

A heavy medal night

Dignitaries are well decorated at Consular Ball

By Shelby Hodge - HOUSTON CHRONICLE

THE colorful ribbons and shiny medals. The Grand March presentation. The array of international flags. The Marines in dress uniform. The elements of the annual white-tie- and-tails Consular Ball are nothing less than spectacular.

It's the one Houston evening in which pomp and circumstance reign. Air kisses fly. Champagne glasses are raised in formal toasts. And the Houston international community is celebrated in the uppermost style.

So it was at the Intercontinental Houston when the Houston Junior Chamber of Commerce held the 54th Consular Ball honoring the Russian Federation and saluting the Consular Corps.

There were, of course, the dignitaries such as Mayor **Bill White**, Moscow's First Deputy Mayor **Lyudmila Shvetsova**, Russian Consul General **Nikolay Sofinskiy**, Consular Corp dean **Armin Meile** of Switzerland and the 40 or so consuls. But also among the 400 guests were Houstonians who served as table hosts for each consular representative and therefore earned the privilege of joining the Grand March with the diplomats.

Port of Houston chairman **Jim Edmonds** and his wife, **Annette**, for example, hosted Italian Consul General **Massimo Rustico** and his wife, **Monica**. Rice University president **David Lee-bron** and wife **Ping Sun** served as hosts to China's Deputy Consul **Li Fang**. The most dashing of all University of St. Thomas president **Robert Ivany** in his dress military attire and full complement of medals and golden braids. He joined his wife, **Marianne**, in welcoming Hungary's Consul General **Phillip Aronoff** and his wife, **Lynne**.

Sharing the spotlight with dignitaries at the head table were ball chair **Elizabeth Arlington**, patrons chair **Geoffrey Connor**, ExxonMobil's **David Tyler**, Jaycees president **Amy Klein** and U.S. Junior Chamber vice president **Garrett McNally**.

Another guest in full dress medals was **George Greene**, honorary consul for Cameroon. He wore decorations from four nations Cameroon, France, Canada and the U.S. The most impressive was the pendant worn on a ribbon around his neck the Order of St. Lazarus from France.

Among those signing on as table hosts were **Lucia** and **Michael Cordua**, **Saba Abashawl** and **George Campos**, **Donna** and **Art Milstein**, **Josefina** and **Hector Ramirez**, and **Philamena** and **Arthur Baird**.



Arthur and Philamena Baird



Marianne and Robert Ivany



Honorary consul for Malta, John Ellis, and Danielle Ellis



Li Fang, from left, Ping Sun and David Lebron



Consul general of Russia, Nikolay Sofinskiy, and first deputy mayor of Moscow, Lyudmila Shvetsova