

BRANDEIS HISTORY

The name Brandeis was not chosen by accident. Our Founders sought to name the university after an individual of impeccable moral fiber, leadership, intellectual ability, integrity and social conscience. The name that stood out was that of the late U. S. Supreme Court Associate Justice Louis D. Brandeis, who stood for the rights of all individuals.

Brandeis was founded in 1948 as a nonsectarian university under the sponsorship of the American Jewish community to embody its highest ethical and cultural values and to express its gratitude to the United States through the traditional Jewish commitment to education. By being a nonsectarian university that welcomes students, teachers, and staff of every nationality, religion, and orientation. Brandeis renews the American heritage of cultural diversity, equal access to opportunity and freedom of expression. The curriculum was unique and personal, and its academic standards were to be modeled after the best American and European universities.

Brandeis University opened with just 13 faculty members, 107 students, three buildings and 100 volumes of books in a converted stable that served as the library. The handful of men of vision, who pioneered this effort, was supported by eight women who undertook the responsibility of developing the library, the heart of every university.

The unique idea of involving women in a study program using syllabi written by Brandeis professors was the genesis of the women's committee. The idea spread, enthusiastically embraced by relatives and friends in other cities. These women became known as Brandeis University National Women's Committee or BUNWC. This was later changed Brandeis National Committee or BNC so that men would feel more welcome to join us.

AND WE GREW AND GREW!

From its humble beginning, Brandeis, now the 6th ranking university in the country, has grown to 5,900 students. It has 542 full time faculty members. 97% of our faculty has achieved the highest degree in their fields. With 148 women professors, Brandeis has the highest percentage of women professors of any other university. The library now has over 300,000 E-Books and over one million print books. Brandeis has become the youngest private research university.

Today, Brandeis National Committee has over 28,000 members with over 54 chapters across the country. BNC has been a vital part of The University since its founding. We have placed over one million books in Brandeis libraries and have raised over \$126 million dollars for Brandeis University, its libraries, scholarship, and scientific research.

Brandeis National Committee has launched "Sustaining the Mind" program. This project is dedicated to research for cures for neurodegenerative diseases such as Lou Gehrig's, Alzheimers, and other age related diseases. Our chapter is a part of something bigger than just the Conejo Valley Chapter. We are part of a university whose students are graduating and going out into the world to make it a better place. In fact, one of our students invented "Siri" for the Iphone.

If you are in Boston, contact BNC, as they would love to give to the Grand Tour.

CONEJO VALLEY CHAPTER HISTORY

In the Spring of 2005, members of the San Fernando Valley Chapter started floating the idea of beginning a new chapter in the Conejo Valley. It was felt that there were enough members from the SFV Chapter who were now living in the Conejo Valley to support a new chapter. Also, the demographics of the Conejo Valley indicated a large number of "mature" Jewish women who might be interested in joining our organization.

A few leaders, believing in this idea, planned a meeting in June of 2005 which attracted 75 women. Representatives from the Western Region attended this meeting to educate us about the prestigious Brandeis University and the wonderful work that BUNWC does to enrich the University. From that meeting a nucleus was formed to give birth to our new chapter. Enthusiastic volunteers offered to serve as officers and we had a board of ten members. We officially became a "chapter in formation."

Word spread like wildfire throughout our community about the exciting new organization being formed. A short 9 months after that first meeting, our new chapter was officially installed as the 80th chapter of BUNWC. Boasting over 200 members, we more than exceeded the 75 persons required to be officially recognized.

On April 26, 2006, Jenna Katz, then President of BUNWC Western Region, presented the Charter Certificate to Carrie Mataraza and Honey Bencomo, two of the three founding members of the Presidium.

From that momentous occasion, we have grown to a membership of over 500 men and women and more than doubled the size of our original Board. Our reputation as a vibrant organization attracted many talented people. We have created over 70 Study Groups encompassing a wide range of interests and activities for both men and women.

To quote one Study Group leader who was invited to a Board meeting with no intention of ever serving on the Board, "I was so impressed by how dedicated and bright the people who made up this board were. Some of them had never been a part of an organization like BUNWC. What they lacked in experience they made-up in determination and enthusiasm." That woman, Sharon Cohen, went on to become a member of our Presidium along with Beverly Sklar and Honey Bencomo.

In June of 2008, at the National Conference in Waltham, we were honored to be presented with the coveted "Chapter of the Year" award and the "Louie". These prestigious awards are even more meaningful to us as that was the very first year that we were eligible for consideration. Since then we have worked hard enough to get a large share of awards and we are very proud of how involved our members are.

We are very proud of our progress and successes. We hope to follow in the footsteps of our neighboring chapters, San Fernando Valley and Los Angeles, both of which have thrived for many decades. We also hope that you will be joining us on this journey.