

# **An Invigorating Conference Experience**

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After months of anticipation, I finally arrived in Harrogate to experience my first SIGBI conference. My excitement mounted and I wish to express my utmost gratitude to SIGBI for the opportunity to attend the Conference as a Memorial Fund Awardee.

On arriving at the Conference Hall, it was evident that a lot of thought, organisation and hard work had gone into the preparation for the Conference which was apparent in the way that everything worked in harmony. The opening ceremony was a splendid affair climaxing to the beautiful sounds of the North Yorkshire Premier Brass Band.

The Conference Speakers never failed to capture our attention as they shared their journeys to becoming the women they are today. I was motivated and encouraged to further strive for high ideals by the stories of these women. Thank you Sahar Hashemi, Professor Susan Vinnicombe and Dame Jenni Murray – you have inspired me!

I listened captivated at the order of the general meeting and how it was so professionally conducted. The highlight at the general meeting for me was the proposition of the resolution for allowing associate membership. I listened as Ann Hodgson proposed as strongly as possible the need for associate membership and felt her profound pain when the resolution did not receive enough votes to pass.

I was further moved by how well Soroptimists can work together when faced with a challenge to overcome. The theme 'Women Leading Change Together' certainly came alive when we were challenged to raise enough funds to help our dear friends in Sierra Leone, their story told to us by our dear Rose – whom I met and took fondly to...not a dry eye was spared as she shared what was taking place in her hometown. This was truly an empowering moment for me and I felt a sense of pride knowing that we were able to help in such a great way.

I still savour the feeling of attending the Change of Insignia and Closing Ceremony and was filled with gratitude for this marvellous experience. This night culminated to the beautiful sounds and theatrics of The White Rosettes...I absolutely enjoyed! This was truly a learning experience for me and my interest in Soroptimism has been strengthened. I now look forward with greater anticipation to future Conferences. Thanks again SIGBI for entrusting me with this award and for making the Conference as memorable and rewarding as I had hoped it would be.