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REMEMBRANCES OF MY YEAR AS PRESIDENT  
1988-89

My year as president was exciting. I recall coming up with the idea of one major fund raising event for the year and raising \$10,000 in each of May 1988 and May 1989.

Being the first "official" female President of a Rotary club in the world was an unbelievable and unforgettable experience. Many of my most vivid memories are of the time prior to my taking office.

I will never forget the PETS (President Elect Training Seminar) which I attended in March, 1988 at the Sheraton Hotel for two (2) days. It seems that my reservation had somehow slipped through the cracks, and no one was aware that a female would be attending for the first time. When I checked in at noon, it was quite obvious that a female was not expected by the shocked and surprised looks on the faces of the men present. They didn't know what to say to me. Our District Governor tried to be polite but his tongue was tied.

I promptly went to my room and became very nervous about the whole weekend. There was a cocktail party scheduled at 6:00 p.m. before the opening banquet. At about 6:00 p.m., I decided it was time to make my appearance. I exited the elevator on the Ballroom level, took a deep breath, and headed toward the sea of men (all 430 of them) in the foyer. Someone noticed me and my present-elect badge that proved I was "one of them". He whispered to the man next to him, who whispered to the man next to him, and so on. All of a sudden, the men stopped talking and a path opened up for me. It reminded me of Moses parting the Red Sea. I headed to the bar, smiling and acknowledging the hellos. I ordered a coke, nervously paid for it, then turned around to face my peers. A man walked up to me, introduced himself, and shook my hand, welcoming me to PETS. That started it. I don't know how many hands I shook in that hour before the banquet, but I never got to drink my coke.

It was now time to go into the Ballroom for dinner and I was invited to join a table of men from Oregon. Opening speeches were made, and, of course, many of the speeches included jokes which were somewhat "sexist". When a wife was part of any joke, she was referred to as a "Rotary Ann". It was obvious that the speakers had not been told that there was a female president-elect in the audience. The Rotary men sitting near me looked very embarrassed and concerned for me. At one point, a speaker told a "sexist" joke and then his eyes met mine. He did a double-take, looked right at me, appeared embarrassed, and changed the whole content of his speech.

The rest of the weekend was wonderful, with everyone wanting to meet me and almost every question having to do with women in Rotary.

Another memorable experience was the International Convention in Philadelphia in May 1988, which was a month before I took office. There were 25,000 Rotarians at the Convention from all over the world. I was so proud to be one of them. One afternoon, I attended a forum on "Women in Rotary". It was exciting — people from all over the world expressing their opinions for or against women in Rotary. I was welcomed by many. The only bad experience I had was when a man from Germany noticed my "president-elect" ribbon, looked at me with disgust on his face, said "your club must have been in a lot of trouble to elect a women as president" and then walked away. I was so shocked I couldn't respond before he left.

During my presidency, I visited other clubs who were coping with the question of women in Rotary. Some of the questions I received included the following: "What will you women do if you get pregnant and can't make the meeting requirements?", "What will you wear to meetings, dresses or pants?", and "Some Rotary wives are concerned that some of the single women in a club will have affairs with their husbands ... isn't this a concern of you women?"

All I can say is, thank you, Hwa-Tsun, for "twisting my arm" and talking me into accepting the nomination as the first official female president of a Rotary Club, our Rotary Club. I will never forget that wonderful year of my life.