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Foreword

FORMER AMERICAN AMBASSADOR TO BAHRAIN JOHNNY YOUNG EXPLAINS WHAT MADE THE FRIENDSHIP TOUR SO IMPORTANT

THE PUBLICATION OF THIS BOOK ON THE FRIENDSHIP TOUR IS A REAL CAUSE for celebration. I am excited about its appearance for several reasons. The first is that the tour occurred at a time when there was such a great need in Europe for a greater understanding of the Arab world, particularly of the nations of the Gulf, where so little is known of them.

The tour provided an opportunity to engage in a sporting activity that could be identified with by a wide range of people in a wide range of countries. At the same time, it provided Ali Mushaima and his co-adventurers with numerous opportunities to help educate people, both directly and through the media, about Bahrain in particular, and the Gulf and Middle East in general.

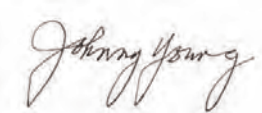
Driving through 20 different countries over three months was no picnic. It was gruelling and tough work, requiring determination, stamina, creativity and imagination.

I was US Ambassador to Slovenia when the tour came through in 2004, and was especially grateful to have assisted with the visas and press arrangements for the tour participants to visit that lovely country. It was a very brief, but very successful visit. I sincerely believe that it helped, as it did in so many of the countries visited, in building bridges of understanding between the countries visited and the Arab world. That is a priceless reward.

Given the vast misunderstanding that still exists among the Arab and non-Arab worlds, more efforts of this type are needed. With that in mind, I hope this first tour will be the beginning of an annual event that will bring us all closer together, with each year bringing us closer and closer.

I hope you will share in my enthusiasm in the need for this kind of undertaking and will support what this and future friendship tours are trying to achieve by spreading the message of peace and understanding.

Sincerely,



Johnny Young

Ambassador, United States of America



Profile

After over 37 years in the US diplomatic service, Johnny Young was nominated to the rank of Career Ambassador (equal to four stars in military rank) by President George Bush, and confirmed by the US Senate in November 2004. In the course of his career, he served as US Ambassador to Slovenia (2001-2004), Bahrain (1997-2001), Togo (1994-1997) and Sierra Leone (1989-1992). In addition, he served in positions of responsibility in seven other countries in Africa, the Caribbean, Europe and the Middle East, as well as in Washington, DC. Young, right, is pictured here with wife Angie and expedition leader Ali Mushaima.

My Driving Ambition

ALI MUSHAIMA, WHOSE BRAINCHILD THE TOUR WAS, EXPLAINS WHAT MADE HIM UNDERTAKE A THREE-MONTH JOURNEY FROM ARABIA TO EUROPE

AS A TRAVEL GUIDE PUBLISHER AND TOUR COMPANY OPERATOR, I HAVE BEEN TO MANY countries around the world. Whether for work or to meet friends or just to have a holiday, I enjoy travelling abroad, often hiring a car to drive around and take in the sights.

In all these trips, I'd often do licence-plate spotting and see cars from dozens of countries but never from Bahrain. I thought it would be so much better to drive one's own car, with a Bahrain licence plate, through all these countries.

When in 2001 the Crown Prince, Shaikh Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa launched the idea of hosting a Formula 1 Grand Prix in Bahrain, my own modest plans began to take a certain form and fresh perspective. I did a lot of research on the Internet, talked with lots of friends about such a trip, and what was a mere castle in the sky started to become a structured plan.

First and foremost, through what was going to be dubbed the Friendship Tour, I wanted to promote the Kingdom of Bahrain and the F1 Grand Prix, the exciting new chapter in the country's history.

I also wanted to promote a better understanding of each others' cultures in both the Middle East and Europe. For this, rather than travel alone, I decided to put together a team of people from different countries who have a good knowledge of Bahrain and appreciated my country.

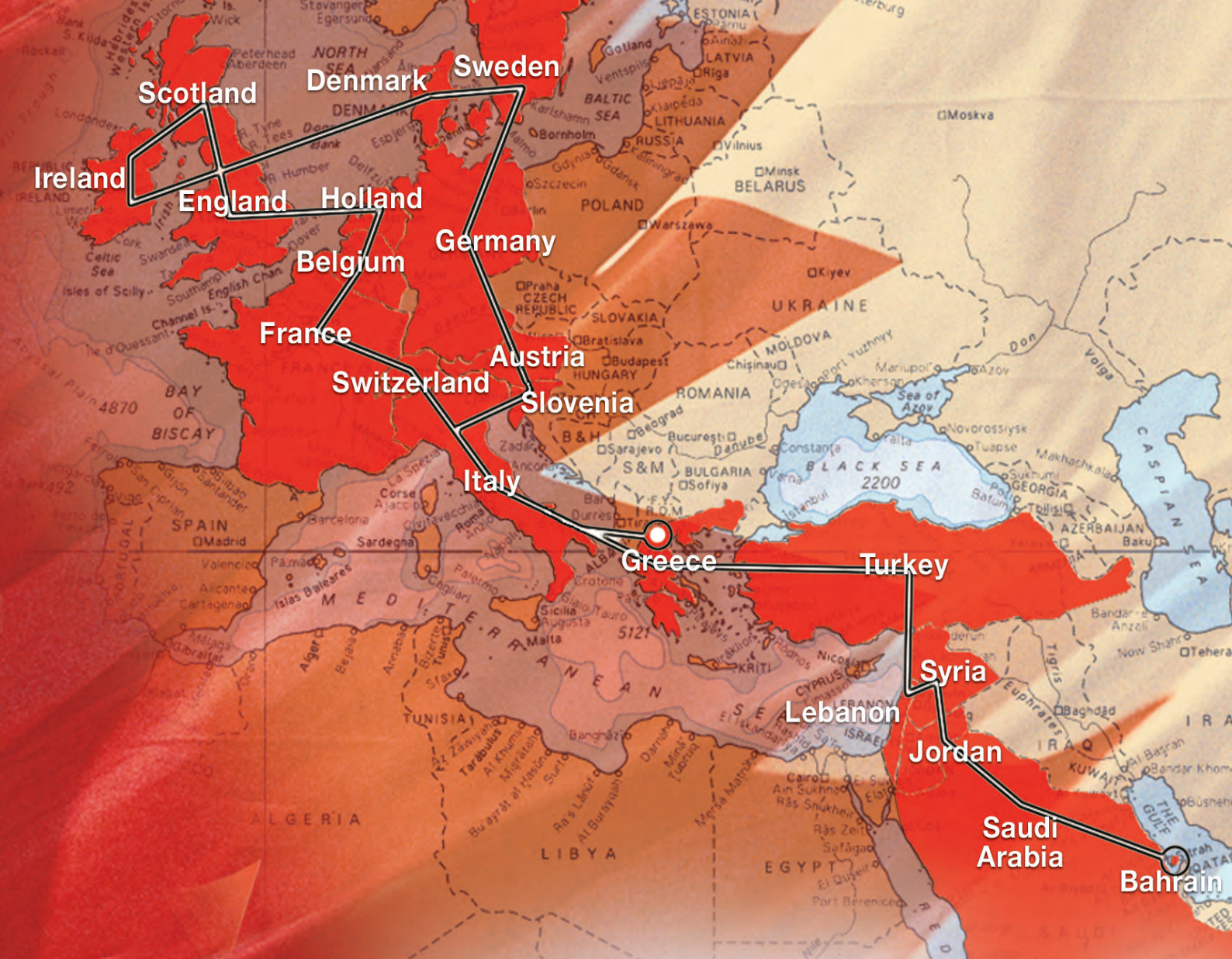
Of course, I love my country and have even conducted "Bahrain days" in Europe. But when people of other nationalities talk glowingly about Bahrain, it somehow seems more credible, and the listener takes notice.

The path to getting the Friendship Tour on the road, however, had its difficulties, the most challenging of which was to sell the idea to sponsors. Selling an ad in a magazine or

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Perseverance was my driving force. With or without sponsors, the Friendship Tour would go ahead.

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SAUDI ARABIA: Not much vehicular traffic on this highway running through the desert, but as this road sign warns, there are other reasons to stay alert.



SYRIA: The Friendship Tour team takes a much needed break along a lakefront after a long drive. The Syrians turned out to be excellent and gracious hosts.



TURKEY: A young boy dressed in traditional costume poses for the camera. Of all the European countries we visited, Turkey was the most Middle Eastern in outlook.



sponsoring a sports tournament is one thing. But it was a challenge to get potential sponsors to grasp the idea. What's in it for us?, I could almost hear them say.

However once Eddy Rizk, former BIC marketing director, flagged off on the race circuit teaming up as a sponsor, I felt the trip had taken a giant leap forward. In time, Bahrain Petroleum Company (Bapco), Gulf Air, MTC-Vodafone and the consortium of five-star hotels joined in. Bapco, of course, made sure we were fuelled up on our trip while MTC-Vodafone ensured we had a communications link right through the trip, including local lines in Jordan and Lebanon where the company even organised press conferences for us.

One of my frustrations was talking to a big-time Bahrain company for six months with lots of reassuring promises and productive negotiation, finally ending with a rejection, a total waste of time. But the words of Mohammed Buzizi, Bahrain Hotels Company chief executive, rang in my ears: "If you take on a job, you have to finish it no matter what."

After that setback in negotiations and with Buzizi's words of wisdom, I was more determined than ever. Perseverance was my driving force. Now I felt that with or without sponsors, the Friendship Tour would go ahead, and those benefactors I already had were all the more valued.

Two months prior, the date for the departure was set. I felt 'no date, no trip' so once I penned in the start of the tour, there was a countdown for me and those involved in the journey. My dream was really going to materialise.

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I ran across a website for a couple that have been on a trip around the world – for the last 20 years. My 21,000-km drive seemed minuscule by comparison.

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Support and encouragement came from countless friends and acquaintances. In this project, “you have to be like a captain. You have to lead,” Abdul Rahman Morshed, head of the syndicate of five-star hotels, counselled me.

When I was considering scrimping a bit here and there to make sure everything came within budget, I remembered Khalid Al Zayani, chairman of Zayani Investments, admonishing, “Don’t go for shortcuts. Think long-term. Think quality.”

Of course, I had my whole family and longtime friends giving me encouragement, too, but there were times I wondered if, despite the publishing successes I’ve relished with the *Visitor’s Complete Guide* series, the three-month drive would be too overwhelming, saying I’d probably make it only to Saudi Arabia, perhaps Jordan or maybe even as far as Turkey.

Then, in my Internet research of countries, I ran across a website (www.weltrekordreise.ch) for a Swiss couple that have been on a trip around the world – for the last 20 years. My 21,000-km drive seemed minuscule by comparison. I had the impetus I needed. The trip was on.

Ali Hussain Mushaima



ITALY: Tourists enjoying canal rides in Venice, a city more famous for its water than its land. Venice is not just entrancing, it’s also frightfully expensive.



FRANCE: The country’s best known symbol, the Eiffel Tower is beloved by tourists. Strangely enough, there are fewer tourists at night when the tower is at its most beautiful.



IRELAND: The heavenly voice of Kinbria, accompanied by plucking of harp strings, greeted us at the Torc Waterfall on the scenic island of Innisfallen.

