the first-ever “Dump ‘n’ Run” campaign. This was a two-week event starting April 19th and running to the end of the month, when students could drop off unwanted, but gently used, items at designated locations. For Tachéites, the goods could be left against the back wall just outside Club Condo. The Salvation Army would then cart the items away to their non-profit thrift stores. Not only did this contribute to a worthy cause, but also eliminated volumes of material from the conventional waste stream—a win-win situation.

**Another Big One at the U of M**

From May 29 – 5 June 5, 2004 the annual Congress of Social Sciences and Humanities drew 6,000 delegates from between 60 and 70 different learned associations and featured over 800 separate academic sessions as delegates shared their latest research results. This was about as many participants as the Pan Am Games in 1999, but in this case, the activities were on the intellectual field, rather than on the athletics playing field.

From an organizational standpoint these numbers presented some major challenges in providing adequate accommodation, meeting rooms, food services, security, daycare, medical services, etc. All available Residence space was used on campus, including the new Arthur V. Mauro Residence, which had opened its doors the previous September and was ready for the challenge.

With Arthur V. Mauro Residence, Mary Speechly Hall, and Taché Hall as the official residences for the Congress Conference, there...
was much planning the winter prior to the conference. A committee met and planned out what conference amenities would be supplied to the attendees.

Rooms were provided with bed linens, towels, soap, a glass, and a fan. There was daily maid service. Card operated laundry facilities were located in the basement of each Residence and cards were available for purchase at Residence check-in ($0.75 per load to wash or dry).

Delegates were cautioned that Taché and Mary Speechly Halls were dormitory Residences and were not air conditioned. In Taché Hall, lounge facilities (Floors 2 & 3) were equipped with satellite TVs. And in Mary Speechly Hall, each floor had its own lounge with small fridge, microwave oven, satellite TV, and VCR. In both Halls, washroom facilities were located centrally to bedrooms.

An interesting situation arose in Taché West with one delegate becoming quite drunk and Residence Security needing to be called in to check on him. The guard reported, “Security checked on the gentleman in TH. He was responsive. Is this our responsibility? Are we running security for the guests during the Congress (are we to treat them like students)? Or are we providing hotel-style accommodations where they are responsible for their own actions and behaviour?” Well, nothing much changes, even as we get older!

Meanwhile ... Back at the Oak Room

The perennial question of “whither the Oak Room?” was made manifest yet again in 2004. The plan this time was to convert the space into a language lab for the University’s English as a Second Language (ESL) program. But now, RSAC was supportive, with the proviso that Residence students had space for their social functions and for study, as well as functional access to the facility itself (it would nicely supplement the existing computer room on the 4th Floor of East Taché). And of course, security would have to be duly provided for.

In the end, this plan, too, came to naught as the cost implications skyrocketed and the deep-thinking about what to do with the Oak Room continued apace. However, a decision on its ultimate disposition was near at hand once and for all when a campus-wide adaptive re-use program, “Project Domino” (see later), was put into effect.

The Residence Life Team

The 2000s decade witnessed the continued employment of support personnel, collectively known as the Residence Life Team. Each floor was staffed with two Resident Advisors (RAs) to help out with all the trials and tribulations of University students, especially the freshmen.

The RAs knew how Residence worked and, with their passkeys, were there to rectify the ever-popular custom of locking oneself out of one’s room. They were there with a sensitive ear, a soft shoulder, and some advice on anything from dealing with homesickness to depression to academic problems. If they didn’t have all the answers, they knew where to find them. Group involvement was smiled upon in Residence, and RAs could be approached for ideas on community programming and projects—anything from helping plan a floor night to starting a new inter-Residence program.

The Senior Resident Advisors (SRAs) had the same duties as the RAs, but had already been on the Residence Life Team for at least one year. They were also responsible for one of the five SRA “portfolios”:

- Praxis,
- Education,
- Spirit Cup,
- Health and Wellness, and
- the magazine The Reside.
These program portfolios were designed for all of the Residences that fell under the Housing & Student Life mandate. The Residence Life Coordinators (RLCs) were the folks who coordinated all the superb positions of the team and supported the educational goals of the University of Manitoba. They were there to build a safe and inclusive community. There was one RLC for each building and they were on a duty rotation, similar to the RAs, so if there was an emergency, one of the RLCs was always on call.

The Praxis Portfolio

Created back in 2002, Praxis was a Residence Life program that provided individuals with the opportunity to engage in activities involving community service and social activism. It was a logical continuation of the charitable fundraising projects and events of the previous decade. Praxis is a Latin word that means “theory into action.”

The Praxis vision came from the new Assistant Director of Housing & Student Life, Joe Danis, whose mandate included student discipline; developmental programming; and the selection, training, and supervision of the Residence Life staff. Praxis promoted community outreach and service-based learning among Residents. Many felt that contemporary society lacked compassion and connection to our fellow humans and to our natural environment. Therefore, Praxis brought like-minded individuals together who were dedicated to service, to community-building with those around them on campus and within Winnipeg, and to advancing social justice issues on a global scale.

“Theory into action” was a concept that supported the overall purpose of a post-secondary education. Thus, the vision behind Praxis was one of creating civically responsible individuals who engaged in life within the community, putting their education to work while developing sustainable and reciprocal campus/community partnerships and student mentors and leaders.

Guest speakers were brought in to make presentations on social justice. These events were not limited to Taché Hall, but Taché Residents were certainly among the participants. Every Praxis member was encouraged to volunteer regularly for a chosen project throughout the year, with no minimum-hour requirement. Examples included Habitat for Humanity, Winnipeg Harvest, Siloam Mission, etc.

In 2004, Praxis took the next step of extending membership campus-wide, as well as within the Residences. As a group, Praxis members were to organize action-oriented activities each semester. These projects tended to be one-day events, but could be extended throughout the year, if necessary. Praxis members were expected to participate in as many of these events as possible. Examples were food or clothing drives and youth mentoring events. Members who were interested in particular projects or issues were encouraged to bring those ideas to the group and to take an active role in organizing those activities.

Praxis members would meet on a bi-weekly basis in the Churchill Room in West Taché, to plan projects, attend seminars and discussion events, and think critically about and reflect on the learning experiences they had while volunteering. Activities of the Praxis group included fundraising to support educational projects in Bangladesh, group reflections on social justice issues, and volunteer work at local homeless shelters.

For Hallowe’en of that year, Praxis organized trick-or-treat outings, requesting non-perishable food items rather than candy. The consumables were donated to Winnipeg Harvest, and monies collected went to UNICEF.

That same year Resbians were asked to donate colouring books, crayons, kids’ clothes, toothbrushes, toothpaste, blankets, music tapes, story books, and so forth. One of the Residents was collecting these types of items to take over to an AIDS hospice in South Africa during the forthcoming summer. Very few, if any, Residence students routinely made use of colouring books, crayons, and kids’ clothes or had supplies of such things readily at hand, so the implications are that contributors would have had to go out of their way to purchase them especially for this initiative or to get donations from local retailers.

Praxis events included fundraisers for Habitat for Humanity, Winnipeg Harvest, and Siloam Mission. This event was called Construction and items collected were donated to a worthy cause.
As part of their Praxis commitment, Reading buddies—partnered with Winnipeg School Division #1—placed U of M students with students in inner-city schools to act as mentors and as an inspiration for an education and the importance of literacy skills. Periodically, students were also placed in junior high math/science classrooms or with specialized professionals such as speech pathologists. This program required a criminal record/child abuse registry check.

Reading Buddies read aloud to children in the classroom, helping them to develop active listening and comprehension skills. In April 2004, the Reading Buddies program won the Mayor’s Volunteer Service Award given annually by the Volunteer Centre of Winnipeg and the Office of the Mayor. The award recognized the valuable contribution the program made in helping young students develop life-long literacy skills.

The Education Portfolio

The Education SRA was in charge of seminars and workshops designed to help Residents in successfully pursuing their University careers via exam seminars, tutor sessions, and study groups set up to facilitate learning and understanding of materials and ideas presented in class. Some of the courses covered included Biology, Statistics, Psychology, and Economics. In the past, students had found the help they received from seminars like these very valuable and increased their performance and most of all understanding in their courses.

- Biology and Statistics Tutorials—As part of the academic programming portfolio, tutorial sessions were offered to all Residents for all Biology and Statistics midterms and finals.
- Documentary Discussions—a documentary on personal or world issues was shown. A question and discussion period followed. Residents could learn something new and share what they knew on topics such as AIDS Relief, International Development, or Counselling and Rehabilitation.

- Professional Development Sessions—Sessions were open to Residence students on topics including exam preparation, essay writing techniques, résumé writing, portfolio development, and job interview skills. These sessions were free of charge.

For those who needed a helping hand, someone with whom to converse, a study group of Residents who were in the same course, or classmates with whom to make common cause, one could sign up with “Residence Study Buddies Online.” One had to be a Residence student to qualify for use of this asset, and the program was for academic purposes only.

To find a study buddy, one posted the course name, course number, and personal contact information on a message board so that others could get in touch. Participants could then communicate about the material covered in their courses or, at the very least, make good the maxim “misery loves company.” It was not necessary to give personal information upon receiving a request for contact, and the message board was a secure website. The board was not for people wishing to get together to copy and modify someone’s work to make it sound like one’s own!!

The Spirit Cup Portfolio

The high-octane Spirit Cup portfolio was established in the 2003-2004 academic year to encourage participation in a friendly competition that promoted House pride and the growth of school spirit. It was a series of inter-Residence events and charity fundraising efforts that challenged the members

![Reading Buddies read aloud to children in the classroom, helping them to develop active listening and comprehension skills. In April 2004, the Reading Buddies program won the Mayor’s Volunteer Service Award.](image-url)
of each Residence to “out-spirit” each other and to highlight the many positive aspects of the University of Manitoba.

It gave students the opportunity to come together to achieve positive goals and to challenge their counterparts in the other dorms. The ideal was to have at least one Spirit Cup event a month that would allow Residents to accumulate, on a per-capita basis, “spirit points” for their respective Houses, and the overall winner was announced at the end of the school year. House standings were reported in *The Reside* and/or the *Perspective*.

There were three categories of events that gave substance to the Spirit Cup portfolio:

- conventional games collectively referred to as “TUCAMS” tournaments (TUCAMS was the acronym for *Taché, University College, Arthur Mauro, and Speechly*),
- non-athletic competition like penny wars, food and blood drives, and
- on-site group support for the varsity Bison teams.

In April of 2004, for instance, the winning Residence for Spirit Cup that year, Mary Speechly Hall, was awarded a Spirit Cup trophy and a $500 cash prize that was donated back to the University for use in a way that benefited the general student body. At the final event, the participants collected non-perishable food items for the University Food Bank.

**Spirit Cup—TUCAMS: Where Champions Were Made**

Competitions and rivalries were always a sure bet for maintaining spirit and morale in *Taché Hall*. And sports could be counted on as a means to that end. In the “TUCAMS” events, the five Houses (East TH West TH, UC, AVM, and MSH) competed against each other in a variety of sports tournaments in which everyone could participate, either by signing on as a team member or else by cheering on one’s respective House.

And so it was that on September 19, 2004, for example, the second annual TUCAMS football tournament took place on the Quad from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm. A total of 295 Resbians attended the event that was organized by East Taché, and everyone in attendance was attired in House clothing and face paint. Arthur Mauro defended its title from 2003 and prevailed as tournament champions by beating Mary Speechly in the final 42-28. University College took the third-place game, defeating West Taché 49-35, while East Taché finished fifth. As organizer, East Taché laid on a barbecue for all who came out to cheer on their respective Houses. The next TUCAMS event was the Ultimate Frisbee Challenge that took place on October 3rd.

**Spirit Cup—Penny Warfare and Other Drives**

The “Penny Wars” event was a money-raiser whereby each participating House had a container into which students deposited money. Pennies counted for points in favour of a particular House, while all other coins (nickels, dimes, etc.) counted against a House. So one would want to put as many pennies as possible into one’s own Residence container, and all other coins in the rival Residence containers! It was a fun event that raised awareness and stirred the competitive spirit.

In 2004, $500 was raised from Penny Wars, a social, and a Valentine’s Day candy grams
event. These funds were turned over to a non-governmental organization in Bangladesh to help build a school.

Food and clothing drives and youth mentoring events were prominent among the humanitarian initiatives engaged in by Residence students. Food drives (like the Penny Wars) were also of a competitive nature, the intent being to see which House could collect the most non-perishable food items. Proceeds were donated to Winnipeg Harvest or the U of M Food Bank. The House with the most food donated won a prize.

**Spirit Cup—Rah Rah Rah, or, Your Mother Wears Army Boots**

Creatively cheering on the Bison varsity teams was another popular means of raising points for the Spirit Cup, and so some events included in the Spirit Cup portfolio were Bison basketball, hockey, football, and volleyball games. In the fall of 2007, a “Pack the Place Pink” event saw Resbians purchase over 100 pink T-shirts for a Spirit Cup hockey game. Proceeds of more than $1,000 went toward breast cancer research.

By 2007, everybody was well aware of what Spirit Cup was all about—or so one would have thought. Yet there seemed to be some confusion about its true purpose. It was great to see that year-after-year the Residence students continued to show their pride for their buildings at each and every Spirit Cup event. However, youthful exuberance and enthusiasm, at times, rose to the point where the wholesome philosophy of the competition was getting lost somewhere amidst the raucous chants and hollers.

And so, all and sundry were issued a tut-tut over cutting remarks, dirty digs, and below-the-belt hits bellowed at the patrons of the other Houses during Bisons games. Through the medium of *The Reside* newsletter, Resbians were reminded that they were not the only fans in attendance; small children were there, too, and they (the wee ones) should not be subjected to hearing swearing and rude comments hurled back and forth the whole game. “Cheer as loud as you want and make a spectacle of yourself,” declared the writer, “but remember, the game is on the field, not in the stands.”

**The Health and Wellness Portfolio**

The SRA for the *Health and Wellness* Portfolio developed and promoted physical well-being and alcohol awareness throughout all of the Residences. Information
was provided through various media to promote healthy lifestyles and choices. Some examples of the programming included super juicy and informative columns in *The Reside* like the Not Just Safe Sex, but Great Sex column, which ran articles on “Mastering the Make-Out,” “Cross Country Courtships,” and “The Break-Up and the Aftermath” and articles about self-defence for women, date rape, deliberate self-harm, avoiding cold and flu in Rez; classes in massage therapy, pilates, yoga, and meditation tutorials throughout the year; wine-tasting and beer-appreciation; Jump Rope for Heart events, and Red Cross Blood Drives. Students were invited not only to participate as recipients of the programming, but also to help plan events, make posters, contribute ideas, and advertise the events.

### Health & Wellness—Dorm Dogs & Campus Cats

Remember when pets weren’t allowed in Taché and the other Residences on campus? Well, that continued to be the case through the 2000s, but that didn’t mean critters were altogether unwelcome. “Dorm Dogs & Campus Cats” was a cooperative program initiated between Housing & Student Life and the Winnipeg Humane Society and it was part of the Health and Wellness Portfolio. Cats and dogs were brought in during mid-term and final exam times to offer stress relief to Residents. The animals no doubt benefited from some one-on-one people time as well.

### The Reside Portfolio

And the last portfolio was the Residence newsletter *The Reside*—a monthly publication that was the University of Manitoba’s Residence Life Team magazine. The Residence Life Team, comprised of the RLCs, SRAs, and RAs in Mary Speechly, West Taché, East Taché, University College Residence, and the Arthur V. Mauro Student Residence, were the people who made a student’s stay in Residence an enjoyable and safe experience. *The Reside* focused on Residence students, keeping everyone informed on policies, Residence activities, Winnipeg events, and the University community. *The Reside*, published at the beginning of each month, was conveniently placed in mailboxes or under dorm room doors. The first issue introduced the Residence Life Team and provided information that Residents needed to know while living on-campus.

### Community Support

Every year in late summer, before classes began, the Residence Life staff (RAs, SRAs, and RLCs) returned to the University for the Dorm Dogs & Campus Cats program, dogs and cats were brought into each of the Residences at scheduled times during mid-term and final exam weeks to offer stress relief to Residents. This day, dogs were visiting University College Residence.
for training, during which time a day was spent on a project intended to help build a sense of camaraderie among the participants.

On August 27, 2005 the Residence Life Team participated in a United Way “Day of Caring” at the Urban Circle Training Centre on Selkirk Avenue in Winnipeg’s North End. The Centre provided Aboriginal people with skill-specific training oriented toward job-market demands. The forty members of the ResLife team spent the day painting, landscaping, and generally getting the Urban Circle Training Centre ready for another year of operations.

Architects This Time

On September 9, 2005, a memo went out to all Speechly/Taché Residence students from the Director of Housing & Student Life, notifying them that the Faculty of Architecture was being welcomed to their new home in the Taché Auditorium. Architecture students would be using the Auditorium as their studio space for a year until renovations in their own Russell Building were completed.

Those living in the Speechly/Taché complex were assured that the area would be monitored and kept safe and secure, and that the privacy of Residence students would be respected. The arrangement sounded remarkably similar to that of the 1980s, which saw the Aud being used by the School of Music—this time however, without the noise.

But the old problems returned. Security became an issue and the doors in the Aud to the dorm wings, both East and West, had to be outfitted with double-sided security alarms to keep both the Residence students from entering the Aud, which was now private space, and also so that the Architecture students could not wander into the dorm spaces. The front doors of the Centre Block were keyed on a special lock meant only for the Architecture students. However, this did not deter some of the Residence students, who broke in repeatedly to see what was going on in “their” Auditorium.

Although the space had been promised for only one year, the welcome mat was fast being pulled aside when the Architecture students refused to clean up their massive projects and leave when their time was at an end. Eventually, the Building Manager hired a carpenter to pull apart all the lumber, wire, and other adornments on the large-scale structures and to haul it all away, so that life could get back to normal. Sadly, that year RSAC was unable to hold certain of its events in the Auditorium. The more things changed, the more they remained the same.

A New Dawning ... ?

As this history of Taché Hall draws to a close, we are gratified to note that, according to a Winnipeg Free Press headline (from September 4, 2005), the “Rowdy frat-house dorm is ancient history.”

In the accompanying article, the new Director of Housing & Student Life, Joe Danis, pointed out that the University environment and the students themselves had changed: the latter were more cognizant of the importance and implications of a post-secondary education beyond the classroom, and the value of it. Along with that came a noticeable decline in disciplinary problems in the Residence.
... Well, Not Quite

This is not to imply that Taché Hall, in its twilight years as a student Residence, was a reincarnation of Shangri-la. People are people, and the old phobias and prejudices still simmered below the surface and came to the fore from time-to-time.

We have previously touched on the problem of racism in Residence, and other persistent negative attitudes toward those outside of the mainstream were still in play at this time.

During the 2005-06 orientation program given to students and parents at the start of that academic year, sexual orientation within the Residence community was squarely a topic of discussion. As part of the campus Safe Places program, office doors were marked with rainbows that signified that gays and lesbians were welcome and would be made to feel comfortable within.

On a humorous note, there were other less serious issues in which misdemeanors were infractions in Taché Hall and its precincts. “More Violations Reported in Residence” screamed the headline in *The Manitoban*. For example, “it’s a violation of Community Standards to place a piece of fruit in someone’s mailbox,” cautioned the Administration.

Rather more serious were not wearing pants in a public area, stealing a fire hose, and allowing a homeless person to sleep in a student lounge. Although there were indeed more violations committed (not just in Taché Hall) during 2006-2007, the numbers could also be attributed to an increase in reporting. Reporting and formal follow-up of incidents had increased because this was seen as a very important part of the duties of the Residence Life Team.

Business As Usual

The “special floors” set-up established during the previous decade continued on into the 2000s, with Taché in particular offering single rooms on the Architecture, Engineering, and International Floors.

In the meantime, costs were again on the rise (room rates up 8 percent, meals up 5 percent) thanks to the usual increases in staff salaries, maintenance costs, utilities, and information technology upgrades. Most of these demands were ongoing concerns; but in addition, the Tachéites found themselves in the same position as did their ancestors when Mary Speechly Hall was built back in the early 1960s: the construction of the new Arthur V. Mauro Residence brought with it $1.3 million in mortgage debt, a portion of which had to be borne by the Residence community-at-large—and that included the patrons of Taché Hall. From the perspective of a historian with a long-term grasp of past reality, it was once more a clear case of *déjà vu* all over again.

Three Top Guns Are Hired

At the beginning of the decade, your friendly neighbourhood Residence Life Coordinator (RLC) was the person who coordinated the activities of the Housing & Student Life Department. Being experienced Residence Life staff, these student staff members had been around awhile and had seen a lot.

Their main focus was on sustaining a safe and inclusive community built upon self-respect, respect for others, and respect for the Residence environment shared by all. When advice was
needed on a personal problem, an RLC was perhaps one of the human resources to whom the RAs directed the troubled soul. There was one live-in RLC per building and, being on duty rotation like the RAs, one could stop in to see him/her at any time. If there was an emergency, one of them was on call.

The student RLCs had been paid a stipend for their room and board fees, as well as an hourly wage for their eight months on duty. Although the RAs and SRAs were not paid an hourly wage, they were rewarded with a stipend towards their room and board fees.

In 2007, Housing & Student Life adopted a “professional model” for RLCs, and three individuals were hired and paid a proper salary, according to the University’s AESES Collective Agreement. [For the first few years, there were only three RLCs for the four buildings—AVM and MSH shared one RLC].

They were no longer students, but graduates who worked and lived in the Residence community and they were responsible for appointing, training, and supervising Residence Advisors. They also were mandated to report and follow up on incidents that involved taking necessary disciplinary action against Residence students. The effectiveness of this set-up was eloquently borne out in the testimony of one befuddled Tachéite in 2007, who declared: “My first year in Rez, I was definitely less intelligent about some things than I am now, but somehow I seem to be getting into much more trouble for the same, or lesser, actions now. I just don’t get it.” The difference, of course, was that the Establishment was now more proficient in keeping an eye on him and his ilk!

Jennifer Trotman became the first professional RLC who lived in Taché Hall for three years, and when her contract was over in 2009, she went on to become the Assistant Director, Residence Life.

**Facebook & Study Night**

By 2007, Facebook was all the rage and Facebooking had become a learning medium. So the Education/Academic portfolio-holder created the “Facebook Group” so that one could easily find out who in Rez were taking the same courses. Participants could ask questions, share ideas and textbooks, swap old exams, and get missed class notes. Before too long the budding scholars knew their stuff better than that annoying keener who thought s/he was smarter than the prof! The Facebook Group was a variation on the Study Buddies Online set-up that had been introduced earlier in the decade.

For those having problems getting motivated to study, students from all five Houses met up each week at a different location on campus for “Study Night.” In 2007, Study Night happened every Sunday evening at 7:00 pm. Participants met in the main lobby of their respective Residence, and everyone then walked from there over to a predetermined study location together.

Study Night helped people to connect with others taking the same courses and motivated individuals to get out of their rooms and get some studying done in a collegial atmosphere with persons having shared objectives. It was much easier to go off and study knowing a friend was also going and when other Rez students were doing the same thing.
Innovation in Pembina Hall

In 2007, the food delivery system in Pembina Hall was over 40 years old. The old cafeteria-style service involved “batch cooking” which meant that a batch of food was cooked in the back and then placed on the steam table. There was little interaction between the people cooking the meal and those eating it, nor was there any chance for customizing it, and the freshness of the food depended entirely on how quickly people could get to it after the food was put out.

The time had come for an upgrade; and during the summer of 2007, work was taken in hand to do just that, and the service and dining areas were refurbished.

In the new system, dubbed the “Fresh Food Company,” the cooks and the food would be brought out front. The students could talk to the cooks and thusly have their meals customized, thereby taking the mystery out of the whole food-preparation experience. The number of staff making the meals would not change, but instead of a cafeteria line-up, there would be a number of cooking areas where people could go to get the food they wanted.

The kiosks would include a soup area, a grill, a produce/salad area, an omelette bar, a “home zone”—an area featuring home-style cooked meals—a pizza area, a deli, and an accent area for specialty choices such as stir fries and vegan options.

Going back for seconds was encouraged. With the former cafeteria arrangement, people felt that they had to load up their trays and a lot of that food then was left uneaten. [Editor’s note: a sensible but curious statement—in the 1960s, students were in no position to “load up their trays”; they were given their portions by serving staff, and that was it. If food was wasted, it was because the students chose not to eat what they had received].

While the servery area was being completely rebuilt and opened up, the dining area also received a facelift with new furniture and new seating options. There was even a breakfast nook where people could read the newspaper or watch TV! With a four-week rotating cycle, there would be something new every day for four weeks, giving people more variety. One thing did not change: as had always been the case, the Pembina Hall dining facility was open to the entire campus, not just Resbians.

In December 2007, Food Services conducted a survey on a voluntary basis at Pembina Hall to get feedback on the concept that had been implemented at the start of the academic year. Students who took part in the survey were eligible to win a Sony PlayStation. The results showed that those who dined in Pembina Hall were pleased with the new Fresh Food Company idea, which featured a market-style, open-kitchen approach to dining. Of the ~ 800 students either on a meal plan or on a declining balance card, 23 percent filled out the survey. Accordingly, 70 percent of the students who responded said that the overall quality of the food was outstanding or very good. Twelve percent were satisfied with the quality and only eight percent felt that the quality fell short or was poor.

Top marks were scored in staff friendliness and their menu knowledge category, as 91 percent of students said service was outstanding or very good. Seven percent were satisfied, and only two
percent said it was poor. That may or may not have had anything to do with the fact that Food Services would no longer be offering take-out because of issues that had arisen the previous year, including students taking food for friends who were not on meal plans, and housekeeping staff finding rotten food under beds and in closets.

Furthermore, one aim of Food Services was to promote a community atmosphere and to create a meeting place—in Pembina Hall, for example. So the whole take-out scenario went against the grain because the students repaired to their rooms instead of socializing in the Dining Hall.

What of the poor soul who didn’t have time to sit in Pembina Hall and eat? What if he needed to be elsewhere studying, or on the Internet, or something? Balderdash, replied the Establishment; if students couldn’t take half an hour out to eat and relax for a little bit, then personal time management was their problem, not Pembina Hall’s. If the Resident had a class schedule issue or had to go to the Bannatyne campus and really couldn’t come to the Dining Hall, a bag lunch could be provided on request.

**“Raising the Roof”**

The Residents’ propensity for community outreach continued on in the first decade of the new Century and showed the University community, and the community-at-large, that there was much more to Residence Life than just pizza and beer. It is probably correct to say that there was an upsurge in activity whereby students from every Residence on campus volunteered their time and energy to a variety of important outreach programs.

Not all such initiatives were conceived locally. The “Raising the Roof” campaign was (and is) a Canada-wide charity that was founded back in 1996 to bring national attention to the issue of homelessness through programs focused on creating awareness and understanding of the problem, especially among youth; identifying barriers and solutions to the issue; providing tools and resources for those working to alleviate homelessness; encouraging networking and sharing best practices to meet the challenge; and engaging individuals, communities, and the private sector in solutions.

A key fundraising initiative is the Toque program, and Taché Hall student volunteers, as well as other Houses, have participated by selling toques at various points around the campus.

**Shades of the 1980s**

History has a habit of repeating itself, and this universal proclamation applied as much to Taché Hall as it did to any place else. Back in the 1980s, there was apprehension among some students over the stifling Administration crack-downs on pranks and booze-fuelled raucous behaviour, with a concomitant decline in “spirit.”

Twenty years later, some students felt that the suffocation had returned (if indeed it had ever diminished), and one critic, who incidentally was also unabashed about his denunciation of the Pembina Hall food, said it all: “The essence of dorm life is being stripped from us and anything that was cool about it seems to have disappeared.”
**Digitize This!**

With the advent of the 21st Century, connectivity to digital information had become a necessary part of education; and increasingly, information was available only via the Internet. In 2007, the University of Manitoba's Ancillary Services Department (AS) and Housing & Student Life (HSL) provided Internet access to all Residence buildings, including Taché Hall.

When planning a new Residence like Arthur V. Mauro, it was relatively simple to provide the space for adequate communications cabling, but retrofitting an existing facility was a challenge. Installing Internet service in Taché Hall, Mary Speechly Hall, and University College Residence was accomplished by using DSL technology. As a result, students no longer needed to pay an external company for high-speed Internet or to use the University of Manitoba's dial-up service. When the project was completed, students were offered high-speed Internet with 24-hour, multi-tier support.

Upon entering Residence, students were now encouraged to sign up for a high-speed modem to use in their rooms. They were given documentation that detailed set-up and usage, and a 24-hour support number was included in the documentation in case they experienced problems. All a student needed to get online was a computer with a working network card (or, with laptops, a built-in network port).

Those residing in Taché could sign up for the Internet service and use the DSL modem and cables pre-installed in each room. Although most problems could be resolved quickly over the phone, a support administrator could be sent to the student’s room, if required.

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**And All That Jazz**

Good things were in the offing for the moribund Residence Auditorium, although the run-up to its resurrection did witness at least one notable event. The “Domino Summer Jazz Concert” was the highpoint of the University’s annual jazz camp that allowed students to spend a week training and working with local and international jazz instructors. In the years previous, the concert had been hosted by Smartpark and held in the Max Bell Centre; but in 2008 the concert adopted the “Project Domino” theme and that meant a change in location as well.

Project Domino was designed to provide over a dozen faculties and departments with new homes on the Fort Garry campus. But the watchword was renewal, and that meant that existing buildings would be renovated and put to new uses. Taché Hall was destined to become home to the Marcel A. Desautels Faculty of Music and to the School of Art. And so the venue chosen for the 2008 Jazz Concert was the Taché Auditorium.

The University’s Associate Vice-President (Administration) made an interesting point, at the time, when he wrote:

*It’s an opportunity to host the concert in Taché Auditorium, which hasn’t been used in a long time, and to allow the audience to experience the Auditorium before it has been fully renovated as a performance space. Taché is coming up to 100 years old and a lot of interesting concerts and performances have taken place in the Auditorium, so this will give them a chance to see it again.*

Parenthetically, Music’s take-over of the Aud is ironic considering the strife that went on between...
the musicians and the Tachéites back in the 1980s. Given the recent developments, one might say that the musicians have won the war!

Flu Pandemic – Not!

The 2009 swine flu crisis was the second of two pandemics involving the H1N1 influenza virus (the first of them occurred in 1918). It was a respiratory illness that caused symptoms similar to those of seasonal flu, but could be deadly.

Initially coined an “outbreak,” the stint began in the state of Veracruz, Mexico, with evidence that there had been an ongoing epidemic there for months before it was officially recognized as such. The Mexican government closed most of Mexico City’s public and private facilities in an attempt to contain the spread of the virus; however, it proceeded to spread globally, and clinics in some areas were overwhelmed by infected people. In June, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) stopped counting cases and declared the outbreak a pandemic.

As early as November 2005, plans had already been in the works at the U of M in face of the threat. Housing & Student Life (HSL) was preparing to meet the accommodation needs of students in the event of a local outbreak. It was anticipated that not all would be able to return home, particularly the ill, those from out-of-province, or international students. Based on available data at the time, HSL estimated that 300-400 individuals might need to continue living in Residence, even if the campus were to shut down.

HSL would have to identify remaining students and they would be instructed to remain in their assigned rooms. A census through self-reporting at 10 am and 4 pm would be set up. A daily sign-in form would be posted on room doors, and students would be instructed to sign their names each day and report any illness/symptoms they might have. Quarantined and isolated students would be monitored twice a day, or as required.

If a student failed to sign in, the staff would check on his/her welfare. HSL would work with Food Services to provide meal delivery to each building, especially for Residents who were already ill. Security would be set up to monitor each building. “Do Not Enter” signs would be posted. HSL would maintain basic custodial and maintenance service in all Residences, but cleaning supplies would be made available to Residents and they would be asked to clean their own rooms, especially if caretakers were also taken ill.

As more and more H1N1 cases were being reported around the world, planning meetings were held frequently in early 2009. Each issue was dealt with carefully, right down to making plans in case staff and caregivers became ill or, at the very worst, establishing procedures for dealing with a death in the Residence.

In the end, with all the precautions of hand sanitizers, posters on all bathroom walls about washing hands properly, instructions on how to sneeze into the crook of one’s arm, and line-ups for hours in University Centre to get the H1N1 vaccine, only a few Residents became ill. Students helped each other once they had recovered and there was minimal spread throughout the dormitories. By February 2010, the worst of the pandemic was over in Canada.
More About Pembina Hall

Were the previously-noted flattering statistics of December 2007 regarding Pembina Hall destined to persist, or were they merely a short-lived flash in the pan?

In January 2009, journalist Carson Jerema, U of M alumnus and former editor of The Manitoban, published a Marion Warhaft-esque review of the contemporary Pembina Hall cuisine.

Of course, Pembina Hall had long been reviled by Resbians in general, and Taché Hallers in particular, so our scrutineer embarked upon his task with some trepidation. But thanks to a number of menu enhancements introduced the previous fall, he was “pleasantly surprised.”

The fare was now better and healthier, not only for the connoisseurs and the health freaks, but also for those seeking to fulfill more “debased appetites.” For the latter, hold-overs from the bad old Pembina Hall were still alive and well!

“Doors Open”

The now-global “Doors Open” tour program originated in France in the 1980s. Its objective was to offer the general public an opportunity to become acquainted with architectural legacies that ordinarily might not be familiar to most. Within ten years, the number of participating countries had increased to 47, and visitor participation had grown to 20 million by 2000. The Winnipeg rendition of the city-wide event was first held in 2004.

On Saturday, May 23, 2009, one of the buildings featured in the program was Taché Hall. Guests were invited to walk backstage in the Auditorium or peek into some of the unique dorm rooms. Guided tours ran from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm.

To make the tours more interesting for the guests, several theme rooms were set up in East and West Taché complete with authentic props, such as an original bookcase and chair from the early 1900s, two metal cots for the 1940s, several of the former plaid bedspreads from the 1970s, and a look at the current RSAC President’s room, which sported a loft.

Photo poster boards and past yearbooks were displayed in the East Lounge. And to supplement the on-site visitor tour, a 20-page handout was prepared titled, appropriately enough, The History of Taché Hall. With the centennial anniversary of Taché Hall approaching in 2011, it was decided that the handout would serve as the foundation for the book you are now reading. Participants in the 2009 tour were invited to contribute stories and information, also included herein, about their experiences as Residents of Taché Hall.

Facing the Flood

The long-standing tradition of humanitarian effort was alive and well right to the end of Taché’s role as a university dormitory. On January 24, 2011 the City of Winnipeg released a media bulletin outlining the flood forecast for that spring. There was no prospect of the University or most of the city being impacted, but much of the province did stand to be affected.

“Face the Flood” was a movement established to create awareness and encourage donations and volunteer help for those who were threatened with water levels similar to those of the 1997 Flood of the Century. Although Face the Flood was not the brainchild of Residence students, RSAC pitched in...
with a Ladies Night to publicize the project, to sell social tickets, and to encourage donations.

At this event, RSAC provided facials, massages, manicures, and pedicures conducted by male Residence students.

On April 3rd of that year, a program called “The Gaming Olympics” took place in Club Condo. Participants were charged $5 per person, and all proceeds went to the Red Cross relief fund.

Cheerleading Plus

So, “cheerleading,” declared a female West Taché RA and team member, “is not about blonde, bubble-headed girls, and we don’t prance around and flirt with the basketball players while they are playing the game!”

Back in 2004, we saw the start-up of the first co-ed cheerleading (read “stunt”) team in the history of the University of Manitoba. Stunt cheerleading is a very demanding sport that takes an abundance of strength, self-confidence, teamwork, coordination, mutual trust, skill, and no small amount of bravery: one mistake could very well result in severe injury, if not worse.

Graphic illustrations of the demands levied on the performers and their outstanding accomplishments can be witnessed by Googling “U of M Bison Cheerleaders.”

This sport was by no means relegated to Residence students, but some Resbians were on the squad, and by 2009-10, thanks to the support of Joe Danis, Director of Housing & Student Life, the team’s practice sessions were conducted in the Taché Hall East Gym until Taché Hall closed for renovations in the spring of 2011.
Can you Spare a Dime?

The “Rez Idol” event was an annual program hosted in February or March wherein three people from each of the Residence halls competed for the coveted Rez Idol title. The monies raised were donated to a charity of the organizers’ choice.

Another fundraiser was the Spike Cancer out of Residence—An annual outdoor volleyball tournament which took place at the end of September. Residence students signed up with their friends and competed throughout the entire weekend for bragging rights, followed by a social at night organized by Residence Councils. All proceeds from the weekend went towards a semester-long fundraising effort to support the Cancer Care Manitoba Foundation.

We Won’t Be Undersold

On April 29 and 30, 2011, the last garage sale ever to be held in Taché Hall took place. Pool tables, fridges, stoves, beds, desks, and chairs all had to go as commencement of the building’s transformation into an art and music facility was just around the corner. All sales were final and only cash was accepted.

What items were up for sale?
- Single beds, including mattresses
- Drawer units which fit underneath the beds, with single or double drawers
- Desks which included a hutch/bookshelf
- Wardrobes in various styles and colours
- Couches
- Televisions and pianos
- Pool tables and fitness equipment
- Tables of various styles, sizes, and materials
- Chairs of various styles, colours, and materials
- Mini-fridges and stoves
- Mailboxes with keys

Open House: The Last Hurrah

The final public event of note to take place in Taché Hall Residence was the Open House sponsored by Housing & Student Life. Over May 6-7, 2011, former Residents and the general public were invited to enjoy tours, where they could view rooms done up in period furnishings; meet with other former Residents; visit their old digs; watch a slide show; peruse displays of yearbooks, student directories, and memorabilia; and just sit or stand around in the Aud swapping war stories.

The photographer from the alumni journal OnManitoba recorded the goings-on in pictures, and one of the ex-Resbians, an established Winnipeg poet, was moved to write a poem [see A Lyric for Taché Hall in the 2000 Memories section].

The Grand Reprieve

Now in 2012, as we head into the close of the first 100 years of Taché Hall, we are excited about the new University-wide Project Domino. The University of Manitoba will undergo one of the largest and most ambitious redevelopment plans ever undertaken on campus.

Project Domino—a multi-year and multi-million dollar plan to retrofit buildings for 21st-Century use—will rejuvenate the Fort Garry campus. It will ensure students and faculty continue to have the facilities they need to succeed.
The completion of one initiative will have a direct effect on another, much like a sequence of falling dominoes. Thus, the opening of a brand new Residence would free up Taché Hall for occupancy by the Faculty of Music and the School of Art. The current Music Building (to be renamed “International House”) will then be taken over by two English Language centres, the International Student Centre, and the Office of International relations. With the School of Art now ensconced in Taché Hall, the Fitzgerald Building would become home to the Faculty of Graduate Studies. But the jewel of Project Domino will be the transformation of Taché Hall. Its new life as part of an Arts Centre integrating Music and Fine Arts will bring a vital new presence to the academic centre of the Fort Garry campus. It will celebrate Taché Hall’s history as the campus home for thousands of students over the years.

When Taché was built in 1911, it was equipped with state-of-the-art facilities for the day. Building on the legacy of offering top amenities for our students, the new Pembina Hall Residence offers modern features, such as high-speed Internet and private washrooms that meet the needs and expectations of today’s students. The 360-bed Pembina Hall Residence opened for occupancy in September 2011, just as Taché Hall closed its doors to Residence students for the last time.
A view of the Centre Block of Taché Hall in 2009 before the new Pembina Hall Residence was constructed.

In 2011, the new Pembina Hall Residence rises majestically behind the stately Century-old Taché Hall—quite a contrast in architectural styles!
Before Taché Hall closed in May 2011, the Residence students created this lovely “handprint” mural on the wall just outside the Club Condo door in the basement.