



East-enders

Newsletter of
Zonta Club of Brisbane East Inc.

GPO Box 3060 Brisbane 4001

Charter Number 1235

May 2008

Next Dinner Meeting

☺ **Monday**
2 June

Pre-Dinner nibbles 6pm
Committee Meetings 6.15pm
Dinner 7.30pm - 9.30pm
At

Terraces

Wickham Tce
(Ground Floor)

Cost \$32.00 each

\$5 Meeting only
(This includes one raffle ticket)

Apologies to

Margaret Casey

Phone 3907 0845

After hours

*In absence on an apology
an invoice for \$27.50 will be
sent to all non-attending*

PRESIDENT'S PATER...

AGM Annual Report

It is that time of year again when we need to report to our members and ZI on what we have achieved in the last 12 months.

Thanks to everyone who has responded to our secretary's request for reports and to our treasurer who has ensured that we meet reporting requirements on our financial affairs.

I look forward to another year of Brisbane East activities to ensure, although a small club, that we continue to support each other and the club executive who have taken on the extra responsibilities for another year.

Breast Cushions workshop

Our next working bee will be on Sunday 25 May at the Mt Gravatt venue as per usual. We have plenty of cushions to fill and complete so as many members as possible are needed. We kick off at

9.30am and should be finished by midday. Some members of the Logan Club usually join us for this activity.

Convention

We will be missing a few members over the next two months due to the Zonta International Convention in the Netherlands. Jill, Ros and Denise will represent us at this gathering of members from around the world. It is an exciting event and will start the process for our new District 22 which will represent the Queensland members.

Thanks to Lyn P who will oversee the Entertainment books while Jill is away.

Guest at May dinner meeting

Welcome to Julie Burton, Area 5 Director who is our guest at tonight's meeting. I am sure you will all make her very welcome.

Bronwyn

Fellow Zontians,

As I was telling some of our colleagues at last meeting, during the holidays, I had occasion to fully realize how important education is to our great democracy, Australia.

Whilst shopping at Mt Gravatt, I said to the sales assistant I would return clothes to the rack. A gentleman overheard me, and told me in a belligerent way to "go home to your own country where you belong".

He went on to say that every one of us (I took this to mean those who appear to be people of colour) should go home, and that he was proud to

be a racist. What does one say? Is this why our parents and grandparents fought in WWII to overcome such ideas of racist superiority?

Up to the early 1900s, there was the belief that the Irish and gypsies also, were of a different race. Obviously the gentleman didn't know that in the convict ships that came to Australia, came 26 different nationalities, including those from Macau, Mauritius, and Jamaica.

In the end, no matter what rhetoric one could have said in the moment, nothing could have convinced the gentleman of anything other than his tightly held beliefs.

Education is the key.

I would have hoped that what our country stands for had permeated the belief systems of everyone in our nation, but after my edifying and rather harrowing experience, we need to be ever vigilant in our education about what a democracy *is*, and the values it represents.

As Zontians, at a time when our fees are due and we are about to contribute to Zonta's international projects, we need to know that racism is alive and kicking all about us.

Our international contribution is to the world, and at home it is about education, our leadership and example, and our future as a nation. *B*

More that just new roads.

Sparkling new tar, army trucks, UN convoys, police, choppers in the sky and warships off the coast, but all we talk about as we wait, are the children. Hundreds and hundreds of children lining streets, many with small Timorese flags.

Children from the schools, proud in uniform. Children from food stalls with flags and children from the Camps in fresh clothes. Everyone has made an effort. There doesn't seem to be a Timorese person around that is not ecstatic that 'he' is coming back.

They line the fresh new road that now weaves itself through swept areas, clean beaches and absent trash piles. One of the things the President hates most is rubbish- they say it saddens his heart.

People on a personal level have made an effort. The shell collection women that work along the beach road have removed the old bags and tidied their sites. Yesterday evening they even climbed the tree, removed the old fronds and hung a banner beautifully made from an old bag. I would say one of them would be in her 50's. Very old in Timor given the average life expectancy is around 52 years. It was she that was highest up the tree.

I have just come inside after wandering the street for a while. The Federation security briefing has advised their staff to stay in doors but my line manager here, Isabel - Secretary General of CVTL, encouraged me to go outside- to enjoy a time of happiness for the people. I agreed with her. Nothing would happen today as I think the tens of thousands of people lining the streets would take anyone down more quickly than the police.

I stood for a while outside with the CVTL staff all dressed so beautifully, proudly wearing their CVTL 'emergency vests'- the only clothing that has got the CVTL logo. They want him to know they are welcoming him as well. Cornelio told me that everyone is happy as the President is seen as 'dependent'- they think he will bring it all together. One can't help but think of the day 10 months ago when the streets went still and everyone feared what would happen next.

Walking the street you can't help but feel drawn into the emotions of it all. Women in their best sarongs and dresses, men with their best shirts. It is a festive and special day. I wish I had made more of an effort but reality what I am wearing (ARC shirt) is

possibly now my most respectable piece of clothing- washing processes here tend to be a bit tough on fabric.

I take a few photos of excited children and soon I am taking many more. Most of the photos will not come out as I am shooting into the sun but everyone wants their photo taken right now! They are dressed so beautifully and want to know that someone wider than them, records that 'they' were here.

Even the UN police officer from Nigeria asks me to take his photo. As Red Cross we are discouraged from being seen with the UN too often as if anything happens it is important that people know we are separate- but today I think it is okay.

I stand and watch and think I really should return back to the area outside CVTL. For some reason I know it is where I want to see the President from. It is a poorer area and there are few flags but that does not mean less effort.

The small IDP camp (internally displaced people or 'refugee' camp) across the road has but three small Timorese flags among all of them but the people are outside waiting for the President. They wait in their good clothes and they will mostly likely wait for hours as we hear he is still talking at the airport. No one seems that worried.

In Australia we would have all gone off to shop for a while, that's if we had turned up at all. We wait and wait. We decide we should go back to work for a while when we hear he is drinking coffee at the airport. Well who knows, but that's what they joke.

Close to two hours later a shout goes up and we all run out side, even the Federation. A banner welcoming him in beautiful and exact lettering passes us by followed by a more beautiful scrawled one with lettering hard to read. They are both carried by barefoot kids on the hot and scorching new tar. The new road is for ease of the President's ride but the old and dusty one would have been better for the walkers. More flags have appeared among the kids from the Camp.

We wait another 15 minutes as UN vehicles; army trucks and police go by. I stopped counting at 38 vehicles. The amount of sirens in the distance reminds you of the morning he left. You know something is happening somewhere - you're just not sure what. It is eerie and bit disconcerting and you wonder how he must feel given the last time he heard sirens in Timor.

Police cars in sequence pull up and police jump out. Crowds of people now mingle with a haze of blue uniforms. The sirens intensify and somewhere in the swarm of trucks and cars and rifles is a President. As you lift your camera and see a rifle

pointed in your direction you realise this is no usual parade.

He is gone. I think I saw him. The suit behind the rifle in the window, I believe, was him. I didn't get a photo, the gun put me off. I wonder if he will ever go back to waving from the windows like he use to.

It was one of the things that was so nice, his motorcade of a morning. A smiling President waving and chatting to people from the car, close enough to touch, guns hidden from view. I always meant to get a photo of him doing that but never got around to it, just thought I will do that tomorrow.... Maybe this is just another sign of a changing Timor.

I find my more heightened emotions suddenly change as swarms of motorbikes scream behind the last of the UN vehicles- maybe it is more like Mardi Gras than I thought! There are young people on bikes peddling hard to keep up with the motorbikes. Kids then follow, running, waving. We hope he has planned a lot of ice cream and drinks for when they arrive at his house. They deserve it if they have followed for the 20 km journey from the airport.

We finally go back inside with that after festive feel still hanging around the office.

Of all the things I saw today, I think it is the image of the corner house that will stay with me most. It lies at the turn of the road leading to the bridge, almost under it. It is the dustiest of houses, often buried in rubbish from the trucks and buses that cast from above. In the front lies a bus overturned some years ago as it missed the bend. Today the yard is clear. I saw the owner as I walked to town doing the final clean up. As I walk back I saw that on his clothesline he had hung three things- a Timor- Leste shirt and two deflated red balloons. The wrecked bus had been wiped down and even the palm fronds seem to be brighter. He was still busy with water try to clean the last of the area.

It is this scene that will stay with me. Of people so poor that they cannot buy and hang a banner. Children so poor that cannot buy a flag. Young people without shoes walking for miles on scorching tar. Families that are homeless, who have no doorstop to clean. People who have so much despair on a daily basis, who have already survived so much. People who will wait all day to welcome a President as they do believe that Timor is going to make it.

Thanks to Merle Stephens, Southern Gold Coast Club for sharing her niece's experience with her fellow Zontians.

Help Wanted

Antique Fair
Sunday 17 August 2008
 At Jindalee State School
 Wongaburra Street

Sunday 25 March—Breast Cushions Working Bee at Mt Gravatt
Monday 2 June—Dinner Meeting—A week ahead of schedule due to the Queen's birthday public holiday.
Friday 6 June— Trivia Night—Brisbane River Club at W'Gabba
Friday 27 June— INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION in Rotterdam until Wednesday, July 2.