CHAPTER SIX
The Swingin’ Sixties 1960 - 1969

Although the year 1960 ushered in a new decade, nothing much changed in Residence culture from what was the norm in the 1950s. As usual, students still had to be accepted officially by the University Registrar to be eligible for accommodation. The Residence had originally been built for the benefit of students from the province of Manitoba outside of Winnipeg, and so priority in the allotment of rooms continued to be given to them. By now, the mandatory deposit to accompany the application had risen to $25, due in the hands of the Residence Cashier by August 1st. Those already in Residence, who were planning to return again in the fall, were encouraged to file their applications before leaving at the end of the current spring term.

Residence Life in the 1960s

The Residence was open for occupation by students the day before the first date of registration for their program of studies. Come the spring, they were required to leave within 48 hours of their last written examination, except for those who received special permission to remain for the completion of a practical part of their program. In addition to room and board fees, each student was levied a caution fee of $5. Against this fee was charged the value of all property broken or damaged by the student, and the balance (if any) was returned to him/her at the end of the academic year. If room keys were not returned, the $1 value of same was deducted from the caution money. Replacement of keys lost during the school year also cost the student $1.

All those living in Residence were required to board in the Dining Room (Oak Room, aka the Luncheonette). The board-ticket system employed at the U of M was subject to all manner of jiggery-pokery by the enterprising student, and of course the Administration had all the bases covered for just about any eventuality. Board tickets were issued, covering periods of one term at a time, fully payable in advance. Unless a student purchased and presented a current term’s ticket to the Dining Room cashier at mealtime, s/he was required to pay cash for each and every meal received over the counter.

And that wasn’t all … penalties abounded for the careless, the devious, and the absent-minded. For example, a $5 fee was assessed against those who did not settle their board and/or room
accounts with the Residence Cashier within one full business day after the account was due and payable. Furthermore, a penalty of $5 was assessed against any student who used a board ticket belonging to another student, and against anyone who permitted someone else to use his/her ticket. And they meant it: anyone who was found guilty of either of these infractions a second time was subject to referral to the University Disciplinary Committee, no less. Crime did not pay.

Not all board-ticket misadventures were by design. If a student simply lost his/her board card and required a new one, (s)he could obtain it for $1. But if the replacement ticket was also lost and a second one was required, the financial penalty rose to $5.

All meals were to be taken in the Dining Room, and the Administration was adamant about deliveries from outside food services—they weren't supposed to happen under any circumstances. This regulation was presumably put in place to keep mice and other pests from entering the Residence building without signing in. With the advent of take-out and delivery pizza joints in Winnipeg, this rule was repeatedly and successfully flaunted with reckless abandon by famished students, mice or no mice.

It was clearly explained to all students when they entered Residence that they must pay for both room and board—they were not allowed to pay for the room alone. This was because those who paid for room only inevitably wound up keeping and cooking food in their rooms. Since the Residence did not have the proper facilities for this, it led to unsanitary and unhealthy conditions, not to mention a potential fire hazard.

Class timetables spanned the entire working day at the University, including the lunch hour. Accordingly, students couldn’t always be present in the Dining Room for that meal, and so they were eligible to receive bag lunches upon submission of their class schedule to the appropriate authority. Those who had to follow a special diet under the direction of a medical doctor could make due application to the Dietitian. Board rates for students with special diets were $10 per term or $20 per session, in addition to the normal board rates.

In the early 1960s, the students’ rooms were fitted with 10-amp wall plugs. This meant that no electric plates, irons, toasters, and other heating appliances were to be operated therein—the circuits just couldn’t handle it. To offset this shortcoming, hotplates were installed in a basement party room of the Women’s Residence, and in the ping pong room on the Men’s side.

Speaking of heating, radiators in the rooms were not to be turned off completely, at least in winter. If the coils froze, two problems were likely to arise: flood damage to the premises, and difficulties in procuring replacement radiators. The latter possibly derived from the fact that the antiquated radiators with which the rooms were equipped dated back to the turn of the Century, and their like had long gone out of production.

**Opposite Gender Contact**

With the *in loco parentis* philosophy still in effect, a wide range of do’s and don’ts were in place to regulate on-premises contact between Residence students of opposite gender. In those days, the Residence Admin offices were located in the Men’s Residence (in Room 212C West, later called the Churchill Room), and so women routinely were allowed
to visit that sector to conduct necessary business. They were also permitted to attend authorized social or athletic events held in the West Gym. Otherwise, they were not allowed to frequent the men's quarters.

Likewise, the women's domicile was out-of-bounds to men except under controlled circumstances. This was in keeping with the early 1960s view by the authorities that young unmarried people in university dormitories should best be treated as a controlled substance. There were three designated Reception Rooms adjoining one another on the 2nd floor of the Women's Residence (East Lounge) that were open to the women and their visiting friends between 6:00 pm and 10:15 pm every evening, and on Saturdays guests could stay until 11:30 pm.

To maintain reasonable quiet in the main hallway and to facilitate announcement of callers, women students, other than freshmen, were required to take “door duty” from 7:00 pm to 9:15 pm. Male escorts calling on women students were to announce themselves to the door-duty attendant(s) and then wait in the Reception Room to greet their friends.

Interestingly, there was a dress code for the Reception Rooms similar to that applying to the Dining Room: women were not to wear shorts, slacks, or headgear such as kerchiefs or bandanas. This can only be taken to mean that skirts or dresses were mandatory, which in turn usually called for nylon stockings and the rigging that went with them. In the Reception Rooms, men were to wear long pants, but no blue jeans.

Inasmuch as the men's and women's quarters were part of a university campus, designated study rooms were available and study hours in place. These rooms assured a quiet atmosphere beyond that which was expected in the domicile, in general. For those who wanted to make noise on a piano, several such instruments were available. Piano practice hours in the Auditorium and in the Women's Gym could be arranged on application to the Director. There was also a piano in the Women's Reception Room that could be played during specified hours. A piano was situated in a music room in the Men's Residence, where additional music instruments could be played, as well. Radios and record players could be used in the rooms, preferably with the Director's knowledge and blessing beforehand.

The Auditorium was provided primarily, but not exclusively, for the benefit of the Residence students. It was used for dances and special parties on Friday, Saturday, or Sunday nights when the University was in session, and all such events had to close at 1:00 am. Groups using the Auditorium had to undertake to provide door-keepers for the entrances leading into each dormitory, and to ensure that non-residents did not, at any time, enter the dorms. The Gymnasiums were for the sole use of Residence students, although the Gyms and the Auditorium served as examination rooms and other needs for the general campus student body from time-to-time.

New Residences Are Built

Until the 1960s, “Residence” had meant the single, massive complex that had been built in 1911, the building we now call Taché Hall. Until the 1960s, it wasn't necessary to distinguish between Residence and
any specific residence hall. There was only the single building.

It should be noted that at about this time, several private residences appeared—St. John’s College had moved onto the Fort Garry campus in 1958 and provided a small residence with about 100 beds; in 1963 St. Andrew’s College provided about 50 rooms for their college members; and by 1964 a fairly large residence of about 250 beds (with space for 150 male students and 100 female students) was built for University College, ‘way across campus. It wasn’t so far away that it could escape the unwanted attentions of the Tachéites: on November 18, 1965, the latter raided the former, and the rude intrusion was ill-received by the “target audience.”

Welcome Mary Speechly Hall

In 1964, construction began on a new university residence, south of the old dormitory, a new complex that would eventually house 245 women, in mostly single rooms. The new dorm, named in honour of Mary Speechly (the aforementioned early proponent of birth control and sex education, and the first female on the U of M Board of Governors), occasioned the renaming of the old residence. Mary Speechly called it Taché Hall. So Taché Hall bears the name of Archbishop Alexandre Antonin Taché, whose influence had been instrumental in the founding of the University in the late 1800s.

Beside Mary Speechly Hall and to the rear of Taché Hall, a lower two storey structure was built to house, on the main floor, a Residence General Office (to accommodate both Taché Hall and Mary Speechly Hall) and a Faculty Club (to replace one of the huts behind the Residence used since the war years), and on the second floor, a new brightly sun-lit Dining Room and Kitchen. In the old dormitory, the Tea Room closed, and the Home Ec. students in the Institutional Management courses now did their practical work in this new Kitchen. This building was named Pembina Hall and was connected by indoor passages to both Taché Hall and Mary Speechly Hall.
This grouping of buildings became known as the Speechly/Taché Complex and from this point forward, some of the historical accounts and Residents’ memories will likely include all three of these facilities, as it is difficult to separate the Residence Life events of the next forty years, because they often included both dormitory buildings.

Back to Taché Hall

After the opening of Mary Speechy Hall, Taché Hall was now entirely a men’s dormitory, and the time was nigh to reduce the physical and social barriers that had historically separated the East and West Houses. To that end, it had to be kept in mind that the Centre Block, as a whole, was not for the exclusive use and enjoyment of the Residence community alone; it belonged to the membership of the campus-at-large. The area least in demand by outsiders was that occupied by the Canteens, below the Dining Room in the Centre Block, and it was available to both the East and West Houses of Taché Hall as a ready thoroughfare between the two sides.

Although the addition of Mary Speechly Hall (“Mary’s Place”) would no doubt be regarded by many as a sign of progress, it is a metaphor for a raw deal that was meted out to the Tachéites at the time. Back in 1963, the U of M Board of Governors had decided to include them as equal, per capita contributors to the debt retirement of the combined CMHC mortgages on the also-new University College Residence, the University College Great Hall, Pembina Hall, and Mary Speechly Hall. And what did the patrons of Taché Hall get for their generous financial contribution to all this? They were awarded Pembina Hall Dining Room, and even that was shared with Speechly, the Faculty Club, and a fairly large number of faculty and staff who used Pembina Hall for lunch on weekdays. Non-residents also defied the elements by using the men’s barrack as a short-cut to get to Pembina Hall for meals—a practice that left the locals in a peevish and restive mood.

But never mind—surely the Board of Governors had firmly intended to follow up the construction of University College Residence and Mary Speechly Hall with a comparable expenditure for a soon-to-come comprehensive renovation and improvement of venerable Taché Hall, oui? Indeed, during the 1965-66 academic year a joint Administration-Resident committee developed a plan to both renovate and expand Taché Hall by virtually gutting the building from the inside, extending the furthermore East Wing, and enclosing both the East and West sections of the structure.

Not a Pretty Sight

Just how pressing was the need for these renovations? Back in 1955, it had been noted that the University of Manitoba had the lowest Residence room and board rates in the country. The given reason was that tight restrictions were maintained on the number of staff employed in service operations. In other words, overhead costs were kept low … and it showed. In the fall of 1964, an inventory was made of the problems that bedevilled the washrooms, in particular. Admittedly, the shortcomings of the facilities do not make for...
particularly pleasant reading for polite company, but they do reflect the primitive conditions that existed in that relic of a building in the early 1960s. The problems, and suggested actions for their rectification, were stated by the Men’s Residence House Committee (MRHC), as noted on the side panel.

Washrooms were but one category of infrastructure that needed serious overhaul; the students reported that “student study rooms are barren, ill-furnished, ill-lit, ill-ventilated, and acoustically hopeless.” The laundry rooms “are in unsightly condition. The ceiling is falling in, the plumbing is sour, the switches for the irons are broken (they are not needed anyway), and the new dryer seems to function inconsistently. We need a board for ironing shirts.”

**Problems with Pembina Hall**

Nor was Taché Hall the only asset that evoked dissatisfaction; brand-new Pembina Hall was also a source of angst.

As a general statement, the MRHC felt that the University had provided a better dining hall than the old Oak Room, thanks mostly to the view of the river and its sylvan environment. However, the logistics had not improved: it was slow and awkward, the line-ups were long, and the space in which the students had to queue (a staircase and the foyer below) was “dull and uninteresting.”

[Editor’s note: This is a peculiar complaint, since both men and women mingled together in the same line-up, and hence the situation was ideal for girl-and-guy-watching. At no time over the course of his four years in Residence did the present writer ever consider the occupants of the Women’s Residence “dull” or “uninteresting.”]

At any rate, the MRHC was adamant that the dinner line-up should never have extended more than 30 feet from the bottom of the stairs. The waiting time for grub—from the point of one’s joining the foyer line-up to sitting down at the table—should last no longer than 10 minutes, wrote the Committee.

Furthermore, the sizes of the food servings were not large enough for growing adults, and there were frequent complaints about the surly attitude of those behind the serving counter. In the new food services building, the emphasis should be as much on “service” as on “food,” and so when one requested a bag lunch, s/he should not have been left with the impression that s/he was asking for the moon. The staff needed to be made to understand that they were working for the students, not the other way around; a civil answer to a civil request was the least one should be able to expect. The cutlery was not being cleaned properly, and the glasses were often soapy. The condiment facilities were inadequate and,
depending where they were, either slow or messy. The line-ups for the bus table were pronounced “ridiculous”—an architectural error—and should be replaced, speeded up, or improved in some other way.

And another thing: the length of the supper hour should be extended. The existing 45 minutes on weekdays and Sunday noon was just not adequate, and the 30 minutes on Sunday evenings was deemed far too short when students were preparing for exams. A supper hour of 5:00 to 6:15 pm was judged to be adequate, and the Sunday dinner and supper hours should be extended to one hour and fifteen minutes, as well.

Open House

With the brand new women’s residence came brand new ideas, or at least old ideas whose time had come. One such idea was the “open house” provision, whereby during certain hours on certain specified days, women could visit men in their lodgings, and vice versa. Thus, entry into the precincts occupied by the opposite gender was no longer relegated to the Reception Rooms or Gymnasia.

An Open House Committee was established, and in January 1965 the Committee Chairman issued an open invitation to all Residents of Mary Speechly Hall to the first-ever Open House in Taché Hall on January 17th from 2:00 to 6:00 pm. Mr. M.A. Kains, Director of Residences and Housing, kindly provided wood for the Reception Room fireplaces, and a guestbook was placed in the lower lobby of Pembina Hall.

The inaugural Open House events were judged by the participants to have been most successful, having added greatly to the livability and social activity in the Residence complex. By October of the next academic year (1965-66), plans were afoot to establish them on a regular basis starting that same month. This meant that Open Houses would be held every second week alternating between Mary Speechly and Taché, thus ensuring that each would have an Open House once a month, but not on the same day. This was seen as entirely appropriate given the recent growth of the Residence community that tended to divorce the students from social contact of the sort to be found in smaller residences. At the same time, the socializing experience would be maximized, with minimum disturbance to non-participants because it would mean that there would be only one event each month per Residence.

Predictably, the senior administrators of student life viewed this Open House business with some reserve. Permission to hold them had to be applied for on an ongoing basis, giving the overseers the opportunity to reiterate their expectations and reaffirm that if at any time “untoward incidents” were to occur, permission would be withdrawn. House Committee members and Floor Reps had to be present as supervisors, and the doors to the rooms were to be left OPEN. Theoretically, gentlemen attending Mary Speechly Hall did so at the invitation of Speechly colleagues who met them downstairs in the main foyer: no unescorted, unidentified foreign objects roaming the Speechly hallways, please. As the latter half of the decade progressed, the students pushed for, and received, longer Open House hours, all of which became moot in the decades that followed as the Speechly/Taché complex became increasingly co-ed.

Floor Reps

Every year, and particularly in 1964-65, the House Committee executives received complaints from Floor Reps that they were not aware of the responsibilities and powers of their positions. Likewise, the Floor Reps and the executives received many complaints from students that the noise level in the Residence was too high.

Both of these problems had a feedback effect on each other: if a student did not know what was expected of him, there was bound to be noise; and it was the duty of the Floor Rep to let him know what regulations existed to govern behaviour in the Residences. Primarily, these were that quiet was expected after 7:00 pm. Discipline also had to be maintained during the weekends, but a certain leniency was possible during the weekly “holidays.”
The position of the Floor Rep was one of the most important, and one of the most difficult, on the House Committee. Difficult, because he had to maintain discipline on his floor, and many of the people in his charge were his close friends. For that reason, it was sometimes difficult for him to take effective action against a rowdy party. If every Resident knew and understood the rules and avoided trouble, the Floor Rep would not have had to fulfill his duty and report them. Standard rules of disciplinary procedure were in place by the mid-1960s, having been developed by experienced Residence students and, if followed, would have resulted in fairness to all concerned with disciplinary matters.

### The Birth of RSAC

In the 1960s, students followed the lead of more radical counterparts elsewhere in North America and began to press for greater recognition in policy decisions. The files of the Resident Students’ Association Committee (RSAC) are filled with the letters of debate between Comptroller W. Condo and Director Kains on one side, and various student Presidents on the other; the evidence of an endless student struggle for greater autonomy.

The evolution of the student government concept was stimulated by the construction of Mary Speechly and Pembina Halls in 1964. With three autonomous governments now (East Taché, West Taché, and Speechly), the need was seen to develop a strong central government while retaining autonomy for the three constituent Houses. So that year, through the authority of the University Board of Governors, the constitution of RSAC was duly instituted, and the members of that association were encouraged to become giving, learning, and responsible participants in the University and the Residence community.

The RSAC, aka “the Residence Committee,” comprised the three House Committees, in part to provide the students with a unified political voice. Following in the footsteps of the Residence House Committees, the RSAC found itself responsible for all social and cultural programming in Residence. Arranging social events, Friday-night dances, drama clubs, Glee Clubs’ variety nights in the Auditorium, speakers, and the enforcement of rules and regulations were all part of the responsibilities of self-governance.

One of the student politicians, Harry Nolan, later returned to the Residence to serve as Director, and was a major force both in the restructuring of Residence Life and in the renovation of Taché Hall.

During the 1967-68 academic year the name of the RSAC was changed: it was now the RSA Council, not the RSA Committee. Something that didn’t change was the long-standing objection to non-residents cutting through Taché Hall to and from somewhere else like the Faculty Club in Pembina Hall and Mary’s Place. An occasional, if not common, response to this form of trespass was to throw the offenders (including professors!) into the nearest bathtub of water before ejecting them from the building—a daunting prospect in the dead of winter.

Another spot of bother was the weekly room service … or at least the annoyances that sometimes came with it. The maids were in the habit of entering students’ rooms without waiting for an answer to their knock. Could they not have had the courtesy to knock and wait a few
moments before entering a room? If the student was in bed and did not wish to get up, could the maid not leave the clean linen behind and let the student make his own bed? And sweep the floor and dust the place? And empty the waste basket? The maids complained to the students personally about the condition of their rooms, the furniture, and personal effects. If they were important enough, such complaints should have been called to the student’s attention by the Assistant Director of Men’s Residence, not directly by the hired help. Finally, the students took the view that the insides of all closets and drawers were private, and that the maids were violating their privacy by opening them. Alas, trouble in Paradise!

The Dons

The concept of the Don was introduced in the 1960s as a method of complementing studies with a “big brother/sister” within Residence to help with individual counselling. The Don was a mature individual whose student background included one or more years of familiarity with a university or college. Prior participation in student activities in high school and Residence activities in college were considered helpful, but not necessary. Being an approachable person with a friendly manner was deemed an asset, as were maturity, a good grade point average, good study habits, and “experience.” Residence Dons were not responsible for discipline. It was expected that if a Don was aware of any general situation that may result in a disturbance, he would report the matter to the appropriate House Committee so that action could be taken to head off foreseeable difficulties.

In reviewing the score sheets from 1966 candidate interviews, it is amusing to note that being “clean-cut” was considered an asset for male Don hopefuls. Presumably, long-haired freaky people need not have applied—not that there were many such creatures around anyway; the day of the hippy wannabe was a few years off yet. As for women, looking “poised, but full of pep” was a good thing; looking young was not! Shyness was a career-killer for both genders.

A Don was expected to seek out and meet those students who would be under his jurisdiction and to maintain a continued contact with them. Mindful that a Don was not intended to be a tutor, he was to advise a student in academic difficulty on the people to see or steps to be taken, to cope with the problem. In dealing with personal problems, the Don had to be aware of the Student Health Service, the Counselling and Guidance Service, and other assets available for professional advice. Don-to-student allocation was made by the Associate Director of Residence, and the Don was free to discuss with the Associate Director of Residence, the Director of Residence, or any of the University Deans, matters that he felt should be reported to them.

In the event of a student’s illness, the Don could be expected to direct him to the Infirmary located on the main floor of Taché Hall East. If a student was unable to attend the Infirmary, the Don would explain the circumstances to the Duty Nurse and arrange for her to visit the patient. If a piece of building equipment or machinery, rather than a student, suffered a physical malfunction, the Don would inform the Associate Director or the Director of Residence. If such an emergency were to occur at night, the Don had to decide whether or not repairs could wait until morning.

If a student was ill and needed medical attention, a Don might recommend a visit to the Infirmary.

If the break-down was serious and the Director was unavailable, a phone call to the powerhouse would bring a Night Supervisor to deal with it. Each Don was required to render to the Associate Director of Residence an interim report of his activities at the end of December and a final account at the completion of the academic year in April or May. Remuneration for the Don covered the equivalent of one hour’s services on one particular day. This could mean three or four hours on one particular day, followed by several days in which there would be no Don-student contact. If anything could be said against the Dons, it was that there were not enough of them, and so in 1968 the move was made to improve the Don/student ratio from 80-to-1 to 60-to-1.
**Plans to Renovate Taché Hall**

As for the plans to renovate Taché Hall, approval of the Board of Governors had been received and conveyed to the Architecture Faculty. There, they were to be turned into a set of working plans. In late January 1966, it was agreed that the formation of a “user committee” was in order to facilitate a rapid development of a renovation program. This committee comprised representatives from the Resident Students’ Association, the Residence Administration staff, and professors from the Faculty of Architecture.

But a year later, something far more ambitious was recommended beyond just the renovation of Taché Hall. In a letter he drafted on February 28, 1967, the RSAC President reported to W.J. Condo that the Residence Improvement Committee endorsed the building of two new residence wings with the full understanding that, upon completion of the new construction, a complete renovations program would begin on the old one (i.e., Taché Hall proper).

The new construction would consist of one new wing running in an east-west direction immediately behind (south of) Taché. This proposal is remarkable for a number of reasons, not least of which was the actual realization of something quite like it (the Pembina Hall Residence) … some 45 years later! The students also wanted a new mixed lounge to replace the one on Speechly’s main floor, which had quickly become something of an evening and weekend passion pit for Residence students. The situation became especially sticky when a girl’s parents came to visit her and they were directed to the existing lounge to await their daughter’s appearance, only to be embarrassed by a hands-on display of young love in full bloom [see Where There’s a Will There’s a Way in the “Memories of the 1960s” section].

The following is excerpted from an RSA position paper dated May 2, 1967:

> The need for a mixed lounge within the Taché Hall and Mary Speechly Hall complex is obvious to anybody with any connection with the complex. There are so few facilities for mixed recreation [sic!] within the residence that the present situation in the MSH Lounge is a natural result; however, most students, especially those that are not coupled, would like other diversions.

> There should be two types of areas within the building: (1) intimate, and (2) one for [non-intimate] activities in which individuals could move without fear of embarrassment. The lounge itself should be at least twice the size of the MSH Lounge.

> This area should be equipped with a stereo. Its main purpose would be for intimacy.

> Control of this region and its activities [would be] produced by residence gossip and the residence ‘social conscience.’ Another lounge area, but for far less intimate activities, would contain the proposed library, tables on which cards could be played, and enough room for group discussion.

> The size of this [mixed lounge] building is probably limited by funds rather than by physical limitations. However, most of the members of the Users Committee are well acquainted with the crowded condition of...
the MSH Lounge. Embarrassment caused to girls who have parents visiting them is often encountered. One cannot fault the occupants, though, because they are making the best of a bad situation. The RSAC is not asking for an area in which everything goes, no questions asked; we are asking for an area in which members of the two sexes may meet, go to, without the embarrassing situations that arise at the present time.

It had been hoped that this new mixed lounge would be placed in the courtyard between Speechly and West Taché. It was never built, but years later in 1974 a lounge was converted out of the old Canteen area in the Centre Block of Taché Hall, as will be recounted later.

In any event, a CMHC loan of $4,000,000 was arranged, and everything seemed to be coming up roses for the renovation of Taché Hall. The plans were given to graduate Architecture students to be completed in their spare time. Alas, spare time among Architecture students was in short supply, and this arrangement resulted in a two-year delay in the completion of the working plans in May of 1968. They were put out to tender in short order, but the bids, which came in during the fall of that same year, were around half a million too high, mainly due to the rising cost of construction and materials during the two-year delay!

The University turned in vain to the Grants Commission, CMHC, and the provincial government for the required extra money, and so the renovation/expansion of Taché Hall was shelved indefinitely.

But that wasn’t all: things in Taché were in considerably worse shape now than they were in 1963 when the renovations idea was originally conceived. Anticipating the virtual gutting of the building, maintenance had understandably decreased substantially. Then came the ever-tightening budgets. Residences were lumped into the “Ancillary Enterprise” category of campus infrastructure, along with the bookstore and parking facilities and the care and feeding thereof. The Grants Commission’s policy that Ancillary Enterprises must break even financially had a telling effect on Taché Hall—rapidly rising residence fees along with a simultaneous cutback in maintenance and services. It was a losing proposition that would only get worse before it got better.

Vanishing Seniors

A rather interesting issue arose in the 1960s. The RSAC felt that there was a need for more single rooms in Taché Hall. The reasoning went like this: senior students had a tendency to leave Residence, especially after their second year, but also after first year as well. They did so for several reasons: the place was too noisy, and they could not get the privacy they desired. Because of the requirement that the Residence should be 50% freshmen, the pervading outlook was one of immaturity. In-house programs were aimed at a lower level of social development, and it was difficult to keep active senior students in Residence to provide the intellectual and social climate that would have benefited the under-classmen. Many of the regulations treated Residents as a whole like young teenagers, and this tended to turn the senior students off.

Their departure was unfortunate because the student government lost potential incumbents, not to mention a mature and seriously
academic element within the social environment. The RSAC argued that upper classmen would be inclined to stay if they could be offered single rooms. The downside of this suggestion, from the Administration’s standpoint, was that there would be fewer paying customers to keep the operation running.

More Problems in P Hall

Taché Hall, as a whole, was an interesting structure in the sense that it was not only a private, but a public, facility as well. The dormitories were private, of course, but the Canteens, the Luncheonette (Oak Room) and the Auditorium (i.e., the components of the Centre Block) were open to the general campus.

Former pupils from outlying elementary schools recall conducting their pageants and plays in the Auditorium; and the Oak Room had been the focal point of meal-taking by staff, faculty, and day students, as well as Residence students prior to Pembina Hall.

When the Pembina Hall Dining Room opened, persons other than Residence students also took their meals there. This arrangement did not always work to the satisfaction of Taché and Speechly Residents, and questions of privilege and priorities arose from time-to-time.

On one occasion, for example, the RSA President wrote the Head Dietitian about a conflict that had arisen earlier that day between an outside group and Residents. At suppertime, many of the students had found it difficult to obtain seating in Pembina Hall Dining Room because a large number of the seats were taken up by outsiders for a special dinner of some kind, and then when the regulars finally found a seat, their dinners were cold.

The layout of the servery itself was part of the problem: one picked up one’s hot food first and cold foods (beverages, desserts) at the end. By the time one had gone through the line-up and sat down at a table, some eight minutes had passed—plenty of time for your hot food to cool off. Thus, it was hard enough to keep meals warm at the best of times without having to spend time hunting for a seat in an already crowded dining hall. In the mind of the RSA President, Pembina Hall Dining Room was first and foremost a Residence student facility, although in reality this did not preclude its use by other parties.

Clearly, some measures had to be taken to ensure that outsiders’ events did not coincide with Residence student meal times. That the matter had not been resolved in the short run was shown two years later when W.J. Condo was informed at a meeting with the RSAC that occasionally outside groups attending meetings at the University arrived at Pembina Hall for lunch at peak times when Residents were endeavouring to have their meals. In a letter to one of the Deans whose faculty was sponsoring such an event, Mr. Condo directed that any member of the Dean’s staff who had occasion to arrange meetings or conferences involving use of Pembina Hall Dining Room had to clear the timing of the meal in advance with the Head Dietitian.
Non-Residents Use of Centre Block

Another aggravation involving non-residents was the University’s use of Taché’s East and West Gyms and the Auditorium for exam purposes during the weekends. The Operations and Maintenance staff set up the tables and chairs on Friday afternoon and did not take them down until Monday morning.

As a result, the Residence students were unable to use the Gyms on the weekends for their intended purpose—recreational and athletic diversions. The significance of these activities was not to be underestimated; with so much of the academic year coinciding with winter, outside activity was not a viable option most of the time, and the Gyms were focal places to which the students could resort to blow off steam and release stress.

Beyond that, scheduling exams in the Gymnasia and the Auditorium caused other disruptions in Taché Hall: they were situated in residential sections of the building, and non-residents assembling for exams or discussing their anticipated success or failure afterwards were a major disturbance to Residents on two floors near the Gyms and the Aud. In addition, the Luncheonette and the Gyms were used for course registration, parking allocation, and other administrative processes. Persons unfamiliar with the building wandered through the residential portions, unwittingly disturbing and impinging on the privacy of the occupants.

The planned use of the West Gym for teaching by the Faculty of Physical Education was no more appealing to the Residence students than was the use of the East Gym by Education students for their Phys. Ed. training.

Fond Farewells

During the latter half of the 1960s, the Residence community bade farewell to two retiring members of the Residence Administration. At the 1965 Colour Night, Mrs. Clara Unwin was honoured for her 11 years of service in the interests of the male students in Taché Hall.

One of the very first officials that new male Residents corresponded with was the Associate Director of Men’s Residence. Effective 1954, that happened to be Mrs. Clara Unwin. Her office was situated in Room 228 Taché Hall West, right next door to what was her private live-in suite (Room 228A). She was responsible to the Director of Residences and Housing and looked to him in all matters concerning the students occupying the Men’s Residence.

Mrs. Unwin received applications from students wishing to live in Residence, both regular and summer session, and handled all follow-up correspondence. She allocated rooms to the successful applicants, and also arranged for telephone monitors and appointed a supervisor from their number.

With her retirement, the C.E. Unwin Trophy was instituted to henceforth recognize annually the RSA member who, in the judgment of the Sports Committee, best displayed sportsmanship combined with ability in Residence sports. [see stories of Mrs. Unwin in the 1950s and 1960s Memories Sections.]

In 1967, two years after Mrs. Unwin’s departure, the McKinnon Presidential Award was established in recognition of the contributions to Residence Life made by Mrs. Vivian McKinnon, Associate Director
of Women's Residence from 1956-1967. This trophy was to be awarded each year to acknowledge the member of the Association who, in the eyes of the RSAC Executive Committee, made the most outstanding contribution to Residence Life in general beyond the responsibilities normally required of him/her by whatever position he/she had held.

**Telephones**

The late 1960s were also a time of technological innovation in Taché Hall, and one major change was in regards to telecommunications. Hitherto, during the evening hours and over weekends, incoming phone calls were answered in a Control Room, one of which was located in both the East and West Houses. Calls were announced by buzzer to individual rooms.

Pay phones were also available, but were intended for outgoing calls only. Their use was to be limited to three minutes per call, if at all possible, and the reason why is not difficult to fathom: the phones were few and far between. In March of 1968, for example, there were six pay phones in West Taché to serve a student population of 305. Thus, there were 50.8 customers per phone. For incoming calls there were five phones to serve 61 people each.

In East Taché, not only students were housed there, but also Pembina Hall servery staff, and they used the pay phones as well. Designated telephones were available to RSAC executive members, but not to the general populace.

By this time, too, the buzzer system in place to notify rank-and-file students of incoming calls was regarded as obsolete and archaic, with students and professors unable to conveniently and expeditiously contact one another. It was difficult and stressful for Residence students to contact off-campus family and other relatives in times of emergency, not to mention the inconvenience involved in routinely contacting dates and friends for social functions.

The perceived solution to all this was to install telephones in individual rooms. In late July of 1968, after considerable negotiations between the University and the Manitoba Telephone System, it was announced that an agreement for the inaugural installation of 115 lines in the Speechly/Taché complex had been reached. Because of the shortage of lines, a two-party system would be used in most cases.

Applications for phones were to be accompanied by $30.30 for a single-party service or $25.75 for a two-party service. These sums, payable up-front, included the installation fee and the basic monthly bill from October 1st to April 30th. Long distance charges were extra. For those who were not blessed with having their own phones, the old system remained in place.

**The Residence Library**

During the latter half of the 1960s, a number of students showed a keen interest in setting up a library somewhere in the Residence complex for use by both Taché and Speechly patrons. The campus Director of Libraries had shown support for the idea and offered to allocate funding to initiate and sustain such a facility.

At the outset, the Residence Library was planned to contain 200 new books and...
50 paperbacks for light reading. It was suggested that the small room on the west side of the East Taché Lounge would serve the purpose, at least for the interim. These books would be locked behind glass-windowed shelves or, alternatively, the entire room would be locked outside of visiting hours. The latter would run from 7:00 pm to 12:00 am, with further consideration for weekend hours. The library idea obviously gained traction, as it was shown as a line item in the RSAC budget proposals on into the 1970s.

Enter, the Perspective

Along-standing void was filled in March of 1968 with the provision under the RSAC Constitution for a Residence newsletter, complete with its own committee made up of a chairman, business manager, and advertising manager.

It was intended that the newsmagazine be published every two weeks throughout the academic year to inform Residents of upcoming events, provide a forum for student opinion, and avail the Resbians lasting mementoes of their school years in Residence. To help sustain the enterprise, revenue was augmented by soliciting and publishing advertising in the newsletter.

The publication, in due course, became formally known as the “Perspective” and was still a going concern when Taché Hall finally ceased to function as a Residence in 2011.

Music Fills the Halls

During the 1960s era, Taché Hall would have live bands playing (no DJs in those days) and the atmosphere was much more intimate than the huge dances held at UMSU. The best part was that there were often a lot more guys than girls at these dances (maybe because there were more guys in Residence?), so the odds were considerably in favour of the ladies, as they were usually in the minority.

At one memorable dance in July 1969, two of the girls were particularly popular (due to the dearth of other females in attendance). That night, one of the gals met the man who was to become her husband and by now, they have celebrated more than 40 happy years of marriage.

In addition to live bands, many Tachéites, like most young people, helped themselves to the popular music of the day via their radios. Indeed, some contemporary hit tunes could well have served as theme songs for the Residence experience, such as Where the Boys Are (Connie Francis), and We Gotta Get Outa This Place (The Animals). For those assigned to the basement floor of West Taché, what better musical metaphor could be found than Down in the Boondocks (Billy Joe Royal)?

Incidentally, it was in 1967 that record players were officially allowed in the rooms, the argument being that such devices were no more of a nuisance than radios.

Central Admin Bureaucrats

At this time, the old order was still very much in control. The new Mary Speechly Hall was guarded by a night watchman, and female Residents were still required to petition for late passes.

Students had no right to either add furniture to their rooms, return what they did not need, or to change, in any way, the décor of their quarters. They, on the other hand, felt that they
Residents tried to make their dorm rooms a “home away from home” but Administration left them few “approved” options. A world map and a large Canadian flag as a window curtain were a few ideas.

These roommates decorated their room with pennants and greeting cards.

Residents should have more freedom to develop their living spaces, as well as themselves, within the confines of the physical space. As it was, the “home away from home” wasn’t very homey. Needless to say, liberties were taken, and period photographs of certain rooms show varying arrays of pennants, posters, and girlie pin-ups clinging to the walls, at least in Tché Hall.

These modest balm notwithstanding, the increasingly antiquated modus operandi for running the Residence was exacerbated by the fact that all high-ranking administrative personnel making decisions were ensconced in the Admin Building across the Quadrangle. These senior administrators made decisions on everything from the number of steam irons available in the laundry rooms, to mixed-lounge hours, to the scheduling of open houses. They were not directly or physically connected with the Residences proper, nor did they have the time to spend fully studying Residence problems due to unavoidable commitments to many other areas of the University. Those administrative types whose offices were sited in the Residence complex and who were integrally involved with its operation—the Director of Residences and Housing and the two Associate Directors—were either not allowed, or else were unwilling, to make decisions on social changes or financial expenditures.

Furthermore, there were arguably too many administrators having a say in Residence business. Understandably, they variously had their own individual ideas of how things should be done, but instead of giving a many-sided approach, the decision-making process was at times confused, at least to the front-liners on the RSAC. Because of the many persons involved (Residence Advisory Committee, Vice-President Financial, Dean of Women, Associate Director of Men’s Residence, Associate Director of Women’s Residence, Director of Residences and Housing, University Head Dietitian, and Provost), the student representatives, specifically the RSAC Executive, had to spend inordinate amounts of time trying to convince each individual of the appropriateness of some reform or expenditure. The Council members were, after all, students, and these time-consuming confabs took them away from their studies beyond what should have been necessary.

If truth be told, it’s unlikely that anyone ever accused the population of Tché Hall of being a choir of angels, notwithstanding the fact that in April 1966 the University President had given the Gideons permission to deposit Bibles in the dormitory rooms. Bibles or no, the place had its share of bad boys over the years, and in 1969 the University-at-large had struck an ad hoc committee to review the disciplinary procedures in place at the U of M. This review involved sending a questionnaire to key officials, including the Director of Residences. His response included the following statements:

My position in the Residences is rather nebulous as I have never actually been told that I must take disciplinary action in specific cases. The Residence Students’ Association are [sic] responsible for all minor discipline within the Residences. In many cases the committee asks for advice and in some cases I give advice without their asking for it. The types of offenses that might need direction from me are:

1. actions resulting from drunkenness;
2. members of the opposite sex being present in a student’s room during restricted hours;
3. Damage to university property.

In cases of damage to property, I am directly involved in that I assess the cost of the damage and send information for invoicing to the Comptroller’s Office. There have been very few cases of a serious nature in the five years I have been here.

Another concern at the time was that not everyone who wanted to live in Residence could do so, due to space limitations. Nor did everyone want to live in Residence in the first place. For these cases, the Director of Residences and Housing maintained a list of homes whose owners were amenable to housing students. There was a proviso, however; the University accepted students for its classes and Residences without distinction as to race, creed, or colour and desired that all student living accommodation, on- and off-campus, should be available on these terms. Accordingly, if owners of off-campus housing were willing to offer rooms on these terms, they were invited to register.

An Assessment of Taché Hall

In 1969, the Association of Universities and Colleges in Canada (AUCC), in conjunction with the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), undertook a national study of student housing. It published an interesting description of Taché Hall that summed up what is, perhaps, an outsider’s impression of the building of the day, which reads as follows:

Taché Hall is a red brick building built fifty years ago in Prairie Spartan style and holds five hundred men. It has solid walls, frail doors, extra large washrooms, inadequate wiring, large windows, high ceilings, a noisy heating system, [and] rooms of odd sizes and shapes, many of them double. It is institutionally painted and lighted. The food service is good, though uninspired. But Taché Hall has developed a style that contributes much to the experience of the people who live there.

Built as a fledgling agricultural college, the Residence was designed as a living and activity centre. It has a large theatre with a stage and cinemascop screen, a large dining room—now used primarily as a day student Cafeteria and supervised evening study hall, a low ceiled Canteen (converted from a swimming pool), two gymasia, [and] miscellaneous rooms which house an infirmary, TV sets, chaplains, music activities, study desks, the directors, and a student government. The medium sized front parlour lounges receive a fair bit of use.

There are many things that are good about Taché Hall. It is spacious. The corridors are streets and talk places, the open stairs are gathering centres, the gymasia give the men a chance to work off energy. The theatre is a busy weekend social centre with films, periodic variety programmes, and frequent dances (with the girls from the adjacent Residence).

Students form groups and develop associations—not forced, but based on an active interest in doing and being. The Residence government maintains relatively stable discipline and promotes an active political, social, and athletic programme.

By 1969, Taché Hall was getting ever longer in the tooth, and the AUCC report addressed the issue:

Taché Hall is being improved. The University, recognizing its qualities, is embarking on an extensive renovation programme. Many of
the difficulties, such as thin doors, ancient furniture, ancillary rooms which are misused or ill-equipped, will be changed. Some rooms will be added and circulation will be improved. But the basic structure, a loose association of a variety of rooms with common facilities which creates an ‘indoor village,’ will be maintained and enhanced.

Unfortunately, that ambitious 1969-70 program to renovate was aborted, as noted earlier. The bids for construction of additions to Taché Hall and renovations to existing portions (including the Auditorium and the Luncheonette) were $500,000 to $600,000 in excess of the original CMHC approval, and though attempts were made to secure additional funds, the project failed. The provincial government changed hands on June of 1969 and considerable pressure was beginning to be applied to the University to cut spending and to put the institution’s financial house in order. A full decade would pass before the renovation of Taché Hall would be realized.

The University of Manitoba did its share when it came to fund-raising for a good cause. But there were limits. In February of 1969 the Greater Winnipeg Shinerama ’69 Committee wanted to rent the Auditorium for a pep rally and go-go show to raise funds for the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation of Canada. Regrettably, previous pep rallies resulted in damage to the Aud, not to mention negative publicity of an undisclosed nature. So the go-go show was a no go.

- A view of Taché Hall from the Administration Bldg. The white chain fence is still protecting the grass in front of the buildings on campus.

- Students watching a concert or variety show from the balcony in the Auditorium. Notice that the beautiful oak balustrade has been replaced with white panelling.