

## Desperately leaving Syria

I fully enjoyed Valerie Edmondson's excellent reporting, "Desperately Seeking Syria" (*Coloradan*, March 2007). The CU journalism school should be very proud.

My delight goes beyond a good story, well told. I am retired after 31 years with the United Nations Development Programme, a career that took me many places. In 1996 I spent three weeks on an audit mission covering our office in Syria. When people ask me my favorite city, quickly I say Damascus. (Similar to Valerie's experience, fellow Americans often find this a strange choice.)

After hours and on weekends, national UNDP office staff members would take us touring both in and out of Damascus. With a history going back over 3,000 years, I learned Damascus is the oldest permanently occupied capital city in the world.

I am no biblical scholar but I would like to share one of many memorable moments of that trip. During a walking tour of old Damascus, our colleague stopped in an old part of the city and pointed to a place on a high wall. He said, "There is where they lowered Saul (Paul) in the basket" (Acts IX: 1-31). Saul, after his famous "road to Damascus" adventure, was on the run and here was where the story happened. Moreover, centuries later it was exactly the same wall and the same street (our colleague assured us the paving stones we were standing on were the same stones Saul probably ran on). "Wow," I thought. "This sure beats walking the hills at Little Big Horn."

Damascus, what a city. Syria, what a history. I share completely Ms. Edmondson's enthusiasm for Syrians, their country and their very historic capital.

Patrick Shima (Econ '63)  
Alamosa

May the Christians' God and the Muslims' Allah smile on Valerie Edmondson for her wonderful article about Syria in the March 2007 *Coloradan*. The article should be read by every public official in Washington, D.C., especially in the Pentagon and the White House.

I suspect many journalism grads, like myself, have dreamed of writing dispatches from exotic lands but, with marriage, children, inertia, etc., the possibilities faded. Valerie made her dream come true!

Dick Johnston (Jour '50)  
Westminster

*Editor's note: We received the following e-mail from Valerie Edmondson (MJour '03) on April 2: "Well, I did get kicked out of Syria! Three weeks ago, my employer called me into his office and informed me that the Ministry of Immigration refused to issue me a residency visa for no reason that they cared to share or at least I was told they would not share, although of course it could be that the messenger just did not want to tell me. You never really know."*

*"They gave me 48 hours to get out of Syria. My employer told me I should return to the United States and get a new tourist visa to re-enter the country to finish the school year. I have been on the East Coast since then. Last week, however, the Ministry of Education got wind of my persona non grata status and was not going to allow me to teach even if I made it across the border."*

*"My next move is to go to Alexandria, Egypt, where I have a teaching job in September."*

## Vets catch football

I am not a CU grad (University of Minnesota). I have been, however, actively involved in the volunteer faculty program at the CU medical school since 1976. (I actually have an official-sounding title like "Clinical Professor of Medicine" but am based at the VA hospital.)

I happened to go to the Iowa State game last fall with a friend who is an Iowa State alum. I don't think he enjoyed the game as much as I did [a 33-16 CU victory], but we both had a wonderful time and really appreciated the gesture of the CU athletic department [which gave game tickets to U.S. military veterans].

I had never been to a CU football game before and had forgotten how much I enjoy going to college football games. The whole atmosphere was fabulous! All the fans from both schools enjoying the tailgate parties before the game on a beautiful autumn day, the beautiful CU campus, the wonderful meal the Alumni Association provided the veterans, the pregame warm ups, watching the best place kicker in the country [Mason Crosby] booming huge kicks before and during the game, the fans, the band, the team, the cheerleaders, the ceremony honoring the seniors, etc. The whole game experience was just fabulous.

Thanks again to the athletic department for inviting us veterans and to the Alumni Association for letting us enjoy that wonderful pregame meal!

Ted Luck  
Denver

## Letters from friends

I've been meaning to write for some time to say how much I enjoy receiving the *Coloradan*. It's always a lively read and, as CU has been through a lot since I left in 1997, your reporting helps me feel I'm getting letters from friends there. The *Coloradan* is especially welcome at my house as I used to work [in the magazine's office] as a student.

John Snyder (Comm, Jour '97)  
Shelburne Falls, Mass.

## Kudos to true Buff

In the March *Coloradan* the sports information office was the subject of a nice profile by Tom Gleason (Comm '73), pointing out the successes of many of the students who have come through this shop in the last half-century. There was an omission of one past director who should be recognized — John Clagett (Jour '80).

John was SID for three years (1981-84), but they were tumultuous years in our history due to budget issues that lingered after we cut seven sports in June 1980. Cuts also included the elimination of the only full-time assistant SID, so John was the only full-time employee in the office for the better part of 20 months (Tim Simmons had gone solo the previous 10 months but had John in a grad assistant role). Then when I left for the summer of '82 to work as the Denver Bears public relations person, John didn't really have a veteran student on hand. He brought me back in October that year and arranged it so I would have a full-time job upon my graduation later that semester.

Most people know ESPN's Chris Fowler (Jour '85) worked for me, but John's the one who first hired him, and he also kept NBC's Jim Gray (Jour '82) on the payroll his senior year. So John was the conduit who held the office together on a minimal budget. By being creative with publications, among many other things, he got the office through until the financial picture started turning around in mid-to-late 1983. Also serving as historian in my role, I felt this omission needed to be corrected.

David Plati (Jour '82)  
Associate Athletic Director for Sports  
Information

## Hispanic numbers slide

Gilbert Quintana raises an interesting issue when he states the university has

fewer minorities enrolled now than we did 30 years ago (March 2007 *Coloradan*). He believes we have gone backward in our efforts to increase minority enrollment. He's right.

In the 1970s we had an enrollment of about 2,000 Hispanic students each year out of a student body population of 20,000. Today we have 1,775 Hispanic students out of a student body population of 29,000. A clearer picture can be made if we consider that today Hispanics are 20 percent of the total population of Colorado yet we are only 6 percent of the student body at CU.

If the university continues to boast that we now have the largest enrollment of minorities in CU history, then it's at the expense of those Hispanic students who are not admitted to the Boulder campus.

David Madrid (Soc '75)  
Denver

*Editor's note: David Madrid did his homework on these facts. Although information on ethnic background was not requested of CU students during the 1970s, David is in contact with several current and former CU staff members and Hispanic alumni who confirm there were, indeed, 2,000 Hispanic students at CU during the 1970s with a high of 2,800 during 1977. Our thanks to David for his diligent research on this topic.*



## Your turn

*Coloradan* celebrates the power of thoughts and ideas. We invite you to write, e-mail or fax us your thoughts and comments on subjects related to the university community. The editors may edit for brevity, clarity and sensitivity to the diversity of the community.

Please let us know your suggestions for stories, your thoughts about CU happenings and your news for a note in "CU People."

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