





Mary-Ellen Shultz

ATA mourns the passing on Saturday, January 15, 2011 of Mary-Ellen Shultz, a long-time member and an accomplished travel writer known for her in-depth spotlights of African destinations, including The Gambia, Egypt, Morocco, Tanzania and Ethiopia. “Mel,” as she was fondly known, spoke Spanish and Portuguese fluently and picked up almost any language immediately—she only had to listen closely and carefully. Her warm heart and generous spirit will be dearly missed by us all. Here’s a photo of Mel at the ATA Zanzibar congress.

Below please find some messages from Mary Ellen’s friends and colleagues around the world.

From Eddie Bergman, Executive Director, Africa Travel Association

“Mary-Ellen was an incredible friend of Africa and the Africa Travel Association. Her passion and energy were contagious to anyone who had the privilege of traveling with her. Her passing comes as a shock to the ATA family and she will be dearly missed. Mary-Ellen’s contributions to ATA were extensive, including promoting the association and the African continent through her incredible writing skills. She will always have a special place in all of our hearts.”

From Karen Hoffman, President, The Bradford Group

The first time I met Mel was in 1996 when we invited her to join the press group for the ATA Ecotourism Symposium in Marrakesh. That was her first trip to Africa, and happily the first of many, as she became a permanent "presence" at the ATA congresses. She was indeed passionate about the continent, compassionate for all the people she met, and a wonderful, generous person. She was also an excellent writer and her articles and stories were always comprehensive and first

rate. Mel was full of adventure and fun and her loss will leave a deep professional and personal void.

From Sylvia Frommer-Mracky, Travel Writer, The Africa Times USA

“Mary Ellen’s African traveling soul sister now faces a huge void when traveling to Africa on an ATA assignment. I promise to leave some of her ashes in Africa this May. My heart is so heavy to lose my "sister" in such a sudden manner.”

From Ogo Sow, “Mr. Africa,” Radio Journalist

“Mary Ellen was a real passionate Ambassador of Africa in America. I remember the first time we all met in Addis Ababa at the 25th ATA Congress in 2000. Since then she never stop traveling to Africa... country by country. Our last trip together to Africa was in May 2010 for the 35th Annual Congress. I am getting ready to go back the Gambia and Senegal next month to celebrate the Gambia Roots Festival 2011 and I don't know what say to Mme Minister of Tourism & Culture of the Gambia Hadjia Fatou Mass Jobe Njie. May her soul rest in Peace. Amen.”

From Jerry Bird and Mugnette Goufrani, The Africa Travel Magazine

“We were deeply saddened to learn of Mary Ellen's death. Mary Ellen's contributions to ATA and *Travel World News* of dedicated services were many and varied. Her contributions for Africa will not be forgotten. She was really a great charming ambassador to promote Africa and a great friend. Many will miss her. Our sorrow leaves a memory no one can steal.”

From Chika A. Onyeani, The Africa Times

“Loretta and I wish to express our heartfelt condolences to the family of Mary Ellen and to the ATA family, especially its media partners. News of her death was a great shock to us. In the 4 years we have come to know Mary Ellen, we found her to be a very cheerful, dedicated, compassionate, considerate and valuable team player. In our travels, we found her to be fiercely attached to Africa's children and of course to the continent itself. She will be dearly missed.”

Mary-Ellen worked as a nighttime proofreader from Verizon Wireless. In January 2011, they ran a spotlight on her (employee of the month). Here it is:

WHAT DO YOU DO AT MRM?

Night-crew proofreader

WHAT DID YOU WANT TO BE WHEN YOU GREW UP?

A globe-trotting diplomat. Until I realized that it involved more than just being able to hop on a plane at moment’s notice (LBD, heels and pearls in carry-on) to attend an embassy cocktail party in some exotic country.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO IN YOUR SPARE TIME?

Read, travel, write (mostly about travel and tourism), take photographs, listen to music, watch movies, and spend time with family and friends— all at the same time, if possible.

FAVORITE VACATION SPOT?

Almost anywhere in Africa and Mexico.

MUSICIAN TAKING UP THE MOST SPACE IN YOUR IPOD?

Currently: Tinariwen, Koko Taylor and Pink Martini.

FAVORITE SNACK?

A cheese (any kind except Velveeta) and fruit platter.

FAVORITE SPORTS TEAM?

Hey, I was born in Brooklyn and love basketball: it's gotta be the NY Knicks.

FAVORITE FICTIONAL CHARACTER?

Don Quixote from the same-titled novel and Precious Ramotswe from Alexander McCall Smith's The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency series

FAVORITE Non-FICTIONAL CHARACTER?

T.E. Lawrence and Karen Blixen.

IF YOU COULD TAKE A MONTH-LONG SABBATICAL FROM WORK, WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Go to Tanzania (in East Africa) and take a course in wildlife management in one of the country's national parks.

PERSONAL MOTTO

When one door closes another door opens. Never give up on what you really want to do. The person with big dreams is more powerful than one with all the facts.