

# INSPIRING WOMEN

*Women*  
**EMBRACING**  
*culture*

**Traditions  
Values  
Celebrations  
Stories  
Heroes**



**November 2023**

**Volume 7**

**Issue 4**



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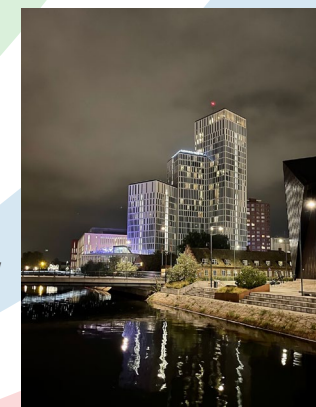
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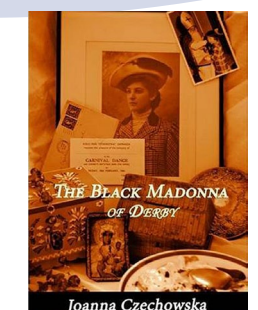
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### *photo feature*

#### *Inspiring Women Magazine: Through My Lens*

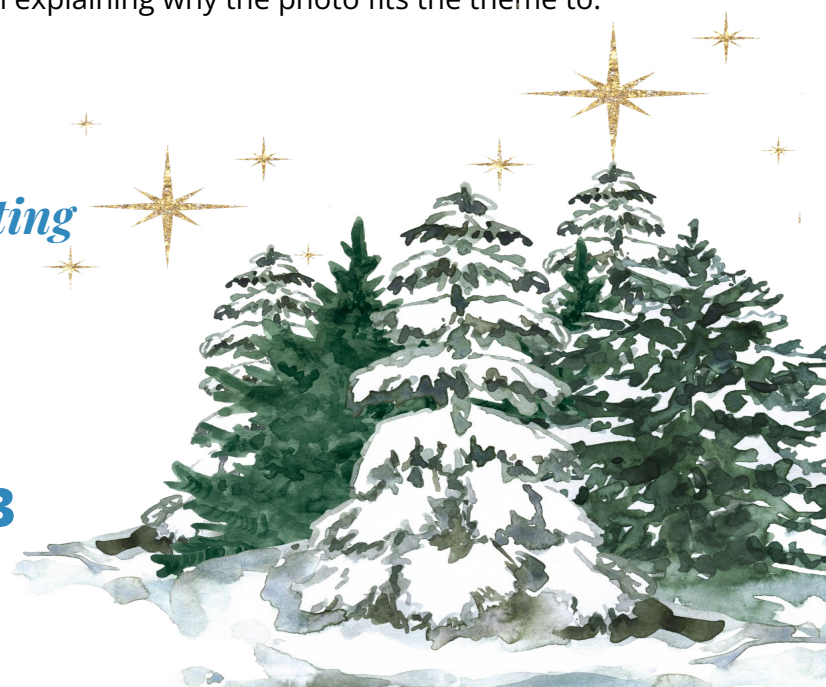
We are looking for your photos of friends, family or yourself that you think embody the next issue's theme of "Women and Democracy".

Photos should be in color and a minimum of 300 dpi. Send your photo with your name, FAWCO club and a maximum 50-word caption explaining why the photo fits the theme to:

[inspiringwomenfeatures@fawco.org](mailto:inspiringwomenfeatures@fawco.org)

*The deadline for submitting  
photos for our next  
issue is ...*

**December 7, 2023**



**"W**hen you learn something from people, or from a culture, you accept it as a gift, and it is your lifelong commitment to preserve it and build on it."

— Yo-Yo Ma

By my name alone, you would think my heritage is French. But you'd be wrong. My family is predominantly German. I grew up with Christmas celebrated on Christmas Eve and German potato salad as a feature of many family gatherings. We otherwise lived a very typical American life with little travel outside of our state and international travel defined as a 4-hour drive to Vancouver, Canada. Fast forward a few years and I marry a Dutch man (that's where the Hendrikse comes from). Over the next 30-plus years we've moved back and forth between the US, the Netherlands and Germany. We enjoyed secondments in Istanbul and Singapore and have traveled to around 50 countries.

Whenever I am planning a trip or move, one of the first things I look for are the local traditions, celebrations, foods, beverages, art, theater and music. Culture is what makes travel interesting and what defines a place. Once we are at our destination, we talk to locals. We ask them where they eat, what they suggest we do or see, where the locals hang out, where we find great live local music. Are there any festivals happening while we are there? We've been invited to the homes of some of these people for a meal and some have become close friends.

Living in an unfamiliar country is a little more complicated than simply visiting. It brings challenges and some awkward moments, like when the neighborhood kids came to our door on St. Martin's Day with their lanterns, singing and waiting for what? There are things to learn, like how birthdays are celebrated or is it your name day? Or, how do you properly greet someone - a handshake, a hug or one, two or three kisses? Sometimes there are interesting meals when, for example, you

### *a note from the editor*



don't know the Turkish word for liver. There are lovely surprises, like finding a vending machine at the end of your street where you can choose from a variety of large, super-fresh, long-stem rose bouquets for less than 20 Euros. These daily life events also make up the culture of a place.

I am thankful I had the AWC Amsterdam and Munich IWC for support and guidance when we lived in the Netherlands and Germany. I am equally thankful to be part of FAUSA because repatriating brings its own challenges. The inability of some friends and family to relate when you talk about the last-minute weekend trip you took to a Greek island is one example.

FAWCO and FAUSA keep me connected with my friends living around the world. I am thrilled to be part of the *Inspiring Women* team introducing you to just a few of the many women who are members of these amazing organizations.

*Best wishes!  
Michele*

[Inspiringwomen.editor@fawco.org](mailto:Inspiringwomen.editor@fawco.org)



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LAUNCH is an independent education consultancy and a Target Program Sponsor. Lauren Hensel, founder of LAUNCH, and Sara Bittner are members of AWC Amsterdam.

### The Pajama Company p. 23

The Pajama Company, founded by Ellie Badanes, FAUSA and AW Surrey, sells pajamas that are cozy, cheerful and available online!

### London & Capital p. 24 & 25

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London Realty Intl. is owned by AWC London member Lonnée Hamilton, who is a worldwide property consultant. Her firm works with the best agents across the globe to fulfill your property needs.

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The American School in England TASIS England is a leading international day and boarding school (ages 3-18) located 35 minutes from central London on a beautiful campus in Thorpe, Surrey.

### Tharien's Art p. 79

AWC Antwerp member and former Target Program Chair Tharien van Eck is a superb artist. She creates beautiful hand painted cards and prints. Proceeds from her cards continue to support education programs for Hope for Girls and Women Tanzania.

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## introducing this issue

When I think of how our origins color our views and values, I consider poop. Yes, that's correct, poop.

Where I'm from, we rarely talked about it and when we did it was in a very limited, clinical way. As I have traveled, I have a better understanding of why other nationalities and cultures have respect and, in fact, reverence for it.

For example:

I had the amazing good fortune of taking a Jeep trip in KwaZulu Natal, South Africa, with amazing guides who looked for, in addition to the typical tracks and footprints, animal manure. They explained that it was a very important marker in tracking animals. They said it was vital to be able to determine what animals had been there and how close they might be. This knowledge was essential to the trackers and the villagers' survival.

Fast forward to my time in Dubai. In the old town of Deira, there is a coffee museum where they have a complete history of all things coffee. Much to my surprise, the most prized coffee beans in the world, Kopi Luwak, come from the feces of civets. It's an expensive luxury coveted by elite coffee connoisseurs all over the world.

Those of us who travel and live in other countries have been best served by learning and respecting the culture of these places. Being open to their practices and traditions provides us with a much larger foundation to learn, live and enjoy. The ability to mix our home-based customs with those of countries we have visited or lived in gives us the possibility of a bit more happiness and a bit more joy.

The stories of the women profiled and featured in this issue are lovely tapestries that are woven with the threads of their histories and the cloth of the places they have visited or lived and thrived in. Some are proud to share their heritage with others, others have immersed themselves in the culture of their new homes. Some are stories of perseverance; others are a bit of "learning as you go along."

It seems fitting that as we head into the festive season, we celebrate our traditions and cultures. (Yes, there is a bit about food in this issue!) We hope you enjoy it. Perhaps you are inspired to add a new tradition next year?

Elsie  
Founder



# Becoming Culturally Agile

*Alexandra Popkova, AWC Bogotá, navigates South American culture without losing sight of her Russian identity.*



Alexandra Popkova

**I** was born in Vladivostok, the major port city in the Far East of Russia. Given its proximity to the Chinese border, Asian culture was a significant presence in my childhood. One of the most exciting activities I could enjoy as a kid when staying at my grandmother's place was going shopping at a Chinese market just across the street.

However, when I turned 10, my family made a big move across the country to Saint Petersburg. This relocation involved a 9-hour flight and meant a 7-hour time difference from my hometown. Upon starting at my new school there, I quickly realized that even though it was still within the same country, there were noticeable cultural differences. As a child, I believe I accepted these differences as a natural part of life and swiftly found ways to make new friends and integrate, a task that proved to be more challenging for my parents.

I was still in university when I decided to work abroad for a while. I began working with AIESEC, an international youth-run NGO that opened doors to exploring the world. My first choice was India, as I believed if I didn't try new and adventurous things now, then when would I? India turned out to be a life-changing experience filled with cherished memories and the addition of two close friends for life.

**"W**hen I feel free."  
Alexa and dance partner





Upon returning to Russia, I resumed my studies in Art History. However, after my second year, I realized something was missing. I couldn't quite see the practical application of my studies, or rather, I needed to witness a more concrete impact from my actions. Working with AIESEC was a perfect solution to finding that balance. While continuing my studies, I headed to Bahrain in the Middle East, where I worked in international recruitment and client success. This experience expanded my cultural horizons even further, making the concept of "normalcy" increasingly transparent.

After my adventures in the Middle East, I decided to venture to a new continent and applied for a position in Nicaragua, Central America. I was selected and offered a one-year contract, which seemed like the perfect way to explore a new location with a clear deadline in mind.

Nicaragua greeted me with a significant cultural clash, but I focused on my work and the opportunity to explore Latin America. During that time, I opened a new office in Honduras, traveled to Costa Rica and Panama, visited a friend's family in



page10  
Vladivostok, Russia, Main city square New Year's celebrations (top left)

Representing Bahrain at an international AIESEC Conference. Lebanon, 2013 (bottom left)

Representing Nicaragua at an international AIESEC Conference. Egypt, 2013 (bottom right)

Dressed as an Indian bride. India, 2011 (left)

In my home country, the prevailing logic is, "You've never taken a credit? That's amazing! Congratulations! It demonstrates your responsible financial planning and accountability. Would you like to have a credit card just in case, though? We're more than happy to offer you a \$5,000 credit limit along with numerous bonuses, cashbacks, and benefits if you use it! Our bank would be honored to have you as a valued client."

In contrast, here in Colombia, it's the exact opposite: "You don't have a credit history? It appears as though you don't exist. We're unsure if we can trust you. Oh, you wish to become a client of our bank? We'll need to conduct a comprehensive background check, including a letter from your employer. We'll need some time to go through this process before we can determine whether we can grant you a \$500 credit limit. Are there benefits from having a credit card with us? Not really. You should consider yourself fortunate if we decide to approve you as our client."

**What are the biggest challenges you have had to overcome adapting to your new country?**

Moving to a new country is always filled with uncertainty and stress, including logistics, learning a new language, creating a new social circle, dealing with unfamiliar bureaucracy, reinventing yourself, and trying to adapt to a new culture without losing yourself. All of this is just a glimpse of any expat experience. I believe the most challenging transition for me was in Nicaragua. I wouldn't be exaggerating if I said that Russian culture is about as different as you can get from Nicaraguan culture.

Here are some examples of Russian vs. Nicaraguan culture:

- Saying what you mean vs. formulating what you want to say, which may not reflect what you're actually thinking.

El Salvador, celebrated New Year's in Ecuador, and attended an international conference in Mexico. By the end of that year, I was content with my experiences and ready to move on – or so I thought.

Life had different plans in store for me! Little did I know that I had already met my future husband during a salsa night out. How can a single night of dancing change the course of your life? Well, it did for me. We started a year-long, long-distance relationship with a 9-hour time difference, all while I was completing my university degree. Eventually, I made the decision to return to Nicaragua to see where this relationship would lead me.

As it turns out, it led me to marriage and a career in organizational development and executive coaching.

**What was something about your new country that you were not expecting?**

The significance of your credit history is something that stands out in Colombia. Many services in the country are heavily dependent on your credit history. Even if you have a substantial amount of cash, it may not be sufficient to accomplish certain tasks. This reflects a strikingly different approach to banking and consumer behavior compared to Russia.



- Saying "NO" if you disagree vs. saying "YES" or "MAYBE" to avoid conflict at the moment and then ignoring the situation.
- Deepening a relationship by addressing the conflict vs. avoiding the conflict all along.
- No small talk vs. small talk being the cornerstone of building human relationships.
- Being goal-oriented and ambitious vs. going with the flow, enjoying the present, and savoring life.
- Planning ahead, thinking long-term, and being strategic vs. going with the flow and focusing on the short term.
- An individualistic mindset vs. a family-oriented culture.



Add to that the fact that I didn't speak any Spanish when I first moved there. So not only did I stand out anywhere I went as an extremely tall, peculiar-looking "gringa" lady, but I also couldn't communicate without someone else's help. Back then, Google Translate wasn't even an option. In the local culture, anything unfamiliar tends to create discomfort because you don't know how to handle it. Dealing with a certain level of discomfort requires maturity and curiosity, which are not always common traits among Nicaraguan people. My cultural integration was filled with drama and misunderstandings. I was expected to behave like a Nicaraguan woman, and when I failed to do so, I was simply ignored.

Over the years, after working there and marrying my husband, and consequently learning how to navigate not only social and corporate but also family dynamics, I've curated a new Latin version of myself. I've become culturally agile, able to adapt in the moment without feeling like I'm losing my identity. Looking back, I believe going through all those ups and downs on my own wasn't the best decision. I wish there had been someone to



support me through this journey, guiding me and saving me so much time and tears.

My transition to Colombia was significantly easier, thanks to several factors. Firstly, I had already spent five years in Latin America, where I married a Nicaraguan, and my best friend happened to be from El Salvador. Moving to Bogotá felt like a natural progression; being a large city, it was more culturally diverse and open-minded, which made the transition smoother.

Since it was still in a Latin American country, I already had some familiarity with how things worked. I did need to make some adjustments, though, like adapting my *Nicañol* to Colombian

Spanish in terms of slang, understanding different regional accents within the country, and learning local equivalents for words I had been using before.

***Did anyone help you to feel included in your new country? If so, how? How do you help newcomers to adapt and feel included?***

Before we left Nicaragua and I accepted my job offer in Colombia, my husband reached out to an acquaintance from his school days. She had married a Colombian and moved there a few years earlier. She became our guardian angel and guide once we arrived in Colombia. She generously offered us invaluable advice on navigating daily life, including seemingly basic things like where to find good bread and where not to buy cleaning products.

About a month after our move, she invited us to celebrate our first Christmas with her family and introduced us to their circle of friends. She truly became our guardian angel, smoothing our transition into this new reality. She played a crucial role in ensuring we didn't feel alone and helped us integrate smoothly into Colombian customs - a task we wouldn't have been able to accomplish on our own.

My own experience and the stories I've heard from fellow expats have led me to connect my professional background in training, coaching, and leadership development with my personal story of living abroad. Now, I offer the support to others that I wished I had had years ago. I work in a one-on-one coaching setting, empowering my clients to navigate uncertainty

and complexity in life and business, while minimizing the drama and maximizing the joy on their expat journey. I complement this one-on-one work with "The Dis\_Connected Events" spaces I've designed specifically for internationals to disconnect from the daily hustle of Bogotá and connect with what's important: themselves and the community.

The idea came to me after the pandemic and a six-month-long lockdown in Bogotá, right after I'd moved

here. Being stuck at home in a new country with no friends wasn't the most cheerful experience. Quickly, I realized that I wasn't alone in this, and the pain was shared. So, I decided to come up with a solution - "The Dis\_Connected Events." I organize gatherings in



Dis\_Connected retreats (page 12)

Dis\_Connected Self-defense class Colombia 2023 (page 13, top)

Dis\_Connected Christmas Dinner 2022 (page 13, bottom)





the city, such as dinners and wine tastings, as well as longer wellness retreats outside of Bogotá where I provide tools and resources to help participants navigate their expat journey with more joy and less drama. I address the top challenges faced by expats: I ensure these spaces are facilitated in English, breaking the language barrier, and I maintain the quality of activities and professionals I collaborate with. Plus, it's a space to make new friends and connect over your international life journeys. This mix is a rare find!

**What is the most unusual cultural tradition you have encountered?**

*La Novena!* A month after we moved to Colombia, our local friends invited us to join them for *La Novena*, a traditional gathering of friends before Christmas. They told us we would enjoy traditional Christmas delights like *lechona* and *buñuelos*, and have some drinks together. It was a Saturday night, and we arrived at the party around 8 pm. It started as a typical Latin get-together, with people socializing, having fun, and enjoying some drinks. Around 1:00 a.m., when many of the guests were already quite "happy" from all the *aguardiente*, the hosts suddenly stopped the music. They



brought a huge bag into the living room and silently invited everyone to see what was inside. The bag was filled with traditional Colombian instruments, some of which looked like toys, while others were more sophisticated. Excitement filled the room as everyone chose an instrument.

We then formed a circle around the nativity scene, and the hosts handed out small brochures. My husband and I were quite puzzled, but it seemed like everyone else knew exactly what to do. The room fell silent as the host began the first prayer. Everyone followed along, singing and playing the instruments. This continued for about 30 minutes, after which all the brochures and instruments were placed back into the bag. Reggaeton music resumed, and it was as if the interruption hadn't happened.

The abrupt change in the party dynamic left us speechless. Later on, we learned that this was a part of *La Novena*. In Colombia, during the nine days leading up to Christmas Eve, families and friends come together to eat, pray, and sing *villancicos*.

**What advice would you give to someone else planning to embark on their own move to a new country?**

Know that your transition to a new country won't turn out exactly as you've imagined. That's okay. Take a deep breath.

While you can't possibly be 100% prepared for every situation, focus on what makes you feel stable and reasonably ready. If you're moving because of your job, don't hesitate to take more of your manager's and support group's time. Ask all those "silly" questions about taxes, logistics, apartment rentals, and so on. Don't settle for a "Don't worry! We'll figure it out once you're there" response. Join Facebook expat groups, explore forums (e.g. InterNations), dig into previous posts, and don't hold back on asking your questions.

Here's a personal tip: ask fellow expats, "What do you wish you had known before moving to this country? What came as a surprise? What do you wish you had been better prepared for?" This can open up space for others to share their challenges, which might be more helpful than specific answers to your questions. Sometimes, when you've never lived in a particular country, you just don't know what the "right" question is to ask.

Once you're there and inevitably going through the classic four stages of cultural adaptation (Honeymoon, Crisis, Recovery, and Adjustment), make an effort to build a new support network in your new surroundings and don't hesitate to ask for



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Three generations of women in Alexa's family (top)

Halloween, 2021. Alexa as Mexican Catrina and husband as Camilo, famous Colombian singer (bottom)

Christmas Eve, 2018. Alexa and her Nicaraguan family (left)



help. You don't have to be a superhero and go through the crisis stage all on your own. If needed, consider seeking professional coaching support to help you navigate the transition between stages and reach the adjustment phase more smoothly and effectively.

**Tell us something interesting about yourself that not many people know.**

I humbly say that I can dance salsa and bachata better than 90% of Latinas. It gives me an incredible sense of absolute freedom and self-expression, and it's something I'm truly passionate about.

**What's your favorite cultural tradition (past or current)?**

As my husband and I come from vastly different traditions when it comes to celebrating the New Year and Christmas, we had to make a decision. Fortunately, it was a pretty straightforward one. You see, in Latin America, Christmas takes the cake as the big holiday of the year. And guess what's the star holiday in Russia? New Year's! So, we've struck a balance: we celebrate Christmas the way my partner's used to in Nicaragua, spicing it up with some newly acquired Colombian customs, thanks to our local friends. But when it comes to New Year's, we go full-on "Russian mode."

December 31<sup>st</sup> is THE day of the year in Russia. You spend the whole day cooking, watch the same old-school Soviet movies like it's a ritual, then sit down with the entire family for a marathon dinner that magically turns into your January 1<sup>st</sup> breakfast and, depending on your culinary creativity, feeds you for the first week of the year. You cheer with a glass of champagne at midnight and prepare for an entire week of official vacations. The best part? You don't even have to use your vacation days – the government gives you the whole week off!

Can you feel how essential New Year's Eve is for Russians? I was definitely not ready to trade all this fun for Catholic Christmas! Although I truly miss that holiday spirit in the air during this time of the year, and having to return to work on January 2<sup>nd</sup> doesn't make it any easier, I've done my best to keep the festive vibes alive within our home. We go shopping, stock up on mayo, potatoes, cabbage, and beetroot.

Over the years, I've not only kept this tradition alive but also taught my husband all the New Year's recipes. Now, I celebrate my success by lounging on the couch, watching Christmas comedies, sipping champagne, and occasionally giving my husband a hand in the kitchen as he tries to master his Russian culinary skills with *salat olive*, eggplant rolls with eggs, spring and *vinegret* salads.

**What is your guiltiest pleasure?**

Well, I have to admit, I enjoy the bones of the meat. T-bone steak is the best! AND I also love to travel! Thirty-nine countries on my list and counting! Quite a combo, right?



Alexa, her husband and a llama, around Bogotá 2022

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# The Cultural Melting Pot

*Usha Codur's motto for embracing new cultures? This member of Heidelberg IWC says, "You must involve yourself to evolve."*



Usha Codur

**I** was born in Warangal, South India. I spent a happy childhood there with my father, mother and younger sister, traveling often to Hyderabad to visit my grandparents. Hyderabad, known as the "City of Pearls," was my first exposure to big city life.

Unfortunately, my father's life was cut short when I was just six years old due to prostate cancer. This early loss had a deep impact on me. My mother became our only bread winner and my inspiration in many ways, teaching us resilience and strength. Both my grandmothers also played pivotal roles, including helping us to nurture relationships.

I completed a degree in Commerce in 1989, and then moved to Delhi (northern India). I stayed in the Defence Colony, an upscale Delhi neighborhood where current and members of the retired Indian Armed Forces resided, with my maternal grandfather's family. My grandfather, who had obtained his Master's at Oxford, had a major influence in developing my social skills, gratitude and personal image. He used to take me to his office gatherings and work trips, mingling with many industry executives. I quickly learned how to dress elegantly and network, improving my confidence. My grandfather also gave me my very own typewriter. I then typed up his meeting notes, research thesis and official correspondence, getting pocket money for every assignment and polishing my technical and soft skills.

**M**emorial Day  
Usha visiting  
her sister  
in the US.





I began my career as a computer programmer. As the only woman in the office at the time, it was quite a challenge. However, I was determined to excel. I entered an arranged marriage in 1992, with my grandmother playing a crucial role in bringing our families together.

After marriage, my husband's job led us to live in various places in India. We initially started our life together in a small place in Andhra Pradesh and then moved to Sonadih, Chhattisgarh, a township for Tata Steel employees. Here, I began my journey of teaching and community service, especially among tribal communities.

Later, in 2002, we moved to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, where I worked as a school teacher at an international school. Working there gave me the opportunity to meet, share and learn from children of the world and my amazing peers, opening my mind to different cultures. After living in Malaysia for 14 years, we embarked on an adventure, moving to Lyon, France, and eventually to Heidelberg, Germany, where we currently reside.

**What preparations, if any, did you make before moving to your new country? For example, did you learn the language or study up on the culture? Tell us how you did it.**

My approach to moving to new countries has always been one of open-mindedness and flexibility. I never made any specific mental preparations before relocating. I believe that part of adapting is being like a river, flowing with new zeal and enthusiasm without any qualms, to a new environment. Learning the basics of the language and immersing myself in the culture came organically as I interacted with people at work and local shops. I find that watching movies, meeting people, and making use of the local library and gym are excellent ways to learn about a new place.

Representing India and Indian culture in Lyon's annual "Fête des Bannières du Monde" or International Flag Festival. (top)

Meeting with an international women's group in Lyon. (bottom)



Celebrating at home with friends.

**Tell us about your arrival. Was there anything you immediately noticed that was different from your home country?**

We arrived in Germany filled with excitement and curiosity. It was in mid-November, and I was eager to experience a European winter and its fashion, something I had always admired. This move also took place at the early stages of my menopause – so the cool climate was perfect for my body! While many people tended to wear black and gray during this season, I enjoyed mixing colors and incorporating ethnic pieces into my winter outfits. My image and sense of fashion have been greatly influenced by the places I've lived.

One immediate observation was the reserved nature of Germans, which taught me to be more patient with people. However, I firmly believe that a smile is a universal language and a bridge to connect with people from different backgrounds.

**Did anyone help you to feel included in your new country? If so, how? How do you help newcomers to adapt and feel included?**

In Lyon, France, a family friend, Joellie, played a crucial role in helping me to adapt. Additionally, our husbands' company organized cultural integration sessions that provided valuable information on various aspects of life in France, from lifestyle and finance to housing and health. I felt privileged to have access to such resources, and I realized the importance of employers offering such support.

To help newcomers adapt and feel included, I always strive to be warm and welcoming. There

is a comfort curve to overcome, so I reassure people that they are not alone, and that the initial adjustment period is a natural part of the process. I encourage newcomers not to be afraid to ask questions, reach out to their neighbours, utilize the internet for information, and learn the basics of the language. Volunteering within the neighborhood community can also be an excellent way to connect and establish a sense of belonging. It typically takes about 3–6 months to find one's bearings in the local way of life. My personal motto is "You must involve yourself to evolve."

**What are the biggest challenges you had to overcome in adapting to your new country?**

Adapting to a new country is a transformative journey that requires reorientation. A significant challenge I faced was the feeling of losing one's identity, especially when moving with a partner and leaving behind a familiar routine, work, people and places. Socially, it can be hard to feel accepted and find a sense of belonging within a new local community.

In Germany, finding a rental property proved to be one of the toughest aspects of our move. We initially stayed in a hotel for six months before securing our first place. As newcomers, it was difficult to establish positive relationships with landlords due to cultural differences and a lack of local connections. Finding the ideal location, managing finances, and other logistical issues added to the complexity. During this time, I also grappled with homesickness, compounded by the loss of my mother that year. Despite these obstacles, we persevered and found a suitable house.



**How have you embraced your new culture? Is there something you can tell us about your new culture that makes you happy?**

Germany's culture is a captivating blend of tradition and modernity. The German language, with its intricate grammar, has been both fun and frustrating to learn. The country's well connected and easy-to-understand transport system makes navigating independently a breeze. Living in Heidelberg, one of Germany's most beautiful cities, has been a joy. It boasts a romantic old town with cobblestone streets, and is considered a center for literature, inspiring many poets and artists. Its architecture and time-honored traditions have influenced me significantly.

**What is the cultural tradition you have encountered that you admire most?**

Among the cultures I've encountered, Malaysia stands out as a favorite. Its multicultural society is exemplified by a mosque, a Hindu temple and a church sharing a street together in harmony. The vibrant Thaipusam procession at the Batu Caves, where people of different backgrounds come together, also left a lasting impression.

**What advice would you give to someone else planning to embark on their own move to a new country?**

For anyone planning to move to a new country, I offer the following advice: communicate openly and don't make assumptions. Be patient, adaptable and willing to embrace change. Step out of your comfort zone. Research extensively, accept differences, and don't be afraid. Meeting new people can be grueling, especially for introverts, but it's essential to overcome that feeling and evolve through social interactions. I always tell people to honor the place and respect its uniqueness.

**Where is the most beautiful place in the world you have been? What made it so special?**

The most beautiful place I've had the privilege to visit is Marrakech, Morocco, a visit my husband planned for my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration. The perfect blend of Moroccan courtesy, traditions, vibrant colors, and unmatched hospitality of the local people made it so special. During my stay, I had the unique opportunity to ride a charming chariot and dance through the bustling streets of Marrakech, immersing myself in the city's enchanting atmosphere. I enjoyed it to my core.

**What is your guiltiest pleasure?**

Despite my strict dietary habits, my guiltiest pleasure is indulging in *mirchi bhajis*, spicy Indian fritters made with banana peppers. I'm usually in tears and sweating whilst eating them because of the heat; however, that is what makes the experience both memorable and enjoyable. Life, at times, can be like savoring these spicy treats – a bit challenging but ultimately worth the journey.

My life's journey has been a tapestry of experiences, from childhood in India to adapting to diverse cultures in Asia and throughout Europe, all of which have shaped me into the resilient and culturally enriched person I am today.

Posing with elephants in Serengeti Park.  
Hodenhagen Germany, 2021



Dancing with Turkish representatives during Lyon's flag festival.



Usha with her son and husband



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Ellie Badanes, AW Surrey and FAUSA Member.  
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US DOMESTIC INSTITUTIONS EXITING INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS

US Citizens living abroad have a whole host of challenges when managing their financial lives. As you will be aware, the US tax on citizenship rather than residency and as such Americans living overseas must declare their global income and gains to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

WHAT’S THE CHANGE?

Over the last few years many of the larger US banks have started to simplify their US operations by rejecting business from foreign US persons. In addition to new business, they are also asking current clients to find alternatives.

WHY?

Ordinarily everyone expects this to be a Foreign Account Tax Compliant Act (FATCA) issue, surprisingly it’s not. FATCA, passed in 2010, focuses on the foreign account of US individuals abroad.

The main drivers for this are risk and compliance.

In addition to the usual bank procedures in the US, for foreign clients the banks will have extended money laundering rules, local country tax rules and potential legal ramifications. With the percentage of overseas clients being so small, many banks have taken the view that this isn’t a worthwhile risk and have closed down their operations.

From our experience, Americans living overseas are finding it increasingly difficult to manage accounts held in the US and find themselves in the situation whereby UK domestic financial institutions are also closing the door.

WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS?

For clients still holding these accounts, this could be a looming problem with possible exit on the cards for the future.

SO, WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

OPTION 1

Hold tight – If your US bank hasn’t asked you to leave yet, it may be coming up. The first and simple option is to leave everything as is and wait to see until and if this happens. The biggest problem here is timing. Part of building a solid financial plan is the ability to control the timing of moving assets and crystallising gains and losses. Clients, essentially, don’t want to be forced to sell out of the markets at the wrong time. Control and management around these decisions, with the support of your wealth manager is fundamental.

OPTION 2

Put together a plan and move now – We have a dedicated team at London & Capital who are available to speak through your options and see if there is an opportunity to move custodian at your own pace. Contact Jenny Judd at [jenny.judd@londonandcapital.com](mailto:jenny.judd@londonandcapital.com) for questions on any of these issues you may face.

*Click here for more information.*

TAX & INVESTING  
FOR INTERNATIONAL  
AMERICANS

JENNY JUDD  
Executive Director  
US Family Office  
  
T: +44 20 7396 3225  
E: [Jenny.Judd@londonandcapital.com](mailto:Jenny.Judd@londonandcapital.com)



KRISTIN SCHAEFER  
Head of Relationship  
Management  
  
T: +44 207 396 3315  
E: [Kristin.Schaefer@londonandcapital.com](mailto:Kristin.Schaefer@londonandcapital.com)



At London & Capital we understand the importance of having a truly borderless financial outlook.

As a FAWCO Sponsored Resource since 2019, we have a specialist team working with clients to navigate the financial complexities that International Americans encounter. Jenny Judd & Kristin Schaefer at London & Capital, both of whom have over 20 years’ experience in wealth and asset management, would love to hear from you using the below contact details on any of these topics which may resonate with you.

- Tax basics for American persons living abroad.
- International planning and the top 5 things to consider as an American overseas.
- Your financial plan, creating a borderless strategy to meet your long-term objectives in a tax efficient manner.
- US domestic institutions exiting international business, what you should do to ensure your accounts are where they should be.

Jenny & Kristin will be attending the FAWCO interim meeting in Porto and are looking forward to meeting all guests. They would also like to extend the offer to share their experience over webinar style workshops for your individual clubs. If this is of interest, please reach out using the contact details above, next to their photos.

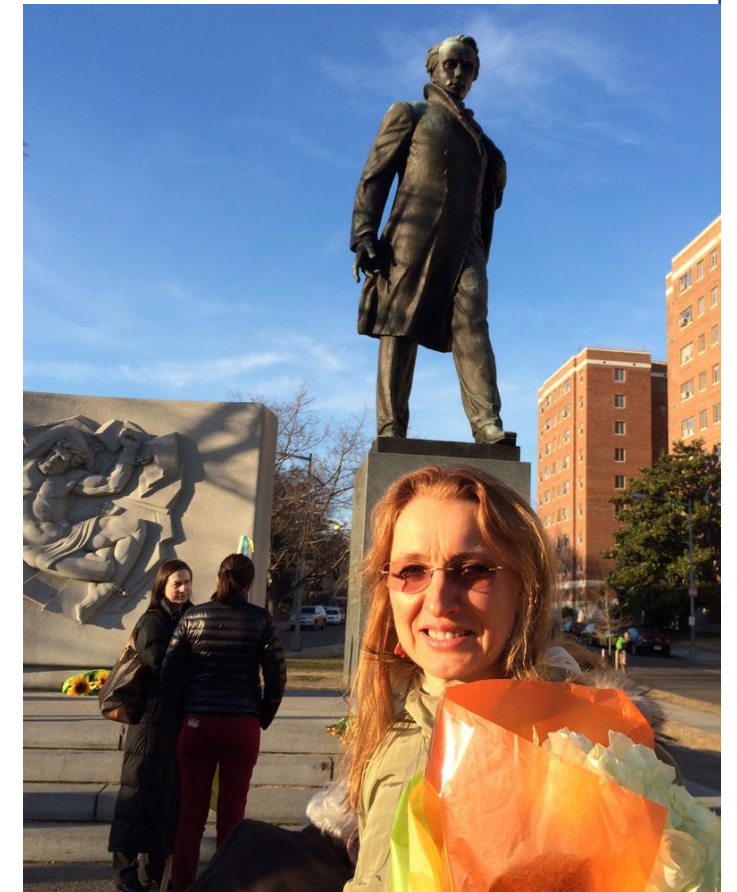
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# Ukrainian Art

*Svitlana Shiells was born in Ukraine, where she received a PhD in art history. She has taught at universities in Ukraine, America, and Austria and has presented her research focused on Central and East European modern art at numerous venues across the globe including Vienna's Albertina and Leopold Museums. In Vienna, where she currently lives, she is an independent scholar and a member of AWA Vienna where she also teaches yoga.*



Svitlana Shiells in front of Taras Shevchenko statue, Washington, DC

As an art historian, I have deep respect for all cultures and religions. Growing up in Ukraine, I was always extremely proud to be a Ukrainian. When I visited the USA at the end of 1990s as a graduate student, I was truly shocked that Americans who inquired about my origin responded to my reply "I am from Ukraine" with "Aha, from Russia." It was painful, because my self-identity was based on my knowledge of Ukrainian history, millennia-long culture and art. When I started to teach at American universities in the 2000s, I was the first to offer an academic course in the West entitled "History of Ukrainian and Russian Art" instead of the traditional "Russian Art." My frustration increased because in practically all textbooks on Russian history, Ukraine was never mentioned.

Kazimir Malevich – *Man in a Suprematist Landscape*



Malevich's *Man between a Cross and a Sword*



Page 29  
Ukrainian folk costumes (top)

Ukrainian embroidery  
inspiring *White on White*  
painting (bottom)

For instance, Ukraine's most noted avant-garde artist, Kazimir Malevich (1879-1935), was almost always presented as a Russian. Malevich was not just born in Ukraine, but also began his art studies there, kept close contacts with his Ukrainian family and colleagues, and cherished Ukrainian culture. He came from a humble family in the countryside around Kyiv. He spoke and wrote in Ukrainian, loved to sing Ukrainian songs, and was deeply fascinated by and knew Ukrainian folk culture well.

During the mid-1890s, Malevich started to study art. His teacher at the Kyiv Drawing School was Mykola Pymonenko, a famous Ukrainian realist painter. Developing his theory of Suprematism, a movement focused on the interaction of flat geometric forms and colors, Malevich closely cooperated with Ukrainian artists and analyzed Ukrainian folk art, especially embroidery, with its hundreds of styles and enormous variety of patterns. One of the most popular methods of Ukrainian embroidery is cross-stitching, which undoubtedly influenced Malevich's geometric fantasies.



Malevich's *Two Peasants*



Malevich's famous painting *White on White* (1918) was likely influenced by the "white on white" embroidery technique, which has been very popular in Ukraine. In this painting, a barely differentiated off-white square is superimposed on an off-white ground. Malevich's preoccupation with embroidery stems from his early exposure to Ukrainian patterns and symbols on peasant outfits, Ukrainian folk dolls, Easter eggs, and icon painting.

Malevich's paintings of the 1930s, such as the *Peasant Between a Cross and a Sword* (or *Running Man*), depict the realities of Soviet Ukraine during the 1932-33 Holodomor (man-made famine). One of the last photos of Malevich, taken with his third wife, Natalia, before his death from cancer in Leningrad, shows a Ukrainian "kylim," or woven carpet and a blanket, which he probably brought with him from Ukraine. The simplicity of design of Ukrainian carpets influenced a number of Malevich's works (*Red Cavalry*, 1932; *The Red House*, c.1930; *Composition 3*, 1932). His works



demonstrate again and again “that his hard-won skills as a sophisticated painter” were deeply rooted in Ukrainian experience.

Recently the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and many other major Western art museums have started to identify Malevich not as Russian but as a Ukrainian avant-garde master. It is clear that without understanding the role of Ukrainian folk culture in Malevich’s art, it is simply impossible to fathom the depth and supreme complexity of his artistic expression.



Ukrainian dolls (above)

Svitlana in front of the White House (right)

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# Coming in 2024!

*The Inspiring Women team is thrilled to announce our 2024 issues.*

## February 1, 2024 Women and Democracy

Democracy and all it entails - standing up for democracy, educating about democracy, running for office, service as an elected official, voting rights, international elections and so much more!

**Deadline for nominations:**  
**Monday, November 20, 2023**

## March 15, 2024 2023 Highlights

A look back at our favorite 2023 Profiles and Features. Our once-yearly printed issue distributed at the 2024 FAWCO Interim Meeting in Porto, Portugal.

## May 23, 2024 Women and the Written Word

Poets, authors, editors, educators, screenplay writers, composers, translators, book clubs and more!

**Deadline for nominations: Friday, March 22, 2024**

## September 19, 2024 Women Entrepreneurs

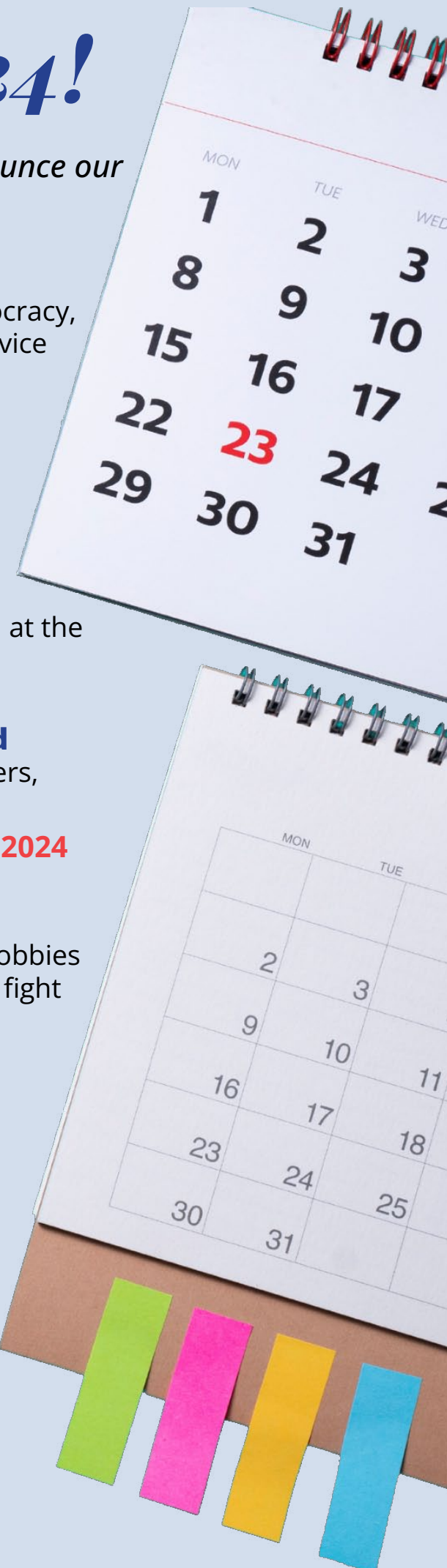
Including women running all sizes of businesses, hobbies turned into business, consultants and trainers, the fight for equal pay and multicultural/national issues.

**Deadline for nominations:**  
**Wednesday, May 29, 2024**

## November 21, 2024 The Family Connection

Family in the broadest sense of the word - immediate family, multi-generational families, adoptions, fostering, ancestry, sororities, clubs, long-distance connections and caring for family from afar, there are so many topics we could cover - we'll be looking to you to help us tell your story!

**Deadline for nominations:**  
**Thursday, September 26, 2024**





# Honoring the Best of America

*Roberta Enschedé, AWC The Hague, brings American culture to the Netherlands through shared history and common values.*



Roberta Enschedé

I grew up in Chicago, which is a very patriotic town. I love America – the mountains, the prairies, the oceans, the cornfields in August, the space, the people! There is so much to love about the United States.

I remember the daylong parades down Michigan Boulevard on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. I loved the flags and the bands and the majorettes. I always wanted to be one, but I was a bit of a klutz! My mother used to make my sister and me stand silently and face east at 11:00 a.m. on November 11. Then she would talk about Uncle Phil, her brother, who ran away, joined the US Army and spent his 16<sup>th</sup> birthday in France during WWI. She even wrote a poem about him. Thankfully, he survived. I visited many of the WWI and WWII sites. We can never forget that our freedom was not and is not free. When my husband and I travel in Europe, I make a point of finding American memorials.

The other thing that had a deep impact on me was de facto segregation. I remember African-American people and white people on the Chicago buses. You could feel how uncomfortable they were sitting next to each other. There were no Black salespeople in the big department stores. They usually did jobs like cleaning floors. I remember derogatory

**R**oberta attending an anti-gun demonstration at the American Consulate.







A Dutch treat - boating on the canal with husband, Ernst (above left)

Christmastime with Georgia Regnault (above right)



Greeting President Clinton (above left)

Celebrating Fourth of July during COVID-19 (above right)

talk about the Black Belt, the southside of Chicago, and the use of the N word. I absolutely hated it. I knew how wrong it was.

I also remember how hurtful people could be when they learned I was Jewish. I remember being called a Jew and being pushed down on the sidewalk. I remember teachers giving tests on the high holidays, the days Jewish kids had to stay home from school. I remember thinking that I wished I could be like other kids.

My childhood ended five days before my 16<sup>th</sup> birthday when my mother died. I didn't know how I would go on, but I did. There were no school counselors to talk to back then. I just had to figure it out myself. I was Jewish but not religious at all. Instead, I made up stories about the stars in the sky and how she was one of them, looking after me. I used to stare through the window in our front room and try to make sense of it all.

I went to the University of Illinois, transferred to Northwestern and graduated from the School of Speech (now the School of Communication) with a major in Theater. I stayed in Chicago for one year working with one of the first Improvisational Theatre Groups in the United States. Then I went to New York City (NYC) with \$50. I managed all kinds of jobs and continued studying acting for

seven years, including incredible classes with Uta Hagen at the Berghof Studio.

I never thought of myself as someone who would leave America to live in another country.

I returned to Chicago for a break from New York, managed to get a part in the *Threepenny Opera* and got a part-time job at International House at the University of Chicago. I also audited a couple of courses. One evening, I was sitting and reading a book. A fellow came over to me and said, "Hello, my name is Ernst, I come from Holland." He then walked away to continue playing chess with his Estonian friend. That was September. The following June we were married in the Chicago City Hall. In July, when he finished law school, we drove Route 66 from Chicago to Los Angeles. In August, we went to NYC, boarded the *Maasdam* from the Holland-America line and, after ten days at sea, docked in Rotterdam.

Our son was born in The Hague 2 ½ years later. He now lives in Washington, DC, where he practices law. I have two grown-up grandchildren and one 8-year-old (going on 25)! She has an opinion about everything. My husband is retired from his law practice, but does all kinds of volunteer legal work for many organizations here including the AWC and other American and Dutch organizations. He is also very active in the Leiden University alumni, plans

programs for his bridge club and plays a lot of bridge with Georgia Regnault, a former FAWCO President and very good friend. Our kids grew up together. My current life is pretty full. I would have it no other way.

***Tell us about your arrival. For example: What was your initial reaction? What was the first thing you did? How do you recall feeling that first week? Was there anything you immediately noticed that was different from your home country?***

We docked in Rotterdam. My husband's sister and her future husband picked us up in their tiny little Citroën. I used to call them "can opener cars"! I'd never seen anything quite like it. We drove from Rotterdam to Amsterdam, where we would temporarily be staying with in-laws I hadn't yet met. I remember thinking how small everything was – the highway (two lanes) and the buildings. Then there were the tiny shops they called "supermarkets" with no cereals for breakfast, only two kinds of ice cream - vanilla and coffee - and very little of each in the deep freeze. Furthermore, the coffee cups were so small - two sips and done! I missed my mugs.

The evening of our arrival, my husband took me to a hotel in the center of Amsterdam. It was an old hangout of his. We met one of his Leiden University friends, who greeted me by saying, "You better learn Dutch or no one will talk to you!" Welcome to Holland! I found out later that

this fellow was not known for his social graces. On the third day I was in Holland, my father-in-law took me to the site of the ancient Portuguese Synagogue, near the neighborhood where he was born and lived. There is a statue there called the *Dockworker*. When the Nazis started to deport the Jews, the dockworkers went on strike. We stood there and he told me about his Jewish friends. He named some of the ones who did not survive.

After that, I really wasn't interested in anything but walking the streets and asking myself: What would NYC be like if they took away all the Jews? To this day, every time I go to Amsterdam, I think about it. Living here, I am always aware of my Jewish heritage and want to say, "I am Jewish" for the thousands who did not live to say it.

***What was something about your new country that you were not expecting? What surprised you the most?***

For one thing, the size of the coffee cups and cutting chicken with a knife and eating with a fork in my left hand - that required some manipulation. The other thing that surprised and dismayed me was the August weather – rain and clouds and cold at a time I would always have been heading for the beach.





Roberta receiving autographed photo of herself with President Obama. (top left)

Celebrating the Fourth of July. (bottom left)

Amongst the Dutch tulip fields (page 37)



**If you have children, where did you send them to school? Tell us a bit about why you made that decision?**

I have one son. He went to Dutch schools until he was in eighth grade. He then transferred to the American School. His first language was English. We always spoke English at home except when Dutch kids came over to play. I gave him English lessons and he learned to read simultaneously in English and Dutch.

I took him out of the Dutch system because I felt it was holding him back. At the time, all that seemed to matter was test scores. He was even criticized by an English teacher for his American accent. At the American School, he was in all the school musicals, did track, played trumpet and participated in the Model UN. In his senior year, he was even chosen to be the Secretary-General. It could not have happened had I left him in the Dutch school. To be fair, I think a lot has changed now.

**What are the biggest challenges you have had to overcome adapting to your new country?**

What really got to me were all the formalities. You couldn't just drop by and say hello or call someone and say, "Let's have lunch." Everything had to be planned, put in my agenda. You had to address people as "Mevrouw" instead of "Hi, I'm Roberta. What's your name?" And ... when the telephone rang, it was proper to say "Met Mevrouw Enschede." If you didn't, the caller would ask, "Who am I talking to?" I'd answer, "You called me, remember." To this day, I refuse to answer the phone like that. I answer "Hello" and that's it.

**You are known for keeping American traditions alive overseas. How were these events received by locals? Did you encounter any resistance? If so, how did you overcome that resistance and make these events the successes they are today?**

The only way I could survive away from the USA is by bringing the USA here and sharing it when possible. I can honestly say the Dutch people never resisted or were negative about American events. They love them. In fact, in 2006, I was designated "Knight in the Order of Oranje-Nassau" for my service to both the Dutch and American communities. I am also proud to say

that over the years, I've received three Certificates of Appreciation from the American Embassy for bringing the Dutch and American communities together.

**What is the most unusual cultural tradition you've encountered?**

The Dutch go to a fish store or a herring stand, buy a herring, hold it by the tail and eat it! These are the same people who cut up a piece of bread and cheese and eat it with a fork.

Also, there's the birthday calendar! The Dutch usually have one hanging in the WC. To this day, I can't imagine thinking about having to go to the bathroom to remember the date of my friend's birthday.

Also, if you go to a gathering, you're expected to walk around, shake hands with each person and tell them your name and get theirs, which you promptly forget before you're finished. What you don't forget is that the Dutch don't just shake hands, they SHAKE hands!!!!



**What cultural traditions would you take with you if you leave?**

I would always have fresh flowers in the house. The Dutch have a way with flowers. Even the simplest neighborhood flower stand always has, or can quickly make, the most beautiful arrangements.

**In your travels, what was your favorite culture you encountered? Why?**

I really can't pick a favorite. Every place has something special. I absolutely love the warmth, generosity and spontaneity of the Italian and Greek people. I love the impatient, sometimes impolite "smarts" of the Israelis. They remind me of New Yorkers! I love the friendliness to strangers in small towns in Iowa and Kansas and New Mexico. I love standing on the shore of the Mississippi and thinking about where it begins and ends and if it could talk, what stories it would tell.

**Do you have a favorite travel story?**

One of the first holidays I had in Europe was on the Greek Island of Kos before it was taken over by the tourism industry. There were only seven foreign tourists on the island - my husband and me, a teacher from NYC, two medical students and a physical therapist, the wife of one of them and a young Danish traveler. The medical students came because the island is supposedly the birthplace of Hippocrates and the site of the first sanatorium.

One evening, the seven of us went up to the site with a guide who was an archeologist. We stayed till the sun was almost setting on the eucalyptus trees below. The medical students and our guide talked about anesthetic needles that were found there and perhaps the first operations.

**What advice would you give to someone planning to embark on their own move to a new country?**

Simply said, be who you are. Find out what parts of your own culture you can contribute and share. Don't expect your new country to be like your own and criticize it when it is not. It's a hard lesson to learn. It took time for me to finally realize it. When I did, I began to be creative and do things I truly believe in. Here are a few examples.



#### Dutch-American Friendship Day:

In 1982, we got a Resolution through both houses of Congress declaring April 19 Dutch-American Friendship Day. On that day in 1782, the Dutch nation recognized the independence of the United States. The ties between the Netherlands and the USA have been unbroken for more than 241 years. Each year, we give a Certificate of Appreciation to a Dutch person who significantly contributes to that friendship.

#### Thanksgiving at the Pieterskerk in Leiden:

On Thanksgiving morning, we hold a non-denominational service at the Pieterskerk in Leiden. The Pilgrims lived around that church from 1609 to 1620. Many of them left from Leiden to ultimately sail on the Mayflower. The idea for the Mayflower Compact might have come from the Dutch. A Dutch descendant of Moses Fletcher, a signatory of the Mayflower Compact, always tells her story. Her family are the only non-American members of the Mayflower Society.

#### The 4<sup>th</sup> of May:

On the evening of the 4<sup>th</sup> of May, the Dutch Memorial Eve, we participate in a ceremony in memory of WWII and all those who since have lost their lives in the ongoing struggles for freedom. We ask the United States Marines to represent our community and lay our wreath at that ceremony. Their presence is extremely meaningful for the Dutch people and the young Marines.

#### Memorial Day at Margraten American Cemetery:

We contribute two wreaths for Memorial Day at Margraten, the American cemetery where there are 8,301 graves and 1,722 names on the Wall of the Missing. We ask US combat veterans to lay those wreaths. On the eve of Memorial Day, we join with the Netherlands-American Institute of Limburg to honor our heroes.

#### The 4<sup>th</sup> of July Picnic:

The picnic is a bit of the USA in Holland - Uncle Sam comes, we register people to vote, the Marines present the colors, followed by a kids' Flag Parade. We even read excerpts from the Declaration of Independence. After that, it's hot dogs, cookies, and games with all our Dutch friends and neighbors.



A cake celebrating Dutch-American Friendship Day (above)

Little pilgrims at the Thanksgiving service (bottom)



#### Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Tribute and Dinner:

We started this dinner in 1986, the first year the holiday was officially celebrated in the USA. We always invite our Dutch friends to join us and usually have Dutch and international participation.



Fourth of July Kids' Parade (above)

Martin Luther King, Jr. tribute ceremony (bottom)



#### The Ceremony of Remembrance and Hope:

It happens each year on September 11. We read names and letters from families and comrades of firefighters and police who died. We tell some of their stories. "September 11 will never be another day. It is engraved in our collective memory." This year, a Dutch woman who saw the plane go into the second Tower told her story.

#### The "Who's the President? Breakfast":

It happens on the day after the US Presidential Election, beginning at 5:00 a.m. – just when the results start coming in on the East Coast. We usually get about 1,000 people. The embassy invites their contacts and we open up attendance to everyone. The Dutch people just love coming. We do it in the Kurhaus Hotel, which has a huge room with a domed ceiling. We hang up all the state flags and the whole place is red, white and blue. The Dutch people get very involved with our election and follow it closely. It is a way for us to come together and try to answer questions they may have.

#### Voter Registration:

Why should we vote? As Americans living abroad, we are held responsible by locals for the actions of our country. If we are to be held responsible, we should certainly make our opinions count!

#### Is there a culture you'd like to learn more about? Why?

I'd probably like to learn more about the Golden Age of Greece and how, in such a short time, it produced great dramatists, philosophers and provided us with ideas that are basic to democracy.

#### What's your favorite cultural tradition?

No question about it - it's Thanksgiving at my house with at least 20 really good friends.



# An Unexpected Adventure

*Arlene Doerr, AWC Dublin, happily moved to Dublin when her daughter asked, leading to an exciting new life and lots of time with her beloved grandson.*



Arlene Doerr

I grew up in a small rural town in British Columbia, Canada, the eldest of three children and all first generation German Canadians. My first language was not English but rather German, and my traditions and culture became a blend of both. As I entered school, I could still understand German, but speaking it became more and more awkward. English became my first language while my second language changed to French as I assimilated more into Canadian culture in my late teens and early twenties.

I spent my childhood exploring my province with my family. My favorite times were picking huckleberries in my beloved mountains, climbing and exploring in search of this wonderful treat. We were, however, not the only ones who loved these deep blue berries. One day we were all picking berries off a remote logging road. My mother was quickly losing patience with my father because he was not replying to anything she said. She parted a bush to scold him for not answering her only to realize she had been conversing with a bear! At the top of her lungs she cried "BEAR!" and the number of people who spilled down off the side of that mountain road took us all by surprise. The bear was also displeased and took off as well!

After high school, while everyone else in Canada in the 1970s was moving west, I had to move east because there were no colleges nearby. I received my degree in due time and began work as an RN.

Arlene being part of the art. Italy, April 2022





Trinity  
Graduation,  
fall 2022 (top)

Arlene and  
grandson  
(bottom)

I had planned to move back west once I graduated, but love changed that when I met and then married my husband. Our two children, friends and careers kept us firmly planted in Central Canada and kept us plenty busy.

I spent most of my career working as a cardiac critical care nurse, which I loved. However, I wanted to be more available for our growing pre-teens so I changed careers in my forties. I began working for a small computer company, but kept my nursing license active, and began volunteering at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO). I retired from both careers when we decided to move to Ireland in 2021.

In June 2020, during the midst of COVID-19, our first grandchild was born. Then in the spring of 2021 our daughter told us she wanted to return to college for a graduate degree. We assumed she meant to attend a local university. Not so. She had been accepted at Trinity College in Dublin for a "professional" master's prior to her application for a PhD program. "Wouldn't you love to relocate?" she asked us. "You do love to travel." I couldn't imagine living so far from our new grand-baby so we jumped with both feet into a new and totally unplanned adventure.

We thought it would be for a year as our daughter finished her second master's degree, but she was accepted into a PhD program at Trinity and we are here for the duration. We are establishing roots and friendships here in Ireland. Our now three-year-old grandson may have been a considerable part of that decision to stay as well.



### ***What was something about your new country that you were not expecting? What surprised you the most?***

Upon arriving in the Republic of Ireland, we did not expect the warmth and friendliness of the locals. We were pleasantly surprised by the welcoming nature of the Irish people.

Additionally, the unpredictable weather, which can change rapidly, even within a single day, took us by surprise. Now we shrug our shoulders, grab our raincoats and just head out. Forget the umbrella, too. The wind will just destroy it.

As Canadians we were delighted to learn that our drivers' licenses were fully exchangeable due to Ireland and Canada's treaties regarding licensing. Our expat American friends do not have that privilege and need to participate in the whole Irish licensing process. A time consuming process! Having traveled to the UK, Australia and New Zealand, we have experienced driving on the wrong side of the road before and have found the transition fairly seamless. We have even purchased a small car in our new country. We do not use it in exploring our city of Dublin, which has a fantastic public transit as compared to what we have been used to, but rather to explore the island itself.

### ***What are the biggest challenges you have had to overcome adapting to your new country?***

We did find a few challenges while adapting to our new country. The first was the cost of living

and adjusting to the difference in currencies. The delays pertaining to visa applications or anything else related to the government is also a challenge. We've learned if a deadline for a document says October be sure to have everything in by early August or it won't be done in time.

### ***How have you embraced your new culture? Is there something you can tell us about your new culture that makes you happy?***

We love attending activities like traditional music sessions in pubs, participating in local festivals and enjoying Irish cuisine, including dishes like seafood chowder with soda bread, fish and chips and even trying coddle. Unfortunately I'm not a fan of white pudding, but the black pudding reminded me a lot of a dish we often had at home. We enjoy checking out the local pubs and foods as we discover more about the city of Dublin and the country, too. History is integral to every part of this country and we enjoy listening to and learning more about Ireland as we explore. Have you checked out the sheep dog trials, Viking reenactment festival or the horse show? We have! Have you explored the Ring of Kerry, Dingle, Sligo, the Giant's Causeway? We have and intend to return and explore much more of our new country.

### ***What is the most unusual cultural tradition you have encountered?***

While not a tradition per se it is an interpretation of words and speech with the Irish. If it's "pouring out" here the rain is "lashing". If you have got everything finally arranged to your satisfaction, it's "sorted". If something is correct it's "100%". If you live in Dublin, you would be part of or from the Pale, anywhere outside you may be referred to as "Culchie". Finally, if someone says "we really, really must get together," you most definitely will not. Language is a great way to communicate but only if everyone is on the same page!

Christmas wreaths with  
AWCD, 2022





**What cultural traditions have you shared with friends in your new country? Or, what cultural traditions from your current county would you take with you and continue if you leave?**

St. Brigid's Day, celebrated on February 1, is a significant cultural and religious holiday in Ireland, although it is not a public holiday like St. Patrick's Day. It commemorates Saint Brigid of Kildare (Naomh Bríd in Irish), one of Ireland's patron saints. St. Brigid's Day was traditionally a time to celebrate the arrival of spring, the lengthening of the day and a blending of traditions both Christian and Pagan. People would make "Brigid's crosses" from reeds or rushes, symbolizing the sun and the arrival of spring. These crosses were often hung in homes to bring blessings and protection. Today St. Brigid's Day is often celebrated with this same focus on Irish culture and creativity. Communities and schools share St. Brigid's story and their shared heritage. When we leave I would like to bring this sense of community and shared history with me. St. Brigid's cross and the history that is in every aspect of Irish life is a quality I will bring with me wherever I go.

The cultural tradition that really took me by surprise is that Ireland celebrates Halloween as a bank holiday. It is in many cases coincidental but a very convenient way to let the people celebrate the Pagan Samhain and the Christian All Saints Day. We have always enjoyed carving pumpkins and passing treats on to the little ghouls and ghosts that visit on Halloween Eve.



Kayaking 2020 in Kauai, Hawaii. Every trip possible we do this, as we own two 15ft sea kayaks. (above)

Halloween (below)



Our Irish family celebrating with Santa. (above)

Will paint on any surface! (below)



**What advice would you give to someone planning to embark on their own move to a new country?**

Take time to explore your options and remember everything takes longer than expected. Be patient and you will find more enjoyment in your new life if you stop and smell the roses!

**Tell us something interesting about yourself that not many people know.**

If you haven't guessed I'm very

much a people person and enjoy my time with others but conversely I enjoy time to myself. I'm an avid reader and find this to be one of my guiltiest pleasures. You can often find me with my nose in a book reading up on murder and mayhem!

**Where is the most beautiful place in the world you have been? What made it so special?**

I really do not have any one favorite place in the world as each has its own fantastic memories or moments. I love to do the planning, research and implementation of my/our adventures. Each phase gives me a great sense of satisfaction and a feeling of a job well done. Our move to Ireland and adventures prior and since have given us a greater appreciation not for the things in life but rather the people you meet on your journey. They are what enrich our lives and make them more complete. If I had to pick a place, again it would be more about the people and that would be Iceland. Our small family came together there to celebrate a major life event. We each ran/walked a portion of the Reykjavik Marathon, exploring yet more of another culture and country.



# Embracing Culture: Supporting the Target Project, Awesome Blossoms

*Frances Durocher, an archaeologist and art historian and graduate of the University of Michigan, earned her PhD in World Art and Museology from the University of East Anglia, UK. Frances is an AWC Berlin member and active with the FAWCO DEIB Team. Over the next year, Frances is giving a series of art tours in Berlin where all the proceeds will go towards the FAWCO Target Project, Awesome Blossoms.*

After years of fieldwork in Australia, Kenya, and Peru, Frances earned an MA in the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas and a PhD in World Art and Museology. She has worked for museums in the US, Peru, UK, and Europe. She teaches and provides multicultural art classes and archaeological programs for children and gives art tours in various Berlin state museums. She was also part of the 2022-2025 FAWCO Target Project Selection Committee.



Frances Durocher standing next to August Gaul's *Reclining Lion* in the James Simon Galerie entrance to the Pergamon Museum. Photo credit: Jana Lilian Kaiser



Ishtar Gate,  
Pergamon  
Museum





Frances as a child at a buzkashī game in the Bamiyan Valley, Afghanistan (above)

Buzkashī is an equestrian game played predominantly in northern Afghanistan, where riders compete to seize and retain control of a goat/calf carcass. (left)



side of a cliff in the Bamiyan Valley of central Afghanistan. I remember holding the hands of my mom and older sister and gazing out at the Bamiyan Valley in complete wonder and awe. The world was a magical place, and I couldn't wait to see and learn more!

When my family returned to Philadelphia my mother continued to nurture my interests in art and history, which led to a BA in Cultural Anthropology. I worked two years on an NGO project in Kenya revegetating semi-arid lands in the Lake Baringo and spent several summers on archaeological sites in southern Peru and museum conservation projects at the Museo Regional de Ica. My MA and PhD dissertations were based on my research of Nasca (100 BCE-600 CE) ceramics and textiles from the south coast of Peru. I will always cherish my time spent in Peru doing work I loved with incredible Peruvian friends and colleagues.



Frances with two Peruvian hairless dogs. These dogs are a cultural heritage and fixture at many of Peru's coastal archaeological sites and museums.

I passionately believe art can be a powerful medium to understand one another and ourselves better. Exploring art worldwide and throughout human history allows us to appreciate different cultural contributions. Behind every art object or archaeological artifact, there are so many stories – human stories - of great value to future generations. Furthermore, engaging in cross-cultural dialogue and reflecting on history can be a powerful way to build respect for all the differences and commonalities that simultaneously bind humanity.

My early experiences in Afghanistan shaped my worldview and career path to better understand other cultures, past and present. In 1977, when I was six years old, my family moved to Kabul, Afghanistan, where my dad volunteered as a doctor for CARE. My mom took us to the National Museum of Afghanistan and told stories about Alexander the Great, Persian history, and the Buddha. She brought history alive for us and made it exciting! One of the most memorable experiences was a trip to the Bamiyan Valley in central Afghanistan. We climbed through caves to reach the top of a sixth-century Buddha statue carved into the

One of the two 6th-century monumental Buddha statues carved into the side of a cliff in the Bamiyan valley of central Afghanistan



In 2006, I moved to Berlin to marry my German husband Tilman and fell in love with Berlin's incredible museums and vibrant art scene. After working at museums and giving adult tours, I focused on art education for children. I create and teach multicultural art classes to connect kids to different art forms, styles, and traditions and design archaeology programs for students (ages 8-11) using art projects and hands-on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) challenges to learn about Ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, China, the Romans and the Maya. It has been such an enriching experience taking these classes to elementary schools and after-school programs. I genuinely enjoy listening and learning from all my students' comments, questions, and insights.

Classroom visit to teach primary school students about archaeology and our knowledge of the ancient past (top left)

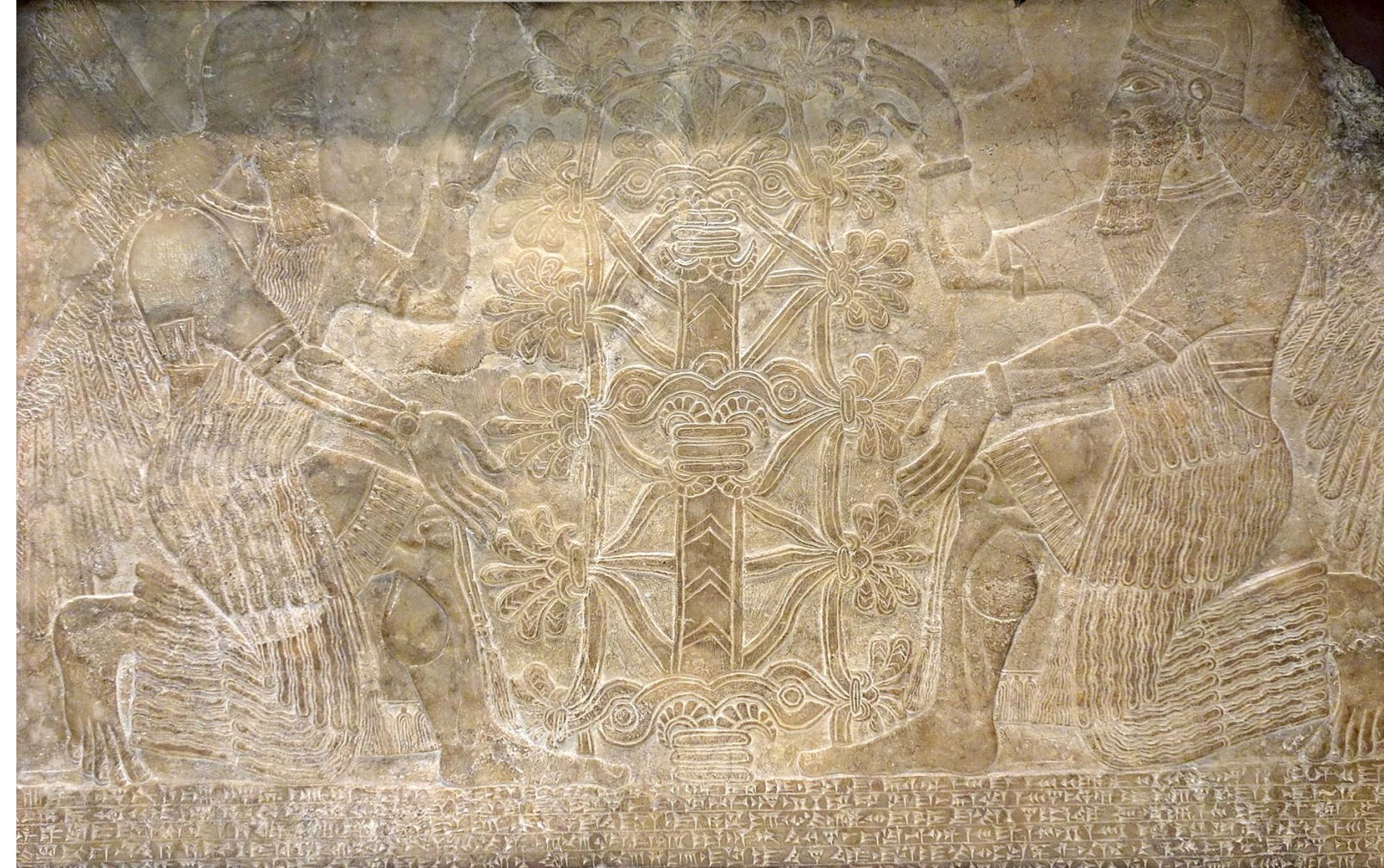
Ancient Egypt students made bookmarks on papyrus with their names written in hieroglyphics and decorated a mummy pencil case. (bottom left)



I recently found a way to combine two passions, art education and fundraising for the FAWCO Target Project Awesome Blossoms. The life and work of Mrs. Peninah Nthenya Musyimi, the Founder/Director of Awesome Blossoms, is incredibly inspiring, as is the project's philosophies of "Each one, teach one" and "Be the change," emphasizing the power – and responsibility – each girl has to give back and lead change. I thought of Tharien van Eck (AWC Antwerp and 2022-2025 Target Project Selection Chair) selling her beautiful artworks to support FAWCO Target Projects. I created a series of art tours in Berlin to raise funds for Awesome Blossoms. The first tours included the Pergamon Museum and Street Art in Kreuzberg. Upcoming tours will be Ancient Egypt and Queen Nefertiti at the Neues Museum and Women in 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> Century European Paintings at the Gemäldegalerie.



Founder of Awesome Blossoms, Peninah Nthenya Musyimi



Alabaster relief of two Assyrian sky deities watering the sacred tree. From the palace in Nimrud of the Assyrian king Ashurnasirpal II, 9th century BCE, Pergamon Museum.

One of the Awesome Blossoms projects established an urban farm pilot program. Fifteen peer educators gained vocational training while 72 women micro-entrepreneurs used the systems to produce food for low-income households.



Page 51  
AWC Target Tour:  
AWC Berlin  
members at the  
Pergamon Museum  
for the first of a  
series, Tours for  
Target, where all  
proceeds will go to  
the FAWCO Target  
Project Awesome  
Blossoms. (bottom)





# Sharing Cultural Experiences Together

*Sue and Murray Frick, FAUSA and AWC Brussels, share their journey from college sweethearts to FAUSA fundraising power couple.*



Murray & Sue Frick

**S**ue: I grew up in a Chicago suburb. Family and music were always very important to me. I began piano lessons in third grade and sang in choirs throughout my childhood. I also enjoyed dancing and gymnastics, competing on my high school's first gymnastics team during my senior year.

I attended Culver-Stockton College in Canton, Missouri, graduating with a Bachelor of Music in Music Education and a Bachelor of Science in Physical Education. I was active in Greek life and became a rep for the Panhellenic association. Murray and I met during my freshman year. We grew closer on a choir tour and the rest is history. We married in St Charles, Missouri, in 1977 and I became a music teacher. I eventually taught every level from pre-school to college and worked for six years at a music distribution company. I then received my Master's in Music Education from Southern Missouri State and continued teaching while we raised a family with three beautiful girls!

In 2006, we moved to Brussels, Belgium, to serve the International Protestant Church in Brussels. I joined the AWC Brussels in January 2007 and became involved with various activities. The Brussels club had more than 750 members when I joined and between classes, Christmas Market responsibilities, working on committees and later the head of reception, I was very busy.

In 2016, I became president for two years and spent another year on the board. In 2017,

**Sue and Murray sightseeing in Doha, Qatar.**





Murray and I attended my first FAWCO Conference in Mumbai. In 2019, we attended the FAWCO Conference in Edinburgh. Scotland has always held a special place in our hearts and before moving to Brussels, we had been Regents for Clan Douglas in Wyoming, New York, and later for Western Europe. On the first night at the Edinburgh Conference, Murray recited the poem *Address to a Haggis*.

We repatriated to the United States in June 2019, to northwest Missouri. In May 2020, we bought our present home in Osage Beach, Missouri, but I did not move there full-time until Christmas. For seven months, Murray served as an interim pastor in another northwest Missouri church and I lived by myself. We saw each other bi-weekly. My FAWCO club gave me the gift of a 5-year membership in FAUSA and I became very involved.

In the summer of 2021, I was asked to be the Philanthropy Director for FAUSA. With my work through churches in Philanthropy and Mission, this seemed a good fit. FAUSA's major fundraiser is the gala held at the annual FAUSA Getaway. The event includes a silent and live auction, a quilt raffle, and a special "raise the thermometer" donation activity. Since I was in charge of the auctions I asked Murray to be the auctioneer for our live auction in Santa Fe in 2022. He was very successful and was asked to return in 2023. I am happy to report that with his excellent auctioneering

Edinburgh:  
Addressing the  
haggis at the FAWCO  
Biennial Conference  
(top)

AWC Brussels  
attendees (bottom)



Sue at the Finestere, Spain (the end of the Camino)

Murray playing with Jefferson City Band.



skills and the wonderful live auction items donated by our members, we raised almost \$20,000 from just the live auction. In June 2023, my title was changed to 3<sup>rd</sup> VP Philanthropy and I was recently re-elected to serve another two-year term.

**Murray:** Growing up I was very active in Scouts, music (band, orchestra, and jazz band), speech and debate, and theater

technical design. While in high school, I took sports pictures for a local newspaper.

I also attended Culver-Stockton College, majoring in Music and Religion/Philosophy. I was active in Greek life and music, and I served a student church after my freshman year. Sue and I spent our summers working together at a sleep-away camp in the Berkshires (Massachusetts). I started my career at St. Charles Christian Church working with youth, education and directing a traveling choir.

I've spent my career as a pastor, serving congregations in Missouri, Iowa, Wyoming, and New York before being asked to serve in Belgium. We gave away or sold our possessions when we moved to Belgium, so when it came time to repatriate, we could go almost anywhere. Our choice was determined by our eldest daughter (and grandchildren) living in St. Louis, as our other daughters are an international teacher (currently in Bogotá, Columbia) and a PhD student at Auburn University.

**What preparations, if any, did you make before moving to your new country?**

**Murray:** Very minimal preparation. There was barely three months between initial contact and arrival in Belgium. I did read up a little on Belgium and had a bit of







Belgian culture: beer & *frites* (truly Belgian, not “French”) (left)

Co-officiating at a wedding in Romania. (bottom)

**Sue:** I arrived the second week of October, almost two months after Murray, and felt very apprehensive about the entire situation. Our shipment had already arrived when I came and Murray had already put our minimal amount of furniture in place. I will never forget my first Monday when Murray “challenged” me to take the tram down to the local grocery (Carrefour) and hardware store (Brico) to pick up a few items. The bit of French that I thought I remembered disappeared from my mind as I tried to talk to a salesperson to find furniture floor pads. He gave up on me, and when I turned around, we were standing right in front of them! Happy to say, I did a bit better buying groceries!

**What was something about your new country that you were not expecting? What surprised you the most?**

**Murray:** Belgians are shy. It is very rare to be invited into someone’s home. Even engaged couples will sometimes stand



**Murray:** I love all that makes Belgium what it is: history, art, culture, food, beer, and chocolate. The pace of life, the people (who are reserved, but delightful once you get to know them). It is all a joy, which is why I now hold dual citizenship.

**What is the most unusual cultural tradition you have encountered?**

**Sue:** On the whole, local Belgians are very private, and although they will greet you on the street, they usually will not invite you into their homes.

**Murray:** Culture clubs and the importance of *frites* (“French” fries).

**What cultural traditions from Belgium did you take with you when you returned to America?**

**Both:** A Belgian attitude and appreciation for food - excellent quality, slow meals, good company. We tend to live to a Belgian schedule, even in the States.

German from my graduate school days (“kinda” like Dutch). Mostly it was a “hope and pray” move.

**Sue:** As Murray said, we did very little preparation and I was very nervous about our move to a country where English was not the main language. I studied French from fifth grade up to my senior year in high school, but that was 35 years ago! We did a bit of research and found some information about the American Women’s Club in Brussels, which I planned to check out!

**Tell us about your arrival. For example: What was your initial reaction? What was the first thing you did? How do you recall feeling that first week? Was there anything you immediately noticed that was different from your home country?**

**Murray:** I arrived in Belgium several months before Sue. The congregation I was to serve was very supportive and tried to help deal with all the “stuff.” I was fortunate that my secretary was a total whiz at helping me establish bank accounts, open utilities, etc. I would not have made the transition without her!



outside waiting on a date rather than enter a house. Also, Belgians have VERY specific ideas about Americans, based in large part on our TV shows.

**How did you embrace the local culture in Brussels? Is there something about that culture that makes you happy?**

**Sue:** I love Belgium and found myself very comfortable taking public transport, going out to lunch with friends, taking cooking classes, and traveling around both Brussels and a majority of Europe in our thirteen years there. Pastors who are recognized by the government are considered civil servants and we enjoyed having Belgian medical insurance soon after we arrived. This summer I had back surgery in Belgium because the insurance and medical care is so excellent there. In fact, I have been seeing a doctor in Belgium for almost ten years.



Preparing Beloved Bundles for Project Beloved. (top)

Summer camp counselors in the Berkshires (bottom)



***In your travels, what was your favorite culture you encountered? Why?***

**Both:** Almost all of them. Each and every one was an absolute delight. We visited 48 countries on six continents while “abroad” and each held something special, something we didn’t expect and are richer for having experienced.

***What advice would you give to someone else planning to embark on their own move to a new country?***

**Both:** Start local, grow from there. Get to know your area WELL before worrying about where else to go. Community, area, region, country, international. Don’t focus on the “big to-do’s,” spend time where the locals go. Eat local food. Drink local wine. Try to blend in. You’ll know you have succeeded when someone stops you to ask for directions!

***Tell us something interesting about yourself that not many people know.***

**Sue:** I walked the Camino de Santiago from Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port, France to Compostela, Spain, for my 60<sup>th</sup> birthday by myself while my husband was on sabbatical in Scotland and the Netherlands.

**Murray:** I have won an international theater design award, been active as a football (soccer) referee, served as a crisis response chaplain for the ATF, and served as Regent for Clan Douglas. I also teach Scottish country dancing, play ceilidh music and play in a jazz band.

***Where is the most beautiful place in the world you have been? What made it so special?***

**Sue:** This is a difficult question as every place has its own special charm. I loved traveling by car across Croatia and Slovenia; the mountains and the hillsides are definitely beautiful. We have traveled to Scotland several times and I love the diversity of that country.

**Murray:** The tiny island of Iona holds a special place in my heart. It sits off the west coast of the Isle of Mull in the Scottish Hebrides.

It was where the Celtic Christian tradition began when, in 563 AD, the Irish monk, St. Columba, arrived with a handful of followers. He built his first Celtic church and established a monastic community on the island from which he set about spreading the Christian faith to most of pagan Scotland, northern England, and eventually throughout much of Europe. This seat of learning and center for Christian worship has become a place of pilgrimage for me.

***What’s your favorite cultural tradition ?***

**Sue:** Family, friends and holiday. While living in Belgium, a group of friends met for several years at Thanksgiving and other holidays, creating a special “family” situation.

**Murray:** Big family holiday gatherings with our family, when possible, with our “now family” wherever we happen to be. We introduced “Advent Open House” to the somewhat suspicious Belgians! Decorations, food, chaos – bring it on!



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# 24 Hours in ... Malmö!

*Who best to tell us about the best places to visit in a new city than those who live there? AIC Malmö president Kirstin Kriz takes us on a whistle-stop tour of Malmö.*



Our club was founded by Lisa (Richter) Fagerberg in November 1997 as the American Women's Club (AWC) Malmö, its name until June 2021, when it was changed to AIC Malmö to be more inclusive and reflect the current demographics of the club membership. The purpose of the association is to bring together Americans and other international expats for companionship, support and friendship. We currently have approximately 170 members, mainly living in the Malmö/Lund area of southern Sweden. Approximately 72% of the club membership are American citizens and 28% are international expats.

The club hosts monthly activities, holiday and special events. The monthly activities include a book group, a baby and toddler group, lunches in Lund, and meetings with a speaker or a group event such as bowling, boating or mini-golf. Larger club events are usually focused on holidays, including a Halloween Trick-or-Treat party for children, Thanksgiving potluck dinner, an end-of-year Glögg party for adults, St. Patrick's Day dinner at an Irish pub, Easter egg hunting for kids, Mother's Day brunch, and of course our annual Independence Day barbeque and picnic.



Malmö at night



## About Malmö and Sweden in general ...

Malmö is a coastal city in southern Sweden with approximately 330,000 inhabitants. It is connected to Copenhagen, Denmark by the beautiful Öresund bridge. Twenty kilometers north of Malmö lies Lund University, one of the oldest universities in Europe. The city of Lund has a population of approximately 100,000.

Malmö has a very young population with approximately 48% of the population under the age of 35. It is also a culturally diverse city, representing 179 different nationalities and more than 150 different languages. More than half the population (54%) was born outside of Sweden or has at least one foreign-born parent. Most of the foreign-born population comes from the former Yugoslavia, Iraq, Denmark, Poland and Syria. Malmö is one of Sweden's fastest growing cities with young people from all over Sweden and abroad moving to live and work at tech companies and start-ups in the city. Malmö is seen as an advantageous location for companies since it is closely connected to continental Europe and office space is cheaper than in Stockholm.

## A Day in Malmö

### Start the day well ...

A traditional breakfast is a smorgasbord of cold treats, typically: bread or flatbread topped with either cheese, sliced ham or salmon, cucumber or jam. Boiled eggs, cold herring or caviar might be included. People also eat yogurt or fermented yogurt with oats or cereal. Delicious pastries such as cinnamon rolls, Danishes with vanilla cream and other sweetened pastry breads with jams or marzipan are also offered for breakfast. Of course, none of this is enjoyed without a good cup of strong coffee with milk!



Danish pastries



### Best pick for breakfast

**Systrar & Bröder (Sisters & Brothers)**  
Östra Rönneholmsvägen 26  
Website: <https://systrarbroder.se/>



## The best way to see central Malmö ...

Take a one-hour boat tour with a guide through the city's waterways and little canals. This will give a unique perspective of the city. The AIC rented boats on the Malmö canal in May and it was a very popular activity.

Website: <https://www.stromma.com/sv-se/malmo/batsightseeing/rundan/>

From the boat dock take a short walk through the picturesque *Kungsparken* (King's park) to Malmö castle (*Malmöhus*). The fortress is from the 16th century and was traditionally one of the most important strongholds of Denmark before the area became Swedish in 1720. Today, the castle houses southern Sweden's largest museum with exhibitions on history, nature, maritime matters and art.

Website: <https://malmo.se/Uppleva-och-gora/Konst-och-museer/Malmo-museum.html>

After visiting the castle, walk to the newly built western harbor and exclusive residential area of *Västra Hamnen*. Here you will have a beautiful view over the Öresund between Malmö and Copenhagen, as well as the Öresund bridge. You will also view Malmö's tallest skyscraper, Turning Torso, 190 meters high (54 floors) with a 90° twist from base to top. During the summer the 53<sup>rd</sup> and 54<sup>th</sup> floors are open to the public. *Västra Hamnen* is a wonderful area to swim, grab a lunch or drink, and even enjoy some delicious ice cream.

Website: <https://visitskane.com/classic-attractions/turning-torso>



## Climate...

The summers are mild with comfortable temperatures (around 70°F or 21°C) and partly cloudy skies. The winter is long, windy and rainy with temperatures just above freezing. The best time to visit Malmö is between June and August, the warmest months with the most sunshine. The days are long with approximately 15.5 – 18.5 hours of daylight. The late-evening light at that time of year is absolutely stunning.



## Time for lunch ...



Saluhall

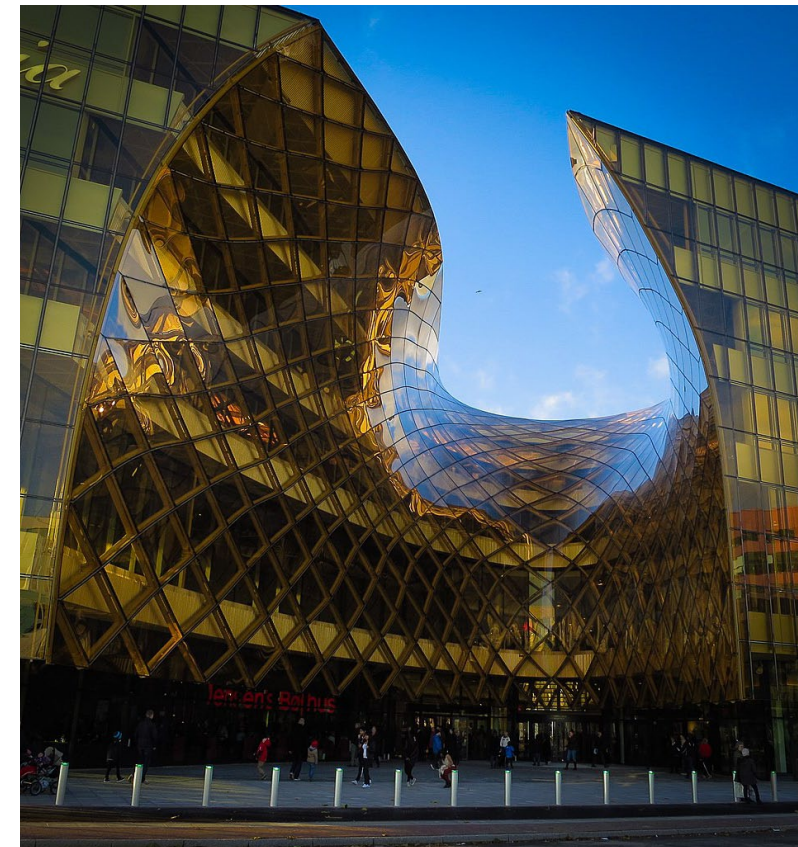
It is not uncommon for people to go out for lunch during the work days when most restaurants offer a "*dagens*" or daily menu at a special low price (10-15 USD or 110-165 SEK). The daily menu often includes salad bar, bread & butter and water (in addition to the main dish). Since restaurants offer only a limited number of dishes during lunch, the food is served quickly. It's a great way to experience the local cuisine at a fraction of the dinner price. The AIC has a monthly Lund lunch group for members working in Lund, where we meet at a different restaurant for networking and good food.

Malmö *Saluhall* is an indoor food market, offering a unique foodie environment combining traditional and innovative culinary trends. Originally an old train warehouse, it has been renovated and transformed into a top foodie destination for hungry lunch and dinner guests.

Website: <https://www.malmosaluhall.se/alla-handlare/?hcat=restauranger-cafeer>

## Afternoon activities ...

Malmö has wonderful street art, which visitors can explore all year round. You can find hidden murals while walking around the city, especially in the neighborhoods of *Davidshall* and Malmö's Modern Art Museum. Website: <https://www.modernamuseet.se/malmo/sv/>



Emporia Shopping Mall

## Or ... Afternoon shopping, anyone?

Emporia is one of Scandinavia's largest shopping malls, located next to the Hyllie train station, the last train station in Sweden before the Öresund bridge. With almost 200 shops and restaurants and distinct modern architecture, it is a place where one can easily spend an afternoon of shopping.

Website: <https://emporia.steenstrom.se/>

However, if one is looking for something a little more quaint or provincial, the cobblestone pedestrian street that starts at *Stortorget* (the Main Square) and runs through Gustav Adolf Square to *Triangeln*, is a great way to spend an afternoon of shopping. There one can find smaller shops including Grandpa, APLACE or *Designorget* selling Swedish or Scandinavian design products. The home design shop Småland AB is a favorite with a unique mixture of home décor, plants, fashion and café.

Website: <https://www.absmaland.com/en>

Stortorget





*Lilla Torg (the Small Square)* is a great place for locals to enjoy a drink after work or grab something to eat, especially when the sun is shining. Located in *Gamla Stan* (Old Town), *Lilla Torg* and *Stortorget* are picturesque squares surrounded by restaurants, small cafés and old buildings. The AIC holds its monthly meetings at the Noble House Hotel located in the Old Town. Website: <https://malmo.se/Uppleva-och-gora/Arkitektur-och-kulturarv/Malmos-historia/Platser-och-byggnader/Malmos-torg/Lilla-torg>.

**Lilla Torg**



**View from the Sky Bar**



### Dinner recommendations? Night on the town ...

The Sky Bar on top of Malmö Live, located next to the central station, is a rooftop restaurant and bar offering a Nordic kitchen with locally produced seasonal ingredients. Locals and visitors can enjoy the panoramic views of the city and the ocean while eating or sipping a delicious cocktail at the bar.

Website: <https://skybarmalmolive.se/>

Alternatively Klang Market restaurant, located near the Malmö canal, offers a twist to traditional Mediterranean food. Dinner there is a festive experience with sophisticated cocktails and tapas-like dishes. AIC Malmö held its 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Party at this restaurant last October. Website: <https://klangmarket.se/klangmeny/>

**AIC's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Party**



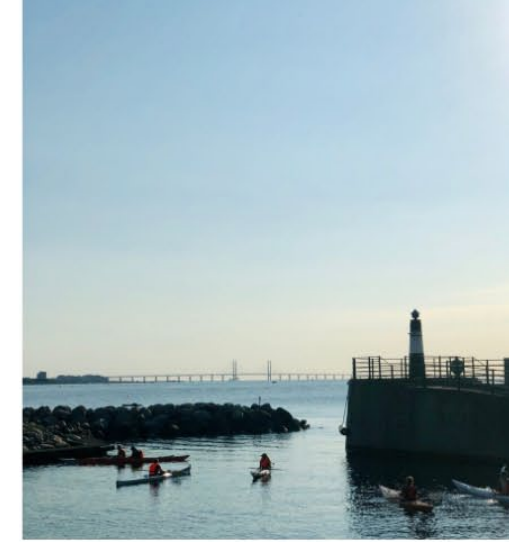
Yes, there are many great places for dinner, drinks, and more drinks from whiskey dens. Malmö Live is also an event center and the concert hall is home to the Malmö Symphony Orchestra featuring concerts throughout the year. In the summer, you can listen to live music and a DJ most weekends at the open-air rooftop. Website: <https://malmolive.se/>

**The Malmö Live event center from the water. The artwork is *Free Flow* by sculptor Eva Hild.**





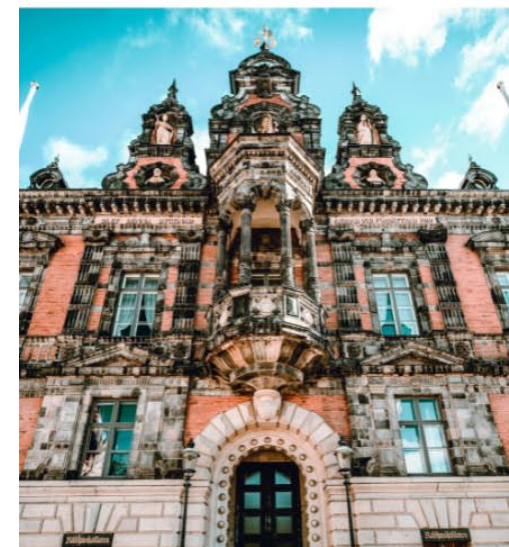
The city of Malmö hosts a music festival every August celebrating the city's art, music, food and cultural scenes. It's a family-friendly, week-long event. The AIC often arranges an event for club members to meet to try the yummy festival food while enjoying the free music concerts. Website: <https://www.malmofestivalen.se/english>



The Malmö Festival began in 1985 and, with 1.4 million visits every year, it is the largest festival in a city environment in Scandinavia.



The Öresund bridge to Copenhagen in the early morning.





# Bridgerton and Beyond

*Cynthia Holden, AWC Central Scotland, shares how she went from studying English Literature in South Florida to reenacting British Renaissance dramas in Scotland.*



Cynthia Holden

**I** grew up in South Florida, where my mother owned a childcare center that helped inner-city families. I grew up inspired to help and be very active in and about my community. Each holiday we would have a big family dinner but, before we could eat, we had to serve dinner to the less fortunate and that's us being grateful for being blessed and lucky enough to have a dinner.

After finishing university at the University of South Florida, where I studied English literature and Italian civilization, I moved to Italy. I lived in Rome for two years and then spent six months in Corfu translating Italian and Greek for tourists. I moved back to the United States, living in Atlanta. After 10 years I moved back to Florida where I opened a seafood restaurant on St. George Island.

I then moved to Dallas/Fort Worth and met my Scottish husband online. We met on April 1 and were married on July 23, just five days after meeting physically. I moved to Scotland in 2004, and we adopted two beautiful children. I started my own successful training company in 2007, but COVID-19 closed us down and I retired.

***What preparations, if any, did you make before moving to your new country?***

I made no preparations at all; I just went all in. Fortunately for me, it was an English-speaking country. Nevertheless, the people of Scotland can have a strong dialect. When I arrived I knew

**C**ynthia at the AWC Central Scotland birthday bash in Edinburgh at the Waldorf Astoria







Cynthia and older sister Judy recreate a picture from 58 years ago.



no one but my husband, but I am so very comfortable with my own company that the transition was easy for me.

**Tell us about your arrival. For example, what was your initial reaction? Was there anything you immediately noticed that was different from your home country?**

I was absolutely smitten with Scotland from the moment I arrived. It was cold, dreary and love at first sight. Angus took me to meet his parents. I asked them, "Did Angus tell you I was black?" They looked at me curiously and responded, "What does that have to do with anything?" We never spoke of race again.

**What was something about your new country that you were not expecting? What surprised you the most?**

I wasn't expecting to feel so safe. That's sad but true. I loved the friendliness of the people. I lived in a very small town but I didn't feel isolated. Having said that, I did miss my culture horribly, so I was so excited when different American religious groups came around. I would cook fried chicken for them and found they would visit frequently.

**How did you become involved with historical re-enactments?**

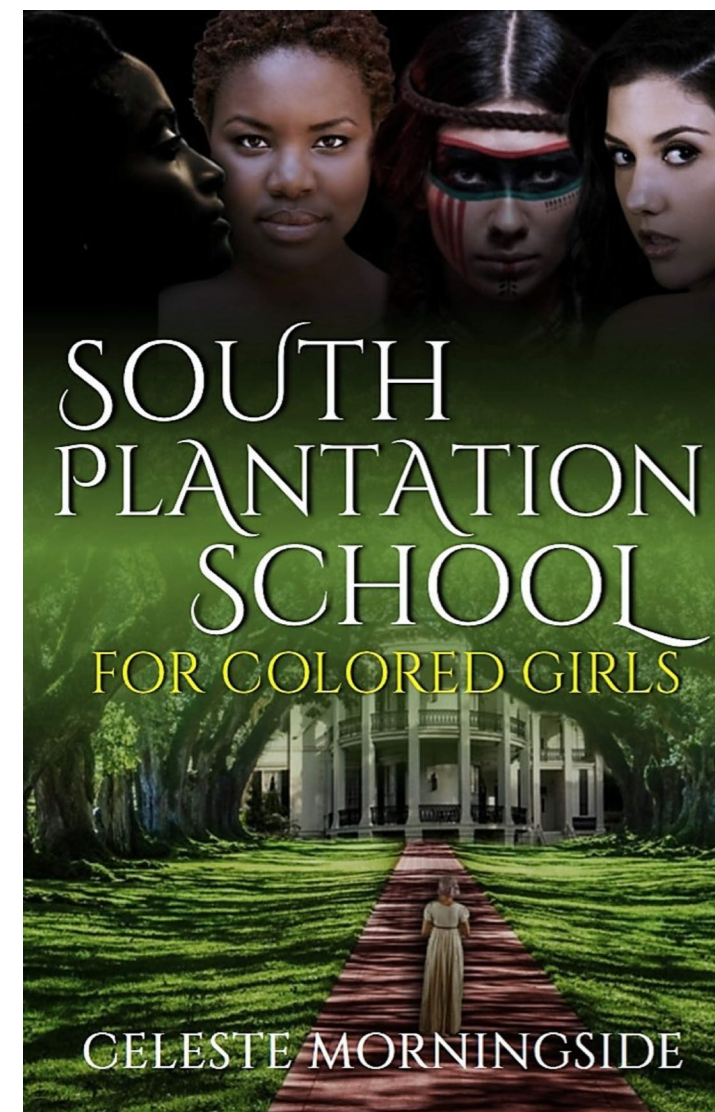
*Bridgerton!* I became close to obsessed with the show and of course being an English Lit major, I was very familiar with Jane Austen and many historical writers. I went to Jane Austen cultural events and started watching other shows. I decided, since my big 60 was coming up, that I would recreate a Bridgerton Ball event at Stirling Castle.

It was such a success that we've decided to hold the Bridgerton Ball again next year to raise money for The FAWCO Foundation. It would be great if some of the ladies can come to Scotland to support it. There will be a discount for FAWCO members.

The website is [www.stirlingregencyball.com](http://www.stirlingregencyball.com)

**Tell us about your favorite event and how it is tied to the local culture.**

My favorite event is any and all historical events but especially the ones held at the Wallace monument. The tower is built on the place where Wallace waited for the English to attack. They have re-enactment scenes there every now and again and they bring it to life for you. It's like you are there. Of course, *Outlander* is filmed here so we have so much going on with that.



Celeste Morningside is Cynthia's pen name. The book is based on her family's past, stories her mother's cousin used to tell her. (above)

Cynthia becoming a UK citizen (left)



**What cultural traditions from your current country would you take with you and continue if you leave?**

Burns Night. A Burns supper is a celebration of the life and work of the famous Scottish poet Robert Burns. The suppers are normally held on or near the poet's birthday, January 25, known as Burns Night, Robert Burns Day or Rabbie Burns Day. We usually eat haggis and drink whiskey and someone reads or recites *Address to a Haggis*. Last year I got together with a few American women and we had our own version of Burns Night.



**What is the most unusual cultural tradition you have encountered?**

Bloody Scotland is a week-long event held in nearby Stirling that celebrates writers of horror and crime writing and, of course, the witch trials. I am a writer and I love Scotland, so anything that melds the two lights my fire.

**Tell us something interesting about yourself that not many people know.**

I was once in a movie made in Corfu.

**Where is the most beautiful place in the world you have been? What made it so special?**

Glencoe, Scotland, was and is definitely the most beautiful place I've ever been. Its beauty is simply indescribable. I take every guest who comes to visit me there to see it.

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Cynthia and her daughters (right)

Cynthia's sisters with her for her 60<sup>th</sup> birthday at The Bridgerton Ball (below)



Page 75

Cynthia dressed for the ball (left)

The Bridgerton Ball featured in the *Sterling Observer* (far right)



**Bridgerton Ball.  
Video**





# Inspiring Reads: The Black Madonna of Derby

*Joanna Czechowska, AWA Vienna, was born in Derby, England to a Polish father and English mother. Her father escaped Poland in 1939 and eventually made his way to the UK in 1943, where he joined the RAF as a pilot. Joanna studied history at London University and completed a Masters in the History of London. She worked as a magazine journalist for 35 years in London and wrote short stories and two novels, published in 2008 and 2012. After spells living in Australia and the USA with her husband and two children, she now lives in Vienna.*



## THE BLACK MADONNA OF DERBY

Joanna Czechowska

### A short summary of the book

*The Black Madonna of Derby* is set in the 1960s and 1970s and tells the story of three generations of a Polish immigrant family living in a small English town. The 69-year-old grandmother, proud and patriotic, wishes to return to her Polish homeland so that, when the time comes, she can be buried with her husband, the enigmatic Prince who died 40 years earlier. Her daughter Helena is settled in her new culture but carries the trauma of her experiences from the Second World War. The three grandchildren, who were all born and brought up in the UK, take different



lessons from their cross-cultural experience. The eldest, Wanda, wants to be accepted as an English girl and she sets off for London in search of her dream. The second girl, Zosia, is her grandmother's pride and joy and revels in Polish language and history. She embarks on a fateful trip to Warsaw and Krakow, then still in the depths of communism. The youngest boy, Jan, has no real interest in his background, but remains in his hometown determined to make money. The novel explores the themes of generational antagonism, class, cultural conflict and the meaning of belonging.

#### **What was your inspiration for the book?**

The inspiration for my novel came from my father's and grandmother's history. My father was one of around 120,000 Poles who arrived in the UK in the 1940s. They set up communities and a network of Polish Clubs across the country. As children, we spent our weekends at the Polish Club and attended Polish Saturday school and Polish mass. My grandmother was allowed to leave Warsaw in 1957 and came to live with us, bringing her language, culture and cooking skills. I thought the story of this little-known group of immigrants deserved to be told.

#### **How long did it take you to write the book?**

It took me around 18 months to write the novel and it went through many edits and rewrites. I had the help of a wonderful editor and my cousin in Poland, a novelist herself, who arranged for publication of the Polish edition of the book.

#### **What kind of research did you do, and how long did you spend researching before beginning the book?**

Most of the ideas for the book came from stories I'd heard within the Polish community and accounts from my own family history. I also used my own memories of a trip I made to Poland as a teenager in 1977. However, I needed to research Polish historical events to make sure names, dates and places were accurate.

#### **What is the most important thing you want readers to take from your book?**

I hope readers will enjoy the story, will learn something about this period of history and will identify with the characters. I think it's important for the world to show empathy towards immigrants in these increasingly hostile times.

#### **When did you start writing?**

I wrote the synopsis and first three chapters of the novel when I was in my early twenties (in the mid-1980s). That was when the image came into my head of a proud and elegant elderly Polish woman who had been a widow for many years. I then put the papers in a drawer and forgot about them. When I was in my early forties, I found them again and decided it would be an interesting concept for a novel so I started writing.

#### **What's your favorite under-appreciated novel?**

We have all heard of the Brontes and Jane Austen, but I'm fond of lesser-known 19<sup>th</sup> century English writers such as Elizabeth Gaskell and Arnold Bennett. My favourite Bennett novel is *The Old Wives' Tale*, a family saga, set in the part of the world I come from.

#### **What is your favorite childhood book?**

As a child, I loved the stories of Milly Molly Mandy written by Joyce Lankester Brisley in the 1920s. Milly Molly Mandy is a young girl who lives in "the nice white cottage with the thatched roof" in a small English village. With two or three friends her age, she has small adventures such as camping in a field, learning to ride a bike or building a tree house. The iconic pictures, drawn by the author, and the gentle stories have stayed with me all my life. I loved to study the map of the village in the front of the novels and imagine myself walking to the school across the fields, buying a cake at the bakery or watching the blacksmith strike his anvil.

#### **What are you reading now?**

I usually have a non-fiction book and a novel on the go. The non-fiction is *Politics on the Edge* by Rory Stewart. The novel is *The Night Ship* by Jess Kidd. Over the summer, I read *The Violin Conspiracy* by Brendan Slocum which I really enjoyed.

#### **If you could tell your younger writing-self anything, what would it be?**

My advice to my younger self would be to have more confidence in my abilities, to write every day and to start sending off as many short stories to magazines as possible. Magazine stories are formulaic but they teach brevity and the ability to form characters and create a great plot. These days it's possible to do a degree in Creative Writing, but that was not the case

when I was 18. In fact, fiction writing was not considered something that could be learned – you either had the talent or you didn't. Now I know the way to become a better writer is by reading widely, writing every day and joining writers' groups to critique others' work.

#### **What's next for you? Are you working on anything new you'd like to share with our readers?**

After *The Black Madonna of Derby*, I wrote *Sweetest Enemy* which is a sequel to the earlier book. In the past few years, I have been writing travel and history articles for a website and I recently wrote a travel article about the Polish port of Gdansk for the *Sunday Times*. I have a new grandson and I've started writing a little book about my childhood with water colour illustrations (I took up painting during lockdown!). The book is intended just for my family but I never say never to publication!

*Books presented in the Inspiring Reads feature are available for purchase via the FAWCO website in the Books by Members or Books by Clubs sections.*  
**Enjoy!**



Tharien

**Tharien's Art is a boutique art studio in Antwerp, Belgium, specializing in hand-painted greeting cards, prints and paintings.**

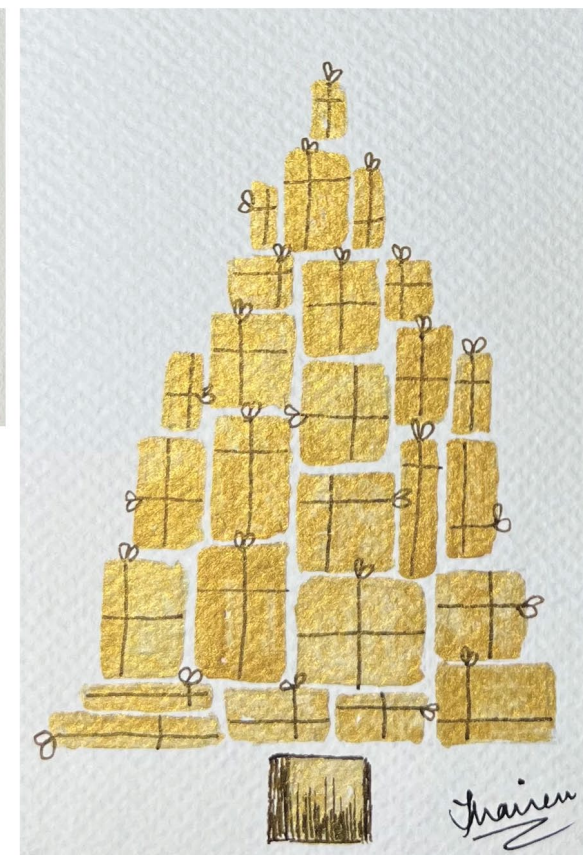
#### **Painting with a Purpose**

Are you looking for a unique greeting card to send to family or friends, or artwork to brighten up your home?

Browse the collections on the website – [www.thariensart.com](http://www.thariensart.com) – now to find a special piece of art.

**Proceeds from all sales go to Hope for Girls and Women Tanzania to support the tertiary education of the girls at the safe houses.**

Take a little bit of time to send a greeting card to a friend, a moment to connect with people to say thank you, share news or just to let them know that you are thinking about them.





# A Thoroughly European American

*Having spent most of her life outside of the United States, Elizabeth Wise, AWC Madrid, uncovers a passion for American culture and its shared history with her beloved Spain.*



Elizabeth Wise

I was born in 1944 and grew up with my sister, Lane, in Pottstown, Pennsylvania, just outside Philadelphia. My grandparents had a beautiful colonial house in Coventryville, close to Pottstown, so during those first years we spent weekends with them, roaming free.

When I was three years old, my parents, my sister and I left for Detroit, Michigan. I remember a nice white house, its back garden with a swing, and a front porch proudly displaying the flag. My sister was a Girl Scout and I remember being so proud of her, always trailing behind, impatient for them to let me become a scout.

Then there were the long car trips from Detroit to my grandparents' house in Coventryville. We would leave in the afternoon, but first I had to have a "siesta" and I was always so nervous they would forget to take me with them! Dad would stay behind, due to his job, so mother would drive all night on the turnpike. I was very proud of her.

In 1949, our family sailed from New Orleans down to Buenos Aires, where my father had been sent in connection with his job. It was the time of Juan Domingo Perón and Evita. For the grown-ups, the situation must have been very interesting – for us children, the instructions were to "keep a low profile and be good!" The American community was wonderful. We were fortunate to

Elizabeth at the modern art exhibit at the Museo Sa Bassa Blanca in Mallorca





have a sports club close by the house, so immediately my sister and I took to swimming and tennis.

We were “very American,” protected by the big American communities that existed then in all important cities all over the world. Dad had our DeSoto car sent down to Buenos Aires, which attracted attention. I, on the other hand, had an American bicycle with thick tires, different from what existed in Argentina at that time.

In 1956, my parents separated. My mother, sister and I passed through the United States and traveled on towards Europe on the USS United States from New York. We first went to Paris, which was beautiful but expensive and difficult because we did not know the language, so we took a train down to Barcelona. Contacting the American Consulate there convinced Mother that we needed to go to Mallorca. At the time, there was an American military base in Puig Major, along with artists and writers there. The word “artist” drew our mother’s attention, so off we went.

Realizing there was no bilingual/ international school on the island, Mother started her own – taking care of the children of military families working at Puig Major and other foreign families whose children needed schooling in

Page 82  
Coventryville – country home (top)

bottom row  
Elizabeth's family in Argentina (left)

11 years old before leaving for Europe (right)

Page 83  
Just arrived in Mallorca, 12 years old



English. Her school still exists and is among the best: Balears International College. However, I could not wait for it to open, so I took up my studies in a Spanish school.

It was a curious period. Franco had power and restrictions were imposed. By that time tourists were starting to flood in, but the Mallorquin society still found it difficult to accept the changes that “we” foreigners brought with us.

When I was 17 years old, I arranged to travel to Bordeaux, France, to study language and



literature at the university. There I met a very nice Spanish boy. He wanted to return to Madrid, and, after two years studying in France, I followed him. There I continued my studies, focusing on commerce, tourism, and translations. I also began attending St. George’s Anglican church.

We married, but since I insisted upon remaining Anglican, they would not authorize us to marry at the main altar in any Catholic church, so I had

to pick the nicest sacristy I could find and we were married there! We had two beautiful children. We divorced in 1991.

I started to work for The Finnish Paper Mills Association in Madrid, selling newsprint paper to Spanish newspapers. After 25 years, I changed to a Swedish company, Holmen Paper, which was also dedicated to newsprint and special qualities for magazines. I retired from this company with a total of 45 happy years of working.

### ***Tell us about your arrival in your new country.***

The arrival with my mother and sister to the island went well. It was October. The weather was warm and I found the island beautiful and relaxing. Knowing the language and coming from another foreign country, where I was used to cultural differences, made it easier for me upon arriving in Spain. Patience, common sense and respect is the name of the game.

### ***What was something about your new country that you were not expecting? What surprised you the most?***

I can recall answering the door one day. There was a nice man leaving an enormous block of ice on the floor in front of me. I waited for instructions as to what to do with it. My mother finally told me it was for the icebox. She then had to explain how the country was a few years behind. She laughed and said it was like living her youth over again!

Having a good appetite, I found the food good. No objections there, although it did take me time to accept the snails they so eagerly offered in the restaurants.

### ***What were the biggest challenges you had to overcome adapting to your new country?***

There were several cultural differences that, as an American girl, I found challenging. For instance, Spanish girls my age could not wear “shorts” and should never be seen with the boys of the neighborhood. This was difficult for me because I was used to playing sports with boys (and beating them). The late lunch and dinner hours also took some getting used to.

The holiday season was also difficult. It was impossible to find a turkey for Thanksgiving or a Christmas tree for Christmas - only manger replicas and porcelain figures.



***If you have children, where did you send them to school? Tell us a bit about why you made that decision?***

Although I wanted my children to attend the American School of Madrid, it was not possible. It was too expensive and the school hours didn't work, considering I worked full time. So both attended the Spanish public school close by. Unfortunately, my husband did not speak English, so I organized through the Universidad Complutense to have American students come to my house twice a week for conversation/reading /playing in English. This extra instruction helped their English enormously, preparing them for a year spent in high school in Seattle, Washington.

***How did you become involved with the Spanish Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution? Tell us more about your activities involving American and Spanish culture and shared history.***

In 2010, in Mallorca after my retirement, I went to visit our US Consular Agent, Amy Christian. They were inaugurating the new offices at Porto Pi, and I was curious to see the new installations

with a view over the port. While talking about everything and nothing, I mentioned that my mother and grandmother were DAR members and that if a chapter were ever to start up in Spain, I would immediately ask to become a member.

She was so happy that she, right then and there, put me in contact with Molly (Mary Ann Long-Fernandez de Mesa, Regent to the España Chapter at the time). When we met in Madrid a few weeks later, I handed her all the papers Mother had kept for my sister and me, should we one day need them, and the ball started rolling. Soon after, I accepted the role of treasurer. Two years later, I became Regent to our España Chapter for six wonderful years.

Becoming a member of NSDAR was a very important step forward for me. Having lived so many years outside my country, I finally had the opportunity to be surrounded by fellow Americans, hearing our unique expressions (which I am still learning!) and above all, learning our history.



At the Finnish Paper office with the director and customers (page 84)

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Elizabeth and her mother in Mallorca (top left)

Elizabeth with her husband (bottom left)

Elizabeth with her two children at summer camp (below)



Together with our chapter members, I learned of Spain's important participation in our revolutionary war, which opened the door to studying the history of the United States at an age when I am open to all information. Books, conferences, computers, Facebook, and WhatsApp have all helped so much.

**BEING AMERICAN**

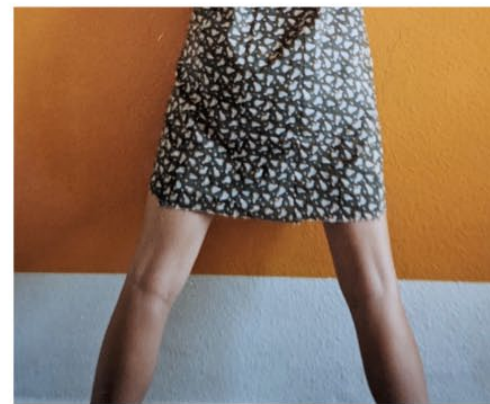
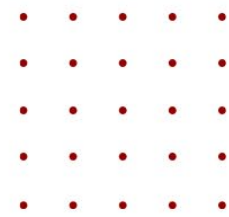
As you can see, I've spent almost my entire life living outside the United States, but that does not exclude my sense of belonging to America. I hang on to my American passport and consider myself a "Europeanized" American - more open-minded than my Spanish friends, more independent. I slowly learned to change my way of dressing, but have a slight English accent due to my years with the Scandinavians, which has caused some funny situations when going back home. They wonder...!

I love Spain, especially after learning its history. We lived and suffered together though the difficult dictatorship years. I am very proud of the changes the country and its people have gone through, as I understand the depth of their feelings, but I will always consider myself an American!



# SAVE THE DATE!

## 24 January 2024



## Inspiring Women Live!

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# Fashion

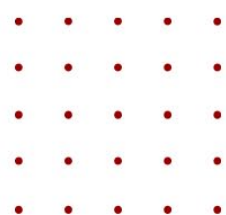
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feature



FAWCO

## Inspired Reader



We are delighted to announce that the Inspired Reader for our "We are Talking Fashion" issue is: Ruth Levy of the American Women's Group in Paris!!

A \$50 donation has been made to the Target Project in Ruth's name.

Do you want a donation to the Target Project made in your name?  
When you are done reading this issue, simply complete the Inspired Reader quiz

**<https://bit.ly/InspiredReaderQuizNov2023>**  
by **Monday, December 11** and, if you answer all the questions correctly, you may be our next Inspired Reader!



# A Love of Opera Sparks Local Passion

*Elizabeth Reifke, AWC Hamburg, educates local members on upcoming opera productions, sharing her passion and making opera accessible to everyone.*



Elizabeth Reifke

I grew up in the Philadelphia area in a small town close to the big city. I've always preferred to live in places like that, which provide a quieter living environment, but are just a short drive away from more urban culture and action. From the start I have always loved languages as well as music – what I lacked in talent, I made up for with enthusiasm. This has never changed! An exchange summer in French-speaking Belgium taught me a great deal about living abroad and life in other countries. As it turned out, this was the perfect preparation for my later life here in Europe.

I received my bachelor's degree and planned to continue my studies, but challenging health problems throughout my 20s jettisoned my intended career path, leaving my direction in life wide open. I explored different directions, including teaching and web design, for several years until I wound up making the big move to Germany. Along the way, I decided to learn some Italian, which led me to Italian opera and my first proper visits to the opera house. So I discovered the world of opera rather late in my life, but there's been no looking back since then!

I met and married my Hamburg-born and bred, husband back in 2000, and we decided to try living together in Germany for a while before making our ultimate decision about where to settle down. After 20+ years, we are still here with the fine addition of two nearly grown-up sons.

Hamburg is a rather rainy place to live, but the weather is always great at the opera house.







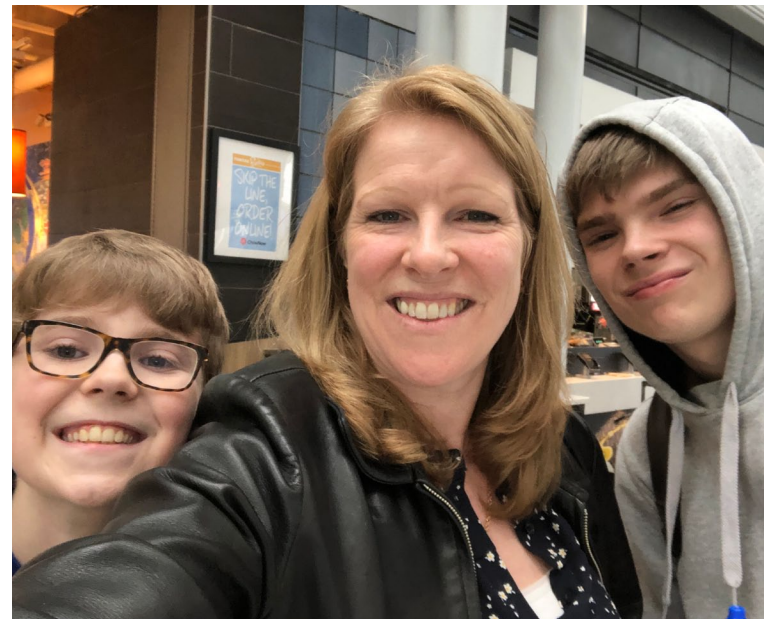
As for work, I am currently self-employed, primarily pursuing job opportunities between the languages – translations and beyond.

**What preparations, if any, did you make before moving to your new country? For example, did you learn the language or study up on the culture? Tell us how you did it?**

I took a lot of German classes in college and spent a semester abroad. Afterwards, however, I neglected my German studies, figuring that I would not use the language much more in my life. Fate had something else in store for me, however, when I met my German husband-to-be 10 years later. It certainly proved to be much easier to refresh my German than it would have been to start learning from the beginning. I did manage to forget all the noun genders along the way, however, to my continuing consternation.

**What was something about your new country that you were not expecting? What surprised you the most?**

I love the openness to and opportunities for travel here in Europe. It might seem obvious by looking at a map, but when you truly realize that you are just a few hours away from entirely new cultural experiences, it's quite the inspiration. Furthermore, the range of cultural opportunities within our own city of Hamburg is truly a treasure trove – opera in particular, of course, but also many other forms of music, theater or art that one might seek.



**Tell us about the opera group you formed in your club.**

In 2012, once my kids had gotten a bit older, I resolved to get back to the opera house as often as I could. I discovered that many people I knew were interested in going to an opera but hesitant about actually attending. Would it be too difficult, too unapproachable, too long? My answer has always been a firm “no, it wouldn’t!” A bit of familiarity with the music, the story, the composer, and, ideally, the current production makes all the difference. So that’s what I do at Opera Club. We choose an upcoming opera and then I seek to make it accessible to everyone, from beginners to budding opera buffs. With videos, recordings and discussions – plus occasional special guests from the Hamburg State Opera ensemble – we make the works come alive together, and then we reap the benefit of these efforts with a “grand finale” outing to the opera house. We have grown into a fantastic, dynamic group and have enjoyed many adventures together over the years.

**How do you feel opera binds people from different cultures together?**

Operas may be performed in different languages, but they all speak a common language of music and of passion. This art form blends vocals, orchestra, theater, visuals and spectacle in an incomparable manner that is readily available for people from any cultural heritage who choose to listen. The world of opera welcomes you unequivocally no matter what your situation might be in terms of age, relationships or nationality.

**What is your favorite opera? Why?**

My favorite has always been and always will be Mozart’s *Le Nozze Di Figaro*. Mozart is my ultimate musical hero; his singular, seemingly impossible genius has always fascinated me. Tchaikovsky’s *Eugene Onegin* is a close second. This opera’s transporting melodies, the poetry of Pushkin and the relatable young woman at its center speak to me completely.

**In your travels, what was your favorite culture you encountered? Why?**

I have always been particularly attracted to Italian culture. Italian opera is just the tip of the iceberg - in my opinion, the expressivity, color and historical richness of Italian literature, music and art simply can’t be matched. I also find Italian landscapes, cities and cuisine to be so

very satisfying, and I look forward to discovering more and more of it in the years to come.

**What advice would you give to someone else planning to embark on their own move to a new country?**

When you move to another country, it can be hard to find your place there. I think it works best to balance your social efforts between natives of your new country and fellow expats (of any nationality). You certainly want to make

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Elizabeth with her husband Sebastian at Oktoberfest in 2019 (left)

Happy international traveling with my two sons. (right)

Happiness is a visit to the Vienna State Opera.





the most of your opportunities to get to know the locals, but also allow yourself plenty of time with those who truly understand your uprooted, “outsider” lifestyle and can provide you with some grounding. And if all else fails, try immersing yourself in music, literature or art. They will always embrace you and you can always find your own personal space there.

**Tell us something interesting about yourself that not many people know.**

I actually met my husband on a Lufthansa flight between Germany and the United States. We both nearly missed the flight, but apparently it was meant to be. Now I greatly enjoy plane spotting together with my younger son, and this seems like the most natural development in the world given our family origins.

**What's your favorite cultural tradition (past or current)?**

I adore German Christmas. Every Advent Sunday leading up to Christmas is something special. Nikolaus day on the 6th creates great excitement for kids. Also, the Christmas markets with their crafts, mulled wine and traditional foods are a wonderful place to meet and enjoy the season. I love the candles, decorations and culinary specialties at home and everywhere you go, as this warm, cozy and colorful season brings the year to its close.

**What is your guiltiest pleasure?**

We don't have any pets of our own due to allergies and frequent travels, but I am just crazy about everyone else's adorable cats, dogs and birds. Bring on those cute pet photos and videos!



Page 92  
Opera Club meeting  
for *Les contes d'  
Hoffmann*, April 2023

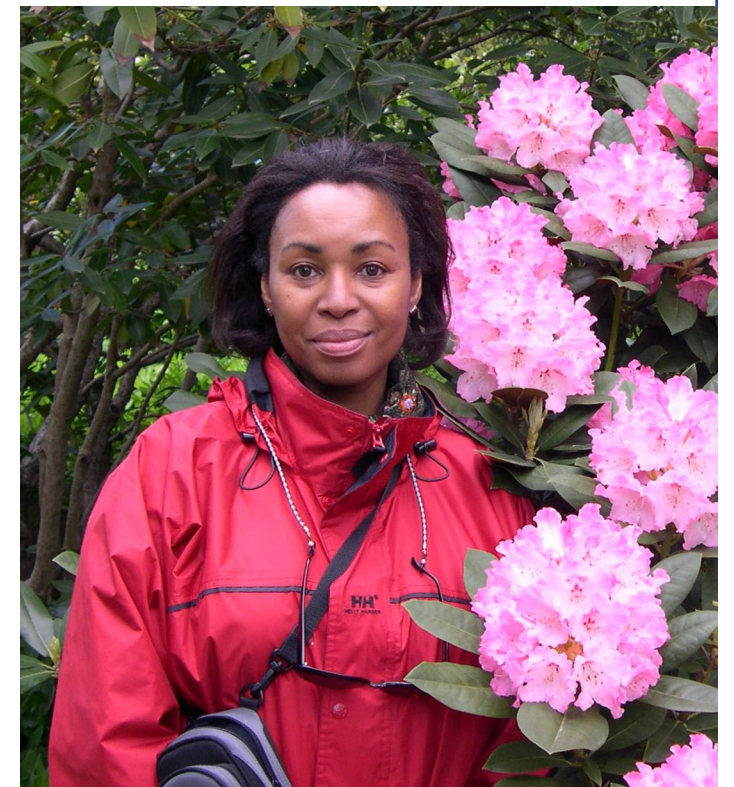
Page 93  
The AWC Opera Club  
at Puccini's *Turandot* in  
November 2022 (above)

*Così fan tutte* outing to  
the HSO, September  
2018 (left)



# *In My Own Words – Thanksgiving for Four*

*Jonelle Lemcke grew up in France and Germany as an army brat. A teenager upon her family's return to the US, she and her family were posted to the Midwest and the East Coast. Discovering and interpreting European and regional US customs became a lifelong passion and a basis for her current work as a Certified Tourist Guide in Denmark. She describes it as, "the best job in the world where every day is different and I get to utilize all of my interests."*



Jonelle Lemcke

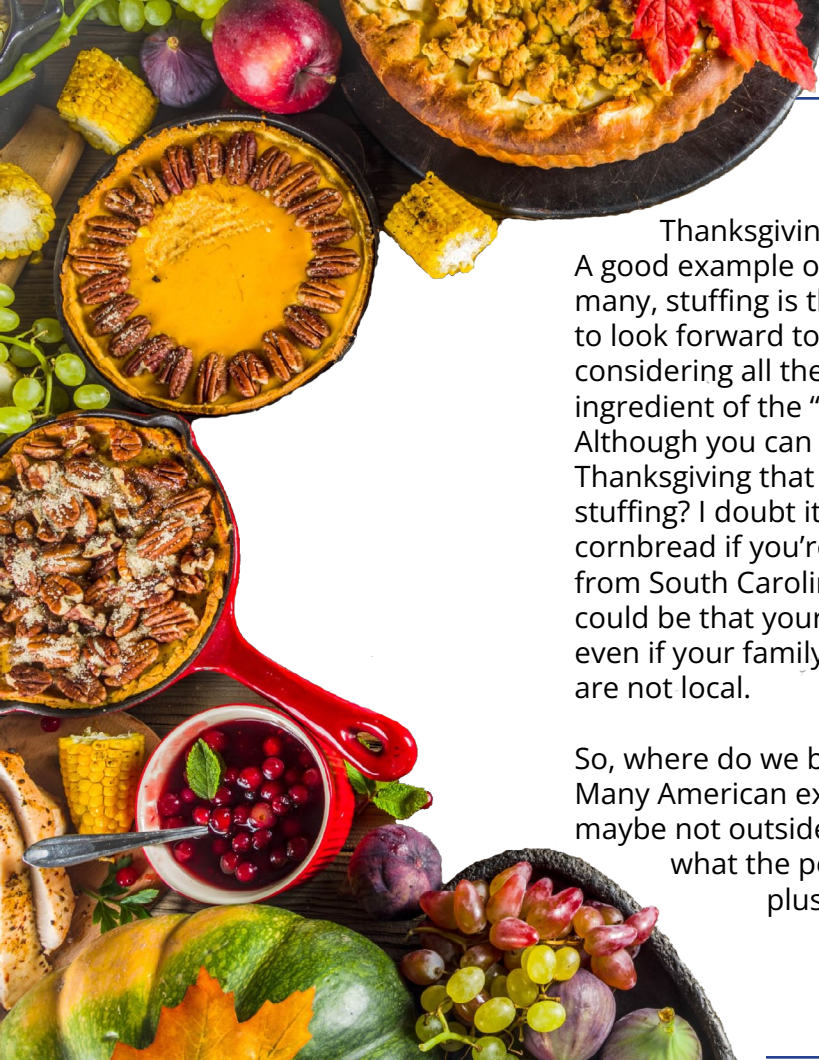
**2**020 was an unprecedented Thanksgiving. All of our Thanksgiving routines and traditions had to be modified in light of the public health crisis. Not the least of was that after which we were advised to limit our Thanksgiving dinners to very small gathering. In this light, I wrote this document entitled, "Thanksgiving for Four."

For Americans, Thanksgiving is about communion. It is the joining of family, friends, neighbors and communities

who share a common mythology and communal history – all of which makes Thanksgiving a "local" celebration. Local football rivalries are played out. Local specialties are on display and eaten. Lifetimes of shared memories with family and friends inform our sense of what Thanksgiving means. Thanksgiving is about kindness and the willingness to share. A sense of community and reaching out to help others to survive. Gratitude for what we have received. There are songs of the season and musical traditions. For me, it is memories of the infamous "school play" that kicked off the holiday season.

Turkey and all the trimmings





Thanksgiving is also very regional in terms of food. A good example of this is that Turkey-Day staple, stuffing. For many, stuffing is the stuff of dreams and daydreams. Something to look forward to all year, to save stomach room for when considering all the other food possibilities on the table. It's a key ingredient of the "day-after sandwich" that one looks forward to! Although you can have stuffing on any given day of the year, it's Thanksgiving that counts. What goes into your family's traditional stuffing? I doubt it's oysters if you're from New Mexico or cornbread if you're from Minnesota. I doubt it's kielbasa if you're from South Carolina. Of course, given population mobility, it could be that your family tradition includes these ingredients even if your family finds itself in an area where these ingredients are not local.

So, where do we begin to create our own Thanksgiving dinner? Many American expats have hosted Thanksgiving before but maybe not outside the US. Everyone has a picture in mind of what the perfect Thanksgiving entails. Here is my guide, plus a link to additional resources.



### *A Few Additional Things to Consider for the Perfect Thanksgiving Dinner:*

Low-level background music for the evening. Different types for your welcome and at the table.

- Adjusted lighting, candles, LED candles (non-live flames)
- What personal decorative items do you love, but rarely use?
- How would you like your guests to help/ contribute? Flowers, wine/beverages, a dish, cleanup, setting the table, shopping, food prep, vacuuming, dusting, and/or washing up afterwards? Make arrangements with them in advance.
- Do you have supplies for packing up doggy bags for your guests after the meal?
- Do you have an extra pair of rubber gloves and all supplies for cleanup?

Finally, **RELAX AND ENJOY YOUR GUESTS!**

### *List Making:*

- What are your favorite Thanksgiving memories? Music? Atmosphere? Foods? Smells? Outfits? Poetry? Literature? Jokes? Stories? Think in terms of what you can recreate in the here and now. Which memories do you want to relive and share? What makes you smile?
- Don't wait until the last minute to start planning.
- Plan your menu with a specific eye to your guests, keeping in mind special diets or allergies, the ages of those at the table and disabilities.
- Don't try to do everything from scratch and prepare as much as possible in advance. Choose a simple, but generous menu.
- Set the table, decorate and create the atmosphere with your favorite cutlery, tablecloths/napkins, serving and glassware. Check if anything needs polishing, ironing or special attention.
- Prepare your shopping list and shop early... not often!



### *Organizing the Meal:*

- Welcome drink: alcoholic or non-alcoholic?
- Main meal with all side dish possibilities.
- Appropriate beverages for the meal.
- Dessert: pie, cake, ice cream, sorbet, cookies, and/or pudding. Having sorbet available is highly recommended after such a heavy meal.
- Coffee, tea, after-dinner drinks.

### *Organizing the Recipes for your Menu:*

- Family or friends' recipes
- Cookbooks
- Regional recipes: Check the websites of local newspapers in cities of interest. For example, here's one from the archives of the Des Moines Iowa Register; it's entitled, "Holiday Dishes All Iowans Grew Up With... and don't you dare make fun of them!"



### *Jonelle's Personal, Abbreviated Menu:*

- Pumpkin Soup with Honey & Cloves
- Stuffing
- Savory turkey or chicken
- Cranberry sauce with orange zest
- Sautéed kale
- Dessert: assortment of purchased baked goods & lemon sorbet

Click here for additional recipe resources and Jonelle's recipes.

Originally written by Jonelle Lemcke in 2021.



# Building Bridges Between Cultures

*Psychotherapist Harriet Cannon, FAUSA, returned to the United States from a posting in Chile with a new passion, helping others with cultural transitions.*



Harriet Cannon

**M**y parents fell in love at a Army base after WWII. They were from different parts of the United States, with different religions, different world views, urban and rural. Family holidays were spent driving the blue highways from Detroit to the northeast and southeast to visit family. Both my parents loved history. We would stop in small towns for the flavor of regional delights, parks and monuments.

Although much of my childhood was spent in suburban Detroit, Michigan, my heart's home, where our family clan gathered every summer, was the South Carolina low country and our family cottage built on stilts. When my father died, my mother went to work full time. Back in the day, there wasn't affordable summer childcare. My brothers and I spent summers with my grandparents at the beach, free and safe, body surfing and crabbing with my uncles and cousins. Along with wanderlust, at an early age, my brothers and I developed the skill of code-switching between our diverse family cultures to keep everything copacetic.

I went to Stephens College, then transferred to the University of Southern California, where I became interested in social justice. After graduation, my first job was as one of two white teachers at 112<sup>th</sup> Street School in Los Angeles in the 1970s, personally experiencing the challenges faced by ethnic minorities in a workplace setting.

The Atacama Desert in Northern Chile, the driest place in the world





Charlie and I married and had two children. I grew interested in how place and family history influence lifestyle and mental health. I went to grad school at Seattle University and worked in community mental health and in private practice with specialty licenses in Marriage and Family Therapy and Addiction Treatment.

When my husband's employer offered him a job in Santiago, Chile, he was thrilled. I was not keen to leave my professional work, and our early-adolescent children were happy with friends and their school. A colleague suggested I contact the Department of State. After going through a robust security clearance process, I was offered a contract to provide mental health services to US Embassy staff and their families. In Chile, my contract expanded to services for the other English-speaking embassies in Santiago, such as the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and other non-government English-speaking or bilingual expats.

We returned to Seattle, a hub for naval architecture, my husband's profession. As a psychotherapist, I had a portable career and could work anywhere, so there was no conflict in our choice. Almost immediately, the Boeing

Company hired me as a consultant on expatriation-repatriation and cultural transitions. I also had a private practice working with multicultural people of all kinds.

Since 2000, I have traveled nationally and internationally presenting at conferences like the International Family Therapy Association and Families in Global Transitions, as well as giving training on living/working across cultures for educators and the public. I co-authored a self-help book, *Mixed Blessings: A Guide for Multicultural and Multiethnic Couples*, published in 2013. In 2019, I closed my business to follow my dream of writing fiction. In 2022, *Exiled South* was published and has been well received. Currently I am working on a second novel and having great fun! Of course, my fictional stories have a multicultural theme.

Charlie and I have been married 50 years. We now live on the Olympic Peninsula of Washington State. On a clear day we can see Vancouver Island from the end of our street. We have two grown children and four grandchildren.

**What preparations, if any, did you make before moving to a new country? For example, did you learn the language or study up on the culture? Tell us how you did it?**

The company Charlie worked for was very unsophisticated about cultural transitions. To put it bluntly, our family was dropped on our heads in a country that had a small international expat community and very few Americans. We lived "on the economy" in a rental house, not in an expat compound. Our immediate neighbors did not speak English.

Fortunately, Charlie had been to Santiago on business, and we had the experiences of vacationing in Peru and Bolivia. We took Spanish classes at a community college before expatriating.

Christmas 2022: Charles Cannon (husband), Harriet, Ned Cannon (son) Kate Cannon (granddaughter), Liza Kishpaugh (granddaughter), Bridget Cannon (granddaughter), Maura Cannon (daughter in law), Sarah Cannon (daughter), Will Kishpaugh (grandson)



Loading our boat on the shore of Puno, Lake Titicaca, Peruvian side, 1998. Headed to Isla de los Oros, a small Indigenous group who still live on floating islands in the lake. They built islands of reeds that grow on the lake and fish the lake in beautiful reed boats. The culture began for this group when they retreated to the lake to escape being enslaved by the Inca. Puno has become gentrified with upscale tourist hotels. Los Oros may no longer be wearing native dress for everyday wear as they were 25 years ago.

The teacher knew Chile and warned us the Chilean accent is difficult for North Americans who learn Mexican Spanish. She was spot on. Upon arriving in Chile, we quickly came to understand how studying Spanish in the United States left important knowledge gaps, some of them humorous and some pretty embarrassing.

**Tell us about your arrival. Was there anything you immediately noticed that was different from your home country?**

We arrived in June, the worst of Santiago's damp, smoggy winter, thinking, "What have we gotten ourselves into?" Our first jet lagged morning we walked to the nearest market for the basics and had to laugh at ourselves because our academic Spanish did not give us the language for Clorox or laundry soap. The cuts of meat/pork did not look like anything we

were used to in North America. This was the era before iPhones and translation apps. In the beginning, we relied on packaging appearances, with very interesting surprises. Our other first impression was that Santiago residents on the street, both men and women, were beautiful and dressed in the latest fashion, with scarves artfully wound around their necks. By comparison, we felt tall, pale and frumpy.

**If you have children, where did you send them to school? Tell us a bit about why you made that decision?**

When we moved to Chile, our children were 11 and 14. There was only one choice that provided core academic classes in English, Nido de Aguilas (Eagle's Nest), a K-12 "International School" built on a hill in a village suburb of Santiago. Native English speakers were the





The "Sugarloaf" in Rio de Janeiro (left)

Page 103  
1970s boat building in Southern California. Harriet is seated, third from left. (top)

Market at Aguas Calientes in the 1990s before the town became a high end hotel tourist mecca (middle)

Hiking *Torres del Pines*, Patagonia Chile, 2000. (bottom)



minority. In our son's graduating class of 50, there were six. Our children became bilingual practically overnight. The Nido's classes were small, and our children developed deep friendships with classmates they remain in touch with and visit to this day.

Reentry for our children was intense after having assimilated so deeply. Our son went directly to university, where he found "other" foreign students in culture shock to hang out with. Although the Seattle-area high school our 16-year-old daughter entered was diverse, repatriation was very difficult as there were no other students returning from living internationally.

### ***How did your overseas experiences affect your career when you returned home?***

When we moved to Chile, I had no idea I would return to the United States with a life-changing professional specialty. Before Chile, I had traveled in Europe and South America. Some trips lasted several months, but until Chile, I had not understood the flexibility and determination it takes to live successfully overseas. As an expat and a professional counselor, I had plenty of opportunity to observe my family's struggles and successes

as well as those of others. When my Spanish became proficient, I was invited to consult with a Chilean group of psychiatrists and psychologists who served multicultural clients living in Santiago, in addition to my work with the State Department. When we returned to the United States, I became involved in the Society for Intercultural Education, Training and Research, Families in Global Transition and the Boeing Company, in addition to private practice.

### ***What are the biggest challenges you had to overcome adapting to your new country?***

Misogyny was the biggest challenge. In the 1990s, Chilean women were 30 years behind their sisters in the United States. Argentina and Brazil were leaders in women's rights at the time. It was really difficult, painful, to explain to my daughter how there were no girls' soccer teams she could try out for. She, like her brother, played soccer since the age of six. At school recess, Sarah would shock the boys with her ball-handling skills on the playground. She took up modern dance and enjoyed it, though it never filled the love spot she had for soccer.

The lack of professional mobility for women in Latin America also surprised me. Physicians, attorneys and psychologists practiced in

settings under male directors or had home offices. School principals and department chairs at universities were all men. Domestic violence and rape were tolerated in a way they were not in North America.

### ***How did you embrace your new culture? Is there something you can tell us about that culture that made you happy?***

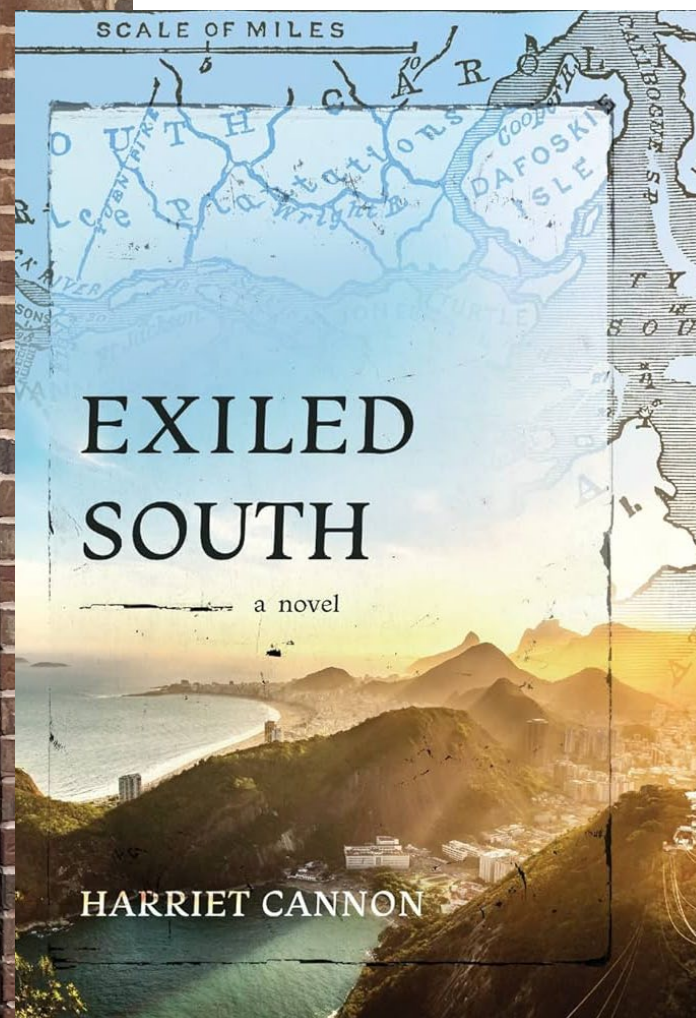
We were fortunate as one of Charlie's colleagues had studied in the United States and took us under his family's wing, inviting us for meals and showing us where to shop. He had children near our children's ages. The kids got along. Through the American Women's Club, I met long-time expat women who were an invaluable resource for just about everything!

Chilean folk songs are lovely, with traditional guitar or sometimes brass accompaniment. They often have unrequited love themes not unlike traditional country and western songs in the United States. The songs are easy to sing along with and are often done as sing-alongs in bars or at parties. On September 18, National Independence Day, with the *Festivas Patrias* and Chilean *Cuecua*, there are dances at parties and in the street, and a great time is had by all.

### ***In your travels, what was your favorite culture you encountered? Why?***

Over time, I have been fortunate to visit several Brazilian states, both rural and urban, for work and vacations. I love Brazilian music, the country's energy and its incredible physical beauty. I am not fluent in Portuguese, but with its similarity to Spanish and French, I have picked up enough of the language to communicate.





HARC - Pat Conroy Literary Center, Beaufort, SC, *Exiled South* book tour, 2022 (above)

Book cover for *Exiled South* (top right)

Harriet and daughter Sarah, both authors, discussing *Exiled South* in Edmonds, WA. June, 2022 (right)

Walking the streets in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, one sees a diverse population not unlike major American cities like New York, Chicago, San Francisco or Seattle. Whether it's urban or rural, I feel at home in Brazil.

**What advice would you give to someone else planning to embark on their own move to a new country?**

- Find someone in your stage of life who has lived in the country you plan to move to. FAWCO and FAUSA are excellent resources. Read up on culture shock.
- Research the culture before you move. Make it fun with movies and music.
- If you have children, research educational and home school options before you go.
- Start language lessons as soon as you know you will be expatriating.
- If you or family members have health or mental health conditions under current treatment, beware of accepting the assignment. Consider what many companies now offer, a long-distance family relationship with frequent visits. If you have special needs, are the resources you need available? If not, do not accept the assignment no matter how attractive the employer makes it sound. As a mental health professional, I know coming home early - failing the assignment - is tough on careers and families.

**Tell us something interesting about yourself that not many people know.**

When my children were young, I used to have a potter's wheel and electric kiln in our garage. I made earthenware mugs and dishes, sold them at the street fair and gave away more of my pottery than was probably wanted to friends and families for birthdays and Christmas. I still have a few pieces of my hippie 1970s pots in the back of the cupboard. After all these years I can't quite bring myself to toss them.

**Where is the most beautiful place in the world you have been? What made it so special?**

In the late 1980s, when the Sendero Luminoso, the Peruvian anarchist group, was terrorizing the country, there were few tourists at the Inca Historical Sanctuary, Machu Picchu. At that time there was a small, simple hotel at the ruins where my husband and I spent the night. Early in the morning, we walked in the company of rabbits searching for breakfast and llamas owned by local farmers munching grass around stacked stone walls still standing without mortar

1000 years on. We climbed a prominent peak at the sanctuary and watched the sun rise over the Andes with a clear blue sky.

**Is there a culture you'd like to learn more about? Why?**

Northwest Tribes and First Nations Canadian totem poles. I have traveled in the West and Northwest for many years. Wherever I travel, I am fascinated by cultural myths and totems. Because I live in the Pacific Northwest, I want to dive deep into our Northwest tribal myths and creation stories.

**What's your favorite cultural tradition (past or current)?**

Thanksgiving. Just the word says it all. The tradition of sharing food with friends and family is as good as it gets.



Harriet with one of the 5,000-year-old standing stones in the Temple Wood Circle, Kilmartin Meadows, Scotland, about 90 miles northwest of Glasgow, 2023



# Cross-Stitching & Danish "Hygge"

*Amber Milland grew up in California with European parents and moved to Denmark, her father's native country, at 19. There, she soon embraced the culture, some of which was familiar to her from her childhood. She has worked at a bookstore, a craft store and currently works at a high-end supermarket. Amber has been a member of the American Women's Club of Denmark for many years and loves cross-stitching in one of its clubs. She also likes traveling to Germany to enjoy her mother's native culture.*



Amber Milland

Cross-stitching, like most handwork, belongs to what is called "women's work" in many cultures. My cross-stitching work is both a legacy and a combination of my heritage from three cultures. Carried out on my own and in the monthly meetings of AWC Denmark's Café Craft group, my work combines self-expression in art with *hygge*, that feeling of coziness generated by, among other things, collectively doing crafts together.

I was born and raised in California with a Danish father and German mother, so I grew up with a variety of cultural traditions: Thanksgiving, Halloween, Royal Copenhagen porcelain, open-faced sandwiches, stollen, live Christmas



**Ribbit!**  
One of Amber's favorite and most colorful stitching projects



candles, Anton Berg chocolate and H.C. Anderson, to name a few. But one cultural element had a special influence on me: the arts, especially drawing and cross-stitch.

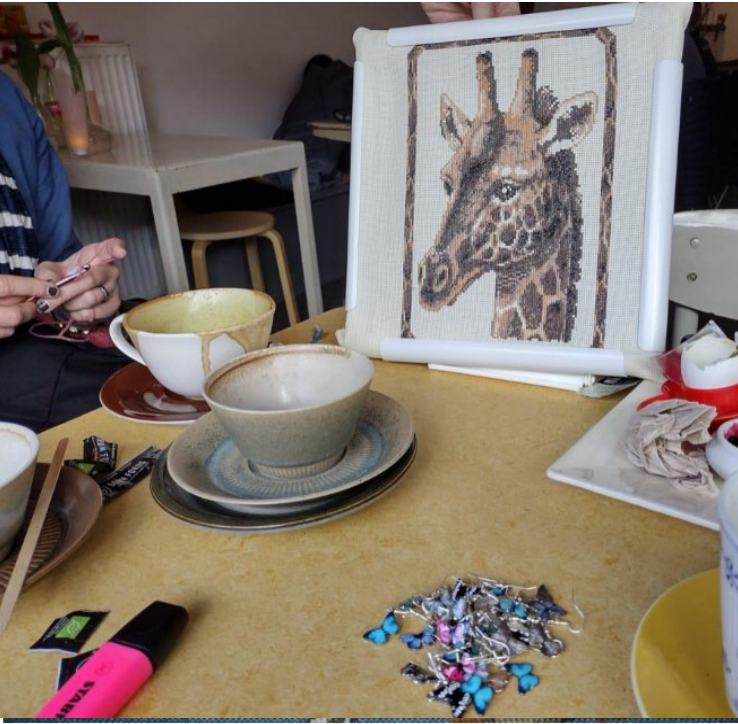
As a child, I always looked for an outlet for my creative energy; I loved art class in school and dabbled in cross-stitch at home. My mom was a seamstress and stitcher, and a very good one at that. She is my cross-stitch inspiration. For example, growing up, I had an alphabet wall hanging she made by *Haandarbejdets Fremme* (The National Embroiderers Guild of Denmark) and a drawstring bag she stitched, which I still use today. So, by the time I moved to Denmark in 1990, when I was almost 20 years old, I knew about Erica Wilson (American embroiderer), Eva Rosenstand and Permin (two prominent Danish stitching designers).

My cross-stitch passion really took off in 1995. It's calming, relaxing, stress release, my mental medicine and good for my all-round well-being. My soul is fed with needle and thread. Since then (almost 30 years later) it has turned into over 100 different projects, large and small, for myself and for gifts. In particular, I have stitched heart brooches for several embassies in Denmark, each heart combining the Danish flag with that of the other country concerned; heart

brooches with the Danish and American flags for members of the Board of AWC Denmark – and recently for AWC to give to our Honorary President and her husband (the US ambassador and his wife).

Some of my favorite things to stitch are pieces that represent other cultures. For example: in Copenhagen (one of my first pieces), *Gammel Strand* (a place in Copenhagen that the bus drives through every day); Tutankhamun and Nefertiti; a scene of Lake Como in Italy (which I personally visited); and a bald eagle. Hard to choose, but one of my all-time favorites is the frogs.

And stitching is definitely *hyggeligt*. Through the AWC Denmark, the Café Craft enables me to meet up with a few other women once a month at a local coffee shop, and you can certainly feel the cozy cultural connection. Ranging from jewelry to giraffes, some of our work are gifts that help to raise the visibility of AWC Denmark and to raise money for our charitable projects. On the internet, I have made friends in the USA, France and England, and we do stitch-a-longs together. Stitching brings people together both locally and multiculturally, broadens horizons and gives me inspiration for the ever-growing projects waiting in the wings.



Stitchn' and chillin' at my beloved Erica Wilson floor stand, which my mom also used. (left)

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From top left

Tutty and Neffi

Welcome sign,  
stitched this at  
least 5 times as  
gifts.

Lake Como, Italy

At *hyggelig*  
meetups, all  
are welcome!

*Gammel Strand*,  
central  
Copenhagen





# In Our Own Words – Embracing Culture

*We asked FAWCO and FAUSA members about the most important aspects of cultures in their lives – home and away.*

*Here is a selection of their answers ...*

**W**hat tradition or other aspect of culture from your homeland do you miss the most when you live abroad? Have you been able to replicate that tradition in other countries where you have lived?

## **Anitra Kitts, FAWCO Rep, Munich IWC**

*I miss good Mexican food, proper brown sugar and thick bacon. I've been known to cure my own pork belly when the craving is high... Dungeness Crab and the Copper River Salmon run.*

## **Brenda Brinkley, FAUSA President**

Brenda figured out how to replicate her favorite Mexican dishes:

*"After talking with FAWCO club members from Bern, I learned where to purchase Spanish rice, pinto and refried beans, and that Aldi had the best cheddar cheese! We learned to make our own Mexican meals - without the fries and mayo...and we may have had the only cast iron tortilla press in town."*

**C**offee anyone?  
Ethiopian  
coffee ceremony





**It's not only food  
that's important,  
it's also sharing  
food with friends  
and relatives.**

***Ethel Brome M'Baya, President,  
AWBS International Women's Club***

*In the Zambian culture, food is to be shared, no matter how little, with invited and uninvited guests alike. I have replicated this to a small degree by cooking Zambian food for friends who have never tasted it. Eating together, often off the same plate, is a bonding experience. Sharing the little you have shows love.*

**W**hat object, taste, sound or other symbol best represents to you the culture of your homeland?

***Fannie Kakonge, President, AWA Kenya***

*I often miss certain foods, festivals, big parades and family celebrations. I also miss social customs amongst family and friends such as greetings, gestures and etiquettes, which are an integral part of my identity, music and dance included. Most important is the special bonding with family and community that's difficult to duplicate.*

***Lyla Taylor, President, AWC Zurich***

Lyla misses Halloween:  
*"It's slowly becoming a happening here, although nowhere near to the extent it is in the U.S. The first year, we had one Trick or Treater. After 17 years of crazy decorating and sitting outside dressed as a witch with my hubby and a big bowl of candy (brought back from America in pumpkin, ghost and witch shapes and given in Trick or Treat bags with Halloween pencils and erasers), last year I had 79 kids."*



***Bev Bachmeyer, FAWCO Rep,  
AWA Vienna***

*I think what I miss the most is the open, friendly atmosphere in the United States. Particularly on the US West Coast, people tend to approach new people spontaneously, talking to them in shopping lines, helping each other and working together.*



**Ethel**

*The mighty Mosi-oa-Tunya Falls in Zambia (The Smoke that Thunders), also known as Victoria Falls.*



The Ocean ... Pacific City, Oregon

Bev



What best represents me, being from a small suburb of Houston, TX, would be the movie **Urban Cowboy**, which starred John Travolta and Debra Winger. *Urban Cowboy* was filmed in the small town I grew up in, and I would watch it when I was homesick while living in Bern.



Brenda



*Powell's Books. Blocks of buildings converted to one bookstore that supports a rainy Sunday afternoon browsing the shelves and a place where I can read all the books since they are all in English.*

Anitra



*The Statue of Liberty. Emma Lazarus' immortal words in her sonnet, **The New Colossus** "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free."*

**Jonelle Lemcke, RC Region 2, AWC Denmark**



**W**hat new tradition you have discovered in other cultures/ countries do you admire and have or would like to incorporate into your own lifestyle?



Ethel admires the British acceptance: "... of disabilities, mental health issues, and diverse sexualities. I am proud to say I was involved in raising awareness of dyslexia in Zambia a few years ago when I started a reading program for children."



**I**n what way does your club celebrate your members' culture when it comes to food?

AWC Denmark: "Food/potlucks and arts and crafts traditions. We have a very active arts and crafts group."

Munich IWC: "We're an international club, so we are always making room for each other's traditions. One example is of course the Holiday Lunch. One year, it is planned for by the Brits, another year the Americans, the third turn is the Germans, and the fourth is the 'everyone else' category, which can be complex for both the planners and the club members. Also, for a couple of years, a group of Indian women planned a Diwali lunch for all of us, which was great."

FAUSA encourages members to stay connected via ZOOM with the friends they've left behind: "ZOOM has been a great tool for those who want to stay connected to their friends and fellow FAWCO members overseas. We hold our annual meeting and Getaway Gala in different cities each year so that all members have the opportunity to share their hometown and traditions."

Bev loves: "...the Advent markets and the Glühwein (hot, mulled wine). The markets also provide a great venue to meet up with friends."



AWBS International Women's Club: "Our club celebrates different holidays and marks occasions with activities such as food explorers, where members go to different places to learn about and enjoy foods from different parts of the world. During Black History Month I will share information with our members according to this year's theme of 'Celebrating Sisterhood.'"

AWC Zurich: If it's an American tradition, we celebrate it. A BBQ for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, Halloween Parties for our Club Members' kids, A big Club get-together for Thanksgiving and Santa photos.





## Women & Democracy

## Call for February Nominees!

2024 could be a pivotal year for democracy. While not perfect, it is the most representative form of government in the world, yet examples of attempts to marginalize or destroy democracy are making headlines everyday.



*Inspiring Women* wants to start the year by recognizing those who through their work, their actions and lives lived, have chosen to uplift democracy. Our theme for the February issue is "Women and Democracy." Do you know someone who keeps the light shining on voters' rights? Is there someone in your club who has run for public office? Someone who has been a poll worker? An election monitor? A member who might teach about democracy either in a democratic or non-democratic country? Is there a veteran amongst us who has been on the front lines fighting for democracy? These are the stories we want to share with our readers!

If you know someone in your club who would be a good subject for a profile or whose story might make a great feature, please send us their name, their email address and a brief description of their work. A picture is worth a thousand words and we would also love to include some photos that tell the story of democracy.

**To nominate candidates for profiles**, please send the candidate's name, candidate's email address and a brief description (50-100 words) of why you think they are inspiring and fit the theme for the issue.

Send the information to Profiles Coordinator, [inspiringwomenprofiles@fawco.org](mailto:inspiringwomenprofiles@fawco.org).

**To submit a feature:** Features are used to complement the theme. This can be broadly applied; let us know what you'd like to write about! Our features are 700-800 words plus photos. Contact Features Coordinator Connie Phlipot, [inspiringwomenfeatures@fawco.org](mailto:inspiringwomenfeatures@fawco.org).

### Deadline for Nominations

The deadline for submitting nominees and feature topics for our next issue is ...

**November 20<sup>th</sup>**



Founded in 1931, FAWCO is a global women's NGO (non-governmental organization), an international network of independent volunteer clubs and associations comprising 58 member clubs in 31 countries on six continents. FAWCO serves as a resource and a voice for its members; seeks to improve the lives of women and girls worldwide, especially in the areas of human rights, health, education and the environment; advocates for the rights of US citizens overseas; and contributes to the global community through its Global Issues Teams and [The FAWCO Foundation](#), which provides development grants and education awards. Since 1997, FAWCO has held special consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council.

### OUR MISSION STATEMENT

**FAWCO is an international federation of independent organizations whose mission is:**

- to build strong support networks for its American and international membership;
- to improve the lives of women and girls worldwide;
- to advocate for the rights of US citizens overseas; and
- to mobilize the skills of its membership in support of global initiatives for education, the environment, health and human rights.

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### Photographs are integral to our magazine.

We end each issue with a full page photograph that offers a unique perspective on its theme. The photo can be provocative, amusing, entertaining and/or a photo that you think says "That's Inspired!" for each issue.

Please contact: [inspiringwomen.editor@fawco.org](mailto:inspiringwomen.editor@fawco.org)

Our photo-centric feature "Through My Lens" is a compilation of photos and short captions in keeping with the issue's theme.

Please contact: [inspiringwomenfeatures@fawco.org](mailto:inspiringwomenfeatures@fawco.org)



## more about this issue

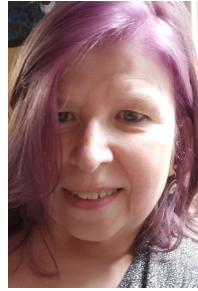
## The Inspiring Women Team



Michele



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Kristin



Connie



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Hollis

For more information about this magazine, please contact a member of the *Inspiring Women* team:

Editor in Chief, Michele Hendrikse Du Bois, [inspiringwomen.editor@fawco.org](mailto:inspiringwomen.editor@fawco.org)

Advertising and Sponsorship Manager, Elsie Bose, [advertising@fawco.org](mailto:advertising@fawco.org)

Layout Coordinator, Kristin D. Haanæs, [inspiringwomen.layout@fawco.org](mailto:inspiringwomen.layout@fawco.org)

Features Coordinator, Connie Phlipot, [inspiringwomenfeatures@fawco.org](mailto:inspiringwomenfeatures@fawco.org)

Profiles Coordinator, Cristin Middlebrooks, [inspiringwomenprofiles@fawco.org](mailto:inspiringwomenprofiles@fawco.org)

Marketing Manager, Hollis Vaughen, [iw.marketing@fawco.org](mailto:iw.marketing@fawco.org)

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### Acknowledgements:

Thanks to our profilees (Alexandra, Usha, Roberta, Arlene, Murray, Sue, Cynthia, Elizabeth Wise, Elizabeth Reifke and Harriet) and our feature contributors (Svitlana, Frances, Kirstin, Jo, Jonelle, Amber, Anitra, Fannie, Bev, Lyla, Mary Stewart, Ethel and Brenda) for their work on the articles and also for the use of their photos and those of their friends and families.

The cover photo is of Alexandra Popkov, AWC Bogotá. Titled *Fall, Bogotá* by @alesiareyohoto (Alesia Rey). Special thanks to the proofreading team of Karen Boeker (AWC Denmark), Barbara Bühling (AIWC Düsseldorf), Mary Stewart Burgher (AWC Denmark), Sallie Chaballier (AAWE Paris), Janet Davis (AIWC Cologne), Carol-Lyn McKelvey (AIWC Cologne/FAUSA), and Jenny Taylor (AIWC Cologne and Düsseldorf), Teddie Weyr (AWA Vienna) and Roberta Zöllner (Munich IWC).

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# That's Inspired!



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2018. A yearly skate on  
the world's longest rink!