

Long walk turns out to be marriage saver

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transformations, not the least of which was losing weight by the quickest, often most drastic means, and learning how to stow her gear in a backpack.

Marco was aghast again, she says with a chuckle. It wouldn't be the last time he would explode with objections before she said goodbye to her husband and son at the airport.

"Another milestone was learning to be resourceful. She knew her car would be "killed." "I promised Marco I could do it on \$1,500." So she decided that she needed outside help — and got it.

"The manufacturers of Sego Bars, intrigued by her plans, sent along three assorted boxes of their product, and the Majord Corp. offered to loan her an instant camera.

"She helped herself by "increasing my zeal" from the housekeeping mon-

"I WAS quite able at this, having had many years of practice."

Marco gave her an additional \$300 and extracted a promise that she would pay her credit card if needed.

But it wasn't until Michael offered to move home to stay with Marco that she was convinced that she would be able to go.

"I looked at my ticket: Manila, Papua, New Guinea, Australia, New Zealand, Tonga, Fiji, Tahiti, Easter Island, Chile, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia.

"I swallowed hard. It was so exciting: my ticket to unlimited freedom, my ticket to adventure, my ticket to who knew what? It was scary, it was beautiful. It was speechless."

SHALOM WAS LEFT almost speechless more than once in the next 12 months. There were times she was frightened or hungry. Frequently she was confused, particularly when handling currency.

"I'm a fool on figures, but I coped. I was writing down '1 equals' all over the place." Even in her native England, she found the currency values had changed. In England, she also discovered she could make alterations in her carefully prepared itinerary.

And that's when she decided to add Teheran to the schedule.

After all, it was on a direct route to India, and she had friends to see there, she said.

And that's how she came to be riding through deserted villages shortly after the Shah's departure, wondering all the while if she was being kidnapped.

"As I thought about this trip, I realized that my husband wouldn't go to these places. He wants to be pampered on his vacations.

"Suddenly, here I was, going to places I thought I would never see." Once under way, she felt exhilaration rather than apprehension, she said.

From behind her, Shalom began to realize that a change was taking place within herself.

"I realized that I was opening up, that I wasn't such an old frump, and that I didn't have to call up my husband to ask what to do.

"I told myself 'You are making it on your own.' I wasn't an object any more."

ADVENTURE WAS everywhere. "It was always easy." Once, she found herself stranded 10 miles from the edge of cannibal country in New Guinea.

"I saw myself as plink and plump; and I wondered if they might want a taste of me."

On other occasions, she said, things were more exhausting than frightening. She travelled by car, airplane, and train. She slept in hotels, YWCA's, on public benches, in a broiler, and railroad stations, and once even bedded down underneath a plane.

As she travelled, she felt a reawakening of feelings and a curiosity that had attracted her as a young woman into a social work career.

That background indirectly led her to the highlight of the entire trip, meeting Indira Gandhi.

"There was a custom that she would meet her people once a week. I asked if I could meet her. The next morning, they took me to her residence. The Indians were filling in, and no one stopped me, so I went into a room where 40 or 40 people waited to deliver their petitions.

"SHE CAME out, bowed, and I was the first person she came up to. I said 'Hello, Indira.' I am a foreign social worker who has come half way around the world. Would you have a few minutes to speak to me?"

"She told her aides to take me into a private room."

An hour later, Gandhi appeared and for the next hour and more the two women talked. Gandhi's plan for birth control and other feminine interests, Shalom said.

"Despite her reputation, I discovered that here was a woman who would sell her soul for her country. I found in India that here, for the first time in my travels, I was a single woman again. I loved India. I wanted to stay there."

BUT THE time came to move on. Ahead lay a private audience with the King of Tonga; dinner with the Lord Mayor of Sydney, Australia; and bartering clothes from her back pack for lodging on Easter Island. It was there, she said, she realized that she had made peace with herself and was ready to come home.

"I came back a confident, self-assured woman." The new Sabina Shalom was virtually impossible to live with for the next several months, she said, but, by bending toward each other, she and Marco worked their way through the friction that this new relationship generated.

"It was summer, and I saw the appreciation he had for the new me. I was a

happier companion, and he began to talk to me." I had been taken for granted to begin with. Now I was a whole new appreciation."

"She showed trust even extended to the preservation of her book. In deference to his feelings, she said, she asked if he would like to read the manuscript, or if describing their relationship prior to the trip would embarrass him.

"HE SAID, 'Go ahead. When I have the finished book in my hands, I'll read it.' He didn't object to a single thing."

In retrospect, she says, backpacking around the world and even writing a book about her experiences are secondary to the reawakening she has felt as a woman, wife and mother.

"Creating this book has given me a measure of independence, and in these later years, that is very important to me." But more than that, she says, by getting to know the people of other lands, by observing women in their varied ways of life, and by standing outside herself to take stock, she has understood the necessity, and the pleasure, of standing alone.

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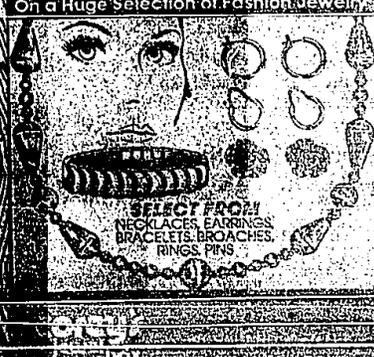
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