

## **Zonta 100 intermezzo 1 1919-1939**

Dear Zontians,

My name is Amelia Earhart, woman, aviation pioneer, proud member of Zonta.

I joined Zonta as a member of Boston Zonta club.

The confederation of Zonta clubs was founded in 1919 in Buffalo, USA and Mary Jenkins was the first elected president. By the time I became a member, about ten years later, Zonta was an international organization thanks to the founding of a club in Toronto in 1927.

Just a few weeks after I became a member, I was inducted into Zonta International. I served as an active member first in the Boston club and later in the New York club. I tributed especially to one of the ideals of Zonta International: actively promoting women to take on non-traditional fields. I wrote articles about aviation for Cosmopolitan magazine as an associate editor, served as a career counselor to women university students, and lectured at Zonta club meetings, urging members to interest themselves in aviation.

Outside our 'Zontaworld' was and is a lot going on. After years of campaigning, the women's suffrage movement finally achieved what they wanted for such a long time. In several countries around the world, women got the right to vote. Yet, there is still a lot of work to do before men and women have equal rights, not only in politics.

In America, president Wilson suffered a blood clot which made him totally incapable of performing the duties of the presidency; the First Lady, Edith Wilson, stepped in and assumed his role. She controlled access to the president and made policy decisions on his behalf. When something needed to be signed or written, she wrapped her hand around his and scrawled words with a pen. The French ambassador to the United States reported back to his superiors that Wilson was a non-factor in governance. The real power rested with "Madame President."

Some people may say that the next subject I want to mention is of less importance but I think it meant a lot to women: our clothes became more wearable. Women said goodbye to the corset, we cut our hair, wear trousers and the length of our skirts became shorter and shorter.

The stock exchange crash on Wallstreet unfortunately has led to a great depression in America and to an economic crisis in Europe and South America. The political situation is tense.

On the other hand, innovation is still going on. You can imagine that I have a special interest in the booming aviation industry. I was the first women who made a solo flight across the Great Ocean and across the Atlantic Ocean.

Now it is May 1937 and I am preparing for the longest flight ever made. A flight across the world. A flight of fourty seven thousand kilometers. I am excited. Nobody did this before.

I have written a letter to my husband George Putnam saying, "Please know that I am quite aware of the hazards. I want to do it because I want to do it. Women must try to do things as men have tried. When they fail, their failures must be a challenge to others."

Thank you.

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## **Zonta 100 intermezzo 2 1939-1959**

Dear Zontians,

My name is Karen-Margrethe Ahlmann-Ohlsen.

Twenty years ago, in 1939, the world looked rather different from nowadays. Before the Second World War there were several Zonta clubs founded in Europe. By the time Hitler and the Nazis had taken power several clubs got a difficult time. For example the club in Hamburg. They were ordered to exclude Jewish Members but the Hamburg Zontians did not want to. They decided not to be incorporated any longer. Instead of that, they continued to meet secretly in private, despite the danger.

Before the war, clubs from different countries visited each other regularly. The war put also an end to that. And after the war, it took some years before everything was back to normal.

In 1945 the United Nations were founded. Zonta cooperated closely with this organisation. 'Action for World Peace' was Zonta's program theme in 1946 and 1947. This appealed to European Business and Professional Woman and an exciting growth of Zonta in Europe began. Member of Zonta Club Reykjavik, Ellen Sighvatsson was the prime mover organizing the clubs in London and Paris. In 1948, she was asked if she would go to England and help organize a club in London, as she was going there on business anyway. She was also asked to go to Paris. In three weeks, they had the making of a Zonta club in London and in another week Zonta club Paris was on its way.

Soon the existing clubs sponsored new clubs in their countries. The dream of Marian de Forest, founding member of Zonta, became true: the old world was linked to the new one. On both sides of the ocean, Zonta brought together women in executive positions and helped them reach their rightful places in the professions that rarely had women leaders.

In other parts of society, women also fought for a rightful place. Women like Rosa Parks, an American civil rights activist. At the first of December in nineteen fiftyfive, in Montgomery, Alabama, Rosa rejected the bus driver's order to relinquish her seat in the "colored section" to a white passenger, after the whites-only section was filled. She was arrested for civil disobedience in violating Alabama segregation laws.

In May 1959 I have attended the third Inter European Zonta Conference in Copenhagen. After my lecture on the refugee situation in Europe, we debated the refugee problem as service project of Zonta international. The project was adopted by the delegates and later by

the American districts. For the collected sum, a house will be built in Pater Peer's refugees town called Anne Frank Town, situated near Wuppertal in Western Germany.

When I reflect on the past years, I see women fighting for their rights. But I also see that most parents had narrow expectations for girls. Their destiny was to be marriage, a home and a family, with work just an interim measure between leaving school and walking down the aisle, rather than a career. For us, Zontians, this is not enough. We will keep on working on our mission.

Thank you.

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### **Zonta 100 intermezzo 3 1959-1979**

Dear Zontians,

My name is Helvi Sipilä.

I am glad to stand in front of you. I was the first International President of Zonta outside the US and I will give you a glimpse in the sixties and seventies of the last century.

Well organised. That is what we are. In the first 32 years of Zonta clubs in Europe, we were so called non-districted. In 1962 Zonta International founded District thirteen, comprising thirty one Nordic Zonta clubs and District fourteen, comprising twenty one clubs from Austria, England, France, Switzerland and Germany. Since that time we expanded our clublife to a lot of other countries not even in Western Europe but also in the Middle East. Unfortunately some stayed just for a short time. Portugal and Turkey left us and so has recently Iran, due to the revolution.

The world is changing so fast. The past years were really exciting. The sky is not the limit anymore, since Neil Armstrong became the first man to step on the moon. The introduction of the birth control pill gave people more freedom and for the first time countries got female prime ministers: in 1960 in Ceylon, in 1966 Indira Gandhi in India and Golda Meïr in Israël.

The sixties were a time of radical protest and flower power, polarization, experimentation, and upheaval. Depending on one's point of view, they are the source of everything good or everything evil in contemporary life.

Betty Friedan published the book *The Feminine Mystique*. It was the start of the second feminist wave. This wave focused on issues of equality and discrimination. The slogan: 'The Personal is Political' identified women's cultural and political inequalities. In her book, Betty Friedan criticized the idea that women could find fulfilment only through childrearing and homemaking.

As Zonta we made progress in getting positions of influence. In nineteen sixty three Zonta International was granted roster-level status by the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

In nineteen sixty eight I was elected International President. That same year, Zonta's contributions reached the amount of one million US Dollars. Can you imagine what that meant to our service projects!

The global ethos of the seventies included increasingly flexible and varied gender roles for women in industrialized societies. More women could enter the work force. However, the gender role of men remained as that of a breadwinner.

Nineteen seventy five was the UN International Women's Year. Zonta International President Eleanor Jammal and UN Committee Chairman Harriette Yeckel served as Zonta's official delegates to the UN International Conference in Mexico City, Mexico. And I, Helvi Sipilä, served as secretary-general. It was a great experience, this first world congress on women's issues. There we started to work on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. And we are still working on it.

The work of Zonta is never done.

Thank you.

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#### **Zonta 100 intermezzo 4 1979-1999**

Dear Zontians,

My name is Jane Fonda. Actress, fitness guru, activist and feminist

Why am I telling this? What does it have to do with Zonta? Some people would say 'nothing'. I want to express that women can do a lot of things and that we do not have to stick to just one role. I started acting in the early fifties. I became famous as Hanoi Jane protesting against the Vietnam War and last decade I released my first exercise video. *Jane Fonda's Workout*, which became the highest-selling video of all time. It was the first of twenty-two such videos over the next thirteen years, which would collectively sell over seventeen million copies. They say this was considered one of the influences that started the fitness craze among baby boomers, then approaching middle age.

I admire Zonta for your mission, actions and projects. I can make a long list of things you can be proud of:

In nineteen eighty three, Zonta is granted consultative status with the Council of Europe.

In nineteen eighty four, the Zonta International Foundation was established.

In nineteen eighty six Zonta International became the first NGO to support the United Nations Development Fund for Women.

In nineteen eighty the Young Women in Public Affairs Award was established.

And you are with so many: more than thousands clubs, all over the world.

The growth of Zonta had led to a huge District fourteen. In nineteen ninety four, District 14 split into new districts. This seemed the most appropriate approach to deal with new diversity and complexity in Post-Cold War Europe. You, gathered in this room, belong to the then founded District 29. By that time, the District had clubs in France, Russia, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

The nineteen eighties saw extreme advances in technology, with the World Wide Web, the first gene therapy trial, and the first designer babies all emerging in nineteen eighty and being improved and built upon throughout the decade. The Cold War ended. More nations than ever before are led by elected women Presidents and Prime Ministers.

In popular culture, pop group the Spice Girls also played a part in the feminist movement, boosting popularity with their slogan "Girl Power!", while country music Shania Twain declared female dominance in her 1995 hit song "Any Man of Mine".

For many years, I feared to call myself a feminist, because I believed that all feminists were "anti-male". But now, with my increased understanding of patriarchy, I feel that feminism is beneficial to both men and women.

I protest against violence to women. I've been sexually abused as a child and I've been fired because I wouldn't sleep with my boss. My mother also was sexually abused as a kid and that may have led to her suicide. One of the great things the women's movement has done is to make us realize that rape and abuse are not our fault. We were violated and it's not right.

In nineteen eighty eight Zonta International Strategies to End Violence Against Women project was adopted as an on-going program. You can image that I am very happy with that. We have to raise our voice. You and me. All of us.

Thank you.

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### **Zonta 100 intermezzo 5 1999-2019**

Dear Zontians,

My name is Odile Marie from Zonta club L'Havre.

I am the last one to speak to you on the occasion of the centennial anniversary of Zonta. For a hundred year old, we are very alive and kicking.

In the past two decades, we lost a couple of clubs, but we also chartered new ones. We lost Ireland and Scotland, and Goudadeloupe and Spain joined our District. At this moment, we are with seventy two active clubs and sixteen hundred and twelve active members, men and women.

Men are encouraged to join Zonta clubs. Zonta International recognizes that gender equality is not a women's issue, but a human rights issue. In two thousand seventeen, Zonta International announced support for UN Women's HeForShe campaign. The global campaign aims to mobilize one billion men to accelerate the achievement of gender equality. Through innovative online, offline and mobile phone technology, HeForShe identifies and activates men and boys in every city, community and village around the world.

We continue our work to end violence against women. The Zonta Says No to Violence Against Women annual campaigns were launched in two thousand twelve. We Orange the World, sixteen days, from October twenty fifth to Human Rights Day, December tenth.

Zonta is prepared for the future.

German clubs began with programs for mentoring, encouraging especially young female migrants in working with them for better school and other educational chances. The program Great Girls meet Great Women was initiated to bring together girls in the time between the end of the school and the beginning of the university.

The dinners for the Amelia Earhart Awardees in the United Kingdom are a wonderful opportunity for young women to build a network and so does the alumnae meeting of the Young Women in Public Affairs. Those young women can be, should be, a part of the future of Zonta. It is not only a big chance but also our duty to stay in contact with them. To facilitate them and to inspire them to work with us.

Zonta is worth celebrating.

Hundred years is a good reason to give a party. In all our areas are festivities to celebrate what we have achieved during the past decades and to look forward to what still needs to be done. The German area was divided in two just a year ago. Nevertheless the new areas still work together. They are preparing a spectacular centennial party.

Over the years Zonta International has been and still is a leading global organization of professionals, empowering women worldwide through service and advocacy. We envision a world in which women's rights are recognized as human rights and every woman is able to achieve her full potential. In such a world, women have access to all resources and are represented in decision making positions on an equal basis with men. In such a world, no woman lives in fear of violence.

Thank you.