



4-8 July, 1999 XVI Soroptimist International Convention,
Helsinki, Finland

**The SI Board Meeting
Through the Eyes and Ears of a New Attendee**

by Mary Cassell, Cook Inlet Club, Northwestern Region, SIA

It would not have occurred to me to request the opportunity to attend the SI meetings as a silent observer. But my friend and possible room mate, Meryl Caldwell-Smith from NSW, Australia encouraged me to do this, so that we could be together the entire time that we were in Helsinki. I am very pleased that I decided to come!

Each Federation held a meeting on June 29th, the day prior to the official start of the Board Meeting. I felt very welcome at the SIA meeting, even though I could not be there on time.

My overall view of my experience of the five full days was that it was a wonderful opportunity to meet involved Soroptimists from around the world and to solidify my growing 'picture' of the International scene. It was a pretty complete overview of the projects we are involved with around the world, communicated by many of those who accomplish them!

I was most impressed with the way the meeting was run and how everyone seemed to keep on top of what was being discussed and what we needed to return to for further discussion or action. Jane Barrie, our Procedural Consultant, monitored this aspect and gently brought us back, when this was necessary. In the course of running through the lengthy agenda, we did have to 'jump around' considerably. IP Hilary gave many the opportunity to express their opinions, including some silent observers on several occasions. The variety of views expressed was overwhelming at times.

I found it most interesting to observe how many of these divergent ideas could be gathered together by the small task forces delegated to find the right wording to succinctly express the message meant to be conveyed, and the appreciation of all attending when they did! Sometimes after several attempts.

I also appreciated listening to the representatives from the four Federations interacting and supporting each other in the process of finding ways to accommodate some of the difficulties that others faced in the selection of the correct phrasing of words to express the whole in ways that could accentuate the similarities and also allow for the differences between Federations.

I would highly recommend that those of you either newer to Soroptimist International or those more experienced members who are not so aware of our International face, plan to attend a future Board meeting. I repeat that it is a wonderful way to meet and to learn from very interesting and involved Soroptimists from all four Federations and to more fully understand how all of us fit together and how we can accomplish much together.