

The History Zonta Club of Northampton – 1st Chapter

THE FIRST TWENTY-FIVE YEARS - 1934-1958

by Mary Bailey

"Yesterday," says the proverb, "is gone; tomorrow has not arrived; the only time that belongs to us is now." So for tonight let us look backward on our record of twenty-five years. A record which we hope will bring satisfaction and pride to Springfield Zonta, our sponsoring mother. These have been twenty-five years of exciting thrills, adventure and achievement! All of our members have been dedicated to the task of examining our community for services which we as a group might render; either helping with established projects or daring to undertake new ones to fill in the gaps in our community living to the end that Northampton might be a better place for folks to live in, and more attractive for newcomers.

Organization

Therefore, since one must have a beginning, on April 19th, 1934, "according to the record," Northampton Zonta was organized by two enthusiastic, challenging Springfield Zontians, Beatrice Latourneau and Elizabeth Klages, the former, a district governor. Following a series of business meetings, Grace Bement (Sibley) was elected our first president. However, Grace, full of that joie de vivre and overcome by wanderlust, left Northampton for many years of travel and finally life in Australia. So Hazel Ross became our first really active executive officer and I might add that she has been at it ever since, in one capacity or another.

Meetings

Our headquarters already established at the Hotel Northampton, were continued and have remained as such through the years. Meanwhile we have held meetings in the homes of our members, at the Practice Cottage of the Smith Vocational School, The Mary Marguerite Tearoom, The Smith College Alumnae House, Toto's, The Prophylactic Brush Company, The Stanley Home Products Company of Easthampton, WHYN, The Deerfield Museum and the Deerfield Inn, and also, the Student Union, at the University of Massachusetts.

You might be interested to know that in our early deliberations, we livened things up a bit, by considering a fine of ten cents on any member not using a first-name or a nickname, but it did cause us to lose one member and I wonder now, how much more wealthy we might have been had such a decision been enforced!

Chesterfield Lodge-The First Big Project

Our first big project initiated under the chairmanships of talented, competent Mary Snook and Mary Alice Parker was the establishment of our Zonta Lodge in Chesterfield. This was a large home maintained by us each summer until World War II engulfed us. It was a home where mothers were offered an opportunity to regain their health and vitality, where they might also have their small children under four, to share in and reap the benefits of such a vacation.

All of our members had an opportunity to share in this service individually by helping in the transportation of families, by cooperating with the staff at the Home, and with Mary, to provide entertainment during the two week periods of vacations, and by providing gifts of such things as fruit, other foods, teaspoons, victrola, washing-machine and even a piano.

Zonta's Lottery

Undaunted by the huge (to us) cost of such a project, shades of the Massachusetts lottery program, we had several successful years of a hope chest lottery'. The chest was filled with all of the things a bride would desire. However, after two years, the lottery was changed to provide a bank book and a bill fold containing money. In considering our Lodge, we must not overlook too, the contribution of articles, money and cooperative assistance given by our mother and sister Zontians in helping to make our dream home a reality.

However, the war years of necessity brought about a change in our pattern of service and we were obliged to close Zanta Lodge. Some of our equipment was sold but many articles such as chairs, highchairs, baby carriages and playpens were given to the Childrens' Home, sponsored by the Childrens' Aid Association.

Rummage Sales Add Revenue

Since the cost of our service project increased in size each year we were really put to it to find the necessary sources of revenue to maintain it. On top of our lottery, we began our ever-present program of Rummage Sales. To this we added such things as silver teas, style shows, for which we used our talented members, Hazel Berry and Marge Van Slaght, with their Filene associations. The sale of Sutton Sweets (purchased through Mary Ramsdell), aprons, felt animals, Berea Products, Stanley Home Parties, pickles with Esther Fitch, our pickle queen, and her home on Dewey Court a warehouse for her stock, cook books, pliofilm bags, peanut crunch, (Perle's responsibilities), gloves, Eleanor's project and the sale of Knobby Craft Jewelry, Bert's particular plan to acquire capital.

We Fail

We might mention our one and only great financial failure--into each life some rain must fall: Our Rubinoff Concert at John M. Greene in itself audience was a delight, but for us, a financial loss, for our public as an audience really let us down. However, this did spark Bert to her greatest form operated and diligently, unselfishly and triumphantly, she took on and the jewelry project from year to year representing hours and hours of loyal, untiring service. Of course like our local state and national governments, each Zontian, through assessment of dues helped in supplying capital too.

The Flood of the Century

Northampton was plagued by a serious flood in the spring of 1936. Our local club ever heeding the call to duty, participated in long hours of volunteer service, helping to maintain and operate lodging quarters and food stations for those in our community whose homes were flooded and who, for a week, had to be housed in other quarters.

Convention Hostesses

In those early years too, we were fortunate in having Cora MacKenzie our International President, living near enough in Massachusetts to be able to participate in our meetings at times. So in the fall of 1938 under the chairmanship of Esther Fitch, Northampton Zonta was the regional hostess for the convention--three days full of bustling activities---challenging and inspiring speeches by Dr. Gordon Gilkie, Cornelia Stratton Porter, Prof. Howard Meyerhoff and Annetta Clark with her humorous anecdotes of the near great and the great who visited Smith College. Because of our auspicious start in the conferences, those of us in the local club took serious stock of our greater commitments and because of this, we have consistently seen to it that Northampton Zonta has had its representation at regional, district and national conventions.

Now if I may paraphrase some of our currently popular songs, our early years we might call the "Getting To Know You" under Rossie. "The Seventy-Six Trombones" days under Bert and Miriam Curtis when we promoted our Lodge so successfully.

WW II Activities

Because of the changing world at home and abroad came "We Got To Be Taught," "With a Little Bit of Luck" and "Something Wonderful" years. Beginning with the austerity of the war program, we needed a firm hand at the helm and Mary Ramsdell our State Policewoman, became our president. To be followed by Jean MacDonald, our trained nurse and Marge Van Slaughter.

These were the years when our Zontians sky-watched, manned report centers, participated in canteens and nursing programs. The years when we cooperated unceasingly with the war relief organizations in our community, the Polish, the Greek, the British, the Dutch and the French, and believe it or not, we even went so far as to help in mending clothes for the Russian War Relief. We might call all this our extra curricular activities because we did sponsor classes in speech correction in our public schools with Mrs. Gillett as our paid instructor.

Hospital Projects

"Just You Wait" had Amy Birge, Mary Bailey, Arlene Spear and Margaret Johnson as our presidents and our projects still included the class in speech correction. We did undertake, also, the painting, redecorating and furnishing of a room in Cooley Dickinson Hospital which was designated as "The Zonta Room." These too were the years when, thanks to Hazel Ross for supplying us with the cooperation of an efficient and artistic group of Smith School students under the guidance of Mr. Roy, Zonta redecorated the playroom in the Childrens' Home. The room was gaily painted to resemble a circus tent, even with animals around the room and new work tables and chairs were also supplied by us.

These years also saw the inauguration of our Volunteer Hostessing at the Cooley Dickinson Hospital Maternity Ward and I wonder how many of us remember that during this time, there had been a Building Fund Drive for the Hospital, to which, we contributed \$300.00.

International Projects

Nor were we overlooking our foreign commitments, for under Ruth Hemingway's guidance, we were sending financial contributions and medical books to her protege Chinese Medical student. Boxes each week for three months were sent to Holland and France with many additional boxes, ten at Christmas for example, sent to families overseas, even to Germany. This was also the time of the Smith College Seventy-Fifth Anniversary Drive to which we contributed generously.

We even adopted a twelve year old Belgian girl, Bella Schlager to whom individual members sent a personal package a month for one year.

Twelve CARE packages were also sent by our club to any country not under Russian domination.

A contribution of \$150 also was made to the Girl Scouts for the Camp Building Fund, establishing a permanent Camp. Sandy Brook, at Norwich Lake.

Zonta's Capital Aids Industrial Development

We even purchased five shares in the Northampton Realty Corporation, created by the Chamber of Commerce for the purpose of bringing new industry to Northampton. Kollmorgen and Chart-Pak are outstanding examples of flourishing new industry.

On the more personal side we had the thrilling experience of meeting and greeting the mother of our Chinese protege, herself, a Chinese doctor who was visiting Ruth Hemenway. Responding to a request by one of our organizations in our community, Molly, Peg and Rossie contributed a sewing machine to a needy family and a piano to be used by the nurses at the Northampton State Hospital.

A substantial check was sent by Zonta to be used in a rehabilitation program in Holland following a devastating flood in that country. Money, too was sent in behalf of the Hungarian Patriots.

Northampton State Hospital Project

Now comes "There Is Nothing Like A Dame" years with Jean MacDonald, Gladys Sampson, Kathleen Atto and Betty Harris as our executives. Our projects under them included contributions for the renovation of a recreation room at the Northampton State Hospital to be used by the student nurses. Contributions also for the Chapel Fund at the Veterans' Hospital for which some of our members also participated individually in the sale of building bricks. We increased our contributions each year to the Community Chest until we reached the sum of \$300 a year.

More Contributions

Zonta made a contribution of \$100 to help in the establishment of a mental health clinic. We also contributed money to the Smith Agricultural School for each of two years, to help defray the expenses of delegates from the school to the National Farmers' Convention.

Historical Efforts Spark 300th

It was during this period that Northampton in 1954 celebrated its 300th Anniversary. Zonta participated individually in this program. Cynthia Walsh made a notable contribution as chairman of the Book Publication Committee which sponsored an historical book, called "The Northampton Book." Arlene Spear was the chairman of the Historical Window Display Committee. Esther Fitch was the Thursday hostess for the Tercentenary Week. Mary Bailey and Dorothy Abott served on the Invitations Committee, and Mary Bailey was coordinator for the Saturday of Celebration Week. Priscilla Graham served on the Tuesday Hostess Committee. Jean MacDonald was part of the Emergency Station crew under Colonel Lavallee and many other Zontians participated in Hostessing at the Betty Allen Chapter of DAR.

Bazaars

These were the years when we supplemented our Rummage Sales by holding two Bazaars, one in Esther's home and another in Mr. LoBello's store on Main Street. Thanks to the good cooks in Zonta-Rossie, Peg, Mollie, Esther and Eleanor, our Corden Bleu graduate, Northampton Zonta gained a city-wide reputation for gourmet food'.

We Win the Blue Ribbon

Our service work in 1957 and 1958 netted us our Blue Ribbon Award from District I and I quote "with less than thirty members, Northampton Zonta sponsored a varied program under the categories of education, geriatrics, health and youth assistance. "

"The service budget for the year totalled more than \$1800 with 1228 hours of service contributed by members toward fund raising and personal service in the name of Zonta."

"In the Educational Field were two scholarships of \$200 each, one in memory of Florence Day, assisting a young French student in furthering her education in social work at Smith College."

"The other, awarded for advance study in nursing with benefits to both the recipient and Cooley Dickinson Hospital to which she returned to teach undergraduates."

"Also an additional gift to Smith Agricultural School for a deserving girl in the Home Making Department."

"Financial support for the Expectant Parent Classes under the guidance of Jean MacDonald and many hours of personal service to the Annual State Hospital Party."

"The largest portion, \$300 to the Community Chest, and \$960 to be paid over a three year period to the Cooley Dickinson Hospital Development Fund for the purchase of four motorized all-purpose beds. These two gifts alone representing approximately \$50 a member."

"In addition, Zonta Club contributed, as in the past, to Youth Camperships and gave many hours of service to the Community."

All of this we may refer to as "our achievements" but we have also had an exciting amount of adventure.

For the Public Good

Seriously, in our field of public responsibility, we worked through our elected officials for bills or measures which we felt would be of public good. On our local level of government, we endorsed the movement to have a full-time policewoman on the Northampton Police Force. We also endorsed the program for pasteurized milk. On the state level we fought to have married women, qualified for particular positions, retain them and always until the bill became a reality, we fought for jury service for women. We also were successful in our fight to have the State Legislature pass an act for regulating the practice of nursing.

Travel Talks

Our more selfish but highly stimulating adventures were gained through our widely diversified and interesting program meetings. Many of our Meetings were devoted to talks with the showing of pictures of countries, some of which our individual members had visited--Margaret Johnson, Betty Harris, Helen Wiestling and Mabel Emerson, our most-travelled world Zontian, who reported to us not only on Europe, but the Far-East and from behind the Iron Curtain. From first hand reports, we learned about Alaska, China, Greece, Mexico, England and even the Coronation Celebration of Queen Elizabeth II with extraordinary pictures shown to us by Florence Snow, Scotland, Holland, Japan, the Middle-East, South America, India, and the Arctic and the Ant-Arctic. The latter contribution, made by Paul Davis who had been a Navy civil-engineer in that location.

The War Years brought us first hand vivid descriptions by personal observations. The first talk by Miss Roone of the Smith College faculty who. returned from England to the United States on the Athenia which was bombed in the summer of 1941, and who told of her harrowing experiences a few months before our entrance to World WarII. Alphonze Vorencamp and his vivid portrayal of the Belgian and Dutch situation; Madame Gutowska on her Polish experiences; Charles Howard, an American officer representing our country in Vienna, reported to us on the occupation of Vienna by Russia. Mr. and Mrs. Chin, Chinese proteges of Ruth Hemenway, relating their problems of living in the Far-East and their efforts to arrive in this country.

Other informative evenings with speakers on current events. Dr. Jean Paul Mather on public universities: a group demonstration by three of our own members-Florence Gates, Virginia Davis and Winifred Eastwood, on the programs of the Extension Service, telling us what to eat and why, and what to buy and why, as to materials and household needs

Music Enjoyment

Other evenings of complete enjoyment and relaxation, listening to musical programs, one given by a quartet of University of Massachusetts students. Listening to the experiences of the Smith Choral Singers in European countries; enjoying the delightful Harp Ensemble, or the music played by a French concert pianist.

Betty Harris was the author and producer of a Socio-Drama, showing how social agencies work together to help families with their problems.

Joint Meetings

It has been our policy to hold joint meetings with other Service Clubs in Northampton and a yearly combined meeting with the Quota Club. Intercity meetings also have had their share in our programs. However, it is only in sharing our experiences, not just with our sister Zontians, but with other dedicated service groups in our community that we can hope to rekindle the faith and loyalty which put worthwhile purpose into living and which give us a glimpse of humanity as we would like it to be - chastened by suffering; and ennobled by friendship to help create a world where order, service to humanity and peace prevails.

History Trends

Speakers on the trends in world history, such as Dr. Hans Kohn and many other people of note the inevitable subject Wills: tours of the College Gardens, the College Museum, the "Gazette", WHYN, and so forth, From this list, you can see why Zonta, too, might have gone "Around the World in Eighty Days" had we not detoured many times to return to the events near home where we might gain the necessary information for our development and a more broadening understanding of human relations in our community and the world at large.

Remember When

In reviewing our early years, we should all be able to sing with the same nostalgia as Maurice Chevalier "I Remember It Well" and "Thank Heavens For Little Girls, They Grow Up In the Most Delightful Way" for "Memories Are Made of This."

And so, Mother Elizabeth, we hope that in our humble offerings, you will feel rewarded for the confidence and trust you placed in us twenty-five years ago this month.

"For yesterday is but a dream
"And tomorrow only a vision
"But today well lived makes
"Every yesterday a dream of happiness
"And every tomorrow a vision of Hope."

So we salute our Zonta, now starting on her next Twenty-Five Years, her years of maturity.