



Final Entry



Meet AGA's Next National President— Evelyn A. Brown, CGFM-Retired

When Evelyn A. Brown, CGFM-Retired, accepts the gavel from outgoing AGA National President Richard Bunce, CGFM, CPA, she will continue to expand her AGA horizon from chapter and regional leadership to the national arena. As a Past National Treasurer and Regional Coordinator for Chapter Development and Assistance, in addition to numerous other chapter positions, Brown has actively participated in the growth and evolution of AGA to the stellar organization it is today. She is well-positioned to become AGA's 63rd National President.

Brown recently retired from federal service after a 40-year career. At her retirement she was the Deputy Chief Financial Officer of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management where she advised the agency's leadership and oversaw the policy and operational

aspects of financial management, including budgeting, accounting, information systems and financial reporting. Since retiring she has served as a financial management consultant in the private sector and has remained active in AGA, completing her term as a Regional Coordinator for Chapter Development and Assistance. She remains committed to serving as a mentor for the Capital Region and beyond. We asked her to tell us what her AGA membership and volunteer leadership has meant to her career, as well as her plans for her year as National President.

Please tell AGA members how your membership has affected your professional life?

When I joined AGA in 1974, it was very early in my career. I was an entry-level accountant at the U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC), Maritime Administration, with very little knowledge of AGA and the benefits that could be derived from it. In the beginning it was just a membership in a professional organization. As time passed, I began attending monthly meetings, met other early-career individuals and senior-level folks as well. I attended professional development conferences and reported on the results to my agencies. It was simply amazing to be exposed to the various sessions. I remember that one senior leader at the DOC recognized me and introduced me to some of his colleagues. That one introduction led to many more. Each succeeding year I met more colleagues and attended financial management training courses. I met and discussed issues and solutions with these colleagues and those at other agencies, exchanging and sharing information. Participation in information exchanges, including meet-

ings, conferences, seminars, workshops and on-the-job training enhanced my competencies and skills. Those activities enabled me to work in technical, operational and policy environments that led to team leadership, management and executive positions. Among the most beneficial aspects of my AGA membership have been the opportunities afforded me to meet and work with some of the finest financial management personnel both inside and outside of government. Working with AGA colleagues and friends in the public and private sectors, including academia, has added immeasurably to my professional growth and development and has helped me acquire the necessary skills to effectively carry on the tradition of enhancing government accountability at all levels of government.

What do you see as AGA's greatest challenge and where do you think AGA can and should have the greatest impact?

Our greatest challenge is to convince governments at all levels—federal, state, local, territorial and tribal—that

we are the thought leaders who should be consulted in filling top-level financial management leadership positions. As we move closer to overcoming that challenge, those who work with government, would likely want to join AGA to help us better serve the public. Our most saleable product, our Certified Government Financial Management (CGFM) certification, would be elevated and sought after by more professionals. That, in turn, has the potential to increase our membership, attendance at conferences and other training events, as well as enhance the desirability of CGFM certification and increase services to our members.

Where do you plan to put the most emphasis in the coming year?

AGA membership and the CGFM certification are at the top of the priorities list. My nomination statement included the emphasis today on accountability and transparency as stated in the updated Mission, Vision and Strategic Plan, consistent with the foundation set by the founders of this great Association. Many entities

have long recognized AGA as a premier professional organization with respect to developing government financial managers. They are increasingly seeking our help in providing education and training for their employees. AGA must continue to provide the best education offerings, and foster best practices and improved performance. Successful implementation of this aspect of our long-range strategic plan remains one of our highest priorities.

AGA must also place even greater emphasis on fostering our CGFM program. It is an excellent tool for professional development and also great for attracting and retaining members. Membership is the lifeblood of the organization. We must engage our constituencies with a focus on CGFM and other membership enhancements and clearly articulate the benefits. And we must continue working to identify and implement a more cost-effective delivery mechanism for the program to make it more accessible and affordable to our members. The comments received from chapter visits and the Sectional Leadership Meetings reaffirm that access and affordability are among the greatest challenges facing us today. Therefore, it must be a top priority as we move forward. Chapters have expressed great interest in expanding the CGFM and one of our challenges will be to more fully engage our younger and more technologically advanced members to assist in exploring and developing alternative technologies for content delivery.

What are you most looking forward to as National President?

One of the most important things I see on the horizon is meeting with chapter- and at-large-members and addressing their expressed needs. I have had the opportunity to travel to a number of chapters and see first hand the hard work and dedication that has resulted in expanded education and training in governmental financial management. The sharing of

best practices is alive and well within the chapters and I am looking forward to keeping the momentum going.

In addition, I am looking forward to participating in meetings with other professional organizations to get updates on their best practices and networking with other leaders to exert influence for advancing accountability in governmental financial management.

Tell us about your professional career and your AGA career?

My professional career began at the Maritime Administration at the DOC. I learned early in my career to put my feet to the fire as an operating accountant, and there was never a dull moment. From there I moved to the Department of Transportation where I worked with financial management systems and reporting and subsequently returned to DOC with the International Trade Administration, promoting U.S. trade both domestically and overseas through policy issuances. As I worked with the inspector general and CFO communities in accounting, auditing, budgeting, contracting and information technology, I was anxious to parlay those skills to help meet the goals and objectives of the boards, committees and task forces that I worked with in AGA. Those experiences propelled me to take on the challenges of the AGA Finance and Budget Committee and ultimately to the coveted position of AGA's National Treasurer, where I learned a lot about the workings of the Association. Those collective experiences under my belt positioned me to become National President.

Tell us about your personal background and include any information you wish to share about your family.

I have lived the greater part of my life in my hometown of our beautiful capital city, Washington, D.C. I had the fortunate experience of learning first hand what is meant by hard work, as well as

Southern hospitality, during the years that I spent on a farm in North Carolina. I picked up experiences there that let me feel that I could definitely aspire to the challenges of leadership. After completing my early years of public education in North Carolina I returned home to D.C. to complete my higher education at Howard University and the Federal Executives Institute. As I began my career in government, I developed a great appreciation for AGA because it provided educational opportunities not available in academia or the private sector in my school days. AGA continues to do provide quality education for public service and related careers.

Working with AGA over the years inspired me to participate in various forms of community service. For 14 years I worked with the Internal Revenue Service Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program (VITA) to assist low-income and elderly taxpayers with their tax returns. I volunteered in the Small Business counseling program along with other AGA members and have recently completed my fourth annual trek to New Orleans to work with members from around the nation on Habitat for Humanity projects, helping to build homes for persons displaced by Hurricane Katrina. My AGA experience has enabled me to help others in providing assistance on a global basis. My role as AGA National Treasurer equipped and inspired me to be treasurer for five years for The International Alliance for Women—a global organization devoted to the economic empowerment and support of women and their families in developing countries.

On a personal and professional level, I have been truly blessed to have exceptional mentors in the workplace and in AGA. My family and friends have been very supportive throughout my career and service in various professional organizations and they have been most encouraging about this exciting new challenge. ■