

Brenda Koch was the chief force behind the formation and operation of the Eighty Club and this eulogy encapsulates her commitment to the ideals of the Eighty Club of Melbourne.

Vale Brenda Koch

by Ivor de Kretser

Foundation member of the 80 Club, Brenda Eta Koch was called to her maker on the 14 June 1996, after a brief hospitalisation at The Alfred. Her funeral was private, but a memorial service conducted on the 25 June by the Rev John Blaze at the Reformed Church, Dandenong, was attended by friends, including members of the 80 Club and relatives. Brenda, along with a few like-minded persons laid the foundation for this club, which from modest beginnings, has become today, a notable charitable organisation committed to raising funds for individuals/families of the poorest community in Sri Lanka.

Her Minutes from February 1983 to June 1985 - when she was Secretary, record a period of almost hyperactivity as she rushed to maintain and capture that momentum which the concept of helping the poor in our community in Sri Lanka, had generated. Her enthusiasm flowed into the building-up of membership, to getting approvals from local councils to run Saturday morning street stalls in busy shopping centres; to spotting and cajoling young and talented artists to perform free at Club dances; to organising the first Food Fair run by the club at a packed church hall in Box Hill. Her enthusiasm and commitment were infectious and by August, 1983 the club had sufficient confidence to assist desperately poor burgher families with a pension of Rs70 per month and later that year pay the first Christmas bonus of Rs 1 00 to each pensioner. Confidence too, to start paying for the ECM training program for students at the Wellawatte Polytechnic.

Brenda had a love for all sorts who could not care for themselves - people, cats, dogs, fowls, anything that looked doomed and helpless got her assistance. Driving once on the road to Wolvendall she stopped and berated a carter for overloading his cart and bull, and, reported his cruelty to the police. Can you imagine the reaction!

Was it the tragedy that befell her at the tender age of 17, which made Brenda realise that living is for doing good for others.? A family holiday in Nuwara Eliya with her father Alfred, mother Eta (nee Paulusz), relative Angela Paulusz, and a young domestic she called her 'adopted sister', were motoring to see Dunhinda Falls and enjoy a picnic lunch. The car ran off the road killing her mother instantly and, her 'sister' two days later. Alfred, Angela and Brenda were perilously close to death for a week and then lived to tell and re-tell the tragedy.

The 25 April 1935 - was etched in her mind.

Sleep well Brenda, you have earned your reward and, we you leave behind salute you VALE.