

Greteman elected leader of world travel association

By **DOUGLAS BURNS**
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Carroll travel professional Cathy Greteman has been named chair and CEO of the 4,500-member National Tour Association (NTA) for 2010.

Greteman, founder and president of Star Destinations and Town & Country Travel, as well as a principal partner with the growing Carroll-based touring bus company, Windstar, assumed the NTA chairmanship in late 2009 and will hold it for a year.

Already, Greteman has traveled to Washington, D.C., to lobby for opening of tourism between the United States and Cuba. She also spies major opportunities for increased Chinese travel in the United States and recently visited Beijing to promote U.S. tourism.

Later this year, she will lead NTA events in Montreal, Canada, as well as in Spain. The NTA has members from 46 nations.

In her capacity as a leader of the major travel association, which counts Disney destinations, hotel chains and major

vacation cities as members, Greteman is taking a decidedly international view. That said, she sees the position as offering an opportunity to promote western Iowa.

"I describe to people what kind of community we are," Greteman, a former Carroll Chamber of Commerce president, said. "I think that's good for us because it helps put us on the map a little bit."

For several years, Star Destinations has been building an international client base for agricultural-related tours in the United States, events that often involve scheduled time in Iowa.

"We're really focusing on the ag market," Greteman said. "It's who we are and what we are."

Because of evolving relations between China and the United States, Greteman expects tourism from that nation to jump from about 100,000 now to 800,000 within four years.

"We see a lot of Asian travelers but they're not necessarily Chinese," Greteman said.

In December, while in



Each month, as chair of the National Tour Association, Cathy Greteman will write a column in the organization's magazine "The Courier." She appears here on the cover of the December issue of the magazine.

Washington, D.C., Greteman participated in a conference with Cuban officials about the potential for increased tourism exchanges and a breaking-down of long-standing embargos on such commerce.

"Cuba is ready for tourism from the U.S.," Greteman said.

Greteman said traveling and meeting people are the best ways to promote democracy and the American way of life.

"When we begin traveling we begin realizing that we're all alike," Greteman said.

A native of Hastings, Neb., and a daughter of a jeweler, Greteman married Mike Greteman in 1969.

She graduated from the College of St. Mary's in Omaha, Neb.

The couple settled in Carroll in 1972 and soon Cathy began an active career as a travel professional.

In addition to having her husband as a partner in the travel industry, Greteman has involved her children.

Jeff Greteman of Carroll is president of Windstar. Scott Greteman of Carroll and Pat Greteman of Cedar Rapids are vice presidents of the company, and Cathy's daughter, Julie Mayhall, a Carroll attorney, handles legal work for the family business.

Five travel questions for Cathy Greteman

We asked Greteman her opinion on five travel questions. Here they are:

Question: What's the most interesting place you've been to?

Greteman: Probably the most interesting destination I've been to, and I've traveled to Indonesia and China and many different places around the world, but I was really fascinated with Egypt and felt as though it really holds a lot of treasures. The antiquities are just fascinating. It's just a "wow" destination.

Question: What's a so-called "sleeper" pick for travel, a place people don't think of going, a surprise place or unlikely place that really surprised you as being a neat or interesting place that people from the Carroll area don't consider?

Greteman: There are places that are really phenomenal like Croatia and Slovakia that are really opening up for tourism. They are beautiful countries with wonderful beaches. Lots of great history with areas that weren't bombed during the war.

You have medieval buildings right next to modern skyscrapers.

It's really a pretty amazing area. Very safe and very inexpensive to travel.

Question: Considering the state of the economy nationally and globally how is the travel industry faring now? Are we seeing more local drive-time travel?

Greteman: People are saying that they are staying a little closer to home.

What we began to see at the end of 2009 and what's coming and it will be a little slower at the beginning of

this year, all of those travelers out there who are real travelers, who have that desire to see things and haven't done much, the pent-up need is going to be unbelievable.

They're going to want to go. They're going to want to find something different.

Katie bar the door, they're going to be traveling.

Question: For somebody who has not traveled outside of the United States, ever, what would your recommendation be on a first foreign travel experience?

Greteman: Of course there are wonderful places like the Caribbean. But if you are looking at Europe, I think probably one of the best choices you might want to make is an English-speaking country.

I'm thinking of Great Britain or Ireland. They are two completely different atmo-

spheres. Both are extremely friendly and wonderful experiences whether you are going into the countryside or stay in the cities.

There's lots of heritage there.

People love Germany as well, especially with a lot of Germans in our area.

Question: What's one city in the United States everyone should see before they die?

Greteman: That is so easy for me to answer because Washington, D.C., is one of the most beautiful capital cities in the world.

It has beautiful monuments. The inner city of Washington is so well planned. It is spectacular, and it holds a lot of American history.

There is just so much in and around D.C. that if you haven't been there you have to go. It's a must.