

Saudi Arabia

Helga's

Writings

September 1977 to March 1980

By

Helga von Schweinitz

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by

Helga von Schweinitz

Printed in the United States of America

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### A Word to the Reader

In 1997 Helga's husband Hans had retired from the US Air Force. Hans took on a job with Northrop that required him to work in Dhahran Airport in Saudi Arabia. Helga and her son, Christopher, accompanied him on this adventure. The three of them lived in compounds managed by Northrop in Al Khobar, Saudi Arabia from September 1997 to March 1980.

While living in Saudi Arabia, Helga wrote a lot to document this unique experience. This compendium contains the original unedited stories and notes that Helga wrote.

There are three other compendiums for a total of four.

Saudi Arabia Photo album

Saudi Arabia Helga's writings

Saudi Arabia Time Line with Impressions and Observations

Saudi Arabia Work Related Documents and Observations

Because of religious reasons, in Saudi Arabia it is forbidden to take photographs, except for scenery and of your own family. There can be considerable consequences, such as instant deportation. If there are other people in the photographs, great care was taken to allow them enough time to realize that a camera was in use. Some embraced the camera, others would just turn their back, but if they waved the camera away, then there is no photograph.

**Helga's articles, journals, and short stories**  
**along with**  
**excerpts from Newspaper Articles and Company Letters**

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## **An American Wife in Saudi Arabia**

While on a trip back to Texas to visit her daughter (Bettina in college), she submitted this article to the Austin American-Statesman. It was published on June 7, 1979 under a variation of her maiden name "Helga Portner". Her maiden name is actually Pörtner, but the umlaut was omitted. Without notifying Helga or getting her permission, the newspaper editor modified the article, completely changing the tone and character of the article, and then published it under the title "Cultures Clash in Arab Nation". Both the original and the American-Statesman version are included here. The reader can determine if the editing by the newspaper was justified and in the spirit of the article submitted by Helga. On August 2, 1979 Helga was paid \$30 for this article.

### **Original Submitted Version**

During my home leave from Saudi Arabia I found several articles in magazines and newspapers concerned with the political tension between Saudi Arabia and our government.

I have no qualified comment to make about the situation but I can tell some anecdotes that sketch the life of many a wife who accompanies her husband working over there for a few years.

When I arrived at Dhahran Airport in Saudi Arabia for the first time on a hot December night in 1977, my perception was so dulled by fear of doing something wrong and being immediately deported or publicly whipped, that I remember little but a flock of men in white gowns and flowing white kerchiefs, an American confiscating my passport and disappearing with the words "I am your company representative", and some small men in knee-length table cloths instead of trousers running off with my suitcase.

"Don't expose your bare arms," I warned myself, "and don't smile at any man," and then, when I discovered my suitcases being opened for custom inspection, I flashed a thought into space, "oh, Jesus, make sure the author of my Webster's is not Jewish," and felt guilty about the Jesus part.

I had spent two long evenings in the Austin Public Library in a vain search for practical advice on how to tackle Arabia as what companies call a "dependent/wife (female) with 1 (one) dependent/son (male)". As the result of my research I expected to be stoned for adultery, have my hand cut off for being found with somebody else's ballpoint pen and finally being decapitated for seducing an Omar Shariff look-alike in his desert tent. Of course, most of my fears were unfounded, after all, I am not a thief.

Other equally poorly informed wives prepared themselves for Saudi Arabia by cutting the words Jesus, Jew, Israel and Christ out of their children's dictionary

## An American Wife in Saudi Arabia

and by removing all Sears & Roebuck labels and Coca Cola stains from their clothes because at one time these companies were said to be on a Arab boycott list. Care should be taken, however, that no girly magazine, no pork product, dope and alcohol is in the luggage.

Once there, most women find life quite acceptable, even relaxing. No women drivers! Regardless of race, creed, age or national origin, women are simply not permitted to drive except in one closed district belonging to an Aramco housing area. No husband asking you why you didn't check the oil all year. No children telling you to drive them to school because they missed the bus. Traffic is so hazardous, the law is a blessing to womanhood. Many companies provide for 15-seater buses to take the wives shopping and to social function in other housing areas or distant parts of town. Our company buses are known as the "Flying Coffins". The second time I rode on one I was the only passenger, and the driver decided to make a detour and visit with a friend for a while. Then he had to hurry back and raced across some dirt roads like a shying horse. When he looked for me in the mirror he realized that I needed more than good words to bring me back to life. He stopped in front of a shack of corrugated iron, ran inside and came back with a can of deliciously cold mango juice for me and a worried smile. All was forgiven, although I arrived in town just after the shops had closed for midday prayer and three hours of siesta.

The no-driving is hard to take by some women, like Frances, a veteran wife of two wars, who has successfully chauffeured four children through their California childhood while her husband was fighting losing battles abroad. She wanted to take an angel cake to Nancy down the block, still within the walled in housing area. The wind was blowing so hard. She looked up and down the road, all was clear, the guard at the gate was sleeping. She sneaked behind the wheel of her husband's Toyota and took off. She was so nervous, however, that she couldn't navigate around the empty aluminum garbage can in the driveway, and she was halfway down the block before she found the brake and stopped that terrible clatter the can made in front of the bumper. The disturbed guard settle down to a content chuckle when he saw Frances get out of the car. She had just confirmed what he had always suspected about women driving.

Most companies lease entire wall-in compounds of one-family houses or mobile homes, usually completely furnished down to the washcloth. Many compounds have a pool, tennis courts and a recreation center, but excessive heat keep people in the home for a great part of the year. Tap water is not potable in most areas, even pot plants die from it. Drinking water is delivered in jerry cans or

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bought in bottles. Mere survival in so arid a country must have been a tremendous achievement in the older days.

Construction is progressing so fast and often done without time for thorough planning and ordering of material and usually undertaken in joint venture by companies from many different continents and different technical heritage, that many houses have built-in hazards.

I live in a beautiful big house. It has many electrical outlets, some are 110 volts, other are 220 volts. Some appliances are 110 volts, others are 220 volts, and the plugs fit either outlet. When I called the resident electrician and tried to explain the damage I had caused, he seemed to understand only Turkish or Pakistani or some Scottish dialect. In one of my bathrooms the shower sprays water directly on the light switch. The plumber who installed the shower was from North Yemen, the electrician from Calcutta and the construction supervisor from Houston. He had left the scene before completion of the job because his two year contract was over.

I have four bathrooms, but none of them is built for what I would really like to use it for. There is this problem with brown-bagging. You see, the workmen who installed the commodes and laid the sewer pipes don't use commodes the way we do, and they clean themselves with a water hose instead of tissue paper. I don't suppose they had a demonstration in the ways of western culture. When they were through with the masonry they threw the leftover cement or mortar into the commode and flushed it into the pipe system where it hardened to rough lumps. A few days after occupation many houses were flooded, the sewer pipes had to be ripped open. Mine was due on Christmas Day, but since we had no running water that day anyhow, it could wait another day. The resident plumber was not at all happy. "Look this," he scolded me as he scraped pink tissue paper off the rock in the open pipe, "you must put no paper in toilet, What a mess!"

I agreed, that it was a filthy habit. "But I can't do it any other way," I argued finally. He sighed in despair and left. A little while later he returned and handed me a brown grocery bag, "you want using paper, you must put it in bag," he said.

At a dollar a roll the use of toilet tissue is not only a filthy habit but also a luxury. Most item imported from Europe or the U.S. are considerably more expensive than here. A year ago we had to snoop through various poorly managed stores to find the things close to what we wanted, but during the last few months the variety of merchandize has multiplied and large supermarkets are taking over, destroying unfortunately the sense of adventure you get out of hunting for tamales or vanilla extract. There is even fresh milk available now and a welcome selection

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of European specialties not found in ordinary American stores. Fresh fruits and vegetables, imported from other Middle East countries, are excellent and should be bought on markets, just like fresh fish, huge shrimp, your live chicken and assorted Bedouin antiques.

Shopping is a major pastime for western women, especially the shopping for gold jewelry. Dozens of jewelers display millions worth of their merchandize in tiny stores all located in the same area of the market. Some ladies develop an obsession with gold. Suddenly they measure the success of their marriage by the amount of money hubby lets them spend on gold, and they wear every ounce they have whenever they leave the house. "I see," said Maggie, wife of the typewriter repairman, as she lifted her arm with about 2,000 dollars worth of bracelets to inspect Nancy's simple 300 dollar necklace, "for having been in Saudi Arabia for nearly two years, you really haven't done very well for yourself, dear." We were on our way to the vegetable market at the time.

Although it is hard for an American woman to admit it, many of us are quite pleased with the Saudi law which makes it illegal for a man to give his wife or daughter permission to be employed except in the fields of medicine and education. Especially young mothers don't have to feel guilty if they don't supplement their husband's income. However, some companies have found ways to hire 'dependent wives' for office jobs.

School-aged children are bused to very good American type private schools including all grades up to the ninth, in some areas only up to the eighth grade. High school students have to attend boarding school outside of Saudi Arabia and come "home" for vacations.

What is there to do besides being the good little housewife and the relaxed lover your husband always wanted? For club-happy girls there is a lot: bridge, Sweet Adeline's, Jazz-dancing, luncheons, mahjong lessons, sewing circle, and anything anybody wants to organize. But most social activities take place within the group of families employed by the same company, and night entertainment is restricted by the all important fact that most men come home from work so exhausted that they fall asleep before desert is served. The frustration of trying to do a good job and fulfilling contractual obligations in spite of all the logistic problems in developing countries is hard to bear.

There is no public entertainment other than soccer games and, in some parts of the country, television. No movie theaters, no rock concerts. Along the Arabian Gulf there is an English Language T.V. program at night sponsored by Aramco, no news, no commercials. Soccer may not be meant for us, but I went anyhow one



night, accompanied, of course, by my husband and my son. The game took place in the new stadium in the port city of Dammam. About 80,000 men were pushing and shoving to be the first one in the stadium, yet, I was neither pushed nor did I feel unwelcome, although I seemed to be the only woman if not the first woman to attend a soccer game there. An elderly gentleman who sat in front of us was very concerned with my protection and made sure the young men and boys in the area did not touch me during their constant climbing over the seats. Everybody was pleased when they realized how much I enjoyed watching the game.

Had I not been properly dressed, i.e. long skirt, long sleeves and no cleavage, I might not have been so well accepted in that crowd, I might have offended somebody's sense of decency. An exposed ankle is to some what a scarlet letter used to be in our society, although knee-length skirts and short sleeves are becoming more and more tolerated in the town with a large foreign population.

Few Saudi women leave the house without a black veil over their face and a thin black cape over their dress. The anonymity this custom offers has advantages, and I have met Saudi ladies with advanced degrees from American universities who do not at all mind wearing a veil once they return to their family. I have the worst trouble trying to keep those garments from sliding off, and that is the main reason for not using them more often. Once, on a visit in Iran, a gypsy woman came up to me and showed me how to hold onto the cloak, but she soon gave up, she had never seen such a clout.

The custom of the veil, I was told, started in the desert, where due to the high infant mortality rate, women were the most precious booty of the tribal raids. A raiding young Bedouin was more likely to grab a woman he could size up in a few seconds than grab an anonymous black bag who might turn out to be older than his grandmother.

There is not much social interaction between us foreigners and the local population. This separation is not a lack of respect for each other but due to our completely different lifestyles. The Saudis socialize mainly within their extended families, whereas we tout out "y'all come over and visit" to anybody who crosses our path. And we fell absolutely rude if we invite a colleague for dinner without extending the invitation to his wife as well. An act like that can cause a lot of unhappiness. We urged a Saudi friend of ours to bring his wife and three little daughters over to our house for dinner. He did so, obviously only to please us. We found his wife well educated, conversing rather fluently in English, although she had never been to England or the USA. During our conversation I sensed that she became very jealous of me because I could spend my days in an office instead

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of staying at home with the same routine day after day. She developed fantasies of a glamorous life among all those men in the office. Little did she realize what a scene a boss can make over those typing error that creep out of my machine, and neither could she imagine how tired I am at night when I do the laundry and wash breakfast dishes while I cook dinner after having spent the hours from seven in the morning to four thirty in the afternoon behind a typewriter. Her visit to our house did little to make her life any happier.

The meeting of our two family cultures seems to be a little smoother when the Saudi is the host, be it in his house or at a chance encounter in the desert as it happened to us. We were driving on a little dirt road miles away from a highway when we saw a car stuck in a sand dune. A man in the Arab long white thobe and a red and white checkered head cloth was desperately trying to push the car back on hard surface. Seven little children and his wife were aimlessly running about. There was nothing but sand for miles around.

Being the city folks we are, we were well prepared for all desert emergencies, with a 4x4, boards, jacks, blanket, ropes, etc. In a few minutes the car was back on the road. And being the desert people they were, our new acquaintances were all prepared for meeting us and inviting us for an instant grand dinner in the desert.

A tablecloth was spread out on the sand, a large platter was filled with rice, chicken, mutton, green onions, carrot sticks and flat round breads. The host poured water over our hands and disappeared with his sons for a while behind a sand dune for further cleaning and, I think, prayer. After I had made myself comfortable on the ground and started to stuff hands full of rice into my mouth and spilling half of it, I notice that the hostess and the little girls were taking their meal on the other side of the car, peeping through the windows at me with giggles and smiles and friendly waving. Yet, I had the feeling that it was okay for me to sit down with the men.

After the meal proper, sweet tea was being served, and the lady sat down a few yards away from the men, but at least on our side of the car. We chatted about children with our host serving as interpreter. Tea was followed by some kind of coffee out of a thermos bottle, and poured in tiny cups that they carried along just in case they came upon people like us. "Only for special guests," said the host. And finally came a treat that I am still preserving in my ice box: a piece of goat or camel cheese looking like a coconut macaroon. "Bedouin specialty only for guests," we were told. I took one bite and made the rest disappear behind the elastic in my long sleeve.

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Social life is also influenced by the official absence of alcoholic beverages. To my knowledge only the American military personnel on active duty may legally get stoned, on booze, that is. So most people simply stay sober. Have you ever been on a Saturday Night Barbecue where the men are holding on to cans of peach nectar instead of beer?

However, there is a lot of alcohol around for those who think they need it. One can make so many types of wine from fruit juices, and people become very imaginative when they engage in such clandestine operations. And the many flavors of beer that are being brewed do the American heritage of a past prohibition full justice. Even hard liquor is available on the black market. I once overheard a bottle of "genuine Kentucky fried Bourbon" being offered for \$180.

Punishment for selling liquor or being caught drunk is harsh by our standards. A colleague spent two frightening months in jail for walking under the influence. Friends had to feed him, and finally he was deported. Jail terms are frightening, but so are drunk people.

You can land in jail for being involved in harmless activities, like witnessing a traffic accident or rendering first aid. The police, usually not very visible and active, seems to arrest everybody who has any connection with an incident under investigation until the matter is cleared up or certain fees have been paid. Justice is done according to Islamic law, no matter where you come from but sometimes foreigners are being deported before the trial.

Although I am by nature against harsh punishment, I appreciate the effect this type of law enforcement has on people. The crime rate is so low, that whenever something happens it makes the world press. I felt safe walking through town carrying four thousand dollars (cost of new car) in cash in an envelope when we bought a car last summer. I felt safe when I took a midnight walk along the beach the other night while my husband and some friends were scuba diving in the Arabian Gulf.

Yet, I felt uneasy, though not threatened, when I walk by myself through a residential part of town where Westerners are not a common sight. The cars slowing down and the eyes of young men wandering up and down my body made me trip several times. But on the other hand, they can make you feel 38-22-36 in the worst of summer heat.

Sometimes one gets pinched in the most fleshy parts in the dense crowd on the markets. "It's when they stopped pinching me, that's when I began to worry", said an elderly Saudi lady to me.

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Every time I return to Saudi Arabia I am sure of only one thing: some new development will surprise me. The country changes rapidly, and the changes are brought about by influences from so many different countries, that predictions are difficult to make. Unless one is in high level management or engaged in contract negotiations, one knows little about the political tension in the background, but occasionally a power struggle between conservative and liberal sections of a community is noticeable. We were alerted to the possibility that men and women might no longer be permitted to use the company swimming pools and tennis courts at the same time.

What will be waiting for me this time at my arrival? If it is that man with the whip who was waiting for people like me last November during the night of the pilgrim season, when the religious awareness is sharpened, I have to disappoint him again. I was returning from an extended medical leave in Europe and was very anxious to run up to my husband and hug him. After being through with customs, I had to climb a staircase at the top of which people waiting to receive arriving passengers were lined up. In front of them stood a man grinning in anticipation and conspicuously swinging a little whip. He, and the crowd of other people, were expecting (hoping?) that I would be indecent enough to embrace my husband and make a public display of my affection for him. But I was too knowledgeable by then. To everybody's disappointment I simply said "hi" and handed him my suitcase, whereupon the man with the whip hit a few times on my portable radio instead of my posterior or that of my husband, whatever his idea of swift punishment for immoral behavior had called for.

Now for the Austin American-Statesman version

### Cultures clash in Arab Nation

Helga Portner, a former Austin resident who taught at Anderson High School, recently returned to Central Texas to visit her daughter in San Marcos. Her husband is a civilian working with the Saudi Arabian Air Force.

By Helga Portner

Special to the American Statesman

During my home leave from Saudi Arabia I found several articles in magazines and newspapers concerned with the political tension between Saudi Arabia and our government.

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I have no qualified comment to make about the situation but I can tell some anecdotes that sketch the life of many a wife who accompanies her husband working over there for a few years.

When I arrived at Dhahran Airport in Saudi Arabia for the first time on a hot December night in 1977, my perception was so dulled by fear of doing something wrong and being immediately deported or publicly whipped, that I remember little but an American confiscating my passport and some small men in knee-length table cloths running off with my suitcase.

Poorly informed wives prepared themselves for Saudi Arabia by cutting the words Jesus, Jew, Israel and Christ out of their children's dictionary and by removing all Sears labels and Coca Cola stains from their clothes because at one time these companies were said to be on a Arab boycott list. However, care should be taken that no girlie magazine, no pork products, dope and alcohol is in the luggage.

Once in Arabia, most women find life quite acceptable, even relaxing. Women are not permitted to drive except in one closed Aramco housing area. No husband asking you why you didn't check the oil all year. No children telling you to drive them to school because they missed the bus.

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Construction progresses rapidly, often without thorough planning. I have four bathrooms, but none of them is built for the way I would like to use it. The Yemen workmen who installed the commodes and laid the sewer pipes don't use commodes the way we do, and they clean themselves with a water hose instead of tissue paper. When they were through with the masonry, they threw the leftover cement into the commodes and flushed it into the pipe system where it hardened to rough lumps. A few days after occupation, many houses were flooded. The sewer pipes had to be ripped open.

The resident plumber was not at all happy. "Look this," he scolded me as he scraped pink tissue paper off the rock in the open pipe, "you must put no paper in toilet, What a mess!"

I agreed, it was a filthy habit, "but I can't do it any other way," He sighed in despair, left and returned with a brown grocery bag, "You want using paper, you must put it in bag," he said.

## An American Wife in Saudi Arabia

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It is hard to admit, but many of us are pleased that Saudi law makes it illegal for a man to permit his wife or daughter to work, except in the fields of medicine and education. However, some companies have found ways to hire dependent wives for office jobs.

Children are bused to good American type private schools through the eighth or ninth grade. High school students attend boarding school outside of Saudi Arabia.

For club-happy women, activities abound: bridge, Sweet Adeline's, Jazz dancing, luncheons, mahjongg lessons, sewing circle, and anything anybody wants to organize.

The only public entertainment is soccer. Along the Arabian Gulf Aramco sponsors an English Language television program at night - no news, no commercials.

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Due to our different lifestyles, little social interaction occurs between foreigners and the local population. The Saudis socialize mainly within their extended families, whereas, we tout our "y'all come over and visit" to anybody who crosses our paths.

We urged a Saudi friend to bring his wife and daughters to our house for dinner. He did so, obviously only to please us. We found his wife well educated, conversing fluently in English. I sensed that she became envious of me because I

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City folks that we are, we were prepared for all desert emergencies, with 4x4 boards, jacks, blanket, ropes, etc. In a few minutes, the car was back on the road. Desert people they were, our new acquaintances were prepared to invite us for an instant grand dinner in the desert.

On a tablecloth spread on the sand, a large platter was filled with rice, chicken, mutton, green onions, carrot sticks and flat round bread. The host poured water over our hands and disappeared with his sons behind a sand dune for more cleaning and, I think, prayer. I notice that the hostess and the girls were taking their meal on the other side of the car, peeping through the windows at me with giggles and friendly waving. Yet, I had the feeling it was all right for me to sit down with the men.

After the meal, sweet tea was served, and the lady sat down a few yards away from the men. We chatted about children with our host serving as interpreter. Tea was followed by coffee. Last came a treat that I still preserve in my ice box: a piece of goat or camel cheese looking like a coconut macaroon. "Bedouin specialty only for guests," we were told. I took one bite and made the rest disappear behind the elastic in my long sleeve.

Although knee-length skirts and short sleeves are becoming tolerated in towns with a large foreign population, few Saudi women leave the house without black veils over their faces and a thin black capes over their dresses.

What will be waiting for me when I return to Saudi Arabia? If it is that man with the whip who was waiting for people like me last November, I have to disappoint him again. I was returning from a medical leave in Europe at the height of the pilgrim season when religious awareness is sharp, and I was eager to hug my husband. At the top of the staircase, a crowd waited to receive arriving passengers. In front of them stood a man grinning in anticipation and swinging a little whip. He and the crowd must have expected me to be indecent enough to embrace my



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**Helga Portner, a former Austin resident who taught at Anderson High School, recently returned to Central Texas to visit her daughter in San Marcos. Her husband is a civilian working with the Saudi Arabian Air Force.**

**BY HELGA PORTNER**  
Special to the American Statesman

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Poorly-informed wives, prepared

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The resident plumber was not at all happy. "Look this," he scolded me as he scraped pink tissue paper off the rock in the open pipe. "You must put no paper in toilet. What a mess!"

I AGREED it was a filthy habit, "but I can't do it any other way." He sighed in despair, left and returned with a brown grocery bag. "You want using paper, you must put it in bag," he said.

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Thursday, June 7, 1977



# An American Wife in Saudi Arabia

**Austin American-Statesman**  
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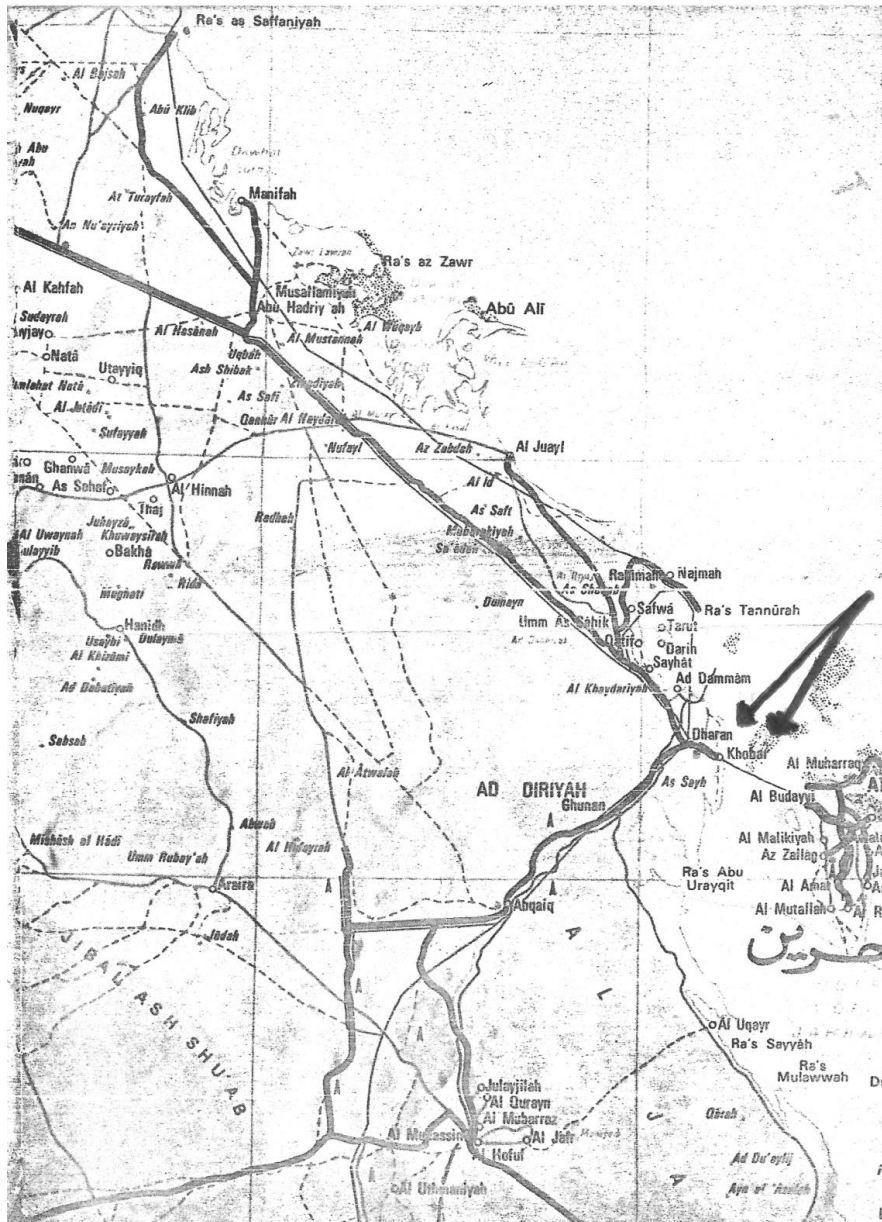
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## Saudi Arabia shorts

While having unique experiences, Helga would resort to writing short stories to record the events or maybe even to understand what was occurring. These are unfinished short stories or musing that Helga wrote while in Saudi Arabia between Dec 1997 and March 1980. Although the names have been changed, these events actually did happen to her family. This map is of the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia and the arrows point toward al Khobar, the town where Helga and her family lived, and Dharan, the air base, where Helga's husband worked.



### **Why Saudi Arabia: Version 1**

"By Gosh, why would anybody want to go to a place like Saudi Arabia," snorted a newspaper editor at me when I offered him a feature article on my experiences in that country. We were at a wine and cheese benefit for some anti-booze society in Houston.

"What people won't do for money," he added emptying his glass with a disgusted swig.

"Money is really only part of it," I lectured him, "And if you figure all the extra expenses of being away from home and usually losing the wife's income, the bottom line is often not as good as you would expect."

"Your bottom line looks good enough to me," he muzzled into my hairdo.

That ended our discussion and left me wondering: Why, coming to think of it, had we actually gone to Saudi Arabia?

### **Childhood Dreams: Version 1**

There were the old childhood dreams fed by books about explorers, adventurers and prospectors, the constant romantic yearning for the miracle behind yonder hills. When I was fourteen I had bicycled almost two hundred miles to the port of Hamburg and asked the captain of an oil tanker, if he had any use for me on his fabulous journeys all over the world. Over dinner in his cabin he told me that I was too young to be of use to him and too innocent for an oil tanker, and he had sent me home.

Seven years later, just married and with the experience of some traveling under my belt, including my immigration to the United States, I had visions of settling down in a mid-western college town as a respectable pillar of society, living in a white mansion with Liszt rhapsodies caressing the sheers in open French windows.

However, my husband's career on active duty in the Air Force had kept us on the move for twenty years and had kept us from becoming pillars in any place or shape: my mansion had to be mothballed in the sky, and I had to postpone my respectability until after menopause.

## **Retire and Job offer: Version 1**

In various short stories, Helga would use Siegfried for her husband, Hans' name. Her daughter's name was changed from Bettina to Heidi. Northrop was changed to McPeace.

After nineteen and a half years in the service Siegfried received orders for a transfer to Okinawa. We had just bought a house in Austin, Texas, where our children planned to attend college a few years down the calendar. Heidi, our daughter, was a few months short of graduating from high school and would have to be left behind in an apartment, and I would have to give up my job, my tenure and my income if we could not get out of that assignment. Worst of all, with only the paycheck from Siegfried from the Air Force, we would have to finance Heidi's education with our savings for emergencies. There was only one way out once we realized that we could no longer afford to serve our country in military service: Siegfried had to retire and look for a job on the civilian market.

Shortly after Siegfried's request for retirement had hit official channels, he received a call from the McPeace Corporation, an aero-space company based in Gun Valley, California.

A voice from the Department of International Employment has a question: "Do you want to work for us in Saudi Arabia?"

"Doing what?"

"The same thing you are doing now, sir, running a media center and training recruits."

"I thought we no longer had military bases in Saudi Arabia," said Siegfried, a little suspicious of the nature of the call or caller.

"We don't have any bases, but we heard that you'll soon be a civilian, and our company has a contract with the Department of Defense to train and help build up the Saudi Air Force. We know you have the expertise we need."

"How about my family?"

"We want you to take them along. Except, of course, any college age children."

"Oh?"

"We can't expect the Saudis to have an American college. And, naturally, they don't have an American high school either. If you have children that age the McPeace Corporation will pay for any one of the long list of boarding schools anywhere in the world. A great way to get the kids out of hair, ha, ha. Excuse me."

We hesitated. We didn't want our kids "anywhere" in the world. With no American high school around it was also doubtful that I would find employment, and without my paycheck the family income based on the salary the company offered Siegfried was no more than what we could easily have made by staying put in Texas.

So it was obvious that it was not the prospect of great riches that made us finally accept the job offer. It was the mystery of the country that intrigued us. It was in the summer of 1997, and our travel agent couldn't even find Saudi Arabia on the globe.

Like every faithful movie goes from years past we knew that Peter O'Toole, under the disguise of Lawrence of Arabia, had delivered the Saudis from the Turks, that the streets were lined with Cadillac that had run out of gas, and that people got their head, feet, and hands chopped off for offenses Americans commit all the time. Our travel agent, once warmed up to the subject, pointed out, that is the Saudis didn't pump the oil out of their desert fast enough, it would slowly sink further and further down into the Yemen. A good look at the globe and his recall of Newton's law of gravity proved it.

We could not foresee then how difficult it would be to become acquainted with the people in whose country we would live for over two years. We shopped in their stores, competed with them for parking spaces, ate their most delicious bread and even worked with them, but a relaxed relationship like you might develop with a neighbor in England or Germany, where you can just run over and borrow a cup of sugar, is rare indeed. Yet eating the pudding tells you more about it than sampling one or two of the ingredients. We were not formally invited journalist who become experts over night while being chauffeured from interview to interview staged in one palace or another or at royal picnics; we were not officials of the State Department or corporate vice presidents who visit the country on "fact finding missions", travel in the back seat of a limousine and confront "problems" in air conditioned conference rooms via statistic presented on slides prepared by the graphic department. And, thank heavens we were not the Secretary of Defense or some other unfortunate American politician having to offer increased military presence.

### **Training 1:1 Ours is not to wonder why**

This short story emphasizes some of the cultural conflict that would occur. Although this event did not happen directly to Helga, she probably heard of this conflict through talking with her husband or heard about it while being a secretary to Northrop.

One of the missions of the McPeace Corporation in Saudi Arabia was - or so it seemed - to train Saudi recruits in all skills needed to run a modern Air Force including aircraft maintenance, weapon handling, fuel storage, supply, reconnaissance, camera repair, to name just a fraction.

A good portion of the employees worked with the administration aspect of the affair in office buildings in the towns of Al Khobar, Riyadh, Dammam, and a few others and had little, if any, contact with Saudi military personnel. But the better portion was out there in the hangars and labs, in machine shops, on the flight line and the rifle range, in classrooms, sandstorms and target practice, to pass on some knowledge most of them had acquired during their years with the US Air Force.

There was sort of an infrastructure with the American being present as advisors and teachers in almost all areas but with no power within the Saudi military chain of command and no say-so on discipline, days off, hours of work, and so on. In case of an actual military crisis, like an invasion by Israelis or Iranians or the Klingons, the advisors were supposed to stay off base and not to get involved. Since there is one conflict or another brewing in the Middle East every day the sun rises, most Americans involved in training - once they have shed the complacency of state-side living - felt a sense of urgency behind their job. After all, to over simplify the matter, when you and your family are huddled under the kitchen table in your trailer a few hundred yards from the Arabian Gulf, and your trainees are trying to stop enemy planes from dropping bombs on you or the oil fields, you want them to be able to shoot straight and with accuracy and well functioning weapon systems. And then there is also the very important aspect of putting one's pride into one's job.

There was general consensus among advisors and teachers that most Saudis - if they want to - learn easily, have excellent memories and understand technical concepts a lot better than the world press gives them credit for. Their first big hurdle, however, is the language. The instructors, of course, speak as good as no Arabic, and practically all written material, including the technical manuals, are in English. Imagine yourself diffusing a bomb following directions given to you in Arabic - pang. So there is an English Language School.

## Training 1:1 Ours is not to wonder why

Michael was one of the English instructors; M.A. from Columbia University, three years with the Peace Corps in South America, two years teaching English as a second language in New York. An idealist.

He blamed himself when two students failed to show up for the final exam of the first course he taught and somehow managed to be enrolled in the same course for a second time. They were among his best students both times.

"They just want to take your course again because they like you and they love the opportunity to talk English," said Juanita, his wife, when he lay awake for the second night, but he knew there must be another reason. He dared not ask the two students for their unexplained no-shows after the one student who had actually taken and failed the test, had called Michael an insensitive and snobby teacher with imperialistic attitudes.

About a week after the final, one evening at supper in the cafeteria, he found out that he was not the only one to be troubled by unexpected failures to pass or even take a test.

It had been a hot day, and the sticky heat arising from the nearby Gulf was getting worse around sunset. But the air conditioner in the cafeteria was working well for a change, and people lingered on for a while before they braved the elements for the way home. As a consequence the place was crowded, one couldn't be choosy about where to sit. That's how Michael came to share a table with Jim Bone from P.O.L. (Petroleum, Oil, Lubrication). As a vegetarian he could hardly stand the sight of Jim stabbing away at a rare sole of steak.

"I'll turn in my ninety-day notice first thing in the morning," said Jim for a greeting. "Those dummies in Administration want to know why that one trainee of mine still hasn't taken his five-level test. We have contract commitments to meet, they say. They have a graph on the wall, would you believe that, and they want that to look like the training program goes smooth and fast. And for Ali they want to make that little cross on the graph for that skill level test."

"Ali, that chubby guy from Dammam?" Michael was surprised. "He stops at my office once in a while and looks at mail order catalogs I keep around. A real smart fellow, I thought."

"Knows the material real well, understands the specs and the tech orders better than you language guys would."

Just then Bernie from the Photo Lab joined the table. "Talking about Ali from P.O.L? We are having a heck of a time trying to take a passport picture of his

wife. We got that work order months ago, but wouldn't bring her in, and he wouldn't let a photographer come to his house neither. Is he up for a transfer or something?"

"He is no more," said Jim, "at least not for a while. Every time he is supposed to take his five-level test he doesn't show up for work for weeks on end, and guess who gets the blame for that? Yours truly. The dummies in Administration tell me that it doesn't look good on their graph. They don't have the guts or the brain to ask the Saudis for an explanation. We should have some cool Budweiser with dinner, would make the steak worth eating. But I can tell you why Ali doesn't want to be qualified as a five-level. You all know what is going on."

"Well, maybe I don't. What's your theory on that, Jim?" asked Michael.

"Another theory, Jesus!" sighed Bernie, who had not only one but two steaks on his plate and had a hard time.

"It's actually not a theory," continued Jim, "I know it's true because I listen a lot, and I put two and two together from the little information the recruits volunteer on their families.

"See, when Ali passes his five-level test he gets a big so called reward: he and his wife get transferred to another base. And look what a dirty deal that is for him. His little wife is thirteen years old, thirteen, and doesn't want to move too far away from her own family. Apparently he cares. He has two unmarried sisters, an old father who is almost blind, and his father's second wife to take care of. The women never leave the house without him, they don't even do their own shopping, being that they live in Dammam where that is done by men. And his older brother seems to be almost blind for all practical purposes, but he doesn't admit it and still drives a car and has a jewelry store that Ali works in at night."

"Good Lord, if Ali moved away, that would be quite a hardship for his family," interrupted Michael, "and probably against his religion, too, to leave them like that, if I understand the Islam correctly."

"That same situation comes up again and again," said Bernie, "Take Mustafa, that photographer we have or had. He passed all his tests okay about three months ago, and I haven't seen him since. I heard he opened a camera shop in Dammam near the gold souk, but as far as I know he is still on our roster and still in the military, and supposed to be transferred to Khamis. And Captain Monsour who is in charge right now, is absolutely mum on why Mustafa doesn't show up. At least our graph shows that we trained him right, for what it's worth.



And I have heard, that his family came from the area around Khamis, but there was some feuding going on with other tribes or families, and he'd better not show his face in that part of the kingdom. Just rumor, of course. The thought of a cool Budweiser does . . . Are you sprinkling nuts on your coleslaw, Mike?"

"Sort of. I always carry a small bag of sunflower seed in my pocket. I wonder now, if their training is purposely designed to make them stall in the end and to drag it out, or if that is simply an oversight in the planning. After all, I don't see the reason for transferring them. But I don't have the military mind."

"They should send them to a different region for their training so that they have an incentive to get it over with and then be stationed near home. I told them that in Administration, but they just ignore what I say."

"Plus, this transferring bit is only one of several schemes to drag out the training contract." said Bernie.

But Jim didn't agree, "It's not actually designed to drag it out, it just has that effect. It's cooked up by retired US colonels or generals now working for companies with contracts in the aerospace industry, and it's based on the American military set-up. And these old stinkers are too ignorant and too insensitive to make any changes for other peoples' needs. They think everything works fine as long as they can go into the board meeting or make presentations to the Saudi brass with fancy charts and graphs." And with the word graph his knife slipped off the steak bone and sent some bloody juice from his plate all over Michael's broccoli. "Sorry about that blood, it's good for you."

"The Saudi brass can't be that dumb," doubted Michael. "That contract has been running for years in several phases and has been renewed a few times, as far as I know."

Bernie had another theory: "It's not just good old American ignorance, it's good old business smarts. Don't forget that we Americans have the best business people in the world. What would happen if the McPeace Corporation had a five year contract to get parts of the Saudi Air Force on their own fee, and at the end of the five years the Saudis know everything. They don't need us any more, finished, end of contract, end of all that good money for McPeace. See what I mean?"

"Don't sell them princes short," said Jim. "They are no dummies when it comes to business. I'll tell you, now that I think about it, but don't quote me on this. It's the royal family themselves, or most of them, who want to drag out our presence, they don't care which company, maybe, as long as it is American. Since

## Training 1:1 Ours is not to wonder why

we don't have any military bases here, they have our expertise around in civilian disguise."

"And our families as kind of pawns in case of a hot crises," added Berni. "And we all know that a lot of Saudi locals wouldn't stand for having American air bases around here again, or the marines. Jesus this meat is tough. If you don't want your broccoli, Mike, I'll take it off your hands."

"Help yourself", said Michael. "There may be still another idea or power behind a deliberate slow down of training, if it's in fact deliberate, the one that ...."

"It's not deliberate," interrupted Dennis, "it was a stupid design to begin with, and the Saudi government doesn't change it because it suits them just right or maybe they don't know how to change it."

"I don't think so," continued Michael his thought. "they don't want to depend on anybody, but deep down they realize that they can't defend themselves and the oil fields on their own, yet they don't want to admit it outright by building official alliances, so they buy American planes and weapons and let us train them and partially handle them for as long as possible. Seems to be that the real mastermind behind this is our Department of Defense or our State Department, something Kissinger might have cooked up. It's a sneaky way to keep Washington's finger in the Saudi soup, I guess."

"Oh Jesus!" Bernie couldn't take that hands down. Knife and fork in front of Michael's face he spoke his mind: "You vegetarians blame everything on Washington."

"Hey, fellows, take it easy," intervened Dennis threatening them with a paper napkin. "You guys shut up and eat up. People are waiting for this table. I'll tell you there is no design behind this mess, and if there is a mastermind somewhere that actually plans a slow progress to military independence of Saudi Arabia, we trainers will be the last to know. They tell us to do our darndest, to do overtime without pay, to produce good looking graphs to show the Saudis when they negotiate contract renewals, and at the same time they make it hard on all involved to complete the training, and then the guys in administration can blame it all on us guys in the field if the company gets blamed for the slow progress. I wish they would fill us in. Makes me feel stupid."

"We are not here to wonder why", said Michael.

## **An Eye for a Tooth**

"I heard that line before," continued Dennis his speech. "But what does Shakespeare have to do with this, for heaven's sake. I'm not a soldier, not any more, no 'do or die' for me, no way."

"Somehow I feel that most Saudis are by their very nature not eager to fight and not all that suited for efficient military regiment, and no matter what type of training, schedule and transfer policy we set up, they'll dingle dangle around," said Michael as he got up to brave the heat.

He felt a lot better now that he knew he was not the only one confused about the paradoxes of his mission. He continued to be troubled by the problem, but in a less personal way now, it was more like a brain teaser. On that level he could cope with it better than Dennis who actually left the kingdom within a week of this conversation.

Michael stayed in Saudi Arabia for another four years. Policies and politics did not change, and Michael became none the wiser.

## **An Eye for a Tooth**

This event actually did happen to Helga and Hans. Again Hans' name has been changed to Siegfried and Helga's son Christopher is called Thomas. Taking trips out into the countryside was a favorite weekend past time for the family. Sadly the incident with the tooth is also true.

A few weeks after my arrival in Saudi Arabia we bought a car, a used Mazda, and felt the need to take it for a Friday afternoon ride through the countryside.

We had not been able to find a map that showed the roads we thought were there, but we did get a hold of a map with a dense net of dotted lines suggesting roads under construction and a statement in the legend by a frustrated map maker: "All roads under construction are being completed as the progress was faster than our production."

Yet, as soon as we had left town it became obvious that not all roads were completed, and certainly not those dotted on our map. Thanks to one of our occasional flashes of wisdom, however, we had stuck a compass on the dashboard before we had ventured out into the unknown. There are still some countries on the globe where one should not get altogether lost.

## An Eye for a Tooth

I had followed the advice of some old timers and prepared myself for a possible encounter - however friendly - with people who might not be used to or who might object to seeing a western woman too scarcely dressed. I featured a long skirt, long-sleeved blouse and a scarf for my head. I also carried a veil and a thin black cloak in a tote bag, just in case I would desire anonymity, and to be prepared for absolutely everything, like a good old girl scout cookie should be, I had a ghutra in the glove compartment, a headdress worn by men which would make me look like a guy, at least from a distance, if I had to drive the car after an accident.

There was an air of adventure about our simple little trip, and we were suitably happy. I even forgot what had bothered me since breakfast: a tiny line across one of my front teeth. The tooth had a jacket crown, and I figured an eyelash had lodged with one end under the crown, a problem of immense magnitude on an idle day.

We ventured south from Al Khobar along the coast of the Arabian Gulf, past Dhahran, the airport and the Saudi/American settlement of Aramco, and then south-west into the desert region. On both sides of the road the sand dunes were stabilized by a layer of what I think was crude oil.

This was the route onto the big oil fields around Abqaiq and into the Al Hasa oasis. Traffic was like it is near an ant hill, with heavy trucks bullying their way from here to eternity with unlimited speed and passing the slower travelers on this planet preferably on a two lane, uphill stretch of the highway.

The spectacle of dozens of thoroughly totaled wrecks to our left and right in the dunes made us turn off the major road and seek refuge on a westbound band of asphalt. Great, up and down over the desert dunes, no traffic, the Shamal, the north wind, blowing sand through the windows, the sun trying to warm the February air.

After a few miles we had to slow down for a little makeshift village, shacks made of corrugated iron and shipping crates. Two Mercedes trucks were parked off the pavement. Black goats were dozing behind flimsy fences, and boys in long gowns and girls in long dresses were running all over the place.

We waved at them with a friendly smile and saw just in time to duck when one of the rascals picked up a stone and threw it towards us, a signal for his friends to look for more rocks. It made me feel bad to be unwelcomed that way, but I remembered myself having thrown a handful of pebbles at an American Army Jeep once as a kid, just for kicks and because I had seen others do the same.

## An Eye for a Tooth

Foot on the gas, children fleeing from our vehicle, and we were on our way further west. The dunes could not control their wanderlust and had already claimed back the road at intervals. We had to zigzag around sloping sand piles, always wondering where we were going. There was not a single wheel passing us, and nothing came towards us. We could pretend to be crossing the vast land on the back of a smooth riding camel.

City slickers that we were, we were all prepared for being stuck in the desert. We had several gallons of water, two wooden boards to help us drive out of sand, a tire pump, ropes, a flashlight, blankets, a spare jerry can of gas and - for what it was worth - the phone number of al Khobar police department.

Just as we were praising ourselves for our wise planning, we saw the very justification for doing so: a car stuck in the sand off the pavement ahead of us. Seven Saudi children and Papa and Mama were pushing and pulling the poor vehicle which was stubborn as a donkey and digging in. The family were in their Sunday best, the guys in white thobes and ghutras, the girls in bright dresses, and the mother completely covered in black.

We stopped.

"Can we help you?"

"Please."

They had been stranded for more than an hour. Being less than a generation away from desert roaming Bedouin, they were not equipped with the knowledge of the hardware to get a car out of the sand.

With the boards and the rope and letting some air out of the tires, their Toyota was back on firm ground within minutes. We were glad we had ventured out on the forlorn road, a Friday afternoon well spent, we thought and turned around to head back home.

Our new acquaintance, however, said, we could not go home until we had shared a meal with him. His name was Abdullah, and he spoke English quite fluently.

"It was God the Merciful who sent you here," he said, and I answered: "Alhamdulillah," which means 'Praise be to Allah.'

Desert people that they were, they were all prepared to honor an unexpected guest with an elaborate banquet. A tablecloth was spread out on the sand and a big silver platter was placed in the center on which the woman and the giggling girls

## An Eye for a Tooth

heaped cooked rice, fried chicken, mutton, green onions, raw carrot sticks and cucumbers sliced lengthwise. Boy, did the aroma make me hungry!

I hoped that invitation would not be retraced when I tried to be polite and said:

"You really don't have to do this."

Abdullah had the graciousness to ignore my insulting stupidity. He and his four sons disappeared behind the dunes. I figured they were saying grace or performing a cleaning ritual that I couldn't really visualize.

I wanted to say something to our hostess but I couldn't think of anything and stood there just as helpless as Siegfried and Thomas, and we sighed with relief when Abdullah came back.

From a thermos bottle he poured cold water over our hands and motioned to the food. I thought that meant he wanted us to sit down and was only too happy to oblige while trying not to kick too much sand on the table cloth. One can be so clumsy!

And how do you eat rice with just your fingers as tools? I watched the oldest boy grab a handful with his right hand, form it into a ball with nimble fingers and throw it into his mouth. What a mess I made of it! I had rice all over my lap, up my nose and crawling into my sleeves. My family wasn't doing much better. And to my horror I discovered that I had picked up a piece of mutton from the platter with my left hand, which, I had read as a child in one of those explorer books, one doesn't do in a Muslim society, because the left hand is used for cleaning your body here and there. Shamefully I licked the grease off my fingers and hid the dirty hand behind my back. Nobody seemed to have taken notice of it.

The two men were comparing fringe benefits of the companies they worked for. Abdullah had an office job with Aramco in Abqaiq.

I was on my second leg (of chicken) when I realized that our hostess and her daughters were not eating with us. They were squatting on the other side of the car eating what they had left in the container when they filled the tray. The smallest girls, maybe three years old, waved at me, and they all took turns peeping at me from behind the wheel.

Was I not supposed to eat with the men? Did I notice an amused look in the boys' faces?

## An Eye for a Tooth

Abdullah sensed my uneasiness and made an effort to include me in the conversation.

"You have seen the caves in al Hasa?"

No, I hadn't. I just knew, if I got up now to sit with the women folks I would stir up enough sand to blanket the tablecloth.

The children got up to play soccer after Abdullah had told his flock in Arabic what must have meant "this little boy is our guest, so don't kick his shins and let him shoot some goals." The girls were very skilled with the ball showing a lot of experience and - well - promise.

The mother inched around the car and I inched toward her. I could now see through her veil and discovered a big smile in a happy face. She was about my age. She asked me something and pointed to my (then) red hair.

Where were the phrases I had studied in my four Arabic lessons? Darn it! I wanted to say something, anything, just communicate, so finally I recalled one single sentence: "Wayn il taffaya?"

The ground shook with her laughter, and the men became curious. I had to repeat the phrase, and Abdullah translated for the benefit of Siegfried: "Where is the fire extinguisher?"

Siegfried was embarrassed but the ice was broken. While Abdullah passed out little china cups and filled them again and again with a very sweet tea. Nabila and I had an animated conversation using her husband as interpreter.

Kids and family was a natural topic.

"With seven children one of them is always sick," she said pointing to Abdullah who was now cuddling one of his girls in his lap who had given up playing and looked feverish.

Thus leading into the subject of several wives, always fascinating to me who can only have them one at a time, Siegfried sighed, "The more you have the more trouble they cause. I have two kids and only one wife, of course."

Our host and hostess had a long chuckling session over that remark and then Nabila threatened her husband.

"My wife said, I must no marry a second wife," he explained, "she is the boss."

## An Eye for a Tooth

Maybe she was the boss, but after Abdullah had emptied the tray and thrown all the left-over food behind a dune, and served a chicory flavored coffee from another thermos, he poured it only for Siegfried, me and himself. I could see that she was very pleased when she noticed that we like the brew.

From the Toyota she fetched a bag and handed it to her husband.

"Something very special for special guests," she said. "Cheese made from goat milk in the traditional way of the Bedouin."

I felt honored indeed. The cheese came in the form of little looking like white macaroons. Maybe it was the shape that made me expect something sweet. But it was - yuck! - somewhere between bitter and sourly dry, and hard. I couldn't swallow it. The very instance I put it into my mouth I spit it out instinctively, straight into the sleeve of my windbreaker, unnoticed by the others.

"Delicious." I said.

We had exchanged addresses and promised to visit. The macaroon had been served with the third cup of coffee, and Siegfried told me in German that the third cup of coffee meant the end of the visit or meal. I wanted to smile and suggest that the sun was setting and that it was time for us to go home. But I couldn't smile. Oh Horror! My tongue felt a hole in the row of my front teeth and a rough edge. I was so confused and bewildered that I couldn't open my lips. I had lost a tooth or part of it.

Yet, I had only one concern: I didn't want our hosts to find out. They would think that I lost the tooth to their Bedouin cheese, whereas - I realized now - I had already cracked it at home when biting on a nut in a chocolate bar.

Another goat cookie was offered.

"Thank you," I said, and the 'th' came out like a hiss from a whistle.

Did you ever serve desert to a previously perfect guest, and suddenly she smiles at you with a tooth missing? Abdullah experienced that shock that afternoon.

The conversation stopped, only Siegfried kept on talking; he hadn't noticed anything. Husbands rarely look at their wife.

Where was that wretched piece of porcelain? I glanced around carefully, casually searched my lap, let my hand slide up my sleeve; I felt the cookies, but no



## Commode

tooth. I was too bewildered to explain my situation. I remained silent, and so did Abdullah and a nervous Nabila.

We got up, still in shock. I would have to run around toothless until next August, when we would go on leave to the States. Oh misery. Yet, that prospect didn't bother me as much as the lack of words that would put our new friends at ease.

As we climbed into our Mazda, we were shown the ultimate in hospitality: Abdullah went through all the boxes, bags, and corners of his car and gave us every can and bottle of juice and soft drinks he could find. He had not a drop of drinkable liquid left for his own family. It was hard to accept. It was a long drive home for them.

"We always think that an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth refers to punishment", said Siegfried as we drove off. "It can also be a motto for returning a favor."

"Yesh," I said, "people can be sho generoush."

I pulled the macaroon from my sleeve and inspected it one more time with a keen eye for a tooth. Sure enough.

To my surprise I found an excellent British dentist in Al Khobar the next day and had another crown put on without problems. But we never again saw Abdullah and his family. I think they never contacted us because they felt bad about my tooth in their cheese, and we were kind of too shy to just show up at their house one day. We would have like to have run into them one day.

## Commode

The commode incident happened in December 1979 just after they moved to the second compound. Again Helga changed her son Christopher's name to Thomas.

About a year later our daughter was granted a visa to come to Saudi Arabia and spend Christmas with us. Since we had only two bedrooms, one for our son Thomas and one for us, we were now assigned a three bedroom house. There is some good in decency.

## Commode

This villa was one of the 85 just like it in a new compound, owned by a Saudi citizen like all real estate in the country, and lease by several American and Canadian companies.

You had either a green or a brown carpet, and since there were two design of furniture to chose from, various combinations of the parts offered some individuality.

I loved the villa's size. There was a formal dining room and a kitchen twice the size of what I was used to, and a little room "for the house boy", very handy for Pepsi bottles, my sewing machine and - in some of the neighbors' houses - for the still and illegal home brew and do-it-yourself wines. I never did have a house boy.

It took me a while to realize that we had two and three quarter and one quarter bathrooms. The two 'full' baths were in the bedroom section, the one quarter bath was for quests off the hall, and the three quarter bath, with a shower, was behind the room for the houseboy. It was designed with the utmost efficiency in mind. The showerhead stuck out of the ceiling, the water sprayed the entire room and trickled out through a drain in the floor. There was no shower curtains or partitions. The waster also sprayed on the commode and the light switch. Thus you could sit on the toilet, take a shower, and electrocute yourself all at the same time.

"Four commodes? Big trouble," said Phil from down the road, a veteran of 21 years in the Middle East.

It happened, of course, on Christmas Eve. We were celebrating in a German sort of way. Christkind had lit the candles on our imported plastic pine and had left behind a delicious bottle of fermented grape juice. We were opening presents and tried to get into the mood.

"What stinks?" asked Thomas.

"The toilet next to the master bedroom doesn't flush," I said.

"Mine doesn't either, now that you mention it," he said, "and the one off the hall is real bad."

To make a long Christmas story short: we spent an unholy night; and so did our neighbors up and down the road.

The plunger went from house to house like carol singers, but with no beneficial effect. When we phoned Maintenance, we were advised not to worry. It turned out, that as block after block of the compound was being occupied, block

## Commode

after block had the entire sewer system backed-up about six to eight days after the people moved in. It was a blessing, that by coincidence the water supply also stopped and nobody could add to the overflow, at least not until the water was turned on again at about dinner time on Christmas Day.

When the plumber finally came to our villa, a day after Christmas, he was no longer in the mood to discuss the situation. He had worked on evil smelling modern sanitation since his return from his holy pilgrimage to Mecca in November. His home was in some lovely hills in northern India, he said, and he liked to keep his mind on the 'bloomings' in the meadows back home, if I didn't mind.

I was happy to see him before the ladies would arrive for a luncheon I was giving.

"You should think that in this day and age, in 1979, architects can design an adequate sewer system," I commented to cheer him up while I watched him poke around with a wire.

"It's okay, American architects," he said and extracted a pile of white tissue. "It's the Yemi men, they build this. See this here?"

I almost screamed when he pulled what turned out to be a yellow rubber glove out of the commode.

"Yemi men don't know American toilet. They throw things in and flush," he explained patiently as a man's boxer shorts surface. "You are lucky. In next door house Yemi men throw all left over concrete in commode and flush. It's a mess."

But all his efforts did not bring about the free flowing gush of water I so longed for. There must be some hardened concrete in our pipes as well - or a sandal?

"It's the toilet paper, Ma'm, you must not use it," he said finally with a good measure of anger, "the pipes are too small."

I knew that in many countries the use of toilet tissue is considered filthy, people use water instead, and we did have a bidet right next to the commode, but being brought up the way I was, I didn't think I would ever be satisfied without the touch of the tissue.

"I can't do it without paper," I confided finally. I wasn't going to give up so easily, not in these basic matters.

Elmer

He sat on the floor and contemplated for a while and suddenly jumped up, obviously having found the ultimate solution to our plumbing problem, "I come back after five minutes, ma'm", he said.

And he did. With a proud smile he handed me a brown paper bag, the size we use for grocery shopping.

"You must use toilet paper, ma'm, and then you must put it in paper bag. No problem," he said and left, a happy man.

I couldn't wait to advise my luncheon ladies in the latest bathroom etiquette.

## Elmer

Just a whimsical short story. It may not be complete, and may have been just a beginning of an idea.

Elmer was no virgin when he came to Saudi Arabia. Back home in South Carolina, during the last prayer meeting before he joined the Air Force, he had calculated that of all the men in the Ebenezer Baptist Church nobody had laid as many chicks as he had. He had thanked the Lord for being blessed with such virility. Of course, he had told himself after the Amen, some of his success was due to the way he carried himself: always clean, short hair shampooed daily, well trained muscles stretching white jeans, and above all, he commanded a lean language, none of those vulgar words the other guys used when they talked about what they didn't get. Girls were a lot more compliant when you treated them like the ladies they wanted to be. He had actually said the word intercourse once when the organ player pretended she didn't know what he had planned for the evening with her. Intercourse, good grief!

Right now he didn't care what anybody called it; in fact, he wanted a woman, and there was none to be had. He stood in downtown al Khobar at the corner of Faisal Street and Dhahran Avenue thinking about Harriette and Wilma, mainly Harriette with Wilma's behind, waiting for the McPeace Corporation minibus to take him back to the compound where he shared a trailer with two other GIs.

The Air Force had an agreement with the McPeace Corporation allowing joint use of some facilities like these stupid buses that never came when one expected them and changed their routes and schedule without telling anybody. It

## **Girly Boys and Boyly Girls.**

had been raining, he wasn't dressed for cold, dirty weather, mud splashed from all around him. Was that bus ever going to come? Probably not. Most buses or their Arab drivers would simply quit when rain ganged up with the potholes.

## **Girly Boys and Boyly Girls.**

Using women as secretaries was risky for Northrop. And when the Saudi Religious Police would crack down on women working in the same building as men, Northrop would be without secretaries. To solve this problem, Northrop actually did hire male secretaries from the San Francisco area. Although Northrop hired them for their secretarial skills with no thought to their personal living situation, it did have some interesting results when these male secretaries arrived in Saudi Arabia.

No country has the monopoly on girly boys and boyly girls. They are part of the folks in everybody's home town. But our scandal hungry mind always finds these deviations from the norm so pleasantly shocking when we see them in other people's territory.

Considering the situation with thousands and thousands of strappingly healthy foreigners on 'bachelor status' working in Saudi Arabia, one could suspect a temporary homosexual behind every tree (or behind every date palm, to stay within the picture). But whatever happens in this area of life occurs seldom enough to still be the stuff that gossip and little stories are made of.

Most Saudis get married at such an early age, that they need no promiscuous classmates, merciful older women, one night stands, or concerned gentlemen friends to do it with. All those young guys strolling hand in hand through downtown are merely displaying human affection for each other just like Italian and Russian men seem to lose themselves in passionate kissing.

What all those foreigners flying into the kingdom without their woman are up to, I don't know. It's none of my business and, as far as I know, nobody else makes it his business. There is no red light district, only the occasional, very secret private arrangement with somebody else's wife and/or daughter, and never have I heard of a Saudi woman being involved. They are known as 'none' to American men, meaning 'you don't see none and you don't get none.'

Most American can bring their wife along, so you have generally a sound family oriented population in the compounds, and there is a second advantage to

## Girly Boys and Boyly Girls.

having wives around: many of them know how to type and can be used as secretaries.

Every once in a while conservative forces in the Saudi government or society make an effort to bar all women from working in offices in the company of men. When one of those efforts hit the McPeace Corporation in the early 1970's, all the wives had to be replaced with male secretaries. Being from Los Angeles the employee recruiter knew just the place where to find the types he thought were needed, right in his own home town. A few weeks later he dispatched into the kingdom a planeload full of gays with knowledge of typing and filing.

They didn't last long. They were allowed to share apartment two by two, but they were matched by alphabet, not by mating patterns.

There was only one department head who didn't mind having his coffee sweetened and milked by a guy instead of somebody else's wife. The housing office and the supply section in charge of outfitting the apartments could not cope with all the complaints about the bedspreads not complimenting the drapes, about the carpets being of such a vulgar green, and why was there no full length mirrors.

There was one male secretary though, Johnathan T. Beam III, who had not come with that particular group. Actually, he was an administrative assistant of undisputed efficiency and absolute correctness and propriety in behavior and attitude. He had us all wondering what kind of vice or flaw we would finally pin on him.

What made him most remarkable, however, was his skill with words, his ability to find tune the language by drawing on such a great resource of vocabulary that made the rest of us feel illiterate. He was a walking thesaurus, and could be founder of the L.A. Chapter of Synonyms Anonymous. When he had decided to accept an assignment to Saudi Arabia, he had dutifully fallen in love and married the lovely Mary, so his work performance would not marred by his search for a woman. He knew how to keep himself out of trouble, especially the kind that leads to nothing but gossip and ridicule.

Imagine our joy and curiosity when he stumbled into the company cafeteria one evening, his hair all ruffed up, his shirt wet with perspiration and oily fingerprints on the seat of this pants. He joined his friend Chatter Tooth at a corner table whose well known quality as a sort of town crier assured us that we would hear first thing in the morning what had happened to our male administrative assistant. And here it is:

## Girly Boys and Boyly Girls.

Johnathan T. had bought a second hand car and taken it for a ride on the highways south of al Khobar right after work. After about fifteen miles in hazy weather he had lost his direction and after another ten miles or so he realized that the fuel gauge on his car did not function, that he was, in fact, out of gas on a desert road somewhere in the Eastern Province.

He decided to thumb a ride home, hoping that he was thumbing in the right direction and that thumbing was not misunderstood as an obscene gesture in this culture.

Immediately one of those huge Mercedes trucks, decorated with ribbons and tinsel like a Christmas tree, stopped for him. He climbed into the cab.

There was a big man (B.M.) and tiny man (T.M.) in brown thobes. They seemed to be Bedouins who knew as much English as Johnathan knew Arabic: four or five words.

B.M. was driving, but his eyes were on his new passenger. His smile was endearing when he said something that sounded to Johnathan like: "!#&%&'()?"

T.M. did the honor and translated: "You," and then he jerked up the extended middle finger of his left hand before Jonathan's face, "him."

Jonathan stiffened silently. This gesture couldn't mean what he thought it meant. Different cultures and so on, but meanings can be learned just like words. Or was it a political statement, or an offer of his sister.

B.M. kept staring sideways and racing forward and made another suggestion: "\*)"&%#'"

T.M. giggled and climbed over Jonathan's lap who was thus seated between the Bedouins.

B.M. puckered his lips and made kissing sounds, pushing his foot ever harder on the gas pedal and whispered into his neighbor's ear what T.M. interpreted with repeated fingers, smacking lips and "You him, him me, me you."

That went on with slight variations for about twelve miles. As long as the truck was moving, they won't really do anything, thought Jonathan, and he knew that the sun would soon go down and most likely they would stop for their evening prayer. That might be his chance.

But they didn't stop like so many other drivers did on both sides of the road. Darkness came fast, and Jonathan became worried.

## Girly Boys and Boyly Girls.

He was scared. He could feel his skin break out in perspiration, he tried to look through the windshield to see if he couldn't recognize the area, maybe see the lights of al Khobar. Nothing.

But then the engine began to stutter, mumble, quite. With an experienced glance to the fuel gauge Jonathan saw to his delight that the truck was out of gas. The big vehicle rolled to a slow stop barely off the pavement. The two Bedouin exchanged some unfriendly sounds, probably blaming each other for the empty tank. Their misfortune gave Jonathan a shot of courage. He simply climbed over T.M.'s lap and was just reaching for the door when he was pulled back by B.M.'s big hands firm grip on the seat of his pants.

There was only one way out: talking. He turned toward T.M.: "You", (finger) "him, him" (finger) "you?"

B.M. giggled, he had understood, but that was not the way he had it planned. He unbuttoned his thobe, "Me you, you him."

Jonathan became alarmed. "La, la, la," he shouted, which is Arabic and means "no, no, no." He forced an agreeable smile on his face, climbed on B.M.'s lap and set to confuse the issue: "me you," (finger) "him you, you me," (finger) 'me him, him me."

And while his two host were trying to figure out the who's and whom's, Jonathan T. wriggle off B.M.'s lap like lightning opened the door, jumped and dashed towards a faint light down the road, a gas station, as it turned out. A yellow cab was pulling out, and he managed to make a run for it and open the door.

"You want sitting on front seat?" asked the driver.

"La, la, la," said Jonathan. "Not me." He placed himself in a corner of the back seat, sweaty, dirty, and little ruffed up, but a statue of propriety, basking in the knowledge that you can get out of any situation if you only communicate effectively.

What did we have to pin on him now? No vice, no crime, just this little rhyme:

Jonathan Beam,  
a Bedouins' dream.



## The Storming of the Grand Mosque

### **The Storming of the Grand Mosque**

In November 1979, the world learned about the Hostage taking in Iran. While the News casts were concentrating on Iran, there were just as threatening events occurring in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Helga and her husband were very effected by the events in Saudi Arabia. Helga wrote about the event by writing a letter to herself. To better understand the letter the following historical events are important to know:

22 October 1979: Shah of Iran had been admitted to US for cancer treatment.

4 November 1979 Sunday: In Iran, hostages are taken in the American Embassy. The Iran Hostage Crisis began.

20 November 1979 Tuesday: Early in the morning the Saudi Arabia Grand Mosque in Mecca was stormed.

20 November 1979: US President Carter threatens Iran with force.

21 November 1979 Wednesday: Mob storms American Embassy in Pakistan.

21 November 1979: Kuwaiti New Agency said that Saudi troops stormed the Grand Mosque in Mecca, situation is now normal.

25 Nov 79, Sunday

Dear Helga,

How are you? Here is you are all well and in good shape. Let me tell you how I experienced things during the last few days.

It started on Tuesday the 20th. On the way home from work I heard that the RSAF was on alert and that some of the Northrop guys on the base had to work late. Nobody could tell me why, so I thought it was due to the crisis in Iran, the holding of hostages in the American embassy. Hans was at home, but he knew no reason.

The next morning on the bus I heard that some people had taken hostages in the Grand Mosque in Mecca. To have an alert for the RSAF for some local trouble seemed a bit unbelievable, but nobody knew more than that, but soon rumors were swarming around like bees around a pot of honey. A fact was, that at around two

## The Storming of the Grand Mosque

pm on Tuesday Northrop's Telex communication with the States were interrupted until the next morning. I don't know if the phone lines were still open, some people say they were down also.

Employees spent more time than usual stopping and talking to others in the halls and offices. "Did you hear anything more?" "Did they say anything on the news?" "Nope."

Somebody said that Dan Colwell had called from Taif and told about being body searched twice when he wanted to get on the base. He also said there were tanks all over Taif. Luise from the mail room overheard somebody she didn't know that there was a coup in Riyadh. And trouble in Hofuf. Who caused the trouble? Anti-American? Anti Royal family? Iranians? Shiites? American Muslims? Simply religious dissidents? Communists? Palestinians? Jews?

There was talk of 200 dead in Mecca. Then it was 200 hostages, then 200 gunmen and a dead prince. Then a dead mullah and all hostages dead. Etc.

Finally the Minister of Information made an official announcement part of which was repeated on the Aramco news at 11:45am and 12:45pm. It stated that some "renegades" had taken the opportunity during dawn prayers to seize the Grand Mosque in Mecca, the holiest of all Muslim shrines, that the renegades were armed and had taken hostages. The situation was under control, so the announcer said, and that soon all the gunmen would be arrested. The army could mop up the operation any minute, but they tried to save the lives of the hostages. Another announcement would be forthcoming within a few hours. It was also said that the majority of the renegades were Saudi nationals and that there was no indication of any specific foreign nation to be involved. The meaning of the last sentence became very clear when other news told that an angry mob in Pakistan and stormed the Embassy there and that the Pakistani army had to rescue the embassy employees by helicopter (two American dead). The mob believe that the gunmen in Mecca were American or at least masterminded by America.

The workday ended and everybody went home for a three day weekend (Thanksgiving), not knowing what to expect. Could it all have been something to do with the crisis in Iran after all? Two American aircraft carriers were on their way to the Arabian Sea, the Shah was almost well enough to leave the hospital in the US. That mess would come to a climax within a few days. No official statement from Northrop, i.e. Mr Holland, Vice President of Saudi Arabian Operations.

## The Storming of the Grand Mosque

We listened to short wave radio in search of information that was not available locally. Radio Wien, I think it was, mentioned 700 dead in Mecca, but nothing about the cause and the extent of it. All other radio stations seemed to suffer either from lack of information or from the guts to talk about it. The Saudi government ordered a news black-out except for official statements. Apparently they hoped to confine the trouble to Mecca, but from the Saudi pool of rumors we heard that there was trouble in Qatif and in the Al Hassa Oasis, apparently Shiites, a religious branch of Islam that is the popular one in Iran and in Bahrain, the more conservative and anti-west section.

In our compound we talked to neighbors and called friends in other cantonments. Communications seemed to be so important. All air traffic has been stopped, nobody can get in or out, we heard. No mail either, of course.

There were no more news on the local Aramco station, only a repetition of the statement that the situation "was fully under control" and **THAT THE REST OF THE RENEGADES** would be apprehended shortly.

Hans and I ate the avocado we had bought at the just opened Safeway grocery store. It had been so expensive and we wanted to make sure we didn't have to leave it behind in case of an evacuation.

26 Nov 79, Monday

The rumors:

The people who took the Mosque last Tuesday (20 Nov 79) were part of a tribe that lives mainly in or near Hofuf. The "renegades" will be quartered and fed to the dogs. There are various ways of torture under discussion before their execution. Not only those actually caught in the Mosque will be punished, but also the families and supporters. The punishment will be televised, and all Muslims are supposed to watch it.

The government of Pakistan has announced that in case of military involvement of Iran and the US, Pakistan will help Iran. Plane loads of Pakistanis have been deported from Saudi Arabia in the last few days. The night before last there was a fight between Pakis and Saudis at Kentucky Fried Chicken in al Khobar. This morning a Pakistani Airline plane crashed shortly after takeoff from Jeddah. 150 dead. Sabotage is not ruled out. Saudi Arabia is "infiltrated" by highly skilled and capable Pakistanis, not just houseboys and business, but especially the military. I heard that years ago the Saudis requested that Pakistan send officers over here to train the Saudis in exchange for the tremendous debts

## The Storming of the Grand Mosque

that Pakistan owed. So they know all the secrets and probably know more than the Saudis themselves.

More talk about American marines on Dhahran and paratroopers on another base. Some people have actually seen a few marines jog along the flight line. The kids say they are being guarded by marines at the Academy.

The entrance of Building 140 is being guarded now by one of our people who checks Northrop Recreation passes. They are building a sort of fence across more than half of the hallway to narrow the entrance. That will be a nice spot to run through in case of fire, a real bottle neck. Dewey says in all his six years over here he has never seen such measure being taken even during the Israeli War. No official statement by Northrop, the way it was on Thanksgiving day.

Beth Long, whose husband works for the US Air Force in the Commander's office as a right hand aide, said that he had to attend several high level meetings with Mr Holland, Northrop Vice President for Saudi Arabian Operations, the Air Force Commander, and high level Saudi officials. Apparently the Saudis are extremely concerned about the safety of westerners, so that no exodus sets in.

At around noon Hans drove to Building 4 to check the mail. While he was gone, Shami (Saudi), the warrant office 'in charge' of the Reconnaissance Lab called: "Tell Hans to come out to the Lab immediately and bring Pete and Bob."

When Hans got that message from me, he called his superior (Liotta), then was called by Bob Paradis who said it was okay for Hans to go out to the Lab. Actually, in case of a real crisis Northrop is not supposed to be working with the RSAF, but it is generally assumed that the RSAF is not quite ready and would require assistance.

27 Nov 79, Tuesday

Went to work as usual on the 6:40am work bus, which raced along the coastal road as if fleeing from hell. ID cards were checked in Building 140. One is getting a little tired of rumors. The Saudi government is still calling the situation in Mecca "under control," but the 'renegades' are still in the Mosque, in the basement. The newspapers are plastered with quotes from foreign governments praising the wisdom of King Khalid in handling the situation. The lack of information is also being praised as 'staying with facts rather than spreading rumors.'

Aramco News at around noon has little of interest. Paul Dadez says he saw military and other types working on evacuation plans in the conference room on

## The Storming of the Grand Mosque

the ground floor. He was told the Saudi government had requested that. Luise asks why Finance is working on the payroll of TCNs (Third Country Nations = neither Saudis nor American). She heard that four different nationalities will be deported. Finance works on the TCN payroll separately because they are paid out of a different fund, but rumors take nothing for granted.

In the evening we hear on the 7 o'clock news from Bahrain that the US government has ordered 10 embassies in Muslim countries to evacuate non-essential personnel because of violence in Pakistan, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. Does that mean they evacuate embassy personnel, or does it include us? The 10pm news on Doha TV mentioned 12 embassies. We have still not heard a single word from Northrop officially, no word of advice, no statement.

We sort out important papers and I select clothes to take along.

The US aircraft carriers are reported to be at the entrance to the Gulf, but the admirals are hesitating to enter the Gulf because it is so shallow and the boats cannot maneuver properly and are easy targets for Iranian mines and aircraft attacks.

Evacuation? I called some neighbors, they don't know anything either. The Saudi Arabian English news mentions nothing about evacuation.

4 Dec 79 Tuesday

About the situation in Qatif and surrounding villages one hears the following rumors and stories:

The majority of those people are Shiites and sympathize with the Iranians. One says that they had quarrels among the population about selling Christmas related articles, also they are said to have planned on making a sweep of some unfriendly nature towards Dammam and then Al Khobar. Last weekend the road to Qatif from Daharan had several road blocks where cars were searched and people were questioned. Later on Friday the road was then blocked completely by a burned out tank and a burned out truck and people were refused entry to Qatif. This information comes from the Fahrigs, a German couple with friends who wanted to drive to Qatif last weekend and had no idea of any trouble.

Late yesterday afternoon, Ahmend Abo-Hebeish, the American/Egyptian I work for, had a call from his relatives in Qatif. He told him "Don't come to see us." He thought that was rather unusual.

## The Storming of the Grand Mosque

The helicopters we saw flying along the coast last weekend are said to have brought in National Guards or supplies for them.

The Fahrigs, teachers for children from several German companies, said that several companies are sending dependents and non-essential personnel home, especially those companies who had the experience of evacuation in Iran last year. However, Philip Holzmann, a company that built the hospitals in Riyadh and has a contract to maintain them, stopped all leave for a while because an unusual number of employees asked for an exit visa and they would not have enough people left to do their job, so they cancelled all of them. The hospitals are reportedly filled to bursting with wounded from the Mecca incident.

Quite a few Northrop people are sending their dependents out of the country and/or have applied for an exit visa. It is hard to get a reservation on a flight, you have to go on a waiting list. Jutta Linday with her two small children and all the other people working for Singer-Link have applied for an exit visa, so has Dodie Stoneburner, who also has a flight ticket to go to England for a few months. Yet Northrop lets the student and high school kids come over here for the Christmas vacation. But should we not be wiser or more careful than the company and cancel their trip? Several other people have done so. But they have Grandmas back in the States.

The RSAF is still on alert and flying missions. People going to the base get checked, but now very casually.

The Saudi Arabian International School is being guarded by Saudi armed men. The other day one of the guards was playing around with the kids and his rifle discharged and he stuck the bayonet in his foot. No kid was hurt.

A shoulder high wooden wall with a swinging door was built in the ground floor hall in Building 140 and a guard checks the ID cards or asks people why they want to get in. We were all asking why this extra security all of a sudden. Finally last Wednesday Mr Holland, Vice President for Saudi Arabian Operations, THE BOSS, descended to inform his employees about 'what he know'. In several groups we were invited to a security briefing. He told us that there was nothing to worry about, that the American were not behind the siege of the Grand Mosque, but that we should keep a low profile, which includes not driving more than necessary, and not offending the Saudi customs. One severe offense, he said, were the working wives. So I thought he would send us home. But not so. He said since the women were so important in the Peace Hawk Program he had the shoulder high wooden partition built in the entrance hall to protect us.

## The Storming of the Grand Mosque

The Saudi government promised to protect the Americans. They had asked for an evacuation plan, just in case. Northrop as well as Det 22 (USAF) looked at their plans which were 4 to 6 years old. They had a safe haven place to be evacuated to: Teheran!

8 December 79 Saturday

There are not a lot of news. Qatif is open again, the last renegades from the Grand Mosque have been capture or killed. The Saudi TV showed the mopping up operations and pictures of the captives, all young men. There is no word about who these men are, what they really wanted, who is behind them. It is quite obvious that they were not just a bunch of rebels who would have the idea of causing some trouble for the heck of it. They were well armed and seemed to have planned the operations thoroughly, carrying the arms into the mosque area in coffins. The Newspaper calls them renegades, fundamentalist, Zionist, but nothing that would really tell their background.

Now Iran seems to break out in civil war, with militant students having taken over Tabriz. Apparently Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini cannot control the mobs and giving in to American pressure to release the hostages would jeopardize his position. He needs external trouble to get the people's mind off the internal problems. Our high school and college students are still supposed to come here for their Christmas vacation. There was an awful lot of air traffic on the weekend, but I don't know what that was for.

According to 'reliable sources' neither Northrop not the Air Force have a really good evacuation plan. They worked on it, but they cannot make up their mind on anything. One plan is to fly us from the compounds in helicopters to the airport. Okay, but who has helicopters?

## **Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg)**

From a diary that Helga kept during this event. Her son Christopher had his leg broken during a Judo lesson. Because of the level of medical services available in Saudi Arabia, what would have been an easy to treat medical condition because a two-continent event. The first part of this diary was written a few days after the beginning, but once the diary was started, the entries reflected current events and feelings.

Saturday May 27, 1978

Chris has Judo class in the gym of the Dhahran Academy from 7pm to 8pm. He gets there in the car of a friend's father.

At 8:45pm, Henry knocks at our door: "Don't get upset or anything. Your son is hurt. The ambulance took him to the clinic." Henry said that his leg was hurt, and when they tried to carry him to the car, the pain seemed to be so bad that someone with a radio called the Tumpane Ambulance. We called the Tumpane Clinic to see if Chris was still there or in a hospital. He was still in the clinic.

Actually he was still in the ambulance. They did not want to move him.

Dr Lang looked at him and called around town to see what hospitals had x-ray people on duty. Mr. Farara (?), the Judo teacher, was still in the ambulance. Finally a male nurse (or doctor?) gave Chris an injection for the pain and we drove in the ambulance to the Ash Sharq Hospital over bumpy roads. The entrance to the hospital grounds has a pipe across the pavement to make the place especially bumpy (to slow the traffic).

We wheeled the stretcher into an emergency room. Some guys who spoke little English called what was maybe a doctor. He said he would have to call a specialist and he would tell the receptionist to call an x-ray technician. Then they set out to give Chris another injection against the pain but didn't do it when I told them he had just received one.

The ambulance driver and the male nurse from Tumpane, Hans and I stood around waiting. There were a lot of young men just running around, some with babies and children like in any emergency ward.

At about ten o'clock some guys showed up, in western clothes (jeans, colored shirts, not clean), all in need of a shave. They wheeled Chris to the x-ray room and lifted him on the x-ray table. The leg is not in a splint and Chris



## Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg)

screams. After the first x-ray, they decided they need to move the leg into a different position for another x-ray. Chris screams, of course. Then one of the guys comes into the hall and says that the technicians doesn't know how to take an x-ray. But apparently after another guy comes and helps they get some good ones.

Then, after ten, a doctor arrives. He is from England, thank goodness for the lack of language problems. He hangs up the x-ray and there it is: the thigh is clearly broken and the parts are parallel to one another.

They have lifted Chris back on the stretcher with a pillow under the leg. The x-ray technician wants the pillow back. Great argument, Chris can finally keep the pillow because removing it would be attempted murder. The x-ray technician is very upset.

The doctor (Reda) says the leg has to be pinned, a complicated, long affair! We ask if we should try to get Chris to Athens or Wiesbaden. He calls us into a little office and says that his private opinion is that the hospital is not equipped to give Chris the best care.

We decide to have him admitted for the night and to make arrangements for evacuation the next morning. It is already close to midnight when they take Chris to the medical ward. The doctor gives instruction for IV and blood transfusion. Again they have to lift Chris to get him into bed. The nurse gives him another pain - injection in the buttocks. Then she spends about ten minutes trying to find a vein, pokes the needle into his hand, miss. Finally a man comes and draws blood and sticks the IV in the same vein.

Hans and I drive home, we go to bed. It is well after midnight.

### **Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg) Sunday 28 May 1978**

At five or even before then, we get up. I pack Chris' suitcase and water the plants. We have breakfast in Bldg 4. A note on the front door informs Hiro Fukuda, who comes to pick me up at 7am, that I won't go to work for "a few days".

Then we wait in the Tumpane Clinic for Dr Lang. At seven he comes and explains that he would suggest air evacuation to Athens so that there is no delay. Wiesbaden might be too long with the paper work, there is probably no military flight for a few days, and he cannot refer Chris to any clinic but Greece and cannot send a nurse along except to Greece.

Hans drives me to the hospital. The receptionist says Chris is now on the 2nd floor, but the ward can't find him anywhere.

## Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg)

Finally they let us back into the room where he was last night. He is still there with a bag of blood over him. He is in great pain. Nothing has been done for his leg. The wardens keep telling me to leave, no visiting hours. I go to the ladies' waiting room for a while. When I go back to the room the x-ray technician is pulling on the pillow that supports the broken leg. He wants it back. It is being replaced by another pillow with the screams by Chris.

9:30am, they take Chris to the operating room.

I go to the lady's waiting room into the company of seven veiled ladies. What now?

10:05am, I go to the second floor, "operating room". A peep through the door shows me that Chris is still awake on his bed. There seems to be a line of patients being prepared for operations. A nurse offers me a chair in the hall after shaking construction rubble off. Dr Reda must have seen me. He brings me a cup of tea. How considerate!

10:20am, George Emmit, Clinical Specialist (US Army) and an American Doctor in Uniform (Dr Major McQuire) with Hans show up. Air Evacuation plane due to leave around 1pm. Is now in Bahrain.

10:45am, Chris is bought out of "operating room". The doctor (not Dr Reda but the resident surgeon, probably Indian) explains what he did to the American Doctor (Dr McGuire). They give us the x-rays.

Chris is, of course, "out". His bed is wheeled back to the Medical Ward, Room 3-4.

11:20am Chris is still unconscious, but he stirred and made complaining noises. The nurse checked pulse and blood pressure, he is on IV. His lips are so dry. He does not react to his name being called loud by the nurse.

11:20am. Chris is taken to x-ray room, return at 11:55am.

There is an old man in the other bed who turns on his radio at prayer time. He wears a little white cap even in bed. The room has an adjoining bathroom. Chris used the bottle once this morning.

Eleven to 12 noon is visiting time. A lot of people. A meal was served on trays before eleven. Chris has a sign over his bed: NIL by mouth, the same in Arabic. The room is not air conditioned, but a fan blows comfortably on the beds.

## Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg)

There is a coughing, wheezing and sing-songing sounds from prayers or complaints all over the ward. Most visiting women bring thermos bottles along.

12 noon, Chris is still "out". At this time Hans should receive our (Chris and mine) exit visa and passport in Bldg 140. Then he has to rush home and pack a suitcase for me. I am hungry with a stomach ache.

Even in the hospital they use these pillows filled with chicken feathers that come out through the seams and material and make the place look like a farm yard.

When the elevator was stuck a guy worked on it with a clothes hanger. He got it to run again.

The hospital is as crowded as Central Station at rush hour, especially in the morning, when hundreds of young men come in on sick call or whatever.

Somebody seems to be coughing himself to death.

12:15pm, Chris is still "out".

12:30pm, I ask at the desk for the x-ray. The nurses say, "You get them when you leave." I said I expected the ambulance any minute to take him to the plane. So they search for the x-rays. They have already been lost in the maze of shelves, folders, and envelops and stacks on cupboards. They find them in the end, but they are not sure that they are Christopher's. I take them anyhow. Then one of the nurses says, "You can't leave. You have not cleared the account." Pang!

How can I clear the account? Not until after 3pm when the accountant comes back from lunch. All that in broken English. In the end somebody talks to the Doctors and a nurse tells me I can leave when and if the ambulance comes.

Chris wakes up in pain at about 1pm. I call nurse. She gives him a shot in the arm. Right afterwards a male nurse from Tumpane and a driver arrive with an ambulance (The Tumpane ambulance had broken down). They transfer Chris to a stretcher which is half broken, and over bumpy roads we go to the US Air Force clinic on the Dhahran Air Base. The nurse on duty has three suitcases and our passports for us.

Dr McGuire has to cut the spike, that the other doctors had put on for the flight, lengthwise because flight regulations forbid transportation of a full cast because in case the plane has to ditch it is hard to evacuate the person. Chris is half conscious.

## Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg)

At about 3 o'clock, we go to the plane, a (141 Star lifter,) converted from a cargo plane into a medic evacuation plane. There are nurses on board, male and female, other passengers on stretcher, some in seats. Dr McGuire comes on the plane to give the nurses instructions.

It is nice to see well trained people handle the case competently. The plane leaves at 3:15pm. It is very hot.

4:30pm, we were served a meal. The air is getting cold. Chris who had nothing to eat or drink since last night threw up. A nurse is with him almost all the time.

Hans came on board a few minutes before we left. He had managed to get an exit visa through Captain Jussef's connection to a brother of Prince Turki.

I wonder what Hans packed into my suitcase?

The flight is expected to last 6 1/2 hours to Frankfurt, then by ambulance to Wiesbaden.

The plane came from Frankfurt, Teheran, Bahrain, Dhahran, Ffm?.

5pm, Chris develops a terrible headache. After looking into several books the nurses agree on giving him the migraine capsules I carry for him (Midrin 100). He is in terrible pain and cries like he does with these headaches. The capsules help after 10 minutes.

6:45pm, Chris wakes up, urinates and smiles. He says he has no pain and he wants to know if he can call Tina as soon as we land and what people are saying about him.

The plane lands in Rheine-Main 11:30pm (9:30pm local time).

Ambulances, cars and buses are lined up to take the passengers to various military hospitals. An ambulance with a nurse (Mrs. Murry) takes us to the US hospital in Wiesbaden. A staff of nurses is expecting us, also a doctor. It is a 3-day weekend (Memorial Day). Chris is given 2 pills for pain, hooked up to IV (He was all the time during transport). He is very uncomfortable. Hans and I are driven to the Amelia Earhart Hotel which is American and next door. Reservations had already been made by someone.

Per night per person: \$8.00. A simple room, 2 narrow beds, no TV, no radio, no wash cloth, no ash tray, but with a view on lovely green grass.

## Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg)

We can open the window, no bugs fly in, no air conditioner makes a noise. We call Ini before we went to bed. Yet, Hans wakes and gets up around 5 the next morning

### **Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg) Monday 29 May 1978**

Breakfast in the Hospital Cafeteria. Due to military orders typed up by USMITM(?) in Dhahran we are eligible to eat there.

Visit to Chris' room. He had breakfast. It stayed down. After urinating into a bottle he tells the nurse on the intercom "My pissing bottle is full." Nurse with an alarmed voice out of the speaker, "Your what is full?"

It is very quiet in the hospital, Memorial-Day weekend.

At around 12 noon Chris is taken to the x-ray department for x-rays after having been given a pill for pain. His cast is movable at the leg/hip joint. That shouldn't be. His right foot is swollen.

He is too exhausted to eat any lunch. He tries to sleep but whenever he dozes off his leg jerks. Painful. He watches a little TV (American Armed Forces TV).

Ini comes to the hospital just before 3pm. Hans and I go with her to NeuhoF while Chris is asleep.

Ini's place is so nice and green, so freshly washed after weeks of rain. We sit on the Terrace, have coffee and cake and talk. Günter goes into the pool to clean it, the first time they use the pool this year. The weather is perfect, no sweater needed.

All day long Chris is not looked at by an orthopedic doctor, just by the duty doctor of the day. Everything has to wait until the weekend is over. He has a severe pain on his spine in his cast.

Mischi picks Hans and me up in the evening after 8pm. We go to his house for about 2 hours. Uschi is very nice, 8 months pregnant but looks like seven months. They have fixed their house up very tastefully. A big house with a guestroom where we might stay later on.

## Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg)

### **Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg) Tuesday 30 May 1978**

Chris had a better night than the one before. A nurse says that the doctor 'might come today'. It is almost 11 am. Since he broke his leg he has not been seen by an orthopedic doctor who really knows about these things. Chris is dozing all the time, quite uncomfortable, usually sedated by pills.

We are anxious to have him put into a course of action. Also we would like to know what the treatment will be so we can make plans. After all, Hans has to go back to Saudi Arabia soon. The definite date depending on Chris' treatment and then the availability of a flight.

Dr Dye came in the early afternoon and decided to put him in traction for 5 weeks. After that he'll be in a cast for about 2 months. So we'll spend the summer in Germany. Hans, however, has to go back to Saudi Arabia, within a few days.

At 3:20pm, they picked up Chris and took him to a treatment room to put the traction on. He was very apprehensive, of course.

At 3:50pm, they bring him back to the room. He is awake. They are now putting the traction on in bed while Hans and I wait in the hall.

In the evening Peter picks us up. We attend a meeting of the FDP in Taunusstein (Feuerwehr halle).

At night we call Bettina in the states to inform her. She sounds just like before. Nice to hear her voice.

Also called Margret and Onkel Erich in Bad Salzuflen.

### **Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg) Wednesday 31 May 1978**

Chris had a good night in his contraption. He can move better in his traction than he could in his cast. He is without painkiller although he is not without pain. He wants it this way.

Hans and I went (walked) to the department stores to look for something for Chris to occupy him. Also had lunch at Horton's. Most delicious (Spargel for Hans, Herrings filet for me). The weather is great. Chris is very happy about a Steiff monkey which Hans bought him "Abdullah" is very cuddly with long arms and legs that can hang around your neck.

## Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg)

Mischi picked us up towards the evening. Spargel, gekochter Schinken, frische Kartoffeln zum Abendessen auf der Terrasse, dann Fürst Pückler Eis mit Rumtopf, Wein und zum Schluß Erdbeer bowle. Fantestisch.

Then Uschi gave us her car to use until we find one to buy. We looked at one last night.

### **Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg) Thursday 1 June 1978**

Chris' hair has been washed and he had his first bowel movement last night. The nurse gave him a quarter for reward. He had a fairly good night. He does not want to take anything for pain. He was too nauseated at breakfast time to eat anything.

There are now 3 other guys in the room, all airmen, I suppose.

Hans met a guy in the hotel who is returning to al Khobar tonight. He can contact Northrop and tell them that Hans is going to come back within a week.

Hans had his eyes checked yesterday. He needs stronger glasses. Just old age creeping up.

Evening spent at Ini's house with Zwiebelkuchen and Erdbeerbowle.

In the afternoon Ini and I went to Idstein to a shop belonging to somebody in the FDP (Herr Hasselbach). Ini wanted to buy there for business reasons. She bought two dresses while I tried some on. While I got dressed again Ini decided which one I would buy and paid for it by check. The dress is red and cost 178 DM. I like it but I didn't want to spend that much money. Hans gave her the money later saying nothing. The price is considered very reasonable for a nice dress.

### **Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg) Friday 2 June 1978**

To Chris at ten o'clock. From 11 o'clock on Hans became very restless and wanted to go somewhere but he didn't want to go on his own. We drove to Hainerberg and were told that we needed to get a statement from the doctor for "logistical support" in order to have BX privileges. The lady let us in anyhow.

Chris did not sleep well during the night. The leg hurts and he has sores on his back, some of them originating from dents in the cast. Very painful.

He doesn't eat well and finds that the milk tastes off. He needs milk for his bone. Also he seldom gets the food he asks for, usually he gets things he doesn't like and can't handle, like tough beef.

## Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg)

We spent the evening at the house of Bobby von Pahlen (Caron) and Vehna (Hans' cousin) in Schlangenbad-Georgenborn. Spargel, Schinken, frische Kartoffeln, sehr gute. Wein and gute Unterhaltung mit Ini, Günter und einem anderen Ehepaar, die sich kulturell (Volkshochschule, Lorienspielschar) betätigen.

### **Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg) Sat 3Jun78**

Hans spent the morning with Mischi trying to buy a car. He is very upset because I didn't come along and visited Chris instead. They bought a '68 VW Beetle with Austauschmotor. 1300 DM.

Chris had bad pains in his leg and asked for a pain killing pill. He is understandably short tempered. We have to find some interesting activity for him.

It is very warm in spite of a thunderstorm in the early morning.

Chris has a 101°f fever in the afternoon. He is losing weight. At mealtime he is usually too exhausted from sitting up to eat anything. The food is not his normal diet and does not tempt him.

In the evening, Hans and Mischi and I went to Bodenheim to the St. Albansfest, a merry affair in the vineyards where people sample different wines from various booths, eat a lot, sing, dance, and walk in crowds and talk, and laugh. We were there two years ago. We met a guy called Sigi and his wife, Helga. He is technical co-ordinator for all the big broadcast on the Zweite Deutsche Fernsehen, mostly big sports events, like the Olympics in Moskau (Moscow) in 1980.

### **Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg) Sun 4Jun78**

Got up late, breakfast in the Club in Amelia Erlhart. Last night the lobby and the Club were filled with Blacks, Male and female, all dressed very exotically, some with sunglasses and walking canes (it was dark inside). Probably the black big city culture transferred to the US Army Posts in Germany.

Hans drives to Mischi's house to go on a bike hike. I stay with Chris. He has 100.7°f fever and is very uncomfortable. Again, too uncomfortable to eat lunch. He nibbles on a chicken wing, two spoons worth of corn.

Maybe they have a special menu for the pediatric ward that he can have.

### **Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg) Mon 5Jun78**

Chris has over 100°f fever, his hind end hurts from lying on it, his feet hurt.



## **Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg)**

Hans decides not to fly until Thursday. He registers the car, etc. To Ini in the afternoon. Early to bed.

### **Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg) Tue 6Jun78**

We leave at 5 o'clock in the morning for Bad Salzuflen in our 1968 VW. Easy 3 1/2 hour drive. Margret lives in her penthouse apartment, nice location.

Lunch at Margret's, then to Tante Else, where we meet Renate with Claudia and Thorsten. Coincidence. Evening with Margret and Hans-Gerd watching the WM game, Germany vs Mexico (6:0).

### **Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg) Wed 7Jun78**

After sleeping at Margret's place we went to Tante Hilde. Although Margret paid over 300,000 DM for the double apartment she has only two bedrooms, no room even for Andreas and no guest room, but 2 comfortable bed-sofas. After a Pickert - lunch with Tante Hilde we drove back to Wiesbaden, we are back with Chris at 6pm. He was in good spirits and had received a package with a game from Sullivans.

Tonight we'll sleep at Mischi's house.

We had a late supper at a family restaurant - butcher in Mainz (Wurstplatter für 3 DM).

### **Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg) Thu 8Jun78**

Chris is without fever and is quite alert and never complains. He plays Othello and Cribbage with some roommates, especially someone called Huddleston who is jumping and running in spite of recent knee surgery.

Hemi called last night from South-West Africa to talk to Mischi about his visit to Germany in July/August. Hans talked to him.

7:10pm A few minutes ago Hans left on the medivac bus for the Rheine-Main Airport to catch the flight Dhahran-Bahrain, Teheran. I couldn't hold back my tears. I know he hates to go back and I would much rather go in his place.

### **Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg) Fri 9Jun78**

Traffic in Germany is so different, but I manage. Went to Heinerberg, did my laundry, bought a dress. I can pay with a personal check there, very good.

## Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg)

In the evening Wilhelm and Roth and Gerz came to Mischi's house to see me. Very nice of them. They are still very vital, he is 65, retired, but they don't seem old. They had recently returned from a trip to Turkey.

### **Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg) Sat 10Jun78**

Went to Chris at 10 o'clock. Mischi suggested that I go to the Flohmarkt and Mainzer Wochenmarkt, but I didn't want Christ to wait for me in vain.

To Ini's for lunch. (She called me at the hospital because she had cooked a real meal).

Afternoons to Gerzen's for Pfloumenkuchen and coffee auf dem Balkon. They live near the hospital.

Evenings with Mischi to Darmstadt (200km per hour on the Autobahn! Crazy) to a party at Thomas Erhard's house. About 40 people, all about Mischi's age, social status, views, reactions, values etc. Most men were engineers, most girls were teachers, all about size 12, well groomed, friendly. So much uniformity, but pleasant people.

They served Sohmalz and rye bread and pickles and a keg of beer in the garden. Simple but effective. Also watched WM game Deutschland VS Tunesien. (0:0) and crowded in the kitchen-bar. On the way home Mischi wanted to drive less fast but couldn't do it because he had such pressure on the bladder and barely made it to his front yard.

### **Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg) Wed 14Jun78**

First letter from Hans. Nothing has changed while he was gone. Chris had mail from Lindig's, Bill and again the Sullivan's.

I ventured to the Sport Center (NATO) in Mainz-Kastel. It is not part of the BX but a concession store of the Rod and Gun Club, only for members (fee = \$1.50 per year). But they let me buy something anyhow.

Sgt Drum, a former patient from Chris' room, stopped by and brought Hamburger and Fries from Mc Donald's for Chris and Huddleston. That was nice of him. Mc Donald's is a specialty in Wiesbaden and very expensive.

Tonight is the WM game Deutschland vs Italia. Hier scheint keiner von Sieg überzeugt zu sein. Can't see the game because it starts at 5:50pm and I don't want to leave Chris that early.

**Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg) Mon 19Jun78**

Chris' leg seems to heal well, less pain, even when touched. X-ray shows the bone still with this situation (picture of bone end parallel, not end to end), but according to several doctors that is supposed to be that way to have a greater healing surface and to go along with the increased growing impulse that the bone received through the injury.

For the last few days the only room companion Chris had was one Sergeant Art Johnson, an ex football player with the behavior of a royal spoiled child, 219 pounds. He is used to having things his way and to have his expressed opinion accepted like a royal decree. Well, Chris doesn't go along with that, he always voices his own opinion, be it on the figure of Char on TV or the voice of an old singer or Sgt Johnson's "diet". Chris says that teasing other people and getting them upset is his only entertainment. Fortunately even Sgt Johnson sees his point in that and gives in most of the time.

Today some other guys came into the room. Chris is now actively studying some German.

**Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg) Thu 6July78**

A week and a half ago Chris was transferred to a room with seven people because 3020 was used for women. A lot of smokers and commotion. Last Thursday Chris had a headache so bad that he screamed and threw up most of the day. Nothing helped.

Today was the big day. Chris came out of his traction device and got his leg in a cast. It wasn't as easy as it sounds. Chris knew that the action was planned and he was quite apprehensive about it, although he was looking forward to it in spite of the pain he expected. Around 1:30pm Dr Foster told the nurse (Marge Behauheck?) to give him a shot of ?? to calm him down. She did. About 15 minutes later, while he was trying to fall asleep, he became pale and broke out in sweat and his eyes looked diluted. I called the nurse and when she said it was probably the effect of the shot, I asked her to come and look at Chris. She felt his pulse and called for another nurse to take his blood pressure. Chris threw up (I had the bowl ready, wise mother) and his body broke out in a red rash all over. One nurse ran to call Dr Foster who came right away. By then his blood pressure improved a little and slowly his skin lost the red color, his face stayed white, however.

## **Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg)**

At about 2:30pm, they rolled his bed into the cast room on 3rd floor. Dr Foster and his crew of men took the leg out of traction and put it in a cast (or vice versa) leaving the pin in the shin bone. It took almost one hour. After that, x-rays, and back to the room where Chris tried to sleep. A lot of people came by to congratulate him to his cast, but he was only half awake. At 7pm in the evening he woke up nauseated and with a headache. He threw up his 2 Midrin 100 capsules and also the pill that was supposed to calm down his stomach.

So I pulled his bed close to the window and opened it wide. The fresh air seemed to help more than anything else. I stayed until almost 9pm.

I hope that he has a peaceful night. All that smoking in there!

A lot of people got interested in Chris, some say they can't stand him because he talks too smart and other enjoy arguing with him. Some stop by to look at him because they have heard about him. One of the medics talked three girls (12, 16, 18) into visiting with him. What excitement in the room.

### **Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg) Fri 7July78**

Today the pin was taken out of the leg (without any anesthesia). The hole is covered up with thick layers of something and then plastered over.

Tonight Chris got into enormous pajama pants and Frank lifted him into a wheelchair. What joy! Chris rolled himself up and down the hall.

The cast is very heavy. Leg exercises hurt his leg, especially his knee.

### **Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg) Sat 8July78**

In the wheelchair again, then a long afternoon nap. He hadn't slept much last night because his cast kept pinching his private parts.

Dr Foster is leaving for the States, so Dr Baily is taking over.

### **Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg) Mon 10July78**

In the afternoon Chris wheeled himself to the PT (Physical Therapy) department. There he was fitted with crutches, put on his left shoe with two heels under the sole, and started to WALK. He was shaking a little, but he walked. It must have been an act requiring great inner strength and concentration. After all these weeks in bed he had enough strength to keep himself up thanks to the exercising he had done.

## Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg)

### **Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg) Tue 11July78**

Finally the weather is nice again. Two minutes of sunshine on Chris' toes bothered him. PT twice a day tires him out plus he does not sleep properly at night.

### **Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg) Thu 13July78**

Chris can't sleep during the night. Walking on crutches is a tremendous strain on his strength. He is sore under the arms. He looks extremely pale and must have lost some weight during the last few days. He does not walk much, two or three minutes tire him out.

### **Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg) Fri 21July78**

Dr Baily, who is taking Chris' case over since Dr Foster had to leave, had some x-rays taken and decided to let Chris leave the hospital, but with the knee joint in locked position. We are to come back in about four weeks. We spent the rest of the afternoon getting the paperwork processed.

Made reservations for the night at the "Amelia Earhart" hotel. Visited Ini for coffee and cake (and beer for Chris) and to Mischi for supper, where we met their French friends Garard and Christine.

All that was a little too much for Chris.

### **Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg) Sat 22July78**

Drove to Bad Salzuflen. Since President Carter was speaking to troops in Wiesbaden Air Base traffic was bad.

Onkel Erich was not at home, so we spent the night at Margret's penthouse.

### **Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg) Wed 2Aug78**

We drove back to Wiesbaden from Bad Salzuflen and went straight to the Orthopedic Clinic and asked Dr Bailey if he could undo the knee lock. He obliged and asked us to come back in early September. At that time he'll take off the cast and see if it can stay off.

### **Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg) 6th to 17th Aug78**

Trip to Austria, Kuchl. Chris can't bend his knee too well, 45 degree after a few days of painful exercise. Nevertheless he climbs mountains with it. He worked his way from the Kihlsteinhaus (Hitler's Teehaus) to the cross on the peak.

## Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg)

We went to Herren Chiemsee, Salzburger Marionetten theater (Zamberflöte), Tante and Onkel von Engelmann, Hochalpenstraße and Tauerntunnel, Königsee, e.a.

### **Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg) Fri 18Aug78**

We had an old, uncanceled appointment with Dr Roybal, a new orthopedic surgeon. He had the leg x-rayed once more and decided that we should return to Saudi Arabia with the cast and come back to Wiesbaden in October at which time Chris has to be hospitalized to have the cast removed and to have PT.

We'll fly on the 24th of August, with Lufthansa. Hans is going to try to fly space available.

### **Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg) Wed 23Aug 78**

Hans managed to catch a flight out of Ramstein at 5:45am.

The knee can bend 71 degrees after 3 session.

### **Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg) Thu 24Aug 78**

If things work out okay, we'll catch the Lufthansa flight around noon. Yesterday on our way to PT, there was a loud crack in the knee area. It turned out (as we found out after worrying visits to the Orthopedic Clinic, the brace shop and back and forth) that something in the metal part of the knee brace had broken off. They had to saw off the brace and plaster on a new one.

We are looking forward to going "back home" to Saudi Arabia. We hope that nothing happens to the leg or cast while we are so far from proper medical facilities. I hope that heat doesn't make his leg itch too much.

### **Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg) Tue 12Sep 78**

Chris started school again. He is catching the bus around 7am.

Chris is very apprehensive about what the other kids say about him when they see him with the cast. He is afraid they might make fun of him. He made sure his clothes looked as smart as possible. He had trouble carrying his lunch box and all the books he has to return from last year.

He jokes a lot about his leg smelling so bad because he thinks people notice it anyhow. The knee joint broke again which makes walking dangerous.

## Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg)

### **Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg) Sun 17Sep 78**

We are scheduling a flight (medi-vac) to Wiesbaden for around the 30th of September. The cast is such a nuisance, such a handicap.

Chris can't do his bending exercises because there is a swelling under his knee. He can hardly bend his knee 90 degrees. I hope everything is okay. I also hope his leg grows like the left leg. I hope my impression is deceiving. This is such a vital age for growth and I am sure the left leg has grown since May.

### **Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg) Wed 20Sep 78**

We have a cat called Danny who sneezes all the time. Took him into our home from Hermann and Miranda when they left. The cat has one ear almost bitten off.

I wrote to Ini that we'll be arriving around the 30th. Wrote that most likely we'll stay at the Amelia Earhart Hotel (for insurance purposes). Living with relatives is nice for a few days but after a while one feels like a burden, no matter how nice they are. Nowadays nobody is really equipped to live in company with guestroom etc.

If we get there on Saturday, they won't take the cast off until Monday as the earliest.

### **Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg) Fri 22Sep 78**

Chris is going on his own to the Rec Center once in a while. He went to the Disco night for teenagers last Wednesday, but he came back very depressed. He felt so left out. He had a bad headache on Thursday. (He had one on the 24th of August before, that 4 weeks interval).

Those bus trips to the Rec Center are kind of dangerous because the 'flying coffin' drivers often start moving before people are safely on or off. But Chris has to socialize to stay sane. He has been alone too much during the summer.

### **Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg) Sat 30Sep 78**

Chris and I are going to fly to Germany today. Chris has counted the days lately.

Flight cancelled, engine trouble in Tehran.

## Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg)

### **Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg) Sun 1Oct 78**

We are a USMTM once more. The plane is scheduled to leave shortly before 12 noon.

### **Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg) Mon 2Oct 78**

We went to the Orthopedic Clinic. Dr Roybal has x-rays done and then the cast removed. Thick layers of dead skin hung around the leg. The hole in the lower leg had healed well. It itched terribly. After Chris was admitted to the ward as an in-patient. We put him in a bathtub for half an hour to relieve the itching and to get some of that skin off.

Chris can't use his leg at this point. He has to have intensive physical therapy twice a day.

Dr Roybal says it is too early to predict the ultimate outcome or effect of the break but he says it looks fine.

I am staying at the Amelia Earhart Hotel.

### **Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg) Thu 12Oct 78**

Tonight we are scheduled to fly back to Saudi Arabia by MAC Medivac. Chris is still on crutches and has to use them until he can lift 15 pounds with his leg. He'll leave the hospital as a litter patient according to AF regulations.

We have to return to the Hospital in 6 weeks for another check-up and possible PT.

### **Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg) Fri 27Oct 78**

Yesterday RSAF Captain Jussef with or for whom Hans works, asked Hans about Chris and the leg. Hans mentioned the need for physical therapy and our desire to get another orthopedic surgeon's opinion. Captain Jussef promised to speak to Prince Turki.

This morning Hans and Chris meet with Captain Jussef who took them to the General in Command of the RSAF hospital where RSAF members, their dependents and local royalties are taken.

The General arranged for Chris to be seen by the two orthopedic surgeons in the hospital. They had x-rays taken, not only of the leg but also of the spine. They examined him carefully and ordered infra-red treatment and physical therapy three times a week and said he should put layers of soles in his right shoe to make up for



## Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg)

the 2 cm that the leg is shorter because the spine shows a tendency to curb due to the limping.

### **Der Beinbruch (The Broken Leg) Fri 8Dec 78**

Hans and Chris are on their way to Germany again, by Air Force Medivac which left a day earlier than scheduled because the usual trip to Tehran was cancelled due to riots there.

Most likely Chris will be an outpatient only. They plan on returning on a commercial flight on Thursday, 14th December. Hans "medivac accompanying leave" or something like that, 5 days off with pay.

They left on Friday, the plane was re-routed to land in riot torn Teheran and picked up a load of children and women (American military dependents) to evacuate them. They spent the night in Adasso Turkey, then to Wiesbaden.

## **Public Morality**

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has a Directorate General of Public Morality in the Eastern Province. Circulars or letters would be sent to the private companies (such as Northrop) warning about public morality issues.

Dated: 22 March 1978 (Saudi Arabia date 13 Rabi' II 1398H)

Circular to all private companies and establishments

Manager, Government Relations

Northrop, Al Khobar

Please impart the following to your employees and workmen, as well as the companies working for you:

1. Shops dealing with public in public markets may not be open during prayer times.....
2. Some foreigners wearing short trousers, long hair and moustaches of various styles and many foreign women wearing short and tight clothes were seen in the market which violates Islamic Ethics....

Please notify your employees and workmen, as well as the companies working for you, of the foregoing. Violators shall expose themselves to insult and punitive action.

With King regards,

Dated: 8 May 1979 (Saudi Arabia date 23/6/99Hejra)

Number: 3/1/4/227

In the Name of God the All-Merciful and Compassionate.

Subject: Re Observations made by the Director-General of Guidance  
Propaganda Casuistry and Scientific Research Admin.

## Public Morality

We received letter dated 23/6/99Hejra ....., concerning the observations made by some brethren regarding abominations that have recently become widespread in our society and which may be summed up thus:

1. Foreign women of various nationalities going shopping in unsuitable dress, their eating in public places, etc.
2. Christians' display of their cross, wearing it around their neck.
3. The playing of noisy music and shameless western songs in some shops like the supermarket. These take interest in dog food and sell it.
4. The use of foreign names like supermarket, Noram, Reema etc.
5. Gathering in front of mosques and shops at prayers time to instigate the people to quit praying.
6. Non-existence of centers in some districts and markets like Forzazdak Palms Street, Officers Quarter and other new districts like Al Salimania, Al Nassim, to mention a few.
7. Korean workers' knocking the doors of families during working hours on the pretext of asking for water while entertaining bad intentions at times.
8. Nonchalant neglect of performance of prayers by persons living in the neighborhood of mosques.

His Highness requests immediate action be taken to eliminate any abominations and preclude any action that is incompatible with our gracious faith. We have been asked to follow this up. As such phenomena constitute a departure from our traditions and customs and gracious Islamic values, expatriates being mainly responsible, it would be appreciated if you would advise all your employees that they should abide by the religious teachings and worth customs observed by the citizens of the Kingdom, the dictates of our Orthodox religion. We on our part will take all necessary precautions to prevent their occurrence, so that nobody would be taken unawares.

Request you advise all your companies and contractors to comply with the above. End.

General Othman Al Hamid Chief of General Staff

### **Corporal Punishment and Shari'a Law**

A letter from the Embassy of the United States of America, Jidda

Dated: December 17, 1979

The Embassy has learned that the special consideration often shown in the past to non-Muslims convicted of crimes for which Shari'a law specifies corporal punishment will no longer be granted. The policy of the Government of Saudi Arabia is to treat all residents - - whether Muslim or non-Muslim - - equally under the law and custom of the Kingdom, and those sentenced to corporal punishment can expect the sentence to be carried out.

The American community generally, and employers of larger numbers of Americans particularly, should note this policy and its implications. Shari'a law specifies the administration of strokes, or lashes, for a number of offenses which would not be so seriously regarded under the law in the United States. These offenses include the manufacture, sale or consumption of alcoholic beverages. Additionally, while not specifically treated in the Shari'a, corporal punishment, along with imprisonment, is generally decreed for offenses involving narcotics.

I urge employers to impress upon present and prospective employees that punishments prescribed under the law of the Kingdom should be anticipated and, once such sentences are imposed, it will probably be impossible to have the punishment waived as in the past.

Sincerely, John C West, Ambassador

### **Telex Newsfeeds from 21Nov1979-31Nov1979**

A common method of receiving news was to read the telex feeds. These are from Northrop Hawthorn A, in November 1979

ALK 0004 14:05PST 11/21/79

TLX 664493 NORTH RP HWTH A

NEWS AT 7:30AM EST 11-21

A WILD SCENE TODAY IN THE TWIN CITIES OF ISLAMABAD AND RAWALPINDI, PAKISTAN. SCREAMING MOBS APPARENTLY BLAMING THE UNITED STATES FOR THE TAKEOVER OF ISLAM'S GRAND MOSQUE IN MECCA STORMED THE U.S. EMBASSY, AN AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTER AND AN AMERICAN EXPRESS OFFICE.

DETAILS REMAIN SKETCHY, BUT IT APPEARS THE CULTURAL CENTER AND THE AMERICAN EXPRESS OFFICE WERE BURNED. SHOOTING WAS REPORTED AT THE EMBASSY AND THE PALESTINIAN NEWS AGENCY Wafa says at least one American was wounded, but those reports have not been confirmed.

IN MECCA, SAUDI ARABIAN TROOPS REPORTEDLY HAVE OUSTED MOSLEM GUNMEN WHO TOOK OVER ONE OF ISLAM'S HOLIEST SHRINES. HOSTAGES WHO WERE BEING HELD AT THE GRAND MOSQUE REPORTEDLY HAVE BEEN FREED, BUT IT'S NOT YET KNOWN WHETHER ANYONE WAS KILLED OR WOUNDED DURING THE TAKEOVER.

IN TEHRAN, HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF IRANIANS FILLED THE STREETS AROUND THE OCCUPIED U.S. EMBASSY IN A HUGE ANTI-AMERICAN DEMONSTRATION, THE LARGEST PROTEST SINCE THE SHAH WAS TOPPLED LAST FEBRUARY.

UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL VIA WESTERN UNION

AAA DETAILED REPORT ... ISLAMIC MOBS ATTACK AMERICAN BUILDINGS IN THE TWIN PAKISTANI CITIES OF RAWALPINDI AND ISLAMABAD...11-21

(RAWALPINDI, PAKISTAN) -- SCREAMING MOBS OF ISLAMIC MILITANTS CHANTING DOWN WITH THE DOG CARTER TODAY ATTACKED THE U.S. EMBASSY IN ISLAMABAD AND BURNED THE

AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTER AND AMERICAN EXPRESS OFFICE IN NEARBY RAWALPINDI.

THE MOBS, PROTESTING THE SEIZURE OF THE GRAND MOSQUE IN MECCA, BATTLED PAKISTANI TROOPS AROUND THE EMBASSY IN ISLAMABAD AND SET FIRE TO THE BUILDINGS IN RAWALPINDI, REPORTS SAID.

THE PALESTINIAN NEWS AGENCY WAFA IN TEHRAN, IRAN, SAID THAT ONE AMERICAN WAS WOUNDED AT THE EMBASSY.

IN WASHINGTON, STATE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN JACK TUOHEY SAID, ALL WE'VE GOT IS THERE WAS AN ATTACK BY A MOB. WE DON'T HAVE A NUMBER, AND IT'S BEING DISPERSED BY THE PAKISTANI MILITARY.

TUOHEY DID NOT KNOW HOW FAR INTO EMBASSY COMPOUND THE MOB GOT, OR IF THEY GOT INTO THE EMBASSY BUILDING, OR IF ANY U.S. MARINES WERE INVOLVED IN THE FIGHTING.

THE STUDENTS AT THE CULTURAL CENTER PUT UP A POSTER SHOWING IRANIAN ISLAMIC LEADER AYATOLLAH RUHOLLAH KHOMEINI WITH PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION CHIEF YASSER ARAFAT IN FRONT OF THE BUILDING WHILE SECTIONS OF IT WERE STILL ON FIRE, WAFA SAID IN A DISPATCH PHONED TO THE UPI TEHRAN OFFICE.

THE YELLING MOBS OF MOSLEMS MADE ITS ATTACK FOLLOWING A RADIO PAKISTAN BROADCAST ON THE SEIZURE OF THE MOSQUE IN MECCA.

THE CROWD REPEATEDLY SHOUTED THAT THE OCCUPATION OF THE MOSQUE WAS AN AMERICAN CONSPIRACY, AND CHANTED DOWN WITH THE DOG CARTER.

UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL VIA WESTERN UNION

BBBB DETAILED REPORT, A STERN WARNING TO IRAN.

6:30PM EST, UPDATE 11/20/79

(WASHINGTON) -- PRESIDENT CARTER WARNED IRAN TUESDAY NOT TO PUT AMERICAN HOSTAGES ON TRIAL, AND INDICATED HE IS READY TO CONSIDER SOMETHING OTHER THAN A PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO THE DEEPENING CRISIS.

WHILE CARTER DID NOT SAY SO SPECIFICALLY, IT WAS UNDERSTOOD HE HAS REVERSED POLICY AND NOW STANDS READY TO USE MILITARY FORCE IF NECESSARY TO FREE THE REMAINING 49 HOSTAGES FROM THEIR 17 DAY LONG ORDEAL.

CARTER SAID IN A STATEMENT THAT IF IRAN PUTS THE HOSTAGES ON TRIAL, THIS WOULD BE A FLAGRANT VIOLATION OF INTERNATIONAL LAW ... AND THE GOVERNMENT OF IRAN WOULD BEAR FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR ANY ENSUING CONSEQUENCES.

THE UNITED STATES IS SEEKING EVERY PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO THIS PROBLEM THROUGH THE UNITED NATIONS AND EVERY OTHER AVAILABLE CHANNEL. THE STATEMENT SAID. THIS IS FAR PREFERABLE TO THE OTHER REMEDIES AVAILABLE TO THE UNITED STATES. SUCH REMEDIES ARE EXPLICITLY AVAILABLE TO THE UNITED NATIONS. THE GOVERNMENT OF IRAN MUST RECOGNIZE THE GRAVITY OF THE SITUATION IT HAS CREATED.

THE STATEMENT WAS ISSUED SHORTLY AFTER CARTER RETURNED TO WASHINGTON FROM CAMP DAVID FOR TALKS WITH HIS TOP-LEVEL FOREIGN POLICY ADVISERS ON HOW TO DEAL WITH THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN IRAN. HE FLEW BACK TO THE RETREAT AFTER THE 90-MINUTE SESSION.

UNTIL NOW, THE WHITE HOUSE HAS SAID REPEATEDLY THE UNITED STATES WOULD NOT USE MILITARY FORCE AGAINST IRAN TO END THE HOSTAGE CRISIS.

BUT AYATOLLAH RUHOLLAH KHOMEINI THREATENED TUESDAY THAT HE MAY PUT THE REMAINING HOSTAGES ON TRIAL IN HIS REVOLUTIONARY COURTS. MANY IRANIANS HAVE BEEN EXECUTED AFTER SUCH TRIALS.

IT WAS UNDERSTOOD THE UNITED STATES COULD TAKE MILITARY ACTION AGAINST IRAN AND JUSTIFY IT UNDER THE UNITED NATIONS CHARTER, WHICH RECOGNIZES THE INHERENT RIGHT OF SELF DEFENSE OF ALL MEMBER NATIONS.

THE CHARTER ALSO SAYS A NATION CAN TAKE APPROPRIATE ACTION BY LAND, SEA OR AIR FORCES IN SELF DEFENSE.

THE WHITE HOUSE GAVE NO DETAILS OF WHAT TYPE OF MILITARY STRIKE MIGHT BE CONSIDERED OR WHAT ACTION BY IRAN MIGHT TRIGGER IT.

THE CLAUSE IN THE U.N. CHARTER CARTER REFERRED TO IN HIS STATEMENT WAS CHAPTER VII, ARTICLE 51:

NOTHING IN THE PRESENT CHARTER SHALL IMPAIR THE INHERENT RIGHT OF INDIVIDUAL OR COLLECTIVE SELF-DEFENSE IF AN ARMED ATTACK OCCURS AGAINST A MEMBER OF THE UNITED NATIONS, UNTIL THE SECURITY COUNCIL HAS TAKEN MEASURES TO MAINTAIN INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY.

MEASURES TAKEN BY MEMBERS IN THE EXERCISE OF THIS RIGHT OF SELF-DEFENSE SHALL BE IMMEDIATELY REPORTED TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL AND SHALL NOT IN ANY WAY AFFECT THE AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL ... TO TAKE AT ANY TIME SUCH ACTION AS IT DEEMS NECESSARY IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN OR RESTORE INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY.

UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL VIA WESTERN UNION

SPECIAL REPORT ... SAUDI TROOPS REPORTED TO HAVE OUSTED A GROUP OF MEN WHO SEIZED MOSLEM'S HOLIEST SHRINE AT MECCA...11-21

(RIYADH, SAUDI ARABIA) THE KUWAITI NEWS AGENCY QUOTED GOVERNMENT SOURCES IN KUWAIT TODAY AS SAYING SAUDI TROOPS STORMED THE GRAND MOSQUE IN MECCA, DISLODGING A GROUP OF ARMED MEN AND FREEING THE HOSTAGES THEY HELD.

THE AGENCY GAVE NO DETAILS OF THE ARMY ATTACK ON THE MOSLEM SHRINE, BUT SAID THE SITUATION AT THE GRAND MOSQUE AND CITY OF MECCAS IS NOW NORMAL.

QUOTING KUWAITI FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS, THE KUWAITI NEWS AGENCY SAID, SAUDI SECURITY FORCES STORMED



THE AL MASJID AL HARAM (GRAND MOSQUE) IN MECCA AND NEUTRALIZED THE MOSLEM FANATICS THAT HAD OCCUPIED THE HOUSE OF WORSHIP DURING PRAYERS YESTERDAY.

THE NEWSPAPER AL QABAS SAID CROWN PRINCE FAHD PERSONALLY ORDERED THE MILITARY ATTACK AGAINST THE MOSQUE'S OCCUPIERS. PRINCE FAHD IS IN TUNIS FOR THE ARAB LEQQUE SUMMIT CONFERENCE.

SAUDI ARABIA BRIEFLY CUT COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD YESTERDAY AND THERE WERE CONFLICTIN REPORTS ABOUT THE INCIDENT. ONE UNOFFICIAL REPORT SAID A CURFEW WAS IN EFFECT IN MECCA, A CITY WHERE ONLY MOSLEMS ARE ALLOWED, AND NO ONE WAS ALLOWED TO LEAVE OR ENTER ISLAM'S HOLIEST CITY.

MINISTRY SAID, A GR THE ISLAMIC FAITH HAVE SEIZED THE OPPORTUNITY OF THE EARLY MORNING PRAYERS ON TUESDAY TO INFILTRATE THE HOLY MOSQUE OF MECCA ARMED WITH WEAPONS AND AMMUNITION.

THE IDENTITY OR AFFILIATION OF THE INVADERS WAS NOT IMMEDIATELY KNOWN.

UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL VIA WESTERN UNION

NEWS AT 7:30AM EST 11-23

THE 49 AMERICANS AT THE US EMBASSY IN IRAN ARE IN THEIR 20TH DAY AS HOSTAGES OF MOSLEM MILITANTS. THEY FACED AN INCREASED THREAT OF BEING TRIED AS SPIES IN ISLAMIC COURTS. (FOR DETAILS, AAAA)

SAUDI ARABIA SAYS ITS TROOPS ARE NOW IN COMPLETE CONTROL OF THE MOSLEM MOSQUE IN THE CITY OF MECCA THAT WAS TAKEN OVER BY ARMED GUNMEN THREE DAYS AGO.

A REPORT IN THE WALL STREET JOURNAL TODAY SAYS A CONFIDENTIAL WHITE HOUSE ANALYSIS ACCUSES A FEW BIG COMPANIES OF DRIVING UP DOMESTIC OIL PRICES BY MANIPULATING THE WORLD OIL MARKET.

OIL EXPERT DAN LUNDBERG WARNED IN LOS ANGELES THAT THE IRANIAN OIL EMBARGO COULD CAUSE A GASOLINE SHORTAGE WORSE THAN THAT EXPERIENCED LAST SPRING.

THE DOLLAR RECOVERED A FRACTION ON THE EUROPEAN MONEY MARKETS TODAY BUT THE UNDERLYING TONE WAS STILL NERVOUS AND UNCERTAIN BECAUSE OF THE CONTINUING TENSION IN IRAN.

UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL VIA WESTERN UNION

AAAA DETAILED REPORT...IRAN'S MOSLEM LEADER

THREATENS DEATH FOR AMERICAN HOSTAGES SHOULD THE US MOVE TO FREE THEM THROUGH MILITARY ACTION...11-23

(TEHRAN, IRAN)---FORTY-NINE AMERICAN HOSTAGES IN THE US EMBASSY SPENT A BLEAK THANKSGIVING THREATENED WITH DEATH BY AYATOLLAH RUHOLLAH KHOMEINI IF THE UNITED STATES SENDS PARACHUTISTS TO BREAK THE 20-DAY SIEGE AT THE DIPLOMATIC COMPOUND.

KHOMEINI, IRAN'S ACKNOWLEDGED LEADER, ALSO CHOSE THE AMERICAN THANKSGIVING DAY HOLIDAY TO APPEAL TO ISLAMIC LEADERS TO REPUDIATE THE UNITED STATES AND EXPEL THIS CORRUPT GERM FROM HISTORY.

KHOMEINI WARNED THE UNITED STATES AGAINST RESORTING TO MILITARY ACTION, SAYING HE COULD NOT CONTROL THE PROUD STUDENTS AT THE EMBASSY WHO HAVE THREATENED TO BLOW UP THE COMPOUND IF THE UNITED STATES MAKES THE MISTAK, AND PEOPLE SEE THEM COMING, SEE THEIR PARACHUTISTS COMING ... WE SHALL KILL ALL OF THEM (THE HOSTAGES), HE TOLD 120 PAKISTANI OFFICERS IN A SPEECH AT HIS HEADQUARTER IN QOM. EVEN IF WE GET KILLED, WE SHALL KILL THEM.

IN PARIS, REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL MEMBER SADEGH GHOTB-ZADER WAS QUOTED TODAY IN THE FRENCH LEFT-WING NEWSPAPER LA LIBERATION AS SAYING THE HOSTAGES WILL STAND TRIAL ON CHARGES OF SPYING AND THAT HTOSE WHO ARE FOUND INNOCENT WILL BE RELEASED. THE GUILTY WILL BE PUNISHED.

HE SAID THERE WILL BE A COURT CASE. THAT DECISION IS DEFINITE.

IRAN'S STATE RADIO REPORTED THAT ALL IRANIAN NAVY UNITS WERE ON FULL ALERT IN THE PERSIAN BULF TO CONFRONT AMERICAN WARSHIPS REPORTED HEADING IN THAT DIRECTION.

UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL VIA WESTERN UNION

BBBB DETAILED REPORT, MOSLEMS ATTACH US EMBASSY IN PAKISTAN 1:30PM EST UPDATE 11-31-79

(ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN) -- A SCREAMING MOSLEM MOB STOREND THE US EMBASSY TODAY, KILLING ONE MARINE, BUT PAKISTANI TROOPS RESCUED ABOUT 100 AMERICANS TRAPPED BRIEFLY IN A THIRD FLOOR VAULT.

OTHER MOBS OF ANIT-AMERICAN MOSLEM MILITANTS, ENRAGED BY REPORTS OF THE SEIZURE OF THE GRAND MOSQUE IN MECCA, SAUDI ARABIA, BURNED TWO US BUILDINGS IN NEARBY RAWALPINDI, ATTACKED THE US CONSULATE IN KARACHI AND RAN RIOT THROUGH THE CITY OF LAHORE.

A STATE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN IN WASHINGTON SAID THE ATTACKING MOB SET FIRES INSIDE THE US EMBASSY COMPOUND AND THE AMERICANS INSIDE RETREATED TO A VAULT -- ACTUALLY A LARGE ROOM -- LOCATED ON THE THIRD FLOOR.

PAKSTANI TROOPS BATTLED THEIR WAY INTO THE COMPOUND AND CHASED THE INVADERS FROM THE ROOF. THE STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL SAID THERE WERE ABOUT 100 AMERICANS INSIDE AND ALL WERE EVACUATED THROUGH THE ROOF AND WERE ESCORTED BY THE PAKISTANI FORCES TO THE BRITISH EMBASSY.

DEPUTY STATE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN TOM RESTON SAID THE EVACUATED AMERICANS ARE IN GOOD CONDITION AND THAT THE ONLY CASUALTY OF THE SIX-HOUR SIEGE WAS A US MARINE GUARD FATALLY WOUNDED IN THE MOB ATTACK.

THE DEAD MARINE WAS IDENTIFIED AS CPL. STEVEN CROWLEY OF PORT JEFFERSON NY.

RESTON ALSO SAID THE AMERICAN SCHOOL IN ISLAMABAD WAS EVACUATED. THE CHILDREN ARE BEING HOUSED WITH SOME OTHER FOREIGNERS, HE SAID.

HE SAID THE AMERICAN CENTER IN LAHORE WAS BURNED AND THE AMERICAN CONSULATE IN LAHORE WAS SACKED. AMERICAN OFFICIALS AT THE CONSULATE WERE EVACUATED UNDER POLICE GUARD.

THERE ARE NOT FURTHER AMERICAN CASUALTIES ANYWHERE IN PAKISTAN, RESTON SAID. THE ATTACKERS AT THE ISLAMABAD EMBASSY, BATTLING PAKISTANI TROOPS AND CHANGING DOWN WITH THE DOG CARTER, WERE INFURIATED BY NEWS OF THE SEIZURE OF THE GRAND MOSQUE IN MECCA, CHARGING IT WAS THE RESULT OF AN AMERICAN CONSPIRACY.

UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL VIA WESTERN UNION

SPECIAL REPORT...A REPORT THAT A WHITE HOUSE ANALYSIS FINDS SOME OIL FIRMS MANIPULATING OIL PRICES ON WORLD MARKETS, LEADING TO HIGHER PRICES IN THE US...11-23

(WASHINGTON) -- A CONFIDENTIAL WHITE HOUSE ANALYSIS CONCLUDED THAT A HANDFUL OF BIG COMPANIES ARE PUSHING UP OIL PRICES IN AMERICA BY EXERCISING GREAT LEVERAGE OVER WORLD MARKETS, IT WAS REPORTED TODAY.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL SAID THE ANALYSIS, PREPARED BY INFLATION ADVISER ALFRED KAHN'S STAFF, SUGGESTS THREE POSSIBLE ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT:

--CHANGING THE FEDERAL OIL PRICE AND ALLOCATION SYSTEM TO PENALIZE THESE COMPANIES;

--JOINING WITH OTHER COUNTRIES TO CONTROL THE SPOT-OIL MARKET;

--ESTABLISHING THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AS THE DIRECT IMPORTER OF OIL TO THE UNITED STATES.

THE NEWSPAPER SAID THE REPORT RECOMMENDS TRYING TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE MAJOR OIL COMPANIES FOR A VOLUNTARY

## Loose Thoughts

LESSENING OF THEIR MARKET CONTROL BEFORE TAKING ANY OF THESE STEPS. BUT IT ALSO CALLS FOR TIGHTENING THE CURRENT PRICE GUIDELINES ON HEATING OIL, GASOLINE AND DIESEL FUEL.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL SAID THE STUDY, ENTITLED INFLATION IN ENERGY AND CHIEFLY WRITTEN BY ENERGY ADVISER TERRENCE O'ROURKE, IS PART OF KAHN'S CURRENT INVESTIGATION OF THE OIL INDUSTRY'S RECORD THIRD-QUARTER PROFITS.

ITS MAJOR THESIS IS THAT CURRENT FEDERAL PRICE GUIDELINES ARE UNABLE TO LOWER OIL PRICES BECAUSE THE BIGGEST COMPANIES HAVE CREATED CONDITOINS ABROAD THAT RAISED DOMESTIC PRICES, IT SAID.

UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL VIA WESTERN UNION

## Loose Thoughts

These are excerpts from notes in a folder. Many were written while in Saudi Arabia. Some are diary like entries and are factual. Others are based on an actual event but the company name (Mc Peace for Northrop) and people names have been changed. These were probably intended as notes for future newspaper articles or short stories.

## Mikka Incident

The Milka incident took a long time to wear off. One adjusts to unsettling circumstances, though. Instead, dozing from one day to the next one begins each morning with a little more anticipation, the body's cells stay more alert, the mind wakes up.

I blamed it on the circumstances, that I was overcome by this desire to do something, wicked and provocative. Had I been 17 that day, I would have wriggled into my tightest sweater to confuse my physics teacher, had I been 19, I would have told my history professor that George Washington was a Nazi because

## Little Pink Dress

he was an enemy of Great Britain just like Hitler. But I was more than twice that age and had no teacher handy. I couldn't even let it out on my husband because he had left for work at five that morning. There was only one shocking thing to do, I could wear a leveled knee long dress to work. Given the political circumstances it might cause an international incident or keep Joey from criticize my typos or the manager of personnel might decide that I was not appropriately dressed for work and take me home in a company car.

## Little Pink Dress

Length of dress was of major concern, especially when out in public. Usually when in the compounds, buses, and American buildings, most women wore the same business outfits usually worn in an American office. But if an unplanned event occurred and you were caught outside of these secure areas, there could be consequences.

The guard at the cantonment gate gave me a disapproving stare as I waited for the 6:15am bus. Ten minutes later he told me that the bus had come earlier today and left at 6:10am. That meant I had to thumb a ride with one of the American guys from the cantonment driving to Bldg 07. Most of them were not too happy to be seen with somebody else's wife in a vehicle because it was considered immoral and could lead to a nasty confrontation with the religious police.

I felt like a lighthouse in my little pink dress on the street corner. Good old Mohammed stopped, through. He was a chauffeur and had picked up several wives of active duty Airmen, who were provided with Limousine service.

In Bldg 07 nobody seemed to notice my shockingly short outfit. In fact, most secretaries in the Air Force department were, as usual, dressed in the same style I was, but there was one difference: They were secure in their little American on the 4th floor, while I had to weather the elements, complete with several hundred eyes, on occasion like walking eight blocks to the dining all for lunch, if I couldn't catch the bus in time, or 'hopping over' to the McPeace travel department 2 blocks to the left and 3 blocks to the right.

Although I welcomed every excuse that got me away from the typewriter, I didn't like to be sent out into the streets on errands like that. It was simply poor public relations in a place and time where men were literally in the streets fighting for their right to insist that a woman's place is in the home. However, a Public

Thanks for your courage, Anwar

Representative is there for public relations if it stood for good public relation (GPR) we would know it as GPR.

### **Thanks for your courage, Anwar**

This event actually did occur to Helga. The names have been changed to her favorites. Anwar's could have received extreme punishment for driving Helga home, because he had a woman in the car that was not his wife or family member. A religious taboo.

It was the day of the month for the McPeace Corporation Wives Club Luncheon in the new Recreation Building in one of the compounds. Non-working wives would travel there by the company's flying coffins, Air Force wives and those of upper management would be chauffeured to the affair, and the working wives were supposed to be given a few hours off with pay and provided with a school bus. The school bus did not always come, and sometimes it came to take the women to the luncheon and then left for good and we women had no way to get back to the office which no boss would ever take for an excuse.

On this luncheon day in January 1980, the bus arrived in time, and left without me. My boss, Billy Bell was expecting a visitor of importance, a Saudi supplier of local and imported chicken and produce. It was a rare occasion when a Saudi supplier came to the McPeace Corporation Administrative Building. Usually the buyers would go out to the Saudi's place or meet them on neutral ground. Billy was therefore quite nervous about this announced visit and wanted me around to serve coffee. I considered it most inappropriate for me to serve coffee during a business meeting with a Saudi. Firstly, due to the knee length shortness of my dress and secondly to me being a woman. My presence might embarrass the visitor, and there was Pierre who I hate to say it, could pour a cup of coffee as gracefully as I'll ever do it. But that wouldn't do for Billy. Besides, Anwar had changed the facts in his latest three travel reports again and needed them re-typed by 4pm. And anyhow, I didn't feel like sitting around with 200 or so other women oohing and aching over a Lebanese buffet. I still hadn't had my excitement for the day.

I didn't have to wait long though. The phone rang. It was Philly's, Her Majesty the Vice President's secretary.

"I saw you in the hall. Why aren't you at the luncheon?"

"Mr Bell needs me in his office this afternoon."

Thanks for your courage, Anwar

"Too bad, guess what?" she sound human. "You wouldn't believe it. Don't tell anybody. It's absolutely secret. Is Pierre listening in? I guess not. I see him in my front office. I just had a phone call from a Saudi Prince who has to remain nameless but you know whom I am talking about. He wants all women out of the building immediately. He says there might be a raid by the Mutawa's religious police."

I interrupted with, "The one who gave us permission?"

"And he can no longer defend the McPeace practice of employing women. But don't leave, this is not official, just a private warning."

"Great!" was my first reaction, "I don't want to work anyhow. Is the company providing transportation to take us home?"

"I don't think so," she whispered, "Mr. England is trying to reach the Prince and negotiate with him. So far I ..." She hung up.

Had the religious police entered her office to arrest her?

An electrifying scream came from outside. I jumped to the window and peeped through the drapes. Commotion in the yard across the street. Half a dozen men, they had slaughtered a goat, nothing unusual. I stole a quick glance down the sidewalk. I'll jump out of the window as soon as the Mutaba come through the door, I decided. With a broken foot they'll put me into a hospital rather than take me to jail.

The better solution would be to leave right away. But how? I couldn't walk home, there was no company bus going for a while, if at all, and it might not be wise to walk through the building. Maybe hide in the lady's bathroom?

I tried the phone, it was working. I tried to call my husband on the Air Base to come pick me up. But I couldn't get through, the lines were always busy as usual. Maybe he had heard the rumor of the expected raid and was on his way (it turned out he had heard the rumor but thought the guys in administration would take us home).

If only I was wearing a long dress! I finally walked into Billy's office and told him of the rumor and asked him if he could find out how I could get home before the raid. He was amused, "They like to scare the hell out of us once in a while. They won't raid us."

"But they raided several of our subcontractors?" I replied.



Thanks for your courage, Anwar

"They didn't arrest a single woman, as far as I know. And who should take you home? You are not supposed to ride in a car with anybody but your husband."

"A company chauffeur is acceptable." I said.

"You can't leave before that visit with that Saudi supplier is over. Make sure the coffee is fresh."

I retreated to my office, ears sharpened to every sound. I couldn't stand the noise I was making on the typewriter. Fear began to boil in me. The phone lines to my husband's lab were still busy. If I was arrested for working in the company of men, it was ultimately my husband who would be held responsible for it, but until the day of reckoning for him, I might be stuck in jail or mobbed by religious fanatics or heaven only knows what.

The door to our department flung open wide and to the rhythm of my racing heart beats Pierre strode in with his usually short steps" "They are finally doing the right thing," he proclaimed, "It's an absolute secret, not a word must leave this office." And beaming with satisfaction he whispered, "The Saudis insist on women to stop working for the McPeace Corporation." The female competition in the administrative assistance had long been a thorn in his eye.

For a moment though, I shared his happiness. "Great, let's hope they don't change their mind, Pierre, you know I never wanted to work here anyhow. Will you take me home real quick?"

"You know you have to serve coffee, my dear." His pleasure expressed itself in pure bile. "Besides, I'll have to take over as assistant to the vice president, of course, since even Her Majesty has to go home to her kitchen."

Every man for himself, I resolved and was just going to take the drapes off the window to serve me as a long skirt after a jump out of the window, when Anwar walked in.

"You are not supposed to know this, Helga, but I want to warn you. The mataba might raid this building looking for women. Can you call your husband to get you?" said Anwar.

"I can't get through!"

"You can't stay here."

"I can't leave!"

I have nothing to wear.

He helped himself to a can of peach nectar from the refrigerator and drank it slowly deliberately. "God will be with us. I'll take you home." he said finally.

From a nearby mosque a call for prayer went out. The mutawa might be on their knees for a while. I grabbed my purse and Anwar and I left the office. We walked through the building unseen, walked on the almost deserted street to his car. If the police did not stop us now to make sure we were married or of one family, we would soon be home safe.

And we made it. It wasn't until I had calmed myself down with half a cheese cake, that I realized the risk Anwar had taken to help me. Although he was not a Saudi, he was a Muslim, and many Saudis expected him to live according to the rules of Islam. Being found by a religious fanatic with somebody else's wife in the car he would have been punished more severely than an "infidel" Christian. Thanks for your courage, Anwar.

### **I have nothing to wear.**

Getting used to a new culture in a new countries takes time. Sometimes what we consider normal in our culture can cause problems when in another culture.

If you have nothing to wear, dear, don't leave the house and draw the curtains. This is particularly advisable in Saudi Arabia.

Cover yourself loosely from neck to toe, that's the motto. And I wish I had been told about the "loosely" before I found out the hard way, so to speak.

On my first morning in Saudi Arabia, my husband took me to the market in Dammam, a port city on the Arabian Gulf, a few miles north of our compound in Al Khobar.

"Don't wear anything sleeveless, and wear something to cover your legs," he told me before we left. I had brought long skirts, but I felt uneasy going to market dressed like a hostess for the symphony guilds annual fund raising coffee, so I slipped into my white trouser suit, very chic, the tailored look.

I am not going to mention the waves of new smells, sights and sounds that throw you about when you find yourself on a Middle Eastern market, a souk, for the first time in your life. The subject of clothes, my white trouser suit.

As soon as I stepped out of the car I felt like everybody in the Eastern Province was staring at me. And there was not one approving look coming my

I have nothing to wear.

way. I knew immediately that my pants were too tight to be decent. I wanted to ask Hans to take me home, but he had meandered over the parking lot towards narrow alleys and a hall. The place was crowded, men, only men, by the thousands. All my attention was focused on not losing Hans and Chris, yet. I tried to ignore the looks and followed Hans and Chris, as closely as I could. For a while I managed, in spite of the density of the crowd people moved aside to let me pass without coming into touch with anybody, but as we came to the part of the souk where the cloth merchants had their stands, it was just like pushing and shoving your way into the Paris Metro during rush hour. Yet, after a disbelieving glance at me, the men tried to get out of my way, a very considerate gesture, but then came this strange sensation between my legs. I turned my head "casually". A young man, a suave moustache, eyes a burning black, was following me closely, too closely. I felt his hand on my behind. In the crowd, nobody would see it, thank goodness. Then again, this chain of beads between my thighs. I saw other men slinking a row of beads similar to a rosary, around like we might play with a key chain on the way to the car. To be assaulted by prayer beads? At a crossing of alleys the crowd came to a stop. Hans and Chris were at least six bodies ahead of me. I felt something hard poke against my from behind. I couldn't move. Oh God, what to do? The intimacy, the confusion, the embarrassment - unbearable! If I turned around and told him to leave me alone, the whole town would know about it in minutes and - I was certain - blame me for provoking immoral behavior in the young men by wearing that screamingly tight suit. I didn't blame him or should I be indignant? I felt hot enough to faint. It was my first day in Saudi Arabia, I felt it was so new.

Just then my own men noticed that I was no longer with them and came back for me. The young man disappeared in obvious panic.

"Please, cover my back," I asked of my son as we mapped out a strategy to get back to our car. From then on, whenever we were in a crowd, Chris would walk half a foot behind me, although I never left the house again in tight pants.

Western men and women can solve all problems of being properly and not comfortably dressed in public with an investment of about thirty dollars: go local. A man would buy an ankle length white shirt called thobe, a white or red and white patterned piece of cloth for his head called ghutra, and an optional double folded black rubber like ring to hold the gutra in place. This black halo or igal, has the nickname fan belt. I have met a few western men in this outfit, they looked very attractive, most of them were British or German and had worked for small companies for years in parts of Saudi Arabia that were not so exposed to the onslaught of business suits as the Eastern Province coast cities.

## November 1978 Feeling unsafe

Most American men, though, wear pants and shirt. Some companies require technical personnel to buy uniform clothing for work like gray pants and white shirts, others recommend brown business suits ("so you don't see the dust" - nonsense). The Mc Peace Corporation issued a memo one November requiring "all employees" to wear coat and tie to the office for the duration of the winter months. That stirred quite an uproar among the lady secretaries. Were they to wear coat and tie, or were they considered "hired help" instead of employees? As a precaution I tied one on for the first day of the new dress code. This I mention as a warning to every unsuspecting man who goes into a third world country: take at least two coats and ties along. You never know what your corporate vice president considers best for your corporate image. Artistic types working in graphics were, of course, benevolently left in their kimonos, Roman tunics or other originals as LONG as their hair did not touch the collar.

In a well air conditioned office, coat and tie are quite ok. The business suit or coat and tie rule caused a major problem during our first two years in Al Khobar. We could find only one dry cleaner in town who was not very reliable with the quality of service. Lack of experience, unskilled labor and most likely poorly serviced machines were probably to blame rather than the good will of the owner. As a result it was wise to have your dry cleaning done in Europe or the States rather than locally. If you didn't go on leave several times a year or were lucky enough to be sent home for medical reasons or company business, you had to ask a friend who was going out of the country to take your dirty dry cleaning. By the time we left in 1980, there was reasonable dry cleaning service available in Al Khobar, at least when the shop wasn't closed. But not in all parts of the country.

## November 1978 Feeling unsafe

The turmoil in Iran and Pakistan did make many American's in Saudi Arabia worried about their safety. The lack of information and news did not help.

There had never been a day without surprises for us since we had moved to Saudi Arabia, where my husband worked for an American Aerospace company, who was training the Saudi Air Force. But since Khomeini had come to power in Iran, and since the Shah had been admitted to the US for cancer treatment, Islamic fundamentalist in that entire part of the world seemed to be more vocal and sentiments against everything American and the Western value system and against those power in the Middle East that were friendly with American like the Saudi government, were threatened.

November 1978 Feeling unsafe

But lately we had begun to feel unsafe. Rumor had it that Khomeini was working on plans to bomb the oil fields of Saudi Arabia to punish the Saudis for being too friendly with America and Western imperialism. Some of those bombs, I was sure, would certainly fall on our quarters. When I rode the company bus to the recently opened American style supermarket in Al Khobar in the late afternoon of November 20, 1979, I was a bit alarmed when Big Foot from our communication department whispered to me "The Saudi government cut off all Telex communications to the US."

"Are they taking us hostage. I heard something about Carter will help them when Iran attacks?" I asked.

"No, there was an incident in Mecca, I heard." said Big Foot, "But that's off the record. They must have said special prayers in Mecca for our hostages in the embassy in Teheran, something with hostages."

I couldn't see then what relationship that had, puzzling over the relationship between Mecca.

I shopped absentmindedly, my thoughts wandering between puzzling over Mecca and craving for having a real Tex Mex dinner on San Antonio River walk or in Austin's East 3rd Street. The sinfully expensive avocado I bought that was as close as I could come to Tex Mex cantina, but the following weeks were too confusing to crave anything but a routine day and safety.

The administration building of our company was like a bee hive the next morning. Nobody knew what had happened in Mecca but everybody had heard a rumor, and as the day went on and people contact friends in other companies, the rumors mushroomed and one had one's choice: Iran had bombed the Grand Mosque; Pakistan military type had taken 700 hostages; a Saudi Arabia tribe had taken over the city; there were 400 dead and 700 wounded; there were 700 dead pilgrims and 1 dead Prince; American Muslims had staged a protest; the hostages were taken in Mecca to cover up a coup which had taken place in Ryhad. Life around us in Al Khobar seemed normal, why, then, were we so excited about something that happened in a place none of us would ever get to? There were two reason: During the last few months American were more and more blamed often for every bit of trouble in that part of the world from the rising price for brides in the Oasis of Hofuf to the fall of the Persian Empire. The blame did not come from the Saudi Government but from...

## **Crisis in the Persian Gulf**

This article was written years later, around the time of Desert Storm in the 1990s. This new event in the Persian Gulf area brought back memories of 1979.

In those days of crisis in the Persian Gulf we all fear for the lives of our men on duty with our naval forces in that region. Having once lived in that part of the world, I often think of the civilian Americans living in the countries bordering the gulf. News of recent incident of violence in Mecca, reminded me of a similar incident in Mecca that occurred in November of 1979. My husband and I were working for an American aerospace company in Saudi Arabia and lived a short walk from the shores of the Persian Gulf in the Eastern Province. Although the events trouble in Mecca seemed to have no effect on us to the rest of the world the events in Mecca seemed to be an internal Islamic problem, the effect on our daily life, was far reaching. I am sure that our experiences in those days are being repeated in similar form whenever a new incident or crisis occurs. Looking back we can laugh about our fears and frustrations, but on the 22nd of November 1979, when Big Yapper of our company's communication department told me that there had been an incident in Mecca. The Saudi government had cut off all telex and telephone connection to the outside world, I was downright alarmed.

Ever since Khomeini had taken over Iran and since the Shah had been admitted to a hospital in the US, American were increasingly blamed where every bit of trouble from the long haired youth in the streets of Jeddah to the inflated price of brides in the Al Hassa Oasis. Not that the entire Saudi government expressed resentment towards Western influence, it was more of a subtle...

We had the nagging fear that suddenly Iran might bomb the Saudi Arabia oilfields and the American compounds to express its anger of Saudi Arabia good relations with the US. Students in Teheran had just recently taken over our embassy, and taken a lot of hostages, and we expected our president to go in there somehow and do something - anything- about it. So to an incident in Mecca, I thought, was the first Iranian attack.

"Not the Iranians," said Tom from Personnel, "I heard it was some Egyptians, they took 700 hostages in the Holy Kaaba in Mecca and killed 200 of them." The English language news on the radio mentioned a disturbance but gave no details. By noon the entire administration building was a flutter with rumors: a coup in Riyadh with 200 dead; American Muslim in Mecca protesting the Shah's presence in the US; 200 Pakistani military taking 700 hostages; 700 pilgrims and one Prince dead; 700 princes staging a coup, one dead, Shiite tribesmen friendly to Iran, taking hostages in Mecca to protest Saudi Arabia's openness to Western

## Front Yards

influence, supported by communist from South Yemen, etc. Radio and television broadcasts in English and the English language newspaper gave only vague information released by the government always followed by the statement that everything was under control and the situation would be solved shortly. No roving reporter, no cameraman in the sly.

We wouldn't have been too concerned if a memo hadn't been passed out suggesting that all American not leave town and stay indoors as much as possible. Why, when Mecca was hundreds of miles away and there were no disturbances anywhere else? My husband and I drove to the recently opened supermarket, a good place to meet people from the companies who had different rumors to tell. Pakistanis and Saudi had a fight at the local Kentucky Fried Chicken, a Pakistani plane took off from Mecca and crashed, and in Kabul the capital of Pakistan, a mob ran on the American Embassy.

## Front Yards

England: Some square yard of excuse to plant daffodils and roses.

Germany: fortification around picture of orderliness. Also, in Hessen, heap of manure.

USA: That patch of the earth that should have been mowed last week.

Saudi Arabia: The distance between a high wall and the house, a mystery filled with noises of children often guarded at the gate by a sleeping old man, once, at least, with a swimming pool and bikinied woman.

In Compound in Saudi Arabia: Community property.

1st yard only shrubs, bougainvillea, oleander, open curtains to admire the blossoms, young Indian looking in.

2nd yard: lawn, mowed and fertilized by an Afghan and his sheep.

3rd. Picnic ground and battle field for Arab neighbors family.

Soccer it to me.

### **Soccer it to me.**

This event actually happened to Helga and Hans. Again Hans' name is Siegfried.

My father was outside left for Spiel und Sport, my brother played for VFB, and as a kid I used to kick a mean ball with our neighborhood gang on the cobblestones of our street. When I saw Saudi boys play soccer on empty lots and between cars on the roads, barefoot and rolling up their long white gowns for a longer stride, I figured that somewhere there ought to be regular teams and games one could watch. However, I had been told that there was no public entertainment in this country, no movies, no live theater, no dancing, so I wasn't sure about soccer games.

I was therefore quite excited when I noticed a lot of commotion in the streets about two weeks after my arrival in the country. Little flags with green Arabic inscriptions appeared in windows, posters were pasted on houses, pick-up trucks and cars full of boys and men were chasing along shouting something and waving flags and banners, the entire population of Al Khobar seemed to be on the move up the coastal highway towards Dammam. The guard to our compound said "Football! Crazy!".

"Let's go," I suggested to Siegfried, and we went. Expecting a terrific traffic jam, we waved down a taxi which was actually already filled, but we squeezed onto top of the other riders. I had the feeling, physically, that the man I was sitting on wasn't used to having strange women descend on his lap, but the ride was short.

We all got out at a stadium surrounded by thousands of people, apparently all trying to buy tickets from a few little booths. Siegfried and I linked hands and pushed and shoved our way with the crowd.

"Don't lose me" I said to Siegfried, all the faces around me turned my way and looked amazed, then, immediately, a tiny space opened up around me and nobody pushed me, hardly anybody even touched me, with all the bodies pressuring from behind and all sides, those around me seemed to shy away from me as if I would break upon touch. I couldn't understand what they said, but it didn't sound unfriendly, although the faces were puzzled rather than delighted after all, they did have to get to the ticket booth.

I realized with the skipping of a few heart beats that I was probably the only woman at the game, at least the only one in "line" for a ticket. If there was another female human being present, I didn't see her. It was too late for me to turn into a



Soccer it to me.

mouse or to be swallowed by a hole in the ground. I felt frightfully embarrassed at my ignorance of local customs. Spectator sports were for men only, it seemed. Yet, I had just read in the Arab News (newspaper) that a man had divorced his wife because she had cheered when the husband's favorite team had lost. Maybe they showed some games on TV. I was just grateful for my wisdom of dressing "properly", long full skirt, loose long sleeved jacket, turtleneck collar top, a scarf, only my hands and face were visible. The lack of a veil revealed that I was a foreigner and probably a Christian was not expected to live completely like a virtuous Muslim woman.

Siegfried of course, was unperturbed by the situation, "You are my wife," he said, "and you go where I tell you to go." He has never admitted to being a chauvinist.

We made it into the stadium. Two goals, floodlight, bleachers. It could have been anywhere in the world. We found some empty seats on a bench half way up the bleachers, not too far from the exit.

Again, the surprised looks all around me. An older man with tailored English tweed jacket over his thobe turned around and smiled at me as if he was welcoming me, he instructed his sons or grandsons to say something friendly at me. And all through the game, when guys around me would get up and walk over, on, and climb over the benches, great care was taken by all not to bother me and, most of all, not to obstruct my view.

My obvious enjoyment of the game gave everybody great pleasure. If I had known which color the local team was wearing, I could have cheered with more confidence. I think Dammam played against Riyadh. They weren't ready for the world cup, not yet, but they knew all the tricks to keep the audience captive, including rolling around on the ground in pain and agony, as if their last misguided kick was due to an injury.

I did have a good time that night, although I did feel uneasy yet flattered at being part of the spectacle for those around me. And then without bad intentions, I did a very inconsiderate thing. A few minutes before the end of the game I said to Siegfried, "Let's go." I was a little scared of the crowd pushing to get to the cars and fighting for taxis that was inevitable after the match. There would certainly be a few people objecting to my presence, especially if the local team had lost, which I suspected from the lack of over enthusiastic cheering. So we got up - and I saw the great disappointment on the faces around me. They must have thought I left because the game was boring me, and they had been so proud of having such good

## One Good Thing . . .

entertainment to offer. As usual, I didn't realize the situation until seconds too late, when we had already left the stadium.

When the guys were streaming towards the stadium in Dammam again a few weeks later, I took out my knitting and did a few rows: knit 2, pearl 2, knit 2, pearl 2, etc, and I watched the soccer game on TV. It wasn't like the real thing, knit 2, pearl 2, knit 2 .... but I was doing the proper thing .... knit 2, pearl 2.

## One Good Thing . . .

"There is one good thing to say about living in Saudi Arabia in the seventies," said John Dow with a happy smile as he savored listening to his phone ringing. "When the phone rings, you can be sure it's not your broker with a margin call."

"That sure is a blessing," said Alec Smart, although - bless his heart - he didn't know what a margin call was.

## So You Think You are Good in Math.

Taking into account culture and religious events become an important factor in any business transaction in Saudi Arabia.

So you thcrisesink you are good in math. \$2.55 plus \$2.55 makes \$5.10, your teacher says that's wrong. It should be \$5.09. What does she know, for heaven's sake! What she knows is that in earlier calculations you rounded up from \$2.546 to \$2.55 for both numbers. So it is  $\$2.546 + \$2.546 = \$5.092$  or \$5.09 in rounded terms.

You can make all the right decisions with the best intentions and end up with embarrassing results if you don't have all the just right facts. The opportunity to goof up increases in direct proportion to the amount of foreign territory under your feet. No wonder Napoleon had to withdraw from Moscow. The Russian winter was only a rough ball park figure to him.

It is suggested to celebrate the graduation of your first class of Saudi students in your employee's English course. Everybody is looking forward to it. The manager of Training is pleased with the idea, it is good for motivation with the

## So You Think You are Good in Math.

next class. You organize a little party for the students and some top corporate and local dignitaries, maybe 30 people, maybe 40 people. You have some cakes baked, you prepare pitchers with juice and tea. No alcohol, no ham sandwiches, you are very considerate of Islamic customs. Or so you think. Before the opening speeches you realize that instead of thirty you have at least a hundred guests and possibly more on the way. Everybody seems to be bring a cousin. There will not be enough refreshments for crying out loud! You act fast, you manage to get the Lebanese baker in town on the phone. He holds his entire stock of pastries. Somebody goes by bus to pick up the pastries, and within 20 minutes there is a most delicious, colorful, attractive display of a variety of pastries. Only a few pieces are left when the party is over. But the next day, John P Bilcher, the manager of Training calls you into his office and chews you out because one of your Saudi trainees has complained about the serving of such a variety of pastries. You have, according to report, offended the democratic principles of your host society, since some of the pieces of pastry were better than others and the people first in the serving line, the dignitaries, had better refreshments than the rest. The Manager of Training is not amused. Although he himself would never have seen a connection between democracy and cream puffs, it is you who has to be blamed for damaging the image of the company in the eyes of a Saudi. And this, when, negotiation for a new contract are at a critical point. It does not look good on your record. At whom could you direct your anger, at the complaining Saudi, at the Manager of Training who did not stand up for you, or at your wife? If the Saudi had not been so lenient, he could have caused you to be sent out of the country before sunset, adds John Bilcher.

The above incident is told to show how difficult it is to do things right. Jean de la Fayette, a sheet metal man from Montreal, had gone into partnership with a Saudi businessman. They opened a little shop in the port city of Dammam, and sold and fitted sheet metal. One day Jean rang the door bell at a customer's house exactly at a pre-arranged time which happened to be the time for evening prayers that day, he had immediate feedback to his innocent ignorance; in the shape of a piqued customer, and he learned from that experience, he decided on an instant change in his visiting policies of his two man business, to include a look into the "Arab News" newspaper for the prayer schedule of the day.

Larger corporations have a more difficult time in staying in touch with reality. This problem is constantly playing in the background of every work day, as observed in the following conversation in the Company cafeteria. The McPeace Corporation set up a real maze for information exchange between the guys who developed policies and goals and the people who have to execute them in the field. I could swear some of the plans on how to teach and motivate in various skills, a

## Coming to Saudi Arabia

young Saudi recruit have been drawn up by somebody who has never left the headquarters building in Gun Valley California except for his regular trips to the synagogue. Either the subject matter was foreign territory to him or he had objective that could not be spelled out in the contract. As it was, for many Saudi soldiers the reward for doing well and achieving a high skill level turned out to be an unacceptable punishment. After successfully passing a course, the Saudi would be transferred to another city, away from family. Unacceptable! So the recruits try hard to flunk the exams so he can take your course over and over again and never successfully pass the course. But your job performance is judged by the success rate of your recruits passing the final exam.

## Coming to Saudi Arabia

This is Helga's first attempt to write down what occurred during her first entry into Saudi Arabia. This later became part of the article she wrote for the Austin's American Statesman Newspaper.

The weird pressed against me like a hot, steaming blanket when I left the Tristar on Dhahran Airport in Saudi Arabia. I could hardly breathe, but that was the least of my worries. Was I dressed properly enough? Should I have wrapped my head in a scarf? Wear a veil? (I had one in my purse). Was my blouse too tight? I should be wearing some all cotton panties instead of the lacy thing, just in case they have a body search. My long skirt was trying to trip me, and the high collar and wrist length sleeves of my blouse were strangling me. I was wearing flat heels, thank God, or thank Allah. To be sure to avoid the faintest hint of being a loose woman. After all, one had heard about the dreadful punishment for immoral behavior in those Muslim countries. And, of course, I was wearing woolen knee socks so that no ill intentional gust of wind might expose my bare leg to somebody's naked eye.

I was scared on my first arrival in Saudi Arabia in late December 1977. I assumed my behavior was going to be judged by standards I was not familiar with, and I was sure I would do all the wrong things. It was the same feeling of guilt that jerks my foot off the gas pedal every time I see a police car in my rear view mirror. It also weaken the stomach below the naval, which makes it difficult to negotiate that wobbly staircase that receives visitors at most airports.

I was fortified with 4 items I hoped would allow me acceptance in this mysterious country. The first three I carried in my hand following the advice of the company that had sent me there, my vaccination card, my marriage certificate, which, I presumed legitimized the fact that I was no longer a virgin; my certificate

## Coming to Saudi Arabia

of baptism, the use of which I could not imagine; and my 13 year old son, who was suddenly no longer my baby but a male member of the family without whom a woman in Saudi Arabia should not travel according to a fine line filler I had read in a newspaper.

With the arriving crowds we puffed towards a building. It was dark, but I could recognize a row of men in white gowns sitting on chairs on the tarmac drinking something out of little glasses. The wind played with the large pieces of cloth they had secured on their head with a black ring. They gave us an inquisitive glance. Inside the building somebody in a green uniform stood behind a podium and stamped our passports. Nobody wanted to see my certificate of vaccination, marriage, or baptism. An American looking man swam against the current of the crowd towards me, shouted: "I am your company representative," grabbed my passport and also my son's and disappeared. There I was not even through customs and already with my passport stolen or confiscated. Visions of chopped of hands kept me from shouting "thief".

And then I discovered our suitcases on the conveyer belt and saw two hairy hands pull them off. Oh no! "Don't," I shouted, "that's mine!" A toothless young man, no taller than my son, but obviously stronger, heaved the suitcases on the customs counter and smiled apologetically. He was wearing a torn t-shirt and what looked to me like a checkered tablecloth instead of pants. Oh no! This must be a porter, and I have no money to pay him! Will he cause a scene? Have me arrested? Why didn't I plan ahead for this? A bored looking man in a white gown tapped impatiently on my suitcases. "Alcohol, pork or drugs?" he asked while I fidgeted around with those stupid locks. "Oh no!" I said and stopped breathing while his nimble fingers finally dug through my things. My all cotton underwear pink and white solid panties were in clear view, but hidden among them was one creation in black lace from Frederick's of Hollywood for special occasions. Oh no! He discovered it, pushed it aside. Would the custom official judge it immoral? He didn't mind. And instead of looking into my sons suitcase, he smiled at my son and put a chalk mark on it.

That toothless young man again took our luggage and ran off. "I have no money," I shouted for everybody to hear, but he didn't understand and kept running. We followed him. What a silly thing to have to worry about; no money for a porter - for crying out loud!

But then came deliverance: in the crowd behind a rope at the top of a staircase was my husband. Nowhere in the world is a husband more appreciated than in a Saudi Arabian airport. "Without me" Hans had written in his last letter,

Y'all Come Over and Visit.

"you don't go anywhere in this country." Well, at least he would have money to pay for the porter.

This was my first arrival in Saudi Arabia, when I worried about all the wrong things. It was to be followed by many more arrivals, with many more worries about other things.

### **Y'all Come Over and Visit.**

Saudi Arabia was not like other countries, and Helga was about to learn this lesson.

When I knew I was going to live in Saudi Arabia, my imagination took off with me like a flying carpet. In my infinite ignorance I saw myself squatting regally on an oriental rug in the desert presiding over the coffee pot and a host of guests. I had told Karen from across the street, my Aunt and Uncle from Milwaukee, and my fellow teachers, "Y'all come over and visit us as soon as I am settled." What an opportunity for them to see that little known big country. I went as far as going with Karen to a travel agency to ask about the price for flight tickets and visa requirements.

"Funny you should ask," said the travel expert, "I don't know the first thing about Saudi Arabia." She had no brochures, no advertisement, in fact, she couldn't even find it on the globe.

Then, while I lived there, I realized why I had never heard of people spending their vacation in Saudi Arabia: you can't get visa unless you have a job, business negotiations, political mission or pressing family matters, waiting for you or you are on a pilgrimage to Mecca or Medina. No tourism.

Many tourists would be hard pressed to fill their days with activities: there are no churches to look at, no museums, spas, or castles and very few stores, but large outdoor markets. They feel they have to do something.

My visa was procured for me by Northrop, apparently under some sort of quota system. On the 12th of December the personnel office caller told me they had no visa for me until the following March. On the 13th of December they told me that they received a batch of visas that had to be used before the year was out. Would I please have our household ready. Which brought me into a hectic Christmas season. Later I learned that the Saudis don't usually measure time by our years and standards

## **The Breast of a Chicken**

Helga and Hans actually did visit an Oasis that had a pond for women to bath in. Always ready for an adventure, Helga tried to join the group.

I am a very modest person. I do not expose my breasts to the eyes of the public for their enjoyment or mine. Imagine my shock when I got chased by furious Saudi women one day for keeping my blouse buttoned up.

It was a warm balmy day in late April 1978, a day asking to be spent on the beach, half a mile down the road from our compound. That very morning, I had been to the beach and was the only woman to go into the water. I was starred at by hundreds of men and pierced by the unseen glances of about a dozen Saudi women who were sitting, under their veils and abaya's on a family outing - good heavens!

That afternoon we had heard from a guy about a village on an island in the Arabian Gulf north of Dammam. There was a pond with a spring where the local women can swim and where no man is allowed. That had to be investigated.

A causeway connect the island to the mainland now, so we drove right into the village. Got out of the car and felt that everybody was not only looking at us but also wondering what the heck we wanted in their village. I guess we would do the same when we see an Arab in thobe and gutra drive into Main Street in a one horse Texan town. My blouse was buttoned to my chin, my hair was covered and my skirt was dragging in the dust and my sun glasses were almost covering my entire face. We strolled around until we heard women laughing, squealing, and chattering behind a mud wall. Hans handed me the towel, "You go in and swim. Chris and I are going for a walk. We'll pick you up in half an hour."

There was no gate, just a walk through. Women of all shapes and sizes were either in or on the side of a little lake. Some were just splashing around, some were washing themselves, others were gently bathing another person's body or hair, a very affectionate, friendly scene. The pond was surrounded by high embankments from which half a dozen boys, two in the age of early puberty, were soaking in the sights. The ladies did not wear swimsuits as I had expected. Most of them wore nothing on the top and kept on their skirts on in the water. That's okay, I thought, I can keep my skirt and blouse on, it'll dry fast enough.

I had hardly taken a few timid steps toward the water when I was surrounded by hands and breasts touching me, well, that's what it felt like. Such curiosity, I had seen in Kindergarten children once on a visit to a petting zoo, and now I was the sheep. My jewelry, fake gold, all of it but very flashy, was admired and

## The Breast of a Chicken

discussed, and so were my greenish grey eyes. I couldn't understand the words, of course, but there is more to communication than words. "Take off your blouse, honey," they indicated to me. "Oh no!" I said, "now it's the blouse and next thing you know you want me to take off my bikini top. No way!" They couldn't understand the words, of course. An older woman tried to help me, she started to unbutton my sleeves. Oh Lord, I couldn't do that! There is nothing wrong with nakedness, but I am the product of my upbringing, and a private parts is a private parts, no matter how you slice it, I was not going to make my breasts exhibits number two and three to anybody but my lovers.

My modesty was not appreciated. It was taken as an insult. One women took my towel to inspect. It was a hot, afternoon, maybe I should just sit on a rock and cool off with my feet in the water. I pried myself loose. from the group and upended my purse to get my sunglasses out. One of the boys from the embankment shouted something which must have meant "She is going to get out her camera." Screaming from a hundred throats. The helpful old lady yanked my hand out of my purse, and gave me a push toward the exit "Shif, shif" she begged me. I figured it must mean "go, go," and I was anxious to oblige, but - not without my towel. A lady held it on her open palms like hot coal. I dashed for it and carried it out like a trophy - some trophy!

We had made it a special point not to have a camera with us when we ventured to the province, but I don't argue with a hundred panicking women especially when I don't speak their language.

It was all my teachers' fault. They had always told me to keep my clothes on and never learned me no Arabic. So I found myself thrown out into the dust of the road in a strange country.

Fortunately the police had gotten a hold of Hans and Chris. Concern for the welfare of the villagers or plain curiosity. They wanted to see our cameras (we had none), and asked us where we came from and why and what I was doing with a camera in the women's swimming hole. I saw them all standing under a tree nearby with an increasing crowd around them.

It all ended well; by night we were back in our all American cantonment with popcorn, moonshine beer and Archie Bunker on TV.



## Diary from Notebook

This diary type notebook was written soon after returning from Saudi Arabia to Austin Texas, USA. It is based on notes taken and articles collected while in Saudi Arabia. And of still fresh memories of a unique experience and adventure.

### Page 1

When Hans and I married on a cloudy November day in Wisconsin, I was dreaming of moving into a well preserved old mansion in a small town and of blossoming into a respected personality in the community.

Nineteen years later I was still dreaming of settling down in a small town, although I had dropped the mansion due to ever increasing utility rates, and I had postponed my respectability until after menopause. Hans was in the Air Force, you see, and we had to move ever so often. Another year in the Service, we said, then we retire and can finally make our home for good somewhere in the Texas Hill Country.

But then came the phone call from California: Was Hans interested in working in Saudi Arabia as soon as he had completed his 20 years in the Air Force? He would be doing the same type of work he was doing now and he paid about twice as much plus bonuses.

Saudi Arabia? The vast desert over an ocean of oil? The Bedouins in white robes who were saved from the Turks by Peter O'Toole, alias Lawrence of Arabia? Where men had many wives and passionate

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eyes like Omar Sharif? Saudi Arabia, where about everybody one had ever heard of was a prince? as rich as those in fairy tales.

Of course, we were interested. At that point money was not a lure, we were attracted by the opportunity to meet a people and a culture so different from ours, a way of life possibly soon to be abandoned. We were sure this learning experience would enrich our own lives. Of course, if we could save some money at the same time our mission might still materialize after all, which was a nice dream to nurture along the way.

## Diary from Notebook

As it turned out, it was easier to save money then it was to get well acquainted with the Saudi way of life, especially for me, a woman, who had little contact with Saudis on the job. Yet, although most of us lived and socialized within closed Western compounds, our life had to be adjusted to Saudi laws, customs, and traditions with which we were only vaguely familiar.

This book is a chronicle of those years. I was not a diplomat trying to be buddies with their Royal Highnesses, not a journalist who is being chauffeured from one party to another, nor a corporate executive who prides himself of his intimate

### Page 3

friendship with Prince what's his name, Abdullah what? I was the dependent wife of one of the thousands of Americans who have decided to give Saudi Arabia a try and who (most of them) find that they have never worked so darn hard in their entire life.

Like most families who have an offer to work overseas, we swayed between no, never, and yes, of course, for several months after our initial "yes" had initiated a flow of forms to be filled out; physical exams had to be taken and passed, and Hans had to fly to California for an indoctrination interview. There he found out about some of the big negative sides of working in Saudi Arabia. Those that concerned us were: Children in grades higher than the 9th, in some areas 8th, could not live with us in Saudi Arabia, they had to go to a boarding school at the company's expense and were probably (not guaranteed) allowed to visit us twice a year. College kids no.

We had to leave our little girl behind. She was then a senior in high school and therefore not welcome to live in Saudi Arabia. Our son, in 8th grade, was allowed to come along but would have to be sent to a boarding school anywhere in the world once in high school. Another surprising bit of information came from the

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mouth of an IRS agent whom I phoned. She said that there is no truth in the myth that American working and living abroad don't have to pay federal income tax. There might be some tax advantages, she said, but nobody knew what they

## Diary from Notebook

were, and it would be two years before Congress would make up its mind, and then another year or two for the IRS to interpret Congressional intentions. And thirdly, the company warned us that medical facilities for us were not really adequate, and in case of death - well, that comes later in connection with the 19th hole on the golf course in Bahrain.

Our son's history of migraine headaches almost disqualified us for the job.

Hans left for Dhahran, Saudi Arabia in late September, 1977. Chris and I were not allowed to accompany him right away, due to a shortage of housing for dependents, we were told. The real reason, I now suppose, is the fact, that quite a few new employees decide to hurry back home soon after their arrival. One guy, Roland, a graphics type, never even made it to our office. He arrived on Swiss Air in the evening, was picked up at the airport by a colleague and later that night introduced to one of the company's department

### Page 5

managers, a retired colonel, who told him to shave off his beard. Roland left the country before noon the next day.

xxxxxxxxxxxxx

To follow:

visit to travel agency (no tourists allowed)

Preparation of clothes (what type, no Sears label)

giving up career

Storage of household goods

communication to Saudi Arabia (phone, mail, fax, Western Union, telex?)

Info by IRS to be in Saudi Arabia before end of year?

### Page 6

When you've got to go, you've got to go, and so I went.

For some reason, still not clear to me, the company had sent me labels with the company's initials to stick on our suitcase so we could be identified as ... employee or dependents, at each airport on our trip where we had to change planes

## Diary from Notebook

a company representative was supposed to meet us and help us. That gave me the feeling of going on a dangerous journey where special protection was needed. I never saw a company representative until I arrived in Saudi Arabia. I didn't need one either, but at each airport we wasted time and nerves looking for one, and dared not go to the lady's room.

We took off from New York. "Well, we are on our way," I said to the gentleman on my right, "off to live with the Arabs for a while." The plane climbed, I relaxed, the stewardesses began to serve dinner. A noisy commotion took over all around me. People were angrily refusing the trays, standing up, demanding to see the head steward.

We flew from New York to London, a flight so bumpy, that the dozen of so old Jewish gentleman in front of me with braided hair and in black 'crats and butts', spent hours reading from a little book and mumbling fearful sounding prayers. They could not even find distraction in the food being served, because it was not kosher and they had to send it back.

We found the Post Hotel in London, where we were to

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stay for the night at company expense. Beautiful England, lush green lawns outside my window, a gentle rain and an easy going atmosphere, so easy going in fact, that the receptionist lost all the vouchers for our meals and a night's room I had given her when we checked in. Would I mind if she called the police to keep me from leaving for Saudi Arabia without paying, she asked. After long arguments, puffed up with anger, I finally paid with my Master Charge. Just as I walked to the plane, a representative of the hotel rushed up to me, showed me the vouchers they had found! All through that eight hours flight to Saudi Arabia I sat in the elegant Tristar and felt, that somehow, given enough time, everything would eventually turn out okay, just like the case of the lost vouchers.

I hate to look out of airplanes, yet I can never resist the temptation. We crossed the Alps, we saw the one thousand and one lights of Bagdad, the darkness suddenly a flame like light here and there. Campfires in the oasis? "Them oilfields" explained the man in jeans and sweatshirt on my right. He seemed to know his way around in these parts, but didn't much care to talk about it.

## Diary from Notebook

My stomach began to flutter. Never before, in all my travels, had I been so nervous about putting my foot on new soil; I was sure I would put it straight in my mouth

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with the first word I uttered. Was I dressed properly? Long Skirt, long sleeved blouse buttoned up to my chin, walking shoes with heavy socks, so no part of my leg might be exposed to somebody's naked eye. Was I supposed to wrap a scarf around my head? Over my face? Would they think I was harboring indecent intentions when the custom officials see the lacy bras in my suitcase?

I was grateful to have my 13 year old son with me, I promoted him within seconds from my baby boy to male escort and protector. I followed him down the stairway. It was dark outside and a humid warm wind pressed against me. Along our path to the terminal sat four or five gentlemen in long white robes and flowing white scarves with a black ring on their heads. They were all holding a cup and saucer as if they were having a tea party, yet they mustered us with rather an official look in their eyes, immigration inspectors in nightgowns? Of course, I had seen pictures of Arabs dressed like that but I had not expected them on an airport. Actually, they looked quite handsome, I thought.

We lined up in front of a young man in uniform who looked at our shot records. Then we lined up again to have our passport stamped. I held my marriage certificate we were supposed to bring. No sooner, there was a great commotion in the hall, nobody wanted to see my marriage certificate, was I handed back our passports

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when a hand grabbed it away from me and an American looking man shouted: "I am your company representative. We'll keep your passport until you need it again." And then he disappeared into the crowd. There I was, not even through customs and my passport had already been confiscated or stolen. Visions of cut off hand kept me from shouting "thief."

The luggage came on a conveyer belt. Christopher's and mine were among the first. When we reached out for them some hairy hands were faster than ours and juggled off with our suitcases. It was a tiny man who had grabbed them,

## Diary from Notebook

dressed in a tank top and a colorful knee length cloth wrapped around his hips. A porter? I hoped so, but what would he say if I couldn't pay him? I had no Saudi money! I had to stop him, he wouldn't release them. We had quite a tug of war, I am embarrassed to remember, but he won and even opened the suitcase on the counter for the customs inspector. I was so nervous, there was this trim very tall man, in a Colgate white robe gently fingering through our personal belongings. Nowhere in the world had that made me nervous, but here it did. He pulled something hard out of Christopher's suitcase:

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a rubber ring the size of a fan belt and a red-and-white scarf that Hans had sent to us explaining that many Saudis wear that on their head. The official was obviously pleased with his find. He gave Christopher such a warm smile and carefully closed his suitcase, that I finally relaxed. Almost. I still didn't know how to pay the porter who ran off again with our suitcases. One has these silly little problems and worries at the most importune moments and locations, no money for the porter, for crying out loud.

And then came a most welcome sight: Hans, my husband. There are few places in the world where a husband is more appreciated than in an airport in Saudi Arabia. "On your own," my Hans had warned me in his letters, "you women don't go anywhere in this country."

At the top of a staircase a dense crowd of Westerners was waving and pushing. Almost every passenger was being picked up by a relative or somebody from the company he was working for.

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Although in my romantic dreaming I had prepared myself to live in a Nomad's tent in the sands of Arabia, I was relieved when we drove up to a real house. In a little patch of front yard bloomed a few man size bushes of bougainvillea, unimpressed by the fact that this was winter time.

The house smelled musty, and the carpet was damp, but "that's only temporary", Hans said, "and due to human error. Sometimes, like yesterday, you get up and there is no water in the pipes. So you keep on checking the

## Diary from Notebook

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faucet until you go to work. And, well, I forgot to shut off the one in the bathroom, and when I came home from work water was knee high all over the house."

We had two bedrooms, a kitchen and a living room with dining section. There was a heater and air conditioner in each room, the furniture was simple but adequate, and the cabinets were filled. There were new sheets and towels and 24 washcloths. I had enough china to serve 38 guests, but only three small sauce pans. There was no freezer, no dishwasher, but a refrigerator which gave me an electrical shock every time I touched it (then we grounded it) and there was the usual cutlery and also Tupperware bowls, several sets of fancy carving knives and not to forget a garlic press. We also had a washing machine, dryer, vacuum cleaner and a black & white TV and a phone.

I was happy. The routine of my daily life would not be different from what I was used to. Neither would the nights be different. The company beds looked most accommodating.

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Our company, like most large companies, has several compounds in Al Khobar near Dhahran, with one family houses or mobile homes, completely furnished, so that the employees can come with a minimum of personal belongings. We were allowed 600 pounds. Some families lived in town in "villas", houses leased from Saudi landlords, and quite roomy where your neighbors were not colleagues from the company, years ago before the compounds were established. Although no foreign company owns the compounds they occupy, most of them perform their own maintenance or contract it out to other foreign companies.

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The ultimate frustration proved to have 10 digits. The telephone proved to be a hell of an invention. What has 10 digits and sucks? A telephone.

On our first day, Hans took a few hours off from work and we dutifully drove to the Saudi Arabian International School to enroll our son in 8th grade. Towards the end of the procedure the secretary asked us to hang around for another

## Diary from Notebook

half an hour or until she had found out what bus Chris had to catch the next morning. "Well", I said, "instead of us waiting for so long, my husband can give you a call later on from his office."

"Why don't you just keep your mouth shut," said Hans, "Do you think I have nothing better to do than to spend the rest of the day on the phone?" "He is right", agreed the secretary, shaking her head about my stupid suggestion. "He'll never get through, anyhow, during the day." So we waited for almost an hour because she had to get the bus number via telephone from the dispatch office.

It took me three days to connect with Hans. I mean by phone, from our home to his office. You had to dial your way from one circuit to another and through, usually, at least one operator somewhere in between, and somewhere along the line you hit a busy signal or a confused voice

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shouted "Eli?, Eli", and I had either reached a woman who didn't understand English and panicked, or a man who asked me for my phone number in sophisticated Oxford English so that he could call me back.

The area had been built up so fast and seemingly haphazardly, that construction was always ahead of planning and the reliability of anything technical was reduced to liability.

When it rained or when we washed our car the phone in our first house would give nothing but busy signals for two days because the insulation used outside was not supposed to be used outside.

All calls coming into the cantonment were channeled through an operator, in that case one of two company woman who had the switchboard in their master bedroom. One afternoon in late 1978, the son of one of our operators, played outside my kitchen window and in the course of our conversation he said, "Your daughter tried to call you six times from the States, almost every night. But you never answer the phone. I wonder why she keeps on trying like that?"

We never answer the phone? The phone never rang! Tina must be in trouble, an accident? Rape? Is she pregnant? A burglary? I ran to the boy's mother, the operator. She confirmed Tina's calls. It turned out,



## Diary from Notebook

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that since the last repair was done about a week ago, we could not receive any calls, but nobody had noticed it.

We placed a call to our daughter with our operator and she in turn placed it with an international operator, supposedly in the port City of Daman, who might try to find an open spot on the line to the States and who might not. We placed the call again and again for 3 days and nights. We also tried to call friends and neighbors of hers while we were spending sleepless nights in bed and sleepy days at work. Finally we sent a telex to the company headquarter in California asking Personnel to call our daughter and find out what happened. Two days later we received a telex from them telling us that she had had an accident and was fine. Only then did I find out by chance, when I overheard a conversation while stuck in an elevator in our office building, between our radio room office, that there is a direct line to the States open all the time for our company for "Emergencies." But ordinary employees are not being informed of that, and later on I found out that those who have easy access have a peculiar definition of emergencies. By the time we talked to Tina on the phone, our advice on how to solve all the problems, the accident

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had created, came too late. The consequences were not serious, but they could have been.

In the following year we moved into a new compound where we had young men from Pakistan or India as operators, devout Muslims who regularly took time out for prayer, five times a day. So when they didn't put a plug in for us on earth they plugged in to Allah, and we were all grateful for that. When I passed by the "Reception" just after six in the morning at the gate, Mustafa, the operator, would have his eyes glued into the holy Koran. He never returned my friendly "hi" at that time of the day. I presume he did not like me to stand at the street corner waiting for the work bus, or going to work, period. Or maybe he thought there was something peculiar about me. You see, there was this cat, a stray, who had adopted us and could open our bathroom windows from the outside. She would also answer the telephone for us if you didn't get there faster than the speed of cats. By the second ring, she would swipe the receiver off the hook

## Second Dairy from loose pages

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and say "aaaw?". And Mustafa would shout, "Madame?" or more like the French. "MaDumb?"

improvement of phone

Quote Arab News

No phone books

Late and no bills

Many compounds without phone

Phones going there faster when you have a secretary dialing for you

Conducting business over the phone

Phone conversations tapped? Party lines in compound

Phone as symbol of prestige for bosses and Saudies.

Radio phone.

## Second Dairy from loose pages

Page 1

"By Gosh, why would anybody want to go to a country like Saudi Arabia!" snorted a newspaper editor at me on my first home leave when I asked him if he was interested in a feature article on that country. "The money must be awfully good," he said, when I offered him a feature article on my experiences in that country. I had just met him at a wine and cheese party at a friend's house.

Money is usually the first thing people mention when they talk about the attractions of employment in that part of our world. "People only go there for the money."

"Would I go through the agony of trying to sell an article to you if money is only part of it?" I retorted.

Money is an easy word to say, and everybody understands what you are talking about." I lectured him, "That's why people give it as a reason for working in places like the Middle East or on the Alaskan Pipeline. It is a lot more difficult to express the real underlying motives. Do you expect Fritz, the plumber, to elaborate on his yearning for adventure in an exotic environment, for his need to get away from his wife or simply his desire to look under a black veil? He'll say: Five hundred dollars a week, plus overtime, sounds pretty good to me. And," I added,

## Second Dairy from loose pages

"after considering all the extra expenses by being out of this country, the bottom line is usually not as good as you had expected."

"Oh, your bottom line looks pretty good to me," he muzzled into his glass so my husband couldn't hear it. Well that was the end of our discussion and it kept me wonder: Why did we go to Saudi Arabia?

### Page 2

There were the old dreams. As a child I read dozens of books about adventurers, explorers and prospectors who went into unfamiliar regions of our earth to see what was there. I had even bicycled 150 miles to Hamburg when I was 14 years old and asked the captain of an oil tanker if he had any use for me. Over dinner he told me I was too young for him and too innocent for an oil tanker, and he sent me home.

Seven years later, just married and with the experience of some traveling under my belt, including my immigration to the USA, I had visions my future as a respectable pillar of society in some mid-western college town, living in a white mansion with Liszt Rhapsodies gently blowing through the sheers in open French windows. However, my husband career in active duty in the US Air Force, kept us on the move and kept us from sprouting roots and becoming pillars anywhere; our mansion had to be mothballed in the sky, and I had to postpone my respectability until after menopause.

After nineteen and a half years in the Service, Hans had received orders for a transfer to Okinawa. We had recently bought a house in Austin Texas, where our children planned to go to college a few years down the calendar. Our daughter was a senior in high school. An assignment in Okinawa meant having to leave her in Texas in an apartment, it also meant that I had to give up my job. With no employment to be expected overseas and with only Hans' paycheck from the Air Force we could not finance a daughter in college

### Page 3

away from home. In other words, we could no longer afford to serve our country in the wide blue yonder. Hans decided to look for a job on the civilian market and just put in his papers to retire on the day after completion of 20 years in the service. This was in anno domini 1977.

## Second Dairy from loose pages

Shortly after his request for retirement had hit official channels, he received a call from a California based aerospace company with huge contracts. Would he be interested in working for them in Saudi Arabia. "Doing what?" asked my husband, Hans. "The same thing you are doing right now, supervising a Photography Lab and training recruits."

"I thought the US no longer had bases in Saudi Arabia," said Hans.

"We don't", was the answer, "Our company has a contract with the Department of Defense to train the Saudi Air Force."

"How about my family?"

"We want you to take them along, except of course for any college age children you have."

"Oh?". The world was against college age children? Thought Hans. "I could leave her here if you pay me well enough to make up. I guess you can't expect them to have American colleges there."

"That's right, sergeant, and of course, if you have kids in high school, they can stay with you for their vacations. Do you have any children in high school?"

"Yes, one in 8th grade?" answered Hans.

"Our company pays for a boarding school anywhere in the world for high school kids, and we pay for two vacation visit a year for them to visit you."

A great deal if your kids are a constant pain in your neck, but ours were not. We didn't really want our kids "anywhere in the world". So we hesitated. And although the salary offered was twice as much as his Air Force salary, it was no more than our joint income with me working as a high school teacher. And without high schools there would be no job openings for high school teachers over there.

## Page 4

It is obvious, that it was not the prospect of great riches that made Hans finally accept the job offer. It was the mystery of the country we knew so little about, that is what intrigued us. A case of the old "wanderlust". Arabian society must have values and a way of life that was nothing but a mystery to us and we

## Second Dairy from loose pages

were thrilled by the chance to learn about it before it was swallowed by Western influences.

We would earn enough to pay for our daughter's education and our son didn't object to getting away from his parents once he reached high school age.

We were looking forward to make the acquaintance of the Saudi so obscure to us. We knew, that over there anybody one had ever heard of was a prince or sheik, that the streets were lined with Cadillac's instead of trees. Like every faithful movie goers from years past we knew that Peter O'Toole had delivered the Saudis from the Turks. And that, if the Saudis didn't pump the oil fast enough out of the ground, it would slowly sink further and further south into the Yemen. A quick look at the globe and Newton's law of gravity can tell you that.

The contract was not final until we had written proof of acceptable health. So we bottled urine, had our blood counted, established RH factors and exposed our chest to x-ray technicians and our bottoms to a nurse for a blast of hemoglobin shot.

A company brochure promised us furnished house, including cookware and linen, "probably quite satisfactory" to our needs; and up to 600 pounds of personal belonging would be shipped for us at company expense. The rest of our moveable earthly goods were supposed to be stored, also at company expense, but only up to 8,000 pounds of it, which turned our piano, and many a dear, useless pieces of furniture into excess weight, which had to be sold or given away or put into a storage unit that we rented ourselves.

## Page 5

What type of clothing should we bring? Obviously it had to be fit for a hot climate. I had also read that women wear long skirts so I bought a few of those from the Goodwill store on dollar-sale-day. I couldn't imagine at that time that I would actually ever wear them almost every day. The company brochure has some suggestion of which I quote the following: girdles; umbrella (1), toe pedes (6); brunchcoats (2) toe rubber (1); skirts, wool (4); corrective glasses (1) dresses, long sport, dressy (12); a good supply of underwear; playclothes as needed (not to worn in public). The company, in the business of manufacturing space age aircraft, suggested that 6 slips, half, cotton and/or nylon, were a one year supply.

When I had my nearly 600 pounds piled up on the living room floor for packing, Lt. Col. B. B. Hicks, retired USAF, our neighbor, full of half knowledge acquired at cocktail parties, told me about an Arab black list of all the companies

## Second Dairy from loose pages

whose products were not allowed to enter the Saudi Kingdom. The list was supposedly based on those companies trading with Israel or being owned by a Jew. Packing these items was risking having part of my shipment confiscated. "Do you mean that my Levis are off limits?" "They ought to be!" How about shipping our college dictionary, was Miriam Webster a Jew? And my nightgown from the Spiegel catalog? And Christopher's "good supply of underwear" from Sears? Was Sears shipping things to Israel? I tried to find a copy of the black list, I phoned the Chamber of Commerce, travel agencies, the company in California, a Professor specializing in Middle Eastern Studies, and got only vague guesses. It seems that there was such a list but it was illegal or in poor taste in the United States to publish and circulate it. Now what? The packers had arrived. The Personnel Department of the company advised me to use my own judgment, which I feverishly executed with a razor blade. I relieved all clothing of labels where possible, books, toys, bars of soap etc out of their original containers and just took my chances with Merriam Webster.

### Page 6

Not that I agree with having such a boycott list, but I do like to obey the laws of the country - any country - I plan to live in for a while. I had learned long ago that laws that make sense in one society are absurd in another.

I did not ship the recommended toe rubber because I don't know what that is and I am too embarrassed to ask anybody.

I'll mention the things I didn't pack but should have at a later time. Preparation is always such a problem. The useless things people ship are worth a term paper for psychology 103. A friend of mine slipped three bathroom scales and several sets of huge butcher knives that almost got him arrested. A patron in her midthirties sent 3 years supply of sanitary napkins. That would have been a wiser choice than me shipping my bicycle to fill the weight allowance. More about that later.

### Page 7

I was prepared to live in a tent. I knew it wouldn't be a palace. I was promised a "villa", but was told a villa is any degree of residence, other than a palace. For most Westerners their "villa" was an American trailer or an apartment in a company run cantonment. For others it was a spacious stone house in town in a Saudi neighborhood. For me it happened to be a 2 bedroom 1-1/4 bath house in one of the company cantonments. Employees had no choice, "quarters" were assigned, well, usually.

## Second Dairy from loose pages

"Almost like back home," I said after having taken the grand tour of my quarter. There were beds, closets, 4 window air conditioners, a living room with sparten furniture. There was even a washing machine and dryer and a refrigerator. There were linen, 24 wash cloths, enough china to host 38 guests, but only three tiny sauce pans. There was no teapot, but a garlic press. The bedspreads were a size too small but the tablecloth could have blanketed central Texas. All in all, my first impression was a pleasant surprise in spite of the shock that launched me across the kitchen when I touched the refrigerator (it was not grounded).

There was that embarrassing odor, though. "It's the carpet," said Hans, "I flooded the house yesterday. That happens all the time. Sometimes we have no water in the morning, so you keep trying by turning the faucets on and off and I forgot to turn it off when I left for work." But the worst smell came from what in American real estate jargon is called a 1/4 bath, ie a vessel in which to bathe only your hind quarter. In our house it was the toilet next to the kitchen. "That odor smell comes our way from the neighbors" I was told, Okay, as long as

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I know from whence it came. The odor was not the only thing we had in common with our neighbor. They had the same furniture, china, flatware, employer, and water heater problems, but a different color bedspreads - thank goodness.

About a year later our daughter was granted a visa to come and spend Christmas with us. Since we had only two bedrooms, one for us and one for our son, we were assigned to a three bedroom house. There is some good in decency.

This villa was one of 92 just like it in a compound owned by a Saudi, like all real estate in the country, and leased by various US and American companies. You had either a green or a brown carpet, but since there were two designs of furniture to choose from, various combinations of the parts offered individuality. Construction of this housing complex had been completed just a few weeks ago and most occupants had moved in just a few days ago.

I loved the villa's size. There was even a formal dining room and a kitchen twice as big as what I was used to, and next to it was a little room "for the house boy", very handy for Pepsi bottles, my bike, etc. It took me a while to realize that we had 2- 1/4 - 1/2 baths. The 2 full

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baths were in the bedroom section, the 1/4 was for guests off the hall, and the 1/2 (with a shower) was behind the "house boy" room. This one was a masterpiece of a design. The shower head stuck out of the ceiling, no walls, curtains nor rods to hang them on. The water simply sprayed the entire room and should eventually trickle out through a drain in the floor. The water also sprayed on the light switch. This way an efficient "house boy" could sit on the toilet, take a shower and electrocute himself all at the same time.

When I counted four commodes I knew that spelled big trouble. "Four commodes? Big trouble, my dear," said Jonathan, a veteran of 21 years in the Middle East.

It happened, of course, on Christmas Eve. We celebrated the German way. Christkind had lit the candles and left behind some bottles of wine and music, bells. We sat around our plastic pine tree opening presents and trying to get into the mood you are supposed to be in on Christmas Eve. "What stinks?" asked Christopher. "The master bedroom toilet doesn't flush," I said. "Mine doesn't either," he said. To make a long Christmas story short: we spent an unholy night. So did our neighbors. Down the road the plunger went from house to house like carol singers. On Christmas morning, when most American children in the neighborhood skipped to the lou after the excitement of "Look what Santa brought me," it was obvious that there was no water in the pipes. That solved the problem of overflowing commodes. In a rare stroke of genius the designer of the houses had fitted every room which had a sink with a tile floor and

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an opening in the middle through which water etc, could run directly into the sewer. An opening is always a way out but also a way in. My kitchen was so designed that when I pulled the plug on the kitchen sink after washing the dishes, the dishwater would partially come up through the drain in the floor. After a few hours of no water running through the sewer pipes, thousands of tiny creatures crawled into the bathrooms. By the time every household had dispatched somebody to the front office asking for maintenance. But, the lone plumber, could only be in one place at a time. We learned that about a week after a row of houses were occupied, the plumbing would give up, and street after street of the compound had to go through this routine.

When the plumber finally arrived at our house, two days later, he was no longer willing to discuss the situation. But I was happy to see him before the



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Ladies arrived for a luncheon I was giving. "You should think that in this day and age, in 1979, architects can design an adequate sewer system," I commented to cheer him up while I watched him. "It's okay," he said, "American architect." He prodded around with a wire and pulled up piles of white toilet tissue. "Why then does it get plugged up so easily?" I asked. "Yemi men, they build this. See this?" he said. I almost screamed as he extracted an orange rubber glove out of the commode.

"Yemi men don't know toilets like American toilet. They throw thing in." He extracted among other things, a man's underwear. "You are luck", he said, "In next door house Yemi men throw all left over concrete in commode and flush. It's a mess"

But all his efforts did not bring about the free flowing flush I so longed for. There must be some hardened concrete in our pipes as well, or a sandal?

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"It's toilet paper, it's a mess," he finally said to me, "You must not use it."

"Well? What do you mean," I found myself without words to say. I knew in many countries the use of toilet tissue is considered filthy, people use water instead, and we did have a bidet right next to the commode, but being brought up the way I was, I didn't think I would ever be satisfied without the tissue, yet, it seemed to get stuck so easily. "I can't do it without paper," I wasn't going to give up so easily, not in these basic matters. He sat on the floor for a while and contemplated.

"No problem, Madame," he said finally, he seemed to have the ultimate solution to this plumbing problem. "I come back after 5 minutes."

And he did, with a proud smile he handed me a brown paper bag, "You must use toilet paper and put it in bag. No problem, Madam."

I couldn't wait to advise my luncheon ladies in the latest bathroom etiquette.

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I am, of course, not as naive as my neighbor Lt Col B. B. Hicks, retired US Army, "You tell them A-rabs," he said to me over his 4th can of Budweiser on the eve of my departure to Saudi Arabia, "You tell them that they ought to be grateful that we Americans go into their ... country and bring them some civilization and

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help them make all that money on their oil. The good Lord's put there for everybody to use, the way they raise the price and all. They would still be riding their camels if it weren't for us Americans. I knew that the rest of the world would be grateful if we bring them some civilization. I suspected that the rest of the world would be grateful if we kept our hands out of the Saudi oil and let everybody else have a bigger share in helping them A-rabs."

How eager the world is to do business in that country became first obvious to my eyes and has plagued many a American negotiating for a contract. If you sit on the marble floor in Dhahran Air Port on a summer evening (115 degrees outside), you feel and smell that you are in every sense of the word in the international melting pot of the twentieth century. The only people most likely not to be represented are the Penguins from Antarctica and citizens of Israel.

From the American point of view and as far as contract jargon is concerned, there are three types of people: us, them and TCN's. "Us" are US citizens, "them" are Saudis, and "TCN's" are everybody else or Third Country Nationals like the French, the Sri Lankans, The Britons, The Germans, and other Gulf nations. I wonder if the British call us TCN's? Somehow I have never liked that idea. TCN's who work for an American company sign different contracts. They often got paid overtime when we were expected to donate extra hours, I forgot what for, maybe some corporate patriotism, short: corpiotism.

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In an attempt to organize the multitude of people around me I began to classify men by their pants. It stands to reason that not everybody is drilling for oil. There would be too many holes in the desert. In an oversimplified fashion I deducted men's national origin by the work they were doing and the pants they were wearing or not wearing.

Anthropologists and I are still not sure about what the Scots are hiding under their kilt, because they don't bend over, which would press all the wind out of their Dudelsack (Bagpipe). However, those men stalking the streets and deserts of the world with their legs in things other than trousers, do generally wear underwear. I've seen it and have to mention it to avoid arousing the reader's undue curiosity.

Naturally, there are in Saudi Arabia, the native men. Most of them, whether they have visited Western countries or not, wear an ankle length long sleeved white gown with pockets in the side seams. Quality of material and degree of cleanliness very, but it never ceased to amaze me how masculine and well dressed a man can appear in a "thobe", especially when a lightly embroidered white

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"ghutra", a square piece of cloth, flows around his head held in place by a igal, a heavy black doubled ring known to the English speaking world as "fan belt". Under the ghutra one sometimes sees a little white crocheted cap.

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In proper (or rather improper) light you can see through a thobe, like you can see through a summer dress. The feet are stuck into sandals.

I don't think I have seen many Saudis working in manual labor. But I have to admit that I haven't seen all of them. Traditionally they are a people of traders and drivers. They drove their camels and goats from one drying oasis to another and transported spices, incense and other valuables from the Indian Ocean to the Red Sea and the Mediterranean, and considering the extremely meager resources of the country until the need for oil changed their lot, they must have been very clever at whatever they did in order to survive. This is not the time and place to mention the historical raids of Bedouin tribes on pilgrims who came into the country to worship in Mecca and Medina and were relieved of the worldly goods. These things happened everywhere. Large is the number of Christian knights in Europe who took to Highway robbery. Hopefully, both Saudi Arabia and Europe have safe passage now for pilgrims.

Saudis seem to be most happy behind the cash register in a store or behind a steering wheel of a vehicle. These are modern time honored versions of the occupations, trading and driving. Although they learn remarkably fast whatever one teaches them, let's say how to replace brake shoes on a Toyota, they don't seem to have the Christian work ethics we value so high in our industrialized society. The idea of a technical job well done and in a short time "your car will be ready and waiting for you at 2:30 this afternoon" is a phrase more American than the words might suggest. This is not due to laziness but rather to

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different priorities. A friend dropping in for a cup of tea and a chat out ranks the brakes of a Toyota. A telephone operator once pulled the plug out on me because it was time for him to pray. I am not sure that they are not right, but it is difficult to drive to the airport to catch a plane in a Toyota without brakes.

In other words, most labor is performed by foreigners, and the origin of their country usually determines the labor contract, the wages and benefits. This is the unfairness of the world in a nutshell. And the Saudis did not create it. If you happen to be born in Germany or the USA, for example, you will live in a house of

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some sorts and you'll be paid enough. Your contract will most likely guarantee you a house or apartment for you and your family, and an income and benefits at least as much as what a young man from Yemen receives. Although you may spend your days in an air-conditioned office while the Yemen is digging a ditch under a merciless sun.

Speaking of the men from Yemen. They wrap a colorful piece of cloth around their hips making a knee length skirt. And they usually wrap their head. Once, on a boat in the Arabian Gulf, I observed the Yeminis crew take their skirts off and worked in their underwear, very practical. Most jobs that we label manual are performed by "Yeminis". Many of them don't even have a place to live, they sleep on the construction site, in cardboard shacks or a dozen of them in one room.

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A little better off are the "Pakis" (from Pakistan) and Indians (from India), many of whom are houseboys, telephone operators, some have office jobs or manage stores, quite a few Pakistanis are in management positions and some are very powerful within the Saudi military. I was told. While I wouldn't be able to spot those by their pants, I always envied the laboring "Pakistanis" for their leg garment: pants of white linen or nettle so wide at the top that they use up six feet of cloth line when they hang up. When you tie the top and the bottom tight around the waist and the ankles, and blow air into them, they float just like an air cushion on water. And of course, with pants of that design you can eat and eat and eat and no button will pop off.

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