

# 'Freshettes' out to get married in the 20's

by Denise Whalen

Women on the Gateway in the '20's

In the course of our history, the Gateway's coverage of women's events has had both its high points and its bad days.

During the first days of our existence as a campus newspaper, coverage of events important to women did not exist. This was a reflection of the overwhelmingly male student body and the blatant chauvinism of the times.

The most interesting period as far as coverage of women's events goes was probably the 'twenties'. Women were just beginning to feel the power of their numbers, while campus life was still based on tradition, ceremony, and conservatism. Women were expected to "keep in line".

The Gateway had only one woman editor during the 1920's. Anna Wilson was the Exchange Editor during the 1925 - 26 term. In this capacity she was responsible for keeping on top of events on other Canadian campuses through reading their respective papers and reprinting the most interesting items in the pages of the Gateway.

Editorial positions which gave the holder the power to shape and define the Gateway's content, such as Editor-In-Chief and Associate Editor were offered to men only. The names of contributors to each issue were printed in the paper's editorial box, but it is interesting to note that although about a third of the contributors to each issue were women, most were not encouraged to, or chose not to, use their full name in their story by-lines. Thus, we got stories written by "Misses Gilhooly" or simply by "Nanette."

During the 1925 - 26 school year the Students' Union, on a request from the Women's Students Advisor, the Student's Union President, and the Men's Fraternity Group decided to require all "Freshettes" (first-year women students) to fill out a questionnaire. The questionnaire was then kept on file for the benefit of the above groups.

Among the "bright" questions listed on the questionnaire were such posers as: Are you considered beautiful? dumb? athletic? and what musical instruments do you play? The Gateway dutifully noted this new policy for first-year women in a brief, second page article written by the "The Alligator". This decision was reprinted without any sort of editorial comment.

Women, however, did make the news occasionally. For example, the "fun-loving" university administration, known even back then for never showing much common sense, offered a championship medal for the freshette who could talk the longest about one subject without stopping for breath. Mercifully, the name of the winning contestant has been lost to posterity, since the Gateway ran out of newspaper space in reprinting her monologue and did not bother to include her name.

Women students resided in Pembina Hall. Although university regulations for women had loosened up considerably by the 1920's, women students in residence were still expected to behave with modesty and decorum at all times.

A certain Miss Dodd, who was the Advisor to Women Students at that time actually lived in Pembina Hall with the women, and was reported to have run a very tight ship. On one occasion she approached a Gateway reporter to voice her growing frustration at "those pampered Freshettes [who] do not even know how to make a bed properly." This was the topic of current interest for two consecutive Gateway issues in September, 1926.

The only known exception to either 'Miss' of a first name was the arrival of two black women on campus in the November of 1926 to give an air of authenticity to the university's "Southern Days" celebration. Both women were simply referred to as "black mummies."

Serious articles written about and directed toward women undergraduates were in short supply all through the 1920's in fact, even a curious glance through any 1920's Gateway would offer the reader more advertising directed toward women than serious inquiries into women's issues. "Casserole", an undergraduate humour column, was one of the most popular sections of the 1920's Gateway. Most of the jokes concerned relationships between the sexes, and as can be guessed at, most of the jokes were decidedly sexist in tone and content.

To judge from Gateway coverage of the campus scene, social events and dances were the most popular extracurricular activities during this period. These events often merited front page coverage, and it was often noted that "Miss So and So, the evening's patroness, graciously spent much of the evening making the boys feel more comfortable." Readers can interpret that sentence any way they wish. At the March 3rd, 1927 Sophomore Party, the Gateway reporter who attended the event, commented on the "unappreciation" shown by the women towards the men's jokes. "But perhaps the jokes weren't so stale. The girls were too dumb to see through them anyway, and perhaps it was just as well. What they don't know won't hurt them."

## Life's

September 30, 1969



## a ball

You're a clown. You're a queen.  
You're whatever you dream.  
Just imagine.  
You're able to do what you want  
any day, every day.  
Run. Ride. Play. Even swim...  
What a world!

And all you have to do to help it all come true is forget about those difficult days each month. And that's as easy as switching from bulky uncomfortable sanitary napkins to Tampax tampons.

A Tampax tampon is worn internally. When properly in place, you hardly know it's there. And no one else will know because nothing shows. Not even when you wear something sheer or "see-through."

Easy-to-use Tampax tampons were developed by a doctor. Any woman, married or single, can use them with confidence. And to make them even more convenient, Tampax tampons are available in three absorbency-sizes: Regular, Super and Junior.

**TAMPAX**  
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MADE ONLY BY  
CANADIAN TAMPAX CORPORATION LTD., BARRIE, ONT.

For the last 75 years, this university has had a student newspaper, the Gateway.

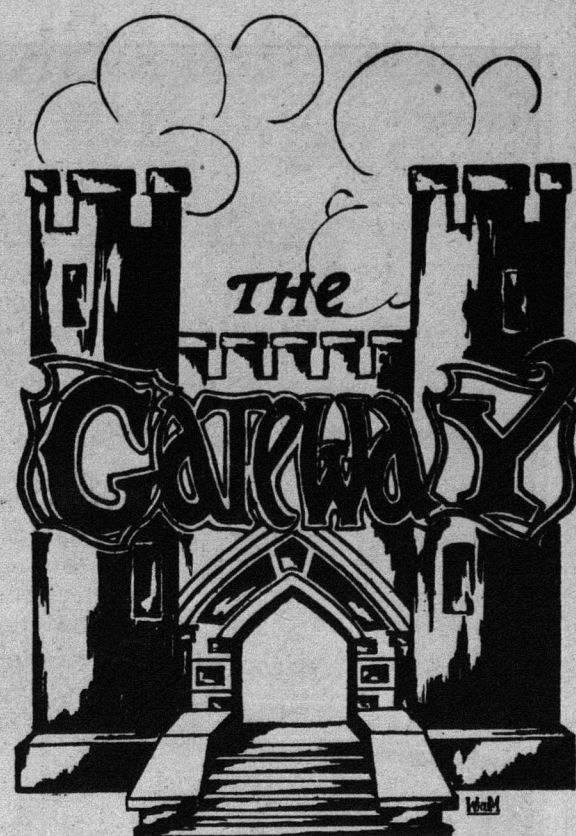
The first editor was Albert E. Ottewell and the Gateway cost 20¢ a copy.

We don't charge you anymore for the privilege of reading the Gateway, but the student's issues that we've covered since that time are much the same — Council's screw-ups, administration's insensitivity, tuition fees, the price of beer.

75 years is a lot of time to cover, so today's supplement will highlight just a few aspects — the Gateway's coverage of women in the 1920's, a few letters from our past, and a photo essay on a day in the life of the Gateway.

Next week we will continue the saga with features on campus humor in past years and on some old political battles.

Stayed tuned.



November, 1910

During any kind of social event women were expected to wait on the men. On October 28, 1925, Sir Arthur Currie President of McGill University, gave a short address to the student body in Athabasca Hall. His speech on "The Purpose of a University Education" must have been particularly stressful because the women undergrads were not allowed into the hall until Currie was finished and the men had partaken of dinner. The women were then ushered in. During Student Council meetings and elections, the women, in true lady-like fashion, were expected to pass the tea and cakes around to get things started. And trivial little incidents like this were reported in the pages of the paper. Woe betide any woman who refused to participate in these activities. She could expect to find herself without a date on Saturday.

It was "common knowledge" among the university students, including some of the more "astute" Gateway reporters, that the only reason most women attended institutes of higher learning was to find a husband. "Co-eds do not seek education for a career," psychology professor Dr. D.E. Phillips warned young men in 1924. "Not one in every ten expects to hold a job. Nine out of every ten have designs to lead you to the altar. Which all goes to prove that college is the greatest matrimonial bureau on earth. Young men, beware!" The opinions of the women in this class went unreported, although the Professor's words of warning ran eleven lines on page five of the January 14, 1928 Gateway.

The practice of "booking dances", or asking women out for a particular social function, was a hot topic during 1926 because a few hasty individuals were booking their dances up to three weeks in advance. The rest of the unfortunate chaps finally decided to cry foul. There was a great deal of discussion in the columns of the Gateway regarding this practice, and Walter Herbert, the current Gateway editor, warned young men in an editorial to keep their passions in check and book dances no earlier than the Saturday night before the dance. The Wauneita Society, the major "women's club" in campus held an emergency meeting to debate the issue and the proceedings warranted front page coverage in the Gateway. The only other editorial comment concerning women in that year was promoted by the debate over whether to allow co-eds to use the university barbershop. The Gateway came down firmly on the side of the women.

Every once in a while women did write about women's issues on campus, but most of these columns were concerned with the frivolous. On November 5, 1925, a column entitled "Girls! Oh, Girls!" appeared on page five of a six page Gateway. The entire article was devoted to the attempts of the women at the Wauneita dance to snare a boyfriend. We can only assume that a woman wrote the story, since it was signed "by Lil' Freshette".

When the women students did attempt to assert their independence in any way, they were certain to be met by a chorus of ardent rebuttals by the males, often within the

pages of the Gateway. On December 3rd 1925, a certain "T.B.T." saw fit to grace the pages of our fair paper with an article on "The things women fight for." In this man's words "It is impossible to write anything original about women at all. Everything that can possibly be said about them has already been said whether by the men or by themselves — trust the women for that. Tea undoubtedly would — not be served, Arts club hikes would not be done, club activities in general would have definite ends — if there were no women in the university. In short, the level of the men's achievements would be higher". T.B.T. ended this article with a word of warning to Dr. Tory, the university president. "It is the women who fix the level of which any university will sink, however high the aims of the promoters."

The barbershop was one of the few victories for women who did agitate for social change. They were ecstatic. "At last we are to have equal rights for women. We hear that it is to be definitely established. Those of you who for years have agitated for it, who broke windows in Convocation Hall of the Cause, who have lobbied the members of the Senate and thrown bricks at the C.O.T.C. (Officer's Training Corps) those of us, I say, who have grown grey in the halls of Learning working for it — are rejoicing today, for we have just learned that there is to be a Co-ed Barber Shop! The enthusiastic writer of this column signed herself "HMB."

Gateway also carried a very witty and well-written rebuttal to "TBT" and his complaints about women on campus. In the writer's own words "Any woman could have told [TBT] that the surest breeder of spite is disappointment. There is a great difference between embracing a woman, and letting one's disappointment do it. Well, well, there is a tragedy at every street corner." After that opening salvo, this particular woman went on to demolish every argument put forth by TBT, in a very convincing manner. Coverage like this was very rare indeed, and this was the only instance during the mid and later 1920's when a woman was allowed space in the Gateway to refute male chauvinism.

Collegiate sports enjoyed its heyday during the 1920's, and the Gateway coverage of women's sporting events was actually more extensive than it is known. The renowned Edmonton Grads basketball team performed regularly on campus and university women's hockey team was one of the best on the prairies at that time. However, judging from eyewitness coverage in the sports page, most women's games were covered by male reporters. One often finds rather lengthy descriptions of the 'pucksters' hairdos and leg-shape, and reports of whether or not they stopped and waved to their boyfriends in the crowd.

To be sure, most of today's Gateway staff members would be expelled and probably jailed if, in some magical way, we could be shipped back to that period. Personally, I'd be sure to take a copy of the Women's Issues supplement to while away the months behind bars.