

American Association of University Women | Nutley Yesterday · Today - 1961

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY WOMEN

MRS. STANLEY YORTON, PRESIDENT

THE STORY of the American Association of University Women is a woman's story - a college woman's story. The national Association was organized in 1882 by college women for the purpose of furthering the education of other women.

A small group of Nutley women formed a branch of this organization 32 years later. These early college women disagreed with the prevailing opinion that little education was needed for women to carry on their duties as housewives and mothers.

They believed that the scope of a woman's work was broad, including among other responsibilities that of inspiring a love of learning in their children, of bringing beauty, music and art into the home, of making intelligent companions for their husbands and of managing households efficiently.

Furthermore, these pioneer college women thought that some women must become students to help plan for a growing America and an expanding world.

The Fellowship Fund, begun in the early days of the Association's history, is still the outstanding service of the AAUW whether it is the branch in Nutley, Los Angeles or Baton Rouge, La.

Contributed to annually by members east and west, north and south, this fund has grown into nearly a two-million dollar endowment. More than 40 fellowships ranging from \$2,000 to \$4,000 are awarded yearly to gifted women scholars. Hardworking and talented, these women have made notable contributions to the welfare of mankind.

In addition to the fellowships, approximately 35 women are brought from other countries to the United States each year to gain professional training and to learn to know America - an outstanding practical aid in promoting understanding between nations.

The AAUW has always given leadership to its branches for study in education, international relations, social studies, art, legislation and other subjects. By encouraging social responsibility based on study it expects each member to become a useful, forceful part of her community.

The history of the Nutley Branch is interesting both as a study of the activities of a woman's organization, as a mirror of changing times and their effect upon a group with a steadfast purpose.

Listing some of the events of this history causes the spotlight to be focused briefly on this figure or that, leaving others, who may have played equally as significant roles in the development of the organization, hidden in the background.

In 1927 the infant Nutley group had 35 members representing 20 colleges. Some of its early members included Mrs. Robert Miller, Mrs. C. M. Tappan, Mrs. W. F. Reinheimer, Miss Marion Walker, Mrs. George Stanford, Miss Ann Troy, Mrs. Lyman Nichols and Mrs. J. C. Fruit. The first president was Miss Elizabeth Bostock.

It is an interesting commentary on the change in times to note that \$3 was sufficient for dues then, while it takes \$7.50 for fee requirements now.

Concern with education was the moving force in the new branch. The AAUW women entertained Nutley High School girls in order to interest them in going to college. They compiled a register of colleges as a source of information for seniors.

A perusal of the 1927 minutes of the Branch showed the women saying, "The percentage of college students from the public schools is declining although the greatest amount of intellect is in the middle class."

In 1928 the group began to offer two prizes of \$15 each for outstanding literary efforts of high school students.

A child study class was formed in 1928 and in 1930 a baby clinic. Speakers on topics that seem very timely today as modern trends in child management, educational problems of the community, our changing education and education of the world of tomorrow appeared before the organization.

The group became interested also in the proposed change of the Board of Education from an appointed board to an elected one. Dr. Horace Tantom spoke to the group on this subject, and suggested the likelihood of a referendum for voting upon it at an early election.

The young Nutley Branch moved into fellowship contributing cautiously, pledging \$50 or more each year. Miss Maritta Palmer served as the Nutley chairman and spokesman for the fund during its formative period.

Bridge parties, both large and small, Bamberger contests on table settings and a showing of antiques in 1931 were popular early fund-raising methods.

The somewhat more leisurely life of the late 20's as compared with that of the mid-century was shown in the inclusion of several groups of songs at most meetings, frequent suppers, teas, games and a more social atmosphere all around.

Clock-watching was probably there but it seemed to permit more of what was lovingly called the "good old days" than time now allows. As today, speakers of high calibre were heard by the women members including university

professors, politicians and artists.

Musicales complete with printed programs were held fairly regularly. In 1931 an exhibition of paintings by Nutley artists, given by the University women had 90 entries.

Advancing to the late 30's and the 40's the AAUW like other groups in town became more serious in its attitude reflecting the wartime spirit.

In 1939-40 the social studies group went on record as sponsoring a pre-natal and pre-school clinic in the town Health Department, and attempted to interest other groups in the project.

Mrs. Florence Staniels, chairman, expressed great pleasure when an increase in the 1941-42 budget permitted the establishment of such a clinic.

A consumers seminar for the purpose of studying consumer problems with special attention to wartime needs and emergencies was formed in 1941-42 bringing in interested people from other groups.

Members broadened their scope of concern to include legislation and journeyed to Trenton in behalf of some consumer bills. Mrs. Robert Eldridge was president during this period.

The AAUW responded to the need for help in the Thrift Shop by manning the shop one day each month and also by contributing generously to the stock for the shop.

"Bundle Teas" were held in 1937 for its benefit. Mrs. Robert Levinson and Mrs. Kenneth Russell, both later presidents, were thrift shop chairmen for the AAUW.

As the war years advanced members took part in the Savings Stamps booth held in the First National Bank, on war loan drives, and on the national clothing drive for hospitals. Packages were sent to Poland, Holland and other countries.

School supplies, pencils, and paper went to schools abroad in connection with the U.N. Children's Appeal.

At one time \$250 was raised for the refugee fund. With hope blooming eternal members went to Princeton to hear a discussion of the "Cause and Cure of War."

To gain funds for the education program and also to provide good entertainment for children, the AAUW introduced children's plays as a project in the schools. Beginning in 1940 during the administration of Mrs. E. L. Lamb, it sponsored the Clare Tree Major plays with "Rip Van Winkle," "Peter Pan," "Penrod," "Robin Hood," and other plays.

The attendance was excellent over a long period of time but by 1950 the plays had begun to lose money and were discontinued.

Continued Nutley interest in the Fellowship Fund was manifested by the fact that in 1938 the Nutley Branch held sixth place in the national gift to fellowship. Sale of tickets for the Nutley Symphony Concerts and the Little Theatre helped to bring in the contribution that year.

A Chinese exhibit, a sale of cookbooks, and ticket sales for the Newark stadium concerts were other interesting money-making devices.

All through the years AAUW members have been on the Nutley Board of Education. Mrs. Frederick Sanford served as a member of the Board at two different times. Mrs. T. C. Braack was elected during the thirties.

In succeeding years other members, Dr. Lois French, Mrs. S. R. Mountsier, Jr., and more recently, Mrs. William Clark, Mrs. Herbert Bedell, Mrs. John Peddieson, Mrs. W. E. Boone and Mrs. R. G. Shaffer have been or are members.

The register of AAUW participation in civic affairs is a reflection of community interests and needs. The Branch sent old toys to the Christmas fund, musical instruments to Overbrook Hospital, talking books to the blind and money to the fund for migrant workers.

It took part in the celebration of President Roosevelt's birthday sponsored by the Social Service Committee.

Its members were interested in the milk control bill, the removal of the margarine tax and the price control bill. The brownies, the scouts, Sunday Schools, church boards and other civic organizations have found and are still finding willing members and leaders from the AAUW.

The Nutley Branch, American Association of University Women, during its 32-year history has formed many small groups for the study of various subjects of AAUW interest. At the same time the Nutley college women have fostered warm companionship and lasting friendships.

In the fast-moving, quick-shifting suburbia of Nutley these groups have maintained a welcome continuity. A look back and a look forward at them shows interesting, diversified occupations.

The Art Group was begun as an outlet for creativeness and for the appreciation of the talents of others. Medieval architecture, Chinese bronzes, stained glass windows, home decorations and modern art have been some of the topics illustrated and discussed in this group.

Excursions to the Newark Museum, the Metropolitan Art Gallery and the Frick Museum in New York City have added background to the group's study.

At the Arts Festival sponsored by the State Division, Nutley has come off well with awards to Mrs. Charles Craig for her watercolors, and to Miss Maritta Palmer and Mrs. Willard Clary for sculpture.

With Mrs. S. E. Andersen as chairman, the 1960 Art Group plans to be a "doing" group, making creativeness its goal.

Another branch of art, Creative Writing, has received recognition at the N.J. AAUW Arts Festival also. Mrs. Norman Thompson and Mrs. David Zeliff won writing awards in 1955

Poetry by Mrs. Charles Nunzio, prose by Mrs. M. M. Nakamura and Mrs. Alexander Goldberg and music by Miss Belle Kearney won acclaim in 1959.

The Creative Writing Group was begun back in 1938. Its continuation points up the fact that, hard as writing may be, the love of it never dies.

The Literature Group formed in 1937 has continued to be one of the most popular. From historical novels, poetry, non-fiction, books of adventure, to advertising and other forms of mass media, the AAUW book reviewers have held their audiences enthralled.

A two-time chairman of this group, Miss Ruth Brettle plans to explore the rivers of America and their effects on their environments in the 1960 book group. A Drama Group organized in 1958 by Mrs. D. C. Goodman presented a very successful play, "The Knave of Hearts," which was repeated before four different audiences.

The International Relations Group has combined with the League of Women Voters to sponsor several trips to the United Nations. It has brought many interesting speakers on world affairs to appear before the groups. Africa, a fast-growing center of attention, will be the international relations topic for the coming year.

During the middle 30's the Social Studies Group became active in the study of the handicapped child in this area of New Jersey. Child labor in Nutley was the subject of other study. The members visited the North Jersey Training School at Totowa for retarded girls.

In recent years their interest has been in the field of mental health, old age, nutrition and consumer problems with speakers on current economic problems.

One event combined by Mrs. Charles Sanger, with a meeting of the Nutley Golden Age Club was particularly successful.

From its earliest days when there was so much concern with getting high school girls to go to college, the Education Group has approached this subject from many angles.

In 1940-41 a course in the Adult Education School entitled "Know Your Schools" was sponsored by the AAUW. It included a series of six lectures given by the superintendent of schools, principals of the high, junior high and elementary schools and heads of various departments.

The three R's, the arts and guidance and democracy were stressed with 30 men and women taking the course.

Mrs. John Clark led the Education Group through a series of meetings in 1950 on physically and mentally retarded children. For the first time many of these women became aware of the need and even of the right of these children to public education.

The keen interest of this group and its leader may have had some effect on the decision of the Board of Education to pioneer in Essex County in public school classes for the trainable retarded.

For 1960 Mrs. L. W. Lubenow has planned member-participation meetings to take stock of education today and attempt to forecast that of tomorrow.

The inclusion of much music and frequent musicales during the early and middle periods of the organization has been followed by the formation of a Choral Group.

In 1957 the AAUW Chorus was organized with Dr. Abram S. Jaffe as director and Mrs. Richard Oram as chairman. Many members find in this group a joy that no other group gives them.

A re-reading of the AAUW minutes of executive board meetings is interesting, among other things as a record of legislative matters to which members have turned with more than the usual amount of zeal.

The University Bill when the question as to whether Rutgers should remain private or become a public university stirred up a high in AAUW loquacity.

The handling of this extremely controversial matter by Mrs. Frederick Sanford who was education chairman in the State Assembly at the time won her the praise of the Nutley group.

In recent years Miss Ann Troy has made legislation come alive by attending Town Commission meetings and giving an unbiased account of proceedings besides reporting on state and national bills of special group interest.

The Fellowship program reached its all time peak for Nutley in 1958 when the group was able to contribute \$500 for a name grant. By unanimous consent it was named the Violette Rosengren grant in honor of Mrs. John Rosengren, past president and long-time active member.

A well-attended, colorful fashion show brought in the major portion of the contribution.

A Nutley scholarship fund with a yearly award of \$100 to be made to a senior girl entering the teaching profession was launched in 1957 using the remains of the defunct children's play fund as the basis.

The sale of bulbs from Holland proved to be an amazingly attractive way to swell this fund as well as to spatter color over Nutley in the springtime.

To keep its members abreast of organization activities the Nutley AAUW has published a bulletin since 1937 Mimeographed on a white sheet of paper the bulletin has been strictly a utilitarian, matter-of-fact affair.

Now in its maiden years, gaiety and high spirits have settled upon it. In colorful dress and with sprightly styling and wording, the bulletin has decided under the editorship of Mrs. Elizabeth Guest to put sedateness slightly to the side.

Many members of the Nutley branch have held prominent positions in the state from time to time. Mrs. Sanford has held innumerable state posts. Mrs. E. G. Toy was a member of the State Legislative Committee beginning in 1942.

Miss Eleanor Woodruff, who has been active in the branch since 1933, and its president from 1949 to 1951, has filled a number of New Jersey AAUW offices including that of first vice president and education chairman. In 1960, Miss Woodruff was elected President of the New Jersey Division of AAUW.

Mrs. S. C. Yorton was appointed to the State Board of Education in 1955 to succeed Mrs. Sanford.

Two members have had the honor of being elected "New Jersey Mother of the Year," Mrs. S. Rush Mountsier, Jr., in 1953 and Mrs. Frank Jannuzi in 1959.

In 1952 during the term of Mrs. E. M. Ganong the Nutley Branch celebrated its silver anniversary with 100 dinner guests. In an impressive ceremony the past presidents spoke, each lighting a candle for her years of service.

A democratic group, limiting its membership not by race, color or creed, but by academic achievement, the American Association of University Women nationally raises high academic standards for women.

Its college recognition requirements for membership include: good academic standards, an adequate foundation of liberal arts, recognition of women in faculty and administration, adequate provision for women students and maintenance of academic freedom.

As one of the 1,400 branches organized in 50 states, the District of Columbia and Guam, and as 135 of the 145,000 members of these branches, the Nutley AAUW lists longevity, stability, warm acceptance and fellowship of members as its prime assets.

It goes on its way striving to fulfill the ideals of those early pioneers "to have a sense of community responsibility, to assist in friendly understanding and cooperation among all college women and to sense what it is to be a part of a great and growing whole, given over to the betterment of the world."