Emerities Newsletter, Spring 2011

Georgia State University Emeriti Association

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Recommended Citation
Georgia State University Emeriti Association, "Emerities Newsletter, Spring 2011" (2011). Emeriti Faculty Publications. 17.
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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 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).

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REMARCABLY FINDING MARY

by Charles M. Williams

My book, “The Crash of TWA Flight 260,” (University of New Mexico Press), narrates extraordinary events - some terrifying - that happened in Atlanta involving descendents of Flight 260 victims. Among these was my discovery of Mary Fink, daughter of noted geologist Charles Williams.

Dr. Balk’s obituary had informed me of Mary’s existence, but I spent four years vainly searching for information about her. I had the inspiration to phone her alma mater, Stevens College, in Missouri in the hope that they might know something. I provided the college with my e-mail address and phone number, explaining that I was writing a book about an airline crash in which her father had perished 55 years before.

On the next day I visited the GSU library searching for TWA historical records and was surprised to be directed to the archivist for the Southern Labor Archives – where I had spent a fruitless visit the 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.

The remarkable fact is that Gary Fink had also been co-founder of the Southern Labor Archives – where I had spent a fruitless visit the day before.

In spring, 2010, I telephoned Mary Balk Fink to discuss my venture, I returned home where I was disheartened by a wasted day. Emory also failed.

In September, 2010, Disheartened by a wasted day, I elected to visit the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta where I had spent a fruitless visit the day before. I had been one of the first people on the scene of the crash and had participated in the rescue efforts.

Actually, after spending four years searching for the exact location of a trace of Mary, I had discovered her virtually on “doorstep.” Uncertain of her married name, I Googled “Gary GSU history” and was rewarded with the fact that Gary Fink had also been co-founder of the Southern Labor Archives – where I had spent a fruitless visit the day before.

Held by travel writer 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.

*I am an author or do you know of a GSU author we might feature in the Emeriti Authors Series? Please send suggestions to Anne Page Masby, anepage@gmail.com or 770/424-0635

**SOME PEOPLE... cont. from p.1

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.

The SGU Emeriti Association is now offering a quarterly series of author presentations. The focus of this series is on publications by SGU faculty, both retired and current. Emeriti gather in the GSU Library for these book talks, which are in addition to regularly scheduled emeriti events. All emeriti are welcome to bring guests. Find out what your colleagues have written!

The inaugural presentation took place March 17 in the University Library Colloquium Room. Bill Sessions described work called “Flannery O’Connor,” which will be published later in 2011.

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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).