

## **Endacott Society: Memories of the club for KU retirees – Rita Haugh**

**Interview conducted Nov. 27, 2011**

**Tell me about the planning that went into creating the KU retirees club.**

All retired faculty were invited to a reception in 1983 to begin a retirees group in a new Adams Center.

A questionnaire was passed out asking: What kind of activities would you like to have for the organization?

All the responses were brought up in a planning meeting. The social chairmen for the first years were Joe and Betty Marzluff and Oscar and Rita Haugh.

One of the responses was to have a New Year's Eve party. Rita questioned about where to have a New Year's Eve party. Would there be a dance floor in the Adams Center? The response was that it would have to be rented. Rita also asked whether there were funds to get a dance band. Another issue was drinks: Learned Club had a bar on the second floor where people could get drinks, but nonmembers of the Learned Club couldn't buy drinks. Members would have to carry them from the second floor down to the party on the first floor.

Just before the planning meeting adjourned, Rita Haugh suggested having a birthday party each month, honoring the people who had birthdays in that month. That's how the birthday parties started. At the beginning there was no speaker during the birthday parties. Another group had an evening lecture series. One of the first evening lectures was Keith Lawton talking about bird decoys, one of his hobbies. The members didn't like evening meetings for the lectures. So they decided to have the program during the birthday party combined with the lectures in the afternoon.

**Tell me about the morning coffees.**

Before the retirees group started, some retired faculty would go to a coffee shop on Massachusetts and have doughnuts and coffee in the morning. So when we started a coffee on Wednesday mornings, I suggested we call it "10 O'Clock Scholars."

In the first morning coffees, we met in the vending machine room with three tables, for about 12 people to sit. If more people came, someone had to move. We made our own coffee in the kitchen. We took turns bringing refreshments, starting with doughnuts. We decided doughnuts were too big, so we started getting doughnut holes instead of cutting them in half.

Elizabeth Lawson forgot she was supposed to bring refreshments once. The Alumni Center caterer had a pan of cinnamon rolls and charged her \$12, which shocked her. It was a small group in those days.

As we grew, we went to a bigger room, but everyone had to stand up. Oscar Haugh was the announcer as no microphone was available. When the group got even bigger, we spilled into the conference room.

Gradually the size increased, and now we meet in the Summerfield Room and have tables and chairs to sit at.

One drawback is that people want to sit with the same people every time, which can make it hard for new retirees to come into the group.

We have coffee from 10-10:30 am and then announcements. Each activity group gives a brief report on recent and coming activities. Guests are introduced, often children or grandchildren of members. Updates on members who are hospitalized or ill are provided as a way to share information, give addresses for get well cards, or discourage visitors for those who aren't able to have them.

In fall 2011 there were 60 to 80 people present at coffee. People take turns bringing food, and if they buy it, they can turn in expenses to be reimbursed.

### **What happens before and after coffee time?**

Bailey Price started the computer group in 1987, when he was president, setting the meeting time at 9 am before the coffee hour at 10 am on Wednesday. Jerry Niebaum, who was helpful to Dr. Price in starting the group, is now the retiree who leads the group in 2011.

Also meeting at 9 am on Wednesdays is the gardening seminar. Arno Knapper and Richard Schielfelbush started this group, and Arno led it until his death in January 2012. The group talks about gardening and gets a good laugh for the day as they occasionally steer off to other topics. That made it challenging for Arno sometimes.

After coffee, a music group meets at 11 am to listen to music recordings. Arno Knapper picked the music, much of it from the retiree music room, or members shared from their personal collections. Yes, Arno led groups at both 9 am and 11 am!

After that, the lunch group meets, started in the early 1990s by Rita and Oscar Haugh. Every two weeks the group would go out for lunch at a different restaurant that would donate some percentage of sales to Hillcrest School. Hillcrest had many international students whose parents owned or worked in local restaurants, and the PTA used this activity as a fundraiser. Many of the retirees' children had attended Hillcrest in earlier years, so there was affection for the school. The group decided to continue lunching together in the summer, even though the coffees weren't occurring in the summer. Now for many years we have coffee every week year round.

The fundraising for Hillcrest doesn't occur now, but lunches continue. Barbara Backus McCorkle has led the Lunch Bunch for four years. The chair of the Lunch Bunch has a master list of restaurants that are willing to take a large group for lunch and may have a separate room for our use. At the morning coffee, she takes a show of hands of who is interested in going that day, and calls the restaurant to get them ready for a group to sit together and have separate checks.

### **What other groups of retirees met or currently meet?**

For a short time we had a craft group that met at the Adams Center.

We had a pool table for a brief time, and the winner was announced at the Wednesday morning coffee.

There was an exercise bike but it got little use.

**Tell me about the library.**

The library has magazine subscriptions and some donated books, and Phyllis and Dick Sapp are now in charge. When magazines are not current, after a few months, members can take them. Members can check out some books on an honorary system. Members can also trade books they have read, leaving one and taking one.

The library houses all the oral histories. Calder Pickett was one of the first to do oral history interviews. Sandra Wiechert is now in charge.

The foreign policy group has met there, but in 2011 it was on hold for lack of discussion leaders.

For a while there was a creative writing group also. Martha Langley was in charge.

**Tell me about the travel group.**

Out of town and overnight trips have been a feature for many years. Some of the day trips were to Eisenhower Museum in Abilene, a December trip to Lindsborg for St. Lucia Day, and Kansas City to see the Plaza lights. The trips always include a good place to eat. We used big buses for these trips.

Overnight trips included going to Springfield, Illinois, to visit the Lincoln Museum and to Hays to see the museum there.

Local trips were scheduled too. In 2011 we toured the new KU Pharmacy building on west campus.

**Did you have any evening events?**

Preconcert dinners started when Hoch Auditorium was used for concerts. A bus would carry us from Adams Center to Hoch. When the Lied Center was built, the preconcert dinners moved to Smith Center at Brandon Woods, but no bus transportation was provided to Lied afterward.

Maceli's catered at the Alumni Center, but the Smith Center used catering from Brandon Woods. Grant Goodman, who lives in Brandon Woods, arranged the meals.

For many years, the Lied center gave one comp ticket per retiree, but they discontinued that practice in 2010. When they no longer received comp tickets, the retirees terminated the preconcert dinners.

The only remaining evening event is occasional potluck dinners.

**Did you have any arts groups?**

Arnold Weiss has been in charge of a playreading group, and the group chooses what play to read in English. It may take several months to finish a play. Different members take different roles. Sometimes they choose a play that will be performed at the University Theatre to become familiar with it before the performance.

Arnold was in a car accident about a year ago and in rehab at Brandon Woods, so the group went to Brandon Woods to read, so he wouldn't miss the session.

**Singing for Fun** was the brainchild of Roberta Spires, meeting second Thursday of the month, which is the same time as the University Women's Club, and often the same night as the evening lecture series (potluck). This demonstrates that there is a lot going on and it's hard to find a time to schedule something! The singing group gets a large turnout. Winnie and Al Gallup provide the music, Winnie playing the piano. Edwyna Gilbert helped turn pages before her death in April 2011.

Several of the group leaders want to retire from their leadership roles now after many years having a fun time.

#### **How do you raise money to support the group?**

Annual dues are \$25 a year for a single person, \$30 a couple. We have a treasurer.

For trips, people pay their own way.

When preconcert dinners were catered, people paid.

With the potluck dinners, now the meat is purchased (from HyVee), and individuals sign up to bring various other items to share: vegetable, salad, dessert, other, etc. Earlier, several individuals would fix the meat for the group, with Arno Knapper in charge.

Potluck dinners are more frequent now but have fewer attending each one. Attendance was typically 120 or more when potlucks were less frequent; now we serve about 80 persons at each one. The scheduling is somewhat dependent on when the room at the Adams Center is open. It was available more in 2011 than earlier, because The Oread Hotel is open with special spaces for wedding receptions, etc. For many years, Arno Knapper made loaves of homemade French bread and two pies for each potluck. (He brought a rhubarb pie to the potluck dinner the night he died, in fact.)

#### **Expressions of Appreciation and Get Well messages**

Friends can give "Expressions of Appreciation" monetary gifts to support the group activities in memory of members.

When we first started, Mildred Clodfelder, who had retired as an employee of the Alumni Association, sent notes to hospitalized or ill members for several years. Others who have done this include Leonora Barker. Janis Hutchison is in charge now.

**You have read through the histories on the KU Retirees website. Is there anything you want to add or expand on or clarify, especially from a woman's viewpoint?**

My husband, Oscar Haugh, was asked to join the preplanning meetings in 1981-83 for the group, before the Adams Center was built. They met in the Kansas Union. We were both very active in the early years of getting the organization going and enjoyed working on events with others.

Many of the male faculty members knew those in their own department. Women who were part of the University Women's Club, both faculty wives and female faculty members, usually knew other women across the university. So when the group for retirees started, the women seemed to be the glue who connected retirees and spouses from different schools and programs. Women were an important part of the success of the group. When we started the seminar part of the birthday parties, we tried to have gender balance of presenters.

**How does the university get involved with retirees?**

In December, the university hosts a luncheon for all retired faculty, either at the Union or the Holidome. Up to 400 people attend, retirees and spouses, companions or friends. Many attend Vespers afterward.

In the spring, after commencement, a spring luncheon honors retiring faculty and unclassified staff members; current retirees also attend as guests of the university.

For many years, The University Theatre has given two tickets per retiree, and often a matinee will have a large number of retirees attending.

The Lied Center gave two tickets per retiree to many of their events, then one ticket, until they discontinued any free tickets in 2010.

**And the future of the club?**

We hope to get more young retirees involved. We need to have people suggest other interest groups to pursue.