

## **FSUEA**

### **The First 25 Years**

#### **A Time for Celebration**

It was a sad occasion, the funeral of a Ferris graduate, which found Dr. Merrill Murray and John Fleming together in attendance. Out of that sadness and a sharing of our concerns as we planned our pending retirements, the question of a need for some organizational linkage between Ferris and its emeriti, an association of sorts. Why not a Ferris Emeriti Association?

During the following weeks, the two discussed this need with members of faculty and staff who were in a near-retirement period. Dr. Murray then developed a questionnaire for broader input, and the results were virtually unanimous. Dr. Jack Bennett, Dean of Optometry, went so far as to offer the use of Optometry office support in the initial phase of the emerging organization and effort.

On May 11, 1982, a group gathered for coffee and a planning session in the Rankin Center. Craig Berke, Joe Deupree, Al Harrot, Dee LaBatt, Frank Marquis, Proctor Maynard, Al Peets, Emery Wiltse, John Fleming and Merrill Murray took the first steps toward organization. Mike Murray was elected chair of the organizational committee and Joe Deupree was asked to serve as secretary.

Murray and Deupree were asked to meet with President Ewigleben regarding University support and cooperation from the President's office. At the same time, a subcommittee of the group, which was composed of Joe Deupree, Merrill Murray, Jack Fleming, Emery Wiltse, Dee LaBatt and Proctor Maynard met and began the development of a constitution and by-laws, which was submitted to the college attorney for review and approval. They were approved as submitted.

The founding meeting of the organization to be known as the Ferris State University Emeriti Association was held on October 8, 1982, in the Country House Restaurant. The initial executive board was:

President: Merrill Murray

Vice President: Norma Conklin

Secretary: Emery Wiltse

Directors: Joe Deupree, Jack Fleming, Dee LaBatt , Proctor Maynard

This Executive Board served until 1985 during which time the board organized standing committees, the needed directory was implemented, a pattern of monthly "coffee talks" and four general association luncheons were established.

These followed a number of activities, such as the Association support of Elderhostels, the first to be in conjunction with the Ferris Centennial celebration in the summer of 1984. Over the ensuing years, the

Association has been involved in retirement seminars, membership on the Board of Directors of the Alumni Association, helping foreign students with language needs, assisting in Ferris Student Government elections, and the overall challenge of maintaining an ongoing linkage between the college and its emeriti through an association newsletter.

Over the ensuing years, the association newsletter first under Norman Peterson, then Joe Deupree, back to Norman Peterson and finally to Richard Perrin reached out to emeriti far and wide and served as an important link with the University, until the advent of the Alumni Web page at which time the Emeriti Association was included under the plan developed by Mary Kay MacIver, Associate Director of Alumni Relations.

The most recent transition of the role of the Emeriti Association came in the year 2000, when the Emeriti Association matured over the years until President Sederburg felt that the Emeriti Association needed more defining in its relationship with the University, and assigned Dr. Richard Duffet this responsibility. Dr. Duffet developed a committee composed of Debra Jacks, from his department and Norman Peterson and Jack Fleming from the Emeriti Association. This committee studied the role of emeriti in colleges and universities within the state, as well as the role of the FSUEA as it had developed over the years, and developed a plan for submission to the President and to the University Board of Trustees. Known as the "Emeriti Benefits Package", the document was adopted by the Board of Trustees on February 17, 2001.

This action formally recognized the Emeriti Association as a unit within the University organization structure assigned to the division of Marketing and Advancement. The Alumni Relations department was assigned as our operational linkage. This action by the Board also spelled out the package of benefits, which essentially replicated those already accorded the faculty, except Emeriti did not receive any duty assignments nor stipend. Mary Kay MacIver continues to serve as the Emeriti Association linkage person, and serves us well.

Dr. Duffett saw the need for a more permanent office in the University for the Emeriti Association and assigned Prakken 114 for this purpose. More recently, President Eisler made possible the redecorating and updating of the office furnishing. Thus the saga of the Ferris State University Emeriti Association was solemnized by a ribbon cutting ceremony, as the Association took over its refurbished office on October 1, 2007

Today, we meet to celebrate the twenty-five years of the Emeriti Association. This brief summary does not recognize the numerous emeriti that have devoted time in behalf of our Association. Sadly, many of those no longer are with us today, but still we thank them, as well as all the other members who have helped our association develop as an effective unit of Ferris State University.