

## Memories of Soroptimist International (SI) Conventions

By Joyce Fee

*I love travelling and it is even better when I am travelling with good friends. Soroptimist International holds a convention every four years in July. The four Federations in S I follow a schedule which means that a Federation would be hosting every 16 years. With the formation of SI Africa in 2020 this scheduling will change.*

*My experiences at Convention have been most positive - great speakers, good food, and making new friends but my memories are of things that happened to me.*

**1967 Toronto, Royal York** - Our Peterborough president at that time, Eleanor Carroll was very involved in the organization. She often commented on what a wonderful time but one that required a lot of work. Our member, Phyllis Braund, who had S I friends in other countries hired a bus to bring her friends from Toronto to visit in Peterborough. S I P members billeted these guests.

**1983 Istanbul, Turkey** - Our member, Grace Smith attended. She gave an excellent report of her experiences which included a tour while in Turkey. I was envious as I listened to her.

**1991 Nottingham, England** - My first S I Convention. How excited we were as we went by bus to Castle Frank for our Friendship dinner and then discovered it was an airplane hangar. The convention committee worked hard in decorating the interior so that it glittered at our closing banquet.

- Our bus tour in the city with a speaker outlining the socio-economic setting from the past to the present
- The prize-winning Brass band concert
- Staying at the University dorm
- Spending an evening in Peterborough, England, where the Mayoress and the members of the S I Peterborough Club hosted dinner at City Hall
- Visiting Sherwood Forest
- after the convention Joan Moyer (a past president of S I P and now a member of Cambridge S I) and I travelled to Peterborough where we were hosted by members for a memorable two days, including afternoon tea in the rose garden of a member's thatched roofed 400-year-old home, eating scones, strawberry jam and clotted cream
- Joan and I followed this with a three-week bus tour through Europe

**1995 San Francisco, U S A** Dianne Hutchison and Rita Giardino attended. You can ask Dianne about their trip.

**1999 Helsinki, Finland** - Before the Convention Dianne Hutchison, Sheryl Hopkins, Rita Giardino and I spent three weeks travelling by bus and ferry from Copenhagen, through Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia to St. Petersburg.

- at registration each person received a pair of socks knitted by a Soroptimist ( or her mother)
- meeting Irene, from Lisburn, at a party
- meeting with our Japanese Friendship Link members who prepared a Japanese tea ceremony for the four of us
- Eastern and Western Canada members meeting for lunch at a restaurant that specialized in pizza
- being hosted for dinner and entertainment by a club in a town that was a bus ride from Helsinki
- touring Helsinki with a bus full of Convention members
- the concluding dinner was elegant with local foods - we were to have Lapland reindeer but this was after Chernobyl and the herds had been contaminated so we ate reindeer from Alberta

**2003 Sydney, Australia** - I spent three weeks on a bus tour, the Waltzing Matilda, travelling through New Zealand and Australia prior to the convention.

- RoseMary Reid and I shared a suite with two friends in the hotel which included the major Sydney casino
- sitting in with RoseMary, who was a Silent Observer, to the business meeting that takes place for a couple of days prior to the convention. One major discussion related to identifying our goal. Some thought we should identify as helping 'women and children'. The members from Africa spoke up that this would mean that any program or monies would go only to the boys. Thus, it became 'women and girls'
- registering and receiving the nicest bag which I still bring to meetings
- meeting our Friendship Link members from Blackburn, England who had brought us tea towels. Consoling their president who had just learned that her husband had died while she was flying to Sydney
- touring the city, including the Opera House, and Bondy Beach. where the Olympic beach volleyball was played
- roundtable discussions with members from around the world
- and all the gala events

### 2007 **Glasgow, Scotland**

- billeted at the University sharing an area with other members from Eastern Canada, travelling to the Convention Centre with women from other areas, chatting about their club activities and fund raisers
- the beginning Friendship dinner which included more to drinking and less to eat
- Tour on the River Clyde
- S I President Lynn releasing the doves on the lawn
- Princess Anne, one of our speakers - excellent speech and presentation - I was sitting one seat from the aisle when she walked by. RoseMary Reid was on the SI Board and Princess Anne shook her hand.
- going to Motherwell where we were hosted by the club there and learning about the woolen mills in the 1800's with children as young as 6 working - they could crawl under the machines if something fell - the owner of the mills started a school program for these children, education for poor children was rare at that time
- meeting our Friendship Link members from SI Beckenham, England and eating sticky toffee pudding with warm custard sauce
- joining a bus full of Soroptimists for a week's tour in Scotland, traveling by train through the Highlands, seeing lots of sheep, stopping at the Church in Balmoral where the Royal Family worship
- In Inverness the S I club had organized a reception with the Mayor at City Hall

### 2011 **Montreal, Canada** - A time to be proud. A number of our members took the morning train from Cobourg

- Our former past president, RoseMary Reid, was the chair of the Local Convention Committee and most of our group had roles at the convention - registration, etc.
- Eileen Stanbury escorted the guest speakers when they arrived and such an array of prominent Canadian women

The Right Hon. Adrienne Clarkson

Dr. Samantha Nutt - Founder & Executive Director of War Child Canada

Anna Maria Tremonti - Host of CBC Radio One's The Current

Dr. Kirsty Duncan - Pandemic Influenza & Environmental & Human Health Expert

Lee Graff - President & Co-Founder Cover FX

Maude Barlow - Social Justice Advocate & Author

Hon. Senator Mobina Jaffer - Senator for BC

- our group enjoyed all of the activities, plus Dorothy Macdonald rescued a Soroptimist locked in a bathroom cubicle
- after the final banquet we gave our orders for bagels and Bev Merrett and Dorothy took a taxi to pick up our orders
- we were a quieter but happy group on our train ride home

2015 **Istanbul, Turkey** - We had members from the Region attending, although there was some unrest in Turkey at the time

2019 Kuala **Lumpur, Malaysia**- RoseMary Reid as a member of the S I Board was involved in the business meetings and attended the Convention.

2023 **Dublin, Ireland** - Are you planning on attending?