

In the summer of 1974, my father, Kenneth Patey, left for graduate school in Jerusalem. He took his seven children and pregnant wife, Sharon, with him—I was eight. For the next three years, I attended Hebrew schools and went to church every Saturday (the Sabbath day in Israel) with dozens of BYU students on study abroad. Those students were my primary teachers, my babysitters, and my first international “mentors.” Their passion to learn about and explore the world was contagious, and I caught the bug early. I left Israel in 1977, at age eleven with a determination to learn as many languages as I could and a resolve to return to Israel someday as a BYU student.

The year after I graduated from high school, I was admitted to BYU and left in January 1985 to attend classes at the Jerusalem Center and work for a year as a part-time nanny for Professor Kelly Ogden’s family. It was an unusual arrangement that worked well for a student on a small budget from a very large family. It has been international scholars, like Professor Ogden and his wife, Marcia, who had the most profound influence on me. Just observing the pleasure they took in their work was inspiring.

Professor David Galbraith, who had known my family well in Israel, also had a continuing influence on me—one that I doubt he knows about. An offhand comment he made to a mutual friend stuck with me for years: “The Patey siblings are all bright, but Cindy is the scholar in the family.” I remembered it at first because I couldn’t believe it. Later I recalled it often, because, with the passing years, it seemed prophetic. I could not have foreseen where I am now. I hardly knew what graduate school was, and I had never considered becoming a professor. Such thoughts would not surface in my mind for several years to come.

The idea, that I could be a scholar seemed crazy to me, but I latched onto it, secretly securing it in the recesses of my mind like some small, treasured trinket. I didn’t know the idea would grow there, the first seed that when blossoming would determine the course of my life. I graduated in 1990 in European studies with a Hebrew minor and went on to obtain my MA and PhD in German to become employed as a professor of German literature at BYU.

The international experiences that began with my first indirect associations with the Kennedy Center continue to permeate every aspect of my life. I met my husband, Bruce, in Professor Nafez Nazal’s Arab affairs course at the BYU Jerusalem Center. A 1987 Kennedy Center graduate in Near Eastern Studies, he travels the world as an Air National Guard Chaplain, having served in Ecuador, France, Italy, and Germany. Bruce completed a PhD in counseling psychology and works as the director of Academic Support at Utah Valley State College.

We are raising our six sons bilingually in English and German. So far, the two oldest

(ages thirteen and fifteen) are following in our footsteps, learning still more languages and going abroad. They have spent semesters in Mexico, France, Spain, Germany, or Costa Rica independent of their parents. We are currently living in Vienna, Austria, where I am directing the Kennedy Center's Vienna Study Abroad program. I am also delving into my research on the writings of Austrian nuns who served missions in Africa.

Life and scholarship are adventures. Where shall we go next? For now, I have my eye on Namibia.

No Events