

his microscope. He was astonished to see millions of tiny trapdoors springing open, with poison threads exploding from them. Rather than killing the nematocysts, the alcohol was triggering them. *This can't be right*, Hartwick thought.

He compiled a list of 47 chemicals that destroy living organisms and gathered them for testing. He tried formalin, boric acid, even sodium bicarbonate, but none would paralyze the stingers quickly enough.

Then he dunked a piece of tentacle in a ten-percent solution of acetic acid. This time when he peered into the microscope, he saw the nematocysts still locked inside the tissue. After further testing, he discovered that even a two-percent acid solution killed chironex tentacles. Scarcely believing his own finding, he phoned a fellow researcher. "The answer is *vinegar!*" he said. Household vinegar contains four percent acetic acid.

AT DARWIN'S NIGHTCLIFF BEACH, six-year-old Anna Töry was playing in a shallow rock pool when she suddenly arched her back and screamed. As she struggled from the water, her mother, Georgia, saw that Anna's legs and forearms were streaked with pieces of chironex tentacle like milky slime. "She's been stung!" Georgia yelled to a family friend.

Grabbing a bottle of vinegar from

her bag—placed there for just such an emergency—Georgia poured it over Anna, then bundled the screaming child in a towel and ran to her car. By the time they arrived at Royal Darwin Hospital 15 minutes later, Anna was fighting for breath and tearing at her limbs.

A nurse poured more vinegar over Anna, and a doctor administered chironex antivenom. The doctor measured the length of her weals: almost two yards, enough to kill her.

Nurses covered the girl's body with ice packs to ease the pain. An electrocardiogram showed that her heart was under extreme stress, the pulse alternately slowing and racing.

Georgia sat by her daughter's bed, holding her hand and praying. For endless minutes she watched as the doctor monitored the jagged green line on the oscilloscope that tracked Anna's struggling heartbeat.

Half an hour passed before the doctor turned to Georgia and smiled. "Her pulse is stabilizing. I think she's going to make it." Tears flowed down Georgia's face. "Thank God," she said.

By day's end Anna's pulse was normal and she was almost free of pain.

Scientists eventually hope to decipher the molecular structure of chironex toxin and so develop a preventive vaccine. Meanwhile, caution and the antivenom remain the most effective weapons—those and, of course, vinegar.



EVER NOTICE that the hotel that charges you \$250 a day for a room has the nerve to call you a guest?

—Flo Ashworth in Dawson County, Ga., *Advertiser*

I hid the post card with his likeness  
from the authorities, and I hid his  
words within me forever

## Thank You, MR. LINCOLN

BY JULIA KIRIAKOV CASWELL

### I. Grandfather's Hero

STEAM AND SOOT seeped through the doors and windows as our train screeched to a halt at the country station in northeastern Bulgaria. Waiting for us was my grandfather Peter Kiriakov, his sinewy arms outstretched, his eyes bright beneath bushy brows and a great mop of dark hair. He kissed my mother and little brother and then scooped me up.

"Yulie, your pigtails get longer and longer," he said, laughing and pulling on them playfully. I was sure, even as an eight-year-old, that I was his favorite.

We climbed into Grandfather's horse-drawn wagon for the three-mile trip to the old stone house where my father's family had lived for generations. Summer visits like this were

annual events for us in the 1950s. It took 20 hours by train through the mountains from our home in Sofia to reach the town of Preslav.

My family had owned and operated an orchard and vineyard on 30 acres near Preslav until the Communist-led coalition seized Bulgaria in 1944. Grandfather was permitted to stay and operate the farm as a state cooperative. I knew there was a somber story about that, though not for children's ears. The grownups alluded to it with anguish and fear.

At home in Sofia, where we lived in an apartment with my other grandparents, my life was also plagued by fears. In school and on the streets, we were told daily that a far-off country called America was going to destroy us with bombs. I could never understand why the people in

America wanted to kill us—I thought about it all the time. My mother and father never helped me make sense of it, but I knew that Grandfather Kiriakov could.

During a horseback ride into the orchard, Grandfather proudly showed me his apples, pears, peaches and plums. Then, out of the blue, he asked why I seemed troubled. I told him that the Americans were going to bomb Sofia and that we could all be killed.

"Yulie," he said, as I burst into tears. "You must not worry about that. Let me explain to you about the people who've taken over Bulgaria. And let me tell you about America."

During the early part of the century, Grandfather had gone alone to the United States to seek his fortune. For six years, he worked in a Detroit sausage factory. "To start with, I cleaned floors," he explained. "But I worked hard and got a better position and was paid more." He and his cousin even opened a small restaurant. But Grandfather could never persuade my grandmother to leave Bulgaria. So he returned home bearing a lifetime of stories about the enchanted land to the west.

He described the American people as hard-working, happy and courteous—their stores filled with an abundance of goods rarely seen in our country. Bulgarian authorities, he explained to me, did not want us to know of a country as generous and just as America.

"But how can there be such a country?" I asked.

"The secret is something called freedom," Grandfather said. Then he told me about Abraham Lincoln, who fought a great war to free the slaves—making America a country with freedom for all.

"But, Grandfather," I asked, "why does that matter to us? We don't have slaves."

"Oh, but we do," he told me gravely, lowering his voice. "All of us here—you, me, your parents—we're all slaves to a government that denies us our freedom."

He then told me the dark story of what happened when he refused to join the cooperative farm program. He was hauled out of bed in the middle of the night, beaten, and dumped unconscious on the main road that ran through Preslav.

"I relinquished my spirit and joined," Grandfather told me. "My body has healed, but my spirit will never recover."

Somberly, Grandfather warned me never to repeat these things to anyone. He explained that it was better to play along with the system, get a good education and create an opportunity to escape. "Yulie," he said, "I pray that someday you can become an American."

## II. A Life of Lies

BACK IN SOFIA, fear was everywhere—at home, at school; in the streets. We even feared our friends and neighbors, never knowing who might trade incriminating information about us in return for favor from the authorities.

Early one morning, there was a terrible banging on our apartment door. I watched in horror as two policemen barged in and shoved my grandmother against the wall and handcuffed her. They dragged her down the steps and locked her in the back of a black militia truck.

Later that day, she returned home—drained of her verve and spirit. She said she had been reported by our downstairs neighbor for telling the neighbor's children about the power of faith in God. She was ordered to publicly denounce religion.

At first, Grandmother balked. But the "educational counselor" told her that failure to comply would mean that I, her granddaughter, would lose my chance for an education. Grandmother denounced religion. But secretly, she and my mother taught my brother Peter and me about God, religious training that was a linchpin for our lives.

Grandfather Kiriakov's glowing picture of America was in stark contrast to the daily lessons in my classroom in Sofia, where a picture of Joseph Stalin hung above the blackboard. Instead of being taught to revere truth, we children learned to lie. We lied to teachers and schoolmates about what we believed. We even lied about whether we were happy, for one of the prerequisites for succeeding was to appear happy. Images flicker through my mind of little children singing songs glorifying the state—their faces bathed in smiles, but their eyes betraying a flat emptiness that I only later understood.

This moral confusion was heightened by a family disgrace: my father joined the Communist Party. While I accepted his claim that he was forced to join, I sensed a quiet scorn for him by the rest of the family. Now and then, if I saw a spark of happiness in his eyes, it would burn only for a moment and disappear behind sad anger. I loved my father, and believed him to be even more a prisoner than the rest of us.

## III. Hidden Symbol of Hope

THE YOUNG MAN in front of our class was a substitute teacher who told us he had visited America. As the school day ended, the man said he had something for each of us—a post card from America. Once on the street, I stopped and stared. It was an image I had heard about from Grandfather Kiriakov—a picture of the Lincoln Memorial with Mr. Lincoln seated in his great white chair, his sculpted demeanor leaving no doubt that he was a beloved figure. And on the back of the card was a quotation, in Bulgarian, apparently in the teacher's hand. I can still recall my thrill over the words:

*In giving freedom to the slave, we assure freedom to the free.*

That night, around our hushed table, my parents were guarded as they passed the card back and forth. There was the sense that something dangerous was present, so I was amazed when my father said I could keep it.

The next day, the teacher was gone. We never saw him again. The principal told us that he had fallen

ill and was in the hospital. Then she said, "I understand you were given some post cards. May I see them?"

Several children pulled out their cards and passed them forward. The principal said that the teacher needed them back—that they would help him get well.

I lied that I could not find the post card, that it was lost. I was determined not to give back my picture of Mr. Lincoln—or his words spoken about slavery and freedom. Instead I secreted Mr. Lincoln in my pillowcase at home. From time to time I would take out the card and study Mr. Lincoln's words. They gave me hope that someday I might be free. There it stayed for the next eight years.

#### IV. Freedom's Mighty Fortress

THE WORST PARTS of the forced duplicity of my childhood were the

youth meetings, when each of us was expected to stand up and speak glowingly of the Communist heroes. As leaders looked into my eyes for signs of deception, I silently prayed that my eyes were brighter than those of my friends.

As I grew older, I felt more deeply the indignities of our lives. I hated having my bed in the kitchen. I hated the communal bathhouse where my mother and I would sit naked with other women. I hated that we had to lie in order to live.

I began to question why anyone would ever want to marry and bring children into such a world. And I knew I wasn't alone. Many couples wanted no more than one or two children. What an indictment this was of our society.

A FEW WEEKS after my 16th birthday, in the spring of 1963, my father presented us with an extraordinary surprise. We would be going to Algeria

where, as a dental technician, he had been given a two-year assignment by the Bulgarian government to participate in a training program. We were ecstatic.

My father reminded us grimly about the importance of taking nothing along that could bring suspicion upon us. I concealed my Lincoln post card in my belongings, but at the Sofia airfield, authorities were dumping out suitcases and searching them. Fearfully, I slid the card into the handbag of my aunt, who was seeing us off. I asked her to hold on to it for me until I returned.

I never saw the post card again.

ALGERIA, IT TURNED OUT, was a great crossroads in our family's history. At the end of my father's tour, he ordered tickets for my mother, my brother and me to return to Bulgaria. He then requested and was granted permission to travel to France on a personal visit before rejoining us in Bulgaria. Finally came the most courageous act of our lives.

I did the writing as we altered the official document to show that all of us were included in my father's exit visa. Without a hitch, the French consulate stamped our Bulgarian passports, and within 24 hours we were on a boat bound for Marseille. Once we passed through French customs, we all wept. This had been my father's long-range plan for our escape.

In France, I began to study Abraham Lincoln. I discovered that the words the teacher wrote on my post card came from Lincoln's annual mes-

sage to Congress in December 1862:

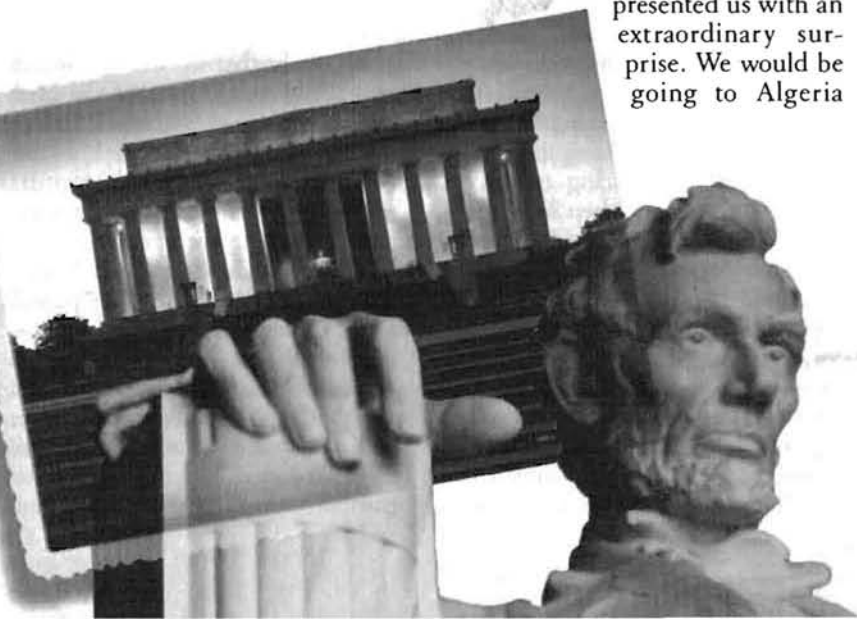
*Fellow-citizens, we cannot escape history . . . The fiery trial through which we pass will light us down, in honor or dishonor, to the latest generation . . . In giving freedom to the slave, we assure freedom to the free . . . We shall nobly save, or meanly lose, the last, best hope of earth . . . The way is plain, peaceful, generous, just—a way which, if followed, the world will ever applaud, and God must forever bless.*

AT AGE 20, I was fluent in Russian, French, English and Bulgarian. These language skills and other academic accomplishments helped me win a scholarship in America—a ticket for the life I had longed for. It also meant I could visit Washington, D.C.

It was a muggy summer night in 1967 when I first laid eyes on the imposing and muted glory of the Lincoln Memorial. Quietly I walked closer to this mighty fortress of freedom. For so many years I had held all of this in my single hand, and now I was but a speck at the feet of Abraham Lincoln. I felt so small—both physically and spiritually.

I looked up at Lincoln's face. Even in his sculpted eyes, I felt the spirit of freedom. The majestic nobility of this man had given me greater strength than had any mortal I'd ever known. As surely as if he had held my hand, he had helped me find my way out of the quicksand of lies onto the solid rock of truth.

My thoughts went back to Grandfather Kiriakov, now dead, and to that courageous young teacher in



Sofia who, under the eyes of Joseph Stalin, gave each of us a personal passport to freedom. As I wondered what happened to him, I knew that it was my turn to pass the torch of freedom to others.

I sat down at Mr. Lincoln's feet and wept with gratitude.

### V. The Light of Liberty

FROM THAT MOMENT FORWARD, my life flowed like a great river filled with all the blessings of freedom I never knew as a child. In college, I met and married Tom Caswell, whose career as a U.S. Foreign Service officer took us to posts all over the world. At each stop, I gave talks to college and civic groups about life in Bulgaria under communism.

In the mid-1980s, we moved to Washington, and I became a broadcaster in the Bulgarian Service for the Voice of America. On November 9, 1989, the Berlin Wall fell.

Shortly before noon the next day, I sat in the broadcast booth and breathed deeply. Somehow, I felt, God and Lincoln must have conspired to place this exquisite moment in my hands—to let my voice tell the people in my Bulgaria that they, too, were about to be touched by the torch of freedom.

Later, making my way home, I could see the Lincoln Memorial in the distance. I was thinking about Grandfather Kiriakov, about my wonderful husband and family. One of the truly great measures of my joy and confidence as an American is that we have six children—each one, to me, a symbol of freedom. Of the torches I've carried, none burns as bright as the light in the eyes of our children—the light of freedom that emanates from the souls of those who are born into it.

For that, Mr. Lincoln, we thank you.

### Affront Page

SOME SNIDE NICKNAMES for newspapers have been collected by Charles Stough of the Dayton Barely News...er, *Daily News*:

- Portland Boregonian (*Oregonian*)
- San Jose Murky News (*Mercury News*)
- Dallas Morning Snooze (*Morning News*)
- Halifax (Nova Scotia) Chronically Horrid (*Chronicle-Herald*)
- San Antonio Excuse-for-News (*Express-News*)
- Charleston (W.Va.) Daily Snail (*Daily Mail*)
- Springfield (Ohio) Nuisance (*News-Sun*)
- Kent (Ohio) Wretched Courier (*Record-Courier*)
- Rochester (Minn.) Compost-Bulletin (*Post-Bulletin*)
- Orlando Slantinel (*Sentinel*)
- Charlotte Disturber (*Observer*)
- Toronto Grope and Fail (*Globe and Mail*)
- Milwaukee Urinal (*Journal*)

—American Journalism Review

## NEWS FROM THE WORLD OF MEDICINE®



### WANTED: DIABETICS' KIN

The National Institutes of Health, along with the American Diabetes Association and the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation International, is sponsoring a large-scale trial to see if insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus (IDDM) can be prevented. Researchers at ten diabetes centers nationwide are recruiting relatives of people with IDDM, also called Type I or juvenile diabetes, to be screened for two antibodies associated with eventual development of the disease. Using the level of these antibodies in the blood, doctors can assess a person's risk of developing diabetes within one to five years.

Preliminary studies show that it may be possible to delay or prevent IDDM with insulin immunization. People who have the antibodies and agree to participate will be assigned to one of two trials: Those at higher risk of IDDM will join a control group or a group receiving insulin injections. Volunteers at lower risk will be assigned to a control group or one receiving oral insulin.

For more information, call 1-800-HALT DM-1. —National Institute of Diabetes & Digestive & Kidney Disorders

### SPORTS INJURIES AND SPERM

A study by University of Wisconsin endocrinologist Wolfram Nolten and

endocrinologists from U.C.L.A. suggests that in cases of significant testicle trauma—when pain lasts 24 hours or more and is accompanied by bruising or swelling—the injuries may contribute to infertility later in life.

Nolten and colleagues compared the hormone levels of 30 infertile men who had had such an injury in their youth with those of two groups of men: 150 patients who hadn't been injured but were infertile, and 46 volunteers who hadn't been injured but were fertile. The findings: the injured men had significantly higher blood levels of the female hormone estradiol (a form of estrogen) than either of the other two groups.

Researchers speculate that a blow to the testicles sets off hormonal changes, increasing estradiol production in the testes. Studies in both animals and humans have shown that increased estradiol can harm male fertility, perhaps by inhibiting testosterone production needed to create sperm.

Nolten's study is the first to link such sports injuries with infertility, and he cautions that his conclusions haven't yet been confirmed by other researchers. Meanwhile, he says, it is essential for