



This true story begins at 6:30 p.m. on Friday, August 15, 2014 and ends less than 24 hours later with a brand new Club in the Georgia District holding its charter meeting.



[Members of the Ya Ya Sisterhood Optimist Club — complete with tiaras.]

THE DIVINE SECRET BUILD OF THE *Ya Ya Sisterhood* OPTIMIST CLUB

By Sandy MacKay, Optimist Club of Athens-University, Georgia

Friday, August 15, 2014 – 6:30 p.m.

On a sultry summer evening on St. Simon's Island, Georgia, the Georgia District was in the midst of its Executive Board meeting when the subject of new Club building and membership came up. Past Optimist International President Jack Creswell – who happened to be visiting the convention with his wife, the newly-elected Member of the Optimist International Board of Directors, Sue Creswell – issued a challenge to the Georgia District. His challenge was that whoever could bring in a new Club, with at least 20 Members, before the end of the Optimist year could spend a weekend with him and Sue in Reading, Pennsylvania, their home town.

Little did Jack know the challenge would be accepted!

Joey Richardson and Anita Still began to talk about new ideas to build a non-traditional Club to serve the entire State of Georgia. Through their conversation, ideas grew and flourished. But where would the new Members come from? We have non-members who attend our conferences and conventions that want to be involved but didn't want to belong to a traditional Club; they want to help but are not quite sure how.

Here's how – The Ya Ya Sisterhood Optimist Club – a non-traditional, unconventional all-female Sisterhood of Optimists.

Joey and Anita talked to Rose; Rose talked to Mary; Mary talked to Sandy – the list of charter Members started to grow. And it continued to grow by leaps and bounds.

At 7:30 Friday evening, we had 10 charter Members already!

At 9:30 Friday night, several charter Members met with New Club Building Chair Johnny Young to make sure we could build the Club in our time frame. If we could get the Members, we could build the Club.

At 9:00 Saturday morning, we had 25 charter Members.

The Sisterhood was growing. We talked to Members; we talked to non-members, wives, significant others, daughters, friends; we talked to anyone who would listen.

2013-14 Governor Hal Sewell, and most of the men, had no idea what was going on – it was, after all, the Georgia District Convention and we should be about our Optimist duties. And we were – classes were taken, boardwalk booths were attended to, tours were conducted – all was well with the District Convention.

By 2:00 Saturday afternoon, we had our 15 new Members required to bring in a new Club. They brought our total to 28.

With a whirlwind of paperwork flying around – all sorts of new Club paperwork, applications, and money – excitement was growing! We were almost not able to contain ourselves.

By 4:00, we had 35 Members and the group was still growing.

At 6:00 Saturday evening, the charter meeting of the Ya Ya Sisterhood Optimist Club was held. Sue Creswell, the visiting International representative, oversaw the meeting. Sue made sure applications and initiation fees were collected. With contagious excitement, Sue joined the Sisterhood. Our friends, Essie and Katherine, from the Tennessee District joined as well – 41 women in total. Four officers and 6 board Members were elected. Every Ya Ya was given her tiara and we were off to the Governor's banquet.

At 7:15, the banquet started with over 110 people in attendance. Governor Hal still had no idea of what was about to happen. He was told the agenda had a few changes, just to go with it and not to worry about anything. The Ya Yas were ready to take over his banquet.

It was 8:30 and the Governor's Luau banquet was well under way. Dinner had been eaten, awards had been given out, officers had been installed, remarks had been made when Conference and Convention Chair Rose Kohler gave a clean napkin to Governor Hal and told him to hold on to it, he was going to need it. Rose and New Club Building Chair, Johnny Young, went to the podium and began talking about Club building. They talked about how great a new Club would be and wondered what it would take to bring one in. The Ya Yas in the audience began putting on their tiaras. Rose told Governor Hal that we had built a Club in less than 24 hours; that's when all the Ya Yas jumped up, threw their hands in the air and shouted "YA YA!" He thought we were kidding. Sue assured him that we were not kidding and that the Club had indeed chartered just before the

banquet started. Governor Hal picked up the napkin Rose had handed him earlier and wiped the tears of joy from his eyes. With a catch in his voice, he said "It truly is a wonderful life!"

The crowd was stunned by what the Ya Yas had done. There was lots of excitement, lots of smiles and laughter and many tears of happiness. The Georgia District is proud of its new Club!

The song "Celebration" by Kool and the Gang began to play and the Ya Yas danced in a line around the room giving high-fives to the crowd. We had so many Charter Members in that room that no one knew where the line began or ended. We're one big circle – a sisterhood ready to do good work for the Georgia District.

We have Charter Members from Georgia, Tennessee, Pennsylvania and Alabama. This was totally amazing!

Sunday morning, Jack Creswell installed the newly-elected officers and Board Members – President Joey Richardson, Vice President Rose Kohler, Secretary Anita Still, Treasurer Mary Still, Board Members Mary Abate, Kathy Forster, Gwen Gable, Sandy MacKay, Cathy Robinson, and Jodi Smith; then installed all 49 charter Members of the Ya Ya Sisterhood Optimist Club.

The Ya Ya Sisterhood Optimist Club will hold Club meetings at the District conferences and convention. At each location, the Club will do a service project that is needed in the area. For example, we are looking at Eagle Ranch Children's Home – a home for boys and girls in crisis and in need of hope and healing – as our first project.

Eagle Ranch is one of Georgia's largest homes for children in crisis, serving North Georgia and Metro Atlanta since 1985, providing a home, counseling and education for nearly 70 boys and girls on a 270-acre campus.

This Optimist Sisterhood was conceived, built and chartered in less than 24 hours. Are you ready to build your Club?