GRAIL NATIONAL MEETING REPORT

June 25-28, 1992

On Thursday evening, with hardly an afternoon's break after the pre-meeting Contextual Theology program, participants were welcomed to the 1992 National Meeting by the Connections Team (Marian Schwab, Ceci Figueroa and Nancy Hennessy Cooney). More than 100 participants had gathered in the caravansary to march in a parade and to share skits and games they had prepared, to get one another in the spirit to focus on the challenge of Grail development.

The caravansary was decorated with balloons and streamers, and with the help of emcee Alice Gallagher, those assembled watched and laughed while teams presented their views of the potential in the new national development program. Putting all considerations into a historical context was a presentation in which various key players at important moments in the Grail's development history ("Roselyn Kew," for example) were called forth to express their perspective upon the Grail's efforts at (especially financial) development.

Songs, noise-makers, hats and various other props contributed to a feeling of energy and solidarity in the effort to build a development program. Dreams presented included an entire complex at San Jose, with its own child care center, Montessori school and retirement skyscraper with swimming pool and jacuzzi. Conversation on the topic continued in the bistro until the wee hours, under the bartendership of Barbara Liba.

First Full Day

By Friday morning at 9am, with the summer morning sunlight already warming the newly built "welcoming space" in the yard, participants were invited to the "Dance of the Grail." While some (like Monica Cardwell) took photos of the others, participants danced and moved to the sound of dances through the years, inspired by Anne Ward's reading of a text by Fran Martin and other Participation Team members.

In the mood to settle down after half an hour of dancing, participants gathered in the caravansary to hear from Marga Callendar (the Grail's "mentor in development") an overview presentation on financial development within the Grail. A large three-legged stool was used as a visual aid to show how the vision and mission (on the seat of the stool) are expressed through programs and activities (on the rim); these are supported by three essential legs: communications/PR, participants and resources/ finances.

By mid-morning, the whole group split into workshop sessions, with each workshop focusing on one or more of the pieces of the "development stool" Marga had presented. Tickets for workshops

were handed out on demand, after workshop facilitators did "commercial messages" to entice people to their workshops.

Three workshops then happened simultaneously Friday morning: Grail Image, Grail Out-reach and Involvement, and Grail Communications and Public Relations.

Led by Mary Kay Louchart and Sharon Joslyn, the Grail Image workshop participants did role-playing focused on explaining the Grail in various situations and to different kinds of people and designed Grail T-shirts showing various visual images of the Grail. ....The Grail is international, faith-filled, justice-concerned, collaborative, and supportive of the poor and dispossessed...has an evolving spirituality...a continuing search for justice... international connections...the potential for trans- formation.....

The Participation Team worked together to build skills in their workshop on Grail Out-reach and Involvement. They had participants do a verbal relay on "what does the Grail mean to each of us?", in which those attending practiced answering quickly questions like these: What attracted you to the Grail? How has the Grail affected your spiritual journey? Is it important to you that the Grail is international? Participants did water color representations of "what is the Grail" to you?"; did 25-word "Grail-grams" for the "World Transformation Foundation" that wanted clarification on "what is the Grail?"; and then engaged in out-reach scenarios. Among Grail-grams: The Grail is an explosion of ideas and energies by women committed to using their talents, professions and experiences for nurturing women and developing women, spirituality, earth, justice and the arts....An international movement of women moved by the spirit within and without to understand the planet, to develop nurturing attitudes, and to work for justice for all.....

In the workshop on Grail Communications and PR, Duanne Welsch and Luisa Coria facilitated a round-table discussion about the differences in the kind of communication needed by Grail members about the movement and among themselves, and the kind of information needed and wanted by friends and supporters of the Grail. Some conclusions? We need to develop external communi- cation of direction and vision, projects, events and human interest stories; contact women in groups which share our interests; get more members to report and share information internally; streamline internal communications; explore the use of technology like voice mail, fax, electronic mail, radio and television to promote the Grail and strengthen bonds internally.

Early Friday afternoon, a second round of workshops happened: Grail Programing, the Grail's Development Program, and Grail Properties.

With the help of a photo gallery of Grail programs, participants in the Programing workshop explored the scope and meaning of contemporary Grail programing. Led by Audrey Sorrento,

Cathy Hale and Sharon Joslyn, participants tested out two possible programs for local groups -- one on women and ecology, one on women and self-esteem. Grail programing was affirmed as a source of personal growth, as a means of participating in the transformation of the world, and as a place where God is encountered. Conclusions? We can do Grail programing where we are -- gather a few women, and just begin; let's begin a long-term Grail work that will strategically address a major work...Key phrases: women growing, deepening, connecting, world transforming; God -- thought, wholeness, hope, joy...come join the Grail journey.

A dialog about the Grail's Development Program was facilitated by Nancy Hennessy Cooney with the help of Marga Callendar and June Jackson, the Grail's new Development specialist. Kinds of questions discussed? Exactly what will the new development specialist do? Will she have a team to help her? How will local fund-raising efforts relate to national efforts? How can more effective communication happen with members about financial matters? How will priorities for fund-raising be determined? How will fund-raising efforts be evaluated? How could major donors be identified? What's the process of members' loaning the Grail money? How can members support June in her work for the movement?

Situating their workshop squarely within a cosmic context, teams from Cornwall and San Jose, along with facilitator Teresa Wilson, spoke with participants about the hopes for the development of Grail Properties. Using giant maps as visual aids, presenters showed participants various options for the use of properties, discussing these options in relation to the Grail's mission. Practical considerations? Financial implications of various decisions about housing eg co-housing, low-cost housing, housing for Grail or non-Grail people; zoning; need to formulate specific plans before people are likely to commit themselves; need for a committed group to work through the complexities of properties questions.

A final round of workshops happened late Friday afternoon: on Grail Finances, Financial Support for Grail Projects, and Grail Members and Money.

Facilitated by Grail Treasurer Martha Heidkamp along with members of the Link Team, participants in the workshop on Grail Finances poured over financial statements of other organizations. Critiquing each in terms of its intelligibility to people without financial backgrounds, they made recommendations about the presentation of Grail finances to potential supporters. Pie charts and other graphs were explored for their usefulness. Conclusions? visual representations can help make financial pictures intelligible; the use of funds should be explained in relation to the Grail's mission, especially to people not in the Grail; Grail members as well as non-members need to understand the movement's financial situation.

In the workshop on Financial Support for Grail Projects,

Grail development mentor Marga Callendar taught participants some practical techniques of approaching people for money. Participants brainstormed about individuals and groups that have some kind of relationship with the Grail, and explored their potential for contributing to the Grail financially. Marga underscored the importance of cultivating relationships with people who care about what the Grail does. What are some of the ways the Grail is meeting the needs of society? The Grail is empowering women. It is producing food in an ecological way; promoting understanding among people of different cultures, nationally and internationally; assisting women in exploring their personal spiritual questions in ways that go beyond denominational and national horizons; and addressing housing needs of low and moderate income families and older adults.

In the workshop on Grail Members and Money, facilitators Sharon Wood and Beth Wasmer helped participants tell one another stories about childhood experiences of money. Acknowledging the importance of getting in touch with the "child within," participants admitted they could recognize the continuing effect within themselves of childhood experiences of economic struggle. Conclusions about the relevance of all this to the Grail's new development program? Attitudes formed early in life might affect how members process feel about communal money questions, and determine how different members will be able to contribute to the development effort.

On the evening of the first full day of the National Meeting, participants gathered in the oratory for a Grail "Renewal Ritual." Called first into "welcome circles" with a flower in hand, participants sang "a new day dawns. They hung their flowers on flowering pillars,adding them to those of other Grail members; then listened to readings of the Grail Faith Message and the Parable of the Old Woman; and sang together "God, the Mystery of Our Lives." They shared the cup, and in closing, gave a blessing of "deep peace" to one another.

Some people toured the abundant Grailville garden in the twilight; some gathered in the reception room to watch Hermine Glaser's slides of self-discovery; many sat outside the bistro, enjoying the evening in good company.

Second Full Day

Saturday morning was taken up with reporting on workshops, as insights were noted on a large-scale, brown-paper stool. Nancy described all the contributions to the growing "case statement," with its supportive documentation of the case for Grail support -- a major resource for the development specialist in her efforts to build financial support for the Grail.

"Make new friends but keep the old...one is silver and the other gold" went 'round the room as participants circled with silver and gold Hershey's kisses, and with a shared wish to turn

these into financial resources for the Grail.

National Grail business items were presented by three teams. The Participation Team helped the group celebrate the more than 20 women currently in Grail participation process groups. The Connections Team asked for recommendations of new team members, since Marian's term will be ending at December's Lateral Sharing Group Meeting. The Link Team reminded participants about the progress of the "properties time-line" approved by the General Assembly.

Saturday afternoon was taken up by International Business. The US International team out-lined a three-stage process culminating in the International General Assembly. Before Stage I ends in October, information will be collected through an assessment questionnaire done in all Grail countries. Stage II, extending from November to February, will focus on reflection materials serving as the basis for IGA proposals, and will include the nomination of delegates as well as candidates for the International Presidency Team. Stage III, extending to the IGA, will include the review of proposals and the briefing of delegates. The IGA itself (July 7-17, 1993) will focus on mission and strategy. Themes of the IGA, US International Team members pointed out, are remarkably congruent with current emphases within the US Grail: building justice and solidarity, facing cultural changes, and contributing to the survival of the planet.

"Saturday night at the movies" featured old Grail films from Australia (narrated by Caress Cranwell), from Holland and Germany (narrated by Lenie Schaareman), and from Dodridge Farm (narrated by Catherine Leahy and Janet Kalven). Sharon Tompson narrated a video on the making of "Discoveries" for late-night movie-goers.

The Closing

Sunday morning's session opened with a report from Trina Paulus about the Rio Earth Summit, and from Grace McGinness about plans for follow-up to the NET-LINK issue on families (Grail women will report to the IGA the result of reflection and other efforts happening between now and then).

Marga named the last question to be dealt with at the National Meeting, ie Where will the development program go from this point onward? Nancy showed participants the case statement binder, and spoke of all the efforts of teams and individuals to gather the information needed to make a substantial resource document. She then called forward team representatives to name some of what they see as development needs. What did they name?

* US International Team: staff people for administration and programing nationally and internationally.

* Religious Forum: financial support for annual gatherings

* Link Team: work on a strategy that links our places with our people and our finances

* Liberation Task Force: money to support the women who have a passion for needed economic and political analysis

* Archives: money to support a part-time archivist to rescue the films and the photos; money for a place where she could work

* Unified Program Planning: funds for staff support and for Grail member presence

* Grailville: long-term staff and more housing for staff

* Philadelphia: more young people, more time and energy

* Cornwall: pages of needs (!): most immediate is a solar greenhouse ($10,000); staff housing for an inter-generational community; two more program staff

* Louisiana: help with out-reach and with programs

To ground these dreams in the concrete mechanics of the development program, June presented a time-line for the rest of this year. Elements include setting up systems for the development office, setting fund-raising goals for the next six months, obtaining fund-raising software, meeting with Grail teams and regions, attending major Grail programs and meetings, working on public relations materials and finalizing financial plans for 1993. In her role as development specialist, June will report to the Connections Team and the Link Team; and on a day-to-day basis will relate to Nancy Hennessy Cooney for the Connections Team and Beth Wasmer for the Link Team.

Hopes and dreams written down by individuals were collected in a basket and ceremoniously honored, while "affirmations" of support for the development program were shouted by the group assembled.

A Sunday morning "prayer for strength and gladness" in the oratory began with "Every time I feel the Spirit...." During readings from III Kings, participants shared "journey cakes," and then formed a circle of solidarity, and shared "the cup of gladness." Each person left the oratory -- and the National Meeting -- carrying with her a "flower of commitment."