



Lady Liberty, Liberty Island, New York Harbor

[By Jesse Londin]

In her first-ever official interview, America's Lady in the Harbor graciously accepts her hard-earned Law Star and talks candidly with LawCrossing about her global image, her singular role as the symbol of freedom and opportunity for the world, and what it means to be an American.

Law Stars are, by definition, larger than life. They come in all shapes and sizes, with huge reputations. But this week's honoree breaks just about every record in the *Law Stars Hall of Fame*.

As we honor individuals whose contributions to the legal profession and the world are uniquely inspiring to the rest of us, here on LawCrossing we do not judge our *Law Stars* by their height, girth or bulk.

Welcome this week's spectacular inductee. Standing 305 feet tall and weighing 225 tons, with green hair and skin, a five foot long nose, size 879 shoes and a reputation around the planet for never budging an inch, especially on issues of freedom and justice for all, this *Law Star's* singular greatness belies her humble beginning as a 19th century immigrant from France who traveled across the Atlantic in 350 pieces to be assembled at her waterfront home in New York Harbor.

Her official name is **Liberty Enlightening the World**. But she has many affectionate nicknames: the **Statue of Liberty**, **Lady Liberty**, the **Lady in the Harbor**, the **Mother of Exiles**, and yes, some admirers simply call her **Torch Girl**. And if the nation has put this icon of liberty up on a 27,000-ton pedestal, and made a pilgrimage out of the 332-step climb to her crown, it's with good reason.

Everybody thinks they know her, but in many ways, the Lady is an enigma. Although commonly considered the most photographed image on Earth, this legendary

Lady, the goddess of the gateway to America, is surprisingly modest. She avoids unnecessary media attention and prefers to let her reputation speak for itself.

In fact, this is the Statue of Liberty's first official interview. So come along with LawCrossing on a ferry ride from Battery Park on Manhattan Island at Castle Clinton over to Liberty Island as we pay a call on the grand dame herself, pin a *Law Star* on her great gown of hammered copper, and induct this most honorary figure into the *Law Stars Hall of Fame*. Because it's about time. Videotape and flash photography are permitted. But please, no autographs.

Q: Ms. Liberty, you are Earth's biggest Law Star and a symbol of tolerance, hope, opportunity and a better future for all. What has it been like for you to stand up for the lofty ideals of liberty, freedom and democracy over the last century?

A: First of all, I want to thank LawCrossing for this honor. To be inducted into the *Law Stars Hall of Fame* means a great deal to me. I've worked hard to earn this. As you know, I get a lot of attention. And if you look at the live Web cam that is focused on me all the time you can see me smiling right now. I also want to toast to all of my fellow *Law Stars*!

As for standing up for all the lofty principles upon which this country was built, well, it's not always easy. But it is the most important job I can imagine. And I would not step down, especially during these trying times, for anything in the world.

Q: For the past few years, a lot of folks have been disappointed when they visit to learn that you are closed.

A: Yes, I understand there has been some confusion. I apologize for that. Actually, I was only entirely closed for about three months in the wake of the September 11 attacks. Thereafter, the grounds of Liberty Island reopened, while my pedestal, which features a museum and 16-story high observation deck, was, for safety reasons, closed.

After all, I am a known terrorist target. A little security upgrade was in order. The good news is, using federal funds and millions of dollars in private donations, including a \$100,000 personal check from New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg himself - he's a big supporter of Liberty - I am getting new fire safety systems and other security additions. And Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton has announced that beginning in August 2004, my pedestal will reopen. I thank Secretary Norton for all her support.

I want to be clear, the government has decided that climbing to my crown will remain off limits. And I think that's smart. Safety first. My spiral stairs are very narrow. Of course, many years ago climbing to the flame in my right hand was also discontinued. Now I know some people feel they need to walk up to my crown to really experience me. This is not true. I actually look best from the Harbor. Besides, I was never meant to be climbed - technically, my stairs were put in place for maintenance



workers to change my lamps. And what a great job the National Park Service is doing.

But you know, ultimately, my job is not so much as a tourist attraction but as a beacon, if you will, to light the way for arriving immigrants and to symbolize opportunity and other great American ideals. Of course, nobody immigrates to America by ship any more. Most come by jet. But, really, Liberty, by nature, is adaptable to changing circumstances. And as you know, I look fabulous from the air, too. So for the record, I remain in all my glory, and Liberty is always open.

Q: Thank you for the information! A new topic: You are not a lawyer; you don't hold a degree in government or public policy. Some people wonder: what is your background and how did you get your job?

A: That's right, I hold no degrees or licenses. I have never been elected to public office and I am not a member of any royal family. What I do have is a natural understanding of the immigrant experience, which is uniquely American. I myself arrived in New York Harbor from Europe in the mid-19th century.

My history is simple. In 1865, French historian and scholar Edouard de Laboulaye spoke of his idea to present a monument to the U.S. to commemorate liberty, independence and the U.S.-French alliance during the American Revolution. His idea inspired sculptor Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi, who then designed me. I was to be France's gift to America on her centennial birthday in 1876. I think Bartholdi did a great job on my design, and the mold and copper shell. They say he wanted me to look like a goddess in the Harbor, and modeled my face after his mom. I also applaud engineer Alexandre Gustave Eiffel, who created my iron framework, and later built the remarkable Eiffel Tower.

On the fourth of July, 1884, after almost 10 years of construction, I was delivered to the

American Ambassador in Paris. Then I had to be dismantled into 300 pieces and packed into 214 wooden crates for travel to New York Harbor.

I arrived here on June 17, 1886, and was put on this massive base of concrete and granite designed by Richard Morris Hunt. It took months just to assemble my pieces. My pedestal was surrounded by a star-shaped wall, which was part of a fort originally built to defend New York during the War of 1812.

My real birthday is Oct. 28, 1886, 10 years after the Centennial of the American Revolution. I remember the day President Grover Cleveland unveiled me to the American people. At my dedication ceremony he said, "We will not forget that Liberty has here made her home; nor shall her chosen altar be neglected."

That's how I got my job. By the way, not to brag, but in 1924 I was declared a national monument. And in 1984, the United Nations designated me a World Heritage Site.

Q: That's quite a history. Then, as we know, you were refurbished in 1986 for the 100th anniversary of your arrival. You had a bit of a face lift. How did that change you?

A: Yes, to celebrate my centennial birthday in 1986, I was fully restored, and I thank the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation for raising the money for the two-year long rehabilitation project. To tell you the truth, it made me feel young again. But really, it was just a little \$87 million touch-up, not one of those extreme makeovers you see on reality TV. I think Oprah would approve. As you can see, I am still my same ol' neo-classical self. I did get a new gold-covered flame, but the original one appears on display inside my pedestal, along with other interesting items.

You may remember the fireworks and hoopla on July 4, 1986 as President Reagan unveiled me after the restoration. I hear more than

1.5 billion people around the world watched the ceremony on TV.

As you see, there is a lot of character in my face. This is because I have seen a great deal of history. Not to mention more than a century of baking sun, sea winds, and hard rain. My green patina, untouched by the restoration, comes from oxidation and is widely admired. Of course, a lady likes to look her best for guests and visiting dignitaries. But I am one of the few celebrities who does not let current fashion or fads dictate what I wear or how I present myself. Besides, I don't get much opportunity to shop.

Q: Speaking of which, if we may ask, what do you do for leisure?

A: Well, as you can imagine, I don't have a lot of free time. But I am a big fan of basketball. At first I did not know anything about the game. But I became very interested in it when the WNBA named a team after me. I was delighted. Of course, I would love to attend the New York Liberty home games, but for security reasons, among other practicalities, I don't leave the Harbor. Besides, I would not too easily fit into Madison Square Garden. Although I notice some of the ladies on the team are nearly as tall as I am. For example, #28 Elena Baranova is 6'5"! Go Liberty!

Q: The poem on your base is famous. Tell us about that?

A: Ah yes, "The New Colossus." Isn't it a sublime message?

"Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me.
I lift my lamp beside the golden door."



I wish I had written that. Many people don't know the story behind the poem. In 1883, Emma Lazarus, an already respected and quite young Jewish-American poet, wrote it to help raise funds for the construction of my pedestal. Keep in mind that the French paid for me and my construction, while Americans raised funds to pay for my pedestal, so that when I finally arrived in America I would have a place to stand.

Of course, it wasn't until 1903, sixteen years after Emma's death, that her world-inspiring sonnet was engraved on a brass plaque and added to my pedestal. Emma's poem helped enhance my image. It captured just the message and spirit I wanted to express. I owe her a debt of gratitude.

Q: What does it say on your tablet?

A: Oh, that's great trivia! Some people imagine I am holding a volume of the *Corpus Juris Secundum*. The answer is, the tablet I cradle in my left arm bears the inscription for "July 4, 1776" in Roman numerals, or "July IV, MDCCLXXVI." Any other facts you'd like to know? I am a one-woman trivial pursuit game. My arm holding the torch measures 46 feet. My index finger alone is eight feet long and my hands are almost 17-feet wide. I've got 31 tons of copper in my shell and 125 tons of steel in my skeleton. My foundation is made of 24,000 tons of concrete. The French ship that transported me to America was named the *Isere*. I was New York's tallest structure until 1899 when Saint Paul's Building was built at 310 feet. Of course, you can get all this and lots more on the Internet. I love the Internet.

Q: You are endlessly fascinating. While we are getting a bit personal, we can't help but admire your hat.

A: Gosh, this old thing? Why thank you. Actually, it's a crown. I do not mind telling you about it. It has 25 viewing windows, representing the 25 gemstones of Earth.

And the seven rays of my crown represent the seven seas and seven continents of the world. Nice, huh?

Q: Beautiful. By the way, they say justice is blind. Are you blind too?

A: Not at all, I have perfect vision. And the fact is, Justice is a true visionary herself. She's not actually blind, she covers her eyes to symbolically demonstrate that every person is entitled to equal and fair treatment under the law. You should really give her a *Law Star*, too. She and I are great friends, like the characters on *Sex and the City*. Theoretically, we can wear the same clothes. And don't forget our first cousin, Lady Freedom, the symbol atop the U.S. Capitol building.

Q: Indeed. Now, what events in American history make you most proud?

A: Wow. There have been many. Some of the greatest historic events occurred before I was born and actually made it possible for me to be here, particularly the American Revolution. I also had the privilege to personally experience the unfolding of such remarkable moments in history such as the defeat of Hitler and fascism during World War II, the civil rights movement, the women's suffrage movement, and lots more. It's been a tumultuous time. History is a nonstop process. I am just glad to be part of it all.

Q: What is your biggest source of pride and feeling of accomplishment so far?

A: Truthfully, I am just a symbol. Each year, more than two million people come to visit me. I am proud of this country, especially the immigrant families who took a great risk by coming to America to pursue their dreams. Because in the end they helped conceive and create the greatest nation on the face of the planet. Who knew? In 1800, the population of America was 5,308,483.

One hundred years later, we were 76,212,168 strong. And by the turn of the millennium, we had grown to 282,125,000 people. Coming to America was and still is a dream all over the world. This great experiment in democracy holds a special place in people's hearts. Sure, I played a part. But I myself am not responsible for putting liberty and the quest for freedom into the hearts and souls of Americans and would-be Americans. It's the other way around. I do not stand for America, America stands for me.

Q: That is very noble. What is the hardest part about symbolizing freedom, liberty and international friendship in an age of terrorism and global uncertainty?

A: It's a great question. Things have always been complicated. But it seems that just as we were adjusting to the promising new millennium, here in the free world things took a very dangerous turn. Of course, there is no such thing as total freedom and there never was. And freedom has always come at a price. The thing to always appreciate is that we are a growing species on a shrinking planet. We share limited resources but limitless promise. But this is an award celebration, not the place for resolving geopolitical differences. Just take it from me, Liberty is for everyone. And she's here to stay.

Q: We'll hold you to that promise! What is the strangest thing that ever happened to you?

A: Ah! One time the magician David Copperfield made me disappear. On live TV. That was pretty unusual, but also exciting, especially for the kids. I love kids, so I consented to the performance. And I know how the magician did it, too. It was fairly ingenious, really. Of course, you can find that out on the Internet, too. But I will not give away the secret. Let's just say there is a little bit of magic in Liberty.



Q: Do you love lawyers?

A: Yes, I sure do. Everybody should. Why not? Without great legal minds, hardworking and often times relentless lawyers, and a remarkable, although complex, legal system that is admired and envied around the world, even if not always completely understood here at home, America would not exist, and I would not be standing here. Period.

Q: We agree. And on that note, do you have a favorite lawyer joke?

A: Ooh, lots of them are quite funny. The joke *Law Star* Christine Lagarde told LawCrossing

recently was a hoot. She is a smart lawyer, the global chairman of the country's biggest law firm, Baker & MacKenzie, and you know, she is French, too.

Q: Finally, who are your Law Stars and heroes?

A: Well, the founders of this country and framers of the Constitution are my biggest gurus. You know them all. I also admire each of the millions of unnamed immigrants who came here at great price. Finally, folks who suffered injustice as the country grew and took shape: American Indians and the Africans during the time of slavery are some

of the bravest and most noble among us. And I admire that patriotic guy with the Web Cam in his window across the Harbor, whoever he is, who watches me 24/7. I'm watching too. Thank you. And God Bless America.