



AURA: CONTINUING PROGRESS

*Don Seay,
President (2014-15)*

Last year, under the leadership of President Larry Mullins, AURA made progress in many areas. His article in the Spring 2014 issue of AURA News, “Looking to the Future of AURA”, provided details of our progress. As I like to say regarding science and medicine, “We have only scratched the surface in our discoveries of solutions to problems and cures for diseases and other health problems”. Likewise, AURA has only scratched the surface in our potential to be of service to all of our members.

As Larry pointed out, your Board of Directors has agreed AURA needs to have both a political and a social focus in order to serve the membership. On the political side, AURA was founded for university retirees to have a voice with the Auburn University and Auburn University Montgomery administrations and the state legislature regarding retiree benefits, specifically cost of living increases (COLAS) and reasonable costs for medical and drug benefits. The social focus has mainly been our spring business and luncheon meeting and our fall “BAR-B-Q” event.

As you are aware, our PEEHIP medical insurance and drug benefits costs this year remain at last year’s level. This was no accident.

The Alabama Education Retirees Association (AERA) has a huge number of active members and an executive director, Janice Charlesworth. They organized and lobbied the legislature in Montgomery and were successful in maintaining these benefits. We each have benefited from those efforts. I am aware that in the past, there has been a divide between AERA, the K-12 retiree group, and AURA, the university retiree group. At this point in history, the continuation of this divide is not helpful. Now more than ever in recent history it takes large numbers of voices to be heard and to receive attention. By necessity, AURA must collaborate with AERA and other universities in the state to present a unified educational voice in pursuit of our interests. AERA has now provided a seat on their board of directors for a representative from the university community. We must accept this opportunity to extend our voice. That seat is in the process of being filled by the higher education community. If you are not now a member, I urge you to join AERA as well as maintaining your AURA membership.

Speaking of numbers, AURA has not done well in attracting new retirees. Currently only about 7% of retirees have been joining AURA. Your Board of Directors is making an effort

continued on page 2

AURA: CONTINUING PROGRESS continued...

to increase this percentage significantly by increasing the benefits of membership. Plans are in process to meet with both President Gogue and Chancellor Veres to discuss how we can obtain better access to persons retiring and how AURA and the universities can better interact to the advantage of both. In order to be effective, we simply must attract more members and increase our voice.

On the social side, we plan to continue our spring business meeting / luncheon and our fall evening event, as well as providing information of other social venues of interest to retirees. Our goal is to disseminate information of interest to Auburn University and Auburn University Montgomery retirees through the newsletter and on the AURA website. Information including proposed Alabama Retirement System related legislation; ongoing developments and news of interest at both institutions; information about organizations within our local communities that support retirees and provide life enriching opportunities; and other useful information in areas of life that affect each of us.

Currently AURA has a Website accessed through the Auburn University Website. One of our primary goals this year is to establish an upgraded AURA Website. It will provide easier access to AURA information. I think this goal is imperative in order to have more timely communication with each of you and with new members. Three newsletters a year are simply not sufficient to keep us up to date. Currently we are restricted on the quantity and subject matter of items that can be placed on the university Website. Additionally, although Larry Mullins and previous editors have done a remarkable job in compiling and publishing each newsletter, it is very expensive to print and mail. Printing costs are approximately \$1200 per issue, plus approximately \$200 for postage. As we increase our membership, that cost will only grow.

Thousands of dollars can be saved and applied to the attainment of our goals

by publishing the newsletter on our website. (Of course, there will have to be accommodation for those without access to the Website.)

At this time your Board of Directors is fully staffed with excellent representatives from our membership. This newsletter contains a list of all board members and their email addresses for your use in making contact with us. PLEASE BE AWARE, THE BOARD ALONE CANNOT ACOMPLISH EVERYTHING THAT MUST BEDONE. CONTACT US AND VOLUNTEER TO SERVE ON A COMMITTEE OR GROUP THAT IS WORKING TOWARD IMPROVING AURA.

Meanwhile we will use the current university website to keep you informed on progress regarding the new Website and other important information. Find it by going to auburn.edu and then typing "retiree" (no quote marks) into the search box at the top right of the page. ♦

AURA BOARD MEMBERS September 9, 2014

- Gene Akers
- Mary Burkhart
- Carol Daron
- Sonny Dawsey
- D'Linell Finley
- Sandy Johnson
- Gail McCullers
- Larry Mullins
- Susan Nunnelly
- Larry Ridgeway
- Don Seay
- Tom Vocino
- Larry Wit

If you would like to contact any of the AURA Board members, please send an e-mail referencing that person to auretirees@gmail.com, or write to them at the following address:

AURA

P.O. Box 1436

Auburn, AL 36831-1436



THOUGHTS ON THE WILFORD S. BAILEY AWARD: KEYNOTE ACCEPTANCE ADDRESS

*Dr. Gerald Johnson,
Bailey Award Recipient for 2014*

Today is the eleventh occasion on which AURA meets to honor Dr. Wilford S. Bailey.

The word “honor” has a wonderful feel and tenor and tone to it. Webster’s definition of honor and its derivatives take up a full column and there are volumes of quotes on honor. Yet, it is one of those words we each own and is personal. We don’t need Webster to define it for us. We, instinctively, know it, feel it, and appreciate it when we see it and are around it and are made to feel better by its presence.

A Socrates quote states that, “The shortest way to live with honor in the world is to be in reality what we would appear to be.”

Thus it was with Wilford Bailey. Today, we are here to honor the memory and contributions of Dr. Bailey. I had the great privilege and honor of working with Dr. Bailey in a number of capacities before, during and after he was President of Auburn University. Dr. Bailey was truly a man for all seasons—an internationally recognized scientist, an author, a power and presence in athletics in the NCAA, a strong churchman, a good man and the genesis of the Auburn University Retirees Association (AURA).

In 1994, the University decided to change the retirement system by moving Auburn University retirees to the Retirement Systems of Alabama (RSA). In that move, Auburn retirees were going to lose some retirement benefits and options. Dr. Bailey led the effort to address that inequity and the result was the formation of AURA. I have been retired for seventeen years and just a couple of weeks ago I received one of the periodic small checks I get from AU that is a result of that

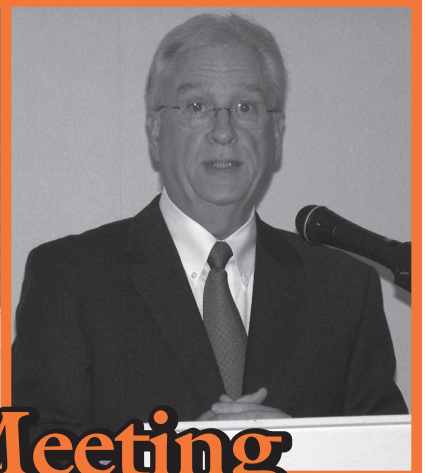
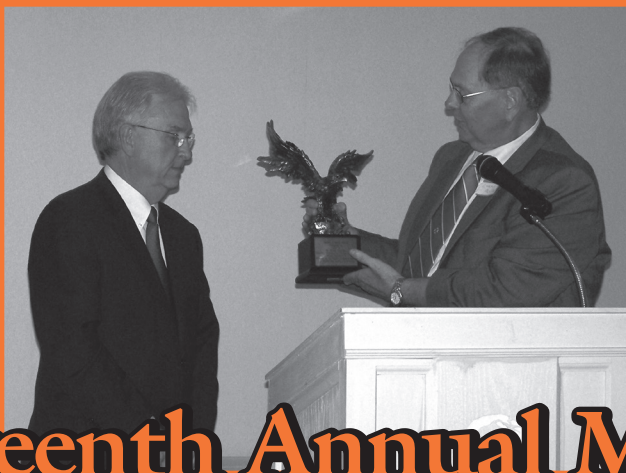
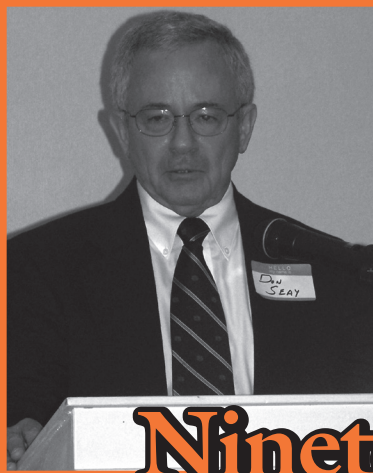
settlement. Every time I get that check I think of Dr. Bailey.

AURA was created to advocate for and promote the best interests of Auburn University retirees. No other organization exists to do that. In coordination with the Alabama Education Retirees Association (AERA) and the Alabama Education Association (AEA), AURA has an important role to play in advocating for the interests of AURA retirees and all education retirees.

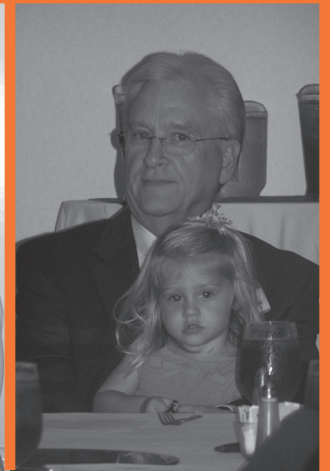
At the last Annual Meeting of AERA, some 700 delegates from across the state, mostly K-12 retirees, adopted a constitutional change that provides for a seat for an elected higher education retiree on the AERA Board of Directors. This was not an easy decision for K-12 retirees to make. But, in the end, the historical tensions that may have existed between higher education and K-12 were set aside in a show of unity with the common goal of supporting and advocating for all education retirees. Thus, the work of AURA continues and is enhanced.

AURA is important. I am pleased and honored to play a role in AURA and to be an advocate for Auburn University retirees and all education retirees. In my current role as Director of the Capital Survey Research Center, one of the things I do is to conduct special and annual surveys of education retirees. You may be interested in some of the findings from the most recent survey.

• Retirees (95%) recognize AEA and AERA, are satisfied (95%) *continued on page 6*



Nineteenth Annual Meeting



CONSIDERATIONS OF ACADEMIC STRUCTURE CHANGES AT AUBURN UNIVERSITY AT MONTGOMERY

by Joe M. King, Provost

The Strategic Plan (2013-2018) for Auburn University at Montgomery states that the university will “evaluate and adjust the university academic structure to optimize efficiency.” To this end, the Provost appointed a nine member Academic Reorganization Advisory Committee consisting of two faculty representatives from the School of Liberal Arts, two representatives from the School of Sciences, and one representative from the School of Business, School of Education, School of Nursing, the Library and Faculty Senate. The Committee was charged with reviewing the current organization of academic units at AUM and making recommendations for a more effective organization of these units, the elevation of Schools to Colleges, a structure that would promote future growth, a structure that makes sense from an organizational perspective, and a structure that aligns the university with its Strategic Plan.

The Committee set about gathering information from internal and external sources. Internally an email account was established to receive comments and suggestions from faculty. Committee members also met with various faculty, hosted two forums open to all faculty and staff and held meetings with department heads and deans. Data on enrollment and credit-hour production by departments and schools was also collected and analyzed. External information included review of the academic organization at our peer and aspirant universities.

After extensive deliberation, the Committee recommended a reorganization plan to the Provost. The Provost made some modifications to the plan and, to date, has attended faculty meetings in the Schools of Sciences, Liberal Arts and Nursing to receive faculty feedback on this plan. The plan will be discussed at upcoming meetings of the Faculty Senate and Faculty Council. All comments and suggestions will be considered in formulating a final draft of the plan to be submitted for approval to the Auburn University Board of Trustees. The University will begin implementation of the plan in the academic semester following Board approval. This is a work in progress and any in-depth discussion of a particular plan prior to Board approval would be premature. ♦

Thank You, Monarch Estates!

Monarch Estates, known for “**Gracious Retirement Living**,” located at 1550 E. University Drive in Auburn, has generously allowed the AURA Board of Directors to use its Eagles Nest Meeting Room for their monthly meetings for several years.

We would like to acknowledge this donation from Monarch and encourage anyone considering moving from their home to visit Monarch for a tour.

with the overall job they are doing and believe (92%) they get their money's worth in AEA/AERA membership.

- The attributes and characteristic of retirees are changing. In 2005, 54% of education retirees had access to e-mail and the internet. By 2012 that had increased to 69% and continues to climb.

- The three most important things that education retirees believe that AEA and AERA does for them are keeping health care cost low (80%), protecting the retirement program (73%) and advocating for COLAs (51%).

- Retirees (62%) prefer no COLA increase in order to prevent an increase in health care costs. This is precisely where retirees are in the state today. In the just ended session of the Legislature retirees did not get a COLA increase. Rather, the Legislature adopted a budget that included some \$77 million to help PEEHIP fund a \$220 million deficit. PEEHIP will use reserves to complete the funding for FY 2015. There will be no increase in premiums or out-of-pocket expenses for FY 2015. However, for FY 2016 the projected deficit is \$345 million and for FY 2017 \$417 million. Without additional revenues both premiums and service costs will increase or services will be reduced. AURA's work is not finished.

- When given options to avoid a reduction in health care services, retirees do not have a consensus position. Forty-four percent supports an increase in co-pays, 37% an increase in deductibles, 35% an increase in premiums and 25% supports a spousal surcharge.

- In the political arena, 36% of education retirees say they vote straight Democratic Party, 11% straight Republican Party and 45% split their vote.

- However, when asked which political party they believe does the best job for education retirees, 61% says the Democratic Party and 17% the Republican Party.

- Seventy-eight percent believes AEA and AERA should be active in the Legislature and helping elect candidates who support public education and public school personnel and retirees. Eighty percent believes public schools and employees and retirees would be worse off if AEA and AERA were not strong voices for public education.

- Education retirees have mixed feelings about the future soundness of both the state's education retirement and health care programs. Forty-sev-

en percent has confidence in the future of the retirement programs while 50% has concerns. Thirty-nine percent is confident of the future of the health care programs while 57% is concerned.

These data provide a testimonial of retiree concerns and priorities and are helpful to AURA, AERA and AEA in telling the story of the interests of education retirees to those who make the policy decisions that impact the welfare of education retirees. AURA is important.

For the role Dr. Bailey played in giving life to AURA, and for his many accomplishments and contributions, each of the following recipients of the Bailey Award thereby gave honor and recognition to Dr. Bailey.

- **2004 Dr. David Bronner, CEO RSA**
- **2005 Dr. Paul Hubbert, Executive Secretary and Treasurer of AEA**
- **2006 Senator Hank Sanders, former Chair of the Senate Education Finance Committee**
- **2007 Dr. Harry Philpot, former AU President and retiree friend**
- **2008 Speaker Seth Hammett, former Speaker of the Alabama House of Representatives and strong Auburn friend**
- **2009 Governor Albert Brewer, former governor and progressive Alabama leader**
- **2010 Dr. Wayne Teague, former City of Auburn and State of Alabama Superintendent of Education and recruiter for higher education retiree associations**
- **2011 Auburn University Athletic Department, AURA friend and sponsor of the Annual AURA BBQ**
- **2012 Dr. Stan Wilson, former AU faculty and administrator who provided years of strong leadership for AURA**
- **2013 OLLIE, the Auburn University lifelong learning program for retirees and educational partner**

Through these recognitions, Dr. Wilford Bailey is thanked and honored. To be able to contribute to the honoring of Dr. Bailey is a gift. I thank you for that gift and accept this recognition as my contribution to honoring Dr. Bailey. ♦



THOUGHTS *from the* EDITOR

— LARRY C. MULLINS —

I hope this finds you all well and content. This issue contains three articles, photographs from the AURA Annual Meeting last spring, AURA Membership information, and the reservation information for the fall Banquet. The article from Don Seay, AURA President 2014-15, points out how we are striving to continue the progress concerning the role of AURA year by year. In order to do this we need your help, especially as it pertains to advocacy for our benefits.

This year is no exception as we look at a possible attack on PEEHIP benefits. Gerald Johnson's article is the written form of his acceptance of the 2014 Bailey Award. His points, as usual, are meaningful and fit with Don Seay's emphases. The last article by Joe M. King, Provost at AUM, concerns the process of the possible, albeit likely, changes in the academic organization at that institution. I look forward to seeing you at The Banquet on October 30 at the Auburn Alumni Center. ♦

REMINDER!

*Auburn University Retirees:
If you have not joined, JOIN TODAY!*

You may have already paid your 2014 dues to join AURA. If so, you will find "(p)" after your name on the address label on this newsletter. If not, you will find "(n)." If you are renewing your membership for 2015, please write "2015 dues" on your check.

AU-AUM Retiree AURA Enrollment Form

Name _____ AU _____ AUM _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

_____ Single Retiree \$25.00 _____ Surviving Spouse \$10.00

_____ Retiree and Spouse \$25.00 _____ Sponsor \$25.00

_____ Retiree & Retiree Spouse.. \$25.00

\$ _____ Gift Contribution

If you have any questions, please contact Sonny Dawsey at auretirees@gmail.com; Gail McCullers at gailandrichard@charter.net; or Don Seay at seay551@bellsouth.net.

*Please make check payable to Auburn University Retiree Association or AURA
and mail to the address below:*



AURA
P.O. Box 1436
Auburn, AL 36831-1436

AURA FALL BANQUET

Co-Sponsored by: Auburn Athletic Department and Auburn University Alumni Association

WHEN: Thursday, October 30, 2014

WHERE: Auburn Alumni Center, 317 South College Street
*Park in gravel lot in back and come in back door. To park in the paved lot,
a car must have an AU parking sticker and the lot is monitored around the clock.*

SPEAKER: Chuck Person, Auburn Assistant Basketball Coach

TIME: 5:00 Registration
5:30 Catfish Dinner

COST: Free to AURA Members and Spouses.
Guests are welcome at a cost of \$10.00 each.

**DEADLINE for REGISTRATION
OCTOBER 20, 2014**

RESERVATION FORM

(If you have not paid your 2014-15 dues, please send in your reservation form and pay your dues at the FALL BANQUET on October 30. Make checks for your guests payable to AURA.)

Member & Spouse _____

Guests _____

Mail your reservation to:

AURA

P.O. Box 1436

Auburn, AL 36831-1436

Or e-mail:

Larry Ridgeway (334-821-0600 or
ridg1292@bellsouth.net)

Gail McCullers (334-887-5898 or
gailandrichard@charter.net)

Make checks for Guests payable to AURA.

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