**100 years of Alamo Women’s Club History**

 Over the years, many things have changed in our Club, including its name and locations. The Alamo Mother’s Club of 1916 became the Alamo Community Club in 1935, and finally changed to the Alamo Women’s Club in 1953. The location changed from meeting in member’s homes, to renting a room at Huber House, to renting a meeting room, a library room and kitchen at the old Henry Hotel, to the current location given by the Henry family (Corwin and Ruth) to the Club in 1949. The Club was dedicated on June 14, 1952.

Many things over the 100 years however remained the same: notably the way local women reached out to help others through kindness, through hands-on help to neighbors and those continents away, and through donations to their greater community.

At the Club founding in **1916**, women married earlier and had children much earlier than today. At this time industrialization had created new kitchen conveniences that meant less housework than ever before and women had more free time. The extra time resulted in the formation of the Alamo Mother’s Club to support their children at their school. Fundraising for a playground apparatus, including swings, sandbox, basketball and handball courts, and a baseball diamond were their school related projects.

I**n 1921** the Club joined General Federated Women’s Clubs. It is recalled that they affiliated with GFWC due to their ongoing efforts placed on women and their right to vote. The GFWC founding motto was ‘Strength United is Stronger’. The early Alamo group typified the slogan as they cooked kettles of soup and hot foods for Alamo Grammar school lunches.

Club efforts at this time though began to reach beyond their children and its school, and a community library was an early ongoing endeavor as the clubwomen became the County’s Alamo Branch Library.

Town Forum Club meetings presenting cultural and educational programs once a month were held from 1921 until 1935.

The two prong approach of fun things for members to participate in as well as community and philanthropy help was established in this era when the women began to help beyond just their children and their school.

In **1935** the Mother’s Club became the Alamo Community Club embracing the trend beyond the grammar school. In **1939** the club moved to the Henry Hotel renting (for $5 a month) a club room, the kitchen and a library room. The arrangement of the time was that the Club rented a room for the library, the librarian was a Club member, and the County paid the librarian salary into the club.

The Alamo postmaster, Bertha Linhares, of that time would build the fire on the Henry Hotel coal and wood stove on her way to work so that the room would be warm for the library and the women coming in to work. Many stories were told about that coal and wood stove exploding and all running for cover. (See story of 1941)

By the way during this decade 474 free public libraries and over 4600 travelling libraries nationwide were formed. The American Library Association officially recognizes that 75% of them were created under the umbrella of General Federated Women’s Clubs founded by women’s groups just like in Alamo.

In 1939 the first scholarships are given out for a nursing student and to a San Ramon Valley High School senior.

1940 and the war years found the club focus on the war effortas the heart of all their programs with disaster preparedness, a canteen headquarters where sugar and coffee were doled out, and dances for soldiers. Rolling bandages, sewing for refugees and manning the Air Watch Tower built on Alamo School grounds had members and their husbands routinely serving for the war at home.  By the late 1940’s they had groups for sewing, arts ‘n’ crafts, excursions, bridge and cards.

Amusingly in **1941** one Club luncheon found a car passing by the Henry Hotel and the driver noted smoke billowing from the kitchen. What a surprise to find that the kitchen was on fire from a defective flue while the women prepared their luncheon! The Clubwomen were nonplussed as the firemen came, and they packed up the food, tables, and dishes and moved to a nearby member’s house and continued with their luncheon!

The annual rummage sale began in 1944 and continued right up until 2013!

The scrapbooks hold two letters from Germany written in **1948** to the Alamo Community Club. Specifics weren’t mentioned but there are thanks in one letter for a coat, books, sugar, stockings, soap, and pajamas. One recipient a woman from Obernkirchen, Germany in the British Zone wrote “I gave thanks to God for His putting into the hearts of noble people at the other end of the world to help entire strangers in their misery. It is not only a great help with regards to food and clothing, it’s a help for the soul too.” Though small in number their outreach had affects.

After armistice there was a renewed vision for a permanent club location which idea had been set aside in the late 1930’s due to the war, and a site was secured when the Henry’s donated land to the Alamo Community Club. A plaque was purchased to honor the Henry’s and a silver platter was used at the centennial celebration on April 27, 2016 that is engraved in honor of Mrs. Ruth Henry.

As **1950** rolled in, members spent time developing, designing and building the new Clubhouse. What a job they did as we celebrate the centennial in that Clubhouse much of it completed by hand!! 1954 featured a fashion show, which they called “Will Dior Be There?”

The clubhouse too had a different look with two huge palm trees flanking the front porch, inside there were four west facing windows and draperies were on all the windows, and doors the interior had exposed beams, and in the foyer shelving for their library books.

1952-53: the parking lot was paved for $1100, which they borrowed. They also purchased a piano in the same year. A Drama Section and a Garden Section were added for members in this year.

1961 there are 181 members. The Holiday Flair is added in 1960 as a fundraiser and includes handmade articles, plants, baked goods and a gourmet luncheon.

In 1964 AWC sponsored the Alamo Evening Community Extension Meeting.

In the mid **1960’s** the first donations began to Penny Pines to reforest California forests. This tradition continues and AWC has donated more than 50 times funding forests all over the state. Card games, help to philanthropies, teas and luncheons dominated Club activities.

In the 1960’s the County quit funding the branch library, switched to a book-mobile which Clubwomen continued to help with and was finally discontinued around 1970. After that the Club was open for members one day per week to exchange books at the Clubhouse. The library for nearly 50 years was manned by AWC and resided wherever they were: first in the Huber House and moved to the Henry Hotel in 1939 and then to the current clubhouse in 1952. 40 years of community library service by clubwomen.

Not surprising that environmental concerns and recycling pop up in Club programs for the first time in the 1970’s.

October 6, 1972 was also important as the Club had paid off their mortgage and held a party to burn it. Husbands were invited to celebrate as they had been great help in making the building of the house a possibility. They used the celebration to mark their 50 year anniversary, and 18 past presidents attend the event.

Club members have a cooking school that is open to the public and remains for several years.

In 1978 AWC does a kitchen renovation and update. Interestingly, the granite-topped table currently (2016) in the foyer was the original kitchen table and is shown in pictures in the 70’s though the top at the time was wood.

1979 discussions are held about proposal to lease the north portion of the property that is ongoing today with the lease for their parking lot.

For most of the **1980’s** the club has 89 members and unites on a new effort to fund a handrail for the steps of the Alamo Cemetery. The cemetery was built on a hill and had steep steps and no handrails so this project funded a 104-foot handrail. For fun an Exercise class is added at this time.

**The 1990’s** also saw a rise and interest in Hospice programs. In 1994 the Alamo Women’s Tree of Hospice Lights was dedicated through the efforts of our member and former president of AWC, Norma Scruggs, who was honored that year as their Citizen of the Year by Hospice of the East Bay. That work ripples forward today with the annual tree lighting and Holiday luncheon event open to the community in honor of those who have passed.

In 1993 Club member, Virgie Jones, was honored for her community work including that of AWC by the Alamo Rotary as Citizen of the Year. Since then three other members have been so honored: Claudia Waldron, Vicki Koc and Nancy Dommes.

Th**e new century**, 2000, continued many traditions such as the garage sale, hospice, teas and speaker luncheons, excursions, Penny Pines, scholarships and philanthropy donations. It was also an era that brought many professional working women into the club and their influence and desire to do philanthropy was felt as we expanded our scholarship and philanthropy donations nearly three-fold over this decade. Their philanthropy interest also directly resulted in expanding hands-on opportunities for members.

2010 saw the first Crab Feed fundraiser and auctions.

**2010** brought a realization that while the club was nearly 100, the Clubhouse was 50 years plus and looking a bit sad. A mini-facelift was in order and over four years, the vision became a reality for a renovated exterior and updated bathrooms and interior rooms. The renovation team headed by project manager Claudia Waldron spent long hours in planning and implementation of the facelift! The project was completed by September 2014. Granite was put on kitchen table now in foyer.

A year after finishing the project, a donation was received in honor of Billie Long, former Alamo Women’s Club member and mother of Lisa Long Laird and her husband Jim Laird, which allowed us to completely renovate our kitchen which we dedicated in 2015. It was over-due, as the last large renovation had been done in 1978. A plaque in the kitchen honors Billie Long.

2015 Scholarships are expanded to more schools.

2015 was the first Author’s Faire fundraiser.

The incoming presidential slogan of 2016/17 reminds us that ‘it’s in our hands’ to continue fostering our approach of having fun and simultaneously giving to others.

Over 100 years the effect of a small group and its impact is evident, even though our name, our location, and our philanthropies changed but 100 years of community involvement remains the same.

Vicki Koc

Compilations from AWC scrapbooks 1939 to present, CC Times article of 1976, A Short History of the Alamo Women’s Club by Carola Cordell of 1971, presidential reports of 1950’s, Remembering Alamo by Virgie Jones,and GFWC official history.