



Dietlind Stuerz (left) stands with Regula Dannecker, Heidi v. Lesczinski and Anita Schnetzer-Spranger, at the 2012 Zonta International Convention in Torino, Italy. They are wearing red scarves they were given by Swiss Zontians.

My best memory from Convention is staying together with like-minded fellow Zontians and to sharing the familiar atmosphere with other nations.

Before arriving at Convention, I want to know the agenda, schedule, the candidates, the new foundation projects, the finances, the evening performances, more about the trips, and the accommodations.

This year, I am looking forward to meeting friends, to getting new Zonta information, and seeing Orlando, Florida.

I went to convention last year to hear about the actual Foundation projects, to meet friends, to applaud the International board, and my friend International Director Anita Schnetzer-Spranger as well as Governor Sonia, and to visit this amazing European Capital, Turin.

Dietlind Stuerz

Zonta Club of Burg Staufenberg/Giessen Area, Germany



Orlene Marks Shimberg (right) stands with a fellow Zontian, from Germany, that she met at her first convention in Torino, Italy in 2012.

No amount of talk prior to attending a Zonta International convention prepares you for the awesome experience that occurs for a member interested in the work that the international organization does to support our mission. The experience also enables one to better lead a local club. Zonta suggests that we give 33% of the funds we raise to ZI. Going to convention tells you why that is a reasonable expectation.

My best memory of Torino was not any single event. Although the splendid flag ceremony evoked tears of pride and joy, and the single act of voting for my club

and a sister club was powerful, the best memory is of the concerted way Zontians around the globe work together to accomplish so much for less fortunate women. Of course, I greatly enjoyed hearing directly from the women who have won major Zonta awards over the years. Their eloquent talks were memorable. I also appreciated learning from the women in leadership of ZI, and I was impressed by many talented women who ran for elected offices.

Before arriving at the conference, I wish our delegation had known that our hotel did not have frequent and reasonably priced transportation available to reach the convention center. When you are traveling at your club's expense, you want to use the least expensive mode of transportation, not the most expensive. The walk was also much further than stated in the literature we received.

Looking forward to future conventions, I'd have to say that the opportunity to interact with women and a few men from all around the globe is a most memorable experience. Having been an educator in the field of world geography, it was an opportunity of a lifetime for me. Although we didn't always agree with the ideas presented by one another, we were generally respectful and listened well to the voices of our sisters in Zonta International. The leadership at the convention was excellent. It facilitated expeditiously the amount that was accomplished during the week. Each one of us is fortunate and intelligent in having selected Zonta International to be the organization that we support, endorse, and work diligently for as we aspire to achieve laudable goals.

Orlene Marks Shimberg

Past President of the Sanibel-Captiva Chapter of Zonta International

What is your best memory from Convention?

I remember sitting in my first International Convention, Melbourne 2006, and seeing my first presentations on the Zonta International Foundation Projects. There were field visits, and photos, and real life stories of the women from Africa and Central Europe who were experiencing these projects and were empowered to improve their lives. For me, the International Projects changed from just being written briefings to living projects, engaged women working on establishing micro-credit in Niger and anti-trafficking interventions in Bosnia-Herzegovina. I was no longer alienated in Australia, but understood with new clarity the contribution our ZIF Projects bring to individual women and whole communities.



What is something you wish you knew before arriving at Convention that you want to tell your fellow Zontian?

Planning! You can just turn up at Convention and attend the sessions. You'll have a great time learning more about Zonta and catching up with your Zonta friends. Or you could have a sensational time with a bit of research and planning. Orlando is one of the world's busiest tourism destinations so book your favourite tour or restaurant in advance to guarantee you can enjoy that special event with your international friends.

What are you looking forward to next year?

OH – so many things! The speeches from our Zonta Awards Program winners. Those young ladies have astonishing achievements, often overcoming complex, maybe dangerous, barriers. I am re-energised for my Zonta projects and their work is making the world a better place by advancing the status of women!

The interactive events in the Conference Program. Zontians are intelligent, hardworking, smart women and this Program asks us each to contribute in the workshops and the Trade Show: Zonta Style. How exciting to participate and learn from each other in a dynamic style.

Finally, I am so glad to show off Orlando to my closest Zonta friends. International Convention 2014 will finally bring together two of my loves: Disney and Zonta! Having visited many times, I can share my secret insider tips and favourite activities such as kayaking the swamps, the Tiffany glass at Winter Park and the adult side of Walt Disney World.

Leanne has visited Orlando many times and is writing a blog: *'Mrs. Banks goes to Convention'* (www.mrsbanksgoestoconvention.blogspot.com.au) to encourage Zontians to come to Convention, reinvigorate their engagement with Zonta and have a 'jolly holiday' in Orlando.

Leanne Elliott, Secretary of District 24 Board
Zonta Club of Canberra Breakfast, Australia



Donna Mae Schlueter (right photo) stands ready to leave for her first closing banquet at the 1978 Zonta International Convention in Denver, CO, USA. Left Photo: Past International Presidents Annikki Makinen and Cornelia Hodges at the 44th Zonta International Convention.

Everyone knows who she is. She's the "gal with the big hair". And if you've been to a convention since 1978, you've probably met Donna Mae Schlueter.

Donna Mae (or Donna, as she answers to both) attended her first Zonta International Convention in 1978 in Denver, CO, USA and has been an advocate not only for Zonta, but for Zonta Conventions ever since.

Calling it the "Zonta bug", Donna Mae feels a renewal to Zonta when attending convention. "I look forward to conventions because we get our Zonta fix," she said on phone interview from her hometown of Mascoutah, IL, USA. "We get to renew old friendships... We get to meet people we haven't met."

Thinking back to one of her favorite memories, Donna Mae recalls a meeting with Past International President Cornelia Hodges when she was running for First Vice President. With a smile in her voice, she remembers telling Cornelia, "If there's anything I can do at convention, let me know. Later [Cornelia] said 'you offered to do my hair. Will you do it?'" Donna Mae laughed as she said what Past International President Evelyn DeWitt, replied to when she overheard the request: "She said 'oh my god Cornelia! You're not elected International President, and you already have a hairstylist in the room.'"

Favored memories and interactions with her Zonta friends like this are not the only reasons why Donna Mae goes to convention. What she really takes away each time, is hearing about the Zonta International Service Projects from the members, supporters and witnesses who have seen the projects and their impacts first-hand. Growing up in a small town in the middle of the United States, Donna Mae admits not previously knowing about the difficulties that women around the world can face, like fistula. But, she says, she wouldn't be able to share stories about these difficulties if she didn't go to convention to hear about them and get a true visual. "It is an opportunity to meet people and make a difference in everybody's life," she said. "We touch people's lives all around the world that we may or may not ever have the chance to meet."

Although money was not easy to come by for Donna Mae during the first few conventions, she saved and got to go. "My priority is Zonta," she said. "I was told a dollar a day and you're on your way" when convention was held in Australia in the 1980s. "I saved \$7 a week, which was a lot in 1980." With this mindset, Donna Mae has been able to go to Zonta International Conventions in Hong Kong, Paris, San Diego, Washington D.C., Finland and Sweden, just to name a few.

Another reason why you'll always see Donna Mae at convention is to make sure Zonta survives. "I want it to be there and for everybody," she said. "It's a great opportunity to meet, help and serve people and stand up for what is right. If you do not go to convention, Zonta is not going to be there. By attending convention, it ensures the longevity of Zonta. It's about keeping the ball rolling - keeping what we're all about going - getting the new member's enthusiasm. We need to promote to those young people. The young people have a tough world, so much bigger. Years ago we didn't have that. Really, it's all about working together as one world."

Zonta is all about sharing and caring for Donna Mae, and "if it's in your heart- you'll find a way."

Donna Mae Schlueter

Zonta Club of Mascoutah Area, USA