

REPORT OF ACTIVITIES OF INNER WHEEL CLUB OF PENANG

By Club Correspondent Mecky Lauermann

10 August 2018 (Friday). IWC Penang Fellowship “Food Trail of Penang”

The day before the installation of IWC Penang some of our sister clubs arrived in Penang to taste the various specialities Penang has to offer. It started with a Char Koay Teow feast at Siam Road for lunch, followed by a trip to Metta Lodge Durian Orchard, which is owned by Rtn. PAG Dato’ Tan Gin Soon and his wife IWC member Datin Mooi Looi, where Laksa, Durians and other local fruits were offered to taste. The day was rounded up at Sunshine Bay Seafood Restaurant where we all enjoyed the different seafood which you can find in the waters around Penang. Besides the food tasting it was a great opportunity to spend more time with our sister clubs in a relaxed atmosphere.



IWC Kuala Lumpur, IWC Ipoh East, IWC Selangor and IWC Penang enjoyed Food Trail of Penang



IWCKL enjoying the famous Durian and other local fruits of the fruit farm



Thumbs up from a very happy Sue Pon of IWCKL for the laksa



DE Dr. Bahma Siva leading the IWC ladies on a singalong



Satay toast to IW

11 August 2018 (Saturday) Inner Wheel Club of Penang Installation Night

Inner Wheel Club of Penang had a Double Celebration this year. We said good bye to outgoing President Sally Koh and welcomed incoming President Dr. Jeyalakshmi Ratnavale. Additionally we celebrated our 10th Anniversary in Shades of Blue. We were honoured not only with the presence of our District Chairman Peggy Lee and our National Representative Datin Seetha Lakshmi, but members of 11 Clubs of the 19 Clubs in the District 330 celebrated with us.



Inner Wheel Club of Penang resplendent in blue



Outgoing President Sally Koh and Incoming President Dr. Jeyalakshmi Ratnavale



NR Datin Seetha Lakshmi, Dr. Jeyalakshmi Ratnavale, DC Peggy Lee



All Past Presidents and Current President of IWC of Penang
cut the cake to celebrate the 10th anniversary



We danced the night away

INNER WHEEL CLUB PENANG 10TH INSTALLATION SPEECH

11th August 2018 (Saturday)

Hotel Jen, Penang

District Chairman, distinguished guests and Inner Wheel Ladies.

Thank you for being here tonight to witness this installation ceremony. It is indeed a great honour for me to be standing before you as the 10th President of the Inner Wheel Club of Penang.

Ladies and gentlemen, tonight is indeed a double celebration – as it also happens to be the 10th anniversary of the Inner Wheel Club of Penang.

Permit me to open my address with a quotation by **Mahatma Gandhi** -
“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service to others.”

The Inner Wheel theme for the year 2018-19 is **EMPOWER AND EVOLVE**. As highlighted by Christine Kirby, the current Inner Wheel International President, the priorities this year are to remove gender inequalities and make women equally empowered and evolved by involving them in service above self, taking part in activities for our communities as a whole and increasing the scope of Inner Wheel’s global platform by growth in membership.

Incidentally, I am also a Rotarian. Well, I was introduced to Inner Wheel Club of Penang in 2013 by the spouses of my fellow Rotarians – that’s just over 4 years. I was truly fascinated by this particular group of women who are so caring and truly committed in serving the community. What attracted me most to Inner Wheel Penang is the way this awesome group of women could work together, while enjoying their friendship and fellowship. That I felt was truly remarkable!

Mind you, the Inner Wheel Cub of Penang has members from all walks of life, both professionals and non-professionals. Each and every one of us with our individual natural talents, have found a way to utilize them for the benefit of others and our own organization.

To be honest, my priority was never to be a president but to serve the community. I strongly believe that to serve the community or to be a leader, one does not have to be a President. Even if you are an ordinary member, be a leader among others. Lead your club from your position. A mere title doesn't necessarily make someone a leader, but your actions and service makes you a leader. That is the core value I learnt after joining Inner Wheel Penang and ROTARY. Nevertheless, I feel honoured today to be installed as the 10th President of Inner Wheel Penang.

I do have some plans for the coming year. First and foremost, I would like to raise the profile of our club through effective publicity and awareness programmes to increase the membership of our club – for the strength of any club is dependant to a certain extent by its membership. I would also work towards strengthening our partnership with other NGOs and continue to support our on-going projects. I would also like to look at ways to build our internal capacity through training and orientation programmes within the club to learn more about Inner Wheel. The International Inner Wheel Project Theme for the year 2018-2019 is **CARING FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS**. Together with my team, I hope to focus on community projects with this theme in mind.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank our Immediate Past President, Sally Koh for all her great achievements for our club during her tenure, and also for the smooth handing over of duties.

Fellow Inner Wheel of Penang members – without your support, guidance and dedicated service, I would not be able to fulfil my dreams of taking Inner Wheel Penang to greater heights. I will try to learn from every one of you – from some, learn what to do and from others – learn what not to do. For I sincerely believe, the person who is afraid of asking is afraid of learning! So please give me the same support you have offered my predecessors.

Our installation ceremony tonight has been a great success. I would like to thank the organizing committee headed by none other than our Charter President Datin Seri Bhajan Kaur and her team of very capable and committed members who have worked tirelessly and volunteered their time. Thank you ladies for a job well done.

I would also like to thank you all for your valuable presence. Without your support, we would not be able to put on an event like this. A special thanks to my family and friends who have come from far and near to support me.

I sincerely hope you will all enjoy the fellowship this evening.

Thank you.

Dr Jeyalakshmi Ratnavale
President
Inner Wheel Club of Penang
2018-2019

Speech by Outgoing President Sally Koh

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our incoming president, Dr Jeya, has chosen this day to hold this momentous celebration of our club for in the Hindu calendar this is an auspicious day, a day for marriages, a day to do good, where good will be come back a hundred fold and only good must spew from our mouth, so ladies and gentlemen, even if this function prove to be boring you will need to say it is good.

Thank you so much for taking your precious time off to celebrate this night with us.

At an Inner Wheel training session a few years ago, all participants were asked what motivated us to join this international women's service organization. Many expressed noble thoughts and ideals and in them I could just picture the makings of future Mother Therese! When it came to Penang Club's turn to speak, I told them very frankly *it is because I sleep with a Rotarian so I automatically get to become a member of IW!!!!!!* for in the past to qualify to be an IW member you have to be affiliated to Rotary but that changed at the International Inner Wheel Convention in Istanbul 2012 when International IW opened its doors to ladies from all walks of life .

All Chartered members of Penang club were spouses of Rotary Penang. We were already acquainted with each other, we met at Rotary projects or whenever Rotary needed us to add oomph & colour to their functions. However, in joining IW, we forged our own identity. The bond among ladies grew; we learnt the importance of friends. Regardless of how much we love our family and our children, we must bear in mind our children grow up and lead lives of their own. So friends become the bulwark of our lives. In keeping with IW objectives of promoting true friendship, we meet regularly on projects and hold monthly meetings and this is good for us both physically & emotionally because there's not much that's as good as an afternoon of laughter, adventure and great company. Our worries and cares get put into perspective. According

to a study done at the University of Oxford, women who go out with their friends on a regular basis have a better quality of life; they manage stress better and have a lower risk of being depressed.

The strongest predictor for creating a fulfilled life is building healthy relationships with others - at home, at work and in the community. What Rotary accomplishes with big donations and mega projects, we IW approach with empathy, hearts full of love and compassion, ears open to listen and hands willing to help. *But my husband will say I don't lavish him with the same treatment.*

Those here who attended our Installation last year would have heard me speak briefly of my aspirations for my year with the theme "Leave a Lasting Legacy." Only time will tell of the footprints we leave of the hearts we impacted in the past one year.

Let me share with you our activities for the last one year.

- ***ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS TRAINING SESSION WITH
CPS & ST JOSEPH AT CONSUMERS ASSO OF PENANG
IW ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECT IN THE STAR***

Each President comes with a pet project and during my year I wanted to focus on children and environment. After all Malaysia is an environmentally conscious country, we even recycle our Prime Minister!!!!!!

Fortunately for us we have Consumers Association in Penang Urban Gardening department where we worked with them in creating environmental awareness, bringing children from orphanages and centres to their premises. They were shown slides on Zero Waste, Say No to Plastics, learnt to identify local herbs, but the most exciting part for the children was mixing the different types of soil filling into their make-shift pots and plant their choice of herbs. Earth worms

are a farmer's best friend, these children overcame their squeamishness when we enticed with presents for those who dared to handle the worms. It was not just the children who gained from the session, we IW members from Penang and Pearl of the Orient who treated the young people to lunch after the training session found it challenging when we were told no junk food, no carbonated drinks, no packet Milo even, no pizza, no McDonalds and especially no plastic cutlery. So we turned chefs and brought our cutlery.

- ***DC'S VISIT & TALK ON WOMEN ACTIVISM***

During DC's Visit, we were privileged to have a global environmental lawyer, Meenakshi Raman who spoke on Women's Activism. Also one of our flood victims took to the floor to recount the events of the nightmare of November 05 and expressed her appreciation TO INNER WHEEL for being the first persons to come to the family's aid.

- ***JOBLINK CENTRE***

Joblink Centre is our ongoing project, Joblink needs your help! The Centre operates as a sheltered workshop for the mentally challenged and sources light industrial work from Penang-based companies. The trainees aged 16 and above work on sub-contract jobs from these companies and are paid according to their capabilities. The income from the sub-contract work is channelled back to the trainees to give them sense of financial security and independence but what is most precious is we give them their dignity to be able to contribute in their own way. I would like to make a special tribute..... to both ladies in IW Penang who devote their time to Joblink on a regular basis - Datin Seri Datuk Lubna Jumabhoy and Mrs Daljit Gill.

- ***CHINESE NEW YEAR CHEER AT RAMAKRISHNA ASHRAMA***

Chinese New Year saw our members giving sports equipment and games sets and cash donation to Ramakrishna. We were amazed by how innovative the older children were as they were given recognition for the creativity in their science projects.

- ***FELLOWSHIP WITH IWC KL***

IWC KL who were on a cruise met up with us on a day outing as part of their shore excursion. They combined this day's outing with our IW Penang trying out hawker's fare and donating towards Children's Protections Centre.

- ***ROTARY HOME NURSING PROJECT***

We see the urgent need for Home Nursing as this will be more in demand with current social fabric. IW Club Penang donated to Rotary Club of Penang Home Nursing Project. This is to provide quality healthcare services to senior citizens in their homes and help preserve their dignity.

- ***FELLOWSHIP WITH TAIPING TIGRESSES***

A day of Zumba, games, donation to St John's Senior Home, boat rowing at Taiping Lake rounding off with a bowl of Taiping chendol. An exhilarating and fun day!

- ***FELLOWSHIP IN MBI DESA KU HIGH TECH IN KULIM & VISIT TO BATU GRACE CHILDRENS HOME KULIM***

A walk in the elegantly landscaped park at MBI Desa Ku High Tech in Kulim before visiting and fulfilling the wish list of children at Batu Grace Home. This orphanage deserves all the help they can get. And we are impressed to see the dedication of the staff there at the Home.

- ***LUANG PRABANG TOUR***

As promoting true friendship is one of the IW objectives, what better way than to have fellowship in Luang Prabang? As part of the tour, spent one night at a Mekong riverside Lodge in safari tents designed to create a close-to-nature holiday away from the bustle of city life. In a remote valley of rice fields, small villages and forested mountains, it is a good example of integration within the natural environment while working closely with a local village. This Kamu Lodge is built next to a small tribal Kamu village. We took a hike there and

visited the villages. We were moved to see the very basic life the villages live so much so we made impromptu donation towards the children's schooling.

- **INTERNATIONAL INNER WHEEL DAY**

We celebrated Green Living with members of our sister clubs. This was organized by IWC KL in conjunction with IW International Day. Imagine our surprise when called to receive a cheque for RM11,600 and what is touching is that it comes from IW KL members own pockets.

- ***GRAPPLING WITH THE AFTERMATH OF THE FLOODS***

Penangites will never forget Nov 05, 2017. It was on this date that the state was completely paralyzed by the worst floods in its history. The occurrence of flash floods during heavy rainfall has been a common phenomenon in the state in recent years and some people blame it on inadequate flood mitigation system that cannot cope with the amount of water as well as indiscriminate hillside development projects. The floods came fast and furious in the middle of the night, accompanied by winds howling like banshees, toppling trees and tearing off branches. Understandably, most services were paralysed. The extent of the crisis immobilised large parts of the island and the mainland. The tragedy prompted then Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng to wake Deputy PM Zahid Hamidi around 03.30am for federal assistance, and very quickly put into place a recovery plan to lessen the anxiety of many who were still shocked at how much they had lost, and how suddenly. Half of Penang was submerged in floodwaters, particularly the NE and SW districts of the island as well as several districts in Seberang Prai.

Now where does IW come into the picture? From day one I was besieged by calls and my hand phone was inundated with messages from sister clubs asking if we are all ok. Our Past District Chairman Sakunthalai called many times in subsequent days to pledge money. I spoke to DAP asking what ways we could help. What they wanted was to get food & drinks to the afflicted but this proved

difficult because roads were still badly flooded and accessibility was hugely limited. But the government persevered. The damage was so broad that getting food and getting enough trucks together to ferry the food into the worst affected regions, proved quite impossible at first. But the sense of solidarity was immense, and managed to deliver food to the victims. Although the army did arrive with trucks and flood relief paraphernalia, they were not being given instructions by their commanders to get into the thick of things. Local authorities were cleaning up around the clock, but they too were struggling with the reduced workforce as many of the workers are also victims of floods and want to take care of their families.

What turned the tide, as it were, in bringing aid to the thousands afflicted by the waters that rose as high as 12 ft, was the quick response of the community. Aid soon came from across Malaysia; volunteers appeared from near and far. The speed at which debris was cleared away and houses and street washed clean was astounding, a testimony to how Penangites and Malaysians rose to the occasion to help their fellow citizens..... And the same could be said of our sister clubs who very generously donated to help in flood relief. The aftermath of the floods was heart-breaking. We were not able to assist in the cleaning, considering the age of most of our ladies and I am sure you will agree!!!! When the few of us from Pearl of the Orient and Penang Club offered to help get rid of the thick layers of sludge, we were told to our faces by volunteer workers we are too old for such bone breaking task!!! So we offered to give in kind. You see pictures of us taking inventory of household items, mattresses and electrical appliances that we loaded onto Lorries, of course with the help of Rotarians and some good Samaritans. For the first two months we were involved in flood relief. There was a case of Shirlynn, President of Pearl of the Orient unloading some mattresses to this lady with 8 children!!!! Imagine eight children and I couldn't help telling Shirlynn you should be dispensing condoms, not mattresses!!!!

We, both IW Penang & IW Pearl of the Orient, went to homes often neglected by the public as their houses were more recessed and thus missed by donors. We were practically knocking on their doors. These houses have their back fronting the rivers and these are the real victims suffering in silence. With money from sister clubs, PJ, Klang and IWC KL, we engaged in furniture replacement. Naturally we vetted cases and there were times when I felt like I was from Inland Revenue what with asking their income, their dependents as I had to ascertain they are deserving cases.

Over time, we came to know the flood victims we helped. We became friends; we don't see each other as donor and victim. We were heartbroken by some tragic cases of abandonment by offspring, of dysfunctional cases, and there are those whom we take pride in seeing them rise above their problems to forge ahead. Now there are a few, with whom we are in contact and even had fellowship in their homes.

We have a lasting legacy with IW KL where we sponsor a flood victim's 7 year old granddaughter to English lessons. Every month we pay towards her tuition fees and also give an allowance. Having come from a Tamil speaking family and being in a Tamil vernacular school, the task is long but we know she will succeed as she shows to be a promising girl and we intend to see her through to mastering the Queen's English.

The disaster unleashed a wave of solidarity between our Penang club and Pearl of the Orient. Amid burner stoves, kitchen cabinets, wardrobes and mountains of mattresses, we see us come together in times of other people's need and forge stronger friendship.

All the accomplishments cannot be the work of one, its all of us. All of this happened BECAUSE OF YOU, the members of IWC Penang. Each time an activity comes up; you unhesitatingly contribute in so many, many ways. Thank you for demonstrating what it means to live up to the ideals of Inner Wheel.

To Jeya and incoming committee, I wish you well in the year ahead. I know at this point it looks like a large mountain to climb, but it will be a fun journey and you will have the support of all your members as you move forward.

Inner Wheel Club Pengang

Outgoing President

Sally Koh

11 August 2018

Hotel Jen, Penang