

Voices from Far Away Lands

Voices from Far Away Lands:

From Divergent to Convergent

Edited by

Mary Gene Saudelli, Jim Kusch
and Sharon Carroll

Cambridge
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MODULE 1:
GOING ABROAD

CHAPTER 1

GOING GLOBAL: A WALKABOUT INTO CONTEMPORARY INTERNATIONAL LIVES

MARY GENE SAUDELLI, JIM KUSCH,
SHARON CARROLL

How This Book Began

Restlessness, a search for adventure, environmental change, questions of self in relation to everyone else, international relations, social change and advocacy are merely a few aspects characterizing 21st century life. People are traversing the globe and finding new locations to live, learn, earn and thrive for a number of reasons, not the least of which is for adventure, global learning, career opportunities, and/or exposure to a new and exciting way of life. Sometimes, people cross the globe for the purpose of reflection – a quest to understand something about one’s self or a circumstance affecting a life experience. Recognizing these aspects of contemporary life is what drew the authors and editors of this book to the notion of “Walkabout”. A walkabout is a term associated with Australian colloquialism for “a short period of wandering bush life engaged in by an Australian aborigine as an occasional interruption of regular work” (Merriam-Webster Online, 2018). The origin of the term however, emanates from Australian Aboriginal society in reference to a male youth’s right-of-passage into manhood. The adolescent journeys to live in the wilderness for a period of time to make the spiritual transition into manhood. Today, a walkabout can be associated with the concept of ‘temporary mobility’. Walkabout, in fact, was the title of an avant-garde film directed by Nicolas Roeg in 1971 (Braun, 2003). But what is a Walkabout in relation to contemporary international lives and why are the editors inspired by this term? In other research (Amorim, Ryan, and Kusch, 2010) discussed the concept of how authors explain themselves via the ordinary term “we” and concluded that the term walkabout referred to

research produced through wandering and in some cases, unstructured enquiry. Other more contemporaneous writing by Booker Prize winner Olga Tokarczuk gathered accounts by a larger group of authors that brought a harmony to wandering authors who wrote asynchronous accounts of a “life away” in the 21st century in the book *Flights* (Tokarczuk, 2018).

The idea for our book began in a rather mundane way. Mary Gene Saudelli was living in Doha, Qatar. After many years living in various countries across the globe, she returned to Canada, met and married her husband Robert. When she was offered what initially seemed like a significant career opportunity to return to her international life, she and her husband packed their bags and left Canada with their dog Lily to live in Doha Qatar in a villa complex close to the city centre. Mary had a robust ‘walkabout’ professional and international life prior to meeting Robert and upon her return to Canada, although she loved how her life had changed, she often missed the international learning experiences she enjoyed from her life abroad. Robert, although well-travelled in his own right, was fascinated by her stories of living abroad.

After a few months in Doha, a colleague was leaving to return to his home country and Mary and Robert decided to host a retirement party for him at their villa. At one point, as the conversation whirled around her, Mary took a moment to look around at the fascinating people filling her villa – truly a “community of those with nothing in common” (Lingis, 1994) except the fascinating lives they all lead as expatriates living, learning, thriving in this international life they had all built and the mesmerizing stories being shared around the crowded villa. Mary heard stories about what it meant to raise children in a country far different from the family’s nationality, humility awareness from making mistakes and learning from them, encounters with different people who had been inspiring, the treachery of driving in a new environment, acts of generosity and kindness, acts of charity and global betterment, adjustments, apologies, happiness, anger, fear, discomfort, enthusiasm, and lots and lots of laughter. The stories Mary listened to were incredible meanderings from people whose lives were filled with adventure, learning and growth – it was like a living scene, or tableau vivant right there in her living room in Qatar of people who had engaged in their own individual and collective ‘walkabouts’.

Enjoying her moment of subtle observation at the conversations and people surrounding her, Mary thought about her own story of first leaving Canada to go to Istanbul Turkey, and then subsequently to many other adventures and locales. What compelled her to go, to live a life like this, return home to Canada to settle down, and then off again to Qatar in the Middle East? How would people who had not lived internationally respond

to the stories swirling around her? There was much to learn from the people who have lived abroad, she thought to herself while the party continued around her. At that moment, Mary realized that the stories shared at the party needed to be shared in a thoughtful, reflective and intimate way; thus inspiring this book.

Sharon Carroll was at the party in Mary's villa and when they talked about Mary's inspiration for this book, Sharon was enthusiastic to contribute, and later was enthusiastic to be a co-editor. Interestingly, Jim Kusch came to be involved via meeting Mary on a website for academics called Research Gate. Mary and Jim had several key areas in common as research interests, and they connected through email – another aspect of contemporary life. All three editors lived in different areas, frequently travelled as they were developing this book and all relied on digital communication to make this book a reality. In fact, Mary and Sharon have never met Jim in person, but feel as though they have through their communication during these last few years. Yet, another aspect of the contemporary.

As Jim became involved in the project, and the three editors engaged in digital discussions through the development, planning, proposal writing, gathering, peer reviewing, and editing of the various contributions from various authors, the term 'walkabout' was at one point mentioned by Jim as a way to think about bringing all these various stories and life experiences together. From divergent experiences of learning and living abroad, to convergence – the notion that all these different stories, themes, ways of writing and ways of being reflective come together to shared learning regarding the living of life abroad - a walkabout life - in faraway lands.

Thinking through the term walkabout, and the stories that make up this book, the editors thought about how the term signifies the personal journeys that contributors have made and the reflective thought in writing down their storied lived experiences. The learning highlighted is personal but also universal (Rogers, 1961/2003). There are lessons to be told from those who have engaged in walkabouts abroad. These individuals, who traverse the globe on their own individual walkabouts, have voices – they are from several different walks of life. Some are educators, scholars, nurses, military personnel, interior decorators, engineers, animal rescuers, business management professionals, innovators, and all have unique voices brought together for this edited book of stories. There are lessons to be learned from their adventures, from their emotions, from their tears and from their laughter. Hence, the title of this book: 'Voices from Far Away Lands: From Divergence to Convergence.'

Globalization, Internationalization and Global Citizenship

A theme offered throughout this book is what global citizenship means and how the authors' viewpoints have been shaped by their storied international experiences. They offer a unique perspective on the discussion of what it means to be a global citizen.

In the late 20th century, we spoke of the term 'globalization' particularly in relation to changes resulting from the advent of the Internet. This term 'globalization' has become problematic in discussions of 21st century contemporary life as it is connected to economic development discourses (e.g.: Akram, Faheem, Kyzer, Abdullah, 2011; Kusch, 2011). Globalization as a concept refers to global impact from advances in technology, industrial expansion, and environmentalism particularly in relation to global issues such as poverty, human rights, health and wellbeing. Globalization is often discussed along binary lines of discourse highlighting inequities and impact. Globalization has also been identified with neocolonialism (Negri, 2008; Kumar, 2010; Saudelli, 2015) particularly in relation to business and economic development and the relationship to English as a global language or lingua franca.

Internationalizing, on the other hand, has been discussed differently. Internationalizing has focused on the potential for global citizenship emanating from reciprocity in learning across international contexts, interactions and opportunities (Saudelli, 2015). To that end, Saudelli (2015) asserts that there is much to learn from the experiences of those who go abroad; she argues the narrative has never been so important. What characterizes new perspectives about internationalizing? What are the lived experiences shaping our visions of being international? What does global citizenship mean in the 21st century? What can we learn from individuals who live in a variety of contexts across the globe engaged in a variety of actions and interactions?

Internationalizing in the 21st century involves individuals relocating their immediate families including children and pets to go overseas. 'Trailing spouses' used to refer to wives who follow their husbands overseas. In the 21st century the trailing spouse may be husbands who choose to put their wives' careers before their own, or may involve LGBTQ+ relationships where spouses or partners may give up their careers for the sake of the international experience. In many cases, being international means raising children in a country very different from one's own nationality – it may mean that children do not get to know their home country until they are older, perhaps even as young adults. Global marriages, with spouses living half way around the world from each other,

is not usual among international people, often called ‘expatriates’. In places where LGBTQ+ relationships are not recognized, international people have found different ways of being themselves and being a family, even if it means living in different countries but visiting each other frequently. Today, being international and having an international family can involve many different ways of being a family.

In the 21st century, global citizenship involves advocacy for social justice, human rights, animal rights, environmentalism and other initiatives that in years past may have been minimized in favour of maintaining the status quo in a new context so as not to offend sensibilities of context, culture and society. Parents must balance the benefits of raising children in an international life with maintaining personally felt cultural and family values, which may be in contradiction with sensibilities of context. Global citizenship also means exploring or perhaps challenging the notion of patriotism in relation to global identities. Amazing experiences of new and reciprocal learning from global interactions provide exciting new ideas. Personal growth and change collides with moments of dismissal of international learning from those who cannot understand an enlightened international perspective. Identities shift, comfort zones clash, curiosities heighten, networks expand, and the thirst for more becomes amplified.

This book seeks to address these issues and other questions about global citizenship in the 21st century. All of the stories that are part of this book are from people who have lived abroad in many places for extended periods of time. These lived experiences form snapshots of lessons and learning shaped by the confluences of living and learning abroad. Currently, the lived experiences of international individuals are relatively unknown. This book explores the lives, the learning, the experiences, the feelings and the contentions and controversies of their lives and situates these aspects within the theme of global citizenship. In doing so, the notion of what “global citizenship” means in relation to internationalism and 21st century living is provoked.

The Approach

The approach guiding this work is narrative self-study; “A look at a story of self” (Hamilton, Smith, & Worthington, 2009, p. 17). Narrative inquiry as a research method acknowledges that through story we make meaning from our lived experiences (Andrews, Squire & Tamboukou, 2008). As a research methodology, it is based on interpretive hermeneutic and phenomenological approaches (Trahar, 2009) that “involves a gathering of narratives - written, oral, visual” (p. 1). Meaning is ascribed in relation to

lived experiences (Josselson, 2006). Through narrative inquiry, we “strive to attend to the ways in which a story is constructed, for whom and why, as well as the cultural discourses it draws upon” (Trahar, 2009, p. 1). In this book, the various authors are telling a story of their international lived experience and in the process are engaged in a thought provoking examination of meaning in relation to events that have changed their lives.

The editors have engaged in a peer-review process of questioning, eliciting information, provoking thoughts and exploring the nature of the ways in which their stories have been told. As editors, we strove to engage each author with comments designed to heighten the reflective nature of their story, explore the nature of meaning of the experience, and thoughtfully engage the authors in a dialogue about their thinking. The editors have requested meaningful pictures that also speak to the stories in an effort for the voices to be represented pictographically and provide the reader with a lens to get to know the person behind the story. The chapters do not rely on empirical facts or assertions – rather, every author has the capacity to illuminate a storied, reflective and lived experience from the perspectives of the authors who contributed. All authors have lived the life – and fascinating lives at that. This book represents a snapshot of the stories of the global flow of human movement. Many, many more stories, and more voices are out there that need to be shared.

The Voices – The Stories and the People Who Share Them

The people who have contributed to this book have fascinating lives which can inform diverse, disciplinary and interdisciplinary fields particularly in relation to global civic-mindedness. We have framed the contributions in four compelling modules. “Going Abroad” represents the first module and contains narratives from the perspective of moving away to someplace international. It involves the nature of leaving, journeying, newness and time as it lapses. “Embracing cultures” represents the second module and contains narratives from the perspective of living and being international as they relate to engagement with different cultures. “Self and Familial Discovery” represents the third module and narratives speak to the learning about self and learning about the concepts of family from both living abroad, but also from writing about living abroad. This module is unique in that it contains chapters with perspectives of both the parents and a corresponding chapter written by the children for a unique parallel discourse. The fourth module “The Walkabout” speaks to the nature of profound learning through interaction with different people – those who are doing great acts of goodwill, those who live at the crossroads of two or more different

geographical borders, and those who have experienced great learning through different social exchanges.

As authors, we come to the task of putting down in writing our experiences of living, working and discovering ourselves in environments that are quite different. The stories that we share with you are uniquely stories of the 21st century although ironically a number are shaped and informed by locations that are set in past timeframes. All chapters draw upon questions that experience, personal circumstances, and locations call forth. The editors have provided a short summary of each “voice” or chapter which they begin with a question to frame the narrative. As you read through the chapters, we ask you to consider the guiding question as a way to think about meaning-making through the authors’ reflection.

Module 1: Going Abroad

After this introductory chapter, we begin with Marilyn McLeroy’s chapter with the title “*Why Would You Want to Go There and Do That*”, which in essence captures the spirit of this book. McLeroy begins by discussion of this question, posed to her while attending a secondary school reunion. She was in a position to attempt to explain her international life and all of her accumulated stories to people who have had little or no international experience and cannot fathom the changes and learning she has encountered. As you read through, ask yourself, do you have stories or do you know people whose life stories are such that they challenge those who have not lived outside their comfort zones?

This chapter moves into Jaspal Kaur’s chapter entitled “*New Marriage, New Career, New Life in Dubai: A Life Less Ordinary*”. This chapter represents a story of newness for a woman who transforms her life after completion of a Bachelor’s degree and a Bachelor of Education amongst the nuances of the complexities of that newness through the lens of an international life. The guiding question to ask as you read is: How does the “newness” of life and living impact your experience of living and learning internationally?

The next chapter is Justin Williams’ entitled “*A Long Journey to a New Life*”. William shares the story of a family making the difficult decision to move to the Middle East and the perspectives of what this entails. As you read, consider the question: What are the challenges of raising a young family together with the desire to travel and work in international contexts?

Continuing with the theme of Going Global, Robert Saudelli shares his reflections in the chapter “*Moving to the Middle East: Anticipations, Expectations, Reality and Myths of Living a Different Life*” exploring the

nature of trials and tribulations related to sacrificing his career in order to follow and support his wife on her sojourn to Qatar. As you read this chapter, consider: What does it mean to sacrifice a life you have always known to go abroad and live an international life?

Module 2: Embracing Cultures

Module 2 begins with Jim Kusch's chapter entitled "*An Excerpt from an Eight-Year Sojourn Through Ottoman Lands*", outlining reflections associated with embracing cultures throughout an eight-year time frame. As you read this chapter ask yourself: How do common international travel routes, from East to West and vice versa, impact our interpretations of 'being' and the ability to integrate our learning about the experiences over time?

The themes in this chapter carry forward to the following one, Jim Kusch's "*Samandag*", which is a reflection of observing the activity and character of cultural street life. As you read this chapter, think about the intermingling of cultures in an everyday experience and the quiet meditation of observing the present moment. A question to guide your thinking: What do you learn from people-watching and street life and what does this mean to cultural learning?

It is these daily interactions that have great power for inspiration and Jan Marie Graham, Neha Bansal, and Mary Gene Saudelli follow with their chapter "*Strong to the Core: Inspiring Women We Have Known*." In this chapter, the authors share their stories of learning that they have received from interactions with other inspiring women. The chapter speaks to how resilience and strength can mean different things to different people. As you read, consider the question: Who are some of the inspiring people you have known and how did they affect you?

Kerry Johnson's chapter "*An English Monkey in Japan*" seeks to share stories of cultural communication with all of its nuances. As we think about cross-cultural interactions internationally, we must recognize that communication in all of its forms is bound by culture and meaning. A question framing this chapter is: What does it mean to learn about different cultures' communication codes and how does this impact our learning about cross-cultural interactions?

Expanding on the theme of nuancing culture and communication to include envisioning the impact of one's sense of being, Seonaigh MacPherson shares in her chapter "*'A Nun is Not a Woman'*": *Contesting Gender in a Himalayan Global Contact Zone*". As you reflect

during your reading of this chapter, ask yourself: How do we explore our sense of being with belonging during our international sojourns?

This theme of ‘consideration of being’ in relation to cultural experiences also involves a complex social cultural history. Raymonde Tickner explores the nature of the past and the present in her chapter entitled “*Listening to the Voices*”. As you read, consider the question: How do voices from the past inform a person’s perspective of a lived experience?

Module 3: Self and Familial Discovery

The opening two chapters of this module chronicle a fascinating opportunity to consider the perspective of a parent who brings her family overseas and all that involves, while also sharing the perspective of her three children who spent their formative teenaged years abroad. Jan Marie Graham’s chapter “*Transitions and Teenagers: Moving the Family to Qatar*” shares the complexities involved with uprooting her family from Canada to Qatar. As you read this chapter, we ask you to consider the framing question: What is involved with transitioning children and family to an international life? We also ask you to consider this chapter in relation to the following chapter which shares the reflections of Jan Marie’s children Sydney MacLellan, McKenna MacLellan, and Cooper MacLellan entitled “*Through Our Eyes: Life as Third Culture Kids*” and “*The Global Village, Isn’t*” written by Gil Abend-David; both chapters written by teenagers and young adults who made the transition internationally with their families. As you read these chapters, consider the question: How can we learn to listen to the voices of children who live international lives?

Sharon Carroll reflects on her experiences of shifting identity in “*Culture Shock, Cultural Safety, Personal Growth and Professional Development Within an International Nursing Education Context*”. Lived experience has corresponding impact on one’s sense of identity and international experiences can provoke profound shifts in a sense of self with corresponding positive and negative implications. As you read this chapter, consider the question: How does our identity shift through cultural change and adaptation?

These shifts in self and perspectives of family are further explored in Justin Williams’ “*Expatriate Children and Where to Find Them: Confessions of an Unpopular Son in Law*”. The longer a family stays abroad, and has more international lived experiences, imbues a corresponding impact on the notions of interpretation of surroundings, nationalism and patriotism. As you read this chapter consider: How does international expatriate living

influence children's development, interpretation of culture, sense of family and patriotism?

Expanding on the theme of exploration of living 'inter-nationally'¹, Archana Sahni reflects on her lived experiences in "*Canadian in India, Indian in Canada: Reflections on Living Inter-Nationally*". This chapter edifies the sense of self as beyond a singular nationality identity. As you read, consider this framing question: What does it feel like to intentionally live 'between' nations when we choose to work inter-nationally?

Module 4: The Walkabout

Many international people speak of incredible moments of learning from various experiences. Going abroad can involve going to larger cosmopolitan cities, and also going to the rural countryside. Christian Leguerrier shares the story of living in the rural countryside in South Korea within a city that borders North Korea and what this meant in terms of his daily life and his role as a teacher. His chapter entitled "*A Waygook in the Wilderness: The Struggles and Successes of Teaching and Living in the Korean Countryside*" shares his reflections of living this life. As you read, consider the framing question: What can be learned when you live near the border of two related but separate countries with complicated political circumstances?

Moving to consideration of those who live abroad and who are moved to engage in acts of care, compassion, and goodwill, the following chapter by Birgit Marguerite, Mary Gene Saudelli, Louisa Howard, and Fiona Mair entitled "*Rescuing Salukis: The Noble Dogs of the Middle East*" shares not only the authors lived experiences, but shares how a globally connected network can be aligned and devoted to changing the circumstances for a beautiful breed of dogs indigenous to the Middle East. As you read this chapter, ask yourself this guiding question: How can an international network of people gather, engage, interact and act for good will, charity and global betterment and how can this impact all of us?

As we consider global betterment and how it affects us, the next chapter by Bahire Efe Özad & Ülfet Kutoğlu Kuruç write of their long standing relationship and their learning from Gypsy women in their chapter entitled "*Among Gypsy Women in Famagusta*". This chapter not only reflects on interactions and interconnections amongst a strong and close-knit community, but also highlights how these relationships have changed the

¹ This characterization of the word international to inter-national is purposeful to indicate the exploration of the internal or personal (inter) in relation to the national (or in some cases, multi-national).

authors' perceptions over time. As you read, consider the question: How does interacting with an unknown community inform us as to different ways of living together?

Considering different ways of learning, Mary Gene Saudelli shares her learning journey over an extended time frame and across four different geographical contexts through social exchanges with locals. Her chapter entitled "*The Intricacies of Social Exchanges: Bargaining Cultures in International Contexts*" captures how her accumulated learning of bargaining in all these different spaces shaped how she engages in negotiations across geographies and communities. As you read, ask yourself the guiding question: What are some of the commonalities and differences and how can they impact you as you engage in cross-cultural negotiations?

In these modules, readers will find an intriguing array of impressions and perceptions that explain how life, work, family and culture vary in international settings and how these impact a person and their learnings. Indeed, they are different from life at 'home'² – yet, at the same time, can inform how we might think our lives and our collective learned experiences. In posing questions about what we did, we find that answers and explanations put who we are, where we came from and how these experiences draw into sharper resolution our thoughts, feelings, beliefs and tensions. Inasmuch as the chapters are highly personal they bear out the truth of Carl Rogers' claim that the personal is most universal.

Invitation from the Editors and the Authors

In this book of essays (21 in total), the stories were not to be conceived as a single body. Rather they are a set of recollections written between 2013 and 2018 but representative of a time frame from 1999 to the present day. Does the collection have a singular intent? Are they governed by a plan? Maybe? Maybe not? All of the authors who contributed to the book wrote personal accounts of transformation whilst living or working abroad. Loosely, the chapters tell about life changes that occur and continue to occur in the passage of time from the 20th century into the 21st century. The stories lead us to question: In what ways is the 20th century distinctive from the 21st? What do the 21st and 22nd centuries hold for us? Each chapter seeks to return to the same place by way of different routes to find the real me who began the journey however long ago, since what endures across time is our mind. So the metaphor of the 'walkabout' that we employ is apt, as is that of the

² Recognizing that even the construct of "home" may be contested and problematized for these authors

‘homeless mind’ (Berger, Berger & Kellner, 1973). Perhaps the same place that all the stories return to tells much about consciousness in the 21st century—that is, the way people all over the world see themselves as human beings and their roles in life and their responses to change.

The editors believe that we always carry within ourselves those elements of our lives that have shaped us: for example, our perspectives, our attitudes, our culture, our ways of speaking, our ways of being and our ways of knowing and learning. We can become reflective and learn about those aspects of ourselves that have shaped us and that we have constructed. Taken together a principle value of the chapters is their difference and their convergence. The difference is the thing on the one hand. On the other hand, the warp and weft of the collection produces a unique perspective on life abroad – the convergence. Visually, we might think of the arrangement as a braid. Once called a *sinett or senett braid*, where the braid is composed of 22 plaits. Each plait is beautiful in its own right but woven together the beauty and strength is enhanced. Warp and weft – ‘coming together to form strong cloth’, and in the case of the reflections and learning from these written works ‘the convergence’ of perspectives and experiences that guide who we are.

As you move through the various stories illuminated in this book, we wish to invite you to live the journeys with them. Before the contemporary time of travel life and work abroad, indeed before the appearance and widespread use of travel guides such as Lonely Planet, many travellers from the mid-19th century onwards relied on *The Art of Travel*, by Francis Galton (Galton, 1855). That book advised travellers planning visits to faraway places that they should enjoy their journey; rather than striving for a goal they should also be prepared for all eventualities. In ‘coping’ with local people, Galton recommended a frank, joking manner that expressed more confidence in others you might encounter than you really feel. There is wisdom in these words. The authors in this book shared many intimate details of their lives and learning. They lived the life, so-to-speak, of being international and we have the opportunity to be a conduit in the sharing of and development of learnings associated with their fascinating stories.

Stories tell what connects us with others more than what separates us. Again and over again we read in the stories acts of kindness and just getting through the day. Someone drops an object, a total stranger picks it up and returns it to the person who dropped it. Total strangers give help to travellers on a bus and see that the foreigners do not miss their stop. Shopkeepers assist buyers about fashion and sizes. The authors find the personal to be most universal and do not allow extreme experiences or controversial locations to define them.

The stories that our chapters tell are about identity and personal change in each author. The chapters show that many of the people whom we meet in these chapters are not very different from you, who read this book. In her 2017 novel *Pachinko*, Min Jin Lee begins her story writing that “History has failed us, but no matter” (p. 1). At first, the quote might seem negative or untoward, but if we reflect about how we find meaning in the present time anywhere in the world, a most reliable source is not with experts so much as with ordinary people telling their accounts of what life is like out there, in different locations and situations that escape being told in mainstream accounts. Neither history nor journalism offers the breadth and insights that the personal accounts in our chapters provide. Critics may ask how we can be sure whether the accounts are real or fake. We would concur with Spivak (2006) who wrote that neither literature nor imagination are verifiable. So we invite you to read and imagine the world as shared through the stories in this book. We invite you to think about how the stories contribute to notions of global civic-mindedness. We invite you to think about your own learning pathways and the stories you have to share.

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CHAPTER 2

WHY WOULD YOU WANT TO GO THERE AND DO THAT!: EXPLAINING MY LIFE ABROAD

MARILYN MCLEROY

I was born at home in the town of Norwich, in beautiful Vermont, the United States of America. We moved to Hartford, Vermont when I was two years old as my parents wanted to raise their children in a farm community. Both my mother and father worked full time in their respective careers, and as a 'hobby', they ran a beef farm. It was a seven day a week 'hobby' and all their children contributed to working in support of the 'hobby'. This background of my life provided the foundation for a life of learning, strength, resilience, and responsibility that has served me well throughout my adventures across the globe. It was a wonderful life and a wonderful upbringing. The community is very closely knit and I still have many close relationships that date back to when I started the first grade.

I graduated from Hartford High School in 1976. After graduation, I joined the United States Army attending basic training in Fort McClellan, Alabama, then to Fort Leonardwood, Missouri for more specialized training. Following that, I was stationed in Nurnberg, Germany. Thus began my international life which has taken me to Jakarta, Angola, Congo, India, Malaysia, Scotland, Singapore, Qatar and now I have returned and am travelling the United States. Some might call my husband and I nomads, as we traverse across the United States after traversing the globe. We wear this label with pride as our experiences travelling the globe have been compelling and have shaped who we are, how we think, and what we value.

In my home town of Hartford there is a very active high school alumni association, which I was encouraged to attend several years ago. Since it was a milestone year, my 10th reunion, I agreed thinking it would be nice to learn how everyone's life had moved forward. It was fun to see my many mates from school and to catch up on families and news. I remember telling

my high school chums of the many places I had been and lived and was stunned that so many asked the same question: “Why would you want to go there and do that?” I guess I was the oddity in the group. I have always wanted to seek new adventures and experiences so at first, I was surprised by the question. However, as I reflect on that question, posed to me by so many, I think about how my adventures and experiences have influenced me, my learning and my life. I realize that I have been able to have faith and trust myself to be able to make my way through all the unknowns that I have to face, especially when one leaves all that is familiar to experience the new; and to do so with a positive attitude. Don’t be afraid to ask questions or to ask for help.

My Military Life

I joined the US Army in 1977. Following the Vietnam War, the draft process was disbanded and it was an all-volunteer army. The military changed from a separate women’s service to a combined men’s and women’s integrated military service referred to simply as the “US Army”. In phases, the army integrated the Women’s Army Corp or WAC into the US Army. Due to timing, I was in the very last WAC class to graduate from basic training on August, 31 1977.

Since I enlisted to be a truck driver, I attended driver’s training in Fort Leonardwood, Missouri and after sixty days I was given permanent duty in Germany. I was thrilled to have that opportunity as I had long wanted to travel abroad and see as much of the world as I could.

This was a time of significant change in both the military and also in society, even though not everyone was ready for the change that was occurring. In the army, women’s uniforms were more like blouses even though they were army issue green in colour. In basic training, women’s classes even included content related to how to apply makeup. Basic training was not particularly challenging because we were treated like delicate flowers. I however, grew up on a farm with brothers, sports, independence and work ethics. I went to an excellent secondary school that was geared toward ‘Outward Bound’ survival type programming – highly engaged and competitive sports, make your own shelter, make your own fire, make your own backpack frames – all survivalist in nature. In this program I worked with climbing ropes, challenging compass oriented activities, using maps and other basic survival tools. Basic training for women at that time in the military? Not a problem. Some of us asked: when does it get hard?

Because it is the nature of the military, as soon as we arrived in the country (Germany), we were required to attend immersion training intended to prepare us for living in a foreign country. Now that I look back on the immersion training, I realize this was an effective protocol as the training gave me tools and strategies I have taken with me and used time and time again as I travelled across the globe. I realize the training gave me confidence to address obstacles and tensions I would encounter in the many countries I have since visited. For example, some of the aspects shared in this training were: crossing quarters, inadvertently causing insult or tension, understanding cultural customs of a place and space, recognizing the needs of working with different people, traditions and protocols, et cetera.

I drove a conventional semi-truck. We would pull trailers out of Frankfurt, Germany from Rhein Mein Air Force Base. Each trailer that was dispatched was a mystery: it could be a one stop delivery or several deliveries, we never knew until we received our orders. This happened in the days before Global Positioning Systems (GPSs) or Mapquest or any of the other devices we take for granted today. As a driver, I had to figure out how to navigate to a post or 'kaserne'¹ so I not only had to navigate the roads, directions and signs, I also had to be willing to embrace communicative strategies in German, a language I did not know and communicative strategies for which I was unfamiliar. Many times these kasernes were located in small obscure towns. I found the people very friendly for the most part especially if you made the effort to speak German. I realized then the efforts you make to communicate in the language and manner of the locale where you are will serve you well with the communities you find yourself. I have taken this learning forward with me throughout all the places I have travelled.

I loved living in Germany. While there, I realized that Europe has so much more history than America, which is a relatively young country. The cultural traditions in Germany were much more conservative than I was accustomed to, but I welcomed learning them. Perhaps this perceived conservatism is due to the vast amount of freedoms that are taken for granted now days in the United States. During my time in Germany the country was not yet unified and Eastern and Western divisions existed. Today of course, Germany has unified and is a political democracy but much has changed over the years. At the time I lived in Germany, there were many homes that did not have phones. The mountains were high and the

¹ A German word for barracks, kaserne more closely refers to the post as a whole not just the billeting space. Barracks more closely defines the area where troops are billeted or housed.

hills were steep so change happened at a different pace then. In addition, within the Bavarian region it seemed to rain almost every day so people remained close to home. The conceptual takeaway for me was to acknowledge the importance of conservative traditions and customs that were very prominent in the region and that would impact my life while living there.

I enjoyed driving for the US Army, but at the time, the Army was still a man's army and most of the officers would make it known in both overt and covert ways that I did not belong: rather, I should be a secretary if I wanted a proper role for a woman. I was continually discouraged from driving and told constantly I should take a more gender appropriate job. However, we Vermonters are made from strong stock. The officers soon learned I did not discourage easily and that I could perform in the job as well as any man. The foundation of strength and resilience of my upbringing came through as I continued my role with the US Army driving a truck across Germany.

I was able to visit see most of the Bavarian area, where each town was wonderfully unique. Every town had their own brewery and food specialties, all of which should be sampled. Most of the local gasthäuser or gasthäuser serve one meal each day. This is where the locals come to chat, debate, and socialize. Some of these gasthäuser would provide boarding for a nominal fee, which offers a visitor a great way to integrate into local society. When you stay in these charming places, and participate in local social spaces, you learn about the people who live their lives in the area. They want to talk to you and learn about your life as well. This is authentic travel – not tourist travel and this is how you really learn about people across geographies. Although I was passing through, I was also living amongst the real inhabitants of Bavarian communities which allowed me to experience their cultures, their discussions, their traditions and their lives in a way that I could not if I were staying in a hotel or military barracks.

When I was not driving on weekends there were always activities to get out and appreciate. A great way to see the country was to go to a 'Volksmarch'. A Volksmarch literally translates to mean a 'People Walk'. This is a very popular hobby of the German people. It is similar to Hash Harrier². They were held in different towns all over at varying times of the year. So you could go to one on any weekend. After registering at the event, you would strike out in groups or on your own in either the 5k, 10k, or 15k options. Part of the route could be along the road, but many times would

² A Hash Harrier or a Hash House Harrier is an international group of non-competitive running social clubs. It is sometimes known as a hash, a hash run, or hashing.

head over hill and over dale, through meadows and around the countryside. A Volksmarch³ is a means to meet the locals along the way, practicing your German, which is warmly received. When you finish you would receive a beautiful medal with the town name commemorating the day and the event. Many people have vests they pin their medals on and some people's vests had hundreds of medals. There is a spirit of celebration and fellowship as you complete your Volksmarch with a meal and a beer.

While in the Army I took advantage of some of the tour packages offered. I was able to visit Garmisch-Partenkirchen to ski. It has a gorgeous ski area that takes you up into the Alps. This is how I visited Austria, which was in fact, an inadvertent mistake. Once I got to the top of the lift, running trails venture off in multiple directions. The group I was with worked our way up and down trying different routes and enjoying the scenery. As we journeyed along, we came upon a quaint lodge serving lunch and we decided to stop in and eat. As I looked at the meal board located in the lodge, I realized something was very different and I began to feel a sense of trepidation. German and Austrian languages are very similar and, although I was able to decipher the menu board, I also noticed a quadrupling of the prices for the items. That was when I realized that we had crossed over the border from Germany into Austria. Our group hastily ordered and ate our meal, leaving the way we had come and re-crossed the border back to Germany. In the current day, my experience in crossing borders in the European Union is quite relaxed; there is an actual gated crossing, but passports seem to be rarely checked. I assume they have some method in place for how they assess legitimacy in crossing borders nowadays, but, in the last 5 years, I have not had to hand over my credentials unless I am coming or going through the airport. This is much different than what would have been required while I was in the Army in the situation above.

While this is a fun story of misguided direction, this could have been a very serious incident as I was a member of the US military stationed in Germany and I did not have authorization to leave the country. I also did

³ Volksmarch: According to Internationaler Volkssportbund E.V. a Volksmarch is "a walking event. Also termed volkswalk. In Germany, these events were originally termed Volkswanderung - "volkswandering, a Volksmarch is "a walking event. Also termed volkswalk. In Germany, these events were originally termed Volkswanderung – 'volkswandering.' Reportedly this was difficult for American military stationed in Germany to understand and so they started using the term Volksmarsch. It evolved into Volksmarch in the United States. Those feeling that the term was too foreign, coined the word – Volkswalk"

([www.http://www.ava.org/vmfaq.php](http://www.ava.org/vmfaq.php)). At the time, I did not know this term was Americanized by the military.