

HISTORY OF
SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL
OF
PORT ANGELES

District 1
Chartered February 26, 1944

Compiled by Mary Watson
with Joanne Evans and Gwyn Callis

Sipa History/Publicity Committee
April 28, 2000

History of Soroptimist International Of Port Angeles

Soroptimism came to the North Olympic Peninsula of Washington State, February 26, 1944 when Soroptimist International of Tacoma, Washington chartered Soroptimist International of Port Angeles with 35 charter members. A banquet at the Peninsula Golf Club marked the chartering of the club. Claire Nicholls, of the Tacoma Club presided. Marilyn Lewis, Director of the Northwest Region of Soroptimist International of the Americas came from Spokane, WA to install Henrietta Haugland as President.

Soroptimist International of Port Angeles has become known as the "Mother Club" of the Olympic Peninsula. In 1947, Soroptimist International of Port Angeles sponsored the dual chartering of Soroptimist International of Sequim and Soroptimist International of Port Townsend. By 1981, they had grown so large they chartered a second Port Angeles Club that was christened Soroptimist International of Port Angeles-Jet Set. The "Jet Set" chartered the Olympic Rain Forest Club in Forks in 1992 and a Venture Club in 1986.

Soroptimist International of Port Angeles club is dedicated to community service and has always accepted responsibility for a share in many civic projects with financial contributions and active support including the following:

One of Soroptimist International of Port Angeles' first projects was to write Congress urging that the Equal Rights Amendment be brought to the floor.

The Club received honorable mention in the *Soroptimist of the Americas* Magazine for sponsoring the formation of the Port Angeles Humane Society.

Members helped found the Port Angeles Municipal League that went on to accomplish the education of citizens, the raising of funds that resulted in the change from the Commission to the Council Management form of City Government which is still in effect today. This aroused the interest of a University of Washington professor who then chose Port Angeles as the next city for a Community Study Project.

When the Children's Hall opened in the old Fire Hall in 1953, the club donated \$500. By 1965, they had contributed over \$1,800 to Children's Hall.

To help add another link in the Chain of Good International Relationship, the club contributed toward the expenses of an exchange student on an International Farm youth trip to Sweden.

They presented the city with a drinking fountain to replace a pump and dipper used for public drinking water.

The club voted to give scholarships to female graduates.

The members introduced many innovative ways by which to fund all these projects.

In the early days the club held an annual smorgasbord. The members prepared the food. They would have a meatball party the day before to prepare hundreds of meatballs. The first party was held in 1949 on the lawn of a club member. By 1957 it was dubbed the Electric Frying Pan Meatball Party.

The club sponsored the Wenatchee Youth Circus as a money making project for the scholarship fund. Due to the influence of one of the members, the city council granted permission for the 75 boys of the troupe (ages 7 to 17) to swim free. A letter to the editor stated, " Port Angeles can be justly proud of its enthusiastic hard working Soroptimist Club who truly deserve to be called a community service club".

In past years, there have been Mardi Gras dinner dances, bazaars, raffles, rummage sales, etc. In May 1982, a rummage sale grossed \$1,500. Better items were taken to a consignment shop. By that time, the club's laundry list of community service projects had grown to where it was necessary to raise more money to fulfill their commitments.

In 1985, the now infamous Elegant Gourmet Coupon book was introduced. The book is comprised of coupons for discounts at local merchants, with emphasis on restaurants that offer "buy one, get one free". The coupon book is produced in Port Angeles by Soroptimist, which means the money-raised stays on the Olympic Peninsula in the form of awards and grants to various worthwhile groups. All Soroptimist International members participate in selling these books. Each year a "kick-off" sales meeting is presented by the Elegant Gourmet Singers. These singers take a vaudevillian approach to promotion. A new theme is used each year with a new song, costumes and choreographed act that is taken on the road and on the air. They perform at other service clubs and community groups, many of which have breakfast meetings. Their performances produce a hefty sale of books. Soroptimist International of Port Angeles received first place for fundraising projects at the Federation of the Americas in Chicago in 1997 for their Elegant Gourmet Coupon Book. Through June 2000 the club has netted over \$100,00 from the sale of these books.

In addition to giving academic and vocational scholarships (which includes one to a small country school) many awards are given in recognition of students and women who have contributed their time and talents that have had a positive impact on the community. With Elegant Gourmet funds, they have been able to support the following:

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Recognition Awards: | Star Awards
Youth Citizenship Awards |
| Monetary Awards: | Girls State – Delegate
Business Week Delegate
Campships |
| One Time Grants: | Art Feiro Marine Lab – Touch Tank
Museum – Women's History room in restored Lincoln School
Museum
YMCA – Dishwasher
Library- Electronic Equipment
Art on the Town – Toward purchase of street art |
| Monetary Contributions: | Food Bank
Tuna Drive Contest with Rotary Club (14,000 cans)
Hospice
D.A.R.E. Program
Operation Uplift - A cancer support group
Safe Home Relief
Rose House - Furnished a room in a temporary home for
domestic violence victims that will accommodate a mother,
child and infant
Serenity House -Transitional housing for young adults to
rehabilitate them back into the work force
First Step Child Development
Port Angeles Waterfront Trail |

Service Activities:

Annual Salute Luncheon for Women & Wives of the Coast Guard
Dinner for visiting Japanese students
Host visiting International Soroptimist members
Host awards banquet for Port Angeles Person of the Year
Prepare over 100 Soroptibaskets of toiletries for needy young girls at Christmas
Furnish Toys for Tots at Christmas
Ring Bells at Salvation Army Kettle at Christmas time - Collected as much as \$3,000 one year, vying with Nor'Wester Rotary
Adopt a Highway Program - Litter pick up
Participate in International Days of Caring - Offer assistance to Senior Center and First Step Family Support Center
Cancer Walk - A candle light walk staged at Civic Field raising money for cancer research

Soroptimist International of Port Angeles has entertained exchange students and visitors from Norway, France, Japan, Rwanda, and England. Club members have billeted them, taken them on tours and had pot luck dinners. Some visits are through the Grant of Friendship.

In their efforts toward International Goodwill and Understanding, they regularly correspond with their sister club in Shizunai, Japan. And recently, the club had a special program to honor guests born outside the United States.

In 1995 the club voted to donate \$500 seed money to help with start up costs for the formation of a foundation, which was then created in 1996. It was formed for the purpose of receiving charitable contributions to support local community projects and scholarships. Earnings from the Endowment Fund will be used for charitable, educational, religious or scientific programs that aid women and children.

Soroptimist International of Port Angeles' most ambitious project began in May 1996 when the club voted to endorse a commitment of \$10,000 per year for five years to the completion of the Valley Creek Estuary Project under the aegis of the Port of Port Angeles. The project will create a new inter-tidal estuary in the vicinity of front and Cherry Streets along the Port Angeles harbor. It encompasses approximately 2.5 acres of property currently owned by the Port of Port Angeles. In addition, another 1.4 acres of the inter-tidal estuary will be created east of Port Angeles along the city waterfront trail in the vicinity of Morse Creek. Both sites will provide public access as well as opportunities to view wildlife in its natural state. Besides the obvious aesthetic benefits to the community, it is hoped that elements in the design of the estuary project will hopefully restore native fish runs to Valley Creek. The total cost of the project is estimated at \$1,500,000. Members have participated in soliciting grants, speaking at hearings and community functions including the sale of T-shirts and commemorative bricks. Members agreed that funds from Elegant Gourmet sales could not be used for the estuary project and will be funded separately.

There are over 50 organizations and businesses committed to this project. Not all of the donations are monetary; there have been donations of engineering, architecture and professional consultations.

A presentation at one of the local elementary schools resulted in the students desire to participate in the fund raising. They saved their pennies and presented them, all coin-wrapped, in a little red wagon. They had collected just over \$100 and stipulated they wished to purchase a trash receptacle for the Estuary.

The Inter-Relations Association of Port Angeles will be building a friendship bridge over the Estuary in recognition of its sister city in Mitsu City, Japan. There will be a Japanese garden on the West and two rooflines on the bridge signifying two cultures coming together.

On site construction began during the summer of 1997. An open house waterfront walk and FUN/D night celebrated in October 1999 netted \$15,101.74.

At the District Conference in Tacoma in October 1999, Port Angeles was presented the First Place Trophy for the 1999 "Soroptimist International Celebrating Success Award" in the Environment category for the Estuary Project.

In fifty years, great numbers of women have moved into new levels of professionalism. In this small club, there are bank managers, ministers, law enforcement personnel, adult educators, stockbrokers, counselors, nurses, attorneys, optometrists, and nurses. Membership has also been comprised of owners of food and beverage services, insurance agencies, pharmacies, daycare facilities, real estate agencies, optical labs, construction companies, retail clothing stores, shoe stores, furniture stores, newspaper, radio stations, and auto malls.

There have been a city mayor, city councilwoman, a member on the State Council for Aging and a member of the White House Conference on Aging. Honors by the Port Angeles Association of Realtors have been given to members for Affiliate of the Year, Realtor Spirit, Realtor of the Year and Realtor Achievement Award. There have been a national winner for Volunteerism, an Award for Media of the Year, a Political Action Award and City of Port Angeles Jim Abernathy Award for outstanding achievement by an employee.

Twenty-year member, Jeri Bawden, represented Soroptimist International of Port Angeles in 1997 on the district nominating committee. She served as Secretary of District #1 for two years and is currently the District Director for the year 2000.

On February 26, 1994, Soroptimist International of Port Angeles invited the public to an Open House at Vern Burton Community Center to commemorate their 50th Anniversary. Joan Sargent, mayor and a member of Soroptimist International of Port Angeles, issued a ★★proclamation thanking the club for their contributions and service to the community.

Displays of history and activities of the five Soroptimist groups including Port Angeles, Sequim, Port Townsend, and Forks as well as the Venture Club were featured. Recipients of Soroptimist contributions and awards had booths depicting what the monies had accomplished for them.

During a short ceremony, Vera MacDonald, a charter member now living in Oregon, was introduced and welcomed. A letter of congratulations from Janet Stevens, Governor of Northwest Region was read followed by entertainment and refreshments.

Today, Soroptimist International of Port Angeles' membership has grown to 92 and there are 260 Soroptimist among the five clubs. The Olympic Rain Forest Club has just chartered the North Beach Club in Ocean Shores with 19 charter members bringing the total to 278 on the Olympic Peninsula.

Soroptimists keep their pencils sharp and their enthusiasm working on projects to bring in the money they so enjoy giving away. The saying around town is "those Soroptimists' can do anything".

We've only just begun!

★★SOROPTIMIST PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, Soroptimist is the world's largest classified service club for women, serving communities in more than 80 countries around the world; and

WHEREAS, a Soroptimist is a woman who is devoted to the highest ideals of friendship, understanding, service and human dignity; and

WHEREAS, Soroptimists are professional women working together to improve the quality of life for all people and to advance the status of women in particular; and

WHEREAS, Soroptimist International of Port Angeles was chartered February 26, 1944;

WHEREAS, Soroptimist International of Port Angeles is inviting the public to an Open House at Vern Burton Community Center February 26, 1944;

NOW, THEREFORE, I JOAN K. SARGENT, URGE OUR CITIZENS TO JOIN ME IN THANKING THE MEMBERS OF Soroptimist International of Port Angeles for their contributions and service to our community and wish them happy 50th birthday.

Joan K. Sargent, Mayor
February 26, 1994