

## **5<sup>th</sup> Historic teaser: MWIA witnessed its golden (50 years) Jubilee celebration (1969-1978)**

Let's shine a light on the 6th decade of MWIA – some highlights: the decade begins in **1969 with the establishment of the permanent Secretariat in Vienna and a celebration of its golden jubilee**. The opening ceremony at the 12th International MWIA congress in Melbourne Australia was a roaring success and a description can be found in Dorothy Wards book<sup>1</sup>

“Beginning in **1919 with two member associations, 50 years later MWIA had 35 national associations**. As the story unfolded, with its portraits of famous women, each nation mentioned was indicated by a golden light on the map, and the National Corresponding Secretary of each member association appeared on the stage, holding aloft her national flag, which she presented to the President, receiving in return a certificate of membership. The timing was perfect and the audience responded with enthusiasm and applause, as it watched the pictorial history on the screen, described by the clear, confident voice of the narrator, and saw the slow pageant of smiling, beautifully dressed women, some in national costume, carrying their large colourful flags across the stage, while lights indicating their countries flashed on to the map. A graph on the screen showed the growth of the MWIA over a period of fifty years, and lights showing all 35 countries appeared on the map”.

**The MWIA presidents of that decade** were Lorna LLOYD-GREEN, Australia (1968-1970), Leone McGREGOR HELLSTEDT, Sweden (1970-1972), Alma Dea MORANI, U.S.A (1972-1974), Harumi ONO, Japan (1974-1976) and Helga THIEME\*, Germany (1976-1978).

**In 1974, MWIA received its first large grant of 50.000 USD** with the cooperative efforts of the U.S. Agency for international development and the Family Planning International Assistance Fund. The money went to the Philippine affiliate with the sponsorship of MWIA.



The MWIA President joined with others to encourage the **United Nations to declare 1974 as “World Population Year“** and the 14th international congress was held in Manila, Brazil to celebrate this achievement. Dr. S. Oludayisi Oduntan who attended this Brazil Congress came back to her country of Nigeria, inspired and in 1976 the **first medical women association from black**

**Africa was inaugurated in Nigeria (MWAN)**, see their historic photo (Inauguration: Medical Women Association of Nigeria, 1977).

### ***Membership Development***

The decade ended with **39 National Associations** and added **25 individual members**. Of note, there was no communication from Lebanon after 1969. Sadly in 1978, the medical association in Argentina ceased to exist.

### ***MWIA meetings***

**1969:** 12th Congress, Melbourne Australia; Golden (50 years) Jubilee celebration. “The Health of Women in Industry“

**1972:** 13th Congress, Paris, France; “Toxoplasmosis“

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<sup>1</sup> Dorothy Ward, “They cure in a motherly spirit. History of the Medical Women’s International Association, Glasgow, Fledging Press, 2010, page 120

**1974:** 14th Congress, Brazil; “Genetic and Environmental Factors affecting Human Health“

**1976:** 15th Congress, Tokyo, Japan; “Viral Infections and their Sequelae“

**1978:** 16th Congress, Berlin, Germany; “Mass Media and Medicine“



The International MWIA Congress in Berlin, Germany, was vividly kept in the memory by many, since MWIA president Dr. Helga Thieme arrived at the gala dinner by a horse carriage (1)!

#### ***Other global events of that decade:***

MWIA members all celebrated when the **Australian medical women doctors won equal pay with their male colleagues** in 1969.

The decade saw the end of a three year **Biafra civil war of starvation that took place from 1968 to 1970**, when photographs of starving children with huge distended stomachs adorned television screens and the front pages of newspapers. Documented by Chinua Achebe in “*There Was a Country*“, and the award winning fiction by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

#### **Sources**

Morani, Alma Dea, A short history of the Medical Women`s International Association in Transactions and Studies of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, Volume 42, Nr.4, 4.April 1975

Ward, Dorothy, They cure in a motherly spirit. History of the Medical Women`s International Association, Glasgow, Fledging Press, 2010

(1) Courtesy of German Medical Women`s Association