



Message from the President of the USA Chapter of the IAML



Happy Birthday to us! Believe it or not, the USA Chapter is 20 years old.

This year, we are going to have our meeting in Boston, Massachusetts, which, incidentally, is where the international organization had its original meeting. Some great continuing legal education is planned (dealing with understanding and interacting with the Muslim world), as well as what I hope will be some very memorable and entertaining events. Mark your calendars for Boston. The meeting will be held between June 4, 2008, and June 7, 2008, and I promise you will have a terrific time. All of you will be receiving registration forms and other information regarding the meeting within the next few weeks.

In the "Great Memories Department," let me simply say that those of you who missed the last few meetings missed some simply unbelievable events. Russia, like China, Poland, Greece and Washington D.C. before it, was incredible. I have long been a believer that it is not where you go, but who is in charge and what you do after you get there. The people in this organization have some huge egos and mind boggling contacts that they use to their advantage in setting up these meetings. The events we were privileged to attend at each of these locations were events none of us could have scheduled on our own.

As a member of this organization, there is a simple rule you should follow: If people like Don Sasser, Tom Stabile, Cheryl Hepfer, David Salter, Jackie Leong, or Haroula Constandinidou are in charge of the meeting, just go. Regardless of where they are going, you are going to have a spectacular time, and you are going to travel with a lot of smart, interesting and delightful people. The Fellows in this organization (along with their spouses, children and significant others) are truly the best travel companions you could ever hope to have.

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FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE

by Suzanne Harris

When I decided to attend the IAML's Annual Meeting in St. Petersburg and then the added overnight train trip to Moscow, I knew Russia had changed from the tales from the Soviet era I heard as a teenager and young adult. I

knew that McDonald's had opened there in the early '90's and that perestroika meant, ultimately, that communism and its grim realities for everyday life had necessarily changed the country. But nothing could have prepared me for what we saw in Russia, what we observed of the Russian people, their culture and their spirit and the "on-fire" Russian economy. This is for those of you who missed the trip (too bad for you) and for those of you who wish to daydream with me on this re-visiting of some of the trip's highlights.

For the meeting, we were lodged in the heart of St. Petersburg, at the Kempenski Moika, on one of the city's canals and within a stone's throw of the Hermitage and the Neva River. We were introduced to the fabulous city from a boat tour on its waterways. St. Petersburg is an architectural gem, full of atmospheric buildings, canals and bridges. We had our own private guides through some of the wonders of the Hermitage with passes to return at will to look again, and at more.

In the neighboring town of Pushkin, we visited the Catherine Palace on day two of the meeting. This palace was one of two official summer residences of the czars outside St. Petersburg. It was built in the 1700's and is spectacular—a mesmerizing display of gold leaf and massive mirrors in the throne room. The incredible restored Amber Room in the palace is made of 6 tons of precious amber from the Baltic. The Palace was destroyed during World War II, when the Nazi army took over the Catherine Palace during the siege of Leningrad (what St. Petersburg was called then). Not only did 200,000 city residents die during the blockade, some by the 900 days of constant shelling of the city and many more by starvation, but also countless works of art were destroyed or looted, including those of the legendary Amber Room. The Nazis plundered the amber panels, which have since disappeared. The Catherine Palace today is a magnificent restoration of its former grandeur, including a replica of the Amber Room itself, which alone cost over \$11 million.



Across the Neva from our Hotel is Petrograd, where Peter the Great's desire to Westernize Russia began when he took the area that would become St. Petersburg in a war with Sweden. In Petrograd, we toured the Peter and Paul Cathedral, a golden spired sanctuary where the Romanovs are buried. After learning more about the Romanovs than most of us know

Planning for the future, you will have your choice of any number of fabulous meetings. Boston, of course, should be at the top of your list, and I sincerely hope I will see you all there. If I was in your position, regardless of what happens, I would not miss the next extravaganza being planned by Don Sasser to Capetown, South Africa on September 3 through 7th of 2008. I have travelled to a lot of fabulous places in the world (mostly with this group), but my only other trip to Africa was in a class by itself. The animals are wonderful, but the people you will meet—Wow! They do not live in a different world than us, they live in a different universe. Do not miss this and the other wonderful opportunities that are available to you through this wonderful organization.

Edward J. Thomas
IAML President
USA Chapter



Russian post-wedding



Laila and Steve Kolodny



Sally Oldham and Arnold Rutkin

about the Presidents of the United States, we experienced an aural miracle; seated in a small, underground chapel, we listened to an incredible performance by the male choir of St. Petersburg's Russian "throat singers." Stepping out into the daylight again, and at almost every major monument and palace we visited throughout our stay, we witnessed the Russian post-wedding ritual of brides and grooms being photographed in all their finery. They seemed to be living proof of the young Russian spirit, which is likely as strong as the spirit of their forebears.



The grounds are replete with spectacular fountains and extensive gardens.

Our visit to St. Petersburg closed with a memorable event—the Third Annual Audrey Ducroux Memorial Lecture presented by Lord Justice Alan Ward, Court of Appeal, London, and spouse of IAML Fellow Lady Helen Ward, a partner in the Manches firm. Lord Justice Ward spoke of his and Lady Ward's long friendship with Audrey Ducroux, of his own life's history, including his service in the Mandela law firm in Johannesburg in the days of apartheid and his eventual departure from South Africa to embark upon what has been a distinguished career in the law in England. His presentation included a brilliant analysis of the absolute lack of legal underpinnings for the war in Iraq, an analysis I would hope could be shared at some point with our lawmakers here in the United States.

Our closing evening in St. Petersburg was a gala dinner in the Yusupov Palace, where we were served cocktails, then dinner, by staff in period costumes. The Yusupov family who lived here until they fled in the 1917 revolution, enjoyed such exoticism as a Moorish gentleman's bath and boudoir and a miniature gilded home theater modeled after the famed Mariinsky Theater, home of the Kirov ballet company. Before dinner we were entertained by the best musical talent the City has to offer and an after-dinner performance of excerpts from the ballet Swan Lake in the 19th century home theater. The Palace is historically significant as the site of the murder of Rasputin by members of the Yusupov family, who poisoned him at dinner, then lured him into the cellar and shot him and finally threw his body into the Neva.

That evening, we boarded the overnight train to Moscow, that dizzyingly expensive city which has become all about money, money, money. What was once GUM Department Store is now a stylish mall with stores of Dior, Jo Malone and every other fashion icon of the world today. It outdoes Rodeo Drive on its own terms. The traffic in the city is unbearable, but the skies are clear and clean. Designer vodkas are served to sable-clad Russian beauties and Armani suited men. They are enjoying their incredible prosperity as could only a people who have lived with scarcity and the memories of all that. Yes, yes . . . we saw the Kremlin and Red Square and the Armory with all the jewels and the Faberge eggs. Yes, we saw the Czar Cannon and visited St. Basil's Cathedral and the Cemetery and the Subway stations. We saw it all and loved it and want to return!

On Friday it was off across a stretch of the Baltic by hydrofoil to Peterhof, a suburb of the city where wealthy Russians (including Putin) have their dachas. Peterhof was the czars' other official summer retreat. It was built by Peter the Great and enlarged by each successive czar. Destroyed during WW II during shelling by the Soviet army trying to force out the Nazis, it is still undergoing reconstruction but is splendid.



Robert Arenstein and Nancy Stokes

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About IAML

Membership of the IAML is by invitation only. Lawyers who are interested in joining the Academy are asked to submit information about their legal practice, and must satisfy established criteria for membership to obtain the approval of both the US Board of Admissions, and the main Board of Admissions. The process is a rigorous one, designed to ensure that the very high level of expertise within the Academy is maintained.

Existing fellows are encouraged to apply for judicial fellowship on appointment to the bench, or for non-practicing fellowship on retirement. The experience and authority which these fellows bring to the Academy is highly valued, and they make a significant contribution to Academy meetings.



Editor

Peter M. Walzer, Walzer & Melcher LLP

Woodland Hills, California

Board of Managers of the USA Chapter of the International Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers.

CALENDAR

European Chapter Meeting April 2-6 2008

04/02/2008 to 04/06/2008

Rome, Italy

USA Chapter Meeting June 4-7 2008

06/04/2008 to 06/07/2008

Boston, Massachusetts

Canadian Chapter Meeting June 4-7 2008

06/04/2008 to 06/07/2008

Boston, Massachusetts

AGM September 3-7 2008

09/03/2008 to 09/07/2008

Cape Town, South Africa

THE HAGUE CONVENTION TWO DECADES LATER:

by Robert Arenstein, arensteinlaw@aol.com

The Hague Convention of 25 October 1980 on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction is a multilateral treaty, which seeks to protect children from the harmful effects of abduction and retention across international boundaries by providing a procedure to bring about their prompt return.

The United States ratified the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, Oct. 25, 1980, T.I.A.S. No. 11,670 ("Hague Convention") on July 1, 1988. Congress implemented the Hague Convention by passing the International Child Abduction Remedies Act ("ICARA"). That Act sets forth the procedures applicable to handling actions brought in the United States pursuant to the Hague Convention.

As we proceed into 2008, it will be the 20th Anniversary of the ratification of the Hague Convention in the United States. It is important to educate the Bench and the Bar on the workings of the Convention. Hopefully, there will be many programs given on how the Hague Convention has been used successfully in this country. When this Convention first began, 21 countries had ratified or acceded to the treaty. On the eve of its 20th Birthday in America 80 countries have signed on to the treaty. This is a remarkable accomplishment.

ICARA was designed as a tool for the left-behind parent to obtain assistance from foreign governmental adjudicating authorities to locate the child and quickly determine where the custody hearings should take place. Under ICARA, the adjudicating tribunal does not have the authority to determine custody issues, unless one of the Convention's Article XIII defenses can be invoked. As such, potential conflicts are less likely because a Country Addressed is not empowered by ICARA to resolve custody disputes,

We are also celebrating another 20th Anniversary, the 20th Birthday of the USA Chapter of the IAML. From the idea of forming the IAML at the Pen and Pencil in London during the American Bar Association Meeting in 1985 to our Chapter today we celebrate the success of this organization and its Chapters. I will write more about our history in further articles.