

Baraboo Branch of American Association of University Women

75th Anniversary Celebration December 20, 2010

Submitted by
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Baraboo Branch

The Baraboo Branch of the American Association of University Women was organized in October of 1935. It was organized by Alice Steeps and Marjorie Stekl with Kathryn Page serving as president that first year, 1935-36. There were 36 members. Not much is known of the early history because mimeographed programs were not begun until 1943 and a scrap book was started in 1947. Most of the early meetings were dinner meetings with a speaker.

Education was always the first interest of the branch. The Baraboo Branch of AAUW gave its first scholarship in 1941 in the amount of \$150. This was a significant amount as tuition at the University of Wisconsin was \$55 in 1941. This was one of the first scholarships offered. At the time only one other scholarship was being awarded in Baraboo to a high school male graduate. The AAUW scholarship went to a female Baraboo high school graduate who attended the University of Wisconsin upon graduation.

In 1944-46, when Marjorie Stekl was president, Play reading was still an important part of the program and the opening meeting was a dinner meeting costing 85 cents.

During the presidency of Kathryn Hill, 1948-50, the Baraboo Branch grew to national attention and fame when the play "MaMa's Metamorphosis" written by Branch member Esther Brannon, was given at the Wisconsin State Convention in 1947. The play was given later at the AAUW Regional Convention in the fall of 1948 and later in 27 states and two foreign countries. The Baraboo Branch had 59 members listed in the 1949-50 program booklets. In November of 1949 a cook book of members' recipes went on sale.

In April of 1950, the Branch with 61 members was able to give the first \$500 Name Grant Fellowship Award and honored Miss Fern Hackett, a founding member and second president of the Branch. This was a large sum of money at the time. Some of the money came from royalties on Esther Brannon's play, "MaMa's Metamorphosis". Later, Esther wrote a second play, "MaMa and the Muses" put on at the State Convention in Wausau. The Cast consisted of Esther Brannon, Kathryn Page, Jean Ringling and Ruth Rouse.

In 1952, when Sarah Willson was president, the AAUW Branch sponsored the first AFS student and was responsible for the formation of the AFS foreign exchange student in Baraboo. The first student was a male from France who lived in Baraboo with the Benzies family. After WWII, Margaret Benzies had become interested in the AFS program through her brother's service in the war. During those early years the Baraboo Branch of AAUW was responsible for sponsoring the AFS student each year. Business men, men's organizations and a few churches helped, but the main responsibility was with the Baraboo Branch until the 1960's when a separate AFS organization formed in Baraboo. The Branch had to concern itself with fundraising activities to support the AFS student and its scholarship. In the early years rummage sales were fabulous because there was not a St. Vincent de Paul Society. The royalties from Esther Brannon's play, earlier silver teas, cookbook sales and later on the sale of peanut crunch, and even a style show for a few years were all ways the Branch made money. In 1951-52, with 66 members, the Branch began to sell cans of peanut crunch and Edith Hope Pearson became known as the "Nut Lady" because of her many sales of Peanut Crunch to businesses and individuals.

During the presidency of Joy Kingsford, 1954-56, the membership climbed to 88.

In 1958, the first branch bulletin newsletter is mentioned, called "You Name It" later to be called "Circus City Crier." For many years it was edited by Margaret Mary McGuan then Rose Lee, and currently Melody Carter.

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In 1960 the 25th Anniversary of the Baraboo Branch was celebrated with a dinner at Herman's Supper Club (across from the swimming pool) and a production of "Ma Ma and the Muses." Many of the charter members were still active: Marjorie Stekl, Kathryn Hill, Lucille Isenberg, Margaret Benzies and Jean Carmichael.

By our 40th Anniversary we had six active charter members and one out of town charter member who attended our celebration.

In 1966-68 Mona Paschen served as president. There were three major chairmanships in 1968: cookbook, candy sales and library cart. The library cart was taken around St. Clare Hospital twice a week by AAUW volunteers and books were supplied to the cart by the Baraboo Public Library. The cart was built for AAUW by Judge Harland Hill, husband of member Helen Hill.

In 1968, the first year that UW Baraboo/Sauk Co. Campus became operational, Dean Ted Savides came to talk to our Branch on "Contributions to the Culture by the UW Center." This was a great addition and asset to the Community.

From 1950 on, there have been 14 Name grants given to honor the following members:

1950 Fern Hackett, 1955 Kathryn Hill, 1968 Edith Hope Pearson,

1972 Joan McNevin, 1974 Sarah Willson, 1981 Margaret Mary McGuan

1985 Jean Carmichael, 1990 Kathryn Wenban, 1991 Irene Clauson,

1995 Louise Aderhold, 1997 Jessie Haefer, 1998 Cheryl Anderson

1999 Mona Paschen, 2000 Melody Carter

In 1985, we observed our 50th anniversary on September 16th at St. Paul's Lutheran Church Fellowship Hall with a potluck dinner.

1985 was the last year the used book sale fundraiser was held on Old Fashion Day.

March 3-9, 1985 was proclaimed AAUW Week by Mayor Donald Pierce who signed a proclamation in honor of the 50th Anniversary of the Baraboo Branch.

In January, 1988 a cross country ski outing and luncheon was held at the home of Bea Statz to raise funds for the Educational Foundation. Each member paid \$5.00 to ski and have lunch. The lunch was donated by Bea Statz, Kathryn Wenban and Joyce Bronkalla. It was super delicious. The outings were first held at Kate Wenban's home on Lake Wisconsin and later at Bea Statz's farm.

In 1988 charter member Jean Ringling moved back to Baraboo from Rome, Italy and rejoined the AAUW Baraboo Branch. Also in 1988, Dido Nash, who was the Wisconsin state AAUW president, moved to Loganville and joined our Branch.

In December 1990 we had our first hors d'oeuvre party and silent auction at the home of Jean Ringling on 8th street. Husbands were included.

In October of 1993 the Baraboo Branch lost two of its past members: Kathryn Hill and Mary Margaret McGuan Holt. Books were donated in their memory by the Baraboo Branch to the UW Baraboo/Sauk County Campus Library and the Senior High School Library. In January, Jean Ringling passed away and a book on circus history was donated to the Baraboo Public Library. Jean and Kathryn were charter members of the Baraboo Branch. In August 1994 Esther Brannan who brought fame to our branch by her plays also passed away.

In May, Joshua Vrabec received the 1995 Irene Clausen AAUW scholarship. He is the son of past president Susan Vrabec.

The National convention was held at the Contemporary Resort

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at Disney World in Florida on June 24-27, 1995. Cheryl Anderson and Dido Nash attended from our branch.

Branch members are sent these publications:

Outlook- from the National Association

Badger Briefs- from the State Association

Year Book- from the Baraboo Branch. This is a list of members and pertinent information now compiled and generously donated by Rose Lee.

Circus City Crier – This is a newsletter compiled and edited by Melody Carter.

Each fall we help pay transportation costs to help local 7th grade girls attend the Science Fair in Madison.

In 1991 Irene Clausen posthumously gave the Baraboo Branch \$50,000 to establish a trust fund. Money from this trust fund is used for local scholarships. Each year scholarships are given by our branch. This year we are awarding five scholarships of \$1,000 each to graduating seniors. Also, two scholarships of \$500 each are given to continuing students of UW Baraboo/Sauk County Campus.

Our annual holiday party with husbands and guests is at Christmas time and has evolved into our Holiday Hoopla. At this time we also have our Fundraising Auction.

Through many years our phoning tree chairperson has been Jan Bohl. The committee is now Pat McConaghy, Mona Paschen and Judy Utzinger. Most girls are reminded by e-mail.

Rose Lee is a Life member of our Baraboo Branch. Kate Wenban who now lives in Madison and Mona Paschen are our two Honorary Life members which mean they have been members of our Baraboo branch for 50 years or more.

Many meetings were held at first in members homes then at

UW Baraboo/Sauk Campus, St. Clare Hospital and currently most are held at Sauk County West Square Bldg.

We have been fortunate to have several State Officers from our Baraboo branch:

Kate Hill-State President 1957-59

Edith Hope Pearson-State Recording Secretary 1957-59

Cheryl Anderson-State Program VP 1995 and later served as president

Liz Nevers-State President 1993

Val Gillam-State Community Chairman 1993

Dido Nash-State Diversity Chairman 1995

Officers 2010-2011

Sharyl Reitz-Programs/Co-President

Teri Lemke-Treasurer-Membership

Mo Reilly-Secretary

Mona Paschen-Historian

Kay Guerin-Publicity

I brought along copies of our 3 Cook Books for those who would like to see them: 1940, 1949 and 1958, a scrap book containing some pictures from our 50th Anniversary and programs from our 25th, 50th and 60th Anniversary.

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