

FIFTY YEARS WITH AFWA

I can't believe I have been a member of AFWA for fifty years – that is half a century. I was asked to share with you how AFWA has enhanced my life. So, I will start at the beginning. Little did I know at that time the personal and professional opportunities AFWA would provide to enrich my life.

I joined the Chicago Chapter of the American Society of Women Accountants (the predecessor of the Accounting and Financial Women's Alliance) in November 1971. I had been invited to attend a meeting by Myra Swick, a co-worker at Ernst & Ernst. I was reluctant at first, but then received a letter from Membership Chair Mrs. George Beck. Being the naïve small-town girl that I was and now living in the big city, I thought the letter was from the wife of one of the partners I worked for at my CPA firm. So, I thought I should go to the meeting as the right thing to do for work. Obviously, it wasn't the partner's wife. But I had such a good time and felt so comfortable that I continued to attend. It turned out to be a great way to make new friends and expand my network of professionals in the big city. Each meeting allowed me to gain updated educational knowledge from qualified speakers in all areas of accounting.

After serving in various capacities working up the leadership ladder, I was elected to serve as Chapter President for the fiscal 1979-1980 year. Unfortunately, I only served three months as President because we moved to Iowa in October 1979. During that time, I also attended my first JAM (joint annual meeting with the American Women's Society of CPA's) held in Minneapolis. Four of us drove up there and believe it or not, we all four shared a room. What a time we had! I discovered attending annual conferences was addictive and I have attended scores more since then. The annual conferences provide current continuing education at a reasonable cost, opportunities for developing social and professional friendships, and many unique cultural experiences.

After we moved to Story City (which is approximately 45 miles north of Des Moines on I-35), I transferred my membership to the Des Moines Chapter. Again, the networking opportunities helped me as Chapter members provided information to help on my new job and help with new to me Iowa taxes. Meetings were held at night, but because the drive was so long and I was always driving alone (no cell phone then), I ultimately transferred my membership to Member-at-Large status. However, I missed monthly in person networking but continued to attend annual meetings around the country.

In 1990 I was ready to actually begin the chartering process for a new chapter in Ames. National gave me the name of an Omaha member who had moved to Ames and I was able to get one of my co-workers to assist. The three of us worked with the Des Moines Chapter (our sponsoring chapter). We had several organizational meetings and ultimately chartered with over 30 members in November 1990. I agreed to serve as President and

held that position for two terms. Over the years I have continued to serve on almost every committee or officer position within the Ames Chapter, many more than once.

I continued to attend annual meetings and I met one of my closest friends at the Houston JAM in 1993. Since both Laura Farney (Wichita Chapter) and I were the only members of our chapters attending and we got along so well, we started rooming together after that. And we are still rooming together after all these years.

One of the best things about AFWA is the networking opportunities it provides. Attending the regional and national conferences allowed me to meet members from all areas of accounting and from all over the country. I remember having some questions about one of the tax tables from the IRS and called a fellow member who worked there. She took my question down the hallway and talked with the person who created the table. Talk about “straight from the horse’s mouth” and terrific networking! It is really nice to be able to pick up the telephone or send an email to another AFWA member to consult on an accounting issue. Making hand-made greeting cards is something I love to do and my best customers are long-time AFWA friends.

AFWA supports development in the profession by giving scholarships to qualified students pursuing careers in accounting and finance. I have served on the local Scholarship Committee and also served four years on the board of The Foundation of AFWA. What an honor it was to be a part of this wonderful opportunity.

Travel is one of the things I like to do the best. In 1999 Laura, two members of the Kansas City Chapter, and I went on a Caribbean Cruise. That was the beginning of my cruising with Laura and we continue to this day. We had to renew our Global Entry (quickie passport) just before Covid hit, and we had gone to 32 different countries in just five years. We hope to continue in spite of Covid. Laura and I often spent several days either before or after an Annual Conference visiting the local area with two members from the Omaha Chapter. Lifelong friendships abound in AFWA. Several of my closest friends belong to the Ames Chapter and have been friends since the beginning of the Chapter.

Approximately ten-fifteen years ago People to People International was asking the National President of AFWA to lead delegations of accounting and financial professionals to foreign countries to interact with accounting professionals and educators there. I was fortunate enough to travel with two such delegations: Vivian Moeller (Milwaukee Chapter) led the delegation to Russia and Kate Mulder (Ames Chapter) led the delegation to South Africa. What a fun and educational process for me and one I would not have experienced without AFWA.

Over the years in AFWA I have been honored to receive the Member of the Year and the inaugural Founders’ Day Award from the Ames Chapter as well as the National Woman

of the Year and the National President's Award. I affectionately refer to AFWA as my "second child." It has been, and continues to be, a very important part of my life. I have gained so much from being a half-century member: from lifelong friends to continuing education in locations all around the country to development of many leadership skills I use in all phases of my personal and professional life.

If I can offer one piece of advice to anyone who will listen, it is this: AFWA is a tremendous organization with amazing members who do amazing things and who can help you develop enough to do amazing things as well. If you have the opportunity to join AFWA, do so. You won't be sorry! Thank you AFWA for all you have done for me!

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February 2022