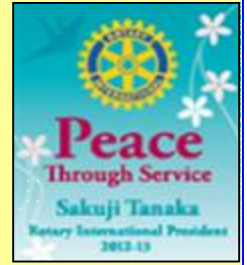


# ROTARY GRIQUA

The Official Bulletin of  
The Rotary Club of Kimberley  
(Chartered 20 August 1951)

15 October 2012



## Meeting Report - 8 October

**Rotary District  
9320**

**RI President**  
Sakuji Tanaka

**District 9320  
Governor**  
Dave Briggs

**AG Kimberley  
& Bloemfontein**  
Barry Downs

**Club President**  
Pete van Zyl

**Club Board**  
Allison Fletcher  
Ken Quinn  
Peter Thomas  
Corlia v Tonder  
Amanda van Zyl  
André Oberholzer  
Philip Maritz

**Club Meetings**  
Kimberley Club  
Monday  
12:45 for 13:00

**Bulletin Editor**  
Barry Downs

President Pete welcomed our guests—Dwaine & Liezl Evans, Pem Rodger, Hentie van Niekerk and Dries van Tonder. Sharon opened the meeting with Grace, the Four Way Test and a toast to South Africa.

Pete reported that Amanda is looking for players to join our Rotary team that we hope to enter in the Nomad's Bowls Day on 13 October. On 19 October we will be working at the Yonder Fête; however, much to everyone's disappointment we will not be cooking and selling sheep's heads and tortoises, but instead our talents will be employed as the distribution arm of the braai and sosatie stall from 5-9pm.

Serjeant Gill attended to the Dates and Duties—somewhat out of kilter because of some changes! [*Please note: when you have to swap duties with a fellow Rotarian, please remember to advise Barry—preferably by email or SMS—so that the duty schedule in the Griqua at least stands a chance of being more or less up to date*]. Barry presented PP Sharon with a District Citation—awarded by IPDG Kevin Dersley for the club's achievements under her leadership in 2011-12. And Peter Thomas announced that he has a new supply of Rotary car window stickers for anyone who wants. Finally, we were told that everything was on track for the forthcoming Night Cycle Race.

Ken, having received apologies from Nanine, Janine and Amanda, as well as a make-up from Barry, recorded an attendance of 19/22 for 86.4%.

Corporal Philip obliged us all to contribute to our Foundation donation by means of a quotation.

Peter T regaled us with the sad saga of Hélène Delangle—The Bugatti Queen. See inside for a synopsis of Peter's fascinating tale.

Finally, Philip closed the meeting with his tail piece:-

*"Filter your questions. There is no point in asking what's the meaning of life, only in asking how life can be lived to the fullest. The meaning of life is known only by living it fully."*

**Last meeting's attendance—86%**

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**District 9320 & FaceBook:** [www.rotary9320.org.za](http://www.rotary9320.org.za)  
**RI:** [www.rotary.org](http://www.rotary.org)

# THE BUGATTI QUEEN

*(illustrated talk by Peter Thomas 8/10/12)*

## THE EARLY YEARS

Mariette Hélène Delangle was born on 15 December 1900 in Aunay-sous-Auneau, about 75 km south west of Paris. She was the daughter of Alexandrine and Léon Delangle, the postman in their small village. She had two brothers; Lucien, the oldest of the four and Henri the youngest. She also had a sister, Solange, about a year older than her.

Solange and Hélène differed immensely. Solange was frumpy and conservative where Hélène was the adventurous one. Solange was intensely jealous of Hélène, something that would come back to haunt Helene in her old age.

## PARIS

While Solange married and settled down into a comfortable married life, Hélène was drawn to the bright lights of Paris at the age 16. Not being the type of person who wanted permanent employment, she found work as a nude model and as a dancer in music halls, becoming very successful under the stage name Hellé Nice. One of the first things she bought was a little Citroen motor car.

Hélène lived the fast life and there was no shortage of boyfriends, including members of the European nobility and personalities such as Philippe de Rothschild and Count Bruno d'Harcourt.

## RACING

At that time, Paris was one of the main centers of the French car industry and there were numerous competitions for auto enthusiasts. Hélène loved the thrill of driving fast and so jumped at the chance to drive in a celebrity race organized by the Paris entertainment world.

The adrenalin rush of this event, together with the effects of a skiing accident that had ended her dancing career, inspired Hélène to try her hand at professional motor racing. In 1929, she won an all-female Grand Prix race at Autodrome de Montlhéry, driving an Omega-Six.

In 1930 she met Philippe de Rothschild. They shared a love of motor racing and Rothschild introduced her to Ettore Bugatti. Bugatti saw Hélène as the ideal person to supplement the male drivers in his racing stable. Through this connection, she achieved her dream and drove a Bugatti Type 35C in several major motor races in France in 1931.



Hélène in her eight cylinder Alfa Romeo

She loved every minute of her life and exploited her femininity, portraying herself as a fearless competitor up against hard-driving men like Tazio Nuvolari, Rudolf Caracciola, Louis Chiron, Bernd Rosemeyer and Luigi Fagioli. She captured the imagination of the crowds wherever she raced, and although she did not win a Grand Prix, she frequently finished in the top ten, ahead of some of the top male drivers.

She remained faithful to Bugatti until late in 1933, when she switched to the 8 cylinder Alfa Romeo, a decision that would affect her later in life.

## TRADGEDY

In May 1936, Hélène traveled to Brazil to compete in two Grand Prix races with Alfa Romeo. On 7 June she finished 8th in the Rio de Janeiro Grand Prix.

Next up was the São Paulo Grand Prix on 12 July. She was sensational, fighting for second place with the Brazilian champion Manuel de Teffé two laps from the end. The crowds pushed forward, causing a straw bale to be pushed on to the track.

She slammed into it at over 160 kmph and her car somersaulted through the air and crashed into the grandstand, killing four race fans and injuring more than thirty others. She was thrown from the car and landed on a soldier, who absorbed the full impact of her fall, saving her life. However, the force of the impact killed the soldier. She awoke from her coma three days later and, after recuperating for two months, she was discharged from the hospital.

*(Continued on page 3)*

*(Continued from page 2)*

The tragedy turned her into a national hero amongst the Brazilians. A large number of families even named their children Helenice or Elenice after her. Although she never spoke about it publicly, the Brazilian race accident had a profound impact on her, and the memory of the events haunted her for the rest of her life.

### **THE COMEBACK**

In 1937, H el ene attempted a racing comeback, participating in the "Yacco" endurance trials at the Month ery racetrack in France. Alternating with three other ladies, H el ene drove for ten days and ten nights breaking ten endurance records. For the next two years, she competed in minor events, hoping to eventually rejoin the Bugatti team. In 1938 she co-drove a DKW with German driver Huschke von Hanstein in the Chamonix rally, a decision that would also affect her later on. They did not finish.



The moment of impact – S o Paulo Grand Prix

In August 1939, her close friend and once lover Jean Bugatti, the son of the founder of the Bugatti empire, was killed while testing the new Type 57. Before she could recover from this shock, racing in Europe came to a halt with the outbreak of World War II.

### **BETRAYAL**

In 1943, during the German occupation, she moved to the French Riviera and acquired a comfortable home in the city of Nice, purchased with the proceeds of her racing and compensation paid out by the Brazilian government. She lived here for the remainder of the war with one of her lovers, Arnaldo Binelli.

In 1949, the first Monte Carlo Rally after the war took place in nearby Monaco and Helene was there to take part. At a party organized for the drivers, Louis Chiron, the Grand Prix champion and Monaco's favorite son, strode across the room and announced loudly that it was a disgrace that H el ene should be allowed to compete in the rally, as she had been a Gestapo agent during the war. Such an accusation would be a serious setback for anyone's career, but coming from someone as powerful as Chiron, even though he provided no proof, it spelled the end of Helene's racing career. She denied the accusation and demanded an apology, but it was unsuccessful. She considered suing Chiron, but because the accusation took part in his home town of Monaco, and he was Monaco's national hero, she knew that this would not have been successful.

Much research has been done into this incident and even the German authorities have confirmed that H el ene had never been an agent. Ironically, Chiron himself, led by the lure of a superior car, had driven for the Mercedes-Benz team, which the Nazis were using as a propaganda tool for their political ideals.

What was the motivation for Chiron's actions? Was it because H el ene chose to defect to an Italian Alfa Romeo in search of faster machinery? Was it her friendship with German driver Huschke von Hanstein, who was politically well connected? Was it that he was jealous of her fame? Was he jealous of her living in relative luxury in Nice during the latter half of the War? We will never know.

### **DECLINE**

H el ene never raced again and, because of the stigma of the accusation, her name and great accomplishments were virtually obliterated from racing history. Her lover soon abandoned her and with him went virtually all her money.

One of the 20th Century's most glamorous women spent her final years in a sordid rat-infested apartment in the back alleys of Nice, living under a fictitious name to hide her shame. H el ene's life had deteriorated to the point where she was forced to accept small handouts from a Paris charity organization called "La Roue Tourne", that had been established to give a bit of help to former theatre performers who had fallen on hard times. She reportedly carried round a loaded pistol, in case she ever ran into her former lover. Her sister, Solange, who was known to be envious of her glamorous life, refused to acknowledge her existence or assist her in her hour of need.

The Bugatti Queen died penniless and friendless on 1st October 1984. Her cremation was paid for by the Parisian charity organization that had helped her, and the ashes were sent back to her sister in the village of Sainte-Mesme near her birthplace, where her parents were also buried. As a last act of malice, Solange refused to have Helene's name inscribed on the family's cemetery headstone.



# Kimberley Rotary Club Calendar

(Meetings: 12:45 Monday lunchtime at the Kimberley Club—unless otherwise stated)



## October—Vocational Service Month

19 Yonder Fête—selling braai and sosaties 17:00 to 21:00

## November—Rotary Foundation Month

?? Saturday/Sunday—possible fellowship visit by Ladysmith Rotarians

29 Thursday—**Official Club Visit by DG Dave Briggs**

## December—Family Month

17 No Meeting—Public Holiday (?)

## January—Rotary Awareness Month

## February—World Understanding Month

### Dates & Duties

If you are unable to perform a duty, please make sure you arrange a replacement.  
(and please advise Barry—by email or SMS—of all changes)

### Fellowship

12:30 Welcome Rotarians & Guests. See that Rotarians wear their name tags and that guests are welcomed.

- Oct 15 Barry Downs & Frieda du Preez
- Oct 22 Andries Erasmus & Sharon Erasmus
- Oct 29 Allison Fletcher & Chris Louw
- Nov 5 Philip Maritz & Hugh McGibbon

### Corporal

Grace, 4-Way Test, Toast to SA – Fines – Tailpiece.

- Oct 15 Hugh McGibbon
- Oct 22 Sharon Erasmus
- Oct 29 Chris Louw
- Nov 5 Judy Morrison

### Birthday Greetings

- Oct 13 Pete van Zyl
- Oct 17 Mark Fletcher
- Oct 20 Suzette Rautenbach
- Oct 24 Corlia van Tonder

### Wedding Anniversaries

- Nov 29 Andries & Sharon Erasmus
- Dec 11 Mark & Allison Fletcher
- Dec 18 Chris & Ona Louw
- Jan 12 Peter & Maryna Thomas

### Induction Anniversaries

- |        |                          |      |
|--------|--------------------------|------|
| Oct 18 | Div Pretorius            | 2004 |
| Nov 14 | Peter Thomas             | 1991 |
| Nov 14 | Nanine van Olmen Philips | 2011 |
| Nov 14 | Chris Louw               | 2011 |

### Coffee Club



10:00 at the "Hole in the Wall"

- Oct 16 Pete van Zyl
- Oct 23 Barry Downs
- Oct 30 Frieda du Preez
- Nov 6 Hugh McGibbon

### Coffee Club Birthday Greetings

Changes—please advise Barry Downs

- Oct 13 Peter Gibbs
- Oct 23 Ginger Olivier
- Oct 24 Clive Holloway
- Nov 5 Pem Rodger

### Disclaimer

The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the editor and the contributors. They do not necessarily reflect the views of the Rotary Club of Kimberley, of Rotary District 9320 or of Rotary International.

### Griqua Goodies

I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.  
—Confucius