LEADERSHIP NOTES: Secretary

When my two sons were growing up, they teased me about my always wanting to be “in the know.” Deep in my heart, I knew they were right. So when I was sitting in a coffee shop with Sally Shorr, being interviewed for my introductory article, and she brought up the open secretary position, it felt like I’d come full circle.

As a relatively new member of the Alliance, I soon realized that there was no better way to be fully informed about this wonderful organization.

My favorite aspect of this job is the collaboration with other members of the leadership team. The monthly meetings are thoroughly organized, starting and ending on time, and filled with kindness and warmth. Many members of the team have worked on different committees in the past. The room is filled with a wealth of experience and wisdom, and it’s a pleasure to behold.

Although I sometimes wish I had taken my mother’s advice and learned shorthand, the note taking isn’t difficult, and my questions are always graciously answered. Using the agenda headings helps with organizing the notes, and Lena Lee, a former secretary herself, has been my editor as I learn to discern what to include. I’m grateful for her patience as I continue to learn the job.

Here are the basics about the responsibilities of the secretary:
* Attend and take notes at the monthly leadership team meetings. (2 hours)
* Transcribe the notes to a Word document and send out a link to Leadership Team members.
* Attend and take notes at the monthly luncheons. (2½ hours)
* Transcribe luncheon notes and send out to LT members.
* Collect documents from the treasurer, Fellowship Newsletter, and other items for the archives.

And that’s it! So if you are organized, detail oriented, and like being “in the know” you might consider becoming a future Alliance secretary. I’m very glad I accepted the job.

In Fellowship,
Elizabeth Newell, Secretary

MEMBER IN PROFILE: Linda Aso

Walk slowly to Linda’s front door and take a moment to admire the Japanese garden beside the front walk; she and Jerry married here in 2000. Inside the front room a grand piano occupies a prominent place. An expansive picture window frames familiar peaks and a river curving beside the city.

These quintessential northwest features are a far cry from Linda’s birthplace in Kentucky where she grew up and the family attended a Southern Baptist church. When jobs were scarce in the 1940’s, the family departed the south for the northwest. Portland became Linda’s home when she chose to enroll at Portland State as a music/voice major.

Assigned in a literature class to read Transcendentalist William Ellery Channing’s Baltimore Sermon, she was inspired by early Unitarian thinking.

At PSU she met Ken Noah and they married in a Baptist church before she graduated with both music degree and teaching certificate. One day in 1972 the couple walked into
Linda Aso, continued

Eliot Chapel with their 18-month-old son and met the organist who also led the choir. They joined First Unitarian, as well as the audition choir. Soon, Ken served on the committee that hired Mark Slegers; Linda has enriched each of our audition choirs since that time with her rich, alto voice.

Linda’s roots reach deeply in this church. Her three children took part in our Learning Community, one daughter married here, and Linda has memorialized both husbands in our chapel. She directed our Music Tree (the 4- to 8-year olds) even touring with the young ones to other churches. She is dedicated to understanding both historical and current racial issues in this country.

Widowed a year ago, Linda is a new Alliance member and beginning to ask where she might volunteer. She’s enthusiastic about our programs, joined the cookie brigade for our Greens Sale and sings the praises of “a group of formidable members here!” Singing praises…? Hmmm. Just say the word, Linda!

MEMBER IN PROFILE: Julie Wheeler

“We knew it was time for a simpler life; dragging the trash barrel up the long driveway, climbing the stairway to the front door… that had to change.” Julie and Andrew Wheeler just moved in October to brand-new quarters at Willamette View Manor retirement community. They brought just essential, contemporary furnishings to 880 pristine square feet, a few tribal carpets, and Andrew’s fine etchings and tempting-to-touch sculptures for a modernist vibe. They even gleaned enough space for a miniature office with desk and two bookshelves.

The two small shelves above the desk hold their 55 remaining books, scholarly volumes authored by Julie’s father, a pacifist, minister, and professor of church history at Andover/Newton American Baptist Seminary, and beloved volumes written by the Bronte sisters. Julie majored in English Literature at Colby College; her love of great books energized her 30-year career as reading teacher at Riverdale School and elsewhere. Julie claims the most daring thing she ever did was “to jump into my first classroom with just weeks of teacher training.”

She’s truly modest! Always a superb and compassionate listener, Julie is also a committed activist who originated more than 25 years ago an ambitious plan to collect as many firearms as possible. Through donations from willing Oregon residents and the help of “wonderful people,” Julie launched an initiative known as Ceasefire Oregon. After working with police over several years at both Portland and suburban police departments, Ceasefire succeeded in receiving 8500 firearms from the owners. Every donor was paid $50.00 for each firearm knowing each one would be melted down. The ambitious undertaking has now morphed into Ceasefire Oregon Education.

Changing their residence hardly altered the Wheelers’ favorite occasions: visits from Anne, Molly or John, their children and grands who live nearby; regular attendance at First Unitarian since 1971; a winter journey to sunny San Miguel de Allende in Mexico. Find Julie at Alliance and she will be glad to chat with you about her new home. “So many interesting new friends, so many good stories …Yes, we are very contented here!”

Andrew could not be reached for comment; he often retreats to the first-floor artist’s studio to work on his latest sculpture.