

## AAUW Prescott 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Script

Read by Tamara and Stephanie Voss

On March 12, 1949, The Prescott Branch of AAUW became the 10<sup>th</sup> to be organized in Arizona. At the time there were 26 members. The first meeting of the 1950s was opened by president, **Helen Culhane**, who introduced vice-president and program “chairman,” Rose Brodie who urged members to join at least one of the “club’s” study groups: international relations, status of women, education, arts, and legislation.

Second President **Rose Brodie** received her BA degree at the University of Arizona—and her MA in mathematics at the University of California, Berkeley. She taught at the junior high school in Prescott for 25 years.

Stepping in as President next was **Norma Hazeltine**, who held a degree from University of California, Berkeley when she moved to Prescott in 1926. She was a charter member of Prescott Fine Arts Association and long-time docent. She bought and gifted the land and buildings to PFAA.

**Ethel Cary** served a two-year term as president from 1956-1958. Following that, she became a state officer. Cary, girl’s high physical education teacher, enjoyed a long tenure at Prescott High School, from 1929-1971.

Following Ethel Cary as AAUW president was another long-tenured teacher at Prescott High, **Lenora Childress**. She held the office from 1958-1959. Chair of the English Department and a Latin instructor, Childress was named Teacher of the Year in 1957.

A third president was plucked from Prescott High School. Mary Ryan, history and world affairs teacher, held the office from 1959-1961. In 1967 she began two years in Uganda, where she served as Education Officer for the Ministry in Kampala. She was one of thirty instructors sponsored by Columbia University’s Teacher Education in East Africa program.

The first Prescott AAUW president installed in the 1960s was **Mary Brooke**, Prescott Woman of the Year 1953, also received the Alumnae Achievement Award of Kappa Kappa Gamma and inclusion in the First Edition of Who’s Who in American Women. She was joined in that publication by Prescott AAUW member, Edith Scholey. Following her tenure as AAUW president (1961-1963) Mary focused on another special interest: classical music. With the support of the AAUW Arts Committee, she arranged for the first concert of the Phoenix Symphony in Prescott in 1966 and helped launch the Yavapai Symphony Association.

**Anna Brown** had big shoes to fill when she assumed the presidency in 1963. But as owner of Circle D Ranch, she came to the job with strong leadership skills. During her presidency the branch delved into the study of international relations.

In Prescott, Jerri Wagner, became Arizona's first woman mayor elected by popular vote. In 1969, she was named Prescott's "Citizen of the Year" and was elected to the City Council.

Another influential Prescott Branch member at the time was Virginia Williams, who was invited to join the founding faculty of Yavapai College in 1969.

We know little about most AAUW presidents pictured in this photo from the early '70s, but one, **Freda Kroll**, president 1974-75, was a WAAC in WWII, one of the first women to be stationed in Berlin after the war.

**Idelia ("Dee") Riggs** became AAUW President from 1977-1980. Dee was heavily involved in raising funds for the Lloyd Rowe Adult Center. Through Dee Riggs and Suzy Furlong, also a future branch President, a connection was made between Faith House in Glendale and our Prescott Branch. Betty Ryan, the then director of Glendale Faith House, featured programs that provided job training and counseling. Stepping Stones, as it has been known since 2000, has honored AAUW for our contribution.

**Suzy Furlong** at the time our youngest President, gave birth to a second son and a daughter while she served as branch president from 1986-88. Suzy launched two interest groups: a Widows Group and a Book Club. A few years later in 1990, the Furlongs were named Prescott's Family of the Year. While AAUW President, Suzy spearheaded a project to promote employer day-care centers. Finding only two corporations in the area which provided such services, her AAUW committee reported their findings to Yavapai College. At the 1990 Convention in Portland, Prescott Branch was recognized nationally. AAUW President Sharon Shuster presented Prescott's President, **Sue Lynch**, the first-place award for the traveling exhibit "From the Past, In the Present, To the Future."

**Mary Shenefield** succeeded Sue Lynch as branch president from 1992 -1994 Jan Strecher edited the newsletter and changed the title to "Bulletin." Her husband designed the logo showing Prescott protected by its landmark Thumb Butte and surrounding mountains and forest. Lucy Fields suggested that we then name our newsletter "The Thumb Sketch."

**Sarah Hoover** led the branch from 1994-1996. At Hoover's behest, The Courier introduced the "Woman's Angle" series which provided the unique view women have of the world. The Branch alternated with Delta Kappa Gamma and League of Women Voters in writing the articles.

Sarah resigned as President, and **Vanette Hickey** stepped up. Her presidency through 1997 is distinguished by creative programming. At the end of the decade, creativity and ambition continued under the leadership of **Doris Piatak and Annette Schiller**, serving as co-presidents for 1997-1999. Doris and Annette expanded the U Do What? community action project to promote non-traditional careers.

At the 1997 AAUW Convention, the theme of "The Power of One" emphasized the importance of voting. Mary Shenefield brought home the Action Impact Grant for the state of Arizona, one of only nine

granted to states. The 1998 AAUW-Arizona convention recognized Mary Shenefield's public policy activity with its "Agitator of the Year" award. The following year she was one of eight women appointed to the national AAUW Public Policy Committee.

In celebration of the branch's fiftieth anniversary, a champagne brunch at the Hotel St. Michael ended the decade. By 2000, the population of Prescott had increased to nearly 34,000 -- and AAUW to nearly 100 members.

During **Mary Hansen's** presidency in the first year of the new century 2000 -2001, barriers were broken in our branch: there were two male members! One, Worth Mallory, was the Educational Equity Chair, and the other was Stephen Knight. February of 2001 saw the first ever neighborhood meetings—a concept conceived during the Presidency of **Wini Daniel**.

**Mary Alice Moulton** assumed the presidency for the 2001-2002 term. AAUW representatives attended a Yavapai College Governing Board meeting and urged the development of a family enrichment center. They continued to attend these meetings until the Del E. Webb Family Enrichment Center became a reality.

Two new board appointments marked a shift in AAUW outreach in the Prescott area: Community Action (Annette Schiller) and Social Justice/Diversity (Doris Piatak).

**Edi Taylor-Richards** took the helm for 2002-2003. Edi was Treasurer during Mary Hansen's presidency and then, President-Elect AND Treasurer during Mary Alice Moulton's term during her presidency, Edi saw the membership reach 100.

"Mining the Past—Prospecting for the Future" was an apt title for the 2003 State Convention held at the Prescott Resort. Mary Hansen and Mary Alice Moulton were co-chairs of the event that brought 100 women to Everyone's Home Town.

**Jan Steiner's** presidency in 2003-2004 accelerated AAUW's participation in the Family Enrichment Center at Yavapai College. Members attended a meeting sponsored by District I legislators regarding funding for day care and other children's issues.

We took a giant leap into the 21<sup>st</sup> century when member Kim Potthast developed our first AAUW Prescott website!

Through Elisabeth Ruffner's efforts we were invited to participate on the Yavapai Regional Medical Center Council of Electors, recognition of our interest in and commitment to the health of our community.

In the spring of 2004, all were shocked and saddened by the untimely death of Mary Alice Moulton. As a tribute, we resolved to carry out her dream of a childcare facility at Yavapai College. She is remembered for her admirable leadership skills and sense of humor.

As AAUW Prescott approached mid-point in the new decade, **Susan King** assumed leadership in 2004-05. In the spring we participated in the Del E. Webb Family Walk-a-Thon, taking additional steps toward the opening of the facility. To honor exceptional members, we created the Mover and Shaker award. In 2004, the first honoree was Tamara Voss.

The concept of a strategic plan was introduced by co-presidents **D. Gail Bleeker and Cathy Cunningham** (2005-2006) and carried out with the support of a committee of board members. After reviewing 10 years of policy decisions, the group developed a vision and a plan to submit to the board.

We launched Sister-to-Sister with Educational Talent Search (ETS) partners at Yavapai College and began conversations with college officials about a one-on-one mentoring program. Around this time our leadership in education became truly visible with the groundbreaking at the Family Enrichment Center.

We entered into an agreement with Yavapai College to endow the Mary Alice Moulton Childcare Assistance Fund and held the first fund raiser at the Phippin Museum. The Family Enrichment Center Dedication occurred on August 14, 2007...and the first day of operation was August 21. At last!

With the membership growing to 130, President **Sharon Scanlan** (2007-2008) created an appointed board position for the Mary Alice Moulton Childcare Assistance Fund. Susan King assumed responsibility for fund raising in support of women attending Yavapai College whose children would be enrolled in the Del E. Webb Family Enrichment Center.

The Woman-to-Woman steering committee led by Claudia Greenwood was able to kick off their program with a training and orientation on the Yavapai College campus. By the end of the day, twenty-five AAUW members were ready to assist students enrolling in the fall. Claudia and Sharon Scanlan presented a workshop explaining Woman-to-Woman at the AAUW-Arizona Fall Forum.

**Zibbie Wolter** was president (2008-2009) when membership broke the sound barrier: 150! That looming number necessitated a new home for our meetings, so we moved to the Macklin Building at the Rodeo Grounds.

Approaching the end of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, **Lynn Ray's** presidency (2009-2010) was launched with a focus on local history by a much-loved member of the community: Elizabeth Ruffner.

Following Edith Scholey, **Jean Hunnicutt, and Mary Shenefield**, in 2010 Sara Wolters became fourth Prescott branch member to assume the AAUW State Presidency. In addition, AAUW-AZ recognized us for the size of our membership, the largest branch in the state.

During **Linda Frith's** term (2010-2011) we were able to cap the Mary Alice Moulton fund and begin a new endowment, the AAUW Centennial Scholarship Fund. At their 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, we received recognition for our role in founding Stepping Stones. Claudia Greenwood, Community Action Chair, received the Ruby

Award of Soroptimists International at both the state and regional levels recognizing women making a difference for women and girls.

As we completed the first year of a new decade with the presidency of **Sharon Groves**, (2011-2012) we engaged in discussions of policies that affect the lives of girls and women and expressed our collective opinion when warranted.

Another co-presidency began with the election of **D. Gail Bleeker and Deb McCasland** (2012-2013.) After their term, **Anne Barton** took the helm from 2013-2014. Sister-to-Sister continued to attract and inform local students, as Claudia Greenwood collected books and letters about our members' college experiences to share at the luncheon. A fashion show of women's garb from the Revolutionary War to WWII was presented by the Barrington House Education Center. New activities were the Reality Store for girls, in cooperation with the Girl Scouts, and the first ever Neighborhood Meetings.

**Patti Blackwood** (2014-2015) was president when the first Centennial Scholarship was awarded to a Yavapai College student in a STEM field. Public Policy took up the disturbing topic of sex trafficking, and a program from CWAG informed us of another serious issue, the fate of the Upper Verde River. In keeping with our practice of combining fun with activism, a new Interest Group, Dining in All Directions, invited members to share culinary experiences in each other's homes.

**Gail Shay** took over the presidency in 2015 and presided over programs on several controversial topics. Mary Melcher, AAUW member and Sharlot Hall Museum Education Director, discussed her book, Pregnancy, Motherhood, and Choice in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Terry Godard, former Arizona Attorney General, shared his knowledge of "Dark Money" and its effect on political activity. AAUW Prescott presented the first Tech Savvy Conference in April 2016, to give members skills and tools to confront the world of new technologies.

Gail's term was followed by the presidency of **Deb Dillon**, who took office during a crucial election year, 2016. Deb remembers that after the election, she frequently had to remind members that "AAUW is a non-partisan organization." The Sister-to-Sister program was renewed for another 5 years, and the first tour of the Yavapai College Southwest Wine Center benefitted our scholarship fund. Kathryn Madden started a series of articles in the Thumbsketch to acquaint members with our past. Deb followed her term in Prescott with a term as co-president of Arizona AAUW.

**Lynne Murphy** was our next president, taking office in 2017. During her term, programs included an introduction to Prescott Police Chief Debora Black and a presentation on "Arizona Women Who Made History" by historian and author Jan Cleese. The AAUW Fall Forum was held in Prescott, and in cooperation with Embry Riddle Aeronautical University, we supported "Girls Rock-it Day," a program to acquaint girls with

opportunities in STEM fields. But not all was serious: a “Mad Hatter’s Tea Party” in the Yavapai College Sculpture Garden entertained members and raised money for the scholarship fund.

**Molly Devine’s** tenure (2018-2019) was focused on community endeavors: Girls Rock-it Days at Embry-Riddle, Sister to Sister, and Reality Store connected us with local students. Public Policy met monthly to understand and impact local, state and national issues. Members toured CTEC, The Lavender Farm, Snow Bowl, and a Buddhist Temple. Chapter membership exceeded 200 for the first time.

As **Becky Gunn** (2019-2020) took office, members continued our many community projects and hosted successful scholarship fundraisers: Mardi Gras at Yavapai PAC and a Literary Lunch. Our Scholarship funds were increased by these events, and through the generous bequest of Elaine Smith. Public Policy focused on developing an ongoing supportable funding stream for education in Arizona. Deb Dillon (2016-17) served on the PUSD school board and later become its Chair. COVID in March 2020 abruptly ended our gatherings: meetings ceased, and Interest Groups either met outside or suspended meeting. The Scholarship Committee pivoted from inside events to outdoor self-guided tours, including a “Stroll Through Victorian Prescott” and “Art On and Off the Wall.”

**Tracy Smiles** (2020-2022) guided us through a "new normal": Zoom monthly meetings featuring speakers, many re-scheduled from the Spring. We offered Zoom to Interest Groups, and weather permitting, some met outdoors. New members were welcomed with a picnic at Finn Park. Tracy graciously served her first term without a President-elect, and even agreed to serve a second term.

**Penny Briner-Ewell** (2022-2023) led us back into the world after lockdown. She negotiated new meeting space charges at Yavapai College. January 2023 saw our ambitious Women's Forum at Yavapai College PAC. Two days of speakers, break-out groups, and an art sale were planned by committee members. Over \$10,000 was raised for Scholarship funds. Prescott Woman magazine published an article in August/September 2023 about our chapter and its activities.

[Closing remarks by Carol Dosse]