CHAPTER FOUR
The Flying Forties 1940 - 1949

The following is a précis of Residence culture that appeared in the 1940 *Brown and Gold*, and we cannot vouch for its accuracy. We can’t even be sure if it was written by a Resbian.

Residence Life in the 1940s

In any event, we are informed that keeping order and maintaining discipline at the turn of the decade were the responsibility of a Senior Committee comprised of senior Residence students. To them fell the task of ensuring that the fire-fighting equipment remained in its containers on the walls, rather than in the hands of rampant hosers with malice aforethought.

Keeping “the Engineers and Aggie students from fighting all the time” (sic) is claimed to have been on the seniors’ standing To-Do list, not to mention trying to somehow keep the freshmen studious, or at least quiet, during study hours.

There was an hour-long dance every evening after supper before everyone was expected to hit the books between 7:00 and 10:00 pm. At ten, most of them went down to the Cafeteria for an evening snack; toast and coffee being a favoured combo. They had, at their disposal, the Gyms for basketball, badminton, or ping pong; two indoor swimming pools (the plunge baths); and, just behind the Residence building, skating and curling rinks when they desired recreation.

A group of student officers was chosen each spring to look after social, athletic, and literary events.

There were six major dances during the year, each combined with some special attraction: the freshie dance, a treasure hunt, a masquerade ball, a roller skating party, an amateur night, and finally a cabaret party that wound up the season.

The formal athletic program included curling and hockey schedules and tennis, badminton, and ping pong tournaments, and a basketball schedule. A frying pan was awarded to the winning team that kept said trophy for one year.

Outbreak of War

With the outbreak of World War II in 1939, University facilities were pressed into service for the Canadian Armed Forces. If the rules were strict in the early years of Residence, they were never more so than during the first half of the 1940s.
The Residence was available to accommodate students for the fall term of the 1940-41 academic year, but by the end of December they were required to clear out to make way for the military types. By January 1, 1941, The Dominion of Canada leased the Residence (then called the Manitoba Union Building) for military accommodation, and it had been agreed that the Ministry for Air would pay the sum of $14,500 per year to the University in lieu of the revenue that the school would lose when the Residence was taken over by the government. It is estimated that 3,000 men were housed at a time, and an expenditure of $25,000 was made on required structural changes.

The government constructed a heavy wire fence across the campus, separating the Manitoba Union and the Army huts to the south from the rest of the University.

By June 1941, the Army had moved in and the Union became the Number 103 Canadian Infantry (Basic) Training Centre, or 103 C.I. (B). T.C.

In a very real sense, the war years represented a hiatus in the history of the Manitoba Union Building, both as a student Residence and a University-operated asset. In effect, it was not a functioning part of the U of M at that time. Also, the War had a dramatic effect on the University, not only in its enrollment, but also in the physical presence of recruits as the military took over the Fort Garry Residence as a barracks. All fit 18-year-old male students were required to take six hours a week in military training. Those over the age of 21 received two weeks of practical training at a camp. The student body at large lost access to the Manitoba Union Building’s cultural and recreational amenities. Consequently, a sharp decline in organized social life ensued, with most activities that endured now using off-campus facilities.

**Living Off-Campus**

Once the Residence was leased by the Armed Forces, pursuant to the policy of “in loco parentis” (in the place of a parent), the Dean of Women set out to find suitable off-campus accommodations for her displaced students. She, or a member of her staff, personally inspected each room that had been made available to the female students, while the Dean of Junior Men did the same for his charges. Acceptable dwelling places won the designation “tested and approved.” It should be noted that the good citizens of Winnipeg responded admirably and provided ample accommodation for the students displaced by the soldiers.

By 1941, 90 percent of women students had enrolled in a variety of courses to aid in the war. The Dean of Women, Ursulla Macdonnell, received requests from across Canada as to how Manitoba’s successful program had been implemented. Auto mechanics proved to be a favourite course among the women. For the first time, women wore slacks in their residences (now off-campus).

Not only was the Union now entirely occupied by the military; by 1942, the Army
had constructed a number of temporary buildings (called “huts”) on the south side of the campus adjacent to the Residence building. The University (with federal assistance) also built a hut (“J”) in order to provide a Cafeteria for students and staff while the Residence was out of bounds. This hut was later to become the first building for the Faculty of Education and, later still, a work area for Architecture students.

Indoor facilities had to be provided for Army training purposes during the severe Manitoba winters. An old roller-skating rink that once occupied the foot of Osborne Street at Jubilee Avenue in old River Park was moved to the campus just to the southwest of the Union Building. It was rebuilt to become the Drill Hall before it was finally converted in 1952 to the Bison Gardens Skating Rink. Parallel to and just north of the Drill Hall, the Army also constructed an indoor rifle range.

During the war period, student activities at the U of M were very much simplified, with the scarcity of resources and the discovery that, with Saturdays devoted to hard military work, Friday nights had ceased to be desirable for a social life. It was a time of great seriousness, and this was, perhaps, reflected in the report of the Dean of Women. She said, of the peaceful coexistence of the students and the soldiers:

*The spirit between the two bodies is one of mutual respect and good will, but of detachment. Each attends its own work without curiosity about the other and there has been a total lack of “incidents” on both sides.*

### The Practice House

Directly to the east of the Manitoba Union, stood the Home Economics Practice House. Here students spent part of the year caring for an infant, making meals for the group, etc. In January 1944, a scarlet fever outbreak had caused the Practice House to be placed under quarantine.

As one Home Economics student recalls:

*I was part of the group that was quarantined for scarlet fever shortly after arriving at the Practice House. I remember us all gargling like mad with salt and water to keep the bug away. It was quite a tuneful chorus. The soldiers residing in the Residence took an interest in us until they heard “scarlet fever,” then they scooted away fast!*
By the beginning of the 1945-46 academic year, Berlin and Tokyo had fallen. V.E. Day and V.J. Day (Victory in Europe and in Japan) had come and gone. The world was in the process of changing over from war to peace. The University campus was resounding with the voices of ex-servicemen in pursuit of an education. Rehabilitation and re-establishment were common terms.

The War was finally over!

In August of 1945, the University regained the use of the Manitoba Union Building and subsequently acquired the temporary buildings (huts) for a $10,000 settlement. These huts were immediately refitted for classrooms and laboratories during the 1945-46 academic year to ease the space crisis created by returning war veterans.

The year 1945-46 in many ways showed signs of a gradual return to a more normal way of life. This was noticeable within the University as well as elsewhere, and one of the indications that things were getting to be more as they should be was the fact that the Residence was once again a “temporary home” for students who came from out of town. At the time, the East Block was just called “Women’s Residence” and the West Block “Men’s Residence.”

The Dean of the Women’s Residence surmised that never before had a university admitted students under such unique and emergent conditions as existed on the Forty Garry campus in September 1945.

There was considerable controversy as to whether the Residence could be put back in shape in time to receive incoming students for the fall term. But the scarcity of suitable quarters in the city decided the issue, and amid scenes of “almost indescribable confusion and disorder,” the doors were opened.

During the 1945-46 academic year, 162 women lived in Residence. Of these, 116 were in the Faculty of Home Economics; the rest were distributed as follows: Interior Decoration, 11; Public Health and Nursing Education, 9; Arts, 7; Science, 6; Commerce, 5; Education, 3; Social Work, 2; and one each in Agriculture, Pre-Architecture, and Engineering.

Eighty-five were Manitobans, 39 hailed from Saskatchewan, 14 were from Alberta, 11 were Ontarians, 10 were from British Columbia, and there was one Québécoise. Last but not least were the two Americans.

There was an attempt to get the place back to looking like a university residence, but things were pretty bleak at first. Army boots had done a lot to help put those gouges in the steps between floors. Household staff were scarce, and so, many of the female students turned housemaid. With scrub brush and pail they made their rooms habitable. With the exuberance of youth they adapted themselves to the discomforts and inconveniences of what was, to many of them, their introduction to university life. Much credit was due them for their sportsmanlike attitude toward their home conditions through that first year.
In time, the rooms were furnished with new brown linoleum on the floors and sharp new fluorescent light fixtures. Each room had two army cots, a rectangular oak table with a hard oak chair for each occupant, plus a dresser. There were no curtains or bedspreads. It was up to the Residents to make the place into a home away from home. One bugaboo was the condition of the washrooms: they needed improvement, and more concerted custodianship was high on the list. Their woebegone state got worse before it got better, and the sub-standard conditions became ever more prominent as the decades progressed.

**In Sickness and in Health**

A temporary Dean, as well as the new one who took office on October 1, 1945, had to cope with an outbreak of illness that required them to be nurse, mother, maid, and general manager 24 hours a day. The task of carrying trays for the sick to and from the Mess Hall/Kitchen behind the Residence was one of countless demands they had to meet.

Two emergency appendectomies created additional anxiety at a time when even the most valiant go-getter spirit was flagging. However, order was gradually established, and a more normal pattern of living began to take shape.

Early in October, a Student House Committee was elected to office to set up rules and regulations. Regular meetings took place throughout the winter, with the Dean acting in an advisory capacity.

Bi-monthly dances were held in the Auditorium, and these attracted the majority of students from both sides of the House. These were “gay and orderly affairs,” proclaimed the Dean, and they were frequently enlivened by impromptu skits and floor shows.

A Christmas party—a joint effort of the Nurse and the Dean—brought the pre-examination period to a happy conclusion. To give an example of the improvisation throughout the year, her Deanship proudly noted that, for said Christmas party, 975 cookies were baked in the Residence Hospital’s small oven, and six gallons of coffee were brewed on a two-burner electric plate!

During the winter, small groups celebrated birthdays and entertained men friends in the Reception Rooms. In the spring term, informal Sunday night programs were carried out in the Auditorium. Movies were shown, amateur contests (talent shows) created much amusement, and records and sing-songs brought these evenings to a close on a note of contentment and good fellowship.

Nightly snacks in the women’s rooms (to which the Deans were frequently invited) rounded out the full and busy student days.

In March 1946 the first Graduates’ Breakfast was served in the Dean’s Office. “This was an informal bathrobe-and-slipper affair which threatened to last well into the afternoon.” Granted it was only supposed be a breakfast, but in a war-weary world just recovering from the Second Great Unpleasantness, one must wonder how an “informal bathrobe-and-slipper affair” in a women’s university dormitory could have possibly been perceived as a “threat” to anything.

**Recommendations for Improvements**

Rather more germane were the Dean’s recommendations for improvements in the Women’s Residence following that first year of its post-war reactivation.

Paramount was the hiring of a “night porter” who, under the Dean’s jurisdiction, would check
in students returning from evening engagements and patrol the building throughout the night. While the regulations governing late leaves were faithfully observed by many, the welfare of those less trustworthy weighed heavily upon the conscience of the one in charge. Also, the noise created by roaming students was a constant disturbance, and it was suggested that some sort of matting be laid along the corridors. There was also some talk of fitting “controls” to as many doors as possible, although there is no elaboration of what form such controls would take.

Speaking of noise, the live-in household staff had their quarters in the east end of the basement of the Women’s Residence, and the Dean proposed that they be moved elsewhere. Not only were additional rooms needed for students, but “the natural enjoyment of leisure hours by the staff,” as the Dean diplomatically put it, was distressing to students during the evening hours. Many years would pass before the situation was in any way changed.

More noise was generated by the telephone located on the 3rd floor corridor, and it was hoped that it could be relocated to an unused sitting room on the same floor.

This space was also recommended as a sewing room for the Home Economics contingent that numerically dominated the female Resident population. A long table would provide excellent cutting facilities (that same long wooden table was in the basement of Taché Hall when it closed in 2011 and still held a sewing machine for mending pillowcases, etc.), and a full-length mirror or two, plus chairs, and small tables upon which the women’s sewing machines might be placed, would be of considerable value to the majority in the House. This kind of thinking was a carry-over from the MAC days, and it was still a reality when Mary Speechly Hall was opened in 1964.

The Men’s Residence in 1945-46

The Dean of Men’s Residence also produced a year-end report for the 1945-46 academic year. In it, he also acknowledged that the Residence would be re-activated in the fall of 1945—on the understanding that the students would knowingly accept the sub-standard conditions as they found them. Furniture was immediately brought out of storage and placed in some of the rooms, and the first customers were registered in Residence on September 14, 1945.

The story has been told that one student came to register for school that summer, only to find that there was no office or administrative staff to welcome him and give him a room assignment. So his dad suggested that the student pick a room he liked and throw his belongs on the bed to reserve his spot, which is what he did.

This chap also related that there were no doors on the rooms when they came in mid-August, but by the time his dad drove him back in September, all the doors had been put back in each room. His
belongings were just where he left them and that was how he claimed his room that year.

Since there were no existing committees for student self-government or recreational programming, it was necessary to build a completely new organization. Indeed, the activities realized during this first post-war academic year laid the very groundwork for Residence culture for years to come. A Tachéite of the mid-1960s would have had little difficulty recognizing the set-up that was put in place in 1945-46.

The first step was the election of a Men’s House Committee. This was done in all possible haste and the Committee, consisting of a President and eight members, held its first meeting on October 9, 1945. Sub-committee chairmen were immediately appointed to organize athletic and social events and, after the Agriculture Diploma students had entered in early November, two more members were elected to the group.

The initial matter to be dealt with by the Committee was the setting up of rules for self-government. This topic was considered slowly and carefully during a series of meetings that resulted in the posting of a set of regulations.

The Student Christian Movement

At an early meeting of the Men’s House Committee, it was moved that the Student Christian Movement (SCM) (archival documents also refer to a “Residence Church Committee”) be invited to organize regular religious services for Sunday mornings at 11:00 am in the Residence Auditorium.

The Manitoba SCM functioned through a cabinet composed of University executive and local executives on each campus. A far-reaching program of study groups, forums, worship services, and community activity was carried out. Study groups centered around Bible study, with emphasis on application of religious insights gained through this study to social problems.

Outstanding speakers were brought to student forums and meetings. The community project provided leadership training and source material for students who were active in community work in connection with city churches, the YMCA and the YWCA. Close connection with many denominations among the city churches was maintained.

Not only were services held every Sunday morning from October until the middle of April, but the House Committee organized a choir that assisted in the church services. This choir provided special music for an evening Christmas carol service in December when the entire SCM of the University gathered in the Residence Auditorium. Special music was also provided for an Easter service in April 1946.

Sports in Residence

During the fall term, a House basketball league of seven teams was in operation. Another league, consisting of four teams, was organized in January for the second term. The Residence Curling Club undertook to provide and maintain three sheets of ice in the curling rink behind the Residence. This club attracted 160 paid-up members and sponsored a league consisting of 48 rinks whose season was concluded by a very successful bonspiel.
The Residence Skating and Hockey Club also had a very successful winter though hampered by heavy snows on the outdoor rink and an early thaw that effectively ruined the ice during the late winter. This club showed a paid-up membership of 158 and organized a hockey league of five teams. Unfortunately, operation of this league was severely handicapped by a shortage of hockey sticks.

Social Activities

In all, nine dances were held in the Residence Auditorium thanks to the efforts of the sub-committee in charge of social activities. They were well-attended and served to help the attendees get acquainted, especially during the early months of the term. Light refreshments were served at all the dances.

In addition to these, permission was granted on six occasions to hold an afternoon tea-dance in the Auditorium under the sponsorship of a faculty or an organization outside of the Residence.

Early in February, entertainments were organized for Sunday evenings. These featured 16mm movies from the Public Library, community singing, music from records and various vocal and instrumental solos, choruses, and acts of entertainment put on by the students. These programs drew an average attendance of around 150 individuals and were so well-received that it was concluded that they could play a very worthwhile part in the recreational program of the Residence.

An effort had been made during the early fall to organize a Residence orchestra. Originally, it had been hoped that the group would be able to play for the House dances, but the lack of a set of drums and a scarcity of brass instruments proved to be a serious handicap. With the arrival of the January registrations, new talent was added to the group and it began to show considerable promise; the orchestra’s contributions to the Sunday evening entertainments were much appreciated, and an enhanced ensemble was anticipated for the following year.

More About Residence Life in the 1940s

Fire Marshall was appointed to instruct the men in Residence on fire-precautions, fire-fighting, and evacuation of the building in case of emergency. This organization was extended to include the women’s side. The Fire Hall was just south-west of the Residence.

Furniture procured from Eaton’s Service Centre by the University was used to furnish the sitting room (West Lounge) in the Men’s Residence, and the House Committee purchased subscriptions to about 20 popular magazines that were regularly placed in a magazine rack in the sitting room for the enjoyment of the Residents.

Telephone duty was organized so that there were two men detailed to this work each evening during study hours.

On the subject of demographics, a total of 480 men were accommodated in the Residence during that winter. Of these, the degree-course students totaled 247; Diploma Course in Agriculture 77; and the Dairy School, Six-Weeks Refresher Course, and various other short courses, 156. The maximum number at any one time was slightly over 320, but it was expected that this would be exceeded the following academic year when the Residence was fully furnished.
Disciplining the Residents

Discipline was very satisfactory on the whole; the House Committee was compelled to take disciplinary action on only two occasions, but in each case the penalties levied “yielded excellent results.”

It was quite evident, even as early as the first week in October, that a great many of the ex-service men had had their fill of military-type discipline, and it was decided that:

• student self-discipline should be depended upon to govern the conditions within the building, insofar as community relationships were concerned;
• the House Committee was prepared to act in specific cases, if and when necessary; and
• the Committee would have the full support of the Dean in enforcing all decisions.

There was an element of restlessness amongst the men, although it was difficult to say just how widespread it actually was. Many of the ex-servicemen settled down to serious study in a very satisfactory manner, but others found it hard to do so or found that their years in the military had left them unable to proceed with further courses without an extensive review. This was especially apparent in such subjects as mathematics and chemistry. From a current perspective, one wonders if some of the problem was not due to post-traumatic stress disorder, at least among those who had seen combat.

On the other hand, it was noticeable that the ex-servicemen were more mature in every way than was the average group of pre-war university students. They had no hesitation in assuming responsibility and discharged their duties efficiently and satisfactorily. The Dean was pleased to note that he found it a great pleasure to live and work with these men.

One lamentable incident, a sign, alas, of more to come in the decades ahead, transpired in the Residence Auditorium on January 29, 1946. The Athletic Board of Control (ABC) staged a full-dress “event” on campus. The Committee in charge displayed a conspicuous lack of ability to plan such a rally and assumed the right to use the Auditorium, without permission from anyone in authority, for the purpose of holding a dance.

As a result, an undisciplined mob of University students from the city invaded the Residence shortly after 7:00 pm and caused a general disturbance that lasted until almost midnight. During the course of the evening, damage to the extent of $125 was done to the building. Subsequently, the ABC assumed responsibility in the matter and instructed their Secretary to tender apologies to the Dean and Residents.

Sickness, Meals, and Cleanliness

Fortunately, the winter passed without the occurrence of any serious outbreak of communicable disease.

The need for a full-time Residence nurse was emphasized, however, by the fact that Miss Jeannette Douglas, who held that position during the academic year just ended, treated 50 male patients during a few weeks before Christmas, and 259 male patients during the first four months of 1946. Serious illness was referred to a medical doctor of the patient’s choice or, in the case of ex-servicemen, to Deer Lodge Hospital.

As was invariably the case in any university residence, the question of food came up for criticism and discussion. Every effort was made to...
explain to the students that the Dietitian and her staff were working under severe handicap because the Mess Hall was very poorly equipped and was designed to serve only as a temporary establishment until the new Kitchen in the building could be reconstructed and put into operation.

This is a most interesting observation, because it implies that the servery for the Oak Room was not in use immediately after the war. Rather, the Kitchen in the hut behind the Women’s Residence was, and this must have been what the Dean of Women’s Residence was alluding to as the “Mess” to and from which she and/or her associates were carrying food trays for students in the dormitory building who were under the weather.

In any event, an unavoidable shortage of kitchen help and an inability to purchase any variety of foodstuffs made the Dietitian’s work even more difficult and trying than usual. It was hoped that the conditions during the coming year would permit improvement on the victualling side.

It was hoped, too, that the University would make some provision for evening snacks for the Residents. The Men’s House Committee had requested permission to establish a snack bar of their own, but this was denied by the Administration on the grounds that such a service would be provided as soon as the new Kitchen could be put into operation. And behold, this prophesy was indeed made manifest before too long with the infilling of the plunge baths and the creation of a pair of snack bars in their place in the basement of the Centre Block.

The difficulty of securing a large enough staff in the janitorial services was also apparent in the Residence. The men employed in this Department seemed to work hard, but were unable to do all that was expected of them.

A number of well-justified complaints were received from students that the condition of the washrooms was not satisfactory. More such help was needed. Like his counterpart on the women’s side, the Dean was also of the opinion that a permanent night watchman was required to make regular patrols of the corridors as a precaution against fire and to assist the Deans in every way possible.

**Residence Life Underway**

At the start of the 1945-46 academic year, the Panhellenic Association had been able to extend its activities due to some cooperative efforts on the part of their members. All the sororities on the campus sent representatives to form a cleaning committee to have the Women’s Lounge sparkling for one of their very special occasions, where rushes became acquainted with all sororities on campus, as well as with the Dean of Women, Miss Marjorie McKay.

Social activities were held again for all Residence students. The season opened with the usual tea dance to allow the freshies to become acquainted and make dates for the “Freshie’s Frolic,” which was held on October 2, 1945 in the Residence Auditorium.

The Co-ed Hike was held on October 6, 1945 and, after the games outside, a program of songs, stunts, and refreshments was held in the Residence. Another popular event was a Hallowe’en Dance in the Auditorium. These dances were held frequently thereafter.

Sports were carried on in both the women’s and men’s quarters. In first term, weekly co-ed volleyball games were held at the “Y” with a final tie between Home Economics and Medicine. Because of the tie, play-offs were necessary. These
were held after Christmas in the Men’s Gym. Three games of 15 points each were played and Home Economics was declared the final winner. Thus for another year the Duncan Cameron trophy remained with the Home Eckers. The women also participated in a basketball tournament. The games were played in the Girls’ Gym at Residence every Saturday afternoon during January and February. The floor was small, but at least not as tiring as a regulation floor. Enthusiasm was strong throughout the series, with a total of 70 girls participating.

The Men’s Residence was divided into corridor teams and a lively basketball tournament was held. The great event of the basketball season was the meet between the University Intermediates and the Residence All-Stars. In spite of the fact that the All-Stars were encouraged by the support of 100 of their favourite Residence girls, they were defeated.

As previously mentioned, the skating and curling rinks, located to the south and behind the Residence building, had begun operating thanks to the untiring efforts of the Sports Committee.

Considering that the students had organized so much, so well, the future seemed very bright for Residence Life. And as the students commented, “This year in Residence is real college life!”

There was a wonderful mix of people living in Residence. There were scared little seventeen-year-olds and battle-scarred veterans who had seen an awful lot more of the world than some had any idea existed. Somehow, they were all good for each other. The young ones grew from the friendship developed with the older Residents, and the vets may have had a chance to gain some of the youthful times they had missed because they’d had to grow up so fast.

Another step forward was realized in October 1945 when the University President recommended the appointment of a full-time Residence Nurse and the outfitting of an infirmary. Further, a staff doctor would be engaged to conduct comprehensive physical examinations in the fall of all Residence students during his bi-weekly visits to the Infirmary.

Probably one constant in any Resident’s life is food—or maybe just complaining about food! Certainly, being normal kids, they complained, but they cherished the beautiful room in which to eat—presently called the Oak Room. It had been freshly redecorated after the war years and shone with new paint, well-finished woodwork, beautiful hardwood floors, and lovely new draperies in a deeply patterned blue. When the sun shone in those big windows, it was beautiful. What a contrast between the room and the meals, though! Sunday dinner at mid-day was the best meal of the week, but Sunday supper always seemed to be creamed salmon in a patty shell.
In 1946, the Home Ec. Tea Room that had been started in 1937 was moved to larger quarters, and with the new Residence Kitchen, students in the Institutional Management field now had practical experience on modern equipment.

The mood on campus and in the Residence was one of hope for the future, tempered by remembrance of what freedom had cost in life and limb and national treasure. Chancellor Dysart wrote in the 1946 Brown and Gold, “Realize the value of the things fought for—the dignity of human life, and the inherent right of human beings to live their lives in ways of their own choosing.”

**Mary Speechly Hall Before Its Time**

At its meeting of December 11, 1947, the University Board of Governors received a remarkable communication from the Dean of Women’s Residence. The suggestion was not acted upon at the time, but it was indeed prophetic. The Dean proposed that the women’s section of the Residence building be renamed “Mary Speechly Hall” after a leading proponent of the birth control movement.

Mary Speechly became the first President of the Winnipeg Birth Control Society in 1934 and helped found the Family Planning Association of Manitoba. She had been appointed to the Council of the Manitoba Agricultural College in 1924 and to the Board of Governors of the University of Manitoba in 1933. She served in the latter capacity until her retirement in 1946, and the following year she was granted an honorary degree by the U of M.

Mary Speechly was a fine role model for educated young women, and the naming of a Women’s Residence after her was an excellent choice. With the construction and designation of Mary Speechly Hall in 1964, the Dean’s recommendation became a reality—seventeen years after she made the proposal back in 1947 when the women’s accommodations still formed part of the original Residence building.

**Residence Rules and Regulations**

At this time, the Student Council had little authority and the real power rested in the hands of the Dean of each Residence—a call to the Dean’s office was never happily received. The men didn’t have hours imposed on them, but the women certainly did. They had to be in by 11:00 pm, with late leaves granted according to their scholastic year. The night watchman sat at the main entrance, monitoring the women’s “sign out” and “sign in.” The set-up worked well as long as the watchman was on station; if he wasn’t, the honour system took over and on occasion liberties were taken.

In one instance in 1948, a fresh(wo)man signed out and back in again using a senior girl’s signature for a late-night leave. A passing Residence official noticed this sleight of hand when the girl was signing back in after a night of whatever, and a report of it made its way to the office of the University President, no less. The President wrote a stern open letter to all and sundry reminding them that such infractions would not be tolerated.

Needless to say, students all tried, at one time or other, to sneak in late. Sometimes they made it. Sometimes they didn’t, and they were reported and lost their late leaves for a week or so.
There were no co-ed visits to the other Residence (no official visits anyway!)—not if you valued your life. Sounds sort of straight-laced, doesn’t it? But there were moments of lots of fun, and great friendships were made, and strangely enough, most of the students did enough work to get their degrees. And if anyone thought that chivalry was dead by the middle of the 20th Century, let it be said that on the early evening of Monday, October 31, 1949, the women Residents were serenaded by a large group of male students who gathered in front of the ladies’ dorm.

Actually, Hallowe’en seems to have held a special fascination for students in those days; on the same date the year previous, more than 80 masked male students raided the Women’s Residence. They burst into the unlocked rooms, dumped the sleeping girls out of their beds, and covered them with soap flakes, confetti, mud, and feathers. The incident made the national media, and it was in no time at all that an outraged parent in Calgary, whose daughter was presumably in the line of fire, wrote the Dean of Women wondering in so many words what kind of madhouse she was running there in Winnipeg. Local public reaction did not flatter the University’s reputation either.

**Avenue of Elms**

At the end of the 1940s, the University of Manitoba could look towards better times. During the First and Second World Wars, the U of M had served as a training ground for troops and had watched some of its best and brightest go off to fight for their country—a sacrifice that had been recognized with the planting of the "Avenue of Elms" in 1922. Now 25 years later, these trees had matured into two majestic columns stretching from the Administration Building to Pembina Highway along each side of Chancellor Matheson Drive. Many of these young people who were honoured would have lived in the Residences (especially during the First World War).

From the 1946 Valedictory Address:

> War has laid its cold hand on every heart, it has brought us to a fuller understanding of the things that are real, not merely a handful of silver, or the towering confidence of self, but a warm fine sense of courage and humility. And as long as there is some corner of a foreign field that we hold dear, may we never forget and never be unworthy of those whom war has claimed.

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**Monument on the corner of Chancellor Matheson and University Crescent.**

**The Avenue of Elms from the University of Manitoba Main Gates to the Administration Building.**
An overview of the campus in 1948. Notice the three Veterans’ Villages on the south-east side of the campus.