

# ZONTA INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT

BERYL STEN



From the very beginning of her professional career in the 1960's, Beryl Sten has worked in companies that have been international, either through subsidiaries and/or agents all over the world. These have included an international asset and investment company, a patent and trademark bureau, and a steel and iron works company.

She spent 25 years with ASTRA, the pharmaceutical company today known as AstraZeneca, including 12 years as Head of the President/Chief Executive Officer's and Chief Financial Officer's offices. Of this experience, Beryl states, "The entire world was my working place." She also says, "In my professional life one person has meant more than anybody else. Ulf Widengren was the CEO/Group President of Astra. I had the privilege to work as his Executive Manager. He believed in and promoted women and was a GREAT mentor. He encouraged my membership in Zonta and supported the club's activities."

She went on to serve as Corporate Manager of Information/Communication and Public Affairs, company secretary and a member of the Executive Committee over a period of 11 years with KLIPPAN. The company was founded in 1573 and when Beryl joined, was a paper producing company with three paper mills and one pulp mill, a subsidiary within the forest industry. In 2005, she had intended to retire, but instead took up the position as President/Chief Executive Officer. By the end of 2006, the mills had been sold or were closing down and she was able to resign. At the time, she was one of a total of nine female CEOs of companies listed on the Stockholm Stock Exchange.

During her tenure with KLIPPAN, she was a member of the Information and Communication Council of the Swedish Forest Industry and KVIST, an association of professional women actively engaged in the Swedish Forest Industry.

Beryl has also served since 2001 as Chairman of the Board of the local branch of the Swedish association of private enterprises. From 2001 to 2004, she was Chairman and Director of KRUT, an association of enterprises for development of industry and trade in the community. She was an elected member of the county Council for Equal Opportunity issues from 2001-2006.

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from the beginning. During the 1980s she was member (director) of the club board and then president of the club. In the 1990s, she was elected to Area Director, Lt. Governor and Governor of District 21. During this decade, she also served as Chairman of the District 21 UN Committee and on the District 21 Nominating Committee. She served as Chairman of the 2000-2002 Gothenburg Convention Committee, and from 2002 to 2004 as Director on the Zonta International Board. In 2004-2006 she served as Zonta International Vice President and in 2006-2008 as President-Elect.

Beryl is married to Göran Sten, a retired Associate Professor, with a PhD in mathematical statistics. Beryl and Göran have one daughter, Birgitta, a certified/authorized nurse. Birgitta is a Zontian, and is married to Mikael Ström, a bank manager. They have one son, Alexander.

Beryl's grandmother had a very strong influence on her life. "When she was alive, I was too young to know, but later in life I have understood. As a small child I listened to her exciting homemade fairy-tales. They were all about human rights but mostly women's rights. The female heroines always stood up for a woman's right to own property, to inherit property; sister and brother were equal, women had the right to refuse marriage, i.e. to be independent of a man, gender equality in law; freedom to think and the civil courage to demand equal treatment whether you were rich or poor. She lived as she learned!...As late as in 1964 a law was passed in Sweden acknowledging rape within the marriage as illegal/criminal. It gives perspectives!"



Beryl joined Zonta as a charter member of the Zonta Club of Södertälje in 1985 and since then has held a position at either the club, district or international level.

In the autumn of 1984, the OMC Committee began to organize what would be the charter of the Zonta Club of Södertälje in 1985. From the very beginning she was engaged in the organizing of this new club and served as deputy director of the club board



## BERYL STEN ON THE 2008–2010 BIENNIUM

**The Zontian (TZ):** What is the primary goal you would like to accomplish as Zonta International President?

**Beryl Sten (BS):** Goals may be classified as primary or secondary; one of the primary goals during the biennium is to establish the global platform for Zonta International to be the leading and most recognized organization for key governmental officials and relevant agencies when it comes to needed changes to legislation about women's rights. The legislative progress in gender equality varies from country to country. Some are more fortunate than others, but still there is enormous work to be done even in the most developed nations in this respect. Laws are not sufficient; implementation is dependent on financial support and, not least, the education of the judicial system.

Zonta International must develop adequate advocacy tools to meet these needs at any development level, be it to start advocating for changes in legislation, education of the court and police systems, equal access to health resources or economic status.

**TZ:** What are the strengths you bring to Zonta?

**BS:** Experience in leading positions in international companies has given me knowledge of global affairs. Ability to listen and respect for other people's opinions are basics for a good approach, as well as for analyzing strategies or the solving problems or disputes. Sometimes it is absolutely necessary to take an unpopular decision, but the ability to combine a cold brain with a warm heart is an asset.

**TZ:** Please describe any particular issues with regard to women's rights that you are especially dedicated to and tell us how you have made a difference in those areas – or would like to make a difference in those areas.

**BS:** There is not one particular issue. Women in the world face various living conditions. Subsequently the particular needs of the women diagnosed with fistula in Liberia are to regain health and self esteem and the possibility to support themselves. While the women in Sweden, for example, are advocating for gender equality concerning salaries and a seat in the board rooms. Others might fight for the right



to leave their own country and/or to return to it.

My professional career has offered me opportunities to encourage and promote women to higher positions internally as well as externally.

**TZ:** What do you see as the greatest challenges facing women today?

**BS:** In a global perspective – poverty!

**TZ:** How can Zonta respond more effectively to women's needs?

**BS:** To realize that we do have to work on all fronts:

- by supporting our International Service projects in developing countries,
- by supporting our educational programs, and
- by being visible advocates in the world arena, as well as locally in our districts and communities as an active and dedicated organization for women's issues.

**TZ:** What do you think Zonta has traditionally offered women? What do you think Zonta offers women today?

**BS:** Very generally speaking – traditionally we have worked through service projects and equally generally I would say that advocacy is taking us to a new level. The combination of service and advocacy should bring us to the forefront as one of the most respected speaking partners in women's issues for governmental officials worldwide.

**TZ:** What is the legacy you want to leave as president of Zonta International?

**BS:** Legacy is not what I am thinking of just now! My duty is quite simply to do the best I can to continue the work for the advancement of women.

**TZ:** Is there a particular message that you would like to impart to your fellow Zontians?

**BS:** Treasure our uniqueness to be a united international organization, where all members have a vote through their clubs and are equally and democratically represented at our conventions. Prevent any tendency to split up the operational organization of Zonta International, which is maybe the one and only truly international organization for women.