

CELEBRATING

40 YEARS
1978-2018



IWA

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF BUCHAREST

Newsletter

NOVEMBER 1988

A Birthday Toast



Here's to you!

International Women's Association

Happy Birthday

1978 - 1988

**NOW
IN ITS
10TH
YEAR**

Our 10th Anniversary Newsletter

IWA at the Dawn of its Fifth Decade

by Gladys Abankwa-Meier-Klodt
— *Ghanaian/German*

IWA President 2018-2019

Banners announce “Romania 100”, and the media is filled with reports commemorating the centenary of the end of WWI, but for members of the International Women’s Association of Bucharest, 2018 means one thing only: IWA is 40!

Evelyn Zivetz, to whose steely determination we owe our association’s existence, arrived in Bucharest from Dusseldorf, Germany, having already founded an international school, now the largest one in Europe. Dismissing the naysayers with her habitual audacity, the diminutive former schoolteacher and wife of the then US Cultural Attache met with Romania’s Minister of Education of the day, Suzana Gadea. Gaining the latter’s approval, she co-opted a core group of Romanian women — Antoaneta Ralian, Zoe Dumitrescu-Busulenga, Emilia Pavel and the spouse of Romanian diplomat Valentin Lipatti — to found IWA in 1978. In another defiant ‘yes’ in the face of a staunch ‘no’, she then welcomed the wives of the Egyptian and Israeli ambassadors into her home as her first two IWA guests.

What began as a challenge to the social isolation imposed by life under a communist regime blossomed into an open and reliable forum in which diplomatic spouses and - as the expat community continued to expand - others of all affiliations could interact freely with each other and Romanians.

Handcrafted, “xeroxed”, bilingual (English-French) newsletters, board members of diverse nationalities, day trips, factory and studio visits, monthly meetings hosted in embassy residences and in the city’s best hotels, fun, fundraising galas and casino nights — all of this, and more, was IWA. Much has changed, but even more has remained the same. As the fifth decade dawns, ours is an enviable achievement of longevity in an age

of short attentions spans and instant gratification. This does not mean we cannot use modern tools to connect with our community, and we do!

IWA continues to enrich its members' lives with the same determination; remaining true to our founders' desire to foster friendship among women of all nationalities, we discover Romania's many unknown facets and help to weave the social fabric of this welcoming country through charitable work. As we put the funds that we raise at the disposal of the disadvantaged in our community, we can also look forward to more discoveries and explorations of the mind and body, locally and further afield.

On behalf of the membership, I extend heartfelt thanks to our committee volunteers whose tireless dedication proves every day that we are what we are because of what we do. Do more, do it often and do it well with and for IWA.

Congratulations IWA - here's to the next decade!



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This is a special supplement to our seasonal magazine: November 2018
Edited by Terry O'Donnell Parsons

IWA is a volunteer-run, registered, nonprofit, social, cultural and charitable association. Join us: Make Friends / Explore Bucharest / Support Charity

Past Presidents

1978 Founder Evelyn Zivetz

after IWA was enrolled in the Romanian Register of Foundations and Associations:

1999-2000	Ursula Groeger (Austria)
2001	Mavis Mitchell
2002	Nevena Milkova
2003-2004-2005	Sharah Schelee (United Kingdom)
2005-2006	Peggy Bates (United States)
2006-2007	Omaima Goher (Egypt) and Josy Van der Stock Verrijt (Netherlands)
2007-2008	Tesca Barnett-Osman (United Kingdom)
2008-2009	Irina Budrina Geets (Russia)
2009-2010-2011	Erzsebet Bajtai (Hungary)
2011-2012	Anne Hutton (United Kingdom)
2012-2013	Patti Golden (United States)
2013-2014	Urga Denize (Mongolia)
2014-2015	Jessica Townsend (United States)
2015-2016-2017	Terry O'Donnell Parsons (United States)
2017-2018	Ximena Reyes (Chilean/Swedish/Ecuadorian)
2018-2019	Gladys Abankwa-Meier-Klodt (Ghanaian/German)

2018-2019 Board/Council Volunteers

President: Gladys Abankwa-Meier-Klodt (Ghanaian/German)

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Communications: Kathrin Finke (German)

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Andreea Rusu (Romanian)

Activities: Anna Cekova (Bulgarian)

Migyung Park (South Korean)

Johanna Traven (Irish/American)

Alecsandra Ecard (Romanian)

IWA'S Charitable Work: Evolving with the Times

by Georgiana Pogonaru — *Romanian*

I became an IWA member in 1994. After one year spent abroad with my husband, I understood how difficult it can be to be the spouse of a busy man in a foreign country. Thus, when I returned to Romania I was determined to help expat women in our country and I did my best to be involved in this cross-cultural adjustment for them.

From the very beginning I joined the Charity Committee; a place which gathered the IWA ladies interested in understanding the social problems in Romania, trying to help those in need. In twenty four years I met ladies coming from different countries, with different values, cultures and backgrounds. Some of them had visited other countries before, so they had some experience in accepting other beliefs and values, but there were many for which Bucharest was the first post.

Empathy was the common thread between us, and this made our group very special. It was interesting for all of us to communicate across cultures, to accept opinions and situations that not always matched our own.

Visiting an NGO, meeting and discussing problems directly with people in need was something new for many of us. It was our role as locals to help the foreign ladies understand some specific situations, laws or financial aspects from our country. But also for us, the Romanian members in the Charity Committee, it was a learning process.

After 50 years of communism — during which voluntary work was imposed — being involved in charity work was something new not only for us, but also for all the NGOs that began their activity during those years.

Looking at the direct involvement of the people in social problems (not at their support for religious institutions that have always existed in Romania), I can say that the revival of philanthropic behavior in Romania started in the 90s.

We learned best practices from other IWA foreign members who had experience in doing charity work in their own countries. As members of the IWA Charity Committee we were responsible for the fair distribution of funds



gathered from our sponsors. We found out how to establish criteria of selection, how to analyze the application and relate with the real need, how to measure the social impact, how to review the achievements at the end of each project and, of course, how to organize fundraising.

In hindsight, our IWA Charity Committee was an example of good practices which created a model for other charitable associations. What is more, our history reflects the development of charity in Romania.

At the beginning, in the 90s, IWA was considered one of the most important sponsors in the community. The Christmas Bazaar and the Spring Ball used to gather the expat community, our budgets were large and we were able to help a lot of NGOs.

In the 2000s, multinational companies in Romania started applying the Corporate Social Responsibility principles and practices just as in more economically developed countries, where these originated, CSR activities became more and more diverse and gradually became more professional and with more considerable budgets. The new allocation system of big companies to their own projects through professionals in CSR decreased IWA budgets, but we succeeded to maintain trust among a lot of sponsors.

Analyzing the situation from the point of view of our beneficiaries — the NGOs created between 1990 -2004 — we can notice that at the beginning they had small budgets and they did not have the knowledge to organize fundraisings; they started their own actions very late. For them, the first important steps in attracting funds were done between 2005-2010 when more fiscal facilities for both individuals and companies were implemented in Romania. Also, different mechanisms for collecting funds were adopted (SMS, crowd funding, etc). As a result, a positive “competition” between fundraising events emerged and thus now there are more and more associations raising funds efficiently.

IWA can be proud that it selected and offered funds to a lot of NGOs at their beginnings, associations that are now very well known and considered of great service and importance in Romania: SMURD, Salvati Copiii, OvidiuRo, Light into Europe, Hospice Casa Sperantei, White Yellow Cross, Casa Ioana, Casa Shalom, etc. We were able to foresee their dedication and success.

In an era in which charity can be easily done using only technology, our fundraising event — the Christmas Bazaar — brings warmth and humanity. It might be considered “old fashioned,” but it will always remain a model. The Bazaar “democratizes” philanthropy, it offers everybody the chance to contribute according to their own means, bringing us together in an equal way. The big number of persons involved in our Christmas Bazaar, coming from so many nationalities and the synergy created is like a declaration of peace and love!

It is in our power to spread this message!



Georgiana is one of the 20 members — both expat and Romanian — who helped register IWA as an official nonprofit association in 1999-2000



IWA brings the world together in Bucharest — Our members hail from over 50 countries!



Algeria	Finland	Lithuania	Russia
Argentina	France	Luxembourg	Slovenia
Armenia	Georgia	Madagascar	South Africa
Austria	Germany	Malaysia	Spain
Belgium	Ghana	Mexico	Switzerland
Bolivia	Greece	Moldova	Syria
Brazil	Hungary	Morocco	Turkey
Bulgaria	India	Netherlands	Ukraine
Canada	Ireland	Pakistan	United Kingdom
Chile	Israel	Palestine	United States
Colombia	Italy	Panama	Venezuela
Croatia	Japan	Poland	
Egypt	Korea	Portugal	
Estonia	Kuwait	Romania	

Membership of any single nationality is limited to 25%. Acknowledging the changes in our world in the last 40 years, we now have a “Friends of IWA” membership (for working women and for male spouses of our members).

Membership fees solely support the association; all charitable donations are held separately. We offer a free Trial membership; please see our website!





What is IWA? Who are we? We are — most fundamentally — our members! We come together from far shores, and our individual stories find common ground here in Bucharest.

Lauren Wilson — *Canadian*



I first started coming to Bucharest for work in 2014 and immediately felt connected to the city. When I made the decision to put a pause on my corporate career in Canada and move full-time to pursue my MBA in 2017, Bucharest was a clear choice. I was excited and apprehensive on what was to come.

One thing I was certain about was that being in Bucharest full-time, rather than for 3-week trips, would push me to find a new side and my place in the city I had come to love. Shortly after arriving I found the IWA Facebook page and quickly registered as a trial member. After attending my first coffee morning and meeting the group of fantastic ladies I was hooked!

IWA has offered an opportunity to expand my network and get out of my comfort zone - far beyond the experiences I would have had on my own. I've had the opportunity to tour the city, visit hidden gems, and cities outside of Bucharest as well as test my hand at artistic endeavors such as painting on porcelain, photography, and creating mosaic pieces. I've gotten to better understand the Romanian culture from all perspectives, and exercise my philanthropic side through the IWA Charity Committee. I've also had the opportunity to contribute and grow my skills as the current board Treasurer and this year I'll have the chance to represent my country at the IWA Charity Christmas Bazaar (go Canada!). All of this on top of what I would have been more than thrilled with on its own: meeting fantastic people and making friends from around the globe!

Haronid Blanco — Venezuelan



I have been IWA member since 2017, when my husband and I moved from India to Bucharest. I like playing games like mahjong, scrabble or bridge, travelling, reading books (when on vacation) and doing handicrafts. I enjoy the coffee mornings, the game groups and the city tours, IWA organizes so nice and carefully for us. The best thing about IWA is the opportunity to meet very nice people from different backgrounds and make good friends.

Silvia Margineanu — Romanian

I live in Bucharest and joined IWA in 2015. I am part of the Charity group and I work as a volunteer guide for the IWA Newcomers. I have a degree in English and French and I speak Spanish. I work as a translator and guide.

I lived in a communist country where it was a crime to speak to any foreigner, where it was almost impossible to travel abroad. My dream was to be part of the world, to meet people from different countries, to know different cultures. And this dream came true when I became an IWA member. It is a miracle to be able to meet women from 58 countries and to share our experiences. This is a precious gift and I am very grateful to IWA who brings the world to each of us.





Deborah Guz — *British*

I joined IWA in 2016. I participate in several of its clubs and activities and am a member of its Charity Committee. I am British and come from London, but France became my home when I got married. I lived, worked and had a family there before coming to Romania in 2015, when my youngest child left home to study.



IWA has hugely enhanced the quality of my life in Bucharest. It has been very stimulating to be able to meet so many interesting and talented women. Thanks to IWA, I've drawn, danced, discussed, exercised, meditated, played bridge and mahjong, studied history of art, learned some Romanian history, and discovered many of the treasures of Bucharest. I've also seen close up some of the poverty and deprivation in Romania and the valiant work of local charities to combat that. I have always been drawn to things international, working 17 years in international organisations, and it was wonderful for me to not only discover a new country in Romania but also to find myself in an international environment again, where we mix together and celebrate the differences and can simply be ourselves without having to conform to our own or others' national norms.

The sisterhood, the kindness, openness and generosity of its members is what I value most in IWA. I shall miss this terribly when I go back to France in a year's time. It is extraordinary to me that while the groups I was involved with in England were comprised of people I had known for years and years, in IWA connections happened so quickly.

While we are defined by our diversity, one of the things that many of us have in common is the experience of living away from our home countries and the particular challenges and sometimes intense sense of "otherness" that that can bring. This is something which is not often understood by those who have never lived abroad, and it has meant so much to me to be able to share it with women I've met in IWA.

I also really appreciate the generosity of many Romanian members who give

so much to the rest of us, whether it be helping us practically with daily living or occasional problems, introducing us to Romanian places, life and culture or relating personal life stories to help us understand the dramatic history of this country.

I have too many favourite activities to single one out, but in this context I will say that I really love our discussions in the book club where our different perspectives are often influenced by our nationalities and where we frequently pick up on themes to do with being an outsider looking in. I'd also like to mention how enjoyable it was to spend three whole days on an IWA adventure when I went on the IWA trip to the Bulgarian rose fields.

Another thing that I've loved, selfishly, is the opportunity IWA gives me to speak my own language, and I've also enjoyed being able to try out my other languages on some very patient native speakers. I never imagined that I would have so much fun in IWA and I thank all the members and particularly those who work so hard to host us and run activities.



Alev Iyibudar — Turkish



It's been almost four years that my family is in Bucharest. We live in Herastrau area, my favourite part of the city. I love having a walk along the lake when it's early in the morning. I find it very relaxing listening to the birds and feeding squirrels. Also I enjoy riding bicycle with my husband in the evening. Another thing I like about the Herastrau Park is that it is an excellent place to capture both nature and human photography.

Photography is one of my greatest passions in life. I try to travel as much as I can in order to capture the beauty and uniqueness in different cultures. After my friends I met at IWA told me how much they enjoy looking at my photographs, I decided to suggest giving photography classes at IWA. This also became a unique opportunity for me, as I had never experienced teaching before. Moreover, thanks to IWA I got to experience new stuff in the city with my new friends. Sometimes I'm participating in different workshops or discovering cultural landmarks in Romania. For example, I recently joined a culinary workshop called 'Colombian Foods' which I found very interesting. Another occasion, IWA organised a tour to Jilava, which became one of my favourite trips with IWA.

I can say that IWA is doing an amazing job in Bucharest; it's a cultural meeting spot where ladies from all over the world can meet and influence each other. Furthermore, IWA is doing a lot of charity work that we are all pleased to support. I'm very happy to be a part of IWA and this amazing community.



Patti Golden — *American*

IWA President 2012 - 2013

Bucharest was my first expat experience and I was very far from family and friends. Everything was a learning curve for me from banking to shopping at the local market. When a kind woman suggested that I attend a “new-member” coffee at the Hotel Intercontinental, I had no idea that within minutes of my arrival the incredible women of IWA would begin to patiently answer my seemingly endless expat questions and guide me through Bucharest. Then, once I knew my way around the Metro, they were there to insure that I fully enjoyed the rest (and best) of what IWA had to offer: new experiences and travel wrapped in friendship, laughter and fun.

I became president after less than a year of membership at a time when groups like IWA were evolving into more modern organizations. I was fortunate to work with a fantastic board that stepped up and tackled difficult issues, from their work to revamp charity rules and banking procedures, to their dedication in hosting an extremely successful Christmas bazaar in the midst of terrible weather and a down economy. And they did it all with smiles on their faces — faces I grew to trust and love. I still think of them and the other wonderful women I met through IWA with deep fondness.

Now I write mysteries [using a pseudonym] about Eastern Europe in order to expose western readers to the beauty and wonder that I discovered as an expat while in Bucharest. The misconceptions about Romania across the globe abound. It made me think. What better way to change minds than to wrap a travel guide around a fictional mystery where strong women like my friends save the day?

Those of you who have read my books know that the friendships I made – and still maintain – through IWA changed my life.



Silvia Bontas — *Romanian*



I have been an IWA member since 2000. IWA gives me the opportunity to meet wonderful, interesting, resourceful women from all over the world, to share together our different cultures and traditions.

In day-to-day life I am a mathematician, working many years at Polytechnica University. The contact with young people maintains a good spirit for me. This year is very special for us: we celebrate 100 years since all Romanian historical regions reunite together in so called ROMANIA MARE – Great Romania.

Over the years, I organized different activities for IWA. As Charity Chairperson (a few years ago) I tried to enlarge the scope of our activity. Working in the Charity Committee is a great experience: as I discovered, pain and grief have many ways to express. I found out about the power of human solidarity. One of the most beautiful memories I have about IWA is the celebration of Pearl Anniversary, on 23rd of May 2008, at Radisson Hotel. It was a great honour for us that Evelyn, our founder, participated at the event.

40 years ago Mrs Evelyn Zivetz, whose husband was Cultural Attaché at the American Embassy, had the idea to start Bucharest International Women's Association. It was set up mainly as a social and networking group for women of all nationalities, as an opportunity for Romanian and non-Romanian ladies to meet, which was very difficult at the time. The Pearl Ball was an excellent opportunity to expose IWA's activities and achievements to our guests. The event was not only a party, but also a fundraising event to support IWA's charitable activities. We had a raffle and very valuable jewelery made by Lalaunis was auctioned during the gala diner. The best moment of the night was the presentation of a giant shell shaped cake.

Very soon we will have the IWA's most famous event: Christmas Bazaar at Romexpo. It is a most amazing experience: a group of ladies, all volunteers, organizing such a big event! It shows friendship and solidarity — I feel proud to be a part of our association.

Cristha Reyes — *Mexican*

IWA changed my life in Bucharest. We arrived in 2015 from Mexico and I found that it takes a while for Romanian women to open to friendship (or maybe I was not lucky). Well, after 9 months I was very depressed without friends. I met a friend on the internet who introduced me to IWA and that was the beginning of a life full of fun and cultural diversity.



What I most loved about IWA, besides all my Latin clan, was the Romanian cultural activities, because it was the best way to know the place and the people of the country we were living in, and that gives you a very local and international picture that fills your life and your knowledge. My favorite activities were those which involved art and fun like the Latin parties and wine excursions. Then, in 2017 Ximena Reyes called me to ask if I wanted to participate in the Activities Team and I just loved it because we were a very well connected team, had a lot of fun and respected each other. Now we are in Austin Texas and a new chapter is being written.
Gracias y besos para todas!



IWA's Founding: a Historical Background

written in 2008 for the celebration of IWA's Pearl Anniversary
by Renee McDannel, then IWA's First Vice President



Arcul De Triumf 1978



Ceaucescu and Queen Elizabeth

1978 was marked by many memorable and interesting events in Romania, such as the hosting of the 20th International Mathematics Olympiad, the 10th Anniversary of the 'Prague Spring,' and the founding of the Ecologist Party. Nicolae Ceaușescu and his wife Elena were invited in 1978 to Britain to meet the Queen. This groundbreaking move marked the Romanian attempts to break free of Soviet control.

Romania's cultural policy in 1978 was marked by many as a continuation of the dramatic 1977 release of Paul Goma, who was arrested, silenced, and imprisoned for promoting basic professional rights and attacking official cultural policy. He was subsequently allowed to leave the country November 20th, 1977. For many this is regarded as a turning point in the country's post 1971 cultural development. It was a time of ambiguity in which actual practices often did not align with pronouncements.

Ceaușescu's orientation during this time fostered the "ideological education of the popular masses" and was constituted by giving preferences and rewards to those artists who obeyed and conformed to party line. It was a time of cultural policy that supported an anti-elite spirit.

This was the backdrop of the times in which Evelyn Zivetz found herself. As the wife of Mr. Herman Zivetz the U.S. Cultural Attaché, she desired to support her husband's work and make a difference in the cultural society of Romania. In Romanian society during this time to have contact and friendships with foreigners was monitored closely and generally discouraged.

Evelyn's seminal idea to combat the social isolation in which she and the other diplomats' wives found themselves was to approach the Council of Socialist Culture and Education, lead by Mrs. Suzan Gadea and request permission to form the Bucharest International Women's Association (IWA). The primary function of IWA was to provide a social network amongst the wives of the diplomats serving in Romania. It was to be an environment in which they could mix not only with each other, but also have access to Romanian Society within the tight limits that were being imposed by the Romanian government.

Permission was given, however IWA was not given a legal status then and had to operate under unofficial statutes until 1999; when it was legalized as an association. In addition, it was not until 1990 when membership to the association was opened to expatriates living and working in Romania other than diplomats' wives.

While IWA membership initiatives primary focused on creating venues in which the ladies could experience the cultural aspects of Romanian society, they also began their charitable work. The first project was to provide a monthly sponsorship of ten dollars each for a little girl & boy living in India under impoverished conditions. This was followed by an urgent response to send packages to Biafra. In the local community they donated \$5000 each to 'Casa de Copii' number one and two in Bucharest.

Today, IWA continues this proud legacy of cultural and charitable work in the community. The IWA membership ranks have swelled to over two-hundred and charitable contributions under the auspices of IWA have judiciously found their way into Romanian based charitable organizations. There original ideals of IWA have proven to withstand the test of time; to create a safe and welcoming environment where women of diverse nationalities can find common unity in friendship, while making charitable monetary and volunteer service contributions to their host country.



Old US Embassy



Intercontinental 1978

Zoe Popa — *Bulgarian/German*



First time parenthood can be lonely, especially after you have spent years traveling and working on transformation projects for large multinational companies. I am an IT management consultant by profession and have lived, worked and/or studied in various European countries (Germany, Netherlands, Denmark, Czech Republic, Bulgaria). I met my Romanian husband during an academic event in Belgium, as we are both Alumni of an international student organization called BEST (Board of European Students of Technology).

I strongly believe in volunteering. It's the responsibility of each and every one of us to create positive, meaningful impact, to make the world a better place. A friend of mind with a small baby like me (who is a Board member of IWA Tallinn) encouraged me to learn more about the International Women's Association of Bucharest. And I am so happy that I followed her advice and joined this wonderful organization... There's much more socializing a postpartum body and baby can handle than you could imagine. Besides, when I find myself alone in the house with a snoozing baby, I try my best to do something productive like editing IWA newsletters :)



Irina Budrina — *Russian*

IWA President 2008-2009

as told to Gladys Abankwa-Meier-Klodt



When Vladivostok native Irina Budrina first arrived in Bucharest 14 years ago, it is safe to say she was somewhat ill-prepared. Relocating as a trailing spouse with a young daughter, she discovered it wasn't easy being Russian in Romania. “Russia” was a trigger in any conversation with a Romanian, and Irina realised just how much information had been withheld from her at home.

Discovering IWA gave Irina some respite. Different cultures were opened up to her through cuisine, costumes, books and films, but especially through close interaction with other women at IWA’s monthly coffee. She remembers being taken aback by the amount of talking about doing charity work she heard. In Russia, one didn’t go on about it, one let the results speak for themselves. And speak they did: 33 projects were awarded grants when she headed the Charity Committee in 2007-2008.

The Charity Committee was as rigorous and exacting in its vetting of organisations as it is today. In those days, it went even further: the committee sourced and purchased equipment itself, adding to the demands of the task. (That approach is now thankfully a thing of the past, and now an IWA task force monitors proper disbursement after a grant has been made.)

Irina’s presidency in 2008-2009 coincided with the 30th anniversary of IWA’s founding. Founder Evelyn Zivetz, then almost 83, delivered a video address to the membership on that occasion, a gala event at the newly opened Radisson Hotel.

While her busy professional life keeps her away from active IWA participation, Irina remains interested in its activities. “IWA will always be in my heart and mind. IWA made me feel at home in Romania”, she asserts.

Alda Popa Ravagnan - *American/Romanian*



I joined IWA in 1993. IWA was a club of vitality, refinement and elegance, with receptions, day trips and cultural activities galore. Its purpose was to help wives of diplomats and expats connect in a society that had been seriously isolated and monitored, to help through charitable works the tragically impoverished society, and to discover the country.

In those days, there were very few adequate hotels and restaurants, so all the receptions took place at magnificent embassy residences. There were lunches, concerts, teas, and cultural conferences about the host country. We learned Ikebana at the Japanese residence, batik painting at the Indonesian, and were lectured on Egypt and Cleopatra by the Ambassador. The Brazilian ambassador organized samba parties and had Alberto come from Rio to teach us the samba.

One of my fondest memories is the performance by the famous Greek singer Demi Roussos, where Demi's melodies, accompanied by a wonderful Greek dinner, so enthralled us that we all spontaneously rose and danced ecstatically around the tables, mesmerized by his divine music.

There was one event that was the most thrilling.... CASINO NIGHT! Casino Austria provided everything, and we gambled, dined and danced the night away, happily knowing that ALL the money we lost while having fun went straight to the IWA Charity Committee. If we won, we would win only a tiny Austrian box with two tiny Austrian chocolates. In one single night, in 1995, we raised \$20,000, and every year it was our biggest fundraiser.

There was also the Christmas Bazaar, an elegant and refined affair held in magnificent venues such as the enchanting, royal, Elisabeta Palace. There were small tables with artisanal items from each country. The event was televised for the Romanian television. Embassies sent their most exquisite delicacies, memorable among them being the Moroccan couscous. Politically incorrect statements could be cheerfully voiced, such as a member's opinion that " There cannot be Sunday brunch without champagne, I am bringing the champagne!" So her table was strategically placed next to the fresh salmon caviar and blinis to everyone's joy.

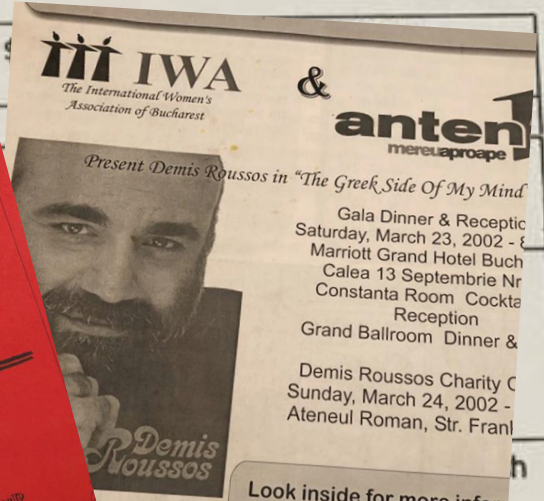
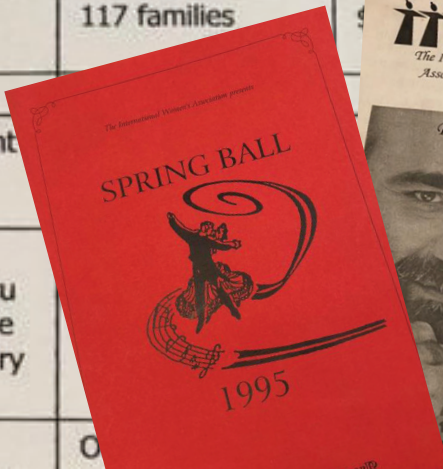
Because we raised so much money through generous sponsors, there was no stress related to relentless fund raising, as seems to be the very unfortunate case today, killing some of the joy in the effort and leaving one completely drained. Many of us took to sponsoring children's or senior's homes. Besides a general lack of food in stores, bright eyed and eager schoolchildren went to classes with coats, gloves, hats and scarves because of lack of heat in schools. So the Charity Committee had very many requests. We also gave large grants to different charities.

I must stress that all of IWA's recent dances, starting with the lively and cheerful dancing at all September coffee mornings, and including the Fashion Show and the Color Party, and the fun evenings at Stejari, were certainly just as much fun as the earlier parties!! Our parties now reflect the trend of less formality, and of dancing in groups, which makes them very entertaining.

I am still a member of IWA because it is the most vital, the most vibrant element of Bucharest, not only for expats but for Romanians who join. It gives you a view of Romania and Bucharest, and does it in an environment which is so friendly and convivial. And the activities and coffee mornings are fantastic. IWA has always been a source of great joys and great fun, but of even greater commitments, social responsibilities and accomplishments.

Christmas Packages for Christmas 2003

Second chance	117 families	
Alternativa		
Saint Vincent de Paul - Sister Germaine		
Asociatia Speranza Pentru Inatate - Hope for Health - Mary Deal		
Inasmuch -		



Ximena Alexandra Reyes —*Chilean/Ecuadorian*

IWA President 2017-2018

IWA is my known place wherever I relocate to, it has been a welcoming place to share, learn and connect. It has meant to me a constant amid the permanent changes, it has given me the opportunity to meet people, visions, ideas, food, traditions and more from all over the world. I have had the honour to meet incredible women from all backgrounds and it has become a significant part of my life's journey. I remember how many times it has been a key reason for me to leave home, a motivation and a drive.

In Romania I am so thankful for all the incredible activities organized, it is such an effective way to connect to the local artists, trends, events and activities.

IWA is a magical bridge that shows me the landscape and connects us to the place that becomes home and hosts us. It motivates us to be active members of the society with the Bazaar and the projects we support, projects that we admire by the drive amid the adversity and the opportunity to improve someone's life conditions.

I have been a member, part of the board and President, in all these forms I have had amazing people to share this path with, some of them have departed and yet their presence remains in our hearts. Thank you IWA



Monica Bommer-Neuner — *Austrian*



We relocated to Bucharest from Doha/Qatar in 2016. Before we moved, I contacted IWA and got a very friendly reply immediately! Banu did such a good job in making me feel really welcome to IWA and our new location.

I met a lot of nice people right at the first coffee morning, got invaluable information about life in Bucharest and made new friends instantly. What a great start! Newcomer coffee mornings, I still really like them. Always new faces, always new friends.

I very much appreciate the hard work and countless hours of dedication by some members that make IWA such a great community. The many very special trips to locations you wouldn't have access to otherwise, the fun events, the special lunches, the various charity projects, ... there's not enough space to name them all.

Being a photographer I also had the great pleasure of portraying the great ladies of the new board. I hope to be able to join many more IWA events in the future.



Melike Roman — Romanian

as told to Terry O'Donnell Parsons

Melike is one of the 20 members — both expat and Romanian — who helped register IWA as an official nonprofit association in 1999-2000

I joined IWA immediately after the Revolution, when Romanian members could join IWA only on the recommendation of an ambassador's wife.

There was a Latin American House in Bucharest at that time and we used it very much. We had Coffee Mornings at the Diplomat Club for many years. They were a great pleasure. There was always something interesting. We had Romanian artists and small concerts. Visitors to different Romanian cities and monuments talked about their trips. We had speakers talk about their home countries. We had eggs and Romanian pastries at *Paști*. On March 8th, International Women's Day, each of us came dressed in our national dress and made a parade and a fashion show. So step by step, IWA activities grew.

To help the children, through charity activities, was a very good thing. I remember we had a Christmas event meeting at the US Residence, around the swimming pool; it was very nice. First, the Christmas event was at the Czech Embassy, then at the Latin American House, then at Palatul Elisabeta (where the royal family lives now) before we organized it at Romexpo.

The top IWA event was a great ball at Army House (Palace of the National Military Circle, Cercul Militar Național). It was wonderful. During that time we had an important diplomat from Turkey, who sang *Strangers in the Night* for us.

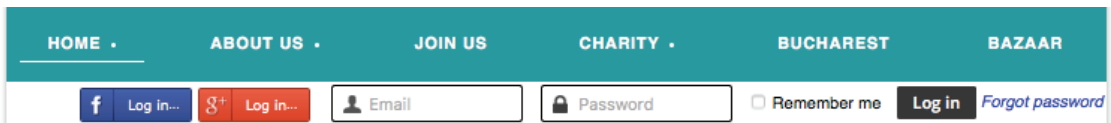


I was Chair of Membership for many years and we met at the Marriott. I organized speakers to talk about Romanian culture and life, to share what is valuable in this country

where we all have lived so long. Or international friends talked about their cultures, “Coming and Going” as we say. In the Statutes of IWA it was written that the wife of an ambassador must be President. Between 1998-2002 we had 400 members. After the embassies formed their own social group, the membership dropped.

I have very nice memories, of friendships, and of trips organized by Gertrude. Each one contributed — no one was the main person. My husband asked me, “Why is IWA the light in your life?” I would like to learn more about the members in IWA now, not just socialize and drink coffee. We have so many intellectual ladies! They could speak about their profession, what they have done, their family life, their human life.

IWA introduced a modern website in 2015 and retired our monthly print news



The International

The International Women's Association
IWA

IWA is a volunteer-run, nonprofit
Please log in for member-only

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IWA is the place for expats and locals to meet and socialize. We welcome women AND your children. We come from around the world, and from all walks of life. Some of us are seasoned expats and diplomats for the first time, or are repatriating here. We are business professionals and stay-at-home moms, artists and hikers... and more!

...a concern to

I.W.A. – 40 Fruitful Years

by Diana Lucia Zotescu — *Romanian*



Diana is one of the 20 members — both expat and Romanian — who helped register IWA as an official nonprofit association in 1999-2000

It was early autumn 1978, thirty years since Romania began choking in the tight embrace of the communist regime, and 18 months since the devastating March 1977 earthquake had flattened an important part of the capital's city centre, killing about 1600 people in Bucharest alone. Life was grim, to say the least. Only the rich and diverse cultural scene brightened the spiritual life of residents, Bucharesters and foreigners alike.

Due to the many food shortages, irregular supply of heating, electricity and hot water, scanty street lighting and the packs of dogs roaming the streets, the Romanian capital was considered a hardship post for members of the diplomatic corps who had to endure two or three years. Meanwhile, their spouses — and it was mostly wives — tried hard to enhance their life here — and, whenever possible, their husbands' — by attempting to catch the spirit of the place, to learn things about Romania and her people, about the cultural and historical heritage of a country which, in that respect, had an immense reservoir to offer. These ladies could only successfully do so by getting in touch with the local people. But how were they to do so, when the infamous, recently enacted Law No. 23, restricting Romanian citizens' contacts with foreigners — any foreigners, but mainly with foreign diplomats — was rendering these ladies' attempts futile?

Evelyn Zivetz, the energetic and resourceful wife of the Cultural Attaché of the U.S. Embassy was a lady with an exemplary sense of duty and extraordinary organizational skills. A very cultured lady herself, with a wide array of interests and expertise that included ethnography, education, geriatric treatment, tourism and, of course, all forms of culture, was determined to find a solution. She decided to gather all diplomatic ladies in Bucharest in an association that would allow them to organize events to satisfy their interests, aware that in most countries in Western Europe, as well as elsewhere in the Free World, such associations always existed. And do so she did. The word went around and, soon enough, scores of diplomats' wives were invited to her residence in Strada Plantelor. There, around a cup of coffee and scones, the International Women's Association of Bucharest held its first 'coffee morning' meeting.

Later on, Evelyn wanted to do something more meaningful, so she decided to organize IWA's first cultural event. It was to be a Romanian Evening, at the residence of the

Dutch ambassador. To do that properly, she needed a Romanian to help, so she asked her husband to allow me to do it. (I was working as a Cultural Specialist at the US Embassy.) It was a very successful event, and as a result, she invited me to become the first Romanian member of IWA. I was very happy to accept, provided that meetings did not overlap with my office work, which came first.

But Evelyn was not a lady to do things without official blessing. She wanted to make IWA official and get approval from the Romanian authorities. Within a matter of weeks, membership had increased to more than 150 ladies, all eager both to take part in, and contribute to, the activities of the young IWA. Therefore, I accompanied her to the Council of Socialist Culture and Education — the equivalent of the today's Ministry of Culture — to talk to and get the blessing of 'Comrade' Suzana Gadea, the Iron Lady of Romanian cultural institutions. "NYET," was her stern verdict. "In Romania, all official organizations should function under the leadership of the Romanian Communist Party, and I don't think that you have this in mind," she said. She was certainly right there because that was the furthest thing from Evelyn's mind. "But DA, you can have run organization, in an unofficial way. We do not wish to stop you, diplomats, from having a good time here in our country. Quite the contrary! I would like, though," and here she softened her voice to a whisper, "to ask you a tiny little favour. Could you, please, include four prominent Romanian ladies, all of them well-known public figures and quite representative of our country, among your members? A famous professor of universal literature and culture, Prof. Dr. Zoe Dumitrescu-Busulenga, Mrs. Amelia Pavel — an art critic of tremendous expertise in museums and painting, Mrs. Antoaneta Ralian — a prodigious and prolific fiction translator, and Mrs. Lipatti, wife of a Romanian ambassador? Could you?"

Yes, Evelyn could, so the four 'comrades', pillars of Romanian communist society, became IWA members. Evelyn Zivetz was relieved. She had not accomplished what she wanted, not entirely, but IWA could exist and function as any other organization, minus the official papers. Besides, she had received approval for IWA to organize fundraising events to donate money to the two orphanages existing in Bucharest. (That was in itself quite an accomplishment, given the official position of the communist authorities that regarded charity as inappropriate, unnecessary and degrading. Nobody here, in dignified Romania, had any need for capitalist charity, right?)

From Christmas 1979 until 1989, we donated the amount of Lei 50000 each to Orphanages No. 1 and 2. Later on, we extended our charity to a few poor children in India who we "adopted," sending money to them for a number of years to cover their education expenses; we also sent relief packages to Biafra.

Membership gradually increased to 250 members and more (even over 300 at times), and soon some other Romanian ladies joined IWA, about 10 of them by 1985. Programmes became more diverse, including organizing or attending classical music concerts, theatre, opera, operetta and ballet performances. After such shows we organized refreshments for the actors and artists, which enabled the IWA ladies and their husbands to meet with Romanian actors. This was a reciprocally joyous experience, otherwise impossible to achieve, given the strict legislation.

Between 1978 and 1998 we had at least two big fundraising events every year: The IWA Christmas Bazaar and Casino Night. The Bazaar was held in December (for a few years we even had an Easter Bazaar). From 1994 on, participation in the Christmas Bazaar increased year by year - and so did the money we made for our charities - and larger and larger locations were found for it. In 2018, we will have our 41st edition of the IWA Christmas Bazaar. Casino Night was held with the logistic support of the Vienna Casino, and in 1999, was replaced by a form of a Spring Ball with different themes (western party, fancy dress party, international dinner-dance, parties dedicated to IWA's 10th, 20th, 25th and 30th anniversaries, etc.).

Clubs based on different interests were also organized, the expertise of members from a great variety of nationalities being so useful, such as: cooking (we travelled around the world through food!), sewing, quilting, painting, Christmas decoration making, gift-wrapping, origami, Ikebana, bridge, golf, tennis, cricket, horse-racing, skiing, mahjong, chess, Go, singing, language conversation and language instruction, etc.

Cultural activities, such as: visits to museums of all sorts, international Art and Culture, trips to different parts of Bucharest and to the countryside, Thanksgiving Day, Unity in Diversity (a programme meant to introduce the IWA members to the life, culture and cuisine of the ethnic groups living in Romania), Performers' Group Concerts (introducing IWA members to the Romanian school of classical music), meetings with Romanian Noble Families, lunch-conferences on different themes, fashion-shows, wine-tasting and lunches/dinners, etc.

Of course, nobody can recall the entire richness of our programmes. Reading our past newsletters would be quite an interesting experience. What is important to remember, however, is that we all benefitted from each other's experience and expertise, in a generous give-and-take debonair atmosphere that gave us all that comfortable feeling of togetherness and of belonging - the very reason IWA was established and that has made it endure for 40 years - and, hopefully, for many more years to come.

Meant at first to provide diplomats' wives with the organizational instrument of enhancing their life in Romania, IWA became, particularly after 1989 when life and legislation changed, an organization not just for diplomats', but for businessmen's wives as well, along with a 25% membership quota of Romanian ladies from a great variety of professions.

As for the IWA presidents, I have hopefully made a complete list of them. 34 ladies were brave enough to take the reins and lead this organization through thick and thin, bringing it to where it is now. It must have been a very demanding job — for, after you volunteer, it does become a job, and a tough one for that matter, but a tremendously rewarding one morally, and one that is greatly enriching spiritually. Of the 34 presidents, most of them were ambassadors' wives, as IWA needed to be led by ladies of high authority and visibility, capable of accomplishing our goals. Some were wives of high-ranking diplomats, and a few were from the business community. All of them, aided by their boards, did their best to push IWA higher and further, to the best of their abilities.

Our presidents were from: USA (8), Germany (5), U.K. (3), France (2), Switzerland (2), and one from each of these countries: Sweden, Italy, Costa Rica, Chile, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Austria, South Africa, Japan, Egypt, Russia, Hungary, Mongolia, Columbia.

Finally, in 1999, IWA became official!

One thing should be said before I complete this lengthy — but still incomplete — presentation of IWA is that IWA's best asset consists of the IWA members themselves. They are the ones whose input gives the variety, high quality and great success of our endeavours.

We all expect IWA to evolve and be enriched by and through the effort and expertise of its presidents and membership. But this evolution should be built on the strong pillars sustaining the organization in place since the beginning, pillars that made it what it was and is today. In order to make it achieve its ever diversified goals and purposes, both the cultural and the charitable ones. We become IWA members to proffer our expertise and skills, seeking no personal gratification other than the one derived from the moral satisfaction of honestly contributing to the common effort. And yes, we members do benefit a lot ourselves as well, by making friends that we otherwise wouldn't have made, by learning so much from one another, from the sheer happiness that comes from knowing that the little we have done adds to the little someone else has done, and together these small contributions become meaningful for the life of someone who is less fortunate than us.

Let us all raise our glasses for the 40th Anniversary of IWA! HAPPY BIRTHDAY, IWA!!

MAY YOU GROW EVER STRONGER AND BETTER!! Let us all raise our glasses and wish a "Happy Birthday!" to the IWA founder, the great lady Evelyn Zivetz who, in a short while will turn 93 years old. And last but not least, let us all raise our glasses for Romania, our host country who, in ten days from now, will celebrate her 100th Anniversary. HAPPY BIRTHDAY, ROMANIA!!

Amel Ben Khaled — *French*

I joined IWA in September 2015 by participating in “Biking in Baneasa Forest” with Dana, and from this moment I did not quit IWA. In 2015, I supported Jessica in Membership. In 2016, even if I was a full time working lady, I joined the IWA Board in charge of the website... but not only, I tried to help each volunteer in her position (activities, member-ship, secretary...). Every year I supported the Christmas Bazaar, first helping the entertainment team 2015, then being the French country representative with Karine in 2016, and with Karine and Patricia in 2017. In 2017, I reduced my involvement with IWA because I was the President of AFB, the French association in Bucharest, but I still renewed my IWA membership. In IWA, I met many wonderful ladies from all over the world as members and volunteers. In the Board, there was a positive spirit and I met women who are committed and who care about you, the association and the projects that IWA created, developed and maintained. Each time I log to the website I still find something interesting to join (cultural activities, fun, games, conferences, cooking, coffees...) You will still find an activity for you. I wish all the best to IWA and her members. Big thank you to the volunteers who work, hardly hidden.



Samantha Sparks – *Canadian*



In Canada I worked as a Special Education Teacher Assistant. Living here in Bucharest, I am constantly asked “What do you DO all day?” by people at home. Thanks to IWA, “What DON’T I do?” is my answer. I loved the Graffiti Street Art tour, and the friends I’ve met in crafts and book club. IWA is a lifeline for many of us. It gives us places to go, answers to our questions, activities, tours and clubs — you can be as busy as you want to be. Sometimes it’s a simple cup of coffee with a stranger who suddenly becomes a friend.

Learning about Romania from my local friends has been invaluable, as it has been in every country I’ve had the privilege to call home. I’ve been moving around the world as a diplomatic spouse since I was 22 years old. The first thing I do in a new country is join the international women’s organization. The memories of the friends I met and the experiences we shared are what I remember about a place.

IWA has helped me have a much more rewarding experience in Bucharest than I would have had. Many thanks to the wonderful women that volunteer their time and skills to make IWA what it is — to so many of us from so many countries.



Sandy Sivri — Greek

I came to Bucharest with my family 4 years ago. It was our first expatriation but I loved the idea of changing country, find another culture and have new experiences.

My first contact with IWA was at the Christmas Bazaar on December 2014 when I volunteered to help at the Greek table. I was amazed by the team spirit of all the participants and by the good energy that was flowing on the air! At 2015, I became a member of IWA — of course! — and I met wonderful persons from different countries, I learned a lot about different cultures and I am the country coordinator of Greece table every year at Christmas Bazaar. It's an event that I never want to miss and I encourage all of you to come and join us!

After one year I became a member to the charity committee of IWA because it's a wonderful feeling to help people in need and it's an opportunity to see that all the energy and effort that we put at the bazaar has a very big goal, a very important purpose!

IWA is all its members but also the people that lead this association. Many thanks to all of you that struggle every day to keep all of us happy and fulfilled.



Manzar Huseynli — *Azerbaijani*



I left my country in 2012. I didn't know anybody in Bucharest, and I wanted to enjoy my life. But how? I joined IWA because I wanted different things in my new life: some activities, to know a new culture, and to meet new people.

In 2012 I became a Board member, and I learned a lot of skills. First I was newsletter editor, then in 2015-2016, I was 1st Vice-President and Fundraising Coordinator. I was a volunteer model in IWA Fashion Shows, and organized the Color Party with the IWA board. All of this involved supervising and coordinating the activity of IWA, coordinating recruitment procedures, current and upcoming events, giving presentations and reports on further directions and development of friendship amongst women, summarizing various information on fortunate and disadvantaged communities in Romania, etc. I taught decoupage and was the Azerbaijan Country Coordinator at IWA Charity Christmas Bazaar every year.

It was important to address issues like gathering a diverse group of women from various countries, promoting the role of women in societies, involving non-governmental organizations and representatives of Romanian society, emphasizing the importance of promoting friendship amongst women from different points of the world living in Romania.

I spent my favorite time in Bucharest with the lovely ladies of IWA. I really loved them. I grew with IWA. It was very hard to me when I left from Bucharest, from IWA. When I wrote this article I cried like a kid. Thank you all for everything. I miss you a lot and I never forgot you. You are always in my heart.



Finding Home with IWA

Daniela Lupas - *Romanian*



IWA is going strong, celebrating its magic 40th birthday. It counts amongst its members founders, newcomers, expatriates of over sixty countries and in recent years, a wave of repatriates, after decades spent abroad. I am one of those odd birds.

You might wonder what brings this eager enthusiasm to associate with expats. Aren't we back to embrace our roots and rejoice in the familiar? Feels as if we paid our return ticket and hesitate to get off the plane.

If only life could be that simple. On repatriation I finally understood the meaning of the saying "there is no such thing as going home again." I know the Romanian vocabulary, nevertheless conversations with fellow countrymen are turning and twisting out of control, as I frequently miss the gist of the exchange. Bill Bryson, the famous expat, once said that returning home following adult years spent elsewhere is akin to waking after a coma. I could not agree more.

Things change. I changed. But most importantly, I was for a quarter of a century on the move, and this defines who I am today. My Romanian neighbor takes great pride in having lived in the same house for the last 56 years. To her, my moving in and out of over 21 flats shows I am fickle. I beg to differ. I am more of a serial lover: faithful to a fault to the place I live in, knowing it will not be forever. Many Romanians refer to going abroad as being "outside." I live like in the old song — wherever I lay my hat, that's my home.

I like to see a thousand different smiles, I love the music of many accents, I recognize myself in the women who left behind many a hat. I believe what brings expats together is the celebration of being different. I am enriched by

each story from a far-away place. In IWA, we share knowledge of the arts, of history, of cooking, of the strange way of life that's lived out of suitcases. We learn geography from looking at yet another backyard, on another continent.

As the new year approaches with its unavoidable resolutions, I feel compelled to evaluate my yearly performance. In terms of integration, things are not quite bright. I am still the Prodigal Son with no family banquet in sight. On the bright side, IWA is the one place I am considered a legitimate Romanian. Maybe I am home after all. Happy, happy birthday, IWA!

Sobia Kahn — *Pakistani*

I was married with kids when I moved to Bucharest. As an Expat, we always want to connect with good and positive people around us, so by the end of 2015 I joined IWA. This is an excellent platform for Expats to join different activities and make long lasting friends.

I joined weekly stitching mornings and decoupage lessons and always tried my best to join other multiple functions, lunches and dinners arranged by IWA. I made lots of beautiful friends from all over the globe, with different backgrounds and religions.

In 2018 July sadly we had to move from Romania to Abu Dhabi. If you are an Expat or even local Romanian who wants to learn many different things and who wants to make beautiful friends from every background, go and join this amazing organization which I will never forget. I will always cherish lovely memories I have made being a member of IWA.



Terry O'Donnell Parsons — *American* IWA President 2014-2015 and 2015-2016

The 2000s were a time of rapid change. Romania joined the E.U. The expat business community flourished in Bucharest. Spouses of ambassadors decided to form their own social group, separate from IWA. Facebook and iPhone launched. All of this had an impact on our association. In its early heyday, IWA had over 300 members, but by the time I started as president, membership had dwindled to only 80 paid members. I thought IWA might die during my tenure, because while IWA used to be the one way to make friends and discover Bucharest, now the expat community didn't *need* us.

I strongly believe in the value of international women's groups, and I was fortunate to find myself surrounded by Romanian and expat volunteers who feel equally passionate. We worked hard, we had fun, we realized the importance of a sense of humor. We were successful — membership has doubled. IWA now reaches potential members with our new website, Facebook page and Trial Memberships. Romanian "re-pats" frequently search us out, and longtime expats have rejoined IWA. We have great activities organized by volunteers. We have strong support from the diplomatic community for the Charity Christmas Bazaar, and it's wonderful that many of them are also active members of IWA. I would like to thank the Boards/Councils that came after me, for continuing the work and expanding the circles of friendship.

I never imagined that Bucharest would become my home, but it has. To the many, many women who have enriched my life, I say *multumesc*. And I give you all big hugs! Thank you for teaching me to decoupage and to paint and for showing me the hidden corners of town. Thank you for teaching me that I actually like *kimchi* and that *Feteasca Neagră* is great wine. Thank you for volunteering through the long hours with smiles lighting the way! Thank you for inspiring me with your dedication to those who need our help, with your compassionate and rigorous charity work. Thank you for exploring the countryside with me. Through the tough times and the silly times — love you!



Strella Hye Eun Ahn — *South Korean*



“If you had to pick one, what would be your single takeaway after giving so much time and effort to IWA?” my husband recently asked me at the dinner table. His tone of voice sounded like pure curiosity but I felt guilty enough to interpret it as a gentle complaint. While trying to find a justifiable answer, my mind took a flashback to September 2017 when I came to Bucharest with my family.

Romania is the third country after UK and Czech Republic where we were relocated within Europe, and the seventh country where I have lived for study, work or family. Every time I was put in a new country, I had to start all over again in every aspect and was determined to adapt at a more and more accelerated speed as if I were Jake Gyllenhaal in “The Source Code,” caught in a time loop. There was no time to lose so I followed the Nike slogan: Just do it.

As if as a matter of course, joining IWA was my first move as soon as I finished unpacking. I have experienced many “firsts” in Romania — dancing ballet on a national stage, and participating in renowned photography exhibition, for example, but IWA made my life fuller with activities such as leading the Korean team to host the Lunar New Year party, founding a daytime international women’s choir, and becoming IWA Vice President and Fundraising Chair.

This Board's year was always meant to be special, as it is IWA’s Ruby Jubilee and also happens to coincide with the centenary of the Great Unification of Romania. My interest in fundraising first germinated in Prague where I worked in a school committee and I am grateful to IWA for empowering me to implement new fundraising initiatives with experienced and dedicated committee members, advisors and third-party professionals.

Now, back to my husband’s question, what would be the single key takeaway? It is friendship with people who are selfless enough to give away their most valuable asset on earth for helping others in need: Time. *Amigos para siempre!* Happy 40th anniversary, IWA!

