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May 2017

ASTA Mid-America Chapter



2014-2015-2016 CHAPTER OF THE YEAR

Dear «First Name»,

I have just returned from a trip to Cuba and I wanted to share a few observations from that experience.

As you are most likely aware the United States reopened its Embassy in Havana during a much hyped ceremony in August of last year. Many people both inside and outside of the travel industry have been anxious to see restrictions on travel to Cuba relaxed so that Americans could access these destinations more easily.

I believe that a combination of pent up demand and positive messaging by the Obama Administration led many people to conclude that steps either had been or would soon be taken to open travel to Cuba for the General Public. This of course is not the case, but you can see how discussions of direct flights from the US to Havana could create confusion and raise expectations.

As much as I enjoyed my time in Cuba, it was evident their infrastructure could not handle a significant increase of tourists from the US and that the Cuban government does not seem to have this as one of their main priorities.

To many Americans Cuba's messaging would come across as being defensive and distrustful if not hostile toward America.

On the positive side the Cuban people are friendly, many vistas are beautiful and points of interest like monuments on San Juan Hill, the museums of Fine Art and the Revolution would be of genuine interest to most Americans.

The various bars, restaurants and residences frequented by Hemingway receive almost as much attention as the number of places where you can purchase Cuban rum and cigars.

There are good restaurants and interesting varieties of cuisines, they are just not easy to find. Still when you do find them they are worth the effort. Much will change in the tourist experience, but I predict it will take much longer for it to develop than most people assume.

Cuba is a place to experience, but in addition to your usual thorough homework, try to talk to a travel professional who have been there recently, when planning trips to this destination.

On the home front I need to mention ASTA's Capitol Summit and in particular Legislative Day coming up on June 7th in Washington DC. If you haven't registered, there is still time. [Click here for more information.](#)

Finally, I would like to end my last few newsletter with a recognition and thank you to my Executive Board who have been so great to work with and so important to achieving our successes. Let me start with our 1st Vice President. The person in this position must be prepared to consult with the President on all major decisions and even step in for the President when the situation arises.

Our 1st Vice President not only fulfilled this role, but took responsibility for a large part of our annual TravelFest events. These meetings represent the principal source of revenues for our Chapter.

Barbara Mazzola has been an ASTA member for 12 years. During that time she has served as a city chair, treasurer for 4 years, 2nd Vice President for 2 years and 1st Vice President for 2 years.

Barb has stepped up to fill in for me on several occasions, but the one that I will always remember was in June of 2015. I was supposed to attend a Chapter President's meeting in Chicago starting on Friday evening. My plans were to drive to Chicago on Friday morning. My husband had been having some health problems, but we still planned to make the trip. Around 11:00am on that Friday it became apparent that there was no way I could attend this meeting. I called Barb, who was grocery shopping at the time, and asked her if she could attend in my place. She said "Can you get me an airline ticket? If you will take care of that, Joe (Barb's husband) can pack my suitcase and I can be at the airport in 3 hours." That is exactly what happened ~ certainly "stepping up to the plate" when needed. That evening my husband was hospitalized for 2 weeks, thank goodness we weren't out of town! Thank you Barb!

Happy Memorial Day!



Claudia Darling
Chapter President

Board Members:
Barbara Mazzola, 1st Vice President
Pam Faust, 2nd Vice President
Pat Reynolds, Treasurer
Connie Corbett, Secretary

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING CHAPTER & NATIONAL EVENTS

ASTA Mid-America Chapter

• **All Chapter Meeting** - June 8-10, 2017 - will take place at the [Nemacolin Woodlands Resort](#) just south of Pittsburgh. Our featured speaker this year will be Arnie Weissmann, Editor and Chief of Travel Weekly. Arnie is an important and well respected voice for our industry. He can be expected to discuss "big picture" issues that will be important to our business interests in 2017.

Registration is Still Open!

• **ASTA Mid-America Summer Meetings** - Join us for breakfast, lunch or dinner in your city to learn more about what exciting news Star Clippers Cruises, Authentic Ireland, Celebrity, Princess Cruises, Globus and Central Holidays have to share with you! Meetings beginning June 26 thru July 20, 2017. Your invitation is coming soon! Registration is required. These meetings are Free.

ASTA National

ASTA has an exciting line-up of informative, educational and enjoyable events planned through 2017. We hope you will join us for:

- [ASTA Capital Summit](#) - June 4-6, 2017, Washington DC; which includes:
 - [Premium Business Summit](#), Washington DC, June 5-6, 2017
 - CAC Meeting, June 6, 2017, and
 - [ASTA Legislative Day](#), Washington DC, June 7, 2017
- [ASTA / NACTA Bahamas Showcase](#), - June 21-24, 2017
- [ASTA Global Convention](#), San Diego, CA - August 26-29, 2017

The global advocates for travel. Go with the pros.

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