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Author tells about life as 'diplomat'

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About halfway through his tour of duty in Afghanistan with the United States Information Service, the rumors began circulating among the Afghans that Robert Trautman was a spy for the Central Intelligence Agency.

"How could anyone think I was a spy with you as a wife?" was Trautman's amazed comment to his wife, Kathleen, referring to her reputation for being "outspoken."

Mrs. Trautman broke into laughter as she told the story of how, after a stag party her husband attended at the Russian Embassy, the family was boycotted by the Afghans for months because of the suspicion that he was a CIA agent. But, in Afghanistan, Mrs. Trautman said, one never really knows who the spies are.

She lived in Louisville

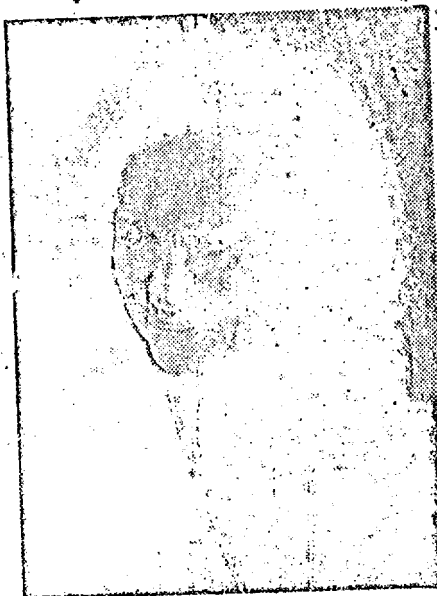
Mrs. Trautman, a 39-year-old former Louisville resident and mother of three, includes the spy incident and other experiences the family had during their year-long tour of duty in the "hardship" post of Afghanistan in her first book, "Spies Behind the Pillars, Bandits at the Pass." It is the story of the Trautmans in diplomatic circles, which they decided after their year in Afghanistan, wasn't for them.

Trautman, a staff writer for The Courier-Journal for three years, joined the United States Information Agency in 1965. After two years in Washington, he was told he would be stationed in Beirut and he was given extensive French lessons. Three months before they were to leave, the Trautmans were told they would be going to Afghanistan instead.

Under constant scrutiny

So in 1967, Kathleen Trautman was settling her family into a country where the language was foreign to them, drainage ditches served as the municipal sewer system, and their conduct as representatives of America was under constant scrutiny.

At that time, a report on the wife was included in the foreign service officer's fitness report. The policy has since been changed, but Kathleen Trautman found herself being constantly chastised by other wives for her outspokenness at cocktail parties—it was not good for the



Staff Photo

Kathleen Trautman has written a book about her family's experiences in Afghanistan.

government or her husband, she was told.

Mrs. Trautman thought it was important for people to know that there was free speech in America. She would comment on the fact that not everyone agreed with U.S. policy in Vietnam, while other officials "turned the conversation to rose bushes when the subject came up."

Mrs. Trautman said their mission in Afghanistan was to inform the Afghans about the United States. And that, she said, meant entertaining the affluent, educated Afghan minority because "they had the power." The Afghans were similarly entertained by representatives from other countries in a constant round of cocktail parties at various embassies.

"They were all alike, Bob said. The only difference was that the Russians served vodka and we served gin."

Cook spoke English

The Trautmans were lucky enough to have a cook who spoke English well enough to take them on tours of the countryside while other diplomats stuck with the American community.

Trautman has been with the British news agency Reuters since he left the USIA in 1968. The family lives in Bethesda, Md. Mrs. Trautman has already started working on her second book, "I'd Love to Go Around the World With You But I Have To Go to the Dentist." She said it's about "being 40."

She has also published several stories in children's magazines, and for two years, while her husband was stationed in Washington, was a research assistant for Kentucky Sen. John Sherman Cooper.

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