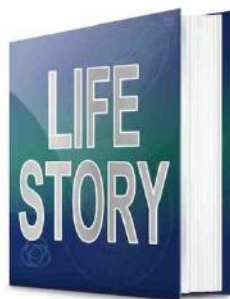# "Meet A Member" – Stories from AAUW – Saint Cloud Area Branch

We like to feature one of our accomplished members each month by asking them to tell us their stories.

Our June, 2020 Member of the Month is: Cleone Ashley

Activitist/Volunteer

I have been asked to tell you about myself. I was born in Minnesota to a large Scandinavian family. My mom wanted a French name for me because she wanted to go to Paris. I was her third child, so she gave up the dream. I disliked my name, Cleone Kay, until high school in Albert Lea.   My dad was not impressed – he wanted a boy. My dad gave up farming and worked as a pour-off at a foundry. My mom took care of eight children and the house, and worked many part-time jobs to earn money for us. We were probably not very well-off but never really felt poor.

I was a child in the 50s and came of age in the 60s. We protested in junior high and won the right to wear jeans to school. We protested in college for the ERA, the 26th Amendment (it gave 18- year-olds the right to vote), and against the Viet Nam War.

In high school I babysat for the children of a pastor, who thought I should go to North Central Bible College in downtown Minneapolis.   I worked my way through school at Sears and Dayton's, and as a nanny and night janitor at the new IDS Tower.

I met my husband at a party my senior year, and we married after my graduation. We worked for Volunteers for America where we were house-parents at a boys' ranch on Mille Lacs Lake. We then came to St. Cloud to work for a jobs program. We raised three boys here. I had a family daycare, volunteered with the PTA, and catered on weekends.

After a lot of volunteering in the District 742 Schools, I worked in Sauk Rapids and St. Cloud schools. I have taught reading and writing, and now teach two classes of citizenship to many immigrants and refugees.

I have three grandchildren, a pink hat (from the demonstration following Donald Trump's inauguration), and I wear jeans nearly every day.