



WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL CLUB DELHI

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at the India International Centre on May 7th, 2008 at 2.00 p.m.

1. **Welcome Address :**

The President, Ms. Eleni Spachi, welcomed all the members to the Annual General Meeting of the year 2007-2008. She recalled the objectives of the meeting and said that she was looking forward to a useful discussion.

2. **Approval of the Minutes of the AGM held on May 2nd, 2007 :**

The President requested the General Membership to approve the Minutes of the AGM held on May 2nd, 2007 at the Park Hotel. The Minutes were proposed by Shakuntala M. Chandra and seconded by Urmilla Sahay.

The President then requested the First Vice-President, Ms. Bina Deogun, to give her report.

3. **Presentation of Reports :**

- **Report of the First Vice-President, Ms. Bina Deogun :** Bina started by saying that WIC is a dynamic Club and it is an honour to serve on the Executive Committee of this Club. She mentioned that this year had been very creative and enjoyable for her as the President had given her full liberty to execute her ideas – that is how the 'Krishna Programme' had taken shape. She said that the whole Committee had worked as a team which is why we were able to organize two new General Meetings in spite of not having had a Second Vice-President at the time, namely the Diwali Gambling Lunch and the trip to Mother Teresa's Home in December. Bina mentioned that as we felt that greater interaction was needed between the members, we had Circles that were more academically inclined as well as lighter ones. Hence new Circles like 'Lunching Out', 'Hindi Bolo', 'Bollywood Dancing' and 'Movies' were introduced so that all members would have some topic of their liking. On an average, we had about 10 programmes a month (which means about 85 plus programmes for the year), in spite of the fact that December and May have very few Circle Meetings. Yet, even with the increase in the number of Circle Meetings, our expenditure had not gone up – in fact, it might even have reduced!

Bina said that the Circle Leaders had done a marvelous job - choosing their subjects and Speakers well, giving in their write-ups on time so that the newsletter could be printed as per schedule and implementing the programmes to perfection. On behalf of the Executive Committee, she requested the Circle leaders to come up and receive a token of 'Good Luck' (Feng Shui Crystal Ball) from the President in appreciation of their efforts. Bina mentioned all the Circle Leaders by name and thanked them individually.

Art Appreciation – Bina said that Darshi Singh was a natural choice due to her vast knowledge on the subject and though Sarla Daga had come in midway, she, nevertheless, did a super job.

Book Circle – Shirin Paul, Gita Devi and Rosa-Lina Nicod organized superb programmes especially the Circle Meeting on 'A Thousand Suns' and the 'Urdu Programme'.

Cuisine – Zakia Zaheer and Niti Judge's 'Trip to Lucknow' was meticulously planned, and their 'Wine Making' and 'Cooking With Wine' a fabulous combination.

Bollywood Dancing – Bina thanked Vaneeta and mentioned an interesting incident. Two foreigners arrived at the Bollywood Dance Meeting one day – one had previously been a member of WIC and the other was her guest. She said that she had never really attended the programmes when she had been a member but now she wanted to join in the Bollywood Dancing!

Lunching Out – This was a very popular programme and Bindu Talwar and Niti Judge took a lot of effort to organize these programmes. The dinner at 'Chor Bizarre' and Sunita Kohli's educative talk was excellent.

Movies – Bina thanked Niru Kapur for single-handedly organizing such excellent movies for us.

Music Appreciation – Shanno Khurana and Rita Gharekhan provided a new approach and insight into both Indian and Western music.

Philosophy – Bina thanked the Circle Leaders, Prama Bhandari and Shakuntala Dawesar, as also our President Eleni, who helped in organizing programmes showing comparisons between Greek and Indian cultures.

French and German Coffee Mornings – Rosa-Lina Nicod and Maya Caroli were thanked for their efforts in organizing the same.

Hindi Bolo, Bina said, was her baby but then we could not have French and German and ignore the language of the host country. This Circle had not only been fun but useful as well.

Bina requested everyone to give the Circle Leaders a standing ovation. She concluded by saying that a Club Year is judged by the quality of the programmes that it offers and that we would leave it to the members to decide whether we had come up to the mark or not.

The President thanked Bina for her hard work and creativity and requested the Second Vice-President to give her report.

- **Report of the Second Vice-President, Ms. Nandini Pattani :**

On behalf of the Executive Committee, Nandini thanked all the hostesses who had hosted the General Meetings and/or helped in other ways. She then gave a brief overview of the programmes for the General Meetings during the year.

The first General Meeting held at the India Islamic Centre in September was an audio-visual presentation by Dr. Punita Singh on the "Indian Origins of Gypsy Music and Language". It traced the Gypsies' historic connection with India, which was their original homeland.

The October General Meeting at the Park Hotel, hosted by our member Mrs. Shirin Paul, was a talk by Aman Nath on "Brahma's Pushkar" – an ancient place of pilgrimage in Rajasthan where the world famous animal fair is held every year.

The November General Meeting was a wonderful and festive Diwali Lunch with card games at the lovely residence of our President, Ms. Eleni Spachi.

The December General Meeting was different where everyone went to Mother Teresa's Home taking refreshments for tea as also sweets and gifts for the children of the Home.

The January General Meeting at the Slovak Embassy Auditorium was an excellent film introduced by Dr. Samuel Berthet that showed maritime contacts between India and Europe, a history that is 2500 years old.

The February General Meeting at the India Islamic Cultural Centre was a talk by renowned environmentalist, Padma Shri Sunita Narain, on "Global Warming and Climatic Changes".

A special programme to commemorate 'International Women's Day' was held at the residence of our President. Chief Justice Anand as also well-known women from different countries were invited to talk on issues relating to 'Women's Empowerment'.

The March General Meeting, to celebrate the festival of Holi, was at the beautiful farm house of our member Taru Kanwar who had dancers and musicians to entertain us followed by a lavish lunch. Taru gave gifts of 'dupattas' and bangles as well to the members. Taru's hospitality and generosity was appreciated by everyone.

The April General Meeting, at the residence of member Smita Divan (who served us delicious refreshments at tea time), was a talk/slide show by well known calligraphy artist Farhan Mujib on the "Sacred Word". He explained how calligraphy and the written word became the focus of Islam. Nandini concluded by thanking the Executive Committee for their understanding and support when she had to cope with urgent family

responsibilities. She also wished her successor, Lakshmi Chandra, all the best for the coming Club Year.

The President thanked Nandini for her work and for standing by the Executive even when it was a difficult time for her, and then requested the Hospitality Chairperson to give her report.

- **Report of the Hospitality Chairperson, Ms. Sylvia Kaelin :**

Sylvia thanked the members for having selected her for the post of Hospitality Chairperson. She thanked the Committee for all their support, especially Bina and the Circle Leaders for organizing such interesting programmes. Sylvia said that as we had so many programmes this year, she hardly ever had to send in regrets to any of the members due to lack of space. She also thanked all the hostesses for their generous hospitality as also the ladies who had helped in bringing refreshments for the Circle and General Meetings.

Sylvia mentioned that though the members generally signed up for the meetings on time and normally sent in regrets if they were unable to attend, there were some Circle Meetings where the attendance was very poor. This was embarrassing for the Speakers and the Circle Leaders and very unfair to the Hostesses. To avoid this, she suggested that the members mark their newsletters or note the same elsewhere before sending in their Reply Cards.

Sylvia concluded by saying that she would talk in detail about her experiences with her successor, Mi-Ran Lee. She wished Mi-Ran Lee all the best for the coming Club Year. Sylvia then called out the names of all the members who had hosted Club Meetings and requested them to come up and collect a small token of appreciation on behalf of the Club.

The President thanked Sylvia for organizing the hospitality work efficiently and with a 'Swiss exactitude', especially since this was not an easy task for a foreigner. She then requested the Membership Chairperson to give her report.

- **Report of the Membership Chairperson, Ms. Supriya Gupta:**

Supriya started by saying that holding this portfolio has been a tremendous learning curve for her with its share of both elation when things went well as well as frustration when they did not.

She mentioned that in 2007-2008, 12 foreign members left us including Dolly Dadachanji who returned to Manila upon the tragic demise of her husband, Jimmy Dadachanji. 6 Indian members left us as well including Tuli Mirchandani and Dhun Mehta who sadly passed away. Supriya requested everyone to observe a one minute silence as a mark of respect to their departed souls.

11 new foreign members as also 7 new Indian members joined the Club. In April 2008, the membership stood at 56 foreign members and 89 Indian members. We have foreigners from 26 different countries and Indian members from all the major states in the country. Supriya said that it is the active and enthusiastic participation and contribution of this wonderful mix of members that gives WIC the uniqueness that we love and wish to see preserved for a long, long time.

Supriya mentioned that this year there were four 'vexed' issues that needed to be attended to, mainly,

- a) The discriminatory condition that 10 year members must resign whereas all new members taken in now would be permanent.
- b) The case of senior members over 75 years needed special attention since advancing age was a deterrent which made it physically difficult for them to attend the compulsory 6 out of 9 General Meetings.
- c) Members with foreign passports permanently resident in India should not exceed 10% of the total permissible foreign membership, i.e. 10 out of 100.
- d) Applicants over 60 years are not eligible to apply for membership of the Club. Supriya said that, today, 60 years is considered the prime of life and that we should reconsider this cut-off age.

Supriya mentioned that we have learned through experience that no more than two issues can be meaningfully dealt with in one EGM. The two issues taken up this year were :

- a) The issue regarding the 10 year membership category.
- b) The issue regarding the relaxation of attendance requirements for members over 75 years of age.

These were resolved by a clear majority vote.

However, the two issues which still need to be deliberated/ voted upon will now have to be done at the discretion of the next Membership Committee, that is, the 60 year age limit and the 10% limit on foreign passport holders resident in Delhi. This is necessary as there have been re-applications from some proven and dedicated former 10 year members who would definitely be great assets to the Club.

Supriya noted that though the Membership Committee worked with fairness and care, they did err in one case where they did not do due diligence with regard to the applicant's age and accepted her on the basis of her qualities and qualifications as they would have done in the case of a younger person. This, Supriya said, was a genuine mistake on the part of the Membership Committee but now that it was done, she was sure that everyone would agree that a Club of the stature of WIC would surely honour its word.

Supriya said that she would like to sum up her experience as Membership Chairperson as one of strong regret. This was because it took her and her

Committee almost the whole year to realize what the 'job' required, to arrive at a good understanding of these requirements within the Committee, to work out the best way to handle people's sensitivities, and to work out what decisions to take in the best interest of the Club. Now that they have come to an understanding on all these points, the tenure is over. She said that had the tenure lasted for 2-3 years, they would actually have been able to serve WIC with much more understanding and to its greater benefit.

Supriya concluded by saying that they have made a list of guidelines based on their experiences which they will hand over to Frenny, the next Membership Chairperson. She mentioned that she was confident that Frenny would do full justice to the Membership portfolio as she has worked with her on the Executive Committee before and Frenny is a seasoned, tactful and humorous person.

After thanking Supriya for her detailed and meticulously prepared report, the President requested the Newsletter Editor to give her account/report for the year.

- **Report of the Newsletter Editor, Ms. Christine Claeys:**

Christine said that when she had joined the Executive Committee a year ago, she had never imagined what a wonderful experience it would be. She mentioned that it had been a pleasure working on the Committee even when the tight deadlines for the newsletter meant working hard and until late.

Christine thanked the Executive Committee for their continuous support and guidance and also conveyed her special thanks to Bina and the Circle Leaders for sending in the details of their programmes on time.

As far as distribution was concerned, Christine said that it would be very helpful if the members who are unable to attend a General Meeting ask their friends to pick up their newsletters for them.

Christine concluded by thanking everyone for a wonderful experience and wished her successor, Seita, all the best for the coming year.

The President thanked Christine in particular for her flexibility and for her capacity to have the newsletter always ready in time. She then requested the Secretary to give her report.

- **Report of the Secretary, Ms. Radhika Birla:**

Radhika mentioned that it had been an enjoyable year and a great learning curve for her. She thanked the Committee for all their help and support and wished her successor, Janet, all the best for the forthcoming WIC year.

After thanking Radhika wholeheartedly for her availability during the year and willingness to contribute in all areas of work, the President requested the Treasurer to give her report.

- **Report of the Treasurer, Ms. Sohinder Nabha :**

Sohinder thanked everyone for having placed their trust in her and for having made her the Treasurer for the year 2007-2008. She mentioned that this was the third time since becoming a member that she was handling this portfolio. She said that she had also handled the post of Hospitality Chairperson earlier.

Sohinder said that before she talked about the Audit Report, she would like to apologise for not having sent the Audited Accounts two weeks prior to the AGM as per the Constitution. This was because of a delay on the part of the American Express Bank in providing the Certificate of Interest on the Fixed Deposits as also the TDS Certificate. This, she said, had been mentioned in the covering letter that was sent along with the Audited Accounts. However, she was certain that the members would have gone through the Accounts and she would be happy to answer any queries that the members might have.

Sohinder said that the expenses for the months of April and May will be shown separately, for our information, as these are expenses incurred during the tenure of the Committee of 2007-2008. The Audited Accounts are drawn up for the financial year ending March 31st so they will not reflect the expenses for these two months.

Sohinder also informed the members that the Executive Committee had prepared a statement of estimated income and expenditure on certain items at the start of the Club Year so that the estimated budget could form the basis for expenditure to the extent possible.

Sohinder thanked the President for her fine leadership as also the Executive Committee and the members for their cooperation, without which, she said, her tenure as a Treasurer would not have been a success.

Sohinder mentioned that the financial condition of the Club is sound in spite of the very varied and numerous activities that were arranged during our tenure. The reason for having a net surplus is due to the careful planning and generous contributions by the President, the Executive Committee and Members of the Club which greatly helped in reducing our expenditure.

Sohinder went on to say that we have Rs.1,04,358.33/- in our Savings Account with American Express Bank. Further, we have the following Fixed Deposits which are due for maturity in May 2009 :

- a) Fixed Deposit Term A/c No. : 31417783 – Maturity Date : 11th May, 2009
Maturity Value : Rs.66,017.51/-
- b) Fixed Deposit Term A/c No. : 31417798 – Maturity Date : 11th May, 2009

Maturity Value : Rs.66,804.60/-

- c) Fixed Deposit Term A/c No. : 31417745 – Maturity Date : 11th May, 2009
Maturity Value : Rs.66,219.70/-

The Treasurer also mentioned a point that she felt required attention. She said that when she had been Treasurer earlier, there had not been too many records/documents (registers, cash receipts, vouchers, etc.). This year she received six big cardboard cartons containing Club Accounts/records dating back to 1982-83. Sohinder said that she checked with the Auditors, S.K. Vohra & Co., if it was essential to keep records for so many years. The Auditors said that we could keep records for the last five years or ten years at the most and could remove the rest. Sohinder said that it is not possible for the Treasurer to go through all the documents herself – we need to employ someone to go through the Accounts/documents. She felt that this was a matter which required special attention. Sohinder said that her successor, Vibhuti Sharma, was certainly not expecting so many cartons. Sohinder said that she would like to leave this decision to her successor who could discuss the matter with her Executive Committee and have a word with the Auditor before taking action regarding the same.

Sohinder concluded by wishing her successor, Vibhuti, and the new Executive Committee all the best for the coming Club Year and said that she would be happy to assist in any way required by the new Treasurer for the smooth transfer of responsibility.

Smita Divan asked Sohinder why there was Rs.50,000/- cash in hand. Sohinder mentioned that expenses for the months of April and May are shown later as the financial year ends on 31st March, and there are always expenses that are incurred in these months as also those that spill over from the month of March. She said that it would make matters a lot easier if the financial year ended in May instead. This should be discussed with the Auditors.

Smita also inquired as to how the General Meeting expenses were Rs.88,663/-. Sohinder replied that this amount included expenses incurred by the last Committee in the months of April 2007 and May 2007.

Sohinder said that Smita could clarify bilaterally with her any doubts that the New Committee may have with regard to the Accounts.

Peggy Sood and Kavita Ratra mentioned that they did not receive the Agenda for the AGM as also the other documents sent with it. Eleni replied that they should have informed a member of the Executive Committee regarding this as the documents were couriered in time and the Committee could not know of this unless they were informed.

On behalf of the Club, Gita Devi thanked the President for her fine leadership and the Executive Committee and the Circle Leaders for their efforts and hospitality.

Eleni thanked Sohinder for keeping the expenditure on track during the year, for all the hard work she had put in and for her efficiency and effectiveness in keeping the accounts of the Club in order.

- **Report of the President, Ms. Eleni Spachi:**

Eleni concluded by thanking the Club for having had confidence in her and proposing her for the Executive Committee as she was a relatively new member. She thanked the Executive Committee and the Circle Leaders for their hard work, for coming forward with new ideas and for arranging and implementing new activities which had increased interaction between members. Eleni thanked the members for their comments, and many of them, for giving of their time for suggestions, and last, but not least, for their hospitality.

Eleni highlighted the fact that the wonderful films shown by Niru had opened up new perspectives for many regarding the existing realities in different countries. The lunches organized by Niti and Bindu were great forums for discussing philosophy, mutual interests and views.

Eleni said that the Presidency in its own way had been one of the most rewarding tasks she had undertaken in recent years, although initially she had accepted it with caution and in spite of warnings from the husbands of a few Ex-Presidents. It turned out to be one of the most fruitful years of her life as she learnt a lot about different cultures, attitudes and life-styles, and made a lot of new friends. Eleni felt that if the year was considered successful by any measure, it was due, to a great extent, to the fact that the Executive Committee had worked as a team, that is, every member did not only just do what their portfolio demanded but was also willing to contribute wherever she could and when she could.

Eleni concluded by reading out and paraphrasing a famous Greek poem 'Ithaca' of C. Kavafy which, she said, very aptly reflected her feelings and thoughts for the year.

When she set out this year upon her Presidency, she wished 'always that the course be long, full of adventure, full of lore'. She considered that there could be no insurmountable difficulties 'if lofty is your thinking, if fine sentiment in spirit and in body touches you. Neither Laestrygones nor Cyclopes, nor wild Poseidon will you ever meet, unless you bear them in your soul, unless your soul has raised them up in front of you'. She hoped that by working hard with the Executive Committee and the Circle Leaders and by being open to what the members had to say and offer during this year 'that many there were of summer morns when with such pleasure,

such great joy', members would 'enter ports now for the first time seen; to learn, and learn from those schooled there'.

Although the year seemed sometimes a little too full, she never wished to rush 'the journey' through. For WIC Presidency had given her a lovely trip in her life's journey. And now that it is over, she wished that others like her 'feel enriched by all gained upon the way' this year.

Eleni hoped that the new Executive Committee would find it the same.

Nina Dey Gupta mentioned that she had written a letter to the President and the Nominations Committee regarding certain points. Nina said that even though the President did not agree with the points in question, she took it very positively and discussed the matter with her. Nina thanked Eleni for her positive and open attitude.

4. Approval of the Audited Accounts and Resolution Transferring the Bank Signatory Authority :

Eleni requested the members to approve the Accounts as also to pass the resolution for transfer of the signatory authority from the President, Eleni Spachi, and the Treasurer, Sohinder Nabha, to the new President, Smita Divan, and the new Treasurer, Vibhuti Sharma. Gita Devi proposed the Accounts and Gugu Anup Singh seconded them. The Resolution for Transfer of the Bank Signatory Authority was also proposed by Gita Devi and seconded by Gugu Anup Singh.

5. AOB :

Ajinder Dugal was upset about the fact that her bag had been checked at one of the meetings. She said that she was a very old member and that this should not have been done. Bina said that we will look into the matter and we apologise for any hurt that may, unintentionally, have been caused.

6. Presentation of the 2008-2009 WIC Executive Committee by the Nominations Committee and its endorsement :

The President invited the Chairperson of the Nominations Committee, Gita Devi, to present the new slate. Gita Devi announced the names of the members of the new Executive Committee, namely,

President : Smita Divan

First Vice-President : Mandy Cunningham

Second Vice-President : Lakshmi Chandra

Treasurer : Vibhuti Sharma

Hospitality : Mi-Ran Lee

Newsletter Editor : Seita Vaidialingam

Membership : Frenny Billimoria

Secretary : Janet Kowall

Gita Devi requested the members to endorse the new Executive Committee which was proposed by Veena Dass and seconded by Shakuntala Dawesar.

7. Installation of the Incoming Executive Committee :

The New Executive Committee for the WIC Club Year 2008-2009 took over.

8. Incoming President's Welcome Speech :

The new President, Smita Divan, thanked Eleni and the Executive Committee for their hard work and effort. She said that she admired Nandini for her time management as she was always there for the General Meetings in spite of going through three traumatic months. She said that Supriya had done a good job and that Sohinder was a past master at accounts. Sylvia, she said, had managed Hospitality very well in spite of the fact that often members did not turn up even after accepting a programme. Smita said that the last Committee had set a high benchmark. She continued to say that she was lucky to have such talented members on her Committee, especially Frenny who was experienced and a long-standing member of the Club. She concluded by wishing everyone all the best for a wonderful summer and said that she looked forward to seeing the members in September.

The floor was then thrown open to the members.

Renu Mehra brought up the point about refreshments at the Circle Meetings. She said that it was alright to have a number of food items for the General Meetings but at the Circle Meetings, the quantity/number of food items should be reduced. She said that a lot of members were in agreement with this. Smita agreed with this as she said that it should be the programme and not the food that should attract the members. Other members like Vinu and Bapsi felt that the hostesses should be allowed to serve whatever they like. Smita said that this rule was in force before but had somehow not been followed. She requested the members to write to the Committee regarding this as she felt that we may have many more members offering their homes if we follow this policy.

It was also mentioned that the General Meetings should be in a central place. The new Second Vice-President, Lakshmi Chandra, replied that in case the venue for the General Meeting is not in a central place, care would be taken to arrange for buses to take the members from a central point to the venue.

The meeting ended with a vote of thanks to the Chair. Members were requested to proceed to the residence of the previous President, Ms. Eleni Spachi, for refreshments and tea as a farewell for the concluding year.



(Eleni Spachi)
(President)



(Radhika Birla)
(Secretary)