

My Experiences at the Taipei Convention in 2008

By Eileen Stanbury

The first day of the Convention in Taipei, Joyce and I had taken a bus tour in the morning and I had left my hat on the bus. I had to wait for the bus to come back from the afternoon tour, which made me late for the Friendship banquet. When I got to the banquet, it was very overwhelming with hundreds of people and no one I knew. A table of Soroptimists from Taiwan invited me to join them and made me feel welcome. A traditional Taiwanese dinner with 12 courses was served on a large round lazy Susan in the middle of a large round table. There was seating for 12 Soroptimists. When I joined the ladies, I made 11. Another lady was invited to join and she sat beside me. Her name was Tamiko Abe and she was a Professor of the Japanese Tea Ceremony. She spoke some broken English and we became fast friends. The meal was served with a very potent rice wine, served out of tiny glasses. Every time I took a drink the ladies at the table said "Thank you". I think that was the only English word they knew! Later on during the meal, some Soroptimists from Eastern Canada Region found me and told me that they had saved a seat for me. I didn't want to insult my new friends by leaving mid meal, so I gracefully declined. There were some very interesting dishes served and one thing that I remember is that I don't like Sea Cucumber!

During the convention, I would sometimes see Tamiko coming or going and we would always greet each other with a smile. On the last night of the Convention there was a large banquet and we were told that it would be held in three different rooms. Of the 1600 attendees of the Convention, only 300 were from the US and 20 from Canada. I looked around the room, trying to find Tamiko and it was very difficult to find her. I had just about given up, when she found me!



Taipei Friendship Dinner with Tamiko Abe and 9 Soroptimists from Taiwan



Tamiko Abe (Professor of the Japanese Tea Ceremony) with Eileen Stanbury