



Adventures
of the
Heart

Everyone Loves Pets

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Dedication

To all women who have motivated their children to greatness, especially my mother Rawhya who taught me love, caring, and giving...God Bless her soul...she is my angel.

To my soul mates, my young men
Abdel Rahman, Omar and Ali.

EVERYONE LOVES PETS

Dr. Mustafa A. Saleh

The Making of a Veterinarian

I graduated from Cairo University in June of 1973, Cairo Veterinary School. Everything happens for a reason. I was asked to visit my sister in Saudi Arabia. I had intended to join her there only a few days, but instead stayed on. The Saudi Royal Family in the Ministry of Agriculture offered me a job. The Faisal Settlement Organization was formed by international effort to settle the Bedouin people with their sheep and goats in a city in the desert. The United States, a long time friend of Saudi Arabia, supported the project.

It was an international effort, which included Germany, France and Canada. I spent two years on this project with the Bedouin people. There were more than 60,000 sheep and goats. The team administered medicine and treatment to this vast herd. We were also involved in preventative medicine. We were in a war against a vicious disease that can be transmitted from sheep and goats to human beings, called Brucellosis. I came down with the disease, diagnosed by my brother-in-law, who has a Ph.D in microbiology in the United States. He caught the disease also and we gave injections to each other for three weeks. Finally we were able to bring the disease under control.

Dealing with the Nomadic Bedouin was a religious experience for me to immigrate to the desert. They spoke the Arabic of the Prophet Mohammed, a dialect entirely different from my Egyptian Arabic. I was involved in trying to assist them to settle down and deal with an entirely different lifestyle. My supervisor, who was from Edinburgh, Scotland called the profession of veterinary medicine, the 'profession of the Prophets,' as Abraham, Moses and the Prophet Mohammed all were, in my opinion, doctors without a license. They made their living by dealing with sheep, goats and other animals.

After two years, I was advised by my supervisor to go into post-graduate work in Scotland. I traveled to Edinburgh to study tropical and sub-tropical medicine. I did research and study for a full year there. I visited many farms and delivered countless sheep and goats, administering medicines and building my store of knowledge. The College there was called "Royal Dick Veterinary College." It was a great experience to meet and study with other students from all over the world.

I returned to Egypt for eleven months. I was long-coming to immigrate to the United States. At that time, the U.S. Embassy was looking for veterinarians. I was accepted. While in Egypt, I worked with dairy cows and received the first nine dairy cows from Switzerland. I was living in Ismallea, where I supervised the dairy farm. I also was working with the poor and advising them in methods of

animal husbandry. I moved from one community to another, explaining how to control and eradicate disease and prevent the spread of disease from animals to people.

After the arrival of my first born son, I began my journey to the United States in June of 1977. I had \$1,000 in my pocket. I was alone and searching for a job. Several months went by. I received word that the United States Army was looking for veterinarians, so I joined the U.S. Army Veterinary Corps. I was sent to Oklahoma to take basic training. Then, I was assigned to Kansas, where I took my first boards in Veterinary Medicine. Once again, I met many people from different countries who had enlisted in the Army and made lasting friendships. In Kansas, I dealt with exotics, other small animals and horses from the base. We also treated the American Indian Bison. I passed my National Boards and embarked upon my Residency. My Residency Program brought me to the great state of California. My Residency in Los Angeles was with small animals, birds and wildlife. I also spent six months with horses there. After my Residency, I was offered a job with the U.S. Government, Department of Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services. I was sent on a two-year tour to Puerto Rico. I was selected, due to my background in Scotland, to work with cows. While in Puerto Rico I traveled all over the island implementing programs to destroy

the tick population, which had caused havoc and disease among the island's population. Ticks are known carriers of the dreaded Lyme disease as well as other blood pathogens.

After two years there, I was promoted and returned to Florida in the United States. We were in a war to destroy the Brucellosis disease in cows. While in Okeechobee, I received an invitation to journey to the Island of Haiti. There was an outbreak of African Swine Fever in the population of pigs there. It had already destroyed the entire population of swine in the Dominican Republic and now was raging in Haiti. The United States was concerned that the disease would make its way to American soil. My two-month stay turned into six months and stretched into two years. It was one of the most astounding times in my life. I became the Chief of Animal Health in Haiti. The terrible poverty only one and one half hours from the shores of the richest country in the world (America) affected me deeply. I had seen poverty in Egypt and even in Saudi Arabia, but nothing compared to this. The misery and helplessness of these people burns, even now, in my memory. At first, I wanted to run back to Florida to escape the sorrow and deep misery. My inability to make everyone happy which is a part of my personality, caused depression, and I wanted to run away. I was quite young at that time and politically unseasoned.

It was an enormous project that required international involvement. We had to destroy the entire population of pigs in Haiti, and then replace them with imported pigs from Canada, United States, Dominican Republic, and Mexico.

Before my tour in Haiti, I was assigned to New York. The facility is called Plum Island Laboratory, one of the largest labs of its kind in the world. It is a high security area and closed to all except those with top secret security clearance. It is reached from Green Port, Long Island, via a ferry. One has to shower upon entry and shower again on exit. The U.S. Department of Agriculture selects one Veterinary Surgeon to be a foreign disease expert. This person is called upon in the event of an outbreak of foreign animal disease. For instance, I worked on Foot and Mouth Disease. This disease attacked the animal population in England a few years ago and devastated their dairy and beef industry. I worked in research, studying viruses and trained other veterinarians who came to Plum Island Laboratory for two weeks to study and causes and effects of foreign animal diseases.

At that time, I translated a manual on diagnosing Foreign Animal Diseases into Arabic. The Department of Agriculture published this manual and it was later distributed to twenty-three Arabic speaking countries.

Since then, the book has been translated into French, Spanish and Japanese.

I have an insatiable appetite for knowledge. The emptiness within my soul seeks always to be filled with more and more knowledge. So my quest for wisdom led me to become the import/export veterinarian for Miami International Airport. I inspected and quarantined horses, birds and exotics in an effort to prevent the spread of disease from foreign countries to our shores.

At that time we were on the alert, aware of the possibility of bio-terrorism, even though in those days, the threat was considered low. After one year I became restless again. On July 4, 1987 I resigned from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

I remember teasing my boss then by saying: “Sir, I am now a free bird!”

The joke was on me. Instead of one boss, I now have thousands of bosses. My clients now boss me twenty-four hours!

A few years later, I had the dream of connecting people with pets and plants. I went back to school at Nova Southeastern University and earned two Master’s degrees;

one is in Health Administration and the other Public Health. My goal is to teach at Nova, setting up a program to instruct medical students in the danger of transmitted diseases from pets to people.

Another goal is to build a facility dedicated to aged people in nursing homes. There will be a great difference. These fortunate people will be allowed to care for and have pets. This will improve their mental, physical and emotional health. The facility would have an organic garden where they could learn the importance of healthy living, as well as beautiful gardens with flowers for them to enjoy.

I formed a new corporation called “Triple P” Veterinary Consultants. We hope to encompass the dream of having people, pets and plants together. Our goal is to help people young and old, have great understanding of the animal kingdom.

My small animal practice in Davie, Florida is thriving. My store of knowledge is now being used to help people with the companions of their hearts, their beloved pets.

I sold my animal practice in June 2004. I started traveling and consulting in Ecuador, Egypt, and Dubai. I

enjoyed training other veterinary professionals in different parts of the world. Teaching Zoonoses is a thrill for me...I volunteered with the World Health Organization for 3 months, to control and eradicate Polio and measles in the Phillipines.

As for now, I was selected as a backfill veterinarian with the U.S. Army in Ft. Eustis, Virginia (Chief Officer, Public Health Consultant) filling in for a captains, majors or Leitenants who have to travel on duty. I am still searching for the guiding light...please, join me...

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Summary Introduction

There really are no borders in today's world so it's no wonder or surprise that our lifestyles have contributed to the mutation of common diseases which, with exposure to any other cultures or species common diseases have the potential to mutate into another form, a "super" disease.

As the world speeds up, so do most of its peoples. Speed being of the essence, most people think nothing of getting into an airplane with other folks from all over the world to spend hours packed together, like sardines in a can, breathing and sharing the same re-circulated, re-cycled air. This "canned" air combines everyone's breath, germs and all, re-distributing and sharing it through the blowing, overhead fans.

In this world of instant global communication, a message, a communication can travel round the world in the blink of an eye. Most of the time, the message arrives as sent, but sometimes, things get added or taken away and the message mutates.

This probability of mutation holds true with Zoonosis [disease that transfers from animal to human] and Reverse Zoonosis [disease that transfers from human to animal] as

well. Just as human disease can and does mutate, so does animal disease. When human and animal disease interact, they combine and mutate. The resulting combination reacts in unpredictable ways, combining and mutating differently [because of individual chemistry] within each human and animal that it infects, because Virus is a living thing, adapting and mutating to best fit its host environment.

No matter where in the world people live, no matter religion, culture or politics; most people have at least two things in common; love of, and between their family and friends and love of, and between their animals. And it doesn't seem to matter whether these animals are pampered pets or working animals, love is love.

If we can recognize and accept emotions as bridges between us, perhaps we will begin to understand that ALL beings share the same emotions; that our differences lay ONLY in the way that we express these emotions.

I also believe that all things happen for a reason and that each "happening" allows us to travel our life path more fully, in light and with greater awareness.

So having said this, here is my story - “Adventures of the Heart of a Veterinarian;” a Journal of Stories from a Small and Exotic Animal practice.”



Bird's Flu and Swine Fever



Measles and polio Eradicated...WHO



Four Seasons Hotel in Cairo, Egypt



Slums of Cairo, Egypt



Chicken market in Egypt



Bird's Flu in Egypt

Reunion: The Swine-Bird Flu

The steady drone of the plane, high above the Atlantic, carries me to my past. I let the sound of the engines and the darkness outside my window relax my mind. My thoughts drift thirty years into the past while I travel into tomorrow, returning for a visit to the land of my birth, Egypt.

The reason for my trip is my 30-year Veterinarian class reunion, with 300 scattered classmates scheduled to attend. Most of my classmates have their practices in Egypt and other Arabic countries, while a few of us have located across the world; but as far as I know, I am the only one visiting from the US. I have not seen or been in contact with any of my friends from University since June 1973.

Our paths and interests went in different directions after graduation and we lost touch. I'm excited and happy to reconnect with them all, and look especially forward to spending time with my friend, Joseph. We were roommates during our time at University and when I think of those years, it's Joseph, his friendship and his dreams that I miss the most.

I have family in Cairo, but I'll be staying at Mena House Oberoi, an elegant, old world, world-class hotel, nearly in the shadows of the pyramids. I plan to spend most of my holiday with old friends catching up and trading stories and experiences.

After landing, getting my baggage and getting settled in the hotel, I go to the upper lobby to see if anyone else has arrived.

Yes, there is Joseph on the other side of the lobby and we see each other at the same time. What a flood of memories in my mind's eye as we cross the elegant room, arms extended, hurrying toward each other. Wonderful memories of study groups and sharing dreams with talks of becoming veterinarians while helping animals all over the world. After emotional greetings with hugs, tears and laughter, I realize that we pick up almost exactly where we left off. It feels as if no time at all has passed since our last meeting.

Our conversation automatically goes to veterinary medicine and the current situation in Egypt.

Joseph, his emotion colored with a strong nationalistic flavor tells me: "Our animal health system is in good shape, however, this younger generation of veterinarians seems very ambitious and they also seem to think that money is everything."

Joseph shakes his head and continues, “And to achieve their dreams of lots of money, they all want to build their own small animal practices!”

As we are speaking, Joseph coughs, and I notice that he has reddish eyes, and a runny nose; he is exhibiting flu-like symptoms, so I ask him how he is feeling and if he has been to see his physician.

He replies; “I am used to feeling like this. These symptoms come and go. I got the flu inspecting pigs in the slaughter house. . .then I got it again a few months later from some workers at the chicken farm next door to the slaughter house.”

Joseph chuckles, shaking his head and tells me that they have absolutely no fear of the flu, that it is just an inconvenience that everyone in this business deals with.

Trying to keep my amazement at what Joseph has just told me out of my voice and body language, I ask; “ Are you saying that you caught these flu symptoms from BOTH swine and birds?” Joseph shrugs his shoulders as if its no big deal; “Yes, and I’m not the only one. Many of us veterinarians and our families and the farmers and their families and workers get the flu, passing it on to others and then we seem to recover till the next time we catch it. I believe we eventually develop an

immunity to it. . .you know us Egyptians,” he says with a smile, “we’re tough!”

“Can you show me the swine and chicken farms in your area?” I ask.

“Of course, the farms are not far.”

We leave the hotel and quickly walk into one of the compounds. Here extremely poor people are living among pigs and chickens in the filthy backyard of a very shaky building. The air is polluted with particles of trash and chicken dung stirred up and drifting aimlessly in the heavy air.

Old and young pigs are rooting, disturbing the dirt and making the air even more dirty as they feed on garbage collected and thrown to them from the nearby communities. In addition to the people, pigs, chickens, rats, flies, cows, cats and dogs are also sharing the same space.

Women are washing clothes in dirty, stagnant water; the same water that young children, completely naked, are splashing, urinating and playing in. Other children are teasing some of the pigs while more pigs and cows are drinking from the contaminated water.

Almost unbelievably, civilized amenities co-exist with the poorest squalor imaginable and they are within feet of each other.

I am stunned. My years away from Egypt have made no difference in the lives of the poorest of our peoples. There is absolutely no change in their circumstances, except, even the poorest of the poor seem to have cell phones! To add to the confusion, the people who live in the rickety building at the pig farm, make phone calls, inviting friends to come here to attend social gatherings. At the same time, pigs, chickens and cows are slaughtered for personal use and these are the animals that children are now teasing and playing with.

In the yard, some of the tenants wave to me, thinking that I am a curious tourist. They ask for money to help build bathrooms and to put in water pipes that would supply clean, running water.

These “yards” have no facilities and when the “nature calls” most of the children, as well as adults, squat to relieve themselves wherever they are, there and then. Many of the children and the elderly are weak and tired and have hacking coughs. These same symptoms are also present in some of the chickens roaming around and also in some of the swine that the children are playing with.

After a bit, we are finished here. The human and animal plight disheartens me, leaving me in my thoughts and I don't have much to say to Joseph as we return to the hotel, a distance of about one-mile from the swine yard. It's difficult to enjoy the rest of our lunch, in five star, air-conditioned comfort.

As we finish eating, we decide to visit a local chicken market. It's not far and is even more chaotic than the swine yard. It's crowded; chickens are stuffed, squashed, barely alive and traumatized from the heat, malnourishment and no water. They are crammed, too many, into much too small wooden boxes.

People pay no mind to the animals' suffering or welfare, they are too busy bargaining and buying and selling and the place is dirty, dusty and filled with noise.

We are walking around when I see a storefront that catches my eye. I walk over to it and looking in through the closed glass windows, I see two teenage boys sleeping in an 8x8 room filled with chickens. Some of the chickens are dead, others dying and very few look healthy. The horrific smell is so strong that even with the door closed, it permeates the outside, like a filthy aura. I knock on the door, waking one of the boys and he shuffles over to let me in. The other young man is awake, but so weak that he is unable

to stand. He is sweating profusely and cannot even open his eyes; he also has a high fever and a constant, hacking cough.

Taking one look at him, I reach into my pocket, take my facemask and put it on, apologizing to Joseph for not having a second mask to give to him. The owner of the store is not here, and the two boys run the place in his absence.

Here it is that they live, eat, sleep and sell chickens to the public. I could see that neither of the boys were much better off than their chickens, and I could hear their stomachs growling, so I insisted on purchasing a meal from the vendors for them. While they were eating, I advised the sick boy to find another place to sleep, away from the dirt, dust and sickness, hopefully avoiding even more chance of re-infection from the sick birds. This young man looks, sounds and without doubt is very ill. He tells us that another worker became severely ill about a month ago and that he had returned to his family's small village to get care, but he passed away from pneumonia. The physician told his family that he died of the flu, but didn't tell them how their son and brother got it, and so, the cycle continues.

My thoughts fall back to 2004 January, a time when I was invited to be a guest speaker at the International Wildlife Conference being held in Dubai.

There I had an opportunity, as a research veterinary scientist, to visit the Royal Falcon Farms, all the area pet stores, to also attend any festivals that were happening and as well being a guest in many Bedouin homes.

One of the Expat Arabian veterinarians was assigned to take me on tour, visiting racing facilities for Falcons in the desert. These facilities are amazing. They are beautiful and efficient and are frequented by the Ameers of the Royal Family. I next visited a few Bedouin families with their precious and prized Falcons.

In the pet stores, some of the animals are ill, and there are, as yet, no safeguards, no protection or plans in place to deal with Falcon illness, so the birds are sold to the public. Often, the owner or caregiver in these stores has the same symptoms as their sick birds. The journeys of these glorious racing falcons encompass hundreds of thousands of miles over the terrain of Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Iran and Russia. In these countries Falconry is part of National, Traditional and cultural sport and is pursued most seriously and with great enthusiasm. The birds are closely monitored via the most sophisticated trace back equipment and satellites, and participants in this sport travel, by caravan, jeep and even the occasional helicopter to attend these events, enjoying themselves in the seemingly pure, clear air of the desert and the mountains.

It was during this same time in 2004, when a SARS outbreak was reported. It quickly spread in Asia and many human fatalities were reported. The Bird Flu was also present in the skies of these races and some of the participants became ill with it.

My curiosity about the Bird Flu inspired me to contact authorities and arrange a meeting in Dubai and Abu Dhabi. Here I presented my thoughts, alerting the officials to the need of research into the transmission of the Flu through the Falcon and Hubbarah bird migrations.

I spoke of my concerns and offered about 15-20 research directions, but I never heard another word about on the topic. I do understand that this is a very sensitive subject, especially as I suggest and believe that these beloved Falcons can transmit and spread the Bird Flu or other Zoonotic diseases to humans, or that humans can transmit and spread disease to the birds.

This seemed a radical and strange idea to many in those times, but my objective was to help people become aware of the potentials of this still unknown and potentially lethal example of cross-species disease.

For people to accept the possibility of cross-species diseases, now known as Zoonoses and Reverse Zoonoses, there would have to be trust and research.

Then there is the matter of National pride and the implementation of a huge international trade embargo. This in itself would cause a great loss of income and trade activity.

By the year 2007, the news regarding the Avian Flu Virus and the Swine Flu Virus and its mutations was suspected but not confirmed. Mutation of the viruses was a fact, but not a confirmed reality until 2009.

Meanwhile, in the Winter of 2006, as an adjunct assistant professor of public health, I traveled with some of my students from Nova Southeastern University, Davie, Florida to Baños, Ecuador.

We volunteered to assist the Ecuadorian zookeepers, training them in obtaining diagnostic samples of blood, stool, and tissue [for epidemiological surveillance], while monitoring disease investigations. Of special interest to me, is cross-species disease, from animal to human and from human to animal.

Baños is an amazing and magical place and I will share more of our adventures there shortly.

In Baños, at their world famous zoo, I met with Fernando, a zookeeper charged with caring for wild pigs. Fernando was sniffing, coughing and dragging his feet. I naturally inquired after his health and this is what he said. “Do not worry, Dr. Saleh. It is just the flu. I got it from my wife who was sick last week. You know, Doctor,” Fernando said, as he looked at me and wiped the fever sweat from the back of his neck, “I think our bird, Patchica, gave her the flu.”

The hair on my body stood up and I immediately remembered the pig farm in Cairo, Egypt. A worker there had said the EXACT two sentences to me, a continent and ocean away from where I am now. I also remember the two boys, sick and sleeping with their chickens in their glassed-in room at the bazaar. . .literally laying down with the flu. And then there is also the Bedouin, raising his majestic Falcon on his arm in Dubai, likewise ill with the flu.

In September, 2008, I was selected by the World Health Organization, commonly known as the WHO, to be a public health consultant to the Philippines. There I would supervise and validate the eradication efforts of The Polio and Measles Immunization Program, in collaboration with the Center for Disease Control, commonly known as the C.D.C. located in Atlanta, Georgia, U.S.A.

I was scheduled to stay in the Philippines for three months, visiting hospitals and small clinics and villages in rural areas. I would be knocking on doors as well, collecting data on women's health and reporting on the health of their infants. Again, in visiting these rural areas, I saw children playing with animals, especially pigs and chickens, in their yards. Some of the kids were experiencing the same flue like symptoms and so were their animals; stuffy nose, congested eyes, physical weakness. . .typical flu like symptoms that come and go within five to ten days.

Now I again wonder:

Could this be the same virus infecting both human and animal?

Does the virus mutate? How does the mutation happen? What happens when the virus mutates? What is the virus incubation, mutation time/cycle?

How quickly does the virus cross-species?

The world needs to put its collective heads and hearts together, putting aside individual consideration; and regardless of our race, creed or culture, we must begin to work together, to figure out answers to these questions. We have and need to answer many questions. The Bird, Human, Swine Flu, H1N1, is here and we need to learn about it and its mutations, including how to protect ourselves and how to enhance our immune systems.

It is not a time to panic, but it is time to collect the facts and become aware of what we need to do to protect not only ourselves, but also our animals.

The study in the Philippines was an important study and not only scientifically. . . it opened my heart to the similarities, the sameness of people, no matter where they live or who they are, no matter religion, culture or politics. I have realized that most people have at least two things in common; love of and between their family and friends, and love of and between their animals. And it doesn't seem to matter

whether these animals are pampered pets or working animals, love is love.

Hopefully we can begin to understand and accept that ALL beings share the same emotions and that our differences lay ONLY in the way that we express these emotions. If we can recognize and accept emotions as bridges between us, perhaps we will realize that that there is no real difference between people, that we all want the same things, freedom, food, shelter, safety and love. A drop of water, by itself is unique and individualistic, and when combined with other unique and individualistic water drops, can make a waterfall. A waterfall is a body of water made up of individual drops, and when those drops join together and become one force, and when that force is harnessed and properly directed, it can provide more than enough energy to power or empower, a village, a town, a city and more. Each drop of water, by itself, is unique and beautiful, yet when joined with other water drops, it becomes more than what it is alone, it becomes a magnificent force, a force to be reckoned with. We are all part of Earth's family, one Earth, one Heart, united but individualistic. . . individualistic but united. Our modern world is becoming smaller and there is less and less demarcation and separation between its inhabitants, be they human or non-human.

We need to ask and answer many questions and this is why I have decided to share my stories.

And here, Dear Reader, I have shared with you some of the stories of inter- species disease and mutation, of cases of Zoonosis and Reverse Zoonosis that I have experienced and worked with in my over 30 years of Veterinarian practice.

My small animal practice in Davie, Florida, is thriving and we are working consciously and consistently toward our dream; our goal of fostering greater awareness, understanding and communication between human, animal and plant life seems within reach. For, after all, we are all part of Earth's family.

Having said this, here is my story -

“Adventures of a Veterinarian; One World, One Heart, One Soul, One Medicine. A Journal of Stories from a Small and Exotic Animal Practice”.

My wish for you is that you enjoy the journey and wonder of our own Heart's adventure in life with the Companions of your Heart, your beloved pets. I hope that you have enjoyed and perhaps learned from my stories; for as you love animals, these are your stories too.

Thank you for sharing with me.

Bountiful Blessings,
Mustafa Saleh
- BVSc, DVM, MS, MPH

- Public Health Veterinary Consultant
- US Army

The Eyes of Mansoor

I graduated in Egypt from the College of Veterinary Medicine, at Cairo University in June, 1973. Young, inexperienced, filled with hope, wonder and being brand new in medicine, I planned to visit my sister, Shadia and relax for a few days in Saudi Arabia. But before my scheduled, very brief holiday, I remember having a conversation with my mother as if it were yesterday.

“Yes, Mom, I’ll take a few days off to visit Alexandria. I’d enjoy the fun and the sun there, its just like Miami Beach.” Mom said, “Wonderful, it will do you good, you’ve studied hard and deserve to relax.”

“Thank you, Mom.”

From my twelve-year-old sister; “That sounds like a plan. . .wow. . .hay, I should go with you,” she says with laughter, although I know that she is serious. “How can I say no to you, Lobna, after my graduation, you were the first one to call me, Dr. Mustafa.” (In the Middle East, it is customary to call someone by their title, example: Dr and then their first name not last name as is customary in the West.)

“Yes, you were,” Mom agreed and then said, “and your brother will be the best veterinarian ever.” “But you promised to take

me to the Pyramids after your exams. . .didn't you Mustafa?" Lobna pouted.

"Lobna, our budget won't allow for two trips, so Ms. Congeniality, unless you beg and dance around "Baba" [Dad] to increase my allowance, I don't think this will happen." "No sweat, Mustafa. . .consider it done!"

She was laughing as she scampered away to find Baba. I laughed, shaking my head, knowing that Lobna has Baba twisted around her little finger and that she would get her way. Calling after her as she disappeared, I said, "Be ready at 8, so that we can get an early start."

The next morning, finds me knocking on her bedroom door at 7am, but she is still sleeping. "Come on, Sleepyhead. You have thirty minutes or I'll be gone. It's Friday and the weekend traffic will be very busy with people visiting the pyramids from all over the world." From under her covers comes her muffled voice grumbling, "OK, Oh God Mustafa, you will never change!" Mother calls from the kitchen, "I made some sandwiches and hot tea for the trip. It will save a little bit of money on the way. "Thanks, Mom. . .great idea."

Lobna comes into the kitchen and taking one look at her, I tell her that she looks like a tourist. "That natural blond hair of yours, along with that hat and sunglasses are going

to attract a lot of attention and the Bedouins will charge us tourist prices to ride their camels.”

“You aren’t serious, are you Mustafa? You’re kidding me, aren’t you? I’ll speak to them as an Egyptian girl and they will NOT charge us tourist prices. After all, we need all of our money for the Alexandria beaches,” she said seriously.

Mom was smiling. “O.K. . .lets move it. . .have a good day, Mama; love you Baba. Pray for us to come home safely.” We kissed Mama and Baba’s hands and opened the door to the hectic street and the waiting bus stop.

The streets of Cairo are always very busy and on a Friday morning, even more so. Cars, buses, scooters, bikes, all honking their horns, people chatting, crossing roads, not paying attention to traffic, traffic lights or stop signs.

The hot, blazing sun is already burning a hole in the cloudless sky and it is only 8 in the morning. Buses pass by filled with people going to the zoo while others are on their way to the pyramids. Many people are in colorful, happy, clothing with big smiles.

Suddenly, a bus screeches to a halt right in front of us. The door swings open and out leaps a tourist waving his arms and shouting at a peasant who riding his donkey, was repeatedly beating the donkey’s rump in a futile attempt to make the

poor, heavily laden animal move faster. Some of the people around us were laughing at the tourist, his face flushed with blood, defending a donkey against his owner's beating.

"Is he crazy?", one pedestrian asked to no one in particular, while another tried to reassure the tourist in very broken English, "Don't be concerned, the donkey is used to it!"

The tourist became even more furious and I felt that I had no choice but to step in and speak to the owner of the donkey. I asked him to stop hitting his overloaded animal, and told him that the tourist was going to call the police if he did not stop beating the poor beast. I calmed the tourist by agreeing with him, in my very limited English, that the donkey should not be beaten.

The tourist began to calm down, nodded in agreement and smoothing his already sweat plastered hair, went huffing and puffing back to his bus; the door closed and they were on their way.

"I didn't know that you spoke good enough English for him to understand you," Lobna said, to me, turning away from the crowd that had gathered.

“Well, I was also talking with my hands and you know, everyone, no matter where they are from, understands talking hands.” I said laughing.

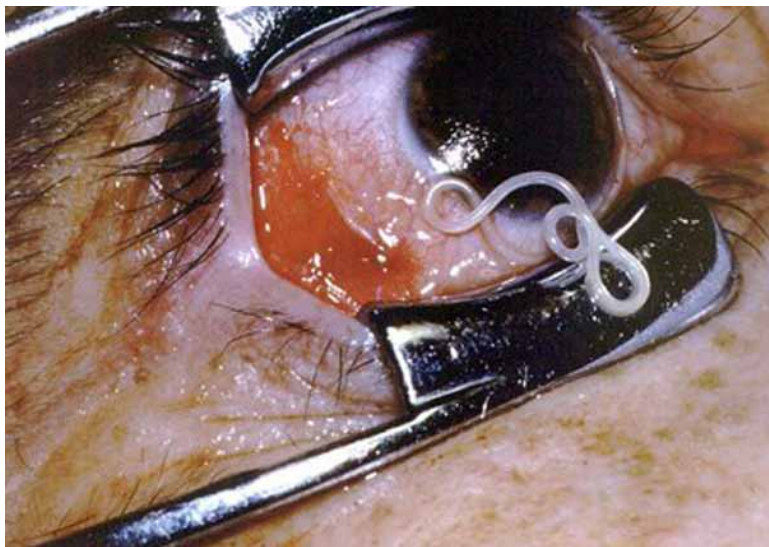
But I stopped laughing as I watch the peasant ride away, shaking his head, and again raising his stick to hit his still over burdened donkey. It is not easy to change the customs and habits of thousands of years with a single incident.

I sighed but catching sight of our bus approaching from the corner of my eye; “Jump quickly, give me your hands, Lobna. . .we are going to miss the bus if we don’t hurry.”

Getting onto the smoke filled bus, I cough and wave a smoky cloud from in front of my face. Smoking is still allowed in many public places in the Middle East and it seems that most people do understand that smoking is not only a choice, but also an addiction.

However, I cannot understand why anyone would smoke cigarettes on a crowded bus, this behavior is tolerated although considered very rude. The man who is smoking, looks at me with an arrogant smirk, his cigarette dangling from his big, lumpy lips.

He says nothing, but blows his smoke into everyone’s face. Women pull their scarves over their noses, men turn the other way and no other passenger is comfortable. Lobna,



Round Worms in Child's Eye in Egypt

also covering her nose and mouth with her scarf tells me that she would rather walk than stay in the bus and smell of smoke for the rest of the day.

We are almost to the pyramids and if we get off at the next stop, we will only walk about a half mile, so that is what we decide to do.

“Nazlet El Saman!” the bus driver shouts.

We get off the bus and start walking. Ahead we see the pyramids and they are spectacular! The three of them - Khufu, Khaphra and Mankarah - loom, majestic, majical and silent, they tower into the brilliant, blue and cloudless sky.

No matter how often I see the pyramids the sight of them fills me with wonder and awe. Raw and powerful sentinels, they silently witness the capriciousness of humanity. The winds of time blow as they always have, whistling, moaning and racing round the ancient stones, sometimes blowing back the curtain of time, allowing a glimpse, a sound, a shadow of the past to slip into the now. Hidden in the dust swirls, you can sense the shades of the Ancient Ones.

As I am allowing these feelings to course through me, I see Lobna reaching for one of the village puppies.

“Be careful, Lobna. Village dogs are often sick or rabid and we do not know the owners of this puppy.”

Before I can finish my warning along comes a young boy, between eight and ten years old. He quickly scoops up the puppy and approaches Lobna, speaking in English!

“Hold, hold,” the child says smiling, holding out to her the thin, weak and bloated puppy, “he is friendly.”

Lobna giggled and replied in Arabic; “Ya wad ana Masria!” (I am Egyptian boy!)

“What is your name young man?” I asked.

“My name is Mansoor [Victorious] and my puppy’s name is “Titu,” he replied.

Mansoor is young and handsome; however he looked tired and underweight for a child of his age. His dress is torn, his hair uncombed, he is barefooted and had old food stuck between his teeth, but Mansoor has a smile that was infectious!

“What grade are you in school?” I asked.

“I am not a student. I help my father in his business with the tourists.”

“So you have learned English from the business with your father?”

“Yes, and I speak French and Italian too.” He said proudly, somewhat puffing out his scrawny chest just a little bit more.

“You seem a very smart young man, Mansoor, do you think you might best help your family by staying in school, graduating and then helping your father?”

“Yes”, replied Mansoor, “but we have a very large family and I am the oldest. Therefore, I must help my family and my friend “Titu,” he said, looking down and rubbing his puppy’s head. He squinted, rubbing one eye with a dirty finger, as his other eye tears.

“You seem like you have something in your eyes, Mansoor.” I got closer to Mansoor and asked him to show me his eyes. They are hazy and very cloudy. “How long have you had this eye problem, Mansoor?” I asked.

“About one month. . . .”

“And when did you notice your dog’s problem?”

“About six months ago.”

“Did you visit your eye doctor?”

“No. . . .” “Did you have your puppy, “Titu” checked or examined by a Veterinarian?”

“No.”



Falcon Hunting in the Emirates

At this point Lobna interrupted by saying that if we stay any longer we were going to be too late to see the shows at the pyramids and that we really should go.

“Please, Lobna, I am fearful of a specific infection with Mansoor’s eyes and I need a few more minutes.” “Are you going to start to practice medicine just one week after your graduation?”

“Didn’t you call me Dr Mustafa?” I said, smiling, “Well, let me confirm your prophecy.”

Turning back to the child I said; “Mansoor, please call your Baba. I want to speak with him.”

“Am I sick?” he asked, looking up at me with his hazy, watery eyes.

“Well, just let me speak with your Baba and we will see.”

Ten minutes later, a tall, dark man dressed in a traditional Galabia came striding toward us He had a smile on his face that echoed the smile of his son, Mansoor. “Ahlan wasahlan [Welcome], my name is Abdel Hameed.

Mansoor told me that you might need someone to arrange a tourist program for you.

“Thank you for your offer, but I am concerned about your son and his puppy.”

“My son Mansoor, is zay el gin [healthy]. What makes you think he is sick?”

“Have you noticed the haziness of his eyes?”, I asked.

“Yes.”

“This can be from a dooda [worm] that Mansoor has gotten from his puppy, Titu. . . .”

In a voice far different from his warm welcome of a moment ago, Abdel Hameed, interrupted me, speaking loud and aggressively, his words accompanied by threatening gestures as he bluntly told me to “get the Hell out of here.”

At this point, my sister pleaded with me to leave immediately. Still attempting to communicate with Mansoor’s Baba, I replied, “Please Abdel Hameed. . . please listen to me. . . .”

But he turned and walked angrily toward his house, guiding his son with one hand and holding Mansoor’s puppy with the other. I watch as another man walks toward Abdel and to my surprise, I recognize the same tourist who got off the

bus to help the abused donkey! The two men are shaking hands and laughing. Abdel turns and sees us still standing there and the look on his face is total disgust, but the tourist is unable to see this exchange.

The tourist looks at me and asks, “Didn’t we meet earlier today, young man?”

“Yes, I replied, “over the donkey in the city. I am Mustafa and you are?”

“Wilson and I’m in love with your country and its ancient history! You seem very caring about animals, Mustafa. What do you do?”

“I’m a Veterinarian,” I replied.

“That can’t be!” He said.

“Why?” I inquired with curiosity.

“Because I am a retired Veterinarian from Florida, in the USA, and I’m doing volunteer work with animal rights groups in different countries; what a pleasant surprise!” Dr Wilson said.

I believe that everything happens for a reason, so without thought I asked. “Please, Dr. Wilson, would you look into Mansoor’s eyes and check his dog’s health?”

“Gladly,” he said, looking to Abdel who nodded his head in permission. Dr. Wilson soon added his voice to mine, confirming the possibility that the puppy had transmitted larva migrans, worms, to Mansoor.

With my diagnosis confirmed, Abdel apologized to me and said that I looked very young and that he did not think that I was old enough to be that smart!

I replied, “Next time I will have grey hair and heavy, thick glasses, just like Dr Wilson!”

Becoming more serious, Abdel asked me, “How did my son get this infection?”

I replied: “When a puppy is born, they get immune protection from their mother’s milk. They are protected, naturally, from disease and infection and that is why it is so important to allow the puppies to nurse until their mother weans them. After being weaned, the babies need to go to their veterinarian for their shots. These shots will now protect them against disease, infection and parasites. The veterinarian can detect problems by examining their pets bowel movement under a microscope and seeing para-



Mr. Black in Edinburgh, Scotland

sites, worms or their eggs. The infection that Mansoor has is called a Roundworm Infestation. This is transmitted through animal contaminated food, water and waste, that is ingested by humans. The eaten worm eggs then hatch into mobile larvae that circulate from intestine into the blood stream.

There they travel to the eyes, causing cloudiness and blindness. A physician can easily treat and heal someone exposed to and contaminated by Roundworm by prescribing proper anti-parasitic treatment. And as for pets, a veterinarian can examine your pets' fecal waste and prescribe the proper dewormer before the infestation is transferred to humans. So now, Abdel Hameed, do you believe me or do you want to take your son and his puppy to another, older doctor and be charged for everything you have just learned?" I said chuckling.

Abdel was very thankful and graciously invited all of us to dinner at his house. He also insisted on giving Dr Wilson, Lobna and I the Pyramid's Tour free of charge and it was wonderful, as was his families' hospitality.

Afterward, Lobna poked me and proudly said, "Now we are cooking, good-looking! I told you that you will be the best Veterinarian in the world, but don't forget my commission. I was the one who introduced you to Mansoor and I was. . . ."

“Stop it. . .stop it. . .stop it”, I said, laughing and holding my hands up. You should be a lawyer!!” (Ten years later, Lobna became a prosecuting attorney)

As the evening ended, we all shook hands and I gave Dr Wilson our address in Cairo. He invited me to visit with him and perhaps practice in Florida and maybe to help work with pets from all over the world.

And on the way home, I realized that the very first patient of my brand new Veterinarian practice was a young human! This is where I first developed my interest in “cross-species” disease, Zoonoses; diseases that can be transmitted from animal to human and Reverse Zoonoses, diseases transmitted from human to animal.

These diseases are more common than most people realize and can be transmitted from animal to human and from human to animal.

Dust of Ages; Sands of Time

I turned my attention to my holiday with my sister, Shadia, in Saudi Arabia. What I thought would be a few days with her turned into two years work because while there, I visited The Faisal Settlement Organization. This was an international effort to relocate the native, ancient, nomadic population to a centralized city in the desert and is partially partnered with Expats from Germany, France, Canada and the United States.

During a social gathering, in speaking about the Faisal Settlement Organization with a member of the Saudi Royal Family who works in the Ministry of Agriculture, I was offered a job within this organization, as the project's first Egyptian, Middle Eastern Veterinarian. The goal of this project was to settle the ancient, nomadic, Bedouin People with their more than 60,000 head flock of goats and sheep into their own, permanent city in the desert. These traveling people and their unique culture seem timeless and helping them to settle into one place, after thousands of years of following their herds and the seasons, to begin an entirely different, settled lifestyle, while still maintaining, but adapting their classic ways, is a monumental task. They speak the venerable Arabic of the Prophet Mohammed, not the Arabic of my native Egypt, or of anywhere else in the Middle East.

Their dress, language, culture and manners seem beyond time and to be in their company, (To me was to walk as did all Prophets and messengers as Abraham, Moses and the Prophet Mohammed, all Sheppard's [Veterinarians] to their flocks.) Working with these people and their flock was for me personally, a spiritual experience. Often I have heard my then supervisor, who is from Edinburgh, Scotland, call the practice of Veterinarian medicine, "the Profession of the Prophets," as all of these great Teachers made their living by being Sheppard's to their vast herds and their peoples.

While tending to the normal needs of this huge Bedouin herd, our team was also involved in fighting a vicious disease that can be transmitted from sheep and goats to humans. This disease is called Brucellosis, and both my brother in law who has a Ph.D. in microbiology, and I contracted it.

Fortunately, we were able to treat each other and within a few short weeks, we both fully recovered. Brucellosis, Human Undulant Fever, is an intracellular parasite that once contracted, lives inside the blood cells and can be transmitted to people from drinking unpasteurized dairy products. Infection can also occur from exposure to newborn calves, aborted fetuses and the placental tissue of infected female animals.

The route of human infection can be contamination to irritated skin, inhalation of aerosols containing organisms, con-

tamination of eyes' conjunctive and/or other mucus membranes.

Patients typically experience illness characterized by continued or irregular fever, headache, weakness, profuse sweating, chills and depression. There is usually weight loss also



Four Pyramids at Giza

accompanied by generalized aches and pains. Adding to the confusion is the fact that these symptoms can often be mistaken for the Flu, as they are quite similar.

[Fortunately, in the U.S.A. the availability of medicines, such as the combination of Doxycycline and Refampin taken for a period of six weeks and preventative programs, some sponsored by the USDA, along with eradication and educational programs are raising public awareness while helping to lessen the potential outbreak probability of this disease.]

There are many incidents, some funny, some sad, that happened over the course of my time with these wonderful and interesting peoples, but after being involved and working with the Bedouin and their animals for one year, I was advised by my supervisor to go into post graduate work in Scotland. Shortly thereafter saying my farewells and packing my memories as well as my bags, I traveled to Edinburgh, Scotland to study tropical and sub-tropical veterinary medicine.

Mr Black Isn't

The College I attended in the green and rolling hills of Edinburgh is the “Royal Dick Veterinary Collage,” and being there was a great and wonderful experience, meeting and studying with students from all over the world. There I did research; studied tropical and sub-tropical veterinary preventative medicine courses and continued my studies. To help pay my expenses, I decided to work on the large sheep farm of a Mr. Black and he had called to speak with me so that we could arrange my stay on his farm.

I was young and unaware of the ways of western culture and naturally assumed everyone's last name to be descriptive of their family, their job or who they are. We agreed to meet at the train station in Edinburgh. Arriving at our appointed time, I scanned the crowd looking for a tall black man; instead, a rather stout, blue-eyed man strode toward me, hand outstretched and smiling.

“Good evening, Dr Saleh,” he said, taking my hand. “I did not think you would be so young!”

“I never thought you to be a white man,” I blurted without thought as we gripped hands in instant friendship. “Well you know what assuming can lead to,” he said

laughingly, and thus began both our personal and professional relationship.

On our way back to the farm, instead of talking about sheep, as I had rather naively assumed the focus of our conversation would be, Mr Black seemed intrigued by my experience with dogs and cats and kept asking questions about them.

Finally, he came to the reason for his interest. “I know a lot about sheep, but I’m worried about my dog, Sally. Sally is not only my working sheepdog, she’s my friend and constant companion and now suddenly, her behavior has changed.”

“What’s going on?” I asked.

“Well, everything was fine and then all of a sudden she refused to eat and she stopped listening to my commands. This is totally unlike her and I’m worried.” He replied as his eyebrows knitted together in concern.

“Mr. Black, understanding and interpreting pet language is very important. Their vocabulary is not limited, but until understood, it can be tricky to correctly interpret. A pet that constantly scratches their ears may have an ear infection; vomiting several times in a row may indicate a possible viral or bacterial infection or a blockage in their gastrointestinal

tract. Coughing several times, almost “hacking,” as does someone who smokes or has smoked many cigarettes daily for years, most likely can be recognized as a lower or upper respiratory infection.”

“Hold it, Dr Saleh; for the last two days, Sally arches her back, straining, trying to poop and her urine is tinged with blood. Are you saying. . . .”

He left his sentence hanging in the air as his face and body tightened with fear and tension for his beloved companion. “Mr Black, your keen observation may just have contributed to saving Sally’s life.” I replied. “It sounds as if she has a urinary bladder infection or stones, but let’s examine her to be sure. We’ll need some diagnostic tests, x-rays, some blood and to check her urine, then we should know what is happening with her.”

Mr. Black became quiet, his concern clearly on Sally. For the time being, he forgot all about his sheep and within a few hours of arriving at the farm, we were in the office of a local Veterinarian, and there my suspicions were confirmed. Sally had a bladder stone – this stone is what caused her pain as well as the bleeding, and she required surgery to correct this situation.

Happily, the stone was successfully surgically removed and Sally was soon on the road to recovery.

Mr Black was relieved and thankful. “You know, two days ago, when this began to happen I didn’t think anything was really wrong. I thought Sally was just upset because I wouldn’t let her stay in my bedroom and that she would get over it. When I saw her in pain and the blood in her urine, it really scared me.”

Mr. Black paused and then with a smile, he looked at me and said, “What you think is black may actually be white!”

I smiled, thinking to myself that I finally understood the meaning of that expression.

Throughout the rest of that year and for another full year; I visited farms, delivered countless sheep and goats and grew in experience, patience and practice.

Mother's Request

After finishing my study courses in Scotland, I returned to Egypt. The Ministry of Agriculture of Saudi Arabia, had contacted me while I was still in school and I was deciding if I wanted to return to Scotland for summer school while applying for immigration to the United States or if I would accept the job offered to me as a Veterinary Epidemiologist for the Royal Ministry of Agriculture in Saudi Arabia.

I returned to Cairo to visit with my family. My parents were very happy to see me but Mother never stopped asking when I intended to marry!!

I think this is a global trait of Mothers, because no matter where I travel, it seems all Mothers have this in common; a desire for their grown children to marry and produce Grandchildren. Being an obedient son, I did not want to disappoint my Mother. I saw and was rejected by one young lady before meeting (through my now brother-in-law) and marrying my wife, Farida.

But I get ahead of myself. Between thinking about the offer from the Saudi Royal Family, chores, visiting and trying to fulfill my mother's request, I was a busy young man! One day as Mother and I were talking about my marriage,

I reminded her of a young lady in the neighborhood whom she had liked before I traveled to Scotland. She was happy with my choice, but her heart was not comfortable with that family's cultural status. (This is an important fact taken into account by both families during marriage negotiations in many Eastern and Middle Eastern cultures.)

So even though I had not seen or had contact with the girl or her family prior to my travels and school in Scotland, I called, made arraignments and went to visit the young lady's family.

The girls' family was happy and very welcoming to me, but her father shocked me when he told me that his daughter was engaged to another young man, an attorney from a wealthy family. At that moment, I immediately and as graciously as possible ended our conversation, deciding to remain a friend to the family.

My heart was relieved at this outcome. I had respected my Mother's request but it was not my destiny to marry the neighbor's daughter. I now have ten days during which I must make a decision regarding my future. The next day, relaxing in my room and reading, I heard the phone ring and my mother answered. She called my name, saying that the phone is for me.

Little did I realise it was my Destiny calling. "Hello", I said.

“Hello. I am “Farida’s cousin, Dr. Hamdallah.”

Immediately, I flashed back and saw myself a year earlier, working for the same project that now wants to hire me as Veterinarian in Saudi Arabia, and meeting another Veterinarian, Dr. Safwan, his wife and their two children.

I so admired their life style and family ways that I asked Dr. Safwan to be my future brother-in law; to propose to engage his sister-in-law, Farida, who lived in Egypt and whose photo I had seen and appreciated, to be my wife. Dr. Safwan, a Veterinary microbiologist with his Doctorate from the University of Michigan, was upfront and truthful with me.

He said, “You must first finish your education in Scotland before you attempt to engage Farida. Hers is a very serious family and you must be prepared with a very good job and your life in order before you even attempt to propose engagement to Farida,” he said.

I respected and accepted his opinion and returned to Scotland without a hint of my destiny. “Hello, do you hear me, are you still there?” Dr. Hamdallah’s voice, clear as a bell, brought me back from my memory.

“Yes”, I replied, “I hear you and I am pleased that you have called.”

“I would like to meet with you today, at Groupi’s Restaurant in downtown Cairo.” Dr. Hamdallah said.

“I can be there in thirty minutes. See you then, goodbye.”

We met at the restaurant and accompanying him, to my surprise, was his sister-in-law, Farida. Dr. Hamdallah and I greeted each other and then he introduced Farida and me. Farida and I sat together to get acquainted and talk while Dr Hamdallah sat at another table, some feet away to give us privacy.

During our conversation, I told Farida what had happened a year ago, with her other brother-in-law, Dr Safwan. I said that I was told to postpone the idea of engagement with her until I had both a good job and my life in order; she smiled, but was not very talkative. I must say, I was a bit nervous in her company and did do most of the talking.

We agreed to see each other two or three more times, still in the presence of her family and in public. As our conversation ended, I asked her if she might be interested in marrying me. “I will think about it”, she replied. Later in the afternoon of the same day, I received a phone call from Dr Hamdallah.

He called to tell me: “Sorry, Farida thinks you too young.”

No discussion, he simply said goodbye and hung up, end of call; just like that! This was my second rejection. I was not sure of what I was feeling and was unsure of what to do next, so I focused and gathered my thoughts together to prepare a cassette recording, instead of a note or phone call for Farida. I was blunt and in the recording, I told her that I was sure that we would both find someone that we would think “more suitable” as a life partner and I wished her a long and happy life with whomever she thinks is “old” enough for her. I sent that off to her.

The next day, I received another call from Dr Hamdallah, this time saying: “Congratulations, Farida was very impressed with your common sense response to her rejection. She has reconsidered her decision and now agrees to marry you.”

Farida and I got married within one week; I got my visa to Saudi Arabia and was awaiting word of when I would start working for the Royal Family, Ministry of Agriculture at the American – Saudi project in the desert.

And as Karma and Fate began to weave together the events of Farida and my lives, I realized that this was an ending to my youth, the boyhood of my life.

New experiences, new adventures, new chapters as Veterinarian, Husband, and Father are waiting to begin and I

am excited and happy to share this new adventure with my dearest companion, my new wife, Farida.

The Bedouin's Project

And so I worked and waited, preparing for my next assignment, my return to the Bedouin Project, the Faisal Settlement Project, named for the late and good King Faisal.

Three months would pass before my new bride, Farida would be able to join me in Harad, Saudi Arabia.

Meanwhile, it is October 7, 1975, and after working all day, I am getting ready to celebrate my birthday, Bedouin style, in the middle of the Desert. I am at the project in Harad midway between the capital of Riyadh and El-Damam, where the giant American petroleum company, ARAMCO, is headquartered, the small desert town that is to be the center of the Bedouin resettlement effort.

The land around Harad, where the Bedouin are to be settled extends for fifty square kilometers. Here in Harad, the Royal Family/Ministry of Agriculture and their American partners have created a town for the Bedouin, wanting, hoping to convince these Nomadic Peoples to change their traveling, seasonal lifestyle to a settled one. Here they will live in luxurious apartments that will all have running water, electricity, stoves, refrigerators, and bathrooms, plus a common living space. This is a town with all modern conveniences in

the middle of the desert. In Harad, there is a two thousand square foot company grocery store, operated by a young Lebanese National family that serves our daily needs.

The store carries groceries, toiletries, and clothing. A train that makes stops and arrives into the town once a day at 3:30 P.M. for fifteen minutes and then continues on to El Damam, where Aramco is located (American Saudi Oil Partnership Corporation.)

If you miss the train, you must wait till the next day, for traveling across the desert, is just not done. There are no roads and the mountains of sand are too dangerous.

There is one Palestinian physician, an Egyptian accountant and his assistant, three American families, responsible for the agricultural sector, a German family responsible for all of the hydraulics and electricity, and a French family that is responsible for the logistics and coordination of the project. The town has a few scattered warehouses with two major apartment buildings for Expat singles, and ten single villas for the elite managers and their families. There is only one road going through the center and encircling the fenced town.

Everyone knows everyone and ours is a self-sufficient international community. Days are hot and dry, the sky azure; nights are very cold, a deep, velvet indigo, stars are pin-points of brilliant light, some steady, others flashing and so

close that you feel that you can reach up and take a handful, like fireflies, to light your way through the darkness of desert night.

On all sides of the desert are thousands of sheep roaming hundreds of acres of cultivated alfalfa fields. The sight of the sheep, the green grass, the blue, cloudless sky and the desert is breathtaking, its silence, deafening. The ever-present wind dances with the alfalfa, carrying its fresh, clean perfume on the breeze; newborn lambs cavort around their mothers, playing and simply celebrating life.



Brucellosis in Saudi Arabia

We begin work at 5 A.M. working till 11 A.M. and then retreat from the pounding heat of the day. Around 3 P.M., we return to work, the heat is still oppressive but manageable. We work till around 6 P.M. and it is still so hot that you can fry eggs on the hood of your vehicle. Today though, I actually finished my daily tour of the sheep flock at about 6 P.M. My regular day includes surgeries, normal injuries and illness requiring surgery, as well as young ewe mothers needing to birth via caesarean section, and regular treatments for all of the flock.

It is a long day. I stay in the field, close by the tents erected by the Bedouin who live and work with us. By 7 P.M., all of the Expats and a few of the Saudi Nationals surround me, all helping to celebrate my birthday. It is starting to get dark and with the sun goes the heat, so the fires are being lit. Dug into the sand were big holes, large enough to cover six large barrels. The barrels each hold a large lamb, dressed with herbs and spices and surrounded by charcoal. They had been buried and cooking since before six that morning and were now ready for the celebration.

You can smell the charcoal and lamb in the cold, crisp air. Delicious!!

Around us were almost one hundred ewes and their newborns, and a few of the camels. The camels carry the tents

and other supplies. In the brisk, cold night, with all of us sitting round the fire, you can feel the energy of the friendships shared by all of us in this moment. People's faces glow with good health and the blush of redness that comes from the sun's tan of the desert.

The rhythm of the night, the Arabic language, the Bedouin music, the sounds of camp, of the camels, stamping, chewing and snorting mixed with the bleating of the lambs, and the colorful clothing of the men, women and children, reflect in the dancing firelight. For a moment time stops and the timelessness of this moment, the countless millennium that this energy has been shared echoes backward and foreword, spilling over into infinity.

No alcoholic beverages, only fermented goat, camel, or date milk were allowed. In accordance with Islamic Law, if one does drink or is in possession of alcohol and is caught, you can be flogged or imprisoned for disobeying and that includes not only Saudi Nationals, but also Expats.

By nine thirty, our dinner is finished and we are all relaxed and I am starting to open my gifts. From beyond the circle of firelight, a young man in traditional Bedouin garb, with only his eyes showing, walks to Sheik Hamdan, the head of the Bedouin tribe and bends to whisper in his ear. Sheik Hamdan begins to look concerned. He looks at me and says, " Ahmad, this messenger came in from another Bedouin family about

two hours away. Their sheep farm has a huge outbreak of Hoof and Mouth Disease and it is infecting the people as well as the animals. The head of their family is also a Prince of the Royal family, Ameer (Prince) Khaldoon and they need help.”

“Do they need us to go to the farm tonight?” I asked.



Bird flu in the Slums of Egypt



Nine Swiss Cows

“Well, my advice would be to go as soon as possible, right away.” Sheik Hamdan said.

“How are we going to drive and reach the farm at without maps or light? Everyone knows how dangerous the desert at night is.” I said.

“Do not worry, Ahmad. This messenger is one of the top desert landmark experts and you will be safe with him.” Sheik Hamdan replied.

I sighed and cannot help but disbelieve what I am hearing. But what an adventure this will be, crossing the desert at night!! A story to tell my children and my children’s children!

Dr. McCorcle, our chief veterinarian, from Edinburgh, looks at me with questions in his eyes. He understands some of the Bedouin’s language, but does not speak it. “What is going on, Mustafa? You look surprised after speaking with Sheik Hamdan.”

“We need to prepare to visit another farm as soon as possible headed by Ameer (Prince) Khaldoon. It is possible that they are experiencing an outbreak of Hoof and Mouth Disease possibly brought into the Kingdom from Syria during “Haj”(pilgrimage), I replied.

Dr. McCorcle, in his sixties, tall and thin, with a red face and a very low tone of voice, got up from the circle and began to prepare for our journey. I joined him immediately while advising our team to be ready to move. We always travel in two jeeps with our team; Scott, our twenty-seven years old American mechanic, and Khalid, an assistant veterinarian from Pakistan and as soon as possible, we prepared our supplies and were off.

After almost an hour and a half of following Ahmad's bouncing and retreating taillights through a totally black and extremely bumpy terrain, we can see nothing, not even our hand in front of our face. The darkness is complete and smothering, made worse by the stinging sand thrown up into your face by the wind and the jeep we must follow so closely.

We stopped for a small break and I went to Ahmad, innocently saying: "When we started to drive, an hour and a half ago, you said that we were about to arrive. Did we get lost?"

Ahmad broke out into big, booming laughter and in a voice heavily accented by his native Bedouin language said; "I am born and raised in this desert and I know every inch of this area as I know my own children. Do not worry, Doctor, we will arrive shortly, InshaAllah (God willing)."

Back into the jeeps and off again. Shortly thereafter, a pinpoint of light flickers in the dark distance and we are told it

is the beginning of the fires of Prince Khaldon's tribe. "Assalamo alikom (Peace upon you), Prince Khaldon." I said in greeting. "Waalikom Assalam (and Peace upon you too)", he replied. I introduced our team, Dr. McCorcle, Scott, and Khalid to the Prince and his people and immediately inquired about the sick sheep. Even knowing that it was close to midnight, and that we had already put in a full days work, we would be expected to do what needed to be done. So, we had best get to work.

We were taken to one of the tents. Inside there were four ewes, two camels and two young men who were in contact with the sheep. The animals symptoms varied from small, elevated bubbles of cysts, soft, and filled with clear liquid - these are on their lips, tongues, and between their hoofs. Their udders present swollen nipples with these similar, painful lesions present.

The shepard said, "Wa ALLAH (By the name of God), we have not had enough milk since these symptoms first appeared and now the sheep are refusing to eat! We are so afraid that all of the sheep will be infected."

After examining the sheep and the camels, Dr. McCorcle and I both agreed that this is an outbreak of "Hoof and Mouth" Disease. We also checked over the workers and they presented very mild, but still painful, blisters. These blisters, as the animals, were filled with a transparent liquid on the face and lips. On people, these can easily be confused with sun blisters.

We collected tissue samples and blood from the animals and kept the specimens in a cooler till they could be sent for laboratory analysis and diagnosis. We advised the workers to contact their attending physicians while instructing other workers to quarantine the sick, exposed and suspected animals showing any signs of the disease.

Dr. McCorcle and I began to answer questions about “Hoof and Mouth” Disease. It is a viral infection that affects all hooved animals and it starts with a fever and not eating. The animal becomes lethargic; there is loss of milk production and obvious blisters upon the face, tongue, the udders and between the toes. Isolation and condemnation is the best choice for avoiding contamination of the disease to other animals. Sadly, this is not an uncommon disease in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East and to help prevent it, we recommend the washing of hands before and after milking female ewes, camels, horses, goats and cows.

Prince Khaldon insisted on inviting us for a traditional Bedouin dinner and also insisted that we stay in his tents till morning after all of our hard work. He thanked us for our efforts in saving the lives of his flocks and his community. Prince Khaldon was educated abroad and finished his doctorate in the United States.

However, he elected to leave the business world, instead choosing to serve his community in the middle of the des-

ert, rather than in the city at the Ministry of Education in the capitol. His people love and respect him greatly for choosing a traditional rather than a modern lifestyle.

It is now almost five in the morning and suddenly, we hear the voice of the Azan calling for Dawn's Prayers, the first of the five Prayers of the day, in the Muslim faith. The people of the camp line up directly behind Prince Khaldon; men and children stand directly behind him and the women stand behind the men, all praying.

Dr. McCorcle watched the people and quietly and thoughtfully said; "If all Arabs and Muslims worked collectively together and put their hearts and minds into peaceful, progressive progress the way that they stand behind one leader, their contribution to humanity would exceed everyone's expectations. These are the descendants of a people whose culture birthed the first known universities!"

We looked to each other and by nodding our heads, silently agreed.

Meanwhile, back at the compound, the majority of the Saudis were friendly, hospitable and gracious. However, there were also a few Saudi Nationalists, some in positions of authority who were not above using their posi-

tions as a means of control; intimidating, bullying and persecuting workers who were not U.S., Western or Saudi. Non-western, Expat passports were confiscated, effectively keeping these people literally bound to the compound, for the term of their contract. They could be expelled from the Kingdom within twenty-four to forty-eight hours and, or imprisoned immediately for not obeying the rules (interpreted by the manager) or personal wishes of the manager.

A man I will call “Kafeel,” a project manager, and his brother co-ruled with an iron hand - they were not respected, they were feared; known among the people as mean, capricious, greedy and unstable. My awareness of this intolerable situation grew as I became exposed to their cruelty and moodiness through their treatment of the other workers. I decided to actively oppose their abuse, but two months later, while helping sheep deliver their offspring, I contracted Brucellosis.

My brother-in-law, Dr. Safwan, who had also been exposed and developed this same disease, recognized my symptoms and then diagnosed me. Dr Safwan is the doctor who initiated and supervised the first laboratory within this project. We both experienced fever, chills, sweating, weakness and nausea, painful, flu-like symptoms.

For three weeks, Dr Safwan and I injected each other with anti-biotics, until the infections cleared.

Meanwhile, case after case of the disease broke out among the Nomads. As I was recuperating, I started to educate the Bedouins about the disease; its symptoms, prevention and control.

Firstly I prepared a memo, documenting and explaining all of the confirmed cases, along with their laboratory findings.

Then I requested an investigation and began an educational awareness program for the workers, the associates and the Bedouin. I next requested the physician in charge of the project to collect blood samples from all ill and exposed people, and to send it to the laboratory for further Zoonotic risk factor determination.

He declined my request, reluctantly refusing to participate, fearing expulsion and job loss.

For whatever reasons, Kafeel and his brother did not approve of the educational program and threatened to fire me.

I could give in, I could accept fear, submission and humiliation and keep my job or I could walk away in total faith and acceptance, completely trusting in the Universe and the

feelings of my heart. I made the only choice that in good consciousness I could make.

I was given forty-eight hours to leave or I would find myself in jail. Taking a stand for an issue that you believe in your heart is the right thing to do is not always the easiest of actions to take, however it is the best way to look yourself in the mirror and to get a good night sleep.

I now realize that if I had chosen differently, I would not be where I am or who I am today! Amazing, for in hindsight, in looking back, I again recognize choices presented by my destiny, my Karma, for the benefit of my Life's lessons and my Soul's growth.

But at that time, it was difficult to remain true to my heart, knowing that the outcome of my decision would leave me without income to support my wife, without a home to shelter us and totally dependent upon others.

So, after six months of marriage, Farida was in shock –None of her four brothers-in-law who had lived and worked in Saudi Arabia for years and attained high positions could do anything to change my heart or the decision made by the Saudi manager. Farida became depressed and very unhappy. This was a situation not expected or easily accepted in her point of view. And her reaction was to be expected.

We returned to Egypt and luckily, her parents were very receptive and encouraged us to share their four-bedroom apartment near Pyramid Street in Cairo. All during this time, my dream was to immigrate to the United States. Finally I heard that the U.S. Embassy was looking for medical personnel; Doctors, Dentists, Veterinarians, and Nursing personnel, to emigrate to the U.S. I applied and waited.

Farida became pregnant and was expecting around May 1977. Everyone was excited and as Farida is one of eight sisters, advice and curiosity was soon flying at us from all directions. Farida was very comfortable being in the center of attention and this was a happy, but chaotic time. She blossomed with her pregnancy and the nearness of her family.

Meanwhile, the Egyptian Ministry of Agriculture offered me a job working in Ismailia, an hour's drive from Cairo. The job that I am offered is to be in co-charge of the health status of the first nine dairy cows gifted to Egypt from the Swiss government. Farida's family had lived in Ismailia until they immigrated to Cairo during the 1967 war with Israel. They still had their old home and its property and my father-in-law, Mr. Abdel Rahman, would be there during the week, returning to Cairo and his family for the weekends.



Lyme Disease



Lyme Disease

The Nine Swiss Dairy Cows Who Came to Live in Egypt

These beautiful cows were given to Egypt by the Swiss government as an economic incentive. They are huge, healthy, high milk producing cows and the like of them has not been seen in Egypt. They cause amazement and wonder to whomever comes into contact with them and they are a source of pride to those chosen to work with them.

Three fortunate people chosen are Dr. Islami, myself and the head Veterinary nurse, whose name is Soliman.

Soliman had been around cows and worked with them for all of his life. He worked hard and with attention and perseverance, he became a manager. He was, rightly, very proud when he was one of the managers chosen to work with and maintain the cows. Soliman kept long hours and made himself available whenever he was needed. In addition to feeding, milking, and training others in how to care for the cows, he also taught other workers how to use the new, automated milking machinery. Proud of his job, his responsibilities and always laughing, he was well liked and respected by all who came into contact with him.

At sixty-three, Soliman was six feet tall, very thin and dark, and has freckled dark skin. His voice, a whispering harshness erupted into hard and deep coughs every time he exerted himself whether by hard labour or his laughter at his own jokes. Whenever his heavy and ill-fitting false teeth would fall out, usually when he would bend over to attach the milking hoses to the cows' udders, he would break out into his familiar laughter, causing everyone around him to smile.

Month after month I noticed Soliman becoming more frail. I advised, and then, over time, insisted that he see his physician. "Do not worry Dr. Mustafa, I will not die now. It is not my time yet. Maybe when I finish my third pack of cigarettes today, I will breathe better." He laughed, his face turning red from coughing and a crackling sound like distant thunder coming from his chest.

"You are going to be fine, Soliman. You are off for the next two days, please see your Physician and get some rest, you really must rest." I said.

"Where is Soliman? I have not seen him these last five days and it's not like him to not be here. I am concerned."

I decided to visit him at his house after work, on my way home. Making my way through a very poor neighborhood, I knock at his door. Soliman's wife opened the door and I stepped inside

to a dirt floor, very cold; the windows are closed against the chilled night air, the flies and the mosquitoes’.

In the dim light, I see two very small rooms filled with heavy, black smoke from the clay oven; no ventilation, the only carpet, Soliman’s prayer rug, facing East; the only sound, other than Soliman’s laboured breathing, was the steady drip of water from the rusted bathroom faucet.

The water was seeping into a small gutter that was very dirty, filled with green sludge. I knew that Soliman had two sons; one a budding agriculturist and the younger who was to graduate from the same Veterinary School of Medicine in Cairo that I had, and to those expenses was where Soliman’s monies went. I was very distressed and wanted to help, but I did not want to go deeper into the sick room, although that action was the honorable and decent thing to do.

Soliman’s wife insisted that I stay for a few minutes. She said, worriedly, that everyone was very concerned for his

health, so I went in and sat next to him as he lay on his cot, too weak to sit up. Soliman could not greet me, only nod his head and look at me with eyes sad and broken. He had aged twenty years in five days.

I asked, “What did the Doctor tell you, Amo? [Uncle, a term of respect] Soliman?” He looked at me with sad eyes and began to weep, saying in his breathy, raspy voice, “I have Tuberculosis, Dr Mustafa.”

“What??. . .This is not one of your jokes is it, Amo?”

“It is the truth from my physicians’ mouth.” He replied.

I sat beside him for a few more seconds, seconds that seemed like years, not knowing what to say; meanwhile, my mind was racing, thinking of the transmission of this deadly, but treatable disease to his family, friends, neighbors, co-workers and. . .Oh my. . .what if the nine new milking cows are infected?

This is worse than a nightmare; it might well be a disaster!

Outwardly I smiled and put my hand on his trembling, bony shoulder. “Do not worry, Amo Soliman. You will be fine if you take all the pills your Doctor gives you. However, you must stay home and rest until you make a complete

recovery. I will visit you from time to time, for I will miss your funny jokes.”

As I stood at the door to leave, I handed his wife an envelope, telling them that this is some of his salary, but she declined to take it. I pressed it into her hand as she looked to her husband, who nodded in grateful acceptance. I left the little house, sure that their physician will guide Soliman and his family through a plan of control and treatment, but knowing that it will take a long time.

Dr. Islami and I must now account for the testing of all of the cows and the people that were in contact with and exposed to this disease at the Dairy Farm. The Minister of Agriculture and his associates were notified; quarantine protocols were activated and all cows and individuals were tested for Tuberculosis. Only one cow tested positive for the disease and this is what is known as “Reverse Zoonoses”, a human infecting an animal. No other human or animal in contact or exposed tested positive.

As for Amo Soliman, it was recommended that he activate his retirement package and complete a long-term treatment program.

The Ministry of Agriculture commended us for our work in diagnosing and controlling this highly contagious disease that could have been disastrous on so many levels. At the

same time, in addition to my work at the farm, I was also working with people of many small villages, educating them in methods of animal husbandry and disease control.

Moving among the communities, I was teaching and explaining how to recognize, control and eradicate disease while preventing the spread of disease from animals to people and from people to animals. It is fascinating to me that within three years of graduating from Veterinary medical school, I am exposed to three cases of Zoonotic disease.

First – my first patient, Mansoor, the child who contracted Larva Migrans from his dog in Egypt.

Second – my exposure and contraction of Brucellosis [Malta Fever] from sheep and goats in Saudi Arabia

Third – the Tuberculosis infection from Amo Soliman to the milking cow, this being known as Reverse Zoonosis.

I was aware, yet unaware at the same time – these happenings stood out in my life, but I was not yet conscious of the direction, impact and interest that I would later develop because of them.

Puerto Rico & Ticks

Throughout this time, my dream was to immigrate to the United States. Finally I heard that the U.S. Embassy was looking for veterinarians. I applied and was accepted.

In June of 1977, after the birth of my first-born son, leaving my wife and child as well cared for as possible, I began my journey to the United States.



Haitian Pig



Pigs in Haiti



Slums of Haiti and Human Diseases

I had one thousand dollars in my pocket, was alone and searching for a job. Several months went by and I received word that the U.S. Army was looking for veterinarians, so I joined the U.S. Army Veterinarian Corp.

Sent for basic training to Ft Sill, Oklahoma, I was next assigned to Ft. Riley, Kansas to take my first boards in Veterinary Medicine. Again, as in Scotland, I met many people from many different countries and made lasting friendships. In Kansas, I dealt with small and exotic animals and also worked with horses from the base.

I even worked with the regal American Indian Bison! [Not considered a “small” animal by ANY stretch of the imagination.]

Passing my boards and embarking on my Residency next brought me to the state of California.

There in Los Angeles, I worked with small animals, birds and wildlife and also spent six months working with horses.

After my Residency, I was offered another two-year job with the U.S. Government; Department of Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services.

Due to my background in Scotland and my experience with cows, I was sent to Puerto Rico to implement programs to destroy the

tick population. Ticks were causing havoc and disease among the island population and are well known carriers of the dreaded Lyme Disease as well as other blood pathogens.

The two years passed quickly and I was promoted and returned to Okeechobee, Florida in the United States. Again, I found myself embroiled in another war to destroy another Brucellosis disease outbreak in this mid-Florida area's cattle.

As this project neared completion, I was assigned to Plum Island Laboratory in New York. This is a high security area closed to all except those with top security clearance. The U.S. Department of Agriculture selects a Veterinary Surgeon to become a foreign animal disease specialist. This person is then additionally trained and then called upon in the event of any foreign animal disease outbreak.

I worked in research; studying viruses and training other veterinarians who came to the lab for two week study programs on the causes, recognition and effects of foreign animal disease. I specialized in Foot and Mouth Disease.

This disease had attacked the animal population in England a few years ago, devastating their dairy and beef industries and I had worked on the disease during an outbreak in Saudi Arabia.

At the same time, I also translated the manual for recognizing and diagnosing Foreign Animal Disease into Arabic. The Department of Agriculture published this work and it was distributed to twenty-three Arabic speaking countries. Since then, it has also been translated into French, Spanish and Japanese.

Afterward, I returned to Okeechobee, Florida and while there, received a request to journey to the island nation of Haiti. They were dealing with an outbreak of African Swine Fever that had already destroyed the entire swine [pig] population of Dominican Republic and was now raging throughout Haiti. The U.S. was concerned that the disease, if uncontrolled, would make its way onto American soil. My two-month stay first turned into six months, then stretched into another two years and this time became one of the most astounding and amazing times of my life. What affected me on first landing on the Island, were waves of suffocating heat and almost unbelievable feelings of despair. The sea, hot and listless was filled with waste. Tiny waves burped, leaving filth on the junk covered, once pristine sand. No trees, no shade, shanty towns made of refuse - terrible poverty, the sense of hopelessness, only one and one half hours from the shores of one of the world's richest countries, the United States, felt surreal.

These images and feelings rushed over me, thundered through me, taking my breath away, and then echoed through every level of my being. I felt dizzy, as if I had lost

my balance. I wanted to turn around and run away; escaping the incessant, defenseless sorrow, the helplessness, the abject poverty and deep misery that I saw and felt everywhere; I felt completely overwhelmed!

Then I met the people of the island, some of with whom I will be working. Amazing people.

Rays of hope and sunshine, in spite of all they have been through. Wonderful people, determined to make the best out of the worst and what an opportunity for professional as well as personal growth! I came face to face with my own need to make everything “all right”, and this challenged me to gain a much deeper awareness of the human condition and human conditioning, resulting in “non-judgment” and a profound respect for those who find themselves in such seemingly dire and desperate straights.

So, rolling up our sleeves we got to work and dealt with prioritizing, then tackling, successfully, the problems of this tiny island nation and it’s pig problem and I became the Chief of Animal Health in Haiti.

This became an enormous, international project. We had to destroy the entire population of pigs and then replace them with healthy, imported pigs from Canada and United States.

But I get ahead of myself.

The Voodoo Curse

African Swine Fever and Human AIDS Virus

Upon completion of my one-year research program at Plum Island Laboratories in New York, and finishing my translation of “The Illustrated Manual of the Recognition and Diagnosis of Foreign Animal Diseases” from English to the Arabic language, I was to choose between an ongoing Haitian project or working at the National Emergency Program, USDA, APHIS.

Meanwhile, my translation was published and distributed to twenty-three Arabic speaking countries in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. During this time, I was thoroughly excited when I found out that I was to be confirmed as The Chief of Animal Health, representing the USDA in Haiti. The Haitian project was an appointment from my supervisor to head a most challenging and sensitive eradication and educational program on the island of Haiti, between 1983 and 1985.

During the first week of my assignment as Chief of Animal Health in Haiti, I met with my staff and we laid the foundation

for our cooperation and interaction with our counterparts within the international community. We share the responsibility of the technical aspects of the African Swine Fever eradication program and we will work together to contain and eradicate the outbreak of the island's epidemic.

The African Swine Fever was first reported in Cuba; then it appeared in the Dominican Republic, where it was eradicated, but by then it had mutated and spread across the border to the Dominican Republic's twin sister, Haiti. This island nation, halved and containing both the Dominican Republic and Haiti, hosts three major languages. D.R. speaks mostly Spanish while approximately 10% of Haiti speaks and writes French. The majority of Haiti's population speaks and communicates with Creole, a combination of African and French languages, with neighbourhoods broken down even further with local dialects called "Patwah." And then there are combinations of religious philosophies, deeply ingrained and unique to the island cultures. In Haiti, the prominent, open religion is Catholicism, but most of the Islanders practice and take part in Vodou. The word comes from the Fon language in West Africa and means "Spirit." Voodoo combines Yoruba traditions with other African beliefs, Fon, Ga and Ewe.

Amid this rich heritage, our task was to continue to eradicate the disease from the island by confiscating all pigs, euthanasing them, then burning and burying their remains,

while compensating their owners with between \$20.00 and \$40.00 per head.

This had been an ongoing process for a year and a half before my arrival and my commitment was for another two years. I was expected to continue the program while implementing the next phases of the project. This included the re-introduction and management of a swine re-population; also working toward the development of more sophisticated and advanced laboratory techniques as well as staffing the scientists; plus implementation of an educational program regarding their animals, for the Islanders.

All this was a formidable task, but at thirty-three, my drive, optimism and enthusiasm, with perhaps a touch of youthful arrogance, was boundless. My second week into the project, I gave instructions to my team to visit the municipality of Gonaïeve. Here had developed a challenging situation for us involving a powerful leader within the community. The gentleman was a high-ranking official in the Haitian government, as well as a High Priest in the Voodoo religion and he refused to comply with euthanizing his special pig because he used it in specific religious rituals.

In 1982, the AIDS virus was raging among the island's human population. Haiti had one of the highest known infection

ratios among its population, more so than anywhere else in the Western Hemisphere. Among the Islanders, it was commonly believed that by using their pigs in a specific, Voodoo religious ceremony, the disease would transfer from human to animal, thereby protecting the people from the ravages and consequences of the disease.

This belief might have come about as the systems of both human and pig are similar and compatible, but this particular belief, rooted deeply in the philosophical and emotional system of the Islanders, made our task much more difficult because there was a persistent rumor that their pigs were dying NOT from African Swine Fever, but from successful transference of the AIDS Virus.

Also, economically the Islanders were suffering from losing their pigs to the African Swine Fever, thereby depriving them of their main source of income. They were unable to trade their pigs or to save monies from pig sales. This deprived them of monies for their children's education, or to get monies for their children's marriages.

Meanwhile African Swine Fever was decimating their culture on one front, AIDS was attacking on another, and the International community is backing the USA in her efforts to prevent illegal, possibly diseased immigrants from crossing

the ocean to seek asylum and a better way of life, by returning these immigrants to their native soil.

It became a vicious cycle, trying to communicate and convince pig owners that because of their refusal to euthanize their animals, they were sabotaging their own economic as well as their physical recovery.

This difficulty was not because the Islanders did not believe what we were trying to teach them, but because our methods and education differed from what their Voodoo leaders told them. The people were fearful of retaliations in the form of curses, bad luck and worse.

To my face, the people would agree, but their pigs were hidden away from us, to be used as currency if or when the AID's virus struck them or their family, and nothing would be done, so the disease, African Swine Fever, mutated even more.

Frustrated, tired of going around in circles, and watching the disease mutate, I contacted my staff in Washington, DC, their counterparts in the Haitian Ministry of Agriculture, the Canadians and the USAID political office. We quickly agreed that ALL of the pigs, with NO exceptions, were to be put down and this action was to be carried out swiftly.



U.S. Soldier Talking with Iraqi Children

When I related this decision to my staff, they agreed that this action was necessary, but no one would participate in carrying out these directives.

During another frustrating meeting with the Vodou hierarchy, I decided to take matters

into my own hands. The leaders and I next met in the yard of the High Priest. We were all talking and they were very unhappy. While they talked among themselves, I spoke in whispers to my interpreter/driver, asking him to be ready to jump into the jeep and quickly drive away on my signal.

Quietly I backed away from the group and found the pen of the pig at the center of our controversy. I unfolded a long knife and pointed it at the heart of the obviously very sick and suffering animal. It screamed once, as with a quick thrust, the knife pierced its heart and it dropped onto the ground. Before any of the gathered crowd realized what happened or could react, I was in the jeep giving the order to, “drive away and drive fast!”

The crowd began to point to me and yell; “Le blond, le blond!” — “The white man, the white man!” No matter how many in the crowd were in agreement with the way I ended the dilemma, no one spoke openly in my defense.

One week later, I had a car accident and my head was in traction. I was hospitalized for three days and no one called or

visited with me during that time! Not even my interpreter/driver showed up! I cannot even begin to imagine what stories were circulating in the Haitian community.

Two years, many adventures and much hard work later, I was able to complete my assignment in Haiti. All sick and exposed pigs had been eliminated and new, healthy pigs from Canada and the USA filled the island. A new Haitian Veterinary Laboratory was spearheaded through the efforts and dedication of a unique America-Egyptian Microbiologist/Virologist, Dr. Farook Hamdy, along with many other wonderful USA and international officials.

With the dedication, vigilance and unrelenting efforts of these amazing people, the African Swine Flu that contaminated the island was prevented from making the leap from the island to the shores of the USA.

Back to Florida

I have an insatiable appetite for knowledge – my Soul is hungry and seeks always more and more knowledge; and my quest led me next to become the Import/Export Veterinarian for Miami International Airport.

Among other things, I inspected and quarantined horses, birds and all kinds of exotics in an effort to prevent the spread of disease from foreign countries to our shores. Even though the threat was considered low, (this was before 9-11) we were ever on the alert and aware of the possibility of bio-terrorism.

After one year, I again became restless and on 4 July 1987, I resigned from the U.S Department of Agriculture. I started my private small and exotic animal practice. I distinctly remember teasing my now former boss by saying: “Sir, I am now a free bird!” But the joke was on me, because instead of one boss, I now have as many bosses as I have patients, thankfully!

A few years later, I began to see the possibilities of making a dream of mine become a reality. I want to connect people with pets and plants! So, I went back to school, to Nova Southeastern University in Davie, Florida and earned

two Master's degrees: One in Health Administration and the other in Public Health.

One goal of mine is to implement a program at Nova instructing medical students in the dangers of transmitted disease from pets to people.

Another goal is to build retirement — nursing care facilities where the residents will be encouraged to have and care for their own pets. The facilities will incorporate organic gardens of vegetables, flowers, fruits and herbs; educational rooms where Qigong, Yoga, Meditation, Music, Massage and other “Internal Arts” are taught, enjoyed and practiced. Practice and

participation in these skills is known and recognized to improve the participants' spiritual, emotional, mental and physical health; as well as foster an ever evolving enjoyment of and appreciation of the wonders of life and all of its interconnections.

By combining People, Pets and Plants (our new corporation), our goal of fostering greater awareness, understanding and communication between human, animal and plant life is within reach.



Brucellosis: Adam's Fever

The ringing phone jarred me out of my lazy Sunday morning daydreams. "Hello", I said.

"Dr. Saleh, this is Mrs Tossini. Are we still on for your visit? Mimi and Momo are waiting for you."

"Of course Mrs Tossini," I replied, "9 a.m. sharp and I will pass by your farm."

Mimi and Momo are smart, young, twin Pomeranians that have been my patients since they were three months old. It's time for their annual vaccine shots and a check up on their general health. They live on a sheep farm and are part of Mr. and Mrs. Tosini's family.

"Please give me your address and the directions again. I know it's a bit tricky to go around our neighbors' sheep farm, but I have a feeling that you will find us easier than the last time you visited," she said with a smile in her voice.

"I know, Mrs. Tossini, it was late in the evening and with all the detours, I lost my way. But don't worry, I will find you this time," I said.

I showered, shaved, grabbed a quick shake, got my house call kit ready, climbed into my jeep and began the drive to the Tossini Farm.

It is a bright, sunshine filled day. The fresh air is damp and sprinkled with the slight mist of morning's dawn. It smells wonderful. The closer I get to the farm's neighborhood, the more and thicker the trees. Lawns become gardens, then pasture, then fields and they are soft with green, luxuriant grass; thick vines and hedges are tangled along both sides of the roadway.

My jeep goes up and down the rolling hills, crossing muddy hollows, wind in my hair, sun on my face, turning up the cd and exuberantly singing a duet, squeaky voice and all, with my favorite singer. Suddenly, in mid screech, cresting a small hill, I spot the dreaded. . . "Detour" sign.

Oh no. . . . not again!! And to make matters worse, I see the Tossini Farm in the distance, but don't see the right crossing to get there!!

Well, I think to myself, it must be this way. . .then I think,

"No that way. . . that must be it!" After admitting to myself that I am lost again, I drive onto more wrong ways and detours while wondering where I might get further directions'. I finally see a house with a young woman milking a goat in her yard while nearby a child plays with a bicycle.

I drive closer to them and turn off the jeep's engine.

“Good morning, I am Dr. Saleh, a Veterinarian. I'm rather lost and am looking for this address.”

I hand the lady the paper with the address and my directions scribbled on it.

“Well, good morning, Dr Saleh. I'm Mary and this is my daughter, Jasmine. My husband is in the field cutting grass for our sheep. Let me see. . . .”, she said, standing up, wiping her hands on her apron and taking the paper. She scanned the paper, then turned and pointed in the complete opposite direction.

“You really should take a complete turn north and watch for the detoured area. I know it's confusing and there really aren't any clear signs, but it's not far from here. We know the Tossini family and their dogs.”

“Thank you, Mrs Mary,” I said, turning back to my jeep but as I go to get in, I see a flat tire! “O boy!!!! I cannot believe it. . .another flat tire!!!

I replaced the same tire not three days ago. I know,” I said, shaking my head and turning back to Mrs. Mary, “it has to be from the new detour and construction sites I drove past.”

“Don’t worry, Dr. Saleh; as soon as I finish up here, I’ll call Triple A. You can take a cup of coffee with us while you wait.”

“I hope that I am not imposing”, I said, “but I must also call Mrs. Tossini and let her know that I will be late for our appointment.”

“Of course, Dr.”, she said.

“Thank you.” I turned to watch her lovely daughter, Jasmine, at play and thought again of the wonder and the miracle of children.

“Are you lucky enough to be a stay-at-home-Mom, Mrs. Mary?”

“Well, Dr., I’m a US army sergeant and I served in Kuwait and Iraq. I came home six months ago after being diagnosed with Gulf War Syndrome. I couldn’t cope with friends and colleagues’ dying; civilians being killed, the childrens horrible suffering, their not having food, medicine or any stability and. . .and. . .”

Tears started to flow from her eyes. “I am sorry Ms. Mary, I do not mean to open painful wounds.”

“No, No Doctor. It’s part of my healing process to talk, to open my heart. It just gets to me because I worry about

everyone there, but especially someone there who became my friend, an Iraqi mother, Lateefa and her young son, Adam.”

“Will you tell me about them?” I asked.

“While I was on patrol in Iraq, I stumbled into Lateefa in a dimly lit, one room shack. She was trying to breast feed her baby. Adam was six months old, but looked much younger. Her husband had been killed in the war, leaving Lateefa and Adam with no one to help them. Lateefa malnourished herself, didn’t have enough milk to feed Adam and was trying to survive by milking and feeding Adam from a she goat that lived among the ruins of the neighborhood. I wanted to help them and went back to my base, returning to the shack with some canned vegetables, meats, soups, and powered milk.

I couldn’t help thinking about Jasmine, safe at home with her father and well taken care of. As a mother with a daughter the same age as Adam, I did what I hoped anyone would do for my child if she were in need.

Anyway, about a week after I started trying to help them, Adam became very sick. He was fevered, lethargic and refused to eat. I took them to the base hospital where one of our Doctors, Captain Angel, examined Adam.

Blood tests showed that Adam had Brucellosis. He got it from the unpasteurised goat milk that he was drinking.

Doctor Saleh, before this I knew that animals can carry disease, but I never knew that the disease could be transmitted to us. Doctor Angel prescribed treatment and advised Lateefa to boil the goats milk before giving it to Adam. He seemed concerned about Lateefa's health too.

I became conflicted, torn between my duty as a soldier and my duty as a human being. I helped Lateefa and Adam as much as I could, but I still and often think about them, worrying if they are alright."

"Yes," said I, "Brucellosis is a nasty disease. Being in contact with the afterbirth of infected animals or their aborted fetuses', eating infected meat or drinking unpasteurised milk of infected animals, can transmit it to humans. We are so fortunate to have this disease mostly under control here in the U.S. Still, there are small pockets of outbreak and it is important to diagnose and treat these cases as soon as possible. It's important to handle pregnant animals with care, to wear gloves if helping a pet who gives birth at home, and to bring your animals to visit Veterinarians for regular examinations.

If flu-like symptoms appear in anyone who deals with any of these or any animal situations, it is most important that they be in touch with their physician, immediately. This can be anyone who works, plays, cares for or has any type of contact with". . . . Before I finish my statement, the Triple A truck arrives.

As the driver deals with the details of my flat tire, Mrs Mary asks me to continue talking but just then her husband comes over from his work in the fields.

We are introduced and shake hands while Jasmine wraps her arms around her father's leg, clambering to be picked up. The driver finishes and my flat tire is changed. We speak for a few more minutes and her husband, a police officer of five years, apologizes for not coming over and introducing himself sooner.

"Do not be concerned about that. I know what it is like to work in the fields and to have to finish chores before being social."

He smiles, looking down at Jasmine still wrapped around his leg, still clambering to be picked up.

"We were talking about Lateefa, Adam and Brucellosis, Honey." says Mary. He glances quickly into her face and the arm not holding Jasmine goes protectively around his wife's slender shoulders. "Any last words of advice, Doctor?" asks Mary, "I really enjoyed our discussion."

"I hope that you heal well and quickly. I am touched and hopeful from your story about Adam and his mother. I am glad that you were able to reach out and help them, for each and every bit of kindness in the horror of war, is priceless. They will be in my thoughts also."

Mary said: “I hope that this war is over soon so that our troops can come home, and that our people and the people of Iran and Iraq can begin to heal.”

Nodding to the little family, I said: “We all know that war is not an answer to anything, but hopefully there will be good that comes out of it. Your relationship, your friendship with Lateefa and Adam, the help of Captain Angel, are wonderful examples of people caring about each other.”

Climbing back into my jeep, armed with new a new tire, new directions and fresh determination, I thank them for their hospitality and say that the main thing is be observant, and wash your hands thoroughly after milking or playing with your goats and other animals. Just then, my cell phone rang. It was Mrs. Tossini.

“Yes, Mrs Tossini, I am but a few minutes away, my flat tire is fixed, I have directions and your wonderful neighbors have been most pleasant.

In the background, Mary yells, “Hi Joyce. I’ll call you later this afternoon.” I drove away with this pleasant young family waving good -by in my rear view mirror.

“Fantaustic” in Ecuador

Nova Southeastern University has a wonderful program offering students and teachers opportunities to work overseas. Some of my students and I volunteered to work and spend time in Baños, a small city high in the Ecuadorian Andes that is about four hours drive from the capital city of Quito.

We are going there to help the students to learn about exotic animals firsthand, to help the native population learn about the dangers of Zoonoses (diseases transmitted from animals to humans), and to teach the people how to properly care for their animals in order to lessen the chances of any type of Zoonotic outbreak.

Sunday morning June 5, at 6 AM is already hot and muggy, and all of us who are traveling together on this adventure have agreed to meet at a rendezvous point at Miami International Airport. Even at this hour the airport is crowded, busy and noisy with unorganized lines of passengers.

Luggage is everywhere, the security checkpoints are bottlenecked, undisciplined children are yelling and screaming trying to get their preoccupied parents attention, and harried counter agents are doing their best to help get travelers wherever they are going.

Like all embarkation points, the air is filled with colorful, multi language, punctuated with laughter, heavy sighs, impatience and resignation. Lovers, those not traveling together, are saying poignant and heartfelt farewells, heavy with the drama of those in love; there is also the exciting expectations of the honeymooners among us, others long together and often looking somewhat alike, while settling into the friendships of long time companions, as other couples seem somewhat distant, appearing barely able to tolerate each others company. Some folks are in wheelchairs with their caregivers attending, then there are the hurried and harried business travelers, and sprinkled within this pool of teaming humanity, are those who are traveling “home” for whatever reason, some looking happy, others not.

Within the middle of all of this chaotic confusion, I am trying to locate and keep together the students and the family members that are traveling with them.

“Everyone is here except Janice,” said Dr Barbara, the Director of the Department of Science and Public Health.

Janice is our photographer and without her, it would be very difficult to document our journey and whatever adventures are about to unfold.

“I’ve collected our passports and hopefully, by the time we get to the counter, she’ll be here. Please call her cell again, Dr. Barbara.” I said.

Now we are at the counter and I hand the passports to the ticket agent.

“These are passports of our thirty team members from Nova University.” I said to the agent.

Just then Janice rushed to the counter, out of breath and waving her passport, she tosses it into the pile. It is only fifteen minutes before departure and the travel agent, handing back the passports says, “Hurry to the departure gate and we’ll let them know that you are on the way.”, as he picks up the phone to call ahead for us.

“Thank you,” I call over my shoulder, turning to run.

Janice, still trying to catch her breath, yelled saying that she would catch tomorrow’s flight because she can’t run with all of her camera cases.

In mid-stride, I reach out to take the cases from her, still running and looking everywhere for a tram, hoping to hop on and get a ride to the gate, but of course, there is nothing in sight. Over the public address system, I hear the final announcement the final boarding call for Flight 878 and ahead, see the gatekeeper beginning to close the gate.

Waving and yelling to get his attention, the gatekeeper spots us and motions us to hurry, shouting, “Run. . .run. . . .run!”

We reached the gate with barely any breath left in our bodies and still had to hand over our boarding passes, get into the cabin and find our seats.

We collapsed into the seats, huffing and puffing and out of breath with cameras all over the place. The flight attendant, seeing our plight, took pity and began organizing the equipment, stowing it all into the overhead compartment.

Janice and I looked at each other, still panting and we knew that we were both thinking. . . "We made it!" We settle in, the plane taxis and by the time we were airborne Janice is snoring. I smile to myself and begin to daydream about Baños.

It is 1,820 meters above sea level and is on the slopes of an active and the largest volcano in Ecuador, Tungurahua, also known as "The Black Giant." The next conscious thought that I have is the flight attendant announcing our approach to Baños. I was so tired that I slept for the entire two and one half hour flight. From the airport we carry our luggage to the waiting bus and continue our journey to Baños.

We are all happy, excited and cheerful. In fact, we are so carefree that we actually began singing and Dr. Barbara is telling jokes. The bus windows are open and the air, fresh and rich, is filled with exotic perfumes. The beauty of the land is hypnotic. We are 5, 971 feet, a little over a mile above sea level (Florida is below sea level) and still climbing

the mountain road, and the road is the edge of a crooked drop off that goes straight to the jungle floor. Tropical birds fly level with our bus, sunlight reflecting off their iridescent wings, while below a canopy of trees presents all shades of green, momentarily and randomly darkened as clouds scud across the sky, shadowing hills and valleys. It is amazingly beautiful and frightening all at the same time, a series of “perfect” moments and views.

We stop twice, once for lunch and again a few hours later to stretch our legs and use the restrooms. People that we meet at our stops are filled with an inner beauty that permeates their whole being and shines out of their friendly, dark, and fathomless eyes. Long, thick, straight blue black or brown black hair crowned by the ever present black hat that is worn by men, women and children, frame faces that seem made of the very Earth they walk upon. All wear colorful dress and when they look at you, smile with their entire essence. They are a beautiful people.

We arrived at Baños around eight that evening. At over a mile above sea level, it was dark, cold and difficult to breathe. Most of us are too tired to do anything but check into our rooms, collapse, and sleep. I think the volcano could have gone off and I would not have known it, so deeply did I sleep.

The next morning at 6:30 am finds Dr. Barbara, cheerfully knocking on our doors, waking everyone and telling us the

day's activity plan. Breakfast is to finish by 8:00 am because we have to manage our time according to a strict schedule that has us visiting the zoo, the plantations and the rainforest in the jungle.

Meanwhile, it seems as if Dr. Barbara's cheery good morning wake up was taken seriously by everyone. All members of our team are in the restaurant within 30 minutes, laughing and joking while enjoying the sights as well as the fresh fruits and vegetables and other locally supplied breakfast foods that the hotel offers.

The restaurant is perched on a cliff on the side of the mountain and its windows are all made of glass. You can look out at crystal clear waterfalls and watch amazing exotic birds flying between thick stands of trees. The scenarios look like they are out of "Indiana Jones" or "Jurassic Park" movies. We are in the middle of a civilized but timeless jungle and it is magnificent. Surrounded by massive, intimidating, green-canopied mountains and in between them, looking down, are winding silver rivers teeming with fish and wildlife. You can barely make out the figures of local boat and fishermen going about their daily work.

I ask Janice if she is ready with her cameras and video equipment. This is going to be a grueling day made more difficult by not yet being acclimatized to this high altitude. The toll

this location takes on our bodies makes breathing an almost Olympic task.

But. . .oh my gosh, the effort it takes is so well worth it. The land is amazingly rich and beautiful.

Our schedule during the next six days is grueling; it is non-stop, and very exciting. . . no matter how unaccustomed to the altitude we are, for the people, the animals, and the place is amazing.

You can walk in the clouds, they swirl about your ankles and knees, and far below you, more clouds cover the valleys, lakes and the streams. One of our main tasks is at the zoo and while there, to teach the students how to take blood samples from birds, monkeys, tapirs, and other exotic animals. The zoo, known world wide, is but a short distance from the restaurant. After breakfast we walked through the main gate to be met by Jose, our tour guide who in addition to his native Spanish speaks fluent English. Smiling with the exuberance of a 21 year old, Jose is a pleasant and a happy person. After our self-introductions, I asked him how he managed to speak such wonderful English. He doesn't have a trace of an accent and speaks it better than me!

Jose smilingly replied that he lived in the States for the first 9 years of his life while his dad was finishing his PhD in psychology, specializing in autism. After his initial greeting,

Jose, pleasant as always, was not forthcoming or talkative. I noted that he would answer questions, staring intently at whomever he was speaking with, but not start a conversation; he also has an excellent memory. I also noticed Jose's face never showed any emotion, but his caring, attachment and bonding with the animals at the zoo was very obvious.

Every time I would ask Jose about any monkey in the zoo, he would answer, "This monkey is fantaustic — the zoo is fantaustic — the weather in Baños is fantaustic!" And he was always scratching one arm. I paused in our conversation and asked him to spell out the word that he is pronouncing.

Jose took my offered pen and wrote the word, fantastic, however, whenever he says the word he pronounces it, "fantaustic." We continued the tour and Jose was in the cage with the tapers, hugging one of them and pointing to the sign on the front of the cage.

Meanwhile Janice is busy photographing everything and everyone. At night, looking over the photos, Janice pauses at one and exclaims, "Wow. . .this has to be painful!" I go to her work desk to see what she is talking about. Janice is pointing at the nose of the Tapir and behind the animal's ear, where Jose's hand is resting. I look closely at the photo and ask her to magnify it. She does and I see the skin on the nose, very crusty, with deeply, darkened

spots and it is extremely inflamed and irritated from constant scratching.

“Can you zoom in a bit more, Janice?” I asked.

The next day, going back to the zoo, I went for a closer look at the suffering animal. While two men held the Tapir still, I scraped the spots on his nose and behind his ears. I gave the slides to Layla, an enthusiastic and energetic second year



Rat Poison

pre-med student, who, handling the slides with care, puts them under the microscope.

Other students are busy taking “souvenir” photos with each other and some of the zoo animals, Suddenly, the calm is shattered by a shriek from Layla, who jumps into the air and would have shattered her glasses and possibly hurt herself if not for the intervention of her room mate, Elizabeth. Layla’s curly hair covers her face as she jumps around with excitement. I look up, thinking to myself how wonderful it would be to be able to bottle that kind of energy and use it whenever you want!

“What did you find, future Doctor?” I asked, mildly.

“It is Sarcoptic Mange, Dr. Saleh,” she said.

“Here, do you want to see?”

“I believe you, Janice. Please show the slide to the rest of your classmates.” Layla’s mom, on the trip with us, is rightly proud of her daughter’s diagnosis. Now begins the comments from the other students: “Oh my God, I touched the Tapir!”

“Will we get sick?” “I hear you,” I said. “And I’m aware of your concern.

Sarcoptic Mange is indeed contagious to humans as well as to other animals. We need to wash our hands thoroughly, shower again, change our clothes and be aware of any change in the way we physically feel. If we feel ill, itchy, or notice any skin irritations or inflammations, we can contact a Doctor and get the proper treatment and medicines. This is not a life threatening disease, but it is a cause for concern with its discomfort and contagious aspects and should be attended to as soon as possible.”

“Oh, poor Tapir. Can we treat and fix him, Doctor Saleh?” asked Janice.

“Yes,” I said. And the infestation will be gone within 30 to 45 days with the proscribed treatment.”

While I am speaking, my thoughts go to Jose’s itching and I ask him to show me his arm.

“Not fantaustic.” He says, rolling up his sleeve. His arm is inflamed with hair loss and the same crusty manifestations as the Tapir.

“OK, Jose, lets put your sleeve back down. Jose, I’ d like to visit with you and your family this evening, so at 6pm, lets all meet for dinner at the restaurant.” I said.

“OK, Doctor” said Jose, not seeming to be at all concerned about his condition and what is happening.



Zazu

After working all day at the zoo, everyone is hungry and looking forward to relaxing, socializing and eating dinner in the restaurant with the amazing views. I was also looking forward to meeting Jose's family, as I've become curious about them.

Cleaning up, we meet in small groups for our first dinner in Baños and are busy looking over the menu, ordering drinks and trying to decide what we want to eat. Janice is busy; her non-stop energy is like a battery to our group, she is our "energizer bunny" and keeps "hopping" from table to table, group to group, with her ever-present cameras, laughing, talking and taking photos, capturing forever a "moment" in time. Some of us are on the dance floor, the Ecuadorian Andes music, especially the flutes, which sound like birds in the jungle, weaving a spell like a gossamer web around everyone. The night calls to me and I excuse myself to go outside, leaving behind the buzz of conversation and music. Initially my thoughts are of Jose's communication skills, but as I become aware of the night around me, I am slowly caught up in the sensual feast that Nature is providing. I can smell the richness of the jungle rising from below and covering Baños like a blanket, the full moon, so bright that I can see my shadow, is playing "peek-a-boo" with scattered clouds racing across her face.

The wind tickles the leaves of trees, fruits and flowers, layering the perfumes of jasmine, gardenia, and passion fruit, and along with other scents that I cannot identify, they tease my nose and relax my heart. Mixed in with these perfumes are the earthy, rich aromas of water buffalo, tapir and ostrich from the zoo next door, while distantly, I hear the calls of monkeys, humming birds, and large cats, all mixed together in the heady symphony of the jungle. To me, this is the magic, the wonder, the beauty of Baños and I am willingly captivated.

Suddenly, I become aware of two human shadows coming out of the darkened trees towards me. For a long second, my body instinctively reacts with tension, fear and goose bumps, all of which disappear when the moonlight shines on the couple.

“Buenos notches (good evening), Doctor Saleh.”

“Buenos notches, Senior.” I replied.

The gentleman reaches out to shake my hand, saying, “I am Dr Hernandez and this is my wife, cati.”

“My, my, my. I was just thinking about Jose a moment ago. I am so pleased to finally meet the parents of such a wonderful young man. He has such a gentle and knowledgeable

way about him. Jose is a big help to us and we enjoy being with him, his animals.”

“The pleasure is ours, Doctor Saleh.”

“Please. . .call me Mustafa. That is so much easier and less formal.”

“And you must call us “Rod,” short for Rodriguez and Cati.” He said, smiling.

“Jose has done a terrific job with us today at the zoo.” I said. “Everyone has fallen in love with him.”

“We are so pleased to hear that, especially since he has devoted his life to animals,” said Rod as Jose’s mother beamed with pride.

“However, I am glad that we have met alone, outside like this.”

At my statement, Jose’s parents reached for each other’s hand and their festive and relaxed air changed to one of concern.

I am aware of the energy shift, but am not sure what has caused it. I continue by saying: “I feel that you should know that Jose has contracted Sarcoptic Mange from one of the

Tapirs at the zoo. He needs to visit his physician for proper treatment and medications.”

Rod says, “Of course we will. Just please do not ask Jose to leave the zoo! Animals are his life, his hope, his future and his happiness. Jose and the animals actually communicate with rare understanding and this skill has developed even more since he was diagnosed, Autistic. Jose seems more comfortable around animals than he is with people. Perhaps that is because the animals seem to accept him and his love. “

“I understand,” I said. “In point of fact, his skill and love with animals can help benefit others, especially those with challenging situations like Autism. There are many studies and programs that emphasize the bond between animals and individuals who are emotionally, mentally or physically challenged. This interaction between species has proven extremely beneficial to all, but most especially beneficial for the human. The animals seem to know that the person is “different” and most act and re-act with what in our world would be called tolerance and even kindness. Just please, do not forget to bring Jose to his doctor for proper treatment of the Mange infection and avoid contact with Jose’s arm to avoid spreading the infection to yourselves.” Catalina says that they didn’t realize that Jose could become ill from an animal and that they are fortunate that they became aware

of this situation, in order to treat it and become vigilant in the future.

Telling them to make sure that they wash their hands after being in contact with animals and before handling and/or eating food, I remind them to seek their physician's service for Jose as soon as possible.

We shake hands all around then turn, going inside for dinner and music. We rejoin our little group and enjoy the company, the food, the music and the ambiance that is Baños.

Hit by a Car

or, Rat Poisoning

The distinguished, middle aged, silver haired, gentleman with large blue eyes was obviously distraught when he entered the office and headed straight for me, his whole being filled with desperation.

“Please, Doctor, my baby was hit by a car!” he said frantically, latching onto my arm “Sir, this is a Veterinary office.” I tried to explain.

“I know, Dr. . . . Tito, my baby, he’s a Rottweiler and needs your help”.

“Where is he?” I asked.

“In my truck, he’s in my truck!” he said, urgently gesturing outside.

Sato, my nurse heard the commotion and hurried to see what was happening. Turning, I gestured him to come with me and we rushed outside to the parking lot.

It was early evening; the sun was setting and the truck's tinted windows made it too dark to see Tito inside. The truck doors were unlocked and Sato, with a surge of adrenaline, lunged into it to retrieve Tito. Sato climbed out carrying a large, two year old, one hundred pound dog. Tito listlessly laid in Sato's arms, unable to move, his eyes congested and cloudy and his breathing, deathly shallow. Navigating the hallways, I intercommed, calling my second nurse for assistance and he quickly arrived, out of breath and running. Tito's eyes soft, and hazy were filled with pain, and he moaned softly. He seemed to know that we were trying to help him as we carried him, as gently as possibly to the emergency room.

Staff nurses were preparing for him to be x-rayed, to begin his IV fluids (for shock prevention), and to mask him for oxygen (to help him breath more deeply). Meanwhile, John was almost collapsed on the floor. His grief at watching his best friend in obvious agony and dying a painful death was too much for him. He kept repeating, "I'm so sorry Tito. . .I have killed you! I never should have let you go outside. . . I wasn't there to watch you! I'm so sorry. . ."

I was trying to talk with him to figure out what had happened. So far, we assumed that Tito appeared to have been hit by a car. His symptoms included bleeding from the mouth (indicative of internal bleeding) with his gums turning white, not their usual, healthy pink (shock).



Fatima's Gerbil

“Please, John, I need you to calm down and tell me in detail what happened.” I said to him.

He took a deep breath and wiped the tears and sweat from his face, trying to compose himself.

Still gasping and with ragged breath he said, “Well I was at the dinner table with my family and we were saying Grace. In the middle of the prayer, we heard the roar of a speeding car engine and immediately, I got a feeling that something terrible had happened. I interrupted the prayer and went to look for Tito. He didn’t answer my call, which was unusual. I couldn’t find him but thankfully he wasn’t in the street. I returned to my family and dinner and was just about to begin the Blessing again when suddenly, we heard the screech of tires of a driver attempting to break, to slow down, his vehicle. The whole family, my wife, daughter and myself went rushing outside and looking about from the porch, I saw Tito laying on the grass in my neighbors yard, facing away from us. He was a fair distance from the street. Could he have been thrown there by the impact of the car? I wondered. We rushed to him and I noticed that he was lying beside a small pile of something. I don’t know what it was and had no time to examine it.”

“John, did you actually see Tito hit by the car?”

“No.” he said

“And none of your neighbors saw him get hit?”

“No.” he answered.



Toxoplasmosis and Zoonoses

Just then a short, rather stubby young lady who was accompanied by her husband interrupted us.

“We’re here because of Tito.” He said in a rather boisterous voice that ricocheted through the office.

“I’m Mr. Bush and this is my wife. I believe my son saw my neighbor’s dog, Tito, eating from a pile of rat poison that I had left in the backyard. I put it out for the rats that came into our community with all of the new construction that’s going on. I’m so sorry that it was Tito who found and ate it rather than the rats, and I want to pay for any medical bills incurred for Tito treatment!”

I was overjoyed that Mr. Bush was honorable and more so, that he identified the source of Tito’s condition. Now we could focus all of our attention, our diagnostic and medical skills toward the proper cause of Tito’s bleeding.

In cases like this, time is most important because the animal is in critical condition, in pain and cannot tell us what has happened. Mr. Bush confirmed John’s finding Tito beside “a pile of something”. . .now we know that it was the rat poison!

I quickly gave instructions for blood work, focusing on finding an antidote to the poison. Meanwhile, we took a battery of tests that soon confirmed that rat poison was

indeed in Tito's blood stream. We immediately began a blood transfusion.

The reception nurse took everyone back out front while we worked. She explained to them that rat poisoning is a very serious matter and can terminate the life of a child, a pet or anyone or anything that is unaware of the nature of the product and might taste it out of curiosity. She also told the neighbors that this whole situation might have been avoided or prevented if they had communicated, if they had only taken a minute to speak with each other.

If John had told Mr. Bush that he sometimes lets Tito out without supervision, or Mr. Bush had told John that he was going to put out the poison, this whole situation would have been prevented. Not only the financial cost, but the emotional cost, which is often much more draining.

Meanwhile the emergency room was in a chaotic frenzy with all of the procedures happening that were necessary to save Tito. Not one person left or changed shifts or anything until Tito was cared for and that wasn't until around three thirty am. Tito was regaining the pinkish color to his gums and was given a second chance at life.

John still felt guilty, but thanks to his prompt action along with the actions of Mr. and Mrs. Bush, tragedy was averted

and the situation ended on a positive note, nonetheless, a lesson was still learned.

By the time Tito's crisis was over, we were all exhausted. Mrs. Bush, a professional masseuse was so impressed and pleased with the diligence and skill we used to save Tito, that she offered myself and Sato a free massage therapy session. Exuberantly, we gratefully accepted.

Many of us tend to overestimate our pets ability to recognize and respond to danger. The reality of this thought is not true, because the reality of our pets, of animals in general is different from ours.

Leaving a pet, usually even less equipped to recognize and respond to danger than a feral animal, loose or without supervision is never the best thing to do. And leaving dangerous chemicals or chemical product about, without communication, verbal or otherwise [a sign] is a dangerous and irresponsible thing to do.

Thankfully, all ended well and Tito is back with his loving family and his family and the Bush's are now friends as well as neighbors.

ZaZu

the Sage

Half asleep, frost in the air and I am ready for bed when the shrill ringing of the phone jolts me wide-awake. This is my emergency service and to ring at this hour, means that someone is in trouble. Mrs. Shindler, frantic, is calling at 10:30 pm. This can only be about Sammy, her pet cat.

I sense her relief as I answer, but panic trembled her voice and I can almost see her face, tense and fearful.

“Doctor! Sammy has collapsed in my arms,” she wailed. “We need help.”

Dressing, I quickly met Mr. and Mrs. Shindler with Sammy at my animal hospital.

Sammy, seven years old, is lethargic and unable to stand. On examination, his gums and mucus membranes are very pale, suggesting shock, the cause of this symptom yet to be discovered. Sammy’s eyes are not focused and seem filled with pain.

Without a second thought, I immediately administered fluids and anti-shock therapy through an IV catheter and oxygen. Surrounded now by nurses and other doctors, Sammy's plight even drew the attention of the maintenance lady; she stopped and asked if there was anything that she could do to help. Everyone was concerned as Sammy's eyes wandered aimlessly, unable to focus and still filled with pain. We put love into our voices and our touch, hoping to assure Sammy that help is here while the next step is to connect the heart monitor, and we quickly did so.



Ali With His Kitten

Meanwhile, Mr. and Mrs. Shindler, badly shaken and quite frightened, are mumbling quiet prayers for Sammy.

Zazu, our Yellow Nape Parrot, from the safety of his perch is watching the situation unfold as we try to save the life of this beautiful and well loved cat.

Zazu has a vocabulary of many words and among other things, has learned the phrase; “Do not worry, it is ok”.



Dental Extraction

Imagine everyone's surprise as Zazu danced from leg to leg, then suddenly screeched and without prompting, but with quiet authority announced, "Do not worry, it is ok!"

Stunned by Zazu's outburst, Mrs. Schindler stared at Zazu in open-mouth wonder.

It was an amazing moment, and the rest of us were still working at the task at hand. The energy in the whole room seemed to shift with Zazu's statement. Meanwhile, Mr. and Mrs. Schindler found it difficult to believe that this beautiful creature, this magnificent bird, would, without prompting, take it upon himself to console them.

During these difficult moments, which felt like hours, life-saving procedures were established and the Schindlers, although tense, begin to relax as Sammy begins to show signs of feeling better. We go a corner to speak privately about the results of the blood work, X-rays and Sammy's EKG. Unfortunately, Sammy has contracted the dreaded Feline Leukemia, a viral disease. As I was explaining the nature of this disease to Mr. and Mrs. Schindler, I glanced to the table where Sammy lay and noticed, to my surprise, that Sammy began to respond to his treatment. He turned his head toward us as if understanding every word I said.

Sammy looked first to me and then to Mrs. Schindler as we crowded around him. I advised the family that Sammy

This is not the end, but always a new beginning...I always search, and plan not to plan...because the unexpected is always better and more rewarding...

Therefore, I ask everyone to spread their wings and fly, only then they will know that they can fly...

See you soon.

Mustafa Saleh