



## Let There Be Light: The Palmer House Chandelier Restorations.

By Lee Balgemann

It all started with a phone call. What a phone call it was!

“Lumenelle, This is Pete.”

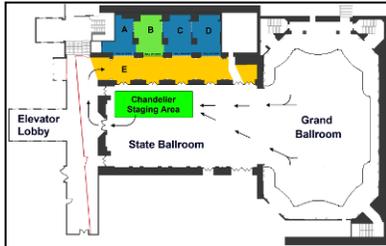
“Mr. Janko, This is Diane Odom, project manager at THOR EQUITIES, LLC. Can you come down to the Palmer House and look at the chandeliers in the Grand Ballroom?”

Thus began the saga for dozens of workers. Days and days of pre-planning, including incredibly safety-conscious logistics, thorough mapping and cataloguing of thousands of individual parts, the meticulous hand-cleaning and polishing of 80,000 Czechoslovakian hand-cut crystals, the cautious removal of 80 years of nicotine and other pollutants from the brass and the replacing, re-wiring and replacing hundreds of sockets. The re-hanging of the chandeliers capped 10 weeks of restorations to the French creations.

PRE-PLANNING is key! Knowing WHAT needs to be done, WHO the experts are in each and every aspect of the process, HOW to try to plan for every possible variable

(there will always be more!), WHERE to have the process done and WHEN to initiate every phase of the job is imperative.

Lumenelle worked directly with the owner/architect, not the general contractor. That way the process was not dependent on the scheduling of others.



LOGISTICS then commenced. Determining and allocating sufficient work space for the project, defining specific areas where the separate parts and procedures were to be performed, YET keeping in mind separation of areas where dust/pollutants, cleaning agents, painting and cleaning did not conflict.

How to safely get the chandeliers down, how to transport them from the ballrooms to the areas where they can be disassembled, how to transport them between stations of the process, re-assembling and re-hanging all needed to be arranged.



MAPPING AND CATALOGING follow. 80,000 crystals, many different sizes of different cuts, took up three rooms and were up to five layers deep on tables! Once again as the crystals were taken from the chandeliers, SAFETY was an issue. The workers wore face masks to keep pollutants and up to 80 years of nicotine and other debris from contaminating them. Each crystal was labeled and mapped as to where it

was on the chandelier so it could be returned after cleaning and polishing.



CRYSTAL RESTORATION provided new challenges. Re-wiring of the swags provided additional challenges, due to their varying weights, each crystal required a unique wiring procedure. After cleaning and repair, each crystal chain had to be “rinsed.” Broken crystals were repaired or replaced.



BRASS RESTORATION involved its own unique techniques. Small cracks and crevices had to be cleaned ultrasonically. Repairing of cracks, replacement of threading where necessary and the Electronic Discharge Machining of screw heads corroded away by galvanic corrosion were necessary on many chandelier parts. Concealed damage of inner components caused by a water leak from the swimming pool above the ballroom, also needed to be corrected. Cleaned, polished and restored brass returned the original beauty to the chandeliers.



ELECTRICAL REPLACEMENT/RESTORATION/UL UPGRADING was incredibly time-consuming. Ground wires missing or not acceptably connected to the chandelier bodies, exposed wires, cloth wires held in place with wire twists, and corroded sockets all needed attention. All existing wiring was completely stripped from the chandeliers and replaced with new 105-degree C Teflon insulated wiring.

It was then necessary to connect and dress the 4 circuit “rat’s nests” in each chandelier before new sockets could replace the existing ones long-overdue for replacement. Lumenelle uses only the highest quality sockets; never-the-less, Lumenelle inspects every new socket for manufacturer’s defects and discards questionable sockets. All fixtures restored by Lumenelle are brought up to the latest UL (Underwriter Laboratories) standards.

What a phone call, indeed!

To get the same quality, thoroughness, safety-conscious attention to your next project, Call Lumenelle, 815-529-5483 or contact Lumenelle at: [info@lumenelle.com](mailto:info@lumenelle.com).

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