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On The Road: A Glimpse at Life in the Trenches

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On the Road

A glimpse at "Life in the Trenches"

Column Editor: **Don Jaeger**

(Alfred Jaeger, Inc.)

All stories, all anecdotes, all shared experiences are welcomed. Fax them to 516-543-1537, or mail to Don's attention at Alfred Jaeger, Inc., 66 Austin Blvd., Commack, NY 11725-9009. — DJ

Those who promised to submit stories this month obviously didn't as of the column deadline of December 15th, so I am pleased to recall one of my experiences a few years ago.

The following is my story of a trip to Moscow, Russia at the inopportune time of August 1991, which is now remembered as the month that shook the foundation of Communism. The trip started out innocently with a flight from New York's JFK Airport non-stop on Pan Am Airlines to Moscow. It was a very pleasant flight, I remember; the weather was clear and the flight was very uneventful. The last fifteen minutes of the flight I remember descending and looking upon the mysterious Russian terrain with apprehension of what I would discover in Moscow. I had attended other IFLA conferences in foreign countries such as Stockholm, Sweden and Brighton, England, however this meeting I thought would be unique.

Upon landing at the Moscow International Airport, a driver was there to take me to my hotel called the Cosmos Hotel, which is a comparable one to the Holiday Inns here in the States. The driver spoke little English so I just said a word here and there, but I marveled at some of the sights driving to my hotel.

The hotel had my reservation and I was escorted to my room which was clean and unassuming. My first trip was over to the exhibit center about twenty minutes away, near Parliament where I would locate the Jaeger exhibit booth and set up my materials. The cab ride was quite interesting going just past the Kremlin and St. Basil's prior to going past the Congress Hotel and eventually the exhibit venue.

It was good to see some familiar faces in the exhibit area including members of the **Dynix Company**, **Elsevier North Holland** and **Faxon Europe**. Sunday af-

ternoon was the opening of the exhibits and it was nice to see librarians not only from China and other foreign countries that attended, but also to see those from the Baltic states of Latvia and Lithuania, as well as librarians from other Soviet provinces such as Georgia.

That evening after the exhibits closed I had dinner with some vendor friends and a few librarians who were invited to dinner and it was a very friendly atmosphere. After dinner I took a cab back to the hotel and retired. Monday morning when I awoke, I ate breakfast with a subscription vendor who I knew from the Far East.

The cab ride over to the exhibit hall Monday morning was uneventful and I arrived at the exhibits around 9:00 a.m. While walking to my exhibit I saw **Jan Willem Dijkstra** from **Elsevier** who casually mentioned to me, "Don, what do you think about the coup?" Well, initially I thought he was joking and didn't have any clue as to something like that going on, so I asked him to repeat himself. And he said, "The coup! Gorbachev's out of power!" Fortunately he was staying at a hotel which had CNN News. My hotel was one of many that did not carry CNN or Western news, so it was mostly local television.

After we discussed the various events that took place I thought about my family back home and what we might expect. The exhibit area was lightly attended for the most part that morning, so I went with a few vendors over to the Congress Hotel for lunch. People kept coming up to us during the afternoon hours at the exhibit and mentioned difficulties in getting across town by car as military tanks were blocking the main thoroughfares and creating snarls in the local traffic. Also, we learned that the domestic airport was closed to immobilize those citizens who wished to travel within Russia.

At about 6:00 Monday evening the exhibits closed and a few of us made our way to the subway station to return to our hotels. This was the only method of transportation we felt would be unobstructed. I arrived at my hotel about thirty

minutes later and again tried to call my wife back home in New York. I finally did get through and discovered at that moment Hurricane Bob was packing winds of 100 plus miles per hour and she was quite frightened, to say the least.

It turns out that my relatives had called the U.S. State Department after hearing about the coup, and their advice was to get out immediately due to the unstable situation. After hearing this, and reassuring my family that I was O.K., I decided to go downstairs to the Hotel lobby where somebody managed to tune in a CNN transmission on the television, providing some information on the situation. It didn't look good at the time, and one of the bellmen in the lobby told me that the international airport was still open.

Hearing that, I packed my bags, and fell asleep around 2:00 a.m. only to get up at 5:00 a.m. and take a cab to the airport. The cab driver only went a few blocks before we had to turn around due to a tank blocking the road to the highway. So going about four or five blocks out of the way we were able to circumvent problems and get to the main highway to the airport.

Approximately one mile from the airport we noticed a convoy of tanks. I estimate about 30 to 40 tanks heading towards Moscow. I was glad at that point that I was at least attempting to leave. Upon my arrival at the airport, hundreds of people were milling around trying to get flights out. I finally spotted a person who looked official. It was the airport manager whose secretary told me where to go for a Pan American Airways flight.

The gate at Pan American was mobbed, and my original ticket was for Friday, not Tuesday, the day I was there. A U.S. Soccer team from New Jersey was in front of me, and was also attempting to leave the country. In conversation with them I mentioned that my wife had been hurt in our yard during the hurricane in New York.

I know from past experience that medical emergencies give people priorities and also eliminate any penalties with

continued on page 86

Book Pricing Update

continued from page 58

Performing Arts. Within the Performing Arts, though, there was yet another discrepancy: Theater, Cinema and Dance all saw prices rise more than 20%. Only Music showed a 0% price gain since 1990, but not because prices stayed flat for the intervening years — they dropped, they rose, and they ended nearly where they began.

The chart of price fluctuations is a particularly interesting one. Architecture started as the highest priced category, and

has remained there. The Fine and Performing Arts, on the other hand, started off with quite similar list prices, and then diverged sharply, with Fine Arts titles going up by \$10 over five years, and Performing Arts titles going up by less than \$3. Again, this reflected the steadying effect of prices in Music, and the fact that Music titles account for more than half of all titles in the Performing Arts.

Even more encouraging: prices in each of the "big" categories, and in all three combined, dropped between 1993 and 1994, allowing librarians to stretch their Arts dollars a little farther. ☞

Biz of Acq

continued from page 69

librarians will be happy to share their experiences and ideas for discarding. And again, bring it up for discussion at general staff meetings.

Deselection has far-ranging implications: on the institution's statistics, on scholarship, on the community served by

the library and on staff morale. The benefits gained by removing titles from the library (space, currency, ease of use) must be balanced by the uniqueness of individual titles and the effect on the long-range goals of the institution. Having a concrete basis for controversial decisions can deflect criticisms by taxpayers, faculty or administrators. How else to justify a smaller (in terms of statistics) but more dynamic and useful collection? ☞

On the Road

continued from page 83

ticket changes so I thought it was worth an attempt. It did work! I was able to get aboard that flight. While waiting for the delayed 9:00 a.m. flight from Helsinki, I talked to the soccer players and engineers from NASA, Goddard who were also ordered to return to our country.

Finally we boarded the flight and upon takeoff, there was tremendous applause and relief from everybody on the plane. We were headed for Frankfurt then and I would connect to New York and the NASA people were headed for Washington, D.C.

I finally arrived in New York later Tuesday afternoon, and called my family from Kennedy Airport. They were concerned because they hadn't heard from me, and asked where I was. I told them that I was back in New York. Needless to say, they were elated to hear the good news.

I hope to return to Moscow again during a less stressful time. However, this experience I will never forget. ☞

Book Review: Final Edit

continued from page 56

himself. In the course of trying to solve the murder while running his publishing business, he paints a vivid and informative picture of how many publishers in the world of New York City publishing function, live, love and deal with everyday publishing problems, not only on the publishing premises, but sometimes at the club and in the bedroom.

While **Final Edit** does an admirable job as a top-notch murder mystery for all lovers of this genre, it is loaded with enough factual and informative publishing insights that it might well be a primer on book publishing as practiced in New York, even down to the clubs favored by the publishing community and the types of drinks imbibed. It offers much about behind-the-scenes publisher activity, auctions, wheeling and dealing with agents, manuscript preparation and submission, working the ABA floor during a convention, and publisher financing problems.

If you love book publishing, or even have a modest interest in the subject, you'll find **Final Edit** loaded with an abundance of publisher know-how and wisdom about life on the Big Apple publishing scene. Don't miss it! ☞

ADVERTISERS' INDEX

69 ALPER	35 GREENWOOD
7 AMBASSADOR	27 INPUT CULTURE
87 AMERITECH	27 INTERNATIONAL BOOK DIST.
31 AMIGOS	2 JAEGER
5 ATG	41 MARY ANN LIEBERT
37 BAKER & TAYLOR	88 MIDWEST LIBRARY SERVICE
38 BLACKWELL	4 PUBLISHERS CONFERENCE
53 BLACKWELL NORTH AMERICA	73 PUVILL LIBROS
47 BLACKWELL NORTH AMERICA	49 READMORE
40 BOOK HOUSE	67 RITTENHOUSE
25 BRODART	45 SPRINGER-VERLAG
61 CHADWYCK-HEALEY	9 SWETS
39 COUTTS	22 UNCOVER
56 EBSCO	36 VCH
31 EASTERN BOOK	55 WILEY
13 ELSEVIER SCIENCE	3 YBP