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Emerities Newsletter, Spring 2011

Georgia State University Emeriti Association

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The above headline might well apply to Bobby, my wife of 58 years, and me. I felt called to be a teacher, and helped by co-op programs, scholarships and teaching fellowships at Georgia Tech and MIT, I followed that dream for 37 years, the last 21 at GSU. I expected that retirement would bring laid-back living, travel and hobbies. The first portent of a different sort of future began in 1978 in an ordinary way: I was asked to judge a high-school science fair. One student project featured a brain-teasing game for two called “L,” invented by British psychologist Edward deBono. The game was so interesting I designed a set so Bobby and I could play. It was fun! Eventually we acquired exclusive rights to manufacture and sell “L” in the U.S. and sold more than 10,000 sets to the Smithsonian gift shop, MIT’s gift catalog, etc. This led to selling other arts and crafts, including kaleidoscopes!

Rooms to Let
In 1980 a daughter married, and she and her husband honeymooned at bed and breakfast inns. On their return they told us, “You two should be innkeepers.” The idea was so appealing that in August 1985 we bought the Hollberg Hotel in Senoia, Ga. After extensive renovations we opened the Veranda Historic Inn in April 1986 and began our next adventure: innkeeping.

We opened the Veranda at the onset of a major emphasis on bed and breakfasts for travelers and received unbelievable newspaper, magazine and TV publicity/awards for our efforts. I retired from GSU in June of 1990, and Bobby and I enjoyed our new career for 20 years — cooking and serving five-course breakfasts and dinners, entertaining the nicest people imaginable from all walks of life and from countries near and far, running a gift shop, traveling to amazing places [like Australia] as guests of our guests, and hosting such events as weddings/business groups/family reunions (our own family now numbers 21). In 1999 I had health problems, so in 2005 we sold the Veranda and moved to Atlanta where our children and grandchildren live. We bought a home, but wondered what to do with our still-in-storage gift shop inventory. The answer was our most recent adventure: kaleidoscope shop!

Grand Opening
We found a location nearby in Briarcliff Village on Henderson Mill Road. In 2006 at our grand opening we were honored to have 20 of the world’s top kaleidoscope artists as well as the woman credited with establishing kaleidoscopes as a

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COMMUNICATING WITH THE EMERITI — THE NEWSLETTER AND THE WEBSITE

The quarterly Emeriti introduced its new design last fall. The new, fresh layout has been well received. What readers truly enjoy, in my opinion, are the articles that tell what our colleagues are doing. The emeriti are engaged, active, diverse and interesting. To get these articles, we depend on you to submit items you think your fellow emeriti will enjoy reading. Thinking of something to submit? Review previous newsletters on our website and please send your submissions to Lorene Pilcher, pilchers@comcast.net, or call her at 404-552-3440.

Our website is www.gsu.edu/emeriti. Encouraged by the effectiveness of enhancing the newsletter, it’s time to develop our website as the comprehensive way to communicate in the future. This project is underway, and it will first update the postings and create a new design for our front page. What will be exciting is the second stage when the site will provide us the opportunity to communicate with each other and GSU interactively.

In January, I joined the national board of the Association of Retirement Organizations in Higher Education and its executive committee, which allows us a chance to learn from and what some of the best emeriti programs around the country are doing to serve their members.

A JOURNEY INTO A HEALING GARDEN by Sandra Owen

Heart pounding, I entered the gardens: clenching, confusion, disorientation, I am in shock! Did the Spiral Spinal Center physician just say, “I am sorry, you will never walk again?” My anger propelled me to escape. Hitting the door with my wheelchair, I burst outside into the cold October day and found comfort in a garden. That day, I faced a life changing trauma. I made a promise to myself to create such a healing garden at home.

My experience in making my garden confirms the observations of experts such as professors Roger Ulrich at Texas A & M and Clare Marcus at Berkeley. They have shown that gardens have therapeutic benefits. They note that people exposed to gardens experience less stress, improved immune function, pain control, and physical and emotional well-being. Although my garden has not had time to come to full fruition, I have already found these assertions to be true.

Even before my garden materialized, I found that being actively involved in the garden’s design with the landscape architect, Eilean Cormier, and landscape designer Erik Johnson, was restorative and healing. We were a wonderful team. Eilean designed an infinite path including a circular front patio an a kidney shaped back patio connected by a curved traditional walk. She included my favorites of gardenias, red clematis, roses, lilacs, mountain laurel and hydrangeas. Planes and birch trees, strategically placed, attract butterflies and birds. A sitting wall on the back patio invites us to view azaleas, hydrangeas and camellias. Wind chimes, a fountain, whimsical gnomes, and garden statues appear throughout the garden.

Erik then transformed the design into reality! He used 12” x 12” pavers, safe grade and appropriate path width for ease of mobility. He installed three arbors for climbing roses; a trellis for climbing clematis; and a solar fountain surrounded with day lilies on the front patio. He spent many hours locating and planting the wide variety of desired plants. Planting was scheduled for completion in April, and by next year plants should be maturing and filling in spaces with lots of color.

Entering the garden, I listen to the wind play the chimes, follow changes in the light upon the stones, smell the sweet fragrances, marvel in each new blossom, and “renew a right spirit within me.”

Sandra Owen resides in Decatur and is a clinical instructor emeritus of kinesiology and health. She serves on scientific expert review panels for government proposals and volunteers at the Atlanta Children’s Shelter.

BOOK LOVERS REJOICE! Authors Series Launched

The next Authors Series event will be June 9 at the GSU Library. Charles Williams will discuss his book “The Crash of TWA Flight 260,” the chronicle of an early air tragedy and mystery.

Save the date now for future book talks scheduled for Sept. 8 and Dec. 8.

REMARKABLY FINDING MARY

by Charles M. Williams

My book, “The Crash of TWA Flight 260,” (University of New Mexico Press), narrates extraordinary events that transpired in Atlanta involving descendents of Flight 260 victims. Among these was my discovery of Mary Fink, daughter of noted geologist Robert Balk, who died in the crash. Dr. Balk’s obituary had informed me of Mary’s existence, but I spent four years vainly searching for information about her that I needed in order to write a book about the disaster that had killed her father. (In fact, I had been one of the first people to contact her before she had participated in the rescue efforts.)

Amazingly, after spending four years searching the nation for a trace of Mary, I had discovered her virtually on doorsteps! Uncertain of her married name, I Googled “Gary GSU history” and was rewarded with the remarkable fact that Gary Fink had also been co-founder of the Southern Labor Archives — where I had spent a fruitless day before. Had I told archivist Traci Drummond that I had written a book about the crash, she might readily have put me in contact with Mary Balk Fink — who had recently consulted her to determine an appropriate institution to receive her father’s geological instruments.

Charles Williams is a professor emeritus of mathematics.

SOME PEOPLE... cont. from p.1

new art form, Cozy Baker, the First Lady of Kaleidoscopes. Since then we have offered kaleidoscopes from more than 200 of the world’s best scope artists — the largest number of artists represented in any gallery. We have a jewelry scope one inch long, a television scope four feet long, a weather-proof plant filled garden scope weighing 185 lbs. and a noisy Marbleator scope that circulates 75 huge blow-glass marbles amidst flashing lights . . . like a big pinball machine.

Prices range from a few dollars to many thousands for kaleidoscopes made from everything from cardboard to gold and silver. Scopes delight men, women and children. They are perfect for kids’ birthday parties, bar mitzvahs, awards banquets, CEO presentations and any other gift giving occasion.

Our shop has been featured in Southern Living and The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, and a fifth grader’s research paper called it “the coolest place in the world.” Besides kaleidoscopes we have puzzles, gemstone art objects, paperweights and dozens of other unusual gift items. Do visit us! Bring your out-of-town guests! Admission is free and we’d love to see you.

Ian Beat is a professor emeritus of mathematics.
SETTING THE COURSE:  
GSU’s Strategic Plan Approved

In late January, the University Senate approved Georgia State University’s Strategic Plan, culminating a year-long effort to plot the course of Georgia State’s future.

The plan “will help to chart our course as we enhance and grow GSU’s educational and research efforts over the next 10 years,” GSU President Mark Becker said in announcing the plan’s passage in the Senate, which was unanimous. “I commend the diligence and dedication of the Strategic Planning Committee, which worked with various internal and external audiences, to create an extensive and comprehensive plan that will help guide GSU to even greater heights as we embark on our second century.”

Becker presented the strategic plan to the university community on January 31. He outlined its five main goals:

**GOAL 1:** Become a national model for undergraduate education by demonstrating that students from all backgrounds can achieve academic and career success at high rates.

**GOAL 2:** Significantly strengthen and grow the base of distinctive graduate and professional programs that assure development of the next generation of researchers and societal leaders.

**GOAL 3:** Become a leading public research university addressing the most challenging issues of the 21st century.

**GOAL 4:** Be a leader in understanding the complex challenges of cities and developing effective solutions.

**GOAL 5:** Achieve distinction in globalizing the university.

The plan can be viewed in its entirety at [www.gsu.edu/strategicplan](http://www.gsu.edu/strategicplan).