AN AMERICAN
in the
MIDDLE EAST

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A memoir

HARRY J. ALMOND

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FOREWORD

My father-in-law started work on this memoir in 2001 in response to the growing need to help Americans in particular, and Westerners in general, understand better the Arab and Muslim worlds. In February 2007, with failing health, he asked me to 'tidy' the document. This I started to do, interviewing him where I felt clarification or expansion of a particular subject was needed. As I completed work on a chapter, he would read it, making additional corrections and suggestions. This process was done for the first half of the manuscript. Then, after a tragic fall from which he never regained consciousness, Harry passed away on June 3, 2007. At the request of my mother-in-law, Beverly, I completed the tidying job greatly aided by my wife Anne Hamlin. My thanks also to Peter Everington for help on several occasions. Subsequently, we have all been hugely grateful for the editorial skills of Virginia Wigan.

One sees in this autobiography the growth of mind and heart in a Christian pastor who started as a young missionary to the Muslim Arab world and came to see Muslims as partners in God's plan for the world, without at any time retracting from his own Christian faith. Harry Almond was a deeply patriotic American and yet hated the arrogance and racism towards the Arab world which he saw in some fellow-Americans, and he felt deeply the mistakes and prejudices of his government's policies. His is also a story of what an 'ordinary person' can do to reach out to people of other countries and cultures,

befriending leaders and even affecting assessments and decisions in those countries.

Harry's is a great example of a life that held in harmony both local and global concerns. This was borne out at his funeral when prayers were said by the local imam, a Jewish neighbor and an Iraqi friend from Canada, after an honor guard from local fire departments had carried his remains to the church on a fire-engine. It has been a privilege to work on this memoir which I believe tells an important story of the outreach by an American, in humility and faith, to one of the most crucial parts of the world.

Bryan Hamlin, April 2009

PREFACE

This book came into being like leaves floating to the surface of the dark pool of memory. Much of this material has not appeared previously in print, and as I am one of the last of those who experienced some of the events I witnessed I feel an obligation to record as much as memory, reinforced by research, letters and notes, can contribute. The Chinese proverb is true: 'The strongest memory is weaker than the palest ink.'

In the immediate aftermath of the September 11 attacks in 2001, many Americans were asking why Arabs and Muslims hated America so much. Having lived over 20 years in the Middle East I hope to help my compatriots understand why that hatred is there. Perhaps some readers will find here an antidote.

I wish to express my thanks to Marshall Green for the generous gift of a laptop computer; Alan Wallach for help with computer work; Christine Cross for research for me at the Library of Congress in Washington DC; Anne Evans who combed the MRA/IofC British archives turning up some valuable material; Margaret Sisam for her help in obtaining illustrative photographs; and Alice Blake Chaffee for encouragement and editorial advice.

Finally, I wish to thank my family: Beverly, my dear wife, without whose love, patience and caring – nothing; Anne and Betsy – one could ask for no better daughters – for proofreading; my son-in-law Robert Lancaster for scanning many old photos into the computer, and my son-in-law Bryan Hamlin for doing much work on the manuscript.

Harry J. Almond, April 2007

Deo Soli Gloria
Al-hamdu lillah

MARCH, 1944. IRAQ. The train had rattled along all night. The 25-year-old, tall, handsome and fair-haired American was finally nearing the end of his long journey. No, he was not going to war, though World War Two was still raging all around.

After the death of his college room-mate at Pearl Harbor, the bespectacled young theology student with a passion for sailing tried to volunteer for the US Navy, but was turned down because of his eyesight. He later volunteered for the mission field, feeling he could not just stay in studies while his friends were away at war.

So here he was: a young man from middle-class New Jersey on his way to a teaching post at the American Mission School in Basra, Iraq. The journey took 115 days: by ship from Philadelphia to Lisbon, around Africa to Suez and Cairo, then train to Haifa, taxi to Damascus, the Nairn overnight trailer-bus to Baghdad and finally the night train to Basra.

The young man's name was Harry Almond.

This is his story.

* * *

1

WHO IS THIS FELLOW?

Approaching Basra at dawn the train slowed for a stop as the guard called out, 'Ur Junction, Ur Junction'. We pulled up the shades by our berths, and there to the southwest was the impressive step pyramid of Ur's ziggurat rising from the plain. Ur – the city that dated back thousands of years to the days even before Abraham, the spiritual forefather of Jews, Christians and Muslims alike. History was everywhere. The extraordinary sight was not lost on a biblical scholar. But it was a long way from where I had begun.

My boyhood home was in Newark, New Jersey, close to New York City. Dad, Harry A. Almond, was a wholesale cotton goods sales manager for a New York company. His father, Andrew, was a carpenter who worked for himself, building and selling homes. As a schoolboy, my dad delivered newspapers to pay for his own clothes because his father's drink problem obliged my grandmother, Lily, to be very frugal, almost miserly.

Starting work as an office boy, Dad had put himself through business college by attending evening classes and soon became a salesman. He sold cotton yard goods by the thousands of yards. By the time he retired he was sales manager for cotton goods with Textron, a large conglomerate.

Mother's parents, John and Millard Stringer, also lived in Newark not far from the Almond home on Broadway. My mother, also named Millard, finished art school after high

school, but stopped her delicate watercolor painting while raising two obstreperous boys of her own. Mother also loved music and she played the piano well.

My younger brother, Dick, and I grew up in a happy, music-loving family. When we moved a few miles to Glen Ridge, Mother's cousins had a house two blocks away. Mother was the piano player; Grandpa played the cello and Aunt Jeanette the violin. Sunday night hymn sings were fun, and the instruments overcame the occasional vocal slips, or vice versa. Radio was still a novelty.

Occasionally on a Saturday Dick and I went with Dad to his office in the heart of New York's textile district. It was a great treat when Dad took us for luncheon at the Arkwright Club where textile merchants congregated. There, one memorable day in May 1927, we were thrilled to see the tickertape print out the news of Lindbergh's safe arrival at Le Bourget field in France after his solo flight across the Atlantic in the *Spirit of St Louis*.

Although some of my Dad's friends lost their jobs in the stock market crash of 1929, Dad was fortunate: he kept his job, though his salary was cut by 70%. I remember peeking through the curtains as he walked home from the train and wondering whether he had been fired that day. Dick and I never knew how Mother and Dad managed to meet mortgage payments and keep food on the table. Looking back, I realize we did eat a lot of potatoes and drank a lot of milk.

Sometimes a respectable-seeming man came to our back door, hungry, and asked if there was any work he could do in return for a meal. Mother always gave these unemployed men a plate of food which they would eat sitting on a bench outside our back door. Mother would say, 'I don't feel good having that nice man eat outside, but I can't ask him in unless your Father is here'. We wondered where they would go next as we watched them walk on up the street.

Dick and I each had a weekly allowance of 25 cents, in return for which we were required to scrub the kitchen floor and sweep out the cellar. Extra pocket money came from grass-mowing and car-washing. As a matter of course we were expected to do the dishes though we usually argued over who would wash and who would dry.

As the years passed Dad's income, cut in 1929, was slowly restored. Our new home was the first built on Madison Street, Glen Ridge, a town a few miles north of Newark. The street had not yet been paved. We watched the construction of the other houses with fascination. A team of big horses with a scoop would excavate for the foundation, leaving an earthen ramp in one corner so that the horses could scramble out to start digging the next. These holes would stay open for weeks and fill with rain water. Dick and I built rafts out of lumber scraps and poled ourselves around. Our definition of what constituted a 'scrap' was broad. Across the street was a low-lying area which rain often filled also, and when it froze it was good for neighborhood hockey games.

When I finished the local primary school and entered the seventh grade, there was a mile and a half walk to the high school. My mother's parents' home was halfway to the school. Dick and I stopped there to take out the furnace ashes because by that time Gramp had a bad heart. Grandma would give us something to eat, usually delicious fried potatoes. We considered the extra breakfast a good deal.

One summer Dad and Mother rented a small cottage for his two-week vacation at East Islip, Long Island. A cousin had loaned Dad the *Scat*, a beamy 21-foot Cape Cod catboat, on which we learned to love sailing and being on the water. Dick and I searched along the banks of the small tidal creeks for crabs. Sometimes Dad would go along with us. Once, when we spotted a big pair of crabs which Dad thought we could not handle, he took the net himself, reached out through the

marsh grass, lost his balance and slid sideways down onto the smelly black mud of the marsh bank. Dick and I did not improve the situation by laughing.

As we came home late one afternoon with a basket of crabs Dad and Mother announced that we were going out for supper and a movie and told us to clean up. We put the basket of crabs in our bedroom, gave our hands and faces a lick and raced out to the car. When we arrived home that night we looked at each other and remembered the crabs. We rushed to our bedroom. The basket was empty, and we could hear the scratch of shells and claws on bare floors throughout the house! We thought we had found them all, but a few days later our noses told us we had missed at least one.

In those years our Fourth of July celebrations were quite unencumbered by municipal ordinances regulating the sale of fireworks, so Dick and I carefully saved up our money to buy an assortment of fire crackers, salutes, flash crackers, cherry bombs, sky rockets and Roman candles. The neighborhood boys competed to see who could set off a large cherry bomb under a coffee can at the earliest hour. The can not only magnified the bang, waking up the neighborhood, but made a satisfactory racket when it clattered back to earth. Grandpa Stringer was at least as enthusiastic as Dick and I.

Boy Scouts were important in our family. Dad was a member of the Troop Committee. I went through all the ranks, and my Eagle Badge was pinned on my chest by Dan Beard, the father figure of American scouting, a proud moment indeed. One of my classmates lived across the street from us in Glen Ridge. We rigged a telegraph wire between our homes to practice Morse code.

Each Sunday we were scrubbed, dressed in our best and taken to Sunday school at the Presbyterian Church on the Green (Old First) in Bloomfield, New Jersey, while our parents went to morning worship. Dad was an elder. I was given a Bible for memorizing the names of the books of the Bible and

gold stars for learning Scripture verses – an important part of Sunday school instruction. The general rule for the pastor was 'speak about God and about 20 minutes'. Later I used to sit with my friend and classmate, Kellsey Dodd, and his family in the balcony. We had little rice guns which could shoot a grain about 25 feet. We concealed them in open hymnals and aimed at the heads below. We coughed to cover the click of the guns. Our reward was seeing a hand passed over a bald pate.

High school was fun. French was the hardest course, and the teacher, Miss Baldwin, was considered a tyrant. We groaned and complained through two years of being treated, as we felt, as imbeciles. However when I signed up for university French and took a placement test I found I was assigned to a second year French class. I wrote Miss Baldwin and thanked her, apologizing for the trouble I had been.

In the 1930s we spent Dad's vacations at Pleasant View Farm in Bradford, New Hampshire, a small family hotel with a nine-hole golf course, a very cold swimming hole, lots of fresh air and good food and maple syrup in abundance. A congenial group of families gathered there year after year. Dick and I were in our teens and were then in our 'cowboy phase', and we got into trouble with the owner for practicing our roping on his milk cows.

The president of the Nashua Manufacturing Company, which had taken over the company where Dad continued his work, was Mr. Robert Amory, who also served on the board of governors of Harvard University.[1] Each year Amory paid a college student 'a dollar a day and all found', plus rail fare, to crew on his schooner, the *Heart's Desire*. In the summer of 1936, before entering university, I landed this job. The *Heart's Desire* was a classic, gaff-rigged, 50-foot schooner, built by

1 Amory was the father of Robert Amory Jr., who became deputy director of the CIA; and Cleveland 'Clippy' Amory, the author who devoted his life to promoting animal rights.

John Alden. It was moored each summer in Northeast Harbor, Mt. Desert Island, Maine.

My job entailed living aboard and keeping the schooner ready in all respects for a cruise whenever Mr. Amory and a guest or two came down from Boston. Amory was a great sailor, a member of the Cruising Club of America and of the Eastern Yacht Club, and I learned a lot from him. On board, I did whatever the others did not want to do. This meant that on shorter cruises I was cooking over the Shipmate coal stove, but, if we were out for more than a few days, the others would tire both of my cooking and of their own long hours at the helm, and the obvious exchange was made.

My menu was simple: a large roast of beef on Sunday, thick slices fried as steaks on Monday, cold roast beef sandwiches for Tuesday, hash on Wednesday, and 'whatever' on Thursday. 'Whatever' was usually canned goods which was 'luck of the draw', because our cans were in the bilge where, due to a very slow leak, the labels were mostly washed off. Much credit is also due to the ship's battered copy of Alec Moffat's *Galley Guide*. Fish came on Friday, depending on when we sighted a hand-liner getting cod. We would circle the dory and the fisherman would grab a big cod by the tail and wing it aboard in return for the quarter we carefully tossed into his dory. Cleaned, stuffed and baked with bacon strips laid across its sides it made a delicious meal.

It was (according to Amory) an unwritten rule of the Eastern Yacht Club that no bathing suits were required if you took a dip before 8.00 am. So after firing up the stove in the galley we would step carefully out on the bowsprit in the nude, dive into the very cold water, swim furiously to the stern ladder, rush up it and on down below to the heat of the stove – a wonderfully stimulating start for the day.

Like any cruising boat we had a locker full of wet weather gear. On one rainy day I noticed the Harbor Master, Captain Harry Coolidge, sitting on the open deck of his fuel barge

Harry on Robert Amory's *Heart's Desire*, 1936

wearing no rain protection, although he was smoking his pipe upside down. So I loaded an extra suit of oilskins in the dinghy, rowed over and offered it to him. 'Oh thanks, young fellah,' he said, 'but I have plenty below: this is just an old lady's rain!' I rowed back to the *Heart's Desire* having learned a bit more about the New England character. A few days later I was hailed by Captain Coolidge from his dinghy: 'Fraid you fellahs'll have to stop your mornin' swim. Lady up the hill has been watchin' with her binoculars, and she's made a complaint. Nothin' I can do but tell you.' That ended our early morning dips, but only in Northeast Harbor.

Robert Amory's standard dress on board was a pair of old khaki trousers and, occasionally, a blue work shirt; so it was quite a surprise to see him on deck as we approached a Vinal Haven Yacht Club mooring one Saturday morning dressed not only in the usual trousers and shirt, but with tennis shoes, jacket and a bow tie added. When I asked what was happening, he said that we were going ashore for lunch and that I had better dress up too. A chauffeured limousine awaited us at the Yacht Club mooring, and we were whisked off to the home of Thomas W. Lamont, a partner of the banker J.P. Morgan.

It was an unforgettable summer on the *Heart's Desire*, confirming for me my love of sailing which has lasted all my life.

In 1936 I went on to Rutgers University in New Brunswick, NJ, where I was already pledged to join the Phi Gamma Delta fraternity.

University life, particularly life in the fraternities with their parties and dances, was a heady experience of freedom for me which I did not handle well. Let us say that I seldom let classes, lectures or labs interfere with my 'education'. Certainly my behavior was no help to my studies.

There were Sunday services in Kirkpatrick Chapel and weekday services for each class. The preachers for the Sundays were first rate: the Presbyterian leader, Dr. Robert E. Speer, and Prof. William (Billy) L. Phelps, the beloved Professor of English Literature at Yale, were two of those I recall. Attendance at the weekday services was obligatory. Seats were assigned and proctors roamed the aisles noting empty seats. I had the innermost seat in our pew and I soon discovered that if I were absent the silly fellow next to me would slip into my seat. More comfortable for him, but a 'present' mark for me. He would be the one hauled up for a scolding by the Dean of Students because his seat had been vacant too often.

Thanks to my sailing experiences I was able to get jobs two or three summers as a sailing instructor at summer camps. Another summer I worked for the Union County Mosquito Commission in New Jersey. On weekdays we inspected properties for mosquito breeding and distributed educational literature. On Saturday mornings we went to the office in Elizabeth, the county seat, to fill out our reports. I worked the first week without exerting myself very much, poking about in backyards, swamps and junk yards looking for signs of mosquito breeding. When I filled out my first report, however, the superintendent called me in and said, 'See here, Almond, if you keep on like this you'll do too much, and there won't be work enough for all of us next year.' I soon found that I could do all that was expected in two or three days, and then go to the beach, play tennis or golf for the rest of the week. It was an elementary lesson in government bureaucracy, but the pay was good.

My fall from grace at college began in my sophomore year with the Freshman Prom. It was hosted by President and Mrs. Clothier, who issued invitations to the freshman classes of Rutgers and the women's college across town, the New Jersey College for Women, NJC or 'the Coop". Invitations to this Freshmen Prom were coveted by Rutgers upperclassmen who understandably wanted to look over the new talent. My roommate, Pete Hartman, and I crashed that Prom, since as sophomores we had no invitation cards. Unfortunately the Assistant Dean of Students spotted us. We were called to the Dean's office the next day and given a scolding and stern warnings.

Later, on another wild Saturday night, Pete Hartman and I went out to celebrate the end of the term. As we headed back to the fraternity house with loot we had collected, we found the sidewalks rather narrow, and so we staggered down the middle of College Avenue discussing whether or not to ring a fire alarm. We had actually decided not to do it, but unfortunately we paused to collect ourselves leaning against a telephone pole with a red alarm box on it which we were in no shape to notice.

We heard later that a lady who had watched our progress and heard our loud discussion had called the police. A squad car had followed us, lights out, until we reached the telephone pole. Immediately we stopped there headlights blazed, flashlights came on, and there was a confusion of uniforms and night sticks. I ended up in St. Peter's Hospital with a concussion. Pete was put in a cell at the police station. The next morning an officer appeared in my room to tell me that I was under arrest and had to see the judge when I was discharged from the hospital.

That evening Mother and Dad came down from Glen Ridge, really broken up and worried. I wanted to crawl under the bed and disappear. I have never felt so ashamed. They had read in the Newark Evening News of my arrest for 'disorderly conduct'. The Dean of Students also heard the report, and I

was summoned to his office and put on probation. My grades dropped and I flunked out.

I worked as a field interviewer for the Gallup Poll for the rest of that academic year and was readmitted to Rutgers as an 'Unclassified Student', not a candidate for a degree, in the fall of 1938. That summer I attended summer school to make up lost credits. I took a course in Public Speaking. The final exam was a three-minute speech to be judged entirely on its effectiveness in producing the desired result with the audience of my fellow students. It was a hot summer, and my speech proposed that the whole class buy a keg of beer and picnic at the beach the next day, Saturday. My proposal passed unanimously, and I received a high mark. On Saturday the weather was fine, and a good time was had by all.

During the repeat of my sophomore year my grades improved enough to qualify me again as a regular student, a candidate for a degree in the class of 1941, and I settled down to work as an English major. I became a member of the Philosophian, the honorary English Society, and was poetry editor of the *Anthologist*, the Rutgers literary monthly. I finally received my BA in 1941 and was accepted to study for an MA in English Literature at Pennsylvania State University, hoping eventually to teach.

A classmate and partner-in-mischief was on a church scholarship and going on to the New Brunswick Theological Seminary of the Reformed Church in America, whose campus, known as 'Holy Hill', overlooked that of Rutgers. After receiving our diplomas we headed for the 'happy hour' at the local bar, stopping on the way for my friend to settle some details with the Seminary's professor of Old Testament studies, Dr. J. Coert Rylaarsdam.

I never suspected then, as I sat there smoking impatiently, how critical a role Dr. Rylaarsdam was to play in my life. When my friend finished his business the professor turned to

me and asked, 'And what are you going to do next, Almond?' I responded, 'Oh, I've a teaching fellowship at Penn State University in English.' 'That's very good. Have you ever thought of coming to seminary?' I chuckled. 'Me? ... seminary?'

Harry as a graduate student, 1942

He went on, 'Well, if you apply and are accepted, room and tuition are free, and you could get a job in the dining hall for your food. If, after a year, you don't feel it's for you, you can go on to Penn State. After all, it wouldn't hurt to have a year's Bible study under your belt if you continue your English literature studies.' Then he handed me an application form.

My friend and I went on to our 'happy hour'. Sitting at the bar, and amid great hilarity, I filled out the seminary application and handed it in the next morning. I did not even bother to tell my parents, it seemed so far-fetched a notion. I went on to my summer job teaching sailing on Cape Cod and forgot the whole matter. At the end of August I received a letter informing me that I had been accepted at the seminary. I was thunderstruck. I was asked to report for orientation and room assignment – which, in due course, I did.

It was only later that I learned that my seminary application had nearly been rejected. It had been Rylaarsdam's plea, 'If we can't take in one chap a year like Almond and do something for him, what are we in business for?', that had persuaded the Admissions Committee to accept me.

Seminary proved very interesting, in spite of my initial reservations. I liked life in New Brunswick. After all, I had spent five years at nearby Rutgers, had a girlfriend there, and a part-time job in a men's hat store. After one year I decided to stay at the seminary for another year. The course in 'The Teachings of Jesus' taught by President John W. Beardslee had gotten under my skin. Beardslee was a great Christian gentleman and an internationally recognized scholar of biblical Greek.

Then came Pearl Harbor, Sunday, December 7, 1941. That day was a bugle blast for young American men. My college roommate, Pete Hartman, was killed while packing parachutes at Hickham Field airbase next to Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The hangar where he was working was obliterated by a bomb. My pacifism went out the window, and early that week I reported to the Navy recruiting barge in the Hudson River in New York. The Chief Petty Officer at the desk looked up at me and said that anyone wearing glasses could not be accepted. I argued that I was able to run small craft from point A to point B and back and surely could be of use. But upon hearing that I was a seminary student, he said, 'Go back and finish seminary, son. It's going to be a long war, and we'll need a lot of padres.' Back to New Brunswick I went, a very disappointed young man.

At the end of my second year in seminary (1943) one of Professor Rylaarsdam's Old Testament classes was taken by Dr. John Van Ess, missionary statesman, world-renowned Arabic scholar, and head of a mission school in Iraq. After the class, Professor Rylaarsdam overtook me walking across campus and asked, 'Harry, how would you like to teach in the Arabian Mission's boys' school in Basra, Iraq, for a three year term?' The thrill and sense of adventure Van Ess had just shared in class was vivid in my mind and I replied almost immediately, 'I'd like to do that very much, but if the Mission Board asks for a reference from the Rutgers Dean of Students, I'll be finished!'

With Professor Rylaarsdam's encouragement, I did apply for the teaching post in the boys' school in Basra. I was aware that it had been a rare stroke of fortune, or perhaps something more, which had let me enter seminary, but I was inwardly quite certain that the Board of Foreign Missions, a very conservative body, would reject my application out of hand.

I was unaware that the President of the Seminary, Beardslee, whose course on the Teachings of Jesus had greatly affected me, argued in my favor. Granting that I did not conform to 'the usual pattern of missionary candidates', he suggested that, since previous short-term teachers had difficulties maintaining discipline, perhaps 'someone like Almond' might be what was needed with the several hundred Arab boys in the school in Basra.

Late in the summer of 1943 I was amazed to receive notice from the Mission Board of my acceptance. I was told to obtain a passport, visas and various immunization shots, and to be ready to sail at short notice. It was wartime, and passages were scarce. I also learned that I would be traveling with Dr. Van Ess and his wife.

Dr. John Van Ess was a man with a great faith, a superb linguist, a statesman, and a shrewd reader of human nature with a great sense of humor. Tall and lean, he had an impressive bearing and – I was to learn – a big heart. There was always room for people in his life.

Born in 1879 near Chicago into a well-respected Dutch clergy family of the Reformed Church, he grew up amongst a Dutch community in Holland, Michigan. Van Ess had graduated with honors in Semitic languages from Princeton Theological Seminary in 1902. His sense of adventure and his Christian faith took him to the Gulf in 1902 at age 23, beginning his lifelong commitment to the Arab world.

In the period just before World War One Iraq, or Mesopotamia as it was then known, was still part of the Turkish Ottoman Empire and had been ruled from Istanbul for

several centuries. Kuwait was still part of Basra Province (Liwa). Van Ess's contemporary, Dr. Bennett, had obtained the requisite permit from the Sublime Porte, the Sultan's Palace in Istanbul, to buy a plot of land for a hospital. To obtain a permit (iradah) to operate schools for boys and girls to be taught in Arabic (Turkish was the official language) was quite another matter. Van Ess spent much of 1909-10 in Istanbul, learning the Turkish language in order to better present his petition. When permission was finally granted, it included the specific right to teach the Christian religion, both Old and New Testaments. At the end of the School of High Hope's first year a celebration was held, attended by the Turkish Pasha who governed Basra Province.

Van Ess had spent the years before this achievement touring along the 'Pirate Coast' (now the United Arab Emirates) and in the Euphrates valley, honing his language skills, pulling teeth, making good use of his rudimentary medical supplies and making friends. He told of a desert tribesman who had just seen his first airplane fly overhead. Van Ess remarked, 'Isn't it wonderful to see that heavy metal machine flying through the air?' 'Not at all,' was the Bedu's reply. 'It was made to fly.'

Van Ess spoke English, Dutch, German, French, Arabic and Turkish fluently and was a scholar of Old Testament Hebrew. His was a strong, adventurous and mischievous spirit. Pranks and humor were part of his make-up.

A religious sheikh from the Euphrates valley swept into Van Ess's study one day with two disciples. Van Ess was sitting at his desk, and the sheikh walked up to him and asked, 'Christian, does the Father need the Son, or does the Son need the Father?' Van Ess took his time getting out a cigarette and lighting it. Then, holding the burning match in his fingers, he said, 'Hold out your honorable hand.' He then held the burning match under the outstretched palm, which was quickly pulled back. Van Ess went on, 'Now first, you tell me. Does the heat

need the flame or does the flame need the heat?' 'Wallahi, ghulubteni! (By God, you've got me!).' Telling the story Van Ess added with a chuckle, 'While I do not advocate smoking, it does give you time to think.' John Van Ess had an impressive array of friendships with academics and administrators in the region.

It was this extraordinary man and his wife whom I joined in Philadelphia to board our ship for the first leg of the long journey to Basra.

2

SHIPBOARD ROMANCE

We sailed from Philadelphia on December 2, 1943, on the 6,400-ton Portuguese *Joao Belo*. The ship was Clyde-built and well equipped for the tropics, but not for winter in the North Atlantic. We slept with overcoats either on or thrown over the meager bedding. The passenger list consisted entirely of government people and missionaries. The ship sailed under the neutral Portuguese flag and floodlights illuminated the large flags painted on her white sides.

My cabin mate was Merrill Ady, a Presbyterian minister en route to China and working with the America OSS (Office of Strategic Services). Dr. and Mrs. Van Ess were accompanied by Belle Bogard who was going to Baghdad to teach in the Mission girls' school there.

The *Joao Belo* was still in Delaware Bay when, as I strolled around the deck, I noticed three young women playing ping-pong rather badly. One of them called out, 'Harry?...want to play some ping-pong?' Naturally, I accepted the invitation from this good-looking American girl. The caller was Beverly Anne Kitchen. Thus began a romance that has lasted over 60 years.

One of the other ping-pong players was Beverly's cabin mate, Marie Keohane. Bev and I soon paired off, as did Marie and Alberto, the Assistant Purser. Having the Assistant Purser in our foursome had distinct advantages, and night after night we had hors d'oeuvres and wine laid on in Alberto's cabin.

None of us three Americans spoke Portuguese. Alberto's only other language was French. Marie spoke no French, but Bev and I had a smattering, so linguistic problems were annoying but not insurmountable.

Bev, who had grown up near New York City, was a civilian employee of the Defense Department in the Special Branch of Army Intelligence. She was under orders to proceed to Britain.

One night during the voyage to the Azores, our first port of call, an unlit ship loomed out of the dark, silhouetted by gunfire and torpedo flashes in the distance. We diverted due south for 100 miles before resuming our course.

From Philadelphia it took 10 days to reach the harbor of Ponta Delgada in the Azores. The seas calmed as we entered the anchorage, and the sunny skies and pastel-colored homes were a welcome relief from the heaving gray Atlantic.

Just before arriving in the Azores I proposed to Beverly. We had been drinking and her response was not very clear to either of us, but in the cold clear light of morning we agreed that she had said, 'Yes'! I had only my high school class ring to give her, but she wore it happily, and still does. Later, she would write her family from England saying, 'There was a boy on board (Harry J. Almond by name) who turned out to be "the most wonderful guy in the world"!!!!'

As well as shipboard romance I had other things to occupy me during the long journey to Basra. Dr. Van Ess gave me an hour's lesson from his Arabic grammar *The Spoken Arabic of Iraq*, morning and afternoon each weekday. At table just before our first lesson Dr. Van Ess picked up a pepper-shaker saying, 'I'll tell you the word for pepper, and you will never forget it: *filfil*.' I never have. Later I was to learn that not long before our journey together the Van Esses had lost their only son, John Jr., in his mid-20s. I was overwhelmed by the care this great man was giving me. It was a privilege to learn from such a knowledgeable person.

Engagement photo, Lisbon, Dec. 1943

Dr. and Mrs. Van Ess talked about life in Basra, pointing out the advantages of being single for one's first years there, so I was initially reluctant to tell them of my engagement. On arrival in Lisbon on December 19, the Van Esses, Belle Bogard and I stayed in the Hotel Tivoli on the Avenida, awaiting our passage around Africa. Bev had been booked in a nearby hotel by her discreet military minders, but we soon found each other. We decided we must now tell the Van Esses of our engagement. They were delighted, ordered tea at once and gave a dinner party that evening, inviting several of our transatlantic shipmates. They confessed that they themselves had known each other for only two weeks before their engagement and gave us their blessing.

Four and half years later John Van Ess put his own remembering of our shipboard romance to verse in a poem entitled 'How Harry got hooked' which in part read:

> At last when the weather had cleared just a bit,
> Came Harry from out second class,
> To talk of the future in store for him
> And whatever might come to pass.
>
> Come to pass, did I say? The second day out
> Passed a girl dressed in slacks very trim,
> With bright auburn hair and a sweet winning smile
> And a look manifestly for him.
>
> The monk in our Harry, he died on the spot,
> Though he covered the corpse cleverly,

For her eyes had said "ta'al",[2] and he ta'aled right away
The captive of our Beverly.

Bev was soon whisked off and put on a flight for London (December 22) which was the only way a civilian could get there from Portugal. We were not to see each again other for two and a half years. Her address for the duration was c/o Military Attaché, US Embassy, London. In spite of the censorship surrounding her job, I eventually learned that she was billeted in the White Hart Hotel in the town of Buckingham, near the Bletchley Park estate where she and many others worked. It would be several more years before I learned that Bletchley was home to the 'Ultra Secret' work where experts were using the Enigma machine to de-cipher the German High Command's encrypted messages, a crucial part of the war effort that gave the Allies a decided advantage.[3]

Dr. Van Ess obtained passage from Lisbon for our Iraq-bound group shortly after Christmas 1943 on another Portuguese vessel, the *Angola*, sailing around Africa for Laurenço Marques (now Maputo) in Portuguese East Africa (now Mozambique). We touched various Portuguese ports along the West Coast, and anchored off Banana in the muddy mouth of the Congo River to land a group of missionaries heading for the interior. At Mossamedes, now the Angolan port of Namibe, we went ashore in a small, low-sided launch. I was keenly aware of shark fins close at hand.

As we approached the Cape of Good Hope we were ordered to dock in Cape Town by British Naval Control, but no one was permitted ashore because the British wanted to question several passengers. During this stay in Cape Town Dr. Van Ess struck up a conversation with a young British subaltern who

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2 'ta'al' is an Arabic word meaning 'come hither'.

3 For more on this fascinating period, see the website of the Imperial War Museum, London, www.iwm.org.uk

was leaning on the rail, swagger stick under his arm. Van Ess asked him, 'I suppose in your work you need to speak other languages?' 'Rather', replied the lieutenant. Van Ess asked what the languages were. 'Two you probably never heard of – Arabic and Dutch.' was the officer's reply. Van Ess's parents were Dutch immigrants and Dutch was their language at home. He himself was a distinguished Arabist, so he replied with perfect accents in both languages. The poor fellow beat a discreet retreat.

On reaching Laurenço Marques we stayed at the Polano Hotel seeking passage on to Suez. In the hotel lobby there were men in civilian clothes who were clearly officers from ships or submarines from both sides of the war, and the hotel's short-wave radio switched back and forth between the BBC and Radio Berlin while coffee was served in the lobby. Bev sent a cable to me to Laurenço Marques on January 19. However I only received it on arrival in Basra two months later.

Again, Dr. Van Ess secured berths for us, this time on a small British collier, the *SS Ribera*. She sailed alone for Mombasa, at slow speed due to a foul bottom and a head current. I was berthed with Booker, the Welsh third mate from Barry Island, and I often shared his watch with him. The ship was blacked out because there were reports of hostile submarines but, although it was a rather nervous voyage, we arrived without incident. While moored in Mombasa's Port Kilindini, waiting for a convoy to form for Suez, Booker and I enjoyed sailing one of the ship's lifeboats around the harbor. Our desire for a swim vanished with the appearance of shark fins cutting through the water. Eventually the convoy formed, and we headed on north.

In Aden we were not permitted ashore, but I sent a note to the American Consulate addressed to a college classmate, Bob Stein, who was vice consul there. Bob came out in a launch looking quite puzzled, since I had only signed my note 'Rutgers '41'. We had a good visit on the ship and next met in

1954 when he was posted in Jeddah on the staff of Ambassador George Wadsworth.

Landing by lighter in Suez, we took the train to Cairo and registered at the Hotel Victoria. There Van Ess chanced to meet an old friend from Basra days, Bobbie Blackford, a British brigadier in charge of transport. He promptly obtained a compartment for us on the overnight train to Haifa, quite an achievement since spaces were allotted only on a priority basis. At the border control in Qantara station on the Suez Canal it was discovered that I had no visa for Palestine and I was told I would have to get off the train. Van Ess was in no way daunted by what seemed to me a catastrophe. He telephoned Sir Harold MacMichael, the British High Commissioner in Jerusalem, and obtained verbal authorization for the Qantara official to let me proceed. We went on much relieved. Then, just as we were dozing off, the train stopped for a contingent of Arab levies (troops recruited locally by the British Army) to board. They quickly filled the passageway and finally burst into our compartment. In this cozy manner we arrived in Haifa.

After a drive up Mount Carmel to see Elijah's cave and the church there, we went on by taxi north of Lake Tiberias (the Sea of Galilee). Rounding the southern shoulder of Mount Hermon we passed by the area of Caesarea Philippi where Jesus had revealed his nature and mission to his most trusted disciples. Then we drove through the Golan Heights and on to Damascus where we spent the night in the Omayyed Hotel.

The next evening we took the Nairn[4] bus for Baghdad – a very comfortable, streamlined, air-conditioned trailer. The trip was a long, rainy, muddy overnight run with a rest stop half way to Baghdad at Rutba Wells, now Ar Rutba.

We breakfasted in Ramadi on the banks of the Euphrates, basking in the pleasantly warm sun, before continuing on to Baghdad. Belle Bogard remained there to take up her teaching post, and that evening the Van Esses and I were off on the

night train for Basra via Ur Junction. At Basra station a delegation of old boys, teachers, students and friends welcomed the Van Esses' return.

Ours was a journey quite different from that of Abraham and his tribe whose caravan took them first from Ur to Haran, between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers near Ramadi, and later from there to Canaan (Palestine) over much the same route as ours. He had traveled on camel the distance of over 700 miles that we had just completed in the other direction by taxi, bus and train.

We arrived at the boys' school in Basra on March 15, 1944, 115 days after our Philadelphia sailing.

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4 ".. the world's first stainless-steel sleeper-trailer bus, built in Philadelphia by E. G. Budd Manufacturing Co. for the 600-mile run between Bagdad and Damascus.... Some 57 ft. long, its desert car consists of a shiny, diesel-powered tractor to which is coupled a 36-ft. trailer shaped much like the observation car on Budd streamline trains. Operated by Nairn Transport Co., the new buses, of which there are two, make the journey in 15 hours instead of the 24 it took the heavy, conventional buses.... A passenger boards the bus late in the afternoon, takes a seat in a modern interior designed like a standard Pullman. Until nightfall he watches the flat Syrian terrain from one of 17 windows. After a box supper, a steward makes up the 14 upper and lower berths. To guard against sandstorms, the whole machine is airtight.... There is air conditioning. Fare: $50." (*Time*, Feb. 15, 1937)

3

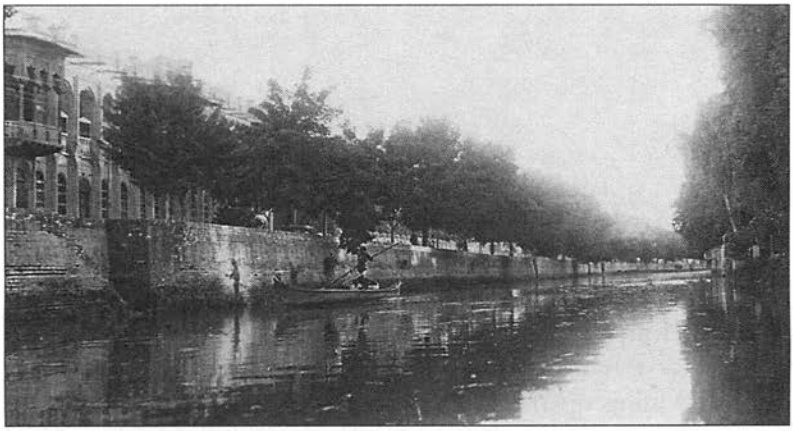
BASRA

Basra, Iraq's second largest city and its major port, lies on the west bank of the Shatt al-Arab (River of the Arabs) about 60 miles upstream from Fao and the delta. A further 40 miles upstream from Basra the Tigris and Euphrates rivers come together at Qurna to form the Shatt al-Arab. At Basra the river flowed fairly deep, and so some ocean-going ships could come up to Basra's port of Margil. Alluvial silt builds up a bar where the Shatt al-Arab meets the Gulf and continual dredging is needed to keep the channel open.

It was wartime when we arrived in March 1944, and supplies of all kinds were flowing north from Margil through Iran to the Soviet Union, which was now fighting against Germany. Supplies also went from the Iranian port of Khoramshahr where the Karoun River enters the Shatt al-Arab downstream from Basra and just north of Abadan Island, where there are now major oil refineries.

Basra had three distinct sections at that time: Margil, Ashar, and the old city of Basra, that we called Basra City. I was fascinated to learn the origins of these place names. Margil, more properly Ma'aqil, originally meant 'camel-tethering ground', but had been corrupted by British and American servicemen into the current form.[5] Ashar, which originally meant 'tithing-place' (because the word for 10 is ashera), was

5 'Aqal' means camel tether, and, when it is not over a camel's bent knee to restrict the animal's movement, it is looped over the man's head to hold down the kafiyya or head cloth.



Ashar Creek, Basra 1940s

where the Governor's office and Customs House were located. This section gave its name to Ashar Creek, the largest of the many creeks in the city running into the Shatt al-Arab. Further inland along the creek, was the old city of Basra. The main bazaar or suq was in Ashar, at the point where the creek joined the river near the Customs House.

The School of High Hope, the Basra boys' school where I was to teach, was in a compound of about five acres on the north bank of Ashar Creek nearly a mile in from the river. The government offices and the bazaar lay between the school and the Shatt al-Arab.

In 1944 there were nine classes in the school. Primary school was housed in the old hospital building and included the first through the sixth grades. The middle school was an L-shaped building for the boys in the seventh through ninth grades. By western standards those in the ninth grade class should have been at the most 15 years of age, but bilharzia, eye disease and malaria often made attendance difficult. Frequently a boy would ask to be excused because of fever. A hand on the lad's forehead seldom indicated a false excuse. The poverty of many families meant that some boys had to work in the date-packing stations.

The poverty of many families also meant that some boys had to work in the date-packing stations. This seasonal date-packing provided work in the autumn for some of the boys, but it cut into their school attendance and kept some back. As a result of all these things some ninth grade students were 19 and 20 years old. This helped the basketball team, but the age differences made teaching more difficult.

The school's enrolment was about 350. The great majority were Muslims – both Sunni and Shi'i – with a small number of Jews and Christians. The school thus broadly reflected the demography of the country. They all got along well, and any differences or quarrels that did arise had nothing to do with sectarian affiliations. Most boys were terribly poor, some were middle class and one lad was chauffeur-driven to school each day. Many came barefoot, and the tile floors were soon covered with mud during the winter rains.

Our garden boasted over 80 date-bearing palms which, in addition to producing delicious dates, provided a partial sun screen for the vegetables and flowers grown by Abu Ali, the gardener.

Dates were a major export, and before World War Two Iraq produced nearly 80% of the world's crop. The date palm has separate male and female trees. Each year a new circle of fronds sprouts out. The old dead fronds, or butts (karab), are cut off and used for firewood, and the frond stumps left on the tree provide steps for the skilled climber leaning back against a belt.[6] Our gardener share-cropped the date harvest giving him a welcome supplement to his meager salary, and we always had dates and date syrup (dibis) on the table. Truly ripe dates, or rutub, are a succulent delicacy. The dibis swells the outer skin of each fruit almost to plum size, but because the

6 Since natural pollination does not produce a useful date crop, the trees must be climbed each year so that the gardener can put sprays of pollen from the male stamens onto the pistils of the females. One male palm can thus fertilize many female palms.

skin breaks very easily the rutub are not transportable. However, a few in a bowl always reached our table, to everyone's delight.

The pattern of date palm gardens was repeated up and down the river banks, irrigated by a network of small canals whose water level rose and fell with the tide in the Gulf. The heavier salt water from the Gulf pushes in under the lighter fresh water of the Shatt al-Arab, raising it and providing just the right amount of fresh water for the date palms. Water was taken from the ditches at high tide by means of a scoop (shadoof) hung on a long counter-balanced pole. The gardener swung the pole and scoop down to the water where it filled. Then the counter-weight pulled it up to ditch level where the water was dumped and the scoop lowered for more.

Some have called Basra 'the Venice of the East' because of the network of irrigation canals and creeks. These waterways also provided passage for local transport called 'belams', narrow heavy wooden craft propelled by paddle and pole. We often enjoyed 'belam teas' along the date garden creeks or on the banks of the Shatt al-Arab itself, loading rugs, primus stove, kettle and food aboard for the outing.

As well as the gardens, the two school buildings, a small building for an alumni coffee shop and gathering place, a playing field, tennis court, servants' quarters and the old stone church building, the compound included two houses; the Van Ess and the Gosselink homes. The church was no longer used for services because the evangelical Arab congregants had built their own church south of Ashar Creek. The pastor at that time was Iskof Garabed, and we worshipped there. Iskof taught Bible to the primary school boys. The old church building was used by Mrs. Van Ess and Mrs. Gosselink for girls' clubs and occasionally for mission meetings.[7]

7 Soon after the 1958 Revolution had begun under General Abdul Kerim Qassim the whole school compound, buildings and all, was taken over by the government and razed.

The old primary school building had been used as a hospital for Turkish prisoners taken by British forces in World War One. By 1944 most of the building was occupied by the Primary school classes, but a few rooms provided beds for boys who had to stay overnight when the river was high, and transport was difficult, and for the few who came from too great a distance. My digs were also in this building. I had a study with a small fireplace, a bedroom and shower bathroom. Fans hung from the ceiling, and there was good running water. We had a fine tennis court made of river mud mixed with chopped burlap bags for binding, and the students were eager to be ball-boys for their teachers.

Meals and teas with the Van Esses were a great privilege. Each occasion was a painless Arabic lesson for me and a chance for the Van Esses to share their rich experience of the country as well as to meet a host of friends and callers. One day the two lady missionary teachers from our girls' school and the Saudi consul came for tea. Max Mallowan, (later Sir Max) the archaeologist, and his wife, the crime novelist Agatha Christie, were there another day, just back from a dig in Eridu. That city had once been a port southeast of Ur, but centuries of silting in the delta had left the town some distance inland. Agatha Christie's choice remark was, 'You know, it's wonderful being married to an archeologist, because the older you grow the more interesting you become!'

Dr. Van Ess had urged me not to try to use any new or unfamiliar Arabic words I had heard during the day's basketball practice, unless I had checked it with him first. One day at tea, I sat beside our host waiting my chance to ask about a word I had just picked up. I thought I had chosen my moment carefully, but unfortunately, just as I asked him what the new word meant, the conversation stopped, and my new word sounded clearly across the room. Van Ess blew a mouthful of tea back into his saucer. One of the lady teachers gasped, evidently familiar with the word, and Van Ess said, 'Why, Charlotte, I

wouldn't expect you to know that word!' He later told me, 'For heaven's sake, next time ask me privately!' The word was indeed foul, and, human nature being what it is, I have never forgotten it.

At the suggestion of the Mallowans we later visited Eridu, and there in the excavated cemetery we were moved to see a tiny, lozenge-shaped clay coffin no more than a yard long. It contained the skeleton of a small boy on his side in a fetal position together with the bones of his tiny puppy, urns for grain and water in the afterlife and a small model of a sailboat exactly like those plying the rivers in the 1940s. We stood there quietly as we viewed these reminders of our common humanity stretching back over thousands of years. The archaeologists had left the grave open because desert dust storms and wind gently covered everything with fine sand and made a good hermetic seal.

For a green young American everything was 'different'. The buildings of the school and the walls of the two missionary homes were built of mud brick and mortar 12-15 inches (30-40cm) thick. The floors were covered with polished maroon tiles. Roofs were made by laying hardwood poles from wall to wall 12-15 inches apart. These poles or chundils were then covered with layers of mats woven from palm fronds, and on them were poured three or four inches of mud mixed with shredded burlap for binding, just like the tennis court surface. In season the gardener spread dates out on the roof to dry in the sun.

There was no air conditioning, but the overhead 'ice cream parlor' fans kept the air moving in the heat of the day. Some rooms had desert coolers. They covered open windows from the outside and consisted of two hinged frames made from date-frond sticks between which camel thorn[8] was

8 Camel thorn (*Alhagi maurorum*) is a low, leguminous shrub of the Arabian desert. The plant exudes a sweetish gum which is one of the substances called manna.

compressed. Water was dripped slowly down through the thorn and the cool, dry 'shemal' wind blew the fragrance into the house. We always had a clay water jar in the room at night. Evaporation from the unglazed surface cooled the water and gave a refreshing drink.

Stairs gave access to the roof from within the house, and in summer beds were brought up to the rooftop to take advantage of those cooler shemal winds. There were enough mosquitoes about to require nets over our beds. One night one of our older colleagues headed up the stairs to his bed on the roof, pillow tucked under his arm, water jug clasped by the neck in one hand and flashlight in the other. Unfortunately, the gardener had not removed the drying dates that evening, and the elderly man let out a great howl as his sandal hit the slippery, sticky dates. He took another long step to get out of the mess only to plant his other foot in more dates. Pillow, flashlight and water jug added to the confusion.

During my first year in Basra Dr. Van Ess introduced me to Ahmed Hamid Al-Nakib. Thus began a friendship that would last the rest of our lives. We were then two young bachelors who saw each other from time to time and enjoyed gazelle hunting across the Shatt al-Arab and shooting fowl in the vast waters of the Hor Hammar. As we were poled along one day on a duck shoot, we passed a Marsh Arab squatting in the water with a long muzzle-loading gun against his shoulder, the barrel resting in a forked stick pushed into the mud. He was waiting for enough ducks to line up in his sights to make efficient use of the gunpowder and odd bits of metal that he had loaded. After we had moved along some distance a loud boom told us he had taken his shot, and we hoped he had got enough to make the expense of powder worthwhile.

Ahmed's uncle, Sayyid Talib Al-Nakib, had been Nakib of Basra. The title Nakib is a very old one, used either for an academic dean or for the dean of the diplomatic corps. In strict Muslim usage it designates the family who keep the register of

descendants of the Prophet, the 'sayyids'. More recently 'Sayyid' is used much as we use 'Mister'. The Nakibs played an important role in the formative years of Iraq, both under the Turks and in the period of the British Mandate.

During World War One, Emir Feisal, the son of Sherif Hussein of Mecca, had led the Arab Army against the Turks, with T.E. Lawrence as his adviser. Following the war Feisal was installed by the British as King of Syria in fulfillment of promises made to Sherif Hussein. However this was not acceptable to the French, to whom the League of Nations had given the mandate over Syria, and Feisal was obliged to leave. Pressed to fulfill their promises to Feisal's father, the British then arranged to enthrone Feisal as King of Iraq.

However, Sayyid Talib Al-Nakib (Ahmed's uncle) was also a serious and popular contender for the throne, thereby presenting a problem for the British. The colorful orientalist, Gertrude Bell,[9] was at that time acting as an adviser to the British High Commissioner in Iraq, Sir Percy Cox. Bell arranged for Sayyid Talib to be invited for tea at the High Commissioner's residence, after which he was arrested and deported to Ceylon (Sri Lanka).[10]

The Al-Nakibs are Kuwait citizens, since Ahmed's mother was in Kuwait when he was born. Ahmed's father had vast date gardens, and his people also raised large crops of barley and rice. One day I saw Ahmed at the airport, dressed in his formal best and welcoming visiting dignitaries. I must have looked surprised, for he asked, 'Didn't you know? I'm now Ra'is el-Belediya (mayor of the city)'. I was unable to conceal my amusement, so he explained with a grin, 'Father did not want me to mess up the date business!'

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9 For more on this British woman of great influence see *Desert Queen* by Janet Wallach (1999). Bell committed suicide in Baghdad in 1926.

10 This story was written up after much research by Haifa al-Nakib, a granddaughter of Sayyid Talib, for her Master's thesis at the University of Leeds in the early 1970s.

4

TWO IS BETTER THAN ONE

Miss Margaret Conant, a friend of the Van Esses, worked with the American Red Cross helping American soldiers and seamen who were in the Gulf area moving military aid through Iran for Russia. One evening I went to the YWCA, where she stayed, to drive her to the Van Ess home for dinner. She was a bit delayed, and I took a book off the shelf while waiting. The title, enticingly enough, was *For Sinners Only*. I became so engrossed in the book that when Margaret appeared I put it under my arm as I escorted her to the car, and I continued reading it later. It was about the Oxford Group.

I had heard some mention of the Oxford Group during my senior year in college in New Brunswick, when a friend came back from 'an Oxford Group house-party' in up-state New York. From this student friend, I had gathered that the Oxford Group – founded by an American Lutheran minister, Dr. Frank Buchman – promoted the idea that if you wanted to see things different in the world, or even just in the world around you, the obvious place to begin was with yourself. Buchman had drawn on the writings of Dr. Robert Speer, whom I had heard preach at chapel at Rutgers, to offer a roadmap for how to go about putting right things in one's own life, which in my case was needed.

The idea, my student friend had told me, was simply to measure one's life by four absolute moral standards: honesty, purity, unselfishness and love, to give one's whole life

unconditionally to God, and thereafter daily to seek His leading in all one's affairs. My newly-enthused student friend had challenged me, with more courage than tact and even less success, to measure my lifestyle against the Oxford Group's absolute moral standards – a notion which I strongly rejected at the time.

It must, however, have been an attractive proposition to some people, because many thousands had attended Oxford Group house parties and had made costly personal decisions and commitments of their own lives. Many of these stories were related in *For Sinners Only*. In 1938, as the world prepared for war, the Oxford Group had been re-launched as Moral Re-Armament, with a far-reaching program in many areas of national life in America, in Britain and several other countries.

Reading more about the Oxford Group in *For Sinners Only* now in Basra, the challenge of its concepts and those moral standards got further under my skin, because at the time I was troubled about the boys' cheating at the Mission School, about nocturnal goings-on in the dormitory rooms, and the general corruption. I tried to be a policeman, gumshoeing around the dorm at night and keeping on my feet to see better during exams. However, as I considered absolute honesty, it dawned on me that I had stolen the very book which was now challenging me!

On the Atlantic crossing from Philadelphia to Lisbon, I had learnt from Bev that her parents, Victor and Elsie Kitchen, were at that time among the leaders of the Oxford Group and its program of Moral Re-Armament (MRA) in America. Vic had been a pioneer of the Oxford Group with Frank Buchman and had been part of the Oxford Group's businessmen's team in New York in the 1930s along with Bill Wilson,[11] the

11 See *Changed by Grace: V. C. Kitchen, the Oxford Group, and AA* by Glenn F. Chesnut. Hindsfoot Press. (2006)

founder of Alcoholics Anonymous. For reasons of her own Bev had distanced herself from her parents' commitment, and we had reached an understanding that neither of us would have anything to do with MRA while we were apart. My problem now was that reading *For Sinners Only* left me feeling uncomfortable about Bev's and my pact.

However, I soon learnt that there was no need for such concern. Bev had been stationed at Bletchley Park and was secretary to Colonel Telford Taylor who headed the American group in the British-led Ultra Secret operation.[12] In the course of her duties she flew with Taylor to Frankfurt a few days after the war in Europe ended in May 1945. It was a marking point in her life. She was billeted in the apartment of a German family. Their pictures were still on the mantel, and a hand-crocheted spread was on the bed. Bev found it difficult to get to sleep as she lay there wondering where the people were who had been put out of their home for her.

The next day a GI in a jeep came to take her to the officers' club. She noticed a sharp metal bar welded vertically on the bumper and asked, 'What's that thing for?' 'Oh,' said the driver, 'That's to cut the piano-wire they string across the streets to get us in the throat!' Most jeep drivers drove with their windshields down, and some had been decapitated. Occasionally the ping of the wire being cut gave grim warning that while the shooting and bombing had stopped, hate remained. Bev understood that to heal this hate required more than a good record of Sunday-school attendance. Here were the seeds of further war, and she wanted to do something about it.

Back in London Bev contacted her parents' friends and associates in the program of MRA whose address she had been given. With one of those friends she made a decision to ask God to run her life. After some struggle over what changes

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12 See F.W. Winterbotham *The Ultra Secret*, New York, Dell. (1974)

might be required in view of her new decision, and what it might mean to measure one's life by absolute moral standards, Bev made a commitment in faith with a friend not just to try to let God run her life but to change her life wherever necessary. Bev wanted to be effective in curing the causes of the hate she had seen in Frankfurt, as well as what she knew to be wrong in America. Her concern about America had grown as she thought of the wrecked lives and divided families she had encountered in her work. Too many American officers were living with the wives of British men serving overseas, and too many Americans, with more than a year overseas, had received 'Dear John' letters from their wives, announcing that they were pregnant.

With the war over, the work at Bletchley Park came to an end. Telford Taylor then became involved in the preparations for the Nuremburg trials of senior Nazis and asked Bev to continue as his secretary. It was a tempting offer but, not having seen me in 18 months, Bev did not want to delay our reunion further. However it wasn't that simple. After various attempts to secure a flight to Iraq failed, Bev returned to America in the summer of 1945. General Taylor went on to become famous as the chief US prosecutor at the Nuremburg trials. (In civilian life back in America Taylor had a long career as a law professor, becoming an aggressive critic of Senator McCarthy in the 1950s and later of the Viet Nam war. Bev stayed in touch with him and he visited us in Massachusetts not long before his death in 1998 at the age of 90.) Bev went home to America for what turned out to be a further year's wait before my own return.

For some of the time while Bev waited for me to return to America, she joined her parents and sister, Hope, as part of a large MRA team in Los Angeles where the Board of Education had asked MRA to present a play called *The Drugstore Revolution* in the city's schools. Hope had a starring role.

After her decision to live differently, Bev's letters to me began to take on a new tone. I was intrigued, but also slightly

uncomfortable, and I talked it over with Dr. Van Ess. He and I asked ourselves, 'What does MRA have to offer missions?' Van Ess's response was, 'Well, we've built schools, hospitals, churches and orphanages, but we do not seem to be answering the real problems. Why don't you look into MRA when you go home? We need new ideas.'

Finally, on June 15, 1946, when my term in the school had ended, I flew to Baghdad, and then to Cairo. There I met Dr. John Badeau, President of the American University in Cairo, who obtained passage for me on an American troop ship, the *USS Marine Shark*. After a few days in Cairo I went on to Alexandria to await the sailing for New York. Being a troop ship she had bunks in three tiers and a chow line twice a day. Many of the passengers were missionary families, some of whom I knew, and we were a convivial company.

On hearing that I was finally sailing home, Bev and her mother, Elsie, came back east and, along with my parents, met me at the dock in New York in early July 1946. This was just before Bev's 28th birthday so we all went off to Holland House for lunch and the process of getting re-acquainted began.

After brief family visits in the east, Bev and I went on to the MRA conference center which had been established during World War Two on Mackinac Island, Michigan. It was there, on beautiful Mackinac Island, that I gave my life to God in a fuller way than I had ever done before, making a commitment very similar to Bev's. Admitting that I had not always done a very good job so far, I asked Him to take over.

Bev and I were then faced with a very hard question to consider. We were very different people than we had been on that ship in 1943 when we got engaged. We had both been through deep experiences during the war, and now each had come to a new place of commitment to God. Was our engagement and the love we felt really part of the next step of our lives, or was it just a carry-over from an intense wartime

romance? Was it solidly enough based to see us through a lifetime together? Wanting to be sure of this, we painfully put our engagement on hold and really prayed for a sense of certainty as we sought God's leading in this crucial matter. We felt our commitment to God required that we must be willing to surrender our own deepest longings to His will, whatever it turned out to be.

After some days of soul-searching and conversations with caring friends, we met with these friends for tea, and in quiet together found the sense of certainty we had prayed for. We felt that our engagement had been given back to us, enriched by the image of a three-way contract with God as the 'senior partner'. For us, it was the only way that marriage could and did work effectively.

Amazingly, we were married just a month later, on August 31,1946, from Bev's family summer home in Gilmanton, New Hampshire, in the old white, wooden Congregational church. By this time, Bev's father, Vic Kitchen, and Hope were at the newly-opened European MRA conference center in Caux, Switzerland, and were unable to attend. Bev's uncle 'Bus', Francis C. Reed, gave her away. My parents were with us, however, and my brother Dick was one of my ushers. Professor Rylaarsdam, who was by then teaching at the Chicago Divinity School, married us. This was the third time Coert Rylaarsdam played an important role in my life.

In Gilmanton the whole town opened hearts and homes. There had not been a wedding in that church for 25 years. Bev planned to wear her grandmother's wedding dress, and attics were searched for bridesmaids' dresses of the same period. Food was prepared and brought to the family home for the reception. After the wedding we honeymooned where I had once worked as Sports Director, at Minnewaska in the Shawngunk Mountains west of Kingston, New York, before going back to New Brunswick for me to complete my final year of seminary studies.

It was a rich year in seminary. Bev worked as secretary to the President, Dr. John W. Beardslee, and we lived in an apartment on campus. The hallway and doors were painted an institutional green. Bev, over my objections, painted our apartment door a bright red, the better to show off a brass door knocker we had been given as a wedding present. Soon after that we invited Dr. and Mrs. Beardslee for dinner. Dr. Beardslee paused for a moment outside looking at our door and said, 'I like that door. Red is my favorite color!'

I graduated on May 22, 1947 and was ordained Minister and Missionary on Sunday, June 1, by the Classis of Paramus in Christ Reformed Church, Tappan, New York. Bev and I were thrilled that Dr. Beardslee agreed to preach the sermon and that Dr. F.M. (Duke) Potter, then Secretary for Foreign Missions, gave the charge.

After my ordination we were invited to join an MRA group in Detroit during the summer of 1947 where they were presenting a musical revue, *Ideas Have Legs*. This show later grew into *The Good Road* and traveled widely in Europe and America. I remember well the clear thought that came into my mind as we were about to step aboard the Empire State Express in Grand Central Station in New York. I felt the pack of cigarettes in my pocket and recalled an earlier feeling that God wanted me to quit smoking. I knew that I must make a clean break with the habit, and I threw that pack of Camels into the gap between platform and railway car. It would have been worse than useless to have joined the team in Detroit with evidence of an unobeyed thought in my jacket pocket.

The next morning in Detroit, while Bev went to the office to help with the ticket sales for the revue, I turned the corner for a walk and immediately came face to face with the wife of a seminary classmate on the arm of another man. She was embarrassed and unconvincingly introduced him as a cousin. I invited her to come to the revue that evening. She came and stayed late that night to talk with Bev. As a result she decided

to go home to get honest and put things right with her husband. They have stayed married. Big doors sometimes swing open on little hinges of obedience.

We spent the rest of the summer of 1947 at the MRA Mackinac conference, and then in the fall we made preparations for me to take my bride to Basra. We visited relatives and got our immunization shots. Since Bev was expecting our first child we received lots of unsolicited advice. It was an exciting time, but hard to say goodbye to the family.

We left New York for Basra in November, 1947 with the baby due in January. A booking error obliged us to stay a week in France as guests of Air France. This was most fortuitous. I had not yet met my father-in-law, Victor Kitchen, and sister-in-law, Hope, who were both in France at that time with an MRA group. In that 'extra' week, after a day or two in Paris, we all four attended the first post-war conference of MRA in France at Le Touquet on the Channel. The beach was littered with barbed wire and dotted with concrete gun emplacements, grim reminders of the very recent past. Here we met for the first time many who would become friends and colleagues for life.

We flew on to Basra with an overnight stopover in Bari, Italy, finally arriving at the school late in November. Bev began her required first year language study at once. I took up my school duties as English teacher and sports director while preparing for the Mission's second year Arabic exam. We were welcomed into the home of Rev. George and Christina Gosselink who were wonderful, generous friends sharing their meals as well as games of tennis with us. Their home was next door to the Van Esses, and they all took us in like family.

Our daughter, baptized Beverly Anne like her mother but called Anne, was born on January 28, 1948, in Maude Hospital in Basra City. The road to the hospital lay along the south side of Ashar Creek. Arriving at the hospital after a somewhat turbulent car journey, due to demonstrations in the streets, I

kissed my Bev and baby Anne. Our life would never again be the same.

In June 1948, we flew – as arranged – to Caux in Switzerland. There at the World Assembly for MRA our simple Arabic proved useful in welcoming people from the Middle East. Anne was baptized that summer in the little chapel up the hill from Caux by an American friend, the Rev. Scoville (Sciff) Wishard. Dr. Buchman pronounced the benediction.

L-R: Victor, Hope and Elsie Kitchen, Anne, Beverly and HJA, Caux, 1948

One person who helped look after Anne that summer was Irmgard Fetzer who became her godmother. Irmgard, a young German woman who had lost her fiancé on the Eastern front, was working as secretary to Dr. Hans Stroh, the Protestant Chaplain at Tubingen University, who had known the Oxford Group before the war. The Strohs and Irmgard had come to Caux in September 1946 as part of one of the earliest groups of Germans to leave their country after the war. Now, in 1948, they were back in Caux as part of a great move to build bridges of healing between France and Germany. This friendship was especially meaningful to Bev because of her experiences in Frankfurt immediately after hostilities had ended.

We returned to Basra in time for school opening, and I continued to teach English, direct the sports program and function as Assistant Head. We attended St. Peter's, the Anglican Mission to Seamen Church, where I occasionally preached. Just once I attempted to chant Evensong, but never

tried to repeat the effort. Arabic study continued under the benevolent eye of Dr. Van Ess, and I began to discover how much of a foundation had been provided by the rigorous course in grammar he had given me on our first long journey from Philadelphia. It provided the framework into which could be fitted the vocabulary I was acquiring in the classroom, in games and during weekend outings with boys and teachers.

5

BASRA AND BAHRAIN

The end of 1947 and the first months of 1948, while Bev and I were settling into the mission in Basra and starting family life, were tumultuous times in the Middle East.

As we returned home to Basra from Switzerland in the latter part of 1948 my conscience was heavy. The day Anne was born, as I had driven to the hospital, I had found the road was crowded with demonstrators shouting 'Down with Anglo-American imperialism' and 'Down with the ministry that gives us bad bread'. Feelings were running high following the UN

Our home in Basra, 1949

vote to partition Palestine. The demonstration was in the classic form of small groups with the leader marching backwards and feeding slogans to his group. As I navigated my car through the crowd that day I had been startled to recognize some of our students among the leaders. They called, 'Sabbah el-kheir (good morning), Mister Harry,' as they motioned to their groups to let me pass. So, along with the emotions of a first-time father in my heart there also rolled the question, 'Where on earth have we failed these boys?'

As I later discovered, many of those demonstrators were rounded up shortly afterwards, including some of our students, and put into a detention camp in Niqra Salman (Solomon's Hole) about 200 miles west of Basra in the desert. The camp was surrounded by barbed wire, and there was little shelter. The soldiers who had been assigned there for punishment passed tents, food and water into this enclosure. Soon a small group of prisoners emerged who called themselves 'the camp committee', and it included the few trained communists caught up in the police arrests. They said to the guards, 'Give us the food and water, and we will guarantee camp discipline and no escapes.' The guards were happy with such an easy solution to their problems, and they agreed.

Soon tent lines were laid out in orderly 'streets', and classes were organized by the camp committee to study such subjects as Iraq's labor laws, how to exploit a grievance, how to organize a demonstration, how to provoke police violence and the uses of trade unionism. With food and water in the camp committee's hands attendance at the classes was assured. The government had unwittingly provided the Iraq Communist Party with a training school and bitterly resentful young men as motivated students.

Some of our students who had been put in that awful detention camp were released after six months and were able to return to school. As I pondered their situation I realized my own failure to help them find a big enough purpose and moti-

vation in their lives. It dawned on me that I had been urging them to adopt moral standards, of honesty for example, which I had failed to apply in my own life. I had been as convincing as a bald man trying to sell hair tonic. Then came the startling thought that I ought to be honest about my own failures with that group of older boys – honest about specific dishonesties in my own life over money and university examinations. I did so and apologized for my failure to live what I taught. I also apologized for my three-fold superiority as an American, as a teacher and as a Christian. I have never had such total attention in a classroom!

That same night several of those older boys came to talk. One of them was a tall lad called Salim. He asked, 'Sir, you told us how you changed; can anyone change?' I replied that anyone who honestly faced absolute moral standards could listen to his inner voice, find out where he might need to change and what he should do about it. We listened together to that inner voice, or conscience, and shared the resulting thoughts. I was shaken by his honesty. This lad, not yet 17, had fathered an illegitimate child by a bazaar prostitute. The woman and child had left Basra, and he had no idea where they were. He was terrified that his father would learn of this, whip him and send him from the house. We listened quietly again, and he had the thought to tell his father. He obeyed and was neither beaten nor sent away. Salim played center on our basketball team, and with his new peace of heart I noticed that we began to win more games.

Other boys noticed something different about Salim too and came to talk with me. They were attentive when I told them about my own experience of apology for cheating in my seminary and university exams, because they knew from experience that I was very strict, tearing up papers and giving zeros for cheating. A few boys began to listen to their inner voice and change. They began to meet, to help each other and to think beyond their own concerns.

After Salim graduated he lived in a reed hut in an enclosure where he kept two cows and sold the milk. His friends often met there. One lad, Qurban, who was good in English, was a telephone operator at the local office of the Iraq Petroleum Co. He felt that a current strike over trumped-up grievances was not right, but there was a picket line that he was afraid to cross. He and his friends met in Salim's hut, trying to seek Allah's will together as to what he should do. I soon came to understand that the Allah that these boys turned to was the same God as I worshipped.

The thought came to Qurban that the strike was wrong and most of his fellow-workers knew it, but they feared the little group who insisted on striking. He himself felt clearly that he should return to his job and did so at the usual hour. The pickets called out, 'Hey, Qurban, what do you think you're doing?' 'I'm going to work,' he replied, 'you know as well as I do that we have no serious grievance. These fellows are just trying to make trouble. I want my job, and I'm going in.' They let him pass, and a few went back to work with him. The next day all but a handful of troublemakers were working as usual.

The Muslim holiday of Eid al-Fitr came shortly after these events, and as was the custom I went to offer greetings to the Mutaserrif (Governor) Jamal Omar Nadhmi. He asked how I was, and I replied, telling him that I had been meeting with some of the detainees released from Niqra Salman. Surprised, he said, 'Oh, you shouldn't be seen with them. My police are watching them, and you may be in trouble.' I replied, 'I understand, Your Excellency, but these boys are different. They have changed.' 'Changed? I can't believe that! That bunch doesn't change.' This was not the moment to hold up the line of well-wishers, so I invited him to tea a few days later to hear more about them.

When Governor Nadhmi came to tea, he brought with him a lawyer friend, Burhan ad-Din Bashayan, a member of parliament who lived nearby. After hearing in more detail the story of

L-R: Gov. Jamal Nadhmi, Burhan ad-Din Bashayan MP, John and Dorothy Van Ess

our students who had been detained in Niqra Salman, they wrote in our guest book as they left, 'Thank you for the very good news of Moral Re-Armament.' I next saw Nadhmi in Switzerland some years later when he was Iraqi ambassador there.

1949 was a year of much change for us all at the Basra Mission. On our return to Basra at the end of 1947 I had found Dr. Van Ess in poor health. By January 1949, when his daughter, Alice, married William D. Brewer,[13] John Van Ess was barely able to walk her up the aisle in St. Peter's Church. He died early that summer just before he and Dorothy were able to fulfil their plan to retire and return to America. Boys of the school carried this much-loved man in his coffin several miles to the Makina Cemetery, where George Gosselink and I conducted the burial service. John Van Ess was buried in the land to which he'd given so much of his life. Dorothy Van Ess returned to America shortly afterwards.

After Dorothy left, Beverly and I, with little Anne, moved across the compound into the Van Ess home. But while we were still with the Gosselinks, and Anne was about a year old, she fell from the second floor balcony. Dr. Stanley Mylrea was on hand and examined her. To our huge relief he could find nothing wrong with her. It was felt, by Arabs and

13 William Brewer went on to serve as US ambassador to The Seychelles and then Sudan.

Westerners alike, that angels had saved her from serious injury.

Stanley Mylrea had retired from his position as Chief of the Kuwait Mission Hospital and had come to live with his old friend John Van Ess. He had grown up in Britain but had done his medical degree in America, sent there by the American Mission in Bahrain. He served in the Mission hospital in Kuwait from 1914-1947, before retiring to Basra. Stanley taught Bev Arabic.

On returning to Basra, I had been delighted to discover that my old hunting buddy, Ahmed Nakib had also got married in 1946, to his cousin, Sajida, the daughter of Sayyid Talib. Sajida and Beverly quickly became friends and we two couples spent time together. We were each to have two daughters; theirs were named Haifa and Hind. Ahmed and Sajida also had two sons, Ghassan and Hisham. (Ghassan died in an auto accident while studying at the University of Delaware, and Hisham carries on the family business in Kuwait). Our paths were to continue to meet.

In our Basra home we had three servants: Ghulam, the cook; Haila, Anne's nanny; and Mustafa, the houseboy. We shared the services of Abu Ali, the gardener, with our colleagues, the Gosselinks. Ghulam was of Persian background and reminded me of a Pharaonic mummy. We had a problem with feral cats that were alert for any chance to raid Ghulam's kitchen. I built a cat trap for him, but he was disdainful until one day a cat ran into the kitchen, seized a roasted leg of lamb and dragged it off. Even Ghulam was obliged to admit that drastic measures were required.

I rigged a box held up by a stick with a long string attached. Bait was nailed inside the box, and when the cat entered the string was jerked, pulling away the stick. The box would drop catching the cat, but we had to put bricks on top after the first cat upset the box and escaped. Ghulam remained aloof, as befitted his cook's dignity, until I actually trapped a cat, put it

into an old sack and made suitable disposition. From then on Ghulam was an enthusiast. He would sit on the back step, string in hand, with all the devotion of a committed angler, and soon the cats stopped visiting. But we never persuaded Ghulam to close the new screen door he had requested. He said it was a bother to open and close, so we presumed he wanted it for the prestige it brought rather than for any practical purposes. Other cooks came to admire it; but it was always held open with a brick.

Ghulam and Mustafa got along well. Mustafa was under 20 and came from a small village about two miles away, Kut al-Hajjaj. He rode in each day on his bicycle to which he was devoted. He had saved for two years to buy it and had never taken the wrapping paper off the frame. He was constantly tinkering with it and cleaning it. He served at the table, cleaned the house, did errands and was devoted to little Anne, or Bushra, her Arabic name, which means 'Joyful News'.

We made many friends in those Basra years amongst the Iraqi, American and British communities. There were plenty of social events such as Burns' night, the St. George's Ball and of course tennis. We often went for picnics in the desert beyond Zubair, sitting under the tamarisk trees.

Although it was understood that I would eventually become Principal of the boys' school in Basra, we were asked to go to Bahrain in the spring of 1950 to free Rev. Edwin and Ruth Luidens for their year of furlough. He was pastor of the Community Church serving both Arabic and English congregations there. Bev, little Anne, Mustafa and his bicycle and I sailed from Basra on the British-India ship *Dwarka* with minimal household things, leaving the bulk of our furniture in our Basra colleagues' care to await our return. Since I had needed to finish the Basra school term, the Luidens had already left before we arrived in early June.

After the Luidens' departure, and before our arrival,

another Reformed Church minister and his wife arrived in Bahrain hoping to go to Saudi Arabia. But when they discovered that clergy had no chance of getting an entry visa, they stayed on in the mission, ever-hopeful. I shall call him 'Jim'. He obligingly took on the weekly English language services both at the church in Manama, Bahrain's capital, and in the Bahrain Petroleum Company (BAPCO) camp at Awali, half an hour's drive south in the middle of the island.

Soon after our arrival in Bahrain two westbound Air France DC-4 airliners crashed in the bay on their approach to Bahrain airport, just two days apart, during a sandstorm that persisted over these days. The passengers reportedly included a large number of Indo-Chinese officials who were en route to an unpublicized peace conference with the French in the Pyrenees. A total of 97 people were killed with just four survivors. US Air Force helicopters from Dhahran airbase in Saudi Arabia and US Navy boats helped in the rescue and recovery efforts.

Along with other responsibilities in Bahrain, I was in charge of the Christian graveyard. The Department of Public Works dug mass graves for the victims. This was in humid Gulf weather. The gravediggers struck a coral ledge less than three feet down, and pneumatic drills had to be used to get through it while carpenters hastily constructed dozens of rough coffins. The Catholic priest and I conducted a joint service, since identification of religious affiliations was impossible. Perhaps ignorant of the rapid deterioration that takes place in such damp heat, the airline unfortunately agreed to exhume the remains of those whose families requested it and to fly the families there to witness the proceedings. Some came, but we had to keep them outside the gate, while the gruesome exhumation took place under a cloud of DDT spray. The coffins had been numbered and personal effects were sealed in plastic bags, but even with double pay we had trouble hiring labor for the transfer of remains to sealable coffins. It was a ghastly business.

Before our arrival in Bahrain, a young Palestinian Muslim

from Jaffa, a teacher of English in the government secondary school, had come to my colleague Jim's study and said that he wanted to become a Christian. Jim was delighted and began giving Mohammed Bible lessons and teaching him Reformed Church polity (formal constitution), of all things. Soon after our arrival Jim told me he that he thought that Mohammed was ready to be baptized and asked me to officiate.

Mohammed was a fine young fellow, but I knew Jim was unfamiliar with the Muslim world. He had no idea of the pressures put on a Muslim who chose to become a Christian. He would risk being disinherited and disowned by his family. His father might forbid him entrance to his home. The young man was just not ready for this. I told Jim that I felt it was premature and declined to officiate. He then asked me to take some smaller part in the service. I still felt that I should not take part in a premature baptism. Jim then asked me if he could use the Church. I replied, 'Certainly. It is God's Church, and you are a duly-ordained minister.' Bev and I sat in the congregation while Mohammed was baptized. Afterwards he stood at the door with Jim as those attending shook hands and left. Soon only Bev and I were standing there with Mohammed. Since it was suppertime, we invited him to join us.

Mohammed, Bev, Anne and I had a fun meal together. After coffee Mohammed and I went to my study, and there I shared with him the deepest things in my life. I told him the steps I had taken to put things right as far as humanly possible and how the Cross had then become real to me. Mohammed then opened his heart about things he had done and was still doing. We ended up making a fresh commitment together to do God's will and to change wherever necessary.

The next morning, however, Mohammed told Jim that he had talked with me and had given his life fully to God for the first time and that this was due to Harry and MRA. It was not lost on Jim that this deeper commitment seemed to have come after, and not in conjunction with, the young man's baptism. I

had simply shared with Mohammed my own shortcomings as I faced Christ's standards, and together we had accepted God's forgiveness, praying for His enabling presence to help us live straight. Mohammed began coming to my study each morning to share the thoughts he had noted down. One day Jim's wife looked in from our common veranda, saw Mohammed with his notebook open, rushed in, seized it and ran out. Mohammed's main thought that morning had been to share with Jim and his wife all that he had been seeing about himself and his need for change. I could only imagine what they must have thought when they read Mohammed's private notes.

Jim continued conducting the English language services which was a great help to me, but I found after this extraordinary episode that it was uncomfortable to sit through sermons clearly aimed in my direction using New Testament texts about 'cleverly devised myths' and 'false teachers' who secretly bring in 'destructive heresies'. Although explicit personal references were not made, it was clear to our mission colleagues and others that I was the target. Jim was frantic with what I think must have been jealousy, so much so that my medical colleagues, concerned with Jim's mental state, insisted that I refrain from talking about absolute moral standards and MRA. This posed a serious dilemma for me, but I acceded to their request in the interest of Christian harmony.

Jim and his wife later took Mohammed off to America and arranged for him to be admitted to a Christian college. He graduated, moved away from faith and reverted to his Muslim name. One of the two doctors and his wife later came to the MRA conference center in Switzerland, and over a meal he apologized to me for the ultimatum he and his colleague had issued. They said, 'We were wrong, and you were right.' This was gracious of them, but of course did little to restore Mohammed's faith. I believe that 'Jim' and his wife ended up as missionaries in Latin America.

A year after our arrival in Bahrain our second daughter

Betsy, Elizabeth Jane Almond, was born in the afternoon of June 6. Later Betsy was given the Arabic name 'Donna' which is a special kind of pearl in Bahrain. One evening Betsy's sister, Anne, then three and a half years old, was upstairs watching with great interest as Bev bathed the baby. We had invited two Franciscan priests for supper, something unheard-of in the mission. I entertained them downstairs while the baby's bath proceeded above us. Conversation was a bit strained until Anne came running down the stairs. She put her chin on the arm of the chair of one of the priests, stared up at him and asked with her lisp, 'Did you know that little babieth have no teeth?' That broke the ice and conversation flowed merrily on.

Hussein and A'isha Yateem were long-time friends of the Bahrain Mission Hospital. He was a leading merchant and an adviser to the Ruler of Bahrain, Sheikh Salman Al-Khalifa. I would call on Hussein in his bazaar office for a coffee from time to time, and we became friends – as did Bev and A'isha. In the summer of 1953 the young sons of the Ruler of Bahrain were given to Hussein's care for a trip to Europe. After visiting their father's horses in England they visited the MRA conference center at Caux, at Hussein's suggestion. Both Sheikh Issa bin Salman (who later became ruler) and his brother Sheikh Khalifa were in the party. Just below the main building at the MRA Center, Mountain House, is a curved promenade with a spectacular view of the sunsets to the west over Lausanne and Geneva, and

Crown Prince Issa of Bahrain and his brother Sheikh Khalifa

of the snow-capped Dents du Midi to the southeast. It was a moving sight, I was told, to see the young princes and their party kneeling there for evening prayers.

Working with my medical colleagues in Bahrain, Drs. Jerry Nykerk and Harold Storm, was a joy. One vivid memory of that teamwork came out of an invitation to Dr. Storm from Sheikh Abdullah bin Jelawi, Governor of al-Hasa Province on the east coast of the Arabian peninsula, to bring a medical team to Hofuf, the provincial capital. The Saudi Arabian province of al-Hasa includes the Dhahran headquarters of the Arabian-American Oil Company (ARAMCO) and the port of al-Khobar. There was no bridge to the mainland from Bahrain in those days and so we hired a wooden, diesel-powered boat about 50 foot long to carry the party of six, our luggage and medical equipment to al-Khobar on the mainland. I went along as the doctor's 'secretary'.

The Governor made available to us a large house, built around a central courtyard. It faced one of the city's gates and the second story balcony looked out over the camel parking area, a place of grunts and snorts. Outpatients gathered in the courtyard for treatment in the morning, and later the doctor and nurse made house calls as needed. While the medical team plied their trade I was free to roam the bazaar, making sure that I was away when the muezzin sounded the noon prayer call and the religious police used bamboo sticks to 'encourage' any slackers to close shop and hurry along to the nearest mosque.

Among the people I met while ambling along in the bazaar was a seller of cloth. He sat cross-legged in his small shop surrounded by large bolts of cloth of every color and design imaginable. I greeted him with 'salaam aleikum', and he replied 'wa aleikum es-salaam. Tafadhal (come on in).' He asked what had brought me to Hofuf, and I said I had taken the opportunity of coming with the doctor to ask Muslim help in getting America to live what we preached. He was quite

surprised to hear this and said that he had never heard an American talk in those terms before. He then invited me to his home for a coffee. One advantage to this custom of 'having a coffee' is the time it gives for conversation – quite different from a drive-thru drink at 'Dunkin' Donuts'. Given this sense of leisure we were able to talk over what absolute moral standards meant and what changes they suggested for us and our countries.

Such an invitation to coffee is not issued lightly. It is a ceremony. A fire is lit. Coffee beans are roasted over the flame in a large flat iron spoon. Then the roasted beans are carefully poured into a brass mortar and ground with the pestle. The grounds are poured into a large, beaked brass coffee pot and boiled, often with cardamom seed for flavor. An expert coffee man produces a rhythm with his grinding that tells those within earshot of the progress of coffee preparation so that the neighbors can come. The lasting impression made by such visits was of the generous hospitality of the people.

On another memorable visit I went again as the doctor's secretary to Doha, the capital of Qatar, which sticks out like a thumb from the hand of the Arabian peninsula. Here Harold Storm was faced with a tough decision. After seeing a large number of out-patients he was asked to examine a group of slaves abducted from Africa. The merchant wanted to be sure that his 'merchandise' was in good condition. This posed a difficult moral dilemma. The Hippocratic oath obliged Storm to care for the sick, but did doing so in this case imply support of the institution of slavery? Harold stuck to his oath, examined the people and fortunately found all in good health. He also made known his views on the practice of trafficking in human beings. In spite of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, signed by most nations in 1948, tragically, at that time in the early 1950s, slavery was still very much in evidence in that part of the world.

Starting while we were in Basra, and increasingly so in

Bahrain, Bev and I became uneasy about our missionary work. Some of our school's graduates would return for talks. As friendships deepened and trust was built their real feelings came out. 'You are a missionary. You might just as well have a sign hung from your neck saying, "Mine is better than yours, and you would be well-advised to drop yours and accept mine".' They would then recite the litany of America's faults and ask, 'Why don't you go home and get America to live what she preaches?' I could only reply that what they said was for the most part true, and I would invite them to help us change. However, argument is futile. You may win the argument but you can lose a friend.

Any Westerner in the Muslim world carries the unintended baggage of the Crusades, Western economic imperialism, and the way unnatural national boundaries had been imposed by the West following the Treaty of Versailles in 1919. The question in Bev's and my mind was whether being a missionary was the most effective way any more, or whether building trust between peoples and helping each other live our respective faiths was not more to the point.

Our visits each summer to the MRA conferences at Caux had shown us this alternative approach which had become increasingly attractive to us.

We went to the MRA Caux assembly as usual in the summer of 1951 and suddenly the need for a decision was heightened. There was a nursery school for the children during the day while the conference sessions were going on, and Anne joined it. We were quite surprised one day when Anne informed us that she thought that God did not want her to have nap time with the other children any more. Although this sounded very strange, there was something in the way she said it that made us feel it was more than a childish whim, and so we agreed.

Anne had not seemed very well for a while and was often very hot at night, leading one doctor to conclude that she was suffering with malaria. However a Dutch physician friend at

Caux, Dick van Tetterode, advised us to pursue the matter further. We consulted a Swiss pulmonary specialist, Dr. Steiner, in Lausanne, and it was determined that Anne had a primary lesion of tuberculosis on one lung – not good for a child, especially at only three and half years old.

At that time the recommended treatment for TB was bed rest, fresh mountain air, sunshine and a healthy diet. Dr. Steiner was sure that was what Anne needed, and he told us firmly, 'You must not take that child back to the miasma of the Gulf.' So in the summer of 1951 Anne was placed in a TB clinique (sanitarium) called 'Les Mélèzes' in the mountain town of Leysin above the Rhone valley, about one hour's drive from Caux. It was a painful experience to leave her in a strange place, but we felt she was in God's hands and that this place was what she needed to restore her health. The proprietors of 'Les Mélèzes', Nicolas and Ludmilla Linden, were White Russian exiles who really took little Anne into their hearts. They could not have been more caring and they became good friends.

Of course, Bev and I were faced with a dilemma: what to do regarding our responsibilities towards the mission whilst meeting our family needs. We still had two years left of a seven year first term, but we felt we couldn't return to the Gulf because of Anne's health. At the same time, as I have said, we were already having doubts about continuing with the mission. We loved Iraq and our life with friends and colleagues there, and I had looked forward with relish to the responsibility of the school. On the other hand, giving a local head man money so that we could go to his village, tell Bible stories, hand out tracts and drink tea did not seem to us the best way to win people's hearts and minds. The whole unfortunate event with Jim and Mohammed added to our concerns and misgivings.

We were more and more convinced that for us MRA was the way to express our Christianity in today's world. MRA's philosophy meant changing the world by starting with oneself

and not with 'them', the other fellow, party, race or nation. After all, when Jesus was asked, 'Who is my neighbor?' he turned the question around by asking in effect, 'To whom are you a neighbor?'

It had begun to dawn on us that we needed help from the very people we were trying to convert, and that truly humble Westerners would receive a warm welcome everywhere. We began to see that we could listen to God together and trust Him to lead us into His truth in His timing and in His way. We were finding that it takes more faith to trust the Holy Spirit to speak in others' hearts, if they will start listening, than it requires trying to convert people in our way and in our timing. We were discovering that God's leading and timing often proves quite different from our own. It was the way to include all faiths and also people of no faith – indeed all who wanted a better, peaceful and just world, and to do so without sacrificing or muting our own Christian convictions. Finally Bev and I were sure that giving our full time as volunteers with MRA was the right way forward for us. We decided to resign from the mission.

The Mission Board was generous. They paid Anne's medical expenses and our eventual passages home to America. The parting from our mission families and friends was painful, but we kept up contacts as best we could over the years since.

Thus we started to work with Moral Re-Armament, and to begin with were based in Caux, Switzerland where Bev and little Betsy stayed during the winter of 1951-52 while Anne was in the clinique at Leysin. A happy event in the summer of 1951 was the christening of Betsy (Elizabeth Jane) by Frank Buchman, along with three other babies, in a ceremony in the main hall of Mountain House, Caux, against the backdrop of the mountains of Haute Savoie.[14]

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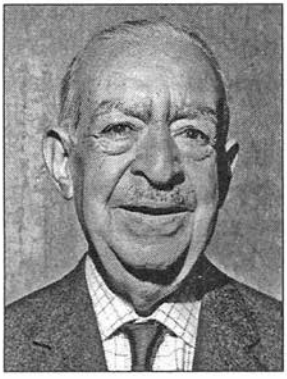
14 The other children baptized that day were Anne (nee Vickers) Evans, Jean-Marc Duckert and Seumas (Jim) Mackay.

6

TURKEY

During the winter of 1951-52, while Anne was in the sanitarium, I took the opportunity to make some trips with MRA colleagues who had for some time been concerned with Middle East matters.

An older British MRA friend, Francis Goulding, and I went to Istanbul in September 1951. Francis had been connected with the Oxford Group since his Oxford student days in the late 1920s. A superb linguist, he was an educator who had worked in Iran and many other countries. Friends had given us an introduction to Ahmet Emin Yalman, owner and editor of the prominent Turkish daily newspaper, *Vatan* (The Nation). Yalman had reserved rooms for us in the Pera Palas Hotel, a real old-world hotel. The rooms were dark, heavily-curtained, high-ceilinged and spacious.



Ahmet Emin Yalman

Ahmet Emin Bey, as Yalman was usually respectfully called, had met MRA through visits to Caux and had taken bold steps to try to heal the deep historic feelings that divided Greece and Turkey. He had worked with his friend, a distinguished elder statesman, Hamdi Suphi Tanriover, to arrange a reception in Tanriover's garden for the Ecumenical Patriarch of the Greek Orthodox Church, His All-Holiness

Athenagoras, who lived in Istanbul, to meet Turkish leaders. Mistrust and fear both in the Turkish government and in the Orthodox community had greatly restricted the Orthodox Church, and Yalman's and Tanriover's initiative began a shift in these attitudes.

Just prior to our arrival our host had been called to accompany Turkish Prime Minister Menderes on an official visit to Greece. Yalman had taken such effective steps toward healing the old Greco-Turk animosity and mistrust that he had accepted an invitation to write major articles for Greek papers.

Yalman introduced us to Dr. Fakhrettin, a psychiatrist and Governor of Istanbul who received us most cordially. He had been to Caux in his earlier capacity as ambassador to Switzerland.

Yalman also wanted us to meet the members of the Inter-Parliamentary Union which was meeting that year in Turkey, and arranged through Dr. Fuad Koprulu, the Foreign Minister, for us to be included with the IPU delegates for an outing up the Bosphorus to the Black Sea. Being on board with the delegates offered a great opportunity to meet people and invite them to Caux. All wore name and country tags so Francis and I developed a system. Francis was fluent in Farsi and we sought out the delegates from Iran. Approaching them I read the name tag and said, 'I would like to introduce my friend, Francis Goulding.' Francis then greeted them in good Farsi as I stood back. In that way we met General Nakhdjavan, recently retired from commanding Iran's Northern Zone, and Abulfazl Hazeghi, who represented Jahrom in the Iranian Parliament. These men became our firm friends over the coming years. Hazeghi made several visits to Caux, often bringing fellow Iranians with him.

After my first visit to Turkey with Francis, I returned to the family in Switzerland, and looked for further ways to develop my contacts with and knowledge of the Middle East.

During Bev's and my visit to Caux in the summer of 1949,

Ismail Izzet Hassan

I had come to know Ismail Izzet Hassan, a nabil of the royal family of Egypt. The first-born son of the monarch was an 'emir' and in direct line to the throne. Other sons were titled 'nabil' and were not in the royal succession. Born in St. Moritz in the Swiss Engadine, Ismail spoke perfect German and Swiss German, as well as English, Arabic, French and Turkish. He would add, 'And I wouldn't starve in an Italian restaurant'. He used to joke that 'MRA caught me between Music and Chinese.' He had received a doctorate in musicology from Zurich University.

Ismail came to Caux as a result of his friendship with a Swiss family living in Alexandria, Karl Leonard and Marianne Burckhardt. Karl was a descendant of the 19th century Swiss explorer of the Arabian peninsula, Johann Ludwig Burckhardt, and he represented Reinhardt & Co. in Egypt, highly respected cotton brokers. The Burckhardts used their home to welcome and help guests, staff, friends and neighbors, who met together at least once a week, to share thoughts about God's plan for them, their families and the nation.

It was there in the Burckhardt home that Ismail, concerned about his country, decided to measure his life by the absolute moral standards. As a Muslim he agreed that they were at the core of the life his religion demanded of him. He then decided to put things right where he needed to. He gave land to the peasants (fellahin) who lived on his property. He restored to the National Bank for monies illegally transferred to a Swiss account, taking pains not to involve others. Ismail also deposited a large sum in Egyptian pounds in the National Bank to be used for the work of Moral Re-Armament in

Egypt. He was aided in these acts of restitution by Hussein Bey Fahmy, the Minister of Finance, who was later appointed Custodian of the Royal Properties by the Revolutionary Council of Egypt.

Ismail also faced the bitterness in his heart regarding King Farouk whom he frequently called 'my illustrious cousin'. Ismail held resentment towards the king because he had denied the required royal consent for Ismail's proposed marriage, although he himself was making headlines with his own marriages and liaisons. At that refusal a bomb of bitterness had exploded in Ismail's heart towards the king. Now he knew he should seek an audience and apologize. Farouk was deeply moved. He said, 'This means a lot to you, does it not Ismail? What is it that means so much?' Ismail's reply was, 'I have found real friends.' 'Real friends,' sighed the king; 'I wonder if such exist.'

These steps were taken, it is important to note, well before the Egyptian Revolution of July 1952 when King Farouk was forced into exile.[15]

Ismail had come to Caux at the Burckhardts' suggestion, wanting to find what to do next with his life. He had had a personal experience of change. Now he wanted to put that experience to use. I too was looking for my own and my family's next steps. I had a general sense of calling to the Muslim world, the Middle East and its relationship with America.

With encouragement from Francis Goulding, Ismail and I teamed up, and in November 1951, the two of us, along with one or two others, went by car from Caux to Paris. The UN was convening its General Assembly that year in Paris, in the Palais Chaillot. One of our traveling group was Deva Surya

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15 The coup was led by General Muhammad Naguib who became President, followed after a later power struggle by Gamal Abdel Nasser.

Sena of Ceylon, now Sri Lanka. He was a distinguished musician who was using his talents to try to build understanding between East and West. At the French border post in the Jura Mountains it transpired that Surya did not have the required French visa. To his fellow-passengers' amazement, to say nothing of the consternation of the poor French immigration officer, Surya burst into a flood of Sinhalese, clearly interspersed with 'United Nations' and 'General Assembly'. The puzzled border officer waved us through into France. Ismail, Surya and I shared a room in the Hotel Farnese near the Place des Etats Unis not far from the Palais.

One of Frank Buchman's most senior American colleagues, H. Kenaston Twitchell, was with the American delegation to the UN General Assembly, as adviser to his father-in-law, Senator Alexander Smith. Twitchell introduced us to Dr. M. Fadhel Jamali, the Foreign Minister of Iraq and Vice President of the General Assembly. Thus began a valued and lifelong friendship with a great Iraqi statesman.

The Assistant Secretary-General of the Arab League, Abdul Mun'eim Mustafa, had been Secretary to Izzet Pasha, Ismail's grandfather, when he was Egyptian ambassador to London. At Abdul Mun'eim Bey's invitation we attended a reception for the heads of Arab delegations, given by Abdur Rahman Azzam Pasha, the Secretary General of the Arab League. There we met the Egyptian Foreign Minister, Salah ed-Din Pasha, who was leading his delegation to the General Assembly. Both Azzam and Salah ed-Din accepted our invitation to the New Year conference at Caux. In the event Azzam was not well enough to go and he sent his secretary, Adel Thabet Bey, an old friend of Ismail, to read the message he had prepared. It began:

> 'Your movement has attracted my attention only recently, and by studying it I have felt that it is in complete harmony with my belief as a Muslim. I can support it in that capacity with the full consciousness that I am obeying the doctrines of Islam.'

Azzam continued with a statement of his beliefs as a Muslim which are well expressed in his book, *The Eternal Message of Muhammad* (Devin Adair, New York, 1964).

That winter was a time of great tension in the Middle East with Egyptians in conflict with British soldiers based at the Suez Canal. Dr. Buchman was in Caux when the Egyptian party arrived, and he initially asked his British friends to avoid meeting these guests. He did not want to put the Egyptians in an embarrassing situation, so the British scooted around corners when they spied Egyptians coming along the corridors.

Salah ed-Din Pasha and his associates joined Buchman for tea one afternoon, and Buchman inquired whether they were comfortable and whether they had any questions. They replied that they were very comfortable indeed and exclaimed over the magnificent view of the Dents du Midi and the Lake of Geneva below. But they said they had one question, 'Are there any British here?' 'Oh yes, shoals of them.' replied Buchman. The Foreign Minister asked, 'Do you think I might meet them?' 'Are you sure you want to?' asked Buchman. Salah ed-Din said, 'I would very much like to meet any British who work with MRA.' So at tea the next day the Egyptian party met Peter Howard, the well-known British journalist, the cricket-player Dickie Dodds, and several others. It was a rich time of honesty, apology and humor from the British. It exemplified the kind of relationship that can be built on the basis of a shared faith in God.

I went to Turkey again in May 1952, this time with Ismail. In God's amazing timing the Burckhardts unexpectedly sent us money that covered our tickets although they had no intimation of our plans.

Ismail was a devout Muslim. Rooming with him I discovered that he said his prayers regularly and read his Qur'an every day. At the end of his formal prayer he would sit with open hands to receive God's leading. He also had a delicious sense of humor and was a devoted reader of the *Nebelspalter*,

the leading magazine of Swiss humor. In fact it was seeing his future wife, Eleanor, reading that magazine in a St. Moritz hotel that several years later led to their meeting and marriage.

The Egyptian royal family had its roots in Turkey. The Khedive Mohammed Ali, founder of the Egyptian royal dynasty, had been a Macedonian Turkish soldier. Ismail and I went first to Istanbul, where we met his cousins, aunts and uncles. They lived in lovely villas overlooking the Bosphorus. These visits gave Ismail the occasion to share his new experience, explain what it meant to him and to tell of the steps he had taken in restitution. I had much to learn about how God works so often in spite of me, and Ismail taught me a lot. There were very practical points under the heading of how to be polite in the Middle East: do not cross your legs in polite society, only your ankles; never expose the sole of one's foot to others; defer to others in going through doors, eat with your right hand only.

Ahmet Emin Yalman received us with his customary gracious hospitality. He introduced us to many friends and again fixed appointments for us to be received by the Greek Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras at the Ecumenical Patriarchate; and by His Excellency Hamdi Suphi Tanriover in the beautiful garden at his home.

The Ecumenical Patriarchate is a tiny enclave in the Fener district of Istanbul overlooking the Golden Horn, a deep inlet dividing the city and alive with bustling water traffic. The Patriarch arranged for Ismail, a devout Muslim, to write an article about Caux and MRA for the Patriarchate newspaper. In response to an invitation to the Assembly at Caux, His Holiness said, 'I would dearly like to come. Unfortunately I am only one member of the Holy Synod whose consent must be given. It is true that I am 'first among equals', but some of the others are *very* equal.' A huge man with a great gray beard, His Holiness's farewell hug was an experience never to be forgotten.

Ismail Hassan (center) at Caux with three Turkish trade union leaders, with Francis Goulding (right)

In Ankara the Egyptian ambassador to Turkey came to call on Ismail at our hotel. He had been told of Ismail's presence by an aunt in Istanbul. As we waited in the lobby the ambassador's sedan drew up to the curb and Ismail hurried in his courtly manner to greet him at the door. It was a revolving door, and as Ismail went out through one side the ambassador, a rather short man, spun through the other part. They both looked a bit bewildered, especially so when Ambassador Hakki mistook me for the prince. But recovery was quick. We sorted ourselves out and protocol was established.

Thanks to introductions from Yalman and Dr. Gokay, the Governor of Istanbul, we met others in Ankara. Senator Suat Hayri Urguplu represented his country at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, and from there had attended a conference at Caux. Dr. Urguplu later became Prime Minister and, along with leaders in other nations, had nominated Dr. Buchman for the Nobel Peace Prize, as had Dr. Fuat Koprulu, the Foreign Minister of Turkey at that time. Dr. Leimgruber, former Chancellor of the Swiss Confederation, was in Ankara at the time of our visit, as advisor to the Turkish Government

on parliamentary procedures. It was a pleasure to work with him and to have his advice on our various interviews.

After Turkey, Ismail and I spent a few days in Beirut. Many Lebanese had homes and businesses in Egypt and Ismail had natural contacts with them. There we met Alfred Naccache, the first President of the Lebanese Republic, who would become a staunch friend over the years. Ismail and I were also cordially received by Prime Minister Abdullah Yafi and by Dr. Butros Dib, then Director General of Information, a contact that would flourish some years later.

7

NEW YORK AND THE UN

By June of 1952 Anne was pronounced free of tuberculosis and rejoined the family at Caux. She was now four and a half and had been in the clinic for nine months. Despite Bev visiting her about once a month during that period, Anne returned to us speaking French with a Russian accent, and had forgotten almost all her Arabic *and* much of her English – quite a challenge in communication for the family!

We felt it was time for Anne and Betsy to meet their grandparents. Indeed, neither of the girls had yet seen America. So for this and other reasons we returned to the United States in November 1952, sailing from Le Havre on the Holland-America Line's *Ryndam* bound for New York via Halifax, Nova Scotia. We had invited Ellen Kongshaug, a young Danish woman, to come with us from Caux, making a party of five.

It was a stormy North Atlantic passage. All of us were quite seasick, except for bouncing Betsy who was 17 months old, so the calm of Halifax harbor was very welcome. In New York harbor we docked at Hoboken on the west bank of the Hudson River. We were met by Bev's parents and by Barclay and 'Goodie' Farr with their station wagon and the very generous offer of a spacious home for us to use as our own. The Farrs had been the first couple in America to work with Buchman. Goodie was a founding member of the American Institute of Interior Decorators. The home they offered us was on their estate in West Orange, New Jersey, atop First Mountain looking

east to the New York skyline. We were not far from my parents, and Bev's aunt and uncle also lived a few miles away. Bev's sister and brother-in-law, Myra and Bill Prindle, who lived in Connecticut, gave us their old Pontiac convertible, so we had more than we could have dreamed of having as we arrived in America.

Our time as the Farrs' guests turned out to be for less than a year because, after spending much of the summer of 1953 at the Mackinac MRA summer conference, we were invited to move to the MRA center in New York State. 'Dellwood', a 276 acre estate in Mount Kisco, NY, about an hour's drive north of New York City, had been given to MRA by Mrs. John Henry Hammond.[16] It included six one-family cottages and two larger houses.

Most weekdays I would go into Manhattan, to the MRA office at 640 Fifth Avenue, next to Rockefeller Center. I was accredited by the UN as a reporter for the MRA illustrated monthly *New World News*, which allowed me the run of the UN buildings. My colleagues and I met many friends there, and they introduced us to other delegates and UN Secretariat staff.

Dellwood, with its proximity to New York City, served admirably as an informal meeting place, and many delegates from the UN came at weekends. The rural setting proved an ideal venue for them to meet Americans of all shapes and sizes, unencumbered by UN committee agenda or by protocol. It also offered the opportunity for long walks and talks in the fresh air. A trade union leader from New York called Dellwood his 'filling station', the place where he could have his spiritual batteries recharged, renew his vision for the world and find the role he and his union could play.

Our friendship with Dr. Fadhel Jamali, whom Ismail Hassan and I had first met in Paris in 1951, was quickly

16 Mrs. Hammond was a widow with links to the Vanderbilt fortune.

UN colleagues *L-R*: Abdul Mun'eim Rifa'i, Jordanian Ambassador; Fadhel Jamali, Foreign Minister of Iraq; Mahmoud Fawzi, Foreign Minister of Egypt; Charles Malik, Foreign Minister of Lebanon

renewed. We learned that as a junior official in Iraq's Ministry of Foreign Affairs he had signed the UN Charter for his country in San Francisco in 1945. Now in the 1950s, as Foreign Minister, Dr. Jamali led Iraqi delegations at least eight times to the UN General Assemblies and brought many of his delegations and others to Dellwood for weekends.

In the late 1950s plans were made for a new interstate highway to go through Westchester County, NY, with one proposed route going through MRA's Dellwood property. This route would also have split the holdings of one or two substantial citizens but Dellwood was the only place that could legitimately argue that it should be spared because of the public service that it was rendering.

Dr. Jamali was due to dock in New York with his UN delegation on the very day of a crucial hearing on the routing of this highway. In a telephone conversation with Dr. Buchman, who was in Arizona, Buchman suggested I meet Jamali at the dock and ask him to come and speak for Dellwood at the Zoning Board hearing that evening. I would never have

thought of inviting a leading UN figure to sit through tedious discussions about the location of garages and property lines, but Buchman had a way of getting on to something. I drove in to New York and met the liner at the 57th Street dock.

To my amazement Jamali accepted my proposal with delight and, after giving instructions to his delegation, he got into the car and we drove to Dellwood. After dinner we went on to the Mount Kisco town offices for the Zoning Board meeting. Dellwood and the impact of the proposed route were last on the agenda, and so we sat through a list of routine items. Finally Jamali was introduced by Ray F. Purdy, one of the directors of MRA, USA. Jamali began by thanking the Board for permitting him to attend. He said he had studied American democracy at Columbia University in theory, but that this was the first time he had been privileged to see it operate on the local level. He then proceeded to give an eloquent statement of the enormous contribution Dellwood was making to the international community as well as locally. He asked the Board to take these factors into consideration in their decision. When the decision was finally made known, Dellwood was spared. In the event the highway construction only began in 1964.

Also in the late 1950s a young Sudanese by the name of Ahmed al-Mahdi was studying at Oxford University. His older brother, Sadiq, would later become Prime Minister of Sudan. They are descendants of Muhammad Ahmad, the 19th century founder of the al-Mahdi dynasty and the Ansar religious order. Ahmed was simultaneously invited, at Oxford, to attend both a communist youth conference in Moscow and the MRA assembly on Mackinac Island, Michigan. He chose to go to Mackinac, and en route to Michigan he and his party stopped at Dellwood, where they were invited to a barbeque. The informality of the occasion and the good food all played a part in winning this young Muslim student to make new decisions, renewing his faith in God's leading and re-evaluating his life.

He has since held cabinet posts in Sudan and has played an important role in trying to bring change in his country. At present he is the Imam of the Ansar religious order.

General Hayauddin, the Military Counselor at the Pakistan Embassy in Washington, was a member of his UN delegation in 1957. We met in the UN delegates' lounge one day, and he introduced us to a friend in the Greek delegation, Zenon Rossides, who was a Cypriot and Archbishop Makarios' legal adviser.[17] Cyprus was not yet independent from British rule, and so the Greeks had made Rossides a member of their delegation to afford Cyprus a voice in UN circles.

Rossides came to the MRA summer conference on Mackinac Island in 1958 and, after introducing several of us to Archbishop Makarios in New York, he and Mrs. Rossides represented the archbishop at an MRA conference in Los Angeles during the winter of 1958-59. There was a private moment of painful honesty when Mrs. Rossides told her husband that he sometimes treated her the way he felt the British treated him. His experience in Los Angeles led to Rossides meeting with British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan in London, and eventually to the Zurich Agreement of 1959 which, while it may have fallen short of fulfilling all Cypriot aspirations, did stop the bloodshed at that time and paved the way for Cypriot independence in 1960.[18]

Another UN personality I got to know during those years was Colonel Frank Begley, USAF retd., who for a time in the 1950s was head of security at the UN headquarters. Over lunch one day he described to me his terrible experience in Palestine in 1948. Begley was in charge of the detail guarding

17 Archbishop Makarios III was not only the leader of the Orthodox Church in Cyprus but emerged as the political leader of the Greek Cypriot cause.

18 For the fuller story of these events associated with Rossides see A.R.K. Mackenzie's memoir, *Faith in Diplomacy;* and *Hope Never Dies – The Grandy Story*; both published by Caux Books (2002 and 2005)

Folke Bernadotte, the Swedish Count who had been appointed special UN Mediator by the UN General Assembly following the outbreak of war in Palestine in May, 1948.

That September, Bernadotte was in Jerusalem trying to bring about a ceasefire. Hanna Asfour, a Palestinian lawyer resident in Haifa, until he and his family were forced to flee to Beirut in the 1948 war, was legal counsel for the Arab Trade Unions, and had worked out a draft peace agreement with Bernadotte. The Count, as UN Mediator, was taking this document by car to Jerusalem for signature by the Jewish leaders, having shown it for approval to the responsible UN officials. A jeep blocking the road stopped his official car. Begley was seated in the front of the car. Two armed men in Israeli army uniforms approached the car. It subsequently turned out that they were members of the notorious Stern Gang. One of the men asked Begley if this was the Mediator's car. Begley replied that the Count was there in the rear seat, whereupon one of the men put the muzzle of his Sten gun through the open window and sprayed the Mediator with gun fire. Begley rushed the Count to the nearest hospital, but he was dead on arrival. Begley himself was badly burnt in the face by the gun flash as he tried to grapple with the assailants. Colonel Andre Serot, a French member of the UN truce mission accompanying Bernadotte, was also killed in the car. The assassins escaped and were never apprehended. It was a horrible beginning to peace negotiations. [19]

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19 Further details are available from UN Archives in the Report of Swedish General Aage Lundström, Chief of Staff of the UN Truce Supervision and Personal Representative of the Mediator. See also the *Time* magazine report of September 27, 1948, which also recounts this tragic event.

8

PALESTINE AND THE CREATION OF ISRAEL

In early 1944 I had traveled up through coastal Palestine, through Tel Aviv at night, and spent a day in Haifa and the Galilee; I later visited East Jerusalem twice in the mid-1960s, before the 1967 war. Nevertheless, despite these visits I have not visited the state of Israel, but I am glad that my daughter Anne, with her husband, has visited Israel twice.

Having lived in the Arab world for many years, I became deeply aware of how Arabs felt about the creation of the state of Israel and how they felt it had been forced upon them. The Palestinians came to use the word 'naqba' (disaster) to describe what they saw as a huge set-back in their own aspirations. In this chapter I give some background and personal insights, and report conversations that I was privy to concerning these developments.

After attending the Versailles Treaty meetings in 1919, President Wilson was determined to pursue the ideal of self-determination and so formed the King-Crane Commission to see what the people in the Middle East really wanted. Wilson hoped that the Commission would be adopted by other nations but in the end it was just an American initiative. Dr. Henry King was a theologian and President of Oberlin College. Charles R. Crane was a wealthy plumbing manufacturer who had given generously to Wilson's presidential

campaign. In brief, the Commission's report had three recommendations: 1) That America be given mandatory responsibility for the State of Syria-Palestine with Emir Feisal as King. 2) That Jewish immigration to Palestine be largely curtailed. 3) That mandatory power be granted to Britain for Iraq, 'since it is unlikely that America could or would do so'.[20]

The King-Crane Commission was not taken seriously in Europe. There were facts on the ground to be considered. The British army under General Allenby, working with the Arab insurgency, had pushed the Turks out of the Arab Middle East, taking control of Jerusalem in December 1917. Under the Sykes-Picot Agreement the British and French had, in 1916, secretly agreed to share control of the Arab lands, despite promises of independence being made by Colonel T.E. Lawrence and others to the Arab leaders in return for their support. In October 1918, a French governor was installed in Beirut. Furthermore, just days after the King-Crane report landed on Wilson's desk in October 1919, the President suffered a major stroke from which he never fully recovered. The San Remo conference of April, 1920 confirmed the Anglo-French carve-up.

The King-Crane report did not become public until 1922, after President Wilson had left office. It is interesting now however, to look back at the King-Crane recommendations. In 1919 the Arabs had quickly, and understandably, become distrustful of the French and British, and regarded the largely unknown Americans as a less problematic mandatory power. Tensions were already growing between Jewish immigrants and local Arabs in Palestine, but no one then foresaw the flood of immigrants that would result from the Nazis coming to power in Germany in 1933, and the subsequent Holocaust.

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20 The text of the King-Crane Report can be found in The Arab Awakening; the Story of the Arab National Movement, by George Antonius (1938).

The Commission report surmising that America would not be willing to be responsible for Iraq makes ironic reading today.

The British, who were mandated to bring Palestine to full independence, had also unilaterally promised to 'look with favor upon the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine'. It is fitting to quote the Balfour Declaration here in full:[21]

> 'His Majesty's Government views with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the right and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.' (British Foreign Office, 1917).

The 'clearly understood' clause seems to have dropped from the collective memory, and to have referred to the predominantly Arab population as 'non-Jewish communities' was unnecessary circumlocution.

Following his commission work, Charles Crane continued his interest in the Middle East for the next two decades, making several extended trips. On one of these, in 1929, he visited the American Mission in Basra along with his son John who was acting as chauffeur. Intrigued with what Crane was doing, the Rev. Henry Bilkert offered to accompany the Cranes on to Kuwait to introduce them and help with translation. Although this was not part of his official duties Bilkert had the approval of his mission colleagues. Crane had an idiosyncrasy in that he always sat in the back right-hand seat of his limousine. About halfway there, as they neared the Kuwait-Iraq border, Crane said that it was ridiculous for him to insist on a particular seat and he and Bilkert exchanged

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21 The Earl of Balfour was British Foreign Secretary, and former Prime Minister.

places. Very soon after that as they neared the Mutla, a rocky pass from which the track began its descent to the Bay and the city of Kuwait, a shot rang out. The bullet hit Bilkert, who was now in Crane's usual seat, and severed his spine. They rushed on to Kuwait City and the American Mission Hospital but it was too late. Henry Bilkert was dead on arrival.

Bazaar rumor soon picked up and circulated the name and tribe of the rifleman so that the hospital staff quickly learned who he was. Some time after the shooting the man who had fired the shot was admitted with acute appendicitis to the Mission Hospital under an assumed name. The Kuwaitis on the staff told the surgeon, Dr. Stanley Mylrea, Chief of the Kuwait Mission Hospital, who his patient was. Mylrea went ahead and operated on the man with normal medical procedure. When the time came to discharge him, Mylrea gave him some medication and called him by his right name. The man was deeply shaken. 'Wallahi'(by God!), exclaimed the Bedu. 'Do you mean to say you had me on the table, asleep, with your knife in your hand over my belly and you knew even then that I had shot your friend?' 'Yes,' said the surgeon, 'I knew, but our Lord sent us to heal, not to kill.' The Bedu departed, considerably shaken, and his story, leaving little to the imagination, was soon on the bazaar grapevine. There was no evidence that anyone was deliberately trying to kill Charles Crane. It was of course a tragedy for Mrs. Bilkert. The couple had been missionaries in the area since 1917. I was told this story by Stanley Mylrea himself when, many years later, he lived at the Basra Mission.[22]

Crane's regard for the Middle East was not impaired. In early 1931 Crane met Abdul Aziz Ibn Sa'ud, the year before he consolidated his Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Suspicious of Westerners, Abdul Aziz nevertheless had an openness to Amer-

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22 The story is also told by W. Idris Jones in the journal *The Muslim World* 19 (3), 287–290, (1929).

icans because of his encounters with American missionary doctors. Probably the first American Abdul Aziz had met had been Stanley Mylrea, when several of his men were treated for malaria by Mylrea in 1914. Then in 1923 Louis Dame, another missionary doctor based at the Bahrain Mission, had ridden 40 hours on a camel to Riyadh to cure Abdul Aziz of a serious infection.

Crane offered personally to finance a geological survey of Saudi Arabia by an American engineer, Karl S. Twitchell.[23] At that time the area was poor, with few known resources. The king accepted the offer and Twitchell was commissioned to explore for water and minerals, arriving in Jeddah just weeks later. His report on water was disappointing but he found some gold and recommended a more extensive survey. As to the potential for oil, he advised awaiting the results of the prospecting then under way in Bahrain by Standard Oil of California (Socal).

This proved out in 1932, and Twitchell went back to America to seek corporate interest in developing Saudi exploration. He returned to Saudi Arabia in 1933 with a Socal team to begin negotiations, and an agreement was signed that year. It was a risky venture for the American company because America was just beginning to recover from the Wall Street crash of 1929, but thus began the long economic relationship between Saudi Arabia and the United States. Many years later I visited Karl Twitchell at his home in Byram, Connecticut and was able to verify the facts with this hospitable gentleman.

Meanwhile, in the British mandated territory of Palestine, fighting broke out between Jews and Arabs in the 1930s. The British became increasingly frustrated, bearing much responsibility themselves in my opinion, because of conflicting promises made to both Arabs and Jews.

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23 Karl Twitchell was a cousin of Kenaston Twitchell, one of the pioneers of MRA in America.

When I transited Cairo on my way home in June 1946 and met John Badeau, the President of the American University in Cairo, I remember him telling me of a meeting at which he had been present at the White House earlier that year. William Eddy, the American Minister in Jeddah, and Lowell Pinkerton, the American Minister to Lebanon and a former Consul General in Jerusalem, were also present. Bill Eddy, son of missionary parents and a retired Marine Colonel who spoke fluent Arabic, had interpreted for President Roosevelt and King Abdul Aziz ibn Sa'ud when the two heads of state had met on the deck of the US cruiser *Quincy* in the Red Sea in February, 1945.

These men were shown into the White House Press Room where they were handed a draft statement for the press, which President Truman proposed to release. He wanted their advice. Thousands of Jews had been detained in Cyprus by the British for attempting to enter the mandated territory of Palestine without permits. Some vessels packed with Jewish refugees from Europe had already been beached in Palestine allowing the refugees to pour ashore against British dictates. The situation was explosive, and there was already violence between Arab and Jewish groups. Truman's draft release said, in brief, that America urged Britain to release thousands of Jewish detainees from Cyprus for immediate entry into Palestine.

Just as the Press Secretary finished saying, 'The President wants to know what you fellows think of this', President Truman walked into the room. Badeau told me that the Arabists urged the President not to make such a statement, saying that it would harm both America's friendship with Britain and US standing in the Middle East. Truman replied that that was what the State Department was also telling him.

Truman had become President on the death of Roosevelt in April 1945, just as the full horror of Auschwitz and the other Nazi death camps was being revealed. Truman felt that some-

thing had to be done for the 200,000 Jewish survivors of these camps and elsewhere who were now desperate to get out of Europe. His initial plan was for many of them to be admitted to the United States but for three years he failed to get Congress to pass the necessary legislation.[24] It has been said by some that Truman was motivated by wanting the Jewish vote in New York, but in 1946 the Democrats lost control of Congress for the first time since 1928 in a landslide swing to the Republicans, and in 1948 Truman narrowly won the presidential election but did not carry the state of New York.

Following the increasing violence between Arabs and Jews in Palestine in the 1930s, a British Commission had issued the White Paper of 1939 strongly recommending curtailment of Jewish immigration. It was this policy to which the British government was adhering, post-World War Two, leading to the Jewish internment camps in Cyprus and the clash between the Truman and Atlee governments in the immediate post-war years.

On April 30, 1946, against the advice of Badeau and his colleagues, Truman made a public statement in support of the issuance of 100,000 permits of admittance to Palestine for Jewish refugees. This had been one of the recommendations of an Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry report that had just been released but which the British government was unhappy about. The British ignored Truman's call.

I stayed in touch with John Badeau for many years. He served as US ambassador to Egypt from 1961-64. Badeau's account of these conversations gives a window on a sad clash of two large concerns, one for the plight of Jewish refugees; the other by the British, who were trying to deal with the situation on the ground in Palestine, and by US diplomats and

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24 In 1948 the US Congress finally passed special legislation allowing Jewish refugees into America. About 80,000 entered America between 1948-52.

others who knew the Arab world well, seeing the inevitable clash to come between Jews and Arabs.

Caught between Arab and Jewish demands and short on funds, the Attlee government of Britain in February 1947 declared its mandate in Palestine 'unworkable' and referred the matter to the young United Nations. The UN Special Committee on Palestine, (UNSCOP), was created. Composed of representatives from 11 nations, none of them major powers, and chaired by Australia's Foreign Minister, Dr. H.V. Evatt, the Committee headed to the Middle East in the summer of 1947.[25]

By 1947 the population of Palestine was two-thirds Arab and one-third Jewish. Jews however only owned about 8% of the land. Yet UNSCOP recommended the partition of Palestine with 56% of the land going to form a Jewish state, 42% to the Arabs, and the remaining 2% for the Holy Places, mostly the city of Jerusalem, which were to be administered by an international authority. There are conflicting claims as to how much land was under Arab ownership. The British claimed that almost half of Palestine was 'crown land'. In any case, Arabs owned considerably more land than the Jews did at that time.

In the UN General Assembly, the UNSCOP recommendation, which became known as the Partition Plan, was debated for several weeks with little support from Africa, Asia or the Middle East. By 1947 President Truman had not only changed his mind and come down in favor of Partition but had browbeaten his reluctant State Department into the same position. It was one of the rare occasions in the UN when the USA and the USSR worked for the same end.

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25 The 11 members of UNSCOP were: Australia (Chair), Guatemala, Uruguay, India, Iran, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Netherlands, Peru, Sweden, Yugoslavia. At the Assembly vote, only India and Iran voted against. Yugoslavia abstained. The other eight voted for.

The vote on the Partition Resolution was to have come up late in November 1947, just before a recess for the American Thanksgiving Day. When it became doubtful that the Resolution would pass the General Assembly, the American delegation succeeded in postponing the vote. France, which had earlier indicated its opposition to Partition, also asked that the vote be delayed. This was because there had been a change of government in France that week. The new Prime Minister was Robert Schuman.

Some years later, John C. Dreier, who by 1947 was already working as an American diplomat in Latin America and who would become US ambassador to the Organization of American States from 1951-1960, told me that John Foster Dulles, at that time a member of the US delegation to the UN, ordered him to contact delegates whose countries were against the Resolution and threaten them with withdrawal of aid if they did not change their vote to support it. It is not clear whether any Latin American countries changed their vote. Liberia did, reportedly after Harvey Firestone, who had large rubber plantations in Liberia, phoned the Liberian President. Another country that changed its mind, probably after pressure from the US, was the Philippines. But the major surprise on the day of the vote was France which voted 'yes'. A last-minute attempt by Camille Chamoun of Lebanon (later President of his country) to defer the vote to a later date was objected to by the head of the Soviet delegation, Andrei Gromyko. The vote proceeded and the Resolution passed with a six-vote margin on the two-thirds needed. There were 33 votes for, 13 against and 10 abstentions, including Britain.

As the end of their mandate approached, the British armed forces and civilian officials executed a military evacuation. Israel claimed its statehood in May 1948, and the surrounding Arab nations immediately attacked. The repercussions of the UN Partition of Palestine loomed in the headlines. The Arabs, linked by Islam to the whole Muslim world, seethed in

resentment. In Basra a Jewish businessman was accused of selling material to the new state of Israel and was publicly hanged. For the Palestinians this was now their 'naqba' (tragedy). It was a crucial time for Palestine, and also for America.

The result of that fateful vote in the United Nations was in a sense Israel's birth certificate. America's part in the vote, and uncritical support of Israel ever since, has fueled anti-American anger in the Arab and Muslim world to this day. Judah Magnes, Martin Buber and other Jewish intellectuals in Palestine in the 1920s had formed a group known as Brit Shalom or Covenant of Peace, advocating a bi-national state where Palestinians and Jews would live in one country together. I often wish that such a route might have been possible, but of course the Nazi Holocaust changed the whole picture and by the 1940s political leaders on both sides had rejected such an idea.

9

AN EXTRAORDINARY JOURNEY

In December 1953, not long after our family moved to Dellwood, I was invited to join Frank Buchman, Francis Goulding and other friends who were meeting in Rome. The idea was to plan a tour of the Middle East visiting people we had got to know through their participation in the Caux assemblies or to whom we had introductions.

My decision to go on this extended trip was taken with the family: Bev, of course, as well as Anne, aged nearly six, Betsy, two and a half, and Ellen Konshaug, the young Danish woman who had come with us from Caux. Anne looked very pensive and said, 'I think it's OK for Daddy to go, but he should send me postcards where he goes.'

I left the family for Rome on December 31. At first I imagined Anne's comment to be a childish whim, but I took it seriously once we eventually arrived in Cairo. Anne was delighted with the postcards. She mounted them in a scrapbook and proudly showed them to all visitors. (The scrapbook still exists.) At a show-and-tell for school Anne showed a postcard and announced that her Daddy was living on ex-King Farouk's yacht. The teacher called Bev and said, 'Anne is usually a truthful girl, but...'. Bev was able to reassure the teacher that ex-King Farouk's yacht had been confiscated by the authorities and was now used as additional accommodation for the Semiramis Hotel on the bank of the Nile where I and my colleagues were staying.

Francis and I initially spent much time in Rome with Buchman and others planning this journey. Buchman himself was about to go to Marrakech in Morocco at the suggestion of Robert Schuman, the great post-war French leader. Francis taught me a lot while we were in Italy rooming together. He was resting in bed one day with a recurrent ear infection, and I went out to buy some postcards and stamps. Coming back I sat down at the desk and began writing the cards. He asked, 'What are you doing?' I replied, thinking it was a silly question, 'I'm writing postcards.' 'Where are mine?' he asked. 'But you didn't ask for any, said I rather impatiently. 'If you want to care for people,' he said, 'you multiply what you want for yourself by the number of people you want to care for!' The point was taken.

In Rome Buchman regularly introduced us as 'the men I am sending to King Sa'ud'. We knew that one could not go to Riyadh without an invitation, and so we were puzzled. We even wondered if Frank were losing it. Finally, on the eve of our departure for Cairo, we went to his room to take our leave and asked how he thought we could enter Riyadh without invitations. He simply replied, 'Oh, he invited me! Just announce yourselves. Goodbye,' and we went back to our room to pack, feeling little the wiser. We did however remember that Buchman had invited Princes Feisal and Sa'ud to join him at his meal table during the San Francisco organizational meetings for the United Nations in 1945. Sa'ud was now King and Feisal, his brother, was Prime Minister.

The work and influence of Moral Re-Armament in the region had not commenced with us, although we sometimes acted as if it had, exaggerating our own importance. In fact Frank Buchman had paid a brief visit to Egypt with a group of colleagues in November 1924. The country was then in turmoil following the assassination of Sir Lee Stack who held the dual posts of Commander-in-Chief of the Egyptian Army and

Governor General of Sudan. In spite of the unrest lives were touched, and people experienced lasting change.

Later, in the 1930s, Mary Rowlatt, daughter of Sir Frederick Rowlatt, the Governor of the Bank of Egypt, met the Oxford Group at one of its house parties at Oxford University. On her return to Egypt the difference in her life-style made a big impression, especially among the British community. One such person, Garnet Lloyd, who ran the leading department store, 'Roberts Hughes' on Qasr el-Nile Street, also began to live differently. Sometime in the late 1930s Buchman visited Egypt again with a group of people. As mentioned earlier, Karl Leonard and Marianne Burckhardt, together with others in Alexandria, did much to promote the Oxford Group's philosophy and challenge of personal change before World War Two.

With the onset of war, Cairo became an important headquarters for the British army. Lloyd's flat became a home away from home for British soldiers already associated with the Oxford Group/MRA. These British servicemen included Bill Conner, Robin Mowat and Matt Manson.[26] Because of their own commitment other lives were changed. An Arabic illustrated pamphlet was produced, called 'Together for Egypt', 'Ma'en li Misr'.

One notable person in this emerging Egyptian team was Dr. Abdu Sallam, a young surgeon in Alexandria with a promising career ahead of him. He and his wife Aida, a pathologist, had the persistent thought that God wanted them to serve Egypt in a new way. When the Revolution came under Gamal Abdel

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25 Bill Conner had been a tank commander at the Battle of El Alamein, one of the decisive battles of World War Two, and devoted the rest of his life to the Arab world. Robin Mowat married a young woman in the Egyptian MRA group, became a professor of history in England, and among the books he wrote was *Middle East Perspective* Blandford Press (1958). Matt Manson spoke fluent French and later worked with French MRA colleagues in Morocco and Tunisia to help ease the path to independence in both countries.

Nasser in 1952, Abdu Sallam was asked to serve on a council to implement the revolution's land reforms, along with others of a small group of professionals who called themselves 'er-Rawwad', the Pioneers. For Abdu Sallam this meant giving up his career in surgery, but he accepted the call. The goal of the Pioneers was to set up a structure for villages to replace what the pashas had done for the peasants, the 'fellahin.' The local pasha had been like a 'seigneur' who helped with weddings and funerals and who was there in time of need. Much depended on the bounty of the pasha: some were benevolent and some less so. The land was his and the fellahin lived on it as sharecroppers at his behest. Land reform under the revolution transferred land ownership to the fellahin. Village centers were built along with schools, medical services and a mosque or a place for prayer. The change worked, although not without its creaks and groans.

When Soviet Foreign Minister Dmitri Shepilov visited Egypt in June 1956, in the course of a full official program he was shown one or two of the village centers by the Rawwad men. Shepilov was reported to have said, 'But such a thing is not possible without the Marxist incentive'. He even suggested that those villages he'd seen had been set up for him and insisted on seeing other villages. His surprise only increased as he was shown further villages.[27]

Dr. Sallam later served first as Minister of Health and then as President of the National Drug Company created to manufacture drugs and medical products, which had previously been imported, thus saving the country much-needed hard currency.

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27 Shepilov had become Foreign Minister just days before his planned visit, catching the Egyptian government by surprise. However, he had been made a senior communist theoretician the year before. It was during this 1956 visit of Shepilov's that the USSR offered to help build the Aswan Dam, an offer accepted by Egypt when, a month later, the USA withdrew their offer.

On our flight from Rome to Cairo in late January 1954, Francis and I decided we should ask the advice of Dr. Abdel Khalek Hassouna, who had succeeded Abdur Rahman Azzam as Secretary General of the Arab League in 1952, and also that of Hussein Fahmy, the former Minister of Finance, serving as Custodian of the Royal Properties under the Revolutionary Government. Fahmy had earlier been very impressed by Ismail Hassan's change and by the steps Ismail had taken to make restitution for his financial misdeeds. Both Hassouna and Fahmy were Buchman's friends, and we needed their advice.

We recounted to Hassouna our conversation with Buchman when he had told us, with regard to the King of Saudi Arabia, 'Just announce yourselves.' Hassouna said, 'Yes. That's the way. I'm invited for dinner tomorrow evening by the Saudi ambassador, so you write a message for the king saying that you are here representing Dr. Buchman and would like to come to bring his greetings and pay your respects, and recall His Majesty's meeting Dr. Buchman in San Francisco. I'll hand your message to the ambassador. That will work very well.'

Hassouna's advice worked very well indeed. Three days after he had handed our message to the Saudi ambassador there came an invitation for us to fly to Jeddah and to visit Riyadh as His Majesty's guests. We were six by then, having been joined by Major General George de R. Channer (retd.), from Britain; Major General Mahmoud Hussein Farrag, recently retired from the Egyptian Army; the Marquis Gerard d' Hauteville, former French naval officer; and Hansjörg Gareis, a former midshipman in the German navy whose father had commanded a brigade against the Russian Army in World War Two. Seeing Gerard and Hansjörg working together attracted much interest, as did the Egyptian and British generals.[28]

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28 Hansjörg Gareis has written his own memoir – *Stepping Stones: A German Biography* (2001) in which he gives a detailed account of this journey through the Middle East in chapter 6, pp 197-231.

While in Cairo awaiting our flight to Jeddah we were invited for dinner at the home of Abdur Rahman Azzam, the founding Secretary General of the Arab League whom Ismail Hassan and I had met in Paris in 1951. Azzam lived in a spacious apartment in the Aguza section of Cairo on the west bank of the Nile. It was an unforgettable evening. He shared with us highlights from his colorful life: as a young man fighting in the desert for Libya's independence, holding cabinet posts under the Egyptian monarchy, representing Saudi Arabia in the dispute over the Buraimi Oasis where the claims of Oman, the Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia clashed. We reminded Azzam of our second meeting with him at the Hotel des Bergues in Geneva when the Buraimi case was being heard. He chuckled as he remembered that his argument had sent the British lawyer, Sir Reader 'Haji' Bullard, striding from the conference hall in a rage. Bullard had been his legal opponent defending the claims of the United Arab Emirates while Azzam represented the rights of Saudi Arabia.

At table that evening he told of his longing as a young man to be a lawyer, whereas his father wanted him to become a religious sheikh. Since both were adamant, young Abdur Rahman asked his father to perform an 'istikhara', a ritual for seeking God's will in making a difficult choice.[29] This prayer form includes readings from the Qur'an, prayer and a night vigil waiting for Allah's will to be made plain. The old gentleman, a man of great faith and learning, agreed. Early next morning the household was roused by the father clapping his hands and calling out, 'Send for the tailor. He's off to England.' And off went young Abdur Rahman Azzam to read law in London, in western clothes for the first time.

We met many of the large Azzam family including Memdouh, a nephew, who was in the League's legal depart-

29 See *A Manual of Hadith*, by Muhammad Ali, Olive Branch Press, NY 1988, p. 184

ment which he eventually headed.[30] We were invited to Helwan, the family seat south of Cairo where we met many other relatives. Azzam's son Omar earned a doctorate in engineering for city planning at Zurich Polytechnic, during which time he visited Caux.[31] At dinner in Helwan, Azzam did not seat himself but in true tribal tradition would remain standing seeing that the guests were served

As we talked over coffee after dinner, Azzam asked us about our journey and its purpose, and our concerns regarding Muslim-Christian relations. As we talked he remarked, 'You should see the Sheikh al-Azhar.' Of course we agreed, as one agrees to any good idea, much as one would do at a dinner party in Rome if the host suggested seeing the Pope. No more was said.

However, as we were finishing breakfast at our hotel the next morning, Azzam telephoned, 'You have an appointment with the Sheikh Al-Azhar at 10 o'clock. My secretary will call for you at nine thirty.' There was very little time to dress as befitted the occasion and collect our thoughts before the car arrived. We were driven through the bazaar to the gates of Al-Azhar University and its Mosque. This seat of Islamic learning was 1,000 years old. From its halls have gone Islamic scholars far and wide to teach and lead in Muslim communities in many countries from Indonesia in the east to Morocco in the west. Today there are an estimated seven million Muslims in the United States. The imams of most of their mosques are Azhar graduates.

Seated on a platform in a large corner room of the university was the Rector, His Eminence Sheikh Abdur Rahman et-Tag. We were shown seats in the front, and the rest of the

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30 Memdouh would later visit Caux in 1955.

31 It was Omar who redesigned the Holy Mosque and other buildings in Mecca. He married a daughter of King Feisal of Saudi Arabia, and his sister, Muna, married Prince Mohammed Feisal, King Feisal's son.

room was filled with the press corps. We had named Francis Goulding as our spokesperson, and he introduced the six of us. Francis began by pointing out that there were two from Britain because the British need twice as much change as others. This brought a patter of applause from the journalists. Then Francis went on to speak of MRA and absolute moral standards. At this point the Sheikh put up his hand saying: 'There is no need to explain to us what Moral Re-Armament means. When I was in Paris I investigated the new agreements that have been achieved by the trade unions and factory owners in the French textile industry, and I discovered that MRA had created the atmosphere in which this was possible.'[32]

The Rector then gave a summary of Islam's message and added, 'MRA is the essence (zubd) of what Islam calls for and you have our support wherever our voice is heard.' The meeting was reported the next day in the Cairo daily papers *al-Misry* and *Gumhouriya*.

Accepting King Sa'ud's invitation we flew to Jeddah, the main port of Saudi Arabia, on March 2. The six of us were installed as His Majesty's guests in the Jeddah Gardens Hotel, and two sedans with drivers were put at our disposal while we awaited the royal summons to Riyadh. This gave us an unexpected but very welcome few days of rest and thought. Several times we went to the beaches for a swim and gathered bits of red coral, and there was time to look around the busy port city with its narrow streets and overhanging balconies from which the women could see without being seen. The Rutgers classmate whom I had last seen in Aden in January 1944, Bob Stein, was now on the American Embassy staff in Jeddah, and he took me to call on Ambassador Wadsworth, who, true to

32 An agreement between certain textile managers and unionists who had met in Caux was signed in 1951. A further national agreement for the French textile industry followed from this in June 1953. See *Frank Buchman: A Life* by Garth Lean, Constable, London (1985), pp 430-431.

The group in Saudi Arabia 1954: Seated back left – Gen Channer; standing – Francis Goulding and HJA; seated at front – Hansjörg Gareis and Gerard d'Hauteville

form, was on the golf course he had laid out. Eventually, the royal call came and we took off for Riyadh in the early morning of March 10.

Sheikh Abdullah Bilkheir, His Majesty's Secretary and a graduate of the American University of Beirut, welcomed us warmly at Riyadh airport and whisked us off to the Royal Guest House where we were given splendid air-conditioned double rooms with a short-wave radio and a cord to pull if we had any needs. We soon found that among the other guests were people we already knew. At table in the dining room we found Ambassador Abdul Majid Haidar whom General Channer knew quite well from the days when Haidar had represented Jordan in London. King Sa'ud had only recently ascended the throne, and many delegations were coming to pay their respects and offer good wishes.

The next day Sheikh Abdullah came to take our group to the royal audience with the two generals in the lead. All in the

large audience hall were aware of the conflict going on in the Suez Canal Zone, and the sight of the two generals together, one Egyptian and one British, carried an eloquent message. The throne room was L-shaped, and since we entered at the lower tip all we could see was the end of that part. There a large man with a sword was seated. The walls of the hall were lined with bodyguards. Swords and rifles abounded. Assuming that this person must be the king, the two generals started toward him, but were fortunately diverted by Sheikh Abdullah in time to turn left into the much larger main arm of the L where King Sa'ud was seated on a dais at the far end. The man we had mistaken for the king turned out to be Chief of the Royal Bodyguard. Abdullah introduced us, and we were seated on either side of His Majesty. Sheikh Abdullah knelt by the king's side and quietly translated. The king bade us welcome and recalled meeting Dr. Buchman during the first meetings of the UN in 1945 in San Francisco.

Then it was our turn. What should be said to the Keeper of Islam's Holy Places at that point in history, with World War Two a recent and vivid memory and with ongoing tension in Egypt involving the British base? The thought had come to us that we should ask the help of Muslim leaders in restoring the lost dignity accorded absolute moral standards in our Western countries, which sorely needed such a renewal. Also, a cable had come from Frank Buchman in Morocco. It had been translated and inscribed on a parchment in beautiful Arabic calligraphy, and was read to the King by General Farrag. It read in English: 'To His Majesty King Sa'ud, cabled from Marrakech, 28 February, 1954: From the outskirts of the world of Islam to you at its heart I send my cordial wishes to Your Majesty. May your reign bring the unity and concord to nations that will remake the world, and may God guide us unitedly on the good road'.

The reference to the 'good road' is a quotation from the *Fatiha*, the opening Sura of the Qur'an which is repeated at

least as frequently as Christians repeat the Lord's Prayer.

We thanked the King for his hospitality and asked his help in restoring moral standards, especially to the West. He thanked us for the message and replied saying that, if he were to be a help in restoring moral standards in the West, he would have to undergo a few changes himself. This royal humility produced visible astonishment around the audience hall.

The King then said, 'If there is anything you would ask of me, any part of my kingdom you would like to visit, tell us and we shall arrange it.' Here we made a great mistake. Simply put, we blew it. We replied with thanks to this generous offer saying that we had to keep to our schedule and that we regretted very much that we could not accept his gracious invitation. If we had accepted, we would have had a splendid tour of the kingdom. We would then have reported back to our host on its completion and had a second audience with him. We were in the grip of a schedule that, in the event, proved not so important. Later, when I recounted this story to the Saudi ambassador in Washington, he interrupted to say, 'I know, you were too busy. That's the trouble with you Americans. Think what you missed!' It was a costly lesson.

After the audience Sheikh Abdullah took us on a tour of Riyadh and its environs. We returned to the guest house in time to freshen up before dinner back at the palace, which followed immediately after sunset prayers. The dining hall was amazing. Around the top of the walls were neon lights which spelled out Qur'anic verses. About every 20 feet there were waist-high basins where hand washing before the meal was scrupulously observed. His Majesty seated Sherif Nasir of Jordan, King Hussein's maternal uncle, on his right, and our party was seated next to the right and left. There must have been at least 60 guests and court officials seated around the outside of the hollow rectangular table. Among them were Floyd Ohliger, general manager of the Arabian-American Oil Company (ARAMCO); Haji St. John Philby, (father of Kim

Philby, the British agent who later defected to the Soviet Union from Beirut) and General Channer's friend, Ambassador Abdul Majid Haidar of the Jordanian royal family. St. John Philby was a famous explorer who had converted to Islam and then served as Adviser to the Throne in Saudi Arabia.

Also at the table was Rashid Ali Gailani a former Prime Minister of Iraq who, with German encouragement, had led a revolt in Iraq in 1941 against British control. When the revolt collapsed Gailani had sought refuge in Saudi Arabia under the tribal custom of 'dakheel', literally a claim to guest status. This practice originated in the days when the nomad Bedu lived in tents, and any refugee could, by grabbing hold of the main tent pole, claim that he was 'dakheel'. This had been a matter of survival in the days of nomad wandering, and the tradition carried on, even when the 'sheikh' lived in a splendid palace. King Sa'ud's father, King Abdul Aziz, had always honored the custom.

We returned to Cairo from Riyadh where there was ticketing to be done for our onward journey. Francis and I had access to money that Ismail had given to MRA as part of his restitution for his former currency dealings and which was lodged in a special account in the National Bank of Egypt. The account, however, was in Egyptian pounds, and was blocked for the foreign exchange required to buy our tickets. On hearing of this difficulty, Fahmy took us to the Minister of Finance, Abdur Rahman el-Amary, to ask his assistance. At first Fahmy was asked, 'Who are these people? Missionaries?' Fahmy replied, 'Yes, missionaries for the Sheikh al-Azhar!' Special permission was granted, the National Bank was informed and we got the money for our tickets covering flights between Cairo, Tehran, Baghdad, Bahrain, Beirut, Amman and back to Cairo. At that time it was not wise for Ismail Hassan to be in Egypt, in view of the revolutionary regime's anti-monarchist stance. General Farrag was unable to continue with us, so we were five who set off on the second part of this extraordinary journey.

We left Cairo at the end of March and flew over the desert of Jordan and Syria, the valley of the twin rivers of Iraq and then the mountains of Iran to Tehran. There the towering presence of the snow-capped al-Burz mountains loomed to the north. Even when the heat in the city was oppressive, the coolness of the al-Burz southern slopes was never far away. On arrival we were met by the friends whom Francis and I had first encountered in 1951 in Turkey on the boat excursion for the Inter-Parliamentary Union to the Black Sea, Abulfazl Hazeghi, the member of parliament, and General Nakhdjavan. They took us to the Officers' Club where General Zahedi, the Army Chief of Staff, came to welcome us. The next day, shepherded by Hazeghi, we set out on a round of calls. First we called on Hussein Ala, Minister of the Royal Court, a friend of Francis', who said he would arrange an audience with His Majesty the Shah as soon as possible.

The audience was granted fairly quickly and we were received by His Majesty on April 13. When the Shah heard that General Channer had a bad back he switched the venue to a table in his study so that we could be seated. Usually such audiences were conducted with all present standing in the Hall of Mirrors. The five of us were accompanied by Senator Majid Movaghar and Parliamentarian Hazeghi.

We spoke of the conferences at Caux, and then, responding to the Shah's question, we explained how the change needed in the world could begin with anyone who would look at his own need for such a change. We referred to four absolute moral standards of honesty, purity, unselfishness and love, as the universally-acceptable basis for that change. Gerard d'Hauteville leaned forward at that point with a charming smile and said, 'You know, Your Majesty, I come from Paris, and I find it very difficult to live absolute purity there.' The Shah replied: 'I understand. How do you do it?' One of the Iranians present protested, 'Oh, but everyone knows that His Majesty is the embodiment of all virtues and there is no need

to speak of such things.' The Shah turned to him, kicking the table in his agitation and calling the man by name, said, 'Don't be an ass!' The thread had been broken, but here in microcosm was the problem, it seems to me, that contributed to the Shah's downfall – the truth seldom penetrated the barrier of such flattery.

In just over two weeks we met several of the leadership of Iran, much of this made possible through friendships made during a brief boat excursion in Turkey two and half years before.

From Tehran we flew back over the mountains to Baghdad and ensconced ourselves in the Zia Hotel on Rashid Street. Michael Zia was the proprietor, and the bartender was named Jesus. The hotel had been the setting for Agatha Christie's mystery, *Murder in Mesopotamia*, but we slept comfortably enough! We arrived in time to celebrate Easter Sunday (April 18,1954), in Baghdad's Anglican Church.

On the Monday we began by visiting our friend, Foreign Minister Dr. Fadhel Jamali. As so often happens in that part of the world, one thing led to another, and Dr. Jamali introduced us to his friend, the Minister of Development, Ali Haidar Suleiman. Other visits were with two of the first graduates from the Basra boys' school, Ali Fouad, now the Director of Civil Aviation, and Abdur Rizaq Ibrahim, Director General in the Ministry of Social Affairs.

As a subaltern with the Indian army in World War One, General Channer had seen action in Iraq against the Turks and had been taken prisoner at Kut-al-Amara, south of Baghdad, when the town fell to besieging Turkish forces. The British and Indian troops were marched overland into Turkey where Channer spent the remainder of the war as a prisoner of war.[33]

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33 13,000 Allied soldiers were taken prisoner following their surrender at the Turkish siege of Kut in April, 1916. 70% of the British and 50% of the Indian soldiers died during their captivity.

The victorious Turkish commander at the siege was named 'Kut Pasha', and years later, when General Channer returned to Turkey with friends from Caux, he was welcomed on his arrival at Istanbul Airport by Kut Pasha, and the two old warriors sat down as friends and chatted away in Turkish. Channer had used his prison years to learn his captors' language.

Baghdad is lovely in the spring. The Zia Hotel was perched on the bank of the Tigris River, and we could sit there, basking in the sun, watching river traffic go by. We saw the occasional kuffa, a unique circular craft made of skins stretched over a light frame of reeds. One would go spinning along with its passengers equipped with paddles to guide it. The Tigris was running very high at that time and so the levees and dykes had been opened below the city to relieve the pressure on Baghdad. Rashid Street, the main shopping thoroughfare, was below the flood level.

King Feisal II, the grandson of Feisal I, was 18 going on 19 when he received us in April 1954. Although he was technically the full ruler since his 18th birthday the previous May, Prince Abdulillah, his maternal uncle, had served as Regent since the boy ascended to the throne in 1939,[34] and the real power was still much with the uncle. Feisal was a very pleasant young man, a stamp collector with a charming smile. Four years later it was a shock to read of his assassination at the time of the 1958 Iraqi Revolution.

As recounted earlier, the two sons of the Ruler of Bahrain, Prince Issa and Prince Khalifa, had come to Caux in the summer of 1953 after visiting their father's horses in England. Now, a year later, invited by the two princes, we continued our journey from Baghdad to Bahrain via a brief stop in Basra.[35]

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34 Feisal became king at the age of 3 when his father, King Ghazi, was killed in a mysterious car accident.

35 General Channer returned home after Baghdad, thus the party became four.

We were granted an audience with the Ruler of Bahrain, Sheikh Salman Al-Khalifa, on April 26, arranged by the princes with my old friend Hussein Yateem's help. We showed the ruler slides of the princes' tour of the year before in the ruler's 'mejlis', or audience hall out in the desert a few miles south of Manama the capital. The building was made of coral rock and mortar with large barred windows on all sides. Chairs lined the walls and beautiful Persian carpets covered the whole floor. The slide projection was a great success; every chair was filled, the floor packed, and outside each window faces pressed against the iron bars. The ruler was principally interested in his horses, so those were shown first. Then the slides led the audience across Europe with the young princes to views of Caux. Sheikh Salman was very pleased and sent us on our way with kits of Arab dress, good Swiss watches and a generous check for the work of MRA at Caux.

On April 28, Francis Goulding and I made the short flight to Kuwait for an overnight visit with an old friend – John Asfour. Hansjörg Gareis and Gerard d'Hauteville meanwhile flew directly to Beirut where we joined them the following day, and then the four of us straightaway took a flight to Kolundia airport on the north side of Jerusalem,[36] and on to Amman, Jordan.

In Amman our host was His Highness Abdul Majid Haidar whom we had met at the royal palace in Riyadh several weeks earlier. With his help we were received by the young King Hussein who was then only 18 and had been king for less than two years.[37] On our return towards Beirut we stopped to visit

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36 Kolundia was a significant hub airport in Jordan's West Bank, important for tourism to many of the holy sites. After Israel's capture of the West Bank in 1967, the airport was renamed Atarot and is now closed for security reasons.

37 Following the assassination of King Abdullah I in 1951, and then the abdication of King Talal after just one year for mental health reasons, Abdullah's grandson, Hussein, just 16, succeeded to the throne.

some of the Holy Places around East Jerusalem which at that time was in Jordanian territory.

In Beirut we were warmly welcomed by Muhi ad-Din Nsouli, a former Minister of Information, and publisher of a respected Lebanese Arabic daily paper, *Beirut*. Some years before, while on a visit to London, he had been given a copy of *Innocent Men*, by the author, Peter Howard. Howard had been a leading political journalist for the *Daily Express*, and after an encounter with MRA had written this book putting MRA more on the map. His editor was against him doing this and so Howard wrote the book and then resigned his position at the Express to devote his whole time to MRA. Nsouli told us that he had read the entire book on his flight back to Beirut. The following day he had his editor, Mohammed Naccache, start a series on Moral Re-Armament.

The four of us returned to Egypt in mid-May. We then took passage from Alexandria to Marseilles on the *SS Malik Fouad* of the Khedival Line, sailing on May 21. A stop for the day in Naples made possible a visit to Pompeii, finally docking in Marseilles on May 25. We then took a train from Marseilles to Montreux and up to Caux. In four months we had met the leadership of six Muslim countries in the Middle East; many doors had been opened and contacts renewed, but we viewed this more as an accomplishment than as an opportunity for future development. Pleased with ourselves we failed to produce a plan for the next steps in supporting these Muslim friends.

10

THE VANISHING ISLAND TOUR AND AFTERWARDS

In the early summer of 1955 we traveled with the girls and Ellen Kongshaug to the Mackinac Island MRA assembly. A major musical production, *The Vanishing Island*, was being mounted, and Ellen Kongshaug was thrilled to be invited to join the cast. We agreed, though with mixed feelings for she had become like a third daughter in our family.

The musical had a large cast, and portrayed two imaginary countries, 'Eiluph'mei' (I love me) and 'Weheityou' (We hate you). The one had a faith but did not live it and so turned liberty into license. The other had an atheist ideology which it lived passionately with the drive and discipline of hate to conquer the world. The presentation showed the futility of both forms of materialism. With help from some friends in Hollywood, the music and choreography had been honed to form a very effective presentation. The plan was for the musical show to be accompanied by a 'Statesmen's Mission' which in the end included a former Foreign Minister of Denmark, cabinet ministers from Tunisia, France and Japan, Senator Majid Movaghar from Iran, Dr. Leimgruber, a former Chancellor of the Swiss Confederation, and other prominent personalities.[38]

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38 For a more comprehensive list of the VIPs who traveled in the 'Statesmen's Mission' see page 479 of *Frank Buchman: A Life* by Garth Lean, Constable 1985

There were delegates from many nations at Mackinac that summer when the show was launched. Invitations were coming in from governments and important national committees. Among the diplomats was a quiet young Egyptian named Abdul Hamid from the UN Mission in New York. It later transpired that after hearing what was happening he had walked to the island telegraph office and wired Cairo, saying that many nations were inviting MRA to bring this musical play, and he urged that Egypt do likewise. An invitation from President Nasser was cabled back forthwith.

My colleagues, Francis Goulding and Henrik Schaefer of Switzerland, were at that very moment in Cairo discussing with Egyptian friends how a high-level invitation for the play could be arranged. When the wire from President Nasser was delivered in Mackinac at the Assembly, I wired Francis and Henrik, 'Congratulations. Invitation arrived.' 'What invitation?' they replied. Only then did we discover that it had come about because of Abdul Hamid's quiet work.

There were initial public performances of the musical in Washington, during which there was a conference based at the Shoreham Hotel. Then after further performances in Los Angeles, this large group of people headed for Japan. In the next several months the *Vanishing Island* touring group, involving over 240 people, would visit 18 countries on four continents.

The Shah of Iran invited *The Vanishing Island* to his country and Bev and I were part of a team that went to Tehran to help with preparations. It was summertime when they arrived from South Asia, and he arranged for the musical to be presented in the gardens of his summer palace in the cool foothills above Tehran. The beautiful grounds of the palace were opened to the public.

The Vanishing Island was going to Baghdad next. Fadhel Jamali was overseas and had planned to return in time to help the preparation group, but was delayed. In his absence the

careful arrangements he had made had fallen through and plans were in a shambles. Learning of this in Tehran, Bev and I went ahead to Baghdad to try and pick up various loose ends with little time left before the large group arrived from Tehran. Part of this involved us going along Rashid Street reserving rooms in hotels.

When the planes carrying the traveling group from Tehran arrived in Baghdad just after dawn, the airport building was deserted. There were no officials to inspect passports or luggage, and the two rented trucks had easy access directly to the planes for the stage equipment. Although we had not had time to procure buses, as the people emerged from the passenger lounge a plume of dust appeared on the horizon. It was the first of a string of taxicabs alerted to customers by that invisible means of communication known to cabbies the world over. As they lined up we agreed with the drivers on the rate for Rashid Street hotels. We then put our friends into the cabs, having put money in their hands to pay and tip the driver on safe arrival. Peter Howard, who was leading the group, observed that the arrival in Baghdad was the easiest they had had on the whole world tour.[39]

But the theater arrangements remained in limbo. The gates were locked. We knew the name of an Englishman who worked with a friend of ours, Fred Abrams, an Irish engineer who worked for the Iraq Development Board. Fred was on home leave, but we found his friend at the bar of the English Club. The Englishman, after hearing our problem, cheerfully took us to his gardener's house, for as Fred had told us, his friend's gardener was also janitor of the Royal Theater! We got the key, opened the gates and let in the trucks with the scenery and stage equipment. Fred Abrams had also given us a blank

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39 For another account of the challenges encountered during the preparations in Baghdad see Hansjörg Gareis' memoir *Stepping Stones – a German Biography* pp 234-236.

check to withdraw cash from his account – with which we paid the taxis from the airport and other incidentals.

Meantime tickets were being printed, including a small number in gold for VIPs. George Daneel, a Dutch Reformed Church minister and former Springbok rugby player from South Africa, and I took some of the gold-printed tickets to the mayor of Baghdad, thanking him for the use of the theater. These he accepted with appreciation, although he had no idea what was going on. De facto occupancy had been secured with the gardener's key, and we trusted that the tickets given to the mayor assured official recognition.

Burhan ad-Din, who had come to our home in Basra with Governor Nadhmi in the late 1940s, was now Foreign Minister in 1955 and on the invitation committee for the play. When a courtesy call was made on Burhan I went along in the taxi with two others who were responsible for the group because I was the only person available who spoke any Arabic. Since Burhan's Basra home had been near ours, and since he had come for tea with his friend Jamal Nadhmi, I assumed that I would go in with the others. Not so! It was made clear by my colleagues that they believed that if I went along the conversation would go along personal lines, and it would be difficult to speak about the broader purposes of the visit of the international group. It was August in Baghdad, 120 degrees in the shade, and I was left steaming in the cab for half an hour, furious at being left out of the call on my friend and former neighbor. My simple Arabic was needed for the taxi driver, but not for Burhan who spoke impeccable English. With the hindsight of many years, perhaps there could have been another way of handling the visit to the Foreign Minister.

After setting up the arrangements in Baghdad there was then need for a few more hands to be in Cairo to work with the Egyptian authorities in preparation for the big group arriving there. Bev and I leased a ground floor apartment across from the Belgian Embassy in Garden City on Sharia Nabatat

and were soon joined by Pierre Spoerri and Henrik and Heidi Schaefer from Switzerland, Bror Jonzon from Sweden, James Silver from Britain and Aage Andersen from Norway.

Abdel Khalek Hassouna and Henrik Schaefer

One day an American official from the Embassy came to the apartment. He was the Air Attaché, and he asked whether we had any information about an MRA group of about 250 on three Military Air Transport Service (MATS) planes that were due to arrive in Cairo, but about which he had no details. He said, 'I am concerned, because when such a group arrives I am usually required to arrange accommodations for the passengers as well as servicing for the planes. Can you tell me anything about them?' The Air Attaché was greatly relieved to hear that the Egyptian Government was responsible for the group's lodging and local transport, which left to him only the servicing of the planes.

A group of civilians flying in MATS planes was unusual. Having exhausted all charter possibilities to carry 250 people and stage equipment around the world, our friends in Washington finally were able to charter three MATS planes for a world tour. The charter was arranged through the intervention of members of Congress including Senator Alexander Wiley of Wisconsin, Chair of the Foreign Relations Committee, and Representative Charles B. Deane from North Carolina.

President Nasser's message earlier that year referred to MRA's good work in 'restoring the lost dignity of absolute moral standards and creating a world that works'. Nasser had designated the Minister of Information, Abdul Qadir Hatem

to act as host to the party, and we worked on a daily basis with Hatem's Director General, Ali Hosni Zein el-Abideen. The old Cairo opera house was reserved for the musical. It was truly a grand building, erected around the time of the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. Verdi's *Aida* had premiered there in 1871.[40]

Our friendship with Ali Hosni continued after his appointment later that year as Undersecretary of the Ministry for Sudan Affairs under General Abdul Fattah Hassan, the Minister. General Hassan and his family became fast friends of many of us. We were invited for teas and meals at their home, and they gave us a lovely set of coffee cups for the apartment we had rented in Garden City.

There was much to be done. Invitations needed to be printed and sent to the top government officials and the diplomatic corps. This was undertaken by the Ministry since they had all the necessary lists and addresses. Another priority was the translation of the libretto into Arabic and the printing of an Arabic/English text. This was done by the Director of Information of the Arab League, Ibrahim Shukrullah. He and his wife, Jeanette, became close friends. We next saw each other years later in New Delhi where he had been appointed ambassador to India for the Arab League.

It was no surprise, given the portfolio held by General Hassan, to see the first row on opening night occupied by a group of tall, white-turbaned Sudanese. It was not until some days later that we discovered that they were the delegation to a conference on future relations between Sudan and Egypt.

Following the Revolution of 1952, Egypt's new rulers believed that the only way to end British domination in Sudan was for Egypt officially to abandon its sovereignty over Sudan, since Britain's own claim to control in Sudan theoretically

40 This opera house no longer exists. It was later burned down during a riot. A replacement has been built in another part of Cairo.

depended upon Egyptian sovereignty. This approach led to the Anglo-Egyptian treaty of 1954 which, along with an agreement on British troop withdrawals from Egypt, also set the date for Sudanese independence for January 1, 1956. However, in the summer of 1955, with his own position as president not yet fully secured, Nasser came under pressure from some Egyptian nationalists for keeping Sudan under Egyptian control. Renewed calls for 'The Unity of the Nile Valley' appeared in the press. It was at this point that Ali Hosny Zein el-Abideen was appointed Undersecretary for Sudan Affairs, serving directly under General Abdul Fattah Hassan.

Francis, Henrik and I learned something else during that premiere of the show. General Hassan drew us out of the auditorium into a small salon and gave us a severe scolding. 'Neither the President nor the Cabinet Ministers received invitations to this, the premiere!' he said. We explained that the Ministry of Information had said they would send special invitations by motorcycle delivery to all VIPs, but in the General's eyes this was no excuse. 'You should have checked to be sure!' he went on, and of course he was right.

President Nasser later received the whole group, the cast and the spokespersons who were accompanying them. When asked by an American journalist why he had invited the MRA group President Nasser replied, 'To show that we and they are one.'

Throughout the visit of *The Vanishing Island*, Dr. Hassouna's support and advice were extremely helpful. As Secretary General of the Arab League he gave an official reception at the Automobile Club of Egypt for the whole diplomatic corps and the Government to introduce the group to them saying that he did this 'to make clear my support of MRA'. He further stated, 'MRA represents the first time the West has accepted the outstretched hand of Islam.'

Hassouna had also sent a message to the MRA conference in Washington in the spring of 1955. Hassouna's message was sent

President Nasser (5th from left in front row) with the *Vanishing Island* group

through Arab League channels to the Jordanian ambassador, Abdul Mun'eim Rifa'i. I had been sent a backup copy to take to the Washington meeting. I had known Abdul Mun'eim in New York at the UN and in Amman, so I naturally called on him at the Chancellery and asked if he had received Hassouna's message. He said that he had received it but when I remarked, 'That's good, because I was only given a copy as a precaution,' the ambassador said, 'Please, let me see your copy.' So I handed my copy to him. He read it quickly and said, 'I'll read your copy for the assembly. This message I have was tampered with in transmission, and I think I know who did it!' He said no more, nor did I ask, but he showed me what he had received. It had been rather obviously altered so that the overall effect was negative. He read the true copy to the conference: it was a message of strong support and best wishes from Dr. Hassouna.

After the Cairo presentations the group flew to Nairobi, returning later for several shows in Alexandria where govern-

ment officials and other leaders spent the hottest days of the summer. Following the Alexandria time the cast flew from Cairo on to Ankara, Milan and Paris.

One morning, in the early autumn of 1955 after the group had left Egypt, Francis Goulding and I quite separately had the thought that we should visit Undersecretary Ali Hosny at his home in the suburb of Ma'adi and share with him our own experience in terms of having a thought which could only have come from God and how, in following such a lead, each person had his part. Ali welcomed us for tea in his rose garden. It was a pleasant conversation during which we told several stories of how seeking and trying to follow Allah's plan had helped nations and communities. Returning to Cairo, Francis and I felt that we had made no great impression.

However, early the next morning Ali telephoned. 'Can you come right over to the office? Something remarkable has happened.' We went and found him waving an old envelope with handwriting scrawled on the back. 'Do you remember the stories you told about God putting ideas in our heads?' he asked. 'Well, I went out early to walk in my rose garden as usual, and suddenly a thought about Sudan came to me, and I jotted it down on this envelope. It was very simply this: "Egypt has fought long and hard for her own independence; how can she grant anything less to her sister, Sudan?"

'I had barely arrived here at the office before the President's Advisory Commission on Sudan appeared, led by Wing Commander Ali Sabry. They told me that President Nasser wanted the final recommendation on our Sudan policy at once because the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium was to end on January 1, 1956. Since I function as secretary at their meetings they asked if I would draft something for them to submit. I replied, "Please wait a few moments," and I rang for my secretary, handed him the envelope with my early morning thought and asked him to make a few copies. He did this quickly and gave them to the three men. They read it, looked at each other

and said, "That's what we really feel. But will the President agree?" I replied that if we four agreed and felt it was the right policy, we should submit it as our united thought as requested. And we did so.'

On January 1, 1956 in Khartoum the Egyptian representative, General Abdul Fattah Hassan, received the Egyptian flag as it was lowered, and joined in the salute to the rising Sudanese flag. Ali Hosny had made his contribution.

The Vanishing Island had meanwhile moved on to Europe. During their visit to Milan, Italy, some of the cast of *The Vanishing Island* were invited to live in homes in the industrial suburb of Sesto San Giovanni. Industrial strife in that factory town was intense. In fact we were told that in one plant directors had been thrown into the blast furnaces by enraged workers. The show had a great impact. Dr. Luigi Rossi, the editor of the town's communist newspaper, began to rethink his views. In a matter of days he renewed his Catholic faith and traveled on to Paris with the group.

In Paris with *The Vanishing Island* during the winter of 1955-56, Francis Goulding, Dr. Rossi and I called on the Foreign Minister of Iran, Abdullah Entezam, whom Francis had known during his years in Iran. The Minister was a Muslim mystic belonging to a Sufi order. He wanted to know more about Moral Re-Armament. Rossi told him that the necessary change in human nature must be based on absolute moral standards and that was where one began, and he enunciated the standards of absolute honesty, purity unselfishness and love. 'With which do I begin?' asked the diplomat. 'Which do you find most difficult?' asked Rossi. After some reflection the reply was 'Purity'. 'Then that is where you must begin,' said Rossi in his gentle way.

Jacques Chevalier, a Deputy to the French National Assembly as well as being Mayor of Algiers, saw the musical in Paris and then invited a group to come to his city. Algeria was then

still a departement of the French nation, but feelings were strong for independence among native Algerians. Violence had begun to break out. Bill Conner and I accepted the mayor's invitation.

We flew first to Casablanca, Morocco. Our party included British colleague Matt Manson, and French colleagues André Crepin, a printer and trade union leader from Paris, and Michel Koechlin, an Alsatian whose grandfather had designed the skeletal structure for the Statue of Liberty and had helped build the Eiffel Tower. After Casablanca we continued to the capital, Rabat, to see Prime Minister Si Bekkai and other friends regarding their nomination of Frank Buchman for the Nobel Peace Prize. We worked closely there with Ahmed Guessous, an Istiqlal (Independence) Party leader, and with Pierre and Jeanine Chavanne whose new way of living as a result of contact with MRA's ideas had interested Guessous and had led to his change and renunciation of his bitterness.[41]

Bill Conner and I then went on to Algiers in response to the mayor's invitation and stayed in the Hotel Victoria overlooking the harbor. Matt Manson soon joined us. These were turbulent times. The Arab Algerians were demanding independence whilst the sizeable minority of French immigrants, known as colons, and later pieds-noir, resisted this. On January 28, 1956, Prime Minister Guy Mollet flew to Algiers to try to sort things out, beginning with the ceremonial placing of a wreath at the war memorial. Security precautions were extreme. The Garde Mobile closely surrounded his Citroen sedan. But as the car was about to return to Government House we watched as the mob of protesting colons surged forward. The Garde Mobile stepped back a few paces to let the angry crowd through. The mob picked the car up off the pavement and gave it a good shaking before setting it down none too gently. Mollet's face

41 For more on this remarkable story see *The Forgiveness Factor: stories of hope in a world of conflict* by Michael Henderson, Grosvenor Books (1996)

blanched, and the car sped off to the Palais de Government. Mollet stayed behind those walls until February 6 when he was driven to the airport to return to Paris.

Conner, Manson and I stayed on, visiting various people at the mayor's suggestion. One evening we were driven out into the countryside to show an MRA film in the local cinema. It was well attended, in spite of the armed guards at the entrance and the orange glare on the horizon of burning barns and haystacks. We were introduced to Colonel Raymond Coche who was in charge of transport for the French Army. He lived in a lovely old Arab home on the archipelago that almost encircled the harbor. The city and nation of Algeria take their name from this island chain because al-jeza'ir is the Arabic plural for jezira which means island.

In February 1958, during a visit in Alexandria, Francis Goulding and I had a long and fascinating conversation with the then recent President of Syria Shukry Al-Kuwaitly. He had just resigned the presidency to enable Syria to unite with Egypt. Many have suggested that Egypt's union with Syria to form the United Arab Republic was evidence of Nasser's excessive ambitions. However, we learned that Kuwaitly had begged Nasser to form the union in order to avoid Syria falling into communist hands. Kuwaitly told us that Nasser had not initially wanted to take such a step but only accepted the idea to avoid a communist take-over in Damascus. It meant Kuwaitly's own resignation as President of Syria, but his concerns were justified. Khalid Baghdash, a member of parliament and the leader of the Syrian Communist Party fled to Moscow soon after the merger of the two states. It is true that the union did not fare well, but the move almost certainly saved Syria from a worse fate at that time. Syria seceded from the union in 1961.

1958 continued as an eventful year in the region. Despite Nasser's crackdown on communists in the new United Arab

Republic (UAR), tensions continued to grow between Nasser and the pro-western president of Lebanon, Camille Chamoun, who had angered Nasser by not breaking off diplomatic relations with Britain and France when those countries, along with Israel, attacked Egypt in October, 1956. This had followed Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal two months before. Meanwhile, many Muslims of Lebanon agitated in favor of Lebanon also joining the UAR and demonstrations against the Christian Maronite president increased.

The tipping point came when, on July 14, there was a military coup in Iraq. A group of Iraqi soldiers machine-gunned the king, the queen mother and the regent, killing them all. Prime Minister Nuri Sa'id was hung, drawn and quartered. Foreign Minister Fadhel Jamali, who had recently returned to Baghdad from the UN in New York, fled with other ministers into the countryside. I was devastated when it was reported that Jamali had been killed by a mob.[42] A memorial service was held for Jamali in the National Theatre in Washington on July 17, at which I spoke. Soon the reports were corrected and we were greatly relieved to learn that Jamali had in fact been captured and was in prison. As he later said about the original report, 'Another unfortunate fellow was mistaken for me and killed.' Now, however, Jamali was in prison under sentence of death.

Immediately following the coup in Iraq, which removed a major pro-Western government, President Chamoun of Lebanon felt increasingly threatened and requested assistance from the United States. President Eisenhower immediately responded by sending 14,000 US troops into Lebanon. Marines landed at Khalde near Beirut airport and British paratroops had entered Jordan at King Hussein's request. The Soviets moved armor south. It was a very tense situation and the Arab States were divided among themselves.

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42 *New York Times*, July 16, 1958. p. 7.

An emergency session of the UN General Assembly was convened which President Eisenhower addressed. Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko put forward a draft resolution to the Assembly which the Arabs could not accept. The UN awaited an Arab initiative for a solution. There were ten Arab nations with membership in the UN at that time and all ten were also members of the Arab League. The Secretary General of the Arab League, Dr. Hassouna, was at that point in Japan, but felt he should be at the UN meeting. Returning first to his Cairo home, he went on to New York, against his own natural inclination for he was very tired, checked in at the Hotel Pierre where he regularly stayed, and convened the representatives of all ten Arab nations in his hotel room. Hassouna called repeated meetings in his hotel room over six days until finally an agreement was reached. Mohammed Ahmed Mahgoub, the Foreign Minister of Sudan, then presented their joint resolution to the General Assembly on August 20. The next day the full Assembly passed this joint Arab resolution unanimously.

Some days later, over breakfast, Hassouna recounted to Rajmohan Gandhi, a grandson of the Mahatma, and me what had happened. Hassouna said that the Arab gathering in his hotel room reminded him of earlier times: 'Songs and poetry were recited. There was a very good feeling.' The London *Times* reported 'Overnight an almost magical transformation had come over the scene'. (August 22, 1958). Three days later the *Washington Post* called the matter 'a triumph' for Hassouna. Another article headlined 'Survival clue?' declared 'Arab nations display spirit of Moral Re-Armament at UN.' (*State Times*, Jackson, Mississippi.)[43]

Jamali, however, remained in prison under sentence of

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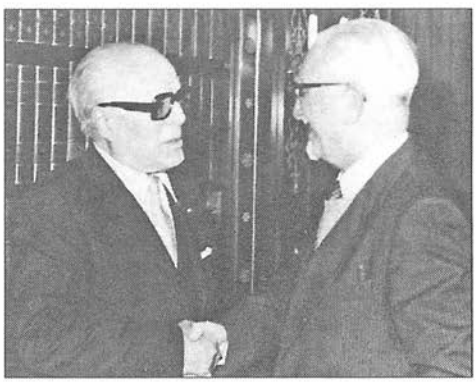
43 Fuller accounts of this can be found in *The Muslim Mind*, by Dr. Charis Waddy, Longman Group (1976), pp 99 – 102, and in *The League of Arab States and Regional Disputes* by Hussein Hassouna, Oceana Publications (1975), pp 71-77.

death. He later said, 'I never knew whether the morning footsteps in the corridor were my breakfast or the executioner.' Bev and I, and Anne and Betsy, prayed each night for Jamali's safety. This death sentence was commuted to a life sentence, then the sentence was reduced and eventually, in 1961, he was pardoned, following considerable pressure from the international community where Jamali was well-known.

Jamali was released at the same time as six other senior political figures who were taken to meet General Qassim, the new military ruler. The impression was given that Qassim had permitted Jamali's imprisonment to protect him from communist-inspired violence. At the Non-Aligned Conference in Bandung in 1955, Jamali had teamed up with Charles Malik of Lebanon, Mohammed Ali of Pakistan and Sir John Kotelawala of Ceylon to defeat a strategy that would have linked the non-aligned nations with the Soviet bloc. While Jamali was in prison the army officer who commanded the Prime Minister's guard said at a Communist Party rally in Baghdad's large stadium, 'At last we have Jamali where we want him for what he did in Bandung.'[44] Reason enough perhaps for the communists to want their revenge.

On his release, Jamali went to the Zurich home of friends and eventually to Tunisia where President Bourguiba had invited him and Mrs. Jamali



President Bourghiba of Tunisia and Fadhel Jamali

44 Bandung, Indonesia, was the site of a major conference of non-aligned nations in 1955 when Jamali criticized both communism and colonialism. See Iraqi Statesman for more details.

to make their home. With his Columbia PhD in Education he was a popular lecturer on that subject at the University of Tunis for several years.

Because of all these events, and others, I was often away from home for long periods. At times during the 1950s Bev and I visited the Middle East together. During such trips Anne and Betsy continued at home attending school in nearby Armonk, NY. Their grandparents, Vic and Elsie Kitchen, or aunt and uncle Hope and John Ayer, stayed with them in our home on the Dellwood property.

11

MACKINAC ISLAND

During our years based at Dellwood, Bev and I became close friends with New York businessman John Newington and his wife Barbara. John and I shared a love of sailing. When I learned that Abdel Khalek Hassouna also loved sailing and had a yacht of his own based at Alexandria, it was natural that I introduced Hassouna to Newington when he was next in New York. John took Hassouna for a sail on Long Island Sound in his yawl *Serena* and a friendship was born.

Learning of an important conference of Arab leaders that was to take place in Cairo where Hassouna wanted to introduce us to people, Newington said he would provide the funds for a business colleague of his and me to attend. But I was rebuffed by senior colleagues in MRA over the plan. Hurt and bitter at those who I believed had spread false information about the proposed trip, I cancelled it and retreated.

I have related how Mackinac Island, Michigan came to hold a special place in our hearts. During the 1950s and early 1960s we went there several times with the girls. This period saw a big expansion of the facilities to accommodate the ever-increasing numbers of conference participants. A theater had been built in the winter of 1954-55, followed by a large meeting hall shaped like a teepee.

I now reasoned to myself that, though I might have been wrong in a plan for a Middle East action, I could at least serve MRA in another way. Since I was a sailor and Mackinac Island

was separated by seven miles of water from the mainland of the Michigan peninsula, I volunteered to help with the boats that shuttled people and supplies back and forth. In the fall of 1959 work began on a studio to produce MRA films at Mackinac. All the materials for this construction would have to be brought from the mainland. Thus I became the skipper of an ungainly barge called *The Beaver.*

The Beaver was 65' long with a rectangular deck and a V-shaped hull powered by a GM 6-71 diesel engine. As winter came the lake froze, eventually with over three feet of ice, but we continued to operate. The hull was made of steel but was only 3/16 inch thick, so it was rather a risky business. We kept the channel open to our St. Ignace freight dock on the mainland by running every four hours around the clock whether there was cargo or not. We had two crews who operated 12 hours each daily, taking off half a day on Sunday to switch the crews from night to day. The blocks of ice in our channel were large and the vibration was transmitted to the wheel through the shaft and hull.

As I stood at that shuddering helm through the dark night hours I wondered about my earlier sense of calling to the Muslim world and its relations with America. Was this icebreaking really what I was meant to do with my life? I began to think that I must take up again my original calling to the Middle East and its relations with America. I had the thought to keep up with events and people in that region so that at any time I would be prepared to have lunch with, for example, Gamal Abdel Nasser[45] and carry on an intelligent and faith-giving conversation with him. This was a most helpful perspective and so despite the necessary details of running a barge and other boats I kept myself up to date with what was going on in the wider world, particularly in the Middle East.

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45 Nasser was *de facto* President of Egypt from October 1954, and more formally from January 1956 till his death in 1970.

Bev and the girls, who continued to base at Dellwood, came up for the 1959 Christmas holidays. After the completion of the film studio in 1960, I continued to operate the boats at Mackinac during the next few summer seasons.

In 1962 Sam Reid, a Scottish engineer who would later take over the Mackinac boats, and I along with three young men, took delivery of a new powerboat (for fast passenger ferrying) from a boatyard in Louisiana and piloted it up the Mississippi and Illinois rivers, through downtown Chicago and up Lake Michigan to Mackinac Island, an unforgettable trip.

That same year I made my third visit to Beirut along with Daniel Dommel, the French Financial Counselor for the Middle East. We stayed at the Bristol Hotel as guests of the owner, Georges Rayes.

Then in 1963, Bev and I had the persistent thought that our family should move to Beirut to provide a link with the many people around the Middle East who had been to Caux, and to enlist the help of these Middle East friends in restoring moral standards in the world. Unexpected confirmation came in a letter from the former President of Lebanon, Alfred Naccache. He wrote from Lebanon, 'Dear Mr. Almond, why don't you come to Beirut? It is a natural crossroad (*carrefour*) from which to spread the ideas of MRA in the area.' This was the only letter I ever received from that kindly, courteous gentleman who had been Lebanon's first head of state.

Though our sense as a family was to move to Beirut, we wanted to be sure of the rightness of such a move. I met with several MRA colleagues over lunch in New York and shared with them Bev's and my conviction and showed them President Naccache's letter. It became clear that it was right to go to Beirut and to make our home there.

12

HOME IN BEIRUT

I went ahead to Beirut in March 1964, and was soon joined there by Hansjörg Gareis, the younger German who had traveled around the region with us in 1954. I had to find an apartment and arrange to get Betsy and Anne into an English language school. Both girls were accepted into a British-run Christian school. It rejoiced in the name of Lebanese Evangelical School for Girls (LESG). Bev and the girls completed the American school year before joining me in August.

In April Hansjörg and I were visited by Peter Everington, an Englishman on leave from Sudan. Concerned about Middle East affairs, Peter had studied Arabic at Cambridge and then taken a teaching position in Sudan. Years later Peter, who became a good friend and colleague, would recall that visit. 'I appeared in your Beirut apartment in April 1964. An image abides of Harry bellowing down the phone in fluent French to get the electricity and other services up and running! On other occasions it would be fluent Arabic usually in quieter tones.'[46]

Our first home in Beirut was a three-bedroom apartment in the Bela'a Building on Madhat Pasha Street. The landlord, Abdur Rahman Bela'a, lived in the eighth floor flat just above us. Above him was the Director General of Tourism, Michel Touma and his Swiss wife. We soon noticed a kind of rumbling sound above us and eventually discovered that the sound came

46 Editor's note: inserted from a letter of Peter to Beverly Almond, June 2007

from our landlord's water pipe, his *nargeila*. Later we were able to rent a villa with more space, Villa Majdalani, from the wife of a prominent Palestinian doctor.

Soon after my arrival, I called on former-President Naccache, who had written suggesting that Bev and I come to Lebanon. From then on I had coffee with him most weeks and over the following months he introduced us to many people.

There were also friendships and contacts to renew from earlier visits to Beirut. I had met Nedko Etinof during my visit to Beirut two years earlier with Daniel Dommel. Nedko was a Bulgarian refugee with Lebanese nationality, and Aznive, his wife, was from an Armenian-Turkish background and earned her Registered Nurse certificate at the American University of Beirut (AUB) Hospital. Nedko was in charge of student activities in West Hall, the Student Union Building of AUB. Nedko also had a beautiful tenor voice and taught music classes in the university. They received us warmly and gave us start-up equipment for the kitchen. They also enlisted their Armenian friends, the Derderians, to help us find furniture. Another family gave us a lovely old rug which is still in the family. Karnik Derderian would later supply the ink and plates whenever we had a printing job to be done.

It was a particular joy to reconnect with our old friends from Basra days, Ahmed and Sajida Nakib and their daughters, Haifa and Hind, and sons, Hisham and Ghassan, who were now living in Beirut following the revolution in Iraq. The Nakibs had a lovely seaside villa near the airport and we saw a lot of each other. At one point they asked our help in getting Hisham into a boarding school in Britain. Although his grades at that time were not the best, he was accepted at a school in Colchester where the morning runs and cold showers were quite a cultural shock.

In May 1968, Roland and Mary Wilson, with their daughter Margaret, came for a visit from Britain. Roly was one of the main leaders of the work of MRA in Britain, and it had

been Mary Richmond (as she then was) who had helped Bev with her decisions of change in London in 1945. Mary was a niece of Gertrude Bell who, as an adviser to Sir Percy Cox, had connived in the exiling of Sayyid Talib Al-Nakib, Sajida's father, to Ceylon in 1921. After telling the Wilsons of this and of our friendship with the Nakibs, the Wilsons were both horrified to learn of this distant event involving Mary's aunt, and also wished to meet the Nakibs.

Over tea, we asked the Nakibs to tell us all about Sajida's father and Ahmed's uncle and what his forced exile had meant for the family. Mary apologized to the Nakibs for the arrogance and perfidy of her aunt. Ahmed and Sajida accepted this with full forgiveness and warm hearts, and they invited the three Wilsons and the four Almonds for a dinner in their home by the sea. The meal was a traditional 'khuzi', a large platter, three or four feet in diameter, heaped with a mound of rice topped by a whole roasted lamb. There were side dishes of stews and vegetables and sauces. Ahmed tore off choice portions of the khuzi for his guests and loaded plates with rice and something from each of the side dishes. Stories and jokes abounded as healing became complete.

We soon connected with other friends who were originally from Iraq. Dr. Abdul Rahman Bazzaz was a highly respected professor of Arab Nationalist thought. He and I had first met when he attended the Caux Assembly at the invitation of Bill Conner. Their daughter Zahira, then in her early teens, was mute, partly because she was nearly deaf. Bev got in touch with various agencies and started to make arrangements for her to be helped. Whenever the family came for a meal we tried to think of ways to involve Zahira, for example asking her if she would like to arrange flowers or help cook on the grill.

When we arrived in Lebanon in 1964, the revolutionary government in Iraq had already been in power for six years, but now the military leaders felt the need to have a civilian

Prime Minister. The military government invited Bazzaz to accept the position and one evening, when the family came for a hamburger supper on our porch, he told us of the invitation and asked our advice. The family would go with him, which meant that Zahira would not continue to receive the remedial help she needed. With her age a factor, this would probably have been her last chance. It was an awful decision to have to make. Beverly and I expressed our concern for their daughter, and we also delicately suggested that there was a question of the reliability of the regime's promises, but it is difficult, even presumptuous, to advise someone from another country in such a situation. Bazzaz said, 'I must accept. It is my duty to serve my country.'

And so they returned to Baghdad, and he took up his duties as Prime Minister. Shortly after that he invited Bill Conner and me to come for a week's visit to meet the leaders of the country. In addition to those he himself wanted us to meet, he also arranged dates with anyone we mentioned, and our visits included appointments with President Abdul Salaam Aref, leading newspaper editors, diplomats and the military.

Alas, Bazzaz's firm stand for faith and morality was more than the military regime had bargained for, and he was put into the Niqra Salman detention camp in the southwest of the country where some of our Basra students had been held nearly 20 years before; a horrible place. Bazzaz was extremely near-sighted and a diabetic. His glasses were smashed and medication withheld. He became seriously ill under such treatment. When it became clear that he was dying he was flown to London. Colonel Gaddafi of Libya read of this in the press, telephoned his ambassador in London, berated him for not caring for 'this great Arab patriot', and ordered him to have Bazzaz moved to a private hospital room and to send all bills to him in Tripoli. Sadly, Bazzaz died shortly after that. The family stayed on in London, and some years later the daughter, Zahira, also passed away.

In 1965 Daniel Dommel was posted to the French Embassy in Algiers. Not long after that, Dr. Bill Close of Zaire fame, whom I had known from our Dellwood days,[47] and I went to Algeria for a short visit, and Daniel loaned us a car in order to get to Bougie to see a medical colleague of Bill's who was also head of the Algerian football association. In our ignorance we took what seemed on the map to be the shortest route but underestimated the Algerian mountains. We were also ignorant of the extent of the fighting going on, and Bill and I had to talk our way through a series of roadblocks. After reaching the doctor at the Bougie stadium we prudently made our way back to Algiers via the autoroute – a bit longer in kilometers, but faster and safer.

During my stay at the Bristol Hotel in 1962, the owner, Georges Rayes, had become a good friend. Georges was a generous host and a gourmet cook and compiled the authoritative book on Lebanese cuisine. He went to America for the first time in the late 1960s, and after his return I came upon him as he sat in a sidewalk café. I asked whether he had enjoyed his tour, and he replied, 'Very much indeed, but your cuisine is abominable! You do not cook. You grrrill or you frry, but you do not cook!' I was shaken and amused. I had thought he would at least like our ice cream, but he preferred Italian style gelati.

Bev and I had gone to Bahrain in 1950 to spell Ed and Ruth Luidens who were going on a year's furlough. Now Ed was working with the Near East Council of Churches in their office in Beirut. After we moved into the Villa Mejdalani the Luidens introduced us to Rosa Khalaf. Rosa worked for the Luidens and started to come to us one day a week to help with

47 Bill Close went on to become personal physician to President Mobutu of Congo/Zaire See his memoir *Beyond the Storm* (2006) Meadowlarks Springs Productions, Wyoming. The Almonds and Closes remained lifelong friends.

household chores. Born in Turkey, she had fled with many other Armenians to Palestine where she had married a Palestinian. When Palestine was partitioned in 1948 the family fled to the Palestine side of that line, and when the 1967 war began, had hurriedly departed for Beirut. Rosa's husband was a mason but had been killed in a fall from a scaffold soon after they arrived. Rosa and her boys later emigrated to Canada where in the 1970s we were able to see them again.

I had lost track of Mohammed who had made the temporary conversion to Christianity in Bahrain. One day Ed Luidens telephoned to say that Mohammed (who was now using his Muslim name again) was in town working as a translator for the Arab News Agency, an affiliate of Reuters, just around the corner from our apartment. He came to see us, bringing us the gift of a coffee percolator, and was delighted to see Anne and Betsy again after more than 13 years. While working in Beirut he married A'ida, a fine Palestinian lady. After having worked a few years in the Gulf Emirates they moved to Montreal, and, again, years later we were able to visit them there during Ramadan.[48]

I also reconnected with Muhi ad-Din Nsouli, the publisher of *Beirut*, and his editor, Mohammed Naccache (no relation to the former President), whom Francis Goulding and I had met in 1954. Naccache's wife, Dr. Sanniya Haboub, was the first woman doctor in Lebanon, and we had been asked to look her up by a classmate from the University of Philadelphia Medical School. When Nsouli died the paper ceased publication, but the Naccache family kept us in their circle. The two daughters, Sanniya and Iffet, were good friends of ours. Iffet cared for her father after he went blind, as he continued to write and broadcast his strong nationalist views. Sanniya married Dr. Ali Issa Othman from Beit Safafa in Palestine.

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48 Editor's note: Mohammed is still in touch with the Almond family and now resides in the USA.

Fred Abrams, the Irish engineer who had emptied his Baghdad bank account to help with the expenses of *The Vanishing Island* when it came to Baghdad, gave us an introduction to a fellow engineer, Michel al-Khoury, the son of Bishara Al-Khoury, a pioneer of Lebanese independence. Michel was the head of a big contracting company, Darwiche, Haddad & Co. He it was who arranged for us to get residence books which eased our long-term stay in Lebanon.

Ambassador Abdullah Najjar was a senior member of the Druze community of Lebanon. We had first met him at the UN in New York when he was Lebanese ambassador to Canada. At Fadhel Jamali's invitation he had visited Dellwood in 1954. We looked him up soon after our arrival and were delighted to meet Mrs. Najjar in their lovely home in Beit Mary overlooking Beirut. The Druze community had always been rather secretive, but Ambassador Najjar felt that the time had come when they should share the spiritual insights they had with the rest of the world. To this end he wrote a book about the Druze religion, after having secured the sheikhs' approval, and proceeded to have it published. At a meeting of the whole community, hotheads with mixed motives raised accusing questions about the ambassador's breaking the code of secrecy. There was shouting and argument, and the kindly old gentleman was shoved about. The sheikhs kept silent, in effect denying their earlier approval, and the book was banned. Of course it sold even better in other Arabic speaking countries, human nature being what it is. He gave me copies in both English and Arabic.[49]

The Greek Catholic bishop in Beirut was Philippe Neba'a whom we met through an introduction from a Swedish Lutheran clergyman. The two had met at a World Council of Churches conference in the USA. Bishop Neba'a received us

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49 These books are now in the library of the Department of Middle East Studies at Rutgers University.

very cordially and we invited him for luncheon with our family. On the appointed day Betsy was mopping the floor when the doorbell rang. Since it was quite early she assumed it could not be our guest. She opened the door barefoot, in jeans and mop in hand. There was the bishop, staff in hand and accompanied by his secretary, Fr. George Haddad. Betsy, with great aplomb, showed the guests into the sitting room and discreetly scurried off to alert us and change her clothes. We continued to meet Bishop Neba'a from time to time. Fr. George was later elevated to the Greek Catholic Bishopric of Tyre.

There is a large MRA conference center, Asia Plateau, at Panchgani in Maharashtra, India. In the late 1960s many who attended these conferences from the west would stop off in Beirut as it was a natural break point in an otherwise long journey in those days. We exploited these 'birds of passage', asking them to share their experiences with our friends. The travelers included trade union leaders and businessmen from several countries. The presence of these men in Beirut prompted Lebanese trade union leaders, along with officials of the port company, to arrange a showing of the MRA film *Men of Brazil* for the personnel of the port. *Men of Brazil* is a documentary, a true story, showing how the port of Rio de Janeiro was turned around from corruption and inefficiency to being an effective contributor to Brazil's economic well-being following a real change of heart in people. The screening was well attended and thoughtfully received by both workers and management.

One thing we did was to institute a Thursday evening open house. By this time there was interest in Moral Re-Armament among some of the university officials of the American University of Beirut (AUB). We had been joined by two young men, Roddy Edwards of Jamaica and John Mills of Australia, who were offered a room in the AUB dormitory by the Dean of Students, Robert Nejaimy, and Professor Jack Ibrahim who

proctored the dorm. Our Thursday 'at homes' were soon being attended by students met by Roddy and John, and attracted by Bev's cookies. For students it was an opportunity to meet an array of non-academic people: former President Naccache, Ahmed Nakib, the Director of Lebanese Tourism, and trade union leaders and others passing through between Europe and the Panchgani conferences in India. Beirut was indeed the *carrefour* envisaged by President Naccache.

Harry Almond and Ahmed Nakib

Among the students who came to these Thursday evenings were several from Nepal. Their leader was Devi Chapagain, a student of electrical engineering. He had attended a course for 'Leadership in the Modern World' at Caux. There he decided to get absolutely honest about exams and lab reports. Cheating was quite a problem at the university, so widespread that the difficulty level of exam questions was raised, which led to more cheating. When Devi spoke to the Dean of Engineering, Professor Raymond Ghosn, he risked his university degree, but the Dean was already aware of the problem and was touched by Devi's courageous honesty. Devi told him about the training course and offered to show an MRA film illustrating what he had experienced. The Dean had it shown in the Engineering School's Bechtel Auditorium. Thus Devi's spirit spread and led to discussions with the faculty. Cheating was greatly reduced and exam difficulty was eased.

Dean Ghosn and Dean Nejaimy themselves began to come to our Thursday evening 'at homes', and they became close

friends of ours. Talking of student unrest, Nejaimy told me, 'We have students applying to enter the University with such high qualifications that we cannot refuse them. Yet we know that their primary purpose is to wreck this institution and not leave one stone on another. It is nearly impossible to get a grip on that situation.' In 1976, when Deans Nejaimy and Ghosn were having coffee in Nejaimy's office, a student burst in with a gun and killed them both instantly. A terrible price was paid by two good men who had wanted to set moral standards in the university.

In the summer of 1965 our daughter, Anne, and I took a group from the area to an MRA youth conference on Mackinac Island. The group of six included Turks, Jordanians and Lebanese. Afterwards one of them, a young Palestinian Jordanian, returned home and started enlisting his friends in a tree-planting campaign, a sorely-needed activity.

That fall Anne began her college studies at Beirut College for Women (BCW), now named the Lebanese-American University (LAU). Ahmed Nakib's daughter, Haifa, was there at the same time. Haifa would later teach at Kuwait University.

In January 1966, Peter Everington, who was then on the faculty of the Higher Teacher Training College in Khartoum, asked me to come and meet some of the leadership of Sudan with whom he had become acquainted. Soon after arriving I discovered that we had been invited by Imam Al-Hadi al-Mahdi to spend the last days of the holy month of fasting, Ramadan, with him on Aba Island, the family seat, in the White Nile, an overnight train ride south of Khartoum. There we would join in the feast celebrating the end of the fast.

Mahdi is a title meaning Guided (by God). It refers in Sudan to the head of the clan who leads the religious sect known as 'the Ansar', or partisans, a name renowned in Sudanese history for their resistance to British rule. I told earlier how Ahmed al-Mahdi, the younger brother of Imam Al Hadi, had visited Dellwood on his way to Mackinac in 1957. Peter and I

took the night train to Kosti where in the morning a car met us and we were whisked off to Aba Island.

The buildings there in the Mahdi's stronghold were two-storied with wide porches overlooking the enclosed area. The complex was U-shaped and offered a large gathering place for his followers, the Ansar, to demonstrate their allegiance. Our room was on the second floor of the large building with a wide balcony looking over the large enclosed court.

The Ramadan meal schedule calls for fasting from early pre-dawn light to sundown. Once the sun is below the horizon the fast is broken, usually with a drink of water and a few dates followed by a sumptuous meal. Our problem was that with typical Muslim courtesy they also served us European style food at European hours – breakfast, lunch and dinner! We both gained weight.

On the day of the feast of Eid al-Fitr, at the end of Ramadan, the courtyard was jammed with several thousand Ansar, all dancing in a shuffle and waving their large swords aloft while chanting the shehada, or creed, that says there is no God but Allah and that Mohammed is His prophet and vowing their allegiance to Imam Al-Hadi in thundering unison, 'la ilaha illa Allah, Muhammadu rasul ullah'. It was truly an unforgettable time.

When we returned to Khartoum it was still holiday time for the Eid festival which usually lasts three days. We decided to make a few of the calls appropriate to the season, starting with the Prime Minister Mohammed Ahmed Mahgoub. We found him alone, reclining on one of the divans set around the walls of his home. He rose and greeted us warmly, responding to our 'Eidkum mubarak' (May your holiday be blessed). My call on the American embassy revealed that the ambassador had gone duck shooting for the holidays. The official keeping the watch said, 'You can't see anybody in these busy days.' But for such holidays it is the usual practice for people to 'sit': they have open house and anyone is welcome to come,

exchange holiday greetings, have a cup of coffee, and leave. We had found the Prime Minister not only welcoming but appreciative of callers.

Soon after my return from Sudan in 1966 I received an invitation to join the faculty of Mackinac College that was being created out of the MRA conference center in Michigan. I was asked to be Dean of Students with the idea of eventually starting a Department of Middle East Studies. I was tempted, but the question remained as to who would replace us in Beirut where we had been for only two years. After consulting with various friends and colleagues I declined the invitation and we stayed on in Beirut. Mackinac College opened its doors in the fall of 1966 but only operated for four years, thus graduating one class, before closing in 1970. The facilities, which had previously been the main MRA conference center in America, were then sold, eventually becoming a hotel.[50] From afar in Beirut, Bev and I followed these developments with concern for the future of the work of MRA in America.

Former President Naccache introduced us to many people, including his successor, President Charles Helou. President and Mme. Helou joined us at Caux in 1966 and were there for our 20th wedding anniversary. In the meantime we had become good friends with Butros Dib and his family. I had first met Butros when Ismail and I had visited Beirut in 1952. Now he was Helou's chef-du-cabinet, and Butros and Lily had sent their daughters, Miriam and Maha, to Caux in our care. The two girls, with help from our daughters, prepared a lovely Lebanese meal, with all the 'fixin's', to celebrate our anniversary along with President and Mme. Helou.

My father had died in 1965 and I had flown back to America for the funeral. In the spring of 1967 my mother responded

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50 The hotel is currently called Mission Point Resort where an exhibition room is maintained that informs visitors of the historic use of the facilities in earlier decades.

to our invitation to visit us in Beirut, despite being in her 80s and having never flown before. I was able to meet her at the foot of the steps as she deplaned, and she seemed a bit wobbly. 'What's the matter, Mom?' I asked her, 'Were you airsick?' 'No.' she replied, 'I wasn't airsick, but every time he let that wing drop I was right there helping him pull it up again.'

We took my mother to see the Holy Places in the then Jordanian-controlled West Bank and East Jerusalem. This was just before the June 1967 war. In Bethlehem we had tea with Dr. and Mrs. Ahmed Khalaf. Ahmed was an Edinburgh-trained psychiatrist who practiced in the Bethlehem Mental Hospital. We discovered that the Khalafs had never been inside the Church of the Nativity, being uncertain whether non-Christians were welcome there. So we all, including their baby, went to visit the large church and the little grotto under the altar which tradition says is the stable where the infant Jesus lay. As we talked there with the Khalafs we remembered together how much the Qur'an tells of Jesus (Issa) and Mary (Miriam).

Several years later we met the Khalafs again in Amman, and Ahmed told us what had happened since we last saw each other. After the Israeli occupation of the West Bank in the June 1967 war, he had been taken one night and thrown into prison without charges. There the Israeli guards beat him with hoses so severely that his pancreas was ruptured. He was left at the Allenby Bridge crossing of the Jordan River where the Jordanians picked him up. He was flown to Beirut where he underwent surgery at the AUB Hospital. Now Ahmed was trying to establish a practice in Amman, but the suffering had taken its toll. He told us that at one point during a break in the beatings he had said to the guard, 'We do not know each other: why are you beating me like this?' The man replied by pulling up his sleeve to reveal his tattoo from the Nazi concentration camp, pointing to the number and saying, 'They did this to me. So I am doing this to you!'

The June 1967 Israeli-Arab war[51] was a pivotal experience during our years in Beirut. There were large demonstrations in the city against America's support for Israel and in support of President Nasser of Egypt. At one point when Nasser threatened to resign after Egypt's defeat, a mob attacked the US Embassy down on the seafront in Beirut. They were turned back by Lebanese security forces, but not without shooting and killing.

The embassy officer responsible for our district telephoned to inform us that we were to report in two hours at the athletic field of the AUB. From there a Marine guard would escort us to the airport to board special planes that would take us either to Rome, Nicosia, Athens or Ankara. For this evacuation we would be permitted one suitcase each. I thanked him and said we would call back.

It was June 6, Betsy's 16th birthday, and a cake was in the oven. We prayed for guidance as to whether or not to accept the embassy's offer. After a quiet moment or two we each had a similar thought: it was God who had brought us here, and we should not leave until it was clear that He meant for us to leave. So I called back to the embassy. It was difficult to get through to the vice-consul who had called us earlier, and the line was very noisy. When he came on line, he said, 'You sure picked a helluva time to call: we're under attack.' The vice-consul made it clear that if we did not leave the embassy could no longer assume any responsibility for our safety. We stayed.

The only damage done was to Betsy's birthday cake: it burned in the oven, forgotten in the excitement. There were fears of an Israeli air attack, and we had to black out our windows. We stayed indoors for three days. We did not even show our faces on our fifth floor balcony for fear of the mobs flowing down our narrow street. They filled it from wall to wall, pouring over parked cars like a stream of locusts. We

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51 Known as the Six Day War, it took place from June 5-10.

were fortunately living in a Muslim neighborhood where Americans normally did not stay, but the mobs destroyed the nearby Pan American offices and attacked American cars, regardless of who owned them.

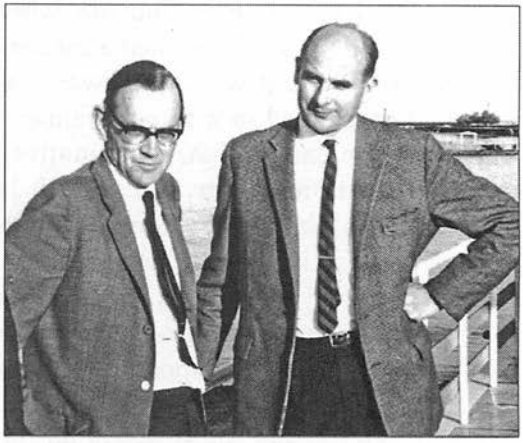
The Nakibs drove a big American Ford, fire engine red. Ahmed was in Europe when the war occurred, but Sajida and her son Hisham came to find out whether we were safe or needed anything. Sajida seemed a bit nervous as she sat down. Hisham told us that when they were parking their car a few men had demanded in a rough manner to know who owned 'the American car'. Sajida, a diminutive lady, drew herself up in full aristocratic dignity and said, 'It belongs to Ahmed bin Hamid Al-Nakib, and it's none of your business!' They half-bowed apologetically and disappeared. Hisham asked if he could get us any provisions. We said that we had plenty of food, thanks, but that it would be great if he could fetch our mail from our downtown post office box, which he kindly did.

Betsy had a classmate in her school named Sherine Beydoun. Her father, Ihsan Beydoun, was from a prominent Lebanese Shi'i family, and her mother, Pam, was South African. The day after the Nakibs visited us, the Beydouns came, during a brief lifting of the curfew, with a huge bag of groceries. Then Anis Bawarshi came to ask about our welfare. He was a leading stationer and printer, a Christian Palestinian refugee who had fled to Beirut in the 1948 war. Other Lebanese telephoned, along the lines of: 'Oh, you're still here. Good. We were afraid you might have left with the rest of the Americans.'

The fact that we had refused evacuation and stayed on became rather embarrassing because in the autumn, at various parties and at church coffee hour, people often opened conversations with 'Where did you go when we were evacuated?' Exclamations of incredulity accompanied our statement that we had stayed, and we soon began to think that we might have been the only American family who did so. In any case the fact

that we had not left seemed to have built more confidence with our Lebanese friends, and people poured out their feelings to us about America.

During the Beirut years our close friends and MRA colleagues, Marcel and Theri Grandy from Switzerland, were living in Nicosia, Cyprus, in a similar capacity as ourselves in Beirut. We therefore used to visit back and forth. It was only a 20-minute plane ride. When tensions mounted in Beirut we were concerned for our teenage daughters and made an agreement with the Grandys that they would care for the girls if anything happened to us. It was understood that Anne and Betsy would go and stay with them in Nicosia. Therefore, we were quite surprised, shortly after making this arrangement, to find Marcel and Theri at our door, suitcases in hand. Their Nicosia home was close to the Green Line, in the line of fire during a flare-up between Greeks and Turks. We had a pleasant visit for a few days before things calmed down in Nicosia, and they could return home safely.[52]



Bill Conner and Marcel Grandy

During our eight years in Beirut I was Middle East correspondent for the Bombay news weekly, *Himmat* (Courage) founded by Rajmohan Gandhi. Through Ihsan Beydoun, the

52 For a fuller account, see *Hope Never Dies – the Grandy story*, Caux Books (2005).

father of Betsy's classmate, I learned of the Amaliya School, which was funded by the Amaliya Foundation whose principal supporter was Ihsan's uncle, Muhsin Beydoun, a prominent banker in the city. The school, a Shiite philanthropy, admitted without discrimination Muslims – both Shiite and Sunni – Jews, Christians, and Druze boys for vocational training. The admissions policy was entirely on merit, and tuition charges were waived in needy cases. This was unusual in a country where sectarian strife and rivalry were rampant, and so I visited the school and wrote a report for *Himmat.*

One of the more colorful people to stop in Beirut after attending the Panchgani conference in India in 1968 was Jack Carroll, a leader of the dockworkers in the port of Bristol, England, where he had led an unofficial strike. Roddy and John had been asked to speak to a student group at the Law Faculty of Saint Joseph's University, a Jesuit institution. They asked Jack Carroll to come with them and tell about his own change. Jack explained in salty language how he sought God's leading each morning, helped by a cup of tea, some of which he poured into the saucer for his cat. The law students were delighted with Jack's story – especially one law student named Ramez Salamé. At Roddy's and John's invitation, Ramez visited our apartment a few times and later went to Caux to attend the course in 'Leadership in the Modern World'.

On his return Ramez began to think and act for his country in a new way. Ramez is of the Maronite community, which is an Eastern-rite Catholic Church with its own Patriarch who is also a Cardinal of the Catholic Church. By an unwritten political accord the President of Lebanon was always to be a Maronite, even though that community was probably smaller in number than the Muslims. At a time of great intercommunal tension Ramez decided to call on the Grand Mufti, the Muslim religious leader. He took others with him including one or two from the AUB Engineering Faculty, since he wanted to build a team. Ramez apologized to the Mufti for

the way he and his people had kept the reins of power in their hands, denying justice to their Muslim compatriots. He expressed the desire to work with the Mufti to build a new Lebanon. The Mufti rose and said, 'What you have brought here today is the first ray of hope in the present darkness.'

A few days later the Mufti was scheduled to preach the Friday sermon in the big, downtown mosque. It was feared that his speech would be inflammatory because a young psychopath had just set fire to the roof of the Mosque of Omar in Jerusalem. The army and gendarmerie were posted around Beirut, and close to the mosque there were sandbagged gun emplacements to control any disturbance. Contrary to fears, however, the Mufti called on the congregation for calm and no violence. The leading Maronite newspaper commented the next day on the unexpectedly peaceful words of the Mufti, and reported that there had been no violence.

13

JORDAN – A ROYAL ADVENTURE

During our years in Lebanon we made a number of visits to Jordan, often as a family. In the spring of 1966, Marcel Grandy and I flew to Amman to interview King Hussein for *Pace*, an American MRA magazine. We wanted to prepare an article on the qualities of leadership required in the modern world. My previous meeting with King Hussein had been in 1954 along with Goulding, Gareis, and d'Hauteville when the king was just 18. His Majesty was now 30 and had been king for nearly 14 years.

We waited for a long time to interview the king, watching a stream of ambassadors and government officials file in and out. The secretary finally came to show us in and was about to open the door when it was flung wide from within. There was His Majesty, wiping his brow and with a grin saying, 'Sorry to keep you waiting so long, but now with no one waiting we have time. Come in and we'll have a cup of tea.'

Here are extracts from the transcript of that interview on the subject of leadership:

> 'There are several factors which enable me to serve the people of Jordan and the Arab world. One is connected with the mission my family has attempted to carry out all through Arab history and will continue to carry out. It is a sense of responsibility, my feeling that I must do my share. I feel I stand as a link in a chain, a mile on a road

to a better future for the Arab people whom I am privileged to serve. Their future, their aspirations are very much like those of people the world over. So that is one factor, continuing family responsibility.

'Then there is my belief in God and in goodness, in sound moral values, in all those ideals and principles which unite free people. I fear no one but God.

'And there is also fear of one's self. There is very much to learn, and one feels small and insignificant before the task. One of the greatest dangers comes when a person arrives at the point where he feels he knows best and becomes over confident. There is much to learn, so much more one feels one should learn; yet overconfidence is the greatest pitfall in sound leadership. I hope I do not fall into that trap. I hope to live up to the hopes and expectations of those who have supported me.

'One of the biggest weaknesses in our part of the world is leaders who have succumbed to this danger. The result then is that a country becomes linked up to one man's life span, and his personal attitudes become primary. From the first day I faced that challenge I have felt that the greatest service I could render my country would be to create a good system of government which depends on a team of people who can govern in a proper fashion and carry responsibility together. That makes for continuity, insures progress and avoids the mistakes so easily made by an individual.

'When there are difficult decisions I try to listen to everyone, to get everyone's advice, and then form my own conclusion. I try to make it a result of considering all points of views and then seeing what is best for all. The early years with my grandfather, His Majesty King Abdullah, were of great importance to me, because there I learned what dedication was and of what responsibility and service to my people consisted. I had to take a basic

decision before I was18, when as a very ordinary person, which I hope I still am, I had suddenly to assume full responsibility for my country. (King Abdullah was assassinated when Hussein was with him at prayers in the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem.)

'The most important part of leadership is never to let responsibility and high position change you so that barriers are created between you and others. We have done away with any such barriers that may have existed. We have tried to create a family spirit in the nation. I consider myself as one member of that family, trying to do his best to understand the whole country's needs and aspirations.

'We have come a long way in that direction. I am trying voluntarily and slowly to retire from active day-to-day government. I want more and more only to observe and guide as needed. My main task is supervising, giving a lead, moving about here and there to stimulate interest in various fields. We know that we are on a long road, but we are going ahead. Progress is being made. Plans are beginning to function.

'If I am dedicated to anything, it is to building tolerance and unity between all believers in God. I believe that we will slowly move closer together. We will come to understand that we must work together and live together, not only for our own day but for coming generations. We will one day come to the point of living like a family, Christians and Muslims, proud to live in this land of unity, hoping to set a good example to others as well as being keepers of the holy places which are so important to all believers. We build only through our human resources and determination.'

Following the interview Marcel and I spent several days as the king's guests. One day we were picked up at four in the

Harry Almond, Marcel Grandy and King Hussein

morning from our hotel and driven out to an army post near the town of Karak overlooking the Dead Sea southwest of Amman. Karak is near Mount Nebo where Moses surveyed the land which the Lord did not permit him to enter. Then we traveled by Land Rover in a cavalcade led by the king who was driving a new Ford Bronco. Two army vehicles accompanied us with machine guns mounted and manned by two royal bodyguards. We went down to the southern tip of the Dead Sea, which is well below sea level. Then we headed south down the Wadi Arabah which was the outlet of the Dead Sea in ancient times, the continuation of the Jordan River. The old watercourse was the boundary between Jordan and Israel, and the guards uncovered their weapons and loaded up. The colonel who accompanied us explained that His Majesty had a rather cavalier disregard for the boundary line and had been known to stray across it.

The old riverbed was a barely-passable track. It was scattered with waist-high boulders. The temperature was over 110 degrees Fahrenheit and the air was so dusty that we put our cameras in plastic bags. The king led us about half way down the Wadi towards Aqaba before turning east up the mountain slope west of the Nabatean city of Petra. The king was accom-

panied by his father-in-law, a retired British Army officer, and a German mining engineer. The object of the trek was to inspect an old copper mine which dated back to King Solomon. King Hussein, with the engineer and one or two others, went into the mine while the rest of us were very happy to rest in what shade we could find. When the king and party emerged lunch was served – a whole roast lamb with all the trimmings.

The royal flight of three Alouette helicopters landed, and there was discreet jockeying for position since there was one more passenger candidate than the Alouettes could carry. Our colonel made his own hopes clear, but suddenly the king turned, pointed to Marcel and me and said, 'You and you. In there.' The poor colonel could not argue with that and climbed sadly back into the Land Rover to face the long, dusty ride back to Amman. Our Alouette followed the one piloted by the king eastward over the ridges around Petra and down to Ma'an where the king's De Havilland Dove awaited. We boarded the plane for the short flight to Aqaba as the sun was setting over the Sinai Peninsula. Ma'an is the railway station on the Hejaz line that figures in the film, *Lawrence of Arabia*. It was quite a day for the king: dawn to noon driving the Bronco, piloting the Alouette and then the Dove to our destination, a 14-hour day in very high temperatures.

After a night in the guesthouse we boarded a speed boat for a chance to water-ski. Besides being an excellent water skier the king also rode a surfboard towed behind the motorboat and pulled in close to the stern. Before getting on the board he said, 'Now you'll probably see a royal flop.' He pulled in close and threw away the towline, balancing on the stern wave created in the boat's wake as if it were surf. There was no flop. He then offered Marcel and me the chance to ski. Marcel wisely declined, but I was foolhardy enough to accept. I managed to stay up and swing about a bit, but it was a very amateurish performance after seeing the king's skill.

Then we boarded a Bertram 38' Sport Fisherman with twin screws. The king's brother, Prince Hassan came on board. The king had been told that I liked boats, and he invited me to join him on the flying bridge. I noticed two vehicles racing us on the eastern shore and remarked, 'Those fellows are keeping up pretty well on that rough road.' His Majesty rejoined with a grin; 'They had better keep up. It's their job. They're my bodyguards.' Only then did I notice the guns.

With the twin motors roaring away and the breeze strong on our faces there was no risk of being overheard, and the king and I were able to talk privately. We asked about each other's children. When we had first met in 1954 he had said that he wanted us to count him a 'pioneer for moral re-armament', and so we talked of moral standards. I commented that it was difficult for a father to bring up two teenage daughters in a city like Beirut. The king said he understood that very well and asked, 'Why do you think that is?' I replied, 'Because there are so many men like me on the streets.' He roared with laughter, and the conversation continued from there.

We returned to Amman and that evening the Royal Artillery School held its graduation maneuvers, and we were taken along. We drove into the desert in a line abreast with His Majesty to windward and the rest of us eating dust. There was a dinner in a great tent and then comfortable seats to watch the artillery shoot off colorful star shells and tracer bullets. The next day we met with the king to thank him for his hospitality, to take our leave and to check our draft of the interview. The king waved that aside saying, 'You men understand me, and I fully trust you to express my views accurately.'

There were many other friends to see in Amman. There was Abdul Mun'eim Rifa'i who I had got to know in America in the 1950s when he was Jordan's ambassador there. It was he who had read Hassouna's message to the Washington MRA Assembly in 1955. Since then he had been Prime Minister of Jordan and was now retired. Another former Prime Minister

was Bahjat Talhouni who had also spoken in support of MRA. These and other friends received us warmly with traditional Muslim hospitality.

We had dinner with General Izzet Pasha Qandour, Chief of Staff of Jordan's Army. We had first met the general through his son, Dr. Mohyuddin Qandour. Izzet Pasha was by then a good friend, and we had been in each other's homes on more than one occasion. The general was a senior member of the Circassian community[53] from whom the Royal Bodyguard is chosen.

The next morning the radio news announced that General Izzet Pasha had retired from the Army and was replaced by Sherif Nasir, King Hussein's maternal uncle, next to whom our group had been seated at King Sa'ud's table in Riyadh back in 1954. Izzet Pasha had not mentioned this at table the evening before, and so we telephoned him: 'Pasha, we just listened to the news.' He replied, 'Yes, so did I.' 'But we heard that you had just retired.' Again he replied, 'Yes, so did I. It was news to me too.' We learned that normally when a general retired he would be invited to the palace for an audience and given some sort of decoration. Marcel and I were saddened to see the long career of this soldier of unquestioned loyalty and integrity end in this way.

53 The Circassians came into the Middle East from the Northern Caucasus region, particularly into what is now Jordan, as well as Turkey, in the 1860s and 1870s following the expansion of Russian military conquest into their mountain region.

14

ANYTHING TO DECLARE?

A further link with Jordan came during Anne's senior year at Beirut College for Women (BCW) when she served on the student council and became close friends with the student president, Amal Sabbagh from Jordan. Amal went on to obtain a doctorate and has served her country in various senior positions particularly related to women's issues. She has remained a close friend of our family ever since.

Betsy meanwhile was admitted to the American University of Beirut in 1968, but instead accepted an invitation to join the cast of an MRA-produced musical review entitled *Anything to Declare?* and traveled around Europe with this review for the next year.

A year later, when Anne graduated from BCW, she joined Betsy in the cast of *Anything to Declare?* which that autumn was departing for what would turn out to be nearly two years touring in Asia and the Pacific. There was a flurry of dress-making in preparation for the coming journey, and I have vivid recollections of having to take giant steps over patterns and pins spread out on the floor as the girls prepared their wardrobe.

Their fascinating journey with *Anything to Declare?* took our two daughters to India for an extended period, (where Bev and I joined them all for Christmas and New Year at the MRA conference center at Panchgani), and then on to Malaysia, Singapore, Australia, Papua New Guinea, New Zealand,

Hong Kong, India again, and then in the spring of 1971 they headed west, first to Iran and then Malta.

Because of our previous contacts in Iran, Bev and I flew from Beirut to Tehran in April 1971, to help prepare for the arrival of this MRA group of about 100 mostly young people.

Our function was mainly liaison with Iran's Department of Education. While the cast and the others of the company stayed in Tehran to present the show there, we were put on a plane with one-way tickets to Shiraz by our host, the Deputy Minister of Education, to help prepare for the group's coming there. We were given assurances that we would be met at the airport and that arrangements had been made for a theater, accommodation and meals. We had only a few dollars with us.

We were met in Shiraz by an official of the Education Department who asked us what hotel we wanted. In Tehran we had been told that a room was reserved for us at the Alumni Club so we asked to be taken there; but found they had never heard of us. So we asked our driver what he suggested we should do, explaining that we had little money. He took us to the charming old Park Hotel whose buildings were surrounded by a lovely garden. There we stayed and later the group used the hotel as a meeting place. Being virtually broke, we entered into a conspiracy with the waiter: 'One order - two plates.' This tickled his fancy and certainly enabled slender resources to stretch further.

The next need was to find beds for over 100 people. We had been given the name of an official in the Anglo-American Chemical Company and so we called on him. The introductory link was tenuous, to say the least, but after listening to our story he said he gathered that we hoped to find hospitality in homes for a number of people. He explained the conservative nature of Muslim society in Shiraz, but assured us that he would be able to find help with his own Jewish community. This he did, and when the cast and others in the group arrived they found a warm welcome in those Jewish homes.

Then there was the matter of the theater. We had been told that the Dean of the College of Sciences, Dr. Abbas er-Rushdi, had made arrangements to receive the cast at the university, so we called on him, a gracious man. Dr. er-Rushdi, although he had heard nothing about booking the university theater for us, called in his superintendent of buildings to see about it. The superintendent told the Dean that they had already rearranged the seating in the theater to accommodate the coming college examinations and that it would not possible. The Dean smiled and said, 'Well, I believe in miracles.' And the theater became available. He also arranged for us all to eat in the university cafeteria, which made contact with the students very natural and enjoyable.

The show was a success and the audiences were enthusiastic. There remained only the matter of the large bill we had run up at the Park Hotel where a good number of the large group, apart from those staying in homes, had been accommodated. Professor Hazeghi had accompanied the group and was responsible for finances, but he was very shy about mentioning money, since available funds were rather short. The group was waiting in the bus for departure back to Tehran. Hazeghi eventually agreed that we must somehow be responsible for the payment of the bill and came back to the hotel lobby with us to meet the manager, Mr. Hooshyar. Tea was served and eventually the painful subject was broached. Hooshyar then reminded Hazeghi that their fathers had been good friends and so there was no need even to mention the bill: 'Forget it!' was his last word. 'Our families are such good friends that we do not need to talk about such things.'

Nothing quite went according to plan, yet it all worked out in the end.

15

BACK IN AMERICA

Our daughters returned from the extended journey with *Anything to Declare?* in the spring of 1971, and some months later we left Beirut, our home for over seven years, and returned as a family to America.[54]

Bev and I first settled into an apartment in Bloomfield, New Jersey, just a short distance from my mother's apartment and 40 minutes by bus to mid-Manhattan. In this modest way, for funds were limited, we had access to New York City and began to pick up old contacts as well as make new ones. By this time, Bev's parents were living with her sister and brother-in-law in Missouri. Her father, Vic Kitchen, was in failing health and passed away in January 1974.

Within a few years of our return our daughters married; first Anne, in 1973, to Englishman Bryan Hamlin; and then Betsy, in 1977, to Australian Robert Lancaster. The Hamlins eventually settled in Boston and the Lancasters in New York.

The youth conference which Anne and I had attended on Mackinac Island in 1965 led to the creation of an international youth show called *Sing-Out '65* which toured America in subsequent months, leading to hundreds of local Sing-Out

54 Editor's note: Harry and Bev made a return visit to Lebanon in 1977 as guests of Ramez and Maryse Salamé. In 1979 they visited Cyprus, Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan; and in 1984, Cyprus, Turkey, Jordan and Greece, both visits in conjunction with Marcel and Theri Grandy who were still based in Cyprus at that time.

groups. This Sing-Out program changed its name to *Up With People*, and in 1968 incorporated separately from MRA. Nevertheless, this program, with its traveling youth shows, became in effect the main effort of MRA USA. One of the reasons that we returned to America in 1971 was that by that time there was a growing group of us who felt called to revitalize the full dimension of MRA in America again.

There were difficulties and divisions between former MRA colleagues in America that continued for a while. Then in the summer of 1976, following some fresh understandings, a newly constituted Board of MRA in the US was created and I was asked to serve as Executive Director, which I did until 1980 when Richard Ruffin followed me.

While in the New York area Bev joined the Islamic Heritage Society. Ladies of the various delegations and missions from Muslim countries had organized it and they were most welcoming to non-Muslim members. At the Society's annual dinner we sat with an Afghan couple, Dr. and Mrs. Bashir Zikria. Bashir was a surgeon and Professor of Clinical Surgery at Columbia University's College of Physicians and Surgeons. Mrs. Zikria, Parwin, or Peggy, had befriended Bev at the Society's meetings. In the normal course of getting to know each other Bashir asked what I did. When I told him we worked with the international program of Moral Re-Armament, he exclaimed 'How extraordinary! When I was a young boy our family lived in Ankara where my father was Afghan ambassador to Turkey. Father came in late for lunch one day and told us about two British visitors he had just received. They had told him about the Moral Re-Armament (MRA) program, and at the table my father turned to me and said, "Son, if ever you have the opportunity to learn about MRA, take the chance to learn all you can. It is a very important movement."'

In the course of our growing friendship I learned that Bashir was a devout Muslim who had made the pilgrimage to Mecca, a Haji. He is also a passionate Afghan patriot. Returning to his

country of birth at considerable risk during the 1980s, he obtained the first valid evidence, in videotaped interviews, of victims of the poisonous gases used by the Soviets. This evidence was presented to a Congressional hearing on Afghanistan. Bashir collected contributions in kind from various drug and medical supply companies and with his own savings helped to set up clinics and tent hospitals in eastern Afghanistan and Peshawar for refugees and freedom fighters.

As we renewed contacts, Drs.Viqar and Nafis Hamdani came to mind. They had visited us in our Beirut home when Viqar was the Pakistani ambassador to Syria and Lebanon. Now, retired from diplomatic work, the Hamdanis were living in Manhattan where he represented the World Muslim Congress (headed by Dr. Inamullah Khan), at the UN. Some years later Hamdani and I developed a series of seminars entitled 'Bridge-building: Muslim-Christian cooperation.' Viqar spoke about how the bridge could be built on Muslim foundations at one end; I spoke of the Christian foundations that could be built at the other. We first gave this presentation in Montreal in December 1981 at the Jesuit Grand Seminary; then in Marlboro College, Vermont and a private club in Washington. Later on Bashir Zikria and I teamed up to continue the series, and on another occasion Dr. Jamal Badawi and I gave the seminar at McGill University in Montreal and in Warner-Pacific College in Seattle. Jamal was imam for the Muslim community in Canada's Maritime Provinces and a university professor.

Bev and I linked up with Dr. Fakhri Bazzaz and his wife Ma'arib. Fakhri was the brother of the late Dr. Abdur Rahman Bazzaz whose guests Bill Conner and I had been when he was Prime Minister of Iraq. Both Fakhri and Ma'arib had doctorates in biology and Fakhri, an expert in climate change, occupied the Timken Chair of Biology at Harvard University. We gave them a photo of Abdur Rahman which proved more recent than those they had. When I told the Bazzazes about

some of my Basra schoolboys who had been imprisoned in a desert spot called Niqra Salman, Fakhri was quite surprised. 'Niqra Salman!', he exclaimed, 'That's where my brother was held!'[55]

In 1980 MRA started renting an apartment in New York at First Avenue and 88th Street which Bev and I lived in for a while until the main hosts became our daughter and son-in-law, Betsy and Rob Lancaster, who continued to represent MRA in New York for nearly 20 years. Bev and I then acquired a modest home of our own in the country, first in Connecticut and later in the Berkshire hills of western Massachusetts. From there we were able to make visits to New York, reducing in frequency as the years went by.

The apartment beneath ours at East 88th Street was occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Ali Teymour, an Egyptian diplomat who was Chief of Protocol at the UN. As neighbors and 'elevator acquaintances' we got to know each other. He became interested in the work of MRA and suggested we apply for NGO (Non-Governmental Organization) status at the UN, offering to use his influence to see the application through. All went well, and MRA USA was accorded NGO status by the UN's Department of Public Information.

In 1985 MRA held an international conference at Georgetown University in Washington. Bashir Zikria and I worked to ensure a good Muslim presence at the conference. I welcomed distinguished representatives from the Muslim world, Ambassador Dr.Yousef Sylla, a dermatologist from Senegal, who was representing the Organization of the Islamic Conference, a bloc of 45 Muslim states, at the United Nations, and Mr. Mazhar Hussain who represented the World Muslim Congress. The head of the Congress, Dr. Inamullah Khan, sent a message expressing his fraternal greetings.

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55 The tragic story of Abdur Rahman Bazzaz is related in chapter 12. Dr. Fakhri Bazzaz died in 2008 at the age of 74.

Then Bashir introduced three mujahideen freedom fighters from Afghanistan, including Ahmad Zia Massoud, the brother of Ahmad Shah Massoud,[56] then the leader of the mujahideen against the Soviets in northern Afghanistan. This was at the height of the Afghans' struggle against Soviet occupation.

Harry Almond and Ahmad Zia Massoud

Also at that conference were a Greek Orthodox Bishop from Cyprus and the Bishop of Thessalonika. The Cypriot bishop stopped over in New York en route home complaining of a very painful knee. Dr. Zikria saw him immediately, and after an examination told the bishop that he had 'housemaid's knee' adding, 'I cannot cure it, but I can give you quick relief.' With that he drew off fluid from the bishop's knee, giving immediate relief. When asked what the bill was, Dr. Zikria said that he and the bishop were both 'men of the cloak, one white, one black', and that such men do not charge each other. When we left the office the bishop was very thoughtful. Turning to me he asked, 'Did you say that he was a Muslim?' This query must be set in the context of the inter-communal fighting between Muslim Turkish Cypriots and Christian Greek Cypriots then going on in Cyprus. It had required a UN-imposed Green Line and blue-helmeted soldiers to enforce the peace.

General Joseph Lagu is a former Vice-President of Sudan,

56 Ahmad Shah Massoud, by then leader of the Northern Alliance resistance to the Taliban regime, was assassinated by al-Qaeda agents on September 9, 2001. At the time of writing Ahmad Zia Massound is first Vice President of Afghanistan in the administration of President Hamid Karzai.

and was Sudanese ambassador to the UN between September 1990 and January 1992. During this time he came several times to our home in Egremont, Massachusetts. He said that the Berkshire hills reminded him of his home in Nimule on the Ugandan border.

During the Gulf War (August 1990-February 1991) that followed Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, Sudan was one of the few countries supporting Iraq. In this way, Lagu found himself thrown together with the Iraqi ambassador, Abdul Amir al-Anbari. After the war, Joseph expressed more than once that he wanted me to meet al-Anbari. Towards the end of 1991, with Lagu's tour of duty as ambassador drawing to a close, my son-in-law, Rob Lancaster, and I entertained Joseph Lagu to lunch in the delegates' lounge at the United Nations. Lagu's expense account must have been modest because, despite being an ambassador, he had not dined there often. Lunch was interrupted repeatedly as many other UN ambassadors came by the table to greet Joseph.

After lunch, as we stood outside the entrance, a car pulled up. Recognizing the man emerging from the car as the Iraqi ambassador, an excited Lagu hurried forward, grabbed al-Anbari by the arm and, pulling him towards me, exclaimed, 'Here is the man from Egremont'!

I invited al-Anbari and his wife for luncheon. In the event, Bev and I had lunch in the delegates' dining room as the ambassador's guests. Our countries had been at war but Bev and I could nevertheless reach out and let this Iraqi couple know that we had great regard for their country. I could not avoid the impression that appearing on television to explain or defend Saddam Hussein's actions must have been too much for him, and he asked to be transferred to UNESCO in Paris.[57]

The UN boycott of Iraq continued through the 1990s.

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57 In 2007 al-Anbari was a director of the National Oil Distribution Company under the new government in Iraq.

Saddam Hussein was a ruthless dictator but Bev and I were concerned with the plight of ordinary Iraqis. Following a report by the UN's Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) on famine amongst Iraqis, we hosted a weekend meeting in our Egremont home in January, 1996. In this way we were able to introduce to each other Dr. Harith Jamali, a nephew of Fadhel Jamali and a professor of chemistry in Montreal; Dr. Ali Khalif Galaydh, a former Minister of Industry in Somalia, and at that time a professor at Syracuse University; Drs. Fakhri and Ma'arib Bazzaz – as mentioned, he was a Harvard professor and brother of the late Iraqi prime minister; and Allan Griffith, who for many years had been a foreign affairs adviser to Australian prime ministers.

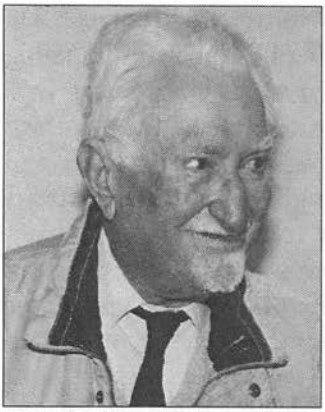
Abdul Khalek Hassouna's younger son, Hussein, was for several years Permanent Observer for the Arab League at the UN where we made contact with him. When he moved to Washington to represent the League we introduced him to our colleagues there. He was still ambassador for the Arab League in Washington in 2001. His wife, Nevine, was President of the Islamic Heritage Society based in New York. In that capacity, following the 9/11 attacks on the Twin Towers in New York, Nevine sent a letter that was published in the *New York Times* of October 23, 2001. She wrote, in part:

> As a stone is thrown into the water, the ripples move outward from the center in ever increasing circles to touch all of us, we are all affected by the impact!
>
> As members of the Islamic Heritage Society we are wives, mothers, sisters and friends, and we condemn all acts of terrorism. We mourn those who have lost their lives in such a tragic way, and our prayers and thoughts are with those whose lives have been so painfully disrupted.
>
> Islam, like all major religions, believes in the sanctity of human life. We pray that in this time of trial and mourning the human spirit of compassion and kindness will prevail and

make all our bonds stronger. Let us now be part of the healing.

In addition, the board of the Islamic Heritage Society decided to make a donation to the City of New York as a symbol of our solidarity.

Sincerely, (Signed) N. Hassouna / President



Dr. Fadhel Jamali at age 92

Ever since we first met in 1951, I had kept in touch with Fadhel Jamali. As related earlier, he went into exile after his release by the Qassim junta in 1961, and was given asylum in Tunisia by President Bourghiba. Jamali enjoyed teaching at the university in Tunis. He and his wife, Sarah, remained good friends of Bev and myself. Occasionally we would meet in Caux, or during visits he made to America. I decided that this remarkable man's story should be more widely known and so I set to and wrote a biography: *Iraqi Statesman: A portrait of Mohammed Fadhel Jamali*, published by Grosvenor Books in 1993. Little did I realize at that time how much interest a book of that title would create.

Jamali was about 90 when he was invited to give a lecture at Harvard University about his experiences in international affairs. By then he was one of only two surviving signatories to the UN Charter. At that lecture was a young Iraqi doing post-doctoral work at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Fareed Yasseen. When Jamali was Iraqi Minister of Education he had instituted an overseas scholarship program based entirely on merit. He did this because he himself had been helped to study at the AUB and Columbia University by a similar government program. Fareed's father had benefited from that program, and now in turn Fareed himself had been helped to go to MIT. His expressions of gratitude to Dr. Jamali

were moving. Dr. Fareed Yasseen and I stayed in touch and as of 2007 Fareed was an adviser to the Vice President of Iraq. On several occasions I was able to call him on his cell-phone despite all the contingencies of war. Bev and I prayed daily for his safety and for his country. Fareed told me that my book, *Iraqi Statesman*, was being read by some of the Iraqi Governing Council.

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REFLECTIONS

Bev and I made several visits to the Caux summer conferences in Switzerland during the 1980s and early 1990s.[58] On one occasion a Swedish friend urged me to meet some Somali friends of his over a meal. Thanks to him I met a marvelous group of Somali patriots – all devout Muslims. This began friendships, which led to an invitation to take part in a seminar on Somalia at Uppsala University, in Sweden, organized by the Scandinavian Institute for African Studies (SIAS). We met there in January 1994 under the theme 'Crisis Management and the Politics of Reconciliation.' I read a paper on 'Basic Elements in Reconciliation'. The following are some extracts.

> 'My remarks begin from the standpoint of faith, a belief in a power greater than and outside ourselves, a belief in one God which is shared by Muslims, Christians and Jews. If that formulation is difficult for some, you can call it what you will, but in the present world situation this X element must be factored in, for no serious person can dispute the assertion that we face problems today far larger than the human mind can span.

58 Ed. note: This final chapter of the author's reflections has two parts, both of which date from well before his death. The first is an excerpt from a talk given in Sweden in 1994. The second contains thoughts provoked by the American invasion of Iraq in 2003 which caused him much pain.

'Understanding what makes people tick, and faith that human nature can change, are prerequisites to reconciliation. Then, on the foundation of faith, friendship and trust, I believe we can dare to hope that reconciliation can take place and bring healing to nations. There are other elements, however, that work to bring the needed reconciliation. Implicit in faith in a higher power is the quality of honesty about one's own failures and shortcomings. Surely there has been enough finger-pointing both on the personal and national levels and a great dearth of honest admission of our own mistakes and insensitivity. We easily point the finger of accusation at the other person or group: we deal less easily with the three that point back at ourselves – at me.

'With such honesty, seldom easy, but very necessary, comes apology. I do not mean the automatic reaction of saying 'sorry' when we bump into someone or fail to hold a door open. I mean the costly apology that comes when one begins to see the cost to others of the way one has lived. If the other person or group is more to blame – perhaps even 90% at fault – then it should be easier for me to take that difficult pride-breaking first step. The true patriot is the one who is willing to break his own pride in order to bring healing to his country.

'It often happens that, to a sincere apology, there comes an equally costly response of forgiveness, and then an electric and memorable moment is given. The individual who apologizes often sees how a greater power, God, has been at work in the other person or group's heart beyond any perception or expectation. It is here that we find reconciliation. It is from these luminous healing moments that a strategy for a nation evolves. In the nature of the process, it begins with the individual. These ideas must be given legs.

'Reconciliation starts in one person. Not with "them", but with me. Our moral health colors our political judg-

ment as well as our relationships. Reconciliation based on these foundations can help the wheels of conventional diplomacy function more efficiently. These challenges may be the essential prerequisites of the peaceful resolution of conflict.

'An industrial play entitled *The Forgotten Factor* depicts the employer aggravated as he reads in the newspaper of threatened violence in his factory. He is further upset when his wife, who is looking at the curtains with an eye to redecorating, murmurs, "Why can't they all just get along like one big family?" The rebellious teenage daughter replies, "That's just the trouble, Mom, they do!"

'It certainly takes an act of faith to believe that change in human motivation can answer this current repetition of violence, but to dream that real peace can come without such a change in people is simply not living with reality. I would like to make it clear that I know, out of personal experience, that such a change can come to people who are willing to begin with themselves and turn off any hint of arrogant know-best attitude. Sad to say, listening humility is not a dominant element in the image that America projects overseas.'

* * * * * * * *

The people of the Middle East usually accord a smiling welcome to a humble listener, although the weight of centuries, of dominating memories of the Crusades, of oppression under the Turkish Empire, followed more recently by the French and British mandates and American economic domination, lies heavy in memory. Now there is King Oil.

We often are quite unaware of the image we project to people of a different culture. I began to learn this during my earliest days in Iraq. During the siege of Stalingrad in World War Two, American troops offloaded ships in Ma'qil, Iraq, the

port area of Basra. They were handling war material of all kinds to be sent overland to the Russians in Kazvin, Iran. Some of my schoolboys hung around the dock area hoping for a stick of chewing gum, or just watching. One of them said to me, 'Mr. Harry, the Americans must be very religious, because they are always saying "Jesus Christ"!' What could I say? Those Muslim lads had come to know about and admire Jesus from the Qur'an and from the Bible classes in our school.

What eventually became the Arabian-American Oil Company (ARAMCO) secured its concession from King Abdul Aziz ibn Sa'ud in 1935. Along with the agreement to prospect for petroleum and to refine and produce it, the company also agreed that there would be no dolls, since dolls were considered idols, forbidden images for the Wahhabi sect of Islam. Christian religious services in the country and even the entry of clergy were also forbidden. However, when it came to alcoholic beverages, forbidden in Islam, the company insisted. 'An oil worker must have his beer.'

Coming to more recent events, I make no excuse for Saddam Hussein; he was a cruel and ruthless dictator. It is good for all that he is gone. The insurgent Iraqi opposition to foreign occupation is abetted and exploited by alien elements whose aims differ greatly from those of patriotic Iraqis. Nevertheless Americans should remember their own guerilla tactics against an occupying power during the American Revolution.

Many Arabs and Muslims see Israel as a foreign body thrust by Western power into the side of the Arab people. They feel that they are being made to pay for European anti-Semitism and the Holocaust. They therefore feel that the West, led by the USA, deliberately overlooks principles of self-determination enshrined in America's Declaration of Independence and in the UN Charter.

As a result, Arabs often have a love/hate relationship with America. A Palestinian friend of over 40 years, with a PhD

from one of our best universities, has cursed America to me in violent terms, yet he sends his children here for their education and retains his American passport. They retain personal friendships with Americans while often finding our government's policies hypocritical and unjust. It is an ambivalent relationship.

It is so important to help fellow-Americans understand the Middle East better. We read all sorts of views and misinformation about Islam. But I believe that we would do much better if we judged each other by the central mainstream of each culture at its best, for that is the way we ourselves wish to be judged.

Much of the Middle East is a strange, different world for many Westerners. If I have learned anything, it is to live on the basis of appreciation rather than comparison. Our comparisons must be only with God's standards of honesty, purity, unselfishness and love – absolute. Using those standards, we all need change!

It is my deep conviction that Jews who really live in the prophetic tradition, rooted in the Ten Commandments; Christians who live that experience of the Cross which says, 'Not my will, but thine, be done.' and Muslims who live in true surrender to Allah and walk the straight road, can together bring in a new world that will see peace and satisfied hearts, happy families, equitable distribution of God's gifts and true justice for every last man, woman and child.

EPILOGUE

Beverly, Harry's wife and partner for nearly 61 years, received many messages from around the world following Harry's death in June 2007. Here are some excerpts.

Harry was a man of many parts. Whether it was keeping in touch with Iraqi politicians or serving on the local Board of Health or being chaplain to his town's fire department, it was all important to him, and for it all he drew from the same deep well of caring for people.

Rev. Bob Duebber in his eulogy at the funeral

Harry epitomized for me the thoughtful, generous, large heart of America. He was able to care for and convey to others the helpful inspiration from his own times of reflection without the recipients feeling that there were strings attached. His understanding and love for the faiths and cultures of the Middle East gave him inroads into the lives of kings and commoners, and friendships which spanned the divides.

Helen Mills, Australia

We have mused, indeed marveled, at how readily my secularism easily melded with his deeply held Christianity and did not put us apart, but rather drew us together so that we found agreement on virtually everything that really matters.

Richard Undeland, a former US diplomat in the Middle East

We learned specially to know him when, in 1994, Harry came to Sweden to the meeting when Somalis from opposing groups met here for the first time. Harry's contribution, with his

knowledge and understanding, was decisive at that time. Since then he has carried some of these people on his heart. The seeds that Harry has sown will bear fruit.

Gunnar Wieselgren, Sweden

We Somalis remember with appreciation the contribution of Harry Almond to our meetings in Sweden in 1994. His faith, heart and vision for us helped towards the spirit of reconciliation that took root in and between a core group then and since, and which we are trying to apply at this critical time.

Osman Jama Ali, former Deputy Prime Minister with the Transitional Government of Somalia

The Muslim world has lost a warm-hearted, humorous friend who played such an important bridge-building role long before it was fashionable, topical or recognized as a need. He left a lasting and memorable footprint in many countries that he visited in the Middle East. Apart from his knowledge, understanding and Arabic, his humor and adventurous spirit lingered in the memory of many who had the privilege to meet him. *Dr. Omnia Marzouk, Egypt and England*

Harry was one of my earliest encouragers when I started to live into the Middle East and the Arabic language in the 1950s.... What an amazing range of Middle East countries Harry visited. It was a sensitive work for a Westerner, assuring leaders and citizens that Moral Re-Armament was indigenous to every people, and independent of political or commercial control; it was open to any who wanted to run with it according to the potential and need of their own society.

For people of faith who have served abroad, the hardest thing is to see that country they love consumed by hate and war. Harry and you, Bev, must have often felt this about Lebanon's internal war after you left. Yet since then Lebanon, imperilled as it still is, has produced initiatives of reconciliation deriving from people who learned first about that sort of change from

you both. The prayer must be that their experience will spread in the region, in the faith that God still has a plan for all our countries.

Peter Everington, England

Looking back I am full of gratitude – an eternal gratitude – for both Harry and Beverly who made it possible for a person like me – and many others – to receive the gift of faith. Harry would have been happy to know that four Iraqis will come from Iraq soon to join our annual MRA gathering in Lebanon.

Ramez Salamé, a lawyer in Lebanon

Harry told me that he had come to the realization, many years ago, that rather than spend his time trying to change someone's label, he could instead help that person become better at what he already is, and in that way become a better person. That meant a lot to me.

Dr. Fareed Yasseen, advisor to the Vice President of Iraq

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