

The Globetrotting Graduate

MICHAELA LEMEN HAS the world in her sights. The whole world. And she's already gotten a good head start on that goal while attending CBU.

Having completed her undergraduate degree in history in May, this Navy veteran is heading to Seton Hall University this fall—"From one Catholic institution to another," she laughed—where she will begin work on her Master of Arts in Diplomacy and International Relations. But along the way, she's making a summer-long detour to Uganda with CBU's Minority International Research Training program.

If Lemen's name and news of her world travels sound familiar, it may be due initially to an article in the Summer 2003 *Bell Tower*. She'd just returned from the inaugural CBU Study Abroad trip to Rome and told us: "Just to be able to stand in the Forum was more than I could have asked for."

But when we last saw this globetrotting graduate in these pages (Summer '04), she'd just been awarded a Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship by the U.S. Department of State and was headed to Jordan and the Middle East for the Fall 2004 semester. The scholarship allowed Lemen to participate in a study-abroad program sponsored by the School for International Training (SIT). Gilman Scholarship recipients are chosen by a competitive selection process; Lemen's was among only 192 awards out of 1,276 applications. (For information on the Gilman Scholarship, visit www.iie.org/gilman.)

"My instructor in Jordan was a political advisor to King Hussein," she said, her eyes still a little wide in disbelief. "I can't even imagine a better introduction to the Arab perspective."

Lemen's studies focused on topics of Jordanian history, religion, culture, gender issues, and development. The thesis she produced was approved by the CBU History Department in lieu of the required senior seminar class—plus she received six hours of foreign language credit for her studies in modern Arabic.

Lemen came to CBU after serving in the Navy and attending several other colleges. "Every so often, an exceptional student enrolls at CBU," said Dr. Marius Carriere, chairman of the Department of History and Political Science. "Michaela is certainly one of those students. Immediately, we recognized that she was



Michaela Lemen,
outside of a mosque in
Aleppo, Syria

quite different. She was not only hard-working, but intuitive and creative. While she was more mature than many of her fellow students, she still had a youthful exuberance. She also liked a challenge."

During her semester in the Middle East, Lemen occasionally found the cultural differences a challenge. "They were overwhelming at times," she said. "There are so many levels to Arab society, it's hard to understand much less to fit in."

Based in Amman, she was housed with a Jordanian family. "I lived in a one-room house," she explained. "The first thing I learned about the Arabic people is their incredible generosity. Whatever they have, however little, they are willing to share."

Lemen also traveled in Jordan to the ancient city of Petra and to holy sites such as the Jordan River. She ventured into Syria to visit Damascus and Aleppo, the two oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world. Her "youthful exuberance" is apparent in describing these excursions, but so is her historical scholarship. She speaks easily of still-evident Cold War ties to the Soviet Union in Syria, of British and French colonization and influence, and of walking across historical battlefields—"We have the Civil War, but they have the Crusades," she said, putting things in perspective.

She is excited about her post-graduate studies at Seton Hall in New Jersey, and about her proximity to New York and the United Nations. Might the U.N. be in her future? "Maybe," she said. "Who knows? My focus is on the international scene, whether it's government or the private sector. My options are open."

She leaves CBU with gratitude and some advice to the students who follow her. "What can I say? I've had an amazing career here at CBU," she said with a shrug and a smile. "I feel so lucky to have had all these opportunities. I'd really advise students take advantage of the new Global Studies minor, which is an opportunity I didn't have. Go somewhere—*anywhere*—and learn something you can bring back home. It will serve you well in this increasingly global society we live in." ■