

From the USA

Unique Shroud Meeting Held in Texas

by Barrie Schwartz

On September 13th and 14th, 1997, I had the pleasure of attending an informal gathering of Shroud researchers at the home of STURP attorney **Michael Minor** in Kaufman, Texas. Those present at the meeting included **Rev. Albert "Kim" Dreisbach** (founder of the Atlanta International Center for Continuing Study of the Shroud of Turin (AICCSST)), Ian and Judith Wilson, **Dr. Robert and Patti Bucklin** (Forensic Pathologist and STURP team member), **Isabel Piczek** (noted monumental artist and physicist), **Fr. Frederick Brinkmann** (President-pro-tem, Holy Shroud Guild), **Richard Orareo** (Shroud researcher and owner of the Boston Shroud Collection), **Carmelita Peoples** and **Jo Pierce** (our hostesses during the weekend) and **Clair Willeman** (meeting coordinator).

The intention of the meeting was to discuss possible ways that important and often inaccessible Shroud resources, now scattered and residing in many collections around the world, could be archived and made broadly available without the need of a physical center to actually house and conserve the materials. To that end, the group discussed not only the conventional archiving methods already in use worldwide, but the new digital technologies that are soon to become the new archiving standards of the 21st century.

With the goal being the long term preservation and better sharing of the world's Shroud materials, it was agreed that the first step should be the assembly of a master catalogue. This would be created by integrating an inventory of each collection into a single alphabetical list. The participants unanimously agreed to add to this "pooled resource" a list of the materials that each holds, with hopes that others around the world would be encouraged to join and provide a listing of their materials as well. This master catalogue would then be made available to everyone via the Internet and other collections could easily be added in the future.

The catalogue would only be the first step towards the ultimate goal of archiving all of the rarest materials in their entirety and creating a comprehensive digital library for eventual distribution on multiple CD-Roms or DVDs (Digital Video Discs). Then, even the oldest book about the Shroud (published in 1581) would be available for everyone to read (only a handful of copies are known to exist in the world). Of course, this is a long term undertaking that would take place over a considerable period of time.

It should be noted that Fr. Brinkmann is the custodian of the Wuenschel Collection, owned by the Holy Shroud Guild, which contains over 900 books and hundreds of periodicals, letters and private correspondence. It is the largest Shroud collection in the United States. Richard Orareo is a long time student of the Shroud and has built his Boston Collection of more than 600 books and other materials over the past 30 years. Neither of these important collections has ever been available to the public.

Probably the best part of the meeting from my point of view, was the spirit of openness and cooperation that pervaded this group. No one was to be excluded. Everyone would be invited to participate. This was not the "typical" Shroud meeting I was used to! The participants were not representing any particular group or affiliation and each was there solely as an interested individual. Frankly, it reminded me of the early days of STURP, the group I was part of that performed the 1978 scientific examination of the Shroud. There had been a feeling of "family" in those early days that was lost in later years, as personal interests and egos prevailed. By the end of the weekend, I felt I had been privileged to participate in a very special and unique event. An event that could lead to a new era in Shroud study. An era where cooperation and sharing of information was the rule rather than the exception and where the study of this fascinating relic could go forward in an open and intelligent manner. An era of equal and open access to everything we already know about the Shroud of Turin... a wonderful goal as we approach the 21st century.

I urge everyone around the world with Shroud resources to become a participant in this archiving project by contacting Michael Minor at the address below. Remember, it can't happen without you!

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Barrie Schwartz is well-known to Shroud Internet users as creator of the Shroud web site <http://www.shroud.com> which continues to go from strength to strength. Please note that in the last newsletter the e-mail address for next year's Shroud Exposition should have read; <http://sindone.torino.chiesacattolica.it>. One missing 't' can make a lot of difference - apologies to all would-be Internet users.