

Sunshine Send - off

Nueva - the Sinai

by Mike Greenfield

The bus station in Tel Aviv is not a normal bus station. There is a central platform, but it is only for arrivals. By and large the busses are scattered over the area of a few blocks. It is hot, noisy, and complicated.

Seven hours southward I disembarked in the port city of Eilat. The beach is small and crowded. Families making outdoor suppers and taking evening swims. Not far away is a road, teenagers are driving their motorbikes up and down it. I meet a Norwegian and we have a beer. There are some very fancy hotels; there is a hostel too, but that is undoubtedly full. Except for the motorcycles, the beach offers a fine mattress.

The sound of the lapping water and the early rays of the sun woke me the next morning. I was anxious to go to Nueva. Actually Nueva is just a kiosk, a convenient spot on the edge of the desert; I had often heard of it.

The bus travels southward, down into the Sinai Desert following the edge of the Red Sea. Two hours later the bus pulls into the parking lot.

Almost immediately I spot John. We had met previously in Tiberias. Snorkel gear in hand we trudge

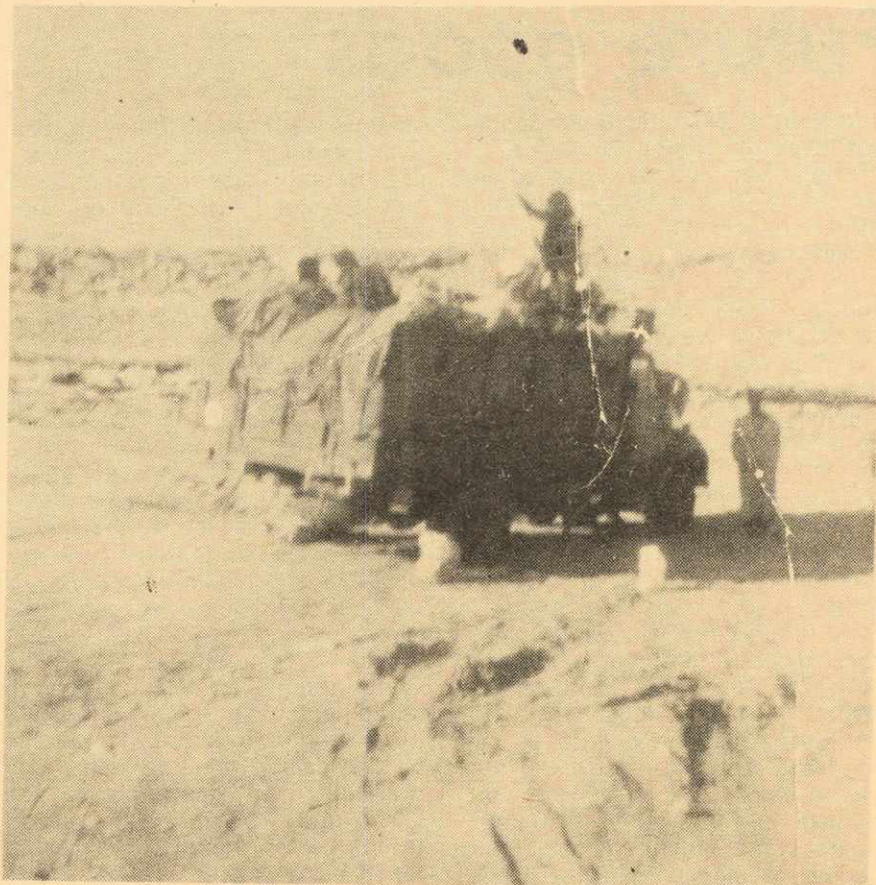
down along the endless beach. The kiosk retreats into the hills. Soon the large sand dunes obscure the rest of the Sinai and the water strokes our ankles as we look eastward, over the water and into Saudi Arabia.

The sun is intense and the colors are either bright yellow or deep blue. Still, it is dry. The only discomfort is to our bare feet as we walk away from the shoreline and tread on the very dry, hot sand, seeking shade for our water.

Once in the sea we move quickly away from the shoreline, circling the coral reef. Schools of small fish accompany, flashing as they zig zag and catch the sun. Below us polyps sweep and fish of every shape and color move in and out of the white coral.

After a while we lift our heads up. Two fingers bobbing in the water. The desert rising on opposite horizons, multitudes of fish below. I am alone with my senses.

At night people move closer to the kiosk. Many fires are lit. It seems as if, behind every sand dune there is a group of people singing folksongs. The kiosk also starts selling beer. Too soon I will board a plane, taking me back to the world, away from Israel, the Sinai, and the colorful fish.



Trucks are the only transportation from the Spanish Sahara/Moroccan border. This one is heading north into Morocco.

Lebanon's beauty

by Valerie Mansour

It's hard to picture Lebanon as it exists right now. Visiting there in the summer of 1972 I admired the beauty of the tiny country and the warmth of its people.

Driving along the main highway you can go from one end of the country to the other in a matter of a few hours. With the Mediterranean on one side and the mountains on the other, the scenery presented an image of peace and contentment.

The common tourist spots of the country are quite famous. The Cedars of Lebanon and the ancient ruins of Baalbeck date back to Bible days. However, in order to grasp an understanding of the country's people, a visit to any of the numerous tiny villages proves to be profitable.

Life there is very casual with people visiting each other at all hours of the day. Televisions and cars were rather rare, thus evening

walks and get-togethers with dancing and singing became favorite pastimes. The people were happy and really enjoyed life. "Eat! Eat!" seemed to be our relatives' favorite line as they (with not too much difficulty) stuffed us continually.

Such a contrast could be drawn with the capital city of Beirut. Donkeys were more common than cars, and the way of life was very much slower.

The only reminders of unrest in the area at that time were the pitiful refugee camps spread throughout the country. Also, in the southern area, at a junction of two roads, army personnel were posted to check your ID before entering the mountainous area. It was almost impossible to ignore the fact that trouble could erupt at any time.

I remember Lebanon as a friendly place with people who could not do enough for you. It's hard to imagine it any other way.

Rhodesia - land of change

Yes, things are changing in Rhodesia, but not so fast that you can't sneak in a quick vacation before the fur really starts to fly. For only 240, you can fly from London to Johannesburg, then by exciting Rhodesian Airways bush-plane (air defense situation permitting) to Salisbury, home of Ian Smith. An armed guide will greet you at the airport, where you'll be presented with your complimentary



I'm Ian Smith - fly me.

'helmet and handgun', traditional dress of the White Rhodesian. You'll be escorted to your luxury bunker, where your free drink will be waiting for you (supply situation permitting). There'll be dancing in the evening to the sounds of the Bulawayo Third Regimental Band, and dinner at any restaurant that hasn't ceased operating.

-Picture it: strolling along the Salisbury boulevards at sunset (subject to curfew); a trip to the Eastern border to see the nightly fireworks display, a fairly recent attraction; roughing it on a hike through the tropical forest - just you and your loved one, and a detachment of heavily-armed military police.

-Rhodesia, land of mystery and adventure! "I couldn't leave here now if I wanted to", says Ian Smith, Prime Minister and former Luton town councillor. You may come to feel the same way. So come and see us! But hurry - this offer could expire at any time!

WRITE TO:
D.R. Smith, Information Officer,
Ministry of Tourism and Defence,
Salisbury.

Lifejackets, raw camels, and sand dunes

By Andy Warhol's look-a-like cousin Fritz

Now that I think of it, what the hell was I doing with a life-jacket on getting ready to climb down the side of this ancient tanker, and into a bobbing antique World War II amphibious vehicle (remember the pictures of the vehicles taking soldiers onto Normandy beaches)? It was the end of a bizarre trip from the Canary Islands to the beaches of the Spanish Sahara.

The trip began as I lingered on the warm, sandy beaches of the Canaries with a couple of new-found friends. Having rested over Christmas in a smallish house about half-way down the Gran Canaria with Ernst (my German buddy who came to the islands with me), a couple of sweet young Canadian girls, and this twenty-four year-old school teacher from the east coast of the States, I began to feel restless again.

Somehow, as it always is when you're simply floating from place to place, I picked up some information about a boat going to the Spanish Sahara, and a truck caravan which went north into Morocco. The new year was coming up quickly, and I decided to celebrate in the Canaries and then depart. The school-teacher and the two Canadian girls agreed; Ernst continued his persistent attempts to get work aboard a freighter going in the direction of South America (and a year and a half later gave me an unexpected elation when he dropped in out of nowhere to my Vancouver home -- this was after I had moved).

The four of us showed up on the docks of Gran Canaria, passport, travelling visa, and ship ticket in hand. Trying to guess which ship was ours, we finally asked this oldish looking Spaniard where we could find the ship going to Spanish Sahara. He pointed to a ship about two-thirds of the way down the wharf, rusted, decrepit, and notable only for the snaky line of Spanish soldiers protruding from its side. At first we were taken slightly aback, but we jauntily worked our way through crowds of other passengers to "our" ship.

We were assigned bunk beds, two to a tiny room and walked to the

upper deck. We began chatting with some of the civilians (about six others besides us) and found out that the soldiers were on their way to the Spanish prison situated in the Sahara to relieve soldiers there. They were also transporting prisoners and when I went to bed I was "lucky" enough to have one in my room. Yes, there in the bunk above me was an armed soldier. Across from him was another whose hand-cuffed hand led to the bunk across from me. Sitting in it was this swarthy heavy-set character. I slept none too well, more frightened of what the soldiers with the guns would do than the prisoner.

A couple of hours after rising, the ship reached its destination -- the beaches outside El Aiun. No wharf. No anything. Just a single customs building. After a taxi ride into El Aiun, and another one out of it and towards the Moroccan - Spanish Sahara border we found ourselves literally stranded. The truck caravan that we were supposed to meet had already left, and another would not be back for three days. The taxi had left to go back to El Aiun, and we had no cash, only travellers cheques.

We spent three days in the hot Sahara sun, saw a wild Camel butchered and had its bladder presented to me as a joke, and made a couple of friends in two young guys from just north of the border settlement (actually the "houses" were corrugated tin shacks). The women had a tough time finding a place to go to the bathroom; the desert was absolutely barren, not even the tiniest plants grew.

The trucks (2) finally came, and the two Moroccan friends brought out some hash for the trip (which they gave as a present when they left). The trip in the trucks is another story, only to be believed once its been done. Suffice it to say that there are no roads leading from the border north into Morocco (thus the necessity for the trucks) and that with problems with the steering mechanism which required continual stops, and fifteen people atop a truck loaded with materials, the whole thing was a trip.