



La storia del Soroptimist e i valori fondanti

Prima Parte *“Dalle origini alla Conferenza di Washington, 1928”*.

Seconda parte *“Dalla Convention di Parigi, 1934, all’anno del Centenario, 2021”*



BRIGHT PAST
BRILLIANT FUTURE

Stefania Briganti 09-12-2020



THE ORIGINS

During a sojourn in the East Bay while attempting to form an Optimist club in Oakland, **Mr Morrow** called upon the "*Parker-Goddard Secretarial School*" in search of a candidate for membership. Presuming that the school was run by two men, he was surprised to learn that, instead, it was operated by women.



It was then that **Adelaide E. Goddard** commented, "*When the men admit women as members of their clubs, I would be interested.*"



This remark sparked an idea for Mr. Morrow. He called together several of the outstanding business women in Oakland to pursue the idea of forming a **club for women**.

In 1921, the first Soroptimist club, Alameda County was formed in California .



Charter members of the first Soroptimist Club, 1921



Alameda, California, 1921

About 80 business and professional women from in and around the city of Oakland

Mr Morrow named himself as originator, founder and general manager of the corporation, therefore having 90 percent of the voting power, property rights, and interest of the corporation. *In other words, he owned Soroptimist!*

Aimed at forming an international Soroptimist organization during the planned June 1927 conference in San Francisco, inquiries were sent to Mr. Morrow seeking his demands for selling his property rights and vested interests in the Soroptimist Club, Inc.

After the discussion at the June **1927 conference in San Francisco**, a compromise settlement was approved in the amount of **\$5,500**
Finally Soroptimists owned Soroptimist!!

Why the name Soroptimist?

From the Latin:

Soror meaning **sister**

Optima meaning **best**

Was interpreted as ***The Best Of Women.***

In current usage as ***The Best For Women.***

This change shifted the focus away from the early qualifications for Soroptimist membership to the lives of the women and girls whose betterment is the worldwide Soroptimist mission

Violet Richardson

First Soroptimist International President



Early and determined feminist, and an innovator in the Physical Education field for women

About Violet

- Was born in Summit, New Jersey in 1888
- Parents had emigrated just three years earlier, in 1885, from Great Britain
- Both had been active in the care of the poor, ill and homeless with *William Booth* in London, when Booth founded the **Salvation Army**
- They were an *emancipated couple* who had total respect for each other

Violet's early experiences with her energetic parents were noteworthy:

- Age 10 with her mother traveled by ship to **London**
- Age 12 went to **Mexico City** with her father
- Same year her father took her to **Washington**, DC and visited the slums
- A parade of **interesting guests** were frequently invited to dinner by her father or mother, providing non-stop intellectual stimulation
- Through his work on the railways her father set up **free day trips** on holidays for the underprivileged.
- Violet had **a horse** to ride to school, thus distinguishing herself very early from the norm

- She studied *health and physical education* at the *University of California in Berkeley*
- Organized the *Berkeley Women's Gymnasium*, shocking the local people by allowing her students to wear *bloomers* while exercising or playing basketball, unheard of before that time.
- In 1912, she received her baccalaureate *degree in Physical Culture*
- Begun to *teach physical education* classes
- On discovering that *she was being paid less than a man* she insisted on equal pay, and when she was refused, she quit

- In 1914 her father bought her a car, so she became *one of the earliest car owners* in the Oakland area
- In 1916 Violet received her Master's Degree from the University, and was hired by the *Berkeley School District as Supervisor of Health and Physical Education for the District.*
- Wrote Sunday supplements for The San Francisco Chronicle, The Oakland Gazette and The Berkeley Gazette
- In *1921*, when Mr. Morrow got to Oakland, Violet was *one of the first women approached* about the new women's organization. She was now 33



Miss Snake Hunter-1914

Berkeley Teacher With Shotgun Declares War of Ex- termination on Reptiles

Rattlesnakes, take warning! Miss Violet Richardson is looking for you. She wears a khaki suit, leggings, a blanket strapped over her shoulder, is tall and good looking, has a wealth of brown hair, which is crowned by a straw hat with wide brim. She will make her presence known by a shotgun, but duck for cover, for she is a crack shot.

With several bunches of rattles tied to her belt, Miss Richardson, who was formerly connected with the physical culture department of the University of California and is now with the Berkeley school department, has stant-

ed a war of extermination of the "var-

minis." During leisure hours she practices with her shotgun, and on Sundays and holidays stalks the Berkeley hills for the reptiles. Miss Richardson has organized a hiking club of women, who will pay particular attention to the wigglers and have already sounded the alarm of their impending doom.

Miss Richardson, besides her prowess with the rifle and shotgun, has organized the Women's Gym club of Berkeley, and is a dainty dancer and exponent of physical culture for fad-
ed nerves and tired bodies.

.....
.....
In **1971**, the Fiftieth Anniversary of Soroptimist, ***the Golden Jubilee*** was celebrated. Violet, now ***aged 83***, Stanley, her husband, and granddaughter, Sandra, traveled to ***Rome for the International Convention***, where she was accorded the ***recognition*** she so justly deserved.



On their way home Violet and Sandra attended Queen Elizabeth II's Garden *Party at Buckingham Palace* in London
Back home in Oakland Violet had *a giant Redwood tree in the Soroptimist Grove* of Humboldt County in northern California named "Violet Richardson Ward" after her, *as a living memorial to her contributions*
She died just twenty-five days short of her ninety-second birthday, in 1979



She instilled in the organization some of its early traditions:

- *Its international scope* (she wouldn't join the club until she had the organizer's word of honor he would also organize clubs abroad)
- *The use of first names among members* during a more formal era

- **Quality, Armony and Service:**

- ***Friendship***

- The term ***service*** clubs was never used in Oakland prior to Violet's term as Soroptimist President. Clubs such as Soroptimist, Rotary and Lions were originally referred to as ***luncheon clubs***. Soroptimist accentuated service and as such, the term became the vogue

In their first calendar year of only three months Violet's first President's Report lists ***the projects for the year as installation of a heating plant for a Rescue Home, care of three destitute families at Christmas, and a civic project , the "Save The Redwoods"*** campaign

- They met weekly, *debating service projects* and hearing *speakers on various worldwide issues* that would broaden members' horizons
- She introduced rules of *punctuality, concreteness, discipline*

*Additional Soroptimist clubs soon followed along the Pacific and Atlantic coasts, amounting to **15 clubs** within 5 years.*



UPPER LEFT:
VIOLET RICHARDSON

UPPER RIGHT:
ELOISE B. CUSHING

LOWER LEFT:
HELENA M. GAMBLE



Violet Richardson Ward's lifetime Mottos were: *"It's what you do that counts"* which sum up Our Work as Soroptimists

Attorney **Eloise B. Cushing** was the major writer of the first Soroptimist **Constitution** and **Bylaws**. These were required for the filing of the Charter and they subsequently served as guidelines for all national and international clubs. Cushing was a life long Soroptimist and one of Violet's closest friends.



Helena M. Gamble was the first Soroptimist Club Secretary who later became *Historian for Life* for her meticulous collection of early records and photographs. Soroptimists owe much of our early written history to this lady, including reports of the many problems, disputes, pleasures and accomplishments of the early Soroptimist clubs



Anna Maria Isastia

La nascita del Soroptimist dagli Stati Uniti all'Europa

Il club di Milano

Worldwide Expansion of Soroptimist International



The prominent French plastic surgeon **Dr Suzanne Noël** was the founder of the **first SI club in Europe, Paris** in **1924** and inspired the founding of many others in Continental Europe. She became the *first President of the European Federation*, which was established in **1928**

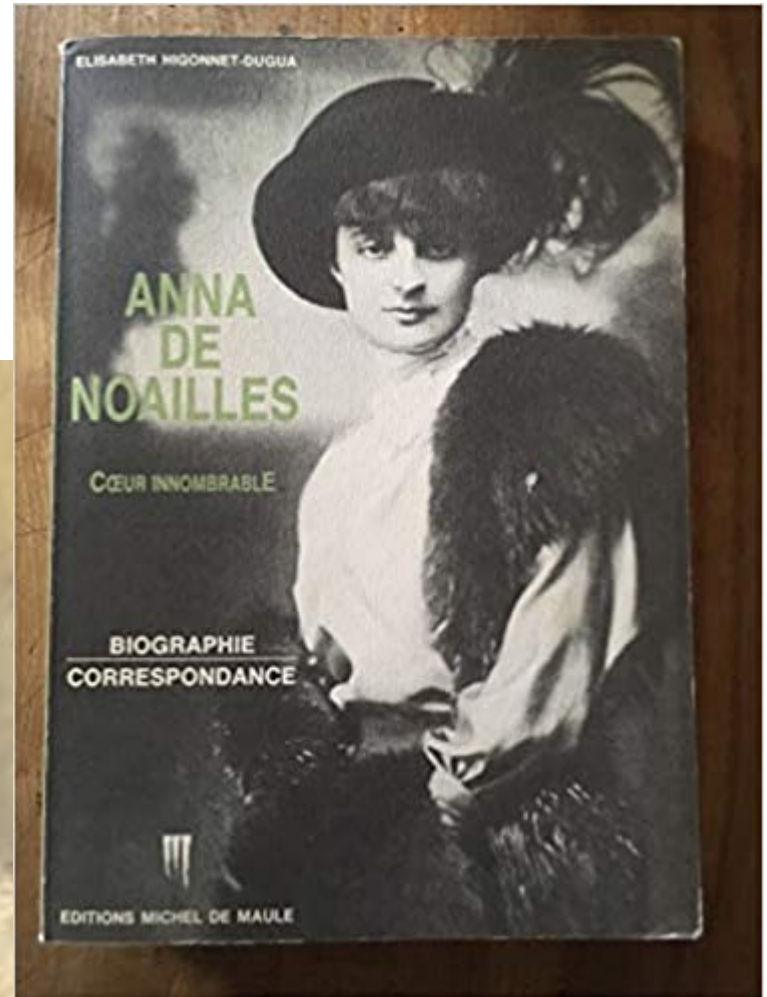
EARLY MEMBERS in Paris



Jean Lanvin



Therese Bertrand



Anna de Noailles

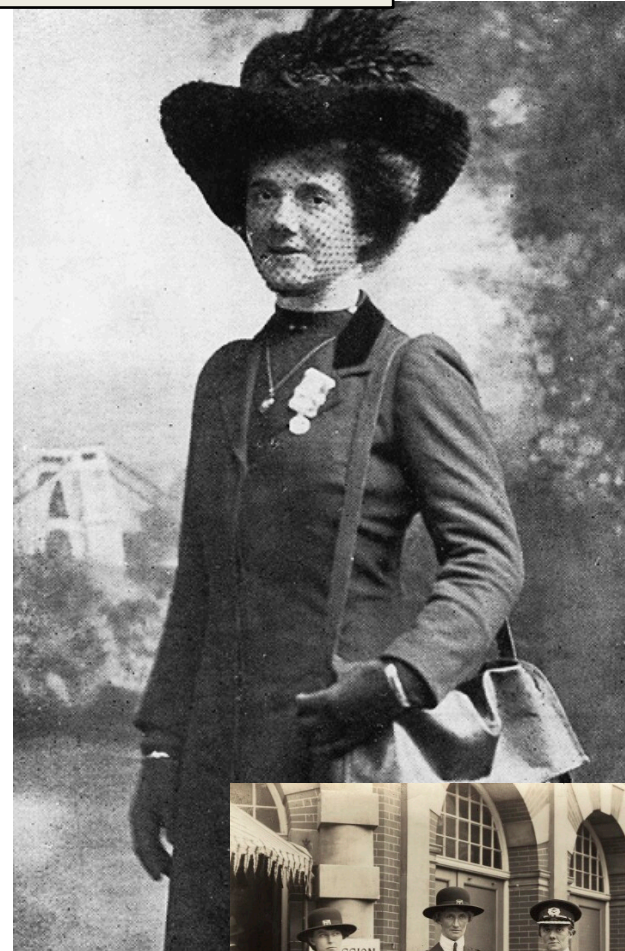
In 1924 the **Greater London Club** was formed in Great Britain, with about 100 Charter members. *Kathleen, Vicountess Falmouth*, was the Founder President. The London Club installation was reported to be the social event of the season, attended by 250 people, including members of the British Royal family.

They were able to charter *seven more Soroptimist Clubs in 1929*".



Kathleen, Vicountess Falmouth

EARLY MEMBERS in London



Mary Allen



Flora
Drummond





Sybil Thordike

Despite their similarity, *neither club knew of the other* and as *similar clubs began forming in other cities*, all without knowledge of each other, **a seed was sown and a global membership was taking shape.**

With the support of her Soroptimist contacts, Suzanne Noël rapidly **expanded** Soroptimist internationally, founding new clubs:

Netherlands (1927), *Italy* (1928), *Austria* (1929), *Germany*(1930), *Belgium*(1930), *Switzerland*(1930), *Estonia* (1931), *India* (1932), *Norway* (1933), *Hungary* (1934), and *Denmark* (1936). The inauguration of the first *Lithuanian* club was interrupted by the start of WWII



Socie fondatrici in Italia

Alda con le altre socie a **Milano**, 1928



Alda Rossi De Rios, conferenziera, conosce 6 lingue, importante esponente della borghesia laica
Prima Presidente Club Milano, 1928
Prima Presidente Fondatrice **Unione Italiana**, 1950



Carla Strauss, coreografa e danzatrice, scuola di ginnastica artistica
Socia fondatrice



Ada Negri, scrittrice e poetessa



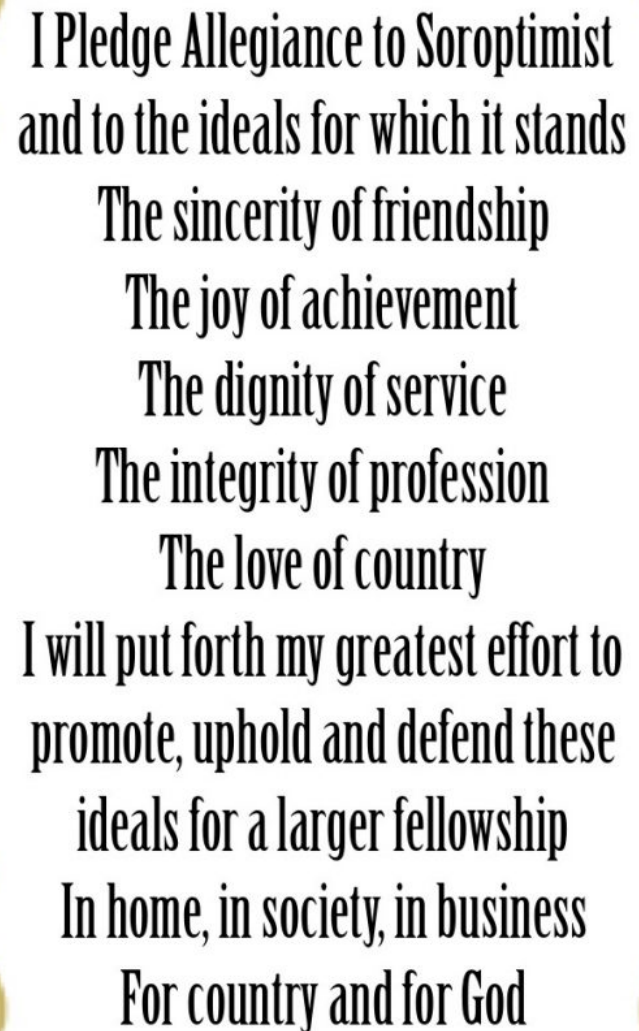
Milly Dandolo, romanziera,
poetessa, scrittrice per ragazzi



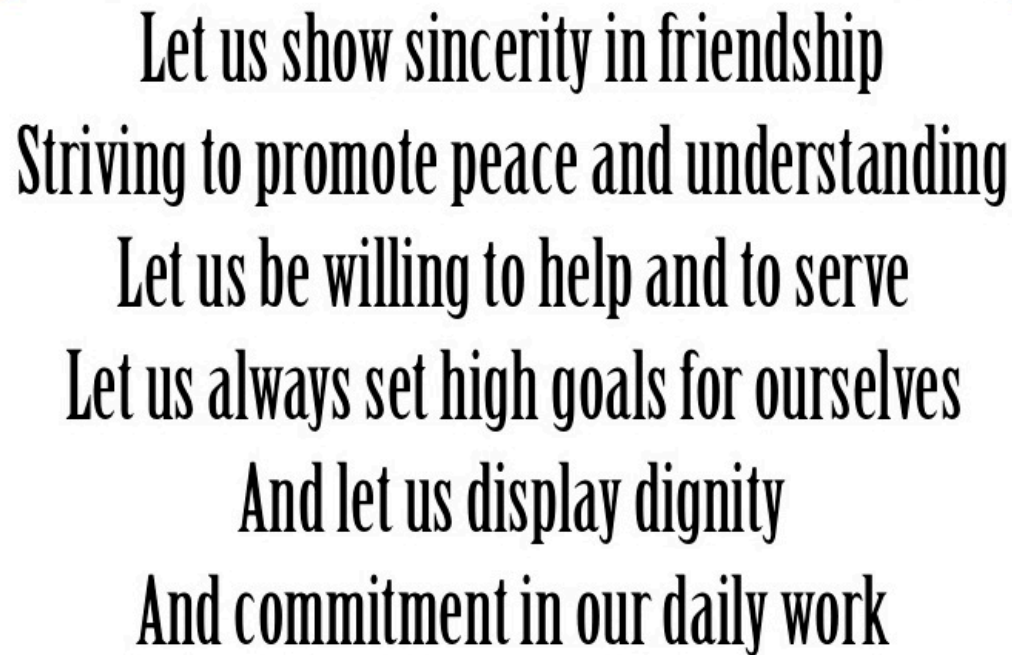
GERMANY. SI Club Berlin was founded on Jan 13, 1930

The *Soroptimist pledge*
was written in 1927 by
Candis Nelson, from
Seattle
Adopted in 1930

Ethel Knight Pollard, director of
Midwestern/South Atlantic regions,
noted “*we want a creed that we*
can use and work by and live by, not
one that will simply be printed and
stuck away to get dusty and have
no use to us.”



I Pledge Allegiance to Soroptimist
and to the ideals for which it stands
The sincerity of friendship
The joy of achievement
The dignity of service
The integrity of profession
The love of country
I will put forth my greatest effort to
promote, uphold and defend these
ideals for a larger fellowship
In home, in society, in business
For country and for God



Let us show sincerity in friendship
Striving to promote peace and understanding
Let us be willing to help and to serve
Let us always set high goals for ourselves
And let us display dignity
And commitment in our daily work

NORWEGIAN SOROPTIMIST PLEDGE



La storia del Soroptimist e i valori fondanti

Seconda parte

“Dalla Convention di Parigi, 1934, all’anno del Centenario, 2021”

WE STAND  UP
FOR **WOMEN!**

Stefania Briganti 03-03-2021



FIRST SOROPTIMIST WORLD CONFERENCE

Washington DC 1928

*United States and Canada formed the **American Federation SIA** and clubs already established in *Great Britain, France, Holland and Italy* formed the **European Federation SIE.***

Other significant milestones at this conference:

1. Soroptimist International conventions be held *every four years* from 1930 onwards.
2. The *constitution* was agreed.
3. The *representative body* would comprise the Presidents and Vice Presidents of the two Federations.
4. The “*Soroptimist Emblem*” was adopted for all members

SOROPTIMIST EMBLEM



Mrs **Anita Houts Thompson**, a founder member, whose Soroptimist classification was “designing and engraving”, submitted an emblem design, in competition with others. It was selected from among 18 entries

SI CONVENTIONS

- 1st Convention – 1934 – Paris, France
- 2nd Convention – 1938 – Atlantic City, USA
- 3rd Convention – 1948 – Harrogate, England
- 4th Convention – 1952 – Copenhagen, Denmark
- 5th Convention – 1956 – New York City, USA
- 6th Convention – 1960 – London, England
- 7th Convention – 1964 – Lausanne Switzerland
- 8th Convention – 1967 – Toronto, Canada
- 9th Convention – 1971 – Rome, Italy
- 10th Convention – 1975 – Sheffield, England
- 11th Convention – 1979 – Honolulu, Hawai
- 12th Convention – 1983 – Istanbul, Turkey
- 13th Convention – 1987 – Melbourne, Australia
- 14th Convention – 1991 – Nottingham, England
- 15th Convention – 1995 – San Francisco, USA
- 16th Convention – 1999 – Helsinki, Finland
- 17th Convention – 2003 – Sydney, Australia
- 18th Convention – 2007 – Glasgow, Scotland
- 19th Convention – 2011 – Montreal, Canada
- 20th Convention – 2015 – Istanbul, Turkey
- 21st Convention – 2019 – Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia



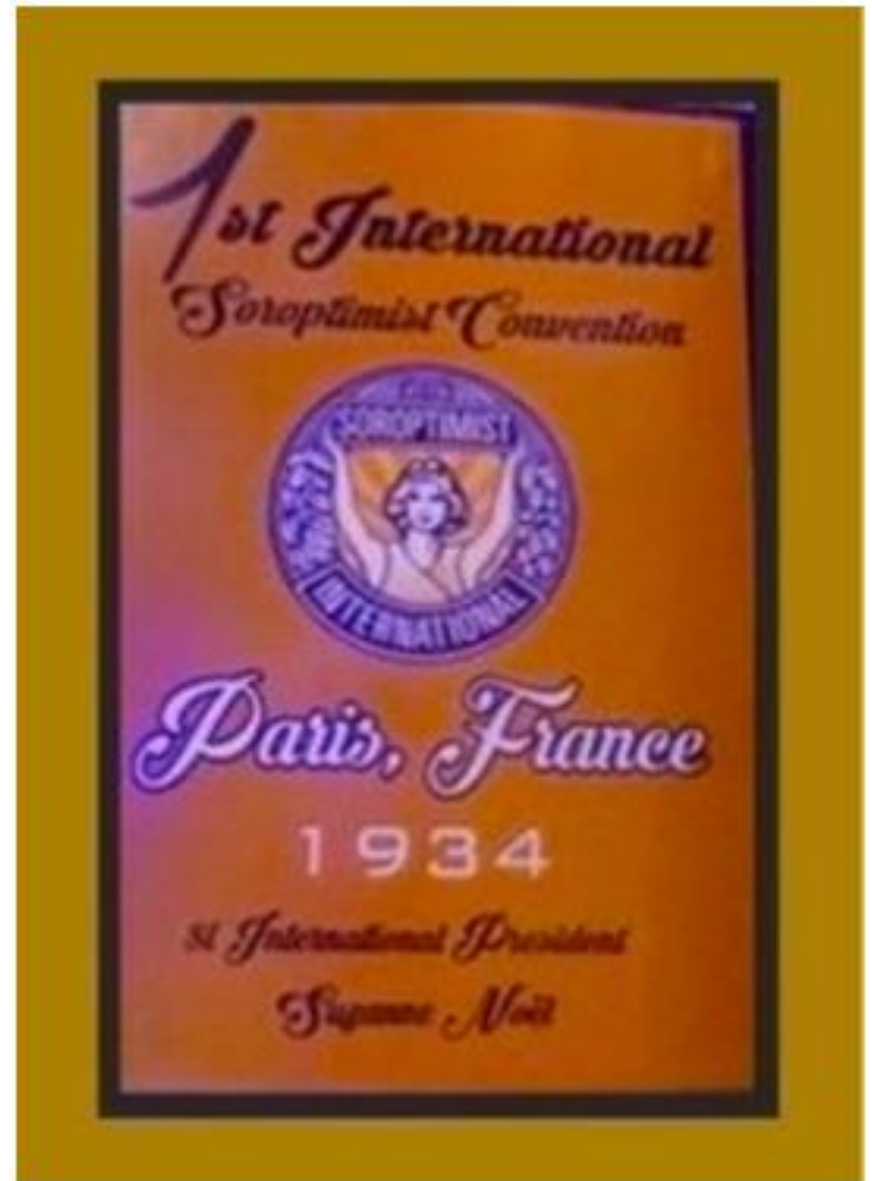
1th Soroptimist International Convention Paris 1934

Members from the two Federations SIA & SIE met at the *1st Soroptimist International Convention*, where the presiding officer was *Dr Suzanne Noël*.

Dr Noël was so anxious to welcome delegates from America and England to this convention in their own language that *she spend 3 months learning English* – she told delegates that it was the greatest sign of friendship she could give them.

They discussed the ***Professional Position of Women in their Countries.***

A fifteen minute report was presented by each country



It was at the Paris Convention that a new Federation was born:

The Federation of Great Britain & Ireland was established in 1934 when Britain split away from the rest of Europe and became ***the third Federation*** of Soroptimist International after America and Europe:

SIE, SIA, SIGBI

Prior to WWII

Soroptimists worked to assist refugees fleeing unrest in central Europe. Many Soroptimists themselves ultimately fled from the Nazis' consolidation of power, to seek safety elsewhere. Some were less fortunate. In 1939, many members of the burgeoning **Kaunas club**, Lithuania, were killed or deported.

In 1943, Marthe Hirsch, director of the Martougin Chocolat factories and the **first president** of the **Belgian Soroptimist Club**, committed suicide to avoid arrest by the Gestapo.



In the summer of **1938** members from the three Federations met at the **International Convention in Atlantic City, New Jersey**, this was the largest Soroptimist gathering to date, and the last International meeting held before World War.

In 1938 there were **11,289 members in 191 clubs in 13 countries.**

- The Convention agreed that efforts be made to *encourage women to enter public life*
- It was clear that improved *channels of communication* were necessary.

A more important step was taken to draw the Federations together.

The Constitution was amended to provide for **an International Liaison Secretary.**

The person appointed to this important post was

Elizabeth Hawes, then President of the Federation of Great Britain and Ireland.

With a private education, Elizabeth Hawes gained fluency in several languages

Studied Optics

Joined the 'family firm' of Alfred Hawes and Son, Manufacturing Opticians.

Founder Member of the Greater London Club, 1924

1938 Conference took place during Elizabeth's SIGBI

Presidency



World peace must have occupied the minds of many members at this Convention. In her report, **Elizabeth Hawes** presented a **resolution** which received the unanimous approval of all delegates:

“The Soroptimist International Association **condemns war** as an instrument of policy between nations and urges governments to seek other means of settling disputes. The meeting of the Soroptimist International Association affirms its belief that **freedom** can only be assured and **peace** maintained **by upholding the democratic rights of the individual.**”

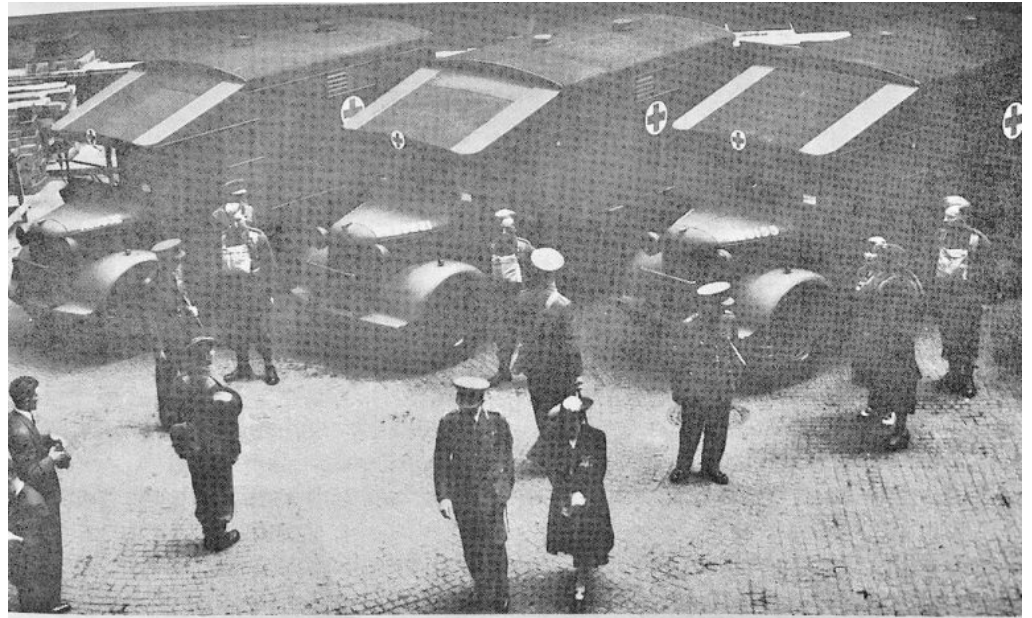
Worldwide Soroptimists Working Together in World War II



Europe Soroptimists ceased to hold formal meetings, however many met clandestinely.

British and **American Soroptimists** continued to meet throughout the war years and to continue their service projects

Three ambulances (1 from SI Canada) bearing the Soroptimist emblem, were presented to the British Army on Horse Guards Parade, London, 1940



Soroptimists presented Ambulances to the British Army on Horse Guards Parade London – 1940.



A Soroptimist Network

The **British Federation** assisted by **Soroptimists in Europe** embarked upon rescuing members of the **Vienna Soroptimist Club** and their families who were threatened by the Nazi regime. Over thirty refugees arrived in England from Vienna. Each refugee had to be sponsored by someone in England, **Elizabeth Hawes** did much of the work. Under her leadership **British Soroptimists** made themselves responsible for the refugees and subsequently arranged their passage to a safe harbor in the United States where they were helped by **American Soroptimists**. Clubs in the **American Federation** gave gifts of money and clothing for distribution to stricken cities throughout Europe.

Elizabeth Hawes was personally responsible for shipping parcels of aid, including money and clothing, from Soroptimists in the UK and the USA to stricken cities throughout Europe.

How Elizabeth managed to maintain contacts with Soroptimists in occupied Europe no-one will ever know for certain, but it is certain that she had her own "*underground network*" of brave women throughout Europe during those dark and dangerous days.

In 1946 SIGBI Conference she introduced the idea of *Friendship Links*: "...interchange of visits possibly on a Club basis"



Her work during the war was greatly appreciated, so she was asked to design the decoration and furnishing of one of the rooms of the ***Soroptmist Residential Club, Number 63 Bayswater Road.***

She died in 1966 but the picture of her standing in her garden continues to hang on the wall in the entrance hallway at Number 63.





US First Lady **Eleanor Roosevelt** is the honored guest and speaker at a weekly luncheon of the Washington DC Club in 1943

SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION

Harrogate, Yorkshire 1948

It was the venue for the **first post-war international convention** , providing opportunities for many reunions after years of enforced separation.

1500 Soroptimists attended, and for the first time the **flags** of the **15 countries** present were carried ceremoniously into the hall, received by *Elizabeth*, who then placed them on display at the front of the hall. This has become the practice at all Soroptimist Conventions and Conferences since that day

After WWII

Suzanne Noël resumed expansion. Her attempt to found a club in *Czechoslovakia* in 1948 was prevented by the Communist coup, but she was successful in *Turkey* (1949) and *Greece* (1950).

THE TURNING POINT

Soroptimist International Convention

Copenhagen 1952

The laws were changed and the **first INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT** was elected:

Mrs GERTRUDE G. HUITT past President of Federation of the Americas.

The governing body of Soroptimist International was founded, as it is today



841 clubs, 22 countries

Soroptimist work with the United Nations (1945) had begun:

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948 (There was Berta Lutz from SI)

1948, Consultative status with UNESCO

1950 category C Consultative status with ECOSOC (Economic & Social Council, United Nations)

1966, UNICEF granted consultative status for service projects for children

1975, Soroptimists attended the **First UN World Conference on Women** which was held in Mexico City

1984 Category 1 Consultative status (now General Consultative Status) with ECOSOC

Soroptimist International has many UN reps in the UN centers, specialized agencies and regional centers focusing on issues that affect women and girls.

ECOSOC, CSW, CEDAW, DBI/NGO, WHO, UNHCR, OHCHR, ILO, FAO, UNIDO, UNODC, UNICEF, UNESCO, UNEP, EWL, OCSE, Beijing+25

Soroptimist International Convention

New York 1956

Soroptimist adopted a **Formal Resolution** *to secure women's rights in respect to equal access to education, equal economic opportunity, equal pay for equal work and equality between parents in respect of their children.*

December 10 – Soroptimist Day

Soroptimist International South West Pacific 4th Federation (SISWP), 1978

1937 SI **Sydney** club, **Australia**, received its charter, Founder President **Edith Glanville**. It was *part of the Federation of Great Britain and Ireland* (SIGBI).

1939 SI **Wellington**, **New Zealand**, was chartered.

1971 the charter of SI **Suva**, **Fiji**

It was not until **1978** that the 4th Federation **Soroptimist International of the South West Pacific** was formed, with **Mary Whitehead** as its First President

In the 1990's, introduction of **Malaysia**, **Indonesia**, **Solomon Islands** and **Mongolia**



Edith Glanville



International President ***Hilda Richardson***
charters SISWP Federation, 1978

SIGBI EXTENSION OVERSEAS

Africa

Zimbabwe, Salisbury 1957

South Africa, Port Elizabeth 1959

Nigeria, Lagos, 1964

Gambia, Banjul, 1985

.....

South Asia

Pakistan, Lahore, 1969

Sri Lanka, Colombo, 1974

India, Bombay North, 1974

Bangladesh, Dhaka, 1983

Nepal, Kathmandu, 2012



SI Cape of Good Hope

The Caribbean

Trinidad and Tobago, Port of Spain, 1959

Jamaica, 1962

Barbados, 1962



The opening of the World Conference of the International Women's Year in **Mexico City** on 19 June **1975**



The opening of the Fourth World Conference on Women in **Beijing, China**, 4 September **1995**



World Conference of the
International Women's Year in
Mexico City on 19 June **1975**



The Fourth World Conference
on Women in Beijing, China, 4
September **1995**

The first UN conference on women, 1975, Mexico City

At this conference, three objectives were identified in relation to equality, peace and development for the Decade:

1. Full gender equality and the elimination of gender discrimination;
2. The integration and full participation of women in development;
3. An increased contribution by women towards strengthening world peace.

.... Copenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1985)

The Beijing Platform for Action, 1995

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is widely known as the most progressive blueprint for advancing women's rights.

The framework covers ***12 areas of concern:***

1. Women and poverty
2. Education and training of women
3. Women and health
4. Violence against women
5. Women and armed conflict
6. Women and the economy
7. Women in power and decision-making
8. Institutional mechanism for the advancement of women
9. Human rights of women
10. Women and the media
11. Women and the environment
12. The girl-child

Conferenze Mondiali sulle Donne ONU

1a, Città del Messico 1975

1. La piena uguaglianza fra i sessi ed eliminazione delle discriminazioni sessuali
2. L'integrazione e la piena partecipazione delle donne allo sviluppo
3. Un maggiore contributo delle donne nel rafforzamento della pace mondiale.

Copenaghen (1980), Nairobi (1985)

Pechino 1995

Piattaforma d'Azione e 12 Aree Critiche

1. Donne e povertà
2. Istruzione e formazione delle donne
3. Donne e salute
4. La violenza contro le donne
5. Donne e conflitti armati
6. Donne ed economia

7. Donne, potere e processi decisionali
8. Meccanismi istituzionali per favorire il progresso delle donne
9. Diritti fondamentali delle donne
9. Donne e media
11. Donne e ambiente
12. Le bambine

SI Convention 1982

First President's December 10th Appeal, a bi-annual Appeal that still stands.

Catherine Salt chose the very first President's Appeal *project on the island of Pulau Bidong, Malaysia, helping refugee women and children.* Pulau Bidong was the first asylum centre run in co-operation with UNHCR.
SI raised £ 20456

Soroptimist International Convention

Montreal 2011

Tema decennale “**Educate to lead**”

Linee programmatiche:

- promuovere una strategia del lavoro femminile e sostenere le giovani donne nella scelta degli studi e delle carriere;
- promuovere e finanziare Corsi di Formazione presso Università, rivolti a giovani laureate;
- promuovere e sostenere le giovani musiciste con un Concorso Nazionale ;
- promuovere le Biblioteche come sede di attività culturali, di incontro ecc. perché diventino strategiche sul territorio;
- realizzare azioni di contrasto alla violenza;

Agenda 2030 - Obiettivi di sviluppo sostenibile (*Sustainable Development Goals, SDG*) 2015



Supported by

Malaysia
Truly Asia


21st
SOROPTIMIST
INTERNATIONAL
CONVENTION
KUALA LUMPUR 19-21 July 2019
Malaysia Truly Asia

Sharon Fisher SI President



PRESIDENTS APPEAL 2019-2021

5 GENDER
EQUALITY



The Road to Equality
SI PRESIDENT'S APPEAL 2019 - 2021



The Road to Equality

SI PRESIDENT'S APPEAL 2019 - 2021

- *Violenza domestica*
- *Traffico esseri umani*
- *Matrimoni infantili forzati*
- *Mutilazioni GF*
- *Donne anziane*
- *Migranti*

Soroptimist International Africa Federation (SIAF) Fifth Federation, 7th July 2020

SIAF President
Connie Mutuhnu
of SI Vabatsiri
(Zimbabwe)

102 Clubs in 4 Regions



Il **Soroptimist International** è oggi diffuso in 132 paesi e conta oltre 3000 Club, con un totale di circa 75.000 Socie



“Small acts, when multiplied by millions of people, can transform the world.”

- Howard Zinn -





Suman Lata Lal
SISWP



Sharon Fisher
SI



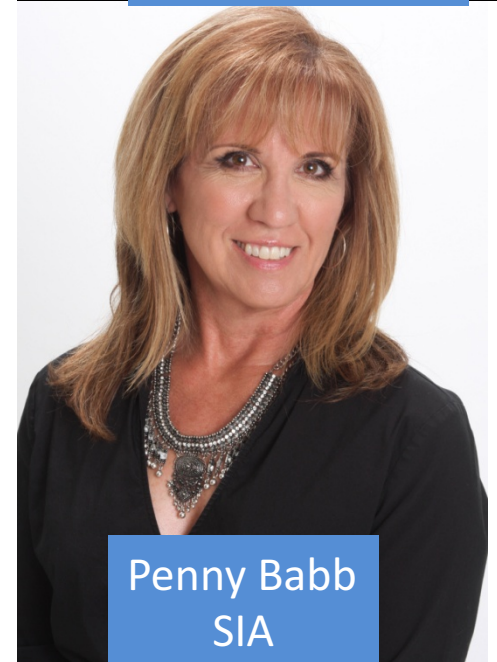
Johanna Raffan
SIGBI



Connie Mutuhnu
SIAF



Anna Wszelaczyńska
SIE



Penny Babb
SIA





100 YEARS OF SOROPTIMIST HEROINES





100 YEARS
OF
SOROPTIMIST HEROINES

DEvised BY SUE CHALLONER SI RUNCORN/FRODSHAM

Drama Presentation

Cast:

Violet Richardson-Ward

Kathleen Viscountess Falmouth

Margaret Adams OBE

Dr Suzanne Noël

Elizabeth Hawes MBE

Edith Glanville

Gertrude G Huitt

Narrator

Technical Liaison

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- “A History of Number 63”, SIGBI Website, Liz Batten
- Founder Region Website- History
- SI website
- All SI Federations websites
- Many other websites concerning the topics
-