

MEMORIES – VENTURE CLUB OF PETERBOROUGH

Venture clubs were started in the United States by Soroptimist as a way to attract younger business women. A specific job classification was not required to become a member like it was with the Soroptimist club.

The Venture club of Peterborough was first formed sometime between the late 1950's and 1961 sponsored by the Soroptimist Club of Peterborough. This club disbanded in 1967 due to low attendance, however, with a tremendous amount of hard work, enthusiasm and determination on the part of the Peterborough Soroptimists and two avid former Venturists, the new club was formed on April 2, 1969. When the first club folded, Soroptimist Phyllis Braund kept the original charter rather than returning it to headquarters, so the newly formed club carried on with the same charter. This new club was active until it disbanded in 1989. Judy White, one of our current Soroptimists, was one of the founding members of this new club, joining in 1969.

The age requirement to belong to Venture was 18 to 35. After that, if a member had at least five years of membership with Venture, they were eligible to join Soroptimist. In the Venture clubs, as we all reached the age of 35, SIA changed the rules and increased the limit to stay in Venture to age 40.

The mandate of the club was the same as Soroptimist – fundraising and service. I joined the Venture club in February 1973 and over the years held the office of President, Vice-President, and Secretary. Our business meetings were held on the second Tuesday of every month and were held at the home of each Venture member. We also had a social evening on the fourth Tuesday of each month. Two Soroptimist members also attended our business meetings as Soroptimist Advisors, each serving for one or two years. Current Soroptimists who served as Venture Advisors are Marylyn White and Joyce Fee. Some of the Soroptimist Advisors who have passed away were Maureen Pammett, Eleanor Carroll, Eleanor McQuarrie, Anne O'Neill, Opal Sharpe and Enith Figueroa.

Other current Soroptimists who were members of the Venture club in Peterborough who joined after Judy and myself are RoseMary Reid, Dianne Hutchison, Shirley Yankovich and past member Vivien Falls.

Our fundraising initiatives were varied over the years. The Venture Club sold badges and programs for the Kawartha Cup International Snowmobile Races at Morrow Park from 1969-1971. We held a spring tea at the old YWCA; we painted a small apartment over a store on Water Street; we worked at the lunch counter at the Cattle Sales Barn when there was a cattle auction, cooking and selling hamburgers, chips, soft drinks and coffee; and we had various raffles.

Our main service project for many years was playing bingo with the residents of Marycrest Nursing Home. One member called the numbers and other members stood behind the residents to make sure they covered the correct numbers called. For the first few years, we purchased small gifts and wrapped them to give to each winner. Then we decided not to give gifts, we thought that the residents would prefer to have money, so we gave them 50 cents to \$1.00 as prizes which went over much better. We also brought home-baked goodies to serve to everyone after the bingo games were over which was a real hit.

One year we decided to have a float in the Peterborough Santa Claus parade. I'm not sure what the theme of the parade was that year, but we decided to have our float be the "Flintstones". One of our

members worked at Rehills at the time and she was able to get us a large flatbed truck that we could put our entry on. We all worked at building a house like the Flintstones had on the television show and we were able to borrow the costumes from the figure skating club at the Memorial Centre. One member, Joanne (Reynolds) Wadsworth, was dressed as Wilma Flintstone and I was dressed as Betty Rubble because, believe it or not, we were the only two members in the club who were small enough to fit into the little costumes. Two other members were dressed as Fred and Barney. The day of the parade, the temperature was bitterly cold. Joanne and I were dressed in long underwear head to toe and sweaters under our little costumes to keep warm. The parade left from PCVS and soon after we started down George Street, the door on our Flintstone house fell off, so because we were standing up and Fred and Barney were sitting somewhere else on the float, Joanne and I had to hold the door on with our hands all the way down George Street. Fortunately, we both had warm gloves on, so our hands were only mildly frozen.

One social activity we did a few times was to go to Kawartha Downs Racetrack where we had dinner and then stayed for the horse races after. We invited the Soroptimist club members to come with us and usually had quite a good turnout. Of course, most of us had to bet on the races. We didn't win big, but sometimes we won a few dollars, however, I think most just broke even.

There were other Venture clubs in Eastern Canada Region where there were Soroptimist clubs. There was a Venture club in Toronto, Barrie, Ottawa, London, Windsor, Thunder Bay and Truro, Nova Scotia. We attended Venture spring conferences every year in most of these cities. In 1972, the Peterborough Venture Club hosted spring conference at the Holiday Inn.

Over the years, Venture clubs in ECR had trouble attracting new members and as the memberships declined, the clubs in other cities gradually folded. The Peterborough Venture club, however, was still active with the members we had. When there was only our club left in ECR we were invited by Midwestern Region in the U.S. to attend their spring conferences, which we did and which they had jointly with their Soroptimist clubs. With only our club left in the Region, SIA folded the Venture Eastern Canada Region, however, we were able to join Midwestern Region to keep our club alive. Our members attended spring conferences in Dearborn Michigan, Columbus and Indianapolis.

I, RoseMary Reid and Shirley Yankovich were the only three members who attended the conference in Indianapolis and that was one we will never forget. We flew from Toronto, but we had to change planes in Chicago. The plane was late leaving Chicago which meant we didn't arrive in Indianapolis until late. A venture member was at the airport to pick us up, however, when we arrived at the hotel, because we were late, the hotel had given our room away and didn't have any other rooms available for the night. The hotel telephoned a prestigious "Men's Club" across the street, and they gave us a room for the night, so we were the only females in their hotel. When conference was over on Sunday, two members offered to drive us to the airport to return home. Since it was a little past mid-afternoon and we had time before our flight left, the members took us to a small restaurant to have something to eat before we left. RoseMary was the only one who ordered a hamburger and when she took a bite out of it, the centre of the meat was still pink, but she ate it anyway. The girls took us to the airport, and we boarded our plane for home, which thankfully, the flight was direct from Indianapolis to Toronto. It was a small plane and I sat on one side with Shirley and RoseMary sat directly across the aisle from me. The plane was in the air only about fifteen minutes when RoseMary went to the washroom. She seemed to take quite a while and when she came back to her seat, I asked her if she was alright, and she said to me "how long does it take to get food poisoning?" I told her it could be two hours or longer and asked her if she thought she had food poisoning. She said yes and spent almost the rest of the flight in the

washroom. When we landed, we had arranged to have the airport van take us to Peterborough. We told the driver what was wrong with RoseMary. The driver was very good – he tilted the passenger seat in the front back a bit so she could lay back and he gave her a paper bag in case she felt the need to use it. He drove as fast as he could and took RoseMary home first. As soon as he pulled in her driveway and opened her door, she bolted out of the van and into the house. RoseMary was so sick she missed the next week of work.

We hosted a spring conference in Peterborough at the Red Oak Inn where members of the Venture clubs in Midwestern Region attended. We always had a good time with the girls from Midwestern Region.

As time went on and other Venture members joined the Peterborough Soroptimist club, there were not enough members left to sustain our club and it was folded in 1989 and our charter was sent back to SIA. Some remaining members joined the Soroptimist club and others decided to pursue other interests.

I will always remember my years in Venture with fondness. I made new friends who I still have today and have many wonderful memories of all the activities we all shared over all those years.

Respectfully submitted,
Julie Coleman, Past-President and a Proud Soroptimist member