Shirley Anne Clements

Shirley Anne Clements was very proud of her Irish roots. She was, however, born in the UK and at age 10 she moved with her family to the then Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, where she stayed until she was 26.

Shirley’s father loved Opera music and played records regularly at the family home, and this inspired Shirley, who then studied music, and became a member of an artist group which performed numerous operas, even taking the lead role, for which she received rave reviews. Shirley then decided to make music her main career and where better to follow this path but in the Austrian capital of Vienna.

Shirley arrived in Vienna in 1969 and furthered her musical studies. However, Shirley also needed to support herself and after a few short jobs she eventually secured a position at the IAEA, initially in the Seibersdorf Laboratories, where, inter alia, she continued research on the Tsetse fly, which she had also done in Africa. Pretty soon Shirley relocated to the IAEA Headquarters in Vienna, where she worked in nuclear medicine at the Agency’s temporary home on the Ring Strasse, where she was well known for taking “newbies” under her wing and showing them the ropes, which of course included many visits to Operas!

It wasn’t long before Shirley discovered the Staff Council and became a staff representative in 1981. She also served as treasurer from 1982 to 1986 and then again from 1990 to 1999, and it was during this second term that upon the occasion of the IAEA’s 40th Anniversary in 1997, Shirley and the then President, Walter Scherzer, approached the then Director General, Hans Blix, with an idea to offer staff and meeting participants a few items to commemorate at occasion. The Director General approved and soon afterwards the IAEA souvenir counter was established. Sales took place each Tuesday during lunch time, behind the black counters that used to be located at the bottom of each tower, and involved wheeling out a metal trolley which had small quantities of limited items available, such as polo shirts, T-shirts, sweat shirts, coffee mugs etc. Afterwards the trolley would be wheeled back to a small storeroom. In her capacity as treasurer, Shirley was responsible for the financial matters and, while she initially manned the sales desk herself, it soon became apparent that volunteers would be needed. Over the years a number of former staff used to help out, Elizabeth and Leslie Crook, Annemarie Weisskopf and even the Staff Council Administrative Secretary, Alison Sweeney, was a regular helper. The proceeds were foreseen to be used for charitable purposes.

Another one of Shirley’s achievements was in coordinating the issuance of petrol cards, a special arrangement which had been negotiated with one of the leading fuel suppliers. Dues paying members of the Staff Association could apply for a card which gave them a small discount on fuel purchases. The amounts spent would then be deducted from the staff member’s salary at the end of the month. The card proved quite popular and continued to be offered for many years until the changes in the Agency’s financial systems meant that it would no longer be possible to include the salary deductions. Shirley was also a main organizer regarding the establishment of the Staff Council Language Training Programme, and the Computer Training Programme.

As treasurer, Shirley also served on the Staff Welfare Committee, now Staff Assistance Committee, Shirley was a valuable member of the Committee and could be relied upon to provide impartial and helpful assistance to many staff members throughout her term. Another area where Shirley was very active was in the annual Council sessions of the Federation of International Civil Servants’ Associations (FICSA). She would often be involved in the Administrative and Budget Committee, where she assisted FICSA in establishing its budget and in ensuring that the membership fees for each member organization would be proportionate and fair, something that was particularly important for those members who did not have the financial resources of a Staff Association as large as the IAEA’s. Shirley made her final appearance in the 53rd FICSA Council, which was hosted by the IAEA Staff Association in February 2000, where Shirley received a plaque in recognition of he years of service. Owing to her impressive abilities she was, however, involved in
budgetary matters in connection with FICSA for many years after her retirement.

Shirley was well known for her willingness to help those in need and as treasurer she coordinated the annual VIC wide distribution of red ribbons and collection of donations for World AIDS Day. She was also involved in many St. Patrick’s Day events that used to be held in the staff lounge, with Guinness and Irish Stew, which Shirley claimed was the best in the world and then there was Shirley’s infamous Irish Coffee, which she was only as good as it was due the addition of Tullamore Dew! Shirley was also an active member of the VIC choir and her unmistakable and remarkable voice was a long-standing feature of the Christmas singing in the VIC Rotunda.

When she was done with that, she would join the regulars of the VIC bar for Carol singing - back in the good old days when the bar actually looked like a bar! Shirley was also a reliable assistant at the annual Children’s Party for many years and was well loved by all the children attending, being the lively, jovial and good fun, caring person that she was.

Shirley had planned to retire in 2000 and I was approached in 1999 as a potential replacement, probably because Shirley was also a member of the VIC Darts Club, where I was the treasurer at the time, and - so she felt - if I could manage the accounts of the darts club I could surely manage the accounts of the Staff Council, prepare the budget, oversee the souvenir shop and the petrol cards and organize the annual AIDS day collection?! I eventually agreed to stand for the office of Staff Council treasurer and when the elections were held, I was the only candidate and was duly elected. Shirley agreed to show me the ropes not only with the accounts but also with the operation of the souvenir counter. Somehow, I have continued as treasurer and the souvenir shop has grown to what it is today, as the Agency became ever more a part of world news the demand for articles with the Agency’s logo, the souvenir enterprise has grown and grown.

After her retirement, Shirley continued to help me with the accounts. Naturally my main role was to take care of all financial transactions and maintain accurate records, but I could also rely on Shirley to cast her eagle eye over the files and finalize the financial report, and having this extra pair of eyes was very much appreciated, especially as the souvenir shop began to require more and more time.

Shirley moved to Bisamberg in 1979 and became a well known member of the community. She soon joined the Bisamberg Choir and was always willing to get involved in the many social activities, helping collect for the needy and assisting in fund raising activities, and participated in the numerous cycling tours organized by local friends, which would take them over half of Europe!

Shirley sadly and unexpectedly left us on 11 October. Her memorial service took place in the Bisamberg Church on 19 October. The weather that day was kind and together with the many locals who came to say farewell, there were many active and former staff members present, all of whom had been touched in some way by Shirley as we knew her, larger than life and not afraid to speak her mind.

Shirley was loved and (sometimes feared – that fiery temperament of hers!) by all. She cared and had an understanding of people, a keen sense of justice and fairness and willingness to right wrongs, not to mention a sense of fun and how she loved being in the thick of things.

You will never be forgotten Shirley. May you rest in eternal peace.

John Young

I first meet Shirley in 1995 when she was the IT Coordinator for RIHU (NAHU today) and I was on the IT Service Desk. As mentioned before Shirley could put the fear of God in you should you not deliver the service she expected for the staff under her responsibility. But she was always a fair and competent partner who knew what she was talking about.

When Shirley retired in 2000 she asked me to apply for her position in NAHU, a position I held ever since except for a DR in NS. Not only did I take over the job as IT coordinator in NAHU, but she also convinced me of the importance of the IAEA Staff Council and got me to follow her as staff council representative for NAHU and NAFA.

Shirley was not someone who dropped off the radar after retirement, she stayed in contact by inviting people to the concerts of her chorus in Bisamberg and once a year around November she invited everyone for Martinis and snacks.

Someone who also always had an interest in in a variety of subjects she did not slow down with retirement - she rather picked up pace.

Keeping up with the latest developments in Information technology, her chorus activities and her numerous travels always made it a pleasure to meet her and chat.

I will remember Shirley as one of the most outspoken people I have met in the IAEA, standing her ground on the issues she believed in. As such she was an inspiration and a good friend on top of it.

Gerd Hinterleitner