

BEGINNING YEARS OF EDMONDS AAUW 1973 - 1983

READER (Roberta Jonnet):

From our branch's archived documents, we learned that:

- On May 16, 1973, fifteen women interested in establishing a new branch of AAUW in the Lynnwood-Edmonds area, gathered at the Lynnwood Library. Mrs. Ann (Robert B.) Thomas presided as chairman pro-tem. A By-Laws and a Telephone Committee were appointed.
- On June 7, 1973, approximately 30 women met at the Edmonds Library to approve the By-Laws and elect interim officers. Several advisors from the Everett AAUW Branch provided assistance throughout the meeting. The members elected Ann Thomas, President; Barbara Wilson, First Vice-President; and Susan Vukich, Treasurer.
- On October 9, 1973, the first official branch meeting was held in the Edmonds Methodist Church. State President, Mary Ann Norton, presented the Branch Charter to the group.

Today, these four charter members continue as active branch members:

- Barbara Bentson
- Sue Vukich,
- Alyce Wiggins
- Barbara Wilson

(Please stand and be recognized. Sue Renhard presents a rose to each.)

When these charter members were asked to reflect on the beginning years of our branch, they shared these special memories.

Susan Vukich: "I responded to an advertisement in the Enterprise inviting women interested in AAUW to a meeting. Ann Thomas was the driving force behind this and she became our first president. I was elected as the first treasurer. Fifty women showed up and became Charter Members, but they were not all active members."

Alyce Wiggins: "When both of my children were in college, I had some spare time. One day, I noticed an article in the paper inviting interested women to an AAUW meeting. I went, liked what I saw and joined. My best memories are

connected to my participation in the Genealogy and Investment Study Groups. Later, I enjoyed being in the Hiking Group with Judith.

Our branch fundraisers included selling scones at the Art Festival, making holiday wreaths in the basement of the Methodist Church, and selling home-made cookies with the recipes included. I still use a great recipe obtained from Mary Jo Bevans.”

Alyce remembers attending a National AAUW Convention and sharing a room with Norma Kruger and driving to a Washington State AAUW Convention with Joyce Mansfield. When helping with “Expanding My Horizons”, Alyce met Sue Renhard and Chris Linker from the Bothell-Shoreline branch.

Alyce’s concluding thoughts, “I made so many friends (many of them are gone now), but I still have treasured memories. I am proud to be a Charter Member, but also very glad that there are enthusiastic people ready to carry on.”

Barbara Bentson: “The Edmonds AAUW branch grew rapidly during the first year; women were anxious to join. There was great interest in women’s social issues and job discrimination, especially women being barred from non-traditional jobs. However, even in the traditional jobs for women like teaching, there was gender discrimination. I remember in the schools that almost all of the principals were men – fishing buddies. Extra school-related jobs also went to male teachers. When I applied for Before/After-School Bus Duty (something that I had done very successfully in another state), I was told, ‘Oh, no we need a man for that.’

In the early years, our members were all working so we met in the evenings. Study Groups were the heart of our AAUW branch in the beginning years. We might not always attend meetings but I often went to two or even three study groups in a week. The Culture Group, which selected a different culture each year as a topic of study, was very interested in learning about the various Native American groups. Study groups were informative and satisfied a need for intelligent conversation. For many of us, it was an important part of our social life.”

During the first 10 years, Study Groups and Program Topics included:

- Prevention of Sexual Violence
- Career Opportunities for Women
- Cooking with Lentils
- Assertive Communication

- Women as Agents of Change,
- Aging, Aren't We All?

In the 1980s, invited speakers included:

- Jennifer James, "The Role of Women in the '80s"
- Pepper Schwartz, "Families Facing Changes"
- Joyce Mansfield, "The Myths and Ms. of Mathematics"

READER: Now it's time to hear from a number of the women who served as president of our branch in our Parade of Presidents.