

DISTRICT 27 HISTORY in brief

Preface

The Centennial Anniversary Committee had asked Zonta districts to provide a brief history. A Zonta International History Book will be published in 2020 as part of celebrating Zonta's Centennial Anniversary in 2019. All clubs and districts shall contribute and thus, for District 27, a History and Archives Committee 2012-2014 was appointed to assist clubs to work on their histories and archives. Nearly all clubs in our district contributed by providing a brief club history. Of course these histories go all the way back to the times before District 27 once was founded in 1994.

The task has been to provide the District 27 History in brief, 3 pages in Arial, 11 points, in Word format (no pdf), without illustrations, up to 6 photographs added. However, as District 27 is a large district, we are finally submitting 4 pages. Relating files of documents (see attached list "Contents of Files") can be found on the District Website:

www.zonta-district27.org.

In the following, I am highlighting the characteristics of our District's history, together with the histories of our countries and areas, respectively. Of course it is not possible to mention all 77 clubs that make up for the numerous activities in our District. During my offices as Governor, Foundation Ambassador, Parliamentarian and Historian, I got to know many clubs and Zontians whose faces I can picture behind this impressive district history.

Thanks

This brief District 27 History would not have been possible without the support of our Clubs – thank you to all of you!

A big "Thank You" also to the Area / Country Historians and members of the History and Archives Committee 2012-2014:

Malgorzata Armatys (Poland)

Frieda Demey (Belgium)

Marianne Dwars (Germany Area 03)

Florence Fischer-Herber (Luxembourg)

Birgit Gutmann-Oks (Germany Area 07)

Geneviève Sauve (France)

Olha Sydorenko (Ukraine)

Hamburg, September 2014

Annette Binder.

A. Highlighting the District 27 History

Today's District 27 reaches from North-East France, Belgium, Luxembourg, North-East Germany to Poland and Ukraine. When you look at the map, these countries remind us of a chain across North Europe and so Malgorzata Armatys (ZC Warsaw) once proudly called District 27: "crown of Europe"...

Since its beginnings in June 1994, District 27 showed a rapid growth having started with 45 clubs and 1248 members in 4 Areas. Now, end of May 2014, it comprises 77 clubs and 1911 members in 7 Areas. During the last years, however, membership has been stagnating, loss mainly was balanced by chartering of new clubs.

There has been an increased commitment regarding support of the ZIF Award contests on club and district level resulting in several international award recipients of YWPA, JMK, and AE Awards. Over the years, significance of Zonta as an internationally recognized NGO has successfully been enhanced in the minds of Zontians. This is also reflected by the fact that several Zontians of District 27 have been engaged in offices on international level – on the ZI Board and Committees.

Never was it a problem to find Zontians for higher offices on district level. Moreover, in District 27 there has been a relatively balanced national representation in the sequence of Board positions and locations of Conferences. The District 27 atmosphere can be characterized by a friendly cooperation among Zontians of the various countries.

Looking through the reports of our Past Governors, all of them mention the international composition, and how rewarding it was for them to work with Zontians of so many various countries, despite the language problems.

It is also obvious that the active involvement of Polish and Ukrainian Zontians has been most significant and rewarding. Zontians of the West learned from their experience of life in non-democratic and under limited conditions. And Zontians from the East were striving for the experience of international friendship and networking to finally serve and improve their societies. Since some months, we have been feeling deeply concerned about the political and economical drawbacks in the Ukraine and the impact this might have on our fellow Zontians. However, from the beginning in 1994 there has been a tradition in our District to financially support these clubs.

The division of former District 14 was according to the historical conflict lines in Europe and based on certain criteria: no division of France and Germany, no division in a way that would leave the Eastern countries on their own, no division of North and South European countries. Some countries would only stay together in a whole Europe not in a part of it, among them Poland and Germany. Indeed, the design of District 27 contributed to rapid membership growth, increased Zonta friendship and networking across the borders, between East and West.

The history of District 27 has been a success story for Zonta International. For us, the District 27 Zontians, this success story is inspiring to continue working for Zonta's future – history in the making to advance the status of women.

B. Highlighting the District 27 History by Countries and Areas

GERMANY(Areas 03 and 07)

Hamburg was the first Zonta town in Germany, with the ZC Hamburg chartered as second club in Europe in 1931. Elizabeth Mc. K. Scott (ZC New York) had presented the Zonta idea to Harriet Wegener and Frieda Radel. Within a few months, 39 founding members made this idea reality. Since then, ZC Hamburg initiated several clubs: Dresden (1932), Munich (1952), Luebeck (1968), Hannover (1974), Hamburg-Elbufer (1987) and Dresden (1993). In these years in Nazi Germany, international organizations became forbidden, and two years after chartering, ZC Hamburg actively closed its official registering as a

charitable organization and continued to meet privately - up to now. Proudly we are looking upon these Zontians who did not exclude their Jewish fellow Zontians unlike other service organizations. However, sadly 6 founding members emigrated and 3 committed suicide.

After WWII, ZC Hamburg was revived and became an official member of ZI again (1949). As Club President from 1937 up into the year 1963, Harriet Wegener wisely led the club through these hard times. Meanwhile, there is a family of 5 clubs in Hamburg working well together and each of them has a character of its own.

Berlin, the German capital, is home of 3 clubs one of which is ZC Berlin (1966). In 1992, ZC Berlin 1989, the first club to unite women from former East and West Germany, was chartered. When ZC Berlin-Mitte was founded (2004), at that time the most natural way was to gather women from former East and West Germany. In Berlin, the history of Zonta clubs has always been closely connected to German history. Over the decades, Berlin Zontians experienced the cold war on a daily basis. When the wall finally was pulled down in 1989, the following changes had a tremendous impact on the clubs' advocacy and service activities. Also other German clubs located geographically close to the former border, actively supported service projects relating to refugees from East Europe.

Today many clubs have specialized on various kinds of educational support for younger women and girls. Outstanding is the cooperation with Femtec, a career-building program for students in natural science and technology initiated and led by ZC Berlin 1989. Over the last 20 years, German clubs have increasingly committed themselves in the ZIF program by offering ZIF awards but also by donating to the Foundation. Many of the fundraising projects have been established as a "tradition" making Zonta a brand in public. The significance of Zonta's internationality among German members has gained as well, also reflected by more Zontians in office positions on district and international levels.

In both German areas, there has been a rapid growth in membership mainly by chartering of new clubs. Zontians actively spread the word about the Zonta idea and obviously there has been a demand. Clubs like Luebeck and Bremen each founded several clubs. In order to improve area management, the former Area 03 split into 2 areas (03 and 07) from 2008-2010 on. Even in the recent years, new clubs have been developed, keeping Zonta and Zontians fresh and open for new ideas. In 2014, the first Golden-Z- Club in Germany was chartered by ZC Hamburg Hanse.

FRANCE (Area 02)

As Area Historian Geneviève Sauve concluded: "Here is the story of a happy Area – her only sorrow is the loss of ZC Montbard in 2011". Indeed, clubs of this Area have been enjoying to work together for Zonta's mission but also to celebrate success. Moreover, it is remarkable that Zontians of France reached out expanding Zonta to Poland and Ukraine.

In 1957, Zonta history in this region began with the charter of ZC Lyon. France de la Chaise Mutin (ZC Paris), a remarkable and famous Zontian who became the first and up to now only Zonta International President from France spread the word about Zonta. She also initiated several clubs in France and Belgium and brought Zonta to Poland (ZC Warsaw, 1991).

Two other French Zontians helped introducing Zonta to another Eastern country - to the Ukraine. When ZC Warsaw founded ZC Lviv, Past Governors Annie Becquer and Jacqueline Shernetzky advised the new club in Lviv, later also Lviv-Zamok and Odessa.

As a great result of Franco-German friendship, ZC Dijon was founded in 1980 (by Ursula Blaise, a German living in Dijon). Later on Ursula Bouchard (originating from Germany as well) created a new club in Beaune (1994). Franco-German life on a daily basis has been experienced by members of ZC Wissembourg, a club originally founded in Alsace /

France by 19 women from Germany (living and working on both sides of the border) and 5 women from France! Within 10 years, membership has found balance regarding members from both countries. However, language is an ongoing challenge, and all spoken words need to be translated.

There is a remarkably high level of cooperation between the clubs of this Area. Not only inter-club celebrations of events but also mutual achievements like the national book "Famous Women In Our Regions" (2006). Recently ZC Nevers initiated a literary contest "Salon des Dames" in which 50 women authors compete each year for an award for the best novel. Since 2014, this contest has been spread throughout Zonta in France, several local panels of a total of 100 judges select the best feminine novel author.

BELGIUM (in Areas 01, 05, 06)

"Give Women Wings" is the Belgium interpretation of Zonta's mission to advance the status of women, the biennial theme of Past Governor Frieda Demey. Zonta in Belgium was initiated by France de la Chaise Mutin, the first club was founded in 1967 (ZC Bruxelles).

Zonta life in Belgium is very active, cooperative and cheerful, facilitated by short distances and close neighbourhood of the clubs. Moreover, the revision of area organization regarding the Flemish-speaking members in Areas 05 and 06 and the French-speaking members in Area 01 (Belgium Central-South and Luxemburg) led to an even better communication and cooperation. There was rapid membership growth, and several new clubs were founded. Having 3 Area Boards in function means also an increased number of Zontians engaged in office and committee positions. Belgium has provided the largest number of Governors (and before District 27 was founded, 2 International Directors: Irène Verschuren 1986-1988 and Mimi Raemdonck 1988-1990).

Service, Advocacy and Fundraising actions have been inspired by the close European institutions located in Brussels, i.e. regarding speakers for public lectures. Also, the presence of the royal family at fundraising events could smartly become utilized for greater visibility in public.

Belgium clubs have been working intensively on the issue of "Umbilical Cord Blood Carrying Stem Cells" (initiated by Lief Aerts and Agnes Vermeulen). A resolution was adopted at the Convention in New York (2004) by the delegates of the whole Zonta world: ZI will support the goal that women should be the only producers and owners of egg cells and umbilical stem cells.

LUXEMBOURG (in Area 01)

Zonta was brought to Luxembourg by Belgium Zontians (Claire de Somer, Mimi Raemdonck, Josette Hecht). Soon after the charter of ZC Luxembourg (1993), its members spread the Zonta spirit and created clubs throughout the country: ZC Esch-sur-Alzette (1996), ZC Eisléck (1999) and ZC Luxembourg- Multiculturel (2002), the latter founded with members from 10 different nations, thus reflecting the international significance of Luxembourg.

"I am looking forward to many more years of friendship and commitment in our club" – these are the words of Historian Florence Fischer-Herber (ZC Luxembourg). In fact, besides working for Zonta's mission, this club has been discovering and valuing especially Zonta friendship. By spending time together travelling to various towns in Europe and visiting local Zonta clubs, its members created a strong bond of Zonta friendship.

Frequent advocacy activities were organized together by the clubs of Luxembourg which strengthened power, visibility and outcome of their clubs. In 2013, Viviane Reding (Vice President of the European Commission) spoke at an inter-generational workshop organized by the ZC Luxembourg-Multiculturel.

Several Zontians of Luxembourgian clubs have been working on district level – on the Board and in Committees, forwarding the work process due to their multiple language skills.

POLAND and UKRAINE (Area 04)

Poland

Cited from Historian Malgorzata Armatys (ZC Warsaw): “We had to learn all starting from basics and we had the best teachers - Zontians from France, Germany and Switzerland.” Some years later, Polish Zontians proudly passed on the support they once received to the Ukrainian clubs.

Zonta history in Poland began during several visits of France de la Chaise Mutin. Around 1988 and 1989, she met Jadwiga Jablonska. As a result, ZC Warsaw was chartered in 1991, followed by clubs in Krakow and Gdansk (both 1993), supported and sponsored by various French and German Zonta Clubs.

Only ZC of Warsaw grew to an internationally well-recognized Club, whereas, the Zonta Clubs of Krakow and Gdansk were disbanded in 2003 and 2010, respectively, due to local membership problems. ZC Warsaw built relationships to Zontians all over the world by organizing several sightseeing tours on the occasion of club anniversaries and conventions in Europe. But also international panel discussions and seminars took place. ZC Warsaw proudly presented several international ZIF awards to girls and young women. Altogether, these efforts contributed to the recognition of ZC Warsaw locally and in the international Zonta world.

Ukraine

From the beginning, it was clear for the Polish Zontians to promote Zonta in Ukraine, a country charged with good and bad emotions in the historical memory of Poles. In 1995, Olha Sydorenko from Lviv listened to the Polish radio station when Jadwiga Jablonska from Warsaw presented a News Briefing about Zonta. Olha took action and finally in 1997, was Club President of the newly chartered ZC Lviv, actively supported by the French Past Governors Annie Becquer and Jacqueline Shernetzky.

Thanks to Olha, Annie and Jacqueline, some years later also ZC Lviv-Zamok (2001) could become established, as well as a third club in Odessa (2002). The fourth Ukrainian club, ZC Uzhgorod, was founded in 2003 by ZC Corvallis / USA (Pete Bober) as a result of a sister city association. Since then several visits were exchanged between Zontians of Corvallis and Uzhgorod. For some years, also ZC Hamburg-Alster / Germany supported ZC Uzhgorod by donating to their local service projects and exchanging visits. Financial support by the District had meanwhile been decreased in order to initiate clubs being self-supporting.

Hamburg, September 2014

Annette Binder.