



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

Is There a Message For You?

Helsinki Hotline

Visit the Friendship Lounge on the first floor to meet friends old and new and to catch up on messages, invitations and meetings on the Friendship Boards.

Each day there will be the opportunity to 'surf' the new SI website during breaks in Convention sessions.

Note from Kate - I can tell you it was hot work lugging the lap top and case from the Hotel to the Convention Centre! However, it was great assisting 'non surfers' to have a look and find their way through the SI web site and on occasion, to show the rogues gallery - that is, Hendre's web site!



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

Monday 5 July

Video Presentation: Tomorrow's Global Voice - "Three Wishes"

by Kate Moore, Nantwich & District Club, Cheshire Nwales & Wirral Region, SIGBI

I have just dashed up to the auditorium, I understand that our Catriona will be on the video, shown within the next few minutes... so there are lots of North Western Regioners, Chat Liners etc. all clearing their throats, ready for a huge cheer when 'our girl' come on screen.

Can I describe the scene? We are all sitting patiently waiting. The flags surrounding the stage show what a truly international organisation we are. We wait for our International President and the officers to arrive, the lights are down and we see the video start.

The video has been professionally produced, and starts brilliantly with great footage of children from a third world country.... Tomorrow's Global Voice!

BIG THANKS TO CHAT LINER LIZ MORGAN-LEWIS, PRESIDENT HILARY'S PR WHO IS BEHIND ITS PRODUCTION. YES I'M SHOUTING!!! LIZ SHOULD RECEIVE WONDERFUL RECOGNITION FOR THIS AND ALL THE WORK SHE IS CONTINUALLY DOING AT THIS CONVENTION, SHE NEVER GETS OUT OF THE OFFICE UNLESS ITS TO WORK EQUIPMENT UP IN THE AUDITORIUM. BIG CHEERS FOR CHAT LINER LIZ PLEASE!!!!!!!!!!!!

I am going to try and give you some of the wishes - forgive me if I miss some wishes and some names. Here we go:

The young girl from New Zealand loves dragon boating and water sports, and wants to be in a debating team. She wants to see clean seas, beaches, rivers - New Zealand is a beautiful place and she loves swimming, and wants every where to stay green and clean like it is now, the best country. She wants children in Africa to have enough good food to go around, to have learning and the opportunity to live in a comfortable home like her.

THEN CAME OUR CATRIONA!!! YIPPEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

We have already heard the three wishes - proud Mum, my dear friend and our chat liner Ann Fallow sent them out. So I sat back and enjoyed watching our lass! Apologies that I can't reprint them in full, perhaps Ann can send it out again if Jacqueline hasn't got it on file for the 'Chat Line in Helsinki web site [Jacqueline - appeal for a copy of Catriona's wishes], But we saw Catriona in her football gear, playing her violin with mum at the piano, with Ann and David. I admit to a big lump in my throat to be around this confident young lady, see her on the screen and remember the time I read bed time stories to her.

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

Glenda, Costa Rica wants a good profession, to be somebody and do something in her life, to be valuable in the world. She has to study, and set her goals and achieve them. Glenda wants Costa Rica to remain free, sovereign and a friendly, nice place and to live there in peace and to make her country even better. Most of all, peace, to live in the future where it is peaceful without violence. Oh yes, some flora and fauna left.

Kae Gibson, Barbados - A very long session from this young lady! Kae wants peace in the world, all children to have a good education and everyone to know Jesus as their Saviour. There are so many wars and everyone wants to rule the world. Homes are destroyed and peaceful people leave their homes and flee for their lives, their homes are destroyed. Lack of medical attention and facilities are all due to war. People die from illness and malnutrition and very little food is available. Diseases spread too quickly. She wants good education, because in many countries - including the Caribbean - many do not go to school, work in factories, on the fields and on the streets begging and get sold into prostitution. They are physically, sexually and emotionally abused, and involved with harmful chemicals. They receive low wages and are ill treated and need education to have a good Job. Everyone wants to know God as their Lord and Saviour. Some go to church to worship, others see what friends are wearing. We must be kind, sharing and helping others to solve problems. Peace, better education and knowing God as personal Saviour.

Marike Van Noortwijk, Netherlands - My mother is a doctor and my father a managing director, I speak dutch and english. I want less homework, I want little rabbits, I want a robot to clear my mess, I want more girl friends and I want peace!

Kacalina Lisa, Fiji - I wish I could be a doctor and for unity within all families. For my country, I wish the leaders would give more time to help needy and poor. For the world, I wish peace, and that war would stop and for us to love one another.

Christine Livery, Northern Ireland - I wish peace for the world and no war, for people to get on with their lives. War brings sadness. If there was no war we wouldn't have to watch horrible pictures from Kosovo, to see the poverty people are suffering every day, to see children hungry. People of different religions should understand each others views. It is possible to live in peace. She wants us to recycle, because trees are cut down and we get less oxygen. We should all buy recyclable products, have less litter and waste in our rubbish bins. For every tree that is cut down we should plant a new tree, she remembers planting trees around the playground when she was at the primary school. She wants less smokers and drug dealers. Smoking is harmful to us and everyone and pollutes the air and leaves bad smells. It causes illness that people have all their lives. Less drug dealers, less access to drugs because they are harmful to the body and make us do dangerous things. We should lock drug dealers away.

President Hilary thanked all the girls, and said we must continue our work helping girls around the world to fulfill their potential as we work together to become 'Tomorrow's Global Voice'.



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

Three Wishes
by *Catriona Fallow*

“Good Morning!

I hope you weren't expecting me to have a funny accent like my Mom's - I've lived most of my life in the States so I don't have a Scottish accent. I do say “tom-ah-to”, not “to-may-to”, but otherwise I speak American quite well.

My Mom is learning too - I've noticed her say sidewalk and elevator several times recently!

My name is Catriona Fallow and I live with my Mom and Dad in Des Moines, Iowa now - we moved there in January from Oregon. I don't have any brothers or sisters, but I do have a pet - he's a black Chinese Pug and his name is Nero.

I'm a fifth grader at St. Augustin School, which isn't far from my home, and I'm hoping Mom will let me ride my bike there next year. Some of my friends live quite close, but a lot live on the other side of the city. Des Moines is a fairly small city, compared to Portland though, so nowhere is very far away.

At school I like art and history as well as reading and writing. I'm not bad at math, but I hate spelling tests.

Outside school, I like to play soccer. I used to play for a classic team when I lived in Portland. It was a new team and none of us had played together before so we lost most of our first few games. But we got better as we practiced and we won the last few. I'm hoping to find a new team next season in Des Moines. I also like playing the violin. I've been playing for three years now and I'm getting better at it. At least the dog doesn't run away any more!

Since both my Mom and Dad come from Scotland, I get to go there most summers to visit my Grandmas and my uncles and cousins. I've been really lucky because I've had a chance to travel a lot - I was born in Japan and then we moved to Hong Kong before we came to live in America.

If I had three wishes to be granted for the next millennium, I think first I'd wish that people would be more tolerant of each other. There are lots of different kinds of people in the world, and nobody is better than anybody else just because of who they are or how much money they have.

It's hard to explain my second wish so let me give an example. You've got a homework assignment due on Friday and you know you should get started on Monday. By Tuesday you know you should have at least some of it done but it's still not started. By Wednesday you're starting to freak out and on Thursday you have to work for hours to do it all.

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

My last wish is that all countries, people and races could be treated equally. If people felt they were equal, they wouldn't need to go to war or fight about land or different religions or things.

I know that Aladdin and all the fairy tale people only get three wishes, but I want to ask for a fourth one today. This is a wish for Monday morning though - not for 2000. I wish it was safe for kids to go to school. I wish all we had to worry about is whether our homework assignments are late, or what's on the menu in the cafeteria, not whether the kid in the locker next to you has a gun in there. I wish it was safe again.

Before I finish I want to say "thank you" to Mrs. Kirkby and Mrs. Falkenstein for inviting me here to talk to you. I need to say thank you to my Mom too for letting me miss school to come and also to my friend Molly and her Mom for bringing me down here from Portland.

Mom says this sounds like an Oscar speech, but I want to thank all of you too. Some of my friends and me worked with the Soroptimists in Portland on their service projects and I know you do a lot for people who aren't as lucky as me.

Thank you."



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

Monday 5 July
The Girl Child

by Christine Fulton, Maidstone Club, South East England Region, SIGBI

Immediate Past President Patsy Daniels introduced Patricia Flor, the Chairman of the UN Commission on the Status of Women. This distinguished German diplomat finished her education at Harvard with a Master of Public Administration degree. Patsy said “behind the words is a woman who genuinely care”.

Dr. Flor said that there was an essential role for civil society in the development of gender equality. The Fourth World Conference on Women could not have achieved what it did without the involvement of the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), including Soroptimists. However it was now crucial that the implementation of the Platform for Action should be monitored. The girls of today are our future.

Dr. Flor divided her address into five parts:

- (a) The Human Rights that girls can claim. The right of gender equality was enshrined in the original framework of the United Nations. The position of the girl child was further clarified in the Declaration on Human Rights of the Child. In June 2000 there would be a conference at the UN to assess the progress on implementation of the Beijing Platform. She urged all her listeners to lobby their governments to ratify the points made in the platform.
- (b) The Human Rights that girls are deprived of. The sad reality showed in the male/female ratios in China, parts of South Asia and parts of Africa being higher than normal, indicating gender-related abortions and female infanticide. Girls tended to suffer more from malnutrition. Two-thirds of the world's illiterates are girls. Globally only about 10% of democratic representatives are women.
- (c) Ignorance of Human Rights. The roots of what we become lie in our childhood. Society at large shapes us all. Often it is the women who most uphold traditional beliefs about women's position. Schools and the media also reinforce prevailing views.
- (d) Steps to be taken now. It was essential to involve governments, local authorities, NGOs and communities in action to implement the Beijing Platform. She also hoped that the World Bank, as the biggest provider of aid, would put gender equality into its programmes for countries receiving aid.
- (e) Implementation of the review of the Platform for Action. Strategies were needed and partnership should be built. The role of fathers, men, and boys should be considered, and we needed to ensure that men adapted to new roles. Beijing +5 was time to measure progress and to reaffirm commitment.

In answer to questions, Dr. Flor said that the preparatory conference for Europe, Canada and the United States would be in Geneva in January 2000. She had proved to be a most fluent and persuasive speaker who, as Immediate Past President Patsy said, “is truly a global voice for women.”



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

Introduction to Programmes of Service

by Mary Cassell, Cook Inlet Club, North Western Region, SIA

International Past President Patsy Daniels introduced Marie-Jeanne Bosia-Berberat, the International Representatives Liaison, and Lois Sagel, Programme Liaison as members who have unique talents and so willingly share them with us. Both gave us a brief overview of their activities during the Quadrennium.

Marie-Jeanne spoke of the opportunity to be involved in the coordination of our activities (at the five UN Centres at which we are accredited) by a wonderful group of volunteer Soroptimists. Because we are so well represented and respected at the UN, we also gain automatic involvement at many conferences around the world. She emphasized the importance of the SI publication "Where We Stand" and that all Soroptimists should be familiar with the statements concerning our stand on issues important to us.

Lois, by telling us a story about the building of homes in a poorer area of the world, illustrated the importance of the Program Focus Reports. Her question to us is: "Have you told your story?" It has been emphasized to us many times that our representatives at the UN and many others at Regional, Federation and International level use these reports to prepare and back their reports. It is really the only way that they can show the accomplishments of the cumulative effect of many clubs working in specific programs of service areas, and the diversity of projects in which clubs around the world are involved.



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

Education - Interactive Panel
“Putting Promises Into Practice”

by Joyce Byrne, *TriCities East Club, Desert Coast Region, SIA*

The distinguished panel of Margaret Alderson, Lynn Dunning, Marie-Jeanne Bosia Berberat and Jeannine Jacquemin explored the role of education in “Putting Promises into Practice” to assist in gaining gender equality. The panel was ably moderated by Eileen Mitchell.

The thrust of the panel was that it is imperative that girls, in order to gain self esteem and become self confident and productive members of society, must be afforded the opportunity to gain an education. “Literacy and communication in the hands of a few means power over many.” “Education must be accessible to girls - not just girls accessible to education.” In order to attain gender equality, we need to educate men to be sensitive and caring as well as women to be self confident.

Girls are often subject to discrimination and sexual violence. How can behaviour be changed? “EDUCATION, EDUCATION, EDUCATION” An educated woman is less likely to submit to practices harmful to herself and her children. In the future, interactions of human beings are going to be more important than ever - therefore, teachers can no longer be just “purveyors of knowledge”, but must work with students in an interactive way in order to help both girls and boys learn the “art” of communicating with each other and solving problems created.

Many of the jobs young people of today will undertake haven't been invented yet! So these children must have the skills to think creatively in order to deal with the unpredictability and uncertainty of society. These include literacy, numeracy, and technology skills. They need to develop self-confidence and the ability to share ideas with others. Quality of relationships will be critical.

How can Soroptimists - as individuals - and members of clubs, work on changing curriculums to meet the needs of our children? We must educate our sons in a different manner and help them develop different attitudes. Become involved in community schools. Work on support projects at the club level.

“Without democracy there cannot be equal rights: There cannot be democracy without education.” There are no quick fixes. It was suggested that we each obtain a copy of the “Platform for Action” which offers ideas of how we can help.

A challenge was given - as we leave to go back home, think about how you yourself can help put into practice some of the promises to help obtain gender equality.



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

Monday 5 July

HIV/AIDS - Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow

by Ruth Liggat, Glasgow South Club, Scotland South Region, SIGBI

Dr. Sirkka-Liisa Valle managed in the short space of 45 minutes to give us a comprehensive history of HIV/AIDS and a look into the future. Women are particularly vulnerable to infection, and are often powerless to help prevent infection of their children. Whereas in the Western world ante-natal care (and testing), elective caesarean sections and cheap and easy alternatives to breast-feeding are available, this is not so in developing countries.

It was not all bad news, however. In Uganda and Senegal, and now in Thailand, effective programmes based on education, freely available condoms and life skills training, as in the SIAM project, are showing an effect on infection rates.

Dr. Valle finished by challenging us to make the epidemic more visible, to decrease the stigma of HIV/AIDS and to reduce the fear of discrimination of those who are infected. This disease will be with us for decades yet.



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

Health - Interactive Panel
Tobacco -- "The Challenge of the New Millennium"

by Kate Goddard, Beverly & District Club, Yorkshire Region, SIGBI

Chairman -- Shiela Lungley, SI Programme Coordinator, Health, Helena Club, Western Australia Region, SISWP

Moderator -- Jane Zimmerman, SI President-Elect

Following the new form of procedure for the interactive panel on Education this morning, we heard three introductory speakers, followed by questions from the floor to the panel.

The first speaker was Inger Nordback, one of our SI representatives at Geneva. She began by explaining our relationships with the UN and its various agencies.

On the last occasion that SI's consultative status with UNESCO was re-evaluated, we were not only re-approved but also invited to become a partner in a special project on tobacco related health problems -- with a particular focus on tobacco and women.

A guest speaker, Mergaretha Haglund (lecturer from the University of Uppsala), President of the International Network of Women Against Tobacco, drew our attention to the way in which the tobacco trade regards women and developing countries as targets for increasing their sales.

She also pointed out that there were more health risks for women than men and that women who smoke like men will die like men and perhaps earlier. She recommended that we should educate ourselves and others about the issues.

- (a) Clean up our own offices and homes
- (b) Speak out
- (c) Become active members of the tobacco control movement

Action has to start NOW.

Our third speaker was one of our own chatline members, Maria-Jose Elias from SI of Lisboa-Sete Collinas, Portugal. She presented us with some scary figures about the increasing smoking of tobacco among women and the reluctance of national governments to promote anti-smoking measures because of the tax revenues that they receive for tobacco sales.

The response from the floor was enthusiastic in support of the anti-tobacco campaign.

It was interesting to note a rather large number of empty seats at this session. I wonder if these were seats previously occupied by smokers!



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

SIAM Project Ends By Doubling Target Goal!

by *Suzanne Harris, Anacortes Club, North Western Region, SIA*

SI Quadrennial Project Liaison, Mary Buchanan, reported today that our 1995-1999 SIAM Project has been a great success.

In partnership with the PDA, the objectives of the project were to prevent young women from entering the Commercial Sex Industry (CSI), to provide HIV/AIDS education, and to allocate formal and non-formal scholarships for young girls and women in the target group, ages 12-25.

Following a successful pilot project 10 villages, all with histories of sending young girls into the CSI, in Chang Rai Province in Northern Thailand were chosen. The challenge was to allow these young girls the best of health, to see their children grow up without being infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. At this time there were reported up to 1,000 deaths per year from HIV/AIDS in the Chang Rai Province.

Following the choice of participating villages came the implementation of the project. 1337 educational scholarships in total were given. HIV/AIDS information was provided to the target group as well as the entire village.

Youth camps were organized to teach Life Skills Training and HIV/AIDS education. Participants could then return to their villages to teach.

Contests were initiated like one for a winning slogan against the CSI. And information boards were posted in each village and kept current with applicable information to the SIAM project and its goals. Income-generating initiatives were instituted, and covered a wide variety -- from weaving and beekeeping to a success in the passion fruit growing.

A change in attitudes has now occurred. From the 10 participating SIAM villages, 98 girls entered the CSI in October 1995, in December 1998 only 9 girls entered the CSI.

The financial goal of the SIAM Project was 250,000 pounds, SI raised 499,614 pounds 96 pence!!!!!!! This run over has allowed an Endowment Fund to be established. The activities of SIAM will be continued. These will continue to be Educational Scholarships, Vocational Training, HIV /Aids Education and a Revolving Loan Fund.

Give yourselves a round of applause! And if you have time, Mary Buchanan asked that you stop by and her booth and add to the flip chart there and document what your club did to enable them to donate the SI 1995-1999 Quadrennial Project.



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

Helsinki City Reception, City Hall, Pohjoisesplanadi 11-13
by *Eva Tyson, Dunfermline Club, Scotland South Region, SIGBI*

The first working day of the Convention finished off in style with the City of Helsinki extending an invitation to the Soroptimist delegates to attend a reception in the City Hall. This magnificent building, built in the neo classical style, dates from the beginning of the 19th century and has recently been renovated. It used to be a cordon bleu restaurant, where the cognoscenti used to gather. Today the hall sports a beautiful pale Wedgwood blue colour and overlooking the harbour, where all the boats from the Baltic tie up, making it an exotic setting. The Hall is also the official residence of our hostess for the evening, Lord Mayor Eva-Riita Siitonen. The fact that her family lives in the City Hall, made for a warmer atmosphere than is normally found in such an august place.

The delegates were welcomed by the Mayor. International President Hilary Page, who is having a great conference, followed with her enthusiastic greetings. We all sampled the exotic food, which included reindeer meat from Lapland.

As benefits an international conference, a veritable Tower of Babel ensued, showing that International Goodwill and Understanding is high on the agenda.

If I could just finish on a personal note, Monday was my Wedding Anniversary and when I returned to my hotel room the most beautiful bouquet of yellow and blue flowers awaited me from my husband in Scotland.

Note from Kate: I sent a Wedding Anniversary EMail to Eva's husband for their Anniversary - and addressed it "Dear Soroptimister" since I didn't know his name. He sent a lovely reply back - addressed to "Dear Soropti Ma'am"!