



**CFUW Stratford  
Monthly Meeting Minutes  
January 28, 2014, 7:30 P.M.  
Central United Church**

**Call to Order and Welcome:** President Katharine Gunnel Gavin welcomed members to the first regular meeting of 2014. She was pleased to see so many in attendance despite the bitterly cold weather, which she found challenging even though she was raised at the Arctic Circle in Sweden.

**Acceptance of Agenda:** Moved by Pat Shewen, seconded by Liz Dolan. CARRIED

**Approval of Minutes of October 22, 2013 and November 26, 2013.**

Acceptance of both moved by Pat Reavy, seconded by Nancy Hallowell Scott. CARRIED

**Business Arising:**

1. Remembrance Day Wreath for 2014. We were too late to be included in the 2013 cenotaph ceremony, but are on the agenda for 2014.

**Correspondence:**

1. We have received several Thank You letters from our 2012-13 Scholarship Winners. Their genuine appreciation for our support of their educational aspirations is both heart warming and gratifying.
2. We were invited to meet with Gary Schellenberger re the Integrated Public Transportation Project. Sheila Clarke and members of the Advocacy Committee attended.

**New Business:**

1. The membership was given the Notice of Motion for amendments to our scholarship rules, with voting to follow at the February 25 meeting. Scholarship chair Nancy Hallowell Scott read the motions:

*“Should a school fail to have a qualified recipient for an award, the Scholarship Committee will ask that school to recommend an alternative award for those funds for that award year, and the Scholarship Committee will decide on the validity of that temporary alteration.”*

*“In the event that students are tied for an award, the Scholarship Committee will determine, based on the available funds, whether each can receive the full amount or whether the award or whether the award will be divided between the recipients.”*

These motions formalize current practice and are designed to ensure that control for such decisions rests with the Scholarship Committee. Any questions can be addressed to Nancy [nhallowellscott@hotmail.com](mailto:nhallowellscott@hotmail.com)

## Reports:

- **President** Katharine Gunnel Gavin, president

Katharine and Sheila Clarke attended the Standing Committee meeting in Toronto in September. Sheila spoke about our Transportation Project and distributed information. They also participated in the Ontario South Gathering in Brantford in November. The Museum provided an eye-catching poster of a steam train presentation and Sheila's talk was well received. Sheila has also provided an article for the Ontario Council Newsletter.

The CFUW AGM for 2014 will be held in Kitchener June 19-22. The theme is "our Emerging Mosaic" the hope is that all local clubs will participate, so mark it in your calendar.

CFUW National has published "Highlights" for 2013 in Canada. The representation of women on major boards is still disproportionate. They are encouraging women to view the "Status-Quo" documentary, which we screened at our Nov. meeting.

The United Nations Committee on the Status of Women continues to advocate for the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls.

- **1<sup>st</sup> Vice-president** Louise McColl

Our March meeting will be discussion of CFUW Canada 2014 Resolutions. More information will be available at the February meeting.

- **2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President** Duties shared by Sylvia Wright and Lois Battle.

Sylvia reported that a new walking group has been added and members were reminded that formation of new interest groups is encouraged.

- **Treasurer** Sylvia Wright

The December opening balance was \$5993. Income included 15 memberships (total 74), the Seasonal Lunch (broke even), the Art Series (\$650). Expenses included rental of Spruce Lodge and sound equipment for the documentary screening in Nov. and for printing of the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Booklet. A GIC matured and was re-invested. Current balance is \$ 8309. National dues will be paid in February.

- **Program** Pat Reavy

Our next meeting Feb. 28 will feature members Sheila Clarke and Nora Walden discussing the club's role in the banning of cosmetic pesticide use. Some members may not realize that the anti-pesticide movement started here. We need ideas for ways to raise funds for our scholarship fund. Our current fundraisers are the Art Series and the Elizabethan Dinner. The Dinner will be April 5 at the Queen's Inn. St. Michael's school will be performing Twelfth Night.

- **Membership** Louise McColl, 1<sup>st</sup>. Vice-President

There are currently 74 paid members for 2013-14.

- **Scholarship** Nancy Hallowell Scott

See New Business

- **Advocacy** Liz Dolan

Liz invited Sheila Clarke to join her for the report on the Transportation Group's Activities. Please visit the website [www.gettingthere.ca](http://www.gettingthere.ca). Thanks to Anne Carbert and Nora Walden for the revisions and keeping it current and interesting. The renewed website is close to completion, which will see an "action" section that will contain sample letters for MP/MPPs, room for insertion of personal comments a link to our petition (currently being developed) and a link to the SWEA petition. The group is aiming for a campaign 'blitz". Please invite people you know to visit the website and participate – the personal touch is most effective. WE NEED TO START PUBLIC DEBATE.

- Our campaign is featured on the CFUW National website.
- Academic researchers from the University Toronto, York and Ryerson Universities are providing us with up-to-date background information and discussions are underway for cooperative initiatives as part of a major SHRRRC funded project looking at transportation in Ontario.
- A brief was submitted Sept. 23 for the provincial government's 2014 pre-budget meetings and Chris West from St. Mary's made a personal appearance before the budget committee.
- CFUW Ontario Council invited us to bring our Transportation Display to their meeting in Toronto January 25<sup>th</sup>. Unfortunately no-one was able to attend, largely because there was no option for getting there on-time or returning the same day, other than driving!
- Sheila has attended several meetings locally, in London and in Sarnia; more than half a dozen in January alone. Each community has its own reasons for wanting improved transportation but the overall goal is the same. She has a meeting scheduled with MPP Pettapiece Jan. 30, with the Zonta Club, the Rotary Club of Stratford, the transportation coordinator of the Huron-Perth United Way, Mayor Matheson and Chris West (Feb. 10) and a taping with Rogers Cable. The goal is to MAKE NOISE!

The Advocacy Group needs your feedback and participation at whatever level you can manage!

There were several questions and comments from members in attendance, confirming the relevance and currency of this issue.

- **Fund Development** Ann Reynolds

The Art Series has commenced with three lectures to come Jan. 31, Feb. 7, 14, at 1:30 PM in the Celebration Room at River Garden Retirement Residences. Tickets are \$15 per session.

- **Communications** Nora Walden

We have had excellent coverage in the Gazette; timing of information on the Art Series was perfect. Even when our articles do not appear in print they are on the paper's website.

Please check our website [www.cfuwstratford.wordpress.com](http://www.cfuwstratford.wordpress.com) for up-to-date news and notices.

**SPEAKERS** Ann Reynolds and Patricia Reavy “*CFUW Stratford and The Canadian Players.*”

Through visits to the Festival Archives, references in books (including Tom Patterson’s *First Stage* 1987) and one-on one discussions with veteran actors William Needles and Ted Follows, Ann and Pat provided a synopsis of CFUW’s role in support of The Canadian Players, a group comprised of Stratford Festival actors, that toured Canada and the United States from 1954-1966 during the off-season.

The first season of the Stratford Shakespeare Festival ran for only 6 weeks in July and August of 1953, and the second season was only 9 weeks long. To keep actors employed for a longer period, Festival founder Tom Patterson, his wife Robin, and actor Douglas Campbell formed a touring company, the Canadian Players, to take shows on the road to the rest of the country. The company, comprised of Campbell, his wife actor Ann Casson, Bill Needles, William Hutt and Bruno Gerusi, opened with a performance of Saint Joan before Governor General Vincent Massey at Rideau Hall in Ottawa in the Fall of 1954. Additional shows in Ontario, Quebec, and parts of the northeast US followed. Productions were spare, primarily works of Shakespeare and Shaw. No Canadian plays made the bill until 1964. Typically they travelled by bus and were billeted when possible to keep costs down. Frances Hyland joined the company in 1955. That year they travelled to Moosonee by train, compliments of Colonel Reynolds, head of the Ontario Northland Railway. Because there was little electrical power available, everyone in town turned out their lights so that the show, Shaw’s Saint Joan, could go on. The venue was so packed some had to watch from outside through icy windows. The audience was mainly native and largely unfamiliar with the play or professional theater, but the reception was warm and the four Jesuit priests in attendance were overjoyed! Later the Colonel invited them to visit children in the local hospital, many suffering from tuberculosis. Mr. Needles recalled this as one of the most moving experiences of his life. In 1956 they toured Western Canada, again mainly using buses that doubled as dressing rooms. Their American bus driver for the US leg of the tour, John Murphy, turned out to be quite a character, frequently proclaiming “Cops! I can smell ‘em.” Mr. Needle’s friend, an Episcopal minister invited them to Richmond VA. The venue turned out to be an old warehouse in a derelict district of town, with accommodation in the neighbouring brothel. When Bill played the parlor organ for their hosts, he was pleased to hear them say he brought “class” to the house.

Initially all the actors contributed their own money to get the tours going, but in the first season they lost \$40,000 in 16 weeks. The endeavor might have been doomed if not for Lady Flora Eaton, who started a fund raising campaign and the continued efforts of Robin Patterson, the Canadian Players’ president for 1955. In 1956 there were two touring companies that barnstormed though Canada and the US presenting 40+ shows to more than 50,000 people. Most places did not have theaters, so they performed in schools, churches and community halls, being interrupted at inconvenient times by telephones, bells, clock chimes and other alarms. During one performance of Macbeth, the first three rows of the audience were overcome by caldron smoke, in another; Macbeth delivered his lines while bracing his castle against imminent collapse. Funding continued to be a problem and the Canada Council grant for 1957 was sufficient to fund only one company. By then the Stratford Festival had initiated a competing touring company of its own and a growing interest in live performance had spawned

smaller regional theaters to provide alternative employment for actors. In 1964 the Canadian Players moved their base to Toronto, doing a nine-month season at the Central Library Theater. In 1966 they merged with the Crest Players to become the Canadian Crest Players Foundation, evolving into Theater Toronto in 1968. Michael Langham Artistic Director of the Stratford Festival (1956-67) had offered to take over The Canadian Players, but the Festival Board of Directors rejected the idea. Longtime Stratford actor Butch Blake (1907-2003) contended that had the decision gone the other way, the Canadian Players would have continued to be a part of the Festival to this day.

Pat Reavy continued by recounting her entertaining conversation with Ted Follows who joined Canadian Players in 1955. He remembered touring on the bus when a typical day consisted of eat breakfast, drive until 4PM, have dinner, perform, have drinks, sleep and repeat. Tour routes were not always the most efficient. The venue-booking schedule often had them doubling back to perform in towns they had by-passed earlier. On one occasion they travelled from Salt Lake to Victoria in 36 hours. There was minimal space for luggage since props, sets and costumes travelled with them. Flexibility was key. In one case they had to cut a three-hour play to one hour and a half to accommodate the dinner theater where they were booked. Most performances were one-night stands, except in larger urban centers where might have longer runs. He felt he was paid well, saving \$1700 in the 1956 - 57 season, enough to purchase a Volkswagen Beetle.

CFUW Stratford involvement with The Canadian Players started in the club's first year. In September 1955, the inaugural members voted down a proposal asking for a contribution of \$1 from each member to set up a scholarship fund; however, they were persuaded by Robin Patterson to sponsor a local performance of Macbeth in November that netted the club a profit of more than \$500, providing \$200 for scholarships the next year. Likewise, local CFUW clubs and other service organizations sponsored many regional performances by the Canadian Players. CFUW Stratford's support continued until 1958 and generated \$170 in '56, \$146 in '57 and \$67 in '58. Subsequently, the club raised scholarship funds through the sale of Hasti-notes. Initially, these notepapers were decorated with a Stratford sketch produced by local students who competed for a \$10 design prize. Later, costume sketches created by designer Brian Jackson were used. The latter proved so popular with Festival patrons that in 1968 the Festival took over production of the notes and we were left to find other creative ways to sponsor our scholarships.

Louise McColl thanked Ann and Pat for a delightful trip down memory lane and for their efforts in pulling together these anecdotes and historical references.

(It should be mentioned that Ann and Pat graciously stepped in when the speaker originally slated for this talk was unable to do so.)

**Adjournment** moved by Louise McColl

Next Meeting: **February 25, 2014, 7:30 PM** Central United Church

The 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration Continues:  
Sheila Clarke, Nora Walden and Stacey Pegg Wilson will discuss  
***"CFUW and Pesticide Advocacy"***