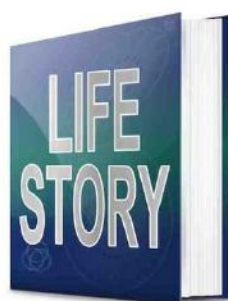




## “Meet A Member” – Stories from AAUW – Saint Cloud Area Branch

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

**Our March, 2021 Member of the Month is: Mary Anne Kieser**



### *A Nurse for the Nuns*

Let's start at the beginning: I was born October 11<sup>th</sup>, 1946, on a farm near the small Minnesota town of Bird Island. My two older brothers were born in a hospital. Why not me? Mom gave three reasons why a home birth was agreed upon: It was harvest time (a busy time on every farm); the doctor and nurse were willing to make a house call; and, thirdly, she said, “I had two little boys running around!”

I grew up surrounded by grandparents, aunts and uncles, and oodles of cousins. We biked or walked everywhere freely – to the fields where Dad worked, down the road to cousins, to the creek about a mile away to ice skate in the winter. We biked into Bird Island about 4 miles away in the summer and we joined neighbors for playing in the woods any time of year. There were always plenty of kids for a softball game or a snowball fight! 4-H Club projects and events added to these activities, as well.

To my child's eye, our farm home was a big house. Actually, it was modest, very similar to other homes in the area. How did we manage with seven kids and two adults in a house with just one bathroom? We didn't know any different since this was typical for other families, too. Everyone took turns and no one lingered in the bathroom. This humble beginning has made me

comfortable throughout my life with simple living. I've never felt deprived or "poor". As long as I have things to do and people to see, I'm happy!

I attended St. Mary's School in Bird Island. The Public School was across the street from our Catholic school. We exchanged classes in high school - we went over there for Home Econ. and Mechanical Shop classes and they came over to St. Mary's for Latin and Typing classes. Was that Legal? Sanctioned? I don't know but it worked for all of us.

After high school, I went to the St Cloud School of Nursing. Though taught by the same nuns who taught college classes at the College of St Benedict, the Nursing School awarded a Registered Nurse Diploma. I always hoped to take the electives not offered in the diploma program and get a college degree. So, many years later, I went back to school through a program offered by St. Francis College of Joliet, IL, and got my Bachelor of Science degree.

I started my nursing career working for a couple years at Northwestern Hospital in Minneapolis (now Abbott). Next, I worked as a Stearns County Public Health Nurse and at Melrose Hospital while my husband, Don, was teaching at Melrose. Then, when Apollo High School opened, Don accepted a math position and we moved to St. Cloud. I worked at St. Cloud Hospital for thirteen years, then as Health Services Supervisor at an Intermediate Care Facility for the mentally and physically handicapped for thirteen years. I finished my nursing career as Director of Health Services for St. Benedict's Monastery ("nurse for the nuns") in St Joseph for thirteen years.

I have accepted leadership positions in several local organizations, associations and my church. Though some have been quite challenging and time-consuming, I have always found them to be opportunities for learning and meeting new people - and for finding my strengths *and* my not-so-strong areas that need some work!

We have three children, all married and living in the Twin Cities. We have nine grandchildren, ages 9-21. We feel fortunate and grateful to have them all so nearby!

In retirement, I "chauffeur" nuns to medical appointments one day a week. I also volunteer at my church, the library, the Paramount and the Food Shelf. I enjoy golfing, playing bridge and MahJongg, sewing, biking, Yoga, a daily walk – and lots of reading (two Book Clubs). We travel every year, including an international trip about every other year.

The first AAUW meeting I attended, I knew I liked this organization. Not only were they a group of like-minded women who valued education and equal rights for women and girls, but I also saw it as a fun social group. I stayed for that fellowship, but mostly, I stayed because I see the powerful voice we can have as a group to promote a promising future for women and girls. And....I continue to enjoy the social aspect, too, of course!