



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

**Closing Session and Introduction to the New Quadrennium 1999-2003**  
by Margaret Heine, Fullerton Club, Desert Coast Region, SIA

Cyber-friends, the closing ceremonies were moving and inspiring.

Immediate Past President Patricia Daniels gave her last speech as an elected official of Soroptimist International. She believes that Soroptimists are on a 'journey of hope and discovery' and offered four challenges for the new millennium.

1. That we all become 'Global Citizens' in act and deed
2. That all clubs deal with the substantive issues outlined in the 'Platform for Action'
3. That to facilitate membership and retention we remain relevant to today's changing world.  
That we implement programmes to educate and inform our members about the organisation, goals and projects.
4. Take chances! Go beyond our comfort zones, expand our thoughts "what can be".

Patsy concluded with a quote from the 'Book of Hugs' - "There will be days when you want to hug the whole world". Cyber-hugs to all!!

President Hilary Page summarized some of the successes of the past two years:

- almost 100,000 members in 119 countries.
- 125,000 pounds to UNICEF "Joyful Learning" programme in India.
- 81,000 to the women's centre in Solomon Islands.

President Hilary reviewed several articles and goals of Soroptimists everywhere:

1. A right to education (Article 26)
2. No slavery or servitude (Article 4)
3. An adequate standard of living (Article 25)

An excerpt was read from a time capsule opened in 1996. Ethel Lord wrote that Soroptimists work was "Human rights, advance the status of women, have an active role in many forums, to stand up and be counted". True today as it was it was 50 years ago.

President Hilary concluded with her three wishes for Soroptimists:

1. Continue as a Global Voice for Women
2. That regions strengthen links even when in different Federations
3. Enjoy Soroptimism! Enjoy and develop our clubs. They are the framework for the entire organisation.

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A moving video was shown - a wonderful tribute to the last two years!

Dr. Chris Giannou of the ICRC gave a presentation on anti-personnel mines. Only 67 countries have ratified the 1997 Treaty. The United Nations consists of 185 countries. He urged everyone to lobby their governments to become signatories to the treaty. Further, the mine fields must be cleared. Artificial limbs must be provided. Artificial limbs only have a life of 3-5 years for adults. The work continues. Our new Quadrennial Project 'Limbs for Life' - we are beginning the project with a donation to him of 4,000 pounds. Support our new project!

President Elect Jane Zimmerman then introduced her team for the coming biennium. Lois Sagel, UN International Public Relations was introduced, followed by the UN representatives from New York, Paris, Vienna and Geneva.

Margaret Alderson will be the Programme Coordinator. The rest of the team are:

Environment - Olive Newton

Social and Economic Development - Ralda Forzin

Education - Ilona Takacs

Health - Nobuko Tsushima

Human Rights - Marie Zaphet

International Goodwill and Understanding - Elizabeth Hughes

Project Five-O Head - Lorry Roberts

Constitution - Jo Darbyshire

Extension - Joan Cromer

Finance - Tolunay Ozdurmaz

TIS - Betty Loughead-Turland

HQ Liaison - Jane Barrie

Finally, the remainder of the board was introduced, June McPhee as Procedural Consultant and Cheryl Liddle as Treasurer.

President Elect Jane announced her focus for the new biennium - "A GLOBAL VOICE A GLOBAL VISION".

How wonderful the next two years will be! Hope to see everyone in Sydney, Australia 2003!



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**A Global Voice - A Global Vision**  
**1999 - 2003 Programme Focus**

*from Soroptimist International Board Meeting Papers*

Soroptimist International, a global voice and a global vision, endorses the UN Platform for Action of Beijing 1995 and strives through awareness, advocacy and action to promote human rights and the status of women through the education and empowerment of women socially, economically and politically. This will ensure gender equality in the decision making process which affects the lives of all people, particularly as those decisions influence the status of women, youth and the girl child. The eradication of poverty is a key component essential for human development.

Soroptimist International will achieve this vision through the implementation of service in the following quadrennial programme focus:

- Alleviation of Poverty
- Women Against Violence
- Life Long Learning
- Culture of Peace
- Women, Science and Technology
- Health Through the Whole Life Cycle



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**Closing Session and New Quadrennial Project 'Limbs for Life'**  
by *Chris Knight, Brisbane City Club, South Queensland Region, SISWP*

Today's topics covered a synopsis of both Past President Patsy Daniels' and President Hilary Page's highlights over the past four years. The slide presentation by President Hilary reflected the many projects and time shared with many, many Soroptimist members throughout the world.

This was followed by the presentation on our Quadrennial Project 'Limbs for Life' by Dr Chris Giannou, Health Coordinator, International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) in Geneva. A video depicted the horrors of anti-personnel land mines and the need to provide our expertise and lobbying skills to ensure that all countries ratify the Ottawa Convention signed on 3 December 1997 for a global ban on anti-personnel landmines.

Dr Giannou reiterated that more innocent people have been killed than soldiers from anti-personnel land mines. Assistance is needed to clear mines. Education, training and support for victims is crucial in providing resources for the fitting and replacement of artificial limbs and to provide rehabilitation vocation and education of survivors.

We should all try to access a copy of this video, bring the atrocities of war and the affects on innocent people to our members. Through our compassion and lobbying skills we can make a world of difference to all victims of war, helping them to lead a full and valued life.



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**Limbs for Life**  
**Seroptimist International Project for 1999 - 2003**  
from *Convention Proceedings*

Anti-personnel land mines are a terrible weapon indiscriminately killing and wounding civilians mainly women and children.

The end of the twentieth century is marked by this tragedy and the effects of these mines will be felt for many decades to come.

In partnership with the International Committee of the Red Cross, Seroptimist International is supporting a four-year project.

The aims:

- to restore human dignity to the victims of land mines
- to help them become mobile again and reintegrate them into society
- to enable children to return to school and play once more like all the other children the world over
- to allow women to again lead a viable family life

How?

- by supplying artificial limbs
- by promoting in a variety of ways the victims' recovery both physical and psychological

Where?

- in Georgia
- in Angola
- in Afganistan

They need your help and support.

Contact your Federation's Headquarters for additional information.



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### **The Gala Banquet**

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

After the closing ceremony at The Finlandia Hall which ended just prior to lunch on Thursday, we had (in theory) around six hours to get organised for the Installation Banquet. Theory is fine!!! However, as I had not ventured out of the hotel or convention centre into the city of Helsinki at that stage, Judy, Elizabeth, and Linette (Zimmerman - otherwise known as Cousin Linette!!) decided we should take the tram to Stockmans the big department store. It was quite an adventure going into this huge store, but even I - a well known shopaholic - was too tired to appreciate or explore the store. So it was a quick stroll down towards the harbour, lunch, search for an ATM and then Judy and I went back to the hotel.

Linette had booked tickets on the Jet Foil for early Friday morning, as we were off for a day visit to Talin in Estonia. Sensibly we needed to try and take the opportunity for a few spare minutes sorting out our room etc. I seem to recall spending some time trying to organise the cases that were being left at the hotel whilst we were in Russia and resting for a short time. Then it was back to the difficult job of getting three of us into (and out of) the bathroom, all ready in our finery for the transport from the hotel to The Fair Centre - I seem to recall we were actually down stairs in the foyer of the hotel by around 5.30 pm, the coaches were already waiting and we were off.

Janet from the International Office some time ago recommended the Finnish drink "Cloud Berry", and said I should be sure to try some during my visit. Well, up to Thursday night I'd not seen it anywhere, but was delighted to learn this was the aperitif we were being offered on arrival. I suppose it could be likened to a 'Kier Royale' - blackcurrant liqueur with Champagne. The only difference, there was a berry floating in it.

In the large reception area where we waited until the doors were opened to the main hall - we were able to meet up with many friends both old and new. It was surprising how many people I saw in those few minutes - several who I'd been looking for all week. When we were eventually able to enter, it was into a huge room (well, there must have been close to 2,000 at the Banquet) with long oblong tables laid sideways, facing the stage. A good view for all.

The stage was banked by Christmas Trees and Convention Chairman Irmeli Torssonen reminded us of the long winter nights, the snow, and the warmth of our welcome. Right on cue large white flakes came floating down to the stage and it really looked like a snow storm. Graceful dancers, dressed in green, entertained us whilst we got to know those around us.

Our group included my 'table neighbours' - Chat Liners Carol Kirkby and Heidi Konrad, the three other members from my own club and several from my other region, NWR of SI/A. People kept wandering past, seeing us and coming to visit! For the first time at Convention I

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saw Chat Liner Diane Varni's friend (from Woodbridge) go past, and was able to catch up and introduce her to a few of us. And so the evening continued.

The main course was reindeer steak which was followed by an unusual sweet - a special Finnish sweet of cheese with a cloudberry sauce. Coffee was served with special chocolates - bearing the Soroptimist emblem - then it was time for the Installation.

Rather than have all the outgoing officers on the stage together, they came individually, i.e. the outgoing Treasurer with Cheryl Liddle as incoming Treasurer. PIP Patsy handing the PIP insignia to President Hilary and so on. Unfortunately it was difficult to photograph the event because in the main, the hand-over was carried out at the podium with only head and shoulders visible to the audience. However, by the time it came for IP President Hilary to install President Jane many of us were at the side of the stage and able to take photos.

President Hilary had graciously asked the current Federation Presidents, and those like our own Jo Derbyshire who had served as Federation President in her biennium, to join her on stage and each was given the opportunity to say a few words. A little side note - you will all recall President Hilary and Federation President Pamela visiting Nantwich for our Golden Jubilee in June - this included a frantic couple of hours shopping! They both looked lovely in their 'Nantwich outfits' - and I had been charged with getting a photo of the occasion for a former member of our club whose shop we visited!

The Immediate Past President of the Lewisham club and our very own Chat Liner - Helsinki Reporter and tireless worker in the Hotline Office - Alison Sutherland gave tributes to President Hilary. President Hilary is a very special Soroptimist who has won a special place in our hearts for her warmth, kindness and the friendship she gives to all.

Incidentally, during the words of appreciation, a special 'thank you' was given to Janet Bilton, Carol Clements and the International Office in Cambridge. This is particularly well deserved and they do a wonderful job on our behalf. On a personal note, I would like to reiterate my own thanks to both Janet and Carol whose unfailing patience, kindness and assistance are always available - no matter how busy or rushed they are. Janet and Carol, thank you for everything - especially your friendship.

It was a thrill to be there as President Jane was installed and to listen to her address. I'm sure that you, like me, will look forward to working for her and our organisation as we look towards the millennium with our theme of "Tomorrows Global Voice". May we become "A Global Voice with a Global Vision".

For me, things got quite hazy then - nothing to do with cloudberry or anything of that nature, but it was that time of the evening when people were beginning to leave and we were saying au revoir to dear friends, not knowing when we'd meet again. As ever, an emotional time.

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However, I do recall being entertained by a wonderful musical group from Lapland with a very distinctive style of music - and then our Finnish sisters took the platform again - led by Irmeli Torssonen and Arja Terho. Arja and I had been in contact concerning the Cyber Friends Breakfast months ago, and by chance we were sat next to each other at the Board Meeting.

Then, it was a fond (and sad) farewell to our friends, and we made our way to the coaches for our various hotels. The Installation Banquet had brought the XVI Soroptimist International Convention in Helsinki to a close. For those fortunate enough to attend it had been a wonderful occasion; for Chat Liners able to meet at long last - it was an emotional and fantastic time; and, maybe, for those of you not able to attend, for the very first time we were able to use modern technology, the internet to keep you in touch with events and make you feel fully involved in things.



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**The Gala Banquet**

by *Fay Cori, SI Cardigan, Wales South Region, SIGBI*

The incredibly efficient 'people handling' by the Finnish Soroptimists continued to the end. In every major hotel a Finnish hostess was waiting in the foyer to escort us to the waiting buses to transport us across town to the enormous Trade Centre Hall. Many of the Finns were wearing their beautiful regional costumes with handwoven skirt materials, silver jewellery and braided headbands and scarves.

With glasses of a sort of Kier Royale in our hands (cloudberry juice and champagne) we moved along the spacious entrance hall towards the main Conference Hall. This was now a time for farewells to special friends and to those who were having to get up at 4am the next morning to travel to St Petersburg and Lapland. We knew that once we were in the Banqueting Hall it was unlikely we would find one another again!

The huge stage was decorated with fir trees and after Convention Chair Irmeli Torssonen had welcomed us and told us of winters in Finland, down came white floaty flakes looking like snow. Filling in the intervals we were entertained by young, incredibly slim dancers who trailed enormously long ribbons which they kept twirling in the air and running behind them. It looked extremely pretty.

To see nearly 2000 people seated at a banquet is impressive. And imagine the logistics of serving that number all at one time. A veritable army of waiters and waitresses suddenly swept through the room and the speed at which we were served was astonishing. We enjoyed Finnish specialities of fish, reindeer steak and a baked cheese pudding with cloudberry sauce, which tasted just like stewed gooseberries. (Incidentally the recipe is at the back of the beautiful Finland book we received.) We wished we had been given a menu to know exactly WHAT we were eating, but it was all delicious.

During the evening (I'm a bit hazy as to when) we were entertained by a musical group of the Sami people. They are one of Europe's indigenous people and live mainly in the northern part of Finland, Norway and Sweden. They wore most beautiful and colourful costumes and played their own traditional music.

I must mention that two video cameras were covering the stage and projecting the image onto a gigantic screen, almost bigger than in the average cinema. I realised just how large the hall must have been because from where we were sitting (near the back) anyone on the podium looked very, very tiny. It was marvellous to see everyone looking so large, but it unkindly showed every welling of tiny teardrops and deep emotional expressions on the faces of "our greats".

IPIP Patsy introduced outgoing and incoming officers. Then she highlighted all the wonderful things that IP Hilary has achieved during her years of office. And when Hilary came on stage

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the applause was deafening! In her warm characteristic style President Hilary beckoned to everyone who had worked with her and said "I want all my team up here on the platform". And each was invited to say a few words. IPP of SI/GBI Jo Darbyshire, current SI/GBI President Pamela Lee, IPP of SI Lewisham Jean Wait (President Hilary's own club in southeast London) and Chat Liner Alison Sutherland all gave their tributes. Special thank yous were made to Liz Morgan-Lewis who has looked after all President Hilary's public relations, Janet Bilton, Carol Clements and the team in the International Office in Cambridge.

It must always be an emotional moment when a retiring President hands over to her successor and it certainly was just that when IP Jane Zimmerman was installed. Her enthusiasm is infectious and we were all inspired to do our very best in following her leadership on the theme of "Tomorrow's Global Voice".

Before the party finally broke up the Finnish Sisters took the stage again, Irmeli Torssonen and Arja Terho, President of the Finnish Union, saying farewell to us all. I think there was more music at this stage because I remember Kate coming up to me (it must have been too much cloudberry juice) and we danced together and were singing to the strain of (I think) "We'll meet again".

After many sad and fond farewells we boarded the coaches to take us back to our individual hotels. Again, extremely well organised.

On the way back to our hotel my travelling companion, Jane Roper from SI Abergavenny, and I wondered how we can take back to our clubs the excitement and the inspiration we found at this Convention - for both of us the first. I don't think we ever can. The distance is so great in communication terms but we are both going to have a jolly good try and if some of it gets through to the very bottom of our pyramid we hope we can encourage more Soroptimists to be in Sydney in 2003! I hope I'll be there to say G'day.



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### **Soroptimist Best Practice Awards**

Congratulations to winners of the Best Practice Awards 1998-1999

#### **Education**

SI/GBI (tie)	SI Reigate, England	Young Carers
	SI Ibadan South, Nigeria	Adult Literacy Classes
SI/E	SI Nairobi, Kenya	Home Management Course
SI/A	SI Truckee Meadows, Nevada, USA	Scholarships
SI/SWP	SI Labassa, Fiji	Oratory Contest

#### **Health**

SI/A	SI San Raphael, Phillippines	Free Medical and Dental Clinics
SI/E	SI Cairo, Egypt	HIV/AIDS Workshops for Students
SI/GBI	SI Kandy, Sri Lanka	Better health through Nutritional Prog.
SI/SWP	SI Solomon Islands	"Facts for Life" translation

#### **Environment**

SI/SWP	SI Christchurch, New Zealand	Creation of nature reserve
SI/A	SI West O'ahu, Hawaii	Restoration of the Limu (sea weed)
SI/GBI	SI Runcorn, England	Local Agenda 2
SI/E	SI Lome 1, Toga with SI Esch Alzette & SI Melusina	Construction of wells, centre for women & school outside Lome

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**Economic & Social Development**

SI/E	SI Winterthur, Switzerland	Training for Immigrant Women
SI/GBI	SI Kandy, Sri Lanka	Remand Prison Project
SI/A	SI Bloomington-Normal, USA	Loan Programme for Domestic Violence Female Offenders
SI/SWP	SI Waverley, Australia	Equality of Access

**Human Rights/Status of Women**

SI/A	SI Dodge City, USA	"When Domestic Violence Comes to Work Seminar and Three Day Silent Witness Exhibit
SI/E	SI Weisbaden, Germany	Mother Child Home in Weisbaden
SI/GBI	SI Kandy, Sri Lanka	Rights of the Disabled
SI/SWP	SI Townsville, SI Townsville West, SI Townsville Breakwater, Australia	Reforms to Responses to Rape and Sexual Assault

**International Goodwill and Understanding**

SI/A	SI Anacortes, USA	Breakfast Room of Noncanpalco
SI/SWP	SI Townsville, SI Townsville West, SI Townsville Breakwater, Australia	Palm Islands Project
SI/E	SI Goztepe, Turkey	International Friendship Week
SI/GBI	SI Folkestone, England	Nature without Frontiers