

## SAUDI ARABIA

### COUNTRY READER TABLE OF CONTENTS

Parker T. Hart	1944-1946	Vice Consul, Jeddah and Dhahran
	1949-1952	Consul General, Dhahran
	1952-1955	Director, Near East Affairs, Washington, DC
	1958-1961	Deputy Assistant Secretary, Near East Affairs, Washington, DC
	1961-1965	Ambassador, Saudi Arabia
Afif I. Tannous	1946-1947	Agricultural Specialist, The Middle East
Lewright Browning Munn	1947-1949	Code Clerk, Jeddah
Hermann Frederick Eilts	1948-1950	Economic/Political Officer, Jeddah
	1960-1961	Desk Officer, Arabian Peninsular Affairs, Washington, DC
	1965-1970	Ambassador, Saudi Arabia
Dayton S. Mak	1948	Administrative Officer, Dhahran
	1948-1949	Economic Officer, Jeddah
William D. Brewer	1950-1951	Acting Deputy Chief of Mission, Jeddah
	1966-1970	Director, Arabian Peninsular Affairs, Washington, DC
Raymond A. Hare	1950-1953	Ambassador, Saudi Arabia
Max Waldo Bishop	1951-1953	Consul General, Dhahran
George M. Bensusky, Jr.	1952-1956	U.S. Treasury Representative, Middle East
A. David Fritzlan	1953-1955	Officer in Charge, Iraq and Arabian Peninsular Affairs, Washington, DC
Grant V. McClanahan	1954-1957	Consul, Dhahran
David D. Newsom	1955-1959	Officer, Arabian Peninsula Affairs, Washington, DC
William A. Stoltzfus, Jr.	1956-1959	Political Officer, Jeddah

	1968-1971	Deputy Chief of Mission, Jeddah
Isa K. Sabbagh	1957-1964 1974-1981	Public Affairs Officer, USIS, Jeddah Public Affairs Officer and Translator, USIS, the Middle East
Norman V. Schute	1957	Foreign Service Security Officer, Washington, DC
Walter K. Schwinn	1957-1961	Consul General, Dhahran
Charles Stuart Kennedy	1958-1960	Consular Officer, Dhahran
Walter M. McClelland	1959-1962	Consular Officer, Dhahran
William D. Wolle	1959-1962	Economic Officer, Jeddah
George M. Lane	1960-1962 1978-1981	Commercial Officer, Jeddah Ambassador, Yemen
Morris Draper	1961-1964	Economic Counselor, Jeddah
Talcott W. Seelye	1961-1964 1965-1968	Desk Officer for Arabian Peninsular Affairs, Washington, DC Deputy Chief of Mission, Jeddah
Joan Seelye	1965-1968	Spouse of Demptu Chief of Mission, Jeddah
Eugene H. Bird	1962-1965 1972-1975	Economic Officer, Dhahran Political/Economic Officer, Jeddah
Charles Marthinsen	1962-1964	Political/Consular Officer, Jeddah
Slator Clay Blackiston, Jr.	1964-1966	Economic Officer, Jeddah
Brooks Wrampelmeier	1964-1966	Political Officer, Jeddah
Alfred Leroy Atherton, Jr.	1965-1974 1974-1979	Deputy Director, Near East Affairs, Washington, DC Assistant Secretary, Near East Affairs, Washington, DC
David Blakemore	1966-1968	Position not specified, Jeddah
Kenton W. Keith	1967-1968	Assistant Public Affairs Officer, USIS,

		Jeddah
Wat T. Cluverius, IV	1967-1969	Political/Economical Officer, Jeddah
David E. Long	1967-1970 1970-1975	Political Officer, Jeddah Saudi Arabia Analyst, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Washington, DC
John R. Countryman	1968-1970	Economic-Commercial Officer, Deputy Principal Officer, Dhahran
Brooks Wrampelmeier	1968-1974	Saudi Desk Officer, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, Washington, DC
James Alan Williams	1969-1970	Petroleum Officer, Arabian Peninsula Affairs, Washington, DC
François M. Dickman	1969-1972	Economic/Political Officer, Jeddah
David M. Ransom	1969-1970	Consular/Economic Officer, Jeddah
David G. Newton	1970-1973	Political Officer, Jeddah
Howard L. Steele	1971	Joint Economic Commission, Riyadh
James H. Bahti	1972-1975	Principal Officer, Dhahran
Francois M. Dickman	1972-1976	Country Director for the Arabian, Washington, DC
Hume A. Horan	1972-1977	Deputy Chief of Mission, Jeddah
Charles O. Cecil	1973-1975 1975-1977	Political/Military Officer, Jeddah Saudi Arabia Desk Officer, Washington, DC
Harold H. Saunders	1974-1976 1978-1981	Assistant Secretary, Near East Affairs, Washington, DC Assistant Secretary, Near East Affairs, Washington, DC
Curtis F. Jones	1975 [est]	Director, Office of Intelligence and Research, Near East Affairs, Washington, DC
Joseph J. Sisco	1975	Under Secretary, Political Affairs,

		Washington, DC
James A. Larocco	1975-1977	Commercial Attaché & Economic Officer, Jeddah
Michael E. Albin	1975-1985	Librarian, Library of Congress, Egypt
Gordon S. Brown	1976-1978	Economic Officer, Jeddah
Marshall W. Wiley	1976-1977	Deputy Chief of Mission, Jeddah
Dorothy A. Eardley	1976-1977	Secretary to the Ambassador, Jeddah
John R. Countryman	1976-1979	Deputy Director, Arabian Peninsula Affairs, Washington, DC
John Hummon	1976-1980	Joint Economic Commission, Riyadh
Richard C. Howland	1978	Office of the Inspector General, Washington, DC
Holsey G. Handyside	1978-1981	Deputy Assistant Secretary, Department of Energy, Washington DC
Ralph E. Lindstrom	1978-1980	Consul General, Dhahran
William Harrison Marsh	1979-1981	Counselor for Political-Military Affairs, Jeddah
George Quincey Lumsden	1979-1982	Deputy Director, Arabian Peninsula Affairs, Washington, DC
James A. Placke	1979-1982	Deputy Chief of Mission, Jeddah
William A. Pierce	1980-1983	Political Officer, Jeddah
Richard L. Stockman	1980-1984	Communications Officer, Riyadh
David G. Newton	1981-1984	Political Counselor, Riyadh
Brooks Wrampelmeier	1982-1984	Deputy Director/Office Director, Arabian Peninsula Affairs, Washington, DC
James A. Placke	1982-1985	Deputy Assistant Secretary, Near East Bureau, Washington, DC

Roscoe S. Suddarth	1982-1985	Deputy Chief of Mission, Jeddah & Riyadh
Kenton W. Keith	1983-1985	USIA, Deputy Director for Near East and South Asia, Washington, DC
Richard E. Undeland	1983-1985	Public Affairs Officer, USIS, Riyadh
Walter L. Cutler	1984-1987	Ambassador, Saudi Arabia
Paul H. Tyson	1986-1988	Deputy Principal Officer, Dhahran
Bruce W. Clark	1987-1989	Political Military Counselor, Riyadh
Hume A. Horan	1987-1988	Ambassador, Saudi Arabia
J. Michael Springmann	1987-1989	Consular Officer, Jeddah
Brooks Wrampelmeier	1987-1989	Consul Officer, Dhahran
Walter L. Cutler	1988-1989	Ambassador, Saudi Arabia
David M. Ransom	1988-1990	Director, Arabian Peninsula Affairs, Washington, DC
David J. Dunford	1988-1991	Deputy Chief of Mission, Riyadh
Chas W. Freeman, Jr.	1989-1992	Ambassador, Saudi Arabia
Kenneth A. Stammerman	1989-1992	Consul General, Dhahran
William A. Pierce	1989-1993	Political/Military Officer, Riyadh
Wayne White	1990-2004	Analyst, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, North Africa, Arabian Peninsula, Iran and Iraq Division, Washington, DC
Marilyn Greene	1991	Foreign Correspondent, <u>USA Today</u> , Washington, DC
Richard McKee	1991-1993	Office Director, Arabian Peninsula, Washington, DC
David L. Mack	1993	Deputy Assistant Secretary, NEA< Washington, DC
Charles L. Daris	1993-1996	Consul General/Principal Officer,

		Jeddah
David M. Winn	1994-1996	Consul General, Dhahran
Albert A. Thibault, Jr.	1995-2000	Political Counselor/Deputy Chief of Mission, Riyadh
Alice A. Dress	2000-2002 2003-2004	Economic Counselor, Riyadh Economic Counselor, Riyadh

**PARKER T. HART**  
**Vice Consul**  
**Jeddah and Dhahran (1944-1946)**

**Consul General**  
**Dhahran (1949-1952)**

**Director, Near East Affairs**  
**Washington, DC (1952-1955)**

**Deputy Assistant Secretary, Near East Affairs**  
**Washington, DC (1958-1961)**

**Ambassador**  
**Saudi Arabia (1961-1965)**

*Ambassador Parker T. Hart was born in Massachusetts in 1910. He graduated from Dartmouth College in 1933 and received an M.A. from Harvard University in 1935. He joined the Foreign Service in 1936. His overseas career included positions in Austria, Brazil, Egypt, Kuwait, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, and Yemen. In 1958, he became the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near East and South Asian Affairs. Ambassador Hart was interviewed by William Crawford in 1989.*

*Q: In what capacity did you return to the Department in 1943?*

HART: ....What he wanted me for was to relieve an FSO (Foreign Service Officer) who was sick in Jeddah. His name was J. Harold Shullaw. He said that he wanted me to relieve him and then to go over to Dhahran and open a consulate. We didn't have one but we had received permission from the king to open one. They were going to build a refinery there as part of the war effort. We needed somebody over there who could get the consulate office going and to help take care of the influx of American workers who could get into trouble and would need a lot of help. So I went down there to Jeddah and relieved Harold Shullaw.

*Q: What was there in Jeddah at that point?*

HART: Very little. It was an old walled city of about 30,000 people. It didn't have a single paved street but it did have a black-top road to Mecca. Camels wandered right through the town. There were no public utilities of any kind -- no electric lights, running water or sewage system. There was a way of having water, from a water distillery plant which had partially broken down. It was constantly breaking down. We drank distilled water, but because of the way it was handled we always boiled it again. Otherwise, brackish water taken from open pits, was sold by 5-gallon tin lots for general use. It was dug out of the coral reefs and carried in by donkey-back, etc. It was a very primitive city, but fascinating to me as a vignette of ancient Arab civilization.

In any event, I was there for about 2 ½ years. While I was there I made one more stab at getting released to go into the military. We were hearing of the Normandy landings and I just felt like the devil being out of it. I can't describe it but I guess you can imagine. The Department turned me flatly down. This was the third time and they wouldn't have any part of it. So I felt that I didn't really have any choice. I proceeded to open the consulate. I had to travel through Cairo.

*Q: Did we have a minister in Jeddah at that point?*

HART: We had a Minister-Resident who was Jimmy Moose. He had opened the legation in 1942 in an old building just inside the city wall close to the ARAMCO Building. The company was not yet called ARAMCO. It was CASOC -- California Standard Oil -- but it became ARAMCO about that time when they took on Texaco as co-owner. They provided us with electric power from their generator. We didn't have any.

*Q: Was this the same building we kept until we moved out to the compound?*

HART: We kept it and two other ancient buildings under lease until the final move, but by 1949 the Ambassador had moved out to a relatively new mansion-type building which had been built out on the seashore to the north of the city.

To resume my story of travel to Dhahran from Jeddah: To get across to Dhahran is about 800 airline miles straight but there was no airfield and there was no air communication to any location but Cairo, and that was by U.S. military aircraft. There were no roads and no vehicles existed that were in shape for such an expedition. Most were pretty well used up without replacement. You couldn't really drive them safely and would require a convoy. I had to fly around through Cairo, and I was ill at the time suffering from a pulmonary disorder. I went into the 38th General Hospital of the U.S. Army outside of Cairo and there I met my future wife, Jane, who was a patient there for one of the many gastrointestinal disorders that Cairo was famous for and still is.

*Q: What was she doing in Cairo at that time?*

HART: Jane C. Smiley was in the OSS doing cryptographic work and analysis of messages coming from behind the German lines in Greece. We didn't get married for five more years, but we met then and got well acquainted. As soon as I recovered, I went on to Baghdad, Basra,

Bahrain, and then by small boat to Al Khobar, the small-craft port of ARAMCO on the Saudi mainland 6 miles from Dhahran. Just ahead of me was FSO Clarence Joseph McIntosh of our legation in Jeddah who had managed to get ahead of me by ship, because of my hospitalization. Together we opened the consulate.

*Q: Did you have a building?*

HART: At first, they didn't have any buildings to spare. The oil camp was still primitive. They had built only a topping plant and very limited, simple housing since the war had stagnated everything -- no supplies -- and they only had about a hundred men who stayed there through the war. In fact, a book has been written about the hundred men of ARAMCO who stayed through that period. They got bombed once by the Italian Air Force. It didn't do any damage to speak of but it was a major long-range effort from Asmara, with light bombs.

We took one-half of a duplex that had been built before the war. That had a bedroom with two beds -- double occupancy or more was the rule everywhere. We had a nice little living room and a kitchen.

*Q: Had this been built by ARAMCO?*

HART: It had been built by Standard of California. It had been there since before the war and there were a number of those buildings. We took this half of a duplex. One-half of the living room became the office and the other half of the living room was for relaxation and social life. Subsequently, they made available to us a rather primitive office in the center of the camp in the utility section. I think we had several rooms there and we put up a flag.

*Q: Was your flag imbedded in Saudi soil?*

HART: That was it. We got quickly caught up on that and they sent word through ARAMCO -- which had the only communication system across the country -- that the Saudis said you can have it grappled to the side of the building but you can't sink it in the ground. So we had to rip the whole thing up -- to the disgust of the ARAMCO workers who had done it for us free of charge -- and have it grappled onto the side of the building.

The Americans were so delighted to see us, they wanted us to fly the flag every day. We said, "We fly it on holidays and special days." We flew it fairly often, but that wasn't good enough for them. They wanted it every single day, if possible. They were homesick.

*Q: What were your actual functions as you set up there?*

HART: The most important functions were to keep guys out of trouble. Construction men came in to do this work, and among them were some pretty bad apples. Occasionally, we would have serious problems. We had one particularly bad case where two men got into a fist fight. One of them took a knife and waylaid the other, who was badly stabbed. The case had to go to trial before the Sharia Court (court of religious law). No Americans there knew what that meant and we didn't know, either. I had to attend the trial, of course, but I must add that before the trial took



place, the rest of the construction workers wanted to lynch the knife wielder. To avoid this, I hid him out in my lodging until the mob had dispersed, then smuggled him out of the country, across to prevent angry American workmen from perpetrating "lynch-law" on Muslim Saudi soil. There was no police presence to speak of. It was sparsely populated desert, had no prison system, but Islamic law would have to govern the final result. The main concern was to protect the assailant from sudden death.

We got him across to Manama but we held him in Bahrain and wouldn't let him go. We had him under informal (and no doubt illegal) house detention.

*Q: How did you hold him in Bahrain?*

HART: ARAMCO had a guest house in Manama. We used it as a safe house. We fed him, took good care of him, but he couldn't go anywhere. There was no place to go anyway except by aircraft and we could control that, so that he could never get on a plane. Those planes landed on the water. He was really isolated. When the Saudis found out that he was there -- we didn't try to disguise it -- they said, "You must bring him back for trial."

We felt that it was going to be a difficult problem to get him to come back. We might have to do it by force, but he was persuaded. He came back and stood his trial in a civil case. It was quickly settled, but the King ruled that he was guilty of assault with a weapon. He was given ten days detention and then exiled forever from the country. It was a neat way of getting around the problem, the knifing victim (who was well handled and quickly recovered) was persuaded by his employer to drop charges.

*Q: I'm sure the assailant was quite grateful.*

HART: We were infinitely relieved because we didn't know if they would take him out and try to either beat him to death or behead him. We didn't know what they'd do.

Of course, the king had a diplomatic problem of his own religious authorities, the ulema. He handled it very well and the man was put on the plane by a giant of an ARAMCO man who acted as a kind of bodyguard and took him all the way to Cairo. From there, he saw him off on a plane for the States.

*Q: What were your dealings with the Saudi government and its instrumentalities? Did you deal with the Governor of the Eastern Province, Saud bin Jaluwi?*

HART: Saud bin Jaluwi was a little remote at this stage. Later on I got to know him very well. He governed the Province from his redoubt in Hufuf which was a huge complex, almost as big as the Murabba Palace of Riyadh -- a walled city with gates, fully controlled by his police. There was a local officer named Sammy Kutbi, whom we had known in Jeddah and who was a representative of the Saudi government for ARAMCO and U.S. consular business. I would sometimes take problems to him and he would take problems to me. He had a lot more business with ARAMCO and than with our consular office.

*Q: Was he a Saudi?*

HART: Yes, he was a Saudi. He was replaced by a much higher ranking person in the Saudi hierarchy of things. Sayyid Sami, as we called him, was a very nice fellow and spoke fair English. Most Arabs didn't speak anything but Arabic in those days. He was replaced by Amir Khalid Sudairi a young cousin of the king. He was roughly my age. The Sudairis are a high nobility, so to speak, in the Saudi hierarchy of bedouin rank and famous in the history of tribal relations. They are very important. I found him an extraordinarily fine person to work with. We exchanged Arabic and English lessons once a week.

*Q: When actually did you begin the study of Arabic?*

HART: I started a little before that time but there was nothing to grab hold of in Saudi Arabia. When I was in Cairo during that 2-1/2 years that I spent there, I went to the American University program of Arabic studies -- the Oriental Studies Department of the American University of Cairo -- and took lessons. That was just an opener to break a little ground. Then when I got to Saudi Arabia, I found there was really nobody to teach me. I asked help in finding a teacher from our top Arab employee who was Muhammed Ibrahim Masud -- now His Excellency Muhammed Masud, a minister and ambassador-at-large in the Saudi government.

*Q: This is Muhammed Masud who was in Jeddah?*

HART: Yes. Muhammed Masud found a fellow to come and to try to teach me but he didn't know how to teach. You don't get very far in breaking ground if you don't have the grammar. I had no book or anything of that kind.

When I got to Dhahran I found a book by John Van Ess on Iraqi Arabic and I immediately latched onto that and tried to teach myself with anybody's help that I could find. Our pouch was carried weekly to Bahrain. The only way we could get mail in or out was through Bahrain. So McIntosh and I would swap weeks -- he would go one and I'd go the next. On those trips I would try to talk to the Arabs while consulting the Van Ess book, useful for both standard and Gulf Arabic. In Dhahran ARAMCO helped me find Suliman Olayan who was a stock boy keeping track of their inventory. He had had Bahraini education and had learned English, British style, quite well. He was not trained as a teacher but he was a very nice guy and an most intelligent. He later went into business for himself and as we know now, he's probably a billionaire [Laughter].

Years later, Jane and I were traveling in 1981 through Jeddah and had dinner at the Embassy with Ambassador Dick Murphy as the host. With Suliman present during a conversation with another gentleman, I said, "You know this gentleman here gave me Arabic lessons for three riyals an hour."

Suliman said, "You could have had me for two." [Laughter]

At any rate, pedagogically this was not a satisfactory way to learn Arabic, but it at least broke some ground. The Arabs are very anxious to help the foreigner learn, so that, at least, I got acquainted with the language during the tour. Later on, when Jane and I, newly married came

back to Dhahran, Dr. Charles Matthews -- an outstanding scholar of linguistics and professor of Semitic languages -- was engaged by ARAMCO to teach their own employees. I joined that class and there we went right into Thatcher's grammar. We went through it as a textbook and studied the structure of the language.

*Q: Did you continue to have two of you in Dhahran or were you the only one?*

HART: In this first assignment, I stayed there until late 1946 and was ordered back to Washington. There were four of us there for most of the time, at least after the first year. By the time of my second tour, we had at least a dozen people because the responsibilities of the post had burgeoned.

*Q: It strikes me that you were rather far distant from any sources of logistical support in getting that consulate established.*

HART: It wasn't all that difficult to get it established. We had mail service via Bahrain, where, as I said, the pouch service brought in the necessary things including some very simple cryptographic equipment. We had to get a safe shipped in by sea. That seems to have arrived pretty early. I suppose by that time, in 1944, shipment by sea was getting to be somewhat more secure. In that year I came to Egypt via Central Africa. I came across northern Brazil, to my old post in Belém, down to Natal, across to Ascension Island, and then to the Gold Coast at Accra. I then flew across Central Africa north of the Congo area, through Nigeria, el-Fasher, Khartoum, and then up to Egypt. With a safe and some filing cabinets we were able to settle down to doing business. There was a long time when we didn't have any forms, then a bunch of forms arrived that didn't seem to have any relevance to our work [Laughter]. We had passports and we had to be able to issue passports, renew passports, etc.

I had an impression seal weighing about 5 pounds that stood about 6 inches off the desk -- I don't know if you remember those great big things where you pull the lever? I also carried a booklet of blank drafts on the Secretary of State with stubs just like an ordinary checkbook, but it was engraved nicely. I went to the only bank in Bahrain that I could find which was Eastern Bank Ltd., a British bank which conducted its accounting by ledgers as in the days of Charles Dickens. Penmanship counted. There was a nice manager who told me he would be glad to take my five-day sight drafts when I had properly made them out. So I used to take those drafts over and cash money -- rupee money for Bahrain since the Indian rupee notes circulated there, and old Saudi coins on the other side. Then I had to make up all the accounts every month. They had to come out to the last para and gersh. That was difficult. Discrepancies, no matter how small, were not tolerated and they had to be resolved right down to the last fraction, in currencies not on the decimal system.

The subdivision of a Saudi riyal was a gersh and there were 11 official non-circulating Saudi gersh to a Saudi riyal. There were also 22 unofficial but circulating gersh, and you used the unofficial gersh for accounting. Then on the other side, there were subdivisions of a rupee called paras, which were something like eight or twelve to a single rupee. This created so many problems of arithmetic that I literally spent a third of all my time getting those petty accounts straight. It was a ridiculous waste of time and effort, but that's what our State Department

accountants demanded.

There were some interesting aspects to the job. I got to know Bahrain and the British India service in charge of Bahrain's foreign relations. I also got to know something of the eastern part of Saudi Arabia and its British-protected neighborhood. My consular jurisdiction extended informally from Bahrain down through Qatar to the Trucial Coast and to Muscat, Oman. One of the interesting things that developed was travel to those areas to get to know them and to meet the few Americans who lived there, most of whom were missionary teachers. There was a good opportunity to visit Oman when a U.S. military mission came through in 1946 to sell U.S. surplus army equipment that had been left in Masírah Island and in Salálah, Oman. We had a C-47 at our disposal and we flew into Matrah. After calling on the Sultan, Said bin Taimur, and making our business proposition to him, he put some of his ministers on board our plane and we flew together to Masírah Island to look over the equipment. We then flew down to Salálah to look over the equipment there. I guess we sold it for something like ten cents on the dollar.

*Q: I didn't realize we had actually introduced military equipment into Salálah.*

HART: These were stand-by bases, needed in the propeller age of short-range planes. There were gravel-strip airports with a wind sock and not much else, except some vehicles and drums of aviation gas and lubricants. On Masírah, for example, they had to have distillation equipment because there was no water on the island. They had a number of jeeps and a few trucks, Dodge Weapon Carriers, and various other vehicles such as generators, desalination kits, trucks, and that sort of thing. We had a small contingent of people there who were very glad to get out. The same was true of Salálah which was a somewhat more pleasant place but still extremely isolated. We had just a few things. These were British bases on which we had tenancy rights as allies. Those were being turned over, of course, to the Sultan.

It was an interesting job because it involved quite a panorama of little-known corners of the Arab world.

I was called home for the San Francisco Founding Conference of the United Nations in April of 1945. I then went back to Dhahran at the close of the conference.

*Q: You were recalled because of the Saudi presence in San Francisco?*

HART: Yes. Warren Kelchner was in charge of international conferences and he had the duty of doing a lot of the housekeeping work of setting up this conference, making all the arrangements, managing tickets to sessions, etc. There were protocol problems. When it came time to the signing of the charter, I stood next to Faisal, later Crown Prince -- he wasn't a crown prince then, he was second prince and Foreign Minister -- when he signed the Charter. Saud was not there. Although Faisal was titular head of the Foreign Ministry, most of the daily work was left to Sheikh Yussuf Yassin. I got to know Faisal a little bit at that time. Prince Khalid bin Abd al-Aziz was with him, and much later succeeded Faisal as king.

*Q: As you look back on that period of opening the consulate, what stands out most in your mind, other than the incredible heat?*

HART: You get used to the heat. We were better off than they were in Jeddah. In Jeddah we had at the start, no air conditioning at all for general use. There were two units going in the entire establishment. For all intents and purposes, none of the other units arrived in operable condition. They were broken from rough handling. We lived without air conditioning but we did have circular ceiling fans which we kept going all the time, even at night. That is what gave me my pulmonary problem because I had it going full blast over my bed every night in order to keep the mosquitos off. During the day, if I were in bed sick -- as I was for a while -- I had to keep it going during the day to keep the flies off. There were no screens either, you know. They had very few utilities.

Over in ARAMCO, these houses in a simple way were air conditioned. They had what they called "desert air conditioning." I think you know what I mean by that -- water evaporation systems. That technique was available if you had electric power and you had a few people who knew how to put it all together. In ARAMCO they did. We were actually more comfortable over there than they were on the other side at this early period. Later on that changed, but ARAMCO kept its workers comfortable if it could because their daytime work was right out there in the hot, blazing sun. To be able to retreat into a trailer which was air conditioned desert-style was a great relief. We would encounter these trailers, for example, out in Abqaiq where, at that time, there was no camp to speak of, just trailers on dunes where ARAMCO was doing seismology testing. Those fellows would come in from a day's work and they could go into an air conditioned trailer, even though it was pretty crowded, sit down, and have a bottle of beer. In those days they could get that stuff in.

I would say that the most interesting recollections I have were of my trips in the desert. One duty brought me much travel alone. We had an American group that had come at the king's request to develop an experimental farm at Al Kharj fifty miles south of Riyadh in the desert. There was a large supply of spring water there as a result of geological idiosyncrasies, two very large sinkholes of open and deep water, with pumps. The King wanted to bring that water to some land nearby and see what could be done for crops for his household and family. It was to be an experimental and demonstration farm. We had three dirt farmers with college graduate degrees in agriculture from Skull Valley, Arizona, David Rogers (leader), Carl Quast and Rahleigh Sanderson, plus a guy named Ernie Chambers who was a good mechanic. He kept the machinery going. The people who briefed them in Washington had no idea what the conditions were going to be like. They told them to just rent rooms in a hotel and submit vouchers. [Laughter] If you had a mud hut to shelter yourself in Al Kharj, you were doing very well. There was very little there. They developed a string of mud huts with desert air conditioning, contrived when they obtained electric power from a transportable generator.

They did their work. They subjugated and planted the terrain, brought in the water from the deep pits, and they grew some very fine vegetables. Then the locusts came and destroyed the whole thing all at once -- the hoppers, millions and jillions of them. They had to start all over. We had short-wave radio contact via ARAMCO.

I used to drive out every two or three weeks with mail to see how they were getting on, and give them a chance to relieve their isolation and blow off steam. I usually made this trip alone in a

weapons carrier, the desert track of some 300 miles included Hofuf (about 100 miles from Dhahran), the Dahna pink sand dune belt and Wasi'a, on the plateau beyond. At each stop there was fuel, water and radio contact. Often I would encounter, standing beside the desert track, a solitary bedouin, holding in his hands an empty wooden bowl. He would not utter a word, nor make a gesture, nor even look in my direction, rather, he would gaze at the route, eyes down cast. I would stop, dismount, take a jerry can, and fill his bowl. Still in silence, he would nod his appreciation and move off slowly, holding the bowl so as not to lose a drop, and disappear behind a dune where I could assume his tent, with family, awaited him.

Accompanying this group, but not a part of it, was Dr. Glen F. Brown of the U.S. Geological Survey who had been sent out just a few weeks after I arrived in Dhahran. He stayed with that team, but his work was to scout geology for Wrather, the head of the USGS. Glen and I have since been lifetime friends. We have special memories in common.

You asked me what stands out -- those trips into the desert were interesting. They required overnight in Hofuf, usually at the guest house of Sheikh Abd Allah Al Suleyman, Minister of Finance. There were certain stakes put up by ARAMCO in the sand, also shields of painted metal on long poles, to show us the way. You just followed these signs and the much-used tracks. When you got into the soft sands, it was a little bit more tricky. We had to cross 30 miles of the Ad Dahná to get out onto the rocky plain on the other side. That and these trips into the lower Gulf were really very fascinating and I had a very good time.

The British didn't like having me there officially. They were very suspicious that we were going to take over their last bastions of important income. Oil had been found in Bahrain and Qatar. Oil was being prospected in the Trucial Coast and Oman. The boundaries of these areas with Saudi Arabia were far from settled, but the ARAMCO presence was unsettling.

I was rebuffed, at first in a request to the political agent in Bahrain, for permission to travel to the Trucial Coast. He was Thomas Hickinbotham, later knighted. I had to report back to Washington that I had been told by his aide that he didn't see any reason for me to have business in the area, there being no Americans there. The Department took it up with London. London's India Office gave him positive instructions and he sent me a note saying that perhaps I'd like to accompany him on a trip he was going to have to make down to the Trucial Coast and to bring along a 12-gauge shotgun and some ammunition. I did and we had a very pleasant journey, most instructive to me.

I saw how he handled some of these sheikhs of Trucial Coast. One of them, the ruler of Ajman, was accused and judged to have committed piracy against his neighbor, the ruler of Umm al-Qaiwain. The latter's sailing dhow, carrying cargo, had been beached in a storm on Ajman shore, where the ruler had just taken everything that was on board. Hickinbotham had to judge that case and he did it right in front of me. He just told the Sheikh off, in Arabic, insisting he must restore the cargo and vessel. Both Sheikhdoms were desperately poor.

Ras al Khaymah was little but a ruined fort. In a later period when Jane and I came back, I completed trips to still other sheikhdoms and we came to know Muscat quite well. It was a

fascinating period, on the threshold of great transformation. Oil income had not yet arrived.

*Q: In a few years that sort of thing was no longer possible. It had changed entirely.*

HART: I did get back in the 1970s. There was a transformation that was almost unbelievable. Outside the cities it was the same old desert. When I first saw Abu Dhabi in 1949, there were jillions of flies but mighty few people, no sanitation, and no public utilities of any kind. As you know, in the space of just 30 years it was totally changed. I must say that, fascinating though it is to see, I enjoyed the old scenes the most. The people were so hospitable and nice and they had time to pass in conversation. They don't have time for you anymore. They are all busy making money. You'd have to find an old timer to sit and talk with, in order to find out what's really going on in the background of tribal affairs. But we have diplomatic missions there and I find that those who have served in them come back very stimulated to learn more about the Arabs and their way of life.

*Q: You returned to the Department in 1946 after opening the consulate.*

HART: Yes, in late 1946 at just about Christmas.

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HART: We were married in early 1949. While we were still engaged, she asked me, "Where do you think we'll go?"

I said, "I don't know, but it won't be to Saudi Arabia because I never heard of anybody going back there."

Sure enough, that's where I was assigned, right back to Dhahran because they had upgraded the consulate to consulate general and had some strategic matters very much in mind for the post. It was the kind of a call you couldn't refuse. I was basically glad to go, but it is not an easy place for a woman, although supplies, housing and community living were better than on my first assignment.

*Q: The consulate general housing was completed during that period.*

HART: Not really. We struck it about midway between what it was in this very primitive period toward the end of World War II and what it later became. It was being transformed even while we were there.

*Q: The famous Orris Page?*

HART: Yes. I was talking about ARAMCO housing because Jane and I were the last U.S. official team to live in ARAMCO. We had a duplex which was not a very comfortable place but Jane made it as comfortable as she could. We had our first child there and we really had some good times in spite of certain deficiencies in the house.

In the meantime, Orris Page had come out of Tompkins Construction here in Washington to manage the planning and the building of a consulate compound. I have to back up a little bit.

While I was in Washington working for Foreign Service Planning, I was twice detached by Fritz Larkin to go out to Saudi Arabia to make sure we had property on which we could build an embassy and consulate compound. A negotiation had taken place before I went that established the principle that we would have 25 years of rent-free use of any space that was agreed upon for both the embassy, as it was now going to be called, and the consulate compounds. We had to pick sites and to agree on the rate at which we would pay rent after the 25 years. So I had my instructions from Larkin's office and I was sent out twice -- once in the summer of 1947.

I spent most of the summer in Jeddah. We had a much larger staff in Jeddah at that time, some very nice people and the foreign community had grown. I picked an empty area on the shore that I thought was most suitable, called Ru'ays. It was on Saudi government land and encompassed a very primitive little golf course put there privately by the foreign community. There were no greens, there was not even grading or sifting of the fossilized coral. Nevertheless, we had a nine-hole course with poles and rags to mark the holes. I felt that this might do because there was a project to bring water from the Wadi Fatima for the Beni Harb tribe to water their flocks of sheep. Further, the location was upwind and well out of the city, which would grow in that direction. So I recommended the site to FBO.

Negotiating about the rent that we would have to pay at the end of 25 years proved to be a complicated business because the Saudi ministers wanted a lot higher rate than we were willing to pay. I had been told I could go as high as two per cent of the original cost of construction, not the replacement cost. Sheikh Yussuf Yassin, Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs, and others wanted ten per cent and so did Sheikh Abdullah al Suliman, the Minister of Finance. For awhile we were stuck.

Reeves Childs who was the U.S. Minister Plenipotentiary and who later became Ambassador didn't help much. Without authorization, he tried to split the difference to make it five per cent. The Saudis seemed ready to agree. This made FBO mad and they made clear their disapproval of his intervention. Keeping the Ambassador informed, I now asked for permission to call on His Majesty, the King. I had met him in Riyadh before in 1946 during the time that the Dhahran airfield was being built. Immediately I received agreement that I could see the king. He was over in Hufuf, main city of the Eastern Provinces, taking the waters. He even sent a C-47 for me as I was in Dhahran at this time. I went to see him and took along an interpreter. To my surprise, I found Sheikh Abdullah al Suleiman there and we met at his house. The king asked, "Now what is this trouble? We shouldn't have any difficulties between us. We're friends."

I agreed we were friends, but explained that the Saudi government was asking an exorbitant future rent for property now vacant.

He said, "You know, you can't really own property in Saudi Arabia because we have a very old law. It goes back to the time of the Turks. You can rent it but you can't own it. How much do you think you should pay?"



I said, "Your Majesty, I don't think we should pay anything. It's a piece of empty desert."

There was dead silence. I could see he wasn't going to go for it, so I said, "I am, however, authorized to go as high as two per cent of the cost of construction."

He turned and said, "Abdullah, that's reasonable."

Abdullah looked at me and said, "I'm sorry you came here." [Laughter]

The result of it was that Fritz Larkin brought me out the next year (1948) to nail down the sites for the Jeddah embassy and the Dhahran consulate. I had selected for Dhahran a few acres on the Jebel (hill) in the concession area, well below the ARAMCO camp, breezy and overlooking the Gulf. Ground water had been tapped by ARAMCO. However ARAMCO didn't like giving us this site. They wanted to keep it reserved for their own expansion. They used all kinds of persuasion to try to get us to go down to Dammam, the "city of the future".

Dammam was a sinkhole in those days -- on the sea, smelly, hot, very humid, no view, no breeze, isolated. Later, of course, it became quite a city, but in the 1940's it was not attractive at all. Being up on the Jebel you would be near the American community we were to serve, had proximity to the new U.S.-built airport. Fritz Larkin then had a real tantrum with ARAMCO's management, which broke down and reluctantly agreed to relinquish the site. It was not a very pleasant encounter, but when it was over and the agreement made in principle, they sent around Tom Barger to help us mark it out. Of course, Tom was just the salt of the earth, delightful in every way. Fritz Larkin melted and asked me why ARAMCO had not used him as negotiator in the first place. When Jane and I came back in 1949, construction was already advanced on that site.

I think I should straighten out the chronology. I was detailed out from my job in Washington with the Division of Foreign Service Planning and in the summer of 1947 to negotiate (eventually with King Abd al-Aziz) on the rental rate, and to pick sites for our embassy and consulate. I accompanied Fritz Larkin to firm up the choice of sites in 1948. The return with my wife was in June of 1949.

We arrived there in the mid-afternoon and it was extremely hot. I'll never forget it because Colonel Richard J. O'Keefe, USAF, in command of the airfield at Dhahran, had ordered out a welcome guard. It was flattering as I was just a consul general. The post had been upgraded for policy reasons and O'Keefe was about to be promoted to Brigadier General. He wanted to make a show out of the all round upgrading. However, it was terribly hot and I felt very guilty towards those men who were standing at attention all that time.

*Q: What season of the year was it?*

HART: It was in June. It was about three o'clock in the afternoon, at the very height of the heat. Later on we had tested the radiation temperature from the tarmac at about that time of day and it was 154 degrees. When we got out of that plane it was like walking into an oven. We walked up and down the line as directed the honor. I thought to myself as we were doing this, "I'll bet every

one of those soldiers will hate our guts for what was done to them." I never saw any sign of it afterwards. They were all very nice fellows, but they were certainly putting up with a lot to go on dress parade at three o'clock in an afternoon of June.

We were also met by the staff of the consulate general. They were housed in Quonset huts on the base because there were not enough permanent facilities to accommodate them. The USAF expansion and upgrading of Dhahran airfield involved taking over all of the stone buildings that had been built back in 1946 and which had been idle for most of the time since. They were now being used -- practically every inch, by O'Keefe's command.

Our people had an office in a Quonset hut on the base and we called it the "Quonsulate." They also lived in Quonset huts. They were good sports and were able to get properly fed, had access to movies and other entertainment on the base. They had some air conditioning -- those Quonsets were equipped with mobile window units. However, the situation was crowded and spartan. It was an effective operating office, but called for teamwork and good nature.

The consulate general compound was under construction and proceeding very slowly and not very efficiently. Quarried limestone (from a hill east of the airport) was being used for buildings which we could see might be in full use after another year or two. Jane and I were allocated space in ARAMCO and we were the last U.S. officials to live in ARAMCO's housing. That was an arrangement to last only until our own quarters were ready. As it developed, they were not quite ready some two years later when we left, although the rest of the staff had moved in and the "Quonsulate" had disappeared.

*Q: What were the principal and substantive developments during your second tour in Dhahran?*

HART: There was a considerable focus on Dhahran by our military as an important staging place for propeller-driven aircraft. The containment policy of President Truman was in force. We arrived in 1949, and as you remember, a year later in June of 1950 the Korean War broke out. Even before it broke out, the mood in the United States Government was tense and the military were doing an awful lot of planning pursuant to the Soviet takeover of Eastern Europe, the Soviet threat to Iran, the threat to Turkey, etc., all the history which you know. The result was an upgrading of Dhahran airfield, an identification of that field in our strategic planning. The old king was still alive, Abd al-Aziz, and he didn't mind a bit this close identification with the United States. As long as he was alive, it meant to him an ultimate security for his kingdom. He, his family and his subordinates all reflected a desire to have a close relationship with the United States, and at that particular juncture they were not excessively worried about Arab opinion in neighboring countries. That came later.

To give you an idea of his attitude, Richard J. O'Keefe -- whom I mentioned earlier -- was a colonel and promoted to be brigadier in the Air Force. The king had apparently taken a shine to him and had told him, "Look, I want you to be my commander at Dhahran airfield as well as commander for the U.S. You will be my man as well as Washington's. You represent me." O'Keefe wired his headquarters and the State Department backed up acceptance of his dual role.

Well there weren't any troops at that time to be in command of, as far as the Saudis were

concerned, but there would be a handful of people around him who would represent the Arab interest. O'Keefe wore two hats, so to speak. This was an unusual situation and I encountered a reflection of it later in another context with his son, when his son became king -- King Saud. O'Keefe was a hard-working commander, not very popular with his people in some ways because of his rather close adherence to the rule book and his sensitivities. He was a good figure to have there at the time because he was effective and he got along very well with King Abd al-Aziz.

We made trips together to see the king on airbase matters. My going to see the king had to be cleared with the embassy in Jeddah, as I was not an emissary to the king. These were working visits to accomplish some problem. O'Keefe would ask that I would go along with him.

*Q: Who was our ambassador in Jeddah at that point?*

HART: When we first arrived, it was Reeves Childs. Within a year or less -- I've forgotten just when -- he was made Ambassador to Ethiopia. He was replaced by Raymond A. Hare. It fell on Ray Hare to negotiate with Sheikh Yussuf Yassin, the Acting Foreign Minister -- he was actually titular Deputy Foreign Minister but he was doing most of the work as far as the foreign ministry was concerned -- to negotiate a status of forces agreement called the Dhahran Airfield Agreement. The Dhahran Airfield Agreement set out the privileges and responsibilities of the United States in connection with the field and it took quite a long bit of negotiating. To get the story on that you really ought to talk to Ray Hare because he would remember it as you trigger things in his memory which are very interesting indeed. Sitting in Dhahran I was reading the traffic as it went through -- that is, his reports came to me for information because it concerned our immediate area. In any event, while they were exacting and difficult negotiations, basically the motivation on both sides was, "Let's get it done."

They got it done and we had a very good agreement built on a five-year period near the end of which one-year notice could be given to renew or to revise or to annul this arrangement. It carried on actually for many years. In fact, I'm not up to date, but I think it is still in effect in most of its basic aspects although I don't know the details. It may well have been revised, not so much by formal agreement as by mutual tacit consent. Negotiating agreement of that kind -- as I was to find later -- involved almost as much trouble with Pentagon lawyers as with the opposite party that you're negotiating with.

My mandate in Dhahran also involved other responsibilities. I was head of what was known as the Dhahran Liaison Group. That was for contingency evacuation planning of Americans in case of war with the USSR. The Dhahran group area, which had its focus right on my desk, included not only the Arabian peninsula but also Iran, Pakistan -- which was newly established -- India, Sri Lanka, and Afghanistan. In 1950 I had to travel to the different countries of the Dhahran Liaison Group area to ensure that their evacuation planning was coordinated and brought up to date. I made that swing with the deputy commander of the base, Lt. Colonel Curt Frisbie, in military aircraft.

For purposes of reconnaissance and updating my knowledge of the place, I also visited the Trucial Coast, Qatar, and Bahrain. Bahrain I visited fairly often. Over there was Colonel Sir

Geoffrey Prior, relocated from Bushehr to Bahrain as political resident of the Gulf, a position which was then taken over by Sir Rupert Hay when Sir Geoffrey retired. These were men out of the old British India army and political service because, even though India had become independent by this time and Pakistan was established and independent, the personnel in the Foreign Office were not as acquainted with this area as were those of the India Office. Britain gave certain of these former political agents of the India Service contracts with the Foreign Office for periods of two or three years. Instead of immediate retirement, they would take those contracts and work in the same positions as before but not with the same duties. Prior to independence, political agents in the Gulf, serving under their political residents, and thus in turn serving under the British government of India, were enforcers of old treaties with Gulf rulers. They were keepers of the peace but also judges in the event of a clash between one Arab Gulf state or between a Gulf state and any foreigner.

I found examples of that during my early career and how they behaved in these situations. I attended court hearings. I attended a session with Thomas Hickinbotham, political agent for Bahrain, who later became Governor of Aden. He sorted out disputes over what looked like an act of piracy by Ajman against Umm al Qaiwain, one of whose vessels in a storm, had been beached on the shore that belonged to Ajman and whose ruler had seized the vessel and all its cargo. He was forced to give it up by Sir Thomas since British treaties with the Gulf rulers required that all foreign relations of any of these sheikhdoms, even with a neighboring sheikhdom, were to be handled by the political agents. Since independence of the Gulf rulers (Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and the Trucial Coast -- now the United Arab Emirates) British treaty relations no longer include these old capitulations, nor any magistrate functions whatsoever. British envoys became diplomats and not all of them settled into that new role very easily.

Rupert Hay was a very broad-minded man and very able. We took to each other and had a good relationship. I visited him with Jane as his house guests in Bahrain and he returned the favor in Dhahran with his wife, Sybil, and stayed with us for a while.

*Q: Had the British at that point begun their later practice of assigning as deputies to the political resident of the Gulf people of the foreign office?*

HART: Yes. But the men that I'm talking about are the old India Office men who were political agents under a political resident, etc. Others I think were pretty junior. We got to know Patrick Stobart pretty well who was a junior political officer on the Trucial Coast. He was a Foreign Office man under the political agent in Bahrain, and was in charge of immediate external relationships of the various Trucial sheikhdoms and their inter-relationships. Jane and I got to know him in Bahrain. I visited him in the Trucial Coast from an American warship on a courtesy visit. He came on board and I had to be accompanied by him when we called on the sheikh of Abu Dhabi, who was Sheikh Shakhbut bin Sultan. He was a small, amiable chap whom we entertained at dinner aboard and showed him a movie which I had to try to explain to him in my weak Arabic. We then visited him on shore.

Abu Dhabi at that time didn't have a single road. It had no public utilities of any description and it had no pier. Conditions under which people lived were absolutely miserable. The sheikh's quarters were a two or three-storied building made of local faroush, the sun-dried mud that is cut

and raised from the tidal bottom along the shallow east coast of the Arabian Peninsula. You are aware that this salty mud consolidates into a crust under the shallow warm water and hardens after a while. You can cut out slabs of it of any size you want and you can raise it to make a whole wall section out of it. Houses and buildings were built that way in the Gulf generally and on the Saudi east coast. In fact, the only coastal Arab buildings other than old forts, were built out of that material when I first went to the area. Cheaper houses were barrastees made of palm fronds woven together. Such was the entire village of Al Qatif and the smaller nearby villages of Dammam and al-Khobar. Al Qatif was the largest coastal community. Down in the Lower Gulf they used much the same type of construction but the styling was different. They built large wind-towers above the sitting room (majlis) to trap breezes from any direction.

*Q: In effect, you in the consulate general had to have relations with two U.S. military commands -- the Air Force in Dhahran airfield and the U.S. Navy in the form of Comideastfor in Bahrain.*

HART: Yes. I visited Bahrain quite a lot, partly for that reason. I believe that our pouch service by this time came directly into Dhahran and didn't have to go through Bahrain as it had on my first assignment in that area. We had good radio communications between Dhahran airfield and the Navy headquarters in Bahrain. It was reasonably good so that we could get messages back and forth. For example, if an American ship was coming in and I wanted to go aboard or there was some reason to consult with the head of Comideastfor in Bahrain rather than in Dhahran (where he could come any time he wanted to), we would arrange those things. Also we would arrange a cruise on board an American Navy ship for good-will purposes to visit some of the sheikhdoms. I mentioned our visit to Abu Dhabi. We also went to Muscat. Jane flew in by an Army plane to Beit al-Fallaj, just outside of Mutrah. I went in by ship. You couldn't carry a lady passenger on a U.S. Navy ship. So I went back on the ship and she flew back to Dhahran. It was a very fascinating experience for her as it was for me. I had been there before and things hadn't changed a great deal on the ground because Sultan Said bin Taimur was still the Sultan and continued to be through my period out there -- the ruler of Muscat and Oman. He gave us a very courteous reception. It was just a good-will visit.

*Q: Was he sociable and welcoming?*

HART: He was welcoming and very courteous. He spoke impeccable English. He had been educated in the College of Princes in Ajmer, India. He wore on his head a turban which looked to me rather Indian -- rather brightly colored and a valuable piece of fabric. His dress, otherwise, was strictly Arab. He wore a thobe and a mislah, like any Arab of the Arabian Peninsula. I always found this symbolic of the man. His outlook was much more oriented toward the Arabian Sea and India than it was toward the Arabian Peninsula. His body was Arab-African. He had a mixture of African blood in him. Among his forebears had been Said bin Sultan, of the mid-1800s, who had been a potentate in that whole region. His merchant fleet was the largest in the Indian Ocean. His political control extended all the way down the African coast to Zanzibar -- in other words, to the Equatorial area. He was known as the Sultan of Oman and Zanzibar.

*Q: Isn't Socotra in that as well?*

HART: Socotra was, as I recall it, definitely in it and so was -- at least in some kind of relation of

suzerainty -- the whole south coast down to Aden and around. Not up into the Red Sea particularly, but around the bend and across to Africa and then on south.

*Q: I asked if he was welcoming because he did have a reputation of being very in-grown, reclusive, absent from the modern world.*

HART: He was absent from it by design. He was by no means absent from it in his education or in his culture. He loved to go to England and did so about once a year or so. When transportation improved, I guess he went every year. He was very pro-British, although he was by no means under British protection.

This was something I had a little trouble with a lot of our people in Washington to get them to understand that this was a sovereign state in British eyes. They gave a 21-gun salute whenever they made a visit to Muscat. The Sultan was not obliged to accept a British advisor. He elected to accept a British foreign minister who was simply his messenger boy for anything he wanted to do. He ran his own foreign affairs, such as they were. There weren't very many. He didn't have any relationships he did not wish to cultivate. He wanted to be left alone. He was obviously afraid of modernization and did absolutely nothing that I could ever identify to develop his country. At the time I'm talking about he didn't yet have oil, nor any oil income. So he was pretty poor and you couldn't blame him for not doing much because there wasn't much to do with. But he was definitely insular. His relationships were mainly with Great Britain, and then as we developed a presence, with the United States. He didn't have any interest in a relationship with his big neighbor, Saudi Arabia, and for that matter he didn't show much interest in a relationship with Trucial sheikhs or any of the Gulf rulers.

He also had a British officer seconded to him in charge of his Muscat levies. They were a small group of Baluchis who constituted his little defense force and that was all there was.

*Q: Was his son anywhere in evidence?*

HART: Not at all. I never even heard about him. He listed the children he had -- he had a large family -- but I didn't get to meet them.

*Q: Did he seem to be aware that his country had had a very early treaty with the United States?*

HART: Yes. At the very first meeting I had with him, I reminded him about the visit of Edmond Roberts in 1833. Yes, he knew all about that. He was a man who was well informed about the history of his country and about its foreign relationships.

I also found out from him a lot about his boundary claims. In 1949 ARAMCO, getting its go-ahead from the Saudi government, began to spread out its exploration activity in the Gulf and down toward the lower Gulf on the mainland. This was on advice from no less a person than Dr. Manley O. Hudson, a renowned professor of International Law at Harvard University whom I had met many years before and who, on retirement became an international law consultant. King Abdul Aziz said, "Yes, these islands are mine."

He wanted a map, etc. He also said, "Down here in the Trucial Coast in Buraymi we have a position."

This was prompted by some of his advisors and caused a lot of trouble. That's another story -- a long one.

When I was visiting with Said Bin Taimur he pointed out on the map where his Buraymi position was. He had an agent -- a wakil -- in one part of the Buraymi complex. There were really three parties to what developed into the ultimate dispute between Saudi Arabia, the Trucial sheikhdom of Abu Dhabi and Muscat.

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*Q: Do continue with what became the Buraymi dispute, ARAMCO's role, and your role.*

HART: ARAMCO had the responsibility under its concession of developing oil resources wherever they were within the kingdom in the concession (eastern) region. That was a very large region. Their concession area went deep inland and went down the whole length of the coast. The problem for ARAMCO -- which you can't blame ARAMCO for really -- was that they didn't know where the boundary was on the eastern coast. In fact, nobody seemed to know exactly but the British had one point of view and the Saudis had another. Of course, the king was persuaded at that time by his advisors to extend the claims as far as he thought he could. Buraymi became important because it was close to a structure that ARAMCO's geologist believed could be oil-bearing near a mountain called Jebel Hafit. Buraymi was a cluster of rather miserable little villages in the sands, carrying several names, about 110 miles inland from Abu Dhabi town, in the general direction of Oman.

The thought that the Saudis had was that, at one or more times in the past, Zakat (religious taxes) had been collected by Saudi officials from the inhabitants of the Buraymi hamlet called Al'Ayn. This hamlet (today a real city) is part of the Buraymi complex, but is not the Buraymi village per se. There is a single village called al Buraymi, and the general expression used for the whole cluster is al-Buraymi.

Based upon that thesis the Saudi Government asserted that: "Buraymi is Saudi, it should be and we claim it." They really meant al-Ayn.

I was fairly close at that time to Amir Saud Bin Jiluwi, viceroy of the Eastern Province. I think I described in an earlier tape our relationship. When I came back on the second hitch to Dhahran, Bin Jaluwi was very pleased that anybody would come back to a place that was pretty raw and not very comfortable to live in and not very attractive, for a second tour of duty. He said, "You must be a friend."

He was very cordial to me, and invited me to bring my bride out to Hufuf and spend some days visiting out there. I did -- that's another story. In any case, one day I spoke to him and said, "By the way, I've been going around the area. Does Saudi Arabia have any jurisdiction in Buraymi?"

He said simply and emphatically: "No."

I knew that he was closer than anybody in Riyadh to the background, probably better than the king. At least he knew it a lot better than Sheikh Yussuf Yassin who was a Syrian nationalist, expelled by the French from his homeland and who had come in many years before to the King's service. Specifically, he had said to ARAMCO, "Buraymi is ours."

I reported Bin Jaluwi's statement to the Department of State. I stood by it, of course, when consulted by ARAMCO. The discrepancy embarrassed ARAMCO and embarrassed, I think, the Saudis, but I never heard complaint from Bin Jalui that I had misquoted him. Years later when I was Director of Near East Affairs and Prince Faisal made a visit to Washington at the close of the Truman administration, he took me aside and said, "You are not with us on this problem of Buraymi."

I said, "No, I'm not, because I don't think it is correct."

Years later when I was being nominated as Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, I thought maybe this would turn the Saudis against me, but it didn't. As you know, al Buraymi ceased to become a serious question in the course of the 1960s because there were bigger questions that faced Faisal. He was not anti-British. However, was a hot issue when the old king died in 1953. Crown Prince Saud, his son, assumed the throne. Saud was not a well-educated man and didn't have as good judgement as his half-brother Faisal. He was very anti-British about Buraymi and tackled John Foster Dulles when Dulles made a visit out there in the early part of 1953. Saud invoked the Truman general pledge of support of 1950, contending that in this dispute the British were absolutely wrong and were claiming a piece of Saudi territory. He was saying that the U.S. must do something about this. He weighed in very heavily. Finally, Dulles became annoyed and said, "Are you asking us to declare war on our ally, Great Britain?"

That put Saud back on his heels a little, but the bitter dispute over this question lasted throughout the 1950's.

*Q: Wasn't it basically an underlying contest between the reach, respectively, of American versus British oil companies because Buraymi really decided how far inland they were into the peninsula British oil companies?*

HART: This was an oil rights dispute but to the British it was a lot more. They felt that they had retreated enough when they ceased to press for the old 1913 frontier line which they had drawn right down the central part of the Arabian Peninsula, through the empty quarter, or Rub al Khálí from north to south, and that everything to the east of that line was under British protection or in the British sphere of interest. They had retreated enough so that they claimed quite a slice of peninsula territory south of the khor al-Udayd, which was at the base of Qatar peninsula and ran inland south to include the oasis of Al Jiwa and then forked up toward Oman where it intersected the Omani line. These were negotiating lines that the British believed were based on tribal realities which gave allegiance to the sheikhs on the coast, the various sheikhs who were later called emirs.



As you may remember, the dispute heated up while I was Director of Near East Affairs. I assumed that desk in 1952 in Washington after I'd been at the National War College for a year. One of the hot items on our desks was al Buraymi and I talked a good deal with my British counterpart, Ronald Bailey, later Sir Ronald Bailey, who is a very agreeable and sensible fellow. One day I suggested, "Why don't you arbitrate this question?"

There was a period of no response to that, and finally he came in one day and said, "We've agreed to arbitrate."

I said, "I think that's fine."

So the arbitral board was set up -- it was an international one -- and it seemed to be going along all right until two things happened. One was that Sheikh (late Amir) Turki al-Utayshan, whom I knew, was sent in by the Saudis with a bag full of sovereigns to try to claim this territory of Al Ayn. He moved in with some men and British levees chased them out. Patrick Stobart had a hand in it as political officer for the Trucial Coast sheikhs.

*Q: What year is this?*

HART: I was back in Washington as Director of Near East Affairs in 1952. Just when this particular incident occurred, I'm fairly sure, that it occurred in 1949 or 1950. Later, the arbitration procedure began about 1953 or 1954 and seemed to be going along all right, when suddenly it was abruptly terminated by the British who announced that one of the members of the tribunal had been suborned by Saudi money. He had been bribed and the British had proof of it. I believe it was a Pakistani, but I'm not sure. The result was that the arbitration was scratched right there. The British fell back on the use of local force, if necessary, but only if necessary. They were very discreet about the use of force. They didn't overdo it. They didn't want to have real trouble anymore than was required to defend their boundaries of their protected sheikhs from threat of take-over.

The dispute over boundaries just rocked along over the years that followed. I learned later that the Jebel Hafit geologic structure turned out to be not as interesting after all as it once appeared. This made a difference in the atmosphere. In other words, nobody was crowding the question particularly, pushing hard on it. Also the dispute was complicated by the claims of the Sultan of Oman in the Buraymi area. For a while there was no real negotiation. The British did not abandon their role of protector of the frontiers and security of all these sheikhs by reason of the independence of India. Their special treaty relationships with the individual sheikhs continued. It wasn't until 1971 that these treaties were superseded by British recognition of the Trucial rulers as sovereign states. Buraymi, by that time, had ceased to be a very hot issue.

When I was ambassador in Saudi Arabia during the period 1961 to 1965, Buraymi was hardly mentioned. Faisal was so exercised about the Egyptian encroachments and the Russian moves into the area with their fishing fleets, which he said were all rigged for electronic surveillance and espionage, that he was glad to have the British around as friends. He wasn't pressing anything on Buraymi. By this time, of course, oil was beginning to move into the economic arteries of the sheikhdoms and things were beginning to change anyway so that the issue just

subsided the way things do in the Arab world. Instead of pressing it too hard, just let it die slowly.

I wish that I could give a more complete story of the diplomacy of the latter period, but I can testify that between 1961 and 1965 it was totally shelved and not pressed on the Saudi side. Whatever happened after that, maybe you would know.

*Q: Now in a sense it's resolved itself in favor of the non-Saudi position, and that Al Ayn is totally a part of Abu Dhabi and is the headquarters of the University of United Arab Emirates. This really ties it into it. I think that's the reason for that.*

HART: Obviously, the Saudi claim was rather shaky anyway and it was based upon some 19th century collection of the zakat. Rulers collected zakat where they could in those days, but it doesn't mean that you could consider it a boundary claim in the usual Western sense of the word.

*Q: I always had a feeling that it was ARAMCO's researchers who found most of those tax records.*

HART: No doubt about it. The research couldn't be done by the Saudis at that time. They had no means of doing it. ARAMCO was able to employ expert researchers and they did. Of course, the results of these researches were pegged down here and there -- this is a place where your documentation or our documentation shows that the Saudis have a claim and, therefore, if you want to put in a marker tablet on this little island -- there was one, I remember, in the Gulf, the name of which I can't remember now, but it was used as an illustration. A bronze tablet was put up there in Arabic and in English saying, "This is the island (we'll say) of Al Makta and it belongs to me, Abdul Aziz, King of Saudi Arabia and to my successors," or words to that effect. Along came the British a few days later and blew up the marker with a charge of dynamite and sent a picture of what they'd done to us.

Of course, they were very suspicious that the United States Government had some hand in backing the Saudis in this. It isn't true. We didn't back the Saudis. As I indicated, we tried to stay out of it and we even disagreed with them somewhat. We disagreed on Buraymi because of testimony of one of their own key people, but we really tried to stay out of the dispute.

It came up in bilateral conversations which I attended during the period 1953. After Dulles came in as Secretary of State, he had a visit from the foreign secretary from London who raised the question of Al Buraymi. I remembered he referred to the visit of the late Turki al-Utayshan as an illustration of high-handed action by the Saudis. They had to defend the interests of their people, their Gulf treaty partners. Dulles said, "Well I recognize that. We also have an interest in our relationship with the Saudis. I think this thing ought to be worked out peaceably by negotiations."

I went in before this meeting to brief Dulles about Al Buraymi. He hadn't the vaguest notion where Buraymi was so I had a large-scale map and showed him where the different villages were. I gave him a little historical background, and he sat there a chuckled over the whole thing. He thought it was very amusing, but it wasn't so amusing when he got in with the British foreign

minister because the later was pretty insistent.

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HART: I have left out one thing in this period that I should perhaps mention and that is Saudi Arabia's position during this period of the late 1950s. Starting back in the 1950s, King Abd al-Aziz, the founding father, died in 1953. As had been foreordained, Crown Prince Saud bin Abd al-Aziz took over. He was known to be a man of very little education and not particularly intelligent but a nice guy. He was good in tribal relations. Following in his father's footsteps, he married extensively by a rotational system to keep up the connections with all major tribes. His mental equipment wasn't very good. He just never understood anything complex. He oversimplified things and made the wrong judgments. He was spending money hand over fist and giving the country the image of gross extravagance and corruption. The word had gotten around through the Arab world and to Nasser in Cairo.

I remember when I was in Cairo in the mid 1950s that Saud and his party came through on their way to Washington to make an official visit to Eisenhower and to ask for aid and support. Saud was already afraid of Nasser. He saw him as a real threat to his position and to Saudi Arabia but he hadn't yet broken with him in any way. He came through to talk to Nasser before going to Washington. Nasser said in effect as I remember it, "You can do two things for us and we set a great deal of store in our relationship with you by whether you are able to do this. We want the Gulf of Aqaba closed to Israel's use. We want a decision made that makes it an Arab gulf. We want wheat from the United States and we need a lot of it. They've been hanging back on this."

George Wadsworth came through at the time. He played a round of golf at the Gazira Sporting Club. Saud apparently made his promise to do his best for what Nasser wanted and they went on to the United States he was given a very good reception and he gave in return a very lavish banquet which I didn't attend, since I had no business there, my responsibilities being in Cairo. Subsequently, Saud came back through Cairo, having won U.S. grant of a \$5 million much-needed civil airport building in Dhahran. From the time of U.S. Corps of Engineers construction of Dhahran Airfield, finished in 1946, there was a solidly built but small terminal building, deemed sufficient by the Corps.

Saud had made no progress on the Gulf of Aqaba with Dulles. It was a foregone conclusion that he wouldn't. It's an international waterway. As far as getting any wheat was concerned, he couldn't budge Eisenhower any more than we could from Cairo. Nasser therefore gave him a very cold reception and said, "We got our wheat from the Soviet Union. I'll send you pictures of it."

Nasser then turned his propaganda guns on Saudi Arabia. Ahmed Said, the famous, vitriolic broadcaster for "Voice of the Arabs," cut loose every day against Saudi Arabia and Saud's corrupt regime and its pro-Americanism, its anti-Arabism, its money fever, its spendthrift ways. He said, "After all, this oil belongs to the Arab world and not to Saudi Arabia and its king. Oil is for the Arabs and should not be under the full control of such a regime as this."

It was a declaration of political war. In Washington we could see this developing and we could

also see that Saud's was a very weak regime in Saudi Arabia. The Saudis came to believe that it was weak when Abdul Hamid Serraj held up a check in front of the crowd in Syria and said, "This is a million-dollar check. Everyone come here and look at it. It was drawn by Saud to kill Nasser."

The reaction in Saudi Arabia was the acute embarrassment of the regime. What could be called the College of Princes, sons of the late King Abd al-Aziz, is the supreme body and they apparently concluded: "We've had enough. This Saud has run us into the ground. He's ruined our reputation and our image in the Arab world. His wastefulness and bad judgment has created a dangerous situation. We've got to make a change and put Faisal into authority."

So they went to Saud and they threatened him. Mohammed bin Abd al-Aziz, a kind of chip off the old block, is said to have made the more potent threats. Very reluctantly Saud made Faisal, of whom he was very jealous, Prime Minister with real authority and Saud stood away. He was not to involve himself in financial matters and he was to let Faisal develop his own program for the use of oil revenues.

*Q: What year was this?*

HART: Late 1958. This action was taken and Faisal moved in on a situation where a budget for the country had never existed. Saud had let others handle the influx of oil money, which was now getting very large. Abd al-Aziz, his father, had handled the relatively modest income in gold sovereigns that had been ARAMCO's pre-1945 royalties. In other words, the old fashioned Arab-Bedouin way was used: that the coffer of money was under your chair or your cushion and you as guardian, gave the key to some trustee who would hand out money to you as you required for public purposes. This was because it was not the sovereign's money. The money belonged to the realm. The sovereign drew on it for what he needed and you gave it to people as needed. This was Saud's inherited philosophy. There was no budget. Nobody had ever heard of a thing called a budget.

Faisal, we estimated, found a situation in which 60% of all the oil company income was being spent on the royal family for whatever they wanted and for the hangers-on who were innumerable. A lot of it was being handled by one 'Id bin Salem, who was what the Arabs call a sa'is, a groom for the horses but he was actually head of the vehicle department. He was black and was totally loyal to King Saud and gave everybody all the money the king wanted given. On royal air trips he handed out bunches of \$100 bills to members of the household as they got off the plane in Europe or elsewhere. The king had also built palaces after palaces, at least two of which he had never occupied. One was near Medina and was never quite finished. I saw it years later. One was built down in Abha on a beautiful site. He never went there. He built a tremendous palace at Riyadh with fountains playing and he built a big one in Jeddah. There was also another which was more modest in Dammam. Money was just flowing around. He had authorized a road to be built from Medina north to the area of Mada'in Salih and beyond. It was given to Muhammad bin Ladin, an Arab contractor without prior engineering. He put it right down the middle of a wadi and it was washed out by the first sayl (torrent).

There was also a bin Ladin road project from Mecca to Taif up the steep mountains, a very

difficult project. That was started and went way over budget immediately. There was enormous wastage from this.

Faisal took all this over. He reduced the amount of royal take from oil income from something like 60% to about 14%, as we estimated. He put civilians in charge of ministries. These were people in whom he had confidence, but he kept very close track of their expenditures. He once showed me a piece of paper which he kept in the pocket of his thobe which showed every minister's budget. Every time he would meet them, and he would meet them often, he would say, "What have you done with this money? I want an accounting for your part of the budget."

He really had things moving in a good direction. Of course, all the hangers-on asked Saud, "We can't get any money. What is happening here? Aren't you the king?"

They started heckling him and making life miserable for him. He got more and more jealous, because Faisal was getting the plaudits of a wider and wider circle of people. Finally, in late 1960 around November a budget was prepared by Faisal to take effect in March. It was submitted to the king for his approval and he decided he would make this a test case. He rejected the budget. When Faisal heard that it had been rejected by his half-brother, Faisal got up and left the meeting and his position as Prime Minister.

He went out and took some members of his family and camped in the desert which is the way his father always did things. Saudis always like to camp in the desert. They love the desert. Faisal just went off there and stayed by himself and refused to have any further contact with his brother, the king. Messengers went out and people tried to get him to come back. He brusquely told him he would not under any circumstances come back unless the king changed his position totally. He realized he wouldn't and so said that he was not going to have anything more to do with him, that without authority he did not want the position of Prime Minister.

*Q: The last time we were talking about the strain and stress between King Saud and Prince Faisal, who was acting as prime minister at that point.*

HART: I think I should intervene at this point to say that Sheikh Hafiz Wahba, the Egyptian counselor to King Abdul Aziz (personal advisor for a great many years in Saudi Arabia) -- I believe he had long since become a Saudi citizen, subject to the king although he was an Egyptian-born diplomat -- told me the following. A year or so before the death of the king in 1953, the king took him with him for a drive from the Murabba' Palace -- the old citadel which is now kept more or less intact as a historical structure in the center of Riyadh but at that time was way out in the desert from the small community that was Riyadh. On this drive they hadn't gone very far before the king spotted a house being built with structural reinforcing rods, re-bars, and concrete. He said, "What is this?"

With some embarrassment, one of his men said, "Your son, Saud, is building this for his house."

King Abdul Aziz immediately demanded that the driver turn the car around and go back to the palace. He summoned his son, Saud, and said, "Is this true that you are building a house here?"

Saud confirmed that he was. The king then gave him a lecture right on the spot in front of Sheikh Hafiz. He said, "We are the people of the black tent. This is something you must never forget. Don't build a house like that. You will separate yourself from your people. Stop that nonsense. Live simply and the Kingdom will be better off."

Of course, the work stopped, but after the king died, Saud became one of the greatest builders of palaces that the whole Middle East has ever seen. These were palaces that he never even lived in. The king was disturbed by his son, Saud. He knew he wasn't as smart as Faisal and he knew that Faisal was very smart and very able and that he had admirable qualities in other directions that were recognized by the king. He summoned the two men -- this being somewhat later than the event I just described -- and Hafiz Wahba happened to be present when he summoned them. So Hafiz asked to be excused. The king, however, insisted that he remain and witness what was about to take place. The two princes arrived and the king said, "I demand that you, Faisal, give me your word of loyalty to your elder brother, Saud, as he becomes king. You must give him your loyalty and your support. Swear that to me."

He made Faisal say it seven times. Then he turned to Saud and said, "I demand that you recognize the position of your half-brother, Faisal, to be Crown Prince, and listen to him. Give him your personal loyalty and consideration in response to his."

He made him say it seven times. This was important in what happened later.

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HART: In the meantime, what had happened with respect to the Dhahran Airfield Agreement was simply that King Saud -- this being at the end of the year 1960 -- had been on the throne now for about eight years. He was feeling the heat of great criticism for his extravagances for his personal wandering away from strict Islamic rules of personal conduct such as drinking. But above all, the criticism was directed toward his extravagance and his splurging of oil money for personal aggrandizement rather than for the good of the country. It gave Cairo the ammunition it wanted to try to overthrow him and to place on that throne, if they could, someone who would be more or less obedient to Cairo's and Nasser's wishes. Nasser considered at that time that the Arab world was pretty weak and flabby and that he was the natural leader. He was going to be the leader. Ahmed Said, the broadcaster from Cairo who was full of vitriolic speech and who was feared in the Arab world but listened to, was fulminating against the Saud clan as unworthy to lead a nation with such resources, and that those resources belonged to the Arab world in general, etc.

The criticism had gone so far that King Saud was really in a panic. He decided to give notice on Dhahran Airfield to the United States simply to assert that he was master in his own house. So he did it and he gave one full year's notice which was in accordance with the basic Dhahran Airfield Agreement.

Q: *When did he take this action?*

HART: He took this action publicly in the beginning of 1961 before April. April 1961 was the

time when the year's notice had to be filed. Otherwise, as I recall it, at the beginning of April 1962 the agreement would automatically renew itself for five years.

I was back in Washington when all of this happened. We, of course, had discussions about it and I was taken over one day to meet President Kennedy after I had been named ambassador to Saudi Arabia. We briefly discussed the situation there but we didn't get into details or how we were going to handle it. We were just going to see what we could do. In the meantime, our official attitude as transmitted by our then-ambassador to the Saudi government was to accept the king's decision and we began plans to move personnel out. The Saudi response showed a great deal of concern that the United States should not leave precipitously. They wanted to talk about details. They really didn't want us to go but they could not disavow the king's public action. Having made it, they were rather panicky about what we would do, particularly when we showed a willingness to just get out. That wasn't really what they wanted.

At any rate, when I arrived with my wife, we didn't get down to business on this very quickly.

*Q: When was your arrival?*

HART: I arrived in July of 1961 right in the heat of the summer. The Under Secretary of State Chester Bowles had called a conference of ambassadors of Africa and the Middle East to meet with him in Nicosia, Cyprus. I first went and presented credentials, made calls and then turned right around and took a flight, with Jane, to Nicosia. Once this conference was over, which was really a conference to discuss our general policies for the benefit of Chester Bowles, I returned and we got into this airfield question fairly soon. I have to say first of all that, in the course of presenting credentials, the king was at Taif, up above Mecca in the mountains at an altitude of about 6,000 feet where people liked to go in the hot summer period because while the days were warm the nights were always very cool and pleasant. It was a summer station for him. He had a fairly sizable palace up there.

After I presented my credentials, I flew back to Jeddah and then made separately an appointment to return to Taif for the exclusive purpose of calling on Crown Prince Faisal, who had moved into his home, a rather beautiful period piece of old Hejazi architecture several stories high, which had been purchased by Faisal from the Al-Husseini family. This was the family of Sherif Hussein, the man who said he was king of the Hejaz back at the end of World War I and who had fought with King Abdul Aziz, had lost, had been exiled, and whose sons, Faisal and Abd Allah, were given the thrones of Iraq and Jordan, respectively, and whose great grandson is the present king of Jordan. In any event this is the Husseini household.

I called on Crown Prince Faisal in Taif. The only person whom he had asked to join us was Abdullah bin Abd al-Rahman, Faisal's paternal uncle, the brother of King Abd al-Aziz who had passed away in 1953. Faisal and I had a very pleasant conversation. We had known each other ever since the 1945 San Francisco conference which I believe I mentioned earlier, and also from a meeting that I had with King Abdul Aziz in which he introduced me to both Saud and Faisal in 1946. I had had rare contact with him in an official way and now I was going to see a lot of him. It was important to call on him, for he was a figure of great influence in the country and in the government, whenever he might want to exert that influence. He was in a position of retreat as a

result of what I have described. He never once, nor did I, mention the crisis that he had had with his brother. In fact, during all of the period that followed while I was ambassador, he never mentioned this crisis with his brother and I never mentioned it to him because that wouldn't have been wise. I learned what I could from other sources, but not from him. The Saud clan hold their cards very close to their chests. All of the members do, young and old. I heard from other sources that the king had come to call on Faisal at his house and Faisal had received him. However, he would not return the call. The standoff was very firm.

During the fall of 1961, things were relatively quiet. We proceeded with incipient preparations for the change that would come about in April of 1962. I am afraid I haven't got all the details in my mind. In general, the commander of Dhahran Airfield was also head of a tactical arm of the U.S. defense establishment. That would be phased out -- that role, that particular hat would be gone by April. With it would go a fair amount of equipment and it was important to decide which equipment would stay. We didn't, as I recall it, get into that question during the fall of 1961, I believe it came just a little later.

There was a Cabinet that the king had rebuilt, after Faisal walked out, naming as foreign minister a man who was the only non-member of the Saud family to hold that title. His name was Ibrahim Sawayel. He later became ambassador here in Washington. Sawayel was a nice man, a pleasant person and easy to talk with. We were on a very friendly and easy basis from the start. I don't think he really had a great deal of authority or influence, because real decisions were being made by the king among members of his family with whom he could get along, which weren't very many. I would say he made as few decisions as possible. Having done what he did, in the very important decision regarding his relations with the United States, he was anxious to make sure that the United States didn't just leave him alone, unprotected in a situation where there was an electric influence of Nasser over the whole Arab world. Anybody who stood up against Nasser was standing up, at that time, against the wave of Pan-Arab opinion which was very powerful. He would do so at his peril.

In the brief period of the fall of 1961 relations were friendly enough and we did what we were supposed to do in preparation to turn over Dhahran Airfield to the Saudi Government. We began to get visits by mediators who wanted to make sure we weren't just going to leave altogether.

The king fell ill in the late fall of 1961. I was informed that he was going to go to the United States and wanted to go to Boston to Peter Bent Brigham Hospital. It happened to be rather close to where I was brought up. I could visualize the situation better. As time came for him to leave, intensive efforts were made within the royal family and outer circles beyond it, to get an accommodation between Faisal and the king. The king was going to leave and Faisal had to step in and take his place. There was no one else really to do that properly. Public opinion would demand it. When I speak about public opinion in Saudi Arabia, it really exists but it is a little different than the way we see it in the West, but it is strong. Information moves very rapidly in this network. Even when they didn't have telegraph and telephone systems that worked, news traveled very fast and through immense distances. It is surprising.

Public opinion was strong for Faisal taking over.



The king never traveled modestly and alone. He always traveled with an enormous retinue. On the eve of his departure they were all down at Dhahran saying goodbye to him before he took the plane the next day. The usual Arab farewell, or greeting, is to kiss the king on both cheeks and even on the nose or the forehead. They were all doing it as he sat there in his room in the ARAMCO hospital. Faisal came, too. He did his duty like everybody else and left at once without saying a single word to the king. What had been arranged and what Faisal had accepted was something like the following. Faisal was to be in the king's place as a locum tenens, but only to manage the mechanics of the kingship without real authority to make any decisions of a consequence on his own. In fact he would not take decisions. He refused to act in any other capacity than locum tenens. This was not something which the wiser heads wanted but that was as much as he would give. Somebody had to sit in that position and receive visitors and recommend things for the king. The king did not, in other words, give up being king. It was not like a sick and absent President turning over things to the Vice President with full authority to make decisions. Not at all.

The king went off on his flight to Boston and was there for some weeks. I don't remember how long he was at the hospital. He took over an entire floor of Peter Bent Brigham, since he brought with him his harem and hangers-on. Id bin Salem, the ever-present handler of money, was there and I don't know how many others, but it was a very large retinue and it amazed the hospital staff and disturbed their routine. Saudis were coming and going constantly in elevators and it must have been very confusing. The king's people were extremely generous and open-handed to the hospital and I think they gave it a lot of money as gifts in addition to more than covering expenses. Id bin Salem, I assume, was paymaster.

*Q: Didn't President Kennedy go to Boston to call on the king?*

HART: No. President Kennedy and the king had never met. Of course, it was to be expected that they would. In fact, if they didn't, there would be something wrong. The President wanted to base his policies in the Arab world as U.S. backing of regimes serving their people in terms of education, progress and human rights. He was worried over a close identification of the U.S. with undemocratic, retrogressive regimes. King Saud's rule did not well advertise the desired image.

The question raised in the White House was when the king would be well enough and pay a call on the President. The king's position with his silly advisors was that, because he was a guest in the country and ill, the President should come and call on him. This got things off to a not very good start because the White House regarded this as absurd and a bad practice to start. They would find that others would demand the same thing.

For quite a while the quiet messages were going back and forth but with an increasing irritation on both sides when they couldn't resolve it. It was finally decided by the White House that President Kennedy would go and make a visit to his Palm Beach estate which was in the Kennedy family. I don't know that it was his personal place so much as a family complex similar but perhaps not as large as the one in Cape Cod. The king was to go down there, stay at a hotel and they would meet without starting a precedent in protocol which would be very difficult to follow with other people. The nonsense about it irritated both sides, I am sure, but particularly

President Kennedy.

The king did come down and they met. Actually when they got down there, the President called on him. He didn't insist that the king come to the place in Palm Beach. They met somewhere else where the king was staying. The aftermath of that which I heard was that President Kennedy was not at all impressed with King Saud. He did what was necessary and he invited him to come to dinner in Washington when they both got back up north. I think a definite time was proposed and the king's reply was, "In shah Allah," which was translated literally by whoever the translator was as, "If God wills." But this was carrying the implication to President Kennedy's ears that he might or he might not come.

We old hands know that in Saudi Arabia In shah Allah means, "Yes." You never do anything without saying that it is subject to God's will, because God governs every action and every circumstance. So when you say In shah Allah, it means, "Yes, I'll be there unless God prevents it." This was not correctly conveyed to President Kennedy, and he didn't take it very kindly.

Of course, Saud did show up and they did have a meal together as I recall it.

*Q: According to my records, that was on February 13, 1962.*

HART: Yes. He came back and I made a call on him. By this time I felt that it was time to really grapple with the question of Dhahran Airfield in certain essentials. I called on him with an interpreter, who was Isa Khalil Sabbagh, Public Affairs Counselor of our embassy. This was a delicate thing. The king received me alone in Riyadh. He didn't have anybody with him. It was just Isa, the king, and I.

I asked him, of course, how the trip had gone. He said, "Oh, fine." He was full of ebullience and obviously felt much better. He felt very good about his meeting with President Kennedy at this point. He seemed to be in such a high mood that I popped the question. I said, "We are, of course, following Your Majesty's wishes about Dhahran Airfield, but would you like to have a U.S. military training mission remain?"

He immediately replied that he would.

I said, "Some of your people are suggesting that it be limited to about 80, a small group. That might not be adequate for training and advice. Would you have any objection if more were necessary?"

No, he would have no objection at all.

I said, "Now with regard to the facilities on the field itself, we would like Your Majesty to consider whether or not we could continue to use the field for non-fighting transport aircraft as a turn-around facility with nose docks and repair facilities so that unarmed planes could get repairs and servicing there by Americans who would be there and who would double as instructors for your people in the handling of aircraft repairs and maintenance."

He said, "That's fine."

We gained what we wanted at that point in the essentials. That is, we were still going to have a presence at Dhahran Airfield for essential purposes. This had been worked out in Washington but we hadn't presented it to the king before. I was lucky enough to have the king there in that mood at that point and alone. I hadn't arranged that. We just took advantage of the opportunity on his immediate return and his feeling so well to pop this question and get a positive answer.

Subsequently, the Arabs were asking me, "Where are the notes on that meeting?" I said, "There aren't any, but this is what the king said."

The Saudi Foreign Ministry couldn't refute it because there was nobody there but thinking to testify. I had Isa with me and the Saudis liked and trusted him. I'm sure they consulted him as to details and he would give them to them. There was nothing there that would make any real qualification to the king's consent.

We began to feel a little better about Dhahran Airfield and so did the Saudis because they really did not want us to go. They simply had done what they did in a moment which they didn't themselves describe as panic, but it was basically political panic.

Then the question arose about the equipment that would remain and the equipment which would be removed by our forces as they pulled out of that particular responsibility of a tactical nature in the framework of free world defense. There was a lot of equipment there and very expensive equipment. In general, the principle seemed to be accepted that what was fastened into the ground or bolted into the concrete or otherwise made permanent should stay. What was light and readily removable would be divided into two categories, one of which would be what we basically needed in our defense establishment in other places. This would go, e.g. to NATO, Europe or to the Far East. A lot of things of considerable value would remain for the Saudis to use, with fair compensation. That's as much as I can remember at the moment. When it came to deciding these matters on the spot, the king named General Tusan, the Chief of Staff of all forces and a veteran of World War I against the Turks. We would go inspecting together with such supporting elements as we wanted to verify and inventory everything. Then on decision-making, when it was put up to the king, he said, "The American ambassador will act for me!"

This reminded me of the action by the king Abd al-Aziz with respect to Brigadier General O'Keefe in Dhahran for 11 years before. O'Keefe wore two hats at Dhahran, one for the king and one for the U.S. command operations at the airfield. King Saud's decision was flattering but it also put quite a responsibility on me. It tended, as it was designed to do, to make me lean towards the king's side in a pinch. That was all right in principle if you didn't carry it too far because we should be generous in principle. We had had the use of Dhahran Airfield for a long time with virtually no restrictions. We could bring fighter aircraft in there as well as bomber aircraft pretty formidable stuff on board. If we weren't going to do that anymore but stay in a non-fighting mode -- the base being obviously reduced to a non-combatant status -- we had to consider that we wanted to leave behind and do it gracefully with good feeling.

The general and I went out and did our inspection together. I found some things that he

complained about that astonished me. Some of our people had cut the bolts and had removed heavy equipment such as machine lathes and maybe even a generator or two that had been anchored into concrete. There was a big machine shop I remember in particular. Here were the bolts and you could see where they had sliced right through them and they were sticking right up out of the floor. They had removed the stuff that was on top and it was gone.

I put in a loud complaint on this to Washington so that they could coordinate with the Pentagon and get the orders issued, "Don't do that anymore. Wait."

There was so much variety, I've forgotten what the compensation problems were on it. Basically, we surmounted that crisis and the Saudis got a lot of stuff which was to be very useful at such time as they had people trained to use it. You see, at this particular juncture, the Saudi forces were very small. Personnel-wise they had maybe 15,000 men with the National Guard with something approaching that in the army. But they had very little training under their belts in the handling of sophisticated equipment. This was in contrast to ARAMCO where the Arabia-American Oil Company had been training Saudis for years and years in the handling of much more sensitive equipment, such as refinery valves and oil drilling rigs. The Army had not had this kind of oversight and help. We got over the crisis.

Then it developed as the year 1962 wore on that the real crisis lay in the relations between Saudi Arabia and Egypt. In fact, these got steadily worse and the bombardment of propaganda coming out of Ahmed Said on Cairo's "Voice of the Arabs," was heavy. In Dhahran Airfield we had a radio station which could be used, the king's men thought, for counter-propaganda against Nasser. In other words, the Saudis would not just take it all the time but would be able to hand back a few cracks at Nasser. They wanted us to manage this because they didn't have the personnel. Of course, we were not about to do that. That was making ourselves verbal combatants against Nasser. President Kennedy was really trying to ride two incompatible horses in his Arab policy. One horse was trying to find areas of agreement with Nasser. The other horse was trying to protect Saudi Arabia, almost against itself, from making such tactical errors that it would be hard to rescue it from control by Nasser's aggressive political drive.

It was very hard to reach the king on this question. He had become so inflamed with anger toward Nasser that he began to turn against President Kennedy with whom he found he couldn't communicate the way he wanted to. He said to me, "As far as I am concerned, Nasser is a Communist. He is a threat to us all in this whole area. You should stop having anything to do with him. Get rid of him."

I said to him in the presence of Faisal, "I'm not defending Nasser. We understand the problems very well. We have problems dealing with him ourselves, but we don't think he's Communist. We don't think that is a correct depiction of the man. He has other problems but not that one."

Saud just snorted his derision at my statement. Faisal kept silent. This brings me to discuss Faisal's relationship.

When the king came back from Boston and Washington, renewed efforts were made by his entourage to try to bring the two brothers together. Apparently, the king was in a much better

mood and less fearful and less jealous. He apparently agreed that Faisal should be his principal advisor in all matter, particularly foreign affairs. Sowayel was out, or if he was still in office he was very inactive. Faisal had always been Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia up until Sowayel's time. In foreign affairs, Faisal, under his father, had been the royal messenger from the time he was a teenager and sent to London. He was the ultimate authority under his father in this field.

When I went to call on the king with respect to this Dhahran radio station question that I mentioned, Faisal was there. I was very impressed by the way he handled the king. The king really had a mind that was that of a child in some respects. Complicated matters annoyed him because he couldn't understand them. I was trying to explain to him that this radio station was in any case not suitable for the kind of thing he had because of power and circuit questions. He rejected all this and tried to imply that it was just bad will on the U.S. Government's part. We were just protecting Nasser and not helping him, who was the aggrieved party.

Faisal understood completely what I was trying to say and very gently and quietly, he addressed his brother with the bedouin deferential term "tawwil 'amrak" ("[God] prolong your life"). He tried to explain some of the complexities without appearing to take sides against the king or against me. When he would talk to me, as he did occasionally to clarify the thing, he would address me deferentially, as he had the king. Never before in my life and never afterwards, did Faisal so address me. "Oh long life," is a phrase of great respect for the interlocutor but also great dignity for the speaker. It denotes the interlocutor's superior status. Later, when Faisal was king, of course, he never used this form of address with anyone that I knew. Faisal, therefore, handled his brother masterfully and brought the temperature down. We got through this difficulty without a real blowup. The king, however, was really steamed up over Kennedy and I got all kinds of indications that to him Kennedy was something almost like a friend who had turned traitor. The euphoria that we had had right after his visit wore off completely within a few months.

Then the king became ill again. I guess he never really had some of his basic health problems resolved during his Boston visit. In any event, this time he went elsewhere, to Europe. I can't remember whether it was Greece or where it was. He decided suddenly that he was going, and this time it was worked out with Faisal -- as a result of Faisal's careful handling of the relationship in this difficult period of the spring of 1962 up to the summer -- that Faisal should act in his stead with complete authority "in his presence and in his absence." "In his presence" meant that Saud was ill and couldn't function and didn't want to go abroad, while the term "in his absence it" clear enough. Faisal accepted and became acting king.

Saud hadn't been gone very long -- it may have been August of 1962 -- when Faisal asked me to come and see him in Taif. So I immediately went and he and I talked. He may have had Omar Saqqaf present because he had brought Omar into the picture rather early as a Deputy Foreign Minister. I probably had Isa Sabbagh with me, but I don't remember. Faisal said that he wanted to make a visit to President Kennedy and determine firsthand whether the United States still felt that it was bound as it had been by President Truman's pledge of October 30, 1950, to support Saudi Arabia against any threat to its integrity or its political independence as a matter of vital concern to the United States. Did the United States still regard its relationship with Saudi Arabia as it had in 1950? It was important for him to know and he wanted to meet the President

personally to go over these matters.

I said, "I'm sure the President will be delighted to see you and I'll send a message right away and come back to you with the answer."

I did. It got a quick response and Faisal was off. It was decided that Isa Sabbagh would go along as interpreter for Kennedy and I would not go because it was felt better for me to stay and watch things in Saudi Arabia. So Isa went. To get the full story, you should really talk to Isa.

I'll summarize by saying that Faisal was given a luncheon by the President in the White House with a number of senior people. Faisal had great presence. He commanded respect instantly in any group, anywhere, with his bearing, his intelligence, his courtesy, and above all his princely dignity. After the luncheon, there was a good political discussion, a fairly free political discussion. Kennedy invited Faisal withdraw and talk with him privately. Isa was the interpreter and the only other person present. So they withdrew to a room upstairs. At this point Faisal got what he wanted from Kennedy which was a reaffirmation of the vital interest and concern that the United States had in the independence and territorial integrity of Saudi Arabia. On the other side of the coin, without making it a condition but clearly implying, two matters were inter-related. Kennedy got something from Faisal which was very important. That was a program of reforms in the government of his country which were badly needed and, in particular, the outlawing of slavery.

Prior to this time I had been very concerned about the slavery problem in Saudi Arabia because it gave the country such a bad name in the Arab world and gave such ammunition to Nasser to constantly try to stir up people in the country against the Saud clan, especially King Saud, as its symbol. Slavery was anachronistic in the rest of the Arab world for the most part and why shouldn't it be outlawed there. I had even had complaints by the ambassador of Mali who showed me documents in his office proving that slavery existed in Mecca with Malians as slaves, and they were Muslims. He said, in effect, "This is an outrage. Muslims being slaves to Muslims? They are coming to me and I've got my yard full of them. I'm putting up tents so that they cannot be recaptured by the police and taken back to Mecca to be servants of families where they've been abused. I've got to get them out of here and it's a problem because the police can come and grab them if they start to move out of my yard. The police won't invade my yard because this is Mali territory."

I had heard a lot about this scandal in the diplomatic community of Muslims. Faisal made an undertaking to Kennedy. He said he believed in these reforms and that he was going to try to do something about the justice system and reorganize it. He was going to try to promote an upward movement of talented people within the government of the country, to democratize, spread out responsibility. I don't believe he got into very great specifics. He couldn't have, but he gave something which, given his manner, his bearing and his sharp mind, Kennedy felt that here was a good leadership standing in the wings and now about to exercise some authority because the king was seriously ill and out of the country for a prolonged period.

Faisal came away from that interview, as did Kennedy, very pleased with the way it had gone. Kennedy reassured him and had the feeling that he had a kind of a national investment in Faisal.

*Q: When was the Faisal-Kennedy meeting?*

HART: This was in September of 1962. Faisal left Washington and went up to New York temporarily. While there he got the word of the revolt in the Yemen and the overthrow of the new Imam, Muhammad al-Badr, who had only occupied the throne for about eight days after his father, Imam Ahmed, had passed away. This was a violent overthrow, led by Abdullah al-Salal, Al-Badr's bodyguard and protector of the royal arsenal. Al-Salal had turned it all against al-Badr and tried to kill him, using artillery actually. Al-Badr, however, had escaped and gone into the Yemen's northern mountains.

*Q: This was on September 26, 1962.*

HART: Yes, and Faisal was in New York. He immediately sent word that he wanted to speak to somebody in authority. Phil Talbot went up with Isa Sabbagh. Faisal said, in effect, "This is a situation which we cannot let go by because it is basically a challenge to Saudi Arabia. It isn't a challenge just to the Yemen. The Egyptians really have in mind Saudi Arabia. The Yemen is just a stepping stone and we'll have to do what we can to resist in our own self-defense. Will you help us? Does your guarantee, your pledge of support apply in this situation?"

This presented immediately a dilemma of policy because the President had tried to see if the U.S. could find points of common interest with Nasser's Egypt. There obviously were points of divergence, but he had the policy of endeavoring to take a brand new look at every relationship in the Middle East. He was not trying to get into the middle of a local quarrel if he could help it. In general, Assistant Secretary Phil Talbot was able to give him sufficient indication that we would stand by Saudi Arabia's existence and its integrity against a direct threat. He must have tried to indicate that it was a guarded message of support, avoiding getting into the scrap. Nobody knew how far this would go or what would happen.

At any rate, Faisal came back with some reassurance. In the meantime, Saud had returned just ahead of him to Saudi Arabia and had resumed authority and had almost immediately authorized help to the royalists opposing the new republic of the Yemen of Abdulla Salal. As soon as Faisal arrived or very shortly after, Saud went abroad again for more medical treatment. Faisal was again in full charge and almost without interruption. There was very little gap. Faisal continued what his elder brother had started, which was aid to the royalists. That meant money and weapons as he could get them. At the very beginning I don't think he could have had very much in the way of weaponry to hand over, but he was going to give them some help and he did. So the issue was joined between Faisal and Nasser over the Yemen. King Hussein of Jordan joined Saudi Arabia in sending modest aid to the Yemeni royalists.

Faisal, however, didn't neglect the home front or his desire to have reforms which he had pledged to President Kennedy. One of his very first acts was to issue a proclamation abolishing slavery. This had never happened before. It had always been fudged. The king's position in the past had always been that slavery really wasn't in existence in Saudi Arabia. Some Saudis just had special arrangements to employ servants. They tried to fudge it that way. But now came a flat statement from Faisal that slavery was abolished. I can't remember the exact words but it was

definite, and it was clear. Anybody having slaves was going to be in trouble.

This rang a good bell back in Washington and opportunely because things were clouding up pretty fast in this Yemen situation. Faisal also appointed a committee to study the judiciary and determine how it should be modernized, not to the derogation of the basic principles of Hanbalite Sharia (Sunni Muslim jurisprudence) which is followed in Saudi Arabia under the banner called "Wahhabism." The Hanbalite school of law was founded in the 9th century of our era by Ahmed ibn Hanbal and is one of the most strict and orthodox in the Islamic codes. Only Qatar, apart from Saudi Arabia, follows it. For us and for Saudi Arabia's image, the real problem with the Hanbalite school is the punishments -- mutilation, beheading, stoning, things of that kind which are practiced. I would say that Faisal, whose parentage gave him a very special position, was stronger than any other person could be to put a clamp on some of these practices. His mother was of the family of the Al al-Sheikh which means "the family of the Sheikh" with a capital S, meaning Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab of the 18th century, who made a treaty of alliance with Muhammad ibn Saud. That alliance continues to this day. So Faisal had the prestige of being a very devout Muslim, and having a lineage which couldn't be improved upon. In fact, Saud had no such lineage nor had any of the other wives of Abd al-Aziz.

The electric effect of Faisal's emancipation of slaves I don't know how to measure in Washington but I'm sure it was very positive. Washington quickly recognized that we were up a very severe dilemma with respect to the Yemen, because Washington, and I personally had not been at all impressed with the rule of the late Imam Ahmed Hamid al-Din.

The death of Imam Ahmad and the overthrow of his successor, Muhammad al-Badr, caused the United States more worry than did the Imamate in life. The latter was a minor frustration. The birth of the Yemeni Arab Republic, on the other hand, put to the test President Truman's 1950 pledge of support for the independence and integrity of Saudi Arabia, by far the possessor of the greatest resources of oil under one sovereignty on this globe. Faisal, defending Saudi Arabia's independence, saw the necessity of blocking Nasser in the Yemen, of ensuring there was resistance to his control of a stepping stone to subversion or conquest of Saudi Arabia. The only effective vehicle was the royalist irregulars, camped in various fastnesses of Northern Yemen, from Sa'da to the Saudi border. As these forces were tribal, this meant gold as well as arms. In they went, through an outpost I was to visit, Nejran.

Nasser, meanwhile, had pre-positioned in depots in Egypt, support elements for the Republicans. Almost immediately, these were sent to Hodeida, Yemen, on ships with supplies and by Soviet-built aircraft. As weeks wore on, training teams from Egypt grew into cadres for command of Republican troops, then to Egyptian combat units, ground, naval and air. An indirect war with Saudi Arabia -- a duel of wills -- was on between two strong leaders and between two countries with which it was U.S. policy to maintain good relations. It was a local war, but the USSR was close to Nasser, while the U.S. had an enormous stake in an independent and friendly Saudi Arabia, and in Faisal as its prospective leader.

The U.S. saw this developing conflict as posing a real threat to the survival of the Saud regime, which was going nowhere under King Saud, but which could be strengthened by reforms to resist a take-over by surrogates of Nasser. Such a take-over, flavored heavily with anti-American



propaganda and Soviet political backing, was not in the U.S. interest. Against Nasser's efforts to subvert Saudi Arabia from within and attack it from without, Faisal had as his defenses only the high regard the Saudi people had for him and their hopes; no real organized defense force; and he had the U.S.

For about two months, Washington held discussions within the government and with the governments of NATO Allies, notably the United Kingdom and Canada, France, Germany and Italy, over the question of recognition of the Yemen Arab Republic. Conversations proceeded with Faisal and with King Hussein of Jordan, as both sought to discourage such recognition. Both Faisal and Hussein were deep into assistance to the Royalists, who were divided, in northern Yemen, into several commands, at least two of which were headed by princes, sons of the late Imam Ahman. Al-Badr was reported not to be in command, but rather a coordinator and a symbol of resistance. He was in a cave somewhere near Sa'da or Hajja. Repeated bombings of his supposed location by Egyptian aircraft discharging lacrimagenic gas canisters failed to flush him out. The war became dirty. The gas, nicknamed "ghurab" (raven) by Egyptian forces, became deadly when very concentrated, so that loud Royalist complaints were publicly raised. In one case, a bombing hit a Yemeni crowd in a village on market day, with large casualties. Our impression of the situation of the warring parties was about as follows:

- 1) Both our Chargé, Stookey, and King Faisal had some information we could accept:
  - a) The Royalists held no large town or city and few, if any villages of size. The Republicans, with Egyptian bolstering by tanks, armored cars and aircraft dominated all main centers and the air.
  - b) The northern mountain fastnesses, beyond roads, were unsafe for Republican and Egyptian troops. Here Royalists could pick off isolated units.
  - c) Almost no large engagements were reported.
- 2) But, Faisal's optimistic forecasts of Royalist reconquest of Yemen were not supported by any reliable data or consideration. The best Royalist future was stalemate, lasting for years, costing Saudi Arabia and Jordan more than either could afford. Nasser had his prestige heavily invested and would fight for it, especially just after losing Syria in September 1962, from the United Arab Republic. He would make as much trouble for Faisal as he could.

He, in fact, did. He bombarded from the sea two small Saudi villages north of the Yemen border. He bombarded the Nejran area from the air. He bombarded by air a hospital in Abha, killing 21 patients. He dominated the air over the Hejaz coast, all 1000 miles of it. Three Saudi pilots, with their fighter aircraft (old F86 training craft) defected to Egypt. The Saudi Royal Air Force headquarters was moved to Dhahran, for safety. Only 7 Saudi pilots had been trained for combat and now loyalty was in question. Fortunately, there were no further air defectors.

Then, in February, 1963, Nasser's air force dropped by parachute 108 bundles of automatic weapons, ammunition and mortars on the Saudi coastal area from approximately Rabigh to Yanbu, a distance of circa 100 miles. The yellow parachutes were discovered by an American pilot-instructor with a Saudi student-pilot in a two-seater trainer, out on early morning exercise.

As they circled to identify the yellow object they saw a truck about to load the bundle, but as the plane dropped lower, took off, unloaded. More parachutes were quickly discovered as the pilot and student flew northwest. Returning to base, the pilot let his student report to HQ while he came urgently to report to me. He was outraged -- because, I at first thought, because it was a hostile action. Not at all. He was outraged over the unprofessionalism of the drop. "What, in God's name, did that guy think he was doing: 100 miles long! We consider a 100 ft radius an absolute limit for any drop at a target."

Well, those bundles were gathered with help from the badu, long indoctrinated from the days of King Abd al-Aziz, that what is not yours, found anywhere, had best not be touched -- or else, you might lose that finger, or hand. They reported in and the bundles were taken to the barracks (gishle" -- old Turkish quadrangle two-story fort) at Jeddah. Later, arranged and labeled, they were put on display for embassies, dignitaries and the press and I went. Right out of Egyptian stores in the Suez Canal base area: tripod- mounted Belgian machine guns, mortars, rifles, ammo. For what and for whom; and was 108 the total? No one could answer, but we knew something from Cairo: The drop was intended for Saudi insurrectionists, to kill all the leading princes, headed by Faisal, Khalid, Sultan, Fahd and others, shortly to assemble in Jeddah for meetings. Nasser was as furious over the mismanagement of the drop as was the American pilot-instructor. "Next time, " he had said, but there was no next time. No reliable Saudi insurrection movement existed.

The botched operation nonetheless galvanized Washington.

But I must backup a bit and tell about recognizing the YAR. The Department of State and the White House, apparently realizing that they could not dissuade Faisal and, fearing more drastic action by Nasser, worked to forestall the latter by a deal with Nasser, made in its essentials in December 1962 without full, parallel consultation with Faisal. It consisted in a U.S.-Egyptian understanding that U.S. would recognize the YAR and Nasser would agree not to undertake hostile action against Saudi Arabia and would be prepared to start a gradual withdrawal of his troops as soon as Faisal stopped all aid to the Royalists.

I was instructed to take this bitter pill to Faisal, whose reaction was as predicted: "First concocted with Nasser and then I'm expected to concur, and to stop all aid while he takes his time about or fakes a troop withdrawal."

[Here I refer to Appendix #1, attached, a copy of "Faisal-A Perspective of 1945-1965" which I wrote for delivery about April 24, 1978 before a large audience deliberating on Faisal's reign at the University of Southern California's colloquium in Santa Barbara. It tells the story as I recalled it then, and it goes on to the next item, the Ellsworth Bunker Mission.(Editor's Note: the Appendix can found with Ambassador Parker T. Hart's January 27, 1989 Interview in the Association for Diplomatic Studies' Oral History Collection)]

The one-sided treatment by Washington, favoring Egypt and Nasser in the procedural matter of what Faisal certainly felt to be the highest security interest of Saudi Arabia, put the U.S. rather on the defensive and in an awkward spot regarding its pledge of support.

We sent, at the Saudi request, some "green beret" officers schooled in unconventional warfare to instruct the Saudis in counter-insurgency in case an insurgency should start in Saudi Arabia provoked by the Egyptians or even manned by them. So they came over in small teams and started working. I think that was about as far as it went at this point.

But after the air drop Washington came to grips with Kennedy's pledge and instituted action first, in the United Nations, then by the shuttle diplomacy of Ellsworth Bunker.

U Thant, Secretary General of the United Nations, was approached by our delegation to the UN and he sent out, from duties in Cyprus, Pier Pasquale Spinelli, Italian Diplomat, as his Special Representative. This was early in 1963. Spinelli impressed me as a very sensible person. I had him to my house for a conversation, and offered him all the information and advice available in a very cloudy situation. In the course of general conversation, I asked him about events in Cyprus, and he expressed considerable worry over the number of minority Turk Cypriots killed by the preponderant Greek Cypriots, a situation which threatened area peace. Little did I realize that within four years I would be heavily involved in this problem at an even more acute stage.

U Thant did not appear to take the Yemen situation very seriously, and it was eventually decided in Washington to call upon Ellsworth Bunker to act as mediator, shuttling between Cairo, Jeddah, Washington and the UN.

The choice was excellent and the mission imperative. Neither John Badeau nor I could function in such a capacity, for our duties were limited to our countries of accreditation and focused sharply upon our ability to evaluate the situation, political and personal, that drove the respective heads of state to take the positions they were taking and to try, where possible, to influence those positions. The selection of Bunker was a wise one from several angles. He had demonstrated effective mediation skills in the Dutch-Indonesian dispute over West Irian. His personal credentials included ambassadorships to major posts: Argentina, 1951; Italy, 1952; and India and Nepal, 1956. In all of these posts he had distinguished himself for his sensitivity, perceptiveness, mastery of detail, persistence and a quiet dignity and good-humor which demanded respect and at the same time set the interlocutor at ease. He was not a career diplomat but a businessman; he had been Chairman of the Board of the American Sugar Refining Company. He had started therefore as a political appointee, and had done so well that regardless of the party in power in Washington he had become one of the elder statesmen of the Foreign Service, assimilated to its senior ranks and universally respected. The timing of his selection was personally agonizing for him; his wife, Harriet, was dying of cancer, slowly, staying with one of their children in Rio de Janeiro. Ellsworth's sense of duty was of the highest, and he readily accepted the President's call to the mission.

Bunker was a delightful person to work with, and we had a fine relationship, to be picked up many years later when we were both retired from government and were members of the board of the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy of Georgetown University. On Faisal he made an instantly favorable impression, as I believe from reports, he did on Nasser. His mandate was, of course, primarily to effect a disengagement between Saudi Arabia and Egypt over the Yemen and prevent an all-out clash damaging to both sides, but particularly to Saudi Arabia and to Faisal's leadership in what was expected to be modernizing reforms and a dedication of oil

income to the public weal. It was feared that the logical outcome of a full confrontation by armed forces would bring about chaos in the Kingdom and the loss of prestige and the fall, in defeat, of the Saud clan. This, in turn would probably give rise to a radical, socialist strategy of Nasser, accompanied by Soviet influence and policies inimical to U.S. interests. Saudi Arabia was virtually defenseless, except for its vast deserts and distances. It had no friends, really, except the United States, while Nasser had a tremendous following, especially by the youth, across the Arab world. It was not White House policy to indirectly bolster, at risk of wide and damaging area repercussions, retrogressive regimes, such as the Yemeni Imamate.

Bunker was therefore under general instructions to bring about a withdrawal from the Yemen or Egyptian forces while ensuring a prompt and final cessation of Saudi aid to the Royalists. The proposition, of course, lacked symmetry. Faisal would be asked to terminate aid at the start of Egyptian withdrawals; and to this it was already clear Faisal had the strongest objections. Bunker would offer the temporary presence in Saudi Arabia of an armed squadron of U.S.-piloted fighter aircraft as a deterrent to further intrusions or attacks by Egyptian forces. Bunker would offer U.S. influence in the UN to obtain a UN observer force, to be stationed in the Yemen and on the Saudi border, to verify both the withdrawals by Egypt and the cessation of Saudi aid. (Quite a task, if one knew anything at all about that mountainous region.) To sweeten the proposition, the U.S. was prepared to send to Saudi Arabia an air unit to give concrete evidence of its sincerity in assuring the security of the Kingdom and the preservation of its independence. This would be a temporary presence of U.S. Air Force pilots and equipment, with as little publicity as possible, and would be labeled a training mission. The big question mark throughout was what happens if Nasser, after agreeing, does not carry out his pledge of withdrawal of all his troops.

Discussions lasted several months, Bunker returning frequently after visits to Cairo, Washington and the UN. U Thant was adamant that the UN had only debts in its budget for international peace-keeping, and that money would have to be found from somewhere to fund the observer force.

I have forgotten exactly when Ellsworth Bunker made his first visit but it probably would have been within a few weeks after this incident in February. He took it at a very measured pace which Faisal seemed to appreciate. The two got along very well. Talcott Seelye came out on one of those visits. The program was basically to restore some simultaneity to withdrawals, the lack of which had antagonized Faisal. It had depended on Faisal's making the major concessions first and then Nasser promising to get out. (Nasser proved in the end that he really didn't mean to get out. He had had all the concessions made on the other side and then he would do as he liked.)

The essence of the deal which was finally worked out was that the Saudis would stop aid to the Royalists as he started his withdrawal of troops. The monitoring of the withdrawal, which was to be total over a period of time not specified but was supposed to be "expeditious," would be done by a UN observer mission. The financing of it, which U Thant was always sensitive about, would be by the two parties. Nasser would pay and Faisal would pay. The observers would be stationed only in the Yemen but all over the Yemen where needed to watch the embarkation or debarkation of Egyptian troops; and to attempt to watch movements of the tribes in the north that might mean more arms coming in from Saudi Arabia. That was not really feasible or fully effective. The terrain in the north just made it impossible. They would have had to have an army

in there of some size, and even then the bedu would have gotten around them. So that part of the observation was never really satisfactory.

When they finally concluded the agreement it was entered into effect sometime around June of 1963.

Meanwhile, the U.S. had de facto recognized the Yemen Arab Republic and Robert Stookey, our Chargé, was able to carry out his duties without serious harassment and effect some liaison with reformist elements in the country. His reports were most valuable.

Faisal was extremely sensitive to any form of pressure during the talks, and at one point took offense and nearly broke them off when Bunker used the word "on the condition" (Arabic: ala shart) in seeking a Saudi commitment. As all interpreting was done by Isa Sabbagh, the only way out was at his expense. Somewhat to Isa's consternation (for he is a perfectionist in his command of nuances in Arabic and English) Omar Saqqaf interjected that there had been a mixup of terms (ishtibak al kalima) and I suggested that in English the word "condition" was less strong than in Arabic and perhaps a better translation would be "on the basis of." This, with regard to Isa, was effrontery of the first order, particularly as Isa was not only my back-up interpreter, but my coach and advisor on all questions of Arabic usage. However, he grabbed the situation and did not insist on his own, perfectly valid translation. In retrospect, I am inclined to think that Faisal understood every word of our discussion, and wanted to make clear that he could not be pressured. He accepted "on the basis of" (Arabic: ala assas), and this was our formula from then on.

Words were always important to Faisal, to the point of fastidiousness. Many times during this crisis period I received direct messages from the White House (repeated to State) saying that the President desired, "if no objection was perceived," to transmit the following message to Faisal, etc. and I would carefully utilize that qualifier to edit the text to make it more cordial and fraternal in tone. Invariably, President Kennedy accepted my suggestions, sometimes with minor changes. It made for closer White House-Embassy relations, but more important, it created a better impression and a greater willingness by Faisal to cooperate in the proposed step.

We had a rough passage when it was finally agreed that the Bunker-carried proposals were acceptable and the U.S. air unit to demonstrate support for Saudi Arabia was ready to take off and that, thanks to successful diplomacy, a UN observer force would be placed in Yemen to monitor mutual disengagement. Funding for the UN force would be by Egypt and Saudi Arabia equally. The air unit was code-named Operation Hardsurface and was ostensibly a training unit only. However, it was to be armed. It consisted of a small squadron of F-100 D's (eight, as I recall) plus logistical backup. The latter were to be installed in Dhahran and the fighter aircraft to be flown from there but could be refueled at Jeddah. A certain number of U.S. Air Force personnel were therefore to be temporarily posted to Saudi Arabia for this special mission. For a long time the American Jewish Congress and other groups on Capitol Hill had been pressing various U.S. administrations for a commitment that any and all American organizations carrying on operations in the Kingdom would ensure that there would be no discrimination against the hiring of Jews for duty in the Kingdom. Knowing the policy of the Kingdom to be firmly against such hiring (requests for visas involved filling out a questionnaire which included statement of

the applicant's religious affiliation), the quiet policy of all hirers had been to not encourage such applicants. Now, on the very threshold of the departure for the Kingdom of the promised air unit from its base in Tampa, Florida, Emmanuel Celler, Jewish congressman from Brooklyn, was alerted by American Jewish organizations that here was an opportunity to ensure that non-discrimination be put into effect. He demanded and received from the Department of Defense assurance that there would be no discrimination and he announced to the press that he had been also assured that there would be Jews in Hardsurface.

I was summoned on an emergency basis by Faisal who, with Saqqaf at his side (and I with Isa Sabbagh to assist me) informed me of this challenge to Saudi authority and was told in oblique Arabic that "if the vessel is to contain the wrong materials it may be best not to have the vessel delivered at all." I sensed that while Faisal was incensed at this invasion of Saudi prerogatives by the Department of Defense his rather elaborate metaphor meant that he wanted us to find a way out. So also, ran the thoughts of Saqqaf, who, after some discussion, proposed that this matter be discussed between him and me and a report made to Faisal, who concurred. Saqqaf and I met immediately after and agreed that I should seek "clarification from Washington." (It was quite obvious that the matter was beyond White House recall.) A few days later, Saqqaf made it clear that the storm had passed and that the air unit could proceed. It had been stopped from taking off 10 minutes before scheduled departure.

Subsequently, I asked the commander whether there were in fact Jews in his personnel. Implying that records did not show religious affiliation he said that he thought there might be one. All of the unit was allowed in by blanket visa without designation of individual particulars. We had no further problems with this matter, which was fortunate, for Cairo Radio could easily have trumpeted that Faisal was calling upon international Jewry to support his desperate help to a corrupt, backward and defunct Yemeni (and Saudi) regime subservient to "Western Imperialism." For some reason Cairo did not. Perhaps the "Voice of the Arabs" just missed this one.

Operation Hardsurface was deployed by way of Turkey and Iran to Dhahran, thus avoiding troublesome clearances for use of the airspace of intervening Arab states which would certainly have preferred to stay out of this inter-Arab squabble, notably Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Jordan. Israel could not be asked without clearing with Saudi Arabia and Jordan, which would then put both in the category seeking traitorous cooperation with Israel. The operation was therefore deployed via non-Arab, friendly states which, at the time, were not overly concerned about Egyptian reaction. Later, while I was in Turkey, it became clear that Turkish policy, under the newly elected Justice Party, had become quite sensitive to Arab opinion and would not allow use of its airspace for non-NATO purposes, closely defined.

Once the green light had been tacitly given by Faisal to the launching of Hardsurface, I obtained orders for consultation and brief leave in the U.S., leave which had been interrupted by the crisis. My family had gone on ahead and was in Washington. I immediately was scheduled for appointments with President Kennedy and with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, which I have described in subsequent pages. These consultations provided up-to-date liaison authority which were of great value in coping with the air unit's problems as soon as it arrived.

The arrival was dramatic. By pre-arrangement, Saqqaf and I witnessed it together on the roof of the Foreign Ministry. Several 100-D's swung low over the city, baking in the midsummer heat, and circled several times at low levels preparatory to landing. Saqqaf became quite excited. Here at last was a concrete demonstration of U.S. support of Saudi Arabia under the 1950 Truman pledge. "Tell the pilots to break the sound barrier!", he shouted in my ear. I replied that this was most inadvisable. Many windows could be broken. He was unimpressed, but I let him cool off, rather than hasten to attempt communication with the commander.

It now became important to privately lay out, with the commander, the program for the unit, ostensibly (and actually) a training schedule for senior Saudi pilots, but intended, of course, to provide a deterrent to further invasion of Saudi air space by Egyptian military aircraft which had been overflying the Hejaz coast at will to and from the Yemen, and had occasionally bombed southern targets, such as Nejran (a Saudi basing point for military aid to the Royalists), and the Abha region. It was essential, in view of the President's instruction to me, to make the deployment an effective but not an unnecessarily provocative deterrent. At first, my follow-up instructions stated that Hardsurface flights should not go further south than 100 miles from the Yemeni border. I objected that this could leave open -- once Egyptian forces began to understand this limitation -- several vital targets to Egyptian bombing raids, to wit, Jizan, the main southern port, and most of the Nejran and Abha areas. The White House and State then reduced the flight limitation to 40 miles of the Yemen border.

HART: We worked it out so that flights would never have the same pattern one day after the another. It would always be changed. Our aircraft would fly up and down the Hejaz Coast over land or right close to it. Their pattern would vary.

I should back up a little bit. I mentioned that I obtained consultation in Washington during the summer. This was before we really had the deployment. I was able to get to see President Kennedy to talk to him about rules of engagement. At one point I remember he said, "We want to avoid any clash with the Egyptians. Clearly that would not be desirable."

I said, "I'd like to contest that point a bit if I might." The President at once became very attentive. "If we make it too apparent that we are going to avoid a clash," I said, "Nasser will take advantage of it. I've served in Egypt, know Nasser a little, and I think that's the kind of guy he is. We shouldn't make it too clear. In the rules of engagement if he shoots at us and we don't shoot back, we'll lose credibility."

He said, "Of course, we would have to defend ourselves. I just don't want to have anything done, without my consent. So I was following his instructions when I worked this out with the commander, and we never had a real violation of the border after that except once when they apparently dropped a bomb a mile or so north of the Saudi-Yemen border trying to hit what they thought were Royalists. In effect, Hardsurface stopped the over-flight situation and calmed things down.

As far as Egypt and Saudi Arabia disengaging from Yemen was concerned, it was a mess. Over and over again, every two months, I had to obtain the agreement of Faisal to renew his share of funding for the peace-keeping operation. Faisal was less ready to renew than was Nasser. Nasser

would go ahead and put up the money, but Faisal would say that Nasser was not withdrawing his troops, that he was simply rotating them. In fact he was indeed rotating them. United Nations observers confirmed this. I don't mean that Nasser didn't take some out. He did reduce, but he never drew down enough to make it a major withdrawal. He would rotate in some new units, ground or air, and his forces in Yemen remained major.

It was hard for me to keep Faisal from resuming wholesale help to the royalists, and he did resume a little in spite of everything I could say. However, the situation between the two countries calmed down, and so it went on for a good six months.

While I had been in Washington on consultation, I had gone to the Joint Chiefs of Staff and talked with a group of them, including General Curtis LeMay who was chairman at that time. LeMay didn't like this operation at all. He didn't see any good reason to deploy that unit. He was opposed to it but he had been overruled by the President. He exploded at one point in the course of a meeting saying, "Why can't we just tell Nasser to get the hell out of there?" [Laughter]

He had an unrealistic view of what was really possible out in that area. The unit stayed and then he finally won his point toward the end of the year, just after the assassination of President Kennedy in November. He said, "Absolutely no more after this two-month term."

I had to go in January to the authorities to tell them that we were going to pull the unit out and that we felt it had accomplished its mission. They took it quite well. It coincided, fortunately, with Nasser's call -- Nasser didn't know we were going to do this -- for a conference of all Arabs to confront Israel over the "stealing of Jordan water." It was a manufactured crisis. It was a means by which he could get off the hook that he had gotten himself on in the Yemen. He also wanted to get Faisal to come to the meeting because Faisal couldn't well ignore a call for a political confrontation with Israel. So, Faisal went. So, also, was softened the impact of withdrawing our unit.

*Q: There was a code name given to the presence of the F-100s. What was it?*

HART: Operation Hardsurface.

*Q: We were talking about the termination of "Operation Hardsurface" which was intended by the U.S. Government as a signal of our determination to support Faisal and Saudi Arabia in general against incursions from Nasser via Yemen.*

HART: The end of "Operation Hardsurface" (January 1964) didn't mean the end to the problem of the Yemen. Nasser's troops were still in the Yemen. They were being rotated almost as much as they were being withdrawn, and I don't recall any significant changes in 1964 with respect to the Egyptian presence in the Yemen, but while they hadn't gotten out, something else had happened. Inside the Yemen there had been a metamorphic change in the structure of the confrontation. Abdullah al-Sallal had become somewhat discredited. He had been a very noisy dictator, a puppet of the Egyptians, fulminating against the United States, against Saudi Arabia, and against the British who had remained in Aden and would not recognize the Sallal regime. The UK refrained from reestablishing diplomatic relations with that government of the Yemen.



In this period of 1964 there was an effort made within the Yemen to summon principal tribal leaders to a conference. It was held abroad but I'm not sure where it was held. This conference was to reach, if possible, a consensus which would dissolve the civil war, provide a government of general consent, terminate inter-tribal conflict, and in effect make the Egyptian presence and the Saudi-backed royalist presence irrelevant while the Yemenis sorted the whole matter out for themselves.

The details of that I do not have, and I've never had them. To me the scene shifted now toward the new government of Faisal, released from immediate concern over the Yemen and working very hard to put into effect economic, political and judicial reforms which he had undertaken to accomplish. He would probably have done this anyway, but he had mentioned them to President Kennedy as his big objective during his meeting with him in 1962.

*Q: Are we talking about the period before his formal takeover from Saud which was on March 23, 1964, or about the period after his formal assumption of power?*

HART: I'm not quite sure about that March 23 date. In effect Faisal was boss. He was running things from October of 1962. There was no one challenging Faisal's authority. If this March period is a turning point of some kind, I think it is more a formality than it is a matter of any great significance because that came later in 1964. (Saud abdicated in November 1964.)

Faisal turned his attention toward getting his cabinet going. He had in his cabinet some significant people from the top ranks of the collegium of princes and one was Prince Sultan bin Abd al-Aziz, Minister of Defense and Civil Aviation. Another one was Prince Fahd, the present King, who was made Minister of the Interior, a very important position. There were other half-brothers and several came from the Sudairi Seven, that is, from a Sudairi mother.

Outside of the framework of that royal family, there were ministerial selections which were rather meaningful from among seasoned veterans of the business world and the legal world whom he put in power and of whom he kept close track.

These changes developed in 1964 into a program which came to our attention in the form of economic planning. The king never tried to restore the U.S. economic aid or Point Four Program which Yussuf Yassin had terminated back about 1953. Instead, Faisal, in what I would call a rather characteristically graceful way, suggested that we could participate in Saudi development through our business firms in such a way as to make a profit. An illustration is the following:

One of the things Faisal wanted very much and asked me about quite early was television. He wanted to set up a television and radio station to provide information of all kinds to the people. Television was particularly on his mind as a tool of education. This was very significant to me because it wasn't so many years before that such things as television were absolute anathema to the ulema.

I knew also that he was working very hard to upgrade the educational facilities of the country, which were deplorable. There was none for women except one school, Dar El Hanaan in Jeddah,

which was founded by Faisal's wife, Queen Iffat, who was Turkish-born but of Saudi as well as Turkish extraction. She was born near Adapazari, east of Istanbul. She was a strong-minded woman, well educated and very determined, and she was his fourth but definitive wife, so to speak, and she commanded the household. Of his previous wives, none competed with her and she had vast influence. She had established this school as a private school and it was untouchable by the ulema, in spite of their objections, because of her position and, of course, her husband's backing. He believed in education very strongly.

His budget allocations to his various ministers were something on which he kept a very close watch. Schools began to spring up in unlikely places such as Al Ula, up near Mada'in Salih, a place we got to know in the late winter of 1964 when a group of us in the Diplomatic Corps formed a convoy with some Saudis, including Hassan Yassin, the son of the Syrian-born deputy foreign minister, to visit these very isolated communities, There were others that were even more isolated in other parts of the vast country. These schools included the establishment of a school for girls. They were segregated, but an effort was made to try to get some really good teaching and a curriculum which would be comparable to what the boys were getting at the elementary and secondary levels.

This did cause a reaction among the ulema. I had experienced in my earlier service in Saudi Arabia back in the 1940s samplings of the sensitivity of this question. The ulema followed the school of sunni jurisprudence called the Hanbalite School. Ahmad ibn Hanbal lived in the ninth century. His school is one of the most strict and tough in the whole panoply of sunni jurisprudence. There are four sunni schools as you know. There is the Shafe'i, the Maliki, the Hanafi, and the Hanbali. The only other country that uses the Hanbali is Qatar but they use it in a different way than the Saudis. In Saudi Arabia Ahmed ibn Abd al-Wahhab, the founder of the so-called Unitarian movement, nicknamed wahhabism, lived in the mid-eighteenth century and became a friend of Muhammad ibn Saud, leader of the Saud clan of that period. They formed an alliance which was religio-political and which is the foundation of the country even today. The descendants of Abd al-Wahhab are called the Al al-Sheikh, the people of the Sheikh. Faisal had the unique position of having a mother from the Al al-Sheikh. This strengthened his position against complaints by the ulema. Furthermore, he is a very devout man himself. There is no kidding about that. It is not politics. He is really devout and it is known.

In contrast to Saud, his elder half-brother who had a reputation for violating Koranic principles: for example, drinking and doing a lot of things, probably exaggerated, and derived from the kind of company he kept and which trailed along with him. In addition to his notorious extravagance and wastefulness, the ulema frowned on him for his personal disregard of Hanbali principles.

The founding of girls' schools hit some rocks. One was up north of Riyadh in Buraydah, a very conservative place. I went to call there on a visit. It had all been arranged that I would be met at the little gravel airport and taken a few miles into town. Nobody met me. When I went to finally get the attendant who was sitting there with a telephone, I asked him if he would be good enough to check into what had happened because I was arriving on schedule for a courtesy visit. He called, and then with great embarrassment told me that nobody seemed to be around who knew anything. I realized, of course, that this was the Wahhabi way of an ultra-orthodox community of getting out from a jam. Somebody had made the arrangements with my people and then somebody else had said, "You never should have done this. This man is an infidel."

I am sure that that was what went on although I never got the full explanation. I did register it with the foreign ministry when I got back. In any case there were communities like this. Buraydah all of a sudden woke up one day and discovered it could have a school for girls as well as a school for boys. Well, the ulema of Buraydah rose in arms and went to see Faisal. They were loaded with complaints and were going to register them in the typical Wahhabi way, totally without fear. This is an independent judiciary, believe me. I don't care what people say. The Saudi judiciary is ready to defy the Saudis or anybody on religious principles. This troop arrived and I heard about it from Saqqaf. They were to visit Faisal the acting king and to register their complaint. He listened to them quietly, with respect and treated them with great consideration. He kept the temperatures from flaring. He then began to fire a few questions at them individually. It was not long before they realized he knew a great deal about their personal habits and backgrounds and they began to get a little bit uncomfortable. Finally, he said, "Why should you object to women having the same education as men?"

Of course, they registered the expected responses that women were the weaker sex and they couldn't be trusted with such matters. These should be decided by men. They shouldn't be involved in questions of politics, economics, government, etc. He said, "Well, I don't agree with all of your points of view. We will leave it this way -- those who want the girls' school shall have it. Those who don't wish to send their daughters to the girls' school, don't have to, but I want this population to have available this opportunity for education if it so desires."

The ulema went away in a huff, but within a year the people of Buraydah were back asking for a second girls' school. I never went back to Buraydah so I never saw what happened. I understand it is totally changed and it was changed rather soon after the girls' school was built. I assume this got around the ulema and that, as a result, there was no further impediment that came to our attention about women's education. Of course, Queen Iffat played her role in it behind the scenes, as it went along. I should say that Queen Iffat never got out in front. You heard about Queen Iffat only through the grapevine. She was a very discreet queen. She behaved as a Saudi wife should, but she was strong in the background of the most intimate councils of the realm, of her spouse and the immediate members of her family.

Education, therefore, took a quantum leap as quickly as they could staff it. This meant bringing in a lot of Egyptians. Egyptian-Saudi relations had been very bad and Saudis had been very suspicious of some of their Egyptian teachers and employees as being "Fifth Column." I told you about the dropping of the arms by parachute. From then on, this was a very bad period for Egyptians. They were under great suspicion, but they were very necessary if they could be kept under control. I think the Saudis found out rather quickly that most of these Egyptians didn't want to get into politics anyway, and that if any of them had been accused of espionage or attempted sabotage, they were few. The majority were quite harmless. Teachers were otherwise not easy to get. Saudis had Palestinians and they had Lebanese as well. They began to try to staff these elementary and junior high schools. It wasn't until a little bit later that they began, through private efforts in Jeddah, to develop the King Abd al-Aziz University. Businessmen led in that effort with the Faisal's blessing. Once it got started, it moved very rapidly. I watched it and I visited it. I was rather thrilled at what they did there, establishing good laboratories for biological sciences. They had a very dedicated young director, Muhammad Fida', who unfortunately died of

Hodgkins disease a few years later. He did a beautiful job of developing this school.

There was suddenly a new dimension, whereas before there had been nothing. Really, the women of Saudi Arabia from the 1940s on up until this period of twenty years or so, if they had any schooling, it was by a sheikh who came to their own homes, sat behind a screen, and got them to memorize and recite. It was an extremely poor curriculum and very limited.

Along with this went an effort to try to reform the judiciary, not to reform the ulema or to cancel their power and authority. It was rather to make more coherent the structure of the religious authorities -- for lack of a better term. As I recall it, they never had a very good term for it. They established a minister of justice who was from the Al ash-Sheikh family, one of the more enlightened members. His job would be to oversee the application of Hanbali law with due respect to Hanafi, Shafe'i or Maliki cases. The country prided itself in having a system which recognized the other three schools of sunni jurisprudence. If a man from the background of one of those legal systems -- and there were many in the country -- would come forward with a case in law, as defendant, or plaintiff, this would be taken into account.

The older ulema were beginning to die off at this point. I met a number of them one evening prior to the Pilgrimage, Faisal invited me to the palace which had been Saud's palace taken over by the government by this time for state purposes. This was an entertainment of Hajji (Pilgrimage) leaders from all over the world including Nigeria. The old ulema were seated at dinner at a special honorary table and each one of them had someone to help him eat. All were blind. Every one of them had a young boy by his side, guiding the spoon to his mouth, because they wanted to eat properly and not in the old Bedouin way with the sleeves rolled up on the right arm. Anyway, they couldn't see what they were doing. It was easier to have boys feed them. I thought to myself, "Well, this is an end of an era because this whole judicial system is undergoing a review. A lot of these people wouldn't know how to fit into it."

I mentioned slavery as being outlawed. How quickly that really took effect I can't say, but I never heard anything more from the complaints of Mali. I just gathered that the heat must have been off on a lot of their complaints. As was the case during our post-Civil War period here in the United States, there were a lot of people who had been labeled "slaves," for lack of a better term, who really thought of themselves as lifetime servants of the family and friends and who had no place to go. I heard reports that freed Saudi slaves came back and wanted to be brought again into the household under any circumstances that the master chose. How the abolition of slavery was applied, I don't know. It seemed to go smoothly. As far as I could see, Faisal carried out his pledge whereas Saud, knowing the sensitivity of the matter, just fudged and tried to pretend there was no problem and no slavery at all which, of course, was patently false.

The other thing was economic development. I mentioned television. Faisal said, "I would like very much to get assistance from your government in building for me a television station. I would like to be able to say to all the eager merchants and businessmen around here that, if they want to get into this project, they have to see the Americans. I've given the whole project over to them and I don't want to be bothered with interventions to try to get special privileges here and there in this contract."

I said that I would immediately see what we could do and that I was sure that our people would be interested. Sure enough they were. The first thing they did was to send someone out from the Federal Communications Commission who was a technician. We had a long talk before he saw Faisal or anybody else in the government. He said, "In this country, there are already two systems. One is the European system of 50-cycle, 220-volt current, direct current. Then you have the American system. In building a television station, they have to decide which they want, and one of their decisions should be whether they want to have equipment which will receive the broadcasts of neighboring countries. Recently they have had problems with Egypt. Do the Saudis want to see Nasser and Ahmed Said on their television, fulminating against Saudi Arabia.

These were questions which put to them. As far as the Saudis were concerned, they realized that they had a system already in ARAMCO which was American, based on American voltage and current. That station was for the entertainment of ARAMCO's American camps all around the eastern province. It was set up on Jebel Dhahran so it could have the necessary reach. The whole camp was on American voltage.

The Saudis decided just to leave that alone and to concentrate on the one in the west. They finally decided to go for the European system and disregard the possibility that their people might be affected somewhat by anti-Saud propaganda. It was an expression of self-confidence by the Faisal regime.

The U.S. was asked to go ahead and build it. We told them, "Look. The U.S. Government doesn't build such things, but the U.S. Corps of Engineers will give it under contract to a firm."

The Corps quickly RCA. They sent out some very capable people whom I talked with a great deal. I spoke with the Saudi minister of communications, Faisal al Hejelan, who later became ambassador in Washington. He was the man in charge as far as the Saudis were concerned. Very soon RCA started construction.

Prince Faisal then raised another question with me. He said, "I would like to have a big road built from Jeddah down to Abha. I'd like to have the United States build it."

Washington again was not willing to say that U.S. Government should go out and build a road. I think it presented a problem of whether they should try to get the Corps of Engineers or whether they should try to get someone else. The Corps of Engineers were brought in as supervisors of the RCA job of building the television station. To build a road in Saudi Arabia was something which didn't fit with the Corps of Engineers' capabilities and interests at that time. In the end, we didn't take that one on.

Faisal, I could see, was puzzled as to why we didn't because he knew that I knew -- without our discussing it -- that what he was trying to do was to make up for their abrupt termination of American economic aid back in the 1950s, some ten years before. He was also trying to express his appreciation of our help for security assistance. After all, the threat to Saudi Arabia had subsided. The results of the 1964 conference in Cairo between Nasser and Faisal had quieted everything as far as direct confrontation between the two countries was concerned. In a typical Saudi way, he expressed thanks not in words or letters, but in a more concrete way.

I was a little disappointed, frankly, that we couldn't build that road. I thought it would be a darn good thing and people would learn a lot. The Corps of Engineers would learn. After all, we had undertaken very modest road building in the Yemen and we knew something about the terrain. It turned out to be a project given to the Italians.

In any event, Faisal was off on several big economic-development tracks. One was roads to link the principal urban and agricultural centers, thereby saving a lot of wear and tear on vehicles as well as providing a much more rapid, safe and economically effective communication network. He was also out to try to improve the radio-telegraph and other communications network which was very primitive.

The other thing was water. Here he divided the country into three sectors. A. J. Meyer was invited to come out when Faisal indicated that he wanted a good counselor and economic advisor on a development program. We sent A. J. Meyer from Harvard University who was an economist who had specialized in the Middle East. He brought with him a colleague and they made two or three visits to Faisal. There was another man before A. J. Meyer who tried to head up a mission of some advisory assistance in economic planning in Riyadh and it did not succeed.

A. J. Meyer arrived and his advice was attentively listened to by Faisal. He and his colleague reported directly to Faisal and I was there each time it happened. They went through the administration of the economic development program that existed in Saudi Arabia and then gave a critique. They told Faisal that it was chaotic. They used the word "jawadh" and that it had to be overhauled extensively and changed or they would never get anything done. Faisal listened very closely. Out of this and out of his own experience was born a deep interest in the search for water.

As you know, we already had a man who knew the geology very well and that was Dr. Glen F. Brown. He arrived in Saudi Arabia just about the same time I did in the summer of 1944, and had accompanied the U.S. agricultural mission to Al Kharj. These were three highly educated farmers from Skull Valley, Arizona, who worked to develop a demonstration project of desert horticulture. They were Cart Quast, Rahleigh Sanderson and the leader, David Rogers, plus a mechanic. Glen Brown never got out of Arabia except for visits back home or short tours because the Saudis respected so much his integrity as well as his knowledge. He knew where the water could be found.

There were some very good ARAMCO technicians, including Tom Barger who also was a great geologist as well as a mining engineer by training. He became the head of ARAMCO, eventually. Between them fossil water was found and one of the places was Buraydah which made a big transformation in that community possible. People in the past had been drilling wells into the replenishable aquifer and overusing it and causing salt to seep through which destroyed land. One of the big problems was to get them out of that habit and to teach them the proper use of water. Some of them began to learn rather quickly because they had as their bosses very intelligent land owners. I remember one of them was the son of Sheikh Abdullah Suleyman, Ahmed Suleyman, who has become one of the great businessmen of Saudi Arabia. I visited his plantation of vegetables and wheat in the area of Anayza which is in that Qasim sector, a very

fertile area in the Nejd.

Things began to move also in Aflaj down in the south. This was tied in with an ARAMCO project which was on the railroad from Dammam to Riyadh located in a big bend to the south. The railroad could pick up products from this agricultural station which was one of the early outgrowths of the Al Khari mission, done by ARAMCO. In the Aflaj area it was found that conditions were right for growing a lot of crops and beginnings were made at that time of a major agricultural effort in that region along with the search for ground water. In many cases the water was found at great depths and it was fossil water. It was still usable and, in some cases, still drinkable, although it had been laid down 10,000 years ago. Glen Brown is the man to talk to about this.

In this period -- and some of what I'm talking about began even in 1963 when Faisal was struggling with the problem of the Yemen -- some of this was beginning in that period and a more intense effort was made when he could put the Yemen on the back burner.

*Q: I may have had that date about his formal succession to Saud wrong. I see I've got two dates here. It could equally well be November 2, 1964.*

HART: There you have it. I have to tell you a little about that. In the summer of 1964, we had to make a decision in the family about the education of our two daughters. Our oldest, particularly, had graduated from the Parents Cooperative School in Jeddah which had been run by TWA for their own people but we were using it. The eighth grade was as high as you could go and she had completed that work. The younger daughter had not, but we really had the problem of improvising her education. Jane, therefore, took the two girls home and I was to join them on leave when I could.

HART: Jane took the girls home in the summer and I was alone in Jeddah for a period of perhaps two months or more. Then I was asked to come back to chair a promotion panel for senior promotions. I was a career minister so I was selected to chair this particular panel. I was very glad I was not in Jeddah during the fall of 1964 for a special reason. The Saudis deposed King Saud during this period. I knew that, if I had been there, there would have been rumors all over the place that the United States Government had something to do with it. It was generally known by this time that we much preferred Faisal's style of administration to Saud's. We couldn't disguise it. It was a general feeling of the public in Saudi Arabia itself.

During that fall Saud came back to his country and tried to recapture all authority. He challenged Faisal's administration. One thing he tried to do was to make sure that the royal guard was solidly with him and that they would pledge their allegiance to him. To do this, he went out into the desert and held Majlis. You know the way they used to do this in special places. They would select a small rise of land and lay down carpets and place a chair. The king would sit up there and people would come forward with their petitions. Saud started resuming this formality. Faisal just kept quiet, but around him his half-brothers who were long since convinced that they had to have Faisal as their chief became angry. It looked as though there might be an armed confrontation in Riyadh. I got details on this later from Omar Saqqaf. It was touch and go.

Saud's son, Prince Muhammad bin Saud, during the period when Saud exercised full authority, had been his minister of defense. He stayed loyal to his father even though his wife was the daughter of Faisal. Her name is Sarah and she is well educated, much more educated than Muhammad. She is a graduate of Wellesley College and a beautiful girl. We met her. It was an extraordinary arrangement to be made in those days. We were informally invited to meet at the home of a friend of Muhammad's. They appeared to be a devoted and were certainly a very handsome couple. There were a lot of rumors about his job as defense minister, charges of corruption and that sort of thing. In this instance he had the difficult choice to make as to whom to give his loyalty and he gave it to his father. I believe the two were separated for a while, that is the wife and he, but I think they never were divorced and eventually got back together. In any event, Muhammad's job as an ex-minister of defense was to see what he could do to round up forces on his father's side. He did not succeed. Even the royal guard which was charged with defending the palace where the king reinstated himself began to waiver during this period. Finally, it became ineffective as there was no pitched fighting. It was done quietly. Again I was told that Prince Muhammad bin Abd al-Aziz, the King's half-brother, played an important role in convincing Saud that he better go or he was going to get killed and maybe by Muhammad himself. He believed in direct action.

However that may have been -- you know how the Saudis play their cards very close to their chest and we'll never know the full story -- this was the version that I was given and I never had a better one. But I was away, and in view of the electricity that must have been in the air and the rumormongering that would have been inevitable, as well as the fact that I had been very close to Faisal and to many of his people, I figured it was better that I was away. Nobody tried to break me away from the selection board that I chaired and send me back to Jeddah in a hurry. I was glad they didn't. They never even raised the question, and things happened fairly quickly and from the U.S. Government's standpoint, in a very satisfactory direction.

I got back at the very end of the year because it always takes selection boards a lot of time to read and reread personnel dossiers and to, adjust figures and the promotion pyramid. I didn't get back until after Christmas.

*Q: By that time Faisal was firmly in.*

HART: Yes, firmly in. Saqqaf privately told me what he felt he could.

*Q: Did Saud leave the country?*

HART: Saud then left the country and his palaces, with the exception of one in Riyadh, were taken over as government property to be used for whatever purposes the chief of state ordered. Faisal would never live in these places under any circumstances. He disdained them. In this way he was somewhat of a chip off his father's block. I told the story earlier of how Abd al-Aziz had objected to Saud's having had built for himself in Riyadh, a reinforced concrete building as a personal home. Faisal showed his disdain for using these palaces for personal residence by the very fact that he would not occupy the one that his wife had built for him out on the shore just a short distance from the American Embassy. You remember that. That building stayed in semi-completion for a long time and was vacant and wide open. Jane and I used to walk up there



occasionally and take a look at it, admire the gypsum and the inlay work that had been done in the main room. I thought, "Well, this would be quite a nice place for him to live because here he's got, for all of his officials and aides, plenty of space for their quarters, offices, and his own office use. It would also be nice for his entertaining."

I raised the question with him once. He looked at me and said, "It's my wife's idea. I don't like it. I won't even go inside."

That's all he would say. Of course, later on I know that he had a very fine place in Riyadh but I never was in it. Isa Sabbagh was in it and he knows what it's like.

The injunction of the late King Abd al-Aziz that Faisal was passing on to his people was, "I am one of the original Bedouin stock and I am going to hold it that way. We have modernized, but we don't modernize in our values. We modernize in technology, in education. We broaden our horizons. We develop our country, but we don't forget the simple beginnings of our lives."

This message got through to the people. I think Faisal had always projected some of that image but not as much until after Saud was out of the way.

Saud, nonetheless, was very good with the tribes. He may have displeased his father but he got around among the tribes and they liked him. Of course, they also liked him because he handed out money very liberally. His retainers would carry, as his father's had done, sacks of riyals. Saud had married the way his father had, a sequence of marriages and divorces (having never more than 4 wives at one time) all around the country to unite the kingdom. His father had truly united the kingdom by a process of family bonding. It really wasn't necessary for Saud to do the same thing all over again, but he did. He had over 60 children. I don't know if he had quite as many as his father. His father told me he had over seventy children, but he didn't know just how many because he never counted the girls!

*Q: I once counted 78 princes.*

HART: I used to get the story from people in 1944 to 1946 that King Abd al-Aziz had 37 princes and that the balance were girls, but nobody knew what the total balance really was, since the king himself didn't know.

In any event, this was a different era. Faisal had twelve children that I know of and he had four wives. His last wife, Iffat, was the one to whom he adhered most closely, but he did not forget the earlier ones. He always made sure they were comfortable and well off. This was particularly true of one whom my wife got to know very well. She was the daughter of Saud al-Kabir, one of the great figures of Central Nejd, a very noble Arab, famous all over the country. Her name was Johara bint Saud al-Kabir. Jane got to know her quite well. From her and her friends she learned that Faisal visited her often. He visited her not for sex but for sharing of information because this was a very shrewd woman who was a Bedouin by pride and lineage of the highest in the realm. She was very religious, very generous. Her house was full of hangers-on, Palestinians included. Nevertheless, she was very sharp and never wasted words. Faisal respected her opinions very highly. Jane can tell you a lot more about this. She may have done so with Penny Laingen, I

don't know. It was an interesting glimpse into the life and attitude of Faisal which came our way.

[Jane had to stay in the United States from the summer of 1964 until I finally came home in 1965. She had to have surgery in May. By that time I had served four years on top of two earlier assignments to the Kingdom and I was ready to make a change. I had reached 27 years of duty and could retire. I didn't know whether I would stay in the for Foreign Service or not. It just depended on whether there was anything attractive and useful.]

*Q: There was some sense of satisfaction that there had been a fundamental change in Saudi Arabia and it was now launched on a different course, a progressive course.*

HART: Yes. It was launched on a good course and I felt that things were out of my hands now, that there wasn't very much more for me to do there. Faisal had charted his course. He had the country with him. Nasser had dropped all direct efforts to try to unseat the Saudis as a clan and put in a substitute regime. In fact, two years later as we know, he had to withdraw everything from the Yemen. As a result of the disasters of the 1967 war with Israel, he became one of Faisal's clients in a sense. He had to take money from the man he had tried to overthrow.

Well, this had not happened yet. This was 1965. We used to get some reports of the meetings of the tribes in different places in the Yemen and of changes in the regime. Bob Stookey came out of the Yemen in 1965 and joined us briefly in Jeddah before he went on. We had a very good debriefing session. I think it was Harlan Clark who went back to the Yemen for a tour. Harlan visited us in Jeddah with his wife, Patty. Harlan had initiated our first official contacts with the Yemen way back in 1944, whose ruler was the late Imam Yahya. It was nice that he could return (1964-1966) and pick up again in the Republican period, as chargé d'affaires.

[Note: William R. Crawford, interviewer, was the first U.S. resident ambassador to the Yemen Arab Republic, 1972-1974.]

I've mentioned already in discussing Saudi Arabia the sensitivity of the Saudis over the Dhahran Airfield as a U.S. base. Actually, Dhahran Airfield was turned over by the United States Government to the government of Saudi Arabia as their base formally in 1946, when it was completed. It was always considered to be a facility belonging to the king which we had built for him as a sign of our friendship and interest in his country. The fact was that for quite a few years the Saudis didn't have anybody to run that base. They had nobody trained. We were in a section of Saudi Arabia which was Bedouin and which had not yet become urbanized in any sense of the word. There wasn't at the beginning any middle class.

A sensitivity was in the air, all over the Arab world, about foreign bases, as you well remember. The French, the British, everybody had this problem. We had it in a pale reflection down in Dhahran Airfield where, locally speaking, it was not an issue. It was only an issue because of the attitude of third countries like Egypt and other countries where, as in Syria, the Baath Party was also championing the idea that there should be no imperialist remnant left, now that World War II was over, of any European power in the Arab world and no symbol of such imperialist presence such as a base belonging to someone else.

*Q: From my calculations, that marked 31 years in the Foreign Service, a remarkable span in which the Middle East really thrust itself forward as very much central, from a start of almost nothing to a very central position in American concerns. Your career spanned that whole thrust of it into it.*

HART: It was a time of fascinating change in Saudi Arabia because, I can assure you, it was really almost an untouched country. It was not quite as untouched as the Yemen in those days, I found out later, but very, very primitive in living conditions -- practically no roads, communications and facilities. We know what a vast change that has taken place since. It was true down in the Gulf and the emirates that I visited several times.

In my time in Saudi Arabia, the Saudi ambassador in Washington was not really part of the process. He gave parties. He entertained visiting princes from Saudi Arabia. He was occupied a lot with the affairs of the royal family. We call them the "royal family" for lack of a word that means first among equals, in a tribal sense. It is the governing clan. They make tremendous demands upon an ambassador here. Up until Prince Bandar bin Sultan became Saudi Ambassador in Washington, the substance of the diplomatic work has been handled in Riyadh between the American ambassador and the king and his advisors.

**AFIF I. TANNOUS**  
**Agricultural Specialist**  
**Middle East (1946-1947)**

*Dr. Afif I. Tannous was born in Lebanon in 1905. He received a B.A. from the American University in Beirut, an M.A. from St. Lawrence University and a Ph.D. from Cornell University. Following World War II, he worked in the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) and later with the U.S. government as an expert on Middle Eastern agriculture, a career which took him to Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Lebanon, Tunisia, Morocco, and Kenya. He was interviewed in 1994 by James O. Howard.*

TANNOUS: In 1946, as I mentioned, we organized a mission, a combination of State Department and the Foreign Agricultural Service, to go to the Middle East and visit a number of countries -- to meet with the leaders, and with the people and report on what were the possibilities for future agricultural and other development, in cooperation with the United States. That's how we went on that mission. Now I describe it briefly, unless you wish to ask questions and details about what we did on the mission.

*Q: No, I won't ask questions and details because you were on several missions. But before you get into that, when I was getting ready to go to Egypt as Agricultural Attaché, you sat down and gave me a list of your friends in the Middle East, with whom you had been in the AUB and who had now been in important posts. Talk about a few of these.*

TANNOUS: That's going back to my education at the AUB, and what it meant. It meant

developing very close association with a number of students going through four years of education. And then, practically, each one of these graduates occupied a position of high responsibility in his own country. My association with them as a fellow alumnus continued over the years. That's why I felt at ease in giving you that list to see these people, knowing they would respond. And I have examples that I may mention later.

*Q: Okay, going back to this mission.*

TANNOUS: Briefly, touching the highlights, because it's a long story and we don't have all the time for it. We visited the following countries, Lebanon, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Syria. Our late colleague, Ross Moore, was in-charge of Technical Assistance in FAS, and he was the one designated as the sponsor of this mission, in full cooperation with the State Department. Also, the oil company ARAMCO was involved in relation to Saudi Arabia.

I had better mention this. ARAMCO, in my own evaluation, had a very enlightened policy of foreign relations with the Saudi government and the Gulf area. It was based on the idea of developing resources for the benefit of these countries, not to just exploit them -- very wise policy. I'll stop here, but I wanted to give this testimonial.

We visited each of these countries extensively (and remember this was shortly after the war; Lebanon had just become independent and Syria, when we arrived there, was celebrating the evacuation of the French soldiers). In each one of the countries we met with the leaders on all levels, newly responsible, some of them AUB graduates, fellow alumni. We could talk freely and feel at home fully, as we emphasized U.S. relations with their new countries. In all of these countries we had the same positive dealing with their leaders; also with their people, as we went all over each country, not just the capitals. We wanted to go and look at their agricultural possibilities. So we met the people in the villages, and many of these were people with whom I had worked, in that rural program of the American University of Beirut. I felt completely at home and they felt happy that I was coming back and trying to help them establish new relations with the United States.

We were very well received everywhere we went, including a reception by two Presidents -- Bishara El-Khoury of Lebanon and Shukri Kuwatli of Syria; also the legendary King Abdul Aziz Al-Saud of Saudi Arabia. I say legendary advisedly. He was well known at the State Department, and he was a legend for what he did for his country. So we had many experiences, we cannot cover them all, I cannot dwell on them, but you may wish to highlight any of them.

*Q: Wait a minute, before that '49 mission, didn't you have a short stint with the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia?*

TANNOUS: Thank you for mentioning that. I forgot about it, but I will cover it very briefly. That was again very meaningful for me and for our government. The State Department, in 1947, requested that I join the entourage of Crown Prince Saud of Saudi Arabia, who was here on an official visit arranged by the State Department and ARAMCO -- to visit all over the country and give him an idea of what the American way of life, the American culture means; to expose him to all of it, because he had never been outside of his country. So they assigned me to that, and

again my knowledge of Arabic, both colloquial and classical, and of the Arab culture, both old and modern, was very helpful.

Let me go back a little bit. When we arrived in Saudi Arabia on that early 1946 mission I mentioned, and were received by King Abdul Aziz Al-Saud, we had a great experience meeting with him, listening to him talking. He asked that I translate for him, although he had an official translator right there, sitting on the side with the Crown Prince and other princes surrounding him, but never saying a word. Only the King speaking and I translating. I did not only translate, but also commented on what he said, and he appreciated that.

Also we had with us other State Department representatives, including my life-long friend Ambassador Pete Hart who was then Consul General there. He had a good command of the language and was very helpful indeed.

*Q: The crown prince now, that you were shepherding around the United States.*

TANNOUS: Crown Prince Saud was the one with whom I went around the United States, observing agriculture, the navy, the air force, industry, economic organizations, etc. and I never dreamed that I would be able to see these things as I was able at that time. And all the time I was talking to him -- emphasizing this and that and the other in Arabic, what it means, why the American system has succeeded so well, what is the way of the American people about things. All my knowledge of the American culture came forward to help in terms of the Arab culture which I knew very well, especially the Saudi cultural background.

*Q: Our relationships with Saudi Arabia have been very good over recent years. Do you feel that you played a small part in that?*

TANNOUS: Let us say I played a part, how big, how small, I don't know. But I feel very happy that I played a part which paid off for the good of Saudi Arabia and the United States in later years. Especially lately as we know.

## **LEWRIGHT BROWNING MUNN**

**Code Clerk**

**Jeddah (1947-1949)**

*Mr. Munn was born in New York in 1922. He served in the Pacific in World War II. In this account he recalls life in Jeddah at that time, its lack of amenities, its physical characteristics and his general impressions during his tour of duty. His other Foreign Service posts include: Jerusalem, Beirut, Bremen, Athens, Bombay, Buenos Aires, Benghazi/Tripoli, Taiwan, Seoul Bangkok, Saigon and Washington, DC.*

MUNN: After 2 years in the South Pacific during WWII, short terms in hospitals in Manila and West Virginia and, eventually "honorable discharge" from the Army I joined and worked at the

War Assets Administration “selling” aircraft and parts. It was not interesting. A friend advised the Department of State’s “Foreign Service” was hiring! The “spirit” of adventure” still in me and the feeling it might be interesting to find out what was “involved”! To make a long story short I went for an interview, my prospects and future sounded interesting so I applied for an offered position. Assuming security and other clearances, I waited. Shortly thereafter I was offered a position, signed on, went through orientation and special training and, finally, received my assignment -- Cryptographer (code clerk), Jeddah, Saudi Arabia!

Purchased my “necessities”, packed my bags and trunk, went to New York for my assigned transportation (a freighter of the U.S. Lines) and after a couple stops en route to deliver and/or pick up cargo arrived at destination, late at night & anchored! NOTE: More on this “subject” later!

Waking early, dressed and went on deck. What I could see by naked eye my initial reaction was - - “Oh my God -- I’m back to the world of Lowell Thomas’ Lawrence of Arabia”! Using my sea glasses, looking all along the town’s shoreline, and the town itself another thought -- “what have you gotten yourself into this time?”! There were no docks, no other freighters, a lot of dhows, fishing boats, several launches, and several buildings. On the left of the so-called “city limits” was some kind of plant, in the middle some “OFFICIAL” looking buildings and in the right just outside the “limits” and built on land and over the water was a fairly new looking building. It was now time for breakfast, getting my luggage on deck and wait for someone to come and claim me!

I saw what turned out to be the U.S. Legation’s launch headed to the ship with a lady, two men and the boatman. The lady was a U.S. Secretary (one of three female staff), one male was vice consul and the other male was the chap I was to replace. After introductions and small talk, my baggage was loaded on the launch and off to shore. We landed at what was the customs dock, went through the usual procedures and drove to the Legation. I was introduced to Minister J. Rives Childs and the rest of the U.S. staff and Saudi Arabian staff (five translators and clerks). After being shown around the Legation I was taken to an apartment I was to share with another male staff member, “space” to unpack and “organized” and “prepared for life in the desert”!

Now to that “life” in Jeddah!

The one main street along the waterfront stretching from the “town limits” in the East to the “Mecca/Medina Gate” in the West was approximately 1 kilometer (0.62 miles). It was the sole hard topped road in Jeddah and continued to Mecca. Every other street or alley was hard packed sand.

With several exceptions most buildings, including three and four floor houses constructed from sand stone blocks, wood, wooden beams and wood flooring. The blocks were “cemented” mostly from “gop” out of a nearby lagoon or actual cement.

Jeddah was originally surrounded by high fortress type walls built in earlier days against tribal wars and attacks but were currently being torn down.

At the East end of the shore road as it turned toward the Mecca Gate was a post World War I salt water condensation plant built by the British and still in use. Off the road and after the Mecca Gate was a large wadi with numerous water wells (source of the water was not known to me). Water was collected daily by a “service man” with donkeys loaded with 55 gallon drums for water. Brought to their destinations, water was hand pumped to large tanks on the roof of buildings (including where we lived). There was no such thing as a “modern” commercial water or piping system throughout the town. Water from the roof tanks was piped throughout our house and living quarters to the kitchen, wash basin, shower and to flush our toilets. Allegedly, true or not, there was underground piping and sewers for waste.

The American Legation consisted of two (2) adjoining floor buildings: Ground: Entrance, Saudi Arabian staff offices, and storerooms; 2nd.: Minister office, U.S. staff offices, unclassified and classified file room, code room; 3rd.: U. S. staff apartment; and, roof and laundry area. A few hundred feet away another four floor building converted to U.S. staff apartments.

Directly across the road from the Legation was the Legation’s maintenance compound consisting of a power plant, garage, workshop and the U.S. maintenance supervisor’s office. Adjacent to that was a walled enclosed building called “the Saudi Widow’s Compound” Its use is self-explanatory!

In an Italian fairly well constructed and modern house outside the “town limits” was the Minister’s residence and walled compound. There also were a garage area, store rooms and servant’s quarters. The house was well constructed, two floors and balcony, open roof area for entertaining. As previously noted the road to the house was packed sand.

Additionally the Legation had one more Italian constructed building in the center of town located on the main road and across from the Saudi Custom’s Office and landing pier -- “The American Clinic”. Its history is somewhat vague but at the time, the first floor was occupied by a Lebanese medical doctor on contract as a “clinic” for Saudis. A separate entrance to the second floor led to a U.S. staff apartment. It was more modern than the other U.S. staff quarters. Toward the end of my tour I eventually moved there. I shared the unit with the wife (who was a U.S. employee at the Legation) and her husband (who was the General Manager of TWA’s contract with Saudi Arabian Airlines). There were two large bedrooms, living/dining room, bath, kitchen, storeroom with an open roof for entertaining. We had a cook (who formerly worked at the French Minister’s residence), a houseboy and cleaner. Except for the Minister’s residence, no servants were known to sleep or live in any of the U. S. staff apartment buildings.

All apartments were shared by two U.S. staff members. Each unit had two bedrooms, living/dining room, kitchen, bathroom, and secured storage area for food and similar items. Each unit was responsible for its own stocking and ordering food supplies etc. Usually and because of shipping costs, two or more units would combine their orders. Upon receipt of the shipment, everything would be distributed in accordance with what the unit had ordered and paid for. As alcohol products were not permitted for Saudis nor locally available, they had to be ordered too. As I remember, non-perishable food and alcohol was ordered from a Danish food supplier as the closest and fastest supplier. Occasionally, similar orders and shipments were received from a U.S. supplier but delivery took longer. Some food items such as imported bulk cheese, some

canned goods, fish, meat -- mostly lamb and occasionally, beef and chicken. Actually the fish and lamb was quite good. Each unit was serviced and paid by the occupants and consisted of a senior houseboy, cook and cleaner. Most spoke English and usually hired through the senior translator at the Legation. No security nor police checks -- all, hopefully, "honest" and "reliable".

The "JEDDAH HOTEL" was located on our road several buildings east of the Legation. To my knowledge no U.S. Legation member nor "official" visitor was required to stay there. For that matter, no known U.S. or European national ever stayed there. From a U.S. standpoint and "standard", it was not appealing, healthy, sanitary, attractive nor livable!

Access to Saudi Arabia was by air, sea or camel! Access between Jeddah, Riyadh, Medina (the Moslem's second most religious city) was by car or camel. To the Moslem world's most religious City of Mecca was solely by road from Jeddah. About five miles north on the Mecca Road was a Saudi police check point used to prevent non-Moslems from proceeding to Mecca.

TWA (Trans World Airlines), under contract with the Saudi Government, maintained, operated and serviced "SAUDI ARABIAN AIRLINES". It operated from/to Jeddah, Medina, Dhahran, Cairo, Beirut and Tehran. Small passenger vessels (during Ramadan) and U.S. and foreign flag freighters brought in cargo as well as pilgrims. As for the U.S. staff, "SAA" was used for the occasional vacation to Cairo on Beirut.

"Public" entertainment and "local" social life was non-existent. Saudi Arabian Government officials and some businessmen were invited to Legation "official" affairs. No Saudi women even attended. There were NO theaters, movie houses, restaurants, department stores, supermarkets nor other amenities usually available to Westerners. We had to rely on ourselves and within our Western "community"!

Social "life" among the Western community consisted of informal and formal (British style) dinner parties; dances to recorded music; card games/contests; "golf" on ARAMCO's makeshift course (when it was not blown away); trips to a small treeless island near Jeddah; drives into the desert and along the nearby shoreline beaches; Sunday morning "Church of England" style "services" within the British Legation; reading; listening to recorded music; and, etc. Thanks to Minister Childs, arrangements were made with the commanding officer of the U.S. Air Base to be loaned current U.S. movies which were shown on the Minister's open roof to the U.S. staff and European guests.

As noted above "swimming" came with a "warning" -- the Red Sea had shanks! Because of the shanks, although it eventually failed, a company had been formed and operating to catch sharks for their fins (Oriental market) and export as well as local sale as food. The reason for the Company's short lived activity was never known to me. However, there were barracuda in the reef areas of Jeddah's harbor often caught by us on our Friday or Sunday fishing trips. NOTE: The Legation was closed Friday because it was a Moslem "Sunday", we worked on Saturday and, again, it was closed on Sunday our day off.

Prior to my arrival and because Jeddah was so isolated and as a "morale" factor for the U.S. staff, Minister Childs and the Department arranged a "break" for the U.S. staff. Every two weeks



a U.S. Diplomatic Courier from the Regional Courier Service in Cairo would arrive with a pouch, deliver it to a U.S. staff member, take our pouch and, usually, get right back on a plane and return to Cairo. On a pre-agreed schedule between the Jeddah and Cairo Legations the diplomatic courier would skip a trip and one U.S. Staff from Jeddah would make a courier pouch run from Jeddah to Cairo, stay two weeks on annual leave and would then pick up and take a pouch back to Jeddah. This was a physical and morale “break” for the U.S. staff. Flight costs were paid by the Department as an “official business” BUT the staffer used annual leave and was responsible for his/her personal expenses during leave. Unfortunately, after a while, at times it became too expensive for the staff and this “break” was not totally utilized. I made two trips to Cairo. While on the subject of “morale & scenery change” I was able to take annual leave and make two personal short trips to my favorite (at the time) Beirut, Lebanon and one, during Ramadan to Tehran, Iran.

So soon after World War II and, at this time, because of Saudi Arabia’s “end of the world” location, its isolation combined with the total lack of local “normal” amenities for Westerners, a “female” presence was drastically restricted. As a so-called “man’s world”, the resident ladies were the “winners”! At the U.S. Legation we had the Minister’s wife, two U.S. ladies (one in finance and one secretary), later U.S. wife of a vice consul, the Egyptian wife of our “jack of all trades” engineer and the on-contract U.S. wife of the TWA manager at Saudi Arabian Airlines. The British Minister’s wife and several wives with the British Gellatly Hankey Company, a long-time commercial company, also responsible for the aforementioned water distillation plant. TWA’s operation at the Jeddah Airport had a couple wives, two minor children among the U.S. pilots and maintenance personnel. I do not remember whether ARAMCO’s “representative” office had any female staff. The Italian Minister had his teenage daughter and a “secretary”. I don’t remember whether the French and Dutch Legations had any of their national females in their groups. (NOTE: At one time I had a list of all the Westerners in Jeddah but, regrettably, over the ensuing years and many moves it was “lost”.)

Local transportation was a minus! The Minister had an “official” four-door sedan -- I believe a Ford -- and driver. The legation had two “retired” U.S. military jeeps. The latter used by the U.S. and Saudi Arabian staff on “official business” and/or the U. S. staff after hours for local personal use. “Public” transportation of any kind, except camels or mules, did not exist. Wealthy Saudis as well as the locally resident Royal Family members had vehicles with and without drivers. NOTE: A frequently reported “incident” involves the “young Royals” visiting or living in Jeddah and personally driving a “royal” car and it ran out of gas would send a servant or other local back to the Palace for another car, return to pick up the Royal who would then abandon the “old” car for possible retrieval by a palace employee. Saudi females, regardless of “position”, were not permitted to drive a car -- it required they always had a driver. The U.S. staff’s usual mode of transportation within the town’s small limits was walking. All the places we might visit were so close -- the “walks” were short. None of the U.S. staff brought in a personal vehicle.

The Persian Gulf’s Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, with its ARAMCO oil “operations”, U.S. Air Force Base, U.S. Consulate General and internal airport could be called a “city” and was the nation’s busiest seaport. On the other hand, Jeddah on the Red Sea “way” between the USA, Europe and the Middle/Far East was the prime seaport. As such it was visited almost daily by U.S. flag freighters (which no longer exist) and foreign flag freighters (who now “get all the business”).

Our U.S. staff could go aboard the U.S. vessels and buy items in the ship's "store". Every once in a while a Catholic priest was on board headed East (but not allowed to go ashore) so we Catholics went aboard to attend Mass.

An interesting thing about the port was that Jeddah had NO docks. But it did have three large underwater reefs "protecting" the harbor. All incoming cargo had to be offloaded onto a single sail dhow which would have to zigzag through the reef passages to get to the custom's area docks and warehouses. One auto (mostly Fords) was loaded across the sides of the dhow and, allegedly, securely tied down. When circumventing the two very tight channels in the reefs and turning too sharply and leaning, a loosely tied down vehicle became a "victim of the sea"! NOTE: Some years later the reefs were destroyed and now Jeddah has a dock area.

When assigned to Jeddah we, usually, were in very good health! Not necessarily so after we arrived. The extreme daytime desert heat eventual "natural" health "emergencies" occurred. Although Saudi doctors and dentists were available, Western health, sanitary and qualifications were unknown. The previously mentioned Lebanese M.D. had departed shortly after my arrival. Later during my tour a British medical doctor -- an ophthalmologist -- became available. Whether on contract with the Saudi Arabian Government, the British Legation or other source I don't know. His primary purpose was to do research into and treat local Saudis afflicted with eye disease -- a common "problem" in Saudi Arabia (as in the case of King Ibn Saud). He took Westerners as "private patients" for minor medical problems. I was extremely fortunate for his availability because, at the time, I came down with "recurrent malaria/dengue fever" (probably picked up during WWII while in the South Pacific). An illness one would not imagine in the desert! A ten or so day "experience" being bedridden. Anyone in the Legation and could travel but had a serious medical problem was immediately flown to the American Hospital in Beirut. While on leave there I had to be treated for acute amoebic dysentery. (NOTE: Again, several years later while on assignment in Bombay, India).

May 14, 1948, Jerusalem, Palestine (later Israel).

On May 11, 1948 the Department advised I was to proceed to the American Consulate General, Jerusalem. As no commercial airlines flew into Jerusalem, on May 11 I flew SAA to Beirut, Lebanon and reported to the Legation for further instructions. . On May 11 aboard the U.S. Air Attaché's plane, along with several other males, flew into the Jerusalem Airport. The ACG's females (whether wives or staff I did not know) loaded on the plane and off they went!

(NOTE: At this time and since the World War I "Mandate" Palestine was "governed" by the British and was to end on May 15, 1948. Any remaining civilian or military were, allegedly, supposed to depart by that date. They were mostly located in the "Old City".

We were then driven to the ACG (American Consulate General) where we were introduced to Consul General Thomas Wasson (who was assassinated a short time later by person or persons unknown -- a whole separate "story"), most of the rest of the U.S. staff (no Jewish non Palestinian nationals were employed at the time). Again driven to a nearby mansion (flying the U.S. flag -- another "story") where we were left to "live" during our assignments.

May 15, 1948: All hell broke out! The Jewish/Arab War had started!

Apparently the British in the “Old City” had “sneaked out” during the night and the British trained Jordanian Army, along with other Arab national military and irregulars had “taken over” the “Old City”, sealed it off and manned its walls (facing Jewish Jerusalem) with machine guns, mortars and personnel.

A personal “incident” occurred the day we were driven to our residence. Passing the Terra Sancta College and standing in its entrance was a Franciscan priest talking to some students. I thought I recognized him. The next morning coming out of the house he was standing in the back yard of the school’s fencing talking with some of my colleagues. Looking at him, I walked up, excused and introduced myself and said “Father, if I remember correctly, the last time I saw you, you were saying Mass at the U.S. Air Force Headquarters on Morotai, Moluccas Islands during WWII”. He replied “Yes, how do you know?” (NOTE: It happened that I, along with a special detachment from a U.S. Army Signal Company assigned to General McArthur’s Chief Signal Officer at Hollandia, New Guinea had been detached to Section 22, U.S. Air Force, Morotai. The detachment was assigned to pick up Japanese code (and similar messages). We had a short but interesting conversation. Unfortunately, it was the one and only time I spoke with him -- no explanation. (NOTE: Several years later when visiting Washington I called to Franciscan Monastery about Father Patrick Coyle. I was advised that he had remained in Jerusalem studying ecclesial law, returned home for a short period, returned to Jerusalem and died). (NOTE: At this point and until I departed there were too many other “stories”, “happenings” and “incidents” to add to this letter making it far too long!).

As my “services” were no longer required and a Truce was upcoming I prepared to return to Jeddah.

At this point, a “Robert Ripley” item of interest is worth noting: The central telephone system for all of Jerusalem was located in the “Old City” occupied by the Jordanian Army! The ACG was within the Jewish Section, on the border of “no man’s land” and facing the “Old City”. The ACG still had telephone contact and service with both sections.

The former senior ACG gardener who resided in the “Old City” was contacted and requested to arrange transportation for me out of the Jewish Section and into the “Old City” for me to proceed to Amman, Jordan. With the Truce in force, I was then driven through the Jewish “lines” to, I think, the “Mount of Olives” where the Truce Center was located at the “Red Cross Center”. I had been met by the gardener and two mules -- apparently one was for me to ride and one for baggage. With Mr. Wasson’s “fate” in mind, I decided to walk. Entering the “Old City” we went to the Jordanian Army headquarters where I was introduced to the area’s military commanding Officer, Major Abdullah el Tel. He had, apparently, been advised by the Acting Consul General of my trip and was carrying a U.S. diplomatic pouch. (NOTE: Major el Tel spoke excellent English as a result like most Jordanian senior officers, had been trained in the British Military Academy. At this point it is pertinent to comment that, several years later I read in a newspaper that a “Col. Abdullah el Tel, Jordanian Army, had been assassinated during a visit to Cairo, Egypt” We had a pleasant conversation when he then arranged for a taxi to drive me to Amman. Baggage loaded, said “goodbye”, got in the taxi and off we went! The road from Jerusalem was

lined, off and on, with military troops, irregulars and trucks of “supplies” headed for the “Old City”. Arriving at the U.S. Legation, Amman and reporting in, I was advised they had been alerted for my arrival. Unfortunately, due to current events, they had no room for me for the night but had made arrangements for “space” for me at a nearby local hotel. Also I was told plane reservations had been made for me the next morning to Cairo. Leaving my baggage and pouch at the Legation, I was driven to the “hotel” located above several stores. The “space” was NOT a room but a canvas army cot in the major hallway -- NO sheets, pillow nor blanket -- no bathroom nor “privacy”! Arab troops and irregulars heavily armed roamed up and down the hall all night as I was “attempting” to get some sleep. Thank God time, finally, came for the Legation car to pick me up, pick up baggage and pouch and go to the airport. So far -- no lunch, dinner nor breakfast nor, more importantly, the use of a bath room! Checking in at the Lebanese Airline counter I, finally, had the use of a toilet. Loaded on a two engine “puddle jumper” (I think it carried 50 passengers) off we went! Met at the airport in Cairo, I was taken to the Legation, relieved of my pouch, made arrangements for my onward travel after a couple days annual leave and then driven to my favorite hotel in Cairo -- a Swiss operated “haven”! When my leave was over I flew by SAA back to Jeddah.

Usual “routines” again in force but, actually pleased to be back to “normal life”!

November 13, 1948: Legation advised by the Department I was temporarily assigned to the U.S. Delegation at the UNESCO Conference Beirut, Lebanon. Nov. 15 I flew to Beirut aboard SAA, reported to the Legation, received instructions, rented a room, proceeded to the delegation’s offices at the Conference for further instructions and then returned to the Legation where I was to work. An interesting assignment, nothing spectacular and strictly “routine”. One week of daytime work, spending “free” time with Lebanese friends, wonderful French food, a little swimming at the St. George Hotel beach -- although I did not stay there on this trip but at the Hotel Normandy and, after one week, returned by SAA to Jeddah.

My life again back to normal and as Christmas and New Year was looming everyone in the Christian community prepared to celebrate. So started our “holiday” social life -- small gifts to/from friends, get togethers, cocktail parties and dinners -- all the every day social routines for being in an ancient “outpost” of the U.S. Foreign Service. Plus, of course, the continuation of our “official” duties!

HAPPY NEW YEAR 1949!

After almost 19 months of Jeddah and assignments, my “Merry Christmas” and “Happy New Year’s” present arrived -- “direct” transfer orders to the American Consulate General, Bremen, Germany!

The timing turned out perfect for me! Contacting the local representative of the Dutch Rotterdam Lloyd Shipping, the Legation was informed a passenger vessel en route from Indonesia en route for Rotterdam was due to arrive in several days. Aboard were Indonesians coming for and to attend THE major annual Moslem “Holiday” and Hajj. Also aboard were Dutch nationals who were “voluntarily” leaving Indonesia as it was about to get its independence from Holland. A cabin was booked for me.

I was given a few “going away affairs” from friends and Minister Childs. The “M/S SLAMAT” of “RLSC” arrived on January 15, 1949 and started to offload its Indonesian passenger “Pilgrims”.

JANUARY 17, 1949

I said “goodbye” to some friends ashore and again to several who had come out on the Legation launch to “see me off”.

I have to admit the departure was with some regret! My assignment to Jeddah and this part of the world, at the time, was a true experience and without a doubt a most interesting “adventure”!

But now I was, I hoped, heading for a new “adventure”!

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My U.S. Foreign Service “adventures” from 1947-1972 included: STATE: Jeddah, Jerusalem, Beirut, Bremen, Athens, Bombay, Buenos Aires and Beirut. USOM/AID: Benghazi/Tripoli, Taiwan, Seoul, Bangkok, Saigon and Washington. After a total of 33 and 1/2 years Federal and World War II “service”, I retired at 55 years old!

I “loved” almost every minute of my foreign assignments! It was an exciting, educational and a wonderful “adventure”! Even now: at my age, I miss it!

Since retiring my wife and I tried to “settle down” in Florida (my home), North Carolina and Virginia -- just could not seem to make it “final”. Our three wonderful children (two girls & one boy) moved on and gave us four fantastic grandchildren and they gave us three beautiful great grandchildren. My wife died and is in a Columbarium in Arlington National Cemetery (where I will be in time). I have toured Canada and Alaska, three times to France (my wife’s former country), Belgium and Holland; and, have taken four cruises. Now, partially handicapped but still driving, I reside in an apartment by my eldest daughter. Driving is now relegated to local area “trips” and one week at the Jersey shore with the Family. Every few months I do drive to Arlington National Cemetery to “visit” with my wife and nearby younger daughter. I drove one time to visit with my son in Indiana.

One could say, finally, that I am at “home”!

**HERMANN FREDERICK EILTS**  
**Economic/Political Officer**  
**Jeddah (1948-1950)**

**Arabian Peninsular Affairs**  
**Washington, DC (1960-1961)**

**Ambassador  
Saudi Arabia (1965-1970)**

*Ambassador Hermann Frederick Eilts was born in Germany in 1922. He received a B.A. degree from Ursinus College and an M.A. degree from the School for Advanced International Studies. Ambassador Eilts was a First Lieutenant in the U.S. Army from 1942 to 1945. He joined the Foreign Service in 1947. His overseas career included posts in Iran, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, England, Libya, and Egypt. He was the ambassador to Egypt from 1974 to 1979. Ambassador Eilts was interviewed by William Brewer in 1988.*

*Q: I see that your first assignment was in Tehran after which you were assigned to the embassy in Jeddah. I wondered particularly; you may have some other things you wish to say about either of these assignments; but one thing occurs to me. At that early stage in Saudi Arabia, ARAMCO, the Arabian-American Oil Company, had been active there for some years and had kind of carried the flag, and represented America, and the embassy was something a little new and surprising and different. I wonder if you have any comments on that. Was there any friction, any problem, or did it facilitate the embassy's duty that this happened this way?*

EILTS: I think generally speaking, at least during my first period in Jeddah, the relationships between what was first a Legation and then became an Embassy, and the ARAMCO officers were pretty good. There was not a great deal of difficulty. Nevertheless, it was clear that the ARAMCO people, many of whom had been there for many years, knew much about Saudi Arabia, had a reservoir of information on Saudi Arabia and had been the principal and initial elements in the association between the United States and Saudi Arabia, thought of themselves as the authorities on the Kingdom. I think it was largely the work of Rives Childs, first as Minister, then as Ambassador, who was gradually able to put it across to the Saudi Arabian authorities at the time that if they were talking about oil matters, that was something they should discuss with ARAMCO; if they were talking about political matters, anything of that sort and the assistance that they might want from the United States, then they should come to him. It took a little while to bring that about, but I think it was helped by a negative development. By the negative development, I mean that in the period '47-'48 in particular, the Arab-Israeli crisis broke out. Israel was created in 1948 and the Saudis were very upset. The Saudis were upset about the American position and Amir Faisal, who at that time was Foreign Minister, felt that Secretary of State Marshall had betrayed him in what the U.S. had done in approving UN Resolution 181, which created a Jewish state. Marshall had not in any way tried to do that. Nevertheless that was the Saudi feeling: a strong sense of Saudi bitterness toward the U.S. manifested itself. Clearly this was an issue that ARAMCO was not anxious to get itself involved in. ARAMCO was only too happy to let the Legation, later the Embassy, handle such discussions. And out of all of this then came a gradual realization by the Saudi authorities that they had to deal with official U.S. representatives. This was also because the Foreign Ministry was in Jeddah and ARAMCO's main offices were, of course, in Dhahran, where there were no Foreign Ministry representatives, the Saudi government too came to realize that foreign relations, issues, not only those with the United States, should be handled through the Embassy.

Now for a long period of time it was still clear that ARAMCO had much more information on Saudi Arabia than the Embassy did. But as time went along, this changed. We sent a series of really outstanding officers to Saudi Arabia in those early days. And it wasn't too long before the officers at the American Embassy in Jeddah could provide as much information on Saudi Arabia, and indeed perhaps more, especially with respect to Saudi foreign relations -- Saudi relations with the Arab states, Saudi attitudes toward the Palestinian issue -- much more than ARAMCO could. And out of that the twin pronged dialogue continued, the Saudis dealing with the Embassy on political matters, with ARAMCO on petroleum matters. The two sides were perfectly willing to let this arrangement go on. There was one exception when the Buraymi issue came up in 1950 with the British, it was ARAMCO that was very much involved in that and took some steps to prepare studies for the Saudi Arabian government. ARAMCO's action, it could be argued, went beyond, at least in my judgement, the legitimate functions of an oil company. The research division of ARAMCO was superbly staffed and had done tremendous work on the loyalties of the tribes in the last century and the present century. All of this became part of the Saudi Arabian "memorial" presented to an arbitral tribunal. But that was the one exception where ARAMCO, it seems to me, got into the political arena and went out ahead of anything the United States Government or the American Embassy considered appropriate.

*Q: Buraymi is of course an oasis area in eastern Arabia south of the Trucial Coast. After your assignment in Jeddah, in 1950 you were then at long last actually given Arabic training by the Department of State in Washington and at the University of Pennsylvania, I believe.*

EILTS: That's true.

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*Q: Now we turn next to your next assignment. You moved sort of laterally, as I recall. Remaining in the Department, you became officer-in-charge of Arabian Peninsula affairs in February-March 1960, so that you were then back on an area where you had served. Without going into great detail, perhaps, is there something that sticks in your mind about that period of service, operating in that office?*

EILTS: I did come back into NE and it was because of my previous service in Saudi Arabia and in Aden and in Yemen. But I guess I ought to add that shortly after I took over the Arabian desk job, I was also asked to take on the job of Near Eastern Regional Affairs, which had to do particularly with Palestinian refugees. You remember the late Jim Ludlow, who had formerly had the job. Then Under Secretary Douglas Dillon was dissatisfied with the way Palestine affairs were being handled and insisted on a management change. As a result, the NE Regional Affairs responsibility was assigned to me along with Arabian Peninsula affairs.

On the Arabian Peninsula assignment I guess the most interesting and in a sense the most frustrating came with the Kennedy administration, which had a confused policy on Saudi Arabia. There were two conflicting themes that existed. One, in the person of Under Secretary Chester Bowles, who may have been a very, very fine person but was also the most god-awful administrator that I have ever seen, who thought that the Saudi government was a feudal monarchy in the worst possible sense. He simply would not approve any policy paper that went up. It would get stuck in his box. I remember on four or five occasions being personally called by

Secretary Rusk, who had given instructions through channels for something to be done on Saudi Arabia or whatever it might be. They were not necessarily major things. "Where is the paper that I asked for?" he would angrily ask. Invariably it had been sent up, through channels, anywhere from two to three weeks before, but when it got to Bowles it had gotten stuck. He had not done anything about it; he hadn't liked it; but he hadn't said no and he hadn't said yes. So it just got stuck there.

And Rusk would then say, "Well, send me a copy." So we started going around Bowles. Bowles was regularly negative with respect to Saudi Arabia. "These fellows can't drink their oil," was the kind of comment that he used to make.

The other side of the coin was Kennedy himself. I don't think Kennedy knew very much about Saudi Arabia. Moreover, Kennedy was one of those who argued that greater democracy should be established in various Middle Eastern states -- Saudi Arabia was one. But somehow the Saudi Ambassador in Washington was able from time to time to influence him. On one occasion the Saudi Ambassador came to Kennedy and complained that it was taking six, seven, eight months and even longer to get some aircraft, some fighter aircraft that we had promised to sell to the Saudis. Kennedy took this to heart and decided to do something about it. And his way of doing so was, instead of calling either the Secretary of Defense or the Secretary of State, who were after all Cabinet members, to call me as the Desk Officer and demand to know, "Why is it taking so long to deliver those aircraft?" As though I, as Saudi Arabia Desk Officer, had anything to do with the speed of facilitating the aircraft delivery. And when I explained that it was a matter for the Pentagon, the President's instructions to me were, "Well, go and see MacNamara and tell him to get those airplanes to Saudi Arabia right away." It was a very unorthodox way of operating.

On the one hand, Bowles, as I say, clamped down on everything having to do with Saudi Arabia. The President, on the other hand, asked the desk officer to do something about it. When Rusk heard about these direct presidential calls, he was upset because of the channels that were used. I went over to the Pentagon and tried to tell people there (I could not see MacNamara) "The President has called me to say the aircraft should be delivered immediately." Not surprisingly they wouldn't believe me. I must say if I had been they, I wouldn't have believed what I was saying to them either. Eventually those planes, thanks to Kennedy's intervention, were delivered. This was not because of me, I obviously couldn't get the Pentagon to hurry, but I had had to report to the President and give Pentagon reaction. I did that and he arranged with MacNamara for the shipment to be expedited.

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*Q: Ambassador Eilts, in your mission to Saudi Arabia what was your primary aim?*

EILTS: Well, I suppose the primary aim was to continue the close relationships that the United States and Saudi Arabia had enjoyed for a long period of time. The issue had become a bit complicated because of differences between the United States Government, the Kennedy administration and subsequently the Johnson administration, and the Saudi Arabian government, and particularly King Faisal, over the issue of Yemen. As we discussed earlier, the United States had recognized the Yemen Arab Republic. The Saudi government strongly supported the



Yemeni royalists, and we were trying to persuade the Saudis to cool it a bit in order to help negotiate a settlement of the kind that we felt was desirable; i.e., some kind of acceptance by the Saudis of the Yemen Arab Republic. The Saudis would have none of it for reasons of their own. We clearly had a divergence of interests on this whole issue of Yemen.

The problem was, given the very deep Saudi feelings on the Yemeni issue, which were far deeper than anything we had in the United States, and the fact that we had these divergent outlooks, keeping our relationship sufficiently close so that a dialogue could continue on trying to find some mutual accommodation on the Yemen issue. That was the primary mission in that early period.

When I arrived in Jeddah -- I remember arriving on a Thursday, the following day was Friday, the Moslem Sabbath -- I had assumed that since it was also the month of Ramadan at the time, that I would not have to present my credentials to the King for a week or ten days. Well, as it turned out, I received word on Friday that the King wanted me to come the following day and present credentials, which I then did. But the credentials presentation ceremony was very, very short indeed because the King wanted to sit and talk about Yemen. He pulled me aside right afterward, took me into his office, and for two hours talked about Yemen and what he felt was the shortsightedness of the American position on Yemen. He obviously had some of the same worries that I did, that the friendship between the two nations was threatened by this very significant difference over Yemen. By that time the American mediation mission, headed by Ellsworth Bunker, had for a period of time thought it had had a success. The Egyptians and the Saudis had agreed to have the conference at Haradh in Yemen and to try to resolve the issue through negotiation. Each was, of course, pushing its particular set of Yemeni clients...

*Q: Excuse me. You're speaking of approximately November 1965.*

EILTS: Each was pushing its respective clients; the Egyptians, the Republicans in Yemen, the Saudis, the Royalists. These two parties, theoretically at least were to sit down and work out a mutual accommodation. By the time I arrived in Saudi Arabia, Faisal had come to the conclusion that President Nasser of Egypt had reneged on that arrangement. Instead of carrying through the promises, additional Egyptian troops had been sent into Yemen and the Egyptians showed no signs, at least as Faisal saw it, of wanting to convene the Haradh conference. So the Bunker mediation idea, which the United States Government had catalyzed and supported, seemed to be falling apart. "Where do we go now" was the issue that was very much on Faisal's mind.

*Q: Leaving aside the Yemen issue, in the period that you were in Saudi Arabia, how would you view the Saudi role in area affairs? Did they play really a very major or significant role?*

EILTS: There are two answers to that question. In terms of the Arab-Israeli problem, the Saudi role was minimal. The Saudis supported the Palestinians, they supported the Arab cause, but prior to the June '67 war it was Nasser and Egypt who were in the van on the Arab side of the Arab-Israeli problem. As a matter of fact, Faisal and the Saudis, along with other principalities in the Gulf region, continued to be severely criticized by Nasser as reactionaries. Nevertheless, they certainly supported the Arab cause. In another sense, and largely as a reaction not to Israel, but to Nasser, the Saudi role in regional affairs was much more prominent. In order to counter the

Nasser criticisms of Saudi Arabia presumably being reactionary, Faisal in effect organized what he called Islamic Unity, not Pact as some have called it, but an Islamic organization. This included not only Arab states but also other Islamic states. And while that Islamic organization was never a major element in international affairs, it did for the period, say late '66 into '67 up to the June '67 war when everything changed, it did represent a balancing influence to Nasser's Pan-Arabism, against which Faisal's Pan Islamic movement was stacked. In that sense, in the Islamic sense, Saudi Arabia did play a much more significant regional role than it did in Arab affairs.

*Q: Perhaps we should now ask about the impact of the '67 war on Saudi Arabia. In particular it has always interested me why the Saudi government did not in fact invoke the oil sanction against the west at that time?*

EILTS: Well, it did do so. For a period of about two weeks the Saudi government did embargo all oil shipments to the United States. I remember when Faisal told me about this he said, "I don't want to do this, but I have to because of domestic pressures within the country itself." Faisal had been out of Saudi Arabia at the time the June war started. Immediately after the war began there were rather strong demonstrations in various parts of Saudi Arabia against the United States, which was seen as the close friend of Israel. In Dhahran the ARAMCO compound was overrun by mobs, the American military mission at the Dhahran airfield was overrun. In Jeddah one of the buildings at my Embassy was bombed. The Raytheon offices in Jeddah were bombed. The United States military training mission offices in Jeddah were bombed. By the time he came back -- Faisal came back to Saudi Arabia within a matter of days after the June war broke out, it was clear to him that there was tremendous public sentiment against the U.S., not only on the part of the Saudi public at large, but on the part of the Saudi military as well. While one does not normally think of the Saudi military as a strong influence in political affairs, in the wartime situation that existed the Saudi military and its views played a part. The broadcasts that were coming from Arab radios, including the Saudi radio, in those first days was that Egypt had shot down 40 planes, Syria 15, Jordan a dozen or more, even little Lebanon 2. So it looked as though a massive Arab victory was about to take place. Nobody would believe suggestions that all of this kind of propaganda simply was not true. The Saudis wanted to believe otherwise. The Saudi army wanted so much to be part of the victory and this was part of the pressure on Faisal.

When Faisal came back, in order to respond to this pressure, in order to show dissatisfaction with the United States and its support for Israel, he placed an embargo on us. He ordered ARAMCO to do it. As it turned out, the embargo lasted only ten days -- eleven days -- but it didn't matter very much. Moreover, it was an embargo that was breached in many ways. We, for example, had some destroyers -- two destroyers -- in the Red Sea. We had deployed them in the latter part of May of '67 largely to assist the Saudis who were being pressed by the Egyptians in southern Jizan and the Najran areas. We had even sent one with an Admiral aboard into Jizan harbor. Then came the war and the resultant oil embargo imposed upon us because of Saudi public feeling that we were supporting Israel. We still had two of our ships in the Red Sea.

I remember going to Faisal and saying, "We've got to bunker these ships, otherwise they are dead in the water." Faisal called in his oil Minister, Yamani, and the three of us worked out a scheme whereby our naval ships were not permitted to come into Jeddah, as had been allowed before, but the Saudis would send out an oil barge in the middle of the night in order to bunker the ships. In

that way he was assisting us. He recognized that, but he was not doing it in a visible fashion, which might have stirred public opinion. But for ten-eleven days until the war was over -- it ended quickly, of course -- the embargo was retained.

How else did the war affect things? I said before that, prior to the '67 war, Saudi Arabia's role in the Arab-Israeli context had been limited. Its leadership role had been in the Islamic rather than the Arab context. With the disastrous defeat that Egypt and Nasser suffered, and the Khartoum conference -- first the Foreign Ministers, then the Chiefs of State -- that was called a few months later to consider the situation in the Arab world, the Saudi role suddenly became prominent again. It would be wrong to say that Faisal was the leader of the Arab world, but because Saudi Arabia had the money, and Egypt did not, it was King Faisal at Khartoum who persuaded the Libyan and the Kuwaiti leadership to join with Saudi Arabia in providing large amounts of money to Egypt to assist Egypt during the period the Suez Canal was closed and during which transit income from the Suez Canal was not available to Egypt.

From that point on, the Saudi role in Arab affairs, not just Islamic, but in Arab affairs in general did go up. The Saudis were strongly anti-Israeli, but they never assumed for a minute that they had any capability to do anything about Israel. So their leadership in Arab affairs took two forms. One, they were the financiers of Nasser and to a lesser extent of Jordan and Syria. And two, they were strongly anti-Israeli, pressed us to do something to get Israel out of the Arab areas that Israel had occupied. That was the principal role that the Saudis played. Nasser had by that time no diplomatic relations with us; he had severed them during the war. So it was largely Saudi Arabia, as the only Arab country that presumably still had good relations with the United States, that played a major role as spokesman for the Arabs.

*Q: Well, you worked very closely as you've indicated with King Faisal during your years as Ambassador to Saudi Arabia. He was certainly a very distinguished Arab leader. I wonder what you might give as your assessment of King Faisal?*

EILTS: I had very high regard for King Faisal. He looked like death warmed over most of the time. He was a cadaverous figure and always remained that no matter how much he might eat. He always looked emaciated. He was a man who had very strong ideas on Islam, Arabism. He was a man who was not given to hasty decisions. He thought things out very, very carefully before he rendered any decision on anything. He was a man of considerable balance, that is, he sought to maintain good Arab relations with the United States despite American support for Israel. And at the same time he worked for Arab unity. It was not a particularly easy thing to carry out these policies. He was a man, as I've already suggested, who was a very devout Muslim, indeed an Islamic fundamentalist -- at least an Islamic fundamentalist in the kind of terms that one would have defined it in the '60s, not an Ayatollah Khomeini type. He was in many ways modern, he had lived and traveled in the West for a long period of time, he knew the West very well, he knew the United States very well. Nevertheless, every time it became an issue of an Islamic principle as opposed to the introduction of the western principle, he would always end up on the Islamic side.

I'm thinking in particular of a case that became very difficult having to do with the American school in Riyadh, which had been permitted and had operated for a good many years. One day

one of the Saudi religious leaders happened to see that there were young girls in the school, and that official complained. He happened to be Director General of Women's Education. Now we thought initially, and certainly the school authorities in Riyadh thought, that this would quickly blow over, and that the King realized it was necessary to have an American school if American expatriates were to be kept there. The next thing we all knew was the school was ordered closed. When I went to King Faisal about this, I found that instead of accepting the point of view that the school was necessary, as far as he was concerned the school authorities had done something that was contrary to Islamic precepts and he was not at all disposed to allow it to reopen.

Here was a case in which on a practical issue involving an Islamic value system and an American value system were in a state of conflict. It took me about four to five months before I could persuade Faisal to find ways and means of reopening that school. Even then it had to be done with women -- when I talk about women, I'm talking about little girls -- and boys segregated. Now that is the kind of thing one would not initially have thought Faisal would feel that strongly about. But that's the kind of person he was.

He had a rather reserved sense of humor. He was a man who was in many ways unlike what one associates with so many Saudi leaders. He was penurious. He was not disposed to throw out riyals to crowds or anything of that sort. The palace that he was building for himself in Jeddah took 13 years to build because he was using only his private money, not public funds. When he finally had it finished, he didn't like it. He never wanted to move into it, and he continued to live in an old house in Jeddah that really was anything but palatial. That was his style. A simple man in his personal tastes, but a man who felt very strongly about Islam and would always side with Islamic precepts. Nevertheless, he sought to move the country forward. We used to say two steps forward, one step back, but at least the overall movement was forward, even though somewhat sluggishly.

*Q: What about any comments on other members of the royal family you may have had close dealings, particularly, for example, the then Prince Fahd?*

EILTS: Fahd at that time was Minister of Interior initially. He was the senior member of the so-called Sudairi Group, the seven full brothers, the largest sibling cluster in the Saud family, the Sudairi Seven. Fahd, although he had supported Faisal at the time Faisal had taken over from the other half-brother, King Saud, was not very close to Faisal. He did not attend, for example, the daily sessions where the princes and others would come to what was called a Majlis, that is to "sit" with Faisal. Fahd never did so. Fahd was seen by Faisal as too liberal. Fahd talked about setting up a more liberal system of government and this was something that Faisal didn't particularly like. Fahd was seen by Faisal as somewhat insolent. When Fahd went abroad for medical treatment, and was allowed, say two weeks off, he would not show up again for six-eight weeks, despite urgent messages from the King, "get back here." While abroad Fahd was involved in gambling, things of that sort, and it wasn't so much that this was unusual, but that the publicity surrounding what Fahd was doing, particularly in Nice, was embarrassing to the family. So the two of them, Faisal and Fahd, were never very close. Indeed, it was necessary for me, as American Ambassador, even though most of my dealings clearly were with Faisal, who was also the Foreign Minister, to make a point from time to time of going to Fahd just to fill him in so that there was no suggestion that the American Ambassador did not recognize Fahd's status.

Fahd, in 1968, I guess it was, became not only Minister of Interior, the job he had had, but also Second Deputy Prime Minister. This happened almost by default. The man who had been Second Deputy Prime Minister, Crown Prince Khalid, a half-brother of the King, intensely disliked cabinet functions. Khalid was not the kind of person who cared about details. So one fine day he told Faisal, "I'm no longer going to continue to preside over the cabinet." Faisal tried to dissuade him, tried to keep him in that office, but Khalid would have none of it. Which suddenly made it necessary for Faisal, who did not have the time himself to attend all cabinet sessions, to name another Deputy Prime Minister.

*Q: Excuse me, I'm sort of confused. Who was the First Deputy Prime Minister?*

EILTS: Khalid. The King himself was both King and Prime Minister. Khalid was the First Deputy Prime Minister, who presided over cabinet sessions most of the time, and he didn't want to continue to do so. He preferred to be on the hunt or something of this sort. It was Khalid, to the surprise of many, and I think in many ways to Faisal's chagrin, who proposed Fahd as Second Deputy Prime Minister. Because Fahd, at the time at least, was one of the more active young princes. And Faisal had reluctantly to agree. So Fahd became Second Deputy Prime Minister and in that function tended to preside over most cabinet sessions. That action, i.e., in effect the designation of Fahd as Second Deputy Prime Minister, was generally recognized by Saudis as meaning that Fahd was a likely successor to the throne. It did not make his succession formal, but as Second Deputy Prime Minister, and given Khalid's indifference to governmental affairs, Fahd was seen from that point on as the likely successor, if not the next time around, the time after.

*Q: Any significant comments on any family member?*

EILTS: On Fahd?

*Q: Or any other member.*

EILTS: Well, I guess the only other one who really made much difference was the full brother of Fahd's, Sultan. He was totally different from Fahd. He was Minister of Defense at that time and he's still Minister of Defense, I guess he's probably the longest serving Minister of Defense in any state today, almost 25 years. He was and is an absolute dynamo of a man, bustling back and forth with an uncanny ability to keep all kinds of complicated issues in his head, but with very few files. And unlike Fahd, Sultan was very much of a conservative similar to what Faisal was. Sultan and Faisal got along well. Sultan regularly went and "sat" with the King. The King had tremendous confidence in Sultan. There were never any of the criticisms, real or implied, that were made against Fahd. Sultan was close to Faisal, and I must say Sultan, in my judgement, has done a great deal for Saudi Arabia over the years.

*Q: In your time there -- of course you had a lot of dealings with Faisal and other members of the royal family, but your channel as I remember it was the Foreign Office which was headed for most of that period by Omar Saqqaf, who, of course, was not a member of the royal family. Was there anything of interest in that relationship? Did he have some influence, or was he a post box,*

*or what?*

EILTS: Saqqaf had a great deal of influence. I've indicated before that Faisal was not only King, but also Prime Minister and Foreign Minister. So Omar Saqqaf was Minister of State for Foreign Affairs. Faisal had enormous confidence in Saqqaf, even though the two were, in terms of personality, totally different. Faisal deputed a great deal to Saqqaf. The Foreign Office was in Jeddah. Faisal spent most of the time during the year, not the summer months, but during the year in Riyadh. That meant one went to Saqqaf for any normal routine business, and Saqqaf was one of those unusual Saudis -- in fact unusual Arabs in any Arab government -- who took responsibility. He would give you decisions, give you answers, at once. He knew a great deal about the royal family, he knew a great deal about what policy was. As a matter of fact, as so often is the case, someone like him helped to formulate policy. When an issue was of sufficient importance that he felt he could not answer it, he'd say, "You better see the King on that." But the relations of Saqqaf and Faisal were good. Faisal had great trust in him. To be sure, Faisal sometimes criticized Saqqaf for not coming to sit with him in this Majlis fashion. Saqqaf would go to Riyadh when he had to, to meet with the King, he never cared for another royal adviser of Faisal's, a doctor Rashad Pharaon, hence Saqqaf would avoid sitting with him. Saqqaf did not want to discuss business in which he was involved -- and I'm talking about official business -- with anybody else around, and he would insist on seeing Faisal alone. That made Saqqaf a bit of a lone wolf in the Saudi elite governmental circle. But despite whatever displeasure Faisal from time to time showed for Saqqaf's independence, he trusted him until the end and gave him pretty much carte blanche authority. So it was possible to deal with Saqqaf and to get answers much more quickly.

True, it was rather an inefficient kind of way, having in mind that the King, the final source of authority was in Riyadh, and the Foreign Office in Jeddah, and the Embassy was also in Jeddah. It was not one of the most efficient ways of getting things done when there were major issues involved. But on a day to day basis it worked very well indeed. Certainly Saqqaf had much more authority than any other member of the Saudi Arabian Foreign Office. Even when you went to one of his Under Secretaries, who theoretically should have had some authority, you could get no answers. On the other hand, from Saqqaf you could always get answers. And I don't remember a single occasion in which Saqqaf gave me an answer to something where perhaps later he had to say, "I'm sorry, I was wrong on that." His answers were invariably upheld by the King.

*Q: I think the final question I have on Saudi Arabia -- you may want to add other things -- is that, as you indicated, the United States support for Israel in the '67 war was a complicating factor in relations with Arab states out there including Saudi Arabia. Was this something that was sort of lasting? You left in 1970 and during that period 1967 to 1970 would you say our relations suffered because of this position that we were increasingly taking?*

EILTS: Well, they certainly were not helped by the position that we were taking, but perhaps they didn't suffer as much as they might have. The thing went through phases. For a period of about six months after the June war, even through the Khartoum conference and to the end of that year, Saudi military officers, for example, would have nothing to do with our Military Training Mission, nothing to do with it. They were bitter about what had happened. Saudi friends, people I had known for many years and worked with all along, would have nothing to do

with me or with Americans. There was a sense of bitterness about the U.S. attitude. It didn't apply to Saqqaf, it didn't apply to the King, it didn't apply to Sultan or Fahd, but generally speaking we were put in a cold freeze for a long period of time. It didn't matter so much because the people in authority were still willing to talk to us and, of course, we were still providing military equipment. This they still wanted.

The second thing that happened during this period, which had already begun during the six months immediately after the war but continued thereafter, was the effort on the part of Faisal to persuade the United States to condemn Israel publicly for having begun the war. He saw the '67 war, the Israeli preemption, as Israeli aggression. The United States took the position that the Egyptian action, Nasser's actions in May, had been what we called a proximate cause of the war and therefore blame should be shared. Faisal, who after Khartoum provided money to Egypt and thus brought about the Egyptian withdrawal from Yemen, causing at least the Saudi-Egyptian clash on Yemen to subside -- Faisal continued to say, "Well, at the moment Nasser is well behaved, but quite frankly once he gets back on top again, he's not going to change. So as far as I'm concerned if you feel that Nasser's actions were a proximate cause of the war, I don't care if you publicly condemn Nasser and the Israelis so long as you include the Israelis in such a public condemnation." We were not willing to do so. The discussions on this went on and on and on and in part became subsumed also in discussions over what UN Resolution 242, the resolution that was passed in the fall of '67 on settling the Arab-Israeli dispute, what was it supposed to do. Its language was vague. Did it mean going back to the '67 borders? As you might imagine, Faisal, and the other Arabs also, saw it as such. There was a sense of disappointment and even bitterness when the United States suddenly indicated that having been responsible for dropping the definite article "those" before the word "territories", that this meant not all of the occupied territory.

So it was a period of considerable tension between the United States and the Saudi government over the issue of what the United States proposed to do in order to undo the consequences of the war. Would it publicly condemn Israel along with Egypt, which Faisal wanted. What did withdrawal from territories mean? Things of that sort. Still, despite all of these things, our relationships remained pretty good.

The Yemeni conflict was still underway, but the Egyptians were out. Faisal was feeling his oats. Essentially, as I look back on it, it was Faisal who was determined, despite Saudi unhappiness, and his own unhappiness about the United States position, to maintain our relationship. I think he was strongly supported in this by Omar Saqqaf, but Saqqaf's influence wasn't that great over matters of this sort, but also by Prince Sultan. Sultan wanted American weapons, wanted arms deliveries to continue. And that was always one of those factors that overrode Saudi unhappiness with our policy vis-a-vis Israel. So on the one hand, you'd get these flashes of lightning from the King and others on what you're doing or not doing with respect to Israel. On the other it was never carried to a point where the basic relationship was so threatened that military aid would no longer be forthcoming.

There was a period when the June war started where the Saudis very seriously considered sending the American Ambassador home. There was nothing personal about this, but simply as a gesture of protest. I think frankly that, if Faisal had been in Saudi Arabia on the first day of the

war, the immediate pressure on him might have required him to do so. By the time he got back two-three days later, there were other things that he had to do and the idea of showing Saudi displeasure by asking the American Ambassador to leave was no longer high on their priority list. But it was a period of considerable tension and it continued to be that into 1970.

UN Resolution 242 was passed, as I pointed out, in November of '67; then the implementation of it, that was agonizing. Then, of course, incidents arose like the burning of the Al Aqsa Mosque about which the King felt very, very deeply, blaming the Israelis for that act. So it was a constant -- the remaining period I was there, '67 to '70 -- it was a constant series of problems large and small having to do with the aftermath of the June war. What do you do about UN Resolution 242, what does it mean? The Israelis are in Jerusalem and this bothered the King terribly because to him Jerusalem was one of the three holy sites of Islam. The idea that it should be in Jewish hands was totally unacceptable.

**DAYTON S. MAK**  
**Administrative Officer**  
**Dhahran (1948)**

**Economic Officer**  
**Jeddah (1948-1949)**

*Dayton S. Mak was born in South Dakota in 1917. He received a B.S. degree from the University of Arizona. After serving in the United States Army during World War II, he joined the Foreign Service in 1946. His career overseas included positions in Germany, Saudi Arabia, Libya, England, Kuwait, and Lebanon. In addition to his assignments abroad, Mak served as Libyan desk officer from 1957 to 1959 and Staff Assistant at the Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs from 1959 to 1961. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1989.*

Q: *And this is 1948. You went first to Dhahran.*

MAK: That's right.

Q: *A post where ten years later I served in Dhahran in 1958.*

MAK: Dhahran in those days was a little Levitt-type town plunked in the desert with hardly anything growing. It was a miserable place; nothing but sand and sandstorms.

Q: *Well, you were there just really a very short time.*

MAK: Yes. We had an inspector come out, Larry Frank, who discovered a lot of things about the consulate. One, that it was no place for an Arabist -- or budding Arabist -- to learn Arabic, because you were living in this community of Americans --



*Q: Described as being equivalent to being stationed in Tulsa.*

MAK: That's right, yes, except not as pretty. Yes, it was really pretty hopeless.

*Q: We're talking because of the American oil camp and all, which dominated the area. There wasn't really much of an Arab community there.*

MAK: No, there wasn't. The only time you ever met any Arabs was when you'd go bouncing over in your balloon tired jeep to Al Khobar, which then looked like an abandoned Hopi village in the west. Or to Dammam, which was full of mud houses and the so-called palace of the Emir Abdul Mohsen bin Jaluwi. It really was no place to learn Arabic, and Larry Frank, God bless him, got me out of there and sent me to Jeddah after about three or four months.

*Q: The ambassador there was Reeves Childs?*

MAK: J. Reeves Childs, yes.

*Q: What was he like to work with?*

MAK: Well, Childs was a jolly fellow. He was very bright and very much down to earth. He let you pretty much do your own things. He did set the guidelines on the reporting that he wanted, but he let you do it. He gave you really full rein. He was very pleasant and he knew how to get along with the Arabs. Furthermore, he knew how to get along with us in this difficult environment. I liked him very much.

*Q: What were you doing?*

MAK: First of all, I was made administrative officer. Mind you, at this time I'd taken and passed the Foreign Service exam in Hamburg, failed the orals, taken the written again, this time passed the orals and was waiting for my appointment as FSO. But the Department didn't have the funds to make all of us Foreign Service Officers, so I was sent out to Dhahran as a staff officer.

*Q: This is a Foreign Service staff officer.*

MAK: Yes, that's right. I was first sent to Dhahran and then transferred to Jeddah, where I was made administrative officer. I did that for a while, and then I was made economic officer. There wasn't a lot of reporting to do. It really turned out to be primarily following up on trade opportunities. Those, strangely enough, turned out to be largely business contacts between Jewish companies in the U.S. who wanted to do business with Arab merchants, primarily to ship them used clothing for resale to pilgrims and others in the Jeddah market.

*Q: I have to add here that even ten years later, pants weren't used, but old coats. You'd see Army coats of every nation there, and vests were a big item and suit coats.*

MAK: Yes. Well, that's exactly it. They never stopped. And those came primarily, in my day anyway, from Jewish merchants in New York.

*Q: Well, you were there in '48, '49, during the formation of Israel. Here you were one of the first group of Arabists and all. What was the attitude of the embassy? Here you were in a country which was just livid because of the creation of Israel. What was the situation as you saw it and the people around you at the embassy saw this recognition of Israel, creation of Israel, and all that?*

MAK: Well, that was interesting. There had been a Saudi contingent to help fight the Israelis, or the Jews, and had just returned, and they returned very, very quietly and were encamped in what they call the gishla. This was an Army barracks near the town wall and near where our embassy was at the time.

The main reaction was one of almost no discernible reaction on the part of the local populace. That did not seem to be a problem to them and they did not seem to be particularly concerned about it. They looked more to their immediate interests, which was trade.

*Q: This is the Hejaz, which is the, I guess we'd call the western part.*

MAK: Right. The Hejazis considered themselves to be sophisticated, where as those out in the Nejd where the Saudis came from -- or where the Saud family came from -- they were considered to be desert, bedouin warriors with no culture. These people in Jeddah were merchants, and they were interested primarily in making money off the hadj and controlling the holy cities of Mecca and Medina.

*Q: The hadj being the pilgrimage, the yearly pilgrimage to Mecca.*

MAK: Their society was built on servicing the pilgrimages, that and playing merchant. They really were not interested on what went on up north, and they were particularly not happy with Egypt and what was going on in Egypt at the time. The Palestine problem did not seem to be of major concern at least as far as we could determine.

*Q: Were the Saudi rulers trying to stir up the populace to turn this into a jihad or not?*

MAK: No. Now, here you're pushing me a little really beyond my knowledge. Our Ambassador Rives Childs, or Hermann Eilts and Bill Brewer, who were in the political section at the time, would have had a better understanding of this than I, but my impression was that the Saudis were interested primarily in, getting the oil going in the eastern province -- solving their production problems with ARAMCO. They were more concerned about distrust of the Hashemites, the rulers of Jordan, their relations with Syria and their dislike of Egypt and the revolutionary forces in control there than anything else. They were looking more for solidifying their own power in their own country than they were getting involved in regional affairs.

*Q: Moving really from the Saudis and all, let's look -- because I think this is important because there's an impression that an Arabist per se as -- I'm speaking of an American Foreign Service person concentrating on the Arabic world -- is opposed to Israel. How did you feel? I mean, this thing happened, this creation of Israel. You and the men who were also becoming Arabists in an*

*Arab capital, how did you feel about this at the time? What was sort of the table conversation about developments there?*

MAK: Do you mean table conversations between us and the local people?

*Q: No. Between you and Hermann Eilts and Bill Brewer and the ambassador and all that.*

MAK: I see. Well, we had all been imbued, associating with Arabs in our studies and so forth, with an understanding of the Arab point of view. As such, we felt that their point of view had been neglected almost completely for political reasons and emotional reasons, having to do with World War II and our American general attitude.

*Q: You're speaking in the United States?*

MAK: In the United States, yes. We felt that the Palestinians had been done in by everybody concerned. We understood the reasons for it and could sympathize with it. Anyone who had been in Germany after the war could sympathize with the plight of the Jews, particularly if you'd been in Hamburg. They tried to run ships from Hamburg to Palestine and some of them were sent back. A lot of were lost. But basically our attitude was pro-Arab. There's no question about that.

*Q: Looking back on it, do you feel that maybe you were overcompensating for the fact that there was an almost dearth of input as far as what the other side of the political clash over Israel was?*

MAK: I don't know whether this is answering your question or not, but in hindsight, I think that we were oversold on the Arab point of view. I'm not saying that I think the Arab point of view is wrong, because for an Arab, it's absolutely right. But for a Jew, on the other hand, his side is absolutely right. I wasn't an Arab or a Jew; I was a State Department officer. And I think it behooves us to follow the policies and act on the policies as established by the people whom we are representing.

And I think that's a lesson to be remembered. It's so easy to live in the Arab world and become more Arab than the Arabs, or live in Austria and become more Austrian, or Holland, more Dutch, any of that thing. It is a disease that is easy to catch in the Foreign Service, or in any other endeavor where you're living with foreign people. You're going to adopt their attitudes toward basic issues.

*Q: For us, we were more or less observers saying, "It's going to happen anyway." What other type of thing did you do?*

MAK: Well, then we had the Persian oil agreement. Mossadegh had been ousted and our oil companies were negotiating with the Persians. The American and the British oil companies were together, and, there again, mine was a time-consuming task. It was just a midnight-oil job. The oil companies would get their negotiating instructions through the State Department channels at midnight, and since I lived a block from the embassy, I would be called to deliver the midnight (NIACT) messages to the American negotiators.

Q: *Night action telegrams.*

MAK: Right. And I would trot over to the embassy in the middle of the night and then trot the messages over to Davies Street, the office of one of the oil companies where the negotiations were being held. This happened night after night after night after night. I was a messenger boy. Just a messenger boy. And about the same time, the British were involved in the Buraymi oases dispute with Saudi Arabia.

Now, Buraymi is, as you know, an oasis in the Southern Arabian peninsula between Abu Dhabi and Oman and Saudi Arabia. And it was thought to be a likely site for oil. The Saudis had claims on it. Abu Dhabi and Oman had claims on it. While the British represented these groups and pressed their claims. The U.S., on the other hand, because of ARAMCO's interest, were supporting the Saudi claims. As a result there was an ongoing dispute and negotiations between ARAMCO and the British and the British and us. There again, we were merely observing and reporting at the embassy, the negotiations being primarily between the ARAMCO (representing the Saudi claims) and the British representing the Abu Dhabi and Omani sheikhs.

We had to keep on top of all this primarily to report to Washington. It was just a reportorial job, but it really brought out a very interesting thing to me, something I hadn't been aware of before or run up against it -- how very sensitive the British were over their protectorates along the Persian or Arabian Gulf and in Southern Arabia.

As a matter of fact one fairly senior officer in the foreign office (Ian Samuel), showing his impatience with our attitude toward the Buraymi problem, said, "You know, Dayton, the greatest mistake we have made in this area was to allow you Americans to open a consulate in Kuwait." I didn't pay much attention to this officer's petulant remark, but it did demonstrate to me the depth of feeling in the British government about our intrusion in their bailiwick, the Persian Gulf and Southern Arabia. That for certain has worked its way out.

Q: *When I was there in '58 to '60, it was still very much resented and particularly our ARAMCO's rather progressive attitude toward Saudi Arabia of trying to share; whereas, the British had very much the colonial attitude and kept feeling that ARAMCO was giving away the store to the detriment of the other oil companies there.*

MAK: That's a point that I've always kept in mind and mentioned to many, many people -- the really intelligent attitude of ARAMCO in dealing with the Saudis. They always dealt with them as partners and never as adversaries, and it made such a vast difference.

Q: *Well, I mean, the answer, of course, is ARAMCO is still there, and many of these other ones are not. I mean, ARAMCO is Saudi, but still it is the same central concern, whereas the other ones are not.*

MAK: They were very wise. I won't go into all the reasons I think they did it, but anyway, that's another story.

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## DHAHRAN AND JEDDAH, SAUDI ARABIA IN 1948 - 1950

### DHAHRAN

The Saudi Arabia of today bears little resemblance to the country I knew in 1948 to 1950. Both the cities of Jeddah or Riyadh, as well as the area known as Dhahran, have grown so tremendously over the years that one would have great difficulty in locating the buildings or even the districts he knew so many years ago. My life in Saudi Arabia began with my assignment as Vice Consul to the American Consulate General at Dhahran, which is located near the Persian Gulf in the Eastern province of al Hassa. Within Dhahran were located the compound of The Arabian American Oil Company (ARAMCO), the Dhahran civil airport and the United States Air Force Dhahran Air Base

I arrived at Dhahran airport the day before Thanksgiving, 1948. I had flown from New York to Cairo and then on to Dhahran, stopping briefly at Aswan and Basra before the final leg of the journey. Shortly after leaving Basra and its vast orchards of date palms, the world suddenly changed from lush green to a world of unrelenting sand, stretching, on the right, into the distance; on the left was a seemingly endless landscape of pale greenish tan, the murky waters of the Persian Gulf. The sight of this vast area of emptiness made my heart sink. The deserts I had known were covered with vegetation and broken by outcroppings of colorful hills and mountains. This desert was a relentless sea of sand stretching as far as the eye could see. Our first indication of human habitation was the appearance of a cluster of buildings perched on an elevation, and in the far distance spots of flame and trails of smoke, the burning gasses in the oil fields. As we approached the coast, another cluster of buildings appeared; this was the Dhahran airport and Air Base.

The acting Consul General, Frances Meloy, and his staff were there on the tarmac to welcome me. I was very grateful for their presence and welcome, and my spirits lifted. After passing through the Saudi document check, we hopped into jeeps and, along with my baggage, made our way over the sandy road to the office of The American Consulate General in Dhahran.

The Consulate building was located on the U.S. Air Base in a World War II Quonset hut, of which many were found on U.S. military installations throughout the world. This was to be not only my working quarters, but also my home. While it was not what one expected a consulate to look like, it was not out of place on an American air base in the deserts of Saudi Arabia. This structure, was appropriately known as the "Quonsulate" My living quarters and those of another officer were in one end of the building, and the consular offices occupied the remainder. Ten steps in the morning and I was at work. Though living and working in a Quonset was not gracious living, it was convenient and acceptable. While most of the staff lived in quarters in the Aramco compound, except for the consul general, we all took our meals at the Airbase mess hall, which was less than a hundred yards from the consulate.

The staff of the consulate consisted of the Acting Consul General, Francis Meloy and four Vice Consuls; Elmer Hulen, John Randolph, Donald Weymeyer and Dayton Mak. I have forgotten the names of the three clerks.

The climate of Dhahran was a problem. While the nights in winter could be cold, the days could also be uncomfortably hot. Yet neither the cold nor the heat was the major source of discomfort - it was the violent sand storms which would suddenly sweep in from the North, whipping the sand in a frenzied cloud, obliterating the landscape and driving sand and dust through doorways, windows and the slightest cracks in a building's structure. Venturing out into such a storm was thoroughly unpleasant and even dangerous, the flying sand obliterating the landscape, stinging ones skin and forcing its way into ears, nose and clothing.

While living conditions were marginal, working in the so Quonsulate was not unpleasant. The workload was not burdensome, and the members of the staff were competent and congenial. Consul General Meloy was a particularly competent and understanding chief, who took great pains to make life for us as agreeable as possible. After living in the quonsulate for several month, I was given quarters on the Aramco compound, sharing a one bedroom house on what was called "Easter Egg Row", a row of small houses painted in pastel shades of green yellow, blue and white. This was a distinct improvement from life in the quonsulate.

Aramco personnel were our primary clients. Their needs were relatively simple, primarily of a routine nature such as renewing passports, authenticating documents, etc. Representational duties consisted primarily of occasional visits to the local Amir in Dammam and a few other Saudi Arabian business and political persons, and we had daily contact with the American Air Force officers, upon whose base the consulate general was located. Reporting to the Department of State on the oil production of Aramco was not a responsibility of the consulate, this being handled by the U.S. embassy in Jeddah with Aramco's Jeddah office, and via Aramco's office in Washington, directly with the U.S. government departments. As the island of Bahrain fell within the Consulate's district, officers from the consulate visited the island on a rotation basis to perform consular services for the American employees of the Bahrain Petroleum company. This was a particularly welcome diversion since Bahrain was a lush, semi-tropical island with a long established business and residential community.

The social life for consulate personnel consisted largely of interaction with Aramco personnel and to a lesser extent with the Air Base personnel. Aramco generously permitted consular personnel to use its handsome club with its swimming pool and tennis courts, and members were welcome at the Officers Club on the base. Visits to typical Arab communities such as the oasis of Qatif and the typical desert towns of Hofuf, Dammam and el Khobar were interesting excursions. Consequently, life in Dhahran, though restricted, was not without compensations. There was, however, little opportunity for contact with local Saudi Arabic speakers, either socially or professionally. After I had been in Dhahran four months, the consulate was visited by a State Department Inspector, who recommended that I be transferred to our Embassy in Jeddah, where I would could make use of my Arabic and increase my proficiency. I was delighted with the prospect, and soon I was off to Jeddah on an Air Force plane.

## JEDDAH

We arrived at Jeddah airport around four in the morning, local time. Though we had left Dhahran at a reasonable hour in the morning, we had gone through several time zones. Furthermore, I

learned that the Saudis in Jeddah set their clocks on sun time, not Greenwich Mean Time. This difference could be a source of confusion. The Saudis and most of the foreign community reset their watches each day at sundown. A cannon boom announced the beginning of a new day for the Saudis, who set their watches to midnight. The rest of us set our watches at six o'clock in the evening. The Saudi Arabian Airline, flown by American pilots of TWA, operated on Greenwich Mean Time "plus", and the US Air Force, based in Dhahran, used its own GMT based time. Bechtel Corporation, the American construction company doing major work in Jeddah, had its own time, also based on GMT. One had always to be conscious of these different times in scheduling appointments.

The Jeddah airport where we landed consisted of an airstrip and a small shed, which served as ticket office and waiting room. The Bechtel company was already building a large new airport to handle the growing number of annual pilgrims, but it was nowhere in sight at that time. I was met by the Administrative officer of the embassy and, after collecting my footlocker, we proceeded along the dusty road into the city of Jeddah. At that time, Jeddah was a small city of perhaps forty thousand. While the old city wall which had defined its limits had recently been torn down, the city had grown very little outside its perimeter. As one approached the city from the airport one was struck by the strange beauty of the place, this vast bulk of tall white buildings huddled together thrusting themselves into the air, gleaming in the intense sunlight. The difference between Jeddah and Dhahran was striking. Here was an old, long established city, so different from the new, artificial community I had just left. Entering the city through what had been a city gate, I felt that I was about to begin a strange and wonderful life in world I could scarcely imagine.

On either side of the road were these four storied, white, balconied structures, leaning over narrow, winding streets, barely wide enough for two donkey drawn carts to pass. Passing through the gate, we drove into a large open square, enclosed on all sides by more of these typical Jeddah residences and arrived at the American Embassy, also a typical Jeddah residence. On one side of the square was the Jeddah hotel, a converted residence, and next to it the "Staff House", where several of the embassy staff were housed. It then being only about four o'clock in the morning local time, the only persons in sight was a group of young Arab laborers engaged in maneuvering a large double-door safe up a flight of steps into the embassy offices.

I was taken by the administrative officer to a building adjoining the chancery, it too a typical Jeddah residence. I was pleasantly surprised to find a spacious living-dining room with ceilings at least fifteen feet in height, and walls paneled roughly in teak wood. The apartment consisted of one large room running the full length of the building. It was furnished at one end with a dining table and chairs, the rest contained a sofa and several upholstered chairs, lamps and small tables. A small alcove at one end held an electric refrigerator and storage space. The apartment opened onto a balcony overlooking the street below, offering a view of the buildings opposite and a truncated view of the Red sea in the distance. Off of the dining room was the small bedroom with bath attached. The bedroom held the sole air conditioner of the apartment, the other rooms being cooled by large overhead fans.

As Jeddah had no municipal water supply, water for the bath and the kitchen was pumped up from a water tank located behind the building. The tank was filled daily by a water carrier, who

would draw water from his donkey-drawn tank into a gasoline container, which he emptied into the tank. It was then pumped up to the roof. Gravity propelled the water down to the kitchens and bathrooms below when was needed. The source of the water was a distant stream bed or “wadi”, from which water was piped to a central point near the perimeter of the city. There water carriers filled their water tanks and deliver the water throughout the city in their carts, one can at a time. The price per can of water was one riyal, or about thirty cents.

As the kitchens were located on the top floor of the building, the food had to be carried up and down several flights of stairs. Our building, known as Beit Thani, was a typical Jeddah residence. The ground floor was used as a store room, and was largely populated by rats; the second floor contained two apartments similar to mine; the third held my apartment and another; and the fourth, or top floor, contained the kitchens and accommodations for the servants. Our building was connected to the Chancery building by an open balcony. Both buildings were typical Jeddah residences, four stories high, each with a massive entry door of teak wood, beautifully carved in oriental design, and windows and balconies decorated in teak latticework.

Jeddah had no central electricity, and only merchants and a few of the wealthier citizens had generators to provide light and cooling, the general populace relying on oil lamps for lighting and roof-top sleeping for cooling at night. The embassy, like many commercial and foreign establishments, had its own generators, providing electric light and air-conditioning. These generators were located in the square opposite the embassy in the embassy motor pool. A staff of one American and two Italian workers assured us of electric power for our lights and air conditioners. The embassy had one telephone, which was of limited utility, the primary mode of communication being messengers. To reach the Foreign Office via telephone a Saudi assistant would furiously turn the crank of the telephone box, shouting “Ya markaz, ya markaz” until the central operator responded. No one else in the embassy was tempted to initiate a telephone call. The streets of Jeddah had no formal names and consequently no street addresses. The location of residence and commercial establishment was the name of the owner. To local Jeddawis, the address of the American Embassy was simply “Beit Batterjy”, the house of Mr. Batterjy. Since all mail was sent and received via a central post office, addresses were not needed. Jeddah had no paper currency, business being conducted in gold and silver coins – the gold sovereign and the Saudi silver riyal. Maria Theresa thalers were common, as were gold coins of small denominations. Our semi-monthly pay was given to us in bags of Saudi riyals

While each member of the embassy staff had an air conditioner in his bedroom, only the ambassador’s office was so equipped. Large overhead fans did the cooling for the rest. While such working conditions would not be acceptable today, in 1949 the lack of air conditioning was not unusual, and we did not consider ourselves particularly deprived. An exception, however was our newly arrived, middle aged Deputy Chief of Mission, who arrived in Jeddah from a comfortable environment in Europe.. He arrived on a hot, steamy day and was shown to his apartment on the second floor of Beit Thani, as it was called. The apartment had been thoroughly cleaned in anticipation of his arrival. Sadly, the day before his arrival, Jeddah experienced a severe sand storm, which took care of the careful cleaning and scrubbing that had been done. Instead of a clean, presentable place to live, he entered a dust filled, dirty apartment. To add to his distress, in the middle of the floor lay the remains of a dead fish, left by a resident stray cat as a welcoming gift.



Despite the lack Western type theaters, restaurants, playing fields, parks or other kinds of public entertainment facilities, there was nevertheless an active social life among the members of the foreign diplomatic and commercial communities. The British and Dutch both had embassies, as did several Middle Eastern countries. There was a substantial foreign business community including the American companies Aramco, Bechtel and TWA; the British companies Mitchell-Cotts, Gelatley-Hankey and the Saudi Arabian Mining Syndicate (SAMS); the Dutch had their Bank; and the French maintained a presence via their Banque de l'Indochine. In those days foreigners were permitted to import alcoholic beverages, though it was forbidden to the local Saudis and other Moslems. Consequently, there was considerable partying among the foreign groups. Our ambassador received by diplomatic pouch from the USIS office in Beirut current American films, which were shown on Sunday evenings on the roof of the residence, located a short distance outside the city. Members of the foreign community were welcome at these showings, but local Saudis were prohibited by law from attending.

The import of alcoholic beverages was permitted to embassies and foreign business companies at that time in Saudi Arabia. However, the murder of a British Consul by a young Saudi Prince brought that privilege to an end. The consul had befriended several of the Saudi Princes and socialized with them frequently, alcoholic drinks playing a part in these social activities. One young prince, enraged by the consul's refusal to give him a bottle of whiskey, followed him to his apartment and shot him dead. The King dealt "definitively" with the prince. Until very recently, the import of alcohol was totally forbidden.

The staff of the Embassy consisted of Ambassador J. Rives Childs; political officer and acting Deputy Chief of Mission, Donald Bergus; Deputy Chief of Mission, Heyward Hill; political officers, Hermann Eilts and William Brewer, economic officer Dayton Mak, an administrative officer, two secretaries and three clerks. Though small, it was an efficient and compatible group which worked well in the sometimes difficult environment. All participated in the social activities of the community.

While facilities for recreation were limited, Jeddah had the Red Sea as a source of recreation. Its coral reefs with their underwater vegetation and exotic sea life made trips on the sea a source of pleasure. The fishing was excellent, and the nearby sandy islands were ideal for picnicking, swimming and sunbathing. Some years past, the U.S. Navy had given the embassy a launch, which was a great source of pleasure. The ambassador regularly invited members of the staff to accompany him on fishing excursions, and on occasion, they were permitted to take the launch and its one man crew on visits to the islands. Several other organizations had launches, and members of the embassy were invited on outings to the islands. The British firm, Saudi Arabian Mining Syndicate (SAMS), whose compound was located on the outskirts of the city, had two tennis courts, and embassy personnel were welcome to play on these courts. Occasionally SAMS personnel invited members of our staff to pay overnight visits to their gold mining operations in the interior of the province. The British Locust Mission, encamped in the desert a few miles from the city, also likewise invited us to spend the night at their compound and visit their operations in the desert. Picnicking in the desert was also popular.

Social interaction with the local Saudi population was slight and was limited to members of the

commercial community, most of whom represented American or European companies. Entertainment by these merchants consisted of typical Saudi dinners, beginning with a ceremonial tea service, followed by a generous spread of roast sheep, chicken, offerings of mounds of variously flavored rice, a variety of vegetables and a local version of yogurt. This feast was followed by a variety of sweets, and ended with Arabic coffee, served in small porcelain cups. These were impressive feasts, and an invitation to them was prized.

While other contacts with the local community were rare, one was free to visit the local shopkeepers and try out one's Arabic language ability. The merchants appeared receptive to conversation of small talk about the weather or other minor subjects and were probably amused by my struggle to make myself understood in my basic Syrian Arabic. One was always welcomed with an offer of tea or coffee. These merchants were tolerant, and I appreciated the chance to exercise my limited language ability.

The American and other foreign ladies in Jeddah were treated to a special kind of entertainment as guests of wives of local Saudi officials. The four wives of the very important (and very rich) Minister of finance entertained the ladies on several occasions. According to an American wife who attended several of these events, the party would customarily begin at sundown and continued through the late hours. Saudi ladies, who had arrived wearing the prescribed covering garments, promptly discarded these robes, revealing the latest fashions of Paris and a brilliant collection of fashionable, expensive, jewelry. The ladies would then proceed to dance with one another, presumably dancing to the music of forbidden phonograph records.

King ibn Saud (Abdul Aziz), was the ruler of Saudi Arabia during my stay in the country. Ambassador Childs would occasionally visit the king at his palace in Riyadh, where he preferred to live. On such occasions the ambassador invited a member of the staff to accompany him. The king's court would specify precisely when the ambassador's plane should arrive at the Riyadh airport so as not to disturb the king's rest. Likewise, the plane was not permitted to depart while the king was resting. Upon arriving at the palace, each visitor was given a set of Saudi Arab garments, which were to be worn throughout the visit, which consisted basically of two audiences. The first, a formal or business audience, was held in the king's "Diwan", a large room whose floor was covered with fine oriental carpets. Three sides of the room were lined with chairs and couches, the king receiving his visitors from a large throne-like chair in the center of the row facing the entryway. The visitor was directed to walk forward and bow slightly as one approached the king. The king indicated where the visitor was to sit. On conclusion of the audience, the visitor backed slowly several paces facing the king before turning and leaving.

The second audience took the form of a huge feast on the roof of the palace, the king and the guests all sitting on the lushly carpeted floor. There the typical Saudi feast was presented. The conclusion of the dinner was signaled by the appearance of attendants carrying water for cleansing one's hands and towels to dry them. This was followed by the appearance of another attendant carrying a pot of incense, or "oud" which was waved over one's Arab garments, leaving them smelling faintly of the Orient. The dinner and audience were finished when the king rose to retire. The following morning as the visitors prepare to depart, each was customarily presented a gift, a fine carpet or perhaps a handsome dagger to the ambassador; a watch bearing the king's likeness, to the others. Ambassador Childs customarily declined his gift.

The king's palace in Riyadh was one of several palaces in the city. These tall, massive structures constructed of mud brick and topped with a crenellated roof, fit precisely one's idea of how a desert fort should look. The "city" of Riyadh in 1949 was little more than a large village, mostly low, mud dwellings, a scattering of palm trees, a small bustling market, or "souk", and the several palaces belonging to members of the royal family. There were no paved streets and no municipal electricity. As in Jeddah, generators provided whatever electricity existed in the city.

Although the king maintained a palace in Jeddah, it was known that he preferred Riyadh, and he rarely visited Jeddah. When he did make a visit there, normal life of the city came to a standstill. As his impressive motorcade progressed from his palace on the outskirts into and throughout the city, the cheering Jeddawis were rewarded with gold coins hurled into the crowd by the king's attendants. Members of the small diplomatic corps customarily paid their respects to the king at his Jeddah palace during such visits.

American congressional delegations occasionally visited Jeddah and invariably wished to have an audience with the king. Not wishing to offend the delegation but not wishing to come to Jeddah, the king sometimes sent his brother, Prince Faisal (later King Faisal), to represent him. A typical feast followed the official visit at the Jeddah palace. When the visit was concluded, the American guests could expect to receive handsome souvenirs, often carpets, gold encrusted daggers or swords. There was some feeling among the Saudis that receiving these gifts was the primary purpose of the visits.

The attitude of the people of the Western Province towards the Saudi royal family was somewhat ambivalent. Being merchants and traders, who historically had connections with the outer world, they considered themselves worldly and more cultured than the tribesmen in the Eastern provinces. They tended to look down upon these people, whom they considered to be uncouth tribesmen, and they did not share their devotion to the strict Wahhabi interpretation of Islam. Furthermore, there remained in the Hejaz a hint of nostalgia for the Hashemite dynasty, which once ruled the province and had been ousted by the Saudis. That the tribesmen of the Eastern province were the primary benefactors of the country's vast oil wealth rankled a bit.

The laws of Saudi Arabia were religious laws and were strictly enforced by religious police. No radio or phonograph music was allowed, either in public or in private. "Entertainment" at a government social function often consisted of the sung recitation of Koranic verses by a highly revered blind cleric, whose talent was greatly admired. Muslim women were strictly prohibited from driving, although foreign, non-Muslim women were permitted to do so. While women were required to be completely covered when in public, Bedouin women from the desert and non-Muslim foreigners were exceptions to the law. The women from the desert walked freely through the streets unveiled, wearing their brightly colored garments festooned with gold bangles and coins. At the hours of prayer, the religious police were on the streets of the market area of the city (the souk) enforcing the law requiring all Saudis to proceed immediately to daily prayers.

No religious service other than Muslim was permitted in the Kingdom. The only Christian service during my stay in Saudi Arabia was held aboard an American naval vessel on an official naval visit to the port of Jeddah. At Christmas-time private celebrations were held in foreign

Christian homes, and the British Ambassador organized a caroling group, which visited foreign Christian residences and establishments on Christmas Eve.

Security was not a problem in Jeddah. The punishment for theft was the loss of a hand. The punishment for murder was beheading. My first visit to a local bank was a case in point. Entering the bank shortly after my arrival in Jeddah I found the floor literally covered with gold sovereigns. These hundreds of coins had been flown to Jeddah in small barrels from Cairo and were emptied onto the floor of the bank to be counted by its employees. Though customers walked in and out of the bank, stepping cautiously through the coins, no apparent precautions were being taken to make sure that none of them “disappeared”. The employees went calmly about their business of collecting and stacking the coins into counting boards.

Saudi punishment for crimes was severe. The punishment for murder was beheading. One day as I was showing a newly arrived staff member to his quarters in a building in the center of the city, we heard shouting coming from the open square below. Rushing out onto the balcony we saw a large crowd of shouting men encircling a blind-folded and bound man, crouched on his knees before a shallow trench. Suddenly a soldier standing behind the man jabbed the man in the back with his sword causing him to straighten and in one stroke swiftly severed his head. The crowd roared its approval and then quietly dispersed. We learned that the slain man had been convicted of murder. Public stoning was the punishment for a woman convicted of adultery.

One of the few consular problems we western embassies had in Jeddah arose from the Saudi law that no non-Muslim was permitted to enter the holy area in which Mecca was located. This area was clearly marked in some areas but not in others. From time to time an employee of an American firm would wander unintentionally into the proscribed area. While generally he would not be seen by any Saudi authority, occasionally one would be caught and promptly incarcerated in one of the Saudi jails. The process of securing the release of anyone so caught was a long and arduous process. Fortunately, such cases were rare.

The beginning of this proscribed area driving from Jeddah to Mecca was at the oasis of al Hadda, fifteen or twenty miles outside of Jeddah along the road to Mecca. The limit of the forbidden area was marked by a sign in English warning “Non-Moslems Go No Further”. The sign was small, and unfortunately was missed by a group of American men and women taking a drive in the evening to cool off. Although they kept looking for the sign, somehow they missed it, and they proceeded on towards Mecca. Stopped twice by police at two Saudi check points they were waved on after identifying themselves as being from the American Embassy. Some miles further upon reaching the summit of low hill there suddenly appeared before them the unmistakable gate of Mecca, and beyond, the lighted hills of the city. In panic, the driver swiftly turned the car and sped back to Jeddah passing unchallenged through the two police check points

Jeddah was not a healthy place to live; dysentery and stomach ailments were common, and unidentified fevers were common. The city had no central sewage system and no public water system. While the embassy apartments were equipped with modern, western toilets, such facilities were rare in the city. Sand boxes served the purpose for most, and one did not ask what happened to the sewage. The embassy was fortunate in having access to the Bechtel company medical facilities, which were housed in the same building in the center of the city in which

several embassy staff members were housed. This clinic treated us for ear the infections, amoebic dysentery and other ailment that appeared from time to time. It also operated as a free clinic to the general Saudi public. Dysentery was so common that it was accepted as a normal condition. According to the clinic doctor, a Saudi woman once brought her child to the clinic, frightened because, for the first time ever, the child had passed a firm stool!

The most serious health problem the embassy encountered was on the occasion of the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, or the “Hajj”. Annually hundreds of thousands of Muslim pilgrims descended on Jeddah, arriving by land, sea and air, to take part in this holy ritual. All pilgrims (or “hajjis”) were required to engage a director, who was responsible for their housing and general welfare, and to conduct them through the holy rituals. There being few hotels of any sort in the city, the vast majority of the pilgrims had no place but the open streets to eat sleep and live until passing on to Mecca. These “directors” were also expected to guarantee the departure of the pilgrims after the hajj. Many pilgrims managed to circumvent the rules and remained in the country long after, some because they wished to die in the holy land and others because they didn’t have the money for passage home..

A tragedy occurred during the 1950 pilgrimage involving pilgrims from the Philippines. A Philippine politician had chartered a boat to bring several hundred Muslim pilgrims to Jeddah and provide their return passage. Things went awry shortly after the hajj was completed. The politician did not have sufficient funds to re-charter the ship for the return journey. While attempts to resolve this matter were being made, smallpox broke out among the Philippine pilgrims, prompting the Saudi Arabian health authorities to move the entire Philippine group to the “quarantine island”, several miles off the coast in the Red Sea. The epidemic quickly spread throughout the colony of Philippine pilgrims resulting in many deaths. At that time the American Embassy was charged with representing Philippine interests in Saudi Arabia. It was, consequently, the embassy’s responsibility to do what ever necessary to provide for the welfare of the stricken people and seek a solution to the situation. The ambassador arranged to visit the quarantine island and see for himself what was being done to help the suffering people. He asked me to accompany him on this visit to the island. After being revaccinated for smallpox, we took off in our launch and toured the makeshift hospital on the island. The suffering there was unimaginable. Rows and rows of helpless victims were lying quietly awaiting death, their bodied covered with pus-filled sores, their faces formless under the hideous scabs. It seemed that little could be done to cure the stricken, and the disease was left to burn itself out. According to the British doctor, everyone on the island was immediately vaccinated for smallpox. Those who had not yet been infected did not catch the disease. Of those who had already contracted the disease, most died. Those who survived were left heavily scarred. As I was transferred back to the United States shortly after my visit to the island, I never knew how many of those poor people died or how many found their way safely back to the Philippines.

As elsewhere throughout the world, the month of Ramadan is an important part of the Muslim faith. With a few exemptions, Muslims must abstain from eating, drinking and sexual activity during the hours between dawn and sunset during this month. The lunar month of Ramadan traditionally began at the appearance of the new moon. In Jeddah, the rising and the setting of the sun were signaled by cannon-fire. The cannon at sunset marked the beginning of several hours of feasting, social and business calls and general socializing. While most Saudis were faithful in

observing the restrictions, a few did not fast; but these were careful not to be seen. Foreign non-Muslims were welcomed in the homes and offices of friends and acquaintances after the hours of fasting, though they were obliged to be careful not to give offence by any inappropriate activities or conduct. The end of the month of Ramadan was a signal to celebrate with elaborate feasts and entertainment.

The city of Jeddah had little to offer in the way of amenities. There were no local restaurants suitable for westerners. While a limited variety of western canned goods was available in a few small shops, much of our food was imported from Europe. A local meat market existed, and, though the sanitation was appalling, that is where our servants bought the meat that we ate. There was little in the way of fresh fruits and vegetables. However, we at the embassy were fortunate in that the United States Air Force made weekly trips to Asmara, the capital of Eritrea, and brought back fruits and vegetables for us and for the air base at Dhahran.

Despite the lack of amenities, morale of the embassy staff was surprisingly good. While the climate was hot and very humid throughout the year, the temperature rarely exceeded 95 degrees Fahrenheit. Sand storms were rare. The tour of duty was relatively short, usually a year and a half. The cost of living was low. The pay, with its hardship post supplement, was attractive, and it was hard to find anything on which to spend money. The housing, though basic was adequate, and all were given the opportunity to spend a week or so in Asmara during one's tour. The presence of a considerable number of westerners throughout the foreign commercial and diplomatic community provided a pleasant social outlet. Jeddah's climate was difficult, however. While the winter was short and relatively mild, the rest of the year was hot and very humid, day and night. There were occasional sand storms, though nothing compared to the frequency and intensity of those experienced in Dhahran. Occasionally in winter Jeddah would receive a torrential rainfall, practically drowning the city and literally "melting" a number of the mud built buildings.

There was always the unanswered question of whether slavery existed in Jeddah. While a particular building in the market area was said to be the site of a slave market, this could not be verified. It was common knowledge, however, that most of the servants of the local Saudis were from Africa, many of whom were unable to afford passage home after the Hajj. It was understood that all servants were to be treated much as members of the family, though they were not free to leave the service of the family at will.

Women held a special status in Saudi Arabia. They were carefully protected and were limited in social contacts, dress and conduct. All females past a certain age were required to wear the veil, and their heads and bodies completely covered when in public. They were not permitted to drive automobiles, and most were given only limited education. A Saudi woman could not leave the country without her husband's consent, nor could she take any of the couple's children out of the country without the husband's permission. This applied equally to foreign women married to Saudi men. A Saudi man could have as many as four wives, and he could quickly divorce one or all of them. Nevertheless, if he did so, he would have to reckon with the family of the divorced woman and forfeit the "bride price". Occupying a portion of the square opposite the Embassy was a building known as the home for castoff wives. On particularly hot evenings some of these women could be seen taking the night air on the open roof, covered completely with their black

garments.

When I left Jeddah in June, 1950, the city was showing signs of change. Electricity lines were being installed throughout the city, a new airport to handle the burgeoning pilgrim traffic was in progress, the new port was nearing completed, a new, modern air-conditioned hotel was already in operation on the perimeter of the city, and a group of Lebanese physicians were in the process of opening a modern hospital in the city.

**WILLIAM D. BREWER**  
**Acting Deputy Chief of Mission**  
**Jeddah (1950-1951)**

**Director, Arabian Peninsular Affairs**  
**Washington, DC (1966-1970)**

*Ambassador William D. Brewer was born in Connecticut in 1922. He received a B.A. degree from Williams College and an M.A. degree from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. He entered the Foreign Service in 1947. He served overseas in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Afghanistan, and in Washington, DC as desk officer for Arab Affairs and Country Director for Arabian Peninsular States. He was appointed ambassador to Mauritius in 1970 and Ambassador to Sudan in 1973. Ambassador Brewer was interviewed by Malcolm Thompson in 1988.*

*Q: Very good. I would like to concentrate on your more senior assignments without overlooking any of your earlier posts. Is there anything of special interest you would like to comment on involving these earlier years? For example, when we served together in Damascus, in the early 1950s?*

BREWER: Well, yes, there is, Malcolm, but if I could I would like to go back before we met in Damascus to my second assignment which was in Saudi Arabia because, although I was technically a very junior officer, I was in fact at the post what would now be called Acting DCM for six months, and actually was in charge of the Embassy in Saudi Arabia for a brief period -- a week or ten days -- when I was a Third Secretary. So I had some experience even at that stage which I think is of interest in connection with your project.

And in particular two things occurred which I think are useful to comment on: the first is that I was in Jeddah and keeping close track of the negotiations between ARAMCO and the Saudi Arabian government which led up to the conclusion in December 1950 of the first 50-50 profit sharing agreement between an oil company and a Near Eastern government. Prior to that time there had been agreements under which royalty had been paid and this system was not producing revenue which the Saudi government wished, and ARAMCO had secured a ruling from, I guess, the Attorney General, the Department of Treasury, anyway Washington, that the tax deducted by Saudi Arabia as part of this 50-50 split could be counted as a business expense in figuring their American income tax. So on that basis there were very complex negotiations which -- I don't

need to go into in detail -- but which produced this 50-50 formula under which the profits were shared equally between Saudi Arabia and ARAMCO.

*Q: What was your role in all this?*

BREWER: My role was in following the negotiations and in reporting them to Washington because that was the first news that Washington had that the agreement had been concluded. But parallel to that we at the Embassy were considering how the Saudi government, could modernize its very antiquated fiscal arrangements. In fact I often thought it was like being in the Middle Ages. If you wanted to go down to send a cable, for example, you had to carry a large sack of silver riyals because the only currency in the country was this full-bodied riyal and it was very difficult to conduct large transactions with these vast amounts of small heavy coins. And we thought Saudi Arabia very badly needed a modern financial structure and in particular a central bank. And also, in due course, paper currency.

My role was to encourage and support the visits to Saudi Arabia by our Treasury representatives from Cairo over a period of months. These Treasury representatives made a number of preliminary suggestions and as a result of all this activity we finally decided that the thing to do was to encourage the Saudi government to request our assistance in providing some technical expertise which would assist them in setting up a central bank. And this was done and the Saudis agreed that they were going to need some assistance, and we cabled Washington, and they agreed, and they went out and they found a man who had been financial adviser, I believe, to Chiang Kai-shek, and had been an official in the State Department at one stage of the game, Arthur Young, a very able man, to advise the Saudis on setting up a central bank.

He came out to Saudi Arabia, and I met him at the airfield, and briefed him and we got him started and in due course he did propose what came to be known -- they avoided the term "bank" because, you know, the Sharia (Islamic Law) does not sanction the payment of interest and the Saudis do not like the use of the term "bank", but essentially it's a central bank -- he proposed the arrangements which resulted in the founding of the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency. And that is the basis of the modern Saudi financial system which, of course, is now one of the strongest in the world.

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*Q: Then you were the Country Director for Arabian Peninsula states?*

BREWER: Yes. I was very pleased to be transferred from the Policy Planning Council after only a year, back to what I considered my home in the Department, the former Office of Near Eastern Affairs. The office had been abolished and the desks had all been upgraded so I became Country Director for the Arabian Peninsula which included the entire area and, of course, the Persian Gulf states, and Yemen and Muscat, and all the rest of it. So it was a big job and I thoroughly enjoyed being back in operations and having more of an impact, I thought, on day-to-day policy decisions.

The first thing I did was to go out on a month-long trip to my new area and I was able to circle



Arabia by air though even in those days you could not do it entirely by commercial flights. This was 1967. I had to get the Air Attaché plane from Addis Ababa come and it took me from Sharjah to Muscat, and Muscat to Aden. But otherwise...I guess from Aden we flew up to Yemen in an A.I.D. aircraft from Yemen. But otherwise they were commercial flights. It was very interesting to see the progress that had taken place in these areas since I had last served in Jeddah and visited Yemen in 1949-1951.

I don't know how much detail you want me to go into with respect to this assignment. There were a number of things that I think we accomplished in the Arabian Peninsula at this time, particularly with reference to the 1967 Arab- Israeli war, which you remember broke out on June 6th. We were somewhat peripheral to the main contest but we did seek as far as possible to reduce the adverse impact on our position that would come from Saudi Arabia and other oil producing states and might conceivably result in an oil boycott. As you remember, of course, there was no significant oil boycott in 1967. One of the things that I think helped had to do with the evacuation of American citizens from the area because there was great discussion just at the time of the outbreak of hostilities -- I think perhaps the day before we knew hostilities were coming -- there was great discussion in the Department all during that day -- what about the evacuation of Americans from the area, and then what constituted the area, and who should be evacuated. And some of our posts, I think Damascus was one, were very reluctant to see Americans evacuated and as a result no resolution to the problem had been reached by the time we went home about 8:00 at night.

Well, the next morning I came in to work and found a comeback copy of a telegram signed by the Deputy Under Secretary, who at that time was Foy Kohler, sent to all our Near Eastern posts saying all American citizens are to be evacuated. And I thought, "My gosh, what's all this?" Because this had gone among other places, to Kuwait, to Dhahran, to Jeddah, and Aden, and there was no particular reason in most of those posts why Americans should be evacuated. And in fact this would send a signal to the Kuwait government and the Saudi government that we thought the situation was even worse than it was, and we would get them even more upset than they already were if we went ahead and evacuated from these areas. So I said to my boss, "What are we going to do?" And he said, "Why don't you write a telegram to your posts in effect rescinding the circular message. See if you can get Mr. Kohler to sign it?" So I drafted something, I can't remember how I drafted it but the idea was, of course, to avoid directly rescinding the message while in fact getting across the word that nobody had to be evacuated. And I prepared some Byzantine language and took it in to Mr. Kohler and he signed it without batting an eye. Apparently he had simply cut the Gordian knot late the previous night because the White House had gotten on the phone and said, "Look, something has got to be done about this issue. The American people are going to be very upset" or words to that effect. So he just fired off this message and he was happy to have it restricted.

Now, I should point out as a footnote. We had particular problems in southern Yemen where Aden is located. And we had been debating entirely separate from this whole issue, the desirability of evacuating Americans from Aden but had reached no decision. So I decided that I would send the telegram rescinding the Department's message only to Kuwait, Dhahran and Jeddah, but not to Aden. So, in fact, the Americans were withdrawn from Aden but I heard later that my telegram arrived in Dhahran just as the first Americans were beginning to pack up

and go down to the airfield to get on a plane to get out of Saudi Arabia. And, of course, everybody was very relieved. So I think that kind of action can be extremely helpful in diplomacy and as I have thought about this interview over the last couple of days, it seems to me that if, as, and when I've been able to accomplish anything, it was more likely to be in the area of preventing some bad thing from happening, than in achieving any positive good. But on the other hand if you can prevent something bad from happening, the situation is not made any worse. And that I think was helpful at that time.

On the positive side, we encouraged the first Washington contacts with the Gulf states other than Kuwait which were we thought probably going to become independent fairly soon. And we arranged for the first state visit of the Ruler of Kuwait to President Johnson. I think it was the final state visit paid to President Johnson. And in general we tried to focus the attention of higher-level people in Washington on the problems and potentialities of this oil-rich region. At the same time I was particularly disturbed as signs mounted that the British, who had had a naval presence in the Persian Gulf for over a hundred years, were probably going to terminate this presence. And this seemed to me entirely unnecessary because the expense was relatively modest -- I think they had maybe two frigates under a man with the wonderful name of Snopg ("Snopgee"), the Senior Naval Officer, Persian Gulf -- and the expense was not very great. They were doing in fact with mirrors what they had formerly done with real force. So that, it seemed to me, this could be continued and furthermore the various Sheikdoms in the region that were going to become independent were very much interested in the British maintaining some position, since they were nervous about their huge partner to the north, Iran, not to mention to some extent Iraq. And I tried to get the Secretary to focus on this issue, and I think we finally at the last minute did get him to sign -- this would have been Secretary Rogers -- to sign a message to London saying that he hoped the British would take no decision on this matter before a forthcoming visit of the Foreign Secretary to Washington, which was scheduled for the next week or something like that.

Well, of course, the British who knew that we would seek to dissuade them from this action naturally took the decision before the Foreign Secretary came to Washington and took it unilaterally and announced they were going to withdraw from the Persian Gulf in 1970. This, therefore, created a vacuum and I have always felt that we could have done more to try and prevent the creation of that vacuum because it would not have taken very much in my judgement to continue the British presence there and it would have been of great assistance in maintaining calm in the region in the 1970s, and I think in all probability preventing, by the presence of the British, things like the Iran-Iraq war from breaking out. But it was a breakdown of a system for regional security which had worked very well in the Persian Gulf for a hundred years. I always regretted that the United States did not take more initiative in trying to prevent this from happening.

**RAYMOND A. HARE**  
**Ambassador**  
**Saudi Arabia (1950-1953)**

*Ambassador Raymond A. Hare was born in West Virginia in 1901. He graduated from Grinnell College with an A.B. in 1924 and entered the Foreign Service in 1927. During his overseas career, he served in Egypt, France, Greece, Iran, Lebanon, Turkey, and Yemen. He became the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs in 1949, and then the Director General of the Foreign Service in 1954. In 1960, he became the Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs. He was interviewed by Dayton Mak in 1987.*

HARE: All of that was in 1950, a busy year for me. In that year I was sent to Saudi Arabia as Ambassador. Jeddah in those days was very primitive but very interesting. Little had changed in the city over the years -- the old houses with the Mashrabiyyah decoration, overhanging balconies and all that sort of thing; water only came in by barrels from the hills someplace, and the only time the telephone seemed to work was when the Foreign Office wanted to get hold of me to say that the King wanted to see me in Riyadh. In Jeddah our communications was largely not by telephone but by hand-carried notes. Though the King lived most of the time in Riyadh, the Foreign Office was in Jeddah, and that is why our Embassy was located there. The King did have a palace in Jeddah but only used it infrequently.

One of the most impressive men I had to deal with in Saudi Arabia was the Minister of Finance, Sheikh Abdullah Suleiman. He was from one of the families from the Dammam area on the Persian Gulf side of Saudi Arabia and came from a culture quite different from the desert culture of the royal family. His family was one of those who had done business in the Gulf and in India and was well known for its shrewd traders. Sheikh Abdullah had one rather inappropriate habit for a Saudi: he drank rather freely. I found it best to get to his office before ten o'clock in the morning; otherwise he would interrupt our business conversation and say, "My teeth are hurting me, my teeth are hurting me." and he would leave and get some "teeth remedy." But he was one of the cleverest men I have ever worked with. He could see right through what you were talking about.

In Saudi Arabia you might think that the main thing we would have discussed would have been oil. It wasn't. You see, oil had gone through a certain phase; there had been the exploration period before the second world war and some drilling; they couldn't drill much because they did not have the materials.

During the war there had been this close relationship between Roosevelt and Churchill, and Roosevelt did everything he could to help Churchill out. One of the results was Lend-Lease. In this connection, the American company, at that time called CASOC-ARAMCO, needed money to meet Saudi demands. We were not in a position to help them, and, they did not qualify under Lend-Lease. So we suggested to the British that they might wish to fill in and help out. This caused a flare up as some contended that we were just handing the Middle East oil over to the British. This was solved by declaring the Saudis eligible for lend-lease. So that settled that little problem.

During the war, the British and we had been interested in oil in the Middle East from the standpoint of reserves in wartime terms. I remember that we ourselves had set up a petroleum

commission in Washington headed by Harold Ickes. He was sort of the petroleum czar in the United States. This joint British-U.S. interest in Middle East oil caused some anguish among some British and Americans. There was an interesting exchange between Roosevelt and Churchill on the subject with Roosevelt telling Churchill that he didn't want anyone horning in on the American side and we wouldn't horn in on the British side. Churchill wrote back that he was glad to know that we were not "casting sheep's eyes" on British interests. That little exchange stopped as far as I know, but Ickes had a lingering feeling about the importance of keeping the American government's hand in the oil business in the Middle East. There was one idea of a sort of joint U.S. Government-CASOC arrangement for the development of oil reserves, but CASOC was not happy with it and indicated they were not interested in any such arrangement.

Then Ickes had the idea of an American sponsored and financed pipeline to the Mediterranean. That eventually fell through too. So you can see that although you would have thought that when I went to Jeddah as Ambassador, my briefcase would have been full of instructions on what to do about oil and that telegrams would probably be flicking back and forth on the subject. No such thing! As a matter fact I can't remember, and I should have remembered if it had been so important, ever receiving an important telegram about oil all the time I was in Saudi Arabia. One basic reason was that by that time the American Government was backing off direct involvement and there was a tendency to look at oil as a business matter and the oil companies tended to do their own negotiating. They became sort of an autonomous entity and did their own negotiating with the Saudis, which in many ways was good. There were many things that they were able to do, a lot of good things such as helping the Saudis with sanitation problems and things like that which would have been awkward for the American Government to do. The oil company did its own negotiating not through the American government. About every year under Saudi pressure they would send a group out to renegotiate the agreement, because oil agreements despite all the fancy phases, never held for long. Situations change and the status of the agreements tend to change. So every so often the two sides would get together and renegotiate in terms of any new considerations that had developed.

I recall that during one to those periods the negotiations had ground to a stop. I happened to meet Sheikh. Abdullah accidentally when my car broke down. He invited me to his house for a cup of coffee. I said "fine," and I got into his car and went and had coffee. We talked about many things and finally came around to the matter of the stalled negotiations. I said to Sheikh Abdullah, "You know, Sheikh Abdullah, my daughter is very unhappy." "Do you have a daughter?" he asked. "Yes," I replied, "I have a daughter." "What's wrong?" he said: "You know my daughter, her name is ARAMCO; she married you some time ago and she wants to be a good wife and get along well, but sometimes she has difficulties, and this makes her unhappy. And, it makes any father unhappy if his daughter is unhappy." Well, I don't know how significant our conversation was, but shortly after that they began negotiating again. Things like that can make a difference you know; they are very human, and you may laugh at them, but they work sometimes.

Actually, the main purpose of my mission was because we had a very important airfield at Dhahran. This was soon after the war, and the Russians were acting in a very alarming manner. Dhahran airfield was particularly important as a staging point in the event there was trouble with the Russians. We did have an agreement with the Saudis regarding that airfield, but it was

imprecise and we wanted to put in some installations -- not guns or that sort of things, but facilities. Negotiations went on for a long time. The chief Saudi negotiator, Sheikh Yussuf Yassin really made life miserable for me.

He was an accomplished obstructionist. Finally, I sent our translator Muhammed (Effendi) Massaud to see him and find out what was the matter. We seemed to be getting to a certain point, and then everything would suddenly stop. He went to see Yussuf, as he often did, and this time he came back with pay dirt. He said that Sheikh Yussuf says it is very difficult for them to conclude an agreement of this kind at this time, not that there was any real objection to what we wanted to do, but it looked very bad for them from the public relations aspect. If we could make the agreement appear to be one in which the Saudis were getting the best at it, but still let us have what we needed, it was possible that something could be worked out.

I telephoned the Department and was given the go ahead. Soon after, however, Sheikh Yussuf met me and said "Something has happened and the King has decided not to have that agreement." (I learned afterward that Rashid Gaylani, the Iraqi, had put the bee in his ear). Sheikh Yussuf said, "I suppose you will want to see His Majesty, won't you?" I tried to think quickly and decided that something had happened, something drastic. I thought, if I go to see the King now I'll get turned down with a bang. So I said, "No, Sheikh Yussuf, it's all right." He said, "What do you want to do? What do you want to do?" I replied, "We'll just stay here; we're comfortable" (which we weren't). So we just sat. Several days later he came by and said, "Would you still like to see His Majesty?" I replied, "No, Sheikh Yussuf. Don't bother." We had a couple more visits, over coffee, and finally he said: "You know that last point we were discussing?" I said: "Yes," and we were off discussing again. What had happened? You simply had to let it work itself out. So we got the agreement, and we got everything we wanted. According to it, the Saudi Arabian government rejects the U.S. Government demands, but in the end it didn't make any difference. In effect it was a good agreement for both sides. Sheikh Yussuf took it up to Egypt to show them, he was so proud of it, and they complimented him on a good agreement. So we got what we wanted, and he got what he wanted.

Some might call this devious, and, of course, it is. But it works and it was devious in an honest way. When we finally got the agreement I asked the Department, "Please do not publicize this, do not play this up as something we have gained or won." I know that if the American Government should publicize this as clever diplomacy that could spell the end of it. Any agreement which you force the other fellow to accept and that he is uncomfortable with, simply won't stick. So we didn't play it up as a win, and it worked out all right. True, we lost the agreement later on, but that was another story.

Secretary Dulles came out to visit Dhahran in Eastern Saudi Arabia while I was there, and he had sent word that he did not want anything special prepared for him. I went on ahead of him to be sure that all was ready for him and found that they had fixed up a separate "palacio" and decorated it with garish abandon. I told the Saudis that I appreciated their efforts but knew that the Secretary would appreciate if he could stay with his staff in the regular guest house. There was one part of the guest house that had two little rooms and had been used by some dignitary at some time or other, and was referred to as the "royal suite." It had a very, very hard bed. That night I woke up in a sweat and thought. "My God, the Secretary will have it in for me because of

that bed." I had been put in it once, found it difficult to sleep on the bed, it was too hard. In the morning at breakfast I said to the Secretary, "I'm very apologetic about what happened last night." He said, "What happened? What happened?" I said, "That bed, that bed," and he said, "What's wrong with the bed?" I said, "It's so hard." "Oh," he said, "As a matter of fact I forgot to bring my bed board with me, and this was the first time that I had a bed that was proper to sleep on."

There was also another story of Dulles's visit. As he was leaving he said to me, "Good job Ray, good job. There's just one thing that I haven't done, that we missed." I said, "What's that, Sir?" "I didn't get a chance to swim in the Persian Gulf." I didn't know just what to think about that, but I found out later that he was really serious. He had a little whim that he liked to swim in any body of water that he got close to.

We got only occasional visitors in Saudi Arabia. One was David Rockefeller, and that was just after all liquor was banned throughout the kingdom. All the non-diplomatic foreigners had to get rid of their liquor and no one could import any. David came to our house, and I did have some bourbon - not very good bourbon, some I used to make cocktails with. I gave him a bourbon and soda, and he said "Ray, that's some of the best bourbon I've ever tasted."

I remember another amusing incident while we were in Jeddah. Fritz Larkin, Chief of Foreign Buildings in the Department was coming to visit the mission. Fritz was known as a difficult man, one who could really make things difficult for you. So I told my wife, "Fritz is coming. Put him in the regular guest room with that noisy air conditioner: Give him enough to drink and feed him well, but don't complain." Our house, the embassy residence, was old and terribly shabby. My wife's bedside table was an orange crate. The whole place was a shambles, and I wanted Fritz to see it when he was in a good mood. Maybe then he would take a more kindly view of our need. So he came, and we acted as though everything was perfectly normal. At dinner, my wife nonchalantly put her elbow on the table, which flew up in the air. All during his stay, little things would happen "inadvertently." The next day we were having cocktails before lunch. I'd not said a word to him about the state of the furniture or residence. Finally, after his second martini, Fritz said, "Oh hell, Ray. Give me a pad of paper and I'll write the orders for you." So that day he wrote to Paris, and we got curtains and rugs and furniture and paint, in fact everything that we needed. It changed Jeddah, because for the first time someone had some furniture from Paris, and the people used to come and have it copied.

We left Jeddah and Saudi Arabia in 1953 for Beirut, where I was named Ambassador to Lebanon.

In discussing my dealing as Ambassador with Saudi officials I mentioned the able Abdullah Sulaiman who occupied a key position in decision-making in financial and economic matters. Prince Faisal, the titular Minister of Foreign Affairs, was the other most important official and only outward-looking member of the court, but was somewhat diffident and tended, unfortunately for me, to delegate negotiating responsibility.

But of course, real power lay with King Abdul Aziz, to whom we frequently refer by his family name as Ibn Saud. Although subsequently, as ambassador, I had frequent occasion to meet with

him, I first met him when I accompanied Alexander Kirk, our Minister in Cairo, who was also accredited to Saudi Arabia and went to present his credentials.

It was in the spring and the King used to go camping, along with his court at that season. So we visited the King at his encampment, and were allotted a tent site of our own along with similar individual accommodations of other important people, upon whom we were expected to call to pay our respects.

I particularly remember one such visit when Minister Kirk, at a loss for polite small talk, happened to remark on the beauty of some gazelles tethered just outside. The result was that on the return to our camp we were besieged with gazelles as a gift of our host.

Later the king gave a farewell seated-on-the-ground dinner for Kirk and staged a camel parade on his honor. Realizing that an appropriate expression of appreciation was called for, but recalling the gazelle incident, he was careful to qualify his expression of admiration of the camels with the observation that they terrified him physically.

As I look back over the years to my association with the King, I can only say that, to me personally, he remains the most outstanding public figure with whom my path crossed during forty years of service. He was great physically, great as a warrior, great also as a man of peace, great in unifying diverse tribal elements into a single country, great as a man of high principle and religious faith, but especially great as being endowed with that supreme virtue of natural wisdom. He was, in fact, a sort of 20th century unique incarnation of a patriarch of the Biblical mold.

Incidentally, he also had a very human sense of humor such as when, teasingly, he suggested to my wife that, with her permission, he would be glad to provide me with another wife, and then laughed heartily when she replied that I already found one wife too expensive.

Perhaps I should also add a footnote that, although the King was very Arab conscious in a fraternal sort of way, he was not an extreme Arab Nationalist like his neighbors. True, he felt strongly about Palestine, but he didn't perpetually harp on the subject - which was a distinct relief so far as I was concerned.

**MAX WALDO BISHOP**  
**Consul General**  
**Dhahran (1951-1953)**

*Ambassador Max Waldo Bishop was born in Arkansas in 1908. He graduated from the University of Chicago in 1932. He served in the United States Army Reserve until entering the Foreign Service in 1935. Ambassador Bishop's overseas career included positions in Saudi Arabia, Japan, Thailand and Ceylon. Ambassador Bishop was interviewed in February 1993 by Thomas F. Conlon.*

BISHOP: In 1951 I went to Saudi Arabia as consul general in Dhahran. I was there for about two years. I was in Dhahran when John Foster Dulles became Secretary of State in 1953.

*Q: What do you remember in particular from your time in Saudi Arabia? This was before Arab oil had become so important for the United States.*

BISHOP: I wouldn't say "before." It was important then, and, of course, was almost entirely American. I don't think that there were any British companies in Saudi Arabia at all. King Saud was not fond of the British.

*Q: Then you left Saudi Arabia when Secretary of State Dulles came into office.*

**GEORGE M. BENNSKY, JR.**  
**U.S. Treasury Representative**  
**Middle East (1952-1956)**

*George M. Bensusky, Jr. was born in North Carolina in 1923. He graduated from George Washington University and received his M.A. from the University of Michigan. After serving in the U.S. Army during World War II, he joined the United States Treasury where he served as representative in the Middle East. He joined the State Department in 1956 and subsequently served in India, the Near East, and Peru. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1993.*

*Q: At that time our concerns about Israel were not predominant.*

BENNSKY: Oh yes, they were. That was the other problem that you had if you worked in the Arab countries. The fact that we were such backers of Israel. I mean, if you wanted to go to Israel, which I had to because we worked down there too, you had to go through an elaborate system not to get anything in your passport to show that you went. You would go to Jordan, and then to the border post in the middle of Jerusalem. It was a check point. You would drive up to it and get off and it would be the Jordanian one. You would be checked through it and walk across among the barbed wire to the next check point, the Israeli post. From there you would walk into their part of Jerusalem. Sometimes people would go through Cyprus. But you had to go in a way that didn't show in your passport that you had been in Israel.

Since I was going to be traveling around the Arab world I couldn't show on my passport that I had been to Israel. The Israelis didn't like that and were always trying to figure out how they could put a stamp in your passport. It was a hindrance. In Saudi Arabia, for example, they would not allow anyone to enter with a passport stamped by Israel. I spent a lot of time in Saudi Arabia, too, with Ambassador Wadsworth. All of this was just a manifestation of strong Arab feelings against Israeli dispossession of the Palestinians and the U.S. recognition of and support for Israel as a sovereign state.

*Q: What was your impression of Ambassador Wadsworth and his method of operation? He was*



*one of the characters in the Foreign Service? And, what was the situation in Saudi Arabia from your perspective?*

BENNSKY: He was one of the originals. One of the old Arab hands. He never went to the Embassy building. He did everything out of his house. When I used to go down there, Bob Houghton was there. I used to try to stay with Bob but I never made it because the Ambassador made me stay in his house. He had some interesting habits. He would stay up until about 4 in the morning and wanted somebody to stay up with him. He would stay up writing telegrams and then he would hand one to me and say, "George, look at this policy I am making today." It was his king, his general and his this and that.

But he had a real understanding of the Saudis and the Middle East, there is no doubt about that. He was an original like a lot of those FSOs that I met out there as ambassadors in the fifties. I mean these were men who had been around and had lots of experiences...people like Jimmy Moose, Ambassador in Damascus and Ray Hare, Ambassador to Lebanon. These guys were good, first class. We can stand more ambassadors like them any time. Even the eccentricities of Wadsworth. I liked him.

Saudi Arabia? It didn't have much money yet and were always in debt. Their finance minister was a real Bedouin, but wily and clever. Before I got there, I remember this because this happened when I was in Treasury in Washington, Saudi Arabia had always just used big silver riyals as currency.

*Q: And the Marie Theresa thaler too.*

BENNSKY: Yes, the silver riyal was big and bulky. The Saudis decided that, as they were growing as a country, they had to have a more modern financial system. So State was very anxious that we try to help them by getting a qualified expert to go out and be an adviser to the Saudis in setting up a monetary system with a central bank. For some reason Treasury was against it, or at least some people there were. I got hell. I went to a meeting at State and said, "Sounds like a great idea to me." I came back and some of my superiors were mad as hell. Anyway, the die was cast, and the fact of the matter was that it was needed. The expert who was sent out there, I can't think of his name, had trouble getting them to do things, but in the end was successful. He carried around in his pocket a well worn letter of resignation. Every time they refused to do something he would pull it out and then they would agree. The Saudis did set up a central bank and issued paper money, all successfully.

*Q: They started out with pilgrim receipts, if I recall, at first. These were receipts indicating you had deposited your money so you didn't have to take it with you on your pilgrimage. And then they were extended to be valid outside the pilgrimage season.*

BENNSKY: In the meantime the structure of a central bank and the Saudis to work in it were being set up. This was a pretty exciting time. It was interesting to watch them trying to come into the modern world. Meanwhile, ARAMCO in its own compound...I spent a fair amount of time with them too. You had situations like this. Nobody knew what the balance of payments of Saudi Arabia was. So one time when I was out there I decided that if I talked to enough people I could

figure out what Saudi Arabia's balance of payments looked like. So I talked to a lot of people and found out what they thought about the amount of trade and finances and services etc. and calculated a balance of payments. I probably computed the first balance of payments ever on Saudi Arabia. This was a country that belonged to another century, but it was coming forward and they were beginning to get some pretty bright and able people. But in the fifties there was still a long way to go.

Things have changed in the Middle East over the past forty years, in the physical sense. When I used to go down to Kuwait they still had the mud walls around the town. They didn't have any hotels or any of these big beautiful buildings or anything they now have. I went down there when Harry Simms and Bill Stoltzfus were the only two FSOs down there and they were doing their own ciphering and everything.

*Q: The so-called one time pads.*

BENNSKY: Yes, that's right. When I went to Iran the hotels were so bad. In Iraq they were no better. The amenities were not there. Only three places had amenities...Cairo, Beirut and Istanbul. Otherwise it was pretty damn primitive wherever you went in the fifties.

*Q: What was your impression of ARAMCO and how they were dealing with Saudi Arabia?*

BENNSKY: You couldn't help but be impressed by their professional abilities. They were out in the middle of nowhere and had built these tremendous installations and were producing great quantities of oil. They knew their stuff. I think they had really very little contact with the rest of the population except the Saudis who worked for them. They basically were out there in their own compound doing their own job of getting the oil out and providing the revenue to the Saudis under the agreements that they had with them.

**A. DAVID FRITZLAN**  
**Officer in Charge, Iraq and Arabian Peninsular Affairs**  
**Washington, DC (1953-1955)**

*A. David Fritzlan was born in India in 1914 to missionary parents. He was educated in England, but received a MA from the University of Kentucky in 1936. His first posting was in Naples, Italy in 1937. From there, he went on to serve in Baghdad, Basra, Tangier, and Oman in the '40s and '50s. He concluded his 33 years in the Foreign Service as General Counsel in Greece. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1990.*

FRITZLAN: I took up my duties in January of '53 as officer in charge of Iraq and Arabian Peninsula Affairs.

*Q: When you talk about Arabian Peninsula Affairs what...*

FRITZLAN: The Arabian peninsula embraces Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Kuwait and the Trucial coast Emirates. The latter were still under British protection, so that as far as the Arabian peninsula was concerned, my duties were at least 90 per cent related to Saudi Arabia. Now, shortly before that time, a few months earlier, a very troublesome event occurred. That is to say the Saudis...we had every reason to believe in the Department, possibly egged on by ARAMCO, the American-Arabian oil company in Dhahran, moved a sizeable force into an oasis called Buraymi which had for many years been a small area in dispute between Saudi Arabia and one or more of the Trucial States.

*Q: Particularly Abu Dhabi.*

FRITZLAN: Yes, it was Abu Dhabi and Dubai. The people who lived in this oasis belonged to a curious Moslem sect. They were not Wahhabis, the dominant sect in Saudi Arabia.

*Q: Particularly in the eastern province area.*

FRITZLAN: Though never stated as such, the obvious reason for this incursion was the possibility that oil reserves might be found there. As I say, this area had been in dispute for many years, a century or more, in the distant past it had been briefly under Wahhabi domination. But it had changed hands frequently, and we regarded this as a serious breach really to the stability of the area -- this incursion by Saudi Arabia. What happened was, the British acting as protectors of these Trucial States, who objected strenuously to the Saudi presence, sent a small force in, which, of course, was very easily able to kick out the Saudis, and they more or less occupied it.

*Q: Probably the Trucial Oman Scouts.*

FRITZLAN: Yes. Well, this was my initiation as a desk officer in the Department. We were in the middle of this dispute. Arrayed against us were Saudi Arabia and ARAMCO on one side; and on the other side the British; and we were squeezed very badly by these two opposing forces.

*Q: I might add there was also British oil interests involved in this too probably.*

FRITZLAN: There probably were, yes, of course. Oil is the name of the game in that area. But then how do you go about asserting a territorial claim? Do you move a force in, or do you not? Now there are people in the Department inclined to take a view that Saudi Arabia was our great and dear friend, and ARAMCO was an American company of vital interest to us. And the British were well known for their imperialism in the past, and this was another manifestation of imperialism. We should, therefore, take a position pretty much with the Saudi government and ARAMCO. I simply refused to accept that. I didn't believe that just because ARAMCO is an American company and they might find oil there, that we had to give them our support in this matter. Nor did I feel that we had to be totally supportive of the British. I felt we should adopt a neutral stance and urge the parties to talk, which is what they did not want to do.

Incidentally, in this respect, I did a lot of research about the relative merits of the various countries in that area as to sovereignty over Buraymi, this oasis that hardly anyone had ever heard of.

*Q: You spell Buraymi?*

FRITZLAN: B-u-r-a-i-m-i. You can also spell it B- u-r-a-y-m-i. Anyway, there was a certain amount of literature on the general area in the State Department library, and I chanced upon a book written some years earlier by the ARAMCO chief political adviser, who was also an historian. I can't think of his name, but I will remember it.

*Q: We can always insert it.*

FRITZLAN: ...who had written a book specifically about the Trucial States, and the areas such as Buraymi which might have been in dispute and he went into the Buraymi oasis question in great depth. The net conclusion that he came to was, that of all the claimants the Saudi claim was probably the weakest. Well, when I made an allusion to this very scholarly work to the chief ARAMCO representative here, Terry Duce, he practically hit the ceiling. In other words he wondered how on earth I got ahold of a copy of this book. I said, "Well, it's in the library." He was nonplused. He didn't know quite how to deal with that. Now, later on the British representative from the British Embassy who was dealing with the subject, came to me and said, he understood that I'd found a book put out by ARAMCO which dealt with Buraymi. I didn't know where he got this from. Perhaps we'd sent a message to the London Embassy which was heavily involved and mentioned this, and then the Embassy passed it on to the Foreign Office, and they passed it on to their Embassy here. Ronald Bailey asked if he could borrow the book; and I said, "I'm afraid not." I didn't want to be accused of helping them make their case. I said, "Look, the book is available. I'm sure you can get it at the Library of Congress. Why don't you go there for it?" I don't know what he did.

This, as you can imagine, made me spend many hours of thought on how we could get this thing settled. Eventually, after about a year or more, we got the parties to agree to arbitration. And the result of the arbitration, I believe, went against the Saudis although I had no reason to believe the dispute had been solved. I, by that time, had left the Department for the Army War College in August 1955.

*Q: I might add that I was in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia from 1958 to '60 and relations between Saudi Arabia and Great Britain had still been severed over the Buraymi issue. So it had not yet been settled.*

FRITZLAN: It soured their relations for a long time. The British had had a very good relationship with King Ibn Saud, but this was something that he took very much to heart.

*Q: And this was under King Saud, his son, who followed through.*

FRITZLAN: I am referring to the old King Ibn Saud, the father of the dynasty. In early 1953 Prince Faisal, one of the sons of King Saud and Foreign Minister, was in Washington having come specifically to meet the new President and Secretary of State, to discuss the Buraymi matter. I took him up to meet Mr. Dulles. Faisal had an interpreter -- a very good one, I could never fulfill the job that he did -- but I was there as a recorder of this meeting which lasted about

an hour. The Secretary thought he could get Faisal in and out in about 20 minutes. After about 20 minutes of his discussion of the Buraymi issue, and how it was our duty to come to their aid, Prince Faisal detected an air of some uneasiness, if not irritation on the part of the Secretary. So he looked at him, and he looked at me, and looked at Mr. Dulles and said, "Oh, Mr. Secretary, have I come on the wrong day at the wrong time?" "Oh, no, no, Your Highness, it's perfectly all right. Go right ahead." So then he talked for another half hour by which time Dulles had just about had it. But we hadn't finished the meeting yet, because as he got up to leave Prince Faisal said, "May I ask one of my attendants to come in?" Dulles said, "Yes." So the attendant came in carrying a couple of cases -- white cowhide cases, with the Saudi royal arms stamped on them in gold -- he opened up one, it was a sword case, a beautiful sword with a bejewelled hilt and all that sort of thing. It was presented to the Secretary as a gift from His Majesty. The Secretary, of course, was absolutely overwhelmed.

Anyway, that wasn't all. He opened another case from which he took out some Arab robes, one set for the Secretary and corresponding robes for the Secretary's wife. And a little case was opened revealing a beautiful string of pearls for Mrs. Dulles. All that took another half hour. So we were up there I suppose for getting on to two hours. It just about ruined his day, but on the other hand he had nice presents. So, from the Secretary's office, with a brief interval, we traveled, with the Secretary in another car, myself with Prince Faisal, to the White House where President Eisenhower received him graciously and the usual interpreter was present. Faisal made his pitch on Buraymi, not in such detail, but considerable detail. Eisenhower, in reply, made absolutely no reference to the dispute. He only said we very much appreciated the fine relations we had with Saudi Arabia and His Majesty King Ibn Saud. This lasted about 20 minutes at the end of which the usual elaborate presents were given. Eventually I was called by some art dealer who was asked to come in to the White House to look at these precious things, and tell the President exactly what was what. So I was summoned to the White House, to go up to the private chambers where all these things were laid out, and asked to identify them, and say something -- "these are Persian Gulf pearls, not cultured pearls, you can be sure of that. This is an abaya and this is something else."

Now I haven't said anything about Yemen, but it occupied very little of my time. We had a few problems. It always amazed me that this poor country was so fiercely proud of its independence, that they were happy to have a relationship with us based merely on exchanges of views about the world, or perhaps the Middle East in particular. They never once asked us for technical assistance or grant aid, whereas the Saudis who had millions coming from their oil exports, were constantly asking us for large sums of money for God knows what. It amazed me, the difference.

*Q: Before we move to that, I would like to ask on the Buraymi dispute...now Henry Byroade was the Assistant Secretary, and there were other people. Were you getting any pressures on this? Or was this, to get a spirit of the times, kind of left for you to work on?*

FRITZLAN: I tell you, there were pressures all right. I have to say that the office director, Pete Hart, who had just come from Dhahran where he'd been Consul General, took a considerably more pro-Saudi, pro-ARAMCO view than I was inclined to take.

*Q: I am sure he had been -- I won't say brainwashed -- but having served there later one*

*certainly gets the Saudi point of view.*

FRITZLAN: I was not surprised at that. Now, of course, I did have this to confront. I was told when I got to the Department that I had a reputation -- Pete Hart told me this -- a reputation for being excessively pro-British. I said, "I don't understand how that reputation arose. I know that I had three years in Amman which had been mainly under British influence, I wouldn't say control, but certainly Abdullah could not have survived without the Arab Legion which was a British raised and supported force, and without a British subsidy. It made for stability in the region, and if I was pro-British to the degree that I thought that a good idea, well then I was pro-British. But I never considered myself an Anglophile. I considered myself pure and simply an American who found it desirable in many instances to support the British and, on the other hand, to receive British support in other parts of the world." But I had still to consider that there were people, like Pete and others, who thought that I was excessively pro-British.

The fortunate thing is that Byroade was quite open minded on Buraymi, and even more so, and more active in the matter, was Jack Jernegan, the Deputy Assistant Secretary.

*Q: So these would have been above Pete Hart, and Pete Hart was above you?*

FRITZLAN: Yes. I found that the greatest help for me, support for me, in dealing with the Buraymi matter came from Jack Jernegan. So on the whole it was he who made the final decision. He was very open minded and took, almost invariably, my recommendation. I won't say that Pete Hart didn't, but I think he was less inclined to.

*Q: So the basic outcome as you saw this was that the Buraymi situation was eventually settled by a compromise, rather than our exerting all our pressure to make this a matter of...*

FRITZLAN: We compromised in this respect, that we were striving to get the parties to go to arbitration which neither of them wanted to do. And they didn't want to talk to each other either, so how is one to come to an arrangement on this? Eventually they did meet in arbitration and that marked a success of our endeavors, which had taken more than a year. I left happily in August of '55 to go to the Army War College at Carlisle Barracks and was relieved of the Buraymi affair.

**GRANT V. MCCLANAHAN**  
**Consul**  
**Dhahran (1954-1957)**

*Grant V. McClanahan was born in Egypt in 1919. He graduated from Muskingum College in 1941 and enlisted in the Navy in 1942. He began working for the Department of State in 1946 in INR until joining the Foreign Service in 1954. His overseas career included positions in the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and Iraq. The interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy January 1997.*

*Q: Well, in 1954, where did you go?*

MCCLANAHAN: I was assigned to the consulate in Dhahran in Saudi Arabia. I was quite pleased with that prospect. Parker Hart was the NE office director. I admired him, and he briefed me on the situation in Saudi Arabia, where he had served.

*Q: Didn't he open the post?*

MCCLANAHAN: I believe that he did, and that he built it up significantly.

*Q: Had you been brought into the Foreign Service by this point?*

MCCLANAHAN: Yes, I had been. I went through an oral exam. I was admitted then, and I was assigned. This was all in a period of two months. There was a great move in 1954 to integrate officers from the Department into the Foreign Service. A few of the older and more specialized people in INR wished not to go in, but for anyone in my position it was a good opportunity. There was a searching oral exam for those who had been working eight years or more such as myself. The test took maybe an hour and a half. There were four panelists.

*Q: Do you remember any of the questions?*

MCCLANAHAN: Yes. I had mentioned on my application form about my playing tennis for my prep school and in college. One of them said to me, "What about a certain change in the rules in tennis? What effect would that have on the game?" I was greatly helped by my experience not only as a tennis player but as a debater in college. I survived that.

*Q: What was your impression of ARAMCO and how they deal with the Saudis?*

MCCLANAHAN: The ARAMCO was in its period of great expansion in my two years there. They had discovered the Abqaiq oil field, which was going to be a bigger one than they had located before and had a great future. They also created a refinery at Ras Tanura, where there hadn't been one before. Previously, they had utilized a refinery in Bahrain. Their production went to over a million barrels a day while I was there. That was the landmark that everyone considered significant. It is now over seven million gallons. They introduced a catalytic converter at the new refinery, which was a technological breakthrough, so we heard a lot about that. ARAMCO was very enlightened in their treatment of their own workers, Saudi workers. They also encouraged the creation of small businesses, and built a new housing area for Saudi employees while we were there. The structure of staffing at that time was that all the key jobs were held by Americans, the next layer by Pakistanis and Palestinians. Most of the less skilled workers were Saudi Arabians. The American families had house workers from Goa, on the coast of India. I always thought that it was something that may have caused friction at that edges between the groups. What they were interested in was that, as they expanded and had more local employees they were training them and preparing them for more responsible jobs. Many Saudis were drawn from the oasis of Qatif that was largely a Shia Muslim community and some were drawn from the areas that Sunni. I foresaw that as potential trouble. That was the kind of thing that one thought about and discussed with the government relations experts in ARAMCO.

*Q: What about normal problems did American citizens have? How were those addressed there?*

MCCLANAHAN: It was an unwritten but known rule in ARAMCO that any American citizen who was caught making trouble or who was arrested was immediately sent out of the country. Most of the Americans who worked for ARAMCO had been informed of that when they were hired, so they weren't surprised and didn't make any resistance. The consulate, the Saudi authorities, and ARAMCO were in tacit agreement with the policy. There was one time when an American was being detained in a worrisome jail. In that case, the consul general himself got involved. Then the detainee was sent back to America.

*Q: Do you remember what the problem was?*

MCCLANAHAN: No, I don't remember what it was, but the concern was that the offense he committed was punishable in Saudi Arabia by lashes. Another time, one of the five Marines at our consulate general was caught with a jug of liquor in his car. He was swiftly reassigned to the consulate in Cyprus. In general, the problems were few. People were averse to publicizing problems, and no one was ever shot or anything like that. If something happened and someone died, ARAMCO had a policy in the company of having one man trained to embalm the body. The consulate would seal the coffin and send the body would be sent home by air. ARAMCO had its own small air fleet.

*Q: What was the social life there like since alcohol was prohibited?*

MCCLANAHAN: It was strictly prohibited, even beer. That was something one heard discussed. At the consulate, we had a little personal alcohol imported from Bahrain in the consulate bag. When I was given my authorized bag, I was given an authorized letter permitting me to have it. It was, of course, against the law and policy to serve it to Saudi guests.

*Q: What about relations with the Amir of the eastern province?*

MCCLANAHAN: The government of Saudi Arabia in that area was headed by an influential, experienced Saudi amir. He was Saud Bin Jiluwi, a powerful man, though not a member of the royal family. He was a trusted old retainer of the royal family. He was well-known, respected, and feared. He did not have to refer to the Supreme Court, so to speak. My consul general, John Carrigan, dealt with him regularly, calling on him about once a week, and through an interpreter they sometimes joked and made small talk. I went with the consul general to meet the Amir one day, and when he discovered I spoke Arabic, he was very pleased. Once or twice a week, he would invite us to have dinner at the Amirate. If we were invited to dinner, it was always scheduled for one hour after sunset so they could say their sunset prayers.

We mostly relied on British reporting on Gulf affairs. We reported on interesting new developments, which there were about every few months. We once reported the installation of the first traffic stoplight in eastern Saudi Arabia. There was an American Air Force base at Dhahran, but we did not report on it, because it was the responsibility of the Pentagon.

There were a few Saudi visits by ministers or the king. King Saud was not as able as his father,



Abd al-Aziz. I remember when I was in charge and the king came to Dhahran. This was around the time of the Buraimi incident, and there was a military parade. There was a lot of shouting. The king himself spoke to calm the crowd down and said these were important times, and "As far as the military matters are concerned, I am the first soldier of the kingdom." Everyone applauded, and the atmosphere became more calm. When we all went to dinner that night at the Emirate, I sat next to the king and spoke to him. I told him I had been impressed by the effect his words had had. I added that I considered him to have been the first diplomat of the kingdom.

*Q: Was there a concern about the Palestinians in the area because they're in the army rather than the Saudis?*

MCCLANAHAN: Palestinians were not in the army, but in the local administration, although everything concerning finance was dealt with by the Saudis. The Palestinians and a few Egyptians were very necessary to the Saudi administration at that phase, but I suppose they were probably watched because they had international contacts, and they were much more educated and sophisticated. I am not sure how they were recruited. I guess each one probably invited some of his relatives.

*Q: What were the concerns and interests in Bahrain?*

MCCLANAHAN: The Bahrain Petroleum Company [BAPCO] was owned by Americans. The chief officials were therefore Americans and they had a comfortable compound on Bahrain, where we would stay during consular visits. We would always take an important American visitor to Bahrain, accompanied by the British agent. Many political agents visit there. I suppose the negotiations for the U.S. Navy presence in Bahrain must have been worked out with the British political agent and advisor and then the British arranged matters with the Bahrainis. We studied and reported on marginal problems such as the cultural stratification in Bahrain, where a majority of the population were Shia Muslims, and the ruling family and a minority were Sunnis.

*Q: Was there not a large Iranian population there also?*

MCCLANAHAN: No, but there were families that went back and forth between Bahrain and Iran because they were Shias. They would travel for business and personal religious pilgrimage reasons and trade wherever there was money to be made. Most of the Bahraini Shias lived in small villages.

*Q: How were relations with the British?*

MCCLANAHAN: They were good. Bahrain had been a troubled issue for the UK because Iran made a historical claim. The British officials were always helpful and generally candid about talking about discussing Bahrain and other places in the Gulf. I visited Qatar, part of our consular district and a British protectorate at that time. I stayed with the British political agent there, and later he and his wife came to be our guests in Dhahran.

*Q: Please tell us about the United Arab Emirates. Tell us about the Buraimi problem.*

MCCLANAHAN: The Saudis built up a claim that the oasis had been an early tributary to the Saudi Dynasty, said Buraimi leaders. They brought gifts and paid a formal homage. That became a political problem because oil prospecting was involved. The probability and the actuality of it made the situation heat up. The Saudis sent an official agent with some lightly armed forces to Buraimi Oasis and attempted to install them. The British maintained Buraimi was part of the Sultanate of Oman and expelled the Saudis. The American government was concerned about ARAMCO's possible involvement.

*Q: How did the Suez crisis affect things?*

MCCLANAHAN: Well, my wife, I, and my children took a few weeks of local leave that summer of 1955 in Austria. On our way back on a day in Athens, I saw the headline in the newspaper that Egypt had seized control of the Suez Canal. We returned to Dhahran and the crisis was indeed very much in the wind, because the airlines using Dhahran would have to reroute. When we left Dhahran at the end of my tour in December, 1955, we flew to Beirut and Istanbul rather than the regular route via Cairo. I think we gathered that in Saudi Arabia, the educated Saudis were sort of exhilarated by the spectacle of an Arab government challenging a colonial power. However, the Egyptian coup leader, Nasser, represented a different kind of Arab nationalism than most Saudis wanted to see in their country. Probably, they would have preferred to hold an Arab summit. I remember, some younger Saudis took me aside and asked, "Will Nasser succeed? If so, what a wonderful thing he will have done."

*Q: What happened when Nasser seized the canal?*

MCCLANAHAN: It was an issue that got shifted to the United Nations. The British agreed to that. Nasser agreed to do it also. The Secretary General wanted to work out a formula for preventing war, such as what happened later in the Suez. If there had been a war or serious trouble in Saudi Arabia or Iraq, that is in an oil-producing country, that would have really stirred things up and would have caused a really serious complication for everybody. In Saudi Arabia and the Gulf, I recall, the price of automobiles went up because they all normally came in through the Suez Canal.

*Q: When the war started with Britain and France with Egypt, I believe the war was in 1956?*

MCCLANAHAN: Yes. In November and December, as I was leaving Saudi Arabia at the end of my two-year tour, there was a lot of concern about it. It was followed on the radio, but it didn't much affect the operations in the oil company. None of the activity was interrupted. The economy there in the short-term was pretty self sufficient. They, of course, had to readjust the ordering of machinery and vehicles, but other than that, their needs were taken care of.

*Q: Where there any concerns about Nasser?*

MCCLANAHAN: The Saudi government as a conservative monarchy was concerned about this new revolutionary Egyptian regime that had come to power in 1952 by the fact that it was a strident Arab nationalism, an assertive Arab nationalism. Nasser came on a visit to Dhahran before I left, and I saw him briefly on his arrival at the airfield. He was warmly greeted by the

crowd who were there. He came at the time of Ramadan and spoke one evening. The gathering was actually held on the tennis court area at the ARAMCO compound. It was not for the Americans, but mainly for the Saudis to attend. Anwar Sadat also spoke with an Islamic tone. It was night. There were the great flares of burning gas from the refinery in the distance in the. He spoke of the great light that had burst out in Arabia in the past, meaning Islam, and how it had illuminated the whole world. I was in the front row of seats and I recall that only a few times did he denounce the West.

*Q: You left there at the end of 1956 and you went where?*

**DAVID D. NEWSOM**  
**Officer, Arabian Peninsula Affairs**  
**Washington, DC (1955-1959)**

*Ambassador David D. Newsom was born in California in 1918. He received a bachelor's degree from the University of California in 1938 and a master's degree from the Columbia University in 1940. He served overseas in the U.S. Navy from 1942-1946 and entered the Foreign Service in 1947. Ambassador Newsom's career included positions in Pakistan, Iraq, the United Kingdom, Libya, Indonesia, and the Philippines. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on June 17, 1991.*

*Q: Tell me what was going on in Saudi Arabia in this period?*

NEWSOM: Abdul Aziz died in 1953. He was succeeded by his son, Saud bin Abdul Aziz, who was a great hulk of a man with poor eyesight. He made a memorable visit to the United States in 1957. Wadsworth was still our Ambassador to Saudi at the time. The rule then, as it is still now, was that the head of state could have 12 persons with him for whom the US government would pay expenses in Washington. Wadsworth protested that 12 was not enough for a king. We finally agreed that His Majesty could bring 40 people, but would only pay for some of them. We sent Victor Purse out to insure that no more than 40 boarded the ship that would bring the party to the United States. We did not realize that the ship would dock at Cannes where another 40 Saudis boarded. The Saudi party, by the time it reached New York was over 80 people. We had to pare that down. Blair House was occupied by the King and his immediate entourage. The rest were put in the Shoreham, except for the King's bodyguards who were bedded down in tents pitched in Lafayette Square. The Royal party was expected to stay in Washington three days; it stayed nine days. During those nine days, we negotiated an extension on our use of the Dhahran airport. Robert Murphy, then Under Secretary of State, was supposed to be our chief negotiator; Yussuf Yassin was the Saudi negotiator -- the same man who handled the Oasis tribunal. After one session, Murphy decided that he didn't want any more and therefore established a drafting committee and made me the chairman. It is we who had to meet with Yassin thereafter. So I negotiated with that wily Syrian for four days and nights and managed to squeeze out another five year extension. That was the last extension. That experience was useful because I learned a lot about negotiating in those four days.

Then the whole atmosphere, which had been reasonably amicable, was marred by apparition of the Straits of Tiran which came up during the last couple of days of the King's visit. Herman Fleiger, the Department's Legal advisor -- a man very close to Dulles -- had been asked to render an opinion on the rights of Israeli transit of the Gulf of Aqaba waters. This came after the Suez incident. Fleiger ruled that the Straits were international waters because we at the time still supported the "three mile limit" rule. In the Straits, the three mile limit overlapped from opposite shores, but in the Gulf, there was an area which we considered international waters. Straits leading to international waters were also considered as "open" waterways. The Saudis were much opposed to this interpretation. So the ruling became a very contentious issue, but it did not fortunately interfere with the Dhahran airport extension. We did make additional commitments to Saudi Arabia during this visit which effected our relationships ever since.

*Q: How did you view the stability of the house of Saud in Saudi Arabia? I ask that question because this was the period when Nasserism was at its heights?*

NEWSOM: I concluded then and I have maintained the view that as long as the sons of Abdul Aziz were still available to assume the throne in turn and as long there wasn't any competition from other branches of the family, the Saudi kingdom was relatively secure. Even the deposition of Saud and the later assassination of Faisal did not dent the cohesion of the royal family.

Saud was a sad figure. He always reminded me of King Lear in a way. He was almost blind, heavy set, not very smart. I went to see him after he had been deposed. I had gotten to know him quite well during the nine days in the Blair House. When I went to see him, he was in the ARAMCO hospital, in a little room, essentially unaware of what had transpired. He had somewhat vacant stare with his semi-blind eyes. It was a very sad picture. Faisal was much impressive. His death was a tragedy. Neither Hollech or Fahd were brilliant, but they kept the kingdom together.

**WILLIAM A. STOLTZFUS, JR.**  
**Political Officer**  
**Jeddah (1956-1959)**

**Deputy Chief of Mission**  
**Jeddah (1968-1971)**

*William A. Stoltzfus was born in Lebanon in 1924. He attended Princeton University and then entered the Naval Air Corps. He entered the Foreign Service in 1949 and his career included positions in Libya, Kuwait, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia, and an ambassadorship to Quwait. Ambassador Stoltzfus was interviewed by Lillian P Mullin in May 1994.*

STOLTZFUS: I got word from Washington that I was being transferred to Jeddah. The Ambassador in Jeddah was a character of the old school and quite a maverick. His name was

George Wadsworth and he was known throughout the service as being cantankerous and contentious. He was the bane of many a junior officer. He just went about his own business in his own unorthodox way.

We had a large Embassy compound at Jeddah. Wadsworth's residence was at one end of the compound. He had built his own golf course there. That is what he always did wherever he went. Whether it was Ankara or Jeddah, he built his own golf course. That was a wonderful thing because it was a community thing. Everybody, all of his colleagues and the rest of us, could use the course. From that point of view he had a very good and kind sense that there isn't much to do in places like that. So he had a golf club; it was a very, very nice community thing.

But he worked entirely in his own residence. It is claimed that in his three or four years there he only went to the Chancery a couple of times and that was to explain to his DCM what he wanted done about the golf course. Whether that is absolutely accurate or not, he never went to the chancery once when I was there.

Jeddah is now a Consulate General, the Embassy having moved to Riyadh years ago.

*Q: And you were his aide, I think?*

STOLTZFUS: Well, Washington was worried about the situation. The Ambassador had his safe and everything - all his papers, everything - in his residence. He didn't do anything in the Chancery at all. The DCM was just his flunky who saw him occasionally if the Ambassador felt like seeing him. He had nothing to do with any of the Ambassador's meetings with the King or senior ministers or other ambassadors. Nothing to do with political or military or oil (ARAMCO) reporting. He simply administered the Chancery.

Well, the person Wadsworth worked with was a Saudi by the name of Mohammed Masoud, who later became Deputy Foreign Minister. But he was trusted by the King and was very influential with the King. And he was also the interpreter and assistant to the American Ambassador.

So he was the only one who was at the residence with the Ambassador. And they would do all the cables, all this top secret stuff. Everything that went through, Mohammed Masoud would see. Whether he informed or not - and undoubtedly he did - our relations with Saudi Arabia were so good that you weren't talking about some sort of terrible thing that was going to happen.

But to say the least it was a breach of security for the Ambassador to be doing all of his cables and all of his work with this Saudi.

So I was sent down to take over from Mohammed Masoud. Now the Ambassador didn't ask for me. He had no notion I was coming. That is an interesting situation to put one of your junior officers into. To send him down there and then he is supposed to take over from the person who is spending night and day with the Ambassador.

The Ambassador used to get up at 10 or 11 in the morning and work until three or four in the afternoon. And he'd play golf in the afternoon. After dinner he'd play bridge with his diplomatic

colleagues and then he'd say, "Bill, let's get to work." It would be nine at night and then we'd work all night until about three or four in the morning. I never saw my wife. I don't know how we had a child there. We did somehow.

But back to Mohammed Masoud. So I showed up at the residence. The Ambassador said, "I knew your parents." He and his wife, who had passed away - he had been Minister to Lebanon and Syria - had met my parents and they were good friends to him. "Well, I know your parents. Good people." I said, "Mr. Ambassador, I am here..." "I know you're here, don't know why." So I said, "What can I do?" He said, "Do? Be helpful, just be helpful! Go and sit with Mohammed and, you know, correct his English or something." Well here is a very sensitive subject. And Mohammed sort of looked at me: what is this guy doing here? I realized right there it could be a very uncomfortable situation for me unless I was very careful. So I said, "Mohammed, I just want to be helpful to you. If there is anything I can do..." And as we chatted over the next few days he began to relax and respond. I never made any effort to interfere in any way whatsoever between Masoud and the Ambassador. Otherwise my life would have been totally impossible because the Ambassador didn't want me there. And Mohammed certainly didn't want me there. He saw me as a spy who had come in to check him out. He was no dodo. He knew it was a rather unusual situation for him to be in. And it was a nice, cozy arrangement. Now here is this guy, this young American coming in and he is going to take my place and so on.

*Q: That is what the Department wanted though.*

STOLTZFUS: That is what the Department wanted.

*Q: Didn't they tell the Ambassador to get that man out of there?*

STOLTZFUS: No. Of course not. Oh, no. They treated George Wadsworth with kid gloves. Nobody would do that.

*Q: Even...?*

STOLTZFUS: It is just amazing. But he did it.

*Q: It's incredible.*

STOLTZFUS: Isn't it incredible? That is just the most marvelous thing. Anyway, I said, "Mohammed, let's chat." When he wasn't doing something specific, we'd talk. And we got to be fast friends because he didn't want to take the notes. He would interpret for the Ambassador and I was the note taker.

And the Ambassador, once he realized that we were getting along all right - we were three bugs in a rug for over a year. I mean we were constantly together. We would go and see the King. Take off in the plane and see the King. The king was often out in the desert hunting. And we'd go and land on some bit of wind swept desert somewhere. King Saud at the time had these huge tents which were air conditioned in the hot season, and he had these huge trucks with food galore. We would land right on the stubble desert and in winter it would be just freezing - you

know that blowing wind - and he'd have these big sheepskin jackets and we would put them on. And then we would keep them. You couldn't give them back...they were presents. I still have one.

And then we would sit with the King and talk about whatever business there was. Mohammed was the interpreter and I was the note taker.

*Q: At least you knew what was going on?*

STOLTZFUS: Yes. I knew what was going on. I did all the cables for the Ambassador. I got so that I wrote them all too. I got so that I would write the way he did. I would find myself saying, "I would venture to say that so and so..." You know, you just become totally immersed in somebody else's psyche and somebody else's way of doing things. For a year we dealt that way there. And then Mohammed later became Deputy Foreign Minister; he went on to higher things.

*Q: But the whole time Wadsworth was there, Mohammed was in the house?*

STOLTZFUS: At first, yes. But gradually, it worked out fine. Mohammed had a family...he didn't want to be there all the time. And he used to complain to me about it as we got to know each other better. He'd say, "I spend my entire life here." So he got so that he would spend less and less time there except when we were on a trip. And I was there. I had to be there all the time. Actually, I didn't mind it because I learned so much from that. I would say from George Wadsworth I learned more than I did from anyone else in the entire service.

Wadsworth and Dave Newsom are the two most important people in my career, in the advancement of my career.

*Q: What was Wadsworth teaching you?*

STOLTZFUS: Well, the way he operated, how he would talk to the King, how he wanted his cables done. At first he'd write the cables and he'd also send in all of my notes. I would spend the whole rest of the night doing notes, you know...setting them up and he would write the cable from those notes. But then later on I even wrote the cables. I wrote a lot of them, showed them to him, and sent them off.

*Q: Did he speak Arabic?*

STOLTZFUS: No. I don't think so. He never used it. I don't think so. When time came to write efficiency reports I said to the Ambassador, "You're not leaving me to the tender mercies of the Political Officer and the DCM to write my report, are you?" Of course the fact that I was exclusively with the Ambassador all the time didn't do me any good with the DCM and the rest down at the Chancery.

Al Jenkins was DCM when I arrived. The fact that he was shunted aside by the Ambassador didn't seem to bother him. But then another guy came in named Joe Sweeney. Joseph Sweeney. The Department, really, talk about how they handled this thing. First they sent me into the lion's

den, and they obviously told Sweeney what the situation was. And that Sweeney was supposed to do something about it. And that Wadsworth probably wouldn't be there very long so that Sweeney would get the Embassy's operations back to a normal situation.

Well of course Wadsworth didn't leave for quite a long time. And Wadsworth thought that Sweeney was less than a small bug on a rug, and could have cared less about anyone including Sweeney. And Sweeney was a real boiling Irishman. He didn't like that one bit. And of course I think it was a little unfair. Maybe I was a little arrogant working with the Ambassador. I tried to make some effort to say, well, I'm really part of this Embassy. He wouldn't let me in the door at all. He said in effect, "You are up there with the Ambassador. Forget it. I won't have anything to do with you." In fact, we weren't speaking for about four or five months.

And there was another problem. Our new Public Affairs Officer was Issa Sabbagh, formerly with the British Broadcasting Corporation, and the Voice of America. He was assigned to Jeddah and he got in Dutch with Sweeney, so Sweeney would not speak to Issa nor to me at all. We were absolutely dead...we were not ever invited to the Chancery. We didn't have an office and weren't allowed in the place. So it was a bit dicey.

Anyway, I said, "Mr. Ambassador, you are going to be leaving. I have been working with you all this time and you're not going to leave me to have Joe Sweeney write my efficiency report, are you?" "Well," he said, "you don't think I'm going to write it, do you?" And I said, "Well, yes." He said, "You know, I recall when I was a junior officer I had to write my own report. Why don't you write your report." So I wrote, "William Stoltzfus has done an outstanding job for the Ambassador. There is very little to criticize in him. Maybe he doesn't make the martinis exactly right but he has been superior in every respect. I have no complaints. I think he should be promoted as soon as possible." I went on and on and on. He looked at this report and he said, "Bill, don't you think this is a little bit thick?" I said, "You asked me to write it." He changed a word or two that I wrote, excerpted parts of the report written by the Political Officer, who of course had no relation to my duties at all - and sent it in.

*Q: A junior officer's dream, right?*

STOLTZFUS: Just perfect...that's why you can say he did me a big favor. Well, I mean actually, I worked with him night and day. It was very seldom that I got home before dawn.

*Q: For over two years?*

STOLTZFUS: Well, no. A year and a half? And then the next Ambassador was Donald Heath. He was out in Cambodia before. Well, he was a piece of work too, but in a totally different way.

He was pretty lazy to be honest with you. And so I became the interpreter as well as the note taker. Whenever we went to the...

*Q: Mohammed left?*

STOLTZFUS: Mohammed had left by that time.



*Q: When Wadsworth left, Mohammed left?*

STOLTZFUS: Yes. And as I said, he was high up in the Foreign Ministry; he became Deputy Foreign Minister. And so I became the interpreter for Donald Heath. We would go and see the King and Prince Faisal, who later became King, who was the Prime Minister then. Saud and Faisal didn't get along. Of course politically it was an interesting time. King Saud, who was an intriguer, a spendthrift and had wrecked the finances of the country, really was an embarrassment to the ruling family.

And Prince Faisal had most of the royal family behind him except those in big time with the corrupt and spendthrift King; the real strong people wanted the ruling family to be headed by King Faisal. Faisal spent much of his time in Ta'if, which is a town in the Hijaz not far from Mecca, and he stayed in the Western province. King Saud stayed in Riyadh and went hunting and so forth in the eastern part of the country.

I had a lot of interesting experiences during that time because by then Washington had decided that since the new Ambassador was there things had gone...

*Q: So you were talking about the period of time after Wadsworth left. And I wanted to ask a question. While Wadsworth was there did anyone from Washington visit the embassy to see what was going on?*

STOLTZFUS: Absolutely not. The situation was left exactly as it was. I was sent down and then Sweeney was sent down but nobody else made an effort to rectify the situation as long as Wadsworth was there. It was obviously a total disaster from the security point of view but there didn't seem to be any serious consequences that would come of that situation.

Our relations with Saudi Arabia, as I said before, were excellent; we were as thick as thieves. There was no reason to think that King Saud or Faisal or Mohammed Masoud or any other Saudi in the government would use highly classified information that we had there against the US. And probably, and this is just speculation, Washington was rather careful about what it sent to us. It probably didn't send a lot of things that might have been very sensitive - activities in the other areas of the world. Further to that, maybe they did, but Wadsworth didn't allow such reports, if any, to get into Mohammed's or my hands. I mean, there may have been another...

*Q: Channel?*

STOLTZFUS: Channel that he...

*Q: You never saw it though?*

STOLTZFUS: Nothing I ever saw. It doesn't occur to me that is too likely, but it was perfectly possible. The Ambassador certainly would not have shown any CIA reports to Mohammed.

*Q: Did you ever talk to the desk officer when you came on?*

STOLTZFUS: No. No. Well, the desk officer was David Newsom, and David Newsom knew all about this. Of course he did. Newsom had a great sense of humor; nobody has a better sense of humor and nobody is brighter or more intelligent or knows better how to get things done - knows what should be done and what should not be done. I think his feeling was that there wasn't a lot of damage here, that actually it was quite an interesting situation. I think it intrigued him.

Q: *Maybe we were getting more than we were giving.*

STOLTZFUS: Yes. That is quite possible. When I got back after my Saudi experience, David and I used to talk about some of it. And he got a tremendous kick out of the whole thing. And so nobody...I don't fault David at all for this...there was no reason really to roil the waters there. It really didn't seem to be worthwhile. At least I assume that is what his decision was. We both loved the situation. It was a lot of fun in a way.

We came back one time with King Saud to the States in connection with the Dhahran airfield agreement, and that is a long story too about the various happenings in Washington and the various people there during his visit.

Q: *Was this about the time we were renegotiating the air base?*

STOLTZFUS: Renegotiating the Dhahran air agreement. That's right.

Q: *Was the Ambassador involved?*

STOLTZFUS: Of course. Very heavily involved. He and I joined the King when he came to visit his great good friend, Eisenhower.

Q: *This is in 1957?*

STOLTZFUS: I guess that is probably right. 1957. Anyway, Washington sent this instruction to Wadsworth: please go and see the King and tell him he is very welcome to come and stay at Blair House, and six or eight people are welcome to come with him. Well, probably just the coffee boys and the shoe shine boys are six or eight people. I mean, you haven't even started with that number. But the King said, "Oh, that's very nice. Please thank my friend." A little bit later we found out there were 20 going, and another time when we checked there were 45 going. And I think the final number was about 80 people. Which of course in those days was a lot but now, I mean for Bush and Clinton, that is nothing. They are worse than the Saudi Kings ever were in the number of people they cart around. But in those days it was unbelievable that anyone would have more than just a handful of people with him.

He had a bunch of his sons along, and the thing that was funny was that a number of his slaves came with him too. And of course all the slaves had the same name, so their last names were al-Saud also. Washington said, my God, how many princes are coming! Well the princes were so-and-so al-Saud, and also the slaves; because they were part of the household, they took the same name. So we had to sort out the fact that they weren't all princes. The King brought six or eight

princes with him including his little crippled son, which generated a bit of publicity. He had come to have his son checked out medically. I don't remember what happened to his son.

But on the ship coming to the US the most interesting thing occurred. (The Ambassador and I met King Saud's ship out of Genoa, I believe.) On the way, while I was walking around the deck, a young American came up to me with one of the Saudi entourage and he said, "I'm teaching him a little English." And I said, "Gee, that's great." He said, "I'm trying to tell him the difference between a slave and a servant." So I said to the king's man in Arabic, he is trying to tell you the difference between "abd" (slave) and "khadim" (servant). The man replied, "I am abd. I am part of the king's entourage. I'm no bloody servant." I have always remembered that. It was just fantastic. The American was blown away. He just couldn't understand that being the slave of the king meant that you had real clout. They were an arrogant bunch anyway.

*Q: It was the next thing to being royal blood.*

STOLTZFUS: Sure. They had the name and they had cradle to grave security. They were not just somebody who takes a salary and sweeps the floor. "We don't do that sort of thing."

*Q: We have servants who do that.*

STOLTZFUS: That's right! The poor American just couldn't understand...this was a crazy culture to him.

*Q: What ship were you coming on?*

STOLTZFUS: I think it was one of the American export line if I'm not mistaken.

*Q: So did the Saudi king take over the whole first class?*

STOLTZFUS: Oh, yes. For heaven's sake. We must have taken over the whole first class and then some.

*Q: And you went with him?*

STOLTZFUS: There were two bigger ships. There was the Constitution and then there was...I'm sorry, I don't remember the name.

*Q: The Independence?*

STOLTZFUS: There was the Independence and the Constitution.

*Q: I sailed on both of them.*

STOLTZFUS: Oh, sure. We both sailed on them. I'm not sure which one it was. We took over the whole place.

Q: *And you were coming with the entourage and who else from the embassy?*

STOLTZFUS: The Ambassador and Mohammed.

Q: *Was Wadsworth still there?*

STOLTZFUS: Yes. Wadsworth.

Q: *You sailed into New York?*

STOLTZFUS: We sailed into New York and let's see. That was dicey because the Mayor...

Q: *Wagner.*

STOLTZFUS: Mayor Wagner said he wouldn't see the King; there would be no reception in New York for the Saudis.

Q: *I saw the headline in the New York Times: Wagner Snubs King.*

STOLTZFUS: Yes. We got that word about two days out, but King Saud had no problem with that. He said, "My friend...I am going to see my friend Eisenhower, I could care less about the Mayor of New York." That was not a problem. He came in to New York and Eisenhower took care of the whole situation.

Q: *Why was Wagner doing this?*

STOLTZFUS: Why would any New York Mayor do that? To make...

Q: *Constituency?*

STOLTZFUS: Yes, of course. Absolutely. That was his way of trying to show what a great Mayor he was of New York. And I bet you that 99% of the Jews were embarrassed by that too. That is just meanness.

Q: *You may disagree but you don't say it.*

STOLTZFUS: I doubt seriously that most Jews thought that was a good thing to do.

Q: *How did he get to Washington?*

STOLTZFUS: I don't remember if it was by rail or by car or by plane maybe. I'm not sure how he got there. In Washington there were a lot of meetings with our military about compensation for our use of the Dhahran airfield. Due to Saudi sensitivities we did not use the word "airbase". The King wasn't in on all of those. Yusif Yassin was the Deputy Foreign Minister and leader of the Saudi team. The Foreign Minister had to be a prince. So Prince Faisal was the Foreign Minister - as well as the Crown Prince - but the Deputy Foreign Minister did all the work. Yusif

Yassin was a Syrian who had become a Saudi, and he looked like Rasputin. I became very fond of him. He was a mischievous type and a very tough negotiator too. So they were negotiating the new agreement, and arms and equipment and training, and the compensation of the advisory group and all that.

Q: *Maybe Ambassador Loudon was there at the time at the UN. Was he?*

STOLTZFUS: I guess he probably was.

Q: *Did you meet him?*

STOLTZFUS: Yes, I met him. I don't recall those detail too much. But I was in on the talks. I had to take notes on the military side. And then King Saud visited a couple of places but he was not in terribly good health himself. He was vastly overweight as many of those princes are including the present King. And so he didn't do a lot of physical moving around. But it was a successful trip and then I stayed on for a bit.

Q: *So the King went down to Washington after he landed and continued his visit.*

STOLTZFUS: Yes. His were mostly protocol activities of various sorts, especially of course kicking off the visit with meetings with President Eisenhower, dinner and so forth. The rest of his flunkies were there in the negotiations led by Yusif Yassin.

Q: *Say it again.*

STOLTZFUS: The chief negotiator was the wily, old Syrian, Yusif Yassin. He looked like Rasputin. I'm sure he didn't have the same activities but he was a very tough negotiator. And he was the one who led the Dhahran airfield renegotiation talks. Those worked out fine. I mean the agreement was renegotiated and that was taken care of. And we all went back to Saudi Arabia.

Actually, I went to Beirut to join Janet and our little boy Bill. Because the Suez Canal was still choked with vessels sunk during the 1956 hostilities, we had not been able to ship our new Chevrolet to Jeddah. So partly for adventure and partly for practical reasons we decided to drive the car down. I had obtained a document from the King, a sort of *laissez passer*. It stated that we were traveling in Saudi Arabia under the protection of the King, and his seal was on it.

The trip took five days and was more than we bargained for. From Beirut David Burns of USIS, Janet and I drove to Damascus, then to Mafrāq, then down the Trans-Arabian pipeline - Tapline - the oil line from Dhahran to Sidon. We stopped first at Turaif where the local Governor, one of the bin Musa'ad family, gave us a fine dinner. The bin Musa'ad, like the Sudairi and the bin Jiluwi families, are allied to the Saudis, helping the ruling family maintain control in far-off parts of the kingdom. We were housed comfortably in the local Tapline living quarters that night. Incidentally, our second son Philip was born about nine months later in Dhahran and I have always suspected he was, very suitably, conceived in Turaif, Saudi Arabia.

The road down the Tapline was unpaved but perfectly adequate. But at Qaisumah we left the

pipeline and headed toward Riyadh en plein desert. No road, only widely scattered tracks made by trucks through several hundred miles of sand and gravel plains. In some areas the wind and sand had obliterated the tracks. We had extra gas, a tiny compass and five days worth of water and food, but traveling alone in an ordinary sedan was not the smartest thing we ever did. In sandy patches we let air out of the tires for better traction but we did get seriously stuck once. We were not in that predicament for long before several Bedouin appeared. They set right to work pushing us out and would take nothing for their efforts. No money, not even matches.

We stayed in Riyadh for a night or two and then left for Jeddah, 600 miles away via sand track. All was well until we arrived just east of Mecca. Of course as non Muslims we could not enter Mecca, but another problem was that our car simply gave out. After four days of bumping and grinding over inhospitable terrain the car was exhausted. Various vehicles stopped and their occupants promised to get a mechanic to come out from town, but no one showed up. Finally a truck with a driver and helper stopped and offered to tow us around Mecca through the Wadi Fatimah which, by the way, is the water source for Mecca.

As I recall it was after dark and we were winding through some hills when our guides suddenly stopped in a dry stream bed, got out of the truck and started toward us. I immediately had thoughts of a holdup and I still don't think I was wrong. What to do? Janet had the presence of mind to say, "Show them the King's pass." That certainly did the trick. The two spun around, walked back to the truck, untied our car - and deserted us! But strangely enough at dawn our car, having "rested" for some hours, started up again. Carefully we picked our way through the Wadi until we reached the paved road on the other side of Mecca. As we breezed along on the final leg into Jeddah we were met by Joe Donahue of our Embassy who was concerned at our delay in arriving, and with him as an escort we reached the airport on the outskirts of town just in time to collect our son Bill, who flew in from Beirut in the care of an airlines stewardess. We had no further trouble with our car and gave General Motors full marks for producing a great vehicle. Amazing really. It just got tired, but after a proper rest was able to carry on!

I meant to mention, before I got sidetracked on our desert journey, that some interesting things happened when King Saud was in Washington. Of course what you do as a great King is hand out goodies all over the place. He had trunk loads of watches. We all got watches; he just handed out things all over town and that was a big deal, of course; here is this Eastern, oriental potentate giving out largesse - the press obviously had a lot of fun with their stories.

But one of the gifts - I've forgotten the name of the Protocol Officer, but he or his wife was given a car, a Pontiac, I believe. That was a substantial gift and the Protocol Officer made the mistake of accepting it. Now he had gone to Saudi Arabia and accompanied the King and had taken care of all the protocol side. I'm sure he did a marvelous job and all that, but the one thing he shouldn't have done was take this gift.

*Q: Was this Purse?*

STOLTZFUS: Purse! Victor Purse! You've got it! You are marvelous. That is good.

*Q: I read that recently.*

STOLTZFUS: Yes. Victor Purse. The poor guy, he got nailed for that. It was very unfortunate. There was something else. What was the other thing we were going to talk about? You triggered my mind on something. Yes. The sensitive part of our relations with Saudi Arabia was Jews of course. And Jews not being allowed into the country. Or at least Zionists...unless they were violently anti-Zionist like David Lilienthal and his "At What Price Israel?" I mean that type of person was of course welcome in Saudi Arabia. If you were Jewish you were assumed to be Zionist and then that was terrible. And of course that was a very dicey situation because we for obvious reasons would never accept that the Saudis would not allow Jewish diplomats or Jewish oil company people or Jewish businessmen in their country, you know. That is one side.

The other dicey thing was the fact that they didn't allow any non Moslem religious services. Theoretically you couldn't have chaplains. You couldn't have open services. Now anyone who got to know Saudi Arabia reasonably well realized that you could do anything in Saudi Arabia as long as you didn't make an issue of it. Of course many Christians feel they have to be witnesses and so on. That is not very practical in Saudi Arabia because it is not allowed. The chaplains were there in Dhahran and they had their services. The point was not to make an issue of it. Just do it in private.

But naturally that would be an situation for people to make something of. And I'm not saying they shouldn't. It just wasn't something that would be very helpful in terms of our relationship. In our Embassy, Wadsworth could care less as far as I could see whether he went to church or not. But his successor, Donald Heath, did hold services in his offices in the Embassy. That was Okay because the Embassy was "American soil". Some of our staff brought in taped sermons, you know, like Norman Vincent Peale and others. Then what we would do, my wife and I would often make a service where you dubbed in some music and you had a reading and those of us who wanted to go would go to "church" in the Ambassador's office on Sunday mornings.

One time at our own home we were taping one of the services, putting it all together. In those days as now, of course, alcohol was not allowed at all. But the Saudis kind of winked at that as long as you didn't make it too obvious. One of our neighbors downstairs had made beer and they had capped the bottles. Suddenly, while we were preparing the service, you could hear pop, pop, pop, pop! I didn't really think about it too much at the time but some of the bottle tops were blowing off from the pressure. Well, during the service, all of a sudden, pop, pop, pop. It was on the tape! Of course the Ambassador didn't know what it was and said, "What's going on here?" That was really funny.

In those days of King Saud, you could not go from one town to another without permission. This was also true in Yemen. You needed the permission of the Foreign Ministry to go to another town. Well, I got so that I knew my way around. I was always with the King's entourage and I knew Yusif Yassin very well. That experience and Yemen were by far the most interesting things I did in the Foreign Service. I was just in my element there.

Q: *Those two posts.*

STOLTZFUS: Those two posts. So one time I went to...I was in a hurry and I wanted to go to

Riyadh. And I didn't bother to get permission. I just got on a plane and went. The Egyptian Defense Attach or Military Attach was in Riyadh too. He had come over from Jeddah also. I wasn't seeing him or anything but it happened we were in town at the same time. You always knew who everybody was. You know, it was not a high powered situation at the time. When I saw Yusif Yassin he said, "Oh, it's very interesting, Bill, it's nice to see you. I don't recall seeing anything about your coming." I said, "No, Sheik Yousef, I just came." He said, "That's okay." He and I were always very good friends. He knew I was up to no skullduggery.

While I was there several days, I saw various people as usual. I did most of the reporting for the Ambassador. As I said, Ambassador Heath didn't like to travel around. It was not that easy to travel. You'd go down to the airport and then if a prince wanted to take the plane, you just waited. The plane went off and forget it! We did not have a plane of our own. And Heath preferred playing golf and sitting around. He was sort of at the end of his career and I don't think he...Saudi Arabia was just kind of a bonus given to him at the end of his career. I don't think he was very happy with that. I did much of the work and that was perfect for me. I got all over the place.

So while I was in Riyadh that time a couple of bombs went off. Mysterious bombs went off. And nobody knew or I'm not sure that they knew that the Egyptian Military Attaché had anything to do with it. And you certainly would not think that he would be in Riyadh when it happened. I mean, nobody would be that dumb to have bombs go off when he was there. But he had come without permission. At least Yusif Yassin said he had. He got kicked out of the country for having come to Riyadh without permission.

Relations with Egypt were not good under King Saud. King Saud had all sorts of zany ideas on how to get rid of Nasser. They were just pathetic. He was always trying some intrigue...to do some dirty work. Nothing ever succeeded, of course. We was a misguided missile, that guy, King Saud. He was a very kind man. But simple, loved his comforts and really was just a very bad King unfortunately.

Ambassador Heath came to Saudi Arabia with his own mind set about royalty. He had previously served as Ambassador to Cambodia, another royal situation, and he was accredited to the King and so on. So he felt the same way in Saudi Arabia. That he was accredited to the King and therefore dealt primarily with the King and he supported the King.

Well, by that time Joe Sweeney and I were talking. Since Joe Sweeney was now able to be a DCM in a proper sense. And Sweeney and I knew that Saud was not going to be there very long. That was a really interesting thing because what you wanted to do was show Faisal that you supported him without having the King get the idea that he was being subverted by us. And you never knew what the King might do. I mean, he ordered bazookas. He ordered all kinds of stuff...you know, his own security forces. You never knew what he might do.

Actually the Saud family, except for a few on the lunatic fringe, had enough sense of self preservation to realize that they could argue among themselves. You know there are about 5,000 princes. It is a huge group. So you could have a lot of different, almost parties among them. But they managed to stay together enough so that they wouldn't all go down the tubes together. They



seemed to have enough instincts for that.

So Sweeney and I were pro-Faisal. The Ambassador was basically pro-Saud. And it was difficult because he was grumpy. And he would say, "What are you guys talking about? We have to support the King." And we were trying to indicate that the King could be a very serious drawback if he did anything silly. Faisal was very careful not to show any public opposition to the King. And Washington wasn't all that clear on it either. We were sort of left to our own devices on it.

But I remember one time going to see the King. I went over on my own. I decided it was time to see what the King really thought. So I went over to Riyadh. I didn't want anyone to know I was seeing the King including the Saudis.

Now the head of the Royal Garage was a man by the name of Id bin Salim. The Royal Garage consisted of hundreds of cars and trucks. So it was no mean, low level job. He was not a garage mechanic. He was an administrator...but aside from that he was also a close confidant of the King. I knew that. So I went to his evening mejlis, to where they all sit around in his office in the evening: prominent citizens, favor seekers, or anyone who is anybody. And anyone who wants to come in and sit there all night can do so. I mean you don't have to ask or be invited. If you wanted to carry on any business you walked up and sat next to him and talked in his ear if you didn't want others to hear. A Saudi office is not a place where you have a secretary and keep the door closed. It is an open thing. Everyone expects to be able to get in and out any time they feel like it. And stay as long as they want to.

Anyway, I knew that he had the confidence of the King. I went in and saw him and whispered in his ear, and I said, "I'd like to see the King. Can you arrange that?" He never asked me why or showed any surprise or hesitation. He said, "You go back to the hotel. I'll send a car." He gave a description of the car. "And the car will be there at 8:00." That evening I got in the car and was driven to the back side of the palace. This huge garden and all of this Shangri-la type of place. Id bin Salim was there. He opened the back gate and we walked in through the back, through all of these gardens toward the palace. And within those walls it was just - the women weren't veiled or anything. They were wandering around. It was sort of like a paradise, honestly. You felt it was something like what the Moslems think of heaven - where you have all these houris walking around and all these beautiful gardens and so forth.

*Q: Or Cecil B. DeMille.*

STOLTZFUS: I suppose. We walked down a long corridor and down to the king's bedroom. He had this huge bed in there and also a gigantic round - what do you call it - pouf?

*Q: Hassock.*

STOLTZFUS: Hassock. Huge hassock in the middle of the floor. The King greeted me and sat down on the hassock and motioned me to do the same. I had brought questions I had written out to ask him. The gist of them was, how do you get along with Prince Faisal and where do you think the future of the Family lies, etc....I mean absolutely impertinent questions. But I figured it

was about time to find out what the answer was. And of course the King said all the right things. We get along fine, he is my brother and no, we won't have any major disputes and so on. I had asked him point blank: Do you think everything's going to be all right with the ruling family and so forth and so on. He didn't bat an eye. He answered the questions and so that was the end of that. So I said, "Good-bye" and walked out and got into the car and rode back to the hotel.

I wrote up my report. The Ambassador didn't ask me why I'd done it either. Basically I could do what I wanted there. It was unbelievable. It was by far the most exciting part of my career. I could see anybody I wanted to, including the King, and nobody would say nay!

The report was secret but needless to say Washington, government being the sieve it is, can't keep its mouth shut. Sulzberger of the New York Times was the man who got hold of the cable. He had the kind of clout and in with officials to get anything he wanted. So he wrote an article...I've always wished I kept that. I suppose it is in the archives somewhere. In it he disparaged our sources, saying that "the type of sources they have in the Embassy is to go through the garage man." I never said anything. But Sulzberger didn't know what he was talking about. I mean, this guy was the closest man to the King as far as...

*Q: He was the way in.*

STOLTZFUS: He was the way in. He was a very close confidant of the King.

*Q: He wouldn't have known that.*

STOLTZFUS: And these guys love to use their half-baked knowledge to write up stuff that people read. Anyway, I've always been amused by that.

*Q: As you were saying, the Ambassador that followed Wadsworth in, was it 1957?*

STOLTZFUS: Probably.

*Q: In 1957 was Don Heath. And at that time was Yemen still part of that Embassy's control?*

STOLTZFUS: I'm not sure. Yemen, you'd have to look up its history. Yemen moved under Egypt. Egypt had a lot of interest in Yemen. And they had a senior representative down there who was getting close to Crown Prince Badr. That is a whole other story.

During the time of Wadsworth we went down on a visit to Yemen to see Imam Ahmad, the Ruler. I'll have to do a little thinking about this before I continue and I'll have to talk to my wife to see if I can recall the facts a little bit better. I'm not exactly sure why we went. Whether it was just a routine visit or we were getting ready for Eisenhower...not Eisenhower himself but the Eisenhower doctrine, through which you gave money to people so they wouldn't go under the Soviets. And Yemen was one of the countries targeted.

*Q: We continue our interview and discussion with Ambassador William Stoltzfus. And I think we wanted to go back with Ambassador Stoltzfus to early 1958 at the time that Ambassador Heath had just been appointed to come to Saudi Arabia and I think Sweeney was the Chargé. There*

*were important changes you were saying in the royal family at that time.*

STOLTZFUS: Yes. Some of the details I probably was not privy to - not being at the top levels there as far as rank and those who were talking about the actual changes were concerned. But as I said before, there was tension building up within the ruling family of Saud. People like the Crown Prince Faisal were distancing themselves from the king. And Faisal tended to stay in Taif when the King was in Riyadh.

It was a time when it was clear that something was building up there. King Saud was, and I also think I mentioned this before, kind of a misguided missile. He was thinking he could do something about...vaguely had ideas about overthrowing Nasser. He had some of his spies and his people running about and informers telling him what he might do. He was trying to get hold of some special military equipment without Faisal knowing or without Faisal's consent.

Sweeney and I were quite concerned over a period of time about that. It was perfectly clear to us that Faisal was the one with his head screwed on and the one who should really be controlling things. The family, major members of the family, certainly were moving in that direction and certainly would agree. It was a tricky question in the ruling family; one had to be extremely careful because you didn't want to have a major blow up in the family which could easily have the influence of the family deteriorate.

A country like Saudi Arabia is really basically a personal fief of this huge family that runs to at least 5,000 princes and maybe more. You are probably talking 10,000 to 15,000 in the family at least. They are a very formidable force of course. They have the money to pay for their continued influence there. But once they start to break up...it is big enough that you can have major factions, it is almost like different parties among the different family groups.

And so it is a very unwieldy situation. A very dangerous one if it starts to become public that there are major disputes. So Faisal was always being a very careful man. A very wise man in many ways, very intelligent. He was careful not to publicly criticize the King or reduce his stature in the family publicly. Of course privately he and others were working hard because they knew things couldn't go on like this. And Saud was becoming, if he hadn't always been, incompetent.

Incidentally, he was not the first choice of Abdul Aziz, the original, most famous ibn Saud, who met Roosevelt on the ship in the Suez and was the one who allowed our oil companies in. The granddaddy of them all. His first choice to succeed himself had been his first son Turki. I believe his name was Turki. Some say he was the sublime choice for the job. But he was probably not quite as fantastic as he was painted to be. Anyway, he was the choice but he suddenly passed away and I think Saud was probably Abdul Aziz's second son and so the throne devolved down to Saud. Not a favorable thing for the ruling family at that time. You really had a period of time there where King Saud, when he became King, was under the influence of a number of advisors. Some were okay from Abdul Aziz's day. Others were not, such as the Minister of Finance, a Sudanese. We've got this written down somewhere. He encouraged, or at least made no effort to curb the king's urge to spend and spend and spend. Saud built palaces and he pretty well cleared out the exchequer. Finally a Pakistani was brought in to help out with finances; his name was

Anwar Ali. Anwar Ali was from the World Bank, I believe. He was a very important person and tried to get the finances back on the rails in that 1956 - 57 period.

But Sweeney and I were pro-Faisal. And Ambassador Heath (although as an Arab you would say, when someone dies, "God have pity on him; he has passed away so I don't like to criticize him too much" had come from being (this is my own interpretation) Ambassador in Cambodia. There was a King of Cambodia. Anyway, he always felt that he was accredited to the chief of state, which I guess is fair enough. You are supposed to be, as the Ambassador. But he had what Sweeney and I thought was a too uncritical view. We were trying to tell him that Saud was bad news. He felt and was probably quite right by his own lights that he was accredited to the government of which the chief of state was King Saud. He was not the one to take our advice. I don't know whether Washington was telling him to shake this guy up or anything. I have no idea. Certainly you never saw anything though.

*Q: This is Wadsworth you are talking about?*

STOLTZFUS: No. I am talking about Heath. Saud's problems had started during Wadsworth's time, of course. It wasn't yet coming to a head as I recall, not coming to a head in the same way. If we go back a little bit, I only remember when I was there that Wadsworth was very cozy with King Saud. And that was okay at that time.

Finances were in bad shape and so on. But there didn't seem to be or at least I wasn't aware that there was much tension between Faisal and Saud at that time. Because then we went to the States and they renegotiated the Dhahran Airfield agreement and all that. Then Wadsworth left, and I believe that was late 1957 or early 1958.

There followed some interim time when the DCM was not highly active with seeing the King or anything, but just kind of holding the fort. When Heath came he was...he'd probably deny he was pro-Saud but he felt that his job was to be dealing with King Saud. For whatever reason - his own experience with kings - Heath felt that he should deal with the King. And of course we did see the Crown Prince once in a while but the Ambassador wasn't about to rattle King Saud's cage at all. I think he was probably right in that.

But Sweeney and I, who were not of course ultimately responsible, were on a little riskier course. But we were convinced that Faisal was going to have to do something. I think one of the things that Faisal and a lot of people felt was that the advisors around King Saud were a bad influence, like the Minister of the Economy or the Minister of Finance who handed out all the goodies. He was sacked at some point. Then there was Yusif Yassin, Rasputin, who probably had no use for Faisal and vice versa. I don't suppose any of the advisors around the King had a lot of use for Faisal because their eggs were in Saud's basket.

So they gradually left. Either Faisal was able to engineer this directly or more likely through a lot of the arcane business that usually goes on in Saudi Arabia. It began to be clear to these advisors that they should retire. And they gradually did retire. Jamal Husseini was another one. And of course Faisal had his own Achilles heel. Like Kamal Adham. That is another story. Adham is still a billionaire who lives in London and doesn't spend a lot of time back in Saudi Arabia. He is

probably another one who over time could have been usefully put aside. And he was later on, after Faisal. But there were all of those people in this very introverted and very...I don't know if I'd call it feudal but it was a court. A big royal court and I'm sure that is the way royal courts in the past have been. Where you had those who had influence and weight which waxed and waned depending on where the power play was. That was fascinating too. Really interesting.

Anyway, Heath did go and see Faisal. And so he kept up that side. Faisal was always extremely cautious about talking about the King. He always said, "I am totally loyal to the King." And he was careful not to give any idea that anything was afoot. But it was clear that something had to be done.

*Q: Did Faisal at this time...my question actually was: What about our oil companies during this period? Did this affect them at all, Faisal coming in?*

STOLTZFUS: No. The lifeblood of the Saudis of course is the oil. And we never crossed Faisal in any way...that is an interesting point. Because if it had not been played correctly and we had been too pushy on this I think we could have raised some difficulties between us and the Saudis, especially with Faisal.

I think Sweeney and I were worried that we would get Faisal's nose out of joint somehow. And that Faisal would have thought well, you guys should certainly know things are not going that well. You should be supporting me. But he was not that direct about it. He could have done that. And I think that would have expedited matters somewhat. But our oil companies were thick as thieves and always have been with the Saudis from Abdul Aziz's time, when he gave the concession to them, to the present. I have often said this. Saudi Arabia is really second only to Britain in terms of closeness of our relations. We are very, very close to the Saudis.

That has its good and bad features. But of course, oil is the name of the game and as long as they are a major oil supplier, that is when everything else fades into the background. Oil is still king. And the Saudis over time...the ruling family, though it at times took a position about Israel that was critical of Israel, it never allowed that to affect its relations with the United States in terms of security and oil. Because the Saudis are smart enough to know that if they get on the wrong side of the US probably the days of the Saud family would be numbered in small digits...small numbers.

So they are very careful of that. And that is one of our Achilles heels, to get out of context here. I've always felt we were too much in bed with these autocratic ruling families who are buddies because they provide us with oil. We are reluctant to press them for democratic changes, and that is one of the reasons why we have so much difficulty in the area. The vast majority of Arabs feel that we are not concerned with their interests. We are thinking only about our own oil needs; without our support, the leadership could change. The belief is that the leadership would be a lot better if we weren't there to support those "backward" rulers.

*Q: I think in 1959 sometime you must have gone on home leave, you said.*

STOLTZFUS: Yes. As we said, Faisal was being very cautious. He was very clever and cautious

about the way he gradually took more and more power, backed by the important princes clearly. In periodic confabs within the family it was clear that Faisal was taking over and the King was reduced to a figurehead but typically, Faisal, as long as his brother was alive, was not going to take over as King by force. There is no way he would have done that. But eventually Saud yielded executive powers to Faisal for extended periods and in 1964 he was deposed by the royal family, the ulema and the Council of Ministers, and went into exile in Greece, where he died in 1969 or thereabouts.

Saud was ill and just kind of corrupt. But then he passed away. But he was given no pomp and ceremony whatsoever on his death. He was brought back to Saudi Arabia and swiftly interred. The authorities wouldn't even mark his grave. Not only not mark his grave...but in the listing of the succession of kings starting with Abdul Aziz to the present, they omitted his name. No picture of him appeared anywhere, just as though he hadn't existed.

This went on for some years. I think it has been very recently that the authorities finally decided it was a bit much to ignore one of their monarchs. Saud was after all a part of their history and, you know, time heals and so forth. There is a university outside of Riyadh called Saud University. I'm not sure that refers to this Saud but it presumably does. And certainly most people would think it did. That is a religious university. It is on the way to the airport in Riyadh.

Anyway, Faisal, once Saud was exiled, became King Faisal; he was the next in line. All the kings so far have been Abdul Aziz himself and sons of his line. That is one of the problems of the succession now. That is in the papers right now. Fahd is now 73 and he is not very well, and the next guy in line is Abdullah, who is about 70, and then comes Sultan. These men are all in their '70s or close to it. Practically speaking you don't want to have a change every couple of years - the king dies and you put another septuagenarian or octogenarian in there. This system of going down from one brother to another is getting a bit sticky now.

*Q: Rather than to the son?*

STOLTZFUS: Rather than to a son. The al Saud family is a huge one with a lot of important princes who don't necessarily feel obliged to go and kneel before the King anymore. I mean it isn't quite the same as when the family was smaller and poorer. It is still a very autocratic regime in Saudi Arabia but there are many influential and feisty princes. I imagine this is sort of like the Middle Ages too. A senior prince may not have his own vast domains as in medieval Europe, but he certainly has power through the pecking order and his money. Some of those guys are billionaires and they carry a lot of clout. So just how are they going to get what they want? Maybe they would like to have one of their sons as King. It is a dicey situation and becoming more so. King Faisal took over and then again, look how long he lived before he was shot by one of his family. But that was after my time there.

*Q: We will begin again where you were. Talking about your sort of final months in Jeddah.*

STOLTZFUS: Very quickly. I arrived in Jeddah in 1996 and I think that December Ambassador Wadsworth went down to Yemen because that was part of his bailiwick. And I think it was just a visit to the Yemenis to talk about relations and so forth.

Yemen is just...it is something you had to see to believe. Absolutely if you read about how things were in the Middle Ages in Europe, it had to be the same. There were very few vehicles. The roads were not paved. Their ruling family was the Hamid al Din. Their monarch was called the Imam. Imam Ahmad had taken over after his father had been assassinated on the road near Sanaa. And then there were all those tribes in the north that were being paid by the Saudis. They are Zaydis, who belong to the Shiite sect of Muslims. The people in the south are Sunnis. The two groups still don't have much use for each other even today.

But at that time Yemen was totally feudal. The tribes in the north, the Hashid, Bakil and Khawlan, were constantly restless and defying the Hamid al Din rulers. It was much like medieval times where the king had control of some areas but not over the whole country. He had to pay people to stay in line.

In Taiz there is a hill or mountain called al Qahira, the word for Cairo in Arabic. It is steep sided and at the top of it is a fort, a castle.

*Q: You were talking about this interesting fortress named Cairo on the top of a hill in Taiz.*

STOLTZFUS: Right. The atmosphere in Yemen in those days was absolutely fantastic, and a throw back to the 12th century. One thing I want to say up front is that the Yemenis are the nicest, the most friendly and hospitable people that Janet and I have ever known.

And yet they lived under this completely autocratic and medieval tyrant. Of course he had his preoccupations because, as I said, some brooding chieftain who thought he should be the potentate instead of the Imam was always waiting in the wings. So the Imam had his hands full.

In Taiz there is a mountain called al Qahira. And on the top is a fort cum prison. The Imam would snatch a son or two of his major rivals and keep them hostages in that fort. They were hostage to the good behavior of their families. That was one of his systems of control. He didn't have much in his treasure chest and the coffee trade had gradually dwindled. The famous Mocha coffee...Yemeni coffee plantations were not as great as before.

Coffee was largely replaced by qat, a mild narcotic grown on coffee-like bushes. One chews the little leaves of the bush. Many Yemenis still chew qat and export some. But the Imam didn't have a lot of income from taxes. The Saudis were the ones with bucks, which they used to influence affairs in Yemen. In the 1930's the Saudis with then Prince Faisal at the head of the army invaded and defeated Yemen. Saudi peace terms were generous. However, the south western part of Saudi Arabia is really an extension of Yemen, geographically and socially. Yemen's border might be further north today if the Yemenis had not lost that war.

The Imam didn't allow any schools except the so called kuttab. At the kuttab you only study the Koran. You sit there and learn the Koran. You memorize it and learn to chant. The students are taught by religious sheikhs. But they do not study the "Three R's" or science.

There was virtually no electricity. We had electricity several hours an evening when the ancient town generator was working. Our refrigerator ran on kerosene and didn't do badly I must say.

One of my most vivid memories when I was assigned to Yemen was the sound of chains. It was commonplace to see somebody who had committed a misdemeanor clanking along in public with chains on his legs.

*Q: You would hear that on the street?*

STOLTZFUS: Well, sure you could hear it on the street. There was a Yemeni who had become an American citizen and had come back to Taiz on a visit. I don't remember what trouble he got into but he came to call at the Legation one time and he had a chain clamped on one of his ankles with the other clamp up his leg. His jailers had undone the one to his other leg so he could walk over to the Legation. He was indeed clanking along, but he didn't seem that distressed. He felt that he was going to be released pretty soon. I asked him, "Is there anything I can do?" And he said, "No, I just wanted to talk to somebody here." I never heard from him again. So I guess that eventually he left.

Traveling in Yemen was another unique experience. If we were on a trip to Sanaa, for example, to call on ministers there, we would stop at a town where there were no public hotels. In fact there were no commercial hotels at all in the country at that time. There were royal guest houses, and the royal guest houses were not exactly outfitted with the latest plumbing or sleeping or dining facilities. One of the stops on the way to Sanaa from Taiz is Ibb, an attractive town reached in those days over muddy tracks. It was nice to get there but though Ibb was less than 100 miles from Taiz, driving there could take you all day because you'd get stuck in the mud or break down.

Below the Ibb guest house was the local jail. From your room you could hear clanking and the murmur of prisoners. They were in chains which you could hear all night long.

*Q: In jail they were chained as well?*

STOLTZFUS: That's right. And outside of Sanaa there are or were these little cubicles. You'd think they were empty or maybe meant for sheep or goats. Then you'd hear these clanking chains. There would be two or three guys in there incarcerated for whatever they were incarcerated for.

*Q: What were the crimes?*

STOLTZFUS: Mostly theft. It was a poor country, you know. Either theft or some insult to somebody. I don't know that justice was all that arbitrary but the usual misdemeanor...you know, your camel ran over somebody. There would be some reason that they would be locked up. Then of course they had public beheadings too. I never felt the urge to go and watch one but that was just the normal procedure for treason or murder - those ultimate crimes. The authorities would make it known throughout the area that a beheading was about to take place and you were expected to go and watch.

*Q: How did they spread the word about the beheadings?*



STOLTZFUS: Well, you just knew. It's like small communities with no radio, no electricity, no TV, no nothing. You just know. It never occurred to us to communicate in any way except either send somebody next door if you wanted to have a party and invite them, or go yourself. It was just...these things were known. You'd have a public crier go through town maybe. That is the normal way to do it. He would just go through town calling out the fact that such and such was going to take place at such and such a time.

Ours was a very small community and all of us foreigners knew each other intimately.

We were always at each other's houses. And Yemenis would come to certain events. But obviously the Imam did not encourage his subjects to get any bad ideas by spending time with foreigners. They were careful about that. My wife started a school in Taiz and that is another story - quite an interesting story. Her school is still running. I got permission from the Imam to have that school, which was the first normal kind of school in the history of that country.

When we went down with Ambassador Wadsworth...as I recall it was basically a routine call so we could report what was going on in Yemen.

*Q: Where did you stay if there was no...?*

STOLTZFUS: We stayed in one of those royal guest houses in Taiz. The Yemenis had done their best to spruce it up and clean out the rather primitive bathrooms and all that sort of thing. It was really quite comfortable actually. But you know, there were no modern facilities of any sort.

*Q: You did get the message to them somehow that you were coming?*

STOLTZFUS: I assume it was through Bill Crawford, our Consul in Aden, who also covered Yemen. Bill incidentally lives in Washington and somebody must definitely talk to him about Yemen. Because he and his wife fell in love with Yemen the way we did. He visited Yemen for us and reported on the situation in Southwest Arabia.

The Yemenis were so gracious. It was such a unique place. The charm and uniqueness were great for us foreigners to experience. But for the Yemenis themselves it was very tough. They had the dirty end of the stick. There is no doubt about that. They were held under ruthless control and they weren't allowed education or basically any modern amenities. It was the same policy as that of Said bin Taimur, the ruler of Muscat, father of the present Sultan. He had this same idea that you don't give your subjects notions about the outside world lest their eyes be opened to what they are missing at home.

I'll never forget one time when we stopped along the road on one of the trips to Sanaa. The Yemenis are such picturesque people. They wear their turbans and jambiyyas, a dagger attached to an ornate belt, and in the countryside everyone carries a gun. Such a man was passing by so I asked him how things were and how he was. His answer was, "We don't know anything except the Imam." That was his answer. He was not going to say a thing to me, not even whether his feet hurt. He was perfectly cordial and nice, and if we'd asked him to help push us out of the mud, he would have done it. If we had said we were hungry he would have given us his last piece of bread. At the same time he was absolutely firm on not saying one single thing that might

indicate he wasn't happy or that might be reported by us to Sanaa. I'm sure he could imagine my saying, "I met so and so on the road and he said things are tough." He was going to be very careful that nothing like that ever happened. He didn't know anything except the Imam. That was what he said to me.

That was the way it was in those days.

*Q: So then after you had home leave in 1959 you were assigned to Aden.*

STOLTZFUS: I was assigned as Consul to Aden to follow Bill Crawford.

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I was reassigned from Addis to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, as DCM in July of 1968. Our Ambassador was Hermann Eilts. He was anxious to get off on leave so I was in charge of the post during the summer while he was away. DCMs of course are like American Vice Presidents. When the Ambassador is at post the DCM is dealing with the more mundane aspects of the mission. It is not nearly as exciting as being either political officer in Ethiopia or Chargé on a long term basis.

My first job there really was to make sure that we had sent in a report assessing the longevity of the Saudi regime. This is a perennial thing you do with the Saud family. How long are they going to last? That is of course an extremely important question for us and for our relations there. To observe the flow of Mideast, especially Saudi, oil is also important. We projected that probably nothing would happen in the next two or three years. As usual we listed all of the factors that could be serious in affecting the regime like: what is the position of the military? What about the ruling family, which consists of 5,000 plus princes and nobody knows how many princesses? A whole tribe. Are there different points of view in different parts of the family - when the family gets that large it boils down to the branches of the family - and are these differences politically significant, leading perhaps to internal disorder?

The branches are based mostly on who the mother was. With polygamy being the name of the game there in the past, many branches emerged. King Abdul Aziz, the original king who put modern Saudi Arabia on the map, had a number of wives. The most important one was from the Sudeiri family from northern Saudi Arabia. Her progeny have been most of the kings and have had most of the primary positions in Saudi Arabia ever since. What that means of course is that other wives that had other children can feel jealous that they are not on the front line. That they are not given the positions they are due. That creates a lot of tension within the family. That is something you watch. It can get pretty nasty. I mean, it can get to the point where one of the younger members from a "wronged" side of the family kills King Faisal. That was the kind of thing one was concerned about, probably more than a revolution from below or from the military. Or even from outside.

Unless there was some frontal attack such as from Iraq, which would bring the US and Britain into the game pretty fast, change would more likely come in the form of disintegration from the top than it would from the rats getting into the cheese down below. Nevertheless the bombing of American soldiers in al Khobar and later threats to our forces in the country make it clear that

internal opponents to the regime do exist. You do have dangerous elements that are hard to track down. Some might be Iran inspired as the Saudis say, but others are simply disaffected activists who feel they are not getting a fair share. The element most watched and mistrusted by the Saud family are the Shiites.

The royal family are Sunnis, and the Shiites of the Eastern Province were always kind of restless because they felt, again like the wrong side of the Saud family, that they were not getting a fair shake. They were kept under control by agents of the Saud family, usually the stern and ruthless Bin Jiluwi family, also Sunnis. Because the Shiites are linked to the Shiite country of Iran there is that risky feeling that you've got a fifth column in your country.

Well, to get back to our reports, you watched to see what was happening in the royal family and in the military; also the kind of rumblings that were going on in the east. And you always came to the same conclusion, which was that the Saudi regime was probably okay "for a couple of years". We were not going to project out much beyond that. Of course that was 1968 and now we are almost at 1998 so there is some longevity there. But the factors for disintegration, the factors for danger from our point of view - a change in regime - are always present. Anyway, I got that report off as a first order of business.

The military and the National Guard were of major interest. We had a very active Defense Attaché there by the name of Bob Marino. He had worked his way into close relations with Saudi Air Force officers, to the extent that he and his wife would entertain high ranking Saudi officers and their wives fairly frequently. Since the Marinos and we were good friends, he would invite my wife and me to some of the parties. It was very interesting.

You have to be extremely careful about what you discuss in terms of politics and internal affairs of a country as closed as Saudi Arabia. But it was clear that these Air Force officers did not think that things were right in the country. Too backward. Most of them had had training in the United States, where they were exposed to unaccustomed freedom. Although the US and Saudi Arabia were and always have been close allies, the kinds of free experiences that Saudi men and women get when they go abroad, particularly to the US, can make them a destabilizing factor from the ruling family point of view when they return home.

What happened was that the Saudi Air Force finally came under suspicion. The officers had been too outspoken, had been spied on and reported to the Palace. Later on we were saddened to hear that they had been slapped into jail, accused of disloyalty to the Saudi regime. Of course the wives were extraordinarily upset for good reason, because the conditions under which the officers were being held and the treatment they were getting can only be left to one's imagination. I don't think that I am mistaken that very few of them were ever heard from again, certainly not in our time. When I left in 1971, they were still incarcerated. It was very unpleasant to contemplate the fate of those people we had been friendly with.

That was one of the major events in the first part of our tour.

In the summer of 1970, I believe, Ambassador Eilts was replaced by Nicholas Thacher. His wife is Beanie. No sooner had they arrived than we learned of Black September, when Palestinian guerrillas in Jordan tried to knock off King Hussein and take over.

Probably the only thing that made matters a little less dicey, if I recall correctly, was that Syria, which could easily have taken advantage of this situation, did not get directly involved. The aspect that affected us in Jeddah was that the supplies and military equipment sent by us by plane to shore up King Hussein and his beleaguered troops had to overfly part of Saudi Arabia, presumably because the Israelis didn't want them flying over Israel. I guess that is the reason.

The crisis broke out late one evening. In those days communications were not exactly instantaneous in Saudi Arabia. While our Embassy had ready access to the key people in the government, endeavoring to get the government of Saudi Arabia cranked up fast enough to alert all their people to allow these overflights was not an easy thing to do. In the meantime Dean Brown, who was Ambassador in Jordan, was bleating and screaming and saying to stop pussy-footing around - the planes are on their way. So it was a bit tense.

Nick and I didn't know each other that well at the time and initially he didn't like my taking umbrage at Brown's talking about pussy-footing. Having just come from Washington, he was a little more sensitive to Washington's pressures. So he sort of brushed me off. We didn't get off to a really good start on that. We finally did get the clearance. I guess Nick Thacher thought later that he wasn't going to let Dean Brown's criticism go by entirely. In a cable he replied, "I'm not pussy-footing around. We are doing the best we can." Anyway, we got the overflight and the supplies got to Hussein.

As I said, Nick was just new there. So I went on a lot of his initial calls with him, to the Minister of Defense and others whom I knew very well anyway. The Ambassador, whoever he was, normally did most of the interesting work.

During that second tour in Saudi Arabia Janet and I decided to take our R and R (Rest and Recuperation) in Yemen, where ten years previously we had enjoyed the best tour of our career together. Ahmad Abi Said was our host in Taiz, where we marveled at the changes, especially the new and expanded buildings and facilities of the school Janet had started.

We visited some familiar sites in Sanaa also and from there we split up, Janet taking a hair raising ride in a taxi down the mountain to Hodeida and a flight back to Jeddah, and I going to Abha in Saudi Arabia to call on the Governor of the Asir, Prince Turki bin Faisal. The Asir is totally different from the rest of Saudi Arabia. Geographically it is really an extension of Yemen: mountainous, blue colored vistas, water whispering through grassy slopes, forests. Beautiful country. In fact the Hejaz mountain range north of Yemen not only looks like Yemen but the inhabitants are of Yemeni culture in terms of their music, their houses, their clothes, their unveiled women.

Prince Turki asked me how I was returning to Jeddah. I said by plane, I guess. He said, "No, you must see this part of the country up close. I'll send you a car tomorrow morning." Early the next day a pick-up truck appeared at my door. The driver and another man greeted me and I brought my bag to throw on the back. The cargo section was covered by canvas over a frame, like a Conostoga wagon, and inside was a pile of bedding, cooking gear, water, gasoline and a baaing sheep.

Saudi Arabia now has a network of first class roads, and that's progress of course. But moving at 60 plus miles an hour can't give you much more feel of the country you're passing through than flying. At that time the Abha - Jeddah road was a rock strewn track, now up and down mountains, now disappearing in dry wadi beds, now deeply rutted by trucks. Traveling by donkey, horse, or camel or on foot would give you even more feel of the land, but a truck going at five to 15 miles an hour is a pretty good compromise. Frequent stops to move a boulder or push the truck out of a stream or to refuel or stretch the legs gave us a sense of being part of the scene. The sounds of people and animals, the wind, the earth, the bushes. I loved every minute of that trip.

Most delightful was our stop for noonday prayers. Muslims need water (if available) for ablutions before praying. Toward noon my companions started looking for a likely spot near a well. We passed wells but the driver didn't stop. Finally the two agreed on a roadside well. Why this well? Because they had spotted a comely young lady there drawing water. The right time of day be damned. The right circumstances were more important!

In fact there were a half dozen girls, mostly children, around the well and they all bolted as we approached. The young woman, however, stuck to her job, showing no fear. The men politely asked for water which she immediately proceeded to draw for them. Needless to say, the men were in no hurry to go off and pray. They were delighted to have this rare opportunity to look at and speak a few words to a pretty girl. But it wasn't seemly to hang around so they reluctantly took the bowl of water and went off to pray. They eyed me jealously - the unbeliever, who wasn't going to pray and had the pleasure of the further company of the lady while they did.

We stopped for the night with some acquaintances of my companions. They killed the sheep and while the carcass was roasting over an open fire, they made a delicious entree of the liver and kidneys and whatever else in a dark sauce. I don't know what all the makings were, but I've rarely tasted anything better. We slept rolled up in quilts and blankets on straw mats, with cool mountain breezes blowing over us. I said good-bye to my friends in Taif, having literally carried out Prince Turki's admonition to see his part of the country.

Another event that I recall being of interest and importance to me in, I think, July, 1971, was the visit of Vice President Spiro Agnew. Agnew had been on a trip to Korea, and Jeddah was one of his stops on the way back. He had already stopped in Singapore and Kuwait. The Ambassador made me control officer, and of course my great experience with Humphrey was very helpful background. A young officer by the name of Bob Jingles arrived as advance man. He and I spent some weeks getting this visit organized.

In a highly conservative country like Saudi Arabia these visits can be rough on local relationships because the Secret Service has its job to do and the White House communications people have their job to do. And they don't brook any opposition to what they think is necessary for security and communications. So when one is working in a sensitive and closed society, touchy moments can arise. The Secret Service insisted on casing every house to be visited. Not only where the Vice President and his people were staying, which was the King's guest house - that wasn't a problem except from the communications point of view. The communications people wanted instant contact with the White House not only for the Vice President but for senior members of his staff, which meant digging holes in the walls to put cables through since

the palace was not exactly wired for White House or NORAD type communications.

It was a pretty nail biting time with the Saudis upset, saying that obviously you don't trust us because you must have all this. It took us a while to smooth feathers down but it worked out all right in the long run.

And then for events like going to the Crown Prince's palace for a function, the Secret Service would go in ahead of time and insist on seeing every room in the house, at least the rooms adjoining or anywhere near the reception room. That could mean an invasion of the harem side and of course that is a no-no. Strange men are not supposed to be wandering around in the harem. That again ruffled feathers of course.

Anyway, Agnew appeared relaxed and to be enjoying himself at that time. His entourage was also a happy group. He was very considerate of everybody. Of course, like a politician, he wanted to shake everybody's hand. He could not have been more charming and pleasant. He had dinner with the King and that went very well. Obviously King Faisal was taken with him. They had a good talk. The whole visit went extremely well.

*Q: They were speaking English then?*

STOLTZFUS: Faisal knew some English but I wasn't right beside them when they were talking. So I'm not sure. I'm sure they had an interpreter there. One of the Saudi interpreters. Incidentally, whenever I called with the Ambassador on someone who didn't know English (the Minister of Defense, for example, wasn't too good at it) I was the interpreter for him. I had done a lot of interpreting in the past for various admirals in the Persian Gulf and Ambassador Heath so I was fairly up to speed. Agnew's visit was not eventful from any point of view other than I think the Saudis were happy that he had decided to stop by on his way back to the US. So everything went fine there.

I remember some of the less important but more fun times with the Vice President. He was known as a keen but errant golfer. People would joke that you had to stand well behind him because he never knew where the ball was going to go. Well, he wanted to practice his golf. There was a golf course on the Embassy compound that Ambassador George Wadsworth had put in. It is nine holes, a very neat little sand course that we all enjoyed a lot. He wanted to practice his driving. So of course we raced around to get a bucket of balls and so on. The Secret Service men said, "All right, but before he hits any balls, we have to be sure that everything is safe. Let's see the balls."

Several of us clustered around while the Secret Service men bounced every ball. One of them suddenly looked up and said, "You know, this is kind of silly, bouncing these balls. Here we are all standing over this bucket. If there was any problem with one of these balls, we'd be gone." But none blew up and we took the bucket of balls out to one of the tees. The tees on that desert course were rubber mats, needless to say. Agnew wasn't familiar with them. So I was showing him. I would tee the ball up for him. He finally said, "I really don't think a DCM should be teeing up my ball." And I said, "It's my pleasure."

He drilled balls all over the place and my sons and the Ambassador's son shagged balls and brought them back for him. It was in the middle of the day and it must have been 150 in the sun. It didn't bother him a bit. He just sweated like mad. We all sweated. He enjoyed that. "Makes the juices flow," he said.

Then he wanted to go swimming and that was fine. Every time he moved of course there was this bevy of people running around doing this or that. Getting towels, cleaning up the place. Then he wanted to play tennis. I was to be his opposition.

*Q: In that heat?*

STOLTZFUS: Yes. Well, it was towards evening by then. But still, it is not exactly cool there even at night. But he wanted to play tennis. So down we went to the courts. One of the Vice President's aides said, Now, you know, the Vice President doesn't like to lose, so just keep that in mind. I said, Okay. So we started playing. I did my best to drop a couple of games but after a while I said to myself, I can't do this, this is for the birds. So I cleaned his clock and beat him 6 - 2. I dropped a couple of games and then finished him off. At the end of the set he said, "Well, you play very well. This is fun." Then he said, "Now you be my partner and let's play against someone else." I chose my older son Bill and Thacher's older son to be the opposition - they were quite good. While we were playing my son was getting nervous because I kept coaching the Vice President: "You know, if you bent your knees you could hit the ball better." Bill whispered, "Are you sure you should be talking like that to him?" The Vice President was great. He said, "You mean I'm too rigid?" He couldn't have been more charming or obliging.

Those were some of the fun things that I remember from the visit that made all the work we did on it palatable. I thought no more of it - just felt relief that the trip had gone well. It wasn't too much later that we received a report on the Vice President's trip and his stops on returning from Seoul. According to the report, the VP told the President that the Ambassadors in Singapore and Kuwait were not doing the job.

Particularly in Kuwait. We learned later that the Ambassador there, who was John Patrick Walsh, had unfortunately and unwisely spoken to the press, in which Palestinian journalists were especially active. You had to be very careful about what you said to the press. But Walsh had made the mistake of saying that the Vice President's trip was of course just a boondoggle. So, the day the Vice President arrived, huge black headlines in the English paper trumpeted: "Ambassador Calls the Vice President's Trip Boondoggle." Well, I don't know if there was anything else that our friend Walsh did that disturbed the VP, but I think those headlines were not too good for starters.

The report from Washington indicated that the VP didn't think the Ambassador in Kuwait was really up to snuff and should be removed. But he had a suggestion for his replacement...and that was William Stoltzfus from Jeddah. Talk about manna from heaven! Everything we did on that visit by the Vice President to Jeddah turned out to be a golden opportunity for me.

Another interesting thing that happened, I don't know exactly what year it was but it was at a time when I was Chargé, was a visit from Qadhafi. Qadhafi, in his usual misguided missile way,

suddenly decided he wanted to go on the Umra, that is, the little pilgrimage. The main pilgrimage is two months after Ramadan. But the Umra is a little pilgrimage that you can make any time that you come to visit Mecca and Madinah. Qadhafi was in his own plane an hour out of Jeddah when he notified the Saudis that he was coming for the Umra. No formal notice. He said, "I am coming." And was said to have added: "Look, I am just a pilgrim. I don't want any protocol. I am just coming as an ordinary believer to pray." Well, the Saudis were not about to let a Chief of State "just come", especially not the unpredictable Libyan leader. The governor of the province was routed out along with everyone that they could find that was notable, and the diplomatic corps. And we all raced out to the airport to greet the eccentric Muamar Qadhafi.

He left the airport for the Libyan Embassy while Saudi protocol slapped together a dinner for him. I mean, it was a state dinner. They weren't going to accept any of this business of his coming in and wandering around by himself. And anyway he was the Chief of State. But since Qadhafi had not come for that purpose he had no suitable clothes for it. So the story was that he went to the Embassy. One of the staff had a civilian suit which Qadhafi donned for the occasion. It was an ill fitting suit, and he looked quite unimposing. He was a slender, young, nice looking guy, a young officer at the time. But he really looked funny in that ill fitting nondescript, ugly, brown colored suit. Poor guy. And he didn't look very happy with what he was wearing. I had been invited as *Chargé*.

Q: *What was his position?*

STOLTZFUS: He was Chief of State.

Q: *Of Libya?*

STOLTZFUS: Yes. He was ruling. He was the head. He followed King Idriss, who was king when I was there in the 1950's. The governor of the Western Province told me later about Qadhafi's Umra. He said, "Qadhafi was just amazing on the Usmra." He was accompanied by the major religious figures in Mecca and Madinah who found themselves unable to keep up with him. His knowledge of the Koran astounded them. He would say to his hosts, show me where the Prophet saw so-and-so or did such-and such. Then came embarrassing moments when the religious leaders would excuse themselves to consult or refresh their knowledge of details of the Prophet's life that Qadhafi was referring to. He knew the Koran backward and forward and he knew it a lot better than these people, according to the governor, who was quite amused.

So the Saudis found it embarrassing that they really were not anywhere near his level of knowledge of the Koran. Here is this revolutionary, dangerous man who knew their book much better than they who were keepers of the holy places and supposedly the "creme de la creme" as far as religious knowledge was concerned.

But back to our Embassy. Our Embassy later moved to Riyadh, where it is now. But at that time it was in Jeddah. We had a compound that on my first tour there in the 1950's was out of town. It was north of the town and practically by itself right by the water. You could leave the compound and walk along the shore of the Red Sea.



When I was there the second time, extensive land fill had pushed the Red Sea out of sight and the whole area had been overrun by new housing and streets and shops. The compound was still on the old site. It now contains the Consulate General. The Saudis would like to have the compound back because it is prime property. And becoming more and more so. Kamal Adham, the King's son-in-law and the head of security, lived nearby. The King's royal guest house was right next door. There were other major diplomatic missions housed in the area. It was a very valuable piece of property.

On the compound was the Embassy. None of it was very prepossessing, but it was attractive. The Chancery was near the south main gate and the Ambassador's residence was about in the middle of the compound. And we had other houses for the DCM, administrative officer, communicators, secretaries, maintenance people and so on. In the rest of this large compound was the golf course built by Ambassador George Wadsworth. It had six holes and nine tees. Really a neat course. He had done an excellent job. The course kind of meandered through the property as well.

It was not a large Embassy. We had a couple of people in each section. We had the Air Force attaché. The Military Advisory group was in Riyadh and Taif where our people were training the Saudis up in the mountains, and where the summer palace was located - the summer watering hole for the Saudi royal family. Our air force was at Dhahran.

*Q: At that time did we have any functions at all in Riyadh? Or did you go back and forth? What was going on in those two places?*

STOLTZFUS: The Embassy was in Jeddah because the Foreign Ministry was in Jeddah. The Saudis preferred having all of the foreigners as much in one place as possible, especially the diplomatic corps. That is the way it was when I was there both times.

We did have a USIS library in Riyadh. We also had an important Consulate General in Dhahran to take care of our large number of Americans with the Arabian American Oil Company (ARAMCO). And as I said, we had Air Force personnel at the Dhahran "airfield", really an airbase.

We would go to see the King wherever he was, and by tradition he and his court divided his time in several parts of the country during the year.

In the 1950's when Saud was king, he moved around more than Faisal did in the 1970's as I recall. But still the idea was that the King would spend roughly a third of his time in each of three places. Riyadh in the winter. Riyadh was the capital of course. Then the King and his court would move to Jeddah for a spell, and then to Taif, and back to Riyadh. The Saudi kings should have spent time in the Eastern Province but none of the Saudi family was very comfortable there. Because of this, as I explained before, the easterners, many of them Shiites, felt slighted and it was kind of a troubled area. That is where the oil is so it has always been an important part of the country. But the King always found an excuse not to spend much time in the area.

King Saud loved to hunt, but in comfort. He would go out to the desert with his air conditioned tents, huge supply trucks and every possible amenity. Often he would go into the north country of Qassim which has since developed, thanks to its excellent agricultural and water resources.

Faisal was not a hunter and I don't think he liked to move all that much. But still, whenever the Ambassador went to see the King, it would be wherever the King was. A bit like the medieval days when a court would move here and there. So if the King was in Taif, we would go to Taif.

*Q: And how long were you posted to Jeddah?*

STOLTZFUS: We were in Jeddah from July, 1968 to the tail end of 1971. And then we went back to the States on leave.

**ISA K. SABBAGH**  
**Public Affairs Officer, USIS**  
**Jeddah (1957-1964)**

**Public Affairs Officer and Translator, USIS**  
**The Middle East (1974-1981)**

*Isa K. Sabbagh was born in Palestine in 1917 and was educated there and in England. During World War II, he worked as a broadcaster and editor of Arabic programming at the BBC and in 1948 joined the Voice of America. In 1957 he entered the Foreign Service to begin a distinguished career as a Foreign Service officer and translator in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1989.*

*Q: You were sent to Jeddah rather than Africa, weren't you?*

SABBAGH: That is another story. I was first, after Foreign Service training, assigned to Tripoli, Libya and then they changed it to Tunis, Tunisia because they said, "It is more central and you know more people, so if you have no objection...?" I said all right. I was finishing the routine things of processing out, getting a diplomatic passport and this and that, having been confirmed, I bumped into an old friend, Donald R. Heath, who had been U. S. ambassador to Lebanon and he was on a direct transfer to Jeddah. He said, "Mon ami (he spoke French fluently), what are you doing." I said I had joined the Foreign Service. He said he knew and had been spending the last three days trying to get in touch with me. I asked what for, and he said he wanted to congratulate me and to ask me for a favor. He asked if I knew where I was being assigned and I said Tunis. "Tunis" he said, "this is the favor I want. If I can swing it, George V. Allen is an old friend of mine."

*Q: He was the head of USIA*

SABBAGH: Yes, he said, "If I can have him assign you to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, would you accept?" I said I would not object. I had been in Saudi Arabia. I had the honor of being whisked out of an airplane to go and meet the king in 1952.

*Q: This was Ibn Saud.*

SABBAGH: Yes, Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud. Heath said, "Good, let me see what I can do." I said all right, but don't tell Allen that I have accepted so readily. Two days later George V. Allen summons me to his office. I had met him before. He said some kind words of how the Foreign Service was richer for having me, etc. "Now our mutual friend, Ambassador Heath, has presented a very good case for having you with him in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia." I said "Oh." Allen said Heath said he did not want to fall into so many pitfalls in that new cultural society because while he knew Lebanon and the Lebanese and their French veneer, but he had never been to Saudi Arabia, he did not know anybody there, and Heath said "I know that my friend Isa Sabbagh has a good standing with the Saudis. They like him, he likes them. He would not arrive as a stranger. They listened to him throughout the war. I want somebody like that to be my right-hand man, constant at my side to help me avoid those pitfalls." "Well, you present a very logical case", said George V. Allen, "and I will see if Isa has no objections, and that is why I am asking you now. Do you have any strenuous objections?" (He used that adjective.) I said "Frankly no. I know Ambassador Heath, and it would be a privilege to be his right hand." Allen said, "We want also as the first country public affairs officer to establish USIS in Saudi Arabia" I said ok and that is how it started and for about two and a half years I worked in Saudi Arabia solo. They did not send me any assistants. The secretaries of the embassy were all very kind (not only because I was a bachelor) but I said "Look, it is your government, not just mine, I want to send these messages to Washington, to my agency."

When Ed Murrow became head of the agency he held a regional PAO conference on Cyprus and I attended. When my turn came for the meeting with him, I went in, "Good afternoon Mr. Director". "You must be Isa Sabbagh". "Yes I am, I have been for some time". He said, "I have heard a lot about you". I said "I do not need to reciprocate the same sentiment because it is taken for granted." He was proceeding with those pleasantries. I said, Excuse me, Mr. Director, really I appreciate your time and mine. Number one, I have arrived here with hesitation as I did not know if you would have the mood or ability to listen to the spiel I am going to give you. If you are willing I will stay here until tomorrow, but if you're not, don't waste your breath or my time". He said, "That's the kind of person I like, the kind of approach I like. Sit down, tell me all you want". I told him how I was running the USIS kind of things as one solitary person. Finally I got a hold of two locals, two very good ones, and all USIS activities rested on their shoulders and mine.

*Q: I know this well because I was at the other end of the peninsula and in my spare time as a vice consul distributing books supplied by USIA with no real support.*

SABBAGH: Thank God for your remark. That is exactly what the case was about. We started sending films, educational films, to Mecca, yet, regularly every Thursday. So I was mentioning all this to the late Edward R. Murrow and I showed him that the cost of what I was allotted for all these activities was something like \$3,000, something ridiculous. An ambassador later on said openly that Isa spends out of pocket more than all of us put together. Ok, I did not see anything wrong with that as long as I had a penny in my pocket. So, this was my start in a) diplomacy, b) USIS Saudi Arabia. Finally they sent me some chap who fancied himself as the CIA's chief operator - and he was not with them at all.

*Q: I would like to concentrate on the situation, as you saw it, in Saudi Arabia. Let's talk first about your initial assignment was 1957-1964. This was a very interesting period because you had King Saud, and Faisal and their difficulties, and then Faisal was assassinated about the time you left, I think.*

SABBAGH: No, Faisal was assassinated during my second term in Saudi Arabia in 1975.

*Q: You are absolutely right. Could you talk about the relationship and how you dealt with the House of Saud and the problems therein?*

SABBAGH: When King Abdul Aziz died in 1953 I was with the Voice of America. I gave a moving elegy, quoting Arabic poetry and all that kind of thing. In fact, later on Mohammed Abdul Aziz when I met him said, "You made us cry". I was moved, of course, and when I went there, as you know, the bedouins, the Saudis do not hang on to moments of sadness. Moving on to 1975 when Faisal died, you did not see many shedding tears. That is their nature, back to earth, so to speak.

King Saud had become king before I went there in 1958. I was due in 1957 but a SNAFU about my diplomatic passport held me up. I said "Look, I don't want to waste Uncle Sam's money with one word in my passport I would not be able to enter Saudi Arabia or go into any other country." I had indicated my country of birth as Palestine. One brilliant person at the Passport Office insisted in putting Israel as the place of birth. I said, "Look, when I was born there was no such a thing as Israel". The person said, "No, we can't change it, this is it, the town of Safad is now in Israel. I said, "Good God", and took it. I had left a message before leaving for the head of all heads of the Passport Division, Mrs. Knight.

*Q: Frances Knight.*

SABBAGH: God rest her soul, I understand she died recently.

*Q: I think she is still alive, in an unconscious state.*

SABBAGH: What a shame. She took my side. I said, "Look, the previous documents, in fact one of which I made by extending my travel document by extending it by scotch taping an insert, is an Ottoman decree, and I traveled on it. One of the data I inscribed was the place of birth, Palestine." She said to the person who was causing the trouble, "But Mr. Sabbagh traveled on documents in which every one said Palestine." "But Mrs. Knight" said that fellow, "that was a mistake." She said, "Joe, we all make mistakes, let's make another one". I swear this is how it happened. She said, "I want this corrected and on my desk in forty minutes as Mr. Sabbagh and I are invited out to lunch at the Department." Bang!

So I went to Saudi Arabia, as I say without too much modesty, as a known person. Isa Sabbagh, they used to listen to him every night on the BBC, they could not believe he was here. In fact one fellow spread the rumor that Isa Sabbagh has an air-conditioned "Sahfar". Sahfar was their name for a Chevrolet. I had asked for an air-conditioner to be installed because I was going to be going

to the tropics, so to speak. And they used to come to the embassy to look at that thing and perchance to see me. So it was all nice and warm.

I became very friendly with Abdullah Bel Hare who was the personal secretary to Saud, when Saud was crown prince. Saud retained Abdullah Bel Hare when he became king. We continued with that friendship; he had the responsibility of providing the reports of the daily news to the king, monitoring various stations, BBC, Voice of America and that sort of thing. He was discreet enough not to say much about the criticism I would hear, anyone could hear of Saud, in the business of squandering money, in the business of thinking the oil revenue was his own, for his own pocket, for his children, etc. Also the fact that he had started to be too authoritarian, listening to no counsel of note. Then he had started drinking. One fellow who was chief of the royal garages, Ali (somebody), got into the act, for whatever purpose I don't know. Saud at one point got influenza, a very bad cold, and Ali suggested some cognac, brandy, "That will warm up your insides". Saud liked it and asked for more. One story has it that he did very well by what we call his harem, this is only a foot note. He used to love to engage in that act in a freezing room. In fact I was told later on that that palace in Riyadh, Naseria, a new and lovely place, was the second in the world as far as air-conditioning was concerned. In those days air-conditioning was new. I asked which was the first and was told, the Pentagon.

Anyway, all these blemishes aside, poor King Saud, was a nice man, a genuine bedouin type. Yes, short on knowledge of the outside world. He had traveled a bit, but how much would you get to know when you are surrounded by, overwhelmed by, favor seekers, derriere-licking idiots and all this kind of thing. So that was the start of his downfall in the minds of the populace. Added to which was the fact that his brother, Faisal had begun to loom larger than ever in personality, knowledge, diplomacy and everything. He was the one person who stood up to Nasser, so that Nasser had to go all the way to Jeddah to patch things up. Mea culpa stuff. Faisal was hesitant, they are so disciplined, those sons of Abdul Aziz, until now that when they enter a place you can tell who is senior to whom. I have been in somebody's office who happened to be a prince when in when would walk in the prince's uncle, who was like a straggling bedouin, who had no job, nothing in government or anywhere, so this prince, the minister, gets up and kisses his uncle on the nose, and gives him a seat. This is the type of manifestation one gathered and of course people from the West do not have a chance of knowing or explaining why it is.

Parker T. Hart was our ambassador there; a very able person, a professional person, I had known him for years too, here and when he went to Cairo as DCM I had given him a long list of friends over there and then when he became our ambassador to Saudi Arabia [1961-1965] I was very pleased and delighted. We would compare notes, Pete Hart and myself, and the rest of us on things, like the barometer, who is up, who is down, and what is happening. There was a time when Nasser's stars went way up there and a lot of Saudis began to look in the direction of that rising sun and bow and scrape. Some of them even went to Cairo, Talal was one of them. I was disappointed in those types, because I had, myself, met Mr. Nasser and had an interview with him in the past, in his office in Cairo. Anyway, Faisal was hesitant to do anything that might be interpreted as knifing his brother or maligning his brother or speaking out of school, out of turn, whatever. He was one person who really liked me and trusted me because a) he used to listen to the BBC, b) because in '43 he and some of his brothers were on their way back from the United States and stopped off in London and I interviewed him and them and gave them tea. I had

grown my beard to surprise him. During one other visit in '47 at the Dorchester Hotel I went to pay my respects and our really solid friendship started. (I am mentioning this in a book I am writing). One thing he said, after praising me and my program, on how I somehow inculcated into minds of the young Arab generations all over the place love for literature, history and so forth, but he said, "What a shame you are not Muslim". I think I must have counted to four or five before saying, "Amir, I have no place being here with you, this is the last time you will see me." I went to the door. Two people came to help me go out, Faisal stood up and said, "What have I done? Please come back." He proceeded in my direction, stretching out his arm. Of course out of politeness I moved in his direction and he sat me down. "You did not understand me." I said, "I beg your pardon, I pride myself on understanding something of Arabic and English, I assumed that you spoke in Arabic quite eloquently, but I do not like the spirit". He said, "But that is just it, you do not understand my spirit in not understanding my motive in what I said". I said, "Okay, suppose you tell me." He said, "What I meant to convey to you was that I wish that there were thousands of people like you in the Islamic nation." Look at that beautiful, fantastic reconciling and we became the best of friends.

*Q: How did you see the relationship between Saud and Faisal during the time you were there?*

SABBAGH: Correct, strict. In non-public, in small circles, if you knew who belonged to the circle of Faisal and circle of Saud you could get a synthesis of the situation. I loved doing that. So much so that when Faisal (I was told) was determined to prick that balloon, it had to come to an end, some of his friends and associates were encouraging on going on an electioneering speech making tour, myself included. He said, "What is that, there are no elections here." I said, "I know you don't." Putting it in my own vernacular, "You know enough about the United States for me to make sense to you, in the elections prospective candidates go around making speeches and presenting platforms of this and that parties. In short you must, if I say so as a friend, make yourself available to your people." He said, "I am available to my people, my house is always open."

I said, "Your house may be always open, both gates on both sides may be open, but you did not realize obviously the awe that you engender in people. You are an awesome person. They love you, they respect you, certainly. I have seen people who have almost trembled when approaching you. Now, your brother, and I don't want to enter into family businesses, in fact squanders a lot of money to make friends and to have people around him when you can do it with one of your charming smiles." He said, "I am not an orator like you". I said, "Who is asking you to be an orator, speak in your own, lovely, Saudi language, Nejd, who cares". Then I started giving him, not needles, but encouragement, namely that President Roosevelt was in the habit, he is still remembered for it, for making fireside chats and things like that, regularly. The American people loved him even more because he told them the truth, where the country was going and that sort of thing. Your friend, Habib Bourguiba, the president of Tunisia, used to make a weekly speech on Fridays for that same purpose. It was your's truly, if I may gloat, who suggested that he make it on Thursdays so that it could be picked up on Fridays during the noon prayers and the Imam could reflect on what the president had said, and what the policy was. Faisal listened, and then he said, "Let me think about it" with some glee in his tone. In a week he started in Jeddah. I remember attending that thing.

*Q: This would be about 1963? King Saud left the scene in 1964.*

SABBAGH: That's right. Oh my God, he made speeches in Jeddah, in Mina near Mecca, Riyadh, in Dhahran. I even went to attend the thing in Dhahran. And God rest his soul, what a marvelous, friendly gesture, every time, whether he met with American diplomats or whenever I was there, he would end the thing when I bid him goodbye with the following question, "How did I do?" Or, "What grade would you give me?"

*Q: Let me ask this. You are the Public Affairs Officer of the American embassy during this time. Here is an obvious rivalry between Saud and Faisal, Faisal being the half-brother of King Saud, but obviously far more competent. Were we thinking in terms of Saud leaving the scene, were we passive bystanders - how did we look on this whole situation?*

SABBAGH: We were, I think, passive bystanders but we had had it up to the tips of our noses with what we kept hearing with what Saud was doing or not doing, with his turning in the direction of Cairo and the Voice of the Arabs, and this and that. Starting with the time when Prince Talal was Finance Minister telephoned and ordered us out of our base in Dhahran in 1962. I think it was at the tail end of the time of Ambassador Donald R. Heath, just before Parker Hart got there. Heath called me in and said, "Isa, explain this to me. This is the Finance Minister telling me this. What right did he have?" I said, "Well, in this society he can always claim to have been instructed by his sovereign to do this." It was then that we began to smell something and people like me started to follow through in collecting those impressions. Talal went to somebody who now I think is now deputy head of the National Guard, Prince Badr, also went and a few non-princely types went [to Cairo], and this is what galled Faisal. And this is what encouraged Faisal, finally, to flex his muscles and begin to want to have something done. At that point we were not doing anything, to my knowledge, openly enthusiastically to have the cleavage widened between the two. No. But I think down deep we exchanged this sentiment, "that man's days are numbered."

*Q: We also felt he was weakening the whole structure with his squandering?*

SABBAGH: Absolutely. Maybe we knew our psychology better than people give us credit for. If we had been the Russians we would have been more vocal, more determined in our attitude. I suggested we be seen more frequently calling on Faisal or on Faisal's friends, deputies and that sort of thing. I kept up with Faisal's chief of office in Jeddah, Ahmed Abdul Sahbar, who is now their ambassador in Geneva; he was an old friend. We renewed our friendship when I was assigned to Jeddah, we had already gone back to becoming Faisal's chief of office and from him I got a lot of sentiments from Faisal through Ahmed. In fact I got a direct answer from Faisal through Ahmed to this question, "I hear tell that a lot of people think I have been sent here as a spy, as a CIA-man," I said this to Ahmed, "please convey this to his Royal Highness, because if that is what he thinks too, I can assure you that my suitcases are not all unpacked. I can repack them and go out, because, what the hell, if I were a spy I would change my character, my behavior and so forth. I had read enough stories about them. I want an answer." Back came an answer the same day, "Tell Isa, brother, he is in his second country so to speak, to let the dogs bark as long as the caravan move along." "Besides," he said, "what can he or anybody spy on us for, our destinies are in the hands of our friends the Americans, they know all about our armed

forces etc."

*Q: What was your impression of how King Saud looked upon the Americans and the American presence at that point?*

SABBAGH: The American presence, he welcomed. I think he shared that view with the rest of the family, namely that America is our best shield, Americans are benevolent and they are nice people, good people. Faisal even said that to me, as I note in the book I am writing, in my first long session with him in Jeddah, two and a half hours. He made a distinction between the American people, of whom, as he put it, "We have thousands in this country, and thank the Lord for that", and the American policy which he tore into. Saud did not have this sharp distinction between the American people and the policy.

*Q: When you say policy, you are really talking about Israel?*

SABBAGH: Yes.

*Q: How did you, at the embassy, deal with this thing? Here we were with extremely strong ties and the major supporter of Israel and at the same time really the major supporter of Saudi Arabia, too - I can't really say mortal enemies, but there was just no communication between the two. How did you all deal with this?*

SABBAGH: It was a very strenuous period. I personally felt it, but being a Public Affairs Officer I had to be in constant touch with editors and column writers and analysts and I had to say "I am telling you the truth, I am representing the United States of America, the United States policy is as follows... Whether I like it or not or you like it or not, the United States is committed to the security of Israel." I will tell you how the responses came. You can be friendly with Israel at the same time with somebody who is not enamored with Israel. I picked this up later on from Dean Rusk, who said it in front of me to Faisal at the Waldorf in New York. And Faisal gave a bored reply. "Well you are speaking, of course, in your own capacity as representing the Western concept on things, maybe specifically America's outlook on Israel. But in the Arab mind we cannot believe in this triangular theory of yours. You are not convincing me, but you have the privilege of voicing it the way you want."

It was tough, but I said in every dispute, which was the thrust of my daily talking to them, "You can never prove that right is a hundred percent on one side and wrong a hundred percent on the other. Look at the background of Israel, look at what they have done throughout the years, they have been doing it for fifty years, they were smashed about by Hitler, whose praises you were singing who butchered them by the thousands, they have learned how to survive and therefore they designed their approaches to the Western world, and certainly to the United States of America and are still at it. What have you done to prove that you can be, not only respected but that they can have confidence in you. The American people do not know much about Saudi Arabia except when they see signs of dollars. What have you done? Your information to the outside world, from my limited knowledge, is not effective. I have attended some of your parties and dinners in here in Saudi Arabia and my Americans would say upon emerging, 'My God, Isa, what a bash, some of those guys have more money than sense!' What for for having these



affairs? You think that the only way you can attract friends is by stuffing them so that the following day they will have to go to a hospital. "

The Saudis would take all this from me, as a person who had proven to have Arab blood in my head, in my veins, but not to the extent of being a lackey or treacherous to my responsibility as an American citizen, for God's sake. And they understood all of this. I got into a verbal fight with a fellow guest of Ahmed Abdul Jabbar. This guy, a Saudi, had come back from the United States of America and was claiming that, by God, he could have any American woman he wanted. I listened to him and then said, "Look, I am sorry, I am even not approaching you as an American versus an Arab, but you noticed the utter quiet here, when subjects like this are entered into by our fellow male cronies. But I don't think that you have convinced anybody, certainly not me. In fact, as far as I am concerned, you have annoyed the hell out of me and if we were not in the home of a respectable friend I would, despite the fact you are twenty years younger, would have bashed your bloody head." He responded, "Why, I am not attacking your sister." I said, "Every American woman in this context is my sister. Besides, on what would they be attracted to you for, for God's sake, you can't even speak English properly, you don't even dress properly and you are not even handsome. What qualifications would you have for American woman to rush up to you? You have been pub-crawling, as we used to say in England. That is all". Thank God I was inspired to be true to my self and second to have that fearless son of a bitch quality, that they called me in the Department.

*Q: Now, there are a couple of important meetings that went on, the first was in September of 1962 when Parker Hart sent you, because King Saud had gone to Boston to the hospital. President Kennedy and Saud wanted to get together. This was particularly important on Kennedy's part to sound out and see what Saud was like. There was first a luncheon at Miami.*

SABBAGH: I wasn't there.

*Q: But you were with Kennedy and Faisal, when was that?*

SABBAGH: That was 1962 after the Yemeni thing. Faisal had already come to the United States for the UN and then by quick arrangements Kennedy invited him to the White House for a working luncheon.

*Q: Faisal at this time was Foreign Minister?*

SABBAGH: Yes, Foreign Minister and Crown Prince.

*Q: How did this work? What were the subjects discussed?*

SABBAGH: It worked very well. The post-luncheon discussion concerned elements that were touched on during the luncheon, including even Abdul Nassar's raving and ranting. The Voice of the Arabs and the verbal attacks on the Saudis, the maligning of members of the Saudi royal family, including Faisal and his father, because of Saud. Pete Hart was kind enough to suggest in those circumstances that Isa Sabbagh be there at that visit because he knew all the sides and is trusted by Faisal. I happened to be here. Talcott Seelye can tell you a story about how I almost

did not attend the luncheon because they wanted me to stand behind the two principals or lean over and say this and say that. I said, "Look, I am a Foreign Service Officer, I was higher ranking than Talcott Seelye was (we are still very good friends) and this servile attitude would not do." Seelye said, "What should I do?" I said, "Get somebody else, drag them in from the street. I am not going to find myself in this position, specifically because the guest of honor happens to be my own personal friend, or he considers me as his own personal friend." This was conveyed to the arrangers of the luncheon and I was seated on the right hand of Faisal.

We went upstairs at the White House, after lunch. During luncheon Kennedy was nice, he even showed some knowledge of the area, he had been well-briefed about the Yemen. He knew there were Zaydis and Shafi'is, as they call them, he said he would look further into the matter. He really impressed me, John F. Kennedy. At one point I made Kennedy laugh when I said, "His Royal Highness says, it is all very well, I do not know to what extent Mr. President, you will have the occasion to hear all the details. But Nasser has been doing all sorts of things, verbal attacks and all sorts of shenanigans". I was going to continue when Kennedy said, "What is that Isa?" I said, "I beg your pardon?" "What was that last word you used?" I said, "That was a good Irish word, shenanigans". He laughed and said, "I thought so." I had known Kennedy before when he was senator, a lovely person.

Kennedy promised that we would look into the situation in more detail, make studies. I don't know if we should say this, but it is past history now. That within nine months if the situation does not improve we will have to rethink our policies towards the area. Faisal was the gentleman he always was, he did not really call Nasser names, just with more pain than venom. He said, at one point later, that the United States had decided to withhold any assistance to Egypt, and we were at that time sending cereals, oil, wheat and whatever was needed by the people so they would not starve. This was when Faisal, again, showed some strong feelings. He said, "Your people think they are pleasing me with this announcement? I haven't requested you to starve the Egyptian people, all I have said and pleaded with you President, is to look in detail into what that man was doing. Because, to me, the one thing I would love for my country and my area is not just calm and peace and good living, no, I want stability. That is all. As long as there is somebody who is upsetting things, then we will not have stability and we won't progress with your help, yes. But without stability neither we nor you can succeed."

So, Kennedy passed the word around that here was a guy you can depend on. So that after Kennedy's death there was a half a day of Saudis' personal mourning. There was an eighty year old man who was practically carried into the embassy to register in the condolence register in Jeddah. That touched me. So when Faisal was visiting again in 1966, I think, dear LBJ (Faisal was king by that time), kept saying, "Your Majesty this, Your Majesty that, it is mighty fine etc." Faisal, at the request of LBJ, was giving him the benefit of what they had been doing in the field of education in Saudi Arabia. Actually when Faisal finished with that visit in 1962 he went back and said to me, that "I started feeling my lungs again." In other words the pressure had been relieved by those things conveyed to him by Kennedy. In 1963 when Faisal made a famous speech as to what he planned for the country including a proper budget, no donations to people who do not have any responsibilities, the justice system, teaching in schools, male, female. It was fantastic. Things started moving. He came here with LBJ. At one point LBJ said, "Why don't you tell that guy to go to hell? (to Nasser)" Faisal took a double-take, (he understood English). "What

was that? I can't say that." I said that you can tell him something in Arabic like, "why doesn't he disappear from my sight or that sort of thing". At the end, after that tete a tete with LBJ, LBJ said, "As a person who started out teaching school, that is really mighty fine, Lady Bird, that is my wife you know, she is working to beautify America, she is planting flowers all over the dammed place."

*Q: You were talking about Lady Bird Johnson.*

SABBAGH: That's right. LBJ said, "She is sewing seeds all over the place and now we see blossoms, perhaps like, you, Your Majesty, I have the following ambition for my fellow Americans, I want every American, man, woman and child, to have a Ph.D." So Faisal, at that point, looked at his watch, everything has to come to an end, and said to me in Arabic, "Brother Halleb, give him of the same coinage that he has been flinging at me:. I knew exactly what he meant, so I said, "Mr. President, his Majesty has charged with me the pleasant task of responding to your kind accolade in kind, namely that he understood what you explained about your background, your ambition for this country and what you want for your fellow Americans and what you want Lady Bird to do. All he can say is to convey his heartfelt appreciation by telling you that in your own words, that is 'mighty fine, Mr. President". LBJ laughed loudly and slapped his knee.

Back to the Kennedy-Faisal meeting. It was two things, one Kennedy asked Faisal to convey Jackie's thanks to King Saud for the beautiful golden dress he had sent to her. So Faisal said he would make sure that the thanks would be conveyed, and then they started talking again about the peace and quiet and the need for cooperation. Faisal expressed appreciation for the way ARAMCO conducted itself, how ARAMCO people had done marvelous things outside the realm of their immediate interest of oil, digging and send it out. He mentioned things in agriculture and other such things. He referred to me several times as being the witness to the warmth that Saudis have towards Americans.

The night before I had attended a meeting at the State Department, Bob Stone was there, who became ambassador to Iraq later. We were preparing for the President's talking points. The late Rodger P. Davies was there, a dear old friend, God rest his soul. What positive thing can we have the President give Faisal to take back with him so that he will not go back empty handed? From my sense, because of my profession, and because of my knowledge of that country, I said, "Why don't we get the Army Corps of Engineers to continue to help Saudi Arabia plus one additional item, namely to help them establish a TV station or two?" "What?" said Stone. Rodger P. Davies, who was a former colleague and knew my background, said, "Isa, that is a brilliant idea". I said that it had just occurred to me. Everyone else agreed except Mr. Stone, who was the one brilliant expert who did not see any merit to it. But we decided that it be put on the agenda anyway. So it was sent to the White House with the result that Kennedy had a folded piece of paper with him and went through the points one after the other, "continued cooperation", "joint ventures", "economic mutual interests", financial this and that, bonds and whatnot, education, we welcomed Saudis to come over so they would get to know us better and acquire specialization and all these things. Nice, but where is the final proposal? Kennedy put the paper away. So I said, "Mr. President I think you had better take that paper out again". "What?" "I think that you would find something very interesting at the end of it. So he took it out and looked. Then he asked, "How

about TV, this is the thing of the present, everyone has TV sets. Do you think we can help you with a TV station or a chain of stations so you can talk directly to the people, so they can see you?" I will never forget what Faisal said. He said, "What would a blind person want more than a pair of eyes". (This is an old Arabic saying.) Kennedy said, "I will talk to my people and I promise you that we will do our best and it will be done." So after the visit we went back and I don't know if Pete Hart remembers this, because he was not in on the thing, he had forgotten although there was a memo. During one session with Faisal, Pete Hart and I, six months after the meeting with Kennedy, and there had been no reaction from the Army Corps of Engineers or Washington. Faisal asked about this, "What happened to the idea of a TV station?" Poor Pete Hart said, "I beg your pardon?" Faisal replied, "When I was in Washington with Kennedy he mentioned that you would be willing to help us with the establishment of a TV chain or station." Pete Hart said, I think genuinely, "I will have to look into this as I don't remember this". Faisal raised himself and said, "I am surprised, Your Excellency, your colleague and my brother Isa was there himself, do you remember?" "Yes, I do" I said, "of course I do." I suggested in Arabic to Pete Hart that he really look into it and ask Washington for a copy of memo which I had drafted. Things started moving after that.

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*Q: I realize you are under time restraints, but did you get involved in any of Nixon or Kissinger's talking or doing business when they were in Saudi Arabia? Can you give me an idea of how these went?*

SABBAGH: I can give you an idea of how I was roped into it. Number one, I was in Beirut at that time at the start of the Shuttle Diplomacy thing by Kissinger. Jim Akins, who was an old friend, calls me up and says, "Isa, guess what? You know the Secretary is going to be coming out and talking about the preparations, schedules with King Faisal. He made one remark, I am not surprised, and I am conveying it to you. He wants you here." I said, "Which man?" "Your friend, King Faisal." "What did he say?" He said he took it for granted that Professor Haleeb, (that's me) would be here to attend. "Where is he?" he said. Akin said I was in Beirut getting packed to go back to Washington. "Washington" said Faisal, "what for? Now is the time and this is the place for Isa to be." In fact I was reluctant to come back to Washington to join what I called "the corridor corps" in those days.

*Q: Yes, those were the people temporarily without any jobs.*

SABBAGH: Anyway, this is how it happened. Of course Akins communicated with the Department, got the Secretary to talk to USIA and all that sort of thing and so I went back to Saudi Arabia for my next stretch of seven years. That is when I started attending the things with Nixon, and before that with Kissinger.

*Q: From your point of view, how did Kissinger and Faisal deal with each other?*

SABBAGH: They got along correctly, with some warmth on the part of Faisal, generated by his innate sense of hospitality with a visitor, whoever he happens to be. Again, if I may take a little bit of credit; before Kissinger went into that meeting with Faisal, I had suggested a little meeting

without Kissinger, with the staff of embassy who knew how to deal with Kissinger, his temperament. The do's and don't's to present, one little sheet, items to Kissinger. One of them was the business of when in doubt don't hesitate to say, "Your Majesty, you may find yourself in the position of a senior student listening to a professor. I knew that you are a professor yourself. But Faisal, as far as the area is concerned and as far as Saudi-American relations are concerned, I think you will find knows at least as much as you do, Mr. Secretary." I elaborated on this sort of thing in my meeting with Kissinger. Faisal is not giving to kissing, certainly not by strangers. He is not Anwar Sadat so don't indulge in levities and jokes, etc. If he even starts exhibiting some humor just appreciate it, not guffawing." I swear to God how I had the nerve to address the Secretary that way, but it was my job. "When you want to cross your knees don't do it violently showing your voluminous thighs, Mr. Secretary". I swear I said that. "Our colleagues were sort of shriveling when I was saying this. They obviously were thinking "How dare this bearded guy say this?!" I was saying that for his own good, for our own good. And Kissinger was a fantastic pupil, he really went through the things one by one and acted accordingly.

There was one fly in the ointment later on, when he was with Hafiz el Asad he was saying with tongue in cheek that Faisal did me the honor of treating me as a human being. Christ, I was there, what did he mean? He wanted Hafiz and Khadam to laugh, but they didn't. When I sensed this hesitation on their part to swallow this line, I said, "Mr. Secretary, I am sorry, I was there I think either you did not hear properly or I, and I am not willing to admit it easily or readily, did not interpret properly, what he said was as follows, namely, 'You are welcome, I hope you will stay longer on this visit, and I hope you will repeat your visits to us and we certainly pray to God to grant you success in your noble venture, bringing peace. I do not know how much you know about Islam, but about our attitude, but you are here as the honored representative of a friendly nation. We love the Americans, the people, the business of whether you are a Jew or not does not enter into our discussions, and should not. You are here and we respect you as a fellow human being.' This is what he said, Mr. Secretary. Not he is granting you the honor of giving you a medal for being a human being as you implied here." He said, "Oh, I was joking". You don't joke. You asked me about Kissinger, I could give you a book.

*Q: What was the substance of the Kissinger-Faisal meeting and when was it?*

SABBAGH: 1974. It was the approach to the Egyptians to have the separation of the forces with Egypt and Israeli on the Sinai. Sinai and also the canal, the Egyptians had crossed the canal. And Faisal at that time made the point of urging us not to ignore Syria. To include Syria in the discussions and the debriefings and the like.

*Q: Despite the fact that Syria was not being very nice, at least publicly, to Saudi Arabia.*

SABBAGH: Exactly. That is to the nobility of Faisal, as I keep saying. That is when he said, I don't remember if I said it, "did they think they were pleasing me when they were withholding their help from Egypt?" "Kings and presidents come and go", added Faisal then and his behavior indicated now, at this juncture that people stay, they are brothers, cousins, we don't want them starved. Now in the case of Syria, he knew the value of Syria, you could split aside the rantings on one side and the genuine attitude on the other. He knew the area. As you say in Arabic, "The people of Mecca are better informed than others of their labyrinthical side streets." So we know

when you ask us about Syria, Lebanon or other parts of the Middle East. Faisal said, "I encourage you very strongly not to ignore Syria." And I think he did. I think that Mr. Kissinger did flatter Assad after that.

*Q: So you left the meeting, from your point of view, with the feeling that it was a positive one?*

SABBAGH: Yes. There was a good exchange.

*Q: Do you think Faisal had the impression that this was a real effort on our part to bring about peace?*

SABBAGH: At that time yes. But the disappointment comes later when you read the expectations of people and as you know the Arabs, when they want something they want it last month. When they promise something, ok, give them two, three or four months. But because we did not follow up immediately with that kind of thing, keeping up the dialogue. I mentioned to Kissinger in Syria the story of the hair of Moawiya, he was one of the caliphs, he said, "Should there be but one hair between me and the people that I need to deal with I would not allow it to be cut, for should they pull I would slacken somewhat and should they slacken I would pull." This is the essence of keeping up the dialogue. I mentioned this to Hafiz Asad, I reminded him that, "Here in your capitol, your excellency Hafiz Asad, Shawat Moawiya started Arab diplomacy." Kissinger later on said, "I caught you having your own conferences with Assad, and if things had not gone right I was ready to blame you." I think that Kissinger won the minds of those he met through his brilliance, the man is brilliant. He lines up his thoughts before he enters into something and he a good memory, obviously and uses logic a lot. He uses world history to a great extent and flattery and jokes. What I call the "ventilation humor" that he had, in my book I call it that. When things tighten up he cracks a joke.

*Q: Well, what about this book?*

SABBAGH: Yes, I am writing a book called Names I Could Drop.

*Q: When do you think this will be ready?*

SABBAGH: When I find a good publisher. Archie Roosevelt, when he knew what I was doing asked for a synopsis of what the book is designed to contain, including these experiences of mine, including my time on the BBC, Saudi Arabia and all that. An Archie, he and Lucky [his wife] were going away, before leaving sent me a letter saying that you, of all people, understand, the reaction I had to my that of my own publisher to publishing your book, the idea which I encouraged and without giving any more details here is a copy of what the head of the publishing firm said. He said, "Thank you for sending us a copy of Isa Sabbagh proposal, but you know why we can't publish this sort of thing. Why, because in the course of the thing I analyze our policy towards Israel, with the Arabs lurking in the aisle, and how we could have done better and how we promised some things and not come up with them." So they could not publish that kind of stuff.

*Q: When you get this published this transcript will be sort of the first glimpse of what you will be*

*presenting. I want to thank you very much.*

**NORMAN V. SCHUTE**  
**Foreign Service Security Officer**  
**Washington, DC (1957)**

*Norman V. Schute was born in Michigan in 1913. He received a B.A. from Stanford University and served in the U.S. Navy during World War II. He joined the Foreign Service Security Program in 1947 and served in Sweden, Finland, Italy, Mexico, and Norway. He ultimately served as Consul General in Paris. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1995.*

SCHUTE: The King Saud thing was really an Arabian Knights affair. I was assigned to escort the little Prince, the Royal Protector and the Royal Nurse. I met them at the ship and took them to their hotel. I'd get them up in the morning and put them to bed at night. Later on, from New York we went to Washington and Blair House which is the official residence for official visitors, was completely occupied by King Saud and his entourage. As I recall, in addition to the little Prince, King Saud had so many wives and of course, many children. I believe he brought over four or five adult Princes and each night one of my colleagues would carry a large packet of money and one of them particularly would go to Baltimore and visit the ladies of the evening. They seemed to prefer blondes, brunettes and red heads. My assignment was, I believe, much more interesting and fascinating. The little Prince apparently had a muscular ailment in his left or right ankle so we made a number of visits to Walter Reed hospital where he was given hydrotherapy and then, of course, visits to the zoo and I have a few pictures of it which are nice memories tucked away. Finally things were drawing to a close. My colleagues and I, individually, were directed to report to a room where assistants of the King gave presents of money and watches. At that point they had run out of the official watches which were gold Longines watches with the King Saud's crest, crossed swords and a palm, in a presentation box. So they went downtown and picked up a lot of Gruens and Hamiltons. I showed the little Prince my watch and he sort of shook his head and ran back into the bedroom. On return he gave me one of the Longines. I also received four \$100 bills. Well, of course, no government employee is supposed to accept any gifts so I promptly prepared a memo and turned in the four \$100 bills and I listed them by serial number. My Chief, then Tomlin Bailey, wasn't too happy that I'd put this all in writing but it was a matter of personal protection, I felt, and it just would hold the next person accountable for receiving it. Of course, I turned in the watch but sometime later the Chief of Protocol, Wiley Buchanan, said that these "mickey mouse" watches, as he called them, should be returned and that's how I've got this very nice watch.

**WALTER K. SCHWINN**  
**Consul General**  
**Dhahran (1957-1961)**

*Walter K. Schwinn was born in Iowa in 1901. He received an A.B. from the University of Wisconsin and a M.A. From Harvard University. Prior to joining the United States Information Service in 1946, Mr. Schwinn worked as a journalist in Hartford, Connecticut and Springfield, Massachusetts and ran an economic intelligence unit in Western Europe and North Africa during World War II. He later served in Poland, Malaysia, and Saudi Arabia. He was interviewed by David Courtright in 1987.*

SCHWINN: Lampton Barry was his name, but it was Dick. I think I dropped him a note and said, "I'm getting ready to leave here, what do you recommend?" You know, just "Be helpful." Well, Saudi Arabia was one of the least desired posts in the Service, and of the two posts....

Q: *Why?*

SCHWINN: Of the two posts in Saudi Arabia, Dhahran (laughs) was even less favored than Jeddah. Hot, inhospitable, very limited social intercourse...rugged. I didn't hear from him, but all of the sudden, a telegram came, saying that I was being considered for that post. It was the sort of invitation that if I screamed loud enough, I wouldn't go, and I said, "Dandy, I'll go." Again, I think a bachelor could function in Dhahran somewhat better than a married couple, although the married couples I had were great. Stu Kennedy, who's running this thing, was there on first post with his wife Ellen. Now there was marvelous pair of youngsters, and full of beans and energy.... One wife was not very good, but Ferebee Lewis and Dick were just a marvelous pair. But I think, in a way, having a wife could be a complication, and I didn't have a wife, and I was free and I was at the right age....

Q: *Especially for an assignment you had characterized as rugged. That could be a handicap. So, you went there in....what part of 1957, do you recall?*

SCHWINN: April, April 1st.

Q: *Now, one of the most important developments during this time was, while you were serving as Consul-General, you personally negotiated a new treaty with Oman, replacing a treaty that was very old, in fact dating back to 1833. What was the background of this new treaty, how did this negotiation come about?*

SCHWINN: Well, as I recall, I was not advised of the background of this treaty when I was in Washington in January, February 1957 for my briefing when I went out. I might say, at that briefing (laughs) it had its chaotic aspects because I arrived for my briefing the same day that Waldemar Gallman arrived, who was Ambassador to Iraq, for his consultation, and the same day that King Saud of Saudi Arabia arrived for a State visit. (Laughs) So, the Arabian Peninsular Affairs people were kind of excited.

And I was simply told that one of the things I would have to do, was called upon to do, would be to do this treaty. I'd never done a treaty....

Q: *So, it was in the works already.*



SCHWINN: Yes, it was in the works. My understanding is that Herbert Hoover, Jr., who was then Under Secretary of State, number two position-Deputy Secretary of State-was the inspiration for it. He was, as you know, a geologist, like his father, and as a geologist, obviously interested in the oil industry. At that time, Cities Service was doing exploration in Dhofar, down on the southern coast of Oman, and had not yet come into anything. But the Jones Brothers, who owned Cities Service, were very large stockholders and very much interested. And I think it was Herbert Hoover, who conceived the idea that if there were going to be Americans working around that area, there ought to be something more solid behind them than this ancient treaty written on ship, a clipper ship, by a traveling merchant (laughs), with the Sultan.

So the decision was taken that there should be a new treaty negotiated, or the old treaty renegotiated, and that the Consul-General in Dhahran was the guy to do it. There were rather curious aspects to the assignment of the Consul-General to Dhahran to do this because Dhahran was right next to Dammam, where the Emir of the Eastern Province sits, the ruling guy of that area. And it was just a year or two since that man, the Emir, had sent an armed force under one of his friends, Turki bin Utishain, down to claim the Buraymi from the Sultan of Muscat. I wasn't fully aware of all this, of course, until I got there, and then I realized how the Sultan would like to have the man who represented the Emir come down and talk to him, and how the Emir would like to have me dealing with his enemy. In that case, that was....

*Q: That little complication occurred to no one in the State Department?*

SCHWINN: I don't know. I have no idea because when I got there, on the way out I stopped in Beirut. And I'd been told that a very able young man, H. Earle Russell, would be my Arabist. I spoke no Arabic, of course, but he would come down, whenever I went down to Muscat, he would come down from Beirut and be with me down there. Remarkable, good boy. Now dead, unhappily. So...what should I say now?

*Q: Well, let's see now, you conducted these negotiations.... Let's deal with chronology first. I have some specific questions, but...so you knew, when you arrived in, I believe, April of 1957, you knew that that was your most important task, did you begin immediately?*

SCHWINN: I can't remember when I made the first trip, but it must have been not earlier than May, maybe more like June. Again, I had never been a Consul-General. I had to make myself known to ARAMCO, to the Emir, to the other distinguished people around...and I went over to Bahrain, which was just across there, to make contact with the British. The British then were not represented in Saudi Arabia at all. So, I went over to talk to the political agent and establish relationships there. So, again, you see, Muscat was, in a way, under British protection, so it was desirable that I clear my decks with him and he know that I was going to be back and forth, and he would know what's up.

*Q: Now, once you had made those contacts and established the ground work, you negotiated personally with the Sultan Said bin Taimur. Is that correct?*

SCHWINN: That's right. I went down first with Russ, and we took along with us (laughs),

optimistic as the Department was, a guy from the Foreign Buildings operation, Larry Berz, because he thought we may as well get started thinking about where we'd put up an office building down in Muscat on the basis of this treaty. Well, of course, there was no hotel in Muscat, no restaurant, and arrangements were made to stay with the missionaries. Dutch-Reformed.

*Q: These were medical missionaries, I believe.*

SCHWINN: Medical and religious. Medical was the more important, by far. Wells Thoms and his wife Beth were just simply, unbelievably good persons. They ran in Matrah, the harbor next to Muscat, the medical mission, and it was with them that we all first stayed when we went down there. Russ and I then-well, I guess I took Larry along with us the first call-so, the Sultan would see all of us. Russ and I then stayed [I think Larry went out], and we discussed how we'd proceed. The Emir proposed that we would come down, he would invite us down from time to time, and we'd go down and spend a week or two weeks at a time, meeting every other day, at eleven o'clock, for an hour. So you see, this was going to be long.

*Q: Why was it done in that fashion? Why that time frame? His convenience?*

SCHWINN: His will. I mean, I said to him, "What is your wish? How would you like to do this?" And this is what he proposed. He had it in mind, he didn't stumble, he said it once, "This is the way I would like to do it."

I might say, one of the first things I learned...I'd set up the date to go down with his foreign minister, an Englishman, who'd been serving in the Sudan previous to his arrival in Muscat. At that time there were a lot of Britishers floating around (laughs), cast out from their original bases in the empire, eager to find little jobs here and there. And a man whose name I can't remember now, but I soon discovered that he was of no importance in the negotiations at all. The Sultan made the plan that he would conduct them personally with me and Russ, who was in attendance. So we went back. Meantime, I had received from the Department a text of the treaty about this high.

*Q: The text of the proposed treaty?*

SCHWINN: The proposed treaty. It was this high. And a briefing book.

*Q: If I might translate your gesture, about two or three inches high.*

SCHWINN: That's right, yes. And also I had a briefing book of equal height, maybe a little bit more, for me, explaining every aspect of the treaty. And I left this draft with the Sultan who'd consult it. I think we went back about three or four weeks later during July, as I recall, and the way I remember being received by him in this palace by the sea, looking out over the harbor [volcanic harbor, the base of obviously a great blowup], steep walls which took the sun mercilessly, made it very hot. All along these walls were the names of ships that had visited, and he said, "This is my visitors book." (Laughs)

I remember so well, his frankness. We made our salutations, exchanged complements, and he turned to me and he said, "Mr. Schwinn, you must understand something. You are the representative of a great power. You're backed by the State Department, and the Legal Department, all apparatus," and he said, "I am just me."

"Therefore," he said, "this document appalls me. I don't know quite what to do with it."

Well, I said, "Do you have any preference as to how we proceed?" He said, "I'd like to have your advice as to how we go."

I said, "How would you like it if you and I were to sit together and you had read certain of the provisions, I would explain them to you as best I can? [I didn't want to reveal to him that I had a big briefing book (laughs) which was telling me as well as him.] I'll explain the meaning of these things to you, and you can indicate approval or disapproval as we go along."

He said yes, that would be agreeable to him. Mind you, he spoke very good English. He'd been educated at the prince's school in India and so had a very good grasp of English. I might just say about him, he's a very short little man-he was, he's now dead, of course. Quite shy. Not given to a great deal of exchange, he was much more open, open to jest a bit, and he was never that way. There's that, and furthermore, we always met at eleven. Well, that meant it ran only an hour because at noon, of course, he had his prayers. And the end of the interview was always indicated by the appearance, almost on the dot, of a servant with coffee in little cups. So one hour was it until the day after next. Well, of course, progress...as I recall, very rarely did he raise suddenly his objection to a specific paragraph.

*Q: So your task was essentially one of explication.*

SCHWINN: Explication and explanation. It wasn't till almost the end, I mean after a year and a half, well, that we got into some real substantive problems.

*Q: Specifically?*

SCHWINN: Well, let's get it down....

*Q: All right, go ahead.*

SCHWINN: We had an interruption in July because he had a rebellion on his hands in the interior, up in Nizwah where the old enemies, an imam, Talib, and his brother, Ghalib,...

*Q: Walter, you were just saying that the Sultan had a rebellion on his hands.*

SCHWINN: Yes.

*Q: And this had led to a pause in the negotiations?*

SCHWINN: Yes. The rebellion was put down only with the assistance of a British force of about

500 men skilled in mountain warfare-because they had to go up the hill to winkle out Sulayman bin Himyar.

*Q: Were these Gurkhas?*

SCHWINN: I'm not sure. I just don't know. Maybe, I just don't know. I might say that I kept in touch with the British on Bahrain at this point, and the political agent there at that time, who had control of the whole British establishment in the Gulf, was a man I knew from Washington, Bernard Burroughs. Bernard Burroughs was always very precise in whatever he told you, but he didn't tell you much. My effort to learn more about this rebellion and the size of the force and the problems and all were not very successful. But in any case, it took several weeks for the operation to be executed, carried out, finished, before we were sent back to Muscat. I forget, I wish I knew how many times Russ and I went down.

I ought to say something about Russell, not that anybody cares but me maybe, but he was an admirable boy. We'd come back from these sessions and have lunch with the mission. At this time we were living in Muscat with the preacher there, who had services every Sunday. And we came back and had lunch then, and I would sack out after lunch. We lived in a squared, screened area on the roof of the house, overlooking the city, and it was rather primitive-two cots side by side and a little table in between and a john next door. Well, I'd come in and sack out, and Russ would sit down and start typing. He would do a memorandum of conversation. He would do a dispatch, he would do a telegram. All three items I wanted to get back to Washington. And I'd find a slip of paper saying, "I'm out playing tennis." (Laughs)

Well, I would then read everything....

*Q: How old was he, if I might interrupt?*

SCHWINN: Oh, Russ at this time was in his early thirties, late twenties, mid-thirties. He'd been through the language school in Beirut, so his Arabic was excellent. Not needed much because the Sultan spoke English. But he made contacts around the town in a way that I couldn't.

Well, I would then walk down to the cable and the wireless office with the telegram which was encoded because I'd gotten permission from the Sultan to encode messages to send over, and then it would go up to Dhahran, and Dhahran would decode and recode (laughs) and get it on to Washington, and then, things would come back that way. And Russ was very good at decoding, it was the guidance we got, which wasn't very much because there was not a problem.

I forget when we shifted from Muscat to Salalah, in Dhofar. I just might say that I regretted leaving Muscat, but the Sultan decided to move, I think almost permanently, his headquarters to Salalah, in Dhofar. Now this had one handy thing, it was not far from where Cities Services was doing exploration, but it made difficulties in my getting down there. Hitherto, I'd had to fly across to Bahrain, pick up Middle East Airlines, go to Sharjah and Muscat. Now, I had to fly across to Jeddah in Army Air Force planes, then fly Saudi airlines to Aden- closed up now, of course, then wide open-where Bill Crawford met me. And there we'd come into an airplane from the oil company and fly me over to Salalah. We lived with the oil people there. Also, there was a

very nice British guy there whom I'm still in touch with, St. John Armitage and his wife Jennifer, and there you'd get a drink once in a while. (Laughs) Also, I must say, the British Bank of the Middle East in Muscat was also cordial at five o'clock in the afternoon. They'd give Russ and me a drink. I didn't want to carry liquor into the place, I just didn't want to have anything happen that would jeopardize in any way the operation.

*Q: At what point did the negotiations move from Muscat?*

SCHWINN: I can't tell you exactly. I think after Christmas of...

*Q: Of '57?*

SCHWINN: '57, yes. Because it was after that that we were then going down to Salalah. And I wish I could remember, except most of the negotiations were in Muscat, but quite a few were in Salalah.

*Q: And the mode of the negotiations continued much as it was?*

SCHWINN: That's right.

*Q: One hour of explication and conversation...*

SCHWINN: That's right. And I always was unhappy with this cut-off at twelve because I knew he had to go to prayers at noon-noon-time prayers were the important thing-and it prevented me from doing other business with him than the treaty. You know, talking about the situation in Muscat, and in Oman, because when that coffee was served, you drank it, you had to go.

Well, we finished up, and it was in Salalah that we began to run into minor, they didn't prove too hard, problems. I don't know how much of this would be classified still or not, but I must say that one thing he was concerned about was the provision for the free exercise of religion. He was permitting the Dutch Reformed Church to carry out religious services in Muscat, and he was willing to permit that to go on, but he said to me, "I don't want preachers standing on the corners in the market and agitating my people."

Well, I said, "I don't think that would ever happen, and I'll see what assurances I can give you that it would be discouraged. I don't think the United States government would say, 'We can't forbid it' because that would interfere with the free exercise of religion which we're trying to guarantee. But I think that they can give you some assurance." So, something came back from the Department that satisfied him.

The other problem, the subsidy, that gave him a problem-or, gave him no problem, he was simply firm about it-was that we'd proposed that any dispute with the United States should be settled by arbitration or at the World Court. Then I realized, of course...you see, the Buraymi problem had ended up with an arbitration procedure which had gone sour because he and the British contended that the Arabs, and basically the United States which was supporting them, had offered bribes to the arbitrators. He had that in mind. The Buraymi dispute never was really

settled. It simply ended in this disagreement. I think in Geneva it was, or maybe The Hague, I'm not sure. That was before I was in Saudi Arabia. But the Buraymi dispute ended in an argument over an arbitration proceeding, and he didn't want to have any more of that. He didn't want to be committed to arbitration or the World Court.

Well, the Department came back and said, "Try again." I told them, "I don't think there's any possibility because of this history, that he would ever consent to it." So I tried again the very last day we were negotiating. He said, "I'm sorry, I cannot accept that idea at all." So there's no arbitration provision in the treaty or World Court provision.

*Q: To this day.*

SCHWINN: Again, I don't know what Qaboos may have done, his successor. I don't know how Qaboos may have dealt with that situation, or if he had to deal with it at all. Qaboos has had his own version of "glasnost." (Laughs) I mean, he's opened up so much there.

*Q: That leads to another question I wanted to ask. It's not clear to me, although I'm no expert on the Middle East, it's not clear to me why the Sultan, his father, wanted to negotiate this treaty in the first place, given that he was a social and religious conservative. Surely as an educated man he must have realized that if Americans started running around the country and oil companies came in that that would bring change with it.*

SCHWINN: Well, he did ask me at one point whether or not we would supply him with arms. Of course, I referred to the Department, and the Department said, "We will sell him arms if he wishes. We will not give him a grant of arms." He had maybe that in mind.

*Q: His concern with arms was apropos the recent rebellion?*

SCHWINN: I don't know. His armed forces were under the control of the British. Colonel Wakefield, I think, was the guy who trained his armed forces, who was almost entirely from across the Strait. I never inquired what arms he wanted, what kind of arms, because it just never got that far. The Department was so insistent that they would not give him a grant, which is what he was after. And mind you, he was not at that point a rich sultan, he had royalties from Cities Service, but that was all, and he had income from the sale of dates and that sort of thing. But he was not rich. So a grant would have been useful to him, if not critical. He was not part of our program for grants, but we would sell arms. The Department didn't indicate that it was one kind of arms, but they would sell them to him. He sort of sadly shook his head, "So sorry." Those were the extraneous things.

*Q: Let me ask you about a piece of history that you may or may not be aware of. He had been approached before you became Consul-General, is that correct? You knew, when you went there in 1957, that you would carry on these negotiations. That implies that he had agreed to them before you went to Saudi Arabia.*

SCHWINN: Yes, I guess so.

*Q: Did he ever say anything in the course of the negotiations or make clear to you when and why he agreed to renegotiate the treaty?*

SCHWINN: No, he never did. And I didn't, of course, ask him. I didn't pry into the reasons. I just assumed he was agreeable. I think he wanted to curry favor with the United States. He was under the protection of the British, obliged to them. But I think he liked to have another wing, and I think that he....

*Q: Did he sense that British power in that part of the world was rapidly declining?*

SCHWINN: He was an intelligent man, and I think he drew conclusions. Again, he never indicated anything of that kind. I don't know whether he read the New York Times or not, but I think that he was aware that the way things were going in the Persian Gulf and in India.... I must say, just speaking of the procedures that I followed.... Although the foreign minister never appeared....

*Q: The British fellow.*

SCHWINN: The Sultan's foreign minister.

*Q: No, no. The Sultan's foreign minister, who was a British fellow.*

SCHWINN: Yes. He never appeared. But after every session, either that afternoon or the next day, I called on him and gave him a rough precis. I also called the British Consul-General and gave him a rough precis because I thought it important that nobody suspected that we were doing anything underhand or contrary to British interests or anything like that. I didn't give him a copy of the treaty to read. It was up to him to get that if he wanted it. But I told him at least, "We talked about this today, and this is what happened."

*Q: And ultimately the treaty itself became a public document.*

SCHWINN: That's right, yes. So I was very careful on that. Also, when I got back to Dhahran, I went straight up to Dammam and told the Amir (laughs) what had gone on. And also I stopped in Bahrain. I mean, I touched every possible base.

*Q: What was the Amir's reaction?*

SCHWINN: He just was interested. It got very interesting. After Sulaymain bin Himyar and Talib and Ghalib had winkled out of the (inaudible), they all appeared at Dammam, living on the hospitality of the Amir. So, every time I went to dinner at the Emirate, I'd be seated on the Amir's left, and there they all were, three arranged on his right. (Laughs) We bowed to each other. They came to call on me one day. I don't know what they wanted, I had nothing to offer them. You could see how many tangles there were of the interrelationships. The Amir's enemies, the Sultan on one hand, and the Amir's friends, Talib and Ghalib-they were all tangled relationships.

*Q: While we're on the subject of the treaty, let me ask one or two other questions. You said that the Sultan had minor reservations. You mentioned the question of religious proselytizing, and you also mentioned the business about arms. Were there any other sticking points in the negotiations?*

SCHWINN: No. The arbitration problem.

*Q: I'm sorry, the arbitration problem, and also his disappointment in not being able to receive a grant of military assistance.*

SCHWINN: Of course, that was apart from the treaty.

*Q: That did not involve a provision in the draft of the treaty?*

SCHWINN: No, no. It simply was that as we got toward the end, he thought it was probably a good time to raise this question, and he did. The next time I saw him I could say, "Sorry, the answer is no. If you want to buy some (laughs), we're glad to sell."

*Q: Did you get a good impression of him as a man? What was he like?*

SCHWINN: Well, he was very shy, or at least very reserved. All the time that Russ and I were with him, back and forth, only once did he offer hospitality. That was very formal-"Would we come for dinner on a certain night? Black tie, please." And we appeared.

I don't know what's going on now, but in those days, we were living outside the wall. If you went inside the wall after dark, you had to carry a lighted lantern. You've probably read about that in some of the books. Not a flashlight-a lighted kerosene lantern. Russ and I must have looked rather comical in our black tie (laughs), carrying a lantern as we trudged through the streets to the Sultan's palace.

But that evening, again, was rather formal. The Wali of Matrah was there. Just the four of us. We had agreeable conversation, but nothing light. (Laughs) It was all measured tones. After dinner he entertained us by...not shooting things, but showing us his collection of revolvers. He was a great marksman. He brought those out, and we looked at them and admired (laughs), and "oohed" and "aahed," and God, I had nothing to say about revolvers. (Laughs) That was the last thing in my history that I could talk about. So, he was shy. He was greatly reserved, his smiles were...he rarely laughed aloud, to my memory. He didn't lean back and, "Ha, ha, ha'd," he just would smile.

*Q: Would you say that behavior was characteristic or uncharacteristic of most Arab leaders in the region?*

SCHWINN: I would suspect it was most characteristic, yes. The sheikhs that I met-again, I met them just once or twice, so I'd expect them to be reserved in the first meeting. The Amir, Al Hasa, became much more "unbuttoned," so to speak, as I got to know him, and he would chuckle from time to time. I remember, I came back from Il Khali once. I'd spent Christmas in Jerusalem,



traveled around there. When I came back to make my first call after two weeks, I said to his secretary, who always interpreted for us, "I want to play a little joke on the Amir today." I didn't tell him what it was, either. I just said "a little joke" to the interpreter.

Well, when I sat down, I said, "Your Highness, I've come to make an apology to you." The Amir looked a little uneasy. He didn't want to hear anything like that. I said, "I've offended the laws of Saudi Arabia." He looked even worse, like I was going to talk about liquor. I said, "I've offended the laws of Saudi Arabia by bringing in a weapon. I'm going to surrender it to you." And I brought out little paper knife in the shape of a sword. He was so relieved that he didn't have to hear an apology of an embarrassing nature. (Laughs) He really laughed out loud, and he brought that up more than once when I saw him. He said, "I still have your weapon here."

*Q: I used to play bridge with an Egyptian physician, and I once asked him about the question of liquor in the Islamic world. He said that there was a great deal of hypocrisy, that in fact, the wealthy and the leadership drank, but did so discreetly. Was that your experience?*

SCHWINN: Well, in Saudi Arabia, no. The Saudis are the Wahhabi sect, which is very conservative. I'm not aware that any Saudi drank, so to speak, on the premises-in Saudi Arabia. I brought liquor in from Bahrain, and it was managed quite well. I would bring it in on a little plane, and then my driver would come up on the tarmac, which wasn't permitted, but he did take the locker out and put it in the car. I would go up and talk to the customs director.

Once, my driver, Nur, didn't appear, and this foot locker filled with gin was taken up and put on the counter in the customs place. The customs director said, "No, leave it here." And he was unhappy as hell. He didn't enter into conversation with me at all, just strode up and down. Then in came Nur, late, and he [customs director] could see he was aghast, and the customs director called him over. Of course, I can't understand Arabic, but I realized that Nur's hide was being taken off (laughs) strip by strip by strip. He put it in the car and we drove out.

It was about a mile and a half or two miles from the airport to the residency. Halfway up I said to Nur, "What did the customs director have to say to you?"

"Oh, he's very unhappy with me. You know, he doesn't like me at all!"

I said, "That's obvious. What did he say?"

"Well, he said (inaudible)."

"Nur, tell me exactly what he said."

"He said to me, 'Don't ever let this happen again. This box here on this base is an embarrassment to all of us.'"

In other words, he knew.

*Q: So it was a matter of face, not of the presence of the liquor.*

SCHWINN: Well, I got a call one day, when I was back up here in retirement and it turned out to be the customs director. He was down in New York, and he'd love to see me. So, I made arrangements to go down, and he was at a hotel on Lexington Avenue. I went up to the desk to get his number, and someone gave me a great bear hug. There he was, smiling and happy, and he said, "I'd like to have a drink." So we went over and sat down in the cafe. I said, "What would you like?"

"I'm going to have a martini." (Laughs) It was very nice. We both had a martini. Just beautiful relationships.

I'd called ARAMCO, and I said, "Do you know the customs director's in town?"

"Oh, yes indeed. We're having a lunch for him."

I said, "May I come?" (Laughs)

They said, "Sure, come along." So we went up to Delmonico's and joined ARAMCO for lunch that day.

Q: *Let me go back to the treaty, if I may.*

SCHWINN: I'm sorry to get so far ahead.

Q: *No, no. That's all right. That's actually quite interesting. It's one of the things that had crossed my mind in thinking about this interview. It also relates to what you said earlier about the reputation of the assignment as being a rugged or difficult one, partly I suppose, because of the stricture against alcoholic beverages.*

*What happened after the treaty was ratified? I believe it was ratified finally in 1959. And did you notice any changes?*

SCHWINN: No. To the best of my knowledge there were none. I was on my way home for home leave-three months-when the treaty was before the Senate. As I heard afterwards from the guys on the Saudi desk, it went through everything very easily. After all, there was hardly any change in it from what the Department had proposed. The only question raised was on the Senate floor by Jack Javits, the Senator from New York. He wanted to make sure that nothing in it could be interpreted as discriminatory against Jews. That was a problem always in that area about....

Q: *Discriminatory against Jews or against Israelis?*

SCHWINN: Jews and Israelis.

Q: *It's hard for me to imagine what provision of the treaty might have been.*

SCHWINN: Well, I don't think there was anything there, but Javits was just making sure for his

constituents and himself. Among other things, ARAMCO had lots of problems with B'nai B'rith in New York about its hiring policies. Obviously, ARAMCO could not hire Jews to work in Saudi Arabia. Obviously, B'nai B'rith insisted they ought to try. One of these conflicts, again, that must have made life so difficult. So, Javits, just representing his constituents, made sure that nothing in the treaty could be interpreted as discriminating against the Jews. But that was the only question raised about it. As I say, there was no reason to raise any because the only thing that was not there was this arbitration and World Court thing.

*Q: Were you present in the Senate when it was discussed?*

SCHWINN: No, I was on my way back home at that time.

*Q: Well, if there was not a great deal of change after 1959, was there a great deal of change after 1970, when the Sultan was overthrown by his son, Qaboos bin Said? The reason I ask that question is because I know that you had a chance to go back, although as a private citizen, but nevertheless to go back to the country in 1977. What changes did you observe then?*

SCHWINN: Oh, incredible changes. In the meantime, oil had come in, you see. Qaboos had taken control. Incidentally, Qaboos did to his father, what Taimur did to his father. Each son each deposes the father. I don't know whether Qaboos had sons, but if he does, the day is coming [laughs] when he will be deposed. This is the way they manage these changes.

No, I was completely disoriented in Muscat. The old palace had been torn down, and a great big wedding cake put in its place. I mean, it saddened me a great deal to see this. I liked that old palace. It had charm, and it was old, and here was this splash of white granite going across the whole frontage of the harbor. I just think it's too bad, but Qaboos is a young man.... Muscat is surrounded by hills. The harbor and all that is part of an old volcano, so it's very restricted in the space.

*Q: It's like Hong Kong.*

SCHWINN: Like Hong Kong, yes. So Qaboos has decreed that buildings inside should take advantage of the grounds available, but most of the building is over the hill in what is called Maqtrah and that area. Well, of course, that's changed enormously because when I was there, the road to Miswah, which the Sultan wouldn't permit me to go up [I usually got the car to take me], used to just be a camel trail. They got the camels down to the interiors. Well now, the camel park there that I used to see day after day with hundreds of camels squatting there, bringing the goods in, taking the goods out-gone. Motor cars gone to Miswah, the British Bank of the Middle East was up high....

*Q: So the country is rapidly being Westernized. Or at least the infrastructure of the country?*

SCHWINN: Yes, that's right. I must say, I think there are two churches there now, so practiced religion goes on, although it's primarily Protestant. There may be a Catholic [church], I'm not sure.

*Q: So the assurances you gave to the Sultan were in fact honored, if that's the right word. There was relatively little missionary penetration after 1959-has been relatively little.*

SCHWINN: So far as I know. I think that the Dutch Reformed had been there since the middle of the 19th century, also in Kuwait, the Dutch Reformed began. There's a little cemetery down near the harbor. It has the remains of the first missionaries and all who came out there. I was very fond of the missionaries there. The Thoms' were great people, just marvelous to us. But many of their services have been taken over by the state, and I think the hospital is now a state hospital. They worked for the state rather than for the Church. One of the guys that built up quite a reputation as an archeologist is now the State Archeologist and is Archivist and all that sort of thing. He's the guy who's now on the payroll. (Laughs) It's great that the history of Muscat is being assembled, but I'm unhappy to see everything taken over that way.

*Q: Even the lanterns.*

SCHWINN: (Laughs) Even the lanterns, yes. I think they've gone.

*Q: Let me return to Saudi Arabia. Your service did not end with the ratification of the treaty. In fact, you continued with the Foreign Service until 1961. I would like to quote you a passage from a 1985 memorandum you wrote about your stay in Dhahran, which you kindly shared with me before the interview, but since it may not be available to whoever's listening to this tape or reading the transcript, I'll quote the memorandum.*

*"With a small staff of virtually no Arabic speakers, the consulate was not in a position to undertake extensive reporting on conditions in Al-Asad. Moreover, ARAMCO, for its own purposes, gathered detailed information on such matters as the state of the local economy, the size and character of the labor force, including foreign labor, and the existence of political activity, indigenous or foreign. Many reports by ARAMCO were passed to the Department of State from the Embassy in Jeddah, who received them from the ARAMCO representative there."*

*My first question is, how did ARAMCO get all this information?*

SCHWINN: Well, ARAMCO established a first-rate government relations staff. I don't know how many Arabic speakers they had. Just guys, Americans, and I guess some Arabs, but Americans, speaking Arabic, reading the press, talking to people. One man whom I still see lives just up the road here in Massachusetts, every day went to the Emirate, whether he had anything to talk about or not, just to sit in the palace, make himself available to the Amir. He got on very good terms, you see, and would get information that way. So it was more having a first-rate staff of Arabic speakers, readers...also having people all over the province, running refineries, digging wells, pumping things. What's up? There in the business of foreign labor. They're hiring people.

*Q: Was there any one person in charge of this information gathering at ARAMCO? Or any one bureau within the company?*

SCHWINN: I think maybe the government relations staff had that responsibility. I think so. I don't know, though.

*Q: Now as you say in you memorandum, this information was then selectively shared with the State Department, or rather with the Embassy. This prompts me to ask whether or not ARAMCO had a decisive role in shaping policy in Saudi Arabia, given its control of information.*

SCHWINN: Yes. Shaping American policy?

*Q: Yes.*

SCHWINN: I would say...this sounds like Charlie Wilson. I would say, "What's good for Iraq goes good for the United States." (Laughs) What's good for the United States is good for ARAMCO. The interests were so parallel, so much identified-not entirely, of course, but a big overlap. Our interest, probably, in Saudi Arabia stemmed from the creation of ARAMCO. A very large part. Without ARAMCO, our interest might have been very different there. ARAMCO and oil, they overlap so much, it'd be hard to say they are identical. No, they obviously are not, but I think there's so much overlap that the policies.... I'm not aware, for example, of any great conflict between ARAMCO and America and the United States.

*Q: If my memory serves me correctly, was there not a controversy over the fact that the royalties paid to the Saudis were deducted as business expenses?*

SCHWINN: Yes, yes.

*Q: And therefore, that money did not go into the U.S. Treasury. So there were some areas of at least potential conflict.*

SCHWINN: I remember that. It was not an area of my interest, particularly. I'm just not enough of an economist to...and originally I think it was fought in Washington rather than out in the field.

*Q: It was not a State Department issue?*

SCHWINN: Probably IRS rather than State Department. Obviously, it would be interesting. ARAMCO hired excellent people. I forget the name of the guy who worked down in Washington for many years, but a very good operator. (Laughs) A first-rate type. Obviously, they represent their own interests and that sort of thing. ARAMCO, you see, was made up of four companies: Mobil, Texaco, SOCAL, and New Jersey. So all these companies had an interest into how much they were getting out of it. They'd fight for their interest just as much as they could, as they would if they were in the United States. Of course, that wasn't really a Saudi problem in the sense that the Saudis weren't involved.

*Q: No. The Saudis were interested in royalties, but not whether it came off their taxes or not.*

SCHWINN: Yes. And as I say in that memorandum, the beginning of OPEC was under way.

*Q: Let me quote that passage. "The overall trend in U.S.-Saudi relations, between 1957 and*

1961, was [and these are your words], in my opinion, a slow drift downwards," quoting from memorandum. "Individual relations remained friendly, even cordial, but during those years Abdullah Turki began the agitation for a higher return to the Saudis of the profits from the sale of oil, agitation that eventually led to the creation, under other auspices than his, of OPEC. The United States' support of Israel was a constant source of quiet tension. The prestige of the United States declined somewhat after the Soviet Union sent Sputnik into space. In 1961, the Saudis withdrew their permission for virtual absolute control of the airbase by the United States. This was due primarily not to hostility to the U.S., but to fear of possible nationalist agitation inspired by Nasser and other Arab extremists for Syria and Iraq."

Now, in this quotation you mention several factors behind the "slow drift downwards," in U.S.-Saudi relations. Which of those factors do you consider most important?

SCHWINN: The support in Israel is a constant there. As the situation developed, it seems to me that the American appearance of even-handedness between the Arab world and the Israelis disappeared. It seemed to me the tilt toward the Israelis steadily increased. In '56 for example, when Eisenhower stopped the Suez war, that was an even-handed operation. (Laughs) It seems to me that since then, and particularly after my time, the tilt steadily was in favor of the Israelis, rather than the even-handed approach. I think it went down, again, after my time, much more in the 1973 war, I think, when Kissinger really threw everything we had into defeating the Syrians and Egyptians. Just throwing everything we had to demonstrate that our war material was better than the Soviets, and so on. That's the constant.

OPEC, of course, brought us.... ARAMCO worried, and I think the government worried, about the Turki agitation, and saw this thing coming as a source of real trouble. I think that the legal department at ARAMCO had this always on its agenda, you know, always there as a problem. It didn't come about seriously, of course, again, until '73-'74, when the embargo hit us very hard. But there it was, and I think it was real trouble. I think those two things, but...what were the others?

Q: *Oh, the fear of agitation inspired by Nasser?*

SCHWINN: Well, undoubtedly it was a blow when we lost full control of the airbase. Our role their became.... I don't know. That happened just as I left, and I don't know exactly how the Air Force worked itself out in the control of the airbase.

TAPE THREE, SIDE ONE

Q: *When tape number two ended, you were talking about the fact that the United States lost control of the airbase shortly after you left, or about the time you left in 1961?*

SCHWINN: Lost absolute control, yes.

Q: *That there had been a token...*

SCHWINN: There had been a token Arab, Saudi, in charge, but it was really a token. Of course,

I don't know all the inwardness of the Saudi regime, but it has always been a rather uneasy one. After all, it's a small country in population, and while its status is improving, it's still largely nomadic, still largely uneducated. That's changing very rapidly, I think, but not enough, I think, to give its rulers supreme confidence. I think that the outward appearance of the ruling house looks rather wealthy, they can do what they please, they have all this. I think actually they feel unsure, particularly since the Iranian Revolution. All the time, back even then, I think that there's always been a little uneasiness, insecurity, on the part of the Saudis. As our policy has tilted more away from the Arab world, their insecurity is even greater. They don't feel quite so confident, and particularly in these latter years, when our-if I may say-our policy in the Gulf has simply become so erratic as to be undependable.

*Q: Well, that leads to my next question, so I may as well go ahead and ask it. You really are in a very unusual, in fact almost unique, position to try to answer this question, since you've had experience not only as diplomat in the Middle East, but as a journalist and a news analyst and an editorial writer. It's a big question, if you want to break it down into pieces, but the question is, what have been the principle strengths and weaknesses of American foreign policy in the Middle East since the 1950s, when you first gained personal acquaintance with the region?*

SCHWINN: The greatest weakness, I think, has been the lack of even-handedness in dealing with the Israelis and the Arabs. As that has disappeared, the Saudis have been less secure, less confident, less certain, and with reason, as to how much they might depend upon...I mean, I'm not an expert in arms. I don't know how much the Saudis ought to be given arms or how much they ought not to be given arms. But, it seems to me we're now at a constant struggle between the Executive and the Congress as to supplying arms. Should the Saudis have AWACS? Yes, no, yes, no. Should they have certain kinds of missiles? Yes, no, yes, no. It must be very hard for the Saudis defense minister to make plans, particularly as he looks across the Persian Gulf and doesn't know what in the world may come out of that situation.

I think it's a weakness that the United States has not made a more active effort to end the Iraqi-Iranian War. Obviously, we just made a mess of our relations with Iran. Nobody knows, nobody ought to know, can know, what our policy really is. Do we want to make friends with them or are they enemies? We should be in a position and we're not, to take a stand that would say, "Now look, can't we bring this thing to an end?" Our influence has been so eroded by fantastic policies run by amateurs for their own interest, that you don't know where to go. I wouldn't know, if I were in the Saudi Foreign Ministry, the Saudi Defense Ministry, what to count upon, and particularly in a very uncertain world there in the Gulf. And what's true to the Saudis must be even more true of the guys who are trying to run the United Arab Emirates, or that gutsy little guy, as I see him, Qaboos, down in Muscat, running risks on our behalf. I don't know why he does it. I don't know what...there he is, sitting in the Straits of Hormuz, with Chinese Silkworm missiles across from him, and yet he does more in many ways than the Saudis do. He gives us more privileges, takes more chances. And yet he has a very small country. The Saudis are way advanced than him. And God, the people in Lebanon or Jordan are millennium ahead of where the Muscatis and Omanis are. And yet, Qaboos takes his chance.

*Q: So would it be fair to say that while you were active in the Middle East, you observed a gradual deterioration in relations with the Arabs? Since then, the deterioration has been even*

*more pronounced, and the situation is even more uncertain than it was?*

SCHWINN: Indeed. Indeed. Yes, and particularly, I still think, in the last couple of years.

*Q: I have a couple more questions I'd like to ask about your experience in Saudi Arabia. Can you give me a kind of general description about your responsibilities and your daily activities when you were not negotiating the treaty with the Sultan? What were your usual responsibilities and duties? What would be a typical day at the Consulate?*

SCHWINN: I just want to say one more thing. In addition to the treaty, I was responsible for plans affecting Americans from Dar-es Salaam to Dacca. This was plans regarding upheaval and that sort of thing.

*Q: You mean a potential evacuation of Americans?*

SCHWINN: That's right, yes. So that took a [good] deal of time, and also I was out of the country a good deal. That was just one more factor.

*Q: That's rather interesting and surprising.*

SCHWINN: What I don't know is how much classified this still is.

*Q: Well, let me speak in general terms. With whom were you planning, with ARAMCO, with the Air Force?*

SCHWINN: ARAMCO, and the Air Force, and the individual missions-Kabul....

*Q: Looking at the contingency of a Nasser-style uprising or...?*

SCHWINN: Any kind. How do people from Kabul get to Peshawar, from Peshawar to Islamabad, and Islamabad to Amritsar and on.

*Q: They could have used you in Tehran in 1979.*

SCHWINN: (Laughs) Matter of fact, that whole effort was misguided, as was demonstrated in 1958. Was that when the Iraqi revolution took place?

*Q: I'm sorry. Let's back up for a minute. "That whole effort"-do you mean the effort to prepare plans for evacuation?*

SCHWINN: Yes. [It] came to a halt when Baghdad was taken over, and the young king, Faisal, was killed, and what's his name-Nouri-was killed.

The plans we had just didn't work because, obviously, they wouldn't permit Air Force planes in, [and] they wouldn't permit ARAMCO planes. The only thing that they could do up there was to get U.S. planes to come-where, into Turkey was it?



*Q: Yes, Turkey. I think at that time Turkey was part of NATO, but go ahead.*

SCHWINN: The whole effort fell apart. While we continued to plan-as I say, I was out of the country a good deal, from Dar es Salaam down in Tanzania to Bangladesh-what was then East Pakistan-and India and Kabul....

*Q: It's not obvious to me why that responsibility fell to you as Consul-General in Dhahran.*

SCHWINN: Well, because ARAMCO was there with a large group of potential evacuees, and the Air Force was there with some airplanes. And it wasn't far over to Eritrea, where we had a base to take people to.

*Q: Oh, I see. So it was a matter of logistics and geography.*

SCHWINN: Yes. At Kagnev Station we had this warehouse full of food, bedding, all kinds of stuff.

*Q: But once you did this, once you prepared these plans, they more or less sat on the shelf.*

SCHWINN: More or less, yes. Except, it was awfully hard to keep them up to date. It was a job I didn't do too well, I think, but it fell to me to try. Now, when I wasn't doing that or the treaty...you really want a day? Want to see if I can recap it?

*Q: A typical day in the life? As a person who was not involved personally in the Foreign Service, yes, that sort of social- historical detail would be of interest to me.*

SCHWINN: Well, I had this rather pleasant residence. It wasn't the most elegant, but it was okay. I had a staff of three boys. I would wake up in the morning-at that time I smoked heavily-and had breakfast around eight. This may sound vainglorious, but I was in the position to ease a lot of things. One, I'd brought my own automobile out. I hired my own chauffeur. I hired my own gardener. My representation money I split among the staff. It was very small, but I wanted to encourage them to use it, and I could pay for my own entertaining.

Well, I'd have my breakfast, would serve it. I forget what it was now, but we had a lot of papaya. I had raised my own papaya. We had good food from the commissary at the airbase and from the commissary at ARAMCO. We were permitted to draw on both. The food was okay, very good. We had a lot of good steak and frozen chicken, and, you know, anything you wanted. Frozen vegetables, lots of them. We had the local fruits.

I would then be driven down-I might have walked, but it was really pretty hot. Temperatures there, except in January and February, ran up around a hundred every day, you see. My car was air-conditioned, so Nur would drive me down and drop me at the office around eight. I would speak to the Marine guards, wish them "Good morning" and "How was the night?" The communicators were already in, and whatever traffic had come, I would look at. I'd sit down and read whatever telegrams and all had arrived. I forget how often the pouch came, about once a

week is my recollection. So I had that to go through.

We had staff meetings fairly often, but the staff was so small that usually we all sat next to each other in just an aisle there, so it was just to drop by and talk. Kep Lewis was my deputy for a long time, an admirable guy, and he was very good at keeping the operations going day to day, to day to day. The operations weren't difficult. The Consulate-General had been set up primarily to service ARAMCO, as the thousands of people kept coming in. It was set up forty-odd years ago to keep their passports valid, to render services as required. But again, ARAMCO could take so much off our backs.

*Q: That seems to me to be the point that keeps recurring, is that...*

SCHWINN: Did my memo speak about-it did speak about the welfare cases, didn't it?

*Q: Yes, that in a sense, the consulate, if not redundant, was almost, in a way, peripheral, except of course for your more critical special activities, such as negotiating the treaty.*

SCHWINN: Well, we made a mistake at one point in not to keep looking after our welfare people enough. The guys, mainly ARAMCO personnel, who were in the jug for one thing or another. Because ARAMCO looked after them so well, we said, "Why bother?" Except when a guy got back to the States and raised hell with his congressman that nobody from the consulate had looked after him. So, we set up a plan at once, that no matter what happened, one of our boys would go up every week, talk to him, see if there was anything we could do, make sure that he was getting.... See, ARAMCO was bringing him food every day and making a report back, "So and so case number three was visited yesterday" So, we got that straightened out.

We had problems of ships coming in to Ras Tannurah who'd touched at an Israeli port, and what to do about them [to] get them off the hook because that was forbidden by the Saudis. If they'd touched at an Israeli port, they couldn't touch at our ports. So we had that problem. One time a ship showed up, running out of fuel. It had touched at an Israeli port. Happily, COMIDEASTFOR, based then in Bahrain, bailed us out on that one. It gone done.

COMIDEASTFOR was one of my regular calls. I went over to see the British about every two weeks just to keep in touch. Very good reciprocal relations happened that way because, since the British weren't represented in Saudi Arabia, they would often call on me. I addressed Imperial war colleges four times (laughs) on what was going on in Saudi Arabia. [I addressed the] Canadian War College once.

*Q: Were you strictly going through channels on that? Did you receive the approval of the State Department to do that?*

SCHWINN: Never thought of it until you mentioned it. I just did it. Why should I...?

*Q: Well, it's only that the State Department might have worried about how that activity was perceived by the Saudis.*

SCHWINN: Well, I don't know that the Saudis knew about it. I never thought of that, frankly. I was trying to be obliging. I mean, I cherished my relationships with the British over there, and they seemed to want it, so....

Q: *So it was not a big deal.*

SCHWINN: Yes. Besides, as I recall, relations between the British and the Saudis weren't that bad. I mean, it had to be handled with gloves. Not like between the Sultan and the Saudis. (Laughs) Not that bad.

So, I'd drive back up from lunch. Sometimes [I] had one or another of the staff for lunch. I tried to keep in touch with the Marines because, God, they were living a hard life. A lot of strong young men down there, virile as hell, and cut off from nearly any social contact with gals. The secretaries didn't want to be identified with the Marines.

Q: *That's an interesting detail. The secretaries-meaning the single women who worked...you mean, single Arabic women or....*

SCHWINN: No, we had no....

Q: *American women.*

SCHWINN: Yes.

Q: *[They] did not wish to be identified with the Marines?*

SCHWINN: They didn't snub them, but they didn't go out of their way to....

Q: *It was considered declassè.*

SCHWINN: I think they would regard it as so, yes. A little social difference. The Marines were very good boys, again simple lads-nice ones, responsible.

The work day ended at 4:30 p.m. or so, and there was always something to write, some cable to respond to, some report to get done. After dinner I often would try to take a walk, when the day would cool off a bit. I'd try to walk down the road a while and get some exercise, although I weighed about twenty pounds more then than I do now. I'd have people in. I entertained the Amir once, rather elaborately.

Then, of course, we were always on call. I cannot tell you how often, at five o'clock for example, we got a call from the Emirate, "The Amir wishes to have you for dinner in half an hour." I would have to get one or two of the boys-the other officers-to go with me. And that wasn't a very pleasant assignment because they had to leave their wives and sit around in this dull meeting, I mean this dull.... When the King was there, it was every night. He'd have us come for a week. And not merely in Dammam, but over in (inaudible). [You] were expected to be there.

Now those dinners were really quite a bore. I hope no Saudi hears too much of this, but at in sunset time, in other words, four o'clock in the afternoon or seven o'clock at night. You'd come after sunset, after their evening prayers. The majlis was this large room, where there were overstuffed chairs all around. The Amir would eat in the center-or the King-and as the ranking American, I would sit at his left. He had his own people on his right. Below me would be my own staff, plus then all the ARAMCO personnel also were summoned in the same way. There we sat.

*Q: So the Saudis perceived you and the ARAMCO personnel as essentially a unit.*

SCHWINN: Well, not essentially a unit so much, but we were certainly complementary.

*Q: Certainly in social terms.*

SCHWINN: Yes. Complementary. Of course, I outranked them because of my official status, but not in really standing with them. (Laughs) The president of ARAMCO was a more important person than I was. (Laughs) They made sure of that.

A huge slave would appear [with] a coffee pot this big and a fistful of little cups. He was remarkable. He could take that coffee pot, this high....

*Q: About three feet high and pour it into....*

SCHWINN: And pour a stream of coffee. (Laughs) Of course, I was lucky because I was at the head of this line, on this side, so I got a clean cup. But after four had been served, he'd put them all back (laughs) and start serving the next....

*Q: This prompts another question. A good midwestern progressive like you finds himself in a country in which there is slavery and in which the role of women is, to put in mildly, circumscribed. How did you feel about that?*

SCHWINN: Well, obviously I don't favor slavery. I like emancipated women. But, if you're in that situation, you can't do anything about it. There's no use crying. It's part of the situation you're dealing with. I, frankly, am a little questionable about human rights. I think there's just a point beyond which you shouldn't attempt to go in telling other people how to manage their lives. Imprisonment is one thing, womens' rights is another. I just don't think you can tell the Saudis that they ought to unveil their women. I just don't think you can do it.

*Q: Well, I wasn't asking this in policy terms. What I was really asking is your personal reaction.*

SCHWINN: Well, obviously, you'd prefer that they weren't that way. But on the other hand, when I was back there in '77, I stopped at Dhahran. In the course of a week I was staggered. By this time oil money was flowing like hell. Dhahran and Dammam and Al Khobar were all completely changed. Great big hotels, boutiques and shops.

Well, one night the Consul-General invited me to go with him and his wife to the apartment down in Al Khobar of a big contractor-Arabic-who was entertaining some Americans.

Businessmen. I was shocked, frankly, to enter that room and find whether the wife, or the consort, or the mistress, or concubine sitting there with a dress cut to here.

Q: *Very low cut.*

SCHWINN: And boys passing trays of martinis. See, I was so accustomed to the other kind of pure life of the Saudis, that this offended me in a way. Yet, if that had been in Miami, it'd been fine. (Laughs) But in Saudi Arabia....

Q: *It was shocking. It seemed out of context.*

SCHWINN: It was out of context, that's exactly the word, because you just didn't see a wife, when I was there, back in the old days. [Did] I describe my day enough?

Q: *Yes, yes. It remains only to ask why you retired in 1961?*

SCHWINN: [It was] mandatory.

Q: *Age.*

SCHWINN: I was sixty years old. They had to put me in a straitjacket (laughs) to get me out of the place.

Q: *So, if you had had your druthers-to use another midwestern expressions-you would have continued in the Foreign Service, and specifically would have continued serving in that part of the world?*

SCHWINN: I'm proud enough to say I'd go where I was sent. I wouldn't have minded at all, an experience in Africa. That would have pleased me, if I could have had a tour of duty...Sub-Saharan, particularly. That would have been agreeable to me.

[As a] matter of fact, when I was back on home leave in '59, the Saudi desk guy sighted me out on being sent to Khartoum as number two. Well, I said, "Whatever you will. What you want will be fine. I'm not going to push for it." One reason I didn't push was the Ambassador there had a reputation of being a martinet. And I, who'd never been a DCM, just wondered whether I could meet his requirements. After all, I was very comfortable where I was in Dhahran. So, I chose to go back. It wasn't pushed. I said, "Now, let's leave it stand as it is."

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Q: *The second session of this interview has been prompted by two things. First, I asked Mr. Schwinn if he would index the first session of the interview so that he could go over it and check the spelling of various names and so forth. He was kind enough to do that, but in listening to the tape again and in indexing the tape, several other details and comments occurred to him. He asked me if he could add those details and comments. Moreover, shortly after indexing the tape, he received a group of documents from a friend, a group of documents pertaining to the*

*negotiations in Oman. Those documents also refreshed his memory on certain points and made it possible for him to provide further detail. So this session is essentially a way of allowing him to provide the further information. Walter, please proceed.*

SCHWINN: I was fortunate enough to get some documentation about the negotiations in Muscat and Dhofar the other day, and they clear up certain points. One is the initiative for the treaty with the Sultan came from the Department of State. Now as I said in my earlier interview, I think it was Herbert Hoover, Jr. who was concerned about an oil company drilling out there and didn't want these guys running around without better protection. It was the Sultan then, who, when asked to reopen the consulate, said, "Yes, but I'd like to have the treaty renewed." So, he was the one that asked for a new treaty, not the Department of State. All they wanted to do was reopen the consulate. One had been open, off and on, all through the nineteenth century. What was his purpose? I think his immediate purpose was to get rid of a clause in the earlier treaty of '33, that set a limit of 5% on the ad valorem value of imports into Muscat. This had been done, anyway, back in 1833, and it still couldn't go above 5%, and I think he would like (laughs) to charge more from time to time. I think that was the basic reason of why he wanted it.

So, all this was in 1956, before I was out there. My predecessor had these discussions with the Sultan, and he conveyed the information back. He might well have negotiated the treaty, except for the fact that he'd already been on the post for three years. His wife was not very well, and he was frozen in the job in 1956, because at that time, when the Suez Crisis came out, all officers in that area were told to stand pat, until they could see what happened. And it was very hard for him to wait until I got assigned and out there, otherwise he might well have done it. As I say, he was a far more experienced officer than I. Not any older than I, but he'd been on more posts. So it fell to me to do it. I can cite some dates, if you think it would be useful?

*Q: Sure, go ahead.*

SCHWINN: The first meeting that I had with the Sultan was on June 22, 1957. That was myself, and Earl Russell, and Larry Berz with the Foreign Buildings Operation. We stayed until June 24. We had two sessions, and that was chiefly about just how we were going to proceed in the future, and so on. We were scheduled to go back in July, but then the rebellion took place in the Jabal Akhdar, and he had other things on his mind-to suppress that rebellion. (Laughs) So we didn't meet again until September 26. In the meantime, in order to keep the negotiations going somehow, I wrote him a long and detailed letter, explicating the provisions of the treaty that he'd indicated some interest in, merely just so we didn't have a complete blank there.

We got back in September, and then we had six sessions, and I began to really get the shape of things, the problem we had in dealing....

*Q: These were the one-hour sessions that ran from eleven to twelve?*

SCHWINN: Well, as I discovered, they were usually ten or ten-thirty to twelve, a little longer than my memory told me. So, they'd been discussions in the problems he had. Perhaps this would be a good point, now having gone through this documentation, to give you some idea what I think of the character of the Sultan and what made him tick.

The basic thing is he was an absolute ruler, absolute. No legislature, no cabinet, and no departmental set-up. He had a finance guy, and he had a minister of the interior, and he had a foreign minister, but no sense of a bureaucracy in the sense that he met with them and they told him things, or they gave him advice. He had absolute rule. Whatever he said was it. And he didn't seek advice very often-this I got from his British consul-general there-that he didn't use advice. He had an uncle older than he, he had a half-brother, Tariki. There were several other people around the town, but my information is that he didn't consult. The Wali of Matrah, a very nice, capable man.... The Sultan was it. That was the reason why he was suspicious of anything that might infringe upon his complete, absolute authority. There were things that he didn't disagree with in the treaty, and he kept saying, "I don't mind that, but I don't want to write it down and have it limit my capabilities." He was an absolute ruler.

Let me make it clear, in all my observation, that he was not a tyrant. I think he had genuine concern for his people. He knew that they were primitive, his country was primitive, and I think he felt a responsibility for their welfare-a genuine.... Now, of course, we don't believe that one man can determine what's good for another man (laughs), but in his view, he was capable of determining what was good for his people. He was very careful about their religion. He didn't want to have that tampered with. They were Muslims, and he was going to see to it that they remain Muslims, and so on.

Furthermore, he was a little xenophobic. I don't think he regarded other foreigners, including other Arabs, as quite as good as the Omanis. He always had a little, special place for them, and certainly he would not think of equating Christianity and Muhammadism. That couldn't be done, there was no question. Sharia law was very important to him. When we were talking about the Consular convention, and the right of a consul to offer protection to an American, he said, "We mustn't interfere with Sharia law. I keep a little record of all cases involving foreigners. I keep that apart from the cases involving Omanis. But still Sharia law is divinely inspired, and it must be adhered to. Not that he was going to cut off anybody's hands, but he was not going to have it denigrated, either.

Also-this was an extension of the treaty-I think that he was quite unconvinced. I kept emphasizing to him the idea of reciprocity, that this treaty would be good for Oman because it would encourage investment, encourage people to come and deal with him. He said, "Oh, I don't...if there's anything here they want, they will come. Otherwise, it doesn't make any difference!" (Laughs) He was just totally indifferent. He said, "If they want to come, if we have something they want, they will do it, and no amount of guarantees will make any difference." As I said earlier, he never wanted to commit himself, particularly in writing, because that limited his authorities, limited his capability of doing what he thought would be best. Well, that's it, I think, unless you have questions to ask about it.

*Q: Only one occurred to me-whether you observed this trait in other Arab countries, this fear of putting something down in writing.*

SCHWINN: I don't think so. Of course, the relationship between ARAMCO and the Government of Saudi Arabia was very elaborately written down. (Laughs) However, the Sultan would

approve that. He would like to make a deal with anybody that comes in like that, but he wouldn't ever have that binding on somebody else. Most-favored-nation treatment, that sort of thing. He'll make a deal with Cities Service, and then if Occidental comes along, he'll make a deal with them, and not necessarily have them the same. He'd make sure that he wasn't committed to a broad principle which you have to apply to everybody. He didn't like everybody. (Laughs)

*Q: We were tracing the course of negotiations on a chronological basis.*

SCHWINN: We got back, not in July as we'd agreed to in June, but in October, if I recall correctly. We'd planned for July 22, and it didn't take place until September 13 and ran for two weeks. As I said previously, that was complicated by an official visit by the COMIDEASTFOR with his ship, and my being obliged to get a LIFE reporter and photographer (laughs) into Muscat. The Sultan was very reluctant to permit that. He didn't like journalists. PARIS-MATCH sent some guys in once, and he showed it to me, and he said, "The reason I don't want journalists here is this." Big photograph of the entrance to the palace with what PARIS-MATCH called "his esclaves" (laughs) in the doorways. He was offended, and he didn't want to hire that kind of thing. I must say that I briefed the boys, the two young men, very well, and they behaved very well. They made no trouble. They came in with the admiral....

*Q: Did that story subsequently appear in LIFE magazine?*

SCHWINN: I'm sorry to say it didn't. (Laughs) All the effort we put in.

*Q: Was he offended by that?*

SCHWINN: I don't know. (Laughs) I never mentioned it to him. I just assumed that he was probably just as pleased that it didn't take place.

The second round we had six sessions. The foreign minister, as I say, was there, but he didn't take any part at all. We accomplished a lot in that. We covered quite a bit of ground. Meantime, after the first session, I sent back to the Department rather lengthy descriptions of what I thought the prospects were, and the Department, very kindly, modified a lot of its positions to meet the requirements there. Of course, some of them were sheerly the Department's draft treaty which just hadn't been edited carefully enough because all the business about exchange, well, he had no currency of his own. (Laughs) The British handled all his money, so they tossed that out very quickly, but the Department was very responsive. Not in all things, but it tried to make things agreeable to get something done.

This session, we were there two weeks, and by this time we were getting to be rather familiar sights on the streets and in the city of Muscat, and people were very good to us. The man who ran Petroleum Development Oman, Sir William Lindsey, gave us a car and driver, and had us for dinner. I think we used his office for typing and that sort of thing. You couldn't have kinder and better attention than we got at that time.

I've just noted here that at the first session he had a problem with expropriation and customs. That was very difficult because he was very proud of his customs service, and his customs



service brought in a large part of the revenue (laughs) of the state.

*Q: That suggests that his concern with the 5% ceiling on the ad valorem duty was a rather important consideration.*

SCHWINN: Furthermore, he felt proud, and he brought out and showed us a well-printed volume for the customs regulation of Oman. I mean this was like, "I'm rather civilized in this field," and he didn't quite like all the language that the treaty had about customs being uniform, and notification of changes, and all this sort of thing. Then the International Court came up, and then he had quite a bit of a problem with the Consular Convention. The rights of a consular officer, how free he should be to deal with...for example, under American law, a customs officer is permitted to represent a foreigner on an American ship. If they get in trouble in the harbor, he has authority over them. Well, these foreigners. As I say, xenophobia. He wasn't quite sure he wanted Americans looking after other than Americans.

*Q: Now, I assume that one of the problems here is that the treaty you were negotiating was a great deal longer and more complex than the original 1833 treaty.*

SCHWINN: Well, the 1833 treaty was on one page. (Laughs) This was a volume about an inch thick.

*Q: In other words, here was a person who started out essentially wanting to modify a percentage in the 1833 treaty, who was having to deal with all these new and unfamiliar points, so that his concern, and his desire to have things carefully explicated, and in some cases limited, was therefore quite understandable.*

SCHWINN: Oh, yes, yes. I didn't find him stubborn. From his point of view, he didn't want to change his customs regulations. They suited him very well. Why should we say it should be otherwise? In a way, he had the same feeling about the Court. He kept referring to [I never knew the document] Oppenheim's International Law, and he said, "That's sufficient. That should be all we need. Just refer to that." Well, of course, that wasn't quite what the Department of State felt was adequate. That went September to almost the fourteenth.

*Q: The fourteenth of...*

SCHWINN: September. The fourteenth to twenty-fourth, ten days we were there. We had six sessions in those ten days. Given the fact that we had this interruption of this official visit of the COMIDEASTFOR, it was making good time. I think I mentioned in the other tape that Russ and I went back to Bahrain with the Admiral on his flag ship, and that enabled us to go through the Straits of Hormuz and see what they were like because even then we were aware of this choke-point.

Well, then almost eight months elapsed because the next negotiation was February. Again, you send back to the Department commentary, recommendations and proposals, and it has to go through that mill. I suppose in this case, there's not merely NEA, the area that is legal, economic. So all those chaps have to get involved. So it was almost six months, February, when I went

back. That was a month long. We were there for eight sessions, and that was really, really getting down, getting drafting language. (Laughs) Russ was very good at all that, as I say, encrypting things and then gave me the cable, wireless, and then it got up to Dhahran, and Dhahran then encrypted it again and sent it to the Department, and it came back and down. (Laughs) We were at the end of the line, you see. But it went very swiftly. I must say, almost every time we were there, he usually started off saying, "This is so long and so complex." But you let him say that, and you sympathized with him, and then he'd say, "Well, let's get to work." (Laughs) I think he just wanted to get it off his chest once in a while.

I have noted here that religious issue, the problem of freedom of expression of religion, and customs, and consular matters, and then, of course, the World Court all the time. Finally, we got down to the World Court, which was the last thing. That was the third round, and that was in February. It wasn't until May that we went down to Salalah, which is in Dhofar, on the Arabian coast, and wound it up. It was four audiences down there. That's when he brought up matters not related to the treaty, matters of economic assistance, arms, and so on. Two sessions on the Court. The Department was quite firm, and I remember to Russ I said, "He won't buy." And they came back and said to try again. (Laughs) So, you try it again, but you run out of arguments. I finally said to him, "I'd like to make you understand this. Would you prefer no treaty at all to a treaty with this provision?" He didn't give me a direct answer, but he looked very unhappy. You don't push that. He didn't answer. I tried to get him to say it, but he didn't. So then, after that, in May he was off to the U.K. and stayed until October. (Laughs) You see the big gaps that would take place in between?

Q: *Yes.*

SCHWINN: Then we went back again for the final windup, which was simply a matter of signing and all, and there were no particular problems. He had a preference for, I forget exactly what it is, but there's a way of having the treaty appear, with seals on one side, seals underneath, and all that sort of thing. He'd signed a treaty with the British which he liked, and he brought it out so (laughs), we decided to do it that way.

Q: *And he decided to acquiesce on the World Court issue?*

SCHWINN: No. It's not in the treaty.

Q: *Oh, that's right, I'm sorry. I had misremembered that detail from the first interview.*

SCHWINN: No, we had to drop it. The Department said, "Try again, but if you can't succeed, drop it." Of course, I'd told them previously that I think the reasons were all this trouble about Buraymi and the arbitration.

Q: *Walter, do you have any recollection of the ceremony itself for the signing of the treaty?*

SCHWINN: Yes. Earl Russell, who'd been with me previously, could not come down to Salalah, and so another big young man, named Bill Wolle, came over from Aden, where he was the Consulate over there, and was my Arabist for the final session. He later became Ambassador to

Muscat. (Laughs) The Sultan was in a very good mood, he was very much pleased. We put the papers out, and it took quite a while to, I forget, organizing them all and having where I signed and where he signed, and where my seal was and where his seal was, and where the ribbon went (laughs) and all this sort of thing. This had all come from the Department, and he had checked the Arabic text. So we met.

The palace at Salalah was not bad. It was on the Arabian Sea there, nice flat country. We sat and we signed. Then we had cold drinks, exchanged complements, I think rather heartfelt. (Laughs) I felt that I'd gotten to know this little guy pretty well, and he seemed to be friendly to me. Well, that was it. He then presented me with this silver coffee pot over there as a token. I thanked him very much for it. I had nothing to give to him. I think he rather expected something, too. He told me in one of the earlier sessions, he pointed out to me that Theodore Roosevelt had given him a plaque or a seal or something, and I think it was rather a broad hint (laughs) that he'd like to have something from this administration. But there was no response to my suggestion to that, so I had nothing to give back to him.

He did sit down at that point. We had quite a chat, and I was interested in his telling me about his son, Qaboos, who was then 17 years old and he just sent him to school in England. I think I reported this in the earlier tape. He was very proud of his boy. He said, "The school's been very well recommended. There's a few Sudanese boys and there's a few Pakistani boys, and his English is very good indeed. He's writing very well." He spoke of him with pride. I think I said in the other tape that 13 years later (laughs) he was overthrown. The boy picked him up and sent him off to India, then to the Devonshire Hotel in London. That's where he spent the rest of his days.

*Q: Well again, I would like to thank you for your time and your input, and I'll go ahead and end the second session of the interview.*

**CHARLES STUART KENNEDY**  
**Consular Officer**  
**Dhahran (1958-1960)**

*Charles Stuart Kennedy was born in Illinois in 1928. He received an A.B. from Williams College and an A.M. from Boston University. He served in the United States Air Force from 1950 to 1954 and joined the State Department in 1955. He served in Frankfurt, Germany, Saudi Arabia, Yugoslavia, Vietnam, Greece, Korea, and Italy, specializing in refugee affairs and immigration. He was interviewed by Victor Wolf, Jr. in 1986.*

*Q: I see that you were in Dhahran in Saudi Arabia from 1958 to 1960. What kind of work did you do there, and could you give us some indications about special problems insofar as it related to movement of peoples?*

KENNEDY: Once again, I was assigned, as often happened to junior officers, to another vice

consul's slot, as the sole consular officer in Dhahran. I was a little unhappy with this, because I thought now is the time to become a real honest-to-God diplomat, as I'd been told that is the job one should aspire to, and to do that, you really have to go to an embassy, but I went to where I was ordered.

We had very little immigration on the part of the Saudis. But we had a rather large number of Yemenis who came in, because at that time we had no post at Sanaa in Yemen, and they would come to our consulate there because also our consulate covered all of the Persian Gulf, except for Kuwait. At that time, there were British protectorates at Bahrain and Qatar and the southern states. So we got the Yemenis to appear with some sort of handwritten, so-called documentation and petitions which had been approved by the Immigration Service from their brother in usually Youngstown, Ohio, or Lackawanna, New York, as I recall. Most of them were working in the steel mills

*Q: I take it the Yemenis you're talking about are from what is now North Yemen, not South Yemen, because South Yemen presumably was covered by our consulate in Aden, am I correct?*

KENNEDY: I'm not sure. I suppose so, but many of these Yemenis also were working in the oil fields. They were hired to work in the oil fields in Saudi Arabia or the Emirates, and they would move up. Many of these cases were rather dubious. There wasn't much we could do about it. "Brother," I think, was a very loose term; they were often cousins. But they had passed the scrutiny of INS, so they were issued visas.

Another visa function was to go to Bahrain, where there were a lot of Indians and a few others there, and the law at that time excluded people from what was called the Asian Pacific Triangle, which meant that we issued, I think, to people who were born in India, maybe 100 a year. I would have people come up in Bahrain as I'd step off the plane. I'd go there once a month. They'd say, "How is my case coming along?" I'd look at it and say, "Well, it's moving. Instead of 130 years, you only have 125 years to wait." I mean, literally of that nature until the great reform of 1967 came.

One case I do remember was Iraqi Jews who were refugees in Bahrain, and they were going to St. Louis, where they had a brother, jewelers, I believe. I got a little touch of the old sort of Biblical history, because I noticed that the young men of the family referred to two women, who, according to my records, one was the wife of the principal applicant, and the other was his sister-in-law, but the young men both referred to her as "mother." According to Jewish custom, he had taken her on as his wife, although I think they were all in their sixties or seventies at the time. So I carefully had to coach the young man, "For God's sake, don't call this sister-in-law, your aunt, 'mother' when you get to the Immigration office, or they won't understand, and you might all get kicked out because of bigamy."

**WALTER M. McCLELLAND**  
**Consular Officer**  
**Dhahran (1959-1962)**

*Walter M. McClelland was born in Oklahoma City on July 13, 1922. He obtained his B.A. from the University of Virginia while he was in the Naval ROTC program. He graduated from Harvard Law School in 1950. He served in the State Department in: Regional Affairs, the Iranian Desk, the Foreign Service Inspection Corps, and the Board of the Foreign Service. He served in London, Liverpool, Dhahran, Beirut, Baghdad, Kuwait, and Alexandria. He retired in 1984. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on November 20, 1995.*

MCCLELLAND: After several false starts, I was finally posted to Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. I had requested any French language speaking post (so I could at last get some practice in a Foreign language) and for a while it looked as if I would be sent to Leopoldville, Belgian Congo. That assignment fell through, however, because the person I would have replaced wanted to stay on. There was talk of a few other posts, but nothing seemed to work out and the next thing I knew I had orders for Dhahran, Saudi Arabia.

Although we had never even thought about going to the Middle East, the assignment was not unwelcome -- although it was a disappointment because it was not a French language post. But at least we felt we were in the "real" Foreign Service, as compared with London and Washington. Also at this point we had three young children and another on the way, so we were glad to have a place where we thought the social pressures would be less.

*Q. That's where we overlapped. You were there from '59 to '61?*

MCCLELLAND: I was at the American Consulate General in Dhahran from September, 1959 to February, 1962.

*Q. What was the political, if you want to call it political, situation in Saudi Arabia, particularly in the Eastern Province, at that time?*

MCCLELLAND: King Saud was the Ruler of the country, and the Eastern Province was firmly under the control of his appointed Governor, Amir Saud bin Jilewi. Dhahran, in the Eastern Province, was the location of the Arabian American Oil Co. (ARAMCO) and the vast Saudi oil fields, so that there were many Americans living in the area, most of them in the ARAMCO camps, but some in Saudi towns. The Dhahran Air Field was also there. Our relations with the Amir were excellent -- to the extent that the Amir gave American women the privilege of driving automobiles on the roads between the Consulate General and the Air Field and ARAMCO, although Saudi women were not allowed to drive anywhere. However, the Saudis felt free to criticize Americans with respect to our policy toward Israel, especially concerning Jewish influence on the US Government, and USG support of Israel in the UN and elsewhere. The American Consulate General at Dhahran was the only foreign consular post the Saudis allowed outside Jeddah (before embassies were moved to Riyadh). This was so that the post could provide services for the large American community there. At the same time, however, the post had access to Americans at ARAMCO who knew a lot about what was going on in the country.

*Q. How did we look upon the stability of the Saudi Government during that period?*

MCCLELLAND: As far as I know, we looked upon it as very stable. The Royal Family was large, wealthy and dominant. Saudis were ruled with very strict discipline by Islamic law. Punishment was swift and hard. There were factions opposing the Royal Family, but I did not hear much about them, and the Saudis seemed to have good intelligence so that things would not get out of control.

The Saudi Government received the Sheikhs from the Buraymi Oasis whom the British had chased out, and we saw them whenever we went to the Emirate in Dammam for a special occasion, such as a Feast Day or during the King's visit. On the right of the host were the Arab guests in order of rank, and on the left were representatives of the Consulate General, US military, and ARAMCO. This was their way of solving the problem of relative rank between Arabs and Americans, but it kept the Americans from mixing easily with many of the Arab guests.

*Q. ARAMCO and the military and the Consulate people were sort of every other person. How were relations with ARAMCO at that time?*

MCCLELLAND: The Consulate General's relations with ARAMCO were very close at that time. The Chairman of the Board, President, and all the senior officers of the company were well-known to us and we often entertained each other informally. Dhahran was reputed to be the only US post in the world where representation funds could be used to entertain Americans. ARAMCO was in a position to know almost everything that was going on in Saudi Arabia and they would often share information that was useful to us. Of course, the oil production figures were important, but ARAMCO had other information about tribal movements, social and economic developments, etc. I used to go to ARAMCO about once a week to talk over what was going on in the Eastern Province with the Government Relations people there.

*Q: We were in a way caught in the middle over the Buraymi Oasis Crisis. I wonder if you could explain what that was about.*

MCCLELLAND: The Buraymi Oasis Crisis involved rival claims of Oman and Saudi Arabia concerning the ownership of several oases lying between Oman and Saudi Arabia in SE Arabia. What I remember of the story is that the British, working with the Sultan of Muscat & Oman, agreed to international arbitration to settle the matter. They thought they had the facts on their side, but the Saudis arrived at the arbitration with a large ARAMCO legal team armed with voluminous statements from bedouin tribesmen in the area attesting to Saudi ownership. I am not sure what happened next, but it seems that the arbitration was thereupon called off by the British and considerable enmity resulted between the British and "the Americans", i.e. ARAMCO.

*Q. I think that at that time there were no relations with the British in Saudi Arabia so we were taking care of their interests, weren't we, informally?*

MCCLELLAND: That may be true, but it would have been done through our Embassy in Jeddah, and the Consulate General was not involved in the protection of British interests when I was there. But just as there were no British in Saudi Arabia, the British were very much present

in the Gulf States. In fact, by treaty the British were responsible for the defense and foreign relations of the various Persian Gulf Sheikdoms: Bahrain, Qatar, Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, Umm al-Guwain, Ras la-Khaymah and a few others. That meant that the US and other countries had no representation in these states. The British had a Political Resident (like an Ambassador) in Bahrain, with Political Agents (like Consuls) in all the Sheikdoms. A US Navy Office, Commander, Middle East Force, (COMIDEASTFOR) was also stationed on Bahrain. One of the interesting duties of Consulate General officers was to visit Bahrain and the other Sheikdoms periodically, as I am sure you remember.

*Q: I believe we called them the Trucial Sheikdoms, didn't we?*

MCCLELLAND: That is right. The Trucial Sheikdoms were all those on the so-called Trucial Coast of Arabia. I remember that we used to go visit the Political Resident in Bahrain and then go on to see Political Agents in Qatar and the other Sheikdoms on one visit. I often stayed at the Residency or Agency and the British were always very cordial and open. They would keep us generally up to date on the developments between the various tribes that were always feuding with each other. The Persian influence in the area was always something that was of concern to the British and to us. On some of my trips, I also visited the American medical missionaries in Sharjah. These missionaries were mostly, if not all, women who came to help the Arab women who were suffering very greatly in childbirth. Arab medical (?) practice made it almost impossible for Arab women to have a second child, so this mission was dedicated to overcoming this practice by having a place where women could come to have their babies safely. They also evangelized the women who came. Many believed, but they were secret believers because a Christian wife would never have been tolerated.

*Q. The great oil wealth had not hit at that point.*

MCCLELLAND: In 1960-61 Abu Dhabi was still pretty primitive. I remember the airport was a hut with a wind-sock on a sand plain and there was a big boiler water desalinization station on the beach where people brought their own buckets for fresh water. I believe oil had been found but no one knew how big the field was then -- and the money hadn't yet started flowing. Later, in 1970-74, when I was in Kuwait, it was a different story.

*Q. We had an air base during that time, they were beginning to shut it down, weren't they?*

MCCLELLAND: Dhahran had been a US Strategic Air Command Base in the past. When I got there in 1959 the Dhahran Airfield was a joint Saudi-US Base that was the Headquarters for the US Military Training Mission (USMTM). At that time there were some dependents and a school there, in addition to the usual PX, Officers' Club, BOQ, etc. By 1962, however, this had changed and Dhahran became a Saudi Base that the US could use as needed, with the Training Mission still operating.

The Consulate General's relationship with the USMTM was generally close and cordial, and we were allowed to use the PX, schools, and APO. Later the schools closed and we were no longer permitted to shop at the PX -- and this was a little hard to take, although no great hardship.

*Q. What were you getting from the American Military? What was their impression of the Saudis*

*as a fighting force and all that?*

MCCLELLAND: I do not recall any discussions about the Saudis as a fighting force. We were aware that there were several promising young Saudi pilots who were in training and that the Saudis were looking for others with potential. We met some of these Saudi pilots and they were rather impressive. They all spoke English -- that was an important part of their training. I remember we joked with one officer who was a language instructor from South Carolina, asking him if he was leaving his students with a Southern accent!

Dhahran Airfield was strategically located and often served as a refueling point for US military aircraft in that part of the world. While I was there Secretary of State Dean Rusk came through and we had quite a competition about entertaining him for an hour or so between the Consulate General, USMTM, ARAMCO, and the local Governor! Somehow it all worked out.

The Airfield was also a reception place for foreign dignitaries visiting the Eastern Province, and Consulate General Officers were often invited (summoned) to be present on such occasions. A majlis (reception area) was set up in a hanger, Persian carpets put on the concrete, and coffee served all around, with the Amir presiding.

Sometimes US military personnel would get in trouble with the Saudi authorities, usually because they became intoxicated and ran over a pedestrian or did other damage. My job at the Consulate General was to do what I could to protect these unfortunate Americans. This included visiting them in jail, helping them get fed properly, and interceding for them with the Saudi authorities. In almost all cases we were able to get them banished -- otherwise they could easily have died in the prisons where they were held.

This sort of thing made me aware of the fact that the Consulate General did not have a well-trained person who was fluent in English and Arabic and knew his way around among the Saudi authorities. I then looked around for someone to do this work and found a young Palestinian named Fawzi Samhuri. ARAMCO was laying off some employees and Fawzi was very highly qualified and available, so we took him on as a local employee.

Some time after this the Consulate General was notified, through our post in Kuwait I believe, that an American woman, an employee of the Getty Oil Company in the Saudi-Kuwait Neutral Zone, was being held hostage and mistreated by Saudi authorities in the area. I asked permission to go see what the problem was, and Consul General Schwinn gave me his blessing.

So Fawzi and I, armed with a letter of safe passage from Amir Saud bin Jilewi, took off for the Neutral Zone starting on a main road but ending up on a desert track. That evening we spotted the giant flares at the Getty Oil Camp and charged in to rescue this American citizen in distress!

There didn't appear to be any real problem. The woman was safely with her family, had not been tortured, and was apparently hidden away in some remote spot. She was a nurse and had apparently told a pushy Arab official that he would have to wait his turn "even if you were Mohammed himself." At this the official became very upset and accused her of insulting Islam and said she should be severely punished. Fawzi and I had tea with the Saudi Qadi (Judge) and he assured us there was no problem. After we checked this out with the Getty people we returned to Dhahran in good spirits.



*Q: Was there a problem of prohibition (of alcohol) in the country? How did one deal with that?*

MCCLELLAND: Yes, I'm sure you know very well there was.

*Q. I'm asking a pointed question, but I'm trying to capture the flavor of the times.*

MCCLELLAND: This was a moral dilemma for the staff at Dhahran because our Consul General felt very strongly on the subject.

*Q. This is Walter Schwinn?*

MCCLELLAND: Yes, Walter Schwinn was the Consul General and he considered that it was important for the Consulate General to be very friendly and hospitable to senior ARAMCO officials. The better relations we had with ARAMCO, the better job we could do keeping the State Department informed about what was going on in our part of Saudi Arabia -- and not just in oil matters because ARAMCO people were all over the kingdom and knew the political and economic situation very well. So, to foster these relations we tried to offer our friends at ARAMCO something they would enjoy that they would not otherwise have, i.e. genuine Scotch whiskey, Gin, etc., when they came to our compound for dinner. This was not really necessary, but Mr. Schwinn felt it would help things along -- and he was probably right.

The problem was that the only way to import these spirits was in our personal baggage when we took our weekly trips to Bahrain -- the British sold it to us there quite legally. We felt, however, that bringing spirits into Saudi Arabia, even though we were "protected" by diplomatic immunity, was not what we were supposed to be doing. On the other hand, we felt strong pressure from our Chief to bring it in. The Saudi officials probably knew well enough what we were doing, but we doubted that the State Department would defend us if an incident occurred.

Of course, I guess we offended the laws of the Kingdom in lots of other ways too -- like having phonograph records, dolls for our children, etc. That was one of the things that made life in Saudi Arabia so difficult -- you always felt you were violating the law and that on that basis you might be thrown out of the country any day and your career might be ruined as well.

But I felt supporting the Consul General in this was part of my job so I did what I had to do and hoped I wouldn't get caught. I did not hear that anyone ever did, although I remember old John Neese had a bottle of Creme de Menthe break in his bag and it dripped all over the place. He was pretty upset but nothing seemed to happen about it.

*Q. I think they must have known what was happening. It used to bother me because I knew perfectly well that if my suitcase broke or something, and all of a sudden there it was, a Customs Officer could do nothing but say "What have you got there?" Then I'd be kicked out of the country, and from then on everybody would say that Kennedy got kicked out of Saudi Arabia and it had something to do with liquor. Oh God! I did not feel very happy with that.*

MCCLELLAND: That is exactly how I felt. But I have to admire at least one officer who felt

that it was morally wrong to import alcohol, so he refused to do it -- and the Consul General let it go. However, if all of us had refused, it might have been a very different matter.

*Q. We had two officers, both of whom were members of the Christian Science Church. They did not serve liquor at home. One was our CIA Station Chief and the other was Bill Caseby, our Consular Officer. I remember Walter Schwinn sort of sighing in annoyance when he found out that they both had this religion because it cut down on his ability. Not that anybody was a boozier.*

MCCLELLAND: You couldn't be, the real thing was too precious!

*Q. It was too precious! One did not just casually have a drink before dinner.*

MCCLELLAND: These "real spirits" were for the Chairman of the Board or other high Officials -- we had to be careful not to waste them!

*Q. How did you find Walter Schwinn, may he rest in peace? He died just a couple of months ago on his 94th Birthday. How did you find him as Consul General?*

MCCLELLAND: I found him very straight forward. He said what he meant and meant what he said. He opposed my coming to the post in the first place. Eventually I understood that the problem was that we had three children -- and he expected my wife to be his hostess (he was a bachelor) and very active socially in the American community. He protested to the Department, but in vain. And then, to cap it all off, my wife gave birth to twins after we had been at post only a few weeks. Mr. Schwinn's remark to her is classic: "Madam, have you no restraint?"

Nevertheless, we worked very hard to do what Mr. Schwinn wanted and entertained frequently. With five children, two baby twins, and only one Ethiopian houseboy/cook to help, this was not easy. But we survived, and Mr. Schwinn became reconciled and even came to like us. He never seemed reluctant to leave me in charge of the post (I was his deputy) when he went off on one of his frequent trips to surrounding countries to consult on emergency evacuation. He was head of the area group.

*Q. That was the Dhahran Liaison Group, which was the evacuation set-up for the whole Persian Gulf. It was more than the Persian Gulf. It was for the whole area.*

MCCLELLAND: Yes, the area included India, Pakistan and several other countries, I think. Mr. Schwinn would be gone for a month or two at a time. When I was in charge, some called it "The short and benevolent reign of Walter II" -- that meant that I did not require officers to wear their jackets to the office in very hot weather. (We always took them off in the office anyway because the air conditioning was not very efficient.) In any event we were a little more relaxed when Mr. Schwinn was gone, but we functioned at least as well.

Mr. Schwinn was usually very fair and mostly gave me good efficiency reports. However, I remember one time when Mr. Schwinn was about to retire, he was a little tired but nevertheless

seemed to want to hold a Conference of Persian Gulf Posts before he left. He asked me if I thought we could do it, and I said that we certainly could. It was not my idea of a good time, but if he wanted it, I would give it all I had. The Conference came off well, but he felt it was a lot of strain. He told me that I should have talked him out of it because it was just too big an undertaking for our small post! In my efficiency report he wrote that McClelland sometimes has too many balls in the air and is liable to drop one or two. (What would he have said if I had actually succeeded in talking him out of the Conference? I doubted that he would give me much praise for that.)

*Q. What was your impression of ARAMCO as regards its dealing with Saudis at that time?*

MCCLELLAND: I thought ARAMCO was a very forward-looking company and it made every effort to do its job and at the same time benefit Saudi Arabia. It sought to educate and train any Saudis they found with potential for working in the company. They would send them away to college and then guarantee them a responsible job when they returned. The company also sought to bring better housing and health standards to the country, especially to its own employees and their families. In addition, ARAMCO had excellent Arabic scholars and they were in touch with what was going on almost everywhere in the Kingdom. The company never criticized the country or its institutions openly, but they did work out problems quietly and very effectively with the Saudi officials.

*Q. Did you go and talk to the people at the Bahrain and Arabian Gulf oil companies, and some of the others that were essentially British?*

MCCLELLAND: There was really no comparison because they were small operations and they didn't have their headquarters in the Gulf as ARAMCO did. As I remember the Bahrain Petroleum Co. facility, it was nice, calm, peaceful, but there was nothing going on. I don't know much about their Government relations, although I am sure they worked very closely with the Sheikh of Bahrain. I did not have the impression that the company was doing nearly as much in the community as ARAMCO was. In general, Bahrain was a quiet place when I was in Dhahran, although there were some leftists in their parliament that caused the Sheikh a bit of trouble from time to time.

*Q. I remember that a major concern in Bahrain was that there were too many Iranians on the island. Many of them were illegally there, but they were working on various projects. The Sheikhs and the British were concerned because the Shah was making noises about this being the Persian Gulf and Bahrain was theirs. (The Saudis called this same body of water the Arab Gulf.)*

MCCLELLAND: Yes, the Iranians were a major worry all through the Gulf. I believe the Shah of Iran referred to Bahrain as "Our 13th Province."

*Q. You left there is '62?*

MCCLELLAND: Yes, early in 1962. I had requested Arabic Language Training in Beirut, and the Department had acceded to this request.

*Q. This time in Dhahran, although it was a quiet place and all that, had it inspired you? Or was this desperation to get into a language training thing? How would you put it?*

MCCLELLAND: I asked for Arabic language training somewhat out of desperation. My language upon entering the Service was French and I kept asking the Department to send me to a French-speaking post. First I got London, then Washington (!), then in spite of renewed pleas, I got Saudi Arabia. Obviously the Department Personnel System was not concerned about my foreign languages, but then a new policy was announced that said all officers should have at least two world languages or one hard language in addition to English. The implication was that if you did not have these languages you would not get promoted. So, for the sake of my career, I volunteered for Arabic.

At Dhahran I studied Arabic after-hours and on weekends, and I realized that the language was much too difficult for me to learn in this way -- I would need full-time immersion. I understood that if I was granted language training it would mean that my future career would be centered in the Middle East, but I was willing to accept that. In the end, I am glad I took the training.

**WILLIAM D. WOLLE**  
**Economic Officer**  
**Jeddah (1959-1962)**

*William D. Wolle was born in Iowa in 1928 and received his B.A. from Morningside College and an MIA degree from Columbia University. He entered the foreign service in 1951 and served in Iraq, England, Lebanon, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Jordan, and Kenya. He was appointed Ambassador to Oman in 1974 and to the United Arab Emirates in 1979. In addition to his overseas assignments, Mr. Wolle served at the Office of Near East Economic Affairs and as officer in charge of Arab-Israeli Affairs. At the time of his retirement in 1986, he was a senior personnel officer. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1991.*

*Q: You left Aden and went to Jeddah where you served from 1959-1962. What were you doing, what was your job in Jeddah?*

WOLLE: Throughout my time there I was the chief of the economic/commercial section. I had a colleague officer working with me, who concentrated on commercial matters and helped out on some other things, and an American secretary. We had one local employee who was obviously vital because of the importance of Arabic and particularly in checking through the press and written sources so that we didn't miss anything like that.

It was an interesting period in Saudi Arabia's history. The 1958-60 period, and I arrived in the middle of that, they were going through a financial retrenchment. King Saud had allowed spending to get out of hand in the middle 1950s and more and more he realized, was convinced by others in the family, that he should turn more authority over to Crown Prince Faisal. He did

that in 1958-60 and he got into the country an expert financial administrator, a Pakistani named Anwar Ali, a Muslim. He was really vital to their recovery. He got along well with those he dealt with on the Saudi side, and foreigners, and helped put the financial picture back into focus.

Also through the influence of Crown Prince Faisal, who was really managing many of the country's affairs in that period, he got the World Bank to come in and do its first major report on Saudi Arabia. It came out in 1960 and led to the country's first effort to plan an economic development program. It began as a small Economic Development Committee. There was a young Saudi, Ahmad Jamjoom, at the under secretary level, who had this committee sort of in his hand to figure out how to get started with development. Before they went too far along, a royal fiat turned this into a more formal organization called the Supreme Planning Board. That got started in December 1960 and used the World Bank report which had just come out to plan for some movement in transportation, in agriculture, and to help some of the small industries.

Of course, up to that time probably the main impetus to start the industrial side had been ARAMCO (the Arabian American Oil Company). But that was heavily in the eastern province.

It was an important time for such action because the spending was back under control and the oil income was rising. (We can look back now and say gradually rising because the figures look so low when we look back thirty years. For example, the annual Saudi budget in dollar terms in 1961 was slightly under \$400 million and then it jumped to \$480 million the next year and went up and up after that.) So now those figures look minuscule, but they were enough to let the government organize things.

There was still a lot of reliance on a few Western advisers. The Ministries, which for the most part were up in Riyadh, were really still spending as much time trying to get themselves organized as they were in trying to help the country along.

Fortunately for my work, you might say, two of the really key departments in the government remained in Jeddah in that period. One was the Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Affairs. Also there remained in Jeddah Anwar Ali, the Pakistani financial administrator, who headed what was called the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency, which in effect was sort of a Ministry of Finance. So pretty much throughout my time, my two main contacts were the Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Affairs and the Monetary Agency, and I could get access to them right where I lived instead of having to travel up to Riyadh to spend a few days.

I think the main lesson that I learned through this experience in Jeddah was that in a country which is large in expanse but very underdeveloped, to do the right kind of reporting and put in advice now and then, you really have to get close to the key figures who have their fingers on the buttons that count. Abdullah Tariki, a very controversial character, was the Minister of Petroleum through most of this period. We got along very well so he became an excellent source as did Anwar Ali. It was just a situation where to find out what was really going on and to have discussions at the level that counted you really had to deal with the top people and in the economic field those were the two key people. I considered it a very fortunate assignment.

*Q: What was your impression of Tariki? He had been educated in Colorado wasn't it?*

WOLLE: I believe it was Colorado. As I learned it at the time he had become engaged and I believe married an American girl during that period or just after his school days. But it didn't work out, so one theory was that he was at times anti-American, anti-Western in some of his talk, if not his action, due to disillusionment and unhappiness because of a romance that didn't work out. But I don't know if there is really truth in that. He was a very volatile kind of guy. He gave ARAMCO a hard time on many matters that they were constantly negotiating.

He was one of the founders, along with a Venezuelan, Perez Alfonso, of OPEC in 1960, I believe it was. They really hatched this thing that has had a long history and a life of its own to try to gain, more rapidly than the companies wanted in most producing countries, more authority and control over their own industry and particularly to get their own governments involved in more than just production...refining, marketing, transportation, etc.

Tariki was quite approachable. He would sit there picking his toes and being very hospitable. I remember once when I accompanied Howard Cottam, then Deputy Assistant Secretary for NEA, to Riyadh. I saw Tariki across the hotel lobby when we checked in. He was as warm as he could be saying that as soon as we got checked in to come up and have a chat. I smiled to myself because I figured I had made this impression on Howard Cottam...here is a guy who gets in to see Tariki. But that was all part of the job.

Howard Cottam, by the way, at that time was the highest ranking State Department official to have visited Saudi Arabia, at least since World War II. In the years that followed all kinds of Secretaries and others from State and Treasury have been there.

*Q: As the economic officer, what were American interests in Saudi Arabia and did they clash with ARAMCO's interests?*

WOLLE: Well, frankly, they did not seem to clash. We wanted first to try to be sure that the Saudis did pull their boot straps up financially, stop some of the wilder spending that had been allowed and begin a rational kind of economic development. We felt that ARAMCO was basically on the right track. They certainly had an excellent reputation for dealing with their Saudi employees. They were bringing at least a good many of them along toward responsible positions in the company.

It wasn't that there were constant clashes on issues up and down the line between ARAMCO and the Saudi government, some of it was just the volatile nature of Tariki. He would speak to the international press and start some of these international efforts such as getting OPEC off the ground. I think we feared that he might have an influence on some of the other oil producers that would perhaps be a bit adverse...try to take over too much too soon.

ARAMCO's philosophy all along, I am convinced, was basically to bring the Saudi employees along as fast as they could...they sent many of them to the States and Europe for technical and other kinds of education. ARAMCO knew that it was so important to the Saudi economy that they had to be very careful whatever they did.

*Q: Part of this time I was laughably the economic/ commercial officer in the eastern province, but I also used to cover Bahrain, Qatar and the Trucial States and you would get the contrast between ARAMCO, which was really saying that these are Arabs in an Arab country and as long as we get a good cut of the pie lets bring them along. You would go over and talk to the British people at BAPCO or others, and one had the feeling that this was a British concern and it didn't want these natives mucking things up. It was much more confrontational. They seemed to despise ARAMCO for letting their side down. I got this impression.*

WOLLE: I can understand your comments precisely. Also having just come from Aden which was still a British colony...a different situation but still one could see there that the British were just calling all the shots and really trying to keep a lid on rather than trying to help educate the Adenis very much. So I think it was a good philosophy on ARAMCO's part.

*Q: It seemed to work. One that was very compatible with the American style of doing things.*

WOLLE: And, of course, as you know, in 1957 in connection with renewing the Dhahran airfield agreement for five years we provided, I think, \$25 million to help improve Dammam Port and also build an air terminal at Dhahran airport.

*Q: The Army Corps of Engineers was responsible for that.*

WOLLE: Less than five years later we were out because there was no subsequent renewal and in 1962 we evacuated our military from Dhahran.

*Q: Did you find in your dealings with the Saudis could they understand that we really...we had this very peculiar policy with the Saudis, we were very close to them but at the same time we were the prime supporter of what they at that time considered to be their bitterest enemy, the Israelis. When you got past the rhetoric, did they understand the political situation and why this was going on?*

WOLLE: Well, at least in my work, economic and commercial work and contacts, the Israeli business wasn't a big bugaboo for us. For the political section of the Embassy, there was more involvement in that and more static, because there were several key bureaucrats in the Saudi government, individuals who were Palestinian and who had come to and been in the kingdom pretty much since 1947-48, who certainly didn't let their Saudi co-workers forget that this was a major issue and that while the US was generous in bilateral relations, it was still a country that had to be watched very carefully because of its role in the Arab-Israeli problem.

For example, just by contrast, in Jordan later even in my economic and AID contacts, the Israeli issue was constantly the major subject of discussion and we were criticized roundly, etc. That was a big contrast with my own experience in Saudi Arabia where it was not a problem that seemed to affect my work very much.

*Q: How did we feel about Nasserism? Nasserism was still big at this time. What was your impression and the feel of the Embassy as far as militant Arab nationalism was concerned?*

WOLLE: Again, I think the period when that really became an impact in Saudi Arabia was shortly after I was transferred back to the Department, because I think it was in the 1962-63 year that all this stuff broke loose. The squabble over the covering for the Ka'aba (religious shrine at Mecca); the Egyptian air raids into western Saudi Arabia; the Yemen exploding with the unseating of the Imam.

*Q: How did you feel and others in the Embassy about the survivability of the House of Saud and all? At the time you were mentioning there were an awful lot of Palestinians around including the military service. I know out in the eastern province we weren't that close, but there was concern about what the military might do and also the Palestinian influence.*

WOLLE: Yes, there was concern, but my gut feeling at the time was that this was such a unique kind of country with such traditional approaches to government, religion, etc. that it was not going to be in the near future or even middle term that the House of Saud would fall, provided those in charge spent the money more wisely and didn't go into great debt. And provided they kept a proper eye on the military. Of course the theory abounded that as fast as the Saudis would built up their regular army they would built up the so called white army, the bedouin army, and keep ammunition restricted so that their wasn't an opening for a military coup.

By contrast, I can remember feeling much later on in Oman in the middle 1970s when Sultan Qaboos had been ruling for just a few years...Gee, what is going to happen to this country when the Omanis who are being educated abroad came back in the middle 1980s? This country doesn't have that much oil and doesn't have that much to develop. The Sultan may be in for real trouble maintaining a grip. Whereas I really thought Saudi Arabia would manage to maintain the monarchy pretty much indefinitely.

*Q: Did you have problems, I know I certainly did, with some of the conflicts that came between sort of normal American business practices and the Islamic Law? You probably recall the case of Robert Tuma who was the Pillsbury flour salesman.*

WOLLE: Yes, when you mentioned Pillsbury I had it in my mind. But such cases seemed to be centered over in the eastern province rather than over where we were. So we left too much for you poor people in the Consulate General to do what you could to bale out persons in those conditions where they had been, what, tossed into jail?

*Q: No, in this case, Robert Tuma was a salesman from Pillsbury and some Saudis had a claim against Pillsbury, not against Tuma and they wouldn't let him out of the country until the claims were settled or somebody stood bond for him, which eventually was worked out. But screams and yells of holding just a company representative in the country caused a lot of friction.*

WOLLE: We really didn't have such celebrated cases that I can recall in the Jeddah region. Cases of that type came up during my time in Oman, when the Omani government would tend to get unhappy with somebody and give him 24 hours to leave. The main American business endeavor near Jeddah was TWA's role in Saudi Arabian Air Lines. TWA was still vital to provide management and flying personnel for the Saudis as it had done in Ethiopia earlier. Eventually they worked themselves out of a job. There was a regular TWA compound, as we called it, near the airport, and a good many pilots, maintenance personnel and administrators. The elementary



school, which our nursery age daughter attended, was known as the TWA school, because most of the American children, or many of them, were in that part of the American community, with the airline.

Anyway a very interesting tour with two distinctly different ambassadors.

*Q: Could you first talk about Donald Heath and then there was Parker Hart...their style of operation and how they dealt?*

WOLLE: Well, in a way one was old school and one was new modern. I had come to know Ambassador Heath somewhat in Lebanon when I was in Arabic school because he was Ambassador while I was there. He had later been transferred to Saudi Arabia for his third or fourth ambassadorship.

*Q: He had been in Saigon, also Minister in Sofia, etc.*

WOLLE: He did not have a tremendous knowledge of the Arabian Peninsula. He did things by the book delegating freely, relied heavily on his DCM for day-to-day matters, maintained very good contacts with key people in the royal family, and frequently flew back and forth to see the king and others if they were up in Riyadh. But I don't think the contrast between him and Ambassador Hart was so much in the style of their operation as in the prior knowledge or lack of it that each one brought to the post.

In other words, Ambassador Heath did not have a big background in the Middle East or in the Arabian Peninsula. Ambassador Hart did have. He had opened the Consulate in Dhahran. He had known a lot of the Saudi persons who counted, including some of the merchant families way back. I say way back, at least 15 years earlier. So he could draw on that and was off to a running start. You really had to know your stuff to talk with him about the tribal relationships and such things.

I think they were both effective and both did admirably. Of course Ambassador Heath retired from that post and Pete Hart had a good many years in front of him still.

*Q: Then you went to the Bureau of Economic Affairs from 1962-65, is that right?*

WOLLE: Not in that bureau, but in NEA -- first in what we then called the Office of Near East Economic Affairs (NEA/E), which was a four officer contingent headed much of my time by Enoch Duncan. That was for 3 years, then for a year I was the officer in charge of Arab-Israel Affairs, with Lucien Kinsolving assisting me. Then in mid-1966 when the country director system got started in the State Department, I in effect moved across the hall and became deputy to Harry Symmes, later Roy Atherton, Harry being the first Country Director for Israel and Arab-Israel Affairs. In all that totaled five years and then my sixth year in Washington was as a student at the National War College.

*Q: On the economic side what were you concentrating on in Near Eastern Affairs?*

WOLLE: We were concentrating on things that involved mostly countries in the Arabian Peninsula, Iraq and Egypt. I, myself, dealt very little with Egypt, Fran Dickman was handling that. One of the interesting things during that period was simply following some of the efforts I had seen get started on the ground in Saudi Arabia.

Between 1962-64 we were approached by the Saudi government to help them get some of their development works underway. For example, they wanted the road network radically improved. They wanted television installed in the kingdom. They wanted an increase in the survey effort which the US Geological Survey had started many years before, along with ARAMCO...it was a joint mapping and exploration effort. So to make a long story short we got the US Army Corps of Engineers to establish a presence in Saudi Arabia to oversee contracts and contracting work in some of these fields. The 1960s became a period of gradually greater US involvement with the Saudi development effort.

With Iraq there was the annual question of date infestation: whether or not Iraqi exports entering this country measured up to standards in terms of bug and waste infestation. Every year this topic required substantial negotiations between ourselves and the Iraqi Embassy which feared we would suddenly lower the boom on the Iraqi date exports.

*Q: Iraq had always had this potential of being the great economic powerhouse of the Middle East, but they seemed to be plagued and continue to be with having dictatorial regimes that drive it to the ground. Have we written Iraq off almost as an economic...?*

WOLLE: At that time?

*Q: Yes, the time we are talking about.*

WOLLE: No, there were some large American construction firms involved through the sixties in building large dams in the northern part of Iraq...Morrison-Knudsen, J. A. Jones and some others. From time to time they would come in and need some kind of representation from us or through our Embassy if they were having problems. Also the road network in Iraq was in part engineered and designed and to some degree constructed by American firms.

But the Iraqis were...let's say they had educated officials who could deal with their development much more readily than the case of the Saudis who had very few engineers and the like, and really wanted the US to be interceding there to make sure that they were not being ripped off by American, European or other contractors.

*Q: Did you find this a problem? I mean when there are oil wells, all the sharks gather. Did you find yourself in an awkward position? We didn't want the Saudis to be ripped off by anybody, including American firms, but what about a firm that you thought was a good American firm with congressional backing... ?*

WOLLE: It is hard of me to think of examples at this point, but I can recall some hours spent with my colleagues helping to draft congressional responses in cases where an American firm

had gone to the Hill and we had either an embarrassing kind of letter or a very delicate kind of situation to respond to. In a sense we were a third party out there helping to mediate in a way between the Saudi government and American or other contractors trying to get bids, particularly after the Corps of Engineers set up shop there.

**GEORGE M. LANE**  
**Commercial Officer**  
**Jeddah (1960-1962)**

**Ambassador**  
**Yemen (1978-1981)**

*Ambassador George M. Lane was born in Maryland in 1928. He studied at the Sorbonne and received a B.A. from Cornell University. After three years in the US Army, he received an MA from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. Lane entered the Foreign Service in 1957 and his assignments overseas include Saudi Arabia, Syria, Morocco, Libya, Swaziland, Beirut, and Germany. He was appointed Ambassador to Yemen in 1978. He was interviewed in 1990 by Richard Nethercut.*

*Q: Instead you opted for a career in the Mid-East and following language school in Lebanon were immediately put into some rather challenging sounding assignments in Jeddah, and Aleppo Syria, and then Morocco. Could you tell me your impressions then, after the two years in Beirut, and these three successive assignments? How did you view the Arab world at that time?*

LANE: I didn't have any early special affinity, I don't think, for Arab culture or anything like that. I viewed it, I suppose, to be perfectly honest as a place to work, as a fascinating new area of the world, something very new. Saudi Arabia was just taking off at that point in the early '60s. The oil business in Saudi Arabia really exploded right after World War II, but the tremendous amounts of money were just beginning to show in Saudi Arabia. You could still see parts of old Jeddah, and the American Embassy compound was five miles out of town. Now it's buried in the middle of Jeddah, what is left of it. It was a fascinating assignment. I was Commercial Officer so my job was to run around and see as many of the business people as I could, and get them interested in representing American products, and helping out American businessmen who came to town. But I suppose the most interesting activity that I was involved in, in Jeddah, was being the liaison escort officer for the first American destroyer ever to visit the port of Yanbu. You hear a lot about Yanbu these days because it's the outlet for a pipeline from the oil fields in the Persian Gulf that goes all the way across the Arabian Peninsula and comes out in what is now a very modern port city of Yanbu -- which I haven't seen since 1962. But in 1962 it was much as it had been for a thousand years. It's a long complicated story, so I won't go into it, but trying to be the escort officer for that destroyer was a real happening. Saudi Arabia was an interesting place to work at that time. It was very tough on the family. The climate in Jeddah is almost as bad as the climate in the Persian Gulf, but not quite.

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*Q: So that suggests that during your time as Ambassador there, there were some rather extensive American political-military interests in the region if only in relation to Saudi Arabia.*

LANE: Very definitely in the region, there was no question. Saudi Arabia...it's hard to -- well, it's not so hard to remember anymore now -- it was a year ago. But in 1979 and '80, Saudi Arabia was producing 10 million barrels of oil a day -- 365 days a year -- and they were selling it for about \$30.00 a barrel, that's what the price was in 1980. I think that's 100 billion dollars, and that's an awful lot of money. And, of course, because of the disruption caused by the fall of the Shah of Iran, that's the second oil crisis since 1973 that oil production has dropped precipitously. We had a real crisis in oil supply, and if the Saudis hadn't produced as much as we wanted, we would have had a real disaster in this country. Saudi Arabia was very important because of its swing position in the oil supply business, and because of what it did with all its oil money. If the Saudis don't put that money into U.S. Government bonds, we're in trouble. One of the reasons I suspect that we went into the Gulf earlier this month was because if somebody controls all those billions that the Kuwaitis had invested in U.S. Government bonds, and doesn't roll them over (as per their famous movie), the U.S. financial system, which is already in fragile state could suffer a very nasty blow. I'm no economist, but that's my guess.

**MORRIS DRAPER**  
**Economic Counselor**  
**Jeddah (1961-1964)**

*Morris Draper was born in California on February 18, 1928. He obtained a B.A. from the University of Southern California. He served in the U.S. Army and also served in the Executive Secretariat. During his career he served in Singapore, Baghdad, Jeddah, Amman, and Jerusalem. In Washington, DC, he served in Personnel and the Turkish desk. He was special assistant to Kissinger, Country Director and Deputy Assistant to NEA. He also worked with the Board of Examiners. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1991.*

*Q: What was your view and that of your fellow students of the Arab world at the turn of decade of the '60s?*

DRAPER: We were seeing the oil revolution which was changing the traditional societies almost overnight. While I was in Beirut, we had opportunities to travel around the area -- the travel was subsidized. This gave us an opportunity to broaden our knowledge. I saw the Gulf States for the first time. I saw Kuwait and what was going on with the transformation of a traditional society. There were a number of books being written at the time, tracing the changes in traditional societies in such countries as Turkey. Many of us saw the Arab world as promising ground for evolutionary change -- modernization -- while maintain the best of their old traditions. We did of course note the occasional violence in that world. We detected underneath all the rhetoric certain sympathy, support and understanding for the United States. There were people who were very

critical of our policies, but their view was not universal. In general we saw the Arab world as a promising environment to work in as Foreign Service officers.

Arabic is useful in something like twenty countries. Its roots are similar to Hebrew's and Farsi and Turkish are also related, as well as Swahili in Africa. Later on, the Department began to assign some of the Arabic speaking officers to Israel to study Hebrew. David Korn was one of the first of those officers and it became a regular practice; not only did the officer's breadth of view get expanded, but it also served to bridging the prejudice against the Arabists that some Israelis seemed to have.

*Q: Your first assignment after training was Jeddah, where you served from 1961 to 1964. What was your assignment? And what were your observations of Saudi Arabia during this period?*

DRAPER: Initially, I was the number two in the economic section. When the head of the section was re-assigned, I took his place as Economic Counselor.

Saudi Arabia was also going through a transition phase. When I arrived in 1961, King Saud had fled. The Saudis were experimenting with "popular" government during which people like Tariki was the oil minister. He was one of the first Saudi "moderns". He went to American University where he specialized in petroleum engineering and the politics of oil. He had become quite a figure and a role model for many young Saudis who were not members of the royal family. The then Prime Minister was of course a Saudi Prince, but he was one of the "black sheep". He wanted to bring Saudi Arabia into the 20th. Century more quickly. But there were problems. Some of the resources were mismanaged. While I was there, Prince Faisal took control in a sort of a palace revolution; he set Saudi on a course which it maintained for at least the next decade -- more efficient management of the resources, which by then had become enormous. Faisal said there couldn't be modernization without secularization.

It was during this period, that the Egyptians had intervened in the civil war in Yemen against the Saudis, who had supported the ruling clan. So the country was going through some critical periods in the first part of the '60s. The United States was asked for support and we assigned a squadron of jet aircraft to Jeddah as a symbolic show of strength. We carried out some joint exercises, we stepped up naval visits and took some more actions of this kind to show that we would not stand by idly while the Saudi government and society were being shaken by threats from Egypt. It was a very interesting period.

Heath was my first Ambassador, but he wasn't there very long. The Middle East was not his area of expertise. He was followed by Pete Hart. Hart was a consummate professional. He had had long ties to the Arab world having been assigned to many key countries, particularly Egypt. He spoke Arabic well and studied it well. He was very serious about his role. He was a very effective representative of the United States.

Hart was a very methodical man. He cultivated the key Saudis and paid attention to the press -- American, Saudi and foreign -- without overdoing. He established a good working relationships with the Foreign Minister. At the time there were three capitols -- Jeddah, Taif and Riyadh. But only the Foreign Minister had permanent residence in Jeddah. The rest of the Ministries were in

Riyadh. I spent a good deal of time just going to Riyadh because the ministries that I wanted to see were located there. Because I got to know Riyadh so well, when Ambassador Hart would visit there, he would take me along.

*Q: What were your impressions of the various Saudi government officials you had to deal with?*

DRAPER: They were absolutely top-flight in the Ministry of Petroleum and the Development Board, which was managed and led by foreign experts -- Americans, British and others -- but which had a good infusion of younger Saudis who had been Western educated and were very able and enthusiastic. Primarily, they were not members of the royal family; they were essentially young technocrats in their late 20's and early 30's, thrust into very important positions. Some of the old line ministries were not well staffed; they had some terrible people placed in positions of power through family connections or for religious reasons. The Education Ministry was dominated by a well-meaning man who belonged to the most rigid religious family which had been a long time ally of the royal family. So the strongly religious ideologues always got their grips on the Education Ministry -- as is true in many Arab countries. But there were changes even there taking place; we encouraged them to develop school for girls -- eventually even at the university level. Schools and hospitals were being expended all over the country. An internal transport system was being developed; roads were poor, but air transit was extremely popular and strained the budding Saudi Air line. So there were many changes, driven in part by the availability of oil money and in part by the influences of Western cultures.

In many ways, the Saudis handled this transition very well, in part because they had never been blessed by colonization. So they always had their self-respect and didn't feel inferior to Westerners the way some colonial peoples did who thought that the British were always looking down on them. But Saudi is still an exotic culture by any standard which caused problems. Every day life in Saudi Arabia was far less restricted than it is today. The Saudis were open to westerners' approaches. There were parties and dinners with men and women mixing. My wife drove her car around Jeddah; not into the heart of the city, but she did drive which would not be possible today. The social engagements were lively -- swimming parties, water skiing, lots of sports -- with Saudi families which allowed their women to be shown. Today, I am told that there is nothing comparable. The Saudis have retreated to their homes and palaces. The role of the enforcers of "modesty" -- religious morality -- is far more conspicuous today than they were when I was there. The society has become much more conservative.

*Q: As an economic officer, you undoubtedly had considerable contact with ARAMCO. How was it viewed during the early '60s?*

DRAPER: ARAMCO's relationships to the Saudis was far superior to anything that British Petroleum, Getty and others were doing in Iraq and Kuwait and other places. In the first place, ARAMCO was very sensitive to Saudi's temperament and need for respect. Early on, ARAMCO had introduced Saudis into key technocratic positions in the company; the company was not proceeding along this line as rapidly as the Saudi government wished. There was a lot of mutual respect between the government and the oil company. The ARAMCO senior representatives in Saudi were first class. They saw to it there be established in ARAMCO an Arab Affairs Section, staffed with first class scholars and people with a feel for the Saudi culture and mentality. It also

had excellent cartographers. They handled matters extremely well, despite the strong undercurrent of resistance to Saudis. It is clear that ARAMCO could have moved more rapidly on some of its efforts to bring more Saudis into the company. There was a "ghetto" mentality among many of the rank and file ARAMCO workers who lived in their compound and who resisted bringing "others" into their midst. For example, they did not allow the children of the American Consulate General to attend their school, forcing the US government to set up its own school. They didn't want to be associated, at least in Saudi's eyes, with the American government; they didn't want to risk being seen as an arm of our government.

But ARAMCO did set the stage for the eventual turn-over of the company to the Saudis. They managed to do that while protecting their interests very well. When the turn-over took place over a period of time, there was very little friction.

*Q: What did the Embassy perceive to be American interests at this time?*

DRAPER: First of all, access to oil. We would probably have been established by the amount of reserves and actual production that subsequently developed. ARAMCO was very closed-mouthed about the extent of the reserves, although from time to time some inkling would creep out, giving us some idea of how large the reserves really were.

We were not so much supporters of the royal family, but we did want to maintain a friendly regime in power. The ties that had developed in the '30s and '40s, despite all their ups and downs, were good. We wanted to deny Saudi Arabia to another power -- not necessarily the Soviets, but other Arab powers that could be hostile, such as Iraq.

We were also interested in a managed stability which would permit American interests to continue to operate. We were seeing changes in the Arab world and we were encouraging some, but not at a pace that would shatter stability. Saudi was also a large land mass, a geographic cross-roads that had some importance to us -- control of the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. We were interested in seeing that American industry was getting a fair shake when it came to Saudi development programs.

*Q: How was Nasser being viewed in the early '60s?*

DRAPER: We saw it in some ways through Saudi eyes as a threat to the Royal family and the regime. We thought we had to help them, without micromanaging Saudi relations with Yemen, which was one aspect of the struggle against Nasser. On the other hand, we were not totally anti-Nasser. He did stand for some sort of modernization in the Arab world and reassertion of Arab pride. But to a Westerner, he was often a ridiculous figure -- the long winded speeches which made him the Castro of his day. He had no business going into Yemen using poison gas. His troops hated their involvement, but oddly enough he did build a foundation for later Yemeni modernization. He brought doctors and dentists and other skilled people and had in a curious way impact on Yemeni life which lasted even after Egyptian withdrawal.

*Q: Were there not some arm shipments to the Saudi opposition?*

DRAPER: There were some raids on a number of towns on the Red Sea coast. In fact, I was in Abha shortly after one of these raids on a hospital, but I don't remember any arm drops to Saudi dissidents. I believe that there was money being given to the dissidents and there were Saudi exiles in Cairo who were supported to some degree by the Egyptians. Nasser had built a tremendous intelligence apparatus, but it operated mainly in Egypt and was not that effective outside the borders. Saudis and others were always fearful of what Nasser might do to stir things up. There were always threats on the radio. If Nasser had called for uprising against some of these traditional regimes and organized them, he might well have had visible impact. As it was, the traditional Saudis felt very threatened.

There were a number of Palestinians who had come to Saudi. Most of the teachers in Saudi had been Egyptians; they became viewed as foreign agents for Nasser. The Saudis made a deal with King Hussein of Jordan to screen Palestinians to insure that no trouble-makers would come to Saudi. When that was done, there was wholesale shift of personnel with the Egyptians being sent home to be replaced by the Palestinians. There were also quite a few Syrian professionals who liked the opportunity to progress in Saudi, which they could do more rapidly than in their home country. They also probably earned considerably more. The Saudis always had to import some professionals; for example, it was unheard for a Saudi to become a nurse -- male or female. So all nurses were foreigners. It had only been a generation earlier that the Saudis had begun to go to medical school. So many specialists were imported. They were all screened for political leanings. By the time I left in 1964, the anti-Egyptian sentiment was very strong. Very few Egyptians came into the kingdom.

*Q: What did you and the Embassy do to encourage Saudi use of American companies?*

DRAPER: Pete Hart was very good at this effort. He felt very strongly that television could be a unifying element and a major educational tool. He talked to the Saudis about his concepts and that Saudis finally agreed. The Saudis were always concerned about fraud or being oversold by Western investors. There had been a history of bribery and corruption. So Hart brought in the Corps of Engineers which was ideal for Saudi's needs. The Corps managed the early development programs taking fully into account Saudi sensitivities -- movies were screened to make sure that nothing too daring would be shown. They developed programs in such areas child care and public health. The Corps made an important contribution to Saudi development, which as in India, proved to be a unifying force. We had Americans in key positions on the Development Board and there were also many private contractors who gained the confidence of the Saudis. One example was the Bechtel Corporation. But there also fly-by-night operators who were primarily interested in making a quick buck.

It was during this period that we set up a commercial office in Jeddah separate from the Embassy. But as all other American establishments have found, it was very hard to recruit Saudis for middle and low ranking positions. A man of education who could speak another language or two, his opportunities were considerable and rewarding. So we always had problems with recruitment and had to rely from time to time on Palestinians, Pakistanis and other non-Saudis to do the work.

*Q: What did you do about the fly-by-night operations?*



DRAPER: Fortunately, there weren't many. The Saudis were very restrictive in their visa issuances. They also tended to be negative against Jewish owned businesses, although not Jewish doctors, oddly enough. That was a problems for us because we could not be seen supporting a regime that showed such religious biases. The usual route taken by the flight-by-nighters was through the cultivation of a member of the royal family. When the Saudis would consult with foreign bankers or ARAMCO, they received very conservative appraisals and in many cases a negative appraisal of these entrepreneurs. But there were major American firms that were not at all interested in Saudi opportunities including enterprises that had been there before. For example, Carrier Industry; they wouldn't answer letters from Saudi, they would not repair machinery which they had sold and installed at an earlier time, they would not support their agents. I could never understand that attitude which I found disgraceful.

In a country, where the name of an automobile was automatically "Ford" because it was the first car to be seen in Saudi, American car manufacturers were paying scant attention to this great market. It was hit or miss approach. The Saudi loved to buy Cadillacs, but Americans failed to recognize what a huge market Saudi Arabia would be in a short time. The growing middle class, the Bedouins were all shifting to cars or light trucks. The first signs of Japanese commercial penetration came when the Saudis bought a huge shipload of small vehicles which became a tremendous success. The Japanese thereafter signed up agents right and left. Their cars met the Saudi demands: reliable and inexpensive.

**TALCOTT W. SEELYE**  
**Desk Officer for Arabian Peninsular Affairs**  
**Washington, DC (1961-1964)**

**Deputy Chief of Mission**  
**Jeddah (1965-1968)**

*Talcott W. Seelye was born in Beirut, Lebanon of American parents in 1922. He received a B.A. from Amherst College and served in the U.S. Army during World War II. He joined the Foreign Service in 1949 and during his career served overseas in Germany, Jordan, Lebanon, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia. He also served as Ambassador to Tunisia, Lebanon and Syria and in several capacities in Washington, DC in the Office of Near Eastern Affairs. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1993.*

SEELYE: Of course Saudi Arabia was the pivotal country in the Peninsula and the country we focused most of our time on. At that point there was an uneasy period in Saudi Arabia because the successor to the great Abdul Aziz was King Saud the prodigal son. Saud was not very intelligent and administered the treasury haphazardly. I remember how, during some crisis in the Middle East, he offered the Syrians \$2 million as a political bribe. It was recognized that his continued tenure would lead to an erosion of the situation in Saudi Arabia. We were worried. In 1961 he fell ill, and he came to the Peter Brent Brigham hospital in Boston for treatment. He

suffered from very serious ailments including galloping syphilis.

Despite Saud's flaws we of course realized that we had to pay some attention to him while in the U.S. I remember sending Andy Kilgore up to call on him. I was dealing with the Saudi Ambassador, Abdullah Khaggal, concerning the King's presence here. The King was of the view that being head of state, who happened to be in the United States for medical reasons, the president of the country in which he was being treated medically should call on him first. At that point our President was Jack Kennedy. The plan was that once the King got out of the hospital he would have a period of recuperation in this country. They had first planned on sending him out West some place.

Wanting to satisfy Saudi protocol, I investigated at the White House whether it would be possible for the President -- who was going to Hyannis Port for weekends at the time -- to swing by the Peter Brent Brigham Hospital. I was told that this was impossible. The President wouldn't take time out to do this. So the next question was how could we create a situation whereby with a minimum of effort the President could call on the King. This would salve the King's pride and enable the King to accept a Presidential invitation to have a meal with him at the White House. It was agreed that Saudi Arabia was important enough to us that the President should meet with him at the White House. But the King would not go to the White House until the President called upon him. That was the problem.

As the weeks went by I noted that Kennedy was now going to Palm Beach and maybe we could persuade the Saudis to induce the King to recuperate in Palm Beach rather than out West. They thought that was a good idea and they were able to find a house belonging to Merriweather Post, which they rented for a month. The King went down to Palm Beach. Then I talked to Angier Biddle Duke, who was head of protocol and a close friend of Kennedy's. I noted that it was only fifteen minutes from the President's house to the Post house. A fifteen minute visit by Kennedy was all that was necessary and then a dinner at the White House could be set up. As it turned out the White House reluctantly agreed.

When the King got down there it was agreed that Kennedy would call on him, let's say on a Monday morning. I took a White House back-up plane to Palm Beach to be present during this meeting. A day or so before that meeting I had dinner with the King. The meeting the next day was set up. Angier Biddle Duke went to pick up Kennedy and as he told me later, Kennedy kept saying, "What am I doing calling on this guy?" Duke, who was a pretty good man said, "Well, I understand that this is very important to the Saudis from a protocol standpoint, it is part of their cultural requirements and we have to be sensitive to that." So they arrived and Kennedy came into the living room and the King, who was a big man, about 6'4", wore dark glasses that were very narrow. He was very somber looking. Normally when the President is meeting with a foreign dignitary there is a State Department interpreter. In those days it was Camille Nowfal. But since this was just a courtesy call, with no substance to be discussed, there seemed no point in sending a special interpreter down from the State Department. So an aide to the King, who was a very distinguished Palestinian with Saudi nationality, was to do the interpreting. His name was Jamal Husseini from the famous Husseini family from Jerusalem.

The exchange of conversation starts. The President says, "Your Majesty I am looking forward to

seeing you in Washington next week. It will be a great pleasure for me." And the King responds, "Inshallah." The interpreter translated the Arabic word literally and said, "God willing." You should have seen the President's startled face. You could see what was going through his mind. "I am going out of my way to meet this s.o.b. and I am saying how nice it is to meet him and all he says is 'God willing'". So that didn't start the meeting off too well. It was a lesson that most professional interpreters understand. They try to translate the cultural context of what a person says. What the interpreter should have said was, "I am looking forward with great pleasure to meeting you at the White House Mr. President, God willing," which is supposedly what the King meant. Anyway, they had about a fifteen minute exchange and that was that. Okay, the King comes to Washington later. He was to meet the President at the White House for a luncheon. The White House didn't want to bother having a dinner for him. The Saudi Ambassador, however, was very stubborn and said to me that it could not be a lunch because this was Ramadan, which was the month of fasting. And as you know, you cannot eat during the month of fasting. I said, "Mr. Ambassador, there are two exceptions to the fasting requirement: one is if you are ill, and the King is ill. Two, if you are in travel status, and the King is in travel status. So both of these exceptions would enable the King, it seems to me, to accept a luncheon invitation." "No," said the Saudi Ambassador, "not at all." So I had to go back to the White House and tell them that a lunch was impossible.

*Q: When you say go to the White House whom were you talking to?*

SEELYE: I'm trying to remember. I am sure it was some low level official.

*Q: You must have gotten the rolling eyes and "you again."*

SEELYE: Yes. I have forgotten who it was. Well, they finally agreed to have a dinner.

First there was a morning meeting between the King and the President and each side agreed who would attend that meeting. The Saudis said that their side would consist of the King, the ambassador and I think one other. On our side there would be the President, an interpreter, me and somebody from the White House staff. As we went into the room there was a journalist attached to the Saudi party who walked in with the Saudi delegation. I thought to myself, "Well, it is up to the Saudis to indicate who they want in the meeting. It is not for me to tell the journalist not to come, although he is not on the list." Well, it turned out that during the meeting the King was quite disturbed by the presence of this Saudi journalist. The King was sitting let's say where you are and then opposite was Jack Kennedy in his rocking chair. I was sitting next to and slightly behind Kennedy with my note pad. Behind me was this journalist. During the conversation the King kept looking in my direction. Actually he was looking in the direction of the journalist. After about two or three minutes, the President turned to me and said quietly, "I think your note-taking is disturbing the King, you ought to put your pad away." I said, "Okay." So I had to put my pad away for the rest of the hour because the President thought that the King was disturbed by my note-taking, but he was obviously disturbed by the journalist. I don't recall anything of extraordinary substance that was revealed at that meeting. I think it was a fairly tame exchange.

*Q: Was the King a pivotal figure as far as making decisions or was he being bypassed by the*

*apparatus?*

SEELYE: I don't think he was a pivotal figure at all. Faisal, his brother, the Crown Prince and the Foreign Minister, was the pivotal decision maker. But the King would often go off half-cocked over Faisal's head and that was the problem. As far as our interests in Saudi Arabia were concerned, we were hoping for a change. The doctors at Peter Brent Brigham Hospital had told us that the King didn't have more than six months to live. Actually he lived another couple of years.

So a dinner was planned. I pointed out to the White House that, of course, the Saudis do not consume liquor because it is against their religion. I assumed, therefore, that no liquor would be served. A couple of people who were invited to the dinner party were American businessmen who were concerned with the Middle East (one was Terry Duce who used to be a big figure with ARAMCO) and the other was Kermit Roosevelt. They both called me to see if liquor was going to be served and I said, "No." So they tanked up.

We arrive at the White House and here are these trays with big tumblers full of pure Scotch on the rocks. Later on I was told by the White House that since Saudis insisted on a dinner, it would entertain its way. Okay. Terry Duce and Kermit Roosevelt ended up in their cups. On leaving the White House I had to help both of them out. That obviously is not the main point of the story.

Liquor was being served and the Saudi Ambassador was absolutely irate. He took me aside and said, "How can you do this to us?" I said, "Mr. Ambassador, when we are in your country we always try to be very sensitive to your culture, your habits and your rituals. We may not agree with them, but we honor them. And I hope you will be generous and sensitive enough to honor our customs." But he was still upset.

The table arrangement at the dinner was sort of a horseshoe design with tables at right angles. I was down at one end and sitting next to me was Angier Biddle Duke, head of protocol. There were a few Foreign Service officers who knew Arabic sitting behind the guests to help interpret if necessary. At one point the President was not speaking with the King. The King was talking to the person on his right, who was Dean Rusk. Lyndon Johnson, the Vice President, was sitting somewhere else. Between courses, Duke would nudge me and say, "The President can't talk to Prince so-and-so on his left. Why don't you go up and help him a bit." So I got up and stood behind and between the President and a very dour prince. I introduced myself to the President and said, "Can I help interpret for you with this gentleman?" The President looked at me and said, "Who are you?" I said, "Well, I happen to be the desk officer for Arabian Peninsula Affairs." "Oh," he said, "tell me about the background of the King and Saudi Arabia." I told him a little bit about how his father had united all these tribes and the country. He said, "That is very interesting. Tomorrow call my secretary, Evelyn Lincoln, and give her the name of a good book I can read on Saudi Arabia on this period." I said, "I have a couple in mind and I will call her." At that point the next course came so I sat down.

There was another break and this time Dean Rusk was left alone, so I went up to him and said, "Can I help you with your partner?" He looked interested and so I helped interpret. Then I sat down. Between the final courses I noticed Lyndon Johnson over in a corner. He had a Saudi next

to him and there was no conversation going on because the Saudi didn't speak any English. I went to the Vice President and asked, "Mr. Vice President, may I help you interpret with this gentleman here? The Vice President gave me a look as if to say, "Who the hell do you think you are? and turned away. He obviously didn't want any help; he didn't want to speak to the guy anyway.

During the dinner milk was served to the Saudi entourage and during his remarks the President made a crack to the effect that never had so much milk been consumed at a state affair. Again, after the dinner was over, the Saudi Ambassador buttonholed me once more and I said, "Look, you have to consider that this is what the White House wanted to do and they did it. As far as I can see, Mr. Ambassador, everything went off very well. The Saudi officials seemed to be very pleased." Then I discovered, shortly thereafter, from a very reliable source, that the King, himself, was polishing off a bottle of brandy a day. It had all started a year or two before when he was seriously ill and his private aide, a man named Id bin Salem, had prescribed a shot of what the King thought was medicine. He took it and liked it and it made him feel better. So he took more and more. As a result he used to keep a bottle of brandy under his mattress in the hospital while he was in Boston. So I thought that was a supreme irony: the Saudi Ambassador's insisting that no liquor could be served and the King is sitting there at the dinner wishing that he could have some of that whisky or brandy, I am sure. So that is just an amusing anecdote.

About a year or so later the King was deposed, pushed aside, and in anticipation of the Crown Prince Faisal taking over, he was invited to the States. This time the President gave a lunch. We asked Isa Sabbagh, then assigned to our Embassy in Jeddah as PAO, to return to the U.S. to be the interpreter. Isa is a unique individual with a tremendous fluency in Arabic and English and with a great knowledge of Saudi Arabia. He was one of our really supreme interpreters who could really bring two individuals together by understanding the context of a conversation as well as respective cultures. So I told the White House that we were bringing Isa back to interpret. And the White House said, "Fine." I was a little worried because Isa is not just an interpreter, and he was particularly sensitive to the fact that he was more than an interpreter. I reminded the White House that we were bringing back a senior Embassy official, the Public Affairs Officer, whom the Saudis liked and greatly respected. The White House said, "Well, that is nice, but, of course, he will have to sit behind the President and the Crown Prince." I said, "Well, you know, I don't think we can do this because Isa is a man of stature and I think we should really make an effort to put him at the table." "No, we can't possibly put him at the table." And our own protocol said the same.

So I thought to myself, "Well, I will go through the motions." When Isa arrived I called him into my office and said, "Isa, I am afraid the White House has a hard and fast rule. Those who interpret for the President have to, without exception, sit not at the table." At which point Isa, who has a distinguished-looking goatee, drew himself up and said, "In that case, I won't do it." There was a pause and I said, "You're right. I thought you would say that and I am going to go back to the White House again."

So I went back to the White House and said, "You know, this guy is important. If you want him to interpret, you will have to put him at the table. Otherwise he won't do it and we won't force him to. I understand why he won't because it would demean him in the eyes of the Saudis, who

esteem him greatly. It wouldn't look right to his relations with Saudi officials, and I personally feel strongly that he should be at the table." So after much grumbling they put him at the table.

So Isa sat at the table not far from the Crown Prince and the President. He didn't get much to eat, but he was close enough so that he could interpret. His face was saved with the Saudis. Isa will tell the story in a book he is writing.

*Q: I must say the people at the White House must have detested the thought of the Saudis doing anything with you because you were...*

SEELYE: I know.

*Q: Was there a change in relations when Faisal was there?*

SEELYE: We had a good relationship with Faisal already. He had as his special assistant a man by the name of Omar Saqqaf, who later became his foreign minister. The embassy dealt a lot with him. Faisal had a strong attachment to the United States. We were quite pleased, of course, when the family got together and deposed the King because of his illness and his poor leadership. When Faisal came in he not only improved the U.S.-Saudi relationship, but he also took Saudi Arabia out of its doldrums. Saudi Arabia had been in the red financially despite the oil revenues. The new King began to bring things together. So the whole relationship became more upbeat and more satisfactory after that.

*Q: An extremely important problem was the relationship of Saudi Arabia with Nasser who was still in his acme pretty much at that point.*

SEELYE: The next crisis we had was the Yemeni crisis. In 1962 a revolution occurred overthrowing the Hamid-din regime. Imam Ahmad had died a few months before that and his son, Prince Badr, had taken over. The so-called revolutionaries decided that this change afforded an opportunity to overthrow this very oppressive regime, a regime that felt education would not be desirable for its people because that would force the regime to make some major changes that would threaten the regime.

I remember visiting Yemen in 1961 and at that point the capital was Ta'iz, not Sanaa, the traditional capital. The capital was at Ta'iz because there had been a split in the ruling family and one branch of the family had fled to Ta'iz and had moved the government there. At the top of a hill overlooking Ta'iz was a big building. I was told that there was where the Imam kept the sons of all the tribal leaders as hostages so that they wouldn't rise up against him. So that was the kind of regime that you had there. You walked around Ta'iz and you saw what looked like a prison and the doors were all open because each one of the prisoners had a tremendous iron ball chained to his ankle and couldn't possibly go anywhere.

The reformers decided it was time for a change and aided and abetted by Nasser's people overthrew Badr in September, 1962. A man by the name of Abdullah Salal took over.

The first problem was what should the United States do. This was not an orderly change of

power. Should we recognize the new regime or should we not? We did a lot of stewing around on that one. The British were very much against recognition because they had their interests in Aden, just to the south of Yemen, and they were afraid the radicals in North Yemen would hurt the Aden protectorate. They urged us not to recognize. But other Arab governments began to recognize Yemen and we decided that we could too because the usual definitions for recognition seemed to apply. One is that the government must be in control of the country, and we felt that this was true. I forget the other requirements but we felt that by stretching this a little bit the new Yemeni regime was eligible for recognition. So we made a public statement saying that we now recognized the Yemen Arab Republic.

*Q: Just to get a little feel for this, was this debate carried out within the State Department with EUR representatives?*

SEELYE: I think we cleared cables with EUR, but I don't remember EUR really being very interested in this. I don't think EUR felt necessarily that it needed to defend British interests in this, as I recall.

Then, of course, the Egyptians decided to insure Salal's survival and introduced some troops. Well, this set the Saudis off. We found ourselves in the middle as the Saudis began to arm the tribes who opposed the new central government. Nasser was quite upset at the Saudis and so he sent in more and more troops. In those days we were trying to develop a relationship with Nasser. President Kennedy evidently was fascinated with Nasser and felt that he was a reformist and that he provided a new look in the Arab world. Accordingly, the U.S. should try to develop a relationship. So we had an AID program in Egypt which helped our links with Nasser even though he was trying to unseat, undermine regimes that were friendly with us like Saudi Arabia, etc. We wanted to maintain that link. At the same time we didn't want the Yemen war to cause internal turmoil in Saudi Arabia. We knew that Saudi Arabia's military was very weak and practically non-existent. Discontent in Saudi Arabia started while Saud was still in power and we wondered how this would erode the Saud regime. There were reverberations within the Saudi political establishment. First one Saudi prince, Prince Talal defected to Cairo. This was quite extraordinary, a member of the Saud family defecting. Secondly, two Saudi pilots defected with their fighter aircraft to Cairo. Third, the police in the western province discovered a parachute drop of weapons. No one picked them up but these events were indications that something was brewing. So everybody was worried, particularly Uncle Sam.

So we decided that we had to devise some way to keep the two sides apart. I think this tended to accelerate the royal family's decision to bring in Faisal. I can't remember the timing on this. Ellsworth Bunker was selected by the White House to go over and see if he couldn't work out a deal whereby each side would decide to lay off and maybe we could neutralize the situation. NEA was asked to assign someone to the Bunker mission. Bob Strong, who was our Director, came to me early one afternoon and said, "Tonight we would like you to come to dinner at Jim Grant's house. I am going and we would like you to come." Jim was one of the deputy assistant secretaries. We get into Strong's car along with Grant and who should appear but Ellsworth Bunker. I didn't know him but had heard about him. We all drove out to Jim Grant's house out in Virginia some place. We were served dinner by Jim's wife and I remember thinking that this was somewhat strange. Here are four men and the wife serves dinner without eating with us. Bunker

was delightful and had wonderful stories to tell, but didn't discuss anything special. Later Bob said to me, "You have been selected to accompany Ellsworth Bunker on this mission." What I deduced was that they had apparently proposed me to Bunker; Bunker didn't know me, so this was their way of exposing me to Bunker. A funny way of doing it, not telling me what was up.

So we headed out not to Yemen, but first to Saudi Arabia to meet with Faisal to try to persuade him to cease and desist in sending arms and money aids to the Yemeni tribes. Then we went to Cairo. I attended the meeting with Faisal, but did not attend the meeting in Cairo with Nasser. I found it very difficult to be of help when I was not attending meetings, but the Ambassador attended them and would take notes. We tried to get Nasser to ease off and we indicated to him that we were trying to get the Saudis to do the same, etc.

To make a long story short, it so happened that we had to go back three times because the first two times were inconclusive. I remember the first time my suitcase had been lost in Frankfurt and it was finally returned the day I was supposed to go back. I took it home and dumped out the dirty clothes, my wife put in clean clothes and off I went with Bunker again. Not each time to Cairo, but three times to Saudi Arabia. After the second trip Bob Strong called me in and said that I was needed in the Department and they would send somebody else in my place. I said that would be fine with me. So they told Ambassador Bunker they were pulling Seelye off the mission and would find somebody else to accompany him. I was told later Bunker said, "I am not going without Seelye." Well, that's the beginning of the cooling of my relationship with Bob Strong. He and I had had a good relationship up to that point. I sensed that Bob Strong thought somehow I had so ingratiated myself with Ellsworth Bunker that I was being disloyal, or something to him. I don't know.

*Q: Was this an issue between Strong and Bunker, or purely bureaucratic?*

SEELYE: I think purely bureaucratic. Maybe they didn't think I had done a good job, they didn't tell me that. Maybe they decided to let somebody else get some experience. I don't know what the reason was.

Anyway, Rodger Davies called me in and said I was going after all. So, Bob Strong was piqued after that particularly since he had decided that I wouldn't go and then he was forced to face the fact that I would be going. Bob Strong is a very enigmatic person anyway.

Well, finally Bunker was able to work out an agreement. I don't remember the exact details now but the Egyptians were to withdraw some of their forces while the Saudis would decrease their aid. And then a UN force was to be brought in to be a peacekeeping force. I remember we saw U Thant up in the UN and talked to him.

*Q: He was the Secretary General of the United Nations.*

SEELYE: We knew it was going to be kind of a dicey affair because some of the wording in the agreement was very ambiguous. So that was the Bunker mission. It took quite a while, however, for the UN to assemble itself. If they had moved quickly, Bunker and I felt that we might have been able to hold the thing together. But the UN took several months to get out there and by that



time the tribes got itchy and Nasser changed his mind. So the thing kind of unwound. A study has been done on this by the Institute of Diplomacy at Georgetown. While I was out in Damascus I gave them my views.

*Q: Going back to the mission itself, how did Ellsworth Bunker...he was used on the Guinea negotiations, the Panama Canal and then eventually ended up for a long time in Vietnam and was considered probably the premier American negotiator. From your point of view, how did he operate in this context?*

SEELYE: Well, his main strength was style. He had a terrific style about him. And, two, he exuded integrity. There was an aristocratic and dignified demeanor. He had a wonderful way of dealing with people and with leading them to believe rightly that he was a man of integrity and that when he said something he meant it. But what surprised me was that as we flew over on the aircraft he wouldn't be preparing for his meetings. If I had been the negotiator I would have been studying and working over what I was going to say and taking notes and working hard. I thought it wasn't for me to propose to him what he should do, so we would sit there in the aircraft and talk. He would tell me delightful stories about this and that. Then I would put together some talking points and after we met with the ambassador, we would get together on what he might say. Then he would go in. What surprised me was the minimum time he spent in preparation. Maybe that wasn't important because there wasn't that much to say, I guess. His task essentially was to persuade two adversaries through the force of his personality to agree. So I would say his great strength was style. Obviously he had more than that because he was so successful in all of his negotiating efforts. Maybe the difference here was that he didn't have to go into that much detail. I don't know.

*Q: Were you with him in any of the meetings?*

SEELYE: Yes, I was in most of the meetings. All but one meeting with Faisal and we went back three times. I can't remember why I was excluded from that one meeting. We had two meetings with Nasser, from which I was excluded. I don't know why. Perhaps because I was the Arabian Peninsula desk officer and not in charge of Egyptian affairs.

*Q: How did Faisal respond to Bunker and to the issue?*

SEELYE: Faisal was not very responsive at first. He felt that Nasser had caused Saudi Arabia terrible problems. So he was in no mood to compromise. It took a lot of going back and persuasion. Omar Saqqaf helped a lot. We persuaded Omar in separate meetings the importance of an agreement. I think Omar was more influential in getting Faisal to finally agree than anybody else. He was a crucial element in the situation.

But the King was always courteous and pleasant. He never would say out right "no," of course. I think he was skeptical at first, and rightly so, about the whole agreement. And there was no reconciliation between him and Nasser at that point, that came several years later.

One thing that we did at that point was to provide reassurances to the Saudis. We felt that in trying to press them to reduce their aid to the tribes we also ought to -- at a time that Nasser was

so popular in the Arab world and out to overthrow these conservative regimes -- tell the King of our commitment to the Kingdom. So we undertook something called "Hard Surface" which was the name for a mission of the flying U.S. aircraft on patrols south to within x number of miles of the Yemeni-Saudi border. We announced that mission by saying, "This is an earnest U.S. support for the Kingdom." These Hard Surface aircraft were both a symbolic gesture to reassure the Saudis of our support and as a signal to Nasser not to go too far. We were trying to get both parties to disengage and this was a carrot to Faisal. I think we kept this up for several months.

*Q: Nasser was a burr under everybody's saddle in those days. How were we feeling at that particular time...reaction with dealing with Nasser?*

SEELYE: Well, we had this ongoing relationship with Nasser which I mentioned earlier. Nasser was always very pleasant in meetings with U.S. officials. He had a turn of personality that made him very easy to talk to I am told. He exuded charm. I don't recall that he was anymore responsive to our mediation in the beginning than Faisal. I think some people at the time, including the Saudis, felt that our effort did more for Nasser than it did for Faisal because people felt we were helping Nasser out of a bind. So Nasser, if anything, was probably eventually a little more responsive to what we were proposing because we were getting the Saudis off his back in Yemen.

*Q: It was the usual thing. You put troops into one of these tribal things and you never win as we continue to learn.*

SEELYE: That's right. I think the Saudis never were too happy with our mediation. They went along because we pressed them to and they knew they needed us. But they felt in the backs of their minds that we were really helping Nasser out of a bind. And I know that a lot of private Americans, oil people and all, were quite upset at our policy because they thought we were really being pro-Nasser. In fact, we were also helping the Saudis out of a bind insofar as their Yemeni involvement was unpopular at home. Bob Comer was the guy at the White House who was one of the prime movers of this policy of trying to separate the two parties. And at one point I was told, I don't know if this was true, President Kennedy took a great personal interest in this. Comer told someone once that Kennedy had spent 100 hours on this operation. I find this hard to believe.

*Q: How did this whole thing end up?*

SEELYE: It ended up temporarily failing partly, I thought, because the UN got there too late to implement it. It was in any case hard to operate in that environment. I think the Saudis may have eased off their assistance, but then started it back up. Nasser decided that he couldn't pull out many troops, maybe he didn't pull out any troops. Differences were not resolved until later. In 1965 while I was in Saudi Arabia as Chargé in June, Nasser sent a message to Faisal -- they were at odds at that point -- saying, "Look, let's see if we can't patch things up. I am on my yacht up in the Red Sea. I am prepared to sail down to Jeddah and let's meet." And Faisal, being a man of courtesy, said, "Well, I don't think we have anything to discuss, but I will receive you." I remember the Saudis in the foreign ministry telling me that they were just receiving Nasser out of courtesy, but the differences were so acute that there was no possibility of a reconciliation.

So Nasser arrived and got off the boat. As Chargé I was at the lower end of the ambassadors lined up to meet him. I remember Nasser walked down the line and was perspiring heavily. It was June, but it was late afternoon and it wasn't that humid... Anyway, he met with the King for two or three days and they signed some kind of an agreement to patch things up. I went to the foreign office afterwards and asked, "Well, what happened? You said the differences were irreconcilable." "Well, Nasser changed and we decided that we could work things out." So that ameliorated the situation, but as I recall differences broke out again and it wasn't until a year or two later that they finally decided to kiss and make up. My memory is vague on this. But I do remember this incident in 1965, which was a temporary ameliorative. I don't think it was a permanent one, that came later.

Well, you asked about the relationship of Foreign Service Officers to the tribal business. I don't think anybody ever fell in love with tribes.

You say you haven't read the Kaplan book, well, don't read it. It is inaccurate.

*Q: We are talking about a book, the Kaplan book, "The Arabists," which has a picture of you on the cover. From all accounts you have read it but I am trying to get it out of the library. It apparently is attacking the Arabist influence of our officers.*

SEELYE: Kaplan claims that we were out of touch with reality and that we were romanticists, too much in love with the desert Arabs. I have had two exchanges with the author about this. In any case I don't think that FSO's had any love affair with the tribes.

*Q: I never felt that, but I felt the British...*

SEELYE: They had their famous romantic figures in the 19th century, of course. But I am not sure all British foreign Service people felt that way. The new generation came along and was attuned to reality. I think the Arabists who became the key players in the British foreign service by the time the sixties came along had a realistic outlook. Of course, those who created the South Arabian Federation were of the old school. The British Arab experts that I dealt with in the sixties and seventies were very much realists and very able people. For a while in the British foreign service they took the brightest diplomats and put them into Arabic studies. That explained why so many of the British diplomats who moved up to the top echelons and became permanent under secretaries were Arabists. I don't think they do that anymore. So the British had top people assigned to the area in my time and they were bright enough to know not to be taken in by old fashioned views.

*Q: Were you still the desk officer for the Arabian Peninsula when the Marxist regime came into Aden, or was that later?*

SEELYE: It came later. When I was in Saudi Arabia at one point we were discussing what we should do in terms of approaching the British again on what was going on in Aden. I remember this because Hermann Eilts was Ambassador and he asked me to meet with him, the station chief and others, because things were unraveling.

*Q: There was a real nasty little war, kind of like Cyprus.*

SEELYE: I felt that the British were wrong in what they were doing because the radicals were gaining strength. The station chief took the British position.

*Q: You were on the desk when President Kennedy was assassinated. How did this impact on your area?*

SEELYE: Well, it impacted, of course, very much as it did everywhere. People were just shocked, and disheartened and we had long lines at the embassy in Jeddah waiting to sign the book, and in Kuwait, etc. I personally had had maybe three encounters with the President which made me personally quite upset. The first encounter was the meeting with King Saud when he was in the rocking chair. Then later at dinner I talked with him. He was so human in both cases and so interested in what I had to say. And the way he treated me when I was taking notes, instead of being peremptory, he just sort of whispered in a very nice way. Then I remember once being out at Andrews Air Force Base when he was returning from somewhere. I don't know why I was there, it must have had something to do with the Middle East. I was in line with maybe ten people, at the tail end and I had my gloves on, it was winter. He came all the way down the line and I had to take off my gloves to shake hands with him. That was a very nice personal touch.

His death was a shock in the Middle East. It had no impact on policy, although certainly Lyndon Johnson never had the interest in the Middle East that Kennedy had. Let us remember that when Kennedy was a Senator in 1958 he spoke out in favor of Algerian independence. I think that this kind of sympathy carried on when he reached the White House. This was reflected in his spending one hundred hours on the Yemen/Saudi/Egyptian situation, if indeed he did.

*Q: I think it is indicative that you were dealing with these things. That you were not sitting around with red arrows pointing towards the Persian Gulf, or something like that, at that time. What about the role of the Israeli lobby and our policy? Did it have much of an impact in the area you were in charge of?*

SEELYE: I was, of course, in Arabian Peninsula Affairs and that was sort of out of that orbit. Obviously the Israelis were not well-disposed towards Saudi Arabia, but I didn't sense in terms of our relations with Saudi Arabia or Yemen or Kuwait that that was a major factor. In any case, the lobby was not as strong in those days, it became strong later. Even during my short tenure on the Jordan-Iraq desk, it wasn't something that I was aware of. So in the 1960's I didn't sense that the lobby had an impact on Arabian Peninsula Affairs.

*Q: Obviously oil was on our main agenda there. How did we view the oil situation during this time? You had Kuwait and Saudi Arabia which took care of a significant bit of the oil in the world.*

SEELYE: At that point, of course, oil was very inexpensive, very cheap. It was about \$1.50 a barrel. I remember when I was in Kuwait there was talk about the oil producers getting together, and at that point they called it pro-rationing, before OPEC was created.

Well, I don't think that oil was a big political issue at that point because the oil producers were just beginning to talk about working together. There was no sense that they were going to force the prices up and form a cartel, which eventually happened. So I don't recall that we sensed that that was a potential problem. Oil was flowing at a reasonable price and we were happy with it. There was no pressure on the oil companies to change the terms of the oil agreements. I remember when the oil was just beginning to be developed in Dubai, about 1963 maybe, and Continental was going out to look for oil. One of the sheiks of Dubai was here and we entertained him and Continental officials. Everything seemed to be working fine in terms of the availability of oil and the relationship of the oil companies with the host governments.

*Q: Then you left the desk in 1964 and went to the War College. You were there from 1964-65. What was the interest at the War College? Did they draw on you much for the Middle East or not?*

SEELYE: No, they didn't. I don't recall anybody particularly focusing in on that. In those days you had an IRP to write, a research paper, and I did mine on the instruments of diplomacy used in negotiating and mediating three disputes. I used Yemen as one example, based on my own experience; and Cyprus and the Kashmir. But the Yemen component was my only Middle East focus at the War College.

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*Q: Well, then you went to Jeddah from 1965-68 where you served as deputy chief of mission. How did that come about?*

SEELYE: I don't know how that came about. I remember Harry Symmes, then Director of NE, calling me and saying, "We have in mind sending you to Jeddah as DCM." I said, "Fine." At that point Parker Hart had just completed his tour as ambassador and Nick Thacher was completing his tour as deputy chief of mission. So as it so often happens the two top people at the embassy leave at the same time. But Nick stayed until I got there. Bill Porter was appointed as the successor to Parker Hart. In retrospect it surprises me that I didn't meet with Bill Porter before my assignment. They must have said they had in mind sending Seelye and here is what he is like or something, and he said, "Fine." Because normally, as you know, the ambassador has an important say in who his DCM is. However, he never arrived because shortly after I arrived in Jeddah in June, our Ambassador then in Vietnam, Henry Cabot Lodge, decided he wanted a senior and experienced Foreign Service officer to help him out. He realized that if he wanted a man of that stature he couldn't be just DCM so he created for the first time in U.S. diplomatic history a deputy ambassador position with the rank of ambassador. So Ambassador Porter, who had been Ambassador elsewhere, was called off the assignment to Jeddah and went off to Vietnam. And that is why I was Chargé d'Affaires for six months because then they had to drum up a new ambassador, Hermann Eilts. Nick Thacher and I overlapped about a week and then he left and I was Chargé from June until Eilts arrived.

*Q: What was the situation in Saudi Arabia during this period?*

SEELYE: It was a very interesting time because while I was Chargé the Yemen thing was again acting up; I mentioned that Nasser came to call and there was a temporary improvement in the Egyptian-Saudi relationship. I remember having to go to see King Faisal -- the King always went to Taif over the summer, it is north of Jeddah up in the mountains and is cooler. I flew up there to make a demarche on him, presumably concerning Yemen. The fact that he would see a Chargé was a measure of the U.S.-Saudi relationship because normally a Chargé never gets to see a chief of state.

So we were still back and forth on Yemen. But the most dramatic thing that happened during my tenure there of six months as Chargé was the beginning of Saudi-U.S. military sales. Of course we had had a military training mission in Saudi Arabia for a long time, but it was in 1965 when Saudi Arabia first purchased arms from the United States. The Saudis decided that they wanted a defense umbrella composed of fighter aircraft and surface-to-air missiles. The Saudis specifically asked for Lockheed F-104s as their fighter aircraft and Hawk surface-to-air missiles made by Raytheon. The experts in Washington felt that the Hawk missiles were entirely appropriate for Saudi Arabia. They were the latest state of the art but not so complicated that we might not be able to train the Saudis to handle them. But the F-104s were considered to be inappropriate for the Saudis. They were a complex aircraft. They were crashing all over Europe.

*Q: There was a terrible problem. They were called the Starfighters and the Germans called them the widow makers.*

SEELYE: That's right. So we were trying to discourage the Saudis from purchasing them. I was a bystander at that point, sitting in Jeddah. Then I got a message saying, "We have got to try to persuade the Saudis to buy F-5s instead of the F-104s, so we are sending out a team of Air Force officers headed by Chuck Yeager [a hotshot test pilot] to meet with the Saudi air force people and to try to persuade them to buy the F-5s." So he comes out, a charming guy. He meets with the Saudis and succeeds in persuading every air force officer there, except the chief of the air force, Colonel Hashim, that the F-5 should be obtained. Hashim dug in his heels. It had to be the F-104. Well, we couldn't figure out why. Yeager and I would get together and try to figure out why. It turned out later that the reason Hashim was holding out was because Lockheed had paid him \$100,000. It never occurred to me at the time that there might be a payoff involved. Later, of course, Northrop made payoffs too. They all gave payoffs. The British more so.

Anyway, we reported the Saudis refusal to purchase the F-5s back to Washington. By that time all the Saudi ministries had moved to Riyadh, with the exception of the foreign ministry which was still in Jeddah. The Saudis didn't want the embassies up in Riyadh quite yet because they didn't think Riyadh was quite ready for such a foreign invasion. They were going to wait until they had built a ghetto, a kind of big park where all the embassies would be isolated. So at that point if you wanted to deal with anyone outside the foreign ministry you had to go up to Riyadh. Finally, after much stewing around, Washington sent me a cable saying, "Okay, you are authorized to go up to Riyadh, to the ministry of defense, and tell the minister that the United States would after all sell them F-104s since the Saudis insisted.. I went to Riyadh to present the package to Prince Sultan, and returned to Jeddah.

The following day I received a cable saying, "Hold everything. We have an alternative package

to present to the Saudis. This will include the Hawk missiles but it will now include British aircraft, Lightnings. You are therefore instructed, and a separate message has gone to the British Ambassador, Morgan Mann, to jointly visit Sultan and put before him this alternative package." I went back with the message, "Well, which one should I favor?" The answer was, "You are supposed to give equal weight to both packages."

So a couple of days later I went to Riyadh again, this time with Morgan Mann. With Morgan Mann was a representative of the British Aircraft Corporation. I thought it was very strange for him to be taking somebody representing the aircraft manufacturer. I think this guy went into the meeting with us. Extraordinary. So we went in to see Prince Sultan and Mann did most of the talking because it was a new package involving the British. I indicated to Sultan that we supported this package with equal weight as the package I had presented to him a few days earlier. Sultan looked at me kind of puzzled and asked, "If we should choose this package, which is half British and half American, what does this do to the U.S. military umbrella?" Well, as far as I knew, we didn't have any explicit commitment on this score. Ever since the Hard Surface operation there had been an assumption that we would come to Saudi Arabia's aid militarily if needed, but nothing in writing. Without instructions I replied, "This would not affect our military umbrella."

As we were leaving the meeting, Sultan called me back into his office and asked, "What goes on here?" I said, "All I can tell you is that I have been instructed to inform you that we give equal weight to both packages."

On the plane returning to Jeddah the British Ambassador and I drafted a brief communique to be read over the Saudi radio that evening about the joint US-UK package that had just been presented to King Faisal. I don't think we ever made an announcement about our package but Mann wanted to make an announcement about the joint package. He said, "Do you mind if we put the word UK before US in the announcement?" I said, "Morgan, I couldn't care less. Do it any way you want to do it." The announcement was handed over to the Jeddah radio station to be broadcast in both English and Arabic. It just so happened by coincidence that the announcer for the English language news was an American who had been an English language teacher in Jeddah and had taken on this job. And the news came on about 6:00 p.m. I wasn't paying any attention to it, I didn't listen to it. Apparently it referred to the "US-UK" package.

Suddenly about 7:00 I got a heated call from Morgan Mann saying, "What are you doing? You have gotten your man to put "US" before "UK" in the announcement." I said, "Morgan, you must be kidding. I told you I didn't care which came first." He said, "You have done it purposely and betrayed me." I said, "Listen, Morgan. I have done nothing of the sort." He hung up on me in high dudgeon. So I called our PAO, George Thompson, and asked him to go to the station and find out what happened. George hightailed it down there and then called me and said, "The American announcer read exactly as it was handed to him." I asked, "Who prepared the thing?" "I don't know, some Palestinian, I think," came the response. So I called Morgan and said, "Morgan, this is what happened. You can believe it or not. The American announcer, who is not my man but an independent operator, was handed a piece of paper that had "US" before "UK." He did not initiate the change. Just a silly little vignette.

Later on I discovered that the reason for proposing the second package was that McNamara, who was then Secretary of Defense, was trying to sell to the British an experimental aircraft that was no longer experimental. It was not in production. This was the F-111, which was a swing-wing aircraft and which was flown off aircraft carriers as well as off ground airfields. The British were not inclined to buy it and McNamara needed more buyers to justify the F-111 assembly line. So McNamara proposed to the British that if they would buy the F-111's, we would help them sell their aircraft to Saudi Arabia. The trouble was that this happened after we had told the Saudis that we were going to sell them our all-American package.

Well, the British aircraft representative helped the British sale by paying off Sultan. The Saudis decided to buy the Lightnings, which turned out to be an highly ineffective aircraft. In fact, they were never used. Much, much later the Saudis bought some F-5s. So that's the story of the first Saudi-US arms deal.

*Q: Okay, we are going to call this off here. What we really have is your time as DCM, as Chargé, and then we will talk about things after you ended up in Jeddah when Hermann Eilts came on board.*

SEELYE: Okay.

*Q: Today is December 13, 1993. In our last interview we were talking about you being Chargé in Jeddah and the problem about military sales to the Saudis. Why don't we pick it up from there?*

SEELYE: Okay. The other important issue that I recall during my tenure as Chargé was the fact there were still tensions in Yemen. I think I mentioned that Nasser at one point tried to patch up differences with Faisal. That worked for a while but then it fell apart. I remember having to go and see King Faisal in Taif, the summer residence for the palace, on some crucial issue dealing with Yemen. Omar Saqqaf, the Foreign Minister, had a peculiar habit. He would get to the Foreign Ministry rather late in the morning and then I would suddenly get a call from him, say about 11:00, and he would say, "Come to my office, I want to see you immediately." Well, it took about fifteen minutes to get from the embassy compound to the foreign office. So I will say the Saudis did deal at high levels with an American Chargé because of our good relationship with them. I didn't find that not being the Ambassador was a disadvantage at the time in dealing with the Saudis.

This is an interesting side affair which isn't political, but we had a problem at the embassy there. Back in the late sixties they were starting a DCM course at the FSI. They wanted case studies of problems that DCMs faced so that they could be played out in the course. I gave them one from my Jeddah experience which concerned the wife of the chief of station, who was a great pain-in-the-neck. She was of Lebanese origin and she had some close female friends who were Lebanese married to leading Saudi merchants. She started spreading the word that I was junior to her husband. She happened to be a very strong Christian Maronite. The Maronites have long dominated Lebanon and have not always been in sync with the best interests of the Lebanese body politic. The United States has often been upset with some of their shenanigans. She alleged that I was somehow anti-Maronite and was to be viewed with suspicion. And not only that, she



began to attack "the embassy" as a whole. Well, as you know CIA station chiefs tend to have cover ranks that are lower than their positions in the Agency. Anyway she was spreading gossip that was harmful and embarrassing for the embassy. She was undercutting the embassy.

*Q: How were you getting this information?*

SEELYE: My wife was picking it up mainly. I deliberated as to what to do. This was near the end of my tenure as Chargé and Hermann Eilts was coming in as Ambassador. So I decided to hold off doing anything until he arrived. My wife had a particularly hard time with her. I felt that what she was doing was turning certain Saudis against me. Furthermore, not only that, but it turned out she was running a kind of high class brothel. There were a couple of diplomats there, and I won't identify their nationalities, one was an ambassador, who had the "hots" for the wives of some other diplomats and she would facilitate their little trysts in her home. She would let them go there where they would not be seen. That did not exactly go down well for the reputation of the American embassy.

*Q: But this also became known?*

SEELYE: Of course it got out. So the Ambassador arrived and after he had been there for a while I said, "Hermann, this is the situation and my recommendation is that we request that the station chief be transferred so that we can get his wife out of here." Well, understandably, I guess, Hermann said, "Well, look, I am new here, I haven't experienced this, so really I should have to experience it myself, feel it, know about it first hand before taking any action." Once Hermann got there, of course, the wife of the station chief didn't attack him and no word was spread in the community that Hermann Eilts was anti-Maronite or anything like that. He didn't pick up any of the stories about the brothel, so the net result was that they hung on. And while the station chief was okay and a good officer, his wife continued to act up and caused my wife a lot of problems.

*Q: Had you at any point been able to talk to the station chief about the situation?*

SEELYE: Well, I thought that should be done by the Ambassador, frankly. But he didn't feel he wanted to, so nobody talked to the station chief. I probably made a mistake not talking to him before that. But I guess I felt that if I had spoken to him it might have caused friction and difficulty and with the Ambassador coming, maybe that would be hard on him, etc. For one reason or another I didn't talk to him.

*Q: Hermann Eilts arrives. He had been in charge of Saudi affairs in Washington in the late fifties.*

SEELYE: He took over Saudi affairs in 1958-61 and I took over from him.

*Q: When he appeared on the scene did he have an agenda that was coming from Washington or did he just arrive and take it as it came?*

SEELYE: I don't think that he had an agenda. He didn't come from being in charge of Saudi

affairs, he had been in London as our Middle East man before that. So I don't know that he had any special program except to do what an ambassador does to promote relations and carry on.

*Q: How did he use you?*

SEELYE: He was terrific. We got along beautifully. I always liked and admired him tremendously. Hermann, of course, was a man of tremendous abilities. He had a very fertile mind and when he would walk into the office in the morning he already had ideas. Immediately he would call his secretary and start dictating. After dictating a couple of cables to his secretary he would call in my secretary and dictate to her, which didn't bother me at all. He just wanted to get all these things out. That was his pattern in the morning. He would be thinking over night. He was always very good with me and would show me his drafts.

I think he wanted me to run the embassy in terms of the administration and that sort of thing, manage it. I think we teamed up pretty well.

We had some slightly different approaches to the dynamics of the Middle East. Hermann was a very conservative person. He was a little more sympathetic to the British position in Aden, which I think I discussed last time, and he was less convinced than I was that the British should have cultivated this nationalist who opposed the British, but who was a moderate nationalist. Hermann was obsessed about Nasser, for example. Some of us had felt that while Nasser was a force for a lot of evil in trying to overthrow friendly regimes, nevertheless, given the social dynamics of the Middle East before he came along, he was a reformer, he was a nationalist, so we saw some good sides to him. Thus we had these slight differences of emphasis, but nothing of great importance.

The most dramatic thing that happened during our joint tenure there was the 1967 war.

*Q: Known as the Six Day War, June, 1967.*

SEELYE: The way it manifest itself at our embassy was one night at about 9:00 p.m. there was a big explosion. We lived in a compound so we all rushed to the chancery and discovered that somebody had set off a bomb and blown up our generator. But nobody was injured.

*Q: This was during the war?*

SEELYE: Just as the war started. That caused concern in the official American community and we pointed out that we thought this was an isolated incident. The Foreign Ministry assigned some national guard troops to protect the embassy. The Saudis investigated the matter but I can't remember if they found the culprits or not. In any case, neither Hermann nor I felt that what happened in the war would lead to disturbances of any significance in Saudi Arabia. While embassies around the area were evacuating personnel, we resisted evacuation. Fortunately we were able to persuade Washington that we should keep our people there in as much as they were not in danger despite this one incident.

Now, unfortunately, the Department has not always been as responsive. I was in Syria later when there was panic in the Department because of a series of tragedies in the Middle East affecting

some embassies. As a result the Department issued sweeping instructions that all embassies should clear out all personnel without distinction. Fortunately in this case the Department accepted our judgment that we should keep our people there but other posts equally secure did not fare so well.

*Q: How did we view the Saudis reaction to the 1967 war? Nasser more or less provoked the war insisting that the UN pull its troops out. But it was right on the Saudi border that some of the action was happening.*

SEELYE: You could argue that the Israelis chose to be provoked by what Nasser did, but there is also the argument that the Israelis had to react the way they did. It is not clear whether Nasser intended to go to war.

One didn't sense that the Saudis felt that they were close to any conflagration or close to a crisis. Riyadh was a long way away from the battlefield. Obviously there was sympathy among the Saudis for Nasser's action because of the fact that there was anti-Israeli sentiment in Saudi Arabia. The government shared the anti-Israeli sentiment but had a strong antagonism toward Nasser. We didn't face the situation where the government issued an ultimatum saying, "Look, you have to support Nasser on this and condemn Israel for that." As I recall, the Saudis did not make a big issue of that because they already had their problems with Nasser. I know that the local employees in our embassy were terribly upset. We had one local employee who resigned. He was a Sudanese working for USIA and resigned in the belief that the United States had collaborated with Israel. As you recall a big myth that was spread throughout the area alleged that the U.S. had helped Israel in its wiping out the Egyptian air force and in defeating Egypt. This was widely believed at the time.

*Q: It is still widely believed, I think.*

SEELYE: And in some sense in retrospect it may be right because we now understand, although we do not have 100 percent proof, that at the time an American AWAC-type aircraft was sent to Israel and had Israeli markings on it and was put up in the air to help the Israelis identify Egyptian airfields and the location of planes. So, if that is true, and there are people who believe it is true -- although people like Dick Helms and others claim it is poppycock -- if it is true, then there is some substance to the belief that the U.S. collaborated at least in a limited sense.

I think there was one incident in the eastern province at that time which the Saudis put down quite quickly, but I can't recall what it was.

*Q: Back to some of the other things that were mentioned before, you say Ambassador Eilts would come in and dictate cables...its nice for someone to have great thoughts and all but Saudi Arabia wasn't on the absolute front burner of the United States...what happened with them?*

SEELYE: I can't really say because I don't know how people in Washington took them. Certainly the desk officers and other people in NEA read them. They gave a flavor of what the Saudis were thinking and planning and that sort of thing. Obviously cables were screened for the Assistant Secretary, how many of them he saw, I don't know. But Saudi-American relations in terms of

Middle East-American relations loom fairly large. They would loom larger later on than they did then. Given the perceived threat from Nasser and the Yemen problem, there was a little more focus on Saudi Arabia at that time than there had been, let's say five or ten years before. But how Washington reacted, I don't remember or didn't know. I can't answer that.

*Q: What was your impression and Eilt's impression about the effectiveness of the Saudi government?*

SEELYE: Its interesting because Faisal had taken over a couple of years before I got there. He came in with a firm hand and a sense of orderliness toward finances. He started to check the erosion in Saudi Arabia that had been reflected at one time in the sixties with the defection of one Saudi prince and a couple of pilots. So Faisal was putting the country back together. Nevertheless by 1966, about three years after he had taken over, we were still not sure to what extent Saudi stability was secure. I recall sitting down with Dick Murphy, a political officer, and brainstorming as to how long we thought this Saudi regime would last. I remember in a very cautious way we projected that it could certainly last five years, but in a ten year time frame we were less certain. As one looks back it is really quite amusing that we were so cautious because the regime proved to be quite stable and has lasted a long time. That was almost thirty years ago. But this was just after the period of Faisal's taking over and the Yemen disturbances. So we were still not totally confident that the regime could hold on. But obviously it did.

In terms of looking at the regime, I do recall that the Minister of Interior in those days was Fahd, who is now King. He was considered one of the more liberal Saudi princes. In those days he was talking about having a consultative council and opening up the society a bit. It is ironic he was talking that way in the sixties and this only happened last year -- in the early 1990s.

Prince Sultan, Minister for Defense, was front and center for us because he was handling military affairs.

I don't think we sensed any real political ferment in Saudi Arabia at that point. People were making money. The princes were being taken care of. Although Faisal was very strong about controlling the princes, not letting them step out of line or giving them too much money. After Faisal died, my understanding is that that got a bit out of control. So Faisal operated with a very firm hand and he had respect in Saudi Arabia, and I think that was a key factor that enabled Saudi Arabia to move in a positive, stable direction.

*Q: After the 1967 war, were there any developments with Nasser or Yemen?*

SEELYE: I am trying to remember when it was played out. I think it was about 1968 when Faisal and Nasser finally buried the hatchet once and for all. I left Jeddah in July, 1968 and it may have happened after I left. By that time the Yemeni regime had been in power for six years or so and had become a little more confident of its security and in itself. It was more willing to cut a deal. One aspect of that deal was to allow some of the Yemenis who had opposed the republic but not members of the royal family to return. But there remains a ruling that no member of the Hamidal royal family can return. There is only one exception, and that concerns the Zabbara family in Sanaa. That is a prominent merchant family which had been close to the

royal family. The son of the former Yemeni Chargé, a man named Muahamed Zabbara, married a member of the royal family and because he was living in Yemen, teaching there, he was allowed to bring her back. She is the only royal family member allowed to live in Yemen.

*Q: How about ARAMCO during the time you were there? ARAMCO always has a very strong political section. How were we viewing it and how did it work, particularly during the problem of the 1967 war and all that?*

SEELYE: The Consul General in Dhahran was closer to ARAMCO than we were, but there was an ARAMCO representative in Jeddah. He used to come in regularly, almost every week, and we would compare notes. And, of course, the Consul General was reporting his contacts with ARAMCO. We had pretty close contacts and we used to exchange views when there were crises or problems. I think during the 1967 war the same thing happened. They wanted to know whether they should send their people home and we recommended that they not. The remarkable thing to me has always been that despite the fact that most of the ARAMCO employees in those days were Shiites from the eastern province, a minority that had been really mistreated by the government, during crises there were practically no incidents. We had good relations with ARAMCO. We used to have tennis matches between ARAMCO and the little Dunes Club in Jeddah -- a club started by Ambassador Wadsworth. It had a sand golf course that he built as well as a couple of crummy tennis courts. I was more a tennis buff rather than golfer and got the courts improved. As we built up our tennis facility we had matches with ARAMCO. That was fun and it also created a social relationship between the embassy and ARAMCO.

*Q: Did you find that the ARAMCO employees were at times running their foreign policy and we were running ours?*

SEELYE: No, I don't think so. You knew ARAMCO better than I since you were in Dhahran, but my sense was that most of the ARAMCO employees were apolitical, technicians and service people, who were somewhat isolated from Saudi Arabian and Middle East politics. They enjoyed the perks, took off on long vacations and had a kind of life of Riley. I didn't have any sense that the majority of ARAMCO people reacted that much to what happened in the Middle East.

*Q: I don't want to over emphasize this and I am really thinking about the political affairs people. Did you or Ambassador Eilts ever have the feeling, "Come on fellows, get on board," type of thing?*

SEELYE: No, I don't think we felt that. I have a feeling they kind of deferred to the embassy on these things. I didn't sense any heated objections to us or what the United States was doing. I think the ARAMCO people in government affairs all recognized the domestic realities back here that controlled our policy in the Middle East. Our only problem (minor) was that our Consul General in Dhahran kept complaining about the embassy. I would have to go up and hold his hand every now and then. He was always complaining about minutiae, such as about the pouches or something. I thought that his complaints were somewhat amusing.

*Q: One last question on your time in Saudi Arabia, there were restrictions on alcohol, on women, it is not the easiest environment. You were in charge of the staff. Can you tell us any of*

*the problems that occurred because of the environment?*

SEELYE: Well, to start, we had no liquor problems because we brought in our liquor in bulk in zinc-lined crates. When I arrived I was told that there was an understanding with the Foreign Ministry that it would not ask questions and we would not ask questions. This, I think, applied to all diplomatic missions. So the zinc-lining was to make sure that if the crate dropped on the wharf it wouldn't leak. We were much better off than the Consulate General with regard to our liquor privileges.

Driving for women was a terrible problem. The only three individuals in the embassy who had drivers were the Ambassador, the DCM, and the station chief. Of course that marked him because everybody figured out that he must be the station chief because he had a driver too. But we did arrange bus service into town for the wives. The husbands who didn't have drivers would have to escort their wives into town for shopping and that sort of thing. So it was a big handicap, no question about it.

*Q: I might mention that our consul general in Dhahran, this is 1958-60, Walter Schwinn, was able to get Saud Bin Jaluwi, the premier of the eastern province at that time, to grant wives driving licenses because he claimed that otherwise men would have to be doing women's work and it was degrading to them. So my wife had a Saudi driving license.*

SEELYE: But just between the consulate general and ARAMCO.

*Q: Yes, around the base. She couldn't drive outside the immediate area.*

SEELYE: I remember Walter Schwinn. There was the famous incident where Walter came back from Dhahran bringing a locker full of liquor and the customs people wanted to open it and he sat on it and said, "Not on my life will I let you open this." I remember one of our wives at the embassy, who was an enterprising young woman, once put on an Arab headdress so that she could drive without anyone knowing she was a woman. A little bit risky, but she got away with it. I think she did that a couple of times.

We had a creek about 20 miles north of Jeddah which is in a bit from the Red Sea where people rented ramshackle shacks, which to us was a great asset because we could go swimming, snorkeling and sailing there.

*Q: Were there any great problems that you had with the American community?*

SEELYE: Well, we had a bit of a problem with the so-called TWA community. The Saudi Airlines was run by TWA. So TWA got contract employees to go out there and fly and maintain the planes. There was a school that TWA started which the State Department contributed to as part of helping American education abroad. We always had somebody on the board of the school. But there was an almost irreconcilable problem of the people at TWA resenting the embassy people because we had liquor and also the usual feeling that diplomats are snooty and are not real Americans. But we did our best. In fact, I made a great effort to try to overcome that by getting to know them and entertaining them. We played softball with them and that sort of thing, trying to break down this sort of barrier. I remember that one of my people who I had

assigned to be on the board would come back wringing his hands after some meetings. We had very close relations with the head of the TWA office, who would come regularly to compare notes and to seek guidance. So relations were certainly not all bad.

*Q: Did you have any difficult arrest cases while you were there?*

SEELYE: We had one fascinating case. We heard through the grapevine that an American had been arrested down along the southern coast of the Red Sea at a place called Yanbu. At first we couldn't get to the heart of it. We kept going to the Foreign Ministry and asking if it was true. Finally, a foreign minister looked into it and confirmed that there was indeed an American being held down in Yanbu. We said, "Well, for God's sake release him." So they finally released him and he came up to Jeddah and we took care of him for a few days and he told us his tale.

He was a single sailor on a sail boat. He was sailing up the Red Sea coast and, of course, at night he anchored offshore. I think in terms of maritime law, you are allowed to anchor in territorial waters without a passport or visa. Well, he had just anchored maybe a hundred yards off shore near a town 200 miles or so south of Jeddah. He saw two or three people waving, and beckoning to him. So he got into his little dingy and paddled ashore. They said, "What are you doing? We have to take you to our police station." They were very nice to him. The police didn't know what to do with him so they called their headquarters for guidance. They were told to hold him while headquarters checked into the matter. Anyway, to make the story short, the poor guy was kept in Yanbu waiting for instructions from headquarters as to what to do with him. They didn't mistreat him. They fed him well. They offered him young boys, he said, which he refused. For a whole 30 days he was held in reasonably good conditions while the Saudi police waited for instructions. Finally word came down to release him and to bring him to Jeddah. So they brought him to Jeddah by land and towed his boat. They wouldn't let him sail to Jeddah.

Then we had a problem of how to get him out of Saudi Arabia. You cannot get an exit visa unless you have an entry visa. He didn't have an entry visa. I think it took us another ten days before we finally got the Saudi bureaucracy to accept the fact that he could not have had an entry visa because he was not there formally. We finally sprung him loose. I said to him, "I hope you write your story some day." I wish I had kept his name and address. I have never read his story anywhere, but he must have a fascinating tale to tell.

That's the only arrest case that I recall in Jeddah or Riyadh, although I guess in Dhahran there may have been some cases during my time, but they were handled by the Consulate.

**JOAN SEELYE**  
**Spouse of Deputy Chief of Mission**  
**Jeddah (1965-1968)**

*Mrs. Seelye was born and raised in Connecticut and educated at Skidmore College. She accompanied her husband, Foreign Service Officer Talcott Seelye on his diplomatic assignments in Germany, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Tunisia and Syria. Her husband served as US Ambassador to Tunisia, Lebanon*

*and Syria. Mrs. Seelye was interviewed by Jewell Fenzi in 2010.*

SEELYE: After a four years in the States we were assigned to Saudi Arabia, an important post-- compound was huge; most of the embassy lived on the compound, but the embassy personnel was expanding so some had to live off the compound. The compound had tennis courts-- it even had a golf course which was written up in Time magazine, a story about the famous golf courses of the world. It had greens that were made of tar. I don't know how golfers ever came home with clean shoes. It was an interesting post, a challenging post because women couldn't drive, but my husband had a driver, and unlike today, a wife could use her husband's driver. It's against the rules now

*Q: In the State Department? Not in Saudi Arabia?*

SEELYE: I was allowed to use my husband's driver, but today in Saudi Arabia or in any other country, a Foreign Service officer's wife would not be allowed to use her husband's driver, a State Department rule

*Q: But can they drive now?*

SEELYE: No, women cannot drive yet in Saudi Arabia

*Q: So, what are they supposed to do?*

SEELYE: Well, when we found out there was not even a bus into town-- the embassy compound was way outside of town, my husband installed a bus service for the women. But I was lucky and didn't have to take that. I was able to use Talcott's driver when he was in the office. I love exploring, I just love exploring these places. I love camels. One of the joys of living in Jordan was I would open up the gate, and there would be a vendor on his camel, I loved it. I loved it. There were plenty of camels in Saudi Arabia, obviously. We had an interesting personnel problem there, so challenging that the State Department gave it as a problem to their deputy chiefs of mission who were going out to new posts. What would you do with a problem like this? The problem was that we had a CIA station chief whose wife was letting her house be used for assignments with the British ambassador and his Swiss mistress.. And it was just awful; terrible, terrible, terrible. We wanted to have them recalled but we had a brand new ambassador arrive who had never been an ambassador before. The CIA agent was very senior. This particular ambassador felt he couldn't get rid of this CIA man and his really belligerent wife. So they stayed and caused nothing but problems, and naturally I had to handle most of it as the wife of the DCM, and it was very, very unpleasant. Morale was low anyway because women couldn't drive, and it was very hot, no place to go, and adding to this quite a few maladjusted females all serving at Embassy Jeddah.

*Q: What did you study in school? Did you feel qualified to take on a situation like that?*

SEELYE: Yes. I took on the situation with the wife, you mean? Yes, I felt qualified to handle the situation but the ambassador and wife wouldn't back us because they were afraid. When we left, they learned more and more about this couple and eventually the couple was recalled. But I had



to live through it. We recommended over and over again to the ambassador and his wife that the couple had to leave; morale was low enough without this additional problem.

As I said, I like to explore these cities. I feel as if I got my PhD in Arab studies, thanks to the State Department, as I spent a good slice of my life in the Arab world. So nothing came as a surprise-- I spent a lot of time exploring the back alleys of Jeddah. One time, I was out, unfortunately at noontime, I knew I should have been in and not on the street because it was prayer time. I was out on the street and couldn't get back to the car in time when along came a religious policeman who had a baton, and he hit me across the leg with it. I was properly dressed, with long sleeves, and the dress came below my knee – properly dressed in those days. Now you have to be fully covered. But he hit me. I decided that I knew the rules, yet I still broke that rule, so I recommended to my husband not to make a complaint to the foreign ministry, because I had been wrong.

*Q: So, he didn't? Why?*

SEELYE: Why make a problem when it was I who was wrong-- and he didn't cause my later knee problem. And of course, there were no hospitals there, by the way. Now there are great big American hospitals in the kingdom. I'm glad we served there because it was already enormously rich, and it wasn't the country it is today. In a way, it was a better country. They had this king, King Faisal, who was a very enlightened man and had spent a lot of time in the United States as a young man, preparing Saudi Arabia for entering the U.N. So, he knew quite a bit about America. I had met him a couple of times by chance.

One time there was a big, royal wedding up in the mountains in Taif. All of the various embassy wives were invited to attend. I was invited because our ambassador's wife was away and to bring along four or five other Americans, and my mother-in-law happened to be visiting at the time so I took her along with the other wives. When we arrived in Taif by plane we were put up in a guest house. That evening the reception took place in a huge garden with hundreds of female guests. The king was the only male in attendance at this wedding of one of his daughters. He was sitting on a little stage up at the far end along with his wife, Queen Iffat, and he spotted me and said to all, "Make way for the women of the American embassy." Well, no one moved.

*Q: The waters did not part.*

SEELYE: So he got off the stage, came down, the crowd finally parted to let him through, and reaching me he didn't shake my hand, because men don't, but he told me to please follow him up to the front. It was a real treat to be led up to the front by no other than the king! At that point my mother-in-law's whose Turkish was absolutely perfect (she was a great linguist) must have known about this awful earthquake that had just taken place in Turkey. Queen Iffat had spent her life in Turkey, although she was a member of the royal family, the Saudi royal family, she was brought up in Turkey. So, the Queen came down from her seat, and sat on the stairs with my mother-in-law and they cried and cried and cried together about the earthquake in Turkey. It was quite an experience to be treated that way by royalty, no less. And if our ambassador's wife had been there the King wouldn't have sent for us and my mother-in-law would not have been

invited.. I happened to have met him several times just by chance, so it was quite an unusual experience.

We did have a bomb set off in our compound during the '67 war. We had a wonderful Palestinian gardener in our compound. Trees don't grow there naturally. With the help of this gardener we had quite a nice garden. Unfortunately, he was forced to put a bomb in with a fern he planted. He did it in a way so no one was hurt, but he was hauled off to jail, and we never heard from him again. He was probably killed, and tortured to death leaving behind a family.

Then we had a lot of entertaining. We had an American women's club there, and I was very active with that. I also did a lot of entertaining with senior Saudi officials' wives. Often, they were just one generation from the tent. One day, two of them were driven up to my house and started parking right in front of the house. The car was driven right up to the front door between two hedges. This was a big Mercedes, and when I opened the door, there they were! The car was scratched because it wasn't a driveway; it was a walkway. As the male help couldn't be anywhere in the room I had to serve them, and I served them angel food cake. They discovered by taking their forks, that if you hit angel food cake it bounces back up. So they hit it and hit it. (Laughter) They were having fun!

*Q: Did they finally eat it?*

SEELYE: Yes, they did. (Laughter) By the end the poor cake was pretty flat, but they finally ate it. Isn't that funny? Things like that amused me.

*Q: Of course.*

SEELYE: They finally left, and went up to the ambassador's residence to call on her. She called and asked where they were. They were having too much fun with my angel food cake. And another time, we had an awful lot of VIPs, a lot of visitors from America, including all seven of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee members and their wives. The ambassador and his wife were both away at the time.

*Q: Was there enough room in the residence to take care of them?*

SEELYE: No. Actually, the Saudis were in the business of changing their capital up to Riyadh, so the King spent most of his time in Riyadh. So, the Foreign Affairs Committee landed there. I was also flown up in one of those cargo planes, the C-131s, an enormous cargo plane that carry tanks; it was an amazing experience. It was totally empty, just me and the two pilots. When you asked for the ladies' room, you sort of had to hug the side of the wall. Behind some curtain was a little toilet room and that was it in the way of modern conveniences in this work-horse of a plane.. So, that was how I got up there. I took the ladies to visit Queen Iffat while Talcott was dealing with the senators and the king. And that was pleasant because the women were very nice; they were lovely people. It went off quite well. Not all Congressional Delegation visits, as you might know, do, unfortunately.

*Q: Try having Ted Kennedy!*

SEELYE: I've heard. So, that went very well. As I said here, Saudi Arabia was an experience, that's all there was to it. And then next, we went home for a couple of years, and then we went to Tunisia, which was Talcott's first ambassadorial assignment. Tunisia is absolutely gorgeous. It's the land of the lotus eaters.

**EUGENE H. BIRD**  
**Economic Officer**  
**Dhahran (1962-1965)**

**Political/Economic Officer**  
**Jeddah (1972-1975)**

*Eugene H. Bird was born in Spokane, Washington in 1925. He was in the U.S. Navy from 1943 to 1948. He attended the University of Washington and completed a B.S. degree in 1948, and a M.A. degree in 1952. Mr. Bird's overseas career included posts in Israel, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and India. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1994.*

Q: *You graduated from Arabic studies and in 1962 where did you go and what were you doing?*

BIRD: In 1962 I asked for assignment to Yemen but instead was assigned to [the Consulate General] in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia.

Q: *You were there from 1962 to 1965.*

BIRD: Yes. We were there at a time when there was no [Foreign Service post] South of us in the Gulf. So we sort of kept track of everything.

Q: *You had Bahrain, the Trucial States -- I'm not sure if we had [an Embassy] in Muscat...*

BIRD: Qatar. Muscat was supposedly under British control in Aden, but whenever the British went to Muscat, which was about once a year, we would go in with them. We kept that practice, too, in a sense. As to Kuwait, David Mack was there. Then he was replaced, and we had an Ambassador there, some time in 1962, I guess. We used to pick up their diplomatic pouch and take it to the Dhahran airport. Then we'd have to carry the pouch up to [Kuwait] about once every couple of weeks. Of course, the [telecommunications] system was pretty antiquated, compared to today's [systems]. But you could get through by telephone from Saudi Arabia if you were willing to wait a day or two.

Q: *What was your position there [in the Consulate General at Dhahran]?*

BIRD: I was economic officer for the Consulate General and also handled a pretty small scale of consular services. I had a Palestinian working for me, Fawzi Sam Hourri, who is retired now. He

had worked for the Consulate [General] for a long time -- almost from the time it was established, I think. [The Consulate General] is in a 60 acre compound, set out in what was then the middle of the desert, between the airport and the little, Texas-sized city of Dhahran itself, which was surrounded by a fence. There were hardly any Saudis living inside that fence. It was almost all Americans [living there]. That was half a mile from us -- [relatively], very close. The staff included Consul General Jack Horner, then James May arrived and became Deputy Consul General. I was sort of a deputy to Jim May.

What was interesting was that I traveled about three months out of the year, into the Trucial States. I would spend a week here and a week there, going down in the tiny little airplanes that they had.

*Q: Yes, Gulf Air. Little De Haviland Doves.*

BIRD: Gulf Air. [De Haviland] Herons [4 engines] and Doves [2 engines]. The Herons were the "big ones." I would fly to Riyadh. We had responsibility for covering the Ministry of Petroleum Affairs. That was the only ministry that the Consulate General was allowed to have much to do with. [Officers from] the Embassy in Jeddah would fly over to Riyadh and cover the rest of the ministries. There were no resident Americans in Riyadh. We were closer to Riyadh. You could even take a train there -- one of the streamlined trains built by the Budd Company, brought over from the United States. It was a fairly pleasant train ride, as a matter of fact -- 300 miles. I'd spend about one weekend out of every two months up there in Riyadh.

[Dhahran] was an interesting kind of post, in that we had quite a few visitors. Not too many Congressmen but a lot of oil company executives. They were often entertained by the oil company and occasionally flown up to Riyadh in their plane. I met a lot of future sources of mine on the petroleum industry. I suppose that the reports on what was happening [included the latest developments affecting] Sheikh Shakhbut down in Abu Dhabi, who supposedly kept all of the money he got for his oil under his bed. That wasn't quite true by the time I got there. He insisted on [the money being paid] in gold coins.

*Q: He was quite a miser.*

BIRD: Yes, he was a miser without any doubt. It was said that when the big change [occurred] in the price of oil, Shell, which was the operating company there [in Abu Dhabi], went to him and said that they wanted to pay him the same as everyone else. So the amounts that he would be paid, instead of 40 shillings a ton, would be so much else, perhaps 80 shillings. Quite a hefty increase. This was when the "50-50" Agreement came into effect. Shakhbut said, "Why? We made an agreement. You were supposed to pay me this much, and that's all I want." [Laughter]

*Q: How were our relations with ARAMCO [Arabian American Oil Company]? They had their Government Relations Group and all that.*

BIRD: Yes, and, of course, the Government Relations Group was like a small intelligence unit, working in a very large country. Sometimes they would be used by the Saudi Government to find out what was happening in the U. S. Government or what was happening in the world outside.

More often, they [the ARAMCO Government Relations Group] would use the government officials to find out what was really happening inside the Saudi royal family, which was running the country. There were very few "technical" ministers -- [Sheikh] Yamani and Prince Saud bin Faisal, who was the Deputy Petroleum Minister and who is now the Foreign Minister. He and I got to be pretty close friends. There were also the head of Petromin [Saudi national oil company], Abdul Hari Taher and the present Petroleum Minister, Hisham Nazir. He was also Deputy Petroleum Minister at that time. So those three and [Sheikh] Yamani were the people I worked with more than anyone else during those years.

It was kind of interesting because they were negotiating the "50-50" Agreement. Bob Brougham, the head of ARAMCO's Government Relations Group, was the primary negotiator. They would hold a lot of the negotiations in Riyadh, but they also held them up in Beirut. I remember one time, after Yamani had been [Petroleum Minister] for about a year, they were back to negotiating on the price and the "offtake" -- how much they were going to produce the next year. Those were the two factors, of course. Kuwait and Iran would watch jealously what was happening in these negotiations. They held [these negotiations] at Brummana up in the hills above Beirut. The Saudis -- Yamani -- had hired an outside consultant, who had brought in computers and set them up. It was the first time, I think, that any of the companies ever faced a computerized negotiation. When they would present their ideas on what the price should be, the various types of oil, and so on, within an hour Yamani would say, "No, that's not satisfactory because of these and these and these factors."

I remember reporting this and talking with Bob Brougham about that. He said, "We were absolutely astonished at how sophisticated [the Saudis] had suddenly become."

*Q: This was in the absolute "Stone Age" of computers in those days.*

BIRD: Yes, that's true. It was all heavy equipment. They [the Saudis] would have a whole planeload [of computers] to fly in. I got my feet very wet on oil, both in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, and in Bahrain.

*Q: BAPCO [Bahrain Petroleum Company].*

BIRD: Yes. A very different group there -- sort of a bridge group with the British.

*Q: Could you describe the difference between ARAMCO and BAPCO toward their hosts, the Saudis and the Bahrainis?*

BIRD: They had very different governments to deal with, of course, in the sense that in Bahrain the royal family was still heavily under the influence of the British. The British Political Agent was dominant there in many ways. The Bahraini royal family was probably much more sophisticated than the Saudi royal family was. BAPCO had very close relations, even then, with ARAMCO. They had a direct telephone line that you could use. They kept in very close touch. However, there was a lot of competition [between them]. They didn't know how much oil lay between Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. There was a great problem of defining the [boundary] lines [between them]. There was a problem of defining where the "center point" of the Persian Gulf

was, [as far as] Iran [was concerned]. All of this was grist for the mill of the person who replaced James May, Colbert Held. He was a geographer who had come [into the Foreign Service] under the "Wriston" Program. He had been a geographic attaché in a couple of places.

Colbert used his expertise in geography quite effectively with some of the oil sheikhs and with ARAMCO. I don't think that he is thought of as being a very effective Foreign Service Officer, but he was a very fine geographer. A lot of the things going on at that time had to do with defining the geography of the Arabian Peninsula, which had only one border that was laid out on the ground. The other borders, touching Jordan, Kuwait, and so on, had been drawn on a map. There was a neutral zone which was controlled jointly with Kuwait. The Saudis had almost fought a small war with the British over the oasis of Buraymi, which they claimed.

*Q: Has that been settled?*

BIRD: Yes, though very uncomfortably. [The Saudis] didn't like the settlement at all. Some of the dissidents from Muscat and Oman -- in fact, the present ruler of Muscat was resident in Dhahran while we were there. We met him several times. He was not acceptable to his father. He had been well educated in Britain and so forth. Instead of going into Abu Dhabi, which was too close, he went to Saudi Arabia and was maintained by the Saudis. This was a very traditional method of handling a problem. What you need to remember is that they talk about the British having defined all of these borders. Well, they defined them on the map. Some of them were demarcated [on the ground], but hardly any of them were accepted. Regarding even the negotiation of the borders of the "Neutral Zone," one of the things to remember is that the former head of ARAMCO -- before my time -- had quit the company, formed another company, and negotiated with Kuwait a deal affecting an offshore area. This was regarded by the Saudis as transgressing on what they claimed. The Kuwaitis and the Saudis were in constant negotiations about how to share the offshore oil fields while I was there.

They came to an understanding. Kuwait was, of course, the "cradle" for the Saudis, in a sense, because there was a period of 25 years during the 19th century when King Abdul Aziz was a refugee. He spent that time in Kuwait and launched his return to Riyadh from Kuwait, starting with 50 men. There is a long history of attachment between the two countries, but it's been a tension-filled attachment in many ways. We got to know quite a few of the Kuwaitis, who didn't often come to Saudi Arabia in those days. They looked down on Saudi Arabia.

*Q: What about your relations with the Emir of the Eastern Province -- Massoud bin Jaluwi?*

BIRD: Massoud bin Jaluwi. The first time I went to see him I was with Jim May. Jim introduced me. Midway in the conversation the old fellow looked over at me and with his most piercing eyes said to Jim May in Arabic, "Who is this fellow, anyway, and why is he here?" Later on, I got to know Massoud bin Jaluwi and some of his people very, very well. [Contact with him] was truly like going back to the 19th or early 20th century, I should say. One of the things we did was that I went to Massoud bin Jaluwi and got permission to take some youngsters, including some Arab youngsters who were home on leave, and fix up a library in Dammam. We took a building about 40' by 20', with an upstairs to it, which was given to us by a local businessman. We redid the inside of it and put a sign on the outside. It became the first public library in Eastern Saudi

Arabia. We actually had some Saudi girls involved. They didn't come down to the library itself, but they came to our house and worked at filing and making curtains and other things for the library.

We got permission to do this from Massoud bin Jaluwi. The way we did it was to work, to some extent, through ARAMCO and get some help from their government affairs people. ARAMCO had very competent Westerners -- Americans. Some of whom, at least, spoke very good Arabic. Many of them had spent many years in Saudi Arabia by this time and knew more about Saudi Arabia than most Saudis did. If those files put together by the [ARAMCO] government affairs people ever become [publicly] available, they will be a good source for writing a history of Saudi Arabia.

*Q: Did you ever find that the Embassy and ARAMCO were on divergent courses as far as our policy?*

BIRD: Well, you have to remember that the Ambassador in Saudi Arabia at that time was Pete Hart. When Pete arrived in Saudi Arabia, ARAMCO made everything available to him and took him on aircraft tours [of the country]. When we had important people visiting -- and we had a lot of them, really. We had to use ARAMCO, because we didn't have much of a budget ourselves and we certainly didn't have any planes. For a while we had the U. S. Military Training Mission there, but actually the relationship was kind of strange, in a way, because back in 1943-44, when the Consulate [in Dhahran] was first established, Pete Hart was sent out to be vice consul there. He was given a building in the ARAMCO camp, one of those old Quonset huts. That was the Consulate for about six months.

Then ARAMCO got very tired of having the Consulate inside their camp. They didn't want to be over identified with the American Government. You probably have heard this story. They [ARAMCO] just notified him [Parker Hart] and Washington that they would have to find a place outside [the ARAMCO camp]. So [the Embassy] went to the king and got the present 60-acre compound. They built the Consulate building and, for a while, [Parker Hart] was living and working out of a so-called hotel down in Al Khobar.

There's always been a critical attitude on the part of many of the ARAMCO officials toward the U. S. Government. They don't particularly like to be controlled by the Government. No oil company does.

*Q: What was our relationship with Bahrain and the Gulf states? We had this representation there, but was it felt that this was really a British responsibility?*

BIRD: Very much so, but, of course, the local governments were trying to get out from under the British. They welcomed our being down there and often tried to help us out in any way they could, vis-a-vis the British.

When I went to Abu Dhabi, I made a point of trying to stay with the [British] Political Agent down there. His name was H. A. R. Boustead. Boustead was an old hand from the 1920's in Sudan. He'd been in the Sudanese Camel Corps and then he'd moved up and became their man

[the British representative] in the Hadramaut, working out of Aden. This assignment [to Abu Dhabi] was his retirement post. He stayed there about five or six years. Of course, the regular British diplomats, some of whom went on to become ambassadors and who were his assistants, used to roll their eyes at some of the old-fashioned, colonial attitudes he would display, right in front of the Sheikh [of Abu Dhabi]. He thought nothing of calling his Arab driver a "bloody fool" and so on.

He wanted to be absolutely hospitable -- and he was. He used to loan me his car and do all kinds of things for us. However, there were limits, and he didn't want us to have a special relationship with Shakhbut, who was a character. They [the British] were about to remove him and did so about two years later. They brought his brother in.

Q: *What about [the Emirate of] Sharjah and some of the other places?*

BIRD: We had an American oil company exploring for oil in Sharjah by this time -- the only one in that area. This was a very small operation. They were just putting down one well. It wasn't very big. There were hardly any Americans down there.

A funny thing happened there one day. I came out of the airport and there was the person I had had to fire in Jerusalem [some years before] for taking money to "facilitate" the issuance of visas. He had become a millionaire by that time. [Laughter] He offered to give me his Mercedes any time I wanted it. [Laughter] He had gone in with the Sheikh of Qatar. They were down there in the Trucial States, investing some of the sheikh's money. The economy of Qatar wasn't very viable, so the sheikh was putting money into all kinds of places. He was building hotels and that sort of thing.

It was great fun in the sense that you would be at a party in Dubai and you'd meet the British Consul General.

Q: *Dubai is the capital of Qatar.*

BIRD: No, it's the capital of Abu Dhabi. Abu Dhabi and Dubai are twin cities. Dubai is the commercial center. It's a different Emirate. I remember meeting the British Consul General there on one occasion. He was laughing and said that the previous week they had really pulled a joke on him. They invited him to go aboard a dhow [local boat] and go offshore for a picnic, do a little fishing, and so on. When they got out there, they said to him: "Oh, would you mind transferring to another dhow?" The dhow he had originally gone on was at that time the fastest one they had. It was loaded with gold and was on its way to Bombay. The reason was that they wanted to "fool" the Indian Political Agent who was there [in Dubai]. He spied on these people to tell the Indian Customs officials.

Q: *So the local people told him [the Indian Political Agent], "This is a fishing trip with the British Consul General," so that he wouldn't have to worry about it.*

BIRD: The Indian Political Agent saw the dhow go out and saw it come back in. The British Consul General was laughing about how he got involved in that sort of thing.



On another occasion we were given a "saluki" by the Sheikh of Sharjah.

Q: *That's a kind of dog.*

BIRD: I made the mistake of admiring the dog. I asked, quite innocently, where I could buy a "saluki" puppy. When I got ready to leave, [I was given] a full-grown saluki which was our house pet for the next eight years. The Sheikh of Sharjah was a very well educated man.

Q: *He was a poet, wasn't he?*

BIRD: Yes, he was. He became a liability to the British, and they got rid of him, finally, and brought his cousin in. They exiled him. He went off to Cairo and a few other places for a while. Then he came back and tried to mount a counter coup d'etat. Unfortunately, the coup was both unsuccessful and resulted in his cousin being killed. He ended up in jail, as a matter of fact, for some time. I'm not quite sure what happened to him. I saw him once in Cairo before he became involved in the coup, when he was in exile. Things like that, you know, touch you very closely. It was pretty remarkable, going out to Buraymi Oasis and seeing Sheikh Zahidin, who later on became the successor to Shakhbut. I guess he's still in power. I remember going across the dunes in a Land Rover. It was the kind of thing you wouldn't do now if you were assigned there.

Q: *You were much closer to the terrain in those days.*

BIRD: I probably learned more Arabic as a result of all of these trips down the coast [than I had in formal classes]. When I was on these trips, there probably wasn't anybody speaking English except the British Consul General, if he happened to be there. He would translate for me, but I would make an attempt to use my Arabic, so that was an excellent experience. I did a tour [of the area] with Jack Horner, the [American] Consul General from Dhahran. I think it was a trip of 1,000 miles by car, all the way to the border of Muscat and back. Traveling from Qatar, we visited all of the sheikhs on the way down and back. Outside of Qatar we took the wrong turn and headed out into the "Empty Quarter" [Rub al Khali] of the Arabian Peninsula. We had two vehicles, and I was in the lead vehicle. I was the first to realize that we were going directly West, and the sun was setting. [Laughter] The sun wasn't supposed to be in that position. We turned around and, by nightfall, we were in sight of the Gulf again. It was kind of scary from that point of view.

Q: *Back in Dhahran did you have any consular problems that you remember or that you can recall that the Consulate was involved in?*

BIRD: Yes. The first one was a case involving "Pillsbury" flour. It became quite famous. A Jeddah merchant had imported a shipload of flour from Pillsbury [Mills in the U. S.]. He [the merchant] claimed that it was bad but couldn't get his money back. About six months later Pillsbury sent someone out -- almost a vice president of the company, I guess. They [the Saudi authorities] picked up his passport and told him that he had to resolve the problem. The way they resolved it was to come over to Dhahran and get some help, I suspect, from some of the lawyers from ARAMCO, because it was kind of embarrassing for ARAMCO to have something like this

happen [on their "patch"]. He [the Pillsbury vice president] deposited \$20,000 with another merchant. This had happened two or three years before I got there and was still going on, still unresolved.

*Q: I know. I remember the original case. I was sort of laughing, because I remember it. We had this fellow named Roger Tuma, who was trapped there [in Saudi Arabia]. I remember going with Walter Schwinn, the Consul General at the time, to discuss [this matter] with Massoud bin Jaluwi. They just didn't understand. If you've got an executive of the company, you kept him there until the matter was settled. But then they [Pillsbury] put a bond up, or something like that...*

BIRD: Yes, they put up \$20,000.

*Q: And it was still going on?*

BIRD: Oh, yes. It had been four or five years. Toward the end of my stay there [in Dhahran] they [the Saudi authorities] still had that \$20,000. I went down periodically to talk with this merchant and said, "You know, while waiting for the decision, can't you transfer that money back to Pillsbury, and we will guarantee [the settlement], whatever the final outcome." We went that far. We suggested that a guarantee would be a more suitable and more modern solution. This guy -- I calculated that he probably turned that money over 18 times [laughter] and made a small fortune out of it.

Things like that were constantly happening with the Saudis -- problems with the base closing and problems with the leaking roof of the world famous airport building. The airport building had been designed by Yamasaki and was built by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers. It was probably the first major project that the Corps of Engineers handled there [in Saudi Arabia]. It won an international award for design -- but the roof leaked. So the Corps sent out people to look into it. It took them two years to plug the leak in the roof. Actually, there was a series of leaks in the peculiar kind of roof they had there.

*Q: There were little humps...*

BIRD: Little humps all over. I went up on the roof once but decided that I wouldn't do that again.

The same thing is true of the building of the port [of Dhahran]. The Corps of Engineers handled that. There would be a hairline crack, and the Saudis would say, "That shouldn't be there." I became sort of an engineer as well as a hand holder. King Faisal came to power when I was there. I went up to Riyadh and watched the final days of King Saud, when he tried to stay in power. He surrounded his palace with Japanese built jeeps equipped with American recoilless rifles. The Royal Guard finally went over to Prince Faisal, and that was the end of that. King Saud was flown out.

*Q: Was there any concern in the Eastern Province [of Saudi Arabia] about the influence of Nasserism?*

BIRD: More concern with the Arab Nationalist Movement [ANM]. The ANM probably had some people in place in Saudi Arabia, among the Shia, among others -- perhaps among some of the Iraqis. Iraqi exiles were in Saudi Arabia by this time, a fair number of them.

The concern with Nasser was very strong, of course, during the first two years we were there [1962-1963], because of the war in Yemen. I would have to say that the concern was very high as a result of the smuggling of weapons into...

*Q: Well, there were Egyptian troops in Yemen during this period, weren't there?*

BIRD: A substantial number of Egyptian troops -- far more than they had used anywhere else. It was the largest expeditionary force that Egypt ever sent outside [its borders]. The Saudis were frightened. They probably opened up faster as a result of that and tried to make some arrangement with Iraq. They feared Iraq and Egypt getting together. They didn't need to fear that, I think, because there were obviously differences, very strong differences, between the two. But sure, the Egyptians were all deported from Saudi Arabia while I was there -- even some of the key people in the Ministry of Petroleum and the Ministry of Planning. Almost all of the Egyptians had to leave. We lost one or two members of the staff of the Consulate General [in Dhahran] at that time.

The Yemenis suffered a lot, too. They were suspected of being on the side of the Republicans rather than with the old Imam. We would see all of these Yemenis in the Amama Hotel up in Riyadh. I even attended press conferences there, which were held in Italian, because that was the only Western language that the old Imam's court knew. I attended a mass rally in favor of the old Imam to rouse the Saudis. There were people from all over the Arab world there. King Faisal came out and made his first public speech at that time. King Saud's sons were very jealous of King Faisal and made derisive remarks all during his speech. He came to Dhahran later on. We met him at that time and took some pictures of him. There was an attempt to create an alternative to Nasser and Nasserism. I suppose that our relations with Nasser at this time were about the same as our relations with Qadhafi [of Libya] are now.

It was several years after I left Saudi Arabia, in 1965 -- indeed, after the 1967 [Arab-Israeli] War that they settled [the war in Yemen]. This was one of the hinge moments in inter-Arab politics. I suppose that our appearance there with a number of aircraft and a small number of paratroops which were sent into the Eastern Province for joint maneuvers with the Saudis [had some impact]. It was the precursor, I suppose, of the Gulf War situation, in many ways.

The U. S. Military Training Mission, of course, was a pretty overwhelming group. They rotated people in and out. [Individual persons assigned to the Mission] spent a year there. I remember one of them saying to me, "I was in charge for a year at Khafji," which is where the Chinese missiles are now. He said, "I was in charge of a tank battalion for training and so on. We used to have a review every couple of weeks. We would march around, and I would say to the commander, 'You know that emergency generator is sitting out there in the sun. It may not work when you need it. It might be a good idea to get it back inside or put a cover over it or something.'" The commander would order his secretary to make a note of that. The same conversation would take place later on, and the man would [again] make a note of it. This

[American] was telling me over a drink in Riyadh, "And I know that two weeks after I leave here, he'll fix it."

This gave me an insight into the Saudi Arab mind. They don't take very easily to advice or advisors, I would say. They like to make up their own minds and they're pretty stubborn people. There's an awful lot of "face" involved in working with them. I don't know what you found.

*Q: I found that this was very much the case. You left Dhahran in 1965 and went to Cairo.*

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*Q: Well, I thought we might turn to your last post [in the Foreign Service] at Jeddah [Saudi Arabia]. You went there in 1972. How long were you there?*

BIRD: We were in Jeddah for three years. I had helped to form the Indo-U. S. Chamber of Commerce in Bombay, which is still going. I guess the creation of organizations of various kinds has been my only lasting achievement. After the embargo had been laid on by King Faisal, I worked with Saud bin Faisal to set up the U. S.-Saudi Arabia Joint Economic Commission. A lot of the work I did on that was based on the fact that, during two tours that I had in Saudi Arabia in the Foreign Service, they had gotten to know me well. And, of course, it's a small group of personalities involved. Some of the same people that I had first met, 10 years before, were still in power when I came back. They contributed a lot to making it possible for us to "douse the fires" after the 1973 Arab-Israeli War.

*Q: You're talking about the embargo after the 1973 War. What happened?*

BIRD: I'd arrived [back] in Saudi Arabia in 1972. By early 1973 it was pretty obvious that the Egyptians, under Sadat, were unwilling to accept the continued Israeli occupation of the Sinai, the closure of the Suez Canal, and the fact that the Israelis were draining off the [Egyptian] oil [in the Sinai] and the offshore fields for their own use. [The Egyptians] were coming down to Saudi Arabia to enlist King Faisal in a sense in a crusade to retake the Sinai. By this time, I think, the Saudis were tiring of the Palestine-Israel conflict. There weren't very many Palestinians in Saudi Arabia, unlike other countries. They hadn't allowed a lot of them in. However, the Palestinians that were in Saudi Arabia were quite important. They were influential and were the wealthiest, private businessmen in Saudi Arabia. Both he [King Faisal] and his brother had married relatives of the Husseini clan from Jerusalem, so they were closely connected. [The Saudis] were collecting five percent of every Palestinian's paycheck and paying it to the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization]. King Faisal was supporting the PLO and [Yasser] Arafat. I don't think that anyone had any hope that Arafat, by himself, could effectively retake Palestine. There may have been a few people who talked that way, but no one really believed it.

By this time Saud bin Faisal was able to say to me, in the middle of this crisis [brought on by the 1973 War], "This is the last chance for the Palestinians. They'd better take it now." I reported this and even talked about it with an Israeli friend later on. He said, "Well, I hope that's true."

Sadat was very close to King Faisal. They enjoyed each other's company very much. Of all of the Arab leaders in the area at that time, Faisal was probably closer to Sadat than to any other, including maybe even the Emir of Kuwait, although Kuwait, in many ways, is an extension of the Saudi family. They are different clans and different tribes, but modern Saudi Arabia really began with the Saud family returning to power from Kuwait. How Saddam Hussein could ever have expected Saudi Arabia to stand by and let Iraq take Kuwait away from the Emir of Kuwait is beyond me. I just don't think that he [Saddam Hussein] understands the politics of the [Arabian] peninsula at all.

*Q: You're speaking of the Iraqi attempt in 1990 to take over Kuwait.*

BIRD: Yes. The relationship between all of their politics is really a relationship between the Euphrates and the Nile Rivers, as someone has pointed out. The most important player outside of that relationship is Saudi Arabia because of her wealth and also because of her independence. Saudi Arabia never had a colonial experience. Because of Mecca and because of Medina and because of the close relationship of Saudi Arabia with the United States. For 50 years -- almost 60 years now -- Saudi Arabia has been very much closer to the United States than to Europe and Britain. And that's not true of any of the rest of the Arab countries. Saudi Arabia has been a "swing" political state -- not just a "swing" state in terms of oil and oil pricing.

I had gotten to know all of the [Saudi] players, including Yamani and others, during my first tour [in Saudi Arabia]. So when I came back as Counselor for Political and Economic Affairs, I was able to establish very strong relationships very quickly. Nick Thacher was my Ambassador. Hume Horan was the DCM.

*Q: You were Economic Counselor?*

BIRD: I was Political and Economic Counselor. I had both of those titles. I negotiated that from New Delhi. They didn't have a Political Counselor [in Jeddah], so I said, "Why not just name me," and Ambassador Thacher said OK, no problem with that. I knew that we only had one political, one economic, and one commercial officer.

I came back [to Saudi Arabia] in 1972, and immediately I was surprised. They expected a war. It was obvious. Unless there was a solution to the desire to reopen the Suez Canal and reclaim Sinai on the part of Egypt, there was going to be a war, and all of us knew it. The head of ARAMCO at that time would brief the Senators, Congressmen, and occasional people who would come drifting through. He would say, "This time around" -- he said this to Senator Jackson, I remember, in March, 1973 -- "if there is a war, as we suspect that there may be, Saudi Arabia is not going to stand on the sidelines. There's going to be an [oil] embargo. That's what we hear." Senator Jackson pooh-poohed the idea. Richard Perle was with him at the time. It was his only visit to Saudi Arabia.

It was very difficult to arrange [the Jackson visit] because the Senator wanted to bring his personal rabbi with him. King Faisal said, "Why should I let this man in?" He said, "He's an enemy of ours." While the king was out of the country, Crown Prince Fahd, who was then head of one of the major ministries, said, "OK, Jackson can come in now." So Jackson came in when

King Faisal wasn't there. He met Saud bin Faisal and a lot of the other people. We put on a grand show for him.

After the visit I went to Saud bin Faisal and asked him how he thought the visit of Senator Jackson went. This was in March, 1973, only six months before the 1973 War started. Saud bin Faisal said, "He is a man who came with certain convictions, and he left with the same convictions that he came with." I thought that this was the bottom line on most of the visits of Zionist-oriented people to Arab countries. Congressman Tom Lantos came later on and left with the same feeling. [These] were people that I took care of in Cairo earlier. Jackson was a very important man, of course, and the Saudis knew this in terms of U. S. politics and on this subject.

Sadat was playing the "Faisal card." He was very careful to keep Faisal informed about what he was doing. We speculate that Faisal knew that Sadat was going to "jump off" [in September, 1973]. But what was fascinating was a report which I don't think has been cited anywhere else. At this time King Faisal [and Sadat] met frequently -- whenever Sadat went to Washington or had major talks with Washington on the situation and moving it forward. Henry Kissinger was then Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. It was obvious that he had "done in" Secretary of State Rogers, and Rogers was going to be leaving. Maybe it's similar to the situation now because some of the attacks on Secretary of State Christopher remind me of the attacks on Rogers at that time.

About June, 1973, we began hearing about a conversation that Sadat's messenger -- what was his name? I can fill this name in later -- I've forgotten it. I didn't have much to do with him. I met him once or twice. He would come to Saudi Arabia -- usually quite confidentially. You can learn about anything in Saudi Arabia. He talked with King Faisal and told this story. He said, "I went to Washington and talked with the Department of State. Then I went over and talked with Mr. Kissinger, who obviously is an important person there. After I complained about the fact that the Israelis were taking all of the oil and ruining the wells, that the Suez Canal had been closed for seven years now, and so forth, I said that it would be necessary, if Sadat was going to be able to continue to rule Egypt, to retake the Sinai, negotiate it back, or whatever." There had been the "confrontation" between Israel and Egypt in 1970 and a lot of bombing of Egyptian villages.

*Q: The "War of Attrition," I think it was called.*

BIRD: The "War of Attrition." In 1970 [Secretary of State] Rogers had proposed a peace plan. It had been backed by people like Don Bergus, who was then, I think, in charge of the American Interests Section [of the Dutch Embassy] in Cairo. The Rogers plan had broken down completely because of Kissinger in the White House. In fact, back in New Delhi, when he answered that question of mine in 1971 or 1972, he made reference to the Rogers Plan. He said, "You know, it didn't have any support in the White House," meaning that it didn't have any support from President Nixon. We presumed that the real problem was Kissinger, as we can see from the Haldeman Diaries and Kissinger's influence on Nixon on specific things. Essentially, what Kissinger was telling me was that the National Security Adviser was "doing in" the Secretary of State.

The same thing happened in connection with the [crisis which led to the 1973 War]. Here he

was, still the National Security Adviser, about to change positions. We knew that the change would take place in not too long a time and Kissinger would become Secretary of State. He was the only man who ever became Secretary of State and continued to be National Security Adviser. He didn't want any competition from a new National Security Adviser, so President Nixon let him wear two hats, as it were.

King Faisal's people told me that Kissinger said something like the following to Sadat's [national security] adviser in Washington. [Sadat's adviser reportedly told King Faisal's people], "I was so puzzled because every time I would bring up [the point] that we had to get the Sinai back and we had to reopen the Suez Canal -- which was necessary economically as well as politically -- Kissinger would say, 'Well, what can you do about it? How are you going to do it?'" Kissinger reportedly offered him no help whatsoever. [Sadat's adviser] went away very puzzled and said [to himself], "I think that what he's saying to me is that we're going to have to do it ourselves." He brought that word back [to Sadat] in April or May, 1973.

We think that it was at that point that Sadat decided that he was going to have to launch a strike against Israel -- have to start a war. So in a sense [Kissinger], the National Security Adviser, was responsible for starting the war. [When the war broke out], I said to myself, "My God, this is going to be a disaster. There's going to be an [oil] embargo and confrontation [with the Arabs]." I remember the front cover of "Atlantic," the monthly magazine, showing U. S. paratroopers dropping in on the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia.

*Q: Obviously, this was theoretical. I'm just saying this for the record.*

BIRD: Oh, yes. [In Jeddah] I was talking with Saud bin Faisal, talking with people around Yamani [Saudi Minister of Petroleum], sometimes seeing Yamani himself, though not very often -- that was for the Ambassador, Nick Thacher. I went back to the U. S. in August, 1973, on a business trip of some kind. I can't remember exactly why. I was invited by various people to come back and make speeches. By this time Saudi Arabia was beginning to be important.

I had a puzzling interview with Jim Akins [former U. S. Ambassador to Saudi Arabia], whom I had never met. He had been an Arabist for a long time, but we'd never met. Here he was the Director of the Office of Energy in the Department of State. He asked me lots of questions, and we had a good conversation. As soon as I returned to Saudi Arabia, the CIA Chief of Station [in Jeddah] called me in and said, "You saw Jim Akins. What did he have to say? Is he coming [out to Saudi Arabia]?" I replied, "I presume that he's going to be coming here." Well, we had an Ambassador at the post, Nick Thacher. Akins was appointed in September, [1973] and Ambassador Thacher went off to retirement. I think that Akins was gunning for an ambassadorship at that point. He said that he would have liked to have gone to Vienna, where OPEC was headquartered. However, Kissinger, coming in as Secretary of State, probably didn't want him in a more powerful position and so sent him out to Saudi Arabia to deal with this developing problem.

I think that everyone in [the U. S.] government at that time knew that there was going to be a war, although the Egyptians hid [their preparations] very, very well. Certainly, they hid it from the Israelis. There was a group of [National] War College [students] who came out [to Saudi

Arabia about this time]. I knew one of them very, very well. They came to Jeddah just after they had visited the Bar Lev Line [Israeli fortifications on the East bank of the Suez Canal], in Sinai. This would have been in August, 1973. They came to Saudi Arabia, and we talked about the situation on the border and so forth. Essentially, they said that they felt that the Israelis had a bad case of overconfidence and that they were overtraining -- whatever that means. I remember that that term was used. I guess that they [the Israelis] were "running their aircraft into the ground" [overusing them] in training. [The National War College students] had real questions about whether the Israelis would be able to maintain the line they held [on the East side of the Suez Canal] with such small forces. By the end of August, 1973, everything in a sense was in place for war.

We should have read it. We knew that there was going to be a war but we didn't think that it was going to occur as quickly as it did or that the Egyptians would have as much success as they initially did. The Russians had equipped them with the right SAM [Surface to Air] missiles, and, for the first week or so of the war, there was a sense of real accomplishment and euphoria [on the part of the Egyptians]. Then, when we resupplied [the Israelis], King Faisal immediately put on the [oil] embargo. We had to explain to Washington why we were so ineffective in preventing the embargo from being applied.

*Q: This was the embargo of oil products?*

BIRD: Well, what they really did was to say that they were only going to sell [oil] to certain customers, not including the U. S. or the Netherlands. They brought their level of production way down, and this was true throughout the Gulf area, too. Kuwait, Iraq, and all of the [Arab Gulf states] joined in. Essentially, they starved the oil markets. The price of oil, of course, immediately went sky high. This was a real problem for the White House.

Like so many things that happened, we [in the Embassy in Saudi Arabia] saw it coming -- like so many things that happened. We see them coming but we don't seem to have an effective way of preventing major developments from occurring. The small things we handle very well in the American Foreign Service, but we don't seem to have the attention of the White House in handling major problems. We don't seem to have the ability to bring a policy proposal to bear on a [major] issue that is effective and gets everyone going in the same direction. This includes building coalitions with other parts of the world, which is the only solution in many cases. We're very good in emergencies. We're very bad, I think, in terms of policies which gradually lead to major crises. I've seen so many examples of these.

*Q: When the [oil] embargo came into effect, I assume that you people [in the Embassy in Jeddah] were going over and making representations and all of this sort of thing.*

BIRD: By this time we had the DCM in charge, Hume [Horan], waiting for Ambassador Jim Akins, who arrived [in Jeddah] maybe a week or 10 days after the war started [in October, 1973] and after the [oil] embargo had entered into effect. It was a fortunate thing for him [Ambassador Akins] that he hadn't arrived earlier. I remember that when he arrived, he took me with him up to Riyadh. He presented his credentials almost immediately, because Kissinger was due in [shortly] on his first attempt to "reverse" the situation. He presented his credentials, and it was kind of a



"love fest." King Faisal was very happy to see the American Ambassador -- and this particular American Ambassador. Here was a professional diplomat who had spoken out very early, in a sense, on a rational policy toward OPEC and toward a price of oil that would "assure the wells of Texas a profit," as Ambassador Akins used to put it. It isn't just a matter of oil pricing and access to oil which has often driven our policy toward the Saudis and so on. It probably drove the Gulf War, to some extent. Essentially, oil will flow, regardless of the politics.

So I was present at the presentation of credentials. Then we went on to a party that evening with Yamani.

*Q: Yamani was the...*

BIRD: Minister of Petroleum. Ahmad Zaki Yamani. We went to Yamani's central Riyadh office, which was really just a big apartment in a hotel, very fancifully decorated. It was a mixed party, with Saudi women present. There was liquor on hand, and everything was very Western [in style]. Ambassador Akins was immediately very popular. Hisham Nazir, another personality among the technical ministers and now the Minister of Petroleum, had been a friend of mine for a long time. He was very close to Saud bin Faisal and to the royal family. However, he had never been very close to Yamani. Hisham Nazir was head of planning. He suddenly turned up, as Ambassador Akins arrived at the party. In typical fashion, Hisham said, "I want you to come and visit my house before you go in." It was a very strange thing. So Yamani very graciously said, "Well, of course, Hisham, if you'd like to, but have him back within a half hour or an hour." And, sure enough, the Ambassador came back in about an hour. The party continued. The relationship between the various "egomaniacs" in the [Saudi] Government is often very fascinating in terms of the personality quotient, and these two people [in particular]. Yamani had had Hisham Nazir as Deputy Minister of Petroleum at one time. [Hisham Nazir] is a very bright man.

I always say that there are two kinds of Saudis: "passive positives" and "passive negatives." I've used this comparison in speeches and so on around the U. S. What I mean by this is that there are Saudis who are very prone to attack a Westerner or to confront him. Those are people I call "passive negatives." Then there are those who are very "soft" and "sweet" and totally agreeable to whatever you might want. [These are the "passive positives."] I used to say that all of the "passive positives" are graduates of the University of California at Berkeley. All of the "passive negatives" are graduates of the University of California at Los Angeles. This happens to be [largely] true. Yamani couldn't really tolerate the disruptive presence of [someone like] Hisham Nazir, who had been one of his two deputy ministers of petroleum. So he [Yamani] "spun him off" as head of planning. For almost 15 or 20 years he [Hisham Nazir] was head of planning for Saudi Arabia and a very effective guy.

I was interviewed yesterday over the phone by a radio station down in Los Angeles on OPEC politics. I made the statement that Hisham Nazir "is" OPEC at this point. What he says, what he convinces the royal family to go along with, in terms of OPEC politics, will rule. He's a very strong personality.

*Q: Speaking of strong personalities, did you see anything of the clash which became quite famous within the Foreign Service between Ambassador Akins and Kissinger?*

BIRD: Oh, yes. They were together a lot in Saudi Arabia. You know, Kissinger made 13 different visits there. Of course, the funniest one was when he came, after having negotiated a two or three kilometer withdrawal on the part of the Israelis. [Kissinger] had shuttled back and forth between Cairo, Damascus, and Tel Aviv. He finally got an agreement of sorts for a two or three kilometer withdrawal [by the Israelis], before any final, full withdrawal to the international border took place. King Khalid [of Saudi Arabia], who was not noted for his brilliance, was a very nice man. He had more intelligence than people gave him credit for. He had succeeded King Faisal.

Kissinger came on this 10th or 11th trip to Saudi Arabia to "report in" on what he was doing on behalf of peace in the area, [suggesting, in effect], therefore, that the Saudis should help us in terms of oil. This was always Kissinger's message. King Khalid said, "Well, Mr. Kissinger, I see that you have again journeyed thousands of kilometers in order to get them [the Israelis] to withdraw two [kilometers]." This became a famous little story within that context.

I think that Kissinger and Akins clashed right at the beginning of Akins' [ambassadorship]. I was [in Saudi Arabia] when this incident happened, although I wasn't present at the time. Joe Sisco [Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs] took Ambassador Akins aside at this very first meeting in Saudi Arabia between King Faisal and Secretary Kissinger, when Kissinger was trying to get the oil embargo removed. He didn't succeed for a very long time. Kissinger [made a practice of] sending an "underling" like Sisco to tell the [local U. S.] ambassador -- and Joe Sisco did this at all the stops [on the trip] -- "Now, the Secretary wants a 'one on one' meeting." Ambassador Akins knew that this was probably going to happen. He knew that nowhere else in the Near Eastern area did the ambassadors refuse to go along with the Secretary's request for a "one on one" meeting with, [in this case], King Faisal. [In fact], it wouldn't be a "one on one" meeting, because there would have to be a note taker and an [interpreter]. Here was a man [Akins] who was an Arabist and an ambassador and spoke good Arabic. Akins replied, and he told us about this right away, "Well, in that case, I'm going back to my office and write out my letter of resignation. No American official comes here and sees the King of Saudi Arabia without me being present, because I represent the President, not the Secretary of State. I have a presidential commission."

Well, Kissinger and Akins had clashed before over the energy policy which Peter Fleming and Akins had spent a year drafting. Kissinger had simply persuaded the President to announce that he was not going to implement the suggestions because the oil companies didn't want them to be implemented. The President was facing an election, and so on. I think that that is when the difference really started between Henry Kissinger and Akins.

We don't yet have a really good biography of Kissinger as Secretary of State. We have a pretty critical biography of him as National Security Adviser to the President, but nothing in comprehensive fashion on [his years as Secretary of State]. I think that this was a sideshow for Kissinger in many ways in Saudi Arabia, although the amount of time he spent on [Saudi Arabia] indicates that it was almost as important for him to get this oil embargo lifted, as rapidly as possible, as to move forward on "half of a peace" between Egypt and Israel.

I think that Kissinger is the kind of policymaker who thinks that "you have to clear the air first." He looked on this event as "clearing the air" between Israel and Egypt on a realistic basis. Let them fight it out, and then the United States can step in and try to make peace.

I suppose that some of us have a different philosophy that we can use our obvious power and influence "before" the crisis, rather than "after." But that philosophy is not in accord with what Kissinger would do. He would ignore a crisis until it burst out, like [the oil crisis].

*Q: Moving back to the focus on you, you stayed [in Saudi Arabia] until when -- was it 1975?*

BIRD: 1975.

*Q: Was the oil embargo still on when you left?*

BIRD: Oh, no. The embargo had been essentially ripped apart by all kinds of efforts by the international oil companies to see to it that oil would continue to flow from somewhere, that Saudi oil would go to refineries in Singapore or wherever, and that the oil would disappear in the international stream and could be used. The oil embargo was put on in October, 1973. The oil embargo can be said to have been effectively lifted by March or early April, 1974. We had the beginnings of a new relationship with Saudi Arabia. We knew that Saudi Arabia was going to be very, very wealthy.

The last thing I did under Ambassador Nick Thacher before he left in July, 1973, was a despatch that I called, "The Saudi Spending Machine." It was about 20 or 30 pages long. The Department won't let me have a copy of it because they say it's still too confidential, which is silly. In any case all it does is say, "Let's look at the end of the 60 year contract between the Saudis and the oil companies," which was to end in 1993. [The contract ran] from 1933 to 1993. [I suggested that we] look ahead for the 20 years from 1973 to 1993 and see how the oil industry might look at that point, how much Saudi Arabia would have in terms of foreign exchange, and how she would spend it over the years. I took the figures from ARAMCO because I knew that they were building a 5-7 million barrels per day production capacity. If you look at the cost of building that capacity, at that time, which ARAMCO did, you can see that Saudi oil is the cheapest in the world, by a factor of four or five. So where is oil to come from [in the future]? It has to come from Saudi Arabia. Just the economics of it requires that, in one way or another, ignoring the politics of it.

So I came out with a conclusion which the Ambassador made me change slightly. The figures looked as if Saudi Arabia would have -- even if she spent an increasing amount on her five-year plan, even if she built a huge road network, and even if she did this and that for the 5 ½ million Saudis at that time -- by the year 1993 [reserves of] \$140 billion in foreign exchange. At that time [1973] Japan had the largest foreign exchange holdings [in the world] of about \$30 billion. The Ambassador looked at this figure and said, "You'll have to cut it back. That's an unbelievable figure." I said, "Well, the figures are there, but, OK, I'll cut it back to \$100 billion" -- a nice, round figure. So we sent it out that way. The Ambassador decided to send this study to every Embassy in the Foreign Service, because he thought it was important.

I got a lot of responses from friends and others around the world who read [this study]. It was prepared on the basis that this was what was going to happen and that the United States would be at the very center of Saudi Arabian economic development. By April, 1974, only six months after the oil embargo was put on, I recall recording that I had taken care of 10 visits from groups of bankers to Saudi Arabia in a six-week period. It was just a complete reversal of the situation.

I had said that I was going to retire on my [50th] birthday. This was on March 17, 1975. However, I stayed on [in Jeddah] for another six months. The last thing I did was to arrange something that nobody else wanted to do. It was a "skunk" job, in a sense. It was the last visit of former President Nixon abroad. He had phlebitis, although we didn't know it. That was a pretty fascinating thing.

**CHARLES MARTHINSEN**  
**Political/Consular Officer**  
**Jeddah (1962-1964)**

*Ambassador Charles E. Marthinsen was in Jersey City, New Jersey on May 18, 1931. He received his BA from Gannon College in 1953 and served in the US Army from 1953 to 1955 before joining the Foreign Service in 1956. His career has included positions in East Pakistan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Canada, Egypt, Libya, and Qatar. He was interviewed on July 18, 2003 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.*

MARTHINSEN: No. Having worked rather hard for two years, I just wanted to go to any Arab country to try to perfect my language. This was before I really appreciated the differences among the dialects. My first tour after training was in Jeddah in Saudi Arabia. I thought, "This is very close to the heart of the Arab world and it should be very good." And it was very good. Jeddah in those days was a pretty sophisticated city with a variety of peoples, Muslims certainly, but from all parts of the Arab world. It was an interesting experience. And Saudi society was fascinating.

*Q: You were in Jeddah from when to when?*

MARTHINSEN: From '62 to '64.

*Q: What was the government like in Saudi Arabia when you got there?*

MARTHINSEN: Then crown prince Faisal Bin Abd Al-Aziz was the power behind the throne. King Saud Bin Abd Al-Aziz was being eased out of the picture.

*Q: What was your job?*

MARTHINSEN: Jeddah was – and it was the embassy then; there was nothing in Riyadh--a small political section. I handled consular affairs and helped with reporting on political developments. Very little in the Saudi media was reportable. This was well before "Al Jazeera"

came on to blow the whistle on various Arab governments and personalities. We had good contacts with the ministry of foreign affairs, which was collocated in Jeddah. The rest of the government was in Riyadh, which I visited only a couple of times; American oil company personnel were more common in Riyadh than were U.S. diplomats. Even the ambassador went to Riyadh only occasionally.

*Q: Who was our ambassador when you were there?*

MARTHINSEN: Parker Hart.

*Q: He was an Arabist.*

MARTHINSEN: Yes. He spoke limited Arabic.

*Q: He was Turkish, too. What were some of the issues that concerned the embassy and you yourself?*

MARTHINSEN: As has been the case in the Middle East for half a century, there was always the threat of war related to the Arab-Israeli dispute. And there was a growing tension between Riyadh and Cairo. While we were in Saudi Arabia, the Yemen civil war broke out, and the Saudis were backing the Imam's forces and Gamal Abdel Nasser was supporting the Yemeni republican forces.

*Q: They put quite a few troops down there.*

MARTHINSEN: Yes. The large Egyptian Expeditionary Force, which kind of tilted the fighting towards the republicans. The Yemeni royalists wounded were brought up to Jeddah for medical treatment. Interesting story there. A Lebanese physician who was on the staff of the hospital in Jeddah said it was extraordinary how when they'd bring in someone with a really serious wound, you could see the wound heal itself even as you watched. Yemeni children who survive childhood build up such immunities that they're enormously hardy. Well, having said that, they still died and so did republicans. That led in time to overflights of Saudi soil by Egyptian aircraft and the threat of war. The whole affair was a struggle for influence between the Saudis and the Egyptians.

*Q: Did you have much contact with Saudis outside the office?*

MARTHINSEN: Yes, we did. There were a fair number of Saudis who had studied in the United States and who were interested in socializing with Americans. The Saudi social system afforded opportunities for wives, too, to join in dinners and parties of various kinds.

*Q: How did that work?*

MARTHINSEN: Beautifully.

*Q: Did the Saudi wives sit down at the table with the men?*

MARTHINSEN: Yes, but a lot of the wives were not Saudis. They were Lebanese, Syrian, Egyptian, and often Western. Saudis often married foreign, more liberated women.

*Q: Were we looking at all at some of the internal developments in Saudi Arabia which lately have come to our attention in rather dramatic form? I'm thinking particularly of the school system where the ruling party apparently turned over the school system to this religious Wahhabi side of things.*

MARTHINSEN: The Saudi schools have always been subject to the influence of the Wahhabi movement, which is, after all, the religious persuasion of the royal family and which has had an alliance with the House of Saud since the 1700s. Wahhabism represents a main prop of the kingdom. Koranic schools (madrasas), are all under the influence of the Wahhabi movement. Remember that while I was in Jeddah, the first ever royal prince to get a degree from an American university graduated; it was kind of the beginning of what you might call the development of a modernizing elite and they obviously still have a long way to go. At the time, there were a number of other Saudis who had been to the United States and Europe who hoped for the modernization of the country and gradual change. They were mostly the kids of prominent commercial families in Jeddah so far as I could tell.

*Q: Going back to this time, did you get any feel for ARAMCO and its influence?*

MARTHINSEN: Absolutely. Among our best personal friends in Jeddah were the ARAMCO rep. and his wife, Clark and Mary Sipher. They retired later in California. Clark ran a 3-man office in Jeddah. ARAMCO had an office in Riyadh and their main office in Dhahran, with which the consulate dealt, in the Eastern Province. ARAMCO was enormously influential. But also while we were there the great shift towards Saudi ownership of oil production facilities began. Concession arrangements were replaced by state ownership. That change seems to have worked out reasonably well.

I tell you what was really a major event while we were in Saudi Arabia. That was the assassination of President Kennedy. Saudis showed at that time the most moving sympathy for our country.

*Q: It was interesting how this affected all over the world. I was in a communist country at the time, Yugoslavia, and people were lined up... It was really something.*

MARTHINSEN: Yes, it was.

*Q: Were we looking at the Palestinian influence in Saudi Arabia? Palestinians were very much like the Chinese in Indonesia running many things. Was this a concern?*

MARTHINSEN: Not that I can remember. It seemed to me that the Saudis kept a pretty close control on all non-Saudi Arabs. Palestinians were influential. Their ambitions, desires, and feelings were, as you might expect them to be, at odds with ours regarding the Middle East. But otherwise so far as I know, they mostly performed their jobs as teachers, administrators, businessmen, doctors etc. The business arrangements were usually in the form of a partnership

with a Saudi national who was responsible for them and how they behaved. They were a kind of leavening agent in Saudi society. By and large, Palestinians were better educated and more sophisticated than the Saudis, who were just getting started... When I was there, the very first girls' school ever in the kingdom was opened.

*Q: You were also there before the great influx of labor from the Philippines and Indonesia and Bangladesh and all.*

MARTHINSEN: That influx had started; the word was out that Filipinas were marvelous nannies. I think that maybe a major task imposed on the Saudi diplomats around the world was to keep an eye out for good nannies, chauffeurs, nurses, etc.

*Q: How were we seeing Saudi Arabia developing? Were we looking for a successor to the House of Saud?*

MARTHINSEN: As usual, I think we were inclined to want to have our cake and eat it, too. We wanted what we call "stability" and yet we wanted secularism and progressive democracy. But they don't always work together and you can't make an omelet without breaking an egg, as we have experienced in our history. Other countries go through the same thing. That's a very interesting question which you can attack at several levels. You get down to the basic level and that is the philosophy of the people involved. Theocracies and democracies and that sort of thing... There has always been a concern that there might be a revolution in Saudi Arabia; we were very conscious of the possibility of that. But as far as I can remember in my day, there were no hints of serious dissent anywhere, no Shia-Sunni conflicts, at least that we heard about. There were always questions about the regimes in power in Sanaa or Aden. One of the last shifts of sovereignty over a chunk of the Middle East-- after the Brits and the French had divvied up most of the Middle East--was the Asir province, the southernmost province of the Hejaz, which the Saudis seized from Yemen in the '20s. There was always concern that an effort to reunify Asir with Yemen might occur, but nothing ever came of that.

*Q: What about along the Persian Gulf area? Were they having problems with the British as a surrogate, at that time the Trucial States over the Buraimi Oasis?*

MARTHINSEN: The Gulf Emirates of the lower Gulf in '61 joined into what is today an expanded Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The UAE took form in about '61. That was the same year in which Qatar and Bahrain received independence. They were originally going to join in that confederation but they opted out with, I think, Qatar following Bahrain's lead.

*Q: While you were in Jeddah, the subject of Israel and American relations with Israel must have come up all the time.*

MARTHINSEN: Yes, it always does. It always will.

*Q: How did you deal with it?*

MARTHINSEN: I would try to explain the reasons for American sympathy for Zionist

aspirations in Israel and the fact that the American Congress and most American political leaders were not only sympathetic towards the Israelis but also sympathetic towards the Palestinians and interested in working out a solution to the Palestine problem. I believe that I never made it to first base.

*Q: Of course, this was before the '67 war and the acquisition of the West Bank, which exacerbated everything.*

MARTHINSEN: You bet. We left Saudi Arabia and went to Damascus in 1964.

**SLATOR CLAY BLACKISTON, JR.**  
**Economic Officer**  
**Jeddah (1964-1966)**

*Slator Clay Blackiston, Jr. was born in 1918 in Richmond, Virginia. He graduated with an A.B. degree from the University of Virginia. During World War II, he was an aviator in the United States Navy. He joined the Foreign Service in 1947. During his career, Mr. Blackiston served in numerous capacities including posts in Amsterdam, Stuttgart, Port-au-Prince, Jerusalem, Tunis, Jeddah, Cairo, Amman, and Calcutta. He was a member of the United States delegation to the United Nations in 1971. Mr. Blackiston retired from the Foreign Service in 1975. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1992.*

*Q: Then you went to a major oil producing country, Saudi Arabia. You went to Jeddah where you served from 1964 to 1966. What were you doing there?*

BLACKISTON: I was head of the economic section. The Embassy was in Jeddah whereas the capital was in Riyadh. All the Embassies were in Jeddah and the reason for that is that the Hejaz, or the province where Jeddah is located, was considered more liberal than Nejd, which is the province, in central Saudi Arabia, where Riyadh is located. The situation there in Riyadh, we did go up there to Riyadh frequently and call on the ministries, was such that King Faisal didn't feel that he could have the Embassies there because the religious ulema didn't even permit cigarettes to be sold on the street at that time; it was very puritanical. He was afraid of trouble if the Embassies moved there because they would have to make accommodations for the western way of life. Saudi Arabia is not a country that women like; my wife did not like it at all and it is the only country that she didn't like. There is the restriction on driving; my wife did drive surreptitiously, knowing where the policemen were she would avoid them. But every so often there would be a complaint to the Foreign Ministry and it would come down to the Ambassador and he would say, "Now Aprille can't you sort of cool it a bit." That's the way it was.

There was a lot of hypocrisy among the Arabs regarding drinking. We brought in our liquor, I think it came from Singapore or Hong Kong, with falsified invoices. On several occasions we would have parties and we would serve liquor, but the Saudis wouldn't take it overtly; but frequently they would ask for an orange juice or a tomato juice and then if they thought they



knew you well enough they would say, "Now could you add a little something else to that, add vodka or something?"

Among the most interesting things I did there was to make a very long trip, I think it was about seventeen days, with one Land Rover and a Dodge power wagon with a barrel of extra gasoline. We went up along the Hejaz rail line, past Medina -- actually I could see Medina. You know Medina is not...

*Q: It is a closed city.*

BLACKISTON: It is a closed city. But it so happened that we were up near Mada'in Salih, which incidentally is a Nabatean area similar to Petra in Jordan -- these carved tombs all over the area, it's really beautiful. It is too bad that Saudi Arabia is not open for tourism. Along this rail line -- at the station in Medain Salah there are still boxcars and locomotives, I think some overturned, others partially destroyed, as a result of Lawrence's raiding. Now part of the rail line has been torn up and the rail line now only goes down from Damascus to Ma'an. We were up there and the sun was setting, we were outside of Medina maybe ten miles but there was very good visibility, and I could see the Prophet's Mosque. Then we went across Nafud sand dunes, up to the TAP line, then back through Hail. Well anyhow I had this other guy, a Sudanese Saudi citizen from the Ministry of Agriculture, driving this other vehicle. I had told him to slow down and he kept going over these dunes and finally sailed over one dune and went head first into this dune and bent a tie rod so the vehicle couldn't be controlled. I had the Spanish Ambassador, who had nothing to do and plead with me to take him on this trip, and he unfortunately had an ulcer and had to eat every so often. I would be trying to push on but he had to stop to eat. I don't know but this is getting too...

*Q: Well it gives a flavor.*

BLACKISTON: I made another trip down south, similar, where in those days the roads were nonexistent or only main roads like the one up to Medina.

*Q: How did the Embassy look on Israel? You must have been getting it all the time from the Saudis on why do you support Israel.*

BLACKISTON: Yes, we got it constantly.

*Q: What was the feeling towards Israel and its role in the Arab world?*

BLACKISTON: Let me answer this by saying that the Saudis have an ambivalent attitude toward this. Sure they support the Palestinians, at least give lip service to it, but they are sort of fearful of the Palestinians. I will give you an example. I was on this long trip that I made down south; I had with me a man from the Ministry of Agriculture named Stambouli who was a Palestinian but a Saudi citizen. There was an exchange, I just overheard part of it and I had to ask him exactly what happened. I can't remember where, it wasn't Jizan, it was someplace else; this person had said to him, this emir, "You have lost your country and you are trying to get us to lose ours," or words to that effect. And he, Stambouli, was absolutely shocked that he was not accepted; and I

really don't know what this emir meant by what he was saying. They did indeed castigate us for our support of Israel, on the other hand they looked to us for support and considered that we were their fall-back position and would protect them. You see we had had a SAC base in Saudi Arabia if you remember.

Q: *Well at Dhahran.*

BLACKISTON: You know that better than I, but King Saud had asked that it be removed. So when I was there we didn't have that, but of course we had the military mission. I went up to Riyadh quite frequently and I knew the head of the military mission. Was Gene Bird...

Q: *No.*

BLACKISTON: Not in Dhahran at that time. I knew Zaki Yamani quite well and...

Q: *He was the Minister for Oil.*

BLACKISTON: Yes, Petroleum Affairs. You know the Saudis would go up to Taif in the summer because it was cooler up there. I went up to visit him once because we had worked out an agreement, it was for the delineation of the median line of the gulf to eliminate friction with the Iranians, you know they claim these islands. I was pushing him to agree for us -- we were going to conduct the survey and then they would presumably use that as a basis for delineating the median line of the gulf. Which, I guess, transpired; I don't know whether the Iranians adhere to that anymore or not. I went up, he was living there in a tent, and had dinner with him and other people there in Taif -- you know they go back to their bedouin roots sometimes. Tom Barger was president of ARAMCO, was he there when you were?

Q: *Yes.*

BLACKISTON: So I knew him quite well. Once we had a dinner with Saud bin Jaluwi, who was the governor of the Eastern Province.

Q: *Did you get any feeling in Embassy country team meetings about reports that would come out of Israel? Did you feel that our Embassy there was the tool of Israelis?*

BLACKISTON: I think I discussed that in our last session. My impression when I was in Jerusalem was that that was definitely the case. And I have had, I think it was Ambassador...well this was related to me by a fairly prominent Ambassador who served in Lebanon but he also served someplace else in southeast Asia, anyhow it doesn't make any difference. This was about last year and he said to me that he was getting ready to go to such and such a place, he had been told he would be named, and some political appointee in the State Department told him, "As soon as we get the Israeli clearance you are all set." And my impression was that Army attachés sent to Israel had to be cleared by the Israeli government before they were sent. That was my impression, I may be wrong.

**BROOKS WRAMPELMEIER**  
**Political Officer**  
**Jeddah (1964-1966)**

*Brooks Wrampelmeier was born in Cincinnati, Ohio on September 27, 1934. He attended Princeton University as well as the American University in Beirut, Lebanon from 1954 to 1955 before joining the Foreign Service in 1956. His career has included positions in countries such as Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Zambia, the United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on March 22, 2000.*

*Q: Today is April 13, 2000. You next went to Jeddah. You were there from when to when?*

WRAMPELMEIER: I was there from September 1964 to September 1966.

*Q: What was the situation in Saudi Arabia when you arrived there?*

WRAMPELMEIER: I think my first impression was how hot it was. It was mid-September when we got off the plane and it was like being hit in the face with a hot wash cloth. The general situation was, of course, that there was continuing tension between King Saud, who was still on the throne although he had been stripped of his powers in 1962, and his younger brother, Crown Prince Faisal. The problem was finally resolved in November 1964 when the royal family got together and announced that they were transferring their allegiance from Saud to Faisal. The religious leaders endorsed that and Saud went into exile where he died several years later.

In the meantime, of course, the Yemen civil war had broken out in September 1962. The Egyptians had sent troops to support Abdullah Salal and the revolutionary officers who had announced that they were supporters of Nasser. The Saudis had come to the support of the deposed ruler of Yemen, Imam Muhammad al-Badr. So there was a great deal of tension along the southern border of Saudi Arabia. Much time was spent by Ambassador Bunker attempting to work out an arrangement by which the Egyptian troops could be withdrawn from Yemen and thereby ease the situation. That did not happen until after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war when the badly beaten Egyptians finally withdrew their troops from Yemen. The civil war in Yemen went on for several more years but eventually the republicans won and Muhammad al-Badr went into exile in Spain.

Our concern at that time was the Yemen situation and what became the Faisal/Nasser struggle for greater influence in the Arab world. Faisal created in the middle '60s the Islamic Conference Organization in which he was trying to push Islamic solidarity among Muslim countries in opposition to Nasser's Arab nationalism and his alliance with the Soviets. At the same time the Saudis began wanting to improve their military posture. A fair amount of time was taken up dealing with their requests for military equipment and ironing out disputes between American companies over which fighter aircraft they should buy. Washington finally sent the famous test pilot, Chuck Yeager, to Saudi Arabia to go through the merits of the various aircraft the Saudis were considering. He tried to appear neutral, but he came down in favor of the F86 which was

what the Saudis eventually bought. They were also concerned with improving their land forces and beginning to think about their navy. In Saudi Arabia we also had an ongoing U.S. Geological Survey that project which was mapping the country and discovering, for example, old gold mines that the Saudis might try to restore and work. The Army Corps of Engineers was involved in still other projects, primarily the establishment of a television system for the kingdom.

*Q: They (the Engineers) were first brought in to Dhahran to build an airport in 1959-60.*

WRAMPELMEIER: Well, the airbase was in the '40s.

*Q: Yes, but this was the airport.*

WRAMPELMEIER: Yes, the civil airport. They came back in and worked on that. Well, this was what was going on in the kingdom during my tour. In August 1965 Nasser visited Faisal in Jeddah to try to work out their problems on Yemen. Nasser sailed into Jeddah on an Egyptian warship accompanied by the commander of the Egyptian navy. To demonstrate our support for Saudi Arabia and to deter Egyptian attacks, we had not only sent a squadron of fighter aircraft to Dhahran, but we had arranged for periodic visits to Jeddah by destroyers from the Middle East Force (MIDEASTFOR). We had a U.S. destroyer in the harbor when Nasser arrived. I was the liaison with the ship and we received a radio message the evening that Nasser arrived. The captain said, "We've got a peculiar situation here," and then the radio went dead. I went down to the port thinking maybe if I could get out to the ship... Well, the port was sewed up tight for security reasons. All boatmen were ordered to beach their boats and there was no way I could get out to the ship. So I spent the night worrying that somebody might have a ruptured appendix or something.

The next day we managed to get back in radio contact with the ship. The problem was that when Nasser's ship came into the harbor, flying his presidential flag, the U.S. warship had not fired a salute in recognition, a standard international naval courtesy. The Egyptian admiral had sent a stiff message of complaint over to the American captain. The American captain said "You know, we only fire a salute if we are told to do so by the local port authorities and nobody told me anything. I'm sorry about that." They eventually ironed it out over a cup of coffee.

*Q: We still had relations with Egypt?*

WRAMPELMEIER: We still had relations during my tour. This was a question of how the Navy conducted their courtesy. I think those were the chief things that were going on during this period.

*Q: When you arrived there was Egypt seen as the threat?*

WRAMPELMEIER: Yes. I think earlier on, of course, in the '40s and '50s the British and the Hashemites were seen as the threat to Saudi rule. By this time, however, the Egyptians were seen as the threat. This was the period of the "Arab Cold War." Nasser was trying to extend his influence into Syria, with which he had a brief political union, the United Arab Republic, and also was in competition with whatever regime happened to be in power in Iraq as to who was

going to carry the banner of Arab nationalism. Of course, Nasser's sending troops to Yemen was a further demonstration to the Saudis that Nasser was a threat and was trying to surround them. At some point in 1965 there were demonstrations against the British in favor of Nasser in some of the Gulf states like Bahrain and Dubai. So all of these things were worrisome to the Saudis.

*Q: What was your job?*

WRAMPELMEIER: Well, my job was a very frustrating one in the sense that I didn't have much to do. The embassy was in Jeddah and with the exception of the Foreign Ministry all of the government was in Riyadh, about 700 or 800 miles away. The ambassador, DCM and senior political officer had established their contacts and there really weren't very many left for the junior political officer other than to do protocol things. So, I must say that I did not find it a very happy tour.

I was in charge of ship visits and would often go aboard visiting destroyers to brief the captain and his officers on the Saudi scene. I accompanied the captains in their courtesy calls on the local Saudi military commander, an elderly bedouin whose headquarters was in a picturesque old mud fort. On one occasion I went up to Yenbu, the port for Medina, to perform the same role for our first naval visit to that port. We also had a visit from Harold Snell, our regional labor attaché from Beirut; he and visited a social welfare facility in a *wadi* a few miles outside of Jeddah.

*Q: Can we talk a little bit about logistics. The embassy had been in Jeddah since opening relations with the Saudis in the '40s. What was the status when you got there in 1964?*

WRAMPELMEIER: Well, the status was that our embassy was on a compound. However, the size of the post had grown and there was no longer sufficient housing on the compound for all the staff. A number of people were living outside in rented houses. Our arrival was not a very happy one because while still on home leave I had corresponded with the embassy and been told that the ground breaking of what would be our house had just taken place. I asked if I should leave my family in the States for a while and was told to come with family. When we arrived our intended residence was still nothing but a hole in the ground. We were put up in a so-called villa of the Kandara Palace Hotel. It had two bedrooms for three young children, our Jordanian maid, my wife and myself. We were there for several weeks and my wife was about to climb the walls when friends of ours who were also looking for housing said they had seen a place they didn't want but we might. We rented a house that belonged to a Saudi air force officer who had been transferred to Riyadh. It took time for us to get it into shape but it proved quite liveable. Still, we had the feeling that the embassy administrative staff wasn't really on the ball.

*Q: Had the ambassador, Parker Hart, and the DCM...?*

WRAMPELMEIER: Well, Parker Hart was in Washington on a promotion panel, so the DCM, Nick Thatcher, who later became ambassador to Saudi Arabia, was chargé.

While in Jeddah, I was able to make a couple of very interesting trips. The economic officer, Slator Blackiston, was an Arabist, and wanted to travel up into the northern and central parts of Saudi Arabia. Ostensibly our purpose was to study bedouin resettlement activity by the Saudi

government. We arranged for an escort, a Palestinian who spoke English, from the Ministry of Agriculture and they also gave us a driver, a man from Chad. The Spanish ambassador, who was bored to tears with nothing to do except during the Haj when people from Spanish Morocco came through on pilgrimage, asked to come so we took him along. We were also joined by a woman named Barbara Toy, an Australian who had married a Finnish American. Her husband and child died during the war under circumstances that she never explained. She had become sort of a poor woman's Freya Stark. She owned a custom-fitted Landrover which she had driven alone around the Libyan Desert, in Ethiopia, and across the Sahara. She wrote books about her adventures. She had driven her own vehicle up to Jeddah from Aden. The Saudis allowed her to drive herself so long as she did not do so in Jeddah. Barbara later wrote up this adventure in a book entitled The Highway of the Three Kings.

We went up near Medina and spent the night in the house of a British engineer who was in charge of the Medina power station. This poor guy lived and worked outside the city. As a non-Muslim, he could not enter Medina. If he wanted to go anywhere to buy something he had to drive 400 kilometers south to Jeddah. He very hospitably let us camp out on the floor of his living room for which he received a half bottle of scotch.

We tried to travel up the old Hijaz railway, which was being repaired by a British-German company.

*Q: After Lawrence had blown the thing up.*

WRAMPELMEIER: Yes, after Lawrence had blown it up. At this time - 1965 - there was underway an effort by Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia to try to rebuild it. The effort collapsed after a bit. I don't think the Syrians or Jordanians really had the money and finally decided the project wasn't worth it economically. We drove up along the restored track bed until we reached the camp of the British and German construction engineers. They warned us not to try going further, it was too rough. So we returned to Medina and took the main road up to Tabuk. At that point Barbara Toy continued on to Jordan and Beirut while we went northeast to Sakaka and Qurayyat al-Milh ("villages of salt") where the chief industry was digging holes in the ground, pouring in water and then returning a day or two later to dig up the salt left by evaporation. Interestingly, the emir there was a young man educated in California who spoke very good English. He gave us a very interesting lecture on the bustard and how to hunt it. Then we went along the TAPLine (Trans Arabian Pipeline) road as far east as Rafah and then back south to Ha'il. TAPLine carried the oil from Saudi Arabia up to the Mediterranean through Jordan and Syria to a Mediterranean terminus at Sidon. TAPLine was closed in 1967 because of damage in Syria to the pipe which was never repaired.

We began to have trouble with one of the vehicles. In the middle of the Great Nafud Desert it broke down. I think we had a broken engine mounting that cut a hose. The Spanish ambassador and I agreed to spend the night in the middle of the sand dunes while the other vehicle went into Ha'il to find a mechanic. I was surprised at how much traffic there was. About every two or three hours a truck would come by. The drivers would always stop and try to do what they could. These big Mercedes trucks have drawers built into the side in which the driver has all sorts of tools and spare parts. Eventually Slator and the others returned with a mechanic who got us

going so we could at least reach Ha'il. We spent a day or two there. Ha'il was still really medieval. The governor was the one originally appointed by King Abd al-Aziz after he had kicked the Rashid family out in 1925. We found him colorful but he was notoriously miserly. The food was awful. So we were not too unhappy to leave. We continued to have trouble with our truck and progress was very slow back to Medina where our escort and the driver were able to get it repaired and we finally got back to Jeddah. The whole trip took about two weeks.

I also made a trip down to Jizan on the Yemen border. I flew down while Slator Blackiston drove down in an embassy Landrover. It was such a hard trip that he put the embassy vehicle on a truck and sent it back to Jeddah while he flew back. We spent a few days in Jizan and I got to know some Saudi army officers stationed there. When I arrived, I was sent over to the army guest house. I suppose they wanted to keep an eye on me. The town was like the wild west, full of wild-looking Yemeni royalist fighters plus the Saudi military.

*Q: At that time was the Saudi military doing anything with the Yemeni royalists?*

WRAMPELMEIER: Yes. They were giving them support. The Saudi troops were not going into Yemen as far as I know, but because the Yemeni royalists were backed up on the Saudi border the Saudis had reenforced their own units down there. It was a matter of some concern lest the Egyptians, who had staged a couple of aerial attacks on Saudi Arabia in 1962 and 1963, do it again.

One of the intriguing persons whom I came across in Jizan was an American, a fellow with whom I had shared an Arabic class while I was a student at AUB. Bruce Condé claimed to descend from French royalty. As a boy he became interested in postage stamps and struck up a correspondence with the then Imam Yahya of Yemen, who also collected stamps. Bruce wanted to go to Yemen. He learned some Arabic in Beirut and then went to Yemen, where he converted to Islam, renounced his U.S. citizenship, became a Yemeni citizen, and married a Yemeni woman. He tried to corner the market in postage stamps but ran afoul of somebody with more clout and ended up being put in chains and shipped out of the country on the Ethiopian Airways. This was after I had returned to Beirut in 1959 and the local newspapers every day reported his adventures. He was flown to Addis Ababa, where they wouldn't let him land because he had no papers. Then on to Cairo, where they wouldn't let him off. Then to Beirut, where they wouldn't let him off. He flew back to Egypt and Addis Ababa. For a week he was the unwelcome guest of Ethiopian Airways until the Lebanese finally agreed to let him land. When the Yemeni civil war broke out in September 1962 Condé joined the royalists in Yemen. Shortly thereafter, he reappeared as Major General, the Prince of Bourbon-Condé, the Postmaster General of the Royalist Forces. He invented his own postage stamps and cancellation marks with statements such as "delayed in transit through enemy lines." He was a very colorful character. He was up in Jizan with some medical problem. This was the sort of wild group that existed there.

*Q: There was a period of time when the AID mission was kicked out and they had some problems. We had to send I think Parker Hart and Herman Eilts down to pack them up. Was that during your time?*

WRAMPELMEIER: I don't remember that, I think that may have been later. At one point there

was an allegation that some members of the AID mission had been firing rifles or something. It didn't make any sense, but the charge was that they had engaged in some sort of illegal activity. I think that may be when they were kicked out.

When I was in Jeddah Parker Hart had, of course, been accredited not only as ambassador to Saudi Arabia, but also as ambassador to Kuwait and as minister to Yemen. When he left Jeddah in 1965 to become ambassador to Turkey, his staff had a party for him and several of them, including Dick Murphy, put on a "this is your life" skit which included three people dressed as the king of Saudi Arabia, the ruler of Kuwait and the Imam of Yemen singing a song to the tune of "We Three Kings of Orient Are."

After Hart left and Nick Thacher went on to Tehran as DCM, Herman Eilts came as ambassador and Talcott Seelye as DCM. Eventually Dick Murphy went on to Amman and Bob Stuckey, who had been the chargé in Yemen, took his place as senior political officer. Stuckey was a little bit suspect to the Saudis as they knew he had urged the U.S. to recognize the Yemen republican regime. He didn't stay very long in Jeddah but resigned and went to the University of Texas where he earned a Ph.D. and wrote books on Yemen and other Middle Eastern subjects.

I made one trip to Dhahran and from there took the railroad to Riyadh. It was a railroad that Aramco had built for the Saudis. I like trains. In Riyadh, I visited an American couple I had known in Amman and made one or two brief courtesy calls at various ministries. You could really walk around in Riyadh in the mid-'60s. It had not yet sprawled out the way it is today.

*Q: Was part of our embassy already located there?*

WRAMPELMEIER: No. There were some American government people as advisors but no embassy personnel.

*Q: Why didn't we do that?*

WRAMPELMEIER: Well, the Saudis didn't want foreign embassies up there. They were willing to take technicians and advisors, but they didn't want diplomats up there because if the Americans moved up there, then the Egyptians would want to move up there too. Also, some of the smaller Muslim countries preferred to keep their embassies in Jeddah where they could more conveniently assist their countrymen on pilgrimage.

*Q: This was a little bit naive in a way. You can't very well have your capital one place and keep the embassies somewhere else.*

WRAMPELMEIER: Yes, but we have done this with Israel.

*Q: It means someone is in the car.*

WRAMPELMEIER: Yes. Well, we could fly up. The U.S. Military Training Mission (USMTM), which had its headquarters in Dhahran, had a branch stationed in Riyadh. USMTM was still flying an old C-47 that once was used by *General* Eisenhower when he was head of SHAPE. Bill



Rugh had established a small USIS English Language Training program there in the late 1960s but it wasn't until the early '70s that the embassy opened an informal office in Riyadh. I think Skip Gnehm was our first resident officer in Riyadh and for many years our little office up there had no real official status. The Saudis did not formally recognize its presence but allowed it to exist. Finally they agreed that all embassies could move up to Riyadh, establishing this big diplomatic enclave out on the edge of town where our embassy is today.

*Q: As political officer, albeit junior political officer, the major political event was when the Saudi princes all got together and said, "Faisal in and Saud out." Saud was considered a pretty ineffective king and Faisal was obviously the person who was running things anyway. Did we have any feel for this or were we able to monitor this process?*

WRAMPELMEIER: Yes, we would get reports from various sources. Americans who were in Riyadh or other people would tell us what was going on. Essentially, the power had shifted from Saud to Faisal in October 1962 when the family agreed that Faisal as crown prince and prime minister would have the deciding voice on government affairs. Faisal had then announced a ten-point program which included things like the abolition of slavery which was legal in Saudi Arabia at that time. It also talked about establishing a consultative assembly which actually was not formed until the 1990s by King Fahd. I forget the other things that were in the program but the purpose was to set forth various government reforms.

Saud, probably egged on by some of his sons who lost power in this shift, tried to reassert himself. In the fall of 1964, just after I had arrived, there was almost a shoot out in Riyadh between Saud's royal guard and the National Guard and army forces which had surrounded his palace. The royal family decided that they must depose Saud. Faisal very deliberately went off on a desert trip so he was not in Riyadh when the family made this decision. He only showed up in Riyadh once the decision had been made. We eventually were able to piece together a picture of how this was done. It was an instructive lesson in how the royal family could handle effectively a difficult succession problem.

*Q: Well, one of the real strengths of the Saudi government was that the power was so wide spread within the family.*

WRAMPELMEIER: The family is huge. So far, the succession has gone down through the sons of King Abd al-Aziz in order of seniority. Saud was his eldest surviving son. Faisal, the next eldest son, had been named crown prince. The two brothers had been pledged to cooperate with each other. There had been this period of tension in the late '50s because they had differing views on what the role of the king should be. The next in line after Faisal were Nasser, Sa'id and then Muhammad. Muhammad was a drunk and a hot head, the wicked grandfather in the notorious "Death of a Princess" episode. He was the one who made sure his granddaughter was executed for her escapade with a young man. The family bought off the princes in between Faisal and Khalid, who was the next eldest prince with any sort of experience in government and who was generally recognized as qualified to rule by the family. The succession has continued to go down through the next eldest brother with the understanding that he has had experience in government. Thus, Fahd succeeded Khalid and Abdullah is designated to succeed him. But this generation is now in their sixties and seventies. The question today is what about the next

generation, the sons of Faisal, for instance, who also have considerable government experience.

*Q: When I was in Dhahran, (1958-60), the question was will the House of Saud make it? Was this still the question?*

WRAMPELMEIER: I think our impression was, particularly after the family handled the succession to Saud was yes, the family was pretty well organized. It was big enough that it wasn't going to be easily overthrown like, say, the rulers of Yemen and Iraq and ultimately the Shah. We used to be somewhat bemused by the Shah and his supporters saying, "the Saudis can't last." Even today I think the general feeling is that despite the criticisms of the Saudi regime that are coming from the right, from the religious groups, this regime still has the strength to keep itself in power. There is a lot of evidence that Abdullah, who is really now the effective ruler of Saudi Arabia since Fahd's illness, has been taking steps that will further open up the economy, for example, and encourage foreign investment. He, unlike Fahd, is not so vulnerable to being criticized by the religious elements for immoral practices, etc. I think the family is going to have to bend and sway a bit but I think they will probably survive.

*Q: I was trying to capture the feeling at the time.*

WRAMPELMEIER: At the time, I think we felt that Faisal was a strong enough person and, while there had been some threats of disunity during the Saud period, that these had been overcome by Faisal becoming king and solidifying his control over the country. We didn't have a feeling that the regime was in serious trouble.

*Q: Back in the late '50s I got the impression that there was concern of too many Palestinians in positions of technical authority, including the military. The pilots were mostly Palestinian at this time. Had this changed?*

WRAMPELMEIER: I think this was changing. I remember the Saudi air force people I knew, and I knew a few because I was living in an air force enclave, were not Palestinians. I don't remember meeting any Palestinians who were air force pilots, although I am sure there were Palestinians in various technical professions like mechanics and engineers, etc. There certainly were Palestinians teaching in schools, but there were also Egyptians and Syrians. The foreign-born people around the king, that is people like Rashad Far'aoun and Yusuf Yassin, were Syrians rather than Palestinians. I don't think we had a feeling that the place was run by Palestinians. By this time you had increasing numbers of young Saudis coming back from school abroad. All but the eldest of Faisal's children, for example, had gone to the Hun School in Princeton, New Jersey and some had gone on to Princeton and other U.S. or UK universities. They were back in Saudi Arabia and beginning to find positions in the government. There were other examples like that as well. Certainly Aramco had a lot of Palestinians and Lebanese working for them. But, even there, Saudis were beginning to replace them.

*Q: Were you monitoring the suq to see if there were lots of pictures of Nasser around and to figure out what the "people" were thinking about?*

WRAMPELMEIER: I never saw a picture of Nasser in the suq and I doubt if anybody in the suq

would have had the nerve to put one up. I think the Saudi police would have stepped in quite quickly on that. No, I must say, I don't think we monitored the suq. It was not one of those things that the Saudis would be comfortable with if you went in and asked what their political view was on this. They would clam up very quickly. They were not used to discussing politics with foreigners.

*Q: Were you able to establish contacts with the Saudis or at least with other Arabs there?*

WRAMPELMEIER: That was a problem. As junior political officer most of the accessible contacts were all ready taken. I did get to know some army officers whom I first met in Jizan. One of them actually was from an Uzbek family that had settled in Saudi Arabia in the '20s or '30s. But, no, we didn't have that many social contacts with Saudis. We did have contacts with the other missions - Jordanians, Indians, Pakistanis, etc. - but with Saudis it was very difficult. I did have contact with the military in part because of my role in coordinating ship visits. I would take people to call on the local military commander and Foreign Ministry people. After Jordan, where we had had wide contacts and the people were talkative, we found Jeddah was not the same sort of place.

*Q: Did you or the rest of the embassy find yourselves busy during the Haj season?*

WRAMPELMEIER: There weren't that many Americans making the Haj in those days and the few who did usually didn't contact the embassy because they would be handled by the *mutawwafs*, the authorized pilgrim guides who met the pilgrims, saw to their needs, and assured their departure at the end of the Haj. Once I met an African American Muslim who had been studying at the Islamic university at Medina. He had been kicked out of school for some reason, but he didn't seem interested in pursuing the matter and I think he left the kingdom shortly after his visit to the embassy.

One of my jobs, oddly enough, was embassy representative on the international committee in charge of the non-Muslim cemetery in Jeddah. This was a little walled cemetery which had grave stones going back to the massacre of Europeans and Jews in Jeddah in the 1850s. It also had the grave of a British vice consul who had been murdered by one of the sons of King Abd al-Aziz.

*Q: Was this the case that started the abolition of liquor to the foreigners?*

WRAMPELMEIER: Yes. The king's son had been drinking at the British vice consul's home. They argued about something and the prince shot him. I think there were a couple of Americans buried there. Italian prisoners of war who had been interned on an island off Jeddah during the world war were buried in the non-Moslem cemetery. There was even a Buddhist grave. I took my wife one time to see the cemetery and she said it was an awful place. It was sunbaked and without trees.

We had very little to do with the Haj. Now my successor, David Long, took a great interest in the Haj and eventually wrote his Ph.D. thesis on it which he had published as The Haj Today. David's book focused on the administrative aspects of Haj and how increasingly the government of Saudi Arabia had become involved in managing the Haj by improving the health, safety, and

transportation of pilgrims.

*Q: What was your impression of Parker Hart? How was he as an ambassador?*

WRAMPELMEIER: I thought he was very good. I didn't see that much of him. He was gone when I arrived and came back only shortly before he was transferred. I think we overlapped four or five months. He was a very competent ambassador and certainly knew Saudi Arabia. He had known Faisal since the '40s. In fact, he had been at the founding of the United Nations in San Francisco in 1945 as a liaison with the Saudis and some of the other Arab countries. I later worked with him briefly when he was Assistant Secretary for Near East and South Asia (NEA). I was then on the Saudi desk. I thought he was very good.

Now, Hermann Eilts was also very good. He was very attentive to the daily management of the embassy and was very demanding about what he expected from his officers. Under him, the embassy was well run, by and large, except on the administrative side. That situation was always a problem.

Here it might be worth mentioning King Faisal's 1966 State visit to Washington to meet President Johnson. On the king's return, Ambassador Eilts arranged that all of the embassy officers and their wives would be at the Jeddah Airport to greet him. The king's arrival was broadcast by Saudi television. This was probably the first time that Saudis ever saw their king shaking hands with Western women.

*Q: You left there in 1966.*

WRAMPELMEIER: I left there in September 1966 and returned to Washington for a two-year tour as analyst for Egypt in INR (Bureau of Intelligence and Research).

**ALFRED LEROY ATHERTON, JR.**  
**Deputy Director, Near East Affairs**  
**Washington, DC (1965-1974)**

**Assistant Secretary, Near East Affairs**  
**Washington, DC (1974-1979)**

*Ambassador Alfred Leroy Atherton, Jr. was born in Pennsylvania in 1921. He received his A.B. and M.A. from Harvard University. He entered the Foreign Service in 1946. Most of Ambassador Atherton's illustrious career have been focused on Middle Eastern Affairs. Aside from his posts in Germany and India, and his assignment as the officer in charge of Cyprus Affairs, his other assignments demonstrate this focus. They include Deputy Director of the Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs; Director of the Arab States North; Director of Israel & Arab-Israeli Affairs; Deputy Assistant Secretary of NEA; Assistant Secretary of State of NEA; Ambassador-at-Large for Middle Eastern*

*Negotiations; and Ambassador to Egypt. Prior to his retirement from the Foreign Service, Ambassador Atherton served as the Director General of the Foreign Service and as the Director of Personnel. He was appointed career ambassador in 1981. Ambassador Atherton was interviewed by Dayton Mak in the summer of 1990.*

*Q: What year was that?*

ATHERTON: As I recall, that happened in the summer of 1966. I'm talking now about the end of '65 and the very beginning of '66, when it was still an Office of Near Eastern Affairs.

I did, as I recall, almost a month's trip. I visited almost every country in the Office of Near Eastern Affairs. I got to all the major countries, including Yemen and South Yemen, which was then Aden and was still a British colony. I did not get to Qatar or Oman, and I didn't get to the sheikdoms that later became the component parts of the United Arab Emirates. Remember, in those days the Maghreb, the Arab countries of North Africa, were still in the African Bureau, so my trip really was from Egypt eastward to the Persian Gulf and from Syria in the north to Aden in the south. But it was a long trip, and I got back in touch as a result of that, and came away from it with a certain number of impressions about what the issues were that we were going to be dealing with.

Just to recall what the issues were at the time, this was a period when there were strains in our relations with the Egyptians despite early efforts by the Kennedy Administration to improve relations. The Egyptians had sent an expeditionary force to support the revolution in Yemen, and this had frightened the Saudis. We had had to choose, and had chosen to stand with the Saudis, and therefore we were seen as opposing the Egyptians. There were other reasons as well, over Palestinian and Arab-Israeli issues, and over Egypt's relations with the USSR and its threats to Arab governments friendly to us. We had suspended Public Law 480 wheat sales to the Egyptians, because of attacks by President Nasser on our policies. So that while we had people, both in Cairo and in Washington, trying to maintain a dialogue and a relationship between Washington and Cairo, there were strains in the relationship.

In any case, one of the big issues in the area at the time, and it tended to affect our relations with a number of countries, was the civil war in Yemen, and the Egyptian intervention on the side of the revolutionary regime, and the Saudi support for the monarchy, so you had a civil war with two of the principal Arab countries aligned on opposite sides, and the United States trying to keep good relations with both of them. In the end, our relations with Egypt suffered, and our relations with the Saudis prospered during that period.

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ATHERTON: And so there was in fact, in July of 1968, a [George] Ball mission to the Middle East. He said he was going to take Joe Sisco along as the Assistant Secretary for U.N. Affairs; it would be a Ball-Sisco mission.

Somebody said: Where is the Near East and South Asian Bureau in all of this? Who is going to

be there that knows a bit about the Middle East? And finally it was agreed that they should have an NEA representative. Ambassador Luke Battle recommended that I be sent along as the NEA representative on this peacemaking mission.

So I got to go along. I was a little bit outranked, since I was then a country director, and I think I was maybe Class Two in the old system. I was pretty junior, and it was clear that I was not going to be a major partner in this thing. I was to be the person they could turn to for expert advice if they needed some factual information, note taker, write up the telegrams reporting the meetings, minutes, and maybe help with briefing papers, but basically I was not there to try to help them shape policy.

So the trip ended in Saudi Arabia where we talked to King Faisal about what we were doing in trying to help the parties make peace. The Saudis did not take part in the war, but they were certainly in a state of belligerency with Israel. We were looking for Saudi support, to get Saudi political and financial support to help bring about peace. One of the concerns we had was that the Suez Canal had been closed by Egypt during the war. It had been blocked by sinking ships in the canal. So the canal was closed and this was causing some disruption in maritime trade; the flow of oil was interrupted. And one of the things Ball did was to try to persuade Faisal that this was not a good thing for the Arabs, and that Faisal should use his influence to get the canal reopened. I don't recall that we made much headway with the King, who was not about to be seen to be deviating from the decision the Arab chiefs of state had taken at Khartoum.

Anyway, the mission didn't produce any results. The short of that is that the Ball mission was the only foray in the Middle East until the end of the Johnson administration. It didn't produce any movement at all. It didn't give Jarring anything he could use that he didn't already have to try to persuade the parties to come to the table.

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ATHERTON: Even as 1973 wore on, we began to get rather ominous warnings from some of the other Arab countries, and in particular from Saudi Arabia, that the situation with continued Israeli occupation, a humiliation of the Arabs, could not go on indefinitely, that this was intolerable from an Arab point of view.

And that was when we first began to get hints out of the Arab world that they might be compelled to put a squeeze on the oil supplies to the West. This was a time when we were not as dependent, as we later became, on Arab oil, but our allies were. A squeeze on them would indirectly be a squeeze on us as well. So there was some foreshadowing of what became, within the year, the Arab oil embargo. But again, there was a tendency in Washington to discount both the possibility that the Egyptians would start a war that threatened Israel's control and that the oil-producing countries would really seriously go through with this. The reasoning was that they would hurt themselves as much as anybody else by cutting off income from the sale of oil to the West, to anyone that was seen as supporting Israel in any way, which meant first of all the United States, but to some extent the western European countries as well.

[... November 1973]

One of the things Kissinger had on the agenda was to go to the Saudis and try to get them to relieve the oil embargo. I haven't mentioned it, but one of the first things that happened after the war broke out was that the Saudis made good on their threat to organize an Arab oil embargo against many countries supporting Israel. It went into effect the day that the United States announced the resupply of the Israeli forces in the war. And it really was a total cutoff of shipments to the United States and some allies, though some disassociated from us in order to get the oil supply. So in the end it was basically an embargo of the United States and I think Holland who stuck by the Israelis and was embargoed.

So one of Kissinger's jobs, in addition to negotiating an agreement that would stabilize the front and relieve the tension that was created by the total encirclement of the Egyptian Third Army, was to try to persuade the Saudis that now that he was working on a just, peaceful solution of the problem, they should lift the oil embargo.

*Q: Were there other Arab oil-producing countries involved, too?*

ATHERTON: Yes, it was the Arab oil-producing countries. The Iranians, who were part of OPEC, did not join, but the Arab countries did. The Saudis clearly were the prime movers in this. They were the ones to persuade. If they could be persuaded, we would see if they could persuade the others to lift the embargo, too. Meanwhile there was an attempt made to organize a U.S.-European oil reserves system where we could help each other. The United States was in a position then, with its own reserves and its production, to help its allies. But clearly the allies were very uncomfortable with this. They felt that we should be tougher on the Israelis and more understanding of the Arabs, so there were some strains in that period between the United States and our allies in western Europe as well.

[...Later: December 1973]

Initially there was some question about how to deal with the Syrians. Kissinger, all through this, was consulting, in addition to the parties directly involved, very closely with the Saudis, and particularly with the Saudi foreign minister, Omar Saqqaf, whom Kissinger felt had a lot to offer, and then, of course, with King Faisal himself. So there were lots of side trips to Saudi Arabia to consult with the Saudis and enlist their help. It was the Saudis, in particular Omar Saqqaf, who said, "You've got to develop a relationship with President Assad of Syria. The Syrians are key to this, and I (Saqqaf) will be glad to help clear the way." So the decision was finally made that we would ask if Kissinger could visit Damascus and have a meeting with President Assad, whom he had never met.

We had no relations to speak of, at all, at that point with the Syrians. As I recall, there had been no Americans in the Interests Section in Damascus, where the Italian government was representing our interests. Unlike Egypt, where we had a small number of Americans in the Interests Section under the Spanish flag, I don't believe at that stage we had any Americans under the Italian flag. It was just Italian staff, in both our embassy in Damascus and our consulate general in Aleppo, looking after our properties there is what it amounted to.

Kissinger was assured by the Saudis that he would be received and well received, and so the

decision was made to go to Damascus. That was one of the first stops on this round of preparations for an international conference, and led to the first meeting between Henry Kissinger and Hafiz al-Asad.

Well, there were lots more of these quick trips, more visits to Damascus and Saudi Arabia and Cairo, and we went to Israel to talk to the Israelis, and went to Amman to talk to the Jordanians.

Kissinger had as his interpreter probably the most accomplished and eloquent interpreter that I have ever seen, in Arabic and English, named Isa Sabbagh. Isa was a native-born Palestinian American citizen, best known as the voice of the Arab service of the BBC, broadcasting from London during World War II. He ended up as an American citizen and a Foreign Service officer with USIA, and had been assigned to our embassy in Saudi Arabia, where he did some interpreting for Kissinger with the Saudis and with King Faisal. Kissinger was so impressed, he took such a liking to him that he asked to have him assigned to be his interpreter for the negotiations with the Syrians.

ATHERTON: Later in '75, there was an occasion to reopen the talks with Sadat at a very high level. King Faisal of Saudi Arabia had been killed by a deranged relative. There was a major funeral, and President Ford sent Vice President Nelson Rockefeller to be his representative at the funeral. I was sent along to be Rockefeller's political advisor for this event. He had been briefed ahead of time by Henry Kissinger about the issues, the status of the negotiations, and what the options were. He was well briefed.

As always happens at state funerals, there were bilateral talks between various combinations of senior people, and among one of those was a meeting between Rockefeller and Sadat, who was also at the funeral. In that talk, Sadat, in effect, said: Tell my friend Henry that I want to try again to have this agreement in Sinai; I think it should be possible. And he hinted at some possible formulas that might work.

So out of this meeting between Rockefeller and Sadat came a decision by the President and Kissinger to make another attempt for a second Sinai agreement. And that led to another shuttle.

**DAVID BLAKEMORE**  
**Position not specified**  
**Jeddah (1966-1968)**

*David Blakemore was born in 1941 in New York State. He graduated from Valparaiso in 1962 and joined the Foreign Service in 1965. He served overseas in Saudi Arabia, India, Korea, Bangladesh and Nigeria, as well as the staff director of the Board of Examiners and Deputy Team Leader in the Inspection Corps in Washington DC. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in the winter of 1997.*

BLAKEMORE: I was in the Near East and South Asian bureau and we were moved from



Calcutta to Jeddah.

When we arrived at the airport, there on the tarmac was my friend from the A100 course who had earned 17 dollars, or something, for having one of the worst posts. He was greatly amused that I had now joined him in Jeddah. At the time, and we are now talking about November 1966, it was the capital of Saudi Arabia and it was the city that tolerated and dealt with foreigners within Saudi Arabia. Nonetheless, it presented us with a new and interesting form of culture shock in the form of restrictions on our personal activity at post by the fundamentalist conservative monarch regime. For example, my wife could not drive. She could not go downtown in clothing that did not cover her arms entirely. Jeddah, if anything, was hotter than Calcutta and equally humid, which always surprises people, but it is right on the Red Sea. No alcohol. Of course, we had plenty of it but it wasn't publicly available. Christian services were conducted on the embassy grounds in a way that made us feel that we were participating in some evil clandestine activity. So as I say, it was another form of culture shock.

*Q: You were there from about '66 to?*

BLAKEMORE: July of '68 which is a year and a half.

*Q: What was the political situation or the situation of Saudi Arabia at that time that you were there?*

BLAKEMORE: It was a very autocratic system then. As far as I can see, things have not changed a whole lot though I haven't been back. King Faisal was certainly a benevolent dictator. A very sophisticated seeming and really gentle and wise man, I thought. I mention this personal characteristic because I think that attitude kind of pervaded the way the autocracy operated. It was not terribly repressive. There wasn't an awful lot of serious abuse of people, as long as they went by the rules, but there was not much tolerance for breaking the rules. There was, for an American certainly, a repressive air about the kingdom. It was a government that despite its conservatism, was extremely friendly with the United States.

At that time the Arabian American oil company, ARAMCO, was comprised of four American companies. It had not yet been expropriated. It wasn't puzzling that we had a very strong and friendly relationship with the Saudi government. Oil was priced at less than two dollars a barrel, a 42 gallon barrel of oil, but the ARAMCO production price was something like two cents a barrel. They were making a lot of money. The government was making a lot of money. This was long before the dramatic increase in prices.

We were in Jeddah during the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. It was a time when American embassies all over the Arab world were evacuated, sometimes under harrowing circumstances.

*Q: There was the rumor in the Arab world that somehow or another Americans had destroyed the Egyptian air force.*

BLAKEMORE: Right, I had forgotten about that and that made people quite unhappy. But the Saudi government saw what was happening in Libya (I remember Libya being one that was quite

messy) and urged us not to evacuate people. They came to the ambassador, personal emissaries from the King showed up and I think the minister of the interior but I'm not certain. While he was in talking to the ambassador making his pitch that we not evacuate, his guard was sitting in the outer office with me, sabers and automatic weapons bristling like great desert warriors. We did not evacuate and there was really no unpleasantness directed at us at all in Jeddah.

The most important thing that happened to me in terms of my career there was that I was exposed to economic work for the first time. The embassy was experimenting with an unusual form of organization where there was a senior officer as the political counselor and another one as the economic counselor and then I think four or five of us junior people did both economic and political reporting. We would flip back and forth. At least they tried it that way and my friend, Tom Gallagher, who had been in the A100 class with me, was also in the bullpen as we called it. After this sort of brief effort at mixing everybody together, there was at least a de facto separation and Tom became the political junior officer and I was an economic junior officer.

I discovered that I loved economic work. I found it fascinating. I got to travel around the country a little bit and do amateurish assessments of the industrial development efforts in the various corners of Saudi Arabia. I learned a lot about the oil business although the main oil reporting took place from the consulate general in Dhahran on the Persian Gulf. Still, I had a chance to get involved in that. I learned a little bit about trade policy and I thought, I don't know where all this activity has been all my life but I really like it and would like to do more of it. I had only taken one economic course in undergraduate school. The Jeddah "bullpen" experience really affected the next 15 years of my career.

*Q: How did you bring yourself up to speed on economics? There you are out in Saudi Arabia, what did you do?*

BLAKEMORE: The economic counselor was a good teacher. What we were doing was a very shallow kind of economic journalism. We didn't have to know a whole lot about economics. Certainly nothing that would constitute analysis was done. From the counselor I learned enough about basic economic theory and forces. I certainly didn't know much but it didn't matter. It was not a very sophisticated economy of course at that time.

*Q: Did you find yourself sort of working with ARAMCO?*

BLAKEMORE: The major interaction with ARAMCO was done by the people in Dhahran. There was a very cooperative relationship and just a steady feeding of information of all kinds: production information, pricing information, market assessments and shipping and all the aspects of the oil business. There wasn't much refining going on at that time in the country. It was certain that they were sharing a lot more than the Saudi government would have liked them to share. It was just assumed that that would happen.

*Q: How did you find the Saudi business, commercial, economic community? I was an economic officer for a year in Dhahran from '59 to '60 or so and I had the feeling that almost everything was being run by Palestinians at one level with a Saudi boss above them. What was your impression?*

BLAKEMORE: That was my impression. Not only Palestinians but Lebanese and Egyptians to some extent. The Saudis that I encountered in economic work were all in the ministries. They did not seem terribly sophisticated about economics.

*Q: The great influx of American educated Saudis was just getting cranked up at that time.*

BLAKEMORE: Yes and I don't think they were going into business to a great extent. They found good opportunities in the government and I don't think had to work hard in general.

*Q: Was there any concern at our embassy about whether Saudi Arabia, the economy, or the fact that so many other Arab countries had fallen to military coups, or something like that, was this a concern?*

BLAKEMORE: Not a significant one, no. It seemed to us that the royal family was quite intelligent in the way it managed the potential for dissident activity in the country. There was certainly no terrorism of any kind in the oil fields or elsewhere while I was there. The religious right had to be gotten around, bowed to, but it wasn't anything like the force that it is today in Saudi and elsewhere. Not a major concern.

*Q: While you were in the political section, were you getting any feeling for Nasser because he was sort of the great god for a while. Then after the '67 war, although he took the blame on himself, was there any feeling of the diminution of his stature at all? Did you get any feel for that?*

BLAKEMORE: I don't recall that I did. Saudi Arabia was a very isolated place at that time. The issue that was so hard for them to deal with was the Jerusalem mosque [coming into] the hands of infidels.

*Q: Which came about because of the '67 war.*

BLAKEMORE: That's right. The loss of the West Bank and the rest of Jerusalem was a great blow to the Saudis in the religious sense rather than the political sense. I don't think the Saudis at that time particularly acknowledged Nasser's leadership in the Arab world, or at least leadership of them.

*Q: Who was the ambassador at that time?*

BLAKEMORE: Herman Eilts, a dynamo and a really amazing man. A fluent Arab speaker. Spoke English better than the queen. His mother tongue was German and so he spoke English beautifully but very carefully. He was extremely effective, friendly, accessible, and included the junior people in his staff meetings as a matter of course. He took me on two long driving trips around the country. He always took one of the junior officers. It was a wonderful experience to see the beauty of that country which is not really obvious from Jeddah.

*Q: Did you get any feel for the Arabists versus the Israelists? This is one of the classic things. We have great interest mainly because of American political pressure in Israel and yet we have a lot*

*more Arabs out there. This is your first time in there, did you get any feel for that tension?*

BLAKEMORE: It was the first time that I had seen it. There were three well established Arabists in the embassy: Ambassador Eilts, Talcott Seeley was the DCM and later became the ambassador in Tunisia I recall, and Bob Stuckey was the political counselor. Seeley and the ambassador, if they had any significant concerns about how American policy was going, kept it to themselves. Stuckey I think it is fair to say couldn't. He was a very scholarly man. He loved to read Arabic texts and was well schooled in Arab literature as well as politics. I think our policy slant really made him feel bad. That is the recollection I have when you talk about it. He was really depressed and dismayed at the way American policy was going. He felt that the views of the Arabists were being brushed aside.

*Q: How about getting statistics, economic information from the Saudis? Was this a problem?*

BLAKEMORE: They didn't have a lot. The governor of the central bank was a Pakistani who was extremely cooperative and that is where the statistical base was in so far as there was one. The Saudis were not a particularly good source of information. We had the Pakistani in the bank on the one hand and the Americans at ARAMCO on the other and that is where the numbers came from. It was only later when I was assigned to Korea that I saw the avalanche of good data that even a developing country can turn out. It was quite a contrast from the Saudis.

As I think back at what I have said so far, I realize that I left something out. I don't know if it is a subject that should not be discussed these days but let's find out. The relationship between the Department of State and the CIA was something that was never covered in any significant way in training. I don't know how I knew, probably in conversation with my more sophisticated classmates, that there would be CIA officers in the consulate general in Calcutta. They were truly spooky in the sense of being shadowy, of conveying the impression that they didn't really trust the State people. Not that the State people had any need or urge I think to know any details about sources or anything.

I can remember needing to talk to one of the CIA officers in Calcutta. They had their own separated off section of the building, and so I walked into that section as I would to any other section, causing tremendous consternation and a scramble to cover up documents. The leader came running out of his office and screamed "do you know where you are?" This was a mortifying experience and it really, I think, soured me on the whole arrangement for the rest of my career. Oddly enough, when I think about people that I was close to, not in Calcutta as it turned out but in other posts, they were often CIA officers at my grade. I never did get it right with the CIA leadership at a post after that, I don't think, including when I was DCM in Nigeria.

*Q: I wasn't told this either. You sort of picked this up by people whispering. It was silly because obviously the enemy intelligence agents knew exactly who was who.*

BLAKEMORE: As well as all of the Indian employees.

*Q: There was a lot of posturing and duplication. I am dubious about an awful lot of what happened.*

BLAKEMORE: There was not a whole lot of sharing of information either, which of course is a policy decision. I can imagine various reasons why it would be good not to share information widely. It was a terrible introduction, a terrible first experience that really colored my views. I don't know if something happened between State and CIA in the late '50s or the early '60s that this was an overreaction to, I have no idea. The same kind of unpleasantness characterizes my memory of the relationship with those folks in Jeddah. The same kind of super secretive, "you don't really need to know what's going on here" attitude. Very troublesome.

*Q: It is, and often I've gotten from other conversations, that you find out that you are both milking the same cow essentially. It is not as though one is getting one source and one is getting the other. If often doesn't work that way.*

BLAKEMORE: Sometimes it does. I have more favorable stories from other posts.

*Q: Did you see any problem with the fact that you had Saudis not working too hard in the ministries and Palestinians, Pakistanis, Egyptians and all doing most of the work? We are not talking about common laborer, we are talking about commercial transactions, school teaching, the whole thing.*

BLAKEMORE: There was certainly a problem in the minds of some of the Egyptians and Palestinians that I encountered but I think the Egyptians, at least, regarded it as part of the price of doing business. They made so much more money teaching school in Saudi than they could have at home. They just accepted it. The Palestinians were more likely to be D.P.s

*Q: D.P.s being displaced persons?*

BLAKEMORE: Yes. They couldn't go home. They didn't have a home to go to anymore. They were much more likely to be bitter but also to be really careful about what they said because they were there at the sufferance of the Saudi government. I think everybody kind of accepted that that was the way it worked.

*Q: In '68 when you were leaving did you feel that you wanted to get yourself tagged as an economist?*

BLAKEMORE: I thought you were going to say Arabist. As an economist, yes, but certainly not as an Arabist. I said, "Okay, that's enough of this experience" and of course it was a very unfair sample of what life in the Arab world in a personal sense can be like. My wife had left about eight months early and she said "I can't stand this any more." She came home to Washington.

*Q: The double whammy of Calcutta and Jeddah is a little tough. What was the background of your wife?*

BLAKEMORE: She is from Texas. I met her at Valparaiso University. She majored in English and eventually was able to work at the consulate in India and at the embassy in Saudi Arabia. Otherwise I think she would have gone nuts. She was at least as shocked by all of this experience

as I was only as we used to say, I could at least go to the American embassy or the office every day and she couldn't until she got the job.

*Q: In '68 where to?*

**KENTON W. KEITH**  
**Assistant Public Affairs Officer, USIS**  
**Jeddah (1967-1968)**

*Ambassador Keith was born and raised in Kansas City, Missouri. After graduating from the University of Kansas he served with the US Navy before entering the Foreign Service in 1965. An Arabic speaking Officer, Ambassador Keith served as Public Affairs Officer and/ or Cultural Affairs in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Syria, France and Brazil before his appointment as US Ambassador to Qatar. His Washington service included several tours in senior positions with USIA. Ambassador Keith was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1998.*

*Q: Today is June 13, 1998. You were in Saudi Arabia from 1967 to when?*

KEITH: Until October of 1968.

*Q: Who was the PAO?*

KEITH: George Thompson was the PAO. He had been there for some years already and was a remarkable and interesting man. I used to think of him as the world's greatest authority – and you can just fill in the blank with whatever subject you like. George had done everything. He had been in Saudi Arabia a little too long by the time I got there and his greatest achievements were behind him. But this was a very interesting time in Saudi Arabia. The Saudis were wrestling with the problems of an increasing number of Western non-Muslim people who were coming to work in the Kingdom and not in menial tasks such as workers from Yemen and Sudan, but in jobs that would ordinarily suggest a rather high public profile. They were trying to find a way to harmonize the presence of this foreign population with their own traditions. At the same time there was, for Saudi Arabia, the beginning of an electronic media revolution. One should not forget that at the time I was in Saudi Arabia, there were no films, no cinemas (Cinema was forbidden). Television had been introduced the year before I arrived, and there were violent protests among conservative elements. Even then, it was the most conservative society I have ever known, and it became even more so subsequently. The country was spiritually guided by the most conservative interpretation of Islam of all seven Islamic countries in which I worked. It was a time when the *mutawa*, religious police, were going around and hitting women's uncovered ankles with a cane and forcing people to leave the shops and go outside during prayer time and pray.

*Q: Our embassy was in Jeddah at that point?*

KEITH: Yes. In fact, foreign presence in Riyadh was discouraged in that period. One of George Thompson's accomplishments was the establishment of an English language teaching center in Riyadh, which if you don't count our military cooperation was the first American presence on an official basis in Riyadh.

*Q: Who was our ambassador at that time?*

KEITH: Hermann Eilts.

*Q: He was an Arabist par excellence.*

KEITH: Yes, and a very fine ambassador. I worked for a number of very fine ambassadors, but he was certainly the first one who really took time to teach. He would call younger officers to his office from time to time and show us a message that he had just drafted and explain its purpose. He was an excellent teacher. It's not surprising that he has moved on to an academic career.

*Q: What was his relation to the USIS?*

KEITH: Hermann Eilts is one of those managers who notes the sparrow's fall. There was no detail in that mission that was too small and there was no section of the embassy whose work he considered beyond his personal interest and certainly beyond his responsibility. He was very interested in two things that USIS was doing. First, he was very interested in our work with the local press in Jeddah. It was pretty pathetic, we all agreed, but George Thompson in particular did quite well getting in touch with the local editors to encourage balanced reporting and general professionalism. Ambassador Eilts was always available for cultural or social or professional involvement. He was always available to participate in USIS programs. He encouraged other embassy officers to do likewise. Second, he encouraged the establishment of an English language center in Riyadh. I'm not sure whether he saw the establishment of that program in Riyadh in terms of English language or in terms of official U.S. presence, but he was very much behind it. I think he gave George Thompson a very big boost for his persistence in seeing it through. It was not easy. There was a lot of reluctance within the government, but George managed to navigate it through the ministry of education and other ministries and get it established.

*Q: At that time, was there the thrust of having the young Saudi students go to the United States as opposed to France, Germany?*

KEITH: Absolutely. In fact, the policy was that if a Saudi student could get an acceptance from a legitimate American institution, he would receive a full scholarship from the Saudi government. I was there when the Saudis began to establish a prep school arrangement in the United States in a handful of universities that would take Saudi students in a pre-freshman year and basically bring them up to speed in English. This was prior to the establishment of the Saudi Educational Foundation, a government establishment that at one time managed thousands of Saudi students in the U.S. under Saudi sponsorship. An interesting sidebar to this was the question of whether Saudi women were entitled to the same largesse. It happened that a man, a Saudi I knew, who

had been one of the few of his generation who had had experience abroad and had been in Italy and spoke Italian, I believe, had sons and a daughter and was a widower. One of his sons was at the University of Kansas. His daughter was allowed to go to Lawrence, on the agreement that she would stay in a dormitory on the university campus under university supervision and attend Lawrence High School for her junior and senior years. Well, she was talented and outgoing and quite beautiful and became homecoming queen of Lawrence, Kansas High School. Of course, as a graduate of Lawrence High School and because of her grades, she had the right to go to the University of Kansas on a scholarship. She refused the scholarship, saying that her government had a policy of paying for all its university students and she would use her government's scholarship. She came back to Jeddah and ran into the very considerable problem that she couldn't get access to the Ministry to apply for her grant. Her father, who was not only a widower and a man of some age but was handicapped, asked me for help. It was summer, the Saudi government was in its summer headquarters in Taif up in the escarpment. So, the three of us got in my car and drove to Taif, where I had arranged a call on one of the senior under secretaries in the ministry. I said that I needed to know, because of the number of students in the United States and questions that could arise, what the policy was. I said, "I assume that your scholarship policy applies to all Saudi citizens, isn't that correct?" He said, "Well, of course." At that moment we had a policy. So, she went back to the University of Kansas on a Saudi government scholarship.

*Q: That's quite a breakthrough.*

KEITH: It was a very generous – in fact, overly generous – policy on the part of the Saudi government. The students often had too much money.

*Q: There are stories about American University and I'm sure it's replicated at other places – sports cars, etc. – the usual thing when you give young people too much money in school irrespective of nationality.*

KEITH: As in many other areas – not just that, but in travels to Europe by family members and extravagancies of the princes in the U.S. and elsewhere. All of that has gradually changed. I'm not saying that it doesn't exist anymore. It certainly does. But the more egregious examples of throwing money around and working under the assumption that money can buy anything are in the past.

*Q: Were you at the embassy working with the Saudis to alert them to the problem?*

KEITH: I can't say that really. I can't picture in my mind Hermann Eilts going to King Faisal and saying, "Your Majesty, your boys are misbehaving in London and Paris and look silly." I can't picture that happening nor would it have been necessary. Faisal was a man who would have frowned on these kinds of things and probably did. He had a son, his eldest son, Abdullah, who had the reputation of being among the worst behaved in foreign settings. We heard that at some point Prince Abdullah was not welcome in his father's house. I think there were enough people in the country who were sensitive to being taken as caricatures. The same thing is true about being taken by phony contractors and charlatans who came to the Kingdom in their dozens over a certain period of years. There was a lot of money and limited experience and the natural



mistakes occurred. But now there is less money, more experience, and so the Saudis could be in the position of wagging their fingers at the Kuwaitis during the Gulf War when young Kuwaiti men were in the discos in Cairo while Egyptians and Saudis were out there in the desert fighting their battle.

*Q: Were you personally opening this American education exposure up for the time but with the knowledge that after the first generation or so would come back would end up in meaningless civil servant type jobs or the doctors would come back and run pharmaceutical companies and that sort of thing?*

KEITH: In fact, that's not what happened. The first generation of people who came back had very important jobs and went on to be influential in the society. It is those who came a bit later who came back and were somewhat adrift. But the Saudis had such a need for western educated people in the period of the late '50s into the early to mid-'70s that people who were getting training had things to do in the ministries. Those who were trained in technical fields certainly had things to do. In the petroleum sector, of course, ARAMCO's school in Dhahran was very influential. But in my experience in Jeddah and from the people I met in Riyadh, whether it was Khalid Anani, who was the foreign ministry person responsible for the United States and Western Europe with a master's degree from the University of Southern California, or whether it was the man who was running both radio and the proto-television service – these are young men, quite young, and not long out of universities in the United States. My memory of that period is that people who came back and wanted to work and wanted to find positions could do so. There were plenty who didn't want to find things to do and didn't need to.

*Q: From the embassy, what was the impression of the power Faisal had at that time?*

KEITH: He was highly respected. The King was highly respected and he was viewed as a modernizer after the Saudi fashion. Under Faisal, doors were opened to the West. Western technology, and of course the relationship with the United States thrived. We always regarded Faisal as a moderate force in regional affairs.

On the other hand, his power was somewhat constrained by family politics. Like all Saudi princes of his generation, he was the son of King Abdul Aziz al-Saud. But he had no full brothers. Natural power cliques were centered on groups of full brothers, i.e. sons of Abdul Aziz from the same mother. For example, the three monarchs who succeeded Faisal are all sons of a woman from the Sudeiri family.

The education of Saudi youth in the U.S. was something that Faisal actively pushed. Under Faisal, there was a modest but perceptible move toward educating women in Saudi Arabia. A lot of people thought that was the influence of his Turkish-born wife, but whatever the reason, a women's branch of the university in Jeddah was established, and he provided more primary and secondary schools for girls. This may sound like a backhanded compliment, but the last vestiges of slavery in Saudi Arabia were swept away by King Faisal. Faisal was not a westerner and all of the things that he did he did in the context of Saudi Arabia, its culture, and what he perceived to be their needs. But he wasn't somebody who wanted to see the fundament of the kingdom changed. He didn't want to see a kind of loosening of the moral bonds of the country. But he

thought that education was compatible with that and necessary for the kingdom's well-being.

*Q: Did you see the religious power as a barrier?*

KEITH: Yes, I struggled with it. As assistant PAO, my main responsibility was running the cultural center, a rather unhappy enterprise in a place that's not particularly interested in your culture. But I decided that after talking with a few people I would try to open the cultural center to women one day a week, with no men on the premises at all, getting volunteers from the embassy, spouses, to supervise. I thought this was in the spirit of what was happening in the country - the establishment of girls schools in various places, the establishment of the women's branch of King Abdulaziz University, and so on. Within weeks the initiative was quite successful. Women in purdah, fully covered faces and hands, would get out of a chauffeur-driven Cadillac or Buick Riviera, and would turn out to be the American-born wife of some Saudi and her two sisters-in-law and her mother-in-law. They would come in and spend some time reading, or just talking, or perhaps just having a social gathering.

A few weeks later, a delegation turned up at the center from the Islamic University in Medina. The delegation leader asked me if I felt this new policy was wise. I said I thought this was in the spirit of things and that there was no mixing of the sexes and there was nothing on our shelves that could be construed as harmful or anti-Islamic or anti-family or anything else, and that they were welcome to see what we had. They said, "You're missing the point. The point is, a woman's place is in the home and if you are opening these facilities for them, that takes them out of the home. So, we're asking you to reverse this policy and close to women." I said, "I understand your views, but the policy will stand." They said, "Well, we'll find a way to close it up," and stormed out. Well, my boss immediately had visions of mobs in the street and the place burned to the ground. That afternoon I called Khalid Anani, the man I mentioned who studied in Southern California, and told him what had happened. He said, "Well, Kenton, you should have told me first before you did this so that we could make the necessary communications, but never mind. Don't worry about it. It will not be a problem." That was the last we ever heard of it. But clearly there was a religious objection to our cultural presence.

I mentioned earlier that the introduction of television was viewed by some religious leaders as an unwelcome Western intrusion. In the riots that ensued, one member of the royal family who was leading the protest was killed by the police.

*Q: On the Eastern Province, the Armed Forces Radio had had television, which was pretty primitive because television was pretty primitive in those days. The governor apparently liked the western in particular. That is a hotbed of the Wahhabis, but...*

KEITH: The Eastern Province is an interesting and very important area of Saudi Arabia from that point of view. It is the Eastern Province that has both the highest concentration of petroleum reserves and the Saudis' Shia population. The Shia are decidedly second class citizens in Sunni dominated Saudi Arabia. So, strains in the Eastern Province remain a feature of the Saudi political landscape today. The people who bombed our facility in Dhahran, the Khobar Towers, were people with a religious grievance against the Wahhabis and a political grievance against the U.S.

*Q: Did you have a problem with your effort? Anything that you would do would be undermining the religion... it's almost inevitable. Keeping women from being barefoot and pregnant or the equivalent there... I would think that there would be a problem of you being a young officer wanting to get out and doing things and the more senior people saying, 'You've got to think about the impact.' The whole idea is to go out there and convert these people to more modern ways. Did you run across a generational cultural clash within the embassy programs?*

KEITH: I don't remember it in Saudi Arabia, though I encountered that elsewhere. I do remember that my boss in Saudi Arabia didn't like the idea of opening the center to women. He said, "We're not here to be crusaders," which speaks directly to your question. But I don't think that was characteristic of George Thompson. I think he was afraid the place was going to get burned down. In fact, as before, the Saudis just stayed away from the American Cultural Center in droves. You would think that you'd get a lot of students at least who would come in and sit down in the air conditioning. We didn't get very many people at all until we began to focus – and this took place really after I left – on English teaching. Saudis were not going to break the door down to read Walt Whitman or George Ball, but they needed English. When we started providing it, then we had an impact. Then later when we were getting beyond the direct English teaching, when the needs expanded beyond our capabilities, then we began to provide technical advice and professional assistance in both government-run and private sector English teaching programs. So, we then had a multiplier effect. We were able to have an effect through English teaching. The question often asked about English teaching is why do you do it? Why does it matter? It matters for a number of reasons. First, countries where a lot of English is spoken have historically been easier for us to deal with. Second, English teachers and materials almost inevitably provide insights into our culture and our institutions and society. So, we have more than one reason to teach English.

*Q: Was there any competition with the French or anyone else?*

KEITH: We are always in partnership with the British council. I never felt in all the years that I have been involved in public diplomacy and educational and cultural exchange that the British council was a rival. Possibly that's because English teaching, which is a basic thrust of both organizations, was so sought after that there was always a market for both of us. Maybe that was the reason. But also, we tended to be very friendly on a personal basis with the people in the British council whether it was in Turkey or Saudi Arabia or Lebanon. But there is no doubt that the French have always felt in competition with us and do today. It is very much a war out there as far as they're concerned. I have been involved and known people who are involved in the French cultural program and the "diffusion de la culture française" for my entire career. I know how important it is to them. I know how vital an interest it is to them. In France, culture is like life and it's also big business. So, if I have ever encountered a nationality that should be considered allies in the cultural wars who are in fact adversaries, it's the French. I say that although one of my very closest friends was until just a few months ago the man responsible for all of this activity and all of the French cultural centers around the world, Yves Aubin, who became a close friend in Damascus 25 years ago. We've been close ever since and have houses in France that are not far apart, so we see each other almost every summer. But the relationship with the British was always cooperative. Even in my earliest days, we did jointly-produced

programs with the British Council in Istanbul, running debate contests, running English language seminars, and I never had a sense of competition.

*Q: I've always felt this at posts where I've been.*

*You had been expelled from Iraq because of the Six Day War and the whole Arab world suffered a real shock by how the Israelis beat the Egyptians. How much of this intruded on your work?*

KEITH: It intruded in the sense that it was always present in the psyche of everybody. Being in Saudi Arabia in '67 was not like being in Syria or in Iraq or in Lebanon. Saudi Arabia did not break diplomatic relations with us, as did most of the other Arab countries. – Egypt. I actually was slated to go to Egypt to open a cultural center in Minya, but instead, because we had no diplomatic relations with Egypt, I was sent to Saudi Arabia. But having said that, the Saudis shared a sense of shame, a sense of failure, a sense of futility with the rest of the Arab world. But '67 was not the first time. Historically, you think of the Arab defeats of '48, '56, then '67, and these were accumulated wounds that never really healed anywhere. That was always present and a part of the landscape wherever you served in the Arab world. It was always a feature of the relationship between the United States and that country. It could be more or less relevant or more or less at the surface, but it was always present. There was always a sense of injury because of a perceived tilt of the United States toward Israel. It wasn't just a perceived tilt; it was all out, full blown support. So there was always a sense of injury. This is one of the great conundrums: Why is it that the Arabs have this sense of injury and resentment toward the U.S. for support of Israel and yet this reservoir of good will toward the U.S. never seems to run completely dry. I have never been able to understand it. I've made as much use of it as I could in trying to establish relationships and institutional linkages between the U.S. and Arab countries, but I've always marveled at the general level of receptiveness. We have had American missionaries throughout that area, except in Saudi Arabia, of course. We've had the presence of American popular culture. We've had in some countries a lot of emigrants to the United States, especially from Lebanon, Syria, and Egypt. So there are those connections, but we have had relatively warm relations with Arab audiences. In Egypt, for example, even in the worst of the days of officially-sponsored anti-Americanism in the Nasser, Americans who worked there were frequently invited to Egyptian homes. People said, "Okay, tonight we're not going to worry about politics and tonight we're just going to have fun," as the Egyptians are very skillful at doing. This was also true to a remarkable extent in countries like Syria and Iraq where there were instances where your hosts were exposed to some sanctions from their governments.

*Q: What about what passed for the press at that time? I'm sure in the '67-'68 period, there were all sorts of almost gratuitous pronouncements of people in the U.S. that must have sent cold chills up and down the spines of any Arab about Israel. Was this a problem?*

KEITH: Much of it was not. We didn't have a global press in those days. What passed for Egyptian, Syrian, or Jordanian television was poor and lacking in credibility. The word "Israel" was never used. They would refer to the "Zionist entity" and the "Zionist enemy" or something of the sort, but the word "Israel" was never used in the early days. If it hadn't been basically for our own publications and our own wireless file and making sure that the editors got the full text of American statements, I'm not sure that people would have been exposed to the truth.

Washington would sometimes note that the local press seldom if ever printed our wireless file items. I was always of the opinion that it was nevertheless important that the editors see these things. In some subtle way, our material would act as an influence on what they wrote or how they edited. The real problem for us was not ill-conceived and ill-informed statements by Americans. The real problem for us was the drumbeat of anti-Israel and anti-American editorials, stories, slanted news stories, in virtually every newspaper in the Middle East. That was the real problem. In some places, it got to be so strident that it was just background noise. We didn't need to read it anymore and didn't. But it did make progress toward regional peace that much more difficult.

*Q: What about social life? Was there much contact with the Saudis?*

KEITH: The ambassador had a lot of contact with the Saudis and so did his wife, a very gracious and talented diplomat herself. USIS officers certainly did. My recollection was that there was otherwise little social contact with Saudis, and I'm not sure I know why. I think anybody who wanted to could have invited Saudis. Saudis loved to come to your house, especially the younger ones with Western education. As a rule, they didn't bring their wives, but they loved to come to your house. And in my experience they weren't reticent about having a drink.

*Q: Where did you get your liquor?*

KEITH: We got the liquor from one of those Scandinavia suppliers -- Ostermann Petersen I think. It came into Jeddah by ship and only the non-Muslim American embassy personnel were allowed to off load while the Saudi customs authorities looked the other way. It had to be us to go down and stevedore boxes and get stuff up to the embassy. You couldn't throw away your Johnnie Walker Red Label bottles or cardboard boxes or anything else to indicate the presence of liquor.

*Q: There must have been quite an accumulation at one point.*

KEITH: Yes. We were either able to take it out to sea and dump it or burn it in the desert. It was a very interesting arrangement. The Saudis did look the other way for the Christian embassies. But they didn't look the other way for the Muslim embassies. So, after our shipment came in, we were always reminded how many close Pakistani and Turkish friends we had.

*Q: Were there any difficult incidents or problems during that time you were there?*

KEITH: Apart from that scene with the delegation from Medina that wanted to close the center (and I'm not sure how serious a threat it really was), no. I was in Saudi Arabia for a rather brief time and I did not really like it. I didn't think that I was doing much good at the cultural center. I wasn't really sure at that point that I wanted to stay in the Foreign Service anyway, and I was considering other options.

**WAT T. CLUVERIUS, IV**  
**Political/Economic Officer**  
**Jeddah (1967-1969)**

*Wat T. Cluverius, IV was born in Massachusetts on December 4, 1934. He obtained a B.A. from North-Western University. He obtained an M.A. from Indiana University. He entered the Foreign Service in 1967. He served in Jeddah, Tel Aviv, and Jerusalem. He also served in Washington, DC in the Near Eastern Bureau. He retired in 1988. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on May 31, 1990.*

CLUVERIUS: So most of them got orders to go back to the States. People on the way to Algiers, people on their way to Egypt and other places. But relations were not broken with Saudi Arabia. I was told to hold in Naples and wait for instructions on how to get to Saudi Arabia after the war when airlines could fly again into the area. Risks were over.

My wife and young son and I had a very nice time in Naples. The cat was in Chicago. After about 10 days we were told to fly to Istanbul; a Saudi plane was reported to be coming from Germany, through Istanbul to Jeddah and we should get on it. Off we went to Istanbul and rested for a few days there, haunting the Saudi office, and then flew into Jeddah near the end of June 67.

*Q: Well, when you were in Jeddah, first post, you had already qualified in Arabic by this time.*

CLUVERIUS: Yes, because I had the Arabic when I was in the Navy. I had spent a year at Monterey. And then of course I did my stuff when I was in Indiana University. So I didn't have to stay in Washington after taking the basic officers course. I was sworn into the Foreign Service in Feb. 67. Did the basic course, didn't have to get off language probation as so many did; I was already off as far as FSI was concerned. So I landed in Jeddah with pretty good Arabic. My first Ambassador was Hermann Fr. Eilts, who was a fantastic teacher for young officers. I had another unusual advantage. The '67 war had ended just a few weeks before I arrived. There had been a great deal of anxiety within the American community there from reports of threats and the fact of attacks on Americans and American installations all over the Middle East. There had been a small bomb in the Embassy compound wall in Jeddah and there had been riots at the Consulate General in Dhahran. I recall being told by Embassy staff members that Washington had considered closing the Embassy and evacuating the Americans and that the General in Command of the US base at Dhahran had made preparations to do this; evacuating Americans as we were doing in Syria and other places at this time. Eilts, I was told, told Dean Rusk that if he wanted to evacuate this relationship, he would have to get someone else out there to do it; he, Eilts would not. The King had assured him that he wanted the Americans to stay and that they would be protected. There were all sorts of reports that the French, in particular, were quietly telling some Saudis, that if the Americans pulled out they would help the Saudis buy arms and would even help in running ARAMCO. The French were in there for some profit taking, as I understood it.

My advantage as a young officer was that the King had told Eilts that until things cooled off, he

didn't want to see any diplomats up in Riyadh. As you know the capital was Riyadh but the diplomatic capital was Jeddah and there was not even a paved road between the two until, I believe, April of 67. It was all done by Saudi Air. The Ambassador replied that he understood the King's position that he wanted things to cool off. Riyadh then had so few foreigners in it that it would have been quite visible if the usual parade of Embassy staffers were in town. But there was a small American business community in Riyadh. There was an ARAMCO office there, a small military training mission and there may have been 500 people or something in that range. And these people were very nervous about their own safety and they were very used to having the American consul from Jeddah come up once a month, do all the consular services and hold their hands at that tense time. The King said, all right, the consul can still come up once a month and stay for a few days but nobody else until, basically, further notice. Eilts agreed to that and since I was the only consular officer, I went up to do most Embassy business for 4 or 5 months. I took everybody's business. If the PAO, the Public Affairs Officer, needed the lease on his house renegotiated with the owner who lived in Riyadh, I did that. If there were some discussions to be held on any subject with any ministry, I would do that. Obviously, I did not do the Ambassador's work which he could do in Jeddah with the Foreign Ministry there. For me, it was fantastic training; I was on my first assignment and I was doing economic work, political work, defense attaché work, whatever, on my own, five hundred miles from the boss in a place where the phones seldom worked very well.

*Q: Far more than you would probably much see later.*

CLUVERIUS: Yes, doing it all plus holding the hand of the community. Of course I was older than most entering foreign service officers of that era; I was 32 at the time, the oldest in our entering class. But it was wonderful training and of course Hermann Eilts was a wonderful trainer for junior officers. He was less famous for getting along as well with his senior officers because in a sense he did not need them. He had extraordinary energy, but what he really needed and used most of his ambassadorial career was himself and 3 or 4 ambitious, energy-filled young officers. So, it was not easy to be the DCM or section chief for Hermann. He liked to work with the young ones. Later he worked with April Glaspie, now Ambassador to Iraq, in Cairo who was kind of the day-to-day link between Eilts and Sadat during those critical months right after the '73 war. I stayed in Jeddah for 2 years, a standard first tour abroad, and was Consul for one year and worked as a junior pol/econ officer the second year.

*Q: Well now this is your first real experience inside the Foreign Service. Did you get any feel for what sort the Arabists of the American Foreign Service were like? What were their attitudes towards Israel, towards Saudi Arabia and other ones? What sort of emanations were you picking up as you came in?*

CLUVERIUS: You had the emanations that many of the older Arabists basically believed that Harry Truman's support for the creation of the state of Israel was a real thorn in the side of all our relations with the Arab states. So there was a certain amount of routine anti-Israel atmosphere. But again I was fortunate that Ambassador Eilts did not share this. He was not your routine Arabist. I recall one occasion that something outrageous happened -- the Israelis did something outrageous -- and Embassy Beirut sent a cable around the horn in the Arab world and to Washington urging Washington to take this and that public posture against Israel on this issue.

And whatever the merits of it, I remember Eilts saying in a staff meeting that no way was he going to join that demarche to Washington because he did not agree with it. And because we can't have all this knee-jerk reaction coming out of all the Arab posts; if we do, we're just going to be ignored in Washington. Near the end of my tour in 69 he came into my office one day; he was never one these guys who just sit behind their desks. He said -- what does the Department have in mind for you? I said, I heard there's a job in INR and a junior desk job in NEA somewhere. He said -- don't respond, I'll get you your next job. I'm going to a Chief of Missions meeting and I'll talk to some people. And when I come back, I'll have your next job for you. What am I going to say but, yes sir! You know when an Ambassador says he's going to take a hand in your career, you let it happen. He came back and he said that you're going to Israel. And at that time it was kind of a belief among the Middle Eastern specialists that if you served in Israel, thereafter you'd be tainted for further service in the Arab world.

*Q: I was going to say that there was almost an unacceptability if you once served there you couldn't go somewhere else. At least that was the word of mouth.*

CLUVERIUS: Yes, that was the image. Now there were already two Middle Eastern experts in the Embassy in Tel-Aviv. I was to go and do an economic-AID job and then move into the political section later. There were 2 guys there already. Maybe 3, let me think. Yes, Hayward Stackhouse was political counselor and he had a Middle Eastern background. Not a pure background, shall we say, he had served elsewhere and all of that. David Korn was there at the time. Also he had done western Arabic and I think he did one tour in Beirut. David, it soon became apparent, didn't give a damn whether he served in the Arab world again. He became very much an Israel partisan. Hayward Stackhouse just did it because it was an intellectual thing to do. The 3rd guy who had done Arabic and served in the Arab world was Jay Freres in the political section. And those were the first 3 so-called Arabists, a label I don't like, to serve in Embassy-Tel Aviv. And they were all still there, so no one knew what their onward careers would look like. But Eilts told me this tour in Tel Aviv would make my career. So I went to Tel-Aviv in the summer of 1969.

*Q: Who was the Ambassador then?*

CLUVERIUS: Oh, the Ambassador was Walworth Barbour. He eventually left a few years later after being ambassador there for 13 years. He was quite an interesting old character. Wally Barbour served in Baghdad in the late 30's and didn't like it; he was Minister in Cairo during World War II and didn't like that very much. But he pretty much ran the top policy and all the major policy of the Embassy with the government of Israel out of his hip pocket. He had tremendous clout in Washington and with the American Jewish community. In fact, I accidentally discovered in 71 that most initiatives that the US was considering in the region, ones that might be sensitive, were informally at least cleared with Wally Barbour, including instructions to our Embassy, or, rather, our interests section in Cairo. Things were cleared with Barbour to see if they would upset the Israelis or not. So I arrived in the summer of 69 and did this econ-AID job. Which turned out to be absolutely fascinating because it was only 2 years after the war. Our AID relationship that we had had with Egypt for the Palestinian refugees in Gaza had been transferred to the Embassy in Tel Aviv. Supervision of the voluntary agencies like CARE, Catholic Relief Services, Lutheran World Federation, that we had with Jordan in the



West Bank, were now administered out of Embassy Tel-Aviv. And that was my portfolio. Gaza was then dangerous. There was an organized resistance down there at the time. Not like the Intifada, it was more based on cells and the PLFP, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, rather than on popular sentiment as was the Intifada. So, I was the only Embassy officer allowed to go to Gaza. I covered Gaza both in the economic-aid sense, particularly working with CARE, which had huge programs down there -- Food for Peace, Food for Work, and all of that kind of thing. I did both the politics and the economic aid supervision and reporting for Gaza. On the West Bank it was a little more complicated because that's the turf of the Consulate General in Jerusalem. But they couldn't administer these aid programs because to do so one had to deal with the Israeli military and civilian occupation authorities. The Israeli authorities in general and the Israeli occupation authorities would never deal with the consulate and vice-versa. So on the West Bank my responsibility was strictly supervision of the aid programs but obviously I went and saw things and saw people that the consulate people didn't. I would work with somebody in the consulate and we would jointly do the political reporting. I became early on something of a Palestinian expert.

*Q: Well I want to move back to Saudi Arabia. How did you find the Saudi officials, since you were dealing with them quite a bit in Riyadh, how did you judge them to be?*

CLUVERIUS: Now that was before they became truly rich. You could look back in history I suppose and see what the price of a barrel of oil was but it wasn't very much. So although there was a lot of money around, nothing like what they had 10 years later. As a result they were quite open. They had not yet been totally besieged by every kind of scheme, businessman, legitimate or not. They hadn't become a real target yet to be ripped off. Which they later were, got stung on how many hundreds of buildings and projects, and things like that. And closed themselves off. They were quite open then. It was much easier to get to know a Saudi. Still there was a reserve. You didn't get to go to their homes very often but more than in later years. I found it fascinating. They don't have a great sense of humor, But they're very honest. A lot of business was done with a handshake. Later on of course they had to hire all the law firms in the world to protect themselves. So I think it was a lot more open and an interesting place to be. You still saw a lot of the traditional culture. Riyadh in those days had very few stop lights and not many paved streets. All the ministries were lined up from the airport down towards the center. You could walk from one to the other. You could casually go in and knock on a guy's door and see him. Within about 5 years after that, maybe a little more, you had to have an appointment. It might take you a month to see a mid-level official. It was a much more open and interesting place particularly for a junior officer. Our senior officers probably later on had more access. But for a junior officer it was great. It was amazing access. In Jeddah, too. Sometimes I would go up the street from the Embassy to the home of Omar Saqqaf with a note from the Ambassador. I'd learned to type Arabic pretty well and could get something done for the boss on the weekends.

*Q: Omar Saqqaf?*

CLUVERIUS: The Minister of State for Foreign Affairs. The Embassy then was on an unpaved track that led off the Jeddah-Medina Road; the unpaved track had the name of Palestine Street, of all things. There were a lot of 4-wheel vehicles, land rovers, you really drove, to get to the Embassy -- you had to tell someone to go out on the Medina Route, turn left at the Lebanese

market, the Embassy is right down at the end, with a white cinder block wall around it. We called it Fort Apache, with the flag sticking out of the sand. On occasion, I would type up a note on the weekend for the Ambassador and take it up to Omar's house, knock on the door and he would usually be in the pool floating on a mattress. He would have a cup of coffee brought to me while he would take the note and float out to the middle of his swimming pool, which was one of the few in Jeddah at the time. He'd read it and come back to the edge of the pool and say, tell the Ambassador "thus and so." So it was a much more casual environment than it certainly is today.

**DAVID E. LONG**  
**Political Officer**  
**Jeddah (1967-1970)**

**Saudi Arabia Analyst, Bureau of Intelligence and Research**  
**Washington, DC (1970-1975)**

*Mr. Long was born in Georgia and raised in Georgia, Oklahoma and Florida. He was educated at Davidson College, the Fletcher School and the University of North Carolina. Entering the Foreign Service in 1962, Mr. Long studied Arabic and was posted to Khartoum. Subsequent postings were Jeddah and, for further Arabic language studies, Tangier and Beirut. Mr. Long became one of the Departments senior Arab and Middle East experts, serving in INR as Director and on the Policy Planning Staff. He authored several books dealing with Arab and Middle East matters as well as on Terrorism and Counter- Terrorism. His expertise brought him visiting professorship at the University of Pennsylvania and the Coast Guard Academy. Mr. Long was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2000.*

*Q: All right, we're off to Saudi Arabia in 1967, and you were in Jeddah. How long were you there for and what did you do?*

LONG: I was there until 1970, and I was the number two political officer in a two-man political office. When the head of the political section went home and then took early retirement, I was the acting head of the political section until we got a new fellow.

*Q: Who was the first head of the political section?*

LONG: Bob Stookey.

*Q: Yes, and who was the ambassador when you were there?*

LONG: Herman Eilts the whole time through.

*Q: What was the situation in Saudi Arabia as we saw it and what were American interests in this '67 to '70 period?*

LONG: The same as they are, and nobody knows. The attitude, I think, in Washington was, well, they can't eat their oil and they're going to have to sell it to the West, so there's no reason to worry about this country since what else can they do with their oil, it's not threatened. They're very religious and very conservative, and there seemed to be virtually no Communist threat as seemed to be, at least in the minds of Washington, rife in northern Arab states. So, yes, they had all the normal concerns, but there was no sense of urgency and there were no visitors to speak of. It was off the beaten track of Congressmen who wanted to junket through the area and wanted to have Israel as their hub and that they'd see Egypt or Lebanon or countries close to there, but they seldom if ever got down to the Arabian Peninsula.

*Q: How did Herman Eilts operate as an ambassador?*

LONG: I think that that generation of Arabists was unsurpassed and is still unsurpassed in quality, in judgment, in depth of understanding and the ability to deal with the problems of the area. When he became ambassador, I forget how young he was. He was a relatively young person, and that was in the days when you had to have white hair before you're considered for ambassador. He was a tremendous fellow. He was also a workaholic, which is the key to success in the Foreign Service. He thought that a good weekend would be spent going down to the embassy and knocking off a dozen or so cables. I think cable traffic when he was there quadrupled from his predecessor, and when he left I think it dropped about a half. He was tremendous. The problem was trying to find something to write on that he hadn't already grabbed up and written before you could get to it; not because he was trying to undercut his staff but because he just was such a dynamic fellow and had an intellectual curiosity to want to know everything that was going on about everything everywhere, that it was hard to keep up with him.

*Q: Well, this is my question, and that is, as a political officer in a two-man political section where they don't have elections and they don't have loyal opposition, what the hell do you do and what do you report on*

LONG: Actually that's a very good question. Most Foreign Service Officers think that if they don't have elections and they don't have all the trappings of government that we have, that nothing's going on – quite the opposite. The problem is if you don't know the system – and virtually nobody did know the system except for the senior Arabists like Eilts – it was very, very difficult to find out what was going on. I went with my boss, Bob Stookey, to a lot of meetings where he never opened his mouth, and he was criticized by visitors, the few that we ever had, not Congressmen but usually FSOs, because they said he was too shy and never talked to anybody. Well, you don't have to fill silent spaces with noise in that society, and you can sit there for 45 minutes and not say a word and it's not considered unseemly or rare or anything. In fact, they wonder why we rattle on. I learned a heck of a lot about the culture under him. Then I went out and decided if I tried to beat the ambassador I'm not going to do it. He's the ambassador and he has access to people and information and cables from Washington that say "Burn before reading" that I would never have, and, therefore, why should I lead from my weakness to his strength. I went out to find things that nobody was necessarily looking at at the time, which may or may not have been marginal, but it kept me busy. I learned so much about the country that academically

I've followed the country ever since and have become, I guess, probably one of the leading Western followers of Saudi Arabia.

*Q: What type of things would you tackle?*

LONG: One thing I did, for example, Ambassador Eilts asked if I would go out and write a report about the *hajj*, which is the pilgrimage to Mecca. I think he thought I'd write about a one-page thing where we had a *hajj* this year and so many people came and this is what happened, it happens every year. There wasn't that much demand on my time, so I went out. Jeddah is the gateway city of Mecca transportation-wise, and they have a fascinating, sort of medieval guild system for administering the *hajj*. What King Abdul Aziz ibn Faisal Saud did when he took over the *Hejaz*, the western region, was he didn't create a government bureaucracy to run the *hajj*, he basically grafted on this guild system. He turned it into what in the United States would be sort of like a public utility, a privately owned but nevertheless totally regulated utility, because the government wouldn't have had the ability to do this anyway. So I met people that were pilgrim guides; they were basically like religious tour leaders, very well organized. In those days there were almost 1,000,000 – now there are over 2,000,000 – people that come every year, speaking about 120 languages and mostly old, and you have to get these out of the seaport and the airport and over to Mecca and around and about.

I studied it quite at length and wrote a 30-page single-spaced paper on this, which I knew nobody in Washington would ever want to read, but it became sort of a source document for anybody going to the embassy being assigned there, because this was the major happening of the country. We always thought of oil, but to however many billion Muslims there are in the world the *hajj* is the most important thing. So I sort of became an authority on this thing, and later on I finished my dissertation, I finished my doctorate, and I needed a subject so I thought, hey, I've done all this research, and I turned it into a dissertation. To this day – and that was years and years ago – I get questions on the *hajj* from scholars who are studying it, that I have no idea what they're talking about because I haven't look at this thing in 25 years. That's one of the things that I did, and I did it in depth. Fortunately I had a boss, Bob Stookey, who was sympathetic, because most Foreign Service bosses would say, "What are you wasting your time doing this for? What don't you do the busy work that is normal?" Well, busy work is busy work no matter where you were. So I did stuff like that.

*Q: Were we concerned at that time with the people coming on the hajj? Were we concerned that this might be a way of infiltrating God-knows-what Communist terrorists, subversives, or what have you?*

LONG: To a degree, but I think Washington was more worried than was Saudi Arabia. This would be like sending John Paul II to the Vatican City for Easter. This is such a high holy day that it would not be tolerated, not just by the Saudi government but by the million *hajjis* that are there.

*Q: Did you get involved, or was this at Eilts', the ambassador's, level, the personal relationships between the princes, the Saudi princes, because they formed essentially what, the majlises they called it?*

LONG: They didn't have a majlis. You mean the lower-case majlis?

*Q: Yes. I'm talking about whatever grouping you want to call it, but there was essentially a body that was representative of the various branches of the Saud family, wasn't it?*

LONG: No, this is one of the mysteries. How does the royal family operate? And it's still largely a mystery. I was very fascinated with it and I did a lot of study of it informally. I talked to a lot of people. Now, I didn't talk to the important people, because I was too junior, because Saudis weren't all that interested in talking to Americans. So there was sort of the regular group of people that would come to the ambassador's parties, and he picked up some contacts and they were senior enough. You always submitted the people that you had at your parties to the protocol officer, who was myself because I was the junior officer. At the next party out he'd be at the ambassador's, so why should he come to my house when he could go to the ambassador's house? So I concentrated on younger people. I met their uncles, who were older people. I met a lot of people. It was very difficult to do, and I worked at that, but then I had the time, everybody had the time. This didn't change, this was constant, but the relationship changed in a major way after the '67 war, which happened in June after I got there.

*Q: The June war between Israel and...*

LONG:...and the Arabs. Following that, the importance of Western-looking Arab states became far more important. Many Arab states in that time broke relations with us, and they were not restored for a number of years. It wasn't noticed very much in the Foreign Service because as relations were restored, the more senior people with a lot of experience in the Middle East went right back into NEA, that's the Near East bureau, where they'd been all along. The junior officers, such as myself, were so junior that it wasn't going to hurt us very much to have a sort of gap there. In fact, because I was in Saudi Arabia and then I went back to Washington, the gap didn't affect me anyway. But there were a lot of junior middle-grade officers who got assignments in the Far East, in Latin America, somewhere else, and had one or two assignments there. Then when the Middle East opened up again, they had to decide, 'Well, gee, I've now sort of gotten myself known in this bureau' – and, as you know, the State Department oversees this sort of group by area specialist more than functional specialist – 'why should I start all over again and go back into NEA? I wasn't that senior there anyway, and why shouldn't I just stay here in Latin America or in the Far East or Africa or somewhere else.'

It's fascinating. Nobody watched this except a few guys like me, I guess. I didn't do it professionally, but I was interested in it. It was not until that older generation started to retire that all of a sudden it was noticed that there was an experience gap of senior officers. By this time we junior officers were middle-grade officers. But with the senior officers there was a gap. Some of them came in from South Asia, which was part of the Near East/South Asia Bureau, but I think there was a definite quality gap. I'm not talking ad hominem here but in terms of experience, which was further compounded by what I in my personal – this is certainly not scientific but my personal – judgment is that about that time process began to win out over substance in experience terms. I don't think that the Near East has ever had the quality of people who were solid both substantively and in process – and you have to have both – as they were of that first

group of people. I think part of it had to do with the fact that after the June war the junior middle-grade people who had to find an assignment out of the Bureau and then never came back created a gap that wasn't really noticed until years went by and they would have been the ones coming in to be DCMs and ambassadors. Yes, there were people more junior to them, but people that came in because they saw a nice ambassadorship – nice ambassadorship meaning any ambassadorship – were long on process and short on substance.

*Q: How did the June '67 war impact on your observation on Saudi Arabia and our work there and all that? This was a devastating blow to Egypt particularly.*

LONG: Well, it was one of these things that was more apparent in retrospect than at the time, because the Saudis did not really involve themselves more than in a token manner in that war. Life went on. However, the energy crisis was to come soon thereafter, and this was sort of a hiatus period between the war and the energy crisis. At the time of the war Arab radicalism was at its height. When Nasser basically lost the war, you couldn't tell it at first but the charisma that he had – and he was one of the charismatic people, I think, in 20th century politics – the air went out of him. There was nothing to take its place. In time we discovered that what took its place, and what became the idiom for people to express their discontent with whatever, became Islam. I don't mean Islam the doctrine but the political Islamicism of today. That wasn't apparent immediately among many Foreign Service Officers of that time. I used to argue with them. They thought that nothing really had changed, that Arab nationalism was still at the center of attitudes of dissent and attitudes of frustration against the West, and so forth. At the time it was more with me a feeling than any real empirical evidence to prove this. The war between Saudi Arabia and Yemen went on throughout almost all of the '60s, and Nasser was keeping the war going by supplying the Yemenis...

*Q: And they even sent troops*

LONG: Right, and after the '67 war he had to withdraw those both for the '67 war and then because Egypt was militarily broken. It took another several years for that war to wind down, so as that was happening, there was still a lot of attitudes, both among the Saudis and the Americans, that Nasser was the big bad guy. Well, but he was a shadow big bad guy and nobody knew it, at first because there wasn't anything else there. So I think, at least in how I looked at it, that the '67 war was a major watershed but it was not fully realized until three to 15 years later.

*Q: Were you getting from your Saudi contacts a certain dismissal of Nasser after the '67 war, because this was really his war, he had made all the moves?*

LONG: No, not a dismissal. He lost face, he was humiliated, but not a dismissal because he was still Nasser. If you are concerned about people using an idiom to express whatever discontent – maybe they didn't like their mother-in-law, whatever – and using the language of Arab socialism and all of this stuff, and the Soviets were still there and they were still powerful, then this would be a concern. He sort of was a symbol of the language and the symbology used by people who wanted to be dissident, be against something, but he didn't rouse people and Islamicism had not flowered. I wrote a piece back then saying that it was a bipolar world, the East and the West. In Saudi Arabia particularly, because it's an Islamic country and classical Islamic political theory is

a bipolar world, the Dar al Islam, the people under the law, under Islamic law, and Dar al harb, the people of war, bipolar. The bad guys are the people of war. Now, I'm not saying that they went and looked at the Koran to decide who was who, but this is sort of like proper Bostonians think that the center of the cosmos is the golden dome of the State House of Massachusetts. It's an internalized feeling. But nevertheless, the Saudi view was that America was Christian and we were people of The Book, because Islam recognizes monotheistic religions including Christianity, Judaism and actually Zoroastrianism, the Parsis. So we were maybe not first class but we were people of the book against the people of war who were the Communists, who were atheist. In that framework they could live with having good relations with the United States. I said, "If you don't watch out, they're not going to look at us as Christian people of The Book. They're going to look at us as secularist, consumerist, nonreligious people and our status can quickly change to people of dar al-harb, people of war." I really think that that is what has happened among the people who are dissident, the Islamist radicals. The interesting thing about it is that one of the early authorities that Islamic terrorists read to this day very carefully is the same guy who is the spiritual father of Wahhabism. It's the same stuff. He lived 1,000 years ago, a guy named Ibn Taymiyyah. But it shows you how attitudes can change but the structural framework, not that they'll ever mention this. It's very internalized but it's there, and I think that that shift from looking at the West as Christians against atheists in the Soviet Union began then. And the final end of that model was with the end of the Cold War, in which the members of the Dar al-Harb and we – guess what – at least by the extremists are considered no longer people of The Book but rather secularist, atheist America.

*Q: When you went into private people's homes, were pictures of Nasser around, being sold, on thermoses, and that sort of thing?*

LONG: No. First of all, you didn't go into private people's homes very much. Saudi Arabia is a closed society. Mutayr – that's a big tribe – if they socialize typically in some social function, 80 percent of the people there will be Mutayr and the other 20 will be everybody else. If you go over to a guy who is an Anayzah, same thing, and so forth. So they don't even interact socially all that much among themselves. For them to mix with Europeans is very, very rare. I knew some people and there were a few families that I got into homes, but many of my colleagues, not just Americans but the Western diplomatic community, there were some that during their entire tour had never been in a Saudi home. That was not rare, that was the rule. About Nasser, no, I think that he captured their imagination in the late '50s a little but, but particularly in the '60s and particularly after the Yemen War started, no, because he was giving succor to this Republican regime down there in Yemen that was a threat to Saudi Arabia. Also, the Saudi concept of Arabism is different from those other people. To be an Arab you have to be born one of a tribe that is Arabian that goes back to God, and if you're not, you will never be one. That's a very different kind of concept of Arab nationalism from what Nasser was selling. They were fascinated by him earlier on, but after that I think no. I think the old attitudes toward Egyptians, which is sort of said with a curl of the lip, continues.

*Q: Was there any positive appreciation of Israel, or was this purely sort of a maligned country sitting out there?*

LONG: Nothing's pure. Behavior is so complicated. I think the tendency of everybody is to try to simplify it, to bring it down to where it's comprehensible to the human mind, but in my opinion never came to me to do this. Their attitude toward Israel was as complicated as is ours, which is also very complicated but for totally different reasons. First of all, Judaism is one of the monotheistic religions that they recognize. They are people of the book and they have a book. How do you square that with a total antipathy toward Zionism. Well, you can honor the religion of Judaism and oppose a political doctrine of Zionism, which is not even particularly religious. Now, you can call this a rationalization, but nevertheless Zionism is really a political doctrine, not a theological doctrine. So they would tell you what they oppose is Zionism. Now, don't take that out to its logical conclusion and find an inconsistency, because life is full of inconsistencies and, man, this is a big one, but that is sort of how they would construct their opposition if you ask them.

Then the other unique thing about these people, because it is such an Islamic society, is that the third holiest site in Sunni Islam after Mecca and Medina is Jerusalem. It's not the Mosque of Omar that they think is the third holiest site; it's the al Aqsa Mosque, which is this little silver-domed job which sits over on the side on the temple mount, not the dome of the rock, and that to Sunnis is the third holiest site in Islam. So there is a religious element here that transcends politics, and I don't think we've ever fully understood that either. And then you would say, "Well, then how do they square that with the fact that there are Palestinians that are Christian and not Muslim?" Well, they don't, but this is the compartmentalization again that we talked about earlier. But there is that religious element that the dome of the rock, no, but the al Aqsa Mosque, yes, that being the third holiest site, that it to them must be under Arab/Muslim sovereignty, and that's an element that some more secular Arab states don't emphasize.

*Q: Were you getting any reflections about King Hussein was being viewed there?*

LONG: Very negatively. I did temporary duty in Oman back in the '80s and I wrote this piece about why the Saudis and Jordanians would never really get along terribly well, and the ambassador was furious that I wrote this thing and quashed it. So I just sent it in the surface pouch to people I wanted to read it and let it go at that. But the thing is the Hashemites come from Mecca, and King Hussein's great grandfather, if I've gotten my genealogy straight, was the fellow in World War I, Sharif Hussein of Mecca. He ran Hejaz, which is the western region of which Mecca was the capital, under the Ottoman Empire. Since the Ottoman Empire didn't have any real military power to deploy in the Hejaz, it was really quasi-independent. He was also very, very ambitious, and so he signed – you remember, back with McMahan, the British officer in Egypt – the McMahan correspondence. He agreed to rebel against the Ottomans, which was a huge step because the Ottoman sultan was also the caliph of Islam. If you're running Mecca, you don't do that. That's like if you were a very devout Catholic, you don't for totally political reasons decide, unless you're Henry VIII, to disavow the Pope. That is a big step, and he did it.

Then at the end of World War I he declared himself King of the Hejaz. That irritated Ibn Saud over in Riyadh but he didn't say anything because he didn't have any money and was being supported in part by British subsidies. He knew that Hejaz was, because of Sharif Hussein's, now King Hussein's, support of the British in World War I, was one of their big buddies, so he didn't want to antagonize the British. But then when Ataturk overthrew the Ottoman Empire, he also



canceled the caliphate and said, “We’re not going to be caliph of this land anymore up here.” So King Hussein self-appointed himself the caliph of all Muslims, and that was more than Ibn Saud could take. So he invaded the place in the ‘20’s and took over in 1925-26, somewhere along there, his armies took over Hejaz, and that ended the Hashemite rule in the Hejaz. But in the meantime the British, because they felt they owed a debt to old Hussein, had made one of his sons King of Iraq; another one of his sons, Faisal, was going to follow him to be King of the Hejaz; and then a third son they didn’t have any place for him, so they went out in the desert on the other side of the Jordan and said, “We’re going to call this Trans-Jordan so that you can have someplace to run.” That is Jordan of these days. The son of this guy, Abdullah, wasn’t king material. His grandson was King Hussein. So there’s been bad blood between the Hashemites and the Al Saudis that go back to this period. It has a lot to do with Islam, claiming you’re caliph, running Mecca and all this other stuff that very, very few Westerners know about. Back in the Cold War we thought, well, Jordanians are anti-Communist and the Saudis are anti-Communists, they ought to get together. In a pig’s eye; they weren’t ever going to get together. I don’t mean they would fight each other, no. Their relations have always been correct, but there is very little love lost between those two countries.

*Q: Was there a feeling in Saudi Arabia that you were able to monitor about King Hussein entering the six-day war and losing Jerusalem? Was he blamed for this, or was this strictly just the Israelis?*

LONG: Well, they weren’t happy at what he did, but at least he fought for the cause. If he had not fought for the cause at all, they would have looked down on that too. They do seek to assign blame and find scapegoats just like everybody else – a human behavioral trait, I think – but not in the way that we do. Yes, they blamed him but I don’t think they blamed him to the degree that if we’d been in their place we would have.

*Q: Were things happening, maybe you’d been getting from people who had been there longer than you by the flow of students to the US and then back?*

LONG: When King Faisal, then Crown Prince Faisal, became Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia under King Saud, they stripped King Saud of his power. There were no more than probably a half a dozen or so college graduates in Saudi Arabia. Zaki Yamani, fabled Minister of Petroleum, was one of the earliest Western-educated college graduates in the kingdom. By the time I got there in 1967, more and more kids were being sent privately to Western universities, so there was a younger generation that had more of them. But it really didn’t take off until the energy crisis and all the money that was flowing in. They sent thousands of kids to the West in the ‘70s, and that is really the period where Western-trained and Western-educated Saudis just really, really took off. There were thousands of them on any given day in the United States. We had the largest number, but then there were others in the UK, in France, in Germany, all over the place. Almost all were on government scholarship by that time versus the families that were sending their own. In the meantime they were building universities. King Saud University, which was changed to Riyadh University and is now King Saud University again, in Riyadh was started in the ‘50s. It was just chugging along, and they basically hired whole faculties from the West. Then as Saudis came back with PhD’s they took their place, so there were virtually no expats there anymore. What was called when I was there the Pet College, which was the College of Petroleum and

Minerals over in Dhahran, became King Faisal University, which is their engineering and scientific university. Abdul Aziz University in Jeddah was started as a private university, and the government took it over and expanded it to a major university, and on and on. So the educational boom in Saudi Arabia occurred really more in the '70s and came to fruition in the '80s rather than in the '60s.

People were worried that with all of these college graduates coming back from Saudi Arabia, what were they going to do to find jobs. In the early days you could go from college into a high government position. Well, by the time everybody in the government had a college education, then what were they going to do? Well, private business, which is taking most of them even now. Everybody is in business; even government people are in business. So worries that they had back then and they were beginning to have in the '60s didn't come to fruition.

*Q: You were there when the oil crisis started, weren't you?*

LONG: I was in Washington at that time, but I was a Saudi analysis in the Intelligence and Research Bureau.

*Q: By 1970, because of the war, had things changed in our relationship, would you say, with Saudi Arabia?*

LONG: Superficially yes. We assigned a little more urgency to our relations than we had before. We took them for granted no more. All of a sudden we didn't have that many friends in the Middle East. They were a very powerful friend, but the relationship really did not change structurally until the energy crisis, for two reasons. One, back when I was there the Israelis would tell Washington, "We want you to have good relations with the Saudis. They have oil, and you should really have good relations. And we don't mind, we're not anti-Arab." This was based, I guess, on a calculation that they were a zero threat to Israel. Well, after the energy crisis, I think it dawned on the Israelis before it dawned on anyone else, that maybe the United States might sell out Israel for a barrel of oil, and they became threat number one.

The demonization of the Saudis did not occur until after the energy crisis. Before that, it wasn't that they were demonized; nobody ever heard of them. One of the difficulties I felt personally after that period was that in my opinion the dynamics of the relationship had not really changed very much since the 1930s, but it's hard to see that because in the 1930s nobody ever heard of the country. In the 1940s we sort of heard of it because of World War II, and then we built Dhahran Air Base, and then there was the Cold War and they were anti-Communist, and there was sort of that among a few people who worried about things like that, and not terribly negatively. Then after the energy crisis all that changed and there was a lot of demonization and still is. There was a lot of misinformation and there still is, and a lot of it is the Saudi fault for not opening their country and allowing people in earlier. We've always heard about them jacking up the price when in fact they have always been price moderates. These kinds of things have not changed except for world energy cycles, price cycles, since the '30s.

*Q: Were we at all concerned at that time when you were in Jeddah about Iraq or Iran?*

LONG: If you recall, Iran was pro-Western, the Shah, and, as we mentioned earlier about, well, there ought to be a love-in with Riyadh and Oman and there ought to be a love-in between Riyadh and Tehran. The fact is that even though there was a marriage of convenience because both countries, Iran and Saudi Arabia, were very anti-Communist, nevertheless there has never been love lost between any Arab and any Persian, and particularly Sunni Arabs and Shia Muslims is a sort of a confessional thing that you add to the mix there. So the relations between those two countries were never as warm as we expected or even was calculated that they were. They were there and they realized that they had to get along because of the worse threat, which was the Soviet Union, but relations have never been good between them. They can't even agree on the name of the Gulf.

*Q: I was going to ask, because when I was in Dhahran we kind of called it the Arabian Gulf. Is that still going on today?*

LONG: We call it 'the Gulf' now. I call it the Persian Gulf in English and the al-Khalīj al-Arabī in Arab.

*Q: By the time you left, how did you feel? Did you feel you were able to contribute to the general knowledge of Saudi Arabia back in the States?*

LONG: I probably wasn't that optimistic. It's very hard to contribute to the knowledge of anything to anybody. I guess I'm more self centered. I certainly contributed to my knowledge of it, and I hoped that it might in a marginal way contribute to the knowledge of people that would follow on. But I've never been terribly sanguine that that process would happen or that more knowledge makes for better decisions anyway.

*Q: Was there a center of learning in the United States that one could look to that was turning out good solid scholars and others on Saudi Arabia, not just Saudi Arabia but that area, at that time?*

LONG: The first American academic institution to really have a first-class capability studying the Middle East was Princeton. That was when Professor Hitti was there, and his focus was on the Fertile Crescent. There were a lot of Presbyterians, missionaries, in Lebanon going way, way back to the 1820s, and there was a Presbyterian school at one time, and so there was that link. Many, many Arab Americans were Lebanese or Syrian before there was a Lebanon, and that was their interest. Then Nasser came along and that became a major policy interest of ours. But in the meantime (a) the Saudis would never let social scientists into their country to study, and (b) the Brits ran the Gulf. So there were a lot more scholars looking at the Gulf in England than there were in the United States. So Gulf studies, if you will, particularly on the Arabian Peninsula side, never got that much attention in the centers that grew up when the government started funding various regional area studies, the National Defense Education Act or whatever it was. Again, most of the Middle East studies had to do with the Fertile Crescent region, and Maghreb but you had to learn French to go there.

*Q: In my brief experience with Saudi Arabia but looking at it, and the whole Middle East, is that it can be a fascinating place, but it's pretty hard to fall in love with this group, whereas...*

LONG: Well, I think that's pretty good. Once you've fallen in love with people, then you've probably lost your effectiveness because you've lost your objectivity.

*Q: But I mean there are countries where our people get in there and all of sudden kind of fall in love with either a romance or something. I think some of the Brits get carried into...*

LONG: The old Orientalist.

*Q: The old Orientalist got into this. This didn't seem to infect the Americans. The romance of the sands and all that, going across the Rub kali and all just didn't seem to...*

LONG: There are individual, I suppose, there have got to have been individuals who had that notion, but the Foreign Service is a professional corps of people. It's like you don't have a liberal colonel and a conservative admiral – there are probably officers – but, you know, you're not a Democratic colonel and a Republic colonel, you're a colonel. I think people believe that (a) regional specialists, not just Arabists, are pro-their countries to the degree of being anti-American, and to me that is just not so. That is not professional, and I just don't believe that they do this. Now, do they disagree with US policy? I pretty much disagreed with US policy in the Middle East as long as I served there, but that had nothing to do with my not trying to write the most effective policy papers that I possibly could to push whatever policy we were pushing. We are paid to be professional implementers of whatever the head guy wants, and I think that by and large, with exceptions I suppose and with what I consider legitimate differences of opinion, that's what we do. And that's what the Arabists did, and I think they did it better than the people who were politically inclined to follow that administration's policy, because they understood the people better and they knew how to sell the policy better even if they thought it was a bad policy.

*Q: Shall we move on then? You left there in 1970.*

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LONG: I went back to Washington.

*Q: To do what?*

LONG: To be an analyst for Saudi Arabia.

*Q: And you were doing that in INR (State Department Intelligence and Research) from '70 to...?*

LONG: Let's see. I did that from '70 to '75.

*Q: That's a long tour.*

LONG: In the meantime, in 1972, my boss, Phil Stoddard, who was the Office Director, persuaded me to finish my doctorate, which I had never finished. I did this at George Washington on the purely academic reason that it was two blocks from my office. I got

interested in the academic side of things as a complement to the operational side of things. So they came up with really a cockamamie of making people FSRUs, if you remember, and I think I was probably the only FSO that switched to being an FSRU, so I could stay in Washington. So I stayed there, and then in 1975 I became a Fellow of the Council on Foreign Relations, which I did here in Washington, and wrote a book. So I took two years off basically to be an academic.

*Q: Let's talk about the time you were in INR dealing with Saudi Arabia. As an analyst in INR, what were you seeing and how were you being used? We're talking about the '73 war and the oil crises and all this. This must have been a fairly hot spot, wasn't it?*

LONG: Well, the timing was great, because from '70 to '73 it was pretty dead, and that's when I got my degree. I did it in two years going at night

*Q: By the way, what was your dissertation?*

LONG: The *hajj*. I took that 30-page single-space paper, and I needed a topic, and this was all original research. No Western researcher had ever been able to get in and do this, and I had reams of stuff, and I turned that into a dissertation and then had it published by SUNY (State University of New York). Press in New York. It was in print for years and years and years. That's why people keep calling me up, because this is probably the only book in print on the subject. Then comes the 1973 war and, of course, all hell breaks loose about that time. I was actually working on the Arabian Peninsula, not just Saudi Arabia. The British were getting out of the Trucial States and the Emirates at this time, so things in my area were beginning to pick up. So it was a fun time to be there, and there was not all that much expertise going. It's interesting, the NEA Bureau always had a rather jaundiced view of INR... And more than that, it's not an intelligence bureau, but that was the name that it had before there was a CIA and they kept the name, but it was basically the research bureau. It's function was to write analysis, and the policy bureau NEA's function was to write policy. In other words, they were advocates and we were not. So you can see the tension between an analytical paper telling it like it is on the one hand and an advocate of a policy on the other hand.

So the term, and it's still the term, is it has to be policy relevant, which, depending on which bureau you were in, means you want to give the policy maker the straight scoop, but on the other hand it means you want to receive analysis that backs up your point of view. So there was that, and that's the kind of milieu I love. What I would do, I realized once a battle is engaged you can't win it, particularly from where I was sitting. So we would dream where we thought the next battle would be. We would write papers, if we could get them through, that nobody thought were terribly threatening. They were on subjects that were not urgent. Our theory was that when they became urgent, and that was one of our calculations, having spread these papers around and having enabled them to become the conventional wisdom of something not terribly important, when they became terribly important, as is the will-of-the-wisp way of policy in the State Department, no matter what they did, they would be playing in our ballpark. I really feel that the years I was there we had as much input on policy making in a way that NEA never really knew about except some of the more discerning – and, in fact, some of the discerning would come to us and ask us to write papers because they'd say, "We think this is going to blow up, and we can't get anybody's attention. Can you write a little paper? Since it has not captured anybody's

attention, we think you can probably get away with publishing it. Then when it comes out, at least we've set some parameters for how we think the policy ought to work." And we did that. It was a lot of fun doing this stuff. And a lot of things were happening in the Gulf with the British getting out and then with the energy crisis. I remember that in the '73 war a couple of us really thought that there could be war in May, not in May but by May of '73, we were convinced that war was a very likely prospect.

*Q: War between whom?*

LONG: Arabs and Israelis. And nobody in government was buying this. "Oh, no, no, there was not going to be a war." Well, a colleague of mine wrote a paper, and it went plunk. Then he left and I took the mantle from him and kept it going. Well, I won't go into the reasons, but there were certain analytical reasons of things that were happening that people were not putting much weight on but we were, that we thought it was a good chance that they could actually go to war. By that spring those factors that we had weighed were themselves decreasing, but not to the degree that we changed our position. I'd like to say that we were more prescient than we were. In-house we had retreated a little bit but not to the extent of pulling back our view. And then the war happened, and we were one of the very, very few people around who had gotten into print saying, "You'd better watch out." Well, people gave us more credit than we really deserved as a result of that, because we really didn't deserve all that much credit. We were just looking at a situation back before it had become a crisis, but it was indeed the factors that we looked out, we felt, that led to war, not that we knew they were going to. We just said there's a higher chance of war than you guys are giving any credit to.

**JOHN R. COUNTRYMAN**  
**Economic-Commercial Officer, Deputy Principal Officer**  
**Dhahran (1968-1970)**

*Ambassador Countryman was born in New York and raised in New York and California. He was educated at Fordham University, Miami University and the Frei University of Berlin. After service in the US Navy he joined the Foreign Service in 1962. An Arab language speaker and Middle East specialist, Ambassador Countryman served abroad in Istanbul, Beirut, Dhahran, Tripoli, Libreville and Oman, where he was US Ambassador from 1981 to 1985. In his service in the State Department in Washington, he dealt primarily with Arab Peninsular affairs. Ambassador Countryman was interviewed by David Reuther in 2001.*

*Q: How soon did you break off from the language training to go into petroleum attaché training?*

COUNTRYMAN: I was assigned to Dhahran, to our Consulate General in Dhahran as head of the economic section. My tour in Beirut in the language school had been up some time like in August in the normal course of events. I was pulled out about a month early. I wasn't curtailed at all. Because the department...I didn't ask for this, but the department, again someone watching

out for me, said we are going to send Countryman to be head of the economic section over there. In that role, his major responsibility is not just talking about the souk, the local market in eastern Saudi Arabia, it is going to be petroleum because he is going to be seeing...he will be our liaison with Aramco. Countryman doesn't know anything about petroleum. Most Foreign Service officers don't know anything about petroleum. We don't want to give him the full year-long petroleum officer program. Under that program a few people went to university. There were places which had good...I think Cal Tech or something like that, and there were a couple of people who went through this and then they also went to the companies.

But what they did for me is they literally hand created a program for me, a few months with Exxon. I think Exxon had also done a program, the full scale program, in cooperation with the university, but they hand created, hand tooled this program for me over at Exxon which was absolutely superb. So I came back like in June or July from Beirut, went directly...just passed through Washington, said Hello-Good-bye, took the Arabic exam, and they said we will see you in three or four months before you go out to Dhahran. Everything from there on in was handled by Exxon. I went very briefly to New York, to meet the president of Exxon and the senior people in Exxon headquarters, which was in Rockefeller Center. I was then sent to Houston to learn domestic operations and the basis of the oil industry. They taught me some geology. I sat down with an aging German professor who talked about organic material and these magnificent huge electron microscopes they had for looking at shale. I have had people who showed me how these reverberation thumpers, where they would drop a heavy weight on the ground and read seismic results from that to tell you where the strata were. I went out on one of these in the interior of Texas where they were doing it; went out to where they were pumping the oil. They assigned me to a Humble, which was Exxon's...Humble Oil Company was their Texas affiliate. I worked at a Humble gas station for two weeks. I pumped gas; had overalls on and put gas in the car and wiped people's windshields.

I learned the economics of it, prices at the pump, just learned everything about Humble's operation. They were very forthcoming and just treated me beautifully. I was there for about close to a month. Then the next phase was to learn about terminal and refinery operations. Their big operation was in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. So I went to Baton Rouge, spent about three or four weeks in Baton Rouge, went all through the refinery. I have forgotten 9/10ths of it, but I used to tell the difference between refining diesel, and gasoline and how you crack it and polymers, everything about that. Then the terminal, how the tankers unload and load and various sizes of tankers. I went on board a tanker. Went out to sea with a tanker and then came back on a launch. I went all over the tanker and saw how the stuff was stored. Of course, you always had to wear sneakers because you didn't want to touch anything and make a spark. There were certain places they could smoke. If you even carried cigarettes with you, you would be thrown overboard. The final, and what was probably the most interesting part, was six weeks in New York to learn the economics of petroleum. Those were the days when you heard a great deal about the posted price of petroleum. You don't hear about that anymore. Now it is just posted price negotiations between the producers and the...between the oil companies and the producing countries. Now, of course, OPEC just sets the price according to some complicated formula.

What happened was the petroleum industry had changed. You had what is called participation. In other words, in the old days we said we had a concession. I mean Aramco was a concession

which was an agreement between Aramco and the Saudi government to extract oil from Saudi territory, and the Saudis really didn't own their own oil in a way by the terms of the concession. Then they had participation where the Saudis really owned the oil, and the oil company was simply a contractor to remove the oil. So that was a shift that occurred while I was in Dhahran,...that was to come.

*Q: You come to Dhahran in '69. As often happens as a result of an the Arab-Israeli war is that all American embassies close down; everybody is evacuated. Later the embassy is reconstituted as an to interest section. Did that happen in Saudi Arabia?*

COUNTRYMAN: No. We were fully organized. I arrived there actually in May '68. There had been some minor riots there at that time. Things were quiet when I got there.

*Q: What did that mission look like? Who was in charge?*

COUNTRYMAN: The Consul General was a fellow named Lee Dinsmore who at the time was one of our better Arabists; a very good Arabist. The post had originally been established literally for Aramco. It was really a post for passport services and protection of American citizens. In order for Aramco to attract Americans there...the idea of going out to the wilds of Saudi Arabia, it would be comforting to have an American flag and an American presence. The Consulate was actually established after the Second World War. There were a number of...the Saudis simply gave us the land. I forget how many acres, just a large area between the town of al-Khobar and the big Aramco complex. After the Second World War...we had captured a lot of Italian prisoners. A lot of them were very good stone masons and builders. Italy of course was in shambles economically. We offered a whole group of these Italians to go to Dhahran and to build us a consulate. These Italian prisoners of war built the Consulate. Our accommodations were absolutely luxurious, because they had gone out and quarried stone, there was stone in Saudi Arabia, and they had quarried this stone and built these lovely little bungalows. So I had a very charming house built by these Italian laborers. But the post, by the time I got there, had changed very much. It had gotten a lot larger because it became a listening post for the Embassy in the eastern province. The Embassy in those days of course, was in Jeddah. Riyadh was still sort of the holy city. There were no embassies allowed in Riyadh, so the Embassy was in Jeddah. That was a long way across. So we were a listening post for the eastern province and a liaison with Aramco. Of course, that is why it was important to have someone who could talk their language and knew petroleum rather well.

Then of course, it came into its own after 1970, because the British government announced in 1968 or I guess maybe '67 that it would withdraw east of Suez, which meant that all those sheikdoms, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Oman were going to become independent. So our job was to travel to those places at a time when no one was allowed to go there. Other diplomats were not allowed to go there, but because of our special relations with the Brits, they allowed us to travel there. It was my job right from the start to go to those places and start doing economic reporting. Later on, when I was literally promoted halfway through my tour to be deputy principal officer, I also helped the Consul General understand and the U.S. government to understand the politics of those places. Then toward the very end of my tour to actually help establish the posts. I helped set up all the posts in Bahrain, Qatar, the UAE, and



Oman from an administrative standpoint.

*Q: Who was the Ambassador?*

COUNTRYMAN: Ambassador Hermann Eilts [Editor's Note: Ambassador Eilts served in Saudi Arabia from January 1966 to July 1970]. He visited about once a month. He would come, and we had an American school on the compound, and he would use its auditorium, and he would have the American business community in and give them a kind of a briefing, an unclassified behind the headlines of the New York Times kind of briefing. They liked that very much. The Ambassador came and reassured them about things, and, of course, he was very articulate and you know would be able to say at my last meeting with the king why we said so and so. Throughout my tour in Dhahran, in any given month, I was outside the Kingdom for a good two weeks and sometimes three weeks, particularly toward the end when we were coming toward independence and the necessity for the Brits to make some judgments about what countries would be allied, or what kind of configuration could those emirates take. The original plan had been for the entire... Bahrain, Qatar, the UAE, and Oman... to be one entity.

To backtrack a little bit, you recall the British had Aden. When they pulled out of Aden it was kind of a mess, and Aden went very far left and became really a Soviet client state, because the British had not handled it all that well. So they were determined when they pulled out of these other places they would do it thoughtfully and carefully with a sense of local realities. So the original idea that they would all be together, although it looked good on paper, it ignored the very the great differences between these places, tribal differences. So the eventual configuration which was Bahrain went independent, Qatar went independent, the United Arab Emirates, the seven of them came together, and then Oman. So you had four entities instead of one. But back then as part of my job, Embassy London was constantly sharing what was going on, and there was a British political resident, because this was still the old colonial system. It was not the diplomatic system. The British still had a Foreign and Colonial Office because they had colonies. But there was a British political resident who had been there since the 19th century in Bahrain. Then you had political agents in Bahrain, Qatar, Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and Muscat who reported to the British political resident in Bahrain.

*Q: Now the analysis and the development that these would be ultimately several countries. That was something that was going on internal with the British, were we were making any inputs?*

COUNTRYMAN: We kept our hands off of that one. We were briefed by the British. We had our ideas and would share our ideas, but the way in which these countries would come to independence and who would become part of whom, that was a British and local decision that we were not involved in.

*Q: Again, you are our man on the ground.*

COUNTRYMAN: The Consul General was in the first instance, but as the economic officer and his deputy, I worked with him. He would say, "John, I have got to go down. I promised the Sheik of Qatar to meet with him on a Thursday. The British political resident has told me that he has got some...he needs to talk to me. I want you and go talk to the British political resident in

Bahrain tomorrow while I go to Qatar."

*Q: So Dhahran had some very unique responsibilities. How big a mission was it?*

COUNTRYMAN: There was a Consul General and a political or deputy principal officer. The reason I had the title of deputy principal officer was that the CG was gone so much, so they need to have somebody run the Consulate. There were other things we did. We ran the admin and consular side of the Consulate General. Then there was a political officer, a junior economic officer who worked for another agency, and that was it. It was really only three State Department officers, the Consul General, the deputy principal officer, and the econ officer. Of course, the admin and the GSO (General Services Officer).

*Q: How did you travel to these places?*

COUNTRYMAN: Air. Flew. Gulf Aviation, they flew these little two-engine Fokker Friendship turbo props. Then Saudi Airlines had DC-9's. We used to fly those occasionally to Qatar and also down to the Emirates. Basically it was British pilots flying. They flew mainly in the daytime. The only times there were problems was occasionally you would have dust storms.

But that was a lot of fun to travel to those places. I would arrive with a list...and the British are very helpful. They wouldn't make appointments for us necessarily, and we didn't ask them to be to run American Express for us, but we quickly got our feet on the ground. As you know, a mission needs to have an administrative sense of the place that it is living in. I mean apart from what the administrative officer would do. How do you get a cab? What hotels do you stay in? What time are shops open? How do you get things done, so on and so forth. But there was an awful lot of stuff that Washington said we didn't know about these places, so anything that you were reporting was thought of as very helpful.

*Q: Now who is handling Saudi and Gulf issues back in Washington? Later it is ARP, the Office of Arabian Peninsula Affairs. Had that office been established at that time?*

COUNTRYMAN: Yes, and Dick Murphy, Richard Murphy was Country Director. Joe Twinam was the Gulf desk officer. That job opened with Joe Twinam. Before we never needed that; we just asked the Brits what was going on. He was the first Gulf desk officer.

*Q: Well, with these special responsibilities, Dhahran probably has its own communication with Washington, not having to go through the Embassy all the time?*

COUNTRYMAN: Nominally we were under the Embassy. We were not accredited to any of these places yet because they were still British, if not colonies, then treaty friends. But the Consul General from the stand point of the State Department was supervised by Embassy Jeddah. Hermann Eilts, very appropriately did not interfere with meetings or our activities in the Gulf. We were pretty autonomous and took our instructions from Washington. It is what Washington wanted us to do and wanted to know, so we operated for all intents and purposes like an embassy.

*Q: As we go into these new places, how do you compare them, did you see the differences that will ultimately come out?*

COUNTRYMAN: A tremendous amount. Tremendous difference, because oil was just coming on, and these were little specks on the...you know they were very primitive. They had old mud palaces or mud buildings where people, where the sheiks lived. A good portion of the population, particularly in the lower gulf, were Bedouins. The oil money was as I say, just coming in. But now you go to a place, any one of these places, Bahrain, Qatar, Abu Dhabi, Muscat, these are modern cities, modern airport, air conditioned hotels.

*Q: So you really were present at the creation. Was anything happening in Yemen at the time of interest?*

COUNTRYMAN: What was happening at the time North Yemen was quiet, but of course you had South Yemen, PDRY, the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, and the British withdrawal, so to speak, even when they did withdraw and the places went independent, the British stayed on in Oman. Oman was made an exception to the policy of withdrawal east of Suez because they had a war going on down there. The province of Dhofar was in revolt from the sultan who was in Muscat. The PDRY, the communist backed people down there, piggybacked on that and were aiding the Dhofar rebellion. Of course, they wanted to eventually take over Dhofar as a province of PDRY and take it away from Muscat and also ferment a possible further revolt in Muscat itself that the sultan had taken over. So the British as part of their dedication to tidying up their colonial empire were determined that they were going to defeat that insurgency in Dhofar, seal it off, and that Muscat would come to independence with a lot more care and feeding than the other places where you didn't have insurgencies. They had intelligence and special branches try and prevent any subversion, but those were easy tasks in the upper emirates, but in Oman they had a real problem. When I visited Oman to visit the old sultan, of course the other problem they had is that the old sultan Said Bin Taimur who was a very reactionary leader. There was a good reason for Dhofar to be in rebellion because he ruled that place with an iron fist. You couldn't go out at night. There were no schools, no hospitals. Qaboos bin Said, his son, eventually overthrew him, with British assistance. Sultan Qaboos had been trained at (Royal Military Academy) Sandhurst, spoke English, and was a modernizer. He overthrew his father and that greatly aided the process of calming Oman because he opened up a lot of things, got education going. Some oil money was coming in. But the British stayed on in a military role to help the Omanis, and also the Iranians helped them a little bit, put down that insurgency.

But when I was there, I only made a couple of trips to Oman. When I went out in the countryside, we would drive in British Land Rovers with sandbags on the floor because the intelligence was that there were no land mines that could destroy a truck, but there were personnel land mines and those could go off and it would be a nasty shock if they came up through the bottom at you. I actually went off and saw some of the military operations in Oman.

*Q: Now when you are going to some of the other places, the British are leaving and the Americans are coming. How did the British look at our presence?*

COUNTRYMAN: It was I think very well handled. Of course, a lot of liaison was done in London and Washington. We assured the British that we were not going to be there to take their place. But the British, I think, understood that it would be helpful for these countries to have an American connection. It was a thing we were obviously interested in, having posts in these places. As it worked out, the British had a whole series of bases in these various countries as part of their colonial presence, and the only one that we benefited from was the one in Bahrain. That for years was where we stationed our Middle East Force. The British Navy left Bahrain; we moved in and used their very good facilities. Of course, the British Navy having been there, it was set up to handle destroyers which was mainly what comprised the Middle East Force. Originally they had two destroyers and then they had a command ship, the name of which I have now forgotten, which was the headquarters of the commander of Middle East Force, the admiral. We actually had buildings ashore, but the fiction was that no he is not ashore, his headquarters is on the ship. It is a seagoing command. He just puts in so many days in Bahrain. We even had some kind of arrangement where the ships would leave, you know, facility days, so we could say they were not actually home ported, they were not ported there.

*Q: How did the local authorities in Qatar, Oman, and Bahrain begin to view the Americans?*

COUNTRYMAN: I think that they were sophisticated enough...just to backtrack. As I said, the arrangements with the British were very good. They didn't think of us as pushing them out. This was their decision that these places should become independent, that they could maintain their economic interests there without an actual, that is, the British ambassador would do the role of the British resident. If colonialism's day had passed it was time to move out and have other arrangements. It was natural in other countries, and we, the French, the Germans would have embassies. Because of the special relationship with them, the Brits were more forthcoming with us. I think also a shared sense that in many of the places we and the British were in partnership in oil, you know because of the oil connection. So it was all very cordial, and as I say the British will allow us access. We would have a non-objection certificate, and they would allow us to, help us get visas. But once we arrived in the country, I made it a practice and so did the Consul General, at some point either when we arrived or when we left, we would brief the British on what we were doing very candidly and give them our reactions. I met with these businessmen; I met with the Sheik of Umm al-Quwain, and he said so and so. Very open and forthright.

*Q: As you are preparing for these countries to appear, did the other Europeans begin to show up and stop by Dhahran and say we too are thinking of setting up an embassy in Muscat?*

COUNTRYMAN: As I recall, I recall briefing both the French and the Germans. Those are the only ones I remember. This was somebody from the French embassy in Jeddah and the German embassy in Jeddah.

*Q: What were some of the other priority issues for Dhahran?*

COUNTRYMAN: I was extremely busy. I retained the petroleum officer mantle even after I was promoted to Deputy Principal Officer, so I had a major responsibility. I was our liaison working level with Aramco. So I met with one of their vice presidents who was in charge of their sort of government relations office. I met with him once a week. We would sit down and we would

exchange information. I would give him a kind of LOU (Limited Official Use, i.e., sensitive but unclassified) briefing on the emirates and what was going on in the gulf, because we were traveling down there and they weren't. So we would brief them on the gulf. We would talk about the local Saudi economy. They would tell me about, you know, it had to be left confidential - about oil strikes and what they were doing. But it would be a gossip session, and we would both take notes. He would go back to Aramco management and say, "Look, Countryman was here yesterday and said that it looks like Qatar and Bahrain are not going to be one country. Looks like the Brits are in favor of them being two separate entities." I would report, you know, "The Aramco people are having some trouble with their Shia laborers over something," you know. I mean exchange gossip which we would then make note of. Some of it we would report to Washington, some of it would be local gossip just for our consumption and was not worth reporting. So I had to maintain that liaison and while I was still economic officer, I had to report on economic conditions in the eastern province, be in touch with the chamber of commerce. But then as the clock started ticking away and we were doing more and more work in the gulf, there were times, two and three weeks at a time, I was on the road. That is what Washington wanted.

*Q: You are saying Oman, Bahrain had their own oil revenues coming in. What oil companies were down there?*

COUNTRYMAN: Well, in Bahrain it was BAPCO, the Bahrain Petroleum Company which was American, which was CalTex, Texaco and Standard of California. Bahrain had a very small amount of oil, very little. That was American. In Qatar, Americans were exploring. Both Phillips and Occidental were exploring, but Shell was the biggest, British Shell was in Qatar. In Abu Dhabi and Dubai I have forgotten now, but there were a small American, like Continental, or Union Oil was there, but the main ones were the British BP and CFP, the French, Compagne Francais de Petrol. In Abu Dhabi and Dubai they were a consortium. In Oman it was Shell.

*Q: Given the large petroleum facilities that Aramco put on the east coast which used large amounts of expat labor, not only Europeans but others, Palestinians, what did the labor force on the east coast look like?*

COUNTRYMAN: In Aramco they had a lot of Indians and particularly Goans. I remember in the Consulate General we had a Mrs. Mariados who was a Goan Indian, Christian-Portuguese speaking. She also spoke whatever they speak in the area of Bombay. She was a Goan. There were Palestinians and Jordanians who worked in clerical jobs in the Aramco headquarters, but the people who were actually the roustabouts, the people that did the oil exploration were either Americans or Saudis.

*Q: How big a population was this on the east coast, because basically the east was a Bedouin area wasn't it?*

COUNTRYMAN: Yes. There was nothing out there before the Americans, the oil strikes back in the 20's and 30's. The total population of Aramco, now Aramco was actually three separate entities. There was Dhahran Aramco which was just buildings and administrators. Then there was Ras Tanura which was the refinery and the port. It was up the coast. Then there was a place called Abqaiq which was inside the interior which was the sort of gathering place for all of the

oil that came in and really the petroleum exploration and production center. So there were three Aramcos I mainly dealt with. I visited one in the terminal and refinery in Ras Tanura. I was out at Abqaiq and I went out in the field to see what their operations were like. The Aramco population I used to say was 10,000.

*Q: Now how did the Saudis deal with this population? I mean the area was Bedouin before, and now we have this urban area with different nationalities. Did this present any problems for them?*

COUNTRYMAN: The Saudis were, I think...before Aramco could bring somebody in, I never explored how they did that, but I think that there was pretty close ties. What I mean is Aramco didn't bring anybody in to work at Aramco without there being a security check. The Saudis were comfortable that this person was OK. How they did that I don't know. Some of the things with their security service, I didn't know.

*Q: Of course you are in Dhahran before the big oil boom of the 70's and this enormous wealth that comes in. Later it turns out that there is vast numbers of Thai and Palestinians who are working in all kinds of economic projects. So at this time what you are saying is Aramco project and the economics around it were fairly manageable and confined.*

COUNTRYMAN: Although by that time the Saudis had already got a lot of money. There was a lot of money in Saudi Arabia because the oil in Saudi Arabia went back to the 30's and 40's. There was a lot of development going on in Saudi Arabia already.

*Q: What did the city of Dhahran look like?*

COUNTRYMAN: Well there wasn't a city of Dhahran. Dhahran is a misnomer. Dhahran is the airport, the Consulate General, and Aramco. The neighboring town is al-Khobar, which at the time I was there had dirt streets. It did not have paved streets. They never paved roads that went to al-Khobar. But al-Khobar was just a little...it was like an Arab souk, like an Arab market. There was a little shop where you could buy food and cloth. There were a couple of places that sold Seiko watches. There was one place that my servant went to and they would compound a curry for you from all the individual ingredients out of bins. But now, of course, it is a modern city. The streets are paved, there is a luxury hotel.

*Q: Your personal staff at your residence, were those Saudis?*

COUNTRYMAN: I had a Yemeni servant who had worked in the British officers' club in Aden. When the British left, he walked to Saudi Arabia and suddenly appeared at the embassy. I think he worked briefly for Aramco. I vetted him through Aramco and the local security service. He was what the French call "à bon a tout faire" – he did everything for me. Took care of the house, and did the shopping. His name was Said. When I left, the Consul General took him. He was a very good servant.

I had some other interesting experiences. One of the things when I arrived, as we were not being so pressed by Washington to do the gulf sort of thing, is that the Consul General, being an

Arabist, and, I think, sensing that he would be spending a lot of time in the gulf, wanted to get a sense of the eastern province. He had served in Iraq and Jordan and a few other places. So he and I made some very interesting trips in Saudi Arabia. One of them...Aramco is at the edge of the empty quarter. As you look at a map of Saudi Arabia, that is the rather largest unexplored area of sand, of desert, that area of Saudi Arabia is called the empty quarter, Rub' al Khali. It has beautiful dunes in it and a lot of Bedouins. The Saudis had built a railroad from Dhahran to Jeddah. It made a hook at a little town, the name of it escapes me; I don't remember what it was, but beyond that little town south of Dhahran was nothing. Just thousands of miles of open sand and a few Bedouins. Lee Dinsmore was determined to make a trip down there. So we got two Land Rovers. You always travel with two because one might break down. We drove from Dhahran, followed the railroad track down to this little town whose name I will think of in a minute, and took off into the sand. Aramco had given us one of their trackers, a Bedouin that they had used, because they had been over this area oil exploring. You know getting samples, sending exploring parties out there. But the area we went into there was no oil being pumped. So they sent this old tracker with us. Of course having been in the Air Force, the Consul General said, "You will navigate." So I had very good maps and I had one of these compasses you know I could take a bearing with. Of course, blind navigation is not a big deal, so every morning when we would get up we would take a bearing and look at the map and so on and so forth. This Bedouin went to Lee Dinsmore and said, "That guy who had that round thing like a watch. That is useless out here. You have to know what I knew which is the way the dunes are formed by the sand going on them. That thing is a piece of nonsense." Well the trip was planned to take us to a point that Aramco had on one of their maps where they had evidently were going to do some exploration. What they had done is take about 25 or 30 55-gallon oil drums and stacked them up to make like a pyramid and then poured cement over them to make a rude sort of pyramid as a marker. That was where we were going to stop and turn around and come back. So on the day when we should have sighted that pyramid, we didn't see it. So this Bedouin walks over to Lee Dinsmore and says, "That guy who is with you with that little watch thing; what does the watch thing say about where the pyramid is?" I said, "We are right on. It must be over the next dune." The tracker said, "It is over the next dune." It was over the next dune.

*Q: Did anybody from Washington come out from time to time getting involved in your work in the gulf?*

COUNTRYMAN: Yes, I have forgotten now who the NEA (Bureau of Near East Affairs), Joe Sisco came out. Joe Sisco was the NEA assistant secretary [Editor's note: Joseph John Sisco served as Assistant Secretary from February 1969 to February 1974.]. He did a trip around the Middle East and he came to Dhahran. I am trying to think of any other distinguished people we had that came to Dhahran. There must have been, but I just can't remember who they were because if they came to Jeddah, they would also want to see the oil fields at Dhahran. I am sure we had some.

*Q: You had a fair number of visitors.*

COUNTRYMAN: We had some professional groups. We had a large CODEL (Congressional Delegation) that came out and I remember, met with Aramco. It was a group of people from the house and senate wanting to get a sense of oil and where the Saudis sat.

*Q: The local administration on the Saudi side, was the Dhahran area organized as a province?*

COUNTRYMAN: Yes. There was an emir of the eastern province who is like a governor. We dealt with ministry of aviation officials and ministry of petroleum officials on the local level. Of course, all of their headquarters were in Jeddah where the ministries were. We dealt with local ministry people.

*Q: So you would be going to their offices from time to time to obtain their view on some issue.*

COUNTRYMAN: The advantage in dealing with a consulate from the Saudi standpoint is that the primary reporting responsibility was based in Jeddah because they were dealing with the government and we were dealing with provincial officials. So the petroleum ministry, I used to go, I have probably met with the Minister of Petroleum who happened to be Riyadh more than Hermann Eilts did. Ambassador Eilts was far more important than I was, but I was the one who got to see him. I was to ask him the embarrassing questions, the technical questions that Hermann Eilts wasn't going to ask, and also the head of the Saudi Petroleum company.

*Q: This meant that you went to Jeddah from time to time to do that business. Why would it be you that would go to see the Minister of Petroleum?*

COUNTRYMAN: Well, I had the petroleum expertise, and the Embassy welcomed it. They would say we would like our petroleum attaché to come and talk to you, and the thought was that sort of on a technical non-political level, I could elicit things they couldn't. It wasn't really the embassy asking, it was just his petroleum guy out there who had this hobby. The Saudi's knew what was going on.

*Q: Could you give us a sense of what the social conditions in the eastern shore were?*

COUNTRYMAN: Pretty much the same throughout Saudi Arabia. Of course Mecca and Medina, the holy places. When I made my trips to Jeddah, you would go on the road, and there would be huge signs. I mean as big as the largest sign boards you have ever seen in the United States, in at least 10 or 12 languages, saying from this point on, non Muslims are forbidden to enter. Once you saw that, you were brought home the major consciousness of it. I had served, of course, in Turkey where foreigners are very welcome in mosques. You are not in Saudi Arabia, even male. You are not welcome to go to a mosque in Saudi Arabia. The problem of women...of course, women could not drive, which made it difficult on wives. Women are not allowed to drive. There had been occasions prior to my arrival where the mutaween, the religious police, had...who carried around sort of a riding crop, the kind of the thing you would use on camels. It was a kind of a stake with a bulb on the end of it that they would walk around with. They were very easy to see because they would not wear the igal, the little round piece on top of their head. They would just have a little draped cloth over their head. They usually had beards. They would go around town in al-Khobar, also in every city, and when it came time for the prayers, they would make sure that the shops were shuttered and closed, and people went to prayer. Prior to my arrival, western women on a couple of occasions had been struck for not wearing proper clothes. Hermann Eilts went to the king and said, "We are here with our wives," and Aramco



urged him to do this, too. "I would like to establish with you a dress code so we are honoring, we are being proper. It puts an undue burden on our women and there must not be a misunderstanding." So he wrote down the dress code. It was that dresses would fall below the knee, and sleeves would go below the elbow. There would be no décolletage. We didn't have any problems while I was there. There were no incidents that I can recall. But it was very strongly promulgated within the American community. The foreign community welcomed this, too - I mean British and French and other people who had missions there because they knew that we had more influence than anybody else.

*Q: Did the Aramco people have wives with them too?*

COUNTRYMAN: Yes.

*Q: Of course they mostly lived in a compound on their own.*

COUNTRYMAN: This is not a criticism of Aramco particularly, but I knew people at Aramco who had never been off the compound. Literally, someone said, "What does downtown al-Khobar look like," to me. They had been from there to the airport, and they had a very generous travel allowance. You get R&R (military term, Rest and Relaxation), so to speak, at various places around. They would go to Beirut. Ceylon was a favorite place to go. There was a luxury hotel so they would go to Ceylon for R&R.

Many years later I gave a talk on Islam to my daughter's prep school class. People asked me very much about conditions in Saudi Arabia. I used an anecdote to describe what it was like. The beaches, Aramco had its own little beach in Saudi Arabia near, about three or four little beaches that were for Aramco only, and women would wear bathing suits there. Otherwise you could go up and down the coast and you would go swimming, and a man could just take his long pants off and jump in the surf and go swimming. There were some excellent places there for scuba diving. I went scuba diving with a gun, a fish gun, you know take some fish in the water, a spear gun. I went one time to one of these beaches, and there was a tent set up on the beach. As I parked the land rover, and came down, a Saudi came out and said very politely, very nicely, "Would you mind going further down the beach? I am here with my wife and daughters. Would you mind going down the beach a little bit." I went down the beach, and of course I was there for an hour or an hour and a half, and I swear his wife and daughter never emerged from the tent. I am sure inside they were totally covered, but the sensitivity that maybe they would look outside and see me in a bathing suit just made him so uncomfortable.

When I left Dhahran, I was packing up. I had a little tent, a little LL Bean two person tent, because we used to take trips out in the desert. I had this tent, and I had it all folded up. I had it in my backyard and had it all set up just to make sure it was all right. I decided I was going to take it with me or leave it with somebody. Our number one local in the consular section came to me and said, "Ah, Mr. Countryman, that tent you have out there, it is beautiful. Would you sell it to me?" There were plenty of big tents you could get from the Bedouin, or you could make one with tarpaulin, but mine was kind of a fancy. A nice tent that you would see in King Arthur's time with a peak on the top and a little cloth around the front and stakes, and it was colored. "Oh when I go to the beach with my wife, this would be just wonderful." He was so happy. I sold it to

him. It had to be a pittance, five dollars or something. But he was the envy of everyone. More and more people said to me, you know, how can we get one of these? This was so important to them to have this tent so they could take their wives to the beach.

As you may know, in Arabic there are about...we have the word "desert." In Arabic there are about five or six words for desert to describe what the desert is, whether it is a dry cakey sort of area next to the ocean where from time to time there would be flooding or rains so you could have a wadi, that kind of a desert. There is the shaley desert in the interior, and there are the dunes that we think of. It is one of the things I will never forget going into the interior in a Land Rover. It gets quite cold at night. You need a sleeping bag, even in the summertime.

*Q: How far could you, there is no road so I guess you could just take off.*

COUNTRYMAN: We had extremely good maps from Aramco who had mapped an awful lot of the area around there. You would just land navigate. You would use some kind of a mark. There was a road from Dhahran that followed the tapline. There was a pipe line that ran from Aramco all the way to Sidon in Lebanon. Along that there was a good hard paved road all the way, and there were little pumping stations. Well, a favorite trip was to take off from Dhahran, go into the interior, and then head straight north. You couldn't go wrong because you would hit the tap line eventually and you would come back on paved roads all the way to Dhahran. But the first part of that box, the "L," would be out in the desert. There is nothing out there.

*Q: On any of these trips did you ever come across and have a chance to chat with Bedouins?*

COUNTRYMAN: Oh, yes. If you...the rules of the desert were very simple. Occasionally people would come along. There would be like a family, or two or three people. We never saw a big tribal migration, but there would be a few people going along. If they saw you, they would come to you and we would be stopped. If we were going along and they were traveling nearby, we would stop and they would come to you. Of course, I always was lucky because I always got included on a trip because I could speak Arabic. You say hello to them, exchange some pleasantries. We would always carry a lot of extra water and tea. That's what they drank, so we had big jugs of tea. I remember one time this group came along, family, and the Bedouin are much less skittish about the women. They would be unveiled and they would have something over their head, but that was mainly against the sun rather than being protected. Of course, on these adventures, we often would have women with us. We would have one of the secretaries or a wife in our group. The women would go off, and the men would sit down. We would drink most often tea and cookies. They had cookies. I remember one time the sort of head man in this little group turned to me and said, "Your tea isn't very good. It is much too heavy and thick. It tastes too strong. It is not good tea." I took his comment as a friendly piece of advice. "It is just too heavy, too strong."

*Q: Interesting. How are the Bedouin a different cultural group than the Saudi?*

COUNTRYMAN: The Bedouin, it is a way of describing...I mean as they have always been city dwellers. Saudi Arabs will make a distinction between Bedouin and city dwellers. There was a program in Saudi Arabia of doing things to help the Bedouin. It was rather sensitive. Because of

all the jobs that were going, the opportunities that were coming about, Saudi Arabian people would hear about these things. So the Bedouin would leave the Bedouin life and they would become taxicab drivers and porters or get a job with Aramco, there were other opportunities for them. At the time I was there, Saudi Arabia had enough money, they had enough jobs, they could probably abolish the Bedouin practically. In other words offer every Bedouin in the kingdom a job or just support him because they had enough money. Of course the Bedouin liked their life. They liked the independence. So the Saudis did not force people to cease their nomadic life. But what they did do is that they tried to do things like, where ever there was an oasis, they would install a pump and maybe like a trough so the Bedouin could know the various places, if there was drought or a problem with the well, the traditional wells, they could always get water, because that was important for their animals and themselves. So there was a system in eastern province of wells that were for the Bedouin. I mean anyone else could use them, but they were there distinctively for the Bedouin. They had a health program too. They had because if the Bedouin got cholera, cholera was of course, still prevalent in the world.

And it is water borne, they would also do this. Once cholera got into a Bedouin community, it would kill people off very quickly because there was no way of hydrating them, and they wouldn't see a doctor, so the children particularly and the adults would die very quickly. So they had a public health system where Saudis in Land Rovers, you know, would go around among the Bedouin, of if they heard there was a cholera outbreak someplace, they would run in there with Land Rovers and give some kind of medicine or shots and try to take care of them. They also had a big program that Aramco had for trachoma because trachoma was a big cause of blindness in Saudi Arabia, and they had as a matter of fact someone from Massachusetts General that Aramco brought in. He was an ophthalmologist brought in and given space in their very lovely hospital there with a couple of researchers who did nothing but work on trachoma. How it is caused, how you prevent it, what to do about it and so forth. They did great work in eradicating trachoma because particularly among the older Bedouin you would see a great number of people who were blind. You could see the eye had literally been eaten away by trachoma. It is very contagious. A lot of the children had it, but there was a very active program to clean that up. There was a very tragic case. The German government sent a German doctor to al-Khobar, a little town, and set him up, sort of a German aid program, just he and a German assistant. It was for people who didn't have access to Aramco, just supplemental. He worked on trachoma. He told me a story one time about having a young girl come into his office brought in by her father, brought in by Saudi health workers in a Land Rover. A little girl about five or six years old screaming and crying rubbing her eyes and so on and so forth. He looked at her eyes and said, "My god what happened to this child? What was put in her eyes?" Because here eyes were literally destroyed. Lye or some very caustic material had been put in her eyes. It was beyond anything he could do, I mean she was blind, her eyes destroyed. So he wanted to find out what had happened so it wouldn't happen again. The Bedouin father was very upset about this. He said, "She started rubbing her eyes and said there was something wrong with her eyes. I had medicine, so I put medicine in her eyes. She screamed and cried, but I thought the medicine hurts but it is helping her." "What kind of medicine did you put in her eyes?" He said, "This, it is medicine." It was some kind of medicine for removing corns for the feet, to burn the corn off. He was squeezing this into her eyes.

This was dallah, this was medicine. But the Saudis that I dealt with, I dealt almost exclusively

with men rather than women. There were a couple of people who had foreign Arab wives who would invite you over and who were western thinking and the wife would be dressed in normal clothes and associate with women. But otherwise it was a very closed male society.

*Q: Much of your official work I would presume would be via office visits.*

COUNTRYMAN: And dinners. I was invited to, at important Saudi feasts I was invited as the Consul General, other people in the consulate would be invited to the emirate, to the emir's palace. There would be a big...you would be seated in his dewan [Editor's Note: dewan or dewaniya originally referred to the section of a Bedouin tent where the men and their visitors sat, a reception area.] He would sit up in the front and talk and welcome people. You would talk and wish him well and sit down and you would be served coffee in little cups. Then everybody would troop out. There would be these huge braziers with either a camel or a goat and big beds of rice. You would sit down, break bread, and you would eat. Then you would get up and wash your hands be perfumed with incense and leave.

*Q: I am always intrigued that rice is the basic carbohydrate, even though it may not be native to the area. It comes from Italy, right; introduced during Roman times?*

COUNTRYMAN: It is prevalent in the Gulf. It is the basmati rice. In Arabic the word Eesh, which comes from the word for life... It depends on where you are as to what Eesh means. In the western part of the Arab world it means bread. In the area where I was it means rice. They were very great connoisseurs. My servant when I was in Dhahran. I was able to buy from the Aramco commissary, which was very good. It was like an American supermarket. I would just send them a list and the stuff would be delivered to my house. Of course, I paid for it, but it was very good service. That's where I got to know basmati rice, which is very good. In this country most people like basmati. It is very light and very good. I always got the basmati rice. One time we ran out of rice, and it was not time for an Aramco delivery; now, normally my servant went into Khobar for shopping. Since I was going to Khobar I said, "I'll get some rice for us." I went into this little store and I bought some Egyptian rice. Said, who was normally very differential to me and never stepped out of line, he said, "What is this? Nobody eats this. This is terrible stuff. I am not going to serve this you, we have to have basmati." The American Uncle Ben's. I mean, the people were really connoisseurs about this. Egyptian rice, it was terrible to eat Egyptian rice.

*Q: Good morning. Today is January 24. We are talking with John Countryman. John had been talking about his assignment in Dhahran. I would like to ask a few more questions about that. You were saying that Dhahran was an important listening post for the Gulf. We had no missions in the Gulf at this time. So, the traveling portfolio was a great assist to your career.*

COUNTRYMAN: Perhaps, but it was the Consul General of course, and the Deputy Principal Officer who did most of the traveling, because it was important that a senior officer called on these Gulf officials, not a junior officer.. I was assigned there in 1969 out of Arabic language training as the economic officer. Halfway through my tour, the Deputy Principal Officer, Dick Adams, left. He retired from the Foreign Service. This doesn't generally happen in foreign service posts, I was promoted in place, not in rank, but I was moved up to Deputy Principal Officer. My focus shifted away from the economic to the political. I still retained my portfolio as

petroleum attaché. I think we discussed that. I had been sent there as petroleum attaché. So I retained that for the eastern province. It happened 18 months into my tour which meant it was in 1970, late 1969 at a time when the tempo of the British withdrawal from those posts in the Gulf was quickening. The pressure from Washington to get more information about these places because we would be setting up house there, increased. So it made it more interesting politically, more urgent. Therefore I did an awful lot of traveling. I shared the idea of having somebody with the title of Deputy Principal Officer but with the Consul General as the primary contact. He was speaking to the British, the sheiks and this sort of thing more than I was. I would sort of run the post when he was gone. Ultimately he would want to rest and he would stay home. We would have a list of important meetings to make, and I would make them, so we were sort of alter egos. Obviously he being the senior man decided these things.

*Q: Now you were saying Washington has increased interest in this. How did that express itself? Were you getting cables saying...*

COUNTRYMAN: Instructions, yes. Well there were two things. One is the question is what the shape of the federation is going to be. Here Kuwait had already been independent so we are talking about Bahrain, Qatar, seven Trucial states as they were then called, and Oman. The original British plan had been that literally it would be one nation, all of them. That was kind of pie in the sky. They were just too diverse and fractiousness and jealousies and that was impossible. So then there was the possibility that Bahrain and Qatar would be an entity, and the UAE, as it came to be called, would be another. Of course Oman was always a distinct country. All of these things had to be worked out. This was the British experience when they pulled out of Aden; it had gone bad and a communist government had been set up. They were determined to, and when we are talking about withdrawal we are not talking about the British breaking diplomatic relations.

We are talking about the military presence going and going from having political agents and a colonial situation to independence. So the British embassies of course, the British political agent became the British ambassador. Under the British system, the British political resident for the gulf was resident in Bahrain. Then there was a British political agent in Bahrain for Bahrain, one in Qatar, one in Abu Dhabi and one in Dubai. There were two in the soon to become UAE and one in Muscat. They reported to him almost the same way we would have Consul Generals reporting to the ambassador. The British political resident was in Bahrain. So they were very keen to be leaving in good order. There was an awful lot that the British were doing to do that, that they would not so much consult us on, but tell us. There were things like the police forces which had been heavily encadred by the British were now the local police forces. Well they made arrangements so some Scotland Yard or special branch Brit would stay on to be sort of an advisor. That was very important particularly from a public order and worries about subversion possibly. There was a lot of economic stuff that had to be done. The British had been the accountants and bookkeepers and suppliers and now you are going to be turning it over and you would have ministries. There was a great deal of nation building that the British were engaging in, that we simply watched. But Washington of course wanted to know what kind of political situation are we going to have, because the ideal was that the British would stay on.

But the British were happy that the American security blanket would be extended over the Gulf.

How that would happen, of course, was another very sensitive thing. That was an era in our history where we just simply didn't have bases over there. But the British had a system of bases when they were the colonial power there. They had a naval base in Bahrain. They had a fairly major air base in Bahrain, and they had another base in Sharjah, one of the Trucial states, and of course a considerable presence in Oman. We had had, because of the special relationship with the Brits, we had an organization called commander middle east force, COMIDEASTFOR, which had been in existence I am not sure, but I think it has been at least since the late '50s, which called on, which was not based, but home ported in Bahrain and used the British base there. We had a converted seaplane tender called the USS LaSalle which carried the admiral's flag. It was a floating office in effect. I think it mounted one six inch gun in the front, but basically it was a big yacht, and it had offices on board. It preserved the idea that we did not have a base in Bahrain even after the British left and COMIDEASTFOR and the British naval presence was withdrawn, and we had a more regular visitation by Middle East force, which at that time consisted of the LaSalle. It would rotate two destroyers either from the Pacific fleet or the Atlantic fleet. So that was something that had to be worked out. We were working very closely with the Navy to make sure that that was done quietly, efficiently. We didn't step on the British toes; it was done in a way that the Bahrainis could accept. As it wound up, by the time independence came it was quite clear that the whole relationship Middle East Force, not a treaty but a document was signed with the Bahrainis providing a home port and it was classified in describing the circumstances.

*Q: You were talking about the Brits doing nation building. At the same time, were we using things like international visitor's grants or bringing people back to the States?*

COUNTRYMAN: Yes, I am glad you remembered that. We were doing a lot of that. One of my more successful ones In Bahrain there was a newspaper called El Hadroit, the lights. It was a local newspaper. I got the editor of El Hadroit to come to the United States. We didn't have a USIA (U.S. Information Agency) presence in Bahrain. As a matter of fact that is one of the hats I wore. I was sort of the USIA's guy there. We got a leader grant from the United States, and if you recall from my bio, one of the things I did before I came into the Foreign Service, I was a reporter for the Danbury, Connecticut, News Times. So although we allowed the USIA people to handle the whole thing on the general program for this editor, I said, "Look I can call my old friends, the publishers of the Danbury News Times and they would welcome him with open arms, and there is a significant Arab community in Danbury, Lebanese and Syrians." So we did that. They also got him an appointment with the New York Herald Tribune and New York Times. But when he came back, the one he was enthusiastic about was the Danbury News Times because it was 25,000 circulation, a small town daily. It had won a number of prizes for journalism and it was much more comprehensible to him with his little newspaper. It had a funky old building with turrets on it. Steve King who was the editor was still there who had been a very great friend of mine. The publisher who is from the Hardaway chain. They had just treated him like a king, took him all over, had dinner for him, sent him out with cityside reporter, investigating accidents. He had a wonderful time. Yes, we did that sort of thing.

*Q: You, or somebody from Dhahran, were taking these trips once a week, once a month. You probably have to string four or five days together if you are making a big swing. It isn't one day down to Bahrain and back.*

COUNTRYMAN: Well it was occasionally. If there was something we had to do with the British political resident there, we would do one thing, but we tried to make it a swing of four or five days. We'd hear something. One of the problems, and there were just all kinds of problems coming up. Again it was our responsibility as being the primary U.S. government diplomacy vehicle to check on it. It became clear about the time I took over as deputy principal officer that the shape of the Gulf would be what it is today. Bahrain would be independent. Qatar would be independent. The seven Trucial states would amalgamate into the United Arab Emirates, and Oman a distinct entity. So there would be four. Well, one of the problems in getting together with seven little Trucial states was a series of rivalries among the sheiks. The logical leader of it was Abu Dhabi because it had the most wealth, and because the Sheik of Abu Dhabi had already exerted a kind of *primus inter pares* (Latin: the first among equals) relationship with the other people in the seven Trucial states. Sheik Zayed. However there was Sheik Rashid who was the ruler of Dubai which was the second most wealthy of the sheikdoms. It had less oil, but it had a very well developed port and was really the port for the emirates. There was a rivalry between the two, and a lot of things were being done to assure that indeed if indeed the capital were to be as it was to be, Abu Dhabi, that there would be kind of a power sharing. Leading Dubai families would get contracts, and that the cabinet would be reflective of the other lesser emirates. The Sheik of Ras al-Khaimah, which is the last, but largest one emirate down the line; it borders on Oman...Sheik Saqr...they discovered oil there. It was just about this time. They had been looking for oil but they made a strike. I think it was Union Oil. It was unclear of course, as it often is in these things, how much oil. I mean was this another Saudi Arabia or 85 barrels a day. What was this. Well Sheik Sutter immediately thought he could parley this into a stronger position in the confederation than he had before because he was very much a junior partner. Well that raised a few hackles. We went down and met with them. Again pretty much in a listening mode and saying good solid State Department platitudes like, we want to work with you as a group. We hope that these things will be resolved before independence because it obviously would not be in the best interests of everybody if they were not worked out. So it was an active but a very low key kind of approach that we took. We were very much under instructions from Washington.

*Q: Before independence these sheikhdoms would have a British resident...*

COUNTRYMAN: No, there were only two in the Gulf; there were only two in Oman. There was a British political agent in Bahrain, a political agent in Doha the capital of Qatar, a political agent in Abu Dhabi and Dubai for the Trucial states and one in Muscat for Oman. All of those political agents reported to the British political resident in Bahrain.

*Q: Okay, so when you talked to him, he would be able to give you if he wanted the reporting of the other British officers.*

COUNTRYMAN: Yes, he was very much in touch.

*Q: Did Embassy London have someone assigned to watching any of this?*

COUNTRYMAN: Yes, very much. Anything that we reported we would copy to London. I have

forgotten now who the fellow was. We always had an Arabist in London. Hermann Eilts had that job at one time way back. It became less important as the British divested themselves of their colonial empire. But we always had an Arabist who looked to...who was usually a first secretary...who did nothing but sort of plug in with his British counterparts in the foreign and colonial office on middle eastern matters. So we would always copy them.

*Q: So you were getting instructions from Washington; you were getting feedback from the embassy in London and you are talking...*

COUNTRYMAN: Well, it was a three card arrangement. The embassy in London would report and say spoke to X today who feels it would be very helpful if our next trip down to Doha, an American representative could play this line with the Qataris over the dispute over Bubiyan Island. This was another one of these. There was a dispute over an island that was off the coast of Qatar that both Qatar and Bahrain claimed. It was eventually solved. You know it would be helpful if you could say blah-blah and we would, nine times out of ten we would just pick up the British line and support them. It looked like we were playing the same approach. The other player in the area who of course was important, the other two players were Saudi Arabia because these were people that they sort of always looked down their nose on as being sort of not big political players in the area, and the British. The Saudis were used to dealing with the British. So now all these little places were going to be independent. So the Saudis had to get, it was important for these people to make sure that their house was in order for the Saudis. The other big player was the Shah in Iran. The Shah of course was...

*Q: That why its called the Persian Gulf...*

COUNTRYMAN: That's right. There was one particularly nettlesome aspect that again we watched, but supported, while the Brits and the UN took the lead on this. There was way back an Iranian claim to Bahrain that was part of the province of Farse. There was an Iranian speaking minority. There were Iranians in Bahrain who were merchants, a quite wealthy group. The Shah, we suspected correctly, as did the Brits, just to assert himself in the Gulf asserted that right. So when the British leave, of course Bahrain is going to revert to Iran, which would have been disastrous, because of all kinds of Arab nationalist sentiment. Of course the rest of the Arab world was looking at this, and the Brits were conscious of that as well, that these places would become independent so somehow the idea that Bahrain would be turned over to Iran was unacceptable. So Ambassador MacArthur who at that time was our ambassador in Tehran got into the loop, anything that had to do with Bahrain. There were also a couple of islands off the coast of the UAE that were right in the middle of the gulf that there was a claim on. They were not so important as an entity except that in the center of the Gulf there was the possibility of oil. So if you are talking about who gets the oil, that becomes rather important. So to get off of this, what the British did was work with the UN as they approached giving independence to Bahrain. There was a UN special representative named, whose name was Mr. Winspeare Guicciardi who was the son of an old Italian diplomat and a mother who had been part of the British gentry. Winspeare Guicciardi came up with a brilliant idea, and that is the way we will get around this is that in Bahrain we will have an ascertainment. There happens to be a word in Arabic, I have forgotten now, that translates very well into ascertainment, about the will of the Bahraini people. Of course you didn't have a democracy. There were no parliaments. It was the Brits and the



sheik. You couldn't have an election because even if it went in the favor of the royal family in Bahrain, you couldn't put them in a position that they were elected. They had a right to be there. Obviously the election probably would go against the Shah, but you couldn't do it by fiat. You had to have some kind of way to show that Bahrain should remain under the royal family and essentially Arab rather than the province of Farse. So the ascertainment was they found a list of all of the possible groupings in Bahrain.

*Q: Ethnic groupings?*

COUNTRYMAN: They got the chamber of commerce. There was not a union, but there was a workers league for BAPCO, the Bahrain Petroleum company. They spoke with them. They spoke to leading bankers. There were a lot of the mosques had what they call muhattams which were sport clubs and Islamic charities. They spoke to them. They spoke to, they had a list of social, business and civil society groups, and they spoke to leaders of some of the ethnic groups and they came up with this ascertainment that indicated should be independent, and the Shah backed off of it. But there was quite a bit of backing and filling as the process was unfolding.

*Q: As this process was unfolding, you were commenting that it put England to be in a more difficult situation for the Saudis who originally only had to deal with the Brits, and now they were going to have to deal with these newly independent countries. Did you get any feel for how the Saudis had organized or looked at this area, and skipping ahead, did they move diplomatic missions in there about the same time or later. They were being moved at the same time obviously.*

COUNTRYMAN: At the time that the British, of course, nobody had any embassies.

*Q: Because they weren't independent yet.*

COUNTRYMAN: But the Saudis had had a long history of relations with these places, visitors coming in. The Brits, if the Saudi prince wanted to visit, he would not be told he couldn't. He might be told well Thursday is more convenient than Monday. There were commercial relations, but the relations between the Saudis and each one of these places were different. With Bahrain, the crown prince and Prince Bandar who was the Saudi ambassador here, they were very close. Those two were royal families. The families weren't close but there were members who were close. The Saudis and the Bahrainis had worked out a development and cost sharing agreement on an oil field that lay between Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. That had been done under the aegis of the Brits, but that was the relationship. The money actually was paid from that field directly to the Saudis and then a little commission existed that decided exactly how much went to the Bahrainis. That had been in existence for a long time, with a British advisor probably sitting by.

In Qatar, the little thumb that sticks up out there, they were Wahhabis. They were co-religions with the Saudis. The other people were just normal Sunni Muslims. So religious connections between the royal family in Qatar and the Saudis. In the UAE and Oman there had been some border problems between the Saudis and those places. The Saudis had at one time laid claim to an oasis called El Heim which was actually Abu Dhabi territory and had been under the Sheik of Abu Dhabi. The Saudis had actually sent troops down there. There had been a confrontation, no

one got shot, but nevertheless there had been a confrontation and finally the Saudis had backed off. The Saudis had backed the Imam in...

*Q: We were talking about Gulf issues...*

COUNTRYMAN: So, there were tensions between Saudi Arabia and Oman. Oman had always been more or less a nation, but there had always been distinction between the coastal Muscat and the interior of Oman. Like many countries where we back the idea of a total national identity rather than loyalty to a local tribal leader which was the order of the day. One of the things that the British were anxious to do in Oman was to make sure that they left that a functioning and united country. The Imam of Oman in the interior had revolted against the Sultan. The British had put that down, but the Saudis had been somewhat supportive of the Imam. One of the members of the Imamate revolt had been thrown out and actually was a guest of the Emir of the eastern province in Saudi Arabia. You would go to dinner at the emir's and there would be this Imam Ghalib who would be sitting there. He was an imam who had been kicked out as a result of this revolution. We really seldom spoke to him, but it was interesting to know was he there; what seemed to be the relationship between him and the eastern province.

*Q: Now you had Arabic language training and you were getting this opportunity to travel separately, using your language a lot?*

COUNTRYMAN: Yes a great deal. I would use it obviously for arrangements, taxicabs, hotel, souks to sell things, and for lower level people. I was not one of those people who was going to by-golly use my Arabic even if it caused bad feeling with the person I was talking to. There were some of the Bahrainis particularly whose English was so good, and they felt more comfortable with English. Many of the sheiks and many of the people in some of the smaller Emirates did not speak any English whatsoever. I always had an interpreter but I prefer to do those things on my own. Since the kind of things I was doing was not hard-edged negotiation where I had to be careful with every word, it was more important I thought, and so did the Consul General, that the tone that I could establish by speaking Arabic was more important than the absolute last nicety of the language. I was the first American official I think, who called on the Sheik of Umm al-Quwain. The talk with him was less substantive. The talk was to talk about, and he was very well read about America. He had already been briefed by his advisors and he would ask, I have forgotten what the questions were, but obviously questions about current events in the United States. He was a charming man, totally without normal education but obviously a clever, I mean there was no university or even high school, but a smart, intelligent kind of guy. So the conversation with him was completely in Arabic for the best of PR reasons; it was a feel good session for him to say "Gee I talked with this guy from this country who speaks good Arabic, knows all the niceties, is charming. You know, Americans are good people."

*Q: When the Consul General or you traveled, did you take a senior local with you as an interpreter.*

COUNTRYMAN: No. It fell out that we none of us knew who we were going to talk to. It fell out that way. Occasionally I think I may have used an interpreter or had gotten somebody in to make a particular point. That was more the exception than the rule.

*Q: Getting back to American issues in Dhahran, were there any particular consular issues that were a problem.*

COUNTRYMAN: Well the original reason why we had a Consul General there was literally for consul narrowly defined. We had at one time 10,000 Americans working for Aramco in the eastern province. As a favor to the oil industry, to make these people feel better to see the American flag flying over the consulate, and to be able to get their passports taken care of was something very good. It was something that they wanted and we provided. Aramco had its own very good liaison with the Saudi police and the eastern province governorate. If an Aramco individual got in trouble outside of the gate that was usually handled without consular intervention. What became more important as time went on and more and more things were happening, we had Americans who were not under the Aramco umbrella in the eastern province. That became of course a potential consular problem. These would be petty things. Alcohol of course was prohibited, but if someone smuggled liquor and had some liquor in their house, usually there was no penalty. The liquor was just seized. In a particularly egregious case a person's visa might be pulled and they were booted. We didn't have any incarceration issues.

*Q: As you are looking into at the Gulf, were American business people, outside of oil, making their presence known?*

COUNTRYMAN: Yes, there were a number of people were coming in. We were looking for areas where there would be openings for American business. Now American business, although that was a period where they weren't that sophisticated as some of the other countries were in making a foreign presence, there were so many reasons why we would develop in the United States rather than go overseas. They were worried about the political aspects. But there were opportunities for American business. Some of them we took the lead in. One of the things that was obvious was that these countries had a lot of money, and had a lack of water and no food production. So we were very helpful to a couple of American companies in building desalinization plants in Qatar and the UAE. We got the University of Arizona to send a team to the Emirates even before independence. They set up an experimental station on a strip of land in Abu Dhabi for desert crops. I am not sure that even today this is actually that the tomatoes they make are cheaper than the tomatoes you might have flown in from southern Italy, but it gives them the pride of raising it on their own. The University of Arizona was very sophisticated in their approach. It is a way you can grow crops by putting a tube over the top of the ground and instead of irrigating all at once, you have a slow drip method to irrigate. An agricultural engineering problem that is beyond my ken, but I found this. They would have sort of like these geodesic domes instead of hot houses that were covered over with a particular kind of plastic that would sweat and create possibly a hot house environment inside for plants. So we did that.

*Q: Let's turn to the staffing of the American mission. Hermann Eilts was the ambassador to Saudi Arabia while you were there; but who was the DCM?*

COUNTRYMAN: Bill Stoltzfus. He later went on to be ambassador to Kuwait [Editor's Note: William A. Stoltzfus, Jr. presented his credentials in Kuwait in February 1972 and finished his tour in January 1976. Simultaneously he was accredited to Bahrain (February 1972-June 1974);

Qatar (March 1972-August 1974); Oman (April 1972-July 1974); and UAE (March 1972-June 1974).]

*Q: Any other people that were assigned there at the time that you particularly remember? Dick Murphy was in the political section wasn't he?*

COUNTRYMAN: Dick Murphy had just left. I think Dick Murphy was there when I arrived and then he became country director for the peninsula. I think he was there the whole time. Then Joe Twinam, who had been in Arabic with me was in the political section in Dhahran rather briefly. When Dick Murphy went back...at that time Arabian peninsula affairs did not have a gulf desk officer. It had a Saudi officer and maybe somebody for Kuwait and somebody for economics. But Dick Murphy came back to Washington. The tempo was really picking up on the Gulf, he insisted that he had a desk officer for the Gulf. He knew Joe Twinam, so Joe was pulled back, cut his tour short and he became the Gulf desk officer. So, Joe was there rather briefly. I forget the job timing but it was really less than a year.

*Q: So Murphy is seeing this coming and he is beginning to make some administrative arrangements back in Washington.*

COUNTRYMAN: With all due respect to Dick, I think the department saw it. I mean there was so much going on, and it would only get worse. I mean a lot of it was administrative and obviously that would be something that NEA/EX (the Bureau of Near East Affairs Office of the Executive Director) would be working on, but the whole question of setting up the posts there had a substantive aspect. I mean how are we going to do it. Were we going to have an ambassador in everywhere? How it worked out, what we did is Bill Stoltzfus went to Kuwait and was accredited to Bahrain, Qatar, the UAE, and Oman. Then we put chargés in those places. This is in 1971 when they went independent.

Actually I left in the summer, July or August of '71, and independence was in September. Phil Griffin, who I had replaced, was sent out to replace me in Bahrain very briefly. He went to be the chargé in Abu Dhabi.

*Q: So, looking ahead here is NEA faced with establishing four new embassies and authorizing new positions to staff those embassies. I suspect that put great pressure on Dhahran to report admin-related information. Did you have any sense of what buildings might be under consideration as embassies?*

COUNTRYMAN: Well the latter part of my tour in Dhahran, I won't say it was exclusively, but it was heavily admin oriented. There were some people in the department who came out. But I went to Bahrain, to Doha, to Abu Dhabi where it seemed quite clear we would set up something, and Oman. I had I remember a list of about 1001 things the admin people wanted to know. Prices, you know what is it going to cost us for locals. Can you get this? Can you get that? You know, airline thing. What are the hotels? What do you suggest about a building? Obviously we are going to rent. Where should the embassy be? Where is the ambassador going to live? Where is staff going to live? All these things had to be answered. In all these places I had made recommendations. Most of them were what we eventually did. Some were not. In Oman

interestingly enough, Oman being so underdeveloped, there was just literally no place you could possibly go for either an embassy or a chancery except one place called the Big Zawawi which was owned by the Zawawi family. I had put in a report that this very historic old building, we might be able to go to the Zawawi family and work something out, because they had moved out of it. Oman was thinking of making it a museum. That is then the building that I moved in to in 1981. It was the Big Zawawi that they had taken as the ambassador's residence. The ambassador lived on the top floor, and the rest of the building was embassy offices.

*Q: That is a great story. So you were heavily involved in admin work. In those final days were people coming out from Washington and going around with you?*

COUNTRYMAN: I did one kind of master tour with somebody, I forget who, somebody from NEA/EX, or somebody from Washington. But most of the time it was stuff they relied on us. Our admin officer, Bob Deason, went with me on a couple of occasions. It was a question of fill out the form for us. Here are the questions. These were not, I mean these were queries but they were not esoteric. I mean they were what is the cost for a driver? What are the possibilities for a house? Obviously that could be better if you could actually see it, but you take so many square feet, is there funning water. I mean there was a lot you could do by mail.

*Q: Did you get any sense of when FSI and the bureau finally glommed on to the idea that they would be opening these new posts and they would need additional language officers?*

COUNTRYMAN: I don't think it was. I think it was the thing began so modestly, and I think there was a sense of maybe that you didn't need Arabic that much, that many people spoke English, which was wrong. Of course the British had been there, but the British had Arabists in every one of those posts. Some of their best Arabists were in the Gulf. But I think the idea was you just take them from someplace else, because I know that I wasn't that much concerned with the personnel aspect of it. I remember people in Washington saying the NEA was told well all these new posts opening up, you are not going to get the people. You are going to have to take it out of your own hide. You know, take it out of Cairo or Rabat.

*Q: Shift positions; get new positions.*

COUNTRYMAN: I think actually they were allowing a couple of new positions, but basically it was take it out of your own hide.

*Q: Then as these new posts were set up, they probably were very sparsely manned, a chargé, a political officer, and a couple of admin officers down there.*

COUNTRYMAN: That's right.

*Q: Is there anything else we need to look at for Dhahran in terms of U.S. interests, instructions to the post, living conditions?*

COUNTRYMAN: Well one of the other things we did back then, of course we had a military presence there. This was a military training mission. Because Riyadh, there was no presence in

Riyadh except for a small liaison offices. The embassy was in Jeddah. It was only later the embassy moved to Riyadh, the national capital. The U.S. military training mission was in Dhahran. We had a brigadier general there. From my back patio of my house in Dhahran I could literally see the field. I mean it was a good distance away. It was open desert, and I could see the airfield. Dhahran had an international airport, and a portion of that was a Saudi air base. This brigadier general who was in the Army was in charge of all of our training, because of course, we were doing the tanks, automatic weapons, it was Air Force deployment. He was in charge of that. Well, he of course reported up the line to the Department of Defense, but he would sit in on our staff meetings. I was usually the one, I would sit in on his staff meetings. All of it was just sort of local housekeeping, you know, what's going on. They would be aware, we would brief them politically on what was going on in the Gulf, and they would tell us what they were doing with the Saudis and military training. So that was another sort of portfolio we had. We didn't control them but it was liaison. We were Americans with common interests.

It was a fairly modest operation. There was a time when the Saudis wanted an advanced fighter. They wanted an F, in those days it was the old 101...102...101...F-100. As an Air Force guy I should remember that. Anyway, the Saudis wanted to buy this airplane, and we decided it was a little too thick for their blood. We got a lot of opposition from Israel to put it frankly. So the British sold them a comparable airplane called the Lightning. [Editor's Note: The British Aircraft Corporation Lightning was a supersonic jet fighter ordered by Saudi Arabia in December 1965 with the first units delivered the following year. The aircraft was noted for its great speed and unpainted natural metal exterior finish.] The British had the training program. Of course, the British military training mission was at Dhahran air base. They were of course, very close with our people, and they helped each other. We knew the Brits there. That was another thing we looked in on. You know, how was the lightning program going.

*Q: Were we the only diplomatic mission on the east coast?*

COUNTRYMAN: Yes. We were very hospitable and occasionally a British vice consul would come down to the eastern province because there were some Brits who worked at Aramco or British businessmen in the eastern province. We would give them an office and let them set up and you know, do favors. The Germans had a big project in the Kufra...was it the Kufra oasis? Anyway there was an oasis south of Dhahran where they were rationalizing the various elements of it and coming up with a water project that was done by HOCHTIEF, the big German construction company. So the German vice consul from their embassy would come out from time to time. I would invite him over for lunch. We'd give them an office and let the Germans come in and get their passports renewed.

*Q: Do you think the other embassies in Jeddah sent somebody down just to check on American activities in eastern Saudi Arabia?*

COUNTRYMAN: They did not. I think we felt, it was a strikingly anomalous position we had because the Consul General was not an ambassador. We were not accredited to these places yet. I think Hermann Eilts...remember the Consul General in Dhahran reported to Hermann Eilts...but Hermann Eilts was really good about letting us run the Gulf contract rather than he constantly intervening on us. But I think that in deference to him it was not appropriate for us to have

diplomatic dealings as the consulate general. I think to answer your question, if a French diplomat wanted to know what was going on in the gulf, and rather than going to our embassy in Paris, they wanted to go to our embassy in Jeddah, to have on the spot comment, he would go to the political officer, or to Hermann Eilts. Hermann would say our Consul General in Dhahran reports that and give them a briefing.

**BROOKS WRAMPELMEIER**  
**Saudi Desk Officer, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs**  
**Washington DC (1968-1974)**

*Brooks Wrampelmeier was born in Ohio in 1934. He received his bachelor's degree from Princeton University in 1956. His career has included positions in Beirut, Amman, Jeddah, Lusaka, Abu Dhabi, Kuwait, and Dhahran. Mr. Wrampelmeier was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in March 2000.*

*Q: So you were there from 1968 to 1974.*

WRAMPELMEIER: I replaced Mike Sterner on the Saudi desk and he moved over to the Egyptian desk. Bill Brewer was the ARP country director. Later on Dick Murphy was office director for about a year before he went to Mauritania, the first of his several ambassadorships. In 1973 Fran Dickman came back from Jeddah where he had been the economic counselor and replaced Murphy as office director.

A great deal of my time was taken up with political/military issues. This was the period when the Saudis were really interested in buying military equipment from us. We got into the naval expansion program in which we helped the Saudis to develop a two coast, ten ship navy with bases at Jubail and Jeddah. We arranged for American contractors to come in and help them to train seamen and to maintain the ships. We also undertook a similar training and maintenance arrangement with the Saudi Arabian Coast Guard and Frontier Force, a branch of the Ministry of Interior.

We also initiated the Saudi National Guard modernization program. The Saudis decided they wanted to modernize the National Guard which is recruited from the central Arabian bedouin tribes who are regarded as likely to be more loyal to the regime than the regular army which was recruited primarily from the Hijaz. Prince Abdullah, head of the National Guard and now crown prince, wanted to modernize the National Guard by upgrading tribal levies into a trained and uniformed well-equipped force. We started out by training two battalions of troops with armored cars and some light artillery, as well as maintenance and logistic support elements. I remember going up to Capitol Hill to explain this program to the staff of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, specifically to Dick Moose. Moose, as you know, had been an FSO and then left the Service to work for Senator Fulbright and later for Senator Frank Church. Later, he returned to State as Under Secretary for Management and Assistant Secretary for Africa. Shortly after I had returned to my office, Moose called me and said something along the lines of "What are you hiding? Two battalions? This is nothing. What are you guys really planning to do?" I told him

that we had no plans other than to train and equip these two battalions. Well, Moose was very skeptical. And at the time we didn't have any other agenda. This started as a very modest program but like a lot of other Saudi programs it grew over time and became a much larger program.

*Q: As we worked on this program were we always looking over our shoulder because we didn't want to develop anything that could be a threat to Israel?*

WRAMPPELMEIER: Oh, yes. You wouldn't have been able to sell it on Capitol Hill if it was regarded as a threat to Israel. At one point I think there were restrictions as to whether or not the Saudis could base F-5 aircraft in places like Tabuk, which was within an easy flight time from Israel. So all of these were factors that had to be considered; selling these programs on Capitol Hill became increasingly difficult as we got into more and more complex and sophisticated types of equipment. Once we got into the '80s with the AWACs and F15 fighter aircraft and that type of thing, sales to Saudi Arabia became very controversial.

*Q: Nixon's presidency started during this time. It, along with Henry Kissinger, became enthralled with the Shah of Iran and sort of opened up our arms to this. Were you getting any reflection of that or was that a different policy because that was anti-Soviet or something like that?*

WRAMPPELMEIER: Well, I think it was anti-Soviet but it also went into the whole issue of the security of the Gulf. Increasingly we had begun focusing on what was going on in the Gulf. By 1968 the British had announced their intention to withdraw by 1971 from their traditional role of protecting power for the smaller Gulf Arab states. They had already left Aden in 1967, withdrawing under pressure from civil insurrections. By 1971, the decision to withdraw had in fact been taken, so our concern was who was going to fill the vacuum and this, of course, led to the Nixon Administration's so-called "Two Pillar Policy." We were going to focus our attention on Iran primarily because it seemed to be the larger and stronger military power and to a lesser extent on Saudi Arabia which was to be the "second pillar." Our concern was the Soviets, of course, and also Iraq which constituted a threat to Bahrain through its support of dissident groups there and in Oman's southern province of Dhofar, where an active rebellion was also being supported by the Marxist regime which had come to power in South Yemen. We saw all of that as requiring our help to build security systems in the Gulf to respond to what were perceived as outside threats to the stability of the region.

*Q: I would have thought there would have been a certain conflict from your perspective of Saudi Arabia and Iran, which was our major ally, on the Persian Gulf because the Iranians had claims or eyes, at least, on some of the Gulf states and off shore islands.*

WRAMPPELMEIER: There was a problem. Some of it was worked out in a median line agreement at the end of the '60s between Saudi Arabia and Iran to settle conflicting claims to various islands and oil fields in the Gulf. The relationship between Iran and Saudi Arabia was at least officially friendly but not warm. The Saudis, being Wahhabis, don't like Shia very much at all and there were some problems because of that but not serious state-to-state problems. I think the general thought was that the Shah is important and he is going to protect the Gulf to some



extent from the Soviets and also counterbalance the Iraqis. We were concerned about what he might be trying to do on the Arab side of the Gulf. Certainly we were concerned about the Shah's action in November 1971 in seizing for Iran the islands of the Tunbs and Abu Musa that were claimed by Ras Al-Khaimah and Sharjah, respectively. But, again, there were problems between Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Abu Dhabi, too, over borders.

*Q: Had the Buraimi crisis been solved?*

WRAMPELMEIER: Yes, long before. It hadn't really been solved, but it was in abeyance. That is, the Saudis' effort to seize and hold parts of the Buraimi, or Al-Ain, oasis had been frustrated in the mid-'50s when British-officered Omani Scouts came in and kicked a small force of Saudi policemen out of the oasis. But the border between Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi had not been resolved and when the smaller Gulf states became independent in 1971 there was a period of several years during which the Saudis did not recognize the United Arab Emirates (UAE) because they were holding their recognition hostage to get Abu Dhabi to agree to a border agreement on Saudi terms. A border agreement was reached in 1974, but it was never published.

*Q: Did we get involved in that?*

WRAMPELMEIER: We didn't get involved in the border issue per se. I think we were concerned that the Saudis recognize the UAE and help stabilize the situation, but we didn't get involved in the nitty gritty of the issue.

Our focus in the early '70s was on the emergence of the nine Gulf states and Oman as independent actors and on the question of our diplomatic presence there. We started off with accrediting our ambassador in Kuwait, William Stoltzfus, also to Bahrain, Qatar, the UAE, and Oman. Up to that time, Consulate General Dhahran had been responsible for our consular affairs in these emirates. About 1972 we also established small diplomatic posts under chargés in Bahrain, Doha, Abu Dhabi and Muscat. That worked for maybe a year or so until it became obvious that each of these countries wanted to have a resident U.S. ambassador. By 1974 we were appointing resident ambassadors to all the Gulf states. Mike Sterner was our first ambassador in Abu Dhabi. The late Joe Twinam, who had been desk officer for the Gulf states in ARP, went out to Bahrain as ambassador. Bob Paganelli was sent as ambassador to Qatar and Bill Wolle to Muscat.

*Q: I would like to stop at this point, but before we leave this desk job, I would like to talk about two other issues and you might have something else you would like to talk about. One was the reaction after the 1973 war, the October war on Saudi Arabia which changed the equation a bit. The other one was your impression of the interest or lack thereof in Saudi Arabia on the part of Nixon and Kissinger. We will pick this interview up next time with those issues.*

WRAMPELMEIER: Okay.

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*Q: Today is May 3, 2000. Brooks, shall we talk about those two issues?*

WRAMPELMEIER: I was talking about my six years as the Saudi Arabian desk officer from 1968-74. I had mentioned that for the first several years the largest part of my time was spent on political/military matters. We were getting into a whole range of new military programs with the Saudis. In addition to the Saudi Navy Expansion Program and the National Guard Modernization Program which I discussed earlier, there was something called the Saudi Arabian Mobility Program. We were helping the Saudi Army to develop an ordnance capability to repair and maintain their vehicles and other military equipment. We then developed a program for the Saudi Coast Guard and Frontier Force in which the U.S. Coast Guard and U.S. contractors helped to improve that branch of the Ministry of Interior. Through the USAID Public Safety Program, we provided training to some Saudi police officers. We were also getting involved in a program to upgrade the Saudi Air Force from F-86 to F-5 aircraft. Given my several years experience in political-military things I went along as the State Department member on a Department of Defense team sent in February, 1972 to examine Kuwait's military needs and to prepare recommendations for possible U.S. military sales and training to that Emirate. So, that was one big part of what I was doing.

*Q: When you look at it, Saudi Arabia was on the periphery of a pretty rough neighborhood. You had Iraq – at that time Iran wasn't a factor – Israel and a lot of space and money. What were we thinking about? What was the military supposed to be doing?*

WRAMPELMEIER: Well, I think a lot of this was tied to being as helpful as we felt we could be to the Saudis. Of course, some of it was linked to the 1971 British withdrawal from their traditional military responsibilities in the Gulf. We were concerned that Saudi Arabia have the military capability to assure not only its own security but also to provide some measure of security to the smaller Gulf Arab states which were coming out from under British protection. Of course, I think at the time that we felt that Iran, being larger, stronger and more militarily developed was going to be the key pillar, but we also were hoping that Saudi Arabia could begin to also play some of that role.

One of the other things was that the British had left South Yemen as well and it became independent under a Marxist regime that was seen as threatening not only by Saudi Arabia and Oman, but also by the non-communist regime in North Yemen. The problem became how do we get the Saudis, who were not all that friendly to republican North Yemen, to begin to assist the North Yemenis against the South Yemenis. There was also the insurrection in Dhofar where South Yemen was aiding tribal elements seeking to wrest Dhofar away from the control of the Sultan of Oman.

*Q: Was there any concern that we might over-militarize the Saudis and they might thrust southward, eastward, etc.?*

WRAMPELMEIER: No, I don't think so because the Saudis had so few military people and their degree of training and trainability was such that we felt it was going to be a long time before the Saudis would be a threat to anybody except their smaller neighbors. There was also on the part of the Israelis some concern that the Saudis not be given such a strong air capability that, in the event of another Arab-Israeli war, the Saudis would constitute an additional military threat

against which Israel would need to defend itself.

Another thing we dealt with began in the late '60s with the changing balance between the oil-producing countries and the international oil companies. The U.S. was becoming increasingly dependent on imported foreign oil and there occurred a whole set of circumstances in Europe and in Libya which enabled OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) suddenly to impose new pricing arrangements on their oil concession holders. Rivalry between the Libyans and the Gulf oil producers led to several rounds of oil price hikes. The Shah of Iran was one of the leaders in this. Then the OPEC governments began to put pressure on the American and other international oil companies to agree to what they called participation, that is, to surrender a portion of their concessions to the host governments. This was an issue that also came to involve the U.S. Government as well as the oil companies for we were concerned that the latter's concession rights not be violated or that disputes over participation lead to interruptions in the supply of oil.

I had taken that trip to Kuwait in 1972 and on my way back I visited Saudi Arabia. In Jeddah, I participated in a meeting that took place between our ambassador, Nick Thatcher, his DCM, Hume Horan, and Rashad Far'aoun, the advisor to King Faisal. Nick told Far'aoun why we were concerned about this push for participation and our feeling that, while it was between the Aramco owner companies and the Saudi government as to what the future of the concession would be, we certainly did not want to see this done by fiat in a way that would then complicate the whole oil picture. Also, we did not want there to be a problem of American companies having their property in effect seized without proper compensation, since that could impact on our overall relations with the Kingdom.

Meanwhile, the Saudis were beginning to hint that the future supply of oil might depend also on progress being made toward a reversal of the results of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. At that time, the Israelis had captured the Old City of Jerusalem, with its important Muslim shrines, and all of the West Bank. As guardian of the Holy Places in Mecca and Medina, this was a matter of considerable distress to King Faisal. A 1970 initiative by Secretary of State William Rogers had failed to break the impasse over implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 242, which called for the restoration of occupied territories to Arab control. On a State visit to Washington in May 1971 Faisal expressed to President Nixon his deep concerns about continued Israeli occupation of Jerusalem and warned that this situation was providing the Soviet Union with opportunities to expand its influence in the Middle East. In the spring of 1973, Faisal sent the Saudi Oil Minister, Ahmad Zaki Yamani, to Washington to warn us that if there was another Arab-Israeli war, Saudi Arabia might be compelled to use its oil as a weapon on the Arabs' behalf. Oil would then become a political issue. We didn't take this warning as seriously as perhaps we should have. Of course, when the war did come, the October War of 1973, Faisal ordered Aramco to cut its exports by five percent and embargoed shipments of oil to the U.S. and to the Netherlands, because the Netherlands was the major oil depot in Europe from where oil was rerouted to many other countries. On the other hand Faisal allowed oil products to continue to go to the U.S. forces fighting communism in Vietnam.

At this point Faisal certainly got Washington's attention. Up to then Henry Kissinger, as National Security Adviser, had not taken a great deal of interest in Saudi Arabia. He had met

with Saudi visitors like the King and Prince (now King) Fahd, then the Minister of Interior and Second Deputy Prime Minister, who had come to Washington in November 1969. (We had invited Fahd because we felt it was useful to develop some rapport with this man who might some day become king.) Kissinger participated in those talks but otherwise Saudi Arabia did not loom that high on his or Nixon's horizon beyond the Kingdom's role as the second pillar of our policy in the Gulf.

With the 1973 war and with the oil embargo, Saudi Arabia was soon included on Kissinger's diplomatic shuttle visits to the Middle East. A great deal of effort on his part was made to try to persuade the Saudis to lift the embargo. The Saudis, however, insisted that he first achieve the disengagement of Egyptian and Israeli forces in Sinai and then begin the process toward an Arab-Israeli political settlement. Eventually Faisal agreed to lift the embargo in the spring of 1974.

It was now clear, however, that the U.S. needed to do much more to demonstrate to the Saudis that its interests, and ours, would be advanced by a closer bilateral relationship. In early 1974, a National Security Study Memorandum (NSSM) recommended, *inter alia*, that we strengthen and expand our ties with the Kingdom in a variety of ways. We accordingly offered to create two high-level U.S.-Saudi joint commissions. An economic commission under the Secretary of the Treasury and his Saudi counterpart would look at all sorts of ways that we could help the Saudi government to modernize and improve its administrative capabilities. The other joint commission under the Secretary of Defense and the Saudi Minister of Defense and Aviation was a security committee that would assess Saudi Arabia's security needs and develop bilateral military programs and joint exercises. Part of that program, obviously, included the overbuilding of certain Saudi facilities like airfields which became so important to us during the 1991 Gulf War.

Prince Fahd came to Washington in May 1974 and signed these two agreements with Secretary Kissinger.

*Q: This overbuilding was done on purpose?*

WRAMPELMEIER: Well, I think the idea was that the Saudis would say, "Look, we want to go first class." Our military would then say, okay this is what we would do if we were doing it for ourselves. We would build a runway of such and such length, etc. The Saudis said that was just what they wanted. I can't really say that someone sat down and said that was a great idea because we might use that facility sometime, but I certainly think it was in the back of somebody's mind. It was not something that we sat down and discussed with the Saudis. We were going to give them a first-class military capability to the extent that we could and help train their people to the point where they could operate it or at least engage contractors could do that for them. This was basically an enhancement of the military and technical assistance relationship that had existed since the early 1950s.

*Q: Did you see a change in the Saudi outlook after the 1973 war in which the Egyptians had at least given a jolt to the Israelis?*

WRAMPPELMEIER: I think there was. I think first of all the Saudis were much happier with Sadat than they had been with Nasser. They did not see Sadat as an Arab nationalist threat in the same way they had seen Nasser. I believe Faisal also was aware that Sadat was becoming increasingly disenchanted with the political and military support he got from the Soviets. The Saudis were therefore prepared to take a more active role in pushing for some sort of Arab-Israeli settlement that met minimum Arab demands. The Saudis were also using organizations like the Islamic Conference Organization and the Islamic Summit to rally international support for the Egyptian and Syrian positions. I think it was a period of much closer Egyptian-Saudi relations. The Yemen problem was behind them. A greater concern for the Saudis was that as long as the Palestinian issue existed their relationship with the U.S. was vulnerable to criticism from Arab radicals, Palestinians and others. If the Middle East conflict could be resolved then they and we could go ahead and cooperate with less friction and criticism. But I don't think the Saudis were prepared to take the lead on Arab-Israel issues.

One other memorable, if tragic, event of this period was the murder in Khartoum of our Ambassador, Cleo Noel, and his deputy Curt Moore. Black September, a Palestinian terrorist organization, had seized Noel and Moore during a party at the Saudi Arabian embassy in Khartoum and were holding them hostage. Word of this reached the Department about lunchtime and, because the Saudi embassy was involved, the Secretariat promptly alerted the Arabian Peninsula Office. I immediately went to the Secretariat and soon found myself on a task force headed by Armin Meyer. I began keeping the log of messages and other actions and, over several days, spent most of my time on the task force. Eventually, President Nixon announced that the U.S. Government would not deal with terrorists. Those of us on the task force felt that this announcement had probably sealed the doom of our two colleagues and that proved to be the case, although there is some question whether the kidnappers ever intended to let them live.

**JAMES ALAN WILLIAMS**  
**Petroleum Officer, Arabian Peninsula Affairs**  
**Washington, DC (1969-1970)**

*Mr. Williams was born in Wisconsin and raised in Virginia. After graduation from Princeton University, he joined the Foreign Service in 1965 and was posted to Ankara, Turkey. During his career Mr. Williams became a specialist in Greek/Turkish/Cyprus affairs and served as Special Coordinator for Cyprus, with the personal rank of Ambassador. His foreign assignments include Ankara, Nicosia, Bonn, Berlin and Athens, and he had several tours at the State Department in Washington. Mr. Williams was interviewed by Ray Ewing in 2003.*

*Q: Did you spend a lot of time interacting with the Saudi embassy or other local embassies in Washington, or were things done primarily in the field?*

WILLIAMS: Primarily in the field in those days. Hermann Eilts was the ambassador in Saudi and anybody who knows him knows it would be done mainly through the embassy because that's the way he wanted to run things, and he did it very well. I did have a contact at the Saudi

embassy, Mohammed Madani, but it was really not a major contact. It was as much social as substantive because in those days we at least at the third secretary level did not do much business with the Saudi embassy. Much more productive contact, just because of the personalities involved, was the team of the Washington office of ARAMCO which, as I said, was the major producer in Saudi Arabia at the time, run by U.S. majors. John Pendleton ran the office and Robert Van Person was his deputy. They were essentially lobbyist and liaison folk between ARAMCO and key elements of the executive and legislative branches. Very able. They both knew the oil industry very well. Person was the child of missionaries who had grown up in the Arab world so he spoke fluent Arabic and understood the world very well. And Pendleton had spent time as a young man out of college in Turkey of all places, so we shared an interest in Turkey based on that.

*Q: This was before OPEC, or had OPEC gotten started by then? It was certainly before the big price increase.*

WILLIAMS: I believe OPEC had gotten started by then, but it had not flexed its muscle in any way.

*Q: Were there major issues that you had to deal with, or was it more keeping track of developments, troubleshooting sort of role?*

WILLIAMS: As I recall it was more troubleshooting than anything. I was usually the reporting officer or the note taker when they would come in to talk about things. Production levels, efforts by the Saudis to raise them, efforts by others maybe not to raise them so much. But I don't recall any of the specific issues too well. There was no big trouble in those days. It was a fairly smoothly functioning relationship between the Saudis and ARAMCO. Been going on for a long time. The oil issues that were more contentious usually involved the former sheikdoms of the Persian Gulf that were coming into independence once the British started pulling back from east of Suez. That was happening in the Gulf when I served in the NE/ARP. And the question then was where are the boundaries of these sheikdoms? The land boundaries had often not been demarcated. The maritime boundaries were subject to dispute, particularly with Iran which under the Shah in those days was very muscular in asserting claims not just to continental shelf, but to offshore islands such as Abu Musa and the Tunbs. The issues that involved more crisis-like scenarios usually involved as I said the sheikdoms, those islands, and the boundaries. Not so much ARAMCO itself.

*Q: Was Yemen part of the area covered by the office?*

WILLIAMS: Yes it was, and I can recall one or two discussions involving Yemen in those days. Usually not with oil. It was more the situation between Yemen and South Yemen because they were separate countries at the time and the South Yemen was quite radical socialist. Bill Eagleton had been our last principal officer in Aden as I recall and he was pulled out when I was in the NE/ARP. I remember when he came back. But the issues were more political and military between the two Adens, between the two Yemens, between South Yemen and Saudi Arabia, between South Yemen and Muscat, things like that. Oil was not a big part of that at all.

*Q: I see your job description described you as an economic petroleum affairs officer. I assume that petroleum took up most of your time as opposed to other economic issues.*

WILLIAMS: Virtually all of it. The other issue that took up a lot of time was a desalinization plant that was finally built in Jeddah on the Red Sea. The Office of Saline Waters in the Department of Interior under Stuart Udall in the Kennedy administration had a mandate which continued for many years thereafter to promote American desalinization technology worldwide. We persuaded the Saudis early on to buy into this, and they did. They had the money for it. And the plant was built by a consortium of companies, Europeans and others. Office of Saline Waters was the supervisor, reporting to the embassy in Jeddah under Hermann Eilts. But it had to deal with Dutch and British and German contractors and subcontractors in a consortium that the Saudis as I recall had put together. It was not a smoothly functioning operation; there were delays inevitably as there are in that part of the world. There were suspicions, backbiting, accusations, and one of my jobs was to trek over to the Department of Interior about once a week to hold the hand of the folks in the Office of Saline Waters who wanted to pull the plug on the whole thing because they were exasperated with the way those foreigners were not showing sufficient appreciation for our technology. In the end the plant was built. After I left NE/ARP it was completed and went online as now one of I think many desalinization plants the Saudis have. But it was the first in those days, sort of a demonstration case of U.S. technology in that part of the world. But it invoked a lot of neuralgic feelings in a lot of corners before it was over. And I like to think that my efforts and those of Bill Brewer and others in NE/ARP helped smooth things out, both with the Department of Interior and with the folks representing the U.S. government in Jeddah.

**FRANÇOIS M. DICKMAN**  
**Economic/Political Officer**  
**Jeddah (1969-1972)**

*Ambassador François M. Dickman was born in Iowa in 1924. He graduated from the University of Wyoming in 1947 and received an M.A. from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. He served in the U.S. Army during both WWII and Korea. Ambassador Dickman joined the Foreign Service in 1951 and served at posts in Columbia, Lebanon, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. He served as the Arabian Peninsula Country Director until his appointment as the Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates. He was interviewed by Stanley Brooks beginning February 2001.*

*Q: Was Saudi Arabia your next assignment?*

DICKMAN : Yes. In mid-July 1969, I flew to Jeddah with Margaret coming a month and a half later after Christine and Paul had entered their respective schools. I never dreamed that I would thereafter be tied to the Arabian Peninsula for the rest of my Foreign Service career. Initially, I was assigned as first secretary and later as economic counselor. Bill Stoltzfus was the DCM. In this joint economic-political section, David Newton and Joe Twinam were the political officers.

John Craig and later Roger Merrick were the junior commercial officers. Bill Rugh was the PAO and David Ransom was the consular officer. I might mention that all of these except Merrick later became ambassadors. Ray Close and Graham Fuller supported the political half of the section.

Although many embassy families had their homes within the embassy compound, which featured a small desert golf course, we lived off compound in a large house several blocks away. It was to be our first government furnished quarters. We were connected to the embassy switchboard by an ancient hand crank telephone, which often did not work. Also, one of the problems in walking to the compound was that we had to avoid a pack of wild dogs that fed on garbage scraps. You were never quite sure whether this pack was going to attack you.

Since access to high level Saudi personalities was basically restricted to the ambassador, this meant that Hermann did a good deal of the embassy political reporting. Fortunately, the economic-commercial side of the joint section was not subject to such strictures. Saudi businessmen were easily accessible for commercial reporting and I also had good contacts with the Saudi monetary agency, which was headed by Anwar Ali, who was a Pakistani, and also with his principal assistant, Dr. Omar Chapra. Shortly after arriving in Jeddah, I recall our section being busy with promoting U.S. agricultural exports which was organized around a food fair. Among other things, it featured smoked turkey which tasted just like ham. Once the fair ended, Margaret used what was left to demonstrate U.S. dishes at Queen Iffat's Dar al Hanan's Women's High School in Jeddah. Queen Iffat was the wife of King Faisal. Among the items that had not sold at the food fair were packages of chicken livers, which Margaret showed how they could be made into excellent pates.

What was different about the assignment in Jeddah was that the capital of Saudi Arabia was Riyadh. Since foreign missions at the time were not allowed to be stationed in the capital, I would fly periodically to Riyadh to call on various officials such as the planning director, Hisham Nazir; the deputy finance minister, Muhammad Aba al Khail; the deputy commerce director, Omar Fakhia; PETROMIN governor, Abd al Hadi Tahir; occasionally petroleum minister Zaki Yamani; plus others whose names I no longer remember. My biggest problem in going to Riyadh was where I would spend the night. Riyadh was very, very crowded. Moreover, I was never sure whether I had the desired appointment. I had to depend exclusively on taxis. This was especially a problem when I had to squire around a VIP who would arrive at the airport in Riyadh and expected to be met with an Embassy car and driver. I recall, for example, the visit of Henry Kearns, the chairman of the Export-Import Bank. The other problem was that invariably, hotel rooms were almost always full. Each time I visited Riyadh, I had to hope that there would be an extra bunk at the U.S. military training mission, which occupied the upper floors of a building in downtown Riyadh. Since the phone system didn't work in the Kingdom, the only way the embassy could communicate with the military mission in Riyadh in making preparations for my visit was by shortwave radio, which was often blocked by static. Fortunately, after I left, the embassy finally rented a house in Riyadh, provided a car, and assigned to my successor a local employee who also served as interpreter.

With the ambassador doing much of the political reporting, it meant that our combined ECON/POL section focused mainly on economic subjects, some of which had not been written about in the past. For example, I did a report on Saudi Arabia's balance of payments and another



on its national accounts, which estimated the Kingdom's gross domestic product. I also did one on its national budget. These initial reports laid the basis for key economic indicators which became part of our semi-annual Economic Trends Report, which either I prepared or helped to prepare. The June 1967 war had had a noticeable adverse economic impact on the Kingdom. With the Suez Canal remaining closed, the cost of imported commodities had risen substantially. In addition, the Saudis had almost been forced to become major aid donors, providing \$150 million in grant aid each year to Egypt and Jordan, with the former intended to offset revenue losses caused by the closure of the Suez Canal. Although Egyptian forces had withdrawn from North Yemen as a quid pro quo for Saudi aid, the Kingdom's outlays for defense and internal security had continued to grow as it sought to build up a modest deterrent force. The Saudis wanted the latest equipment. However, since most of it was very sophisticated, it required a lot of support companies like Raytheon to manage programs like the Hawk ground to air missile.

By the time I arrived, the pressures on the Saudi budget caused by rising defense expenditures, foreign aid, and a helter skelter of different development projects had forced the government to apply stringent fiscal restraints. In order to deal with the problem, the Saudi Central Planning Organization, headed by Hisham Nazir, had completed the Kingdom's first comprehensive plan with the assistance of the Stanford Research Institute. Meanwhile, the Saudi attempts to reestablish a monarchical regime in North Yemen were going nowhere. Although Nasser had withdrawn Egyptian forces from North Yemen in return for Saudi aid, the Yemeni Republicans had managed to maintain control over much of the country by turning increasingly to the Soviet Union for military equipment and to Communist China for economic assistance.

Early in 1970, King Faisal finally decided to stop supporting the royalists and to establish diplomatic relations with the Yemen Arab Republic. King Faisal had finally realized that the Yemeni Royalists had become a very expensive lost cause and that the civil war was only giving Moscow new opportunities to meddle in the Peninsula. The Saudi recognition of the North Yemeni regime gave me a couple of opportunities to fly down to Sanaa to meet with the then head of the Yemen National Bank. Saudi Air had established a fairly regular flight schedule with Sanaa. Although North Yemen had broken diplomatic relations with the United States during the June 1967 war, we established an interests section following Saudi Arabia's recognition of the North Yemen regime under the protection of the Italian embassy.

*Q: What was the most interesting aspect of your assignment in Jeddah?*

DICKMAN: I think what turned out to be the most interesting aspect of my assignment in Jeddah was to watch and report on the series of events that began in 1970 causing an increase in OPEC's bargaining power. It was a period when Saudi Arabia was becoming the world's major oil producing and exporting country. At the same time, Saudi Arabia was pursuing its goal to gradually take ownership of the ARAMCO concession. The term that the Saudis used was "participation," participating in the concession.

In the summer of 1970, Libya's Muammar Qadhafi had forced Armand Hammer's Occidental Petroleum Company to cut back on its production by about 35%. Armand had failed to get other oil companies like Exxon to loan him some oil so that he could meet his contractual arrangements which were entirely with European nations. Libya was Occidental Petroleum's

only source of crude. Unable to gain help from other oil companies, Hammer caved to Qadhafi's demand for higher postings and a change in the tax rate from 50/50 to 55/45. Other OPEC countries, including Saudi Arabia, soon demanded the same treatment. This was followed by Syria closing the Iraq Petroleum Company pipelines in its dispute with Iraq over transit fees. To strengthen its negotiating position, a Syrian bulldozer "accidentally" cut ARAMCO's Tapline which carried oil from Dhahran to the Port of Sidon in Lebanon. The sudden shortage of oil was further exacerbated by Kuwait's decision to cut its oil production from four to three million barrels a day. Not only did Kuwait's cut back affect world supply but the civil war in Nigeria had broken out, which had sharply reduced exports from that country, and there were delays in completing the Alaska Pipeline because of environmental concerns. At the time I arrived in Jeddah, ARAMCO employees were complaining that there was a world oil glut. But by the fall of 1970, the situation had suddenly changed to a world oil shortage.

This was reflected in OPEC's meeting in December 1970 in Caracas, where the member countries sought to take advantage of the situation. They issued a 30 day ultimatum to the oil companies to make new price concessions and to accept the 55/45 split of profits. Otherwise, the OPEC nations threatened to cut off their supply. Since the value of oil was denominated in dollars, the OPEC nations also wanted price adjustments to overcome the 10% devaluation of the dollar that had occurred earlier in the year.

Fearful that they could be caught in a ratcheting situation, the major oil companies decided that they would no longer deal with OPEC nations individually but as a common front. So, they agreed on what they called a "safety net" arrangement whereby if one company's access to crude was denied by an oil exporter, companies not similarly disadvantaged would transfer some of their crude to the affected company. Since the "safety net" arrangement raised anti-trust problems in the United States, the companies turned to Jack McCloy who was instrumental in getting the Department of Justice to issue a business revue letter exempting the oil companies from anti-trust prosecution. In order to coordinate negotiations with OPEC countries, a policy group of senior oil company executives was formed in London.

The news of the London group provoked angry reactions among OPEC nations. Wishing to avoid a confrontation, Under Secretary of State John Irwin was sent as special emissary to Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait to moderate their demands. The first stop was Iran. Under Secretary Irwin was accompanied by Fuels and Energy director Jim Akins. Irwin's message was to stress the importance to the United States and the free world that there not be a halt or a cut in oil production which otherwise would seriously affect our relations. The Shah had objected strongly to having negotiations where OPEC would be dealing with a common front of oil companies. The Shah claimed that the OPEC threat had been misunderstood The dispute was with the oil companies, not the oil importing nations. Oil would always be available to oil importing nations even if OPEC's negotiations with the oil companies broke down. The Shah insisted that the United States deal separately with moderate Persian Gulf producing nations which were willing to enter into five year oil supply agreements even if radicals like Libya or Venezuela got a better deal in separate negotiations.

I had been sent to Riyadh to meet and brief the Irwin party as it came in from Tehran. I expected that they would hear the same message from Saudi oil minister Yamani, which they did. It was

clear that Yamani knew what Irwin had heard from the Shah. After the meeting, I remember the discussion that followed, whether to acquiesce to the Shah's position or what to do. If the offer of a five year oil supply arrangement was turned down, the oil companies might find themselves with a less favorable arrangement. That was our concern. The general feeling was to accept the assurances of the Shah and the Saudis and later the Kuwaitis that they would avoid price ratcheting. This is what Secretary Irwin recommended to Secretary Rogers and the oil companies. But in doing so, it broke up the London group's united front. In February 1971, the oil companies met in Tehran, where the companies agreed to a new profit split as well as a uniform increase of about 35 cents a barrel, the elimination of discounts, and adjusting posted prices periodically to deal with the inflation of the U.S. dollar. The Tehran meeting represented a symbolic transfer of power from the oil companies to the OPEC countries in the Persian Gulf basin.

We reported on how these developments were having a favorable impact on the Saudi economy. Because the United States no longer any shut in capacity and had ended oil import quotas, the ARAMCO oil companies were rapidly increasing production. By 1972, Saudi Arabia had become the world's leading oil exporter, which had resulted in rapidly rising foreign exchange earnings for the Kingdom. In doing economic reporting, I had become pretty well acquainted with oil minister Zaki Yamani. On at least a couple of occasions, he had invited me and Margaret to his home. One of these dinners was when Armand Hammer was present. I believe it was in the latter part of 1971. Sheikh Zaki was always helpful in answering my questions whether the Kingdom would allow the continued rapid rise in oil production since the income from oil was beginning to exceed the economy's absorptive capacity. Yamani implied that there was a limit beyond which Saudi oil production should not rise, although he had to be careful in what he said since he was not a member of the royal family.

By this time, Nick Thatcher had replaced Hermann Eilts as ambassador. Hermann had gone to the Army War College in Carlisle as deputy commandant. Much of Ambassador Thatcher's time was devoted to dealing with Saudi requests for sophisticated military weaponry as well as advanced training, but he had also become increasingly preoccupied in how to deal with the Ministry of Petroleum's push for share participation in ARAMCO. It raised the question of the extent to which the U.S. government should become directly involved with the operations of American oil companies in the Kingdom. For several years, Yamani had called for Saudi shared participation in the U.S. oil company consortium but Washington had avoided reacting to the idea.

In February 1972, matters had come to a head when the ARAMCO partners had turned down a Saudi request for an initial 25% of ARAMCO's shares. The American companies had also been hesitant to make the needed investments that the Saudis wanted to capture associated gas that was being flared. The Saudis wanted to convert it into valuable petroleum by-products. Instead, the ARAMCO partners had offered a 50% share in new discoveries. Reacting to this refusal, the Saudis had announced that they would call for an extraordinary OPEC meeting to take place in March. Along with David Newton, I remember attending a meeting on the subject between Ambassador Thatcher and King Faisal which included Oil Minister Yamani. The ambassador had received instructions to point out to the King that participation was not part of the 1971 Tehran Agreement with the oil companies. Its implementation without negotiation would violate

existing contractual agreements. As I recall, the ambassador made about 10 points. Faisal's performance was impressive. He responded to each of the points in the order they had been presented. He hoped the companies would not oblige him to forcibly put participation into effect. He said participation would ensure a long-term supply relationship between the Kingdom and the American oil companies. Normally during visits by American officials, Faisal was wont to digress to talk about the dangers of the protocols of Zion, but this time, with Saudi national interests involved, there was none of this.

I believe this meeting was important from an historical point of view. On the eve of the special OPEC conference, oil minister Yamani announced that the ARAMCO partners had accepted the principle of participation. The partners had finally realized that with growing world oil demand, what mattered most was not who owned the oil concessions but who had access to the world's largest pool of recoverable reserves. So, what had been an adversarial approach was now changing to one of common interests.

The appearance that we were giving in to Arab oil producing nations generated suspicions among certain elements in the United States. The suspicion was that State Department Arabists were undermining U.S. support for Israel. In an article by Joseph Kraft which appeared in the November 7, 1971 issue of "The New York Times Magazine," a copy of which I have, it implied that as Arabists, almost by definition they were pro-Arab at the expense of Israel and their influence had to be countered by the White House. The article quoted out of context statements from Department Arabists as well as some who were not even Middle East specialists. If such reasoning were accepted to its logical conclusion, it would discourage Foreign Service officers from taking Arabic language training since they would be perceived as untrustworthy. I recall that retired Ambassador Pete Hart wrote an excellent letter rebutting this outrageous article. The attack reminded me of charges in the early 1950s against the old China hands. Nevertheless, the suspicion has remained even to this day. The Arabists myth was the subject of an article by John Soleki that appeared in the 1990 issue of "The Middle East Journal." Soleki's article indicated that there was little if any proof that the Arabists had ever influenced U.S. policy vis a vis Israel. Recently, there has been a book entitled "The Arabists" by Robert Kaplan which supports the Kraft thesis. What I found surprising in Kaplan's book is that he never mentions the Soleki article, not even in a footnote or in his extensive list of references.

*Q: When did you leave for your second tour in the Department?*

DICKMAN: In December 1971, I learned from Rodger Davies, who was now deputy assistant secretary in NEA, that I would be replacing Dick Murphy as Arabian Peninsula country director. Rodger had come to Manama to represent the United States at Bahrain's independence day celebration. I had joined Rodger in Bahrain and then traveled with him and Lee Dinsmore, who was our Consul General in Dhahran, for a swing through the lower Gulf. It included stops in Qatar, the fledgling United Arab Emirates, and Oman. We flew on the old DC-4 that the U.S. military training mission used to go back and forth between Jeddah, Riyadh, and Dhahran which was known as the "Desert Run." On occasion, I would hitch a ride when traveling to Riyadh.

Rodger's visit came just as British military forces were completing their final withdrawal from the Gulf. These newly independent, small, and very vulnerable Gulf states were most anxious that U.S. diplomatic recognition would soon be followed with the opening of an American

embassy in each country.

The most fascinating part of this visit was Oman. In 1970, the British had forced the removal of the retrograde Sultan Said and replaced him with his son, Qaboos, who had attended Sandhurst. The Saudis had withheld recognition of Qaboos because of their dispute over the ownership of the Buraimi Oasis. However, by the time we had arrived in Oman, Qaboos had just returned from a visit to Saudi Arabia, where he had been addressed as His Majesty. The Saudis had belatedly become concerned over the insurgency in Oman's western province of Dhofar, which was being supported by South Yemen's Marxist regime. The Saudis had decided to abandon their longtime support of rebels in Oman's eastern interior because of their boundary dispute with Qaboos' father. After landing in Muscat, we boarded an Omani military aircraft which took us to Salalah, the capital of Dhofar province, where we met with Sultan Qaboos. At the time, the primitive runway at Salalah was periodically under mortar attack from the nearby mountain positions held by the insurgents. Although Oman had become a sizeable oil producer (an important oil field had been discovered by Shell), Oman was still very much a medieval kingdom. There were only three miles of paved road in the entire country, which joined Muscat to the port of Matrah. At night, the gates of Muscat were closed with the inhabitants only allowed to use lanterns as they moved about.

As for the rest of my tour in Jeddah, other than being involved with details for the visit of Vice President Spiro Agnew, who came in the summer of 1971, the one major headache that I had during my tour was being the embassy's point man to deal with problems of the Jeddah electric power and desalination plant. Prior to my arrival, an agreement had been signed with the Saudi government whereby the Department of Interior's Office of Saline Waters was responsible for the design, engineering, and supervision of the plant's construction as well as making recommendations on the construction bids. Westinghouse had made a strong pitch for the job but it had gone to a Dutch company because it was the lowest bidder. By the time I came, construction was well underway, but there were a number of technical problems. Ambassador Eilts did not want to be involved in the incriminations among the various parties. The Dutch company had cut corners such as not properly coating the many pipes which prevented the plant from operating properly. At one point on Christmas Eve of 1971, lightning struck the plant putting three of its four banks out of commission. The Jeddah electric company officials refused to provide the needed electric charge to jumpstart the plant in order that it could operate again. The company officials were afraid that if they did so, it could ricochet and short circuit the city's other power generating plants. Eventually, the desalination plant was put back into operation after arranging to jerryrig a large power line connecting the generator in Raytheon's compound a half mile away to the desalination plant in order to give the needed jump start.

By the time I left Jeddah, the Saudis wanted to use the Department of Interior's adjudication mechanism as the means to obtain funds from the Dutch company. In other words, they wanted enough funds to make the plant operable. This was strongly resisted by James Watt, who was then Assistant Secretary of Interior. Although we were both from Wyoming, I felt Watt was more interested in protecting the Department of Interior from getting a black eye than trying to work out the problem equitably – at least equitably for the Saudis, who were footing the bill. If I remember correctly, the Dutch company went bankrupt, which forced the Saudis to pay about \$8 million for the services of a German company to make the plant operable.

*Q: How did Margaret find life in Jeddah?*

DICKMAN: She was flexible and a good soldier. As you know, women can't drive in Saudi Arabia. This was always a problem. Also, it was an inconvenience when I had to travel to Riyadh at least once, sometimes twice, a month since we did not live on the compound. But I must say, the biggest time consuming inconvenience was shopping. There was no embassy store at the compound. Our house was located about a mile from the nearest grocery store. This meant that every time Margaret had to go to buy food, I had to drive her there. It also meant being sure you had included all the needed items on your grocery list to cut down on the number of trips. The embassy motor pool tried to help by periodically assigning a van to take wives to do their shopping. But this meant stopping at different places for different needs all of which required a good bit of time. Fortunately, this inconvenience did not bother my very resourceful wife. Aside from demonstrating American foods, Margaret's many activities included coaching the daughters of Deputy Foreign Minister Ibrahim Mas'ud, who were seeking to improve their English comprehension. They would only call when I was not in the house. Since the second floor of our large house was unoccupied (Our kids were in school in the States), it also became a spit and glue center for embassy wives to relieve some of their frustration over their lack of freedom of movement.

*Q: You said you had already received your assignment to Washington, DC.*

DICKMAN: Yes, we had. We left at the beginning of March of 1972 and returned directly to Washington for my assignment as Arabian Peninsula country director.

**DAVID M. RANSOM**  
**Consular/Economic Officer**  
**Jeddah (1969-1970)**

*Ambassador David Michael Ransom was born in Missouri on November 23, 1938. He received his AB from Princeton University in 1960 as well as a BA from the School for Advanced International Studies in 1962. He served in the US Marine Corps from 1962 to 1965 as a 1st lieutenant and entered the Foreign Service in 1965, wherein he served in Yemen, Iran, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Syria, and Bahrain. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on November 2, 1999.*

*Q: You were assigned to Jeddah as your first post after language training.*

RANSOM: That's right. I went there initially for a few months to fill a gap in the Consular Section. But I was getting very tired of doing that type of work. I was promised that I would be reassigned to the Political Section shortly. So, we threw ourselves into the task of meeting as many people as possible and of getting around the country as much as possible. The ambassador was Hermann Eilts.

*Q: You were in there from when to when?*

RANSOM: It was not quite three years, 1969-1971. It did not end well. Our efforts to get around the country, to do things, to meet people and such produced a complaint against us from Saudi security just at the time Hermann Eilts was leaving and before a new ambassador, Nick Thatcher -- my good friend from Tehran -- could arrive. The security services' charge was that Marjorie was Jewish and that I worked for the CIA. Nick Thatcher took me out to lunch while we were back in the States on home leave and then said, to me "I don't want to start out by arguing the case that neither of these accusations are true. I don't want to blot my copy book from the beginning. Therefore you have to withdraw from this assignment and get another assignment in the States."

I was crushed, and concerned by what this might do to my career. I was very unhappy. I was allowed to return to Jeddah, pack up, and leave. I think it is become pretty common knowledge in the Department that this had happened. It never made any difference in my subsequent career that I could see. I went back to Saudi Arabia many, many times. At one stage of my career I was responsible for the work of the Saudi country director. I considered myself a friend of the Saudis in ideological terms. I still do. But it was a fairly disagreeable experience and one I'm not sure I managed with full dignity at the time. I was angry and unhappy about it.

We returned to Washington. I was assigned as the Yemen desk officer and quickly found out that jobs in the United States for Foreign Service officers are very different from their jobs in the field. I worked hard. I later became the Jordan desk officer and went on from there to join the National Security Council staff. So, in fact, my misadventure in Saudi became an experience of great change and not a setback at all.

*Q: I want to go back to the Saudi times. You were there from 1969 to late 1970. How did you find Saudi Arabia at that time?*

RANSOM: The big hike in oil prices had not taken place yet ; still the Saudis were wealthy, but they had only begun their great drive to develop their country. It was not entirely clear at the time whether the regime could maintain itself against a nationalist tide which was alive even though the radical Arabs had been greatly wounded in the aftermath of the "Six Day" war. The overthrow of the government in Libya, King Idriss, seemed to be a sign that no conservative regime in the region, no family-based monarchy, was safe. The on-and-off chances of King Hussein of Jordan were always dicey. Everybody remembered what had happened in Iran in 1958. The region looked shaky.

The Saudis were hard to get to know--close, small families, and they didn't really welcome strangers. Tourism was not easy. Distances were great. Facilities were primitive. We did as much as we could to travel around the country and do things, but I wouldn't say that it was our happiest assignment.

*Q: You started out in the Consular Section. Did they eventually get you into the Political Section?*

RANSOM: Yes, I did. I worked with Long and Barnum, both very capable guys who became good friends. I wasn't in the Political Section very long before Nick Thatcher was invited to find me an assignment someplace else.

*Q: What was your wife doing at that time?*

RANSOM: She was raising kids and going around. She had made a small effort of her own to meet the women in Jeddah. She went assiduously to women's homes and tried to learn about their families and such. It was part of an effort to extend beyond the embassy. I was doing it with much less success on the male side.

*Q: It's hard for somebody who hasn't been in the business to understand such efforts. When you've learned a language, you want to get out there and use it. What you were doing was part of that effort.*

RANSOM: I think so. I don't know to this day if there was ever any one incident or one person that led to produce the charge that the Saudis levied against us. I know that I never said anything that was hostile to the Saudis, broke any of their rules that I know of; we did try to make some friends, but we ran afoul somewhere of the Byzantine Saudi intelligence system. That was very, very unfortunate.

Years later, after I finished my tour of duty as country director of the Arabian Peninsula, I went to Bandar Bin Sultan, the Saudi ambassador in Washington, and said, "Now that I am going on to issues outside of NEA, I have a favor to ask you. I'd like you to set the record straight after all these years." He and I had had a very good and close working relationship. We had done a lot of things together. I liked him very much and vice versa. He had been a guest in my house for dinner. I had gone to his house with Marjorie. He was appalled when he heard what had happened to me years earlier and he sent a number of cables trying to make it clear that the charge should be wiped from the files. I never heard anything about it. Nothing was ever done or said. I continued to go in and out of Saudi Arabia without difficulty, but I was looking at it as a matter of pride and some vindication after all these years. I never really got it.

*Q: At that time, was the embassy looking at Saudi Arabia as being vulnerable?*

RANSOM: Yes. Everybody thought that they were a weak reed. That view was wrong, as was eventually proved. But it was a very American view that if the Saudi leadership didn't change its ways, they were going to be replaced by the new class of educated men from families other than the royal one. We saw the threat coming to Saudi Arabia from the left. The Saudis saw the threat to themselves coming from the right, from the religious fundamentalists and tribes. We were wrong. Our whole effort in the kingdom was intended to support them against leftist forces. They agreed that that was our role and cooperated with us in that. They didn't want us to interfere in what they did inside the kingdom to defend themselves from the right. So, it was in some ways a difficult relationship because we were not in complete agreement on the threat and how to do things. Our ambassador, Hermann Eilts, was a superb, wonderful man. He was a first-class ambassador.



*Q: Everyone I've talked to has this feeling about him. Were we looking at the Saudi military as being a possible source of a coup?*

RANSOM: Yes. The Saudis were much more concerned about this possibility than we were. We wanted to move ahead in the training and equipping of the Saudi forces. They didn't want that. They wanted to make sure that the army in Saudi Arabia was never in a position to do what other armies had done in Syria, Egypt, and Libya.

The Saudi leadership was equally concerned by the build up of the national guard, the "White Army." We had a program for training and equipping them. It could not be run through our military mission. It had to be separate. In fact, the building up of the army seemed to us to be something that really was going on, but at the same time there were efforts to weaken the army which were even more important. In fact, what happened over a period of time is that the Saudi air force eventually developed into a fairly competent organization. The navy doesn't really count and the Saudi army continues to be hamstrung by all sorts of efforts. For example, the ammunition would be stored in places far away from the tanks. A centralized command and control system has never been set up. National guard forces were placed outside of the barracks with the army forces. All that was done was to make a potential coup as difficult as possible.

*Q: Were we looking at students who had been in the United States, England, or France, particularly those not associated with the royal family, as being the source of real concern about the left? Where was the left in Saudi society?*

RANSOM: We fell into believing that the Saudi students who went to the United States would be bulwarks of the regime and friends of ours when they returned--not leftist, but good red-blooded American-educated kids. In fact, quite a number of them who came back joined fundamentalist clans. One of those students actually shot Youssef, a royal family member. That young man had been turned off by his own life in the United States and moved back in a very conservative direction. The leftist threat, we thought, came largely from outside from Egyptians, Syrians, Iraqis, and others who carried with them such ideological baggage. The threat was not from the Soviets in Saudi Arabia since they were simply excluded from the kingdom--were not allowed to enter, establish an embassy, or do anything such as trade.

We were under a lot of pressure by the Saudi leadership to do things to protect them. They didn't object to our relationship with Iran, but they didn't want it to be an exclusive relationship. They were off again, on again about our relations with Jordan. They detested the Israelis, but they would do nothing to threaten the Israelis. They suspected the Syrians and the Egyptians deeply and rightly so. They had very ambiguous relationships with the Yemenis. They didn't dislike the British.

What you had in Saudi Arabia was a classic test of American diplomacy: i.e. to build a coalition out of disparate elements to make sure that those things which united the coalition were not overcome by those issues which inevitably tended to divide. I found American diplomacy in that respect to be more than inventive and vigorous. By and large, it was a highly pragmatic and successful effort. The bottom line is that here we are, 30 years later, with still strong ties of friendship which are of great mutual benefit. History has shown that they made the right bet

when they bet on us and vice versa.

*Q: Since there was no official opposition, how did one do political work there?*

RANSOM: You had, of course, a certain amount of work that you did with government officials. There was not a social life which you could easily use to start and maintain contacts. Their headdress and even their looks militated against easy relationships. They would come in with scraps of paper. It was not a very easy group to fit into our paper bureaucracy.

*Q: After Saudi, as you said, you were assigned to Washington and dealt with Jordanian affairs. How was Hussein doing at the time?*

**DAVID G. NEWTON**  
**Political Officer**  
**Jeddah (1970-1973)**

*Ambassador Newton was raised in Massachusetts and educated at Harvard University and the University of Michigan. An Arabic speaking Middle East Specialist, he served both in Washington and abroad in positions dealing with Middle Eastern matters. His overseas postings include Yemen (three times), Saudi Arabia, Syria and Iraq. From 1984 to 1988 he served as US Ambassador to Iraq and from 1994 to 1997 as US Ambassador to Yemen. A graduate of the National War College, he was also assigned there as Deputy International Affairs Advisor, and in 1997 he was Special Envoy to Iraq. Following retirement, Ambassador Newton joined Radio Free Europe in Prague. Ambassador Newton was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.*

*Q: You graduated, whither?*

NEWTON: Well, it's funny. I was told all the time I was either going to go to Dhahran, which I was looking forward to, or Jerusalem, which I would've liked. Then suddenly in April my wife got a call while I was off at my courses that I was going to Jeddah, to the embassy. Joe Twinam had been the political office there and was going back, was being brought back to Washington a little bit early. So we went off, but in September I finally arrived there in September.

*Q: You were there from September of--*

NEWTON: Of '70.

*Q: Of '70 to when?*

NEWTON: To the, I was the beginning of January 1973. So a little bit over two years, about two years and four months.

*Q: What was the situation in Saudi Arabia when you got there?*

NEWTON: Saudi Arabia was a pretty quiet place. If you can imagine, given the size of our embassy now, I was the only political officer. I had grander title of principal political officer, but the other political officer position had been abolished, and there was one political officer, one economic officer, one commercial-- Well, the economic counselor was in charge of all of us. Then a commercial officer and a political/military officer. Just four of us on the state substantive side.

*Q: Who was the ambassador when you got there?*

NEWTON: Just, the same day I arrived was Nick Thacher. Nick passed away about a year or so ago. Very nice, very decent man. Nick was not, I think, was not really an Arabist but he had, actually he had been DCM (deputy chief of mission) in Jeddah and then had gone on to be DCM in Tehran and then was appointed ambassador.

*Q: Who was sort of the political counselor or was there one?*

NEWTON: No, there wasn't one. I was the only political officer. Our friend Dick (\_\_\_\_\_) was the economic counselor, but he, he wrote my report because he was more senior. Bill Stoltzfus was the DCM for most of the time, and then Hume came as DCM. He had done very well in Oman with all, with Black September and so forth. So—

*Q: Well, the ruler was Faisal while you were there.*

NEWTON: Yeah, Faisal was still the ruler who was—

*Q: When was he assassinated?*

NEWTON: He was assassinated, I had already left I think it was '73, sometime maybe late in '73. He was assassinated after I'd left.

*Q: As a political officer, what does a political officer do in a rather was it essentially no political activity? Or there was not supposed to be.*

NEWTON: Yeah, that's right, and it was considered at the time unworthy of a Saudi to discuss politics. So it was a lot of tealeaf reading and reporting on visits and events. But I, even I didn't have enough to do. I remember I volunteered to fill in for the single consular officer when he went off because I had done some consul work in Jeddah. I thought this is a good way to meet Saudis and have a chance to talk to them. But the other thing I did because in my job in Arabian Peninsular Affairs I'd been involved as I said in reimbursable technical assistance. I and an aide officer really started this, how to pay for it, how to organize it because I would just, I'd get a request. I remember the Saudis wanted someone to come out to advise them about gazelles for their zoos. So I called put the director of the Washington, the National Zoo, and he agreed to go out. That's the way you did it. So I picked this up when I was in Saudi Arabia and I became basically the only officer who ever went to Riyadh. We had no embassy officers there. We did

have a couple of USIS (United States Information Service) officers running an English language center, and in those days we still had the office of public safety under AID. I used to go there and they'd take care of me and they also provided, they'd tell me what's going on, what the news is in Riyadh. Very nice people. So they were kind of eyes and ears. I mean, not anything nefarious, but they would help me and I would go there and be the only officer to visit and I would off and take, I'd take care of the visitors coming because I'd go up and talk, got to know the people in royal protocol. If you can believe it, while I was there John Erwin who was the deputy secretary of state came out. He was the highest U.S. official ever to visit Saudi Arabia, and then he was followed some months later by Rogers, Secretary Rogers who then became the highest U.S. official ever to visit Saudi Arabia.

*Q: Well, did what was the role of consular general in Dhahran?*

NEWTON: Well, his role was mainly with ARAMCO (Arabian-American Oil Company). ARAMCO was of course American run at the time, and he reported on events in the eastern province. He tried to keep track of the Shia in the eastern province who were an important political issue, but mainly he dealt with oil affairs and with ARAMCO.

*Q: Do we have much of a military program with the Saudis at the time?*

NEWTON: We have and we have had for many years the U.S. military training mission which was required to be well, it had been in, it was still headquartered in Dhahran, which was another reason for consulate. But it had also a significant presence just of advisors in Riyadh with a small compound. That was the other U.S. presence there.

*Q: Did you have much contact with sort of Saudis informally?*

NEWTON: In those days Saudi Arabia wasn't rich yet. Only really after '73. I had a good bit of contact with people in the foreign ministry and with Saudi businessmen. I mean the social life there often revolved around well to do Saudi businessmen, but it wasn't tremendous social life. But it wasn't that easy to get contact with Saudis, but it was possible in those days because they weren't so tremendously rich and they lived normal lives. Different for various ways. Yeah, we had a fair amount of contact with Saudis.

*Q: What was life like there? Were you married at the time?*

NEWTON: Yeah, yeah. I was married as a matter of fact when we had one, our son by the time we got there was a little over three years old, and our daughter was born just three weeks before we left Ann Arbor. So she was just a few weeks old. Life was not particularly easy. We moved outside the compound in a kind of a large house but kind of rundown at least furnished. The problem for my wife was that there was no reliable telephone system and that she really couldn't go out with the kids. One time she went out, and she was being attacked by a pack of dogs when a Saudi came and drove them off for her. But even though it was only about a ten-minute walk, and of course the heat was tremendous for about half the year. The embassy had very limited transportation. There was a shuttle that came by once a day that could pick you up and take you off to one of the markets for shopping. That was about it. But we'd try to get the phone fixed, but

it would go out within a day. So when I left in the morning, she was really trapped in the house without any communications. But that wasn't particularly easy, and it was a pretty Spartan lifestyle. The, our daughter got sick at one point, but we had a very good Lebanese pediatrician who took good care of her, but the hospital was very minimal and the medical care was minimal.

*Q: Did, with your experience with Yemen was anything happening around the Yemeni border in those days?*

NEWTON: No, I don't recall any, no not really much on the border. No, the Saudis in those days allowed Yemenis to come in and reside in Saudi Arabia and open businesses and work. They didn't need work permits, and they could come and stay I think for three to five years. It was much easier for Yemenis. We did get to know some of the Yemeni, actually South Arabian sultans and so forth who were living in exile in Jeddah. But it was a pretty Spartan lifestyle. Almost no restaurants. Not much to do.

*Q: In Saudi Arabia while you were there, were there still disputes with the Trucial states over the Buraimi Oasis and—*

NEWTON: Buraimi was over, but there were still a lot of undefined borders. The Saudis at that time were still very, very insular unlike Gulf States. There was still at least unresolved issues, I wouldn't say disputes, with most of their neighbors. It was a pretty quiet time basically. I remember Muhammad Ali came on a visit to make the—

*Q: Boxing.*

NEWTON: Umrah. Yeah. Yeah. The ambassador was a little nervous because I had just wrote a little airgram and I entitled "God's the greatest," "Allahu akbar."

*Q: Well the, I'm just trying to think of, what about the influence of ARAMCO. Their political affairs section was, has a tendency to, I mean they had a pretty strong representation I guess in Riyadh it may have been.*

NEWTON: Yeah, by the time I got there, maybe in past days ARAMCO really looked on itself as more important than the embassy but not by the time I got there. Our relations were very good, and I got to know the people in the Riyadh office, the government relations people. They'd been around a long time. They were very helpful. I think relations between the Con Gen (consul general) and ARAMCO were very good. I do remember that we got a visit from Scoop Jackson.

*Q: The senator from--*

NEWTON: From Washington State.

*Q: From Washington, yeah.*

NEWTON: I remember one of my first real introductions to Congress that the senior people at ARAMCO met him in the executive guest house, and these were people of the old ARAMCO.

They'd been there since the late '30s or something. They were really good people and fine people and very knowledgeable, and Jackson began to lecture them about telling them about the oil business. It really was kind of funny. They were very polite, but I don't think he made a great impression on them because they knew a hell of a lot more about the oil business when they were asleep than he did when he was awake.

*Q: Well, then after this time the I take it that I mean, was the subject of Israel something that every once in a while would crop up when you were trying to deal with something else, our relations?*

NEWTON: Yeah, it would crop up from time to time. Faisal was pretty realistic, and he would bemoan the fact that the relationship with Israel would complicate relations with Saudi Arabia. Of course you didn't know when he would get on this kick about the Zionist Communist conspiracy, but it wasn't so much of an issue at that particular point. I mean there was, things were kind of on the freezer after the '67 war for a while. They didn't build up until the '73 war.

*Q: Well, was the sort of the rumor accepted as fact that American planes had wiped out the Egyptian Air Force, was that still around?*

NEWTON: No, that was largely wiped out within weeks, but of course when it was made at the time, it really created a huge uproar. No, that was not, but the Arabs were still in their kind of rejectionist mode. They just were still in shock. So it wasn't a big issue at the time.

**DR. HOWARD L. STEELE**  
**Joint Economic Commission**  
**Riyadh (1971)**

*Dr. Howard L. Steele was born in Pennsylvania and graduated from both Washington and Lee University and Penn State University. Assignments abroad have included Brazil, Guatemala, Bolivia, Honduras and Sri Lanka. Dr. Steele was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2003.*

STEELE: Right. One of my assignments later in the Joint Commission activities that Secretary Kissinger started was recycling petrodollars. We were in Saudi Arabia with a big program. The United States was in Iran under the Shah at that time, also in Tunisia, Egypt, Israel, and so forth. I went on an assignment for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (which I joined in January 1971) to the Joint Commission For Economic Development/Riyadh (JECOR) to the new lands 280 miles northwest of Riyadh with a friend and colleague, an extension economist from Ohio State. I was with the Department of Agriculture at the time but I hired him to come with me. We went to the new lands, where former nomadic tribesmen were now being trained to become farmers. They were bringing water up from an aquifer about a mile down under the desert and making the desert bloom. They were losing 40% of their beautiful tomatoes, 60% of their wonderful watermelons and other melons. We did some quick "armchair, down and dirty research." There

was no refrigeration, no protection from the sun., no refrigerated trucks, badly handled product That was typical.

**JAMES H. BAHTI**  
**Principal Officer**  
**Dhahran (1972-1975)**

*James H. Bahti was born in Michigan in 1923. He graduated from Michigan Tech with a B.S. degree in engineering in 1948. Subsequently, he received a M.A. and a Ph.D. from the University of Michigan. Mr. Bahti entered the Foreign Service in 1955. During his career, he served in numerous capacities in Germany, Egypt, India, and Saudi Arabia. Mr. Bahti was a member of the Sinai Field Mission in 1978, and then was the Consul General to Alexandria from 1981 to 1983. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1990.*

BAHTI: Fortunately, or unfortunately, after less than two years I was offered the principal officer job in Dhahran. My boss at that time was David Bane who had been ambassador to Gabon. He said, "Jim, it is always better to be number one than number two." That had been my conclusion after about thirty seconds. My wife said "Fine" so we bundled up our cats and our household effects and went off to Dhahran.

*Q: You went to Dhahran where you served from 1972 to 1975. What was the situation there, and what were you doing as consul general?*

BAHTI: I had followed Lee Dinsmore who had been responsible not only for the Dhahran area but also for visiting all the emirates and sheikdoms in the Gulf area. That was about the time we were establishing embassies at most or all of these posts. Therefore my range of responsibility had considerably declined. It was also a time when the wheels were in motion for making ARAMCO a totally Saudi company. That went on all the while I was there and continued after I left. I did quite a bit of reporting on oil, oil and consular affairs were our main business. We did not do much other political reporting as there was not that much going on, the action was in Jeddah and Riyadh.

*Q: You were in the Eastern Province.*

BAHTI: Right. It was maybe the best post I have ever had, a beautiful residence and the ARAMCO people were wonderful neighbors, most but not all of them were Americans. They gave us tremendous support. We did have a lot of administrative problems; we had, for instance, our own electric power plant and that was constantly in need of redoing, refurbishing. ARAMCO finally stopped sending us gas through a pipeline because of their growing construction area needs. We went onto bottled gas with a huge storage tank. The day the valve was opened all the pipes blew up. They had become so corroded over the years that the increased pressure, the high pressure from the tank as compared to the lower pressure from the pipeline from ARAMCO, did this. Gas was coming up all over the place. So we spent a couple of months replacing the gas

lines and living off small bottle gas containers in individual residences. The Saudi National Guard had been living on the grounds in tents. It was kind of a messy situation so my administrative officer, Bruce Christopherson, decided that we could give up one of our empty warehouses. They were delighted. We gave them a TV set.

*Q: What was the National Guard doing there?*

BAHTI: After the 1967 war [between Israel and the Arab states] the consulate was attacked. Not much damage was done, some rocks were thrown and some windows broken, the Saudis were very embarrassed. It was led by Palestinian students from the college next door, the College of Petroleum and Minerals, and from that point on the Saudis stationed forty or fifty National Guardsmen there just to protect us. One of the administrative problems, the sand was continually drifting against the walls so that you could walk right over them so that every three months we had to get a bulldozer to clear away the sand so that people could not just walk into the compound over the walls.

*Q: I have to say for the record that I served in Dhahran from 1958 to 1960 and we had almost given up on the sand at that time, but we had not been attacked.*

BAHTI: We did put barbed wire on top of the wall, put in a gate keeper. There was a school on the compound. About a week after I arrived the admin officer gave me a folder about six inches thick and said, "Oh, by the way there is a school board meeting today and you are the president of the school board." I said, "that was not in my job description." That was my biggest cross during my three and a half years in Dhahran. Not only trying to make peace among the various members of the school board but to go through two different expansions of the school. ARAMCO would not take on the responsibility of teaching the children of its contractors, all of whom lived off the ARAMCO compound. So knowing there was an American school they turned to us. It seemed there were construction people on the compound all the time putting up prefabricated classrooms. I think ultimately after I left they put in an air-conditioned enclosed tennis court. Financing this thing and trying to find a contractor who would take on a relatively small job were problems. This school was small potatoes, so we got very bad contractors. I remember the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers came by once and looked at what had been done and said, "Mr. Bahti, I think this is about the worst electrical job we have seen in Saudi Arabia." You could not get people for a job for a few hundred thousand dollars.

*Q: Were there any particular difficulties you were having at the time? You were there during the 1973 [Arab-Israeli] war.*

BAHTI: I don't know if I was prescient or not but about a month before the 1973 war I went on home leave and I was on my way back on a round-the-world swing and was just leaving Hawaii where I was visiting a War College classmate and as I was leaving his staff aide said, "Oh, by the way, war has broken out in the Middle East and we think it may last longer than the 1967 war." I said, "Well, they have my schedule and if they want me they know where to get me." I went on to Hong Kong and Djakarta and Singapore where I received a cable asking me to get right back. My number two man was getting fatigued, constant NIACTs [Night Action cables -- one is alerted day or night for these] and generally keeping alert for what reactions might develop.



What was happening to oil shipments, oil was embargoed for several months. So I went back -- I had to overnight in Bombay as I could not get a direct connection, my wife stayed on in India for about a week.

I had to hit the deck running, maintain frequent contact with ARAMCO to get their view of what was going on. Problems of security. The fighting was largely over by then but nevertheless the aftermath...we had frequent visitors. It seemed that every Congressman wanted to see where the oil used to come from. I had to deal with high Saudi officials, though of course the embassy had primary responsibility. That was a very busy time.

*Q: How did you deal with the Saudi officials at that time? Whom did you deal with, and what was your relationship?*

BAHTI: On oil matters I simply did not deal with the Saudi authorities, I dealt with ARAMCO. I did have occasion to meet Yamani [Saudi minister for petroleum] and I visited and met the king, but my day-to-day duties were largely with the amir, bin Jaluwi and he was very pleasant. We had no serious problems; I think the biggest one was the practice of contractors of dumping their construction waste in front of the consulate rather than taking it to the designated dump.

A consular officer, Jim Hooper at the time and later Tom Wulitch had to deal with the local police officials because Americans were in trouble, either making liquor, *sadiki* juice, or dumb kids who would come back with a pinch of marijuana in their baggage and get caught, or the American at the airport bringing a bottle of liquor, not knowing that you could not bring anything into the country like that. So that took a lot of time of our consular officer. We only had at the time one consular officer; shortly after I left we got a second one. One time the Department said, "We are thinking of sending a female consular officer to replace so and so, how would you feel about this?" I said, "I am second to none about women's rights, but since she could not drive a car, (women were not allowed driver's licenses) and many Saudis would not deal with her in a meaningful sense," I said, "I don't think she would be effective; we would have to have a special driver for her." Ultimately we did get a female consular officer, but she was "Miss Inside" and we had a male who was "Mr. Outside", so that worked out OK, but at the time it would have simply been wasting resources.

It was an exciting time. I hate to say this but ARAMCO was a great party crowd and there were always big fun parties. Then there were the desert trips, hunting for arrowheads and stone axes. You could come back with a bucket full of these things after a three or four day trip. You could go a long way equipped with sand tires. It was the sort of thing we enjoyed doing with ARAMCOs -- you never did by yourself.

Another point of living there, as I mentioned in our so-called hardship report or whatever it was called: you could not take a cold shower in summer because the water that came out of the water tank was so heated by the sun that it was simply too hot to bear. You would fill the bath and put in ice cubes so you could comfortably take a bath. No one in Washington believed that, they thought I was pulling their leg.

*Q: During the 1973 war, did the Saudis do anything to the consulate or its operation?*

BAHTI: No it was pretty much business of usual. I was told that initially they beefed up the National Guard when the war started, of course I was not there during those initial days, but I really saw no differences. The war was so far removed from the average Saudi, except for the top levels who, of course dealt with the ambassador, the subject never came up.

*Q: How did you see the House of Saud as reflected in the Eastern Province? Did you feel there was a chance that the new middle class that was developing in Saudi Arabia might take over or challenge the regime or did you feel that this was a system that was going to continue?*

BAHTI: I felt as a system it was going to continue for one simple reason, why kill the goose that is laying the golden egg? Everybody was making out like bandits. Land prices were skyrocketing. Kids could be sent to college with virtually no cost. The best equipped hospitals in the world, not necessarily the best hospitals, were being set up. There was something for virtually everybody. Why upset that?

I heard the question you just asked many times while I was there and, except for the Shia community, which was larger, relatively larger in the Eastern Province, nobody was really hurting.

*Q: Most of the Saudis were Sunnis except for a couple of villages up the coast, as I recall, which were Shia.*

BAHTI: That's right. The police, I won't say were oppressive there, but the Shia were pretty carefully watched. There was no sign of any dissident activity that I was aware of. There may have been. It was alleged that the demonstration at the Great Mosque was Shia inspired, and it may have been, but I suspect it was more pilgrims than resident Shia. Many of the Shia worked for ARAMCO. ARAMCO had a disproportionate number of Shia working for them, in part because the Sunni Saudi did not want to do manual labor. If it were not for the Shia and Yemeni workers there in the hundreds of thousands, a lot of dirty work would not have been done. They dug the ditches. About the lowest work a Saudi would do would be to drive a taxi, and maybe do electronic repair, which is a little more glamorous, perhaps, but it was a rare case to find a Saudi who would do anything to get his hands dirty.

*Q: Talking about difficulties with the authorities because of liquor being prohibited and marijuana and all that. Did you have any problems with Americans being held because of their having business disputes. I remember when I was there that this could be a major problem.*

BAHTI: Yes. I can't think of specific instances but I do recall instances at the time and since then. First of all you had to have a sponsor to get into the country. Normally it would be ARAMCO but it could be a Saudi businessman and the Saudi businessman would be responsible for the visitor and he would hold his passport. If you got into a business dispute or whatever, say wanted your deposits back or could not deliver something until such and such a date, then there would be a built-in penalty, usually financial, you could not get out of the country, not necessarily go to jail, although that could happen too, because the Saudi courts were almost always on the side of the Saudi. The feeling was, rightly or wrongly, that you could not get a fair

shake if you were not a Muslim, especially if you were not a Saudi. If you were a contractor working for ARAMCO, it was different. ARAMCO was very well plugged into the legal side, they had their own legal Muslim law specialists. They would take care of their own people, their contractors. Not if they were in drug things -- but even there they might get them amnestied on certain religious holidays or expelled. It could be a terrible thing -- a kid might be coming from a school in India with some marijuana and the whole family could be expelled from Saudi Arabia. It was kind of unfair, but that was the way it was. I believe it is still the case pending the settlement of a financial, usually a financial, dispute.

**FRANCOIS M. DICKMAN**  
**Country Director for the Arabian Peninsula**  
**Washington DC (1972-1976)**

*Ambassador François M. Dickman was born in Iowa in 1924. He graduated from the University of Wyoming in 1947 and received an M.A. from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. He served in the U.S. Army during both WWII and Korea. Ambassador Dickman joined the Foreign Service in 1951 and served at posts in Columbia, Lebanon, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. He served as the Arabian Peninsula Country Director until his appointment as the Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates. He was interviewed by Stanley Brooks beginning February 2001.*

DICKMAN: While the Saudis (and the Kuwaitis as well) wanted a safe place to place their excess funds, they also wanted complete confidentiality as to the amounts invested. One of the first important visitors from Saudi Arabia after I became ARP [Arabian Peninsula] Country Director was Saudi Monetary Agency governor Anwar Ali. In the fall of 1972, we also had separate visits of Oil Minister Zaki Yamani and Deputy Oil Minister Saud al Faisal. Saud was a son of King Faisal and later became (and still is) foreign minister. They proposed a special relationship with the United States whereby we would be assured of access to Saudi oil in return for allowing Saudi investments in the U.S. oil industry. While American officials were not keen on the idea, it is my recollection that Treasury Under Secretary Bennett was sent to Saudi Arabia about this time to work out arrangements where the Saudis could invest their surplus income in a variety of U.S. Treasury notes, bonds, or other U.S. government securities. Since large sums were involved, the deposits would be "ex-market." In other words, they would be kept outside of the normal market for these securities and would be kept strictly confidential.

Soon after the 1972 hearings before Congressman Hamilton, we had the visit of Saudi Defense Minister Prince Sultan. The Prince had been invited to Washington by Defense Secretary Melvin Laird. The Prince also met with President Nixon. While much of the visit dealt with the U.S. response to various Saudi requests for additional training and military equipment, Prince Sultan took the occasion to point out that the Saudis were urging President Sadat of Egypt to reduce his dependency on the Soviet Union. Later, the Prince implied that Saudi Arabia had been behind President Sadat's dramatic move to expel all Soviet technicians in July. I recall accompanying Assistant Secretary Sisco and calling on the Prince at his hotel. During the meeting, Prince

Sultan said that the Saudis had encouraged Sadat to distance himself from Moscow in the belief that it would permit Washington to start taking again a more active role to get the Middle East diplomatic process moving again. Prince Sultan hoped that diplomatic relations between the United States and Egypt, broken off at the time of the 1967 Arab-Israel conflict, would be resumed. During the meeting, Sisco urged the Saudis to persuade Sadat to enter into proximity talks, i.e. opening a private diplomatic channel between Washington and Cairo. National Security Council director Kissinger must not have been at the Prince Sultan's meeting with the President, since he mentions in his memoirs that he did not know of the Prince's meeting with Sisco until later.

Although our moves to offer to sell arms to Kuwait generated some opposition among Israel's supporters in Congress, it was mild in comparison to the adverse reaction in the summer of 1973 when the Department agreed in principle to sell F-4 fighter aircraft to Saudi Arabia. The F-4 was a supersonic aircraft. Up to this time, we had supplied the Saudis with sub-sonic Northrup F-5s. By the spring of 1973, we had already concluded four military sales agreements to modernize and train the Saudi national guard, which serves as an internal security force, to build shore installations for the Saudi coastal navy, which included training, and to supply a variety of trucks and other vehicles to improve military mobility. I remember preparing a memorandum for Roy Atherton, who had replaced Rodger Davies. Rodger had been named to be our next ambassador to Cyprus. Roy was now the principal deputy NEA assistant secretary that I reported to. I do not recall exactly what arguments I used in the memorandum, but it was enough to convince Roy that we should respond positively to the Saudi request for the F-4 Phantoms. Roy in turn persuaded Sisco. I think one of the winning arguments was that in light of our growing dependency on Saudi oil, we could not turn down what the Saudis considered to be the litmus test of our commitment to their security. If we turned them down, the Saudi leadership would conclude that it had no recourse but to buy Mirages from the French.

Once the decision to make the F-4 available to the Saudis had leaked out, objections were heard in the Congress and hearings were held in July 1973 before the House Foreign Affairs Committee. The criticisms directed at the Department came mainly from Congressmen Rosenthal and Gilman. They had no problem responding positively to supplying arms to the Shah or for that matter Israel, but they had a number of reservations when it involved sales to the Saudis. In the hearings, they asked what guarantees we had that the planes would not be diverted to another Arab country and thereby undermine Israel's military edge over its neighbors. They ignored the fact that only a small number of aircraft were involved. They also ignored that it would take a couple of years before these aircraft could be delivered and that under U.S. foreign military sales legislation, the recipient was obliged to not transfer equipment to a third party without prior U.S. approval. Besides, there was no mention that the Israelis had received the Phantom F-4s several years before and were expected to receive the top of the line F-16 in the next three years.

Every time we had this kind of hearing, it would generate a host of letters from members of Congress relaying questions from their constituents which asked about the future of our defense commitments to Saudi Arabia. Behind these objections were fears that our growing dependence on Saudi oil would impact directly on U.S. support for Israel. This required the time consuming preparation of replies, many of which Congressional Relations (or H ) objected to, particularly if

the reply sounded too much like boiler plate. It was one of the Directorate's most onerous tasks. We were seeking to spell out how the arms sales supported U.S. interests in the region, but H wanted the letters to be as pleasing as possible to the member of Congress' constituent.

In the meantime, I had several occasions to speak to public groups that the growth in world demand for oil was more rapid than expected and that it could not continue at its present rate. I should say that I was encouraged to speak to the public groups and I welcomed the opportunity. Saudi oil production at the time was expected to reach nine million barrels a day, about three times what it had been in 1969. Based on consumption trends that existed at the time, if they continued, it would require Saudi production to reach at least 24 million barrels a day by 1980. Before leaving Saudi Arabia, I had reported that the Ministry of Petroleum considered the 24 million barrel a day production to be an unrealistic projection. Any increases would have to depend in the future on the extent to which ARAMCO invested in projects that captured and processed associated gas that was being flared. By 1973, ARAMCO was flaring six trillion cubic feet a year or roughly 1/3 the annual U.S. consumption of natural gas. The Nixon administration and NEA Assistant Secretary Joe Sisco did not take Saudi production curbs seriously. I believe they listened to Max Fisher, the Detroit industrialist who was an influential advisor in the Nixon administration. The argument was that if the Saudis did not want to increase their oil production, the United States could continue to look to Iran as a major source of oil. However, Iran did not have the oil reserves that Saudi Arabia had.

Meanwhile, the doubtful outlook for increased oil availability to meet world demand began to be viewed in political terms by the Saudis. In April of 1973, we began to receive warnings from King Faisal that the Kingdom would no longer allow a continued increase in Saudi oil production, particularly if the no war, no peace situation in the Middle East remained. With the death of Nasser in November of 1970, Saudi-Egyptian relations had improved significantly. Sadat made several visits to Saudi Arabia. At the time, Faisal was reflecting President Sadat's frustration as well as his own that Sadat's expulsion of Soviet technicians from Egypt the previous July had not resulted in any new diplomatic initiatives by the United States. King Faisal's warning initially had been conveyed by ARAMCO oil company executives in calls on Joe Sisco (where I was a notetaker). Subsequently, the warnings became public with statements by Oil Minister Yamani. Later when Faisal learned that his warnings were seen by senior administration officials as a bluff, he repeated the warnings in public to "Newsweek" and the "Washington Post." We soon learned from our embassy in Jeddah that Faisal had decided to hold any further increase in oil production to 10 percent, which would mean a ceiling of about 9.9 million barrels a day, and that he had informed visiting President Sadat of that decision.

By September, the Department was getting worried. It was decided to send Jim Akins to be our next Ambassador to Saudi Arabia. Aside from being an Arabist, Akins was well known for his energy expertise. It was also decided that arrangements be made for a visit to Saudi Arabia by Deputy Secretary of State Kenneth Rush. A high level visit was intended to indicate the importance that the United States attached to its relationship with the Kingdom. The Arabian Peninsula Directorate was instructed to come up with a list of incentives that would encourage increased Saudi oil production. The principal one that we came up with was to offer a significant expansion in reimbursable technical assistance - in other words, technical assistance that the Saudis would pay for. For years, the Saudis had funded the U.S. Geological Survey in its search

for groundwater resources. Also, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers had done the design work and supervised the construction of TV transmitters in the Kingdom. There was also the example, albeit not a very good one, of the Jeddah desalination plant. Well, the outbreak of the Ramadan or Yom Kippur War on October 6, 1973 canceled any plans for Under Secretary Rush's visit, just as it stopped any consideration of F-4 Phantoms sales to Saudi Arabia or Kuwait. For the next six weeks, I and my colleagues lived in the Operations Center spelling each other in 12 hour shifts. Remembering my experience with Cleo and Curt Moore's murder, I started a log on the first day listing every major communication or event, which proved useful when we prepared a situation report for the Secretary every six hours and later every 12 hours.

Two days after the war's outbreak, there was a long prearranged meeting that took place in Vienna between the oil companies and Persian Gulf exporting nations, which were seeking to get a near doubling in oil prices to offset world inflation. The companies had responded that they could only offer forty cents a barrel and the talks broke off. By the time the talks broke off, oil prices had shot up, particularly in the spot market. So, the Gulf producers met in Kuwait on October 16 and, for the first time, unilaterally determined the price of crude, which rose from about three dollars a barrel to five dollars and 12 cents. It represented an increase of 76%. Fearful that their access to the oil resources of the Peninsula might be denied, the ARAMCO majors turned to Jack McCloy once again. Using McCloy as an intermediary, they prepared a memorandum for President Nixon and Secretary Kissinger. The memorandum emphasized that any increased military aid to Israel would have a very negative effect in our relations with moderate Arab oil producing nations and could affect U.S. access to their oil. Haig, who had replaced Kissinger as NSC director, reportedly sat on the memo for several days. Whether or not this is true, I do not think it would have made any difference.

On the same day of the unilateral increase in oil prices by the Persian Gulf producers, a delegation of four Arab foreign ministers headed by Saudi Arabia's Omar Saqqaf arrived in Washington. They met the next day with Secretary Kissinger, where I was the notetaker, and then went to meet President Nixon. They appealed for the U.S. to establish a cease-fire and a stop to the massive U.S. arms shipments to Israel that were underway. The war had been going on for 11 days. Their oft repeated goal was to seek Israel's return to its 1967 borders in accordance with UN Resolution 242. Although the delegation seemed heartened by Kissinger's promise to make a major Middle East diplomatic effort once the conflict ended and do so on the basis of UN Resolution 242, Kissinger said the United States could not stop the arms airlift unless the Soviets did the same.

Prior to the visit of the Arab delegation, President Nixon had decided to respond to domestic pressures and submit a request to Congress for \$2.2 billion in grant military aid to Israel. I knew of the decision because Mike Sterner, after polling the opinions of NEA country directors, had drafted a memorandum to the Secretary setting forth the likely reaction among different Arab countries. I had told Mike that I believed the Saudis would apply an oil embargo, that they would stop the overflight of U.S. military aircraft across Saudi airspace, and would push Bahrain to close its facilities for MIDEASTFOR. I felt the request was a bad move and an unnecessary one. We were already emptying our NATO stocks to provide all the material that Israel could possibly handle. The request should be delayed until a cease-fire had taken place. I knew of the decision, but could not reveal it to the delegation. Kissinger said nothing about it in his meeting

with the delegation and, to my knowledge, neither did President Nixon.

When the request was submitted to Congress in the morning of October 19, the Saudis had announced on the previous day that production would be cut 10% if the United States continued to supply arms to Israel. Remember, the war was now 12 days old before they were talking about cutting back. Once they heard the President's October 19 request to Congress, the Saudis announced an oil embargo against the United States and a cut in oil production of 25%. The request to Congress was interpreted by the Saudis as a public diplomatic rebuff similar to the one given by the Eisenhower administration to Egypt in July 1956 when we withdrew our pledge to help finance the Aswan High dam. The oil embargo applied as well to the United States' offshore purchases of petroleum products. These were made mainly by the U.S. Navy from refineries in Bahrain which processed Saudi crude. This forced the Navy to rely on dwindling American stocks which were already stressed because we were supplying South Vietnam's energy needs. Kissinger claims on page 873 of the second volume of his memoirs that he can find no record of anyone warning him of the Arab reaction.

The embargo and production cutback proved to be a deadly combination. At the time, I recall pointing out in our situation reports for the Secretary that the U.S. was consuming almost 17.5 million barrels a day of which over six million barrels a day were imported (Saudi Arabia accounting for about 2 million) with an additional 375,000 barrels a day purchased offshore by the Navy mainly from Bahrain's refineries. The application of the Saudi embargo and production cut back put the ARAMCO partner companies between a rock and a hard place. They were in the anomalous position of having to carry out the instructions of a foreign government against their own government. If they failed to do as they were instructed, the ARAMCO companies risked losing their Saudi oil concession and to be replaced by the French, Japanese, or other outsiders. But they could also be penalized or taken to court in the United States for not meeting contractual supply commitments. So, they had every interest in seeing an end to the embargo.

With gas lines forming in the United States along with the rapid rise in the price of oil, it caused a major political problem for the Nixon administration. In my view, it was the compelling reason that goaded Secretary Kissinger to undertake a major effort to bring about a cease fire and to begin a process of disengagement in what came to be known as shuttle diplomacy. In doing so, Kissinger sought to use our diplomatic intervention with Israel to end the fighting as a bargaining counter to get the Saudis and other Arab oil exporters to end the embargo.

The domestic impact of the oil embargo generated an angry anti-Arab and anti-oil company reaction in the United States, particularly among Israel's supporters in Congress. They accused the oil companies of forcing a choice between Israel and Arab oil. They sought to pass legislation to embargo shipments of grains and foodstuffs to Saudi Arabia and other Arab nations that were involved in the oil embargo and production cutbacks. The ARP directorate was kept busy responding to letters from members of Congress and their constituents seeking punitive action. In response to those seeking to stop grain and food shipments to the Saudis, we pointed out that the Saudis could easily find substitute suppliers. If necessary, they could use access to their oil by the food exporting nations as an incentive. Besides, it would be difficult to police such a ban since there was nothing to stop foodstuffs sold to third countries from being re-exported to Arab countries. We also pointed out that the proposed legislation would make it

much more difficult in pursuing our efforts at disengagement. In late November 1973, there was another set of congressional hearings before the Hamilton Committee with NEA Deputy Secretary Rodger Davies as the lead witness. In an effort to offset punitive legislation while the oil embargo lasted, Rodger pointed out how countermeasures could be unproductive in light of the ongoing diplomatic effort underway by the Secretary. My brief testimony stressed the economic importance of the Arabian Peninsula countries as sources of aid to poor countries, as rapidly expanding markets for U.S. goods and services, and as sources of investment in the United States. I also pointed to the discussions that had started with the International Monetary Fund's Group of 20 with the oil exporting nations in an effort to provide easy credit to Third World countries suffering from the rapid rise of oil prices.

Early in December, I had prepared briefing papers for the anticipated visit of Saudi Deputy Crown Prince Fahd, who had been invited to come to Washington by Secretary Kissinger. The Prince had accepted but had decided to drop out at the last minute. Instead, we had the visit of Saudi Oil Minister Yamani and his Algerian counterpart, Abd al Salaam, both of whom had been visiting several European oil importing countries and I think were on their way to Japan. I remember meeting Yamani and his colleague at the Department's entrance and escorting them to the Secretary's office. The call received heavy play in the evening TV news with the naïve expectation that the oil embargo would soon be lifted. As notetaker, my recollection of the meeting was rather more confrontational than the way it is portrayed in Kissinger's memoirs. Yamani insisted that the embargo could not be lifted and production curbs progressively removed unless a timetable for Israel's withdrawal from territories had been instituted. That included the territories that had been occupied in the recent conflict. The Secretary's reply was that if the Kingdom wanted the United States to intervene to achieve this timetable, then it first had to lift the embargo as well as the production cuts; otherwise, it could not expect the United States to pursue these diplomatic initiatives. Following the meeting with Kissinger, Yamani called on Deputy Defense Secretary Bill Clements at the Pentagon and quietly agreed to allow the Navy to resume its offshore purchases of petroleum with the understanding that the arrangement would be kept secret.

Once having launched the joint commissions for Saudi Arabia, Secretary Kissinger decided to organize similar joint commissions for other important countries lest they think only Saudi Arabia was favored. Joint commissions were established with Israel, Egypt, Iran, India, and a few others. But after initially becoming a fad, it soon became evident that the joint commission idea had its limitations. Busy U.S. cabinet officials simply did not have the time to devote to these commissions and they soon ended up getting in the way of normal diplomatic intercourse. Except for the U.S.-Saudi Joint Economic Commission, whose acronym was JECOR, all the others petered out after a couple of years. As for the U.S.-Saudi military joint commission, I believe it met only once in Riyadh in November 1974 (and I attended that meeting). The U.S. delegation was headed by Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Robert Ellsworth. At the meeting, the Saudi representatives used the occasion to tell us that they were no longer interested in the F-4s. They wanted to know if the United States would be willing to supply the Kingdom with the F-15, the newest and most sophisticated U.S. military aircraft.

The move to establish JECOR did not, however, reduce the debate in the United States over what should be done in the event in the event the U.S. was faced with another oil embargo. The



attention that Saudi Arabia was receiving caused TIME magazine to name King Faisal as its Man of the Year for 1975. Various articles appeared in the media suggesting that the next time, the U.S. would seize Saudi oil fields. Speculative articles appearing in the "Washington Post" suggested that Iran or Israel could act as our surrogates in seizing the oil fields. How the U.S. might react was given further credence in a December 1974 "Business Week" interview with Secretary Kissinger, who had been asked if the United States would consider taking any military action to gain access to oil. His response was that it would be a very dangerous course. He was not saying that there was no circumstance where we might use force, but it was one thing to use it in the case of a dispute over price and another when there was actual strangulation of the industrial world. The interview raised a furor in Saudi Arabia and generated severe criticism from Ambassador Akins. Articles appeared in the Arab press that any attempt to seize oil fields by force was a fantasy. The prolific oil fields of the Arabian Peninsula could easily be put to the torch because of the high gas drive and it would take years to put them under control, which in fact happened in Kuwait in 1991 by retreating Iraqi forces. Kuwait certainly served as a good example.

Secretary Kissinger's press interviews on matters related to Saudi Arabia reminds me of an amusing incident that occurred some time after the embargo and production cutback had ended. The ARAMCO partners had scheduled a meeting of their board in Panama City, Florida. Since Saudi Arabia was now a major shareholder in the ARAMCO concession, Oil Minister Yamani had come to the U.S. in a private capacity as a member of the board to attend the meeting. During a press interview, the Secretary was asked what Yamani was doing in Panama City? Not familiar with the cities in Florida, he understood the question to mean Panama. The Secretary had to answer that he did not know and immediately called Roy Atherton who in turn called me. I explained it was a board meeting in Panama City, Florida. The Secretary was furious that he had not been informed that Yamani was in the U.S. It was my mistake but I fear that Roy got the worse of it. However, the fit of temper was soon forgotten with the Secretary inviting Yamani to an elegant lunch in the Department.

*Q: Wasn't King Faisal assassinated shortly after being named Man of the Year?*

DICKMAN: Yes. It is an event that I remember very well. As I was leaving the house in the morning of March 25, 1975, I heard over the radio that King Faisal had been assassinated. By the time I reached the Department in less than 10 minutes, Roy Atherton was paging me to come immediately to the Secretary's office, with instructions to prepare a series of condolence messages and to have by 10:00 am an analysis for the Secretary on who was likely to succeed, the prospects for internal political stability in Saudi Arabia, any signs of organized political opposition, the future of the House of Saud, and how the tragedy might impact on U.S. access to Saudi oil. It soon became evident that I could not meet this timetable. While I struggled preparing condolence messages, which are always hard to write, and refused to take a flood of outside calls, I began to prepare the requested briefing memorandum. Although we still had only fragmentary reports on Faisal's assassination, I anticipated that the succession would be smooth. I expected that the royal family would close ranks and name Crown Prince Khalid as King and Fahd as Crown Prince, which is what occurred.

Thanks to help from INR, the briefing memorandum was finally completed in mid-afternoon. By

this time, the issue was whether to only have Ambassador Akins represent the United States at the burial ceremonies that were to take place within the next 12 hours or to send a high level official but who could not possibly reach Riyadh before the burial. Late that afternoon, it was decided to have Ambassador Akins represent the United States in the cortege but to send Vice President Rockefeller to Riyadh as the United States' gesture of condolence. Roy Atherton and I boarded Air Force Two with the Vice President along with a gaggle of members of the media which included the newshen, Connie Chung. The aircraft reached Riyadh in the morning of March 27. The memorandum for the Secretary became the basis for briefing the Vice President. While I briefed the Vice President on the House of Saud, Roy Atherton briefed him on the latest status of the Sinai disengagement. After reaching Riyadh and paying his respects to the House of Saud, who were lined up to receive visitors, the Vice President plunged into meetings with Egypt's President Sadat and Crown Prince Fahd. By the late afternoon, we were back on the plane returning to Washington. Roy and I spent the time preparing long memoranda of conversation of the Vice President's meeting with Sadat and Crown Prince Fahd. When I finally reached home in the early morning of March 28<sup>th</sup>, I had not had any sleep for 60 hours.

Faisal's assassin was a young nephew who would be beheaded after a short trial. At the Saudi government's request, the FBI conducted an investigation of the nephew, who had spent several years at the University of Colorado. The Saudis were concerned about the possibility of someone else being behind the assassination. From the investigation, it appeared that the young man had acted alone. The investigation revealed that he had spent most of his time cutting classes at the University while enjoying the young ladies. In the end, the motive for the assassination never became clear other than perhaps it was because the nephew's brother had been killed in a demonstration against television stations about a decade earlier in the city of Hayl.

The hearings were held at the end of February of 1975, attended by Senator Church, Senator Case of New Jersey, Adlai Stevenson, Jr. of Illinois, and Senator Clark of Iowa. It was clear that Senator Church had presidential ambitions since the hearings were televised and were receiving considerable publicity. By making public copies of the 1970 Saudi chamber of commerce boycott publication, the hearing was intended to be seen as uncovering for the first time the extent of the Arab and Saudi black list. Of course, that was nonsense. The committee also sought to determine if U.S. government agencies operating in Saudi Arabia under the Joint Commission Reimbursable Technical Assistance Program had acquiesced in enforcing the boycott.

The hearings began with the testimony of Army Corps of Engineer colonels who were responsible for doing the design and engineering of construction projects paid for by the Saudi government. The colonels explained that the Saudi government, not the Corps, approved the private companies that the Corps considered were capable of meeting contract requirements. As was well known, Saudi visa regulations barred the entry of workers of the Jewish faith. To the colonels' knowledge, no American firm seeking a contract in the Kingdom had been denied because it was black listed. NEA Deputy Assistant Secretary Hal Saunders was the lead off witness for the Department. Hal reiterated the U.S. policy of our opposition to the Arab boycott, but he also pointed out that the boycott was politically, not economically, motivated. This meant that progress in gaining its removal could only be achieved if there was progress in the Middle East in the political context. My testimony was mainly explaining where the committee had gotten the Saudi black list. I pointed out that the boycott had been applied to firms not because of

their religious persuasion but because they were believed to have engaged in acts supporting the Israeli economy. I also pointed out that Arab nations did not black list a firm simply because it traded with Israel. I also recall denying that the Department had ever indicated a do-it-yourself way of getting off the boycott list. Someone had written an article to that effect.

As the Congress continued its debate over the U.S.-Saudi relationship, the Secretary's December 1974 interview with "Business Week" continued to reverberate among Arab oil exporting nations. The Secretary's remarks hinting U.S. military action to seize oil fields if we were being strangled had been picked up and played upon by a number of commentators and writers in the United States. The concerns that these comments generated were repeatedly reported to the Department by Ambassador Akins, who would continue to point out how impractical it would be to try and seize oil fields. The implication was that the Secretary was not doing enough to discourage these provocative articles. Akins' reports increasingly got under the Secretary's skin. This was not new since the Secretary had previously had run ins with Ambassador Akins, who insisted on being present at all of the Secretary's meetings with Saudi officials.

As for the military sales program for Saudi Arabia, legitimate questions arose over the very high commissions that American suppliers of military equipment were paying to Saudi middle men such as Adnan Khashogi. I was concerned over reports that since the death of King Faisal, various members of the Saudi royal family were pushing hard to have a share in these lucrative commissions. By now, Saudi Arabia had made a formal request for the F-15s, whose long range was needed to protect the Kingdom's lengthy coastlines along the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. Should the sale of F-15s be approved, plus a number of supporting facilities, there would be many opportunities for operators like Khashogi who we believed was passing a good bit of his high agent fees to certain favored members of the Royal family. This prompted Congress to pass the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act of 1976 making it a criminal offense for any American company caught offering bribes to gain contracts. In light of this legislation and given the general opposition of Congress to more arms sales to Saudi Arabia, the Saudis were advised to put off their F-15 request until after the 1976 presidential elections.

**HUME A. HORAN**  
**Deputy Chief of Mission**  
**Jeddah (1972-1977)**

*Ambassador Hume A. Horan was born on August 13th 1934 in the District of Columbia. Horan served in the US Army from 1954-1956 and graduated from Harvard University in 1958. In 1960, Horan entered the Foreign Service. Ambassador Hume's overseas career includes posts in Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Jordan and as Ambassador in Saudi Arabia. The interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy 2000 – 2001.*

*Q: Well, then in February '72 whither?*

HORAN: a bit of a fairy-tale story? I had been control officer for Secretary Rogers' May, 1971

visit. It was a very successful visit, you know. a big love in. All I did was work on the briefing papers, motorcades, and try to smooth out a packed agenda. I did a little interpreting at the State dinner for the Secretary. The Jordanians liked me. "Here's this *khawaja* (gringo) who speaks Arabic." This all by way of background.

Then one day Dean Brown called me in and said, "I have heard that Secretary Rogers passed down word to get Horan a good job." I said, "Oh!" Dean: "Yes, you're being considered for DCM in Jeddah." Unbelievable! I tell you I wanted to dance on the ceiling. I was only an FS0-3.

*Q: Equivalent to a colonel, or in today's Foreign Service, an FS-1.*

HORAN: That's right, to go off to a place like Jeddah, a big post, where Arabic was everywhere in use...that is the real hard core stuff. Dean said, "Well it is not set. You have to go and talk to Ambassador Thatcher and be interviewed by him. He is willing to have you come."

*Q: Nicholas...*

HORAN: Nicholas G. Thacher. a splendid wonderful human being, a wonderful ambassador. He and his wife, Caroline, "Beenie," were great. Role models of integrity and style, both of them. Of course while I was serving in Jeddah, it was "Mr. Ambassador and Mrs. Thacher." Years later, when I visited them in San Francisco, they asked that I call them by their first names. At first, I could hardly get my vocal cords to work! But in February, early February, I flew to Jeddah to be interviewed. He gave me the green light. I went back to Amman, packed up, and then we went to Jeddah. I guess it was the end of February, 1972. I am very fond of the Thachers.

I got an excellent bit of advice from Ambassador Thacher. In discussing the DCM's job - he had been DCM in Tehran - he said to me `Hume, remember you are to be Deputy Chief of Mission of the EMBASSY. NOT Deputy Chief of Mission of the State Department component! Don't hover over the Political or Administrative Counselors - just because their activities may seem more familiar or congenial to you. If you must focus on something, let it be a part of Embassy work that you're less familiar with, or that frankly does not much interest you. You don't have to follow closely the issues you like and know. You'll do that automatically. Focus on the unfamiliar. Focus on the whole.

*Q: We'll stop at this point but I wanted just a little housekeeping. What happened to the Amman Embassy. You must have had to do an awful lot of hole patching and all that.*

HORAN: They were looking very hard for a new location for the embassy which they subsequently found. But as long as I was there we still limped around in the old messed up chancery. The new chancery, I guess it went up outside of Indian country up towards where the palaces are. That was a couple of years later - the pace at which FBO moves!

*Q: Did your family join you?*

HORAN: My family rejoined me in the summer of '71; they flew to Beirut and we drove to Amman. We were there for six months or so. Then off we went to Jeddah.

*Q: What about just something, how did you feel when we mentioned some of the others, you had gone through a very dangerous very trying period during the Black September. How did you feel the State Department and the U.S. government treated you and all having gone through this?*

HORAN: Boy, you know, I was ecstatic at the thought of going off as a DCM. The No. 2 political officer in Amman, Pat Theros, said that when I broke the news to him, "Your face looked like you'd just seen God." Pat later became our ambassador to Qatar. One of our very best Arabists. So how was I handled? Very well. I think everybody got a good job out of their Amman tour. Dean became Under-Secretary for Management.

*Q: All right, well we will pick this up next time in 1972 when you are in Saudi Arabia.*

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*Today is Pearl Harbor Day, December 7, 2000. Hume, you were in Saudi Arabia from 1972 to when?*

HORAN: 1977, a little over five years.

*Q: What was your job when you went out?*

HORAN: I was Deputy Chief of Mission, replacing Bill Stoltzfus.

*Q: Well let's talk about Saudi Arabia 1972. Let's talk internally. I mean, this is your first time there, wasn't it?*

HORAN: Correct.

*Q: How did their system work and all?*

HORAN: Anybody who talks about Saudi Arabia must emphasize continuity, especially by contrast with other Middle Eastern countries. Over the years, Saudi Arabia's system has experienced "*Sturm und Drang*." In the '50s and early '60s the future seemed to belong to revolutionary Arab Socialism - led by Nasser, the new Saladin, a few Royal Princes had even become converts. They flew to Cairo whence they made scurrilous broadcasts about the royal family. But when King Saud was forced from power by his brothers, and replaced by King Faisal, the country stabilized. Some of the popular pressures against the corrupt regime of King Saud diminished, because Faisal was a person of universally regarded probity. He managed to pull the royal family together and get things working better. So you had a widely respected king at the top and this gigantic royal family, say 5,000 princes then. I don't know, maybe 10,000 now or more. It wasn't so much a family as a political party that ran the country. Or you could say the family *was* a political party, and an extraordinarily efficient one. This multitude of princes of varying degrees constituted a network of trusted, well placed people throughout the country right down to the lowest 'precinct' level. The impedance was zero. Information could flow through those channels of the royal family with a dazzling speed. An Embassy officer once remarked to

an ordinary Saudi contact, "When is that King of yours going to drop his weird obsession he has about the Protocols of the Elders of Zion?" The very next day we got a call from the Royal Diwan saying, "You had better rein in Mr. so-and so if he wants to stay in the country." In 24 hours that news had made it to the top and back down again! So, one could say the country was run by a political party that was at the same time a family. Some experienced, competent senior Princes made up the "Central Committee." At the top there was a very astute, very well respected and admirable leader, King Faisal, who of course had a few blind spots like "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion."

*Q: You might want to mention what the protocols of the Elders of Zion are. It was a Checka production, wasn't it? How the Zionists had a secret conclave and were going to undermine the world. Hitler loved it. He used it; thumbed through. Henry Ford. It still surfaces.*

HORAN: Actually, a fabrication done in the late 19th century by the Czarist secret Police. It blamed the Jews and Zionists for everything that was going wrong in Europe and the world - from the fall of Rome, to the Black Death, and so on! These things are like crabgrass. You can never eradicate them because they respond to something unwholesome in human character which is permanent and eternal. Hitler DID love it. Alas! So did King Faisal. Outside his reception room, he'd keep a bookshelf entirely filled with copies of "The Protocols..." At the end of every meeting, he'd say to his Protocol Assistant, "Have you given him THE BOOK? Get him THE BOOK!" And the poor pained looks of the protocol people! What could they do? They complied, although they knew what impact this crazed book would have on an American Congressman. As the king grew older he really did have a worse than blind spot for Jews, not Israelis, but Jews. When Congressman Leo Ryan of San Francisco called on the King, Faisal reminisced about visiting San Francisco in his youth. He liked the city, and especially the signs on stores which - with a gleeful cackle, he claimed said, "No dogs or Jews allowed." The Congressman, to his credit, only replied, "Your Majesty, if you were to visit San Francisco today, you would find it altogether changed." A good response. He didn't agree, God forbid! nor did he confront the King, nor let the matter just pass him by. Instead he laid down his own marker. Ryan was killed in Jonestown, a righteous Gentile.

*Q: How about relations with the United States at that point?*

HORAN: You know, again not too different from what they had always been - and were to be. Ambivalent. Saudis knew we were their last and best security guarantee, in a region where opponents were stirring up trouble in South Yemen. Of course they liked our military [sales]. They liked the commissions that royal princes got from these purchases. At the same time, while they wanted us there, they didn't want us to get too visible, too close. In various ways they tried to keep the American presence and the western presence in fact, from becoming too visible, from impinging too closely on the lives of Saudis themselves. a foreigner might live in Arabia for many years, enjoy a high standard of living, but still be only tangential to the surface of Saudi Society. It didn't matter whether you were an American or a Turk or a Muslim or Malaysian or Palestinian. Either you were Saudi or you weren't. Everybody who wasn't a Saudi was kept on the other side of a glass wall. That was a deliberate policy, to maintain cultural homogeneity, cultural stability within the Saudi system.

*Q: How about the impact of foreign education on Saudis? In Cairo and the West? I am thinking the boys, but I guess some women went abroad, too.*

HORAN: Some women got some education. The visible impact was slight. The reason is partly that Arab nationalism was making such a mess of itself that some of its cachet had vaporized. And the challenge of radical, Sunni fundamentalism had not fully arisen. More to the point, though, was the vast reintegrating pressure of family, tradition, and money that returning U.S. graduates were exposed to. They might have been political science majors at the University of Michigan and dated lots of coeds, but when they came home, Saudi Arabia would overwhelm them, like an avalanche. If you had any funny notions you were pretty quickly disabused of them; your enormous family was there, leaning on you to conform. The carrots and the sticks were so evident that it usually didn't take very long at all for westernized grads to become rehabilitated to Saudi society. They could eat their cake and have it, so to speak. Whenever their home town got too oppressive, they could get into their private airplane and fly off to Nice or to Monaco or to San Francisco. Hisham Nazer, the able Minister of Planning, later Minister of Petroleum, was a wonderful smart guy. One of the earlier Saudi Ph.D.s, a real John Kennedy type. Very superior wife, also a Saudi. He said "In Saudi Arabia we live VERY comfortably. But when we need a change of atmosphere, we get in my Gulfstream, fly off to San Francisco. We do it a couple of times a year. First thing, we go to our house and put on some jeans. We drive around, or just walk along the street and go to a McDonalds, look in a bookstore and just enjoy being where we are like everyone else."

Rich Saudis always had a safety valve. I think the safety valve became a little bit less "safety" as more and more Saudis got a foreign education, and the amount of money to spread around became relatively less. But still, but the centripetal pressures of tribal society, links of blood and confession, remained strong. The rewards for going along with the system were considerable and the penalties for not going along, were swift, and considerable. Then when Saudis looked to their neighbors, they saw all these hungry wolves on the periphery. a "shoulder- to- shoulder" complex helped to unite Saudis.

*Q: But what about the shopkeepers and all the, I am talking about other Saudis who were not in the first tier.*

HORAN: Being a merchant was okay and quite a few of the merchants were Saudis - gold dealers, runs, Kuwait chests. But manual labor was not prized. You'd find it being done by Palestinians, by Turks, or by Koreans - who were being imported in large numbers. The largest single group was Yemeni. They were neighbors, and so could be chucked right across the border - as happened during Desert Storm. The presumption was that most Saudis belonged to a rentier class. Some were richer, some less rich. But there was usually a little something just for anybody who was a Saudi. At the Embassy, for instance, we had precisely one Saudi on the payroll. He was the Ambassador's driver, the only one. All of our other FSN's were third-country nationals.

*Q: What about the role of women at that time. I mean when you were there before the Carter administration. First, how did you see the role of women there? Was it evolving, and two, did we get involved in it?*

HORAN: I didn't see women. I would see black hooded figures floating along like nuns - you know, that flat, roller-bearing, walk down the street. Once I visited the women's university. The classrooms looked pretty modern, but the women received all their instruction via closed circuit television! They could not be in the presence of a man not of their own family! Classes were a little like a quiz show. Like a call-in program. The coeds, could press a little button and ask the professor a question. His face would appear on the screen as he responded. There was no spatial connection between the women and their professors.

I visited one of the men's universities. It could have been a Pharaonic funeral mausoleum. The building was marvelous. Well built, over built in fact, lots of computer consoles and electronic things. This was in the early days, but they had what was the top of the line. There was also a library, a tiny one, not vastly bigger than my personal library at home. Nobody seemed to be doing much work. All the professors, pretty much all of them, were Egyptians and the like. Some of these Arab countries produced such a large excess of so-called teachers that they exported them for back hard currency. But what they also exported was sometimes not just technical knowledge, but extreme ideas which have been a problem for some Arab countries ever since.

At the secondary level, one woman ran an inspiring girl's school in Jeddah for the children of privileged Saudis. She had good local contacts, and managed to win administration approval to a good academic curriculum plus physical training. King Faisal and his powerful wife had given their support to women's education, but in the main it was neglected.

*Q: How about the women of the embassy, the American women?*

HORAN: Women officers tended to be treated as honorary men. We had a couple of them. There was a woman in the political section, an attractive, physically very athletic woman, very nice. She would walk to the chancery. Her apartment was just off the campus. Well, one day she came running into my office and said, "Maybe they are going to PNG me." I asked: "What happened?" She said, "I was walking along the embassy wall, and this car with a couple of young guys was keeping pace with me. They were saying, 'Oh, you are so beautiful, you want to get into our car...?'"

*Q: You were saying she was listening to this.*

HORAN: They were giving her all of this patter. As she got right by the front gate of the Embassy, she picked up a brick and threw it right smack through the windshield. She then ducked under RR bar, and ran to my office. I got up and shook her hand and said, "You are the best. You don't have to worry, if those punks make any kind of reports, they'll be the ones getting into trouble in this society." Saudi misogyny does have its other side. You know, women are oppressed, but anybody who messes around with women...the system comes down on them, too. It is an underhanded even handedness.

*Q: How about social life there? I mean in the first place, contact with Saudis, how did you do your business and sort of get to know people in informal get togethers and then just plain social life?*



HORAN: I was lucky. Getting there in 1972, February of '72, Saudi Arabia had not yet achieved liftoff. It was rich but seen as somewhat sleepy. Before I left, Jeddah was raised to Class 1. At the time, though, it was still a class 3 post. The few Saudis you got to meet had not yet been economically and socially transformed, as was to happen not too many years later. Some younger Saudis spoke English, but most were more comfortable in Arabic. Through my Arabic, I got to know a few socially. One later became the king's interpreter. a well-integrated personality. Balanced, lots of self-respect. His wife spoke no English. One evening he invited my wife and me out to a little fried chicken place on the road north of Jeddah. The tables were screened off from each other by thick hedges. We had a really pleasant evening - just us two couples. Anyway, I did get to know a number of medium high level younger Saudis who became a little bit better than acquaintances. But I would say that most people's contacts followed the official lines of the tables of organization. You met your contact; you saw him; you came home; you did your report. That was pretty much it.

*Q: What about, was living there I mean DCM was sort of responsible, has housekeeping chores which is the morale of the embassy and all that. You know all the married people, you are not allowed to have liquor. Your ties with the community are cut off. It is difficult for the woman as with your female officer to go out and go around. How did it work?*

HORAN: Embassy women mostly lived on, or very near the compound. Once on the compound, it was like being in a small bit of southern California. The compound was 46 acres in size. Some 35 acres were devoted to recreation: a nine hole golf course, six tennis courts, three squash courts, a very nice pool, and a pretty good snack bar. There was a small commissary. The chancery had a theater that showed movies a couple of nights a week. Movie movies, not videos. Security was perfect. No one locked their doors. Children could play out of doors all year round. Schooling for American kids was indifferent, but very American. Sounds a little like Booth Tarkington, Penrod and Sam?

One woman said, "I really like it here. I have been here two years and have never been off the compound." She went on: "For some, compound life can be oppressive, but there are certain types of Americans, good colleagues and good workers, who shouldn't be pushed into becoming cross cultural communications experts. If they are doing a good job and they are happy and have got their collection of mugs from Embassies around the world, leave them alone. Let them know that you appreciate them. Make sure you include them in your social functions. Keep an eye on people to make sure nobody falls off of the platform. Come high Holy Days, Thanksgiving, Christmas...always make sure that everybody is included in something. That way people won't sit around grousing, 'No one cares, I'm just a second class citizen.'" She had a point.

I spent a lot of time drawing people out, but without trying to bully them. Me: "Are you going on the tour to the University?" a: "No, I don't want to go to the university. It's hot and smelly." Me: "You may be right. See you at the Marines' barbecue!"

I was, by the way, the ex-officio president of the Recreation Association, also known as "The Dunes Club." It actually had a big budget. That was a key role in the social life of the community. As president of the only place in town where you could play squash, tennis, or golf, in mixed company, a lot of people wanted to join. Americans were admitted, and most foreign

diplomats.

Morale was high. Inspectors came through. They said, "The post is pretty happy. People are making good money, 25%. They are safe. Housing is good. Creature comforts are available, and as long as you don't look much beyond the walls of the Embassy, you can pretend sometimes that you are not in Saudi Arabia." So it was a satisfying kind of place. Excellent for small children: I should know, as our youngest, Ted, was born at the Raytheon-operated Air Defense hospital nearby. Quite a few people extended for a third year. Partly again because life was okay, and the money was good.

*Q: What about the foreign community, other embassies and all? How important were they from your perspective as far as wiping out the...*

HORAN: My chères colleagues. You have got to be careful not to assume that because so and so is a foreigner, he doesn't know anything at all. I would see a lot of these foreign diplomats socially. Some of them were very affable. The British were good. The sad thing was that their brains exceeded their brawn. Their time in the region had passed - but they brought to their jobs a background of experience and personal education that made them valued colleagues. Other diplomats had "niche" positions. The Korean, Italian and German ambassadors knew a lot about construction. In their contacts, they'd follow the main lines of their business. Not synoptic. I always made a point, though, of trying to give everyone full value. You must avoid giving the impression that: "Oh, because I am an American, you know, I know everything, and then you, you poor..., of course, know nothing." It is the lion and the mouse. You never know who might be helpful, when. So, you always try to be gentlemanly with your colleagues. But I rarely dropped my glass on the ground and said, "Wow! I have never heard that story before!" Socially, most of my diplomatic colleagues were nice. But idle. Diplomacy is a lazy man's profession unless you are in just two or three foreign services. There were a lot of pleasant, cheerful people who had lost out on Geneva or to Buenos Aires or Tokyo, and found themselves in Jeddah. I think of a Baron from one of the Northern European Embassies. He couldn't wait to get out. He counted the minutes. He was pleasant. He was fun at parties. He would dance with the women. Some people got a little too close to the European diplomatic circuit! I'll tell you, the things they would come up with! "Idle hands..." and that sort of thing.

*Q: Well then, looking at Saudi Arabia in its neighborhood in '72, did you see any problems of the neighborhood?*

HORAN: It is a terrible neighborhood. You shouldn't have the fanciest house on your block. And there were the Saudis, in this giant glitzy glass house, having for neighbors resentful Egyptians, radical Iraqis, ultra-radical South Yemenis, a suspect Yemen - with twice Saudi Arabia's population. Thank heavens for Jordan, a little buffer state! Otherwise the Saudis would be face to face, eyeball to eyeball, with the Israelis. But they certainly loathed Jordanians, always suspecting the Jordanians were harboring irredentist aspirations.

*Q: This is going back to the Arab revolt.*

HORAN: That's right, after which King Ali of Hejaz was driven out of Arabia out by King

Abdul Aziz. In 1926, I think. The British, who owed him, then seeded the area with his children. One became King of Iraq, the other, Amir of Jordan - Hussein's father. The feeling among the Saudis was that the Hashemites, resplendent in their 1400-year family tree, were just waiting for their chance to make a comeback. And as for the Jordanians, their bad luck preyed on their minds. There they were, poor but proud - and looking south, knowing they had missed the greatest historical boat since Noah's. As soon as they left Arabia, oil was discovered!

Politics and economics dictated that the Jordanians go to the Saudis, again and again, begging bowl in hand. And again - at the dictates of politics - the Saudis would usually come through with the bare minimum, and in a manner as galling as possible to the noble Jordanians. We were often midwives in these fund raising drives. I recall how once we were trying to persuade the Saudis to buy Hawk Missiles for Jordan. King Hussein himself agreed to come down and make the pitch. What an arrival scene! I was off to one side, but watched as the King and his chief of staff, Major General Zayd bin Shakir, deplaned. They were both beautifully tailored, idealizations of the British Army. Waiting for them was the Crown Prince, and a number of senior princes - who seemed to be bent, toothlessly, over their shepherds' crooks. Only kidding. But as I watched these bronze, arrogant Jordanian warriors coming down, I thought, "Couldn't they have worn some kind of Arab dress? I thought I could see Jordanians sneer. The Saudis glare. The visit was a complete washout, no money at all. But you have to give the Saudi credit. Their neighborhood was awful. Yet they managed to preserve their balance on a rolling deck. Where're the Shah and the Royal family of Iraq, now?"

*Q: What about, well, let's get to relations in '72. For the United States, did we just, how did we deal with the Israeli issue?*

HORAN: The Saudis did not see themselves as a front line, confrontational state. We would raise issues and they'd say, "Look, take that up with the Egyptians. Take it up with the Jordanians, all the people who signed that Rhodes armistice in 1949. We are just bystanders. Don't get it on us." To the extent that we asked them to do anything positive on our behalf, the most we could ever expect is inactivity. The Saudis are masters of inactivity. Anything they didn't want to do, you felt you were walking into a mountain of warm cotton candy. You would never get a flat 'No,' just nothing would ever happen. In some areas they'd help. But if it ever meant Saudi Arabia getting out in front or even getting alongside other regional powers, you could forget it. We were always nudging and pushing, nudging and pushing. But they did their best to maintain a kind of firewall between themselves and issues which they knew could be very de-stabilizing.

One of the areas in which we were disappointed, was their lack of support for UNRWA - the Palestinian's relief agency. Once, on instructions, I went to see Foreign Minister Prince Saud, to ask for more help toward Palestinian relief. The Prince said, "Look, you created the problem; you solve it." Did that reply bother me! I said, "Your Royal Highness, that is really not an acceptable answer." I asked him to imagine what would happen if a disaster drove half a million Canadians to the USA. Did anyone think that 40 years later, we'd still have them confined to refugee camps? Without citizenship or work permits or access to the broader society? I said one heard Arab leaders extolling the cause of their Palestinian brothers. But more tangible help to the Palestinians was usually lacking. The Prince listened non-committally. No more money, though.

*Q: How were relations with Kuwait?*

HORAN: Wary - the same as with all of the sheikdoms of the Gulf area. The ruling families of the Gulf were structured in a mode similar to, or at least familiar to the Saudi Arabia. They were on the whole, conservative. The Kuwaitis could also claim credit for having given Abdul Aziz refuge when his family was driven out of Riyadh by the Rashid Alis. That being said, however, there was this ingrained tendency of Arab dynasties to find fault with one another. The Gulf rulers, moreover, were on the Persian Gulf littoral. They were part of the regions's maritime economies. Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, was a large insular, pastoral, high desert, continental society. The Saudis were made uneasy by the cosmopolitanism of their small neighbors. These were seen as congenial, but potentially unreliable, who because of their location and their involvement in the greater world around them, were exposed to developments that might someday worry the Saudis. Of especial concern to Riyadh, were the oppressed Shiites in Bahrain - whose discontent might spread to the Shiites of the Eastern Province, and the large percentage of guest workers throughout these statelets.

And so with the exception of Qatar, which really *was* quite close to Saudi Arabia, the ruling family there being cousins of the Abdul Azizes, the Saudis kept a watchful eye on their Gulf neighbors.

*Q: What about internally, in the first place you came out of Jordan where the Palestinians had played a major role. You saw Palestinians in Saudi Arabia. I would have thought that the Saudis would have been cutting down on Palestinian participation and all.*

HORAN: The Palestinians were very quiet, very circumspect, never looked up, never made eye contact. They knew that just the slightest peep and they would be out of that country. They had a substantial position in the economic life of the country, but they were all on notice that if you get out of line, you get your one way ticket. And it is a one way ticket to Gaza or someplace like that which is not a real vacation spot. Palestinians were very quiet. One had a number of friends among the Palestinians, but they were all pretty chastened because they could see what had happened just up to the north.

*Q: Egypt?*

HORAN: Egypt? One didn't see too much of the Egyptians. I didn't - the Saudis would not have been much in favor of it. Our ambassador saw the Egyptian ambassador a number of times, but Saudi-Egyptian relations on matters of substance were dealt with at a higher- than- Ambassador level. The Saudis were always watchful, always on guard with regard to the Egyptians. They remembered that in 1819, Ibrahim Pasha overthrew the Wahhabi state and destroyed its capital, near present-day Riyadh. You can see the ruins today. The Egyptians were kept at an arms length. But not provocatively so, the Saudis always would cross the street to avoid antagonizing or irritating. They just wanted to maintain a highly aerodynamic position, flat against the ground, in a region where the winds could reach hurricane force.

*Q: You were there during the October wars, '73. How did that affect relations there? I mean*

*what was the effect of the October war?*

HORAN: The October War was really the turning point of my assignment in Arabia - a turning point also for Saudi Arabia. Ambassador Nicholas Thatcher had left Jeddah a month or so earlier. I was chargé when the war broke out. Jim Akins was actually in transit, heading for Arabia. Tensions in the area were high and rising as it appeared. Once again, the Arabs would be beaten. The "street" was getting restless. Radio Cairo plied its whip, "A weapons air bridge from the USA is striving to save the Zionist entity...!" It's like watching a pot of water heat up; eventually it comes to a boil.

The only good news was that the Royal Diwan passed word to me that the war and our government's actions, wouldn't alter their willingness to receive our new Ambassador. I sent a Flash precedence message to Ambassador Akins - I think he was still in Vienna - saying in effect, "You are still welcome. Get here ASAP." Jim afterwards said he was very glad to have gotten that message. He'd recalled that in 1967, our Ambassador had arrived in Cairo just as *that* war broke out. He never presented credentials, and eventually returned home.

In the event Jim arrived. It was a very eventful Ambassadorship for him and an exciting time for me. Jim was confronted with the Saudi oil boycott. The world price of oil maybe quintupled, our gas lines were long, and rage at the pump common. The Saudis were motivated partly by area politics. They had to show they were willing to deploy the only weapon they had in favor of the Arab cause. But also, they wanted more oil money for themselves. Previously, they'd sell the oil to Aramco at maybe four or five dollars a barrel. Then ARAMCO would refine the oil abroad and sell the processed product at a much higher net price than what the Saudis were receiving. All the "value added" so to speak, accrued to ARAMCO's parent companies.

What with the new oil prices, Saudi Arabia found itself deluged with money. It now held a leading position in world energy and finance markets. Saudis came under vast pressures. There seemed almost to be a shuttle service for senior Americans between Washington and Riyadh. Richard Nixon came to Riyadh on his last State visit. The Secretary of the Treasury, Tom Connally, came. Every couple of weeks, Jim would host a CODEL of senators or congressmen. They all wanted to see the King, Oil Minister Yamani, discuss the boycott, energy policy, and "how could they help the Saudis responsibly place their windfall millions." Ideas were not in short supply. Almost daily, the Saudis were treated to performances by some of the fastest talking, often most respected men on the world economic scene. '73 was a real watershed.

*Q: What was your impression of how the Saudis dealt with this?*

HORAN: The Royal family's muffled organizational style, its habit of holding things close to their chest, moving very slowly, listening - but speaking little, was you might say, "adaptive." In the past, there had never been a problem in the Saudis' ability correctly to apprehend their world. It was a world where one walked carefully. This turtle-like approach to the world continued even after the money started pouring in. I'd say they withstood the shock of countless billions of dollars being lavished onto their country with fantastic success. Look around you: Nigeria, Venezuela, Gabon, the USSR! Money did not scour away the foundations or identity of the kingdom. It did not disrupt the cohesion of the Royal family - rather the opposite. Lots of money

was wasted - always happens in a boom. Consider our Mauve Decade. But what matters is that the Saudis remained Saudis. There is something tenacious and gritty about being a Saudi. It was perhaps just as well for the kingdom that its national character had been formed over decades of challenge and adversity.

“Throughput” was a problem. Here was a country with vast needs, vast resources, having to manage its development through a bureaucratic “needle’s eye.” Getting things done, though, was more of a concern for foreign visitors than it was for the Saudis. If the foreign contractor didn’t want to come back three times, didn’t want to wait two more weeks in a hideous hotel...Tough! Shows he was not really “Sincere” in the first place. There are other contractors out there. The Saudis would not be rushed; they would not be hurried. They wanted to continue to deal with issues in the Saudi way and at the deliberate Saudi pace. They’d say: “Yes, yes, yes, we know, and thank you for your advice. We probably do come to you Americans the most for advice, but in the end, thank you, we will make our own decisions.” I’d say the Saudis were very well served by their natural caution, their conservatism, their skepticism about the good intentions of almost all the people who came to them offering to sell them snow mobiles and God knows what. Anything, anything! Every four-flushing, mountebank in the world was at their door, along with our first-string, first-rate military-industrial giants, such as Bechtel, and the Corps of Engineers.

*Q: Well, when you get into a situation like this, did your economic people do a certain amount of sorting out as to who is a solid person and who isn't.*

HORAN: Very good question, because we are supposed to represent all Americans. We’re not to relay information that Ms. So-and-so is a “double-dyed, belly crawling crook.” How to separate these fly-by-nighters, from the Browns and Roots, the Gibbs and Hills? The Saudis knew they couldn’t plumb all the project proposals before them. They’d come to Jim and say, “Look we have always been friends. We are entitled to your best opinion on these offers. And please don’t give us this eyewash about ‘They are all American firms so they are all good.’”

Jim came up with an inspired idea. The USG had no way of addressing the needs of countries that from a development standpoint needed our aid, but who from a financial standpoint could not qualify. Through his contacts at the Palace, at State, and at Treasury, he set up our “Joint Economic Commission,” or JECOR. JECOR was run by a Treasury representative. It operated like a streamlined AID mission - but its expenses were fully funded by the Saudis. It provided expert analyses and recommendations to the Saudis. JECOR was helpful to American business - it could assure them they would be dealing with a transparent, U.S.-style bid and offer system. Not all their recommendations went the U.S. way, either - this helped give JECOR a reputation for honesty and probity. The biggest companies and investment firms, of course, had their own ways of establishing their bona fides with the Saudis. They had ties with the royal family, they’d already have Princes on their side.

*Q: Well now, in the first place, did you see a rise in the temperature or in the political temperature when the Egyptians and Syrians nearly seriously threatened the Israelis? And then what happened when it began to look like they were going to lose big, again, after the Egyptian Sixth army was encircled. Were the Saudis following this?*

HORAN: Yes. There were sleepless nights in Riyadh because they knew that if the water got too hot, they'd be cooked. Should the war drag on, the Saudis knew attacks on the U.S. would mount. Saudi Arabia could be cast by its critics almost as a collateral participant. A long, inconclusive war could erode the foundations of Saudi stability. So what mattered to the Saudis was ending the war fast, almost without regard to the winner. An Arab win would be nice, to be sure. But in their heart of hearts, did they really want to see Egypt triumph? What kind of a world would that be? Whereas an Egypt that had been taken down a peg or two, that was licking its wounds from yet another military defeat? Then it would be "Oh, so sad! But here's a check for you!" And the Saudis would wipe away crocodile tears.

*Q: Well, when the Saudis and the Arab world, particularly the Saudis were curtailing or cutting off oil supplies to the United States, what did we do?*

HORAN: First, and providentially, the USA for once had just the right man on the scene. People often ask: "What do Ambassadors really do?" And too often - especially these days - the Ambassador can seem a clerkish, high-level employee of UPS. He just carries mail and packages, get receipts signed, and continues his daily runs. But Jim Akins in Riyadh was that rare thing: "An event-making" Ambassador.

Jim Akins' role was so historic because he was seen by the Saudis as a genuine friend - to a degree that some in Washington criticized, finding him excessively susceptible to and sympathetic to speaking up for the Saudis. But he also used his "entree" clearly, relentlessly to pursue America's interests. And at that time, our No. 1 policy objective was to persuade King Faisal to raise the oil embargo, and so moderate the price of oil to the U.S. economy. Whether talking to a Royal Prince, or to the Minister of Petroleum, Sheikh Ahmed Zaki Yamani, Jim would not let go. He once said that to deliver a message to the Saudis you have to deliver it again and again. The first few times, it just evaporates!

I will never forget one audience Jim had with King Faisal. Jim had taken me with him as note-taker. Jim's Arabic was very good, but this time he spoke in English, and the very able royal interpreter - one of my friends - turned his remarks into Arabic. The King understood English quite well, of course, so he got the Akins' message twice. Jim liked to have me there taking notes, because we, too, would get two versions of the discussion. I'd hear the King's remarks in Arabic, and then hear the English translation. The issue was important, and this practice produced a more nuanced MemCon.

Jim it was extraordinary. He wouldn't stop pushing the need to raise the embargo. I thought of Abraham, again and again going back to the Lord for an easement on behalf of the Cities of the Plain. "Behold, I have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord. Suppose (only) twenty are found there?" Each time the King would in a typical, muffled way, say, "No." And each time Jim would return to the point. He wouldn't stop. I could see the King was getting tired, and also tiring of the discussion. The interpreter, a senior person in the royal household, had never seen the King in effect, manhandled by a foreign Ambassador. Sweat was popping out on the interpreter's brow. I myself thought: "How much farther can Jim push before something breaks?" But Jim just kept worrying the King. He would not let go. It was a totally daring performance. Jim had laid his career on the line. The meeting, however, produced a breakthrough. The embargo was lifted.

Jim knew he was risking a quick and permanent return to CONUS. But he was able to speak as he did - and be listened to as he was - because the Saudis knew they were dealing with someone of integrity, who had their best interests and those of his own country at heart. Arabs have got a saying, "Your real friend is he who tells you the truth, not he who confirms your opinion." The Saudis knew Jim could be stiff-necked, hyper moralistic, undiplomatically blunt - but knew and valued also his personal warmth and high moral character. For these reasons, they were prepared to listen to him in a way that they would not have listened to almost anyone else. They had the wit to perceive that in Jim Akins they had that rarest commodity: a man who was personally disinterested, who didn't give a damn about money, and who - if he had - could have prospered on an almost Saudi scale. What he was telling them was the oddest thing they'd ever heard: principled, disinterested, moral sort of advice. I think they found him kind of a weird phenomenon. (End of tape)

*Q: You were saying Akins might have been on a plane back to Washington.*

HORAN: I told him afterwards, "Jim, the ice you were walking on was so thin...it might as well have been water. I wasn't sure if you were going to walk out of that meeting and get on your plane to Jeddah - or to Washington."

He replied: "That's what they pay me for. They don't pay me to walk in and just show a piece of paper to the King, bow, leave, and get home in time for cocktails. I'm Uncle Sam's attorney, and I'm paid to make the strongest case I can on his behalf." a lot of good officers would have made a good presentation. But would they have pushed it all the way in, right up to the hilt, the way Jim did with a guy as imposing as King Faisal? The ashen countenance of the protocol officer! It was green-gray.

Not long afterwards Faisal was assassinated.

*Q: What a moment for an FSO. How did the news hit you and what were we thinking at the time?*

HORAN: I was sitting in my office in Jeddah when one of our political officers, Ray Close walked in and said, "The King has been assassinated." From one moment to the next everything changed. One moment, the world was as I knew it, and then suddenly, the wall collapsed, and something transformative had happened. Word got out fast. The town - the entire nation - was still and mute. The National Guard was out - but there wasn't a murmur, not a peep from anywhere. What to do? Under Islamic law, the King needed to be buried the next day. So Jim went up to Riyadh and the U.S. government really burned some rubber. Nelson Rockefeller came out.

*Q: He was Vice President.*

HORAN: Vice President. He came out with Assistant Secretary Roy Atherton, and a pretty large delegation. I think the Saudis held off an extra 24 hours or so because so many Arab and other leaders wanted to come.



The Vice President and his party were housed in the Royal Guest house across from the U.S. embassy compound. The VP and Roy and some others came to the Embassy for a briefing. Roy was very collegial. He said "As you know Mr. Vice President, Ambassador Akins is not here, but I'm confident that his Deputy, Hume Horan, can give you a good briefing." It really was a good briefing. Afterwards, the VP said to me: "Thank you for a brilliant briefing. Are you free for dinner tonight?" I said, "Mr., Vice President, it is an honor." He took me and my wife over to the guest palace where we had dinner. He said, "No more talk about politics. This is a social event now."

He was charming, relaxed, patrician. Just as in the Congress, a VIP's entourage picks up and amplifies their boss's management style. The people around the vice president were smart and competent and level headed. They had it all together. The vice president asked one of his assistants for a document. The aide said, "You know what, I had it here Mr. Vice President. But I must have mislaid it." Rockefeller said, "Forget about it. We'll just wing it." I thought how wonderful! a vice-president who doesn't throw a tantrum if some piece of paper was lost. It was a big moment in the life of a pretty small fry, having a chance to brief the Vice President, and have him respond so well.

Rockefeller and his people were very good with the junior staff of the Embassy. They would say, "Does anybody need a lift up to Riyadh?" About five or six support personnel took up the offer. It was a thrill for them to ride in the VP's plane. The crew gave out lots of small mementoes. Chic.

*Q: Who was the assassin??*

HORAN: It was a nephew, maybe a great nephew of the king. He was something of a fundamentalist, whose equally fundamentalist minded brother had been killed by the police in an attack against a TV station. The assassin held Faisal responsible.

He joined the throng that each Thursday would flood into the King's majlis, or reception chamber. Virtually any Saudi could gain entrance, and at least leave a petition for the King. The nephew approached the monarch, drew out a pistol, and shot him. The assassin was later beheaded.

I make no claims to prescience, but one day I was in Riyadh during one such "majlis." I looked down from the staircase. The doors to the chamber had been opened, and in flowed this turgid Mississippi of robes. The King was making his way through the crowd. They were pushing and shouting at him. I thought to myself, "Even in a country that prizes the personal touch, this is just crazy."

*Q: Well now, you mentioned Richard Nixon making a visit to there. Was that of any interest particularly, or was that just Nixon's last hurrah, tour of the Middle East to get the hell away from Watergate wasn't it?*

HORAN: That's right. It was just in his closing days, and he arrived. The Saudis loved him because they thought he was more objective than the Democrats on the Israeli question. They

thought he was a victim of a Jewish conspiracy.

I had to leave post just before the visit. But Nixon arrived with the usual overwhelming number of people. There were maybe 500 in his delegation and 20 aircraft from the U.S. government there on the hard top. a sort of U.S. pilgrimage to Arabia! We thought the Peninsula might slip below the Red Sea under the weight of this American armada! Then before the state dinner - you may hear this from Jim Akins - Jim had asked the President if he wanted any texts or talking points for his speech. Nixon replied, "No, I write my own." So he got up there and began talking about King Faisal, and how wonderful it was that his father had cooperated with Lawrence of Arabia, the great role he had played in the Arab revolt, and how in his early days Faisal had been to France for the Paris Peace Conference...with Woodrow Wilson, etc. Excellent. But Nixon was speaking of the wrong Faisal! He was praising the late King of Iraq - not the Saudi Faisal, whose father had driven the Hashemites from Arabia!  
Jim's blood ran cold.

But help was at hand. In Jeddah, we had an extraordinary Public Affairs Officer, Isa Sabbagh. His was one of the "conjure names" in the contemporary Middle East. During WWII, he had become widely known as the BBC's "Golden Voice of the Arabs." A Himalayan ego, he basically considered himself the Arab world's interlocutor to the universe. Very macro-media. I don't know of anyone with a similar grasp of the nuances of English and Arabic, and their respective cultures. He was also a wise and perceptive counselor. I learned always to seek his advice - and usually follow it. And especially, he was a patriotic American, who did not back down when attacked by Arabs for seeming inconsistencies in U.S. policy toward the Middle East. Like Jim, Isa was a superb attorney for Uncle Sam. I cherished his friendship, and had the honor to be a speaker at his funeral in Washington last year.

His sense of integrity, moreover, was a match for Jim's. Neither position nor title mattered to Isa if he knew himself to be in the right. And he was never wrong! Once, the garbage outside his house remained uncollected - despite frequent appeals to the Mayorality. Isa's answer? He had all his garbage piled onto a truck, driven to the Mayor's fabulous residence, and tossed over the wall! Anyone else, would have been drawn and quartered. Expelled or arrested at least. But Isa? Henceforth, his garbage never lingered.

Anyway, Isa was at the State dinner, and had just had this hot potato dropped in his lap. He freely translated Nixon's remarks, skillfully conflating similarities in the two Faisal stories. Afterwards someone remarked to Jim, "I never quite understood when President Nixon was speaking what he was referring to...but your Minister for Information, Mr. Sabbagh, made it all very clear for me."

*Q: Well, speaking of egos one of the smaller less ones was that of Henry Kissinger. Will you talk about that relationship and Kissinger's links to Akins?*

HORAN: Ha, ha, ha! (laughter) I'll tell you, just as there may be love at first sight, there can be its opposite. Did something like this happen between Jim and Henry? Here were two brilliant, opinionated men who just did not cotton to one another. The "propagations" were bad. I speak out of turn, but Jim maybe found Kissinger duplicitous, too clever by half. Whereas Jim would

give it to you right between the eyes, bang. I think there was a basic disjunction of style. Jim's attitude toward HAK may have had in it an element of moral disapprobation. Kissinger, on his part, may have found Jim too "standup", stiff-necked, and cocksure.

Kissinger, I heard, after visiting Riyadh, would go to Damascus and tell the Syrians unflattering little jokes about these ignorant Saudi shepherd kings. The Syrians would chuckle, "Ha, ha, ha. That is, indeed, a very funny story, your Excellency!" Afterwards, of course, the Syrians would pick up the phone and tell the Saudis, "You know what Kissinger is saying about you? He said you were a bunch of toe-picking crackers from Nowheresville." The Saudis were not unaware of HAK's different personae: fawning when with them, but bad-mouthing them when with others.

*Q: Well, I have interviewed George Vest, and George Vest acted as Kissinger's spokesman for a very short time and thought that he really couldn't take some of the duplicity. I mean it was a moral matter.*

HORAN: Interesting. I observed some of Kissinger's sneaky side when Jim was withdrawn from Arabia. Jim was at home in the States on leave. The desk officer called him and asked, "Have you seen the Washington Post today." Jim: "No, I am still in my bathrobe." Desk Officer: "Well go get it off the porch." The WP headlined an article "Kissinger withdraws the American Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, James Akins." It was the first Jim had heard anything like it!

*Q: Were you there with the thing that supposedly precipitated this? I mean from what I understand there was a time that Kissinger as was his wont, did not want the Ambassador to a meeting.*

HORAN: Yes. It was an audience with the King, I believe. Jim said, "Either I go to that meeting or I am gone, period." That is a very good principle. That would have been completely consistent not only with Jim's way of operating, but with that of any self-respecting Ambassador. It was a mistake of Kissinger's to try look like a BIG MAN, by making the Ambassador look like a LITTLE MAN. The result was to weaken the subsequent position of the Ambassador. Kissinger would, in effect, sacrifice our ability to conduct American diplomacy in order to puff up his ego. Very bad.

You always learn from your good bosses. In this instance, I learned from Jim: years later, the head of the CIA came to Arabia on a visit. It was suggested to me that I needn't accompany him to see the King. His topics, I was told, were not really germane to Arabia, and, anyway, afterwards I'd be told what went on. I said, "Look I am really sorry. I am not making a big grandstand play for one agency or the other, but I am the President's representative here. I'm not going to write you guys' lines, or censor what you are going to say, but if there is a meeting, I HAVE TO BE THERE." The Agency was perfectly civil. They said, "All right. If you feel that way, you know, you can come but just don't say very much." HORAN: "No I am not going to say very much, but I gotta be there. I just can't face my Embassy colleagues if I was just hanging around the Snack Bar while this was going on."

Before Jim left Arabia, Kissinger came back for one more visit. Jim was at the foot of the stairs. I was standing right behind Jim. Down came Kissinger. He shook Jim's hand perfunctorily, and

turned to shake the hand of the Foreign Minister. But Jim wouldn't let go. Kissinger was pulling, tried to pull his hand away, and Jim was about twice the size of Henry, and he wouldn't let go of his hand. Then Jim said, "Mr. Secretary, I am sure you are glad to know that this is the last time when you come to Riyadh, you have to greet me at the foot of the stairs." He said this in a loud, clear voice. Kissinger looked very unhappy. He was tugging and pulling, and Jim was holding onto his hand. I thought he didn't mind rubbing it in. It was a sight, I can tell you, this *pas des deux!*

*Q: You talked about Akins, and I know you are a good friend of his. Jim Akins is a towering figure. He called the oil business right in previous times and so had a great deal of respect as you were talking about his time with King Faisal. I was wondering if you could mention some of the problems you as a DCM see the ambassador, you are a little bit like the ambassador's valet.*

HORAN: Valet, that is a good word. Not just to the Ambassador, but to the Embassy itself. That is one of a DCM's many functions. You want to stay in touch with your people, keep them informed, on the team. Not in a manipulative way. People know right away when they're being stroked. They'll say "Oh what the hell, I don't need to be stroked." But, if as a manager and colleague, you demonstrate a genuine interest in their well-being, listen to them carefully, and respond effectively, you can draw people to your side. This management approach can be important in as non-Western a country as Arabia. Psychologically, Embassy people were under multiples of atmospheres. You have to explain Saudi Arabia to people who don't know anything about it, help them adapt. I did a lot of talking and listening and walking around.

But with great affection and all due respect, I wouldn't affirm that Jim's management style was seen as all that warm and fuzzy by his American embassy colleagues. I think they saw him kind of an Old Testament guy, thunderbolts right there by his desk. I don't think he was seen as approachable as probably in reality he was. I think people found him a little intimidating. I don't believe they found me intimidating.

*Q: Well, another aspect too is that as DCM you are often sitting in on meetings when visitors come, and at times the DCM will advise the Ambassador on an issue, or - afterwards, say you came a little strong there.*

HORAN: That was an issue with Jim. His certitude approached 100%, intellectually a kind of "Take no prisoners, give no quarter" attitude. What compounded the problem was that he was right almost all the time. He could make more enemies being right, than most people could by screwing up royally. He would be "stand-up" guy, even when that was unnecessary or inadvisable.

I recall, the Under secretary of the Air Force came out with a delegation of top air defense manufacturers. In the course of a meeting, some members of the delegation lit up cigarettes. Rather brusquely, Jim said to put them out. That was before the day of smoke free rooms. I thought, these were big men, all earning six figures or more. They're not in the habit of being spoken to like students caught chewing gum in class. I think it was after that meeting, that the Under secretary - who'd come on a USAF 707 - said to Jim, "Since we're both going to Riyadh tomorrow to see the King, how about coming along in my plane?" Jim declined. He said he'd

take his own C-12. Afterwards I spoke to Jim. I said the poor Under-secretary looked so rebuffed and uncomprehending. I was sure he had not meant his offer in any bad way. And regarding the delegation, I said, "You have just made yourself about a half-dozen enemies in Washington's military-industrial complex."

But one must consider the whole performance, the whole *Gestalt*, of an officer. Akins was perfect for the time. An average FSO would never have spoken to the King as Akins did - and gotten away with it. A schmoozer type, always running for office, would never have produced the dynamic that allowed the oil embargo to be lifted. Jim was the right man at the right time. I am not saying that he was the right man for every time. Sometimes a foil can be as useful as a sabre. It could be said of Jim - as it had been of a great historical figure - that he could be a "turbulent priest."

*Q: Well what happened to you when Akins left? What happened to you?*

HORAN: I had been there three-and-a-half years and William Porter arrived. Ambassador Porter had done everything, and been Ambassador to just about everywhere. Sort of the David Newsom of that epoch. Porter had been Under secretary for Political Affairs, Ambassador to Algeria, Canada, and Korea. He graduated from Katy Gibbs and in the mid-'30s joined the Foreign Service as clerk to our Minister from Romania. Then he was transferred to Damascus around 1936-1937. He not only knew the history of foreign affairs - he had lived a lot of it. He said, "During the war my wife and I spent 10 straight years in Iraq and Syria. We never got home leave." What a man! Total wisdom.

Ambassador Porter got along with Kissinger about as well as Jim Akins had. Porter always spoke his mind. Once he told me of a disagreement with Kissinger - I forget the issue - but Porter said that as he left Kissinger's office, "Henry was so mad at me he was actually jumping up and down." Kissinger wanted him out of Washington, and Porter wanted to see Saudi Arabia. He said, "I'll go, but you have to make it a class 1 post for me." Which is what happened. Jeddah had been made a Class 2 Post when Jim came.

That year, I was supposed to go to the Senior Seminar. But when Ambassador Porter asked: "Why don't you stay another year or year-and-a-half with me?" I said "Yes, I would be delighted to." I'd already been in Arabia three-and-a-half years, more than a full tour. But I wanted to see "How the play was going to come out." I'd had a front row seat on some significant events, and once in awhile made a cameo appearance on stage. We'd had the war, the embargo, the assassination of Faisal, visitors galore - what more could an FSO want?

Porter was an excellent Ambassador and a good boss. The Saudis liked him also very much. They thought him a very senior American, who in his own way was as knowledgeable a friend as Jim Akins. He was probably in his late 60s, and his age may have given him a useful gravitas in Saudi society. The outline of American relations on a higher plane with the Saudis had been established by Jim Akins. With Porter, we entered a phase of deepening and strengthening the content of these initiatives. He brought American-Saudi relations to a level consonant with the needs and opportunities of the time. Porter was a very credible executor of American policy.

*Q: Did Kissinger make any trips to Saudi Arabia when Porter was there?*

HORAN: I can't remember any.

*Q: He probably wanted to stay away.*

HORAN: Porter was crusty, even ornery. He had his own view on things, you wouldn't easily change his mind. He'd speak his mind. When in 1976, Fall River had its bicentennial parade, Porter was invited to be Grand Marshal. Teddy Kennedy was only the Deputy Grand Marshal. Porter said to me, "Teddy asked, 'Hey, Porter! How come you are the Grand Marshal of this parade?'" Porter replied: "Senator, it's because the people of Fall River like me better than you." Porter had a wonderful wicked cackle.

I remember some advice he gave me about his departure from Canada. There were many things the Canadians under Trudeau were doing we disliked. So Porter saved them up, and just before he left he unloaded them all, in what was to Canadians a shockingly frank speech. Porter's advice to me was: "Hume, when you have to say something that is very true and very disagreeable to your hosts...do it, then head for the border."

Here's one more "Porter-ism:" One day I'd done something kind of stupid. Porter was unconcerned. "Perhaps a good thing," he said. I asked, "Why?" He answered: "You know, Hume, a good Foreign Service officer is paid for his good judgment. How do you get good judgment? You get it from experience. How do you get experience? You get it from bad judgment."

*Q: Well then you left there in '77.*

HORAN: Correct.

*Q: That would be a good place to stop. Just put at the end where did you go in '77?*

HORAN: Hallelujah, I went to the senior seminar.

**CHARLES O. CECIL**  
**Political/Military Officer**  
**Jeddah (1973-1975)**

**Saudi Arabia Desk Officer**  
**Washington, DC (1975-1977)**

*Ambassador Cecil was born in Kentucky into a US military family and was raised at several military bases in the US and abroad. He was educated at the University of California, Berkeley and the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS). He entered the Foreign Service in 1966. A trained Arabic Language speaker, the*

*Ambassador served abroad in Kuwait, Dar es Salaam, Beirut, Jeddah, Bamako, Muscat, Tunis and Abidjan. He was US Ambassador to Niger from 1996 to 1999. He also had several assignments at the State Department in Washington, DC. Ambassador Cecil was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2006*

*Note: Subsequently, Ambassador Cecil served as Chargé d'affaires of the US Interest Section of the Belgian Embassy in Tripoli, Libya from 2006 to 2009.*

*Q: You were in Jeddah from when to when?*

CECIL: I arrived in mid-January of '73, and I left in late May of '75, so just a little bit under two and a half years.

*Q: Jeddah at that time was where our embassy was located.*

CECIL: Right. The Saudis did not want any embassies in Riyadh, so all of the embassies were in Jeddah. Jeddah, of course, was the traditional entry point into Saudi Arabia for foreigners. It was the pilgrimage entry point. Mecca is about an hour's drive away by car. Jeddah was also the commercial center of the country. It was the place that foreigners were allowed to reside in the old days, and we were still in the latter part of that period. Over in the eastern part of Saudi Arabia, Al-Hasa province, Aramco was very much in existence by then. They first found oil in 1938 and had begun to develop it after the world war was over.

There were Americans living in the eastern province where we had opened our consulate. There were no diplomatic or consular facilities in Riyadh. Our practice was to live and work in Jeddah where the foreign ministry was. That was the only ministerial headquarters located in Jeddah. All the other ministries were in Riyadh. My job required me to go to Riyadh about every third week. I would go usually for two nights—three working days and two nights—and do my work in Riyadh. We had very nice housing in Jeddah not too far from the embassy compound but outside the compound. We were one of three houses in a row that were rented by the embassy.

The nature of the post and of the country and of our bilateral relationship, I would say, changed totally during my time. When I arrived in January of '73, Saudi Arabia was a foreign aid recipient. We provided funds for military training, the IMET program in the States. We had a public safety mission there from AID. We were giving various kinds of modest but important assistance to the Saudi government. This, of course, changed totally after the quadrupling of oil prices in November of '73, and we'll get to that point after we talk about the October war of '73.

The embassy itself changed... I'm not sure of the best word—radically? Significantly?—in character and operations when we had a change of ambassadors.

*Q: Who was the ambassador when you arrived?*

CECIL: When I arrived the ambassador was Nicholas Thatcher. Nick Thatcher was... I suppose people might use terms like "old school." He was a career officer. We had only had career officers up to that point. He very much played his cards close to his chest. He did not share all of

his information with his staff, and that was also true of the military relationship. An American general headed what we called the U.S. Military Training Mission: the USMTM or [phonetically] use-mitem as we called it.

The general lived in Dhahran where we had something over a hundred U.S. military advisors and a smaller number in Riyadh, a USMTM office facility in Riyadh where many of them were assigned to the Saudi ministry of defense or to other military organizations. The general would come over to Jeddah periodically and meet with the ambassador. I would always be there as a note taker. I would prepare notes for the ambassador beforehand about issues that I thought were important. After we would cover the points on my memo, then usually the ambassador would ask me to leave, and he would have his own session with the general which would be another 20 or 30 minutes. I never knew what went on in those sessions. This was typical of the way he managed the affairs of the embassy. It was difficult for other staff members to know sometimes just what our policy was because we didn't know what the ambassador thought about an issue.

I was political-military officer reporting to a combined chief of the whole econ section and above him the DCM and then the ambassador. Sometimes the DCM would task me directly with work. There was one other political officer in the section. He was more or less my equal. I guess you might say he was the political officer and I was the pol-mil officer. It was at that point a fairly small operation.

I was interested in broadening my contacts. I looked for opportunities to use my Arabic. One example of an early encounter with the ambassador's philosophy of the role of his staff was I discovered that the mayor of Jeddah was also chairman of a city planning commission which had its own offices in town. For whatever reason I thought of, I thought this was an opportunity to learn more about Jeddah and the plans for the future. Because I was at least in a pol-econ section, I said, "I want to talk to the mayor in his role as chairman of the planning commission." I made an appointment, and I went to the office. When I came back a day or so later, the ambassador called me and said, "Chuck, I understand you've been to see the major." I said, "Yes, but I called on him in his capacity as chairman of the planning commission, and I went to the planning commission office, not to the mayor's office." The ambassador didn't see much value in that distinction, and he asked me in the future to please check with him before requesting such high level appointments. I was put in my place! I learned a lesson from that.

Because we had come on a direct transfer from Beirut, we had deferred home leave. We went back to the States in September on home leave of around five or six weeks. Shortly before I left Jeddah, it turned out there was an article in a Lebanese Arabic newspaper which said that Nicholas Thatcher was going to be replaced as ambassador to Saudi Arabia and would be leaving soon. None of us had heard anything about this.

The DCM called the whole staff into his office. The DCM was Hume Horan. Hume spent five years as DCM in Jeddah under four different ambassadors when he finally left. Hume called us all in, told us to deny the story if we were asked by anyone; there was absolutely no truth to the article. The article had been presented to the DCM by the Iranian DCM who had picked it up through his own sources. Okay, those were our orders, and that's what we said, but shortly after that I left for home leave.



It turned out that while we were on home leave indeed, Nick Thatcher was recalled. At the same time practically in October, the Arab-Israeli War of '73 broke out. A new ambassador, Jim Akins, was announced, quickly confirmed, and left for Jeddah while we were still on leave and arrived around the third week of October. He presented his credentials almost immediately to King Faisal, so had already been there for a week or two when we returned at the end of October.

I had a friend working in the White House at that time. After Jim Akins's appointment had been announced I visited my friend in his office one day while I was on home leave. My friend showed me an NSC memo a few months old reviewing our ambassadorial staffing at several Middle Eastern posts at that time. It mentioned Nick Thatcher and suggested that it was time he be moved on. That Lebanese newspaper sure seemed to have good sources!

Jim Akins's approach was totally different from Nick Thatcher's. It was like night and day. Jim was an Arabist, of course, a good Arabist, but a specialist in energy policy and petroleum affairs. He had been working at the White House on energy affairs and I think before that the director of the state department office that dealt with energy affairs.

Jim was a kind of person who was totally confident of himself and in a way that confidence transferred to his staff. He was tremendously supportive of everything we did. He gave us tremendous freedom. He put his own views out on the table very clearly in staff meetings. If the ambassador was gone to Riyadh or anywhere for that matter, even for a few days, the embassy just kept humming right along. There was never any doubt about what our policy was on an issue because Jim made it clear what our policy was. The staff could respond to inquiries and visitors. We moved along so efficiently. It was a very different atmosphere.

*Q: As political-military officer, what was our policy at that particular time?*

CECIL: We were in the early stages of tremendous buildup in our cooperative relationship with Saudi Arabia. It intensified after the war. The Arab response to the war included the embargo on oil exports to the U.S. The oil embargo I suppose was first announced before the end of that short war. In November of '73 oil prices were quadrupled, and the Saudis began to have so much money that they never had before, and we began to search for ways to recycle those "petrodollars" as we called them. The U.S.-Saudi military relationship had several components. If I look at my very first Officer Efficiency Report where my job description was summarized, the programs that I was charged with overseeing were the following:

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was building several bases for the Saudis and also involved in a vehicle acquisition program. There was a new National Guard program that was developing. The National Guard in Saudi Arabia is a separate institution from the ministry of defense and was specially charged with ensuring the security of the House of Saud. (It was commanded by Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz, who became king in 2005 following the death of Fahd, his half-brother.) There was a public safety program run by AID in connection with the ministry of interior, and I was also supposed to watch that. I was supposed to be the first point of contact for the U.S. military training mission with the embassy. We had what was called the Saudi Naval Expansion Program—SNEP—that was just beginning. We had a coast guard construction and

training program, and the Saudis were also buying Hawk missiles from us as part of an air defense system managed by Raytheon. These are examples of the kinds of issues that I was supposed to be following. I was supposed to watch for issues that needed to be called to the ambassador's attention. I was the staff person who would do any follow-up required by the embassy as a result of discussions with the ambassador. My own conception of the job included the idea that I should get to know as many members of the Saudi military as I could, especially officers more-or-less my age, to try to assess their ideas on political and social issues. But of course in a larger sense I wanted to meet any Saudis I could, not just military Saudis, for the same reasons—to assess political and social trends.

Then there were things like the annual National War College trip that I and the defense attaché had worked on together, and I was supposed to be in touch with the various civilian contractors like Raytheon. We had many, many contractors in the country. Lockheed was another. Vinnell was one that got a contract for helping modernize the national guard. I don't think I remember all the companies now, but there were lots of them. The relationship was evidence of our concern for the security of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and for its ability to defend itself. It showed the importance of the oil reserves for our own national interests.

*Q: Were there any particular areas of difficulty for you in these relationships that you were working on?*

CECIL: What kind of relationships do you mean?

*Q: I'm talking about the military contractors, of the Saudi ministries, particularly the ministry of defense. How did this all work out?*

CECIL: I think on the one hand the general commending the U.S. military training mission probably by nature was inclined to look somewhat askance at the idea of a civilian State Department officer watching what he and his military training mission were doing. I think he also knew he had no choice but to accept the fact that the embassy had a legitimate interest in my being a point of contact and following their operations.

I had a lot to learn. I had served two years in the air force as an officer, and I grew up in an Air Force family, so I had a little bit of military culture behind me. Maybe that helped in my relations with the American members.

*Q: It was an air force run command, wasn't it?*

CECIL: No, not during my time but maybe later. These were generals. I forget their names now, but I know we had a change of command early on during my first year, I think. I don't remember if that was a one year or two year assignment. I only remember two generals at the moment, so perhaps the second one stayed on and was still there when I left. We may have been just about to get a third one who might possibly have been air force. Now that you say it, there probably was an Air Force general later because a lot of our programs were Air Force programs, so it made good sense.

My relationships were always very cooperative. The military helped me orient myself early on. For instance, I went down to southwestern Saudi Arabia to the town of Abha where the corps of engineers had helped to build a military base called Khamis Mushayt. I also was flown up to Tabouk in the northeast up near the Jordanian border to look at those military facilities. My U.S. military counterparts were quick to try to help me because they saw the value of having someone in the embassy well-informed about their activities and issues.

I tried to orient myself to the country as quickly as possible early in my tour. I knew how important that was to have the context of the country. I also went to Riyadh but to Dhahran early in my tour. I don't know of any particular tension other than the fact that the general probably would have preferred not to have anybody watching, but I didn't take it personally.

I used my trips to Riyadh to try to expand my Saudi contacts beyond strictly the military ones. It was hard to develop personal relationships with Saudis, especially Saudi military although I did become on good terms with—I think he was a colonel, maybe a major—Major Ahmed Malik, who was a real expert in economics and finance. Later after he left his military career he had a senior position in the Saudi SAME, the Saudi Arabia Monetary Authority, sort of like a central bank. People like him who were not strictly military in their focus but focusing in this case on economic issues. Those are the kinds of people that I sought out.

Nevertheless, I would say Saudis were not particularly open to social relationships. I think in the course of my two and a half years—I was thinking about this driving over here this morning—certainly I was invited to some large functions at Arab homes but probably under the umbrella of the DCM or the ambassador. I was included maybe because of some particular reason for the function. Maybe it was for a visiting business man or whoever might have been involved in military issues.

On my own as Chuck Cecil, I think I maybe had lunch in a Saudi home once or twice in two and a half years. It was different from Kuwait. Kuwaitis were much more open to social contact.

*Q: This is pretty much the pattern I have talked about to other people who served in Saudi Arabia. Very difficult. For one thing, they are extremely family oriented, the Saudis are. They all eat at home at Mother's house or something like that.*

CECIL: Right. I could say a few more words about our life in Jeddah in those days and then maybe we could talk more about the policy activities. I mentioned that we had a four bedroom one story house surrounded, of course, by a wall as all houses are. We had an Ethiopian live-in maid in a little house adjacent to the main house. We had a Saudi gardener, and we had a cook who came for dinner only. We had the two children by this time.

Certainly from my wife's point of view life in Jeddah for women lacked the spontaneity that American women like. The main reason for that was the prohibition against driving. The embassy provided transportation, but you had to fill out a written request a day in advance. There was nothing like, "Oh! I need a loaf of bread. I need to go to the store," or, "I need to go and buy eggs." If you didn't think of it the day before, you most likely were not going to be able to get the transportation. Women especially lose that spontaneity, but the embassy shuttle bus did try

and fill in as best it could.

The neighborhood we lived in was infested with wild cats. With two little children playing out in the yard, we were a little concerned as were other families because these cats were filthy and they were aggressive. The embassy provided cat traps to every house in the neighborhood. There were cat traps that would hold two cats at a time. If you caught one you could maybe lure in another into the box and close the partition then catch your second cat. The embassy GSO would come and take the cat trap down to the fish market and let the cats loose in the fish market. That was one little aspect of life there.

One of the good points was that in Jeddah we had APO mail service, so we could get letters from the States in seven days. That was a far cry from Kuwait and Zanzibar where we relied on the old sea pouches that would arrive every two or three months with piles of magazines and newspapers. Air Mail was a little more frequent than every two or three months. That would be a couple of weeks to get a letter. But the APO was a great help by virtue of the military presence.

We had what were called welfare meetings for church services. There were no resident priests or ministers in our community in Jeddah at that time, but a priest or minister would come down from Beirut about once a month, is my recollection. There would be a meeting in the embassy auditorium. These were announced in the embassy bulletin as welfare meetings. So you had Welfare Meetings P and Welfare Meetings C depending on whether you were Protestant or Catholic. That's how we met our religious needs.

After five months—this just supports what I said earlier—I wrote a friend, and I said at that point I had not yet met any Saudi that I could have a real give-and-take of ideas the way I did in Kuwait. I found the Kuwaitis always open and talkative and eager to exchange views. The Saudis were not.

Another aspect of life in Saudi Arabia was the total security in the countryside which allowed us to go on camping trips even with our young children. The U.S. Geological Survey was a very important part of our presence in Saudi Arabia. They were exploring and mapping the mineral resources of the kingdom. That was a fine group of American geologists mostly who loved to be in the outdoors. We made friends there. We went on camping trips to places like Meda'in Salah, a Nabatean ruin north of Jeddah a few hours. We went to Taif more than once. We went on family camping out into the countryside to see both the scenery and certain historic ruins that we didn't always know what we were seeing. It was a good family life environment, none of the concerns we have today in Saudi Arabia.

*Q: Did you get any feel for the pervasiveness of religion, Wahabyism and all of that?*

CECIL: Absolutely. Certainly it was pervasive, and the Mutaween as they were called—the religious police—were very much a factor of life. Foreign women had to be very careful about how they dressed. There were many stories of Mutaween rapping foreign women's legs or ankles with their sticks if they thought their dresses were too short. My wife always wore what you could call a modified abaya. Abaya is the traditional women's dress in Saudi Arabia, the black robe. My wife had dresses made out of Western material, patterns, colors—not black—but

otherwise an abaya. She did not wear a veil or a scarf. That wasn't required in those days. I understand that today in Saudi Arabia you almost always have to have a scarf if you're a woman, but it wasn't that strict then. It's certainly gotten more conservative since we were there. I think after what's called the siege of Mecca when the fundamentalists took over the mosque in 1979, the government and the royal family turned toward more conservative practices. Of course, the growth of terrorism has made it even more important to observe certain fundamentalist and conservative practices.

We need to talk a bit about the changes in our relationship with Saudi Arabia after the war. I learned a tremendous amount, another benefit of going to Jeddah instead of Muscat. Henry Kissinger started his shuttle diplomacy after the fighting had ended in October. He came during my remaining time in Saudi Arabia—that is, between late '73 and May of '75—he came 13 times to Saudi Arabia and after I left he came a couple of more times.

We were on the front burner as far as Washington's concerns were. I got tremendous experience as a control officer. That was extremely useful later in my career to be able to learn what's expected on these high level visits. Once we got into the attempts to recycle Saudi petro dollars and as the importance of Saudi Arabia became clear to everyone, we were inundated with high level visits from Washington. During my time we were visited by the president, who was Nixon, the vice-president who was Rockefeller when he came for the funeral of King Faisal, and by so many cabinet members I have forgotten. I was control officer for a visit by the secretary of the treasury, Simon, in Taif where he had to go to meet the Saudis at that time.

I know we had the deputy secretary of defense, a man named Clements. I'm not sure if we had the secretary of defense. We had so many congressmen and senators. At one point in Riyadh I was control officer for a visit by 19 members of the house armed services committee who came to learn more about our military relationship. It was tremendously educational; it was exhausting. We worked very long hours. We had few days to ourselves. Even on weekends there was always somebody coming from Washington. This was exacerbated by the fact that we worked the Muslim work-week, Saturday through Wednesday, so our Thursday-Friday weekend was regarded by people coming from Washington as just regular workdays.

I began to resent that, I must say, toward the end of my tour. I felt the Department was not providing us the staffing and the resources that we really required to carry out the load. I think I began to get a bit cynical about how the Department would treat its people overseas. Jim Akins was always asking Washington for more resources.

Another example of Jim's openness and collegiality was his use of representation funds. He said he didn't believe in fencing off a certain proportion of the representation funds for his own use or for the DCM's use. He said, "Here's the money. This is what we have. The DCM will approve your representation vouchers." I think he set a certain limit above which we needed prior okay. There were some monitoring controls in place, but he said, "We will use the money as we need it to do our job. When we get low, I'll ask Washington for more. If they can't find it, I'll tell them, 'All right, we have ceased representational activities. Until you can find more money, I'm not going to ask my officers to subsidize the activities of the U.S. government.'" And that's the way he worked. He almost always seemed to get what he needed, but sometimes it took more than

one request.

*Q: Did you get any feel for the relationship between Kissinger and Akins?*

CECIL: Absolutely. There was tension between them from the very beginning. If I recall—I hope I’m not wrong on this—the timing of actions, I think Jim was actually nominated to become ambassador when William Rogers was still secretary of state and Kissinger was still NSC advisor. I’m not sure what Kissinger thought of the nomination originally, but in any case Jim often thought that instructions coming from Washington were not the best way to achieve our objectives, I guess I could say. Kissinger wanted to apply what I would call a get-tough policy on the Saudis. He didn’t want to coddle them. Jim felt that there were other more effective ways to get what we needed.

The Saudis had a very welcoming and warm attitude toward Jim Akins. They trusted him, they confided in him. They told him things I’m sure they would not have told other ambassadors. He had an especially close relationship with Sheikh Ahmed Zaki Yamani, the minister of petroleum. All the royal princes liked Jim Akins. They confided in him in ways that I thought were probably unprecedented. Jim felt that he knew the Saudis well, and he knew how to get what we needed. He often would question his instructions. This did not go over very well in Washington. If I recall correctly, Jim was fired by Kissinger in the fall of ’75. We can talk about that when get to talking about my time as Saudi desk officer which is the assignment I came to after Jeddah.

After he was removed. Jim was called to testify before a congressional committee. I suppose it was the Senate Foreign Relations committee, though I forget which one. I guess the senators had been briefed and were probably told that he was fired because he questioned his instructions too often. One of the senators asked Jim, “Mr. Ambassador, is it true that you sometimes questioned or failed to carry out your instructions?” Jim said, “No. I never refused to carry out my instructions.” There was a brief pause and he added, “Only if the instructions were stupid.” I think you have there the essence of the relationship with Kissinger. They did not get along well.

The whole U.S.-Saudi relationship was transformed in the course of the year following the war. The whole American presence expanded tremendously, both the private sector relationship and military relationship. So many contractors came in and got large contracts from the Saudis to do various things.

I think the most important development during that time was the creation of what we called the Joint Economic Commission. This was an idea that sprang, if my memory is correct and I think it is, from talks between Jim Akins and Bill Simon, the secretary of the treasury. I remember Jim asking us—the staff of the embassy—to each officer he asked, no matter what your job was, he asked each officer to come up with two or three best ideas on how to recycle Saudi petro dollars. How could we gain the most of these dollars for American companies or for the American government? Each officer put his ideas down on paper. The ambassador asked Dennis Murphy, our econ officer at the time, to distill all of this into a cohesive series of ideas. This was submitted to Washington as Airgram A-11. We still sent airgrams in those days.

I believe it was June or July of ’74 Prince Fahd was invited to Washington. Fahd was minister of

interior, and he was invited to Washington. Jim Akins came back for that visit. When he returned from Washington, he said that he and Bill Simon in a late night session had developed a framework for this thing we were going to call the U.S.-Saudi Joint Economic Commission which would operate under the supervision of the Treasury Department. It would be in effect a kind of small USAID whose job it would be to contract for the Saudis to get them whatever they needed in the way of managerial or development services. This operation worked for 25 years until the year 2000. It was finally terminated more or less by mutual agreement.

That was a tremendous initiative and certainly we did contribute in many ways to strengthening and developing the government capability of Saudi Arabia and also strengthening the infrastructure. We did such things there as help them develop a consumer price index to gauge inflation. They had no such capability before that. We got all kinds of infrastructural support services for them. It was an extremely important aspect of our relationship.

*Q: I've got two questions: One is, were we all concerned about the influxes of so many Americans coming into this society which is an exclusive one? Too many contractors and all this. Was this a problem during the time you were there?*

CECIL: I don't think we tried to resist it. The idea of recycling Saudi petro dollars naturally led to a great influx of American personnel coming to Saudi Arabia, One indication of the difficulties was that Jim Akins... And here, I hate to speak for Jim; I hope maybe he's done these interviews, too. It was made very clear to us as so many of his views were. He strongly opposed establishing an American high school in Saudi Arabia throughout his time there. He said, "There will *never* be an American high school in Saudi Arabia during my tenure. This country is not ready for American teenagers. They will be a constant source of trouble. They'll get into trouble. They just don't fit into this conservative society." That was not well received by the business community. The business community wanted a high school, so Jim took a lot of heat over that. That's one sign.

Another was, for instance, the lady in charge of Arabic language instruction in Washington those years was a lady named Margaret Omar. She was American by birth, but she had an Egyptian husband and therefore the name Omar. She came out probably in early '74 to give a seminar that she called Arabic Language and Culture. It was a wonderful survey of the pitfalls of cultural misunderstanding between American society and Arab society. The ambassador was so impressed with her seminar that he said he needed her to go to Riyadh and to give this not only to the military training mission but also to the office managing the Saudi national guard expansion program and to open it up to any civilians who would attend as well from the defense related companies.

There were certainly many cultural pitfalls to be avoided. I won't try to repeat her seminar, but there were concerns. I don't know what else to say about them. I think some Americans came totally unprepared for the conservative, restrictive society. Others were well prepared. I think you had a whole gamut of reactions to this. Some people thrived and stayed a long time. Others couldn't take it and went home early.

*Q: A further question, then I'm through. I'll leave it to you. Were you seeing with this*

*development—all of a sudden you were there at the time when the Saudis moved from being a debtor nation to a creditor nation. Were you seeing a desirable influx of Saudi citizens, young people who had been trained in the United States or Britain or somewhere coming to the floor and able to take on technical jobs?*

CECIL: Yes. I don't remember exactly when this happened, but after the war Saudis reorganized the cabinet. Saudis love to tell us that there were more holders of American PhD's in the Saudi Arabian cabinet than there were in the American cabinet.

*Q: I'm sure there were!*

CECIL: We had some very fine young Saudis. Ghazi al-Ghusaibi was one I recall. We had another who I believe was a SAIS graduate. We had a number of young Saudis in there, probably in their early 30's at that point who became ministers. Many of them held those positions for years. There's not a quick turnover. Saud al-Faisal was the foreign minister, the son of King Faisal. He was the foreign minister during Jim Akins's time, and he's still the foreign minister, more than 30 years later. They have tenure, you could say.

There were obviously other Saudis, U.S. educated, who filled positions at lower levels. They were not all ministers. I did not find them a force for political change. The general attitude that I found among the young Saudis that I could meet was they wanted to get rich. They were quite happy for the House of Saud to run the country, ensure stability. "I don't care about labor unions. I don't care about political parties. Just let me go into business and make my million." I found U.S.-educated Saudis focusing on their own personal interests and no way agitating for political reform back in that period.

Well, what else to say about the relationship? One or two examples of my work as a pol-mil officer. This is related to your question about how did the cultures mix. I remember being impressed when I noted that lunch time for the U.S. military training mission in Riyadh was 12 noon. That's when the very small mess hall that they had there at their Riyadh offices served lunch. Of course, Saudi government working hours were theoretically eight to two I think it was. Might have been three, but I think more like two.

Not all Saudis showed up at 8:00 in the morning. It was closer to nine when they really got to working. Those military training officers who went to their minister of defense offices, they would be at work probably at 8:00, probably on time. About a quarter to twelve they would break away and go back to the compound for lunch. The Saudis, as I say, showed up and probably got into gear around nine or so. There was a period of slightly less than three hours a day when they might actually be in contact. By the time lunch was over it would be 1:00, and if the Americans went back to the ministry of defense, the Saudis were about ready to leave at that point. They didn't have many meetings after American lunch time. The Americans would stay on and do their paperwork but not much face-to-face contact with Saudis.

I mentioned this to Jim Akins. I said, "There's a disconnect here in cultures. For Saudis lunch is at 2:30 or 3:00, yet the Americans are leaving at a quarter to twelve to have lunch." I thought that he should suggest to the general that he push the lunch hour back to one or one-thirty at least to



give a little more face time there with the Saudis. It was a case where Jim thought, “No, that’s a military-culture issue, and I don’t really want to tell the general how to run his mess hall or his lunch hour,” so we didn’t make an issue of it. That’s an example.

One idea that I proposed to get more contact between our two military services was that our Mid-East Force invite Saudi naval officers to go on cruises with MIDEASTFOR up and down the Gulf. MIDEASTFOR was based in Bahrain, a very small fleet of three ships, there to demonstrate a U.S. presence in the Arabian Gulf area. I’m not sure if that ever happened. I remember discussing it with our military attaché at the time. He thought it was a good idea. He also was talking about some of the cultural pitfalls there. I guess I won’t go into some of that, but he was talking about the preparations that would need to be made such as having little buckets of water in each of the toilet stalls for the Saudis who didn’t use paper.

I talked earlier about some of my feelings of being over-worked and under-supported. I did begin to feel that the Department was taking advantage of us. I think later on, especially when I came back to Washington, I found the same thing on the Saudi desk. I think I began to adopt a little bit of a work-to-rules attitude sometimes. Nevertheless, on the whole I think it was an extremely educational assignment for me.

I had learned things about Saudi Arabia that I think are still valid. The question of succession. For instance, the royal succession up to now, more than thirty years later, is still following the same rules of succession. The sons of Abdul Aziz ibn Saud are the ones who are the kings, and they follow each other by strict order by age. Only one or two have stepped aside. They either didn’t want to be king or were determined by the family maybe not to be qualified to be king. We’re still going down that succession by age. After Abdullah dies, Prince Sultan will become king. There are a few more after him. It’ll be really interesting. This is the question that has always fascinated me: How will the Saudis deal with the succession when there are no longer sons of Abdul Aziz ibn Saud capable of assuming the throne. That’s a really fascinating question.

I wonder what I can say about some of the visits? Nixon did come in June of 1974. I remember that an advance party of 65 people arrived before the president. It was quite a tidal wave that came upon the embassy handling this. When the president himself came there were four airplane loads of people. One airplane was full of journalists, and the Saudis dedicated one entire hotel to housing the journalists.

The Saudis asked Jim Akins at one point, “What would be an appropriate gift for the president?” Jim was—is—a Quaker and against ostentation. He had some very strongly held views about gifts given to American officials. I can say a word about that later. He said to the Saudis, “It should be something symbolic of Saudi Arabia. What about frankincense and myrrh? If you put that all in a very nice engraved wooden box, that would be a very fine symbolic gift.” The Saudi chief of protocol made notes. When the president came, the Saudis presented him the frankincense and myrrh, but it was in a solid gold box and rather large. There were some people who thought giving Nixon gold, frankincense, and myrrh was maybe not the appropriate thing. That was the gift given to the president.

Of course, he resigned six weeks later in August of '74. I recall that Hume Horan told us, the following year I think it was when, I forget which visit it was to Washington by which Saudi. I don't recall. It was a crown prince sort of thing. Hume said the most embarrassing assignment he ever had to undertake in Saudi Arabia was to go to the chief of Royal protocol and tell them that Blair House could house 12 people in the official party, and beyond that the Saudis would have to turn to the many hotels in Washington of which there was a wide selection. After the Saudis had provided four hotels for the Nixon party, Hume found this a very embarrassing message to convey.

One of my side jobs—additional duties—during my time there was to be the gift returner. Jim felt very strongly about these lavish gifts that the Saudis were giving to VIP visitors. They would give silver incense burners, gold khanjars, the curved Saudi daggers. Lavish gifts. Jim explained to the Saudis that our law required that these gifts be turned over to, I think, the GAO, isn't it?

*Q: I don't know.*

CECIL: ....for disposal at auction. A public auction! He said, "The recipient can't treat these gifts in the spirit you are conferring them. Why don't you just find a more modest way to express your courtesy and your esteem?" At one point he said to the chief of protocol, "Why don't you, for instance, offer to make a charitable donation to the visitor's favorite charity? Instead of giving a \$5,000 gold dagger, why doesn't the king give \$5,000 to the American Cancer Society or the American Heart Association?" if that's what the visitor would designate. The chief of protocol was aghast. He said, "King Faisal could never give \$5,000 to the American Heart Association! It would be unworthy! King Faisal would have to give \$100,000 to the American Heart Association! It's much cheaper to give a \$5,000 dagger!"

When Senator Percy of Illinois came, I was control officer for that visit. Ahmad Zaki Yamani gave Senator Percy a beautiful set of prayer beads made of Red Sea coral. At the dinner that evening at our political counselor's house—he was having the dinner. I didn't know why Jim didn't do it. Jim and Percy were there, and Percy opened this little box with these beautiful prayer beads. He said, "Jim, what do you think these are worth?" He was in accord with Jim's policy about not keeping gifts that exceeded our limits.

None of us knew what they were worth, but the box was a well know Jeddah jeweler, and so I was told go down the next morning to the jeweler and find out that these cost, and then we'll see if the senator can keep them. I went down, and I found that these prayer beads cost \$3,000. When I went back and delivered the message, Percy said, "By all means, you will have to return them." Jim said, "I'll explain it to my good friend Ahmad" And that's what happened. I returned many gifts to royal protocol. When Jim confronted the visitors with the harsh facts that they couldn't keep these things, most of them weren't going to take issue with him. I was sent back to protocol with many gifts.

I remember the first time I did this I went in to a mid-level official, I think it was a gold dagger, and I said, "This was given to somebody." I explained our law. The Saudi looked at me and said, "It's blemished, it's tarnished, it's scratched." I said, "No, no. It's beautiful. It's absolutely beautiful, but we're not allowed to take it." He said, "There must be something wrong with it.

Show me.” I showed him, and he reached for the phone. He reached the chief of protocol and said, “The American here is returning this gift! It came as a gift to someone the day before.” The chief of protocol knew very well our ambassador’s views, and he must have explained it to the mid-level official. When the conversation was over, he said, “OK, I understand,” and he took it. I had several of these encounters returning gifts.

I was in Saudi Arabia when King Faisal was assassinated on March 25, 1975. I had just begun that morning a 12-day circular camping trip with my counterpart in the British embassy, my wife and our kids and my colleague’s wife and their young child. We drove all day, headed south toward Khamis Mushayt. We had no indication along the way that anything had gone wrong. The towns we passed through seemed normal. When we reached our campsite for that night, which was a U.S. Geological Survey tent encampment, the caretaker told us that the embassy had called on the radio for me and that I was supposed to call the DCM immediately. I reached Hume Horan, he told me the news, and told me to come back to Jeddah immediately. Since it was nightfall and Jeddah was a full day’s drive away, Hume agreed that I should start early the next morning. My British friend had no such orders from his embassy but he obviously wasn’t going to go on this 12 day trip alone with his wife and child. So we turned around the next morning. I got back to Jeddah about six in the evening. Jim Akins had already gone to Riyadh for the funeral with most of the embassy staff that he needed. Hume Horan had stayed behind in Jeddah and was out at the airport welcoming the vice president and his plane. The message that the marine gave me was, “Go home, change clothes, and get back here in half an hour. You can sit in on briefing the vice president.”

That’s what I did. It was just Hume and Vice President Rockefeller and myself. Hume did a masterful job of briefing the vice president about Saudi politics, the family and our relationship. I was very impressed with Nelson Rockefeller. He had background already. He had been well-briefed in Washington, but his questions were very perceptive, very interesting questions. I came away from that meeting feeling Nelson Rockefeller does his homework. He, then, went on right after that meeting to Riyadh to be present at the funeral. King Faisal was buried in an unmarked grave. The Wahhabis do not mark their graves. An important member in the foreign ministry seemed to take the death philosophically. He said in Arabic, “He played his role, and now it’s finished.” In other words, he helped start us toward modernization, and its God’s will. It’s finished.

One of the points of contention between Akins and Kissinger was the time when Joseph Kraft, the columnist, a Jewish-American columnist, wanted to come to Saudi Arabia. The Saudis did not like to give visas to Jewish applicants in those days. They needed to be pressured into that. Jim was somewhat reluctant to put a lot of pressure on them, but Joe Sisco who I think probably was Under Secretary for Political Affairs at that point, he basically told Jim Akins, “You need to get Joe Kraft into the country.” Jim convinced the Saudis to give the visa.

After some meetings in Jeddah, Kraft then went Riyadh, and I went not with him but simultaneously. My job was to arrange for Kraft to meet with three Saudi military officers in Riyadh in a little residential facility that by that time we had started renting. After quadrupling oil prices we were going to Riyadh so often that the embassy decided to rent a residential apartment there which we shared, and the Saudis didn’t object. I arranged for Joe Kraft to talk

with these three Saudi military officers because he wanted to get a feel for what their attitudes were toward the royal family and modernization and progress in the kingdom. The Saudis were very guarded. They were polite, they came, and they talked. They were guarded in what they said because they didn't want to get into trouble.

Joe Kraft played a role later which we'll talk about in our next interview when we talk about my time on the Saudi desk in Washington and the end of Jim Akins's tenure in Saudi Arabia. I'll just make this point now at this point. Maybe we've pretty much covered the highlights of my time there.

*Q: Okay. We'll pick this up the next time. You went back to Washington and were the Saudi desk officer. You were there from when to when?*

CECIL: I was Saudi desk officer from the summer of '75 to the summer of '77. This was Jim Akins and Hume Horan who made that happen. They wanted me to do that because obviously I was steeped in Saudi affairs by that point.

*Q: Okay, we'll pick it up then.*

*Q: Today is the 6<sup>th</sup> of February 2008. After a long hiatus... How long has it been—a couple of years?*

CECIL: You mean since we talked?

*Q: Yes.*

CECIL: I don't know, two or three months maybe. I can't remember the date, but we got started in the early winter or late fall after I came back from Libya last summer. Today we'll cover my five years in Washington from 1975 to 1980. I'd like to put that in context before we get into some of the details.

Washington: NEA/ARP and PM/SAS

I came back to Washington in the summer of 1975 basically after nine years overseas. My only time in Washington in that nine year period had been 11 months at FSI to study Swahili and French, but I didn't have a so-called "real" job in the Department, so this was my first time to work in the Department after having served in Kuwait, Zanzibar, Beirut and Jeddah. These five years were extremely important to me in the development of my career in getting a better overall grasp of Foreign Service work.

First, they showed me the importance of the geographic bureaus and how they are, in my views, the heart of the Department. They also allowed me to see the role of a country desk officer. They exposed me to bureau coordination and policy management. One reason for that was the assistant secretary of NEA at the time, Roy Atherton, allowed any member of the bureau to attend his weekly staff meetings with his country directors. I think they were weekly. I may be wrong, but anyway, the door was open. The seats around the side of the room were available for any of us.

We could come and observe how Roy coordinated with his country directors and the other DAS's (Deputy Assistant Secretaries) in the bureau. That gave me a feeling for some of the personalities involved, people like Spike Dubbs, who was later killed in Afghanistan, Marshall Wiley who later became ambassador to Oman, Morris Draper and other people that were well known in the bureau at the time. They were one way or another role models. It was nice to get a feel for the personal attitudes toward the issues we were dealing with.

The second thing that the five years did is it exposed me after my two years as desk officer to the role of the functional bureaus. I went from Saudi desk officer to the political-military bureau where I spent the next two years in charge of arms sales and security assistance for Africa. This showed me how the functional bureaus worked to ensure the consistency in our policy worldwide or at least to make geographic bureaus build a strong and compelling case were we to depart from what I might call "global norms." The geographic bureaus sometimes want to do things to facilitate our relationship with countries, and the functional bureaus are there to be the guardians of the ramifications of these exceptions to policy, I'll call them. That was very educational for me. My fifth year in Washington was a year on the Hill as a Congressional Fellow where I worked for Congressman Jim Leach and Senator Bill Proxmire. We can go into more details about that. That gave me a wonderful year to see the congressional interaction with the Department. I learned a lot about that.

*Q: Now let's get down to details. In 1975 from the perspective of being the desk... In the first place, could you describe how many desk officers for Saudi Arabia were there? A number of you? What was the Saudi Arabian contingent?*

CECIL: At that time our relationship with Saudi Arabia was still in a process of transformation. We had had the Arab-Israeli war of 1973, the quadrupling of oil prices in November of that year, and then the efforts to "recycle" is the word we used: to recycle all the Saudi money that was coming into the Saudi treasury by gaining as many contracts for American countries as we could. We had a major arms sales program, also. The whole American government discovered Saudi Arabia overnight. We had many, many visitors during my time in Jeddah as I described in our previous session.

Nevertheless, the Department staffing of a function was slow to keep pace, so I was the only desk officer for Saudi Arabia at the time. We did, of course, have a country director for the Arabian peninsula and a deputy country director for the Arabian peninsula.

*Q: Who were they?*

CECIL: When I arrived the country director was Fran Dickman who later went on to be ambassador to Kuwait and to the UAE, He was succeeded after, I guess, a year by Ambassador Joe Twinam, who came back from his tour in Bahrain. The deputy director in the early part of that time under Fran was John Countryman who later became ambassador to Oman and asked me to come and be his DCM. I attributed that to our working together in NEA/ARP. John was succeeded by a fellow... whose name I believe was Richard Aherne, but I could be wrong on that. He was not an Arabist, and I know those of us who were tended to downplay his role in the office because we didn't think he knew the region very well.

In any case, in addition to that the country director had a desk officer for the two Yemens and Oman. I can't think who did Qatar and Bahrain and the UAE, but it was a relatively small office. So there were three desk officers plus the country director and the deputy country director.

I want to say before you formulate your question a little point I found in my notes just to illustrate how busy we were. One day in September of 1975 I kept a little log to satisfy my own curiosity of phone calls. I found that I had 28 incoming phone calls that day from the outside, not counting calls from inside the Department itself. It maybe gives a little bit of a feel for the degree of public interest in U.S.-Saudi relations at that time.

*Q: What happens when you get a phone call from outside? What generally were they asking about? How could you reply?*

CECIL: A lot of the calls were from businessmen who maybe more properly should have started at the Department of Commerce, but on the other hand I think they realized that the State Department had more knowledge about conditions on the ground in Saudi Arabia than Commerce did. Commerce was working hard to educate itself and respond to the public, and I often went to the Department of Commerce and participated in briefings or panel discussions that Commerce would organize for American businessmen. One favorite topic that I had a little set speech to give about was whether it was necessary to pay under-the-table bribes to win contracts in Saudi Arabia because there were a lot of stories that it was necessary.

My answer to that was the answer Jim Akins had always given: "If we have any reason to believe that an American company is paying under the table money to obtain contracts, then this embassy will do nothing to assist you in your effort. If you play by the rules as they should be and if your operations are all honest and above board, this embassy will do everything in its power to help you win contracts in this country." That was my message to the business community, perhaps a little bit naively but nevertheless by and large, I think it was true. Later, the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act helped ensure that it was true. I told them that and I said, "You can get large, important contracts in Saudi Arabia without paying bribes to influential people."

*Q: There was a system, too, in Saudi Arabia, wasn't there? That they really had to have an in-country sponsor which in a sense... It was perfectly legitimate to somebody who knows the territory, but that takes care of the problem.*

CECIL: That gets into the gray area because some of those sponsors were quite capable of providing assistance as needed. They could recruit labor; they were very good at working a bureaucracy; they could move paperwork. Others were less good and delivered less so yes, you're right, that gets you into the gray area.

To go back to your answer, how did my day go? A lot of it was that. We also had a lot of calls about visa issues even though there's the consular affairs bureau. Nevertheless, I think people by default turned to the desk. It was a wide variety of issues. The workload was heavy. I went in early and stayed late. It was common in those days. I chafed a little under that workload because I felt that the Department should have done better by adding one or two people to the country

directorate. I thought that those of us who were there were unfairly carrying the burden that the Department should have recognized and already solved.

Some of the issues that we dealt with? There was a big issue at that time in late 1975 that maybe went on into '76: visas for Saudi students coming into the United States. From the beginning of the Saudi relationship with the U.S., when they first started coming here for college, they were given diplomatic visas. A2 visas. By the mid '70s the numbers there were considerable—several thousand—and this issue attracted attention. The decision was made in the Department that they would have to end the practice of giving diplomatic visas to students. That was also done for Kuwaitis as well as Saudis. That took some of my time the first year I was there.

There were infinite requests for briefing papers for senior officials. As I mentioned so many people in the American government were discovering Saudi Arabia. There were lots of high level visits, and we were constantly either clearing or turning out briefing papers for high level people both in State and elsewhere in the government.

I remember one request for a briefing paper that was an example of the kind of request that really irritated me as a young officer maybe not fully accustomed yet to Washington ways. Mike Mansfield paid a visit to Saudi Arabia. He was Senate Majority Leader at the time, I think was his title. When he came back he was going to have a meeting with President Ford. We received a request from the 7<sup>th</sup> floor saying, "Please draw up talking points for President Ford to use when he meets with Senator Mansfield to discuss the senator's visit to Saudi Arabia."

I went to Fran Dickman and I said, "This is a lot of nonsense. These two men have worked with each other on the Hill for 20 years, maybe more. They're friends and colleagues. The president doesn't need talking points to ask Senator Mansfield about this trip to Saudi Arabia. He's going to put his feet on the desk and lean back in this chair and say, "Well, Mike. What's it like dealing with those Ay-rabs?" Fran just shook his head. He said, "The requests won't go away. Anything the 7<sup>th</sup> floor sends down you've got to heed and send back up." He dashed out something quickly and sent it on up. He said, "It's quicker to do it than to try to kill the request." I had to get used to that sort of thing.

There was another one when our new consul general to Dhahran came to see me and tell me that his good friend Carol Lays who was then the Director General of the Foreign Service (the chief personnel—now we say human resources—officer) was going to swear him in as consul general. This is a little unusual, but I guess it was a tribute to his relationship with Carol Lays. I said, "That's just wonderful." A day or two later I got a request from the Director General's office for talking points for the swearing-in ceremony. The gentleman who was going out was a man named John Bushnell. He came by and I said, "Really, John, I don't have time to do this sort of thing. You said she's doing this because she knows you and she's your good friend. Surely she doesn't need talking points to swear in her good friend." He took the request, and he drafted the talking points for his own swearing-in which is maybe the way it should have been. Those kinds of requests always irritated me.

*Q: We're coming to the oil crisis in the aftermath of the October war of '73. How did this impact on the desk?*

CECIL: Impact. One thing that came out of the oil crisis and the effort to recycle Saudi petrodollars was the creation of something we called the Joint Economic Commission which was actually headquartered at the Treasury Department. I probably discussed this in our last interview. It was a result of Jim Akins and Secretary Simon putting their heads together and coming up with a mechanism to help American companies get contracts and also to help Saudi Arabia to develop itself and bring it into the modern world.

I spent a fair amount of time coordinating with the Joint Economic Commission. They did feel relatively independent. They thought they had their own mandate, but State was concerned that we monitor closely their activities, and that was part of my job. If I found anything that I thought was alarming, I would go to Fran Dickman, and he would then go up to the front office of the bureau and they would talk about it at a higher level. Working with the Treasury department was part of my job.

There was something else I did. This maybe isn't a direct answer to your question. I felt a need to be in touch on a more informal basis with other members of our government dealing with various aspects of our relationship with Saudi Arabia. I started organizing a monthly luncheon at the Foreign Service Club across the street for roughly my peers—my colleagues—from several agencies around town. I found the list when I was reviewing these years. I had about 20 people or so that I would call every month. They were in State, USIA, Defense Department, both ISA—International Security Affairs—and DSA, the arms sales part of defense, CIA, OMB. I gradually got to know staffers on the House and Senate foreign relations committees and sometimes personal staffers of other members who had special interests in Saudi Arabia and people like John Duke Anthony. I forget what his job was at that time. He for many years has been president of the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations. He still is today.

I would usually get about a dozen of these 20 or so who were able to attend. We all found these very useful meetings just to get together around a round table and have a casual lunch. The Foreign Service Club had a little room upstairs that they gave us for that purpose so we could have our own talk without worrying about who else was around. That was another part of my introduction to Washington: getting to know people in the other agencies and how these agencies interrelated with State.

There was something that I want to note for the record. It related to Jim Akins. I think in my last meeting with you, I talked about the tension between Jim Akins and Secretary Kissinger over policy and how to deal with the Saudis. That eventually led to the firing of Jim Akins, the early termination of his assignment as ambassador to Saudi Arabia. As it happened, that occurred not long after I began my work as Saudi desk officer.

I told you I used to go in early. One morning I got the Washington Post and I was eating an early breakfast in my home. It was August 19, 1975 and I found on the op-ed page an article by Joseph Kraft the columnist. In that article Kraft said that Jim Akins was going to be replaced in Saudi Arabia by Bill Porter who was currently our ambassador to Canada and that Tom Enders would be the new ambassador to Canada. I think Enders at the time was in some position in Europe, not ambassador to a country but something like the European community or the economic



commission or something. I forget the exact title. I commented to my wife, "Gee, this is a real surprise." Jim Akins was in Washington on home leave and had been in my office the previous day. I said Jim was at my desk and he didn't mention this. "That's really curious," I said to my wife.

I thought about it all the way on the bus as I was riding into town. I had to use the bus in those days before Metro, and by the time I got to my desk, about 8:00, I said, "Maybe Jim doesn't know! I'm going to call him." So I called him at home and said, "Have you seen the Washington Post yet this morning?" He said, "No. It's still out on the porch." I said, "Joseph Kraft says you're going to be replaced by Bill Porter." There was a slight pause, and Jim said, "Ohhhhh? I guess I better go get the paper." That was the end of that conversation.

At 9:00 that morning was Roy Atherton's bureau staff meeting which I attended. There was an exchange between Roy Atherton and Fran Dickman. Fran said Jim had called him, had asked about the article, but had told Fran that several journalists had called the house to ask if it was true. Jim had told them, "No, it's not true and the reason it's not true is that I haven't been informed, so it can't be true." Roy said to Fran, "Well, I'm seeing the Secretary at 10:00 right after this meeting. Maybe you should tell Jim that if I were in his position I would be a little less categorical in answering the journalists' questions. I'll know after my meeting with the Secretary."

That showed me that the Assistant Secretary himself didn't know for sure, hadn't been in on this and, in fact, it turned out that the article which was clearly the result of a conversation between Kissinger and Kraft or maybe someone like Larry Eagleburger who was on Kissinger's staff at the time. It had been a plant. Jim Akins was allowed to return to Saudi Arabia, and he twisted slowly in the wind until December 8<sup>th</sup> when he finally left. From August until December he was basically a lame duck ambassador. It put him in a very difficult position.

I in fact wrote a draft editorial for the Foreign Service Journal. I don't know if you do like they do up on the Hill and accept items for the record, but I found the text. If you want to put it into the interview, we can do that. The thrust of my editorial which they did not print, I have to say, was that it was deplorable for an ambassador to learn through a newspaper columnist that he was going to be replaced. It wasn't only Akins. It was also Porter and Tom Enders as well although maybe they had been let in. I suppose they had, but Akins clearly had not. I pointed out in my editorial that this was the second U.S. ambassador in a row to learn through the press that he was going to be replaced. That had happened to Nick Thatcher as we talked about in my earlier interview with you. In this case he learned through a Beirut Lebanese newspaper that he was going to be replaced by Jim Akins. I said this is no way to treat our ambassador.

*Q: Within the little community of the State Department, how did you find they viewed the tension between Kissinger and Akins? How was Akins regarded?*

CECIL: Akins was first of all a very capable Arabist. He spoke good Arabic and knew Arab culture quite well. He was an internationally recognized authority on oil. He had worked in both the Department and White House office dealing with the issues just before he was sent to Saudi Arabia. He was sent there because Washington recognized he had expertise in this area. He was known, though, to be a bit aloof and sometimes curt. He did not come across as a warm, open,

glad-hander kind of person, not a backslapper. He had his views, and he would be quick to tell you what his views were.

I have to say, as I think I did about my years in Saudi Arabia with him, he was extremely loyal to his own staff. We had absolute freedom to question everything. He had always promoted open and free discussions inside the embassy. Washington, I think, regarded him as a difficult ambassador to manage because he often questioned his instructions.

*Q: This brings up a question on the desk” Did you feel the hand of AIPAC, the American-Israeli Political Action Committee, or what can be termed “ the Jewish lobby?”*

CECIL: Certainly it was always a presence, always a factor. I might be hard pressed to come up 30 years later with precise examples, but there was clearly an effort to disrupt the U.S.-Saudi relationship. There was a constant effort to emphasize the bad side of Saudi Arabia, the closed society, the bad elements of the monarchy, the unreliability of what AIPAC might have considered to be an unstable political system. The years have shown it has been pretty stable.

I don't recall any overt interference in my work at my level, but I'm sure it was a constant concern at the front office level. It's hard for me to be more precise on that at this time. We have Congressman Paul Findley's wonderful book *They Dared to Speak Out* which documents in great detail the efforts of the pro-Israel lobby to stifle discussion of any critical aspect of our relationship with Israel and to undermine our relationship with the Arabs. That book was written by Findley after he was defeated in one of his congressional re-election campaigns because he'd begun to speak out publicly of a need for a generally balanced policy in the Middle East. I can't say that it affected me much at my level. More recently, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* by John Mearsheimer and Walt brings this subject up to date.

I've a couple of other vignettes. I might just say again to look at the whole two-year period, after Jim Akins left, Bill Porter did follow him as ambassador to Saudi Arabia. I had the pleasure of meeting Ambassador Porter and participating in his briefings as he got ready to go out. Going to Saudi Arabia from Canada might have been seen as a step down. Porter had been what we called the “deputy ambassador”—I think the only time we used that term—in Vietnam, before Canada, so he was at the height of his career and a very senior diplomat. He told me that when Secretary Kissinger had asked him to take the position in Saudi Arabia that he told the Secretary he would take the job, but he had certain conditions. One was that Jeddah be upgraded from a Class 3 post to a Class 1 post. (We have four classes of posts.) The Secretary said, “No problem with that.” Secondly, Porter said he wanted to arrive in Saudi Arabia on a military aircraft. He wanted the visible evidence of our military support and of special status by arriving on a military aircraft. The secretary said, “We can arrange that as well,” I know there was a third condition but I must admit I've forgotten it now. Porter's instructions were to go out there and put the Saudis on notice that we are very serious about this relationship but there are not going to be any favors or any special treatment handed out to Saudi Arabia just because it has a lot of oil. It was basically a get-tough policy. Don't be as friendly as Jim Akins had been. Porter fulfilled that role for a year or a little bit more, and then he left. I guess at that point he finally did retire.

He was replaced by South Carolina Governor John West. John West had been the first of the

southern governors to endorse Jimmy Carter's race for the nomination for the democratic party for the presidency. He was close to Carter. I also got to participate in Governor West's briefings as he was getting ready to go out. I was transitioning out of the job at the time. The new desk officer, Fred Gerlach, and I actually assisted John West in all of his preparation. Governor West told us that Jimmy Carter had offered him the position of Secretary of Commerce in his administration because of his early endorsement.

Governor West had as governor led a trade and investment mission to Saudi Arabia, part of that U.S. effort to get to know Saudi Arabia. He told President Carter that he was so fascinated with Saudi Arabia that he would rather be U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia than Secretary of Commerce. So Carter said, "That's fine." He was the first political appointee to be ambassador to Saudi Arabia. Up to that time our ambassadors had been career officers, and I think every one of them was an Arabist. Nick Thatcher maybe was not actually an Arabist, but at least he had some experience in the area.

Governor West was a wonderful person to work with, and although I was not the desk officer once he got out there, I certainly got a feel for the man during his preparations. I know he was very well received by the Saudis. He had all the qualities of Southern gentility and interest in your personal situation, your family. He quickly got to know the key princes in the Saudi royal family and other key ministers, and he would know what schools their children were going into and what their own connections with the States were. He was a real effective politician in dealing with the royal family. He never pretended to know more than he really knew. He talked about the Arab world in a very cautious manner and always turned to his staff when he needed help and information. There are many wonderful stories and examples about that.

I was privileged to be on the desk during this period of great transition. It's part of the transition in our relationship, I guess, from Jim Akins to Bill Porter to Governor West. We've had many political appointee ambassadors since that time.

*Q: Had you seen or felt that we were being overly deferential under Akins or others at the time? What prompted Kissinger to set forward this tougher policy?*

CECIL: It didn't seem to me that we were overly deferential. What I saw from being in Jeddah was that the relationship between Jim Akins and the Saudis was so close that I thought he was extremely effective in dealing with the Saudis and getting what we needed from them. They confided in him.

Jim was especially close to Ahmad Zaki Yamani, the oil minister at the time. Jim could not roll back the quadrupling of oil prices. That was, after all, an OPEC decision, and the shah of Iran was quite influential in that as well. I don't know what pressure we put on the shah at that time. I didn't feel ever that Jim was in any way selling our own interests short. I thought he was the best person for the task at hand.

*Q: This many have been Kissinger's rationale for getting rid of one ambassador. Kissinger did not like to be upstaged. In the Saudi context, he was upstaged.*

CECIL: That's possible. Certainly I don't think Kissinger liked his views to be questioned. Jim Akins had never had any hesitation about questioning his instructions, really, if he thought this wasn't the way to achieve our interests or objectives. I can see why Washington would react negatively to some ambassador who's constantly coming back and saying, "I don't think we should do this this way," or. "Maybe we shouldn't do this at all."

*Q: Did you get any feel for the effectiveness of the Saudi embassy in Washington?*

CECIL: A bit. They were quite a sleepy little embassy when I went on the desk, but they sent a new ambassador in November of 1975, Ambassador Alireza, who was U.S.- educated. He had had an American wife who wrote a book that all Americans living in Saudi Arabia at the time knew and most had read. It was called, At the Drop of a Veil.

In that marriage Ambassador Alireza had, I believe, four children with his American wife. The marriage eventually ended in divorce. The mother left Saudi Arabia with the children and came back to the United States, yet eventually when they became adults the children all went back to Saudi Arabia to join their father. I think because that's where the assurance of a high standard of living was. He was quite a wealthy businessman and came from a well known commercial family.

One of the first things Ambassador Alireza did when he arrived in Washington was he shook up the Saudi embassy by extending the official working hours. They had been working from ten to three, but Alireza got them working nine to five. Those members of his staff had a hard time adjusting to that. I remember writing to my sister, "this is going to put the Saudis into rush hour traffic in Washington, D.C. for the first time ever! They won't have experienced this before."

Once Ambassador Alireza was in Washington, I think the role of the embassy became more important. Not as important as it later did under Prince Bandar. When Prince Bandar became ambassador, then clearly the Saudi Embassy—or at least the ambassador himself—took on a major role. The Saudis preferred to deal through Prince Bandar in Washington rather than with our embassy in Saudi Arabia. It was a gradual thing getting into gear. Before '75 it was a somnolent little embassy that didn't do much, but it became more active under Alireza.

*Q: How were the Saudi students in the States? Did they cause any particular problems for you?*

CECIL: No. I would say no in general, no particular problems for me. Certainly at my level there were occasional issues. I remember the case of a traffic accident in which a Saudi driver rear-ended a car in California with some American college age students in it. The result was that the young man on the right rear seat of the car that was rear-ended was rendered a paraplegic. I received calls and some correspondence from this young man's father asking my advice as Saudi desk officer—here you go, you never know what's going to happen when the phone rings—on how to deal with this issue. The father wanted to know whether he should hire a lawyer and try to get a settlement against the Saudi student driver or whether some other approach would be more effective.

I was less guarded in my advice than I might have been later in my life, but I gave him my best

advice. I said, “Really I think that if you go to court, your chances of winning are something only a lawyer could advise you on. Personally, I think you’ll have better luck if you try a personal appeal to the Saudi government.” At the time I’m not sure who I recommended, but I suggested that he appeal to the Saudi government as a father rather than as a litigant and that he make the case that his son would require medical care for the rest of his life, which he would. He had been an athlete, a basketball player. It sounded like he had quite an active life, and now he couldn’t ever get out of bed on his own again.

Sometimes Saudis did have accidents or had encounters with the law, but most of that did not come to us for resolution. This was a particular case that still sticks in my mind all these years later. I wonder what ever happened. I don’t know the course that the father pursued, and I don’t know the outcome.

*Q: Did you get involved with—this is more the consular side—American women who married Saudis when in the States, who went back to Saudi Arabia, had children, and then wanted to get out? I had it when I was vice-consul in Iran. How did you get your kids out?*

CECIL: I never got involved in those cases. I’m not aware that they were that numerous in my time. Certainly you heard about them. Some cases maybe would get press attention, but I never had to get involved in any such cases.

**HAROLD H. SAUNDERS**  
**Deputy Assistant Secretary, Near East Affairs**  
**Washington, DC (1974-1976)**

**Deputy Assistant Secretary, Near East Affairs**  
**Washington, DC (1978-1981)**

*Dr. Harold H. Saunders was born in Philadelphia. He received a B.A. from Princeton University and a Ph.D. from Yale in American Studies in 1956. He served in the US Air Force and then joined the CIA. He served on the National Security Council for over fifteen years and in 1974 became Deputy Assistant Secretary of State under Henry Kissinger. After a two year period as Director of INR, he returned to the State Department in 1978 as Assistant Secretary. Dr. Saunders has written extensively (e.g. The Other Walls: the Arab-Israeli Peace Process in a Global Perspective, American Hostages in Iran: The Conduct of a Crisis, Conversations with Harold Saunders-US Policy Toward the Middle East. He was interviewed in 1993 and 1994 by Thomas Stern.*

SAUNDERS: I am sure that having been an alumnus gave me greater credibility in CIA; it was always interested in assisting policy makers, but since I had been "one of them", that made it much easier for everybody. During one of the shuttle periods, I wrote a note for Kissinger's signature to Bill Colby, then the CIA Director, asking for some CIA assistance. Colby wrote back saying anything that I wanted from CIA would be gladly delivered. Beyond that, during the

shuttles, Kissinger would ask me to contact the local CIA Station Chief. For example, it was through the Station Chief in Saudi Arabia, that we were able to initiate and maintain a dialogue with the younger Saudi princes, one of whom became the Saudi Foreign Minister and the other the head of Saudi intelligence organization. Kissinger, who was dealing with King Faisal at the time, wanted to make sure that other members of the family also understood what he was doing and why. He asked me to develop those relationships. Working on the NSC staff and for Kissinger helped, but I am sure that being an "alumnus" also helped in obtaining maximum cooperation from the Agency's staff.

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Then I was commissioned to go to Amman with the answers to the King's questions. As a point of historical interest, I was accompanied on that trip by Nat Howell, who later was our Ambassador to Kuwait when the Iraqis invaded that country. At that time, he was assigned to NEA. I was also asked to go to Saudi Arabia to brief them. I was to cross the Allenby bridge and talk to the Palestinians on the West Bank. Then I was to move on to Israel for discussions in Jerusalem. Since my task was to persuade the moderate Arabs that the Camp David Accords took some of their concerns into account, I obviously used the five point difference between the accords and the Begin plan as talking points. I was arguing a non-Israeli view of Camp David. It was a Carter view since it was based on the Carter approved-and-signed answers to the fourteen questions. That was not something Begin wanted to hear. At the same time, the Iraqi were organizing what became two conferences in Baghdad; the second concluded by condemning the Camp David Accords. That added another dimension to my trip because now I also had to try to convince the Jordanians and the Saudis to disregard the conclusions of the second Baghdad conference. I thought that although the Iraqis were a threat in the area, there was a chance that the Jordanians and the Saudis might ignore them. In fact, they led me to believe that they would do so, but in the end they did cave in.

I had a four hour meeting with Crown Prince Fahd during which I used every ploy I knew to try to persuade him that Camp David was part of a political process which was a beginning to incorporate the Palestinian dimensions into the Arab-Israeli dialogue. I pointed out that we could not openly talk about a Palestinian state; that that would have to come in a step-by-step process, starting with autonomy discussions and implementation. I argued the same case with King Hussein. He was passionate on the subject of the Palestinians. I was accompanied by Nick Veliotis, then our Ambassador in Amman. Hussein was pretty cool to my presentation. I thought we would have a very short meeting. I just kept talking. Finally, he said to me, in an eloquent, but somewhat jumbled comment,:

"Look, Hal, you know I would do anything I could do to bring peace to my people. I would give my life if that would do it!". Then he began to talk about the recent death of his wife in a helicopter crash. That chopper and its pilot were the same ones that had flown Hussein to the secret meetings he had held with the Israelis in Tel Aviv and elsewhere. Somehow, he viewed the death of his wife as having been caused by the unsafe practices -- low altitude and no lights -- that his pilot had been forced to use during some of the secret trips. It was not a happy session.

**CURTIS F. JONES**  
**Director, Office of Intelligence and Research**  
**Washington, DC (1975 [est])**

*Curtis F. Jones was born in Maine in 1921. He graduated from Bowdoin College and served in the U.S. Army during World War II. He entered the Foreign Service in 1946 and subsequently served in Lebanon, Ethiopia, Egypt, Syria, and Aden. From 1971 to 1975 he served as Director of Research and Analysis on the Middle East in INR. He retired from the Foreign Service in 1975 and was interviewed by Thomas F. Conlon in 1994.*

JONES: Another thing that happened was that I also received sensitive intelligence from other agencies -- other than CIA. I should "backtrack" a little and say that Jim Akins was one of the most brilliant and also one of the most egocentric officers in the Foreign Service. Akins was a man who decided early on [in his career] that the future was in oil and that he would become an oil expert. He made himself such an oil expert that he was sent to the White House as deputy to a man whose name I forget but who was the President's "oil man." When Akins had had his fill of Washington duty, he told people in his car pool that he was going to tell Secretary of State Rogers that he wanted an Embassy overseas [as Ambassador]. If he wasn't going to be appointed Ambassador, he would quit.

Well, Akins did get an Embassy overseas. He was appointed Ambassador to Saudi Arabia. Some time after he became Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, I was told by a member of his staff that Henry Kissinger, who, by that time, was Secretary of State as well as the Director of the National Security Council staff, took a trip to Saudi Arabia. A meeting was set up with the King [of Saudi Arabia] -- I can't remember who the King was at this time. Kissinger told Ambassador Akins, "I want to meet with the King alone -- just the two of us, with an interpreter." Akins said, "I am the President's representative in Saudi Arabia and I will be at that meeting. If I'm not, then my resignation goes in by IMMEDIATE cable." Kissinger "caved in," according to my source, but Kissinger apparently made the decision at that time that Ambassador Akins was on the list "to be disposed of" at the earliest opportunity.

Ambassador Akins had a conversation with a foreign ambassador -- not an American and not a Saudi -- and said that the ambassador might inform his government that American policy was a little "off base" in [a certain] respect and [suggested that the Ambassador's] government might be able to have a salutary influence on American policy. This information came back to me from a sensitive intelligence source. I won't be more precise how it came back. My obligation, I'm sorry to say, was to carry this information to [various senior people] and, of course, it got back to Secretary Kissinger. Within weeks Akins' resignation from the Department of State was announced.

**JOSEPH J. SISCO**  
**Under Secretary, Political Affairs**

## Washington, DC (1975)

*Under Secretary Joseph J. Sisco was born in Illinois in 1919. He received his B.A. from Knox College and an M.A. and a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. He served in the U.S. Army during World War II and joined the State Department in 1951. He served in the CIA and at the UN Bureau of IO, as the Assistant Secretary of Near Eastern Affairs from 1969 to 1974 and as Under Secretary for Political Affairs until 1976 with a concentration on the Middle East. Mr. Sisco was interviewed by Michael Sterner in 1990.*

*Q: We're now approaching the shuttle period in which you played a key role. I think you went on all of the shuttles. You were drafting many of the positions, conducting much of the diplomacy. Let me ask, Joe, just to begin with, about your impression of Kissinger as a diplomat. There's much...everybody agrees he was an extraordinarily effective person. There's a good deal of material that suggests that he had all of these disparate Middle Eastern leaders practically eating out of his hand. Was he as effective as all that?*

SISCO: Yes.

*Q: He was remarkable.*

SISCO: Yes, absolutely remarkable. He was able to combine overall strategy with tactics. The rapport he struck with all of the Middle Eastern leaders of consequence is unparalleled. King Hussein had great confidence in him. Kissinger was rightly viewed as one who had influence within the administration. Of all people, the people who might have been expected to be more skeptical was not. Kissinger and Saudi King Fahd hit it off very well. King Fahd was taken with Kissinger.

## **JAMES A. LAROCCO** **Commercial Attaché & Economic Officer** **Jeddah (1975-1977)**

*Ambassador James Larocco was born in 1948 in Evanston, Illinois. He graduated from the University of Portland (Oregon), and Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. He entered the Foreign Service in 1973. His overseas assignments include Jeddah, Saudi Arabia; Cairo, Kuwait, Beijing, and Tel Aviv. He was the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Near East Bureau 2001-2004. Ambassador Larocco was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2011.*

*Q: Your time in the upper reaches of the State Department, your first tour, did you look towards what you wanted to do? Still Latin America?*

LAROCCO: Yes, that is what I wanted to do as my next assignment. What happened to change



my outlook, and I will never forget this, is that I was called to meet an ambassador who was in personnel assignments. His name was Joe Twinam. He passed away many years ago. He had been ambassador in the Gulf, I think Bahrain. I was stunned. Why would an ambassador want to see me? I went down to see him and he said, "Jim, we need you in Saudi Arabia."

I said, "Saudi Arabia?" I thought, geez, sounds awful.

He said, "We really need you with your economics background. We know you are a Latin American specialist, but look: Oil prices have gone up. We have a small presence there. We've got to start building. Things are happening super fast. Money is flowing in there. We need to get business, we need to get reporting. We need to do all this. We will give you ten months of Arabic and then send you out there to be Commercial Attaché, running our nationwide commercial program."

It's hard as a junior officer not to respond to an ambassador who says you are needed. I thought, how can I say no? It is a whole new world but an ambassador wants me, which I never forgot because later on when I became an ambassador and then PDAS, I would personally call on people and say we need you in Iraq. We need you in Saudi Arabia. We need you in Yemen. The lowest number of bids are in the Middle East, always has been. The Near East Bureau always had to reach out to people. I didn't invent that. This goes way, way back and I never forgot that. You get a young officer and you say you need him. What an impact that has and it had it on me. So I said, "Sure." I thought, well, I'll put Latin America aside for a while.

So that's what happened. I did my year in Congressional Relations and then went off to the old FSI over there in Rosslyn and took ten months of Arabic and then headed to Saudi Arabia with barely enough language ability to understand and be understood.

*Q: How did you find Arabic?*

LAROCCO: Fascinating, obviously very difficult. I didn't think it was taught very well. It was just a strange language. I was absolutely delighted. One of the nice things about Arabic is you look at these squiggles and think "I will never learn that." You learn those squiggles in less than a week so that really boosts your morale. Then the problem is what you do with it. In ten months we could barely communicate, after ten months of some very, very hard work.

In those days, there wasn't a hell of a lot of English in Saudi Arabia. I was actually thrown into situations where I was expected to do translations back and forth with ten months of Arabic. It was brutal and I am sure I crucified it in both languages. We had a very small mission in Jeddah and an enormous amount of work to do.

As the commercial attaché, I wasn't even in the embassy. I was in downtown Jeddah, the only American. When they say no man is an island, they weren't thinking of me.

*Q: The port city?*

LAROCCO: The port city. A city described by Lawrence when he arrived there sixty years

before as smelling like a gym locker that hadn't been opened for a hundred years. It wasn't a pretty place. I had a ground floor office that opened directly to the street in the Jeddah Palace Hotel. There were Yemenis and other workers who slept on our sidewalk. We would shoo them away every morning.

Before I go on, let me clarify to some who may be confused by the spelling I use for Jeddah. Back in 1975, we transliterated the Arabic to Jidda. To be frank, I think that's a better phonetic transliteration than Jeddah. I have no idea who the language gurus were who decided to change it. In any case, it's the same city on the Red Sea.

First year in Jeddah: Commercial Attaché

I had a pretty large staff of locally hired employees. No Saudis. Mostly South Asians. I was really happy because I always wanted to manage as quickly as I could in the Foreign Service.

In Jeddah, I had the responsibility to manage a budget, a staff, an operation and I would often have 12 or 13 businessmen waiting to see me outside the office every morning. Saudi Arabia was booming, and we used to say that the cheapest thing there was money. And I was a first tour junior officer. It was a heady experience indeed.

It was a good education. It was tough. I am sure I made a million mistakes. There was nobody there to guide me. I was the one and only American at this commercial office. I was really on my own. There was a commercial counselor, but he was on his retirement tour and he sat in the embassy. I rarely saw him. To be honest, that was fine with me.

I was particularly proud when I did all the preparations for a trade mission from the U.S. that recorded more business on that one trip than any other trade mission in history up to that time: \$83 million. After this blockbuster mission, they realized that they needed a veteran commercial officer out there, so they sent out someone from what was the budding foreign commercial service. He was truly experienced officer and turned my makeshift operation into a real commercial office. Larry Jensen was his name, and I will never forget how gracious he was to me. They established a new commercial office across from the embassy, which was out of town in those days on Palestine Road. That compound is still there, with very few changes in the main building from my time nearly 40 years earlier. It's now as a consulate, as the embassy long ago moved to Riyadh.

Second year in Jeddah: Economic Officer

My second year in Jeddah, I was an econ officer, which is what I really wanted to do because of my academic background. I had several experienced bosses who had me on a very long leash. They allowed me to explore Saudi Arabia, writing reports on cities and sites few Americans had ever visited. They had the foresight to understand that Saudi Arabia's future was going to require major expansion throughout the country, providing American business with multi-billion dollar opportunities.

A sidelight to all this was that because of the economic boom, there was little available housing,

so I was a nomad, house-sitting for people on leave. For a while, I was put in an apartment building that housed stewardesses for TWA. I never got full time housing till late in my assignment. But I was single, I was busy and I didn't really care.

Of course, frequent illness was common in those days in many parts of the region, and Jeddah was no exception. We all came down with "the Jeddah jitters" more often than we would like. We were given all kinds of shots for our protection, some of which are no longer advised. We also were provided with lomotil for frequent use. And, strange as it now sounds, we had salt tablet dispensers throughout the embassy compound.

My worst case of the Jeddah jitters happened when I was house-sitting. I was in desperate straits, barely able to crawl to the bathroom. I managed to make it there. I pulled myself up, opened the medicine cabinet, and there was nothing there. Who were these people? I then glanced over to a side table and noticed a book by Mary Baker Eddy. Just my luck: Christian Scientists!

Tales of "the old Foreign Service" abound for all of us who served in the far reaches of the Arabian Peninsula in those days. I have enough from this one assignment for years of bedtime stories for my grandchildren.

*Q: To get the dates; when did you go to Saudi Arabia and you were there a year doing commercial?*

LAROCCO: I started Arabic in September of '74 and went until June '75, and then I arrived July of '75 in Jeddah. I was the commercial attaché for one year until 1976; then I was the economic officer for 1976 to 1977. I spent the summer of 1976 in Riyadh, which I will talk about later.

Saudi Arabia in 1975

*Q: How did Saudi Arabia strike you when you first went out there?*

LAROCCO: Like being taken somewhere in a time machine. So little in common with U.S. society, norms, values, customs. I had some Saudi friends, but I would consider them acquaintances at best. Saudis were still very uncomfortable around foreigners so it was hard to get a meeting, hard to have a serious conversation with them, hard to ever come to closure on anything. Most of my time, quite frankly, my first year was spent with American business visitors who came in and I would bring in my local staff, none of whom were Saudi. They were Palestinian and Pakistani and other nationalities and we basically had files on companies that we would provide to them. We would give our best recommendations on how to use their time usefully. It was very easy to sell anything at that time because money was falling from the skies. Oil prices had quadrupled and there was so much cash in search of some place to use it or park it. There was no infrastructure outside of the Eastern Province. The streets weren't paved. They were just building everything. It was basically taking a country from the 15<sup>th</sup> century and moving to the 20<sup>th</sup>.

*Q: Something the Saudis appear to have done was basically plowing much of it back into the country.*

LAROCCO: Yes, they were.

*Q: The royal family was doing its thing, but still there was a lot of investment of state money.*

LAROCCO: They were building roads and bridges and schools and hospitals and all the elements of infrastructure aiming for a more modern society. This was a conscious policy, a clear vision. They were bringing in the expatriate labor that would do it. Again these were people who were in a society that was very backward in terms of its position in the world. Bedouin habits and mores reigned. They were determined to end the nomadic way of life for many of their population, bring them into urban life, educate them and move forward.

I recall one failed effort that I was able to see first-hand. In the middle of the desert in northern Saudi, a city was built to house Bedouins. It looked like Emerald City. So many houses. A full service city, ready for inhabitants. The Bedouins were brought to the city. Rather than move into the houses, they put their animals in them. They chose to continue to live in tents outside the homes.

On the other hand, almost the entire cabinet had PhDs, mostly from U.S. universities, but some from the UK or Cairo. You had a very thin veneer at the top of technically qualified people and you had a leadership that understood the politics of spreading the wealth in the country and that was the only way the country was going to hold together. They were a conquering family. They were not a chosen family (as in Kuwait). It was a tribal society that was brought together struggling to cope with so many demands that were unprecedented to their culture. With the utmost respect, they have proven to navigate these challenges with a good degree of success. Nobody expected them to even survive.

I am trying to give you the view when I was there. It seemed like this place was never going to work. How do you take a 15<sup>th</sup> century, incredibly conservative society and bring it to the 20<sup>th</sup> century? It just didn't make any sense to me. I think they have handled it really quite well, very brilliantly.

*Q: I was in Dhahran in the '50s. I was one of the 15 guys or so who climbed the walls of Riyadh.*

LAROCCO: It was a very different culture in Jeddah from either Riyadh or Dhahran. Jeddah was more cosmopolitan because that was the gateway to Mecca. They had been handling foreigners for more than a millennium.

*Q: At that time, ARAMCO had not been completely taken over. They were making concessions and seeing the future where BABCO, the Bahrain petroleum and Qatar and all were fighting changes.*

LAROCCO: I think the Saudis were wise to choose to set up and work with ARAMCO. Again, I think the Saudis handled it all extremely well and were not taken advantage of.

*Q: Were you concerned on the commercial side of fly-by-night American companies coming in to*

*grab money?*

LAROCCO: We had a good number of them. As I said, the opportunities were endless.

*Q: How did you deal with them?*

LAROCCO: As a commercial officer, I was obligated to treat everyone as best as I could with fairness and without bias, and I did. I would give them honest assessments.

Perhaps my most comical but successful handling of a businessman was a guy who was peddling raincoats. Of course, it doesn't rain in Jeddah. Our staff huddled, and we suggested he advertise them as tarps for Bedouin. He sold more than enough to pay for his trip and pocket a tidy profit.

It truly wasn't hard to sell anything. One guy brought in the gaudiest looking plastic fireplace with flashing lights for the hearth. He took orders for dozens.

This was the stuff of Mark Twain tales. You had some of the best businessmen and some of the worst businessmen. But there was a market for everyone and everything. Everyone wanted to be on the gravy train, and the sharp ones left with fat wallets, regardless of the snake oil they were peddling. The Saudis needed everything. They were not sophisticated. The Saudis did buy a lot of junk that was way overpriced.

My job was not to sell anything. My job was to try to marry up American businessmen with potential customers and that's what I did. I was very clear about no corruption, no bribes, and no money for us, not even a free lunch. Of course, there was no place to buy lunch, so there never was that temptation.

It got so bad that I recall an exhausted, harried American businessman stumbling into my office for an interview. I commented that he looked like he had wrestled with an alligator. He said that might have been preferable to his own evening. He finally found a place that would take him for the night. He was told he would have to share the bed. When he crawled into bed, there were two other men already in it. When the fifth guy got in bed, he called it quits, deciding to sleep on the floor. He paid \$100 for that space. That's how crowded Jeddah was in those days and how inadequate the infrastructure was to handle it.

*Q: Well, they had to have sponsors, didn't they?*

LAROCCO: Yes, they did. It was the law.

*Q: So that took care of some of the problem right there, didn't it? In order to get in, somebody had to sponsor them.*

LAROCCO: It was not hard to get a sponsor if you were in business. Some Saudis companies made all their money sponsoring visiting businessmen. They were not interested in being agents to these businessmen, only visit sponsors.

I constantly warned companies about signing up with a Saudi firm as their agent. This was a near irrevocable arrangement, and some of our most reputable firms made bad choices. This cost them dearly, including in some cases, driving them out of the market. I went both ways there because you had to have a sponsor and I would warn companies who would contact me in advance to be careful about that because once you had a sponsor, that sponsor basically owned you. For the fly-by-nighters, I didn't care as much. Nor did they. They could get in the country and sell their wares and most of them were there for a one time deal anyway. But for the really reputable American companies, my concern was the other way around: a serious concern that they would either get the wrong partner so they wouldn't be able to sell their goods at all or that they would never be able to get out of a bad marriage. All too often I would see a Saudi sponsor that was going to take advantage of them who is basically out to get their 10% or 20% or whatever. I had quite frankly, more concern about our good companies getting the wrong partners and that still happens today, all the way till today in that part of the world. It can kill the opportunities or profitability of even the best U.S. and other foreign firms.

When I was ambassador in Kuwait many years later, even that recently, there were some complaints about local agents. The problem at that time was most often related to the fact that an American firm had developed a trusting, honest relationship with the Kuwaiti in charge. But when that Kuwaiti transferred the business to his son, things changed. This was extremely awkward. There often was nothing that could be done.

There were various commercial disputes when I was in Jeddah, but in most cases there was nowhere to take them. You either wrote it off as the cost of doing business or grabbed what you could get and clear out. But let's be clear: there were enormous profits too. The profit from one contract could more than offset a string of losses.

*Q: Trying to mate sharia law with commercial law was not mentioned in the Koran.*

LAROCCO: Yes, and the development of a commercial law was just beginning when I was in Jeddah.

My second year as an econ officer took me in many directions, including my travels around the country doing some pioneering reporting. But I also did a lot of work reporting on the massive mess that was the Jeddah port. At one point, 220 ships were waiting to be off loaded. The line went out over 30 miles outside the port. It was a catastrophe. I spent a lot of time pleading with the Saudi government in Riyadh to have someone, preferably an American company or one of our port authorities to come in get things organized. The Saudis eventually came around, but even then, the massive backlog and the growing demand to bring in more and more goods make it a multi-year task to organize the port. I laid the groundwork, and others finished the job. I consider the movement to upgrade the port facilities, procedures and regulations a major part of my legacy from that assignment in Saudi.

The dismissal of Ambassador Akins

*Q: Who was the ambassador?*

LAROCCO: My first ambassador was Jim Akins, a petroleum specialist. A wonderful guy. Jim was a proud man, dedicated to his mission, who eventually got axed. Henry Kissinger was still secretary of state, and he came to see the Saudi King who was spending the summer as usual in Taif, a hill town not far from Jeddah. I was asked to go up there and work with the advance people because they knew I knew some of the seventh floor staff and their procedures. I did so, and everything seemed to be in order. It came time for the meeting with the King, when Kissinger suddenly surprised us by saying, "I am going in to meet the King alone."

Akins found this unacceptable. Kissinger did not know the King, while Akins had built up enormous trust with him. There was a waiting time, which is usual when someone sees the King, but then word came to us that the King was indisposed. Maybe the king couldn't see Kissinger after all. Kissinger's blood pressure went up, especially when he realized that this was orchestrated by Jim. Kissinger had been outflanked. He announced that Akins could attend, and the word came back that the King was ready to see them. We knew that Kissinger was mad, but we did not know that he was going to get even.

It was shortly after that that we, including the ambassador himself, learned from a Washington Post article that Akins was recalled. Fired, essentially. Akins called us all into his office and said, "Just so you know." We already knew, and we truly felt badly for him. But he did what he did, and he must have known that this wasn't going to stand.

Some of the embassy staff drafted a cable to Washington protesting the recall. I refused to add my name to the cable. I never believed in these open type actions that would be dead on arrival, and I make this point when I address incoming Junior Officer classes. Take actions that will have results. Just because you believe you are right doesn't mean everyone else will believe so. If you feel passionately about something, find a way to make it happen. Rarely is a two by four over the head the right way to do this. One would think that diplomats of all people would understand this.

Then they brought in "Wild Bill" Porter who had been an ambassador seemingly since the dawn of the Foreign Service. He was a national treasure. Talk about the American dream. He epitomized it. He had started his career in London as a local gate guard. He moved up to become a political advisor and eventually was naturalized. He then moved directly into the Foreign Service. His career was astonishing. When he arrived in Jeddah, he had not only served as an ambassador all over the world for nearly 18 years, but also served as Undersecretary for Political Affairs at State. Why he came to Saudi Arabia, I will never quite understand. He came there and wore his fishing hat with lures attached to it and brought in a Winnebago to drive in the desert. It was like a retirement job. But he was a genius and a wonderful man, one of the best writers I had ever seen. He was like Moynihan or Richard Parker. Reading his messages made you feel like you were in the room with him when he met with the King or other senior officials.

And speaking of great men, I must mention Edward "Skip" Gnehm. But first, let me catch up on what else was happening in my second year. As I noted, I was first commercial attaché in Saudi, then economic officer. I also did serve for several months as a consular officer when our three consular officers got on plane and went home, disgusted with life in Jeddah. Without any training whatsoever, I managed the operation and learned an enormous amount on the job about

visas, tourist and immigrant and American services. My most difficult case was an African-American woman arrested and kept in what could only be described as a horse corral. Saudi prisons were truly hellholes in those days, and we did everything we could to get Americans out of there as fast as possible. So, despite my efforts to avoid serving as a consular officer, I did get the experience, which proved useful later in my career.

#### Tom Pickering's wild ride from Amman to Yemen, 1976

It was during this second year that I had an unforgettable experience I would like to mention. We received a cable from our embassy in Amman that Ambassador Pickering was planning to drive from Amman all the way to Taiz in North Yemen. Would anyone from Embassy Jeddah be interested in joining his caravan? I immediately signed up. Tom had a reputation for being arguably one of the most adventurous of all FSO's, from driving himself at 100 miles per hour through the streets of Amman to taking dangerous journeys on routes few would ever consider. I was also told he even drove home from the embassy in Tel Aviv to his residence in Herzliya over the sand dunes along the coast. I find that tale a tall one, but others swear to it.

I jumped on the caravan of four wheel drive vehicles in Jeddah and could not believe the blistering pace Tom set in the lead car. Nothing daunted his determination to press on, and we would change blown tires sometimes four times a day. We drove those vehicles as if they were dune buggies. He wanted to keep the pace up, so when the Prince of Najran, in southern Saudi Arabia, invited him for tea, he was not inclined to accept. Of course, this was a command performance. It was truly a slice of the old Arabia, but also extremely useful as the road ahead was not only treacherous and mountainous, but also full of bandits. His armed tribesmen accompanied us to the border, and there was a handover there to armed tribesman contacted by the embassy in Sanaa. It was indeed treacherous going, but we finally made it to the capital city of Sanaa.

Talk about a funky embassy. I recall having to bend over to get in the door (which was common in Sanaa...it was easy to lop off someone's head if they were already in the right position, bent over), and I was greeted by a small scorpion inside the door. I was invited to a qat party hosted by a young consular officer, Mark Hambley, and I was quickly introduced to a Yemeni mainstay of its culture. Let me stress here that the use of qat by Americans was not outlawed yet in those days.

After exploring Sanaa, we went to Taiz, then on to the coast, visiting the ancient and historic coastal towns of Mokka (hence the coffee name), Hodeida (an ugly port city) and Al-Jabr. The villages were much more African in appearance than Arabian. Instead of mountains as the challenge, we had the greater challenge of sabkha, a quicksand-like unstable sand along the coast. It was slow going.

My admiration of Ambassador Pickering was profound, and we would cross paths repeatedly in my career, in Cairo when he was involved in negotiations for an agreement on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and almost every assignment thereafter. I will talk more about him later.

#### Riyadh, 1976



My fourth job in Saudi was my posting to Riyadh after the one and only FSO up there unexpectedly had to be removed for personal issues. That's what I was told. I was sent up there for three months to hold down the fort and represent U.S. interests in the capital city. I had two villas, two Pontiacs, and all the Betamax tapes I could ever want. But these villas were not air conditioned, so I had to sleep on my desk in front of a wall desert cooler, which barely spewed out enough cool mist to keep me from expiring. I had two local employees, a Pakistani and a Lebanese. The Lebanese, George Dabbaghi, a refugee from the Lebanese Civil War, was already quite old, but he was a delight. There was absolutely nothing to do in the evenings in Riyadh at that time...no restaurants, only one hotel, no foreign community. We played hours and hours of backgammon every evening as he sipped his beloved Scotch. I actually thought I was getting quite good at the game. He smiled and promptly beat me badly 20 straight games. I was truly humbled, appreciating the high level of skill required to be a backgammon expert.

Edward "Skip" Gnehm

In any case, I slowly but painfully got around Riyadh making many contacts, leaving the post in pretty good shape. Skip Gnehm, designated our first director of what was to be called "The U.S. Liaison Office," came on board and I returned to Jeddah.

Because the ambassador had a good deal of trust in my judgment, he at times looked for my advice on issues related to Riyadh. As you might imagine, this was more than just annoying to Skip, who felt there should be nothing between him and the ambassador. He solved this problem by inviting me up to Riyadh to spend a few days, and we set out in one of the Pontiacs for the desert region north of Riyadh, arriving first in Buraydah, then on to Hail and Artawiyah, the homeland of the Wahhabis. To us, at that time, it was all historical. We foresaw no connection to what this name would mean in the future. He took the time to get to know me personally, and we worked out all our issues. I never forgot the clear management lesson here: take your issues face-to-face and reconcile them. Skip was one of the best managers in the business.

Forecasting Saudi Arabia's future

*Q: You were a junior officer but you've got big ears. You know, you are listening and absorbing this. What was the feeling toward the survivability of the house of Saud in Saudi Arabia?*

LAROCCO: Few gave it more than ten to fifteen years before it would collapse. Faisal spent his last years picking lint off his thobe (his outer garment), Fahd was smart but no role model for his people, and Khalid was a placeholder. That was the feeling. Give these guys ten to fifteen years, they're gone. They cannot cope with the change. There is no way to absorb this wealth, use it wisely, change the way people live and work. I mean driving was so bad that I remember when I first came back to Washington and I was driving to see my sister in Silver Spring. I was driving from downtown, got a rental car, and was going up 16<sup>th</sup> street which becomes Georgia Avenue. I was stopping at green lights to look both directions and almost caused massive traffic accidents. In Saudi in those days, stoplights or stop signs meant nothing. People were driving their big cars in the desert and the car would smash into a rock and they would just leave the car and go away. The huge inflow of cash to this society was truly wrenching and they simply couldn't handle it in

an orderly way.

*Q: Who did you look to take over?*

LAROCCO: In those days? I think basically it was assumed there was a technocratic group of people, including some members of the house of Saud, who would essentially overthrow the royal family and establish some kind sort of oligarchical system. The alternative would be a Wahhabi takeover, either driving Saudi back to a medieval existence or becoming a strict Islamic Republic, a Sunni theocratic version of Iran's Shia theocracy. Of course, the Sunni approach is nothing like the Shia. In the Sunni case, it would likely be a tribal arrangement politically with strong religious control over society. We truly could only guess since everything was in such a state of flux.

*Q: There were religious police.*

LAROCCO: The religious police were still around then hitting people with sticks if they didn't close their shops at prayer time or swatting our female personnel if their clothing was considered too revealing. It was a very, very difficult environment to accept. None of us really believed they could make a transition to the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

*Q: Did you feel when you were the economic officer that they were making right choices?*

LAROCCO: No, I didn't. In those days, no. They were scrambling all over the place. This was certainly true in the first year of my assignment. I will tell you what happened. In the first part of my assignment, they were just buying anything that was coming at them. I remember they put in these temporary flyovers all over the place because they were stuck with that old British model of circles that just wasn't working, so they would put in these flyovers that the Belgians would put up in two weeks. They built cheap buildings, relied on room air conditioners only (an incredible market for Carrier A/C units) and wanted only big cars. This, of course, was also great for GM since Ford was boycotted.

There was no quality control at all, so in essence, there was no quality, only quantity.

America's Role in bringing Saudi Arabia's economy to the 20<sup>th</sup> century

The Saudis, however, were honest enough with themselves to understand they needed help. Just as they had turned to Americans for help with the oil business, which you are familiar with, and had turned to us to help them with their National Guard, they turned once again to Americans to help them get on a better path toward economic development.

On the one hand, a noted Harvard economist came to Saudi Arabia and laid out a game plan under which they would essentially "control" oil prices. The idea, as he explained, was that if they allowed oil prices to skyrocket, consumer countries would rapidly develop alternative energies. Instead, if they raised prices gradually, and occasionally let them fall, consumer countries would continue to depend of fossil fuels for decades. I was truly impressed when I heard this presentation, and so were the Saudis. Of course, he was right, and the Saudis were

smart enough to heed this advice.

The Saudis then established what was called the “Joint Economic Commission” which was an unprecedented creature run by the U.S. Treasury Department. They were given authority over tens of billions of dollars’ worth of projects to plan, contract out and supervise, primarily using U.S. engineering firms and contractors, ensuring that a variety of development projects proceeded in planned, efficient ways. I marveled at how well the Treasury Department handled this awesome responsibility with professionalism, integrity and respect for their Saudi clients.

Similarly, you had the Army Corps of Engineers that had tens of billions of dollars for other infrastructure projects. I think the Saudis very wisely decided they couldn’t do it without massive corruption and so many mistakes that it would take them down. Between ARAMCO, the Joint Economic Commission run by the Treasury Department and the Army Corps of Engineers, they got a damn good deal out of us, out of the United States. Saudi costs were minimal for the benefits they received from our brainpower, our skills, our experience and years of our R&D. At the same time, it brought excellent business, jobs and experience to American firms.

The ‘70s were truly a golden age for us economically and commercially in Saudi Arabia. The Japanese, Chinese, South Koreans and others had not yet penetrated the market, so we had a near corner on hugely lucrative business. Contrast that with today when we are the laggards in the Saudi market.

This is a story that as far I know has never been told. I am confident in saying that young Saudis today have no clue what we did for their country not only in the defense field, but getting them on the right path for development, including financially. We have much to be proud of in the story of the development and sustained growth of Saudi Arabia.

*Q: As an economic officer, were you looking at the employment of Saudis or the lack thereof?*

LAROCCO: Let’s be clear: The U.S. was doing this because the Saudis couldn’t. I liked it as a commercial officer and an economic officer because the Army Corps, ARAMCO plus the Treasury were all going to look to U.S. firms to do this business.

Yes, but Saudis were not getting the training, not being employed. They were basically getting the benefits and spending the money. In that era, they became professional shoppers. It was very corrosive, and the Saudis are only now addressing this.

*Q: Did the religious side disturb this?*

LAROCCO: I don’t think the religious in those days really figured out what the hell was happening. Sharia law had nothing to do with what was going on, and I pointed this out to the Saudis. They had a desperate need for a separate commercial law. They understood this, and did move, albeit slowly, to address this. A lot of this was just so much new and unexpected coming at the religious, but they were benefiting too. Mosques were being built, religious schools were being built. They were all getting automobiles so they were beneficiaries along with everybody else and they were shopping too. The system looked pretty sweet in those days to the religious side.

*Q: I was there 20 years before and we thought actually probably the Palestinians, because they were the only cohesive, well educated force. They were flying the airplanes and all. There might be sort of a Palestinian, at least cooperative group, with a group of Saudis or something. But we didn't think the house would come down.*

LAROCCO: The thought of them making it to 1985 was almost inconceivable to us with the way the world was changing. The Far East was now starting to come alive.

**MICHAEL W. ALBIN**  
**Librarian, Library of Congress**  
**Egypt (1975-1985)**

*Michael Albin retired from the Library of Congress after 27 years of service during which he held a number of positions including 11 years as Director of the Library Field Office in Cairo Egypt. Mike spent most of his career in acquisitions for the library but he also served in the Asian Division and was Acting Director for Acquisitions and Overseas Operations. Mr. Albin was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2012*

*Q: You mentioned at one point, of all the Arab countries Saudi Arabia was not your favorite.*

ALBIN: Who can like Saudi Arabia?

*Q: Yeah. Well, I lived there two and a half years.*

ALBIN: Did you like Saudi Arabia?

*Q: Not particularly, but I was in Dhahran, and it was, it was sort of like Tulsa.*

ALBIN: *(laughs)*

*Q: A big oilfield and an American oil company, so you know. But would you talk about your Saudi experience?*

ALBIN: Yes. How often was I in Saudi Arabia during those 10 years? I don't know, maybe more than once a year. Why was that? Because the publications scene -- as you can imagine, the intellectual scene in Saudi Arabia was in a word, backward. Saudis at a certain level were probably the saddest critters in the whole Arab world. One of the reasons I went to Saudi Arabia as frequently as I did is because they issued a lot of official publications. Every ministry, every directorate general, every university faculty, each had tons of money to spend, so they put out slick journals, studies, and statistical compilations. The Abdulaziz University Journal of Internal Medicine, or Journal of Geospatial Imaging. That kind of thing. All the deans and department chairs had money to spend. So that's why I went. Not because of the commercial publications.

The commercial publications were repetitive gruel, simplistic fiction, repetitive poetry, pietistic books and booklets, local histories. Sometimes freshly matriculated PhDs would publish their dissertations. These were usually on religious subjects. We collect local histories, and I'm glad we do. They're all useful. Of all of the many conversations I had with Saudi academics the one I remember most was with the Chairman of the Department of Geography at -- I can't remember which university it was -- in Riyadh. It was an unbelievable experience. I went into his office. As I say, he was the department chairman. The department of geography had a building of its own, as I recall, or had a big wing of a social science faculty or arts faculty building, lavish as you can imagine -- all glass and fancy looking. I got there early, as I usually did to these appointments, so I could snoop and browse. It was open to the public. I went to the library and looked around. It was extremely well stocked with all the international journals and recent books. Geography is not my field, but it looked like they had everything up to date as could be. They had the computer terminals. It was just fancy as hell. But not a soul in the place. Not a soul -- no readers, no librarian. Empty. So my time for the appointment came and I went in. The chairman was welcoming, gave me coffee. He was dressed Saudi style. And we had a general conversation. And then at the end of 15 or 20 minutes he gave me whatever publications he had, the latest journals. At the end of the conversation he got up from his desk, closed his office door, and said, "Could I speak to you frankly a little bit, for a while? Just kind of as a friend?"

And I said, "Why sure, that would be nice."

"Can I get you some more coffee?"

I said, "No, I'm fine."

He said -- we were speaking in English. He said, "I'm a graduate of USC (University of Southern California). I have a PhD in geography from USC. And, and I'm the unhappiest guy in the world." And he proceeded for the next hour, or perhaps even more, to lay his soul bare to me about his professional career and the cultural wasteland that is Saudi Arabia, and the intellectual wasteland that was the university and his department. He told me stories of students who were subsidized to do nothing, about the intellectual sloth of the students, the fact that everybody gets high grades and nobody deserves them. Scholarships are awarded for overseas study and travel willy-nilly to anybody who asks. There are no standards. No education is happening. And by the way, just to deviate for a minute, I understand according to statistics that I've read and/or heard, that there are upwards of 100,000 going on 150,000 Saudi students in the United States. Did you know that?

*Q: No, but I knew that it was high.*

ALBIN: Yeah, boy. I'm amazed. Students were being sent over by the *carload*, he told me. I'd have to go back to my notes because I came back and I wrote up the meeting because it was such a spectacular venting of frustration.

*Q: Well actually, you know, you've got two sets. You've got the Saudis coming and the Chinese. The Chinese are real students and they're absorb -- I mean they're really getting educated. And the Saudis are getting girls and, you know, I mean my --*

ALBIN: Sure.

*Q: This is my impression, I --*

ALBIN: I think, Stu, that you are right. I don't suppose -- well anyway, I don't know them. I'm not connected in the Saudi community here.

*Q: But you've got to remember that -- I know one institution refers to the Chinese coming -- first place, they've got good students. But also it's their cash cow.*

ALBIN: *(laughs)*

*Q: And you can imagine the Saudi one, OK, so we'll have a department of benevolent neglect, Abdulaziz's Department of Benevolent Neglect. And picking up their -- they charge full tuition and --*

ALBIN: Sure. Absolutely. Oh, I don't know what the statistics are. I aim to find out, but.

*Q: But did you ever get any opportunity to look at what the Saudis' educational system were teaching their young people? Particularly about Islam vis-à-vis the rest of the world?*

ALBIN: I --

*Q: Because one of the great concerns I think has been that the Saudis have been sponsoring anti-Western teachings, vis-à-vis Islam and all, to students in Nigeria -- well, anywhere there are madrassas.*

ALBIN: Yes.

*Q: And were we monitoring this at all?*

ALBIN: Well, I was not a spy and I was not in the Intel business.

*Q: Well, you're not a spy, but I mean it's part -- part of it is published material.*

ALBIN: Oh!

*Q: They found it here in Arlington, for God's sake.*

ALBIN: In Falls Church and in Arlington.

*Q: Yeah.*

ALBIN: Absolutely. No. This is the kind of stuff I've picked up. I didn't have a list supplied to me by my bosses in Washington. I had a list that was supplied to me by me, that I made -- that I

made of the sheikhs and the preachers and the influential preachers and sheikhs and imams of Saudi Arabia. So I would look for their stuff when I went to the bookstores in Saudi Arabia. By the way, I also looked for those books on the stands in Cairo and any other city I went to in the Middle East. Sheikh ibn Baz was one. I forget who the stars of the jihad were in those days. The Wahhabis, were publishing a lot. They were publishing pamphlets and they would publish grand volumes of sermons and preachments. They had Muhammad bin Saud University that was *totally* given over to the Da'wah. I don't think I was even allowed on its campus, come to think of it. So yes. In Egypt, the publications were not nearly as effective as the internet and the electronic media became by the time I went back in 2007 when everyone had access to the internet. Publications on the street corner or sold on the curb outside of mosques were not nearly as effective as the flood of stuff that was coming over the internet that Egyptians were watching in 2007 when I went back for that TDY. That was an eye-opener for me. And all of a sudden I became a believer in the nefariousness and effectiveness of the Saudi propaganda machine.

*Q: Yeah. And apparently from all accounts this was a deal with the devil. You don't mess around with a god who will allow you religious leaders to preach whatever you want.*

ALBIN: That's right. I don't know about the underpinnings of the regime, but I would think that that's the principal one.

*Q: Were you ever -- well, did anybody ever from the State Department, the CIA and all, I mean not using you as a spy, but you're collecting material, which certainly added to intelligence about the country. And I think particularly about the educational system when we're talking about Saudi Arabia. Did anybody ever ask you about this or not?*

ALBIN: No one.

*Q: So you were pouring it in and as far as you knew you say they're not readers and -- do you think anybody was reading this?*

ALBIN: Well, we don't know, do we? Because we don't have a look on the inside.

*Q: Yeah. But I was wondering, you know -- yeah, somebody in --*

ALBIN: I mean what can I tell you about our achievements? I don't know much about the regime-- *our* regime -- because I'm excluded as a citizen -- I'm excluded from learning about it. But one thing I do know about it is that it took 10 years for the CIA to catch Osama! Now, how good is *that*?

*Q: OK. Well, I think -- looking at the time -- probably a good place to stop. And we'll pick this up the next time in 1985. And you came back here to -- and we'll talk about what you're up to then.*

ALBIN: Fine.

**GORDON S. BROWN**  
**Economic Officer**  
**Jeddah (1976-1978)**

*Ambassador Gordon S. Brown was born in Rome, Italy in 1936. He graduated from Stanford University in 1957. He served in the Army from 1957 until 1960, and joined the Foreign Service in 1960. His overseas career included positions in Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, France, Tunisia, and Mauritania. Ambassador Brown was the Political Advisor to the Central Commander in 1989 to 1991 and served as the Ambassador to Mauritania from 1991 to 1994. Ambassador Brown was interviewed in December 1996 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.*

Q: *Then you were in Saudi Arabia from when to when?*

BROWN: Just two years. It was my only two-year assignment I think in my whole career. It was from summer of '76 to summer of '78.

Q: *In Jeddah?*

BROWN: In Jeddah, yes. The embassy was still in Jeddah.

Q: *What was your job?*

BROWN: I was the economic officer who was following oil and money. As you can imagine, those were two interesting subjects to follow. The money thing was an interesting situation because the Treasury Department very much wanted to have its own Treasury attaché there. Our ambassadors were resisting it. They said, "Here comes Brown; he's a good officer and he'll do all the reporting you want." Well, the Saudis were being very secretive about what they did with their money in those days. They wouldn't tell me, as a junior officer or middle grade officer in the embassy, very much. I wasn't able really to do very good reporting. As a result, the reverberations from Washington Treasury kept saying, "Look at this crap we're getting from your embassy."

State was saying, "Ah, but it's great." I was caught in the middle of that. I was caught in the middle of quite a few things at that embassy and I really didn't like my experience there. I was also supposed to be doing oil reporting and yet the consul general over in Dhahran, whose name I've blessedly forgotten, didn't want me to come over to his consular district and said he was doing a fine job, which wasn't the case. My ambassador kept pushing me...

Q: *Your ambassador...*

BROWN: Well, the first one was Bill Porter who was oozing on off toward retirement and frankly I think had retired at post. The second one was John West, a political appointee, ex-governor of a southern state.



Q: *North Carolina?*

BROWN: No. South Carolina. Very interesting guy, but he had his own agenda. I didn't agree with him very much either.

Q: *What was his agenda would you say?*

BROWN: Bilateral relations entirely. The improvement of the U.S.-Saudi economic relationship, particularly when it affected contracts which he had friends bidding on. I think he was so wrapped up in that aspect of his job that he ignored some other aspects of his job to the detriment of our policy. But on the bilateral side he was crackerjack, a super ambassador in terms of pushing U.S. bilateral interests. Unfortunately sometimes he also pushed people who were frankly not of a caliber we should have been pushing, as commercial representatives of the United States.

Q: *There were some dubious...Not the top rung...*

BROWN: Dubious friends of John who showed up bidding on contracts.

Q: *We'll come back to that. Let's talk about the money. I would have thought that in many ways, Treasury with its contacts in World Banking, would be the place to find out where the money is going anyway?*

BROWN: To be perfectly honest, Treasury knew more about what was going on in Jeddah than we ever could have learned on site, because the Saudis were very carefully putting their reserves in U.S. Treasury notes in transactions which were off the market so that they didn't affect the market rate. They were so large. They were buying huge quantities of Treasury notes.

Q: *I assume Treasury was aware of it?*

BROWN: The Treasury was totally aware of it; they were negotiating with the Saudi Monetary Authority on a regular basis. Then to have some junior guy at the embassy running around saying, "What are you doing with your reserves" was kind of ridiculous. So I was a cat's paw in this argument really. They didn't expect any reporting. They just wanted their own guy in place.

Q: *With the oil, this was '76 to '78. This was during the real oil crisis.*

BROWN: Yes, right. This was during the time...

Q: *There must have been an awful lot of pressure on our embassy and on our diplomacy to do something. Here are these Saudis- we've been allies with them a long time and we are lining up to get gas. This is not a minor thing. This is alternate days, license plates. It was really a very difficult time.*

BROWN: I'm trying to remember at this point and I think I've forgotten exactly when the supply

situation actually improved. The embargo didn't last very long if you'll remember. It probably lasted for less than three or four months. So the question then really, after the immediate crunch was over, was what do you now do? Oil prices had reached a new plateau. Supply was tight and looked as if it was going to be tight for some time. How did you handle this new marketplace, rather than the crunch? I think I was probably either still in Paris or en route to Saudi Arabia during most of the crunch. Let's see. When was the war? The war was October 1973?

Q: *Yes. It was October.*

BROWN: I didn't go to...

Q: *So when you went there, it was three years later?*

BROWN: Yes.

Q: So we're really talking about high prices.

BROWN: Yes.

Q: *Was there a concern... Were we expressing our concern about the third world. In other words, maybe we could absorb it but what does Pakistan do?*

BROWN: In two ways we were doing that. One we were doing it rhetorically in the North South dialogue which was still going on in Paris. We were trying to get an alliance between ourselves and the poorer countries against the oil producers, in short; which was cynical, but appropriate to the circumstances.

The second thing, what we were really arguing about or talking to the Saudis about in those days was not drying up the capital pool. In short, not taking all of this huge amount of money which had suddenly shifted in their direction in world trade and sticking it under their mattress. The argument was: recycle, recycle, use the money, keep it in flow so that prosperity returns to the marketplace. If you'll remember, the '73 oil embargo really resulted in a slowdown in producer prices around the world and a slowdown in economic activity which lasted for quite some time. So we were telling the Saudis, "Keep the money pumping. Keep pumping out the money so that people get rich." Well, of course a lot of our people got rich. Not too many of the Indians and Pakistanis to be honest. We did get the Saudis to invest their money in ways so that it did not disappear. We kept it in circulation.

Q: *Who would you talk to on the Saudi side?*

BROWN: Well, it was largely a question of trying to prepare my ambassador to talk to Zaki Yamani, who was still the minister of oil, and the minister of finance or King Khalid and/or Prince Fahd, who at that time was Crown Prince. Khalid was the king but not a very active king. I talked to people at the staff level in the ministries and so on to get information, but by and large when we tried to make those kind of representations we made them either at the level of the ambassador or visiting people. Secretary Schlesinger, who was Secretary of Energy, came out

during that time (and a whole string of high level visitors, as you can imagine) trying to get the Saudis to increase their oil production-both capacity and actual. And to sort of serve, if you will, as the swing producer for oil market requirements.

*Q: How did we view the Saudi petroleum establishment? It was Yamani?*

BROWN: Yamani was the minister of oil. ARAMCO was still partly owned by the American partners-or partly controlled, in any event.

*Q: Were we watching how they operated with the other oil producing...Iran was of course a big one and Iraq at that time. Were they working well together or were there problems?*

BROWN: They were working reasonably well together at that time. Iran was still under the Shah. We monitored an awful lot of the market development from Vienna because, as a result of the famous North South dialogue and our own internal dialogue with other energy consuming countries, the International Energy Agency had been established in Vienna - and that became the official place for monitoring the oil market and oil market developments. Not so much the embassy. We were focused on what the Saudis were doing internally to produce oil.

*Q: I assume at that time there were agreed upon restraints weren't there, by the various oil producers?*

BROWN: I'm trying to remember whether they had the quota system in place already or not. They probably didn't. I really can't recall.

*Q: I can't remember all the details there but I was wondering were we feeling that the Saudis were team players at that particular point?*

BROWN: Well, that's why we kept pushing them to increase their capacity because we felt that as long as they had a huge capacity to produce oil, that would always put a ceiling on the level to which the market could rise. Everybody would know that the Saudis could just open the spigot. The Saudis were very definitely on our side at the time and they were trying to buy U.S. arms to indicate the degree to which they had an alliance with the United States. That was another political problem in Washington.

*Q: When the Saudis were buying U.S. arms who was the designated enemy for all of this?*

BROWN: There wasn't one. The Saudis simply said, "We don't have a modern military to defend our huge space," - and they do have a huge space - "and we need more modern arms."

Of course they ran into predictable difficulties in Washington and that was what John West was working on most of his time, when it wasn't commercial issues. Ambassador West was very effective in getting together a group of senators and congressman who tried to support the Saudi arms sale. Not successful at the time, but eventually successful.

*Q: The issue was mainly sale to Saudi Arabia might mean a potential arming of an*

*enemy of Israel? Wasn't that it?*

BROWN: That was the way it was seen in Washington anyway. Yes.

*Q: Did Tariki play any role at this point?*

BROWN: He was out of OPEC. I don't remember who was head of the OPEC at the time. Tariki was no longer active. He was doing oil consultancies. Fanning the fire a little bit, put it that way, wherever he was, but not playing any official role.

*Q: Were there a lot of oil operators, international types wandering around in Saudi Arabia?*

BROWN: Not so much oil operators. The number of contractors, large and small, American and others, who came to Saudi Arabia in those days was legion. They were trying to get some of that Saudi money. There were a lot of operators around, believe me. Some good and some bad. A lot bad.

*Q: Had the Saudis began to turn to contracts with Korean, Filipino, Pakistani firms? In other words, places who could bring in cheap labor, who could come in, do the job, and leave without leaving an impact basically?*

BROWN: Yes. They had already done that in some of the major projects. Even with U.S. cooperation. I think, for example, of the naval base which was being built north of Dhahran, with the U.S. Corps of Engineers doing the design and major contracting or project management, and the Koreans doing most of the on the ground contract work with scores of Koreans in hard hats working 12 hours a day and living in barracks. And presumably sending home lots of money.

*Q: Well, this of course became the pattern. Also they were less likely to have an impact. They kind of ate their kimche and stayed in their barracks and didn't interfere with society.*

BROWN: It was good for everybody concerned, except presumably the Ray Blount construction company, and people like that, who were bidding on the same projects and getting undercut by the people they had trained in Korea.

*Q: Although you were dealing with the economic side, what was the feeling about the viability of the Saudi monarchy, the Saudi government, how things were going there at that time?*

BROWN: Khalid was a good solid citizen who was doing a pretty respectable job as King. He wasn't an incandescent bulb, but he was pretty good. Fahd at that time had gotten over his playboy stage and was a good solid Crown Prince, doing a lot of the day to day operations of the government. Some of us thought...there was some discussion in the embassy as to whether or not Fahd had the wherewithal to really become a good king - which was obviously going to happen. By and large, I don't think we challenged him, or the House, as the appropriate ruler of the country. There was some air of unreality about it, of course. By and large, they were well entrenched. They know their country. They are suited for the country and we tended to feel that's okay. Obviously, Fahd was a modernizer, who was the kind of guy we hoped would move the

country forward. He has in some ways as you know, not in others.

*Q: Were we seeing the possible revolutionaries-I'm not sure if that is the right term-within the ranks of the royal family or elsewhere-the middle class or students or anything like that? I imagine with a Kingdom you always kind of look around at who's out to overthrow you.*

BROWN: You have to remember first that this was the Klondike period. Everybody was getting rich. Everybody was focused on getting the bucks. There was lots of money to go around. From '76 to '78 when I was there, certainly there was no question of real opposition (or even unreal opposition) to the regime. Everybody was busy trying to make some money off the regime. Sure, the regime is not universally popular, but by and large the middle class is perfectly happy with it. They get what that they want out of it which is a nice, comfortable life.

*Q: How about students? Lots of Saudi students in the United States at this time?*

BROWN: Yes. There were tons of them in the United States. Some of them were presumably being radicalized which we learned subsequently. But the students there were-again this was the time in which the State was building up the universities and pumping kids into the universities. They hadn't yet realized there were no jobs at the end of the tunnel. During that period I was there, the students were not at all restless. They were simply riding the gravy train like everybody else.

*Q: When you were there '76 to 78 Carter came in in '77. Was there any appreciable difference in our policy that you noted towards Saudi Arabia after Kissinger left? I guess it would be Vance.*

BROWN: No. No not really. Not at my level certainly. It was pretty...Even Kissinger had come around at some point or another to the realization that we needed the Saudis.

*Q: Did Israel raise it's head while you were there or was that an issue at all?*

BROWN: It's a consistent background issue to any service in the Middle East. Other than the fact that the Israeli lobby was making it difficult to sell F-15s to the Saudis which I wasn't immediately involved in. Although obviously everybody in the embassy pitched in when we had a big visitor. We had Carter. We had the Secretary of Defense. We had all those other people who came. It wasn't until Camp David that the U.S.-Saudi relationship was put to a real strain as a result of what was going on in Palestine and Israel.

*Q: How did the Carter visit go?*

BROWN: It went fine. It was to my recollection, not terribly substantive and a lot of atmospherics. Good atmospherics. They were fine.

*Q: Well then, you left in '78?*

**MARSHALL W. WILEY**  
**Deputy Chief of Mission**  
**Jeddah (1976-1977)**

*Ambassador Marshall W. Wiley was born in Illinois in 1925. He received his undergraduate degree, a J.D. and an M.B.A. from the University of Chicago. He entered the Foreign Service in 1958. Throughout his career, Mr. Wiley focused on Near Eastern Affairs, serving in North Yemen, Jordan, Cairo, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia. He was appointed ambassador to Oman in 1978. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1989.*

Q: *How long were you in Saudi Arabia?*

WILEY: A little over a year. I was asked to go to Saudi Arabia by Porter, who was then the ambassador in Saudi Arabia.

Q: *Which Porter?*

WILEY: Not Dwight. Ambassador Porter.

Q: *Yes, okay.*

WILEY: He was the ambassador there at the time. By the time I got there, he had been fired, and John West had been sent out, who was governor of South Carolina. John was very much a political animal, very much a politician, and knew almost nothing about the Middle East. But he had been active in Carter's campaign, as one of his supporters. I'm not quite sure why he wanted to go to Saudi Arabia, but, in any case, he did and Carter sent him there, after firing Porter from the job.

So by the time I got there, there was a brand new political appointee on the scene, who arrived, more or less, when I did as DCM. So I had the experience of dealing with a political ambassador.

Q: *How did this work? Was he able to function at all? The Arab world is a complex world, and we have real interests there. This is not Luxembourg; this is the Middle East. So how did the embassy run, and what did the ambassador do?*

WILEY: Relations were never very good between Ambassador West and myself. I thought that he came in with kind of a chip on his shoulder, knowing that he was a political appointee, and that the bureaucracy would probably resent him, particularly, replacing a career Foreign Service Officer, as he did, as ambassador. As a result, he tended to strike first against the bureaucrats as he saw them in the embassy, and I was in the middle as his DCM. On many of these issues, I was much more sympathetic to the bureaucracy, than I was to West. I would tell West this in private, which he didn't particularly appreciate, having his deputy side with the people with whom he was in dispute. It was not a very happy year, I must say, although I feel my personal relationships with West were not very good.

Q: *Were there any major issues that you had to deal with at that time?*

WILEY: Policy issues. John, like many political appointees, felt that he was the appointee of the President. He was not really ready to take orders from the Secretary of State. At times, he would ignore, or even go contrary to instructions from the Secretary of State. I thought he should not have done that, of course. He said, "I'm not the Secretary of State's appointee; I'm the President's appointee."

Q: *That is a recipe for disaster.*

WILEY: Yes.

Q: *Turning from that rather awkward time, in a way I am surprised that you got an appointment as an ambassador, because sometimes if you are not on the right side of a previous ambassador, particularly one who is connected, this can sometimes be the end of a career.*

WILEY: John had kind of a problem looking at it from his point of view. He was dealing with a bureaucracy, and a career officer, and myself, whom was part of that bureaucracy, that he didn't wish to antagonize totally. After all, he was a very political man, and he understands how political organizations work. I think, he did have respect for me as a substantive officer, and my knowledge of the area, and my reporting, and so on. His own reporting frequently reflected, I thought, quite a lack of knowledge about the area, and I tried to help him in this way, and, I think, generally, he did appreciate this. He knew that I was respected back in Washington, although he also knew that Washington knew that there was a conflict going on here. So he supported my nomination for an ambassadorship. This enabled him to bring in someone, whom he wanted as DCM.

Q: *Promote up!*

WILEY: Yes. [Laughter] So he supported my nomination to be an ambassador to Oman. So maybe it helped me.

**DOROTHY A EARDLEY**  
**Secretary to the Ambassador**  
**Jeddah (1976-1977)**

*Mrs. Eardley was born in Wisconsin and raised in Wisconsin and Illinois. She attended Rubican Business School before entering the State Department, where in 1951 she was assigned as Clerk-Stenographer at Djakarta, Indonesia. She subsequently was posted to Berlin, Chengmai, Paris, Libreville, Colombo, Ankara, Ottawa, Jeddah and Kigali. She also had temporary duty assignments in Djibouti, Reunion, and Johannesburg. She retired in 1980. Mrs. Eardley was interviewed by T. Frank Crigler in 2008.*

*Q: Why did you “dance at the chance”? Why did you want to go to Jeddah?*

EARDLEY: Because I wanted out of Ottawa. These fancy posts were never my cup of tea. I liked hardship posts, although it was nice being close to the United States. While I was there, I was once sent to Washington to work on the selection boards, promotion boards I think they were called. Also I had a chance to visit my family periodically, the ones in Detroit and the ones in Illinois. So it was pleasurable. But Ottawa wasn't my kind of embassy, and I was very happy to go to Jeddah. Twenty-five percent post.

So we went there and I lived on the compound. The embassy was on a big compound. To get off the compound you called for a chauffeur and a car. And that was how you got out and how you got back. It was great. I loved being hauled around. I wanted to hire a chauffeur and bring my car over, but they wouldn't let me do it. The Saudis wouldn't permit it.

*Q: They wouldn't permit you as a woman to drive, would they?*

EARDLEY: Right. But they wouldn't even let me own a car. No movies, no cinemas, no television, no . . . no fun except for the men. Anyway, my sister Grace and her husband came over. He was ex-Air Force so they always had free transportation. They got to Saudi Arabia and landed in Dhahran. Mike, my brother-in-law, was permitted to continue on to Jeddah; Grace was left behind. I had a terrible time getting her to Jeddah. I called our consulate there. I said, “Please help. I'm worried about my sister, who's been stranded there for two days.” They couldn't do anything.

*Q: Why was she stranded? Why couldn't she have come with her husband?*

EARDLEY: She finally did, but not through the consulate's help, not through the embassy's help. You've never been to Saudi Arabia. Oh, you have? Were you ever at the airports? Did you notice how the Saudis, the Saudi men, climb over the counters and grab a boarding pass and get on the plane, and the women are always left behind? That was what was happening to Grace. Women don't mean anything. Anyway, I think it took four days to get her from Dhahran to Jeddah. I had a nice little apartment on the compound with a concrete patio in the back, and I walked to the office every day, through the sand.

*Q: Another word about getting Grace there. Why was the consulate or embassy unable to help?*

EARDLEY: You don't balk the Saudis. You just try to get along with them.

*Q: Do you know whether anyone from the consulate went to the airport to help Grace get through?*

EARDLEY: Here's how she finally got to Jeddah: there was an American military man who was, I think, married to a Saudi. They were waiting to get on a plane. They knew that Grace had her boarding pass and everything. But she was always shoved aside by these thoughtless men. Anyway, he said he would help her, and he did. He was the one who finally got her on a plane,



because he was trying to get his wife on a plane too. And he succeeded; he finally got them both on a plane.

*Q: Just muscled his way through?*

EARDLEY: Yeah. That's what you have to do. One funny thing I noticed at Jeddah. You didn't often get out of the city, but if you did, you saw that all the roads were lined with wrecked cars. They drove like idiots, but they could get a new car the next day. They drove big cars, and they loved them.

Oh, we went swimming one day. We had a Palestinian there who was head of general services in our embassy. He was an excellent scuba diver. He was married to an American woman. Nice guy.

*Q: Do you remember his name?*

EARDLEY: I wish I did. It may come to me. Grace will probably remember it, and Grace will be here Wednesday. Anyway he said he would take us swimming. We got into our swimming clothes, we walked at least a mile across the desert, to the beach. I think the men wondered what the heck this was. We got down close to the water finally, then we walked another mile to the falling-off place, just a sudden drop-off. And if you don't fall over, you can see all those fish down there, and the colors are for real! It's a sight I'll never forget. Besides, it was fascinating to be able to dress like that and go across that long expanse and not run into any problems.

We were led by this Palestinian, and he did some scuba diving while he was there. I still have a shell that he caught down there. It was still alive, and I put it in my back yard and buried it in the sand. That's how you kill those animals that grow inside. And I still have that shell. Beautiful shell. I don't have anything that looks like it at all. But while I was digging down there I found a great big . . . now what do they call those big shells you can hear with?

*Q: Conch shells?*

EARDLEY: Yes, conch shells. (I think there's another name.) Anyway, I found a great big one that someone had buried there. I dug some more and found more shells, but nothing that big. It was huge, that big. I still have it. I never throw anything away. That's my problem.

*Q: How about the others working with you in the embassy there. Were they happy with their lot there, or was that a miserable place to be assigned?*

EARDLEY: Well, we had a secretary in the political section who was rather well-endowed with boobs. She wore skin tight t-shirts and skin-tight blue jeans. She'd come back from the souk every time she went in tears, because they sprayed her.

*Q: With what?*

EARDLEY: Whatever they had — ink, or paint. She also had long black hair which she didn't

put up in place. It was her own fault. Most people I think were satisfied with the place. I didn't hear any groaning, really.

*Q: And did they like Ambassador Porter?*

EARDLEY: Yes, I think they did. I didn't hear anything.

*Q: How about your relations with Ambassador Porter?*

EARDLEY: That jerk! That stupid ass! Men can be stupid, and they don't need to be.

*Q: He misbehaved, I take it.*

EARDLEY: Uh-huh. He did indeed. I would be shocked were Eleanor to ever learn about that.

*Q: Is she still living?*

EARDLEY: As far as I know. I've never seen an obit. But she was way up in age. I don't know.

*Q: It would be interesting to know where he "misbehaved." Are we talking Ottawa or are we talking Jeddah?*

EARDLEY: Jeddah. One day, he overheard me making an appointment for Eleanor to call on one of the women, like around one o'clock in the afternoon.

*Q: A wife of one of the other ambassadors?*

EARDLEY: Yeah. And he never came back to the office from lunch. Never. He would come in about five o'clock in the afternoon.

*Q: After a siesta.*

EARDLEY: Uh-huh. Well, I ordered the car for Eleanor, and had everything set up. He knew it. He could hear me from his office at my desk. And right after we all got back to our desks, the phone rang. It was the ambassador. He said, "Bring your book." "Aye, aye, Sir." But I thought, well that's funny. Fortunately, I didn't walk up through that sand-trap. I ordered a car. A chauffeur and the car. And when we got up there I told the chauffeur to wait for me. I had no idea. It was stupid. And I got inside. It was all dark, all the shades were drawn, drapes. He was sitting on a sofa, and I got out my book. He tells me to sit on the sofa. He throws his arm over my shoulder, and I just looked up at him and I said, "You don't want to dictate." And I got up and walked out of there, jumped in the car, and told the chauffeur to take me back to the embassy. I stayed there. But the rest of the weeks were a little bit uncomfortable. It was so stupid!

*Q: Men do stupid things, just like you said.*

EARDLEY: He shouldn't have done it.

*Q: I imagine your relations were strained then.*

EARDLEY: They were. And for no reason at all. He had never pulled anything like that before. I knew he had played around a little bit in Ottawa with my junior secretary, because she told me about it. But he never tried anything with me.

*Q: Well, that's an interesting story. You didn't experience difficulties with military personnel there?*

EARDLEY: No. We didn't see much of our military there. They weren't in the embassy. We had an economic section — can't remember the name of the head. I can't remember the head of the political section either. It was a very small political section, one secretary, one officer I think. Consular section. One secretary in the mission had a chance at a better job, but it required shorthand dictation. She asked me to teach her, which I did. She was good. I hope she got the job. I never heard. But anyway, as a thank you, she gave me these earrings out of the souk, you know the gold souk, in Jeddah. All that gold is manufactured and designed in Italy, so it's good gold. These are 18 carat. I think it was a very nice thing for her to do. I wear these all the time.

We had clandestine church service in the basement of the embassy. We also had square dancing, and I learned to square dance in Jeddah! We were called the Red Sea Squares. It's strange. I learned to play volleyball. I'd never played before. I had bowled in Paris. In fact, I may still, fifty years later, hold the women's single game champion. I bowled 213 — one time. And I was the champion in all Paris with all those military people. So, my career in Foreign Service was very helpful in many ways.

*Q: Jeddah? I guess we've finished with Jeddah.*

EARDLEY: Oh no we haven't! Mine had been a direct transfer from Ottawa to Jeddah, so they sent me a telegram saying I could go on home leave and return to post, which I was willing to do. I was happy there. Shortly after I got home, though, I got a telephone call from Washington saying I would not be going back to Jeddah. I hadn't packed up or anything. That I should just go on leave as long as I wanted to (another one of those run-around things). They said Ambassador Porter had been replaced. That was a shocker. He was replaced by the former governor of South Carolina; a man named West, I think that was his name.

*Q: John West.*

EARDLEY: I insisted that I had to get back to Jeddah because my whole apartment was there; my freezer was full of meat. But there was one person in the Department in an administrative capacity who helped me out tremendously. She said she would arrange for me to get back to Jeddah if I was willing go on TDY afterward. I was delighted!

However, while I was in Jeddah (when I got back there to pack up my things and get out of the way) I called on Madame Ambassador. She didn't know beans about people calling on her. I still

smoked at the time.

*Q: This was Mrs. West?*

EARDLEY: Oh, yes. I smoked for fifty-three years. I smoked 3-4 packs a day! Can you imagine the price of them now? All that money I could have saved, except I got them for \$2.80 a carton.

*Q: In Jeddah.*

EARDLEY: No, all over the world. I ordered through the mail. I don't think I ever paid much more than that except maybe at commissaries. Anyway, enough of my smoking. I got over it.

Well, I got out a cigarette, so she went across the room and got an ashtray and handed it to me. It was full of cut toenails! I couldn't believe my eyes. Evidently, before I got there, she was busy cutting her toenails. It was a very stilted meeting. She was very much out of place.

*Q: She was not a success.*

EARDLEY: She wasn't up to the task. I think she was out of place. I think he probably did all right, but I don't know.

*Q: He was there for four years.*

EARDLEY: Was he? He must have done all right then.

*Q: What else about Jeddah do you recall?*

EARDLEY: Square dancing.

*Q: Who square danced?*

EARDLEY: All of the embassy, I think. It was something to do. I guess we played cards. (I don't recall bridge there.) We had parties at each other's apartments. And there was a swimming pool on our compound.

*Q: Did you detect problems within the Country Team, any elements of the Country Team that weren't on board?*

EARDLEY: Nope. I thought we had good relations all the way around.

*Q: Do you remember being inspected there, by any chance?*

EARDLEY: I don't think so. We were inspected I believe in Colombo.

**JOHN R. COUNTRYMAN**  
**Deputy Director, Arabian Peninsular Affairs**  
**Washington, DC (1976-1979)**

*Ambassador Countryman was born in New York and raised in New York and California. He was educated at Fordham University, Miami University and the Frei University of Berlin. After service in the US Navy he joined the Foreign Service in 1962. An Arab language speaker and Middle East specialist, Ambassador Countryman served abroad in Istanbul, Beirut, Dhahran, Tripoli, Libreville and Oman, where he was US Ambassador from 1981 to 1985. In his service in the State Department in Washington, he dealt primarily with Arab Peninsular affairs. Ambassador Countryman was interviewed by David Reuther in 2001.*

*Q: Because of the War College field trip and research that you did, you re-introduced yourself to the people on the desk, Arab Peninsula affairs. Now organizationally, had Arab Peninsula affairs always been there and basically had been the Saudi desk? Is there any particular administrative history there that sets the background?*

COUNTRYMAN: Yes. ARP had always been a country directorate. Since when I'm not sure, but way back. Initially it covered Saudi Arabia and Yemen, as I recall. Then Kuwait slipped in when Kuwait went independent. When Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the UAE and Oman were under the British, they were not covered by ARP. It was sort of handled out of London. So it was really a Saudi directorate with Yemen tacked on. When Joe Twinam, when he was transferred from Jeddah back to the Department and Dick Murphy was the Country Director, Joe Twinam was the first gulf desk officer. He was the desk officer for the whole gulf at the point when they were coming in to independence. Then he was the first U.S. ambassador to Bahrain, a resident ambassador. But by the time I got there as Deputy Director, it was one of the biggest country directorates in NEA in terms of number of countries that the Director was responsible for, and one of the biggest in terms of personnel because of that fact.

ARP had a Country Director, and now a Deputy Director. The only other NEA country directorate which had a deputy director was NEA/AIA, Office of Israel Arab affairs. Again because of the span of control and the size the office. Then there was a senior Saudi desk officer and a junior Saudi desk officer. There was Barbara Bodine, who later went on to be Ambassador to Yemen. She was the desk officer for the two Yemens and handled political-military affairs, which were very big. Then we had two other desk officers who split the Gulf. This changed over the years. I mean somebody took like Kuwait and Bahrain, and the other desk officer took Qatar, UAE, and Oman. So you had country director, deputy director, two Saudi people, a Yemen pol-mil officer, and two more desk officers, so you had seven officers. When I became country director (in 1979), I had two deputy directors. I had Roger Merrick and Quincy Lumsden. Roger was... Quincy was the senior of the two, but Roger Merrick was the deputy director for Saudi Arabia and the Yemens. Quincy Lumsden was the deputy director for the Gulf.

*Q: Illustrating that it is all becoming much more important to U.S. interests, and we are having to staff it out. Who was the senior Saudi person when you arrived in the fall of 1976?*

COUNTRYMAN: Charles Cecil, who later was my DCM in Oman and went on to be Ambassador to Niger.

*Q: Now looking up if you will, the Country Director at the time you arrived in the summer of '76 was...*

COUNTRYMAN: Fran Dickman, but was only there a matter of weeks before he went off to be Ambassador to Kuwait, and Joe Twinam came back from Bahrain and was country director.

*Q: Joe was country director. Now up in the NEA front office, which deputy assistant secretary was responsible?*

COUNTRYMAN: Sid Sober. Roy Atherton was the assistant secretary.

*Q: From the desk's point of view, what are some of the policy priorities that you are looking at and you are asking these embassies to watch for you?*

COUNTRYMAN: Well, this was a time when Congress had just passed legislation that foreign military sales had to be submitted to them for review if they were over a certain amount of money. As I arrived, this legislation had just passed, and we had our first test case with sending some military equipment to Saudi Arabia, which actually was turned down. There was heavy opposition from APEC, The American Israeli Public Affairs Committee, the Israeli lobby in Washington. The offices in NEA and PM (Bureau of Political-Military Affairs) were simply not very well prepared to do the kind of congressional work that needed to be done to handle the arms sales. This was a very tricky kind of a thing. It was a thing that became, because I think Joe Twinam thought he had enough other things to do with oil and the dollar and Saudi involvement in the peace process, sort of my thing that I watched over for the office was military sales. I was sort of in contact with...not that Joe didn't do it, but he looked to me for and also for some drafting and working with the desk officers. I was sort of our pol-mil officer writ large. As Deputy Director I did whatever he told me to do, and it shifted day in and day out. But that was a large part of what I did for the next two years as his deputy.

*Q: Can we fine tune the timing of this legislation a little bit, because you come in the summer of '76, and the American presidential elections are that winter with the Carter administration starting January '77. Did that legislation pre-date the transition to the new administration?*

COUNTRYMAN: Yes. it did. It was in place. It had passed in the spring or very late winter of '76 and the first cases under it came up in the summer. This was case, the actual one was the TOW missiles, you know the wire guided anti tank missiles [Editor's Note: "TOW" stands for Tube-launched, Optically-tracked, Wire data link, guided missile]. There had been, in conjunction with this, a lower Gulf arms policy that had been approved in an inter agency Presidential Directive as to what would be the guidelines for our arms sales to Saudi Arabia and the lower Gulf. The language in there was rather general, I mean, it sort of indicated that we would not sell offensive weapons whatever that means. It is a very tricky concept. What is this? It is practically, I mean a military purist would say there is no weapon that is purely defensive.

And that they would not be sort of first generation so that there was a certain sense that an older version of a weapons system would be sold. Not a second rate particularly, but not the cutting edge technology would be sold, and that we would encourage the countries to look to Saudi Arabia and Iran for their security in a local sense. I think what was particularly on people's minds was that there not be, because these countries were increasingly getting more oil wells, is that they were not going to have their own little arms race and buy an awful lot of expensive equipment just for prestige purposes.

*Q: I am struck that the Yom Kippur War in 74 was followed by an oil embargo and increase in oil prices. Congress then passed legislation to restrict arms sales to an area that has new found wealth; an illustration of Congressional impact on foreign policy, as it set the parameters of what the American government can sell, and what it can't. So now Congress is even more directly involved in setting American foreign policy agendas.*

COUNTRYMAN: I feel we weren't all in that much trouble, once we kind of got our act together and had a better sense of being able to brief the Congress. There was a general understanding, and I was interested to see this was in an article yesterday or the day before in the (Washington Post) on the relationship with Saudi Arabia. The basic parameter, or guidelines of our dealings with the Saudis since the Second World War and President Roosevelt made King Saud a beneficiary of lend lease for his help in the Second World War. It has always been oil for security. That has been the trade-off. U.S. being the sort of metropole, being the protector over the horizon very quietly, so that it doesn't embarrass the royal family, but American security guarantees even though there is no treaty, but a sense that there is a special relationship and the United States would protect Saudi Arabia, and Saudi Arabia would be helpful in terms of oil.

Then as oil became even more and more important and Saudi finance became a very important instrument in the world of finance, all those millions of dollars, that they would invest their money in U.S. treasury bills, recycling the petrodollar. That message to the strong supporters of Israel in the Hill caught resonance. There was a relationship with the Saudis that predated the founding of the modern state of Israel. It was in Israel's best interest that the United States had access to oil and there be stable oil and financial markets in the world. So then the issues came down to just how sophisticated the weaponry is that you sell to Saudi Arabia, and what controls do you put in place so you make sure it is not used against Israel. And of course, this was later on in my tour. The following year we sold the F-15 fighter plane to Saudi Arabia. That was a major Congressional battle because heretofore we had never sold a first run, front line American fighter plane to anyone in the Middle East except the Israelis. The Israelis were very concerned about losing air superiority. The Saudis had a good air force. They had good pilots. But we were extremely careful and had very, and I was very much involved for two or three months. I did little else other than worry about that F-15 fighter plane sale to Saudi Arabia.

Brian Atwood who later on would become the head of AID, he was the Deputy Assistant Secretary in H, Congressional Relations. He did almost nothing for months except that. He was extremely effective in going up and talking to people in Congress. He made himself familiar with all of the issues. I was practically at his beck and call. I mean call Joe Twinam out of courtesy would say, "I would like John Countryman to come up Thursday at three o'clock and meet Senators," blah, blah, and blah and representative Blah, and the staff aide of blah and just chat

this up. Sure. So I would spend the afternoon sitting around and sort of calming to people. So we really I think learned a lot from that early experience. I think Roy Atherton was particularly good and had very good relations with the Hill and was a very persuasive testifier.

*Q: Let's look at the Congressional side of this a little bit. The common stereotype of the Foreign Service officer stationed in Washington deals with a local embassy and writes internal memos. Extensive liaison with Congress is not part of that stereotype. How were you interacting with Congress?*

COUNTRYMAN: Stepping back, I remember when I worked for Averill Harriman, how he used to rant and rave about how he thought that the State Department's Congressional Relations office was terrible. His attitude was it was not effective, and it was more effective in telling the State Department what it could not do and how difficult things were up on the Hill rather than having, knowing how to present American foreign policy on the Hill and selling it. Of course, being a politician, he was very sensitive to the necessity of bringing the Congress along. He was not, you know, let's stuff it down their throats. He was a very strong advocate for a strong Congressional relations office and not one that simply told the State Department what it couldn't do, but enable the State Department and the President to achieve.

*Q: We were talking about State's interaction with Congress. In your position as Deputy Director, were you only dealing with staffers?*

COUNTRYMAN: Oh, no, I was dealing with the principals. We got Ambassador John West, our ambassador to Saudi Arabia, who of course was a political appointee. He had been governor of South Carolina and was a very close friend of Jimmy Carter. He came back and we used him. I went up and took him around. He knew a lot of people particularly on the Democratic side, but also on the Republican side. He knew a lot of people on the Hill. I went up with him, and he gave briefings and talked to people. He was extremely persuasive and helpful. But a lot of what I learned in that period was that the mere fact of my walking in the room with a particular attitude which is: I am not here to apologize for what the President wants to do and the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense in these arms sales, but I am here to answer any of your questions and to try to make you understand where we are coming from. I think that kind of achieved fair better results than the attitude: look I am the foreign policy expert; you are just a dumb Senator from North Dakota who doesn't know anything about these people. Let me explain these foreigners to you.

We tried very hard to get that element out of it, and to say absolutely that is a very legitimate question to ask, and here is the answer to it. I can understand why you would be concerned about it. No, that is not the way the Saudis have traditionally thought about this thing. Here is the history of the royal family. Here is what it means to be a protector of the holy places. So, I think that the amount of time that we spent there was extremely well spent. I had the feeling that in many cases the warmth of the reception was not so much tied to the substance of my message as it was how nice of you to finally have been courteous enough to come over and taken me into your confidence. You as a representative of the State Department.

*Q: Did part of your work include suggesting to staffers to contact local embassies or suggesting*



*to the local embassies to include a staffer or congressman on the next Embassy dinner list? I guess my question is how effective were the ARP embassies in also presenting their case?*

COUNTRYMAN: Well, I guess the Gulf embassies didn't have to do it; we really didn't have such controversial sales. It was the Saudis. At that time the Saudis tended to be rather quiet. They didn't have someone as flamboyant and highly placed as Prince Bandar right now. So they were not very active. I think they felt that they could probably do themselves more harm than good. The ambassador usually did. He would deal with a few people, but the embassy itself was not particularly active.

*Q: While you were at ARP there was an election and transition between the departing Ford administration and the incoming Carter administration. Transitions can be interesting as the desks prepare background papers for the new people. Did you recall anything of note about this transition?*

COUNTRYMAN: As I recall, it happened fairly soon after my arrival. Of course, I hadn't been in Washington for years, so I was a little forgetful of what had been the usual thing. In retrospect after I spent five years in Washington before I went to Oman, between the time I arrived in ARP and actually left. It really wasn't that much different in the tasking on the desk than if the Secretary of the Treasury were going to Saudi Arabia, you would get the tasker from S/S and NEA. You know, ARP will write a paper on oil in the Gulf or the current state of our relations with the Saudi royal family. The political military affairs officer will write this paper, and there would be this book compiled that would be presented up to S/S to be given over to the Secretary of the Treasury that was his briefing book on the background and talking points. The Saudis may raise this, and this is what you should raise. You shouldn't raise this, and if you raise this, here are your talking points. Here is background on this. Well, when the transition came in, it was like that writ large. We had an incredible number of papers to write, to brief the new administration on relations with Saudis and the Gulf.

*Q: Did that tasking list of papers come from the front office, Ambassador Atherton or did the newcomers...*

COUNTRYMAN: I think it came from the transition team to its people in S/S, and S/S filtered it down. Obviously there wasn't just NEA. There was policy toward Japan and Australia and South American things and drugs. Everybody got into the act. I think what it was the transition people sitting down with the career people in S/S and the 7th. Floor and coming up and discussing what kind of papers they wanted and information they need.

*Q: With the arrival of the Carter administration and its emphasis on human rights, and I think the State Department established a human rights office at the time. Do you see any difference in your work or priorities upon the arrival of this new administration?*

COUNTRYMAN: Yes, and I think I can remember that, I have forgotten her name now, but she was a young woman who was on the White House staff who was sort of spearheading the whole question of human rights. What was her name? Her mother wrote, was an historian and wrote a famous book on the First World War. I will think of her name in a minute. Wait, wasn't it Patt

Derian? What happened with human rights was that the people who were most interested in human rights were really unaware of some of the realities in the Middle East. There was very little concern then about what I think now would be something we might see as repressive and that is the way that women are handled in a place like Saudi Arabia. That was no so much an issue.

It was more a question of the more traditional freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, voting, that sort of thing rather than women's rights. I remember one of the first sessions we had with these people from the White House we're talking about the bureau being set up. I, or Joe Twinam, was asked at one point, "When is the last time one of your ambassadors in the Gulf had a discussion of human rights with a host government?" I think it was Joe who was all prepared for this. He said, "Well in the case of our Embassy in Kuwait, yesterday they had a thorough discussion of human rights in conjunction with Kuwait's complaints to the United States about the human rights of Palestinians being violated." Well that is not what they wanted to hear. So the wind was sort of taken out of the sails of the whole human rights thing in terms of ARP or the Middle East because there was at that time quite frankly a lack of desire to ruffle the Saudi's feathers or even anybody else in the Gulf with sort of an implicit criticism of Islamic law. There was also a feeling that if you brought up human rights in any context, you were opening the door to have an undesirable discussion about the United States condoning Israeli degradations against the rights of Palestinians. So the whole question of human rights puffed up as the Carter administration came in, but as far as I was concerned, when I was Deputy Director and I was in regional affairs and I came back, it was never a very large issue with us, human rights because of those two factors. One a disinclination to take on Islam, and disinclination to open the door to a thorough discussion of human rights which would have embroiled us in bitter exchanges about the Palestinians. That United States support of Israeli policies could be construed as against basic human rights.

*Q: Given the paper that you wrote in the War College and your duties in ARP, what were the view and the priorities given to Iran and its activities in the Gulf?*

COUNTRYMAN: Well, the Iranians were in general quite thoroughly...fairly circumspect under the Shah in what they did in the Gulf. They tried to be good neighbors. They did help the Omanis a little bit and actually supplied very quietly and discreetly some Iranian troops to help the Omanis put down the communist revolt in Dhofar. But that was done very quietly even though that was a little bit, you know Iranian troops on the Arab side of the peninsula. The Saudis weren't too happy about that, but the Saudis didn't particularly like the Omanis to begin with. They kept quiet about it. But the Iranians were pretty good about not attempting to use their military power on the Arabian side of the peninsula.

*Q: So the Iran that you are looking at and you are factoring in to your policy suggestions is the Shah's Iran. It is a less overt actor in the Gulf at this time.*

COUNTRYMAN: And someone who, we always wanted there to be a Tehran-Jeddah, Tehran-Riyadh axis of these being the two most powerful countries in the region to sort of keep things quiet and do the right thing. You know money in the case of the Saudis and oil. There were money and oil in Tehran but also a larger population and a larger military force. That never quite

worked out because of mutual suspicion between the Shah and the house of Saud never were very close to each other.

*Q: What would be some of the factors keeping them apart?*

COUNTRYMAN: Well, the Shah was, of course, Shia. The Iranians rather than Arabs, the Wahabi fundamentalism versus a rather tolerant view of Islam and a progressive secular state that the Shah was advocating, and just basic geopolitical and geostrategic divergence. Who was going to be the primary power in the Gulf?

*Q: What was the Saudi view of Iraq at that time? We are talking late '70s.*

COUNTRYMAN: Well, suspicious and not good relations but not quite so... I don't think they felt the way we feel with the analysis that Iraq presented that much of an immediate threat, that whoever was in power in Iraq was going to step over the border. There had always been this question of Kuwait, but that had been met by the British with a show of force. That was something that had never been settled. The Iraqis had never stepped back from their claim that this was their territory and they had been forcibly separated. It was not an active problem.

*Q: Again as you are coming to '78, you have been on the desk a couple of years, how would you describe now your policy priorities and whether they shifted from when you first came on board?*

COUNTRYMAN: Well, there was still the question of appropriate arms sales to Saudi Arabia because this was something that Prince Sultan who was the Minister of Defense, this was a thing that every body was concerned that the Saudis are very much concerned about. I think it was for a number of reasons. They literally wanted to keep their military happy, and that it was a way of convincing themselves that the United States was a good ally, that we would supply them with this equipment. I think that from a geostrategic standpoint, we wanted to sell it to them because it would mean if you were going to sell them the F-15, well then you had to have hardstands for repair of the F15 which meant that although you could never have an airbase in Saudi Arabia, if the Saudis and U.S. had common equipment and you had tooled the Saudis up to handle American equipment, and you were rather lavish in the way you constructed the base, in effect, you had base facilities that you could use.

This was still, of course, a time when we were concerned about a Soviet thrust into the Gulf to seize the oil. And there was some concern that perhaps Iraq could be a threat to Saudi Arabia. There was always a concern about holding the Saudi's hands, I guess is the best way to put it, over the Arab-Israeli problem, that it was always a discomfiture between us and the Saudis because while the Saudis, like so many of their Arab brethren, didn't like the Palestinians, they felt obliged to make the Palestinian cause a bedrock of their foreign policy and to complain about mistreatment of fellow Arabs and injustice to the Palestinians and the necessity for a Palestinian state. That was always a problem; we were always concerned that we were writing instructions and I worked very closely with the Israeli desk and the front office to make sure that if the slightest thing happened in the Levant or whatever it was that happened between Israel and its closer Arab neighbors, that we read the Saudis in. It was a particular sensitivity to the kind of questions that the Saudis would raise. The talking points could not be the same ones we gave to

our ambassador in Amman or Cairo. They would have to be a little bit tailor made to the Saudis. The same idea but we would phrase it in a little different way.

*Q: By suggesting we were bringing them in on our most intimate thinking about a subject and suggesting we were taking account of the way they looked at the problem, I suppose we were given them special status.*

COUNTRYMAN: And with the added thing of and the next time when Prince Abdullah goes up to see his friends in Damascus, if he could stress so and so, gee that would be helpful. So we would try to use the Saudis because the Saudis, although they did not have political muscle in the Arab world because of large population or big armies, they had the power of the purse, and they had the prestige of being the protector of the holy places. So what the Saudis said was not of overwhelming importance in the Arab-Israeli context, but it had some importance. Under somebody like a Roy Atherton or Nick Veliotis who were trying to do everything they could to forward the peace process, it would have been foolish and very bad to leave the Saudis out. So that was an element of American foreign policy that required a lot of work on the desk, because the Saudis always were being pulled into it, and we wanted to be able to lead them in.

One of the other big developments is because of the tremendous amount of emphasis on oil and the Saudis desire for development, we launched in that period the U.S.-Saudi Joint Commission which was really, since Saudi Arabia was obviously not eligible for foreign aid, it was sponsored by the U.S. Treasury. It was really a way of funneling petro dollars into appropriate development projects for Saudi Arabia. It took some of its impetus from our AID and from the British Crown agent, back in the 19th. Century. The British still had a Crown Agent in the Gulf when I used to go before the Brits pulled out. The Crown Agent was established way way back in the 18th. not even the 19th. century for British colonies. The Crown Agent was a private individual sponsored by a British business but with some quasi Foreign Office blessing. The Crown Agent would be resident in India or in Dubai or Kuwait and would have offices in London. The local maharaja or the sheik could come to the Crown Agent with any request from: "I want new drapes in the palace," to "I want to buy a Rolls Royce," or "I want to buy commercial refrigerators for my kitchens." So that some Brit or some other person wouldn't rip him off, the Crown Agent would work with British suppliers to make sure, first of all, that it was a British supplier, and secondly to make sure that things were done fairly. So the Treasury Department became the agent, and there were Treasury reps in Jeddah and Riyadh. The Saudi ministries would go to them as they would go to AID and say, "We want to build a road from Jeddah to al Baha." "Fine we will get Bechtel to come out and give you an estimate on it." Or whatever, we need a turnkey operation for a medical system for the King. So we got, this was a big thing the Treasury did. We got a huge American medical conglomerate to come out there and gave them hospitals or built hospitals and staffed them with nurses, staffed it with autoclaves and centrifuges and medical staff, so on and so forth. Just set up these turnkey operations for them. That was a big operation. There was a lot of Embassy involvement, a lot of writing of papers so that the Treasury officials who went out there, Secretary of the Treasury Simon was the one who was very involved in that. Briefing him so he could get a better sense of what the Saudis were like, the kinds of projects they would be looking for. That was a big involvement at the desk in that period, launching that Joint Commission.

*Q: Let's go into that a little bit because what I hear you saying here is one of the functions of the desk is to liaise with other agencies in the federal government, and in this case of recycling petrodollars Treasury gets involved a great deal. Is the Saudi desk officer handling most of the liaison with Treasury or are you and Joe Twinam attending a lot of inter-agency meetings?*

COUNTRYMAN: It would depend. As obviously, we were talking about the Secretary of the Treasury, Secretary of State is talking to him. In second instance probably a front office person, Dick Murphy or Nick Veliotos is talking to an assistant secretary level counterpart. So the big meeting would have perhaps Secretary Simon coming over and meeting with Dick Murphy. I might have been there, either in my deputy capacity or later on when I was Country Director, to sort of figure out, to be there and aware of what were the lacks in his knowledge. What was he looking for, so that we could give him what he wanted, but at the same time a lot of these other agencies, to them Saudi Arabia was really kind of a mystery. I mean these were people with funny head dresses and where the camels fit in with oil production. I mean there really was a lack of knowledge as to who these people were, and a difficulty in understanding that the Saudi interlocutor might on one level be extremely sophisticated in terms of what he knew about the United States and all the expertise in petroleum and so on, but in other respects have some rather... You could not derive from that immediate sophistication, sophistication about other areas of American life. except that there would be certain sensitivities or certain ways of looking at the world that they might be somewhat surprised about. So there was a constant need to make sure that people were properly briefed. That is what it comes down to.

Of course, we had a lot of people who came over to the States for military training. A lot of the Saudis came over. We had pretty good people in the Pentagon that we talked to and we did not give the briefings to these people when they went out to, someplace in San Antonio or Kansas City. But I had a certain input into it and would supply them with talking points and things that they might want to stress in their briefings with Saudis.

*Q: In addition to working with Treasury Department do any other agencies particularly come to mind? Wasn't the Army Corps of Engineers deeply involved in a lot of construction in Saudi Arabia?*

COUNTRYMAN: Yes, they were there. They were there through the whole period. They were more or less folded into our military missions.

*Q: Let's see now, you are Deputy Director ARP to the summer of '78. As you said this is your first time back in Washington for some time. Were you able to do things like serve on a promotion panel or...*

COUNTRYMAN: No I didn't. I served on a promotion panel some years later, something I always wanted to do. Those two years I was really busy. It was a very busy time, and Joe Twinam, I think, felt very strongly that to do his job properly, he had a very full plate, he had a clear idea what he wanted off his plate that he wanted me to take care of. So he delegated a good bit of work to me and worked me hard. This is what I need to do, and this is what you need to do. So I worked long hours; I was working very hard for those two years. There was a lot going on, and there was a lot that he looked to me to take care of.

*Q: Did that also include such things as making sure everybody's annual performance evaluation was written in the spring.*

COUNTRYMAN: Yes, I was sort of his DCM but back in the States kind of thing. I would handle a lot of administrative things that the country director. I would worry about are we getting an extra secretary. I would worry about we had some, Joe didn't wash his hands of it, but he didn't want to deal with for instance with any consular matters. We had some difficult consular problems, so I would more or less work with the desk officer in resolving some consular problems.

For example, when Ambassador West came there, we had a number of incidents involving Americans who were...before we had had classically in Saudi Arabia, we had sort of two groups of people who were sort of shielded. One were the diplomats and the other were the ARAMCO people. ARAMCO, I think we discussed this before, ARAMCO had its own kind of enclave and its own system for taking care of its people, working with people in the eastern province and keeping Americans out of trouble. Well, you got this Treasury presence and a burgeoning of other Americans and civilians coming in, there were people who were not American military or diplomats or ARAMCO, you got other people. So you got such things as drunk driving or someone bringing in alcohol or someone punching out a Saudi. The consular section in Jeddah and Riyadh had always been very small and staffed by good competent consular officers, but not the kind of people who had a great deal of...who were senior protection and welfare people, people who had served on the Mexican border, say Nuevo Laredo, who were really experts in that field of consular work. I remember there was a time when Ambassador West kind of came to Joe Twinam and me on one of his consultations and said, "I feel like an old country lawyer. I shouldn't have to do this. I have to go down and deal with some of these things." Joe and I hit the ceiling. "My God you shouldn't be with all the other things we look to you to do, you shouldn't be worrying about this." So we got a fairly senior consular officer in there. I worked with consular affairs to try to pull that act together and come up with some guidelines for Americans and publish some stuff about Saudi sensitivities and what to do if you got into trouble.

**JOHN HUMMON**  
**Joint Economic Commission**  
**Riyadh (1976-1980)**

*John Hummon was born in 1930 in Ohio. He graduated from Albion College in 1953 and later earned an MA and PhD from the University of Michigan. Mr. Hummon began work at the Agency for International Development in 1960 and worked in Tanzania, Nigeria, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia and as the Mission Director in Botswana. He was interviewed by W. Haven North in 1999.*

HUMMON: I left the Philippines and went to Saudi Arabia.

*Q: What year was this?*

HUMMON: In 1976. To head up the U.S. Mission to the U.S.-Saudi Arabian Joint Economic Commission.

*Q: This is a special and unique type of program. What's the background on this type of program? This was not with AID, I gather?*

HUMMON: No, this was with the Treasury Department. I had to meet with Bill Simon who was Treasury Secretary and I met with Larry Eagleburger, whom I had known when I was Executive Secretary. I think he was an assistant to Katzenbach at an earlier time, but he had become Under Secretary for Political Affairs in 1976. So there were some political dimensions to this job. The genesis of it was the energy crisis in 1973 when the oil supply was cut off by OPEC, and the price of oil quadrupled overnight, and the Saudis and the other Mideast nations just took a really tough stand. The United States suddenly realized that we had talked about a special relationship with the Saudis, and we in fact did have one out of necessity; we needed to improve that relationship to ensure the continued flow of oil. The Saudis also had an interest in close relationships with the United States in terms of support for their regime and their overall policies. They were very fundamentalist, but there's another element of fundamentalism that goes even further to the right, as witness to what happened in Iran. Saudi Arabia wanted to develop closer relationships with the United States.

*Q: This was a time when they were accruing vast sums from the increase in oil price, is that right?*

HUMMON: Yes. To repeat, there was a coalescence of interest. The United States wanted to develop a better relationship with Saudi Arabia. The Saudis wanted to get a better relationship to help protect their regime. And they also suddenly had these tremendous oil revenues. Their production shot up to 9 million barrels a day from whatever it was ... a very low figure. And they stabilized at this time at about 8.5 million. So they were receiving millions and millions of dollars in revenues. In 1974, Secretary of State Kissinger and Crown Prince Fahd signed an agreement for a Joint Commission, which would be to share certain ideas on financial matters and the like. But it also was to be basically an assistance program by the Americans in areas of industry, agriculture, science and technology and manpower.

*Q: What was the name of the program?*

HUMMON: JECOR. The Treasury was wild about acronyms, but this was the Joint Economic Commission ... the U.S. Saudi Arabian Joint Commission on Economic Cooperation. It was an interesting setup in a procedural sense.

*Q: How did it work?*

HUMMON: Pretty well.

*Q: But functionally, how was it? It was their money.*

HUMMON: We had two co-chairs of the Joint Commission. The Secretary of Treasury, Simon and Blumenthal when I was there and, on the Saudi side, was the Minister of Finance and National Economy. The Joint Commission met once a year with the Secretary and Minister co-chairing either in Riyadh or in Washington, alternating capitals. Then there were two Coordinators, and the Coordinator for Saudi Arabia was the Deputy Minister of Finance, at that time, Dr. Mansour al-Turki, and on the American side it was the Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for International Affairs, Gerry Parskey and later Fred Bergstrom. But as a practical, de facto matter, the day to day coordination by the U.S. was by the Director of the U.S. Representation to the Commission in Riyadh and that was the job I had. I worked with the Saudi Coordinator, and I met with him or his Deputy often to carry out the Commission mandate. There was an office in Treasury that back-stopped us.

We had in staffing a Director, a Deputy Director, a Controller, an Administrative Officer, a GSO and Program Monitors in the four areas of involvement: industry, manpower, science and technology, and agriculture. All of these salaries were paid by the Treasury Department out of a special fund under Section 607 of the Foreign Assistance Act. Thus, we were not being paid by the Saudis. However, the people that we brought in as technicians in the various development areas were paid on a reimbursable basis.

Here's how it worked. A Saudi Ministry would say we want assistance in the development of financial information services within their Ministry. And they would come to us and ask if we could recruit some Americans to work on that. They might come to us directly or they might come to the Saudi Coordinator, and he would then come over to me, and we would write up a project agreement or perhaps initially carry out a study. Then we'd get an estimate of what the funding would be and, instead of going to Congress for our funding, we would go to the Saudis and sit down and explain to them what the funding would be. If they agreed they would come back and say, "All right, we're going to give you x amount," which we would put into the Joint Commission account at Chase Manhattan Bank in New York City, later to a Treasury Trust account, and we would proceed from there. We developed project agreements, of course, with specific financial plans.

When I left after a couple of years we had project funding of, I don't recall precisely, but something on the order of \$300 million that we had accrued in that period of time. We had about two hundred Americans working plus numerous third country employees. The number grew to over 300 Americans in later years. We were involved in a host of activities.

*Q: What do you regard as the most significant role in terms of development?*

HUMMON: I think probably at that particular time a significant accomplishment was getting the overall program operational and assisting in the start up of several projects. These included such activities as agricultural research, electrification, development of national parks, vocational and technical training, upgrading of the Saudi Arabian national statistical system, initiation of a program for new energy resources, transportation planning, customs administration, and so on. Included in nearly all of this was a strong training component.

*Q: Were we not including institutions within the country? Were we mostly training in the U.S.?*



HUMMON: It was a combination. Much of the training was in-country, e.g., the development of vocational training programs and centers within the Kingdom. Later, many participants were sent to the U.S. under various projects. When I was there much of the funding was for the costs of U.S. technicians - salaries and related housing and administrative costs. We also financed electrical equipment, and of course, there were training costs.

*Q: Any particular institutions stand out in your mind as continuing today that you helped establish?*

HUMMON: I think that, by and large, the fact that the Joint Commission was successful and that it continued in existence is a credit to the Saudis and to all those on the American side who were involved. There were a number of other Joint Commissions that never got off the ground, at least when I was there. As for the projects, I believe there was success in meeting the objectives we had outlined in the various activities I mentioned earlier.

A mark of what transpired is the fact that the Joint Commission is in its 25th year with Saudi Arabian funding over these years totaling around \$1.7 billion, according to my contacts at Treasury. Perhaps the most signal accomplishment has been the substantial training in the various areas of involvement, and the development of systems for carrying on institutionalized activities in various sectors - key elements of modern state administration in such areas as census capability, consumer protection, gathering of statistical data, transportation and power grid planning, auditing, customs, survey and research in agriculture and natural resources, and so on. I understand that since the Gulf War, there has been a phasing down of the program, partly because of a tighter financial situation in the Kingdom. Other factors may have been considered as well. The Commission is scheduled to terminate its operations in June, 2000. But it is clear that the magnitude of the effort was significant and made an impact on development.

*Q: Was AID associated with this in any way at all?*

HUMMON: No. Not at all.

*Q: Did they help with the recruitment of people?*

HUMMON: Well, they helped in my recruitment.

*Q: But I mean in terms of bringing out the technicians?*

HUMMON: No. The Saudis didn't want AID involved and they made that very clear. I recall one meeting that they had with Ambassador Porter and me. They said that they did not, I don't exactly know the context in which it came out, but they did not want to be seen as putting their hands out as a recipient country. (They didn't say it precisely that way, but that was the intent of their comments.) They associated AID with that. They were very proud.

*Q: The name of the agency would have determined that.*

HUMMON: The name of the agency... yes. So they made that very clear and AID had no involvement whatsoever.

*Q: How did you go about locating and identifying American technical people ?*

HUMMON: We advertised via the Commerce Bulletin just as AID does. I mean we went out to tender and so forth.

*Q: You used a competitive process?*

HUMMON: Yes, where private firms were involved. As I recall, we basically used AID procedures, although there may have been some variation on the themes.

It is important to keep in mind that much of the technical assistance was by teams from U.S. Government departments and agencies. When I was there we had teams or individuals from Agriculture, Treasury, Commerce, Interior, Labor, Transportation, GSA, and the National Science Foundation. The bulk of the assistance was of this nature. As I remember, the private contractor element was largely in the electric power sector, although I know that expanded into other areas in the future.

*Q: Was there any responsibility for accountability or auditing or anything like that? Or was this just the Saudi Arabian money that...?*

HUMMON: No, no. We brought in auditors, too. We wanted to make sure that these funds were spent wisely.

*Q: Were there any different criteria for what you would select or reject?*

HUMMON: Basically, we responded to what the Saudi Arabian Government was interested in having the Joint Commission become involved in. Certainly, we discussed possible areas for assistance, but there was no master or strategic plan such as we try to have in USAID. We were more a reactive organization. It was after all funded entirely by the Saudis except for joint funding of an energy project, and the salaries of the U.S. Representation administrative staff.

*Q: Were there any of AID's interest in family planning and health services or anything?*

HUMMON: Nothing in the family planning area at all. Nothing. I mean, there was no interest on the part of the Saudis for that. I mean, they were interested in increasing their population, so we didn't. It was not a development situation comparable to what we were familiar with in AID. In more recent years, certain health projects did develop.

*Q: Were they interested in working with the poor Saudis ?*

HUMMON: Well, yes, I mean, in a sense that all of this was designed to help in bringing about change that would affect all the people. But that was not the sole motivation of the program. A key element of the program was to bring the modern elements of state administration and

performance standards to Saudi society. In one sense, it was kind of novel in a way. It was a different type of atmosphere to operate in, I suppose. To a purist in development, this is what are you doing? You're bankrolling a variety of projects. Yet the projects did have a development impact; it was just very different.

*Q: Within the Treasury were there differences of view on what should or should not be done? How things were operated? Any issues that you had to deal with?*

HUMMON: Yes, a lot of them, but they not particularly relevant. There were differences on the administration of the program, the role of the Embassy, on the degree of involvement by the Saudis in our communications, on the supervisory role of JECOR over project teams, etc.

*Q: How did you find them to work with?*

HUMMON: Well, I found that the people I dealt with by and large were first rate. They were really interested in making change within their society, at least in the economics field, not politically, but in terms of development. They were hard working and very interested in change. But there were frustrations as well. You might plan to have a meeting with a Deputy Minister scheduled for next Tuesday at 9:00 am, and you'd go to his office and the male secretary would say, "Oh, Hussein? No, he's in Paris." I don't know exactly how to describe it, but it was a very different experience is the best way to put it. Commitments were not always kept; it sometimes seemed as though the frequently used word "inshallah" (if God wills it) could provide a built-in legitimate justification for inaction, or for doing something different than anticipated. Yet I found the experience incredibly fascinating. The culture. The whole orthodox, Islam society.

*Q: How did you find living in that culture?*

HUMMON: Well, it's very different.

*Q: Why?*

HUMMON: Particularly for the women, I think it's hard for women. Although my wife, for some reason, found it mesmerizing. I don't know, maybe it was just the total immersion in religion, the different faith. She really liked it. But many women in the international community found it very difficult. Women can't drive. There's no theater. The cultural life, in that sense, provides little to do. There are no other faiths in Saudi Arabia than Islam. The government quietly did permit us to have a Christian service. We brought in a Baptist minister under the guise of his being a social welfare worker, and we met in the office of the Saudi Arabian National Guard for religious ceremonies every Sunday. We felt somewhat like the early Christians meeting surreptitiously, you know. There was no high school education available for teenagers. We had to send our son, Marc, away to school in Rome. So there were many elements of that kind. Much time, frankly, was spent with trying to get a recreation center built for the American employees, and many other hand-holding type of actions. I think much of the work was that of a Peace Corps Director, in dealing with personnel-type situations.

*Q: Was there any socializing with the Saudi Arabian people?*

HUMMON: Quite a bit by me, although not so much across the board by JECOR people.

*Q: Men only or were there family get-to-gathers?*

HUMMON: Almost all men, although we were invited a few times to Saudi homes where we met the wives. And Jean, my wife, became friends with the wife of the man whom I worked with most closely. But mostly the parties we had were men visiting our home.

*Q: Anything about the culture that you were dealing with... This program must have had a profound effect on the culture?*

HUMMON: I don't think that it had an effect in terms of the culture. I think it had an effect in terms of the administration of certain areas, but not on the culture. As an ancillary point, there was little general interaction by Westerners with Saudis. The Americans lived in compounds, for example.

*Q: Pretty isolated then.*

HUMMON: Pretty isolated. While I had quite a bit of social contact with counterparts and entertained often, it was not in terms of total family get-togethers. Women wore the veil (and continue to wear the veil today) and were separate in many areas. And also one thing to keep in mind. We were not involved at all in the basic education system. There was no request for us, and I think that still remains true today. There was no request for us to be involved in anything to do with the basic education system. So I don't think that the program, when I was there, had any impact in terms of culture.

*Q: I would have thought that over time the training of large numbers of people in the technical fields would begin to develop a mass of a modernized, technologically advanced people.*

HUMMON: True. But we were in at the beginnings. Change with greater training and education will come. But I'm not particularly familiar with the present-day situation. I know the regime has been attacked by both the left and the right. Some advisory political structure has been established to give the people more of a voice.

*Q: There were no programs involving women at all?*

HUMMON: Not directly.

*Q: Alright. Anything else on that?*

HUMMON: No, I think not.

*Q: Okay, very good.*

**RICHARD C. HOWLAND**  
**Office of the Inspector General**  
**Washington, DC (1978)**

*Mr. Howland was born and raised in New York and educated at Adelphi College and George Washington University. After service in the US Army, he joined the Foreign Service in 1960, serving several tours at the State Department in Washington, DC and abroad in Phnom Penh, Djakarta, Vientiane and Surabaya. In his Washington assignments, Mr. Howland dealt primarily with personnel and East Asia matters. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1999.*

HOWLAND: I've already mentioned the team leader, Ambassador Van Hollen. Deputy Team leader and Admin inspector was a nice guy named Danny Williamson, who had been a DAS for Budget, and the consular inspector was officer named Irene Hammond. I did the economic sections and Al Williams, the political sections, except when we had to split the team. One further person who was along was our audit qualified inspector, John Mercurio, a very competent and interesting guy. He later resigned from OIG when he was offered a position, I think in 1981, as the chief accountant for the New Jersey State Gaming Commission, which was just setting up the casinos in Atlantic City. John had come from Trenton, New Jersey. It took him perhaps 12 seconds to make that decision to resign from the Foreign Service. I never heard another word from him.

We first went to Jeddah; the Embassy in those years was in Jeddah. They had a liaison office in Riyadh because the Saudi capital was going to move there, but I think the decision had been made, but no site for an Embassy had been found. However we also had to inspect Riyadh, but the main Embassy was in a compound in Jeddah. Have you been to Jeddah?

*Q: No.*

HOWLAND: There was a huge Embassy compound, with a sand golf course and tennis courts in Jeddah. The Ambassador was a political appointee, the former governor of South Carolina, John West. When West left the governorship, President Carter, once Governor in Georgia next door, appointed him Ambassador out there in Saudi Arabia. The rumor in the Department during our pre-departure survey was that West thought of his tenure as a way to benefit South Carolina, where his son was running for mayor of Charleston. There was concern that West wanted to use his position to help his son.

That said, he got along very well with the Saudis because the mark of a successful Ambassador in Saudi Arabia is that he can pick up the phone and call the President of the United States and he could clearly do that, so the Saudis liked that. Not only to get things done, but more of the prestigious factor, a special relationship.

Anyway, when West had arrived he found that the Embassy, which had a very fine DCM named Marshal Wiley, was resistant to his efforts to change the thrust of the relationship to commercial benefit for his home state. He then basically fired him as DCM, and told him he

couldn't even come into the Embassy to work. For months Wiley had sat home until he could leave the post for a new job, a good one as Ambassador to Oman. But he hadn't been replaced by the time of the inspection.

The head of the economic section was not a Saudi expert and actually had been a commercial officer. He had been named Acting DCM, and there seemed to be a natural convergence of his views with those of the new Ambassador. With the new emphasis on commercial work, the remainder of Embassy responsibilities were languishing. There were severe commissary problems, because the facility had just been transferred from the Defense Department to State, and there were enormous profits which the Embassy had apparently used for going-away parties and to installing grass greens on the sand golf course.

Because of the emphasis on commercial work, the Embassy staff had to forgo even the most basic political and economic reporting. Actually we found that to be the case in other posts in the Arabian Peninsula. The political function had been marginalized and the CIA -- and even the DIA -- had moved into the gap. DIA was doing political reporting that was just totally off the wall. We knew we had to address that on a regionalized basis and we did, but specifically in Jeddah we knew we had to do something about this DCM who was just catering to the Ambassador's notions that he was really the Ambassador from South Carolina.

In addition he was basically serving as West's staff aide. He was doing his schedule. West would call him in and say, can you draft me up a letter, I've got a letter from Prince Faisal. He wants something or other. Can you draft a reply for my signature? He was basically functioning as sort of a private secretary to the front office, not a DCM. West had recommended making him permanent DCM, but we blocked that and recommended assigning a new one. It turned out the best candidate was Rocky Suddarth. Do you know Rocky Suddarth?

*Q: I know, I've interviewed Rocky.*

HOWLAND: Oh, good, you've done him? A great Arabist and superb officer. Then we had the problem that West really did need a staff aide. I suddenly remembered that my GSO from the Surabaya Consulate in 1974-76, Bill Pierce, had become an Arabist and was stationed in Damascus. He was from Georgia and I knew West would like him, and I knew Bill would leap at a chance for a political cone assignment. It all worked out fine and the two of them got West under control. Bill had married a Syrian, a beautiful Syrian woman and had converted to Islam. I hope you've done him, he's just retired.

*Q: I've interviewed Bill, too.*

HOWLAND: Isn't that marvelous, that's great. I ought to track him down. You know I've forgotten the name of that. Anyway, we got Bill Pierce. This happened afterwards, but we heard afterwards that he straightened the place out. Absolutely straightened the place out because Rocky was superb and Bill did a great job. As a Muslim, when the fanatics seized the great mosque in Medina, he was able to get in on the scene as a Muslim. It was either in Mecca or Medina, I forget which one. I think it was Medina wasn't it? He did some great

reporting out of there. As it turned out it must have been the high spot of his life.

*Q: Do you recall whether West understood the problem?*

HOWLAND: Yes, he absolutely did, but he didn't want to change. We had the report, a thick report. We gave the report to him one day and he didn't read it. We saw him for about an hour the next day and briefed all the points. I must say Chris Van Hollen -- who was on the point of retirement -- was very strong in all of that.

West said, well, you know, I've just been looking over my letters from Jimmy. I got a letter last week from Jimmy and he was asking me about some of this stuff. Van Hollen said, can I see the letter? He handed it over. It was a handwritten letter from the President of the United States to his pal, Governor West, you see. He and the President wrote back and forth on a handwriting basis. We sort of sat there, stunned..

*Q: This is tape fifteen, side one with Dick Howland.*

HOWLAND: He said, now. I'm willing to give Bill Pierce a try and you tell him to come out here and I'll see about Mr. Suddarth and the DCM, but anything else that you were talking about, like all the bad things you said on the commissary, I just have to put this in this letter, I'm writing now to Jimmy about you boys. That just sort of hung in the air.

So, Van Hollen replied, well, we appreciate taking your time. We left at that time and I never knew what he was going to write about us, or if he even did.

*Q: Why would he bother, but it was a threat.*

HOWLAND: Yes, this is the threat, exactly like that. West went on. I didn't know whether we moved West out, even though he was not doing a very good job, but that was the outcome of the Inspection. Well, did he know that he should have been doing all of this Foreign Service stuff, reporting and the like? Yes, I'm sure he was told, hey had the charm school in those years, but I don't think they really got into it pretty much. It was more that the idea was to kind of envelop a political Ambassador with competent career people who will get the other job done and prevent him from doing too much damage to the relationship.

The nice part about that inspection was that an old friend and FS entering classmate at the post, Gordon Brown, had me out to dinner with a number of Saudis, as did the consular officer, a woman who functioned quite well as an official, despite the Wahhabi restrictions on women working, driving and so forth. She even went to visit prisoners in the jails, things like that. She had us all out to meet some Saudis that she dealt with, including some women professionals and their husbands. We were able to get more of a picture of the strange anomaly of Saudi Arabia.

We also got a good picture of the situation in Riyadh where the administrative officer who was as the head of the post turned out to be the same the FSR ex-Peace Corps administrative officer who had set up the post in Guinea Bissau that I mentioned earlier, the same guy. He

was becoming a specialist in putting together new posts. I guess that's why they sent him to Riyadh and he was doing a great job. We then flew to Dhahran, which is a compound that began with houses out on the desert, and became a Consulate General.

*Q: I lived there for two and a half years, 1958-60.*

HOWLAND: Oh, that was long before. So, we did Dhahran. Do you remember the American club, the club there on the compound?

*Q: We didn't have a club.*

HOWLAND: Oh really? They had built a club building there and they set up cots for some of us inspectors there because there was no other place to put us up in Dhahran. The one memory I have of Dhahran -- which was run by Ralph Bergstrom? Do you know him?

*Q: Ralph, no.*

HOWLAND: Very capable officer. He was consul general. The only thing I remember distinctly was going out to see the famous Dammam number six, the first successful oil well up on that hill. And as I recall the story, a German engineer wouldn't let them stop drilling. He kept saying no, go down another 20 feet, go down another 20 feet and they wanted to give up. He said, no, go down another 20 feet. Finally they hit the oil that changed the face of the planet and changed the course of history. We went out to see that well which was still pumping 40 years later.

**HOLSEY G. HANDYSIDE**  
**Deputy Assistant Secretary, Department of Energy**  
**Washington, DC (1978-1981)**

*Ambassador Holsey G. Handyside was born in Ohio in 1927. He graduated from Amherst College with a B.A. degree in 1950 and received an M.P.A. degree from Princeton University in 1953. He joined the Foreign Service in 1955 and his overseas career included posts in Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq, Libya, and Mauritania. Ambassador Handyside was the Deputy Office Director for Political Military Affairs from 1970 to 1974 and he was the Ambassador to Mauritania from 1975 to 1978. He worked with the Department of Energy from 1978 to 1981. Ambassador Handyside was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1993.*

HANDYSIDE: Perhaps one of the most difficult diplomatic assignments I ever had was as the senior US government representative on the joint group that directed the cooperative solar energy project that we had with Saudi Arabia. The Saudis had been talking to us for some time about the desirability of joining forces for doing something in solar technology. Part of this was because there were technical people in Saudi Arabia who recognized that this was one of the resources they had, second to oil, obviously, and they had large quantities of and really ought to



start thinking seriously about doing something to exploit it. But interestingly enough, this is one of the things that Crown Prince, late King Fahd, had a particular personal interest. So at one stage of the game there was a Saudi state visit to Washington during President Carter's administration and there had been some preliminary discussions between the Americans and the Saudis about the desirability of some kind of a joint project and our representatives had not been terribly enthusiastic apparently. They were thinking in terms of a few million dollars. At the state dinner, at least according to the anecdotal evidence, the King of Saudi Arabia stood up and amongst other things in his little speech proposed that the United States and Saudi Arabia join forces in a solar energy R&D program. He suggested to President Carter that the two of them right then and there should pony up \$50 million a piece to fund this effort. Well, whether the President had any previous inklings of this thing or not at least he rose to the occasion and allowed as how this might be a very good and useful thing to do.

So there we were, we now had a \$100 million and a program with was called Solaris. The result was that we spent some four or five years by the time we were finished working some fascinating projects in tandem with the Saudis. We did a series of developmental projects with a number of solar technologies that no one had either had the courage to do before or had the finances to do before and therefore these were really technically path breaking projects.

*Q: What type of projects?*

HANDYSIDE: For example, we were interested in whether it was possible to develop a workable solar driven water demineralization process and plant. Another was generation of electricity using solar energy. One of the ones that I found most fascinating was to see whether solar energy could be exploited in some fashion to produce air conditioning. The Saudis, for obvious reasons, were interested in the air conditioning project. But we were critically interested in it as well because we were discovering about that stage of the game, in the southwestern part of the United States, the burgeoning air conditioning load in places like Arizona and New Mexico was putting enormous strains on the power generation and distribution facilities. The planning groups of the various public utilities and state governments were eagerly searching around for some way to ease off the requirements for peak energy generation in the middle of the summer. Some of the planners had begun to realize that it would be a great idea to find away to use the sun, which is the cause of these enormous peak energy requirements, to drive the air conditioners. Or to put it another way, to use the sun to defeat the sun by using solar energy to drive the air conditioning equipment. Since success here might reduce the requirement to build more power generating plants, it was part of the R&D program that lots of people were interested in.

On the electrical generating side, we jointly built a station in Saudi Arabia that fed directly into the power grid around Riyadh. I don't remember what the technical specs were of the station, but at the time it was built it was the largest photo-voltaic power plant anywhere in the world.

We were less successful in the desalinization area, although we did explore some technologies that no one had ever thought about before. When we put out requests for proposals to the technical community, we were fascinated with a proposal that came back from the Chicago Bridge & Iron Company which proposed demineralizing water by freezing it. The project was

based on the two facts of physics: First it takes five times more energy to change water into steam than into ice. Since solar energy is diffuse and difficult to collect, a process requiring only 1/5 the energy obviously has enormous advantages. There is lots of sunshine in the Southwest and in Saudi Arabia, but in terms of collecting it and converting it for use in a major project, it is scarce. Second, freezing produces pure water just as boiling and evaporation produces pure water.

We took that concept as far as we could in the laboratory, but never, at least to my knowledge, made the decision to spend the amount of money required to build a pilot plant. But at least we produced the basic documentation of the concept. This by the way, was one of the cardinal propositions of the whole SOLERAS program: whatever we did we published so that the concepts, drawings, and test results immediately became available to the public.

We picked three candidate projects in the air conditioning area and built pilot models in Phoenix, Arizona. We never could get two of them to work, although they worked beautifully in the laboratories. As soon as we scaled them up a hundred times to small industrial size, they refused to work. But the third prospect turned out to be a real gem. We arranged with the owner of a building that was under construction to install a regular air conditioning system as well as making provision for us to put our equipment on the roof of the building and pipe in the cooled product. So long as the solar energy air conditioner cooled the building properly, the owner would not start up his regular system. But it would be there on standby just in case the solar system didn't work. The last time I visited Phoenix in this period, the SOLERAS equipment had been working highly satisfactorily for the better part of three months. They had not had to turn on the regular air conditioning system once during this period. SOLERAS was obviously on to something. Whether anybody in the air conditioning industry has carried the development effort forward to scale up the pilot plant to a full size industrial plant, I simply don't know.

[...Interview resumes]

HANDYSIDE: I thought looking back over the last session that we had where I was talking about the various cooperative research and development programs in energy technology that there were some particularly interesting observations that ought to be made about the Solaris program which was the joint Saudi Arabia and United States program in research and development of solar energy technology.

This was an effort that was undertaken primarily at the instigation of the Saudis who recognized that one of their primary resources, other than oil, was sunshine and that they ought to address in some systematic way the exploitation of this enormous natural resource. It just so happened that about at the same time a number of things had been going on in the United States in terms of environmental and environmental law and regulation that prompted a number of people in the United States to say, "You know, there are some things that we ought to know and if we can use this as a vehicle to begin to look at some of the research areas that we would particularly benefit from then we could really make this program payoff in a technical as well as a diplomatic way.

So we started down the track of planning in detail an approach to the problem with the Saudis of at least in a preliminary way identify the kinds of solar technology that might be of particular

interest simultaneously to Saudi Arabia and to the United States. One of the areas that we quickly identified was that of the desalinization, the demineralization of water. This was important to the Saudis for obvious reasons in that they have very little water except fossil water deep underneath the Arabian peninsula and lots of sea water on three sides. So if there was some way that could be developed to convert sea water to drinkable water using the sun's energy this would be an enormous benefit to the people of Saudi Arabia. The possible application of solar technology to the desalting of water was of special interest to the United States as well at that particular juncture, which was the late 70s and early 80s, because the Congress had recently enacted legislation requiring all those who withdrew water from a water course in the western part of the United States to ensure that the water was at least of equal quality when it was restored to the water course after having been used for whatever the utilization of that particular company or family was. Well this meant then that people in the southwest were faced with the prospect of having to establish water clean up facilities and apply them to their discharge water throughout the entire southwestern region. And quite clearly, if some way could be found to harness the energy of the sun to provide the resource to energize this desalting project, it was to everyone's advantage and there were people who were on the receiving end of this who recognized that they were going to have to do something specifically because they were running various activities that drew water from the Colorado River, or whatever, and then dumped it back in down stream. Or there were people who were interested in making sure that the law was in fact observed and therefore finding some more handy and less costly way to achieve the objective, by using the sun rays which come free, was of some importance in insuring that the law was observed and carried out.

There were other similar kinds of areas. For example, one of the problems that we faced in the southwest at that particular stage of the game was the recognition that the growing air conditioning load throughout the southwest was putting an enormous demand on the power generation and distribution facilities for peak period power. And quite clearly if some way could be found to harness the sun's energy to drive air conditioning equipment, this would very neatly balance off this source of additional air conditioning requirement which was the heat of the sun during the middle of the day.

*Q: You mentioned that there was some promising experimentation in buildings, and all that.*

HANDYSIDE: Right. This was after we had been active in the Solaris program on this air conditioning concept. We managed after a period of about three years to produce three prototypes that we put into buildings in Phoenix, Arizona. Two of them we never were really able to get to work the way they were supposed to work and the way we had been able to make them work on the laboratory bench. The third one, however, we made the transition from laboratory model to a partially scaled up installation model and it worked like a charm. So at least it demonstrated that at least the concept was a doable concept and that practically the concept could be converted from a laboratory idea into a functioning model. But that is getting ahead of the story a little bit.

After we had identified several of these promising areas of technology that were of interest to both the Saudis and the United States, we then began to develop a program by recruiting people that were interested in it and had some expertise and knowledge to contribute. As the deputy

assistant secretary in the international area of the Energy Department, I was very quickly tagged as the guy who would be the senior US representative on the governing commission of the Solaris organization. The governing commission was a sort of board of directors for the R&D project made up of an equal number of Saudis and Americans. We began to put the project together after having some of the members of this commission identified.

What quickly became obvious was that all the Americans who were involved were going to have to face up to the fact of squaring a very difficult circle, a circle that was established, if you will, by the fact that while the Saudis were clearly the little brothers in this research and development effort in many ways because of their absence of highly trained research technicians, scholars, engineers and project managers. And some of the senior Saudis recognized that explicitly, although informally in closed sessions. On the other hand the Saudis quite clearly were going to demand that they be treated as an equal partner. So from the very beginning we had a situation where we had to treat as an equal a government and a group of technical people who were clearly not and this posed, what turned out to be over the next two and half to three years, undoubtedly the most difficult diplomatic assignment I ever had.

*Q: I can well imagine.*

HANDYSIDE: One of the ways that my Saudi counterpart, who was head of the Saudi Arabian Science and Technology Agency, and I decided to address this problem was to informally expand the objectives of the R&D program to include an objective of education and training in both technical and management areas.

*Q: Were you able to sit down with your counterpart and say, "Look, we have a problem" and talk about this in realistic terms rather than diplomatically pussyfoot around what was a very obvious problem?*

HANDYSIDE: Yes, this gentleman was the first Saudi Arabian to earn a Ph.D. in a foreign university, was a very capable and perceptive individual who had very realistic appreciation for the education and management gap that was involved. In addition to these educational and bureaucratic tributes, my counterpart also had the very distinct advantage of having been one of the protégés of Crown Prince Fahd prior to his becoming the monarch. So this gave him the clout that he needed from time to time to make sure that some of the younger Saudis who were more nationalistic inclined didn't stray off the reservation.

But what my counterpart and I decided we would have to do is to insure that there was this understood objective of training Saudis up to the point where they in fact would be our technical and managerial equals. As far as the technical side was concerned this was a little bit more difficult because of necessity it was a longer run, but the Saudis did their part by scouring around and turning up a dozen or more young men who had been graduated from American engineering schools and persuaded them to participate in this project. So we were dealing with young fellows who already had a fairly systematic and substantial technical and engineering foundation. On the management side, there were really very few Saudis who had ever been involved either at the project direction level or certainly at the program management level in any kind of research and development program, whether solar energy or anything else. So this was an area that was

clearly missing but at the same time it was an area where the gap could be filled in much more quickly by recognizing the problem and then by devising either educational programs or training programs or mentor type arrangements with American project managers and program directors, using again the same engineering graduates that had been brought to the program. As a result of this my counterpart and I were able at least in theoretically terms to square the circle of a program based on equality between unequal partners.

The next step was for both of us to go back to our respective side and figure out ways that we could people that this was (a) necessary and (b) doable. And then, at least on my side, figure out how we would get the people that we needed that had the right cast of mind who were therefore highly competent technicians but at the same time prepared to be teachers and mentors, and to weed out those who couldn't do that or didn't wish to do that, and at the same time keep up the required technical standards of the program. And at the same time to persuade them that this indeed was a necessary part of this overall effort and that failing to square this circle, the program would almost by definition not be successful.

So we started down this track. As we began to zero in on the various projects we began to draft requests for proposals to put out to the solar energy community to participate actively in this R&D effort. At no time was it intended that the United States government would do all of this by itself. It was quite clear that we were going to get a lot of other people involved simply because we didn't have the resources, either technical or financial, personnel primarily, to do it any other way.

The thing began to move. We began to get the Saudis involved in the process of defining the technical areas that we wanted to focus on in doing the initial drafts of the project proposals and the kinds of things that we were looking for. Obviously the young Saudis at the outset had relatively little to contribute to this process, but one of the fascinating and gratifying things was how quickly some of them developed a sense of how to handle these sorts of things. They became real stalwarts in this process.

The commission was set up in such a way so that the chairmanship was to alternate between the senior American and the senior Saudi. At the insistence of my Saudi counterpart, I became the chairman for the first year. This went along quite well. We met at least twice a year. At the outset the meetings were in either in Saudi Arabia or in the United States. Subsequently, we found that it was convenient to meet half way, and so we had one Solaris commission meeting in Madrid and I think another one in Rome. It was easier for each of us to go half the distance than for one of us to go the full distance.

At the end of that first year as the next Solaris commission meeting was looming on the horizon, I began to think about what was in prospect in terms of turning the chairmanship of the board of directors, if you will, over to my Saudi counterpart. After thinking about it for a while I jotted my thoughts down on a piece of paper and send a letter off to him and was a little surprised that I got no response.

I arrived in Riyadh for the meeting and went to see him and almost immediately the topic came up. He proposed that we should drop the alternating mechanism and that I should simply

continue as the chairman. I said that I was prepared to do this but was very concerned about our basic problem of equal partnership among unequal partners. I had already had separate conversations with a couple very bright eyed youngsters on his staff who were much more concerned about the reality as well as the appearance of equality and who were looking forward to the time when the Saudis were going to be chairman of the commission. I said that I didn't want to raise that series of things that were going to happen if we made this decision. Obviously there was going to be a lot of disappointment on the part of a lot of people, but equally importantly there is going to be some very vigorous opposition on the part of some of the younger men.

We talked about this quite candidly, quite openly for a little while. He finally said, "I really don't think that is a problem. In the case of a couple of these fellows, I think I can sit down with them and when I explain to them why I think it is important to do this, I think I can persuade them. They are very sensible, rational people. Once they get some sense of what the problems are and what you and I have been facing together over the last twelve months, I think I can bring them along. As far as the others are concerned, if I can't persuade them intellectually, I think I can ultimately persuade them in terms of what goes on in Saudi Arabia." So I said, "Okay. But for my benefit, I obviously cannot propose this myself. There has to be some appearance sake as far as I am concerned, as far as the American side is concerned. So if you really want to do this, I think you are the fellow who has to speak up and publicly do it." He said, "Okay."

So sure enough this was the way it happened. The result was that I remained the chairman of the board of directors of Solaris for all the rest of the time that I was associated with the program, which was another two and a half years or so. But this problem of squaring the circle was never totally resolved. Each time we would bring a group of the young Saudi academics and technicians along to the point where they had acquired the technical or the managerial background, then we would have to start getting them ready to take the next step up the ladder. So we never really got away from the quiet behind the counter objective of the educating and training element of the program. For as long as we were involved in that program we were doing the job of educating the professional elite in Saudi Arabia in project management and program director as well as solar technology.

A word, I think, might be in order at this point both as a way of background and by way of homework, about some of the activities of the program. One of the projects that we built was a photovoltaic electrical generating station which we built outside of Riyadh. At the time it was built it was the largest such solar generating station anywhere in the world. Subsequently, using the lessons learned from that project, a number of airport authorities in the United States proceeded to build equivalent solar energy facilities to run the electrical lighting systems of their airports, particularly in places west of Mississippi River.

One of the air conditioning project concepts which was field tested in Phoenix, was successful. Whether the company involved decided there was a market for a solar air conditioner and built an industrial size plant, I don't know. One of the major objectives of the SOLERAS program was the achievement and spread of solar technology. The primary means of achieving the second half of this goal was the publication of all the documentation on every R&D project undertaken in the program. The initial analytical studies of need, technical approach, technical and economic

feasibility, etc., progress reports, and final evaluation reports, were all to be published to permit the international solar energy community to learn what we and the Saudis had done, what worked and what had failed, and exactly how they could pick up the R&D where we left off and carry it forward. All this documentation was published by the Solar Energy Research Institute, which was located on the outskirts of Denver, Colorado.

But what is important about the SOLERAS program as far as the Foreign Service and the State Department are concerned, indeed as far as American foreign policy is concerned, is not the technical aspects of the R&D program. It is rather the diplomatic challenge that was involved in making a highly complex, highly technical program a success, despite the fact that at the outset, the theoretically equal partners at the outset were almost the farthest thing imaginable from being equal. Recognizing that if you scratch your head long enough, you can figure out ways to get around even fundamental conflicts and devise methods to address both the primary objective of a particular technological program and the diplomatic or political realities and requirements, including the inequalities of technical preparation or managerial background.

I believe the SOLERAS program is an important example of an area of success in American diplomacy that has never been recorded or published. All the technical studies published by the SERI focused on technical problems; they did not even mention the diplomacy of the management of the program. Moreover so, as far as I know nothing has ever been written about this aspect of SOLERAS, nor has it ever been the subject of an oral presentation.

**RALPH E. LINDSTROM**  
**Consul General**  
**Dhahran (1978-1980)**

*Ralph E. Lindstrom was born in Minnesota on April 10, 1925. He joined the Navy during World War II. He obtained a B.A. from Harvard University and entered the foreign service in 1952. He served in Kabul, Paris, Hong Kong, Oberammergau, Moscow, Nairobi, and Dhahran. He spent a year at the Naval War College. He also served in the State Department in INR, the Economic Bureau, the ACDA, and with Iranian Affairs. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1994.*

*Q: Today is December 6th, 1994. Ralph, you were assigned to Dhahran, which is sort of unusual wasn't it? You went there as Consul General, because you're not an Arabist. You'd been in Africa before and had other things, and all of a sudden to end up in Dhahran at a time when the area was particularly sensitive. Had the oil shock hit at that point? Or one of the oil shocks?*

LINDSTROM: It was just beginning to hit.

*Q: How did that assignment come about?*

LINDSTROM: Well, this was an unexpected assignment. My predecessor was transferred I think

somewhat unexpectedly, and the position suddenly came open. Ideally, I think, you'd put an Arabist in there, but there weren't any available and Joe Twinam, who was the Assistant Secretary, gave me a call and I went around and talked to him, and he said, "How would you like to go there?" He gave me about one month's notice, and I said I'd like to take a little bit of Arabic. I took a couple of week's worth and then studied it at the post. But, of course, with a difficult language you can't do a great deal there. One of my credentials, of course, was my economic background because it is a very important post economically and from the point of view of economic reporting. But my arrival there coincided with some very major political developments, and also with (inaudible).

And coincident with my arrival, up until then everything was basically given to us. There was all the data just put in the mail and delivered to the Consulate.

*Q: This is through ARAMCO.*

LINDSTROM: The Saudis had been moving in a very Saudi-like way, to gradually take over ARAMCO, and about the time I got there it was widely considered to be Saudiized, and no longer would they be willing to give the details of their natural resources. (noise)

*Q: Talk about your relations with the oil company. I was there from 1958 to 1960. The Americans were running things completely really. And our relations, of course, were very close, and also it wasn't seen as critical at that time as it became. Here you had the Saudis taking over all elements of ARAMCO. Could you contact the Saudis within ARAMCO, or was this difficult?*

LINDSTROM: By and large, not. This was not a very rapid take-over. It was a very gradual take-over. It's not necessarily even completed today, and this was typical of the style of the Saudi ruling family, the royal family. Now I think a couple of the senior Saudis are at the point where they are primary sources of anything that is going on. But it was a very gradual process. I used to meet with the people in government affairs to some degree, but they were shut out of the thing pretty much once it became Saudiized. I mean in terms of being a contact for me. They still have an office here in Washington, and once in a while I run across a fellow who is working...I think he's the boss and then an American. So a lot of those things remain as they were.

*Q: We had an embassy which had Petroleum Affairs and had his contacts. What was your beat. What were you supposed to be doing on the oil business?*

LINDSTROM: Basically finding out what their production plans were, and how high they could go. This was no longer publicly announced, as I mentioned before. It was of great importance, I think, to the outside world to know what production they could manage, what obstacles they were running into, and making up for the Iranian shortfall.

*Q: What were you gathering at least from the eastern province point of view, which was your beat? Was the attitude of the Saudis that you had contact with towards the Iranians, and what was going on in Iran at that time?*



LINDSTROM: I don't remember having any prolonged conversations on that subject. I think they all opposed it, and, of course, the eastern province is where most of the Shiites in Saudi Arabia live. This was one of the most important developments during my tour there. You might say the politicization of the Shiite community which we estimated numbered maybe 20,000-30,000 and maybe a little more, partly in the oasis, and part in the oasis to the north. We employed quite a number of Shiites from that community in the Consulate General doing mechanics work, and that kind of thing. A very large numbers of Shiites were employed by ARAMCO, and had been by ARAMCO for a long, long time. ARAMCO is the one that first gave them their real opportunity to get out of real genuine poverty. And they did very well in ARAMCO. They kept their religion to themselves pretty much, and had not become political activists at all until Khomeini came along. And this, of course, was about the time when I arrived there. And then there began to be all sorts of political ferment, tapes of Khomeini speaking Arabic, which is a religious language, were best sellers, were going all around the province and in the worship houses, of the Shiites. I knew some prominent Shiites, businessmen primarily, but didn't really seem to want to get into political conversations particularly. But everyday the radios from Iran in Arabic were aiming right at the Shiite community and Saudi Arabia, in general, right across the gulf. And that added to the effect of the tape recorders of Khomeini's religious pronouncements of one kind or another. So everyone began to become much more conscious of security in ARAMCO at that time. There began to be graffiti around, anti-Saudi graffiti on the walls in ARAMCO. And yet, the Shiite employees were the ones working in the most sensitive installations because they were the ones, the plumbers and mechanics and people who worked with their hands, whereas the Sunni generally were the office workers. So this created a problem, dilemma, for the Saudis in management of the oil company. Some people they no longer trusted fully, working in the most sensitive installations, Riyadh and Dhahran, the big pumping stations where the big super tankers were loaded. Anyone with skill and intention, and had a mind toward sabotage, could do an awful lot of damage there. Fortunately it didn't happen. And I think it was a relatively small proportion of the Shiites who became politicized, and later over time arrests were made and I don't know how many people were finally detained by the government but there were quite a number.

Ironically, I think, some of the Shiites became somewhat anti-American, and yet everything they had managed to achieve they really owed to an American institution.

*Q: Just to put it in context, the Shiites were a minority living in an area which had been strictly a province. They were predominately almost fanatically anti-Shiite, weren't they?*

LINDSTROM: Yes, but still they aren't that new. They came there very quietly and settled, and Sheik al-Ka told me about this. His family were a very important merchant family, and very friendly with the Shiite, even though he's not Shiite. They were there when they came and settled in that area, moving down from the head of the Gulf. There were a lot of very interesting migrations there. But as an example of their anti-American fervor among some of them, I was dis-invited from a speech that I had planned to make to a group, not Dhahran, and the person explained, he's was rather embarrassed about it, but he said, "There are a lot of feelings now because of what's going on across the Gulf."

So then moving on, this is in the following year...

Q: *So we're talking about...*

LINDSTROM: '78, I arrived in the summer of '78, and of course the revolution was just getting underway in Iran, and the oil was beginning to be affected. Then we moved on into '79 and things were sort of going from bad to worse. We had the taking of the Great Mosque, which I wasn't involved in, that was in the other side of the kingdom.

Q: *This was by Sunni radicals.*

LINDSTROM: I don't know if they ever analyzed it fully. Not long after that, the first day of the year 1400 -- and I can't remember what this was on the western calendar, I guess it was in October or November -- the beginning of Muharram, this is when the Shiite traditional do celebrate the first ten days of the calendar. I think they were already in a high state of tension because of the things that had been going on, and the agitation by the Iranians. But on the, I think it was the seventh day of Muharram, things had been quiet up until then, there was a very serious incident up in the a Shiite town just north of, (its name escapes me right now). The young Shiite boys were out throwing stones at passing traffic, as they've always done. I've had stones thrown at me all over the Middle East, in Afghanistan, for example. And along came a Saudi National Guard vehicle, and if there's anybody that hates Shiites it's the National Guardsmen who are real Wahhabis, and they didn't take kindly to having stones thrown at them. One of them just picked up an automatic weapon, and sprayed the crowd, killing four or five boys. This set off three days of what you might call rioting, and they had to send in helicopter gun ships to put it down. This had never been in the newspapers. We checked it out. My estimates of the number of people killed were estimates that I did get from Saudi security officials. Something like maybe 50 to 60 Shiite were killed.

Q: *That's very serious.*

LINDSTROM: This was mainly in Al Qatif where they started seizing police stations. It was a real threat to security in the eyes of the rulers of Saudi Arabia. Then they ended up even fighting over the dead bodies. The Shiite wanted to collect their dead and not have them thrown out in the desert in Wahhabi style. The Shiite believe more like as we do, having burial sites. So that led to further skirmishes between the two factions. But throughout all this period our Consulate employees disappeared. I remember when they did come back finally, our gardener at the Consul General's residence was an old Shiite they called Hajj because he had made the pilgrimages to the holy places in Iran. He wouldn't think of going to the holy places in Saudi Arabia. Everybody called him Hajj. He was in a really foul mood, and he came in and picked radishes from the garden he had raised for us. I was later told by our cook that he just threw the radishes at him, and said, "That's for these..." and calling us some kind of a name as Americans. He had been radicalized like everyone else, which rather surprised me. But again, the oil production did go on, and there was never any serious incident of sabotage. I remember getting some rather strange phone calls in the Consulate from people with sort of veiled threats, and wanting to meet with me. For the most part I brushed those aside as provocations.

So much was happening simultaneously that it's almost hard to pick up all the threads and how

they interrelated. One of the things, of course, that was of great interest to the Saudis was the annual Hajj. That was a little bit before the rioting of the Shiite. The Saudi police would count the Hajjis who would come in at the border with Kuwait, and then notice that these same vehicles were half empty by the time they got through the eastern province. It turned out that a lot of them were mullahs, agitators. They were dropped off and stayed for a while to preach. I never got really good numbers on this. I think many of them did eventually go on to the Hajj. In subsequent years after we were there, this became the standard form of Iranian agitation against the Saudi regime was to have their own Hajjis do all sorts of disorderly things. This was really the beginning of that.

*Q. This is tape 3, side A, an interview with Ralph Lindstrom. With the Shiites, they would also go to Mecca, or were they making Hajj to...*

LINDSTROM: They'd make both Hajjis. My gardener being an exception.

*Q: Just to capture the spirit of the times, the American political body, American populace, became very aware for the first time probably of the difference between the two major sects of the Islamic religion because of what was happening in Iran. Before that I don't think we paid an awful lot of attention to it. Did they beef up our security at the Consulate General?*

LINDSTROM: Yes, and very suddenly and almost unexpectedly. Unknown to me, I guess the ambassador over on the other side of the kingdom, the embassy was still in Jeddah at that time, had given an okay to the Saudi authorities that they could improve security around the Consulate General in Dhahran. But we had no advance notice of that, and all of a sudden lorries pulled up with National Guardsmen. Of course, we'd had ever since your days there, a small contingent of probably 15 or 20 National Guardsmen living right on the Consulate.

*Q: In my day we didn't have anybody.*

LINDSTROM: This dates back to another incident of the tearing down of the flag.

*Q: I think this was after the '67 war.*

LINDSTROM: I think it was after that.

*Q: I think the '67 war, the Arab-Israeli war.*

LINDSTROM: But anyway, all of a sudden and unexpectedly these truck loads of Saudi National Guardsmen showed up in the Consulate. Of course, my Arabic was almost nonexistent, so as a practical matter in terms of dealing with the situation, there wasn't anybody there to tell me why these people were there. They were pointing their guns at my wife and me, and asking us to come out behind the residence. So Gloria, my wife, said, "What's this all about?" I said, "I haven't the faintest idea." I said, "You better wear your hostage clothing," an extra pair of pants and that kind of thing. Well, of course, it was a mistake on our part. It was just these people being friendly. Then for quite some time they remained in strength in our compound, as protection against possible Shiite actions or other hostile threats. I can remember once, actually

my wife witnessed this too, going back to our Shiite gardener. The Saudi National Guardsmen, one time they, I guess, frightened him. They loaded their weapons, and pointed them at him. They didn't shoot, but that's indicative of the animosity. With them on the compound, I had to ask all the women in the consulate to go around rather fully clothed. They could still go to the swimming pool. We had a nice swimming pool by then, but they couldn't go around wearing something that provocative with these National Guardsmen around there. Our whole security situation was enormously complicated by the fact that we had this very large American-run school on the compound by then. I forget when it started exactly. So we had large numbers of parents and people coming in cars to drop off their children, pick them up: I had asked the Marines to search the cars, to make certain nothing was being brought in to the compound. That slowed up the whole process, that there were no weapons or anything else.

I remember during this period I got a phone call from, I think the New York Times or Wall Street Journal correspondent. They had gotten as far as Saudi Arabia and they wondered if they could come down and visit me. I said, "Well, it's pretty dull here." Actually we had a 50 caliber machine gun in the main entrance, and 30 calibers all around the compound. I didn't see anything to be gained by having the newspapers in there. The Saudis were terribly tense about all of this, understandably.

One of the things I should mention is that unlike the Gulf posts, and this was a Washington decision, the decision was made to leave our post fully staffed. We didn't evacuate anyone.

*Q: This was after the take-over of our embassy in Tehran?*

LINDSTROM: Yes. It was one of the sparking factors and, of course, that almost coincided with the Shiite uprising we had. And then there was something else going on in Pakistan at the same time.

*Q: Yes, our embassy was burned in Pakistan. It was a very tense time. This was around November-December of '79.*

LINDSTROM: Yes, that's right. Anyway, although my post, Dhahran, was located right on the Gulf. All these Gulf posts were closed down. It was in the heart of the Saudi oil industry, and the decision was finally made that we should not drawdown, or close our post in the kingdom. Partly for political reasons, well, in large part for political reasons, it might undercut the whole kingdom and their major industry, thinking that all their oil workers go.

*Q: It's interesting because I've interviewed people who were ambassadors to Oman and that area, who were screaming and yelling because they had to drawdown their posts, and they were saying this sends a bad signal, we had no problems, and why the hell do we have to do this? But Washington would not listen to them -- not close them, but brought them way down...*

LINDSTROM: Brought them way down, sent their dependents out of all of the Gulf posts.

*Q: But there you are in the middle of the thing.*

LINDSTROM: A stone's throw away from Iran. Yet I didn't have to close down. My own judgement was that the threat was manageable. But the main concern, as I understand it in Washington, was what it would do to Saudi morale, what it would do to Saudi oil industry. Because once you started evacuating people, what are you going to do about those Americans working in ARAMCO. What's that going to do to oil production? I can understand that these people were unhappy in being forced to drawdown, but I think they made a correct decision.

*Q: Did you have a problem with the staff and family morale during this period of time?*

LINDSTROM: I would say no. I met with them all, including the wives, and explained the situation as best I could. No, in fact one of the other things that I did throughout my tour in Saudi Arabia was to meet regularly with representatives of the American business community, and give them off-the-record briefings on what was happening, which they greatly appreciated. I think that had a somewhat stabilizing influence. And I said, "Let me know if you're hearing any rumors," and, of course, they were always hearing rumors and I'd listen to them, and I'd say, "I don't think there's any basis for that one at all."

*Q: It sent tremors throughout the entire diplomatic world, particularly within the United States. The seizure of our embassy, and taking of hostages for 444 days by Iranians in Tehran. Did this weigh on everybody's mind all the time in what you were doing, or not?*

LINDSTROM: No, I'd say very definitely. My own regret was that I didn't take the opportunity to visit Iran when I first got there, while it was still possible to go over by air on Iran Air. Then when the revolution came. I had to give that up. It would have been very valuable first-hand experience for me in view of my subsequent assignment. One of the things about Saudi Arabia is that we were always having high level visitors, the Department of Defense particularly, and they would regularly meet with Prince Bandar, who is now the ambassador here. I got to know him when he was Major Bandar, and the squadron leader of F-15s, and a very interesting person, very bright, very brilliant. Of course recognized by his father, although he was illegitimate...not an illegitimate child, but his mother was a black slave originally. Of course she begot him the most exceptional son of all, so that is why he has been pushed since then. When I first knew him he was still in his twenties, and a very useful contact. Now he only speaks with presidents. Anyway, that's sort of an aside.

I guess I might as well mention, I think there are still some more things we will discuss about Saudi Arabia; in January or February, the Assistant Secretary of...

*Q: January-February of?*

LINDSTROM: Of 1980. Hal Saunders, who was our Assistant Secretary in the bureau at that time, he'd come out a little bit earlier along with one of the cabinet level delegations, so I had gotten to know him a little bit. He was back in Washington then. I was up for reassignment the following summer, and they gave me a choice of head of the Interests Section in Baghdad, or the Director of Egyptian Affairs, or Director of Iranian Affairs. The feeling back there was that they could put Iran back together again. This was just two months after the taking of the hostages. This turned out to be a horrible decision. But it had an impact on me. So out of the three jobs, I

ended up picking the one that was probably the least promising, the Iranian one.

*Q: Back to Dhahran. What about the government? You had the Emir of the eastern province. How were relations? Did you have much to do with him?*

LINDSTROM: No. He was very distant, and a difficult person to get to know. I did not really develop a successful relationship with him, and partly I think it was his choice. His family was in there as a reward for something they had done for...

*Q: The one I had known was one of the 13, or whatever it was, who climbed the walls of Read, and Saud. They were cousins. So he was sort of an old hawk at that time, and this must have been the son or cousin, but it was still in the family.*

LINDSTROM: Not a young man, but not old, and a real non-doer. I would run into him constantly, because as Consul General, at least during that period, I was an honored figure along with the Emir of eastern province. But it was not a very interesting relationship. I don't think even if I spoke fluent Arabic that I would ever have gotten very much of interest out of him. He was a very timid man, just didn't want to make any mistakes. Of course, many years later, it took quite a while for the royal family to get up their nerve to remove him, and put in some members of the royal family. I understand they put in some rather competent people later on.

*Q: Speaking as an old consular hand, what about consular problems, arrest cases, detention cases?*

LINDSTROM: We had a lot of them. I had a first rate consular officer, a woman, mind you, Andrea Farsakh. I don't know if you've heard about her, or met her. As I understand it, the ambassador objected to Washington about accepting her because she's a woman. She functioned perfectly well. She was married to an Arab, and her Arabic was quite good, and a very reasonable sort of person. She handled, I don't know how many prisoners, that had to be visited from time to time -- probably at any one moment it might have been 20-25, that kind of thing. People who had committed offenses, such as alcohol related offenses, which the Saudis took very seriously. So she would regularly visit these people. I would send one of our top Saudi employees along with her to help with the interpretation. Otherwise Saudi officials would not even have accepted her as a woman alone, because they could be accused of doing something or other, and that kind of thing. Anyway, she did a tremendous job. She would consult with me on particularly tricky cases as to how we should handle them, and there were a multitude of those coming in all the time.

*Q: Did you have cases such as Americans being detained because they were having business problems? How did you deal with it?*

LINDSTROM: That was a continuing problem. There's no formula for dealing with them exactly. You'd hope to mediate them, and get somebody in the economic section or the commercial section to see what they could do to find out what the root cause of particular dispute was. If they couldn't fix it, they'd arrange to get the people out of the country, rather than have them imprisoned. This was a very difficult area at all times.

*Q: You must have had a lot of congressional letters trying to explain what was happening. Did you feel any pressure, it may have hit elsewhere, on the non-welcoming of American Jews to the area? Did this cause problems on the part of the Saudis?*

LINDSTROM: It didn't, at least in the eastern province, partly because of the presence of Prince Bandar. I sat in on a conversation between Bandar, two other princes, I've forgotten their names now, and our Jewish congressman from New York, who is now out. What's his name? It was a fascinating conversation, and they discussed very frankly in English all of these outstanding problems, everything from Jerusalem to you name it. This conversation went on for at least six or seven hours into the evening. He had aspirations to become at least in the position that Helms is going to go into now as Secretary of State, and it all dashed down the drain. Anyway, he was very smart brained. And the next morning Bandar insisted on taking him off to show him the line of F-15s, which he had all at attention, and Bandar had the Saudia flight that was going to take our visitor over to Jeddah stopped, just like that, royal prerogatives. So the flight was delayed for fully an hour while Bandar proudly drove his guest around the flight line.

But later on our visitor told me that when he reached Jeddah he was searched, and they took away some magazines, Time magazine, on the grounds of possible pornography because they censored all of the magazines coming in.

*Q: He was nominated to be ambassador to India, we can add this. What about the defense side? Later Dhahran became the center. It was on the nightly news because it was the center of our opposition to Iraq's take-over of Kuwait. Were you involved at all in turning Dhahran into a military hub?*

LINDSTROM: No. But this process had been going on quietly for many, many years. We had USMTM, (U.S. Military Training Mission), which was at that time located in Dhahran, and headed up by a two-star U.S. Air Force officer, one after the other. They were rotated through there. That was a very important relationship for me, worked very closely with them. They were, along with the Corps of Engineers -- a very large contingent of Corps people, I think about 3,000 or so -- working for the Saudis, or being paid by the Saudis, on military infrastructure, underground POL tanks. Then this fantastic military city in the north of the country to protect against the threat from either Iraq or Iran. I visited that in its earlier stages. Of course, this was fairly well completed by the time the Gulf war came along. We had, I think, a better infrastructure in Saudi Arabia (People didn't realize that), than we had in West Germany probably. Anything money could buy, they would buy and they were putting this in. So without that we would have had a pretty hard time winning the Gulf war. It was never brought out very clearly in the reporting, how important these facilities were to the U.S.

*Q: How were relations, as you saw them, between the Saudis and the Bahrainis, and the Trucial states?*

LINDSTROM: I think, by and large, they were good. The Saudis, of course, considered themselves to be the dominant power, at least from a protocol point of view. To an increasing extent from a military point of view, although the Saudi air force and other armed forces still

remained pretty small, it had been beefed up subsequently.

*Q: What about the third country nationals? I think of Pakistanis, Indonesians, Koreans. These were the people who were doing most of the work, weren't they?*

LINDSTROM: Yes. Now I had in my own staff, just as an example, a Yemeni whom we inherited from a predecessor, a Chinese whom we brought in from Taiwan, and a Ceylonese whom we brought in from Ceylon. Three different religions, and kind of interesting. The Saudis began, of course, during this critical period being very nervous about people like the Yemens from a security point of view and were beginning to discourage them from coming in. They already had restrictions. I had a Yemeni driver and had to substitute somebody else, I can't remember of what nationality, to go up to Ras Tannurah, because he was on the banned list, while these Shiite of Saudi nationality could go in there. Very mixed up from the way of running things. But the military relationship was already a very important part.

*Q: What was your impression of Saudi rule in the eastern province? And also Saudi business people? Because we had an increasing number of people coming back who had studied in the United States, or elsewhere, but the development of a governing class, business class, what was your impression?*

LINDSTROM: Well, I had to do with the business class. These were people who were somewhat independent of the royal family and would occasionally express their views fairly candidly. I remember one man, a prominent business man in the largest town near Dhahran, who occupied sort of a quasi-governmental position -- practically nothing was delegated. I remember how he would say, "For each ten riyals appropriated up in the capital [at that time Jeddah], only one riyal ever gets through to our public works projects here in the eastern province." I thought that was rather striking. There was somebody taking all the way along the line, and a lot of it the royal family probably.

*Q: Each era one has a different view. I was there during the late '50s, and we were kind of dubious about the Saudi system remaining intact at that time. This was the times of Nasser. We thought it was probably a dying institution. Now it's 30 years later, and they're still around. What was the feeling when you were there? We're talking about the late '70s, early '80s.*

LINDSTROM: Well, I think we still had the same concerns. Those of us who came in there and saw this remarkable institution of the Saudi monarchy said, "This isn't real. This isn't in keeping with the age we're living in. It can't possibly survive." But yet it did. I used always to look around. Now whose the guy who is going to lead the revolt against this? And I never really found him. I'd look at some of these very good colonels in the Saudi army or air force, and they never did. For one thing the royal family was so numerous. I've forgotten now how numerous, up to maybe 2,000-3,000, I think at the time I was there, were certified.

*Q: I've heard figures of 9,000, and that doesn't include the women.*

LINDSTROM: They were very good at getting into things like the army and the air force, and that's a very good security device to be in by working there, and being respected by and large.



*Q: I'm interested. How did you find them as a working crew? Because I had the feeling, at least from my time, that there was a disdain for getting out there and actually mucking around in the field and doing something on the part of, not only the royal family, but of people who'd get engineering degrees, and they would immediately head for the office and try to run a firm and get money, rather than getting out and learning the practicalities of the trade.*

LINDSTROM: There was a lot of that. There was a checkbook society, I call them. The other answer to your question, I think, is how a stability has been maintained this long? It's just simply one word, money. As long as you've got this extreme amount of wealth, and almost everyone in the country has a piece of that, except for the Shiites and then later they began to give them some too, they realized that's a way of keeping them happy. But the young man coming back from studying in the United States, and being given a business with all workers, let's say, all he had to do was sit in the office and sign checks. So he could be a manager. He was in effect bought off by the system. Now, how long this will continue, I don't know, but certainly money has been a major factor.

One of the interesting things I found too when I was there, was the treatment of women. We got to know...this is something you could do in the eastern province...we got to know quite a number of prominent Saudi women. We even gave a discotheque dancing party one night for all Saudi couples, rather carefully selected by them. They all checked their purdahs there in the front hall.

*Q: The veils.*

LINDSTROM: Yes, veils, and the covering garment. They, of course, would have \$5,000 Paris gowns underneath, very attractive women. I was able to dance with a number of Saudi women. I don't think many foreigners got that opportunity, but as I say, it was a very carefully selected group. But within ARAMCO there were several outstanding women who were trying to get ahead, advance things, and it was very difficult for them because of the system. But they weren't as downtrodden as some people might have thought. They still were not permitted to drive cars.

*Q: Could the American women drive cars when you were there?*

LINDSTROM: No. My wife could drive our personally owned Volkswagen on the Consulate compound to the swimming pool, and that was all. ARAMCO had a very limited thing just going out to Half Moon Bay, you had to drive out there if you were a woman in ARAMCO. We got into some very strange situations where the women were being encouraged to acquire skills, medical skills, for example, as nurses, and in some cases doctors. But then the religious requirements are such that they had to do absolutely ridiculous things. Westerners would go to get their shots, and there'd be a hand coming through a hole in the wall to give them their shots -- a woman's hand.

Then we had problems with religions, particularly in the personnel in ARAMCO, and elsewhere, but more in ARAMCO. They had recruited a lot of Filipinos, and Filipinas also. And Filipinos take their Catholicism rather seriously. Whether they were out in a barge, or what have you. While I was there the religious police came by and seized all of the...I don't know if you're

Catholic. What do you call the instruments, all the religious artifacts?

Q: *The chalice.*

LINDSTROM: There is a word for this. And this really upset, obviously, the Catholic community in general, so petty, but so typical. I managed to have a Christmas tree in front of the Consulate General the whole time I was there. But I think some people were not too happy about that. This was a tradition that went back quite a number of years. The Consulate General would always call generally on Bin Jaluwi, as well as on other prominent Saudis. And in return they would call on my residence at Christmas. This was a custom that was started by one of my predecessors going way back.

Q: *Well, we certainly would call. We'd be called at something like 4:00 in the morning and told to appear at dawn at the palace. And then there would be the call back. I remember my first thing, I arrived and here was a bodyguard in the middle of August wishing me a Merry Christmas, because it was part of their Eid.*

LINDSTROM: We had a local employee, actually a Palestinian by the name of Fawzi, a very good man and he had done a lot to promote these relationships. He kept a very good relationship with the el-\_\_ family for example.

Q: *A major merchant family.*

LINDSTROM: Yes. At the time I was there they had a big hotel and many other...

Q: *They were already big in Pepsi when I was there, but it was small potatoes compared to what it is now.*

LINDSTROM: But Fawzi had done a lot to encourage this cross-fertilization and calling back. I even bought frankincense and myrrh, so we could pass the thing around during their calls on me at Christmas time. Everybody would flap the perfume around, they liked it.

Q: *Yes, it was kind of fun.*

LINDSTROM: It was really an exciting experience, it was so different. Although I'd been in the Middle East before, I'd never been closer than Afghanistan, and never really been in the Arab culture. I'm still sorry that there wasn't some way in which I could have acquired better working knowledge of Arabic. But Arabic is extremely difficult.

**WILLIAM HARRISON MARSH**  
**Counselor for Political-Military Affairs**  
**Jeddah (1979-1981)**

*William Harrison March was born in Pennsylvania in 1932. He graduated from*

*Cornell University in 1953 and from Princeton University in 1957 with an MOA after having served in the US Air Force. He entered the Foreign Service in 1960 and served overseas in Saigon, Bangkok, Brussels, Paris, Geneva and Jeddah. Mr. March was interviewed by Lambert (Nick) Heyniger and Vladimir Lehovich in 1997.*

MARSH: Of course; we were there overnight. We were her guests on top of the mountain. It was quite extraordinary. There were other trips made, it was all very good. I was to be reassigned in 1979 and managed to get myself a position as counselor for Political-Military Affairs at Embassy Jeddah, in fact the first counselor for Political-Military Affairs in Jeddah.

*Q: Did Phil Habib have anything to do with that?*

MARSH: No, no, he didn't, as a matter of fact.

*Q: By this time, just as an insight, you have now been back in Washington since 1974, this has now been about five years. You are going off to a fairly isolated and difficult post. How about your wife and children? For example, what was your wife, Ruth, doing in Washington, and how old were your children?*

MARSH: The boys were in seventh and fifth grade that summer. There was no eighth grade at the school in Jeddah so we applied several places and my son, William, Jr., whom we call Wim, was accepted at Lawrenceville. We decided that we were going to put him in Lawrenceville and we were going to leave him there. He had been shunted around from school to school. He started in Brussels, then went to Paris and was in public school in the District and then went to private school when the public school didn't pan out. He then went to St. Stephen's in Alexandria [Virginia] for the seventh grade, when the first private school ran out. We needed to find a place for him.

*Q: So Lawrenceville would take him in the eighth grade?*

MARSH: They certainly would, and did. He was there five years.

*Q: You had by this time two children?*

MARSH: Two sons, that's right. The younger one, Andrew, would go with us.

*Q: Had Ruth been working here or had she been looking after the family?*

MARSH: No. I was rather concerned as to whether I should go, whether life would be worth living in Saudi Arabia, for heaven's sake. I had never been there.

*Q: Particularly for your family.*

MARSH: And particularly for my family. So I came home rather tentatively and said, "Well, you know there is a chance I could go to Jeddah as counselor for Political-Military Affairs" and my

wife immediately said, and I'll never forget it, she said that it sounded fascinating.

*Q: Good for her!*

MARSH: So here I had been expecting her to bail me out of this! I went ahead and went to Stuttgart several times for security assistance conferences but you know Saudi Arabia was in the EURCOM realm of responsibility. And I stopped at Stuttgart and then went on to Jeddah. They had a place all fixed up for us and frankly it was the best quarters made ready for us that we had ever had in all of the Foreign Service.

It just shows what can happen.

*Q: So tell us the name of the administrative officer and the general services officer.*

MARSH: Oh, I always repress names of administrators and general services officers. But the ambassador and deputy chief of mission were terrific.

*Q: Unlike your experiences, or your wife's experiences in Thailand, you seemed to do fairly alright in Saudi Arabia.*

MARSH: Well, you know what the exception proves.

*Q: Okay, so here you are in the burning sands of Arabia. Who was your ambassador and who was your DCM?*

MARSH: Our ambassador was John West who was named by Jimmy Carter, as a neighbor, as he was governor of South Carolina while Jimmy Carter was governor of Georgia.

*Q: Why did John West want to go to Jeddah?*

MARSH: Well, I don't know but I'm glad he did because this was one man, and I haven't met many in 36 years in the Foreign Service, where everything was for the troops. Now Phil Habib had had touches of that. For example, I got overtime pay for a month in the spring of '75 and everyone on the Indochina Task Force then got overtime pay. I tried to turn it back because this was contrary to regulations and I was told to shut up and cash it, that Mr. Habib had gotten it for everyone.

Which is interesting because it shows when someone does want to do something, to get something done, they find ways to do it.

Similarly, all my wife had to do when she wanted to go somewhere in Jeddah was to call the embassy and a car was dispatched. John West had gotten enough cars that all the wives could be accommodated since they could not drive. They never had to wait more than a few minutes.

*Q: Even American embassy wives were not permitted to drive?*

MARSH: No women drive in Saudi Arabia. There is nothing which says they may not drive, but none has ever received a driver's license, and John West just came right in and picked that all up.

*Q: But the job of handling U.S. relations with this important Arab country in the area of things like arms sales, bases, etc., very important, what were you doing and how did you enjoy it?*

MARSH: I enjoyed it very much. I used to tease our commercial officer who was trying to push American products and by my count the total foreign military sales contracts we signed during my two years in Saudi Arabia, totaled 31 billion dollars. A young commercial officer said, "I'm trying to sell eggbeaters here, and you are selling these AWACS systems!" But as a matter of fact we did sell that.

*Q: I assume there was either a number of military attaches at the embassy, as well as perhaps a MAAG or MIL Group. Could you sort of help us to understand how you defined your job in relation to the American military that might be there?*

MARSH: It wasn't easy. But there was a very remarkable Major General who was the head of the Military Assistance Organization, Chuck Donnelly, amazing guy. Now we were all widely dispersed. Jeddah is not the capital of Saudi Arabia, Riyadh is the capital. But all embassies, at that time, were confined to Jeddah, which is the traditional port of arrival for pilgrims on the Hadj. So they wanted to keep the contamination of foreign influences confined to post, I suppose. Later on, in the '80s, there was the completion of construction of diplomatic quarters in Riyadh.

Similarly, the Military Assistance Headquarters were located not in Riyadh, but up on the Gulf in Dhahran. Now Chuck Donnelly and I used to get together very regularly in Riyadh. He would fly down in a military plane, I'd fly up from Jeddah on Saudia Airlines. As a matter of fact I was going from Jeddah to Riyadh at least twice a week. That would be getting up and being at the airport at 6:30 in the morning for a 7:30 flight and arriving in Riyadh about 10:00. Spending time with the military and seeing the Saudi officers (or ministers, as the case may be, if I was with the ambassador), who generally saw people about 11 or 12 in the morning, but very rarely after that, and never beforehand.

Then I would spend time with the military assistance people at the lower levels. You don't just want to do it with the Generals. First of all he's got things to do, and second of all you want to hear, as I learned in Vietnam, you want to hear what the Majors and the Captains and Lieutenant Colonels think and are doing and how things are going. Then I'd get a flight back and if I were lucky I could be back in Jeddah by seven o'clock and if I weren't so lucky I might be back in Jeddah at ten o'clock at night and get home at 11. So that would be a very long day and was tiring. You never knew how to dress because in the middle of the desert Riyadh could be a hundred-plus at midday and it could get down to pretty chilly at night. You probably remember that from your North African experiences. So you needed extra clothing and that sort of thing.

But we did have a Liaison Office in Riyadh and that was very helpful. If you needed to stay over you could stay over at that place.

*Q: That was an American military office not a State Department...*

MARSH: No, it was a State Department office. It was called USLO, the U.S. Liaison Office. It was done away with, of course, when the embassy moved there.

We had a huge compound for the embassy in Jeddah, now the consulate general in Jeddah, and a wonderful swimming pool. It was a very strange place, living there. It was very, very strange because there were no public places to speak of. There were no movies, on the Saudi side, that is. Occasionally we'd see a movie at the embassy or we'd rent a tape and play it in a machine. There were no movies in English in a theater; no theatrical presentations of any kind.

It was risky, as a matter of fact, to go out to dinner. Major General Donnelly later...by the way he died a few years ago...but he became a full General and served as head of U.S. Air Forces in Europe, after having served as head of U.S. Air Forces in East Asia. At any rate, Chuck Donnelly and a number of his staff and their wives...

*Q: We are talking about getting out of the office and having some recreation in Dhahran and Jeddah.*

MARSH: I was saying that General Donnelly, his wife, and a number of other senior staff from the military and their wives were having dinner at a recently opened Chinese restaurant in Dhahran when in burst a group of the religious police. These are laymen who volunteer to do all this sort of enforcement of the strict Wahhabi Muslim rules and they smashed up the place royally with clubs as the U.S. military tried to eat their dinner!

*Q: Why?*

MARSH: Because there were some representations of the Buddha about as decoration.

*Q: Sure, it's a Chinese restaurant.*

MARSH: In a Chinese restaurant, and that was idolatry as far as these people were concerned. They really smashed it to smithereens according to what Chuck wrote. That was the way it was.

You know, if you were in a supermarket and prayer call was called, the doors were locked, the shades pulled down and the cash registers stopped working. So we would have to stand there and wait and sometimes we would be there fifteen, twenty minutes, standing and waiting until the end of the prayer period. And then up would go the shades and the lights were turned on and the cash registers resumed ringing up our purchases.

*Q: There wasn't much sort of downtown in Jeddah for either movies or cultural events?*

MARSH: Nothing. No auditoriums of any kind, no theaters of any kind. As a matter of fact, there was an amusement park and certain nights of the week were for fathers and sons, and other nights of the week were for mothers and daughters, but never for mingled families to go out. As a matter of fact, there was great pressure placed by the Wahhabi religious that men and women

should not be allowed to dine in hotels together. The hotels said they simply could not operate having split dining rooms. However, the swimming pools at the hotels had set hours for men and set hours for women. Husband and wife could never swim together.

*Q: Part of the definition of a hotel is that it is for people who don't live there, so most of the hotels would be full of people who were not Saudis.*

MARSH: Very sorry, but it did not work that way.

*Q: Bill, one thing I have in my notes on this period is that in 1980 while you were in Jeddah, along came the Iran-Iraq War and the question of the use of U.S. AWACS planes. Did you get involved in that?*

MARSH: Let's go back a bit, there is something even more significant in 1979. You'll recall that for many years journalists have been saying that the Saudi monarchy and the whole system of the country is about to collapse. It has not undergone modernization, democratization, representative and responsible government, etc. Well, the Saudis had been listening to this, by the time we were there, for a quarter of a century. They always maintained that their generous system of allowances and social welfare benefits to the population managed to keep everything in place. And then of course came the shock of the seizure of the Grand Mosque in Mecca.

It so happened I had been there about a month. It was during the Hadj, followed by the Id. A good many of the embassy had gone off with the ambassador's blessing on a flight to the States that had brought pilgrims, hadji, over. It was returning to the States empty and then was going to come back and fetch the hadji later. So for the two empty segments of it, the airline responded to the ambassador's generosity and shrewdness in having them over for a party, and offered that anyone who would like to was welcome to go on the plane.

I was too new, I mean it was unthinkable that I would go anywhere, I had been there about a month. Many embassy personnel were away on that trip when I got the word in the embassy from the U.S. military that the Grand Mosque had been seized. This was a terrible time for the Saudis, very difficult.

*Q: Islamic militants seized it, I believe.*

MARSH: That is correct.

*Q: These are sort of conservative...*

MARSH: Ultra, ultra, ultra...

*Q: Ultra conservative, nationalistic.*

MARSH: You'll recall that the disinformation went around the world that the United States had had a hand in the seizure of the Grand Mosque. Therefore, in Islamabad, our embassy was burned. Rioting mobs killed some of our people. It was a very bad time.

Yes, at the time of the Iran-Iraq War, we did not have U.S. AWACS at that time. They were brought in a little later, to tell you the truth. They were based in Riyadh, because there would not be very much warning time if the Saudis were to be attacked by Iranian forces. Remember Iran is the enemy at that time, not Iraq. The threat was from Iran.

The strategic lifeline, particularly vital for Japan and the East Asian economies was through the Iranian Gulf straits, a very, very long lifeline. With a super tanker leaving every hour for the Far East, every hour. I've been in the air and I've seen this. It used to be called the string of pearls, laying out all of these super tankers which are great, wallowing whales. It takes twelve miles for them to come to a stop!

*Q: All heading for Japan, Hong Kong?*

MARSH: Japan, Hong Kong and so forth, oh, yes. That's right. But in any event we did get the AWACS in. The Saudis were very impressed with the AWACS. They wanted an AWACS. Our military presence there did not cause a great deal of dissension among the populace. All of these things were very useful come the Gulf War... come Desert Storm.

*Q: Is there anything that you would like to tell us about the Saudi balancing act between on the one hand being a proud, independent Arab country, one of the leading Arab countries of the world. And on the other hand having a fairly close and reasonably friendly relationship with the United States, particularly in military terms.*

MARSH: Well, I don't purport to be a Middle Eastern expert. I've read everything I possibly could and tried to follow developments. Over the years I've talked with all sides, as a matter of fact later in Geneva I was in touch with the Iraqis at the Department's instruction to see how the negotiations with the Iranians, presided over by the UN Secretary General, were going. So I dealt with various sides of approach. I dealt for many years with the Israelis, with Israeli diplomats and all that sort of thing. I consider myself a strong friend of both sides, if you will. I will not be characterized, and people have tried to do it, characterize me as an Israeli sympathizer or an Arab sympathizer. I want reconciliation, progress and peace worked out by both sides working together and this has been the name of the game for years and years and years, there is nothing new about that.

At the same time, one has to strike a balance, and it isn't easy, between the strong interest and importance to the United States and to the country itself of human rights matters and of stable, representative government. You have to balance that with the particularities of the region. They have ways of doing things which may not be according to our ticket, and each of the countries has certain, shall we say, anomalies of either religious inspiration or of their political system or their social structures, that sort of thing. We have to be very careful and very discriminating in our approach to it. It is too easy to say 'X' is not negotiating now or 'Y' is not controlling terrorism, or 'Z' is not practicing the rule of law and justice and so forth. There are so many interests at work there.

*Q: This is one of the things that the FBI, perhaps, is running in to in trying to get to the bottom of*



*the bombing of the Air Force apartment building a year or two ago. The FBI still doesn't feel that the Saudis have been forthcoming enough about their investigation, but this is an aspect of Saudi sovereignty and culture.*

MARSH: Yes, that is very true and furthermore there are an awful lot of things that probably will not come out into the light of day for years and years to come because the Saudis have done things very, very quietly in many respects. And sometimes they've done things quietly which seem contradictory in order to be of use to both sides. But there have always been certain things very difficult to understand in the Middle East. It is a set of paradoxes, no doubt about that. For example, from day one Israel had had an assured oil supply from Iran. This was interrupted to a certain extent, and I say to a certain extent, at the Iranian Revolution. But however arranged, though the former supplier or vendor was out of operation, Israel has had a continued oil supply vital to its economy.

In Saudi Arabia we used to eat lettuce that purported to come from the Gaza Strip. I don't believe it came from the Gaza Strip at all. I think it came from Israel. So one day I put this to certain Saudi officials and they became extremely uncomfortable, then coughed, so I knew I had hit on something!

*Q: Talking about Saudi officials, any quick perceptions that you'd like to give us about some of the Saudis that you dealt with?*

MARSH: I found them very impressive people, most of them I dealt with to any extent. You know, the Kingdom has concentrated upon good education for its princes and for as many of its people as it could.

Now this tends to run counter to the extreme conservative Wahhabi trend and so occasionally they have a period of re-evaluation, reconsideration, but still thousands and thousands of the people have become quite well educated.

*Q: I would imagine that a number of the people you dealt with, for example in the Foreign Ministry, would be people who had a Western education. How are they managing on the one hand they've been exposed to Western culture and yet they are living in this very strict and conservative environment. How are they dealing with that?*

MARSH: They travel a great deal and what they do, when in Rome... So there has been very little problem with that. Occasionally there is some argument from the government about their foreign exposure.

*Q: Okay, so now we are in 1981. You are up for transfer from a hardship post, where did you want to go?*

**GEORGE QUINCEY LUMSDEN**  
**Deputy Director, Arabian Peninsular Affairs**

## Washington DC (1979-1982)

*Born and raised in New Jersey, Ambassador Lumsden was educated at Princeton and Georgetown Universities. After service in the US Navy, Mr. Lumsden joined the Foreign Service. Following assignments in Izmir and Bonn, he was assigned to Amman and Beirut, where he undertook Arabic Language Studies. Subsequent foreign assignments include Kuwait, Paris and The United Arab Emirates, where he served as Ambassador. In Washington, Mr. Lumsden held positions concerning the Arabian Gulf States. After retiring, he pursued petroleum and energy matters in the private sector. Ambassador Lumsden was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2000.*

*Q: Greenwich Bay, I think.*

LUMSDEN: Exactly. Except in those two spots, we really did not have any military presence. The Saudis sort of winked at this. They were glad that we were there. Clearly, they could not do it in Saudi Arabia at that time.

*Q: Had we started to build an airfield complex in Saudi Arabia? We built that big airport.*

LUMSDEN: We had built airfields and things. They were not stationed with U.S. military personnel. There may have been a technical advisory group there for certain U.S. equipment that was bought pre-positioned and sort of permanently stationed.

*Q: Were they being arranged? You need a certain type of runway to take airplanes. We were in pretty good shape.*

LUMSDEN: We were in great shape.

*Q: Had that started yet?*

LUMSDEN: This stuff started, I would say, in the mid-'80s, that type of activity. We are talking about 1979-1981 now. We were pecking around the edges. We did have technical advisory groups because the Saudis had bought some American equipment and things. But we didn't have the big stuff until the Iraq-Iran war got started.

*Q: What about in your area - I'm really thinking of the Gulf states, including Oman - what was happening? Were the Iranians sending mullahs or the equivalent thereof to stir the population up? There is a sizeable Iranian population in all those.*

LUMSDEN: They didn't have to send mullahs. The mullahs from the area went to Tehran and were energized. Certain key areas in the Gulf have very large Iranian communities. You can go to parts of the souk in places like Bahrain and Dubai and suddenly you don't hear any Arabic. It's all Farsi. They've been there for a long, long time. Bahrain was part of the Persian Empire for many years. It has a population - these are Arabs - over 50% Shia. The Iranian segment of that is much, much less, probably 15%. The Qatif Oasis in the eastern province of Saudi Arabia

is a majority Arab Shia, the worst possible place from the point of view of security of a Sunni monarchy trying to invite the Americans in to be a counterweight against the Shia mullah in Iran.

*Q: Was the takeover of the Great Mosque during your time?*

LUMSDEN: I was still in Washington when this happened. The French lay great claim to having had special forces in re-taking the mosque. They didn't. This was another wonderful French trick. "Paris Match" had them all suited up and going. The French were led to believe that they were French special forces that regained the mosque. That was not the case. That, of course, was a great shock to Saudi Arabia. That would have been about 1981. I went to Abu Dhabi in '82 and had been working all around the fringes. The Iraq-Iran war was starting. The Great Mosque takeover was coming. That is when the Saudis started to say, "Oh, by golly gee, we've really got to now bite the bullet on this preparedness business and listen to some of these things the Americans have been talking about to us."

*Q: You mentioned this before, but what was our impression of the stability of the Saudi ruling group?*

LUMSDEN: The in-house Department view is that if the House of Saud is overthrown, it will be overthrown by another branch of the House of Saud. The House of Saud is very large. It contains people of various persuasions. The concern was that the new technological class wouldn't mesh properly with the home-educated Islamic class and that that could cause difficulties. It still could. But through it all - and here we are in the year 2000 - there sits the legitimate ruler of Saudi Arabia with no visible opposition forces arming themselves in the desert against him.

*Q: In 1958-1960, I was in Dhahran. One of our things was that obviously the Saudi regime will collapse because this was the time of Nasser and all that. We were trying to figure out... It didn't look good, but we hoped they would hang on for a while.*

LUMSDEN: What more can you say? All these people who visit the Shah and the Shah says, "Oh, Saudi Arabia is going to collapse..." Everybody says, "Saudi Arabia is going to collapse." Well, never say never, but it seems to have a staying power longer than some of its detractors.

*Q: What about the burr under the saddle of the Peninsula, and that was the Democratic People's Republic of Yemen?*

LUMSDEN: Oh, yes, the PDRY. That is a classic example of Cold War creation. The British left Aden and the Soviets were able to appeal to the proper tribal elements and establish the People's Democratic Republic of the Yemen, a communist people's republic that extended, I would say, for five or 10 blocks around Government House in Aden. That was basically it. But they had the southern half of Aden and these tribal elements could play off their grievances against the northerners in Sanaa, who in turn were sometimes a problem for the Saudis. So, never mind. The Saudis sometimes would assist the PDRY tribes, who they knew weren't a bunch of communists (They were as true Muslims as they were. You just had this Marxist ideology at the center of town.) in order to balance off things because of Saudi Arabia's concern. Yemen at that time was the most populous country in the Arabian Peninsula with over nine million people. Saudi Arabia

only had 7.5 or so then. So, it was a communist country in name and in international representation and in all its pronouncements and in its support for the Dhofar Liberation Front fighting against the Omanis. Life in general in Aden did not change its ancient cadence very much during that period. As you can see now, it's Yemen again and the tribes who were part of PDRY still have the same animosities against the tribes who were in the north.

*Q: By this time, the Buraimi Oasis difficulty with Saudi Arabia had been solved.*

LUMSDEN: The Buraimi Oasis problem with the United Arab Emirates and Oman was solved. The Buraimi problem with the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia was still a problem, although there is a negotiation that was completed delineating the border there. This is where the oil company started tribal warfare over this Shaeb al-Zararra oil field. Were you there then?

*Q: I was there 1958-1960. I would meet the British guy who was advising Abu Dhabi. Shakput was doing his thing. ARAMCO had their advisor from Saudi Arabia and the British wanted us to go and visit and we thought, "No way." We weren't going to get in the middle of this one.*

LUMSDEN: The simple answer to your question is, the United Arab Emirates and Oman have solved. The United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia have solved, but it's all confidential and not released because Saudi Arabia and Oman have not solved. So what you've got is a very definable point with no magnitude. It's called "Um al-Zummal." Everybody agrees that the borders of those countries meet at that point. However, the Saudis got concessions from the UAE that gives them a Danzig Corridor to the sea by Qatar and nobody asked the Qataris about this; they changed the border of their country without even inviting them... The Qataris know about it, but they're pretty ticked off. This won't be published until the whole thing is solved. Who knows when that will be? I may be saying something that is dated because I haven't been doing this in a... Saudi Arabia still is putting pressure on Oman... Their negotiating position starts out with something called the Fuad Hamzabay Line, which is way to the east into the Jebel Akhtar. The Saudis say, "Traditionally, these tribes belong to us." The Sultan of Oman is never going to agree to that. So, they don't get together and talk about this third leg of the tripod. Until you get that in, all the borders are indefinite except the UAE-Oman thing. That is a functioning part. UAE-Saudi-Oman...

**JAMES A. PLACKE**  
**Deputy Chief of Mission**  
**Jeddah (1979-1982)**

*Mr. Placke was born and raised in Nebraska and educated at the University of Nebraska. He entered the Foreign Service in 1958. An Arabic Language Officer and Economic specialist, Mr. Placke was posted to Baghdad, Frankfurt, Kuwait, Tripoli, Ottawa and in Jeddah, where he served as Deputy Chief of Mission. At the State Department in Washington, Mr. Placke dealt primarily with Near East affairs. From 1982 to 1985 he served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Near East. Mr. Placke was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.*

*Q: Well, then you went to Saudi Arabia. You were there from '79 to when?*

PLACKE: '79 through '82. I was there for three years.

*Q: In Saudi Arabia that's [a lot]. What was the sort of the situation of our relationship with Saudi Arabia? We'll talk about the embassy next.*

PLACKE: A very close relationship. This again because energy was as usual the high point of the relationship. The structure of the industry had by that time changed. The Aramco partners had been nationalized or were in the process of being nationalized, effectively the Saudis had taken over Aramco, which was the world's largest oil company as it is still today. That was the centerpiece of the relationship. The very high oil prices which were a result of first the Arab oil embargo in the early '70s and then the collapse of the Shah's regime in 1978. He left Tehran in February of '79, which led to an even sharper escalation of prices. So, I got to Saudi Arabia right in the middle of that. Saudi Arabia of course had been one of the major beneficiaries of period of high oil prices and it was being transformed right before your eyes from what had been a pretty primitive place actually into a physically adept, modern country and they were doing everything at once - roads, highways, mosques, schools, hospitals, telecommunications. When I arrived in Jeddah, you could barely call across town on the telephone system. Two weeks later they plugged in the new system and you had international direct dialing. It was like night and day.

*Q: Most of this was being done by outsiders, wasn't it?*

PLACKE: All of it, AT&T, Bell Canada, General Electric, anybody you could think of was working in Saudi Arabia.

*Q: Was that a matter of, I mean people were looking at Saudi Arabia concerned because I mean what in a way you're developing is a parasite class which, maybe it's the wrong term, but you know, I mean if one that lives off the work of others.*

PLACKE: Well, they live off the resources, which Allah happened to put in their country and that's kind of the way they look at it, you know, it's there because God put it there and that was his intent and fine and it's still more than just. Saudi Arabia when I said a primitive or relatively primitive, or undeveloped is a better word because socially they were not primitive, but in an economic and physical development sense the place was pretty basic. Even some of the royal palaces that I visited in the early part of my assignment there, would be kind of substandard housing. The Saudi society historically and certainly up to the present time is tribally organized. To understand anything about Saudi Arabia you have to appreciate that fact and fully absorb what it means and learn as much as you can about the main tribal systems and interconnections and so forth because it is absolutely fundamental to what goes on in Saudi Arabia. The tradition is that the head of the tribe, the Sheikh, is the person who doles out the duties and that was the role of the Saudi government. The oil wealth came in not to private individual Saudis and there were entrepreneurs, some of them associated with the oil industry that became extremely wealthy and were often very astute businessmen as well, but the bulk of the money came to the central government to be utilized and distributed. So, they did what was natural given the way their

society works in its history up to that point, the government did everything. It built power plants and it built the highways, it built the railroads, it built the telephone system, it did all of these things. Well, now some 20 or 25 years later, that looks like kind of a bad choice and it's only been in the last couple of years that the Saudi government has realized that they don't have the resources to do all of these things anymore.

The Saudi population when I got there was around seven million people about a million of which were expatriates working there on a generally temporary basis. Today the Saudi population is over 20 million of which two million are expatriates. The government cannot perform all of the social functions like education and health care which are often the province of governments around the world, sometimes they are not, such as in the U.S.; sometimes there's less of that in other countries, but the Saudi government was doing everything. It was being the source of capital and the developer for everything. They can't do that anymore. So, we're beginning to see the development of private electric power. That's very new. That's only from around the last two years and the character or really the mechanics of the Saudi economy and to some extent the psychology of the society is attitude for government, is attitude toward private investment, has to change and is in the process of change.

*Q: Well, while you were there, were we seeing the population growth as waiving flags or was that very apparent?*

PLACKE: Well, we knew that population growth rate was in the range of three and a half percent, which is among the highest in the world. It didn't look threatening at that point, but if you had run the numbers and carried out two generations you'd realize what the consequences were going to be. I had some conversations with Saudi leadership about this. They just didn't, (a) they didn't understand it and (b) they didn't want to hear it because their perception was here is this large country. Saudi Arabia's geographic extent is equivalent to the United States east of the Mississippi. It's a big place. Very thinly populated, a lot of it uninhabitable, it's arid desert or mountainous desert, you have that choice, with a large financial inflow, a wealthy country that became so literally in a decade and was nervous about other more covetous folks in its regions that might have designs on them.

Therefore, one very important element of the U.S.-Saudi relationship was the security relationship. Really that's the underpinnings of the relationship. The strategic bargain between Saudi Arabia and the United States which is really where it began actually with the things moving between President Roosevelt and King Saud at the end of the, just before the end of the Second World War. That set the framework. It was a preferred position in the Saudi energy sector which is still true today with the United States or American countries in a unwritten, but apparently well understood U.S. commitment toward Saudi Arabia's external security. It was never promised and never been asked to do that, I don't think they would want us fooling around in their internal security. That bargain has held up very well, but it, the Saudi perception was that they were under populated and vulnerable and had a subsidy system to encourage large families and that subsidy system is still operating today when they got through this problem and hundreds of thousands of young Saudis coming on the job market every year for which there aren't jobs.

*Q: How did the events in Iran, the events of '79, the embassy, well, Iran had been going through*

*a revolution, how did that reflect on what was happening?*

PLACKE: Well, I knew actually the wife of one of the embassy officers who was taken hostage was, she was Iranian by birth and was living in Saudi Arabia and remained in Saudi Arabia.

John West who didn't come out of the Foreign Service tradition, but came out in the southern political tradition, he was the government of South Carolina. President Carter appointed him Ambassador to Saudi Arabia. He was the first non-career ambassador to Saudi Arabia and of course the Foreign Service was miffed about this and knew that this wasn't going to work and how could any non-career person understand or even come close to understanding the complexities of Saudi Arabia. John had no problem with that at all. I've often accompanied him, I always accompanied him in fact, when he met with Prince Abdullah who in those days was number three and commander of the National Guard as he is still, now he's number two and is effectively running the country. [The] King is incapacitated.

We'd go around and see Abdullah and almost every time John West and [the Prince] would go through this routine. We'd walk in and the Prince would greet the Ambassador, very gracious and would sit down and he would say something like, "Your Excellency, always delighted to see you and I'm sure we'll have an opportunity to exchange our views here today. You must appreciate, however, that I'm going to speak very directly because it's the only way I know how and essentially from a Bedouin tradition, we deal with people in a direct way." John would say, "Your highness I know exactly what you mean. I'm just a country lawyer." Then they both laughed. John figured out Saudi society sufficiently to be a very effective ambassador.

*Q: Often, I think it was noted that ambassadors who are politicians often can do better than ambassadors who are business people. They're dealing with political figures. It may be a prince, but I mean it's politics, you know, even though there may not be a very solid tribal system in South Carolina.*

PLACKE: Well, I think southern politics - about which I don't really have any real expertise, my only serious exposure was with John - probably would fit into that mold a little more comfortably than northern American politics. John was in my observations did a very fine job as Ambassador.

*Q: Well, back to the events in Iran, I mean here you had a very revolutionary fundamentalist Shia group in Islam, practically on the borders of Saudi Arabia.*

PLACKE: Right across the Gulf.

*Q: Right across the Gulf. This must have, particularly at that time, must have presented some real strains, didn't it?*

PLACKE: Well, the real strains came later, but not much later. I recall meeting with a group of Iranian clerics within a week or two of arriving in Saudi Arabia actually in... I guess it was, I don't remember where, we must have been in Jeddah. They had come for [pilgrimage] - not the annual pilgrimage, it's a, it's the minor, so-called minor pilgrimage, which can be made by

Muslim visiting Mecca and Medina at any time, the Hajj being a particular period that takes on additional significance. These were about four or five clerics and I didn't, and nobody in the U.S. government had a very clear notion as to where they fit in, but it was the first opportunity to talk to any kind of representation from this group after the embassy officers had been taken hostage. We had discussions, which I don't, thinking back on it I think they must have been; they were very, very weary and didn't know what this was all about. I frankly didn't know what it was really about either. My purpose under instructions from the Department as just to try to find out whatever might be useful in the way of political intelligence to find a handle to try to deal with the hostage situation. Needless to say we didn't find that handle on this occasion. I think only later began to appreciate that the whole hostage episode in Iran was a reflection of Iranian domestic politics more than anything else and that when it was no longer useful to Ayatollah Khomeini to hold these hostages and when that became a liability brought it to an end. It was turned on and off for their own purposes. Bad news for the hostages of course.

John Limbert was one of them and John had been a political officer in Saudi Arabia and his wife having been Iranian born, John spoke very good Farsi and Arabic and was asked after the Iranian revolution to go back to Tehran and take an assignment there in the political section which he did. He left Parveneh in Jeddah because I think that was before dependents could return and when the hostage incident occurred and this is an illustration of John West's approach to things opposed to perhaps the more traditional Foreign Service, there was no doubt in his mind what the right thing to do was and that was to provide housing on the embassy compound for Parveneh and [their] two children. Being DCM and being kind of a, the point of contact between Ambassador West and the State Department on all kinds of things and particularly administrative affairs, I knew that there was potential to get us all into difficulty if we didn't handle this right. So, my role was to try to figure out a way to do it and to explain to Foreign Service inspectors or anybody else. We worked it out. Parveneh then became an employee of the consular section and this was not a sham. She was there and did a genuine job and therefore, entitled to embassy housing in her own right, while her husband John was being held in Tehran. That was the situation that was maintained until the hostage episode came to an end.

Politically, tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran were there from the outset. The takeover of the Mecca Mosque, the Grand Mosque in Mecca occurred in September of 1979 a few months after I arrived there in September or October, it may have been October. [Editor's Note: The Grand Mosque Seizure on November 20, 1979, was an armed attack and takeover by Islamic fundamentalist dissidents of the Al-Masjid al Haram in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, the holiest place in Islam. The insurgents declared that the Mahdi, or redeemer of Islam, had arrived in the form of one of the insurgents' leaders and called on Muslims to obey him. The seizure shocked the Islamic world as hundreds of pilgrims present for the annual Hajj were taken hostage, and hundreds of militants, security forces and hostages caught in crossfire were killed in the ensuing battles for control of the site. The siege ended two weeks after the takeover began with militants cleared from the mosque.] That was followed by at the end of the year, December going over into January of the following year, by fairly serious riots among the Shia in Eastern Saudi Arabia. The belief of the Saudis and how much intelligence they really had on this I don't know, but within their own country they generally know what's going on and our beliefs were simply on a more analytical basis, was that this was probably Iranian inspired so that the antipathy between the two sides began to rise and hit the boiling point when there were large scale Iranian



inspired riots at Hajj. That I think was in 1981 I believe and then there was a series of these incidents. The Iranians were attempting to use the premier religious event in the Muslim calendar for political purposes. They were staging, you know, pro-revolution, anti-U.S., anti-Israel, to some extent anti-Saudi Arabia demonstrations, getting people killed. Finally the third time that they staged one of these things a lot of people got killed, hundreds of pilgrims and dozens of Saudi national guards. That's when the relationship between the two really ruptured and was only put back together about, it was in the late, it was right at the end of the '90s, I think it came about probably 1997. Iran became the president or the chairman of the world Islamic council and in that role convened a traditional heads of state congress in Tehran and by this time Fahd of course had become king when the King died which was while I was still in Saudi Arabia in 1982 and by the late '90s was incapacitated to the point where he wasn't going as Saudi Arabia's representative to these things, so Crown Prince Abdullah went. Abdullah found someone in Mohammed Khatami who had been the popularly elected president only a short time earlier that he felt he could work with and even extended that later to the religious in de-facto secular leader of Iran and that's when the Saudi Arabian relationship turned around within a very short period of time. There had been a lot of tension between them and in-between we also had the Iran and Iraq War.

*Q: When was the Iran and Iraq War? Was it on your watch?*

PLACKE: It was during the time I was in Saudi Arabia, we had the takeover of the mosque in Mecca, the riots among the Shia in the eastern province which was the oil producing area, the seizure of the American Embassy and the hostage taking in Tehran. Then in September of 1980 the outbreak of the Iran and Iraq War and then [the] King died the month I was leaving Saudi Arabia, July of 1982.

*Q: You know, these things were going on with Saudis' eastern neighbors, Iran and Iraq and all, was this something that we would consult them or were we sort of bystanders watching their relationships, what they were doing?*

PLACKE: Well, when the Iran and Iraq War began because we did not have diplomatic relations with Iraq, but we had reinstated resident officers in Baghdad in the U.S. Interest Section which operated under the Swiss flag. But, of course with the situation in Tehran needless to say there wasn't anybody there and still isn't to this day. So, we had a poor relationship with Iraq and a really bad relationship with Iran. So, between, the choice between the two was not very dramatic as long as they were just fighting and hurting each other, we didn't see that our interests were being directly affected. The Iran and Iraq War when I was back at the Department as deputy assistant secretary was something worth coming back to, because it did have a number of long lasting consequences, but at that time, of course the Arab states on the Arab side of the Gulf, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and all of the others lined up immediately behind Iraq and become Iraq's principal source of finance for the war and the Saudis actually built a separate port to bring in Iraqi arms shipments in the Red Sea and they were trekked across the kingdom. We saw all this going on and observed and reported on it, but it didn't, our perception at the time particularly involved American interests.

*Q: Well, the problems of internal security, did we give advice or again were we observers to*

*what happened? The Grand Mosque was taken over, the Shiite revolt, you know and the disturbances during the Hajj.*

PLACKE: Indeed, we did. The takeover of the Grand Mosque, of course, would be the equivalent of St. Peter's being taken over in Rome by some Catholic revolutionary group. It was a shocking event and the purpose was to dramatize the conservative view within Islam that this particular group was putting forward and one of the ironies in all of this was that the leader of the group that took over the mosque in Mecca was the son of one of the Muslim brothers that were killed in a confrontation with [the] King. These things have long antecedents and long memories. The, let's see where were we going on this?

*Q: Well, I was just wondering, did we get involved in sort of security advice or help or anything?*

PLACKE: Security advice: Yes. The myth about the takeover of the Grand Mosque is that the French came in and helped the Saudis retake it. This is not true and I finally found why it was so widely believed. Several years later, it came across my desk a copy of a report out of the military attaché's office in Paris reporting that this is what the French had told them and therefore this is what happened. It wasn't what happened at all. This is what is believed, but it simply is untrue. What actually happened is that there were non-Muslims within sight of Mecca, at that time, about the same as on any other day of the year, but the Agency did bring in some advisors, U.S. military, not CIA, but under CIA auspices that in my understanding - and I did not observe it directly - provided some fairly useful advice and perhaps some special weapons to Saudi National Guard in their retaking of the mosque.

*Q: Speaking of fundamentalism, actually within the last couple of months here in the United States, Saudi Arabia is under a lot more scrutiny because of the fact that so many Saudis have been involved in terrorist acts. Were we looking at the schooling system of Saudi Arabia?*

PLACKE: No. We were generally aware of it. I mean what is become known since and also I think the schooling system has probably gone even further in that direction than was the case while I was there. My interpretation of what happened about this set of circumstances; I think what you're referring to is the fact that there were 15 Saudis among the 19 hijackers of the three aircraft on September 11. There is bigotry taught in the Saudi school system. It is in the curriculum. It's reflected in the textbooks. This is a bad thing and the Saudi government has belatedly realized that this is also a threat to them. Osama Bin Laden doesn't plan to come to power in Washington, he wants to come to power in Riyadh and we just happened to be in the way, which is why we're a target. At the time when Saudi Arabia, just to sort of go back again to the way it was, when it got sudden oil wealth, again it wanted to do everything it needed to do everything at once. One of the things was to expand greatly the educational system. At that time illiteracy was probably more than 50% of the population. There was very little schooling for girls and women at all. There are only two universities in the country. They were sending their best and brightest abroad generally to the United States for advanced education and even secondary education. Both the present foreign minister Prince Saud al-Faisal and his younger brother Prince Turki Al Faisal who up until about six months ago had been the head of Saudi intelligence were educated in the United States. They both went to the Hun (?) School and then Saud graduated from Princeton and Turki from Georgetown. Of course I dealt with both of them extensively

while I was there and still see them from time to time. In trying to enormously expand their educational system from the ground up, the Saudis had to bring in large numbers of Arabic speaking educators or teachers and the largest available pool was in Egypt. The Egyptians were very glad to see the Muslim Brotherhood faction among the teachers go off to Saudi Arabia. The Brotherhood's stated goal is to instill the Koran and [Sunnah](#) as the sole reference point for... ordering the life of the Muslim family, individual, community... and state, but then were expanded through the Saudi educational system and because of Saudi Arabia's self-perception of being the leader of the Muslim world, the protector of the Muslim holy places and so forth, because of Saudi support for charitable and sometimes not so charitable Muslim activities around the world this was the attitude that infiltrated this whole system. This goes back to the 1970s when the Saudis were confronted with a need to do something and this was the way that they dealt with it; with consequences that I don't think anybody could have possibly foreseen.

*Q: How did your officers find dealing with the Saudis? Were they able to get out and around, how were contacts?*

PLACKE: I'll give you answer to that question because it's clearly part of how the career service performed and an aspect of the official U.S. Saudi relationship, but let me start with sort of a personal vignette. Most people who are outside the Foreign Service or outside government, when my wife and I are talking about some of our past experiences, when we get to Saudi Arabia, they always say, well gee that must have been a hard experience, especially for your wife. In her view that was our best Foreign Service assignment. For this reason, first of all being DCM I had a car and driver, so not being able to drive for her was not a great liability and every morning my secretary would schedule what the driver was going to do that day and so there wouldn't be any conflicts or any surprises it all worked very smoothly. She realized that sitting on the embassy compound in the DCM's residence for three years was going to be pretty dull if that's all she did. She had an education background herself. She is a graduate of Smith College and has always been interested in the arts. So, she became aware of the USIS series, video series, on American women artists and she would invite Saudi women and some non-Saudis as well and diplomats' wives, but mostly Saudi to our house for a showing of one of these films in this series. Actually they weren't videos, they were films because I remember operating the projector or setting it up once or twice. After the first one this became a real hit and she would have people call her up and say, so and so has told me that you're going to have another film showing, can I come. They would be wives of prominent Saudi personalities of one sort or another, so she became very well connected in the Saudi women's community and when I was an Arabic language student in Beirut they had what was called the wives' course. I doubt if you could call it that today, but it was one hour a day, five hours a week. So, she has some basic grounding in the language which she then picked up in Saudi Arabia in a more serious way and got to the point where she could feel comfortable in a group where she was the only non-Arab and non-native Arabic speaker.

That led to a couple of professionally very useful things. With her contacts and my own we were much better able to figure out how Saudi society worked in a small community in Jeddah and the larger society and in a social sense it works in Saudi Arabia just as it does here or in most places. That is, if the wife says that they'll come to dinner, they will come to dinner. So, we would send out dinner invitations. We did a lot of entertaining of Saudis, I mean real Saudis. We always approached it the same way. We'd send the invitations out and then a couple of days later my

wife would call and indeed the wife and she almost always knew the wife, if she said, “Yes, we’d like to come”, we could count on it. If she said, “Well, you know, we may be busy”, you know, they probably wouldn’t be there.

So, we developed some long lasting relationships among the Saudis and she, actually we, were talking about this just the other day. She became acquainted with Ken Collins, the principle wife and a number of the other royal family wives, including the wife of former King Faisal who as actually Turkish born, and Ken Collins, senior wife. On one occasion when my wife was invited to a reception of some sort, she took our oldest daughter along who had been a college student and the queen, as she was usually termed, but that’s very much a Western term, she wouldn’t be called queen in Saudi Arabia, saw our daughter Elizabeth and said, “You sit here next to me.” They didn’t have a language in common, but I gathered they got along famously. The point of the story is it was a collaborative effort between my wife and myself. She had a much more interesting time there than she might have otherwise. This was not a paid activity for her, but it was supported by the U.S. government in the sense of providing transportation, our representational allowance and housing allowance and all the rest of it. It very definitely served a useful purpose. I had much better contacts among a segment of Saudi society than I would have ever had if I was just working on my own.

More broadly - to go back to your original question after this long digression, it is pretty much like everywhere else. It depends upon the personality of the officer involved and depends how much effort they put into it. Some put in more than others, but it was certainly possible. Mark Handley at the time was the junior officer in the political section. Mark is very fluent in Arabic. He sounds like a Yemeni which kinds of grates on everybody, but he speaks Arabic very well. After all of these events that we referred to at the onset, the collapse of the Shah’s regime, in Iran the Shia riots in the eastern province, the outbreak of the Iran and Iraq War, my principal substantive issue during the three years I was there, was to persuade Washington that Saudi Arabia wasn’t just like Iran and the same thing that happened to the Shah wasn’t going to happen in Saudi Arabia. Washington saw the parallel as an absolute truth and it was my job to try to persuade them what the reality was. I turned to Mark at a given point. He was approaching the end of his two-year assignment after the first year that I was there. I wanted to keep him on. So, I called him in one day and I said, “Mark, I’ve got a deal for you. I’ll give you a new van, the van equivalent to an SUV which we just had gotten into the motor pool and cover your expenses and I want you to go out and get around the countryside and talk to the provincial governors, talk to district security officials, talk to religious figures to the extent you can and find out you know, in some depth what public attitudes really are and how we can communicate this to Washington to counter this notion that Saudi Arabia is just another Iran waiting to happen.” Mark did a terrific job. He did exactly what I asked him to do in the process elected to stay on in Saudi Arabia instead of going to Tunisia where most people would have preferred to go. Mark, being Mark, he thought this was an opportunity he couldn’t pass up. He relished it and did a terrific job. He turned in some really superior reporting which eventually got him a director general’s reporting award. But that was a key thing in communicating to Washington what some of the realities of Saudi Arabia were.

*Q: What were some of the realities that stuck out in your mind?*

PLACKE: I guess what I, this comes down to Saudi Arabia as almost always does to personalities. I referred earlier to John West and Crown Prince Abdullah and how they got along together. At one point the Crown Prince, now Crown Prince, then just Prince Abdullah, but always commander of the National Guard which is his power base. He's very much a product of the tribal system and understands tribal politics at a level that I couldn't even comprehend. It's because the Guard is drawn essentially from tribal levies almost, largely Bedouin, and it's intensely loyal to him personally, as you would expect. He wanted to improve the health care and he wanted the U.S. army, which has trained the Guard for 30 years now to manage the health care system for the National Guard. We talked to the appropriate people in the Pentagon who had no particular appetite for doing this, but ultimately with a lot of leadership and persuasion from Ambassador West, agreed to undertake this. I negotiated the terms of the arrangement with some of Abdullah's staff and it was interesting from my point of view, and kind of fun, because they had an Egyptian lawyer who was their legal advisor on their negotiating team whose mission in life was to obstruct everything and assure that nothing ever got done. At every point he would raise some objection and finally the, it was one of the two [inaudible] who are a closely related family to the royal family and had always occupied high positions in the National Guard and the I can't remember which of the two it was that was my opposite on this occasion, but he finally turned around to the [lawyer] and said, "Our instructions are to come to an agreement and that's what we're going to do." That ended that whole sector of opposition. So, that was kind of fun and we got it on my watch. It was important to Prince Abdullah and the last time I saw him, which was here a couple of years ago, I reminded him of that and he got a big kick out of it and laughed and said, "Oh, yes, I remember that."

More generally, Fahd, who was Crown Prince under King Khalid, dominated the government in a way that there is really no parallel in the United States. If you're king you don't have to, things are done by consensus, but the king's position is much greater than say the president of the United States is in our context.

There were three American ambassadors in Saudi Arabia during the time that I was DCM. John West had already been there for two years when I arrived, followed by Ambassador Newman, Robert Newman who was only there for six weeks. He had a falling out with Alexander Haig who was briefly Secretary of State. The third ambassador in my tenure was Dick Murphy, who was a career and a very highly regarded Foreign Service officer, and who was had been already ambassador to Syria. At the time I arrived in Saudi Arabia he was ambassador to the Philippines and ultimately came there after Bob Newman. Because we had a lot of ambassadors coming and going, I logged a lot of time as chargé.

I sat through two sessions where the arriving American ambassador presented his credentials to the crown prince who was Fahd. On both occasions there would be a little private meeting afterwards which was rare. They didn't do this for many ambassadors, but always for the American, maybe for a few of the Europeans. He made, Fahd made the same point both times. He said, "Look, whenever you have a policy question about U.S.-Saudi relations, you come to me. If you have a policy question about oil affairs you come to me." And we did and he absolutely had the last word. Oil policy was Fahd's policy and it was certainly in the service of the kingdom, but on a couple of occasions when there was going to be a particularly crucial OPEC meeting when there was an inclination on the part of some of the more rabid elements in

OPEC, often the Iranians, to push for further reductions and quotas to raise prices which were then already in the \$30 range even higher we'd have instructions to go to the Saudis and try to persuade them to take a more moderate position in OPEC. Fahd always responded, always because the American president asked him to.

The other dimension that took up a lot of time was the security side, which was of course was the other half of the strategic relationship. Prince Sultan who is still defense minister of Saudi Arabia and number three in the order of succession right after Crown Prince Abdullah, was the defense minister while I was there and had already been for about eight years at that point. He was constantly being approached from various angles by the U.S. military to broaden the relationship to allow us to establish a forward headquarters there, to go into more joint training exercises, to have short term deployments, which he always turned down. On one occasion he was kind of exasperated and said, "I understand why you want this and you'll have to appreciate that it's not something that we can do. I want to assure you beyond any shadow of a doubt that the military cooperation between the United States and Saudi Arabia will continue at its present level and in the event that there's some development that requires you to deploy forces we will welcome them. They will be able to use every facility that we have. We will turn over whatever you need. You know our bases better than we do because it was your Corps of Engineers who built them" which was true and that of course was ultimately happened in 1990 and Sultan did exactly what he said he would do.

*Q: How about were there any other developments there that we should cover before we move to moving back to Washington?*

PLACKE: That's kind of the highlights. I guess one of the lowlights was a visit by Secretary Haig. This was shortly after the Reagan administration was formed and Haig's first foreign trip as Secretary of State was to the Middle East and he made the usual rounds including Riyadh, which in those days was on everybody's itinerary because of oil and money. He was not there about oil and money; he was there about politics and the U.S.-Saudi relationship. In his staff this notion had been conceived of the strategic partnership and the object of it was - once you got past the smokescreen - was to try to form a relationship with the United States at the center and surround it by Israel and the conservative Arab states. This was what Haig was trying to sell to the Saudis. Crown Prince Fahd who was the de facto head of government gave a dinner for Secretary Haig and this was the main object of the exercise of the dinner. Fahd who was, as most Arabs, unfailingly courteous and certainly as host would be, listened to all this and indicated that he had understood what the Secretary was saying. Well, we were put up in the brand new guest palace. It was the first group of official visitors that had come to the palace, which was a magnificent structure that had just been finished in Riyadh. We gathered afterwards, of course, as you would expect. The Secretary's party could not have been more pleased or more self-satisfied that they'd really put it over on these Saudis. This was in the bag. What they didn't understand is what I was not able to make them understand is that Fahd hadn't agreed to anything. He simply said, "Yes, I hear you", which is not yes, but because he didn't say no, they thought that they had really snowed him. Well, unfortunately that tenure was reasonably brief and that went away with it. [Editor's Note: From April 4-12 Secretary Haig visited Cairo, Israel, Jordan, Saudi Arabia (April 7-8), Italy, Spain, United Kingdom, France and Germany.]

**WILLIAM A. PIERCE**  
**Political Officer**  
**Jeddah (1980-1983)**

*Mr. Pierce was born and raised in Georgia and educated at Davidson College and the University of Georgia Law School. Entering the Foreign Service in 1973, he was first posted to Surabaya, Indonesia, followed by a tour at Damascus, Syria. After completing Arabic language studies in Washington and Tunis, Mr. Pierce was assigned as Political Officer to a number of Arabic speaking posts, including Khartoum, Jeddah and Riyadh. In Washington, Mr. Pierce dealt primarily with Middle East Affairs. His final post was Surabaya, where he was Consul General. Mr. Pierce was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.*

*Q: Well then you went to Saudi Arabia in 1980?*

PIERCE: Yes.

*Q: You were there from 1980 to when?*

PIERCE: 1983.

*Q: What was the situation in – it was Jeddah then?*

PIERCE: Yes it was.

*Q: When you arrived there? I mean the situation in Iran was still very hot, at least from our point of view, and I guess from the Saudis' point of view, too. You had a Shia revolution of considerable magnitude boiling off on its eastern border, or almost border, and all that.*

PIERCE: There were a couple of things. Firstly, although assigned as a political-military officer, that slot was abolished and I became political officer at the embassy. My specialty was internal affairs. The events that you suggest, especially the Shia incidents in the eastern province, but more importantly in late '79 the armed takeover of the mosque in Mecca.

*Q: Yes. When did this happen?*

PIERCE: I think it was in late '79. It had caused an extreme amount of tension and concern in Washington.

*Q: This was before your time?*

PIERCE: Yes, just before my time. And the primary concern outside of the fact that it was such a tremendously staggering event – this is what triggered the reaction in Islamabad that you mentioned earlier – was that the accusations against the royal family seemed to make them very

vulnerable: corruption, siding with the West, and basically not being good Muslims. And it caused an immense amount of concern over their stability and the regime's stability.

One of my jobs was to travel to various provinces and to see what I could do as to how stability was, whether there was an economic largess or economic gains that were being made outside the glossier big cities where people almost always focused. So this is what I did for most of my three years there. Take forays primarily into the north, north of Riyadh and north of Jeddah. Also some into the south. Number one, to look for signs of progress, and, number two, progress economically, commercially, and socially. And whatever suggestion about the politics of the place. The other job that I had, in that sense, was to follow, to the degree you could, the royal family and to try to get some idea as to just how cohesive or not, uncohesive, a fuse they were.

*Q: For me, I had a little time in Saudi Arabia – two-and-a-half years in Dhahran, but this goes back to '58 to '60 so things have changed. But also the people I've talked to really talk about Riyadh, Jeddah, and Dhahran and that's it. The fact that you got out and around – let's talk about the north. What were you seeing up there, because I'm not even aware of any particular cities or settlements up there.*

PIERCE: Well, it's easier to go into Riyadh and go north of Riyadh. The first place you look at is the province of Al Qassim, the towns of Buraydah and Unayzah. This is the area which in the past, in the '20s, spawned a group of Islamic fanatics called the "Iqan muslimin," Saudi version, which in essence ultimately revolted against King Abdul Aziz and were crushed. This is the area that we had the riots against television in the early '60s, I think. A prince was involved in this and was shot and killed. Ultimately his brother ended up being the one who assassinated King Faisal. It's the most conservative, most extreme area in the kingdom. It is the area also that the plotters of the assault on the mosque in Mecca in '79, were from. That area I went to a few times. Just north of that is Hail, which is at the base of the great Nafud Desert which stretches northward towards Jordan. I went there a few times. There was an interesting prince who was governor there and I found him a very captivating man. Trying to see what he was doing in that place. This was the competitor of King Abdul Aziz. Ha'il was the capital of the Al Rashid family that in essence ruled Saudi Arabia – or what is now Saudi Arabia – until Abdul Aziz was able to take it back from them. I went there several times. And just a little bit farther north on the other side of the Nafud is Al Jawf which is in the Hinterlands; this is more traditional, ruled by a Sudairi at the time – I think his son still rules – held much like a chieftan. And just to the north of that on the border with Jordan and Iraq was the northern province, northern borders, Al Hudud ash Shamaliyah, and it also had a prince from a cadet branch of the royal family ruling there. And it's the long stretch of province that borders Iraq and Jordan going down towards the gulf. The capital there is Ar Ar. Always trying to find out just visually what was going on. The Saudis were extremely mistrustful of foreigners. They did not like us to travel, they would never talk politics to us. I just tried to see how grandiose the projects were, what were the schemes, what were the programs. Trying to travel as much as possible, sometimes with minders, sometimes without minders.

*Q: "Minders" being somebody to help you.*

PIERCE: From the governor's office to help you. Yes. I found out from time to time that they



were quite good. You'd get them to start gossiping about their work and you learn a lot about what's going on in their family history.

*Q: Oh, it's much better than just being by yourself.*

PIERCE: Sometimes it was.

*Q: In the first place, what about accommodations there? I mean this is not a place where tourists go or foreigners go.*

PIERCE: No. There are no tourists in Saudi Arabia, or there weren't at that time.

*Q: How would you be received? Would it be sort of hotels or what have you?*

PIERCE: Buraydah had a decent international style hotel with a decent buffet and decent central air conditioning. Ha'il was a little bit more primitive. Jawf you stayed at the guest house of the governor, and in Ar Ar you stayed at a substandard hotel. The farther north you went out of Riyadh, the lower your accommodations became. Khasid was going through a tremendous amount of prosperity. This was at a time that the Saudis were subsidizing wheat to an extreme degree and farmers in Khasid, through government loans and giveaways, were able to extract fossil water and were producing wheat in tremendous quantities. I think Saudi Arabia was in the top five in terms of wheat production in the world by the time I left in '83. The policies continued on into the '90s and I don't know what's happened to it. It was very wasteful; the water was just being frittered away. The wheat produced was several multiples higher in terms of cost than wheat in a wheat-producing country would be. But it was part of Crown Prince Fahd's desire to see Saudi Arabia self-producing in food, which is an immediate spring-off of the '73 OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) freeze of oil and the occasional threats that came out of this country. Out of America in terms of, "Well, they cut off our oil, we'll cut off their food."

*Q: You had these schemes, but some of the other places weren't producing wheat. How was money distributed? My impression is in the old days the king would come by, hand the ruling sheik, or whatever it is, so much money or marry a daughter or something like that and drift away, and then that sheik would then distribute the money.*

PIERCE: You've got two things here. Firstly you've got a bureaucracy that makes sure that the king's word gets promulgated. It's not only in the interest of trying to help parts of these isolated pockets of the country, but also to promulgate your own profession as a bureaucrat. One of the things you just said is very interesting – I've always thought this – is that in the old days we did have a king, Abdul Aziz. He owned everything and he gave things away to people. The country didn't own anything. There was no real sovereignty invested in the people. That concept continued. You could see it simply in the way the press reported that grants would occur if something happened. If there were a flood, the king would give money to the victims of the flood. If there were a project, the king would announce the granting of money for this project. Continually everything was phrased and thought of as coming from the king. Now behind the king obviously you have the consensual family, and the king's authority. It's not solely vested in

the king, but the king as selected by perhaps the ruling elders of the family, who are looked upon with great veneration or as having authority by the rest of the family. In other words, always an attempt to maintain the cohesion of the “Al Saud,” the family of Saud. That began to have holes in it over this period of time, but it still was an institution, which I imagine it is with a lot more holes in it today, that was cohesive enough, and revered enough, that it would succeed. When King Khalid died in 1982, I believe, and Crown Prince Fahd became king, the more traditional way of selecting the monarch through more consultation and consensus was in part short-circuited. This suggests, perhaps, the beginning of an erosion of reinforcing the institution.

*Q: Let's talk about the north? What was sustaining them?*

PIERCE: Basically major grants from the central government. Each region had a budget and then I think above and beyond the budget you had a lot of special programs where you could get loans, where you could get land. Through the provincial government and through the central government, individuals could do that. One of the things that you continually hear is the holding of the “majlis”. You know what the majlis is.

*Q: Basically it's a tribal council.*

PIERCE: Where you've got the ruler; the local potentate opened to anyone of his subjects, male, who could come in and make petition of him. This is a major way in which funds are doled out. But in other ways it's always a constant, entreaty, of the man who holds the keys – in other words, who holds the revenues – be it a local level, be it official, be it unofficial, at a national level. There's this constant barraging of requests through to the man and it's doled out that way. Plus you had the regular programs. You have five-year plans that are announced, you have annual budgets that are announced, and you have we are going to build a massive health system. You might even identify the more isolated areas of Ha'il Province, for example, that are going to get their new hospitals.

The same thing is going to be true of communications, of roads. I found out, by and large, that roads were there throughout the north, that communications were good – good telephone facilities in isolated villages in which not much existed. They were just there and you saw no signs of economic activity coming out of these places. The dusty roads between Riyadh and Jeddah, for example. Or going up fifty or a hundred miles outside of Ha'il. Water was available. Massive conversion was underway – although at that time it wasn't even close to completion – of desalted water being provided to the country. Ten or fifteen years later it was a much more visible presence throughout the kingdom. But I think there was a very, very pointed attempt by the Saudis to assure that the fruits of largess were being dispersed to Saudi nationals. That said, of course the royal family and those closest to them were several tiers higher than the average Saudi. You looked constantly for poverty and yes, you can see signs of it, but it's very difficult to put your finger on. You also looked very carefully at how nomads are being treated, and by the time I was there the institution of nomad was just about coming to a close except perhaps for the Al Murrah in the empty quarter of the southeast.

*Q: The Rub al Khali.*

PIERCE: Yes. Although the problem with nomads is the government had tried very specifically to settle them, because settling, in the government's mind, was a way to civilize them and give them prosperity. This had begun several years prior to my coming and it was an open question as to how successful that would be, although there were beginning to be signs that it wasn't working well; that you had people who lost their anchor, so to speak. Who did nothing gainful, who were even more on the dole than they would've been had they lived independently out on the deserts. Ultimately, they were just basically losing their sense of local identity.

*Q: There's always a problem when you've got wealth and you're raising a sort of new bureaucracy – that it's damned hard to get doctors and other professional people to go beyond the capital or the commercial centers. Did you get any impression of how in these places out in the middle of nowhere or up in the north they got competent professionals up there?*

PIERCE: No, I didn't. In the capitals you always had them. Beyond the capitals I think it was a hit or miss situation. It was very difficult. You never could get good reliable medical statistics; you never could get – and I don't know if you can today even – solid statistics on population. I think the Saudi government failed several times to conduct an honest census. So you never really could get a feeling as to exactly what kind of medical attention you would get if you were 200 miles from Ar Ar. I daresay you wouldn't get much. It just wasn't there.

*Q: Well, what about labor? During the time you were there, they had the great infusion of Koreans, Indonesians and Pakistani come. Who was doing the grunt work?*

PIERCE: When I was there, what was the nationality of choice? They were beginning to look at Pakistanis; the Thai had out-priced themselves, the Koreans had out-priced themselves, certainly the Turks and other Arab countries like the Sudanese had out-priced themselves. What the Saudis would do is they would go into tapping through labor contracts from various countries. And once you got the group in there, and as their price went higher, then you would look elsewhere. I think the Pakistanis, at that time, were on the favored list. The Indians had lost out. The Pakistanis were always viewed despicably, by the way – looked upon in extreme distaste. And the feeling was reciprocal. They were later to be replaced by Bangladeshis and Indonesians. Filipinos also were in there somewhere. It just depends; it depends on what period of time as you go through. We tried to get estimates of just how many were around. I don't even remember what our estimates were – not as much as the Saudi population, but not insignificant.

*Q: Would these foreign workers be apparent when you got away from the major population centers?*

PIERCE: Rarely. Foreign workers mainly lived in compounds. They were bussed to the site of whatever construction or whatever plant they were in. They would be pervasive in the cities on Fridays, market days, where they had nothing to do and the employer would let them go. They were not visible, not much sign of them outside the major cities, with some exceptions where you have particularly large projects. When you go to the special industrial cities like Yanbu, you see foreign workers. They're quite visible. But 10 or 15 miles away you don't.

*Q: In the north, which had been the seat of a lot of fundamentalism and problems for the Saudis,*

*was there much of a military presence there?*

PIERCE: There was never any visible military presence in the kingdom unless you specifically went to places where they were positioned. In other words, this is in the case of two tours of mine. My first tour I went to no places like that.

*Q: Okay, let's go down to the south. There had been sort of a recurring problem with Yemen. Did you get that close to Yemen?*

PIERCE: I did not. The southeast was not an area that I was responsible for. Did I ever go down at all? That was an area that we split off and gave to another officer. Jizan, Najran, and the Asir, although I did go to the Asir. That issue was one that made its way into my focus on my return to Saudi Arabia.

*Q: Well let's stick to this '80 to '83 period. What about the eastern province and that area?*

PIERCE: Again this was covered by our consulate in Dhahran, although I made a trip out there once or twice.

*Q: How about – was it the Hijaz?*

PIERCE: The Hijaz is where my focus of concentration was.

*Q: This would be the Red Sea area?*

PIERCE: Yes, with the exception of the south end.

*Q: What about that?*

PIERCE: In what sense?

*Q: In your observation of how things were – the rule of the Saudis and their internal problems.*

PIERCE: The problem with looking at potential internal problems is that you tend to take what you get and magnify it too much. There was always a dichotomy between the Hijaz and the Nejd between Riyadh and Jeddah.

*Q: The Nejd being the central part.*

PIERCE: The central part where the Saudis are from. People in the Hijaz felt themselves more sophisticated, were far more civilized, and basically dispossessed by the Saudis.

*Q: They were a lot of the major merchant families.*

PIERCE: Merchant families and people of great religious background coming from Mecca and Medina. As you might recall, many of the merchant families are either Yemeni or from Persia

four or five, 10 generations ago, and mixed in with the Hijaz which always has been a sort of an open door for access to Mecca and consequently has a hodgepodge of ethnicity to it. But there was a dichotomy. You could feel it. You could sense it. And resentment. Now to say that this was really a major focal point of contention that would split the kingdom would be ridiculous, but it was there.

Jeddah has always been a prime focal point of Crown Prince and King Fahd, who made palaces there. A lot of corruption was there as well. But it enjoyed a prosperity commensurate with its tradition, its past. It was the preferred place of residence for most Saudis who had education and could afford to stay there professionally, although Riyadh outdistanced it, I think, ultimately. There wasn't a great feeling of, again, political tension there. You'd get problems in Mecca and Medina, and why you do is that over the years, prior to '83, the Saudis allowed Islamic dissidents to stay in these cities. And as long as they kept their noses clean they were tolerated and accepted there. I always felt that there may be a certain sort of potentiality although you never could see it, never could sense it coming out of the Hijaz because of this. Refugees from the Muslim brotherhood in Syria, from Yemen, and from Egypt were basically allowed to live rather freely in Mecca and Medina. In Mecca primarily, but also in Medina, you had large numbers of illegal immigrants who lived there for years and from time to time you get Saudi officials saying, "Well we're going to clean up the immigrant problem in Mecca [or Medina]," and from time to time they might even try to do so, especially around hajj, but ultimately it never worked. They were primarily Africans.

*Q: Were the Africans used as workers?*

PIERCE: Most Africans were overstays from the hajj, and not to any great degree. Chadians hajj for some reason – thousands of them. Medina has since the early '80s up through the mid-'90s, been a major construction site. It always had in it apparently a Shia population, but trying to fight it was very difficult. Between Shias and Sunni Muslims ultimately you got an intimation that they had ties to Iran. The problems in Medina were exacerbated by the Iranians over the years, but starting that early.

Iranian Shia always trying to politicize the hajj, ended up finding Medina a place more convenient for incidents. In the mosque in Medina you have the Prophets' tomb and traditionally the Iranian Shia wished to venerate tombs and graves. There is a grave site, cemetery, in Medina called the Ka, I think. On it is a great sign that said, "Do not venerate these graves," and you could not get in to the cemetery. When you would have visiting Iranians on hajj, they would also go to Medina and many of them would attempt to venerate the Prophets' tomb.

In all mosques, especially in the prominent ones for tourism or for religious pilgrimage, you have a bureaucracy of very large unhappy looking Saudi bureaucratic religious officials. Their job is to make sure that the proper tenets of Islam are followed. Whenever these Iranians were there during hajj – this is always what happened – they would begin to be perceived as venerated prophets too and it would become a great fight. And this would constantly happen in Medina. It wouldn't happen to any great extent in Mecca. Mecca was a place where Iranians would try to demonstrate for the Islamic revolution and the Saudis continually tried to suppress these so-called demonstrations. This also occasioned an incident or two. At the mosque in Mecca, when

you do “kaulof” – circumambulate the Kaaba – you look at people from a whole variety of nationalities and many of them are in extreme ecstasy.

There was once one – a very black African – who, in part of his ritual small pilgrimage, the “umma,” he went close to “Kiswa,” which is the black drape around the Kaaba, and he basically was flat up against it in its embrace. This is duplicated in the hundreds of thousands of people. It’s very difficult to turn a group of people who speak no common tongue and who are there to go through the peak of their spiritual and physical lives; it’s very difficult to politicize that. And when you have a thousand or five thousand Iranians committed to a political demonstration, it gets lost in all of that when you have another two hundred thousand people who are not interested in that at all and very easy to contain.

*Q: I assume during the pilgrimage season you would want to monitor what was going on, if there were going to be any problems, and both Medina and Mecca were forbidden to you.*

PIERCE: Yes, but they weren’t forbidden to me.

*Q: Oh, they weren’t?*

PIERCE: No. I became Muslim when I married my wife.

*Q: Oh, I see. Okay. Did you have any problem with that?*

PIERCE: No. What do you mean?

*Q: No, I’m talking about the problem with the Saudi authorities. Would they accept the fact that you were Muslim?*

PIERCE: I had never had any problem with that. Almost always I went to Medina or Mecca with an Arab – sometimes my wife, sometimes an FSN, and sometimes a friend. The one time that I went alone I was stopped on the way into Mecca. I was carrying a message from President Reagan to Crown Prince Fahd and he looked at me and he said, “Are you Muslim?” and I said, “Yes,” and he said, “Okay,” and that was the only so-called problem I ever had. I went in to Mecca. When the hajj takes on full force the city ultimately closes down. The Saudis attempt to limit the number of cars there and you end up finding yourself parked several miles out and being bussed in unless you are really a super VIP. I never went in beyond during that period of closure. It becomes a monstrous mass of people and you’re in there for religious purposes only. I did go in the day before, once, before it did close, and walk through the mosque and around the city, observing, and this was a time when the Iranians would try hard for a political demonstration. The conclusions I gave you before about people in ecstasy, people who speak no common tongue, or people who were there simply for this peak of their religious life, I concluded then that the potential for major disruption or for making contagious the political message of Iran was very, very low.

*Q: Going back to before you were at the takeover of the center of Mecca, was this done by the Iranians? These were not Iranians who did this; these were...*

PIERCE: No, as I made allusion to earlier, these were primarily a group spearheaded by an Islamic group with ties into Kassi, into the very tribes that revolted against Abdul Aziz in the '20s for being un-Islamic. Who really thought that the Mahdi had returned in the form of this person and that the age of their version of Armageddon was coming. It's a very abhorrent form of Islam. And I think extensive research into the background of these people and whatever ties they may or may not have had revealed nothing. It was a home-grown group of abhorrent cultists.

*Q: Yes. In the area you were covering in the North and the Hijaz and the Nejd, what was your impression of the Saudi family presence. How they were dealing with the people and the stability of it?*

PIERCE: I thought that the family, during this time in which they had unbounded revenues, made a very conscious effort to distribute wealth and to deal with problems. Unfortunately most of that was throwing money at them and throwing money away, but it was still there. At the same time corruption was pervasive.

*Q: How would corruption manifest itself?*

PIERCE: Corruption manifested itself in the skimming of profits. Corruption manifested itself in payment of bribes, and in the commissions that invariably went along with all major projects in one form or another that were accomplished primarily by foreign business. Invariably a foreign company or a Saudi company will not have a contract with the Saudi government without sponsorship and someone close to, or a member of, the royal family.

*Q: Yes. And so there's not room for...there is the payoff to the member of the royal family.*

PIERCE: There is the payoff. The payoff can be 10, 15, 20 percent; when you're talking about a \$10 million project that gets to be enough money probably.

*Q: You know, one always hears about these palaces that are around there.*

PIERCE: Yes.

*Q: What is the role of the palace? You would think one or two would take care of a person.*

PIERCE: I found it was an exorbitant fascination, particularly on the part of King Fahd at the time, to have palaces. When you burst into this valley that Medina is in – it's in a beautiful valley – and you come over a ridge, it's sort of a hill that you can go over, going up the coast you're slowly elevating until you get to the altitude of Medina. So this valley appears and off to the distance on the left side is this tremendous mountain and at the top of that mountain is this construction and it looks like a palace that you could see in Cinderella. Walt Disney's Cinderella sort of stuck on the top of this mountain. That's King Fahd's palace.

It has this road winding up it and on top of that is a helipad. It's a very impressive palace. One of

his multibillion dollar palaces. Tracking where Crown Prince Fahd was over the three-year period I was there, he spent a total of perhaps six days in that palace in three years.

*Q: Did these contribute anything outside into the pockets of the contractors and all that or...*

PIERCE: I don't know the answer to that question. You'd have to presume that, given the way business is conducted.

*Q: But I was just thinking that, you know, you have these palaces – I suppose there's a retinue that lives there or something like that.*

PIERCE: One of the interesting things I found out about another prince, whom I will not name, is that he had on his payroll 12,000 people. Now, what this meant – this was his personal payroll, his personal retinues. I'm trying to remember if they were being salaried by the ministry or not. He provides the wherewithal for 12,000 people, and were he to stop the phenomenon, he had 12,000 people out of work.

*Q: Yes. And of course in a country like Saudi Arabia where the population is small, this is not an inconsiderable number of people.*

PIERCE: It is not an inconsiderable number of people. I think you could see this duplicated across the board. It is a form of subvention and monumental entitlement that becomes part of how things work. Trying to convert that into a system of modern bureaucracy or trying to clean it up you would produce an awful lot of fissures, social fissures, as you did that.

*Q: Speaking of contractors, right now one of our major problems in the United States is Osama bin Laden.*

PIERCE: Yes, I know.

*Q: The bin Laden family was a major family, wasn't it?*

PIERCE: The bin Laden family is a major family. Ever since the first king, King Abdul Aziz, began building his kingdom, he's always had around him contractors or people who will build for him that he trusts. The monarch had always done this, and normally it's a good relationship between the two. As I understand it, bin Laden, the father, was in this position and was, in essence, the major contractor for the modernization of the city of Medina – a multibillion dollar contract – one of King Fahd's pet projects.

*Q: Did the Iran-Iraq War have any particular resonance when you were there from '80 to '83?*

PIERCE: Yes it did. It was quite a disturbing development. One in which the Saudis were fully supportive of our initiatives. As you can guess, or you might know, the Iran-Iraq War was one which did not directly affect the Saudis, but Gulf security was of extreme importance. They were highly supportive of our attempts to keep the Gulf secure and safe for the egress of oil, and for commercial traffic.



*Q: Did you get any feel for the new breed of Saudi who were coming out, particularly out of American universities and all? You know getting trained in the United States and getting quite respectable educations and coming back. Did you find that the system was absorbing them in a fairly efficient manner or were they building up a problem?*

PIERCE: From what I could tell, the system absorbed them in a fairly effective manner. You could find them in all sorts of positions – high positions in ministries as well as in commerce. The fear or the hope at the time was that this liberal education that these Saudis would receive would in part have a positive effect on the more rigid, conservative approach found there. I did not find this to be the case. In most cases when a Saudi returned to the kingdom, he, or in some cases she, would immediately revert to and be a staunch upholder of traditional values, a staunch defender of the Saudi model of social and economic development. The Saudis, over the period of the '80s, had begun constructing many universities. They did this in the '70's. It was in the '80s that they began to cut down on scholarships and approvals for study overseas, since "we have our own perfect system." Ultimately it would be a major negative. Yes, they could hire the best educators in the world for the universities, but you would always question their standards simply because it's very difficult to have a Saudi fail. Secondly the positive aspects of education overseas, while it did not have a major impact on social policy, ultimately you would think that it would. Therefore, this sort of containment of education was seen as a negative.

*Q: What about the treatment of women by the Saudis? Was this sort of a burr under the Saudi-American relationship at that time?*

PIERCE: No. I don't think so. There was always a tendency on the part of westerners to presume that women in Saudi Arabia are in extreme distress over their second-class status. And indeed it is quite confining, yet from what I could see during that period of time, the women in Saudi Arabia, by and large, in large measure, did not feel the need for greater freedom in the kingdom – I just don't think so. Most women – we're talking about women of means – got their frustrations out or got their freedom to the degree they wanted it by extensive travel abroad. Yet at the same time I didn't sense that people who were sequestered in Riyadh felt any great sense of freedom when they went to Jeddah. It just wasn't part of the culture.

*Q: Was your wife, Daad, a good source for you for sampling how things were going on the distaff side?*

PIERCE: Not really. She was a good source for observations about Saudi society. She had some contacts that were immeasurably interesting and useful to me, and extremely nice. There was a very good female Foreign Service Officer (FSO) in Jeddah when I was there.

*Q: Who was that?*

PIERCE: Audrey Farsa.

*Q: What's she doing now?*

PIERCE: She is OIG (Office of the Inspector General).

And we knew particularly one Saudi who was extremely distressed over what she had been educated in the West and did not get on well when she returned to Jeddah. Of course you got other examples of this happening during my second tour.

*Q: I was wondering whether...of course this would be a consular matter, of an American woman who marries a Saudi student and comes back, has children, and then says, "I've had enough."*

PIERCE: A major problem. I didn't know all the details; I knew enough about the situation to be happy I wasn't in the consular section.

*Q: Yes. There's no real answer for this.*

PIERCE: No, there's not.

*Q: How about the Afghan war? It later became both a positive and very much a negative as far as terrorism went. The recruitment from the Islamic world, including Saudi Arabia, of what you want to call freedom fighters, "mujaheddin," or what have you, against the Soviets. Was this apparent to you at that time?*

PIERCE: Very insignificantly. Obviously the Saudis were wholeheartedly behind our policy in stopping the Soviet Union. Very prominent was the gathering of private funds under official auspices to aid the mujaheddin fighters in Afghanistan. Beyond that, in the early '80s, there was no overt sign of much beyond that. I mean the Saudis were strongly committed towards stopping Communists. That's what this was all about. In that period of time the fear of communism, which was a fear inculcated mainly by King Faisal to a tremendous degree, but even earlier than King Faisal, and it was still very, very strong in the Saudi mindset. Consequently, it was then natural for them to be very supportive of our policy of trying to kick out the Soviets, and also to do their own thing from a religious side to the degree they could.

*Q: Your ambassador while you were there – you probably had two from '80 to '83 because you were there at the end of the Carter administration and the beginning of the Reagan. Who were your ambassadors?*

PIERCE: John West was the first ambassador.

*Q: He was from North Carolina, was it?*

PIERCE: South Carolina. A former governor from South Carolina. He stayed around several months into the Reagan administration. He was replaced by nominated Ambassador Robert Neumann, who had this unfortunate run-in with Secretary Haig and I don't know if he ever presented his credentials. And then he was replaced by Richard Murphy, whom I had already known in Damascus.

*Q: How was West? I mean he seems of sort of unlikely type of person to end up in the Middle*

*East – the governor of South Carolina.*

PIERCE: It's my impression that the Saudis let it be known – this is hearsay, but I think it's reasonable – to President Carter that they wanted someone who they could trust had the ear of the president, and that's the reason why Ambassador West came there.

*Q: Because Carter of course had been the governor of Georgia and they both talk southern.*

PIERCE: They both talk southern and West was a very sort of traditional man, very country gentleman, filled with anecdotes. He constantly liked saying that we've got the same traditional values – they revere family values just like we do; they're just like people at home.

*Q: Well, in a way there was at a certain level a concurrence. You know, I mean two greatly different cultures but...*

PIERCE: No, I agree. Being from Georgia I can understand the point and I can understand the message behind it.

*Q: Well, what was the feeling? You were there for a while with West. Was he getting the message across?*

PIERCE: He was getting the message across. He had very good contacts. One of the things I used to do was translate presidential correspondence – letters from the king to the president. I wouldn't presume to translate English into Arabic – but one of my jobs was whenever we had to get in touch with the king, we'd use a man in the palace in Jeddah. That always worked well. Then whenever I had to get in touch with the crown prince, the ambassador had a very special relationship with the crown prince through his office, through his special assistant, and the crown prince was always available. The oil minister was always available. Other key ministries were always available and it was a constant, I think, back and forth dialogue which continues. It was very obvious during the Gulf War and during the war with Iraq and when I was there in the '90s, but I think we've never had a communications problem with the Saudis.

*Q: Who was the Saudi ambassador in the United States at the time?*

PIERCE: The man's name was Faisal Alhegelan.

*Q: He was later replaced by Prince Bandar.*

PIERCE: Yes.

*Q: But that was later on.*

PIERCE: I don't remember exactly when Bandar took over. Maybe by '83, I'm not sure.

*Q: Yes. Well, we can talk about that the next time around because at least my interview with Hume Horan was that he felt that Bandar was not a positive influence. I don't know.*

PIERCE: Bandar, before being ambassador, and certainly while ambassador, was readily available here in Washington, and before, in Saudi Arabia. Although – I've met Bandar once – he had a habit of disappearing for long periods of time whenever. (*laughs*) I mean for whatever reason; sometimes it seemed politic as far as he was concerned.

*Q: How did a female officer work within that society? Because I would think this would be a great problem.*

PIERCE: I had more experience in dealing with that when I was the political-military counselor in Riyadh.

*Q: Okay, we'll pick this up the next time.*

*Was there much social intercourse with the Saudis during off-duty hours and that sort of thing?*

PIERCE: Not really. I was able to develop social ties with about two or three. Other people who had served in the kingdom 10, 15 years earlier, used to speak of how easy it was to have social intercourse with Saudis and to meet their Saudi wives. I knew one Saudi family – an entrepreneur – met his father. I may have met his wife, I don't remember. For some reason I got attached to him. He was trying to convince the kingdom to build a state-of-the-art oil spill containment operation. A very impressive man. I also knew another Saudi who was a businessman – met his Egyptian wife and his family and had several contacts with him. These are the only two that I knew in a more relaxed, just social, environment. Although you would meet young Saudis from time to time, you would meet Saudis at official functions, and I also had a different set of contacts or approaches in Riyadh during the Gulf War, during the war with Iraq.

*Q: In 1983 is there anything else we should discuss do you think?*

PIERCE: About the kingdom?

*Q: Yes, at that time.*

PIERCE: One other thing – and this is just an observation – I studied very carefully the royal family and I also studied, to the degree I could, the religious establishment. One of the things we were interested in there was an upsurge – the beginning upsurge at the time – as King Khalid was an interim king anyway. He was there to be supplanted by King Fahd – Fahd did a lot of the decision making for Khalid. But there was an upswing of religious strength – hardcore, Wahhabi strength – in the kingdom, which had persisted although I don't know what the state of it is today.

It was my theory – and I could see this happening – that when you had a king who was strong in religious values, who had a good religious education and was incorruptible, or could make the case that he was incorruptible, he was in a position to subvert, to twist, and to dominate the religious side. King Abdul Aziz, the founder of the kingdom, was that way. When you had a king who was overtly corrupt, pliant, and not religiously educated, the religious people took a swing

up and became more present in terms of policy making, which you could see happen under King Saud. When King Faisal took over from King Saud, he had more of the qualities of King Abdul Aziz and the religious leadership went into eclipse. King Faisal was assassinated and King Khalid came in. Khalid was not particularly corrupt in the real sense of the word, nor do I recall him being any great Islamic scholar, but Crown Prince Fahd certainly had an image more closely resembling Saud, I think, in the common view of things, than say Faisal. And you could see the religious infrastructure beginning to take more control over social policy.

*Q: Was this “alumna” or whatever you pronounce it?*

PIERCE: Well we worried more on the upswing which is always the foreign preoccupation in Riyadh, or in Saudi Arabia, of the “mutaween,” the volunteers, the religious believers. But also the sense of the steps taken to curtail girls’ education, the steps taken to assure that women remain in a secluded place, the steps taken to make it more difficult for expatriates to live, in terms of fasting during Ramadan, basically just hardening of religious attitudes. And these things seemed to get stronger when Fahd took over.

*Q: Were you able to monitor this? I’m just wondering how as a political officer, would one monitor?*

PIERCE: I had some very good contacts – not Saudis – who followed the religious leadership very closely. And one monitors this by paying attention to the promotion list or who is promoted into what positions in the Ministry of Justice.

*Q: Sort of criminology in a way. (laughs)*

PIERCE: More or less. Then you find out where this fellow fits in, the approach and the attitude, or you find out what he’s spearheading in terms of trying to get through certain policies, or how he participated in a certain “fatwa” (religious edict). You might recall that when the Saudi military did assault the mosque in Mecca to get rid of the abhorrent takers of the mosque, they had a fatwa.

*Q: That’s a religious...*

PIERCE: That’s an opinion issued by prestigious religious leadership, most prestigious. And you look at who signs these things.

*Q: Sort of like a Papal bill in a way.*

PIERCE: More or less.

*Q: Well, of a different nature, but the basic thing is this is...*

PIERCE: When I was in Jeddah before there was a religious moderate of immense learning who had been promoted highly by King Faisal, and then under King Khalid he had been shunted off into a sinecure and his position had been supplanted. His successor, in terms of religious

influence, had a more conservative bent. He was a very interesting man.

*Q: Well I think this is probably a good place to stop. We'll put at the end in 1983 you were where?*

PIERCE: Sudan.

*Q: Sudan. So you were known as a hot weather man. (laughs)*

PIERCE: *(laughs)* I was known for someone whose assignment sheet went to hell. Khartoum kept coming up as empty and I wanted a place to go. I didn't know what the hell I was getting into.

*Q: So we're off to Khartoum in 1983.*

PIERCE: Yes. I left Jeddah in 1983 and was transferred to Sudan.

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*Q: What about relations with Saudi Arabia, because back in my time the Saudis were not a very nice neighbor.*

PIERCE: Well, no one is really a nice neighbor to anyone else on the peninsula. I mean Saudi Arabia had quarrels and quibbles with virtually every one of its neighbors in the peninsula. I'm trying to think if it had some with Bahrain. It's kind of hard maybe where that border is in the middle of the strait. I'm not aware of any with Kuwait, but certainly with the UAE (United Arab Emirates), with Qatar, with Oman, and with Yemen and PDRY (People's Democratic Republic of Yemen) at the time. Yes, they always had problems. But there were also always problems among the others. There was some confusion over the Omani-UAE border and the fate of the Musandam Peninsula. The border between Dhofar, western Oman, and PDRY had been worked out as I recall but still obviously big questions remained between Oman and Saudi Arabia. But you'd get into that tremendous "little war that wasn't" between Bahrain and Qatar over the Hawar Island and the future of that relationship. And the constant lambasting of the Al-Thani family in Qatar as being a bunch of nouveaus. Gangsters that the British had insinuated into Qatar in the 1880s, 1890s – very nouveau. Then a recollection by the Al-Thanis that the Bahrainis and the Al-Khalifahs used to be in Qatar until they were so weak that the Al-Thanis were able to kick them out 70 years before the Al-Thanis even came to power under the Brits. It's the nature of the beast there.

**RICHARD L. STOCKMAN**  
**Communications Officer**  
**Riyadh (1980-1984)**

*Richard L. Stockman was born in Missouri in 1940. He was educated in Catholic*

*seminaries in Missouri and served in the US Army as a communications specialist. He entered the foreign service in 1966 and subsequently served in Brazil, Honduras, Singapore, Togo, Switzerland, Ireland, Saudi Arabia, and Canada. Since his retirement from the foreign service in 1987 due to illness, he has participated in short-term projects, particularly in the former Soviet Union. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1993 in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.*

*Q: Then you went off to Riyadh in Saudi Arabia. You certainly are touching every base in the geographic book as far as areas go.*

STOCKMAN: Well, as I mentioned to you, the philosophy was to see as much of the world as possible. I have to admit we did not bid on this assignment. That was one that was dictated to us and for reasons unknown to me. I think the assignment came about for a couple of reasons. One, perhaps of my own doing and stubbornness. We did not get very good support from the Regional Communications Center in Bonn in Dublin. What little support we did get came out of London and begrudgingly at that. Consequently it was a real source of frustration for the embassy that we could not have better communication facilities there. And I did my best to bring it to the attention of the regional authorities who were frankly shirking their responsibilities. The Ambassador was extremely frustrated with this at times. For example, he lived in a house in Phoenix Park that was an isolated home in the middle of this huge park and frequently had no telephone communications. We could have resolved that very easily with a little bit of money. But for reasons of indifference, it never got accomplished. We knew what the problem was but it simply couldn't be budgeted. I made a lot of waves about that. One of the consequences of it was, "We are going to give you a real assignment where you will shut up." And that was Riyadh. But it did prove to be truly one of the most challenging jobs I ever had. The timing was absolutely perfect as far as a challenge goes. The Saudis had determined about this time that all foreign missions would relocate in Riyadh which would become the new capital.

*Q: Before that it had been in Jeddah.*

STOCKMAN: Yes. How do you do this overnight? Well, most of the huge construction projects in Riyadh, similar to Brasilia, were completed on time as the Saudis insisted. The last was the building of the diplomatic city. Our particular embassy was somewhat behind schedule mostly because of our lackadaisical attitude about this thing and the incompetence, I think, of FBO.

*Q: Foreign Buildings Operation, which is not known for its effectiveness.*

STOCKMAN: But that too in itself was our own undoing. You have to keep in mind at this point in time Ambassador Richard Murphy was the Ambassador...

*Q: He and I were in the same entry class.*

STOCKMAN: Well you know what a wonderful person he is.

*Q: A real expert on the Arab world.*

STOCKMAN: He is and I have always thought with a bit of sadness that he was shuttled out of

the picture when the Persian Gulf developed. For some unexplainable reason his name never surfaced again, maybe by choice or whatever. But at any rate he was Ambassador at the time. There were some very important things happening in that time frame. One of which is, and I will only touch on it lightly for obvious reasons...but there was no question about it that the Iran scandal was unfolding at that very point in time...

*Q: This is the Reagan Administration swapping weapons to try to get hostages out of Beirut.*

STOCKMAN: And who knows the way the shots were called, but it is a fact that they were taking place. One could see obvious signs of very high level things going on. It is not my place to provide any details, of course, but it kept things on pins and needles. We were attempting during this whole period to constantly upgrade the total lack of communications capability in Riyadh. We were in a very pitiful, leased building which was ill equipped to carry out the mission. My task was to identify these requirements and correct the problem and get it done. All this was to be accomplished in the period of two years, including a building that was not even started when we arrived, right next door, that eventually got put up. We had to tie them together and make it a workable embassy until the diplomatic city could be completed. The support out of Washington and regionally in the beginning was absolutely pathetic. They were not focusing on this whatever. It was a total act of irresponsibility in my way of thinking. Management types should have been called to task. Eventually they got the message in a very, very strong manner. It was feast or famine. I was not going to be the sacrificial lamb. Rocky Suddarth, was the DCM. After all we had to identify suitable homes for the Ambassador, the DCM and others, get telephones put into these homes and all kinds of requirements. Our staff was inadequate. I finally got it increased to a total of three while I was there. There was no diplomatic courier service in place. There was nothing when I arrived. To start from scratch is not an easy task.

*Q: When you have problems there with your kind of work in communications, is this Near Eastern Affairs Bureau or Communications Bureau?*

STOCKMAN: Well, at this point in time the Office of Communications unfortunately was not a Bureau. That did not come about until the late '80s. So at this point it was simply an office of communications subordinate to the A Bureau. Now, once we were assigned, of course, to an embassy we became part of the Bureau as part of the staffing pattern, but we nevertheless had to work through regional offices through our chain of command. So we were serving two masters and you know what happens when you do that. Nobody wins and you can do nothing but wrong or fail. So it was a very frustrating time.

I must say the most delightful part of it, however, was the housing that we eventually got. In the beginning we were all living in prefab homes handed down or subleased through other American firms who had done business and then vacated these places and it was not very nice. In fact it was kind of pathetic. But we survived nine months until we finally got into some very nice established housing which made all the difference in the world. But it is incredible how people stick together in hard times at a post like that. The wives did not particularly resent being there. They were treated decently, chauffeured around by embassy cars, because they couldn't drive. They adapted, I thought, incredibly well. So did the children for that matter. Of course the Saudi practice was to allow education only up to the ninth grade. They wanted the children to go



elsewhere after that.

...Needless to say those things have to be honored, they should be honored and I think in most cases they are. There has always been kind of a jealous possessiveness about communications personnel to maybe go too far in the interest of secretness and confidentiality and to perhaps mislead the average customer who has a right to know some things, to deprive them of this in the interest of security, etc. But I think you can appreciate the need for this so-called back channel that you talk about. I really would say that abuse of such a thing, of course, could make an ambassador very, very nervous as the principal officer at any post. Obviously when the chief does not know what the Indians are doing we have a serious problem. When the Secretary of State cannot communicate with his Ambassador in any given country at the level that he wishes to, we have a very serious problem. And, of course, we all know the most classic case of all in our memory when things were really falling apart in Moscow, how difficult it became to reinvent the wheel there. We can't go into a lot of detail, of course, but having been in Washington at the time...

*Q: We are talking 1987-89.*

STOCKMAN: We basically have to do what has to be done.

*Q: Because of all the sensitive material flowing through you, have you ever found either security people or inspector generals putting any particular burden on you because of leaks, etc.? Is this a problem that happens to communicators?*

STOCKMAN: Well, I have never seen any abuse on either side of the fence. Whether enforcement or carrying out one's duties and responsibilities from the communication's center point of view. I think that common sense in most cases prevails. In one rare case, which I have mentioned to you, an individual tried to abuse a position of power and obtain information that he was not entitled to which I refuse to give them, even though they felt they were entitled to. Perhaps I paid a price for maintaining the integrity of the system. If so, so be it. But that would be the one rare instance that I can ever remember along those lines, and it was exceptionable.

*Q: You left Riyadh in 1984 and things were pretty well in place by that time?*

STOCKMAN: They were virtually about as good as we could expect them to be until the diplomatic city was completed which I think happened some time in 1985, maybe early 1986. I would love to go back and see it again just out of plain curiosity, although I must say that I was not overly fond of trying to do business in Riyadh before it became a US Embassy. A Liaison Office is no cup of tea to work in. One gets spoiled and becomes very presumptuous all the time of doing business as an embassy employee. A Liaison Office, as you well know and can appreciate, has no diplomatic status. You are very vulnerable to the whims and fancies of local authorities, the airport, etc.

*Q: How did you find your working relations with the Saudis?*

STOCKMAN: Well, most contacts with the Saudis are kept to a bare minimum because of the

way they like to do business. They are screened by so many buffer zones. On one occasion in two years I was able to meet a Saudi and invite him to our home. At all other times I was dealing basically with Bell Canada employees in the Ministry of PTT, or perhaps British on some occasions. Very rarely a Saudi. That is the way they like to do business. It worked. There was no real problem. It kind of disappointed me in a way that one doesn't get to meet some of the people of a country, but that was Saudi Arabia.

**DAVID G. NEWTON**  
**Political Counselor**  
**Riyadh (1981-1984)**

*Ambassador Newton was raised in Massachusetts and educated at Harvard University and the University of Michigan. An Arabic speaking Middle East Specialist, he served both in Washington and abroad in positions dealing with Middle Eastern matters. His overseas postings include Yemen (three times), Saudi Arabia, Syria and Iraq. From 1984 to 1988 he served as US Ambassador to Iraq and from 1994 to 1997 as US Ambassador to Yemen. A graduate of the National War College, he was also assigned there as Deputy International Affairs Advisor, and in 1997 he was Special Envoy to Iraq. Following retirement, Ambassador Newton joined Radio Free Europe in Prague. Ambassador Newton was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.*

*Q: So you were in Saudi Arabia from when to when?*

NEWTON: From the middle of '81 to the middle of '84. It was a funny assignment in a way, and maybe I mentioned this the last time.

*Q: Yeah, you were sent back.*

NEWTON: Yeah, because I didn't want to go as DCM to Khartoum. All the people who helped me get jobs, good jobs were retired or gone off somewhere else. So I just decided I wanted to be in the action. So I had the DCM really put the arm in me. He was a friend of mine. So I did. I enjoyed it. Now we spent I would say an awful lot of time, the issue we spent the most time on was Lebanon again, Dick Murphy and working for Dick Murphy. We spent two summers working constantly on Lebanon I remember.

*Q: Where, how did Lebanon—*

NEWTON: Well, trying to end the Lebanon civil war, which had become very violent. The Saudis, we were working very closely with the Saudis, especially with Prince Bandar who was then the national security advisor to King Fahd and Rafik Hariri, the late Rafi Hariri who was essentially his deputy. Constant, I can remember then Dick got called back, I remember, to in would've been the summer of '83 went back as assistant secretary. Rocky Suddarth who was the DCM went off on leave for about three weeks. I remember being chargé for that time and

missing a good two nights sleep a week because it was Ramadan and work all day and then grab a bite to eat. Then of course Saudi Arabia would wake up at night because it was Ramadan, and the department would wake up. Sometimes I'd just go straight through and just go home and change clothes and go back to the office. We were really busy on Lebanon. That was the big. Also on the peace process issue, the Reagan initiative. It was an interesting time.

*Q: Well, let's talk about Lebanon. What piece of the action or what did the Saudis have to do there? I mean, what were we working with the Saudis on in Lebanon?*

NEWTON: Well, the Saudis were working for peace and stability because that's what they value in the Middle East because they have so much to lose. They had been giving subventions especially to the Sunni Muslims, and they were working. But they were trying to work with all the parties to get them to end the fighting. I remember the one, a Saudi minister who had been military attaché in Lebanon and went back as ambassador was joking with us one day. He said, he checked back with his embassy when he was away and said, "How are things?" They said, "Well," said, "There was one bomb went off nearby." He said, "Are we up to date on all our payments?" They said, "Well, we are except for this one person. We couldn't find him." He said, "Find him. Pay him." So but and that's what they did. We later when I was working in ARN that's how it succeeded. IT was Saudi pressure and Saudi money, which is something that always appeals to Lebanese politicians.

*Q: Well, were we working, I mean were we seeing the thing the same way the Saudis were?*

NEWTON: Yes, very much so. We both want, we both realized there was a need for reform so that the Muslims would have a fairer share of the power. That was the only way you could stabilize the country. So no, we did. We were both working to try to bring about an end to the killing.

*Q: Did, well, how stood things with Saudi Arabia during, this was the time of the Iran-Iraq war was waged, wasn't it, at this time?*

NEWTON: Yeah, just that, that was just the first year of the war. The Saudis were very concerned about that. Saudis had always been concerned about Iraq. I remember being in the 1970s when there was very clear that the Saudis viewed their number one threat to be Iraq. When I was back the second time, they had been concerned about Iraqis trying to bribe tribesmen in Northern Saudi Arabia because they had a very large army. There was kind of long border with Saudi Arabia. So the Saudis were, the Saudis were trying very hard to, as they always do, to keep things calm. They were trying to get along with Iran. We were of course very angry at the Iranians. We had the hostage crisis. But the Saudis kept trying to keep lines open to the Iranians just to try to keep the lid on things.

*Q: Were you there, had any of the sort of Shiite business gotten involved in Saudi Arabia taking over the grand mosque or anything, demonstrations or anything of that nature while you were there?*

NEWTON: No, the earlier time there were radicals Sunnis, Saudi Sunnis had taken over the,

taken over the shrine in Mecca. But at this point the Saudis had some concern about Iranian propaganda because they were always very sensitive about their Shia in the eastern provinces. But most of the Shia followed an Ayatollah from Iraq who was the quiet school of-- . But they were concerned about maybe some of the younger people being infected by Khomeini. They always kept a pretty tight lid on the Shia in any case.

*Q: Were we looking at all at that time on the what the religious schools were doing in Saudi Arabia?*

NEWTON: Well, it's funny because as I was, towards the end I was trying to say to people in the embassy and among the Saudis as I could, do you realize what you're doing? I mean, you've brought in all these Muslim Brotherhood teachers and others who are theologically compatible with your (\_\_\_\_\_) School, (\_\_\_\_\_) and so forth. But they have a separate political agenda. You are using as course material if you will and people to emulate, you're using people like (\_\_\_\_\_) from Egypt and (\_\_\_\_\_) of Pakistan, fundamentalists but who are also very anti-authoritarian. Don't you realize you're infecting your students? These people are theologically compatible, but you're, they're being infected with this political message. But nobody was really focused much on that at the time. Well, one of the problems that of course came about that we still have to do deal with this, that the Saudis are very concerned that Khomeini could spread his fundamentalist view of Shia Islam around the Middle East and that it would infect the Sunni majority. They therefore really stepped up their own propaganda efforts and a lot of money, and they ended up spreading a lot of very radical Sunni fundamentalism around the area, which they funded. They built mosques. They paid for preachers. They ended up radicalizing themselves, a lot of the Sunnis, but they did stay Sunni radicals. They, but they were so anxious to block the Khomeini message that they created I think a lot of mischief for themselves and for us.

*Q: Well, during this period, was this were you there I can't remember, when Israel went into Lebanon?*

NEWTON: Let me see. When did, yes, yes, I believe so, it was '82, was it?

*Q: I think it was '82.*

NEWTON: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

*Q: This must've been, I mean this is a really nasty period, and of course no matter how you do it, we sort of have that umbilical cord to the—*

NEWTON: Yeah, it was really nasty. Yeah, before that I remember Phil Habib and then he continued his efforts, and I don't know if you read the book about, I forgot whose book it was the Israelis how much they harassed Phil Habib. They buzzed his helicopter and—

*Q: Yeah, and I've had a long interview with Bob Dillon too who was in Lebanon at the time. I think Cursed is the Peacemaker. It's a book that—*

NEWTON: Yes, that's the book.

*Q: Get involved with.*

NEWTON: Yeah, the, yeah, it was bad and cost us a lot and was, it was pretty disgraceful. I mean the Israelis they provided lighting so that the Christian militia could continue their work at night in Sabra Shatila. Anyone who knew anything about Lebanon, anything, knew that if you left the Christian militia in the camps after the assassination of Bashir Gemayel, they would kill every living thing in there. Basically that's what they did. The other thing that disturbed me was, and people didn't talk about it, but recently we had the talk about American forces using white phosphorus. The Israelis used white phosphorus against civilians in West Beirut. I remember a report, AUB hospital said they had bodies of some small children in their morgue that smoldered for several days because they'd been killed by white phosphorus, people jumping into the water hoping this would save them. But it didn't of course because white phosphorus will burn until it chemically exhausts itself.

*Q: Well, what, how did this affect what we were going to do?*

NEWTON: Well, the Saudis, the Saudis have been through this often. They really do want to be our friends, and they look on our security umbrella, if you will, as very important for their survival. But the connection with Israel has often been very hard for them to deal with because they have a pretty hard line view of their own towards Israel. But of course the Saudis basically want peaceful solutions to things. They've generally been very responsible I think, certainly in regional politics.

*Q: Well, in the region I would think during this period that there could have been sort of a split personality. One, the fear of Iraq because it has Saddam Hussein, a very large army. At the same time you have Iran with Khomeini spreading his thing. I mean, how did they, I mean were they taking any side, tactical sides at the time or—*

NEWTON: Well, the Saudis were in the first year of the war gave like the other Gulf states they gave Iraq quite a bit of money because they were afraid, but of course that, it was expensive and after a year or so their contribution was reduced. I mean, basically they were, at this point I think, they were more afraid of Iran. But they were trying to deal with the Iranians and to maintain some distance from the Iraqis, but they didn't want the Iraqis to lose either. So they live in a dangerous neighborhood.

*Q: Well, at any point was it implicit or discussed at all about what would happen if in the future either Iran or Iraq got so powerful that we might, they would look to the United States to introduce forces?*

NEWTON: Oh they looked, they certainly looked to the United States to protect them. In extremis they certainly would've looked to that. Of course they did--. When Kuwait was overthrown, they did reluctantly agree. There were of course as you know differences of opinion. The king, King Fahd was less reluctant to have a visible American connection than crown prince, now King Abdullah. Abdullah was not anti-American at all. But he was perhaps in balance a bit

more responsive to Arab opinion and so forth and a bit more nervous of the high visibility of the U.S. connection. But certainly in extremis they always looked on us to protect them. Of course we had a great stake in the country and—

*Q: Was anything playing out down in Yemen, I mean on the Saudi side at all or at that time?*

NEWTON: No, not very much. The Saudis, at that point not very much the Saudis did not like the Yemeni president at the time or the current one at that time they were pretty hostile and generally just rather dismissive of the Yemenis. But I don't think they, it wasn't a great deal of focus on Yemen at that point.

*Q: How about—*

NEWTON: I should correct though and say, let me see when it was, at that, it was later that the Arab Cooperation Council came into existence. That disturbed them. That was, I guess that, trying to think. My timing is getting a little off. But the Arab Cooperation Council pre-dated the Gulf War. Of course it was, this was later. It was Iraq arranging Jordan, Yemen and I've forgotten one other country joining in kind of a union or something like modeled after the Gulf Cooperation Council. They didn't, they did not like Yemen's ties to Iraq, which were generally were pretty good.

*Q: What about Egypt and Saudi Arabia at the time?*

NEWTON: Reasonably good relations, I think. Yeah, by this, the Egyptian government was moderate. They were not any real issues.

*Q: Did they still have quite a few Egyptian doctors, professional people and all there in that or—*

NEWTON: Yes, yes, they did. Of course on the religious side they took people from the Muslim Brotherhood, but they also had doctors and they were, as their economy with oil, when oil reached a low point, they tended to go down market. So then they would go more for Egyptians and Pakistanis who cost less.

*Q: That's the market forces at work, I guess.*

NEWTON: Well, I've seen it. I saw that when I was there. I mean, they might get a Brit to replace an American who would be excellent but would be cheaper, or they begin to get more and more unaccompanied males without families to save money or get Filipinos who are often well-educated and didn't cost much. Indians and so forth. But also little by little they were training their own people at least in some fields.

*Q: Well, were you noticing this? I mean one of the things, I go back to the '50s, but Saudis who say went to United States to get medical training would come back and open pharmaceutical companies and immediately go into business and not practice medicine. In other words were the Saudis entering the professions?*

NEWTON: Yes, they had for example some very good Saudi lawyers. Doctors, even in the '70s I remember we had an ophthalmologist in Jeddah who was very good. I think the thing you really worried about more was the quality of hospitals and so forth. Nursing care was poor. Sometimes the lab results were questionable but also had to worry about standards. Did people really keep the standards? We, very close to our embassy in Jeddah, which we then moved subsequently moved in '84 to Riyadh, was this very large surgical hospital, did a lot of cardiac bypasses and so forth and was later evaluated and found out it had a huge death rate. I think because of the lack of insistence on absolutely the top standards. But these people were well-educated. But the Saudis, I mean, the rich Saudis they would continue to go the Cleveland Clinic. I remember the mayor of Jeddah very proudly holding a reception for ambassadors and senior diplomats to, we went of course because it was in honor of Dr. DeBakey. He'd done his quadruple bypass, and I guess different countries have the premier disease. I always joke that if you wanted to really be considered a senior Saudi, you had to have a quadruple bypass. Because what happened of course is the Saudis began to eat every day what they used to eat once a month or twice a month and that is camel or sheep on rice, doused with the fat of the animal. They also got many of them got very big and fat, and we saw that with King Fahd, Prince Sultan and others. They really put on huge amounts of weight, and they ate a very unhealthy diet.

*Q: Did you have to go to lots of, I used to, in Saudi, in Dhahran we used to go out to the sheep dip—*

NEWTON: The military used to call these things goat crabs. No, you could see. They'd come in and take the animal fat and just spread it all over.

*Q: Ghee, but I guess not.*

NEWTON: Well, I think it was—they had ghee or also--

*Q: Maybe not ghee but just animal fat.*

NEWTON: The fat from the animal.

**BROOKS WRAMPELMEIER**  
**Deputy Director/Office Director, Arabian Peninsular Affairs**  
**Washington DC (1982-1984)**

*Brooks Wrampelmeier was born in Ohio in 1934. He received his bachelor's degree from Princeton University in 1956. His career has included positions in Beirut, Amman, Jeddah, Lusaka, Abu Dhabi, Kuwait, and Dhahran. Mr. Wrampelmeier was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in March 2000.*

*Q: Let's turn to arm sales to the Saudis. I imagine you came up against AIPAC. Could you talk about your 1982-84 period?*

WRAMPELMEIER: Initially, I wasn't really responsible for Saudi Arabia. Somebody else handled that. Come to think of it, in those two years we were sort of in between major arms sales. I think the AWACs issue had been resolved and we were not yet into the political debate that accompanied the major new Saudi requests for aircraft and missiles in 1985. We had, of course, a very large ongoing military sales program with the Saudis which continued throughout this period. Oftentimes these issues involved rather exotic and little-known types of radar, certain air-to-ground munitions, etc. that did not create the same public relations issues as had the AWACs and F-15s, but which still, were matters of some concern to those who knew what it was all about.

We spent a great deal of time with the Pentagon people and the political/military people in the Department trying to move these issues through the bureaucracy and Congress, when that was necessary. Again, in thinking back on this period what I particularly remember are the efforts we were making trying to get agreements on access and pre-positioning issues.

*Q: You eventually ended up as office director. Did you feel that the importance of Saudi Arabia was well drilled into everybody including our political masters both in Congress and in the White House and State Department that there was no gratuitous messing around?*

WRAMPELMEIER: I think there was. Obviously we weren't necessarily always put at the top of the agenda, but I think there was a feeling that the Saudis are important and that things were going fairly well in terms of our military, political and economic relationships. This was still the period when the Saudis had a lot of money and we were concerned about it being recycled responsibly through the international financial system. By 1982 the oil market had begun to weaken and as we went through the '80s we saw that the Saudis would have less and less financial clout. Nevertheless, they were still important even if they did not have the wealth they had in the late '70s.

The visits that were made out to the area again were primarily people from the Defense Department. I am trying to remember if George Shultz ever went out. He may have, but I just don't recall. I think at the top levels of the Department the principals were more concerned with the Arab-Israeli issues.

**JAMES A. PLACKE**  
**Deputy Assistant Secretary, Near East Bureau**  
**Washington, DC (1982-1985)**

*Mr. Placke was born and raised in Nebraska and educated at the University of Nebraska. He entered the Foreign Service in 1958. An Arabic Language Officer and Economic specialist, Mr. Placke was posted to Baghdad, Frankfurt, Kuwait, Tripoli, Ottawa and in Jeddah, where he served as Deputy Chief of Mission. At the State Department in Washington, Mr. Placke dealt primarily with Near East affairs. From 1982 to 1985 he served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Near East. Mr. Placke was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.*



*Q: In '82 you left and came back to Washington, is that right?*

PLACKE: Right. Came back to be Deputy Assistant Secretary in NEA. In those days there were four deputies and each of them got a war. My war was the Iran and Iraq War. Things had evolved since the war began in September of 1980 when I was in Saudi Arabia from where I had a view from sort of nearby, but not any direct involvement. Now it became much more of a direct concern.

*Q: You left that job when?*

PLACKE: I left it in 1985. During this tour there were a lot of other interesting things that happened. The first Saudi astronaut was launched. The relationship with Saudi Arabia was always a subject of great interest and concern. Prince Bandar who is to this day the Saudi ambassador in Washington and has been the military attaché. I knew Bandar in Saudi Arabia when I was DCM and just keeping track of the Saudis, keeping track of the Iraqis, keeping track of the Iranians, that was pretty much of a full time job.

*Q: I was going to say. How did you find Prince Bandar, he became sort of a power to himself. At this point he wasn't?*

PLACKE: No. Certainly not while he was actually, . . . he became an ambassador while I was still in the Bureau. When I came in he was military attaché. The last thing I ever want to do in my life would be the chief of mission in a place where Bander was the military attaché. Everybody knew who the real ambassador was and it was Bander. Bander cut his teeth on diplomacy in 1978 in the first F-15 sale to Saudi Arabia and actually worked very closely with Ambassador West who was, . . . this was before I was involved in Saudi Arabia and came back here and was here for several months. He and Bander together worked the Congress and got the deal through against a lot of opposition. So, that was a constant theme at the time I was in NEA, arms sales to Saudi Arabia, which were vigorously opposed by AIPAC [American Israel Public Affairs Committee, see: <http://www.aipac.org/>] and their sympathizers on the hill. In fact I can remember when the subject was AWACS [Airborne Warning and Control System] [the] Prime Minister saying, "And if the Saudis have AWACS, I don't even know what I'm having for breakfast."

*Q: Did you find that the Israeli AIPAC, how did you find their impact on it?*

PLACKE: Well, they successfully blocked for some years the second trove of F-15 sales to Saudi Arabia and the Saudis were also beginning to develop an appetite for F-16s which were completely off the menu and, of course, subsequently have been sold. It was a real struggle over AWACS and actually it was Senator Cohen who subsequently became Secretary of Defense and was then a senator from Maine who cast the vote that put the AWACS sale approval over the top.

*Q: Well, I would have thought with AWACS being such a complicated system that this would be hard to man by the Saudi military?*

PLACKE: Well, it was manned by American contract personnel who were former U.S. air force. The first AWACS was delivered while I was still in the Bureau, so I actually saw them operating out of Riyadh. No, I'm sorry, let me take that back. They were not Saudi AWACS at that point. They were American AWACS that had deployed there in the context of providing protection for air defense for Saudi Arabia. We had an AWACS detachment as I recall for aircraft deployed to Riyadh which was a big deal at its time and the Saudis saw this equipment, saw what it could do, there was always one or more Saudis on every mission and that's what gave them the appetite to get these things for themselves. They ultimately acquired AWACS, which they managed to absorb in their order of battle and successfully operate themselves.

**ROSCOE S. SUDDARTH**  
**Deputy Chief of Mission**  
**Jeddah & Riyadh (1982-1985)**

*Ambassador Suddarth was born in Kentucky and raised primarily in Tennessee. He was educated at Yale and Oxford Universities and Massachusetts Institute of Technology and served in the US Air Force before joining the Foreign Service in 1961. Primarily a Middle East specialist the Ambassador served as Political Officer and Counselor in Yemen, Libya, Jordan and in Saudi Arabia, where he was Deputy Chief of Mission. He also served with the Department of State in Washington in senior level positions concerning primarily Middle East and Political Military matters. In 1987 he was appointed Ambassador to Jordan, where he served until 1990. Ambassador Suddarth was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1999.*

*Q: Although the ambassador in some of the major places plays a relatively minor role.*

SUDDARTH: Yes. But that was not the case in Saudi Arabia, particularly in the days before Bandar became ambassador. We were dealing with Bandar in Saudi Arabia. Prince Bandar, who is the son of Prince Sultan, the defense minister... I arrived in Saudi Arabia the very month of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon.

*Q: You were there from when to when?*

SUDDARTH: From August of '82 until August of 1985. We moved our embassy there from Jeddah to Riyadh. I had a fabulous time. It's probably one of the very most interesting overseas assignments of my career.

*Q: Could you describe the issues that were concerning us when you arrived before the Israeli invasion of Lebanon? What was important in the relationship at that point?*

SUDDARTH: It's hard to separate the Lebanese thing. That was such a trauma. I'd say the major issue was getting the AWACs implanted. We were still working on implementation documents when I arrived. It was paying close attention to the oil situation. Then even perhaps more

important was getting Saudi Arabia to support our causes with their money. The real case in point was the Afghanistan issue, where we in effect got the Saudis to divvy up something like half a billion dollars to support the mujaheddin guerrilla effort in Afghanistan. From their viewpoint, our recognition of the PLO was very important, our carrying forward on the peace process. I had been there two weeks when the Reagan Initiative was announced, which was another way of bringing the Arabs and the Israelis together in negotiations, which was rejected out of hand by the Israelis and went nowhere. Dick Murphy, our ambassador who had been summoned, cut his tour short, in the Philippines to go to Saudi Arabia to negotiate the AWACS deal along with Weinberger. Phil Habib was popping in all the time doing the Lebanon business. The Saudis had put out the Fana Plan, which was aimed at getting negotiations between the Arabs and the Israelis going. It was looking towards peace with Israel, which was kind of a breakthrough on the Arab side. The Saudis were very much interested in getting us to talk to the PLO. Bandar would often be sent over by Fahd to our embassy to talk to us mainly about Lebanon. Lebanon was a major issue. Fahd had been minister of education. UNESCO was in Lebanon. In his more playboy days, he used to spend vast amounts of time in Lebanon doing ministry of education business as minister of education, but also having a grand time there. So, he had a real personal emotional attachment to Lebanon that came out. I dare say that I spent more time in my tour there dealing with Lebanon than I did on bilateral issues.

*Q: Before we move to Lebanon, let's talk about the AWACS issue. What was the issue? Could you explain what AWACS is?*

SUDDARTH: It's Airborne Warning and Control System. Essentially, it tracks aircraft. It's in a C-5 or C-130 with a big radar on it. It's an immense capability to be able to track radar. A lot of the Saudis got worried that it could also track vehicular movement because of all the smuggling, particularly of whiskey, that was going into Saudi Arabia. The concern was that Iran was acting up and the Saudis were very much worried about Iran at the time.

*Q: Iran and Iraq were at war at that point, weren't they?*

SUDDARTH: They were at war. We spent a lot of time briefing the Saudis on that. In effect, the Saudis cut off their aid to Iraq because here is an immense oil producing country and they realized that they were financing a development program as well as an aid program. So, they and the Kuwaitis and others cut things off.

As an aside, I recall Fahd saying during my tour there in a visit by Gerald Ford that I went with him with in '83 that Saddam Hussein should step down. At that point, the war was going badly against Iran. Iran had stopped an initial thrust. That is another thing that came up on Newsom's watch. There was a general feeling that a plague on both their houses, it was a good thing that the two were fighting each other. That allowed the Gulf Cooperation Council to get started. It could never have done that otherwise because Iraq would have prevented it. So, you had a long cherished U.S. military idea, which was to get the Gulf peninsular states together militarily. We were able to do that. We also established the Central Command. Before that, it had been the Rapid Deployment Force. We had a genuine command started. The Saudis were very ambivalent about it. As DCM, I was given the chore of running over and basically throwing it through the transom of the chief of staff and going back. Sure enough, Prince Sultan called our ambassador

about 15 minutes after I made this presentation and said, “What the heck is going on here?” He was very shrewd, very smart, and realized that if you have a major command, Saudi Arabia is going to be the platform. The Saudis were very reticent to ever have U.S. hands showing on this. I’m popping ahead a little bit because this is kind of an interesting story.

We were constantly trying to get the Saudis to do contingency planning against either an Iraqi but in that time an Iranian thrust. We said, “What happens if Iran overruns Iraq? It’s 48 hours by motor vehicle to the Dhahran oil fields.” We spent a lot of time kind of blue skying what would happen. We could never get the Saudis to really work with us on these things. What came up was, Qadhafi mined the Red Sea. A ship called Qat had dropped these mines throughout the Red Sea. There was panic in Saudi Arabia. Among other things, King Fahd had just ordered a huge \$600 million yacht which was sitting on the Red Sea. So, over a weekend, we mobilized, thanks to the JCS, a whole task force to go out with Sea Stallions, these big helicopters that would drag pontoons in front... Fahd wanted to go up to his favorite watering spot in Rabigh from Jeddah. So, we set up an escort. We had one in front and one in back dragging pontoons so that he would be able to go up. We were told that these mines were not a serious threat, that they were way down or something. King Fahd was happy to be able to go out on his new yacht.

But more seriously, I had been chargé and had brought a group out and we were trying to persuade Sultan, the minister of defense, to let us engage in joint contingency planning. He said, “We don’t need that. We have our diplomacy that will protect us and all the good feelings that we’ve aroused around the world.” Then after this mobilization of this task force on de-mining the Red Sea, Prince Sultan said to me one day, “See, who needs contingency planning? You can do it all on your own when we need you?” So, he was very clever at debating. I remember saying, “Well, you know, one boat is a little different from an entire army.” But now I assume we do contingency planning ever since the Gulf War with the Saudis.

*Q: Back to the AWACS? What was the issue?*

SUDDARTH: Once again, Iran. Iran had made several incursions by aircraft across the median line of the Persian Gulf. There was a thing called the Fahd Line. It wasn’t King Fahd but it was Fahd Bin Abdullah, who was head of the Air Force, which was a line where the Iranians were told “Thou shalt not go beyond that line.” The AWACS was there to monitor Iranian air traffic along that area. Since the Gulf War, there is the Tackan which is now able to also monitor on the ground, but this was restricted to air at that point. It was essentially the Iranian threat to Saudi Arabia. As a background of this, the Iranians were at that point a revolutionary movement. There is a large Shia population in the Eastern Province right where the oil is located. The Iranians were stirring up unrest among the Shia there. So, that was a major concern.

*Q: Was this issue political in the United States?*

SUDDARTH: Yes. The Israelis opposed it. The Israelis had a catechism which is, any state which is not at peace with Israel they would oppose arms to. They did to Jordan, to very moderate states. So, it became a real battle and it lost Chuck Percy his Senate seat because he was opposed by AIPAC.

This was the first real foreign policy battle I can recall in the Reagan administration. The Israelis opposed it, so a good portion of the Congress did. There was a major mobilization of a task force in public relation firms and all sorts of things to narrowly win this battle under the leadership of Chuck Percy, who later lost his seat and came to Saudi Arabia while I was there telling us the story, the way he had been defeated. So, it was a major victory. I remember being at a party where both Prince Bandar, who came over and was very helpful (He's a very eloquent fighter pilot and so forth.), were celebrating the fact that they were going to get the AWACS. So, that got started before I came, but I helped Dick Murphy to finalize the implementation agreements. It also meant an augmentation of the U.S. military presence to maintain the AWACS, which was an issue of not particular great sensitivity. We already had a big military mission there under USMTM plus the advisor to the Saudi national guard was a U.S. brigadier general. We had thousands of American service people who were in Saudi Arabia when I was there. They were a major element of our mission.

*Q: Particularly after the lesson of Iran where the American presence had upset the Islamic society and Saudi Arabia being as strict, if not more so, were we able to sit on them?*

SUDDARTH: The Saudis were the ones who did most of the sitting and that was that they would refuse... Once Central Command got going, they had enormous requirements. They really wanted to set up a NATO type infrastructure. I remember taking people around no see the Saudis. They wanted to have a communications node system all across Saudi Arabia, to which the Saudis said, "No way." They wanted to have a command element. They really wanted to have the head of Central Command in Saudi Arabia. They finally had to settle for Tampa, Florida with a forward element in Bahrain, which is the way it is today. The Saudis saw definite limitations. Once again, when I say Prince Sultan would tend to denigrate and dismiss our worst case analysis where we were going to be needed, but they learned in the Gulf War that you cant do this with smoke and mirrors. You need to have some presence there. Now it's become more discrete because there have been some terrorist actions against them. But at that point, there was no significant internal opposition in Saudi Arabia to this buildup. It was mainly the prudence of the leadership. They may have been having their religious authorities saying, "Go slow." Don't forget, there was an attempt in '79 or '80 by a fundamentalist group. They took over the mosque in Mecca for a while. But rather than bring in the United States, they brought in French security advisors. Our Israeli policy was so unpopular - they didn't want to have the United States in a visible role of helping them to quell a civil emergency.

The other thing I should mention on the Iranian threat is that the Iranians were disrupting the Hajj pilgrimage. They consider the pilgrimage a political event. So, the Saudis were always negotiating how many would come. They were sending political cadres who were carrying banners around "Death to America! Death to Saudi Arabia!" At one point, the Saudi national guard came in and cleaned them out and killed several hundred of them back in '86 or so. But that was a constant element of tension.

The Saudis did perceive a real threat and they also saw that perhaps Iraq could lose the war to Iran.

*Q: Did the helping with the mujaheddin in Afghanistan... From your perspective, were the Saudis*

*showing any concern about arming these people? Later, you have Bin Laden and others who...*

SUDDARTH: No, at that point, they were very much in favor of it. I don't recall too many Saudis going there, but the Saudis provided the muscle and they began to deal directly with the five or six different factions of the mujaheddin. Sayyaf, who was a Saudi-trained Sunni, somewhat fundamentalist, was one of the six groups. He was their favored guy. They later switched to Hekmatyar when he began to get more important.

But the Saudis have an interesting element in their foreign policy. They really do see themselves as the font of Islam. There were problems. They were giving aid to the Moros in the Philippines. It was an Islamic insurgency group. They were arming the Eritreans, who were Muslims in Ethiopia who have now since become independent. They were giving handouts to any Islamic leader who would come to the Hajj. There was a kind of myth going around, probably a rumor, that if a chief of state was willing to go to the Hajj and humiliate himself by sitting around about two weeks, the Saudis would give him \$15 million to go home.

But here they were major contributors right up through '83/'84 to the Iraqi effort in the Gulf War. They were giving immense amounts of money to the rest of the Arab world. I think in terms of percentage, I think they at one point were giving 9% of their GNP in foreign aid.

*Q: At that point, Iraq was seen as the side to support as far as the Saudis were concerned.*

SUDDARTH: Yes, right.

*Q: Did we have any concern about this?*

SUDDARTH: I think our concern was, yes, the Iraqis, if they lost, then Iran could pose a real threat to the rest of the Arab world. Iraq had the strongest army. If they succumbed, there was nobody else that could really stand up against Iran. At that point, our contingency planning came into play. Our strategy was that we had to plan for meeting a Soviet thrust through the Zagros Mountains. We figured that if we could size our forces to that, we would be capable of handling any regional contingency like an Iraq or an Iran. So, it was a pretty gross set of planning assumptions, which became more and more refined as CENTCOM got more and more into action. The Saudis were genuinely concerned. Once again, in August of '82 when the Iranians had blocked the initial Iraqi thrust and were beginning to move through the marshes into Iraq itself, that is when the Saudis gave a major push.

The Saudis also were helpful to us because during this period, we began to warm in our relations with Iraq. I remember as charge going in and asking the Saudis to get Iraq to kick out the Abu Nidal from Iraq, which they did, which was the major harbinger factor that allowed us to establish an interests section in Iraq itself. David Newton, who had been political counselor, when he left Saudi Arabia went on to be head of an interests section. He was head of an interests section which we then upgraded to an embassy once they kicked out Abu Nidal. I can recall going in to see the under secretary of Foreign Affairs and laying this on him. Then he called me back the next day to discuss it further. As I went out, I saw these two really thuggish looking Iraqi quasi-diplomats sitting there. He really did it to orchestrate the fact that indeed it was the

United States. That was pushing them. They didn't want to make it considered that it was Saudi Arabia. They were still handling them with kid gloves. But in effect, that did work. The Saudis had a role in promoting that with the Iraqis.

*Q: Going back to the major thing, what had been the status... Saudi Arabia was looking toward coming to a peace with Israel or help promote a peace on the Palestinian question? Then talk about the invasion.*

SUDDARTH: We had a number of congressional visits. I recall Fahd telling each one of them that once there was peace with Israel and the conditions of peace had been fulfilled by Israel, which was a withdrawal from the lands they occupied in 1967, Saudi Arabia would look forward to normal relations with Israel. This was very important for congressional groups that came out. That was their view, but the view was that Israel had to get out of the West Bank, Gaza, and eastern Jerusalem, where the holy places were. But that was not a major theme at that point. The Reagan Initiative fell apart. The Israelis invaded Lebanon. So, the focus all came from 1982 until 1985 on Lebanon. The peace process wasn't even in the picture.

*Q: What was the Saudi reaction when this happened? Were they concerned... There was a story that Haig had given a wink and a nod to Sharon. Was this an accepted so-called "fact" or something like that within Saudi circles? Did they feel we were involved?*

SUDDARTH: The Saudis were immensely discrete. I don't know that they felt that we were responsible, that we had given a nod. Their main concern when I arrived was that Beirut was burning. It looked as though the Israelis were going to trash Beirut. Sabra and Shatila occurred, where these Palestinians were massacred. Arabs don't like to see Arab blood being shed like that. A lot of the effort went into evacuating the PLO by boat from Beirut as a condition for the Israelis. We were constantly trying to get Saudi support for what we were doing. There were some fairly ill-advised things that happened. George Shultz was new as Secretary of State. He bought the line of supporting an Israeli-Lebanese treaty which was negotiated in agreement which everybody who had ever spent a week in the Middle East, knew the Syrians would massively oppose. Of course, the upshot was the assassination of Bashir Gemayel and then trying to execute this agreement which went nowhere. You had civil war that broke out in Lebanon. You had the bombing of our embassy. You had the bombing of the Marine barracks. You had the decision of Reagan, while we were all in the trenches really pushing for this. I think probably quite correctly, Reagan, who had initially called Lebanon a vital U.S. interest, reportedly was persuaded by Jim Baker and others that before the 1984 elections to cut and run, which is what we did.

We got involved in a number of things. I had a wonderful, interesting time dealing with Bandar on a ceasefire in Lebanon. There was a lot of stuff going on. The Druze were fighting the regular Lebanese forces, the Druze being backed by the Syrians. There was major fighting going on. We got the Saudis to intervene with the Syrians and it took about a week. I kept our code room open one whole week, 24 hours a day. We had a big party afterwards. This was largely Fahd working through Bandar. Bandar got the Syrians to pull the Druze back. There was a ceasefire. I recall Bandar called me and said, "Bingo," which meant that they had achieved the agreement. One of those personal things you recall. I sent off a FLASH cable to Washington saying "The Saudis

have informed us of the ceasefire.” Reagan happened to be at the UNGA. This was in September of ‘83. Somebody handed him the cable or briefed him on my FLASH cable. I thought, “Oh, my god, I hope Bandar was right!” The President of the United States had announced it on the steps of the UN. It turned out to be correct. But then two weeks later, there was the bombing and the killing of 300 Marines in the Marine barracks. It all fell apart after that.

But Fahd had this deep, deep love of Lebanon. He was being held to account by the Arab world. Here is Israel invading a small Arab state. One scandal after another, one slaughter after another. Here is Saudi Arabia with all of its might unable to persuade the United States to lean on the Israelis to get out. They recall that Faisal in 1974 had cut off the oil because of our support for Israel. So, we were in a very delicate situation there.

*Q: From your perspective, did you feel that our embassy (Sam Lewis was ambassador at that time.)-*

SUDDARTH: Yes. And Sam was having huge fights with Sharon at the time.

*Q: How did you feel that we were acting? We’ve always had this support Israel side, but this was a real test.*

SUDDARTH: Everybody in the field thought that Shultz had made a major error in trying to broker this treaty between Israel and Lebanon. We knew it wouldn’t work. We knew it would destine Lebanon to years of bloodshed until the treaty was repudiated. In effect, what it did was consolidate Syrian control over Lebanon. It brought on a major spate of terrorism and hijacking. There was the Beirut hijacking that ended up in Algiers. It raised the stature of the Shia community which was under Iranian control where Iran was able to move in at that point and take advantage of the situation. To my mind, it was a major strategic blunder not only by Israel but by the United States in not being firmer with the Israelis and making them get out.

*Q: Did you feel that our policy was being directed by the Jewish community in the United States for political motives or not?*

SUDDARTH: No. I think that everybody was caught short in the United States. My sense of the Jewish community is that they were very embarrassed. Begin himself was embarrassed. What he thought was going to be a little policy action on the border Sharon took all the way. So, Begin went into a deep depression and resigned. Sharon was thrown out. But nevertheless, the Israelis persisted in trying to get this treaty.

The feeling was that we should get the Israelis out. The price of doing that was getting the PLO removed, which we did. Eventually, it was terrorism that drove us out of Lebanon. Shultz visited Saudi Arabia several times. The first visit, Nick Veliotos, who was the assistant secretary, pulled me aside and said, “Would you like to go to Syria as ambassador?” I said, “Sure. Love to.” What had happened according to Nick was that Bob Paganelli had disgraced himself in front of Shultz by telling him that there was no way that this treaty would ever get in, that it was an act of folly (Bob had a way of not mincing his words.) and that this would be a major disaster for the United States. It turned out that they had a demarche over some missile thing which Bob carried off very



well. So, Shultz pulled back.

*Q: From all accounts, that encounter sort of resonated down the corridors of NEA.*

SUDDARTH: Yes. I think throughout the Foreign Service it was an example of a Foreign Service officer really earning his pay and doing his job. I have to admire Bob for doing it. He was articulating what everybody else felt.

Let me just add, there were a lot of shenanigans that went on. Bud McFarland started coming out to try to push the Saudis to push the Syrians to cool things in Lebanon. We were trying to get the thing cooled down. I later found out that McFarland came in on a secret mission.

*Q: He was with the National Security Council?*

SUDDARTH: Yes, he was the NSC advisor at the time. He went without Dick Murphy or anybody in the embassy other than the station knowing about it. He went and had meetings with Fahd and others and got back. That was the kind of shenanigan that was going on that eventuated in the Iran-Contra business with Ollie North and so forth. There was a real surge of the NSC. Poindexter came out after McFarland left and went through a set of talking points that we had been using for years and then got congratulated by a sycophantic bunch of his staff for having really made the point. We just had to laugh up our sleeve. We had been doing this for years. He got no more effect out of it. It was contingency planning and doing all that stuff that we had been trying for for years.

*Q: This is one of the themes that runs through this series of oral histories and also in writing, that often you find that there are people who are Washington based and if they feel they can get Congress on their side, media on their side, and the White House on their side, and the Pentagon maybe, that it's a fait accompli. You just go out and whoever happens to be Assad of Syria or whoever it is will immediately fall over because, gee, we put it together here in Washington and it's so well put together by Washington operators, so you have to go along with it. Of course, the answer often is "Hell, no!"*

SUDDARTH: That's right. Of course, often the embassy gets blamed for its negative attitude because we're trying to accurately describe what we think the host country... The thing about shooting the messenger - there is also the question of shooting the guy that's right. It happened to Newsom for being right about bringing the Shah into the United States. It happened to Paganelli for being right. It was his last assignment. Some people can do it skillfully. One of the classics is to say, "Well, you know, we may have a mismatch between goals and means," which is another way of saying, "Hey, your plan is crazy as hell." But you can put it two different ways. The more successful diplomats put it in that more neutral way.

*Q: To round out this time in Saudi Arabia, you were both chargé and DCM. Where does one go in a monarchy? Where do you push buttons? How did you operate within this rather family-run state?*

SUDDARTH: Some examples. The Saudi family operates under consensus. So, often, you have

to touch several points and it's not always in the organization chart. For instance, Bandar was the pipeline to the King. Bandar had no status. He was known as "the pilot" [El Tayyar]. So, you would often work through him. The King had another fellow named Mohammad Suleiman who Dick Murphy used to describe as like a pane of glass. If you gave a message for the King (The King really wasn't that accessible. You could see him, but you could tell if he thought you were taking up his time unnecessarily.), you do it through Mohammad Suleiman, who was often at home and would call in by the telephone or something. You'd get an answer back. Bandar was far more effective because he could manipulate both sides, usually our side as well. For instance, in the Reagan initiative, we went to see Fahd, Abdullah, and Sultan, and Prince Saud. Prince Saud I often use as the foreign minister, who was Princeton educated. He had a good relationship with everybody. When we were trying to push Sultan, we could use Saud, who tended to be more receptive to our arguments on the need for military contingency planning.

One dealt with ministers, but trying to really get an insight into what was really going on was difficult. Yamani was very special. He was brilliant, one of the most interesting people I've ever met in diplomacy. I used to call him the "Merlin," the magician. He would make perfume. That was one of his hobbies. An absolute, incredible grasp of the world oil situation. When Faisal died, he told his successor to please treat Yamani as a prince. He later fell out of favor with Fahd, but when we were there he was a real force. I remember in '85, the price of oil began to decline. The Saudis were beginning to worry. There were OPEC meetings and we were always trying to find out what was going on. We asked to see Yamani. Dick Murphy and I he invited to lunch. So, we had a beautiful three-hour lunch, 11 courses, in his living room in Riyadh, which had a large swimming pool in it as well. The only thing we were interested in was what he thought the price of oil was going to be after the OPEC meeting. That was the one thing he was not going to tell us. So, we were subjected to a three-hour lecture on the early caliphates in Islam, we were given an 11 course meal. I made one of those social miscalculations. We had a fork and a knife and a plate and it was lunch, about 3:00 pm. We were hungry. They brought out this beautiful rice dish with chicken and stuff in it. I thought, "Why a knife and a fork? How sensible to have one big course." Then they took the plate away and put another knife and another fork. That was the first of 11 courses. Meanwhile, Yamani, who looks a bit like a Cheshire cat, was sitting there with his Metrocal. He was having Metrocal [a diet drink] while we were stuffing ourselves and getting more and more frustrated and not finding out everything.

We had a big relationship with Saudi Arabia. Don Regan came out as secretary of Treasury. I remember his handlers (I was chargé.) saying that he was going to go see the King and the finance minister. They said, "You're not allowed in here. No State Department types are allowed in." I said, "Well, let me talk to Secretary Regan." I went in to see Regan. I said, "Your folks are saying I shouldn't be in these meetings. I think I can be of help to you, Mr. Secretary. In my capacity now as chargé, I work as much for you as I do for the Secretary of State and the President. So, he let me in. But that is the kind of crap we had to put up with. Regan was full of things because they had just invaded Grenada. So, Regan was full of stories, that sort of thing.

My wife, Michele, is much younger, but she was a dead ringer for Nancy Reagan. Both Mrs. Shultz came out and Mrs. Reagan looked at her curiously. She said, "Are you related to Nancy Reagan, by any chance." My wife would get stopped in the supermarkets. We never could figure out whether that was going to hurt or help our career.

*Q: Were we concerned during the Lebanon invasion and all that went on about Saudi Arabia all of a sudden getting so disgusted, pulling a boycott, shutting out oil, or anything like that?*

SUDDARTH: It didn't seem to be a major element, mainly because we showed our bona fides. We had evacuated the PLO. We had condemned the Israelis for Sabra and Shatila. We were really making a massive effort. So, I don't think that ever came up as an issue.

*Q: By this time, they had seen you as not being a tool of the Israelis.*

SUDDARTH: Yes, right.

*Q: I was there in the '50s in Dhahran. I was vice consul. That is my only time in the Middle East. We weren't that sophisticated then. We weren't really concerned about the oil weapon being used against us by this point?*

SUDDARTH: No. I think that that just wasn't an issue. They had good high oil prices. After all, they were all jacked up. The more oil... Iran was shut down and didn't build up for several years, so the Saudis were pouring it in. This was the high water mark in Saudi economic prosperity in that era. It lasted from '79 up until probably '85 when it began to taper off.

*Q: Were we rather pleased with how Saudi money was being invested? Did we get involved in that?*

SUDDARTH: We didn't really get involved. We were happy that the Saudis were investing most of their money in U.S. Treasury bonds. We had somebody from Merrill Lynch who was attached to Saudi Arabia to the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency, David Mulford, who went back to be assistant secretary of Treasury under Regan when Regan was Secretary of the Treasury. He was in Saudi Arabia while I was there and left to take that job. So, we had a lot of influence behind the scenes. We also had JACOR, which was a kind of aid program financed by the Saudis which the Treasury Department administered. We did such things as set up a park service, a bureau of public roads for Saudi Arabia. There was a lot of nation building that went on. The minister of finance had a very finely culled think tank that was paid for by the Saudis and was composed of Americans. So, when he would go on a trip to Malaysia, he would have an elaborate set of briefing papers written up. So, we were doing a lot of that sort of thing for him.

*Q: Is there anything else we should cover in Saudi Arabia?*

SUDDARTH: There was the shoot-down of a couple of Iranian planes in '84.

*Q: This was over the Persian Gulf?*

SUDDARTH: Yes.

I think that's about it. I transitioned back to be deputy assistant secretary for Dick Murphy and had a fascinating two years, 1985-1987.

**KENTON W. KEITH**  
**USIA, Deputy Director for Near East and South Asia**  
**Washington DC (1983-1985)**

*Ambassador Keith was born and raised in Kansas City, Missouri. After graduating from the University of Kansas he served with the US Navy before entering the Foreign Service in 1965. An Arabic speaking Officer, Ambassador Keith served as Public Affairs Officer and/ or Cultural Affairs in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Syria, France and Brazil before his appointment as US Ambassador to Qatar. His Washington service included several tours in senior positions with USIA. Ambassador Keith was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1998.*

*Q: Did you find that you were having to play a cautious hand when you were dealing with Saudi Arabia because of Saudi sensibilities?*

KEITH: Even by the '80s, the Saudis had largely rid themselves of the stereotypes of earlier years, throwing money around and misbehaving in Europe and the U.S. By the '80s, mid levels of the Saudi government had been educated in the United States and Britain and were quite sophisticated, certainly sophisticated enough that you could have frank political talks. In general terms, we encouraged the Saudis to play a moderating role in the peace process in general terms, but this was not a difficult case for us to make. The Saudis hated instability in the region, and for good and obvious reasons. We have always been able to rely on them. The Saudis would preach to us. They would accuse us of being unfair and not evenhanded in the Arab-Israel disputes, but they had a way of looking at their strategic and long-term economic interests that eventually was beneficial to our relationship. Even so, we couldn't take the Saudis for granted. There's a lovely story that works best in Arabic, but you'll get the point. Kissinger was planning a trip to the Middle East that excluded a visit to the Kingdom. King Faisal on hearing this is very upset. He has his ambassador in Washington go to Kissinger, and after much pleading Kissinger agrees to stop in Saudi Arabia. So, a few days later Kissinger is sitting with the King in Riyadh who says, "So, Henry, you weren't going to come and see me." Kissinger looked at him with a look of complete incredulity and said, "Your Majesty? This whole trip was just to see you." Yes, you had to take into consideration the Saudi sensibilities, but our strategic cooperation was very much in our interests.

**RICHARD E. UNDELAND**  
**Public Affairs Officer, USIS**  
**Riyadh (1983-1985)**

*Richard E. Undeland was born in Nebraska in 1930. He received an AB from Harvard University and a M.A. from Stanford University. He joined the USIA in*

*1957 and subsequently served overseas in Beirut, Tunisia, Egypt, Vietnam, Algeria, Kuwait, Syria and Saudi Arabia. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in the summer of 1994.*

*Q: Then you went to Saudi Arabia in 1983. Could you talk about what you were doing and what the situation there was at the time?*

UNDELAND: Again PAO, I was there for only 21 months, instead of the projected 36, for I was pulled out early to go to Cairo. The Saudi assignment came about by my opening an informal dialogue with Personnel, at least that was my intention, on what were possibilities in the area after the Damascus tour was over. I mentioned Saudi Arabia seemed to be coming open at about that time and wanted to know whether true and what else there might be. Back almost immediately came a cable, announcing I was assigned there as country PAO, stationed in Riyadh.

*Q: So much for discussion.*

UNDELAND: Maybe there was some in Washington, but it had to have happened rapidly and certainly nobody brought me into it. Paganelli's nose was understandably put out of joint, but I explained to him that I was just starting, I had thought, an informal dialogue, and not setting off a precipitous action.

Coinciding with my arrival on the new assignment, the main post was moved from Jeddah to Riyadh -- the Saudi government itself had mostly completed making the same move, ministry by ministry. It was where the main newspapers were published, as well as the site of Saudi radio and TV. Two of the country's main universities were there. The Embassy move from Jeddah followed my arrival by several months. If anything the USIS switch should have been made earlier, although there was logic that it happen to coincide with the changeover of PAOs.

I inherited a dispirited post, with morale by far the worst I have encountered anywhere, caused by a series of personal conflicts and rivalries, some preposterous egomania, health problems, divided authority and a woeful lack of leadership. It was a mess, which I saw I had to tackle immediately. I was pleasantly surprised at how rapidly the problems diminished or disappeared with a little give and take, concern for the other fellow and inclusion in the decision making process. If there was ever a place where the staff needed to get along well, it was there, for the pressures stemming from the environment were continuous and considerable.

Saudi Arabia is a world apart in so many ways, and its character, history and customs dictated much of what we did and the way we did it. Maybe that's to be said of most places, but Saudi Arabia offered us less flexibility, narrower margins in which to deal, less chance for adapting, greater distance from our normal procedures than any place else I have been. Begin with isolation for centuries, cast over it *Wahhabi* Islam with its concepts of asceticism and denial, add in one of the world's most inhospitable climates, mix in unbelievable wealth and an extended royal family of over 5,000 princes and you have the basis for a unique place, with its clashes of cultures, of ages or eras, of the traditional and the modern. The longer I was in Saudi Arabia, the more I came to respect all that the Saudis had already accomplished and had underway. If there

was ever a society that could have come unstuck and disintegrated, it should have been that one. At the same time, Saudi ways, all too often mixed with Saudi hypocrisy, vastly complicated what we wanted to achieve and the tools we would have liked to use.

In some ways it was as closed to us as Syria, with the decision making processes in a small inner circle of the royal family, which effectively kept its own counsel. The contrast with Syria was striking. It was going from a place with lousy government relations and pretty solidly good ones elsewhere, to another where it was just the opposite, that is good official ties but many complexities and difficulties socially and culturally. Much less of the personal openness. Still, these generalizations are to be treated with caution, for they can be belied by specific examples seeming to show the opposite.

Saudi mores, customs and restrictions shaped a unique USIS operation. For starters, we did not have one Saudi on the staff, but rather a mixture of Arabs from other places, primarily Sudanese, Syrians and Egyptians, and also an Afghani, a Pakistani, several Europeans and two locally hired Americans.

We could not have any post programming which mixed men and women. For a time, it looked like we at last might find a chink in this wall at the prestigious Faisal Institute with an Islamic art lecture given by Esin Atil of the Smithsonian, one of the world's foremost scholars in the field, but at the last minute it was canceled as being too radical or revolutionary a departure to have a woman lecturing to men. And Esin Atil herself is a Muslim! Next, there were no cinemas, no exhibit or concert halls and no public cultural events or performances of any sort. We finally got nervous official approval to mount a totally unobjectionable photo exhibit -- was it the work of Ansel Adams?, I forget -- in the lobby of a leading hotel, but after the opening, which almost nobody attended, for we had not been permitted publicity, the Saudis ordered it closed down, not because of the content of the exhibit but because of the precedent they claimed it would set.

We had small libraries in Riyadh and Jeddah, but as I soon learned, with not a single Saudi user and very few other Arabs. We did put on a couple of concerts, but in homes, with nothing more than word of mouth publicity and for an audience that was no more than 5 percent Saudis.

*Q: Was this official policy or what?*

UNDELAND: Official Saudi policy, yes, and applied not just to us, but to all. Public entertainment, except for horse and camel races, was taboo. The main source of entertainment outside the home seemed to be visiting the shopping malls and centers, which were glitzy and jammed. Saudi families, particularly those of Riyadh, often went to the desert for their version of camping, with big tents, refrigerators, catered feasts and God knows what all. It was a society where many Saudis, particularly the Western-educated ones, and there were a lot of them, would spend several months outside the country every year, when they would be away from the social and cultural restrictions and could and did lead entirely different kinds of lives. It was an escape a number of our Saudi friends found essential. There was, however, an escape inside the country, namely weekends on farms. During the cooler months -- a well kept secret is that Riyadh has one of the world's most splendid climates for about 4 months out of the year -- the owners' family and those of close, like-minded friends would gather at the farm, whose size was described not in

acres or square whatever, but in pivots...

*Q: These pivots refer to irrigation circles?*

UNDELAND: Exactly. Watered by rapidly depleting underground sources, they were circles of green in an otherwise barren landscape. You would speak of so-and-so's two or three or however many pivot farm.

We got in with a group of highly westernized Saudis, who had spent long periods in the States and in Europe, who when on their farms, cast aside the Saudi world. Jeans and shirts largely replaced the *thobe*, the *ghutra* was put aside, easy relations between men and women emerged, even in one case dancing together by teen age sons and daughters. Of course, they were always on the look out for an approaching vehicle -- the clouds of dust raised made them easy to see -- and for a quick change back into Saudi clothes and ways. The kids were bilingual in English, often speaking a heavily accented dialect learned from their Bangladeshi or Filipino nannies and other English speaking servants. These were tiring weekends, for they stayed up all night and the Johnny Walker Black flowed freely.

We did a certain amount of entertaining of Saudis in our home, usually just men, although there were a few who would come with their wives. If you invited somebody to dinner at your home, the main guest or guests usually wanted to know who else would be there before accepting. This was doubly true when wives were included. Indeed, it went so far, the almost normal inviting process was to get the main guest and ask him who else he would like. In fact we found this procedure sometimes rather useful, for by it we got to meet more Saudis and in a social context, where we could ask them again. But the social part of developing and maintaining contacts was tough sledding. There was also the question of whether an acceptance meant the invitee would come or not. It was a phenomenon not only the foreigners faced. At a farewell dinner given for us by an official and his doctor wife, both Saudis, two invited Saudi couples didn't arrive and finally, the hostess blurted out, "you just can't trust us Saudis. You never know when we mean what we say and when we don't."

*Q: You were saying earlier some people had acquired Saudi citizenship, but basically foreigners and Saudis remained apart, and you had no born and bred Saudis working for USIS.*

UNDELAND: On your first question, only a handful of others, all Arabs, had ever acquired Saudi citizenship, with the exception of Philby and perhaps a very few other Westerners in the early days. There was one Saudi on the Embassy's consulate staff, who had been born in Saudi Arabia of Syrian parents, a family that had somehow gotten Saudi nationality. He was the only Saudi working in the Mission. Why didn't we employ Saudis? Two simple reasons. First of all, our salaries weren't high enough to attract them. Secondly, differences in work ethic made none apply.

*Q: Talk a little about the Saudi-foreigner relationship, particularity in those areas of concern to you, to USIS. How did it work in the universities?*

UNDELAND: The Saudis were clearly on top. They called the shots, took the main decisions,

but left much of the dealing, the detail work, to others, that is, to foreigners in their hire. However, decisions by Saudi entrepreneurs, ranking officials and administrators were often based on information gained from and recommendations made by foreigners. We encountered it all the time in our relations with the universities and government administrations, but I sensed a gradual change was underway, wherein Saudi inputs were becoming larger and more important at all levels. This was hardly surprising, indeed only natural as time went by. With the media, our relations were with both other Arabs and Saudis, and increasingly so with the Saudis, who were the editors and ranking officials. All in all, there was no question on who was boss, but they got along relatively well together. At least on the surface, for underneath, the foreigners harbored lots of resentments.

At the stunningly modern Riyadh university, named after Ibn Saud and built by an American-French combine, the president, deans and all in the top echelon, plus about 25% of the professors were Saudis. The number of Saudis on the teaching staff increased each year, but with the University's annual growth, the percentage didn't change during my time in Riyadh. Each year, a massive recruitment was undertaken to fill the vacant positions by foreigners, looking first to Syrians, Lebanese, selected Egyptians, Jordanians and Palestinians, although they were beginning in those days to become more than a little wary of Palestinians. Then, they filled the still remaining vacancies with other Egyptians, for they never had a problem in finding enough with Ph.D.s in any required field, though their quality was uneven, and the Saudis tended to be pretty contemptuous of them. Standards in the universities, never very high, were falling, for a number of reasons, but a key one was that no non-Saudi teacher dared fail a Saudi student, for this could lead to having his contract terminated on the spot. It had happened enough times that it was not to be treated as an idle threat. This was hardly a formula for insisting on standards. Why did the foreign professors come to Saudi Arabia? The same reason as foreigners in all other fields, for money. A professor from Egypt made more than ten times what he would get at home. Differences in pay with Syrians and Jordanians were less, but nonetheless very large.

Still, the Saudis were a beginning to realize standards and performance were essential, and the graduates had to be truly educated and able to compete in an increasingly competitive Saudi Arabia and world. There was no longer the guarantee of a good job for every graduate. The University had some able, serious professors among both Saudis and foreigners, who were trying to improve the learning process, but the obstacles were great and not easily susceptible to the fundamental changes needed for improvement, without more resolve and toughness from high levels. This situation in academia found parallels elsewhere in the system. Much good had been done and progress was being made, but also a lot of rot had set in, and Saudi ways and thinking were at the heart of many of the problems.

*Q: The United States had been involved with Saudi Arabia intimately since World War II, so the basic relationship had existed for some time. But USIS, one of whose main jobs is selling the United States, is much involved in the arts, literature, etc., and yet for religious and political reasons, these activities were almost precluded. There was so much you couldn't do. You must have felt you were operating with one hand tied behind your back. What did you do?*

UNDELAND: In many ways we were. We did have close relations with the media, and a fair amount of our stuff was used by newspapers, radio and television. Nothing they deemed



political, but then that has been true everywhere I've been in the Arab World. The media was basically friendly to the U.S., which was the way the authorities wanted it. Interestingly, this was less true of the English and other foreign language publications, but the Ministry of Information didn't pay much attention to them, and they were freer to go their own way. The media and government officials and some others valued our information bulletins, which helped them keep up on American policy and thinking. We were welcomed at the Ministry of Information, Youth and Sports, other government bodies, professional organizations and throughout the Saudi education structure.

At that time we did not have a woman officer, so our contacts were entirely with men. By the way, I recommended there always be at least one woman officer in USIS, so we could also work that side of the street. Nothing happened then, but it became reality in later years, though it's highly unlikely my earlier recommendation played any role in this decision. We had no exchange programs, except for one Fulbright researcher from Harvard working on Islamic law. His grant was completely paid for by Oil Minister Yamani and in fact had been worked out without any post involvement. We tried to help with the planning of portions of visits to the U.S. by some Saudis, the Voluntary Visitor Program, but this proved to be only an embarrassment, for they almost always went their own way, ignoring appointments and schedules set up for them. After being burned a few times, I stopped offering this kind of help, for I was angering the Agency and not really helping the post or the individual Saudis concerned.

One of the most active parts of the operation was our student counseling, which attracted Saudis in droves, who were seeking information on American colleges and universities and how to go about applying. On this we worked closely with the foreign missions office in the Ministry of Education, which in fact became my main point of contact in the Ministry. I would have preferred to have AMIDEAST take over the counseling, but the Saudis never forgot or forgave AMIDEAST's former CIA connections, even though they had ended a couple of decades earlier. They would not consider letting AMIDEAST establish an office on Saudi soil. I tried to explain they could do the counseling better than we could and they were respected throughout the Arab World, but I found myself up against a stone wall. I never got a satisfactory answer as to why, though I actively sought it.

Given the many limitations on programming, I myself and others on the staff spent more time on personal contacts that otherwise would probably have been the case, although I have always emphasized this part of the job. We had Saudi interlocutors at fairly high levels and I found them interested in kicking around ideas which ranged wide, but of course centered largely on areas of our expertise and common interests. To give an idea of who they were, I saw much of deputy ministers of information and communications, the head of the Civil Service Commission, the chairman of the national science organization whatever was its title, the director of the Manpower Institute, the prince doing public relations and security for Jubail/Yanbu development, the Director General of Antiquities and of course university front offices, deans and professors, and editors and selected journalists. Whereas I found officials at these levels accessible, my contacts with ministers were few, for they required very specific reasons demanding attention at that level, except for Education, where the Minister and I shared a deep interest in the *mameluks*. He always wanted me to stop by. It wasn't the first time I found a personal interest in something completely outside the job opened doors and led to key

relationships. Such as, my more than half hour discussion on gathering desert truffles got USIS plugged in with the prickly president of the university in Jeddah as never before.

Getting to know these people well led to asking for a considerable body of special information, which the Agency provided -- Washington responded particularly well to our requests -- or guidance where they could go themselves using their own computers. We were also quite active with those who had studied in the U.S., promoting American ties, strangely sometimes even with the institutions where Saudis had studied. The visit of the president of the University of Pittsburgh comes to mind. We helped put together a program for this visit, which reasonably was to feature Saudi graduates from Pitt. Weird, and to the president's chagrin, Pitt hadn't compiled a list of its Saudi graduates. However, the visit came off well and it was only a short while before I got a copy of the list!

Did that kind and size of a USIS operation make sense in Saudi Arabia, with its main post in Riyadh and branch posts in Dhahran and Jeddah? I didn't ask myself that question when there, but in looking back, I fear the answer probably should have been no. Something far simpler and on a smaller scale would probably have been sufficient. Yet, my successor somehow justified adding an assistant cultural officer slot, although what he could usefully have done puzzles me. Obviously, he was a better bureaucrat than I. In one of my annual performance ratings by the Ambassador, he commented he thought highly of the USIS program, which he found viable, though he hadn't previously thought that possible. Nice words, but in retrospect maybe he was right in his original premise.

I did earn a certain notoriety with USIA, for I closed down our libraries except for beefed up reference collections. This, in the minds of Washington, placed me down among the book burners or perhaps devils further down. I had absurd, increasingly pointed, exchanges with USIA, at one point exacerbated by my attempt to insert a note of levity by asking whether any other PAOs or Agency types were currently into reading all of the novels of W. Dean Howells, as I was, and wondering how this could be true of a committed book hater and burner. It did not go down well. But with no past, present or likely future Saudi readership, and next to none by other Arabs, I did what I knew was right and stuck to my guns. USIA grumbled mightily but finally went along with me.

*Q: Why weren't they using the books? Did they have their own, or weren't they readers or what?*

UNDELAND: Reading books for pleasure or other personal satisfaction, at least those in a foreign language, was just not part of the Saudi scene. I don't say this to be critical, but only to state a reality. If an individual or institution needed books, say on computers or construction or even in the liberal arts, they didn't need us. They had virtually limitless funds and went out and bought them. They didn't even come to us to help them put together lists of books they wanted, at least not while I was there, although we made the offer to help them do so on several occasions. In the library field, we were drawing a blank.

*Q: You say you would have welcomed a woman officer on the USIS staff. How would this have worked?*

UNDELAND: Very well, and some who were there in subsequent years proved the point in spades. In that country with separate universities, separate banks and separate facilities for everything, you either had a woman officer for programming with this half of the population or you didn't do anything at all, except occasionally when you could program a woman visitor. Furthermore, there was often greater receptiveness in female institutions than in those of their male counterparts. And through women, we developed a wide range of impressive contacts not only with them, but with their husbands as well. My wife had wide ranging contacts, but this and the occasional programs by visitors were no substitute for having a woman officer on the staff, working that side of the street full time. It must be remembered that women were and are very often real forces within Saudi family structures and indirectly had and have real influence on what goes on outside. In no other place I have been stationed have families been of greater importance, although almost always in unseen ways, hidden behind the high walls surrounding their homes.

*Q: You mentioned Dhahran. That is where ARAMCO is. What did your post do there? How did it relate to ARAMCO? How did you see that part of the Saudi scene?*

UNDELAND: ARAMCO had been nationalized, and while the American presence and inputs were still immense, it was no longer an American island in the Saudi sea. This changeover was occurring in a slow process, but it was moving inexorably in that direction. Americans in the Saudi petroleum industry were very important and would long remain so, but by that time, everyone was marching pretty much to the Saudi tune. I met a few Saudis in the oil company, and it was clear from them and what I heard that they were a hard working, competent group, schooled thoroughly in American ways and imbued pretty thoroughly with our work ethic. Middle East politics apart, they were intensely pro-American, although in social and cultural terms, they, at least on their home turf, abided by Saudi mores.

The ARAMCO compound housed Saudis as well as Americans and other westerners, and the personal freedoms enjoyed in the past were disappearing. No more mixed swimming in the pool. No more driving by women on the compound. No shorts or bare arms for women outside the house. It still was not subject to the full restrictions of Saudi society, but Americans there looked back longingly on the good old days. There was the incident, when an American wife apparently said, "the hell with it", jumped in a car and drove to another place on the compound. The brouhaha which followed led to no one else repeating this show of independence, at least not while I was there. Far more serious was the case of the American oil worker making pornographic films in his home on the compound. He was discovered, arrested, convicted and jailed for a while by the Saudis, then expelled. This arrest was taken up in the American press and Congress got involved. I thought the fool got off pretty easy, but he obviously thought differently, for he protested mightily over Saudi injustice and his treatment in jail.

I did get to know moderately well a number of Saudi professors at the Petroleum University in Dhahran, which had been started by ARAMCO, but by that time was under Saudi management. It was far and away the best university in the country, demanding solid performance from its students and not afraid to fail those not up to the mark. It insisted on maintaining its standards. It was turning out capable graduates not only for the oil industry, but for other enterprises as well. Saudis rightfully took pride in its achievements. The Dhahran USIS post worked closely with

this university. In fact, in addition to a certain amount of representational stuff and being a presence, its main fare was dealings with the University and providing student counseling. That post was the one part of the operation, whose viability I questioned at that time, but I did not take it further than passing on my doubts to NEA. I got back little or no reaction from the Agency.

A bit off the subject, but our Branch Public Affairs Officer in Dhahran was a Mormon, which carried risks, for anyone discovered attempt to proselytize, even among foreigners, was kicked out of the country pronto. In fact, it was instant expulsion if the Saudis even learned someone was a Mormon. I worked it out with him, so he would keep his religion to himself and family as long as on Saudi territory. A capable officer, he did very well.

Branching still further afield, for me one of the hardest things was to come to terms with the hypocrisy on religion and the repressive rules and ways stemming from it. I could have accepted the rigors and fanaticism dictated by honest, sincere observance of the *Wahhabi* strictures, but virtually every rule and restriction was flouted with the connivance the highly placed, even members of the royal family. There was virtually no sin or vice that could not be satisfied, that is, that was not being satisfied. There was no problem with buying alcohol if you had the \$150 for a bottle of whiskey. The importers were purportedly princes. The same was true with drugs, and women and others to satisfy sexual pleasures. It seemed the only sin was getting caught. The supermarkets, modern stores a la Safeway and A&P, had cases of fruit juice stacked floor-to-ceiling along entire walls. A tenth, a hundredth, of the supply would have met breakfast and other juice demands, unless you just happened to be into home fermenting and distilling on a pretty impressive scale. You could even openly buy the equipment for a still and starter kits.

*Q: We used to call them the ARAMCO kits. I go back to the 1958-1960 term in Dhahran where that area had the highest consumption of orange juice in the world because it was turned into something called sadiki juice, which was 180 proof alcohol.*

UNDELAND: Sadiki, by the way, means my friend.

It's very easy to just come up with one derisive story after another about the Saudis, and there was much there, which was wrong, absurd, dishonest and deserving all those negative words. But we must not lose perspective, for there was much that was right, admirable, promising. The Saudis deserve much credit for what they've done with their country. Don't forget that the rulers and much of the population came out of that primitive, harsh desert environment, which demanded immense strength of character, body and personality just to live. Jeddah, with its merchant class and commercial traditions is another story, but they did not set the pace and indeed some of them rather reluctantly went along with it. It is not difficult to understand how this climate produced a rigid religious conservatism. Maybe, the social and cultural extremism was inevitable. In any case, Abdul Aziz and cohorts took over the country in the early part of this century with camels and flintlock rifles and made *Wahhabism* the law of the land. It was a simple society. The person in charge of the royal treasury, that is to say the national treasury, carried it around in a chest on camel back. All of a sudden a technology and unbelievable sums of money engulfed this society. It didn't disintegrate, but adapted, finding its path with increasing assurance, and it did so in an amazingly short period of time. I think anyone who looks at the country in historic terms would have to agree that the Saudis have handled change incredibly

well and have built a state that is viable and looking to the future. Self sufficiency may not ever be reachable, but the development of industry and even agriculture is impressive. The huge industrial developments at Yanbu and Jubail provide cases in point. They also have developed their social services and administrations to handle it. It wasn't just the largess of the King, his handing out money in a disorganized way. Given the newness of everything and the weight of their past, things have functioned pretty darned well. The Saudis deserve a lot more credit than they often get.

I was taken by the way that they ran the *haj* (that's the pilgrimage to Mecca). There were well over a million pilgrims annually, presenting huge logistics, management and security problems. The Saudis took pride in the way they handled these challenges and rightly so, as was brought home when I visited the pilgrimage center in Jeddah. I felt they did a good job with political problems caused by the Iranians, who clearly were using the Iranian pilgrims to create disturbances in furtherance of their political agenda. The Saudis cracked down hard, but I did not feel excessively, nor did Saudi individuals with whom I talked. Contrast this with the earlier disturbances, when they had to bring in the French to handle the uprising.

We helped Saudi Arabia in so many ways. We built the roads. We ran the hospitals. The army was largely trained and equipped by us, as was the National Guard, a parallel military organization set up to see the army did not get too strong or have a monopoly on power. We were the central player in so much development in addition to ARAMCO and other oil related activities, but that is not to belittle Saudi inputs. Social welfare and Arabsat were just two examples of Saudi initiatives, with which we in USIS got involved.

Perhaps I have ridden this hobby horse a tad long, but I feel we must not harp too much on the negatives.

*Q: Even in my time, 1958-1960, we used to talk about at that time Prince Faisal, that his greatest confidante was supposedly his mother. Very often, you....*

UNDELAND: His wife, too.

*Q: ...And his wife. These were the powers behind the throne. But you didn't have such women later on. Was it just happenstance?*

UNDELAND: Hard for me to say, but these two women were talented and impressive from all I have heard. Maybe part of the reason lies in their having the advantages of the intelligence and leadership of Faisal himself. Virtually all Saudis looked on him as far and away the best and brightest of Abdul Aziz's sons and found his assassination a disaster for the country and its ruling family.

*Q: How did Walt Cutler operate as Ambassador while you were there?*

UNDELAND: I was fond of him and respected his outlook and the way he ran the Embassy. He had a talent for being very much to the point, even tough, but always in a quiet, unabrasive, laid back way. He came across as always open and sympathetic, with a pleasant expression on his

face. The Saudis reacted well to him, his friendly ways. They found him easy to get along with, a good listener, understanding and never impetuous. We were well served by our diplomats there, for the ambassador before him was Dick Murphy, who left a couple of weeks after I arrived. I had not served with him elsewhere and although I didn't get to know him in more than passing, Saudis and Americans alike continued to speak well of him throughout my tour. During the interregnum between Murphy and Cutler, Rocky Suddarth was in charge, and he did a commendable job.

*Q: Your Director, Charles Wick, visited Saudi Arabia while you were there. Tell me about it.*

UNDELAND: For that brief period, the Wick visit dominated the Embassy's attention, as well as USIS's, for although he came out as director of USIA, the Saudi and the Embassy's real interest in him came from his close ties with President Reagan. Wick had the reputation of being demanding, short tempered, not open to ideas and much taken up with his own importance, expecting kowtowing and fancy things and places. We went all out to make sure all bases were covered, but I found during this visit his reputation more fierce than his reality. I had not met him before.

The high point was his long session with the King. Fahd started off with a monologue on water, which had Wick champing at the bit, but then they got off on the evils of communism, agreeing on every point. Wick seized on a slight pause to launch into his WordNet sales pitch, which obviously befuddled the King, but after a "what is this" gesture to his confidant, the Minister of Information, and a reassuring nod in reply, sat back, smiled and listened politely. As we were departing, an elated Wick noted the interview had lasted exactly one hour and 22 minutes and that Fahd had accepted Saudi participation in WordNet interactive programming. I told him then and there that my reading of what happened was the very opposite, for I was sure the King had indicated a turn down, but I would, of course follow it up to find out. I cautioned against taking smiles and no stated objection to mean yes, adding the way a negative response would undoubtedly be expressed would be in no action and no answer to my queries, neither a yes nor a no and most likely not even a maybe-later or anything at all. Wick bristled a bit at this, but when I went over it again with him as we were driving to the airport for his departure, he said without rancor or anger he didn't understand this kind of behavior or know how to deal with it, but let it go at that. I sent a message back to Washington later, stating that what happened, rather didn't happen, was exactly as I had foreseen. I got no reaction back from Wick or anyone in the Agency, and when I saw next the Director a year or so later at a PAO conference, he was all smiles, even when I brought up a somewhat similar case involving the Egyptians, where he was also badly off base.

The Saudis put him up in a million dollar guest house, with gold bathroom fixtures and the works. I had a piano sent in, which he played for hours late at night. It wasn't my kind of music, but he's a talented pianist and loved being lost playing these tunes. The program of the visit came off without a hitch -- it had no more than fleeting reference to what USIS was doing -- and he left happy, having been royally feted at every turn and obviously having hugely enjoyed himself. It wasn't that way with all visitors, however, but perhaps the most trying one was Rumsfeld...

*Q: Donald Rumsfeld.*

UNDELAND: Yes. He came to see the King, seeking, if I now recall, greater Saudi involvement in getting things sorted out in Lebanon. Rumsfeld insisted on meeting the King on a Friday because that was when it fit best in his schedule. The Embassy told him this would be impossible, but he imperiously flew in for it anyway. The Palace's nose was put thoroughly out of joint, which they displayed, predictably I might add, by having him cool his heels not only on Friday but, to make the point, all day Saturday as well, agreeing to a call on the King only well into Sunday. Rumsfeld fumed and exploded magnificently. We run silly risks when in other countries, we do not pay attention to their practices, customs and mores, all the more so if there are sizable cultural gaps between us and them.

*Q: I imagine one of your major concerns was trying to get across in various ways our relationship with Israel. There must have been, for example, lots of problems from Israeli objections to our arms sales to the Saudis. I don't recall if the AWACS came up when you were there.*

UNDELAND: You're right. This was a thorn in the side of our relationship with the Saudis, and although it came up in conversations less often than you might have expected, resentment over our paying so much attention to the Israelis and their concerns was never more than a scratch beneath the surface. In the main, however, the Saudis, without accepting our position, tried to live with it, although they were convinced it was wrong morally, wrong in a strategic sense and bad for American interests in the Middle East. It was not just the AWACS story that rankled, but also our cautioning the Saudis against putting American provided planes in bases in the northern part of the country and the type and quantities of munitions and other equipment we wouldn't provide. They went along with us, swallowed hard and kept quiet to an amazing extent, for they had many fish to fry with us, projects of importance to them, so they heeded us and refused to let themselves get wound up over Israeli aspects. And they were afraid the Israelis might lash out militarily against them, if they did not pay attention to the Israelis. I personally did not often find myself involved in discussing these matters, but they did of course come up. Rarely was there much heat; the phrase "agree to differ" was where we almost always ended up.

*Q: We've been down that road many times.*

UNDELAND: You are right. We have had to accept the unpopularity of our stand. It's like a rock in your shoe. While uncomfortable, you can walk with it, and it doesn't stop you from doing the things you really want to. Forget for a moment Israel and look only at our other ties with the Arabs, economic, social, cultural and political, and you have a pretty full basket of things that are good.

*Q: Could we go back to the Saudi-foreigner relationship, which seemed to be one of continual tension. How would you describe it?*

UNDELAND: While the fundamental government-to-government relationship ran quite smoothly, at least in the main, the social and cultural tensions and restrictions were a constant thorn in the flesh. Restrictions on women's dress and movement, on activities bringing men and women together, over Saudi justice, on restraints posed by compound living and the like worked

to create constant friction between the foreigners living in Saudi Arabia and the Saudis. It was made worse by the widespread contempt existing on both sides. The vast majority of the foreigners were there for one thing, to make as much money as fast as possible and get out of what most looked on as "that miserable place". Saudis were no fools and saw this clearly, and they responded with a, "we've got the foreigners here to do what we want them to do, but we know they have no real concern or regard for us. So we accept and get along with them, but we'll throw them out just as soon as we no longer need them." Saudi personal relations with Americans in the abstract or in particular were on the whole not good. Of course one saw individual friendships, which were excellent and enduring. Some truly tried to come to terms positively with the Saudis and did so quite well. The majority, however, did not even try. Negative sentiments were fueled by the never ending incidents and rumors, which, as described by the foreigners, invariably cast Saudis as bad guys. There was all too little of the "it's their country whether we like it or not" kind of acceptance. But if there were arrests of foreigners on charges of alcohol, cheating, corruption, etc. that roused resentment among the foreigners, the foreigners were also often at fault. All too many Saudis have been cheated in business and other dealings or have been treated in an off-hand manner and without respect. My point is, enough blame lies on both sides to go around; sadly, very few tried to look at things through the other's perspectives or optic. It wouldn't have been easy, but how much it could have improved things.

Let me close these comments of my Saudi experience, by saying I found it a useful part of my career; yet, it was the Arab World assignment from which I took away the least satisfaction. We made friends with and were quite well accepted by a number of Saudis, but the USIS program didn't amount to all that much, and it was not an easy place to work and live. While I did not feel USIS Americans and families had extraordinary morale problems, the life there was sufficiently lacking in appeal that few were even remotely thinking of extending their assignment.

*Q: You left Saudi Arabia in 1985 and went to Cairo, where you served until 1988.*

UNDELAND: That's right.

**WALTER L. CUTLER**  
**Ambassador**  
**Saudi Arabia (1984-1987)**

*Ambassador Cutler was born in Boston, Massachusetts and educated at Wesleyan University and the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. After serving in the US Army, he joined the Foreign Service in 1967 and served abroad in Yaoundé, Algiers, Tabriz, Seoul and Saigon as well at the Department of State in Washington, DC, where he held several senior positions. In 1975 Mr. Cutler was appointed United States Ambassador to Zaire, where he served from 1975 to 1979. He subsequently served as United States Ambassador to Tunisia (1982-1984) and Saudi Arabia, where he served twice, 1984 to 1987 and 1988 to 1989. After retirement Ambassador Cutler was President of Meridian House in Washington DC from 1989 to 2006. Ambassador Cutler was interviewed by*



*Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2010.*

*Q: Okay, so let's talk about Saudi Arabia.*

CUTLER: Okay.

*Q: How did the, I mean there's a certain obvious logic of going from ambassador to Tunisia to Saudi Arabia I mean you're involved, it's going from one country that is moderately important to us to one that's significantly important to us in the Arab world. How did you get the appointment to Saudi Arabia?*

CUTLER: I went to Tunisia in 1982, and I was delighted with this assignment. It was the first and only non-hardship post in my whole career. And to make matters even better, I had just been married. But in 1982, as you may recall, the Palestinian problem was very much in forefront of concerns in that part of the world. Having been driven out of Lebanon, the PLO set up its new headquarters in Tunisia. That was during my first year there, and it was useful for me to realize the intensity of feeling, even among the very moderate Tunisians, about the perceived plight of the Palestinians, at the hands of the Israelis and their U.S. supporters. My time in Tunisia was subsequently cut short when our ambassador in Saudi Arabia, Dick Murphy, was named Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs, and I was asked to replace him in Saudi Arabia...

*Q: In a way it seems almost a deviate or maybe it became later, but they seem to use southern governors I don't know why I mean -- Well I think the Saudis had a reluctance to take professionals, I think they felt they could, I don't know I mean my guess would be they felt they could manipulate American politicians better than they could Arabists.*

CUTLER: Our previous ambassadors had been professionals, with the one major exception of John West, who had been Governor of South Carolina and served very successfully as ambassador. The trend toward non-professionals has been more recent. Whereas at the end of both my tours in Saudi Arabia I was succeeded by professionals, since then our Ambassadors to the Kingdom have come from outside the Foreign Service. I'm not sure there is any particular reason for this. Sometimes, governments believe that a politically-appointed ambassador enjoys a close personal relationship with the President. This may be so, but often is not. In fact, it is usually more a myth than reality that to solve some problem quickly all a political appointee has to do is pick up the phone and call his old buddy the President.

*Q: Yeah, unless they happen to be extremely close to the President. Usually it is somebody that supported a senator on a local thing who has no real connection to the White House.*

CUTLER: Yes. But I have to say that, in the case of Saudi Arabia, a number of our non-professional ambassadors have previously had some kind of public service; and most have had successful tours. While I believe that, overall, the percentage of U.S. ambassadors who are non professional is excessively high -- up to a third of the total -- I have no objection to those who have strong qualifications for the job. My problem is with those who are appointed only because they have made a major financial contribution.

*Q: It's a mixed bag.*

CUTLER: Yes.

*Q: Okay, so you were in Saudi Arabia from when to when?*

CUTLER: From 1984 to 1987; and again from 1988 to 1989.

*Q: Did you have any problems getting confirmation?*

CUTLER: No, I don't recall I did.

*Q: How about the American Israeli Action Committee (AIPAC), did that play I mean was that sort of a factor you had to keep in mind, or not?*

CUTLER: Not necessarily. In the first place I was not a so-called Arabist. In other words, I had not spent all or even most of my time in the Arab world. There were issues with Saudi Arabia that related to major arms sales. Over the years, the White House was very determined to overcome Congressional and AIPAC opposition to these sales for a variety of reasons: Saudi Arabia was a stable, friendly, and cooperative country, particularly during the Cold War; with its large land-mass and small population, and situation in a volatile area with predatory neighbors, Saudi Arabia needed outside support for security and stability; and Saudi Arabia possessed the world's largest oil reserves, the uninterrupted access to which were vitally important to the U.S. and the global economy. Hence, arms sales, not only F-15s but more recently AWACs, were of major mutual importance.

*Q: These are radar planes.*

CUTLER: Yes, 707-size planes based in Saudi Arabia that could go up and circle around for most of the day and actually detect any type of skullduggery in the whole area. Now these arms sales were controversial in the Congress and one reason, of course, was Israel's concern lest any Arab country obtain arms that could endanger its own security. The AWACs sales aroused particular opposition in the Congress.

*Q: What was going on, the negotiations of that at the time?*

CUTLER: That had just finished before I went to Saudi Arabia.

*Q: So it had already been -*

CUTLER: Yes.

*Q: They'd worked it out, more or less?*

CUTLER: Yes. In my confirmation hearing and thereafter I don't recall any particular effort by

AIPAC or others to get some commitment from me that I would not pursue additional arms sales. And as a matter of fact, the confirmation hearing was non-confrontational, and implementation of the sales went ahead pretty quickly.

*Q: Okay. How stood relations with Saudi Arabia when you went out there at that time? I mean were there things you had to be concerned about or how stood things?*

CUTLER: During my time there -- 1984-1989 -- there were two principal issues related to security.

One was the war between Iraq and Iran -- a vicious war almost like World War I trench warfare - that went on for almost eight years. Our first concern was that the flow of oil from the Persian Gulf not be disrupted. This was a real concern, as the ground warfare at times spilled over into the Gulf both on sea and in the air. Another, related concern was that Iran might win the war and extend its influence not only over Iraq but throughout the whole Gulf region. While we were officially neutral in that war, in various ways we tried to help thwart Iran's efforts to over-run its neighbor.

The other issue, in which I was not directly involved, was our efforts in working with the Saudis to get the Soviets to get out of Afghanistan. This related to the training, arming, and financing of the guerrilla fighters that succeeded after almost 10 years.

Of course there were other, more mundane issues, such as the price of oil. (laughter) Believe it or not, at one point our concern was that the price was too low -- so low, that U.S. producers were complaining.

*Q: Well then okay, first place how did you find the embassy when you got there?*

CUTLER: Well, that's interesting, because when I arrived our embassy, along with other embassies, was located in Jeddah, on the Red Sea. I called Jeddah the New York of Saudi Arabia, because it was the country's largest city and its commercial center. But the government, except for the foreign ministry, was located in Riyadh, the capital, several hundred miles inland. For the first six months or so, I had to fly to Riyadh to meet and conduct business with all ministers except the foreign minister, Saud al Faisal. While we had a small office and guest house in Riyadh, flying back and forth all the time was a bit strenuous. Meanwhile, we and many other governments were building new embassies in the just-opened diplomatic quarter on the outskirts of Riyadh, followed one-by-one by the embassies.

The large American Embassy compound in Jeddah was really a page out of the past. The ambassador's residence was a very modest, cinder-block, 1950s bungalow, with the equally modest embassy offices about 100 yards away. Within the walled compound there were several other staff houses, and, at one end, an athletic club featuring several tennis and squash courts, a swimming pool, and a small, all-sand golf course -- at that time the only one in the country. Originally built for members of the American community, the club had gradually opened its doors to others, including a few private-sector Saudis who enjoyed being able to swim with their families.

*Q: But did you? I've talked to people who served in Saudi Arabia at various times. I spent, I had two and a half years in Dhahran, and this was back in the 1950s, as a vice consul.*

CUTLER: I thought you did.

*Q: Yeah.*

CUTLER: That was the old Saudi Arabia; that was before oil started gushing.

*Q: Yeah. Well one of the things that I've heard is that at the embassy even if you are an Arabic speaker the Saudi society is very hard to crack, you know you can see somebody in the office but you really didn't get much of a personal relationship. How did you find that or was that a problem?*

CUTLER: Well it's always a challenge; but it's a challenge I find in most non-Western countries. I mean how many times was I invited to a Korean's house during my two years in Korea?

*Q: Three years I think once for me.*

CUTLER: Sure. The same could be said for Vietnam. And much the same when I served in Iran and Algeria. All this takes time. And when I look back at my five years in Saudi Arabia, together with my wife I probably spent more time inside Saudi houses than I did in several other countries.

*Q: Well how were relations with Saudi Arabia during your first time there?*

CUTLER: They were good. They were good in that there were no difficult or contentious bilateral issues. True: two entirely different cultures. I mean you cannot imagine two more different peoples. Yet a lot of Saudis had already been coming to the United States to study. This, incidentally, is an interesting phenomenon. The Saudis at one point had something like 15,000 students in the United States. A lot of the people both in the government and private sector had American experience, American education; they knew our country pretty well. Starting mostly in the 1970s when there was a great oil boom, they came here in droves. As a postscript, let me add that after 9/11, as you can imagine, the flow of Saudis to the United States dwindled way down -- to no more than 2,000 or so. Now the total number here has rebounded to way over 20,000. And this tremendous increase is thanks largely to King Abdullah's scholarship program for studying abroad. But this is really another story that goes beyond the parameters of this oral history.

*Q: Well, did you -?*

CUTLER: I found the Saudis very hospitable. We inevitably spent a lot of time with those American and Western backgrounds. But it was a fact that a very high percentage of these people were in significant positions both in government and the private sector. To be sure, this was not

like going down to the souks or mosques and hanging out with local folks.

*Q: In many ways going down to the Souk, the market place, really is just for one's convenience and shopping and you're -- it really isn't very consequential in diplomatic relations, however, where what is consequential is do we understand what is going on sort of, what the mullahs are saying and what the movers and shakers outside the government are saying and, were we able to monitor that very well?*

CUTLER: Certainly. And this is why you have Arabic-speaking political officers on your staff, moving around. But the ambassador himself or herself doesn't necessarily have to do this in order to have an ear to the ground. But do we ever have our ears sufficiently to the ground in any country? That's probably one of our problems, and I would say that most diplomats of other countries have the same challenge.

*Q: Yes. Were you getting any feel about sort of the anti-western religious thrust to the society, particularly through the mosques and through education?*

CUTLER: Not that much, although there certainly was a widespread perception that the Palestinians' problems were attributable in substantial measure to U.S. support for Israel. Again, in those days -- and here we're talking about the 1980s -- our major focus was on maintaining stability in a highly volatile part of the world. Sometimes that focus comes at a high price over the long run. Take, for example, Iran, where stability was very important to us in the context of the Cold War.

*Q: This is prior to the -*

CUTLER: Prior to 1979.

*Q: Yeah.*

CUTLER: And we had priorities; you can't do it all. Our major priority was trying to block the expansion of Soviet power in that part of the world. In Iran, we had a leader in a strategically-located country who was closely cooperating with us. So we were more or less turning a blind eye to some of the ominous developments, religious and political, within the country. It seems there was something of an understanding on the part of the Shah: Don't mess with my internal affairs, and I'll help you fight the Cold War. And, of course, this sort of trade off was not unique to Iran in those days.

*Q: Yeah.*

*Were we making motions or serious ones or non-serious ones on some of the things, particularly the subjugation of women?*

CUTLER: We were not preaching there. We were certainly aware of the problems related to the status of women, and we often had frank discussions about a range of social issues with Saudi counterparts and friends. One, for example, was the religious police. The number one priority of

any American Ambassador, as far as I'm concerned, is the protection and welfare of American citizens living in that country. We had a community of 35,000 Americans living out there, working and living in a very different culture. As you know from your own experience living in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia was the most conservative of all Muslim countries, and there were some severe restrictions on what we in this country value as freedom of religion.

No churches are allowed there, and we had some people in the American community who were strongly Christian and wanted to fervently practice their religions. One could argue that if they felt strongly, they shouldn't have gone to Saudi Arabia in the first place. Let's face it: most of those Americans went out to join the private sector and to make good money; and they certainly understood beforehand that they couldn't live exactly the way they live here in the U.S. That said, problems related to the practice of religion among Americans did arise from time to time, and occasionally I was obliged to intervene personally on their behalf with Saudi government authorities.

*Q: Well in Dhahran we had actually itinerant, not really itinerant, but traveling teachers you know on their passports they identified themselves as teachers who would come and conduct services in private homes. Saudis knew what was going on but they didn't make a big deal about it; we didn't make a big deal about it.*

CUTLER: Yes, you could practice your religion within the confines of your house; that was okay. But you couldn't institutionalize it in any way and once in a while there would be a problem. For example, there were many Christians from the Philippines working out there, and most were strong Catholics. There were a couple of instances when they tried to hold large services in some warehouse, and they got into trouble with the religious police. Another example: You were not allowed to take bibles into Saudi Arabia, and once in a while there would be some American who didn't pay attention to that or didn't know about it, and had their bible confiscated at the airport. And there were other minor problems along these lines. But at the Embassy we all understood that Saudi Arabia was the extremely conservative home of the Sunni Islam, and that even the Saudi government, while not always agreeing with the religious extremists, had to deal with them with great care.

*Q: Did you find that as ambassador you kept getting called in about something that happened in Israel or in like Congress because we are all passing resolutions I mean, you know I mean, the Israeli connections is so tight, so strong in the United States that things come up where you know it hardly think about, resolutions or something in support of Israel which hit like a bomb back in Riyadh or Jeddah?*

CUTLER: Yes. Only a few months after I arrived in Jeddah, and I think it was even before I moved to Riyadh, I was called back by the State Department to testify before a Congressional committee on a resolution calling for the moving of our embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Now this was an issue that came up quite often, and it still comes up, and it's always resisted by the White House. The pro-move argument is that Israel considers Jerusalem as its capital, and embassies are traditionally located in other countries' capitals. However, in Israel's case, the Palestinians also claim Jerusalem as their capital and its future status has yet to be decided. I was asked to testify as to what would be the reaction in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere in

the region should we in fact move our embassy. I stated with conviction that the reaction would be explosive, with severely negative consequences for U.S. interests. There's no question that the Palestinian issue was, and still is, a major one for the Saudis, just as it had been for the Tunisians when I was serving there.

I think that in my previous oral history I may have told you about the first Fourth of July reception which I hosted in Tunis. Whereas many, many Tunisians would normally turn out for this annual celebration, this one happened to be right after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. Very few Tunisians came, hardly any, to that Fourth of July. As my Tunisian friends explained to me afterward, they stayed away because they were so upset by the invasion and their conviction that the U.S. government had supported it. Theirs was a personal, heartfelt reaction -- the Tunisian government had not advised people to boycott the celebration -- and it was a poignant reminder for me as to how deep and widespread are the feelings on the Palestinian issue in the Arab world.

*Q: Well, when you were called upon to testify I take it you were carefully briefed and rehearsed about, I mean you knew what you were going to have to say.*

CUTLER: Oh yes. The State Department made it clear that the issue of moving our embassy came up nearly every year, and they thought it would be useful if I, as somebody with current and past service in the Middle East, would comment on the impact that such a move would have in the region. It was easy.

*Q: Well I mean you know, every four years presidential candidates go to New York for the primary and practically swear they will get the embassy moved to Jerusalem, and this includes Hillary Clinton, and I guess Obama and I don't know and everybody else who's ever run for national office and senatorial office and it hasn't happened yet; it's about 50 maybe we're moving into 60 years I guess.*

CUTLER: Well, when you think that the future status of Jerusalem is one of three or four major issues that have to be addressed and resolved as part of the peace process, then no way are you going to pre-empt that. It would end the process.

*Q: How did you find Aramco? I mean is there such a thing as Aramco still?*

CUTLER: There is, it's now named Saudi Aramco.

*Q: Yeah.*

CUTLER: Soon after going to Saudi Arabia, I visited the Eastern province, where you served, and where most of the oil and Saudi Aramco's headquarters are located. A number of the top company officials with whom I met were American. In contrast, during one of my last visits several years later, before leaving Saudi Arabia I was struck by the fact that almost all those American officials had been replaced by Saudis. It seemed to have become a truly national company. While, of course, there are still a number of Americans working there at various technical levels, the Saudis are really running their own show and, as far as I can tell, doing it very well.

*Q: During the time you were there, how did you feel they were using the funds generated by oil?*

CUTLER: Well, that's a key question. Is this fabulous wealth distributed adequately among everybody? And I would say that probably not as well as it might be. One problem is that Saudi is still increasing rapidly. I think when I was there the average Saudi family had six children. That may now be down to four or five, but it's still a rapidly increasing populations. And, don't forget, oil wealth can periodically ebb as well as flow. When I was there, in the 1980s, the price dropped to below \$10 per barrel for a while. When were you there, Stu?

*Q: I was there during the 1950s.*

CUTLER: Yes. Well, the 1970s was when everything came on stream, as we say; that was when the big oil boom occurred and when the population was smaller. As I said, in the 1980s when I was there, the price of oil was going way down but the population was continuing to increase. Of course, we've seen what's happened since. Still, not every Saudi is oil rich by any means, and the unemployment rate has been pretty high -- probably higher now than back in those days. On the other hand, looking at it relatively, the "poor" Saudi may be equal to the "pretty well off" Yemeni next door. In other words it's all relative: the income at the lower end of the ladder in Saudi Arabia is still pretty much higher than that in a lot of countries. Did we see abject physical poverty in Saudi Arabia? No, not like what one often encounters in other countries. I'll never forget the drive in from the airport in what was then Bombay, going in through a vast area of people sheltered by tarps or almost nothing at all. You don't see that in Saudi Arabia. Have a lot of people become rich in Saudi Arabia? Yes. Has everybody become rich? No.

*Q: Well, were we you know I mean, our concern is stability and there was concern that the Saudis were relying on foreign labor, including Americans but the construction Filipino or Koreans at all to the extent that the lower Saudi, lower level Saudi, was not really work inclined or not?*

CUTLER: To an extent, there was that problem. We had a fairly large technical assistance program in Saudi Arabia. The Saudis paid for it, but we supplied most of the expertise. Our efforts included a vocational training school where, Saudis were learning to become mechanics and other technical trades. We believed that this technical training was going to be increasingly important, because not everybody could sit behind a desk. There was an aversion among most Saudis to working at lower levels, and it was not surprising that the demand for vocational training was somewhat limited. It's a cultural thing as well as social. I mean I found the same thing when living in Iran. I remember complimenting someone, naively, on his great tan. Far from being flattered, he appeared embarrassed, if not insulted, for it was an indication that he might have been working outdoors rather than in a more socially acceptable office.

*Q: Well you know when we were in Vietnam you had long finger nails, the little finger had a long finger nail, that showed that you didn't do manual labor and that was a point of pride.*

CUTLER: Well, let me just say a word or two about what we called Saudization, which is getting more of these jobs in Saudi hands as opposed to somebody coming from another country.



Saudization was starting to gain some ground when I was there, and I think the fact that the oil boom had ended and there were leaner times gave some impetus to this. But it was moving slowly, and especially in the private sector it was still a lot easier to import from abroad an experienced accountant, for example, than to engage in on-the-job training for a Saudi just out of school. I think Saudization makes sense, especially when the unemployment rate is high. At the same time, so long as oil income remains robust, the progress of Saudization is not likely to be very smooth or rapid.

*Q: How did you find the Saudi government? You know one looks at Saudi Arabia and says well you've got a few princes here and obviously princes are outmoded and it would be easy to overthrow but the Saudi government has maintained itself, why and how did you find dealing with this government?*

CUTLER: Well, while there are many princes, there are also many, many highly and Western trained technocrats keeping the ship of state moving forward. And they tend to occupy top ministerial positions, especially in the financial and economic areas. I've been told there are more holders of U.S. PhDs in the Saudi cabinet than there are in our own cabinet and Congress put together. Overall, during my time the Saudi government functioned reasonably well. These were people who knew their business. Of course, decision-making on major issues that needed to go to the very top could take a long while. But that's usually the case with most governments, including our own.

*Q: Who was king when you were there?*

CUTLER: King Fahd.

*Q: How did you view him?*

CUTLER: King Fahd was certainly intelligent and knew us pretty well, even though he had no Western education. Like other older members of the royal family, he was privately educated. It was the younger generation of princes and possible future kings who started going abroad for their higher education. There are many examples, like the superbly able Foreign Minister Saud al Faisal and former Intelligence Director Turki al Faisal, both sons of a king, who attended Princeton and Georgetown, respectively. King Fahd had not this foreign educational exposure, but he came to know the West pretty well during the course of his lifetime of public service.

*Q: Did you find that, an awful lot of the action with the Saudis I mean is -- was for years Prince Sultan was the ambassador here and one hears stories about you know his great connections with everybody and I mean did you feel that you were not quite at -- it wasn't an equal representational balance?*

CUTLER: That's a good question. It was Prince Bandar, who was ambassador to the U.S. for more than twenty years.

*Q: Yes.*

CUTLER: Bandar Bin Sultan bin Abdulaziz: son of the long-time Defense Minister and now also the Crown Prince, and grandson of the founder of Saudi Arabia.

*Q: Yeah, something like that.*

CUTLER: A former F-15 pilot and an extremely active diplomat. Your question basically is if an important question came up, would I be asked to work on it there in Riyadh, or would Prince Bandar be handling it here in Washington. The answer is that, in most cases, both. But there's no question that some of the major issues would be handled primarily here, as Prince Bandar over the years developed close relations with the White House. But this was mostly after my time as ambassador. When I first went to Saudi Arabia, Bandar had been ambassador here for only a year or two, and his influence in Washington was not as pervasive as it would eventually become. As a matter of fact, we worked pretty close together. He was often called back to Riyadh by the King and, while there, he and I would get together and strategize on ways to advance specific mutual interests. But in later years, yes, I think he gained stature here and was very good, very capable.

*Q: Yeah as with the Soviets used Dobrynin but you know -*

CUTLER: Yes.

*Q: - you have longevity and you have the right person here in Washington because Washington is a complex place and to understand the role of the media and Congress and all this and if you get somebody who had the right personality and contacts and all, longevity can play a major role.*

CUTLER: Yeah. Longevity can be very important, and in both capitals. Take, for example, the foreign minister, Prince Saud al Faisal, who was the minister when I was there, 30 years ago, and today he is still the minister. He knows us Americans very well. I worked with him quite closely. I saw the King less but still fairly often, frequently together with visiting senators and other delegations. And, as you can imagine, we had quite a few of those VIP visitors, given the importance of Saudi Arabia.

*Q: You had this war, big war, going on you know some 100 miles north between Iran and Iraq. How did you view the military situation both the Saudi military and the fact that maybe either Iraq or Iran might win and then might turn on Saudi Arabia; I mean was this a concern?*

CUTLER: Yes, but not quite as much of a concern then about Saudi Arabia being a victim of that war. That worry came later, after I had left Saudi Arabia, when Saddam Hussein took over Kuwait. As I said before, both we and the Saudis were concerned about Iran's intentions, and of course this concern persists to this day. As for Saddam Hussein, even though the Saudis recognized his many faults he was nevertheless an Arab, and a Sunni Arab. The Iranians, on the other hand, were neither Arab nor Sunni. So there was a natural inclination on the part of the Saudis to be more concerned about Iraq's falling victim to Iran than the other way around.

*Q: Alright, well then you left there the first time, it was a regular tour wasn't it?*

CUTLER: It was a regular tour and the time had come to leave, after three and one-half years.

**PAUL H. TYSON**  
**Deputy Principal Officer**  
**Dhahran (1986-1988)**

*Mr. Tyson was born in Virginia into a US military family and was raised in army posts in the United States and abroad. Educated at Dartmouth College and George Washington University he entered the Foreign Service in 1974. As a trained Economic Officer, Mr. Tyson served in a number of foreign posts, including Bonn, Dhahran, London and Kuwait City. His Washington Assignments were primarily in the petroleum and international economic fields. Mr. Tyson also served with the Sinai Multi-National Force & Observers. Mr. Tyson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.*

*Q: Next time we'll pick this up in 1986 and you're off to Dhahran.*

TYSON: Correct.

*Q: Where I served from 1958 to 1960, myself. Back in the Middle Ages. In the first place, you were in Dhahran from when to when?*

TYSON: I was in Dhahran from May 1986 to June 1988. I had come back to the States and had gotten engaged. My fiancé was not necessarily all that thrilled about Saudi Arabia. Of course Saudi Arabia is the type of place where you don't take your girlfriend. She was working on the Hill in the Senate when we agreed that I'd go out and come back and get married and she'd come out with me.

So I actually resigned from the FMO, went to Cairo, saw some friends and did the Nile cruise while I was technically unemployed, came back, reentered the State Department, did the necessaries, and then went out to Dhahran, which was sort of a real piece of history. It was an older compound, rather down at the heels in many ways, but with a lot of character to it; quarried fieldstone and so forth.

*Q: Who was consul general when you were there?*

TYSON: Consul general when I was there was John Eddy, who was entering his fourth year there. I was replacing David Trotter. I had taken the job under the assumption that Mr. Eddy would be going on to Bombay, but it became something of a daisy chain, so that was delayed for a year. So he was the consul general.

*Q: And your job was the deputy consul – no, what was your job?*

TYSON: Deputy principal officer. I did a great deal on the economic side of the house in particular - a lot with ARAMCO (Arabian and American Oil company) and oil issues. I also did, it was very strange, a State Department cable on the defense of the Eastern Province. It was a little incongruous because we have all of these military advisers out there and I had to do this cable, but I wasn't supposed to talk to them and this was supposed to come out of the air. It went through a whole series of drafts and was sort of an interesting experience in and of itself. It was one of these classic things that after much effort, we sent it in, virtually nothing ever came of it, but years later people would say to me, "God, that was a great cable. I really appreciated it," or "insightful," this, that. But basically I just wrote it as: if I were an Iranian, how would I attack the Eastern Province.

*Q: But at that time it was predicated on Iran.*

TYSON: It was predicated on Iran. What was going on was Iraq and Iran and there was the so-called "tanker war" going on out in the Gulf, forces were picking off tankers – generally going after the rudders and so forth with rocket propelled grenades and everything else. I had someone working for me named Crist Caulth who was an economic officer and he had very good contacts with the marine port captains from the oil companies Chevron, Exxon, Texaco, and Mobil up at Ras Tanura. We got a great deal of information from them about attacks that were occurring. I mean literally, in a day before word processing, we had sort of blank cable forms ready. You know, "The S.S. so-and-so was attacked at..." and then fill in the time and geocoordinates if you had it. That was actually pretty popular with both the Department and the navy at the time.

*Q: Why don't we continue on this particular topic? While you were working there, what were you seeing Iran doing? I mean, how did you see an attack evolving from Iran?*

TYSON: An attack from Iran - how I would do it, as a full-fledged assault?

*Q: Yes.*

TYSON: At dawn, on one of the Eids, I would have stepped up over-flights, near the median line and the Gulf, of airplanes – just F-4s and other fighters, to get the Saudis and others used to seeing a certain presence. Then wait for one of the Eids when everybody is at prayers, absolutely turn, and go and take out Abqaiq, the big gas processing plants, the piers at Ras Tanura, and a number of facilities in the eastern province. Then I think they would've had a pretty good chance of pulling it off. There would've been a lot of big bangs and very big fires.

*Q: At this time, '86 to '88, did Iraq come into the equation at all?*

TYSON: Well, what do you mean by "into the equation?"

*Q: I mean, when you were sitting there, very obviously, even back when I was there in '58 to '60, we were looking at Iran. I mean, it was the Shah, it was friendly and all that, but you couldn't help but figure that Iran is a big country with a lot of people and Saudi Arabia is a rich country with not many people. Iran was seen like the "big boy" in the bought.*

TYSON: It was, and there was a lot of ambivalence about this, and of course the Gulf states had more than tilted towards supporting Iraq in this; mostly in terms of cash, to some degree oil and other things. Something important that absolutely happened, and it happened more than once. The DPOs house had a flat roof. My wife and I were out on the patio – we were actually doing something up on the roof, and a plane came in very low that just didn't look like any one of the Saudi or the U.S. planes. It was an Iraqi Mirage. What would happen is they would fly down the Gulf and attempt to bomb Khark or another Island depending upon the conditions, if the weather wasn't good and they were going low on fuel, they'd come into Dhahran and gas-and-go. "No one ever saw them and it never happened," but they came in low over the house and were gone in the next forty minutes.

*Q: Were you there when the USS Stark was EXOCETed?*

TYSON: I left Dhahran that evening and found out about it in the basement of the American Embassy in London the next day.

*Q: Ah. Well now, was Iraq seen, you know we had various things, one police when I was there he had something called the Dhahran Liaison Group. I don't know if that still existed, but it was essentially an emergency center for evacuating that part of the Middle East. In your emergency plans for getting the hell out if all hell broke loose, was Iraq seen as a possible problem?*

TYSON: Not really, particularly at that time. If it was, it would've been sort of an unintentional overspill. We were a bit of a distance from Iraq and, as I said, Iraq was depending upon the Arabs for money and other support, so I think the perception was that they would be unlikely to "slaughter the golden goose."

*Q: How about Kuwait? What were you picking up from Saudis and ask Americans around there about how we beat...*

TYSON: Kuwait was always the sort of odd man on the block. I mean, everybody loved to hate the Kuwaitis and rarely had much nice to say about them. They, from the time of independence, were noted because they had the Russian Embassy others there and were always playing the ends against the middle and were seen as very, very cautious of their own interests. At that time they sort of felt that their own interests in that part of the world included a sort of genteelly fashionable anti-Americanism.

*Q: Was Eddy consular general? He was there for about a year or so?*

TYSON: He was there for a year. I actually was "acting" for about four months and then Brooks Wrampelmeier came in.

*Q: I've interviewed Brooks.*

*What about relations with the Saudis; what was sort of the government, and how did it operate from your perspective in the eastern province?*

TYSON: It was, in many ways, a new era there because...First of all, let me discuss the government. The king's son, Prince Mohammed bin Fahd, who is still the emir there, was newly appointed as the emir of the eastern province. It had been the sort of historical birthright; it had been Jalawis for a long time.

*Q: His son, bin Jalawi.*

TYSON: And once or twice with Mr. Eddy and Mr. Wrampelmeier, we would call on the former emir and the contrasts couldn't have been more striking. You'd go to the new sort of emiri building or the government headquarters for the eastern province, which was, you know, open atrium, glitzy marble, everything else, and go in and you walk into Prince Mohammed's office and he has this huge desk which is sort of inlaid Italian wood, quite ornate, obviously quite expensive. And here's a man who had made, oh, a billion dollars reputedly on a telecom steal and so forth, who spoke reasonably good English, was the next generation, and fairly savvy about it. His vice emir was one of his cousins, Fahd bin Salman, who actually died this past week; the son of the governor of Riyadh. So it was more the young generation coming in. The head of the Saudi National Guard there was Prince Mishari bin Saud, one of the youngest sons of old King Saud. With Prince Mohammed and all, there was much more the newer generation – more modern Saudi Arabia. You'd go to the bin Jalawi palace and there would be these old sort of Bedouin retainers with the cartridge belts draped...

*Q: Cross bandoliers.*

TYSON: Cross bandoliers and the swords. It was literally stepping back into a time, into a very, very different Arabia.

*Q: By the time you were there, was there a significant American business or professional community there?*

TYSON: There was a very big community there. Actually, 1986 was quite an interesting turning point because there had been the oil boom in '73 and just rivers of money, and the eastern province and most of the kingdom was a huge construction project. They built Jubail and the Envou, they put the gas processing project in, the highways and this and that, and they were sort of spreading the cash around to a lot of people doing that. And interestingly, in '86 a lot of the projects were done, many of the contractors were leaving, and oil prices were declining. So there was actually a contraction where for pricing going up it had just been accepted. There was actually a little bit of a deflation at that point. A lot of the ARAMCOMS and particularly the businessmen, the contractors who depended on ARAMCO, and the government were saying, "Oh, in a sense, it's sad that you missed the boom days." Well, au contraire, most of the stuff was built, most of it worked, many of the people had left so it wasn't immensely crowded. Since I had a government salary and wasn't making part of the contract, it was actually in some ways better.

It was interesting because it was also forcing the Saudis to come to grips with making choices as opposed to, "Let's just throw more money at it."

*Q: Well tell me about your impression of how the Saudis were dealing with sort of the problem of getting workers. My understanding is - this is sort of way after my time, that they were getting people from Indonesia, from the Philippines, from Korea, and would have Pakistanis coming in, and the Saudis themselves weren't doing much outside of sort of watching other people work.*

TYSON: There had been a big change there. There's a slight difference among the Shia, and I'll get into that. But, in a sense, there had been a lot that had happened. In previous sessions I'd mentioned that I'd done something on the foreign workers in Germany. The Germans are rank amateurs in comparison with Arabs in terms of the purchase, use and consumption of foreign labor. Starting with the hiring of Americans and Brits who tended to be at the upper end of the food chain; I mean everything from investment bankers to doctors to whatever. The name of the game was to explain to the Saudis what you wanted, and how much you would pay them for a particular job. If you wanted a plumber, you wanted a Filipino and he would be so many riyals per month. If you were actually looking for an agronomist you wanted an Egyptian, particularly from Alexandria, at so much, an accountant - a Lebanese Druze. They absolutely had it down as to which nationality, what price. And there were huge differentials based on passport, national background, race, and color, in terms of the salaries paid for what might seem broadly similar work.

*Q: How were relations? The Saudis weren't making the mistakes that the Kuwaitis had of letting a large Palestinian population come in. It was different days, but they tend to settle there and cause problems shortly thereafter. My understanding is the Saudis would let people come in, do their thing, and then they'd leave. I mean there was no...*

TYSON: That was the image. It wasn't always the reality and it certainly wasn't the reality of ARAMCO with some of their other Arab hires, including Palestinians - a number of whom had come out in the '40s or early '50s had settled in there, had families there, had kids who grew up there, and eventually were turfed out during the Gulf War. No, they didn't have the number of Palestinians or other Arabs as a percentage of their overall population. I think that had a lot to do with the money coming later. The Saudis would tend to balance the sourcing of it; they'd become concerned if one group got too large, or certain groups would have specialties. You know, the Koreans would come in to do construction. The Filipinos would come in to do certain other things. But even then the issue was coming up of personal maids and the abuses of the maids. It was always out there. Obviously some families had servants for many years who were members of the family - very well treated, well paid by their national standards, who could go home. Others, the cases of abuse were real. Probably very little was done about it.

*Q: Did you find - "you," I'm talking about the people in consular, but you yourself, too, were concerned about problems of Americans who had troubles or let's say automobile accidents or alcohol abuse and then the problems of Americans married to Saudis and with children who couldn't get them out and all. I mean did this...*

TYSON: That's a whole series of problems that actually also elicited different responses. Let me start with American women married to Saudis and the child custody cases. That's much tougher. My wife actually got involved in escorting an American woman whose husband had died back to Houston. There were the issues of whether the spouse died and was the family trying to assert

claim to it, or was it a sort of nasty divorce and the husband didn't want the children to leave. In the latter cases that could be difficult and, in a sense, what you almost wanted was for the Saudi to take another wife – start another family, and interestingly enough, I think effectively it was the second wife who would basically say, “Get them out of here.” In a bizarre sort of way that would help.

The senior officials in the government would try to be helpful while of course they had to uphold a lot of their own laws and standards. It would often tend to be a very Arab solution of attempting to persuade people to let things go. Now obviously one of the things that would be better is if the children were or were nominally Muslim, they went to a place which had a mosque - Houston, Los Angeles, New York, Washington; that's fine. Pocatello, Idaho becomes a bit more problematic. There would be issues with that type of thing sometimes.

The actual criminal cases – let's take the alcohol; that type of thing. It could be difficult when you get the situation of Americans being lashed or being put in difficult circumstances in Saudi jails, particularly if they've got medical issues. It really required a lot of intervention and assistance by the consular officers who did incredible work.

*Q: What kind of things would you do? I mean, just say the lashing; what...*

TYSON: Very often with the lashing you try to keep the appeals going forward. Sometimes the one in jail would eventually decide, “Let's just go through with this and get it over so I can get out,” which in a sense was their choice. I think in a lot of ways there were discreet interventions to try and deal with a lot of these things.

Auto accidents were much tougher. You'd hope under those circumstances that the person's company had the financial reserves to basically pay blood money. One of the first rules in the Middle East for any junior officer getting such a case was, “You got a problem like that, get a suit on it quickly. Get someone in a suit down there talking. Handle it. Get it done fast.”

*Q: When you say “a suit,” would you explain what you mean?*

TYSON: Basically a senior official in the embassy or the consulate who has got some stature with the Saudis. You don't send a junior officer down.

In another Middle Eastern post there was an attempted suicide involving an American woman. The government basically did not want to deal with it, and the embassy went in and said, “We're very well aware of this. You absolutely have the right to do this under your laws, but it's difficult circumstances; here's what the company and the family proposes. Let's have it happen.” She's on the plane and out of there that evening.

This was the bottom line for Americans. The Saudis didn't want the embarrassment of a nasty dustup with problem Americans the way that they would with the Filipinos. With Filipinos they would just shrug and say, “So what.” Filipino problems often made the papers. The real punishment for a lot of transgressions out there was loss of your job and income. You know, you've sweated away in the desert on a rig, you're two years away from the ARAMCO pension



and you get fired up on seddiki or your kid does something or whatever, and the solution that many people want, including the Saudis, and the companies, is that you're out of there. That's it. You're over. In a sense, its much more than jail time or criminal sanctions; that was the ultimate sanction.

*Q: That was true in my time, too. I might put in for somebody who doesn't know - seddiki is a form of homemade liquor, usually made from orange juice, I think.*

TYSON: It was made from any number of other things.

*Q: When I went out they used to put out a booklet saying, "Be very careful in doing this to orange juice because if you do this, and go through here, it could end up like becoming alcohol," and this was put out because otherwise you had people experimenting and things would blow up and so they didn't want things to blow up. So they put out a guide and I know my wife couldn't go into the commissary, but asked for some yeast because she wanted to make some bread. She got a five kilo loaf of brewer's yeast.*

TYSON: Well, when we were there, you'd walk into the supermarkets downtown and you'd go buy the bottles of Rausch grape juice, the Austrian grape juice, in these bottles with the ceramic stoppers with the rubber gaskets. Right next to it would be the bag of sugar, and right next to that would be the yeast. Just in case you sort of forgot anything. But people were bringing in special wine yeasts and there were actually wine tastings at some of the private compounds. But sid was also actually brewed from straight grain and other alcohols; there was sid white, which was sort of the straight run, or actually what you wanted was the middle cut of the run, and then sid brown was more like a bourbon and you got that by toasting your hickory chips on your charcoal grill and then sitting the stuff on it for two weeks.

*Q: There are all sorts of recipes.*

*What about – I'm particularly thinking about Americans, but the problems of the religious police. What were they called?*

TYSON: The Mutawa.

*Q: Were there problems of people not observing, or running up against, religious laws?*

TYSON: The religious police, the Mutawa, were always something of an issue. First of all, let's define this. In a way, in terms of the Wild West, I mean if you could imagine something like fundamentalist vigilantes out on the town to enforce order, that's probably about the best description of them. I have an image of some puny little guy with a stick who would be nothing had he not wrapped the veil of the Lord about him. It was always fairly interesting because rumors would go around there, and there was a cycle of time that one had to be aware of. We used to talk about this at businessmen's meetings. If Ramadan is coming up, it's time to drop your jets, be a little more discreet, not quite so loud; a little more aware of what's going on, and just to be somewhat more tuned in to what's going on around you. It was interesting because my wife never wore an abaya, and because she's a blue-eyed redhead and obviously a foreigner that

actually probably helped. The women who had the biggest problems were African-American and/or Mediterranean – Italian, Spanish, who could be Muslim. They were much more likely to be approached in Arabic with, “Sister, cover your hair. You’re showing disrespect.” Well, obviously Susan was European or American. It would come to the attention of the consulate. It was very useful to have a consulate down there because I always thought that the emiri government was looking for reasons to rein in the Mutawa, and the better your case was, the happier they were.

There was one famous story of the Mutawa going into some sort of western party. They broke a whole bunch of imported crystal glasses, when actually there was no liquor there; it was fruit juices and so forth. The emir called in the Mutawa, offered them some orange juice, as it turns out, in crystal glasses. He asked why they did it and the answer was, “Well you could drink wine in this,” and he pointed out that, “Well, you’re holding it and you’re drinking orange juice. So I think you’ll be paying for those glasses.”

The Mutawa also got into teenage boy stuff, which you’d find in the United States, too. You get a bunch of teenage bucks out on the street and they discover that they can go up and harass a foreigner who is their father’s age. I was out one day and sort of got a bunch of the young bucks looking around and I didn’t speak enough Arabic to really do that, but there was an Arab near me who was sort of looking a little shaky about what might happen, and I just basically said, “Tell them I’m from the consulate. Tell them I have the emir’s phone number in my wallet. Tell them that if anything happens, I’ll see them there with their father and grandfather.” And that was the end of it. It’s teenage boy stuff. That in a sense wasn’t religion.

*Q: How about working on business - one of the problems has always been to have sort of international commercial law meeting Sharia law. Various commercial problems sometimes could get almost out of control, at least in my time. Was this a problem for you?*

TYSON: It wasn’t so much Sharia per se, because in many ways you could thank ARAMCO for that. I mean, in many ways as the absolute big dog on the hill there, they had introduced and had contracting practices that were legal in the kingdom - that would go forward. The biggest problem that was going on with most commercial people was late payments at the time – or no payments, delayed payments. I think that your sharper Saudi dealers were using that as a way to say, “Well I owe you a million riyals and I’m a year late and I can drag it out because I’ve got most of the aces in the hole. What do you say if you just take 300,000 and call it quits?” That works to a point, but then, as I used to point out to the Saudis, what that means is that everybody builds that into their price if they’re smart. The money is going to be late, they’re going to nick me on the last payment, they’re going to do this or that. ARAMCO and a few of the other companies were really blue-chip in the way they did it, but some of the merchant families or people who had gotten into it were playing those games. I think in some cases they were getting second quality merchandise and stuff as a result of it in the follow-on contracts, or they couldn’t believe that someone would take the settlement and then walk. And of course a lot of times it’s not just the building or the piece of equipment that you want, it’s the follow-on support, and when you’ve hacked them off, that support isn’t going to be there.

*Q: Talk about relations with ARAMCO and the consulate general at that time.*

TYSON: I was very well aware of the fact that basically the consulate was there because of ARAMCO. I had said that I've done oil work and remember in the '70s we used to get the ARAMCO magazine, and I'd leaf through it, figuring, "My, this is exotic."

*Q: ARAMCO World?*

TYSON: ARAMCO World. I'll never go there. Foolish me. It was fascinating for what it was as an entity - a huge enterprise. Quite an American company and this was the twilight of the American management. The shift over occurred while I was there; John Kelber went out and Ali I. Al-Naimi came in as president. This was the real Saudiization of ARAMCO.

There were always a series of incidents, and I think one of the most important things, actually on both sides, on the ARAMCO on the one side and the consulate on the other, was to maintain a civil and a productive working relationship. I had my counter-part at ARAMCO government relations; it was headed by Abdullah S. Jum'ah and there was Harry Alter there, and then David Bosch who is now at the Saudi ARAMCO.

*Q: Harry Alter was a brand new officer when I was there.*

TYSON: Well he was much more senior when I was there. *(laughs)* Harry and Abdullah Jum'ah dealt with Mr. Eddy and I tended to deal with David who was also president of the American Businessmen's Association. This issues that came about the consulate was access to some of our entertainment facilities and other things that we had. And how shall I best put this? I tended to take a somewhat more liberal attitude towards this than Mr. Eddy did, so David and I tended to get along. It was one of these things where every now and then in this business you are given a contact and in a sense it's up to you to make that relationship work. David and I are still friends, although it's, "There you are. You're each other's counterpart."

*Q: What did the consulate have that ARAMCO didn't have; anything?*

TYSON: Basically liquor and a number of other things.

*Q: Did you have a school there when you were there?*

TYSON: We had the school on the compound.

*Q: How did that work? Was that a problem for you?*

TYSON: I managed by and large to avoid many of the problems as a bachelor and then a newly married person without children. Stuff would come up with the school. I think in smaller places people tend to get very, very well wound-up about them. There were certain discipline issues; there were some allegations of some drugs at school. I remember butting heads with Mr. Eddy about a new school policy that was fairly Draconian; I don't remember it in retrospect, but it struck me at the time that if someone mentions your child might have been involved with drugs then they were summarily expelled. This sort of offended me as the lawyer. As it turned out, this

policy was put through and two of the first kids to get nailed were reasonably senior children. I won't go into who they were, but they were reasonably senior children. It was just very tough as far as that goes. These schools are important, but they take up a lot of consulate time out there.

*Q: How about relations with the Saudi military, and did we have any American military there at the time?*

TYSON: We had the United States Training Mission (USTM) out at the airbase. Up in Riyadh there was OPM-SANG, which was the Saudi-Arabia National Guard Modernization Program which I think was the Vinnell Corporation. It also had a U.S. army one or two-star general with that. We had a United States Training Mission naval support unit up at the port at Jubail. There was a fairly heavy military presence; they had the F-16s and a number of other things. We were selling them a lot of equipment so there was probably a much larger presence than in your time. The Saudis controlled the base, but there was a small U.S. commissary and things like that.

*Q: Was it still - you had the National Guard or what was sometimes called the White Army, and the sort of the regular Saudi army and sort of made to make sure that one didn't get too strong or something like that?*

TYSON: That very much struck me; the regular Saudi army definitely struck me as the runt in the litter as compared to the air force and even to some degree the navy. I think the Saudi Arabian National Guard which was much more historically the personal retainers of the Al Saud drawn from their Bedouin support base. They were putting a lot of money into modernizing that. As I said, Prince Mishari bin Saud was the head of the eastern province, and of course Prince Abdullah, who is now Crown Prince Abdullah - that was always pretty much his baby, too. So it always played an important role there.

*Q: John Eddy - was he a relation to the Eddy who was from Lebanon or was sort of a pre-eminent Arabist during World War II, or not?*

TYSON: There's the famous picture of Eddy kneeling with Franklin Roosevelt, and I think Eddy had also gone to Dartmouth. I think...

*Q: This is on the destroyer...*

TYSON: Great Bitter Lake. John Eddy is Irish-American, although there may have been some distant tie, but I basically think not.

*Q: But basically he was not part of that group. Were American entrepreneurs, not the big people, going around selling good fountain pens and these things?*

TYSON: Oh, you mean all the snake oil salesmen, the descendants of the ones who did the Indians in Oklahoma in the 1920s? Oh, they were all there - some with decent products, others with things that were little more than scams. For a long time that was the get-rich-quick, get out here, make a sale, get huge commissions, and go rolling back home. As I say, it was starting to tail off by '86.

*Q: Were you ever called upon by Saudi merchants, like the Alghosaibis or something, "Who is this guy; do you know anything about him?" or do they have to get that information themselves?*

TYSON: Interestingly enough, what we got was more inquiries about families like the Alghosaibis and stuff. I ended up supervising the commercial section for a while and there's the World Trade Data Report which Commerce sold, and we'd get inquiries about that.

*Q: It's one of the big merchant families.*

TYSON: It's a huge merchant family which has got Citibank as one of their clients. If they want to run a "Dunn & Bradstreet" on someone, they'll do it in New York or London. The level of sophistication that the money had bought to the big families was considerable. I knew the Connus, the merchant family, and the Bin Zagr among others.

*Q: The Connus were also in Bahrain at the time.*

TYSON: Yes. Bahrain and the UAE (United Arab Emirates). These people are about as sophisticated as you'll find here, and were big enough, and were it serious enough, they'd run the checks in Europe or back here.

*Q: Bin Laden was - this was a construction firm, wasn't it?*

TYSON: Yes, pretty much Jeddah-based. They did some stuff in the eastern province. Bin Zagr were also Jeddah-based, but Muhammad Bin Zagr was like the New England family that sends the son out to California to open the operation. There was a bit of that in the eastern province on some of the projects.

*Q: What about the riots in Mecca in '87.*

TYSON: In the summer of '87 Ned Walker was the chargé, Anne Patterson was the acting DCM, and I was the acting principal officer in Dhahran. It was generally thought that these riots were inspired by the Iranians as a test of the governing ability of the Al Saud. It was an interesting time because I'd gone up to Riyadh to country team and I met with Ned who later had a number of ambassadorships and was NEA assistant secretary. Mr. Eddy had left. Mr. Eddy was always extremely careful about interviewing the Saudis; one looked for subtle nuances, body language, intimations or hints that this might be this or that, but you couldn't ask a lot of stuff. Frankly, I looked at Ned Walker and said, "I thought we could ask a lot more. I thought they had a new generation in there." And while, in a sense, it was risky, we're playing these Kabuki shadow games and what does the shadow on the wall mean? He basically said, "Well, go for it," so I went in to Prince Muhammad, Prince Fahd, Prince Mishari, and a number of others and basically started asking questions like, "How did you get your job?" "What do you think about the situation with Iran?" "What do you think of the Shia?" Big questions. I just walked in and said, "I've been instructed by Washington to ask you the following." I had ten questions and I'd get nine out of ten. It was just phenomenal; they answered it. You know, the sky didn't fall; it was, "Wow, okay fine."

The other thing that went on at this time was Dhahran's a consulate and the move to Riyadh had occurred and the embassy was there. Walter Cutler was the ambassador when I first got there and I remember going to the Embassy at Christmas. The ambassador had a party for the staff and someone had said, "Oh, yes, you'll have to come and meet 'C and C'." I went, "'C and C' – what's that?" and it was carrots and celery and it referred to Mrs. Cutler because that's what she tended to serve. I was going there with someone because we were just up in Riyadh for the country team and they basically said, "We'll have reservations for dinner afterwards." It was sort of interesting because Senator Percy, who was out of office at that time, was there. Cutler was pleasant enough and competent enough and everything else, but Mrs. Cutler, who is quite a talented photographer, came down to Dhahran on a visit with her husband and Mrs. Eddy. My wife, Susan, and I, went off on the women's program and all I can say about Mrs. Cutler is that she treated my wife dreadfully and my wife has never forgotten it.

*Q: What was the background of your wife and then could you talk about how she adjusted to Dhahran?*

TYSON: I think you'd best ask her sometime and get her for that.

She had been working on Capitol Hill on House appropriations and Senate appropriations. Then one weekend she marries a Foreign Service Officer and goes off to Saudi Arabia - comes out there, gets pregnant, comes back, has our son in Maryland, and comes back with the first son for three months before we leave Arabia. So it was quite a whirlwind. I would not presume to speak for her. I think she should have her own interview.

We also had Hume Horan and the Chinese missiles incident. Horan came in – incredible Arabic and very, very interested in the country. Nancy Horan was wonderful. She came out for a visit to the eastern province with her sister and brother-in-law. Everything was going along very well and then the whole Chinese missiles thing happened and then Horan was pulled and Cutler came back.

*Q: How did we view the presence of a significant Shia population in the eastern province? Was that considered to be destabilizing or...*

TYSON: I think there were people who thought that it would be destabilizing, certainly the Saudis were historically concerned about it. And of course one of the roles of the consulate was to report on that. Actually one of the more interesting things that I set up for Ambassador Cutler one time when he came down was a luncheon and some meetings with what we referred to as the "Shia notables." David Hale, who is now DCM in Beirut and is about to come back here, did a great deal of contact work with the Shia when I first got there. He moved on to Bahrain. I sort of inherited it and continued the contacts.

There was an American, Jack Coley, out of ARAMCO. Mr. Clinton Jack Coley, Jr. of Alexander City, Alabama, who had come out to work at ARAMCO and actually, God love him, made a real effort to introduce newly arrived people at the consulate to other people and to Saudis. Some of my first contacts with the Shia community were courtesy of Jack; he had asked me to come

along to the wedding of someone he knew, Muhammad Al Dhamin, who just died this past week – may he rest in peace, who actually turned out to be a delightful man and a very good friend. But it's like a small village anywhere; you come to be known to people and you're known as the friend of someone.

*Q: Taif, was it, maybe?*

TYSON: It was Tarut Island. Katif and Tarut.

*Q: I mean Katif, yes.*

TYSON: And then we also had contacts in Al Hasa in Hofuf, which was between Dhahran and Riyadh. Susan came out two months into it my tour. My Shia friends and their wives wanted to meet her, so I took her up to Tarut Island and went to Muhammad's house. She was with the women and I was with the men. She came back and was at some sort of women's function in ARAMCO and announced that she had been to Tarut the last weekend, it was the equivalent of venturing into the depths of Harlem or Anacostia.

When Susan came back with David, it turns out I was the acting principal officer. It turned out that a lot of the Saudi women wanted to see the baby, so what we did is Susan and the baby and some of our consulate female staffers were at our house and I was up at the big house receiving the men. So there was a lot of that convoluted socializing, but she'd done it all; she'd gotten married and then she'd produced the heir. *(laughs)*

**BRUCE W. CLARK**  
**Political Military Counselor**  
**Riyadh (1987-1989)**

*Bruce W. Clark was born in Los Angeles, California in 1941. He attended Claremont Men's College from 1958 to 1959 before transferring to Stanford University, where he received his BA in 1962. He also served in the U.S. Army Reserve before joining the Foreign Service in 1966. His career has included positions in countries such as Germany, Vietnam, Belgium, and Saudi Arabia. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on June 4, 2002.*

*Q: Bruce, 1987 - how did you get to Saudi Arabia? What was the process?*

CLARK: Well, the Political Military Counselor's job had been vacant for so long they wanted me there immediately, therefore I never even got area training. So I had some leave and got on a plane and flew to Riyadh.

*Q: Arriving in?*

CLARK: August. At about two o'clock in the morning.

*Q: What was your initial impression of what you saw there?*

CLARK: I was flabbergasted, because as we flew in I had no idea how big Riyadh was. I had read books which still described it as a small sort of city up in the highlands or something. From the air, as you flew in, it seemed to be about as big as Los Angeles. Very spread out, and at two o'clock in the morning there were lots of people with portable TVs camped out on the desert watching portable TVs and having a little outdoor meal. And the city is very modern. I was just very surprised. The old historical center of ancient adobe buildings is still there, but basically it's a very modern city.

*Q: Did you have any feeling why the job had gone unfilled?*

CLARK: Riyadh has always been an unpopular post because of the restrictions on women. A lot of women don't like it, but a lot of women do like it, especially if they have interests they can pursue on their own. For instance, women who were studying for a graduate degree or writing a book or a thesis or something liked it because they had drivers and could live in the luxurious compounds which had cable TV, pools, tennis courts and all that. The whole question was how much they were bothered by the fact they couldn't drive and go out by themselves really to shop and eat.

*Q: You were there from '87 to when?*

CLARK: Two years, 'till August '89.

*Q: What was your job?*

CLARK: Political Military Counselor.

*Q: What did this encompass?*

CLARK: When I was there it was mainly about liaison with the U.S. Military Mission there which advised the Saudis on all things military, especially sales of arms and airplanes, especially the Saudi desire to buy more F-15s.

*Q: Well, what was the situation regarding sales? As you know, political careers had been destroyed in the course of selling AWACS to Saudi Arabia. I'm talking about Congress and the Israeli part of the equation. What was the situation when you were there?*

CLARK: It was pretty much the same thing that AWACS sales faced. The Saudis had bought some F-15s in 1978 and wanted more, but Congress objected largely because of the Israeli lobby's fears that the planes could be used someday against Israel. The Saudis were cooperating with us pretty well, but Congress had a lot of problems with selling things to Saudi Arabia until they looked at the balance sheet, and realized that if we didn't sell them aircraft, the British or the French would. So the argument was always that we might as well make the money build up important connections with Saudis who were important or going to be important. But in the end, Congress still refused to sell them F-15s so the Saudis bought British Tornados.



*Q: Well, how did political military fit affairs fit into the Embassy's operations?*

CLARK: It was pretty much limited to following all the information and insights that we got from the U.S. Military Mission, the Saudi National Guard advisors and private U.S. contractors. They would feed into us what they learned of Saudi attitudes and leanings towards this equipment and that equipment. Sales negotiations were so important, however, that they were handled at a much higher level than political-military counselor. In fact, sales were discussed and negotiated at the ambassadorial level in Riyadh and Washington, because you were talking about multimillions of dollars involving very sensitive relationships between various princes and Prince Sultan, the Defense Minister, and Prince Bandar back here in Washington and so forth.

*Q: What were you getting from your military colleagues about the Saudi use of aircraft and the efficiency of the air force?*

CLARK: Well, actually, our impression was that the Saudi pilots, a lot of whom had been trained in the United States, were very good. And as I recall, the big issue at the time was whether we could keep Americans on the AWACS planes after we trained the Saudi crews. I think we wanted to know what the Saudis knew. The Saudis were reluctant to do that.

*Q: Well, what was the situation '88 to 90? Was the Iran-Iraq War still going on?*

CLARK: Yes, the big threat to the Saudis came from Iran. And, of course, there was the our downing of an Iranian passenger plane. It caused a lot of concern. But at that time Iraq was still an "ally." In fact my deputy got in a lot of trouble with the Ambassador once in a CODEL briefing by mentioning that probably in a few short years the real enemy would be Iraq. He was told to shut up and not say that in front of Congressmen again. It embarrassed the Saudis, for the Saudis never liked to speak critically of any neighbor, regardless of what they thought privately. They didn't want to ever be quoted that they said Iraq was a potential enemy even though they realized that was so.

*Q: Were we, at your level, looking at Iraq as a potential enemy?*

CLARK: Not at my level. I think that agency officers were aware of the potential of Iraq. But at that time Iraq had not caused any problems; it was busy fighting Iran, and Kuwait was quiet. We knew there was a border dispute between Iraq and Kuwait, but I don't think anyone had an inkling that Iraq was going to try and invade Kuwait.

*Q: Were you there when the Iran-Iraq war stopped?*

CLARK: I don't think so. I don't remember clearly when it stopped but I think it ended shortly after I left.

*Q: I was wondering whether that caused any change. I mean did life kind of just go on the whole time you were there?*

CLARK: Well, when I left the big issue that really stirred up our relations with Saudi Arabia was the Saudi purchase of missiles from China. We were completely surprised to learn that Prince Bandar had made very secret trips to Peking and bought these missiles while ambassador in Washington. A coup which he managed to pull off, I think, without any American really knowing it.

*Q: These were Silkworm missiles, weren't they?*

CLARK: Actually they were CSS-2 surface-to-surface missiles which the Saudis installed down in the southern, almost uninhabited part of Saudi Arabia. And he actually got them over there and installed, I think, without the Americans knowing about it until one of our military teams or something happened to be down in that area and spotted some odd crates or something like that. And then one discovery led to another. When I left that was one of the big issues. Why did Saudi Arabia do this on the sly, and why did they need such missiles? We were afraid, of course, that if they didn't use them against Iran they'd use them against Israel someday.

*Q: Did you have many contacts with the Saudi military or pretty much just with our military?*

CLARK: Pretty much with our military. And with a few Saudi officers in the Ministry of Defense who spoke English, because I spoke no Arabic.

*Q: Well, did you find yourself waging battles with the Department of Defense or with Congress or with State in your position there?*

CLARK: No. I think State and Defense were working together trying to deal with criticism of Saudi Arabia and keep arms sales going, because a stable, friendly Saudi Arabia with all its oil is of great importance to us economically and politically.

*Q: Who was your ambassador while you were there?*

CLARK: Oh, first Hugh Horan. He is - or was - one of the Department's greatest linguists, especially in Arabic. He's a brilliant man and was delightful to work for. But then he ran afoul of the Saudi royals. I suppose you know that story.

*Q: Yes.*

CLARK: The account that was in the Post was actually very accurate.

*Q: Did his departure sort of upset the Embassy, would you say?*

CLARK: Yes, I don't recall exactly but there was a lot of anger at the Saudis and real unhappiness at the way he had to leave so quickly. He was sort of a beloved Ambassador. He was a very, very nice fellow and very well-liked.

*Q: How about when you...*

CLARK: I was about to say that he was replaced very quickly by Walter Cutler, who had been the ambassador right before Horan. Cutler returned to Riyadh transformed. I mean that when I arrived, Cutler had just left and it was clear that people were more or less happy to have a new Ambassador. Apparently he was not very popular for one reason or another, so we were all wondering how he would be on his second go-around. I found him very good, friendly, very sharp and businesslike. I don't know what happened in his stint in Washington, but people said he returned a reformed person.

*Q: How wonderful. How did you find life there? Were you there with your wife?*

CLARK: No, we weren't married yet. I always wanted her to visit, but we never did it because it was so difficult to bring in a single woman. I would have had to falsify a reason for the visit, like saying that she was coming to visit some other family, so she never came. But life was very comfortable if boring as a single person. Even as a single man, I got frustrated at the restrictions on women. The restrictions were just ridiculous. You couldn't go out to a restaurant with someone you weren't married to. You had to go out in groups, and basically that meant you had to go to international hotels where men and women could sit together at a table. Otherwise you had all sorts of problems. So the life there got sort of wearisome. And I think that's why a lot of women didn't like to go there with their husbands. Life in Riyadh was a bore even though it was comfortable. I never had any problem with the Saudis, and all the stuff you read about now was relatively rare then. I guess it was sort of a golden interim period. If there was anti-American feeling, it wasn't obvious. We knew of course they had the Mutawa, the religious police, and the Wahabi sect was very strict. But that was sort of always over there outside the diplomatic world.

*Q: Did you get involved in the building of bases and all that?*

CLARK: Personally? No. But we were busy building or helping build various military installations and bases. For example, the Corps of Engineers was building a huge base in the northeast. I think it was called King Khalid Military City. It was enormous, a veritable city. It cost hundreds of millions of dollars, and had everything in the typical Saudi fashion. I was never allowed to visit it though, and it was very difficult even for American military and attaches to get to go there.

*Q: How did the American military find it there?*

CLARK: Well, the ones I dealt with got along with the Saudis very well. The Saudis were very agreeable personally if sometimes frustrating to work with. U.S. military got along well with Saudis, especially with those educated in the United States. I don't think there was any problem that I knew of.

*Q: After this sort of desert interlude, where did you go in '89?*

CLARK: In August '89, I was transferred back to the U.S.

**HUME A. HORAN**  
**Ambassador**  
**Saudi Arabia (1987-1988)**

*Ambassador Hume A. Horan was born on August 13th 1934 in the District of Columbia. Horan served in the US Army from 1954-1956 and graduated from Harvard University in 1958. In 1960, Horan entered the Foreign Service. Ambassador Hume's overseas career includes posts in Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Jordan and as Ambassador in Cameroon, Sudan, and Saudi Arabia. The interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy 2000 – 2001.*

*Q: Well, let's move on to the career of Hume Horan. In '87 you were coming out. I assume you were popping by the corridors of power at the State Department from time to time to take the temperature and let yourself be seen and all that.*

HORAN: Yes, I had friends in the Department, people I had worked with over the years. Anyway, one day Dick Murphy asked me to come see him. He said they would like to send me as Ambassador to Saudi Arabia. Dick was himself a former Ambassador to Riyadh. His proposal was a professional's dream come true. If you're a Russian specialist, you aspire someday to going to Moscow. If an Arab specialist, its Riyadh or Cairo. The work would obviously be interesting and demanding. As an Arabist, I looked forward to the pleasure of just using and living in the language. Your skill brings you closer to the issues and the people of the country; you feel more professional.

In my early '50s, I felt that I was finally becoming a master, a full professional in my own little narrow specialty. The way an Admiralty or patent lawyer might feel on being selected to a senior office in his Association. I was really very pleased and honored that my government was giving me an opportunity again to serve in Arabia.

*Q: You went out there when?*

HORAN: It was, I believe in mid-July, 1987.

*Q: Did you have any problems with confirmation or anything like that?*

HORAN: No. I didn't go up by myself. There were maybe six of us who went up at the same time. The Senators summoned us in groups of three. We stepped forward, fell into the mass grave, and the next rank moved up! Actually, the Senators appeared well-disposed. Their questions were all professional and to the point. As expected, that wonderful Senator, Paul Simon, asked about my language competency. He strongly believed that Ambassadors should be able to work in the language of their country of assignment. In response to his question, "Do you speak Arabic?" I was able to reply, "Yes, Senator. I've been tested as an S4+/R4+." He replied: "Oh, I wish we had more people like you coming before me." None of us career guys had problems.

After the hearings, I went around to the relevant officials in Washington. I called on the Saudi

Ambassador, Prince Bandar bin Sultan, whom I guess still lurks at his mega-McLean estate, when he is not reposing at his one-acre large house in Aspen. That is not the area on which the house is built. It is the floor space of the house itself. I think the Aspen town council passed an ordinance henceforth banning construction of such monster “chalets.”

Anyway, all went smoothly. The exit experience was pleasant: I had the opportunity to re-establish and strengthen contacts of years past. After all, I had been out of the Near East proper for maybe a decade. All along, though, I had kept up my Arabic.

*Q: Before we leave it, obviously you don't have the greatest impression of Prince Bandar. How did you see him in his role here in the United States?*

HORAN: Bandar represented a country that was important to us. He was only a junior member of the Royal Family - not a core member by any means - and his “Royal” connection counted for more in Washington, than in Riyadh. Bandar was the son of Minister of Defense Prince Sultan, by a black concubine. Race, in a pedigree sense, is important to Saudis. They have a certain color awareness. And because principals can have many children by many mothers, a key question always asked, is “Who is the maternal uncle?” So within the Royal family, Bandar’s position was minor.

Bandar, however, was talented, brave, and ambitious. He won his father’s recognition and approval by becoming a dashing, competent F-5 pilot. He was also an accomplished courtier. There’s a kind of sycophant who can be especially ingratiating because of a superficial cheeky forwardness and bonhomie. This aspect of Bandar went over very well in Washington, and especially with the Pentagon. Before King Fahd, though, Bandar was a different Bandar. When he’d interpret for the King, he would position himself on a low stool by the King’s side. *Accroupi au tailleur*. As he sat, his body axis would turn, and his robes swivel about him. As if he were curling into a basket. When he would regard the King, there was just one word for the expression on his face: “Rapt.” a kind of saintly ecstasy.

I’d say Bandar had a challenging upbringing. He responded to the challenge by showing himself in every way worthy of his father’s confidence. He came to Washington in the early ’80s, and still is here, Dean of the Arab Diplomatic corps.

*Q: How did you find him as a factor in the American-Saudi relations from your perspective?*

HORAN: It is a little bit like astronomy. You are watching the movements of heavenly bodies and you think gosh, there is something non-Newtonian about this particular orbit. The answer may be that there is something causing that orbit to become eccentric, some factor that you don’t immediately see, and you perhaps ought to look for. So it was with Bandar, and our relations in Riyadh with senior Saudis and the King.

Bandar had superb tools and assets for his mission to DC. Americans love Princes. We dote on them. 1776 did not expunge that from our character. Bandar also was dashing, spoke great English, and was backed by all the oil in Arabia. His residence off Route 123 was a cross between “The Breakers,” and Ali Baba’s cave. On the entrance gate, you’ll see a festoon of

swords and palm trees. Within is a security system that would do honor to the CIA. I was told that Bandar had bought the estate that adjoined his on the north, and had it razed - so as to have an unobstructed view towards the Potomac.

Bandar used these personal and material assets well. The performance of his predecessors could best be described as “somnolent.” Bandar gave Saudi Arabia prominence on the social page but also with influential circles in Washington. What with the billions in hardware and training the Saudi were buying from us, any Saudi Ambassador would have had good entree to the Pentagon. But Bandar’s “fighter jock” persona, helped. Nancy Reagan, I’m told found him charming. The National Security Council loved having a sort of “Aladdin’s Lamp” ready to hand. a touch? And there would appear the helpful, ingratiating genii!

Through access in Washington and in Riyadh, he skillfully magnified his influence at both ends of the Saudi-U.S. relationship. As issues arose in the U.S.-Saudi relationship, Bandar would seize the moment. He’d raise his hand, “Maybe I can help. I spoke to my father last night and this is what he said and what he believes is the King’s opinion...” Meanwhile, a cable would have gotten drafted in the State Department, cleared around Washington, and (finally) sent out asking the Embassy to raise certain questions with the Minister of Defense. Or the King, even. You’d get the appointment, march up the hill, and make your presentation. Sometimes, I felt my interlocutor was looking at me quizzically: “Doesn’t the Ambassador know we’ve already been discussing just this in Washington with his government?” There were times you felt you were trying to catch up - not easy to do, when in Washington the Saudis had a representative eager and able to promote himself as the link between the U.S.G. and the royal family of Arabia.

I remember on my introductory call on Bandar, quipping that we might divide our work: I’d pass on to Riyadh the good news from Washington, and he could pass on any that was less good. He answered: "Ha-ha-ha." It was a very insincere laugh. It’s like the encounter in the Victorian RR carriage: “A year later, and five thousand miles away, young Arbuthnot was to recall that moment.” So, as I got ready to go out to Riyadh, I was aware that there were a number of channels, a number of tracks in the U.S. relations with Arabia. One was the Embassy’s, but another, less formal track led from the royal family to the Saudi ambassador and from the Saudi ambassador to the U.S. bureaucracy.

*Q: Who did you replace? Who had been ambassador?*

HORAN: Walt Cutler, a career officer. I think he had been before ambassador to Tunisia. He was not an Arabist. Very warm, engaging, a comfortable person to be around. a good manager.

*Q: Well, when you got out there in '87, what were sort of the issues you saw as being, what issues were sort of taking front place at that point?*

HORAN: The Iran-Iraq war was going on, and we were helping the Iraqis as much as we could. We could see the bony hand of Khomeini-ism projecting over the Gulf and the Emirates. That was a big issue. Another was how adequate to the challenges of the day was the political system the Saudis had inherited from the ‘50s, ‘60s, and ‘70s? Was the same group of leaders who had been running the country for thirty years, still up to the task? What was being demanded of

them? What dynamics were at play? What would the effects be of maybe new wine - pardon the image - poured into old bottles? On the economic side, Aramco pretty much took care of itself. It had become the Saudi Arabian-American oil company. But arms sales were always a big question. The Saudis had a great, almost unlimited appetite for hardware, but only a small capacity to meet the manpower needs of a modern military system. Our mega-projects with the Saudi military, the National Guard, and our Corps of Engineers, often stubbed up against there not being enough trained or trainable Saudis to go around. So, the panoply of American interests was broad. It was evolving as Saudi Arabia's internal scene evolved, and as pressures within the region needed to be considered. It was a good time to have arrived there.

*Q: How did you find dealing with the government? We have already talked about the presence of Bandar. Where were your points of contact, and had you noticed any change in how sort of the government operated from the way it had before?*

HORAN: The government had become more bureaucratic, more institutionalized. People whom in the '70s you'd been able to call, or just drop in on, had been borne upwards, out of sight of man, by money and greater responsibility. This development, however, was less of a hindrance for me. I could sometimes parlay on a semi-personal relationship with the Saudis because they'd known me before. So, I had as good an entree, partly based on my earlier experience, as I could have expected. I spent a lot of time seeing the Deputy Foreign Minister and the Foreign Minister, and his Deputy, Sheikh Muhammad Masuud. Competent, both of them. The number two person in the Royal Diwan, the office of the king's household, was a friend from years back. The leading international law scholar at the Foreign Ministry was an engaging and well-disposed person. I even got along well with the prickly Chief of MFA Protocol!

*Q: When you were there before, you had mentioned that money, the great tidal wave of money had not yet quite hit Saudi Arabia. By this point it had. What was this doing from your observation to the society?*

HORAN: I'd have to say that "then was then," and "now is now." For decades, political scientists have been crawling over the wings and fuselage of the Saudi government, looking for the hairline cracks that betoken a possible catastrophic failure. A sort of political-academic National Transportation Safety Board. They are still disappointed. The traditional factors of stability are even now - mostly - operative. I've discussed these with regard to my tour as DCM. The Saudis still had an ideology, Islam, that had apparently stood the test of time - by comparison with Arab socialism, anyway. I'd have to add that Saudi Islam was practiced in a very intolerant, non-Islamic way. You could not bring a Bible into the country, Christians held religious activities in huddled, informal groups - as if they were meeting in the catacombs, two thousand years ago. a group of American businessmen was expelled: the religious police had discovered they were holding Bible studies classes in one of their houses. Did we ever say anything to the Saudi about this? Heavens No! Money talks! If you want to be intolerant...be rich.

Leadership was pretty good - the senior princes knew their jobs and their country. Their governing style emphasized continuity, steadiness, a personal tie between the average Saudi and his rulers. By area standards, they were discriminating in using force. Their statecraft was more

nuanced than that of Assyrian Iraq. They'd rather spend money than blood. The Royal family still functioned at all levels and in all areas as an effective political-cum-intelligence gathering organization. The external challenges kept the Saudis compacted, a closed elite.

These factors tended to moderate the shock of wealth and the social transformation that wealth often brings. Money enabled Saudis to enjoy goods and services without having to experience the social changes and transformations that would enable them to produce and maintain these goods and social services themselves. These hyper-modern aspects of Arabia were like prosthetic devices. The Saudis had contracted out to various outside sources for water systems, for infrastructures, for military equipment. Their orders would be delivered, installed, maintained and administered - very often by foreigners. The end product would be used by the Saudis - but not require an involvement beyond "filling the tank" or "turning the key" in the ignition.

This policy was all the more effective, because there was **at the time** money for everyone. Much was spread around in a vast spoils/entitlement system. Some money went abroad. Still other sums went into Pharaonic, Mt. Rushmorian palaces. These palaces were surrounded by high walls - for privacy, security, so as not to excite popular envy. But within! I once had to call on the Minister of Defense, Prince Sultan, at his palace in Riyadh. When I got into the car, my driver asked, "Which palace?" Horan: "Which? You mean he has more than one?" Driver: "Yes, about five in the Riyadh area." The Ministry's phones didn't answer. So we went to one palace. It was the wrong one. There they told me he was in palace such-and-such. "Shabby," they said, "but the Prince likes it." Believe you me, that "shabby palace" was a construction of great beauty and total luxury!

I thought it one of the most extraordinary, extravagant things I'd seen, until I visited the new palace that King Fahd had built for himself. 1-2 billion dollars! Visiting Congressman swooned! It was simply a confection of architectural fantasy, all done with the most expensive materials and withal, in good taste.

*Q: How about I guess, you know there practically was no real laboring class there was there? That was foreign.*

HORAN: That was the prosthetic quality. The Saudis were the noble warriors who no longer had any warring to do. They sat composedly and accepted from the world, its tribute of goods and services. At the bottom level, these goods and services were provided by Yemenis. They did the stoop work, the day labor. One notch up, and you had the Koreans, whose work ethic frightened and unnerved the Saudis. The Korean labor crews were finally ordered to stop marching to the airport military-unit style. It was a sight to see, as these tough, disciplined labor battalions, marched out of their work camps, in their orange uniforms, all in perfect step. Their "Platoon leaders" would run up and down the columns calling cadences! Up one more notch, into the semi-skilled and skilled stratum, came the Palestinians. They were indispensable to trade and the professions, but were disliked and mistrusted. After them, came the European expatriates, French, Italian, Germans. At the very top, sort of, you had the Americans. We were in oil, finance, defense. But do keep in mind, that to the Saudis, none of these rankings mattered a whit. There was in the end not an iota's worth of difference between the American who advised the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency and some Yemeni who would change your flat tire at a border



station. In Saudi Arabia, either you were a Saudi...or you weren't.

I perhaps should make a partial exception for certain Aramcons. They had been there long enough as to acquire almost the status of "metics." There could be no doubt as to their sincerity or the validity of their credentials. Moreover, if you were an American, who had learned Arabic, and showed enthusiasm for the wonders of Arabia, you were allowed a certain access. The Saudi response would be genial, welcoming, and a bit abstract. You'd never get close to them, but you'd not exactly get rebuffed, either. You were cordially kept at a distance. You were unnecessary to their personal lives. And what about your skills? They paid you for those!. *Saudis found their social and personal needs amply oversubscribed by their enormous, extended family system.*

Working directly for a Saudi, though, could be difficult. When they paid you a salary, they had, so to speak, bought you. a very senior American came to work for the Salim bin Ladin company. Salim was a nasty little twerp and brother of the infamous Ousama. At a big dinner, Salim turned to his American assistant, a very senior engineer, and asked (shades of the NT): "Do you love me?" The answer: "Absolutely, your Highness." (The bin Ladins are as much "Highnesses" as yours truly). "Sheikh" Salim: "Well, I would like you to prove that to me." With this he picked out a large, raw onion from the centerpiece, and handed it to his American assistant. "I want you to eat this. Right now." "Ha, ha, ha, you are only joking aren't you." "Joking? Eat that onion." An embarrassed hush fell over the room, as this older American, looked at this punk kid, and slowly began to eat the god-damned onion.

*Q: You said earlier how "at the time" everything seemed stable and prosperous. I know this is after the fact, but today, do you perceive any possible "cracks in the wings?"*

HORAN: Nothing stands still. I'd emphasize that it has been thirteen years since I left Saudi Arabia. And the Saudis are still standing. That speaks for itself, I'd say. But there are problems: the government is vastly in debt, half the population is under 18, entitlements are exceeding revenues, the area is still a-boil, and the Princes are all getting older. You think of the Politburo: older and older guys, leading their country for shorter and shorter times. a robust perennial: who will lead when the Kingship drops to another generation? Big question! Maybe put it to one of my successors?

*Q: Well, when you were there, what was the sort of the attitude towards the Iran-Iraq war?*

HORAN: Terrified. Terrified that the Iranians might win, and inflame their Shiite serfs. The Shiites were the helots of the eastern province and Bahrain. They were extremely oppressed. We were also concerned about the possibility of unrest in that area - remember it produces most of Arabia's oil. So we tried to help the Iraqis check the Persian momentum: intelligence and naval cooperation, and the like. The prospect of Khomeini-ism flooding across the area, made the Saudi knees shake. Our knees were shaking, too. We were very glad the Iraqis could at least maintain an adequate defense, at a huge cost to themselves.

*Q: What, when you were there, was sort of the Saudi relationship with the Iraqis?*

HORAN: The Saudis had no use for Baathism or any of the other manifestations of so-called political ideology in Iraq. They feared the Iraqis. They saw them as very credible rivals. Iraqi oil reserves are close to matching those of Saudi Arabia. Iraq also has a much larger population. It was once the most socially and technically developed country in the Arab world! The Saudis would say, "One good thing about the Iraqis is that they are real Assyrians. Just as nasty and mean as the Persians. So we'll support them, because if they lose, there goes not only Iraq, but the Eastern province of Arabia. a new Sassanid Empire!"

*Q: What about the Israeli situation at that time? How did you all deal with this?*

HORAN: That was basically an easy one. The Saudis maintained "We are not a confrontation state, not a front line state. We are not a direct party to the conflict. Whatever the parties to the conflict agree to, including the Zionist entity whose name begins with an 'I', is fine with us. We support UN Resolution 242 and resolution 338, blah, blah, blah."

Henry Kissinger made ever so many tries to get the Saudis more involved. They'd say: "Why?" Right now things are okay. We get the arms; you get the oil. Your weapon shops keep producing, and at lower unit costs. From time to time we'll denounce al-Kiyaan al-Sahyouni, the Zionist entity, but everyone knows we're not a factor in the Arab-Israeli conflict. You ought to leave well enough alone. Let us produce our oil and buy your products. Stop trying to get us to take a seat at the Middle East peace table. We are like a clay pot, you know, and when you put a clay pot in with iron ones, the clay pot often gets broken. We must be cautious. We are a conservative, pro-western monarchy with a strong religious base. Our region is not conservative, and is often driven by radical ideologies. Ours is a very bad neighborhood. If you are living in the biggest, fanciest house in that neighborhood, you have got to be very careful about your relations with your neighbors."

Jim Hoagland once wrote that the Saudi government was like a turtle. Very cautious about ever sticking its neck out.

We'd talk about "stiffening the Saudis' spine." But on Arab-Israel, it was not to their benefit or their interest to have a spine. Or to "Stand up and be counted." Stand up for what? Stand up for Uncle Sam?" Their position was, "Bilateral relations are good, and we know that the perfect is the enemy of the good. Please don't push us too hard because we are a little bit fragile."

*Q: How about with Egypt and Mubarak and so forth at that time?*

HORAN: Relations were fine at the "Smiley Face" level, but wary. The Saudis recall that the Egyptians destroyed their capital - it was near present-day Riyadh - in the early 19th century. They recalled, too, how Nasser had flown in arms to help subvert the Kingdom in the 1950s. But with the collapse of Arab Nationalism after the 1967 war, and Nasser's death in 1970, the external ideological threat was less. Saudi fundamentalism looked better and better by comparison with other brands. Besides, the dirt-poor Egyptians could be bought. Egypt was happy to export all the second and third rate teachers and technicians you could want, in exchange for hard currency. Other financial transactions could be used to ward off trouble with Egypt. Plus, our good relations with both parties caused Saudis to believe the U.S. could be

helpful with Egypt, too, when needed.

*Q: How about up to '88 or early in '89, Henry Kissinger was Secretary of State, and we talked about Jim Akins and his problems with Henry Kissinger, and you were sitting there as DCM taking notes. How did you feel? How did Kissinger come along while you were? Wait a minute, this wasn't Kissinger. I am sorry. I mean but this was you had a new Secretary of State. This was George Shultz.*

HORAN: Solid. The Saudis liked him, the kind of American they felt comfortable with. He'd headed one of the Saudis' favorite organizations: the wonderful Bechtel company! Together, Bechtel and Aramco built Arabia. They built it honestly, on time and under budget. They did it with extraordinary, pioneering, non- cross culturally expert Americans. Just hard working, you know, straight from the shoulder Americans. The Saudis found in them no deceit, no hidden motives. They felt reassured having such organizations to rely on. They knew Aramco or Bechtel would not let them fall on their face. I don't think Shultz came out to Arabia while I was there. But they seemed to consider him very much persona grata. The novelist, Abdul Raman Munif, in Mudun al Milh (Cities of Salt) gives an almost sympathetic view of Americans in Arabia. We are lost, clumsy, and blundering, but in a childish way, seem to mean well.

*Q: Those relations with the Gulf States while you were there?*

HORAN: Watchful, imperially patronizing. The Saudis did not want these statelets around the periphery of their country to become entry points for non-Saudi, non-Islamic, non-Monarchical influences. Some of these countries were a little bit too socially progressive, too open to the rest of the world, too cosmopolitan, too mercantile in the persons of their own leaders. Saudi Arabia was a continental country, while Bahrain, Kuwait, and the Emirates looked outwards - they were trading, maritime societies. The "Gulfies" might be members of the "Peninsular Club," but some of their manners and customs were alien, even contrary, to those of the high deserts of Arabia. Also, the Saudis were very much aware that in the end, it was they who would have to guarantee the security and stability of their smaller neighbors. There was once a dynastic squabble in the closely affiliated state of Qatar. The Saudis moved their National Guard right up to the border...the dispute was settled to Riyadh's satisfaction. They'd made it clear that if things did not go their way, Saudi Arabia would exercise its responsibilities.

Gosh! The time! I think I had better head off. I hate to...

*Q: All right. I'll tell you we will pick it up, we have been talking about your second tour in Saudi Arabia. You were there from when to when?*

HORAN: From August of '87 to April of '88, eight months.

*Q: So, we talked about much of this, of how the Saudis view the world and how we dealt with Saudi Arabia at the time. What about one further question and then we will move on to other developments. How about looking at the military, you know, they want all this equipment, but as with almost every Arab army, they get equipment but they really don't maintain it. The training is lousy.*

HORAN: Totally right. Yes. Every Director of our U.S. Military Training Mission (USMTM) faced a conflict. He needed to move military sales along. He also needed to make sure that it was sold to the Saudis under such circumstances that it would not come back to haunt us. Once Prince Sultan announced to General Andrew Goodpaster, who was visiting, "We want to buy F-4's. Just imagine the effect on visitors, as they fly into Riyadh, of seeing 15 F-4's, with Saudi markings, parked there, wing tip to wing tip!" The General replied, "Your Royal Highness, do you know that F-4's have twenty different kinds of grease in their landing gears alone? Can your men do the maintenance? And as for the tanks you've requested? They require three hours of maintenance for each hour of operation. Are you prepared for that?" The Saudi reply would usually be, "Our boys are very smart and resourceful. Sell us the end items and we'll work it out." Or they'd offer to transfer manpower from another project that, at the moment, had a lower priority.

Our wonderful USMTM Chief, General Ahmann, would tear his hair. He kept emphasizing the need of balanced, across the board, military development. The Air Force, he'd say was hollow, if there was an Saudi in the cockpit, but if the ground crew and support personnel were foreign contractors.

Desert Storm, however, showed what the strategic advantage to the U.S. might be of having, in effect, lots of first-rate military equipment pre-positioned in Arabia.

*Q: Okay, we'll pick this up next time.*

HORAN: I will give you a call in the next couple of days...

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*Q: Today is the 23rd. of January, 2001. Hume, we are back in Saudi Arabia.*

HORAN: Yes, it was very gratifying to be back in Saudi Arabia where I had served for five years as DCM. It was interesting to live and work Riyadh - before one had to fly in in for the day from Jidda.

*Q: Before, our Embassy was in Jidda.*

HORAN: Yes. Now, with the Embassy and most of the Saudi offices co-located, it made work with the Saudi government slightly easier and more productive. I got to present my credentials in just a few weeks.

A glimpse of the real Saudi Arabia: I protested, unsuccessfully, the Saudi decision to exclude Economic Counselor, Anne Patterson, from the small group of colleagues who accompanied me to the credentials ceremony. They did not want the King to be seen on TV with a woman. So they limited my group - arranged in order of precedence - to such a number that Anne missed the cut. After credentials, I spoke to a gathering of Aramcons in Dhahran, hosted functions and briefings for U.S. business leaders in Jidda and Riyadh, and began my calls on Ministers and

other officials.

It was an interesting time. I've discussed the Gulf War. But it was also a time when U.S.-Saudi friction over military sales were rising. In 1986 before I was there, Congress had upheld a Presidential veto on arms to Saudi Arabia. Later, we told the Saudis, "After all, you can buy F-15s, but the ceiling is 60. You can't have any more than 60 at any one time. Then the Saudis wanted to buy a supply of Maverick air-to-air missiles. The F-15, without Mavericks, is like an knight in armor without a lance. We said, "No, because we know the Congress would never approve of a direct sale to Saudi Arabia." That refusal really angered the Saudis.

In 1988 Prince Bandar informed us that his government could no longer regard the U.S. as a reliable partner in arms sales. His government was very concerned. Afterwards, I wondered if Bandar had just been putting his alibi in place. Which was the chicken, and which the egg?

Because in the spring of 1988, we discovered that the Saudis had bought - -unknown to us - from the Communist Chinese, an intermediate range, strategic missile system. The agent for the deal, which was worth hundreds of millions of dollars, was none other than Prince Bandar himself! The sale, we think, had its origins during Bandar's visit to Beijing in the fall of 1987. This sort of missile had previously only been associated with the delivery of nuclear weapons. The discovery that the Saudis had acquired ground-to-ground missiles that could reach Tel Aviv produced a stir. Israel was very concerned. At that time, the missiles - stashed away in caves - were within weeks of becoming operational. We were shocked that our closest friend, the most anti-communist country in the region, should turn to Communist China for a sophisticated weapons system.

*Q: Was the thinking that the Saudis may have gotten this missile system really to gain our attention more than, because it didn't sound like it makes much sense.*

HORAN: a good point. The missile system, per se, really doesn't make sense. I'd note again, though, the agent for the sale was Prince Bandar. There are stories of his pocketing a large commission - which is sort of standard. When a big prince lands a major arms contract, there is usually at least a finder's fee or something better. Bandar explained the purchase to us, saying, "You've been uncooperative. We are trying to get your attention. We are tired of constant admonitions about Congressional opposition to military sales. Frankly, what we've done, makes us feel good. Self-standing. Like other nations in the area, we have our own missile system. We've kept up with the Joneses, or the Arabic equivalent."

On March 12, I received instructions to see the King. I was to tell him that we welcomed his assurances (I guess, passed through Bandar) that the missiles were not-nuclear. But we said we were not certain that other states would be fully reassured by such an assurance. Accordingly, we asked that all work on the missile training and launching sites be suspended. We wanted to be confident that this had been done.

The language was strong, so on the morning of the 15th, I called Acting Assistant Secretary Peter Burleigh on the secure line. He said the message was, indeed, our policy. I should go ahead. So that day I asked for an audience, and provided the Royal Household with an outline of my

intended talking points.

On March 17, however, the Department sent me an astonishing message. It said that at the time that I was presenting our position to the Royal Diwan on the 15th, the U.S. position being conveyed to Bandar the same day was different in both tone and substance. I was told to stop all discussions of the subject with the Saudis until I received further written instructions. I was also told the King was displeased with me. The Department said it was considering sending Secretary Shultz out. In the event, they sent Phil Habib.

I guess there are moments when the State Department finds itself out of its weight class. Much of the action was going on at the NSC. I never got the sense that the State Department was "at the helm." My understanding is that Bandar got in touch with the White House - he may have spoken with President Reagan. The edge was certainly taken off what the State Department was asking. After his own demarches in Washington, Bandar apparently told the King that I'd been instructed henceforth to keep my nose out of the missile business. a plausible reading from him, considering my instructions of March 17.

*Q: Well, Bandar was really wanting to get money for getting the damn missiles and he was trying to protect himself and play the Washington game which he could obviously play pretty well.*

HORAN: My thoughts, too. Then, seeing the United States so surprised and outraged at the Chinese missile deal, and he being the person behind it all, he had an interest in minimizing the fallout. Some of it, otherwise, some might come down on his own head. Phil Habib came out. I remember how, after he arrived, I showed him my March 12 cable of instructions from the State Department. He handed it back, saying only, "That's not our policy!"

The next day, I guess, it was, we went to see the King. With Habib, came Bob Oakley of the NSC, Bill Kirby of NEA, and Pol Counselor, Alan Keiswetter (notetaker). I don't remember the Saudi side, but Bandar was the King's translator. The meeting was going alright, until Habib said something like, "And now Your Majesty, we would like to take a look at those missiles. It is a matter of great concern to us." The King said, "They are non-nuclear, and there is no need for anybody to look at them." Habib insisted, saying, more or less, "Your Majesty, of course your word is gospel, but we would like for our own reasons to confirm that the missiles are non-nuclear and that the construction on them has stopped." At this point the King said, in so many words, "I guess the Ambassador has been meddling in this issue and he shouldn't have. Prince Bandar was told that Horan had been instructed to stay out of it."

*Q: This was you as ambassador.*

HORAN: Yes. This was followed by what Bill Kirby later called, "The Royal Explosion." The King said that he had known American ambassadors for many years, and they had all been close friends of the Kingdom. He was deeply offended by the talking points he had received on the missile question. He then said, "If the ambassador has Iranian blood, then let him keep it inside himself." I'll not forget that phrase! The meeting ended on that note.

Word of continued Royal anger continued to reach us at the Embassy from various sources. So I cabled to the Department, saying in so many words, "My position with the Saudi government is compromised. In a religious autocracy, if you make an enemy of the King, your effectiveness is over. I'm afraid my continued presence here will only impede the work of the U.S. government." I recommended I be withdrawn - adding I hoped they would leave a nice long gap between my departure and the arrival of a replacement. I left the end of March.

*Q: Had you suspected such feelings before? Most unusual for a monarch to attack the ethnicity of an American Ambassador. What did Habib say?*

HORAN: Not at all. The fact that my father had been a high official in the court of the Shah, was known to the Saudis. He even came once on a visit to Jidda when I was DCM, and he was - I believe - Foreign Minister. But now the Iran-Iraq was going on. My ancestry must have been preying on the King's mind.

It's been surmised that I made the Saudis uncomfortable for other reasons, too. I called on all the Cabinet in protocol order. Last on my schedule of calls, was on the Minister of Religious affairs. He was blind, and maintained the earth was flat. He was widely respected, and had a powerful intellect in his own domain. I recall that he actually laughed at some religious anecdote I told him! These meetings were always public, with Saudi and American note takers present. So the Saudis saw I was active. I had contacts from my earlier tour. I spoke Arabic. Did they maybe feel that here was an Ambassador who could not be confined along the same straight lines, as other ones? The Saudis are an intensely private dynasty. Might it have bothered them that here was someone in a position to peek under their skirts?

What about Habib? He said almost nothing in response to the King's outburst. Mumbled something about "Ambassadors communicate their instructions..." He wasn't helpful. He seemed to be awfully full of himself, and quick to side with, to nod approvingly, or suggest some sort of assent, to whatever the King was saying. I strongly felt that the poor State Department had been outmaneuvered by Bandar, the NSC, and the White House. I was offended by the ethnic slur, and - then and later - by the State Department's weak reaction.

*Q: Before you talk about leaving, did you sit down sort of with your staff, your DCM and all and you know, people who had been there and try to get a feel for this? I mean was this really that bad? How did Embassy people react?*

HORAN: Yes, my able staff did not dispute my decision that it was best that I leave. It was a happy Embassy. I'll not forget that before I left, the Embassy had a farewell for me. Over the recreational space, they'd hung a large banner saying: "Farewell to our beloved Ambassador Horan." I thought that was a nice choice of words for colleagues in a high-powered, impersonal post to apply to their boss. I suspected that Maryann Heimgartner, at several posts my strong right arm, and superb personal assistant, had something to do with that.

One thing I knew my colleagues liked - they told me - was that after arriving I had had a flagpole *cum* spotlight mounted in the Residence courtyard. a bright, clean, fresh American flag was

always flying. I have a thing about tattered, dish-cloth looking flags - so Third World! Then, would you believe it, an important visitor came from Washington. He saw the flag. His only comment was, "I guess now the terrorists will know where the American Ambassador lives." What a loser! I'd have hated to serve under pressure with that sort of an FSO! No *bella figura!*

*Q: And Prince Bandar is still ambassador.*

HORAN: Yes, that is correct.

*Q: Did you get any reflection from circles within the Saudi government or from your contacts saying sorry or anything like that?*

HORAN: It's a monarchy. The Saudis keep their ducks in line. The King comes out against the American ambassador, and in a nanosecond, people learn he is being withdrawn. Everyone huddles down in the grass. But one senior figure in the Foreign Ministry was an exception to the rule. He and I went out to the airport to say good-bye to Phil Habib and his staff. After the Habib party boarded, my Saudi friend turned and gave me a hug. I thought that was one of the most unusually personal gestures. The Saudis are not touchy feely at all.

*Q: How did you find your reception back at the Near eastern bureau?*

HORAN: It's as if you're a Russian specialist, and you get PNGed from Moscow. Thereafter, you might have great Russian, but your assignment choices are - or were - limited. There was once talk of maybe another Arab embassy, but no. Nobody in the Middle East wants to have as American ambassador someone who has drawn the wrath of King Fahd. It blots your copybook in the area generally.

*Q: But I mean in a way the facts are that you were not made Persona non grata, and you were not formally kicked out.*

HORAN: Correct. Neither the Saudis nor Washington wanted to have a formal PNGing to deal with. But the word that we were getting from the Palace left me - and the USG - no alternative. I think, though, the Department could have left a certain gap between my departure and the arrival of a successor. That would have helped to show while we wanted to continue to do business, the missile deal, after all, was a very nasty surprise. It was not something normally done between old friends and allies. A gap at the Ambassador position would have helped to underline our displeasure.

It didn't brighten my day when shortly before I left Riyadh, I was instructed to request agreement for...my predecessor in the job! The Department was sending Walt Cutler back for a second tour! I was offended. I told Washington that to the Saudis, this nomination will be proof that the United States admits it had a rogue ambassador in Riyadh.

General Vernon Walters, God bless him! when I saw him in Washington, said, "If it had been up to me, I'd have let the Saudis just hang in the wind for awhile before they got another American ambassador."



*Q: You left Arabia when?*

HORAN: I left around the end of March of 1988. I returned to Washington in early June, after a long vacation swing through East Asia.

After I came back, Senator Paul Sarbanes had closed hearings on my departure from Arabia. He was supportive. Under such circumstances, you always appreciate a responsible person saying you'd done a good job, and had conducted yourself in the manner expected of American representatives. Several other senators were there. Barbara Bodine, ARP Director, was the notetaker. Afterwards, I ran into Ed Djerejian, who was sympathetic. I said, "You know, Ed, sometimes you just have to say fuck it." That was my attitude. Pissing and moaning and "Who struck John?" is all wasted breath. Life's too short. I'd seen officers who took a reverse too much to heart, become crabbed and bitter. There are certain things you should not let into your heart - one is righteous indignation. You should let go, and you should keep going, and should enjoy what life offers, as long as you're able to enjoy it.

**J. MICHAEL SPRINGMANN**  
**Consular Officer**  
**Jeddah (1987-1989)**

*J. Michael Springmann was born in Washington, DC and attended Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service. He received an MA from Catholic University and joined the Foreign Service in 1967. He began his career in the Department of Commerce and later served overseas in Germany, India, and Saudi Arabia. He retired in 1991. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1994.*

*Q: So you served in Saudi Arabia from '87 to '89.*

SPRINGMANN: Yes.

*Q: What did you go out as?*

SPRINGMANN: I was chief of the visa section. They had three people in the consular section, the chief of the section, a woman in charge of American citizen services, passports, notarial, and dead bodies,; and then I did visas.

*Q: What was the situation in Saudi Arabia at that time?*

SPRINGMANN: They were our very best buddies, and they saw us as their very best buddies. I remember going on a road trip to Jordan, and I was coming back and I was pulled over by this Saudi cop. And I couldn't figure out why he was doing this because I had consular corps plates

on my car that identified who I worked for. He said, who are you? And I said, American. Oh, America, kwayyis. Fantastic, good, wonderful, and then let me go on.

*Q: Was the House of Saud running things?*

SPRINGMANN: Yes. And the Americans maintained that Saudi Arabia was as stable as the Rock of Gibraltar used to be, but when I was there I sort of wondered about this. You had 4,000 princes. One of my locals described them as real princes, and chicken princes. Guys who had ability, talent, and connections, and then guys who by accident of birth could be called a Saudi prince. They were all throughout business, and throughout the government, holding meetings around the country and claiming this gave the ordinary Joe access to somebody at the top. But there was an awful lot of grumbling about how Saudis laid back and did no work, and raked in the dollars, and that they were a minority in their own country. They brought in Filipinos, Indians, and Pakistanis, and everybody else to do the work, from pumping gas, to running the banks. I wondered how long this was really going to last because the Saudis produced nothing at all. You couldn't even buy handicrafts in Saudi Arabia. They pumped oil and they made some office furniture, and some processed foods. And that was about it.

*Q: I must say, I was in Saudi Arabia in '58 to '60 and we kept wondering how long this situation, I mean the real oil money hadn't hit at that point, but more or less the same thing was going on, and we thought, "this isn't going to last either." What sort of visas was one issuing?*

SPRINGMANN: Mostly tourist visas, and business visas. Immigrant visas were handled by the embassy in Riyadh, but we did the processing and the paperwork for most of them.

*Q: We were having the problem that they tended to ask for official visas for students. Students were getting regular student visas at that point.*

SPRINGMANN: In the past I was told they were getting diplomatic visas. But you had the odd guy who demanded a diplomatic visa because he worked for the government. We'd say, fine, are you going on a diplomat assignment to the United States? No. Well, you can't have it. And they would get very huffy, and yell and scream at the embassy.

*Q: I take it there wasn't really a problem of people getting visas, if they had the money to go.*

SPRINGMANN: For the most part, no. Saudis were seen as good visa prospects, and the people I refused were people who tried to smart off with me for the most part. They woke up one morning and said, I want to be a student in the United States. And they'd come down and ask for a student visa. And I'd say, do you have the form, do you have the paperwork chopped off by the right people in the States? No. Well, you're going to need that to get a student visa. Okay, how about a tourist visa? Their intention was to go as a tourist, get the student paperwork done in the U.S. and then adjust visa status in California or wherever. I said, no, you can't do that.

*Q: Were there any great incidents, or any problems? I mean either for you at the time?*

SPRINGMANN: Yes, the major issue was visas. I started hearing about this visa business, and

how something funny was going on in Saudi Arabia back in Washington before I came out. I had a meeting with Walter Cutler, set up by the desk officers in State. He was then still the ambassador, before being succeeded by Hume Horan. He started talking to me about the problems that were created for him in Jeddah about visas. It seemed to revolve around people having trouble bringing their favorite servants over. This story didn't seem to track, and I had no idea of what he was talking about, except he was obviously giving me some sort of oblique warning.

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*Q: But you were saying you were getting...*

SPRINGMANN: Visa problems were surfacing in Jeddah according to the ambassador, but he never really talked about what it was. He only discussed it indirectly, which I thought was really bizarre. And I woke up thinking, what the hell is going on over there? Once I hit Jeddah, I started hearing from my staff about my predecessor and her problems with the Consul General, Jay Freres, about visas, and how he was ordering her to issue visas to people who were unqualified applicants. I was told repeatedly, whatever you do, don't get Freres mad. Then I heard from a woman who was doing citizen services about the fight that she and Greta Holtz, and the previous head of the section had had over illegal visas. And I settled in, and all I ever heard was how abrasive and obnoxious Greta Holtz, my predecessor, had been to applicants. Then I heard, Oh, you're doing so much better than Greta, you're doing a great job -- the Consul General told me this, and the CIA base chief mentioned this, and a political officer told me...So I went chugging along. Then after a while the Consul General came to me and said, would you come over here, I want to talk to you about some visa cases. And I said, what? Well, this guy has applied, but I want you to look at his his application. "He's a good contact", and from what I could see on the visa application, he seemed like an okay guy, and I said, fine. Then after a while Freres didn't ask my opinion, he demanded that I issue visas to people, and they were generally people I had refused on my own advice and the advice of my staff. And these were flat out 214Bs, "intending immigrants". They were guys that hadn't been in the kingdom very long, and they didn't have much of a job, and could give no clear and coherent reason why they wanted to go to the United States.

*Q: These were basically people who weren't Saudis.*

SPRINGMANN: Yes, they were Lebanese, Pakistanis, Indians. My assistant said, do this for Freres. And one of the other staff said, Greta had started a folder on all these people that Freres wanted visas for, do you want us to continue it? And I said, yes, why not? We'll have a record of all the people we opposed, marked as "issued under orders of Jay P. Freres, American Consul General". (And according to regulations, this is exactly what we were required to do.) Some of these didn't appear to be outright visa fraud such as a woman who didn't want to come for personal visa interview, and who asked for Freres' assistance. But there was a case of Libyan students. One of them had an American wife living in the U.S., and they wanted tourist visas. Their father was a rich business man, and Freres kept pressuring us to issue visas in rather strange circumstances. The CIA case officer assigned to the consular section objected to this, and it was bucked it up to the counselor for consular affairs, Stephanie Smith, and she gave a visa to

one of them, and denied the visa to the other one. It just went on and on and on.

And not long before I left, one contact who I thought had ties with the agency, said the price for visas at the consulate was \$2500, or 10,000 riyals. There was the suggestion that the Consul General did it because he needed the money. I reported this, there was a meeting with the regional security guy from Riyadh, and nothing was done once we decided our internal security was tight enough.

And then an inspection team came out. I was told by the same contact, that if you mention the visa problems at the consulate, or the problems with the liquor at the consulate, you're going to cut your own throat. And I started to write this down, and I said, no, I'll be smart, I won't say a word. I refused to talk to the inspectors. Finally, Joe O'Neill, an inspector, came over, and lined out to me all the problems that were at issue at the consulate: spying on American citizens, visa sales, this incredible emphasis on selling liquor at extreme markups to hundreds of people and never accounting for where the money went, attacks on the Arabic teacher, an American citizen, etc. He urged me to confirm the foregoing to improve management at State.

I did so and in the course of the conversation learned that the consulate liquor sales supported "off the books" intelligence operations. (The majority of Washington-based staff were employees of the CIA or the NSA which ran a large signals intelligence facility at the consulate.)

Following my return to Washington, I was told by a journalist with experience in the area that most of the visas to which I objected went to CIA operatives, many with terrorist ties such as Sheikh Abdul Rahman. He said he had stumbled on this while researching another story about a company called E-Systems and its links to the Agency. According to his sources, the CIA was sending people specifically to Jeddah for visas and had an arrangement with the State Department not to assign an experienced consular officer there. He said that such a person would strenuously object and would complain to the right quarters, jeopardizing the operation. Moreover, a seasoned officer with tenure couldn't be got rid of as was the case with me. (Subsequently, one FSO told me he retired rather than fulfill the constant demands for illegal visas at Jeddah.).

*Q: Liquor was forbidden in Saudi Arabia?.*

SPRINGMANN: Yes, that's right.

*Q: Then who was selling it?*

SPRINGMANN: The American consulate.

*Q: How could we do that?*

SPRINGMANN: They would hold parties on the consulate grounds which were safe from the Saudis. The Marine house would have 200-300 people on a Thursday night, which is the beginning of the weekend, for drinking and dancing. Guys told me how they would come for the first time, and order half a dozen beers and line them up in the crook of their arm and go gulp-

gulp.

*Q: You mean they were selling liquor?*

SPRINGMANN: Yes. They would have pool parties at the consulate and invite 200-300 people. They would just put out a flyer, party at the American consulate on Thursday night, or whenever. They'd have dinner dances, and there were hundreds of people buying tickets at Washington prices for the equivalent of \$10.00, or so, you got about four or five drinks. They'd sell cards, you'd have this punched every time you bought a beer. And people would buy two and three, or four of them...

*Q: Was this officially sanctioned?*

SPRINGMANN: Yes.

*Q: I find it just incredible because having served there, we used to play hanky-panky with liquor, but the liquor we would get we would pay for ourselves, and then parcel it out to guests. I mean, you certainly wouldn't charge for it.*

SPRINGMANN: The consulate had its own bar in addition to the pool parties. They initially didn't want me and the communicator bringing in people to the bar, saying it was bad. They would never specify why and create a problem for us. And eventually the word got out that, hey, we can make a lot of money and get a lot of information from well lubricated tongues. So all of a sudden the American bar, the Brass Eagle, became the place to go.

*Q: Selling liquor, under what auspices was this being done?*

SPRINGMANN: Under the American Employees and Family Support Association. And in the middle of all of this, you had American business men wanting to come to some of these functions. They were willing to work with the consulate, if we had free admission to the bar, we can supply the bar with pool tables and equipment, or we can make you all members of the American Businessmen in Jeddah for free, which was the local Chamber of Commerce. And at the same time the American Businessmen of Jeddah from time immemorial had had permission to hold a couple of dinner dances on the consulate grounds, at the pool and have dinner, and have drinks supplied by the consulate for which they paid. This was sort of sub rosa, but as long as it was under the table, and in the quiet, and just a couple times a year, it was permitted to be done.

And then the consulate started charging Washington prices, plus a big mark up. And the ABJ said, look, we're catering this thing, we're selling tickets, it's becoming fairly expensive to our membership to pay \$50 or \$100 a ticket, plus whatever it costs for drinks. Can we work out a deal somehow? And the consulate refused to do it, raised hell with the guy who came pushing it, and eventually got him expelled from the country. So it was a really strange situation. And the inspector went through all of this, and they said, well now, do you feel that you can talk about this? And I said, I was told that if I mentioned any of this, confirmed any of this, I would get my throat cut. I shouldn't do it. Well, we need to help you, we need to have this confirmed, we've heard this from other sources. We want to know somebody who has been directly involved. And eventually he talked me around to saying, yes, everything you've just told me is true. And I said,

is this liquor business part of a way of making money for the agency, which comprised more than half of the American people at the consulate, and two-thirds of the people who said they worked for State, didn't. He smiles, and nods his head. I said, Jesus Christ. Then I said, what's the story on the visas? Is it fraud, is the Consul General on the take? He wanted a copy of all the files we had on the visas we were protesting, and then nothing was ever done. Then, immediately afterwards, I get an efficiency report guaranteed to end my career in the Foreign Service. And I raised this with the counselor for consular affairs, and she said, this is bad, I'm going to talk to the inspector. And the inspector, according to her, agreed to recommend me for tenure, and wanted to look into this matter further. But, *mirabile dictu*, he had a couple of meetings with Freres and Chuck Angulo, the admin officer, and all of a sudden the inspectors had no interest in helping me. So it was definitely bizarre.

*Q: What happened then?*

SPRINGMANN: Well, I had gotten a name for myself by writing a cable reporting that one of my contacts had seen Saudis importing Chinese made Silkworm missiles, which got to the President as part of his daily intelligence briefing. The embassy was overjoyed at my doing this. I had a lot of reporting on Saudi women which the female political officer couldn't apparently manage, and I still had this report hanging over my head. I went to Washington, I talked to the executive offices in the Near East and South Asian Bureau which went through the ceiling when they heard about the liquor. I talked to the Bureau of Consular Affairs about this visa business, telling them I thought somebody was selling visas, but they just didn't want to get involved with it. Is Freres leaving, I was asked? I said, yes. Well, then the problem takes care of itself, doesn't it, I was told.

*Q: So then what happened?*

SPRINGMANN: So then I went to Stuttgart, and found out that I couldn't get my car licensed on the road, I couldn't get housing. They kept me in a hotel for three weeks when an apartment was already available for me. I eventually was shunted off into a corner and excluded from operations at the consulate.

*Q: This was '90? '91?*

SPRINGMANN: '91. Then I get a notice that I will get a third and extraordinary tenure review, but they're not going to give me another overseas assignment, I should come back to Washington. Once back in D.C., I was assigned to INR (the Bureau of Intelligence and Research), and then I learned I wasn't getting tenure.

*Q: So, how did you feel about this whole thing?*

SPRINGMANN: In some ways I was glad to get out of State because it was no fun anymore. I saw that the agency had persuaded State to give them their own consulate in Jeddah. When I was in Stuttgart, I began to wonder about the last two Consuls General. They did not have the track pattern of Foreign Service officers. It was more like somebody from the agency, or from NSA. In fact, one of them had worked for NSA at one point. The communicator was married to an agency

employee and he wanted to retire from State and work for the CIA. And the one liaison officer who had been civilian Army intelligence the first time I had been to Stuttgart had expanded to three plus a secretary by the time I had come back for my second tour. And the agency, which had been invisible the first time round, was meeting regularly behind closed doors with the Consul General during the second. So initially I thought when I was bounced out of State I had pissed off State Department officials, making allegations of corruptions and things like this, because I won my lawsuit against State for not giving me a medical clearance, I figured it was a way of just pushing him out the door. We're forced to give him a job, but we'll get rid of him. But after reflection, I realized that the explanation I had gotten from the journalist I mentioned earlier was correct: I was out because I had vociferously questioned an intelligence operation.

*Q: So, it was not the greatest experience.*

SPRINGMANN: Not at all.

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*Q: ...Mike, I think we're up to the last part.*

SPRINGMANN: Just about, although I remembered after I got home that there are a number of points I wanted to raise on Jeddah that I wanted to go through. There was one major thing there that I found totally incomprehensible and which nobody could explain easily. The CIA base at one point wanted to review every visa we were going to issue for certain classes of nationals. And when I asked why the CIA was getting involved in something the State Department is doing, I was told that they had better resources for finding terrorists than we did, even though all known terrorists were routed into the data base that the State Department used for checking for visa issuances.

*Q: You can't tell what was behind that.*

SPRINGMANN: And there was this bizarre emphasis on security at the consulate. They would search the local staff coming to work every morning, go through the women's handbags, run the men through a metal detector. But in cases of locally hired American employees at the consulate, these were never searched at all. And it was kind of a haphazard thing. They would search my car, for example, but would never look under the tonneau cover in the back when the convertible top on my car was down. But some poor soul who came to my party one night, and was going on to another function, he had to unwrap a gift package he'd carried with him to show there wasn't a bomb inside.

*Q: My general feeling is when you've got people doing it, one is haphazard and it doesn't make sense, but we're talking about a time when people were getting bombed. And in the Arab world there are a lot of undercurrents there. It's not the greatest, it's not done with great finesse, but there it is.*

SPRINGMANN: But it antagonized an awful lot of people.

*Q: Of course it did.*

SPRINGMANN: At a time when they had an x-ray device at the consulate for just such a purpose.

*Q: It's a haphazard thing.*

**BROOKS WRAMPELMEIER**  
**Consul General**  
**Dhahran (1987-1989)**

*Brooks Wrampelmeier was born in Cincinnati, Ohio on September 27, 1934. He attended Princeton University as well as the American University in Beirut, Lebanon from 1954 to 1955 before joining the Foreign Service in 1956. His career has included positions in countries such as Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Zambia, the United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on March 22, 2000.*

*Q: That was 1987 or so?*

WRAMPELMEIER: In the summer of 1987 I left the National War College and went to Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, as Consul General. I spent two years in Dhahran, 1987-'89. This was my last overseas post in the Foreign Service.

*Q: Tell me about Dhahran, I was a vice consul there back in 1958-'60.*

WRAMPELMEIER: I don't think you would notice a great deal of difference.

*Q: Was asbestos still coming out of the walls?*

WRAMPELMEIER: Oh, yes. There had been, of course, some additions made to the consulate office building. We had a glass-enclosed addition that housed the consular section and its waiting room and we had added another section across from it for the commercial section. Now the original stone building has two ell's creating a sort of courtyard. However, most of the housing was the same as you would have remembered it. About half the compound was taken over by the American School. The consulate general had roughly 25 Americans and maybe 75 local employees, most of whom were engaged in maintaining the compound. We had our own electric generator and water supply if we needed it. We had streets that had to be maintained, although they rarely were. It was an expensive operation. At one point I suggested to the embassy that, much as I liked this compound, I thought we should begin to think about returning the property to the Saudi Government and moving the offices into a modern high-rise office building. We could then buy or rent a house for the consul general while other American staff would be housed in the growing number of commercially-run residential compounds. In fact, half my staff were already living in such compounds which many of them actually preferred to living on the



consulate general compound.

It was an interesting period because first of all the long-time provincial amir, or governor, whom you may have known had retired. In fact, I finally got around to calling on old bin Jiluwi just the week before he died.

*Q: He was a real Arab desert sheikh of the first water.*

WRAMPELMEIER: He was still in the old emirate while across the street was a huge new glittering glass and steel building that had been erected for his successor, Prince Muhammad bin Fahd, the king's son. Muhammad's deputy was his cousin Prince Fahd bin Salman, the son of the Governor of Riyadh. Both had been U.S.-educated and spoke excellent English. They had brought a much different kind of government to the province. They were sophisticated individuals who were very much concerned about the economic aspects of the region. Of course, the economy was booming. Not only was there the expansion of the oil and gas industry but Jubayl had become a major area for industrial, mostly petrochemical, industries as well as a base for the Saudi Navy. Dhahran, of course, was still a major airbase although a new civilian airport was under construction between Dammam and Jubayl. It wasn't finished by 1990 but was used nevertheless by our forces during Desert Storm. The runways were useable. When it was completed, the old airport in Dhahran was to become primarily a military installation.

Aramco (the Arabian-American Oil Company) was also undergoing dramatic change. When I arrived John Kelberer, an American, was still the chairman of the board, but the president, Ali al-Naimi, was a Saudi and all but one of the senior vice presidents were Saudis. While I was there the remaining American senior vice president stepped down and was replaced by a Saudi. Sometime in late 1988, before I left Dhahran, the Saudis formally assumed control of Aramco.

The background of this transfer began in the '70s when the Saudis had negotiated with the consortium of four American oil companies that owned Aramco to buy the concession from them. The final Saudi payment was made sometime in 1980. John Kelberer once told me what had happened next. "I telephoned Oil Minister Ahmad Zaki Yamani and said that we had received the final check and he now had an oil company. Where did he want me to deliver it." Kelberer said there was a long silence at the other end of the phone and finally Yamani said, "Why don't you just keep running things the way they are." This led to a curious arrangement whereby the Saudis legally owned Aramco but the consortium continued to operate it in accordance with its charter issued by the State of Delaware. It wasn't until 1988 that the Saudis finally decided that they were ready to manage the company. John Kelberer retired and the then Minister of Oil, Hisham Nazer, became chairman ex officio of what was now to be known as Saudi-Aramco. Nazer later told me that when he first announced this new name to the Saudi Council of Ministers, everybody sat there trying to figure out what "Saudi-Aramco" meant. Finally, Nazer told them said, "Don't worry about what it means. Its name is just Saudi-Aramco. Period."

From that point on the company was officially a Saudi company. Over a period of time there continued to be further negotiations between the company and the four former owners - Chevron, Esso, Texaco, and SoCal - over various aspects of what each of the former owners was going to

do in the way of training, providing American technicians, etc. to work with Saudi-Aramco on various projects. In addition, Saudi-Aramco purchased a major share of Texaco's refining and distribution system in the eastern and southern United States.

Of course, as consul general, I tried to keep an eye on what was going on, not just in terms of what was happening within Aramco, but also what was happening in the oil industry in general. I was authorized to report directly to the Department on oil matters while keeping the embassy in Riyadh informed.

*Q: Our big contact when I was there was an American who staffed the Government Relations Department. Obviously with Arabs running this thing who would you talk to?*

WRAMPELMEIER: In addition to Kelberer, I talked to Ali Naimi who was then the Aramco president and is now the Minister of Oil for Saudi Arabia. I talked also to most of the other senior vice presidents and, of course, with people in the Government Relations office. One of them, David Bosch, is now head of the Saudi-Aramco office here in Washington. And there were still several other Americans who had been there for a long time, like Harry Alter. It was clear that at some point the American influence was going to be still further reduced as other managerial positions were Saudi-ized. Already Aramco was no longer distributing The Blue Flame, the little booklet that explained how to make bathtub gin without blowing up the bathroom or poisoning your guests. I think pork was no longer available in the commissary as well as some other things.

Incidentally, there was a young woman on the Government Relations staff. She had been a summer intern in State's Office of Arabian Peninsula Affairs when I was there and later had taken this job with Aramco. She had bought herself a little red sports car. Everybody asked what she was going to do with it since she could not drive outside the gates of Aramco. She said, "That's all right. As long as I can drive within the compound I am happy."

Another major preoccupation, of course, was the Iraq-Iran war which was still going on. In October, 1987, not long after I had arrived, the U.S. Navy clashed with the Iranians in the Gulf. One incident involved Iranian torpedo boats; another was a raid by our people on an offshore oil platform that we felt the Iranians were using for military purposes. We saw an increase of U.S. naval visits to Dammam. Oddly enough, Dammam suddenly became a very popular port of call for the Navy. The reason was that the American community, which was still several thousand strong, would turn out to take a whole shipload of sailors and marines off to the compounds and give them a nice day, making sure that they got safely back on board. You didn't see sailors wandering around town. We didn't have any serious incidents. The Saudis were perfectly happy with that. This arrangement worked very well.

*Q: Did you have problems with Americans being put in jail for automobile accidents, booze and all that? How did that work?*

WRAMPELMEIER: Yes. Unhappily, on my predecessor's watch, we had the case of one of the local employees of the consulate general who was responsible for clearing incoming shipments of household effects and office supplies that happened to be liquid. Whenever the consulate

general ordered a liftvan full for our little coop, he ordered an extra one without our knowledge. He then cleared both liftvans through customs but the second liftvan was delivered to him and two American business associates of his who were not associated with the consulate general. They then sold the contents covertly in the black market.

*Q: Was this a regular foreign service employee?*

WRAMPELMEIER: An FSN (Foreign Service National Employee). One day the Saudis followed the second liftvan to its destination and arrested the FSN and his two American compatriots and they all went to jail. My predecessor had been forced to provide some explanation to Prince Muhammad bin Fahd for why the consulate general had failed to prevent this serious infraction of Saudi Arabian law. I think our consular officer was still periodically visiting the two jailed Americans while I was there. Another case I can remember involved a privately employed American who visited friends at Aramco and drank too much "sadiqi juice." He had an automobile accident when he left the Aramco compound. He was detained by the Saudi police and given a breathalyzer test which mysteriously disappeared from the hospital before it could be analyzed. As there was no evidence of drunken driving, he was not brought to trial. However, he was fired by his Saudi employer and forced to leave the country. Things sometimes worked out that way.

I remember going to bat for an American woman who was arrested but not detained for taking pictures of a chemical fire up in Jubayl. The Saudis felt that was a security violation and were going to deport her. Her husband's American employers made a case that I took to the Emir and he agreed that she could stay. Fortunately, we didn't have serious problems like somebody being arrested for murder.

*Q: What about the very common American woman meeting a Saudi student in the United States, they get married and come back and they have some kids after which she says, "the hell with this," and she wants to leave with the kids?*

WRAMPELMEIER: I think I mentioned the case that I had in Kuwait where my consular officer was PNGed for helping an American woman in precisely those circumstances. By the time I came to Dhahran this case was still going. That summer of 1987 the woman, along with several other people, had made statements before a House committee describing how they had been abused in Saudi Arabia. She told about how her husband had taken their children illegally back to Saudi Arabia and how Saudi law prevented her from returning them to America. During my tour in Dhahran we finally were able to make some progress in letting her visit with her two children. My consular officer, Dan Goodspeed, was married to an Algerian and had a young son. I think that being a male and married to a Muslim, Dan was able to find a way to break the ice with the Saudi father. Previous consular officers had been female and this probably made the Saudi father uneasy. Dan made an arrangement to meet the man at a public function. Dan brought his child and the father brought his two children so Dan could report that he had seen them and that they appeared to be well taken care of. Eventually Dan was able to persuade the father to sponsor a visit to Dhahran by the American mother for very carefully supervised meetings with her two children. When I left Dhahran I think she had been able to visit twice. That was about the best that we felt we could hope for in her case, at least until the children (who

by now were thoroughly Saudi) reached an age where they might be permitted to visit her in the U.S. We had a couple of other cases but I don't recall them being as serious as that one. By and large, we didn't have many cases in the Eastern Province of that sort. Indeed, I knew of at least one Saudi husband-American wife marriage that appeared to be quite successful.

We did see during that period a growing concern in the Eastern Province about Iranian influence among the local Shia minority. There was an attempt made to blow up the Aramco refinery at Ras Tanura that came within a quarter of an inch of succeeding. The charge had not been shaped properly and was muffled by the heavy insulation around propane pipes which, had they blown, could have leveled part of the refinery. There were some young Shia who did get themselves into trouble and shot a police officer. Eventually they were captured and executed. There was also concern on the part of the Saudi authorities about anti-Saudi propaganda on Iranian television and radio which could be received in parts of the Eastern Province.

My own feeling, and I had contacts in the Shia community, was that probably the majority of the Saudi Shia simply wanted to be left alone by the Saudi Government. They were unhappy with the various restrictions that were placed on their religious life and practices and the fact that they were not usually able to get good jobs. They certainly were excluded from the police, the military and most government jobs. By and large, however, most Shia were politically quiescent. There was a small group who were pro-Iranian or at least wanted to do something to try to change the situation through violence. There was even a smaller group that one might call accommodationists who argued that the Shia should do more to earn the government's trust. Unfortunately, nothing much happened with that group. At one point, through an intermediary, I asked if Prince Muhammad might want to talk to people in this group. I got back the message that if they wanted to talk to him they could go through their community leaders. This would not have worked because clearly the community leaders were not the ones that were members of that group.

Unfortunately, what had happened at Ras Tanura and also at Jubayl, where someone did succeed in blowing up a tank of something, led to a clamp down on the Shia working at Aramco. Up to that point most of the security guards at Aramco were Shia. All of a sudden the Saudis realized that and promptly replaced most of the experienced company security people with bedouin whom they felt would be politically reliable even if they didn't know much about security. There was a lot of unhappiness among the Shia who traditionally had looked to Aramco as an important source of jobs. So the Shia's situation in the Eastern Province was not helped by this growing concern about security. At one point I was warned that a Shia group was surveilling the consulate general but we had no problem. When I left in September 1989 this was the situation. Since I left I gather we and the Saudis have substantially increased the security around the consulate general, especially since the bombing of the Khobar Towers which killed 19 U.S. airmen.

*Q: What was your impression of the American business community in doing business at that time?*

WRAMPELMEIER: There was a very active American businessmen's association that included people from Aramco like David Bosch, who served as president during part of my tour, and

people from various American companies mostly related in one way or another to the oil business. They were very active together with the other U.S. chambers of commerce in the Gulf in coming to Washington and lobbying the Congress and the Administration on matters related to trade preferences, restrictions, etc., which affected the interests of American businessmen in the region. The size of the American community, of course, had gone down from the heyday of the mid-'70s when there had been many thousands in the Eastern Province. What you had by this time was a fairly stable group of people and they did have periodic meetings which I attended. The consul general was an honorary member ex officio. They also invited the ambassador and various people from Riyadh to come down and talk to them, which they did. Adopting a practice that Fran Dickman had followed in Abu Dhabi and Kuwait, I held periodic briefings at the consul general's residence for the senior American businessmen. This enabled us to exchange information about upcoming events or to answer questions about U.S. policy. I think the association was an important aspect of our presence in the Eastern Province. The association was also responsible for organizing the annual Fourth of July picnic for the American community on the consulate general grounds. As the Saudi authorities made no effort to suppress its activities, I believe they also felt the businessmen's association made a positive contribution to our relationship.

*Q: Were we watching any of the interplay between the Bedouin army or the White Army, and the professional army? Were we looking at the Saudi military there?*

WRAMPELMEIER: I would say not a great deal because we didn't have any sense of tension between the two groups in the Eastern Province. I paid calls on the regular Army commander at his base on the road to Riyadh. I also called periodically on the regional commander of the National Guard, who happened then to be a son of the late King Saud. It was about this period that some of King Saud's sons were being politically resurrected. One son was head of the National Guard in the Eastern Province and another was governor of Baha Province on the western side of the country. I should add that the National Guard provided perimeter security for the consulate general compound.

*Q: So it wasn't a factor?*

WRAMPELMEIER: No, the two forces had their own separate responsibilities. The Saudi Army was not all that numerous in the Eastern Province and most of its units were stationed up near the Iraqi border. The air force and navy were more prominent than the army in the area around Dhahran.

*Q: I imagine the air force was almost Americanized by then wasn't it?*

WRAMPELMEIER: Well, the air force was fairly competent. There was the famous incident, I think in 1984, when the Saudis detected Iranian fighters coming across the Gulf and sent up two pilots who shot the Iranian planes down. While I was there, former Texas Congressman Charles Wilson, who was on the House Armed Services Committee and took a great interest in this part of the world, came out to visit. Prince Turki, the Dhahran air base commander, gave him a tour of the base. When they got to the ready room bunker in the middle of the field, Wilson looked up and said, "What is that red button?" Prince Turki said, "Well, press it and see." Wilson did and

immediately bells went off and pilots came running out of the ready room, the hangar doors swung open and the planes taxied out and were very quickly up in the air. The party barely had time to move its vehicles away from in front of the hanger doors. It was a very professional-looking operation. So, yes, I think the air force was regarded as fairly good.

*Q: I recall in 1959 or so a brigadier or major general air force officer saying that he called an alert one time and nobody appeared for a while. He said that they couldn't fight their way out of a wet paper bag. I relate this just to show how things had progressed.*

WRAMPELMEIER: Of course you have a lot of Americans working on the logistic side and on their training, etc. So I would say that the Saudi air force ran a fairly professional operation. The Saudi navy less so. It was still very much the junior service in Saudi Arabia. It had a nice base up in Jubayl and a training school in Damman. Their communication systems were probably not as good as the air force's and their crews still did not have extensive at-sea experience.

*Q: Well, you left there in 1989.*

WRAMPELMEIER: Although I still had another year to go of my three-year tour, I left Dhahran in September 1989 largely because my wife, whose parents were both seriously ill in Chicago, had not come with me to Dhahran. Her father died in December 1987 and as her mother's health deteriorated Ann had finally moved her to a nursing home in Bethesda. Visiting her at the home was becoming a strain for Ann because she doesn't drive and it took her two or three hours to get out to the nursing home each day and two or three hours to get back. One evening she had her purse stolen off her shoulder within two or three hundred feet of our house. Therefore I felt it was time for me to come back and play chauffeur at home. Also, I was 55 and had 33 years in the Service and it was time to start thinking about something else. Consequently, I put in for early retirement.

My successor had all the fun of Desert Storm which he and his wife handled beautifully.

*Q: Who was that?*

WRAMPELMEIER: Ken Stammerman.

*Q: Where is he now?*

WRAMPELMEIER: I think Ken is teaching economics at the University of Kentucky. I had known him at FSI when he ran the economic training program. He was in Kuwait as economic counselor while I was in Dhahran and he and Patty (who sadly died last year) had come down a few times to visit. Ironically, people from Embassy Kuwait came to Dhahran to buy pork.

**WALTER L. CUTLER**  
**Ambassador**  
**Saudi Arabia (1988-1989)**

*Ambassador Cutler was born in Boston, Massachusetts and educated at Wesleyan University and the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. After serving in the US Army, he joined the Foreign Service in 1967 and served abroad in Yaoundé, Algiers, Tabriz, Seoul and Saigon as well at the Department of State in Washington, DC, where he held several senior positions. In 1975 Mr. Cutler was appointed United States Ambassador to Zaire, where he served from 1975 to 1979. He subsequently served as United States Ambassador to Tunisia (1982-1984) and Saudi Arabia, where he served twice, 1984 to 1987 and 1988 to 1989. After retirement Ambassador Cutler was President of Meridian House in Washington DC from 1989 to 2006. Ambassador Cutler was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2010.*

CUTLER: It was only a few months after we had unpacked and moved back into our house, and I was mid-way in my teaching, when everything suddenly changed. I returned from giving a speech in Tulsa to find a number of urgent messages (this was before the days of cell phones) asking me to contact the State Department right away. Well, what had happened was a crisis in our bilateral relationship with Saudi Arabia necessitating the withdrawal of the officer who had replaced me in Riyadh as ambassador. His name was Hume Horan, one of our best Arabists.

*Q: Yeah.*

CUTLER: And he had been our ambassador I think in Cameroon and then also in Sudan, wasn't it?

*Q: Yes, I've interviewed Hume.*

CUTLER: Yes, a very bright fellow. But again, the crisis went back to this whole question of arms sales to Saudi Arabia. The Saudis were concerned about the growing power of Iran in the area, and they felt that they needed some intermediate-range missiles which they didn't have, and which because of our Congress, they couldn't get from us. So they went ahead and purchased some of these missiles from China, without consulting or informing us beforehand.

Thanks to our intelligence, we determined that these missiles had been brought into Saudi Arabia, and our concern was heightened by the possibility that they could be nuclear configured. All of this caused a momentary but severe crisis in our bilateral relations. This was in 1988. I was off the scene, over at Georgetown. And I won't go into details, because it gets very involved. But, in short, Ambassador Horan was unable to carry out instructions to protest to the King because, for a variety of reasons, he had lost personal access to Saudi Arabia's leadership. To his credit, he sent word back to the State Department that he was unable to do his job effectively and that we had better find a different way. In the event, the crisis was rather quickly resolved in Washington, rather than in Riyadh. But it had served to cripple Horan's ability to carry on his work.

*Q: Was he recalled on our part or because of the Saudis asking for his recall?*

CUTLER: I don't think it ever reached the point where he was asked to leave; in other words, declared persona non grata. But that might have been coming. In any case, the White House and State Department agreed that he should be replaced. And I was asked -- that's what the phone calls were about -- to return to Saudi Arabia as soon as possible. For how long? Not, as I had initially assumed, for just a few weeks or months, but to stay. Like a good soldier, I agreed. Presumably, this meant that I would have to be reconfirmed by the U.S. Senate, even though we all hoped this could be finessed in order to get me back out there as quickly as possible.

But it wasn't to be that easy. When, as was customary before a formal confirmation hearing, I called on Claiborne Pell, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, he looked at me and asked "Weren't you just out in Saudi Arabia? And, if you were, why are we bothering to hold another hearing?" My hopes sank as a staffer member from the office of another senator stood up and said that his Senator had a couple of unanswered questions: one was that he did not understand why our Saudi allies were buying these Chinese missiles without telling us. Also, he did not understand why one of our good professional diplomats had been so abruptly removed from his post. Before agreeing to sending me back, he said, his senator wanted these questions answered. Well, there was no way I could address these questions, since I had not been in any way involved in either one. So Chairman Pell agreed to defer my confirmation hearing until the Committee had a chance to interview Hume Horan upon his return to Washington. The whole process, including Horan's hearing and mine, meant that it was almost three months before I finally got off to Riyadh. Such can be the price of our democracy, crisis or not.

Meanwhile, I had been approached to take another job here in Washington outside of government: President of Meridian International Center. I'd been in the Foreign Service for some 33 years, and I'd been fortunate in my assignments. Moreover, Meridian, a totally international institution that worked closely with the State Department, seemed like a logical follow-on to my years in the Service. After considerable thought, my wife and I had finally decided to accept the Meridian offer. Then, at almost the very same time, the need for our return to Saudi Arabia arose. Fortunately, the chairman of Meridian's trustees understood the national need for my return and offered to hold the job open for another year. At the end of that year, the new Bush administration asked me to extend my time in Saudi Arabia for another two years. So I had to make another decision: Leave the Foreign Service and take the Meridian position still being held open for me, or finish out another full, second tour in the Kingdom and continue on in the Service. I chose the former.

*Q: Did you find when you went back there was a matter of smoothing the feathers on both sides, Americans and Saudis or was everybody to sort of say okay get this behind us?*

CUTLER: Very much the latter. By the time I got there, the blip on the screen of our relations had long passed and there were other things to be doing. So that was not a problem: the crisis had come and gone.

**DAVID M. RANSOM**  
**Director, Arabian Peninsular Affairs**



## Washington DC (1988-1990)

*Ambassador David Ransom was born in Missouri on November 23, 1938. He received his AB from Princeton University in 1960 as well as a BA from the School for Advanced International Studies in 1962. He served in the US Marine Corps from 1962 to 1965 as a 1rst lieutenant and entered the Foreign Service in 1965, wherein he served in Yemen, Iran, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia , the United Arab Emirates, Syria, and Bahrain. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on November 2, 1999.*

*Q: What was your job when you came back?*

RANSOM: I came back to be country director of the Arabian Peninsula.

*Q: How long did you do that?*

RANSOM: It turned out to be two years, partly with Murphy and partly with Kelly-- much less time with John than with Dick. It was a very good job. The Arabian Peninsula directorate had eight countries and seven embassies. We had no embassy in south Yemen. But that meant that you had seven ambassadors, seven embassies, seven sets of issues, seven sets of visitors, etc. It was a very busy job. It was also one that involved a lot of important issues, particularly with Saudi Arabia, with a lot of high level attention. It gave me the chance to catch up with my old friend, Prince Bandar Bin Sultan al-Saud. That was great fun. I liked the job very much.

*Q: What about Saudi Arabia? Were things on a fairly even keel with Saudi Arabia or were they somewhat distant from us during this period?*

RANSOM: We had the usual fights over arms sales. That was a pretty simple matter. The Israelis and their friends in Congress would complain bitterly about arms sales until we would give another \$100 million to the Israelis. Then they would decide, "Well, this time we can let this go forward." We were being held hostage in that sense. The fight was always described to be one of arming the enemies of Israel in a way that endangered Israel, but while there was an element of truth to that, it was just a very, very small element. The Saudis posed no threat whatsoever to Israel. It was basically U.S. politics that made arms sales to Saudi Arabia very difficult. The Saudis are very good friends of ours, probably our best friends in the Middle East, but an awful lot of people were impatient with the Saudis. They could be maddeningly slow in making decisions. They could be opaque. They weren't willing to join us publicly in support of the peace process—even such as it was. They didn't have the heart in many cases to stand up to Arab radical states. Their own society at home was not interested in what was happening beyond their borders. They were very rich; the oil price was an issue that deeply pained Americans. Carter in particular was forced into a series of almost humiliating pleas to the Saudis to help with the price of oil. That was one of the reasons why the Saudi portfolio was not easy to manage. There were congressional issues, public affairs issues, defense issues, intelligence issues. There were lots of things going on. While it was a big set of issues, it was hard to find any Saudis willing to discuss them with us. They could be very standoffish. Nevertheless, I think it's still a first-class portfolio.

**DAVID J. DUNFORD**  
**Deputy Chief of Mission**  
**Riyadh (1988-1991)**

*Ambassador Dunford was born in New Jersey and raised in New Jersey and Connecticut. He was educated at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Stanford University and the National Institute of Aerospace Technology of Spain. Entering the Foreign Service in 1966 Mr. Dunford became an economic, commercial and trade specialist serving in Washington, Helsinki, Cairo (Economic Minister-Counselor) and Riyadh (Deputy Chief of Mission). In 1992 he was appointed Ambassador to Muscat, where he served until 1995. Ambassador Dunford was interviewed by Elisabeth Raspolic in 2006.*

*Q: Does anyone leave senior seminar early. What happened?*

DUNFORD: I was the only one who left early from my class but I can recall other instances of it happening. I was slated to be DCM in Riyadh and in April of '88 we had what came to be called the Chinese missile crisis. Saudi Arabia secretly purchased and installed Chinese intermediate range ballistic missiles in a location south of Riyadh and we discovered it. Because we discovered it, almost immediately the Israelis discovered it and it became a public issue. Hume Horan was then ambassador in Riyadh. He had only been there maybe nine months. Hume had agreed to take me on as DCM.

*Q: To be his DCM.*

DUNFORD: Yes. Ned Walker was the guy I replaced. Horan was given very tough instructions to go over to see King Fahd. As a result of his meeting with Fahd, the king decided he no longer wanted to deal with Horan. He had a lot of other issues with Horan. Horan had been deputy chief of mission years earlier when the embassy was in Jeddah. He spoke fluent Arabic; some say better than the king, and I do not think the king liked being shown up. He also met with a lot of figures the king did not think an American ambassador should meet with. So even before the Chinese missile crisis, the king already had a laundry list of complaints. He chose that moment to tell the U.S. Government he did not want to deal with Horan any more. He did not formally expel him but made it clear to the U.S. Government that he would no longer be useful in Riyadh. Ned Walker had already departed post, leaving a gap of two or three months in the DCM slot. Ned agreed to come back for two weeks to break me in and introduce me around. I soon found myself in charge of our mission in Saudi Arabia. Leaving early was awkward because our children were in high school, both in their senior year, and about to graduate. I managed to extract a concession from Assistant Secretary Dick Murphy that I could come back for their graduation. That also allowed me to attend the senior seminar graduation which happily was the same week.

I remained in charge for over three months until Walt Cutler returned for a second tour as

ambassador. He came out of retirement and had already been confirmed once as ambassador to Riyadh. This either greatly eased or obviated congressional confirmation. I am not sure.

*Q: So he was back as chargé.*

DUNFORD: No, he returned as ambassador so the Senate must have confirmed him.

*Q: Yes, they must have confirmed him. But he-*

Q; But anyway, he came back.

*Q: It was just a one year thing.*

DUNFORD: He returned in August of 1988. I remember being in charge for about three and a half months. The Saudi mission was huge; about 1,500 Americans.

*Q: I was just going to ask what is the size of the Saudi mission.*

DUNFORD: This was the biggest job I had, including being ambassador to Oman.

*Q: Oh yes, I am sure it was much bigger.*

DUNFORD: We had two consulates-general in Jeddah and Dhahran.

*Q: Oh, two. Oh, Dhahran was there.*

DUNFORD: We also had USMTM, the U.S. Military Training Mission, which was our military assistance to the ministry of defense. We also had a separate mission to the Saudi Arabian National Guard.

*Q: You also had a large-*

DUNFORD: We had JECOR (Joint Economic Commission Office in Riyadh) run by the Treasury. I had some early challenges asserting control over both USMTM and JECOR.

*Q: So one does have to remind them.*

DUNFORD: I was a green DCM so the heads of these organizations thought they could ride over me. I had to learn some lessons in a big hurry.

*Q: What about the American oil contingent? Was that large or did-?*

DUNFORD: By then Aramco was Saudi Aramco. There was still a substantial American community. 30,000 Americans, counting families, lived and worked in Saudi Arabia. When the Gulf War came, managing the anxiety of the American community became a major issue for us.

*Q: I can imagine.*

DUNFORD: When Walt Cutler came back in August 1988, the big issues we were dealing with were Lebanon and Afghanistan. On Lebanon, the Taif agreement to end the Lebanese civil war was negotiated in the fall of 1989. Walt had departed for the second time at the end of April that year so I was Chargé for the Taif negotiations. Chas Freeman did not arrive to replace Walt until January of 1990.

*Q: What was happening in- Well first of all, the Taif agreement in Lebanon?*

DUNFORD: The Saudis brought all the remaining Lebanese who were in the parliament when the civil war broke out to Saudi Arabia and sequestered them in Taif until they were able to reach an agreement. There was not a lot to do in Taif – few bars or nightclubs. The Saudis were working with the Algerians and Moroccans in an Arab League committee charged to make this happen. The Saudis were very keen to have the agreement endorsed by the UN Security Council so they kept in close touch with the US, UK and French Embassies, the only permanent representatives of the UNSC with embassies in the Kingdom. I recall having to travel at least three times to Taif in October 1989, along with the British and French Ambassadors, to receive Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud’s demarches about what was going on in the negotiations. Prince Saud would brief us on the negotiations and tell us what he wanted our governments to do to support them.

I remember one fun story. Are you good for a fun story?

*Q: Oh yes.*

DUNFORD: The French ambassador, the first time we went to Taif, told us about this great hotel he remembered staying in years before called the Azizia. So the British ambassador and I booked ourselves rooms in the Azizia but when we got there it was just a pit. It might have been great 20 years earlier but the passing of the years had not been kind. We, the British Ambassador and I, decided to grit our teeth. It would only be for one night. I was shown up to this huge suite with a bare minimum of furniture. The British ambassador stopped by for pre-meeting coordination, he looked around the suite and expressed astonishment. He said his room was like a broom closet in comparison.

It turned out that his room was actually meant for his driver. Eventually, he got a decent room. We also learned that the French Ambassador, who recommended the Azizia to us, had chosen to stay in Jeddah.

Prince Saud met with us and, as usual, wanted immediate action from our governments. I found myself in Taif with no communications. I opted to phone my notes to Embassy Riyadh where Dick Jones, the new political counselor, was waiting. There were several problems with this. First, the only phone available went through the hotel switchboard so it was hardly secure. I guess this helped the Saudis check to make sure I got the message right. The second problem was that the only phone was on one side of the room and the only light was on the far side of this cavernous room and it was 10:00 at night. I pulled the light as far as its cord would allow and I

pulled the phone as far as the cord would take it and I stretched out, prone, on the floor. While talking to Dick Jones, I had to move back and forth from my notes in the light to the phone. At the end I started to giggle but you do what you have to do. .

*Q: Well, you also mentioned Afghanistan. What was the mission there?*

DUNFORD: Well, you will recall Charlie Wilson's War?

*Q: Yes, yes.*

DUNFORD: The Saudis provided the financing, we provided the training and equipment and the Pakistanis provided the location. The operation required a lot of consultation with the Saudis. Peter Tomsen was then special ambassador for Afghanistan. Peter is a wonderful man and very capable diplomat but also somewhat disorganized and forgetful which added challenge to managing his visits. He called me one time to tell me that he had a meeting with Saudi Intelligence Chief Prince Turki the next day but had not had time to get a visa. Getting the Saudis to issue a visa on short notice required heavy lifting.

*Q: No, it is a time consuming matter.*

DUNFORD: So on that occasion, it took about 24 hours of hell just to get Peter to his meeting. I enjoying the opportunity to accompany him and learn about the politics of the Afghan resistance, to learn about the key leaders like Sayyaf and Hekmatyar and the details of our effort to help the Afghan fundamentalists kick the Soviets out of Afghanistan. Of course, it was a huge example of blowback in the end.

*Q: That is right; it was a mixed blessing.*

*Did the \_\_\_\_\_ mission change when Chas Freeman came in?*

DUNFORD: Oh yes. Chas is one of the brightest guys I have ever met. He also has a big ego but we got along pretty well. I enjoyed working for him more than any other boss I have had. He generates so much work that it can be frustrating sometimes but I learned an incredible amount from him. Chas to this day helps me figure out how to think about issues. I read his speeches religiously.

*Q: What was Chas's connection to the Middle East at that point, because my knowledge of Chas is within China?*

DUNFORD: Chas had virtually no connection with the Middle East before his assignment to Riyadh.. He learned some Arabic during the long confirmation process.

*Q: He is a superb linguist.*

DUNFORD: The myth that he spoke fluent Arabic arose from the trip by then Secretary of Defense Cheney to Jeddah in August 1990 after Saddam invaded Kuwait to convince the Saudi

king to allow our troops into Saudi Arabia? Chas is a quick study and by then he no doubt understood enough of the conversation between King Fahd and then Crown Prince Abdullah to figure out what was going on but he was hardly fluent.

Chas reminded me a lot of Frank Wisner. One of my biggest challenges when I was running Egyptian affairs was getting Frank ready to go to Cairo as ambassador. Frank like Chas had Jesse Helms problems so he was kicking around Washington for about six months before being confirmed and it was exhausting. Frank would come in every morning with 100 new ideas, 99 of which were terrible but at least one of which was brilliant. But all the ideas had to be dealt with in some way. Some we could reject quickly, but some had to be staffed out until we could talk him out of them. I remember being so glad when he was off to Cairo. Once he was in Cairo, his ideas kept flowing back to Washington so we were not off the hook. Frank is an amazing guy. I will not try to rank Chas and Frank; both are brilliant. But I worked with Chas much more intensively. Going through the first Gulf War together really made our relationship close.

*Q: That took place while you were there.*

DUNFORD: It took place while I was there. In fact, I was Chargé - Chas was on vacation - when Saddam invaded Kuwait.

*Q: It seems like everyone was on vacation at that time; April was on vacation.*

DUNFORD: April Glaspie was on vacation. However, Nat Howell in Kuwait was not on vacation. This brings up another little story. Arnie Raphel asked me in 1987 if I would be interested in going to Kuwait as ambassador. I said no because I had both of my children going into their last year in high school. Had I ended up going to Kuwait, it could have been me trapped there.

So where was I?

*Q: It is the midst of- okay.*

DUNFORD: In Riyadh, we anticipated the possibility that Saddam would seize the disputed islands and maybe the border area where the disputed oil field was. I do not think anybody predicted before August 2 that he would take all of Kuwait. In retrospect it seems logical because it was really the equivalent of a bank robbery; Saddam needed the money and controlling Kuwait's financial assets and oil production was what he was after. We were fooled by the smoke screen of the territorial issue, the claim that Kuwait is the 19<sup>th</sup> province of Iraq.

So we were worried about a crisis but I for one did not anticipate how big a crisis it would be. Chas went off and on August 1 Taha Ramadan, the vice president of Iraq, came to Jeddah to meet with King Fahd the Kuwaiti vice emir. That night, the night of August 1, the Department asked me to find out immediately what happened at that meeting. I called Sheikh Mohammad, personal secretary in the king's office. I only met him in person once but it seemed for a while that we were talking daily or even more frequently. He was fluent in English and flawlessly efficient and reliable. The message I got was not to worry. The dispute was not yet settled but

that Iraq and Kuwait would meet again in a couple of days.

*Q: So this was not a courtesy briefing of the Saudis that Iraq was planning an invasion.*

DUNFORD: No, no. It was a Saudi attempt to mediate the dispute between Kuwait and Iraq and the night before the invasion the Saudis still were upbeat that war could be avoided. After I talked to Sheikh Mohammad, I still had to write up a cable so I did not get home and into bed until well after midnight. It could not have been more than an hour later, the Department called to say that the President wanted to talk to the king and they wanted a phone number. I called Sheikh Mohammad. Calling at 2:00 in the morning was no big deal because the king usually stayed up until about 4:00. I told him the president wanted to call the king, he gave me a number which I relayed to Washington, and I went back to bed. At 4:00 in the morning, Sheikh Mohammad calls, tells me the president has not called yet and the king wants to go to bed. So I called Washington again. By then, Washington had figured out that something was going down and were too busy worrying about that to call the king. I recall maybe another hour of sleep before the Embassy duty officer called to tell me that Iraq had invaded Kuwait. So, I drove back to the embassy.

The first issue on my plate was how to help Americans trying to flee Kuwait. Most did not have Saudi visas and we had to get the Saudis to allow them across the border. We sent two officers from ConGen Dhahran to facilitate the border crossing.

*Q: They decided they were willing to take them in or at least let them cross over?*

DUNFORD: Yes, the Saudis agreed to let them cross over. It took a lot of phone calls and considerable effort but there really was no friction about it. Then I recall a lot of back and forth to the Department about what was going on in New York in the UN. Yemen was at the time the Arab representative on the UN Security Council and the Yemenis dragged their feet on sanctioning Iraq. We were asking the Saudis what they could do about the Yemenis. The Saudis were wondering themselves what they could do about the Yemenis so there was a lot of discussion about that. It was a Thursday I recall, usually part of our weekend in Riyadh, but by mid-morning we had everybody not on vacation in the Embassy working. It occurred to me that we were working flat out on what was urgent without giving much thought to what was important. I wandered over to the Economic Section and asked Paul Daley, one of our economic officers, to think about what we as a government needed to think about and do over the next days. He came back to me with a brilliant draft message which I sent in virtually unchanged. He made two key points: first, given the loss of oil production from Kuwait and Iraq, the Saudis, the only ones with the spare capacity, need to double their production. Second, if the sanctions are to work against Iraq, the Saudis need to cut off the pipeline from Iraq through Saudi Arabia to the Red Sea.

*Q: They had that capability.*

DUNFORD: Turks obviously would have to do the same as the other Iraqi pipeline went through Turkey. Paul concluded that, if the Saudis are going to do stuff like this, which we needed them to do, we need to demonstrate that we will protect them. I do not know whether that message

influenced the decision making in Washington or not it was a brilliant piece of work that foreshadowed the strategy we chose.

*Q: And this was a junior officer?*

DUNFORD: Well, he was not that junior.

*Q: Mid-level.*

DUNFORD: Yes, mid-level.

*Q: Wow, that is great.*

DUNFORD: Over the next four or five days, we were in constant motion preparing for Cheney's visit. I cannot remember the details. I was back and forth to the foreign ministry. I do remember one interesting moment. I was given a message passed through other channels which warned that the Iraqis were massed on the border and could be preparing to come into Saudi Arabia. In retrospect I wonder if that message was not fabricated. Not fabricated but-

*Q: Designed to influence the decision.*

DUNFORD: Designed to influence the Saudi decision to let us come in.

*Q: Were Embassy Kuwait and Embassy Baghdad drawing down or were they sending their people to you at all, along with the citizens coming out of Kuwait?*

DUNFORD: Well, the embassy in Kuwait was taken hostage. So there were Americans coming out of Kuwait but not, as far as I remember, official Americans. Americans were trapped in the Embassy Kuwait compound. Iraqis did not go into the compound but they did not let anybody out.

*Q: Okay, well, they were there.*

DUNFORD: There was a military attaché, attached to Embassy Kuwait, who set up in a hotel room in Kuwait City and was phoning in real time intelligence about what the Iraqis were doing. His name was Col. Marty Stanton. I met him again in Iraq in April 2003 as he was attached to CFLCC (Coalition Forces Land Component Command).

Back to Saudi Arabia, Chas cut short his vacation and came back with Defense Secretary Cheney. I did not attend the famous meeting with King Fahd where we persuaded him to accept 150,000 American troops. When I heard what had happened at the meeting, I said to myself: Well, you have always wanted to be in the center of the action; now you've arrived. With 150,000 American troops coming to Saudi Arabia, it was clear that we were going to be the center of action for the foreseeable future. While 150,000 seemed amazing at the time, we ended up with about 500,000 US troops. The two big issues we worried about initially were alcohol (a controlled substance in Saudi Arabia) and women drivers in the U.S military (Saudi women did



not and still do not drive). General Schwarzkopf solved the alcohol issue with General Order Number One, which forbid alcohol in the Kuwait Theater of Operations. On women drivers, we worked out a deal with the Saudis that they would be treated as men as long as they wore their chocolate chip (camouflage) uniforms. When they were off duty, military women were counseled to dress in abayas.

*Q: I am surprised the Saudis agreed to that.*

DUNFORD: Well, they may have come to regret doing so. Remember, in November of 1990, sixty or so Saudi women demonstrated against the driving ban by driving around a shopping mall.

*Q: Yes I do.*

DUNFORD: The Saudi Government took so much heat from religious conservatives on that issue that they really cracked down hard on those women. The government took away their passports, chewed out their husbands, and took away their jobs if they had them. The presence of American troops in Saudi Arabia is really what triggered Osama bin Laden.

*Q: Where was he at the time?*

DUNFORD: He was back from Afghanistan. The bin Laden family, close to King Fahd and owners of a huge construction company, were very powerful and Osama had not yet been branded a black sheep by the family. I understand that Osama offered the Saudi Government the services of Arab mujahideen (returning fighters experienced in Afghanistan) combating Iraq as an alternative to bringing in the Americans. The royal family decided they were better off with the Americans but it was a difficult decision.

So with Chas back, the issue that took much of my time was dealing with 30,000 Americans, many of whom were hysterical about the threat of chemical weapons. Press reports suggested that Iraqi scud missiles could be armed with chemical weapons. Americans either wanted gas masks or for the US government to issue what we called a voluntary departure order. Private employers customarily would follow our lead and fund travel home for dependents and non-essential employees.

*Q: Yes.*

DUNFORD: As the shooting war approached in late 1990, virtually all of our posts in the entire Middle East were under voluntary departure orders.

*Q: ...Dunford, December 5, 2007. The interview being done by Elisabeth Raspolic.*

DUNFORD: I was talking about the fact that virtually every other post in NEA and the Near East bureau, including our Consulates General in Jeddah and Dhahran, were under a voluntary departure order. Riyadh was the only exception.

*Q: I should point out, voluntary departure pertains to the embassy's and consulate staff, not private American citizens.*

DUNFORD: That is right but the private sector looks to the government to trigger their own decisions about whether they pull their employees out. Some companies pulled out right after the announcement of the decision to send U.S. troops to Saudi Arabia. I remember we were somewhat annoyed at that because it sent a bad signal to the Saudi Government. But by the time December rolled around it was clear that this was a war by appointment. There was a UN resolution authorizing use of force and it gave Saddam until January 15 to pull out of Kuwait. So there was little doubt that war was coming. I remember feeling some relief that the situation was coming to a head because I did not figure to get a vacation until the war was over. We were working around the clock for about seven months straight.

The anxiety in the American community continued to build. The Department of State could not make up its minds what to do about either voluntary departure or gas masks. Our position was that we preferred voluntary departure. If the Department continued to resist that decision, then we needed gas masks. I recall a message from Washington in October endorsing that position, telling us that if the situation deteriorates to the point where we need gas masks, then the Department would pull people out. Well, that never happened until the missiles began to fall in Riyadh. We did not get the voluntary departure and we did not get gas masks. We decided to fill the vacuum by organizing a series of briefings in Jeddah, Dhahran and Riyadh for the American community. We pulled together a military team of experts in chemical warfare and missiles and tried to sketch out what the realistic possibilities were. For example, Iraq would not be able to destroy the whole city with one missile tipped with a chemical warhead. If you happened to be outside in the vicinity of such a missile strike, it would likely be lethal. If you were inside a nearby building, chances of survival were pretty good.

*Q: I suppose that is small comfort.*

DUNFORD: The narrative is now up to the shooting war. Let me step back a bit. One huge problem we faced as an embassy in the fall of 1990 was the flood of visitors. Riyadh was the center of action so naturally the president came for Thanksgiving, the vice president came for New Year's. The secretary of defense came perhaps eight times. Colin Powell, then chairman of the joint chiefs, also visited several times. Jim Baker, the secretary of state, made at least eight trips but most of these were after the war. Add deputy secretaries, undersecretaries, and virtually every congressman and senator, and we were running a huge visitor's bureau. Chas was quite acerbic in his messages to the department, saying that Saudi Arabia was being treated like a military theme park. Our message was we had a job to do and please cut back on the visits so we have time to do it. Schwarzkopf picked up on that refrain as well. Of course, we had little success stemming the flow and of necessity we got pretty good at dealing with the constant flow of visitors.

The war started and, predictably, the Iraqis started launching scud missiles both toward Israel and toward Dhahran and Riyadh. One benefit was the reduction in visitors. I remember the first day the missiles came. I was home, it was about nine or ten in the evening and I got a call from the embassy saying four missiles were incoming. We had an early warning system that allowed

us about three minutes warning. We had detectors that sent signals back to Cheyenne Mountain, near Colorado Springs, which were relayed back to Riyadh. The duty officer told me I had better come into the Embassy. I said bluntly that was no way I was going anywhere until those suckers hit the ground. We heard the first explosion and my wife Sandy went running to the window. We had briefed everybody in the embassy to stay away from the windows so I just about tackled Sandy to keep her away from the windows. The next morning she talked to her friends in Riyadh. They told her what a wonderful sight it was to watch the scud missiles coming in, the Patriot missiles going up, and the subsequent fireworks. I gave up and we would watch later missiles coming in from our balcony. When the real show was over, we went back inside and watched the replay on CNN.

Obviously, many Americans were terrified. It is hard, no matter the effort, to get everybody the kind of knowledge they need to deal rationally with a threat like that. We knew that all the scuds were aimed at one of three places: Riyadh air base, King Khalid International Airport and another air base south of Riyadh. Those who lived near the Riyadh air base, which was close to down town, had some issues. We in the diplomatic quarter were far enough from any of the targets that the chances of being struck were remote. That said, there was a stray missile in Dhahran that killed several members of a Pennsylvania National Guard regiment in February near the end of the war.

But here we are in a shooting war with no voluntary departure and no gas masks. Chas then let fire with a cable, which ought to be one of the classics. The message raked the Department and Washington over the coals for their inaction. He had me send a little follow up cable. It was a very simple cable that provided three lists of posts: a list of posts in NEA on voluntary departure; a list of posts under attack by scud missiles (Tel Aviv Dhahran and Riyadh); and finally a list of posts under attack by scud missiles but without voluntary departure orders (only Riyadh). The dam broke in Washington and we got both our voluntary departure and permission to issue gas masks.

*Q: If only you had them.*

DUNFORD: Right. So where were the gas masks? I still have, on a shelf in my home office, an example from one of the first shipments of gas masks. It is of World War II vintage, covered with graffiti and with a nonfunctional seal. What we eventually did is borrow a shipment that was destined for the Saudis. I hope we replenished the shipment after the war.

I still remember a message I wrote during that period recapping the sad history of our dialogue with the Department on voluntary departure and gas masks. A key sentence reminded Washington that by the time they ordered us to distribute gas masks, which we didn't have, we had successfully convinced most American citizens that they didn't need them. We found ourselves scrambling to get citizens out, sometimes under fire in Dhahran, on military backhaul flights (scheduled airline traffic dried up when the war started) while at the same time fitting those who chose to remain with gas masks. In the end Saddam, of course, did not use chemical weapons.

*Q: Was there any evidence of chemical weapons on the missiles coming in, chemical tips?*

DUNFORD: No.

*Q: No?*

DUNFORD: The explanation, in my view, is that Jim Baker, mindful of our failure to dissuade Saddam from invading Kuwait in August 1990, made it clear when he talked to Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz in Geneva just before the war that if Saddam used weapons of mass destruction, we would take Saddam out personally. I think Saddam got the message. Of course, we did take him out personally eventually.

*Q: Yes, eventually.*

*Had the Gulf War finished by the time you finished your assignment?*

DUNFORD: Oh yes. The war was essentially over in early March. That did not mean life got back to normal right away.

*Q: No. We still had 500,000 Americans.*

DUNFORD: But, eventually most went home. We turned our focus to the ambitious Jim Baker initiative to try to restart the peace process which culminated in the Madrid meeting in October '91. Baker made about eight trips to Saudi Arabia. I remember both Cheney and Baker made separate trips to Saudi Arabia while I was chargé so I got to see both in action. My impression of Dick Cheney was that he seemed much more rational compared to the picture I have of him today. Jim Baker impressed me as one of the most effective arm twisters I have ever been associated with.

*Q: Really?*

DUNFORD: I watched him talk Prince Saud into calling the king and getting permission to lift the Arab boycott against Israel. That was pretty impressive.

*Q: Yes, yes.*

DUNFORD: I was supposed to be reassigned in '91 and the Department called me and offered me ConGen Karachi which just did not attract me at all. I shamelessly begged Chas to keep me on for another year and it worked out very well for me. While the last year was not quite as exciting as the previous one, there was plenty to do. Collecting \$16.8 billion from the Saudis for our services during the war was a major challenge. I still remember the looks of anguish in the faces of the Central Bank Governor and the Deputy Finance Minister when I pressed them for prompt payment. The other issues we dealt with are a blur.

**CHAS W. FREEMAN, JR.**

**Ambassador  
Saudi Arabia (1989-1992)**

*Ambassador Chas W. Freeman, Jr. was born in Washington, DC in 1943. He graduated from Yale University in 1963 and joined the Foreign Service in 1965. His overseas posts included India, Taiwan, China, Thailand, and Saudi Arabia. He also held numerous positions in Washington, DC in Washington and also served as Assistant Secretary in the Department of Defense. He was interviewed in 1995 and 1996 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.*

*Q: Chas, we're coming now to something completely out of your ken, although, of course, Africa had already been out of your ken. How did your assignment as ambassador to Saudi Arabia come about?*

FREEMAN: I was, of course, due to leave the Bureau of African Affairs, after a bit more than three years there and a new administration, and the post of Saudi Arabia was open. It was nothing I had ever considered. In fact, one of my proudest achievements to that date had been to avoid the Middle East, with the poisonous domestic politics that it entails. I think, precisely because I had no record on the Middle East, and I had a reputation as a strong manager and a competent diplomat, and was available, I was offered Saudi Arabia. After a brief gulp, I accepted. I actually got the telephone call when I was in Mozambique, and it really rather stunned me.

*Q: You didn't have to ask where that was.*

FREEMAN: No, I knew where it was. I'd met very few people from Saudi Arabia, although those I had met I found really quite charming. I'd only had two experiences with the area.

I had transited the Arabian Peninsula, including Jeddah, on several occasions, going to and from Asia or Southern Africa, the Indian Ocean. In the middle of the night, when one gets off a plane, one forms impressions. I must say, they weren't terribly favorable. When the aircraft transited, for example, from Mauritius, the Seychelles, and then Jeddah on to Paris, I tended to be asleep, and I would be awakened by the sudden arrival on board of what looked to be animated black bags, who would sit down. Once the plane was in the air, these black bags would disappear into the ladies' room and emerge in Paris couturier costume or jeans and sweaters, very pretty ladies who were adapting themselves to life outside the kingdom.

Similarly, in the Gulf, at several of the airports there, I remember getting off in the middle of the night and seeing men sitting around at two o'clock in the morning, picking their toenails with daggers while they watched the female transit passengers.

So, overall, in cultural terms, I sort of wondered what I was getting into.

On the other hand, I had, in the course of my reading back at the Harvard Law School, when I was ducking classes there, read a fair amount on Islam, and, when I was in India, had quite a number of Muslim friends, and had some familiarity with the religion. I'd read histories of the

Arab world, which, however, mentioned the Arabian Peninsula hardly at all. After the explosion of Islam out of the Arabian Peninsula, it essentially became the empty quarter of the Arab world. Nothing of significance was presumed to have happened there by the Syrians, Egyptians, Lebanese, and Iraqis who wrote the histories.

So I started immediately trying to find what I could to read, and discovered there wasn't a great deal.

Saudi Arabia is unique in the following sense. It is the only traditional non-Western kingdom, political structure, if you will, that has survived intact into the modern age without having been conquered or significantly bent to Western ways. Japan, of course, was conquered by the United States in World War II. Swaziland, another traditional kingdom, which I talked about some time ago, had been taken over by the British. Thailand, where I'd also served, had deliberately absorbed many Western ways as part of its tactic of survival and adaptation. But Saudi Arabia experienced no missionaries, no soldiers, no foreign influence at all. And when the West came to Saudi Arabia, it came essentially as hired help.

The Saudi mentality, therefore, is much less full of self-doubt, much more self-confident, not to say smug and complacent. The Saudis, because of this history, lacked the angst that make many other Arabs, for example, Lebanese or Syrians or Egyptians, so full of self-deprecating humor. The Saudis are a very reserved, rather dour, dignified people, with few self-doubts. Their history teaches them that the more religiously devout they are, the more oil comes out of the ground. So I knew I was getting into something special.

Another consequence of the absence of foreign dominance, either in terms of conquest or influence, in Saudi Arabia, unlike many states in the Arabian Gulf, is that there is very little accurate literature on the kingdom. I found some reasonably good works done from secondhand sources at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and a few British books. Of course, there are the books of Abdullah Philby (the father of Kim Philby, the traitor), who became a Muslim and settled in Saudi Arabia, but who wrote copiously of his treks around the kingdom. There is Wilfred Thesiger's work on the desert and desert tribes. But really nothing I would consider terribly reliable about the modern kingdom. So, learning about Saudi Arabia was more a process of finding informants than it was of reading, unlike any other preparation for a post I'd ever made.

*Q: You served in Saudi Arabia from when to when?*

FREEMAN: That's an interesting story. I mentioned a bit of a misunderstanding with Senator Pell. Senator Helms, now the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, but at that time the ranking minority member, was equally dubious about me, I suppose because of my involvement with Cuba, Angola, and others. So not only was the nomination process the usual painfully extended one, because of the increasingly arcane procedures of investigation and paperwork that are involved, but it was summertime, and the Senate was not in session. Senator Helms, obviously, wasn't pushing my nomination, Senator Pell felt that he should take his time, and so it wasn't until the early fall that I actually had hearings.

*Q: We're talking about '89.*

FREEMAN: Yes. So I actually served in Saudi Arabia from about the middle of October 1989 to August 1992, just about three years.

*Q: I always think it's interesting to catch the new boy on the block looking at a bureau. You said you'd always avoided the poisonous domestic atmosphere. I wonder if you could talk about that atmosphere, and also your impressions of the Middle East and the so-called Arabists, which you were not. The Chinese hands, of which you were one, have always come in for a certain amount of scrutiny. But probably even more, mainly because of the domestic reasons, the Arabists have been looked upon. Could you tell me your impressions of that and the Near Eastern Bureau, as you went in, the things you'd been picking up by osmosis and observation.*

FREEMAN: I had, of course, served in NEA (Near East and South Asia Bureau) when I was in India, and had a great deal of respect for its tradition. I think it traditionally had a reputation in the Department of State of being one of the most efficiently managed and effective bureaus that there were.

On the other hand, people forget that, up until Lyndon Johnson's time as president, the United States maintained an arms embargo on Israel and Egypt and the Arab countries, and tried to keep strictly neutral between them. But in the mid-'60s, in the wake of the first really major war between an established Israel and Egypt and Syria, and through the '70s, Israeli influence over American foreign policy on Middle Eastern matters, and indeed on Soviet matters as they bore on Jewish immigration from the Soviet Union, became deeper and deeper, and the relationship became closer and closer, to the point where there was a virtual hammerlock on American foreign policy.

The American Jewish community, which had always been extremely suspicious of people who trafficked with the Arabs (who, of course, were professed enemies of Zionism in the Jewish State, and who, by and large, over the period of the '50s and '60s, abandoned the policies of tolerance they had toward Jewish minorities, and made life miserable for these minorities or actually expelled them), became increasingly hostile to Arabists in the State Department. It essentially became difficult, if not impossible, for Foreign Service officers dealing with the Arab world, or with the Middle East generally, to take anything other than a stance that was assertively loyal to causes espoused by the Israelis.

Whether the officers believed what they were saying or not was another matter, but they knew that the price of remaining in business was appropriate deference to Israeli interests.

By the '80s, as AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee), which was only formed at the end of the '70s, achieved the transcendent influence in the Congress that it did, there was an atmosphere of intimidation, worthy of the McCarthy era, in many respects, imposed on Arabists.

So, when I spoke of poisonous politics (without taking any position on the merits of Israel's case versus Arab countries'), I was referring to the sense that those of us in the Department of State, observing NEA from afar, had that the Arab specialists there were operating under extraordinary

political constraints, really worthy, in many ways, of those that apply in totalitarian countries. They could not speak, even privately to friends, an ill word of Israeli actions, let alone Israeli policy, without fear of consequences to their career. So this was not the sort of situation that one voluntarily moves oneself into, unless one has some great affinity for the Middle East, which I didn't.

In any event, since I had no record at all on Middle East questions, and indeed really had quite an open mind on them, and didn't know much about either Israelis or Arabs, except to the extent that I'd dealt with Israelis on non-Middle Eastern issues, where I actually had a very cooperative relationship with the Israeli Embassy. So they were quite surprised, but not at all displeased, about my nomination, and there was no opposition at all from that quarter. It still struck me that, from a personal point of view, it was a good thing that I was going to a part of the Arab world that was not directly involved in the Arab-Israeli dispute, but which presented a series of different issues.

This was, of course, the last gasp of the Iran-Iraq War, which was in the process of being settled.

We had a longstanding, cordial relationship with Saudi Arabia, which, however, had come under strain on a number of issues, precisely as the Israeli influence over U.S. policy grew.

For example, the Saudis, in the mid-'80s, wishing to upgrade and modernize their air force in the face of a threat from Iran, which was a real threat, wanted to buy F-15s.

*Q: F-15s being...*

FREEMAN: F-15s being, at that time, modern, frontline, fighter bomber aircraft. In any event, they had some F-15s; they wished to buy some more. This followed several incidents between the Royal Saudi air force and the Iranian air force over the Gulf. The Reagan administration approved that, but it was essentially blocked in Congress by friends of Israel.

At that point, the Saudis turned emphatically to the British, making a deal called al-Yamamah, after the name of a town in pre-Islamic times and the name of a palace in Riyadh, where the king now resides. The word means dove in Arabic. They made a deal with the Brits that involved the purchase of a large number of Tornados, a British bomber. That contract grew over the years, from the mid-'80s, into a sort of open-ended, general military procurement contract, which covered everything from barbed wire to airport construction and communications equipment. In other words, any military item that the Saudis wished, they could have, drawing on this relationship with British Aerospace, achieve. The al-Yamamah arrangement, furthermore, was immune from any difficulties in the Saudi budget, because it was essentially funded by a stream of oil; that is, a certain portion of Saudi oil production was dedicated to the al-Yamamah project. It was turned over to British Petroleum and Royal Dutch Shell for marketing. They then remitted the proceeds of sale, after refining, to an account in the Bank of England held by British Aerospace. The Saudis could draw at will on that account to procure British defense equipment. So it was a very cozy deal. I might say, there were many substantial sweeteners for Saudis involved in the process of setting this up and managing it, in the form of the usual rake-offs that one expects in the region. So that was a bad turn in U.S.-Saudi relations.



A second one came when the Saudis, again in response to developments between Iran and Iraq, meaning the War of the Cities, as it was called, hundreds of Scuds fired...

*Q: Scuds being...*

FREEMAN: Scuds being a Russian upgrade of the German rockets of World War II, a rather crude, 200-300-mile-range ballistic missile. Hundreds of these were fired by the Iranians on Baghdad. The Saudis became very concerned about the potential for Iranian use of these against Dhahran and the oil facilities. They wished a retaliatory capacity, so they sought to buy the Pershing, which was an even shorter-range, probably 100-150-mile-range, missile that we used in Europe for nuclear purposes. The Saudis did not want a nuclear warhead, they wanted a conventional one. But this was dismissed out of hand. That led the Saudis to turn to the Chinese, and they bought a 1,500-mile-range, behemoth missile, called, by us, the CSS-2.

That led to a sharp deterioration in relations, and also played a key role in one of my predecessors, Hume Horan, being declared persona non grata; that is, the American ambassador essentially expelled from the kingdom.

So, although the relationship was cordial on one level, it was also quite strained on others. And, by 1989, the United States had fallen to fourth place among Saudi Arabia's suppliers of military equipment and services; that is, the British, French, and Chinese were all ahead of us, which was hardly a healthy state for the relationship.

Moreover, despite the escort of Kuwaiti tankers during the Iran-Iraq War, to protect them from air attack from Iraq, but also from Iran, and close U.S.-Saudi cooperation in that operation, there really had been no high-level travel by members of the U.S. Cabinet to Saudi Arabia, to speak of, for years. I think the last secretary of state to visit had been Henry Kissinger, which was probably in 1976, and this was 1989. Two secretaries of defense -- Mr. Weinberger and Mr. Carlucci -- had made very brief visits, of several hours, essentially in transit between places. No secretary of commerce had ever visited Saudi Arabia, despite the fact that about fifty percent of U.S. exports to the Middle East go there.

Saudi Arabia, in short, was not on the policy map in Washington. The relationship was fraying. The underpinnings of it, commercially, remained strong. Hundreds of thousands of Saudis had studied in the United States or been trained by Americans. The Saudi sense of connection to the United States was strong, but the American sense of connection to Saudi Arabia was weak. Official interaction was infrequent to nonexistent. So it was an odd set of contrasts.

I really became aware of this over the course of the summer of 1989, as I sat awaiting, first, nomination and then a hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and applied myself, over the summer, in half-day stints at the Foreign Service Institute, to learning Arabic.

I found it surprising, because my image of Saudi Arabia and the American relationship to Saudi Arabia had been quite different. I think the image I'd had was largely colored by the very successful U.S.-Saudi-Chinese joint venture in Afghanistan, in which Saudi Arabia and the

United States supplied the money and management, and the Chinese supplied the equipment, for the Mujahideen, ultimately making the Russian occupation of Afghanistan untenable. Indeed, the one area of the relationship that did seem to be somewhat intimate was cooperation on covert action of that kind. In fact, the Saudis had gotten themselves in a bit of trouble by responding positively to a White House request, under Reagan, for some money in connection with the Contras in Nicaragua.

In other words, Saudi Arabia was a reliable friend, but one that was feeling a bit neglected and a bit hurt by rebuffs by the Congress.

In any event, over the course of the summer, as I learned Arabic and waited for my hearing, I began to meet more and more people from Saudi Arabia. There was a very helpful seminar put on by the Bureau of Intelligence and Research at the Department of State, at Meridian House here in Washington, at which a number of former ambassadors, business executives, and scholars provided papers and did a briefing for me. But Saudi Arabia remained very much an abstraction to me, and I didn't have much idea of what I would see when I got there.

*Q: We're talking about the summer and the fall of '89. You said the Iran-Iraq War was running down. What were you getting from those who were in NEA dealing with Iran and Iraq, as far as how it was going to come out and what it was going to mean?*

FREEMAN: Very little information came to me on the negotiation process that was going on between Iran and Iraq.

The people dealing with Arabian Peninsula affairs at that time were much more interested in the Taif Accord, which was the Saudi-brokered process at the Saudi city of Taif that produced a reknitting of a coalition regime and constitutional guidelines in Lebanon, including dealing with the issue of Syrian withdrawal from areas that Syria had occupied while Lebanon was in a state of anarchy.

Oddly enough, although the Arabic version of the Taif Accord was available, nobody had translated it. My first exercise in translation of Arabic was to do the translation, for NEA, of the Taif Accord, which I did sometime in August or September, and was very pleased to find that, in the short time I'd had, I'd gotten to the point where I could sit down with a dictionary and translate what was quite a complicated Arabic legal constitutional document.

Aside from the Taif Accord, the other great issue was the prospective sale, by General Dynamics, of a main battle tank to Saudi Arabia, in competition with the British, French, and Germans, and in sort of partial competition with a Brazilian tank, the Osorio, which actually wasn't directly comparable. It was not a heavy tank, it was a medium tank, and not really in contention.

There, I think perhaps I played a useful role in stimulating General Dynamics to pioneer a technique that has since been used quite successfully in terms of generating congressional support for sales of this kind, against opposition (in this case opposition from AIPAC), by getting them to do a study of the economic impact of the deal on every congressional district in

the country, so that each congressperson was provided, in his home district, with an indication of the number of jobs that would be generated if the sale were to go through, or, conversely, the number of people who would be laid off if the sale did not. That ultimately did produce a congressional non-veto of the tank deal, which went through.

But, no, nobody was talking to me very much about Iran and Iraq.

*Q: Obviously, this became the thing, but was anybody saying, "Well, we're going to have a victorious Iraq sitting there"? Was this in the cards at the time we're talking about?*

FREEMAN: I heard that from no one. I did, myself, as I looked at the situation, come to that conclusion, and later, when I was ambassador in Riyadh, wrote fairly extensively on that and its implications. But that's jumping ahead.

*Q: You say you were confirmed in the late fall.*

FREEMAN: I was confirmed in October, sworn in, and went out to Saudi Arabia, to be greeted by Dave Dunford, who'd been chargé for eight months.

*Q: Who had been the ambassador prior to you?*

FREEMAN: That is an interesting story. After Hume Horan was expelled, there was a four-month gap, during which, again, Dave Dunford held the fort. And then Hume Horan's predecessor, Walt Cutler, who is the president of Meridian House and who presided over the briefing I mentioned, was recalled to a second tour in Saudi Arabia, which lasted about eight months. Then he left, and there was an eight-month gap. And then I arrived.

*Q: The Saudis must have been thinking, "What the hell is this?"*

FREEMAN: I'm sorry to say that the gaps have gotten progressively longer since that time.

In any event, Dunford had been very much in charge.

I recall an amusing incident as we came in from the airport. I asked him to tell me about the employees of the embassy, specifically the Saudi employees, the Foreign Service national employees. He laughed and said that was a bit of a joke at Riyadh, in that, when the beautiful new chancery building had been commissioned by George Bush, as vice president, Bush had given a speech in which he praised the hard-working Saudi employees of the embassy. Dave Dunford informed me that there was only one Saudi working at the embassy, but we had thirty other nationalities. I asked him who the Saudi was, and he gave me a name, which didn't make much impression. I said I'd like to meet him, and I did meet him the next day. It turned out his name was Muhammad Gireaux, which is a French name. And we were able to trace a common ancestor. So the only Saudi employee of the embassy turned out to be distant cousin of mine, through a French connection.

But I must say, at this point, and it was proven beyond any doubt in the performance of the

embassy during the Gulf War, that the quality of the third-country national staff of that embassy is extraordinary, quite the best group of people I've ever worked with, and I've worked with some good ones.

The embassy itself had recently, a couple of years before, relocated to the diplomatic quarter in Riyadh. It originally had been in Jeddah, and then in temporary quarters in Riyadh. There was a residence for the ambassador under construction, barely under construction. My residence was downtown, in the Suleimaniyah district, a wonderful house, with a sort of hanging garden over an indoor swimming pool. So I was plunked down in that.

I recall that I'd had a bad cold, and, arriving in Riyadh, found that both of my eardrums had popped out, and my ears were bleeding as I was greeted by royal protocol at the airport.

But I settled in. I was astonished by Riyadh, really. It's a city that, in the mid-'40s, was a mud-walled village of twelve thousand, with only one electrical generator and a couple of telephones, one in the king's bedroom and one in his mother's bedroom, because he was very close to his mother.

*Q: That was `Abd al-`Aziz.*

FREEMAN: `Abd al-`Aziz. It had mushroomed into a vast, sprawling, sort of Los Angeles-type city, connected by motorways and superhighways, and contains some spectacular contemporary architecture and public buildings. The Saudis took the windfall that they got from the oil price rise after the Arab embargo and recycled it to the benefit of the Saudi people, building roads, hospitals, public buildings, universities, new schools. And so you really, in a way, have a 21st-century environment there, even though the culture very much retains most of its traditional premodern elements. Somebody whom I asked at the embassy who had just arrived from Moscow told me that the difference between Moscow and Riyadh was that Moscow was a Third-World city inhabited by First-World people, and that Riyadh was the opposite. Learning to time travel and shopping around prayer time was quite an experience. There were a lot of adjustments that had to be made.

I found, however, the Saudis with whom I was to deal, first, of course, the foreign minister, whom I saw promptly to present a copy of my credentials, and then the custodian of the two holy mosques, King Fahd, and other ministers of the government, to be very shrewd, but very gracious people. Over the course of the three years there, I developed a great deal of respect and affection for many of them.

*Q: Let's talk a bit about the embassy. You had a DCM who had been chargé for two long, extended periods, is that right?*

FREEMAN: Right, and who had a bit of the problem one would expect, of stepping gracefully back.

*Q: I was going to say. Could you talk a little about that, because this is one of the things that's endemic within the Foreign Service. It's probably true in any other thing, but particularly in our*

*business, where you have somebody running things, and all of a sudden having to step back. And this was your first embassy.*

FREEMAN: We had a period of some adjustment. I should say that to run the embassy in Riyadh is to run something really unusual, in that, when one included all of the different elements of the diplomatic mission, most of them paid for by the Saudis and therefore not visible on American staffing patterns or payrolls, the total American population under the ambassador is about five thousand. This dwarfs any other embassy in the world. And it's a very well-kept secret.

There was a series of problems that my arrival was able to address.

The Department of the Treasury, in the '70s, had established with the Saudis a joint economic commission that was essentially a reimbursable assistance program by which Saudi ministries, through the Ministry of Finance in Riyadh, could acquire the services of American specialists. In its heyday, this had about four hundred American bureaucrats working in Saudi ministries around the kingdom. And they played a really seminal role in developing the Saudi Census Office, building the desalination plants that were the source of all the water for these large, new cities, doing budget planning, and so forth and so on, really across the board.

Treasury, however, ran this operation, to the extent it could, without reference to the embassy. This was aided initially, before the embassy moved to Riyadh, by the fact that JECOR, as it was called, was in Riyadh, whereas the embassy was in Jeddah, and the ambassador visited infrequently. There was a very small liaison office in Riyadh for the embassy, but it was not able to exercise any real oversight over JECOR.

Dave Dunford, I think quite sensibly, had made a strong effort during his tenure to begin to assert some measure of guidance over JECOR, as was appropriate. To do that as a chargé, however, is extremely difficult. It had resulted in an essential rupture of relations between the deputy assistant secretary of the treasury and Dunford.

And so my first act was to try to straighten this out by denying the deputy assistant secretary of the treasury country clearance, thus establishing who was in charge. It took several months of discussion on the phone, and finally face to face, to establish a pattern by which JECOR, while remaining quite autonomous, not only informed me of what they were doing, but actually took guidance.

This, in the end, turned out to be very helpful not only to me, but to JECOR, because the luster had quite worn off JECOR by 1989 and 1990, and I was able to work with the Treasury Department and the Ministry of Finance and others to reorganize, restructure, and revitalize JECOR and give it a new lease on life, so that everyone benefited.

I think Dave Dunford was most grateful to be relieved of this burden. But, generally, as you say, and as I've experienced, it's not easy to step back. I think he had a bit of problem doing that. But we worked out a very good relationship, which served us well during the ensuing martial arts festival in the Gulf.

*Q: You say "denied country clearance." What does that mean?*

FREEMAN: What it means is that officials of the United States government may not visit a foreign country to do official business without the approval of the ambassador, meaning, for most purposes, a routine notification and routine approval by the embassy. The purpose of this is to ensure that U.S. government activities in a country are in fact coordinated by the ambassador, as he is supposed to do. It's very rare for someone to deny permission for a government official, particularly a senior government official, to visit.

I did it on two occasions. Once was with Mr. Schotta of the Treasury, with whom, by the way, later I developed a very good relationship. Sometimes it's necessary to fight in order to form friendships. The other occasion was the Foreign Buildings Office interior designer, whose, in my view, gross mismanagement and appalling taste in the furnishing of a really quite spectacular new ambassador's residence, and whose total unresponsiveness to any suggestions from the post or from the ambassador, led me to believe that her presence was not necessary.

I might say that, the minute I left, Treasury reverted to its old ways immediately. Which is always what happens; the bureaucracy can wait out any transient, like an ambassador. And the FBO designer promptly came out and undid everything I had done and did it back her way. I was rather pleased later to find that my successor, when he ultimately got there (there was a two-year gap between me and my successor), quite independently, without having talked to me, undid everything that the interior designer had done and put it back more or less the way I had.

But Dunford was an enormous source of information and sound guidance on how to do business in the kingdom.

I inherited a secretary, Alice Boynton, from my predecessor, Walt Cutler. And she also, having served a full tour in Riyadh, knew how to get things done.

So I got off, I think, to quite a smooth start.

There was some wait to present credentials to the king, which is normal. [14 January 1990.] But it wasn't very long, and then I began to establish a relationship with him and with his office quite early on. In fact, I saw him clandestinely before I publicly presented my credentials, in connection with an official visitor from Washington, the director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

*Q: Still talking about the embassy operations, before we move to the broader scheme of things. At the time, what did you see as the role, and what was your impression of the operation and use of our consulate general in Dhahran?*

FREEMAN: The diplomatic establishment, as distinct from the diplomatic mission, consisted of an embassy in Riyadh, with something under a hundred Americans working in the embassy; a rather large consulate general in Jeddah, with a strong commercial focus, but also a focus on the hajj, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, both because of its implications for Saudi Arabian internal security and also because a growing number of American Muslims were making the pilgrimage; and, finally, a small consulate general in Dhahran.

Dhahran actually consists of three joined cities, al-Khobar, ad-Dammam, and Dhahran. The principal function of Dhahran was threefold. One, to keep an eye on the Saudiized Aramco and oil production, and maintain liaison with them. Second, to promote business in the Saudi Arabian eastern province, which was growing fast economically, on the basis of the oil production and demand for services there. Third, of course, to provide consular services to the rather large number of Americans who lived and worked in the eastern province, many of them for Aramco, but many for other companies as well.

There were efforts made, ironically, on the eve of the war, to close Dhahran, on the grounds that it was irrelevant in the modern age. Extremely ironic, because we then sent five hundred and fifty thousand soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines to protect the very interests that Dhahran was charged with managing.

I should say that Saudi Arabia really consists of five regions, maybe six, but only three of them are really relevant to our interests, particularly.

The central region, the Nejd, is where the political power of the kingdom arose and remains the cultural center. The dominant national culture of the country is in the Nejd. And Nejdis dominate the government, along with people from the Qasim region to the north.

The eastern province, where the oil is mainly found, has a very substantial Shi`ah minority (Saudi Arabia is, of course, a Sunni Islamic country), and a very distinct culture that is closely related to the culture of Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates. In other words, a culture focused on what we call variously the Persian, or the Arabian, Gulf.

The Jeddah consulate, in the western province of the Hejaz, has yet another culture, one that has a cosmopolitanism, coming from centuries of pilgrimage through Jeddah to Mecca and Medina, and well-established trading families, whose wealth has grown along with that of the kingdom, but a very different, softer, more tolerant cultural tradition than the very austere Islam of the Nejd, and quite different from the Gulf atmosphere of the eastern province.

*Q: Since I'm an old consular hand, I wonder if there were any particular problems with Americans getting involved in the hajj?*

FREEMAN: No, there were not any particular problems involving Americans. However, the hajj in 1990 saw a terrible disaster, in the form of the trampling of a large number of people who panicked. You're talking about crowds, which, at that time, were a bit over two million, concentrated in a small space. They've now grown to much more than that, maybe three million. And it's extremely difficult, under the best of circumstances, to manage such a willing throng.

There had been, of course, in the past, prior to my arrival, a series of incidents in Mecca, one of them homegrown, in 1979, in which the Great Mosque itself was seized by a Saudi religious radical and his followers, and had to be taken back by the Saudi Arabian National Guard and Ministry of Interior forces. And, after the Iranian Revolution, there were efforts by the Iranians to politicize the hajj by making it into a xenophobic, anti-Western event. So there was always a

certain amount of tension, in security terms. There were bombs that occasionally were placed.

In 1990, without recalling the details, there was a terrible incident in which many people were trampled to death. Fortunately, I don't believe there were any Americans among them. But my Indian and Pakistani and Bangladeshi colleagues had a large number of their citizens killed. The difficulty of identifying bodies, in a place in which everyone, by religious edict, is dressed in a seamless, unsown, white costume that is identical and bears no identifying marks, became apparent. In subsequent years, I had many discussions with the minister of interior, Prince Naif, and with the minister of hajj and endowments, about the adoption of the sort of hospital bracelet identification system that we have here. And I think that is now actually being implemented.

But, during my tenure, there were no really notable problems with the hajj. There were some rather prominent Nation of Islam black Muslim hajjis, who kept a distance from the embassy, and who, I think, found a more tolerant vision of Islam when they mixed with all the different racial groups together at Mecca, and saw that Islam was the very opposite of the racist vision that many of them had professed prior to coming on the hajj.

*Q: Again, sticking to this type of problem. Did the embassy get involved in parental problems of American women married to Saudis? And then the children, where do the children go? This is always a problem. And you say over a hundred thousand Saudis studied in the United States, and they're mostly male, and life being what it is...*

FREEMAN: The American community in Saudi Arabia at that time numbered between twenty-five thousand and thirty thousand, but has since grown. While the vast majority of those were Americans married to Americans, there were quite a number of mixed marriages between Saudis and American women, much fewer, although I do know of some, between Saudi women and American men. And that is simply because Islam does not permit marriage of Muslim women to non-Muslims; whereas, Muslim men may marry non-Muslim women. As you would expect, many of these marriages took place while people were studying in the United States. The women were very young and inexperienced, and had no real idea what they were getting into in marrying someone of a different culture. Some of the marriages were very strong and good, but many of them were not, and they would fall apart under the impact of culture shock and the difficulty of American women adjusting to sexual apartheid and other aspects of Saudi society.

Saudi Arabia shares with Israel the distinction of being a country with the largest number of child kidnapping cases. In both countries, the issue is the same at root, and that is the desire of the Saudi or Israeli partner in the marriage, and the insistence of the authorities, that the children be raised in the religious tradition of the country, rather than in the secular tradition of the United States. So that we had many problems of children who had been taken by their fathers from the United States to Saudi Arabia, with the wife left in the United States unable to communicate with the children. We had cases of wife abuse, beating of women. And we had cases of divorce, where the divorces were far from amicable, and the dispute of custody of the children became very ugly. I had a great number of occasions, on weekends and nights and during the day, to meet with and try to help distraught American women, and also, of course, occasions where the women would take the children out of the kingdom without the permission of the husband or father. I would then have to talk to the Saudi authorities about this. Generally speaking, I think



the authorities were reasonably helpful. But this sort of problem is essentially very difficult to manage, and it was a constant source of distress for me and for the consular section.

There were other issues, since we're on the subject of the difficulties of work. The Saudis had, in the course of the oil boom, signed contracts, with great haste, with a large number of companies. In some cases, frankly, they were badly gouged by the foreign partner. The Saudis at that time were inexperienced. This gave rise to both a large number of commercial disputes about contract fulfillment and a rising suspicion on the part of the Saudis that led them sometimes to refuse payment on contracts where in fact the American partner had delivered what was contracted. So there were commercial disputes, many of them dating back years, which were slowly being settled.

I spent a great deal of time trying to get the royal Saudi government to push the process of dispute settlement. Where the disputes involved a member of the royal family, particularly a senior member of the royal family, they were particularly difficult, because they involved the politics of the royal family. Again, I spent a great deal of time talking to representatives of the royal family and some senior princes about these, as well as coordinating with Prince Bandar, the Saudi ambassador to the United States.

Some disputes, which had long been settled, revived, as those who had settled saw others settling on what they felt were more generous terms than they'd been able to get. Despite the fact that they might have signed a quit claim and expressed satisfaction with the settlement or court decree in earlier years, they then attempted to reopen the cases, through congressional intervention, which got quite ugly. In fact, there are several of these cases that have dragged on to the present day, it being 1996, long after I left Saudi Arabia. Still, working with the commercial counselor and his staff, we were able to make a substantial dent in the number of such cases outstanding, and thus reduce the irritation between the United States and Saudi Arabia.

There were several other consular cases that were troublesome, cases where Americans alleged that they had suffered bodily harm in the course of being imprisoned. (One was never sure whether the bodily harm arose from the expectation of vast sums from the wealthy Saudis by way of settlement, or whether it was real.)

But these issues, too, tended to become politicized, especially because, again, elements of the American Jewish community were always looking for ways to embarrass the Saudis and complicate U.S. relations with Saudi Arabia. So they would provide informal counsel and support to the efforts of disgruntled Americans to press their case in Congress. Some of these became quite causes célèbres. And I made the best effort I could, I must say not by any means always successfully, to try to produce some reasonable quelling of these controversies.

*Q: In this type of dispute, was there a body of law that really dealt with it adequately? I served in Dhahran as a vice consul from 1958 to '60, and we were up against the almost impossible problem of having everything, either commercial law or automobile collisions, judged according to Sharia law, which was a law that goes back to the 15th or whatever century it was.*

FREEMAN: No, it actually is based [in part] on the Koran (systematized in the 9<sup>th</sup> century), and was perfected probably in the 12th century. [Systematized during the 8th-9th century AD.]

*Q: So that if you have an automobile accident, you have the problem of when cars collide and camels collide, there is quite a difference. And also the intricate problems of demurrage and everything else you can think about as far as shipping costs and who's responsible for when goods arrive and all that.*

FREEMAN: There continued to be tension between the Sharia legal system and modern codes that had been put in place alongside it -- civil courts, rather than religious courts, the grievance board, which was a body that settled disputes between Saudi-government entities or royal-family entities and foreign claimants, or Saudi claimants, for that matter.

Generally speaking, Saudi Arabia, like most societies other than the United States, abhors the idea of litigation. Settlements really should be reached by give and take, bargaining and negotiation. The dispute-settlement process can work, but Americans find it arcane, and it may not yield the results that Americans would expect from another legal system.

So, yes, this was a problem. But there has been considerable modernization of law in the kingdom since 1960, and I suspect the problems are far less than those that you encountered when you were there from '58 to '60.

*Q: Before we get into the dustup that they had there, with that tremendous American commitment, what was your impression of the Saudi government, both the princes, the king, and the various ministries?*

FREEMAN: Saudi Arabia is an interesting case of a country with a new class of highly competent technocrats who are making a transition to authority in the kingdom in bureaucratic organizations that are, in many ways, typical of the Third World. What I mean by typical of the Third World is that you have a few rather competent people at the top, in whose hands decision making is centralized, and a larger number of people of dubious competence underneath them, who, in any event, can't make decisions.

*Q: They can't make decisions because of the structure of the situation?*

FREEMAN: Because of the structure of the situation, or because, in many cases, they're not competent. And a great deal of the work is still being done by foreign advisors -- Syrians, Lebanese, Palestinians, or even, in some cases, Westerners.

But the cabinet and the sub cabinet I found to be a remarkably competent group of men and women. There are some very senior women, but it was rather difficult for me to communicate with them. Really an outstanding group of people; however, rather long in the tooth. The king had not made significant changes in his cabinet for decades. Anyone who is in a position for a long time, however bright and however strong a manager they may be, after a time, settles into a routine and is no longer a source of innovative thinking. And so there was this problem. But the competence of the group was considerable. As American ambassador, I had excellent access to

them, and found them really quite responsive to sensible suggestions, and appropriately dismissive of the sometimes nonsensible suggestions that I had to put on behalf of Washington. So I had a sense that I was dealing with people whom I could respect.

*Q: What was your impression of their Foreign Ministry and Foreign Service?*

FREEMAN: The foreign minister was Saud al-Faysal, who had been foreign minister, at that time, for about nineteen years already, having become foreign minister as a very young man. He, of course, is the son of the late king, Faysal ibn `Abd al-`Aziz. He's a graduate of the Hun School and Princeton, a gentleman of extraordinary personal grace, gravamen, and dignity.

He had a number of highly competent, terribly overworked senior staff, who were really first-class. Much of the Ministry, however, despite occupying what is certainly the most beautiful foreign ministry building in the world, fell quite short of those standards. And I have the impression that the Ministry remains a very personalized structure, not really institutionalized. This tendency, of course, is aggravated in the case of the United States, because a great number of the decisions taken about the United States are taken outside the Foreign Ministry, many of them directly by the king, in consultation with Prince Bandar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz, who is the brother-in-law of Prince Saud, the foreign minister. The two of them are on very good terms, but Prince Saud often had to scramble to keep up with what was going on. His Ministry was not being effectively used.

Indeed, by the time I arrived in Saudi Arabia in 1989, Prince Bandar had emerged, in a way, as an alternate foreign minister for great-power relations. That is, it was he who had set up the al-Yamamah deal with Margaret Thatcher in Britain. It was he who managed the missile transaction in the opening of relations with China. It was he who, when the Soviet Union began to decommunize and flake apart, dealt with Mr. Gorbachev. He did not deal with the French; that was the responsibility of someone else. And, of course, he dealt with the United States, and was on extraordinary terms with both President Reagan and President Bush.

Prince Saud's role was limited to the management of lesser relationships, and not even all of those. Prince Saud, in fact, on many occasions, did not handle problems with the Arab League or in North Africa. A former deputy of his, in fact a former chief local employee of the American Embassy, Muhammad Ibrahim Masa'ud, who was a minister of state in the palace, tended to handle issues in the Horn of Africa, as well as some intra-Arab issues, Arab League issues, for the king. So Prince Saud, I think, performed splendidly when called upon, but, on some occasions, his talent was simply not made use of.

*Q: What was your impression, since this was a whole new thing for you, of the stability of the House of Saud, as far as the ruling?*

FREEMAN: That is a very complicated question. It goes back to the point I made about Saudi Arabia being a traditional non-Western society that, in its relations with the West, is unique, having never experienced Western dominance.

I would argue that Aristotle failed to include in his taxonomy of political systems the system of

government that prevails among the desert Arabs.

There is a word, which a Yemeni told me, that is really quite pejorative in Arabic, but, if one takes out the pejorative sense, probably does better than any other to describe this system. He called it bedukratia (bedocracy, ruled by Bedouins). I think, if one doesn't use the term Bedouin in the pejorative sense that many urban Arabs do, that nicely captures the essence of a system that is quite consistent with tribal tradition.

The sheikh of a tribe is a venerated elder figure, who is revered for his ability to form and implement consensus. That is to say that a function of the leader (and this carries over to the modern kingdom in Saudi Arabia) is not to impose decisions made in an arbitrary and capricious or individual capacity, but rather to form a consensus, to learn the consensus, and then to impose the consensus. The sheikh is responsible for both the moral and political leadership of his tribe. He's also responsible for the dispensation of largesse and alms for the poor. The wealth of the tribe goes through the hands of the sheikh, and is recycled, in effect. In part, this is a patronage function, of course very political.

All of these things together represent a sort of basic compact of governance between the sheikh and the people of the tribe (or, in this case, between the king and the people of Saudi Arabia).

The essence of that compact of governance, that bargain, is that the king will preserve a moral society. He will not allow gross moral transgressions. He will not make decisions without wide consultation. He will be open to popular opinion and petitions. As you know, in Saudi Arabia, every member of the royal family, every minister, must, by custom, which has the force of law, open his doors, at least once a week, generally twice a week or more, to the public, so that anyone literally can walk in on the king and speak with him directly, much as American presidents may have been open to the public in the last century, but very unlike our system now. So it's a system with a great deal of access to leaders by the public. Along with this, the king is the custodian of the welfare of his people, and he is to dispense wealth to them.

Now this bargain has basically been kept by the modern kingdom. The elaborate welfare system that's been erected really is the functional equivalent of the bag of coins that the king used to carry with him, to dispense to those in need. The dispensation of government contracts spreads the wealth around. The Council of Ministers' procedure and the way in which the king decides things is consensual, rather than dictatorial, to a great extent, although the king really does have a great deal of power. In other words, he is not Henry VIII; he is the president of a collective body.

The system works pretty well, especially given the oil wealth that has come in. Saudi Arabia has been able to use modernization to reinforce traditional values and traditional systems, rather than to overthrow them. It's sort of a paradox. I often thought that the kingdom's slogan should be: "Progress without Change," because that seemed to be the objective.

While the speed of the physical transformation of Saudi Arabia -- the introduction of air conditioning and modern buildings and telephones and television and motor cars and airplanes and so on -- has been extraordinary, literally taking Saudis from camelback to the space shuttle in twenty-five years, which naturally engenders a fair amount of stress on the culture (future

shock, if you will), it's also been managed extraordinarily well. The amount of dissidence, meaning, primarily, griping and conspiring from religious militants on the right, has been a great deal less than, frankly, I would have expected.

In other words, the king has succeeded in doing what the sheikh of a tribe is supposed to do; namely, co-opting opposition and maintaining tribal harmony and unity.

When I say the king, I don't just mean King Fahd, although he is the architect of the modernization of Saudi Arabia, but I mean the king as an institution, kings through `Abd al-Aziz; King Saud, who was, of course, deposed for failing to carry out these functions appropriately; King Faysal; King Khalid, who did not rule, but allowed Fahd and his crown prince to rule for him, in effect; and Fahd himself.

So, while there is always a sort of prurient interest in the possible instability of the kingdom, especially after the fall of Iran's shah, and this question really concerned me, I found very little evidence, as I looked around, that Saudi Arabia had made the mistakes that the shah made.

Certainly, the shah, in promoting a secular, or pre-Islamic, vision of Iran, challenged the strong Islamic tradition of the people in Iran, and alienated himself from them. The fruits of his corruption perhaps were not as widely shared as they should have been. The clergy was not effectively co-opted, and the regime's method of rule was increasingly violent and dictatorial.

None of these things have happened in Saudi Arabia. So I tend to be a great deal more optimistic about the resilience of the Saudi system and its ability to manage shock (in other words, its stability) than many other people are.

As I say, I came to this view really after approaching the whole question with a great deal of skepticism and, indeed, probably a bias in favor of finding instability, given the improbability of the existence of a place like Saudi Arabia.

If you look at the history of the Arab world, post-World War II (that is, post-decolonization), various ideologies Pan-Arab in nature -- Socialist nationalist, Arab nationalist, or combinations of these -- military coups d'état, Islamic visions, along the lines of Qadhafi's rather strange one in Libya, have arisen and fallen. If one had been sitting in the 1950s, I think it is entirely forgivable that one would have predicted, as indeed people did, that monarchies were a thing of the past in the Arab world, and that they were in the process of being superseded by Socialist-Party systems like the Baath in Syria and Iraq, or Nasser's single-party structure in Egypt. And yet Nasser and Nasserism are dead, the Baath has lost its following, Libya is isolated. The systems that have survived and prospered are precisely those that are most traditional.

*Q: Morocco and...*

FREEMAN: Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and the small Gulf sheikhdoms. Now it helps to have oil. But even Jordan, which doesn't have oil, but which has a traditional monarchy, has managed to adapt itself quite well.

So, in this broad sweep of perhaps forty-five years of Arab history, stability has been with the traditionalists, not with the Westernizers, the Marxists, or the others, nor with the religious innovators like Qadhafi. So I tend to believe that, as I said, Saudi Arabia is and remains a very resilient society, with a great deal of inherent ability to right itself after shocks.

A final point on Saudi Arabia. The current al-Saud dynasty, founded at the beginning of the century by Abd al-Aziz after his reconquest of the Nejd from exile in Kuwait, is the third such al-Saud dynasty. The al-Sauds had been overthrown once by Egyptian invasion and decimation of their homeland; and once by Egyptian manipulation of their internal politics and divisions within the family, followed by military intervention from Egypt. The Egyptians tried again, under Nasser, to overthrow them in the 1960s. On every occasion, they have managed to survive, and when they have been overthrown, they have managed to reconstitute themselves.

This is obviously a family of great diversity, a family in which Abd al-Aziz's direct male descendants now number almost ten thousand, a large and diverse body, with every political opinion, from Communism to reactionary Islamic radicalism, represented. But it is a family with a depth of talent that pretty much guarantees that if there is change in the kingdom, of whatever nature, it will most likely be led by a member of the al-Saud.

So one has to distinguish between stability in the sense of the current leadership staying in power indefinitely (individuals change; people grow old; they die; if they perform poorly, they may, as in the case of King Saud, be deposed), on the one hand, and the constant reality of the al-Saud as the guiding force in the kingdom, on the other hand, which is very unlikely to change.

The more I looked at this, the more impressed I was with the factors pressing for continuity, rather than abrupt change. And I've not altered my view.

*Q: I'd like to ask about some of the pressures on you as the American ambassador, on things that grate on the Zeitgeist of the American soul, such as the role of women, and maybe some other things dealing with the Saudis, where there was pressure on you to try to make them be more like us. Also, how did you and your officers work within this society, and what were you getting? And then the relations with the other neighbors in the south, the Gulf states, with Saudi-Jordan and all that, prior to when all hell broke loose. And then we'll talk about hell breaking loose. Chas, let's talk first about being the American ambassador and representing American values in the Saudi society. Did you get involved in this type of thing?*

FREEMAN: Mainly in the sense that, as ambassador in Saudi Arabia, you are the mayor of a good-sized town of some thirty thousand Americans, many of them women. The Americans are there in the kingdom to work for joint ventures, or to work for Saudis as experts, but, from a personal point of view, they've chosen to be in Saudi Arabia in large measure because of the tranquility of Saudi society. Saudi values are family centered, involve swift and sure justice against malefactors, and produce a society that is a wonderful one in which to raise a family. I discovered, when the war broke out and attitudes were tested, that probably fifty or sixty percent of those Americans in the kingdom were there because they could raise their children in a home environment in an atmosphere free of drugs, with the kind of confidence, that things like child molestation and meaningless violent crime would not beset their family, that really Americans

have not seen since the 1950s, and perhaps didn't even see then, since we tend to idealize past ages.

But there were constant points of friction between this American community and the Saudis, the most severe of these, of course, as you suggested, was over the status of women.

When I paid my farewell call on Prince Salman ibn `Abd al-`Aziz, the emir of Riyadh and the governor of the central region of Saudi Arabia, a very senior member of the royal family, I joked with him that it was the first time we'd had an opportunity to meet since my initial call on him, when I was not appearing before him as the sheikh of my tribe, protecting the women of my tribe from the men of his.

Since Saudi society contains a group of officially sanctioned religious vigilantes, known as the mutawa', often referred to as religious police, I and members of my staff spent a great deal of time trying to recover these women from the custody of the religious police, who had picked them up for what they regarded as immodest dress.

There is no clear definition of what modesty consists of, but the most extreme definition in Saudi Arabia, of course, requires virtually total coverage of a woman's face and even her hands, as well as what the looser definition stipulates, which is simply that the hair be covered and the ankles and wrists be obscured from view.

So there were daily incidents, really, of, I would say, generally petty harassment, much of it not by the officially sanctioned religious enforcers, but rather by true volunteers. The name mutawa' means volunteer. But there are mutawa', who are genuine, unsanctioned volunteers, who, in many cases, are teenage boys, with the sap of lust rising in their bodies and a desire to harass women following close behind. So this was a constant source of friction.

As far as other items are concerned, obviously there is a grave set of differences between American secular values and Saudi religious customs and values, and a fundamentally different view of issues like human rights and so on.

And one must remember, of course, that I really didn't have a normal ambassadorship, since the war broke out nine months after I arrived.

*Q: After that, I assume everything was...*

FREEMAN: Everything was on a different level. But there wasn't much pressure on the issue of human rights from the United States. I think American officials certainly recognized that the Saudi royal family was, in many respects, more progressively minded and more enlightened in terms of our values than much of the Saudi populace, and that pressure, for example, to democratize might well backfire in the form of unleashing people similar to those in Iran who democratically impose a reign of terror on minorities and dissenters. So there wasn't much pressure there.

There was, as I began to get around and have obvious access and to demonstrate a bit of

influence with the establishment, a sort of constant murmur of requests from members of the Saudi technocratic class (relatively liberal-minded, Western-influenced Saudis, of whom there are very many), who urged that I speak to the king or speak to others in the royal family on behalf of this or that liberal cause that they espoused.

I have to say that this, of course, has a cultural background. In Saudi Arabia, one very seldom makes a direct request of someone in power. If one can possibly do it, one finds an intermediary. And the American ambassador seemed like a logical intermediary to these people.

Many of the issues they raised, it seemed to me, were quite beyond the pale of what was appropriate for a foreign diplomat to speak about. Generally, I counseled them that they were Saudis; I was not. That the king and others had open meetings several times a week, and that the mosques were places where relatively free discussion of issues that would be considered constitutional in our society were raised. And I said that if they felt so strongly about matters, I hoped they would raise them, and if anyone asked me, I would express my view, but that I didn't really see it as appropriate for a foreign envoy to become an intermediary between a king and his people.

I basically concluded, since very little, if anything, in fact did get expressed by these people to a higher authority, that Saudi liberals, unlike Saudi conservatives, were born without spines. Saudi conservatives, many of them very well educated, including in the West, very articulate and well versed in the Koran, which provides the language of political discourse in Saudi Arabia, had no hesitation about standing up in the mosque and railing against what they perceived to be libertine behavior on the part of this or that person in Saudi society. The liberals tended to be doing something else during the Friday mosque ceremony, and, if they were there, lacked the strength of religious education and conviction necessary to join the debate on their own behalf. And so the net effect of the liberal tendency to seek indirect means of expressing their views was to leave the field of debate very much in the hands of religious militants on the right.

But that, in the initial period of my tenure in Saudi Arabia, was not a major thing. It really became considerably greater during and after the war.

As you know, just before the war, in a magnificently ill-timed gesture, a number of Saudi women, many of whom I had gotten to know indirectly or, in some cases, had met in the company of their husbands or fathers, took to the streets in a protest drive against the custom that decreed that women couldn't drive in the kingdom.

I say this was magnificently ill timed because this was during the very nervous period before Desert Storm broke out. The king had made a very courageous decision to invite foreign troops, virtually all of them, initially, infidels, onto the holy earth of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The local religious faithful, especially the committed religious militants, imagined the worst of these foreigners who had arrived. Islam in Saudi Arabia is full of stories and speculations of disgusting behavior on the part of Christians in particular, and Jews to a lesser extent. There was a great deal of tension, and the king was trying to hold the majority of the country, which was religiously conservative, behind his policy. In these circumstances, to face a social protest from the left, as it were, was a prescription for disaster to the cause that these women espoused.



Indeed, that happened. The king, I think, tried to protect them from some of the worst aspects of the broad popular reaction to their drive, but he wasn't really successful. Women who were teaching in the university, for example, found their students spitting on them, and their husbands received threatening phone calls about their failure to manage their household in the proper fashion. It became very, very uncomfortable for those who had participated in the protest.

Of course, there was an investigation, which meant, in practice, that they had to stay in the kingdom and be available for questioning, the point being to find out to what extent there was some sort of broad conspiracy behind all this.

The irony was that there was good reason to believe that in fact the king had been waiting for the right moment to declare that he saw no reason why women couldn't drive. Bedouin women do drive, and, of course, Arab women drive in the neighboring countries. But the effect of the protest was that the custom became a law, and therefore is now enshrined in a way that will be much harder to overcome.

With regard to women, there were things that my then-wife and I did that attempted to be supportive. We sponsored, for example, in our residence, a show of art by Saudi women, much of the art very, very good, by very talented women, including some members of the royal family who were painting. Sculpture is not much of a Saudi art, as you might expect in an Islamic society. We held gatherings of women at the residence, with all the men sent away for the occasion, including myself. And we ran a series of interactive television programs, where the residence was used for women, while men were in the embassy chancery, so men and women were appropriately segregated and yet able to interact with people in Washington over a television connection. So we did a number of things to try to be supportive.

More particularly, however, I think we tried to hold the line in terms of not succumbing to demands that we advise the American community to adopt the full veil or anything like that. Indeed, liberal members of the Saudi royal family, very quietly, made it clear that they would regard our yielding on that point as a sort of betrayal of their own hopes for the kingdom.

So there was tension. It centered, however, mainly, as I said at the outset, on the role of the foreign, particularly the American, community in Saudi society.

The majority of people working in the kingdom were being well paid, and there were reasons for them to be there other than family reasons.

For example, there are a large number of American doctors in the kingdom. And they are there for two reasons basically. One, the access to top-of-the-line, very expensive equipment, which they wouldn't get to see in the United States for years, if ever, but which was immediately introduced in Saudi Arabia's excellent hospitals. Two, the absence of malpractice suits and the whole avalanche of paperwork that bedevils professionals, under government regulation, in the United States. Saudi Arabia is a very unregulated environment.

Still, most people were there, as I indicated, because they found Saudi Arabia an excellent place

to live and to maintain a family and raise children.

There was a first class American school in Riyadh, and a very good one in Jeddah as well, and in Dhahran. These are not official, but I took an interest, of course, in helping them when they had problems.

By and large, the majority of Saudis, I must say, were privately quite tolerant of foreign behavior, and very sympathetic to the problems that foreigners had when the mutawa poked them with a stick in a shopping mall, or whatever.

*Q: My next question is about the embassy and also our consulates general, one in...*

FREEMAN: Dhahran, one in Jeddah.

*Q: How did the officers get around? You mentioned that there were what amounted to constitutional political debates in the mosques on Fridays. I would think this would be an excellent place for an American political officer to be, sitting off to one side and observing what things are burning within the society. I assume that we didn't have many Muslim officers, but maybe I'm wrong.*

FREEMAN: You're quite correct, the issue of religion is a barrier to penetration of Saudi society. Non-Muslims may not visit Mecca or Medina, for example. Indeed, they are surrounded by ring roads, beyond which the nonbelievers may not pass (called locally, by the expatriate community, the Christian bypasses). So, to the extent that the staff was non-Muslim, there was an immediate barrier in terms of travel and access, particularly, of course, to the mosques. There were some American Muslim staff, as well as, of course, local employees, who worked in the political section, who were themselves Muslim, although by no means all of them were. Many of the most ferocious debates, sermons, in mosques tended to be reduced to cassette, and one could buy the cassettes and listen to them.

I think a larger barrier, frankly, was language. By contrast with China, where as deputy chief of mission and, before that, as country director, as normalization began, I insisted on a level of linguistic competence that was virtually total in the embassy, a great part of the American Embassy in Saudi Arabia and the consulates consisted of people who had either no Arabic at all or whose Arabic was rudimentary. There were some exceptions, but there was not the depth of linguistic talent that I had seen when I worked in China.

One can speculate about why that is. Arabic, like Chinese, is, of course, an intimidatingly difficult language, although, frankly, I think its difficulty is overrated. The expense of training people for two years in a hard language is such that it is difficult to sustain, budgetarily, over a long period of time. But I suspect that it is because a great many of the most distinguished ambassadors that we had in the field, and those who had worked in Washington as assistant secretary for Near Eastern affairs, themselves knew no Arabic. And since they managed to get along without it, they imagined that it was not necessary.

When I started learning Arabic (and I did, during the entire time that I was there, including during the war, except when it was simply physically impossible, put in at least an hour and

often two hours a day on language, with a tutor or reading), I asked one of the most distinguished American diplomats in the field whether he had any particular insights into learning Arabic. And he told me, much to my surprise, that he had never learned it, and that he had not done so because, in his words, "I saw no point in acquiring the key to an empty room."

*Q: This is the story I heard that Ambassador Wadsworth, years back, told somebody.*

FREEMAN: This may have lived on. I'm not at all sure that the person I'm quoting was the source of the original insight. In fact, it's not an insight; it's a slander and a very parochial attitude. Arabic culture is far from an empty room. To proclaim that the people with whom you are working inhabit an empty room is to say something very profound about yourself, rather than about them.

So, over the years, evidently, language-designated positions, at least in the establishment in Saudi Arabia, and I believe elsewhere in the Arab world, had either been de-designated, as no officer suitable for the position could be found with Arabic, or had never been designated in the beginning. Of course, the problem is that if the positions are not designated, the training positions are not created. So you get into a vicious circle.

I would say, of the senior people on my staff, in a very large establishment, there were only two or three who really could handle Arabic at a level that I considered moderately impressive.

My own Arabic, as I studied, finally got to the point where I could understand virtually everything that was going on around me, as long as it was in the local dialect, rather than classical Arabic, which I made no effort to master. I couldn't, of course, speak well, and in fact made no real effort to learn to speak well, because my concern was to be able to understand my environment. In any event, if one is an ambassador, I think one should speak with the precision that one's native language provides, and not speak in a broken version of local language.

I think really the lack of linguistic depth in the embassy was a greater barrier to interaction.

You had asked earlier about how people got around. The restrictions of language and religion, I have discussed. Sexual apartheid in Saudi Arabia was a very significant barrier as well.

The Department of State, in its wisdom, and reflecting the drive toward affirmative action and diversity in American society, decided that Saudi Arabia should be treated like any other post for purposes of the assignment of female officers. This was, in my view, grotesquely unfair to them, even if they were interested and volunteered for the slots, and unfair to the rest of the embassy.

There was, for example, a very, very bright, able, young woman officer who was assigned to the political/military section. She could not get access to the Ministry of Defense, as a woman. She could not get into the building, nor could she have any social interaction with the officer corps. She was restricted, in her contacts, to foreign contractors and subcontractors or to telephone conversations. The net effect of this was that she became enormously frustrated and resentful. The work that she was supposed to do had to be done, and therefore it had to be done by others. Eventually, I managed to move her to a position where she could display her talent, and in fact

she did all right.

It is difficult, not impossible, but difficult for female officers to be effective in certain functions, of which the political/military function is clearly one. In others, perhaps it's less of a barrier.

There was another problem. Normal social life in the non-Islamic world is conducted between couples, but many Saudi couples would not appear in mixed company, so that evenings tended to be sexually segregated. There were nights when my wife would go one direction, and I would go another, and since evenings tend to be very late, we would not meet up until the wee hours of the morning, when we were separately delivered back to the residence. Saudi couples would come to the residence if they were sure who the other couples were. Women are concerned about their reputation in Saudi Arabia, as they are anywhere, and public appearance before strange men will become the subject of gossip and innuendo. Therefore, a great deal of time was spent arranging that nobody ever met anybody new, and that certain circles of friends were reassembled. Very often, I would invite people to the residence, and they would say, "We'd really rather that you come here," not for any reason other than that they could then control the guest list.

Now having said that, when I did have the opportunity to meet the upper echelon of Saudi society, as couples, I was very, very impressed by the professionalism and level of education and competence of many of the women. They were doctors, they were businesspersons, they were engineers and professionals of one sort or another, who were managing to conduct very successful careers in this society, despite its peculiar strictures on contact across gender lines. They seemed to have very comfortable relationships with their husbands. Most Saudis are monogamous, but some are polygamous, up to the Koranic limit of four wives. Sometimes we would be in the company of a man with two wives, and it was very interesting to watch the interaction. The husband might well request that the wives unveil. But generally they wouldn't, because whoever unveiled first might be criticized then by the other as a brazen hussy of some sort.

At any rate, there was a lot of social interaction, but it was conducted in this manner, which is peculiar, a great many receptions at which American and other Western couples were present, but only Saudi men would turn up.

Of course, the great attraction of embassies in Saudi Arabia is that, by longstanding custom, despite the strict laws against possession and consumption of alcohol, embassies do have access to alcohol. Many Saudis rather enjoy a drink once in a while. So there was never any great difficulty in getting a certain class of Saudis, who liked to drink and to be in Western company, to an embassy affair. Whether these people, in the end, were totally representative, I doubt.

Some of the most interesting evenings I had were with members of the religious right, who would come to the house for discussions, for example, on concepts of human rights or the like, and, very articulately, state a case quite contrary to the view that I and most Americans have of these subjects.

*Q: How well informed did you find the religious right about, you might say, the mote in the American eye?*

FREEMAN: Many of the most prominent religious figures and preachers in mosques in fact had doctorates from American universities, and traveled back and forth to the United States. Some of them, as professors now do, if they were university professors, had businesses on the side, with offices in the United States.

They were very familiar with conditions in the United States, and were really sometimes, I found, quite contemptuous of the American lack of recognition of the religious roots of American secular values.

They had read and would point out that the reasoning of John Locke and Thomas Jefferson rested on Deism. That the inspiration of the Protestant Reformation was the essential prerequisite for the Enlightenment. That the Enlightenment itself was animated not only by a spirit of skepticism, but by religious faith. That the Bill of Rights therefore ultimately rested on a religious vision, despite being presented in secular form. They would say that it's impossible to conduct a significant debate with Americans about issues like the Bill of Rights, because Americans don't know the history that led to the founding of the Bill of Rights, and don't know what the inspiration of the various provisions in the Bill of Rights, in terms of the definition of man and woman's relationship to God, is, and are really not conversant with the Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition to an extent that they can talk intelligently with them.

Which is, of course, another way of saying that there is a great gap in communication, in terms of values, between the two societies.

Islam, of course, has a grand tradition of scientific inquiry and respect for foreign ideas. Islam, in many ways, certainly in the Middle Ages, was the religion of science, which is why so many of our basic scientific terms have Arabic roots, terms like algebra, alchemy, and algorithm, for example. It's also why Plato, Aristotle, and even some of the pre-Socratic philosophers were introduced to the West through Arabic, either the Caliphate in Spain, or the kingdom of Roger of Sicily, who did a great deal of translation into Latin of Arabic translations of Greek and other sources that had been lost in the West.

But Saudi Arabia, unfortunately, does not adhere to this particular tradition of Islam, and the study of pre-Islamic philosophers, Aristotle, for example, is banned in Saudi universities. So that the criticism that many of these very well-educated religious men were making of Americans, in my view, applied even more to Saudis, who had been denied exposure to part of their own heritage, let alone the basic heritage of Western thought. So I always found a certain level of irony in this kind of discussion with them.

*Q: On the reporting that came out of your embassy, and the fruit of these contacts (there are usually two fruits: one is to influence and exchange information; the other is reporting back to Washington), how did you find the support of the Desk and the understanding? And what were its desires for information?*

FREEMAN: As I said at the outset, Saudi Arabia, during this period, simply was not on the Washington policy map, and there was no great interest at all in anything that we were reporting,

beyond the narrow circles of specialists -- the Desk, one or two people in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, and, of course, the intelligence community.

We had a much more active interaction, in a way (but, at that time, since the military relationship was in such a sad condition, a very sweet and sour relationship), with Desk officers at the Pentagon than we did with people at State or Commerce or in the White House.

Saudi Arabia was a place that no one thought of except when they needed some cash to do something and thought they could shake down the Saudis for that purpose.

I did have some difficulties with the Desk. Frankly, I wasn't very impressed with the level of support from the Desk on many issues, whether they were personnel and staffing or insight into the Washington policy process, although, in fairness to the Desk, there wasn't much of a Washington policy process going on about the Arabian Peninsula. NEA (the Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs), at that time, to the extent it was engaged at all, was engaged completely in Levantine matters, the peace process between Israel and Palestinians, which was a great focus of U.S. policy, to the exclusion of all else. So there wasn't much there.

Two things I can say about reporting.

One, I began, very deliberately, to reorganize reporting and to try to raise the analytical standard, by looking at some of the more fundamental questions of long-term importance. As I gradually got to know the capabilities of people in the embassy, I was able to put together little teams that produced really first-class material, of which I was quite, quite proud, some of it quite prescient. And I was able, as I made my own intellectual inquiries into the understanding of the kingdom and its environment, to inspire and stimulate, I think, a higher level of reporting than had been the case for some time.

The second thing I would say is that, on occasion, the Desk, much to my horror, and reflecting the difficult atmosphere in Washington with regard to Arab affairs, would tell me not to report things that I heard.

The most egregious example of this was in connection with the Saudi desire for F-15s. Washington had, by the summer of 1989, contrived an elaborate charade with regard to Saudi aircraft purchases, and had convinced itself that this charade was in fact an accurate portrayal of Saudi views.

It went like this, that the fleet of F-5s that the Saudis had was aging and losing its utility, and that the Saudis were not interested in the F-15, but they were interested in the F-16, or possibly the F-18, as a replacement for the F-5s, and that they planned in the process to get rid of the F-5s, so that there would not be a major increase in the capabilities of their air force. This was because, in the mid-80s, AIPAC (the American Israel Public Affairs Committee) had successfully vetoed an F-15 sale. So it was a convenient way for Washington, if indeed the Saudis believed this, to avoid addressing the question of F-15s.

Over the summer of 1989, I'd heard this story, and I had no reason to doubt it, since I knew

nothing about what the Saudis might want. But, shortly after I arrived in Saudi Arabia, it became apparent to me that this was a concoction for the convenience of Washington. I heard specifically from Prince Sultan, the inspector general and minister of defense and aviation, that he was absolutely uninterested in getting rid of the F-5s, that he had a problem that needed F-15s, and that he wasn't at all sure that he wanted anything to do with F-16s or F-18s, but if he did, it was as a supplement to an F-15 purchase.

I reported this and was roundly reprimanded by several levels of Washington for puncturing the political balloon that they had raised, and was told not to report further.

I told them, "I'm sorry. I am not out here to tell you what you want to hear. I'm out here to tell you what is going on. If you find it awkward and inconvenient, then I deeply regret that. But it is not my job to deform reality out here to fit your convenience."

I, in fact, as I looked at the military environment, could see a very good case for F-15s that the Saudis had and were making, and became a proponent of an F-15 sale, which made me even less popular.

I think Washington's optic I could understand. A Saudi F-15 purchase might have complicated the Middle East peace process by riling up the Israelis or causing the Israelis to demand compensation in some form, and therefore it was a very awkward issue. Nevertheless, it was an issue, and I refused to pretend that it wasn't.

*Q: I'm really fishing in waters I know nothing about, but I've heard the name of Dennis Ross so often in the Middle East process, and it continues to be there. Did he play any part in this?*

FREEMAN: I think he was quite central to this, although he didn't personally speak to me. But his name was cited on many occasions by different people who called me and told me to shut up.

*Q: Dennis Ross, I'm not sure what his position was at the time. I know he was with Baker.*

FREEMAN: He was, I believe, at that time, the director of policy planning staff at the State Department, but in fact engaged almost totally on the Middle East issue, to the exclusion of all else.

*Q: What was your impression of Dennis Ross and his role in this?*

FREEMAN: I have to say I don't know Dennis well personally. I have a very high regard for his intellect and his ability as a securocrat, meaning a professional bureaucrat dealing, in the Washington context, with national security issues.

I later learned from Israelis, when I was at the Department of Defense and visited Israel, that there was a great deal of suspicion of Dennis in Israel as being temperamentally connected, if not politically connected, with the Likud, if not the Party, at least the strain of thought.

*Q: Which would be basically the right-wing party.*

FREEMAN: The Israeli right wing. In fact, one of the reasons that was cited, by Israelis who had participated, for the Israeli decision to go to Oslo for meetings with the Palestine Liberation Organization, and with Mr. Arafat, at a later time, rather than to go through the United States, and one of the reasons for keeping the Americans in the dark about this, was concern that Dennis Ross and a couple of others were so close to Likud that they would have talked to Likud and injected this issue into Israeli domestic politics. I don't know whether these concerns have any founding in fact or not, but they certainly were cited to me.

In any event, Dennis is very much focused on Israel and its security problems and on the peace process, to the exclusion of other factors in the Middle East. He certainly had no great interest in or affinity for the Saudis and their problems, as he began to come out during the many, many visits that Secretary Baker ended up making as a result of Saddam's invasion of Kuwait. A set of proposals emanated from Dennis that made great sense in the Washington political and bureaucratic context, and absolutely no sense in the Saudi context, and therefore were infeasible or insensitive to Saudi style.

So I would say that (and I don't attribute this particularly to Dennis personally) Dennis, in a way, did personify some of the self-absorption of Washington, its lack of empathy for other viewpoints, and its total focus during this period on the Washington game and the Israeli-Palestinian game, to the exclusion of other issues.

*Q: I'm just trying to catch the atmospherics of the time, again before the balloon went up over Kuwait. You were obviously the new boy on the scene, but did you find developing, both within the embassy and maybe even internally with yourself, a certain sense of paranoia about Washington? Whatever Israel wants, Israel gets, and the rest of the Arab world can go to hell unless we want some money. Did you get this?*

FREEMAN: There were several issues that reinforced a sense of, rather than paranoia, I would say difficulty of communication with Washington, and inability to engage Washington in the issues of concern locally.

One of them was Afghanistan. This was, of course, as I mentioned, a very successful Saudi-American joint venture, with Chinese involvement, through the Americans, in support of the Mujahideen in Afghanistan, which ultimately proved fatal to the Soviet occupation, and perhaps played a role in bringing down the Soviet Union, much to everyone's surprise. As my tenure in Saudi Arabia began, the Afghan adventure was winding down. I spent an enormous amount of time dealing with, mainly, the Central Intelligence Agency and Judge Webster, who was the director for Central Intelligence at that time, through the station chief, but also, to some extent, with National Security Council staff, rather than State, and with the Afghan people at State, and a bit with Bob Oakley, who was ambassador to Islamabad, Pakistan, at that time, trying to ensure that the Afghan adventure ended in a way that enhanced, rather than diminished, prospects for future U.S.-Saudi cooperation, when that might become desirable. In other words, having been eager to get the Saudis in on the takeoff, I thought it was important that we not forget them as the landing occurred. And I thought, in many respects, this required a level of dialogue and an intensity of dialogue and an honesty of dialogue that was frankly missing. So this was one issue that, during this period and subsequently, was of very great concern to me, where I found it



difficult.

A second problem was, of course (and this is implicit in the F-15 issue to which I referred), Saudi Arabia had, in response to various congressionally administered American rebuffs, turned to others as the mainstay of its arms imports. The British in particular, the French, the Chinese were all ahead of the United States in gross volume of sales. Their influence was rising, and ours was diminishing. I felt that this was a long-term trend that needed to be addressed. That we had an interest in maintaining our connection to Saudi Arabia and our ability to cooperate with the Saudis in the defense field. And that the whole question of arms sales, training, exercises, and the like needed more attention from Washington than it was getting. I found Washington not only unresponsive, but, as I indicated, on occasion, actively hostile to suggestions in this area.

A third area was trade. About fifty percent of American exports to the Middle East region go to Saudi Arabia alone, and yet no secretary of Commerce had ever visited Saudi Arabia. There was virtually a complete lack of interest at that time, pre-war, in Washington, in promoting exports to Saudi Arabia by high-level travel, business delegations led by government officials, and the like. It was very difficult to get American participation, through the Department of Commerce, in major regional and other Saudi-specific trade exhibitions that were going on regularly in the kingdom. I had a great sense of frustration as the multiple arms of the U.S. government with an interest in trade tussled with each other, rather than worked together to promote trade.

I might now jump ahead, because, of course, the war did energize interest in Saudi Arabia. In fact, over the course of my tenure, during which I spent probably half of my time promoting exports and trade and investment, I was able to get U.S. exports up from about three-and-a-half billion a year to eight billion, in a three-year period, of which I'm very proud.

But, jumping ahead, I would say that there was almost total confusion in Washington and many efforts canceling each other out. At various times, I was dealing with, of course, the Department of State; the under secretary for economic affairs, as the title was at that time; the assistant secretary for economic and business affairs; the Ex-Im Bank; the Overseas Private Investment Corporation; the Foreign Commercial Service; the Foreign Trade Administration at Commerce; the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal, Plant, and Health Inspection Service; the Foreign Agricultural Service; the Bureau of Reclamation, which had an interest in cooperation in recharging aquifers, such as the Ogallala aquifer in the central western part of the United States; the Treasury, through several different areas, one of which is the Joint Economic Commission Reimbursable Assistance Program; the Department of Labor's occupational Safety and Health Administration; the Health and Human Services Department, through its hospital arm, since hospital business is big in Saudi Arabia; the Defense Security Assistance Agency, which manages foreign military sales; the Minority Business Administration; the Small Business Administration; the National Technical Information Service, which is the former Bureau of Standards; the Department of Energy's oil and gas equipment export-promotion arm; and I'm sure I've left out quite a number.

One of my great battles was an effort, during this period, to engage Washington in rectifying an error of omission that had been made earlier, and I'll talk about that.

But my point is that all of these agencies, in my experience, spent more time trying to one-up each other in Washington than they did doing anything in the field. And they were impossible to engage.

Let me mention the Saudi Arabian Standards Organization as a case in point. Back at the beginning of the 80s, as Saudi Arabia began to modernize, under then-Crown Prince Fahd's leadership, the Saudis determined, quite sensibly, that they needed to have a standards organization that would write standards for industrial and consumer goods, such that they would have compatible equipment and that consumers would be protected. They asked the United States to supply a couple of experts in the writing of such standards. And the U.S. replied we had no budget, but that we might be able to do it if they paid, but we weren't sure. Similar offers went to others, like the Germans, the Singaporeans, the Japanese, the French, the Brits, Swedes, whatever, all of whom immediately supplied people, free of charge.

The result was, for example, that a half-billion-dollar annual U.S. electrical-appliance market -- refrigerators and electric stoves and the like -- disappeared overnight, as the Japanese rewrote the standards to require 127-volt appliances, with two-meter cords. In other words, precisely what Japan made and what no one else made.

The most egregious case, which led me to become a bee keeper, was honey. We had an approximately twelve-million-dollar honey market in the Gulf; not enormous, but significant for honey producers. The Germans rewrote the standard. Germany, of course, being a heavily polluted place, has a great deal of soda ash in the air and in the honey. They wrote the standards to *require* a certain level of soda ash in the honey, so that American honey could no longer be sold in Saudi Arabia unless it was deliberately adulterated with soda ash.

So a great deal of my time was spent trying to get the business community and the Department of Commerce to cooperate, separately, putting up matching funds, to bring somebody out to work in the Standards Organization and reverse some of this damage and prevent further damage. And I ultimately succeeded. But doing that was virtually a full-time task, with no real help from anybody.

There were other issues, some of them generic and not specific to Saudi Arabia.

I'll give you a case in point. The United States and the Philippines have the distinction of being the only two countries (at one point, Ethiopia may have been in this category also, but I think they've dropped out) that apply an income tax to their citizens overseas. There is, in the case of the United States, a seventy-thousand-dollar exemption, and, of course, you can take a foreign-tax credit. Saudi Arabia has no income tax, so the tax credit is irrelevant. The rules are arcane. The effect of U.S. taxation is, very often, to price Americans out of the job market.

In Saudi Arabia, this had a specific consequence. The hospital-supply industry, pharmaceuticals, including a huge pharmaceutical trade that goes on around the hajj in Mecca, had originally largely been in the hands of American companies. The tax law, however, had the effect of leading hospital-supply companies in Saudi Arabia, including American-owned companies, to hire Brits, Germans, Swiss, and other Europeans, all of whom promptly placed orders with

British, German, Swiss, and other pharmaceutical companies not in the United States. So that the net effect on U.S. exports to Saudi Arabia was measurable.

I argued (I spoke a great deal to the American business community in Saudi Arabia) that this was a very good example of the pernicious effects of the American tax policy. But I further argued (and I thought this might have some resonance with a Republican White House, since I suspect that most of the roughly three-million overseas Americans are Republicans) that there was a great deal to gain and very little to lose by putting a proposal to Congress that these overseas Americans be allowed to vote in constituencies for representatives with powers similar to those of the representatives of the District of Columbia, Guam, the Virgin Islands, and the like. That is, representatives in Congress who could sit in and vote in committee, but not on the floor of the House. That, in fact, the no-taxation-without-representation cry had a certain resonance in American history. But, more important, that good trade and overseas tax policy would be made if those affected by the overseas tax policy had a voice in the Ways and Means Committee that they lacked. And that the global involvement of the United States ought to be recognized in this fashion. Perhaps I was inept, but I got no real response.

So I found it very difficult to engage Washington's attention.

And I wasn't the only one. In February of 1990, General Norman Schwarzkopf, who had succeeded the previous summer as commander in chief of the central command (CINCCENT), turned up in my office. I had, of course, met him previously. He was stuck with a plan, approved by the Joint Chiefs, for the region that envisaged fighting the Soviet Union in the mountains of Iran. He and I had agreed, when we had met before, that this was probably a bit out of date, especially as it wasn't clear there was going to be a Soviet Union, and our relationship with Iran had rather changed. So he came to my office and laid out a number of scenarios that he was exploring, for exercises and focuses of battle plans.

I stopped him, and I said, "Now I think you really ought to think about three scenarios. You ought to think about Iraq invading Kuwait, or Iran invading Kuwait, anyway an invasion of Kuwait. The second scenario you ought to think about is Iraq invading Kuwait, and Yemen attacking Saudi Arabia from the south, by prearrangement."

*Q: Because these two were blood brothers almost, in the political context.*

FREEMAN: They were both estranged from the Saudis, but I'll come back to what the reasoning was.

"And third, you should consider the possibility of an Iranian-fomented insurrection in Saudi Arabia's eastern province among the Shi`ah, possibly beginning with intervention, through subversion, in Bahrain and/or Qatar. I think these are really more realistic scenarios than others. And while I doubt that any of them will happen, if you concentrate on these, I think you will not be wasting your time, in the way that you are."

He readily agreed and indicated that he'd been thinking along much the same lines himself. We agreed that he should focus on scenario number one, an Iraqi or Iranian invasion of Kuwait.

He then went back and tried to get the Joint Chiefs to approve this scenario, and ran into a total lack of support. In fact, it was not until June of 1990 that Colin Powell, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs, personally overruled the rest of the Joint Chiefs and allowed Schwarzkopf to proceed to develop this scenario, which led to the command-post exercise that Schwarzkopf ran just at the very end of July, only a few days before Saddam Hussein actually did invade Kuwait, a command-post exercise that was invaluable in putting together what became known as Desert Shield.

I cite this because it's an indication of the disconnect between thinking and realities in the Gulf and Washington, at all levels.

Similarly, I might say, in the spring of 1990, the U.S. Navy determined that the naval presence, which we had maintained in the Gulf since 1947, called COMMIDEAST Force, was no longer required in the post-Cold War era. That there was no strategic interest of the United States that required defending in the Gulf. And that this force should be disbanded and withdrawn. Schwarzkopf and I and some of the other ambassadors in the region argued strenuously against this. Again, fortunately, in June of 1990, Colin Powell overruled the U.S. Navy, and we did have a naval presence in the Gulf, therefore, when Saddam went into Kuwait.

*Q: What was the thinking there? We had this very active tanker-guarding thing, reflagging tankers and all, so it wasn't as though this had been a dormant area.*

FREEMAN: That operation had ended. More particularly, the National Command Authority, as the military call it, had proclaimed the Carter Doctrine, which was directed at excluding external intervention in the Gulf. And while Earnest Will, the operation to escort Kuwaiti tankers, had in fact not involved an external threat, but rather one from within the Gulf, post-Cold War, there was no interest in remaining engaged. The Navy was under terrible pressure to reduce the number of naval vessels worldwide, and saw this peripheral region, the Gulf (ironically, as it turned out), as a good place to carry out the naval reductions that the budget was driving.

The sense that I had that we were unattended in Washington became so acute that I called some of my counterparts in neighboring countries -- Nat Howell, in Kuwait, in particular, I recall, Charles Hostler, in Bahrain -- and suggested that, since NEA (the Bureau of Near East and South Asian Affairs) apparently had no intention of calling a chiefs-of-mission conference and was not keen to have us come back to Washington, we call our own sub regional conference, much along the lines of the one that South Asian chiefs of mission pioneered, that we get together informally, and that we invite some people from Washington. If they came, so much the better; if they didn't, we would still have a lot of useful common problems to discuss and help each other to resolve.

I stressed to Nat and others that we should go ahead and formulate this proposal, and we should not seek Washington's permission until we had a proposal, and that we should present Washington more or less with a fait accompli, and then we should have the assistant secretary for NEA and whoever else wanted to come out come out, if they were able to do it. But that the great utility was the opportunity to exchange experiences that we all had in the Gulf and different perspectives that we all had, and to talk about the Gulf after the end of the Cold War, what the

collapse of the Soviet Union that was going on meant for Gulf security and economics and the like.

Nat, unfortunately, did mention it to Washington before we got very far along in the proposal. And they were so alarmed at the prospect of people in the field getting together on their own, out of control, as it were, that they proposed a chiefs-of-mission conference in Bonn, of all places. Which meant that we wouldn't be able to run around Washington and pollute people's minds with the local perspective, and they would be very much in control.

So we had a very strange chiefs-of-mission conference, which was not Gulf specific, it was the entire region of the Near East, not including South Asia, in Bonn, which the then-assistant secretary, John Kelly, attended, with Jock Covey, his principal deputy, and very few other people from Washington.

In preparation for that conference, I sent in three long telegrams on the Gulf after the Cold War. Among the ideas that I threw into those cables, not stressed, was the thought that, to go back to your earlier question, Iraq had emerged from the Iran-Iraq War as the dominant military power in the region. Iran was exhausted and no longer able to check Iraqi ambition. That Iraq did have ambitions and an empty treasury. That it was far from impossible to imagine that Iraq might use its military power to do again what it had done in the past; namely, to try to extinguish Kuwait's independence, or at least to grab the oil fields on Kuwait's northern border with Iraq. And that there were further possibilities of regional collusion, through the Arab Cooperation Council, which Iraq had formed with Yemen, Jordan, and Egypt, Egypt dropping out of the ACC as that year went on.

The great irony is that the only ambassador present in Bonn who gave any credence at all to this thesis that Iraq was a menace to the region was April Glaspie, who was in Baghdad. Others pooh-poohed it, and Washington simply didn't want to hear about it.

Now right around this time, of course, Saddam Hussein, in an informal talk with his officer corps and political entourage, which I reviewed for my Arabic lessons, so I actually watched it, made what was reported in the West as an unprovoked threat to rain fire on Israel. In fact, what he said was that Israel had attacked Iraq in the past, but if it did it again that he would retaliate by raining fire on Israel. He also said quite a variety of things about how Kuwaiti and Emiri, meaning United Arab Emirates, behavior on oil pricing and supplies was intolerable, and how this would have to be fixed.

This threat to the Gulf was not taken seriously. The threat to Israel was taken very seriously. Ironically, of course, Iraq was planning aggression against the Gulf, not against Israel. As I say, we can talk about this next time.

*Q: Going back a bit, you say no secretary of commerce had ever gone to Saudi Arabia.*

FREEMAN: Not to my knowledge.

*Q: But why not? After all, we were always asking for money, and it was a big market. Do you*

*have any feel? Was it just not a fun place to go?*

FREEMAN: I think it was not regarded as a significant market until the '70s, when the oil revenues produced a major market. At that time, there was a bureaucratic struggle, as I understand it, between the secretary of state, the secretary of commerce, and the secretary of the treasury. And there were other struggles going on; for example, with regard to who would have responsibility for managing economic relations with China, which was an opening market. Basically, Henry Kissinger, as both the national security advisor and secretary of state simultaneously, arranged to give Saudi Arabia to Bill Simon, the secretary of the treasury. Therefore, Washington treated Saudi Arabia through the treasury. Well, the treasury, whatever its merits may be, and I'm sure they're considerable, has no proven record of success or even great interest in the specific promotion of American exports. It's interested in financial relationships rather than trade relationships. Bureaucratically, therefore, I think that greatly reduced the incentive for secretaries of commerce to take an interest in Saudi Arabia. That is the only reason that I can ascribe to this, other than, of course, the point that you made, that Saudi Arabia is not the U.K., and Riyadh is not Paris.

*Q: I would have thought, in a way, by calling a meeting in Bonn, both it took you away from the area, but also, by including the whole Middle East into the thing, this immediately brought you back to the Levant, really.*

FREEMAN: Of course. It made the Gulf again a sideshow. I must say that was very apparent.

I did give a paper, which turned out to be fairly prescient, at the conference, on the forthcoming collapse of overseas official development assistance, and the requirement to focus on the development of private capital markets as a source of finance for development, the need to refocus relationships on economic and structural reform -- privatization and the like -- rather than on donations of official money, which I didn't think would be available anymore. This was, of course, 1990, and the scenario that I predicted did unfold in the coming years.

*Q: What about the role of Secretary Baker? We've mentioned Dennis Ross. Obviously, great things were happening elsewhere. Did you have the feeling that Baker was at all engaged in the Middle East outside of the Levant?*

FREEMAN: No, he was totally disinterested, which was one reason that he was caught so totally by surprise by the Gulf War. That is to say, he was totally disinterested and frankly, I believe, let it be known to the bureaucracy that he did not wish extraneous distractions, like information about other areas of the Middle East, to be brought to his attention. As you say, great things were happening...

*Q: We're talking about the fall of the Soviet Union.*

FREEMAN: The fall of the Soviet Union, the reunification of Germany, which was agreed in the spring of 1990. So I think he may very well have been right to concentrate on these, but we did end up paying a price in terms of not being alert to events that were occurring elsewhere.

*Q: Before we come to the Gulf War, could we talk a bit about how Egypt was viewed at that time from Saudi Arabia. Also, a bit about the Yemen and the Gulf states and Kuwait, as far as what you were getting. And then we'll go to relations with Iraq. I'd like you to talk about how that developed, and the role of April Glaspie, because this became very controversial later, and your perspective on that. And then, obviously, the developments on this.*

*Today is the 5th of July, 1996. Chas, why don't we take a tour of the horizon. This is prior to the Gulf War breaking out all over the place. What was your view of, and how do you think the Saudis felt about, Egypt?*

FREEMAN: In the spring of 1990, the embassy, under my direction (actually, I did a great deal of the writing), did a series of three telegrams, which became known as the hairy mammoth series. The contention was that, with the end of the Cold War, things in the Gulf, as elsewhere, had fundamentally changed. The telegrams attempted to examine the strategic environment around Saudi Arabia, both on the Gulf and Red Sea, Horn of Africa, fronts, as well as, of course, the Levant.

They became known as the hairy mammoth series because the thesis was that the Cold War, much like an Ice Age or a heavy winter, had covered the landscape to such an extent that it looked very much unlike what it was underneath the snow and ice. Suddenly, the ice of the Cold War was melting, and the familiar landscape, which had been obscured for nearly fifty years, was reemerging. Animals that we thought had been dead turned out to have been simply hibernating, and nationalist passions were re-arising. I think that somehow hairy mammoths came into this extended metaphor.

Looking at the world around Saudi Arabia at the end of the Cold War, one was struck by the effects of the collapse of bipolarity, the rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union.

The Arab world traditionally had three centers of power that contended for ascendancy. They were Baghdad, Damascus, and Cairo, each place representing a very different personality within the Arab world. During the 1950s, '60s, '70s, and '80s, Riyadh arose as a fourth point of influence. It got to the point where nobody did anything very much in the Arab world without first checking with King Fahd, because, while they might take a dim view of the nouveau-riche character of Saudi society, they recognized that his money gave him influence, particularly influence with the United States.

By 1990, on the eve of the Gulf War, Saudi Arabia and Egypt had restored a good relationship. Their relations had been impaired, as Egypt's relations with most Arab states had been impaired, after the Camp David Accords. Saudi Arabia, in fact, had bankrolled part of the Egyptian preparation for the 1973 crossing of the Suez Canal, which gave Sadat the bargaining leverage he needed to make peace with Israel. But I don't think the Saudis were witting that that was his intention. They saw this purely as a recovery of Arab land from Zionist occupation. So, in 1990, actually President Mubarak of Egypt and King Fahd had established a quite cordial working relationship. It was the case that Mubarak did very little without checking with Fahd, and Fahd did increasingly little without checking with Mubarak. Nevertheless, under the surface, the Saudi-Egyptian relationship remained somewhat an arms-length relationship.

You have to remember the history of the Arabian Peninsula to understand this. On three occasions, armies from Egypt had attempted, twice successfully, to overthrow the al-Saud dynasty in Riyadh. At the beginning of the 19th century, they sacked Riyadh and destroyed it. Later in the 19th century, they manipulated family quarrels within the al-Saud and sent an expeditionary force that again overthrew the al-Saud. They did not welcome the conquest and reorganization of Saudi Arabia by Abd al-Aziz at the beginning of the 20th century. In the 1960s, President Nasser attempted once again to overthrow the House of Saud, through his operations in Yemen, and subversive operations, including some commando operations and air operations in the Hejaz, the region of Saudi Arabia along the Red Sea coast.

So there was a legacy of suspicion. And this came out, I think, most forcefully in the aftermath of a late-1989 summit meeting between Mubarak and Fahd in Riyadh, at which, among other things, Fahd agreed to the construction of a bridge and causeway across the Strait of Tiran; that is at the bottom of the Gulf of Aqaba, between Sinai and the part of the Saudi coast opposite that. This agreement quickly unraveled as Fahd's brothers in the royal family, Minister of Defense and Aviation Prince Sultan, in particular, but others as well, and other Saudis, raised a question about whether Saudi Arabia really wished to have a land link to Egypt, given the propensity of Egyptian armies to arrive in Saudi Arabia with malign intent. And so this project very rapidly was shelved.

Nevertheless, I think the political relationship was clearly warming. One element of the warming was the increasing Egyptian coldness to something called the Arab Cooperation Council (ACC), which had been formed under Saddam Hussein's leadership and which attempted to coordinate policy between Iraq, Yemen, Jordan, and Egypt. In retrospect, President Mubarak says he became aware that this was in fact seen by Iraq as an instrument of expansionism. And he basically dropped out of participation, leaving Yemen and Jordan to conspire with Iraq in the events that led up to the Gulf War.

Mentioning Egypt, from Saudi Arabia's perspective, in other words, historically, the enemy has lain to the west. And that's generally true of the Arabian Peninsula. At one point 1500 years ago, Ethiopia sent an army that succeeded in conquering Yemen and advancing into portions of what is now Saudi Arabia, in fact coming quite close to Mecca. The Saudis, particularly those who live along the Red Sea coast, see themselves as part of, if not a Red Sea community, at least a network of Red Sea relationships, many of them with an unfortunate history.

There is a very large Sudanese population in Saudi Arabia. Sudanese are, in the Arab world, a very clever lot, with excellent Arabic and generally excellent English, and a propensity for religious discourse that is quite impressive. Many Sudanese teachers work in Saudi Arabia. So the Saudis, as they looked at this strategic area to their west and south, saw an improving relationship with Egypt, but a deteriorating relationship with the radical Islamic regime in Khartoum.

And they were very concerned about the trends in Somalia, which eventually led, in December of 1992, to the initial American intervention, later joined by the Saudis, in Mogadishu and elsewhere in Somalia.



Looking in the other direction, traditionally, there has been no love lost between Iranian Shi'ites and Saudi Sunni, especially Wahhabi Sunni, Arabs. There are, of course, many Arabs who live in Iran, a significant Arab minority population, and there is, in the Gulf, particularly in the United Arab Emirates, and to some extent in Oman, Bahrain in particular, as well as a bit in Kuwait, a substantial group of people who trace their origins to Iran, many of whom still can manage to speak Farsi at home. At various points throughout history, the Persian empires that have risen and fallen have exerted control over the southern coast of what the Saudis call the Arabian Gulf (what most of the world calls the Persian Gulf). Particularly after the Iranian Islamic Revolution, 1979-1980, the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran was extremely tense. There were Iranian military probes at Saudi Arabia. On one occasion, two Iranian aircraft were shot down by Saudi pilots. There was, of course the Iran-Iraq War, which broke out in 1980 and which lasted eight years before it finally sputtered to a halt, with Iran exhausted and Iraq ascendant. The Saudis, during that war, provided very substantial assistance, something on the order of \$28 billion or so worth of help, to Iraq, in order to prevent its collapse in the face of the vastly more populous and fanatical Revolutionary Guard in Iran. During this period, also, there were incidents of Iranian mischief-making during the hajj (the pilgrimage to Mecca), including subversive activities and even an explosion or two, which were traced to Iran. Iran continued, during the early 1990s, to make efforts to politicize the hajj in ways that would have turned it into a forum for anti-Western diatribe. This was not welcome to the Saudis. So there was a great deal of concern about Iran.

Saudi Arabia's relationships with the smaller Gulf countries were superficially good. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), to which, I suppose, Saddam saw the Arab Cooperation Council (ACC) as an antidote, was an organization with increasing importance. But, of course, Saudi Arabia's smaller neighbors, most of them having border disputes with Saudi Arabia...

*Q: I think of the Buraymi dispute.*

FREEMAN: The Buraymi Oasis, with the United Arab Emirates; an unsettled border with Yemen, which meant that the Omani border was unsettled; an unsettled, undemarcated border with Qatar; and, of course, disputes over a couple of islands with Kuwait, although the neutral zone that Kuwait and Saudi Arabia had jointly managed for about fifty years was successfully divided. Only Bahrain, which in many respects functions as a client state or a subsidiary of Saudi Arabia, with heavy Saudi subsidies, enjoyed really close and friendly relations with the Saudis.

So there was considerable concern in Saudi Arabia about the potential for Persian subversion of the smaller Gulf states, and also of possible Iranian efforts to stimulate unrest among the Shi'ites of Saudi Arabia's eastern province. The area around Hufuf in Saudi Arabia is predominantly Shi'ite (that happens to be where the oil is, and it is therefore of great strategic importance), but restive under a culture that is predominantly Sunni and a political leadership that is Nejdi, from the central part of the kingdom.

With Iraq, relations were superficially good.

With Jordan, relations were clearly deteriorating. King Hussein chafed under his dependence on

the House of Saud. After all, the House of Saud had pitched out his grandfather from the Hejaz. The fact that, in the southern part of Jordan, the Bedouin tribes felt, if anything, more allegiance to the House of Saud than they did to the House of Hashem, I think, also disturbed him. But mainly there were signs, as 1990 proceeded, that King Hussein's tolerance for his role as a mendicant in the Arab world, and particularly one dependent on Saudi largess, was coming to an end.

The specific issue that aggravated relations during this point was the nonpayment by Jordan of several bills to Saudi Arabia, one of them well known, and that was the bill for the Tapline's delivery of oil to Jordan.

*Q: Trans-Arabian...*

FREEMAN: Trans-Arabia Peninsula pipeline. But the Tapline that ran from Saudi Arabia's eastern province up into Jordan essentially was turned off when Jordan became very much in arrears in paying for the oil. And this dispute festered.

A more serious and less well-known dispute concerned Saudi subsidies for the American foreign military sales program. The Saudis paid for a good deal of the U.S. military training in North Yemen, and they also paid for a great deal of the U.S. program in Jordan. On one occasion, King Hussein and the United States came to Saudi Arabia with a request for a couple of hundred million dollars (it might have been \$250 million), to support Jordanian purchases of American equipment and related training and so forth. And the Saudis gave King Hussein a check for that amount. But he never paid the United States; he simply pocketed the money. Then the United States began to try to collect from Saudi Arabia. This naturally rather annoyed the Saudis, since they had already paid. And this, I think, was a bone of contention.

At any rate, as 1990 proceeded, King Hussein, in a dramatic gesture, went to Mecca and embraced King Fahd, in precisely the manner that his grandfather Abdullah had embraced Abd al-Aziz, the founder of the current Saudi dynasty.

To understand this, you have to understand the role of the iqal, the black band that holds down the head cloth on many desert Arabs.

*Q: It's basically a hobble for camels, isn't it, which is wrapped around the...*

FREEMAN: That's, I think, its origin, but its significance, symbolically, is great. Very religious Saudis don't wear iqals, because they regard them as an adornment and therefore contrary to Islam. But most Saudis do. The iqal symbolizes the honor of the man who wears it.

The story goes that, early in his reign, Abdullah had come to Mecca to meet Abd al-Aziz, and pledged his fealty to Abd al-Aziz, and buried the animosity that had previously existed, because he knew he would be dependent on Abd al-Aziz. Abd al-Aziz took off his iqal and put it over Abdullah al-Hashemi, in a gesture of welcoming him into this relationship. And Abd al-Aziz declared that the House of Saud would always be respectful, supportive, and loyal to the House of Hashem.

So these pledges were renewed in the summer of 1990, which accounts in part for the very sharp reaction of King Fahd and others when Jordan in fact sided with Iraq during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and threat to Saudi Arabia.

Yemen, at that point, was also a problem for the Saudis, as always. `Ali `Abd Allah Salih, the president of Yemen, had begun a process of democratic reform in Yemen. But that was not the issue. The issue was unsettled borders and `Ali `Abd Allah Salih's flirtations with foreign powers, especially Iraq. On the eve of the Gulf War, it was said that Saddam gave `Ali `Abd Allah Salih a check for \$50 million, in order to ensure Yemeni neutrality, at a minimum.

There were also suspicions (and now I leap ahead to after August 2) that Jordan had been promised the Hejaz back, and Yemen had been promised the Saudi southern provinces, which it had lost in a war in the 1930s to Abd al-Aziz. Actually, forces led by Prince, later King, Faysal spearheaded that war. At any rate, in addition to this, of course, at that point, there was still a Communist regime in South Yemen. Yemen was moving toward unity. And the Saudis don't like the prospect, particularly, of a strong, united Yemen on their southern border. So this was a troubling situation, and it was one that was getting virtually no attention from the United States.

*Q: On these relationships, did you, as the ambassador, either on instructions from Washington or on your own initiative, take any aggressive role? Or was this pretty much the Saudis dealing with what was happening?*

FREEMAN: No, there were no instructions from Washington on any of this. Nor was there any effort by Washington when, in the winter/spring of 1990, relations between Saudi Arabia and Kuwait deteriorated, in part for the same reason that Iraqi/Kuwaiti relations deteriorated; namely, Kuwait was blatantly cheating on its OPEC quota, to the detriment of larger producers like Saudi Arabia and Iraq, but in part because of some rather egregious Kuwaiti pokes at Saudi Arabia during a soccer match. Sports are often an instrument not of friendship, but of hostility. So, when Saddam began to threaten, in the spring of 1990, to take action against Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates for cheating on their oil quotas, he had a measure of sympathy in Saudi Arabia. The Saudis, however, never imagined that he would take the sort of military action that he did.

By the early summer of 1990, the U.S. Navy had, as I mentioned, its plans to withdraw from the Gulf reversed by Colin Powell.

*Q: Who was chairman of the joint chiefs of staff?*

FREEMAN: The United Arab Emirates, in July of 1990, asked the United States for a show of force in the form of a joint exercise, which was called Ivory Justice and involved the deployment of a squadron of U.S. aircraft to the United Arab Emirates.

The reaction of all of the other Gulf states, including Saudi Arabia, was that this was an unnecessarily provocative act to Iraq, that Iraq had no intention of using force against either Kuwait or the United Arab Emirates, and it was generally disapproving of this action, which, in fact, was prescient by Sheikh Zayid in Abu Dhabi, because, when the invasion of Kuwait

occurred on the 2nd of August, the only state in the Gulf that was militarily in a state of readiness and alert was the Emirates. There was a measure of complacency in Saudi Arabia about Iraqi intentions.

Now, in retrospect, we could see that, on July 20, 1990, Iraq conducted a simulated invasion of Kuwait in central Iraq, which it then carried out two weeks later. But, at the time, this appeared to be more military posturing and regular military training than anything terribly unusual.

As July went on, I was due for home leave. On July 28, I convened a meeting of the country team to poll them as to whether I should cancel my home leave. With only one exception, the deputy chief of mission, Dave Dunford, those present expressed considerable confidence, including the intelligence agency representatives, that the worst that could happen between Iraq and Kuwait would be some sort of tussle over the Rumaila oil fields, which straddle the border, which Iraq conceivably might take and hold for ransom in order to obtain Kuwaiti forgiveness of debts, which the Kuwaitis were very unwisely insisting on collecting from an essentially bankrupt Iraq. No one, including the DCM, anticipated anything beyond that. It was left that there really wasn't any reason why I shouldn't go on home leave. If something happened, I could come back. But the expectation was that if something happened, it would essentially be a limited conflict between Iraq and Kuwait, without grievous implications for Saudi Arabia.

So I took off. I arrived in Washington on July 31, hopped in my car, and went to my house in Washington, where my daughter was living. I took a shower and a nap, and then got in the car and drove to Rhode Island, overnight. I arrived there on August 1, about nine-thirty in the morning.

On August 2, being very jet-lagged and confused about where I was physically, I awoke about four in the morning and went out and turned on the BBC, on the shortwave radio that I normally carry with me, and heard, to my astonishment, that Iraq had invaded Kuwait. I waited for the sun to rise, and when things had opened up in Washington, I called David Mack, who was the deputy assistant secretary in the bureau of Near Eastern affairs, who was responsible for the Gulf, and asked him whether this was something with really broad implications, and whether I should plan to return to Saudi Arabia, and was told, no, it didn't look that way, it looked like a very limited action, and that I should feel free to continue with my home leave for the time being, and that maybe I would have to curtail it, but I didn't have to turn right around.

The same essential message was given on the 3rd of August, when I called again.

On the morning of the 4th, which was a Saturday, I called again and was told, well, you probably ought to come down the beginning of the week to see the president, and then plan to go back to Saudi Arabia. I had planned a family reunion for the 5th, Sunday, and there were a large number of people planning to turn up. Saturday afternoon, however, I received a call saying, no, no, this is something very serious, it looks like Saudi Arabia is at risk, and you'd better come back tonight for meetings at the NSC. So I managed to get myself on a plane, and I got down to National Airport. I was paged and told that the meetings were off, and that I should come at eight o'clock the following morning, Sunday, to the Ops. Center, which I did.

I found, on the morning of Sunday the 5th, a great atmosphere of confusion surrounding what was happening. I was able to ascertain that somebody was probably going to Jeddah, which is where the king was at that season, around noon. The signals kept changing. First, it was Bob Gates, the deputy national security advisor, who was to go. Then it was Brent Scowcroft, the national security advisor. Then it was Dick Cheney, the secretary of defense. Then it was General Norman Schwarzkopf, the commander in chief of the central command. When I got out to Andrews, I found Norm Schwarzkopf there, and he told me that it would be Bob Gates who was going. There was a plane standing by; I put my luggage on it. Fifteen minutes later, a call came saying, no, that wasn't going to happen. I took my luggage off. And I said to Norm, "Look, I think I'd better go down to MacDill Air Force Base in Florida and go over there with you," because he was planning to go. Then a call came that Dick Cheney, who had earlier been supposed to go and had been canceled, was now going. Cheney arrived, we got on the plane, and took off.

*Q: Let's go back here now. I can recall, on the 2nd, picking out the headlines of the Washington Post, "Iraq Invades Kuwait," and the word coming in, even right at the very first, was that it really looked pretty awful. Obviously, major American interests were being threatened, the oil, even if it didn't go into this. And yet, from what you're telling me, one of the key people, the ambassador to Saudi Arabia, wasn't being used by the State Department or the National Security Council to say what the hell was going on, what the Saudi reaction was going to be, and this type of thing. Could you look at that?*

FREEMAN: I don't personally find anything particularly unusual about that. I'm not an expert on Iraq and was very new in the Arabian Peninsula. Prince Bandar was in Washington and very ably representing King Fahd in intensive discussions with the White House and the State Department.

I think the more unusual thing was that it took until the 4th of August, when two Iraqi Republican Guard divisions were spotted, in a pattern typical of resupply for further advance, on the Kuwaiti-Saudi border, and several Iraqi reconnaissance patrols appeared fifteen to twenty kilometers deep into Saudi territory, for the wider implications of this to really sink home.

There was a further complication. When the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait occurred, President Bush was out West with Margaret Thatcher.

*Q: Prime minister of England, and a very tough lady.*

FREEMAN: Yes, exactly. And she worked him over pretty hard in terms of the need for a stiff response.

But, going back a little bit, remember, please, that U.S. relations with Kuwait, notwithstanding Operation Earnest Will, which had escorted Kuwaiti tankers through the Gulf during the Iran-Iraq war, were not cordial. The Kuwaitis were not asking for help. As I understand it, only a couple of hours before the actual invasion, Nat Howell, the U.S. ambassador to Kuwait, asked the Kuwaitis whether they wanted us to do anything, and was told no.

In fact, at that very moment, an Iraqi sports team, which was not really a sports team, but a group

of air traffic controllers, was guiding Iraqi helicopter gunships into Kuwait City, and guiding the initial assault.

Furthermore, Kuwait's relations with Saudi Arabia, as I indicated, were not good, nor were they good really with other members of the Gulf.

The U.S. had no defense commitment to Kuwait implicitly, and certainly not explicitly. So I think the initial reaction was to treat this as a classic case of a quarrel in which the United States was not directly involved, where perhaps Iraq was intending to, as I said earlier, in effect, conduct a bank robbery, or at least a hostage-taking, and then bargain with Kuwait for financial advantage.

When, however, the Iraqi forces began visibly to prepare for further advance into Saudi Arabia, I think people remembered that the United Arab Emirates had been as much a target of Iraqi ire as Kuwait had been. And there began to be real alarm about the implications either of an Iraqi advance into Saudi Arabia or of an Iraqi position on the Saudi border, which would put it in a position to intimidate Saudi Arabia and perhaps dictate some measure of policy to Saudi Arabia.

*Q: I might point out at this time that Iraq had by far the most battle-experienced and largest army in the whole area.*

FREEMAN: Iraq had just finished its eight-year war with Iran. It had 1.2 million men under arms; actually more men in the Iraqi armed forces than there were Saudis of military age, which was one of the reasons that Saudi Arabia felt it required assistance.

But, in any event, I was simply not a participant in whatever confused discussions were going on in Washington. And confused they were, as the last-minute pulling and hauling over who would go to see King Fahd illustrated.

*Q: Actually, Secretary Baker was not in town, either, as I recall.*

FREEMAN: Secretary Baker was in Mongolia, and broke short a visit, which I believe in fact was a private hunting trip, but described as something else, to return to Washington.

In any event, I didn't consider it particularly unusual not to be in that group.

In fact, as we proceeded on the aircraft toward Jeddah, I really found it very difficult to figure out what the Saudi reaction to all this was likely to be.

King Fahd later confirmed to me that my judgment of his leadership style was correct. He said that in fifty years of public life, he had never once made a decision outside the consensus of the royal family and the Council of Ministers. In fact, the Saudi monarchy is not a Western-style monarchy. The king, in some respects, is a powerful presider over a consensus. Typically, King Fahd takes an agonizingly long time to come to a conclusion about what must be done. Therefore, I was frankly astonished not only by the decisiveness that President Bush displayed with regard to Saudi Arabia, but also by the decisiveness of King Fahd.

The meeting with King Fahd, Secretary Cheney, General Schwarzkopf, and others, in Jeddah, has, I think, been misportrayed in the press and in much of the writing about the Gulf War. Much of the writing about the Gulf War, I might say, is really writing about Washington and the Gulf War, and tends to overlook the fact that the Gulf War took place somewhere outside the Beltway.

*Q: Before we get to that meeting. You were on this plane, flying out with Norman Schwarzkopf and Dick Cheney. What were you all talking about as you went? What was the mission to do, as they saw it, as you flew?*

FREEMAN: The mission was essentially to describe the threat to King Fahd and to ascertain whether he wished assistance or not. To offer assistance, but not to cajole him into it.

I believe that in fact there was a great deal of effort made by Prince Bandar, who occupied a pivotal position and who had...

*Q: Whose position was what?*

FREEMAN: He was ambassador to the United States. Almost a foster son, in many respects, of King Fahd, very close to the king. A man of great ability and energy, with unparalleled access in both capitals. Bandar had, himself, flown back, just ahead of Cheney, to Riyadh, to prepare the king for whoever it was that turned up, and clearly anticipated and wished to see a decisive American intervention.

But no one knew whether that would happen. So a great deal of the discussion was: "What will the king decide?" and "How should we present the intelligence material to him?"

Accompanying the group was a CIA briefer, with a great package of what is called PHOTINT, meaning overhead satellite photography, of Iraqi dispositions in southern Kuwait and along the Saudi border.

*Q: It's ideal country to find out who is getting ready for what, isn't it?*

FREEMAN: Exactly. It's open, with clear skies at that season of the year. We asked this briefer to run through his briefing, and it was a very good briefing, but it was very much in the peculiar style of such briefings in Washington, with: "On the one hand..." "On the other hand..." "We don't know." "Probably." "Probability of seventy percent this," and blabitty blah. It was my judgment, and I expressed it, that if King Fahd were given this sort of briefing, not being familiar with that particular style, it would simply confuse him. And I suggested that the briefer come to the meeting, but that, in effect, General Schwarzkopf provide his military judgments, rather than a normal intelligence briefing. And that is what happened.

The king really, as it turned out, had only two questions.

One was, "Is the threat to Saudi Arabia as grave as I believe it to be?" When the king, with General Schwarzkopf on bended knee in front of him, and the crown prince looking over the

king's shoulder, and the foreign minister looking on, with the deputy defense minister, Prince `Abd al-Rakman, and the chief of staff, General Hamad, saw these photographs, particularly those which showed Iraqi patrols inside Saudi territory, he saw his judgment confirmed. So that answered his first question, is there a serious threat. The second question, which he put rather bluntly to us, was, "What are you prepared to do about it?" And he said, "Frankly, if your reaction is the sort of thing I had from Jimmy Carter when I was threatened by Iran..." (in which the United States persuaded Saudi Arabia to accept the deployment of a squadron of F-15s, and then, when they were in the air en route to Saudi Arabia, announced that they were unarmed). The king said that if this was the sort of thing we had in mind, we needn't have any further discussion.

Norm Schwarzkopf then briefed the king on the plan that became known later as Desert Shield. At that point, it had no name. And when the king saw that the American response involved the deployment of 220,000 people in our armed forces to Saudi Arabia, he said, "That is a serious response, and I accept."

*Q: Now he was talking about a decision that had been made in Washington that, if requested by the Saudis, we would do it.*

FREEMAN: That's correct. And it was clear that the king did want this deployment.

At this point, there was a nice reminder of the normal Saudi decision-making style. As I mentioned before, normally, in Saudi Arabia, decisions are made after lengthy discussion and the formation of consensus among the ruling group. The crown prince interrupted in Arabic (and my Arabic by that time was good enough to understand all of this), in an aside with the king, and said, "Don't you think we ought to take some more time to consider this before we make this decision and convey the request to Washington?"

And the king said, "No, we don't have any time. We have to make the decision now, or what happened to Kuwait will happen to us. There is no more Kuwait."it."

The crown prince said, "Yes, there is still a Kuwait."

And the king said, "And its territory consists solely of hotel rooms in London, Cairo, and elsewhere."

The crown prince said, "I agree with you."

And then the king went around the room, polling his other advisors present, the deputy defense minister, Prince Abd al-Rakman; Prince Saud, the foreign minister; and the chief of staff, who saluted and said, "At your orders, your majesty." And that was the decision.

So it is often made out that the United States went there determined to persuade the king to accept forces. That is not correct. The king did not require persuasion, and proved to be exceptionally decisive. He later said to me that this was in fact the only time in his many decades of public life that he had ever made a decision on his own, without waiting for consensus. And



he said he felt qualified, by experience and by his understanding of the circumstances.

Secretary Cheney asked the king whether he could communicate to the president that there was a request. When he did so, the president ordered the 82nd Airborne to deploy to Saudi Arabia, as well as Air Force units and the like. And the first phase of what became known as Desert Shield was set in motion.

That, however, I must say, left many, many questions to be resolved. For one thing, as the 82nd Airborne rightly put it, they were, in effect, speed bumps, not an obstacle to Saddam's further advance. The 82nd Airborne is a very competent, light-infantry paratrooper unit, and it would not have been able to stop the heavy Iraqi forces had they chosen to advance. They were essentially joined initially only by the Saudi Arabian National Guard, another light, very mobile force. And it took quite awhile for the Saudi Arabian land forces to deploy. We had very little air power beyond that provided by the Royal Saudi Air Force. So, for the first four or five weeks, perhaps, into September, we lived in a situation in which it was clear that if Iraq wished to prosecute its attack, we could not stop it. It was not until the middle of September that the military began to feel confident that they could hold Iraq some hundreds of kilometers inside Saudi territory, and in time press a counterattack. And it was not until early October, when the deployment was complete, that they were confident they could hold Iraq near the border.

The purpose of the deployment was wholly defensive. The mandate that we had from the United Nations, to which the U.S. government promptly applied for approval of this action, was to defend Saudi Arabia and to mount pressure on Iraq with regard to withdrawing from Kuwait. That involved an enormous deployment of naval forces, which began to board ships and divert them if they were carrying cargo destined for Iraq. This, in turn, led to endless complaints, primarily from Jordan, which was a primary transshipment point, through Aqaba, for Iraq.

I discovered only later that there was still an Iraqi detachment of about 1,200 men sitting up in the northern part of the Red Sea, near the Gulf of Aqaba, which had been managing Saudi-financed military supplies to Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War. They were interned and returned by the Saudis to the Iraqis.

But the early days were tense. And they were made even more tense, to jump ahead a little bit, when an incident, which turned out to be totally unrelated to the war, occurred. An American woman and her children somehow found themselves in the middle of a gun battle between the Saudi police and a Saudi drug trafficker, who commandeered the car. A wild chase then ensued, with bullets flying everywhere, and the woman and a couple of her kids were killed.

This was a memorable incident, for many reasons. Among others, I felt obliged, as ambassador, to ensure that rumor control in the American community was promptly instituted. We set up a command post that provided news to the warden system, which is part of any embassy's normal evacuation plan. And I spent hours on the phone with senior members of the royal family. It was quite clear that police bullets, rather than those from the criminal, had killed the woman and her children.

The husband, who had gone inside a supermarket to go shopping while his wife and children

waited in the car, was a devout Mormon, a man of great spiritual strength. I took him, the following morning, to see Prince Salman, the governor of Riyadh, a very emotional meeting. I didn't know what this man would say. Much to my astonishment, he said to Prince Salman that he and his wife had come to Saudi Arabia to find an environment that was drug- and crime-free. That Saudi Arabia had been good to them. That he recognized this was a most unusual incident. That he bore Saudi Arabia no ill will. And that he would treasure the memory of his days with his wife in Riyadh. Prince Salman, for his part, was most gracious and apologetic. And the incident passed.

But, in the conditions of tension where invasion was a real possibility, keeping the American community from misunderstanding this incident was quite a task.

I should go back and say that the decision to make a huge deployment of U.S. forces to Saudi Arabia (220,000 men and women, initially) was obviously problematic on many scores.

Before Norm Schwarzkopf left for MacDill Air Force Base, leaving Lieutenant General Chuck Horner, the commander of the Central Air Forces, behind as his forward command element in Riyadh, Norm and I had a long chat, in which I basically made two points to him.

First was that my own readings of military history suggested that, unlike the British, who had become accustomed to operating with and among foreign forces of very different mentality, the U.S. had not really developed in the armed forces what I would call an adequate military-political function. And that liaison with Saudi forces and with local Saudi emirs, meaning governors and potentates, would be a major task. That this was an opportunity for Norm to develop a system that would be a model for future operations.

Second was that, given the nature of Saudi society, we could anticipate a huge amount of friction between American forces and Saudi forces unless certain things were made clear. Specifically, that there could be no use of alcohol. There could be no USO shows involving scantily clad women. And there would have to be some program of orientation and indoctrination for U.S. forces, so that they understood the nature of the society they had been thrust into.

All of this discussion, which Norm, having grown up partly in Iran, understood very well, I think paralleled his own thinking, and resulted in General Order #1, which was a godsend, because it banned liquor, it required all forces to have a one-week indoctrination in Islam and Saudi society, and it recognized the need for extreme discretion in the practice of religions other than Islam in Saudi Arabia. This, together with the exceptional discipline and remarkably high quality of the U.S. armed forces as they then existed, kept frictions to a minimum.

But, in parallel with this, the embassy and the consulates, most particularly Ken Stammerman, the consul general in Dhahran, established an extremely effective liaison process with the U.S. military and the local Saudi authorities, such that when incidents began to occur, they were either nipped in the bud or resolved or, if not resolved, at least kept out of the newspapers, and therefore didn't have a snowballing effect. As time went on, the civil-affairs people in the military got awfully good at working with American consular officers on this. And the American consular officers got awfully good at working with local Saudi authorities. I think probably this

element of the Gulf War experience, the fact that the relationship between the embassy and the consulates and the military was so close and cooperative, and that the two were able so effectively to manage the frictions between the Saudis and the U.S. military, is one of the great achievements.

It parallels one other, of which I'm personally very proud. Norm Schwarzkopf and I are the only war-fighting commander in chief and ambassador who have ever been co-located forward in a war zone. Historically, ambassadors and CINCs (commanders in chief) have had a very rocky relationship. Norm and I had an exceedingly cooperative relationship, with a great deal of mutual assistance provided. He kept me adequately informed of military plans; I kept him adequately informed of what was going on, on the political side. I supported him, and he supported me. I think it would be worth going on at some length, when time permits, about that relationship and how it was managed and why it worked, because both of us have strong personalities. Norm, in particular, unlike me, has a notorious temper and a leadership style that was very dictatorial, peremptory, and demanding. While he kept most of his subordinates in a state of fear and trepidation, the relationship that he enjoyed with me was cordial and cooperative.

These two things, that is, the good connection between the ambassador and the CINC, and the excellent connections between people on the ground managing the day-to-day frictions from this large U.S. presence, played a vital role in enabling us to build up in Saudi Arabia and ultimately to liberate Kuwait.

*Q: What about the problem of Americans leaving Dhahran, particularly, since the oil fields could be a critical problem, as well as elsewhere? The embassy plays a major role in this. How did this play out?*

FREEMAN: The American community was desperately afraid of the use of chemical weapons. I was far more concerned about biological weapons being employed. Early in August, around August 10, the embassy sent the first of twenty-seven telegrams to the Department of State, asking for support in the form of materials and guidelines for briefings of the American community that would enable us to cope with this problem. We pointed out then, and in all of the succeeding communications, that we were trying to walk a fine line between keeping essential civilian personnel at work in the kingdom and avoiding the deaths of American citizens.

The point being this (I'm really leaping ahead a bit and melding Desert Shield and Desert Storm in this regard), Saudi Aramco included a vast number of expatriate personnel, some of them key ones, being Americans, but many of other nationalities. The defense contractors who supported the Saudi armed forces and the U.S. military were staffed largely by Americans or by British subjects, with other nationalities in a subordinate role. Altogether, at this time, there were fewer than 30,000 Americans in the kingdom, with the largest community in the eastern province, which was the target of Saddam's possible attack. If those Americans had left in a panic, there would have been no oil with which to fuel aircraft or tanks or to keep ships at sea. There would have been no defense contractors to maintain those weapons systems. And we would have ended up fighting to defend the two holy mosques, rather than the world's oil supplies, and doing it under gravely disadvantageous circumstances. Moreover, other communities regarded the Americans as likely the best informed, and an American departure would have set off a stampede

of everybody, down to and including the Filipino bottle washers for the Saudi military and the Bangladeshi street sweepers. Saudi Arabia's dependence on expt. labor therefore rested on the behavior of the American community. So we did not want the American presence to attrib.; we wanted the essential personnel to remain.

However, as you might guess from the figure of twenty-seven cables, the Department of State and the interagency process in Washington proved utterly unable to come to grips with this matter. We first got instructions not to worry. Then we got instructions not to brief the American community. Then we got instructions, in response to our request for chemical gear that we could distribute to the American community, not to press that.

*Q: You're talking about chemical suits and things like this.*

FREEMAN: Gas masks, ponchos, that sort of thing. We were enjoined from briefing the American community at all. In the absence of briefings, panic began to rise. So I just violated our instructions, and we provided over a hundred briefings to the American community.

The idiocy did not stop with this. In December 1990, the Department of State Human Rights Bureau vetoed a sale of chemical gear to the Ministry of Interior in Saudi Arabia, which would have been distributed to the foreign community, including the Americans, gratis, on the grounds that the Ministry of Interior controlled the police, and the police in Saudi Arabia are violators of human rights. It proved impossible to overturn this decision.

I attempted, in December, when the majority of American families leave Saudi Arabia with their children for Christmas vacations (since Christmas is not congenially celebrated in the kingdom), to issue a voluntary-departure notice before school let out, so that the families would be able to stay abroad (I knew the date and time of the attack, by then; Washington didn't, apparently, except for a few people), and I was vetoed. So these families returned to Dhahran, and in January, just after their return, the voluntary departure was then approved.

An issue arose about Riyadh. I favored a voluntary departure. Washington suddenly was thinking about a directed departure (meaning involuntary). We were never able to resolve this, and it was the subject of a number of very fiery communications from me, some back-channel, which are frankly obscene and which I will not quote. One, front-channel, I sent after the missile threat to Riyadh began to eventuate, when I got an instruction from Washington to distribute gas masks and chemical gear to the American community, which, of course, I didn't have, because Washington had declined to provide them. At that point, I sent a telegram that began, as I recall, "If I were to ask my staff whether to continue the search for intelligent life in Washington, they would all advise against it," and went on from there.

This subject, of managing the American community in the face of indifference and efforts at micromanagement... At one point, I learned that Washington was about to make a decision on directed departure from Riyadh. I informed the Department, back-channel, that if they did that, I intended to go to Dhahran and resign in front of 1,600 American news people, since I felt I was responsible and accountable, and I needed to be consulted. So this was a major issue for me and for the Americans in kingdom.

It was aggravated by the issue of biological warfare, which the American community had not focused on, but which the military were very focused on and which I was very focused on. I have reason to believe that in fact Saddam Hussein did make one attempt to employ biological weapons against Riyadh. But, in any event, there were insufficient anthrax inoculations available, and it was decided to inoculate the military, but not the American ambassador, the embassy, or the American civilian population, still less the Allied and coalition forces that were alongside us. So we had a situation in which the civilian population and industrial base, which supposedly the U.S. troops were protecting, was left unprotected, while the troops, quite properly, were given inoculations.

Finally, in the middle of all this, I would say the intelligence community, from my perspective, behaved in an unfortunately quite typical pattern. That is, as the war began, in August of 1990, the judgment of the intelligence community was that Iraq did not have chemical warheads for its Scuds or, still less, the longer-range variance of these, which it had manufactured, the al-Hussein and al-Abbas missiles. There was no change in the evidence, but as we began to get closer to conflict, the intelligence community began to cover its bets by steadily escalating, until, on the eve of the war, the intelligence community was asserting that Iraq definitely did have chemical warheads. There was some dispute about whether Iraqi missiles could reach Riyadh or not. As it turned out, of course, they not only could, but did.

I objected to all this, and after the war, I received an apology from Judge Webster, the director of Central Intelligence. I was right, and he was wrong. Iraq never did successfully mount chemical warheads on missiles, although it certainly stockpiled a vast quantity of artillery shells and other shorter-range munitions with chemicals, for use against an infantry and armor attack.

*Q: When you say "Washington made these decisions," obviously there was a lot of to-ing and fro-ing, but it wasn't as though there was this big amorphous Washington and you were sitting there and had no idea where things were coming from. I assume that you were getting knowledge of where the micromanagement and the indecisions were coming from. Did you get a feel for what the problem was?*

FREEMAN: You're quite correct, "Washington" is a convenient way of avoiding having to name names.

*Q: Just name names.*

FREEMAN: I don't want to get too much into naming names.

There were several problems. The Deputies Committee, which, in the opinion of all who participated in it in Washington, worked splendidly, was, in effect, a device for micromanagement.

Brent Scowcroft took a particularly active and unhelpful role in the issue of evacuations. All the rest of the Middle East, North Africa, and Muslim countries had directed departure. We ended up as the only place that didn't. And the reason was that he was concerned about exactly what I was

concerned about; namely, that if the Americans bolted, everything would fall apart. But rather than trusting me to manage that, they attempted to do so by remote control. Ivan Selin, the under secretary for management at the department of state, who was the subject of much of my ire, was frankly in a very, very difficult position, given Scowcroft's assumption of authority over this matter. Now this was most unusual. The responsibility for the protection of American citizens runs from the ambassador through the secretary of state, not the national security advisor. But, anyway, that's Washington.

There were other issues, I might say, and perhaps when we return to this topic, we could talk about them: the nature of deployment orders; the question of who would pay for what; the issue of religious observances at Hanukkah and Christmas; the question of the extent to which military and political policy in Washington were being effectively coordinated, as I observed it from my distance; and the issue of the avalanche of bright lights and dim bulbs that descended on Saudi Arabia.

*Q: For someone who's reading this in the 25th century, you're talking about not very bright people.*

FREEMAN: A lot of people who wanted to have their photograph taken with troops in the field; 2,010 of them, to be exact, over the course of the run-up to the actual fighting in the Gulf War.

*Q: You arrived back there on the 5th of August. In what state did you find the embassy and the consulates? How did you employ the embassy at this particular time?*

FREEMAN: I was very fortunate in having an exceptionally competent and seasoned deputy chief of mission, David Dunford.

*Q: Is he still...*

FREEMAN: He's now retired and living in Tucson, Arizona. He had served as chargé for two extended periods, one between the expulsion of Ambassador Hume Horan and another between Walt Cutler's second coming and his departure and my arrival. So Dave was very, very competent and familiar with the local scene, and had done all the right things in terms of activating the liaison with the American community, setting up a command center in the embassy, putting the embassy on alert, establishing immediate liaison with the U.S. military as they arrived.

The first few days after the deployment decision, I was stuck in Jeddah, because of the need to reach an agreement with the Saudis on, in effect, a status-of-forces agreement. The deployment of this number of foreign forces to Saudi Arabia was unprecedented. At the king's direction, with my help, ultimately the agreement was actually reached in Washington. It was agreed that all 220,000 and any others who might be deployed (ultimately there were 550,000) would be assigned as technical staff of the embassy. So, in a technical sense, I certainly commanded the largest embassy in history, since it numbered something over half a million people at its peak. But I was stuck in Jeddah, trying to convey to Washington, without enormous success, the sense of urgency that the Saudis felt about resolving these issues.

And then, even before I could really get settled again in Riyadh, I had to go to Dhahran with John Kelly, the assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, to call on a very shaken emir of Kuwait. The emir, in the initial stages, was housed at the Gulf Palace, which is a guesthouse that the king maintains in the eastern province. Later, he relocated to Taif. There were questions about liaison with the Kuwaitis. In the initial period, either I or Phil Griffin, the consul general in Jeddah, who's now retired also and lives in the Washington area, handled this liaison. I very quickly decided that I wanted Phil to handle it, because he had served in Kuwait and knew it better than I, and because Taif, where the Kuwaiti emir eventually lodged, was in the Jeddah consular district, and finally because, frankly, I had so much to do with the Saudis that I didn't have time to give the Kuwaitis the attention they deserved. This later became very awkward, when, really at my urging and at the urging of the individual concerned, Skip Gnehm, the ambassador-designate to Kuwait, was accredited to Taif. Initially, my thought was that Phil Griffin might serve, in effect, as his DCM, double-hatted, as consul general in Jeddah and DCM for Kuwait, because of the requirement for on-going liaison. But Skip didn't find this arrangement attractive. He was very concerned about turf and who would control what. And so, by the latter part of the war, Phil Griffin had dropped out of that role.

When I arrived in Riyadh, of course, the major concern providing a context for the supposed incident of terrorism (actual incident of innocent death in a police firefight, to which I referred earlier) - the principal concern was, of course, to establish security for the embassy and for the American community. To ensure that we had effective, rapid liaison with the Saudi authorities, I was able to get secure telephones installed between the embassy and the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of Defense and the king's private secretary, so that I could communicate on a timely basis. Then, of course, as time went on, liaison with CENTCOM and adequate arrangements to keep informed of what was happening and to make sure that they were informed of our views became the principal issue.

Very soon, however (and this should be the subject of the next conversation, as I indicated), we got into visitor overload. The first visitor, who was instructed not to come, was Senator Lautenberg. Steve Solarz, of course, turned up, as he did everywhere. I found myself bouncing around in the kingdom, taking visitors in to see the king and the military and various other people.

Fortunately, quite early on, Norm Schwarzkopf agreed to simply make a jet plane available to me on a twenty-four-hour basis. That was a godsend. I think I went to Jeddah fifty-two times, over the course of the war, on that aircraft. I remember there was one twenty-four-hour period when, because of congressional and other delegations, primarily, as well as work, I was in Jeddah three times, Dhahran three times, and Riyadh twice, all within twenty-four hours. These are a thousand miles apart. This again was a nice instance of Schwarzkopf and Freeman cooperating informally. My colleague in Turkey, Mort Abramowitz, was never able to get support from the military, because he approached it in a formal manner. I simply said to Norm, "Look, a lot of what I'm doing is work for you. If you can fly a sergeant around, you can fly me, I think." And so he never billed the Department of State or whatever. When Abramowitz made his request, the military asked for a fund site, which, of course, was not forthcoming, because the expense of military aircraft is enormous.

So visitor management became a major obsession very early on. As the war proceeded, I began to make requests, in cooperation with Norm Schwarzkopf, that Washington cease treating Saudi Arabia like a military theme park, with an ambassador and a general as the park rangers, and remember that we had things to do. We had preparations to make and issues to deal with, and were really less able to do so because we were spending all our time meeting VIPs.

*Q: What was the reading at the time, as you saw it, why the other shoe didn't drop? Why didn't Iraq come in when they could have? Was it indecisiveness or they didn't have a plan? How did you feel at the time? What were you getting?*

FREEMAN: Clearly, they did have a plan. We suspected that at the time, and later became aware that Saddam Hussein in fact had been using the services of a computer company in Colorado to do war simulations of an invasion of Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates for the past five years, updating this annually. So, clearly, he had a plan. The disposition of his forces led us to what turned out, once we saw the computer simulations, to be a correct interpretation of his intentions.

As to why he sat in Kuwait, neither advancing nor withdrawing, I think no one knows the answer to that. Certainly, in August 1990, as I said, the way to Riyadh, to Dhahran, and onward to the United Arab Emirates was open to him.

I believe that he was like a house burglar going down a line of townhouses. His intention was to go into the House of Kuwait and take whatever he could. And then he'd poke his head out and see if the police were anywhere around or not. If they weren't, he'd move on to the next house. The sudden arrival of the police left him with a situation where he could neither gracefully withdraw, under apparent pressure, nor could he safely attack. I think it led him to hole up in Kuwait. I find no more elegant explanation for his very obtuse decision-making than that.

*Q: A question which has no pertinence to what we're talking about, but it came up by our transcriber saying that you never offered your impression of why Paul Wolfowitz didn't subscribe to the idea of having a meeting with China, North Korea, and the United States. This goes way back, but we can insert it.*

FREEMAN: I'm not entirely sure, but I would speculate that there were several reasons.

First of all, Mr. Wolfowitz took a very jaundiced, rather ideological view of China, and I think was inherently suspicious of any initiative that originated with the Chinese.

Second, with regard to contacts with North Korea, I believe that he was apprehensive about the political reaction from the Republican right, which he has courted and from association with which he has benefited, and that therefore he saw such a development as politically unattractive.

And I suppose he might also have been concerned about the adequacy of prior consultation with South Korea. On the other hand, he must have been aware, as certainly I was, that South Korea itself was conducting a whole series of maneuvers intended to get the Chinese to put forward just



exactly this sort of proposal.

I never really have understood it, but I suspect these are the factors that led him to be more than skeptical, actually out either to brush aside or actively to sabotage the Chinese initiatives.

*Q: For the next time, you'd mentioned several things that we should discuss. All this is during the build-up phase. One was the nature of the deployment orders, getting who was going to pay for all this, problems of religious observations by American troops on Saudi soil, and then, probably the most horrendous problem you had, all the U.S. visitors coming.*

FREEMAN: I think I've actually dealt with the latter, pretty much.

*Q: And then the other one might be also talking about the early part of putting together a coalition, and whatever role you played as we put this coalition together. And this is all what became known as Desert Shield.*

FREEMAN: I'd add a couple of other things that we should discuss. That is, the timing of the counterattack on Iraq, the nature of the battle plan, and the coordination problems in Washington that surrounded it. The problem of sustaining Saudi will as many Iraqis died under air attack. And finally, in the aftermath of the war, a whole series of issues related to prisoners of war, refugees, and the like, as well as the financial difficulties that the war placed Saudi Arabia in.

*Q: And then, of course, we'll talk about the attack and also the embassy under Scud attack and all that sort of thing.*

*Today is the 3rd of September, 1996. Chas, we've talked about the visitors. Did the finances come in early on? This became a major question.*

FREEMAN: Who was going to pay for the deployment was an early issue. I think it was recognized, from the outset, that Kuwait should make a substantial contribution, since the issue had to do with Kuwait's annexation by Iraq and our desire to reverse that. But, frankly, there was never any real formula worked out for sharing the costs.

Jim Baker, the secretary of state, who from the outset raised this issue, found the Saudis willing to make substantial contributions. The Kuwaiti government, by about September, was located in the Saudi city of Taif, and he visited there before going to the United Arab Emirates, as I remember, in an effort to obtain financial support for the deployment, which he was successful in doing.

The figures, however, were essentially made up on the back of an envelope. I know that the Saudis felt, from the outset, that the Kuwaitis were doing something less than their fair share.

Of course, the Saudis, during this period, were bearing an enormous burden of expense themselves. As the war went on, that burden mounted continuously, until around January of 1991, as the air attack had begun, it was clear that the Saudis were financially overextended. At least it was clear to me, although it was not at all clear, apparently, to intelligence analysts in

Washington, who, frankly, dismissed the warnings of the embassy that this was the case, and substituted their own, as it turned out, erroneous judgment for ours.

The burden of carrying the war fell very heavily on the Saudis. I would guess that they probably spent something on the order of \$65 billion, which, against an economy the size of the State of Georgia of about \$100 billion GNP, is a very, very substantial unanticipated charge; rather as though the United States had suddenly had to spend \$4 trillion off budget.

They went into the war with minimal reserves. The windfall from the oil embargo in '73 and the speculative run on oil in 1980 were invested by the Saudis in some of the world's most modern and impressive infrastructure. This infrastructure actually was crucial to our ability to conduct Desert Shield, because the Saudis had, very deliberately on the military side, overbuilt their airfields and ports precisely to facilitate a large movement of U.S. forces in time of emergency.

*Q: Had this been a joint plan? In our previous time, you were saying how difficult it was to get the Saudis to make the decision to bring them in, yet here this was being anticipated.*

FREEMAN: I think it wasn't really a joint plan, but the Saudis had always anticipated the possibility that a crisis might come on them that would require them to accept American forces. And when, in fact, that crisis occurred, they were prepared logistically.

I remember, ironically, then Major General, later Lieutenant General, Pagonis, who was the chief logistician for CENTCOM, commenting in 1990 that if, God forbid, we ever had to go into some less-developed place (and he cited Somalia as a probable example), we would never get ashore.

At any rate, they had invested their money in infrastructure, including universities and social services and modern highways, ports, airfields, and the like. By August of 1990, I suspect that they had liquid reserves of somewhere between \$3 and \$7 billion, which were essentially exhausted in the first week of the response to Saddam's occupation, because they bore a very wide range of costs.

In addition to payment directly for support -- food water, housing and the like -- for American forces and other foreign forces, British, French, African, South Asian forces, and other Europeans who ended up on Saudi territory, they bore the entire expense of the refugee exodus from Kuwait, both the non-Kuwaitis, for whom they quietly bought airline tickets and sent home, and also the Kuwaitis. I think probably, by the time the Kuwaiti refugees were finished, they had cost the Saudis somewhere around \$3 billion, maybe a bit more. Very generous treatment for the Kuwaitis.

They had their own emergency deployment and mobilization costs. They had emergency re-equipment costs, as they stocked up on ammunition and spare parts. They had to put quite a significant investment into the production of jet fuel for the growing air force presence. In fact, Saudi Arabia ended up as the largest importer of jet fuel in the world. They bought huge amounts of jet fuel from refineries in Singapore and elsewhere, to fuel the allied war effort.

They had, as the war proceeded, direct payments, which they made to the United States and other

American allies, but they also wrote off billions of dollars in Egyptian debt. They made cash transfers to both Egypt and Syria. They paid for the transportation and, indeed, the equipment of many of the Third World forces who arrived, essentially in jock straps and flip flops, requiring everything from uniforms to guns to Jeeps to artillery, all of which the Saudis provided, along with salaries and housing and water and food.

An enormous burden was placed on them. I think they were very generous, and did not haggle at all over the requests that the United States made of them during the course of the war. Our bill to the Saudis alone was \$16.9 billion, essentially in direct payments. It was left to me, after the war, to collect that from a Saudi Arabia that was in a state of near bankruptcy.

So the question of who was going to fund things emerged very early on. It was smoothly solved, but it had consequences in terms of a squeeze on Saudi Arabia that probably should have been anticipated better by Washington and mitigated.

*Q: Why do you think that the analysts in Washington were coming up with the wrong calculus? Was it that they were trying to make it all seem easy and make it simpler from their point of view? Just sort of, well, the Saudis have got a lot of money and that's no problem? And was what you were telling them treated as, well, this is localitis?*

FREEMAN: All of that was a factor.

There was simple disbelief at the idea that Saudi Arabia could be cash poor.

There was also, I must say, an inability in Washington to distinguish between the private wealth of the royal family, wealth that belonged to individuals, and wealth that belonged to the government. That is a distinction, of course, that the Saudis sometimes forget. Princes are accused of helping themselves at the public trough when they feel like it, and there's some justification to that. But the fact is that the government is distinct from private individuals, and the government does not control the private fortunes of members of the royal family. The two are not at all interchangeable; that is, the two pockets of money are quite different.

There was a third, and I think more important, factor in the analytical failure in Washington, and that was that the Saudis, I think deliberately, had somewhat cooked the books with the World Bank and the IMF on their reserves. I think they had essentially listed various debts that they were owed (for example, some \$28 billion or so they were owed by Iraq; \$11 billion they were owed by Sudan) as assets. Well, anyone who thought that these assets could ever be collected against was dreaming. So I think that the Saudi financial position was somewhat misstated.

Finally, the Saudis have, like the United States, a social security administration, which has its own funds that it invests, which is really the patrimony of the ordinary Saudi citizen. And these assets somehow got confused with government budget reserves; whereas you couldn't really rape the social security system with impunity, even in Saudi Arabia.

In any event, there was a very strong tendency, with one analyst in INR at State being particularly vociferous on the subject, to accuse the embassy of misperceiving the problem, and

of localitis, if you will.

In the event, the embassy turned out to be all too correct, and the analysts in Washington all too wrong.

*Q: We're talking now about the Desert Shield operation. What about the alliances that gathered together? As the ambassador, did you play any role in this?*

FREEMAN: A great deal of it was done directly either by the Saudis or in Washington or at the U.N. But, yes, I did play a role, and the embassy did play a role, in holding the coalition together. We were often called upon by members of the coalition to provide ground-troop briefings. Often I had to go to the Saudis to make requests for them to persuade a recalcitrant coalition member to do something that we thought they should do. Sometimes this extended to the Saudis is in effect buying votes in the United Nations, as they did with a series of extensions of foreign assistance to the Soviet Union. Essentially, this secured Soviet cooperation in the Security Council.

The greater role of the embassy, however, was in assistance to CENTCOM, as a sort of front for CENTCOM in managing the politics of the military coalition. We acted, of course, as an important channel of communication between the Saudi government and the U.S. government to concert policy, but I would say the major role there was really played by Prince Bandar, rather than by those of us in Riyadh. So it was an extremely active time on the diplomatic front.

*Q: The Syrians arrive, the Egyptians arrive, the French, others are appearing there, and most of these would not have the diplomatic clout that the embassy would have. We, of course, wanted to have as large a coalition as possible. Did you find yourself running interference for Syrian problems or Egyptian problems or French problems or anything like that?*

FREEMAN: Actually, the main problem with the Egyptians and Syrians really was that they didn't arrive. It turned out that neither of them had the lift to get there or the money to pay to get there. So there was quite a long delay while I helped worked out arrangements for the Saudis to provide sealift. I worked very closely with CENTCOM on that, and we did eventually get them there.

As far as running interference for the Syrians is concerned, the answer is no, I didn't. The Syrians were very standoffish. I thought our cause was best served by allowing them to work directly with the Saudis, and I didn't try to get in the middle.

The Egyptians, of course, have a very fine diplomatic service, and they had an excellent ambassador in Riyadh with whom I worked quite closely.

The French were initially quite standoffish. At the last minute, having at first decided to put themselves under Saudi command, they defected and came under American command. But I had little to do with them except to trade diplomatic information not related to their deployment.

There was a great deal of effort made by the United States to broaden the coalition by including representatives from different countries, and I found myself going to the Saudis and persuading

the Saudis to pay for the recruitment of different contingents from around the world.

By the end of the war, I found myself working closely with the Swedes, who made the first overseas deployment, I think probably since Charles V, in the form of a medical support unit that they deployed to Riyadh. This was really an important development, because it marked Sweden's first major step in the abandonment of its neutrality policy, and the decision to integrate with the Western alliance in the post-Cold-War era. The Swedes had a very able ambassador, also, and he and I worked very closely together.

Others who contributed even when they were not a major presence on the ground -- the Australians, the New Zealanders, again very close contact, and, of course, the Canadians. So it was a very, very active time.

Of course, I was not the dean of the diplomatic corps, but it was widely assumed that I was the best informed about what was going on. I found myself holding hands a great deal with the African ambassadors, as a group, reassuring them that they were not about to be obliterated in a nuclear exchange; or talking to the Filipinos, who provided a great deal of the labor supply in the kingdom; to the Bangladeshis, the Indians, and Pakistanis, to try to help them hold their workers in line and prevent panic. In other words, a major dimension of the diplomatic activity in Riyadh during the war was persuading various foreign communities, through their embassies or directly in some cases, that there was every reason to have faith in the ability of the coalition to prevail over Iraq, and that the danger to their nationals was overblown.

*Q: When the American troops started to arrive, were you at all involved in putting together a war plan, or figuring out where do we go from here?*

FREEMAN: No. Early on, in August, I sent a cable to Washington, in both a short and a long version, which appeared to have had some impact. I argued, essentially, that it was likely that we would end up having to go to war with Iraq, and that if this were the case, we needed to bear in mind the requirement to sustain Iraq's ability after the war to balance Iran, and that therefore our objective vis-à-vis Iraq should be limited.

I may have been the originator of an unfortunate phrase (which got taken out of context and used in a way different than I had intended), "new world order," because in that same telegram, I argued that this was, in the post-Cold-War context, the precedent of the potentially pivotal nature of the Korean War, and that it might be the defining event in the end of the old world order and the birth of a new world order. I meant order not in the sense of tidying up things or imposing something, but order in the sense of a classification of an era. At any rate, that phrase was then seized upon, within a matter of days, by the White House and passed into the folklore, in, of course, quite a different sense than I had intended.

But I was not involved in war planning. I kept myself, deliberately, at some remove from the war-planning conferences, which went on both inside CENTCOM and between Secretary of Defense Cheney and his entourage and General Schwarzkopf, or between General Powell and General Schwarzkopf.

On the other hand, I had a very close, cooperative relationship with General Schwarzkopf, such that he kept me broadly and quite adequately informed of every twist and turn in the planning. So that, by late October, as I argued, again in a series of cables that seem to have had some influence, that we had to make a decision either to increase deployments to the point where we acquired a genuine defensive option against Iraq, or to plan a curtailment of our presence before Ramadan and the heat returned in March and April of 1991, I was already aware of both the nature of the battle plan and the rough timing that General Schwarzkopf had assigned to it.

By December, I was aware of his proposed time and date for the air attack and for the ground attack. The air attack was, I knew at that time, planned for two-forty to three o'clock in the morning on January 17. The reason for that had to do with the phases of the moon, as much as anything else. That is to say that, at that time, the moon would be dim, and the Stealth bombers could be used to maximum effect.

I was also aware of the proposed use of Special Forces to take out radars at that time. And I was aware that the ground attack was planned for February 21. As it happened, it only occurred on the 23rd of February.

But I found, to my amazement, in January, that Jim Baker was not aware of any of this. And I found it out by participating in a conversation I may have already referred to.

*Q: I can't remember. I think you did, but maybe we'd better do this because we don't want to take a chance. And I would like to ask about your relations with James Baker and his entourage during this time, because he was a very touchy individual who didn't like anybody...it seemed...I don't want to put something in the way he operated, but it just appears that he was not somebody who liked to have anybody stand up who took the sun away from him.*

FREEMAN: No, I certainly didn't make any effort to get out in front of him. I thought his forcefulness of presentation was very effective. I also found him to be totally focused on Washington and on relations with Congress, to the exclusion of almost everything else. And that, I think, contributed to his unwillingness to take into account the possible long-range financial impact on Saudi Arabia of the demands that we were making on the Saudis.

After the fighting, he was, of course, immediately focused on the Middle East peace process. And there, I'm afraid, also a combination of Washington focus and the Israeli diplomatic style to which he was subject led to expectations of the Saudis that they never could have possibly fulfilled, and very little willingness to listen to the American ambassador in efforts to propose a different approach. I thought it was always the secretary of state's job to formulate policy, but that the ambassador should be of some assistance in developing a way to make that policy effective on the ground in Saudi Arabia. He wasn't always too open to those sorts of suggestions.

*Q: How did the Saudis and the rest of you view the debate that went on in Congress over whether we should get involved or not?*

FREEMAN: It was regarded with fear and trepidation, because there seemed to be a possibility that Congress would pull the plug on the president's support of Saudi Arabia and the U.N. effort

to compel Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait. I think the nature of the debate in the United States, although it reflected the vigor of American democracy, seriously confused the Iraqis and had something to do with Saddam's disastrous miscalculation in failing to withdraw. It also had something to do, I think, with some of the unease that many Saudis felt as we went forward. And I found myself constantly having to reassure them, as Jim Baker did, of the constancy and resolve of the Bush administration.

*Q: In my interviews, I've been talking to people who were talking about how they did almost the same thing after the peace accords in Vietnam, in '73, '74, about the constancy and the resolve of the United States in supporting South Vietnam. That, of course...*

FREEMAN: Proved to be empty.

*Q: Proved to be absolutely empty. There are a lot of people going around today who went down that path one time and said never again. Did that have any effect on you?*

FREEMAN: No. I thought, in the end, we would do what we had to do, and that, if necessary, the president would exercise his authority as commander in chief and as chief foreign policy officer for the United States. In the end, of course, the Congress was not asked for a complete endorsement of the president's action, but provided one. Still, the delicacy of this relationship between the Executive Branch and the Congress had a great deal to do with why we were unable to formulate war aims or a war termination strategy, as I've mentioned, because of the concern about leaks and the danger that any clear definition of war objectives would have been picked apart by members of Congress, made public, and then dismantled the coalition.

*Q: No doubt about it.*

FREEMAN: So I'm sure the administration had a well-founded fear of clarity.

*Q: There was a certain amount of fait accompli, though, wasn't there? I mean you had close to half a million American troops on Saudi soil at a certain point, and to pick them up and go home would have been kind of disastrous.*

FREEMAN: Well, no. When the decision for the so-called second deployment, which made possible Desert Storm, the counteroffensive, was made, which was in late October, announced by the president right after the midterm elections in November in the form of the call-up of a significant part of U.S. Reserves, this was the clearest evidence that you could have had that the administration was serious and meant to see this through. And it became virtually unthinkable, I think, that the Congress would pull the plug on that, for the reason you mentioned. Nevertheless, there was a sort of nagging concern throughout, and very confusing to our friends.

There was, I must say, also, as January 1991 approached, repeated evidence of concern in the National Security Council that Jim Baker might reach some sort of compromise diplomatic solution with the Iraqis that would in fact have made the entire deployment, in a sense, moot. And I think there was delight when, at Geneva, in mid-January, just before the U.N. deadline of January 15, the Iraqi foreign minister, Tariq Aziz, in effect, took such an uncompromising

position that Baker did not have the opportunity to produce a diplomatic solution and a face-saving way for Iraq to withdraw. By that time, everyone was ready for war and didn't want compromise and temporizing to get in its way.

*Q: As we moved to the brink of war, were you getting any information that seemed useful about what was going on in Iraq and what was in the mind of Saddam Hussein?*

FREEMAN: There was very little information of that nature coming out. Essentially, the human intelligence resources of the United States on Iraq were extremely limited to nearly nonexistent. We had very little insight into what went on in that regime. That, I must say, was the product of very misguided decisions by some of the predecessors to General Schwarzkopf. In fact, General Schwarzkopf himself, in one instance, vetoed an effort to put an agent into Baghdad who might have provided some information, on the grounds that the risks outweighed the possible benefits. In the event, of course, Schwarzkopf was among the most vociferous complainers about the absence of such intelligence. But we didn't have much information about what was going on inside Baghdad.

I felt, pretty much from the beginning, that it was extremely unlikely that sanctions and public castigation would succeed in enforcing Saddam to reverse his course on Kuwait, and that, in effect, a fight was inevitable. That, of course, is what happened. As I've indicated previously, nothing in my reading of history or personal experience has given me much faith in sanctions as a method of coercing foreign governments to do things they regard as fundamentally challenging to their national interests.

*Q: I always think back to Jefferson's embargo, which devastated American shipping much more than it hurt the British.*

FREEMAN: One can look at more recent examples. Sanctions failed to persuade Noriega to do anything in particular in Panama. And if there were ever a case where they should have worked, it was in this highly dependent Panamanian instance. Yet they didn't. Why should we assume that they could work in the case of Iraq? In any event, they didn't. There were repeated rumors of impending preemptive withdrawal by Saddam, but he never did.

*Q: Americans armies are a microcosm of some of the best and the worst of American society. We arrived, complete with women soldiers, religious chaplains, religious services, books, TV, what have you. I'm talking as an old Saudi hand, and just watching the small contingent in Dhahran back in the '50s trying to keep our TV from annoying the Wahhabis there was an act and a half. This whole thing being dumped into the eastern province.*

FREEMAN: This, of course, was a major focus of concern on many, many levels: arranging with the Saudis permission for broadcasts, first of radio and later of television, for the troops; arranging USO-type activities that did not include female participation that would offend the Saudi sensitivities.

This process was made very complicated at the outset by the unintended consequences of well-intentioned people in Dhahran who organized a show, on the consulate grounds, for the U.S.



forces, which included various young ladies from the American School, performing, and which, in an incredible lapse of judgment, the consulate allowed to be televised on CNN. So it immediately became a cause célèbre among the Saudis.

But, anyway, we were able to arrange for some things and to move others offshore. Steve Martin was fine, but Brooke Shields was not welcome.

*Q: Steve Martin being a male comic, and Brooke Shields being a...*

FREEMAN: Female actress.

*Q: Sort of actress, but a beauty of...*

FREEMAN: Bob Hope was all right, but not with Bob Hope's usual female entourage.

*Q: And his patter.*

FREEMAN: I suppose the major difficulty was ensuring freedom of religion for the American troops without offending the Saudis. Basically, there was a tacit understanding, well, more than tacit, between the king and me that the troops should feel free to practice their religion in private, off camera. They could, and did, celebrate both Christmas and Hanukkah on Saudi soil with no difficulty. But the press imagined there was an issue where there was none, because they were not allowed to see this activity. So we had to keep a stiff upper lip as the press accused us of denying the troops the right to practice their religious faiths, when in fact, of course, they were practicing them, but we just couldn't say so.

*Q: Back in the 1950s, we used to have priests and ministers arrive, as teachers, once a month, and conduct services on Aramco facilities. Everyone, including Saud bin Jaluwi, the emir of the Eastern Province, knew about this, but we just didn't publicize it.*

FREEMAN: Many things are possible as long as they're not in the public eye. Despite the fact that Saudi society has become even more conservative since the time you refer to, and such private visitations are virtually impossible now, the fact is that the chaplain corps was more heavily represented in this war than in any previous one. But they were not identified as chaplains; they were called morale officers. Nevertheless, they ministered to the troops, on a sectarian or nondenominational basis, very effectively -- Catholic, Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and I believe there may have been a Buddhist or two.

The other problem, of course, was the continuing tension over the role of female troops, which, of course, is largely logistical. That is, the women tend to be very heavily represented in the logistical functions -- truck drivers, loadmasters, and this sort of thing. Essentially, the Saudis agreed to turn a blind eye to this, and when problems occurred, were quite good about intervening with those who objected to this, to ensure that a problem did not develop.

As I think I may have mentioned earlier, the very effective coordination between the consular officers and the consulates general, on the one hand, and the U.S. military and the Saudi

authorities, on the other, meant that when problems arose (for example, an officer arrested for soliciting homosexual sex in the souk in Riyadh, the sort of thing that can bring the death penalty in Saudi Arabia in normal times, this was very quickly handled with the quick expatriation of the officer concerned, with the collaboration of the Saudis, who didn't want problems), we were able to avoid incidents coming to the attention of the press, and we were able to ensure that they were either resolved or swept under the rug sufficiently fast that they didn't become an incitement to serious friction between ourselves and the Saudis.

*Q: It seems, during a critical situation like this, that you have a basic problem of roles. The press normally, in our society, anyway, is always looking for conflict, for stories to show isn't it awful that such and such happened. Yet, at the same time, I suppose, if you were to talk to the members of the press, none of them really wanted to dissolve the alliance and to seriously damage this thing, or most of them wouldn't; that wasn't on their agenda. And yet they were playing a role where you had to almost view them as not the enemy, but damn close to it.*

FREEMAN: They were antagonists, there's no question, on several levels.

First, they had a prurient interest in military plans, which, if it had been realized, could have resulted in hundreds, maybe thousands, of unnecessary deaths on the battlefield. So military security had to be protected.

Second, they were looking, as you say, for controversies. The net effect of reporting such controversies would have been to exacerbate relations between the foreign members of the coalition and the Saudi civilians and soldiers who supported it.

Third, the press is always looking to sensationalize things. They're looking for headlines; that's their business, and one had to be very cautious in dealing with them.

There were 1,600 members of the American press on Saudi territory during this time. I think I did over 700 backgrounders without a single leak, which testifies to the professionalism of the press. I followed a special practice, because I did not want my name in the newspaper or on the television or on the radio. I simply told them that my condition for giving a briefing on background was that there be no attribution at all, and that, beyond that, if I saw my name in their publication under any circumstances remotely connected with the interview, they were never going to get back in to see me again. That had a sufficiently intimidating effect that I stayed out of the public limelight in the U.S., which is what I wanted to do. There is no advantage, to my mind, for an ambassador to appear in the limelight, and I was happy to yield pride of place to those who should have it, like a secretary of state.

The final comment I'd make about the press, however, is that they were extremely poorly prepared for this war, and their performance suffered. This was a press composed of members of the Vietnam-draft-dodging generation, who had no experience with the military, did not understand the military mentality or the terminology of the military, and continually astonished me in their response to the really quite comprehensive and revealing briefings at CENTCOM by failing to understand and follow up on points that were being made. They were militarily illiterate.

Second, they were illiterate about Saudi Arabia. They didn't speak Arabic.

Let me give you two instances of this that illustrate my points.

First, during the air campaign, there were 41 Scud attacks on Saudi Arabia, many of them on Riyadh. And in the city of Riyadh, by the embassy's estimate and the estimate of Saudi authorities, who kept this figure secret, perhaps 100 inhabitants of the city died from the Scuds, either directly from the warheads on the Scuds, or sometimes from the Patriot warheads that were chasing the Scuds. Yet it was an article of faith among the press that only one person was killed. The evidence of many deaths was all around them. We were able, at the embassy, to track it down, notwithstanding Saudi reluctance to see it revealed. The members of the press were not.

Second, another example, on February 11th, as I recall, I had a regularly scheduled meeting with General Schwarzkopf, and being aware of the battle plan as I had been for months, and knowing that the great movement of forces to the northwest to carry out what became known as the Hail Mary maneuver was in progress and due to finish on February 14th, and being concerned about the increasing tendency of the press to violate guidelines and go off into the desert on their own, I said to him, "Norm, you know, I'm concerned that someone is going to blow the deception, with the result that the attack may result in much higher American casualties than will otherwise be the case. If you want, I can arrange for some of my Saudi Bedouin friends to make guests of these wandering members of the press, and migrate slowly with them in the general direction of Yemen, and keep them out of harm's way." And I said, finally, "How is the movement going?"

And he said, "Well, I have good news on two scores. First, we've actually completed the movement today, three days ahead of schedule," which I was delighted about. "Second," he said, "you won't believe this, but I have been taking the members of the press up to the new locations, and even though they're 300 kilometers away from where they used to go, they haven't noticed. One part of the desert looks just like another to them."

So this was, I think, yet another instance of lack of acuity and adequate preparation by the press. In this case, an insufficient knowledge of Saudi geography and attention to detail.

*Q: There was one newsman who got himself picked up by the Iraqis.*

FREEMAN: Bob Simon, who was one of those who had been warned repeatedly not to stray off, but he did. And, I must say, many of us had mixed feelings when he was picked up. He became a major focus of an effort to get him out. CBS, which was the network involved, became quite histrionic and sometimes quite obnoxious about trying to get him out. When he did emerge from Iraqi jail, it was as a much-chastened man.

Finally, we had to contend with the CNN broadcasts from Baghdad, which, inadvertently, in the course of repeating what they had been told by Iraqi officials, amplified and disseminated the Iraqi propaganda messages very effectively. CNN, in particular, through the Baghdad broadcasts and through the recruitment of an entire phalanx of retired generals to anticipate Schwarzkopf's battle plan, seemed to many of us to be playing a role that could get a lot of people killed. I take

some pleasure in having insisted with CENTCOM that the Baghdad television and radio broadcast tower and a satellite link be taken down in the first wave of attack, little knowing that CNN had a backup portable satellite transmitter that kept them on the air after they initially went down. That, in effect, led to quite a debate about whether we could legally take out that American-owned portable satellite dish on the grounds of a hotel in Baghdad where the press were. And, of course, we concluded we couldn't, much to our distress. There were repeated instances where the press, not having access to all of the facts, or having access only to one side (in this case, the enemy's side), inadvertently aided and abetted Saddam's very skillful political warfare.

*Q: During the buildup time and then also during the military action, from your perspective, did the specter of some move on the part of the Israelis play much of a role?*

FREEMAN: It didn't really, until the fighting actually began and Israel came under Scud attack. Then, the Israeli government, like the Saudi government, came under tremendous popular pressure to retaliate, and the Israelis began to insist that their own air force was going to go into western Iraq and somehow do a better job than the U.S. Air Force at ferreting out Scuds. There were several problems with this. There were some military problems, in that the Israeli Air Force is in no respect more competent than the U.S. Air Force. The Israeli intelligence on the whereabouts of Scuds turned out to be mainly bogus, and we wasted hours and hours chasing after targets that proved not to be there, which the Israelis had sworn were there.

Finally, the larger problem was that, while I think Saudi Arabia would have gritted its teeth and gone on with the war, the Arab and Islamic coalition would have flown apart had Israel attempted to muscle its way into it. Israel was not welcome as a coalition member, and wasn't a coalition member. I was aware, although I did not participate, of very angry confrontations between Schwarzkopf and officials in Washington, and directly between Schwarzkopf and Israeli military officials, patched through on the line from Tel Aviv through Washington to Riyadh. And I was very grateful for Schwarzkopf's insistence that the Israelis not be allowed to come in.

As I said, the Saudis also came under intense pressure. On two occasions, we had to talk the Saudis out of launching their Chinese IRBMs against Baghdad. Once, Schwarzkopf did it, and, once, I did it, in the middle of the night on both occasions, and they were 20 to 30 minutes away from launch on each occasion.

*Q: Why?*

FREEMAN: There were many reasons not to do this. One, is that these missiles were terribly inaccurate, and they would have hit, in all likelihood, a heavily populated part of Baghdad and killed an enormous number of innocent civilians. We, meaning the Royal Saudi Air Force as well as the U.S. Force, engaged in pinpoint bombing, with very small civilian casualties. So the use of these missiles would have cost the coalition the moral high ground. It wouldn't have added anything to what the Saudis were doing anyway with their air force. And, frankly, the value of these missiles as a deterrent depends on their inaccuracy never being revealed, so, using them would have degraded their long-term utility to the Saudis. I used all these arguments, as did General Schwarzkopf, to dissuade the Saudis from decisions that they had made under the heat

of popular indignation at deaths in Riyadh.

*Q: When you go into a war, you usually want to have a war aim. As you were cranking up and the air war was getting ready, what, from your perspective and General Schwarzkopf's, was the perception? How was this thing going to end?*

FREEMAN: This was a major difficulty. There was an enormous amount of discussion between the embassy and General Schwarzkopf, and, I presume, between General Schwarzkopf and other ambassadors in the region, remembering always that Schwarzkopf had a regional role, and I had a country-specific role. Nevertheless, my embassy, being co-located with CENTCOM's headquarters, I lent my officers to study groups at CENTCOM, to plan a post-war order.

But there was enormous frustration here, from the beginning. At about the same time as I argued for what became the second deployment, arguing with the president that he had to make a decision whether he was prepared to use force to eject Iraq from Kuwait or not, I also made the point that the first question you should ask yourself before launching a war is not whether your forces can prevail on the battlefield, but how you propose to end the war, on what terms, negotiated by whom, with whom, and why should the other side regard an end to the fighting, or not cheating on a truce, as preferable to fighting on. And so I pressed, in a series of communications, for a war termination strategy and also for a statement of war aims. I got no response from Washington, for the reasons I've mentioned; namely, the potentially lethal consequences of a leak, with the result that there never was a statement of war aims. The war aims were the lowest common denominator of U.N. Security Council resolutions, which were the liberation of Kuwait. To that, we managed to add the reduction of the Iraqi Republican Guard and Iraqi weapons of mass destruction to a point where Iraq would not pose an intolerable threat to the region, or, in other words, could be balanced by Iran, again.

Schwarzkopf and I were so frustrated at this that, on the eve of the counterattack in the air, I sent in a cable saying that, not having heard anything about war objectives, and having discussed it with General Schwarzkopf, unless instructed otherwise, these are the objectives he is going to pursue, which were what I thought the lowest common denominator was. I never had a response, and that document, in effect, was his operative statement of war objectives.

The more ludicrous development was, at the end of the fighting, at Safwan, when he met with the Iraqi generals, he had no instructions. We tried to get him instructions, he tried to get instructions, but Washington was unable to provide instructions, because they had no vision of what sort of peace they wanted to have follow the war.

Of course, after the war, the absence of such a policy framework led to a fumbling and inadequate and greatly delayed response to both the Shi'a uprising in southern Iraq and the Kurdish uprising in the north. The Kurdish uprising in the north led eventually to a huge flow of refugees into Turkey. And the Turks insisted, along with European partisans of the Kurds and humanitarians... In Europe, Madame Mitterrand, you mentioned off-mike a while back, certainly played a role. This led to an international response in the form of a protected zone for Iraqi Kurds, a repatriation of the refugees, relief supplies, and reconstruction activities, which were thought of as temporary, but which, in 1996, five and a half years after the end of the fighting in

the Gulf, continue to be a semi-permanent feature of the Middle Eastern landscape.

So the absence of war aims, the absence of a war termination strategy, in my view, is the reason why the war never really ended. There was no political negotiation, no request for one. In short, Saddam's military disgrace was never translated into a political humiliation for him. Hence, he is still in power, being able to claim, with some justification, that he stood against the mightiest force the international community could organize and survived, which is itself a sort of political strength.

*Q: Speaking of that strength. When our people, Schwarzkopf and you, were sitting and getting the briefings, what was the assumption how the war would take place? We were building up the Iraqi army into being the fourth-largest army in the world, and it had just won a war against Iran, and there were great concerns. Were those concerns translated, do you think, in our planning?*

FREEMAN: Very much so. And they were real concerns. The Iraqi army was a formidable, tough instrument of war. And that is why the battle plans subjected that armed force to 42 days of nonstop bombing -- one bomb a minute, for 42 days, on those forces -- with the objective of attriting those forces to the point where there was a three-to-one ratio between the attacking forces (ours) and the defending forces (the Iraqis). In other words, the Iraqi forces, without that sustained, in effect, artillery bombardment from the air, would have been a formidable, and perhaps insuperable, obstacle, notwithstanding their technological limitations. With the effect of sustained bombing, much of that force melted away or was so demoralized that it surrendered at the first sight of the advancing coalition forces. In fact, the success of the bombing campaign, which was, as I say, seen by CENTCOM from the beginning as a means of preparing for an unobstructed or lightly obstructed ground advance, was vastly in excess of what we had hoped.

It was aided by a belated effort at psychological warfare. In fact, one of the more difficult military elements, as I saw it, in the planning was the lack of attention early on to what are called psychological operations (PSY OPS), psychological warfare. The reason for this was that the U.S. military had become accustomed to thinking of war in the Fulda Gap and in the central European area. We had 45 years in which to prepare psychological operations; we had plans in place and radio transmitters and leaflets, everything all done. Faced with a new theater, we sort of forgot that this stuff wasn't in place. This problem was compounded by bureaucratic confusion in Washington, and buck-passing between State, Defense, USIA, and CIA, to the extent that only very late in the game did the psychological operations plan, which CENTCOM had prepared early on, get approval and get implemented. And it ended up by, I think, saving a lot of lives, both Iraqi lives and, more particularly, American and coalition lives. But it had very low priority. It sat in General Schwarzkopf's in-box for over a month, until I called him and got it shaken loose.

I must say, General Schwarzkopf and I had an excellent relationship, cooperative and close, because he was helping me, and I was helping him, and sometimes each of us was helping the other, by helping the other to see that he needed to pay some more attention to good ideas from his subordinates. I think he did that for me a few times, and I guess I did it for him a few times.

*Q: How did the embassy and, by inference, the consulates, particularly in Dhahran, respond during the Scud attacks?*

FREEMAN: Our major difficulty was, as I think I may have alluded to, the absolute inability of Washington to respond to the danger of chemical and biological attack. I don't know whether I've spoken of that.

*Q: You did, yes.*

FREEMAN: This left us essentially unprepared in many important psychological dimensions, as well as otherwise.

But we had a 24-hour, around-the-clock, community information center that was in touch with embassy people, as well as members of the American community, and we were able, I think, quite effectively to subdue panic, or at least reduce it to acceptable dimensions.

As time went on, of course, people began to gather on the balconies to see the nightly shrapnel show overhead (not recommended, but I'm afraid all of us did it), and the sense that these large pieces of steel falling from the sky were unlikely to fall on you personally grew to probably a dangerous level.

*Q: How did you find the embassy family and consulate family responding?*

FREEMAN: It was varied. I had a couple of employees who frankly panicked and had to be sent home, because their panic was contagious. I was sorry to see that the Foreign Service was unable to deal with cases of cowardice, and took care of these people as though they had done something exemplary, rather than something that showed a weakness in their fitness to serve the United States in conditions of stress abroad.

I had only one incident that I thought was a clear case of insubordination, when an intelligence agency, which had been supplied quietly by its own parent organization with gas masks and the like, distributed those to its own employees while other embassy employees did not have them. I hit the ceiling and forced the recall of everything that had been handed out, on the grounds that either everybody was going to get stuff or nobody was going to get stuff, and everybody was going to get treated the same.

But, with that one exception, I think people behaved, by and large, magnificently.

I was particularly proud of the Foreign Service national employees, third-country nationals in the case of Saudi Arabia, who showed a level of dedication and loyalty that was most impressive, who stayed on the job even though many of them were terribly concerned about their families. In the end, I was able to get Washington, somewhat grudgingly, to give the American employees an extra R&R for all this, and to recognize the employees with a group honor award.

*Q: Why don't we stop at this point, because I know you have something coming up, and we'll pick it up the next time. Maybe there's something more you want to add about what was done during*

*the war.*

FREEMAN: I have a feeling we've probably missed an enormous number of things.

*Q: I'm sure, I'm sure. Anyway, if anything occurs to you, it can be added to the record at some point. We'll pick it up with what you were doing and the embassy was doing when the attack went in, and how you viewed the ground attack and the aftermath.*

*Today is the 31st of October, Halloween, 1996. It's been a while since we've talked on this, so that we may be missing something, but let's start about the attack, when the actual timing of the attack went in, and then what Baker knew.*

FREEMAN: I can't be absolutely sure at this point what we've discussed and what we haven't discussed. [Some of the following was covered in the last session and can be combined or deleted.]

As I probably mentioned, General Norman Schwarzkopf and I had a very close and cooperative relationship, rather unusually. As part of that relationship, although I never took part in military planning sessions, during visits by Secretary Cheney, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Colin Powell, and others associated with them, General Schwarzkopf would fill me in, in broad terms, about his thinking, not only before they arrived, but also about the results of these conferences. The result was that, as I probably indicated, we were able to help each other a good deal.

My telegrams, in mid- to late October, pointing out to the president that there was a limited window for making the additional deployments necessary to gain an option to take the offensive against Iraqi forces in Kuwait, I think, played a key role in producing the decision, right after the November midterm elections in 1990, to deploy an additional 300,000 troops to the area of General Schwarzkopf's responsibility, the AOR, as it's called in military terms. That deployment, of course, was not completed until early February.

I knew, from, I suppose, mid-November, two prospective dates that were crucial. One was the date of January 17, 2:40 in the morning, which was the moment that General Schwarzkopf had recommended for the air assault on Iraq to unfold. The second was the date of February 21, 1991, which was the date that he had set for the unfolding of the ground assault. Between January 17 and February 21, obviously, there were almost five weeks. So it was clear to me that the battle plan, which he outlined to me, involved an air assault to attrit Iraqi forces and bring the Iraqi forces down to a level at which something approaching the normal ratio of attacking to defending forces of three to one could be achieved on the Kuwaiti front.

I was also aware from the beginning that it was our intention to shift ground forces 300 kilometers to the northwest, so as to assault the Kuwaiti front mainly by a flanking action through Iraq, which would culminate in or near Basra, north of Kuwait.

So I was quite clear on the general nature of the battle plan. I did not confide it to my staff. And I was rather surprised, in January 1991, to discover that the president and Secretary Cheney had not confided it to Secretary of State Baker.



He came to Saudi Arabia to meet with the king and various others, especially Foreign Minister Saud al-Faysal. During that meeting, a couple of things happened that I found really rather shocking. One was a meeting, actually in a sort of side room of the king's guest hotel in Riyadh, between Baker, several of his entourage, Schwarzkopf, and me (now mind you, this was January 10, only seven days before the actual unfolding of the battle for Kuwait), at which Baker mused out loud that he wondered what our war aims ought to be.

I said, "Well, one of them clearly should be to establish Iraqi recognition of Kuwaiti independence, and to achieve the demarcation of the Iraq-Kuwait border, so that future problems of the sort we had experienced would not occur," recalling, in that connection, then, in the 1960s and 1970s, Iraq had fiddled with that border.

Baker looked surprised and initially resisted this idea, until Schwarzkopf endorsed my suggestion. So it was clear that there had really been no thought at all given in Washington, at high levels, to what specific results we wished to achieve from the war, notwithstanding the many telegrams that I had sent and the many representations General Schwarzkopf had made in military channels, asking for two things: a definition of war objectives and, second, a war termination strategy.

That led me, several days later, on the eve of the attack, having failed to get for General Schwarzkopf and myself and others any statement of war aims, to draft a cable saying that, unless instructed otherwise, here is what General Schwarzkopf believes he has authority to do, a cable that was informally coordinated with General Schwarzkopf and that sank without a trace into the Washington morass.

*Q: Chas, this is really sort of frightening. Prior to Saddam Hussein making his move, the general wisdom was that the whole foreign policy apparatus was centered on Baker and a small entourage in that particular administration, and that they were concentrated on the breakup of the Soviet Union, at least the fall of the Soviet bloc. But there's nothing like impending war and half a million American troops to sort of focus one's mind. I would have thought that this would have been a time when he would have gotten the boys and girls together, Policy Planning or his coterie or whatever, and said, okay, what are we going to do with this? Did you have any feeling about this?*

FREEMAN: I couldn't really, from the distance of Riyadh, understand exactly what was happening in Washington, but it appeared that the Deputies Committee, meaning the committee of Under Secretaries and deputy secretaries that is the operational arm of the National Security Council, was, in effect, so mired in the management of day-to-day detail and routine that the larger questions were never, in many instances, addressed.

Now, in the case of the setting of war objectives and the determination of a strategy for war termination, I think the problem was essentially the existence of multiple coalitions, any one of which might have been upset by clarity beyond the lowest common denominator of objectives set by the United Nations.

The only objective that the United Nations had really proclaimed was the liberation of Kuwait.

We - that is, we in Riyadh, General Schwarzkopf and my embassy, but General Schwarzkopf first and foremost - had added a second objective, which was the reduction of Iraqi war-making potential to a level that might be balanced by Iran after the end of the war. Not below that level, because to reduce Iraqi defense capabilities excessively would have invited Iranian opportunistic attack, and not at a level at which Iraq could successfully threaten the offensive against its major adversary in the region, Iran.

But, with the exception of these two objectives, one openly declared by the United Nations, and the other a sort of hidden agenda, if you will, of a military nature, coming from CENTCOM and the American Embassy in Riyadh, there were no objectives stated.

Had such objectives been stated, I suppose the concern of the White House and of Jim Baker was that they would have been second-guessed in Congress, and the coalition between Executive Branch and Congress, which was in a delicate state at that point, might have collapsed.

Wobbling in the Executive-Congressional coalition would have clearly disturbed the United Nations Security Council coalition, which was vital to retain U.N. authority for our actions. Some members of the Security Council, specifically the Soviet Union and France, were always prone to second thoughts about the wisdom of confronting Iraq. To state objectives beyond the liberation of Kuwait would have opened a debate in the Security Council that could have been fatal to that coalition.

Furthermore, there were other coalitions. One, with our Western allies, principally Britain and, to a lesser extent, France. Others, such as Germany and Japan, who, although not present on the ground or in the air or on the sea at that time in the theater, were important financial contributors and contributors of logistical support to the war effort. And then, of course, our coalition with the Saudis, and their own delicate coalition of Arab and Islamic states.

The effect of so many coalitions was to make it politically extremely risky to state clearly what it was we were about.

My view was that it was nonetheless very much worth the effort to be clear in our own minds about our objectives, even if we had to do that on a secret, rather than on an open, basis.

*Q: You can't go into a war using your own troops without figuring out what you want out of this.*

FREEMAN: That was my perspective. That is, I thought it was essentially irresponsible for the United States to use force like a sledgehammer, rather than like a chisel, to achieve results that we hadn't carefully considered and thought through.

But, in the event, I suppose, from Secretary Baker's and the White House's perspective, the risk of clarity was too great, given the probability of leaks. Therefore, the danger of leaks prevented any serious thinking through, let alone a statement of, war aims.

So this was the first thing that really rather shocked me. I had not recognized the extent to which we were operating without the sorts of guidelines that one normally would expect when force is used on this scale.

I guess I should mention that, throughout this period, I was acutely aware that, although I was cohabiting with General Schwarzkopf and therefore was the only American ambassador in touch directly with the Central Command at the top, and the only one with a comprehensive view of the war effort in the field, I was not ambassador to the Gulf or to the Middle East, but merely ambassador to Saudi Arabia. Therefore, although I did raise, as I said, a repeated series of questions about war aims and war-termination strategy, I did not feel that, in the end, I could insist...

The second point that really took me aback was a meeting between Secretary Baker; Saud al-Faysal, the foreign minister; Ambassador Bandar ibn Sultan; and me, at which Saud leaned across to Jim Baker and said to him, "You know, Chas says that the air campaign is likely to go on for many weeks, perhaps months, and that, during this period, there is undoubtedly going to be a great deal of unrest on the Arab street throughout the Middle East, but that we are just going to have to hunker down and take that political pressure. Is the air campaign really going to go on that long?"

And Baker said, "Oh, no, it'll be a matter of four or five days."

*Q: Oh, God.*

FREEMAN: Which made it clear to me, suddenly, that he had not a clue what the battle plan was, since the essence of the battle plan was a sustained air campaign to attrit Iraqi forces, as I said, to the point at which they could be easily overwhelmed on the ground.

So I suddenly had a decision to make. After all, I worked for Jim Baker, received my instructions from him, in the name of the president. The president had obviously not chosen to confide in him. And, clearly, there was some sort of compartmentalization in Washington between the diplomatic and military side of which I had previously been unaware. Should I tell Jim Baker the battle plan?

In any event, I answered Baker and Saud by saying, "Well, Mr. Secretary, Your Royal Highness, my point to Prince Saud was not to describe the specifics of the battle plan, which are not a matter of concern to diplomats, but rather to make the point that the purpose of the air campaign is to reduce the Iraqi forces sufficiently to be able to overwhelm them. And that may take a sustained period of time. However long it takes, Saudi Arabia must be prepared to hang in there and stick with the effort resolutely, rather than to have second thoughts or to give ground in the face of political pressure from other Arab states or from the Arab street."

And Jim Baker said, "Well, of course, I completely agree with that point."

So that was the end of that discussion. I never did tell him what I knew.

One other element of this particular encounter with the king was the concerting of a means of informing the Saudi monarch of the moment at which the counterattack on Iraq would be launched. The king said, in effect, he didn't want to know until the last minute. I added to him that I thought he should assemble members of his family, once he knew the time, and essentially cut off telephone communication with the outside world, because I was concerned that some members of his family might call their mistresses or their stockbrokers, and that the surprise, which was essential to success, would be jeopardized. Anyway, we agreed on a method of notifying him, which was double-tracking Prince Bandar to call him from...

*Q: When you say "we," this is you and Schwarzkopf?*

FREEMAN: This is Baker; the king; Bandar; Saud al-Faysal, the foreign minister; and me. We agreed on a method of double-tracking notification to our Saudi allies.

*Q: Double-tracking...?*

FREEMAN: Meaning that Secretary Baker would inform His Royal Highness Ambassador Bandar, in Washington, and Bandar would call the king with an agreed code; at the same time, I would inform Saud al-Faysal, the foreign minister, and his royal highness the foreign minister would also go to see the king, thus ensuring that, one way or another, word would get to the appropriate place at the right time.

This later led to an odd circumstance, because on January 16, as the moment of the attack approached (I, of course, was not able to share that with my staff or my wife or anyone), the day went by in Riyadh, and finally, around four-thirty, five o'clock, I got a call from Secretary Baker on the secure phone, saying that Prince Bandar was with him, and that he had just informed Bandar of the time and date of the attack, and he was now informing me. I had to act surprised, because it turned out to be, surprise, surprise, 2:40 in the morning on January 17.

I asked if Bandar could be put on the line, and he was, and I said, "Bandar, I think you know your family better than I do, but I'm getting to know them pretty well, and I think the later we can notify them the better. Particularly, I'm concerned about your brother, Khalid," who was the Saudi general in charge. "I will talk to General Schwarzkopf carefully about that. But I think we should hold off for several hours."

Bandar said, "Well, you're right. Actually, I would suggest that we hold off for another five or six hours. Around nine-thirty, ten o'clock your time in Riyadh would be about right."

And I said, "Okay, that's agreed."

So I tried to behave normally, though, I was very agitated. I went home, had dinner with my wife, picked up the phone to call the foreign minister, with whom I had met several days prior to concert a code, and said to him, "You remember that information you wanted from Washington the other day. I don't really have it yet, but I'll have it tomorrow. If you're at home tomorrow afternoon, maybe I could come around at about six o'clock in the evening. I might even be able to get there as early as about 5:40. I have some prior commitments. And I know I'll be able to

give you that information then." Of course, the code was, whatever time I said, subtract 15 hours and you have the time of the attack. Saud, who was a very controlled, reserved, dignified individual, for the first time in my experience was so excited that he lost control, his voice broke, he hung up the phone, and went racing off to the king.

I had talked to Schwarzkopf, and he essentially contrived to have Khalid sequestered in a series of briefings.

*Q: What was the problem with Khalid?*

FREEMAN: The concern was that he might call his broker or get on the phone and tell people, because, of course, he was terribly concerned to appear to be in charge. Khalid is a very able individual. But, anyway, there was some concern about telephone security and communications security, which in Saudi Arabia is not what it ought to be.

At this point, my wife said, "What was all that about?"

I said, "Well, I can't really tell you now, but I'll tell you later." And I went to bed.

I had arranged for the DCM, to whom I had given this information just prior to leaving the office, to call me at 2:20 in the morning, to say that there was a NIACT immediate that had come in and I needed to come down to the office. So he did. At that point, I got up (I was not really sleeping terribly soundly) and went into the office.

As I left, my wife heard the Filipino butler calling his network, since he was one of the chief wardens in the Filipino community, saying, "It's going to happen. It's starting."

But, in any event, notwithstanding the fact that, from about eleven o'clock on, the air over Riyadh was full of the rumble of tankers and bombers and everything else, we did manage to achieve surprise.

The crucial element of the surprise was in part the fact that the border would be crossed by aircraft. Some three months earlier, I had suggested (I don't want to take credit for this, because I'm sure others had thought the same thing) that the B-52s (which I think I probably did describe earlier on in terms of the aborted effort to get them bedded down in Jeddah), which were staging out of Diego Garcia, run a daily mock bombing run at Iraq and stop at the border each day, with the idea that eventually one day they'd just keep going. So they did. We expected to lose up to 150 aircraft in the initial assault. I think, as it turned out, we only lost two, and I was ecstatic a little later when that became apparent.

But the more important part of the surprise really was that, as I was aware, there were three Special Forces teams that were going in on the ground to take out Iraqi radars, so that the planes could come in. And they were in great jeopardy. But their part of this went off without a hitch. We did achieve surprise.

At three o'clock in the morning, as Baghdad was hit, I was delighted to see CNN-Baghdad go off the air.

I spent the early morning hours calling colleagues, first the British, then the French, at about three o'clock, and then, later, other members of the coalition and key neutrals. I had sort of become the unofficial acting dean of the African diplomatic corps. The poor African diplomats had no reliable source of information, and were panic stricken, as most people in Riyadh were, about the possibility of Scud and chemical attack. So I had set up a system of diplomatic wardens, whom I called, including some very helpful pro-Western neutrals and some Arab ambassadors. So, by about five o'clock in the morning, everybody in Riyadh was well aware of not only what was going on, but of the success of the initial assault.

The air campaign lasted for, I think, 42 days. We dropped one bomb a minute on Iraqi forces during that period.

*Q: I'd like to stop here, Chas, before we move into that, to go back a bit about Washington, your angle and all that. In the first place, was Saddam Hussein's survival in power a subject of discussion at all when you talked to Schwarzkopf or in what you were hearing from Baker in Washington?*

FREEMAN: Well, no. It was very much a topic of discussion between Schwarzkopf and me, and between Schwarzkopf and his command structure.

There, the operative constraint throughout, in a peculiarly American way, was the law against the assassination of foreign leaders, which was taken very seriously by the Judge Advocate General Corps, and which greatly constrained our actions against Saddam.

However, generally speaking, there was an assumption, which proved erroneous, for reasons I'll be happy to explain, that Saddam would, willy nilly, fall from power, given the devastating blow that his forces were about to suffer, and that he would not survive the end of the Gulf War. Since that was the assumption, and since I knew nothing about Iraqi politics and had no basis for really questioning it, I shared it. There was very little discussion of that.

Now, in Riyadh, between the embassy and CENTCOM, there was an elaborate planning process going on between J-5 and the embassy for post-Gulf-War security structures, trying to determine the desired end state after the war. That included a variety of factors related to Iraq.

For example, from the outset (and I think I had argued this as early as August in a cable to Washington), we determined that we did not want to threaten the territorial integrity of Iraq, for reasons of regional balance of power and the sensitivities of our Arab allies.

There was not really much discussion, by us certainly, and apparently none in Washington, about how to deal with possible post-Iraqi-defeat rebellions inside Iraq.

There was, in Riyadh, a great deal of planning about how to transform the GCC the Gulf Cooperation Council, consisting of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Oman, into a moderately effective collective security system that could provide a first tier of defense against future challenges to regional stability.

And there was also a great deal of discussion about what sort of prepositioning of war reserve material might be necessary to manage Gulf security without a continuing American military presence, but under circumstances in which such a presence could be reconstituted very effectively on short notice. All of this was relayed to Washington; none of it apparently had any impact, since Washington was not interested in thinking about these things, or, more accurately, some people in Washington were very interested in thinking about them, but decision-makers were not interested in considering the options.

*Q: This brings up another question, both at the time and in retrospect. Here you were, a new boy in NEA. You were in a position of major importance at the time. But did you have a feeling that you lacked a mentor, a man or a woman, back in the Washington establishment, the State Department, who could both keep you alert to what was happening and push things though? This often is very important. You understand what I'm saying.*

FREEMAN: Oh, exactly.

*Q: It's a network system.*

FREEMAN: I very much felt that way. The Baker State Department was focused entirely internally, with minimal interaction even between the 7th and 6th floors, and no real involvement or linkage between the 6th floor, meaning the assistant-secretary level, and desk officers. It did not seem to me that the assistant secretary for Near Eastern affairs, who would have been the person to play the role you describe...

*Q: This was John Kelly.*

FREEMAN: John Kelly, was in any sense a member of the inner circle, or that confidences were shared with him, or that he had much to impart in the nature of policy guidance. So I felt very much out at the end of a limb that had a very limited connection to the trunk of the tree. I think I described the appalling history of the chemical warfare preparations. That was, in a way, symptomatic. When we tried to get guidance from Washington on matters of concern to us, we never did. That was true also on major issues: war aims and war-termination strategy.

There were other issues where perhaps I was more effective with Washington, and those tended to be the military issues, which the military were far better about communicating, by fax and phone. As I mentioned, we came very close to not having a psychological warfare strategy, which was a crucial element of our success in the end, because, in the first instance, General Schwarzkopf, who, like his entire generation of military commanders, had been nurtured on theaters with longstanding battle plans that included well-thought-out psychological warfare elements, specifically in Europe, did not initially perceive the priority of this. I had to help his staff break the PSY OPS (psychological operations) plan out of his in-box. When he finally did that, some 30 days after it had landed in his in-box, it went to Washington. And, there, bureaucratic turf struggles between the State Department, USIA, the Defense Department, and the NSC staff caused it to languish for a long time. It was only after I personally buttonholed Colin Powell and insisted on the importance of this that he was able finally to break that plan

loose.

In addition to the psychological operations plan for the military, which involved leaflets, broadcasts, loudspeakers, and the like for the Iraqis, which we hoped would be demoralized by the bombing (successfully, as it turned out), we placed a great deal of emphasis on what I would call political warfare, meaning propaganda, directed at Arab and Islamic opinion. Washington was never able to get its act together on that. The single film that was produced by the Central Intelligence Agency, when it arrived in Riyadh, proved to be so counterproductive and unsuitable for an Arab or Islamic audience that I demanded that it be removed immediately and not shown in the kingdom, and recommended that it not be shown anywhere in the Arab world.

I cite these things as examples of the failure of the Washington apparatus to provide answers to questions that were coming in from the field and, I assume, not only from me, which were relevant questions. It wasn't that we necessarily needed to have the answers, but we felt the questions needed to be addressed and answered. Going back to the incidents I mentioned with Jim Baker, I was really horrified when I discovered that in fact the questions had not been addressed, even as we began to go to war.

*Q: Did you sense in Jim Baker, and again I'm getting this third, fourth hand really through newspaper editorials, that he was a man who had presidential aspirations, and that essentially his group around him seemed to be primarily interested in making him look good, which is always, I think, quite dangerous. For him to think that his ambassador knew more than he did about something rather crucial, I think, could be almost dangerous both for you and for the way things go.*

FREEMAN: Well, it might have been, but that really wasn't a consideration in my mind.

I would take minor issue with something you just said. I think that the function of staff is, in large measure, to make superiors look good. I have always felt that, when I acted as staff to someone, that was my job, to make that person look good by helping that person to do his or her job most effectively.

On the other hand, Jim Baker is a man of presidential demeanor, and obviously someone who, in the White House, both as chief of staff to Ronald Reagan and with George Bush in office, was quite capable of acting presidential. He is, in fact, very well qualified, in many ways, to be president, but not qualified, I should say, by virtue of personality. His personality is not a warm one; it's not suited to campaigning. Although I'm not a great admirer of Jim Baker, in many respects, I do admire his ability, and I think it is a great shame that our system will not permit someone of that sort of ability to aspire to the highest office in the land. Rather, that selection is made on the basis of criteria that are ultimately largely irrelevant to the ability to govern.

So I wouldn't say that Jim Baker was the problem, and I didn't feel that. I do think that the constipated management style that he practiced in the Department of State was a problem that he was never able to figure out. Indeed, he wasn't particularly interested in learning how to take effective advantage of and make good use of the large number of very talented people in the Foreign Service and the Department of State or in embassies overseas who were available to him



to make him look good. Instead, his management style was very much focused on a small coterie and was quite cabalistic.

But, be that as it may, I don't think that was the main factor that led to what I consider to be the policy failures of the war, which meant, in effect, that the war, in some respects, never ended, and goes on to this day.

*Q: Going back now to the air attack. How did you use your embassy? For one thing, this was a time of great strain, because you had some nasty people across the border, who had missiles, and also particularly there was a fear of chemical and biological weapons. The ability of the Saudis, the princes, and the rest of the population to stay in line was very important.*

FREEMAN: In effect, Stu, I may have already discussed this. One of my greatest focuses during this whole period, from August of 1990 through the beginning of March 1991, was the maintenance of morale among embassy American and Foreign Service national staff, and, more broadly, in the American community, and, in fact, because of the centrality of the American community to the calculations of other foreigners and Saudis, through the American community, ultimately, the morale of the kingdom.

There were few problems in that regard, in part because my DCM really did yeoman service, particularly on this point of embassy, consulate, and community morale during this period. (I would urge you, by the way, given the importance of the topic, to interview David Dunford, who was my DCM, later ambassador to Oman, and now retired and living in Arizona.)

I began to be more concerned about a series of other issues. The exactions that we and other foreign allies of Saudi Arabia in the campaign for the liberation of Kuwait had imposed began to visibly cause severe financial strain in the kingdom. Toward the end of January 1991, as the bombing campaign was at the end of its first ten-day period, I recall a meeting with Foreign Minister Saud al-Faysal at which he expressed grave concern about the level of financial demands that the United States was making on Saudi Arabia, in terms of the impact on Saudi financial health and ultimately on the kingdom's stability. I reported that, and, indeed, throughout the fall, one of my principal points of friction with Secretary Baker was my concern that, if we found it necessary to bankrupt Saudi Arabia in order to save it, we would regret that, for many reasons.

First, a selfish American reason: Saudi Arabia historically had bankrolled many important American foreign-policy initiatives, some of them far from the Middle East, as the Iran-Contra controversy illustrated. But there were many others. The Afghan adventure, in particular, which may ultimately have brought down the Soviet Union, or catalyzed its collapse, was such a case in point. So I was concerned that we would lose this asset, and, more particularly, that, if indeed we were able effectively, after the end of the Gulf War, to produce a peace process in the Middle East, the Saudis would not have the financial wherewithal to contribute, and that we would be left to finance it ourselves, and that we would not be able to do so.

The second concern I had was about the nature of the constitutional bargain in Saudi Arabia, one element of which is that the royal family, and the king in particular, is expected to share the

wealth through endless largess to the citizenry. And if the means by which the well being of Saudi citizens was taken away and the financial resources to do that were no longer there, I was concerned that would produce instabilities in Saudi Arabia that we would regret.

So I, fairly constantly, made representations to Secretary Baker urging that we go somewhat easy on the Saudis, recognizing that political imperatives in Washington dictated that allies pay their fair share, and that we should be careful not to overdo it. I think he interpreted that as a sort of clientitis and special pleading for Saudi Arabia.

*Q: Not only he. Recently, I was talking to a friend and colleague of mine, Bob Duncan, who was an economist with INR, I think, at the time. He was making a point, and he said, "Well, you know, that Chas Freeman was trying to claim the Saudis were broke, and they weren't broke. And, you know, maybe it was private money in the hands of the ruling family, but what's the difference." I'm talking about the perception.*

FREEMAN: That's correct. There was a huge battle, which really began in '91 and continued through '92, between my embassy and Washington, more particularly INR, on this issue.

INR persisted, right up through 1993 when the Saudis finally did essentially collapse financially, in insisting that the Saudis had all sorts of money squirreled away, in places that INR was never able to identify.

My perspective was that, no, they didn't. Second, that it's all very well to sit in Washington and say that the private wealth of members of the royal family should be available to the government. But the private individuals who make up the royal family are no more inclined to share their private wealth with the government than wealthy Americans are. Therefore, this equation simply was erroneous.

I think enormous damage was done to American policy by the persistent failure of the intelligence analysts, particularly in INR, to a lesser extent in the Central Intelligence Agency, which was a little more open minded on this, to recognize the financial strains, which are now acknowledged to exist. I had the misfortune of being right, before my correctness was recognized, and that was indeed interpreted as special pleading. And it contributed a great deal to friction between Secretary Baker, or, more accurately, Dennis Ross, and me.

But the fact is that the Saudis, on the eve of the outbreak of the war, August 2, 1990, probably had liquid assets, above the currency cover that was required by law, of only \$3 billion. They went through that and then some in the first week.

The net result of the war, notwithstanding INR's frankly injurious and self-serving analysis, since they were telling Secretary Baker what he wanted to hear, was to take Saudi Arabia from zero national debt to a national debt equivalent to 55 percent of GNP, overnight. In other words, the Saudis spent unbudgeted funds equivalent, in terms of the U.S. economy, to roughly \$4 trillion. The Saudi Arabian economy is an economy of about \$100 billion, the size of the State of Georgia. And while that provides fabulous wealth for a few, and a moderate standard of living for the many, it does not provide an endless cornucopia of dollars with which to do everything

they wish.

The Saudis ended the war, in fact, financially lamed in a way that has had all of the consequences that I anticipated with apprehension from the fall of 1990, and, more particularly, from January 1991, on. We have had to do a sort of Chapter 11 reorganization on the foreign military sales program. Ironically, I ended up doing that, as assistant secretary of defense, in February 1994. We have had to curtail many programs in Saudi Arabia.

The general view in Saudi Arabia of the American role in the war has shifted from affection, respect, admiration, and gratitude to resentment of financial exactions, as the extent of those exactions became known.

At the end of the war, in fact, the DOD (Department of Defense) accountants had to struggle to show that we had not made a profit on the war. I believe, in fact, if it were not for accounting sleights of hand, we did. Now a good deal of that was not accounted for by the Saudis, but much of it was. I personally collected \$16.9 billion from King Fahd, including \$3.2 billion that he had never agreed to.

When the second deployment was agreed to, the deployment that ultimately transformed Desert Shield into Desert Storm, in early November 1990, Jim Baker came out to Saudi Arabia with, among other things, a request that the Saudis contribute \$3.2 billion to the financing of that second deployment. What he was asking for was that the Saudis pay for every truck that gassed up in Seattle to transport material to Baltimore, the shipping expense, and, of course, the living expenses of soldiers in Saudi Arabia. Which was not, on its face, unreasonable, perhaps, but which, in the meeting, the king responded to by saying, "Well, I suppose anything is possible," which, translated from the Saudi Arabic, meant no.

At the end of the meeting, His Royal Highness Prince Bandar bin Sultan, the Saudi ambassador; the king; Jim Baker; and I stayed behind in a little group for a minute. Jim Baker grabbed King Fahd by the equivalent of his lapels and said, "I want to understand that I heard yes to that question."

King Fahd was so taken aback that he knocked Baker's hands off his lapels and said, "All right!"

On the basis of that, Jim Baker reported that King Fahd had agreed to \$3.2 billion.

I knew that he hadn't.

But then, when the king somehow mysteriously failed to pay this \$3.2 billion, Jim Baker went to Bandar and asked him to collect it. Bandar said, "Well, you better talk to Chas Freeman about that."

I ended up going, actually with help from Bandar, to the king and convincing him that, notwithstanding the ambiguity about what he had agreed to or not agreed to, his friend George Bush would be mortally embarrassed before Congress, because Secretary Baker had reported his agreement to this figure, and therefore the king had to come up with \$3.2 billion, which he did.

There were other instances of this sort. Some money that we wanted for the benefit of the Turks was another point at issue.

At any rate, one of the problems of fighting wars with other people's money is that the other people may come to resent what you're doing. And that was, I'm afraid, the case here.

When I left Saudi Arabia, in my farewell call on the finance minister, I treasured his remark when he asked me what I was going to do when I left. I said that I thought I had done enough government service, and I planned to go to the private sector. He said, "Well, I don't know what you're going to do, but if you ever need a letter of recommendation, say, for example, you decide to become a mafia bill collector, I will provide the letter," which, unfortunately, I never did get from him, but I would have treasured such a letter.

So I found myself in the odd position of arguing with Washington that Saudi Arabia was strapped, and arguing with the Saudis that they could and should pay more. And I was more successful, I think, with Saudi Arabia than I was with Washington.

*Q: What was the atmosphere that you were getting from our military and the alliance about the air war and how it was going and what they were thinking?*

FREEMAN: We had daily briefings during the war, as we had frequent briefings several times a week in the runup to the war, on the implementation of the embargo by the U.S. Navy and other navies operating in the Red Sea and in the Gulf.

There were endless complaints, by the way, about that embargo from, particularly, the Jordanians, who were playing a somewhat dubious game throughout this. I would say that describing it as `dubious' is generous. Our embassy in Amman appeared to endorse Jordan's special pleading to such an extent that I considered persuading the United States Navy to refrain from air strikes on our embassy there to be one of my greater achievements.

The Jordanian role, from the Saudi perspective, was not a helpful one. In fact, I learned, in September of 1990, of a series of approaches to a member of a prominent Hejaz family (the Hejaz being the region of Saudi Arabia that includes Jeddah and Mecca and Medina) by Crown Prince Hassan of Jordan, in London, in mid-June of 1990, of a most peculiar nature. The individual who was approached told me that Crown Prince Hassan had come to him and said that he recalled that, when the Hashemites had controlled the Hejaz, this family had played a prominent role in supporting them. And he said, "You know, we may well be coming back to the Hejaz, and we would like to know that we can count on your support to reestablish ourselves."

The individual said, "Well, I'm not sure what you're talking about," and sort of dropped the issue.

He then reported to the head of the family what he had heard. And the head of the family sort of dismissed this by saying, "Well, you know, there's a history of insanity in that family, and this is some sort of delusion."

*Q: The present king's father was...*

FREEMAN: The king's father was disturbed.

However, this individual told me that, around July 20th, he had received a telephone call from Hassan, who asked him whether he recalled what they had discussed in London in June, and said, "You know, it's really going to happen, and we need to know..."

*Q: We're talking just prior to the invasion of Kuwait.*

FREEMAN: That's right, this was two weeks prior to the invasion. "It's really going to happen," he said, "and we need to know that you will be with us."

The man said, "Well, you know, Saudi Arabia and the association with the oil of the eastern province has been rather good to us, and we're loyal to the al-Saud, so I'm not sure what you're talking about." And they broke off the conversation.

At that point, the head of the family went to King Fahd, to tell him of this rather peculiar approach, since it had occurred twice. King Fahd also, reportedly, according to the individual with whom I spoke, said, "Oh, well, it's a strange family, and you can't take this kind of thing too seriously."

In any event, after the August 2 invasion of Kuwait, King Fahd put two and two together and concluded that the Hashemites had been very much witting of the Iraqi plans. Indeed, ironically, in light of later assertions by Jordan that it was always neutral and skeptical, during this period in August right through the early part of September, negotiations that had begun between Amman and Baghdad on a merger and amalgamation of Jordan and Iraq continued, notwithstanding the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

So there was a widespread belief in Saudi Arabia, with some evidence behind it of the sort that I just cited, that the Jordanians, like the Yemenis, had been promised a payoff for support of the invasion, not just of Kuwait, but of Saudi Arabia, ultimately.

In these circumstances, it was very difficult after the war, when the imperatives of the peace process, quite correctly, dictated that the United States attempt to broker a rapprochement and resumption of normal relations, including Saudi subsidies to the Jordanians, to persuade the Saudis that this was in fact in their interest. In fact, after the end of the fighting, Riyadh decision-making circles were dominated by the view that Jordan, which had great utility as a buffer state for Saudi Arabia, Israel, Iraq, and Syria, had lost that utility, and that Jordan's greatest contribution to the peace process probably lay in its dismemberment. People began openly to agree with Ariel Sharon of Israel who once had said that Jordan is Palestine. The level of hostility and suspicion was extremely high. So, in these circumstances, it took quite a while for me to be able to persuade the Saudis even to open the border to truck traffic from Jordan.

The war left Saudi views of many nationalities within the Arab world and Islamic world poisoned.

The view of the Jordanians was understandably very negative. The Jordanians were seen, in large measure, as a subset of the Palestinians. Mr. Arafat and the Palestine Liberation Organization's open embrace of Iraq led to the curtailment of all transfers of funds to the PLO. And that, ultimately, was one of the factors forcing the PLO to the negotiating table at Oslo with the Israelis.

The Saudi view of the Yemenis was that of someone who has been betrayed by his brother, with a special bitterness reserved for the leadership in Yemen. And the Saudis began to toy with support for secessionist forces in Yemen. Yemen, having united, seemed for a while to be on the verge of disuniting again. So that it made for strange bedfellows, the Saudis ending up by sympathizing with and supporting the former Communist forces in South Yemen, as well as conservative Islamic tribal forces in the far north of North Yemen.

The Saudi view of others was probably somewhat changed for the better.

Iran's behavior during the war was surprisingly benign and cooperative. Iran, I believe, felt that, after the war, it, like Israel, should receive some sort of recompense for its forbearance and self-restraint, which, of course, was not forthcoming. But Iranian behavior was, in effect, rewarded with an improvement in relations between Riyadh and Tehran.

For a time, relations among the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states seemed to have improved, and suspicions of Saudi hegemonism, which are always present among the smaller Gulf states, seemed to have somewhat abated. They resumed, however, with a vengeance as the GCC struggled ineffectually to put together a collective security structure and a joint armed force, which it failed to do when proposals by the Sultan of Oman proved to be completely unacceptable to Saudi Arabia and several other GCC states, and Saudi proposals were seen by the others as excessively hegemonistic.

So there were these problems. However, the principal point of friction between the Saudis and us was not over our differences about their relationships with Palestinians, Jordanians, and others in the Arab world, but rather friction over our continuing demands on the Saudis for support of various foreign-policy initiatives that we had, in many cases, very remote from Saudi Arabia.

This culminated in July of 1992, on the eve of my departure from Saudi Arabia, with the 52nd such request of the Saudis (the previous 51 all having been ignored and thus rejected) for funding for Armenia, a remarkably strange request in light of the fact that the Saudis were competing in Azerbaijan with the Iranians for influence, and Azerbaijan and Armenia were at war. Therefore, the idea that the Saudis would somehow aid the Armenians was most peculiar.

At any rate, having failed, after several attempts (which tie back to this point about the dispute between the embassy and Washington over the state of Saudi finances), to turn off this flow of uncoordinated and ill-considered requests, I dutifully presented the 52nd request to the vice minister for political affairs, Sheikh Abdurrahman Mansouri, in the following manner.

I came in and said to him that I understood from Washington that the Armenian foreign minister

might shortly be visiting Saudi Arabia.

He said, well, that was news to him.

I said, "Well, I'm not sure how my government knows that, but at any rate, they are convinced in Washington that this is going to happen. So let's assume, for the sake of argument, that it is.

He said, "I bet you have a request."

I said, "Well, now that you mention it, I have received a request from Washington. Rather than go through all of the argumentation, let me simply leave my talking points with you as an aide-mémoire, and you can consider that the request has been registered. In due course, I hope for your reaction."

He took the talking points, set them down on the sofa beside him, and looked at them without reading them. Then he picked them up again, tore them up, and threw them on the floor. He said, "I will give them all the attention they deserve."

I said, "I will report to Washington that you were not enthusiastic, and prospects are dim for a favorable response on this."

In other words, there was a great deal of wear and tear, because analysts in Washington did seem to succeed in continuing to convince the political leadership here that rumors of Saudi financial straits were some kind of special pleading from the embassy in Riyadh rather than a reality.

*Q: Also, there seems to be, in Washington, a sort of patronizing attitude toward Saudi Arabia. Is that correct?*

FREEMAN: One of the great utilities of Saudi Arabia historically to the United States, as I indicated, was in fact Saudi willingness, as a friend, to be helpful to various causes of importance to the United States, even though they were of no intrinsic importance to Saudi Arabia. I suppose the unexamined presupposition was that this behavior would continue even when the Saudis were broke. But, of course, people in Washington didn't believe they were broke, and couldn't understand why requests for funding of worthy projects, from Argentina to Zambia, both of which countries were mentioned over the course of the 52 requests, would go unanswered. So I think frustration built on both sides. The key to it really was the analytical difference between the embassy and Washington with regard to the state of Saudi finances. So that was a crucial issue.

*Q: Obviously, the finance side was of major concern to you, and you were not running the war, but you were having a part in it, and you were sitting there. What was your impression of the atmospheric during the air war?*

FREEMAN: During the air war, Saudi Arabia took 41 Scud attacks. The nights were filled with the explosions of Patriot missiles igniting, followed shortly thereafter by the explosive sound of their crossing the sound barrier, and finally, one hoped, by the explosion of a Patriot warhead against a Scud warhead. I should say, the Patriot was remarkably effective, much more effective,

I think, than it is now given credit for being. In some cases, the Patriot intercepted not the warhead but the fuselage of the Scud. In one case, a Patriot actually chased a Scud warhead down a street, and the two of them blew up together in a building.

There were about 100 civilians killed in Riyadh by these attacks. Remarkably, despite the fact that this was fairly widely known in the inner circles of the Saudi establishment, the American and other foreign press presence remained totally unaware of it and did not report it. I think it remains an article of faith and of public record that only one person died of Scud attacks in Riyadh. [See page 18 of Freeman.14] Most of the people who died were not Saudis, but Yemenis, Palestinians, Jordanians, and other nationalities.

But the Scud attacks did take a heavy toll on Saudi morale and on the morale of foreigners in the kingdom. Riyadh lost about a third of its population, which decamped to Jeddah, which was out of range. Dhahran lost an even higher percentage. The Saudi authorities were under tremendous pressure from their own populace to retaliate in kind.

On two occasions, [see page 20 of Freeman.14] Norm Schwarzkopf and I talked the Saudis out of launching their own Chinese-built IRBMs at Baghdad. These are very large missiles that somewhat resemble a blunderbuss in their lack of accuracy. My concern and General Schwarzkopf's concern was that, far from continuing the pattern of coalition pinpoint bombing of military targets, they would land on civilians, cost us the moral high ground, and incur a major propaganda loss, with no real military benefit. So, twice, as I say, in the early morning hours, once, Schwarzkopf, and once, I, with the Saudi defense minister... Sultan bin `Abd al-`Aziz, managed to convince the Saudis, who were only 20 minutes or so from launching, not to do so. "After all," we argued, "the Royal Saudi Air Force is engaged in pinpoint bombing of Iraqi targets, including in Baghdad. Why do you need to fire such a blunt instrument?" In my mind was the thought that whatever deterrent value these missiles had would be greatly degraded if it became apparent how inaccurate they were.

So there was an atmosphere of great tension.

During this whole period, I was essentially living, as I had done earlier, on an aircraft, commuting around the kingdom on an aircraft provided by CENTCOM, but at a less frenetic pace than had been the case prior to the outbreak of the war.

One thing that I did (you asked earlier about embassy morale in this context) was to write our situation reports, our daily SITREPS, to Washington in as entertaining a fashion as possible, sometimes including doggerel and the odd pun or joke.

I can remember reporting an actual incident, for example, in which a Palestinian employee in a local supermarket threw a potato at an American housewife as she was shopping. And I said that we had counseled the American community to beware of Spud attacks.

But the main purpose of doing this was to keep embassy morale up, which I think we did quite successfully.



*Q: Back here in the United States, we were treated to a fascinating series of military briefings, showing pinpoint bombing and all this, which later showed, yes, there was this, but there were also other types. It was a selected view of how many tanks were knocked out, etc. What type of briefing, when you were not in the air going someplace, were you getting from the American military? This seemed like a PR-type briefing that the world was subjected to.*

FREEMAN: I don't think it was. I think that the bombing campaign in fact was remarkably precise, with, of course, the exception of B-52s, which are a carpet-bombing device. The efficiency with which ordnance was delivered was extraordinary.

The best proof of this is in the accomplishment of the objective of the bombing campaign; namely, an Iraqi army so demoralized and so attenuated by desertions that it collapsed and willingly surrendered, by and large, to the invading coalition forces when they finally crossed the borders on February 23.

There was a two-day delay in the ground attack, due to two things: a combination of weather and, more particularly, a last-minute intervention in Baghdad by Mr. Primakov of the Soviet Union, as well as a French initiative, which it was felt had to be allowed to die a natural death before the ground attack occurred.

In connection with the ground attack, I began to become very concerned, around the early part of February, about the extent to which the press was violating its guidelines and straying into areas that it was not supposed to be in. [See page 18 of Freeman.<sup>14</sup>] I was aware, of course, that the plan called for the shift of a massive force to the northwest by some 300 kilometers, and I was concerned that the element of surprise and deception, which was crucial to the success of the battle plan, would be jeopardized by the press stumbling on this movement. So, around February 11, three days before the movement was to close (the movement was to have been completed by February 14, or to close, as the military put it), I met, in one of my regular sessions, with General Schwarzkopf, and I expressed this concern to him. I asked him whether there was anything I could do. I said, "I don't know how the movement is going, and I'd be interested to hear," because the movement was not reported in the daily briefings that we got at the embassy. I knew about it, but other members of the staff did not. So I asked first how it was going, and second, I said, "You know, with regard to the press, if you want, I could probably call my Saudi friends and arrange for them to be made guests of some Bedouin tribe, meandering slowly in the direction of Yemen, to just get them out of harm's way."

He said, "Well, I have good news for you on both counts. First, today, three days early, we have actually completed the movement, and it was successful. There's no indication that the Iraqis are aware of it. Second, you won't believe this, but I have actually been taking the press up to the new locations, 300 kilometers away from where I used to take them, and one part of the desert apparently looks just like another to them, and they have not noticed that they are going 300 kilometers away from where they used to be."

The day that the ground attack began, which kicked off at about four o'clock in the morning, I went down around six in the morning to Schwarzkopf's command center in the sub basement of the Ministry of Defense and Aviation in Saudi Arabia, and was present during some very

interesting and somewhat histrionic examples of the famous Schwarzkopf temper, as he spoke with various commanders, whom I also knew and who were friends and for whom I felt very sorry.

His temper had never been in evidence in my presence before, but I was very well aware of it. You know, there are different ways of leading. His manner of leading was very much in the mode of tirades, uncompromising demands, castigation, and criticism, which is not my style, but, in fairness to Norm Schwarzkopf, it produced a fantastic result, and results really are what count. My own relationship with him, as I've indicated, was one of great cordiality, friendship, cooperation, and, I think, mutual admiration. So this element of his personality never intruded on our relationship; it only affected the many other people of whom I was fond who were subordinate to him.

*Q: Why don't we stop at this point. We've really talked about up to the ground war, and I'd like to pick up with some of the reaction to the 100 hours or so of the ground war. Also, any input you or others might have put into the peace terms with the Iraqis, and how they were evaluated by you and maybe from other embassies, and also the aftermath of the war. We've talked at length about going again and again for financing, so probably we don't have to cover that again. But let's talk about, other than the financing, the aftermath of the war and the reaction in Saudi Arabia and with the ruling class and that sort of thing.*

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*Chas, other than finance, let's talk about when the ground war started. Were you or others talking to General Schwarzkopf, saying, for God's sake, make sure that the Saudis get credit, as well as the Egyptians, the Syrians, and others? In other words, there was more at stake than just getting the Iraqis out of Kuwait.*

FREEMAN: Oh, indeed. I had many conversations with him on that subject, and he had arranged the final stage of the battle plan in such a way that Saudi and Arab coalition forces would capture Kuwait City and appear in the main square in Kuwait City as the liberators of Kuwait. He very deliberately contrived the battle in such a way that, regardless of what those forces (meaning Saudi, Egyptian, primarily, and Syrian forces) actually did in the fighting, they would get the photo opportunity. Indeed, that is pretty much what happened. So I think everyone was pleased about that.

When the ground war kicked off, I was asleep. It was four o'clock in the morning. However, very early after that, I went down to Schwarzkopf's bunker under the Ministry of Defense and Aviation, and was present to hear him begin to rearrange the battle plan in response to the unexpected extent to which we had softened the Iraqis with our aerial bombardment. I was there the following day, when he was having enormous difficulty with the Egyptians, whose top-down Soviet planning style made them very inflexible and unable to adjust tactically to developments on the ground. Also, he was quite upset by the slow pace of movement by General Franks.

*Q: General Franks was...*

FREEMAN: He was the commander of the Army group [VII Corps] that was, in effect, at the center, moving directly along the Kuwait-Iraq border. The two flanks, that is, the so-called Hail Mary, the northwest advance toward the Euphrates, went splendidly, faster than had been expected. It was the longest tank drive in the shortest period of time in history, and it resulted in the largest tank battle in history, all of it off camera, and not, therefore, much acknowledged.

*Q: Was it larger than the battle of Kursk?*

FREEMAN: Larger than the battle of Kursk. In one night, Tom Rhame, who was later the head of the U.S. military training mission in Riyadh and director of the Defense Security Assistance Agency, but then commanded an armored division [1st Infantry Division], killed more than 400 Iraqi T-72 tanks.

At the same time, Schwarzkopf was having some trouble restraining the Saudi National Guard forces from a too-speedy advance along the Kuwait coast, in the direction of Kuwait City.

Of course, the extent of the Iraqi surrender and the number of prisoners of war that had to be handled was vastly in excess of what anyone had expected, so there was an enormous problem of moving Iraqi forces back out of the line of advance, disarming them, interning them, and so forth.

I followed that closely, and it was clear that the war was going to end shortly, and to end, as I had indicated earlier, without the benefit of a clear statement of war aims. Schwarzkopf and I were in doubt as to whether there was in fact a war-termination strategy. I asked orally, and he asked many times in writing, I believe, as well as orally, for instructions on a surrender negotiation, and never received them.

In the middle of all this, I happened to be present in his office at the Ministry of Defense and Aviation, which was well above ground, when he spoke with Colin Powell, who was in the Oval Office. Colin called to ask, basically, how Norm Schwarzkopf viewed the idea of "the hundred-hour war," meaning hundred-hour ground war, something which the White House was thinking of, I think, exclusively in terms of political packaging.

*Q: Yes, sounds good.*

FREEMAN: Sounds good. Of course, the war was not a hundred-hour war, because it was a combined-arms action and had been going on for well over 40 days. But it was clear from that conversation (I think the president was in the room with Colin Powell, together with various political spin doctors) that the main focus of the White House was on packaging the victory for electoral advantage.

Schwarzkopf said, in effect, and somewhat wryly, given everything that had gone before, which I've described, "Well, you know, the only thing I was asked to do was to liberate Kuwait. That I have done. If you gave me another 24 hours, I could finish off the Republican Guard. But I've done enormous and perhaps sufficient damage to them. Therefore, since I've done what I've been asked to do, I'm not in a position to object."

There was a short discussion between Colin Powell and him about the desirability of avoiding another Wounded Knee (Wounded Knee being a black moment in the history of the U.S. Army when the Army massacred an Indian force that had essentially capitulated).

*Q: Sioux, I think, wasn't it?.*

FREEMAN: Yes, Dakota, I think. [Teton Sioux]

But essentially the decision was made on political grounds. And Schwarzkopf did not object, although he did register the point that, given a little more time, he could do a great deal more damage and cut off the Republican Guard completely from retreat across the pontoons north of Basra.

So, indeed, a cease fire was declared, early in the morning of February 28.

Then the question was, as we looked to a meeting at Safwan with the Iraqi generals, what demands would be made of them. To my consternation, and to Schwarzkopf's complete bewilderment and anger, he was given no instructions whatsoever for that meeting. Therefore, the only meeting between the coalition forces and the defeated Iraqi forces was restricted to military technical matters, specifically three issues. First, where the line of control lay. And I think the Iraqis were astonished to find how far the coalition forces had actually advanced into their territory. Second, how prisoners of war and missing in action were to be handled by both sides. And, third, restrictions on overflight of southern Iraq by the Iraqi forces.

In any event, I think the results of the failure to devise a war-termination strategy were very far reaching. I imagine that the Iraqi generals must have gone out of that tent at Safwan having great difficulty restraining a broad smile. They must have assumed that one term that would have been laid on them, at a minimum, would be a requirement for a meeting between their government and the governments of the coalition forces or the United States or the U.N., at least someone representing the coalition forces, to arrange the terms of a permanent cease fire and, in effect, some sort of Iraqi capitulation.

The fact that no such meeting was requested or ever took place meant that the United Nations, several days later, ex post facto, defined war aims, to include reparations; demarcation of the Iraq-Kuwait border; an intrusive inspection regime to eliminate some elements of the Iraqi armaments industry, especially those related to weapons of mass destruction; a series of further restrictions on the movement of Iraqi forces within Iraq; and so forth. But Iraq never was compelled to agree to these explicitly, and since it did not accept these terms and has not really felt bound by them, it has cheated ever since.

The second major consequence of the failure to insist on a political negotiation to end the war was, in effect, that the war never ended. The military disgrace that we had visited on the Iraqi armed forces was not translated into political humiliation for Saddam Hussein. He was, in effect, able to stand in Baghdad and declare that he had survived the worst that the world could throw against him, and was a man of great staying power, strength, and formidable political skills. In a

sense, much as Gamal Abdel Nasser did after the Suez Crisis, he was able to transform a military defeat into a kind of political vindication, with the result that he remains to this day in power in Baghdad, plotting revenge against the House of Saud in Saudi Arabia, the Americans, and others who injured him. Therefore, as I say, the Gulf War, in a sense, never ended.

All of this, I think, is an extraordinary lapse on the part of the American-led coalition, which could have easily been remedied.

I think it was not remedied mainly because of the speed with which our attention (that is, the attention of political Washington) turned from the war to the task of bringing the troops home and getting on with the 1992 election. This must be unique among wars in that it produced no clear political result, despite the ample opportunity to do so.

*Q: Looking at it as a system, Chas, how you felt at the time and then comment looking at it overall. You have a war where obviously at a certain point it's up to the generals to say, Your troops go here, you go there, this is how we fight it. But a peace, cease fire, end of a war is a political act. It's not only a political act, but it's an international political act. It would seem here that the secretary of state, who apparently got along well with George Bush, and George Bush, who had certain qualifications in the international field, and I think he should be given full credit for putting together this unlikely alliance, it seems like they just went into a coma. We're not talking about something that happened in a hundred days. From early December, we knew we were going to go to war. One of the lessons that's always learned is, well, God, you've got to figure out what you're after and what kind of a world you want and all that.*

FREEMAN: I think you really would have to ask people who served in Washington during that period for an explanation of this lapse.

I was, as I say, horrified, disgusted with the absence. I was totally astonished. It had never occurred to me that we could go to the end of the fighting without a political strategy for translating military victory into political victory.

Norm Schwarzkopf, as I say, was enormously frustrated, because, like all well-trained members of the U.S. military, he believed very strongly that generals implement policy, they don't make it. And he was asking for a statement of policy that never came. Just before he went to Safwan, he called me to ask if I had any success.

I had to tell him that I had, in effect, shot my wad some time ago on this with a series of cables, to which I referred, arguing for a war-termination strategy. That I was not the ambassador of the United States to the region. That this was, as you just said, a major international issue and a regional issue. That the question of what terms the United States should demand from Iraq, which was something on which I had pronounced myself earlier, was, in effect, above my pay grade at this point. And that if his own efforts, through Colin Powell and others at the Pentagon, to obtain clarity of terms had failed, there was really nothing I could do. I asked him whether he had received any instruction or indication that he should ask for a follow-on meeting at the diplomatic level, and he said he had not. I was simply appalled, but there was nothing I could do.

Now why this happened, as I say, I think it was a combination of all of the factors I've discussed before. The focus in Washington, which was a successful focus, as you point out, was on the nurturing and sustenance of several interlocking coalitions: between the White House and Congress; between the United States and the United Nations Security Council; within the Council; between the Security Council and Arab and Islamic allies led by Saudi Arabia; within the Western alliance, NATO in particular; and between the United States and Japan. All of these coalitions were delicate and subject to collapse. And I suppose that the habit of avoiding potentially controversial statements or appearing to impose an American agenda on the coalition had become so ingrained that the momentum of this, in my view pernicious, habit simply carried us through this crucial moment.

In any event, that's what happened. Not having been in Washington or in the U.S., I can't begin to explain it.

*Q: You were mentioning your deluge of visitors. Two people with whom you might have had discussions on this would be James Baker, secretary of state, and maybe somebody within his group, and then John Kelly, who was the assistant secretary for Near East and South Asian affairs. Did either of these discuss this with you at any time when they came to visit?*

FREEMAN: They did not. I raised it with them, with Secretary Baker, with Secretary Cheney, with Colin Powell. As I say, I had put my thoughts in writing, in fact, sending a telegram, I believe, in a very restricted channel, in November of 1990, called "Defining Victory," the first line of which, as I recall, was something like, "The first thing you should ask yourself when you prepare to start a war or launch an offensive is how you propose to end it, with whom will you negotiate, what terms will you insist upon, why should the other side regard those terms as superior to fighting on or to cheating on the truce," or words to that effect. And I had gone on to try to describe the requirement, without, I must say, getting into an excessive level of detail, because it seemed to me that my vantage point in Riyadh was naturally skewed in a certain direction, and that my superiors in Washington would have a more complete and well-grounded set of ideas.

So, certainly the issue had been registered, and I knew from people at the time that there were many good minds in Washington wrestling with the question. A lot of papers written, a lot of meetings held. The fact that they came to no fruition, it seems to me, reflects some sort of mental vacuum at the top that I can't explain.

*Q: What about the role of James Baker? Did you feel, particularly during this period, any particular hand on the helm there?*

FREEMAN: I think his principal concerns, which he managed brilliantly, were the construction of the multiple coalitions that I mentioned and, in particular, the management of the inside-the-Beltway coalition, which was, in many respects, the most fragile and subject to collapse.

*Q: The congressional vote was extremely close. It got sort of quasi-political as far as who was supporting...*

FREEMAN: That focus, on Secretary Baker's part, explains the difference of view that we had

on the level of exaction that was appropriate to take from Saudi Arabia, which you and I discussed last time. He was focused on a war that did not require congressional appropriations, although, in the end, he had to accept that even though the money was not coming from the United States, there should be an authorization by Congress.

*Q: I've just finished interviewing Jim Bishop, talking about having to be evacuated from Somalia. We were talking about how crises were dealt with in the Department of State and beyond. And he said, and this is clear from other interviews I've had with people who've been involved in crises, that, at a certain point, the people in the field are moved out, and the operators take over within Washington. And it's usually: Who's going to pay? What do we tell Congress? What about the media? What does this mean politically? And very little about: Is there a road from A to B and how do we do this? I'm talking more about diplomatic crises, of embassies under siege or something like this.*

FREEMAN: That's entirely true, and was certainly the case throughout the nine-month course of the Gulf War, and was reflected in some of the frustrations, which I have expressed earlier, with regard to, oh, matters as mundane as chemical warfare, briefings, and protection for American citizens in the war zone. It meant that, while you could have input from the field, you were not present at the discussions. The French have a proverb that nicely states a consequence of that. They say, "Les absents ont toujours tort," the absent are always wrong. If you're not at the table, by definition you are subject to blame, but get no credit for whatever you have contributed. That is the lot of an ambassador in the field in circumstances like this, and it simply has to be accepted and endured silently.

*Q: What was your impression of the role of Colin Powell? He was not only chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, he had been national security advisor and had been around a long time, right in the conning tower of the government of the United States. So his wasn't, or shouldn't have been, just a military role. Did you have any feel for him as far as how he...*

FREEMAN: I think, perhaps because he took a political path to the chairmanship, he continually evidenced great caution in his approach to the possibility of an attack on the Iraqi occupying forces, and was very much concerned about the domestic impact of failure.

In the event, of course, he presided, I think with great skill at his end, over one of the most stunning military victories of all history, a victory that restored to the U.S. armed forces the prestige that had been stripped from them by the Vietnam War and, in some sense, before that, the Korean War. The professional army that emerged from the Nixon reforms, and the decision to go to an all-volunteer army, and the hard work that a whole generation of military leadership did to professionalize the armed forces paid off, in the sense that the unparalleled professionalism of the American armed forces, which really is at a level not seen before in history, was vindicated in this extraordinary victory.

So Colin's caution may have been a salutary thing, but in the end, I believe, it was Norm Schwarzkopf's battle plan that deserves the principal credit for all of the good political effects on the armed forces that I referred to.

*Q: During the ground war and the aftermath, the lack of a defined peace, were you getting any reflections from your colleagues in the other diplomatic services in Riyadh that they were trying to figure out what the hell was going on?*

FREEMAN: The principal and most active and adroit allied participants, of course, were the British. They have a long history of military muddle and political acumen, which have taken indifferent performance on the battlefield by their generals, combined it with the bravery of the common soldier in the armed forces and the political skill of their political class, and snatched victory from things that hardly were deserving of that name. And I think that they were enormously frustrated by effectively being cut out of the process. The process that you cite Jim Bishop as describing was very much operative, and there was little room in that for consultation with allies, still less accepting advice from allies, as we went forward. As I say, the whole focus was on the packaging of victory for domestic political effect, rather than the consolidation of victory for the post-war order in the Gulf.

Now, just to continue this theme beyond Safwan, there had been a great deal of work done by CENTCOM, located forward with my embassy, and members of my embassy had long discussions between Schwarzkopf and myself about exactly what sort of post-war order we should wish to see, what end state we should desire after the conclusion of the fighting in the Gulf. And we had a series of ideas. One was that we should use the warm glow of victory to reach understandings with our Gulf allies, particularly with the Saudis, on a package of actions that would preclude the need for long-term stationing of U.S. forces in the Gulf, but provide the area with the stability that it had apparently lost after the end of the Iran-Iraq War.

The measures that we envisaged included, first, some assistance and brokering of a more effective collective security element to the Gulf Cooperation Council, which is a very loosely organized group of the six Gulf states, without much coherence. We hoped to persuade the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council that, in their own interest, they should establish some common military institutions and train together to raise the threshold at which they would have to call for help from external allies. This was the first objective.

A second was to ensure that there was, in effect, a three-tier defense structure: beginning with self-reliance by the GCC as a group; backstopped, as a second tier, by regional allies, especially Egypt, but conceivably Syria as well if it were prepared to play a constructive role, perhaps Pakistan, which could come to the aid of the GCC, with the United States perhaps performing a logistical role, but not a direct combat role; and third, and only in case of dire need, resort to the deployment of U.S., British, and other non-Arabic, non-Islamic forces to the region. This was the concept.

The final point was that, in order to make this structure operate, we envisaged the development of a comprehensive plan for prepositioning of war material and equipment in the region, which would enable U.S. forces to arrive, get into their tanks and aircraft, and go instantly into action, which would therefore preclude the need for U.S. forces to remain in the area, because they would come periodically and exercise this capacity, but not hang around in the interim. So, in other words, we would maintain a presence by demonstrating our ability to reconstitute it on very short notice and to make it effective on the battlefield.



These were the concepts that we developed. Many of them became declared policy after the war. But all of them were severely undercut by the absence of attention from Washington. In the case of prepositioned equipment, a kind of overreaching by Washington, which was most unseemly and counterproductive, ultimately resulted in the absence of any agreed plan.

In other words, post-war, the United States did not act effectively to cement the GCC military coalition that the war had produced. We did not consult effectively with our Arab allies on making the Damascus Declaration, which provided the Egyptian and Syrian backing potentially for the GCC, effective. And we did not put forward either a comprehensive plan or a realistic one that fairly balanced cost and benefit with our potential allies in the Gulf for prepositioning. So that we ended up, in effect, with nothing. To this day, the GCC is a big shell with a very small snail inside it. The Egyptians and Syrians have faded away. And, far from having left the Gulf, we are there in such large numbers as to be a destabilizing political influence and an attractive target for terrorism.

*Q: You say our overreaching on the prepositioning. What do you mean by that?*

FREEMAN: Schwarzkopf and I, knowing the Saudi preference for succinct, general statements, drew up a very short umbrella agreement to cover post-war military cooperation, including prepositioning. It was about a page, page and a half. And we sent it to Washington for approval. The idea was that we would get, at a very senior level, an agreement on this text, which we would then follow up with detailed negotiations to implement the agreement later. What we needed was a political stamp of approval at a high level, and we needed to get that before post-war tristesse set in, in the Gulf.

That ran afoul of the not-invented-here syndrome. Platoons of DOD lawyers, State Department desk officers, and various people in the office of the secretary of defense conspired to produce a sort of debenture-like, detailed document.

In the end, Dick Cheney went to Saudi Arabia. Somehow, on the aircraft, Paul Wolfowitz, I believe, the under secretary of defense for policy, managed to persuade Dick Cheney that he should ask the Saudis to buy equipment already in the U.S. inventory, at their expense, and store it, at their expense, in the desert, with assurances that they could not use it, but that U.S. forces that arrived would. I talked to Dick Cheney by telephone before he left. I was here in Washington, taking a little bit of time off from a pretty harrowing experience, and I did not return with him. But I understand that the meetings with the Saudis and others did not begin at the level of generality that was required. There was a series of presuppositions made, that the Saudis would understand the utility of preposition, that they would want it, and that they would be willing to pay for it. As I mentioned, the reporting that I was doing, suggesting that the Saudis were broke, was not taken seriously in Washington; in fact, it was derided in many quarters. So, somehow on the plane, a modest scheme became an enormous demand. And, as I understand it, the meeting began with Dick Cheney introducing an admiral, who said, Well, we need 5,000 square feet of air-conditioned storage space, and we will have to store 1,300,000 tent pegs, and we will have this and that, and you are going to pay for it all.

The result was, of course, that the Saudis said, Nothing doing. This looks like a permanent U.S. presence. You agreed with us that there would be no such thing. And we're not going to do it.

This was pursued first with Prince Sultan bin `Abd al-`Aziz, who is the minister of defense and aviation and the second deputy prime minister of Saudi Arabia, and then later with the king, both of whom, in a very polite Saudi way, rejected the notion.

At the same time, this debenture-like agreement on the sort of occupation-style status-of-forces agreement and other things was presented.

And when I objected, a few days later we were allowed to present the umbrella agreement that we had proposed. But by then, of course, it had, in effect, been superseded by this far more ambitious and frightening agenda (frightening to the Saudis).

That, basically, in my view, killed any prospect of getting what should have been, in the interests of both Saudi Arabia and the United States, a much more modest package in which costs would have been shared.

There was a follow up. Dick Clark, who I think was then the assistant secretary for political-military affairs at the Department of State, came out for another run at this, probably around June of 1991, and basically was told the same thing that the Cheney mission had been told, with the specific exception that Prince Sultan, with whom he met, said that Saudi Arabia would agree to a very limited prepositioning for the U.S. Air Force, and an even more drastically limited prepositioning for the U.S. Navy and Marines, and that was it.

Clarke then attempted, after that meeting, for some reason, to reverse Prince Sultan's decision with Prince Sultan's subordinates, which, of course, was not going to go anywhere.

Dick Clarke is an exceedingly able Washington operative, a very bright man and very effective in the Washington context. But, in the context of this international intercultural negotiation, he was very off-putting. One of the key Saudis on the other side remarked to me later that this was the only occasion in his life when he'd been tempted to use his ceremonial dagger.

So we continued to try locally to pick up the pieces and produce an agreement. In fact, we did get pretty close to an agreement by the end of the summer of 1991, only to be told by Washington that we had been acting without adequate instruction, and that they needed to restudy everything that we had worked out with the Saudis. That cost about a year. The result is that, to this day, there has been no closure on what could have been a very useful and mutually advantageous, if modest, prepositioning of equipment for the Air Force and the Navy, if not for the Army.

In the event, to leap ahead, CENTCOM has been forced to scurry around in the Gulf and get what it can. And the pattern of prepositioned material that has emerged is militarily irrational, to say the least.

The Army has prepositioned a great deal of material for a division basically in Qatar. And Qatar

is a sort of sandspit that sticks into the Arabian Gulf 500 miles south of Kuwait. That is not where you need to have Army material.

We are continuing to operate Air Force and naval installations and a presence on a large scale in Saudi Arabia, with no agreement with the Saudis on this, basically on sufferance. The Saudis continue to pay for that presence, but not under any agreement, so they could terminate that at any moment.

We have begun to use the United Arab Emirates as the principal port of call for the United States Navy, but have been unable to get an agreement with Abu Dhabi on the terms of reference or status-of-forces arrangement that is mutually satisfactory.

We have established a Fifth Fleet with headquarters in Bahrain, partly by sleight of hand, with a wink and a nod from the Saudis, but without, in my view, an adequate regional underpinning of acceptance for this operation.

We have had a roller coaster in our relationship with Oman, reflecting the collapse of the foreign-assistance program, more generally, and the inability of the United States to make good on commitments to Oman to provide foreign assistance that would offset some of the pain, suffering, and costs of a very large repositioning package that has been in Oman since 1980.

So we have, in effect, a kind of Rube Goldberg military presence cobbled together in the region, which is something that CENTCOM, being a very competent and ingenious organization, can probably make work, under most circumstances, but not all. This is not an ideal result. It's certainly very far from what we had conceived during the war, as I say, partly, probably, because of the pressure of different bureaucratic forces and political forces in Washington far removed from the area and from what is feasible on the ground in the Gulf.

*Q: For the historian of the future, Rube Goldberg was a cartoonist who made up fantastic, sort of homemade inventions, which would turn an alarm clock on, for instance, with lots of pulleys and all, an almost amusing type of construction.*

FREEMAN: It's an extremely elaborate, improbable, and inefficient way of accomplishing a desired result, basically.

*Q: Did you find that, after the war was over with Iraq, there was an immediate turning of the searchlight of your concern toward Iran and whither Iran?*

FREEMAN: No, on the contrary. Iran had behaved with great responsibility and restraint throughout the war. Clearly, Iran expected that it, like Israel, would be rewarded for good behavior. If that was its expectation, however, Tehran was sorely disappointed. The political image in the United States of Tehran as the site of hostage-taking and mad mullahs made any incentive to improve relations with Iran that we might have had quite beside the point, especially in the context of an election campaign.

The concern that I had in the region shifted immediately, rather, to two points, which were

related: first, the absence of a policy with regard to the Shi`a rebellion in southern Iraq; and, second, the related issue of how to deal with prisoners of war and interned civilians from Iraq who were in the occupied area of southern Iraq.

Now when I say `the absence of policy,' what I mean is that, since we had not defined the desired end state in Iraq, and since we had all assumed, including myself, erroneously, that Saddam would fall from power under the military licking that we had given him, we didn't know what to do when rebellion broke out both in the north among the Kurds and in the south among the Shi`a.

In the north, Turkish pressure to end the intolerable situation that was created by a massive flow of Kurdish refugees into southwestern Turkey forced the development of what became known as Provide Comfort, a relief and sanctuary operation for the Kurds.

In the south of Iraq, the Shi`a rebellion, which had some assistance from Iran, was the subject of great confusion. Privately, the Saudis, very early on, began to press very hard, through me and directly in Washington, for a joint Saudi-American program of assistance to the Shi`a. The Saudis, despite their distaste for the Shi`a religiously, had come to the conclusion, correctly, I believe, that Iraqi Shi`a are Iraqi Arabs first and Shi`a second. They had certainly shown that in the conflict between Iraq and Iran. Nor did the Saudis wish to leave the field to the Iranians. And they saw support for the Shi`a rebellion as the key to dislodging Saddam Hussein from power.

It was six months, however, between March 1991, when the rebellion began, and September 1991 before Washington could muster a reply to these requests. By that time, the Shi`a rebellion had been crushed.

In the interim, in the absence of instructions, or perhaps carrying out instructions of which I was unaware, our military occupying southern Iraq, up through about June of 1991, routinely disarmed and interned any Shi`a who came across the line of control, thus draining the rebellion of its most effective military support. The United States destroyed vast arsenals of Iraqi weaponry, including weaponry taken from the Shi`a rebels. Some of that weaponry was removed quietly and provided to the Mujahideen in Afghanistan, but most of it was simply destroyed. So, in effect, whatever our intentions, from an objective point of view, we were allied with Saddam in suppressing the Shi`a rebellion, contrary to Saudi desires.

The newspapers, throughout this period, perhaps reflecting some sort of superior wisdom being leaked from Washington, continued to allege that the main reason we weren't helping the Shi`a was because the Saudis objected to our doing so, which was 180 degrees off the truth.

In any event, as the occupation of southern Iraq ended, the question immediately arose: What do we do with the Iraqi Shi`a civilians and fighters who had been interned?

Now many of these people had come over voluntarily to the area of coalition occupation, and had served as interpreters or otherwise assisted the occupation forces, and were subject to the death penalty for treasonous behavior if they came back under Baghdad's control.

I, therefore, insisted very strongly, first with the Saudis and then with the United States, that

these Iraqi rebels should be removed to a refugee camp in Saudi Arabia, and that the United States, having disarmed them and taken custody of them, should continue to exercise some degree of responsibility for their well being.

The Saudis were very reluctant to do this. It is rather as though a large group of Irish Catholic partisans of Sinn Fein were given sanctuary in Ulster, if one knows the feeling between Wahhabi Sunni Saudis and Shi`a Iraqis.

Nevertheless, the Saudis agreed, in an important humanitarian gesture, and built a very, by normal Third-World standards, luxurious refugee camp, up in the deserts of northern Saudi Arabia, in which to intern both the POWs who had not been repatriated and didn't wish to be, and those refugees from the Shi`a population who were in the custody of the coalition.

Then there ensued a lengthy battle with Washington, in this case with the Bureau of Refugee Programs, which was not resolved until Princeton Lyman, the then-assistant secretary for refugee programs, came out to Saudi Arabia.

The battle was this, that I and my embassy insisted that the United States had a responsibility vis-à-vis these refugees. That that had to include some effort to arrange resettlement, if not in the United States, then elsewhere. That we could not, in good conscience, either leave these Iraqi Shi`a in the custody of Saudis who were religiously antipathetic to them, or simply abandon them to their fate. That we had a direct and active role to take.

Obviously, resettling in the United States former enemy aliens was not a popular thing, and I can understand the reluctance of political Washington to respond to this.

In the end, finally, we did. And, as you are probably aware, there are now large numbers from among this Iraqi refugee population who have been resettled here and in Iran, primarily.

Now one sort of entertaining byline on all this was a revelation about the manner in which some of our allies conduct arms sales to Saudi Arabia. When the Saudis were building the refugee camp at Rifia`h, they needed 1,000 kilometers of field-grade telephone wire to connect communications from the camp and within it. Their normal supplier, the British, under the al-Amamah arrangements, was unable to supply that, because they had exhausted their supplies during the course of the war. So the Saudis came to us, and we rummaged around in the stocks of the European Command, which, of course, was beginning to dismantle a large part of the U.S. presence in Europe. And we came up with the required 1,000 kilometers of field-grade telephone wire. We also presented an invoice, a bill.

Two days later, the Saudi Ministry of Defense and Aviation came back to us, in a great state of anxiety, and said that they thought there was some fundamental mistake with the invoice.

We said, "Well, what is it?"

They said, "Well, this is only ten percent of what we normally pay."

And we said, "Well, this is what it costs."

If you think about it for a minute, you can imagine what a premium of that sort could be used for, in terms of kickbacks, rake-offs, ripoffs, profiteering, and the like.

So that was an interesting sidelight on some of the relationships that Saudi Arabia has internationally, which often ace out American defense contractors.

*Q: Going back to the Shi`a revolt in southern Iraq. What were you getting from the Saudis, and could you explain a little about what they were saying to you and what you were passing on?*

FREEMAN: From many sources, but primarily from the foreign-intelligence side of the Saudi Arabian government, there were increasingly anxious, escalating requests for, first, American support for these Shi`a, in several forms, one of which, I believe, eventually was answered positively, although, as I said, six months late. And that was support in the form of a propaganda outlet for the Iraqi opposition to Saddam Hussein. But, beyond that, they wanted military training, equipment, and the usual sorts of support that one would offer an insurgency, to be provided to the Shi`a.

As I say, these requests fell on deaf ears in Washington, perhaps because they were counterintuitive in terms of what Washington thought the Saudis might want, perhaps because they were in extremely restricted channels, naturally, as such requests always are, perhaps because the principal objective of Washington was to put the Gulf behind it as it moved toward the 1992 election. But, for whatever reason, the requests, which were serious requests, and which, as I say, were fairly constantly reiterated both to me and directly by very senior members of the royal family in Washington, were not answered.

As they were not answered, a sort of tone of desperation crept into the requests. But, by mid-summer, it tapered off, as it was apparent that Saddam had successfully crushed the rebellion.

The American focus at the time, to the extent there was one, was on the Kurds, where General Shalikashvili, acting for the European Command, was operating a very successful repatriation of Kurds to northern Iraq and a resettlement program for those Kurds in a protected zone of northern Iraq. The continued condition of the Kurds is another subject.

But no one was apparently prepared to come to grips with this group of Shi`a in the south.

*Q: There is sort of a policy that has been articulated, I think, that no matter how you do it, Iraq is one of these entities that was put together, a bunch of tribes following a flag type. and that there isn't really an Iraq that's always been there. And that if you allow the Shi`as to break loose, you could have an Iraq breaking into essentially three parts: a Kurdish north, a Shi`a south, and something in the middle around Baghdad. And this would leave Iran the predominant power. That would not be in our interest, because you want an Iraq to offset an Iran. Was this a matter of consideration at the time, in 1991, from the Saudis or anyone else?*

FREEMAN: That view is certainly one that I share, and those concerns I also share. And I had

articulated them at the outset of the war, as I believe I mentioned. That is, that the one primary objective that should be kept in mind was the preservation of the territorial integrity of Iraq, precisely because of its importance as a factor in the regional balance of power, especially vis-à-vis Iran. So I agreed completely with that.

The difficulty with the application of that thesis to the Shi`a rebellion was that the Shi`a were not attempting to secede from Iraq or establish a separate Shi`a state. They were focused on overthrowing Saddam and participating in national politics in Baghdad. So there was no inherent inconsistency between the two.

Now it is true that if the Kurds, who are Sunni, are removed from the Iraqi equation, the Shi`a, who constitute about 60 percent of the Iraqi population, would exercise a dominant influence in Iraqi politics. But if the Saudis, who are the great skeptics about Shi`a Islam, were prepared to accept the possibility of greater Shi`a influence in Baghdad, it seemed to me it ill-behoved the United States to object. Nor did I believe that support for the Shi`a would necessarily have led in any way to the weakening of the Iraqi state.

Now it is conceivable that the Shi`a might well have made common cause with the Kurds in demanding a more federal structure within Iraq. But I also fail to see why that is inherently objectionable. After all, the United States is a federal structure, and we find that it works well for us as a means of allowing a high measure of local autonomy and experimentation.

I think the real answer is that serious consideration at a high level was simply not given to the issue. So the arguments that I've just stated and you've just stated were, in a sense, beside the point, because there was no willingness to pay attention to the issue. That, of course, in fact, may or may not have been the right decision. I simply note that we didn't have a policy. And that the public appearance of Saudi opposition to the rebellion in southern Iraq was incorrect; that, in fact, they had quite a contrary view. And that we failed to give it even a response, still less, apparently, adequate consideration.

*Q: I would have thought there would have been a little bit of concern on the Saudi side about doing anything with the Shi`as, because they had a significant minority of Shi`a in the eastern province, where all their oil is. Did that come up at all in any discussions you had?*

FREEMAN: Frankly, I was surprised by the willingness of the Saudis to put aside their religious doctrinal differences with Iraqi Shi`a and advocate support for them. Typically, in the history of the region, when a strong dynasty, the first al-Saud Dynasty, the second, the third, arises in Saudi Arabia, one of its first acts is to go smash the Shi`a shrines in southern Iraq. And there's certainly no love lost between the Saudi Wahhabi adherents and their Shi`a fellow Arabs in Iraq. Nevertheless, whatever concern there might have been about the impact on Shi`a in Hofuf and the eastern province apparently was swept aside by considerations of realpolitik.

*Q: It sounds like there was really a very sophisticated world view by the Saudis, at the leadership level.*

FREEMAN: I have great respect for the political acumen and prudence of the Saudi leadership.

It is a leadership with an enormous depth of experience, great continuity, and a fine intuitive grasp of the political-military environment surrounding the kingdom. It is a successful leadership, which sometimes makes errors of judgment, but, more often than not, has a good sense of what it wants to accomplish, and has been able, by enlisting American competence, with Saudi money, to accomplish much of what it wants to do.

I think that, in this case, the Saudis were very frustrated by the absence of American willingness to join them in a common endeavor. As I say, later, this was to some extent repaired, but by that time, it was, in effect, nugatory, because the Baghdad regime had effectively reconsolidated its control of the south.

*Q: Was there anything such as a conference of the American chiefs of mission of the Middle East, to get together at some point, sit down, and say, well, where are we going to go now?*

FREEMAN: That's a splendid idea, which didn't happen.

*Q: I asked the question, but I knew the answer. Was there any noise about doing this?*

FREEMAN: I don't recall any great interest on the part of Washington in convening such a meeting. I've recounted the difficulty that those of us in the Gulf had trying to put together such a meeting on the eve of the war, and the really rather paltry results that came from that, as an essentially irrelevant meeting was organized as a diversionary tactic by people in Washington concerned about losing control over their ambassadors in the field. So it wasn't something that anyone Washington particularly wished to hear.

*Q: We've talked about some of the major things. When did you leave Saudi Arabia?*

FREEMAN: I left Saudi Arabia in August of 1992.

I would say that the remaining period, that is, from the fall of '91 through the late summer of '92, was dominated, first, by the endless stream of sometimes ill-considered monetary demands that I described, by the dispute between the embassy and Washington over whether Saudi Arabia indeed was in financial difficulty or not, and by a number of other subjects. I spent a great deal of time during that period working to promote U.S. commercial interests, which is something I'd given great attention to before the war, but not much during it, especially the sale of new aircraft to Saudia, the Saudi Arabian national airline, and in coping with the internal political aftermath of the war, which was a definite swing in Saudi public opinion toward radical Islamic activism. It was clear that the war catalyzed a more open division between cosmopolitan elements and nativist elements in Saudi Arabia. There was a great surge in activity by religious vigilantes that affected the American community in Saudi Arabia, and a great deal of quasi-consular work was done by me.

The second area of concentration was in foreign-policy terms. I guess there were two. One was continuation of the effort I had been making to produce a happy ending for the joint venture in support of the Mujahideen in Afghanistan. We had been very eager to have the Saudis in at the takeoff, and I thought we should be appropriately considerate and consultative at the moment of landing, if we were to preserve a relationship that had historically been very important to both



countries. And I registered some success with the Central Intelligence Agency, less with the State Department, in moving that way.

*Q: What did you mean by that?*

FREEMAN: What I meant was that we had a set of agreed objectives in Afghanistan in terms of removing the Soviets. The Soviets had gone from Afghanistan. Afghanistan was, however, in a state of chaos and confusion. The Saudis, in many instances, had gotten too close, in my view, for their own comfort, or ours, to radical Islamic groups among the Afghan Mujahideen. The Pakistani intelligence service that we both cooperated with in funneling assistance to the Mujahideen was, in effect, playing us off against each other. Whereas there should have been a sense of accomplishment and pride in a job well done, coupled with some agreed process for managing it down and phasing it out, there was instead an absence of consultation, and a bit of ill-will and a sense of working at cross purposes developing. And I thought it was important to try to mitigate that. As I say, I think, with some support from the Central Intelligence Agency and a lot of work by my colleague in Pakistan, Bob Oakley, we did manage to mitigate the effects, but not to resolve the issue.

The final issue that was important, but not an easy task, was enlisting Saudi support for the Madrid peace process; that is to say, Saudi support in the form of diplomatic representations and the usual diplomatic payoffs to various Arab parties to the Arab-Israeli peace process, aiming at a conference at which these adversaries would openly appear with each other and shake hands at Madrid, and a process in which the Palestine Liberation Organization, which was persona non grata in Saudi Arabia after the war, would be engaged with the Israelis in a constructive process of bargaining about arrangements for the emergence of a Palestinian autonomous zone, with eventual claims to statehood, in the area of the former Palestine mandate.

Related to this was a constant desire on the part of Washington to broker some repair in the ruptured relationship between Amman, Jordan, and Riyadh. In a previous session, I described some of the bases for Saudi suspicion of and animosity toward King Hussein and his entourage. Obtaining a relaxation of restrictions that the Saudis had placed on Jordanian and Palestinian workers was not easy.

I would say, by way of a sidelight, that I had become quite concerned during the war about the probable mistreatment of Palestinians by the Kuwaitis after Kuwait was liberated, and had made quite an effort, primarily through Crown Prince Abdullah, who is the commander of the National Guard, to try to ensure that the Saudis weighed in on behalf of Palestinians who had been active in, indeed the mainstay of, the Kuwaiti resistance movement. A myth grew up that Palestinians were uniformly in favor of Saddam. That was emphatically not the case. And it seemed to me that the Kuwaiti impulse for indiscriminate revenge against all Palestinians was something that the Saudis should take an interest in tempering. I wasn't terribly successful in this regard.

In other words, after the war, the focus shifted to the northwest, to the Levant and the Arab-Israeli peace process, and to the business of reconstruction in Kuwait.

We also had a number of issues left over from the war that took attention: the environmental

damage from the Iraqi deliberate spilling of oil in the Gulf; the environmental damage from the enormous oil fires that the Iraqi forces had set in the Kuwaiti oil fields as they withdrew. I visited Kuwait two or three days after its liberation, and have never seen anything like the black sky and the towering flames, something resembling the floor of Hades, on the one hand, and the so-called Road of Death north of Kuwait, in which perhaps 16,000 Iraqis were killed as they left Kuwait with their loot, in many cases killed by phosphorous bombs, which do not produce a pretty corpse. I was acutely aware of the need to support the reconstruction of Kuwait, and much of that was based in Saudi Arabia, and much of it involved American military operations or American companies.

So all of these things took a great deal of attention. But life was less exciting, in some ways, than when large metal objects were hurtling down in the direction of my residence.

*Q: Obviously, the Saudis had been a strong supporter of the PLO, the Palestinian Liberation Organization, for decades. To have the Palestinian leadership side with their mortal enemy, Saddam Hussein, not only turned off the American public on this -- the newsreels showing Palestinians in Amman and even in Kuwait jumping up and down with joy over what Saddam was doing -- but also this was almost helpful, wasn't it, in that the Saudis no longer had to be particularly nice to the PLO, as far as the peace process with the Israelis.*

FREEMAN: I think that most Saudis have always had grave doubts about Palestinians in general, and the PLO in particular. Yasser Arafat was not a widely admired person in Saudi Arabia even before his treacherous alignment with Baghdad.

The Saudis continued collecting the tithe on Palestinians, which was a principal source of income for the PLO, but put it, in effect, in escrow, rather than turning it over to the PLO. Ironically, the United States later played a role in getting the Saudis to turn that money over to the PLO, in order to give the PLO some incentive and some ability to carry through on its peace commitments.

But the Saudi distaste for the Palestinians has many sources, one of them is religious. Fifteen percent of Palestinians are Christians. In Saudi Arabia, Christians are regarded with even greater suspicion religiously than Jews. The Palestinian leadership was notably atheist or agnostic, and that is even worse than being a Christian or a Jew. In fact, it may be worse than being a polytheist Hindu, if that's possible. So there was no love lost between Saudis and Palestinians. The Palestinians clearly sensed this, and evidenced very anti-Saudi sentiments during the war, which were fully reciprocated by the Saudis.

So it was not for some time after the war that Yasser Arafat was able to crawl into Saudi Arabia and humbly beg forgiveness from King Fahd. It's a measure of the fine grasp of political realities that the Saudis have that eventually they did accept that apology. They must have been holding their rather large noses while they were doing it.

Similarly, eventually, some sort of peace was made with King Hussein.

But those things happened, I'm afraid, after I left. I'd like to think that I helped advance those

processes, which I think were helpful in producing a hopeful moment in the perpetual peace process in the Middle East.

*Q: We'll stop here. We're very close to wrapping up Saudi Arabia. One question I wanted to ask, which we can deal with next time, is the Middle East peace process between Israel. During the whole time you were in Saudi Arabia, how well did you find the Saudis informed about events in Israel? Of course, they had no diplomatic relations, but did you have a feeling that they knew what was going on and understood the political process, being a very political country, unlike the other countries around. I'm just putting this down as a question, and we'll pick it up next time. And we'll finish up your time. We've pretty well covered everything. Is there anything else we should cover?*

FREEMAN: You had said something about covering the period at the Defense Department.

*Q: Oh, I plan to pick that up.*

FREEMAN: Let's take it as we go, on Saudi Arabia. There may be one or two other things.

*Q: And also you had mentioned something about quasi-consular work. Are there any cases that are of particular interest?*

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*Chas, how well did you find the Saudis informed about events in Israel?*

FREEMAN: I think, for most Saudis, Israel is a place that exists only on TV, where daily atrocities against fellow Arabs are staged. That is to say, every night on TV, on the news, one saw scenes of Israeli bulldozers bulldozing houses, or Israelis doing a Bull Connor routine on protesters (Bull Connor being the police chief [commissioner of public safety] in Birmingham, Alabama, who gained notoriety in the '50s for his police dog and baton [fire hose] routine with civil rights demonstrators), or shooting into crowds and killing kids, and so forth. So, for most Saudis, Israel was sort of a bad dream. On the other hand, many Saudis with satellite television dishes watched the two Israeli stations, particularly Channel 2, which had a sort of soft porn element to it, which, at least in the Saudi context, seemed to be very pornographic and therefore attracted quite an audience.

I think, as far as the king and the crown prince were concerned, they certainly had a major interest in seeing the Gulf War bring into being some sort of peace process for the Middle East. And they had a measure of sympathy with Israel as the target of Iraqi Scud attacks, much as they were. As I mentioned, twice I worked with General Schwarzkopf to dissuade the Saudis from launching missiles at Baghdad. In one case, they were only twenty minutes from doing so. These are Chinese missiles, manned and targeted by Chinese, but for the benefit and under the control of the Royal Saudi air defense forces. They felt tremendous pressure from their own populous to retaliate, and they certainly understood how the government in Israel might have been under similar pressure from Israelis. CNN was widely available in Saudi Arabia at that time, and people could watch the human-interest stories that it broadcast about Scud attacks in Israel.

Strangely, just as a footnote, CNN and the other networks never did any human-interest stories to speak of on the terror that the Scuds produced in Saudi Arabia. The Saudi story of Scuds was high-tech American counteraction; the Israeli story was human interest, and it was a very interesting contrast.

After the end of the fighting, Jim Baker came out to try to enlist the Saudis in support of what became the Madrid Process.

*Q: You might explain what the Madrid Process was.*

FREEMAN: The Madrid Process is the peace process that began in '91 with a major Middle-East wide Israeli-Arab conference in Madrid, which spawned not only bilateral negotiations between Israel and its neighbors and ultimately led to the meetings in Oslo that produced an agreement between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Israelis, but also set up a series of sub conferences on regional issues, such as water, environment, agriculture, and the like. The purpose of those conferences, in which the Saudis took part, was less, frankly, to accomplish anything on the matters that were nominally the subject of discussion and more to engage the Saudis and others, who didn't have a border with Israel and didn't have specific issues to negotiate with Israel, in contacts with Israel that would give the Israelis some confidence that a peace with their neighbors would lead to a wider reconciliation.

In any event, the initial proposal really was quite different from the one that produced Madrid. But Secretary Baker found King Fahd enthusiastically supportive of American diplomacy and willing to help, and, if anything, Crown Prince Abdullah even more enthusiastic.

And the reasons for this are not hard to understand. The establishment of Israel, and its expansion at the expense of the Palestinians, and the several wars that have occurred, and the enmity between Israel and its neighbors that resulted have been among the principal factors radicalizing politics in the Middle East. Saudi Arabia does not like radical politics; it is a very conservative country that is dedicated to the status quo. To the extent that the Arab-Israeli struggle has produced left-wing, radical, or terrorist organizations in the Middle East, particularly in Lebanon and Palestine (meaning the Israeli-occupied portion of Palestine), this is very destabilizing, and it is very much opposed by Saudi Arabia. So they very much would welcome an end to the confrontation between Israel and its neighbors, whether Palestinian, Jordanian, Syrian, Lebanese, or Egyptian. So that was a major factor.

The second point, however, is that the only issue of direct concern to the Saudis is the status of Jerusalem as the third holy city of Islam. King Fahd, as the custodian of two of the three holy cities...

*Q: Medina and...*

FREEMAN: Mecca, has a possible role in the management of religious sites in Jerusalem. That management responsibility historically devolved from the Ottomans ultimately to the Hashemite family who now are the royal family in Jordan. As I think I must have mentioned, one effect of

the war was to cause deep estrangement between King Hussein and King Fahd and his brothers. I think King Hussein no longer had the confidence of Saudis in his role as custodian of the Dome of The Rock and other Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem. So there is this issue.

There is also the legacy of succeeding Saudi monarchs from the time of `Abd al-`Aziz, the founder of the kingdom, who have said that they will not set foot in Jerusalem, nor will they normalize relations with Israel, until the issue of the right of Muslims to worship freely in Jerusalem is settled. This is, in fact, an issue that has a great deal of passion behind it in Saudi Arabia.

And it's probably the only issue between Israel and Saudi Arabia. They do not share a border. Saudi Arabia, rather cleverly, donated twenty kilometers of territory to Jordan, to ensure that they didn't have a border. While they share the Gulf of Aqaba, there is really no contact to speak of. There are no prisoners to exchange. Saudi Arabia, in fact, has never actually gotten into a fight with Israel. On several occasions, it promised to join the battle, but always contrived to arrive too late to take part. Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, has been a staunch financial supporter of the Egyptian-led anti-Israeli effort, and was a principal bankroller of Egypt's 1973 counterattack on Israel across the Suez Canal. But Saudi Arabia, as far as any Saudi could tell me, in fact never gotten around to declaring war on Israel. And while arguably the Arab League declaration of war somehow affected Saudi Arabia, from a bilateral Israeli-Saudi point of view, there is no state of war. There is no trade to speak of. There have been no specific issues, really, between the two countries.

So that is one of the reasons why the regional conferences that accompanied the Madrid Process were so important in giving the Saudis an ostensible reason to sit down and discuss substantive matters with the Israelis.

Other than that, I think most Saudis, like most Americans, other than those who follow Israeli politics closely, find the Israelis somewhat bewildering. The multiplicity of parties, particularly religious parties, the shifting coalitions of Israeli politics, the uncertainties of electoral campaigns in Israel, the sometimes indiscipline of Israeli cabinets all present a sort of kaleidoscope, rather than a firm image, to Saudis.

Nevertheless, as I say, they were very supportive of the peace process, and very much hoped it would succeed. To that end, with great difficulty and quite a bit of work by me and by others, they gradually accepted a reconciliation with Jordan and with the Palestine Liberation Organization, both of which had sided with Iraq in the Gulf conflict.

*Q: You say a great deal of work on your part, among others. What do you mean?*

FREEMAN: I mean that, as part of the effort to get the peace process going, Secretary Baker traveled frequently to the region, for example, to Amman, the capital of Jordan. And he always felt that he would like to be able to present some evidence of American effectiveness in serving Jordanian interests more broadly, in order to induce Jordan to take risks for peace with Israel. During the war, the Saudis had expelled the majority of the Jordanian citizens in the kingdom, and they had, in effect, sealed the border to truck traffic from Jordan. Jordan had traditionally

been the major supplier of fresh fruits and vegetables to Saudi Arabia. I was very happy to arrange for California to replace it in that role during the war. Still, from the point of view of long-term American strategic interests, it made sense to facilitate the reopening of that. So I worked to try to persuade the king to relax the strictures that had been imposed on Jordan, and ultimately to allow the PLO to resume collection of the tithe on Palestinian residents of the kingdom that it had traditionally collected, but that it had been barred from collecting during the Gulf War and in its immediate aftermath. I don't want to say that I was by any means the only one working on this, but I did spend a lot of hours in discussing it with the Saudis.

*Q: When you say with the Saudis, would it be the king, the crown prince, the foreign minister?*

FREEMAN: The king, the foreign minister, basically those two, Prince Sultan, Prince Naif, who was minister of interior and who was concerned about infiltration of terrorist elements from Jordan, with all of them.

The other subject was, of course, the requirement to influence Syria, which traditionally held a sort of veto over Arab actions on the Arab-Israeli peace process, and which required some financial inducement from Saudi Arabia, and representations from its Saudi bankers, as it were, to feel comfortable with the process of peace that was beginning to unfold.

So I spent a good deal of time on this subject after the war, amidst dealing with the refugee, POW, MIA, environmental-cleanup, and business-development issues that the war left behind it.

There was also, as you indicated, a lot of internal change going on in Saudi Arabia. The war had catalyzed a resurgence of Islamic militants. The American community, particularly the female part of it, was subject to frequent and escalating harassment by religious vigilantes. So I found myself working a great deal on that.

Also, the war was a very stressful experience for everyone (and by 'the war' I mean not just the period of combat, but the whole period from the occupation of Kuwait, August 2, 1990, through the withdrawal of U.S. forces in June of 1991). It was very stressful for Saudis, and many mixed, Saudi-American marriages came under strain. In fact, all marriages came under strain. My own marriage collapsed under the impact of Scud attacks, a marriage of thirty years, which had been quite happy.

So I found myself doing a lot of work trying to persuade the Saudi authorities to exercise greater control over the religious vigilantes, and reduce, if not eliminate, the sort of harassment that they were engaged in. Helping American spouses (usually it was women) to separate from their Saudi husbands and go home.

*Q: The children were always the problem.*

FREEMAN: The children were always a problem. Saudi Arabia and Israel share the distinction of being the two places with the largest numbers of kidnapped kids, and for essentially the same reason; namely, the desire of the parent, usually the father, to ensure that the children are raised in the proper religious atmosphere, meaning in either a Muslim atmosphere or a Jewish atmosphere.

There were cases where American women and children managed to smuggle themselves, with help from various people (whose identity I didn't particularly want to know), across the causeway to Bahrain, for example, and thence onward to the United States. And since this sort of border crossing is a violation of Saudi law, and since there was always an angry Saudi husband involved, sometimes I found myself responding to accusations from the Saudis of official American involvement in these actions, which I certainly was not about to acknowledge.

*Q: The prisoners of war and the missing in action, did that engage you much, or was that more a military matter?*

FREEMAN: No, it was very much a concern of mine. As I mentioned, after the war, in the absence of any clear set of objectives vis-à-vis Iraq, the United States allowed, and in fact in some ways colluded inadvertently in, the crushing of the Shi`a rebellion in the south of Iraq. I say colluded in the crushing of that rebellion, because the rebels who crossed the line of control into the American-occupied zone of southern Iraq were promptly disarmed and interned, rather than aided and assisted or provided with weapons and training. The Saudis were very strongly in favor of aid to these Shi`a.

At any rate, as the American forces withdrew from southern Iraq, they had with them, either to be left behind or brought with them, a large population of Iraqi POWs, Iraqi Shi`a civilians who had been interned in the manner I described, and Iraqi civilians who had been in the occupied zone and who had collaborated with the American forces by providing various services, such as interpreting or other services, that would have subjected them to a charge of treason once Saddam reasserted control in the region.

I argued very strongly with the Saudis and with my own government that we had a responsibility to these people. Those POWs who did not wish to be repatriated should not be left to their fate; those civilians who had aided us should not be left to suffer for having done so.

The result was that the Saudis finally agreed to take these people, in two groups, into northern Saudi Arabia: the first, POWs; the second, refugees.

Then there ensued a most unseemly American failure to transfer internal responsibility from the military, which had taken these people in Saudi Arabia, to the State Department, which was then responsible, presumably, for helping them, through the U.N. High Commission for Refugees and others, to achieve appropriate resettlement. Many able-bodied young men in these camps were being picked off by the Iranians in order to form an Iraqi foreign legion. I had a very difficult time persuading the Bureau of Refugee Affairs, which I had actually created, to work on this problem and to consider resettlement of these people in the United States. This took a great amount of time.

*Q: What was it, just bureaucratic slowness, or was there a principle involved, from their point of view?*

FREEMAN: It was partly, as I say, the failure of the military to pass the baton effectively. The

military just checked off this problem and left, rather than following up with State. Partly it was political, because Iraqis were hardly the most popular people in the United States at that time. The difficulty of explaining why the United States should accept responsibility for Iraqis, and particularly to resettle them in the United States, was obvious and made this an unpalatable topic for RP [The Bureau of Refugee Programs]] to take up. And, frankly, there was the usual problem that RP has of too many refugee crises in too many places, and not enough time and management availability to deal with all of them effectively. So it was something of all of the factors that you mentioned.

*Q: After the war was over, during the time you were in Saudi Arabia, did we see this as an opportunity to advance the development of American business, as opposed to some of the other ones, like the Japanese or the Germans, whose support was halfhearted, to say the least?*

FREEMAN: I devoted, I would guess, over half of my time during this period to promotion of business. Not, however, in the zero-sum context that you suggest. I thought the Japanese performance in the war was, in fact, quite commendable, both the \$13 million in direct financial support for the war, and the dispatch, for the first time, of mine sweepers beyond Japanese territorial waters, to help clean up the Gulf after the combat ended. Similarly, the Germans gave, I believe, \$11 billion, and I didn't, for my part, fault them in any way. The French and British had participated in the fighting, in no small measure, in order to reap commercial benefits after the war, to be sure. But I felt, quite aside from the issue of competition and who was more deserving or not, that there was a major opportunity, because the war had put Saudi Arabia on the map for American business. Senior corporate management was suddenly willing to come out to Saudi Arabia and devote some time and effort to cultivating relationships and making sales pitches. There was, at that time, a very favorable attitude by Saudis toward many American companies, as well as toward Americans in general. Some American companies were looked at with particular favor, because they had not cut and run from the kingdom during the crisis; they had stayed and supported both the war effort and the continued operation of the civilian economy. So I spent a lot of time trying to help business, from small businesses to large ones.

I spent a lot of time, for example, working on the replacement of the aircraft in Saudia, the Saudi national airline, by Boeing and McDonnell Douglas's newer models. This I did not bring to fruition during my time in Saudi Arabia, but I did advance it substantially.

And here I must remark on one thing that was very interesting to me. It was clear to me that a letter from the president to the king, expressing interest in the aircraft sale, which was a \$6-billion transaction, not inconsequential, and in one or two other things that I was working on with other companies, would have an impact. So I suggested this, and a letter was drafted for the president. It said simply that the president was aware of this and hoped that the king would give every consideration to these companies, whose products were of high quality, and further trade would be to the advantage of both countries, and so forth. There was no overt we-deserve-this-sale kind of language. There was no disparagement of third countries in that letter.

Anyway, the letter went and sat in the National Security Council and didn't move. I came back for a brief leave at Christmas 1991, and I literally had to go camp in the NSC and, in effect, almost blackmail the White House (since it was widely known in the aerospace industry and in



the other industry that I was working with that this letter was sitting there) by asking what the president planned to say during his campaign about why he didn't send the letter. Was it because the ink had run out in his pen? Or because he didn't consider it appropriate for the president to promote American exports and jobs? Or beneath his dignity in some way? What was the reason?

Anyway, after raising these unseemly questions, it took about ten minutes to get a signature on that letter. And I think it did advance the sales, which took place some years later, actually, under the Clinton administration.

*Q: Was this, do you feel, because, just within the bureaucracy, particularly the National Security Council, which was not primed to promote trade particularly, this did seem almost not their sort of thing or something?*

FREEMAN: I think that was probably it. There is an odd, in my view, sentiment among some Foreign Service officers and among securocrats (that is, bureaucrats who specialize in national security) toward the promotion of trade and relationships with business. Somehow it's considered unseemly for them to make representations on behalf of business. In fact, I found it impossible, until Jim Baker's very last visit, to persuade him to raise this issue, because he didn't feel it was the job of the secretary of state to do this sort of thing.

On the other hand, American competitors, the British and French, frequently had the prime minister, the minister of defense, the minister of foreign affairs out in Saudi Arabia essentially for the sole purpose of supporting commercial offers with political inducements.

I don't think that the United States should or needs to entangle political relationships in commercial relationships. But I do think it's appropriate for senior officials of the United States, the ambassadors and the secretaries of departments, to make it clear that they support American jobs and exports.

But there is an odd attitude, and I think that was probably all that was behind this. I'm sure, once the president became aware of the matter from his staff, he had no difficulty signing the letter. So it's a question of a sort of subculture in the national security and foreign affairs bureaucracy that is, I think, quite dysfunctional and not entirely erased.

*Q: What about relations with The Yemen? They had taken the most pro-Iraqi stand, I think, other than Jordan. Was there any attempt to reconcile differences with the Saudis, or wasn't The Yemen of importance enough for us to try to get the two parties back on terms?*

FREEMAN: There wasn't much effort by the United States to broker an improvement of relations between Yemen and Saudi Arabia.

On the other hand, the Yemenis, during that period, were in the process of achieving the reunification of South Yemen, which had been the British colony of Aden, a Soviet-leaning Communist state, and North Yemen, which was traditionally a conservative Arab-oriented state, pro-Egyptian during the Nasser period, in part, and the subject of quite a civil war on its orientation, and later quite dependent on the Saudis, with a good relationship with the United

States. The Yemenis, I think, were resentful, feeling nationalistic, and not really able, during that period, to muster much of an effort to improve relations with the Saudis.

On the other hand, I had very good relations with the Yemeni ambassador, and was very interested in the issue of Yemen, and tried in my own way, really without much instruction, to do what I could to encourage both sides to pursue reconciliation. I tried to keep informed on the Yemen matter by speaking frequently with Prince Sultan, the minister of defense and aviation, who had the Yemen portfolio, within the ranks of the senior royals. So Yemen took a good amount of my time, to the extent I wasn't doing business promotion, but it wasn't a burning issue for Washington at all.

*Q: Sudan, did that play any role?*

FREEMAN: Sudan was the bête noire of Saudi Arabia.

Bureaucratically, within the State Department, it is within the African Bureau, which doesn't have quite the burning passion about Middle Eastern matters that the Near East and South Asia people had. So there were not many instructions about Sudan, again, but I made a point of talking with Islamic bankers who were involved there, some members of the royal family included, and frequently saw members of the Sudanese opposition, who came into Saudi Arabia seeking assistance from the Saudis, for discussions, and tried to generate a bit more interest in Washington than otherwise.

This was a period when the Sudanese government was clearly moving, under the influence of Hassan Turabi, toward a more radical stance of support of international Islamic terrorism and political movements. It was a period when Algeria was undergoing its electoral process in which the Islamic Front, FIS, as it was called, won the elections and then had the elections negated in a coup d'état.

So there was great concern about the spread of radicalism and political Islam generally in the Arab world, and much discussion, essentially of an information-exchange nature, with Prince Turki al-Faysal, who is the head of the Saudi foreign intelligence service, with Saud al-Faysal, his brother, who is the foreign minister, with the crown prince, who has an interest in this, and with others in the Saudi establishment, but not a great deal of interest from Washington at that time. I think the interest really gelled later, in response to a number of Sudanese operations against Egypt.

So Sudan was an issue for the Saudis, but less so at that time for the United States.

*Q: You left Saudi Arabia when?*

FREEMAN: I left Saudi Arabia in mid-August 1992, right on the heels of discovering that my marriage had collapsed. I had my first inkling and information about that an hour before Secretary Baker arrived in Jeddah, which was not a happy experience. And I was unable to leave Saudi Arabia to do anything about it, because there was another one of the periodic confrontations with Iraq in which we might have ended up bombing Iraq. We didn't, as the case turned out.

**KENNETH A. STAMMERMAN**  
**Consul General**  
**Dhahran (1989-1992)**

*Kenneth A. Stammerman was born in Kentucky in 1943. He graduated from Bellermine College in 1965 and entered the Foreign Service in 1966. He has served in post in Israel, the Philippines, France, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Mr. Stammerman was interviewed in 2000 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.*

*Q: Today is the 4<sup>th</sup> of December, 2000. Ken, Dhahran. How did you get the job and would you talk a little... how did you get the job.*

STAMMERMAN: When our time to leave Kuwait came around, we wanted to stay overseas. We did not care to go back to Washington ever again for that matter, and looked for a job in the Gulf. We saw that the consul general job in Dhahran was open. I knew the position. Dhahran was the place the backup post, as it were, for Kuwait. We would get the pouch. Material would come into Dhahran, so some of us would make the pouch run, every two weeks from Kuwait to Dhahran. It was always a bit of an adventure since you went from Kuwaiti to Saudi Arabia. And it was funny when we would re-enter Kuwait from those trips, the Kuwaitis would search us thoroughly. This always caused a problem, being diplomats and all, and we had a big thing about the pouch, of course, they could not search the pouch. All the Kuwaitis were worried about was booze, because they knew the Saudis allowed liquor for diplomats. Sort of an open secret. And the Kuwaitis did not. Kuwait was the driest post in the Foreign Service in those days. They would not allow liquor imports. They would look at our stuff, not take it apart, but just look, so that was always an adventure. And contrasting the living styles of the Saudis and Kuwaitis, for those living in Kuwait it was always an adventure because Kuwaiti women could drive and don't wear an abaya, the cover-all cloak.

*Q: You were saying the Kuwaitis didn't allow liquor... it's the reverse, wasn't it?*

STAMMERMAN: No, the Kuwaitis were the driest post in the Foreign Service. The Kuwaitis, they are not Wahhabis, they are not that branch of Islam, but the government at that time, the parliament had been dissolved or suspended, and the area is very devout Muslim, and the government felt that Islam indeed forbade the consumption of liquor. So they banned it, completely. Granted, they respected people's privacy, so if you made your own, they would never raid anyone's home. Of course there was some smuggling done, but by and large Kuwait was dry. They would do things like when businessmen would move in, the Kuwaiti customs would go through their shipments, down to fingernail polish, to see that they were not smuggling alcohol. So the Kuwaitis were concerned about alcohol. They didn't care about anything else.

So they would look in our cars and we would have to open the trunks. They wouldn't actually take our stuff apart, but they would look. I remember we had one admin officer who really objected to this. They said, "Open your trunk," and he said, "No." Well they said. Fine, well we won't search your trunk but you aren't entering Kuwait. So you can go back to Dhahran or you can open the trunk." That's just the way it was. The Kuwaitis were very strict on that. Saudi Arabia, by contrast, there was an unofficial arrangement by which diplomats were able to obtain alcohol. It was sort of well known. So that when we had diplomatic receptions in Saudi Arabia there were always these codes. You would have a wet bar and a dry bar. The wet bar was in alcohol, and the house man, or whoever was pouring, people would ask for white or brown or red, that is there were certain codes... gin, or scotch or bourbon, there were all these codes that nobody said but everybody knew what it was. There was all this hypocrisy, but it was I always called an open sort of constructive hypocrisy. Everybody knew what was going on. And so they could tell the Wahhabis, all these guys forbid liquor, and they would look the other way. It made things go pretty smoothly.

*Q: Did you ask NEA to send you there, was there any problem?*

STAMMERMAN: Going back to how did I get the job... I applied for it. When I'd gotten the Kuwait job, I was the only person who applied. When I applied to be the Dhahran consul general, and it's a CG job after all, as I recall there were two applicants. The requirement, they wanted someone with an economic background because the reason we are in Dhahran is ARAMCO. They wanted someone who had energy reporting background. Well, I had that, I did in Kuwait, doing energy reporting. Embassy Riyadh was well aware of my kind of reporting. So, essentially, it amounted to getting the ambassador's agreement in Riyadh more than NEA personnel. In previous jobs, I always got my jobs by going to NEA personnel. In this case, Dhahran is a subsidiary post to Riyadh, it amounted to getting an okay from the DCM and ambassador. Now, it happened that they were between ambassadors in Riyadh, so it amounted to getting the DCM, David Dunford, to agree. David later became ambassador in Oman. Anyway, David agreed, and then NEA saw that, hey, they had somebody at grade applying for it who had a 2-2 in Arabic, I guess I had a 2-1+ in Arabic, who knew some economics and had been there. Because before then, Dhahran had usually been a retirement post. It's a quiet place, normally. So it had been often, I won't say always, but often a retirement post. Quiet little place. You had your consular cases among the ARAMCO Americans. You would write, the reporting was on the tribes in the Eastern Province, and Shia problem of the Eastern Province, which were long-standing issues. So for a retiring Arabist it was a nice place. This time, though, they wanted somebody who could do the economics, and I was then the only qualified candidate. Once Riyadh said okay, it was okay.

*Q: You served in Dhahran from 1989 to when?*

STAMMERMAN: 1989 to 1992. Three years. Summer of 1989 to summer of 1992, which meant I saw the military come and I saw the military go.

*Q: When you arrived in Dhahran, what was the situation?*

STAMMERMAN: In what sense?

*Q: Political, economic... was there anything happening?*

STAMMERMAN: Well things were fairly quiet because the Iran-Iraq war had finished by then, pretty much. The Saudis were nervous about Iran, but there was no war going on in the north. There were economic problems because the price of oil had fallen, and the Saudis weren't able to pay their bills. The princes were being told to cut back on their lifestyle. But one of the good things about Dhahran was that very few of the Saudi princes lived there. I think the most we ever had five princes in residence in the Dhahran area. Three of them were very busy. One was the son of the King, Mohammad Mohammed bin Fahd, was the governor of the province. He had taken over after the previous governor had lots of Shia trouble, had not been able to keep the Shia problem in check, so they brought in the king's son. Kept everything in check, very strongly. Then there was another prince, Turki bin Nasser, who ran the Dhahran airbase. King Abdulaziz airbase in Dhahran... massive airbase. He was a jet pilot, general in the Saudi Air Force, and he pretty much 'owned' the airbase, so within the airbase his word was law. There was another prince, Prince Mishari bin Saud, who ran the Saudi National Guard in the Province. And he was a power unto himself. Then there were a couple of other princes who were there, one was the deputy governor. One was the former astronaut. There was another prince occasionally there, so at most I think we had five or six. And that helped because it meant, Dhahran was the creature of ARAMCO and pretty much what you focused on in our reporting and our relationships was the Saudis at ARAMCO.

We talked to the government agencies and all because we had some business with them, but generally, the idea was we were promoting American business. We dealt with ARAMCO, worked on getting more of an American market share in ARAMCO purchases. We'd talk to the Saudis about their production levels. It was a fairly small post. When I got there, I was surprised... I was the only person, the staff was fairly small, but I was the only person there, save one, who had ever served in an Arab post. Most of the people there, it seemed to me, were there because it was a quiet place and you got a salary supplement because of the heat, and the fact that it was very remote. We had a military liaison group who trained Saudis and helped maintain the Saudi weapons and secure the base. McDonald Douglas had a big contingent, Bechtel had a big contingent of Americans, and ARAMCO had roughly 13, 14,000 American citizens. In those days, I guess it still is, ARAMCO was one of the wonders of the world. I don't know if you've ever seen it... For those who haven't seen ARAMCO...

*Q: I served 2½ years in Dhahran, but this is the fifties, but even then it was...*

STAMMERMAN: So you know. ARAMCO was a wonder. ARAMCO is this American city, town, American suburb out in the middle of the Saudi desert. It is, once you pass inside those gates, you are, for all intents and purposes, in America. Women drive, whereas in Saudi Arabia women are not allowed to drive. There are swimming pools where men and women swim in the same pool, which is unheard of in Saudi Arabia. There are arrangements so that Christian religious services were held, but very quietly, but people know what's happening. It was also interesting as a side light, there were often requests from the outside Christian community that the American consulate host religious services, which we refused to do since they were in general available at ARAMCO for the American population who knew who to ask, and would

likely attract third country nationals. Again everything works in the Eastern Province in a very constructive way, the hypocrisy is very constructive. So religious services go on if you don't make an issue of it and if you don't make it too public. ARAMCO was very much an American place.

*Q: I've heard of the Saudis taking over ARAMCO, at the top. But at the time you were there, how much were operations and all in American hands?*

STAMMERMAN: That was changing during the years I was there. Because when I was there, ARAMCO became Saudi-ized. Saudi-ized in the sense that all of the top officers of the corporation, except one, were Saudis. Not only the Saudi-ization, but the Sunni-ization. ARAMCO had been a nondiscriminatory hiring place. That is, the ARAMCO Americans would hire who ever was best for the job, and promote who ever was best for the job. Once the Saudis took over, and they started taking over in the early '80s, by the time I got there everyone but the legal advisor was Saudi. The Shia could no longer get promoted, and few were hired if there were Sunni candidates. That said, the senior people at ARAMCO culturally were, it seemed to me, were as American as they were Saudis. Some of them had come in out of the desert when they were 12 years old, entered ARAMCO, learned to speak excellent English, went to school in America, got their graduate degrees in America, went back and worked their way up by merit through the system. So that the top echelon at ARAMCO, these people could, I'm told, they'd be welcome at any major oil company at the same job, as the executive vice president for exploration or as president or whatever. The Saudis by then, they had Americans there, but they were slowly being eased out in every job. No new Americans were being hired, a reduction in American staff more by attrition than by firing. So you'd promote a Saudi, but the American would still work beside him until he really learned the job, and when the American left, they would not be replaced. But the Saudis had talent at the top, and they could bring in anybody... By the way, they kept the arrangement, and this was arrangement, they kept their partnership arrangement with the former partners of ARAMCO, companies like Texaco or Exxon, or who ever, Mobile.

Whenever the Saudis needed a particular expertise that they didn't have, they could call on the former partners who would send people over immediately. They were being run very well.

*Q: How did you deal with them? Because when I was there, although they were making all sorts of arrangements with the Saudis, it was an American staff at the top and we had very close relations, so if you want to get statistics or how things are going, you could go right to them. How did you find it when you were there?*

STAMMERMAN: There were two channels. ARAMCO still maintained, by then it was called Saudi ARAMCO, they maintained a government relations office. This was a kind of funny office in a way because the government that their relations were with to begin with was the Saudi government. It being Saudi ARAMCO you kind of wondered what happened, because they kept these guys as a liaison to the government which owned the company. What also became very interesting, as I found out over the two years that I was there, was that the Saudis who had grown up in ARAMCO, and they did, they joined as children, culturally were as American as they were Saudi. Many of them. I won't say that of all of them, so that talking to them, speaking perfect American English, to them I would say things about the Saudis that they themselves wouldn't

know, culturally. They were uncomfortable between two worlds it seemed to me. There was also a rule that whenever they officially met the foreigners, which included the American consul general, or especially any visitors, they had to wear Saudi dress. Well, these people were uncomfortable in thobes and khaffiyas, because they hardly ever wore Arab clothes, many of them.

*Q: Thobe being...*

STAMMERMAN: Being the Saudi robes, and the khaffiya or gutra, the head covering. They hardly ever wore them except when they were on duty for visiting foreigners, or with other Arabs. Normally, when you saw them just working around ARAMCO, they dressed as Americans. In work clothes. They had suits and ties, but they hardly could wear those in ARAMCO because in ARAMCO everybody wears work clothes all the time, up to the president. And it's interesting, these two tracks we had then, we had the liaison office then would deal with us. We'd ask for certain statistics, or publicly available material, or if we had a visitor coming. A congressman is coming through, or someone from the State Department who needed a tour, maybe a flight over the oil fields, we would officially go through the government liaison office which would set these meetings up, of course with ARAMCO. The rest of the Saudi government and ARAMCO, as far as I know, didn't talk to each other. Because ARAMCO dealt with the oil minister and the king. The government inside ARAMCO was a law unto itself, pretty much. But also within ARAMCO, I could also to the Saudi executives at the vice president level and above. There was no restriction. If I wanted to call the senior vice president for exploration, say, I'd call him and say I'm coming over to the building today, could we drop by. I'd like to talk about some fields you're working on. So we didn't have much of an access problem. They are Americans, culturally, these guys were very easy to work with. They had no problem with our staff meeting people. You might be interested, we had a female FSO who was assigned as our petroleum officer. We worked an arrangement with ARAMCO since she didn't have that much training in petroleum work, she had economics, but not been out in the field much. She went out on an exploration trip with a Saudi ARAMCO team. Took her backpack, sleeping bag, and they went off for a few days camping in the desert and watched these big machines pound the earth and figured out how much oil was there. And this was no problem. The Saudis knew about it.

*Q: What about with the governor and the Americans coming... I think of people get tossed in jail because of automobile accidents, or maybe the home brew liquor blew up, or other things such as an American woman marries a Saudi man and then there's a child dispute, in other words, consular cases. How did that work for you?*

STAMMERMAN: Consular cases of course were the problem. A lot of our collective time was spent on those cases. You mentioned liquor problems. That was not that big a problem when I was there actually. Inside ARAMCO the Saudi government pretty much did not care. If you went to a meal inside an ARAMCO American's home, with Saudis present, they would serve homemade home brew of some sort.

*Q: Sadiki juice.*

STAMMERMAN: Sadiki (homebrew). They'd serve sadiki. And nobody cared. The Saudi

government didn't care as long as it stayed inside those walls. Out on the town, I was really surprised, early in my stay, when I was invited to a dinner by one of the senior businessmen, and his guest list included one of the senior police officials in the area, one of the senior government officials, and a couple other businessmen. They knew I'd been in Kuwait so we talked about Iran-Iraq, Kuwait, and business in general. At the end of the meal the host got out a bottle of Scotch and set it in the middle of the table. I was the only one there who wasn't drinking. I will drink at home, but if I was driving myself home that evening, I don't care to drink at all if driving. And these guys would just merrily pour themselves a few shots of Scotch. This open hypocrisy I understood. But we did have Americans in jail over liquor, and these were people who had done things like driven up to the main Shia village up in the Qatif oasis, opened the trunk of their car and were selling sadiki out of the back of their car. This is not smart because you will be arrested. Generally the Shia don't care for that stuff in public. The Saudis had a very heavy police and military presence in Shia land so they were noticed. These were two guys and they got thrown in jail, five-year sentence. The Saudi system, they were not mistreated, but they were treated like other prisoners. Meaning no air conditioning. That's tough. They complained about it, though they were being treated like everyone else. Adequate water, and so on, but they were just uncomfortable. So the way this worked, every year when the eids, or religious festivals, came around, very Biblical process, we would ask the governor for a pardon. On the occasion of the holiday, it was the custom of the governor to release prisoners. And we would write a note saying, knowing of your generosity and so on that we ask for the release of the prisoners John Jones and Joe Smith or whoever. And sometimes we would get people released and sometimes not. But, one thing the Saudis did, and we'll get to this later, as the American troops started deploying, they released every American prisoner from their jails. They did not want the American press to start finding American people in the clink. Which was smart on their side. Not that we had that many. At most at any given time we had about 6 or 8 people in jail. It was always on account of liquor.

*Q: When they were released I take it that then they left the country. In other words, they were not hanging around afterwards.*

STAMMERMAN: They were released on condition that they'd get a one-way ticket out of the country, never, ever to come back. We'd tell some of these ARAMCO guys, businessmen, we'd tell them you've got a good deal here, good salaries, don't play games with liquor, it's stupid. You'd get a one-way ticket out of here forever. At the very least you are gone forever, it's over with, and you lose access to this money machine out here. But that was not a major problem. Those were our major jail problems. The more pressing problems, the sadder problems were the children of the families who broke up in America and the father took the children to Saudi Arabia, or, more often, the cases where an American woman would marry a Saudi man and they'd move to Saudi Arabia and immediately go under the Saudi system. They'd have to, impossible to do otherwise, unless they're ARAMCO, where they'd end up in some little village and she's married to this Saudi who not this dashing guy who drove a big car out in California. The Saudi young businessman lives in this village and commutes to work, and she's left there, naturally with kids, and a mother-in-law she can't talk to and is very miserable. Eventually, the marriage breaks up. The rule in Saudi Arabia was that the woman would get custody of the children until the children were of age, which generally meant around 11 or 12, and the father would pay child support. But they could not leave the country, because the judges knew that if



she left the country with the kids, they'd never, ever see them again. Of course, in Saudi Arabia the judges are all religious, the concern was that the children would not be raised as Muslims if they were taken out of Saudi Arabia. These became very sad cases. We would put pressure, and the governor's office would cooperate, in putting pressure on the Saudi husband first to make sure that the family was well taken care of, and second, if the mother wanted to leave Saudi Arabia and come back that the ex-husband would agree to sponsor her on a visa. And, as a general request, we would really like the mother to be able to leave with the kids. Of course, they always said no to that last part. Almost always, without the father's permission. If the father said it was okay, that was the end of it, but if the father wanted the children to stay in Saudi Arabia it was practically impossible for them to all get visas to leave. The concern with the Saudi authorities was that the Muslim religious courts would feel offended, and the Saudi regime was legitimate only because it was back by the Wahhabi religious authorities. And we all sort of knew that, so they would not step on the court's prerogatives, but they could pressure the husband. They could pressure him to allow the woman to come and go, to sponsor her own visa, pressure him to make sure the kids were well taken care of. And he did. Generally. There were some cases that just degenerated into really bad situations. The husband was violent, and then it just... those were difficult.

*Q: Well did you have any of these cases that every once in a while get their way into movies or books or something while you were there, or congressional pressure, a lot of American attention in the media and all?*

STAMMERMAN: We did have one, that was during the war. Not before the war. Before the war we had, and we used congressional letters, but these were usually long-running cases. One of my junior officers nearly resigned. She started crying at one point. We did succeed on one long-running case where, which involved, it was trouble, it was violence in the family, the man was not providing properly. There were all kinds of problems. The lady, let's say she didn't have the most ingratiating personality, but that being neither here nor there... The ex-husband finally said, "I've had it, I'm giving them all visas and they can go." So she left with the two kids. And six months later, she came back, in hopes of a reconciliation. At that point, my vice consul started crying, after years of patient work by our various vice consuls and consuls and consul generals in getting this person out of the country, she returned. And within a month, she was a consular case again.

*Q: Oh, boy.*

STAMMERMAN: What can I say?

*Q: Yes, I know. This is what I was saying, particularly when there is abuse, and going all out to get the American back to the States and all, a significant number of times they come back. Not if there's just plain disagreement, they get on with their life. But when you get that abuse, a dependency builds up.*

STAMMERMAN: Yes.

*Q: I mean, it's the damndest thing.*

STAMMERMAN: It was the strangest thing. When we get onto the Department though there were a couple of other things...

*Q: We'll come to that, but first, sort of doing a tour of the horizon. When you arrived there what was your impression of the Shia community, that was in Qatif..*

STAMMERMAN: Qatif, and there was another oasis, but Qatif was the center. I had visited there. It was very interesting. Over the three years that I was there I would visit Qatif with my driver, a Yemeni, and we'd pass through the Saudi roadblock. I would go in there, other than my driver, by myself. Occasionally, with another American officer. Occasionally, we'd actually have some social gatherings where we'd bring several officers, including females, to have a dinner, hosted by some Shia notables, just for a cultural orientation just so they could see what village life was like. But in general, I would go down there by myself making arrangements through an intermediary. I'd call an ARAMCO employee and say I plan on going down there and meeting so and so. And I would go down there and we'd eat in a majlis, one of the Saudi family rooms and a Shia notable or two would come by and we'd talk. We'd talk about employment, about young people's attitudes, about how the Saudi authorities were treating them in terms of employment, was there any active repression going on? Stuff like that. Much of which eventually found its way into the State Department human rights report on Saudi Arabia, which is always critical of the Saudis being repressive.

*Q: In what form were you seeing the repression?*

STAMMERMAN: No, in fact there was not open repression. It was job discrimination or religious discrimination. It was hard to get permits for mosques, or more often though it was jobs. ARAMCO had been a source of jobs there since 1940 something, and as ARAMCO is Saudi-ized, the situation is simply that if you are Shia, you were not welcome. That was the hardest part. Then was petty harassment, road blocks, government contracts would not go to Shia companies and so on. Roads were not repaired. That sort of thing. I would often call upon the governor of the Qatif sub-province. Depends when I went there. If I went there in the daytime, I would usually call on the governor. It was assumed that provincial governors like Mohammed bin Fahd held power, not the district governor. I would call on them. It was sort of irrelevant in any way, he was a nice little man. We'd come by, sort of pro forma, give him a courtesy call, and then do whatever else I was going to do that day.

*Q: How about the business community there?*

STAMMERMAN: The American?

*Q: And the Saudi... and the American... was it an international business community there?*

STAMMERMAN: International business, yes... many of them were Americans, many of them were British. Because the airplane deal of the century, so-called, was the Saudi purchase of the British Tornado jets. When we refused to sell them F-16s, on the grounds that they might be dangerous to Israel. Even the Israelis thought that was stupid, many of them did. The Saudis

were not going use F-16s against Israel. So there were a lot of British there, because not only do you sell a lot of British jets, but you sell a lot of other British things there. And there were a large number of British people working there on the airplanes, just like McDonald Douglas worked on the F-16s. You had British people working on the Tornado set-asides. A large group of foreign businessmen were American, and they would do quite well. I would go to their quarterly meetings. There was a long-running argument when I was there, which the Americans were still winning, on whether you could have a mixed gathering at hotels. It always had to be at hotels, and the American businessmen would bring their spouses. Saudi custom does not permit that. At least modern Saudi custom cannot have men and women together at a social function in a public place. So, it was a long-running problem. When I was there you could still do it. I've been told since then that you no longer can. It's men only, which is unfortunate. So, I'd speak there once a year or so. Generally, though, they had outside speakers, including the ambassador. We had some visitors like a congressmen who would talk. They were doing very well in terms of money. Contracts were still flowing. Some problems. Saudis, again, were slow in paying their bills, because the oil prices were low.

*Q: The community of workers from the Philippines, Ceylon, Korea, did they play any role in the area?*

STAMMERMAN: Talking about the third country nationals, not really. They were necessary, so for example, ARAMCO's nursing staff was also Filipino, and a lot of the doctors were third country nationals. They worked cheaper than Americans, so a lot of doctors in the area, especially ARAMCO third country nationals. Filipinos made up a large number of the unskilled workforce. Saudis did not do unskilled labor. Usually. They simply didn't. So they brought in Pakistani, Filipinos. The drivers were Yemeni, everybody had Yemeni and Pakistani drivers. A lot of the household help around was Yemeni. It was like the Indians in Kuwait, they did a lot of the work, but had no role in other things, culturally or politically. Every once in a while, the police would arrest a couple dozen Filipinos for holding religious services. Mutawwa would crack down. It was interesting the role of Mutawwa, active in the province but not as active in Riyadh and Judah.

*Q: These are who?*

STAMMERMAN: Okay, the Mutawwa are the religious police. In the country, they were a power unto themselves. In Saudi Arabia in general. The Saud family and the government itself are reluctant to interfere with their activities, because the Mutawwa ultimately answered to the religious authorities, the Wahhabis and to the ulema authorities. So, the al-Saud family is reluctant to get involved. However because of the history of the Eastern province which, as I say, is the product of ARAMCO that's what they say now, culturally even among the Shia, they do not respect, the Shia don't look like Mutawwa anyway because they are all Sunni, but even among those who regulate external observances. the Eastern province didn't allow Mutawwa as free a range as they had in Riyadh or elsewhere.

This of course led to a lot of mixed signals for people who traveled to Dhahran and to Riyadh. Even among the Americans, our advice, backed up by the government, was American do not wear an abaya they do not wear the coverall, they dress modestly, you know, modestly, wrist

length or ankle length clothing, but that's all that's necessary. My wife never wore a veil or an abaya or anything like that. She wasn't expected to. So the Mutawwa were sort of reined in. There were occasional abuses of Americans, but usually it was the Americans whom the Mutawwa mistook for Saudis or other Arabs.

In Dhahran, as in the rest of Saudi Arabia, you have prayer calls. The times are posted in shops, there's no business then du du du dum, and all the stores close. Actually they close ahead of that, they close and everybody should go to a mosque or go pray. In fact, the process is, if you had been shopping, you'd have to leave and they'd shut the door, as they usually do, and you have to wait until they reopen. There would be occasions when people would do stupid things like one lady got in trouble because she waited outside a mosque for the stores to reopen. Of course, when the Mutawwa saw her, and thought she was a Saudi lady, they arrested her. We complained. They didn't keep her, they just arrested her and called for her husband to come get her. So we protested that to the governor. Where in Riyadh that would be commonplace. But it was unusual in Dhahran.

*Q: What about the Saudi military? This was before the war. What was our impression of the Saudi military?*

STAMMERMAN: We had a military liaison group with us who worked as trainers, essentially. Who actually trained the Saudi? You have the Saudi military, the Saudi Army, the Saudi Air Force which is at Dhahran airbase. There were several other groups. There's a coast guard, sort of a frontier force, equivalent, and then there's the national guard. The feeling there, essentially was that the air force was quite good, for their region, for their threat. During the Iran-Iraq war, when the Iranians had tested the Saudi perimeter, the Saudis had sent jets up and pushed them away. They intercepted them properly and so the feeling was that the Saudis could defend their air space against any threat. They would be capable against anything other than out and out invasion by Iran or Iraq, when we'd be thinking about American backup. But short of that, just some border clashes or a matter of defending the air space, the Saudis could do it.

The national guard was made up only of Bedouin, levis from the Bedouin tribes, from the tribes who were historically loyal to the Al-Saud. They are tough and very lightly armed. Their function is to defend the regime. That's their defined function. They are also in charge of defending the country from internal insurrection, meaning the Shia. The national guard was very strong in the Eastern province. The military was there to defend the borders and we sort of had to watch over their presence out there at the causeway between Dhahran and Bahrain. And up near the Kuwait border. But they were not a major force, we never saw many of them. But we saw the national guard often, and the impression was that they were tough fighters, not terribly well armed, and not well educated in modern warfare.

*Q: How about the neighborhood when you arrived there... the Gulf States, Iran, Iraq, Bahrain. How did you view the neighborhood when you got there?*

STAMMERMAN: The concern at the time was Iran. It was a big problem. Iraq much less so. The feeling was that the Iraqis were indebted in more ways than one to the Kuwaitis and Saudis. Saddam Hussein was a problem, but he had to borrow more money from the Saudis and the

Kuwaitis, so he wasn't particularly a threat, was the general feeling. But Iran continued to be partly because they saw themselves as protectors of the Shia, and there were OPEC problems. The Saudis were producing a lot of oil, and the Iranians, and the Iraqis, but particularly the Iranians wanted the Saudis to produce less to keep the price up. The Saudis couldn't produce any less because they were already down to five millions barrels a day. They didn't want to be the swing producer. So there was concern about an Iranian threat, not an immediate threat, but what a lot of us worried about was Bahrain, actually. Bahrain has a government which is Sunni, though the Shia are the majority of the population. They don't do census very well, but the ruling Sunnis are a minority. But should there be a Shia rebellion or takeover in Bahrain, the Saudis would intervene, almost certainly. They could likely bring in the Iranians. So you could have a Saudi – Iranian fight break out over Bahrain. There might be other reasons, but that was one of the immediate reasons. So the concern was Iran, we were worried about Iran, we watched Iran, people were watching Iran very closely. But when I got there, it didn't seem to be too hot of a problem.

*Q: Was there any American military presence in there?*

STAMMERMAN: Yes there was. We had trainers. It's called a liaison group. They lived on the Saudi air force air base. In fact, a lot of our consular people would drive over there for lunch, they had the equivalent of an Officers club. And they had a PX, which was convenient. So we would visit them occasionally. We had joint outings sometimes. I once organized an outing with the governor of Khafji, who invited of us up, to show the Americans the desert. So I worked with the military commander and we all brought up families up to Khafji which is on the Kuwait/Saudi border. He had a camp 20 miles out in the middle of the desert, which we would all go out to and spent several days, the kids having a great time riding camels. It was sort of a cultural thing. A lot of these Americans never really got off that air base and never saw Saudi Arabia at all. We got along reasonably well. The air base is where my wife and I first met General Schwarzkopf. When he took over Central Command (CENTCOM), he toured the region and stopped at this liaison group. He was checking out the region. Central Command had been sort of a major player when we were escorting the Kuwaiti ships during the Iran-Iraq war, but CENTCOM thereafter got to be a very quiet command, 1989, early 1990. Our relationship with CENTCOM was reasonably good. I met the American General in charge at the liaison group early on, it was usually run by one-star or two-star air force man. I went to see him and we worked out arrangements. Our chain of command went to Riyadh separately because they are the liaison group working with the Saudi military. There is no clear line of authority between State Department and Defense in a situation like that. We simply said, if we have any problems any issues, we would try to solve them on a local level, rather than bouncing them up to Riyadh to have the country team try to fight it out. And that generally worked. I would not assert anything and he would not. We would always just try to solve any issues informally. And we didn't have that many issues. We dealt with them on matters like PX and such.

*Q: Were you in touch with your former colleagues up in Kuwait?*

STAMMERMAN: Often. Very informal stuff. But also, they would send people down on that pouch run every two or three weeks, so I could keep up with who was there and the gossip and what was happening. Another thing was going on. It turns out that the Saudi business community

in Dhahran, who I got to know reasonably well, there were some former Kuwaitis who were there and had married into Saudi families. And I would see them fairly often. I would keep up with what was happening inside Kuwait itself.

*Q: Did you find, when you were in Saudi Arabia, that there was sort of a natural aversion of Saudis towards Kuwaitis?*

STAMMERMAN: Ah, good question. The Saudis and Kuwaitis don't particularly care for each other. The Kuwaitis think of themselves as merchants and they have a merchant culture. They left their Bedouin roots long ago. They claim to still have some Bedouin connection; they don't. They are merchants. They send their children to study in the United States, they are bankers, they are comfortable with Western style banking. They generally consider the Saudis to be Bedouin who happened to have struck oil and don't know how to handle the money, besides which they are, in Kuwaiti eyes, sort of backward and are religious fanatics in many ways. The Saudis had a real problem with Kuwait. First of all the Kuwaitis have elections. That's a real problem. The people who are close to the Al-Saud are very disturbed about the Kuwaitis. The Emir is not strong. That's a rule. He's equal with the major Kuwaiti families. This is not good from the Saudi point of view. But in merchants, there's less of a problem because a lot of merchant families run across the border. There's much stronger kinship ties among the Sunnis, along the Gulf, rather than the Gulf into the interior. So I would meet any number of people in Dhahran who might have the same family name as someone in Kuwait, who might be distant cousins. The Kuwaiti businessmen who visit in Dhahran would never think of going to Riyadh. So, the business communities got along well, but the official communities did not get along well at all.

*Q: While you were there, when was there any growing disquiet, I mean, how did things develop there with Iraq?*

STAMMERMAN: There was nothing... it just happened all of a sudden. The main problem as many of us, as I saw it, that led to the invasion was oil. OPEC. The Kuwaitis were cheating, so called cheating. They were producing over quota. Everybody knew it. So the effect of this was, first of all, the Kuwaitis got a bigger market share than they had pledged to take within OPEC; second, their overproduction kept the price of oil down. By keeping the price of oil down meant that Iraq then could not afford its rebuilding, and Saddam's socialist schemes through its own income but had to keep borrowing from the Kuwaitis and the Saudis, who always lent with strings attached. So, in July, the Iraqis demanded that the Kuwaitis quit overproducing. You know the Kuwaitis never admitted that they were overproducing.

And the Iraqis rattled a few sabers so the Saudis called a conference in Jeddah. They would mediate between the Iraqis and the Kuwaitis. And they held the conference. I'm told what happened was that the Saudis said, presented the issues and said we really should work this out. The Iraqis, by the way, had pressured Kuwait on a number of fronts, not only the money but also there were a couple islands strategically placed. And the Kuwaitis felt backed into a corner, so they apparently, I'm told, told the Iraqis, you owe us \$35 million and we think you better start making payments on that. At that point, the Iraqis stormed out. They were not going to be talked to by the Kuwaitis like that. Saddam lost his temper and brought up this issue of the border, whether the Kuwaitis were really drilling into the Iraqi oil fields from right across the border,

who knows. In the end it wasn't that important because there's enough oil to go around. Then the Iraqis started rattling sabers a little more loudly. And most of the Saudis thought, this has happened before, the Kuwaitis would find a way of buying the Iraqis off, for that's what the Kuwaitis always did, and everything would be solved peacefully. There were no alerts, no Saudi businessmen, military, anybody, ever said a word to me that they were worried about Iraq. Just here we go again, the Kuwaitis would get pushed around and they'll probably have to pay off, this will cost them a few billion dollars, but they can afford it. And then, you know, the invasion happened. Shocked everybody, shocked. In fact the Saudis were in denial, they would not even admit that it happened.

*Q: Had there been any talk in Saudi circles prior to this about Saddam Hussein, about his personality and concerns about him?*

STAMMERMAN: I didn't hear any. The Saudis were very careful not to talk about Iraqis. They'd talk about Kuwaitis because they are cousins, and they'd talk about Bahrainis, but they would be reluctant even to talk about Iraq, other to say that they made them nervous, they generally would not talk about Saddam. Generally not.

*Q: By this time you had a new ambassador. Can you talk about that?*

STAMMERMAN: Yes, we had a new ambassador who arrived... When I arrived, David Dunford had been chargé for most of his time there. We had a couple of ambassadors who came and went. One went very quickly. I never did understand that one.

*Q: Hume Horan?*

STAMMERMAN: Hume Horan

*Q: Yes, I'm interviewing him next week.*

STAMMERMAN: Good. I never heard. One heard only rumors, so fine, you don't talk about what really happened. So, David Dunford had been DCM and chargé a good part of his tenure. Chas Freeman, who was a new ambassador, had been working on UN matters, came out not an Arabist. The Saudis in fact, I heard this I was in Dhahran, but I'd heard this from embassy people in Riyadh, that the Saudis were really did not want another Arabist. They were concerned about people who really had training and insight into their culture. That bothered them. They preferred a political appointee in the first place, feeling that this gave them a tie in the White House.

*Q: Morocco felt the same way.*

STAMMERMAN: Okay. They had the feeling that a political appointee was better because he would be closer to the President, just as their ambassador was there because the king respected him. Not because the foreign ministry had anything to do with it, so they felt both things. They wanted the political appointee because of the White House, and second that they did not want an Arabist, they'd take a professional as long as he was not an Arabist. So Chas Freeman had just worked out the Namibia compromise, and his background was in Asia...

*Q: He was a Chinese language officer.*

STAMMERMAN: Chinese language officer. He accompanied Nixon on the trip, as an interpreter. Had quite a success in Asia. So the Saudis said fine, that's fine, he'll be a professional and not an Arabist. Chas arrived and we had a very good meeting, myself and the CG in Jeddah, had a very good relationship with Chas. To this day I do. He immediately summoned us to Riyadh. We worked an arrangement where we would visit there once every month. This sort of carried over from before, but he formalized it. We'd visit for a country team meeting, it would be country-wide, including the CG from Jeddah and me, once a month, and we would discuss with him and the DCM everything going on in our provinces. The four of us together, sort of a little executive committee. Any reporting we did would be vetted through Riyadh. I didn't have any big problem with that since what we were doing was mostly economic reporting. David Dunford is one of our better economic officers, he's a well trained economist. Where we had some friction between our reporting and that of petroleum officers in Riyadh was not I would say of that nature. We would just differ on policy matters. That is, on the analysis of what would be the optimal Saudi oil policy. Kind of a basic argument because it was a long-running argument. So Chas moved in and I thought he ran a very good ship, established his authority early on and really set out to learn about Saudi Arabia. He came down to visit us a number of times, got to know the local business community, called on the prince. He established himself in Riyadh pretty quickly, smart guy. Very, very smart.

*Q: Very smart, yes.*

STAMMERMAN: Very, very smart, so it's one of those things where you realize you are dealing with somebody who really, who doesn't know the region very well, he's listening, he's learning very, very quickly. He picked up some Arabic also very quickly.

*Q: Well then how did things develop with the first of August?*

STAMMERMAN: The second of August, 1990.

*Q: Were there any other developments that we haven't covered in the year before?*

STAMMERMAN: No, it was a quiet place. Again, one of my concerns was the... that the staff knew little about Saudi Arabia and I was trying to do some cultural things, bringing them to gatherings, majlis, eid calls, and so on. And I'd work with the junior officers especially. I was concerned, but it was a quiet post. The other officers, admin, whatever, my deputy, I figured well they could do their tours, but it's not hectic, it's a quiet place.

*Q: Was there a plan for evacuating the Americans, having had the Iran-Iraq war I imagine there must have been some concern or planning or something of that nature?*

STAMMERMAN: There was a plan, but it was a plan that had been worked out some years previously. The assumption was that the threat was Iran, not Iraq, and that we would have sufficient notice. Because if Iran, probably if there was trouble with Iran you'd have Bahrain first



of all, or else, the other possibility, if the Iraqi forces were not held at Basrah, the Iranian forces would probably turn into Kuwait, so there would be fallback from Kuwait, with the remnants of the Iraqi army and the Kuwaiti army and the Saudis picking up a battle somewhere in the middle. So you had time. And Dhahran air base was massive, so we could move people out by airlift. There was a getaway plan that we all kept in the file cabinet and review once a year. Somebody asked from Washington, and you said, well, yes, if things work out according to plan and you can probably move everybody out. But at that point, we figured if anything happened we have lots of time.

*Q: [laughter] So Okay then, how did “you know what” happened [laughter]*

STAMMERMAN: [laughter] As I was saying, you always wanted to review the evacuation plan. None of that was considered realistic at the time. So what happened is that on the morning of August 2, I would typically listen to the BBC world service, and indeed turned on the radio and oops it said that the Iraqi forces were that they'd crossed the border into Kuwait. Hm. The first thing I did was pick up the phone and call the political officer in Kuwait. His home is near the Embassy, he's a friend of mine. Turns out he was on home leave. But his maid answered. So I said is so and so there and she said no. She was very nervous. She said, "What are we going to do? What are we going to do? There are troops in the streets." "Well, maybe you better call the embassy," I told her. So I called the embassy and I got not much out of them. It was an open line, just we are very busy, call back. Interestingly enough, that day we were having work done on the consulate grounds, it was quiet, summer, and although I had an outside line, the phone line to the consulate wasn't working because the workers had cut the line. Now, Riyadh was trying to call us. When they could get no answer, they got very nervous. What is going on in Dhahran? They finally made a connection through the military side. They called the military who was there and said "What's going on?" "Nothing's going on." The military, at least the guys at the phone, didn't hear that anything was happening at all. So they then linked to us and said... this wasn't that long afterwards, say 7 o'clock in the morning... I then spoke with the DCM. Our concern was that American citizens would be fleeing Kuwait, and furthermore the Saudis who were sticklers on admitting people into their country might be sticklers at the border. We think they would, but just to make sure, we wanted an American presence at the Kuwaiti-Saudi border. So I woke up my head of the consular section...

*Q: Who was that?*

STAMMERMAN: Les Hickman. I told him, "Les, the Iraqis have invaded Kuwait, we need someone at the border to make sure that the Americans who show up at the border are taken care of. I know the governor in Khafji, here's his name, I will try to call him and find if there is a way. And he will take care of you. I'm sure he will take care of you, just use his name to get to the border." So Les, and for a while the deputy CG who went for a short while, were up there. Les stayed there for a month. He left that morning with just a change of clothes and stayed there for a month, at the border, with Saudi border guards. Basically, the crossing north of Khafji was just a Saudi border station, Saudis just treated it as a border station, with offices, border guards drinking tea, and the American consul and refugees just pouring across the border. There was a no-man's land of a kilometer or so between the Kuwaiti exit station and the Saudi border post, so they could see the Iraqis when they eventually arrived at the Kuwaiti border post and took up

positions. If any Americans were picked up by the Saudi patrols, and some were, they'd be escaping through the desert, not on the main road for fear of Iraqis, the Saudis wouldn't hold them at the main gate. The Saudis would bring them over to our consul. The Consul would arrange through the governor to have them taken by car down to the consulate at Dhahran. We would repatriate them to the United States, which got to be a good system after awhile. Anyway, the day of the invasion then, we had the American consul there by 11 o'clock in the morning.

*Q: Well, that was a very fast reaction. What about the British and others who had a lot of citizens up there? Were they...*

STAMMERMAN: The British unofficially had two diplomats who lived in Dhahran. That was because of the British airplane deal, they had all these British citizens in the province, they needed a consular backup. Even though the British had somebody there, there was really no official British diplomatic mission. The two officers were assigned to Riyadh and detailed to the Eastern Province. We had the only accredited mission in the Province. Otherwise there were no other foreign diplomats in the Eastern Province. So it took a lot longer for the rest of them to respond. They had to come from Riyadh, plus they didn't know the situation and they didn't have the contacts that we had. We had Les up there and he got on the phone later that day to me and he told me that the senior Kuwaitis had gotten out. The Kuwaiti Emir and senior Kuwaiti family members had all gotten out, made it to the Saudi border. I'll tell you later how that all happened, which we can go into. The Saudis had put them on helicopters and gotten them away from the border as quickly as possible. Apparently the Saudis were worried hot pursuit. They might be inviting Iraqi invasion if they kept the Kuwaitis right at the border. So the Kuwaitis then were evacuated out of the border area. Meanwhile I heard also that day from the air base that Kuwaiti planes were landing, asking to be refueled, and the Saudis were refusing permission to refuel. The Saudis were just saying, if a Kuwaiti plane landed, it would just stay on the ground. In turn, then, they would just...

*Q: These are Kuwaiti what? Military?*

STAMMERMAN: Kuwaiti military. No, not civilian. Kuwait military who were fleeing, who apparently had fought. There was this airbase in Southern Kuwait that had held out for a couple of days, they'd done strafing runs against the advancing Iraqi troops. They couldn't get any fuel supplies. The Iraqi units eventually advanced on the base and as the base guard was collapsing, what remaining planes that had any fuel took off and landed in Saudi Arabia, one after another, and as they landed the Saudis disarmed them. The Kuwaitis wanted to be re-armed, they wanted to go back and fight. But the Saudis said, "No we are not at war we can't do that." That day was the first day we started hearing about the Kuwaiti aircraft arriving. The consulate general is just a few hundred meters off the end of the runway, so we'd see military activity, we'd see planes flying around, we didn't know what it was, necessarily. So we heard during that day that this was going on and my consul Les Hickman stayed up there and said he'd just stay there for the duration. In a couple days the British and Japanese showed up, and I think French. And they got hotel rooms or whatever, and they stayed up there for another month, pretty much.

*Q: At the beginning, was there concern that this was going to be a rolling thing or was this pretty much an Iraq-Kuwait thing?*

STAMMERMAN: That's a very important question, and opinions differed. Opinions differed in the American government, opinions differed among the Saudis, definitely among Saudis. The Saudi reaction in the Eastern Province was first of all denial. No newspaper said anything about the invasion. This happened for about 4 or 5 days. Just nothing appeared in the newspapers. As far as you knew, nothing has gone wrong. Everybody knew it because it was on BBC, on whatever. But the Saudis simply refused to acknowledge that anything had happened. Meanwhile, all these people were crossing the border and being put into camps. Third country nationals were put into refugee camps. The Americans were being sent down to us, the British and other foreigners went wherever their consular people took them.

It turns out, I found this out later from Saudis, that the Saudi National Guard had moved forces. The Saudi military, that is the army and air force as opposed to the National Guard (haras watani in Arabic) did not, as far as I know to this day. I do know that the Saudi National Guard moved its forces from west of Dhahran, that is toward Riyadh where they are permanently stationed, to a blocking position north of Dhahran. The National Guard leadership was very concerned that the Iraqis would keep going because there was nothing other than lightly armed border guards and a few national guard units between the Kuwaiti border and Dhahran. There were no Saudi military. The military had a big concentration near Yemen because that's where there's some real border problems and there was a certain airbase and support units up in the north toward Jordan and Israel but there was nothing much other than national guard in the Eastern Province other than the airbase. There was a little outpost near the Iraqi border to the west I guess. But these were minimally manned border posts, so the national guard moved their units to a blocking position. These were lightly armed Bedouin fighters.

I have since then talked to senior commanders in the Saudi national guard. They said that because of the configuration... there's only one road south from the Kuwaiti border, and there's a lot of sand dunes on either side of the Kuwait-Dhahran road, they figured that if the Iraqis rolled south in force, they could probably hold them for a matter of hours, maybe 10 hours, but that would accomplish two things. First, that they would have defended the honor of the Al-Saud family, and second that the Americans would have to fight. They thought that if the Saudis put up a fight, as opposed to the Kuwaitis who did not, that the Americans would somehow see that their interests would be threatened at Dhahran, the oil fields, ARAMCO and all that. So there was a national guard force, but that was it. The commanders were sure that the National Guard units would fight if ordered to do so. I agree.

*Q: Was there an influx of American military officers, intelligence people and all that to see what the hell was happening, where I would imagine they would have been mainly up in Riyadh around the embassy.*

STAMMERMAN: As far as I know, no. Remember that there were no U.S. military forces stationed in Saudi Arabia at the time, other than training units.

*Q: What were you doing?*

STAMMERMAN: We were busy. We were doing several things. What we had our hands full

with was ARAMCO Americans. The first thing we were doing, it's funny, we had a port call scheduled. There was an American ship that came to port. It was some little ship. We had these port calls every once in a while.

*Q: A port call. But it's a military ship.*

STAMMERMAN: Military ship. A U.S. Navy ship. And we had a big... there was a small fleet based out in Bahrain. But it was regularly scheduled, there would be a port call by a U.S. Navy ship in Dhahran. Every few months. Well we happened to have a small ship, I don't know what it was, a mine sweeper, or something, that had arrived, so I used the occasion... this was about two days after the invasion, to have a big reception for the American business community, including as many ARAMCO Americans as I could find, bringing the U.S. Navy captain to speak to everybody to say, hey the American Navy has this big presence in the Gulf, and American military's strong in the region. Our concern was that the American community in Dhahran wanted to leave. Most Americans I heard from wanted to go, and senior ARAMCO executives, both Americans and Saudis, confirmed that Americans wanted out, and soon. Since a lot of the dependents were gone from ARAMCO for the summer, we had probably 9,000 Americans in ARAMCO. We had another 8-10,000, the numbers were never very good on this, people didn't register with consulate, who with all the others, McDonald Douglas, Bechtel, we probably didn't have that many, but you never know... we had dual citizen children and we had lots of other people. And it seemed everybody wanted to leave. They were afraid. Many Americans who had been there for years were contemptuous of the Saudi military. And they really thought the Iraqis had a strong military. They were afraid the Iraqis would invade and the Saudis would do nothing to stop it. And furthermore they had no confidence that the American government thought anything of them... that we thought more of oil than of their safety. Because after all ARAMCO was producing 5 million barrels of oil a day and if the Americans left, they would be producing zero.

*Q: That was probably the most, along with the troops we put in, was the most important thing keeping those people in place.*

STAMMERMAN: Keeping those people in place. Absolutely.

*Q: But was that apparent to you at the time? I'm talking about within the first couple of days.*

STAMMERMAN: Yes. The reason I say yes so quickly was that we had a crisis in that ARAMCO called. First of all we had calls from the Americans saying what's going on. If they were reading Saudi newspapers of course nothing was going on. And yet they saw that the Saudis were denying, in complete denial. At Saudi ARAMCO, as with many Saudi organizations, if you went to work there as a foreigner, you turned your passport in to your employer. Your employer had your passports. And we told people it's not terribly important because we can get you out of here without a passport. We can get you into America, although we can't get you out of here without Saudi cooperation. We can get you into America. You don't need a passport to get into American if you have other proof of being American, don't worry we're not going to keep you out. It's not a big deal. You are registered, we know who you are, if you want to turn in your passport as a condition of employment, that's between you and your

employer. It's not against American law.

So a lot of Americans stormed the ARAMCO passport office, demanding their passports because they thought they needed their passports. In fact, they did if they wanted to leave and ever come back, they had to get a Saudi exit stamp or the Saudis would never let them back in. So a couple days after the invasion, there was a near riot at the ARAMCO personnel office with people demanding their passports. And the Saudi leadership of ARAMCO said, "You want your passports? Take your passports. We don't care. Because we assume you are not leaving. If it will make you feel better here's your passports." I talked with some of the Saudis who were working there, I talked with some of the senior people, executive vice president, the man in charge of personnel, and they were just having a terrible time because these things were filed alphabetically in Arabic and how do you spell these names, and here are these people pressing and pushing and fighting and shouting, and near riots.

The Americans would call and say, "These incompetent Saudis can't give us our passports. What are we going to do? We hear rumors that the Iraqis are invading. What's happening?" [I'd say] "Calm down. If we have to evacuate you, you don't need your passports. We'll get you out of here." And from the Saudi point of view, I said, "Look, find more Saudis speaking English, give them their passports, please. Because these people have this idea that you're holding them hostage and you're not." This all happened with the other countries' citizens as well. And rumors were rife because the Saudis were silent over the invasion. I got a call from a senior executive at McDonald Douglas one night about 3 days after the invasion who said, "Ken, our information is that the Iraqi units have moved across the border." I said, "First I heard, but then I might not know. So I'll check." So I called both the embassy and senior military people. "No, everything's quiet. Quiet enough." There was some trouble. What I think happened is that there was a Kuwaiti unit that fought itself south from near Kuwait City and fought its way all down to the border with Iraqi units in hot pursuit, and as they crossed the border the Saudi units fell in and let the Iraqis know they had to stop advancing. So there was a little confrontation. It did not turn into an armed conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iraqi, it was a near thing, but rumors might have gotten around. Anyway, the McDonnell Douglas people had heard that and similar things I suspect from lower-level U.S. military contacts who also were nervous about the Iraqis moving south. A lot of the McDonald-Douglas personnel were ex-military, so once word got around of what the situation was, that there was no invasion then they stayed where they were.

*Q: What were you getting from the embassy, was somebody from the embassy saying, Ken, It's really important to keep these Americans here, or was this just something you knew?*

STAMMERMAN: Something I knew. It was more the reverse. I was telling them, the embassy was being swamped by calls from Americans in the United States. "Get my daughter out of there." And they were saying, "What's going on?" And I said, "A lot of people want to go, but if all these people go we're shutting down ARAMCO, you know that." The Saudis are good, but there's just people down the line who are going to need those Americans there. The senior guys were okay, but as you go farther down the line there are key Americans being scattered throughout. It was kind of a mixture. I think, again, the senior leadership in the embassy understood right away. We sort of talked it out what the issue was. The ambassador's attitude was if Dhahran became unsafe, we should get everybody out. Unquestionably. We were not

going to sacrifice Americans. That was clear from the beginning. Even later on when we talked about poison gas and threats like that, if it appears that Americans were under direct threat, get them out. End of story. And there were ways and means. So I would go and see... I remember talking to Saudi ARAMCO leadership and trying to figure out how to handle this. We'd stress if it's time to get out, we want to work with you to get Americans out of here as quickly as possible. On the other hand, we want to minimize any panic or any unnecessary problem. It came out that the Americans meanwhile were having community meetings inside ARAMCO, at least I heard about these. Some of our consular officers would go over there and say our information is the Iraqis were stopped at the border. This is in the first week or two. And we don't see an immediate threat of invasion.

The Saudi ARAMCO authorities eventually said to ARAMCO Americans, "We have your passport, we'll give it to you, that's no problem, and we will let you go. We will give an exit stamp, exit proof, you need an exit visa or such... for anybody who wants to go, dependents included. Here's the ticket, we'll pay for the dependents' flight home. They will be gone for the duration until this crisis has passed. But if dependents want to go, that's it. If you are a worker and you leave now, you will never again work for Saudi ARAMCO and if we have anything to say about it you will never work anywhere in the Gulf for oil companies or their governments. You have nice salaries out here, you have lived very well out here for the past 20 or 30 years. We expect you to stay on now." So, the Saudis were very clear about it.

The Americans then came to us and said, "The Saudis are holding us hostage. We were being threatened of being killed by the Iraqis, and if we leave, we lose our jobs." We said, "Okay, if you leave you lose your jobs. That's a private contract between you and your employer. Fine. If you have a problem getting a ticket out, we'll help you. But we're not going to change that contract between you and your employer, we're not going to try to." Meanwhile the embassy was under all kinds of pressure from the congressionals, you had all these people saying, "They are holding my daughter hostage." This is not that long after Iran, so using this word "hostage" had a lot of emotional power.

Then one of the American oil companies, I can no longer remember which one, one of the partners, former partners... remember some of these people were not working for ARAMCO, they were employees of Exxon, Texaco, and all those. They flew a plane into Dhahran to evacuate their people without Saudi permission. I mean there should be Saudi permission to land or their planes could get shot down. What were the Saudis going to do? So they just flew this stupid plane into Saudi air space and landed. And guess what, essentially they took out the dependents, which was less of a problem, they didn't lose all their people. But they felt they didn't want Teheran, and Iranian-type crisis, to happen again, where Americans got left behind. So they unilaterally sent the plane back to evacuate the dependents. I had two consular officers there once I heard about it, since the airport is a short drive from the Consulate General. I should mention by that time I had already borrowed one consular officer from Riyadh. We were a small post. We had a consul, and two consular officers.

*Q: And you had one officer up on the border.*

STAMMERMAN: Had a congen officer, the Consul, who ran the Consular section, up on the

border. So we had essentially two junior officers left at the consular section. The week of the invasion, this one lady, a first tour FSO, had been visiting the female vice consul on my staff. She walked by my office late in the day of the invasion, she just kind of walked in the hall, and I said, "Hey you're working for me." I called up the DCM, I said "I need bodies, she's it." And he said, "Sure." So they were both out at the airport helping to process Americans who had escaped from Kuwait when suddenly they had like 200 American dependents show up, immediately trying to get on this plane that had arrived on half-hour's notice. The American oil company employing their husbands had called from the United States and said, "Better get out to the airport because we've got a plane landing in half an hour. Get on it." So it was a mad scramble and they went up there.

But the problem was they needed exit visas. Saudi border control doesn't let anybody out without exit visas. The concern there is you might have dual citizens, you might have children, this might be smuggling people out, who knows. So I got on the phone, this was at night, they were already starting to have a mini riot out at the airport. I called the governor's office, and actually the governor controls everything, but he doesn't control exits. That's the Saudi frontier force. So I finally found some general and said, "You really don't have a choice in this, you've got to give those people visas." And he went, "Well, I will have to check." I said, "Do it quick. Because you'll have the American press on this, you'll have American congressmen. This will be messy if those dependents don't get out." Then shortly afterwards, suddenly the visas appeared, passports got stamped, off they went. So it was hectic those first few days, crises one after another, all involving consular work. Well the next major, let me move on, the next thing that happens after that we get a call from NEA, sort of a conference call, or whatever it was, or they called the embassy first. The assistant secretary of state is coming out to visit. He wants to see the Kuwaitis. This was...

*Q: Kelly.*

STAMMERMAN: Kelly. John Kelly. And I said, "That's fine. And we will establish contact with the Kuwaitis if we can find them." So I went to the Saudis and they said fine. It turns out the Kuwaitis were cooped up in a Saudi palace. It's called the Gulf Palace, near Dhahran, it's one of the big palaces the Saudis built to host official visitors and hold conferences. I called over there and got in contact with the Kuwaiti Minister of Planning, whom I knew from my Kuwaiti days. I sent my deputy over to talk with him and we set up some meetings. So Kelly came out. That would have been about August 15, mid-August, before the deployment of forces began in any numbers. A/S Kelly first went to Jeddah and Riyadh and then Dhahran. I got a call from one of my contacts in Jeddah who said, this man is in a bad mood. Let's say his reception in Jeddah wasn't the greatest. I have no idea what it was all about, but he lost his temper at some American officer, I'm told. Anyway, he arrived in Dhahran, along with an embassy political officer, note taker. I had set up the meetings, and we went over and talked to the Kuwaitis.

Part of what I felt good about, because we'd just had time to brief the secretary on the way over. He was not going to stay overnight. Throughout the crisis, whenever you had visitors, from the embassy or anywhere else, they would not stay overnight. People were still very concerned that the Iraqis, even if they didn't invade, might still have people in the area at that time, infiltrators.

So, I briefed him on the way. I told him first of all, we'll probably be met by the oil minister, Sheikh Ali Khalifa al-Sabah. He was the American connection for the Kuwaiti Government during the Iran-Iraq War. Very smart man, American educated, very used to dealing with Americans. So the family usually puts him up front because he's more prepared, when it's very serious, he'll be the guy up front. The Kuwaiti foreign minister had made a career out of being anti-American. He was the head of the sort of Third World anti-American Bloc over the Palestine question. The Kuwaitis had been very pro-Palestinian. And the Emir was a financial genius who liked to garden, that was his hobby. Turns out A/Secretary Kelly was a gardener as well, which I'd had heard from somebody, so I told him, if you want to break the ice, talk about gardening, he loves to putter. That's the Emir's hobby. So I briefed him very quickly in the car on who else he might see and what their concerns were. A/S Kelly had his agenda of course. So we went over, and sure enough, Sheikh Ali Khalifa met us and we did the rounds.

Again, many of the Kuwaitis I knew, they recognized me, so we talked about how they'd gotten out. They all had their stories. Very interesting stuff. The story I heard was as follows: The Emir had been at home in his palace... The Kuwaiti Emir's home, by Saudi standards, is modest, maybe a businessman's home. The Kuwaiti Emir does not live in a palace in the Saudi style. A very modest, large house, as does the Crown Prince, very large house, but modest by Saudi standards. Anyway, he'd been at home when the Crown Prince came in with his bodyguards, and said the Iraqis are in town. Iraqi invaders are in town. There was some gunfire and the Crown Prince went out and said, "An Iraqi unit is out in front of the palace right now, fighting some Emiri guards." Those are the Kuwaiti special forces troops assigned to guard the Emir. The Crown Prince took the Emir out the back door and over the back garden wall, they walked around front on the next block over where some of the Emir's cars were parked, and the two of them hopped in their Mercedes and drove to the Saudi border. Nobody saw them. The Iraqis did not close the gate at the border crossing until late in the following afternoon. That's what I heard from one of the Crown Prince's aides. That's also where one of the Kuwaiti Emir's brothers was killed, at the Emir's palace, apparently because he, the story the Kuwaitis told me, he grabbed a gun from one of the Emiri guards and said, "I'm going to go out and kill some Iraqis." And he did, and he got killed. Kelly expressed his condolences over the death of the brother.

Also, I heard the story while waiting with Kelly that there was a cabinet meeting going on when the Iraqis invaded, and the foreign minister was chairing for the prime minister. The Crown Prince, who serves as Prime Minister, wasn't there at the time. And he heard what was happening, this was shortly after midnight when the Iraqis came across, and the foreign minister said, "My friends, this meeting is adjourned, let's get the hell out of here." And he and the interior minister, another al-Sabah, just walked out the front door, got in their Mercedes, headed for the border. Sheikh Ali Khalifa (by the way, the 'Sheikh' title for Kuwaitis applies to all males of the al-Sabah family, it has no religious significance) actually, the following morning, he saw Iraqi helicopters flying along the coastline where he was living and said, this is not right. And he grabbed his family and headed south. For some reason, the Iraqis did not close the gate. There's only one road out, but they did not close the gate until later the next day.

So we heard all these stories, Kelly and I. He spoke to the Kuwaitis, who were generally were in a state of shock, especially the Emir. He was just shocked. I had seen him many times before, but never like this. He just kept shaking his head, how could this have happened? Anyway, we had a



round of conversation, met all the Kuwaiti leadership. I'd said, you'll probably see the oil minister first, then the Crown Prince, then the Emir, and probably the interior minister will sit in on the meeting because the Kuwaiti defense minister was irrelevant. He was made defense minister, as the Kuwaitis said, because he was probably the least talented of the brothers, and the mother wanted him to be taken care of, not to be treated as a poor relation. So he was made defense minister, which was not very important in Kuwait. The really important jobs in Kuwait were finance minister, foreign minister, and interior minister. Defense? Pshh... The way Kuwaitis for 200 years they'd kept their existence by playing off their neighbors, or by buying them off. So he was defense minister. So I said this is not important, he may sit in, but... Kelly asked me, what about the defense minister? I said it's not important, it's truly not important.

So the important meeting was with others, and we'd ask them to do the necessary requests if they wanted our help... and this eventually became public because the next day Secretary Baker made it public... the Kuwaitis asked us for support under the Self-Defense Article of the UN Charter. They asked us for support formally in a diplomatic note that they handed to me the day afterwards. Which took a day to write only because somebody had to find an Arabic typewriter. the Kuwaitis themselves wanted to type it up. They didn't want to depend on the Saudis. So they said, search through the Dhahran Suq for a manual typewriter. Such little incidents, but these things happened. So I went over the following day and the Kuwaitis were packing up. The Saudis had told the Kuwaitis that they would be moving to the other side of the peninsula, hundreds of miles away.

*Q: What was Kelly saying? Was he giving you any intimation on how we might respond?*

STAMMERMAN: No. Nothing. I could hear what he was telling the Kuwaitis, which was, in broad terms, we do not accept the permanent annexation of Kuwait by Iraq.

*Q: I mean, our President George Bush had said rather early on, this will not stand.*

STAMMERMAN: Right, exactly.

*Q: Was anyone coming around and looking and saying, Alright, if we land our paratroops here or if we do this...*

STAMMERMAN: Not yet. Not yet. What happened... that happened after Cheney. Secretary of Defense Chancy and the senior military leadership, General Schwarzkopf arrived in Riyadh, that was after the Kelly visit. The Kelly visit result was the Kuwaitis by unilaterally asking us, giving me a note the following day, were asking for our intervention.

*Q: Because the Kuwaitis had always been very standoffish about the United States.*

STAMMERMAN: Right.

*Q: They had really said, we don't need you and...*

STAMMERMAN: That's not exactly the way it worked. By then, we had, remember we had

worked together with them on the ship escort issue.

*Q: Right.*

STAMMERMAN: But that was by a private company. The Kuwait Petroleum Corporation dealing with the American embassy and the U.S. Navy. I mentioned that previously. That's why I suspected strongly that the person meeting us would be the oil minister, or the former oil minister who had had that American connection, because the Kuwaiti foreign minister indeed was on the record as saying, we don't need the Americans, we'll call the Arab League if we have trouble. The signal we got from the oil minister was this is now bilateral American-Kuwaiti. The foreign minister was there but he didn't speak, so we had the Emir and the Crown Prince saying we respect and appreciate your support, and then us telling them what we need you to do is ask us. We want it in writing, under the UN Charter, you are asking us for assistance in self defense. And they asked us formally. I took it back to the Consulate General and sent it up, and the following day, Secretary Baker said the Kuwaiti government has asked us for assistance under the UN Charter, the Charter Provisions for Self-Defense. Interestingly, one of the senior Kuwaitis pulled me aside and said, "Ken, you remember so and so?" This was a senior Kuwaiti official, he didn't get out. "We want him out, can you help us?" I said, "I'll see what I can do." Essentially, I sent word back through channels, they want to get somebody out, somebody very important to them – can we do it? And in the end we did... I'm still not sure to this day how we did it, but he showed up on our doorstep in Dhahran a bit later, which was nice.

*Q: How about your wife? You had kids at that time?*

STAMMERMAN: My wife... no; my son was at the University of Virginia. We'll get on to what happens after the Cheney business, things changed completely. No, my wife Patty had... we'd been in Kuwait together, but she was concerned as I was about our consulate general staff in the not being attuned to the local culture. So she made a project of helping spouses and junior officers, trying to teach them about Arab culture and inviting Arab ladies over to talk. In many ways, consular families, like almost all the military families, had very little contact with the surrounding culture, other than ARAMCO which was really an American culture. So she had done that a lot. She helped set up that dinner where we had the American Navy people come and meet with the American business community. She thought, as I did, that the Iraqis would not advance farther, we sort of knew the region, and we had not thought that Iraq would invade Kuwait. So we were wrong on that score, but also we didn't think they would come farther south.

But in any case, panicking wouldn't help anything. So Patty's attitude was... she was in contact with the ARAMCO wives... we're not going anywhere. And also with our local employees, who were all third country nationals, she took a big role in dealing with them. Because their attitude was, as one of our drivers told her, you're going to leave. She said, "I'm not going to leave." He said, "Yes you are. A big helicopter will arrive and take you and the consul general away and leave us behind. This happened in Somalia. All our FSNs were left behind." So she said, "No I'm not going anywhere." So as long as she stayed, the FSNs believed us. She stayed for the duration. The State Department immediately put out a voluntary evacuation plan. Any dependent could leave, but you'd be gone for the duration. Patty and I said, "she's not going to leave," and she didn't. That really helped with the FSNs. They were very nervous, and were essential to

keeping the Consulate General operating.

*Q: So, what happened then? You've had your meeting with Kelly and the Emir, they'd gone back, and then what happened?*

STAMMERMAN: The senior Kuwaitis then went away. The Saudis did not want them in the province. They were worried that it might draw, if not the Iraqi army, Iraqi infiltrators. Security would be kind of tough. So they shipped the Kuwaitis off to the other end of the peninsula. South of Jeddah. We then had the Cheney visit to Riyadh. The following day, the U.S. military arrived. I heard first from our military training mission liaison, who told me that we've got lots of people moving in. Then the embassy told me the American military is deploying, you're going to have a few hundred thousand soldiers real quick. That morning, the day after I heard that, the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne showed up at the consulate, a couple of intelligence officers wanted to talk to me. The general said, "Here's where we're going, here's the Shia, is that going to cause us a problem." "No, they're not. The Shia are our friends, they love us. Don't worry about the Shia. They'd love to have American soldiers around to protect them from the Sunnis." I'll say right now, there never was any trouble at all, none, between the Shia and the American Army.

*Q: Prior to the actual arrival of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne, were Saudis coming up to you, acquaintance and others, saying why aren't you doing something...*

STAMMERMAN: No, they were not saying anything along those lines. A lot of people were leaving. This is what made the Americans nervous, was that the Saudi business people were sending their families out of the province. One of the positive outcomes was that within a week of the invasion, the Mutawwa, the religious police mostly left, the religious police and their families and anybody connected with the Mutawwa left. They thought they would be better off in Mecca, praying I guess, but they all left. They were worried both that the Iraqis might invade, or the Americans would take over the Province, or something. Whatever was going to happen would not be good for them. So they left.

*Q: Well, that was handy.*

STAMMERMAN: Yes.

*Q: It kept that particular fly out of the ointment.*

STAMMERMAN: Yes it did. So, they left, in general. I said fine. Some of the American military as they deployed were worried about that. They said, "They're gone, they're not here. Finally, we did something." But the Saudis were evacuating the families, but they were not talking about why. There was a lot of concern. In Saudi Arabia, you don't want to appear disloyal. If the Prince, the King's son, governor of the Province, was staying, which he was, you didn't want to look like you are leaving. So they started staying with the program. They would ask, "Well, Ken what do you think is going to happen?" But it was never, "Hey, I'm really worried." So business got less. I have to say this... One American company with a major contract fled. Their Saudi sponsor, he actually did not live in the Eastern Province, he lived in Jeddah. This American company's personnel all left. We had a consular phone net, a warden setup, where we call the

American business community, and we couldn't find them. We finally talked to their landlord and he said, "They left the morning of the invasion." "So where are they?" We called around and called around, and found they were in Jeddah, they drove all the way across the peninsula right after the invasion, and they didn't come back until months later. These guys had a billion dollar contract, and I said this is insane. I looked them up and said, "This is not smart, walking out on a billion dollar contract because you are worried about Iraqis," I said, "Don't." And most of the American businessmen understood that. And the Shia could not leave after all. They stayed. But a lot of Saudi businessmen sent families away. A lot of Americans by then took ARAMCO up on their offer and sent their spouses and children out. Saudi ARAMCO paid their fare, but their offer after that was the standard, if you leave you're gone, don't come back, we'll never see you again. But as for dependents, they said, fine, no problem. We'll send them out. And that calmed a lot of the problem. But the people who lived there, the Sunnis, the establishment, they had a lot of money there. They realized that if they left, showed disloyalty to the regime, that was it. They'd send out children and so forth, but all the senior businessmen stayed.

*Q: Were you seeing any change in the Saudi regular military? Were they beginning to make moves and do things?*

STAMMERMAN: Not that I saw. Again, the Saudi military, they were out in the encampments in the desert. There was no increased military presence or what have you in the Dhahran areas. If you drove around nearby, no roadblocks. I drove up the border, probably not the first week, but after the first couple weeks, you'd run into roadblocks, but you didn't see tanks on the roads or trucks with troops or anything. Wasn't there. I started seeing Saudi military more after the U.S. military had deployed.

*Q: How about on the Arab side? Were there more flights?*

STAMMERMAN: Lots. Yes. Sure. The Saudi air force by then was launching aircraft a lot, presumably running patrols along the border. The Saudis had air supremacy. That was a given. Against either Iraq or Iran. Now that the focus was on Iraq nobody would talk about it, but you saw a lot of flights going. But I did not deal with the Saudi military. Our training group would deal with them.

*Q: When the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne, I assume their liaison officers were going to call when arrived. That was before the full deployment, right?*

STAMMERMAN: Before the full deployment. The first two people deployed were General Pagonis of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Support Command, who was a logistics man, and his deputy. As soon as the Riyadh meeting broke up with Cheney and Schwarzkopf and so on, Pagonis moved to Dhahran. He was living out of a jeep for about a week, just driving around, looking at the port, looking at the airbase, looking at the other airport which was semi-finished out in the desert, and trying to find how do you supply... you know, we'll have a hundred thousand men here in a couple weeks... where are we going to get food? Do we have to ship it all in? There's a port, how much support can we have? And I made contact with him fairly early on, or he made contact with me, we got to talking, and then the 82<sup>nd</sup> arrived.

I should say that an incident that happened around then was a senator from New Jersey showed up...

*Q: Brighton or Torecelli?*

STAMMERMAN: No, the other one, the one that's just retiring just now. Lautenberg. He showed up around August 18, or so. He was in Cairo. It's interesting how the State Department works. He was in Cairo and sent a message saying he was going to visit Dhahran. The Today Show was already there... no I take that back... this would have been after the deployment had started, that would have been probably around the 20<sup>th</sup> or so. Anyway, the Today Show was already there starting to interview the 82<sup>nd</sup> that had just arrived, and he said he's coming to Dhahran to see how deployment is going. The State Department said this visit is not supported because the U.S. Senate leadership wants to visit first. So the embassy is not to welcome this visit. And Chas Freeman and I both laughed at that.

*Q: Yes, ho ho ho.*

STAMMERMAN: Ho ho. We laughed. Both of us... I called somebody up and Chas sent some messages back, "Do you really want us to tell a U.S. senator NOT to come? Are you out of your minds?" So I sent a cable to Cairo saying hotels are full but the senator is certainly welcome to stay at the consul general's residence. Chas did the same. So he showed up, just took a commercial flight in and we met him. He met with General Pagonis, we talked about what the military was going to do. It was good meeting, this is what we were going to need. We fed the good Senator some MREs, at his request. This is what our troops will be eating. He said, "Euww, this is awful."

*Q: Yes, MREs are...*

STAMMERMAN: Meals Ready to Eat.

*Q: They're strictly emergency rations.*

STAMMERMAN: Emergency rations. Some units ended up living off of them for months. You know, they were way out in the desert. If you put Tabasco sauce on them, they are edible, so Tabasco sauce got to be a hot commodity. Anyway, that first visit was kind of funny just in the way the State Department does these things, trying to tell a U.S. senator that he's not welcome. I said this is silly.

So when the Saudi families were contacted by military logistics, I recommended one to the logistics people and can we get 10,000 breakfasts tomorrow morning, and they said sure. And they did. One orange, some kind of breakfast roll, and, I don't know, but they had enough for a decent breakfast. Eggs, enough to form chow lines... So then the 82<sup>nd</sup> showed up and then their liaison officers came over...

*Q: They all came by what... air transport?*

STAMMERMAN: Oh, yes, everybody landed at Dhahran airbase. So the 82<sup>nd</sup> guys came over

and I gave them a little briefing and they said there's a lot more people coming in. We didn't know how many, but they said, thousands of people in the next few days. So I said, "That's fine, there's lots of space in Saudi Arabia." We then saw these big C-5s flying over the one end of the consulate general compound, we'd see just a constant stream of these things for the next several weeks. And I met the various commanders, invited them to the house, and we all had meals and talked with them about the liaison arrangements.

The senior guy in Dhahran, actually IN Dhahran as opposed to out in the field, out in the desert where the forces deployed, was General Pagonis, who was then a 2-star Army officer. He and I worked out a very good working relationship. Very good. Early on, we agreed that if any of his people had trouble with the consulate, he would tell me, and if any of my people had any trouble with one of his soldiers, I'd tell him. Let's keep Riyadh out of it. I don't want an argument with General Schwarzkopf, and you don't want an argument with Chas Freeman, and it worked very well. One of my officers would attend his staff meetings. He had a standup staff meeting every day. And two of his officers would attend my weekly staff meetings. So we always kept close touch on what was happening.

We also worked out an arrangement early on and that involved... General Pagonis had already established his own ties with the various Saudi commanders, which was what he should do, it was appropriate. He also took over our training mission facilities. The trainers were immediately moved out. They shipped them all off to Riyadh. So our usual contact with the military weren't there anymore. We had to set up new arrangements with support commands. The 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne had their own group out in the desert, the 101<sup>st</sup> had their group, and the Marines landed and they had their group. So we were all very busily trying to keep up with all this. Washington kept augmenting my staff, which was good. I'd started off with maybe 10 American officers, maybe fewer. By the time it all ended, I had 35 Americans. We had people sleeping in the rec center, we had a little rec center, sleeping on floors, doubling up in the various officers' houses. The military actually wanted to deploy a unit at the consulate grounds, and I told them, "No we can't do that. It was a diplomatic establishment. No guns on this place, except for the Marine guards. So we didn't allow any military placements." We didn't want that. We did have a problem. We were very concerned about our outside perimeter security, because the consulate had walls, which were mainly to keep camels out, I guess. To keep out wandering herdsmen or whatever. They really were not very secure. They weren't very high, they had barbed wire on them, but they really wouldn't keep anybody who was very determined from scaling them. So we were very concerned about our security. After all, it's the American diplomatic establishment and we had all these military outside Dhahran who were very well capable of defending themselves, and we had Marine guards who were very good, but not enough of them, and their job was very specific. Our outside perimeter security was unarmed Indian rent-a-cops, who were good, but all they did was search automobiles. We had one armed Saudi post at the compound entrance, manned by a couple Saudi National Guardsmen.

So I asked the RSO, I asked Washington, I said, "We need bodies, we need security, we need something. We're vulnerable." We were vulnerable anyway. I thought the security arrangements were not good anyway. But we need help. Of course, the Washington response was, "No, we can't spare anybody, and we have no budget, do what you can." So I called up the National Guard commander, the Prince, and said, "I need some help. How about it?" So he said fine, and

he deployed a couple units, meaning dozens of National Guardsmen, and he supervised, he built a double ditch around our entire perimeter, enough to stop a tank, with an earthen escarpment on the side of the ditch, and he set up four watchtowers in our four corners. He put up a barbed wire fence so there's a place for a jeep to drive between the barbed wire fence and the consulate fence. His National Guardsmen would run their jeep along that and man the guard posts. I figured if our government would not provide security, theirs will. They did very good. They responded very well to that, and I'm still very grateful to the Saudis for doing that.

*Q: I think this is probably a good place to stop for now.*

STAMMERMAN: Okay, good.

*Q: And we'll put down we have just covered the arrival of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne, and we've talked about your consulate security using the National Guard to do this, and we'll pick it up from there.*

STAMMERMAN: Okay, very good.

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*Q: It's the 17<sup>th</sup> of December, 2001. Ken, you've heard where we are, but I'm not sure you talked about the visit of John Kelly, who was the assistant secretary for near eastern affairs, so we'll talk about it, just in case.*

STAMMERMAN: Okay. Assistant Secretary Kelly showed up and I can't be sure of the dates, but it's mid-August of 1990. That is to say, the Kuwait ruling family had arrived in Dhahran. The Saudis had admitted publicly that there was, indeed, an Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, which they had simply been silent on for the first week after the invasion. We still had two consular officers up at the border watching what was going on and helping American citizens who were crossing, who were walking across the border. At this point, there was a notice that came out to the consulate via the embassy, via Chas Freeman's office, that Assistant Secretary Kelly was coming out from Washington to meet the Kuwaiti Emir. He flew first into Jeddah where he met the consul general there, Phil Griffin, and then went to Riyadh where one of the political officers, head of the political section, latched on to him, and the two of them came to Dhahran.

Meanwhile, I established contact with the Kuwaitis via the Saudis because the Saudis were keeping them secreted away in a palace near Dhahran. The Saudis were wanting the Kuwaitis to keep a very low profile because they were afraid the Iraqis, I found out later, they were afraid the Iraqis in sort of hot pursuit would go after the Kuwaiti ruling family all the way to Dhahran. So they had them in a guest palace, so called. Assistant Secretary Kelly first arrived in Jeddah, and then flew to Dhahran. As an aside, I had a phone call from the CG in Jeddah saying, watch out for Mr. Kelly, that he had a very bad temper and that he was in a terrible mood. Because apparently the administrative arrangements in Jeddah had really fallen through. A lot of small stuff that apparently he really got angry at the CG.

Nevertheless, the two of the arrived, that is Assistant Secretary Kelly and a political officer from

Riyadh. I met them, having already established contact with the Kuwaitis through the Kuwaiti planning minister who I knew, not well, but I knew him from my days in Kuwait. So, when the Assistant Secretary arrived, we wanted to get him in in the morning, and get him out before nightfall. We didn't want to do an overnight, just for security reasons. Those were directions from Riyadh. He arrived, and as we drove from the airport to the palace, which is 20 minutes, half an hour, I briefed the Assistant Secretary on whom he probably see. The Kuwaitis hadn't briefed me, they just said they'd make the Emir available, and the Saudis of course. We'd worked it out with the Saudis so that the Saudi security was all over the place when Kelly arrived. So we drove in my car, and we knew where we were going, so the Saudis just told us to go there. As we went along in the car, I told the assistant secretary that we'd probably be met by Sheikh Ali Khalifa al-Sabah, who was the oil minister. He was our main contact at the embassy in Kuwait with the ruling family. He has an advanced degree from an American university, speaks perfect English, was the author of Kuwait's OPEC strategy for many years. A trusted man, a very trusted man within the family by the Emir, and he was sort of the Emir's man to deal with the Americans. I briefed the Assistant Secretary on the other members who were in the family, including the Emir. I mentioned that the Emir's favorite hobby, besides marrying dozens of young ladies (only four at any one time), was gardening. And since Mr. Kelly apparently also was a gardener, he said, "Well good, we'll have something to talk about." I'd mentioned a couple of other members of the ruling members who would probably be there and gave him a very brief bio on each one of them. He apparently had some bios, but I sort of gave him just a little gossip about each one of them. For example, the defense minister, who was a sad case, he was made defense minister, word had it within the family, because he was a brother of the Emir and apparently the mother made the brothers say they would take care of him because he was very slow, he was slow and didn't seem to have much future, but they'd all said they'd take care of him. So they made him defense minister, but he had no power within the family, had no responsibility really. It was other members of the family that took care of defense policy and defense purchases. But that he might call on him. But the real power, the real people to be concerned about were the Emir, the Crown Prince, who was the Emir's cousin, and the interior minister and the oil minister.

So we got in the car and drove out to the palace, and doors opened, we were waived into the parking lot, all the guards just waved us through, they were expecting us. I don't recall if I had the flag on the car or not, but the Saudi guards knew who we were. Got us in. We got out of the car, and sure enough, Sheikh Ali Khalifa was there, which was nice. He's a very engaging man. He said, "You'll have meetings. You will see the Emir, first you will see the Crown Prince and then the Emir."

*Q: He was called the Black Prince.*

STAMMERMAN: Yes. That is, he's dark skinned. That is because by rumor, his mother was a black concubine of his father. His background was that he was trained in police work in Britain.

*Q: A capable man.*

STAMMERMAN: A very capable man. He always wore sunglasses because of an eye ailment. Some people thought he was just putting on airs, but he has something wrong with his eyes.



Anyway, yes, he's dark. He's very competent. The Emir is very strong on finance. He's a financial genius. The Crown Prince is very strong on security, police work, that sort of thing. They are from different sides of the family. They alternate being Emir, one side of the family and the other side of the family, since they are cousins. So, the first two people we saw were the Crown Prince and the Emir. It could have been opposite. The assistant secretary talked with the Emir and he's very engaging. They hit it off and they talked about gardening. The Emir really likes to garden, when he's not on official duties. That's one of his two joys in life. And they talked for a while about gardening and sort of broke the ice. The Emir used an interpreter. It was an interpreter he always used in Kuwait, and they apparently got him out. So, they talked for a while, just breaking the ice, and then the assistant secretary told the Emir what he wanted, which was a formal request from the government of Kuwait under the United Nations Charter for American assistance in self-defense. The Emir sort of nodded, and then we just went off, that was the end of the meeting. Everybody was in a hurry and they're all in makeshift quarters. Then we saw then in sequence, after we saw the two of them, the Emir and the Crown Prince. The Crown Prince meeting wasn't terribly substantive, it's just that they appreciate our being there, and looked to us for assistance. We talked to the interior minister, Sheik Salman, who is a tough guy and told us what he was doing. He was going to other Arab countries to round up support for the Kuwait position. We also called upon the foreign minister who was polite, but not much else. The foreign minister had a long history of being anti-American. We had avoided him during the whole tanker war. We worked, he was a foreign minister and deputy prime minister, sometimes prime minister, acting prime minister sometimes. We'd made a practice of avoiding him because he had a policy of aggressive neutrality, which meant in the U.N., he always voted with the Soviet Union. So we did the whole oil tanker thing, just as an aside, working with the oil ministry, not with the foreign ministry, and not with the defense ministry.

We saw a couple other members of the ruling family and as we went through the sequence, we saw the defense minister, which was simply a hello, shake, welcome, hello, shake hands and leave. He was really non-substantive, and the Kuwaitis made no pretense that he was. We left... there were some side conversations going on all the while, which I will mention one with the Kuwaiti oil minister who pulled me aside and said, Ken, did I remember a certain man, his name was Abdel Fatah al-Badr, did I remember him. A hard man to forget, he was about 350 pounds, a huge man. He was the head of the Kuwait oil tanker company. He would be a target in Kuwait of the Iraqis who hated him, and he said, "Ken, we didn't get him out, can you get him out?" I said, "Well we'll see what we can do."

Other than that, at the end we got back in the car. The arrangement was made with the planning minister that he would get the document to me that Assistant Secretary Kelly had asked for, that is the formal request from the government of Kuwait. Of course, we had, Assistant Secretary Kelly had reiterated to the Kuwaitis that we recognized them as the government of Kuwait, and that we did not accept the occupation. We then left, headed for the airport, and off went our two visitors.

*Q: Question.*

STAMMERMAN: Sure.

*Q: I've been told that when dealing particularly with the Saudis and people in that part of the world, that if somebody nods after you make a proposal or something like that, that it's essentially an acknowledgment, I've heard your question, and you want to make sure you get some... In a case like this, I would think force majeure would take over, it was assumed that they would, but did you have any disquiet about that you... nobody... did you get a definite commitment?*

STAMMERMAN: We had a definite commitment as I recall.

*Q: From who?*

STAMMERMAN: From the Emir. He was the only one who could have made that commitment. It's the same way as what I've heard what happened in Riyadh about the King making the commitment. Normally, the Emir would nod and then consult. Normally, but they didn't have time for consultations, so I'm fairly sure it was the Emir who said yes, but by the time we walked out of those meetings we had a commitment from the planning minister. We had a commitment from the Kuwaitis with our being told that the planning minister, who was my contact, would get me the document as soon as possible. No later than tomorrow, the next day. So, they left, and I was satisfied, and I assumed they were, that the Kuwaitis were going to make the formal request.

The next morning, I think it was, I got a phone call from the Kuwaitis, from the planning minister, saying, Ken, I've got your document. I went over and it was indeed a document in Arabic and English, because we'd given them a suggested text after all. And the planning minister said, "We're sorry it took so long, but we didn't have a typewriter." The planning minister himself, it's one of these little incidents, he went to the suq in Khobar, looking for an Arabic typewriter. He had to just buy one because the Saudis hadn't given them anything, no paper, no typewriter. It was simply a palace where they were living. So he had gone to the suq and had found an Arabic typewriter and had typed the thing up himself. It was signed by the Emir, as appropriate.

As I got there, it was weird. Because the Kuwaitis were clearing out. As I drove in, you had people in Mercedes Benz', in all manner of cars, people with guns out the windows, all roaring out of the palace, with this planning minister staying behind to talk to me, and a couple of the other Kuwaitis I knew, who were friends of mine. And they told me, we're out of here. The Saudis have told us they want to get us to the other side of the peninsula, and the Emir is already gone, they are leaving for Taiz, which is way the other end of Saudi Arabia. Because they were worried about Dhahran. They did not want him to be a target.

*Q: Well, just get in the feeling, there's still concern that there might be suddenly something launched at Dhahran?*

STAMMERMAN: Yes, very much so. The Kuwaitis were very worried about it. The Saudis were worried about it. And they were worried that the Kuwaiti Emir being there, and word was sort of getting out among some people...

*Q: Would be an attraction.*

STAMMERMAN: Would be sort of a hot pursuit reason, that it would give the Iraqis a reason to go after him, to go after Dhahran just to get the Kuwaitis, and in the process they'd take the oil fields. [laughter]

*Q: Yes. [laughter]*

STAMMERMAN: So the Kuwaitis were spirited away, on the orders of the Saudis. This was not their choice. They were happy to leave and would go wherever the Saudis gave them a place to stay, but the Kuwaitis told me the Saudis want us to move to the other side of the peninsula, so we're gone. A couple of them stayed behind to talk to me. The planning minister told me the story about getting the typewriter and handed me the paper. I took it, shook his hand, said good luck, then headed for the consulate where I called the op center and said, "I've got the document. I'm pouching the originals. Here's the English version." Sent a very restricted cable. That was that for a short while. Then the next day, Secretary Baker was on television saying we have this request from the government of Kuwait for self-defense under the United Nations Charter. I thought, cool. [laughter] Hey, this gives us an excuse to go to war. I'm part of it. Hey. The story of things going on. Glad to see it.

*Q: This is in August.*

STAMMERMAN: This is in August. Mid-August. Early on. Again, at this point we were concerned about a lot of things. We were concerned that the Iraqis would still come, just for the oil. I mentioned earlier about the arrangements that we made with the Saudis over security, the Department not being responsive at all, but the Saudis really coming through for us, setting up... I should mention that the Saudi National Guard chief, a prince, one of the bin Saud... he not only supplied dozens of soldiers for us, built watch towers, he also dug a trench completely around the compound, except for the one road, the setback we had.

An amusing incident, I have to mention this. Not long after that, my deputy at the consulate general came into my office and said, "Ken, do you know what the Saudis have done?" I said, "No, what now?" He said, "They've arrested two of the American professors at the university." The University of Petroleum and Minerals, which was right next to the consulate. I said, "What in the world for?" He said, "They were jogging around the warning track, that the Saudis had established along our perimeter. You've got to do something, call somebody in protest." I said, "Are you kidding? They're lucky they didn't get shot." There's sort of the attitude of the American community, and a good many of my staff for that matter, about security. I was very worried about this and said we've got to be very strict. And people were kind of... It was kind of strange sometimes.

Meanwhile, the American community was still in full-fledged panic, in Dhahran. They were watching CNN, more importantly, their families were watching CNN, all showing arrows pointing to Dhahran, and so everybody in the States was calling up to say, get my daughter out of there. That is, calling the sons to get their daughters home, and get everybody out of there. The Saudi-ARAMCO policy was that if the American embassy and the consulate general called for the evacuation of American citizens, they of course would cooperate. Short of that, if you left

their employ, and flew back in panic, you lost your job. As far as they were concerned, you would be unemployable in the Gulf if they had any say in the matter for the rest of your life. This left a lot of the American community, the oil guys, torn between fear and greed, and they were very angry at me personally, and at the embassy, for not evacuating them, because they kept hearing on TV that Dhahran was in danger of being overrun. As soon as the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne deployed, though, I was confident that there would not be an invasion. I was sure of this because having been in Kuwait, knowing how the Iraqi army fights, I thought they would not dare to take on the American army in any way, shape, or form. I was very confident. None of my staff were, or very few of my staff.

*Q: Where did the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne go? North of Dhahran?*

STAMMERMAN: The 82<sup>nd</sup> deployed north and west. In the west, they occupied the oil processing area, where you separate the natural gas from oil, at Abqaiq. They covered Abqaiq and that area. The first thing they did though was set up a blocking force north of Dhahran where the Saudis...

*Q: North of Ras Tanura.*

STAMMERMAN: Yes, it would north of there, north of the Shiite area, which is near Ras Tanura. They also deployed near where the Marines were to land. That was part of what they were doing. Essentially, there was a Saudi blocking force that was up there on the initiative of the Saudi National Guard commander. Until the 82<sup>nd</sup> arrived, we simply had that small blocking force of National Guardsmen that were up there. Then we had the deployment, large numbers of forces deployed. My main contact after the first week of deployment... Again, the deployment starts in mid-August. By the third week in August, I suppose, I'd contact with General Pagonis, who was the head of the 22<sup>nd</sup> support command. That was his vehicle..., he was the head of logistics, became known as the logistics genius behind Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm. He and his second in command colonel arrived and were living out of an Army vehicle for about a week until we made contact. I invited him over, and they were always having good reason to come by the house because they get served good American food at the house. This is before they had their units deployed. Anyway, I worked with them very closely and put them in contact with the Saudi merchant families, who could supply, who were good at the logistics supply.

*Q: Al Gusabis...*

STAMMERMAN: Yes, the Al Gusabis, the Al Zamils. The incident there with the Al Zamils, the Al Zamils were one of the major families of the Eastern Province. They were asked by General Pagonis, as soon as he arrived he said, I've got thousands of troops arriving in the next couple of days, can you supply 10,000 breakfasts tomorrow morning? They said yes we can, and they did. Which really surprised the General. He said, he was worried that he was getting into a third world country. I said, "No these guys are good. They really know their stuff." There was another family who had the local Sears franchise. They had a local manager who was Pakistani, whose job was on the line because on his own authority he had ordered a big shipment of sledgehammers for the local Sears outlet. Saudis don't use sledgehammers for anything, well I

guess they can for tent pegs. Anyway, these things were just sitting on the shelf. They'd just opened 2 months earlier, and nothing was moving. And then the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne arrived and said we need sledgehammers. [laughter]

*Q: [laughter] I assume there was an "Allah be praised."*

STAMMERMAN: There was an "Allah be praised." A helicopter lands in the parking lot and a guy walks in and says, I need sledgehammers. All these buyers, all these logistics guys, they all had authority to spend \$20,000 out of their pockets, and he walked in and said, "I'll take every sledgehammer you have." [laughter]

*Q: [laughter]*

STAMMERMAN: Allah be praised. The Saudi owners told me about this later on and said this is unbelievable how this came out of the sky to rescue this guy's job, because they thought it was the height of foolishness to have ordered all these American sledgehammers. The Saudis wouldn't use them. As they arrived, General Pagonis was the contact with the local Saudis on the military side. I would go with him on some meetings, others he arranged on his own because of ARAMCO, the king, the royal family did not want the Al Saud messing around with ARAMCO. They did not want corruption in the Saudi ARAMCO arrangement. There were only 5 princes in the entire province. Among them, though, were Prince Turki bin Nasser, who was head of the airbase. He owned the airbase, essentially. And he answered to no one except I guess the king, the Crown Prince, or the defense minister. Within that airbase, his word was law. The governor, Prince Mohammed bin Fahd, governed outside the airbase. So General Pagonis made his arrangements with Prince Turki and kept me informed of what was going on. I said fine. I advised him when asked what to do.

Part of the arrangement was, he told Prince Turki, that over half of his personnel were female, and that they had to be able to drive in order to perform their duties. And he understood of course what the local arrangements were about women not driving, and about women being alone in a car and all these sorts of things. And Prince Turki and Prince Mohammed bin Fahd said the same thing, we were off base when we saw him. I saw Prince Mohammed with the General, I took him over to introduce him to Prince Mohammed, set up so that they would have their own contacts and arrangements. The Princes, Prince Mohammed and Prince Turki both said, "American women who are military personnel can drive in the Eastern Province as long as they are on a mission. To signify they are on a mission, they have to wear their hats. American females in uniform wearing a hat will not be disturbed. If anyone disturbs them, they will have to answer to Prince Turki or Prince Mohammed." After those commands were issued and word got around, no American females were bothered. Nobody wants to mess with either of those two gentlemen. They had a way of making people disappear if they wanted to. [laughter]

*Q: [laughter]*

STAMMERMAN: There were rumors, I should mention, all during the deployment, that American female military personnel had beaten up Mutawwa, religious police. I've heard this from any number of Saudis, from ARAMCO Americans, same story. Turned out to be an urban

legend. Near as we could understand the legend, a Mutawwa had accosted a female soldier who then beat him up... used judo on him or somehow embarrassed him and kicked him around. Which all the Saudis loved to hear because Eastern Province Saudis really don't like the Mutawwa.

*Q: No. No. [laughter] These are sort of the equivalent of the Taliban to the Eastern Province.*

STAMMERMAN: Exactly. In fact, shortly after the deployment, I'd say within a month of the deployment of the U.S. forces, as far as we know, all the Mutawwa disappeared. All the sheiks, the religious scholars, all the ones with the scraggly beards, we called them the bearded ones, they all left figuring their efforts would be better appreciated in Mecca. So they moved out to the Jeddah area to pray for victory or something. But they disappeared. So we had no trouble as far as I know with any of our military personnel in the Eastern Province.

*Q: Was there any concern about Iraqi sympathizers or spies or saboteurs or that sort of thing?*

STAMMERMAN: Yes. I was certainly concerned because between us and the Kuwaiti border was just a lot of sand, and the borders were very porous. The Saudis did not seem concerned. I was not concerned about major... I did not think we would have major units slipping in under cover of darkness, but we were worried about terrorism, as were the Saudis. The Saudis not as seriously, I think. They were fairly confident about their internal security. They were more concerned over the years about Shia, the Iranian sympathizers than Iraqi sympathizers. Our soldiers were primed... There were a couple of incidents, a couple of close things... For example, at the airport, not long after the deployment after we set up our guard force out at the airbase. Our forces deployed on the Saudi airbase. We had both Saudi security and American security in various places. We had an American security checkpoint on the public highway as you go towards the airport. At the airport where there was an American security presence, U.S. soldiers in uniform, there was an incident where a drunken Saudi walked in like he always did, just lurched through the security checkpoint, and I heard this second hand, that the American officer said, "This guy's guns went up, but our guys didn't fire because they figured this guy might well be drunk." And indeed he was. So it's one of these lucky things. We didn't want a dead Saudi. But we were concerned. I think I was more concerned probably than most of the people on my staff. People on my staff and the ARAMCO Americans sort of shared a fear that the Iraqi military would arrive, that the Iraqi airplanes would bomb us and Iraqi tanks would appear over the horizon. I wasn't concerned about that at all.

*Q: Well with the arrival of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne and the logistics command, did this begin to change perceptions in the ARAMCO community or was this still a nervous group?*

STAMMERMAN: It was a very nervous group. They became more nervous as time went on. They'd heard... Again, it's not universal because there were, I thought, some level-headed people among the bunch, but they'd heard from the U.S. military guys, lower ranks. We had a 'take a soldier home for dinner' program, and they would hear from them all these tales, you know the Iraqis have poison gas, you know the Iraqis have weapons of mass destruction. We're prepared to go to war next week. And so on... I got one call, and I would get calls occasionally, fewer... the first week after the invasion I got several, but from senior executive among not ARAMCO

but ARAMCO contractors, American citizens, that we have word from the military that the Iraqis are coming over the border tonight. What do you know? Nothing I've heard. [laughter] We're here.

*Q: [laughter]*

STAMMERMAN: We heard you guys are bailing out. That sort of thing. [laughter] No, we're here, we're staying. We had an around the clock op center, operations center, the rumor control mill sort of thing. I should mention here that, not long after the Iraqi invasion, a special assistant to the governor, the Emir, Emir Mohammed bin Fahd, a special assistant to the Emir... I knew he existed. I'd called his telephone number a couple of times. He'd never returned my calls. I was sure, because I had asked, he had no other contact with anybody in the U.S. mission either. He was sort of this internal security guy, special projects, contact with the secret police. That sort of thing. Not long after the invasion, he called me and said, "Ken, we can talk now." [laughter]

*Q: [laughter]*

STAMMERMAN: And he came over that day and called on me. This is a man who lived in the United States for a long time, spoke perfect English. Was a member of an old family in Saudi Arabia. He said if I need to talk to him, if you need to get a message to the Emir, any hour, day or night, call me. Here's my number. And likewise, if the Emir needs to talk to you, we can talk. There's the problem that if the Emir himself, Mohammed bin Fahd, talks to me, it's a matter of diplomatic record, a matter of government conversations. This is all, as far as I'm concerned, off the record. I said fine. It can be off the written record. We can talk about it. So throughout this entire event then, I had a back channel to the Emir which worked very well. It turns out, I gathered indirectly, that he was also talking to some of our senior military people. Which was useful.

*Q: You must have had somebody designated to be the soother, somebody who would take calls to the Americans, talk nicely to them, or meet them or something.*

STAMMERMAN: What we did was have this 24-hour operations center. We always had somebody at the phone. The consul was Les Hickman, who was to my point of view, a very capable officer. Unfortunately I had him at the Kuwaiti border for the first month and a half. Just across the border from the Iraqi tanks. Welcoming Americans, making sure the Saudis treated them right and put them on transport to Dhahran and evacuate to the States. We were not a very large staff. I had a consular officer who was then sending Americans out on empty U.S. military planes on the reverse flight. There was one young female officer from Riyadh who was visiting us on the day of the invasion, who I saw walking by my office that first week, and I said, you're working for me. I called up the DCM and said, "I need bodies, she's on my staff, right?" He said, "Okay, as long as you need her." So, I grabbed anybody I could and put them to work on that late shift because we had people calling at all hours of the night.

We just didn't have enough people to have anybody to designate as chief hand holder until my consul, Les Hickman, got back, which was maybe a month and a half after the invasion. The concern by the Americans, and it got worse as time went on, was they would... every time there was a story on CNN about Iraqi capabilities and intentions, we would get a wave of calls

from the American community. CNN showed over and over... By the way, I should say AFRTS, Air Force Radio TV Service... once the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne, which is sort of the senior group over the 82<sup>nd</sup>, once they arrived en masse, the U.S. military went live on U.S. TV, so we were broadcasting American television in the Eastern Province, in the clear, which was really quite a cultural experience for the Saudis.

*Q: Well, actually, it wasn't, because when I was there in the late '50s, the airbase, which had an American TV station, was doing it and apparently the Emir loved to watch wrestling. [laughter]*

STAMMERMAN: [laughter]

*Q: So, then it died away after...*

STAMMERMAN: Well, actually, there was still an arrangement of sorts. It could only be received by certain Saudis. Our training mission had set up an arrangement where American TV was going to them would be piped to certain Saudi people like the Emir. I'm not sure it was the Emir this time, but it was people like that. But this was just broadcasting in the clear so that everybody could see CNN and CNN kept running the sequence of showing our soldiers training for germ warfare and chemical warfare. They would show an American soldier in uniform having a fit, as it were, shaking all over, and by all accounts dying on the sand. This is what it looks like if you are caught in the open by poison gas without a gas mask. So from that moment on, a) they wanted out, and b) if not, they wanted gas masks from us. Our response was, if you want to get out, talk to the Saudis. We're not going anywhere. Second, you don't need gas masks, the Iraqis would never gas against American civilians, we were sure of it. I was sure of it. I remained sure.

I should say that the ambassador and DCM still were talking to me, we would meet at least once a month, I would go to Riyadh, with the Consul General from Jeddah. There was an understanding. Ambassador Chas Freeman had said to me early on, do I think we ought to bail out? And I'd originally said no, and that was the last we talked about it. The understanding was that if I thought we should bail out I would tell him. I didn't think we should bail out. Never did. Whenever I would talk to the American community, and I'd talk to small groups occasionally. They would be at the consulate for various things, I would call meetings of the American business community at least once a month and have a speaker. I had General Pagonis speak to them early on. I would tell them the latest travel advisories. I would say, we're staying, informally. Formally I would say we have no reason to evacuate. They of course didn't really believe us and thought we were playing up to the Saudis, because if the Americans pulled out it meant 5 million, no by that time 7 million barrels of oil would go off the world market. Because without the American workers at ARAMCO, ARAMCO shuts down. We knew it, the Saudis knew it, the American workers knew it. The American workers felt that we were downplaying the danger in order to keep them on the job to keep the 7 million barrels flowing.

*Q: Well, in a way you were. The point being, we were trying to keep this thing together, and there was a risk involved.*

STAMMERMAN: There was a risk, but I was personally convinced that there was no risk to



American personnel, either to my staff or American citizens, except through a very, very random chance that if the Iraqi ever fired SCUDS they might by chance hit something. I'd been briefed by the military on SCUDS about how they tend to have a target radius of 3 miles, in those days. I'm sure characteristics are different now. But in those days, the Iraqis would be lucky to hit Dhahran, Khobar, very unlikely to even hit all of the entire ARAMCO compound if they aimed at it. So, I'd tell them, "There's a random chance that something might happen, but unlikely. So the risk is not worth it for us to get out. So, if the risk bothers you, you are always welcome to leave." That made me very unpopular, comments about holding them hostage were very typical. When we did have open meetings, there were some very angry people around.

*Q: Was it a matter of sort of well, it's your decision, you can leave.*

STAMMERMAN: This is what we told them. The Saudi ARAMCO management had a standing offer that any dependent, wives and children normally, who wanted to leave could leave. They would give them a free ticket back. Okay, but if you are a worker... at first there was a big, long thing about getting a passport. ARAMCO, like most Saudi employers, kept their employees' passports. But eventually they gave them out their passports. There was no reason under law that they had to have passports. Even though there's no reason under law the Americans had to have their passports to get back into the United States. We told them, no big deal, if we have to get you out of here, we'll put you on planes and believe me, they will let you into the United States. They were convinced, though, that they had to have their passports to enter the United States. I told them not to worry about it. But they were again... during the deployment, there were some very angry people.

*Q: Was there any response? Would you say, well then get out?*

STAMMERMAN: We would say, "If you can't take it, well, the Saudis will let you go." And then they'd scream, "Yes but then we'll lose our jobs." Oh, okay. They wanted us to help them have it both ways. "You are just playing down the risk." "No we are not." Very confident what the risk is. Then they started... "Well, give us some gas masks." I said, "I don't have any gas masks." They were convinced that we had a store of gas masks, and such, at the consulate, which we didn't.

*Q: Well, Chas Freeman found out, as did Bill Brown in Tel Aviv, that Defense and the CIA, the defense attachés had stores of gas masks. But nobody else did and they told them to get rid of the damn things.*

STAMMERMAN: [laughter]

*Q: Either everybody has them or they don't.*

STAMMERMAN: That's interesting. We didn't have any defense attaché personnel, as such. There was the training group, but the training group immediately redeployed to Riyadh when the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne arrived, because the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne and General Pagonis, who outranked the JUSMAAG, or whatever we called them, the training group, ordered the training group out. He needed their offices. And so he got them, which was good because he was much more attuned to

local conditions after a few weeks than the JUSMAAG officers were after a year. He was a genius. A good man. Of course, they had gas masks, they had lots of gas masks. The deployed U.S. military did. CIA personnel is an interesting question. My understanding was that they had arrangements to evacuate if needed. That was their business. I said to other agency folk that with my staff I know what I am doing, and I'll thank you to shut up. Unfortunately, I do have to say that there was more than one incident where other agency personnel had told State personnel working for me that they thought I was underplaying the risk. That they were convinced that I was playing with their lives. And this made at least one young officer, two young officers do things they shouldn't have done. One sent his family home, which made him very unhappy the rest of the deployment, because he had been told by somebody in another agency that I was downplaying the risk and this other agency knew that we were in great and imminent danger. And there was another officer, was a young vice consul, did the same thing, was told that both I and Les Hickman, the consul, was playing with their lives, that we knew that the danger was much greater, or that we were ignorant. Either we knew it or if we didn't know it we were ignorant. And they, the other agency people, knew, by gosh, what was going to happen.

*Q: And so what did he do or she do?*

STAMMERMAN: She was unhappy and engaged in sort of bureaucratic guerilla warfare the rest of the deployment. Just complaining about her boss. I think it turned her against him, unfortunately. She worked well. She did, under instruction, she worked long hours, but it made her morale plummet. Absolutely destroyed, because all the while she thought we were ignoring the reality, either intentionally or through ignorance.

*Q: But it does show, there's this feeling that people are rallying around and some don't quite rally quite as much as other people.*

STAMMERMAN: Some don't rally.

*Q: Chas Freeman said he had some people, a few that he asked, just had to let them go.*

STAMMERMAN: I did ask his permission to send one of my state officers, who also had gotten this attitude from I think from other agency people. I don't know. But he had this attitude. I had a staffing problem. I may have mentioned earlier. None of the officers on my staff when the Iraqis invaded Kuwait had ever served in an Arab country. They were there mainly because of the high differential. They lived there, lived behind the compound walls, didn't meet the Saudis, didn't know the customs, certainly didn't know Iraq. They didn't know Iraq from Iran, most of them. This officer, he's the one officer I asked Chas, one more time, I've got to put him on a plane. While we were evacuating Americans, he threw a temper tantrum, what I consider a temper tantrum, in front of American civilians who were waiting to be evacuated, and in front of U.S. military personnel who were trying to evacuate them. He absolutely exploded and said that I didn't know what I was doing. I told him, "Look, calm down, and go home. Just go home." I sent him home for the day. We never talked about it afterwards. I'd say he was under a lot of pressure. But there were a lot of people like that. This was the only one who absolutely exploded and said you're doing a... you're wrong, you'll get us all killed, kind of thing. The situation when he exploded was, I've got a better way of doing this, and you're endangering us all by this

ineffective way of getting people out. Oh, well. That jumps ahead, though.

*Q: One last thing, we were talking off mike, you said there were two schools on the consulate compound, one British and one American. And these continued during the time...?*

STAMMERMAN: Yes, the schools remained open. We had the international school there, we had a British stream and an American stream, with an American headmaster and a British headmaster. They remained open the whole time. The superintendent would come over and see me fairly often. Patty, my wife, would have the teachers over occasionally. Of course they lost a lot of their students because of an unfortunate incident early in the deployment with Bryant Gumble doing a show on the runway as American troops arrived. He mentioned...

*Q: Bryant Gumble being...*

STAMMERMAN: The NBC anchor at the time, the Today Show. Said, in passing, "Oh, the American community is leaving here and the American school is closed." The headmaster and the superintendent said, "Oh we're not closed." And they did contact NBC, which would just not retract it. It made the headmasters very upset. They lost a lot, the school stayed open, even with a lot fewer students than they would otherwise have had. Their students remained the international students... no Saudis go to school there...the international contractors' children who were non-ARAMCO. ARAMCO has its own schools.

*Q: When you move into, from August to September and October, what was happening?*

STAMMERMAN: We were having of course the deployment of U.S. forces and material. And our compound is a couple hundred meters from the end of the airbase runway. The airbase, I should say, is King Abdulaziz airbase at Dhahran. Dhahran airbase they call it, is dual purpose, it's both military and civilian. So that when the C-5s, these huge, American transport planes were arriving, they would fly right over the end of our compound. So we saw a steady sky train of these massive airplanes arriving day and night. We also had F-15s and F-16s constantly taking off and circling the... flying cover over Dhahran. The Saudis meanwhile had opened up, for our use, the other airbase that they had been constructing. There was another civilian airport under construction in the Eastern Province. It had been under construction for years, under Bechtel management. Bechtel was the contractor. Subject to much scandal because, while Dhahran airport has capacity for couple million passengers a year, this would have more than doubled the capacity of passengers, this was going to be a civilian airport, it was about 20 miles north of Dhahran and out in the desert area. There was no reason in the world to build this airport following the downturn in the oil economy in the mid-'80s. Yet, it kept going, and the assumption was that members of the Al Saud were getting their pocket lined by continuing to build the airport.

General Turki took General Pagonis and some of air force commanders out to the airport. When our logistics general and the Air Force commanders saw this airbase, they were overjoyed. It was usable. The control tower was up. The runways were finished. The passenger terminal was not finished. Who needs a passenger terminal? So, the Saudis, through Prince Turki, and the Saudi military commander of the Eastern Province, who was a non- al-Saud, by the way, both said,

“You want the airbase? Take it.” Bechtel would stay there to manage, because Bechtel, the contractor, was an American company, knew what needed to still be done, and what was in shape and what wasn’t.

And so that became our other deployment airbase. We couldn’t see things arriving there, but essentially that’s where we put all our helicopters. All the Apaches came in there, and a lot of the deployed units, the C-5s were diverted to there as well. All civilian aircraft continued to come into Dhahran. That’s one thing that went on. So we had massive numbers of troops deploying. We had Pagonis putting together... hiring people, setting contracts up, military making contacts throughout the Saudi society. I was setting up a lot of officer meeting merchant family dinners, like every other week if I could. I had a Saudi merchant family who had agreed to host a dinner for American officers. And the Saudis were lining up to do it.

The deployment of American forces was welcomed by the Saudi community. We’re talking the Sunni merchant community. The Shia kind of laid low. I’ll mention here that I did have some concern by various units as they deployed, they were deploying near Shia areas. The units were quite concerned about security, because remember not long before, in the late ‘70s and mid-‘80s, there had been Shia uprisings which were put down brutally by the Saudis, and they were concerned that we, the Americans, were identified with the Saudi regime, and that therefore the Shia, who were pro-Iranian to a point, almost by default, since nobody else except the Americans ever took notice of them, that the Shia might act against the American forces, might somehow sabotage, or engage in violence or something. I told the American commanders that there was no concern because as far as the Shia were concerned, we were their only friends in the entire world. They loved Americans, because if we were in the area, the Saudis wouldn’t beat up on them so much. I did make some contacts with the Shia community and explained what we were doing, and they said fine they weren’t going to cause any trouble.

Anyway, the American officers would go to these dinners hosted by the merchant families. This happened all the way up to when the war started. One of the funny things going on was, General Schwarzkopf had issued general order number one, to the American forces, which was the American military is dry. There will be no alcohol, and any officer, any man, anyone caught drinking would get an Article 16, which was sort of a summary, not quite a court martial, but it’s a summary punishment. For any officer it means he’s on a plane back to the States. It would effectively end his career. So the American Army was dry. We’d go to these gatherings, and alcohol is illegal in Saudi Arabia, and there would be whiskey on the tables, invariably. Because the Saudis had it. The Saudis had, what I always considered a constructive hypocrisy about alcohol, that it’s illegal, you can’t sell it, and it doesn’t appear, but it’s there, once you are inside the walls. This is the Eastern Province; now I’ve heard things are different in Riyadh, but as for the Eastern Province, once you are inside the walls of someone’s house, or inside the compound, then the Mutawwa are forbidden to enter. So if you want to drink under your own roof, that’s your business, just don’t have it in the car, don’t go anywhere with it. Don’t sell it on the street. So we go into these dinners and there’s alcohol on the table. The American officers couldn’t drink because if any one of them had admitted it, then they would all get Article 16 and they would all go home. None of them wanted that. So it was funny, I might drink a beer, but never have been much to drink whiskey anyway. The Saudis and maybe myself or another American officer might drink a beer, where the American Army was dry. These turned out to be very

constructive gatherings.

The American officers by and large didn't know a lot about the Saudis other than what they had heard. These were officers from the deploying units like the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne. You mentioned the Al-Gosaibi family. One day an al-Gosaibi, the son-in-law of the old man, called me up and said, "Ken, we'd like to invite the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne." I said, "The 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne." He said, "Yes, as many as you can get, we'd like to have them over." They've got this vast compound, several compounds, this vast compound in al-Khobar (the town next to Dhahran), and I replied, okay. Then I called up my contact with the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne. The deputy commander of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne, I would see him probably once a week. I had good contacts inside the deployed forces. And I said, as many as you can get. He said fine, we'll deliver however many... This was probably October, so it wasn't like we were on the front lines, ready to attack and all that. As many guys as we can pull off the line, we'll get them down there. There were busloads and busloads of 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne, showed up at this family place, the al-Gosaibi compound. We tried to keep track of how many were expected. I kept telling him, hundreds. He said, great, the more the merrier. And they were invited and had this massive feast with long tables, as many of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne as we could get onto the compound had a wonderful day. The general Saudi attitude was, we love these guys, we had no problem at all.

*Q: Were you following the politics back home, whether, you know there was a big debate going on about whether or not we would attack. One was a defensive, that decision had already been made, Desert Shield. But Desert Storm, the attack on Kuwait, it was a big debate and it was rather close in the Senate. Was this being followed by you all?*

STAMMERMAN: We were following closely, yes. As the deployment went on... there were a couple of incidents that we want to get back to, but as the deployment went on, I would also, as invited, brief American military units. General Pagonis would ask me over to brief his staff, especially as new people arrived I briefed more of them. But there were others, for example, one of the secretaries in the consulate, excellent person, had arrived not long before the deployment. Her son was deployed to a front line unit. He was in a tank unit. The first deployment was the airborne units and the Marines. But then, the President deployed our heavy armor from Europe.

*Q: Fifth Corps or something.*

STAMMERMAN: Fifth Corps... it was an armored corps under General Franks. It was General Franks organization. She was scared stiff about her son. She wasn't worried about Dhahran, she was nervous about her son. I kept reassuring her, and she believed me, but she was nervous because she kept hearing about this argument going on in the Senate. We were told about all the body bags that the Army was bringing over, that we had expected thousands of casualties. Since her son was going in the first wave, this made her very nervous. So I briefed his unit, not at the general officer level as usual, but they were in Dhahran on leave, and I briefed them. I told them their main problem was going to be taking care of prisoners. That the Iraqis will consider that you guys beat the Red Army. The Red Army didn't want to fight you, and your main problem will be how to care for the prisoners you take. I don't know if they believed me or not, but that's what I told them. My attitude insofar as I made it known was typically when I mentioned at our weekly staff meetings that the sooner we went to war the better. Because I had a lot of sympathy

for the Kuwaitis; I would care about what was going on in Kuwait, these were my friends. I hoped we kicked the Iraqis out of Kuwait, the sooner the better. I did not know the details of how we would do it, but I was fairly sure that whatever we did, that it would be a walkover. The secretary was the only person, by the way, after the victory, who said, "Ken, you were right." The rest of my staff never did come back and say that. But she did. Her name is Barbara. Quite a lady.

Back though, to what happened those first few months. There was an incident, unfortunate incident involving CBS TV. One of my USIS junior officers who normally were there for education liaison, our educational shop telling Saudis how to go to school in the States. He by default became the press officer for the American embassy in the Eastern Province. The ARAMCO civilians had a theater group, and they wanted to put on a USO-type show for the American military. The only auditorium that could handle them was at the American school, which is on our compound. So I said, that's all very nice. Take care of it. And they did, they practiced. They put on a USO-type show. I attended one of the rehearsals.

*Q: Sort of a variety show.*

STAMMERMAN: A variety show, featured a standup comic. And it featured dancers, dancers who did a can-can, which was modest. By American standards, quite modest. The women had their arms covered by sort of frilly things, went from shoulder to elbow, and the skirts went to just above their knees. And they danced. There was singing, it was a variety show. My USIS guy, unbeknownst to me, invited CBS TV in. This was not smart. This was not smart at all, because the CBS guy, a real jerk, he's still around, but he was one of the Middle East guys. He eventually was captured by the Iraqis. That might give somebody a hint as to who he was. He was a jerk. He filmed this. There was not supposed to be cameras on the compound for security reasons without my permission. He either smuggled one on or my USIS guy invited him and didn't caution him about cameras. But somehow he got in that auditorium with a camera. And filmed the show, at least parts of it, and then did a voice-over which appeared on CBS TV. And the voice-over showed the women dancing from their shoulders up, which showed of course only bare skin, and from the knees down which showed only bare skin, and showed pictures of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne in the audience jumping and shouting and cheering. His voice-over was: you might not think this Saudi Arabia (snicker snicker, leering) but it is. It was a clip on TV. The Saudi ambassador saw it, of course, in the USA. Which meant the Saudi defense minister heard about it, which meant Prince Mohammed bin Fahd, the governor, heard about it [laughter] and so I got a call from my back channel contact with the governor who said the governor wanted to see me pronto. I'd also heard about it that morning from David Dunford, the DCM, he said, "Ken, what in the world is going on down there?" I said, "Beats me, Dave. I'll try to find out."

So I called my USIS guy who told me, well, it seemed like a good idea at the time, to show that ARAMCO people... his purpose in letting this guy on the compound was to show that the American community in the Eastern Province was being nice to the American troops. So he showed an appalling lack of discretion by not getting the right to review this film or something, or by just making sure they had no film at all. I'd rather they had none at all. Anyway, I called him, and said, "What in the world did you do?" He said, "Well it seemed like a good idea at the time," was essentially his reaction. I said, "Oh well."

So anyway, my back channel guy said, “The Emir will see you at 10 o’clock this morning.” Didn’t even say, “Ken please come.” He said the Emir WILL see you at 10 o’clock this morning. So I got the car, got the driver, went over, got into the Emir’s waiting room, and sitting in the waiting room with me was the president of Saudi ARAMCO who is by the way right now the Saudi oil minister. This is an oil industry veteran, educated by the Americans, joined ARAMCO at the age of 12 or something, he’s an oil executive who can stand with any oil executive in the world. Excellent man, educated through graduate school by the Americans. Speaks perfect English. As far as I know, not used to wearing Saudi dress (thobes), he always works wearing Western clothes, has for most of his life. Anyway, I saw him in the waiting room and he was unaware of why he was being called. And we walked into the Emir’s office and the Emir was livid. This was Mohammad bin Fahd. Like I say, he could make people disappear if he wants. He was livid. Red face, absolutely blowing his top. And he’d never before, we always were on good terms, I’d never seen him lose his composure. He lost his composure. He said, “I’ve received a call from the defense minister. The King hasn’t heard about this, but everybody else has, and what in the world are you people doing?” He turned to the head of ARAMCO and just started going after him. I should say there were 3 people in the room besides the Emir. Me, the head of Saudi ARAMCO, and this is very interesting, the head of Saudi ARAMCO had an Arab affairs advisor, I’m sorry... government affairs advisor. Essentially an Arab consultant. The westernized Saudi management of ARAMCO never really dealt directly with the local Saudi government. They dealt with them through other Saudis. This may be one of the few times that these guys ever had a face-off. He starts off speaking English to the head of ARAMCO. I should say the Emir has a degree from an American University, the University of California, Santa Barbara, and speaks perfect English of course. Anyway, he started going into the head of ARAMCO, “You know what happened, this is terrible. I’m hearing all these things from the defense minister, everybody is angry.” Of course the head of ARAMCO had no idea what was going on. Zero. He had no idea about the TV show, he had no idea what had happened. Nobody on his staff had told him. I guess they didn’t want to admit it or they didn’t know that the Saudi government had heard about it. One thing the governor said, as he was livid, he said, “I know what goes on behind those walls. For example, I know you had church services. I don’t care. None of us care. But you’ve got to keep things behind the walls.” Which is a wonderful exposition of the way the Saudi hypocrisy works. You’ve got to keep that behind the walls. I interrupted and said, “Excuse me, Your Royal Highness, excuse me. He doesn’t know what’s happened. Obviously. I know what happened. Please let me interrupt and tell you what happened.” So I explained. I said, “This was done by a lower-ranking member of my staff. I didn’t know what was going on, the American generals did not know what was going on. We would never have let this happen had we known it was going to be on American TV. It will not happen again, and there will be no more USO shows. You can be sure of that.” At that point he kind of calmed down a bit. And then I explained what happened, and he said, “Well it better not happen again.” I said, “Okay.” So we walked out of the room, and the head of ARAMCO says, Ken, thank you. And later that day I got a call from the senior American on the ARAMCO staff. He said, “Ken, you rescued our guy and we’ll remember that.” I said, “I take responsibility for that, it shouldn’t have happened, it won’t happen again.” It was quite an incident.

*Q: Oh, boy. Yes.*

STAMMERMAN: Schwarzkopf of course heard about it. I got a call from Pagonis. "Hey that was quite a flap, you guys." I said, "Yes that's a flap but it's over." Incident ended, with no more USO shows, nothing. Agreed. I said, "That's it, there won't be any more." So we had no more shows at all until after the war was over, and the shows we did have after that were male only, male country music stars, no females. Zip. Because of that. Unfortunately. It was quite an incident.

*Q: This also points out the irresponsibility of the people on TV and the press. They are out for a quick fun story and they don't give a damn about the repercussions.*

STAMMERMAN: Exactly.

*Q: And then they complain about that the military and government people mistrust them.*

STAMMERMAN: Yes. There's another incident... we were talking earlier... You asked about the American Congress, the Senate. We, of course, had lots of congressional visitors, well over half the Senate, and at least a third, maybe half of the House came to visit during Desert Shield. The routine was that General Schwarzkopf, whose command center was in Riyadh, would always fly to Dhahran, with the Senators and Congressmen. They would all arrive in Riyadh in military aircraft which would take them further to Dhahran. We would do briefing at Dhahran airbase. The briefing would be General Schwarzkopf, Ambassador Freeman...

*Q: Now, Chas Freeman said sometimes he made three trips a day to Dhahran.*

STAMMERMAN: Yes, it was incredible. We were just flooded with these Congressmen. They all wanted pictures. They all had to get out to see the forces. And there was a routine that the Army always found constituents of any congressman, would somehow end up having meals with them, eating MREs, Meals Ready to Eat, deployed. They would do a briefing, at Dhahran airbase, where General Schwarzkopf and Ambassador Freeman would do the briefing. I would sit up there at the table, but just be available for any specific questions which hardly ever came up. There was one incident which sort of illustrates again the press and some of the congressional attitudes. We had the foreign relations, which was then called the House Foreign Affairs Committee, group came out. There must have been 12, 13, 14 congressmen. And quite a large number of their staff. There was a policy that no one could stay overnight in the Eastern Province. We were worried about security. You just never know... if the Iraqis ever did do some sort of sabotage, we didn't want to have a Senator or Congressman involved.

We did the briefing, and at the end of the briefing, a young lady who was on the staff of the House Foreign Affairs Committee came up to badger Chas Freeman, very aggressively, that she had seen on TV a very upset American couple who were evacuated from Kuwait, who'd gone through the American Consulate in Dhahran for assistance and were given an interview back in Detroit, or somewhere, that they were very upset with the State Department with the way they were treated. And she wanted to know what the details were. Chas, looks at me and says, "Beats me. We've evacuated a lot of people. And if they weren't happy, I don't know, I'll try to find out. Give me their names, do you know their names?" No idea. "When was it on TV?" She said, "I don't know, but I remember seeing it though and they were upset. I want all the details." I



said, "I'll do what I can." She said, "Look, I want a written report, by you, before I leave this country, and I want it in 24 hours." At this point Chas was kind of backing away. This lady was on the majority side too, apparently a good friend of the chairman. I'm not implying anything, but she was sponsored by the chairman. So I said, "I'll do what I can." So instead of immediately leaving with Chas and going and making the rounds as I usually did, I made a quick call to the embassy. We didn't have cell phones in those days. I called up the consular officer, I think that was still the first month and a half, so the consul was still out on the Kuwaiti border. So I had no idea and I said, "Please search the files, and figure out what this was." She said, "I bet I know which one it was. There was a couple we had real trouble with." Turned out this was an American couple who had been evacuated from Kuwait. They had been in Kuwait for years. He was contractor with the oil company. Been on the staff with a contract with the oil company. When he crossed the border, I don't know all the details, but apparently in conversations with the Saudis, he was glad to get out, he walked out through the desert as many Americans did. You snuck or bribed Iraqis to within a kilometer of the border and then walked out. Apparently the Saudis, and he met the American consular officer who was there, and in some exchange said, oh, yes, they can find a job in Dhahran. Well, he got to Dhahran and ARAMCO did not care to employ him. And we had no way of employing him as an American citizen. He was very angry because he expected to move from a job in Kuwait to a job in Dhahran, seamlessly. Apparently his employer who employed him in Kuwait did not have a presence in Dhahran. So we just said, "Your choices are to go back to the United States by military aircraft or by civilian aircraft. But that's it." He was very upset. When he got back to the States, he continued to being upset, saying he'd been promised a job by the Saudis, or Americans or somebody. I never did get the whole story. Anyway, I wrote it up, I had the officer write it up. They had said they were leaving via Jeddah, so we've got to get this out by tomorrow. And then I rejoined the group via the military, and I found the lady and said, "Look this is what was going on during deployment." She said, "I don't want to talk to you. I've talked to the ambassador about this and I don't want to hear from you." That's the last I saw of her. So I thought, I'll latch onto a couple of Congressmen. I showed them around as we went to the deployed forces. We went to the briefings by local commanders. I later heard that through her influence on the Foreign Affairs Committee she became a deputy assistant secretary of state. But we'll let that go.

*Q: Who was it?*

STAMMERMAN: I can't remember her name right now, but I heard she became a DAS. She was just obnoxious. We had little things like that. But I have to say that most of the congressmen and senators who came through, they were all serious, there were a few who were simply getting their pictures taken and that was it. There was only one group, and they were the House Appropriations Subcommittee- (end of tape)

We were talking about [how] the congressional subcommittee shows up and I think they were appropriations or whatever. They were on the money side, in charge of Foreign Service housing, which of course made all the admin people perk up. And they came out with spouses. They were the ONLY subcommittee that came out with spouses. It was a standing rule... no spouses. Military didn't have spouses deployed. Foreign service did, because our rule was... we had voluntary departure... if an American spouse chose to leave, she was gone for the duration of the Desert Shield emergency. If she stayed, she stayed, if she was already there. He or she, but in

this case they were all she. No military spouses were allowed in at all. So this bringing spouses along by the congressmen was considered very bad form to say the very least. And they were a pretty useless group. I took them on a bus tour of Dhahran. I took them out to see a unit that had some people from their districts. I'd go around the compound so they could see our housing. They just wanted to see it from the outside. It was very obvious they just wanted an excuse to get to the Eastern Province, get their pictures taken with the soldiers. The rest of the groups were serious, I'd say, in general. They listened, asked good questions. Congressman Hamilton, for example.

*Q: Lee Hamilton.*

STAMMERMAN: Lee Hamilton, whom I know. I'll say more about him later. After Desert Shield/Desert Storm I met him back in Washington. He's from the district directly opposite Louisville, which is my home town. So I saw him. We had a good chat, sort of privately at the time. We also had the Senator from New Jersey. I'm almost sure I mentioned earlier, showed up in Dhahran before the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne showed up. He'd come over despite the State Department's objections. He's a very rich man, he just came on his own. He came back later as part of a group of senate leadership visit, and introduced me to the various other senators. He introduced me to the senator who later became the Democratic Party Vice Presidential nominee, from Connecticut.

*Q: Lieberman.*

STAMMERMAN: He introduced me to Senator Lieberman when they arrived. They arrived on military aircraft and I met them out on the tarmac, and Senator Lautenberg told Senator Lieberman, Oh, Ken served in Israel, and he speaks Hebrew. And of course, Senator Lieberman speaks Hebrew. So we had a little chat in Hebrew on the tarmac of the Saudi airbase, which I thought was a first. [laughter]

*Q: [laughter]*

STAMMERMAN: But they were all, and Senator Dole and their group, were all very serious people. This was sort of interrupting, but it served a good purpose, it was very educational.

*Q: Yes, it's one of those things that is often overlooked. The Foreign Service gripes about congressional delegations, but in the long run, it's the one chance you really get to educate people about the complexities of what we are dealing with. It's a splendid opportunity.*

STAMMERMAN: Splendid opportunity. And I think we did some good, especially this time. I will also say as an aside, after all this was over, after I retired from the Foreign Service, there was a major debate within AFSA, the American Foreign Service Association, over CODELs, over what our association should say on the subject of congressional delegations. This was when CODELs became very unpopular, were considered to be junkets. There was an anti-junket movement in the U.S. Senate for a while. Many people in AFSA were, unfortunately, I think, talking to the press and saying that CODELs were nothing but junkets. Where Ambassador Atherton, as part of his discussion online, this was a computer online discussion, and I both said, "Hey, these are great educational opportunities, and we don't have a constituency so we ought to

make one among the Congress.” But that’s, as you say, you get different opinions within the Foreign Service.

Back to what was happening there. As the deployment went on, you saw more and more American soldiers in public around in the Eastern Province. We had originally an arrangement with the U.S. military, some ground rules. The U.S. soldiers would not carry weapons in Saudi urban areas. By December, that had fallen by the wayside. So we had American soldiers heavily armed, just going to restaurants. But the Saudis okayed it. They understood. So I can say that throughout the deployment, in the Eastern Province, we had no incidents that I am aware of, of any trouble between American service people and Saudis. On the contrary, the Saudis went out of their way to make them feel at home. ARAMCO’s attitude... ARAMCO had this Take-A-Soldier-to-Dinner program that went on and on. Our main problem with them was alcohol. We eventually laid down a rule... a soldier has to be returned to his unit in the same condition he was delivered: sober. We had American soldiers, the stevedore unit, at Dhahran port. Fascinating bunch of people, mostly women. Mostly women who were moving these large cargoes off of U.S. ships. Weapons... Their main complaint, and we would hear this because again, at these monthly businessmen’s meetings we would always make sure various units were invited. And I got to know a lot of rec associations and try to put on outings. Their main complaint was showers, they had these outdoor showers that were just ramshackle things the military would put together. It was awful hot besides. So, Patty would have these evenings where she would invite people over, especially these women from the stevedore unit, and they would get in our bathroom and close the door and just stay, until somebody knocked, banged on the door and said, “Please let us in, we’re missing the luxury of an American bathroom.” Communal showers and all that, out on the docks, were not their thing.

Well, this whole deployment was a great educational opportunity, we had lots of things going on. My staff built up. I mentioned earlier that we were trying to get more security personnel from the State Department with no success. Finally I did get somebody who was attached to my staff, from the State Department’s SY, who was a former Special Forces officer. He volunteered to come out, over the objections of his immediate superior, which I understand cost him later with his career development. He joined my staff to be political-military liaison officer. He would go to General Pagonis’ staff meetings, and any other military staff meetings, like the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne staff meetings. He made contacts.

*Q: Who was this?*

STAMMERMAN: I don’t remember his name. He didn’t last long, it turned out. General Schwarzkopf was invited in October to visit the Saudi military headquarters in the Eastern Province. He had not called on the Emir yet, Prince Mohammad bin Fahd. So, we took the occasion, we, the embassy military command, to have General Schwarzkopf call on the Emir Mohammad, Prince Mohammed. Which he did. It was a nice meeting. The way it worked, though, the military showed up at the consulate compound and we formed one of these long caravans of cars, all secured of course.

When Schwarzkopf showed up, he showed up with lots of people. This may have been the first time he showed up in Dhahran outside the airbase. Of course, General Pagonis knew his way

around, we called the head of the Saudi military, a general officer, of the Eastern Province, and the internal security of the Saudis, we all went out to the airbase to meet General Schwarzkopf. He was supposed to arrive at say, 10 o'clock, at 9:30 a light plane arrives, U.S. Air Force type light plane, which is the kind General Schwarzkopf would be on, arrives, and General Pagonis and I look at each other and say, is he early? Because the Saudis had not all shown up. Well, it wasn't, it was his advance security. Guys wearing what we always called Banana Republic outfits. In civilian, really. They'd wear an Army hat, but they'd wear these vests, heavy vests, with all kinds of weaponry attached, with a big gun. He got out beside his plane and just stood there.

So the General and I kind of looked at each other and walked over to the guy and said, "Who are you?" He just muttered, "I'm General Schwarzkopf's security." "Okay, we are going to meet him." "Oh, okay." We just stood there and the guy just stood there the whole time. We thought it strange, since around the airbase, you are inside the perimeter, so what do you need a bodyguard for? We didn't have bodyguards. I never did have a bodyguard, by the way. Nor did General Pagonis. So General Schwarzkopf showed up and then his armored car showed up. We went over to see the Prince. We had a lead car who knew the way, supposedly, a car full of guards, then General Schwarzkopf's armored vehicle, and then a follow car for General Schwarzkopf, and there was another car, staffers or something, and then us, in my car, which was armored. Oh, I got an armored car out of the process. I have to say this. My car, which I'd been complaining about for years, it was always tearing out the clutch and wearing out the transmission and everything else, we got a new armored car. Mine was several years older, due for being replaced. We got one that was supposed to go to the consul general in Marseilles, and they diverted it to Dhahran. It's a nice thing, we got a new car out of it. Anyway, back to the procession, then there was somebody behind us.

So we all went tearing off from the consulate general, they came by the consulate general to pick me up. We all went tearing off through Khobar through Dammam, to the Prince's palace, which is at the other end of Dammam. All this at 60 miles an hour. The Saudis knew we were coming, so they cleared the streets and they'd worked this out... they had motorcycle cops with sirens. My SY guy helped me out as a military liaison, was sitting in the front seat. My little Yemeni driver was driving. He was a wonderful driver, took wonderful care of the car. He'd been trained, of course, in security driving, and I trusted that. But he knew the car by then, and he did not like this idea of driving 10 feet behind the car in front of you at 60 miles an hour, as the military do, this high-speed security stuff. Besides, we are going through Khobar and Dammam, which are safe. So, he gave, of course, two car lengths, which meant we were not a tight unit like security likes.

So, we went over and saw the Emir. The meeting went fine. There was introductions, everybody shook hands, said nice words, the usual drill. We got back in the car, and the American SY guy says, I'm going to drive. This guy who had been attached to my staff as my military liaison from SY. He told my driver, you're not doing it right. I'll show you how to do it. So we went tearing off into the desert, I'm in the back seat, my driver is in the front right seat, and we've got this guy from SY driving, and we are 10 feet behind the car in front of us, or less, driving at 60 miles an hour through the desert. Going out to Saudi military headquarters.

So we arrive at Saudi military quarters and we slow down because it's a little village way out in the middle of nowhere. And we slow down, thank goodness, until we come to... We were going to have a luncheon, given by the Saudis, Saudi general staff. So we slowed down, which is good. Well the lead car unfortunately misses the turn to the banquet hall. It's a little U in front of the building, a U-shaped driveway. He misses it. So he stops. This is not smart when you are doing 30 miles an hour in heavily armored vehicles. So he stops, the car behind him slammed on its brakes, stops. General Schwarzkopf's car slammed on his brakes, stops. Skids a little then stops. The car behind him slammed on his brakes, stops. We didn't stop. We slammed our brakes of course, but being 10 feet behind the car in front of us and going 30 miles an hour, you don't stop terribly suddenly when you've got an armored car. So we hit the car in front of us, which hit the car in front of them, which hit General Schwarzkopf, which hit the car in front of them. The car behind us hit us. Nobody got hurt. We are all heavily armored anyway. Tap tap tap tap tap.

The Saudi general staff, meanwhile, was lined up watching this. [laughter] I'm trying to look ahead, and General Schwarzkopf gets out of his car. He is red faced. General Schwarzkopf has a temper that is legendary. He gets out of his car, he's red-faced, he's obviously ready to hang whoever hit the car. Meanwhile, he looks up and sees the Saudi general staff. They are bent over double laughing. They think this is the funniest thing they've ever seen. This is Saudi humor, really, Saudi humor is very slapstick humor. They are bent over double laughing and pointing. General Pagonis who had driven ahead during the meeting with the Emir and is standing up with them, he turns and walks away with his face red, because I can tell he's about ready to burst out laughing as well. General Schwarzkopf then sort of bites his lip and says nothing. I got out of the car, hey, I wasn't driving, and went over to the Saudis and melded into the general population. My driver, who is again a former Special Forces guy, disappears. Never seen again that day. [laughter] My driver then became my driver for the rest of the day. And the Special Forces guy shortly thereafter left the country, I suppose because he was unwelcome by anybody in the military. Nice guy. We chatted together after he left. It was none of my doing, he just decided he better leave. He was replaced by an officer who had been on our staff in Iraq, who helped evacuate the American Embassy from Kuwait. The officer was named Melvin Ang, who turned out... he was a first-rate officer. He was a great help. He became my liaison to the deployed military units. That was one incident.

The other major incident at the time, there were several incidents that may come to mind. I'll mention this one and then one having to do with the Marines. President Bush came out to visit the forces for Thanksgiving dinner. This was a major event, of course. It meant pulling resources from all over Saudi Arabia. The White House sent out an advance team. The U.S. military essentially staffed the operation, provided staffing in terms of vehicles, facilities, helicopters, whatever the White House advance staff wanted, they got from the military. General Schwarzkopf designated a two-star general to be in charge of the visit. A good man, he knew his stuff.

I went out to meet the advance team with my admin officer. There were two team leaders, this guy in charge, and his deputy. They were thoroughly obnoxious people. They were private sector executives, detailed to the White House staff is what they were. And they made themselves obnoxious immediately by berating my admin officer about why didn't he have what essentially would have been a full-fledged White House staffing office ready for them on arrival. They need

this, they need that, they need this many typewriters, this many whatevers. My guy said, we don't have it, we don't have it. Well, you should, you should. It's a managerial technique to belittle the man. Eventually, we agreed that we would detail a Foreign Service secretary to their staff. The rest of their staff would be White House people coming out. They'd be out there the next day anyway, and the U.S. military would back them up. We went to the same palace complex that the Kuwaitis had been in. This is also where the congressional people had been put up, had been using as a rest stop during the day, so I knew the guy that ran it. And this White House guy made himself further obnoxious by demanding things from the Saudis. He wanted to be treated like a prince. He wanted the best suite in the place. The Saudis went along with it, they said, it's White House after all.

We were then asked to come back the next day for a security briefing. The RSO from embassy Riyadh showed up to brief the White House staff who had come out. These two team leaders and a couple of their staffers who had shown up by then. They wanted a briefing about the current security situation in the Eastern Province. The RSO gave the brief, and I followed with a few words. And they said, tell us the real story. And we said, we've told you the real story. The deputy on the White House staff said, "Well look, we've had THE briefing." I said "Yes, well, you got another briefing." He said, "By the AGENCY," I said, "Okay." He said "Well, we've heard about the threat of poison gas, we've heard about the threat of SCUDS, we've heard about all these threats." I said, "Okay, well, we've told you what our threat analysis is. You really don't have a lot to worry about now. And certainly not you. And when the President deploys, I'm sure he will be secure, but what the RSO has said is our assessment."

And this deputy persisted, and he was shaking. He was frightened, he was truly frightened. He said "Look, our lives are threatened out here. I want to know where is the helicopter that will get us out of here. I want to know my place on the helicopter. Show me your evacuation scheme." The RSO just laughed, and said, "Oh, come on. If we have to bug out, we've got hundreds of thousands of military personnel here. We've got helicopters by the ton. If for some reason we have to bug out, we just hop on a helicopter and get out of here." And again, this guy says, "Well, again, where do I go, which helipad do I go to on the compound?" At that, the RSO laughed and said, "You got to be kidding." The deputy stormed out and said, "I'm putting you on report. I'm calling the White House right now."

*Q: [laughter]*

STAMMERMAN: And this guy persisted, until the President came and went. Every time I'd see him, he was shaking, he was frightened. But it was an ambition thing for him, he didn't want to leave. He was convinced...

*Q: What was his position?*

STAMMERMAN: He was deputy head of the advance team for the President's visit. So we had the one guy, the head of the advance team who was simply obnoxious. And the second guy was nervous.

*Q: Coward.*

STAMMERMAN: Yes. [laughter]

*Q: [laughter] To use diplomatic language.*

STAMMERMAN: Diplomatic language. Coward. I don't know if that affected the RSO or not. I simply don't know. The White House man was angry. Another incident along that line happened. As I mentioned earlier, the secretary, I suggested the Foreign Service secretary, Barbara, on my staff, be the one detailed to work with these people because she was super efficient. She was an excellent secretary. The other Foreign Service secretary was quite good but had some health problems. So I didn't want to have her over there if, she had asthma, you never know if something would happen. So Barbara was over there working, and she was quite good. I had no complaints at all about her. I went over there one evening, shortly before the President's arrival. We'd been working out the President's schedule, and David Dunford and I had gone out with the team. We'd flown around in helicopters all throughout the Eastern desert about getting good photo ops [opportunities] where the President would be, and setting up the President's minute-by-minute schedule. And this one evening, there was this argument going among the White House staff. We weren't part of it, but were present for it. The military members of the White House staff, these were not military deployed member, just somebody on the White House staff, military, and civilian members were arguing over how much time the President would spend with certain military units. Front line, whether he'd spend more time at the Thanksgiving dinner, which was in one place, or with the front line unit, or out to the aircraft carrier. And this military staffer said, and I was sitting there talking to Barbara, the secretary, said, "Look, thousands of these men are going to die. They should have the opportunity to see their commander-in-chief." At that point, my secretary, who had a son who would be in the first wave going in, turned white, and got up and walked out of the room. Of course, I got up and ran after her. She just broke down and cried and cried and cried and cried. I said, "Barbara, this guy does not know what he's talking about. Believe me. I know the Iraqis. Nothing's going to happen to your son." This took a while, I talked to her and finally calmed her down. She was a real trooper, and after a while she went back in and got back to work. After a while, somebody told the guy, "Hey, by the way...", and he apologized. It was one of those unfortunate things.

*Q: White House support staff are trying to prove their way, and they create so much ill will. It's unfortunate.*

STAMMERMAN: Yes. The White House secretary was quite good. They deployed a secretary who was very good. She worked very closely with Barbara and I would go over and chat. But the White House aides were not, or worse. Anyway, the visit went off okay, as it turned out. One of the interesting side events was that there was a discussion about what Mrs. Bush would wear. We worked it out at the embassy, I had asked Chas Freeman and he said, "She should just wear BDUs." Battle Dress Uniforms. Because the problem would be an American civilian woman in the Eastern Province, what should she wear. How much attention to American customs, or Saudi modesty codes or whatever. Well, the easy way to trump the whole thing was to have her come in uniform. And it worked. The Saudis were quite happy. They said, "Good, it gets rid of the problem."

I will say another interesting event involved a marine. I would have this senior Marine general, General Boomer, head of their expeditionary force, to dinner every so often. He would come down to my house. And I mentioned that I occasionally would go up to the border to talk to the Kuwaitis. The Kuwaitis had a listening station at the border. They'd interview Kuwaitis who were in the border region, either escaping or running people across the border. The Saudis simply had a border police unit at the border, and there was a no man's land just about a kilometer between the Saudi unit and the former Kuwaiti unit now occupied by the Iraqis. I said, "I go up there occasionally." He said, "Really! I'd really like to see that." Because the Marines were not deployed near the border. The Saudis occupied that area. But the Marines would eventually have to invade through that area if they were going to go North. So I said, "If you want to come visit sometime, be my guest." He said, "Great." So I called him next time I was going to the border with one of the political officers from the embassy. We picked him up inside his fortress. The Marines had occupied a port north of Dhahran called Jubail. I went in through all manner of security, guards and Marines in battle uniform. And got in to see him. He was dressed in civilian clothes. I'd said, "You have to be dressed in civilian because you are going in our car. If you go by military you can make the arrangements with Saudi military; if you go with me, you are civilian." He said, "Fine." I got to his office and his bodyguard driver was with him. And his driver said, "Can I carry my weapon?" I said, "No. Not in my car you can't."

I should say, as an aside, much earlier General Pagonis had asked could he station military units inside the consulate general. I said, "No, we're a diplomatic property, we do not have deployed U.S. forces, we have Marine guards for security, but deployed forces are not within diplomatic property." We didn't want to compromise diplomatic status. Which he understood perfectly well once I explained it.

But I said to the bodyguard, "No weapons, but you can come along, fine." So it turned out that the general and I got in the back seat, and his bodyguard, without arms, extremely nervous man was up front, because again, it's his responsibility. The general's safety is his responsibility. We all went up and went right through the Saudi lines, through Saudi security. They saw me, saw the flag, and waived us through. Went up and we had a long talk with the Kuwaiti people who were listening, and we walked right up to the Saudi border and had tea with Saudi border guards who, they would still process refugees. The Iraqis were encouraging Kuwaitis to flee, so that road was being used. The Saudi border guards would just process them in. So we walked up and had tea with them, and had an American Marine two-star or 3-star with me right there looking across the kilometer at Iraqi tanks. I'm sure if they knew we had a general there they'd WOW, but we just watched them and he took notes. That was fun. So that all went off well. It was just an interesting little experience of doing so. Later on, as we got closer to the American invasion of Kuwait and Iraq, that same CBS journalist that I'd mentioned earlier, disregarded, I'm told by the U.S. generals involved, disregarded their warnings to stay away from the border. He thought that meant the American military had something to hide. He went to the border and was captured by the Iraqis.

*Q: His name is Simon or something like that.*

STAMMERMAN: Yes.



*Q: I can remember talking to somebody who was saying, somebody in Kuwait, our ambassador in Kuwait, was saying he was asked to contact to see if they could get him out, and he said he did it with the greatest of reluctance. He was a son of a bitch to...*

STAMMERMAN: He may have been in Baghdad by then, because we had already evacuated Kuwait by then. I would have said the same thing. You probably would have heard it from me. He had been warned by the military. First he disappeared. I told the military, I hope we were not endangering any American soldiers looking for him while he was missing. The guy just thought the American military was lying to him and that there was something to be found up there. So he got captured by the Iraqis who were running patrols just like we were. The border's very ill-defined, so the Iraqis were running patrols.

Other adventures along the way... We had an American military unit called Civil Affairs Unit, which was then operating out of Fort Bragg, it's now a part of Special Forces. In those days it was attached to the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne. They were our main working contact between all the U.S. units. I had a working relationship with Pagonis. We met each other at least once a week, or more often. The 82nd Airborne deputy commander would come over and he liked our cheeseburgers at our lunchroom, so I'd see the deputy commander of the 82nd Airborne, and we'd discuss what was happening. But for all the rest of the units, we had the Civil Affairs Unit. I would see them every once in a while. They'd take me out to see deployed units in the field. So I got to see know where a lot of our units were. I was not briefed about Desert Storm. Which leads to an interesting story.

*Q: I was wondering, just to capture the spirit of the times. Was it your feeling and the others that we were going to go in and that something was going to happen.*

STAMMERMAN: We didn't know. Our hope, certainly any time I had a chance to talk to anybody within the State Department... of course, I always let the ambassador talk to the senators and congressmen... our hope was, the sooner the better. I should mention another incident that just came to mind.

*Q: Wait a minute. [break in tape] You were saying...*

STAMMERMAN: I was talking about the Kuwaitis. A favorite theme of the American press was that the Kuwaitis were living high on the hog were happy to have the Americans come in and fight for them but were living in the fleshpots of Cairo and the United States, while the Americans were out there to liberate their homeland, and that therefore why should we endanger our boys' lives for these fatcats as it were. In the first place, I was in contact with Kuwaiti units. Their military is a very small group. There aren't very many Kuwaitis. There are 600,000 Kuwaitis in all the world. And they weren't well trained at all. But they were there.

They eventually ended up as advisors to our armed forces. They went in as interpreters. Plus, some of their air force escaped, fought their way out. There was an armored unit that fought its way out of Kuwait, just ahead of an Iraqi column that chased them across the border. That, by the way, was another reason why we...a lot of people were concerned about hot pursuit, because the Kuwaitis military personnel were still fleeing after all this, so there was a lot of concern

about hot pursuit.

It must have been November or so, one of my main contacts within the Kuwaiti ruling family came to see me with a story. This man was a son-in-law of the Emir and an official of the oil company. I knew him well from my days in Kuwait. He was a young man, being a son-in-law of the Emir and a son of one of the major families. He's a Sabah, though not a part of the ruling branch. It's an interesting story. He had been in Kuwait. In Saudi Arabia some time earlier, he had been to the Emir in Taiz and said, "We need to find more about what's really going on." They were getting word out from their intelligence services and such, but they wanted someone from the family to see what was happening. So he, himself, had gone into Kuwait. The Diwaniyyas, that is the Kuwaiti extended family meetings were still going on, the Iraqis had not shut them down at that point. He went in and attended some of the Diwaniyyas of the families that were close to the Al Sabah to find out what was going on. What is the gossip? What are the Iraqis doing? He had been told by his family, by Kuwaiti intelligence, don't be in touch with the resistance, because if he went in like this and got caught, they might consider, hey, he couldn't tell them anything, that he was simply some hot shot kid off on a mission or something. But he did go to the families, and also wouldn't get to any of the families involved in resistance activities. So he went in and he came out and gave me a briefing on what was going on with the families and what the Iraqis were doing. He said the only time he felt he was in danger was he saw his car, his own personal car, being driven by a Palestinian. He went over and told the guy, hey that's my car. Then he realized, oops. [laughter]

*Q: [laughter]*

STAMMERMAN: Oops. Then he realized what he'd said and disappeared as quickly as he could. But his impression was the Palestinians were collaborating with the Iraqis, and that really bothered him and bothered the ruling family. It was not long after that that I told...Chas I assume also told the military because I passed this through Chas, Freeman, and David Dunford. We were hearing rumblings from the Kuwaitis, things like that and after Yasser Arafat showed up in Baghdad to embrace Saddam Hussein not long before the war, we passed the word to the U.S. military to make sure that Kuwaiti units did not liberate Palestinian neighborhoods. We were worried about retaliation, massacres, so when liberation happened, it was American military and Egyptians who liberated Palestinian neighborhoods.

*Q: Oh.*

STAMMERMAN: The Kuwaitis then expelled the Palestinians en masse, there were something like 300,000 Palestinians in that country. They deported them by lifting their work permits, all but a few. But there were no massacres. We were worried that there would be. We did not want another Tel-a-Zaatar (in Beirut, where Christian militia massacred Palestinians) or Sabra/Chetilla. We didn't want anything like that. So the Kuwaitis did not liberate those neighborhoods. The American military made sure they didn't. Anyway, this Kuwaiti debriefed me and I reported it all. It was very helpful for him to do this for me, to brief me. He had ways in and ways out. It confirmed everything we were hearing about the Iraqis, that they were having a very brutal occupation.

*Q: Were you getting anything from your American military contacts or anything about the Iraqi army and Iraqi military system, which turned out under intensive bombing and all, to be a paper tiger. Were you getting any of that?*

STAMMERMAN: Sure. Every time we'd take the senators and congressmen around, and even when I'd talk to the local commanders or whatever, that when they'd do the briefing, they always showed these Iraqi forces at full strength. I would tell General Pagonis, I'm not a military man, but I would tell anybody I knew, including the 82nd Airborne when they first showed up, that these guys even at full strength they ain't much. As Melvin Ang who got out with, eventually got on my staff, helping Embassy Baghdad evacuate Embassy Kuwait. We just said, these guys are terrible fighters, and your main problem is going to be POW camps. Except for the Republican Guards, we always said be cautious, the Republican Guard will fight because they have to. If Saddam goes, they're all dead, they'll be lynched, en masse, if they are in Shia territory. But anybody else, all these poor Shia fighters in the Iraqi army, they're cannon fodder. Sad, we're going to have to kill a bunch of them. They'll be shot if they try to defect, and if they're in front of us we'll have to kill them. That's too bad.

Then, after Thanksgiving, we were all inspired by the American military good people. The American press was obnoxious, the press would accompany the senators and congressmen which always gave the press the opportunities to grill American military personnel, at the lieutenant, captain, colonel level. There were always questions... There was something in "Doonesbury" about this... it was a caricature of what was going on, things almost to the point of "What is it the Iraqis should know to shoot this plane down that which we're worried they might find out? What are the vulnerabilities, what are you worried, colonel, what are your vulnerabilities?" And he'd turn to the press liaison with him, and "Well can I..." "Don't talk to him, you're interfering with us." It was that blatant. "How's your morale? Are you worried you are going to get wiped out by poison gas?" "Well..." And soon the military press liaison would interrupt, "Look," then the press would say, "You're interfering with us. Shut up." It was silly. They were aggressive. They were not... they don't have to be with the program, but they shouldn't... the journalists were all trying to make a name for themselves after screwing up the press role in Vietnam. They wanted to be THE reporter who cautioned them that we were going to get wiped out, and were shut up by the American military. So they were generally obnoxious all around.

There were a few that... were some American press people... I would brief them off the record, so there were a lot of things that would be a diplomatic source in the Eastern Province, and that was always me, because there are only two diplomatic groups in the Eastern Province, the Americans and Brits. So I would say, I would brief them mostly on oil, and on the al-Saud family, or the Kuwaitis, if they wanted to know that. I couldn't brief them on the military because I didn't know anything about it. But I would brief them on that and occasionally, people like Christiane Amanpour would show up. I did have one brief by a CBS guy. Funniest thing. He was a CBS news guy... he was the CBS News White House guy, then with ABC. I can't think of his name right now, he later became ABC Sunday with Kuralt and the lady. Balding guy from Arizona or New Mexico. He had been very aggressive when Nixon was in the White House. He was the very aggressive CBS reporter trying to nail Nixon. Good man. He'd gone up near the border right before the war began. The Iraqis shelled some Saudi installations. They shelled something called the Arabian Oil Company and started a fire. The Arabian Oil Company, as it turns out,

was a Japanese managed firm just inside the Saudi border. They are property that is jointly owned by the Kuwaitis and Saudi Arabian... so called neutral zone. Well the Iraqis shelled this thing, and it was burning. This guy did a standup up there, saying, "This is what the war is all about. This is a Saudi ARAMCO installation burning as Saudis flee." And he came down to my consulate general and came in to see me, and I briefed him. I said, "You got it wrong. I'd seen this on TV, and said you got it wrong. A) it's not a Saudi installation, it's a Japanese installation; and in second place, those weren't Saudis running, those were Japanese." He laughed and said, "Oh, no I'm wrong." He said, "Would you like to go on camera? I'll make you famous."  
[laughter]

*Q: [laughter] (end of tape)*

STAMMERMAN: So we were talking about deployment of U.S. forces and what's going on during Desert Shield. There were various events. I'd meet various military officers and we'd brief them. My staff was of course meeting military people all the time. There was a lot of feedback... again I had problems within the consulate, a lot of feedback with concern over chemical warfare. Because the U.S. military by and large were saying that they were briefed that there will be chemical weapons used against American forces. Therefore, my staff wanted to know why we didn't have gas masks. My understanding with the embassy was, at the time, that if we really truly believed there would be chemical weapons, or bio weapons, but chemical weapons were the ones were about here, if we really truly believed that there would be chemical weapons used against American civilians in Eastern Province, we would get out. We would simply shut down. We would call for evacuation. Gas masks do not work. They would not be enough to defend us against nerve gas, skin contact. I remained convinced, even though the military by this point, by my friend General Pagonis, when I'd say this around him he would raise his eyebrows and shook his head. He really was worried that Dhahran would get hit with SCUDS, with chemical weapon warheads. I was saying they wouldn't dare. Saddam wouldn't dare.

*Q: What would possibly cause him to be concerned?*

STAMMERMAN: I was convinced, and this was from my days in Kuwait where I watched the Iran-Iraq war go on and on and on until it finally ended when by accident the Americans shot down an Iranian airplane, and the Iranians said the Americans will stop at nothing. The Iraqis know that if they used weapons of mass destruction against us that we would kill anybody. We would not stop. They believe it, we would not stop. I was convinced, and I said, "Look if Saddam uses nerve gas against American citizens we will kill him. The man has no morals, no conscience. He does have a lot of interest in self-preservation. He will not kill American civilians." I was convinced of it. I was not worried about my life, but the other Americans said "You are betting our lives too." But I said, "Yes but I know more about it than you do."

So that was a running source of tension within the consulate. I should also mention along the way, this led to what I thought was unprincipled guerilla warfare by another agency against one of my officers who was backing me up. Unprincipled as in, they accused him of essentially criminal behavior involving visas.

*Q: Who was...*

STAMMERMAN: They accused him.

*Q: Who accused him?*

STAMMERMAN: Another agency person accused an American officer of criminal behavior involving visas. I'm convinced it was a personality conflict that led to that. Because their source, it was not something they knew, it was indirect through Americans who really didn't like us. I'd said, when I was told of this by the ambassador, it's not true. I was convinced it wasn't true. I knew the guy, full confidence in his character. Later he was interrogated intensively by SY and the State Department, and they never did find anything. I was convinced there was nothing there. I'm convinced there were American civilians in Dhahran, non-government people, who were unhappy with us who passed word through their contacts to somebody inside another agency, who then passed it on as if it were known. I don't know. One never knows what's behind those...

*Q: The accusation was what exactly?*

STAMMERMAN: Was providing the visas in exchange for sexual favors.

*Q: Oh. I can't think of Saudi Arabia being a particularly good grounds, good area to play that game.*

STAMMERMAN: No, it's not. But we had third country nationals who'd come through. That would happen. And there were third country nationals who were maids and so on in Saudi homes. Anyway, I knew it wasn't true and it wasn't. He's gone on to have an excellent career in the State Department.

*Q: As a professional consular officer myself, I know this is always a problem. That when in doubt you can levy this charge for cash, either one. And it's very hard to disprove, and it feeds a natural suspicion of somebody who has the power of judgment.*

STAMMERMAN: Yes. This accusation was relayed to me.

*Q: I take it that you weren't particularly happy with the other agency at your consulate. Is this correct?*

STAMMERMAN: That is correct. We had very little to do with each other at a certain point. When I was in Riyadh, I would talk to the head of that agency. We had an excellent relationship, it turned out. He would ask me in great detail about Kuwait, about the government, how it works, and about the Eastern Province. He seemed to be very well informed. He's the only other person I knew from that agency. After this thing came up, I said, "Don't ever do that without telling me. Don't go to... have somebody tell me. Don't have the ambassador spring this on me." After that, that's the last I heard of it. Anyway, the guy has gone on to have an excellent career. I didn't believe it was true anyway.

There were a lot of tensions going on, and I understood why people were behaving strangely, they were under a lot of pressure.

*Q: How was your wife doing during this?*

STAMMERMAN: Oh, Patty. She ended up with an award for volunteering, by the way. She was hanging on, she was doing very well. She hung on very well, she was very supportive, but she was organizing community events. She was hosting things like the American Women's Group, which dissolved as most spouses left. We ended up keeping their records, all their records of many, many years were moved to the consulate. In terms of school liaison, she would go to the school a lot, and then she started serving dinners. As we got closer to the war, we had to have 24-hour presence at the consulate, and we did at first after the invasion, but then it sort of faded back to on-call after the midnight hours. But then we started going on 18-hour shifts almost, and somebody would cover the other 6. And she would have the household staff cook meals and bring them down so we would stay on the job and eat. So, Patty was extremely supportive, and everybody thought she was a very lovable person. She passed away last year, by the way, I don't know if that's on my previous tape... Everybody who knew her loved her and still do. When I've gone back to Dhahran in the years since, they always asked about her. She really lifted morale, and eventually she got this award from the Secretary of State for volunteering. It was very nice.

As we got toward the time of Desert Storm, we updated our evacuation procedures. Now, this was always an ongoing thing. If we have to bug out, how do we get out. As the profiles of the American military units in the neighborhood changed, we got to keep changing our procedures. So I had it worked out with ARAMCO where the Americans who wanted to be evacuated would deploy on the ARAMCO compound. We had another assembly spot inside Khobar for the Americans living in that area. The Americans would assemble at the school at ARAMCO, the Americans would assemble at an auditorium in Khobar, and we would have trucks and helicopters to get them out. The main concern then was not that we would have large numbers of Iraqis invading, but that we might have air strikes. We might have heavy SCUD bombardment. Who knows. But you've got to keep it updated.

So we would have meetings with ARAMCO management, Saudis and Americans, and with the American military. There's one wonderful meeting that I remember to this day. We had it after my staff meeting at the Consulate General. This sort of illustrates certain points of view. We had the 82nd Airborne guys there, we had people from the Civilian Affairs Unit of the U.S. military, we had people from the 22<sup>nd</sup> Support Command general's staff, because he's logistics but he's also the senior American military commander in the Dhahran district. And we were all sitting around this table talking about evacuation procedures and what happens if the war starts. This would have been probably December and the air war started in January. My admin officer raises a question, because he's been in East Asia before and there are a lot of Asians who live in the Dhahran area, the Khobar area, Dammam. In other evacuations, from other countries, you'd have non-Americans, that is third country nationals who were not on our staff who would rush, come into the American compound, would come to the evacuation area and try to get on American helicopters, try to get on American trucks to escape. At some point in evacuations, we'd often bring everybody into the American consulate or embassy compound where you could then air lift them out. That's how it was in those days. I assume now everything's changed.

And he said, "Well what happens if we're in there and we've got American civilians in our compound being evacuated, and all these south or east Asians decided to rush, run onto the compound?" I said, "Oh, the Saudi National Guard will shoot them." And the U.S. military is sitting around the table nodding, yes, yes, that's what they will do. And my administrative officer turned to me and said, "Ken, you wouldn't let that happen, would you?" I said, "Watch me. Of course we would. That's between the Saudis and the third country nationals. I'm worried about what happens inside my compound. Whatever force the Saudis need to do to keep it orderly, that's fine by me." And he just shook his head like, "Ken you wouldn't let them do this." I said, "Of course I would." That was a funny exchange. Our military agreed with me, but some on my staff just did not understand.

Anyway, as we proceed then... your question was about Saddam. Why was I convinced that Saddam was not going to use poison gas, nerve gas, whatever. As we got near the start of the war around January the 6<sup>th</sup> or so, January 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, that last week. The war started January 15<sup>th</sup>, the air war, actually more on the 16<sup>th</sup>. The defense secretary, now Vice President Cheney, came out to the Eastern Province. Came with, General, now Secretary, Powell. The two of them came and went around to visit all the forces. I went with them, as did Melvin Ang, Chas wasn't on that visit... because they were going out to see the units. So we went along. First thing, Cheney arrived to do a press conference. Somebody asked the question, I don't know if it was planned, "Are you worried about Saddam using weapons of mass destruction against Dhahran?" And his reply was, "If the enemy uses weapons of mass destruction against civilians, against population centers..." I don't know the exact words, but along those lines... "We will hold them personally responsible. We will respond in kind."

Now, the assumption throughout the Eastern Province was we were threatening nuclear retaliation. Because that's the only weapons of mass destruction we have and have used in the past. And the Iraqis I'm sure were nervous about that. And he said, and we will hold Saddam personally responsible. At that point, I was sure Saddam would not use weapons of mass destruction.

*Q: You know, in interviewing Bill Brown, who was our ambassador in Israel, when things heated up, was saying that they were convinced that if the Iraqis had ever used chemical weapons that Baghdad would still be glowing now.*

STAMMERMAN: Yes. I was convinced that the Israelis would nuke them if provoked. I had lived in Israel, I was sure the Israelis were willing and able to use nukes, if that happened. If you start gassing Jews in Tel Aviv... But at the same time, our threat, which Cheney said very clearly, was enough that I was convinced Iraq was not going to use them. But there was a very interesting incident - and then I want to get to gas masks - in the Eastern Province at that time. As we went around with now Vice President Dick Cheney, then secretary Cheney, and General Powell, we went to the various units and they did their dog and pony show and pulled out the charts and tap tap tap. And I'd seen these with the congressmen and senators... We got up to one of the units, it may well have been the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne... I'm not sure. I know there were 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne personnel around, so it was either the 101<sup>st</sup> or the 82<sup>nd</sup>. Art Hughes was there, he was on the trip of course. I don't know if General Schwarzkopf was there. Marine General Boomer

was there.

*Q: Art Hughes being...*

STAMMERMAN: Being the CENTCOM political advisor a senior State Department guy attached to CENTCOM. And we got in to get the brief. We had chairs and we were sitting there. And I'd made myself noticed as we went along, I'd met the secretary of defense and I'd seen General Powell before. And they did their stand-ups and really revved up the troops, especially Powell. He was a very inspiring speaker. Usually he comes across very diplomatic and such. But in front of the troops, he just, "You're going to go out there and kill these units all the way to Baghdad." He was good. Cheney though was very soft spoken. So we are in this meeting and the officer who was giving the briefing starts to brief Desert Storm. I'm not cleared for Desert Storm. I'm State Department, not even an ambassador, and I've got a middle grade State Department officer with me. And this is military plans, which a) we're not cleared for, and b) we certainly shouldn't know about it. And I'm standing there until it dawns on me what we're seeing. And that point, Cheney looks a little uncomfortable and he sees me. And he calls Hughes over, whispers in his ear and points to me, makes a thumb movement, out of here. And Hughes walks over and says to me, "Ken you better leave." [laughter] So I grabbed Melvin and the two of us walked out. So I said, "We better watch out for these 82nd Airborne guys, they're liable to lock us up for the next several days." I told Melvin, "Don't tell anybody about this. This is really, really stuff we're not supposed to know." We didn't get that much, but we got enough to have a general idea of what was in store. Or sort of what the general idea was. So we walked out and waited until everybody showed up, got out of the meeting. Art walked over and said, "Ken, do you know what's going on?" I said, "Yes, I know what's going on." [laughter]

*Q: [laughter]*

STAMMERMAN: I said, "I went in there, but nobody told me not to go in. I just walked in with the group." He said, "Okay." There's no effect of it after that. I didn't tell anybody. But it was a funny incident. I can say I was the only... it was the only episode I personally got thrown out of a meeting by Dick Cheney during Desert Shield.

*Q: Well, after the summit voted rather closely on yes, we would go all the way, what was the feeling, particularly with the civilians, your own feeling and the staff and ARAMCO.*

STAMMERMAN: Here's what happened. The real key was the meeting in Geneva. We all figured, the military, we all, civilians, everybody figured the Iraqis had their last chance. Secretary Baker was going to meet them in Geneva. The deadline's already set by the Americans and the Security Council, the 15<sup>th</sup> we're going to war. They had a last meeting in early January or sometime, and we were all watching that very closely. Now some of us, like me, like Mel, some of the others, were hoping, please don't let the Iraqis compromise. What if they offered to withdraw from the northern third of Kuwait. Aw, that would be it. We would not go to war. I'm convinced to this day that if they had offered to just take the oil fields and evacuate Kuwait City, that would have been it. That would have been terrible if that had happened because that would have left the army alive and threatening Saudi Arabia and would have put Iraq in charge as far as OPEC is concerned. But the Iraqis true to their stupidity refused to compromise at all. So, we're



going to war. I thought, that's great.

*Q: Was there concern, we were picking up that... putting the American army, I mean it was a huge army, a half a million men...*

STAMMERMAN: Yes.

*Q: In Saudi Arabia, this couldn't last very long. We had to really do something, or we'd have to evacuate.*

STAMMERMAN: All manner of problems. It was not so much the Saudi civilians, at least not in the Eastern Province. They didn't mind. Quite happy. But in Riyadh, a lot of tension about it. We would hear rumblings out of Riyadh, but in addition the American military.

*Q: Yes.*

STAMMERMAN: They deployed as units. It wasn't like Vietnam where individuals came out back and forth. We had the entire unit, and we called up families and people left their kids behind, and the reserves were called up, and it was very hard to keep them deployed. Morale would have been declining.. they were all primed to fight. But they wanted to get there and do their job, and this is something they all told the press. "Well, what are you here for?" "I'm here to do my job. I want to go home. You bet I want to go home. But I'm going to do my job." The press wanted to hear something else. And so we all knew that these guys wanted to go home. Fine. We all, some of us anyway, said, "It's terrible what's going on in Kuwait." We've got to get the Iraqis out of there. So, yes, we wanted it to start soon. I'm told that, again, if you read the books, a lot of the military did not want to fight. And by the way, in the general scheme of things, it was State Department people, in my experience through this whole episode, who wanted the war to start. They wanted the war to start sooner rather than later. They definitely wanted to start it. The American generals did not want to fight. They were worried they didn't have enough forces. They were convinced they would take heavy losses, in terms of thousands of men, people killed. We were arguing...

*Q: I've been interviewing Joe Wilson, who's our chargé in Baghdad at the time, who still feels very bitter about the testimony that the former chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, Admiral Crowe, made testimony in front of the Senate in the fall period. Stating that we should let sanctions do their job and all that. He felt that that strengthened Saddam Hussein's resolve that these Americans are not going to fight.*

STAMMERMAN: Yes, and if one report in the book called, by the Washington Post reporter, Ju-

*Q: The Generals?*

STAMMERMAN: The Generals or something. It wasn't Generals, it was something like that. The Commanders

*Q: Something like that, it was a joint work, but it was by Woodward.*

STAMMERMAN: Yes, if one is to believe that book, Colin Powell was on the side of people who did not want to go to war immediately. He wanted to give sanctions another six months. In another six months, I think we would have been lost. Morale would have plummeted, being out in the desert, the Saudi religious nuts might have gotten some leverage against us. As it was, in the Eastern Province, we had no trouble with the Saudis, they were behind us all the way. All the families, all the commercial people, everybody.

As we got closer to the war though, we... Within the consulate, we had some problems. A few of us, myself, Ang, the USIS guy, there weren't that many that were still there that I'd inherited, that were still there when deployment started. We were all saying that the important thing is we go to war and liberate Kuwait. It will be over soon, and we aren't in any particular danger. We should be prepared to evacuate Americans, because the war is going to happen. Others on the staff continued to be upset because they thought we were putting them in harm's way for no good reason. I'm talking about the State Department employees. There got to be this whole big thing about gas masks, which we kept arguing to the ARAMCO Americans, you don't need them. We don't have them. They thought we were lying. Many people thought we were lying. Maybe somebody on the staff did have gas masks, but we certainly didn't.

So then the Saudis started distributing gas masks to anybody who wanted them. We told the ARAMCO guys, "You want them? Take them. The consulate doesn't have any." But they didn't trust them. It was funny, somebody got me one of them... no they didn't get me a gas mask. They got me the kit that comes with it... the instructions are in Swedish. I thought it was hilarious. It serves them right. David Dunford came down from Riyadh, along with the senior army guy on biochemical weapons defense to brief the ARAMCO civilians, at their request. They wanted David to come down and wanted a briefing. We knew a lot of this because we had these regular monthly meetings with the American business community, so David Dunford, the DCM or else Chas would be there almost every month. And he'd brief them and said in general how you're not in much danger from incoming SCUDs. Even if they're loaded with chemical weapons, unless they land on your head, the topography and geography of the Eastern Province is such that the small weight that the SCUD could throw, in those days, would just blow away in the desert. And would be so diluted before it hit any of us that we wouldn't have to worry. Of course, they didn't believe that either. They thought the U.S. Army, and I and Dunford were lying to them.

*Q: But the calculation was always there, that we wanted to keep the Americans... if risk wasn't too great, we wanted to keep the Americans there in order to keep the oil flowing. If the Americans went, the oil wouldn't flow.*

STAMMERMAN: That was my calculation. I don't know how explicit it was. I don't recall, for example, Chas Freeman ever saying that in so many words.

*Q: Well, I believe he said this...*

STAMMERMAN: I would say that to him in a staff meeting. But I don't know if we ever said that in any formal sense

*Q: No, it's not the sort of thing... Because it does begin to sound like, not a hostage situation, but of putting... people are in danger. But at the same time, if there is a situation, why not? It's a terrible thing to say. After all, everything's not just what can they do for me, but what can I do for them?*

STAMMERMAN: The Saudi management was very disappointed. They'd paid these people well. Princely sums, over years and years. And the Americans were ready to cut and run. The Saudis knew they were. So I kept good contact with the Saudi Arab management who, again, that was a source of concern among American employees of ARAMCO that I was playing games with the Saudis. As we move toward Desert Storm, there some interesting diplomatic and consular events going on. One was that the Irish came to see us. Yes. Remember, there were only two diplomatic groups in the Eastern Province. There was only one Consulate General, and one diplomatic presence. We had the Consulate General and there were the British. The Irish came in and said, look, if you are going to be evacuating people by American military transport, we'd like you to take our citizens as well. I said, really? Because, in general, the rule is we would take NATO and sort of divvy up with the British. We were in contact with the British diplomatic principal officer. The British would take the Aussies, we would take the Canadians. These are people working for ARAMCO. So the Irish came to me and I replied... well in the first place, my mother's name was O'Leary, in the second place, I'll pass the request up the line. So I called the ops [operations] center, I called the embassy and talked to the head of the consular section, I called the ops center to check with them, then CA, Consular Affairs in the State Department, and said, "Can we do it?" And they came back, "Sure, but we need one of their officers on our staff because we don't know what Irish passports look like. We don't want to be evacuating people that don't belong." So I called the Irish consul and said, "Okay, we can do it but you have to detail somebody to my staff." Which he did, along around January 15.

*Q: How many Irish were there, do you figure?*

STAMMERMAN: A couple hundred.

*Q: Oh, boy.*

STAMMERMAN: The nurses were all Irish.

*Q: Oh.*

STAMMERMAN: And some of the secretaries for ARAMCO. But the nurses were all Irish. They were always getting in trouble. Some of them were getting arrested for immoral behavior. [laughter]

*Q: [laughter]*

STAMMERMAN: Always when somebody got arrested, it was an Irish nurse. So I eventually had this Irish consular officer on my staff. And the same thing happened with the Canadians. Would we take the Canadians? Yes we would. Of course, after Teheran, sure we'd take

Canadians. But I need a staffer, I don't know what a Canadian passport looks like. We did the same with the Japanese. We didn't need to with Japanese because what happened is, after the failure of the meeting in Geneva, the Japanese told their people to leave. So they left.

*Q: Well, they were right on the border anyway.*

STAMMERMAN: Yes. The ones up on the border left. There were a few others, sort of contractor types for ARAMCO and they just left.

*Q: How about the Filipinos?*

STAMMERMAN: Ah, it varied. Actually their ambassador came down to talk to them. I met him because I'd been in Manila once upon a time. And they didn't offer their people any help. Sink or swim. That was it, it was too bad for them. And they didn't ask us, because the rule is, you pay your way out, and our flights are too expensive for Filipino laborers. We weren't flying anybody out for free. Even American citizens had to pay their way out. That's another sore spot by the way.

Also in early January, Pan Am, which was still in existence, announced that it was no longer flying to Saudi Arabia. Which made us rather unhappy, all the subsidies the U.S. government had given them over the years. And they backed out even before the war started. So at that point we knew we'd have to run an evacuation to get women and children out who wanted to get out. So we said, that's when we started working very seriously with ARAMCO on how to bring people on the compound, and setting up teams and everything. We also kept... There was this whole mess with the gas masks. Whole problem. Diplomatic exchange with the department, DOD, and everybody else about the gas masks.

The war started... I should keep going forward. I found out the war starts because I was called by the DCM, the 15<sup>th</sup> happens, and I was told I would get a message that would say when it starts because we wanted to make sure I was at the consulate in case people started calling in, instead of being at the residence. I got a phone call at 2 o'clock in the morning or whenever it was on the 16<sup>th</sup>, because it was the 16<sup>th</sup> in Saudi Arabia when the war started, the 15<sup>th</sup> in the U.S.A. Of course, at that point, we kind of know something was up since every aircraft at Dhahran airbase had taken off and the place smelled of airplane fuel, kerosene, just everywhere. And I went up to the consulate. Nothing much happens, the war starts, everybody's watching TV, nothing happens at Dhahran.

Then, within the next few days, the Iraqi ambassador to Belgium says, we will react. At this point we were bombing the Iraqi positions, killing a lot of people, all on TV. Within a few days after the start of the air war, around the 19<sup>th</sup>, somewhere along there, of January, the Iraqis starting firing their SCUDs. One of the first ones went into Tel Aviv, actually Ramat Gan near Tel Aviv, and we had drills. The Saudis had set up sirens and everything. One came in to the Dhahran area. SCUD came in, met by Patriot missiles, after the SCUD had reentered the atmosphere.

One of my officers was out that the airbase, and she ran, so I hear... This is the strangest

experience. She and one of the military press guys she was with ran toward the Dhahran airport hotel because there was a basement there. It was a shelter. They got there first, and there was a revolving door, and he was kind of making order and pushing people through. And two Saudi military ran up with their guns leveled at them, "Get out of the way." So he said they thought better of that and decided they better get inside. And they did. And the Saudis military apparently just broke the door in so people could walk through without revolving. Which was a good thing... they thought they were going to get shot though. So they went in and the sirens are going on and the Patriot missiles fired and they went down in the basement, and it was very weird because everybody else is wearing gas masks and she's not, because the American consulate doesn't have gas masks. She came back. She was pretty upset, arguing "What do you mean? Can't we get gas masks?"

What finally did it... we were holding off. We were fighting it. We said, "It's not going to get to the point that we need gas masks; this is crazy, if we need gas masks, we should evacuate." And then as I remember the sequence, the American ambassador to Bahrain somehow had access to American military stores. And he was under tremendous pressure same as we all were. So when the first SCUDs landed, he told the American civilian community in Bahrain that they could have U.S. military gas masks. And that left us in an impossible situation in Dhahran and in Riyadh.

So at that point, we went to the military and said we better get them. The State Department then went to DOD. The Defense Department sent out bunches of gas masks to us with the Political/Military part of State being the intermediaries. In the end, I thought the entire episode was amusing, since I knew, despite all the CNN-driven hysteria, that the Iraqis were not going to use chemical weapons against American civilians. I thought it was hilarious. Because I wasn't worried, I truly wasn't worried. Neither was Patty. We both... if something happens it happens. But I was not worried. I was convinced that I was God honest sure that there was not going to be any gas attack. I thought it was a silly, stupid, media-driven game going on, which, since nobody in the U.S. Government ever does a lessons-learned exercise, was played out again in the Gulf War of 2003. All this panic over weapons of mass destruction when the Iraqis, even if they had them in 1990/1 or 2003, would not use them. But, to carry on the charade, the U.S. military in January 1991, then sent out a shipment of gas masks, care of the U.S. Consulate General in Dhahran. It was a big shipment of gas masks, hundreds of them. Enough to take care of American civilians who wanted them. We had an estimate that there were maybe 7,000 Americans still there... somewhere between 7,000 and 10,000 Americans still there. There were 13,000 in the summer and we knew a lot of them had left.

Two days later, a senior guy at PM, a Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Political/Military Bureau in the State Department, called me and said "Do you have your gas masks?" And I said, "I don't have any gas masks." He said, "Oh, we sent them." I said, "Where'd you send them?" He said, "We sent them to Dhahran to the Consulate General." I said, "How did you send them?" He said, "We sent them via the military transport system." I said, "Ahhh, you sent them via the military transport system. And where did you send them?" "To Dhahran airport." I said, "Ah." So I called up General Pagonis and said "What's the backup up out there in the unloading area?" He said, "Oh we've got a couple square miles of stuff stacked that's supposed to go to various units." Remember Desert Storm hadn't happened yet, only the air war. They were getting war materiel

by the ton and deploying them to forward units. I said, "Somewhere out there, there is a shipment of gas masks for the American civilian population of the Eastern Province. Think you could find it?" He said, "I have no idea." [laughter]

*Q: [laughter]*

STAMMERMAN: He said, "I'll detail somebody." So he sent out a lieutenant, to look at every shipment that had arrived in the last couple days trying to find these stupid gas masks. And it took a while. I called the guy from PM back and said, "We don't have the gas masks." He said, "What? You don't have the gas masks? We're under all kinds of pressure. Congressmen are calling, people are telling them to get gas masks out there." I said, "Let me tell you what the inventory looks like out at Dhahran airbase. We have square miles of stuff out there." He said, "Oh, no." [laughter] See, I was laughing, which really upset the DAS (generally, this is NOT a good career move, by the way). Because I wasn't that worried. I called up Chas Freeman and David Dunford. I said "You got a guy back at PM who is really upset. He started shouting at me, so I shouted back at him. He's some DAS, I don't know, I don't know who. So I shouted back, there's no way in the world I'd know where this stuff is." I called David Dunford who thought it was amusing. David was also fed up... my impression was that he was so completely fed up with American civilian population of the Eastern Province, that he shared my feeling that it sort of served them right in a way that their unneeded gas masks got lost.

So things went on for several days more with people screaming and panicking and finally I got a call from the airbase. They found our shipment. Not only did we have gas masks, we had capes, which you then make into a little tent to put over you if nerve gas falls on you. And so they shipped it over to us. I called ARAMCO and I also got hold of the military from the Civil Affairs Group to instruct civilians on how to put the masks on. I believed they had to set up a school, because of course you have to brief people on how to fit the masks; these are World War II vintage stuff. You got to put them together, they have little buttons, you got to fit them. Because if you don't fit them right, you'd suffocate. You got to be able to blow the filters out. Also you can't give them to kids. Kids will suffocate. As we found out. As the Israelis found out. Children died out there. That's another thing we were worried about: people would die from the gas masks because it's not a riskless thing. It's like talking shots, a certain number of people are going to die because they can't blow the mask filter through.

So we set up a little school. A funny incident the night that this woman driver, God love her, she was an American military sergeant, delivered the masks and the capes. We were supposed to have two people in a truck if a U.S. military woman is driving, but she was driving herself, because they were really under tremendous personnel pressure in logistics, since their major push was to supply the front line units secretly deploying far to the west of the Iraqi army positions. She drove this big U.S. military truck to the consulate with crates of gas masks. Two of the crates for us. Gas masks and various other gear. They'd been bringing MREs to us all the while, by the way, we stored a LOT of MREs on the Consulate grounds just in case. When the driver arrived with her truck, we had people there, we had some of our FSNs in. We unloaded the crates. She had other crates. When she had her invoice out and I was signing off for our crates, she said, "You get those two crates." She's at the American Consulate General in Dhahran and she says, "This next crate's for the American Embassy in Qatar." Her next question was,

“Where’s that?” [laughter]

*Q: [laughter]*

STAMMERMAN: She had planned to drive all the way to Qatar with her truck full of gas masks. She had her orders and she would have driven... If it had been ammunition, she would have driven up to the front lines. She was a very determined lady. [laughter] She was a wonderful lady. So I suggested that she better go back to her commanding officer and get directions. And she went back to the airbase.

*Q: Was there sort of a long panic line to get this?*

STAMMERMAN: Well, we announced it to ARAMCO, we said you could show up after you called in, we’d have these telephones manned on a 24-hour basis, and you’d get this appointment for a class. Because you had to take a class; we weren’t handing them out unless you had a class. The odd thing was these guys all had gas masks by now, because they’d all gotten the Swedish stuff that ARAMCO was handing out. But they wanted, by gosh, American gas masks. The Swedish ones were these new-fangled kind with two filters in front and such. The American kind was very old, World War II things, that fit around your face, that you had to get adjusted, and punch buttons through the leather to make it tight, air tight. Then you had to screw the filter in and blow it out. Some of them were dirty as they’d been in storage for, maybe since World War II for all I knew. Mark II model which was really antiquated.

Once the masks arrived, we were ordered, the embassy said, “You will do it, you will carry gas masks. The State Department is now saying U.S. Foreign Service personnel will have gas masks at all times.” I said, “Okay, we got orders.” So we also had ours. At first there was this huge mob. Everybody wanted to be in the first class. Okay. Then after they got them and brought them back to ARAMCO and people were saying “Is THIS what you got?” And the numbers dropped off tremendously. They had to sign for them, though. And with a pledge that when the emergency was over that they’d give them back to the U.S. government. I’ve still got mine. As a souvenir. Never did turn it back in. After the Department issued orders, I carried it around like I was supposed to.

*Q: During World War II, you could always tell which way the troops had been, because as soon as combat came, all the gas masks were thrown on the ground as they went in. They used for carrying...*

STAMMERMAN: Yes.

*Q: Well, rations and such.*

STAMMERMAN: Because they were convinced the other side was not going to use gas... In World War I, they didn’t throw away their gas masks because the other side used it. Anyway, the air war starts. At this point the SCUDs start. Then we start evacuating American civilians. That is to say, we had it arranged, and we set the plan in motion. The plan was to evacuate dependents. Anybody who called in and said they wanted to go, anybody eligible for evacuation,

and this would have included any American citizens, employee or not, we didn't turn them away. Or Canadians or Irish that showed up. And the evacuation assembly point was on our American Consulate General compound. The evacuees would assemble, in the end not at ARAMCO. They all assembled at the American Congen. If there were large numbers, we would have had different assembly points. Since there weren't, there were never more, the number of people we could get, in those days, on the kinds of American military transport we had, was around 100 daily. So as the planes would arrive with munitions, they'd be unloaded, and then the crew would turn them into passenger transports. (End of tape)

Okay, we're talking about the modalities, how we evacuated people from Dhahran. The military transport aircraft would arrive in the morning, we're talking about C-5As, C-140s, would arrive in the mornings. The munitions would be taken off, arms and munitions, materiel, whatever they were carrying, would be taken off. Then during the day, the U.S. military and Air Force would reconfigure the aircraft to take passengers out. Each plane could take about 100 people and we would have groups of one hundred. Never more than we could get out in a day. We never had to carry over anybody. They would arrive in the morning. The MPs, that was a unit deployed from General Pagonis' outfit, would search all their luggage. They were each allowed one bag, no pets. One lady came with a pet, that great line... the soldier said, "Lady, it's my way or the highway. The pet's got to go." So she gave the pet to somebody to take back to ARAMCO. The MPs searched the one bag allowed outside the compound, in our parking lot, before they passed the gate to get inside the grounds.

They would then come inside our compound and go into a gymnasium where they had Air Force personnel who would fill out the roster. Got to have a roster, got to know who's on the plane. They'd give us their U.S. documents, their passports. The consular officer was there to make sure there was indeed a U.S. passport. A Canadian was there to see if it was a Canadian passport, and an Irishman to see about the Irish passports. Whoever showed up, we would take their documents. We had one Saudi national on the staff, a Sunni by the way. We had one Saudi Sunni on the staff, and several Shia, GSO and drivers, but one Sunni who was a good contact with the Emir's office. All the while, by the way, I'd kept my contact with the Emir's office, my back channel, fully informed of what we were up to. The Saudi FSN would take all the passports, and with an American consular officer, sometimes me... at this point, I worked as a consular officer... we didn't have many consular bodies, so we were all working all the time. One of us, me or somebody else, would go with the Saudi FSN to the Saudi immigration authority, a general who ran the Saudi immigration.

This was kind of sensitive. So, one of the American officers had to be there and get exit stamps. Because if you'd been in Saudi Arabia, you got to get an exit stamp or you can never come back again. After the war is over, it's not going to be an emergency situation, and we had to make sure the paperwork's right. And we had to make sure the Saudis understood that we were not smuggling out American/Saudi dual citizens. We had a large number of dual citizen cases, after all... Saudis married to American women and their children, many of whom had always been trying to get out of Saudi Arabia over their husbands' objections. The Saudis didn't want any of that going on. Luckily nothing ever came to push and shove. We never found one where we would have to contest getting an American woman out with her Saudi/American kids under evacuation procedures. But the Saudis were nervous about that, I think... because everybody



knew the Saudis were carefully watching what was going on... maybe that's why the Americans who were in these contested cases did not attempt to flee via the evacuation planes.

So we would go, get the exit stamps... we would then bring the documents back to the school, line everybody up, have the rosters prepared. Meanwhile, by the way, my wife Patty and several of the ARAMCO ladies had set up a child care facility. They were keeping the children entertained while everybody's in this gymnasium, worried about nightfall. Because at nightfall, the Iraqis would fire the SCUDs. They did this many nights after the 19<sup>th</sup> of January. They were firing at the airbase, we were convinced, because the airbase was flat as a table, and even though there's not much of a SCUD payload at that distance, a full-loaded C-5 has got nothing but fuel at that point, to go back. If you just had a little shrapnel hit it, it would blow up. Some of our planes were within these so-called revetments, the fighter aircraft. But the transport aircraft were simply loaded with fuel out there on a runway. So if a SCUD hit near any one of them, they would go up in flames. We figured that's what the Iraqis were shooting at. They never did hit one, it turns out. And they fired lots of SCUDs. It's a matter of odds. And maybe the Patriots knocked some of them off course, nobody knows. Anyway, it's getting toward sundown.

*Q: Patriots being an anti-missile missile...*

STAMMERMAN: Anti-missile missile of somewhat doubtful providence. There's still some dispute as to what effect they had, if any. Anyway, as it got darker, we all got very nervous. We wanted to get these people on the planes and off the ground. It was a matter of you've got to do certain procedures, and that plane's got to be ready to take people. So once the plane was ready, once all the documents were done, we would get on the buses. Each bus would have an MP with a rifle, an automatic weapon, an Air Force officer, and a U.S. consulate officer. And it happened that all of us with consular commissions had to get involved. If there were four buses... we had political military people, we had admin people, we had this and that... but I think at the end we only had four true consular officers.. consuls and vice consuls, that's all we had. So one of us would be on each bus. Oh, yes, we had a lady, an FSO from CA (Consular Affairs at State) who had been sent out from Washington..

*Q: Bureau of Consular Affairs...*

STAMMERMAN: Sent out a female FSO. With a new-fangled device called a cellular phone. [laughter] A satellite phone, not a cellular phone... that when the war started that we could somehow keep in contact with the department in case all other communications failed. Also could be out in the field. So she could go too, although she knew nothing about Saudi Arabia, she was really a trooper. You needed a body, you need an American body with a consular commission on each of the busses.

So we would go out there. You'd drive right up on the tarmac, through Saudi and American lines, guard lines, since we had Saudi okay, they'd breeze us through. And we'd get the evacuees on the aircraft and hope that aircraft got off the ground before sundown, and we'd head back towards the consulate. By and large, it worked. But one of the early nights, my consul was out at the airport with a busload. There weren't a lot of them, so we weren't all out there, but he was out there, with a busload of American women and children.

When you got on the bus, they'd turned in their gas masks. The American Air Force officer wouldn't have his gas mask, I wouldn't have my gas mask with me, because they're traveling back to the States, you don't take gas masks. You take only, they want only the luggage, that was the Air Force rule, no gas masks, no weapons, no nothing. Again, a lot of people turned in their gas masks as they left. Night fell, the SCUDs starting coming in. They were already on the plane. The plane couldn't roll because it had not started rolling down the runway, had not gotten to a go/no-go point, when the SCUD alert went off. So everybody had to pile off.

They had 5 minutes warning, by the way. We'd get a phone call from somewhere in the United States, out in Colorado they'd call the op center who'd call me. At the same time they called the U.S. military and the Saudis and said you have five minutes because they'd spot the launch. You have five minutes from the launch of a SCUD near Basrah until it hits Dhahran. I think Tel Aviv had a longer notice, but we had about 5 minutes. They'd tell us and we'd say five minutes, great. The alarms would go off and flashing lights on the TV, put on your gas masks, get against the wall.

So everybody piled off the airplane out at the airbase and went to a shelter. They got in a U.S. military bus or truck or something and got to a shelter. Where of course they didn't any gas masks, but they all sat there with their backs against the wall. SCUDs hit. Of course the SCUDs missed. Then they said, "Okay, let's try this again." Got on the plane again. Got ready to roll again. Again, incoming SCUDs. Back to the shelter. People were crying, people were getting sick. The consul called and in the end I said, "Get them back to the consulate general." One of our floors is underground in the main building, it's safe, so unless something actually falls on top of you, you aren't going to get hit by shrapnel or anything. If you're out at the airbase, you're liable to get hit by shrapnel, if one of those planes went due to a SCUD hit or near-miss, we'd have a lot of people dead out there, if they were anywhere near that plane or that fuel. So, bring them back.

They came back to the consulate, and everybody's upset. Kids are crying, people are sick. We got them into our underground floor, that long aisle in one building that's underground. We all went to the consulate building. Sure enough, another SCUD alert. The MPs were with them of course. Very interesting what happened. The MPs sort of looked around at each other, and their sergeant indicated to them, don't put on your gas masks, because the American civilians didn't have any. And they didn't. Even though they were trained to, their orders were, they stood there and didn't put their gas masks on. Afterwards, I wrote them up a commendation for their unit, to their commanding officer. They all got awards for that. Which I heard back through the system, which I was very happy to hear. Then after the third one, we waited a while, there were no more SCUDs. They got out and got going.

The only other incoming SCUD of interest was one afternoon when I was out there at the airbase. We had four busloads of evacuees. We got everybody on the C-5s, the sun was setting. I remember the scene, this sort of red sun is setting over the airbase, and I said, "Oh, no. Here we go," so I said, "Let's get back to the consulate, pronto." We waited until the plane started rolling, because we didn't want them getting offloaded. Once a plane started rolling to the go/no-go point, they're going to take off. We didn't want them to get offloaded. So, until a plane starts

rolling, our orders were to stand and wait. They started rolling, I said let's get out of here. The consulate is about a five minute bus ride since there was no traffic. Got back to the consulate. As we're rolling in to the entrance of the consulate, going through the concrete barriers, I see our local guards start running. So, I told the driver, open the door, and you could hear the SCUD-alert siren. Oh, boy. I said, "Let's go." It would take too long to go through the barriers, so we piled off, four of us on one bus and started running for the consulate building. Including the lady from the State Department.

There's a plaza in front of the Congen; we were running across an open plaza, and before we started running across that plaza, the SCUD reentered the atmosphere, the Patriots fired, there were explosions overhead, and the plane had just taken off. The plane was taking off near us. It was one of these thing, bombs bursting in air things, you can imagine the poor people on the plane, SCUDs and Patriots are not heat-seekers, so the odds of them hitting a plane are very low, but nevertheless... Explosions in mid-air near their plane are going to shake people up.

Plus, by the time we were running across the open plaza, you could hear click click click click click, things falling. Pieces of SCUD, pieces of Patriots falling. Some windows got broken that day on the consulate compound, cars, pieces of SCUD fell and hit cars. We made it across... we got into the doorway of the consulate. I walked in, the Marine was still there, because the Marine stayed at his station, guarding the sort of the airlock security entrance at the main building. We looked back and the lady FSO had tripped, she was in low heels, her shoe broke or something. I said, "Oh, no." So I went back out and sort of carried her in. Put my arm around her and pulled her into the consulate. And then together, we got into our shelter. I got on the phone to the op center and said, "I'm too old for this. I can't take this running." I was out of breath. I'm too old for this stuff. It was nice... they wrote me up for that later on, for going back to get her. She'd wrote up something nice and it later went into my EER.

*Q: Now, when the SCUDs started falling, how did this affect the ARAMCO community? What happened?*

STAMMERMAN: Oddly enough, except they wanted to get their wives out... oddly enough, once it started falling, they went out and started taking pictures, not much panic at all once they saw what SCUDS were really like. In the daytime, they'd go out on the roof. They did a film with music in the background showing SCUDs coming in at night. And we heard very little after that at the consulate. When the spouses got out, but very few of the workers at that point... They were busy, and ARAMCO sent them up North to man oil installations in the north of Saudi Arabia. They wanted to make sure no damage was there. I should mention, that reminds me... Just before the war, like January 10, the American Secretary of Energy came to Dhahran, along with his staff. They set up a channel in which ARAMCO would report directly to DOE, and to us, if there was any damage to any ARAMCO facilities once the war started. He set this up with the senior people in ARAMCO. I went around with him too to meetings and all.

So as soon as the war started, we were also reporting... DOE make an announcement the day after the SCUDs, no the day after the air strikes, the day after the Americans started flying the air strikes, and then after the SCUDs started, we kept a steady flow, the DOE was making announcements, there has been no damage to Saudi oil facilities. And after the SCUDs, there has

been no damage to American assets or to ARAMCO oil facilities, and the price of oil in two days fell from \$38 a barrel to \$22 a barrel, which dismayed a lot of Saudis, since the Saudi government of course saw their income drop precipitously. But the Saudi oil minister, who was, in fact it wasn't the Saudi oil minister who did it, it was the senior Al Saud within the oil ministry who agreed to it, it was a prince who agreed to it. He thought he did the right thing, probably to this day, he thinks he did the right thing, trying to prevent panic. But in terms of the price effect in fact it did the reverse of what the Saudis as sellers of oil would have preferred. It made pretty clear that the SCUDs were not that big a deal, that the Iraqis were not going to fire chemical weapons, that the payloads were small, so that there was no way the Iraqis, short of invading Saudi Arabia, could hurt Saudi oil production.

*Q: And by this time, the idea of the Iraqis doing anything offensive was completely out of the question, wasn't it?*

STAMMERMAN: Almost. There was still some concern I'd say for the first week or two weeks that there might be some Iraqi suicide attacks on Dhahran by what was left of the Iraqi air force. But shortly after that, people started figuring that that wasn't going to happen, that they wouldn't have an air force left. That's when the Iraqi air force fled to Iran, what was left of it. At that, people said, well the oil market's calmed down, the oil prices fell, the ARAMCO Americans went to work. And that was it.

*Q: It must have been hard, because back here again in the States, everybody was watching, in fact around the world with CNN, were watching this war, with essentially the American briefings of the war and watching these smart weapons and all that, which were somewhat exaggerated, considerably exaggerated, but at that time. But it became sort of the great worldwide show, and there you were in the middle of it. You didn't have time to look around.*

STAMMERMAN: No... But interestingly, one event still sticks in my mind. We had TV, AFRTS, Armed Forces Radio and TV Service, was on. This is real time. There's this guy, a CNN reporter, he was always called the SCUD Stud, I think, a handsome guy-

*Q: With a leather jacket on...*

STAMMERMAN: Yes, leather jacket, whole bit. He was at the Dhahran airbase, the civilian side, that's how he got there. And he was on the roof, out there watching the things come in. We were watching, he was watching, we could see out the windows, we could hear the sirens and everything. And he would say, "Here comes a SCUD." And you'd look up and see this, because they light up as they reenter the atmosphere. And he'd say, "There's a SCUD and it's just fallen to the west of us." And we were screaming, "He's spotting for the Iraqis, the Iraqis know they just missed to the west." Next thing, they'd fire a little bit to the east. So, naturally, we all and the military and everybody said, "Shut that guy up. Or put him on half hour delay or do something, or don't let him say where." We said, "Hey you're spotting for those guys."

Which reminds me, just a week or two before the actual air war started, we had a delightful visit by the rest of the NBC news staff. I met them, and remember we had earlier on had a visit to Dhahran airbase by Bryant Gumble who was not helpful in the early parts of the deployment.

Katie Curic who was then the Pentagon correspondent showed up with the weatherman, they showed up at Dhahran. I went over at one point to see the military information guy who I would see occasionally, and Patty was with me. She saw Katie Curic who we'd seen on TV and she said, Oh, where's the weather guy? And she said oh, let me show you. She took us and introduced us and Patty said, I remember when you were one of the Joy Boys on radio here in Washington, DC. He said, really. So he said where are you from, and she said she's the wife of the consul general. Well, we're going to do a radio show for AM630 in DC, so come on. So Patty went live with him on radio. The drive time was set for drive time Washington, DC. So we got some phone calls, hey I heard Patty on the radio. Which is nice, he's a very nice guy.

And they were very sympathetic to the U.S. military. They played by the rules. He went out to all the units and did weather shows. They were friendly, everybody liked their performance.

Then there was a SCUD hit just before the end of the war that hit American military.

*Q: Hit the barracks...*

STAMMERMAN: Hit the barracks, which was about a mile from the consulate general. It was just incredibly bad luck. If it had happened on the first day of the SCUDs, who knows what would have happened with ARAMCO, but it happened as the war was almost over. It was just one of these things, it was a barracks that had 50 yards of sand on every side. It was bad luck. Metal fell out of the sky and hit them. The hero of the encounter was the mayor of Dhahran, a Saudi. There is a mayor of Dhahran itself, which is a small town. Not al-Khobar, not Dammam, but Dhahran. He's a Saudi, and later, after the war, the American military gave him a medal. One of these commander's medal, and a plaque for his work in organizing the rescue effort. He came in and took charge and made sure our people got to the right hospitals, that all the medical personnel were called in. Great organizer, a good man.

*Q: As the air war went on, was it becoming pretty obvious that this was a pretty passive enemy?*

STAMMERMAN: I don't know if that was the feeling. Again, Dhahran, a lot of the information that people in general were getting was through TV, through AFRTS radio and TV. Passive in the sense we were... I never was worried about attacks. People became more convinced, I think, that we were not in danger of attacks. But people were still worried about what would happen when the American military goes to war. They were very worried that we would lose enormous numbers of people...

*Q: This is the conventional wisdom, too, which tends to exaggerate, which we've seen in Afghanistan as we speak.*

STAMMERMAN: Yes.

*Q: Playing it through again...*

STAMMERMAN: Yes, playing it through again...

*Q: Playing back the commentary of our so-called experts...military... it would sound laughable today, but these are the people who two months ago who were pronouncing doom and disaster...*

STAMMERMAN: And there was this man, I forget his name...Heckworth or something like that, the most decorated officer in Vietnam or some... who was excellent on that war but was completely out-of-date when it came to Desert Storm. And he was predicting, he was writing for Newsweek I think, he was predicting we're going to lose a lot of people. And all these guys, all these former generals, who were saying, "You can't take the territory until the grunt gets down there with his bayonet, and face-to-face kills the other guy." They were fighting World War II.

*Q: Absolutely.*

STAMMERMAN: And I knew about some of these weapons, I went through all the briefings. I went with every the congressional delegation. They were describing what these fuel air explosives do, and I'd tell, I didn't talk to the military guys or correspondents, but I'd talk to the ARAMCO guys and said, "It takes the air out of everybody's lungs for two football fields and burns an inch and a half in the ground. You've got a poor little Iraqi Shia out there at the front lines for the Iraqis. They don't want to fight. These poor guys were almost sure to killed. I hope they surrender." But they couldn't surrender. This whole poison gas thing, the American civilians would say, "Well what are you doing with gas masks then?" I said, "Look, even though I have orders to carry the mask, I'm still convinced there will be no poison nerve gas or chemical weapons used against Dhahran. The American troops have to have gas masks because we are destroying Iraqi command and control and there may be stocks deployed near front line units that some colonel or major will use as his unit goes under. So yes our troops should have gas masks. I'm still convinced we don't need them." And we never did. So I knew forces were moving up north, I didn't know about the big end run General Schwarzkopf was doing. The war starts... One of the things that bothered me, I knew what was happening, these poor Iraqis, these guys in front, we killed... I don't know what the body count was, nobody ever told me officially.

*Q: It hasn't been played out, I don't think.*

STAMMERMAN: It had to be tens of thousands of dead up there. I heard what happened, I heard from unit commanders, we bulldozed trenches. We just buried people up there. We were killing people with those fuel air explosives. It's flat. Southern Kuwait is flat, so it's not like in Afghanistan where an explosive gets bottled up in a cave or canyon. It just takes away entire football-field-sized groups of people. I don't know how many people got killed. I am sure lots were killed.

*Q: Did the 3 or 4 days of ground invasion make much of a change in what you were doing?*

STAMMERMAN: Well as soon as the invasion started, there was hardly anybody wanting to be evacuated. We had evacuations up to probably close to when they had the invasion. As long as we had SCUDs people were nervous and were sending their families out. So we were focused on evacuations, focused on rumor control. There continued to be rumors about Iraqi sabotage. At foreigners' compounds in the Dhahran area, we heard that water's been poisoned. Stuff like that. All false rumors. Otherwise, our staff we kept on doing what we were doing. We really didn't

have that many people. I think at maximum strength there were 34 people on the staff, up from maybe 18 or 19, and a lot of those were commo, support staff. We did end up, by the way with an MP unit on the compound. We'd let them sleep on the compound so they'd be there the next morning...

*Q: Well, for evacuation.*

STAMMERMAN: For evacuation. They were not considered to be defending the compound. I did find out later from one of the generals, that they had... again, the military is concerned about worst case scenarios. They've got the resources, and we don't. And one of the generals had a squad set up whose mission was to protect the consulate general in case the Iraqis sent a squad through to attack the consulate general and somehow overwhelmed the Saudis, that you'd have an American Army reaction squad ready to go in and protect the consulate. It would have helped the Marines.

*Q: Did you have a problem with the Marines, the Marine guard? Because I would have thought that they would have been so itching to get into this rather than standing around at the consulate?*

STAMMERMAN: Actually no. We had a very strong gunny sergeant, which is what you absolutely need. And luckily, we'd had one very errant corporal who'd been transferred just before the deployments. This guy did things like goof off on guard. He'd make phone calls he wasn't supposed to make, use long-distance phones, stuff that got him into trouble with the admin officer, disciplinary stuff. The funny thing was, the Marine guards at the consulate general became the only military unit in the entire area with access to alcohol. Of course, they weren't under General Order Number 1. Because they weren't deployed forces, they answered only to the MSG deployment commander in Marine security, their detachment commander in Morocco, I think. That was their chain of command. They didn't answer to the Marine general deployed up the coast. Although when he showed up, they of course snapped to, you betcha. But early on they invited some of their friends over and I early on caught wind of it and said, "No can do. That is, you can't invite military personnel to your TGIFs. You'd get them in trouble."

*Q: TGIFs Thank God It's Friday, which is essentially low-cost drinks to Marines.*

STAMMERMAN: The Marines raise money for the annual Marine Ball, it's done everywhere. But no can do in that case. I should say there was one other incident, I think after Desert Storm... I think after the invasion, while the forces were still deployed. I think it was at least after the air war started. There was an incident where an American spouse of a Saudi, who had been divorced from the Saudi, but in those situations, it's very sad, the children are dual nationals. The Saudi court gives custody to the father, but they are in the mother's actual custody until the children become of age. So as long as the American spouse agrees to remain, then she will be there in a Saudi home, her mother-in-law's home, with the children, but she can't leave the country.

Now, we could not get her out through evacuation because the Saudis would see the papers, every passport. They didn't push it. The American spouses figured out this would not be a good way out. But this one American spouse befriended two U.S. military sergeants who had a pass to

cross the bridge to, there's a bridge between Dhahran and Bahrain. She befriended them somehow and they agreed to smuggle her and her kids out. And they did, in an ammunition truck, which the Saudis would not inspect because it was American military ammunition. We found out about it when she turned up on Sally Jesse Raphael in the United States saying in effect, "Thanks to the U.S. Army, we escaped a life of slavery and wife abuse and child abuse in Saudi Arabia."

It's another one of those moments. She was one of our long-standing cases. She got out and of course that meant that every other spouse in that situation was put under close watch. It meant that the Saudis were unlikely to be flexible on other child-custody cases for a long time. These cases continue to be a major problem in Saudi-American relations

Another event, interesting... I know of one other sort of interesting... this is before the war started. I mentioned drinking, well there was a case in which an American colonel or major escorted some ARAMCO spouses, civilians, I think it was men and women, certainly some spouses were there, in Bahrain. The officers were deployed with U.S. forces in Saudi Arabia. It was one of these get to know a soldier thing, you know, take a soldier home for dinner; in return, the officers took some of them out to see U.S. Navy facilities in Bahrain.

One of the officers was drinking. Apparently became quite inebriated, which upset some of the ARAMCO spouses. Word got back to his commander in Saudi Arabia and he was out of theater the next day. I don't know if it was a major or a colonel who got an Article 16, which effectively ended his career, just for taking a drink, more than one, it was stupid, but he did it. So that's the only incident I know about drinking. You hear rumors of others.

*Q: Well, Ken, I'm looking at the time. I think this might be a good place to... Your voice is beginning to go down. I think I've plumbed the depths... we've been going at this for about 4 hours now.*

STAMMERMAN: Yes.

*Q: We'll pick this up the next time when you're in town, it would be when our troops have successfully ousted... the end of the war, and you might talk about reaction about how the war ended and then what you were up to and all that. We'll pick that up at that point. You were going to mention an incident. You can just say what it was and then you can embellish it when the time comes.*

STAMMERMAN: Yes, the incident was just after the war is over. American forces liberated Kuwait. Defense Secretary Cheney comes out to visit the forces. He's out at the American air base. He's seeing where we're now doing showers, washing off the American tanks. General Franks joins the scene. By this time there was quite a bit of gossip about General Franks actions during the war. The book was Commanders, by the way. In the Commanders, it describes how he was nearly relieved of his duty, of his station, during the war. General Schwarzkopf was on the verge of giving an order, of sending someone else to do his job. And it's interesting that then Franks showed up, somebody went and said it's okay for Franks now. And that point, he went over and said hello to Cheney. But people were pointing out, that by the way that's General



Franks. I recognized him anyway. His role at the end of the war is the subject of some controversy. The Shia who know about it, some Shia really don't like the guy. We'll go into it.

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*Q: It is the 8<sup>th</sup> of July, 2002. Ken, we're picking this up. Immediately after the war, what was your overall reaction, and sort of the peace, and what was happening in the Eastern Province?*

STAMMERMAN: Our overall reaction was a great relief. The Kuwaitis were very, very happy, of course. The Kuwaitis in Dhahran had a spontaneous celebration when the TV pictures were showing American troops being mobbed in Kuwait with welcome open arms. The Kuwaitis had a spontaneous demonstration in downtown al-Khobar, which the Saudis broke up, because the Saudis do not permit parades on any occasion, for any reason. They always worry when people gather in large numbers. So, the Kuwaiti demonstration was broken up. I heard about that from some of my Kuwaiti friends who were just shaking their heads about the Saudis, saying how that was so typically Saudi. They were overjoyed, couldn't wait to leave Saudi Arabia and get back home.

At the embassy and consulate general, of course, we were all relieved. It was not really at the time a case of thinking what comes next, but more, just relieved that it was over. We didn't have to worry any more about SCUDs, about evacuations, we could get our breath a while. I'd have to say that the secretary in the consulate who'd been very concerned about her son, who was on the front lines, did come to me and say, Ken you were right. The Iraqis were not going to fight our people. They were no match. Earlier I'd mentioned that she'd become very upset when working with the White House visitors who told her that thousands of U.S. soldiers would be lost in the first assault. And I'd told her not to worry, that the main problem the American army would have would be to collect the prisoners.

Beyond that, the rest of us were just kind of happy it was over. Then shortly after that, we became focused on reopening Embassy Kuwait. Skip Gnehm, our Ambassador to Kuwait, was over on the other side of the Saudi peninsula with the Kuwaiti government. The Kuwaitis flew back immediately after the liberation. Our embassy though, wasn't immediately open because the Army Rangers had to clear it first. Skip Gnehm and his people left, over on the Jeddah side, came to Dhahran, we're at the airport, I went out to see him. Skip was our ambassador to Kuwait, had been staying with Kuwaiti government in exile, meeting with them over in exile in Saudi Arabia. So Skip and his senior team came to Dhahran expecting to just change planes at the airport and go on into Kuwait. But they got a message that the embassy was not yet secure, even though Kuwait City was secure, that is, our troops had entered. The Army military command had not yet liberated the embassy and did not want him up there yet.

So Skip and his people came with me over to the consulate. I called Patty, my wife and asked her if we had any food left in the place. She'd been feeding our people around the clock. And she did have some food left in the freezer. So Skip came over with his country team, with some military people who were to go with him and be setting up some... to work with the Kuwaiti government in Kuwait to help reestablish some of their functions like the central bank and so on. So Skip came over to the house with his group of fifteen to twenty people. We ate a while, and I asked

Skip if he brought along any music, any tapes. I knew that he would have a hard time with finding any music... Kuwait radio and TV wouldn't be back up for a while. He might want to go out and buy some tapes. So, he said, "That's a good idea. We ought to go out and buy some cassettes." So, I said, "Let's go," and we sort of walk out to the car. At which point, several of his security people ran after us and said, "You can't do that." We said, "Dhahran, we don't worry, just driving around." They said, "No, no," they insisted. It seems that elsewhere in Saudi Arabia, even on the other side of the Peninsula from Iraq, our SY people insisted on heavy protection for senior officers. I suppose Dhahran had different rules, especially since SY, State's Security Bureau, would not deploy any of their resources at our post. Fortunately, we had the Saudis covering our security needs, which did not include bodyguards.

So we ended up getting a follow car. Walked into a local cassette shop. Very cheap there because a lot of the music was pirated. So we walked in and the store was jammed with American soldiers also buying a lot of cheap cassettes. Pirated. Heavily armed American soldiers. So, we had nothing to worry about. I was telling him this place is one of the safest places in the Gulf. We've got all these American soldiers here all the time, including the women, well armed. So Skip stayed over, and the next day went out to the airport and flew up in a C-130.

*Q: Did he say anything while he was with you about dealing with the Kuwaitis back in Riyadh...?*

STAMMERMAN: He had not said... no... he did not talk to me about them. One other small incident while we were there... We were watching the TV as the TV was showing the Army Rangers entering the American Embassy in Kuwait. The helicopters, and climbing down off of ladder onto the embassy roof where they blasted their way in. Of course, Skip was saying, that's my embassy. They blew a hole in the roof. As Rangers do. It turned out that when they... I'll get to that because I visited that embassy a couple weeks later, but when they- (end of tape)

*Q: You were saying Skip called his mother...*

STAMMERMAN: Yes, Skip called his mother, his mother says, "Skip, I see you. I see they're showing the film of how you entered the embassy." He said, "No, no. [laughter] I'm in Dhahran. Those are the Rangers going in."

So the next morning, we put everybody up, and by then we had so many people in the consulate general compound, the congen personnel, the residents, the rec building at the consulate, we had some military, MPs as I mentioned, on the compound. People were sleeping on the floors, wherever we could stack them, essentially. So the next morning, I took them all out to the air base and the Air Force flew them in a C-130 up to Kuwait.

Got back to the consulate... a couple of incidents immediately following that. Again, you were asking about the reaction how did we feel... we were still busy. Not quite the hectic kind of thing like before because we weren't worried about SCUDs and evacuating any more American dependents. But there was always what to do. Right after that plane left, a military officer showed up at the consulate, I was over at the office. A military officer showed up at the congen from the Special Forces, and he said he had to see Ambassador Gnehm. He'd heard that he was at the consulate. I said, "He just left." He said, "Oh, no." And he walked in, I'd walked out to

talk to him, and he was a locksmith. And I said, "I think the Rangers have already done your job anyway." [laughter] Because they were worried that the Iraqis... See, we didn't know, from what Skip had told me, we didn't know whether the Iraqis had gone into the American Embassy compound in Kuwait City when Kuwait was under occupation. For all we knew they had occupied the building. We just didn't know. So they were worried that the Iraqis had gone in and booby-trapped it, changed locks, who knows what. And he was the guy who could do locks. So I told him since he'd missed the plane, to hitch a ride with civil affairs guys... they were already going up there fairly regularly.

Then I was in touch with the Saudis and the Kuwaitis, of course, they were all overjoyed and very happy. Prince Mohammed's people all decided they were all just going to relax for a couple of weeks. They'd had a hard time too. The governor's office... they were very happy, of course. We, my wife Patty and I, thought it would be nice to have some kind of commemoration, some kind of celebration. I'd been talking to the U.S. military and knew that the Saudis were not going to allow a victory parade in Saudi Arabia. So, we decided to have our own parade inside the consulate general compound for the U.S. military, and for our people, who had been working very hard. We decided to call it the Peace in the Gulf Parade. I called up the U.S. military, called up the Air Force commander in the area, called the Army commander in the area, and said, "If you'd like to send some detachments over, give us some flags, give us some unit banners, we're going to do a parade, and you're welcome." And the Air Force and Army showed up... not the senior commanders, but colonel level. We had people from the Air Force, from the Army Civil Affairs command, mainly. I think we had some from the 82<sup>nd</sup>, but almost all the 82<sup>nd</sup> was off on forward, so we may have had a few of their people who were liaison. Mostly U.S. Army Civil Affairs guys and Air Force, plus all of the consulate staff, American and FSNs. We had them decorate all the consulate vehicles as floats. They were so happy, our FSNs, because they really thought they were goners. They were the most stressed out of anybody, I think, aside from certain Americans. [laughter]

*Q: [laughter]*

STAMMERMAN: So we had this nice little parade. We had music, we had the CONGEN car in front, the consul general's car in front with a siren and the flashing lights. We had music blaring from loud speakers, and did a little parade all around the compound, and anyone who wanted to join in the parade or watch could come in. The school children who were in the international school on the compound, were let out of their classes, these were all international children... Americans, British, Indians, other foreigners. Primary grades, no high school. There was a British and American school there. The children were all allowed to sit out on the curb by the street, and they were waving American and British and Saudi flags, which the headmaster had passed out. Which was very nice. It was a nice touch.

And we all walked along. By then, I may have mentioned earlier, it was always cloudy because of the oil fires, had already started that pall over the Eastern Province. It was gray, it was always a gray day for months thereafter. But we had a good time. Everybody had fun. People dressed as they wanted and had big banners. One guy had an Ohio University flag that he was waving. It was great fun. And then afterwards, we had a big feast, what we called a goat grab. It's where they kill a sheep and we all had a big communal meal.

The next morning, I got a call from my friend on the provincial governor's staff. As I'd mentioned earlier, I had direct contact with him so we wouldn't have to go through protocol, I would just call the governor's assistant or he would call me. We got a call from the confidential assistant the next morning, "Ken, I hear you had a parade." "Yes, we had a parade...Peace in the Gulf." "Oh. Were any Saudis there?" "No, no Saudis." "I heard there were a lot of children watching..." "Well none of them were Saudis." "Oh. Okay. Bye." That's all they were concerned about. It was obvious they were letting us know that they knew everything that went on in the compound. And their only concerns were that there were no Saudi children or Saudi adults, but especially no Saudi children there, and there weren't.

*Q: Well, did you have any Saudi employees at the embassy?*

STAMMERMAN: We had one Saudi Sunni employee who I had to let go. I had to let him go just after the war, actually. The problem was the following. It's a side digression, but it's worth noting, because people should know about all these different things. For many years we had a Saudi employee who worked in the consulate section, worked with American citizen services, that side of things. And he was well connected and comes from a family that's got ties, and he had some ties with the governor's office as well. He would come in handy especially when American citizens were in trouble. He had access to just about everybody. He kept Saudi hours, but I'd always figured, counting the time he spent sitting, which I counted as a good investment, sitting in the governor's majlis, things like that, that was fine. However, not long before the Gulf war due to exchange of rotation of personnel, we had a junior officer and we also had an admin officer who became sticklers for time and attendance, and this caused us some serious problems. This man's attendance was not according to U.S. government specs. I was quite happy with his performance. During the Gulf War, I used him to get some passports run through of the American dependents who were evacuated; they had to get exit stamps on their passports or they could never get back in. And he arranged that and various other sundry things like that. After the war, I had to let him go. Which is too bad. It's one of those people filing... notes to the inspector general how this was all highly irregular...

*Q: Yes, this is the trouble when you try to mix cultures sometimes, because as we know, contact and actually sitting around the governor's palace and all this, or keep contacts, this is part of the job.*

STAMMERMAN: It all got mixed in with attitudes of some people that I thought were unhappy about being there under a lot of pressure. I think a lot of it spilled over into management issues in particular. Why do we treat the Saudi employee different from other employees? There was backbiting among the FSNs for the same reason...

*Q: Where were the FSNs from, mainly?*

STAMMERMAN: The FSNs were from all over, South Asia, we had a couple of Ethiopians... actually... not Ethiopians, what's the northern part of Ethiopia that broke off...

*Q: Eritreans...*

STAMMERMAN: Eritreans. Muslims.

*Q: I remember the consul general when I was there, '58 to '60, driver was Muhammad Noor was from Tigre.*

STAMMERMAN: Yes. Well Muhammad Noor left just before I or as I got there he was leaving. And his son is still there, who was a senior FSN in the consular section. We had one Bangladeshi. He was the only one that bailed out during the war even though I had promised the FSNs that you know, I'm not leaving, I hope you guys all stay, and they all stayed. There were Pakistanis, Indians, some Yemenis. Not many. But by and large, I'd say, South Asians.

*Q: Well, it shows what's happened in the Gulf area where essentially Saudis just would not do equivalent to clerical work.*

STAMMERMAN: Oh wait, I'm mixing this up. We did have some Saudis... we had Shia employees, I mean Saudi in the sense of Sunni, we had only the one. We also had some Shia who were laborers. We'd throw a Spring gathering every year, not an Easter party, but a Spring gathering, where one of the FSNs would dress up as an Easter bunny and the Shia would show up with their children. And of course, they had large numbers. These little Saudi kids, and the girls, the Shia children in the Eastern Province, the girls start covering up probably [around] nine or ten. With Sunni it's usually later, you know, puberty, but the Shia start covering girls up in abayas up at 8 or 9 or 10. So you had little girls running around covered up and their mothers would show up. Multiple wives, of course. We'd have a great time, all these little Saudi kids. Yes, we did have some Shia employees.

*Q: When you were there was there an adjustment of some of the people, both in the consulate and at ARAMCO, those who left and were starting to come back, or wanted to come back...*

STAMMERMAN: The way it worked with ARAMCO, it was very interesting, with ARAMCO, for the dependents who left. That was sort of all understood. They could come back, because there was a lot of family pressure on everybody to leave. It was sort of understood. People were calling up, "Get my daughter out of there." At the consulate general, our spouses stayed. We had... mostly singles there, or else there was the admin officer's spouse who was my secretary, so we didn't have people who left in the consulate staff, particularly. We had people who had to go out for a short while, just to get away from the pressure, but nobody really evacuated from our staff. The FSNs, as I say, all except one stayed. But I wouldn't say there was this big thing about people leaving and coming back. For the employees of ARAMCO, if you left, you were fired. That was very easy. The Saudis made it very clear. You are welcome to go, don't think you'll ever come back, not here and anywhere else where we can have a say in your getting a job.

I don't know if I mentioned in a previous tape, but when I went back to Saudi Arabia in 1996 or so and went to the CONGEN'S home, he had a social gathering, ARAMCO people were there, and one of them recognized them and said, yes, you're the guy that kept us hostage... because they saw me as cooperating with the Saudis in not letting them go, at the risk of losing their jobs. They wanted us to weigh in and say, "That's not fair." I said, "Hey, that's your contract, and we

were not going to call an evacuation because we didn't think the employees were in danger." And they weren't. In the end.

*Q: In a way, it was happy in your turf, but it wasn't your direct responsibility, but there must have been a feeling, ok the war is over now what are we going to do about all these troops here? I mean, before everybody wanted the troops, but once the war is over, ok fellas, back to the... the local people would get kind of...*

STAMMERMAN: Here's what happened. Let me do this a little chronologically. Immediately after, I was talking to the U.S. Army guys, logistics and so on. They told me early on, we're getting out of here. Our chief objective now is to move people and things home. And they told the Saudis that, and I also told the Saudis, "We're leaving." Because that was a big concern, as the buildup was going on, I didn't hear this from the governor's office, but there were Saudis who would say when the Americans come they aren't going. The military made it clear that they were leaving, except for a few stay-behinds that they'd worked out with the Saudis. Everybody wanted to go home as quickly as possible.

I'm not sure if it's a week and a half, maybe a little past that... we went up to Kuwait. Patty and I went with U.S. Army Civil Affairs personnel, we took some care packages, because Embassy Kuwait was living off of MREs for the first couple of weeks. Meals Ready to Eat. Yes. Meals Rejected by Everybody, they had any number of acronyms for that. MREs. We drove up, the drive up was fascinating, because as you got towards the border... We went to Khafji first. I know the governor at Khafji. Patty was with me and we called on the governor. He's a very modest man. His office was modest by Saudi standards. He received us and he showed us the damage that had been done to his office and compound by the Iraqis. The Iraqis had occupied that part of Khafji in one of the early fights of the war. He was certainly happy to see us. They were all very grateful for the American presence and what the American Army had done.

As you got close to the Saudi-Kuwaiti border, it started getting very dark because of the oil fires. And not far north of the border, it was just dark, pitch-black. It looked like a darkness at noon as they said. You might see the outline of the sun through the clouds overhead, but mainly it was just dark. Worse than a dust storm. We were in a small convoy that went north, Civil Affairs people, and we'd bought lots of food, fast food, canned food, all kinds of stuff. We had a little convoy, so we stopped at various places, and the military told us you have to stay on a hard surface because there was all kinds of unexploded munitions anywhere along either side of the road since the American military had been shooting Iraqi troops, tanks, anything on that road was getting hit by cluster bombs. They'd cleared the hard surface, but they had no idea what was off the road, so stay on the road.

We did stop to pose with one Iraqi tank; there was a burned out Iraqi tank right beside the road, in the dark. We pulled over and we all took pictures. It had American military written graffiti written all over it of course. We all took some pictures. I should say there was an American officer from CA, Consular Affairs, who was with us as well. We then went on into Kuwait City, and the smoke cleared as you got just south of Kuwait City, outside the last ring road in Kuwait City. The smoke cleared. It was just the atmospherics of the whole thing. We went up the embassy, brought lots of food, everybody was very happy to see us. People were staying either in

the embassy rooms, or sacking out in the Hilton across the street. Skip put us up at the embassy, in the residence. I went around with Skip who was making his calls on the diwaniyyas, the majlises, especially some families I knew. Shia families. They were very, very happy to see us. They were already telling us, we were getting information. They were in contact with the Iranians and already via these extended family ties, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iran, they were all talking to each other about the new situation. The Shia were telling us immediately how we should re-establish ties with Iran, that this was a good occasion... I thought it was strange in Dhahran when we heard some of the perceived wisdom out of Washington was that some of our troops had to be worried as they were attacking Iraq, be worried about an Iranian attack on our troops. Which I thought was ludicrous as did anybody who knew the Iranians in the area. Afterwards, yes, Iran and Saudi Arabia have had a lot of problems, but the Iranians would love for us to rip up Saddam. They still would.

Anyway, so we saw all the families. I went around with Skip. Skip had unbelievable security, and he had American guards, Kuwaiti guards, he'd moved in this massive entourage. It's like I've heard of our people moving around Beirut. They were worried about Iraqi stay-behinds. The Kuwaitis loved us. Still do. So we called on various diwaniyyas. And then we went back to Dhahran. The Saudis were watching the U.S. Army leave by then. As I drove back, again this was a couple of weeks after the war... the roads were jammed with American military equipment. Bumper to bumper. APCs, tanks on trucks, as far as the eye could see. Getting back was very difficult because from Khafji til you get to the first major intersection south, it's just one lane on each side. So it was kind of dangerous, people were traveling in both directions with the military equipment moving very, very slowly of course everybody's passing and there are no shoulders.

We eventually made it back. All over Dhahran there were tanks and APCs parked all over the place waiting for their turn to go through the world's largest car wash. The military had put together a "shipments home..." an area where the returning troops would dock out. They had a barrel as they went through the checkout line where they'd dump any weapons they'd seized, especially if they were live. They had quite a few Iraqi grenades. The only incident that happened on the way out... some American military officer got caught... he broke the law somehow. He was embezzling or something. It involved a Saudi, so we had to deal with the Saudis on that one. The Saudis weren't shocked at all. They'd expected a lot of this, and as far as I knew this was the only case that we had of an officer getting involved in something. Afterwards, the relationship, everybody was very cheery and happy to see what we were doing. We had a few more congressional and senatorial visits, but we were just closing everything down.

*Q: I can't remember if we asked on the last tape when we covered, because you'd mentioned off mike, could you talk about during the war was there anything that came up about how to end the war? Was this a topic of conversation? And then we'll talk about after the end of the war, what was the feeling?*

STAMMERMAN: Sure. Very interesting. Before the ground war started, after the air war started... Remember there was some arguing of how the war would be waged. The American military really did think we would take heavy casualties. They were worried about chemical warfare, but also just worried about battle hardened troops and the fourth largest tank army in the

world and so on.

*Q: They'd been waging a war so these were supposedly trained troops.*

STAMMERMAN: The Iraqis had fought a war since 1980 against Iran, so... a lot of the thinking was very short term. How do we win the war? Where do we stop if we have to fight our way into Kuwait City? What constitutes victory? There was a lot of talk that went on. The only message that I saw that talked about after the war was a message that Chas Freeman sent out, with some thoughts of his own on what the region would look like after the war, and some speculation. He invited comments from all the other posts. Now, I didn't see all the other comments. The one place that I differed with Chas was on the stability of the Kuwaiti regime. Having been in Kuwait I saw the Al Sabah as being national symbols, that yes, the Emir, even though... The Kuwaitis, to outsiders, the Kuwaiti leadership was seen as having done poorly. I didn't get that feeling from Kuwaitis that I knew, and then the fact that they fled. The Kuwaitis were very happy that the senior Al Sabah got out so that they could not be used as hostages or captured symbols or whatever.

And I figured that things would return more or less to the same structure in Kuwait which would be the Emir in charge, national figure, a Parliament dominated by the Sunni merchant families who were not Sabahis, and the other families of the elite. You have the Nejdi Sunnis, you have the other Sunnis, you have the Shia, and the people without citizenship in Kuwait. I thought they'd more or less all return to where they'd been, but that was not a major difference to Chas' analysis. The question was what happens in Iraq? Would there be changes in Saudi Arabia? Having people seeing, especially the Eastern Province, all these American women driving about, lot of interchange between American soldiers and Saudis. Maybe there would be social change. We might see some changes inside Saudi Arabia in the region... how would things fall out? Jordan, Palestinians? What would happen to the Palestinian population of Kuwait after the war? My thoughts were they'd be kicked out, and they were.

This thing...

*Q: I was wondering what was making that noise...*

STAMMERMAN: That was feedback on my, sorry about that, I just turned it off. I just realized that. Sorry, we just had a little feedback on the cell phone. Just came up.

So there was a lot of speculation. And as far as I know, Chas was the first one to raise that question. I don't know if back in Washington anybody ever really got around to addressing that issue.

*Q: After, were you picking up any signs of disquiet? There was this suppression of the Shia wasn't it, in the south of Iraq?*

STAMMERMAN: You mean after the war?

*Q: Yes.*



STAMMERMAN: Immediately after the war? That came a little bit later. And I should say a little bit more about Saudi Arabia. There had been concern, remember, you had the Saudi women who demonstrated in Riyadh by driving. A number of them were from the Eastern Province. They all lost their jobs, those who had jobs, in the Eastern Province some Saudi women had jobs. They all lost their jobs, and the Saudi regime essentially called the patriarchs of their families and told them keep these women quiet. And they did. Essentially, they rescued them, they made sure they didn't go to jail and security forces wouldn't deal with them on condition that the families took them out of circulation. But you didn't have any groundswell of democratic feeling in Saudi Arabia.

I did have a conversation with some senior Saudis in the Eastern Province who were concerned about Kuwait that they were worried that Kuwait might become more democratic as it was liberated. With the American troops there, with the family not being in charge when they went back, all this, that Kuwait might become more democratic. That bothered the Saudis a lot. They did not want a truly democratic state up there. It would be too much of an example they thought. So they were happy for the Americans to leave Kuwait.

Then not long after that, there was the Shia uprising in the south of Iraq. The U.S. government assessment at the time, and I'd say this was anybody I knew, anything I read, was that Saddam did not have long, would not be long in power. That the collapse of his forces, with the few remaining forces he had would not be enough to preserve him against unrest in the south, the north, and even among his Tikriti clansmen whom he had led into disaster. The Shia uprising, I'm not sure of the dates there, the Shia uprising took place not long after the end of the war. We were pulling out, so we were not involved. Our troops were getting out as quickly as we could.

I didn't mention, when I'd been in Kuwait after the war, I'd been asked by Skip and his econ guy if I wanted to see the oil fires. It might be a good idea. After all that was my background, oil economics. I said yes, so the American military flew me and a couple of the other embassy people up to the northern oil fields which were then still burning. It was an unbelievable sight to see these oil fires. Remember at that time, people thought those oil fires would burn for years. So we flew over them, low over them, unbelievable what the Iraqis had done. They just blew out every 'Christmas tree,' a kind of oil cap. And we were flying up there and the aircraft needed to refuel, so he headed north. Interesting.

We landed at a U.S.-occupied Iraqi air field. We waited around there for a little while, there was a little village next to it. I don't think it was Safwan, but it was up near Safwan. We stayed there a while, took a few pictures, and flew back. When I got back, I called Riyadh and gave my report about where we had been, and said, "Oh, by the way, we flew into Iraq, and got some pictures and do you want to see them?" The DCM said, "Oh, no, you didn't do that." I said, "Yes. He said, "Well forget that, don't put that in any reports. You aren't supposed to go there."

But the Shia in that region... we were pulling out. We pulled our troops out of Iraq as quickly as we could. We had no intention of occupying the place. As we pulled out, and this is what I'd heard from various Shia afterwards, as we pulled out, the Shia, lot of Shia soldiers and students decided that enough was enough, they now could take the south if they wanted. So they launched

their rebellion, they took Basrah, they took the Shia holy cities, and killed every Baath Party (Saddam's political base) man they could find. There was a bloodbath against the Baath Party. There were very few Iraqi senior military commanders in the area, so the military wasn't hurt that much, but the Baath Party apparatus was destroyed. They killed them all. But the Shia were not terribly well organized. Students and low ranking soldiers, there were no senior Shia commanders.

They weren't terribly well organized and when the Republican Guard that had survived the American assault, the ones who we let escape, got themselves organized after the Shia had gone through their bloodletting... they came back in force, with armor, which the Shia didn't have. And killed everybody in sight. They killed all the fighters, of course, who they could find. I heard this from some of the Shia who got out. They went into the Shia holy places, the mosque of the Imams, and hanged people in the mosques, and then turned their attention to the Shia villages in the south, just north of the Saudi border. They were very careful to stay away from our forces and to stay away from Kuwait. And just drove straight through those villages, killing women, children, everybody. Those who could escape, fled...the Shia who were on that drive that track that the Iraqis took. Those who could escape did, they went across the Saudi border. The only place they had to run. Our forces watched. They knew it was happening, and we watched. So we would get reports back of what was happening, but that's it. The refugees fled across the Saudi border by the thousands. The Saudis put up a camp, due north of Riyadh, up by the border, and kept them there, since they were Shia, they were not going to let them into Saudi Arabia proper. I've heard that we leaned on the Saudis to allow the Shia to cross the border. If up to the Saudis, they would have left them on the other side of the border, many Saudis would have anyway. So, we watched it happen, and there was TV of course, we heard what was happening, saw the reports, and it was over fairly soon.

The interesting incident at the time... Saddam arrested the head of the Iraqi Shia in the south, an Ayatollah. A Shia, they have the same setup as Iranian Shia. He was an Ayatollah, I can't remember his name any more. I was doing one of my regular soundings in the Shia villages north of Dhahran and I talked to a community leader there. We did the usual talking about what was going with the Shia community in Saudi Arabia and the usual complaints about discrimination and so on. And he said, "Ken, Saddam has arrested our Ayatollah." The Saudi Shia were very close to the Iraqi Shia, same kind of Shia. There had always been some contact across the border because of the Shia holy places. He said, "We have a request." We, I guess was the Saudi Shia. "We would like the Americans to get our Ayatollah out of Saddam's custody." I said, "Well, we don't have a lot of influence in Baghdad, to say the least." He said, "Ken, Ken, you must understand, Saddam does not fear God, he does not fear man. He fears the Americans. If you make it a point of insisting on this man's release, Saddam will release him." Well, I reported the conversation. That's all I could do. Eventually, Saddam executed this guy. If we did anything, it was nothing much.

Essentially, for the Shia rebellion, we watched it happen. The Saudis were not too disturbed. The Saudis would have been very upset about a Shia state north of Kuwait, so they didn't say...

*Q: Pulling out, was there any second thoughts about the mess we left behind?*

STAMMERMAN: I would say no. Whenever there were any questions, the general comeback was we could have done things differently, but it would have cost the lives of American soldiers and it wasn't worth it. At the time, everybody, military, any State Department people I knew, we all figured Saddam would last another three months at most. So the fact that Saddam survived was not that big a thing because we figured he could only survive through a repressive government, and he didn't have that many people left, that if the opposition would be organized at all, they could overthrow him. We were wrong.

*Q: Were the people who were knowledgeable about the area concerned too that Iraq in a way is, unlike almost any of the other states around there, such a divided, it's not really a state... it's a glued together entity that has fractures that have not healed since the end of World War I. Was there any concern that if that place really fell apart it would be quite destabilizing to the area?*

STAMMERMAN: On the American side, the only person I knew who serious addressed that issue was Chas Freeman. Perhaps other people did, but I didn't see it and I didn't hear it. But the military wasn't that much concerned about it. That wasn't their mission. Again, they were happy to leave. The Saudis were very concerned, but they thought essentially that Iraq would hold together. They were just worried that the Shia might succeed, and it concerned them. At the time, everybody's top priority on their minds, as well as ours, was that Saddam should go. Among the people who were dealing with the war, sort of the everyday tactical, it was all tactical, there was very little strategic thinking as near as I could tell. There was not a big sense of history. I had people in the State Department Near East bureau who really thought Kuwait was once part of Iraq or who thought Iraq existed before World War I, that sort of thing. There was no feeling of how fragile the Iraqi state might be, so they had not thought of the consequences of breaking up. I didn't see much strategic thinking at all.

*Q: How long were you there after the war was over?*

STAMMERMAN: I stayed until the summer of '92. I was there a whole year afterwards and saw the American drawdown. The major part of the troops got out right away. Then the stay-behinds took a while. The Marines were pulling out of a port north of Port Jubail, north of Dhahran. Slowly, slowly. A lot of the things we'd get involved in were because of Saudi businessmen and contractors, and winding up the last supply contracts and the last commercial disputes. I remember going up there. When I'd been up there before, this would probably have been summer of '91, it was a base port with troops everywhere, and jeeps going everywhere, and tanks being moved out on trucks. In 1992, I drove in and all you had was one small building occupied by Marine officers. The last Marine colonel was there and he was trying to finish off some commercial disputes, of claims essentially. The big parking lot at the port had trash blowing across it. The Saudis had not reoccupied it yet. It was kind of sad really, sad and empty.

So, I saw all this drawdown happening everywhere. Except the one place that stayed busy was Dhahran Towers. That's the place where the U.S. military quartered their troops, right next to Dhahran airbase. Within a few months of the end of the war, we established a policy that we'd have U.S. Air Force personnel quartered there, but they would only have six-month tours. That makes them temporary. The Saudis were very insistent on that. They did not want a permanent U.S. presence in the Eastern Province. So it was a rolling six-month redeployment. It wasn't the

same personnel, they'd move people in and out. So the Saudis could say that they were training personnel, support personnel for Southern Watch, we were watching the Southern No-Fly Zone, southern Iraq.

One of the nicer events after the war was an awards ceremony given by the American military command to the Emir of Dhahran. There really is an Emir of Dhahran, who I had only met once before. He's a very junior official because Dhahran itself is really a small town. Dammam is the city where Prince Mohammed bin Fahd the governor resides. Dhahran is simply ARAMCO and the consulate general, and a small residential suburb. The governor of Dhahran had played a key role in helping when our troops were killed and wounded in the SCUD attack in Dhahran, which was the largest loss of life in the Gulf War for the American military. He had played a key role in getting the survivors to hospital. The U.S. Army gave him an award, which was very, very nice. And shortly afterwards, we had a ceremony at the consulate general where he and I together planted a tree. I'm glad to say that as of 1997, that tree was still there. I'd also put up another monument before I left. I had talked to the head of the logistics command. I remember how VFW halls in the United States always had a cannon out front. I wanted a howitzer, or the equivalent, on the consulate general grounds. We put up some kind of a plaque, Gulf War Memorial, or something. We got one. It was a Chinese made Iraqi howitzer, and kids loved to play on these things. Kids climb over them, and we made sure it was plugged with concrete and all the usual. It was nice, and the Saudis thought it was fine. And nobody had a problem, we all thought it was fine. And when I arrived back, I visited Dhahran twice since then, once in '95, and once in '96 or '97... and the last time I arrived back there, the cannon was gone. It seems one of my successors as consul general thought it was inappropriate to have a weapon like that on the consulate grounds.

*Q: Ah, yes.*

STAMMERMAN: What a jerk. What can I say? The Saudis didn't care, and I thought it was appropriate, and fun for the kids.

*Q: Was there anything else that you were dealing with before you left?*

STAMMERMAN: Well, let's think. After the war a lot of it had to do with the drawdown and the stay-behind American forces. We went back to doing a lot of ordinary things like issuing visas and reporting on the oil economy, rebuilding the contracts. Very interesting, there was one occasion where I went over and visited a senior Saudi family that one of the in-laws was a Kuwaiti, a friend of mine. By this time, I'd heard that the Kuwaitis were sort of getting overwhelmed with our insistence on buying American, especially our defense contractors. So, it was getting more and more difficult for the Embassy to access the Kuwaiti defense minister, or so I was told at the time. After the war, the defense minister was replaced, and the new one had real power, was a sharp man. I think he was just tired of being asked to buy this and that American weapon system, or whatever. I went over to one of these afternoon gatherings, business people, and my Kuwaiti friend, Kuwaiti-Saudi... married into a Saudi family. And we were good friends, and he said, "Ken, stay around after the party's over." I said, "Okay, fine." I did. There were a couple of consulate people there and I told them, "You guys can go home."

I stayed around. He said, "Come on back." They had a desert camp out there. The occasion had been a cocktail party, with the usual drinks and everything else. And this was more than your typical big Saudi mansion, it had acres of, it's not a backyard it's grounds, and he had a desert encampment set up out there, Bedouin tents. He said, "Ken, come on out, I've got somebody you've got to meet." I walked out and the Kuwaiti defense minister was out there. I know the man because he'd been a watcher up at the Kuwait border. He was in charge of the Kuwait, I may have mentioned this earlier, he was in charge of the Kuwait watching station at Khafji, so when I visited Khafji I'd called on him. I'd known him before very slightly in Kuwait, and during Desert Shield, I had called on him near the border.

So I walked out and saw him. We did the usual embraces, and "long time no see" and we had a long talk about what was going on in Kuwait. Sort of informally, I mean I wasn't after info on Kuwait government policy, but how was so-and-so, and what's happened to so-and-so because already there were some rumblings, as the families took a larger position in Kuwait, rumblings against the people in charge of the Kuwaiti oil ministry especially. That's where the money was, and the major Kuwaiti families wanted to get back into influencing where the money was. That's so important in Kuwait. Kuwait runs on money. So we had a lot of discussions. We talked about people we both knew and how everybody was, and how people survived the war. So that was nice. I remember that incident. A little affair. After that, the following year was just constant drawdown and working our way out.

Another nice event before we left for the States...I paid a farewell call in Kuwait, went up to see Ambassador Skip Gnehm and some Kuwaitis after all we had gone through. The Kuwaitis gave me a plaque, a sort of trophy-shaped token. They inscribed 'we shall never forget' on it. We found it touching...

*Q: So, you left there in '92, is that right?*

**WILLIAM A. PIERCE**  
**Political/Military Officer**  
**Riyadh (1989-1993)**

*Mr. Pierce was born and raised in Georgia and educated at Davidson College and the University of Georgia Law School. Entering the Foreign Service in 1973, he was first posted to Surabaya, Indonesia, followed by a tour at Damascus, Syria. After completing Arabic language studies in Washington and Tunis, Mr. Pierce was assigned as Political Officer to a number of Arabic speaking posts, including Khartoum, Jeddah and Riyadh. In Washington, Mr. Pierce dealt primarily with Middle East Affairs. His final post was Surabaya, where he was Consul General. Mr. Pierce was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.*

*Q: You were a political-military officer in Saudi Arabia, that's right?*

PIERCE: That's right.

*Q: I'd just like to set the framework. Bill, you were in Riyadh from '89 to when?*

PIERCE: I was in Riyadh for four years.

*Q: So about '93.*

PIERCE: '93.

*Q: Okay. Had Saudi Arabia changed much since you were there last?*

PIERCE: The first issue of that nature that my family and I confronted was Riyadh. We had always nursed the vision of it being such a primitive outpost in the middle of the desert, with far more "Wahhabi," or more puritanical sensitivities, and not a very fun place – even somewhat primitive. It was surprising to see the amount of progress that had occurred in Riyadh in the eight years that I had been away from the kingdom, especially in the diplomatic quarter (DQ) where we would be living. The DQ is an area adjacent to Riyadh just on the outskirts and had been beautifully planned and landscaped. The new embassy building and embassy housing were there.

The city itself had been well-funded by the Saudis and had been made into a rather dramatic town – I wouldn't say beautiful, but not unattractive – with a very good infrastructure of roads and communications. The desert air was, as always, an extremely different experience from the humid, languid atmosphere that always was in Jeddah. Quite refreshing, and the winters were extremely mild, but again they did not have the languishing atmosphere on the coast – the Red Sea or the Persian Gulf. So it had some attractions. It was still, and it remains as far as I can tell, sort of the capitol of puritanical Islam that dominates Saudi politics and religion, and your liberties were somewhat restrained by that. Being a diplomat did make that bearable. Living in the quarter, which you might think was being sequestered, was in fact more liberating in the sense that there was more of a toleration – less of a feeling of being observed and being...

*Q: You could have a swimming pool and that sort of thing.*

PIERCE: You could. And the religious police, from time to time, would frequent the diplomatic quarter, but it was not often. Incidents were rare there, and involved cases where religious police would encounter people and warn them or apprehend them for violating rules on modesty, conduct or dress. Women were just a bit freer there. I don't think you would find women riding bicycles outside of the DQ; you would find them there. The social events were just a bit freer there and it was quite beautiful. The embassy itself was an extremely attractive place, inside and out. And again, the housing, although there were many complaints of it being too small, seemed quite functional and especially because it was new it was very workable and had minimal problems.

*Q: Who was your ambassador? You must've probably had a couple, didn't you?*

PIERCE: No I didn't, actually. Chas Freeman had gotten there just before I did and he left three years later after the war with Iraq, and the chargé afterwards, David Welch, those were the

COMs (Chiefs of Mission) during the time I was in Riyadh.

*Q: First let's look at the Saudi form of government. I mean it had eight years or so to absorb more money and all. Did you see a difference in the Saudi government and society? I'm talking about at the time you arrived.*

PIERCE: I can't think of any great change. When I left Jeddah in '83 Fahd was king, and when I got to Riyadh he was still king and operating as king. I don't think his position had been consolidated that much. More or less it seems the system just kept moving. There were no big changes, as I recall, in the system that I noticed when I first got there.

While I was in Riyadh there was an economic downturn and the Saudis were beginning to cut back on subsidies. You began to have questions about real poverty among Saudis in Riyadh in certain areas. It was a hard question to answer. Certainly they were no longer getting what they had been getting ten years earlier. Still, it was obvious that the dole for the royal family and those in the elites hadn't stopped. In fact, it might've expanded. This would in turn cause, along with the introduction of western influences by the American troops – these two factors would begin to call into question the family's authority, the family's adherence to religious tenets in the kingdom. A number of factors would contribute to that questioning. This was political work and I wasn't doing political work but you began to get in the street tapes, some pamphlets, some sermons at mosques that were not exactly in accord with the established party line. People were talking more about a renaissance, talking more of the good 'ole times, their paradisiacal version of the values that the Prophet had brought to the peninsula in the 7<sup>th</sup>-century. That was a veiled reference to the lack of corruption in those earlier days, and that became more worrisome to the authorities. In some cases certain preachers who were giving these types of sermons were observed or perhaps taken away for a period of time. Again, it was not an area that I focused on, but it was a time of questioning, one in which you saw more of a general rumbling.

There have always been, from time to time, calls by commercial types for greater participation; very, very subtle calls for the kingdom to begin to accommodate itself to getting more participation of groups in the society. This was a call that began when Fahd – I think it was in '79 or '80 – began to talk about the creation of Majlis al-Shura, which was the consultative council made up of key elements in society. This tapped into an interest of certain circles, but not knowing what it really meant because Fahd never would explain it to any great degree. Those currents had gone up and down while I had been away and you could still hear them from time to time when I was there. I believe ultimately the body was created, but that was after I left. What it does and how suitable it is is a question that I can't answer. It happened after I was gone.

*Q: You were the political-military officer. Where did that position fit within the embassy? You had the ambassador, Chas Freeman, his deputy...*

PIERCE: David Dunford at the time.

*Q: David Dunford.*

PIERCE: He went on to be ambassador in Oman.

*Q: And then the political counselor?*

PIERCE: No. In Riyadh, given the import of our military relationship, we had our own political-military section which was headed by a counselor who was a member of the Country Team. There were a number of reasons for that, primarily simply because of the amount of foreign military sales and the programs that we had with the kingdom – also because of the significant coordination that the embassy felt important with the American military regarding how they viewed Saudi Arabia and how they wanted to try to heighten political-military cooperation. We were a section in and of ourselves. There were three officers and a secretary, as well as the head. In Saudi Arabia we had a very complicated system of SAO, security assistance offices. At the time two officers of general rank, one who was a two-star officer in charge of something called USMTM, the military training mission. Traditionally this was an Air Force position. There were several hundred U.S. military involved in advising and contributing to U.S. military programs for the Saudi military. There was also a one-star general who was Army and he was in charge of something called the OPM-SANG, which was a separate advisory group working for the Saudi National Guard to help modernize that institution. The USMTM had a relationship with the Ministry of Defense. The Minister of Defense was Prince Sultan bin Abdul Aziz, the brother of the king. The Saudi National Guard was under the supervision and leadership of Crown Prince Abdullah and was a totally separate entity. The OPM-SANG had a relationship solely with the Saudi National Guard.

There was another small group there which was the Corps of Engineers which ten years earlier had been involved in massive construction and modernization, building infrastructure for the Saudi military for the Ministry of Defense airbases primarily. That program, as these facilities had been completed, was pared down and during the time I was there it was a very small group that still had an ordnance supportive role with some aspects of the Saudi military under the Ministry of Defense. So there were three groups primarily involved in security assistance programs, and one of the primary roles that my section had was to interact, to coordinate, to keep updated on the programs of our military assistance with the kingdom. The job required intensive building of relationships and maintaining them with the individual U.S. military groups.

*Q: When you got there in '89 what were you getting from your own personal observation, the other officers in the political-military section, and from your American military counterparts? What was the sense of the Saudi military establishment?*

PIERCE: By “sense” what do you mean?

*Q: Effectiveness. Your eyebrows went up. (laughs)*

PIERCE: *(laughs)* No they didn't. You just think you saw that. The Saudi military, depending on the units, would have varying degrees of effectiveness. One of the primary goals of our military groups there was to enhance that ability and to try to make them as capable as possible through a modernization program. In some areas they were extremely good. As I recall – this is anecdotal; I have no way of knowing this – the Saudi pilots, for example, were very good at flying and in combat. In fact during the war with Iraq they flew the second largest number of sorties of any of



the nations – we being first – against Iraq. But you had significant shortcomings. I think the farther away from the Air Force you got, for example, there were a lot of questions on the Saudi army side – in terms of systems that would have to be adopted as they were moving into modernization. At the time we were in the middle of beginning a program for their purchase of Abrams heavy tanks, and this was an area where they were going to have a lot of work to do.

*Q: Again dates become important. In '89 how were those involved with looking at Saudi national defense looking at the threat, the situation around them?*

PIERCE: I'm sorry. You mean "those" who? Those Americans or?

*Q: Americans and others. There may have been divergent views, but what was the feeling?*

PIERCE: I think one of the issues that you could see affecting the kingdom was a tendency often in the comprehensive U.S. policy to lump the Middle East together and to view the Arab-Israeli issue as the primary one that colored all. This was a major problem in the sense of trying to modernize the Saudi defense requirements. The result was a very, very tortured, very, very slow proceeding on the part of administrations in proposing arms sales and giving congressional notification, sometimes significantly resulting in failure. The Arab-Israeli issue always seemed to become interjected into Saudi Arabia's defense requirements.

If you looked at the kingdom, on the other hand, you could see surrounding it were a host of countries that were well constituted threats, or were unstable. You could look at the time at South Yemen, which constituted a threat of some sort, and because hostilities had broken out along the border there. North Yemen, at the time, was unstable and had that potential. Iraq at the time was blatantly a threat and proved absolutely to be one. Iran, especially after the Iranian revolution, there were very purposeful attacks on the kingdom's legitimacy and stability coming out of Tehran. Across the Red Sea you had an unsettled Sudan. And while Egypt was stable, I think the Saudis could view Egypt from the point of history as a place from which invaders came, although the relationships were always quite good with Egypt during the modern era. It was over a longer view of history – which the Saudis always took – though I'm not trying to say that Egypt was a threat. In essence Saudi Arabia had a history of borders that were unsettled, and then you had some very direct – not overt, but very strong – threats coming mainly from the Gulf on the Iran side.

And so you had legitimate defense requirements, and the question was how much do we want to help the Saudis gain capabilities to be a deterrent or to contain the minor incidents that might occur along their borders – perhaps in the south or on the eastern side. Also, greater security assistance programs would make potentially greater military cooperation, if and when the time arose that we might need to become more active militarily in the region. If you have no security assistance programs and suddenly a threat emerges that is extreme and pressing, the ability to suddenly have military cooperation is severely constrained, because you simply do not have, on the ground, an awareness of their capability, an interaction with them, or the personal ties that you simply have to have in order to get cooperation, in order to get exchange, in order to immediately get the benefits of an alliance or a partnership. That was what was needed in 1990 when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait.

*Q: Again, when you arrived, was the embassy, our military, and also on the Saudi defense side, looking at Iraq or looking at Iran? Which one were they looking at?*

PIERCE: That's a very difficult question. For the Arab world, Iran at the time was always the most visible threat. The Iran-Iraq War had wound down and Iran had suffered a major military defeat, yet their stridency, their belligerency and their reported desire to stir up religious minorities, Shias, in the eastern province, which is a long-term situation – also Shia in Bahrain – was always a fear that the Saudis had. So that was the first threat that they would always mention. When you got to talking about Iraq, the public position was that there was no threat there. It was very difficult for them to make the case in the public domain, but you could always tell that there was one and in private they would allude to the Iraqi threat. This was the main threat, but you would never say it, simply because of this concept of Arab unity, this concept of “my brother Arab” which is honored publicly, though often not in private circles or amongst themselves.

*Q: Well what about at the embassy with Chas Freeman as the ambassador? Would there be any sort of look at the situation from time to time, particularly by those involved in the military efforts as you were, where you would sit around and say, “Well, what happens here,” or “We could do this?” I mean were we writing out contingency papers or brainstorming or anything of that nature?*

PIERCE: One of the primary jobs of the political-military section is always to promote or to react to ambassadorial front office queries along those lines. This is a constant. Saudi Arabia was one of the few places in which to me at the time a political-military section was justified – in the sense of really needing to think very carefully through our approaches, how we could foster and advance military cooperation, how we had to take into consideration Saudi sensitivities in trying to promote closer cooperation. This was a very, very important factor. It was very difficult – and you can see it today as it has spun out – for the Saudis to accept the presence of foreign soldiers on Saudi territory after the invasion of Kuwait. And it did produce a public reaction.

It was very difficult for the Saudis to reconcile what they considered our biased approach to the Middle East peace process, and their closer cooperation with us, and doing it in a way that appeared overt. It opened them up to accusations by, primarily, Iran, but also by Libya from time to time. There was sometimes sniping from other Arab governments accusing them of hypocrisy or taking positions that were not supportive of Palestine or the Arab goals in Jerusalem. Those were very touchy issues that still have to play themselves out. At the time it was a very difficult question. They wanted the cooperation but the difficulty was how open it could be without leaving them susceptible to attacks by Iran and others.

*Q: In a way you in your position were having to look at both sides. If we did too much for the Saudis we'd get hit by the pro-Israeli forces in the United States. And the Saudis on the other hand had a worry about both internally and externally getting too close with the United States.*

PIERCE: Exactly.

*Q: Again, coming back to the embassy and this time, you had Central Command down there. Were you asking where is the threat coming from or what do we do about it?*

PIERCE: We were mainly defining the threat. Obviously we had a very active Defense Attaché Office (DAO) in Riyadh, as well as the USMTM security advisors. Their primary job wasn't to analyze threats, but at the same time it was. Primarily because if you advance military programs, or try to get the U.S. government into new military programs, you have to define the threat. Threat analysis on the part of all of us was a continuing process; trying to analyze it and also trying to devise – and especially with the militaries (our military with theirs) – trying to come up with programs that in the long-term would be suitable to redress or to counter individual threats from the military or political side. This was a constant issue that you always deal with.

The Defense Attachés' Office would submit reports through their channels; the USMTM mainly in concert with us, because we both had to work carefully when we were into proposed arm sales. We would analyze the threats; they would have the most direct link with CENTCOM. Then, of course, we had our exchange programs with the Saudis. We had a very close relationship with them in terms of threat analysis.

*Q: How about you and your office? Were you getting pretty good reports about what was happening in Iran and Iraq, particularly?*

PIERCE: One of the things that Ambassador Freeman did was to encourage, and would organize, weekly political-military meetings in which all of the major military players as well as those players on the rest of the Country Team who were involved in the military and issues of general stability would get together and exchange views. This was at a supervisory level. At the working level one of the things you've got to do in the Political-Military Section is to assure that you are up to speed on virtually anything that has an impact on the threat against the kingdom. And we had access to anything everyone else had.

*Q: Yes. Was there some reservation in the beginning? I mean here you were an Arabist and a lot of others were Arabists there and all of a sudden you get a Chinese language officer as ambassador.*

PIERCE: No. We had no thoughts along that line. I was impressed by the way Freeman would take issues and basically refocus them. It was very interesting to see. He had vision, which again, in terms of the military side was to have stronger political military cooperation, but to do it in a way that wouldn't severely strain the Saudi-American relationship. And ultimately we were thinking that once you begin to have a relationship you can expand it as they get more comfortable with it.

One of the things we had always done is have a very good relationship with their navy. It's easy to have a relationship with the navy, because the navy doesn't operate on Saudi territory. They were very interested in having exchanges with us in various operations. The problem with the navy is that it was not a significant branch in the Saudi military. We had the same type of approach with the air force, but it was a little bit more standoffish because their air force requirements or interests, they wanted aircraft sometimes from us that it was difficult to be

responsive to. These were the F-15 issues.

The army, on the other hand, was where you needed the strongest type of military cooperation, because that would be the force that would be the main threat repellent. It was more difficult simply because the army is on Saudi territory and you've got to figure out ways in which you can slowly build up a relationship and a trust that might move into further military cooperation.

*Q: What was your impression of Prince Sultan? What you were getting both you and your colleagues. Again your eyebrows have gone up.*

PIERCE: No they weren't.

*Q: (laughs)*

PIERCE: I had the opportunity to be in many meetings with Prince Sultan and looked at him for a very long time. He's a very, very interesting fellow. Now this is a difficult question to answer. I think overall he saw that the kingdom could have greater security through a relationship with the U.S. And he saw it manifested, not surprisingly, in more and more arms sales. He was very effective in articulating that. He was also very effective in making the rounds. Many of the Saudi military installations are in the middle of nowhere – way out – and he would, once or twice a year, make the rounds to all of these places and to basically warm up the esprit. He did that very well.

The problem he had was that he had been minister of defense since 1970 or something. He had seen come and go six or seven secretaries of defense, and over that period of time had heard our promises, our statements of policy, our views toward the Gulf, our views toward the Arab-Israeli process – views he would always ask about. He would hear one from one and a totally different version from another, and it would go up and down, and up and down. Our policy would not be a straight, solid, unwavering, direct policy. It would wax and wane. And I know he'd notice this because in every meeting he had a scribe who would write down exactly everything everyone said, so he had access to everything any secretary of defense ever told him. So I'm not so sure he had any great faith in our constancy. And that made him standoffish to a degree, I think, which is understandable.

*Q: Yes.*

PIERCE: He was more skeptical, but I don't mean to say very skeptical, because there's no alternative for the Saudis and they've had a good relationship with us. He was less accepting than King Fahd, for example, who probably didn't have his experience of the history of ups and downs in this specific aspect of our policy.

*Q: Well of course our people all came in full of enthusiasm or whatever you want to say about what the latest policy was.*

PIERCE: There's nuance change; there always is.

*Q: Yes. I would think the Yemen threat was basically a border guerrilla type war, but with Iran and Iraq you're looking at two large countries. The demographics of that are such that they've got big populations and Saudi Arabia is a small population.*

PIERCE: There you go.

*Q: So that when you're talking about an army, if anything goes overland...I mean air force, yes, a small, elite air force can take care of a large, not-so-elite air force, but when you're talking about land stuff there must've been implicit in some of the planning that sometime we're going to have to put troops down here.*

PIERCE: This goes into a CENTCOM planning issue which we had to deal with ultimately, and it's always in the back of your mind. That would really depend on what the threat was. I'm talking pre-invasion. But that would depend on what the threat was and how you would respond, and how good your rapport was with Saudi leaders, which was the key factor that did help us when it finally happened. How good your cooperation was on the ground. I made the argument for more sophisticated fire power. There are not a lot of Saudi military; therefore they need weapons systems that have more lethality and operate in greater concentration. This was an argument we'd frequently use as we would provide arm sales proposals to SECSTATE (Secretary of State) for coordination and ultimately White House approval, and if and when they would be notified in Congress.

*Q: Were we getting anywhere with this?*

PIERCE: It was a fight, but I think the Abrams tanks happened just as I got there. In other words the work had already been done. One of the long-smoldering issues was F-15 E's...

*Q: Could you explain this for somebody who doesn't know what we're talking about?*

PIERCE: The Saudis had already purchased a number of F-15 series aircraft.

*Q: This was really our mainline fighter, wasn't it?*

PIERCE: It was at the time, yes. I guess it still is. I've forgotten most of my POL/MIL (Political/Military Section) stuff, but in essence these were primarily designed for air defense and air fighting. Among many strengths the F-15 version had a ground attack capability. For several years the Saudis had made repeated requests for them, and these had been basically postponed because of its ground attack capability. When you would make a proposal of that nature, it would trigger alarm bells amongst some members of Congress as to its potential for use in a war with Israel in the future. That argument would ignore the fact that the Saudis did need to have a ground attack capability by their aircraft because of the threats that they were facing, just using common sense from Iran or Iraq.

*Q: Yes.*

PIERCE: Now you said earlier that and objectively speaking you're right – that Yemen would be

minor border irritations, but I think the Saudis always nursed a greater fear simply because that Yemen border area was the focus of a conflict in the '30s, and it still is in the back of their minds.

*Q: You say so much depended on relations with the Saudis. At your level, how did you work?*

PIERCE: Relations in the sense of you're talking primarily military to military contacts here. Not relations through the embassy. One of the hardest things was for embassy personnel to have direct contact with Saudi military. Entering the Ministry of Defense required permission; you had to get permission to enter and to go see someone. It was very difficult. When you tried to do that the answer would come back, "We deal with USMTM; we don't deal with embassy people," or, "We will see you, but with a USMTM person available." It was very difficult to do. We were able to get some contacts, but not very many. And they were not very productive, in a direct sense, with Saudi military in their settings. More successful was seeing heads of certain groups with a security assistance adviser's presence; such as the upper tiers of the National Guard through our brigadier general there. Also going out with the ambassador to pay calls on people like Prince Khalid bin Sultan who was the son of a minister and at the time was the head of the Saudi Air Defense Force, which ultimately moved into the Patriot issue. As you might recall, during the war with Iraq he became the overall commander-in-chief of the Saudi forces.

The other way you made contacts, was through American Defense contractors. There were a host of them there, mainly involved in direct programs with the Saudis, but also trying to get the Saudis to want certain systems – and then trying to get the U.S. government to support the Saudi desire. Also with Saudi military contractors. This would be a good way to get impressions, to find out what Saudi thinking was in a more informal way. You could find out more or less what was going on below the surface. When you did that, for example, you found that the Saudi Ministry of the Interior had an intense interest in upgraded communications systems, mainly security warning systems and other infrastructure around the borders.

You also ended up running in the great game of competition with defense firms from other nationalities – mainly French and British – which was an interesting side show to the political military situation in the kingdom.

*Q: Were you given the brief to make sure to do whatever you could to push American products? Were you pretty well constrained by your lack of direct contact with the military?*

PIERCE: That's an interesting question and it's basically one that you had to approach on an ad hoc basis. There are certain areas which just simply are not doable from the standpoint of what Saudis may want and what the U.S. is going to allow. It's a sensitivity issue. If you had a question about certain systems, you could always find someone at USMTM and say, "Well, what about this [or that]?" One of them was a system where that aircraft could identify friend or foe (IFF). It was a very sensitive issue, one very difficult for us to touch in concrete ways. Whether there was a competitor in that I don't remember.

*Q: I might say for the person who is reading this, IFF has been done for a long time. How do you tell that things are moving very rapidly and is it a friend or a foe? Usually it's an electronic*

*response.*

PIERCE: But mainly between aircraft.

*Q: But it can also be with tanks and aircraft and all of that.*

PIERCE: This was mainly an aircraft issue. That issue was very difficult. I mean there were some systems that were usable, but the more advanced ones raised touchy issues. Sometimes there were areas in which the French were going to win. They were just going to win. And the British were going to win. One area where we were trying was the navy. The navy was predominantly using French material. I think the British were coming in second; maybe we were. But we were saying, when you look ahead to the time you will need to replace your naval ships, you should look at American sources. It was a difficult issue, but we tried, though there didn't seem to be much potential. But this was ten years ago.

The British challenge was most dramatically seen in the Al-Yamamah barter deal with weapons in exchange for oil. The British provided Tornado aircraft and a host of other aircraft, and built a large airbase in the kingdom. This was under Prince Sultan and that was going to happen – whether you would question its ethics, whether it's efficient. There were a host of questions that came up about it, but this was going to happen in the kingdom. The kingdom was very interested in this type of exchange, one that was quite difficult for us to do just by the mechanism of how our sales occur. Still, in terms of actual programs we did have the most significant relationship with the kingdom, which was as it should've been and how it should be.

*Q: You mentioned the National Guard. I think I raised the subject before, but back in my time – we're talking about the 1950s – the National Guard, or I guess it was then called the White Army, was kept as sort of a counterpoint to the regular army, being seen as a little more loyal to the king or something. It was a time when all of the other Arab countries were being taken over by their military and all. Was this still sort of in the backs of people's minds?*

PIERCE: I don't think so. When the National Guard was first formed shortly thereafter, maybe as late as '62, when King Faisal came in officially and Saud was deposed as king, most of the current leaders came in. Prince Sultan, King Fahd, Crown Prince Abdullah. This type of desert politics that you're suggesting – desert political military stuff – has always remained in the backs of the minds of the Saudis, but it has been proven it's not really the role of the National Guard today. They performed admirably in the invasion; they were extremely good. And they had modernized. We started a relationship with them, maybe in '74, and had an agreement supporting the crown prince's desire to see it modernized, while at the same time be recognized as more of a relic of the past.

*Q: It had been considered almost a tribal levy or something like that.*

PIERCE: Yes it was. A bunch of guys with guns who sit up there in the mountains and repel any of the invaders; good medieval stuff.

*Q: Yes.*

PIERCE: But he wanted to see it modernized and become a secondary backup force with some internal security responsibilities and also border responsibilities. That's what spawned this very productive relationship that our army has had with the National Guard. And it also solidified – contrary to what many pundits suggest – Abdullah's strong appreciation of, and tie to, the United States. He had always been thought of as being just a bit more standoffish, and not as close to the United States as perhaps Fahd. While he has a different attitude and a different approach – I sat in several meetings with him and followed his thinking quite closely – I never detected that at all. I think you get into the same sort of reservations that Prince Sultan had, where he might question our constancy and perhaps even the wisdom of our approach to the Arab-Israeli question, which is a dominant one for any Arab.

*Q: Yes.*

PIERCE: But in the sense of our partnership with the kingdom and its utility for both, I think that's unwavering and it's far more dramatically expressed by him than perhaps by any other prominent Saudi that I've encountered.

*Q: Were the Gulf states a factor at all – either a support or a problem?*

PIERCE: There was always an interest that we had, since the early '80s when the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) was formed, as to whether it could take on a military component; in other words have a united GCC force. There was some attention given to that. Yet I think the governments of those countries were – and again, I don't know what the relationship is now – the GCC evolved politically. It evolved economically in certain ways and in certain other forms of day to day cooperation. The military aspect of it was slower to evolve. The issue begins to boil around how much of your military capability do you want to cede to GCC, and can the GCC be seen as taking part of yours away or making you stronger. That's a difficult question and it never was fully answered. You still had the beginnings of adopting political positions that had effects on their military approaches, but ultimately each country was going to set its own military priorities. The GCC was not going to produce a military position at variance with them. So it was an evolving situation.

*Q: Well, talking about evolving situations, can we talk about your personal experience of events that led up to the Gulf War, were we seeing clouds, or when did the adrenaline start to flow?*

PIERCE: That's a question that you can find in books better than you can from me. When you're working an issue on a day to day basis, the issue was the tension between Kuwait and Iraq. You'd read the traffic; you'd read the cables coming out of Iraq, coming out of Kuwait. You could see a lot of parrying, manipulating, backing-and-forthing – also from the UAE at the time. And you always get into this question of well, we've done this. We've been here before. Is this the time or isn't it the time? It boils down to are you taking every crisis like this seriously – I mean to the extreme – or are you just trying to work it to pull back the brinkmanship? I think it was an issue that was in the back of my mind but it wasn't the primary one on which we were focused.



I do remember the night before August 1, I went out – my family was not in the country at the time – with a friend of mine and the next morning I woke up at about 7:30, turned on the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation), and I heard the news and I said, “This is going to be a very bad day.” *(laughs)*

*Q: (laughs) Well Chas Freeman I think was up in Newport, Rhode Island, or someplace like that.*

PIERCE: He was not in the kingdom.

*Q: No. There were a lot of people that were saying this was not going to be a good day. (laughs)*

PIERCE: *(laughs)* And it wasn't.

*Q: So just to give a person who doesn't understand this an idea, what did you do that day?*

PIERCE: Okay, we did a couple of things. Firstly, you get into the embassy and you try to get some sense of what's going on. You don't get an awful lot; you get more from the radio than you do from our traffic, simply because the issue is so inchoate and so unknown. You begin to call around and try to find out from your military contacts where their people are. Because some of the security assistance officers were in Kuwait at the time. Then you call a number of bases closer to the Kuwait border and see where we have military programmers who are visiting and see if you could find out what's going on from them. You check very carefully and make sure of what you're doing with both of your consulates. By noon you're beginning to have a very, very vague picture as to what's going on, and begin sending in some cables – very, very sparse cables – about the situation.

I don't recall an awful lot of information that we had. The situation was just very vague and very unknown. It stayed that way for a few days; the joy being that Saddam Hussein decided to stop on the Kuwaiti border. By then things had developed to the degree that Secretary Cheney was en route to the kingdom.

*Q: Was there the feeling when you started hearing this to say, “Oh my God, they may come all the way.” Were you talking particularly about Saddam Hussein as being really a loose cannon?*

PIERCE: Oh certainly. I just remembered this. On Sunday, my family was coming back into the kingdom and arriving at the Riyadh airport Sunday morning. I remember going out to the Riyadh airport and there was this great big window there looking out to the east and I just kept looking up there wondering, “Are the planes coming over?” *(laughs)*

*Q: Yes.*

PIERCE: It was nothing, of course, but you've got a lot of apprehension. You began to ask for information like if you came to the Kuwait border with Saudi Arabia and decided to barrel down to Riyadh, how many hours would it take to get here? You want to know what Saudi units might be in real force between here and the border. You also ask the same question about Dhahran. You begin to think about where the desal plants are.

*Q: Desalinization plants.*

PIERCE: Desalinization, which is ninety percent of the water in Riyadh, for example. You have an awful lot of questions, which thank God I didn't have to worry that much about, but questions from the American community. Another ramification was that the American community primarily was there for contracts. The expertise in the desal plants. Significant expertise in the oil infrastructure. Expertise in defense programs. They were quite predominant and you were very interested in keeping in touch with them. I kept in touch with the ones involved in the military programs, but the embassy did it at large. Great consternation and a great sense of, not anxiety – I wouldn't say that, but just an unknown feeling.

*Q: Secretary of Defense Cheney came and had a very important meeting with King Fahd.*

PIERCE: Yes he did.

*Q: What task was laid upon you all?*

PIERCE: Our ambassador came with Cheney for that meeting, and, in essence, at that time our main focus – which is normally what you do – was to provide the infrastructure to coordinate with the Saudi side – knowing what Mr. Cheney wanted to do, who he wanted to meet with, when he wanted to do it, and who else would be with him. It was primarily who he wanted to see, and that was the king. Basically it's a coordination issue where you are trying to set up the infrastructure and work with the Saudis so that this group will have a place for accommodation and sufficient transportation, and have a schedule laid out that will identify when and where he might see the king. You would also provide – which is always what you do, even in a situation like this – some background as to where we think the Saudis are coming from. Which in this sense was kind of vague simply because the situation was so murky. Prince Sultan was not – I forget where he was; he might've been out of the country at the time – so he was not a factor. He did arrive during the visit, but after the meeting with the king as I recall, and had a separate meeting with Cheney. I could be mistaken about that. So that's what you do. We had about 36 hours notice to do all that.

That is being helped on the other side, as I recall – but this might be just logic and not actuality – by the Saudi embassy here in Washington through Prince Bandar who facilitates all that. But the actual working out the schedule, getting it all together and making it happen, rests with the embassy and with USMTM. Mainly when you're going into political issues, which meeting with the king perforce not a military one, the embassy takes the lead and the military people on the ground are in support of you. Now obviously when Cheney came he had an intensive relationship with our military on the ground in Saudi Arabia, but when he interacts with the political leaders, the embassy normally is the one that orchestrates that event. And that's what we did.

*Q: After the meeting were the Saudis, "Alright, this is the big time now." Was this pretty apparent?*

PIERCE: Yes. It's not like immediately you go up and here are the F-15s, but within say 24 hours or so they began to arrive. What you'd had initially was the SAOs on the ground. The SAOs are security advisers, they're not military combatants.

*Q: SAO being?*

PIERCE: Security Assistance Officers. They're not their advisers. They're not here to fight a war. So then you began to move in the actual CENTCOM deployed troops from the various units in the States or from elsewhere, and you began to get ranking officers setting up CENTCOM forward headquarters. This is when the embassy begins to coordinate very carefully with the CENTCOM elements. Freeman was very good at this. He recognized immediately that this is a military operation; they are independent of the chief of mission. But his intent, which one of my main charges and he very carefully did it as well, was to get a cooperative bond with the CENTCOM headquarters, with CENTCOM, and to keep that in a constantly updated, coordinated way, so that we and they would always have a position in respect to what we needed to do in the kingdom that was cohesive. He worked very hard at that and it was one of the jobs that my section was charged with doing. On a day to day basis this is what you did. And we, over the period of time that they were there, developed a tremendously close, coordinated role mainly with their J-5, their planners. But also with their J-4...

*Q: "J-4" being?*

PIERCE: Supply. Those were the main two, but we would have coordination on other matters. They would want to write manuals, for example. This was very day to day stuff. Manuals or little pamphlets for introducing troops on how to survive in the kingdom in public places. We would basically give our very heavy guidances as to what was right. They would want to know how to interact. We would be in close contact with them. They had a daily staff meeting and somebody from my office was always there at CENTCOM headquarters. The ambassador quickly invited them into our coordinated POL/MIL meeting that I mentioned to you. Then the ambassador and Schwarzkopf, when he got there, began having a close relationship of sharing, and we were able to get our DCM to have the same type of meeting with his chief of staff. As you know, the DCM is sort of an executive officer; the chief of staff is sort of an executive officer. At both of these meetings they had things to talk about, but we would always make sure their agendas were filled with issues that we felt were worth bringing up. This was a relationship that persisted throughout their presence. Almost as soon as the first group came in – it might've been a full-bird colonel in charge of it then – we were down there meeting. After that General Horner came in when we were there. When Schwarzkopf came the situation solidified. And then with their J-5 and then their POLAD. Their POLAD (State Department political adviser to CENTCOM) was their major information conveyor.

*Q: What's his name?*

PIERCE: Gordon Brown.

*Q: Gordon Brown, whom I have interviewed.*

*I think it's interesting to look at this closely, because here was an operation which was both successful and started off right from the ground being cooperative. Because normally we, the embassy type people, say, "Well, you can't do this and that," and the military says, "Get out of my way; we're going to do it our way." Would you say lessons had been learned on both sides or was it the people who were directing it? What caused this close, effective relationship?*

PIERCE: I can't speak from the military's side, but I would say that Freeman made it clear that this is what we were going to do, and it did not take my section any great period of time to figure that out. And that's when we began to move. But he began straight off the bat making the overtures, making sure that the CINC was aware of what our attitude was, and then we solidified it on a day to day basis.

Now another thing that goes back to that point is when General Horner flew in...

*Q: Horner being?*

PIERCE: The head of the Air Force. When he flew in to that airbase in Riyadh, Horner already knew the Saudi general who went out to meet him. They had a long fruitful relationship. Horner and the people he flew in with already knew what that base was because we had had programs in position there. This was the result of the military cooperation, the military programs. We already knew what their capabilities were in terms of their aircraft, what they could do with them and what those aircraft could do. We knew we could work with them. This was true in Dhahran when we came in; this was true in Riyadh when we came in. We knew where the administrative defense offices were; we knew the people in there. All of our U.S. military officers had had relationships. That was one of the most significant reasons why we were able to forge a working relationship with the Saudi military on the ground almost immediately.

*Q: Obviously the pace of life moved up, but here you were with your family arriving in the middle of...*

PIERCE: They had just been on vacation.

*Q: Did they stay or did they leave?*

PIERCE: Everybody stayed.

*Q: This must've put a certain strain on everyone, didn't it?*

PIERCE: Some people it did, some people it didn't. There were a number of questions and problems that spread throughout the community in Dhahran and in Riyadh. First was the poison gas fear, and the rush by the Saudi government to provide gas masks to their citizens and by several embassies to do so as well – and our slowness in doing that. Then, ultimately, there was the Scud issue which happened after combat began. Obviously it was an extremely difficult time, with the evacuation that we put into place just before hostilities broke out.

One of the important things – in a subjective sense – was a time when all commercial aircraft

into the kingdom stopped. In essence you couldn't get out anymore, and the way people did get out was using U.S. military aircraft to evacuate if they wanted to leave. I felt at that time like there had just been a big lid put over the sky in Riyadh and here we were. And when the whole situation had become resolved, that lid would come off and the stars would come out again.

I remember after the invasion in Kuwait, and after we introduced our troops there, I always had a sense that ultimately we would move into combat. As events progressed through the later part of '90, inevitably Saddam Hussein, by his ineptness, put himself in a position where he could only be attacked by the allied forces. I remember meeting with Dave Ottaway from the Washington Post, whom I had known from an earlier job, and he said, "Doesn't this seem like a Greek play to you? In essence you have this tragedy out at the end – this terrible thing that's going to happen – and all of these players are trying to avoid it, yet they move closer and closer to it and ultimately it's going to happen." I didn't want to feed him, but I thought that was a very interesting observation, because it's exactly what I felt was happening. And it's what did happen.

Yes, there was a lot of tension felt by a number of people and it got worse when the Scuds starting falling.

*Q: Yes. One of the obvious factors was that whereas in the normal course of a war situation coming up, we've got to get all of the American civilians and everything out and move the embassy down and all, in this case we really, for very practical reasons, wanted to keep American civilian personnel and non-embassy people working in oil fields, the desalination plants, on and on and on, because they had to be there in order for the machine to work.*

PIERCE: That's right.

*Q: And this was a reversal of almost everything all of us have been trained to do, which is really to get the non-combatants out of the playing field.*

PIERCE: That's right.

*Q: Did you get involved in any of this outside of making appropriate noises at home or something like that?*

PIERCE: We never had any personal reservations about staying. There were voluntary evacuations and a few people in the embassy took advantage of that, but not a lot. When the Scuds started falling, significant numbers of dependents – especially from commercial installations – moved out; and many of the commercial operations as well as commercial military relations, went to skeleton operations. Overnight this happened. I remember I had a friend in a big compound filled with military contractors. The Scuds fell not too far from there and overnight the houses were evacuated. They all got in their cars and scrambled – went down to Jeddah – which was a safe place to go. The International School of Riyadh went from, as I recall, a population of 2,000 to 200 within a week. Teachers there were given options to leave and to come back in the future if it should prove that they could. My kids stayed. There were all sorts of rumors about potential terrorist attacks; our kids got instructions on what to do in the event of a bomb near the school. They were very small at the time. It was kind of dramatic but we had

never any question about leaving.

When the Scuds began to fall, my office was in very close contact with the CENTCOM headquarters and would be alerted when there had been a Scud shot out from Iraq. It wouldn't be much. Basically, at any time day or night, we would just know within two minutes that a Scud was going to probably fall somewhere in the Riyadh area. You could confirm it and then sometimes see if the Patriot would hit it, which they would do from time to time, and then check with the CENTCOM headquarters to see, as it developed, what the situation was – where it hit and whether there might be any ramifications. You would always keep in touch with the ambassador or the DCM about this if it was a significant development. Mostly Scuds were aimed in Riyadh at the Riyadh air base. The problem with the Scuds is that their – to use the technical term; I don't know the acronym – CIP, the focus range of the Scud was so erratic that it wouldn't hit the Riyadh air base, it would hit something else outside of it. It just wouldn't hit what it was targeted at. Mainly that was an area that was filled with many expatriate defense contractors and they began to get very rattled about the Scud attacks. The Scuds would normally attack about – would hit, if they were going to hit at all – they would hit maybe early evening, late evening – elevenish – and early morning. Two of those three times. As the hostilities or combat progressed, they became more erratic, suggesting that they were being coordinated even less professionally than they were initially. They became more random as to where they hit.

*Q: Sort of hasty firing really.*

PIERCE: Yes. I think the reason being is they were afraid that as soon as a launch was detected they would be zeroed in on by our Air Force. I think that's what happened. But we were living on the fringe of Riyadh in the diplomatic quarter and we were not close to the Riyadh air base, so we did not have the same sense of apprehension that many of the USMTM people who were living near the base, as well as many of the defense contractors. A defense contractor friend said, "We used to have Scud parties." Yes, they had Scud parties. What they would do is since Scuds only shot at night they would all leave – these guys, a lot of them bachelors now, with all of their families being evacuated, working for the defense companies – would leave and go to the desert and sit around and watch to see if a Scud was coming in and whether a Patriot would come up and hit it. He explained it to me; he was laughing but it was kind of a "funny, ha ha ha, I'm scared to death," laugh.

*Q: During this time, let's say up to the buildup before January 17<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup>, were you pretty well working out of Riyadh or were you going off to Dhahran and other places?*

PIERCE: Pretty much out of Riyadh. The most important touch-base for us was the CENCOM headquarters. I would often find myself with the ambassador going down to Jeddah because the king – and I don't remember the precise dates – liked to be in Jeddah a lot. This was leading up to the hostilities. I don't remember when he came back to Riyadh. And then Prince Sultan would more often than not be down there. So whenever the ambassador went down to see Prince Sultan, I would go. And that was quite frequently. Over the period of a year Secretary of Defense Cheney, almost always accompanied by General Powell, visited Sultan eight or nine times. And we were always working that political aspect of his visit. Cheney would also go and consult with CENTCOM and that was totally under CENTCOM's venue. In terms of orchestrating the

political leaders meetings, we would take the lead there and also obviously coordinate very closely with CENTCOM. It was very much focused on travel to Jeddah. I went to Dhahran I think once; and I went up to the border with a VIP (Very Important Person) once. That's after our marines had just gotten up there.

*Q: According to Chas Freeman, he spent an inordinate amount of time escorting VIPs, many Congress people who wanted to see the troops and all. Did you get involved in much of this?*

PIERCE: Yes. In this orchestration you've got a CODEL (Congressional Delegation) who wants to come to the kingdom and the major focus here is to meet the troops. But he's coming to the kingdom and so he, or they, will also meet with the Saudi leadership. This is more of a political issue than it is a political/military issue. That will be the portion of the trip that the embassy will work and that will be done by another section, the Political Section. *(laughs)* And then they will be taken over by the CENTCOM people who will move them into the troop inspection and the photo opportunities and address their keen interests. This is what Ambassador Freeman was talking about. It was a constant. I think the embassy wanted to make sure that these congressional leaders knew, number one, what the role of the kingdom was and how vital its partnership was, and also to underline to the Saudis the importance by having so many visitors come. It culminated of course with the president's visit out there.

*Q: The time before the actual war, which really didn't last that long, while the troops were building up there, did you get involved in working with our military to tell them how the troops should behave and then working on this? Because even in the nicest, easy areas putting half a million American young boys and women into an area is upsetting.*

PIERCE: This was the issue that we worked most closely with J-5 on. As I was explaining earlier, these books on guidance – regulations on what you can do; how to best accommodate yourself when you're in the Saudi environment – squibs on Saudi mores, Saudi culture, Saudi customs, Saudi history. It was a delicate issue that I would raise, in the sense of how you conduct your own religious services in a country in which the predominant theme everywhere is Islam. That's a very sensitive issue and I know it's come up from time to time – how best to do that and to avoid any possibility of misperception, but I think it was accomplished.

*Q: How did you work this? I mean obviously you have chaplains with the troops and they conduct services, including Jewish services. What sort of guidance was there and how did you work it?*

PIERCE: Well it was a military issue in the sense of what the military has to do. Normally if you are in an environment that is yours – like a large camp – then what you do inside, as long as it's done in an appropriate manner, like a simple service, that's fine. We would have certain approaches like that, and then they would implement them in the field. We would find more often they were extremely sensitized to the need to keep that smooth. There were all sorts of issues that the military had to work on the phone. When you're in the field, rubbing up against the rural Saudis, this was an issue that I know they were really preoccupied with. We didn't have to get involved in that. Then there were claims issues. An errant artillery shell blows up a camel or you drive a tank across somebody's date orchard or something. They were very sensitive to

these issues. We didn't really have to work with them on it.

*Q: How about women in our armed forces? At this point women were an integral part; they weren't token.*

PIERCE: They were indeed.

*Q: In fact I was in Korea in 1976 when we had a border incident on the demilitarized zone and in those days female personnel are supposed to get out of the war zone and the commanding general there, as we went on high alert, said, "Hell with it. We can't run a war because women – truck drivers, military police, and all this – have to be there." And certainly by 1990 they were a major component.*

PIERCE: Well I think it's a matter of record that General Schwarzkopf had a lot of coordination with Khalid bin Sultan who was at that time his counterpart on the Saudi side. A lot of these issues that we worked with J-5, General Schwarzkopf would work with Khalid. I think our military was in a position to see that certain things had to happen, and would happen. Our forces are unified and there are men and women in it, that's just the way it is. When they moved their headquarters into the Ministry of Defense headquarters there may have been some initial apprehension on the part of Saudis seeing certain women officers, and women soldiers dressed for combat, in the halls, but when they would go into intelligence briefings and they would find out that the person who knew exactly what they wanted to know happened to be a woman, that woman thing sort of evaporated. It wasn't really there. That person became a person who knows the intelligence brief or who knows something about communications equipment for an F-15. That's what took over in large part. Also I think there was an acceptance, and how quickly I don't know, by the Saudis of the fact that a certain percentage of our drivers who happen to drive these trucks that are getting these supplies to point "A" and point "B" are going to be women. You have any problem with that? The answer was that the U.S. military drivers will drive the vehicle.

There were always rumors, and reports that become anecdotal, of an occasional incident or two in a public place, but I think most of those were taken care of and there was never any significant – as I recall; I could be wrong – disciplinary breach on our side. One of the things that was extremely admirable about General Schwarzkopf – or sensitive – was the immediate guidance that members of the U.S. military would not drink in the kingdom. It was pretty much adhered to. There was a pretty good esprit, I thought, among the military there.

*Q: I think you've alluded to this before, but was there the feeling at a certain point that it was pretty obvious we were going to go in? You know, if you put a half a million troops there you can't keep them there for too long. Did you have the feeling that a clock was ticking and they, you know, were going to "use them or lose them?"*

PIERCE: It's the Greek play. That's just the feeling I had. Slowly but surely. The thing that was so interesting about that is Saddam had many chances to have reduced that possibility and he didn't take them. He did the exact opposite instead of coming out with a token show of conciliation. An interesting scenario would be to have moved out of Kuwait except for the oil



fields that were being contested. What would that do to the Arab nation component of the coalition? He could've thought of these things but he didn't. So, in essence he basically remained totally intransigent. There were several attempts, I think, to offer some graceful way for him to pull back and he didn't take them.

*Q: Did you get involved at all in the relations with other Arab countries, the Gulf State military forces – Syria, Egypt, I guess Morocco?*

PIERCE: No. Egypt, Syria, Morocco. I think Morocco did.

*Q: Yes.*

PIERCE: I'd have to go back and look. No, we didn't have any real ability to coordinate with these people. We and the British, and perhaps two more embassies were proactive in the political-military aspect of the relationship. I don't recall other embassies having that same role. They could have, but it wasn't that obvious. I didn't have any contacts in the political-military aspect in the Syrian Embassy, or in the Egyptian Embassy.

*Q: Well what about say with the British and the French? They had troops on the ground.*

PIERCE: They did.

*Q: Did you get into a consultation role or asking what they were doing?*

PIERCE: Not on any regular basis. I think I might have had one or two conversations with a British counterpart; with the French, no. Not to any great degree. Mainly, as I recall, most of that coordination was worked out at a MIL/MIL level. And CENTCOM, CINC, would have relationships with certain other military officers in trying to forge a common approach on a variety of issues. I'm not sure about that. Obviously, greater coordination occurred in the multilateral naval forces. We did get very involved in Japanese support simply because we were very active in coordinating with the Japanese. They sent a vast amount of assistance. Their assistance was in large part sent into CENTCOM and through their embassy. We got into pretty frequently contact with the Japanese, facilitating their contact with CENTCOM in the sense of when they would send their assistance.

*Q: Were you picking up a different spirit from the contacts you had in Saudi Arabia – civilians, others – about the United States during the war?*

PIERCE: No. There're two different things. As I mentioned at the beginning of this our presence began to bruise sensitivities within certain Saudi circles. The good example which is used all the time now is bin Laden saying that the Saudi government basically allowed sacred Saudi soil to be stained by foreigners, by unbelievers. That issue was working itself in any great degree around Riyadh during the buildup towards the fight. It might've been in certain circles, but it wasn't an issue that was prevalent on the streets. I don't think anybody there – any Saudi – underestimated the threat. I would find that over the years my contacts would say they do know quite a lot about what's going on; they're not quite that naïve. They were fully aware of the

threat coming out of Kuwait. We had tens of thousands of Kuwaitis coming through Riyadh and Dhahran. It was not as though we were living in a vacuum. They did not underestimate the dangers to them. The hype on gas masks was extremely sharp and there was a sense of vulnerability, but I don't think there was any negative reaction against our presence there to address that vulnerability.

*Q: The war was over rather quickly. Well, we had the air war that went about thirty days, forty days.*

PIERCE: Quickly enough. Yes, that's right.

*Q: And then we had, what, about three or four days? What was the general feeling that you all had about the end of this? I mean was there a feeling of maybe we quit too soon or that we didn't take care of it?*

PIERCE: I'll let history be the judge of that.

*Q: Yes. Well, you know, it's a debatable thing and I'm just trying to capture the spirit of the time.*

PIERCE: Yes, I understand. It was a difficult issue at the time to make the call.

*Q: Were you picking up any of the frustration that came out in my interview with Chas Freeman about nobody was talking about how this thing would end. In other words, our embassy, and obviously Schwarzkopf, were not getting instructions to say, "If they surrender, you will ask for this and that." Sort of the lack of...*

PIERCE: No end game.

*Q: An end game, you know. It was sort of remarkable that there really wasn't.*

PIERCE: This is true.

*Q: But I was wondering whether this was apparent at the time. I mean to you all on the ground.*

PIERCE: I'm trying to think if that as an issue ever came up. When you're in a situation that is so difficult and with a heavy agenda you are trying to work on a daily basis, your longer-term thinking is not always on Iraq or on the greater regional picture. It always was on the kingdom and the relationship that the military has with the kingdom. So it was an issue that would come up, but it wasn't an issue that we were charged with focusing on. Freeman had a more comprehensive picture to look at than we did.

*Q: When the war ended was there a feeling of exhilaration or was there one of "let's get these troops out of here?"*

PIERCE: No, as I said before, the stars came out again. You could leave. It's not like you wanted to leave, but to know that you couldn't leave if you wanted to was not a positive feeling. You

have a feeling of a darkness; and that darkness was gone. Immediately there was resuscitation of life in the city and people just had a greater spring in their step. The whole issue of working out the UN resolutions and getting the Iraqis to sign them and then setting up the regimes that would be responsible for assuring that they were complied with, ultimately to set up the no-fly zone – that was farther down the road. The beginning of rebuilding of Kuwait, these were the priorities that were the focus at the time. And then the slow but steady diminution of U.S. forces and other foreign forces out of the area.

*Q: Did your job change much from '91 to '93, and after the war was over?*

PIERCE: The preoccupation after the war was to take advantage of the situation, to assure greater military cooperation on the ground so as to have a much greater capability as a deterrent as well of an actual preventer of any recurrence of this type of aggression. That was the main issue after the war wound down.

*Q: Was there the feeling on your part or maybe your colleagues that the Saudi military instrument had been tried and worked? And was stronger than before?*

PIERCE: You would have to look more carefully at the CENTCOM's evaluation than mine, but I think there were several bright spots in the Saudi approaches and there were several deficiencies. I think one of the things that we expressed great amazement at is when they initially deployed their M-60 tanks, sometimes as far away as the southwest up to the Kuwait border, they did it, and it was not an easy thing to do for any military. Their pilots performed admirably. Their Saudi National Guard demonstrated an extreme superiority of fighting, and not always with the best of equipment. There were other coordinative problems that again I'm not an expert on. There was an evaluation and no one is going to say that the Saudi army or military was perfect or anything close to it, but you recognize its weaknesses and its strengths and you try to build on it.

*Q: So by the time you left how did you feel about the way things were going?*

PIERCE: One of the things that did occur, which I felt was a great success on our part – although again we can always question it – is that, with the war and the evolution of Saudi-U.S. military cooperation, we got to the point that we became extremely positive to Saudi arms proposals and were in a position to basically constitute a massive, very large, very long-term assistance program that would put them in very good stead. To me that was a very positive thing, culminating with the sale of F-15.

*Q: Ground attack.*

PIERCE: Had the ground attack capability with some modification, off the F-15 E as I recall. The more problematic issue was how we approached military cooperation with the Saudis on the ground in the kingdom. Our suggestions had to be counter posed with this vulnerability that the Saudis have to criticism internally and externally. By the time I left it was obvious that this was not the most productive aspect of our military dialogue. It had potential, it was working, but it was a learning process. It was not always easy to convince people in Washington how to go

about doing it. And there I left it and I don't really know the end result of that.

*Q: Well you left there in '93. Where did you go then?*

PIERCE: I went to Personnel for two years.

*Q: Okay, '93 to '95.*

PIERCE: Yes, I started in 1993.

*Q: Okay, 1993 to '95. What were you doing in Personnel?*

PIERCE: I was head of the assignments division in charge of Near East assignments – all assignments to South Asian posts and also the regional bureaus for those areas. Also all assignments to POL/MIL, to PM (Bureau of Political-Military Affairs), assignments to the narcotics bureau, all assignments to the Seventh Floor – that is to the secretary's floor and to the undersecretary's staff – and other specialized offices tied directly to the secretary of state. Offices like Dennis Ross's office; offices like the Office of Counterterrorism. I am missing a significant bureau that I handled assignments to. In total there were about eleven bureaus and offices and embassy sections that I was in charge of assignments to.

*Q: I'm interested in looking at the Seventh Floor. This is where the principals are and where the special assistants are and all this.*

PIERCE: That's right.

*Q: Did you find there that this was sort of out of the hands of Personnel or \_\_\_\_\_?*

PIERCE: *(laughs)*

*Q: Because this is one of the best ways for people to move on the fast track up by snuggling close to an undersecretary or something like this. How did this work?*

PIERCE: The relationship of Seventh Floor offices, offices of sub-cabinet level individuals and the secretary, is one of tension with the personnel system. While a number of positions at that level went through normal assignment procedures, there were always several positions up there that ultimately did not follow strict personnel procedures for assignments. In some cases where the senior official wanted a specific individual for the position, it was so difficult to do that you would find frequently that the director general of Personnel would have to designate – it was “she” at the time; Mrs. Genta Holmes – had that authority to do, and the position would be uncontested through the regular assignment process. I could exercise prerogatives that normally assignments officers would not be able to do, to assure that a candidate that an office or a senior official wanted had a very good chance, if not an absolute chance, to get it.

You have three different types of systems up there. Number one, you had the DG directed system and this is where you had a candidate who was just simply not going to conform with all

assignment procedures and the senior officer really wants that person. Two, you had special prerogatives or rules that the assignments officer could use to enable the Seventh Floor position to be filled by a candidate that a senior officer wanted. And three, you had others that fell into the normal system. By and large most of those positions were filled through the normal assignments process.

*Q: Now what would happen... one of the reasons so many people are willing to work very long hours and all up there is they are seen and they are tabbed as being comers or special people. But what about coming out from there – not I guess at the senior officer level, but at the mid-grade level – were you getting directives to give this person a good job, or were they naming their jobs?*

PIERCE: Very often. After a junior officer or a mid-term officer completes a tour up there, usually that person can get the backing or concurrence of the person they worked for – in other words, a very senior official – to support him or her for an ongoing position somewhere else. And obviously if you are evaluating candidates for position “A,” if undersecretary of something calls you up and says, “Hey, I like Anne for that job. She’s really quite good,” you’re going to be somewhat hard-pressed to say, “Gee I’ve got somebody else.”

*Q: Yes.*

PIERCE: But that normally does not affect the Personnel processing so much as it affects the candidates that the individual offices or bureaus would support for a non Seventh Floor position. For example, a deputy director job in a country desk somewhere – a candidate coming from a Seventh Floor position with his or her boss backing that person has an extra chance to get it just by virtue of the support that the senior level official might give that candidate.

*Q: You mention that you were in charge of staffing the Political-Military Bureau.*

PIERCE: Yes.

*Q: Now one of the complaints or comments that I’ve gotten from people in recent years – I’ve never served there and I’ve been retired now for some time, so I’m speaking from other peoples’ points of view – is that the Political-Military Bureau used to be considered one of the up-and-coming places to go and they had some very bright, young officers going into it. But they’re saying that this has become more and more an area of Civil Servants. How did you find it during your time?*

PIERCE: In the Political-Military Bureau you could divide the positions into three types. You had several, but not an awful lot, of very solid positions that offered extremely interesting, very hard, very high-level work. Also, unfortunately, you had a number of jobs that were much less significant. Number crunching jobs. Not very significant jobs, not very high visibility jobs, just a lot of hard work. They did not attract a lot of people in many cases and the potential for onward assignments for an officer there was based more on that person’s experience perhaps than other bureaus. In many cases it was not an easy sell for a candidate coming off of these number crunching jobs in PM to be competitive in other positions outside the PM Bureau. And then you

had a significant number of jobs in PM that were decent jobs and were not numbing by the numbers. So you had three different types of jobs there.

The other problem PM had was reorganization. They were always reorganizing. There was a significant reorganization when I first came into Personnel. What the reorganization problem is, is when you reorganize you rewrite your position descriptions, you recategorize your jobs, the job work level, who is being supervised by whom, what the different office tasks are, etc. But you're always behind in the sense that the system itself hasn't taken hold and ingrained those positions into the computer system. There's always a final act of approval; there's always some detail missing so you don't really get that position quickly into the personnel system. So you assign in an ad hoc way. You create personnel numbers and assign people into them in close consultation with the bureau, but they're not real numbers yet. You can't really do the honest assignments into the system until everything is regularized – and sometimes this would take months. And in some cases, very astoundingly, it could take years. You would have people leaving domestic positions in which they were not in the system to begin with although they had always been paid. But they did not have accurate records thanks to the fact that the system itself had not incorporated that position that they'd served for two years in, into the system. Very frustrating in any case, but you had to keep the assignments going. You had to make things work.

*Q: The Foreign Service assignments process is pretty much a competitive one because we have an “up or out” service and there are certain jobs that give you a far greater visibility than other jobs, and therefore the assignment process is part of the competitive process. How did you find that NEA did in getting what you considered as you looked at your clientele, how did you feel that you did?*

PIERCE: I need to give you a clearer idea of how the system worked.

*Q: Okay.*

PIERCE: Within Personnel you had two different spheres. You had the assignments officers and the assignments officers basically worked within Personnel but for the bureaus of the offices that were trying to staff. On the other hand you had the Career Development Officers (CDOs) – this was a system that was changed in '95 – that looked after the individual Foreign Service Officers. By and large, people who would bid on jobs, people who would become candidates for assignments into various jobs, would primarily go into the bureaus and be interviewed and basically try to tell the responsible person there why that person was good for the job. Now out of those candidates, normally then the bureau or the office involved would select one that it wanted, and informally, in many cases, contact that person to see if that person was really interested keenly in that job. And that person would become that bureau's candidate.

Normally, in most cases, the Career Development Officer, working for the client – not for the office, for the individual – would find out obviously if the person were keenly interested or would take the job. If there would be a mesh, a meld, the position would go through smoothly. That's what happened for most positions. Frequently, however, what would happen would be that the bureau wanted one candidate, but then another Foreign Service Officer, through his CDO, would also want that job. So then you would have a conflict. This ended up being settled –

if it couldn't be settled outside through alternate jobs coming up or alternate candidates coming up from the bureau – in what is known almost notoriously as a “shoot-out” within the Personnel Office, where we would assemble once a week to sit down and thrash out the better candidate for the job.

**WAYNE WHITE**  
**Analyst, Bureau of Intelligence and Research**  
**North Africa, Arabia Peninsula, Iran and Iraq Division**  
**Washington, DC (1990-2004)**

*Mr. White was born and raised in Pennsylvania and educated at Penn State, Abington. Entering the Foreign Service in 1973 he served in Nigeria and Haiti before being assigned to the Sinai Field Mission. He subsequently devoted his career in the State Department to Middle Eastern Affairs, serving in senior positions in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research dealing with Arab-Israel, North African and general Arab and Iranian Affairs. Mr. White was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.*

*Q: How about the Saudis? How were we looking at the Saudis at the time?*

WHITE: Aside from Iraq and Iran, the Saudis were concerned, as were we, over the economic situation in the kingdom. The oil price was extremely low at the time. The Saudis were continuing to really run deep deficits after running nothing but gigantic oil-fed budgets all the way up through 1981. Since '82 they had been running deficits that were yawning ever wider. That was the main concern about Saudi Arabia at the time: how long can the government continue to run these deficits and maintain the vast social support system critical to its survival?

*Q: Well now, what sort of things were you, in the first place I imagine one of the major things we would want to know again, this goes back to intentions. Is this grab of Kuwait it? Is this something they are going to do and pull out? Are they going all the way because you have got all those Saudi Gulf oil fields right down in Abqaiq, down that whole area down there.*

WHITE: Yes, this is an important question because of the difficulty involved in assembling the force necessary to roll the Iraqis back. The international community, led by us, needed to convince the Saudis, who had tremendous religious issues with respect to deploying foreign, non-Muslim forces on its soil, which later would become the source of considerable angst in the kingdom and eventually played a major role in producing the Osama Bin Laden challenge. To convince the Saudis that there was a sufficient threat that they needed to allow hundreds of thousands of foreign troops to be assembled on their territory, since they were the main launching point for the re-taking of Kuwait, Jim Baker went on the road taking along with him our senior military analyst, Charlie Jefferson, who just passed away in the last year. Charlie would give the briefing at the beginning of the sessions. He briefed the Turks, the Jordanians, the Saudis, some of the other Gulf states we needed like Qatar in a whirlwind tour. Charlie would start off the meeting scaring the Hell out of them because the briefing starts with look at the

massive capabilities that Saddam had positioned in Kuwait. Once in Kuwait, he placed about 150,000 troops, with large armored forces on the Saudi border. We misread his intentions towards Kuwait, and with such forces, he could have been in the Saudi oil terminal in Ras Tanura and overrun eastern Saudi Arabia in 48 to 72 hours. Do you want to take yet another chance regarding what might be his intent? We just didn't know, and that scared the Saudis tremendously — and us. They immediately let multi-national forces pour into the country in order to first form a defense line, a shield blocking a move against the eastern Saudi oil fields that the world needed access to so badly. Only then did we begin the build-up for an offensive.

*Q: Who is "Their face?"*

WHITE: Senior people in the Clinton Administration who ordered this unusual step, among which I believe probably was Sandy Berger. There was collateral damage because some of the information that was held back from normal distribution was material that contained other information of use to us in evaluating other developments that we needed for the analysis of other issues pertaining to Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf. We heard that if one small portion of an intelligence report related to Khobar Towers, the entire intelligence report was put on restricted distribution. We've dealt with things like this before, but it was generally restricted to, say, the INR Front Office. In this instance, the restriction initially went all the way to the top in the Department. It seemed aimed at avoiding pressure from building within the government (and the potential for a related leaks) for action against Iran at a time when it was felt at the highest levels that our foreign policy interests concerning Iran might be moving in different direction. I don't think that is the way to run things. We know about some of this because people in one intelligence agency ordered to severely restrict distribution of reports they were receiving relating to the Khobar Towers bombing along the lines I have described were horrified, and tipped us off under the table about just how upset they were and just how large the body of material not being properly distributed happened to be.

And who knows, strong action might not have been a mistaken path. We might have gotten a reaction from the Iranians which was different than the one anticipated. In other words the Iranians, the reformists, might not have simply waved off the evidence as lies and demanded an explanation from their own government. Anyhow, what was done by us turned out to be a losing gamble. What did we get in the end? We got the defeat of the reformists in Iran, no improved relations with Iran, and no payback for the victims of the Khobar Towers bombing.

*Q: I want to come back to the Khobar Towers. Let's talk a bit what were you picking up about Iran before this? Were there two different forces at work? One we call a reform movement and the other the darker force trying to make things as difficult for America?*

WHITE: Even at the height of the reform movement (which would be roughly 1997-99) when reformists had the presidency, parliament, and local councils, and it would otherwise seem to be in a position to exercise some measure of restraint, two Iranian intelligence organizations functioned, both relatively independent of presidential oversight and control, existed (and still exist). The first is the Ministry of Intelligence and Security or MOIS. A cabinet ministry, but answerable to the Supreme Leader first, not the president, is one side of the intelligence bureaucracy, although it might not be quite so active as it once was. The Supreme Leader and



more shadowy and hard line elements in his inner circle such as some of those on the Council of Guardians and the leadership of the Revolutionary Guard Corps also have at their disposal another, perhaps now more robust and dangerous, intelligence operation run out of the Revolutionary Guard Corps. Particularly infamous is this Revolutionary Guard “Quds Force,” or Jerusalem force. These people appear to be running the really nasty covert ops, whether in Lebanon, Iraq, or elsewhere. These are the real bad guys. The reformist president almost certainly had virtually no say over the activities of the Quds Force.

*Q: You were telling off mike. Will you talk about Al Khobar?*

WHITE: Yes. This is very interesting. Rarely in the world of terrorism, because these matters are so covert and carefully planned, do you get specific information that something is going to happen and when. You rarely get enough before the fact and in time to do something about it. I was working away in my office back in 1996 a couple of weeks before the Khobar Towers bombing, and my Arabian Peninsula analyst came in to see me carrying some reports. He was a Foreign Service Officer doing only a one-year tour in our office, and with little or no prior experience in intelligence, but very, very diligent. He said: “I think there is going to be a bombing. Someone is probably going to hit Khobar Towers. The indicators are pretty clear. I think we need to write something on it in the SMS,” which, as I said before, gets distributed around the intelligence community, to the Secretary, other cabinet departments, the NSC, military commands, etc.

Disbelieving that we would ever get such clear indicators, I said, “Are you kidding? We never get this kind of warning.” I asked to read the sheaf of reports he was carrying. Most all of them were DIA or military-related reports. I scanned them, and in ten minutes I was right back in his office saying, “Write, for God Sake, write!” So the next morning, 13 days, I believe, before the Khobar Towers bombing, INR issued a warning that it was probably going to happen. DIA, the Defense Intelligence Agency, picked up on our analysis very quickly. They ran their own warning, perhaps 10 days prior to the bombing. Some measures were taken by the people on the scene, but not nearly enough to deal with a bombing of that magnitude. That truck may have been the largest bomb that anyone had ever produced for such a mission up to that time. Virtually none of the bombings in Iraq have matched the sheer power of that truck bomb.

*Q: They are mostly car.*

WHITE: There have been both, with a truck bomb having taken out the UN headquarters in Baghdad back in August 2003, but this was an entire fuel truck with detonating explosives. The massive load of fuel comprised its main explosive power. It was just devastating. But we called it. It was an incredible call. Regrettably, however, we thought we would make more of a difference. I would like to place the credit where credit is due and name FSO Joe Fishbein as the man who put the pieces together and made that call, a man new to the job and not a terrorism analyst. He’s one of those heroes in government that most of those critical of, say, the State Department never get a chance to hear about otherwise.

*Q: Obviously there was some ability, but how the hell can you call it? I mean what was coming out, and why wasn’t somebody else picking this up?*

WHITE: Well, that's where it gets interesting. You get into situations where there is just so much intelligence that people have to sift through that you can easily sift through it, see the reports one by one, arriving during a span of days or weeks, and not put them together in one package. In addition, much intelligence can be insufficiently specific or from sources not highly regarded. Joe noticed in his careful scanning of the traffic that there was a disturbing pattern emerging. He picked out about five or six reports, most from the people on the scene, that all pointed in the same direction — people involved in too many suspicious activities in the vicinity of the Khobar facility, a rather systematic pattern of casing the facility on the part of the terrorists.

*Q: By surveillance.*

WHITE: Right, things like that. In fact I think the other report that was really stunning to us was somebody supposedly accidentally losing control of his car and actually ramming into one of the security barriers there. Someone else might have chalked it up as an accident, but with the other reports in hand, it appeared to us as an attempt to test the strength of the security barriers for possible penetration by a car or truck bomber. Even the Khobar Towers people, their own security people, reported that they weren't entirely buying the story that this guy just lost control of his car. I think he might have had some other connections that were a little suspicious. So, anyhow, all this came together, and very quickly, meaning that it seemed imminent, that they were close to attempting an actual attack of some sort, and we had pulled together what is called actionable intelligence in advance of the attack.

*Q: Were the Saudis alerted?*

WHITE: Yes, the Saudis were also alerted. The Saudis actually made some revisions in their protection of the facility, but nobody was ready for this monster of a bomb. They could have done more, and the commander came under criticism for not doing more, particularly in view of the warnings. But, anyway every once in awhile you actually can use intelligence, add some real ingenuity, and predict pretty specifically something that is going to happen. And even though the precautions—widening the perimeter somewhat, for example, did not prevent significant damage and loss of life, the results of the bombing would have been even worse without the warnings.

*Q: Were you picking up that this is essentially an Iranian operation early on?*

WHITE: No, all we knew was the place was being cased, and that the casing was fairly intense. The intelligence that made it fairly clear to me that it was done by people with connections to Iran came many months later, before we started being denied a lot of the intelligence that might have made that nature of that connection still clearer.

*Q: Were the Saudis in a way complicit in this in that they didn't want to raise...*

WHITE: Well, months after the fact, they, as with, apparently, some senior Clinton Administration officials, did not want any new trouble with Iran. They saw it as an opportunity, this period of reform in Iran that appeared to be succeeding with the election of Khatami in 1997. They wanted to make their peace with the Iranians — see the reformers keep gaining. They knew

that accusations and retaliation risked strengthening the Iranian hardliners once again. They probably were putting heat on people like Berger to back off. In fact Berger had a number of one on one meetings — I know this from that same source of mine — with Bandar Bin Sultan, the Saudi ambassador. Those two huddled over this issue repeatedly, seemingly gambling that the reformists, without interference related to Khobar, would prevail continue to make steady gains against the conservatives. And, during 1997-1999, that appeared to be the case.

*Q: This of course is always a dangerous thing. Bandar figures in a lot of things. He has got far too much influence I think in our government. And he is working for somebody else. I mean i.e. the king of Saudi Arabia.*

WHITE: That is right. He had a lot of easy access. He was probably the only ambassador who could call up the White House, say I need to see the President for 15 minutes, and get into the oval office in an hour or two. For awhile, he was ailing and appeared to be falling out of sight, but more recently he has bounced right back into the fray. The Khobar saga played out in his heyday.

**MARILYN GREENE**  
**Foreign Correspondent, USA Today**  
**Washington, DC (1991)**

*Ms. Greene was born and raised in New York State and was educated at Syracuse and Northwestern Universities. She also studied in France under the Junior Year Abroad program. In 1986 she joined Gannett World News Service and traveled with Al Neuharth on his worldwide JetCapade until 1989, when she joined the staff of USA Today as a reporter. Her first assignments included covering the White House and government Departments in Washington, DC. She later became foreign correspondent for the paper. Among her foreign assignments was the Gulf War, reporting from Saudi Arabia during the conflict and from Kuwait immediately after the War. In 1996 Ms. Greene joined the staff of the World Press Freedom Committee, serving as its Executive Director until 2003. Ms. Greene was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2012.*

GREENE: But in early 1991, I went over to Saudi Arabia. I wasn't covering The White House at that particular point. I was covering Desert Shield.

*Q: Well, let's talk about the Desert Shield. What did they do with you?*

GREENE: I went to Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, the closest I could get to things at that stage, January, 1991.

*Q: You couldn't go up the road?*

GREENE: Not at that time, no. And then, in February, the war actually started and so there were

SCUD missiles coming into Dhahran and Dammam. Before then, it was kind of interesting and challenging, trying to come up with stories while nothing was happening. Just before the actual war, Desert Storm, began.

That's when you try to get creative and you write stories about Saudi women wanting to drive and Saudi fashions and Saudi morality police and Saudi cooking (*laughs*). Life on the base for the military people. It was something.

*Q: OK, let's talk about being in Saudi Arabia and being a woman. Let's talk about clothes and morality police.*

GREENE: Yes, it was challenging, frustrating and exasperating. The morality police would chase you around, literally. I had a longish black dress with long sleeves. And I was going somewhere with my driver and the morality police came up. They carried a switch and they would switch women's legs if they weren't covered properly. And he didn't even look at me, but he looked at the driver and said, "Get her out here. Get her covered up." It was very annoying. And then there was a big controversy for the military women who were in uniform and the Saudis who were supposedly our allies, being very demanding about what the women in the military did or didn't do, and what they wore. I think we were a little slow, but finally made it clear that these people are military personnel and they're not subject to your national dress code. But it's not a place I would want to go for a vacation (*laughs*).

*Q: Did you find yourself being able to talk to our female troops who were there?*

GREENE: Yes. In fact, the relationship between the media and the military was almost too close. We were so dependent on the military for everything from transportation to information that I think some of the reporters almost became part of the military. They got very wrapped up in the whole lifestyle.

*Q: It's very easy to do.*

GREENE: Still, when the war started, the military people were just great. I mean they were fantastic. I was among the few journalists who went with the Marines when they entered Kuwait the first couple of days. And of course that wouldn't have been possible without the military. You simply couldn't go otherwise. And when we got to Kuwait City, there was nothing there. It was devastated. Food gone. Stores, homes, hotels looted and destroyed. The military people provided water and MREs (Meals Ready to Eat) for us. And they were very, very kind and good. We were literally embedded with them, maybe beyond the point where it was possible to be totally objective. Not that I saw anything done that I would have found wrong or objectionable.

*Q: Well, I mean let's talk a bit about that. I mean here you are, you're with troops. Was there anything you could really write about? Did you write about tactics?*

GREENE: There was plenty to write about. We could write about individuals and what they were doing. Thinking back to what I said about Gannett News Service and the idea that a lot of papers all over the country were out there as potential recipients. What I wrote about was people

servicing. I wrote about a Coast Guard company from Wisconsin, for example, and the people who had come from their posts in Wisconsin to serve in the Middle East. The stories went to their hometown papers, and the Coast Guard people received the recognition and understanding they deserved. They were more than happy to cooperate.

*Q: What would a coast guard company be doing in Dhahran?*

GREENE: One of the things they did was help clean up tremendous oil spills caused by Iraq's burning of oil pumps. The oil burned in infernos, and spilled into the water. Hundreds and thousands of birds were killed and injured. The Coast Guard helped put out booms and barricades, rescued animals and put out fires.

*Q: Well, then how were you received in sort of the shopping centers of Dhahran, Dammam, and all?*

GREENE: Well, you pretty much had to be accompanied by your driver. I didn't go shopping all that much. There was a lot of partying going on, which surprised me. I thought alcohol was forbidden by Islam, but soon found that sheiks and lots of others had their own private stills, plus access to gin, whiskey, bourbon and anything else they wanted.

In Kuwait, as in Saudi Arabia, it was interesting to note that the nationals expected the U.S. Military to do so much for them, as if they were hired help. In Kuwait, it was cleaning up the mess and reconstructing roads and buildings. It was almost as if we were another work party from the Philippines.

*Q: What would the Americans be doing?*

GREENE: One thing they did was to clean up the Kuwait City zoo. The zoo was *awful*. It was devastated. The animals were slaughtered by Iraqi soldiers and often eaten. It was just horrible. The elephant was tortured. Carcasses were strewn everywhere amidst terrific filth. One Army man, on his own initiative, had taken it upon himself to heal the elephant. The elephant had been tortured and burned and this guy took it upon himself to rehabilitate this poor animal. And a lot of others came in to clean up the devastation and feed the animals, who were close to starving.

Kuwait City was just a mess. For quite a period of time there was no water except for a couple of hours a day, and no electricity. I stayed on the 16<sup>th</sup> floor of a downtown hotel, and had to walk up to get there. I would fill the bathtub during the hours of water, then use that until the next day's supply came.

*Q: The Kuwaitis, did they organize any troops?*

GREENE: No, not that I know of, although Kuwaiti military forces did work with Americans. But it definitely more an American effort. There was a lot of drama too. When the Iraqis fled the Kuwait City -- you've probably heard of the Road of Death.

*Q: Yeah.*

GREENE: And that was just incredible. When the American bombers struck, Iraqi soldiers began to run from the city toward the border. They tried to carry off whatever they could, but many were killed on the way. There were charred corpses, Jeeps and tanks that had exploded and burned. A swath of stolen goods: I saw a wedding dress, a washing machine, guns, jewelry, anything you could think of. Apparently they just tried to take anything they could, and run. It was horrific.

*Q: Well, were there a lot of prisoners of war when you were there?*

GREENE: I didn't have anything to do with that.

*Q: Did you see any of our troops go into mosques or anything like that, or?*

GREENE: No, you mean to do devastation? No, I didn't see anything like that. Our military were reminded almost daily to be respectful of the Muslim culture and to not do anything that would annoy or insult either the Kuwaitis or the Saudis.

*Q: Did you get any information from the Kuwaitis?*

GREENE: Oh, lots. They were so happy to be liberated. Especially at first, when the Marines came in and the Iraqis had fled. We were greeted like heroes. Thousands of people lined the streets of Kuwait City, ululating and waving Kuwaiti flags.

There was a huge influx of people riding through the city in cars and just being elated and happy that it was over. And even though a lot of them returned to find their stores and homes destroyed, there was just an awful lot of elation and happiness that it was over, and gratitude too. I think they were very glad that they had received our help.

*Q: Did you have any particular experiences in these first hours of the liberation?*

GREENE: Yes, just being there and going in with the Military, walking for a long way, and riding in a convoy with lots of armor all around. And then just when the convoy went through the city, the welcome it received from the Kuwaitis. And then the terrible devastation. At the hotel, there was nothing: The water didn't work, the elevators didn't work, the rooms were stripped. It was just a place to stay. There was just nothing there. The swimming pool had been half-emptied and was full of debris and filth. There was just a lot of vicious, deliberate destruction that had been committed.

*Q: Well, how long did you stay with the troops?*

GREENE: I was gone from January to March of 1991. And then I came back home in March when it was winding down.

*Q: Well, then did you run across anybody in our consulate or embassy either in Dhahran or in Kuwait City?*

GREENE: Well, Edward W. (Skip) Gnehm was the Ambassador to Kuwait at the time. He was in Taif, Saudi Arabia while the Kuwaiti leadership and the emir were in exile there. And he was fantastic about providing information and guidance and just being a great resource. And he'd put us in touch with the emir and a lot of the ministry people who were over there in Taif waiting to go back home.

*Q: Did your paper send you out to do any particular type of reporting?*

GREENE: Well, a lot of it was "What have you got for me today?" because we were in a better position to know what was newsworthy. But there were lots of questions about, what is the plan, what is the strategy, who's going to be doing what, who's fault was it, you know, this kind of thing. And there was a team of us there. So it was pretty much distributed -- or else amalgamated into a single presentation.

*Q: Well, did you have any feel towards the end game? Because we didn't seem to have much of a plan of what to do at the end. Was that apparent, or not?*

GREENE: Yes, it was kind of a ragged ending. And I don't believe that we realized that it was going to be a little bit difficult to make the transition back, putting the Kuwaitis back in charge. Because they did expect so much from us. And then, you know, just what to do about Iraq after that as well. Of course one of the huge issues was all the oil well fires that were set by the Iraqis and the tremendous -- there were a lot of stories that we did about the oil spill -- the oil spills and the fires, the animals who were covered with oil, the economics of the whole thing. So that was a whole different set of concerns.

*Q: Did you find yourself concentrating more on where are you from, soldier and that sort of thing?*

GREENE: A lot like that, yes, because there was so much interest at home and in all those places where we had newspapers.

*Q: Well, you must have in a way had a bigger portfolio than most newspapers? Because most newspapers would be -- the Des Moines thing would be looking for --*

GREENE: Right, right.

*Q: -- Iowa soldiers.*

GREENE: Right, exactly.

*Q: And you had all these anywhere.*

GREENE: Yes, lots of potential. It was very nice too, because people really appreciate being appreciated and being asked questions about what they were doing.

*Q: Did you get any feel for what the Iraqi occupation was like?*

GREENE: Well, you know what happened is that most of the Kuwaitis left. The leadership certainly did. And the wealthy people left. And of course when they left, most of their homes were either taken over or destroyed. So I didn't run into very many ordinary people who were suffering. It was, you know, the property, the animals, and then the worker people who were still there. The Filipinos and the other nationalities who were accustomed to working there. They were in a bind because they couldn't necessarily go home and they had no place to live or work, no income anymore.

*Q: Well, did they yank you suddenly out of there, or were you there for a considerable amount of time?*

GREENE: Well, no, I didn't get yanked out. I think I just stayed until there weren't very many stories to write anymore toward the end of March. Just kind of petered out once the U.S. military entered Kuwait City and got things recaptured. You know, there eventually wasn't much left to write about, no more conflict, no more bombings.

**RICHARD MCKEE**  
**Office Director, Arabian Peninsula**  
**Washington, DC (1991-1993)**

*Richard McKee was born in Pennsylvania in 1941. He attended Cornell University for a BA, the University of Virginia for a MA and then joined the Foreign Service in 1965. McKee served overseas in Bolivia, India, Pakistan, Tunis, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. McKee also served as the Office Director for the Arab Peninsula and on the Board of Examiners. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2003.*

*Q: Well then, in the Spring of '91, you left.*

MCKEE: I got a reassignment to go back to Washington, where I hadn't worked in since 1977, to be the office director for the Arabian Peninsula. It was a position that I wanted. I did it for two years. It was undoubtedly the most difficult position I ever held in the Foreign Service. I'm not a particularly good bureaucrat. I didn't like Washington. I did well enough at it that at the end of it David Mack, my boss and good friend who saved my posterior on many occasions, asked me if I wanted to do it for another year. I said no, I didn't want to do it.

*Q: What does the Arabian Peninsula encompass?*

MCKEE: Well, that was one of the problems, in a way, with the desk, it's the Saudis, but it's also, we used to call them Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs if the Saudis were Snow White, then you've got the Seven Dwarfs - Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, UAE, Oman, and then there were



two Yemens, only one of which we recognized. So you had out there six American Ambassadors all thinking they were very important people and demanding service from the desk, and then there were also six Arab Ambassadors in Washington. Now Bandar, the Saudi Ambassador, didn't even operate at the State Department level, by the way. He operated at the White House level. But the rest of these guys were fairly small fish. And they often had difficulties seeing Assistant Secretaries or one of the deputies for NEA, so they would come visit me.

*Q: Saudi Arabia, again, this would be the aftermath of the war. What were our issues with them and all?*

MCKEE: Well there were some lingering disputes over who would pay how much for the cost of the war. I didn't get directly involved in those battles, that was mostly in the Pentagon. Other questions were things like maintaining the Patriot missile presence in Saudi Arabia, and, for that matter, Kuwait and Bahrain. Now it's all been largely discredited, but in the immediate wake of the liberation of Kuwait, the Patriot missiles were seen as just crucially important to maintaining the security and independence of the Gulf states. The Gulf states were quite willing to pay for these crews. Reflecting the desire to have a good political relationship, the State Department would endorse their requests that these crews stay on, but the Pentagon was quite opposed. These unaccompanied postings to the Gulf resulted in a lot of refusals to reenlist among these very highly trained technicians, so that was of course a source of tension with the Pentagon.

*Q: Were we trusting the Saudis to do something about the role of Yemen and all that?*

MCKEE: No. I could elaborate, but the answer is really no.

*Q: Really no. Was there any effort on any part within our government or outside forces to do something about this?*

MCKEE: Not that I recall. You don't want to know.

*Q: Did, was anybody looking again at the religious teachings, because this later became important ten years later. But what was going on in Saudi schools and Saudi society?*

MCKEE: In that period, '91 to '93, by that time there were very few Saudis in American universities. Twenty years earlier there had been as many as twelve thousand. But the Saudis had built up these local universities, some departments staffed by Western expatriates, but most departments staffed by Palestinians and Egyptians and Sudanese and what have you. The curriculum and all was very heavily Islamic, and Islamic precepts even influenced other areas, science for example, English literature, if you were teaching that. We certainly had the sense that these were lousy universities, really, but I don't think we had the sense that they were schools for fundamentalism. I was conscious, that, in the aftermath of the Gulf war, the social situation in Saudi Arabia was, incredibly enough, even more restrictive than it had been when I lived there from '81 to '86. The religious police paid for by the state were much more intrusive than they had been earlier. We, of course, made sure that everybody understood that the basis of the legitimacy of the Saudi princely family was the perception that they were faithful guardians of the two holy shrines. But no, I really don't recall concerns that either the Saudi government,

directly or indirectly or individual Saudis were funding what were seen to be fundamentalist groups.

**DAVID L. MACK**  
**Deputy Assistant Secretary, NEA**  
**Washington, DC (1993)**

*Ambassador Mack was born and raised in Oregon and educated at Harvard University. Joining the Foreign State Department in 1965, he studied Arabic and devoted his career dealing with Arab and Middle East issues. His foreign posts include Baghdad, Amman, Jerusalem, Beirut, Tripoli, Benghazi and Tunis. From 1986 to 1989 he served as U.S. Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates. In Washington from 1990 to 1993, he was Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of Near East and South Asian Affairs. During this period, the major issue was Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the military actions that followed. Ambassador Mack was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1995.*

MACK: I went out to Riyadh to act as chargé d'affaires for two weeks at the end of 1993. The circumstances were unusual, but they say something about what was a close knit band of colleagues on the Arabist circuit of the U.S. Foreign Service. When I was a DAS, I had urged our chargé, David Welch, to take the job as deputy chief of mission in Riyadh. David had worked for me as a Lebanon desk officer many years earlier, was very capable and would do very well as a DCM. But I also knew that he could be in charge for a fair period of time between ambassadors to a key country where we needed committed diplomatic leadership.

Our previous ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Chas Freeman, was in Riyadh when David first arrived in late spring of 1992, but he was anxious to leave. Everything after the end of the Gulf War was an anti-climax for Chas, and the State Department understood why he felt that way. When Chas learned that a distinguished retired oil executive was being named as the new U.S. ambassador, Chas said, "I want out." The Saudis wanted, unwisely in my view, to have a political appointee. It was an election year, however, and the Democrats controlled the Senate. I told Chas that I didn't think that George Bush could pull it off. Unfortunately, President Bush tried. The oil executive never got confirmed, and he eventually left Washington in disgust. So, the months that I thought we might have a chargé between ambassadors were stretching into a much longer period. The Clinton administration proved particularly inept in getting senior appointments through the confirmation process, despite the fact for the first two years it had a Democratic majority in the Senate. By late 1993, the State Department was still waiting for the White House to name a new ambassador, and Washington didn't feel there was anybody other than Welch who could be in charge of that very large diplomatic establishment, including two consulates general and a substantial military presence. The largest part of our military presence was there because of the continuing problems with Iraq. It was very important that the State Department not seem unable to protect through diplomacy what the military had gained through force of arms.

After David Welch had been in Riyadh a little less than a year, in maybe April or May of 1993, when I was still a Deputy Assistant Secretary, I was on a secure phone call with David discussing some critical military cooperation with Saudi Arabia. David said he'd made plans to send his wife and two children back for the summer to see their grandparents and get a break from the Saudi climate. There was kind of a long pause, and then I said, "David, I feel terrible about this." David said, "Don't worry. I know you're working on getting a new ambassador out here, so I'll just plan on taking a long vacation for Christmas and New Year's." Another long pause, and I said, "David, if we don't have an ambassador out there by Christmas, I will come out and take your place," thinking that was an easy promise to make. I thought we'd surely have an ambassador by then. Well, we didn't, and NEA Assistant Secretary Robert Pelletreau asked me to relieve Welch for a couple of weeks. I had to explain to my wife why I was going to spend Christmas and New Year's in Riyadh, a place she had no desire to visit with me.

It was a very interesting two weeks. They had a summit in Riyadh of the heads of the Arab States of the Gulf Cooperation Council in Riyadh, part of which I was able to attend as an observer, and I supervised the embassy's coverage of the event for Washington. In addition to this international event, Saudi Arabia witnessed a rare step of internal political reform. King Fahd inaugurated the Majlis-ash-Shura, or Consultative Council. This was a very cautious step toward the broadening of the political process that we have tried to encourage. It built on the traditional Arab consultative tribal forum where people come and present their views to the Sheikh, or leader of the tribe, and he is supposed to consult with them until he gets a consensus. It was a promising beginning in the kind of process I had broached publicly for the State Department at the luncheon for the G.C.C.-U.S economic dialogue earlier in the year. So it was an interesting period to be in Saudi Arabia, while the National War College was on holiday break and the State Department was taking a breather. In addition to dealing with sensitive matters in then U.S.-Saudi bilateral relationship and regarding Iraq, I was able to attend one of our two weekly community meetings. Every Friday we had two American community meetings in the embassy chancery, one Protestant and one Catholic. So my last diplomatic assignment was a memorable Christmas in Riyadh, including religious services.

**CHARLES L. DARIS**  
**Consul General/Principal Officer**  
**Jeddah (1993-1996)**

*Charles L. Daris was born in 1938 in Massachusetts. He served in the US Navy before graduating from the San Francisco State College in 1963. He entered the Foreign Service in 1964. His overseas posts include Afghanistan, Vietnam, Western Africa, Morocco, South Africa, Tunisia and Saudi Arabia. Mr. Daris was interviewed by Raymond Ewing in 1998.*

Q: *Where did you go from there?*

DARIS: I went for what was to be my last assignment, as principal officer to Jeddah. It was a wonderful, challenging, and very satisfying experience.

*Q: This was shortly after Desert Storm, the second Gulf War?*

DARIS: Yes, I arrived shortly after, in '93. Jeddah had been the site of our embassy up until 1985, so the consulate had inherited considerable infrastructure. I in turn inherited a pretty sizable staff because the present King spends most of his time in Jeddah and the many senior visitors coming to the Kingdom always came to Jeddah.

Jeddah is the commercial capital of the country. Its inhabitants are considerably more worldly than other Saudis, particularly those to the east and northeast. The Organization of Islamic Conferences is located there, so that added another dimension to it that was occasionally interesting. And Jeddah is the gateway to Mecca, so each year we witnessed a pilgrimage of many millions of hajjis coming in from all corners of the world.

*Q: Including a few Americans.*

DARIS: Yes, that is right. We also had a large American business community in the consular district, about 6,000 U.S. citizens. I was quite active with our businessmen. We also had a lot of protection and visa cases. We produced considerable substantive reporting, particularly on the economic side but also some political. I had a good staff and good relations with the embassy, but I profited from the considerable distance separating us and I had a great degree of autonomy. I enjoyed an excellent relationship with a capable political appointee, former governor of Mississippi Ray Mabus, who visited Jeddah frequently for business and pleasure. My wife and I were extremely active in an area that was my highest priority, the Saudi commercial community. We found that very satisfying.

*Q: I'm looking at a piece of paper that says you were cited by the U.S. Businessmen's Group in Jeddah as the most pro-U.S. business consul general in memory.*

DARIS: The American Businessmen of Jeddah and the American Ladies of Jeddah were the two key organizations for U.S. citizens. They were both very active. I was supportive of both groups and permitted them to use USG facilities, often difficult to find in Saudi Arabia given the religious constraints that foreigners - and especially females - are subjected to in Saudi Arabia. It wasn't just logistical support, however. I participated actively in their board meetings, hosted a number of their functions, and tried to make them viable organizations both for the sake of the American community as well as to further American business. My wife played an active and invaluable role in the American community, as well as the Saudi.

*Q: Are women able to do somewhat more in Jeddah than they can in other parts of Saudi Arabia? Is it a little bit easier for them there?*

DARIS: Yes, I think it is fair to say that they are less likely to be harassed by religious police in public. They still must obviously respect customs and there is some capriciousness about application of the restrictions that foreigners fall victim to from time to time, but by and large the climate in the Western Province was more open for Western females than in the rest of the country.

*Q: Where we also have a consulate in Dhahran?*

DARIS: Yes, there is a small consulate there because of the oil industry.

*Q: You mentioned that the current king spent much of his time in Jeddah and that senior American visitors would therefore come there to see him. If the ambassador had business with the king, or I don't know if there were other elements of the national government, would the embassy feel like they would come to Jeddah and handle all of that, or did you on occasion get directly involved with either the king or with other elements of the national government in Jeddah?*

DARIS: There was a division of labor which was well established. The embassy handled central government issues, with a few exceptions which I will mention. I must say that the ambassador was very good in taking me along to see the king, the crown prince, and other senior central government leaders on occasion when he came down, but that was not an essential feature of my duties. I dealt with local provincial officials, the governor for example, the mayor and other local officials. I did take the lead substantively in dealing with the Organization of the Islamic Conference. The national airline was in Jeddah so I took the lead in dealing with them. The environmental agency was located in Jeddah and we took the lead in dealing with them, although the embassy did send people down and we'd jointly do things. As a general rule substantive government meetings were handled by the embassy if it involved the central government. We were always lending a hand both logistically and often substantively. My substantive officers did reporting and demarches on behalf of the embassy on occasion. It worked out quite well, and Jeddah had more substance and dimension than many of our smaller embassies.

*Q: You mentioned that Jeddah is the commercial capital and the seat of the national airline, and therefore probably more involved in some ways with Europe, Egypt, than perhaps other parts of the kingdom. Is it true that they were more involved, more aware, with other parts of the region? Also, what did they think of Israel? Was there any contact apparent in Jeddah?*

DARIS: No, there was no contact with Israel and very little sympathy for Israel. I think that the merchants followed both in spirit and letter the official line. I never sensed any deviations from that or any longing to do otherwise. As a general observation the merchant families in Jeddah evolved over the years because not only were they on the trade routes but because of the annual pilgrimages. There was a well developed sense and spirit of the outside world and in modern times countless Saudis have studied in the States. I can't tell you the number of Saudi interlocutors to whom I could speak as I am speaking to you now. I never experienced this in my Foreign Service career. There was a vast reservoir of people to whom you could talk in this manner, without missing a beat in terms of nuance and sophistication about our own society.

*Q: Was much of this dialog in English?*

DARIS: Always English. I had a couple of officers who spoke Arabic and it was useful, but it wasn't necessary.

*Q: Was there much U.S. military presence in the western province in Jeddah at the time you were there?*

DARIS: We had some advisors to the national guard and to the air force and a number of American military contractors working with the various Saudi armed forces. In terms of our own operational assets we had some at Taif, which is to the east of the city in the high plateau area, and we had some down near Abha, at Khamis Mushayt. These were remnants of Desert Storm and the monitoring regime, but they did not constitute large numbers.

*Q: You had a very large consular district in terms of territory, area. Did you travel quite a bit or was most of your focus in Jeddah itself or close by?*

DARIS: I traveled periodically, but most of the American activities were centered in and around Jeddah. There were about 6,000 Americans in my consular district.

*Q: What about terrorism? One thinks of that word with certainly the Middle East, Saudi Arabia on occasion. Was that a problem, an issue, a concern when you were there?*

DARIS: It's a problem for any manager and of course we are responsible under law in certain circumstances for harm that might come to our staffs if we ignore security. We spent a lot of time on security issues, especially in response to the frequent threats our system disseminates. The two bombs that went off in Saudi Arabia in 1995 and 1996 were targeted against the U.S. military. Notwithstanding these menaces, I felt secure in Saudi Arabia. The security forces are more competent than in many other countries in which I have lived. In sum, while a lot of my management time dealt with security issues, it was not an intellectual preoccupation for me nor was it a distraction.

*Q: The two bombs that went off weren't down the street so to speak?*

DARIS: The first one was in Riyadh. That went off in the fall of '95. The second one was in Khobar in the eastern province and occurred 24 hours before I left the country. That did change the way that our people worked and lived, and I'm glad, frankly, I didn't have to live in such an atmosphere.

*Q: Politics in Saudi Arabia is obviously a somewhat sensitive subject and my question, generally, is did you have a pretty good range of contacts did you feel and were there sensitivities about some of the people that you and the consulate staff would have liked to have seen or did see?*

DARIS: I didn't have any problems discussing just about any subject that I wanted. My interlocutors were sophisticated, they were the senior people in society. There were some things however that they just didn't know and the kind of information gaps we had were those which you might expect in a controlled society. In general, information gathering was not easy in Saudi Arabia, although the opinions of my interlocutors often reflected senior thinking. That said, in such a society it is very difficult to ascertain what kind of organizational opposition there might be out there.

*Q: Let's go back to the business commercial side again for a minute. Besides working with the businessmen's association and the women's group as sort of an organized entity, did you feel like you could be particularly helpful to American exporters, American potential investors? Or was so much of the business already well organized by large U.S. company people that had been there a long time that there really wasn't much that your staff could do to directly assist them.*

DARIS: The Foreign Commercial Service had an office in Jeddah as well as in Riyadh. They were active in helping small traders plug into the U.S. economy.

*Q: Small Saudi traders?*

DARIS: Yes, to find sources that supplied from the States. I think they did a reasonably good job in that respect. The larger Saudi enterprises, however, knew where to go and what to do. The Saudis had been operating with U.S. companies for years, most had studied and/or lived in the States, many of them have offices in the States. There was not much brokering to be done there. Every now and then there was some major commercial issue we would become involved in. The ambassador was highly engaged, as were we all, on the Boeing /McDonnell Douglas sales to Air Saudia, but those were exceptions rather than the rule. Your supposition that lines of communication already exist and that relationships already exist is largely correct.

*Q: You mentioned that there were about 6,000 United States citizens in your consular district. Do you have any general idea of who they were? Were some of them Saudis with American passports, business, military? How did it break down roughly?*

DARIS: These were private citizens, they were non-officials. It is illegal for anyone to have two passports but we considered American spouses of Saudis to be American citizens and we treated them that way even though under Saudi law they couldn't be dual citizens. Our records were pretty good. We had to keep updating them. We had an active warden system and it worked pretty well. I think we had good communications with them. I sent my consular officers around in the consular district to service people and listen.

There was one memorable incident involving our successful repatriation of an American spouse and her daughter. It was a classic case of allegations of abuse, use of Saudi law to keep the woman and child in country, etc. The woman's family engaged a wealthy, well-known American figure to generate some pressure in the USG and in Saudi Arabia. Over the course of one long memorable night, my team and I tag-teamed for hours on the husband and local Saudi officials, while Ray Mabus worked his phone from Riyadh. It was touch and go, but eventually the husband agreed to let them leave, and my people eventually escorted the mother and daughter to the airport - with the husband along to authorize their departure - for a middle-of-the-night departure to the U.S. High drama, with a most satisfying outcome.

*Q: Anything else about Jeddah?*

DARIS: No, nothing about my personal experiences there. I think that Saudi Arabia has some very difficult times ahead in terms of the way it governs itself, the way it makes decisions, the way it engages its population. It can't buy its way out of its problems anymore. Its population

has grown too much and the economy simply can't support the fat years of the oil boom and just permit the leadership to buy everything and build anything that they want to keep the lid on. But Saudi Arabia has enormous assets and just about any other country would exchange its problems. With good management, Saudi Arabia can survive and prosper. The main question is – and this pertains equally to all of the Muslim world - when will it develop institutions that engage the majority of its people?

**DAVID M. WINN**  
**Consul General**  
**Dhahran (1994-1996)**

*David M. Winn was born in Texas in 1942. He graduated from Swarthmore College in 1964, received an MA from the University of Texas in 1966 and an MPA from Syracuse University in 1969. He served in the Peace Corps and then joined the Foreign Service in 1969. He has served overseas in Vietnam, Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, France and Senegal. This interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2002.*

*Q: You were in Dhahran from?*

WINN: '94 to '96.

*Q: '94 to '96.*

WINN: Yes, that's when I left the Foreign Service. Dhahran was a grimly interesting post, a very unpleasant place to live personally, but I remarried out there, which is a good memory, and the Saudi experience in retrospect has been invaluable in light of September 11th. I don't know, I'm happy to keep talking or we can do it another time.

*Q: Well, lets talk about Dhahran.*

WINN: Sure. It was a different post, given the Saudi ambiance. I don't see how any American who ever served in Saudi Arabia can feel any emotion other than loathing of those people with the obvious exception of occasional individual Saudis. That's where I think NEA and Arabist apologists have gone too far in tolerating the Saudis abuse. Forget the terrorist angle, the sheer abuse of 50% of humanity. I regard with incredulity any colleague who has a kind word to say about the Saudis, and any American who can stand to work out there. I felt this way long before I left, long before the bombing in Dhahran. I left the night of the bombing of the U.S. military barracks, by the way, and long before September 11th. On the other hand, my living among the Saudis has proven invaluable, because what has come to pass is what I and my wife predicted at the time. Ill never forget her telling the DCM in Riyadh, "These people hate us. This is Islamic, bloody minded Islamic fundamentalists and they all, they want us dead." I remember her vividly telling the visiting DCM from Riyadh and he condescendingly said, "Look Heidi when you've been in the Foreign Service as long as I have, you will learn to be a little more tolerant." Well, he



was dead wrong, and a week later they blew up the barracks in Dhahran, and years later we saw September 11th. Have I made myself clear on my feelings about the Saudis?

*Q: Well, in Dhahran, I speak, I'm a Dhahran myself.*

WINN: But the Saudis you knew were different.

*Q: Well, its a whole different world.*

WINN: Yes, its a different world.

*Q: It wasn't great, but it were talking 1958 to '60. I mean it was different.*

WINN: Oh, it was a different world. You didn't have the huge population pressures, the Saudi birthrate and the present Islamic fervor. The Saudis themselves are scarcely aware of the motivations that are driving them now. It has been so gradual, so the Saudi Arabia at that time, and indeed of the '70s is now a dim memory. So, if Im speaking too harshly of my colleagues, that time was not the Saudi Arabia of now.

*Q: But, still, I mean, you know, we were dealing with Abdul Aziz, who was...*

WINN: That's right and he lives on out there, in memory.

*Q: He was one of the guys who climbed, the 13 who climbed the walls of Riyadh or something.*

WINN: That's right. Great old photographs. Now its a different world.

*Q: Yes. Its still a desert kingdom.*

WINN: But it's a different world then when you were there. Its so bizarre now.

*Q: Yes, because we had a lot of very quick, very dedicated Arabists.*

WINN: Yes, a different world now.

*Q: Well, anyway, first of all, how did you meet your wife?*

WINN: Oh, she was a colleague that I had known back in Washington when she was working Palestinian issues in the Department. I met her within weeks of returning to the States in '92. She was assigned to Amman of all things in '94 and I was assigned to Dhahran. So, we commuted back and forth and decided it was time to get married. So, we got married in '95 and she finagled an assignment to Dhahran until our return in '96. Once we were married it was not a separate tour. She was in Dhahran for the last year I was there.

*Q: What was the government of the eastern province like when you were there? How did you find dealing with the authorities?*

WINN: A very, very cordial group. I have fond memories of the official Saudis I dealt with, despite my harsh comments on Saudi society as a whole. The Saudis in the Eastern Province are far and away the most enlightened of all and the governor of the Eastern Province, gosh, prince, what was it, Prince Mohamed, one of the sons of King Fahd. Very cordial relationship with the Saudi authorities. When I say the Saudis as a rule, I'm talking about the culture, although I dislike the hypocrisy of the leadership. They still have their women confined like veal calves, but the Eastern Province Saudis are relatively enlightened. The governor used to tell me, I see all these ARAMCO women running around in the abaya and that's not necessary. It undermines my efforts to promote more tolerance for Westerners out here. So, I was irritated at the American women who wore the abaya, would go around completely covered when they didn't have to. I cite that as an example of how tolerant the Saudi leadership was in the Eastern Province. It was a different world. You know we didn't have a problem with the mutaween, for example.

*Q: These are the religious police?*

WINN: Religious police, yes. The old days of the Dhahran that you remember in many ways lingered out there.

*Q: Our consul general went to the Governor and was he said, You know, I have a problem. My officers are being chained. He said, What is this? He said, Well, they are forced to do women's work. He asked, he said, What are they doing? He said, In America, the wives run all the errands in cars and my officers do women's work. So, we reached an agreement where the women could drive between ARAMCO and the air base and the consulate.*

WINN: No longer of course.

*Q: Yes, but I'm saying, it shows at that time.*

WINN: Right. There you go. I recall hearing about that. Well, of course, no woman could drive by the time I got there anywhere.

*Q: Did you get any feel or were we even looking at what was being taught in Saudi schools and all that because that's only within the last month or two come up?*

WINN: I did some reporting on it, and the result of that kind of education emerged with the bombing of the Air Force barracks in '96 and also September 11.

*Q: This was the Marine Air Force barracks?*

WINN: Air Force barracks, sorry.

*Q: Its called the Khobar Towers.*

WINN: Khobar Towers. We left the very night of the bombing, to my eternal regret, bad timing, but I remember within two weeks of returning here being invited to a seminar by John Duke Anthony and his group here that promotes Gulf-American business. At the seminar, the Saudi DCM was present. We were talking about what had just happened in Khobar Towers and what

did I think about the situation in Saudi Arabia, and asked me my opinion on the future of Saudi Arabia, and I said, “The Saudis need urgently to address their educational system. This religious oriented isolated educational system that is just promoting, I didn’t say hate, but it certainly is not helping our situation.” The Saudi DCM took umbrage at that and said, “Who are you to criticize an educational system that hasn’t changed for 800 years?” I said, “Well, point taken.” I cite that example which my colleagues remember. I was aware of the educational problem, but and it struck me for some reason toward the end of my tour, and it struck me because I had dealings with the Saudi schools and the insistence of the Saudi authorities. I was shocked by the curriculum that American women married to Saudis had their children to go through. Even the best intentioned American women married to a Saudi still had to put her children in Saudi schools. They would come in and complain to me, for example. Pictures of little animals, baby animals, Bambi, who had to have a line drawn across the throat to show that it was really dead, to show that its throat had been cut because the fundamentalists couldn’t portray a living creature, according to the Koran. The strict Islamist was not going to allow the depiction of a living animal, or human, certainly not a human, but even an animal. Then I began to look into the curriculum on my own. Now, this certainly didn’t become a big deal in Washington until recently.

*Q: What were you seeing or looking at this growing population?*

WINN: The topic of the embassy, the embassy in Riyadh, the constant topic was the population explosion and falling aid revenues. That was as I recall a reporting topic throughout the two years I was: the pressure on the economy and the pressure on employment or unemployment. Not that they were lining up to work, but the Saudi government at the same time began to be worried by all these armies of unemployed youth, and instituted a program of “Saudization,” requiring foreign firms to hire Saudis. There was virtually no mention of the educational curriculum. By the way, only last week the embassy in Riyadh produced a wonderful magnum opus on the Saudi educational system. None of that then, certainly though on the population explosion. It was huge. The highest in the world. The Saudis were proud and are proud of the fact they have if not the highest, the second highest population growth rate in the world. They constantly compete with Kenya on this point.

*Q: I mean at that time were they seeing this as a problem?*

WINN: No. They see it as a fact, but not a problem. The reason I say that, I just heard a program on the BBC where King Abdullah is encouraging Saudis to reproduce. Saudi economists are talking to the BBC that this is a problem, but it is not even remotely being addressed by the Saudi government now. I’m quoting the BBC. Despite the fact the per capita income of Saudi Arabia, when I was there was that of Mexico. You know \$25,000 down to \$7,000, now its down to about \$4,000, but population growth is never addressed by the Saudis as a problem. The only problem to them is how to create more jobs. Astonishingly.

*Q: Did you find Saudis for example beginning to go into manual or service type work?*

WINN: Very sporadically. They would insist on being hired by the banks, the American banks and even ARAMCO. They would always insist on managerial jobs, but I never saw then what I

gather one can see now, Saudi bellhops at the hotels. I never saw a shred of evidence of it.

*Q: Did you get any feel for the radicalization of the young people?*

WINN: Just the sheer looks Americans would receive on the street. My wife picked up on this. It was the sheer hatred and hostility with which we would be viewed, by that I mean looked at, physically viewed and the growing incidents of occasional pushing and shoving and threats against American women down in the Eastern Province. The growing belief on the part of ARAMCO women, they simply had to wear the abaya, despite what the governor said. It's funny how my wife picked up on it. You could see the looks, you could go into the back streets of Dhahran and see the relatively poorer living quarters and the zeal with which prayer time would be enforced. We did have the reappearance of the mutawaeen when I was there. The zeal with which Saudis would glare and shout at us if I would try to enter a McDonald's with my wife. I can remember thinking when that bomb went off in Dhahran it had to be Saudi inspired, but it was all sort of subliminal.

*Q: During the time you were there, outside of getting blown up after shortly when you left, how about our military?*

WINN: I had very close relations with them and actually testified under oath upon returning here to the fact that the Brigadier General in charge of the base could not be blamed for any lapse of judgment in Dhahran at the time. His career was ended because of the explosion. I had some very close relationships with the succession of brigadier generals who commanded the air base there. They only stayed three months at a time, although General Schwalier came out for a year tour. I had great respect for all those guys. These were the guys running the no fly zone over Iraq. Indeed they took me up in an F-15 once. We had a very cordial relationship and I had nothing but admiration for the way they ran their relationship with the Saudis. A wonderful group of military people over there.

*Q: The military wasn't a particular irritant, was it?*

WINN: Not to the consulate and not to the Saudis. They certainly stuck to themselves over on the air base. We rarely saw them. They were scarcely allowed to leave the base. They were a constant presence with these jets flying. You always knew they were there. They were constantly breaking the sound barrier. You got used to it, constantly hearing these enormous explosions. Indeed, I was physically still in the Eastern Province when the barracks were blown up. I just thought it was another incidence of the sound barrier being broken or perhaps a plane crashed. We got in the car and went to the Bahrain Airport. I didn't realize what was happening until we got to Amsterdam. No, they were not, they rarely left the base. They were certainly no irritant to the Saudis. The Americans went to great lengths to respond to Saudi concerns. I never heard the governor complain to me about any military problem.

*Q: How did you find the Americans at ARAMCO? What sort of breed were they?*

WINN: That is the weirdest culture on the face of the planet. New Yorker Magazine, asked me, I knew a writer over there, asked me to write an article on how strange it was over there. I didn't

do it of course, but that is another planet. As you know, physically you drive out of a parched desert into a nice green retirement community. Now a retirement community, though its changed over the years, they still have their stills, still would make their booze.

*Q: Sadiki juice.*

WINN: Sadiki juice and occasionally these stills would blow up, with grievous injury.

*Q: Yes. I mean the consular officer has to run out there.*

WINN: So, that culture lived on. They had the 20 and 30 year veterans living on, little contact with the Saudis, no knowledge of the Middle East. To them Saudi Arabia was the Middle East. They would refer to being in “the Middle East,” but they never set foot in Jordan or Syria, they would fly back to Houston or they would fly out to Bangkok and buy jewelry. No, little awareness of the world around them. Physically never left the ARAMCO compound. Been there 20 and 30 years, socking the money away and retire to the retirement communities in the States composed of other ARAMCO retirees.

*Q: In a gated community.*

WINN: Gated in more ways than one, but again the Saudis, the crackdown had long since begun by the time I arrived there. For example, prohibition on Christmas decorations. Absolute prohibition on any Christmas lights or the mention of the word Christmas. They referred to the x word. Occasionally you would see a Santa Claus in a backyard that would be stealthily displayed to me, but no observance of any Christian religious holiday, no mention of it, pointedly ARAMCO employees were expected to appear on work on Christmas day at work. Worst of all, the Saudis beginning to live on the compound. The beginning of what at that time seemed to be the beginning of the end, particularly with the “Saudization” program. Now, I gather the Draconian measures by the Saudis had been retained while at the same time the exodus of Americans for job reasons stopped. As I was leaving a lot of Americans were being let off, laid off as Saudis took their job. That apparently didn’t work and they were all asked to come back. Now in the wake of September 11th, some people are leaving just because they are scared, but its the oddest group of people I’ve ever met in my life, in their own little world over there, raking in the money. Very friendly group. Tended to drink rather too much when they came over to my house. Nothing new there because it was the real stuff.

*Q: You left in...?*

WINN: That was, I left to retire in ‘96.

**ALBERT A. THIBAUT, JR.**  
**Political Counselor/Deputy Chief of Mission**  
**Riyadh (1995-2000)**

*Albert A. Thibault, Jr. was born in Massachusetts on August 5, 1941. He received*

*his BA from the University of Windsor in Canada in 1962, his MA from the University of Toronto in 1963, and another MA from the University of Pennsylvania in 1964. He entered the Foreign Service in 1969. His career has included positions in Guinea, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, India, Nepal, and Saudi Arabia.*

*Q: How old were you when you were taking this?*

THIBAULT: I was, let me see, this was in '95, so I would have been 54. That's an interesting question for you to raise.

*Q: I know, because the older you get ...*

THIBAULT: Now, be careful of what you say, Stu, because you're playing into stereotypes. That was one I encountered repeatedly. People would say, "Oh, you're studying Arabic, such a hard language and at your age." I don't accept that at all. I grew up bilingual and I've never had any difficulty with languages. I studied a lot of Spanish, for example, in college and still speak and read it fairly well, and then Hindi and Urdu, becoming very proficient. It's a question of attitude and whether you're intimidated by the prospect and I was not intimidated by studying Arabic. So I never had any problem and it was not a big issue. So I spent a year doing that. I truly regret, deeply regret I did not spend that second year in Tunis, because what I found, just to go ahead a little bit, when I arrived in Riyadh, I had by that time a two plus in spoken Arabic. I had made an enormous effort to get that. It's not an easy language. I arrive in Riyadh and no one speaks Arabic there. The whole Saudi elite has been educated in the United States. They all speak English. There were no less than three English language dailies in Riyadh. The foreign population is so enormous, thirty to forty per cent of the population and they all speak English. That's why they're recruited to come there. So English is really the *lingua franca*. So to keep up with your Arabic, particularly if you've not had the two-year program, is very difficult.

Just to add to that, unlike my experience in India and in Pakistan, where I could have private tutors who could come to my home at six in the morning and which I would pay for. They would be on their way to work as teachers, for example and they would come by to my house and we would just chat in Hindi or in Urdu for a full hour and then I would have breakfast and go on to the office. I would do this on a daily basis and I hoped to do that in Riyadh as well. But unfortunately the embassy and our residences are all in an area called the Diplomatic Quarter, which is a little ghetto and there are no Saudis who live there. And security is a big issue, it was even then. So it's not possible to have a tutor and the embassy language program is not suitable. I had studied on a much higher level than would be appropriate for that class and I just didn't have the time, either, during the day. So my Arabic really suffered, as a result of that. It would not have suffered as much if I had had that two-year program.

*Q: Well, you got there, you were in Saudi Arabia from when to when?*

THIBAULT: I was there for five years. I was there from July, of '95, to July of 2000. For three I was political counselor and for two years I was deputy chief of mission.

*Q: How stood our relations with Saudi Arabia when you arrived?*

THIBAULT: They were very good. In my view, Saudi Arabia is a much maligned country but very few of its critics, very few people speak with any degree of knowledge, I mean substantive knowledge, about it. So it's a country about which there are tremendous misperceptions. But the relationship was a very close one, a very collaborative one. It was throughout that period. We had enormous interests in Saudi Arabia, particularly at that time, from military cooperation - our largest military aid missions were there - to commercial interests, the trade relationship between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia being larger than that of all of the other Middle East countries, including Israel, put together. And the energy relationship is vital to us. The role of the Saudis in the Gulf is also absolutely key to the U.S. position in the Gulf. The cooperation on political issues, consultations and dialogue, was also vital. So all of this was in place when I arrived in 1995 and it continued, despite growing strains and problems in the relationship.

*Q: Noticing, I think, in the paper today, our Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, has just come back from the Middle East or maybe she's still there, but some of the columnists are saying, "Here we are, talking about bringing democracy and stopping human rights abuses and Saudi Arabia is the worst violators of all these things." Was this in the air when you were there?*

THIBAULT: Well, certainly, the way I'd put it is that Saudi Arabia is a country with which we have enormous shared interests and virtually no shared values. You can calibrate the U.S.-Saudi relationship almost to the last dime or you can measure it almost to the last dime, because the interests are very quantifiable and very specific. But we have virtually no shared values. By contrast, for example, with India, we had for many years relatively few shared interests but enormous shared values and in the long term the shared values are just as important, if not more important, than the shared interests. In terms of popular understanding, public understanding and public support for the relationship in the United States, that is the great weakness of the U.S.-Saudi relationship. We were conscious of it from the very beginning. We had to write a human rights report, for example, each year and we had a similar Congressionally mandated religious freedom report. We had constant problems on the issue of religious freedom. Cases being brought to our attention of the religious police harassing, many times arresting, mistreating, Christians who were practicing their religion. We had issues of consular access arising out of American women who had married Saudis and then getting divorced or separated from their husbands and wishing, indeed they were desperate for, access to and a relationship with their children. That was a constant problem there. We faced constant congressional inquiries on very particular complaints. So yes, human rights, civil rights, religious rights, were very much a part of our agenda.

*Q: Who was your ambassador when you got there?*

THIBAULT: The ambassador then was Ambassador Ray Mabus. Ambassador Mabus had been governor of Mississippi and was a personal friend of President Clinton. They both were of the same generation, same sort of southern political background. He was there for a year and then was succeeded by Ambassador Wyche Fowler, former Democratic senator from the state of Georgia. So those were the two ambassadors in the five years that I was there.

*Q: Stick to the ambassadors, how did you see they worked? I mean, here are men out of the American political scene thrust into an area that very few Americans know how to deal with, including foreign service.*

THIBAULT: That's right. Their value to the relationship, and as the Saudis saw them, was that they had a personal tie with the president. The Saudis definitely prefer a political ambassador to a career ambassador. We've not had many career ambassadors and when we did have one there in the late 80's, Hume Horan, he was PNGed (declared persona non grata), in effect, within a very short time of his arrival. I don't want to generalize, but the Saudis, I believe firmly, prefer, by and large, political ambassadors. I mean they've never said that but that was certainly my reading of them. The ambassador, whether it was Ambassador Mabus or certainly Ambassador Fowler, whom I got to know very well, had full access to the Saudi leadership. The American ambassador was always the envy of his ambassadorial colleagues because he could request a meeting with Crown Prince Abdullah or with King Fahd, before he had his stroke, and with other senior princes - and it is the royal family that definitely runs that country - and be received within a day or two. Access was never an issue for the American ambassador.

*Q: Well one of the things, at least within Foreign Service ranks, is that, this also applies to Morocco, where the king there preferred political ambassadors because he didn't like Arabists because he felt they knew where the bodies were buried or something like that. Is that the feeling?*

THIBAULT: You know, I'm skeptical of that. I think from the perspective of the Saudi leadership, they've been around a long time. They've dealt with the United States for decades now. Their ambassador here, Prince Bandar, would be the dean of the diplomatic corps, if he allowed himself to be so. He's been here since the early Eighties. They've gone through one administration after the other. They've dealt with many ambassadors. My point in mentioning this is that for them what counts, far more, is access to the very top levels of the U.S. administration, the U.S. government. That's how Middle East culture works. I mean the ambassador, when he was seeking a meeting and was under instructions, he didn't ask to see the minister of labor or the minister of finance, he would go to the, I mean sometimes he would if it was a technical issue. But if it was truly important he would go to see the crown prince or the king. To have an ambassador who was a personal friend of the president, that counted far more than having some, let's face it, bureaucrat like myself or someone else who arrives, who may be deeply versed in the culture but who ranks in our system down on the totem pole from the assistant secretary, the under secretary, and the secretary of state. That's not the way they want to work.

*Q: Did you find while you were there, with Prince Bandar the Saudi ambassador in Washington, was he a power unto himself?*

THIBAULT: No, Prince Bandar would, I recall, come to Saudi Arabia maybe twice a year. He did not necessarily make a beeline for our ambassador. And again, this is sort of how their system works. There's a pecking order of princes and in the royal family which now includes thousands of members. Prince Bandar has his place there but he is not one of the senior princes. He can advise, he can guide, they have confidence in him. They're very pleased that he has the



access and the personal relationships he has developed in Washington but he's not the one who's making Saudi policy.

*Q: Well, when you were there, what were the, let's start when you arrived. In the first place, in a country that doesn't have a political system, or at least a democratic political system, what does the political counselor do?*

THIBAULT: As I said at the outset, the relationship is a very broad one. We have a lot of very specific problems or areas for discussion that arise on a daily, on a continuing basis. Many included the common issues that arise in any normal diplomatic relationship for a political counselor to deal with, such as UN votes, politics in the Gulf affecting neighboring countries, reaction to the Bosnian events, Middle East peace process questions, visiting Congressional delegations etc. which consumed a lot of effort. Then there were issues unique to the bilateral relationship, probably the most important of which at the time of my arrival and over the years was the pol-mil relationship, military to military relationship. We had two military missions. One that was working with the Saudi Arabian National Guard and the other one with the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Defense. Now the Saudi Arabian National Guard reported directly to Crown Prince, now King, Abdullah, who is their commander. The ministry of defense reports to the defense minister, Prince Sultan, Abdullah's half-brother, and now Crown Prince. Those are very separate organizations, each with its own U.S. training mission, fully paid for, fully funded by the Saudis. There were no concessionary terms for them. If we speak of the supply of F-15 aircraft to the Saudi air force and training in its use, that relationship is with the ministry of defense. With the Saudi Arabian National Guard the mil-mil relationship consisted primarily of relatively low-tech training. But each of these missions employed several hundred Americans, military, as well as civilian contractors. They were there on a continuing basis. They'd been there for the past thirty or forty years, and presumably they are still there. That's a very important part of our commercial relationship, too, I might add., although it's rarely counted as such. In other words, our U.S. defense contractors have a big stake in the successful operation of these missions. Anyone who tells you that doesn't carry weight in the overall political relationship is fooling himself.

But in addition to this, we also had Operation Southern Watch (OSW), U.S. Air Force wings deployed to Saudi Arabia to keep an eye on Iraq, on Saddam Hussein, which had been based in Saudi Arabia since the Gulf War. Their presence represented quite a significant commitment on our side and a political risk, as we have since learned, on the Saudi side, to have this large U.S. military presence in the kingdom. My point in detailing all of this is that it involved constant problems that would come up and would have to be resolved by the embassy and often by the ambassador. In other countries, you would have the military attachés who might be able to handle such issues, and many were handled that way, not to mention by the training missions themselves. I don't want to suggest otherwise. But in Riyadh the embassy was the big focal point for nurturing the whole broad spectrum of the bilateral relationship, including its formidable military component, unlike other countries where the military operated independently of the Ambassador. In Riyadh, the heads of the training missions, general officers, were very much members of the country team.

For example, whether it was funding for fuel for OSW - who's going to pay for that, if there is a

surge that carries costs beyond what was budgeted? Who's going to pay for the upgrade of the radar capabilities or for added costs with Patriot missiles based in the country, or to station new missiles after some provocative action by Saddam? Who's going to pay for new housing to accommodate any additional personnel who might be sent there? Or how do we find, build, and pay for the new housing required after Khobar when the US personnel at the Saudi air station at Dhahran were moved from in-town apartment housing to more easily secured and isolated compounds in Riyadh? These were big issues for both sides, especially for the Saudis whose oil was selling for \$10 a barrel in the late 90's and thus faced a major budget crunch. High-powered U.S. delegations came out precisely to discuss such issues. Funding issues were a major and constant element of our bilateral dialogue, including prodding for payments on existing contracts and earlier obligations. There is that image of the Saudis swimming in oil wealth, which may be true today when oil sells at \$60 a barrel, but certainly wasn't then.

There might be accidents, U.S. personnel killed on the highway between Prince Sultan Airbase where the OSW aircraft were stationed and Riyadh; how do you handle the disposition of remains? Given the nature of their system, all of this funnels up to the top. So the embassy was very engaged on these issues. We had a political-military counselor as well myself as a political counselor, but we worked together very closely on this in supporting the Ambassador and in working with the senior U.S. military officers stationed in the kingdom who would seek our engagement and support in resolving these questions and I must say, nine times out of ten, we worked out acceptable arrangements with the Saudis. And the USG not only sought money for purely U.S. – Saudi purposes but for broader foreign policy causes as well.

When I arrived we had the Bosnia War going on. We were very keen to have Saudi financial assistance to support humanitarian operations in the Balkans. Or it might be for Palestinian aid, African disaster relief, whatever – the Administration would try to tap Saudi coffers because it had no money of its own readily at hand or not enough. We called it 'tin-cupping the Kingdom.' We had special envoys come out to meet with them on some of these worthy causes. I must say that normally, the Saudis kept their hands on their wallets in such cases. Throughout my five years, we had a constant flow of high level visitors, CODELs. The Secretary of Defense, SecDef, would be out there twice a year. You'd have the CINCs, the CENTCOM commander, there. You would have the individual air force and army generals from the Pentagon, and then very regularly, the senior-most air force and army generals in CENTCOM. You would have representatives of the joint Chief of Staff travel to Riyadh or Jeddah where the king lived and where the Crown Prince resided for several months each year. There was a constant flow of senior Americans, up to the Vice President, who wanted to interact with the Saudis and the political section handled much of this in support of the Ambassador.

In addition, we had our domestic reporting which became increasingly important as Islamist pressure manifested itself. That was a key priority for us. Keep in mind that the Saudis did not allow any journalists, American or other journalists, into the kingdom, nor any tourists. There is virtually no academic expertise in the United States on Saudi Arabia, at least on their politics. There are no exchanges of scholars. There are no independent travelers. No foreigner can enter Saudi Arabia without sponsorship, without Saudi sponsorship. In other words, the whole network of contacts that existed, for example, between the United States and the Soviet Union, even in the darkest days of the Cold War, was not replicated in Saudi Arabia. Which meant that the

burden fell on the embassy and on the political section in particular to try to explain what was happening, to analyze what were the currents, as we could discern them, in Saudi Arabia. And then, of course, you have your routine reporting which can be very time consuming. I say routine, not that it's not important, but on human rights report, which would take a lot of an officer's time for several months, and you would have the religious freedom report. And, again, because these were very widely read public documents, you had to make a special effort to keep abreast of what was happening in these areas, or not happening. And there were others as well. So we were very busy, I can assure you.

*Q: Well, what about, there are all sorts of people and I think there are several women particularly who have written extensively on Saudi Arabia. They've made trips and all. Were these people around or were they picking up information from somewhere else somewhere?*

THIBAULT: You mean Americans? We did not see very many of them. As I've said, you could not enter the country without sponsorship. So you had to have a defined purpose. And it's not easy, once you get into the country then to sort of wander around. There are a lot of barriers. And you mention women. Sandra Mackey comes to mind but she was married to someone living there, working with one of the private companies.

*Q: Just one of the issues, what about women at the American air force base?*

THIBAULT: To be honest with you, the times that I visited, I went quite often down to Prince Sultan Air Force Base, I do not recall seeing any American female military personnel. Nor at the residential compound on the outskirts of Riyadh although there were many spouses. The military missions certainly didn't have any women attached to them. I know in the Gulf War there were reports of problems that female military personnel faced. But during the time I was there that was not really a big issue.

*Q: One of the issues which comes to the forefront since 9/1, according to some reports, the Saudis have sort of made a pact with, I'm talking about the royal family, made a pact with the devil, if you want to call it, and that is with the religious leaders. You can do whatever you want, just stay away from us. And that you had these schools, not just in Saudi Arabia, in Pakistan and eastern Africa and other places, where imams or mullahs, preaching hatred of foreigners, the Americans. Was this something you were monitoring?*

THIBAULT: This really raises the whole issue of terrorism and the role of anti-terrorism, in our relationship. I arrived in July of '95. King Fahd experienced or suffered a stroke in November of '95 which incapacitated him and led to Crown Prince Abdullah, taking charge of the government and that remains the case to this day. Fahd, I might add, from a medical perspective, made a remarkable recovery, having survived all these years but he's not capable of managing the country. So he continues to have an honorary role. I mention this because the change in leadership really prompted us, within the embassy and within my section in particular, to take a very close look at Saudi leadership issues and patterns of succession. Who were the new contenders? What were the implications of Abdullah taking over from Fahd? What was his relationship with Prince Sultan, who was the minister of defense and regarded as the likely successor to Abdullah? More broadly, we examined the relationship of these individual princes

and of the royal family to the society at large. This effort, which was a major priority for us, was accelerated by the fact that at that same time, in November '95, a terrorist bomb explosion occurred in downtown Riyadh, at the office of the U.S. mission supporting the Saudi Arabian National Guard, in which five Americans were killed and others were wounded. This was the first terrorist attack on the Americans in Saudi Arabia, at least that I'm aware of. Now no one claimed responsibility but questions were raised as to why it had occurred, what was its background. Within a relatively short period of time, the Saudis arrested the perpetrators, the alleged perpetrators, of this attack, who then made a confession on television that they were Islamically motivated. As I recall, this was in February or March of '96. So one immediate consequence was to reexamine our security posture and I'll come to that, dwell on this at greater length later on. But the other one was to really take a closer look at the Saudi internal scene.

In June of 1996 there was a second terrorist attack, at Khobar, on the eastern coast, just outside of Dhahran, in which a truck bomb exploded outside an apartment building which housed a number of U.S. military personnel who were attached to the office helping the Saudis at the local Saudi air base.

*Q: Was this Khobar Towers?*

THIBAULT: Yes, Khobar Towers. Nineteen Americans were killed. I might add, if I recall correctly, 18 were killed by glass, flying glass. It could have been avoided. So 19 servicemen were killed, plus five a few months earlier, for a total of 24 Americans and many more injured. That prompted a tremendous review in Washington as well as in the field, in Riyadh itself, of what was going on, what was happening, how do we respond to this, what is driving that. The suspicion and very strong belief that developed very quickly was that, in one way or the other, the Iranians were behind the Khobar attack, if not the first one. None of this is particularly secret today but at the time it was closely held. Individual names of Iranian operatives surfaced and of course the concern was that the Iranians were perhaps working through the local Shiite community to target Americans.

*Q: Which is fairly strong in the Eastern Province.*

THIBAULT: There's a very strong Shiite presence in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia, particularly around the oil fields there, Aramco and the like. The FBI finally managed to open an office in Riyadh and we began developing it, but it took quite a bit of doing and I must say the ambassador deserves a lot of the credit for being able to push it through, this was Ambassador Fowler, for being able to bring the Saudis around to cooperation on the investigation. But obviously it was in their interest as well. They saw what a powerful reaction there was in the United States. The whole foundation of the relationship was being questioned. With subsequent attacks in Yemen on the USS Cole and on our embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, with which bin Laden and Al-Qaeda became identified, the focus shifted to the Sunni versus Shiite dimension of terrorism. In addition to trying to get the Saudis to apply pressure on the Taliban in Afghanistan to take action against bin Laden in Afghanistan, we continued to look more closely at the relationship between the Sunni religious establishment in the kingdom and the royal family.

So to come to your question, you start with the foundations of Saudi Arabia, a religious and

political pact between the Wahhabi strand of Islamic teaching and philosophy and the al Saud, which has existed for almost two hundred years. This was not something new. I think you expressed it pretty accurately in saying that, “We’ll do our thing and you do yours.” And it wasn’t merely an opportunistic alliance. Nor was it a conspiracy. I think that there is a deep conviction that it is the Al-Saud responsibility as guardians of the holy shrines. The king’s title formal title in Saudi Arabia is “Guardian and Protector of the Two Holy Shrines”, Medina and Mecca. They had a responsibility, as they saw it for many years, to support Islam, to propagate it. Supporting and propagating not only at home by creating a social and educational system that reflected a strict version of Islam; not only in terms of their enormous investment in infrastructure at Mecca, in particular, to allow millions of Muslims from around the world to conduct the *hajj* pilgrimage in a comfortable and efficient manner; but also to support organizations that tried to propagate Islam around the world. That’s where you have the funding relationships developing with about half a dozen of these organizations. And it was not just a question of the royal family. It was an obligation on business people, on the Saudi public. There’s a deep belief that this is an appropriate role for Saudis to play. They see themselves as special in the Arab world and in the Muslim world because Arabia is their holy land. That’s the rationale for not permitting foreign places of public worship for other religions. You point out, well in Kuwait and in Jordan and many other Muslim countries, Christians and Jews and Hindus and whatever, Buddhists, can all worship freely. “Well, yes, that’s fine there but we’re the holy land, we can’t permit it here.” And they’ll quote a statement by the Prophet Mohammed to that effect. So there was this. There was this part of their outlook and therefore of their policy which had been in place for many years. And as they grew wealthy, they were able to funnel funds to these organizations, over which, once they left Saudi Arabia, they had no control, or very little.

*Q: Well, were you able, when you were political counselor, to say, “I’d like to see copies of the syllabus or the textbooks of what’s being taught in, say the Saudi religious schools or universities or in the grammar school level.” Were we looking at that?*

THIBAUT: No, at that time, we did not. We did not go into that level of detail in our reporting, as I recall. I mean, we knew in a general sense, not so much at the primary and secondary level but at the university level, that it was a very narrow view of Islam and, in fact, the whole curriculum was tightly controlled by the religious leadership. That was their province, implementing the compact between the Wahabi establishment and the Al-Saud. That was no secret but the concern expressed for a long time was couched as an economic development issue. Here was a country having incredible oil resources that had achieved staggering progress in building infrastructure and the wherewithal of a modern country, and yet their educational system was overwhelmingly tilted towards teaching subjects that had little or no practical value. The Saudi leadership was well aware of the disconnect of having a high population growth rate, producing large numbers of young men who couldn’t find jobs, and yet at the same time also having in their country an enormous population of foreigners doing the work. The problem was not that the economy didn’t generate jobs but that they weren’t being filled by Saudis. So the issue of religious predominance and control of education was viewed in these terms, rather than in terms of the basic philosophy that was being taught at lower levels, which is the issue that arose after 9/11, when scrutiny of Saudi textbooks revealed a consistent theme of active hostility and even aggression against non-Muslims being drummed into young students.

*Q: One of the things you mentioned was infrastructure. Saudi Arabia has, you might say, a terrible reputation and everything, but when you take a look at what it has done with its oil wealth - yes, the princes have done well and all that but there was a tremendous infrastructure that was built. You take a country like Nigeria, where the oil goes out and is practically pumped to Geneva or Zurich, where it goes into the bank accounts and nothing is happening. And in so many other countries. A significant part of Saudi riches have gone to help the people, I use this qualified term, because it really hasn't done much for the youth, in preparing them to become responsible citizens.*

THIBAULT: I think I would agree with you. I recall seeing home films of Americans who had been there for many, many years, made back in the Sixties of Riyadh and what it was like when I was there, 35 years later. The change was incredible.

*Q: I was in Dhahran in the Fifties. It was a sleepy little town. Also, the Trucial States, as they were called in those days. Dhows beached. Great things have been done and a significant portion of the investment has gone to the people, which has not been the case in a lot of other countries.*

THIBAULT: I agree with you. Partly I think it's again the Bedouin and tribal mentality, if you will, where the royal family does not exist in isolation. The Al-Saud are woven into the very fabric of Saudi society. King Abdul Aziz, the founder of Saudi Arabia, is famous for his matrimonial policy. I don't know how many marriages he contracted but he made a very specific point of marriages with tribal leaderships across Arabia so that he would build a network of family ties. So to with his sons and daughters, of whom there are many and then their grandchildren and the like. It's very hard to separate them from Saudi Arabia. It's striking when you look at the Moroccan and Jordanian and some other royal families. They're a handful of people. And then you look at the Saudi royal family. Which is why I think that system, that political system, has much more stamina than people give it credit for.

*Q: In the late Fifties, when I was in Dhahran, one of the questions was, how long will the Saudi rule last? The answer was, probably not very long. We were looking at almost everything those days being run by the Palestinians. Which was a dangerous mix. Now they are run by Bangladeshis, who are no threat.*

THIBAULT: Yeah, that's exactly it. And they're very shrewd. In 1990, at the time of the Gulf War, when Arafat endorsed Saddam Hussein's occupation of Kuwait, that was interpreted by the Saudi leadership as in effect inviting Saddam to occupy Saudi Arabia, particularly given the rhetoric that Saddam was employing at the time. They immediately expelled the Palestinians. They expelled the Yemenis whose president voiced similar views. The only significant foreign Arab presence now in Saudi Arabia are the Egyptians but they're greatly outnumbered by people from Asia, who, Muslim or not, cannot obtain citizenship, they don't speak the language, they have nothing in common, they have no desire to remain permanently. They're guest workers in the real sense of the word and they represent no political threat to the Saudis. So they've been able to maintain political stability for a long time and I see no sign that this is in any way in jeopardy at present. Now I've been away for several years. I may be misreading them but I think they have a lot of political assets.

*Q: Well tell me, let's go back to Khobar Towers. I was interviewing, I believe it was Wayne White, who was an INR analyst who dealt with this, among other things and he was saying that it became quite clear early on that the Iranians probably were behind this but that the Saudis didn't want this to come out. And at the same time things were happening in Iran where we were feeling things were changing in Iran, getting more liberal. So the whole thing was an attitude, held both by the United States and by the Saudis, sort of we didn't follow it to the close. Was this your feeling?*

THIBAULT: Certainly I think on the part of the Saudis, they were very reluctant to publicly identify the Iranians. I think that the most compelling reason is that they were uncertain what the American reaction would be if evidence became overwhelming and incontrovertible that the Iranians were in fact behind this. And as I say, though the view favoring Iranian responsibility emerged very soon in Washington, I'm not sure there was conclusive, absolutely dead-sure kind of evidence, within a reasonable period of time, that the Iranians were involved. To the extent that the Saudis feared that such evidence might be uncovered, then our reaction would become unpredictable for them. They had their own problems with the Iranians and they were not inclined to roil those waters. So I think that this hesitation or this ambivalence, maybe that's the better word, ambivalence, created a feeling among many Americans, particularly on the investigative side, that they were not getting full access to the information that the Saudis had.

*Q: Also from Wayne, Wayne White, he felt that some punches were being pulled at the NSC, at the top, I guess Sandy Berger, level, because of what was perceived as being a change in Iran. Hope, which I guess, springs eternal.*

THIBAULT: I recall Rafsanjani, who's now, ironically, again candidate for president, had just taken office and he was viewed as maybe a bit little more liberal. I know the Saudis had great fears of the Iranians, particularly, for example, in their ability to disrupt the *hajj*.

*Q: They did it once.*

THIBAULT: They did it once, that's right, in 1987, I believe. It took on an anti-American tinge, thousands of Iranian pilgrims hoisting Khomeini placards and shouting slogans in the most sacred precincts of the Grand Mosque, which deeply shocked the Saudis. In fact, there was a clash in Mecca then in which several hundred people were killed. This event, this politicization of the Hajj, was especially troubling because it jeopardized the Saudi reputation for managing a peaceful hajj for all Muslims. Guardianship of the Holy Places is their unshakable claim to legitimacy at home and in the Muslim world. This is an area of real vulnerability for them and they know that the Iranians know they can push that button. So regarding Khobar, they perhaps handled them in very gingerly fashion, as they did regarding the Iranian occupation of disputed islands on the coast of Bahrain and the UAE. The Saudis were quite restrained in commenting publicly on this and in responding to the pressure for a stronger stance that came from some of their Gulf neighbors. So I think that was part of it, yes.

*Q: You referred, you were going to talk more about sort of security.*

THIBAULT: Well, these explosions, and particularly the one at Khobar June 1996, were the turning point, not just for our security posture in Saudi Arabia, but even worldwide for U.S. embassies because it was clear that we had an ideological adversary targeting Americans in our most vulnerable locations. To that extent, perhaps, it differed from the attack on the Marines in the early Eighties in Beirut, where you might argue it happened in response to the immediate situation at the time. In any event, we immediately redeployed our military missions and presence in Saudi Arabia. We reduced our footprint, as they say. For example, the U.S. military presence at the base in Dhahran was terminated. We consolidated our assets at the Prince Sultan Airbase which is in central Saudi Arabia, south of Riyadh, about 60-70 miles south of Riyadh, where we had not had much infrastructure, in part because it was in the middle of nowhere, therefore more difficult to attack, easier to defend, to isolate. We placed tremendous new constraints on the movement of our military personnel in public, for example, in Riyadh. In the embassy we took a whole series of measures, which included closing off several streets around the embassy, of course working with the Saudi government on this. And again the ambassador had to go to the top to get approval for this. The interior minister, Prince Nayif, was very reluctant to permit it, regarding it as a challenge to the Saudi obligation to guarantee security. So we closed off several streets, we developed physical barriers, we expanded the open space around the embassy.

*Q: For a bomb blast area, the farther away it occurs, the less likely a car bomb can kill and damage.*

THIBAULT: That's right. Over time, as quickly as funding and construction permitted the building itself was strengthened, and access to it was greatly tightened. We redeployed housing for many of our people. Not so difficult in Riyadh because we were already in the Diplomatic Quarter, as I mentioned. In Dhahran and in Jeddah, there was considerable strengthening of the perimeter defenses around the compound of the two consulates there, including units of the Saudi Arabian National Guard on permanent guard there as well. Our U.S. contractor community took many similar steps. Security around the American school took the same pattern as around the Embassy. Security became the watchword for all of us and that continued throughout the remainder of the period that I was there.

*Q: Were you seeing any movements within Saudi society, I'm thinking of women's ability to drive cars and other things. Were there any other groups than women trying to get somewhere?*

THINBAULT: Just before I had arrived, and this was almost a precursor of bin Laden and the fundamentalist reaction against the United States and the Saudi leadership, you had had several preachers in the town of Qassim arrested. They had been circulating manifestos directed against the Saudi leadership and cassette tapes of some of their sermons had also circulated. So that really put an end, at least for several years, of any consideration of change in the political system.

*Q: These cassettes, they were attacking the government for being too liberal?*

THIBAULT: Well, yes, for compromising on Islamic principles. You had Saudi exiles in London who were flooding the country with faxes denouncing the royal family. Ironically, the net result of this was to frighten many people into believing that the fundamentalists had more



clout and more influence than had been appreciated. The view emerged, particularly among the more educated Saudis and particularly the ones whom we saw, that the Saudi princes were more liberal than their society as a whole. You did not see any movement towards women driving or any liberalization of restrictions on religious worship. You had a response by the leadership of holding back on whatever might be their personal or natural impulses to bring their society up to contemporary standards because they felt vulnerable.

*Q: I suppose part of the thing was their saying, "Okay, fine, we have a democracy, it'll be one vote and that'll be the end of it. It'll turn into a fundamentalist society."*

THIBAULT: At least my experience there was that there were very few advocating fully representative democracy. They have an advisory council called the Shura, all appointed members. The steps that were being advocated at that time were to make their proceedings more transparent, to draw from a wider spectrum of society, to allow a broader agenda than had normally been discussed, to allow media reporting on their meetings and discussions, these sorts of things. Not that this should become an elective body. For two reasons, I think. In part because, as you say, there was a concern about who might become elected as a result of that. I think that what you have to give greater weight to was the strongly held belief that an Islamic political system should not necessarily reflect or, in their words, "ape" Western norms. Saudi Arabia, I emphasize, is a deeply, deeply conservative and very religious society. It's easy to list all of its shortcomings by our standards but I think in many ways the Saudi leadership has its finger to the political wind and they're extremely sensitive to what they think public opinion will accept. They would not have survived as long as they have without that ability to discern public opinion. Moreover, the family is so large and then the tribal connections are such that their tentacles and their antennae extend to all corners. I have often seen Crown Prince Abdullah and other senior princes in their courts receiving hundreds of petitioners. They are open to any and all, held weekly and often more frequently, and people turn out in large numbers. There's a constant flow of people who come to see them. These men are not necessarily isolated from public opinion.

*Q: The majlis.*

THIBAULT: The *majlis*, exactly.

*Q: I watched this, where the cousin of the King, was the emir of Eastern Province, this is back to the old court. But people were coming in on all sorts of things.*

THIBAULT: Exactly, and this continues to this day.

*Q: Equivalent to an American town meeting.*

THIBAULT: So, it's not that they are isolated. This is not a Shah of Iran kind of situation. They're much closer to their people than we give them credit for. You saw it reflected in Secretary Rice's visit, you mentioned it, a couple of days ago in Riyadh. She met with Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal, graduate of Princeton, absolutely urbane, extremely knowledgeable and experienced man, 35 years now as foreign minister, father was the late king, King Faisal. He's heard it all before. His response is, "We'll do it at our own pace and in

accordance with our own traditions and laws.” I think this is how they view it. We have no leverage over them. I think this is something that few Americans appreciate. If anything, it’s the other way around. Constructing a policy that will promote change in Saudi Arabia is little more than exhortation and appealing to their own sense of what’s in their best interest. They have to be persuaded that it is in their own interest.

*Q: Did you have a chance to sit around with the younger princes and have the equivalent of bull sessions, talking about wouldn't it be nice to do this or that? You'd find most subscribe to the "we've got it pretty good, it works well for us" line.*

THIBAULT: Well, you know, it’s a good question to raise because having contact with ordinary Saudis, not to mention princes, is a lot more challenging that you might think offhand. Even assuming that there isn’t a language issue, there’s a basic difference of hours of the day. You’ve lived in Saudi Arabia, you know. They entertain each other until four, five in the morning and they’ll sit around a tent or someone’s tent and talk all night. You can do that two, three, four times, maybe, but you can’t be there every night. You’re looking at your watch and you know you have to be at the office at eight o’clock and earlier. You can say that jokingly but it is a big issue, it’s a big issue. The other interesting aspect of this is that it’s harder to meet Saudis than you might think, if only because so much of the actual work is done by foreigners. When I’ve been in other countries you encounter the local nationals at different levels of society because you can come in direct contact with them just by stepping out of your embassy or stepping out of your house and just by socializing.

In Saudi Arabia, for example, we have a very large U.S. business community. When I was there we had 40,000 to 45,000 Americans resident in the kingdom, about evenly divided between Dhahran, Riyadh and Jeddah. I’d say 10,000 to 12,000 to 15,000, including dependents, in each of these three cities. You had many American companies who had business interests in Saudi Arabia. Just like the military would send its top officers out there on a constant basis, so would major firms, corporations, send senior representatives to Saudi Arabia. In any other country, they would host functions to which they would have their own local employees organize guest lists and extend invitations, at local hotels or whatever. In Saudi Arabia, the ambassador’s residence became the venue for that kind of entertaining. Quincy House was in constant, unceasing use as a venue for business representational events because it was the only way in which the Saudis would respond, having to get permission, in many cases, especially if they were government officials, coming if the invitation was issued in the name of the ambassador. The ambassador might or might not be present or he might be present only for a few minutes but otherwise, if they were to host them at hotels, no one would come. Other foreigners would come. Of course, one of the attractions, I’ll be candid, is that the ambassador could serve alcoholic beverages.

*Q: When I was there, it was forbidden. We would serve it but only if all the guests were foreigners, were non-Saudis.*

THIBAULT: Well, I’m not sure how much more liberal things have become but one of the drawing cards for Saudis to accept that kind of invitation was that they could get a drink there without the religious police looking over their shoulder. Now the corporation, the business host, would pay all expenses connected with and the ambassador could include whomever he liked. In

fact the companies encouraged you to bring other guests, and in fact many of our embassy officers would come because that was their way of meeting these people as well. It was not easy to achieve otherwise. You'd go to diplomatic receptions, national day and the like and the only Saudis who would be there would be a handful of business people and a few designated representatives from the foreign ministry. No one else would come. Not that they weren't invited. No one else would come. And they almost never invited you to their homes.

*Q: Was it that they needed permission or they didn't feel comfortable or what?*

THIBAULT: Well, it may have been a combination. For government officials, they needed permission from the foreign ministry. If you had a Treasury official and he was working during the day with, for example, his counterparts, the latter might come. As we had several missions come to talk about WTO matters or other economic issues, these receptions were a good way for our economic officers to meet Saudis at the policy-making or operational level.

*Q: World Trade Organization.*

THIBAULT: World Trade Organization. Or we would have American officials come to advance our anti-terrorism cooperation, for example from the office in Treasury that tracks the movement of foreign funds. Well, you could invite Saudis in the evening and they might come but they would have been cleared to hold the meetings in the first place by the foreign ministry and therefore would have implicit permission or maybe explicit permission to attend a related social event. But our public affairs section seeking to reach out to students or professors or journalists or others like that, opinion leaders, encountered enormous difficulty, enormous difficulty. To illustrate: where I've worked in other countries, you would have a very large local country work force working in the mission, typically outnumbering the Americans by a wide margin. When I was in India, if you were not American, you were Indian. Every section had its professionals; the AID mission was very heavily dependent on Indians, right down to the gardeners. Saudi Arabia was a very big mission, a Class IV mission. I was DCM, so I knew the situation very well. Do you know how many Saudis we had working at the embassy? One. And he was the son of a Frenchman. Now, he was very helpful to us. He was in the political section and he knew an enormous number of people. His father had been physician to King Abdul Aziz, had married a Lebanese lady, become a Muslim and all of that. But he wasn't a "real" Saudi. But we had one. The hundreds of others were all from other countries. So it's easier said than done, much easier said than done.

*Q: Had there been any terrorist attacks that began to zero in. You mentioned Khobar Towers but that was maybe off to one side. But what else had happened while you were there that gave focus on terrorism and maybe look a little harder at Saudi Arabia?*

THIBAULT: Well, of course it was the attacks in East Africa, on the embassies in Dar es Salaam and Nairobi and if I recall there was one other.

*Q: What about the underground garage underground garage attack on the Twin Towers?*

THIBAULT: That was in '93, that was before my time in Riyadh. That was an Egyptian, rather

than a Saudi, the Blind Sheik. After the East African attacks bin Laden became the overwhelming priority for us. As I said earlier, we had been highly sensitized by the attack on Khobar Towers. We had had the first attack, where five people were killed, which had not been connected to the Iranians but seemed to be indigenously Saudi. We had had statements, if I recall the timeline correctly, by bin Laden even before the attacks in which he heavily criticized the Saudi royal family. There was a climate of tremendous apprehension about terrorism. The focal point for us was, in addition to further strengthening, further tightening our own defensive measures, the focal point was to bring the Saudis to put pressure on the Taliban government in Afghanistan to clamp down on bin Laden. That was the subject of numerous discussions at all levels, including the vice president, who visited and by others as well, other senior administration officials. Including Secretary Albright who came a number of times during my time, four or five times to Saudi Arabia. As I mentioned, the Secretary of Defense, Secretary Cohen in particular, was a regular visitor, the JCS, and all of them, they were all singing from the same sheet of music, so to speak. The Saudis were, I would say again, slow to come around on that. They had good ties with the Afghan resistance. They had been, along with us, a major supporter during the 1980's. They were not anxious to roil Islamic waters, if you will. They professed not to have any real connections with the Taliban, that their influence was very limited. But on the other hand, after a lot of jawboning Prince Turki, the director of intelligence, GID and the brother of the foreign minister, now ambassador in Britain, did travel at least once if not twice to Kabul, where he apparently had no success at all. But this was a continuing issue for us, tightening up on the flow of foreign funds. That had started even earlier during the Bosnian War when we had received reports that some Islamic extremists were at work in Bosnia and that there was Saudi money going to those organizations. It was a very high priority for us, a very high priority for us.

*Q: Was there a media you could pay any attention to there? In other words, was there, I won't say a lively press or TV or not?*

THIBAULT: No, it was very much under control. We did have reporting on sermons. We had a Muslim officer who, in Jeddah in particular, attended Friday prayer services. He would report on the content, the themes, of these sermons. Even there, just as the press and the electronic media were under very tight government control, so, too, were the mosques. The ministry of religious affairs controlled mosques and the appointment of imams to the mosques. You did not have the phenomenon you have in other Arab countries like Egypt to some extent, or even Jordan, where you have the mosque as an alternative source of assistance and aid to people in trouble and allowed to operate that way. That's not the case in Saudi Arabia. They had their own informants in the congregations who would make sure that the preacher was sticking to the subject and, if I'm not mistaken, the themes they were supposed to talk about in the Friday sermon were disseminated by the ministry of religious affairs. So they were very concerned about this. They had seen, as I mentioned to you before, these clerics from Qassim who had tried to organize a movement critical of the royal family on religious grounds.

We also had a concern with the Saudi Afghans, if I can use that term. That is, Saudis who had fought in the Afghan War with the *mujahideen* in the 1980's and who had come back and were imbued with a very zealous view of Islam and receptive to the notion that the royal family was violating its trust by allowing these "Crusader forces," the Americans, into the kingdom. This

was the real issue for them. This offended large numbers of very conservative Muslims. We recognized that, particularly after these attacks and we tried to maintain our military presence at as low a profile as possible. And recognizing that we could not sustain this indefinitely, we began building up an alternative facility to Prince Sultan Air Base, an alternative facility in Qatar. It's interesting to note that after 9/11, in spite of the large amount of money that was invested by the Saudis who paid ninety per cent of the cost of Prince Sultan Air Base with tremendous data processing capabilities and all of that in the service of Operation Southern Watch over Iraq, that we were prepared to walk away from it and transfer this function to Qatar. And the Saudis, I am confident, were happy to see us go. So that today and now for the last several years, I think we're back down to our original military missions, the training missions which have been there for almost half a century. Which, by the way, were never a point of criticism. That was not an issue within Saudi Arabia, because there they could see this was being done to build up their own capabilities. Operation Southern Watch offended these fundamentalists, because it was seen as a means of putting pressure on another Muslim country and the royal family was complicit in that.

*Q: So we basically ran our war in Iraq out of Qatar, weren't we?*

THIBAULT: Yeah, out of Qatar, the war in 2003. But prior to that, Operation Southern Watch, was operated essentially out of Saudi Arabia, at least the air force part of it.

*Q: Is there anything else we should talk about on this?*

THIBAULT: On Saudi Arabia? There's lots I could talk about.

*Q: Then in 2000*

THIBAULT: In 2000, in '98, when my assignment as political counselor ended, Ambassador Fowler was very keen to have continuity, to follow up on Ted Kattouf, who later became ambassador to UAE and Syria, who had been DCM the first year or two of the ambassador's presence in Saudi Arabia. Ted and others suggested that since I had already been DCM elsewhere, that I would be a good candidate to succeed him. So I stayed on for an additional two years, from 1998 to 2000, making a total of five years in Saudi Arabia. In 2000, at the end of two years, the opening in India developed, which I had bid on earlier. With the ambassador's support, knowing how interested I was, he said, "I don't want to hold you back. You've been in-country five years now. So why don't you pursue this if you can get it." Otherwise I would have stayed for a third year as DCM.

There is one other issue. I raise it only because it's been a very large element in the 9/11 Commission's assessment of what happened, assessing the fact that 15 of the 19 hijackers were Saudis, all of whom had received a visa. That's on the consular operation.

*Q: While you were there, what was the attitude towards visas and getting young Saudis to the United States in particular?*

THIBAULT: The attitude towards visas in Saudi Arabia was reflective of what I would call the

general philosophy of overall consular operations as I have encountered them in my assignments. Which is that until 9/11, by and large and I won't say that this applies to every country but by and large, the view was that visa applicants should be screened and an assessment made about their eligibility based on their intentions, so far as these could be discerned, aided by a review of the applicant's family, financial, academic, etc. standing. If the general pattern in a particular country indicated a very low probability that the visa applicant would remain in the United States, then the approach was more liberal than in a country where there was a good probability of visa applicants remaining in the United States and therefore perhaps making fraudulent statements in order to qualify for the visa. Of course, the consular officer's number one question up until this period, up until 9/11, was, is this person an intending immigrant. As I've mentioned before, in Pakistan and in India, where the criteria, particularly in the early Eighties and mid-Eighties, when I was in those countries, were rather stringent, you had a relatively high visa denial rate. Beyond the general question of intention, there was particular focus on age groups and young, single men, in particular, were deemed in those countries, India and Pakistan in the early Eighties, mid-Eighties, to be high probability intending immigrants. So therefore the rate of visa issuance was much lower than would have been the case in Germany or Sweden or Japan or many other countries.

Now these factors changed, particularly as the economic prospects improved and particularly as we became more sophisticated in distinguishing between those who had a legitimate reason to go to the United States, especially for studies, from those who were there as "tourists." In Nepal, as I've mentioned earlier, before, although economic prospects were not so great in Nepal for young Nepalese, INS data suggested that very few Nepalese remained in the United States when they traveled there. So therefore the visa issuance rate, for young men for example, was much higher in Nepal than it would have been in India, simply because we were confident that when they told us why they were going there, the reason they cited was appropriate and legitimate, and that they would return.

Now, viewed in that context, Saudi Arabia was seen as a country in which very few Saudis traveling to the United States remained in the U.S. after their travel. INS data suggested that it was minuscule, in the less than one per cent category. So, not surprisingly, there was a much more open attitude towards issuing visas to Saudi applicants. That said, they had to apply for visas. There were no waivers of the appearance and personal interview requirement simply because they were Saudi citizens. The Visa Express program that attracted a great deal of critical attention from the 9/11 Commission was not put in place while I was there. So every day there would be a long lineup of Saudis outside the consular sections at the consulates in Jeddah and Dhahran as well as in Riyadh, of people applying for visas.

The other dimension to our visa issuing policy and practice which was perhaps unique to Saudi Arabia but very important in influencing the attitude of consular officers in this pre-9/11 period was the fact that a very substantial percentage of the Saudi population were non-Saudis. I've mentioned thirty to forty per cent and in the work force much higher than that. So you had millions, literally, of non-Saudi citizens living in Saudi Arabia with absolutely no prospect of ever getting Saudi citizenship or remaining permanently in Saudi Arabia, many of them highly educated, very well qualified in many different fields, proficient in English because that's how they qualified to get into Saudi Arabia in the first place. And therefore there was a reasonable

presumption, it seemed to us, that many of these people who would apply would be perhaps intending immigrants. So there was particular scrutiny given to these people. They were a very large percentage, I might add, of visa applicants.

So the result of this is that for many years the pattern had been that Saudi citizens were issued visas on a fairly liberal basis whereas non-Saudis faced a rather steep barrier. Many of the latter, if they were older and they had established ties, particularly if they had been to the United States and returned, then of course that was a different matter. But for young people and particularly young men, they really had, there was a high presumption that they were intending immigrants. So this is how the section operated, by and large, during the years that I was there and, as DCM, I interacted regularly and closely with the Consul General who headed consular operations.

*Q: Is anybody looking at, was the subject of potential terrorists raised at all?*

THIBUALT: Well, of course we had our Visa Viper list and there were names on the lookout and each name had to be entered into the lookout system, which was tied in to a worldwide database, global database, before a visa could be issued to that person. I don't want to suggest that we bypassed those procedures. That was not at all the case. If for some reason someone's name popped up on that list, then obviously they would not be issued a visa. But it was in that context, not necessarily that Saudi citizens *per se*, as opposed to Egyptians or Tanzanians or whatever other nationality, might represent a higher level of terrorist threat than those nationalities.

*Q: I just had a flashback as you were talking. Much was made of the fact that what were these young men doing going to flying school in the United States. I was issuing visas in Dhahran in the late 1950's and I was surprised at the number of Jordanians who were working in the Eastern Province were applying to flying schools, mostly as I recall in Texas or Oklahoma. Flying schools seemed to have quite an attraction to the young people there. It struck me at the time, I thought, "Gee, I didn't know there were that many airplanes." There was already a long pattern of doing this. We're talking about almost fifty years before.*

THIBUALT: Well, ironically, in the time that I was there one of the issues that we discussed often and in fact bemoaned was the sharp drop in the number of Saudi students going to the United States. The contrast between the Sixties, Seventies and Eighties, when Saudis were number three or number four as a nationality among foreign students in the U.S., in which you would have at any given time then 20,000 to 25,000 Saudis studying in the United States with the period in which I was there in the kingdom of maybe 3,000 to 4,000 Saudi students. This was something that we regretted because we felt that the new generation of Saudis and their leaders in the future would less reflect American influence than more senior Saudis. We could see this in the ironic fact that your older generation, middle-aged generation, was a lot more liberal and modern and global in its outlook than the younger people. You would not expect that. This reflected the fact that most Saudis, and they do have universal literacy and free education and so forth, most Saudi university students attended Saudi universities. It was a very different environment than what their fathers or uncles had experienced. Then you had very specialized kinds of education like flying or others which would not necessarily involve a degree but which provided a kind of training that wasn't available in the kingdom and there was no reason, as we

saw it at the time, to be mindful or doubtful about their *bona fides*.

I think another factor to keep in mind here was that Saudis paid their own way. They were not there on scholarship. You did not have this sense that they would be going in and looking for employment, unlawful employment, to support themselves.

*Q: And the universities of course were delighted.*

THIBAUT: They were delighted. Those who attended, there were many graduate students. Those who attended, the three or four thousand, either went there because their parents would have paid for it, as opposed to the government which paid for it or they were graduate students, post-graduate students, where the government did continue to pay because that kind of specialized training wasn't available in the kingdom. So I think this pattern, the background provides a context for the approach that the mission pursued and applied, in so far as issuing visas was concerned. This was very much in sync with Department-wide policy and with the policy of the Bureau of Consular Affairs. Now, of course, all of this came to a great change. Now I understand, and I have no first hand knowledge, that after my departure, which was in July of 2000 and then the year between that time and 9/11, there was a significant change in how the consular section operated. But, again, to put that in context, as I understand it, the changes that were made and particularly this so-called Visa Express program, were to try to get a handle on the huge numbers of people who were applying. As I said before, you had these long lineups.

And let me just mention that in addition to training, you had many, many, many, many Saudis who traveled there for personal reasons. There were direct flights between Jeddah and Orlando. So families would go on holiday. Many Saudis, wealthier ones, have properties, they would spend time in the United States. So for all of these, as I said, there was no waiver, they had to wait in line and wait like anyone else. So this was an attempt, this Visa Express program, presumably, was an attempt to sort of modernize that system and step up the flow of processing.

*Q: You left there in 2000.*

**ALICE A. DRESS**  
**Economic Counselor**  
**Riyadh (2000-2002)**

**Economic Counselor**  
**Riyadh (2003-2004)**

*An Economic and Financial specialist, Ms. Dress was born in Indiana and educated at a number of colleges and universities, including George Washington, Tufts and Boston Universities. Initially working with the Department of the Treasury in Washington, DC and in Rome Italy as Treasury attaché, Ms. Dress joined the State Department Foreign Service in 1985, and served, primarily as*



*Economic Counselor, in Kinshasa, Zaire, Dakar, Senegal, New Delhi, India and Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. At the State Department in Washington, DC she held senior positions in the European and African Bureaus. Ms. Dress was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2009.*

*Q: This is sort of the bazaar of the souk mentality in the bidding; you've got to know what you are doing.*

DRESS: You've got to know what you are doing because you can really mess up. Anyway, having been warned about this for years, I must have either blanked or something because I put economic counselor Riyadh on my bid list along with the DCM positions I really wanted. The Riyadh job was a Senior FS position. And guess what? I was the only bidder on Riyadh.

*Q: Why?*

DRESS: Why was I the only bidder? Because Riyadh was an extreme hardship post and although the job was a Senior FS position, the economic section was actually fairly small. But I couldn't get out of it; they wouldn't let me go. In fact, Nancy Johnson, the deputy director in Office of Arabian Peninsula Affairs in NEA informed me, with a hint of apology in her voice, "You bid on it. It's yours."

*Q: I would think from an economic point of view this would be, using a Foreign Service term, a real challenge but also a high profile challenge.*

DRESS: I really enjoy economic work and all of my overseas posts have been interesting. I especially liked working in an embassy because it's a small operation with less bureaucracy compared to the Treasury or State Departments here in Washington. But I must say that my years in Saudi Arabia were the hardest of my career. The working conditions were tough. After dealing with the Indian bureaucracy you would have thought that the Saudis couldn't have been that much more difficult but they were. The U.S.-Saudi relationship is longstanding and reasonably close. But the Bedouin culture is closed and secretive; strangers are kept outside the tent and only a few people at the top can make decisions. So talking to anybody below the King and his royal brothers doesn't really get you anywhere. There was also an access problem. It was difficult to get in to see people and once you did it was very hard to find anyone who would do anything but refer the issue up the line to someone at the top who could make a decision. So it took forever to move an issue forward. When people asked if it was hard working in Saudi Arabia because I was a woman, I always said, "No, my male colleagues had the same difficulties." Professionally being a woman was not a handicap for me.

*Q: Well as an American you are an honorary man. I mean this had been pretty much the standard. Most places time has passed and there are other fish to fry.*

DRESS: Yes. As far as professional contacts were concerned, most of the Saudi men who were my age or a little older and in positions of power were U.S. educated. A whole slew of Saudi's went to the States in the 1960s, learned English, got PhDs, came back and moved into positions of power. That shared experience, that common ground gave my embassy colleagues and me an

advantage. But otherwise, being a woman in Saudi Arabia was difficult and unpleasant.

*Q: You couldn't drive could you or could you?*

DRESS: No, I couldn't drive. And frankly, I didn't want to given how fast and how badly the Saudi's drove. The roads were really dangerous. But the real problem was that a woman couldn't go out and do anything without the risk of being harassed. Saudi women are not supposed to leave home, go anywhere or do anything unless they have a male relative (a "mahram" in Arabic) with them. Men and women who are not related by blood are strictly segregated in public. Restaurants, even fast food restaurants, had different sections for men on one side and for men and their families on the other. Saudi Arabia has this wonderful institution called the Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice or the religious police ("mutaween" in Arabic). The mutaween made sure that all businesses closed for prayer, that men went to the mosque and that women were modestly dressed. Since prayers were called five times a day you had to plan your life around them, which wasn't easy because the time for prayers varied slightly every day. On weekends, which were Thursday and Friday, you had to time your shopping and your errands around prayer times to avoid getting locked in or locked out of stores. During the workweek you had to plan your appointments so they wouldn't conflict with prayer call. Sometimes during a long meeting that ran into prayer time, Saudis would excuse themselves, go off to pray and return to continue the meeting. I carried a prayer schedule in my wallet all the time, as did other members of the embassy community. I also carried a card that said, in Arabic, something along the lines of: "I am a diplomat. I do not have to wear an abaya or attend prayer and you can't arrest me."

*Q: What were you doing? Did you have a petroleum attaché?*

DRESS: The economic section in Riyadh was much smaller than the combined economic-science office in New Delhi. Fortunately, my job performance in New Delhi got me my promotion to Senior Foreign Service. In addition to the head of section, we had an officer who followed the all-important petroleum sector and two first-tour junior officers, one of who rotated after one year to the consular section. I spent a lot of time nurturing and training the junior officers. Fortunately, I had the experience and the time to do it, but I'm surprised when I think that I had never supervised junior officers before. You would have thought a large section like New Delhi would have first-tour junior officers but it didn't. Maybe that was just the way Riyadh was staffed; first-tour officers couldn't say no when they were assigned there.

The folks in Riyadh were great to work with -- Greg Winstead, Nick Hilgert, Dick Murphy and the FSN Dalia Elsoudani in the economic section, Matt Tueller the political counselor and David Rundell in the commercial section -- to name a few.

*Q: As economic officer did you find...to me it seems to be the problem of practically every oil producing country is it became such a curse. Actually it doesn't require many people to work, which are usually foreign workers who suck the oil out wherever it is whether it is in Venezuela, Nigeria, Indonesia or Saudi Arabia.*

DRESS: I don't think Saudi Arabia suffered as much from the so-called oil curse that ruined

countries like Nigeria. Yes, there is corruption in Saudi Arabia and the royal family feels entitled to a large chunk of the nation's oil wealth. Nonetheless, the al Sauds (the Saudi Royal family descended from King Abdulaziz bin Saud) have been reasonably good managers; at least they haven't bankrupted the country. Over the years the government has invested in infrastructure -- schools, hospitals, roads.

When I briefed visitors to the Embassy on the Saudi economy one of the challenges I stressed was the "youth bulge." Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf countries have very young, very rapidly growing populations. The Saudi economy has a very narrow resource base; they produce oil and grow dates. The economy even when it grows rapidly as a result of high oil prices does not generate enough jobs. Young people leave school and can't find work. They don't have the skills that the private sector wants. Also, in 2000 there weren't a whole lot of opportunities for domestic investment so people with money have no place to put it. So most of the oil wealth was invested overseas. This changed gradually as the Saudi stock market developed. We were always concerned that the lack of opportunity for Saudi youth would generate social and political unrest. Now King Abdullah is undertaking modest reforms to try to head off unrest and respond to demands for reform.

A few months after I arrived in Riyadh, the bombing of the USS Cole happened in Yemen.

*Q: This is the destroyer.*

DRESS: Yes. The USS Cole, an American destroyer, was hulled in the port of Aden in October of 2000. State ordered the embassy to go to zero burn, which means we had to shred all our classified files. I practically cried. I had only been at post a couple of months and was still reading in. Shredding all of that institutional knowledge was a very painful experience and something I regretted the whole time I was at post. I asked the desk at State to check their files and they were able to replace a few but not all of the documents.

*Q: Oh God.*

DRESS: Back then we didn't have an electronic filing system that could act as back up. If that happened today, I could go retrieve cables electronically from the Central Foreign Policy Records. Anyway the next big event was the September 11 attack in 2001.

*Q: How did that hit you all there? Sort of take me through the day and all.*

DRESS: We felt shock and horror. The news came toward the end of our workday. We went into emergency mode at the embassy. We were concerned about everybody's security. The first priority was to make sure all personnel were safe and to determine where everybody was. In the short-term aftermath, we hunkered down in case there were follow on attacks.

*Q: How soon and how did you hear that the significant Saudi citizen participation in this attack?*

DRESS: As reports of who the hijackers were came out, it became clear that many were Saudis and that their visas for the most part had been issued in the Kingdom. That was a shock to those

of us who weren't aware of Al Qaeda or Islamic terrorism. In fact, prior to September 11, most of us who didn't work in intelligence weren't aware of the threat Osama bin Laden and his friends posed. To illustrate the lack of information sharing between intelligence and law enforcement agencies and the rest of the USG, I should point out that in 2000 the Embassy had revamped and streamlined the visa application process in Saudi Arabia. When Saudis went to the United States, they came home when they were supposed to. They were not visa "overstayers." So we made it easier and more convenient for them to apply for and receive visas. After September 11, that all changed of course. The September 11 Commission people visited Saudi Arabia to interview embassy personnel in Riyadh and Jeddah to determine how the hijackers had gotten visas. The Saudi reaction to September 11 was interesting. Many flat out refused to believe Saudis were involved or believed that Israel was behind the whole thing.

Immediately after September 11, 2001 I got heavily involved in supporting U.S. efforts to combat terrorist financing. Treasury developed lists of names of suspected terrorists and terrorist organizations and State sent them out with instructions to embassies worldwide to ask host governments to block their bank accounts. There were some initial difficulties in developing channels of communication with the Saudi authorities. The first time I took a list of names to the Saudi Arabian Monetary Authority (SAMA), the central bank, they told me to communicate through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs via diplomatic note. The Saudi financial authorities were used to dealing with their counterparts at the U.S. Federal Reserve Bank and the U.S. Treasury in restricted, confidential channels. They did not trust diplomats from the embassy to deal with sensitive banking issues. Overall, the Saudi's were sympathetic and willing to be helpful but as far as they were concerned it was our problem. They insisted that they knew where all of their dangerous people were, so our lists of names were not of much interest to them. They assured us that they didn't need the information because they were on top of their domestic security situation. In all fairness, the early lists were not very useful; they listed generic Arabic names without a date of birth, driver's license number or other identifying information, which made it impossible to pin point the real culprit. And secondly, most terrorists weren't using the formal banking system anyway.

In May 2003, Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula bombed a housing compound in Riyadh killing Muslims, including some Saudis. That is when the Saudi government woke up and realized that they had a domestic terrorism problem after all. Finally they had to admit to themselves and to us that they didn't know who all the bad guys were and where they were. So when I went returned to Riyadh in August 2003, dealing with the government on terrorist financing issues was totally different. The Saudis were cooperating with our law enforcement and intelligence agencies on counter terrorism cooperation and the embassy was playing a key role.

One of my major responsibilities was supporting visits by high-level U.S. officials who visited Saudi Arabia to confer with the Saudis on combating terrorist financing. A good deal of effort went into trying to keep the charitable contributions made by religious Saudis from being misused to support terrorist activities. During my three years in Saudi Arabia, I was the control officer for Richard Newcomb, the head of Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), Treasury Secretary Snow and Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neil. I also supported several visits to Riyadh and Jeddah of Frances Townsend, who served as President Bush's Deputy National Security Advisor for Combating Terrorism. Cofer Black, State Department's Special Coordinator

for Counterterrorism (S/CT), usually accompanied her. I went with them to their meetings with Saudi officials, including then Crown Prince Abdullah.

*Q: When you started off on this thing did you get involved with honey?*

DRESS: I seem to recall that the early lists Treasury sent us of specially designated entities contained dozens of Somali honey stores. At the time I was totally baffled and only later learned that the honey stores transferred money outside the formal banking sector for clients. I don't know what story you heard about it.

*Q: There were articles about al Qaeda being very much into the honey trade, sort a network of informal lending of money to people who were close relatives or something like that; they don't go through regular banks.*

DRESS: In the Gulf, that informal system of money transfer is called "hawala." Most of the labor force in Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf states was from Pakistan, India, Indonesia, and the Philippines. They all sent money home and most of them used informal channels rather than the commercial banking system. The hawala system was something Treasury's Office of Foreign Asset Control was always concerned and investigated on trips to the Gulf.

If I could just put in a word here to note that the economic section in Embassy Riyadh was interested in a number of other issues in addition to oil and terrorist financing. For example, we spent a fair amount of time trying to get the Saudis to remove trade barriers, specifically their ban on genetically modified organisms (GMO), which blocked imports of U.S. agricultural products. Certainly the most important economic issue was encouraging Saudi reforms that would permit their entry into the World Trade Organization. We argued that the reforms that would qualify Saudi Arabia for WTO membership would also benefit the Saudis by helping to diversify the economy away from oil and stimulating economic growth. And, it goes without saying, that opening the Saudi economy to trade and investment would benefit the United States. A stronger, more prosperous Saudi Arabia was in our interests, given the key role Saudi Arabia played as a stabilizing force in world petroleum markets.

*Q: After 9/11 those of us here in Washington, particularly by profession I was a consular officer, we felt that the head of consular affairs, Mary Ryan, was unjustly singled out. She was the only one who lost her job because of 9/11 and she was just following basically the dictates of the Department. Was there a lot of pressure on the embassy and particularly on the consular section because they had issued the visas?*

DRESS: Yes, there was a lot of unhappiness on the part of a lot of people in Washington, because 15 of the 19 hijackers were Saudis and the consular sections in Riyadh or Jeddah had issued most of their U.S. visas.

*Q: Perfectly legitimate visas.*

DRESS: Yes, the consular officers who issued the visas followed procedures, procedures that were overhauled after September 11. Several of the consular officers involved were summoned

back to Washington and ended up going up on the Hill to answer questions about the consular operation. It was very stressful for all concerned. Among the changes put in place was the integration of Homeland Security officers into the consular operation at the embassy. Another change was to require fingerprinting of all visa applicants.

*Q: Who was the ambassador when you were there or ambassadors?*

DRESS: There was no ambassador at post when I arrived in August 2000. Senior FSO Chuck Brayshaw served as Chargé d'Affaires (CDA) for a year. After he left, DCM Margaret Scobey was CDA until Ambassador Robert Jordan arrived in October 2001. Jordan was a lawyer with Bake Botts, the Dallas, Texas law firm of James Baker. James Oberwetter, Senior VP for Public Affairs for Hunt Oil and Gas of Dallas succeeded Jordan in October 2004. Both men were very competent and good to work with. Ambassador Oberwetter's first Fourth of July reception had a Texas theme -- country music, bales of hay, dancing on the tennis courts, BBQ, and those that had them wore blue jeans, cowboy boots, and cowboy hats. It was a refreshing change from the usual national day reception.

Speaking of "theme" parties -- DCM Margaret Scobey hosted several women-only events, which was an excellent way to make contact with Saudi women. The most memorable, at least for me, was the one featuring a Patsy Cline imitator. Saudi women arrived covered head to toe in abayas and when they verified there were no men on the premises, they disrobed revealing their dressy evening attire. We sat around the DCM's pool socializing and listening the Patsy Cline look-alike sing about sweet dreams and heartaches. She was actually very good.

*Q: Was it difficult being a single woman in Saudi Arabia at the embassy and all? Because sometimes this kind of place is family oriented because there isn't a whole lot else to do.*

DRESS: Yes, you are right. In New Delhi the embassy community was more social, people did things together and there were more people to select from in terms of making friends. Saudi Arabia was more difficult because the embassy community was much smaller and very family-oriented. So really my life in Riyadh revolved around my job.

*Q: Well you left there when?*

DRESS: I left Riyadh in August 2002 and joined the Board of Examiners in Washington for a year testing candidates for admission to the Foreign Service. When I was job-hunting the following spring I told DCM Margaret Scobey that I wasn't having much luck finding a job I wanted. So she said, "Why don't you come back? I've just lost my economic counselor." John Ford, who was working in Manama, Bahrain was supposed transfer to Riyadh but volunteered for Iraq. I decided to return to Riyadh for a just 12 months. So, I just packed up the cats, turned off the phone, locked the door of my condo and headed to the airport.

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*Q: Well then after Saudi Arabia what?*

DRESS: My third year in Saudi Arabia was really tough. Following the May 2003 bombing in Riyadh by Al Qaeda, spouses and children were sent home and staff was reduced. We were on lock down for months at a time, restricted to the diplomatic quarter except for business. I was acting DCM in July and August of 2004 when Al Qaeda kidnapped three Americans and beheaded one of them. The FBI sent out an investigation team. We were dealing with the Saudi security services, we were dealing with distraught family members back in Washington, and we had to lock down the embassy and tell people they couldn't go off the diplomatic compound so it was extremely stressful and difficult.

*Q: Well you hear things about people being stressed and you were locked down. You know this happens. You feel these things aren't jokes.*

DRESS: My last year in Riyadh was my first experience at an "unaccompanied" post. Things were difficult enough before the drawdown, what with the isolation and security threats. Boy, there is nothing sadder than an unaccompanied post in a country where there is no place to go and nothing to do but work 24 hours seven days a week. Officers were without their spouses and children. We provided what moral support to one another we could, but it was a very difficult year. Today there are support groups for separated family members in the States and there is counseling for officers coming out of high- stress posts because of the toll Iraq and Afghanistan is taking on the Foreign Service. But when I came out of Saudi Arabia in the summer of 2004 those services weren't in place and frankly my colleagues and I could have used them.

*Q: One wonders I wasn't overly affected but I spent eighteen months unaccompanied in Saigon and you feel this.*

DRESS: One definitely feels the stress and isolation. When you are overseas the job is 24-7. But the presence of children and spouses at post and the fact that your married colleagues have that comfort keeps everyone's morale up. When you are living in an artificial, restricted environment where security concerns are paramount, it's difficult to stay balanced.

*End of Reader*