

BC NOTARIES

Laurie Salvador



Notaries Without Borders

I'd like to share a little story with a heart-warming ending. In 1998 I received a call from a local group home asking if I would make a "house call" for an elderly man dying of cancer. I drove to the remote location on a dark, rainy night and was taken through myriad rooms filled with inquiring eyes.

The social worker gave me the history—as much as was available—about this man called Mikola who had no home. He had come to them from the street after being diagnosed with cancer. The most attractive feature of this man was his blue eyes. They dazzled like diamonds through his wizened old skull.

I visited with Mikola while collecting the information I needed to prepare a Will and Power of Attorney. It was a sad visit. He was melancholy; he was estranged from his family. He had children in eastern Canada and three much older offspring in Croatia that he had not seen since they were young. He had no idea where they lived. Alcohol had been the dagger that had wedged between them.

The second time I visited, Mikola was in bed, almost completely covered. I assumed he was close to death. I approached his bedside with tender steps and leaned close to see if he was breathing; I feared he had slipped away. Suddenly the bedclothes came flying off; he jumped out of bed fully dressed with a belly laugh and those dancing baby blues. I nearly fell over with shock and laughter at the joke he was playing on his new-found friend.

Unfortunately, Mikola did pass away later that year. He had appointed me executrix of his estate. With the help of snippets of information I had gleaned from him during our visits, I was able to find his Canadian children through the Internet. The offspring were not able to tell me anything about their siblings in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but they did know their siblings' birth names and the name of their war-ravaged community of origin. I began to search for these people through the Internet and the International Red Cross.

It's just another example of how close we are in this world—as Notaries and people—without borders.

I continued the search over a period of two years, but to no avail.

It was a small estate. I decided to distribute one-fifth to each of the two Canadian sons and hold the rest until I could be certain whether the others could be found.

Just as I was about to give up on the Bosnia search, I remembered our new Notary in Armstrong, Senad Sijercic, who is originally from that area. I called Senad to ask if he thought I could do more to find these individuals.

He emailed a friend, a Notary from Kosova. The Notary responded within a couple of days, telling us he knew the family and that he had contacted them! They were alive!

Now, how to get \$1500 to Bosnia and Herzegovina?

By another coincidence, a friend was going on a peacekeeping mission to Bosnia. He agreed to take the USD money draft with him on his next trip and delivered the draft to the Notary, who was able to cash it—it took months to clear—and then pass the funds along to Mikola's three long-lost children, in their own currency.

I cannot help but think that Mikola's spirit guided me to persist and not give up. I am sure those children, while they did not have the benefit of growing up with a father in their home, were pleased to know he thought of them even in his dying moments and wanted them to have something to comfort them from a lifetime of loss.

My thanks to Senad Sijercic for being the key to giving this story a bittersweet ending. It's just another example of how close we are in this world—as Notaries and people—without borders. ▲

Ed. Note: Please see page 52 for the profile of BC Notary Senad Sijercic.

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