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# Parents Night Out

A free babysitting program for ALL Texas A&M Faculty, Staff and Students provided by the members of Alpha Phi Omega will be

Friday, March 26, 1996

6:30 - 10:00 p.m.

Koldus 110

Questions?

Call the APO office at 862-2525

MSC L.T. Jordan Institute for International Awareness Fellows Program presents

Leslie Pourteau Walking Wordsworth's Path

David Snyder

Liquid Fuel for Naval Purposes:

Oil, Technology, and the British Hegemony before the First World War.

Thursday, March 21st 7:00pm Rudder Tower Room 701

For more information call 845-8770

or e-mail: [ji-fellows@msc.tamu.edu](mailto:ji-fellows@msc.tamu.edu)

Persons with disabilities please call 845-8770 to inform us of your special needs.

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# Wandering through a war-torn world

Even people who have known me for years were a little surprised by the idea. Almost no one goes to Bosnia for Spring Break. ...

Frank Stanford, Special to THE BATTALION

A disabled Serbian tank lies in front of a shelled apartment high rise.

... Although I already had an interest in Bosnia from a couple of classes I'd taken, I never really thought about going there. But when the opportunity presented itself, and a cheap plane fare became available, I just couldn't resist.

Cheap fares, however, usually have a few drawbacks involved. In my case, the plane landed a couple of countries north of my destination. The rest of the way was up to me. Actually getting into Bosnia and experiencing other cultures along the way became half the trip.

When I arrived in Hungary, I was starving. So I meandered around Budapest looking for a restaurant and a cultural encounter.

I hit the jackpot. The beer was cold, the food was hot, the place was run by musical Gypsies, and I was the only customer. I ate and drank my fill while a string quintet played at my table. I tipped them with a few packs of American cigarettes and everyone was happy. In Hungary, that is.

The next day I hopped a 6-hour train to Zagreb, Croatia. It was a sobering experience to say the least. I shared a compartment with two Romanians who were fleeing their country for a better life in Italy, the end of the line. One spoke English and the other spoke vodka, so communication was possible.

They had never met an American before and couldn't believe I would even sit with them. They told me about how horrible life is in Romania, that they were licensed engineers and made only \$75 a month. They asked me everything about America they could think of. What do we eat? Can we actually own a home? Can we really buy guns?

One of them had a map and showed me where they boarded the train in Romania. They had traveled 14 hours already and still had another 12 to go. When we stopped at the Croatian border, the police gave me a free visa, but asked them to pay 100 dollars each. There was some yelling, and my companions were forcibly removed without their belongings. A man told me they were going to jail. I threw a coat out of the window into the darkness. I still have their map.

At the last stop before Zagreb, two Croatian women boarded and sat down in my compartment. They were college students, and one of them spoke English. She was from Sarajevo, Bosnia, but left when the war started. She told me how her cousins and many of her friends had been killed by the Serbs. She didn't say much more after that.

I arrived in Zagreb after midnight and found a place to stay. It was cold. I had a connection at the university there, but he had left the country for a few days. It took a day and a half for my previously made plans to completely fall apart. You see, I was supposed to be accompanied into Bosnia; I'm not that stupid. But I was now on my own in freakin' Croatia.

I decided to enter Bosnia by myself. I was painfully aware that I was a lone American who had no idea what I was doing.

Luckily, I remembered that a place exists for Americans abroad who don't know what they're doing — the American Embassy.

At the Embassy, I was frisked and checked

FRANK STANFORD  
GUEST COLUMNIST



for weapons. The consul who advised me was not very encouraging. He provided a copy of the State Department's official warning and told me stuff I sort of assumed anyway. I had been to war-torn countries before and knew how to be careful.

He was thorough and matter-of-fact with what he mentioned.

There was no unified civil authority, little or no medical facilities and no public transportation. The roads, airports and trains had been bombed, and there were land mines and unexploded devices everywhere. Any bus routes were unofficial and would be on unsecured Bosnian roadway.

I thanked him, filled out a form listing my next of kin, and called the Bosnian Embassy to hear what they had to say about buses.

I explained to the secretary that I wanted to go into Bosnia to take pictures, video and write a story. She said, "Sarajevo is safe for you, the buses will avoid any Serbian territory." She added that a bus left from Zagreb every day. So, I bought a ticket, and in two hours began my 16-hour journey to Sarajevo.

By morning I was deep in Bosnia. It was mountainous and blanketed in snow — quite beautiful until the first destroyed village came into view. Bombed, burned and lifeless, the dead little towns came one after the other.

The bus continued around hairpin turns, over gravel roads and bombed-out bridges repaired by the United Nations. As we slowly rolled across an especially high and particularly damaged bridge, a young Bosnian girl turned around in her seat and smiled at me.

"You know swimming?" she asked.

I felt a much needed grin spread across my face as I glanced at the river far below.

"Yes," I said, "I know swimming."

She had learned English by watching movies. Because of the war, she had been away from Sarajevo for six months. Her cousin, aunt and grandmother were traveling with her and had not seen their home in four years. I could tell that the adults knew what to expect of their city, but when the bus arrived in Sarajevo, the cousin — who had been intently staring out the window — began to cry.

The city was a shambles. Every building in every direction was covered with bullet holes and bomb blasts. A tank with a British flag rumbled past, and well-armed soldiers stood their posts.

The Holiday Inn was right around the corner. What was once a beautiful structure now displayed shot-out windows, boarded-up doors and tank traps at the entrance. I found my way inside to discover it was open for business. But not my business.

I had some cash on hand, but they wanted \$230 a night and I still had to buy a ticket out of there. I didn't feel like sleeping on snowy streets, so with a heavy sigh I flashed my credit card. They laughed. A familiar commercial ran through my head. "Visa Gold, it's everywhere you want to be." They should have added, "Except Sarajevo."

I sat down for a cigarette, my only friend in Bosnia. But not for long.

A few minutes later, a man walked up to me and asked if I needed a cab. I explained I didn't have anywhere to go. For a pack of cigarettes,

he offered to take me to one more hotel. So I got in the car. His name was Adnan.

He had a .45 caliber pistol strapped to his side. "Don't worry," he said. "I'm in the Bosnian Army." We arrived at the hotel where some British journalists were staying, but the cost was still prohibitive. He offered to put me up at his house with his family, and I accepted.

Adnan drove me all over Sarajevo while I filmed from his car. In broken English, he gave me a general understanding of what life was like in Sarajevo.

He took me to his mother-in-law's home in a heavily bombed suburb on a snow-covered hill. The next door neighbors were dead from grenade blasts, and their own house had numerous holes in the roof. Many friends and relatives were killed in that very neighborhood.

I was welcomed into the three room house with open arms by five other family members. The grandmother fed me well, and we all smoked and drank Turkish coffee for several hours. It didn't matter that I was American and they were all Muslim. Only one spoke English, but that didn't seem to matter either. Everyone was a part of the conversation.

The next morning Adnan took me to the bus station. And just like the Bosnian Embassy told me, the bus had to change routes because of Serbian military movement. The journey was only 11 hours this time, but I still had plenty of time to think about the people I had met.

No matter who you are, where you are, when you are, or what you believe in, there really is very little difference among the people of the world.

Everyone wants a good life. Even Bosnians.

Frank Stanford is a graduate philosophy student



The newspaper headquarters in Sarajevo was bombed by Serbian aggressors.

# The Association of Former Students Induction Banquet

Wednesday & Thursday, April 3 & 4, 1996

COLLEGE STATION HILTON HOTEL GRAND BALLROOM - 6:15 P. M.

All May & August '96 graduates\* are invited Complimentary tickets may be picked up in the MSC Hallway, March 26, 27, & 28 (9 a.m. - 3 p.m.)

TICKETS GIVEN ON A FIRST-COME, FIRST-SERVED BASIS Student I.D. Required to Pick Up Tickets

Compliments of The Association of Former Students

\*Graduate students not already a member may attend either night



THURSDAY

March 21, 1996



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