

Electronic Mailbox

Viva La France International Relations Opinion

In December 2002, I had the pleasure of traveling to the 50th annual meeting of the Union Internationale des Huissiers de Justice (*UIHJ*) in Paris, France. I attended along with past NAPPS President Sue Collins and past NAPPS President and International Relations Chair, Fred Blum. As a NAPPS member, I had an interest in attending such a meeting, especially since the UIHJ has voted to hold their 2006 worldwide "Congress" here in the United States.

Huissiers have been in existence for over five hundred years and the UIHJ was formed approximately fifty years ago. There are currently fifty-four member nations that make up the UIHJ, and they are governed by a ten-member panel. Huissiers are also called Bailiffs of Justice. In addition to serving process, Huissiers prepare lawsuits and legal documents. They also prepare and levy upon the executions that result from these lawsuits. Their duties require that they be very educated men and women. In fact, much of the work they do in their countries would be performed by attorneys here in the U.S.

In 1992, the UIHJ, under the leadership of their president at that time, Mr. Baudouin Gielen, sought out NAPPS and asked for our help in getting international process served here in the United States in a timelier manner. This set the process in motion that recently resulted in ABC Legal Services being awarded the Department of Justice contract to take over the duties of the Central Authority here in the U.S. If it weren't for NAPPS' ongoing involvement with the UIHJ over the years, these duties would remain in the hands of the government.

The UIHJ's current President is Mr. Jacques Isnard. He is a charismatic and powerful leader with great vision and a dry sense of humor.

President Isnard and his leadership skills are so respected by his peers, that the members of the UIHJ rewrote their by-laws so he could remain their president after his maximum-allowed term in office expired. As a NAPPS member, I was very proud to hear from President Isnard how the UIHJ holds NAPPS in such high regard. President Isnard went on to say that it was Fred Blum's involvement that defeated the service of international process via e-mail. Without Fred's vision, service of process by e-mail would eventually have been a reality here. Think about it... If international service via email were allowed, how long would it have been before federal process would have followed suit? The states would have fallen next. Fred Blum deserves more credit than he gets and it was NAPPS' international relationship with the UIHJ that made sure Fred was in the right place at the right time! There is no question that we must maintain this relationship.

In addition to their annual meetings, the UIHJ meets every three years for a worldwide "Congress", which is hosted by a member country or association. In 2003, this conference will be held in Tunisia, where they are expecting 800-1000 attendees. The UIHJ voted to hold their 2006 Congress here in the United States. This is a great honor for our association.

My experience in Paris made it clear to me that NAPPS needs to maintain an on-going relationship with the UIHJ. Such a relationship cannot be measured in dollars and cents. The benefits we have already realized and the potential benefits of the future far outweigh any expenditure.

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