

RIOTS & REVOLUTIONS

TRAVELS

OF THE

VERY FIRST

FEMALE

JOURNALIST

TO

by

Carol Abaya, M.A.

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INTRODUCTION

* Molotov cocktails rained down around me as I watched another building burn.

* Police held me for several hours demanding I give them my film after I took pictures of anti-American demonstrators.

* Armed soldiers pointed submachine guns mere inches from me as I tried to get into the Indonesian Defense Ministry.

* "There's been a revolution. Heavily armed soldiers are everywhere. We're trapped," my sister-in-law said. The line went dead!

Over the years I have had some extraordinary experiences -- many with significant political ramifications. I was a lone female in a man's world. THE FIRST and ONLY female newspaper reporter to have covered race riots and the civil rights movement in the United States and to travel extensively meeting and interviewing country presidents, Maharajas and even a Sultan. I found myself in the middle of two revolutions in Asia.

I was there in the midst of these upheavals because I predicted several:

- Chinese invasion of India in 1962,
- the 1965 communist revolution in Indonesia,
- the increased tension and acts of violence in the Middle East, and
- the 1972 coup in the Philippines

Once I made up my mind to write this saga, I realized that more than 50 years of life cannot be boiled down to a few, even a few thousand, words. This book was written in stages.

First, my memories in a stream of consciousness manner. For months beginning in August 2011, I just wrote every day with a red pen on yellow pads.

As I was writing from memory I was also going through many hundreds of clippings of my articles that appeared in newspapers and magazines around the world.

Lastly I went through hundreds of letters to my parents at their home in New Jersey, my father at his business and my sister in NYC. . In my Aug. 13, 1959 letter to my parents from London (my first trip abroad), I wrote "Keep these letters as I'm not keeping a diary."

My "pack rat" mother did! The stamps are all gone -- given by my father to a friend of his who collected foreign stamps. My mother even numbered my letters from India, so it was easy to put my story in historical perspective.

I have actually been in more foreign countries (25) than US states (23) and traveled about 400,000 miles.

The letters clearly show my desire to see all and experience all - from family life to the political and economic situation. They also show that even in the midst of political and economic upheavals that friendship, generosity, hospitality and much love met me at every point in my travels. I was welcomed into the palaces of the very rich and the minute huts of the very poor.

In covering events and my travels as a journalist, I quickly realized that certain people were enablers. These people gave me an edge over other journalists. From the Indian Prime Minister to the Presidents of Indonesia, The Philippines and Liberia to Maharajas and the Sultan of Sulu.

Everyone was interested in learning about me, as a lone female traveler, and life in the United States. The humble

Indian Finance Minister even questioned me about American dating habits.

The incentive to write my story came from two experiences in August 2011, when I was on vacation in the Berkshires, Massachusetts. I watched the revolution unfold in Libya and two female reporters in riot gear dodging bullets. In the afternoon, we saw the play “Red Hot Patriot: The Kick-Ass Wit of Molly Ivins.” I personally identified with so much.

While Ivins (according to her biography) was “thinking” about the differences between whites and blacks” and “mulling” over inequities in society, I was dodging Molotov cocktails in Paterson, N.J., during one of the first race riots in the country in the mid-1960s.

My own story holds significant historical perspective. First, I was a lone woman journalist who traveled the world at a time when women went to college for a MRS. degree. My experiences, hopefully, will be insightful and provide food for thought for better political decisions in the future.

My original thought was to show that my political predictions came to be because I connected the political DOTS. For some reason political leaders did not — and still do not — connect the DOTS. DOTS (intelligence/accurate information) are critical and will play an even more important role in maintaining civilization as we knew it before ISIS.

Another important factor then - and now - is that too many American leaders do not even want to understand foreign cultures. .

Nowhere is this more evident than in my visit to Liberia (chapter 6) in 1966. Without exception, from the liberal president to cabinet ministers, businessmen and even Peace Corps volunteers, the word “arrogance,” described Americans.

In this arrogance and not connecting the DOTS, in 1980 the US crushed the only real democracy in all of Africa.

We (Americans) think that because we have a great country that everyone should follow our path to freedom. Giving “freedom” to others who have never had freedom has been foolhardy. This is why I have come up with my thesis that political man (especially American) does not know how to correctly connect happenings, those political “DOTS.” And non-connection of DOTS has resulted in too many human disasters.

The Tree of My Life has three large trunks.

The largest trunk was from the beginning through 1972. My young years consisted of traveling around the world, covering race riots and revolutions, and interviewing various heads of state, one-on-one.

Originally, I planned to write about all three trunks. But as I finished handwriting (in Feb. 2013) about the 1972 coup in the Philippines, I decided that this book would end with the year 1972.

Perhaps the other two trunks will make another book. Trunk Two would cover 1972 to 1991. Trunk Three would cover 1991 through 2012, which greatly changed my life and career directions. You can learn more about Trunk Three on my web site www.sandwichgeneration.com.

The one person who was my staunchest supporter and encouraged me was my mother. Sarah K. Goldstein, born 1905. She graduated college in 1926. Support was both emotional and financial. Encouragement was for me to take risks, to do new things. She provided financial support to enable me to take those risks.

She was my earliest and continual role model -- believing that a woman could be more than a wife and mother. That a woman can do almost anything she starts out to do.

My mother was a pack rat, and when I was working on *The Sandwich Generation*(R) nationally syndicated column for Jan. 2012 (part of the third major branch), I pulled out her tiny brown book of sayings and my own special cache of tiny books. Words of wisdom by various people. So, I was struck by the following:

“What is worth doing is worth finishing. If it isn’t worth finishing, why begin at all?” by Baltassar Gracian.

A number of other sayings from famous people also pushed me forward in this book endeavor.

“No one knows what it is that he can do until he tries.” By Publilius Syrus.

“The only joy in the world is to begin.” by Cesare Pavese.

And “Miracles happen to those who believe in them,” by Bernard Berenson.

The completion of this book was a “miracle.” That it has been published unlimited “miracles.”

My dream, my passion has been to help others get factual information about events, to better understand world-wide happenings, and to accept the good -- and bad -- in life.

I do hope you enjoy reading this and learn more about people, politicians, and how some individual decisions changed the world.

CHAPTER 1

I was mesmerized as I watched events unfold in Tripoli, Libya, that August day in 2011. I was fascinated by the two female journalists, wearing helmets and protective armor and dodging bullets.

In the afternoon, we went to the Shakespeare Theatre in Lenox, MA, and saw the play “Red Hot Patriot: The Kick-Ass Wit of Molly Ivins.” Ivins was a hell-raising journalist, a true Liberal, who was a tireless advocate for social justice.

As a result of the above, I mentally relived the past 50 years of my own life.

I personally identified with so many incidents in the play -- from initially being the only female reporter on a daily newspaper in an inner city to dodging Molotov cocktails thrown from rooftops during the race riots of the 60s to standing in front of an Indonesian soldier who had a sizable automatic weapon pointed at my belly.

The day’s experiences (watching Tripoli and seeing the play) prompted me to start to write down some of my own experiences and memories.

Hence I began my story as I sat outside at a resort in Lee, Massachusetts. In so many ways, I *was* a pioneer.

My own background and beginnings are humble, and no one has ever come forth as a mentor to take me to the next level of my professional and thinking abilities. Whatever I have achieved has been on my own.

I come from a middle-class family. As a child I lived in an all-white neighborhood. I don't recall any blacks or Asians in my elementary school. Only contact with blacks (called Negroes in those days) was our day maids or some of my father's customers. The subject of blacks wasn't discussed

My neighborhood was mixed with various religions. The differences became apparent at holiday times. I would peddle my three wheeler down the street to the Ellis family on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. My friend Sandra was in school. It wasn't her holiday. At Christmas I went across the street to help the Hagens decorate their tree. I got gifts for both Hanukah and Christmas. The other kids were jealous.

My maternal grandfather, Morris Katz, came to the US in the early 1900s. He started peddling fruits and vegetables door-to-door with his horse and wagon, going back and forth several times a week across the Hudson River ferry between New Jersey and New York. He married Rachel Dorf, had four children (only three survived), bought some real estate and in 1923 opened two stores in Tenafly, New Jersey. The family lived above the stores. The barn in the back housed cows and a still during Prohibition. My mother used to tell stories about how she had to stand guard while my great-grandfather, Aaron Morris Dorf, made liquor and to warn him if the sheriff was nearby.

My mother, the eldest, was my role model. I always say, she was a woman before her time. She graduated from Pace College (now University) in 1926 and went to work in a real estate office in Tenafly, NJ, owned by the town mayor. This started a long real estate career. She was one of the very few women real estate brokers (as opposed to just a sales agent) in the 1950s in northern New Jersey. She retired in 1995 at age 89 because she couldn't deal with the MLS computer system. She

never could understand the NOW movement -- because she had done it all. Graduated college, had a career, became a wife, mother and again a career professional. And at 90 she tutored disadvantaged second graders in reading at the neighborhood elementary school. No one stopped her from doing what she wanted to.

My paternal grandfather, Hyman Goldstein came to the USA in 1890.

In 1894 my grandmother Sarah Victor arrived. They settled in south Jersey. My grandfather had a sizable chicken farm and specialized in eggs (rather than chickens for food). After WW2 they moved to north Jersey to be near my father, Samuel Victor, and his two sisters, Fannie and Mary.

In 1927, my father and his brother-in-law, Harry Albert, opened a hardware, paint and glass retail store in Englewood, N.J. My father retired in 1969, at age 69. The love of his life was Betty White, for whom he did a considerable amount of mirror work in her Englewood home in the 1950s.

My father was active in the small community and in the fifth car in the official opening ceremonies of the George Washington Bridge in 1931. He 'dined' at the White House several times, having received some award or other. A staunch Republican, he treated everyone, regardless of race, with respect. After he retired in 1969, he did volunteer work every day at the Englewood Medical Center until he was 88.

All of the above helped form me -- in an unconscious way. Both parents were hard working, caring about other people. My father was a man of few words, and my mother often worked late. So conversation at dinner was little. I retreated into books and homework. But things were just whatever.

I can clearly see that my interest in writing -- in putting words down on paper -- began in elementary school.

My mother was a "pack rat." I still have the "newspaper" I was editor of in the 5th grade. In junior high as well as high school I wrote about school events for the local weekly paper, *The Englewood-Press Journal*.

* * * *

One of my passions is dogs. The first thing I wanted to be was a vet. But the thought of blood and guts and my dislike of needles ended that dream.

My next dream was to travel -- to be an airline hostess and travel *free*. At that time, hostesses (only females) had to be at least 5'4" tall and weigh at least 110 lbs. I was only 5'2" (now only 5'1") and never weighed more than 100 lbs. until I was in my 30s. Second dream crushed.

In my sophomore year in Dwight Morrow High School, Englewood, New Jersey, I had a dragon of an English teacher - Anita Dincin. She was a dragon to the boys -- especially a few (who shall remain nameless here even though they are all gone) who thought they were hotshots. I always listened intently.

She gave us an assignment -- write a poem or an essay on brotherhood. I never cared for poetry and wrote the essay. I still remember her handing the essay back to me with a number of red corrections. "Rewrite it and give it back to me," she said (without any explanation).

A couple of months later, I remember my mother getting a telephone call at 10:30 P.M. I had won first prize in a brotherhood essay contest sponsored by B'nai B'rith. Mrs.

Dincin had entered my essay without telling me. The prize was a \$25 savings bond, a lot of money in those days.

I am also a pack rat, like my mother. If it weren't for her saving all my school papers and letters during my early travels and my taking them from my parents' basement when my mother passed on April 2, 1997, I would not have found the original essay so easily and the program from the award ceremony of February 17, 1953 and a letter to Mrs. Dincin congratulating both her and myself for the essay and my presentation. Also, the blue first Prize ribbon was found within minutes of my shifting through the many rat pack papers.

So, I will quote from it.

"Brotherhood itself cannot be defined simply. In the dictionary you may find these definitions: a relationship as between brothers, an association of persons joined as brothers, and the condition of being a brother.

"But the kind of brotherhood which is emphasized during Brotherhood Week is not defined in a dictionary. Brotherhood, to most people, is more than just the tolerance of people unlike themselves. Brotherhood is the understanding and accepting, without prejudice, all people, regardless of race, color, creed or religious beliefs....."

I do want to say that basic brotherhood -- as defined in my essay of almost 60 years ago seems to have been lost by man somewhere along the way.

I found writing the essay had been easy. I thought I'd be an international correspondent so I could fulfill my dream of traveling the world - free.

My interest in writing skyrocketed in my junior year in high school. I took a journalism course given by Sally Winfrey. Miss Winfrey loved dogs as much as I did. But she

lived in a multi-story apartment house and worked unusual hours. So, she never had a dog. But we would gather in her kitchen to finish up the school newspaper and after feeding us she would have one of the fellows, John Zeeman, go home and bring over his wired-hair fox terrier.

When I graduated in 1955, the dog of a friend of my father had a litter of pups. I asked Miss Winfrey if she would like a puppy. She was so excited. She spent the summers with her sister in Virginia, and when I brought the puppy -- an ugly little thing -- to her, she had already bought a traveling case, dishes, leash etc. ready for her trip south. She had that dog for 18 years, and whenever she saw my mother she said "That was the best gift anyone ever gave me." I kept in touch with Miss Winfrey until her death in 1977. She followed my travels and work until the end. Her sister sent me a note telling me the sad news and said that the ugly pup had been the joy of Sally's life.

Miss Winfrey's encouragement led to my being selected to participate in a special summer journalism program at Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern University, in 1954, between my junior and senior years in high school. The words in my brotherhood essay were replayed.

At that time in history, blacks, particularly in the south, led separate lives from whites. There were several southerners in the program and two blacks. The white girls had never sat in the same classroom with a black, never eaten at the same table with a black, and had never 'talked' with any black, other than household help. I recall that one of the black boys was from Detroit and that his parents were both professionals, one a doctor and the other a teacher. These southern girls really had an awakening experience.

My upbringing was in an integrated suburban town (Englewood, NJ), and so blacks in the classroom and extracurricular activities were common in junior and high school. But even there, in my elementary school days when the neighborhood school was virtually all white, there was a divide between the races. I can still vividly remember one time as I walked to school our cleaning lady got off the bus. I loved big, fat, cheery Molly. I gave her a big hug before continuing on. But one of the other kids on my block questioned me about why would I hug a black person. I do not remember exactly how I answered the question. I guess to me such a hug was not exceptional, as my paternal grandparents lived in the 'fourth' ward and had many black neighbors. And my father had a hardware store and many of his regular customers were black. I helped my father in the store -- even knew the difference between one penny and five penny nails -- and he always treated the blacks with as much respect as his white customers.

My initial scribbled notes for this saga note the great influence of my history teacher, Irene Eckerson -- Mrs. Eckie, as we all called her. (My mother had Mrs. Eckie the first year she taught in the 1920s. And I reminisced with my 88-year-old cousin, Herman Berkman, up in Massachusetts during that 2011 vacation as he also had Mrs. Eckie.) She gave an unusual course in those days - Far Eastern Studies.

We had an Indian exchange student whom I got to know fairly well. We had many interesting conversations about India's position in world politics. At that time India was "neutral" in world politics and would not support either the USA in its anti-communist campaign or Russia, which led the communist world. The Indian student said, "We have a 3,000+ mile border with Russia. We are a poor country. How can we

protect ourselves if Russia invades us?" But the American government -- and press -- treated India as an enemy because of its neutrality. It was at this point I decided that if I could write the truth and real story about such situations that maybe the American people would make better decisions.

That course and my talking with the Indian student were major influences on my road to where I am today -- where I still passionately believe that if people have accurate and well balanced information that life decisions would be better. This is where my passion to search for the truth and write about current events in a balanced manner was ignited.

* * * *

Given my desire to write about world events in a balanced manner, in 1955 I finally chose The University of Wisconsin to pursue my journalism career and had enrolled in the School of Journalism. UW had an excellent journalism program. My cousin, Herman, was working on his Ph.D. in urban renewal. (Years later he retired as Professor Emeritus from New York University, where I did my graduate work.)

After my enrolling, the Freshman Dean came to visit my high school (Dwight Morrow) in Englewood and asked me what I wanted to do. I said, "Be a foreign correspondent." She then recommended that for the first two years I take a special program, Integrated Liberal Studies (ILS), which integrated a wide range of disciplines from sciences, language, literature, history, political science, and economics. The Dean said that having a basic knowledge of various subjects would help me write with a better understanding of what was happening in the world. Then she said I could combine ILS with journalism.

Best advice!! So, I sent a letter to the school saying I wanted to switch my major and take ILS. I received an acknowledgment letter that said “You have been accepted in ILS.”

I did not understand what the word “accepted” meant until I went to a Labor Day barbecue with my cousin. His friends asked me what I was going to study. I said I was taking ILS. “Oh, you must be smart,” they said. “That is a very hard course.” To say the least, I was petrified before I even stepped into my first class. More than 200 started the program, and only 97 of us finished. Instead of continuing in journalism, I majored in International Relations, another very special program that enabled me to take courses in history, economics, political science and journalism. I was able to choose those courses that really interested me. In my junior year I was taking graduate courses in political science and economics. So many of those courses helped me write the kind of political and economics articles I wrote after interviewing top officials around the world.

The first ILS science course combined astronomy, climatology, meteorology, and a little geology. The book itself was mundane, taking each discipline separately and dealing with it. However, the professor’s lectures were fascinating. He put all these disciplines together and focused on the rise and fall of the Greek and Roman Empires in relation to climate change. He showed how the change in the rain belt in these two countries (which moved further and further north over time) led to the downfall of these great empires. As the rain belts moved north, drought took over the southern parts, which led to crop failures, hunger, citizen unrest, riots in the streets, and the collapse of the political establishment of that time.

Today, global warming is of great concern. How anyone cannot believe there is global warming is beyond me. Today's scientific technology has clearly shown the changes in the ozone level and the many holes, which expand and contract during different parts of the year. And what about those polar bear and the penguins who now have to search elsewhere for food?

* * * *

Wisconsin had a large number of foreign students, most of whom were graduate students, and a very active International Club. I became active in the International Club. My interest in the international arena increased as I got to know more about the cultures and politics around the world. Many of these students were important in later years in my travels and marriage.

My interest in and understanding of foreign affairs was further heightened . It also increased my desire to dig deep into what was going on in the world and write more balanced articles.

THE FIRST OF MANY EXPERIENCES

Over the years my travels took me to Israel (four times), through Europe, India (a year), Pakistan, Indonesia (three times), Burma, Thailand, Hong Kong, The Philippines (three years), Sabah, Taiwan, Japan, Liberia, and South Africa. I interviewed the top leaders in many of these countries and wrote articles that often were against the American government's position at that time. Today (2011) these strong

feelings of truth and accuracy show up in my articles about *The Sandwich Generation* (r) (these words trademarked by me) and about scams that take advantage of vulnerable Americans. **The truth can free people from making bad decisions.**

During my senior year at Wisconsin, in 1959, in order to earn some spending money, I worked for the head of the Hebrew and Semitic Studies Department. Menacham Mansour was one of the few experts in Middle East history who translated the Dead Sea Scrolls, which were discovered in 1947. I helped him write a series of radio broadcasts on the information obtained from his translations. That summer he took a group of Christian clergy on a biblical tour of Israel and asked me if I wanted to go with them. As I only had to pay air fare (we were then guests of the Israeli government), I jumped at the opportunity. The group consisted of 15 clergy (including two wives) from various denominations, myself, and Dr. Mansour. We flew to Rome, spent a day or so there, went down to Pompeii, and then took a ship to Haifa.

In Rome we attended a special audience with Pope John XXII. I had bought several St. Christopher medals and had them blessed by the Pope. My mother kept hers in all her cars until her death in 1997. I still have it -- somewhere.

Naples has had a reputation of housing a lot of poor. In 1959, years after the war ended, bombed out buildings were unrepaired. People lived in hovels and hung their clothes on lines put out along the streets. The children, thin and scantily clothed, played in the streets.

Winding roads along the coast took us to Pompeii. Buried in 49 AD, the city sported cobblestones and thick walls of houses, public baths, basilicas, court yards. Intact houses had original paintings and mosaic walls, ceilings and floors.

CAROL ABAYA

Kitchen utensils, women's hair clips, and potbellied stoves were common. An intricate city-wide watering system attested to the sophistication at that time.

* * * *

We then boarded the S.S.T. Herzl, at that time the only real Israeli luxury liner.

This was my first trip abroad and my first of four visits to Israel: 1959, 1967, 1978 and 1984.

We landed in Haifa where white modern buildings covered the mountain from the port to the top. The gold dome of the Bahai Temple and the Dragon Silos towered over all.

Unlike Naples, Haifa had been quickly rebuilt after The War of Liberation. The atmosphere was one of progress and pushing ahead, of building a new life. Everywhere trees and luxuriant vegetation, colorful flowers dotted the landscape. Palm and umbrella trees created an atmosphere of unreality.

Our hotel was at the top of the mountain with a panorama view of the city. The only way to really to get to know a city is to walk. And we walked and walked.

Although a seaport, Haifa at night was quiet. Upon reaching the lower part of the city, we heard Israeli music. We discovered a group of children 13 and 14 years old, singing and dancing in the courtyard of a school. Although it was 11 p.m., there were no adults present.

The spirit of revival was also seen on the slopes rising above the port. Romans and Ottoman Turks had stripped off all vegetation. We noted the reforestation program, rows and rows of new trees, many growing amidst rocks. Jews around



the world donated money to have a tree planted in their family's name.

On July 4, 1959, the US Ambassador had a party. As night fell we stood silently as the Israeli and American national anthems were played. We were in a new state in an old land, looking forward to seeing what had been accomplished in a very short period of time.

The Old Testament was our guide book, and our guide was one of the foremost archeologists in Israel.

We went on to Jerusalem, the Holy City, buried in the mountains and accessible only by steep winding roads. Reforestation was also quite evident. Remnants of the War of Liberation dotted the roadside. Rusty armored trucks and tanks. Deserted Arab villages appeared ghostlike.

The Old City teemed with masses of people and overwhelming noise. Meha Shearim was the center of the very orthodox Jews. They did little or no work, spent the days contemplating the Talmud and lived on charity. My thoughts at that time: they live like parasites on the land.

The City was not a pleasant place. As we walked into the market area, the stench of fish reached our nostrils. Flies and filth covered both foods and humans. Loaves of bread swarmed with flies. The clothes of many of the shop keepers were caked with dirt.

Curious 14-year-old girls surrounded us. Aside from the occasional tourist they had no contact with the outside world. Their few English words were "America is good, isn't it." Verbally our reaction was "Yes, America is good." Our thoughts and our reaction were that we could not comprehend the lives of these Jewish children, curious about us, yet living in filth and poverty.

We continued walking near the barbed wire border between Old and New Jerusalem, keeping our hands down at our sides so the heavily armed border guards would not shoot us. More remnants of deserted buildings from the War of Liberation.

* * * *

Down to Beersheba, the Negev desert which covers 60% of Israel. Desolate, brown and barren. No plants, no human beings. An occasional Bedouin cavalcade with a few camels moved slowly across the eroded soil. One wonders why God called this the land of milk and honey.

One of the outstanding cities we visited was Avdat, located in the center of the desert between Egypt and Jordan. Then deserted Avdat had supported an agricultural and trading population of 10,000. But it wasn't until the mid-1950s that the source of the water for the crops was discovered. A survey by plane showed clearly defined rock walls a short way from the city itself, which stood on a high hill completely surrounded by the desert. The rain water -- only several inches each year -- was collected in these cache basins and used to water the crops.

Israel in 1959 was not well developed. But the Israelis brought together two main elements that helped build the country to what it is today. First, the kibbutz -- THE only true Marxist political community -- where everyone contributed to the whole and everyone was provided with housing, food, clothing, education and medical care. Second, the use of agricultural technology. Israel has little water (as evident in Avdat) and water was -- and still is -- very precious. Amidst the beige sands were green oases where underground

irrigation systems fed the roots of plants, thus bypassing evaporation from the leaves. Thus Israel developed a thriving business of exporting fruits and vegetables to Europe.

My feeling today is that if the Arabs had used such systems that they too could have made their hostile lands fruitful. But sometimes it seems that the Arabs are more interested in political elements rather than providing the basics for their people.

ARTICLES DOCUMENTED THE TRIP

I made arrangements ahead of time to send articles to *The Wisconsin State Journal (WSJ)* -- because the trip was organized through the University of Wisconsin -- and the *Bergen Evening Record*, my hometown paper. My by-lined articles in the *WSJ* read "State Journal Correspondent." In those days there was no Fax, so all articles were airmailed, probably typed on my old Royal portable typewriter, which weighed 25 pounds and which I always carried with me .

My clips tell the story.

Headlines in *The Wisconsin State Journal* were:

Tuesday, July 21, 1959 -- Madisonian Reports on Trip to Israel, Progress of Jews

Sunday, July 26, 1959 -- Jerusalem Shows Its Age, but Ignores Past as Well

Thursday, August 6, 1959 -- In 10 Years, the Negev Struggles From Desert to Vigorous Land

Friday, August 7, 1959 -- Equality Stressed in Israel Kibbutz

These articles focused on what I saw as we traveled from modern city to stark desert and the Dead Sea and Mediterranean. The articles show the vision and hard work of the Jews in rebuilding, in some areas virtually from scratch. Also clearly shown is the drive for the future and enhancing human quality of life. These articles did not deal with politics -- except relating to education and immigration.

My first article in the *Wisconsin State Journal* stated:

“At Haifa, our first glimpse of the Holy Land, the slopes of Mt. Carmel appeared to be dotted with white modern buildings. Soon we could see that buildings covered the mountain. The gold dome of the Bahai Temple and the “Dagon Silos” could be distinguished in the masses of whiteness.”

I wrote about the efforts at reforestation and reclamation of the land stripped of forests and vegetation by the Romans and Ottoman Turks.

The first article ends “The general atmosphere is one of progress and pushing ahead, of building a new nation and life.”

(Later on in this book I talk about my 1967 trip to Israel and the fact that the Arabs did little, if anything, to reclaim and rebuild the lands they occupied. If Arabs had done ‘things’ differently, we might not be in the political and highly emotionally charged situation in which we are today.)

My second article to the *WSJ* was from Beersheba and talks about what it was, is and will be. Following is key text.

“Beersheba. The building of a dynamic modern society has gone on at an unbelievable rate.

“With mass immigration, the population has doubled in 10 years. A total of 437 new villages and towns, 578,000 living units, 1,346 new schools, 132 hospitals and clinics, 764 miles of

new roads, and 395 miles of railway have been built since 1948.....

“The harsh and once unpromising lands of the Negev desert present a typical image of an irrevocable desert. Desolate, barren and brown, eroded by winds and rains, the Negev covers 60% of Israel.

“Before 1949, the Negev was dismissed in a multitude of argumentative documents as impossible for human habitation, destined to remain parched and inaccessible. And when one travels through this area - the bleakest land imaginable - one wonders how it could have been called the Land of Milk and Honey.

“However, scholars knew that once large sections of the Negev had been fertile and productive and had sustained populations ranging from 80,000 to 100,000.

“Today from this area of ungodliness rise the buildings of Beersheba, the vigorous capital of the Negev.”

“The clue to the Negev’s progress is the bringing of water from the north, where it is plentiful, to the south, which receives only a few inches of rain each year.”

In the next article in the *WSJ* as I stood at the barbed wire separating Israel with Egypt, I continued to talk about the spirit of the Jews and the kibbutz -- THE only place in the world where true Marxism existed and was successful. This land-based spirit is also shown in my unique 1967 series in *The Bergen Evening Record* on the “occupied” lands. This spirit continues, even stronger today, as the “enemy” (the Arabs) continues to try to wipe Israel from the world map.

“Life on a kibbutz is looked upon as being the best expression of equality man can find in this word.

“The kibbutz is a communal settlement in which all property is collectively owned, and work is organized on a

collective basis. The members give their labor and are supplied with housing, food, clothing, education, and cultural and medical services.

“The emergence of Zionism as the concrete expression of an age-old dream to restore Jewish independence in Israel was accompanied by the idea of a return to the soil.

“This return to the soil met with overwhelming difficulties.”

I talked about the barren land and the tremendous obstacles faced by the settlers, and again the spirit of the people and the country.

The *WSJ* article continues “The Israelites are building a country to become a nation among nations. They are building farms and industries from rocks. They are blossoming forth from the desert.”

As I stood that day close to the Egyptian border in the Yad Mordechai kibbutz I wrote “Israel is looking to the future, building day by day, yet apprehensive of the still unsettled peace here.”

That night, right where we stood that day, Israeli soldiers killed three Egyptians who were trying to cross into Israel to do damage.

* * * *

The first *Bergen Evening Record* article, written from Jerusalem, focused on education and immigration and the problems caused by a multiethnic population. The first paragraph reads: “Educators in Israel today face problems similar to those faced by their American counterparts during the great expansion years following the Civil War and extending to the present day.”

That “present day” is still here today with unequal quality of education resulting in a high dropout rate in cities, gang wars, drugs and guns.

My *Record* article headlined “Immigration Causes Problems for Israeli School Systems.” And says “As America was an assimilation point for various immigrants and racial groups, so in a smaller sense is Israel just such a melting pot. Since 1948 thousands of immigrants from all parts of the globe have flocked to Israel, bringing with them many diverse languages and customs.

“It is the educators’ task to assimilate and raise the living and educational standards of peoples with entirely different cultures and backgrounds. Education is the indispensable instrument for welding together the different elements --the native born and the newcomer -- into a united society.

“Israel’s question of cultural atmosphere in the home in correlation to educational levels is not unlike America’s education problems born of our influx of immigrants. Both countries endeavor to find the best possible way in which to raise their national standard of living and education, including that of the newcomer, without hindering those who have had a head start by virtue of being native born. ...”

Education is complex. Perhaps the Israelis had been more insightful in philosophy and action than Americans, even in the 21st century. In one of my articles I talked about the aims of the Hebrew University, still the premier educational institution in Israel.

According to my article: “The University has a 3-fold aim: to serve humanity by expanding knowledge, to serve Israel by providing it with professional manpower, by training its future leaders, and by scientifically hastening the process of its development; and to service the Jewish people by helping

to redefine Jewish values and to re-create a specifically Hebrew culture.”

The article also talked about the technical and trade schools, so “the youths of the nation build themselves into productive citizens and build a greater Israel.” Again, Israel was ahead of the USA in establishing educational objectives to meet the needs of both its youth and the nation. We are still grappling with this problem today -- not enough technical expertise to meet the needs of the 21st century.

The next *Record* article focused on Beersheba and the Negev, same as the *Wisconsin State Journal* one. The headline: “Reclamation of Desert Is Important to Israel.” The subhead: Portions of Bleak Negev Have Been Restored to Fertility As Nation Marches Ahead. Its beginning tied everything together with “The building of a dynamic society in Israel has gone on at an unbelievable rate.”

And the next *Record* article combined a description of the desolate country with the Yad Mordechai kibbutz. The headline: “Rebirth Held Back Without Working Soil.” The subhead: “Zionism Accompanied By Return to Agriculture.”

My last article for *The Record*, dated Sept. 3, 1959 summarized my impressions and the many challenges facing Israel. So much progress had been made from Independence to that summer of 1959. My 1967 articles further showed the progress, but focused on the political and economic dilemmas resulting from the Six Day War.

The 1959 headline read “Israel Fights to Live, Lacks All Resources.”

“Our visit to Israel is over. We leave with a feeling of having seen a modern nation being molded out of wilderness -- a wilderness such as our forefathers never experienced.

“Here the soil is gone from the mountain slopes and water is scarcely found in 60% of the country. Israel has few natural resources, and although a Middle East country lacks precious oil.

“Mass immigration has caused innumerable problems. Problems which must be solved. To remain a free political entity amidst enemies, Israel must build a strong country or perish. Thus, progress comes from necessity.”

The article ends: “This land of the Bible, which has lain waste for generations, has, during the last few decades, changed beyond recognition. The barren wilderness has turned into a flowering garden; malaria-infested swamps are now fertile valleys with flourishing settlements; new water resources have been opened up, and the earth yields crops undreamed of a generation ago. Much still remains to be done, but labor, science, and humanitarian work have made common cause and carry on harmoniously towards a common goal.”

For the three weeks in Israel, our schedule was hectic. Up at sunrise and after 13 hours either on the unairconditioned bus or sightseeing we’d crash at a hotel. At the same time, I felt as if I had just “tipped the country”. So much more! So much dynamism.

TO NEW CULTURES AND FAMILIES

From my experiences in Wisconsin and at New York University, I believe that most peoples were basically the same as far as life values go, regardless of ethnic or country background. I found that even the poor willingly share what

little they may have with strangers, especially from another country.

This belief was validated time after time, over the years, as I always tried to get to know average people in every country in which I spent time. I stayed with families wherever possible or visited families of my Wisconsin classmates.

So from Israel, that first trip in 1959, I went to Athens, London, Edinburg and Paris.

In Athens I met the family of one of my Wisconsin classmates, Demetris Spyridakis. His brother, George, managed a small hotel, Hotel Alfa, and I stayed there. I met the whole family, who peppered me with questions about Wisconsin and life in the States.

Needless to say, given my interest in ruins, I found the Acropolis, Delphi and Corinth fascinating. That parts of those cities still stand, after thousands of years, is really amazing -- especially when a building or structure here may only be a couple of hundred years old.

As always the best way to immerse oneself in the atmosphere of a city is to walk the streets. I did this in Israel with the group. And a few of us would do so at night. In Athens, London and Paris I traveled alone. But every day I walked the streets, taking in the past as well as the present. Of course, I was young and had a lot of energy.

The top of the Acropolis, tells the story of the ancients. The Temple of Theseus from 400 BC, the Arch of Hadrian, the Theatre of Dionysos, the Tower of Winds, and so much more. My feet ached, but I continued the next day. An amazing boat trip to Argolis, Corinth, Epodaurus, Mecnas showed the ancient buildings that have stood up over time.

At night, George took me out to dinner. Often to hidden places the average tourist would never find. One dinner with his family. Another night to his cousin's family.

Noted in my diary: HOT!! HOT!! And "the Greek people's warmth was overwhelming."

Given my interest in international affairs, there were many discussions about USA's role in the world. A Foreign Ministry official told me that the US should take more initiative in foreign policy rather than sit back waiting for events to occur.

Aside from my conversations with the Indian exchange student in high school, this was the second time a foreigner criticized American foreign policy and the lack of understanding of the world and other people.

This was re-enforced the next day when I went to the USIS library and spoke with the Director for 1 1/2 hours. The lack of true understanding came out. A larger budget was needed to translate books into the native language. And the availability of cheaper American books would further cement a positive relationship.

LONDON

London is difficult to fully describe because it is so complex. In spite of a lot of rain, I wandered around on foot and found the Indian section, where restaurants offered less expensive lunches and dinners. I loved Indian food even then. I spent many hours in the museums, awed by the masterpieces -- the details and depth perception.

The English had a reputation for being somber and cold. I found them quite friendly. However, I clearly felt the class distinction, an aloofness of lower class from the uppers.

As I'm a people person I sought out people wherever I could. Lunch and then dinner with the family who were cousins of the husband of my cousin. Also I spent a day and evening with one of my Wisconsin classmates, Hasso Rudt Von Collenbeg. We visited the London Tower, the British Museum, and the play "A Raisin in the Sun." If I recall correctly the play premiered in London before coming to NYC. We also went to a concert and ballet. Hasso and I years later planned to get together in Vietnam. Did not happen, as he was killed.

From London I called the parents of one of my Wisconsin classmates, John Crellin, to say "hello" and tell them John was doing fine in the States. His mother said, "Oh, when can you visit us?" On Sunday I took the train to Thorpe Bay. After sightseeing and a long walk on the beach, I had lunch with the family. John's mother looked at the way I ate and said "I wonder if John is going to eat with two hands when he comes home."

From London I took the train to Edinburg to attend the opening ceremonies of the Edinburg Festival. My US travel agent had gotten me a ticket. Cost US\$5.

In Edinburg, I visited with still another family of a Wisconsin classmate, Sev Fluss, whose Jewish family invited me to a Friday Sabbath dinner. We talked about the upcoming Festival. They were also going. They wanted to know where I would be sitting so they could find me. I showed them my ticket. "Is this a good seat?" I asked. Everyone looked at each other and said "Yes!" We arranged to meet after the concert.

Before the concert I had dinner at a restaurant on the Village Green, which was crowded with people going to the concert. The maitre'de asked me if I would share my very small table with a female army officer. I agreed and spent an interesting hour learning more about Scotland. The officer had an army car and driver and offered to take me up the steep hill to the castle. Of course, I agreed.

I found my seat. But then I looked around and cringed. I wore a sleeveless denim dress and sandals. I was surrounded by mink, ermine, diamonds and tuxes. Wow! All for \$5. Afterwards, I asked Sev's family why they didn't warn me. His mother said, "We were afraid you wouldn't go."

* * * *

The last stop on that first trip abroad was Paris. I spent a lot of time in the Louvre Museum. As in London, the delicacy of the masterpieces fascinated me. At that time, Chagall was little known, but he had one of his first exhibits in a small side gallery of the Louvre. I wasn't impressed by his work then -- and I'm still not. I would buy a loaf of French bread and some cheese and sit on the banks of the Seine watching the boats and ducks.

One night I treated myself to dinner at a fancy French restaurant -- linen table cloths, waiters in tuxes. I had had a little (very little) French in college. When I finished eating, I said to the waiter "Je sui fini ." And motioned that he could take my plate. He asked me what I said, and I repeated it. "Oh, no," he said, "you can't say that." "Why not!" I asked. "I am finished."

"No," he said, "Je sui fini means I am dead." What a booboo!!

I stayed in a small B&B on a side street near the Arch de Triumph. On my last day I met a young Irish couple, who were on their honeymoon. She was a teacher. We spent the day together, and I learned a lot about the poverty in Ireland - - even more than 10 years after the War. Bread and potatoes were the staples. I had about \$20 left, and so invited them to dinner -- at a tiny, inexpensive, but very good Italian restaurant I had found. The couple had never seen spaghetti! Once the other diners saw me trying to show them how to use the fork and spoon to twirl the spaghetti, everyone gave advice. We had a jolly time!

AFTER THAT FIRST TRIP

I returned home and after a short stint with one of the encyclopedias I started working for *Time* magazine and went to graduate school at New York University. At *Time*, I was a researcher. At that time, only men were writers, no women writers. I learned a valuable lesson there, which helped me throughout my writing career. I quickly saw that what these men wrote never saw print as they first wrote them. A number of levels of editing changed their carefully crafted words -- and they were making big bucks then. So I asked, "Doesn't it bother you that what you write doesn't get into the magazine?" The unanimous answer was "If you can't accept editing and changes then you should not be in this profession." Another 'best advice.'

The work week was Tuesday through Saturday, because the deadline was 11 p.m. Saturday. The magazine went to press early Sunday morning and was on the streets across the country Monday morning. **Looking back, this**

accomplishment was amazing. There were no computers, and every word, in fact every letter, was hand set on large wooden plates that were then put on the printing presses. There was no Federal Express to get the papers quickly to the newsstands.

Another lesson learned was that I am no drinker. One drink was my limit. Reporters have a reputation of being heavy drinkers, and in order to keep the best of the best, *Time* management delivered bottles of Scotch and Rye (favorite drinks of the day) every Friday night to the writers and researchers. On Saturday, gourmet dinners were brought in for everyone. I wonder if this custom is still honored.

Even though we made far less money than the men, researchers wielded awesome power. An article could not go to the printer unless I signed off on it. Signing off meant that every word was spelled correctly (no such thing as spell check), each punctuation mark was correct, and the article was totally factually accurate.

I can still remember one story about some agricultural program and policy that was so warped it was factually inaccurate (at least as far as I was concerned). I made the writer change the wording -- otherwise I would not sign off. Reluctantly he did make the change -- probably because we were on deadline and there was no time to debate it.

The only time something inaccurate slipped by me involved the death of some well-known sheik in the Middle East. It was late on a Saturday night -- deadline time -- and I used the information from the *New York Times* obit without checking further.

So, I worked at *Time* during the day and went to New York University graduate school at night -- again majoring in International Relations. My MA degree in Government

/International Relations was January 1963. I commuted from New Jersey every day, often returning home late at night, only to get up very early the next day and repeat the process. My parents paid for my years at Wisconsin, but then I was on my own. I guess when one wants something bad enough one finds a way. Actually *Time* reimbursed my tuition after I completed each course. They wanted their staff members to be as educated as possible.

Several things during those years influenced the rest of my life. First was the ongoing discussions at NYU about world politics and what we would do when we would have the power to make changes. A great lesson learned by listening to others with differing opinions.

Second were connections with colleagues from overseas which made my travels in India and Indonesia extremely fruitful.