

COMMUNITY

Mediterranean adventure real eye-opener for trio

Area's turmoil hits strong chord with women who visited countries just weeks earlier

By Christina Commisso
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While exploring the ancient ruins of Libya, Egypt and Tunisia, three Miltonians had no idea what would be in store for the Mediterranean nations mere weeks after their departure.

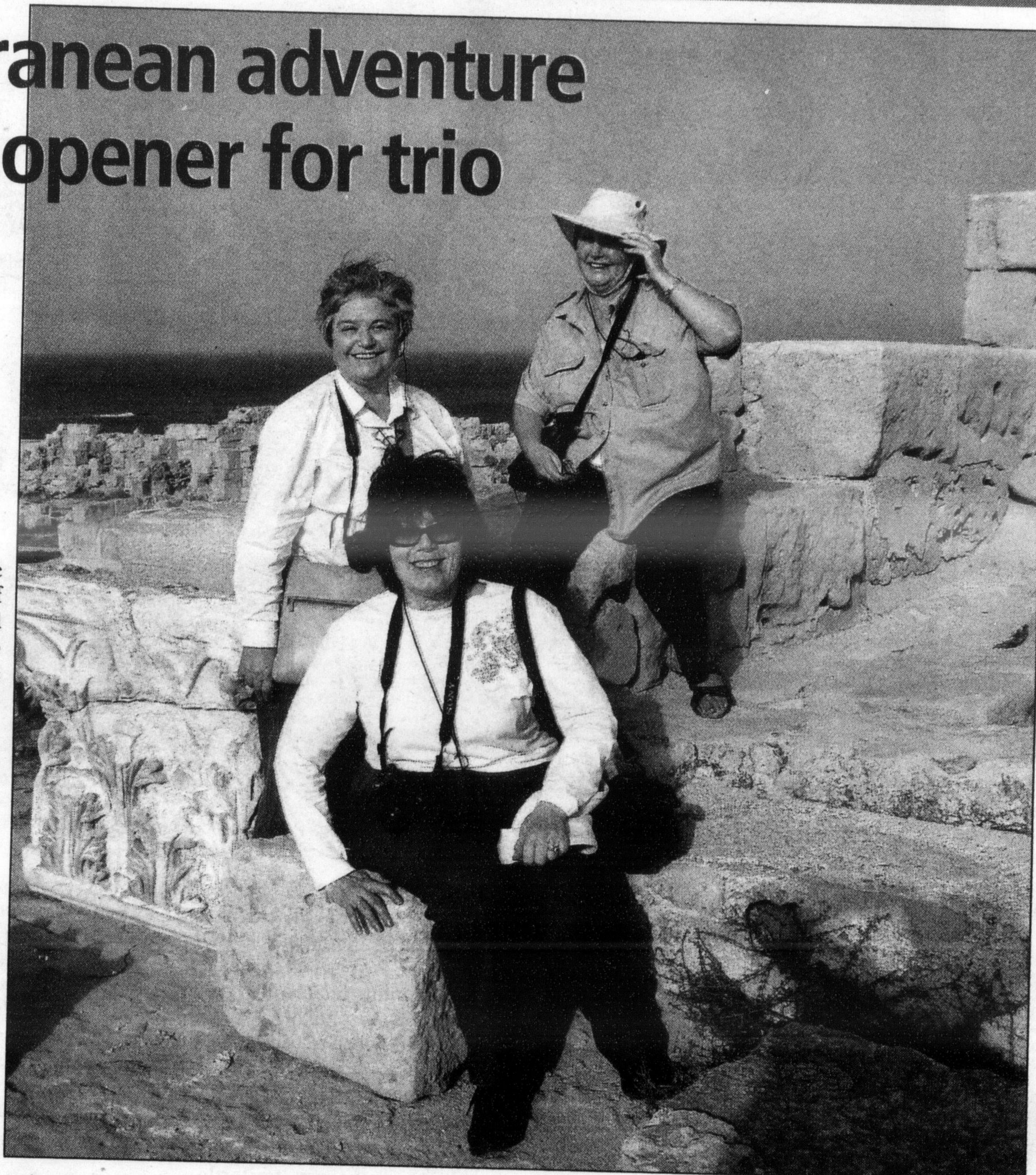
Spurred on by widespread corruption, high unemployment rates, food inflation and a lack of political freedoms, revolutions in northern Africa have brought about democracy where there was once dictatorships, but not before demonstrators took to the streets for weeks of deadly protests that are still ongoing.

News of the uprisings and subsequent casualties have made headlines around the world, but it has hit a particular note with rural residents Anne Taylor, Barbara Alderson and Councillor Cindy Lunau.

Time-sensitive trip

In November, the women spent 17 days touring the Mediterranean coast and visiting ruins in Sicily, Malta, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt.

"We didn't realize how time-sen-



GLOBE-TROTTING TRIO: Miltonians Barbara Alderson (front), Cindy Lunau (left) and Anne Taylor visit Sabratha, Libya. PHOTO SUBMITTED BY BARBARA ALDERSON

sitive this trip was," said Lunau, "It will be a long time if it ever we were there."

skimming over hundreds of photo-happens again. The revolutions Added Alderson, "You feel lucky could have easily happened while you had the opportunity to be there

and sad that it's now in the state it is."

She said she's not surprised by what transpired shortly after returning to Milton.

Citing a fairly young population with soaring unemployment rates, Lunau said, "It was a recipe for unrest."

"For a young population that's underemployed, what's their future?"

The Nassagaweya residents said their time away was relatively problem-free, but in Libya, they did have some issues with the "tourist police."

Police presence unnerving

An increased police presence in the now rebel-controlled eastern part of the country had the women on their toes.

"We were told not to leave the tour group or we could be apprehended by police as an insurgent," said Taylor.

Lunau said billboards of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi were present at every turn.

Along with a number of pictures and souvenirs, the women have come back with a renewed appreciation of Canadian freedoms.

"I don't look at democracy the same way and I don't look at our comforts the same way," said Lunau. "I realize how fragile it is. For a little bit of freedom these people are standing in front of bullets, and we don't make our way down to a voting station."

Alderson said the events in the Middle East remind her that democracy is a privilege, and voting is a responsibility.

Said Taylor, "I have a cynical view on politics, but I will vote to respect the people who fought for that right."

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