



4-8 July, 1999 XVI Seroptimist 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 Seroptimists 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 Seroptimist 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 Seroptimists from all four Federations and to more fully understand how all of us fit together and how we can accomplish much together.



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

**Arrival in Helsinki**

*by Kate Moore, Nantwich Club, Cheshire North Wales & Wirral Region, SIGBI*

Hi everyone!!

This is a very bleary eyed Kate, awake, just, but definitely up and about on this wonderful, bright, sunny morning in Helsinki.

By the time I had downloaded the messages that came in when I sent out the Convention reports, and cleared a few problems we seem to have on the Chat Line, it was just before 2.00 am :- ( Both my room mates (Elizabeth our Club President) and Ruth from Portland were fast asleep - and dare I say, gently snoring. The room was so hot, and regrettably there is no air conditioning that works in this part of this hotel. We are on the front, facing the park and the river, with the Finlandia Hall to the right a short distance away.

Well, with three Soroptimists to get up and ready before 7.00 am breakfast - it was a very early start. I was awake and up at about 5.00 am, and am now ready and organised for the day. It's coming up to 6.20 am - Ruth is getting ready and Elizabeth just went for a shower. You may wonder how consequential this information is <VBG> - let me tell you, I have to move furniture etc. to get at the telephone socket and it is quite a thing to actually move the computer from the dressing table, over to Elizabeth's bed so I can transmit!!!! Last evening Elizabeth and I were in hysterics - we succeeded in doing all this, even taking the wire across a sleeping Ruth - and sent out the Convention reports.

Dear Judy is feeling so poorly, she has a dreadful cold, but refused to miss anything of the opening ceremony because "I am doing a report for the Chat Line!"

All the Chat Line reports from now on will form the main body of a daily newsletter issued to all Convention attendees. Each day, these newsletters will be put on [www.sorop.org](http://www.sorop.org) (the international www site) by Liz Morgan-Lewis. I am going down to assist her, and Alison was editing for her yesterday, and Joc is working away like mad.

My question is, do our Chat Liners want the very full reports our members are actually submitting, or are you happy to download the newsletter from the SI web site? As it is, as long as I can keep going, I'll send whatever I have for you. Hopefully, our members will not be too 'wordy' :-), because some days there will be around 6-8 events to report on.

Quite by chance I have managed to find so many of 'us' - Nancy Hansen, Lisbeth Hass, dear Heidi Konrad, Christin Coleselli, then Audrey Peacock and so many more. Mind you, at the festivities last evening (after the opening ceremony) I joined Carol in wearing our Uncle Sam hats, so had fairly good visibility <gggggg> There are going to be a lot of very confused Korean, Japanese, Taiwanese members who took photos of what they thought was an American

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

Soroptimist celebrating the 4th July! I could only get away with it because I informed all non Americans I am an honorary member of NWR with a certificate to prove it.

One of the problems we all suffer from here is the length of time it takes to get fed anywhere! A couple of nights ago it took the hotel around two and a half hours to feed nine at our table, one course and one drink, and the bill took half an hour to arrive! Last night was even worse at a local restaurant, which was why it was nearly 11.00 pm before we got back to the hotel.

So, today is going to be busy. The Friendship Lounge is actually the reception area just outside the upstairs level entry to the Finlandia Hall. I am going to try and be available with the lap top and an overhead projector to display the SI web site, but be assured, if anyone is interested I will have Hendre's site up and the rogues gallery :-)

Also, Fay's large map is prominently displayed right by the same entrance door to the Hall, with a Chat Line poster right next to it. I'm walking around with my cyber friends polo shirt on, with my name in BIG letters right across the back. It also says The Soroptimist Chat Line, List Owner.

It was quite an ordeal to sit through the Board on Friday, not knowing when president Hilary would ask me to speak. It actually came just before coffee on Saturday morning. When I have a few minutes (ha ha) I will type in my report to the Board so you can read it. Until then, bear with me as I do my very best to see a little of the convention, whilst keeping you all part of it too.

Chat to you later tonight.

Love & cyber-hugs



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

**Two Wonderful Days!**

by *Anu Lehtinen, Hamina Club, Finland, SIE*

I have had two absolutely marvellous days with our SI sisters from SI of Hakodate, Japan. Four sisters arrived to Hamina last Thursday, and yesterday (Friday) we had a big party for them. At 5 pm, we and all representatives from Zonta-club of Hamina and Rotary-clubs of Hamina were guests of the town of Hamina. The mayor of Hamina and some other city executives offered a cocktail party for us in the town hall of Hamina. After that, there was a celebration dinner in a restaurant where we ate Finnish food: lavaret, lamb, turnip and arctic cloudberry for desert. Everything was so wonderful! Japanese sisters wore their kimonos and we wore Finnish national dresses (VERY HOT to wear a Finnish national dress when the temperature is about +27 degrees C, because Finnish national dresses are made of linen, cotton and WOOL!!!)

After the great meal we were all invited to one of our member's home, and there we ate strawberries and blueberries and drank champagne. I played piano (two pieces from Sibelius) and Finnish national instrument "kantele".

And the best part of this celebration was when Irma Vitikainen's husband called and said that Irma is much better now, and soon she will be allowed to have guests to her room in the hospital. So soon - I hope - I can bring your wonderful and supporting messages to her. I know she will appreciate them very much.

Now it's almost 2 pm and I just came home from a Japanese tea ceremony. Sisters from Japan wanted to thank us for our hospitality and they organised a real Japanese tea ceremony for us. It was SO exciting!! They served us one cup of tea each, then they asked if some of us wanted to make tea when they would teach. I wanted to try, of course. I was thrilled!!! One of my dreams came true when I tried to learn how to move my hands and my fingers in the right way, and finally I succeeded to make one cup of tea, and it was served to my dear friend Dr Eva-Anita Kiviniemi. I told Mrs Sakiko Watanabe that they fulfilled one of my dreams and I was very honoured that they gave me the opportunity to learn even a little about their tea ceremony. As you can see from my text - I'm still high in the clouds... During the ceremony I wore a Japanese "happy-coat" which my father brought to me 15 years ago when he visited Japan.

Now I try to concentrate for tomorrow! 5 am I will start to drive to Helsinki and try to be in time for our breakfast meeting.

Still floating somewhere in Finnish/Japanese heaven...



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

**Three Soroptimists from Tartu Club Go To Helsinki**

by *Pirkko Kiravuo, Helsinki Erottaja Club, Finnish Union, SIE*

You should have seen the happy faces of three Tartu Soroptimists when they hugged their Finnish Soroptimist friend in the friendship lounge.

Tartu Club in Estonia was started by Pirkko Vahervuori, the founder member of Helsinki-Erottaja Club and the honorary member of the Finnish Union. The Tartu Club has worked well. The first project was a clinic for young girls, the second was new equipment for the oldest school in Tartu, for example, tables, chairs, and sewing machines.

Tartu, Helsinki-Erottaja and Stockholm-Vaxholm Clubs are friendship link clubs. When the Convention was approaching, Helsinki Erottaja Club decided to offer the opportunity for two members of SI Tartu to take part in the Convention. We thought that this might be the only opportunity for years, that Tartu Club would be able to take part in an international Soroptimist event.

Part of the money for registration fees and social packages was collected by a musical afternoon in the home of one Helsinki-Erottaja club member. With this musical event we supported young musicians giving them an opportunity to show their talents.

Helsinki-Erottaja Club told its idea to the members of Stockholm-Vaxholm Club. They decided to pay to send one member of the Tartu Club to the Convention.

One can be sure that Ene, Kaja, and Mari will take our regards to their Tartu Club members.