

THE HISTORY OF TUESDAY CLUB

Tuesday Club was founded in 1986 during a dinner meeting at the Headliners Club in Austin, Texas. The founding couples—Nancy and Bobby Inman, Marian and Hans Mark, Ruth and Arnold Rosenfeld, Elspeth and Walt Rostow, Louise and Steven Weinberg, and Jerre and Mary Pearl Williams—modeled the Club after Ralph Waldo Emerson’s Boston Saturday Club. Mary Pearl Williams, the first female judge in Travis County, drafted the original bylaws for the Club. Steven Weinberg, a professor of physics and astronomy and Nobel Prize recipient, was the first president of the Club. The third Tuesday of each month was picked as the meeting date to avoid conflicts with Jerre Williams’ monthly scheduled trips to New Orleans for sittings of the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals.

According to the Tuesday Club bylaws, the purpose of the Club is to “engage a congenial group of men and women in the discussion of ideas and problems of general interest and to promote an informed relationship between the Austin community and university and college communities.”

From the beginning, it was intended that Tuesday Club would welcome both men and women. Indeed, the creation of the Club was in response to the all-male Town & Gown Club refusing to admit women as members or guests. Founding member Louise Weinberg said, “We all thought it was time there was a good dinner club in Austin to which a man could take his wife. Women were confined in the 1980s to their own societies . . . [F]or the membership, we aimed to find couples in which the women were women of distinction and solo women of distinction as well.”

The Club’s nearly 200 members are a balance of “towns” (non-academic) and “gowns” (academic). To this day, Tuesday Club members practice diverse professions in both the non-academic community and the university community. Members have included scientists, lawyers, doctors, mayors, teachers, businessmen, university presidents and chancellors, legislators, mayors, professors, journalists, historians, award-winning authors, and artists.

The Tuesday Club’s first meeting was on April 15, 1986, with Mr. T.R. Fehrenbach, “the top historian of Texas,” as its first speaker. Mr. Fehrenbach spoke to the Club about Texas history. The Club met at the Headliners Club for the first meeting and has hosted meetings there since. Since 1986, the Club has hosted panels, performances, and lectures by experts in assorted fields from Texas, the country, and around the world. Lecture guests have included: Rep. Barbara Jordan (1986), Lt. Governor William P. Hobby (1995), Jack Blanton (2000), Governor Rick Perry (2001), James A. Baker III (2008), Holland Taylor (2010), Karl Rove (2011), Kenneth Starr (2012), Senator Wendy Davis (2013), Admiral Bill McRaven (2018), and Beto O’Rourke (2024). Many of the Tuesday Club speakers have been members of the Club with lectures on diverse topics, such as the future of Austin, cosmology, cancer-fighting molecules, the U.S. Supreme Court, the collapse of Enron, school finance, and the role of the media. The Club has taken field trips to the Harry Ransom Center, the LBJ Library, the University of Texas Chancellor’s residence, the Alley Theatre in Houston for a play by

member Larry Wright, and has welcomed various music groups from around Austin to perform at meetings, including the choral ensemble of UT; Austin Classical Guitar Society; the Wild Basin Winds music group; pianists James Dick, Marcia Ball, Anton Nel; Bruce Robison and Kelly Willis; The Reverent Few; and, WhoDo, a band consisting of several of our members.

In 2011, Tuesday Club was recognized as a notable Austin organization when the *Austin-American Statesman* ran a column about a Tuesday Club dinner featuring Karl Rove and a particularly brutal Q&A session with several dissenting members. The Club has only grown in membership and prestige since then. And after 40 years, Tuesday Club has become a group of distinguished members who now are lifelong friends.