CHAPTER EIGHT
The Yuppie Eighties 1980 - 1989

In 1979, it had been decided to open East Taché despite the ongoing renovation project. That end of the building had been substantially completed, with the exception of delivery of furniture and washroom facilities that had been promised by the contractor to be ready by September.

Joint Management Committee

When the guarantee of delivery of furniture and completed washroom facilities was obviously not going to be met, the Joint Management Committee (JMC) was created to look at alternatives to accommodate students.

After the immediate issue was attended to, it was obvious that there was still a need to continue the Committee throughout the renovation project, mostly as an information exchange, but it would go on to serve a larger purpose: pressure had to be exerted on the contractors to complete their work; deficiencies and unfulfilled guarantees were substantial enough for the students to realistically request rebates; and it was an opportunity for the RSAC, Administration, Food Services, and the project coordinators to meet and assess the values of the project and specific deficiencies to be addressed.

Over time, the JMC evolved as an informal means of exchange of ideas and information. The philosophy behind it was that information had to be shared with the student government in order to enable Administration and the RSAC to resolve Residence concerns. The Director felt that the RSAC had the right to know as much as possible about the operation of the Residences and, conversely, that Residence Administration and student administrators should share in the problems encountered by the student government. Accordingly, the JMC became an advisory body to the Director.

The Committee was composed of nine representatives of the RSAC and six members of Administration (Director of Residence, Coordinator of Admissions and Student Life, House Manager, and the Head Resident from each of the three Houses). This Committee ensured that the student government would be aware of the

The doors leading out to the balcony on the first level of the Auditorium.
problems and possibilities that lay ahead, and that they were full participants in the decisions that would have to be made down the line.

**After the Renovations ... Raid!**

The spring of 1980 was certainly unique from the RSAC Treasurer’s viewpoint. A great deal of his time was spent negotiating rent rebates for students who had been inconvenienced by the lingering renovations project. The latter also had a negative impact on the income of the Association, which was less than it had been in previous years due to the reduced numbers of students living in Taché Hall.

After renovations, Taché Hall rooms and lounges were attractively furnished, and wall-to-wall carpet had been installed. But in Speechly, students had to be content with vinyl couches and chairs (known generically as furniture that sticks to warm skin), and with rugs that had seen too many water fights.

Despite the confusion, the Taché Hall Residents were sufficiently well-organized to plan the annual raid on Mary Speechly Hall. Because this event could occur at any time, and because a locked door was no obstacle to the invaders (who always arranged to find passkeys before the raid), Speechly Residents were obliged to sleep fully-dressed. Certainly no one wanted to be thrown into the tub in anything less substantial than a pair of sweats. Smaller women were sometimes able to escape by squeezing into the high cupboards in the rooms, and a few clever individuals sought refuge in the crawl spaces behind the washrooms. Most, however, were forced to face the assault.

For what little it was worth, retaliation consisted of a counter-attack by women armed with shaving cream, pudding, water buckets, and perhaps some cheap perfume. In retrospect, revenge might have been tougher on the cleaning staff than on the Taché guys.

Discipline is Needed

Fine-tuning was required on procedures of discipline management. In the normal scheme of things, charges against individuals accused of misdemeanours were brought to the attention of the Director of Residences by the Residence Disciplinary Board (RDB). During the exam period, however, involvement of the RDB was for all intents and purposes precluded because the Board members were students.
So in early April 1980, the Director advised one and all that if anyone had occasion to press charges, he should bring his statement straight to him. The latter would then conduct a hearing with the accused and witnesses, arrive at a judgement and, if necessary, levy a fine or take such other action as he deemed appropriate. If the offences were egregious enough, the guilty party could be placed on probation. This involved being served notice that s/he had been given a last chance to retain Residence standing; any further violation of rules and regulations, as spelled out in the *Speechly/Taché Handbook*, could result in immediate expulsion from the complex.

At the risk of stating the obvious, certain prohibited actions posing a danger to life, health, or property, and/or affecting the University generally, were spelled out in the *Residence Housing Contract* signed by all students. A 1980s edition of the contract listed the following:

- illegal sale, purchase, or use of drugs or alcohol;
- use or possession of firearms, explosives, or dangerous weapons;
- use or storage of flammable liquids or other dangerous substances;
- physical acts of violence through coercion, intimidation, or other forms of harassment;
- damage, destruction, or theft of other Residents’ or University property;
- tampering with or misusing fire equipment and elevators;
- and, last but not least, setting fires.

It is a wonder, is it not, that people had to be advised in print that such adventures were undesirable in the Residence community.

Nor did Resbians confine their assaults on property to Taché Hall alone. For many years, they seasonally removed the top portions of evergreen trees on campus and in the surrounding neighbourhood. The practice was called “topping.” These purloined bits of flora mostly ended up in the Residence complex as part of the Christmas décor. When caught, the culprits were fined; otherwise, the bill went to the RSAC.

To add a bit of colour to the foregoing, here is what the Royal We had to offer in a fit of pique:

> The Residence Office has received a number of complaints [from students] regarding the maintenance of the Complex [particularly the washrooms]. While we recognize the validity of many of these, we must point out that the maintenance staff operates within certain time restrictions. Priorities must be respected. If they are to be occupied with the task of clearing trays from the hallways or wiping chocolate sauce from the walls, then they will have little time left to spend on the washrooms.

**Hats Off to Harry**

It was the custom of the RSA to set up an award or fund to honour the departure of a member of the Residence Administration. Harry Nolan, Director of Residences and Conference Services, had spearheaded the badly needed renovation of Taché Hall before leaving the post in 1980.

Harry had had a rather lengthy and active association with Taché Hall: he arrived at the U of M as a freshman in 1960 and enrolled in the five-year Bachelor of Architecture program. He served as Secretary of the Residence House Committee in 1963-64 and as its President in 1964-65. During the latter academic year, Harry was also the chairman of the Inter-Residence
the above-described renovations, he was instrumental in setting up the Joint Management Committee (JMC) in 1979 to deal with the communication gap that had built up between the student government and the Residence Administration. Harry was front-and-centre in the transitioning to co-ed Residence living and in re estructuring Residence Administration that witnessed the beginnings of Student Life programming. He is credited with implementing the Friday afternoon “Happy Hour,” the canteen services in the Condo Lounge, and the conference services program in the Residences.

And so, the Harry E. Nolan Fund was established in his honour for the beautification of Residence. The conditions were that $200 from the RSAC was be to put into a fund, along with $100 from the University’s President. In 1981, Council resolved that the monies in the Fund should be used to obtain artwork of former and present Residents as an acknowledgement and commemoration of creative Residence heritage. That same year, Council voted to contribute $100 to the Terry Fox Cancer Research Fund.

Staff Changes

In August 1980, Mr. Gordon Grant was brought into the Department by the then Director, Mr. Harry Nolan. Mr. Grant’s position was Residence Admissions and Student Life Coordinator. The previous incumbent, Mr. Dave Roberts, had left to complete his Masters program.

In September 1980, Mr. Nolan left his position and Mr. Ken Galston arrived to act as Residence and Conference Services Director. In spite of some of the difficulties presented in the situation, the Department still managed to construct and conduct a Senior Tutor and Proctor training program on short notice.

Proctors were required to attend special training programs held in August prior to the start of classes, as well as other such instructional sessions held during the academic year. They were responsible for helping to organize and execute the Freshie Month events, and accordingly were required to be in Residence while both the training and Freshie Month activities were in progress. As a salaried (as opposed to a voluntary) position, the Proctorship called for a serious commitment by the incumbent.

Variety: The Spice of Life

With the advent of the 1980s, Residents were now given a greater choice in types of dorms. Previously they could choose among male-only, female-only, or co-ed areas. Now there were several different kinds of Halls including co-ed, mature student, graduate student, and single-gender Halls.

As a result, fewer students moved and there were fewer complaints. During the preceding decade, students took a confrontational approach toward Residence administrators, a follow-on, perhaps, from the rebellious 1960s when defiance of authority was widespread inside and outside of Residence. But now the mood was much more one of cooperation and compromise.

East House Carpentry Club

Some idea of the initiative of which Residents were capable can be gauged from a project that came up in early 1980. The East House Carpentry Club conceived a proposal to build a sauna in the block. There was a $13,000 fund
on hand from the sale of old furniture from the recent Taché Hall renovations project, and the House Committee President wrote the Joint Management Committee for financial support of $3,000 from that source.

The complexities of such an undertaking were not to be underestimated. Present plumbing fixtures had to be removed, a drain had to be fitted, and then the drain had to be connected with existing drains. Heaters had to be installed, existing light fixtures had to be relocated, and/or lighting suitable for saunas needed to be put in place. In compliance with safety requirements, relocation and/or new installation of heat/smoke detectors had to be addressed. Also required was a new concrete floor that would slope to the drain. To this end, the present floor would have to be raised as much as three inches in its outer areas to allow for the required slope.

The plan was that the Carpentry Club students would do some or all of the concrete floor work, all of the woodwork and installation, as well as installation of the insulation and the vapour barrier. A partition would separate the dressing room area from the sauna itself, and walls and one window in the sauna area would be insulated and covered. A set of comprehensive plans and a costing of labour and materials had to be submitted to the University’s office of Physical Planning and Design.

Did the East House sauna become a reality? Unfortunately, the archival record is silent on the eventual outcome, and I think the current students would have known about it!

---

**Music to Their Ears … Not!**

During the early 1980s, the Auditorium was at the centre of an uproar that was very serious indeed. For several years, the School of Music had used the facility as a classroom five days a week. The need for this arrangement might strike one as curious, since the musicians had had their own on-campus building, complete with a large recital theatre, since 1965.

In any event, their activities in the Auditorium produced a certain amount of noise that did not sit at all well with those Residents living adjacent, who had to put up with it. As a consequence, music sessions had been interrupted by Resident traffic through the Auditorium, by deliberate shouting and door-slamming, and by water fights raging through it. More seriously, the musicians had been targets for flying ceiling tiles, eggs, snowballs and, on one occasion, a head of lettuce. Valuable instruments had been hit by these missiles. Notwithstanding the good cooperation from the Director of Residences in dealing with the problem, it had proved impossible to seal off the Auditorium to allow uninterrupted and safe music rehearsal.

In November of 1980, the situation came to a head. The Music School Director rendered a most distressing report directly to the President of the University, noting that he and three distinguished colleagues had gathered in the Aud to rehearse for a performance scheduled for the following evening. One of the guests was an accomplished accordionist from Toronto who was to be the featured artist in the upcoming event. During this rehearsal, he had been hit on the side of the face by a ceiling tile to
which were attached short pieces of wire. Since the musicians were on stage, the tile could only have been deliberately thrown from above.

Fortunately, the gentleman was not injured; however, to be hit in the face while concentrating at the high level demanded of professional musicians in rehearsal was unnerving for everyone in the ensemble. It was fully ten minutes before they felt sufficiently composed to continue. The Music School Director, as host of the rehearsal, understandably saw the incident as a source of acute embarrassment to himself and to the University. Three months later the perpetrator of the assault had been identified and expelled.

That did not mark the end of the tensions between the School of Music and the RSA, however. There were many violations of security and Quiet Hours by Music students. It was not unusual to find Music students practicing on percussion instruments up to 2:30 am! The Residents who wished to use the Aud for their socials, variety nights, and other programming felt like intruders in their own building.

Security was another problem arising from Music’s use of the Aud. On many occasions, Residence security staff found the entrance doors to the Centre Block left propped open; the front doors of the Auditorium remained unlocked when the musicians departed; lights were left on; and band instruments were not locked away on weekends, but instead were left where they would get in the way of Residence functions.

The Five-Year Upkeep Program

In 1980, in order to budget for maintenance of the Speechly/Taché complex, it was decided to identify types of work (e.g., painting) to fit into a five-year upkeep program. The plan for Taché was to completely paint one floor per year, and this would include both sides of the building. The fifth year would be taken up by the main and smaller Lounges, the showers, the washrooms, Gymnasia, and laundries.

A combination of factors militated against this ambitious plan. The first and major factor was the budget. Increases in fixed costs—salaries, benefits, and utilities—caused the maintenance portion of the budget to correspondingly decrease. The unforeseen labour costs for summer business (conferences and student accommodation) reduced discretionary spending. The second factor, perhaps having as great an influence on maintenance work as the first, was that the restorative work had to be scheduled around the summer programming and sometimes this was not possible: the show had to go on, and scheduling for infrastructural improvements had to be scaled back.

Problems with Proctors

It was brought up at an RSAC meeting in January 1981 that there had not only been numerous occasions of violation of Quiet Hours, but that the violators included RSAC members and Proctors. Since RSAC members and Proctors were responsible for upholding Quiet Hours, not violating them, it was a clear case of the foxes guarding the hen house!

We offer but one archived instance of behaviour unbecoming a Proctor. A few years back, a Resident of 3rd Floor East was firmly planted on a toilet minding (to) his own business. Another chap was in the next stall performing a like function, and when he finished he proceeded to the janitor’s sink, filled a dust pan full of water and dumped it over the top of the door of the biffy occupied by our defenseless victim. This manoeuvre enraged the latter who seemed to have no difficulty discerning the identity of his tormentor who, we regret to report, was the
The suspension stands until further reports by the Campus Police and the Residence Disciplinary Board are completed.

Of Proctors and Beer Fridges

As was seen in the previous decade, unruly escapades were sometimes instigated by Proctors, some of whom seemed to have been chosen as much on the basis of popularity (not necessarily a bad thing) as on their maturity or for acting as good scholarship and citizenship role models. Proctors set an example for freshmen, and if it was not a good one, it perpetuated an ongoing problem.

Also, Proctorship could be a first step for election to student government positions. Poor Proctors became poor student government reps, which boded ill for changes for the better. Proctor selection based solely on popularity did not

A Lock and Chain

A historian researching the files of the RSAC will occasionally come across a piece of correspondence that demands some serious guess-work and reading between the lines. Consider the following letter from the Director of Residence and Conference Services to a rogue (and suspended) Proctor:

Thank you very much for the clarification last night that you were carrying a lock and chain and not snowballs into the House, and that others were carrying snowballs.

I look forward to your report and your assistance in laying charges against those involved.

I would be pleased to lift your suspension; however, following our conversation and after further investigation, it appears that a lock and chain were used in an attempt to confine the University College students in the Gym.
necessarily occur, however. Popular students, if they had other traits deemed suitable for Proctorship, were often viewed as good candidates because their personalities were such that popularity was viewed as an added positive characteristic.

One provision that came with the liberalizing of liquor regulations in Residence was the operation of beer fridges by Proctors in their rooms. The beer fridges helped to develop a sense of camaraderie, and profits of sales went toward the funding of much-appreciated hall events. Indeed, without the revenue from beer fridges, halls would not be able to support as many good events as they had been.

Further, beer fridges actually provided some protection and safety for Residents: if an individual drank too much, he could walk “home” to his room rather than have to get into his car and drive home from a Pembina Highway bar. Also, a student could buy a single bottle from the fridge, not an entire case.

But illegal (i.e., over-sized) fridges turned out to be somewhat of a problem. Certain Proctors were alleged to be “boot-legging” to anyone who wanted beer anytime of the day or night. On the positive side, a student could buy a single bottle from the fridge, not an entire case from the liquor store.

Customers

The summer school tradition prevailed into the 1980s, but of course not everyone housed in Taché Hall over the summer was a standard University student. In 1981 and 1982, upwards of 40 percent of those in Residence in the “off season” were participants in chartered accountancy and driver education programs, or were students working in the city who needed an inexpensive place to stay, and were re-directed to the campus from youth hostels. Summer school staff and graduate students were lodged in an isolated section of East Taché that was quiet and conducive to serious study.

Nor was everyone using Taché Hall’s facilities a Resident of the building. For example, the Summer School of Highland Arts booked the East and West Gyms, the Auditorium, the Condo Lounge, and the Oak Room for their programming in the early 1980s. The group had come to the campus on the recommendation of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet (which also used the Taché Hall facilities each summer) and had planned to make their week-long summer school an annual event.

Over the years, a wide range of organizations and programs were hosted by the University, with Taché Hall serving as a domicile. These included the Winnipeg Blue Bombers training camp, Girl Guides Canada, Dance Canada/Contemporary Dancers, hockey schools, the Canadian Amateur Diving Association, the Native Evangelical Conference, Agriculture field trips, the United Nations Association of Canada, the Provincial Judges Seminar, the Royal Life Saving Society, and Manisphere High School Bands, to name a few.

Not Just a Lounge—Club Condo

After seven years in business, the Condo Lounge was deemed to be under-used. Equipped with a wet bar, walk-in cooler, tables, lounge furniture, and a dance floor, it was used primarily as a study area and intermittently on weekends as a social space for often-unlicensed social events.

One idea that was floated at the turn of the decade was the conversion of the Condo Lounge...
into a permanently licensed Residence club with pool tables, a dance floor, pinball machines, and other games open to Residents, their guests, and to non-residents who might be invited to join the club. Not only would this provide a needed additional social space on campus, but also it would perhaps further encourage students to drink in a controlled environment. With a professionally managed house club, there would exist the opportunity to teach students about drinking and to more readily identify and then assist students who developed drinking problems. Furthermore, during the summers the presence of an in-house club (not simply a “lounge”) would greatly enhance the marketability of the University as a conference facility.

For the grand opening of Club Condo in September 1981, the extensive talents of Residence students were utilized to present a program of singing, musical displays, dramatic readings, and other acts. The opening was well-attended and served to officially make Residents aware of the purpose and presence of the facility. During the Festival of Life and Learning, Club Condo was the site for a musical appearance of Dan Casavant and his band, and throughout the year Club Condo was used for impromptu singing and playing sessions and occasional game tourneys. It was also the meeting place for the Photo Club and was used as the venue for the Residence Pavilion during the first annual “Rezorama” [see later in this chapter].

To what extent these progressive ideas would come to fruition can be gauged from a document titled “Club Condo Report” written at the end of the 1981-82 academic year. The facility had just finished its first school year of business and had firmly established itself with the students of all three Residence Houses. The whole environment of Speechly/Taché had undergone a change for the better, and the feeling was that Club Condo had been a deciding factor in the transformation.

At the outset, Club Condo was essentially managed by a group of six volunteers. These individuals served as a Board of Directors who took care of ordering, social events, opening and closing, and accounting. Indeed, the most notable achievement for Club Condo was perhaps its survival and the fact that it was maintained by a group of volunteer managers with little practical experience. Though not paid monetarily for their services, they were formally recognized at the RSAC’s annual Colour Night.

In addition, Club Condo was able to provide employment for approximately twenty-five Residents throughout the year. Each nightly shift during the week utilized two students, and students were free to transfer shifts and arrange for substitutes if they had conflicting academic schedules.

The Club was a popular place to work, as the duties were light and it was a very good place for meeting fellow students from throughout the entire Residence complex. It was open on Friday and Saturday nights, as well as on weekday evenings. Business was very slow and operating losses were a reality on the weekends, but it was felt that, by being open, an alternative to alcohol use and abuse was available.

Expenses for Club Condo consisted of employee wages plus minor amounts for student recognition and Condo T-shirts. Profit margins on saleable items were kept as low as possible and were used simply for paying student workers’ wages, which amounted to approximately $210 per week. The profits were just enough to cover

![This chap is not shy as he straps on a guitar (and little else!) and belts out a song at one of the many events in Club Condo.](image1)

![There’s certainly a lot of energy in this female dancing act in Club Condo.](image2)
expenses. For the 1982-83 year, it was planned to hire a manager to be aided by a group of volunteers and to pay this new staff member a salary equivalent to any regular RSAC position.

Rezorama

For a long time, one of the signature cultural events in Winnipeg has been Folklorama. Not to be outdone, the Residents of Speechly/Taché established their own version of the annual festival of the nations—“Rezorama”—in late 1981. This project was put on by Residence students for Residence students, complete with pavilions featuring food, entertainment, and cultural exhibits. Considering the ethnic mix of the Residence population, this idea was a natural.

Indeed, an ongoing challenge of the RSAC was to deal with the alienation felt by foreign students within the overall Residence population. Rezorama would serve to promote a sense of community by allowing international students the opportunity to participate in and contribute to Residence Life in a meaningful fashion and to expose Canadian students to the cultural backgrounds of their peers.

To give but one example of the response to the inaugural staging of Rezorama, a co-chairperson of the Malaysian-Singapore pavilion wrote to the Malaysian embassy for artifacts for their display. The student’s enthusiasm was so catching that the Deputy High Commissioner came from Ottawa to attend!

The event was run on a non-profit basis, and all revenues were returned to the account to be expended on the following year’s rendition of the event. Although Food Services did help out, one little wrinkle in the Rezorama concept was a possible conflict with the unionized serving personnel and the effect it would have on the functions of Pembina Hall as the première-dining venue in the Residence complex.

Procedurally, individuals were issued “passports” (just like at Folklorama) that entitled the bearer to an unlimited number of visits to, but with only one sample of food at, each pavilion, whereupon the passport would be stamped in the appropriate section.

More Changes

In some ways, the 1980s were a new day in the morning for the Rez. West Taché floors finally went co-ed commencing in the fall term of 1981, despite the initial opposition of the traditional-minded West House Residents. Also in September of 1981, the Senior Tutor-Proctor
system was replaced by three Head Residents (HRs) and 23 Resident Assistants (RAs).

What the HRs got in return for their time and effort was nothing to sniff at: they received free room and board, a telephone for local calls, a nice room with cooking and shower facilities, and a salary. The new administrative structure encouraged participation of Residents in the planning and operation of Residences.

By early 1982, the patrons of the Speechly/Taché complex were experiencing a new-found sense of community and cooperative planning. There was a less than 1 percent vacancy rate, compared to a much higher rate in previous years. Tangible evidence was the successful Rezorama project, and Club Condo was a welcome coffee, cribbage, and conversation venue, and a popular meeting place. It was not so long ago that Residence was not a work-friendly place, nor did it lend itself to getting to know people because of vandalism and all-night parties.

In sum, by 1982 the Residence was undergoing significant changes. It had a new Director (Gordon McKee), a new agenda (the Residence was to return to the control of Administration), and a new system of student para-professionals (the Proctors were replaced by Resident Assistants), who answered to Administration rather than to the RSAC). The RAs were senior students who were selected because of their knowledge of the University and their ability and willingness to work with a diversity of individuals. On behalf of the Residents, they arranged information seminars dealing with such topics as time management, birth control, nutrition, physical fitness, and stress management. As employees of the University, the HRs and RAs were not subject to D-boarding.

**Condo Thrives**

Club Condo was no two-bit operation: it was very well-organized and had its own Manager and Board of Directors. The University-at-large was a year-round operation, and so was Club Condo. In a March 1982 report to the Coordinator of Student Housing and Conference Services, it was noted that Summer Session students, Royal Winnipeg Ballet students, and conference guests of all types and ages enthusiastically patronized the facility. To appreciate how well-organized Club Condo was in the 1980s, one need only look at the responsibilities of its Manager who was required to, among other things:

1. Prepare and keep a legible set of files
2. Prepare a year-end report
3. Attend an orientation session to brief the RSAC in their duties for the forthcoming academic year
4. Be a voting member of the Services Committee
5. Attend at least one RSAC meeting per month, making a full report on behalf of the Club Condo Board of Directors
6. Manage the accounts and financial records of Club Condo
7. Keep inventory and stock of all Club Condo assets and supplies
8. Order all necessary supplies for the Club
9. Arrange programs and entertainment to be held in Club Condo
10. Arrange advertising for Club Condo
11. Follow all rules set by the Union and Food Services

**12. Select a Board of Directors to assist the Club Condo Manager in carrying out his/her duties.**

What manner of non-alcoholic goodies could be purchased in Club Condo?

- Coke Classic
- Sour cream ‘n’ onion chips
- Diet Coke
- Salt ‘n’ vinegar chips
- C-Plus
- Regular chips
- Diet C-Plus
- BBQ chips
- Sugar-free A&W Root Beer
- Cheezies
- Iced tea
- Cheese tacos
- Minute Maid (Lemon-Lime)
- Muffins
- Fresca
- Donuts
- A wide selection of candy bars

**A New Deal**

Pilfering and theft of private property had long been a matter of concern to Residents. During the fall term of 1982, action was being taken to make available to individuals a Residence insurance policy for those who were not covered by their parents’ plan. It cost $5 a month, with a deductible of $100 and provided coverage in the amount of $10,000. To make a claim on this policy, there did not have to be any sign of theft—an item just had to be missing. Many insurance companies were hesitant to insure Residence students because they were
considered too high a risk due to the nature of their living situations. This policy was an inexpensive way to protect oneself against loss.

A Problem Needing a Solution

Residence for many was a sort of testing ground for exploring the limits of acceptable behaviour. After years of being constrained by living in the natal family, students were faced with new-found freedom, both socially and intellectually. However, it was found that, in general, commitment to the long-term welfare and standards of the community was very low among Residents due, no doubt, to the transitory nature of the Residence experience and because Residents were facing a period of transition and re-definition during their stay. In preparing themselves for the future, dormitory living was a means to an end, not an end in itself. Most were undergoing this change at the same time in their lives and, as a result, behaviour that would not normally be tolerated in another community setting was accepted in Residence.

In early June 1982, the Coordinator of Admissions and Student Life rendered a review that was alarming indeed. “Taché,” he wrote, “had an extremely poor reputation with high school counsellors and the community-at-large, and was reputed to be a centre of drugs and alcoholism. Compounded with the lack of consideration with individual rights made Taché Hall a place to be avoided at all costs.”

Concerned individuals already living in Taché were disinclined to complain about the problems for fear of retribution by the raucous faction, and senior students were considering not coming back because of the discipline problems and lack of direction in the Residence. And much, if not most, of the dysfunction was blamed on the abuse of alcohol. It all demanded serious attention on someone’s part, and in due course the RSAC stepped up to the plate.

A Full Social Calendar

During those years in Residence, many functions occurred in the then raucous Club Condo. They were heavily into Disco Destruction then, choosing the Pogo over Saturday Night Fever. The Pogo presented them with an interesting challenge—given the low ceiling of the Club. How could the taller and more athletic fully express themselves, in the Pogo-mode, without punching out the ceiling tiles? Songs like “My Sharona” and “Johnny Be Rotten” could really get everyone jumping.

Clearly, then, the lifestyle of the student body of Taché Hall was not by any means defined solely by scholastics: the program was flush with extra-curricular activities. In fact, the RSAC President was compelled to take action in early November 1982 about the number of RSAC-generated socials that were scheduled for that month—people were complaining that there were too many! With Christmas exams fast approaching, no fewer than four socials and several beer bashes were in the offing. Socials were fine, but they had to be kept in their place.

So then, was Council not over-emphasizing social activity at the expense of academics? What about the intelligentia who wished to study during the run-up to the end-of-term exams?
It was Council’s responsibility to represent not only the party animals, but the more serious students as well. Not to mention the question of money: at an average of $20 to $25 a month in admittance tickets, people could not afford that many socials monthly. And finally, there was the ever-present problem of vandalism, which did not necessarily happen only on the night of the event. It was a well-known fact that much of the damage was perpetrated by non-residence students who came to regard the complex as a “place to party.” As a result, people returned to the premises with that in mind even when a social event was not scheduled, and the vandalism problem increased. Student Security, a provision whereby Residents were hired to maintain order after socials, had more than it could handle.

More often than not, the outsiders were never caught, and therefore the Residence community had to cover damages that they themselves did not cause. When the offending outsiders were identified and dealt with, however, the consequences could be substantial: one partying visitor was hauled on the carpet and fined a whopping $1,000 for setting off a false fire alarm. A fire in a building containing a high concentration of people was no trifling matter, and so a full complement of emergency resources responded to the call. This translated into a minimum of an aerial ladder truck, two pumpers, a rescue wagon, and a District Chief’s car, altogether carrying a total of fifteen men. In addition to the fine, the aforesaid culprit was further ordered by the University Administration to abstain from consuming or possessing alcohol, and to stay out of drinking establishments for one year.

There was the odd occasion when Resbians took the law into their own hands in dealing with unwelcome outsiders, apart from throwing them into bathtubs of water. Witness, for instance, the case of the non-resident who attended an Architecture Hallowe’en Social. He partook excessively of the dew of the barley, and a friend from Taché conveyed him to the Rez where he could sleep it off before driving home. The Good Samaritan was dismayed to learn, sometime after the fact, that an in-house ne’er-do-well had shaved off one of the inebriant’s eyebrows while he was passed out.

**Alcohol Awareness and Discipline**

The inaugural event to deal with alcohol (and drug) abuse was precisely what one would expect in an institution of higher learning: an educational program. In January of 1983, Residence Alcohol Education Week was instituted, involving the following:

- a drug display by the RCMP;
- a City of Winnipeg Police impaired driver/breathalyzer display and presentation;
- a debate-&-discussion session by experts on legalizing marijuana and on alcohol and youth;
- topical movies (*The Days of Wine and Roses*, *The Morning After*);
- and a panel discussion by Alcoholics Anonymous, Al-Anon, and Alateen.

All these events were put on in the Residence Auditorium and the Oak Room. There was even a tour of a Winnipeg brewery.

Nor was the initiative to deal with alcohol abuse a one-week flash in the pan; a more long-term undertaking was also put in place. This was the Residence Alcohol Awareness Program,
the primary purpose of which was to offer a preventative influence on young or moderate drinkers in order to minimize the development of detrimental drinking habits that may lead to alcoholism. The goal of the program was to educate students about alcohol and to promote responsible drinking practices and behaviour for those students who wished to drink.

The Freshie Handbook

Change was not the only dynamic that characterized Residence Life in the 1980s. Established traditions continued on, with amendments and improvements appearing here and there along the way. One such was the Freshie Handbook. As usual, its purpose was to introduce new members to the RSA and to familiarize them with Council—its structure, goals, and offered services.

The RSA Constitution also called for inclusion of the usual schedule of Freshie Month activities with a brief explanation of each event, an Organizational Chart of the RSAC structure, Council’s goals and objectives as provided for in the Constitution, and introductory letters from all House Committee executives and Council members, including descriptions of their respective positions and mandates.

The Freshie Handbook was to be completed by no later than March 31st and copies distributed to all new members of the RSA upon their arrival in September. To supplement the information in the Handbook, Council was at liberty to compile an information package regarding the University and the city of Winnipeg.

The Telephone Directory

Another useful item that enjoyed continued popularity was the Telephone Directory. Published by the RSAC, its declared purpose was to facilitate communication between the rank and file and Council; however, it had also long been used as a means to connect a name to a pretty/handsome face for the upcoming dance. A photo machine had been set up outside the RSAC office, and the students were urged to have their mug shots taken ASAP after their arrival on campus.

In addition to the photo and individual’s name, their room number, phone number, faculty, year, and home address were also called for. The best things in life might be free, but the Directory wasn’t; and so it was up to the Services Committee to obtain funding from outside sources to assist in the financing of the publication.

The Joys of Parking

The seemingly never-ending saga of Residence student parking continued to demand the attention of the RSAC. Back in early 1980, the Residents Parking Committee conducted a survey and the results were interesting because they exemplified the ongoing distractions that dogged certain Residence members of the campus community.

Typically, students listed vandalism to their cars as being the most pressing issue. Many of the cases were not reported to the police due to previous lack of response by the latter. The security at the assigned lot (R Lot) was deficient due to inadequate lighting, insufficient police patrols, and the lot’s proximity to a residential...
area with a high crime rate. Ironically, Residents had to park in a place that was best suited to daytime-only occupancy, while daytime staff and others parked in lots better suited to 24-hour use.

Residents were critical of their accessibility to their parking lot. While not so much a problem to Residents of Mary Speechly Hall, it was seen to be a major handicap for those in Taché because it meant a walk of several blocks to their cars when needed. This discouraged frequent checks by the owners that otherwise would have enhanced detection, if not prevention, of the vandalism.

Serious concern was also raised over the condition of the lot. Originally, the Residents parked in D Lot when it was gravel-surfaced, but when it got paved, they were moved to R Lot, which was not paved! They also expressed a desire not to have to walk through “lakes in low undrained areas” to their cars in the fall and in the spring.

Council did not just complain; they actively pressed their case with recommendations to the authorities. In August of 1983, the RSAC President was pleased to write the University’s Associate Vice-President (Operations), thanking him for the switch from R Lot back to D Lot. This gratifying move was seen not only as an important step toward resolution of the various parking problems outlined above, but also as beneficial to the overall working relationship between the Administration and the RSAC.

Camera, Action

During August and the Labour Day weekend of 1983, a large portion of a 60-minute film Arnold Spohr and the Royal Winnipeg Ballet was shot in the West Gym by O’Meara Productions Ltd of Winnipeg.

The film director was effusive in his praise of the support and cooperation he received from the Residence staff with whom he worked. “The location, the lighting, etc. have combined to make this film one of the handsomest ever filmed in this province. It will be shown across Canada on the CBC network in the spring of 1984,” he wrote, and noted that it was the company’s intention—and every effort would be made—to give Taché Hall a credit on the finished production.

A Female Bastion No More

In other areas, change continued to occur at a rapid pace. For the first time, males now were allowed to occupy rooms in Mary Speechly Hall, hitherto a female enclave. The 1983-84 academic year witnessed the inaugural migration of erstwhile male Tachétés to Virgin Towers, no longer the bastion of all-women supremacy. Led by the fearless “Johnny Vegas,” fourteen male pioneers staked out new ground in the heart of a two-hundred-women’s hall. More followed the next year, and the whole process went off without a hitch if one co-ed can be believed: “Like sure, I think Taché men are totally tubular and I’ll support any kind of movement to share my home with them. But I’d rather buy one if that could be arranged.” The yearly raid on Speechly slowly faded into history, as it was becoming increasingly unclear as to who was raiding whom.

Keeping Fit

Lea McPherson, Coordinator of Admissions and Student Life at the time, was a Nationally Certified Fitness Instructor...
through the YMCA. In September 1983, Lea sent a memo to the RAs asking them to find people on their floors who would be interested in voluntarily teaching fitness classes in Residence. Lea would teach the novice instructors to direct exercises in physical fitness, and ten came out to her initial session. She spent two hours on theory and then gave a forty-five-minute demonstration class. For the next two weeks they all met several times a week, with each instructor-in-training teaching a few minutes of the class.

Lea's initiative did not go unnoticed outside of the Residence complex; staff members from the Student Health and the Student Counselling Services indicated that they would like to be involved in comparable fitness classes a few times weekly. So in November, she began holding classes for them in the West Gym. A nominal fee was charged, and any monies made from the staff classes went toward the purchase of skipping ropes, mats, etc. for use by the Residents in their own fitness classes.

Health Fair

In-house programming often transformed the Centre Block of Tché Hall into a place of learning in subjects that were rather less academic than what was to be had elsewhere on campus. A good example was the “Health Fair” that ran for two evenings in early November of 1983. Various stations in the Oak Room featured displays offering handouts, demonstrations, and short questionnaires on the different aspects of health and fitness.

The main objective was to encourage Residents to take an active role in maintaining their own health, and to make them aware of aspects of their lifestyle over which they had direct control. Food Services, Health Services, and Counselling Services all had representatives on hand to answer questions and supply information provided by their respective departments. The following is a brief rundown on the planned displays:

- Manitoba Lung Association - information on smoking; also, people could take a “breathing test” to determine their vital (lung) capacity;
- Stress - a brief questionnaire could be filled out to determine the amount of stress a person was under;
- Nutrition - in addition to hand-outs, individuals were able to fill out a Food Record and have their diets assessed.

Rezorama: Still Going Strong

The 1983 edition of Rezorama ran for three days, the first featuring an interfaith service at 1:30 pm in the Auditorium and a grand opening in the Club Condo area. On that day, the pavilions closed at 8:00 pm, but on the two remaining days they were open from 4:00 pm until 8:30 pm. Pavilions were located in the East and West Gyms; in Club Condo; in the East and West Lounges; and in the Oak Room. The following countries/areas were represented: Belgium, East India, Germany, Great Britain, Hong Kong,
Israel, Italy, Malaysia/Singapore, Scandinavia, Ukraine, and the West Indies. An information booth was set up adjacent to Club Condo.

**Wanted: A Bigger Bang for the Buck**

An issue of concern to the RSA and the Council in particular was administrative effectiveness and overhead costs. The directorate of Housing and Conference Services was singled out as an on-going problem, as the desires and questions of the student body seemed to get bogged down at that level.

A new Director had been hired in the spring of 1982 to solicit more summer conference business at a time of the year of traditionally low Residence use. This would theoretically bring in money and offset the fixed costs of the Residence enterprise, thereby lessening the need to raise regular session student fees. However, conference business had declined substantially between 1982 and 1983, and the RSAC wondered why that was so, given the extra resources that were now available for lining up and hosting supposedly money-making conferences.

The Department of Housing and Conference Services initially received $30,000 annually from student fees, and it was considered that for that kind of investment, the return should have been higher and the students’ needs should be tended to in a better manner than had been the case. Although this office’s mandate was campus-wide, Speechly/Taché was the only residence on campus to bear the burden of financially supporting the directorate office and its conference program. The 1983-84 RSAC wanted to know where the dollars were going, and it was determined to ensure that the students were getting their money’s worth.

The following year, a study was undertaken to look into the situation, and it was confirmed that the following issues were factors:

1. While conference business was bringing recognition to the University, it was failing to offset costs for the regular-session Residence students. And in fact, given that much of the conference business was provided by repeat customers such as the Royal Winnipeg Ballet and the Summer School of Scottish Arts, the amount of new publicity being provided by having conferees in Residence was questionable. Ironically, the profits from summer students in Residence actually had to be used to offset the losses from the conferences!

2. Questions were also raised about RA salary increases. It seemed that the salaries were more than what the standard of living required, and this was due to the fact that they were pegged to and hence affected by changes in room and board costs.

3. And what about the cost of heating the Rez? The cost of steam on campus was 25¢ more per cubic metre than elsewhere in the city of Winnipeg due to the control wielded by the University. What else?

4. Well, the Residents were, through their fees, paying for the utilities and maintenance of the Faculty Club ($9,200 in janitorial costs, or $12.42 per student). Student Health Services, which occupied almost the entire front wing of Second Floor East Taché, justified their existence on the basis of services provided, not just to Residents, but also to each and every student on campus. Yet only Residence students paid the costs of cleaning, heating, and lighting the area; RSAC estimated that the Residents subsidized the janitorial costs to the tune of $33.85 per head. Furthermore, the staff of Student Health Services paid no rent, and at the same time took up space that could have been put to use more in keeping with the function of a student dormitory.

5. VS Vending Services, a division of the company that now managed Pembina Hall, occupied the old Oak Room Kitchen as office space—rent-free. The students’ fees paid for the utilities while at the same time losing use of the space as a storage facility. The RSAC wanted VS Vending Services to pay rent that would cover the cost of utilities and compensate for the loss of the floor space … or better yet, vacate the premises altogether.

6. The School of Music occupied the Auditorium at least five days a week, ten to twelve hours a day, without paying for heating, lighting, or janitorial services. The fall-out from this particular arrangement was described earlier in this chapter.

In sum, the Residence student body was subsidizing personnel and facilities from which it received only partial, limited, or no benefit. The RSAC took the view that the Speechly/Taché membership was being abused. Truly, there was any number of issues into which the RSAC could sink its teeth during this restless decade. As in other years, the students perceived the Oak Room as the heart of the Residence complex and they paid the financial price as the University made the effort only to a degree to offset the cost of the Centre Block.

Better times lay ahead with the announcement at the January 1984 JMC meeting that, commencing the upcoming budget year, Residence would be billing Physical Plant and Energy Management.
(PPEM) for two positions for the janitorial costs of the Faculty Club and Student Health Services.

**Bubble, Bubble ...**

In recent years, the Oak Room had been used for in-house social and educational functions that were integral to binding the Speechly/Taché infrastructure and community into a cohesive unit.

It served as a connecting corridor between East and West Taché on the Second Floor, and over the years as a venue for a wide variety of activities: RSAC events, weddings, Nursing Student Appreciation, and U of M Volleyball Club socials; study space at exam time; Rezorama; Alcohol Awareness Week; UNICEF fund-raising; a Fitness Fair that provided nutritional awareness and fitness; the Christmas Cheer party (proceeds of which went to charity); revenue-generating beer bashes, “Happiest Hours,” dances, etc., etc. As of October 1983, some 253 events had been held in the Oak Room during that calendar year.

**... Toil and Trouble**

But in that same year, the University drew up a plan to convert the Oak Room into a micro-computer training centre for the unemployed. The facility was to comprise about 150 micro-computers, classrooms, washrooms, and office space and would be federally-funded. Construction was to commence in December after exams and was to be completed in March 1984 before final exams.

The Residents felt that Taché Hall—all of it—was their home rather than an eight-month hotel or drop-in centre, and that it should not be opened up to all and sundry: infringements on privacy, excessive noise, deprivation of recreational and study space, and security issues were among the leading concerns of the students.

The RSAC was outraged that they had not been consulted about the idea from the outset. As the Residence governing body referred to in the *Housing Contract*, Council felt that they should have been consulted on the matter before a decision was reached. As it was, they were informed that the Oak Room had been designated for other purposes as a *fait accompli*. A sense of betrayal was strongly felt. All was not love, trust, and pixie dust.

The University Administration, for its part, argued that the space was underused, nor was it technically part of the Residence complex; the entire Centre Block was deemed by them to be “public space.” This was interpreted by the RSAC as running contrary to the *Housing Contract*, which specified that the Oak Room was a Residence facility. The Administration further maintained that there was nowhere else on campus to put the planned facility.

Pleas for help went out to Taché alumni, the community, and to all of the province’s MLAs. The support was overwhelming, and soon Administration had to change course and look for an alternate facility to house its micro-computers.

By mid-January 1984, the word was out that the proposed micro-computer training centre would not be set up in the Oak Room, but rather would be installed in University Centre.

The beloved Oak Room had been saved, for now.

**A Sinking Feeling**

The cruel and unusual punishment meted out to the structure of Taché Hall by students and their guests was not its only source of physical distress. There is a price to
be paid for building a university on the clayey sediments (Red River gumbo) of long-extinct Glacial Lake Agassiz.

By the mid-1980s, the foundation was sinking and portions of corridors and rooms on upper floors of both Houses were suffering damage as a consequence: severe plaster cracking in the walls and fragments falling on the carpet, movement of wooden door framing, damage to the interior and to the exterior arch over the northeast entrance of East Taché. To make matters worse, the same problems were showing up where repairs had already been made.

The Director of Residences was loathe to rent the damaged rooms in the upcoming school year; there was no worse advertisement for Taché Hall than students, guests, and friends carrying the grim story outside of Residence. Serious remedial work was an immediate necessity.

Another Struggle

In 1984, it was announced that the University, with funding from the federal and provincial governments, planned to construct a Transport Institute/Administrative Studies (TI/AS, aka “Commerce”) Building [later to be named the Drake Centre] behind the East Wing of Taché Hall. On October 6th of that year, no less a personality than Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II turned the sod to initiate construction. But the idea of cramming a large new structure cheek-by-jowl with the existing building did not sit well at all with many in the Residence community: with students’ rooms facing the building site, there was the fear that an individual could wake up in the morning and be staring into a classroom full of people.

So privacy would become an issue. Some 1,800 persons, including Transport Institute staff and Business faculty and students, would use the new structure and this would place a strain on already overcrowded Cafeteria and parking facilities.

Beefed-up security would become necessary, as the Residence would now be right in the path of greatly-increased foot traffic: with the proposed computer terminals for the new building, there would be 24-hour traffic in and around the Residence complex. Large numbers of non-residents would end up wandering through, because Residence students would unknowingly allow outsiders access by opening the door for them, it being impossible to differentiate all 750 people in Residence. Theft and vandalism would be hard to control with strangers coming and going. In that regard, let us not forget the historical problems (including the dumping of faculty members into bath tubs) that resulted from the relatively modest increase of traffic through the building on the opening of the Faculty Club in Pembina Hall in the mid-1960s.

The University Safety Officer had a few worries of his own. He recommended that the south-facing doors of East Taché be temporarily sealed for fear that a student might fall into the large pit created by the construction. This, in turn, raised concerns for the implications for escape during a fire. Last but not least, the new building would eliminate a goodly swath of green space, a Residence parking lot behind the Residence complex, and the service road to Pembina Hall.

An ambitious letter-writing campaign by a pair of Council members to a large number of politicians was embarked upon in an effort to have the plan overturned. If nothing else,
RSAC received a lesson in real-world politics and governmental responsibility. The overall reply to them was that the decision to site the new building was entirely at the discretion of the University Board of Governors and that provincial and national politicians were in no position to intervene. Nor was the B of G itself moved by the students’ arguments, and so the project went ahead exactly as planned.

Predictably, the first intrusion of this project upon Residents of the East Wing was excessive construction noise. Numerous complaints were finding their way to the Director of Speechly/Taché Residences regarding the hours of work: such activity was sometimes commencing as early as 4:00 am and carrying through until 12:30 (midnight) or 1:00 am.

According to a City By-law, work could run from 7:00 am to 10:00 pm on weekdays (in the opinion of the students, 10:00 pm was too late for all the racket to be still going on), and from 9:00 am to 7:00 pm on Saturdays, and no work was to be conducted on Sundays.

**Debris**

If guests were going to be invited to the campus to celebrate the good old days, the appearance of the place must be clean, pleasant, and attractive. Such was not always the case, however, and in early November of 1985, the Director of the Speechly/Taché Residence complex was moved to reprimand the occupants of 403 West because their window sill and the ground directly below it were blemished with unsightly litter [see the piece titled Forbidden Fruit in the “Memories of the 1970s” section]. Littering was an offence for which the University was within its rights to levy a fine, as stated in the Residence Handbook.

To be fair, the presence of flotsam and jetsam around the Residence complex could not be laid entirely at the feet of Resbians; the buildings and immediate surroundings acted as natural catchments for debris and refuse that blew in from elsewhere on the campus. Nor was the issue one of aesthetics alone; the maintenance folks who cleaned up the mess billed the Residences for the work, a situation that was escalating now that the new TI/AS Building was being built. Enough already.

**Shake, Rattle, & Roll**

The continuous construction noise dramatically inhibited daytime study in one’s own room and made sleep and rest all but impossible after lights-out. The University had an obligation under contract to provide the Residents with an “environment conducive to the living-learning experience of the community,” and inordinate, constant, external noise violated that obligation. Where was the contractual promise for the “use and quiet enjoyment” of the Taché Hall by its occupants? Students affected were understandably raising the prospect of rebates, as was the case during the major renovation program of the preceding decade. Arguably, the project was in contravention of the University of Manitoba Residence Housing Contract and clearly against the City By-law.

It had been suggested that dry summer weather had caused the soil next to the Taché foundation to shrink and that was the cause of the aforementioned foundation sinking. Mother Nature may not have been the only
culprit, however; the problem may have been aggravated by the constant vibration caused by the construction of the T.I./AS Building right next to East Taché. How bad was the vibration? Well, one morning a student’s bed was found to have migrated some 15 centimetres across the floor.

With the dust finally settled (literally), the final result—among other things, a monument to the Administration’s unwavering resolve—can be seen today in the form of the impressive Drake Centre on Freedman Crescent. In recognition of their concerns, Residents were granted full access to the new building’s computers and library.

**Lofty Ambitions**

Whereas in earlier years the living quarters were to be maintained in a spartan condition, the students were now, according to the 1983-84 *Speechly/Taché Residence Handbook*, allowed—indeed encouraged—“to personalize their rooms with posters, plants, additional lighting, or any other fixtures [they] may wish to bring.” They were permitted to build lofts in their rooms, provided the structures were self-supporting; were not affixed to, or would rub against, the wall; and were of easy access in case of emergency. Incidentally, the lofts were somewhat problematic at the outset because some of them were being built too close to the ceiling. Several accidental fire alarms had been set off from people striking their heads on the overhead heat detectors! This resulted in an inspection of the Residence loft policy by the Campus Safety Office. Consequently, all lofters were behooved to renovate their structures, if necessary, so that:

- the loft did not extend so far into the room as to create the potential for hitting one’s head on the heat detector when in the loft.
- As well, a ladder must not to be so placed as to create the possibility of hitting one’s head on the way up into the loft;
- the loft was not so large, or extend so far out over the floor area, that if a fire were to start below the loft, the alarm would not be activated by the detector.

So lofts were a fine idea; as always, the devil was in the details. And the details were no trivial matter; it was essential that no more alarms be accidentally set off as a direct result of there being a loft in a room. If such were to transpire, there was a real possibility that all lofts would have to come down by order of the Fire Chief.

Of course, there were limits to what one could do to improve one’s room; one was NOT to:

- remove or alter assigned furniture; bring common-area furniture or fixtures into one’s room
- paint, drive nails into, or otherwise alter walls
- bring waterbeds into one’s room
- use paint-removing poster tape, or
- bring refrigerators larger than 5 cubic feet in size into one’s room.

As ever, safety was a major concern in the Residence complex with its multi-storey buildings and large concentrations of people. Emergency procedures took the form of fire drills, with each floor or wing having an assistant fire marshall whose job it was to brief their charges on such procedures. The Head Resident (or designate) was the Fire Marshall for his/her House and had complete authority in the event of an emergency. In addition to the heat detectors in each student room, there were alarms and pull stations on each wing, and fire hoses on every floor.
Student Life Committee

Student Life Committee was eventually established, with the inaugural meeting taking place in early September of 1984. Its main purpose was to discuss programming concerns in Residence. Did it work? The following is the complete list of RSAC-sponsored events tentatively scheduled for the 1985 spring term, shortly after the Student Life Committee was formed:

- Jan 4..........RSAC Beer Bash
- Jan 5..........West House Ukrainian Christmas Social
- Jan 11.......East House Beer Bash
- Jan 12........East House Social
- Jan 18........Mary Speechly Hall Beer Bash
- Jan 19........Mary Speechly Hall Social
- Jan 25........West House Beer Bash
- Jan 26.......West House Social
- Feb 1 ........Civil Engineering Beer Bash
- Feb 2.........RSAC Social
- Feb 8.........UMES Beer Bash
- Feb 15......Pharmacy Beer Bash
- Feb 16.......Mary Speechly Hall Valentines Social
- Mar 1 ........Geological Engineering Beer Bash
- Mar 1 .........RSAC Colour Night
- Mar 8 .........East House Beer Bash
- Mar 9 .........East House Social
- Mar 15 ......West House V.W. Beer Bash
- Mar 16.......Mary Speechly Hall Social
- Mar 22 ......RSAC Beer Bash
- Mar 23 ......RSAC Year-Ender Social
- Mar 29.......Mary Speechly Hall Beer Bash

How many times can you find the words “Social” and “Beer Bash” in the foregoing list?

Many of the socials were theme events requiring certain attire. Students were encouraged to bring pyjamas, Hallow’e’en costumes, 1950s (“greaser”) outfits, and semi-formal clothing for the various get-togethers held throughout the year. Other diversions during the 1980s included stags and stagettes, sleigh rides, variety nights, Christmas and New Year’s parties, and of course the usual slate of intra-mural sports events.

Tea and Fashion Show

The continued decay of Western civilization was clearly in evidence at the 1984 rendition of the Mary Speechly Hall Tea and Fashion Show. To demonstrate the degree to which society’s morals had degenerated over the preceding twenty years, let us begin with a short description of just such an event in 1964-65:

Probably the biggest social event of the year for Women’s Residence was the annual Christmas Tea. This year the Tea was held in the Staff Lounge in Pembina Hall. Parents and friends came from far and wide to see the new Residence and to dine on Christmas cake and dainties. The Tea was followed by the Choral Service in the Residence Auditorium, a show, and a record hop.

Compare that quaint production with its similarly-named counterpart (read “spoof”) held in the Oak Room in 1984:

[JV] emceed the show and introduced the models, starting with West HR [A] in a gaudy brown nylon dress, followed by many more plunging necklines, buxom bosoms, and top designer fashions in some of the most nauseating shades, patterns, and prints known to mankind. Then it was on to the undergarments!
Following the black lace camisole sets modeled by [S] and [B], [D] appeared in an impeccable pink lounge outfit. [D]'s baby blue housecoat and matching teddy were next in line, spurring long loud applause from the ladies. ... The next set consisted of bathing suits, bikinis, and bulges. ... [L]'s pretty pink lace sundress was a hot item, as was [D]'s. The last two items—a mini-dress of impeccable taste modeled by [L], and a beige silk dress with a lovely, deep neckline worn by [D]—brought us to the finale, and the all-round favourite model event.

The winner of this contest was to be determined by the volume and length of the audience's applause, and the judges eventually eliminated all but three models. A single winner could not be decided on, so [D], [L], and [W] were all awarded first prize. ... Before the show closed, all the models were brought out and introduced, each receiving a goodly amount of appreciative applause.

The men, of course, had their own way of showing their appreciation to the audience and I'm sure that the ladies who were in the audience will remember it for "many, many moons."

Money, Money, Money

It's probably true to say that there has always been a certain amount of rivalry between the Speechly/Taché and University College Residences. In 1985, scuttlebutt had it that UC was by default subsidizing the Speechly/Taché complex, and they weren't too happy about it. The ever-fercious Director of Speechly/Taché Residences, who did not suffer fools gladly, wrote a letter to the Director of Housing and Conference Services challenging the "myth" that part of UC's "profit" was being used to offset Speechly/Taché's "losses." In his view, the reverse actually occurred: University College Residence and Mary Speechly Hall were built at the same time, and the mortgage was borne by all Residents of UC and Mary Speechly and by Taché Hall.

Indeed, the Taché Hall students, although living in poor physical conditions, were paying their full share for these new buildings. Throughout the past 20 years, the Residents of Speechly/Taché had paid annually $43,140 as their share of the CMHC loan repayment; UC had paid $17,245 annually. If we accept that UC and Speechly had about the same Residence population, then Speechly Residents would have been charged the same as UC, or $17,245 annually. This means that the Taché Hall contribution to the new Residences amounted to $43,140 minus $17,245 = $25,895. If we then assume that Taché Hall

Food Fight

There was no joy in the Director's office on Wednesday, April 11, 1985, the day following the mother of all food fights in Pembina Hall. An open letter to all and sundry made it known that the event had proven "very costly" to the students of the Residences. One thousand dollars was being charged to the RSAC to cover replacements of broken dishes and cutlery, shampooing the rugs, dry-cleaning the drapes, and repairing damages to tables and chairs, not to mention payment of overtime to two managers and cleaning staff. Several students were requested to withdraw their applications to Residence for the following academic year.
was in effect paying equally to the cost of each of the two new buildings, then Taché Hall students contributed $12,947.50 annually to UC’s CMHC loan, and the same amount to Speechly’s CMHC loan!

Another point that was seemingly overlooked by the UC complainants, but that had to be considered by them, was their apparent refusal to accept charges for benefits they received from Housing and Conference Services, which resulted in added summer income for them. At the end of the 1983-84 academic year, University College Residence had received an increase in their income due to their rates having gone up. This meant that they now possessed the ability to contribute to the Office of Housing and Conference Services to the same level as that of the Speechly/Taché Administration, and the JMC recommended that the costs be distributed more equitably between the two.

**Aliens Go Home**

Invasion of privacy continued to dog the dwellers of the “private” Residence. They had been forced to contend with Faculty Club members using Taché Hall as a shortcut ever since the construction of Pembina Hall, but by the mid-1980s this habit seemed to be on the increase. The entrance to Student Health Services—through East Taché or Condo—was always open, but it was only meant to allow students to go to Student Health Services. However, the link past Student Health Services led directly to the second floor of Pembina Hall, and then from there to the Faculty Club. Some of the club members even returned to the north side of the building by this route, but mostly they entered and left through Taché Hall first-floor corridors.

The students were very concerned about thefts from their rooms, and they were advised to report any person in the halls/corridors who did not appear to have any business in the Residence building. As a result, some outside Administration/academic staff were questioned by students, and these people appeared to feel that this interrogation was an affront. It had been noticed that very senior Administrators and academics used the Pembina Hall entrances and seemed none the worse for wear. Accordingly, precious little sympathy was had for the trespassers. More signs were posted in hopes of stemming this contentious practice.

**Au Revoir to Student Health Services**

Finally, a welcome change was in the offing in the summer of 1985, when it was announced that the University was considering moving the Student Health Services to University Centre. This meant that the Infirmary, offices, and reception area; East House suites 202, 204, and 212A; and storage spaces off the East gym would all be freed up. The RSAC requested that the space not be re-allocated to non-resident associations or University administrative offices, but rather that it be used to house students. As it was, a housing study was currently underway to consider increasing the number of Residence spaces offered to students, especially freshmen. Initially, the relocation of Student Health Services was to take place on the January 1, 1986, but as of the 22nd of the month, negotiations to that end were still stalled.

Speechly/Taché operated on a housing-contract basis with its students that guaranteed self-governance (RSA and RSAC), security, the right to quiet and enjoyment of the premises, discipline that was enforced at the level of the RDB in the first instance, student para-professionals (HRs and RAs), Residence Life programming, reinforcement of academic pursuits, and parking. The RSAC was concerned that if the newly-available ex-Health Services spaces were to be allocated to groups other than Residents, these provisions would be undermined and the integrity of the Residence complex would be lost.

The waiting list for accommodations in Speechly/Taché was well in excess of 300 persons. The students were resolved to defend their turf, and the territorial wars seemed never-ending.
No history of any university residence would be complete without a discourse on house “spirit.” The *Standard College Dictionary* (Canadian Edition) offers multiple definitions of that word, but for our purposes it means mood, temper, or a state of mind. In the positive sense, it encompasses such good things as heart-felt loyalty, ardour, devotion, pride, vivacity, buoyancy, contentment, good morale, and an all-round positive attitude. And if there is one word that conveys what “spirit” is NOT, it is “apathy.” Both spirit and apathy can be group phenomena or a personal, individual experience.

In 1985, a contributor to the newsletter *The Perspective* painted a rosy picture of what Taché Hall had been and could be. To him, it offered most of its inhabitants the prospect of friendship and good times. They didn’t live there for privacy, or a great studying atmosphere, or for economic reasons, or for the food. The close proximity of classrooms and libraries was nice, but Summerland and many other domiciles were within a few kilometres of the campus and on direct bus routes. No, the reasons most Resbians stayed in Taché, says our scribe, were friendship and a spirited way of life. And Rez spirit was manifested in a variety of ways and means: tubbings, Speechly raids, playing one’s ghetto-blaster, talks into the early hours of the morning, beer bashes, socials, getting drunk and barfing into one’s waste basket, floor hockey, beer fridges, RAs and RSAC, to name a very few.

It was through this spirit, this pride in Taché, that one became more than simply a refugee from one’s hometown or a student in a faculty. Under Taché’s roof, 550 individuals became close friends, all hoping to meet each other for the first time. Such was the attitude that provided the energy for Freshie Month and all the zany antics that occurred throughout the year. Rez was where folks blew off steam, let all one’s inhibitions take a vacation, and found energy to face a new day. It was where you met strangers that became not only friends, but also confidants, and sometimes even lovers. Rez offered more to its patrons than any other location on campus. If one were to sum up Rez in a few words, they would probably be “spontaneous fun.”

---

**Apathy**

Over the years, the perceived importance of “group spirit” and its evil twin “apathy” waxed and waned in Taché Hall. And for some Resbians, the waning of spirit and the waxing of apathy was cause for alarm. For example, another mid-1980s contributor to *The Perspective* wondered if he was the only returning Resident who had noticed something strange that year. It was an eerie feeling that came over him when he walked down the hallway—something just wasn’t right: something was missing. And his diagnosis of the problem was not long in coming ... it was TOO QUIET!!
Where, he pondered, had the noise gone? What happened to the stereos cranked up so high that the walls vibrated? Didn’t anyone party anymore? What happened to everyone having fun? What happened to … Rez Spirit?? Frosh Month was supposed to be a time of a more-than-average number of social events designed for the express purpose of getting to know everyone. But some of these events had been failures like they had never been in the past. Beer and Skits, traditionally a fun event wherein everyone had a good time, was cancelled due to lack of interest. The two full busloads of people from Rez going roller skating in days gone by had dwindled to a mere 14 people. A piddling 12 rafts competed in the Annual Raft Race.

Gone were the days when The Perspective was filled with reports from each Hall telling everyone else how much fun each floor had had during the previous two weeks. Gone were the days when Taché socials were totally sold out by Thursday. Some people now complained that there was nothing to do around Taché, and then wondered why the RSAC lost almost $2,000 at their two recent socials.

Why, even two RSAC positions went without anybody applying for them during recent RSAC elections, and of the other spots, all but two were won by acclamation. The Rez community couldn’t even muster up enough interest to organize and run Rezorama 1985.

One culprit behind this lamentable state of affairs was a spectre dubbed “Captain Apathy.” It was Captain Apathy who had taken possession of the chap who, if asked if he wanted to go play volleyball in the gym, replied that he had too much work to do, “even though he was only in 1st year Education”(!). But Captain Apathy wasn’t the only demon who wandered through the corridors of Taché seeking the ruin of souls, nor indeed was he the root cause of the lethargy.

In the early 1980s, policy had been brought into being that slowly but surely had trickled down from the Admin Office to the HRs and even to the RAs. It was acknowledged that, in the minds of some people, Taché had a reputation as something of an “animal house,” but the official corrective measures were perceived by the local aggrieved fauna as having gone too far. A number of dejected veterans had noticed a disturbing trend in Rez spirit since the de-animalization policy had come into effect. Every year, the joie de vivre and pride in Rez had progressively diminished, to be replaced by indifference and impassivity.

In the opinion of one critic, the reversal of this woeful trend would be very simple. If the Residence Administration would only take a few minutes to realize that they were slowly suffocating the festive atmosphere in Rez, then they could take the first step towards stamping out apathy forever.

How? With HR and RA selections upcoming, all that the Admin Office had to do was select HRs who realized that this declining Rez spirit was not only harmful to the students, but to the image of Taché itself. Especially if they hoped to fill it to capacity like it hadn’t been over the past two years. With HRs placing programming high on their list of priorities, they would get RAs who would take that policy down to the students. RAs would start to assist the RSAC in their endeavours to provide the students with the best services possible. The RSAC and the Administration would develop a good working
relationship, and the students would have the best of school and social life.

**Students Just Wanting Cheap Digs**

In “The Games People Play” department, we find a serious conundrum that had to be addressed in the tumultuous 1980s. It seems that some students would apply for and receive accommodation in Residence without having any intention of staying on board for very long: they were simply interested in cheap digs while looking for other lodgings off-campus! It was circumstances just like these that gave rise to the $10 room-reservation deposit back in 1948.

The scheming individuals took up valuable space at a time when others were seriously looking for Residence accommodation. By the time the short-time students left, those who would have occupied Residence space for the full academic year had either found other accommodation, if not another university altogether. Taché Hall was then left with empty spaces and was losing money. This little scam did not escape the notice of the Director of Speechly/Taché Residence, who worked assiduously to set things right.

**Centurion Club**

The “Centurion (aka ‘Century’) Club”—Fact or Fiction? One information source for the writing of this volume has been the newsletter *The Perspective*. This august organ contains a surfeit of wondrous accounts of life in the Speechly/Taché complex. Does it go without saying, however, that all of the contributions are unembellished testimonies of past reality? Might some of them be the figments of the scribes’ fertile imaginations?

Not the curious, notorious “Centurion Club” of the mid-1980s. A concise, dictionary-type definition of this phenomenon is not readily available, but by reading between the lines one might conclude that it was not really a true “club” in the usual sense of the term. Rather than being a corporate entity with a paying membership, it was an event.

More specifically, it was a sort of rite of passage wherein a candidate consumed 100 ounces of Labatt’s Light beer in 100 minutes, hence the name “Century.” The initiated was dubbed a “Centurion,” and participation was open to both men and women. For those not given to alcohol abuse, the effects of this custom on one’s physiology can scarcely be imagined. Just how often it was played out is not a matter of record, but it by no means met with the approval of all Residents. Indeed, after one Centurion happening was described in the newsletter *The Perspective*, a pair of dismayed fellows authored a rejoinder to it.

They questioned the judgement of the writer of the piece who, in their view, glorified a “totally juvenile event.” The freshman initiate, “who appears to have the IQ of a celery stick,” was placed on a pedestal by a scribe whom they admonished roundly for aggrandizing such “immature, mindless time consumption”—never mind some 35,500 mL of alcoholic beverage in just over an hour and a half. “How,” they wondered, “would his parents react to his display?” They opined that perhaps a copy of *The Perspective* describing their son’s indiscretion should be sent to his home, or better still, someone should blow the whistle directly to his parents.
As for the other participants, some of whom were upperclassmen, the example of their behaviour was seen by the outraged duo as totally contradictory to the norms and standards of better judgement set by society. The elder students should have been encouraging the younger ones to be more conscientious towards their scholastic endeavours, studying diligently and “not concerning themselves with such medieval pursuits as sex, drugs, and alcohol.” The critics urged that it was time for drastic changes in the University’s attitude towards such “Neanderthals.”

**The Dime Fund**

Back in 1983 something called the “Dime Fund” had been established in an attempt to set aside money to repair physical damage and to offset the misuse of equipment such as the discharging of fire extinguishers that had to be recharged at cost, where the person(s) causing the damage/misuse could not be identified.

It was originally proposed to charge each student $5 at the start of the year for a “Residence Improvement Fund,” but this surcharge idea was scrapped in favour of raising the washer/dryer fees by 10¢ per load, hence the term “Dime Fund.”

In 1986, it was proposed at a meeting of the JMC that the Fund be divided up among the Houses. Under this arrangement, each House would pay for damages done by its own occupants, and any leftover funds would be expended on major purchases for the subject House. Hopefully, this would be an incentive for people to think twice before “laying the lumber” to their homestead, and make damages more visibly a cost to each House. It is not known if this fine-tuning actually materialized.

A secondary use of the Dime Fund was to purchase items on a “Wish List” that had been created by the JMC. Items on the Wish List were procured when the Fund built up to the point where it could be foreseen that, during the last few months of the academic year, there would be money left over. Such residual monies would then be spent on things like a TV set, ghetto blaster, video camera, video cassette recorder, new drapes; repairing or replacing existing equipment that was run down due to normal wear and tear; or whatever else the RSAC considered desirable.

The more money that was left in the Dime Fund, the more such goodies were affordable. And more discretionary money would be available if the hellions were caught and forced to pay for their demolition sprees out of their own pockets. Thus, it was beneficial to the community-at-large if the deviants got ratted-on and were made to pay financially for their sins.

The Dime Fund was not the only source of disposable income. In a financial report at that time, it was noted that money was raised by such events as beer bashes and the Hallowe’en Social. Not all such enterprises were financially gainful, however, and of course there were expenditures: fixing the stereo, buying wood for the Lounge fireplace, holding Grey Cup parties and House Night festivities, funding Hall suppers and Alcohol Awareness sock hops, and subsidizing the manufacture of hall shirts and jackets, to name a few.
The summer of 1986, however, provided something of a respite to the usual maintenance challenges. West House was exceptionally busy in terms of occupancy, and the wing rarely had space available as a consequence. Financially, it was a highly successful enterprise that session, and the resulting income made possible an extension of maintenance work well past the usual time frame. A side-benefit was the laudatory comment made by the Director of Speechly/Taché Residences after the fall session finally got under way:

*Overall, I think we can be very proud that our student population is responsible and concerned that Residence is well kept. Residence pride is the best thing that we as administrators have going for us, and if possible we should attempt in some way to reward this.*

### No Dumping

From the dawn of time, students living in Residence had to ship belongings to the dormitory for storage. Said goods arrived addressed c/o 110 Pembina Hall with the expectation on the sender’s part that they would be placed in safe storage. The Department accepted packages received in this manner and accepted responsibility for their well-being by way of a signature.

However, this practice was deemed most unsatisfactory; staff members were very busy in the days prior to and during registration. But more seriously, the shipping company had been allowed to leave packages in the corridor outside the office at 110 Pembina Hall, resulting in losses that had to be covered by the University.

The solution was to outline in the *Resident Student Handbook* and to advise students prior to arrival that the Department could not accept responsibility for these shipments. The sender would have to insure his shipments with the transfer or trucking company and would have to insist that the latter accept the responsibility for loss.

### Faculties

Perusal of 1980s issues of *The Perspective* reveals much about the popular culture in Taché Hall. Colloquial names for the various faculties and schools crop up. One chap delights in his being a student in the “Faculty of Fishing,” which we must assume had something to do with the Biology Department. He conceded that his roommate had a point in complaining about his bringing lab assignments home where he could finish dissecting his specimens (in one instance a 10-lb carp). Another fellow, upon due observation and reflection, felt that the Faculty of Human Ecology, hitherto Home Economics, was due for yet a third name change; he recommended “Faculty of Husband Hunting.” The alias for Commerce was the “Faculty of Robbing the Poor.” Old stereotypes died hard.

### 1987 Reunion

In celebration of the 75th anniversary of the opening of Taché Hall, a Speechly/Taché Reunion was held on the weekend of June 26-28, 1987. When the announcement went out, replies were received from as far away as California, England, and Saudi Arabia. An Honourary Committee was organized and such notables as Mr. Mitch Ostberg, one of Canada’s hopefuls in the sport of wrestling, Premier Howard Pawley, and The Honourable Justice Sterling Lyon agreed to sit on it. Canadian Pacific Airlines offered discounts on flights to all alumni attending the reunion and, in addition, provided two free tickets to be raffled off for those who travelled with the airline.
The organizers drew up a tentative schedule comprising a social evening where groups of alumni from different eras could meet and greet in designated hospitality centres, followed by a mass gathering in the Oak Room or Auditorium. A walking tour of the University, a scavenger hunt, attendance at ongoing sports events, a “Residence Through the Decades” slide show and/or cultural presentation, dinner and dance in the Multi-Purpose Room at University Centre, and a farewell brunch were all on the agenda.

Photographs and memorabilia for display were requested, and a commemorative booklet detailing the colourful history of the Residence was compiled for distribution to each of the registrants. Former students stayed for the weekend in their old rooms, and some even found former roommates. Office records show that about 250 former Residents stayed overnight, with students as far back as from the 1920s attending. [Editor’s note: It was at this reunion that former Taché students wrote down their memories and shared them in the first edition of this manuscript. It was a jumping off point for this book.]

New Sheriff in Town

After the mid-1980s it was clear to the Residence Administration that a clean-up of the behavioural problems in Taché would have to be met head-on. It was time for The Empire to strike back, and a big step in that direction was the hiring, effective September 1, 1987, of Garth Wannan as the new Director of Housing & Student Life. Mr. Wannan was well-qualified to deal with the problems that beset the Residence community: he was previously the Director of the Trent University Counselling and Career Centre, former executive member of the Canadian Association of Colleges and University Student Services, and a past-President of the Canadian University and College Counselling Association.

And in short order Mr. Wannan found his approach to the problems on the receiving end of criticism from certain elements of the young and the restless. Now, it appeared, the pendulum was swinging in the opposite direction; Taché Hall was losing its appeal as a “fun” place. [Editor’s note: This was a major issue, and a sampling of the stories can be found in the “Memories of the 1980s” section that follows].

Tutors in Residence

In the usual scheme of things, the dormitory was the place where one slept; attended to the mundane, daily routines of gearing up and winding down for/from a day’s work in the classroom, library, or lab; and, during the sometimes-elusive “Quiet Hours,” studying. Group learning usually took place in other buildings on campus designed expressly for the purpose of attending lectures or conducting lab work.

Of course, some students found the subject matter of their studies difficult to grasp, and tutoring of some sort was needed. This was where the Residence setting was beneficial, since there were others within the immediate community who were able to lend a helping hand.

The RSAC had an Academic Committee that functioned as an informal tutoring service, with volunteers being available for a couple of hours on Sundays commencing on November 8, 1988. At the outset, the Committee drew up a list of
the faculties and subjects in which it was felt there would be the greatest demand: Science (Chemistry, Biology, Physics), Environmental Studies, Interior Design, Engineering, Human Ecology, Commerce, Arts (Economics, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology, English). The Committee also set up an exam paper file.

A Final Word

One contributor wrote in a 1989 edition of The Perspective …

It is not too late to become involved. House elections are taking place. Don’t throw up your hands and say “what the hell, nothing ever changes.” That attitude will only enable the further deterioration of Residence spirit. A few years ago the University tried to take control of the Oak Room and turn it into office space and a computer room. The spirit in Residence coalesced and prevented the takeover. I have to wonder if anyone would care anymore. The only way we could get people out to a demonstration is if a trip to the Blue Room was included.

Residence spirit is not about drinking. It is not about socials and beer bashes. Residence spirit flows from the enjoyment of spending eight months with some of the closest friends we’ll ever have. Spirit is wanting to get involved, to make the effort to transform this collection of individual rooms into a community we can all call home. Without that effort, without the spirit, this place is just a skeleton.

The skylights overtop of the stairwells are one of the features of Taché Hall that is quite unique and memorable.
Over the decades, seeing Residents watching a sporting event like floor hockey, volleyball, or basketball in the Gyms was a common sight. However, when the building was first built in 1911, it would be hard to imagine the female students sitting in their long skirts with their legs hanging off the side! It’s nice to see these young ladies able to be comfortable in their surroundings.