



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

Sunday 4 July
The Famous Cyber-Breakfast

by *Eva Tyson, Dunfermline Club, Scotland South Region, SIGBI*

Although scheduled for 7.30 am at the Hotel Intercontinental, members of the Chat Line were already gathering long before that, eager to actually meet face to face all those cyberspace friends. Would the faces from Hendre's rogues' gallery help in what might develop into an identity parade? Everything was beautifully organised by Kate Moore with huge name tags on hand together with the cyber badges.

I have attended many Soroptimist events, but this was the most wonderful and friendliest I have ever experienced, cyberhugs and all. It was like a reunion of old friends picking up from where they left the chatline.

The number attending was around sixty and like all Soroptimist gatherings there was plenty of food to enjoy, although judging by the volume of the chat, I am not sure if anybody had time eat.

Kate welcomed us all with an update, including the news that a second chatline is being introduced - called the Soroptifun Line, which will carry funny stories, jokes, and chit chat - leaving the Chat Line for more business of a Soroptimist nature etc. The Soroptifun Line will be reserved for the more light hearted and fun emails.

Fay Cori showed us her magnificent cybermap and had brought along enough copies to go round. The amount of work that has gone into this map is difficult to comprehend.

International President Hilary Page, who we must remember was instrumental in encouraging Kate to start the chat line, explained how it had contributed to our aim of international goodwill and understanding.

A surprise and welcome musical interlude followed. Our Finnish Soroptimist member Anu from SI Hamina played the piano "The spruce trees" by Jean Sibelius, that greatest of Finnish composers and then a Prelude by a contemporary of Sibelius, Heino Kaski.

Eva Tyson, one of the members from Scotland, paid tribute to Kate for all her hard work and suggested that we were now the Cyber Space Federation with Kate as President. Kate herself summed up the whole experience in four words. "A dream has come true".

Anu, I need to express my gratitude for all that you and all the Finnish Soroptimists did to make our stay in Helsinki so memorable. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. I felt like I was being welcomed by family. Indeed, I guess we are family. And now I find your pictures of the Chat Liners Breakfast which brings more memories flooding back. Thanks and please come to San Diego so that we can return the hospitality.

-- *Tex Cornwell, La Mesa Club, Desert Coast Region, SIA*



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

A Tour of the Displays

by *Meryl Caldwell-Smith, Goulburn Club, New South Wales Region, SISWP*

Finlandia Hall was a hive of good humoured activity from early Sunday morning with members busy setting up displays, and our Finnish Seroptimist hostesses in their colourful regional costumes - all hand-made, many by their wearers - on hand to help.

The 'Continuous Help' Desk is open the whole time that the Hall is in use, and you can pick up copies of 'Arctic Circle' and 'Helsinki This Week'.

On the entrance floor, near the registration desk, is the Sydney 2003 SI Convention display. On the first floor, displays spread in both directions. Add your own Club's Best Practice to those already depicted on 'Seroptimists on the World Map'. See the displays prepared by SI Program Coordinators, SI Extension Coordinators, SI Extension Coordinators, UN Representatives, Unifem 'Women's Rights are Human Rights', 'Project Five-O' the Siam Project 1995-1999 and Limbs For Life 1999-2003. More displays on the top floor - including Open Heart Open Door (with application forms in 17 languages); entries for the SI/E Drawing Competition 'Children and Violence', SI Magadan's similar local competition; SI/E's 1999-2001 Federation project - 'Into the 21st Century with Youth', SI America Board; SI Europe Congress in Istanbul; the Silent Language of Pinkinys in Anatolia; and Women Behind the Veil.

Finnish Seroptimists have, in addition to all their other commitments, a bank of display boards depicting their work on the environment, for War Veterans, and against Drugs and Violence, and distinguished Finnish Seroptimists.

Don't miss any of these exciting depictions of our Seroptimist World and endeavours.

Lifting the Veil for the Afghan Women

Visit the exhibition on the second balcony, produced by Medicins du Monde, and promoted by EU Commissioner Emma Bonino. The exhibition is touring Danish Seroptimist Clubs who are advocating against the terrible conditions suffered by the Afghan women. For information contact Lisbeth Hass IGU Coordinator SI/E 1999-2001, or Hanne Jensbo, President Elect SI/E 2001-2003.

-- *Hanne Jensbo*



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

Finland - A Summer's Delight, A Winter's Dream

by *Maria Jose Elias, Lisboa Sete Colinas Club, Portugal Region, SIE*

Dear all,

I returned from Helsinki last night, and I am now writing to tell you that everything has been actually wonderful. At this Convention as a chat liner, I was eager to meet other chat liners as if I was looking for relatives who I had never met before. The Cyber-Breakfast was wonderful and Anu played some piano. We received cyberbadges and put names to faces. Everything along the week developed in a very smooth way and we must thank our Finnish sisters.

Did you know that everyone of us found a pair of hand knitted blue and yellow wool socks inside the bag with the Convention material? And that all these 1800 pairs of socks had been knitted over the last two years by Finnish Seroptimists for the 1800 Convention participants? I think I shall never use them and I must keep them for exhibition. It seems incredible. In the directory of SIE there are 57 registered clubs in Finland. That means a rate of 32 pairs of socks per club. Inside one of my socks, there was a little card saying: 'A friend is someone who makes you feel totally acceptable'. I felt very moved.

At the Convention web site, I saw that lots of news has been included, and it is very interesting to read them now. I think that many chat liners have not yet returned home as the chat line is so silent. My room mate that I met through the chat line, Alison Sutherland, went to Lapland and many others too.

The Finnish Seroptimists published a wonderful book titled 'Finland - A Summer's Delight, A Winter's Dream' - to celebrate the XVI SI Convention in Helsinki, Finland. It represents a joint effort by Seroptimist Clubs throughout Finland to introduce their country to their Seroptimist sisters coming from all over the world. Contributions and illustrations were solicited from all clubs, and clubs wrote about local characteristics and traditions. A full colour 170 page book, where every club wrote two or three pages with wonderful pictures and text about their own region. A very nice idea, and a very pretty book.

I think that our sisters from Finland surpassed all our expectations.

It is about midnight and I have not yet unpacked everything. Lots of things to do. But I begin to become addicted to the chatline.

Cyberhugs to everyone,

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

I do hope many of you have now had time to read through the book 'Finland - A Summer's Delight, A Winter's Dream which came in your Convention bag. It is everything you need to know about Finland, including some nice recipes.

But most important of all. Did you see that the Finnish sisters paid for two books when they were ordering their own copies, so that their guests should receive one as a gift? That is yet another very generous contribution. The production costs must have been considerable and I will certainly treasure my copy. It is beautiful.

-- *Fay Cori, Cardigan Club, Wales South Region, SIGBI*



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

We thought you would love to hear how some of our members are enjoying their tours etc. so here we go with a couple of them.... so sit back, relax and let your imagination run riot. Pour out a glass of wine, enjoy the experience

-- Kate Moore.

Sunshine in the Arctic

by *Chris Fulton, Maidstone Club, South East England Region, SIGBI*

Brilliant sun to the north at midnight, shining across the Arctic Ocean was a wonderful reward for deciding to drive to Convention by the scenic route.

I have a small motor caravan and crossed from Newcastle in northern England to Bergen in Norway. I then drove along the Norwegian coast, over ferries and through tunnels but with views of some of the most beautiful scenery I have ever seen. It took over a week to reach the North Cape, the most northerly point of Europe at 71 degrees 10' north. At that point the weather improved dramatically and I experienced five days and nights of continuous sunshine and high temperatures. The drive South through Finland with forests and lakes all the way to Helsinki.

Excursion to Jean Sibelius' home and Artist Museum

by *Maria Jose Elias, Lisboa Sete Colinas Club, Portugal Region, SIE*

4th July. A sunny and warm Sunday. After 38 km through the countryside, we found Ainola, Sibelius' home, at the eastern shore of Lake Tuusula. The Finnish greatest composer wrote 7 symphonies, the Finland Hymn, the "Swan of Tuonela". His wife Aino, who gave the name to the house was also a pianist. The graves of Sibelius (1865 - 1957) are near the house.

Many Finnish masters of literature, fine art and music have been inspired by this eastern party of the lake. A great friend of Sibelius, the painter Pekko Halonen (1865-1933) the most lyrical portrayer of Finland and its people lived nearby, at Holozenniemi. We visited his log wilderness studio that combined home and studio facility. It is nowadays a very interesting museum and it has been restored to its original condition. Through the windows we see the lake and the marvellous forests of pine, birch, spruce, aspen, juniper, and many other trees, showing all sorts of green tones.

We finished with a lunch of Krapu, one of the main farms of Tuusula Lake Road. Krapu means kettle and is a symbol of the long tradition of hospitality to guests.

We arrived at Finlandia Hall by 5.00 pm just in time for the Opening Ceremony.

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

Ateneum - Museum of Finnish Art Kaivokatu 2 (almost opposite the Railway Station)

A place worth visiting in Helsinki, recommendations from Kate Goddard, Beverly & District Club, Yorkshire Region, SIGBI

Wonderful paintings, and sculptures displays in generous space in an interesting building. Free cloakroom and leave your bags and parcels. Lift. Good toilet arrangements. A cool and quiet cafe and good supply of postcards of the art collection in the museum shop.

Open Tuesday - Friday 9.- 18.00 hours

Wednesday - Thursday 9. - 20.00 hours

Saturday and Sunday 11. - 17 00 hours

Closed Monday

Price 15-45 finnmaks (probably higher prices for special exhibitions). Free with a Helsinki Card.



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

Church of the Rock

by *Christin Coleselli, Balzano-Bozen Club, Italian Union, SIE*

Three Soroptimists (Italian and German Union) visited by Tram 3T the Temppeliaukio Church (Church of the Rock) built in 1968 by the famous Finnish architects Timo and Tormio Suomalainen. The elliptical church was excavated out of a solid piece of rock. The construction of the cupola is of glass and steel and copper and gives special light and colour effects. The acoustics are excellent, especially when the pipe organ is being played.

Walking through the birch park we reached the Sibelius monument designed by a Finnish female artist Eila Hiltinen in 1967 in honour of the great Finnish musician.

Going back we strolled the Olympic Tower at the stadium and had a fantastic view of the city. Finally we had a stop at the railway station from 1916. It is one of the most significant works of the Finnish national romantic style.



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

Sunday 4 July
Opening Ceremony

by Judy Dreis, Kent Club, Washington District 1, Northwestern Region, SIA

At 5:00 p.m. July 4, 1828 Soroptimists gathered together in Helsinki's jewel, Finlandia Hall, for the opening ceremony of the 16th Soroptimist International Convention 1999.

SI 1999 Convention Chair Irmeli Torssonen gave the welcome and presentation of flags. 79 out of 199 countries are represented here this week. Flags from countries present at the previous International Convention in San Francisco were posted on the stage. New Soroptimist countries: Bosnia Herzegovina and Haiti both represented by the SI Flag, were followed by flags from Albania, British Virgin Islands, Burkina Faso, Croatia, Ecuador, Latvia, Malawi, Mozambique and Slovakia were presented separately, followed by the flags of Finland, United Kingdom, United States of America, Australia and the United Nations.

The first dignitary to offer greetings, representing the Republic of Finland, was Sirkka-Liisa Anttila, 1st Vice Speaker of the Parliament -- and Soroptimist. Sirkka-Liisa was the first of several speakers to point out that Finnish women were the first in the world to be able to vote and stand as candidates for Parliament. Indeed they have had full equality since 1906. 37% of the 200 Parliament seats are held by women. Finland, at the beginning of the month, assumed the role of President of the EU and will lead the European countries until the end of the year. They wish to stress the importance of feelings and emotions along with the practical everyday lives of the people of the EU. Sirkka-Liisa concluded with the important role IGU plays in Soroptimism saying, "By serving others we are also developing ourselves."

The next speaker was Helsinki's Lord Mayor Eva-Riitta Siitonen who began with a few words about Finlandia Hall, designed by Alvar Aalto, Finland's most famous architect. She said as Finns they sometimes take for granted the equality they have developed in society, but they must not forget how many countries still dream of attaining that goal. Soroptimists, she said, work to build a better world through the preservation of human rights and improvement of the status of women. People from other cultures learn to know each other, and develop lasting friendships. Eva-Riitta spoke of the high level of education of the citizens of Helsinki, and Helsinki's role as a leader in high technology and communications. Helsinki has been designated one of nine European cities of culture and will celebrate its 450th birthday next year. And as leader of the EU, it has the honour to steer Europe to the new millennium.

Their Excellencies Ambassadors Gavin Hewitt of the United Kingdom and Eric Edelman of the

United States expressed their official greetings and good wishes to all Soroptimists and guests for a successful congress. They each concluded with the hope that we take some time to learn about the Finnish culture and meet the Finnish people who are welcoming us so warmly to their country and to their capital.

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

Irmela Torssojnen introduced representatives from the following organizations who presented greetings: International Federation of Business and Professional Women, Zonta International, International Federation of University Women, The National Council of Women of Finland, Lions Club Association in Finland, Rotary International of Finland and UNIFEM.

In her few opening remarks, Soroptimist International President Hilary Page spoke of Finland - a land of nature, lakes, cell phones and Moomins, a reference to the characters in Finnish author Tove Janssons much-loved childrens books. She next thanked the Convention Organizing Committee -- in Finnish. Finally, she introduced the new statement just passed by the International Board, "Soroptimist International is a worldwide organization for women in management and professions working through service projects to advance human rights and the status of women," and declared the 16th Convention of Soroptimist International in session.

Entertainment prior to adjournment to the Friendship Evening was provided by the child choir Verajapalon Kuoro, girls ages 10-23, whose clear, sweet bell-like voices enchanted us all with traditional and folk songs from Finland and Lapland, concluding with Jean Sibelius' Finlandia, and a Welsh lullaby.



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

Friendship Evening, including Fashion Show

by Sheilah Downs, Lower Hutt Club, New Zealand Central Region, SISWP

Have just returned from one of the friendliest Friendship Evenings ever; the setting was the magnificent Finlandia Hall overlooking the Gulf of Toolo, one of the many waterways of Helsinki. A fine evening and the fountain playing outside. Everyone released from the formality of the earlier opening ceremony, headed first for the food and drink and then to hunt for old friends, friendship links and generally mix and mingle.

Today being the 4th July, there were some truly marvellous outfits on display. I particularly enjoyed some very European members wearing some very smart black jackets with Japanese lettering and on their heads the distinctive head gear of the Statue of Liberty.

There were shrieks of joy as people made contacts, cyber sisters have been hugging and kissing like mad and I should think Kodak will be recording a huge increase in their profits for the month of July.

Suitably refreshed we were then presented with some mouth watering clothes that most of us would die for! The fabrics were soft and flowing, colours bright red, black and orange and the furs divine. All the clothes were very reasonable and apart from wishing you were a lot slimmer. I think most of us would have liked to pack at least one of the outfits in our cases to take home.

After the formal parade, we had a more light hearted parade of our Finnish sisters in their delightful national costumes. Hendre will no doubt display photos for us later on. Then we had a quick run past on the Stage of some of the Japanese members wearing their national dress. However, national costumes from Africa, Korea, West Indies, Samoa and almost every corner of the world were around us.

As the wine flowed and the goodwill spread, sporadic outbreaks of song and dance occurred throughout the hall.

Finally, after two hours of merry making we made our various ways home. Some strolling along the water front back to nearby hotels, other to catch the trams, to take them back to hotels further afield.

On a lighter note Chatliners, there were present a considerable number of people on crutches! I heard from one of them they were considering a group photo session tomorrow!