

2017 AGM – PRESIDENT’S REPORT

It was my pleasure to welcome several new members during our 2016-2017 year. As always, these new members have brought with them the energy and enthusiasm that is so critical to the continuing life of the Calgary Women’s Literary Club, now in its one hundred and eleventh year (or eleventy-first, as Bilbo Baggins would say). Sadly, we lost four of our members over the same period – two past members and two active members. At this point in time we have 38 active members and 11 honorary members.

As you just heard from our Treasurer, Della Mae Wood, our financial situation is much improved from the low point we experienced about five years ago. This happy situation is the result of our increased membership over the last two or three years and the Calgary Public Library’s generosity, since we no longer pay an annual fee to rent our regular meeting room. Indeed, the CPL’s continued support is greatly appreciated and we cherish this special relationship.

However, we cannot become complacent. For example, our ability to enjoy the hospitality of the Calgary Golf & Country Club depends upon having access to a membership there. And for the past three years, we have relied on the wonderful hospitality of our Secretary, Flora Spackman, for our Winter Party venue. But that is too great a burden to place on one member, given that we had around 50 people attend the party last November. As a result, I and various members of the Executive Committee have been looking for alternative venues, primarily for the Winter Party,

but, longer-term, for our Spring Luncheon and AGM. Some of the alternatives also depend on a membership, others, such as the Elbow Springs Golf & Country Club, may be too far away, and some are simply too expensive. So, the search will continue.

In the meantime, I am pleased to announce that our 2017 Winter Party will be held at Amica Seniors' Residence, Aspenshire Drive, S.W. This is the new home of honorary member and one-time president Ruth Hilland and, since this too depends on one of our members being an Amica resident, it is not a permanent solution. I can confirm that they are offering a charming room with a piano for our private use, a buffet tea with beverages, Christmas decorations and free underground parking supplemented by limited on-site surface parking and street parking, all at no cost.

Anne Tingle, our program Chair, will be presenting our upcoming presentation program shortly. I don't want to steal Anne's thunder, but I would like to say a few words on the subject. Our 2016-17 theme was, as you know, Favourite Authors. It was unusual insofar as our themes have always been more specific as to genre or writing credentials. Even more unusually, the Executive Committee voted to continue this theme for a second year because several members expressed disappointment that they would not have the opportunity to prepare a paper on their favourite author. Our 2016-17 program introduced us to a broad spectrum of genres and authors – from cookbooks, travel writing, ex-journalists-turned novelists and biographers, poets and modern novelists to classic writers such as Robert Louis Stevenson and Jane Austen. All the papers required the same caliber of research and scholarship as we have come to expect of our members and all followed the guidelines for presentations in terms of length, the author's life and times,

influences, minimum number of books covered and so on. In addition, this theme engendered two other elements. First was the extraordinary passion for the author by the presenter, which was infectious and energizing. At the conclusion of each presentation we have enjoyed some lively discussions. Second, the choice of author gave special insight into the member presenting the paper, so we got to know each other a little better. Now, however, we are already looking for suggestions for themes more in line with those of previous years.

Speaking of getting to know each other, I have been especially pleased to see how many members are making a point to arrive early at the library to enjoy the refreshments and get to know people. Thanks to all of you who have brought “treats” and to our Social Chair Doloris Duval and her team of Cecilia Krupa and Sue Carscallen.

Our website continued to go from strength to strength under the leadership of our Webmaster Janet Halls assisted by Judi Lee. Thanks to their dedication, the site attracts new members and allows existing members to catch up on meetings they have missed, presentations, and on-line conversations about literature. I know that Janet and Judi would really appreciate more member contributions throughout the year, including our summer and winter breaks. It might be a book review and recommendation, or a comment about a literary event, or anything else that promotes the study of and interest in literature.

We continued to advertise our meetings in Swerve magazine and, in the fall of 2016, we were approached by Avenue Magazine for a paragraph about our club. This appeared in their March

2017 issue under the heading “Five Book Clubs You Should Join.” I can’t imagine why it wasn’t titled “The One Book Club You Should Join!”

I’m sure many of you will recall Sue Carscallen’s fascinating presentation last October on the Glenbow Archives. Now Sue has become our “semi official” club Historian. Sue is working with Ruth Hilland and other long-standing members of the club to compile a photograph album showing members through the years. The identification is, of course, the tricky part and where the older members can really add value. I have been attempting to recreate club documents for the missing archives covering 2012 to 2014. Thankfully, I have been able to find most of the meeting minutes, programs and presentations. Sue and I will continue to work on this project over the summer.

Thank you to all our members for your continued commitment to the Calgary Women’s Club. Some of our members have experienced grave personal difficulties over the past club year, including members of the Executive Committee. It is a testament to their devotion to the Calgary Women’s Literary Club that they made valuable contributions in spite of those difficulties. I thank all the members of the current Executive Committee for their hard work and unstinting support. Without them our club could not keep going. However, I would be remiss if I didn’t single out one person in particular. Lillian Tickle, Past President, has been my rock and my mentor. She has been incredibly generous with her knowledge and counsel and not once has she complained about my seemingly endless e-mails and phone calls. Lillian, thank you from the bottom of my heart. I couldn’t have done it without you.

Margaret Sparkes

President of the Calgary Women's Literary Club

Wednesday, April 26, 2017