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SEPTEMBER BRANCH MEETING: WORK SMART THANKS TO COCA COLA

By: Betty Slater

Members and their guests gathered at the Agnes Scott College Bullock Science Center on September 22nd to begin the 2019-2020 Branch activities. We welcomed new members and this year's local scholarship winners: Thuy D. Duong, Christina Bass Smith, and

Amanda Valentine (Georgia State University) and Annalyse Pierce (Emory University).

Agnes Scott was represented by Robiaun Charles, Vice-President for college

Advancement; Karissa Tedesco, Assistant Dean for Student Development; Dawn Killenberg, Director of

Internship and Career Development; and Dr. Daisy

Bourassa, Assistant Director of Residential Education (and Branch member), who invited students to participate. The Branch honored The Coca-Cola Company for their \$500,000.00 donation to Work Smart, a national program teaching woman everywhere to negotiate effectively. Helen Smith Price, Vice President for Global Community Affairs, and Wanda Rudwell, Director of Community Partnerships, represented The Coca-Cola Company as our guests.

Fifteen college students and many Branch members demonstrated part of the Work Smart program by role playing positions of applicants and employer hiring directors. Agnes Scott's Dawn Killenburg and Irene Foran from the Internship and Career Development Department set up scenarios and offered commentary about the role play, which was very helpful to all of us! Coca-Cola provided their products as part of the lovely refreshments to those attending. We thank Agnes Scott College for its hospitality and partnership with the Atlanta Branch.

The 2019-2020 handbooks were distributed to Branch members. There was also opportunity to sign up for working at the 60th Bookfair, held at the lower level of Perimeter Mall near Dillard's.

Our next Branch meeting will take place on Saturday, November 16th, 11:00 am at Marriott Buckhead Hotel and Conference Center, Lenox



Figure 1 Members at September Branch

Leadership continued

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Bar and Grill, located at 3405 Lenox Rd, Atlanta, GA 30326. We will be learning about Atlanta's Westview Cemetery as well as hearing how we did at the 60th Bookfair. Put that date on your calendar!

CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE MEETING – VENUE CHANGE

By: Kay Collins

Our Monday, October 7TH meeting will be at the Sandy Springs Library (395 Mt. Vernon Highway, Atlanta, 30328/404-612-7000.) Room B has been reserved. We will start gathering about 10:30am and the room has been reserved until 1:00pm. We will discuss "The Rent Collector" by Camron Wright. All are welcome.

Questions? Contact Kay Collins.

TRAVEL GROUP

By: Betty Arden

The AAUW Travel Group will meet at the Atlanta History Center 10:00am on Thursday, October 10th. The History Center is located at 130 West Paces Ferry Road, Atlanta. We will tour the new exhibit, "Andy Great Change: The Centennial of the 19th Amendment", commemorating the 100th anniversary of women gaining the right to vote in 1920. The exhibit is located upstairs at the Swan House of the History Center with two rooms filled with dozens of historic artifacts.

Lunch will follow at the Swan Coach House. If you have questions, call Betty Arden.

GOOD NEWS COMING!

By Mary Lynn Merkle

We are now in the midst of Bookfair. Many of us have been working hard all year to ensure the success of our 60th annual fundraiser. Atlanta Branch's share of the proceeds will allow us to once again work toward equity for women and girls in a meaningful way. Traditionally, we allocate significant amounts for AAUW Funds (graduate fellowships and legal advocacy) and local scholarships. Additionally, we offer funding for other international, state, or local programs. Last year's funding was given to the International Rescue Committee, Atlanta Technical College, Saturday Milestone Prep (part of Dresden Elementary School Foundation), and Days for Girls. The thank you notes received made it very clear what a substantial difference our gifts can make.

As the Philanthropy Committee meets in November to discuss the distribution of funds for this year, we welcome input from our Atlanta Branch members. If you have ideas for programs (including those that

have received past funding) that fit with our mission, please contact any member of the Philanthropy Committee. Members are listed in your 2019-2020 handbook.

AAUW SPONSORS GBPI FALL POLICY FORUM

by Cele Covatta



Figure 1: Marge Anderson and Cele Covatta at GBPI Fall Policy Forum

On September 20TH, Marge Anderson (membership Co-Chair) and Cele Covatta (Co-President elect) represented the Atlanta Branch at Georgia Budget and Policy Institute's *Women-Powered Prosperity Fall Forum*. Alex Camardelle, GBPI Senior Policy Analyst, presented the current report. The report focused on the topics of Poverty and Economic Security, Employment and Earnings, and Health and Wellness. Problems and proposals to correct issues and fulfill promises in these areas of concern were explored.

A panel discussion, Building Power to Achieve Wins for Women, was moderated by Rose Scott, host of WABE's *Closer Look*. A brilliant keynote address by Mehrsa Baradaran, author of *The Color of Money* and *How the Other Half Banks*, followed the panel. Full transcripts of these very thought-provoking presentations are available at GBPI.org

MARY AND DARWIN WOMACK—A LIFE OF CHANGING CULTURES

Mary Lynn Merkle

Note: In response to an earlier diversity article (May 2019), members were asked to share personal stories about their varied life experiences with diversity. Mary and Darwin Womack responded to this invitation and the following article is the result of Mary Lynn Merkle, our Diversity chair, interviewing the Womacks.

Mary Womack, a longtime member of Atlanta Branch, has been a “cheerleader” and constant supporter for the success of our Branch in so many ways. Her husband Darwin has been an advocate as well.

Both Mary and Darwin have experienced living through vastly changing cultures. They were both born in very small towns in Eastern Tennessee just a few miles apart—west of the Tennessee River and east of the Cumberland Plateau.

Mary's father had an ice and coal business. He also had a canning factory during the growing season. The business was successful, and he hired people to help—some of whom were African American. One worker was Jo, who delivered ice in town and around the countryside for a number of years.

Darwin's family had a farm. His mother had not grown up farming or with hard physical labor, but she became a true partner with her husband at working to make the farm successful and caring for their eight children. All the siblings worked on the farm side-by-side with the hired hands who were mostly African American.

It was a time of strong legal issues regarding race. In Mary's town, an African American man bought a block of land close to downtown and the man's family added houses over the years. There were two African American churches, an elementary school, and bus transportation to the county seat

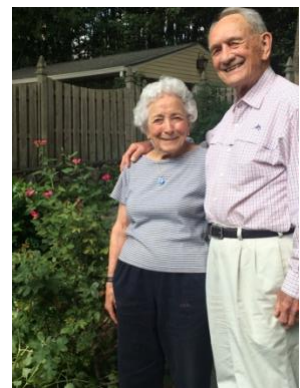


Figure 2 Mary and Darwin Womack

where the African American high school was located. Even though there were legal restrictions, in Mary's memory that community was hardworking, self-supporting, and well respected.

And then came the Depression and its aftermath. Mary's home was just a block from the rail station. Hoboes were riding many of the trains, and word went out that there was a house where a person could get a sandwich. Mary's mother provided many a traveler with a sandwich. Times were difficult during the depression days, but most families had chickens, a cow, and planted gardens for food. They did the best they could to support themselves and their families.

Schools were an important part of the community. Mary's school was small, just one class for each grade level. The area high school was in Spring City, Mary's town, and that's where Darwin and Mary met. However, they didn't get married until both had graduated from college.

The next big cultural change came with the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). It would bring electricity to everyone. However, people no longer needed ice for their refrigerators or as much coal to heat their homes with electricity. Mary's father had to let many of his employees go as he was forced to close down much of his business. However, he helped many of those employees find work with the TVA. Fortunately for the family, Mary's mother had been sent to a business school in Chattanooga at her father's insistence. Now she was able to help with family finances by securing a position as a postmistress.

TVA, in its work to bring jobs and electricity, also flooded huge amounts of farmland. Suddenly supporting a family by farming was no longer viable. Fortunately, Darwin's father was also a skilled carpenter.

To the rescue came Oakridge, a nuclear research center. It brought many scientists to the area. Housing was hard to come by, so families would rent out rooms, and Mary's family was one of those.

Darwin, after his senior year, went into the service. The Second World War was just winding down. When he finished his enlistment, he used the GI bill to attend the University of Tennessee. He only had enough service credit to pay for three years, so his sister loaned him the money (\$75) to pay for his final year.

After graduation in 1949 and marriage, the Womacks returned to Spring City where they both taught. After eight years there, Darwin had an opportunity through the Ford Foundation to work on a doctorate in Educational Administration which he received from the University of Tennessee in Knoxville.

Mary, in her senior year at University of Tennessee, was selected to attend the Merrill Palmer Institute's nationally renowned child development program. She later received a master's degree from University of Tennessee in health and physical education. Then, after teaching and raising a family, she returned to school and earned a specialist degree in curriculum development from Auburn University.

With degrees in hand, they moved to Atlanta in the 1962. They purchased their home—the one in which we have enjoyed so many AAUW gatherings. The needed repairs to their new home were completed with the carpenter skills Darwin had learned from his father.

Atlanta was a growing city. It was also the center of the Civil Rights movement—another huge cultural shift. Darwin was hired to recreate how schools could serve the growing number of students as a result of the integration of all students. Mary taught health and physical education and became a Curriculum Director for the Atlanta Public Schools. Both Mary and Darwin initiated many new ways of delivering meaningful programs: elementary physical education that centered on child development, teaching nurseries in selected high schools to meet the needs of young mothers, factual sex education programs, and so many more creative changes that continue to help our communities.

As Mary and Darwin have lived their lives, they have adapted well to all the cultural changes they faced. The Womacks are long retired from schools, but definitely not from fully participating. They are extremely proud of their three adult children who are successful in their chosen fields. In interviewing them for this article, I thoroughly enjoyed the many history lessons. They both have many more stories to tell.

They have been powerful influences in the lives of so many who have traversed Georgia's education institutions and have modeled equality in their living and serving. How fortunate our Atlanta Branch is to have their friendship.

UPCOMING EVENTS

September 30th - October 6th: Bookfair

October 7th: Contemporary Literature Meeting

October 10th: Travel Group Meeting

November 9th: Board Meeting

November 16th: Branch Meeting

Quote of the month

“I could not, at any age, be content to take my place by the fireside and simply look on. Life was meant to be lived. Curiosity must be kept alive. One must never, for whatever reason, turn his back on life.”— **Eleanor Roosevelt**

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