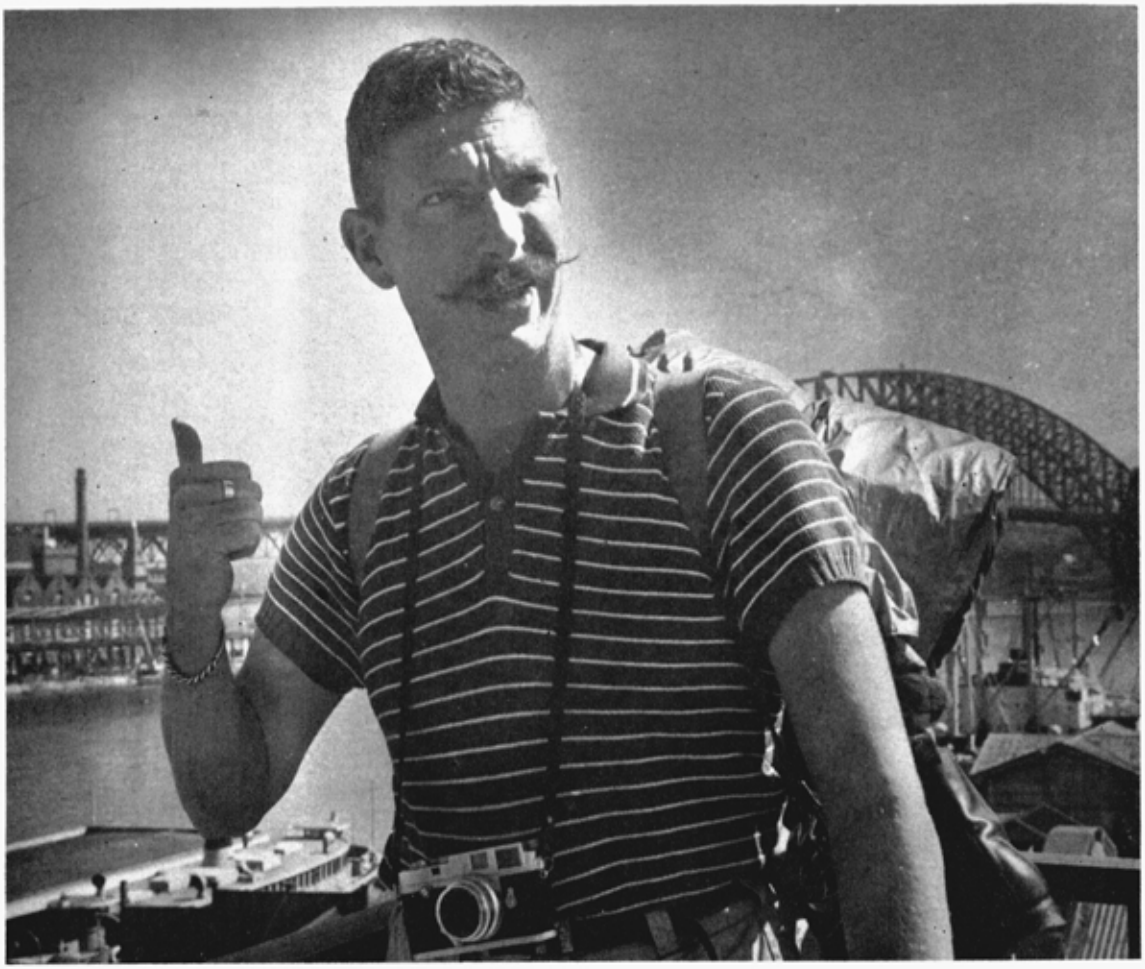

Around the world on a nickel

By Jim Bedford

IT USED TO BE SAID that with a college degree and a nickel you could buy a cup of coffee. After two years of research I've learned (the hard way) that with *three* college degrees *and* a nickel you can go around the world.

This experiment was based on sound principles of economics as taught at the University of Missouri, plus certain theories I incubated in my cranium for seven years, and a fantastic amount of good luck. The idea began in 1951 while I was a graduate assistant in economics and journalism, working toward my masters degree in economics. Frank Price, a student from New Zealand, invited me to visit him and his wife when they returned to the Southern Hemisphere and opened up a weekly paper in Australia.

"Sounds fine," I said, "but where am I going to get the money to travel back and forth to Australia?"

"Simple," said Frank, "you just work your way as you go, same as I've done." Further questioning revealed Frank had left New Zealand about 1936 and would not get back home before 1952. Although I'd always hankered for some traveling, the thought of spending 16 years away from Missouri didn't interest me greatly but if I could do it in a year or so, it was worth a try.

Friends were encouraging but the uncertainties and fear of getting stranded 10,000 miles from home were a bit frightening and I talked myself out of it for seven years—until one day in May 1958. I was lecturing in the William Allen White School of Journalism

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Planning a two-year world tour? Do you have $300 and a motor scooter? That's all Mizzou's Jimmy "Pete" Bedford had — plus a friendliness that made him welcome everywhere. Even his jail guards in Guinea were hospitable.

at the University of Kansas. It was one of those balmy days when everyone wants to get outside and walk in the sun and take off his shoes and walk barefooted on the cool green grass. I looked out the window to the distant hills beyond the Wakarusa valley and knew that no longer could I stay my restless spirit. Here I was a prisoner of this school with all the cares of teaching on my shoulders, end of the year reports coming up, exams to give, papers to grade, and suddenly I decided I would go. Less than a year later I would be in a real prison with genuine iron bars but I didn't know it now, nor could I care.

THERE WERE NO PREPARATIONS. I was too busy winding up the affairs of teaching. I turned over the keys to the dean, packed up my typewriter, a few necessary books and clothes, a camera, and my portable darkroom; sold my car and other minor possessions; with that money I bought $300 worth of travelers checks for emergency use; and stuck out my thumb—toward the East.

Two rides later I was in Columbia, my home town, for a few farewells, replenished my stock of sandwiches, and got a fresh start toward the East. Two years later my thumb continued to carry me East, this time from San Francisco to Columbia. A reckoning of travelers checks in my pocket plus other earned assets figured very close to $299.95. The trip had not gone exactly according to "plan" but it had cost no more than a nickel to travel 85,000 miles through 49 countries.

How was this done? It was really quite simple. When you burn your bridges behind you and are forced to work or starve, you'll find a way to work. And because wages are based on the country you're working in, you usually live like the natives of those countries. In fact, because you are dissatisfied with the conditions of work in that country, you will live even *more* economically than the natives so you can save enough money to get into the next country—and there you begin all over again.

I had planned to earn most of my money by selling articles and photographs to newspapers and magazines. But getting started in the free-lancing field is difficult. And although it was easy to hitchhike to New York, crossing the big puddle to Europe was a problem. I solved it by putting my portable darkroom to use on a Dutch ship and photographed enough passengers to pay my passage to England—and earned $100 besides. Then I landed a job in London's Fleet Street on a newspaper and my worries were over—I thought.

AFTER THREE MONTHS there I'd saved enough to start out full time freelancing in Europe. I traveled all over Europe from above the Arctic circle in Lapland to Italy, writing articles and sending out picture stories—and getting rejects. I got three agents to handle my material: One in London, one in New York, and one in Washington.

The one in Washington was my brother, Emmett Bedford (B.J. '47). He was the only one who ever sold anything for me. The other agents kept making excuses. Emmett kept sending me suggestions, writing encouragement, and giving me ideas. I used his address as my return address and every reject went to him for reading and rerouting to another editor . . . or putting away if not worthy of sending out again. When a check did come in, it also went to him and he deposited it to a special account. If I ran low on money, I'd send him a letter to "please send me $75 to Timbuktu, care of post restante" and then all I had to do was reach Timbuktu to collect the money he'd send.

Often, however, there was no money in the bank for him to send me. Then I relied on that old "Yankee ingenuity." In Brussels, for example, my money was declining rapidly and all I seemed to be getting from editors was rejects. I jumped at the chance to move furniture in return for my room and board.

I worked only four hours a day and had some time for writing. Then I moved down to Paris and got a temporary job collecting old newspapers from apartment houses and in five days earned enough to keep me for two weeks. This allowed me to reach Munich and by then I had sold a couple of articles and was able to keep eating now and then. But my weight was dropping. I'd lost 30 pounds by the time I reached Rome where I met another journalist, Nino LoBello. We started up a partnership arrangement on some article writing. By then I'd bought a motor scooter and the two of us went whizzing around Italy working on interviews.

Once we rode down to Naples to interview Lucky Luciano who threatened to get the Mafia after us if we didn't let him buy our breakfasts. I don't know whether it was a genuine fear of the Mafia or fear of starvation, but we did allow the ex-gangster to pick up the tab.

Besides these articles, LoBello was writing some on his own and hired me to do some extra typing. This plus other odd jobs brought in enough payola to keep feeding the scooter and me until more article sales came in. By then I was ready to tackle Africa. But Africa is a large place—nearly four times as large as

Bedford is shown with a family he met in Brussels. The picture reflects the hospitality he received everywhere. "Pete," a bachelor, recalls that this family—the Weyns—has four unmarried daughters.

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continued

the continental United States—and before I was through, it was Africa that had tackled me. A simple jaunt across the "dark continent" became a six-month obstacle course over 15,000 miles of the world's roughest roads and found me marooned in a village of grass huts, jailed for nine days over a visa misunderstanding, wedged between two countries for five days before I could cut the red tape to enter either one legally, and sleeping a week in a stable with the horses.

Even getting into dark Africa was a problem, to say nothing of getting out. I had loaded up my scooter in Italy, driven across France, Spain and Gibraltar, and was down as far as Casablanca before I realized I was going to have a rough time. The French refused to let me go by road any farther south; I had to catch a ship. But my funds, as usual, were low and not enough to cover the fourth-class fare on a French cargo-passenger ship—unless I could get a very good exchange rate. Here I put Prof. Wennberg's foreign trade principles to work. I borrowed enough Moroccan francs from a Dutchman, using my camera as security, to buy the ticket so the French consulate would start the three-day procedure needed to grant me a visa. Then I drove my scooter up to Tangier (carrying a passenger who paid the expenses), drove a good bargain to change my dollars at the best rate, then returned to Casablanca to redeem my camera and pay him the promised interest. This complicated procedure was necessary to gain about $10 on the exchange rate and thus have enough to get to Dakar where I could again resume traveling by the relatively simple method of motor scootering.

But my troubles were just beginning, as I realized most genuinely after I'd finally crossed the face of Africa and was ready to go north from Kenya to Egypt via the very mixed-up country of Ethiopia.

AS THE GREAT SILVER BIRD FLIES, it is 720 miles from Nairobi to Addis Ababa and it takes two hours and 55 minutes flying time. By road it took me 17 days to go the 1,200 agonizing miles for which I needed a motor scooter, two passes, three letters of introduction, a long distance phone call, three trucks, a paint brush, a valuable camera, a British consul, two Norwegian missionaries, and an Ethiopian army convoy. Complicated though it sounds, I had to live only one day at a time and it was not until I reached Addis Ababa that I realized what I'd accomplished: Besides painting a house, I had made a good many friends in those 17 days and got a remarkably clear insight into the daily lives of the people I met.

Even being in jail is a process of education. This happened in the Republic of Guinea which I had entered with the blessings of the immigration authorities on the basis of my visa for French West Africa. But sixty miles later I was arrested by the Guinean gendarmes at Kankan. They insisted I must have a visa from their government, now six months old—and *very* important. They made me wait in the Kan-

Bedford with an African Pygmy, 45 years old, 4 feet 3 inches tall. Also shown is his motor scooter and its 200 pounds of baggage. At right, hospitable Egyptians entertain for the Missouri traveler.

kan "can" until my visa could be approved from the capital. Nothing happened for nine days but by then I'd gotten to know the guards fairly well and had repaired typewriters for them, eaten their food, and taken their pictures. They decided to let me go anyway and escorted me to the border of Liberia.

All went well there but I had to pass through Guinea again enroute to the Ivory Coast. This time I secured the proper visa and re-entered Guinea, only to be arrested again inside the border. The visa was no good without revenue stamps. I must go to jail again or pay another $5. I paid up half of my bankroll and proceeded on to more civilized countries.

I would never have succeeded getting through these 20 countries of Africa—or the rest of the way around the world—however, if it had not been for the unbelievable hospitality that I met wherever I went. In Ghana a young photographer I worked with on the Daily Graphic insisted on taking me to a French restaurant. He drank three glasses of water while watching me eat his day's wages in thirty minutes.

An Ivory Coast chief's son walked three miles to invite me to visit his father's home. A Nigerian insurance salesman escorted me to a place to stay free—but insisted on presenting me with some gifts when I left. In the Belgian Congo during the riots the Negroes didn't say "White Man Go Home." Instead, they said "White Man Come Home with Us." Even the cannibals invited me to dinner—and I was a guest, not the main course. When I stopped under a tree during the rainy season to get out of the downpour, I noticed a grass hut nearby and someone beckoned me inside.

There I was given the only chair in the house and someone brought me a bowl of soup to warm my innards. When the rain stopped, I rose to go but was stopped until one of the little tykes could run out to the chicken's nest and bring me a fresh-laid egg to take along as a gift.

Even in Egypt where I feared my British-looking mustache would get me in trouble, I was treated like a visiting pharoah. At one point on the road to Minia two motorcyclists waved me down and I stopped, thinking they needed help. We exchanged greetings and then they invited me for dinner. I followed through the fields to their home, ate a marvelous meal, watched them sing and dance to entertain me, and then prepared to resume my journey. But they had planned for me to stay the night and it took a long time to explain I must be in Minia that night. Reluctantly they allowed me to leave but only after they had laden my scooter with a half-bushel of grapes and lemons and given me a pound-note ($2.86) to pay for my hotel in Minia.

THIS HOSPITALITY IS NO EXCEPTION. It is the rule; a far cry indeed from what I had expected after listening to a friend in Rome who said "Beware of those Arabs: They'll steal your motor scooter out from under you while you're riding through the desert at 60 miles per hour!" The only real trouble I had was

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GEORGE WILLIAM PRICHARD, BS CE '47, March 28, of a heart attack in Independence, Mo. He was owner of the Prichard Co., Inc., consulting engineers, and was active in church and civic affairs. He is survived by his wife, 220 W. Farmer, Independence, Mo., and two sons.

WALLACE EDWARD DANIELS, BS Agr. '51. He was assistant manager of the Plainfield, N. J., branch of New York Life Insurance Co. He is survived by his wife, a son and a daughter, of 60 McKinley Ave., Colonia, N. J.

HUGH STURDY PEXTON, BJ '55, March 10 in Baptist Memorial Hospital, Kansas City, Mo. Although he knew he suffered with Hodgkins disease, he continued to cover sports events around the country and to write and to edit. He was on the staff of the Gazette Telegraph in Colorado Springs from 1955 until Feb. 1, 1960, when he resigned because of ill health. He was sports editor from 1957 until his resignation. He was awarded a citation from the Air Defense Command for his contributions to the promotion of sports and sportsmanship. He is survived by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Frank S. Pexton, 304 E. 70th St. Terr., Kansas City, Mo., and a sister, Mrs. Nancy Schroeder.

LEONARD J. LEA, AM '55, April 3 in Kansas City of cancer at the age of 62. He was editorial assistant to the first presidency of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and had been ordained a high priest of that church in 1932. He served as a member of the Standing High Council of the church from 1932 to 1953, and was managing editor of the Herald House in Independence, Mo., publishers of the Saints Herald Magazine, from 1929 to 1938. He is survived by his wife, 722 Proctor Pl., Independence, Mo.

The Rev. HOWARD E. HINES, AB '58, April 4 in Columbia, Mo., after a nine-month illness. He had been a Methodist minister in Boone County for a number of years. In 1953-54 he was minister of the Sturgeon Methodist Church and chaplain of the Missouri House of Representatives. Before his illness, he had been doing graduate work at the University. For five years he had been employed at Puckett's in Columbia. He is survived by his wife, Eleanor, who is secretary to the College of Education dean, and by three children.

WILLIAM T. McELROY, BJ '59, April 4, during surgery for a congenital heart condition, at Research hospital, Kansas City, Mo. He had worked as a reporter for the Springfield Leader-Press. Survivors include his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence McElroy, a brother ROBERT McELROY, a student in the University, and his grandfather, Ira Ruddell, Fillmore, Mo.

Mrs. A. J. Ohrenberg, ELIZABETH JANE NEASE, BS HE '59, March 17, in an automobile accident on Highway 40 near Marshall Junction. She had been employed in the business and dietetics divisions at the University Hospital since 1955, and was appointed dietitian after her graduation. Her husband, ALVIN J. OHRENBERG, BS Agr.E. '59, suffered a serious chest injury in the accident. The couple lived at 608 Missouri Ave., Columbia, and Mr. Ohrenberg was attending graduate school.

HAROLD DUANE PHILLIPS, first year B & PA student, March 18 at the University Medical Center, of cancer. He is survived by his wife and a son.

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in Iran—and even that was a misunderstanding. A veiled woman saw me getting on the train at Tabriz after my scooter was broken down. I was so loaded down with baggage that she thought to do me a favor by carrying some of it for me. She chose my billfold.

This incident, plus the others which on the surface appear unfortunate, turned out to be a blessing in disguise by giving me something interesting to write about and thus kept the checks coming in fairly regularly as I proceeded throughout the Middle East, Iran, Pakistan, and down to the tip of India to Ceylon.

By then I'd driven the motor scooter 25,000 miles and sold it for enough to pay for a ticket on the next ship to Australia. Then I rested, regained 30 of the 80 pounds I'd lost, and earned enough money to pay my passage back home again.

Here at home, I've begun to count my assets. I have just a nickel less money than when I left nearly 24 months ago. I can now buy another car, get another job, and be no worse off than before, financially.

But I've gained far more than that. Today I've an accumulation of some 7,000 negatives and color slides of life in 49 countries. I have addresses of some 500 friends in various places; a firsthand acquaintance with the geography, politics, economics, and journalism of five continents; and have unlimited horizons for the future—not only in jobs but personal understanding of world problems and tensions.

I'd like to encourage other young people to think seriously about similar trips because it is in this type of travel that one comes to realize that "a man's a man for a' that and a' that." One learns that outside, no two men are alike; inside, no man is all good or all bad—but the degree of good or bad bears no relation to the outside hull or the nationality.

The trip has given me so much mental growth, in fact, that I'd sort of like to take another one, traveling around the world in a westerly direction this time. But I feel myself getting a little older now and being 32 years old I'll probably want more of the comforts of Western living. Next time I think I'll go first class —and make it around the world on a quarter.

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The University will again offer a Summer Institute for High School Teachers of French and Spanish this summer under a grant of $67,812 from the U. S. Office of Education. Dean W. Francis English of the College of Arts and Science said the six-week special course will be directed again by Dr. John S. Brushwood, professor of Spanish in the University, who directed a similar institute last year that won unanimous praise from the 66 teachers who attended. The Institute for this year will have facilities for about 62 teacher-enrollees, beginning June 18, and continuing through July 29. The Federal grant provides payment of a stipend of $75 a week to each public school teacher accepted for the Institute, plus, $15 a week for each dependent. It also pays a limited amount for transportation to the University from their homes.