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A Splendid Swedish Summertime

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a splendid swedish summertime



Hillary Miller
University of Georgia School of Law
Global Internship 2010

(come pick me up) I've landed!
Saturday, May 15, 2010 (posted at 8:00pm)



It is only 5a.m. in Sweden ...and why am I awake? First, because it's bright outside, and has been since 3a.m. (I need to adjust to this new latitude). And, because I fell asleep at the absurdly early hour of 5:30p.m. last night, having not slept a bit on the flight overseas. But, I am safe and sound in Sweden! A co-worker of mine at the law firm, Terje, and his girlfriend were nice enough to pick me up from the airport yesterday and take me through downtown Stockholm, where we had a wonderful lunch and wine overlooking the water. And, in even better news, they offered for me to stay with them until my apartment in downtown Stockholm becomes available

later this month. So even though it was a long journey over, it had a perfect ending!

Tuesday, May 18, 2010 (posted at 9:13am)



Just got home (from my afternoon commute!) after two great days of work. The office is awesome; right across the street from a beautiful park, and very modern inside. Everyone at the firm is very nice and extremely helpful, and are taking extra care to include me in everything they can. My desk is amazing...there is a switch you can flip that makes it raise and lower, so you can either work standing up or sitting down! Today we went for lunch and I had my first genuine Swedish meal at a place called Vurna: swedish meatballs, mashed potatoes, and lingonberry jam. You can see for yourself in the picture, but needless to

say, I'll be going back. Terje took me on a walk through downtown after lunch, down to a nearby market where they sell fresh fruit, vegetables, and seafood. It was another beautiful day in Stockholm - low 70s and sunny - and I hope it stays like this the whole time I'm here!

Tonight we're having a bbq with Terje, Kathy, and some friends. I found Sweet Baby Ray's bbq sauce at the market! It's the first real American thing I've seen so far at the market, and it couldn't have popped up at a better time!

Wednesday, May 19, 2010 (posted at 11:34am)



So now I feel like I'm writing about food a lot, but I had my first Swedish fast food meal today: a French hot dog (ironic), which is served with the usual ketchup and mustard, and then Bostongurka, which is pickled cucumber. The sausage is held in half a baguette, which is closed on one side...genius! That way it and all the condiments don't fall through! We ate in the beautiful park across the street from the office on the steps of the Royal Library, a library that houses every book or magazine that has ever been published in Sweden. Its depository spans underneath the park because it has so many holdings. The park is called Humlegarden, "humle" meaning "hops," because it is where they used to grow hops for brewing beer.

We were invited to drinks with White & Case next week, an international law firm with offices across Europe (in Stockholm too, of course) and also in the U.S. Everyone at my firm is so great that I am looking forward to meeting more Swedish lawyers now, too!

Thursday, May 20, 2010 (posted at 10:49 am)

Today I toured Grappe with Mats, an attorney at my firm, as research for a case we're working on. It is the first wine cellar in Europe, where people spend thousands of dollars a year to store their wines at optimum temperatures. The cellar is amazing...much bigger than I could have imagined and very cold. For some reason, all I could think of was some Edgar Allen Poe short story or poem we read in high school that took place in catacombs, but it really wasn't creepy! So if you store your wines there, you can arrange for tastings and dinners (just last week, the most famous chef in Sweden prepared a meal for a party), and you can come any time to drink a bottle with their cheese buffet. But even if you don't store your wine there, they conduct tastings for the public every Saturday...so that's where I'll be headed this weekend! Cheers!

Friday, May 21, 2010 (posted at 4:30am)

A very pressing development necessitates a mid-day post. During a lunch break venture in search of hair dryer (which was much more difficult than one would ordinarily imagine), I was, for the very first time in a week, mistaken for a Swede. Terje says that you can tell I'm an American because I look healthy and innocent, and blonde, fair-skinned, light-eyed Swedish girls are neither of those things.

Thus, my conversations usually go something like this: a very polite Swede says, "Hej, hej!" and I respond, somewhat apologetically, "Hi," and then he or she immediately realizes that I am an American and begins speaking English (fluently, I may add). But today, the girl ringing up my (expensive, but the cheapest one available) hair dryer gave a happy greeting, and I followed with my usual reply, and then, amazingly, she continued speaking Swedish! She said that she would never have been able to tell that I wasn't Swedish! One small step for me, one giant leap for my quest to not stick out like a sore thumb...

Saturday, May 22, 2010 (posted at 9:57am)



Had an amazing day exploring Stockholm today. I went for a run this morning through Kungsholmen, one of the

several islands that makes up the city of Stockholm. Running is really one of the greatest ways to familiarize yourself with a city...I love it. But (as always) I saw about a hundred stores I wanted to visit as I ran past, so after I showered and had lunch, I walked my morning running route, stopping to shop all along the way. Stockholm shopping is top-notch, I'm happy to report.

A few notable things to mention...one, I have found my favorite home store ever: Granit. It is like a combination of Pottery Barn and the Container Store, which is basically the most wonderful combo I can imagine. There's a picture of the inside attached. Two, there are an absolutely absurd number of H&M stores. No exaggeration: I once saw FIVE stores within a two-block radius. But I'm not complaining, because I love H&M. Also, there are a lot of



"mother and daughter" stores - like matching clothing for moms and their girls. I've been pondering why this might be and have determined that it is probably because Swedish women get 18 months of maternity leave (part paid at 80% of their normal salary, part paid at a set base salary), so they have a lot more chances to dress in matching clothes with their children and frolic about the city to show off their ensembles.



After my round of shopping, I did some sightseeing along the water in downtown Stockholm, to the National Museum and the Opera House (pictures above). It is amazing how walkable Stockholm is, and how very much you can see in just one (long) day.

One other thing to note: I have probably generated less trash in one week living in Stockholm than I do in just a few hours at home. I have used zero paper towels. Swedes are very

economical. If a house even has a trash can, it is very small. Refrigerators are very small too, so that no food spoils and is wasted. If you need plastic bags at the grocery store checkout, you must pay for each one you use. I'm sure that this phenomenon is due at least in part to the literal lack of space in Sweden, it being such a small country, but another substantial part, I'm sure, is due to a different general mindset about wastefulness.

Monday, May 24, 2010 (posted at 1:07am)



Yesterday I braved the bad weather (though I'm not complaining, because it's the first rain I've seen) to travel to Sodermalm, the southernmost island in inner Stockholm, to celebrate opening weekend of



Fotografiska (<http://en.fotografiska.eu/>), a brand new photography museum right on the water among the shipping docks. The views back across the water to Gamla Stan (where the Royal Palace is) and downtown Stockholm were amazing, even in the bad weather. The museum was packed. Three photographers were highlighting opening weekend, the first of whom I was most interested in: Annie Leibovitz, Vee Speers, and Lennart Nilsson. Annie Leibovitz is one of those artists whose name I recognized, and whose work I recognized, but

where I hadn't quite made the connection with how very influential she was, and is. She was a photographer for Rolling Stone and Vogue, and has photographed some of the most famous celebrities in American history. I attached a few of the ones I was able to snap pictures of. And, the exhibit included much of her personal photography, as well – of her children, and parents, and friends. It was really great, and totally worth the wet socks and broken umbrella.

I noticed something while wandering around the museum that I've also noticed while wandering around downtown: almost every couple walks together in some sort of embrace. Either arms around one another or, at the very least, holding hands. Many of them stop every so often for a full-on embrace and kiss. And this isn't just teenagers, either - it's ALL ages. Everyone seems very connected to one another. As a person who is quite fond of hugs, I find this very heart-warming :)

Thursday, May 27, 2010 (posted at 4:17am)



It's been an uneventful but busy week so far at work. I'm working on several projects for Terje as well as on a case with Mats, and it's a test of my multi-tasking skills, but a good one! The case I'm working on with Mats was supposed to go to trial next week, but as is seemingly always the case in civil litigation, it has been postponed for another few months. Instead, though, I will get to accompany Mats to a pre-trial hearing with the trial judge and opposing counsel on Monday. In Sweden, there are no jury trials. Since a judge decides all matters, criminal and civil, there are no limitations on the introduction of evidence at trial, because there is no fear of misleading or confusing a jury of civilians. So, that means there's a LOT of

evidence that is introduced by both parties - much of it conflicting - and thus a lot to sort through in preparation for and at trial. So that's basically what we've been working on...getting our facts straight and separating our facts from the defendant's.

I went for what I had planned to be a five-mile run yesterday after work, got terribly lost, and ended up just about completing a half-marathon! But the only good thing about getting lost in a new city is that you end up seeing a lot more of it than you intended to. I found all these beautiful, forgotten side-streets (picture above) that I'm sure I never would have seen otherwise.

My mom is arriving in Stockholm tomorrow morning for a six-day visit, and I can't wait for her to get here! The weather has been perfect thus far, and I hope it holds out while she is here. Even when it is only high 50s or low 60s, though, the Swedes break out their shorts and tank tops and flip-flops, while I stay wrapped up in a sweater. Because Stockholm has such a long, dark winter, I think the Swedes jump at any chance to wear summer-ish clothes, and I can't blame them.

Friday, May 28, 2010 (posted at 12:26 am)

It is truly the smallest of small worlds. Yesterday after work I decided to check out this amazing-looking glasses store called Bagar & Glas in central Stockholm that I keep passing on my runs. They carry all these really neat brands of glasses, most of them handmade in Italy. It has come to my attention that I am ordinarily one of the only people not wearing some sort of chic glasses, and thus my quest for cute glasses began yesterday. So I'd also been e-mailing back and forth with a girl named Jasmin who lives in Stockholm, a friend of a friend of mine from UGA, Halley Espy. We hadn't yet met, because she is still in class and preparing to graduate this weekend actually. And we're not Facebook friends or anything, so I had no idea what she looked like. So this great girl is helping me pick out frames, and we've gotten about 100 out and are deciding which ones make me look like Harry Potter and which ones don't, and suddenly she says, "Are you Hillary?!?" Because I had not even considered the possibility that she was indeed Jasmin, you can imagine my surprise at being recognized in, of all places, Stockholm. We both just couldn't believe our luck in running into one another in a big city without even having planned it or knowing what one another looked like...of all the optical stores in all the world, I happened to walk into hers!

Last night was just a great night all around, because it was also the night of the cocktail reception at the law firm of White & Case. They served wine and beer and finger foods on the rooftop terrace of their downtown building, and the weather had just cleared off, and it was amazing. I met an ex-pro Swedish football (i.e., soccer) player. I talked with several young attorneys from other firms in Stockholm. Their English is so impeccably American that I never cease to be amazed at my ability to hold such an "American" conversation in a foreign country. When I told them this, they laughingly explained that it was because their generation has grown up watching American sitcoms, in English, and thus they have almost developed American accents when they speak English. I also met several attorneys from the White & Case Stockholm branch. They do a lot of work with the London, NYC, LA, and Miami offices. They said that the London and Stockholm (and for that matter, all their European offices) are always looking for American lawyers, that way they are not disadvantaged when negotiating on behalf of their clients against American firms. Interesting :)

Monday, May 31, 2010 (posted at 12:24am)



Had a wonderful weekend touring Stockholm with Mom, and now it's back to work! On Saturday we shopped at the market and stores all along Stockholm's "King Street," Kungsgaten.

We had delicious pastries at the famous

Vette-katte...though I'll admit it was our second-round, as we had already paid this lovely café a visit on Friday evening. Saturday was overcast and a bit rainy, so we spent most of the day indoors, shopping and then later that evening...Sex and the City 2!! It did not disappoint. But, I think I might

be the only of my friends who saw it with Swedish subtitles at the bottom of the screen! Interesting tidbit about Swedish movie theaters: you have assigned seats! So, the earlier you buy your

tickets, the better. Then, when you buy them, you get to choose from what's left – whether you'd rather sit in the front, middle, or back of the theater. It's a much easier system, though, because then you know you'll have seats together, and you don't have to arrive early to fight for seats!

Sunday was Mother's Day in Sweden, so Mom got to celebrate Mother's Day twice in 2010! We took a three-hour brunch cruise of the Stockholm archipelago, an area of approximately 24,000 (!!!) islands and islets in the Baltic Sea. The archipelago is the biggest in Sweden and one of the largest in the Baltic Sea. We traveled to one of the outermost islands of Vaxholm; it has the lowest reported crime rate in Sweden, having had only three crimes since 2008! The pictures above are from that cruise. The weather was absolutely perfect, and the scenery was amazing! After the cruise, we spent the rest of the afternoon shopping and touring Gamla Stan – the middle island in Stockholm. All things Royal are located on Gamla Stan: the Palace, the Royal Cathedral, the House of Nobility, etc. It is also known as "Old Town" because it dates back to the 13th century, which the cobblestone streets and medieval alleyways make quite obvious. When Princess Victoria gets married on June 19th, the wedding will be held at the Cathedral in Gamla Stan. Afterwards, she and her new husband Daniel will "parade" through the center of Stockholm on the Royal Barge Vasaorden before going back to the Palace for the reception. Much to my dismay, however, it seems as though my invitation to this event has been lost in the mail...

Tuesday, June 1, 2010 (posted at 4:41am)



Last night Mom and I were the lucky recipients of my new friend Jasmin's gracious tour-guide and hostess skills. We met her after work and made the short walk to Gamla Stan, Stockholm's "Old Town" and center island - the home of the Royal Palace. Jasmin lives in Old Town and is a wealth of knowledge about its storied past...she gave Mom and I a wonderful tour of the small island. The center square Stortorget (pictured above) is what Gamla Stan is the most famous square in Stockholm. In 1520,



Christian II the Tyrant used the square to commit "The Stockholm Bloodbath," having 82 (I believe) of his political opponents beheaded there after they arrived under the pretense of attending a party. You can see in the picture that there are cream-colored stones dotting the reddish building with a triangular top. There are 82 stones in all, one for each of the nobles that was killed in that square. Legend has it that if one stone is removed, that noble's spirit will haunt the square forever.



Jasmin's absolutely perfect apartment is the uppermost right-hand window of the other reddish building, to the left. The apartment has been reserved only for students. The rooftop terrace of the apartment provides such a great view of Gamla Stan (the Palace, Stortorget, etc.) as well as almost all of Stockholm, especially at sunset. Jasmin set out a great dinner of cheeses, fruits, and tea for Mom and I, and it was a wonderful evening!

Thursday, June 3, 2010 (posted at 5:33am)

Today was a big day at Advokatfirman Urban Olson...Karin and Terje were officially admitted to the Swedish Bar Association this morning! In Sweden, the requirements for admission to the Bar are much more rigid than in the US. After graduating from law school, you work for several years as a sort of "associate attorney" under an attorney who has been admitted to the Bar. Later, after you have compiled many references as to your professionalism, character, and work ethic from various judges and attorneys with and against whom you have practiced, you formally request admission to the Bar. Then a committee meets and deliberates and decides whether you are fit and

ready to be a practicing attorney in Sweden. This morning, that committee admitted two of my co-workers, Karin and Terje. The firm celebrated with bouquets of flowers for the inductees, champagne, strawberries, and genuine Cuban cigars in our courtyard, followed by a wonderful lunch in Stureplan. As Urban says, I am now the only person at the firm who is a mere associate anymore!

Saturday, June 5, 2010 (posted at 8:25am)



The end of this week has been so great, starting on Thursday afternoon (my last post) - champagne and cigars with the firm. First of all, I moved into my new apartment in Kungsholmen (picture attached). It's in a great location, right next to a park and very close to the water, and I'm excited to get to know another neighborhood of Stockholm. I spent Thursday evening with white wine and good company at Josefina's, a really nice restaurant and bar overlooking the water. It is actually the place Kathy and Terje took me on my first afternoon in Stockholm. It is gorgeous in

the late evening as the sun is finally setting over the water, and there are wicker couches with big cushions spread out all over the patio.

Yesterday, my friend Jasmin graduated from optometry school, so I met her and some friends in Slussen at the very classy champagne bar at Soder Teatern to celebrate! The champagne bar has a patio that overlooks the entire city. It sounds strange, but I had never seen Stockholm lit up at night, because it doesn't get dark until so late (past 11pm), and I hadn't been in a spot with a good view past 11pm these past three weeks. Needless to say, it was gorgeous and a great way to spend the evening. I attached a picture, but unfortunately it came out a bit blurry. The champagne bar was on the seventh floor, and a dance bar was down below on the fifth, so we headed down to dance after a bit. The place was packed, but the music was great and almost everyone there was dancing. Best conversation of the night: "So where are you from?" "The U.S." "So how old are you?" "I'm 23." "Ah! LeBron James' number!!" Last song: theme song from "Fresh Prince of Bel-Air." I felt right at home! When the bar closed at 2am, the sun was already rising...it was the strangest feeling to be basically "calling it an early night" as the sun was coming up!

Today I got up early to spend the day shopping along Drottninggatan, a long pedestrian mall in the middle of the city with great local and chain shops. The Stockholm Marathon started at 2pm, so pretty soon 20,000+ runners and spectators began cramming the streets. I went to one of my favorite cafes in Ostermalm for lunch and was seated next to a family whose accent I

recognized...Americans! They were from Florida and are in Stockholm for a week of vacation and are loving it as much as I am. We ended up having our lunches together, which made my favorite spot all the better.

Tonight I'm headed to Vurma, the restaurant that serves the (amazing) Swedish meatballs that were the subject of one of my first posts. Vurma is celebrating its one-year anniversary tonight with food and live music, and several of the waiters that I have met there are performing in the bands. Should be another fun night in Stockholm!

Monday, June 7, 2010 (posted at 1:28pm)



Yesterday, June 6th, was Sweden's National Day (like July 4th for Americans). It also marked the start of Stockholm's Festival of Love 2010, which culminates in two weeks with the Royal Wedding of Princess Victoria. The holiday, the



festival, and the absolutely perfect weather made for crowded streets and lots to do. First, I went to church at the Royal Chapel, right next to the Royal Palace in Old Town. Princess Victoria will be married there on June 19th. A rather plain exterior masks a gorgeous golden interior, and the pews were packed in. The entire service was conducted in Swedish, save the invitation to communion. But even though I didn't understand much of anything being said or sung, I did really enjoy the boys choir that performed in honor of National Day. After church, I shared brunch in Stortorget, the famed central square of Old Town, with two Danish ladies I met. As I was finishing

brunch, I noticed a crowd forming around the entrance to the Nobel Prize Museum, also in Stortorget, so I stuck around to see what all the hype was about. It turns out that the Museum was sponsoring an hour-long showcase of wedding rituals from different cultures. Costumed actors representing at least a dozen different countries, including Sweden, re-enacted wedding ceremonies. I attached pictures of the best ones!

Afterwards, I made the long trek back through Central Stockholm to the Vasa Museum. The Vasa was a great Swedish warship built in the 1600s - at the time, it was one of the largest and most expensive that had ever been built. However, when it set sail on its maiden voyage for war in Poland, it sunk with the first big wind after only a few minutes in the Stockholm harbor. The King was embarrassed at this epic failure for hundreds of years. Then, in



at the time, Gustav Adolf, was so that he forbid anyone to speak of it. In the mid-1900s, it was re-discovered, and with the help of the current King, massive efforts were made to raise the ship from the ocean floor, where it had spent the past 300+ years. It is remarkably well-preserved, because a bacteria that erodes wood in most oceans cannot survive in the less salty waters of the Baltic Sea. With 95% original materials, the great ship is now housed in the Vasa Museum.

When I left the Vasa, Stockholm was abuzz with parades. The first parade I caught was headed along the water down Strandvagen, and was complete with bagpipes and bands. The next parade, though, was the best, because it was the parade of the Royal Family! It lasted only a few minutes, but first came about 00 officers on horseback, playing horns, and then came the King and Queen in one carriage, and next Princess Victoria, her fiance, and the Prince in the second carriage, again followed by the calvary. From my spot on the sidewalk, I was only about 10 feet from the Royals!



When you are in a country with a monarchy, the monarchs become virtually like celebrities, and seeing them so close was amazing. I was surprised at the general lack of security, though. There were about 10 policemen guarding the streets, but the Family rode in open-air carriages, and it seemed scarily easy for some lunatic to do them harm if he wished.

On the walk home, I explored Stadshuset, which is at the site of the Nobel Prize dinner each year. It is a beautiful building right along the water, complete with gardens and an enormous courtyard. The Taste of Stockholm was also this weekend in Kungsgarden, so I wandered through the booths to see if anything in particular caught my eye. About 50 Stockholm restaurants had set up booths with samples of their best and most popular menu items, food and drink, for small prices. I noticed that the most popular dishes seemed to be the most Americanized: french fries, onion rings, and BBQ ribs. I felt right at home :)

Stockholm's famous city hall, entrance to Kungsholmen and is the

un bon weekend
Sunday, June 13, 2010 (posted at 6:20am)



Just had an amazing weekend in Brussels! It was a jam-packed 48 hours, but really ended up being about the perfect amount of time to see the highpoints of the city. There are three languages spoken in Belgium: French (predominantly), Dutch, and German (least common).

I speak no Dutch or German, but have enough of a French background that I was able to get by. Less people speak English in Brussels than in Stockholm, but it was still widely used thanks to the generally cosmopolitan nature of the city. One person I met said, for example, that in his neighborhood alone there were people of 178 different nationalities. I took hundreds of pictures, so I'm going to post those in a facebook album instead of taking up an obnoxious amount of room on this blog. Perhaps just one or two here...

Anyways, the weekend started on Friday afternoon with a bus ride to Stockholm's Skavsta airport, and then an uneventful two-hour plane ride on Ryanair. The ticket, which I purchased back in the States, only cost me \$8, by the way. Have to love European airfare rates! Once I arrived in Brussels, I took a bus to Gare Midi, the southern-most train, bus, and metro station, then took the metro north a few stops to get closer to my hotel. You can imagine that attempting to navigate the ancient streets at, by this time, after midnight, to find my hotel, while also taking care to avoid those who were the most drunk was quite a task, but thankfully I found my hotel quite quickly.

I woke up early - in fact, I think I was the first person up in all of Brussels. As I made my way to Grand Place, just a block away, I basically had the streets and the square to myself. Grand Place is widely considered the most beautiful city square in all of Europe, and I couldn't agree more. It was once the town market, and even that morning several vendors were setting up booths of flowers, etc. It was burned in 1695 by the French, but rebuilt in the years immediately following.

I spent the entire day exploring the city from there. Brussels is known for six things: beer, chocolate, frites (french fries), lace, waffles, and comic strips - so I made it my mission to sample each one in the next 48 hours. There are chocolate and lace shops absolutely everywhere surrounding Grand Place, so that was quite easy to find. I even visited a chocolate factory and was able to catch a demonstration of how chocolate shells (like the ones used for Reeses cups) are made. I shopped up and down Rue Nueve, Brussels' best shopping area, then found a beer museum and brewery, where I sampled the BEST BEER I HAVE EVER HAD: Kriek. It is cherry-flavored, and quite popular in Brussels, even among boys. You can tell by the color of its foam how sweet it is - the redder the sweeter. I also visited Brussels' comic strip museum and tried to go inside every beautiful cathedral I came across, though there were almost too many to do so. Late in the afternoon, I stumbled across an amazing antiques market and found what I've been searching for for the past month: an antique map of Stockholm. Apparently maps of Stockholm are extremely hard to find and quite expensive, as the best ones stopped being made in the 19th century. The one I found was produced in 1840, but is still in great shape, and I couldn't believe my

luck having found it in, of all places, Brussels! Last night I found a neat looking Italian restaurant and enjoyed the company of several Americans, as we cheered on the USA in the World Cup match against Britain. I finished off the night with an indescribably delicious Belgian waffle, hot off the griddle and covered in fresh cream, chocolate, and caramel...calories number 5500-6000 for my Saturday log.

I woke up early this morning again to explore the Northern part of downtown Brussels that I hadn't gotten to see much of on Saturday. Again, I found several beautiful cathedrals...the number of churches in downtown Brussels, which is a relatively small area, is absolutely incredible! There's one beautiful church after another. I had pain au chocolat at a neat French cafe, checked out of my hotel, and headed to Grand Place to meet the Brussels Bike Tour and our guide. The tour began at 10am with our tour guide Cesar, Argentinian-born and Brussels-bred. The tour group was made up of a group of American students studying in Germany for the summer and visiting Brussels for the weekend, and a recent graduate of the University of Michigan who was traveling through Europe before starting a job in NYC in August. We had a great morning together, riding through some neat areas of Brussels on bike. We saw the largest courthouse in the world, though its beauty and grandeur were somewhat tainted by the scaffolding that has surrounded it for over 21 years. We biked through the European Union buildings too. We stopped at Brussels' most famous frites vendor, Maison Antoine, and thus I checked off the last of the must-do-in-Brussels off my list. Maison Antoine wraps their massive portions of frites in cones, and also gives you a choice of over twenty different dipping sauces. I asked for their two most famous and was (unsurprisingly) not disappointed. Our tour group and guide shared frites, sauces, and Belgian beers in the square, and then I said goodbye to my new friends to head to the airport as they finished the last bit of the tour. All-in-all, a great weekend. It was fast, and a bit overwhelming, but there's certainly something to be said for making the most of the daylight...I got to see and do everything I wanted in Brussels, and I am so glad that I went. In the spirit of my renewed love of the French language...au revoir!

Wednesday, June 16, 2010 (posted at 5:22am)



I can't believe my last weekend in Stockholm is already here! My how the times flies when you're having fun (slash the time of your life)! The week has gotten off to a great start with Jasmin and three of her friends visiting from the States: Marc, Jenna, and Farshad. We spent Monday evening enjoying the water-front festivities of the Stockholm Festival of Love (the two-week celebration of Princess' Victoria's wedding...this weekend!), great pizza and desserts at Vapiano in Old Town, and a beautiful (albeit chilly) evening on Jasmin's rooftop terrace.

Last night Jasmin hosted a party at her Old Town apartment. The evening started with more time spent on the rooftop terrace, but gradually descended to the cellar of the

apartment building. This sounds creepy, until I explain further...the cellar has been refurbished by Jasmin and other tenants of the building and is now a cozy, roomy party spot. There is a room with a bar, a room with speakers and a disco ball, and a room with two dining room tables and a chandelier. After enjoying some authentic Persian cooking (complete with their favorite spice: saffron), we spent the night dancing and socializing and had a great time! And the greatest part is...it never gets dark outside! So you always feel as though the night is young... :)

Meanwhile, life in the office is great too. I've been working primarily on researching and preparing a couple office memos for Mats concerning personal jurisdiction assertions in cyberspace and life settlements (sale of life insurance policies) in the U.S. The work has been really interesting, and I've been getting a lot of good feedback. Today I worked on a quick wrongful death/statute of limitations assignment for Urban, senior counsel/the partner, and also got good feedback from him. Everyone is so patient with me, always ensuring that I am up-to-speed and understanding everything.

Most afternoons, we (and everyone else in Sweden) take a quick afternoon break, called a fika, for socialization and snacking and a much-needed break from the computer screen. Sometimes we have "afternoon apples" and catch some CNN updates. Today we had ice cream sandwiches (which are made with gingerbread instead of chocolate wafers) and lively discussions of the merits of Wal-Mart and reality TV. I will definitely miss everyone at the firm and the fikas I have come to love! Urban has also announced today that the firm will be celebrating my time here with a party after work on Friday...I just still can't believe it's coming to an end so quickly!

Friday, June 18, 2010 (posted at 12:58am)

I've been wanting to take advantage of free admission to the Stockholm Stadsmuseum (City Museum) for several weeks now, but their limited opening hours had proven a difficult obstacle. On Thursday evening, though, it is open until 8pm, so I took the T to Slussen right after work. The Museum is located in Sodermalm, the southernmost island of Stockholm, where I have spent relatively little time. I took the Millenium tour here, which coincides with the famous "Girl with the Dragon Tattoo" trilogy, but have done little else. I spent about an hour exploring and shopping in Sodermalm, then headed to the Museum. In honor of the Royal Wedding this Saturday (which, incidentally, I will be watching from Jasmin's rooftop terrace overlooking the chapel, with snipers!), there was a special exhibition of wedding photos throughout the years. It was really neat to see the progression plotted out in one long row, from the stiff, unhappy faces of yesteryear to today's rather unconventional poses.

Last night I met up with some friends who were celebrating with colleagues from the Royal Bank of Scotland at Bistro Jarl, a neat restaurant and bar in the very fashionable district of Ostermalm. The bar had indoor and outdoor seating and lots of commotion, but no cover charge (thankfully, for once) and a good atmosphere. Tonight after work I'll be celebrating with my colleagues and then catching England's World Cup match! Time to enjoy my last weekend in Stockholm :)

goin' to the chapel

June 21, 2010 (posted at 12:23am)



This weekend was the event all of Stockholm has been waiting for since I arrived - or better yet, for the past 32 years: Princess Victoria's wedding. Victoria is the heir to the Swedish throne, which she will inherit as soon as her father steps

down, and Daniel, her new husband, will become a Prince because he is not of royal descent. The city was absolutely swarming with Swedes and tourists early on Saturday morning. The streets were all blocked off for the parade that was to follow the wedding, but the subways were running all weekend free of charge. Little girls in princess outfits and tiaras pranced in the streets. People of all ages were wearing crowns and holding cameras. It was definitely a big, big day in Stockholm, and I'm so glad I was here to experience it! I watched the pre-wedding buzz with friends on Jasmin's rooftop. From there, alerted by a roar of applause, we saw Victoria in a car on her way to the Chapel. There were at least 4 helicopters overhead, one of which circled our group on the rooftop several times. We watched a live feed of the wedding in the apartment, then joined the crowds when it was nearing the end to try and catch a glimpse of them as they left the church. The group decided that putting me on Farshad's shoulders was one of the best ways to actually get some good pictures, and the view from up there was amazing! I saw Victoria and Daniel in their carriage, waving at the screaming and adoring crowds, on their way to begin the parade. It was definitely one of the highlights of my trip. Swedish national music was playing, the guards on horseback were playing trumpets...it was amazing.

When we headed to Ostermalm for dinner a few hours later, downtown Stockholm was like a ghost-town. The parade had passed through, the private wedding reception had begun, and the crowds had disappeared. The roads were still blocked off through, and debris lay everywhere from the madness a few hours before. The crowds started picking up again, though, after dinnertime, and we stayed out - first at a fancy bar along the water in Gamla Stan, then to Vassa Eggen back in Ostermalm - and had a great night!



On Sunday Terje and Kathy were nice enough to take me on a mini-tour of the Swedish countryside. We headed North of Stockholm to a town called Uppsala, which is Sweden's "college town." Mats, Urban, and Terje all went to law school in Uppsala, and there are something like 45,000 students there. The largest cathedral in all of Scandanavia

marks the center of town, and the university buildings are old and beautiful. Uppsala University was established in 1477! It's amazing how much older things are in Europe than at home - it's just an entirely different concept of "old." We had fika in the town square at a student hangout where Terje spent a lot of time during his studies. I was so happy to get the chance to see a bit of Sweden outside of Stockholm, and I hope I get the chance to see even more the next time I'm here!

the last post

Monday, June 21, 2010 (posted at 4:01pm)

I can't believe I'm writing my last post from Stockholm, summer 2010. What an amazing time I have had here. I will miss the city, my friends, and my co-workers so much, but feel confident we will all meet again someday soon :) Until then, I can't wait to get back to the States to see my friends and family and enjoy an amazing weekend for Kadie and Dustin's wedding! Thanks everyone for reading/following my blog. There are about a million more stories to tell and pictures to share, but I'll always be happy to do so. Coming to Stockholm was probably the bravest and most rewarding thing I've ever done, and I am so, so thankful to have had the opportunity to have come here. If you EVER get the chance to go to Stockholm, do it!!