

# Goals reviewed as AAUW observes 40th anniversary

Medford Branch, American Association of University Women, celebrated its 40th birthday with a Founder's Day luncheon and visit from the Oregon State Division president, Kappy Eaton of Eugene.

Eighty-five members and friends attended the Nov. 6 event at the Red Lion. Tables were decorated with antique collectibles from members of the Branch's antiques study group. Past presidents, Frances Willett and Lenore Smith, cut the birthday cake.

President Nelda Swisher read a letter from Gayle Clason, 1971-72 president, now residing in Eugene; and introduced the following past presidents: Elizabeth McGalliard, 1940-41; Dorothy Dowson, 1950-51; Harriet Tobin, 1952-53; Lois Seitz, 1954-55; Maxine Anderson, 1955-56; Frances Willett, 1956-57; Rosemary Johansson, 1957-58; Ruth Roemer, 1961-62; Lenore Smith, 1962-63; Mary Lasher, 1965-66; Virginia Wait, 1966-67; Jean Fish, 1968-69; Pat Collins, 1969-70; Helen Gebhard, 1970-71; Maxine Smith, 1972-73; Kayleen Hart, 1973-74; Susan Evans, 1975-76.

Virginia Wait, one of the founding members of the group, shared highlights from the beginning years. Meetings were always Saturday luncheons and about 40 women were charter members. Branch study groups in 1936 were international relations, creative arts and parent education. The next year, arts and music and interior decorating were added. Concerns and interests seemed to be very much the same as they are today.

Program chairman Jan Sawyer introduced Mrs. Eaton, speaker of the day, who is assistant professor of library administration at University of Oregon and librarian in charge of the Bureau of Governmental Research and Service Library.

Mrs. Eaton has a master's degree in both library administration and journalism from the U of O. She is a past president of Oregon League of Women Voters and of the Oregon Library Association and national secretary of the Council of Planning Librarians. Mrs. Eaton was on the national board of the Camp Fire Girls for four years and has received the Luther Gulick award, highest award given to a volunteer by a local council.

The AAUW state president has served on many city and county boards in Eugene and Lane County. She was Eugene's Young Woman of the Year in 1956 and Eugene's Woman of the Year in 1974 and has been honored with a Eugene AAUW Branch named grant.

Mrs. Eaton discussed "What's AAUW All About", tracing the history of the group formed in 1881 in Boston, when 17 educated women banded together because of their desire for educational opportunities and upward mobility for women.

Education has remained the priority interest of AAUW, Mrs. Eaton said. The Education Foundation Program has grown from \$500 grant money in 1891 to more than a half million dollars given in 1976 for educational

grants to women seeking higher degrees. All is earned by members. The Oregon Division is second highest in the United States, with \$18 donated per capita state membership.

More recent innovations in educational programs include Project Renew, which gives small grants to women who need to update education to get back into the job market. There also is the Jail-Library Grant to bring reading materials into the local jails. Medford Branch received such a grant two years ago and has continued the Jail Library Project in Jackson County.

Mrs. Eaton said the second aspect of AAUW interests is the legislative program, which began in the 1890s when members became aware they must seek influence with government to get education legislation passed.

Another early interest was the support of child labor laws. AAUW was very involved with lobbying for suffrage for women, and now the primary goal of the national organization is to accomplish passage of the Equal Rights Amendment, Mrs. Eaton said.

On the local level, Oregon Division's most recent success was reform of the Oregon inheritance tax laws in 1975, the state president reported. AAUW is presently in the middle of the fight to substantially increase basic school support from the state and has a continuing interest in comprehensive planning.

The third area of AAUW is its study and action groups. They can be large or small, may meet once or continue for years — as a means for women who have an interest in a particular topic to meet and study. The guideline topics elected for study on a national level presently are titled: 21st Century, World Pluralism, Economic Facts of Life/Living with Less, and Generating Creativity. New topics for next year will be Redesigning Education, Skills for Equality and the Politics of Food.

One of the main advantages of belonging to AAUW is its diversity of programs and that a member may become as involved as her time and interests allow, Mrs. Eaton pointed out.

Statistics quoted by Mrs. Eaton show the growth of AAUW in the past 95 years: From 17 members to the present 200,000 internationally; from one branch to 18,000. Oregon in 51 years has increased from 100 to 3,800 members and five to 44 branches.

Mrs. Eaton concluded by saying that AAUW has come a long way in 95 years but is only on the threshold of where it is going.