



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

### **Chat Line Reporters**

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

Hi everyone!

I hope by now some one (please) can have a look at the international www site which is [www.sorop.org](http://www.sorop.org) and confirm that (I think under 'news') copies of the daily Hotline Newsletter from Helsinki can be found.

We tried to send the info by email yesterday, so hopefully its there. Chat Liner Liz Morgan Lewis who is President Hilary's PR is doing a brilliant job as Editor of the Hotline, and Alison Sutherland is fabulous at condensing down the long reports you see here to fit into small spaces!!!!!!!

Joc Hanby is rounding up all our fantastic and enthusiastic reporters - and I am, well I am just me and doing my best for everyone. Suffice to say I am not sitting around twiddling my thumbs. And as for that Judy Dreis, she is helping make sure you get all the reports. WHAT A TEAM!

Its a super atmosphere, if somewhat frantic most of the time. Liz, Joc and I "put the baby to bed" at around 8.30 pm and went for a meal. We have a TV programme in the UK called 'Drop the Dead Donkey', about a newspaper office - so that explains the 'dead donkey' - and WE NOW KNOW what its all about <VBG>.

So, its 6.16 am, I'm ready for 7.00 am Breakfast (with all the women in this hotel and the small room they gave us for breakfast) that's the only way you can be sure of getting fed in reasonable time. Anyway my friends, I wanted to get the chance to chat to you all.

Marie Jose Elias was part of one of the panels yesterday - Eileen Mitchell chaired another, in fact our Chat Liners were much in evidence. I spent a couple of hours at lunch time running the SI web site on an overhead projector, and I must tell you, I slipped occasionally to Hendre's site, to display the music and our faces. Christin is gorgeous, and we all love Maria Jose to bits. ITS SO EXCITING, and we do wish you could all share it with us.

However, I hope this makes you feel part of things. Just be glad you don't have to get up at 5.30 to chat to you <ggggggggg> or have a chance of breakfast.

Love and cyber-hugs

Your roving reporter in Helsinki!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!



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**Environment - Interactive Panel**

**“Playing God Without Knowing the Rules?”**

*by Maria Jose Elias, Lisboa Sete Colinas club, Portugal, SIE*

Early in the morning thinking about a fast changing world: “Playing God without knowing the rules”. Mady Molitor, SI Environment Programme Coordinator chaired the Interactive Panel, introduced the issue: the evolution of the world has taken millions of years, built an extremely complex equilibrium - the rules of which are unknown to us. We are introducing dramatic changes at a very high speed and the consequences are yet unknown for us to foresee the future, for example, diminishing biodiversity or genetic engineering experiments.

Ann Christine Soderlund from the Swedish Club of Linkoping presented a point of view of the action that each of us can take as citizens for our country, our city, our home:

- try to be informed about the origin of our food
- ask for products without additives
- lower the energy consumed
- have separate bins for paper, plastic, and glass
- try to send used articles to recycling collecting centres

Dr. Shafika Naner a Seroptimist from Cairo and a Professor of Cairo University, reminded us that we don't know the long term effects of our food containing antibiotics, hormones, genetic modifications and chemicals. Herbicides are contaminants. As producers and consumers we must be very cautious and careful to protect our health and the health of future generations. We need to obtain the correct information and pass it on. We have the right to choose and pass the information to our sisters all over the world.

Jacky Huggins, our guest speaker from Australia, is a specialist in the relationships between indigenous and non-indigenous women in Australia. We have to learn from aboriginal people, they live very near mother nature and feel deeply and respectfully that “the land is our mother”. They can teach us (if we hear them) how to reconcile with their values that whisper some secrets about environmental equilibrium.



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**Friendship, Friendship**

by *Chris Knight, Brisbane City Club, South Queensland Region, SISWP*

The most amazing aspect of this international conference is the opportunity to meet so many wonderful women who all work for the aims and objects of Soroptimist International from so many countries throughout the world. It is only at this level that you truly begin to appreciate the valuable contribution that we as ordinary club members make to being a global voice for women.

There have been so many opportunities to meet our national, international and UN representatives and to listen to them speak on the activities of our club members and to learn how these activities are used to demonstrate how truly global our voice is throughout the world.

Every Soroptimist member should feel very proud of their achievements and those of their sisters throughout the world as we continue to advance the status of women and move forward together with one voice in many languages.



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**Economic and Social Development - Interactive Panel**  
**“Women’s Spending Power”**

from *Convention Proceedings*

Chairman of the Panel: Ralda Forzin, SI Programme Coordinator

Members: Valerie Evans, Katherine Mayer, Indrani Manuel and Evi Wunder

From transnational corporations, big government and big money to the power of the individual:

- to influence transnational corporations, big governments and big money
- by consumers ability to make an informed choice in purchase
- to be informed by making use of the WWW as a tool and as a source, ensuring accuracy
- by linking with other Soroptimist clubs in the places in question

This can then be turned into Action through the Soroptimist programme using:

- UN Representative reports
- the Soroptimist statements in “Where We Stand”, and
- accessing other groups' prepared material, e.g., Great Britain's “Consumer Education” package and consumer watchdog web sites.

Economic and Social Development (ESD) as a programme is critical in Soroptimist work as it encompasses a number of major issues:

- economic global action and its affect on consumer choice as well as on social development
- exploitation of resources beyond sustainable levels
- the health of our families and environment
- employment levels and conditions and social development in general



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**Culture Tour**

by *Elaine Moffat, Lower Hutt Club, New Zealand Region, SISWP*

A wonderful chance to do more out of the city into the luscious countryside. A chance to meet new people, to enjoy our sisterhood in the company of our "accompanying person". The culture? A succinct account of Helsinki's history absorbed the miles as we journeyed to the home and grave of Finland's illustrious son, Sibelius. A sturdy structure, the home allowed us to visualise the domestic life of this very famous composer.

Sibelius was obviously not married to a modern Soroptimist. His musically talented wife and daughters only played the piano when he was out for his daily walk. A sentry daughter would announce his impending return, the music stopped and he arrived back to an atmosphere of tranquility. I haven't found a Finnish sister who would accommodate these demands today!!

A visit to another home, now an art museum, and of course a delicious lunch followed.



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**Friendship and Food**

by *Sherry Luz, Marysville-Yuba City Club, Sierra Nevada Region, SIA*

The Soroptimist tradition of exchanging ideas and friendship over a meal has been well exercised during the last four days. Over a wonderful lunch of salmon and salads, new friends from the Netherlands, India and the U.S. came together to discuss a handicap swimming pool in the Netherlands, building public toilets in India, breast cancer research promotion in the U.S. and how our three individual clubs are making a difference in our world. The conversation continued in our Soroptimist way to the difference in educational viewpoints to how our sons have been trained, or not, to accept our young women's progress to equality.

What an exchange in a little over an hour! How I wish more Soroptimists could have an experience such as this.



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**Children Must Always Come First**

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

In an inspiring keynote speech, Scholastica Kimaryo, UNICEF representative to Liberia, charted achievements since the UN Convention of the Right of the Child 10 years ago and set out the agenda for the start of the next millennium.

191 countries have ratified the CRC since 1989; only two countries (Somalia and the United States) have not yet ratified it. "The walls of silence, apathy and denial that have often surrounded issues like child labour and the sexual exploitation of children have begun to crumble" since CRC was adopted. The stakes are enormous--HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis facilitated by HIV, malaria (which kills 3,000 children a day in Africa alone); the proliferation of armed conflict which has uprooted 22 million people worldwide (80% of them women and children) and many in conflicts not reported by the media; desperate poverty with 3 billion people (50% children); living on under \$2 a day. "There is nothing abstract about human rights--and no limit to what we can do to promote them."

UNICEF has joined in the global drive to eradicate poverty; has stepped up its support for increased immunisation; proposed a global peace and security agenda for children. It has drawn up a new global agenda, drawing from the fundamental question, What are the moments of intervention that will make the most difference to children's health and development (especially for the girl child)? They are that: infants begin life in good health; all children must be educated; adolescents have ample opportunities to develop and participate in a safe and enabling environment.

UNICEF seeks a global consensus on these bedrock objectives. Political commitment on a global scale, and resources to match, are currently the missing ingredient, but we should aim to achieve this in a generation--advocacy and financial support will help UNICEF achieve its 21st century dream that "the best interests of children must always come first".



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**Human Rights/Status of Women - Interactive Panel**

**“Trafficking and Teenage Girls: How to Help Our Most Vulnerable Youth”**

from *Janet Gregory Amtmann, San Diego Club, Desert Coast Region, SIA*

Chairman of the Panel: Dawn Marie Lemonds, SI Programme Coordinator

Members: Dr Juliette Engel, Guest Speaker

Dr Anele Heiges, Guest Speaker

Roswitha Benesch

Erika Leonhartsberger

The convention attendees listened in disbelief as the plight of young women sold into prostitution was told in video and personal stories in the panel session. Several important factors were outlined which have come together to make trafficking of women and girls a worldwide problem:

- Globalisation of economies
- Ease of transnational travel
- Sex on the internet
- Government Policies
- Patriarchy

We need to become consistent in documenting cases of trafficking to increase visibility of the issue, developing capability skills to deal with the issues and working in partnership with other NGO's and Government agencies.

The well organised sex industry's traffickers can easily entice young Russian women with “dreams of economic success”, said Dr Juliette Engel, Director and Founder of MiraMed. The demand for young virgin girls is high and so is the financial gain for the international crime syndicates.

Diane Sawyer of “20/20” stated that one million women are sold per year into the sex industry. Sadly, “human lives are always for sale”, she said. Prices for these teenagers range from 3,000 to 20,000 US dollars. They are subsequently trafficked in 43 countries around the world.

An Israeli brothel owner interviewed on “20/20” spoke of the ease of obtaining Russian women for his brothel with little or no opposition from law enforcement. These same women are kept under guard in deplorable living conditions, suffering from abuse and sickness. Brothel owners continue to make profits from the women by selling them from brothel to brothel. Soon it becomes impossible for the women to “buy back” their freedom. Ultimately, the women are deported, with only a few lucky enough to escape.

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The UN has scheduled a Congress on Transnational Crime to be held in September 2000. SI participation through our UN representation will bring our concerns for the trafficking of teenage girls and women to this International body. From this a Convention document will be generated.

The complexity of various governmental laws to regulate prostitution must be investigated. At the moment solutions seem to be to deport foreign prostitutes rather than shut down the brothels, jail the traffickers and address the issues. The victims are victimized again rather than pursuing the perpetrators of sex crimes.



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**Hi Everyone**

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

This is my “unofficial report” or almost my diary of last couple of days.

Sunday 4th July

I woke up at 4 am (!) and left home about 5 am to drive to Helsinki. 7 am I was in Hotel Intercontinental, parked my car and took an elevator to 9th floor. I thought I would be the first one in our meeting place, but no I wasn't! The very first person I met was my dear friend from Australia - Chris Knight! We finally met, and shared a real “koala-hug”! Lots of hugs and lots of tears of happiness! Joy Donelson and Heidrun Konrad were there too, and after that so many familiar names (not faces!) started to enter. It was a very special moment for me, and so hard to understand that it was really true! In the morning I woke up in my own bed, and after couple of hours I met all these wonderful people. I asked people to pinch me in case I was still dreaming... I finally met Meryl Caldwell-Smith and Mary Cassell - after all those letters we have written! And of course it was splendid to meet Kate! And many, many others...

After that we tried to eat something! But I must admit I was too busy to eat properly - it seemed like a waste of time when I finally had a possibility to meet all these people! You read a report of our breakfast meeting, so you know that I played piano there. It was my way to say thank you to all my cyber-sisters for what you did for me last March when I was in trouble.

I don't remember was it president Hilary or someone else who said that we have a special “Cyber Federation” and Kate is our President. So true, isn't it? I was shocked when Kate told us about Karyn. KATE: I send continuously green thoughts to Karyn and to you. I hope she recovers fine.

I took some photos there, but it was difficult because I didn't know who and what I should photograph - too many people and too little time! And too soon it was 9 am and we had to end our meeting. Chris, Meryl, Mary and I talked a while after that, and we will meet again after one week when they will spend couple of days with us here in Hamina.

After that I drove back to home. I was SOOOO tired after that, and I spent monday with an awful headache... ;-(

Tuesday 6th July

At 3 pm I started another trip to Helsinki with two of my friends from Hamina. We were in Helsinki at 5 pm and changed to our national dresses. We walked to Finlandia hall where there were hundreds of people waiting for buses to take them for “Light Summer Night” parties. I promised to be in charge of one bus, so I actually was working there. I saw many familiar faces (not only names any more!) there when 28 buses left from Finlandia Hall. Fay Cori and Mary

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Cassell was in my bus, and Jane Zimmermann was in the same party as we were. So at least four of us chatliners were in the same place! These Light Summer Night parties were arranged in many different places all over Helsinki, so there were about 100 persons in our party.

After meal and coffee, Marjatta, a friend of mine sang four Finnish songs (I accompanied), and then all together we sang the Soroptimist Symphony, and finally I played two Finnish piano pieces. The atmosphere was really warm and nice, and I think everyone enjoyed Finnish "Light Summer Night".

At 9.30 pm we left to go back to Helsinki city, and then we started to drive back home. I was home by midnight, so now I'm very tired - again...

One funny thing I just have to tell to you. One of my friends of our club in Hamina is one of the hostesses at the Helsinki convention. Marjukka arrived Helsinki last week, and just when she was signing in to her hotel, she first met two SI ladies and started to talk with them. Ladies asked Marjukka if she is from some club of Helsinki, and she said, "No, I'm from a very little town called Hamina..." And she didn't have to say anything more when these ladies said, "Oh - Hamina! Yes, we know that club. Our friend Anu is from that club!!!" Marjukka said that she was A LITTLE surprised. And these ladies - they were Meryl Caldwell-Smith and Mary Cassell!!!! How small the world is - indeed! And Marjukka told me that "Almost everyone here seems to know you..." Well, maybe that's not true, but she has obviously met many of chatliners!

Well, I think that's enough for now. I AM very tired at the moment, and now I try and rest a bit. So if there are many errors in my text it's only because my eyes and brains want to get back to sleep... Meryl, Mary and Chris will come here next monday, and I have many things to do before they arrive!

Almost forgot - again, GWENDA, my warmest congratulations to you and your new husband! A month ago we celebrated our 10th wedding anniversary.

Must end now.

Love, Anu



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**Light Summer Night On Bus 26**

by *Alison Sutherland, London Club, Central and South West Region, SIGBI*

Bus 26 went to Konstringeum as guests of SI Helsinki III - an art museum in a private home displaying a wonderful collection of Finnish art, sculpture, paintings and furniture. After a reception in the gallery the chief guide, a Soroptimist, told us the history of the collection; we heard a beautiful piano recital by a student of the Sibelius Academy and then had a splendid supper - as we mingled in the galleries and on the forested shores of the nearby lakeside. A wonderful evening.



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**Playing Bagatelle One Light Summer Night**

by Nancy Hanson, *Friday Harbor Club, Northwestern Region, SIA*

Our "Light Summer Night" began with a bus ride to the harbor where we were entertained by a group of accordion players. We boarded a boat which took us for a half hour ride across the water to the Folka Institute - a business training centre. There we were warmly greeted by the President of SI Helsinki Erottajea - Sisko Penttila. We were served a sumptuous buffet of grilled trout, salmon, potatoes, roast turkey and pork accompanied by bread and pate. We had the choice of apple juice or home made beer - all non alcoholic, and quite delicious.

The accordion band accompanied us there and continued their concert - some of the ladies also entertained us with dancing and singing. After dinner, coffee and cake, we wandered around the lovely grounds which included a replica of a Lapp hut. The Central open fireplace was surrounded by seats covered in soft furs. A grill was set in another hut where we had the opportunity to roast sausages... Having eaten such a wonderful dinner I was only able to take a small taste, yummy!

Some people played a form of pinball on the lawn, called bagatelle. An international competition began - President Sisko won hands down beating the Australian, Scottish and Irish sisters! She was rewarded with three cheers at the closing ceremony.

The closing ceremony was quite lovely - four candles were placed on a table on the lawn where we all gathered in a circle. The candles represented Seroptimist International, SI of Europe, the Union of Finland, and the Helsinki-Erottaja Club. Unfortunately, the wind would not allow the flames to stay lit, but the idea was beautiful - a Finnish tradition at Seroptimist gatherings.

Those of us who came by boat returned to Finlandia Hall by bus. It was a wonderful evening of fellowship and good talk. We chatted with our special friends and made new ones. Our Finnish sisters certainly organised a fabulous evening for all. BTW, I met fellow Chat Liner Kate Goddard on this trip - what a joy it is to meet here in Helsinki!

I for one truly appreciate all the wonderful treats our Finnish sisters gave us. They worked so hard to make this Convention a memorable one. The night they arranged to take us to all the interesting places around the area was incredible. I heard from so many people as to where they had been and each one had an experience that would never have been possible without such careful and wonderful planning. I say three cheers for our Finnish Sisters!!!

-- Linda K. Ross, *Fullerton Club, Desert Coast Region, SIA*



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**The Galerie Ojemark and Lutheran Cathedral**

by *Christin Coleselli and Elke, Bolzano-Bozen Club, Italian Union, SIE*

During the Helsinki Convention, 75 Finnish Soroptimists showed Finnish Arts at The Galerie Ojemark, mainly oil paintings, pastels, textiles, photos, jewels..... By the way, we learned that the purest flax is grown in Finland because of the abundant light of the summer (we still had sunshine at 10.30 pm). So the unique eco-linen is cultivated on a clean soil and a piece of linen is a symbol of good luck. All the works were very impressive.

Afterwards we went up to the cathedral for the Lutheran people. The other three sides of the very important square are represented by the University Buildings and the Government. Only a few steps and you are at the Harbour, the big market hall reminding us of the Quincy Market - just smaller. Huge ferry boats on the sea in a special and beautiful light, and we had a look at antique shops with old Russian art.