

## March towards the 21<sup>st</sup> century 1980 - 1995

History flows with time like a river, its waves following each other without any end or beginning. It has many layers. The historian tries going deeper to find the roots of the events which are manifested on the surface. She wants to show the links in order to give some meaning to all the happenings otherwise they would appear like masses of episodes thrust upon us by our destiny.

Fortunately the Guild's history has been recorded in its annual newsletters by the participants. By putting them together one can see a pattern and find the threads that have tied us with the past and are now leading us to the future.

1980 appears to be a glorious year and the ones that followed were no less significant, one from the other. In 1980 Doreen Grun handed over the torch to Vesna Roller, a step which by itself is rather noteworthy. Since the birth of the Guild, it was mostly English speaking members, either British or American, who had piloted the affairs of the Guild and had brought it to its fullness. The break with the tradition came with Vesna Roller, who was from Yugoslavia, and after her the presidents were elected from almost all corners of the earth. In 15 years from 1980 through 1995 the chain has run through many countries reflecting the reality that has taken shape at the United Nations. It began with Vesna Roller (Yugoslavia) and continued under Dolores Lawler (Canada), Nalini Edward (Sri Lanka), Elsa Wurfl (Panama), Kamala Sen (India), Paivi Makela (Finland), Petra Hütter (Germany), and Munawar Habal from Syria. The presidents and the whole membership reflect the same transformation, from the West to the East, from the developed to the developing. Of course, it did not happen in a day, but when we look back over the decades the change is spectacular.

The purpose of the Guild has remained the same. It anchored itself steadfastly to the welfare of the needy children avoiding any kind of political or sectarian controversies that were swirling around all over the world during the cold war. But its focus shifted from regional to international, and to keep up pace with the enormity of the needs of the children, it stretched its arms as far as it could. Consequently, the fund-raising activities required tremendous efforts on its part and a knowledge of the facts of life beyond its doorstep became imperative.

The first recorded balance sheet dated 1961 appeared in the Newsletter of 1962. From that we know since 1956 when these summary accounts were started through 1959, the Guild had donated a total of \$12,346.62 from Group and Book funds. Since then the Guild has published its Balance Sheet for every calendar year. The following chart shows only the annual donation of a single year made at the beginning of each decade. It indicates the trend of the increase in donation during that period.

\$ 1,242.00 in 1960  
\$ 20,412.00 in 1970  
\$ 29,528.00 in 1980  
\$ 71,465.00 in 1990  
\$100,300.00 in 1995 (latest available)

These bare figures illustrate not only the effectiveness of the Guild's enterprise, they also carry within themselves many of the stories that led to the flowering of the Guild's potentialities.

In the fifties, the Guild took its first step towards establishing a cash fund for its humanitarian work. The book of folk tales came out in 1955, and the royalties from this source became a regular part of the annual income which dried up in the eighties.

In the sixties, the Calendar Towel was added to the list as the second money-earner. What an exciting experience for everybody it was! The book was in the hands of the publisher McGraw Hill, but for the towel the responsibility fell on the Guild. The designing, the selection of the printer, pricing and marketing, all business decisions depended on the Guild, and the members carried out their duties proudly and efficiently. To this day, every year the Guild Towel hangs on the walls of thousands of homes here and abroad. Every penny earned flows to the children without fail.

In addition to the towel, the Manhattan Group had found another lucrative way of replenishing their group funds - their annual Charity Bazaar. This was not a new idea. Some time or other every group had planned a Bazaar to sell their handicrafts or unused gifts or even stacks of used books. On such occasions, home-made cookies and cakes always added a unique feminine touch. But Manhattan Group began to do it in a very systematized way, making full use of the privilege that they enjoyed because of their proximity to the U.N. Headquarters or as a result of their special relationship with many of the missions. The benefits from this began to show up in their annual income column, and also in the long list of projects they supported from their funds.

In the seventies, this lesson was not lost on the other three groups. Happy with their own success, the Manhattan Group remained aloof. So the rest of the groups decided to join hands, and started a Fall Bazaar differentiating it from the Spring Bazaar of the Manhattan Group but both were held in the U.N. The new initiative gave a boost to the total income of the Guild and all the partners were pleased to increase the number of their charities.

The Tri-Group Bazaar was significant in more than one way. Apart from bringing financial gains to the Guild it also provided for all groups the same kind of exposure to the U.N. and its community as did the Spring Bazaars for Manhattan Group.

This proved to be most beneficial for the Queens Group. By seizing this opportunity it demonstrated once and for all that it could be an effective partner to count on for any venture the Board might decide to initiate.

If a single name could be quoted in this context, it would be that of Phyllis Madwella. For years she was a driving force behind the Queens Group. At the time of the first Tri-Group Bazaar she was its director. Even when her health was failing, she tried to keep on working with great fortitude not only for the bazaars but also at the sales counter. Regrettably, her death came much too soon in February 1993.

The eighties opened a new chapter in the history of the Guild. Manhattan had already perfected their Bazaar under Shirley Goundrey, a most competent member in every way. Some time later, Zaida Carleton, also a member of many talents, took her

place and went a step further by raising the Bazaar earnings to an all-time high. The Manhattan Group was elated.

This, however, led to an imbalance in the incomes of different groups which was not a very healthy development in an organization which was basically built on the principle of "separate but equal." To maintain an equilibrium, in 1984 the Board decided to merge the two Bazaars into one and to have some equitable distribution of income from this source. The transformation of the Bazaar from a Group to a Guild project needs some elaboration.

It was mentioned before that Manhattan Group had developed the Bazaar into a well-organized source of income for its charities. The enthusiasm and ingenuity of its members made it a major annual event carrying the name of the Guild all through the U.N. The reputation of its International food tables never failed to draw captive customers from the staff to the Bazaar area every year. Also some friends and invitees would come from the outside providing a fairly large crowd for the occasion.

To make the Bazaar financially successful, the Group depended mostly on the gifts from three sectors - the Permanent Missions to the U.N., the Commercial Sector in Manhattan, and, last but not least, on the contributions of the members themselves in food, handicrafts, and miscellaneous gift items.

A Raffle was added to create an exciting finale at end of the Bazaar day. The main prizes were donated by the airlines, Raffle tickets were sold for weeks both in and outside the United Nations. Over the years, it became the blue-print for a successful Bazaar. When the Joint Bazaar was introduced, this was adopted as a model.

Although Manhattan Group was a willing partner in the new arrangements, it was a little hard for its members to part with the tumultuous past when the Bazaar was their exclusive prerogative. During later Bazaars suddenly the names and faces of some of their stalwarts like Dorothy Wilner, Vesna Roller, Katy Mohan, Chantal de Paola, Branka Rifai, Earlene Smith, and of many others would flip through their minds, who were part of that past and now all gone from New York. For a moment they would cast a glance at the corner where Rebecca Lipovetsky, upholding the old tradition, was still selling the art wares donated by many Art galleries located in Manhattan. But quickly they would turn to their own assignments and begin to solicit the customers as diligently as before.

A new development in the field of fund-raising started transferring the focal point from the Bazaar to the shop. In the mid-seventies when Margarita Muller of Westchester became the president of the Guild, the most important contribution she made was to establish useful contacts with the high officials in the U.N. That came easily to her because of her achievements both in the academic and professional life. With her easy access to the higher echelon of the U.N. and her persuasive pleading, she managed to obtain official recognition of the "equal status" for the Guild with AFICS, the revered group consisting of the retired officials from the U.N.

This opened up a new world of privilege for the Guild. The first thing to happen was the allotment of an office in the United Nations, the second step was a coveted spot for the shop in the concourse with a stockroom nearby. To complete the picture, the Chemical Bank stepped forward with the gift of a set of wooden counters with attached storage drawers. For the shop, the days of make-shift arrangements were gone. It

established itself as an equal partner with other shops run by the U.N., UNICEF, and UNESCO in the same area.

In 1985, on the occasion of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the U.N., when Robert Muller came to inaugurate the souvenir sale at the shop, Kamala Sen as sales coordinator welcoming him told the gathering "This shop is the jewel in the crown of the Guild." It was no exaggeration. Today, as the Guild is celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the U.N. embellishing the T-shirt it sells with the new anniversary design, we can repeat the same attribute of adulation for our shop without hesitation.

In the eighties, it was not only the appearance of the shop that improved, but the business itself took a quantum jump in its volume. For that, a miracle was needed and so was it ordained. Towards the end of 1983, on a lucky day, Margarita Muller brought a proposal to the co-ordinator requesting to help the Westchester Group sell 200 T-shirts from the Guild shop. These shirts had been prepared for sale at a local charity Bazaar in their county but the sale was a failure. The offer was immediately accepted, and with permission from the Board the shirts were brought over to the shop. Within a few weeks, the whole assignment was sold. Literally speaking, the burden became a blessing. Immediately, a new order was placed, and in 1984, the sale of the shirts went up to 2000 pieces. Now a second miracle was in the wings. Afraid to break the spell of success, yet tempted by the call of 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the U.N., Kamala Sen proposed to change the original design of the group of U.N. Buildings on the shirt to a new emblem based on the U.N. logo. The success of this move was fantastic. The number of shirts sold rose to 8000. In 1986 as it was no longer the anniversary, the design was again modified a little, a chain of children holding hands replaced the inscription of "40<sup>th</sup> anniversary" under the logo and thus it became the hallmark of the Guild. Since then, its popularity has remained undiminished. True, there are other articles in the shop which are also selling well, but the T-shirt with its ancillaries like the sweat shirt and the golf cap with the same design is generating bulk of the income for the Guild for over a decade.

The first T-shirt was the brain-child of Uma Banerji of Westchester. She will be remembered by the Guild for this fine contribution.

Outside the Guild, some questioned the use of the logo for the T-shirt. But timely help from Mrs. Marcela Perez-de-Cuellar, the Honorary President of the Guild, resolved the dispute in favour of the Guild.

When the dust settled, Mrs. Marcela Perez-de-Cuellar wrote to the Guild "I am glad we were able to help you overcome your difficulties and I wish to thank you for providing me with samples of the new Women's Guild T-shirt." The Secretary General accepted it with pleasure. Earlier, another letter had come, it was from Mr. Bourbonniere (Director, Communication, Records and Buildings Services Division, under whose supervision the Guild Shop operated) congratulating the Guild for its performance during the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary year - 1985 - and "thereby assisting the United Nations." The approval from right quarters assured victory to the Guild for the design and a door was opened for the benefit of the children.

Though the eighties were showing prosperity at the shop, some clouds were gathering on the horizon, casting a shadow on the Guild's future that could not be completely ignored.

The joint Bazaar which was introduced earlier did not bring in enough money to compensate for the merger of the two Bazaars. Coupled with the dwindling number of gifts from the Missions and the commercial firms, this caused a temporary setback for the Guild. But, worst of all, fewer members were showing enthusiasm to share the responsibilities. Those who were at the helm of the Guild were aware of this sea change which was repeated in their various reports.

As early as 1981, President Vesna Roller was reporting "We are losing, in less than 13 months, six members of the Co-ordination Board, all of whom have been, for many years, actively involved in the work of the UNWG and of whose absence we will be aware for a long time to come." Such regrets could be heard from the directors of Manhattan and Queens again and again. The Secretariat Group never had too many new recruits. Only Westchester was showing strength in their number. Even there, in 1984, the outgoing director, Gerta Ambrozek, made this parting remark, "As with all organizations, time marches on and with it comes change. I believe that we have reached a moment of great decision. Many of our members either work or have children or other obligations. Thus the many tasks to be fulfilled fall on the shoulders of the few."

In the expansive days of the U.N., there was a constant flow of newcomers who would readily join the Guild and participate in its activities. At the time of shrinkage, the opposite was happening. To complicate matters, a new rule had been passed, allowing the wives to work in the U.N. A boon for the women had become a bane for the Guild! Under such adverse forces, the Guild was desperately searching for new recruits as replacements to the old ones who were either retiring or being transferred to the field.

This same dilemma had also spread to the U.N. centres abroad. When the Guild was born, the members had high hopes that, by establishing volunteer units (composed of the wives of the Staff members with a sprinkling of local recruits) in the different parts of the world, the Guild would be able to create a network of volunteers affiliated to the Guild. They thought that in time it would become a unique international organization of volunteers carrying the message of peace and caring for children all around the world. It showed much promise at the beginning, and its progress continued even into the early eighties. At that time, there were some positive signs that the overseas arm of the Guild could even become more powerful in the future. Marie-Elizabeth Egger reported in the Newsletter of 1981, "Sometime during the month of March, 1981, a new U.N. Women's Group will become a reality thanks to the initiative of a former member of the Parkway/Queens Group. Elizabeth Mathai has been able to bring together nearly 100 U.N. wives in Brasilia, Brazil, and together they have drawn up their by-laws, programmes etc. and will formally start their new activities after a new constitutional meeting next month." The same newsletter published reports from Addis Ababa, Bangkok, Bangladesh, Botswana, Geneva, Georgetown (Guyana), Guatemala, Jakarta, Kabul, Seoul, Sri Lanka, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda and Vienna - altogether 14 groups. No wonder the Guild was delighted to enrich itself with this treasure of information from abroad. In 1985, eleven names appeared in the report of the Liaison Officer Christiane Joubert. Next year, her report was still very encouraging. She said, "Overseas, I very proudly saw the number of their groups increase regularly and getting better organized, emulating each other." Then came the lull. The number was reduced to only a few letters, the reason was that either nobody else wrote or they did not arrive in

time for publication. In 1992, Sally Patten, a long-time member with experience both in the field and in New York, became the Liaison Officer on the Board. New contacts were established and letters came from Geneva, Bangladesh, Sudan, Sri Lanka, Mozambique, Zambia, Fiji, Vienna, and Rome. Because of business operations the Guild was always in touch with a few of these centres.

We regret to admit that in one decade from 1980 to the nineties, the overseas groups have undergone a fundamental change. That became quite clear in the report of Barbara Berke given at the Annual General Meeting of the Guild in 1995. She had spent 25 years with UNDP and was very much involved in the activities of her groups while she was in the field. What she said is worth quoting here: "One of the continuing problems faced by field groups is the question of membership and we sadly received a letter from Fiji informing us that they could not find a president or vice-president from the U.N. community and were therefore disbanding and would become an international club to continue their charitable work." The reasons given for this calamity are similar to what the groups are faced with here - fewer wives are coming, and when they come usually they want jobs or have children at home.

If these were the constraints that were hampering the running of charitable organizations either here or in the third world countries, the Guild could not offer any solution. The Guild exists under the patronage of the U.N. Its fate is inextricably woven into the U.N. system. If any decision of the U.N. affects it adversely, it will have to find ways and means to soften its impact and continue with its mission.

Fortunately, even in the late eighties when the Manhattan Group, a leading partner and known for its efficient management, was faced with a crisis due to a vacuum of leadership and at the same time the Board was unable to cope with its regular activities, the Guild did not despair. Some members were always there in each group whose unflinching devotion to duty had helped the Guild to carry on with its vital functions. The shop at the U.N. Headquarters - the main source of income - remained open seven days a week thus earning a profit. But most important, the members did not fail to review the projects and send the donations without delay. These women were not unknown or unsung. Their names were immortalized in the pages of the Newsletter every year. They were willing to give their blood for the Guild, but in no way they would take the final responsibility and agree to become the president or a director. So uncertainty continued, but the work did not stop.

With the nineties, things began to improve. The winds of change were blowing through the U.N., and maybe that gave a shock treatment to the spirit of the Guild. In 1992, a new Board was elected, the priorities were sorted out, and actions were taken accordingly.

Everybody understood that the shop should have the top priority and all attention was turned to it. For several years, there had been talks about introducing internal audit of all five accounts of the Guild held by the Board and 4 groups separately. Before leaving, the outgoing president had sent a letter to the director of Audit Division to that effect. At that point, the understanding was that only the Bank Accounts would be audited. The new president taking over in 1992 knew from her past experience that something more than that was needed - the focus should be on the shop and the control of

the inventories. She personally spoke to the director explaining the Guild's requirements and the response was immediate. The director put his deputy in charge of this assignment and assured the president if the Guild needed further help, he would give it his personal attention. Steps were set in motion to put the available records in order. The auditors were quite aware that this was the Guild's first audit, and they knew that much of the records could not be reconstituted backwards, so the director made it very clear in his covering letter, "These reconstructed statements should not, however, be construed as the Guild's official statements or as audited financial reports." A long list of suggestions was submitted as guidelines and he expressed his appreciation for "the cooperation and assistance extended to the auditors in conducting this audit."

The advice given by the audit was accepted wholeheartedly by the Board. How to put them in action could have been a formidable task. But "where is a will, there is a way." In Petra Hütter, then Vice President, the Guild found the right person to deal with the problem. All the operations related to the shop were delegated to her, the rest remained for the treasurer and other members to handle. The audit report was handed in at the end of 1993 and within a couple of months, in March 1994, the shop began to work in a faultless manner. By introducing some generally accepted business practices, Petra Hütter brought about a miraculous change in the running of the shop. Everybody heaved a sigh of relief - the sellers were happy to work in a trouble-free atmosphere, more money was generated for the children, and compliments were showered on the Vice President.

This was a turning point in the fund-raising activities of the Guild preparing it for the entry into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In reviewing the business practices of the Guild, the auditors had also touched on a fundamental point which went to the heart of the matter. When the Guild was founded, it was based on 'Honour System.' 'Trust and Integrity' was its first tenet. The constitution was drawn up accordingly. The founding-members were not aware that the hand that would distribute the money would be so deeply involved in earning it in the market place of the general public. Circumstances have changed so much, so that 'Rigours' should be added to 'Honour.' 'Accountability' should be the watch-word.

To consider this point and to introduce necessary changes in the constitution and by-laws, the Board appointed a standing committee under it. Over the years the Guild had adopted a few amendments. At the AGM of 1995, two more amendments were passed, one to the constitution, the other to the by-laws. It was another momentous step to modernize the Guild.

This period of 1980 through the nineties should be remembered for the major changes it brought about without much dissension. Even in bad days, the four groups working in unison kept the business in top form which demonstrated the inner strength of the organization and the unity of purpose among the four groups. The sales were healthy at the shop and other good things were also reaching the Guild in small measure.

In 1989 a silk scarf was introduced at the shop in three different colours. The print was adapted from a design donated by Laetecia Chan, a Philippino artist, with the same purpose in view. The response from the public was very favourable. In 1992, the new edition of the cookbook appeared on which the Westchester Group under Rosemary ap Rees had spent a great deal of time and thought. The presentation was beautiful.

About the same time, Chieko Tagaya, an old member of the Manhattan Group informed from Tokyo (her home town) that the Japanese translation of 'Ride with the Sun', which she had undertaken as her personal project for the Guild, was finished and ready for publication. She found a publisher in Japan who signed a contract with the Guild and soon after that, in 1992, the book was in the market in Japan. The beautiful cover was done by Mr. Tagaya. Two years later in January 1994, the same publisher asked the Guild for permission to produce a CD-ROM Japanese/English version from five stories borrowed from the same book. The Guild was delighted. In September, the contract was signed by the two parties, and CD-ROM disks began selling in December of the same year. This was followed by another proposal from a different party. This time it was a subsidiary of McGraw Hill who approached the Guild for the rights to publish the American story from the original book of folk tales in one of their publications named: © 1997 Reading/Language Arts Program (the 1997 Program). The Guild gladly accepted the proposal. After several months of friendly negotiations, the contract was signed by both parties in November 1995.

These transactions brought in handsome returns to the Guild funds. It was a most pleasant surprise to find that a book, which was published in 1955, ran its course for 20 years and went out of print in 1977, could return to life in such unusual ways. It was as if the past was signaling the present generation to go forward with their work with new hope and commitment.

It is time to state clearly what is meant by 'commitment.' Once a member describing the functions of the Guild said, 'The projects form the core of most of our activities in the Guild, and at the heart of each project there is a group of children. These children represent the whole world to us. By serving them we feel we are also serving the cause of the United Nations.' True, but for these projects the Groups have no executive responsibility, nor do they have any contractual obligations in any form. Yet working under the banner of the U.N. the members know deep in their heart that for them there is an obligation to humanity which can never be forgotten. This is what impels them to join the Guild to work and raise funds for the children who are growing up in the midst of deprivation and poverty all around the world. This is their commitment.

Since the Groups cannot have direct contact with the children they turn to the organizations which are caring for them at a great sacrifice of the volunteers' own time and comfort. The selection of an institution is not an easy matter. Each Group has its committee whose function is to gather all relevant information and on the basis of that a project is chosen. The primary requirement is that it should be a charitable organization with a record of able management. In most countries these are run by women volunteers like the members of the Guild. That is an additional qualification.

These centres belong to three categories - schools, hospitals, and orphanages. The donations from the Guild are usually in small amounts running in the hundreds, but they are often renewed over several years and that help establish a relationship between the donor and the recipient. This way the Guild can cover more projects and get more information from different parts of the world.

Looking at the statistics, it is heartening to find that how in 1949 a single project in North West Greece emptied the Guild's coffer completely. It had spent \$150. In 1994



the total donations rose above \$80,000, yet it was left with a surplus balance in its account. 145 projects spread over four continents and some Islands were benefited indicating a fruitful year for the Guild.

In reality, during these long years a demographic revolution had taken place. In 1949 the world population was 4.2 billion, in 1995 it had reached 5.7 billion. The urban societies are multiplying fast but with it rearing children is becoming more of a problem. Today the concern is not from disease so much as it was in olden times, but from other ills in the societies. So these figures are not much of a consolation.

However, the Guild is not in the field for its own success story. It wants to carry a message of hope to those who are on the brink of hopelessness. In a quiet way using their own time, labour and initiative, the members try hard to make a modest sum of money from all possible sources. This will provide at least some children with more opportunities in their formative years so that they can build a better world in the unfolding future.

All that had been recorded until now is related to what the constitution says - "the purpose of the Guild should be to assist the children in need throughout the world." But what about "to serve as a mutual bond and centre of interest for women connected with the United Nations?"

In a wider sense, the work the members do for the Guild has been the major unifying force. In this respect the annual Guild Bazaar has always played an important role. Weeks and months of working together culminate in the excitement of a single day bringing a joy of fulfilment to all. Reminiscing of her days in the Guild a past member from Paris wrote "At the Bazaar I learnt how to work with people with such different backgrounds. I found it extremely rewarding giving me tolerance and understanding of others' point of view. It often led to long standing friendship."

The Bazaar also serves as a vehicle for showing honour to the patrons of the Guild in the U.N. or in the City Liaison Office to the U.N. The opening ceremony makes a worthy occasion for inviting a 'Guest of Honour.' Previously, Madame Lie and Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold had honoured the Guild by their presence at other events. In 1971 Secretary-General U Thant accompanied by his daughter came to open the Bazaar. Since then, the wife of the Secretary-General, who serves as the Honorary President, has gladly accepted the invitation to this particular day. Mrs. Waldheim, Mrs. Perez-de-Cuellar and Mrs. Boutros Ghali have all shown their appreciation of the Guild activities in various other ways. In 1990, the Guild was fortunate to have Mrs. Joyce Dinkins, the First Lady of the City of New York, as its 'Guest of Honour.' She opened the Bazaar surrounded by a crowd of cheerful women. They were proud to welcome her at a time when they could display the product of their group efforts for fund raising at its best.

In a narrower sense, in their day to day life, the group activities provide them with ample opportunities for getting together and knowing each other more intimately, and setting their own programmes for entertainment or for helping each other whenever needed.

Beyond this there is an area which has not been much talked about among the members in general. In broad terms, it is 'Women's Cause.' Of course, 'Women's

Decade' launched by the U.N. had made an impact on their consciousness and brought a new awareness of the existence of vast discrimination against their own sex, universally.

The newsletter record indicates that in 1975/76 with support from the Board, Margarita Muller took steps to initiate intensive lobbying in the Fifth Committee (the most powerful decision making Committee in the U.N.) to fight against the meager pensions allowed to the widows of Staff Members. Those efforts at some point produced some positive results. In 1984/85, Nalini Edward in her annual address urged the members to take some active interest in 'Women's Cause.' The 1990 Newsletter indicated clear signs that 'Spouses' Rights', if not 'Women's Cause', was a live issue with the Guild affiliate in Vienna. Its report stated, "In response to this need of recognition of 'Spouses' Rights', the Women's Guild of Vienna established a Committee on the 'Rights of U.N. Spouses'." The Newsletter also published views by Elsa Wurfl and Connie Vegega on this matter. Both had reported favourably. This initiative from Vienna had its ripple effects. A similar group was started in Geneva and a working Group in New York began to operate.

In 1992 when the sitting president realized that there was a nucleus of such a working committee in New York, she proposed that it should come under the Board. Since then there has been a 'Spouses Rights Committee' in New York with limited activities. The Guild decided to remain as observers. No formal strategy or plan of action was established.

The members might disagree about their rights but the approach to their duties is the same. In human relationship, the Guild never failed in maintaining its image of dignity and compassion while working with people in the U.N. at all levels starting from the 3<sup>rd</sup> basement to the citadel of the U.N. - the 38<sup>th</sup> Floor. The members knew how much they owed to the cooperation of the people around them to achieve success in their objective. They were genuinely grateful for the understanding that was accorded to them on all occasions. In 1982, President Dolores Lawler spoke for every president and every member of the Guild when she said, "We must thank, of course, the Church Center and staff for all their help and the space they make available for us for our meetings and parties. We also thank the U.N. Staff and Buildings Management Service, Security, the Secretariat News and Photo and Printing Sections for their help and cooperation." It began in 1948 and in 1995 it is the same story, underscoring the bond of friendship and gratitude among diverse people, men and women, brought together by the United Nations.

It is amazing that living in America, a land which is full of '15 minute celebrities' the Guild never came forward to claim its share at any moment. Occasionally there was an urge to promote the cause of children using some publicity but it did not materialize. The members depended on the good deeds that they were performing year long at the shop and annually at the Bazaar to carry the name of the Guild. In 1989 President Elsa Wurfl mentioned "We were unable to execute several excellent suggestions to celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary (of the Guild). One was by Sheila Farah to open an exhibition depicting 40 years of development and growth which could become a permanent display near the sales counter. The plans for implementing this idea were discussed with Building Management for some time."

Taking the cue from this desire of the members, in March 1994, the Guild unveiled a pictorial exhibition in the South Lobby of the U.N. before a huge gathering of friends and patrons. The concept of the exhibition with all its text was presented by President Kamala Sen. But for its execution, most of the credit should go to the Secretariat Group whose participation under its director, Genoveva Wallach, and its outside contacts led to the realization of a dream held so long by many members of the Guild.

The official record says, "The first picture that comes to mind of the opening of the exhibition on March 15<sup>th</sup> is its beautifully decorated Reception Area, and a few steps away in the sunbathed corridor hanging on the screens are the professionally produced posters and pictures telling the story of the Guild and its activities to our guests and patrons." There was Lady Hannay - the first lady of the British Mission to the U.N. in New York. She always wanted a closer relationship between the Guild and the ladies belonging to the missions. On every occasion she tried to make her contribution towards that goal. For the exhibition she did not hesitate to become an honorary adviser and to hold meetings at her home. She generously made substantial donations to its success. She will be remembered with affection by those who worked with her.

The display began with Sheila Farah's imaginatively designed poster of the 'Mighty Oak from an Acorn' followed by Zaida Carleton's creation of the "the laurel leaves embracing the heart of the Guild Constitution." More than fifty posters, large and small, showed the members at work, but more that that they showed the children from around the world who formed the core of many of the projects that the Guild has helped in so many countries since its beginning.

This made an indelible impression on the viewers. A member felt inspired and words flowed -

"The exhibits and interest of  
Visitors revealed the rare  
Tapestry of superb artistry  
Of hope and help  
To smoothen the ever-soaring  
Flight of the white dove." (Natarajan)

Mrs. Gillian Martin Sorensen, (Under Secretary-General in charge of 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration), who had opened the exhibition and knew the Guild from its early years wrote "I appreciated the chance to see your exhibit portraying the many people and programmes the United Nations Women's Guild has supported over the years. It was artistically presented and evoked recognition and appreciation for the Guild's work."

Overarching the exhibits stood the message from Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali clearly defining the image of the Guild which it had humbly tried to project. It said: "Today, as the United Nations faces new challenges such as ethnic violence and intolerance, the example of unity and understanding set by the Guild is needed and appreciated more than ever. In its modest fashion, the United Nations Women's Guild is helping to create the culture of peace and caring which the world needs as we approach the 21<sup>st</sup> century."

The Guild knows the contribution it makes is very modest, not even a drop in the ocean that is needed to alleviate the misery of millions of children. But a poet spoke for us:

“Jostling with the crowd in a country fair he saw a child with empty hands and empty pocket near a shop full of toys and tinsels. The sadness in his eyes had shadowed all the glitter at the fair. Suddenly from a corner, a little girl blew on her penny whistle - its note rose to the sky clear and joyful filling the air with bliss of happiness.” (Tagore)

We in the Guild like to believe that our efforts will buy some penny whistles for the children - that will be our reward.