Council Composites

Those of you who were here last year may remember the request for $5000 to digitize the Council composites: those are the collages you see around the walls here and elsewhere on this floor, pictures of your predecessors, members of Student Council, going back to almost the very first year of UBC.

Unfortunately, we’re missing the very first year. It was put together and we even have a reproduction of it done at the time, but it’s not very high resolution. But there it is, our first Council, sort of. It’s missing our first AMS President, Sherwood Lett, because just after he became President he went off to war – World War I was underway 99 years ago, and so he left.

You can see his future wife, though (circled in red): Evelyn Lett, or Evelyn Story as she then was. They met at the AMS, and so even then we were the Alma Mating Society.

Another period we’re missing is the late 60’s and 70’s. This time it’s not because the composites were done and then lost, but because they just weren’t done. I’m not entirely sure why. It was the Sixties, and people were refusing to follow traditions, so maybe that was it.

It’s unfortunate, though, because there are people from that period who you might want to see but can’t. At least we still have Kim Campbell: there’s the composite she’s in, and here’s a closer view of it. This is from 1964-65, when she was elected as Frosh President, running on the slogan Kim is Cuddlier. And then she became Prime Minister [photo of her as Prime Minister].

We produced one other prime minister, John Turner: he’s at the top of that composite; there he is in close-up. He was known as Chick Turner in those days. He became a little more dignified in later years.

Then there’s the composite from 1927-28 in which you can find the father-in-law of a prime minister and the grandfather of someone who may someday be a prime minister. That would be James Sinclair: that’s him in the middle. He went on to have a distinguished political career, becoming a federal cabinet minister and an important figure in the Liberal Party; the Sinclair Centre in downtown Vancouver is named after him. But his greatest claim to fame perhaps is that his daughter Margaret married Pierre Trudeau and they produced Justin Trudeau. So that’s the AMS connection to the Trudeau dynasty.

Perhaps you’re interested in your more recent predecessors. There’s David Borins from the mid-90’s: he was VP External (or Coordinator of External Affairs as it was called then) and then President and then a Board of Governors rep. Now he’s a lawyer and one of the alumni members on BAGB [2 photos], our business and administration governance board. Then there’s Mark Fraser from
the early 2000’s; he was VP Admin twice in a row, then a BoG member, and now he’s another alumni representative on BAGB.

Then there was Blake Frederick and Tim Chu, who took us to the United Nations; Amina Rai and the rest of her Executive, who got themselves collectively censured by the rest of Council for trying to fire the General Manager: that was our previous General Manager, Bernie Peets. They were frustrated by forces led by Dave Tompkins, who served for many years on Council, eventually becoming Speaker; he was the previous Speaker to Michael, and in the composites he set a new fashion style: a plaid shirt, which he wore year after year [show some], eventually leading other Council members to adopt the fashion [show them].

If you go through the years you will note some changes: increasing diversity and also just an increase in size from the 8 or 9 Council members at the beginning to the 40 or so now. If you look closely you will also realize that only in the early 60’s do you begin to see Constituency representatives: that’s the first year we adopted a system of Constituency representation, 1961-62; before that, Council members were either elected campus-wide at large, to positions like First Member or Second Member or Junior Member, or became Council members automatically by virtue of holding some other position, e.g., President of the Women’s Undergraduate Society or the Men’s Athletic Association. For a while the Ubyssey editor even appeared in our composites, though as far as I can tell from checking old constitutions, the Editors were not Council members, but perhaps we let them in the picture instead of giving them food.

If you poke around some more you can find the Meekison brothers, after one of whom the Meekison Arts Student Space is named. Even further back you can find Clarence Idyll, who brought the Thunderbird to UBC, and Earle Birney, who became a well-known poet. Also Arthur Laing before he became a bridge. And Norah Coy, our first female president, back in 1917. Then there was the President, Kurt Preinsperg, who caused an uproar by telling the Province newspaper all about his Rules for Romance, which later inspired a satirical documentary by a UBC student.

Speaking of Presidents, you may notice a strange-looking or out of place figure in the early composites: UBC President Leonard S. Klinck, who served as UBC President from 1919 to 1943, and who featured in almost every composite in those years because the AMS in those days named the UBC President the Honorary AMS President. His successor, Norman Mackenzie, appeared in one composite, but then the practice stopped. I’m not sure whether that was a decision by us or by UBC, but it does indicate something about the development of AMS autonomy.

You will also notice that President Mackenzie is depicted smoking a cigarette, another sign of the times.
But for further historical and sociological exploration I will let you investigate on your own, which you will be able to do once we put these up online as part of the AMS Historical Photo Collection at

http://digitalcollections.library.ubc.ca/cdm/landingpage/collection/ams

And now I'll let you see the whole collection scrolling here, and you can ask me questions.

I should thank Artona for digitizing these composites for us and my assistants, Maegen and Emily, for getting them into this presentation.