

Soroptimist Memories

By RoseMary Reid

Where do I begin? I have had so many wonderful memories during my time as Club President, Region Governor, Federation Director, Federation President, and SI Director and of course as SI Local Convention Chair for the 2011 International Convention in Montreal.

Conventions, whether they are Federation or International, are all unique. The friendships which are generated and renewed at each convention, last a lifetime and are life changing and enriching. You meet Soroptimists from all over the world, attend plenary sessions with world class speakers, take tours and experience the culture of the country in which the convention is held. You return home exhausted but enriched and determined to influence others to attend convention for the first time so they can learn first hand what a great experience it is.

Here are just a few examples of some wonderful memories of meetings and conventions I attended during my 30+ years of being a Soroptimist:

My **first SIA convention** was in Anaheim when Joan Cromer was SIA President. Joan had attended the chartering of the SI Stoney Creek Niagara Club and she made a point of connecting with the members from Eastern Canada at the Convention. Joan is a very special lady and mentor. She served as SI President from 2003-2005.

At the **2000 SIA convention** in Hawaii, the friendship dinner was to be a luau outside on the lawn of the convention hotel. I was really looking forward to it, as my in-laws had attended one when they were in Hawaii in 1974 and could not stop talking about it. Well, the convention luau had to be moved indoors due to rain. This was not the experience I had been hoping for but it was still very enjoyable.

On the friendship evening, the members of the Japanese friendship link sought us out – easy to find us as we were proudly wearing our “Canadian” scarves, hats and all waving small Canadian flags. They had gifts for us, so in exchange we gave them our Canadian items. They were so thrilled!

In Hawaii, I shared a very small hotel room with 3 other Soroptimists from Eastern Canada. With 4 people sharing one bathroom we had to work out a schedule - 2 people showered before bed and the other 2 showered in the morning. Most mornings we had breakfast of cottage cheese or yogurt with fresh papaya and a

muffin in our room. On occasion we went to a small diner down the street for breakfast. It was very cozy and a lot of fun.

At the **SI Convention in Glasgow** I shared a room at a BNB with 2 Soroptimists from Eastern Canada. I had the privilege of being part of a small group of Soroptimists from around the world to meet in a private setting with Princess Anne. What an honour to be included in this group of women. Another highlight was the closing ceremonies when all attendees (dressed in white) gathered in a circle outside the convention centre and SI President Lynn Dunning released a dove for world peace. I took one of the bus tours to Edinburgh and saw the Queen's official Scotland residence and attended a museum which had a plaque about Soroptimist and the work we do.



I almost made the cover of the **September 2003 Soroptimist International magazine**. Here is a group photo of the majority of the attendees at the **2003 SI Convention in Sydney, Australia**. The green post-it note is where I was standing. You will see I missed being in the photo by about 2'.

During my term as **ECR Governor**, I invited SI President Joan Cromer to be our official visitor and install the incoming region board. The conference was at the Novotel by the Toronto Airport. One of my most embarrassing times was at the reception I held in my suite after the Friday night activities. There were probably 25 or more women in my suite including President Joan. A knock came to the door around 10:30 pm and it was security asking us to keep the noise down as flight attendants were trying to sleep. Something I will never forget.

In 2005 I attended the **Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)** in New York and needed a room mate to split the cost of the hotel room. A young Japanese Soroptimist answered my call. I was concerned that she would only be able to speak Japanese and we would have no way of communicating...but she had excellent English. There are many protocols and security checks in place in order to attend CSW. Pre-registration and a letter confirming your attendance is sent to you in advance. My dear Japanese friend forgot to bring her confirmation letter with her. She was



on the SI delegation list but they wanted to see the confirmation letter. After much dialogue with registration and the fact I had all the necessary documents, a pass was issued. (likely would not be the case now). To this day, we are great friends and we always find time to meet up at convention.

Serving on club, region, federation and international boards is work and a time commitment. But it is worth it. It is an opportunity to enhance your own skills and motivate and inspire others to take the leap into a leadership position.

I look forward to telling you more about my Soroptimist experience at your November meeting.