



## NEWSLETTER 1

Dear Ladies of Agora Club!

It's me again – your old and new secretary – again looking forward to your articles and pictures of all activities in our Agora world.

This first newsletter of our new social year is entirely dedicated to our **20<sup>th</sup> ACI Conference** which was so special as we celebrated our **20<sup>th</sup> anniversary**.

In friendship

**Brigitte Colberg, ACI Secretary 2015-2017**



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## ***Words of our new president***

***Dear Ladies, dear friends,***

First of all I want to say thank you from the bottom of my heart for all of your good wishes, thoughtful and generous gifts, which I had the pleasure to unwrap with care and gratefulness once arrived at home. Your kindness, your smiles, your embraces and your love overwhelmed me and gave me enough power and energy for a whole year!



I loved every minute of the Conference, I felt honoured to meet so many Past Officers who had paved the way for Agora Club International. It was such a great pleasure to meet so many wonderful, lovely and beautiful women from around the globe, to work together and to have fun together. How blessed we are!

No need to say that I am happy and proud, but also very thankful to have the honour and the privilege to be your 21st International President. Together with Thanh Thao, Isabelle, Brigitte and Yvonne we will give the best of ourselves to serve Agora Club International. We have to set the course for our beloved thriving organisation, to keep it healthy and growing.

And we are not alone. Being part of the all-encompassing Round Table Family, we will continue to establish, maintain, improve and to strengthen the relationship with all our International Sister and Brother Organisations.

With the All4 Nepal project we realised how successful we can be united.

I firmly believe that we can move mountains when we trust each other, support each other unconditionally, join our forces, stay together as ONE and focus on what we all have in common, - our sense of friendship and service.

Let us all together work wonders for the wellbeing and the growth of our wonderful association „Agora Club International“ within the Round Table Family, because we are „**Stronger United**“

In friendship and love

***Ursula***

ACI President 2016-2017

**“Stronger United”**



# ACI Conference in Milan

What a **CONFERENCE!** 20 Years of Agora Club International was worth every effort to make this conference a very special one. Many of you could not wait to join us in Milan!



Every day pictures of your departure to Milan reached us via Facebook

and some of you made pre- or post tours to visit other beautiful parts of „**Bella Italia**“ . . .



three turns... and your wish comes true!



... while we counted the days

...

to welcome **You !!!**





Before starting the Conference with the Councilors Meeting on Friday afternoon, we had the opportunity to visit Milan.



gelati. . .

opera . . .

amore!!!!



After the sight-seeing tour an „Italian welcome “waited for us with good Italian food, Opera and a Happy Birthday song: “Agora, oh oh, Agora, oh oh oh oh...in joy, together in joy!”



Welcome





Finally, Saturday morning the long awaited conference with representatives of 18 out of 19 countries could start. We worked and discussed seriously but the highlights were without any doubt the celebration of the 20th anniversary where we expressed our gratitude to our past officers in various ways. Kelly's catchy Agora Song is still jingling in my ears, „Agora oh oh, Agora oh oh oh oh....“ and Gry's Agora Football Song was really fun. We had a lot of gifts, we sang songs and saw lively presentations, to say it short, we celebrated life by celebrating friendship. Unforgettable!



### Conference



The **Gala Evening** was the summit of a well-organised week-end full of friendship, fun and laughter with the promise to meet in **2017** at the latest for the Conference in **Malta!!!**

### Gala evening







**Our (non) Sleeping Beauty**



**For more pictures have a look on our website**



My dear Agora friends,

After the great Conference and the wonderful Celebration of the Twentieth Anniversary of Agora Club International, I have to bow my head and say "THANK YOU".

First of all, I thank each and every Agora member: the success of this Conference is due to your fantastic endeavors during the social year 2015-2016 to promote Agora, to make known its values of Service and Tolerance, to commit yourselves to the first Service Project "Eyes For The World", and to your numerous participation to the Conference.



Furthermore, I wholeheartedly thank our 19 Past Officers for having honored us with their pleasant presence. Together we have added a special and memorable page to the history book of Agora Club International.

I deeply thank my collaborative, energetic, generous, and lovely Boardies, Ursula, Kelly, Brigitte, and Martine. I really appreciate and can never forget all the brainstorming and hard work we did for the Conference.



I warmly thank my Italian friends of the Conference Team for their resilience, energy, and firm belief in the overwhelming success of the Conference. We spent nearly two years together: we shared so many discussions, so much anxiety, uncertainty, but also so much fun and laughter.

And finally, my dear Agora friends, I am sure that you will give Ursula Lejeune, our President 2016-2017, and her Board as much friendship, love, and support as you can. 😊😊😊

I can't but feel happy at the thought that the Agora world will be engaged in another fantastic

"STRONGER UNITED" year.

Yours always in friendship and love

Ly thi Thanh Thao

ACI Immediate Past President 2016-2017





## ***Our new BOARDIES!***

### ***ACI-Vice President Isabelle Seguinot 2016-2017***

Dear Friends!

For one month now, I have been your new Agora Club International Vice President and I am really very proud about it!

First, I would like to thank all of you for your nice support, messages, words... before and after my election... Thank You!



For those who don't know me, I'd like to give you a few details about myself...

I live on the French Riviera, in Hyères, between Marseille and Nice. I work as a physiotherapist and osteopath. I created and developed my office 25 years ago and I've been my own boss ever since.

Despite the fact that I have a job that keeps me very busy, I still try to find the time to do the things I like: scuba diving, skiing, hiking, discovering new countries and new people while travelling, taking pictures underwater...and above water too, dancing, spending quality time with my friends, here, and all over the Agora world!

Being involved as a charity and volunteer worker is important for me, that explains why, few years back, I was a circler. Then I was elected National President of Ladies Circle France and eventually became the International Weblady.

Today, I am an Agora member. "Donner et tolérer", French for "service and tolerance", was for me the logical continuation after "Friendship and Service" with the Side by Side spirit.

I am the founder President of Agora Club 39 Hyères. I also presented the South East Area for 2 years and, in 2013, I was the convener for the Agora Club International conference in Hyères.

Now, it is the beginning of a new adventure for 3 years in the ACI Board... lots of work but with fun and warm friendship with very nice ladies!

***Yours very friendly Isabelle Seguinot***

### ***ACI treasurer Yvonne Houben 2016-2017***



After having been part of the national board of Agora Club Belgium for four years I'm now pointing my attention to the ACI treasury and accountancy.

Some background about myself: I have studied accountancy and several years ago I made a career switch and professionally I am now a Human Resources Officer and I have a huge affinity for numbers.

My husband and myself have two sons, Kris and Michiel. They both have left the parental nest. In August 2016 we became grandparents of our first granddaughter named Stien.

***Yours in friendship Yvonne Houben***



## ***Impressions of Past Presidents***

### ***Francien van Gastel***

#### **Unforgettable weekend in Milan**

The 20th AGM of Agora Club International was, in all senses, a special one. It has been over sixteen years that I was President of a way more tiny and manageable ACI. Amazing how the club has grown over these last twenty years and still kept its very own Agora spirit.

That is probably why I felt so welcome again, after seven years of having to miss out on the event. One feels even more at home when the *voolaaare oh ho* on the Alitalia flight to Linate resonates 48 hours later in *aaagoora oh ho* in the AGM conference hall. And what about noticing your last name on posters all over the city, together with your favorite and oh so fashionable leopard design? Of course, I found a moment to visit the Giovanni Gastel exhibition in Palazzo della Ragione showing work from the famous fashion photographer's 40 years' career. But an Agora member feels never more welcome at an AGM than to run straight into the arms of President Ly Thi Thanh Thao on Thursday night! That first evening, the welcome dinner was brightened by professional opera singers who sang arias and duets from *Italiana in Algeri* and *Barbiere di Siviglia*.

Although the Atahotel Expo Fiera in Pero was the best possible venue to host a huge event like this, I opted for a hotel situated downtown, at a stone's throw from Duomo. It allowed me to hang out a bit in the city center and easily join the city walks I signed up for on Friday. That day we savoured a delicious risotto Milanese in Brera. Agora tradition has it that guests are offered a variety of trips. They didn't lack this year: Como lake on Thursday, Porta Nuova on Saturday and Bergamo on Sunday.

The AGM on Saturday was a particularly festive one. It lasted five hours and I wasn't bored for a split second. An alternation of agenda points, rituals and presentations made it an exciting event and a lot of fun. I felt honored by the spotlights put on us as past officers, and pleased with the so well deserved tribute to the three honorary members Annie Ferdinand, Danielle Gardin and Veerle de Jonge. They were presented with a beautiful satin rose, handmade by Ursula Lejeune, our new President, from whom all past officers received one to take home.

I have been deeply impressed by the fundraising activities: The Eyes for the World project and the knitting project for premature babies. So inspiring and it shows we can make a difference with our heads, hands and hearts, to quote our immediate Past President's motto.

The President's cocktail party on Saturday, the raffle and the very tasty gala dinner concluded a great Agora weekend, which I thoroughly enjoyed and closed off on Sunday with a visit to the Necchi villa and Peck's delicatessen, before flying back to Holland: *aaagoora oh ho!*

A big thank you to the Milanese and German clubs who organized this unforgettable twentieth AGM of our Agora Club International!

**Francien van Gastel, Past President 1999-2000**

## ***Nikkie Grewar***

Dear ACI Board and Members of ACI worldwide,

Thank you so very much for allowing me to participate at this past ACI AGM Conference (October 2016) in Milan by granting me travel grant allowing me to attend.

As a Past ACI President I was able to take pleasure in, interact and see friends old and new at all the functions.



This was such a special AGM special, as together we celebrated 20 years of our amazing organization.

I felt very honoured and privileged to stand amongst the ACI Past Officers at the AGM and Gala Dinner and was very touched by all the distinctive and exceptional treats that we all enjoyed so much. Well done to the Italian ladies for a superb weekend. We all will treasure the memories made forever!

From the fantastic tours – I love Lake Como, to the well run meetings and the outstanding Gala Dinner

Thank you, Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Much Love

**Nikkie Grewar, ACI Past President**

## ***First Attendance of an ACI Conference***



### **My 1st ACI CONFERENCE and 20th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION**

Early Thursday morning, Kalenga Mulenga and I, started our journey for Milan, Italy for our first ACI Conference!

We were going to meet Freda Sakulanda at Gatwick airport. We looked around at the check in counter and there was no sign of Freda! We assumed she had already checked in.

We got to the plane



and still no sign of Freda!!! We waited as long as we could but the stewardess said we couldn't wait any longer! We arrived safely in Milan but now getting worried because we had no idea as to what had happened to Freda!! Just when we were about to send a search party for her, Freda walked in just after noon, she had overslept and the plane left her!! =) What a relief, now we could enjoy Milan! Our first stop was Il Centro shopping mall!! We tasted our first authentic Italian meal in Milan and it was delicious. After our meal it was off to the shops 😊



We woke up early on Friday as we were on the tour to see the "jewels" of Milan, it was awesome. The Duomo, is absolutely beautiful and I enjoyed the other sights as well though some of us had to leave after a quick lunch for the councilors meeting. It was very educative for me and certainly an eye opener. I learnt a lot!

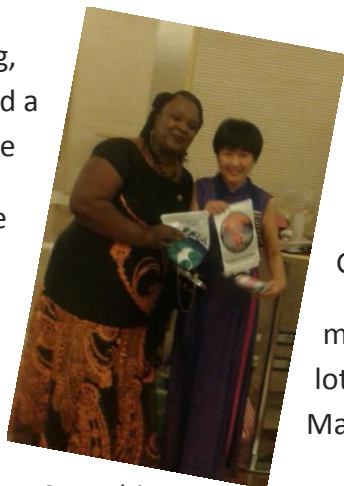


The Welcome party in the evening was great! The ladies were all dresses up in their national dress. The "Marilyns" looked fabulous!

Saturday morning, anniversary added a members over the

In the evening we followed by the

This has been a days and met a next AGM in



started with the AGM. I absolutely loved it and being 20th special touch! It was great seeing past and present ACI Board past 20 years especially our founding President!

had the President's cocktail and banner exchange which was Gala Dinner! That was the icing on the cake!

memorable AGM for me! I reconnected with ladies from the LCI lot more awesome ladies in Milan! I certainly look forward to the Malta 😊

Chilufya Nsofu IPP AC Zambia

## Our first time...

### Club Agora 8 Voorne Putten eo in formation at the ACI conference in Milan

Long before the departure date we had a lot of fun preparing for the ACI conference. 12 ladies of the very new club in Agora The Netherlands decided to go to this special ACI 20th anniversary conference in Milan. We bought or borrowed the flag dresses for the AGM, a trend that was followed by the other Dutch ladies, held a preparatory meeting with delicious Italian sweets and discussed our suitcases as we would like to travel light...

At Schiphol AirPort we left strange noises coming from completely normal as the Together with the National World championship. We conference! Some of us ex- others were completely to get to know Milan, city



with an hour delay. We heard extremely the bottom of the plane, which were steward said (?!), but finally we took off. team for roller skating on their way to the were quite excited. This was our first ACI circlers visited the LCI conferences before, but new. As we had a lot of free time we used this of fashion, culture and good food. We loved

the Duomo, went on top of it, ate delicious pasta, enjoyed the Aperol Spritz and of course bought some bags and cloths. We enjoyed the program of the conference, meeting ladies from all over the world and

old friends of Ladies' Circle, dressing up in our flag dresses and our gala outfits, admiring the results of Eyes for the World, making a lot of pictures, dancing the night away, sleeping short, apping to the 8 ladies who could not join us and most of all having a wonderful time together as club and getting to know each other better.

Our charter will be on March 25th 2017 on the beautiful island of Vorne Putten. You are all invited!  
Follow us on Facebook: AC 8 Vorne Putten e.o.

Thank you ladies of AC Italy and ACI for making us feel welcome. Also the ladies of Agora The Netherlands who were and are always helpful to us.

We will meet next year in Malta!!!

Greetings from Agoraclub 8 in formation Vorne Putten eo

## ***Speech of Janice O'Neill at the ACIC 2016, Milan***

**Dear Executive Board, Ladies, Guests.**



I bring greetings from the UK. UK what? Grown Up Circle, Tangent UK, Tangent Club International? No, I'm just a virgin & I haven't been able to say that for a long time! So why am I here?

I believe we are all basically the same people in the Round Table family, so why can't Tangent & Agora be sisters? Yes, there are obstacles: The Name, The Finances (my goodness, is that a nightmare!), The Rules But they can all be negotiated. Everything is negotiable, even men! We can't sort this overnight but we can start. It's like the famous question – how do you eat an elephant? The answer is simple, small bites at a time. You can see by my hips I've been doing that for a long time 😊

Now a short history lesson for you:

The first Tangent Club in the UK was formed in Bournemouth on the south coast of England in 1965 & the National Association of Tangent Clubs was created in 1970. At the time, it was purely for wives of Round Tablers who had to leave at the age of 40 or 5 years after their husbands became 40. In 1993 the rules changed & I was allowed to join Circle even though my husband wasn't in Round Table as he was over 40 years old. So I became the first Open Member. 'Oh it's going to go downhill from now on' I heard lots of ladies complain but it isn't all my fault. Tangent still chose to remain closed to all ladies except ex Circlers or partners of Round Tablers. Sadly, Circle is decreasing in the UK. It is hemorrhaging members faster than it is recruiting due partly to the age rule & therefore Tangent UK is decreasing too, every year. Tangent fairly recently voted to allow clubs to choose whether to remain Open or Closed, a discretionary rule. I'm telling you this because now it is the only real difference between Tangent & Agora. Some Tangent clubs are still closed.

In 2014-15 I was the National President of the National Association of Tangent Clubs, known as NATC & the following year I became Immediate Past President & International Relations Officer. As Tangent Club International had only just been formed & the UK was a founder member, I became the UK Board member on the TCI Board. During that time, I met Sandy, Kelly, Ursula, Thanh Thao & many, many more friends from all over the world who belong to Agora. So why is there a difference? We are all just girls who want to have fun. Now, I know there have been bad feelings/politics between Agora & Tangent in the past but we must look to the future. Look at us here. We have been friends for a short time or a long time. It doesn't matter. We all have the same dreams, problems & solutions.



I've never met anyone so argumentative about money as some of our older Northern Tangent members. We pay £6 per year to belong to Tangent but the arguments about increasing revenue to compensate the decrease in numbers is embarrassing! However, in Sweden there are different problems. Swedish Circlers insist that Tangent remains closed or they will refuse to join. India has applied to join TCI but their rules are even more strict. Their Circlers have to leave at the age of 40 & they MUST be married to Round Tablers. How does one sort that out? Not here & not today!!!!

So Ladies, let's get Agora & Tangent to work together to find a great solution. We are women & goodness, we can perform miracles although our new Prime Minister Theresa May has a difficult challenge right now just as Hilary Clinton & Angela Merkel have their problems too!

I am an Independent Member of Agora with 9 new friends from Agora UK in Southend on Sea & very proud to have the Tangent UK National President Paula Farnfield here too.

I promise to work hard to bring Agora & Tangent closer together & between us maybe we can rule the world.

Thank you for letting me join your wonderful club. I think you're fab.

**Janice O'Neill**

National President of the National Tangent Clubs (NATC) 2014-15  
Immediate Past President & IRO for NATC 2015-1206  
Executive Board Member of TCI 2015-2016

8<sup>th</sup> October 2016



**After the conference is before the conference!**

**21<sup>st</sup> International Conference in Malta, 12-15<sup>th</sup> October 2017**



**These beautiful, lovely ladies are waiting for you!**