

## **Louise Tukey Interview – June 15, 2014**

### **1. Why did you join AAUW?**

- When I moved to State College from New York City in 1951, I lived next door to Mary Alice O'Brien who was the President of the Branch 1949-1951. She invited me to a meeting. She convinced me that AAUW had a great purpose in the community.

### **2. Why have you remained committed to the organization for so many decades?**

- I was convinced that the organization was dedicated to the advancement of education for women and girls and because I had worked on the book sale for fifty-three years.

### **3. What would you tell potential members about the organization?**

- I would emphasize that the purpose of AAUW is to advance equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, philanthropy and research. Locally, members work on many specific projects. Namely, the Used Book Sale, which benefits numerous non-profit community agencies and we provide four scholarships for returning women students and STEM activities in three school districts.

### **4. What would you tell current members?**

- AAUW has been the nation's leading voice promoting education and equity for women and girls for more than one hundred and thirty years.

### **5. What were the biggest challenges you faced as branch president and/or Used Book Sale chair? How did you resolve or address those challenges?**

- One of the challenges in 1959 was when the branch financial contribution quota was set at \$1,760, or an average \$10 per member, for the new educational center in Washington D.C. We borrowed from the Simmons Loan Fund to meet our quota. Then we founded the Used Book Sale to repay ourselves. We held the first Used Book Sale in 1962 and paid back ourselves in a few years.

The big challenge as Book Sale Chairman was the sea of mud, which greeted us in May 2000 because the Office of Physical Plant let the hoses running on the floor of sawdust and sand. We solved this problem by putting tarps down on the floor. Today we still have many recycled tomato boxes with muddy bottoms. That was the same sale where I had laryngitis, the arts table collapsed on the opening day, the boxed lunches was not delivered on time and the trucks were late due to a concert at the Bryce Jordan Center. There were other challenges due to volunteers, which sometimes resulted in personality problems.

- 6. What impact has AAUW made nationally and locally on women's issues? Or how has AAUW contributed to the status of women in State College and at Penn State University?**
  - The local Branch has been associated with Penn State through women's issues, lower dues rates for undergraduate students, members on the Women's Commission, inviting numerous professors to speak and using Penn State facilities.
- 7. What were some of the challenges of being members of an early feminist organization?**
  - When the organization was founded in 1916, as the Association of Collegiate Alumni, Penn State was not on the accredited list because women students should have their own Director of Physical Training, Penn State should have a woman on the faculty with the status of Full Professor and there must be a woman member on the Board of Trustees. Gradually, all these demands were met and by 1926, Penn State was finally on the accredited list.
- 8. What opposition did the local branch face over the years as a women's organization? From whom?**
  - The opposition was from the local Catholic Church, who felt that AAUW was not pro-choice. Some members dropped out because of the matter of reproductive rights. Also, the rules were changed so women who had Associates Degrees were eligible for membership.
- 9. What are the next important steps for AAUW nationally and locally toward equity for women and girls? Or where would you like to see AAUW go in the future?**
  - I would like to see AAUW advance locally and nationally as a forerunner in the future.
- 10. What programs/needs/causes has the local branch supported over the years?**
  - The local Branch has supported libraries since 1927 and contributed financially since 1956. We promoted the "Save the Library" project in 1960, presented books to the library since 1963 and requested that the vacated Post Office building be used to relocate the Schlow Library in 1965. In addition, we gave \$20,000 in 2005 for the present Schlow building.  
Since 2006, the Branch has presented the Gateway to Equity Award to groups that have shown by action and philosophy the promotion of the AAUW mission.
- 11. Identify notable branch projects and/or community projects supported by the branch such as Phone Friend, the scholarship endowment, Women's Resource Center, Schlow Centre Region Library, Family Health Center. (Directions branch is headed in)**

- In addition to those named above, members of the Branch have worked tirelessly for the Schlow Centre Region Library.

**12. What impact did AAUW have on the State College area, on Penn State University, and on women's leadership opportunities locally?**

- We have had a close relationship with Penn State since its inception that women were given consideration for increased facilities or dormitories, physical education and home economics laboratories. Women at Penn State now hold leadership positions and serve on the Commission for Women, for example. Locally, women have served the Borough boards and commissions, Leadership Centre County and at present we have a female Mayor.

**13. What are the most notable or most meaningful changes you've seen during your involvement in AAUW?**

- The admission of men into membership, the change to admit members with Associate Degrees, STEM projects, Schlow Library advances, Humphrey Fellows lunches and Branch leaders on state and national boards.

**14. During your membership in AAUW, how has women's role in society evolved?**

- Many more women are working outside the home. Many are in top positions in Fortune 500 empires and hopefully the Equal Rights Amendment will soon result so that women can be paid the same as men for the same work.

**15. Over time what has the branch done to raise funds? What form has branch philanthropy take over time?**

- For many years the branch held musicales, recitals, bridge and theater parties. We sold engagement calendars, notepaper, playing cards, Branch cookbooks and serrated tomato knives to raise money for fellowships fund. Once the book sales began in 1962, we no longer needed other fundraisers.

In addition, over time the Branch has supported the Eleanor Roosevelt Fund for research and endowment, given to the AAUW Legal Advocacy Fund and made philanthropic contributions to CASE, The Council for Human Services and the United Nations Foundation. In addition to 4 annual scholarships of \$5000 each, all the proceeds of the annual Used Book Sales are contributions to non-profit organizations in the community.

**16. Are there other AAUW issues you would like to discuss?**

- Yes, I would like to see a written history of this Branch! Helen Hill and I did the first fifty years in 1966. We have a printed yearbook to that effect. And now I think it's time to do the next fifty. And I think it's got to be done before 2016. It should be in a written form so that everyone can have a copy.