

UC SANTA BARBARA

THE *Current*

January 7, 2014

[Shelly Leachman](#)

Fond Memories Inspire Major Gift to Faculty Club

In 1966, Betty Elings Wells was new to town and expecting a baby with her then-husband, who had just joined the physics faculty at UC Santa Barbara. Save for the tenants at the Isla Vista building she agreed to manage in exchange for a rent-free apartment, she didn't know a soul. That wouldn't last long.

"We had been here only two days when this gal came to the door and said, 'Are you Betty Elings? The Faculty Women's Club is having our opening tea, and we'd like you to come meet other faculty wives,'" recalled Wells, who is still active in the club some 47 years later. "It was really touching and it stuck with me so much. The club became a huge part of my life."

So huge, in fact, that Wells credits the group and the enduring friendships it's given her as the inspiration behind her most recent generosity to UCSB: a gift of \$1 million to help renovate The Faculty Club building. Unveiled in 1968, the prestigious campus gathering place and restaurant will soon get its first facelift.

Once complete, the upgraded structure will ensure a permanent meeting site for the Faculty Women's Club (FWC), which has evolved over time to include men and women faculty, as well as campus staff and their partners. It will also tie together the memberships of two entities — FWC and The Faculty Club itself — with a shared purpose to serve the UCSB community of family and friends.

“I decided to make this gift because the Faculty Women’s Club has been a very important part of my life,” Wells said. “We had all our events at the Faculty Club once it was built, and nearly all my friends today are a consequence of the relationships I developed through Faculty Women’s Club. It’s meant so much to me, and that was my main motivation for this gift. For our club and for UCSB as a whole, this new space will be so great to have.”

Once the renovation is complete, the lagoon-front club with ocean views will register at twice its current size and offer 34 boutique hotel-style guest rooms that open to an outdoor terrace for special events such as weddings, retirements and campus celebrations. It will also boast an enclosed, tech-outfitted pavilion for meetings, presentations and private parties.

Both the pavilion and the terrace will be named for Wells, a UC Santa Barbara Foundation trustee, real estate investor and philanthropist who has previously made a leadership gift to campus. With her former husband Virgil Elings she donated \$12.5 million to support research at the California NanoSystems Institute (CNSI). The building that houses CNSI was named Elings Hall in their honor.

“Our campus is deeply grateful to Betty Elings Wells for her gift in support of our Faculty Club renovations,” said Chancellor Henry T. Yang. “Betty has been part of our campus family for many years, and is an Honorary Alumna and longtime member of our Faculty Women’s Club. Her philanthropic contributions to our campus range from support of our California NanoSystems Institute to student scholarships. It is very fitting that her name will be permanently associated with our Faculty Club pavilion and terrace.”

Chancellor Yang added, “I also wish to express my appreciation to our Faculty Club president, Professor Bruce Tiffney, and vice-president, Professor Stephen Weatherford, and to the entire board, as well as to our Facilities Management team, headed by Senior Associate Vice Chancellor for Administrative Services Marc Fisher. With Betty’s generosity, we can look forward to an enhanced Club that will serve our outstanding faculty and our campus community.”

The club’s new incarnation will also feature a members’ lounge, a bar, a private, ocean-view dining room adjacent to the main dining area and modernized restrooms. An entrance will be added at the restaurant level, as will a larger lobby and enclosed entry upstairs.

“This gift will allow us to make a much better entry sequence and, really, to operate the club in a much more flexible manner,” said Fisher. “They can host multiple events at one time in a much more graceful way, since there will be several different ways to enter building. With the Betty Elings Wells Pavilion being created where the courtyard is today, and with the addition of the terrace, it just becomes a much more functional building.”

Current plans call for construction to begin this summer. With a projected timeline to completion of 16 months, the renovated club should be finished around fall 2015. In the interim, kitchen operations will be temporarily relocated to the University Center, where space will be designated for members and guests. Total budget for the project is \$17.6 million — a figure that includes the gift from Wells.

“For 46 years the Faculty Club has been a gathering place for my beloved Faculty Women’s Club and is the birthplace of many of my dearest friendships,” Wells said. “Many memories fill this space, and so many more will be made once the club renovation is completed.”

Wells is a successful real estate investor and property manager in Santa Barbara, Santa Ynez, Iowa and Arizona. She and Virgil Elings have launched numerous successful entrepreneurial ventures, including Santa Barbara-based Digital Instruments (DI), which pioneered the development of atomic force and scanning probe microscopes that led to a scientific revolution at the nanoscale. DI was acquired by Veeco Instruments Inc. in 1999.

In addition to the Women’s Fund of Santa Barbara, Betty Wells’s local philanthropy includes Elings Park and the Elings Aquatic Center at Dos Pueblos High School. At UCSB, she has served two terms as president of the FWC and, for the last four years, as treasurer. Currently she serves as liaison from the FWC to The Faculty Club Board. She joined the UCSB Foundation as a trustee in 2013.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we

draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.