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**PRESS**

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**Outside of Her Comfort Zone:  
Teacher and Memoirist Travels to India and Lives the Best Year of Her Life**

Living in India on her own would be a challenging, life-changing experience for 50-something-year-old Sandra Bornstein. She'd have to leave behind her husband and soulmate, a Colorado-based attorney, and three of their four sons. She also would be required to step outside of her personal comfort zone every moment of the day. Her previous experience with traveling out-of-state on her own had been limited to a summer camp experience and subsequent traveling within the United States when she was younger and adventurous – but she had never left the country on her own.

Now, since her husband, Ira, had been severely injured in a mysterious ski accident and was recovering from reconstructive shoulder surgery, Bornstein wasn't eager to leave him behind and face the perils of a foreign country all alone. She came from the Jewish tradition in which sanctity of marriage and the home were deeply valued. Her husband actually remained neutral during the decision-making process. However, when she landed a job teaching English and social studies to fifth graders at a prestigious international boarding school in Bangalore, she found that she couldn't easily turn it down. "Where else could I teach a Hindu population about Jews?" she asks in her new memoir, *May This Be the Best Year of Your Life*.

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She had previously traveled to India with her husband after he had accepted an overseas position. While searching for possible teaching positions, she realized how lucky she was to be born an American. “My lifestyle and opportunities were dramatically affected by this simple fact. I cherished each and every one of the modern conveniences that were part of my life, and was appreciative that my sons had had an American upbringing and education. To put it simply, I was immensely grateful to be home,” she said.

And yet Bornstein couldn’t stop thinking about what it would be like to teach at an international Indian school. It was something someone half her age would do, Bornstein told herself. Maybe she was having a midlife crisis. Was she looking to reclaim her youth? She didn’t know. Furthermore, she couldn’t know whether the decision to teach in India would have a positive or negative effect on her health – and she couldn’t have anticipated how it would affect her marriage and her sons.

Bornstein’s oldest son, Josh, lived and worked in India, and she was thrilled at the prospect of spending more time with him. “But the largest splash of water that tipped the balance in favor of [my decision to accept the job in India] was the lure of teaching in a Third World country where my expertise would make a difference. Plain and simple, I wanted to have a *purpose*. I feared that if I stayed in the United States, I would never find a position that would give me the job fulfillment I was seeking.”

The sights and sounds of the Indian neighborhood mesmerized Bornstein as she made her way to the school for orientation. She had a bird’s eye view of the cows and goats that paid their respects on graves in cemeteries, and she gained a new perspective on the lack of safety on Bangalore streets. Poverty was rampant, and many Indian children spent their days in squalor, without hope, and never had a chance to attend school. She met the principal, and heard him tell everyone over and over again: “This is going to be the best year of your life.” She was about to find out just how true that prediction would be.

*May This Be the Best Year of Your Life: A Memoir*

By Sandra Bornstein

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<http://www.sandrabornstein.com/>

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## Suggested Interview Questions

1. What are your three greatest passions, and how did they motivate you to move to India without your husband?
2. Did you have a job lined up when you moved, and how did you arrange that?
3. How much international traveling had you done on your own before you moved to India?
4. Do you consider yourself the adventurous type?
5. Where did you live in India, and what were conditions like there?
6. What were your biggest day-to-day challenges?
7. What did you think of the international school where you taught?
8. What were the challenges you faced in interacting with your colleagues?
9. How would you compare Indian fifth graders with American fifth graders?
10. What were the main cultural differences between your fifth graders and you, and how did you cope with that?
11. As a Jewish woman living in India, were you able to get to know other members of the Jewish community?
12. How did your husband and your sons, who remained in Colorado, handle the separation from you – and how did you handle it?
13. The principal of the school liked to say that “this will be the best year of your life.” Was it really the best year of your life and, if so, what were the best things about it?
14. What were the most important lessons you learned in India?

## Story Angles

1. When is it too late to pursue your dreams?
2. How can you find your “true north?”
3. What are the differences between teaching in the United States and teaching in India?
4. Are Jewish people in India vastly different from Jewish Americans?
5. How can we handle the fears associated with leaving our comfort zone, and how can doing so benefit us?
6. How is poverty in India similar to poverty in the United States?

## Author Bio

Sandra Bornstein, an international educator and writer, has taught K-12 students in the United States and abroad as well as college level courses at the University of Colorado and Front Range Community College. Sandra holds two master's degrees-- one in Education from the University of Colorado and another in Jewish Studies from Spertus College. While pursuing a master's degree in Jewish Studies, Sandra Bornstein wrote *Rose Haas Alschuler: A Chicago Woman's Life of Service 1887-1979* and five biographical essays on American Jewish women. The essays were published in encyclopedias and later added to the Jewish Women's Archives website.

In 2010, her husband's international job created a unique opportunity to live abroad. In India, she fulfilled three passions — a desire to travel, a zeal for writing, and a love of teaching. Sandra's Indian adventure became the backdrop for her book, *May This Be the Best Year of Your Life: A Memoir*. Sandra currently lives in Colorado with her husband and their cat, Chloe. Visit her online at [www.SandraBornstein.com/](http://www.SandraBornstein.com/).