



Excerpts from
*The Gem
Hunter, True
Adventures
of an
American in
Afghanistan*

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- Historically, the Afghans have been as hard to conquer as their mountains are to climb. No foreigner stays for long, as life there soon becomes threatening to one's health
- The Great Game -- The complex scramble among the powerful and the developing countries to win the prize – Afghan land, oil rights-of-way, natural gas, minerals, gems. Money.
- ... much of life is chance. One bus arrives on time, another ten minutes late; another goes over a cliff and never arrives at all. As a wanderer, with no set agenda, I could equally well have been on any of them. Something about this randomness excited me. It was so different from the planned, structured life I had known
- There are so many ways to measure the passage of time. The flight to Tokyo took eight-and-a-half hours. In entertainment terms, it was a two-movie flight. Metered in food intake, it was meal and a snack.
- I did not tell Joao that I would be calling the Central Intelligence Agency agent in Honolulu the next morning. In the midst of the “Cold War,” a meeting with the CIA, or KGB, for that matter, would have labeled me a “spook” and made me a walking target in Central Asia.
- Then it clicked, and I got it. Being a spy is a bit like being a woman accused of witchcraft in Salem, Massachusetts in 1615, or a Jew in Berlin in 1939. It doesn't matter what *you* think you are... It only matters what *other people* think you are.
- ... the mines of Lajwurd, which men have worked them for over seven thousand years. By 4000 B.C. Afghanistan exported lapis to Egypt to produce scarabs, personal seals, and pharaoh masks. Transport took as long as three years. Later, Cleopatra, queen of Egypt from 69 to 30 B.C., exaggerated her exotic features with powdered lapis eye shadow.
- With another guard, he mounted the bus and started his search for guns, non-citizens, or whatever else he might find. This was the territory of the warlords of the Northern Alliance. No Westerner came here to pick daisies. If you were here, you were up to no good, and the guard's superiors would want to know which no good you were up to, and for whom.
- Nothing had even been written about emeralds in Afghanistan prior to some Soviet geographic studies in 1977. Nothing! There were no ancient mines, or vast trade in them

since the times of the Silk Route. They were a relative secret, hiding in plain sight! This was virgin territory!

- Tucson is the home of the largest cut and rough gem show in the world, with thousands of buyers and sellers from over fifty countries. Emeralds are duty-free in the US, and I had arranged with Pakistan that unsold emeralds could be brought back without duties.
- In this area of Badakhshan, farmland once planted in wheat is now used for growing poppies, which brings substantially more money than a food crop. Meanwhile, food has become scarce. Not only do villagers trade opium but also more and more locals have started using it themselves. By the time children reach their teens, they are already addicted. I have even seen parents blow opium smoke into the faces of crying babies to quiet them and ease their hunger pangs. It strikes me as contradictory and counterproductive that Moslem devouts, who eschew alcohol, seem to condone using this powerful narcotic. Yet Afghanistan is the world's Number One producer of opium, having surpassed Burma in production. They produce 75% of the world's supply.
- Labeling divides. Or divides. And unites. And the thing it creates defies easy description. Terrorist and freedom-fighter and father and brother and sinner and saint. One man can be all of these. It is time for *and* to take its rightful place. Up and down. Fast and slow. Short-term and long-term. Hard and soft.
- Come with me to Afghanistan. Sit with my friends, or with strangers. Talk. Listen. We'll have a cup of tea. And, in doing only that, we will build a new tomorrow.

Media Note:

*For a review book or to arrange an interview with Gary Bowersox, contact Scott Lorenz of Westwind Communications at scottlorenz@westwindcos.com or by phone at: 734-667-2090 or cell: 248-705-2214. **The Gem Hunter, True Adventures of an American in Afghanistan** (ISBN 0-9747323-1-1 \$29.95 505 pages) is available at fine booksellers everywhere or from the publisher at www.thegemhunter.net or by calling 877-612-9078.*