

January 19, 2023

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**Soroptimist
International
of Sacramento
celebrates 100 years
of community service**
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Soroptimist International of Sacramento celebrates 100 years of community service

By Pat McConahay and
Lance Armstrong

This year, Soroptimist International of Sacramento (SIS) is celebrating its 100th anniversary.

Soroptimist volunteers throughout the world have a mission to provide women and girls with access to the education and training they need to achieve economic empowerment.

The word, Soroptimist, is a combination of "soror," the Latin word for "sister," and "optima," the Latin word for "best." Soroptimist can be interpreted as "the best for women."

The Soroptimist movement began with the creation of its first chapter, which was officially chartered in Oakland as Soroptimist Club, Inc. on Sept. 26, 1921. Its original members consisted of about 80 Oakland area business and professional women.

An installation dinner for that new organization was held in the Ivy Room of the Hotel Oakland on Oct. 3, 1921.

The original chapter is recognized today as the "founder club," and has also been called the "mother club."

In the first constitution of the Oakland club, which was initially led by its founding president, Violet Richardson, the purpose of that club was described as follows:

"To foster the spirit of service as the basis of all worthy enterprises, and to increase the efficiency by its members in the pursuit of their occupations by broadening their interest in the social, business and civic affairs of the community through an association of women representing different occupations."

Soroptimist International of Sacramento has the distinction of being one of the oldest Soroptimist chapters in the world.

An early reference to Soropti-

mist presence in Sacramento was recorded in the Sept. 23, 1922 edition of The Sacramento Bee.

"Mrs. Helena M. Gamble of Oakland is in Sacramento organizing a local branch of the Soroptimist Club," notes an article in that edition. "Mrs. Gamble is the state organizer for the club."

At the time that this Bee article was published, there were only three Soroptimist chapters, with the other chapters, besides Oakland, being located in San Francisco and Los Angeles. Another chapter was then in the process of being established in Washington, D.C.

The inaugural Soroptimist meeting in Sacramento was held on Oct. 27, 1922 in the Tapestry Room of the Hotel Sacramento at 10th and K streets. It marked the first of this local organization's weekly luncheons.

Included in the program for that initial meeting was a speech by Richardson, and vocal performances by Irma Randolph of Oakland.

The Hotel Sacramento was also the site of a special banquet on March 2, 1923, in which then-recently elected officers were installed by Richardson.

Those officers were Winifred Louthain, president; Pearl Atkinson, vice president; Lula Adams, treasurer; and Emilie Connelly, secretary.

Among the special guests in attendance at the banquet were Gov. Friend W. Richardson and California first lady Augusta (Felder) Richardson, and Sacramento Mayor Albert Elkus and his wife, Cordelia (DeYoung) Elkus.

Charter members of the Sacramento chapter came from such diverse fields as law, engraving and growing olives.

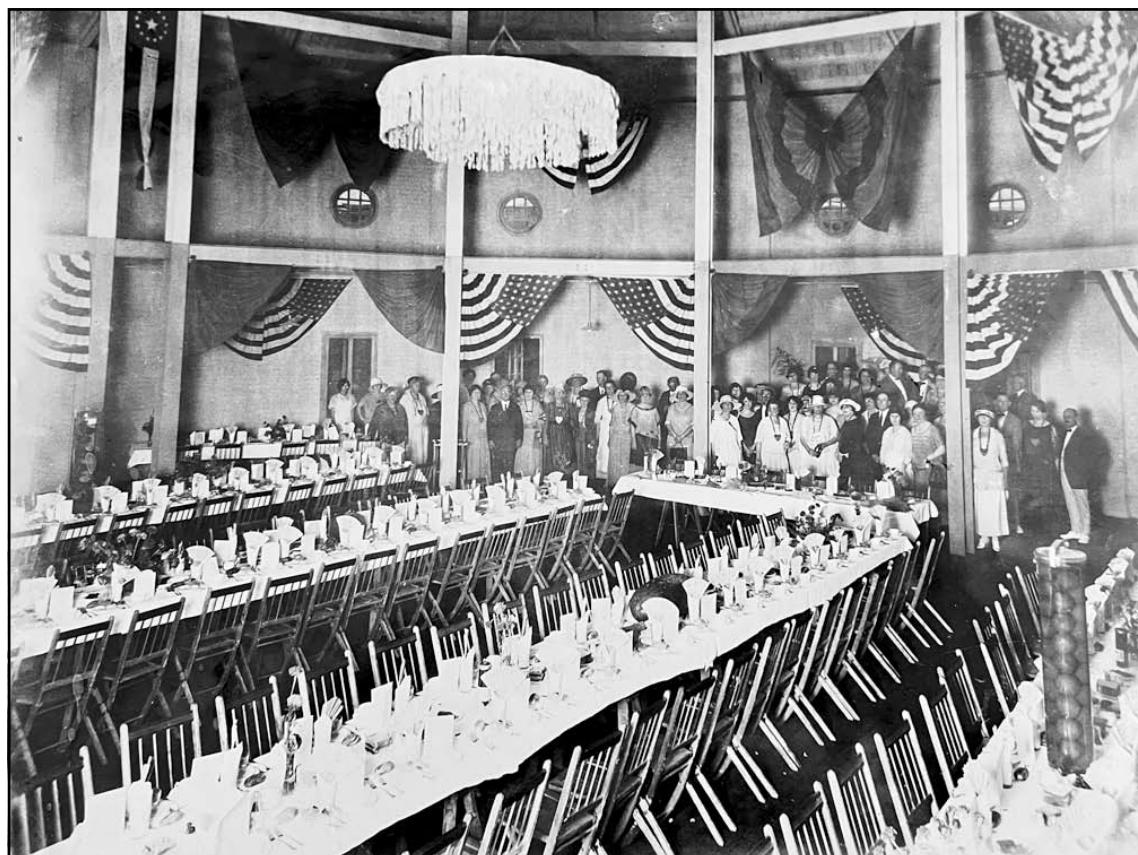
During this local organiza-

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Soroptimist International of Sacramento Christmas party, 1949.

Photos courtesy of Soroptimist International of Sacramento



Pictured is a historic scene from the local Soroptimist club's annual California State Fair dinner.

Soroptimist:

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tion’s first few decades, it funded a wide range of community projects, including trees for Sacramento, a station wagon for Easterseals, laying the YWCA cornerstone at 1122 17th St., and contributing to boys and girls clubs.

“We evolved from being a women’s service organization, supporting many different

causes, to focusing on issues related to women and girls,” said Idelle Claypool, who served as SIS president in 2015. “This not only allowed us to take on some critical issues, but it also gave the organization a specific identity.”

Soroptimist International of Sacramento celebrated its 50th anniversary with a gathering at the Elks Building at 11th and J streets on March 23, 1973.

The event, titled “A Day to

Remember,” included a choral group performing music from 1923 to 1973.

Chairing the program was Carolyn Johnson, and special guests included Sacramento City Council Member Anne Rudin and Sacramento County Supervisor Sandra Smoley.

Many recipients of the services of local Soroptimists have expressed appreciation for the assistance they received.

One such recipient was Shelby Scott, who received an SIS scholarship that led to her earning a bachelor’s degree in women’s and gender studies at California State University, Sacramento.

“The scholarship gave me hope – the hope that I could complete my education and be able to support myself and my child,” Scott said. “The scholarship not only covered some school materials, it helped me pay basic bills for

my daughter and me, so I could concentrate on school.”

Today, Scott works with a program that helps youth with literacy and how to advocate for themselves.

SIS disperses about \$20,000 annually to women, so they can continue their education.

The “Dream Scholarship” is one of several programs the Sacramento chapter participates in as part of the global volunteer organization.

Soroptimists are dedicated to helping women and girls overcome challenges by pursuing education and training, so they can successfully support themselves and, in some cases, their families.

“We’re proud of our mission to educate women and girls, because through education they are less vulnerable to sex traffickers, more likely to leave a domestic violence situation, and less likely to live in poverty,” said SIS President Karen Smith.

That is certainly true for Nicole Openshaw, who benefited from another Soroptimist International of Sacramento program, called the “Live Your Dream” awards.

“For the first time, I, felt recognized for the individual that I am, despite what I’ve gone through,” Openshaw said.

When Openshaw received a nearly \$5,000 grant, she and her daughter, who is a preschool student, were living in a shelter for women escaping sex trafficking and domestic violence.

The “Live Your Dream” award allows women, like Openshaw, who are the heads of their households, to pursue a college degree or complete a technical training program.

They may use the funds in any way that helps them achieve their educational goals – whether it is to pay for tuition, rent or child care.

Openshaw was able to buy a car to get to and from Sacramen-

CROSSWORD

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CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Not invited
- 6. Whale ship captain
- 10. One point south of southwest
- 14. Small cavity in a rock
- 15. Recidivists
- 17. City of Angels hoopster
- 19. A way to mark with one’s signature
- 20. OJ trial judge
- 21. Rice cooked in broth
- 22. One point east of due south
- 23. One point east of southeast
- 24. Complements an entree
- 26. Grouped by twos
- 29. Disfigure
- 31. Woods
- 32. Political action committee
- 34. Longer of 2 bones in the forearm
- 35. Kin groups
- 37. Philippine Island

- 38. Contrary to
- 39. Bluish-gray fur
- 40. Comprehend the written word
- 41. Natural depressions
- 43. Felines
- 45. Breathe noisily
- 46. Taxi
- 47. Pancake made from buckwheat flour
- 49. Swiss river
- 50. Foot (Latin)
- 53. Have surgery
- 57. Formal withdrawal
- 58. Monetary units of Peru
- 59. Greek war god
- 60. 2,000 lbs.
- 61. High points

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Green and yellow citrus fruit
- 2. A bright color

- 3. Thicket
- 4. Journalist Tarbell
- 5. A place to work or relax
- 6. Sharp mountain ridge
- 7. Helicopter
- 8. Mimic
- 9. Suggests
- 10. More musty
- 11. Large, flightless rail
- 12. Make beer
- 13. Soviet Socialist Republic
- 16. People who can account for you
- 18. Taunt
- 22. South Dakota
- 23. Cover the entirety of
- 24. Kids’ favorite visitor
- 25. A way to save for retirement
- 27. Fencing swords
- 28. C. China mountain range
- 29. Type of sandwich

- 30. Team
- 31. Paddle
- 33. Partly digested food
- 35. Most cagey
- 36. Shoppers make one
- 37. Cathode-ray tube
- 39. Food supplies
- 42. Backbones
- 43. Concern
- 44. Blood group
- 46. Broadway songwriter Sammy
- 47. Dutch colonist
- 48. Full-grown pike fish
- 49. Deity of a monotheistic cult
- 50. Type of bread
- 51. S. Nigerian people
- 52. Scottish tax
- 53. Young women’s association
- 54. Brazilian city
- 55. Hide of a young animal
- 56. Midway between north and northeast

Pretzer:

Continued from page 2

like two buildings, and only the girls gym,” Pretzer said. “So, it was constant construction going on. There was very little landscaping, so, in the dry period when it got windy, we had huge dust storms across campus when we went from one building to the other.”

A highlight during Pretzer’s time as a Rio Americano student was speaking at his graduation.

Pretzer recalled rewriting his speech following the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

“The (rewritten speech) basically argued that what we had received was an education that was, despite the best efforts of our teachers at Rio and the calm upbringing we received in the homes of Arden Park that we had, an education of violence,” he said.

“And I talked about the violence, I talked about racial violence, I talked about the violence of war, I talked about the violence of political opposition. And I said that we were going to have to overcome that education. We

were going to have to reject what we had learned about violence, and turn it into a different direction for ourselves, and hopefully for society.”

Pretzer later attended Stanford University, where he graduated with a bachelor’s degree in political science in 1972.

His education also included earning a master’s degree and doctorate’s degree in history at the Northern Illinois University.

In 1977, he received fellowships to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. to conduct research on his dissertation.

Two years later, Pretzer received another fellowship from Northern Illinois University. It was also during that time that he was married to Terry Moores, who he met in graduate school.

Pretzer was hired by the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of American History, where he worked on exhibits for the following four years.

The Pretzers moved to Delaware in 1984, and Pretzer began working at the Winterthur Museum.

After a year in that position, Pretzer obtained full-time employment at The Henry Ford museum, which is the largest indoor-outdoor history complex in the United States.

In addition to his work at that museum on an exhibit with the Rosa Parks bus as a main feature, Pretzer also worked on many other exhibits, including a Thomas Edison, Menlo Park laboratory exhibit. He later edited a book about Edison.

From 2006 to 2009, Pretzer ran the museum and taught museum studies and history at Central Michigan University.

It was in the latter year that Pretzer joined the Smithsonian in establishing its National Museum of African American History & Culture. The museum opened on Sept. 24, 2016.

Pretzer, who remains with that museum as its senior curator of history, spoke about his current work.

“I’m really, really pleased I got the opportunity to try to do something to educate the American public about the reality of race relations and the history of



Photo courtesy of William S. Pretzer
William S. Pretzer speaks at his 1968 Rio Americano High School graduation ceremony.

race relations in this country,” he said.

“Because only if we acknowledge the reality of those relationships, and the way in which African Americans have been systematically discriminated against, in slavery and after slavery, and physically attacked, only if we acknowledge that and know

about it, and can trust the information we get as truth. I like to think that that’s a contribution to making a better world.”

In recognition of Pretzer’s notable career, he was inducted into the San Juan Education Foundation’s hall of fame on Oct. 7, during a special ceremony held at the Milagro Centre in Carmichael.

Soroptimist:

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to City College, where she was studying sociology. She could also drive her daughter to school.

Today, Openshaw has stable housing and is the program coordinator for the Inter-Tribal Council of California’s sexual assault program.

This year, six women will share \$12,000 in cash grants.

SIS also created “Dream It, Be It,” a career mentoring and life skills program. It serves students at the Sacramento Academic and Vocational Academy, a charter, alternative high school in Sacramento.

The program includes the SIS chapter-developed money management course, “Money Matters.”

“We teach young women how to handle their money, so it goes farther and lasts longer,” said Nancy Wolford-Landers, who helps conduct the classes.

A student, who identified herself only as Maria, mentioned that the course has helped her to better manage her personal finances.

“Before I took this class, if I had money left at the end of the month, I would spend it going out to dinner,” she said. “Now I put it in my rainy-day fund, and I have saved more than \$700.”

Another student, Angela, also spoke about how the course helped her manage her money.

“I learned the difference between a need and a want,” she said. “Now I only spend my money on needs.”

Soroptimist International of Sacramento also gives out additional grants to support community organizations aligned with the Soroptimist mission, like Wellspring Women’s Center and My Sister’s House.

SIS President-elect Nilda Valmores expressed pride in her association with this historic, local Soroptimist chapter.

“I’m proud of being part of an organization that has done so much for Sacramento over the last 100 years – especially what we’ve done to empower women and girls from underserved communities,” she said. “We’re excited to do even more as we embark on our next 100 (years).”

Soroptimist International of Sacramento will celebrate its

centennial anniversary with a dinner at the Dante Club, 2330 Fair Oaks Blvd., on March 4 at 5 p.m.

Tickets are \$100 per person

and can be purchased through SIS.

For additional information, visit the website, www.SoroptimistSacramento.com.

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