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...
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 Lorine Pitchers, pitchers@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 firsthand what some of the best emeriti programs around the country are doing to serve their members.

COMING TO A HEALING GARDEN

By Sandra Owen

H eart pounding, my mind loyal. ‘I was thinking “clenching, confusion, disorientation,” I am in shock! Did the Spinal Cord Injury 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 challenge that brought 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 Clarence Marcus at Berkeley. They have both 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, Elise Cormier, and landscaper, Erik Johnson, was restorative and healing. We were a wonderful team.

Elise designed an infinite path including a circular front patio and a kidney shaped back patio surrounded by a curved traditional wall. She included my favorites of gardenias, red camellias, roses, lavender and roses. Plants and bird houses, 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 statuary 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 in anatomy and biochemistry. She serves on scientific review panels for government and private proposals and volunteers at the Atlanta Children’s Shelter.

REMARKABLY FINDING MARY

By Charles M. Williams

M y book, “The Crash of TWA Flight 260,” (Univ. Press of New Mexico Press), narrates extraordinary events that unfolded 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. (In the inspiration to phone her alma mater, Stevens College, in Missouri, I found 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.

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 – which I had never heard of and which seemed inappropriate for my needs. Neither the archivist nor I could imagine why I had been directed there. I didn’t find what I was looking for, and my subsequent search for the records at Emory also failed.

Disheartened by a wasted visit, I returned home, where I was delighted to find a voicemail from Mary Fink with the thrilling message that she lived in Decatur, Ga., and that her late husband, Gary, had been chair of the GSU history department and, thus, a fellow faculty member of mine! Mary’s initial impression was that I must be a new member of the history department who had unknowingly chosen to write a book about the disaster that had killed her father. (In fact, I had been one of the first people to arrive on the scene of the crash and had participated in the rescue efforts.)

Amazingly, after spending four years searching, I was able to secure 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 Mary Fink had also been co-founder of 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.

BOOK LOVERS REJOICE!

Authors Series Launched

The GSU Emeriti Association is now offering a quarterly series of author presentations. The focus of this series is on publications by GSU 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 as the World’s Hardest, and Flannery O’Connor, whose work will be published later in 2011.

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.

Are you an author or do you know of a GSU author we might feature in the Emeriti Authors Series? Please send suggestions to Anne Page Mabry, anpage@gmail.com or 770/424-6035.
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).