

The Dallas International Conference on the Shroud of Turin October 25-28, 2001

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As you will all have gathered from Ian's editorial, he was not present at the Dallas conference. Joe Marino's paper (included in this newsletter) had been rejected by the peer reviewing committee and he later decided not to attend. Other last minute withdrawals were John Jackson and Bruno Barberis. This said, the speakers present were in general terms excellent, and there was a high proportion of new information, new faces (young ones too, a healthy sign as most of the "Shroud crowd" is hardly what we might call juvenile) and interesting ideas. In this edition of the Newsletter I will just give some general information about the conference and some of the attendees who did not present investigation papers, leaving specific reports of the scientific and historical presentations over for the next issue.

The conference organisers were the gentle, kind and immensely likeable Tom D'Muhala, a member of the STURP team that carried out the only scientific testing on the Shroud to date, back in 1978, the internationally renowned artist and physicist Isabel Piczek, the "true Texan" Michael Minor and Fr Fred Brinkmann of the Holy Shroud Guild.

The keynote address at the end of the conference, just before the banquet, was delivered by Rex Morgan (who also read a paper). It was a truly excellent and moving speech, summing up the great milestones of Shroud history and investigation and looking forward to a future that all desire to be brighter and possessed of a spirit of collaboration. Special mention was made of the terrorist attacks on September 11th and the determination to go ahead with the conference despite all the fear about travelling by plane. In fact, there were no cancellations for this reason at all.

Possibly the guest most people wished to hear was Italian fireman Mario Trematore, who rescued the Shroud from certain destruction in 1997 when the Guarini chapel, where the cloth was kept at the time, burned down. With the help of an interpreter, Mario had many in tears (himself included) when he told of how he took the casket out of the cathedral. Many present called him a hero, but as a true Italian used to good food, Mario said the true heroes were the Shroudies who put up with the conference meals. No offence Tom, Isabel, Mike and Fred, but I certainly agreed with him and the lack of any nearby restaurants meant that we had no choice ...

Mention has been made many times in this newsletter and in many others of the impressive Shroud collection belonging to Richard Orareo, in Boston. Given that historian Dan Scavone was presenting a paper about the Shroud's possible stay in Besançon during the "lost years", Richard brought and set up for viewing various embroideries and engravings of the Besançon copy (although Dan's paper by no means suggests that the copy was the real thing). It is always a pleasure to see both Richard and his Shroud items.

Perhaps the most serious presentation was given by Barrie Schwartz, well-known as the host of the Internet's most comprehensive Shroud website. In the light of all the "events" before the conference itself, and given that the paper contained no Shroud investigation, I think it is appropriate to include it in this edition of the Newsletter. In a talk entitled "The Image **of** the

Shroud" as opposed to "on" the Shroud, Barrie basically reminded everyone present that conferences such as this one are for the public in general the image of Shroud research and so we all have a responsibility to be serious in our work, never publishing outside our own specific fields. In other words, a one or two person Shroud "centre" cannot possibly investigate all aspects of the cloth. When people visit his website, any such complaint is always addressed to him, and as he said, he is under no obligation to defend other people's poor work. No names were mentioned and although some felt that the address was out of place, I can only offer Barrie total understanding and support on a personal level and I hope from all BSTS members. Barrie Schwartz already does a fantastic, unrewarded and for the most part unthanked job with the website. On a lighter note, just before the dinner to end the conference, he surprised us all by playing the guitar with the musical duo hired to provide entertainment.

Barrie's is by no means the only website devoted to the Shroud. Russ Breault, host to another website aimed at younger people, was also present to talk about the latest developments on his own Internet site. Specifically designed to introduce the cloth to teenagers, it speaks to them on their own level (e.g. "The Shroud is a cool tool to reach your school") without getting too involved in profound science. The site is well worth a visit at www.shroud2000.com

As I said at the outset of this report, specific papers and investigation from the Dallas 2001 Conference will be covered in the next edition of the Newsletter.