



WORLD EXPO 88

1988)(2008

20th Anniversary Celebration

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20 CELEBRATION CORPORATE VIGNETTES

EDITION # 2 OCTOBER 2006 – 18 MONTHS TO GO!

A CELEBRATION FOCUS ON 20 CORPORATIONS AT WORLD EXPO '88 AND TODAY



**Interview with
Ms Beris Pritchard,
Quota International,
at the Regent Theatre,
Queen St Mall, Brisbane, Australia**

18 September 2006

John McGregor, Executive Director,
speaks with Ms Beris Prichard,
President (1988/1989) Quota International,
about Quota's beginnings,
Quota at World Expo '88, and Quota today.

Exclusive Live Interview

[INTERVIEW START]

....Thank you very much Mrs Pritchard for your time this morning...it's really wonderful to be able to not only contact many of our chief World Expo '88 stakeholders, but also to look towards the 20th Anniversary in two years time, and it's wonderful that Quota International has agreed to be a part of the 20th Anniversary Corporate Vignette Interview Series for the Foundation Expo '88 website. Many people have heard of Quota International, a service organisation in the likes of Rotary, Zonta, and so on....but what can you tell us about the start of Quota International, and its role in the world today....

Well, actually Quota International is the oldest women's service...international women's service organisation...it was chartered as an international service group for women in 1919, in Buffalo, New York, and it was started by four women, who realised after the First World War, that women had been making a contribution during the War, and then, after that were pushed back into the background...but there were women in the work force that they felt that they could make the same contribution that Kiwanis and Rotary were making...because they were invited to a Kiwanis Breakfast Party, and they could see the fun that the men were having together in what they were doing...and they thought...why can't women do the same? So these women really had a lot of foresight...and got together, and drew up a charter for Quota Club International, and it was started with the purpose of the business women getting together sharing their skills, their background, their interest...to help the community...and they came up with the word 'Quota', which means 'to share' – sharing their skills, and using 'We Share' as the motto for Quota.

And the original concept was to help women and girls...and that has really been the focus, although it's changed slightly, it's really been the focus for the last 87 years...we're 88 years old next year...

Excellent, you mentioned that Quota International started in Buffalo, New York in 1919....that would have been just on the cuff of the suffragette movement, which started in the early 1900s...?

Yes, it probably was, but it had a different focus...it had more of a service focus...

...a service focus in terms of an apprenticeship, giving women work, equal rights or pay, in that sense, or,

No, service from the point of view of helping women and children who were disadvantaged, who needed support, with families, helping girls, particularly being trained, for something they could do to further their life, further their work skills, that sort of thing...

So, also a charitable institution I guess...a charitable institution....and you would taken certain women and children under your wing...and give them a supplement to their weekly wage, or it could be food and clothing as well...

It could have been done through fundraising, that's how we operate now, we raise funds, and we use those funds to help different organisations or individuals, or it could have been through service through time...actually doing something using less time to do something to help the community...and we're still doing that now...we package parcels to send out to the drought areas in western New South Wales...so, it's not all fundraising, and its not always done for the local community, it is also on a wider community basis in Australia and America...and its done on an international basis as well...

OK, now, how would a relationship like that be instigated. Does Quota International identify the areas of need and then seek the best way to fulfil that need? Or is it that the disadvantaged in the community seek Quota's help?

Both, both...over the past 87 years that Quota has been operating, we changed our direction in 1970 towards supporting the hearing and speech-impaired...because it was such a silent disability...and they didn't seem to be receiving much help and recognition, so Quota really put their focus towards supporting that particular group of people...and that remained one of our service focus areas ever since. And then in the 1980s we looked at supporting disadvantaged women and children, specifically in today's world. And they are our two focus areas for service support, and in the local community of each Club, they look to those specific areas for support, but if there are any groups in the local community they can also approach the Quota Club and say, 'We've got trouble with this, can you help us?', 'We need so much money to do whatever...can you help us'.

And you had a very interesting role with Quota International during Australia's Bicentennial Year – you were appointed as President of Quota International for 1988...that must have been an especially significant year for you....

It was. It was really special. We had our first International Convention in Australia in 1980 Sydney, and in 1988 we had it in Melbourne, and it was only the second Convention that we had held out here...and it was planned for that year because it was the Bicentennial Year. And it just so happened that I had six or seven years on the International Board... that my turn came up to be in the position to be elected as President, to be installed at that Convention, so I was International President from July '88 to July '89...through the Bicentennial Year.

And as part of that International office, did you have to re-locate to Washington D.C.? Were you able to act as President whilst still in Australia?

I was President whilst I was still in Australia, but I was still working, a teacher, a Deputy Principal. So the travelling I did...I did in School holidays, and I took long service leave a couple of times...but apart from that I was still working... I mean we're looking at days before fax machines...before computers...so the communication was done by 'snail-mail' and by telephone...between me and Washington...but it worked...!

What were the special memories that you have, and challenges for you, as President, in 1988? And also Quota International played a special role at World Expo '88....would you like to tell us a bit about that as well?

Well, as far as the Expo role was concerned well before 1988, Sir Llew Edwards [Exec Dir. Note: Chair & CEO of the Expo Authority] spoke to one of our Quota Conferences in Brisbane as Guest Speaker, and told us what was planned... he said he hoped to use the Service Club, or incorporate the Service Club, and asked if Quota would be involved. And we said, 'Yes, we would'. And, at that time I was travelling to the States for a Convention, and I said to him I would be going over there for a Convention when Expo Vancouver was coming up...

Expo '86?

Yes, so he gave me a special letter of introduction to the VIP Suite in Vancouver...and I called in there, and spent two or

three days there to see what it was all about, before I went on to our Quota Convention, and later on...when Quota said Quota would be involved...two of our Brisbane City members were appointed as Co-Ordinators for Quota, along with the Rotary and Lions Co-ordinators, ...and they made up a Hospitality Committee...and I was too busy that year to be too involved in the actual hands-on work with the Hospitality Suite...but Quota was involved from the word go...with the Hospitality Committee that set it all up.....

Really, so it was part of the larger plan called the 'Services Club of Australia Pavilion' at World Expo '88...where was that do you recall exactly at the Expo site?

From memory it was near the Administration Area, rather with the Pavilions.

At Expo House do you mean, up at Mater Hill?

Yes, in that area...it was staffed all the time by Service Club personnel...and it was never at any time unattended...there was always Rotary, Lions, Zonta, Quota or somebody there, and the people that they hosted were people from Service Club members all over the world...and they were the only people who were able to use it...and we had set up tea/coffee/biscuits and that sort of thing...the Lions Club were responsible for furnishing that area, and they got donations of furniture, tables and chairs...where people sit down and have a chat, could take off their shoes and have a rest...

...like a place of rest and recuperation...during the hectic activity of World Expo '88!

...Yes, it was.

And that would have been re-assuring to your Club Members as well, to know they could visit the World Expo, and be with their own, and intermingle....

...It didn't really matter, ...if there were only Quota Members that were there staffing it, and if Lions or Rotarians came in, it really didn't matter because we were all Service Club people...we all understood what we were on about...it was just an opportunity to share ideas, stories, of what we did in our own particular community wherever we came from...

And so there were five groups represented at the Services Club of Australia Pavilion...

Quota International, Zonta, Rotary, Lions...

And the staffing of the Hospitality Suite, was that also done on a rotation basis....

Yes, it was done on a rotation basis, on a roster basis, and each organisation was responsible for checking up their own roster, and sometimes there were people from each of the Service Clubs, or sometimes there was someone from just one of the Service Clubs, but there was always somebody there from somewhere,...and it was manned by...we had Quotarians there...not just from Brisbane but from other places around Australia that came in to staff it as well, ...to Brisbane for Expo...

The actual Service Clubs of Australia Pavilion, consisted of several rooms...

I remember that there was a main room, and a catering area, where they could make their tea/coffee, do the cleaning and so on...

And could have accommodated ten to fifteen people at a time...

Yes....

And it would have been open every day of the Expo from 10.00a.m. to 10.00p.m.

Yes, that's right.

And what was the role for you as President, as Quota International for the Bicentennial Year. What was the role of your personal input for the Services Club of Australia Pavilion? Did you work in a liaison capacity with Quota International offices...?

I didn't really work in any capacity as far as Expo was concerned, except that I supported Quota in setting it all up, and of course each time I went there I was there...

And that would have been representation as well...

Yes, on the roster system, but not a great deal because I was busy with other things...so, it was the Quotarians here in Brisbane, who actually did the 'hands-on' work who were manning the place all the time...

And apart from the activities actually at the Service Clubs of Australia Pavilion, were there also auxiliary activities that you supported, for example if you had a visiting Quotarian from overseas, you would have had one of your Quotarians who could attend a visiting delegate from overseas....

Yes, that was happening as well...after our Convention in Melbourne, one of our Canadians came up and stayed with me, and I took her, hosted her to Expo, and took her to the Canadian Pavilion, and then of course to the Service Club Hospitality Suite...and we did quite a lot of that, we encouraged Quotarians to come from where-ever, and visit the Hospitality Suite, and be involved at Expo...

What are your personal most favourite memories, and challenging times, of your work during your Presidential year...?

I can't remember too many challenging moments, but it was a tremendous experience, and I had some wonderful experiences that I wouldn't have had ... I led a delegation of about 12 Quotarians to India, then we went to Singapore, to the Phillippines, and to Hong Kong, and from there I went to America for a Board Meeting and they all came home... and that was the first time that we had come into contact with the Quota Clubs in those areas...and looked at what they were doing on an official basis...and when I went to Washington in January 1989, and it was the Inauguration Ceremony for George W. Bush...not George W., his father...and the Executive Director in Washington got us a ticket to part of those Celebrations, and I attended a function that was organised by Disability Groups in Washington to meet the President and his wife...they're experiences that are really a one-off and really appreciated it very much,...and I went to New Zealand and visited the Clubs over there, and they gave me a traditional Maori welcome...which I couldn't accept because I was a woman, so a husband of one of the Quotarians accepted the welcome on my behalf...!

Well!...I think we should wind up the interview now, just a few last quick questions,...we've talked about Quota International, right from its very beginnings, to the Bicentennial, and your role as President of Quota International...a very prestigious position and in a very interesting time in Australian history,...and now, today in 2006 Brisbane, and in 2006 planet earth, what are the major challenges facing Quota International of today, and its chief area of focus at the moment?

The biggest challenge facing us today, and all Service Clubs today, none of us is different from the others...is membership. Getting new members, and in particular younger members. The membership base is aging...because we are not able to bring in younger women...The whole focus structure has changed, and the social climate now is different...

Do you think that the essential 'good work' has been done? Am I correct? It's a different world we're living in now?

I don't think the essential good work has been done...I think there still is a place out there for Service Clubs, but it's getting the younger women...not so much interested, but to make the time commitment...it's a different world, they're driving children these days to ballet to football, to this, to that, and they're working as well...as where as when I was growing up...when I joined Quota, kids were still riding their bikes to whatever they wanted to do...the women that were working when I joined Quota, that were members, had the staff to do work for them to allow them to go out and do their Quota work,... these days women don't have that....they don't have the staff to do those sorts of things, if they want to go out and do something...they have to go to pay staff to replace them...so it's a whole different, a different situation, and we're all struggling to deal with it...and it's a shame...

It sounds like a negative note to finish on...but the fellowship... that the Service Club members enjoy with each other is certainly still there...and that's one of the bonuses of belonging in a Service Club, you're not only a part of a local group, but you're part of an international group, and for the people, the members who want to take the opportunity to grow that, to go beyond their own cities, and their own countries can do it, the opportunity is there...

....Finally, if I was to join Quota International today, and I can (laughs)..., because as a man I can join now, I just noted at your website the other week, one of the recent changes to your Mission Statement, is that men are also allowed to join Quota International...So, if I was to join Quota International today, what are the type of activities that I could participate in, to help Quota International?

Well, you'd just be joining in part of the activities of the Club does that you join, and it might be organising a fashion parade, it might be organising a UNIFEM Breakfast for International Women's Day...or it could be organising a BBQ to raise funds for something, or it could be getting together with other members to put parcels together, and so on...

We have only got one man in one club in Australia at the moment...the Americans have a few more, so when they join they just do what the women are doing...but, by the same token, although the men can join, it's up to the each Club as to whether they issue them an invitation or not...it's the same as Rotary, with their women members, they have to be invited by a member to join...

And, for a person who seeks to become a member of Quota International, what is your advice, what are the essential attributes you are looking for..?

We just need people who are interested in what Quota's all about, interested in belonging to an international organisation, to join in..., to share..., what they have got to offer...to the members that are in the Club.

Excellent. Thank you for your time this morning Mrs Pritchard, thank you.

[INTERVIEW ENDS]

...extra.....extra.....extra.....

Quota International and Foundation Expo '88 are working together on a heightened presence at the World Expo '88 1988-2008 20th Anniversary Celebration. Watch the 20th Anniversary page at Foundation Expo '88 for further details!

Quota International



FOUNDATION EXPO '88

Progressing the World Expo '88 Vision

– A non-government not-for-profit entity celebrating Brisbane's World Expo '88 –

Learn more about Quota International and the We Share Foundation at

<http://www.quota.org/>

Learn more about UNIFEM – The United Nations Development Fund for Women at

<http://www.unifem.org.au/>

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