

Al~Ayyam Al~Jamilah

الأيام الجميلة



PADI Women Dive Day
Jeddah, Saudi Arabia
2019

@Redadity

@Pinkbubblesdivers

@Redseacitizen

Joining the
'MERMAIDS
of **ARABIA'**
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2 Reunions Roll On

Aramco Overseas retirees reunited near The Hague in May, the Annuitants Reunion is set for September in Colorado Springs, and the UKaramcons have slated their get-together in Norwich in October. Find out what happened and what's planned—and don't miss your chance to take a steam-train ride in Cripple Creek, Colo., next fall!

8 Abqaiq Teacher Loved Bugs Bunny Role

Teaching summer school in Los Angeles didn't pay the bills, so a former Abqaiq teacher moonlighted as Bugs Bunny at the Magic Mountain amusement park. Frank Boylan found out that special responsibilities came with his outfit, and he learned more about his students by being a cartoon character than he did in the classroom.



12 Joining the 'Mermaids Of Arabia'

Diving in the kingdom's waters is as much a frame of mind as it is a sport. Jennifer Simpson knows that from her PADI (Professional Assn. of Dive Instructors) days at Aramco in the late 1970s and '80s. She reclaimed her "Mermaid of Arabia" status with Saudi divers like this one in the Red Sea in July. She remembers her early diving days and delights in what she discovered celebrating PADI Women's Dive Day with a group of women led by Saudi diver Nouf Alosaimi this summer. Simpson returned to her home in Panama "my life forever changed."



Al-Ayyam Al-Jamilah

"Pleasant Days," is produced for annuitants, families and friends of Aramco, now Saudi Aramco, and its associated companies by Aramco Services Company. Website: <http://aramcoservices.com/news-media/publications>

FALL 2019. ISSN-1319-1512

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18 The Florence Serves Up 'Cool' Pool Memories

Florence Chadwick was crowned "Queen of the Channel" for her record-breaking swims of the English Channel in the '50s. She's remembered by Joyce Kriesmer and Jackie Voscamp—twins who swam in the 1948 Aramcocode that Chadwick directed, and who visited a new San Diego restaurant named after her this summer.



22 'Red Palace' Sheds Light on Kingdom And Company

A prince uses artifacts he found in the Riyadh palace where King Sa'ud lived as crown prince, as well as items he acquired in the *suq*, to tell the story of modern Saudi Arabia. Some exhibits have close links to two former Aramcons and to the company itself. A key artwork is an Aramco photo of King Abdulaziz visiting company facilities in a limousine in 1947, "flipped" to place him in the driver's seat.

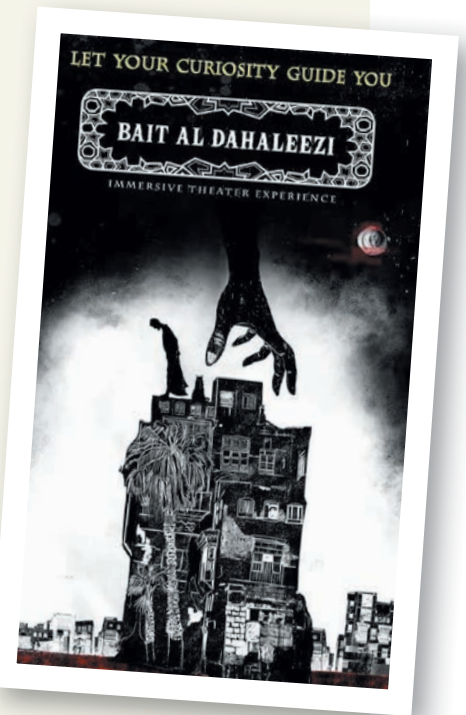


26 The Gift Of a Lifetime

Hassan ibn Youssef Yassin, 85, has close ties to Saudi Aramco. His father, Youssef Yassin, played a key role during the oil-concession negotiations in 1933 and 1939, and Hassan worked closely with two oil ministers during his own government career beginning in 1949. He looks back on his life inside and outside the kingdom in ways that many retirees will appreciate.

28 Brats Take Center Stage

"Maybe it's the sand or the sizzling temperatures" that make Reunions in Arizona so popular, writes Jenn Harbert (AB75). That certainly was the case this spring in Phoenix, where more than 600 Brats and family members attended their biennial get-together. What Harbert says about Arizona might also apply to Jiddah, where other kinds of activities unrolled under the guidance of two Brats this summer. Todd Nims (DH95) and Kristina Owen (DH03) helped stage special theatrical performances, including an audience-immersion play that "will frighten and delight," said one reviewer.



Cover: Jennifer Simpson, right, and leading Saudi diver Nouf Alosaimi celebrated PADI Women's Dive Day with 22 other female divers in the Red Sea north of Jiddah in July. The worldwide event coincided with two other 2019 landmarks for Simpson: the 40th anniversary of earning her PADI Instructor certificate in Dhahran; and her 70th birthday. Photo by Shoug Al Saud.





ARAMCO OVERSEAS CHIEF *Salutes Retirees*

BY MUAZZIN MEHRBAN

Eighty-five Aramco Overseas retirees and family members (pictured above with Aramco Overseas President Talal Al-Marri, right center) reinforced old ties at the annual company reunion in Voorschoten, the Netherlands, on May 24.

“Our position in Europe today, as a trusted and respected industry partner, is a reflection of your work,” Al-Marri told guests.

“I find the name Aramco is always greeted positively and is considered a sign of opportunity for those wishing to work with us. This is because of the standards we have set, in particular *you* have set, which today provide us with an excellent license to operate.”

Tricia Cromberge enjoyed trading memories of old times with fellow retirees. She joined the company in 1979 and stayed

more than three decades.

“I was given amazing opportunities and worked with a very wide range of wonderful colleagues and executives,” she said. “As do many of the ‘old-timers,’ we look back on very special times within Aramco.”

“I am proud of what we all have achieved, especially as I was involved in so many of the early steps—opening the Korea office with S-Oil, reopening the Tokyo office, arranging many joint-venture openings, opening the London office, relocating from Leiden to the current offices... all those historic milestones.”

Aramco Overseas operations in Europe began in The Hague in 1952. Its predecessor, Aramco Purchasing Company, was established in 1948 in Rome, focusing primarily on procurement and technical services.

From its base in The Hague, Aramco Overseas expanded to administer offices in

Rome, London, Beirut, Cairo, Sydney and Tokyo. Moving into the ‘70s, employee numbers began to grow with the establishment of special Project Management Teams across Europe and as far away as Brazil and South Korea.

In 1984 the company moved from The Hague to nearby Leiden, where several scattered offices were consolidated in one location.

The 2000s ushered in a new period of growth, as support to Saudi Aramco expanded into finance, law, human resources, expatriate recruitment and public relations.

By 2005 Aramco Overseas had established research-and-technology support services, and in 2008 it opened an office in London. In 2009 the Netherlands operation returned to The Hague, in Scheveningen, firmly established as the company’s European headquarters.

Come One, Come All —to the 8th UKaramcons Reunion!

The eighth UKaramcons Reunion will take place in Norwich, near England’s southeast coast, Oct. 2-4, 2020. The venue, the Mercure Hotel (www.mercure.com), “provides an ideal base to explore a vibrant city full of history,” says host Maggie Cresswell.

Rooms, at £89 bed-and-breakfast per night single and £100 double, may be reserved by contacting the hotel at

01603 294330 and mentioning “2020 Aramco Reunion.”

The Aramco Overseas-sponsored dinner/disco will take place Oct. 3. Reservations may be made by contacting the host at maggiemartham@gmail.com or 01603 613373 after 5:30 p.m. Monday-Friday, or on weekends.

More information about the reunion will be published in the Spring issue.



BY DOUG COOK AND JOHN PALMER

As geology and petroleum have been the lifeblood of Saudi Aramco and Saudi Arabia, geology, gold, silver and tourism have served that role for Colorado Springs and the Pikes Peak region. Hafla 2020 attendees will find reflections of that in abundance at the 32nd Annuitants Reunion Sept. 26-30 at the Cheyenne Mountain Resort in Colorado Springs.

One year out, 68 rooms had been booked by 123 guests, well ahead of expectations. Resort reservations may be made at <https://book.passkey.com/event/49911740/owner/65927/home>. Target attendance is 300 people.

The reunion-registration page is <https://aramcoexpats.com/events/2020-aramco-hafla-annuitants-reunion/>. Check for the latest information about the event and connect with the hosts via Facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/HAFLA-2020-347026632632644/>.

The organizing committee includes cohosts John Palmer and Doreen Cumberland, and Doug and Elizabeth Cook; Dave Sherwood, golf; Diane Jackson, tennis; and Alfred and Susan Hanner, entertainment. *AramcoExpats.com* has published an invitation for volunteers for more roles.

Colorado Springs is a crossroads for historians, sportsmen, architects, artists and foodies. Sunny skies and crisp mountain air make it a perfect place for golf or tennis, or a picnic in the park.

Golf and tennis competitions have been reserved for the *hafla*, and a variety of tours have been arranged:

Garden of the Gods Park and Air Force Academy

(approx. 4 hours)

Some 250 million years ago Garden of the Gods Park comprised sandy beaches on an inland sea. The 300-foot orange sandstone rocks in the park were once sand dunes. As the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains rose 70-35 million years ago, the overlying sedimentary rocks were bent upward into vertically standing fins. Over time the softer rocks eroded and valleys were created, leaving harder sandstones standing as tall ridges.

The park forms a dramatic backdrop for Pikes Peak, hosts a world-class Visitor & Nature Center, and abounds with wildlife.

The Air Force Academy tour begins at the Barry Goldwater Visitor Center. The campus features stunning mid-century modern architecture. Trails provide beautiful vistas for hikers, bikers and equestrians.

Pikes Peak

(approx. 4 hours)

At 14,115 feet, Pikes Peak is the highest mountain of the southern Front Range of the Rocky Mountains. Its height means the tour is not suitable for those with breathing difficulties.

Located 12 miles west of Colorado Springs, the mountain is named in honor of explorer Zebulon Pike—although he



Colorado Springs is 12 miles west of Pikes Peak. The Mollie Kathleen Gold Mine in Cripple Creek descends 1,000 feet into the peak's southwest side.

never reached the summit. A National Historic Landmark, it is composed of billion-year-old pink granite that solidified miles below the surface.

The view from the peak inspired Katharine Lee Bates to write the poem that became the song "America the Beautiful."

Frequent stops will allow lots of photo opportunities and help visitors adapt to the altitude.

Cripple Creek

(approx. five hours)

Cripple Creek is one of the most famous and historic gold-mining towns of the Old West. Its altitude, 9,500 feet, can be challenging to those with breathing difficulties.

Guests will be able to descend into a historic gold mine, chug through the wilderness in a steam locomotive or step into a jail that housed many an outlaw.

Other Attractions

Those with more time might wish to visit the Cheyenne Mountain Zoo, Manitou Springs, the Cave of the Winds, the Manitou Cliff Dwellings, and the Royal Gorge, with the highest bridge in North America. Consider coming early and staying late to make the most of your *hafla* experience. You may never want to leave!

Remembering ‘GP’

NOTE: The “In Memoriam” story about George Pappas in the Spring issue drew comments from colleagues. His daughter Irene shared these.

May 6, 2019

I feel I must add my two cents to the GP story. Your father and I go back to January 1959 when I transferred from New York to Ras Tanura. We were electrical engineers in RT District Engineering. Our boss was Andy Dienes, senior electrical engineer. The chief district engineer was Ed Bowen who was very much concerned with both our careers over the ensuing 30 or so years.

John Studebaker came to RT about this time. We all subsequently became foremen of the Electric and Steam Unit. Subsequently, GP went to Dhahran to work in the Electric Power Unit of Engineering. When I was tapped to transfer to Project Management, GP took over as the head.

He then transferred to AOC, The Hague. That’s when Bob Radford met him.... There was another Greek electrical engineer, Mike Frankos, who died quite young. Mike, GP and JCS were the nucleus of electrical engineering in Aramco. It was a real privilege to be associated with them. Also, Irene, you will recall that my wife Sue and your mother Mary were very dear friends.

Hank Barracano
hbarr1@aol.com

May 8, 2019

I was a trombone player in the University of Michigan Marching Band—1950-’52. In 1950...we played Ohio State Univ. in the “Snow Bowl” in Columbus (the winning team—Univ. of Mich.—didn’t rack up a first-down during the game; my trombone slide froze up during our halftime show); and then we went on to the Rose Bowl game, on Jan. 1, 1951. My wife (Wilma) found a plastic bag with some of these memories a week or three ago, and asked me to “put them elsewhere.”

I glanced at the top item, a copy of the “Pictorial” section of the Nov. 11, 1951, issue of *The Detroit News* that featured an old friend of mine, drum major Dick Smith of Weirton, W. Vir-

ginia... [and that] hit a memory bone.

I turned to look at my desk, specifically the obituary of George Pappas, from *The Baltimore Sun*, e-mailed to me by Fred Bobb. Hard—nay, virtually IMPOSSIBLE—to believe that George Pappas and Dick Smith were both from Weirton.

I wonder if they knew each other in high school....

Friend of GP!

Bob Radford
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Sailors Stay in Touch

NOTE: Two sailing stories in the Spring issue brought messages from the sailors themselves.

May 18, 2019

I saw this tortoise at St. Helena in April 2005 when I was delivering a boat from Cape Town to Tortola, British Virgin Islands, with stops in St. Helena, Fortaleza and Virgin Gorda. At the stop in St. Helena we toured the island and saw Napoleon’s house/prison and also Jonathan, the world’s oldest tortoise.

At the time the only way to get to St. Helena was by boat, from England to St. Helena to Cape Town, and then it made a return trip, each month. In 2016 the airport opened so the *RMS St. Helena* quit service February 2018.

Jay Holland
jayholland@yahoo.com



Retiree Jay Holland met Jonathan, an Aldabra giant tortoise hatched in the early 1830s, on a sailing stop at St. Helena.

June 11, 2019

We enjoyed seeing the article about our sailing in *Al-Ayyam Al-Jamilah*.

I [Marvin] am attending my high-

school 63rd class reunion this year and have been asked to give a slide show later this month. We left the boat in Mazatlan, Mexico, and will return [from California] in November after hurricane season to resume our cruising.

Marvin and Ruth Stark
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Delighted to Dance

May 20, 2019



Carl Kopatish got an unexpected dancing workout at the Expatriates Reunion in March.

Thank you for a copy of a splendid photo [Spring issue cover] of what I understood was a “wedding” dance at the 2019 KSA Expatriates Reunion.

I enjoyed the dancing very much, and I had never participated in a dance like that before. It was one of the many highlights of our reunion.

Carl Kotapish
ratnapark@me.com

July 2, 2019

We received the beautiful magazine a couple weeks ago. Thanks very much for mailing it to me.

Dancing [at the reunion] was a blast. The dance troupe and drummer were excellent and were having a great time entertaining us....

I’d just had a chance to dance, Saudi-folkloric-style, three times in the days prior to that with Bedouin friends out in the desert. They think I love to dance and, well, I suppose they’re right!

Mark Lowey (Abu Jack)
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Recalling Old Friends

June 12, 2019

I get *Al-Ayyam Al-Jamilah* and enjoy it. They're stored in a special place for the time when I have time to really read them.

I did a little presentation on *Married to a Bedouin*, by a New Zealand lady named Marguerite married to Mohammed Othman at Petra [see Fall '06], at a friend's book club recently. When sharing [the late] Ann Hanushek's travel photos with Ann the three days I spent with her at her bedside, one trip she specifically wanted to see was Petra, and she had written "M and M's house" on one photo album. She was happy to see them and hear about what they are doing these days and I was so happy to share that with her.

Sue Koenig
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Special 'Returning Student'

June 21, 2019



Lou Spencer, standing center, in his ninth season at Yellowstone, spent time working with wolf-watchers.

Good job to keep us all connected through *Al-Ayyam Al-Jamilah*.

I just returned from three months in Montana working in Yellowstone. I am also working on some more Dhahran Outing Group trips.

Regarding the Aramco Schools' 75th-anniversary story [in the Spring issue], in the summer of 1964, between my junior and senior year at the American Community School (ACS) in Beirut, I

spent time in Abqaiq as a returning student. Most of the boarding students were Aramco dependents....

One of my classmates invited me to visit him during the summer. I flew from Abadan to Dhahran. We took an orange non-air-conditioned bus to Abqaiq and I spent about a month there, before returning to Iran and then Beirut for my senior year. So, I guess I was not a "true" returning student, just a visiting one.

I returned to teach in Dhahran in August 1980 and taught at the Dhahran Hills School, the Intermediate School and the Dhahran Junior High to 2007. I applied because I was getting laid off by Foster Wheeler in Algeria, where I was a teacher in its construction camp. The superintendent in Aramco in 1980 was the old headmaster of ACS in Beirut, after I graduated, so there was a little networking there.

Lou Spencer
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Thanks for Spring Issue

July 8, 2019

I received the Spring issue of AAAJ yesterday—thanks so much for sending it to me! It has so many interesting stories, and I wouldn't have wanted to miss this one.

I was glad to see a few larger obits—I was particularly interested in Shafiq Kombargi's story, but the one on George Pappas, too. We were RT neighbors and our daughters Irene and Karen remain lifelong friends, but I didn't know much about George's career.

Hardly the same, but I remember those years in the '60s with Lyn Maby right before the *Sun & Flare* would go to press. Those were great days. I really enjoyed working with Lyn, Bob Norberg and the others of that era.

Harlene Morrow
harmorrow@aol.com

Proud of Tapline Days

July 10, 2019

Thank you for the Spring issue of "Pleasant Days." Believe me I enjoyed it too much.



Ali Al-Naimi posed, left, at the 2019 Expatriates Reunion with Irish retiree Tony Bird and Reunion Committee leader Ali Baluchi.

In "Aramcons Celebrate Homecomings," Ali Naimi praised the Americans in these golden words, "You trained us and you trained us well." This is a fine gratitude, expression and appreciation from the inner and deep heart of the orator.

In "Saudi Aramco Commemorates 75 years of Schooling in Company Communities," you wrote that the Nariyah Pump Station (Tapline) [where Aramco had a school] was the only Tapline station operated by Aramco. I feel proud that I worked there about three years, from 1983 to 1985.

Shahid Husain
husainshahid@rediffmail.com

Story and Photo Stir Memories

July 19, 2019

I would be very grateful if you could kindly add my name to the distribution list...and send previous issues specifically to include an article on Margaret Jepson in January 2019, and a group photo taken in 2002, sent by Ann Berry in February 2019.

I worked in Aramco for many years, initially from 1980-'84, returning in 1985 until I retired in 2015! I certainly didn't intend to spend so many years in the Middle East, but it was an experience I will never forget.

Margaret and Ann and were both very distant colleagues. I initially worked in the same building as Margaret. I was interested in the photograph Ann sent since I recognized many of the girls on the photo.

Shirley Clarke
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'Saudi Arabia's Walter Cronkite'

Sometimes news arrives in a roundabout way. Take the story about retiree Larry Barnes, 96, published in the *Sentinel-Source.com* in Keene, N.H., on Aug. 20.

Titled "Meet Keene's Larry Barnes, 'the Walter Cronkite of Saudi Arabia,'" it came courtesy of Government Affairs retiree Muhammad Tahlawi in Saudi Arabia on Aug. 21.

Barnes joined Aramco in 1947 as a communications engineer and retired in 1977.

"A few years after he settled in Dhahran, [Aramco] began looking for someone to do an English-language news broadcast.... Barnes's name came up because of his experience at Syracuse [University]," said the *SentinelSource*. "And that's how Barnes says he became the first regularly scheduled English-language voice on the radio in the Middle East."

Barnes read daily UPI newscasts for 20 years, beginning in 1951, and then cut back to weekends. In *Looking Back Over*

My Shoulder, the book he wrote after he retired, Barnes called news reading "strictly a labor of love."

After he retired he worked as a radio talk-show host in the Keene area.

Barnes's son Gary "recalls hearing his father on the radio as a normal part of everyday life [in Dhahran]," the *Sentinel-Source* said.

"The music would stop, and then my dad's voice would come on: 'Here's the news from the wires of the United Press International.' He'd start, and invariably, I'd get a little ribbing from my friends."

Larry Barnes's "mark on the country



Larry Barnes, 96, regaled *SentinelSource* writer Meg McIntyre and photographer Michael Moore with his tales of Saudi Arabia for a story published Aug. 20, National Radio Day. His book, *Looking Back Over My Shoulder*, sits left.

remains," the *SentinelSource* reported. "The younger Barnes has heard his father called 'the Walter Cronkite of Saudi Arabia,' and...had strangers ask about him on a trip back to the area in 2009."

NOTE: If any reader has a copy of *Looking Back Over My Shoulder* that he or she would like to retire, Muhammad Tahlawi would love to acquire it. Please contact The Editor at arthur.clark@aramcoservices.com.

Banner Year for 1950s Aramcons

This is a banner year for 1950s Aramcons Ken and Ruth Wright: On July 1 the National University of Engineering in Lima, Peru, named a classroom in the Wrights' honor for their work to study Peru's native cultures; and on Aug. 7 the Wrights celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary.

Dr. Javier Arrieta, dean of the university's civil-engineering faculty, said the room had been named to recognize the couple's "invaluable contributions in the investigation and spreading knowledge of the works of our native cultures."

The Wrights are both in their early 90s. Ken lived in Dhahran from 1951 to 1955, and Ruth from 1954 to 1955.

"Our time in Saudi Arabia exposed us to native technology and ancient water-handling methods," Ken said. "Visits to Iran, Iraq, Jordan and Egypt kindled our interest in archeology and ancient cultures. This, coupled with Ruth's work with archeologists and anthropologists in the Industrial Relations Dept., jumpstarted our interest in ancient water handling."

When they visited Machu Picchu in Peru in the early 1970s Ruth wondered how the Inca had obtained water at such a

high mountain setting. The Wrights applied to study ancient water management there in 1974, but didn't begin work in earnest until 1994 when they received an archeological permit from the Peru Institute of Culture.

"Our field studies at Machu Picchu were well documented and we followed up with several publications on the extraordinary engineering accomplishments of the Inca," Ken said.

In 1996 the Wrights established the Wright Paleohydrological Institute in Denver to promote public education on ancient water management.

The Wrights did not attend the official opening of the room at the university, but "our interest in ancient Peru remains high,"



On July 1 officials and staff at the National University of Engineering in Lima, Peru, inaugurated the Wright Room, honoring the work of 1950s Aramcons Ken and Ruth Wright (pictured top right) to further the understanding of Peru's native cultures.

Ken wrote in July. "Any plans to return to Peru will need to wait until after we celebrate our 65th wedding anniversary."

The Wrights married in 1954 in Mirabell Palace in Salzburg, Austria.

Retiree's Son Makes Waves in Hyderabad

"My son Zubair has organized a swimming event at Hyderabad, India, and the news media has given good coverage," wrote 2010 Ras Tanura Refinery Maintenance Dept. retiree Mohammed Ifteqaruddin in September.

Indeed, Zubair Ifteqhar, 27, who was born in Dhahran, garnered local and national coverage for the Razorfish Swim Meet on July 28. The event drew 400 participants, far more than expected.

Ifteqhar established Razorfish Swim University (RSU) in Hyderabad in 2016 after earning an MS degree in electrical and computer engineering from the University

of Illinois at Chicago. The swim meet celebrated the school's third anniversary.

"We were expecting around 125 participants," Ifteqhar told Hyderabad's *Telengana Today*. However, more than three times that number competed, reported the Mumbai-based *New Indian Express*.

Despite rain, "enthusiastic parents patiently waited and encouraged their dependents," said Ifteqaruddin, who founded the Ex-Saudi Aramco Employees Assn. in Hyderabad after a 33-year career. "It was a fun-filled day."



Zubair Ifteqhar, the son of retiree Mohammed Ifteqaruddin, stands back left with young competitors in the Razorfish Swim Meet in Hyderabad, India, on July 28—the third anniversary of the opening of Ifteqhar's Razorfish Swim University.

Couple Donates 'Prosperity Well' Rubbing

Aramco Services Company has received a rare charcoal rubbing of the plaque that marked the site of Dammam No. 7,

Buddy and Delores Haug donated this charcoal rubbing of the plaque marking the site of Dammam No. 7, the "Prosperity Well."

the "Prosperity Well," from retiree Roy "Buddy" Haug and his wife Delores. The well, the first commercial producer in Saudi Arabia, came in on March 3, 1938, five years after the kingdom signed the oil Concession Agreement with Standard Oil of California (Socal).

"We think this is such a historical scene and would like to share it with the company," the Haugs wrote.

Haug and his late wife Mary made the rubbing (measuring about 2 feet by 3 feet) in Dhahran around 1970. When Buddy transferred to Aramco Overseas Company in The Hague, the family had it reframed for their home there.

When the Haugs retired in 1986

to Rancho Bernardo, Calif., they took the rubbing with them.

Buddy's connection to the company is almost as old as the discovery well.

His father Roy Haug, Sr., went to Bahrain as an assistant driller for the Bahrain Petroleum Company, a Socal subsidiary, in July 1938. He transferred to the California Arabian Standard Oil Company, which Socal established to run its Saudi concession, in March 1939.

Buddy joined Aramco in mid-1946, joining his father in the kingdom. His mother Pauline and his sisters Joyce and Jackie arrived shortly after he did. Two of Buddy's four sons, Rodney and Kevin, joined Aramco, making the Haugs three-generation Aramcons.



Seal Reveals Company History

"Interesting stuff!"

That's how Bobby Horton, Aramco Services Company (ASC) general counsel, described five company seals from the old ASC Law Dept. library.

Two seals were labeled California Arabian Standard Oil Company, predecessor of the Arabian American Oil Company, and two others Aramco Overseas Purchasing Company (established in 1948 and based in Rome), predecessor of Aramco Overseas Company. The one without a label was for Aramco Realty Company.

Did Aramco have a real-estate arm? It did, said Horton, and it was ASC's predecessor.

"California Arabian Standard Oil was headquartered in San Francisco, and post-WWII changed its name to Arabian American Oil Company (Aramco, or AAOC) and moved its headquarters to New York City," Horton said.

"Aramco Realty Company was established there in September 1950 as a non-staffed corporate subsidiary of AAOC. Its original purpose was to hold the facility leases and other realty for AAOC in New York." Those included a corporate residence in Scarsdale, a training facility in Riverhead and the Aramco building itself.

In the mid-1970s, after AAOC had moved its headquarters to Dhahran, it

closed its New York office, Horton said.

"At that time Aramco Realty Company's name was changed to Aramco Services Company. It moved its headquarters to Houston [in 1974], and was set up to provide all and any services from the Americas which AAOC could need," he said.

"It is now 'us.'"

This impression of the official seal of Aramco Realty Company, predecessor of Aramco Services Company, comes from an embossing seal from the old ASC Law Dept. library.



**ABQAIQ
TEACHER
LOVED NEW**

Bugs Bunny Role

WRITTEN BY

FRANK BOYLAN

ILLUSTRATED BY

IVY JOHNSON

**WE FELT BAD THAT DAY IN 1985.
MY WIFE CARY CRIED IN THE
AIRLINE SEAT NEXT TO ME. I
COULDN'T BELIEVE THE DESERT
WAS SLIPPING AWAY AND WOULD
NOT COME BACK.**



We flew to Florida, and then wound our way west via Mexico and Canada and Las Vegas. I finally got a job in Los Angeles teaching high school. Good kids to work with, but without the snap of the happy, bright-eyed youngsters I'd taught in Abqaiq.

There was a touch of adventure in the kingdom that was missing in, well, any



What does an L.A. schoolteacher, fresh from a job in Saudi Arabia, do during summer break? He takes a job playing Bugs Bunny at a local theme park, sometimes posing for photos with kids from his own classes.

place else. I really didn't want to dwell on why.

Before I knew it, I was out of work again. Summer vacation. Actually, it was a partial layoff, for I stayed on to teach summer school. But the days were shorter and the pay was less: A teacher had to go out and scrounge for work,

fast, to make up the difference.

I got a job at Magic Mountain, about 20 miles north of the city, near the ocean. Every afternoon and evening I was one of the several seven-foot-high cartoon characters walking among the visitors, posing for pictures, hugging families—like the mascots for sports teams.

I was Bugs Bunny. Bottom to top a furry rabbit able to see only through a secret screen hidden near his mouth. I couldn't talk. But inside I was just a teacher with a family somewhere. I was sweating in that hot costume, with people standing on my feet, punching me, shouting questions at me.





Left: From cartoon character to counselor: Without saying a word, Bugs Bunny (aka Frank Boylan) consoles Joe Levy, one of his students, after a long day in the park. **Above:** In class the next day, Joe gets a pat on the same shoulder from Frank Boylan (aka Bugs Bunny).

“Is that a man in there, or a woman?” kids would ask. I was usually posing for a picture when they asked me, so I gave the asker a little squeeze on one shoulder.

“Oh, it’s a man,” one visitor would call out to everyone.

An off-duty cartoon character walked near me with a walkie-talkie to keep me from being hit with a baseball bat, as happened occasionally. If I tripped, he would help me up.

I loved it. It seems that lots of kids talked to Bugs when they were walking home from school alone, or at night before they went to sleep.

When I strolled around and no one could hear, many of them would continue conversations they had with their own private Bugs Bunny.

“Bugs, you remember when I asked you to help me get a catcher’s mitt for Christmas? Well, I got it. Thanks, Bugs.”

I gave the lad a little shoulder squeeze. Sometimes, out in a crowd, I saw

kids who were in my classes at school. I couldn’t say anything, but waved with a secret smile for them to recognize me.

They never did. Some waved back, but the wave was for a rabbit somewhere else in their lives.

One boy came up, unsmiling. He was Joe Levy in my third-period class. Joe was always down in the dumps at school. I wanted to remind him not to

‘BUGS, REMEMBER WHEN I ASKED YOU TO HELP ME GET A CATCHER’S MITT? WELL, I GOT IT. THANKS, BUGS.’

forget the assignment due Monday, but couldn’t.

We characters strolled through the park, then rode the overhead tramway back to the part of the fence we slipped through to return to our costume area.

I was up on the train cooling off when Joe arrived and sat next to me. He started talking, fast.

“Bugs, there is a kid in my second-period class who beats me up every day. I don’t know what to do.”

Joe looked at me with tear-filled eyes. I reached down and gave him a wordless squeeze on the shoulder.

I left the park that night, pushing a stroller with my sweaty cartoon clothes inside. No one knew the tired man pushing the cart was Bugs Bunny when the sun was out.

Next day, Joe looked at me in my “school” clothes as he walked into class, indifferent now.

“Hi, Joe.”

“Hi, Teach,” he answered, thinking about something else.

“Everything okay?” I asked as he took his seat.

“Yeah,” he replied. “Okay.”

As I walked past, I gave his shoulder a small, one-handed squeeze.

Startled, he looked up. For second, his mind shifted gears.

“Nawww,” he said, and was back to his thoughts.



Joining the
'MERMAIDS
of **ARABIA'**

BY JENNIFER SIMPSON
PHOTOGRAPHED BY SHOUG AL SAUD



Chance or destiny?

OVER MY LIFETIME THERE HAVE BEEN TOO MANY COINCIDENCES LEADING ME TO THE KINGDOM AND ITS WATERS—FIRST TO ARAMCO AND THE GULF IN 1977, AND MOST RECENTLY TO THE RED SEA PORT OF JIDDAH IN JULY—SO I AM LEANING TOWARD DESTINY.

At age four, upon seeing the Disney film *Peter Pan*, I vowed to become a mermaid and refused to take a bath until my parents wrapped my legs in orange-mesh produce sacks.

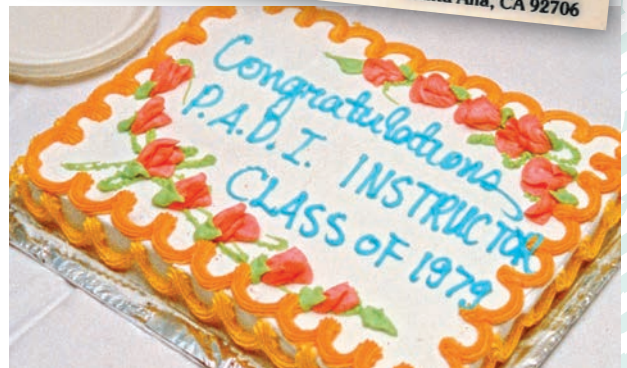
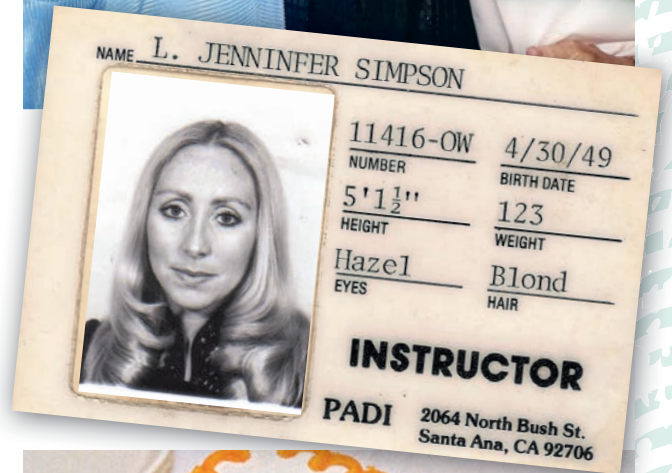
In my teens I was so enchanted by the desert scenes from the movie *Lawrence of Arabia* that I spent years reading

about the Middle East and dreaming of riding a camel between yellow dunes and red rock formations.

My 1976 Denver wedding to Don Simpson took me to The Hague, where he was an electrical engineer at Aramco Overseas Company. A year later we decided to transfer to Dhahran for a non-career-enhancing reason: to learn to scuba dive. On Dec. 28, 1977, we left for a (rather roundabout) 13-day, 5,000-mile drive to the Gulf.

When I married Don the thought hadn't crossed my mind that we would end up in Saudi Arabia, for he had only planned to work two years in Holland. But here we were, driving through Syria, Jordan and the length of Tapline, realizing my teenage desert fantasies.

Within three months we began scuba training through the only



Opposite: Jennifer Simpson (in pink mask) and compatriots unfurled a banner heralding PADI (Professional Assn. of Dive Instructors) Women's Dive Day in the Red Sea north of Jiddah in July. **From top:** Nouf Alosaimi (left), a pioneer Saudi diver, welcomed Simpson to Jiddah on July 9, almost exactly 40 years after she had received PADI Instructor certification following 30 days of training in Dhahran and at Half Moon Bay—for which she and 13 fellow Aramcons earned a cake and *Arabian Sun* coverage.



Water skills expert Warren Glaser demonstrates how not to pick up an air tank to divers Don Nims and Jennifer Simpson in foreground, and Bob Neff and Don Simpson in masks. Glaser has spent most of his career training lifeguards and divers in his native California.

The Arabian Sun - July 25, 1979/2



Water Instructors Course Graduates

Skin and scuba diving courses leading to Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) certification will soon be available to Aramcons under the direction of graduates of the PADI open water instructors course, completed in Dhahran in late July (See July 25 *Arabian Sun*). From left, front row, are Ted Valentiner, Bill Ingles, Don Nims, Mike Cornechione, Jennifer Simpson and Norman Warren. In the back row are Roy Wright, Don Simpson, Jim Gallagher, Dick Schneider, Darryl Cavalier, Bob Neff, Bruce North and George DeBarca. PADI school diving instructors Jim Williams and Warren Glaser are in the rear. Not pictured are PADI course graduate Mike Jones and course assistants Tom Barkume and Robin Petty. Those interested in enrolling in the PADI courses, which range from skin diver through assistant instructor, should contact Bill Ingles in Dhahran at phone 56536; Darryl Cavalier in Abqaiq, 22417; or Roy Wright, 35389, in Ras Tanura. (Porto)



Above: Diving in the Gulf, the wells of al-Hasa and the Red Sea in the '70s and '80s was full of "Indiana Jones-like adventures," says Simpson, pictured with fellow Aramcons Malcolm Davenport (left) and Dick Gibson. **Right, top and bottom:** Exploring the Gulf in the past and the Red Sea this year resulted in face-to-face meetings with many saltwater "regulars."

internationally recognized certification program in the Eastern Province, the British Sub Aqua Club. The siren call of Saudi waters is extremely strong, but few people had the constitution to invest in a year of training to achieve entry-level BSAC certification.

We did it by attending weekly sessions in the classroom and pool and weekend open-water excursions, finishing in early 1979. It had taken 25 years, but finally I was almost a mermaid.

Certification by PADI, the Professional Assn. of Dive Instructors, was the next goal. PADI is the No. 1 scuba-certification program in the world and with just a five-week commitment, training three times a week, a diver could receive an internationally recognized accreditation.

Dive buddies Bob Neff and Bill Ingles suggested to Bob Long of Dhahran Recreation that several Aramcons be trained

as PADI Instructors to improve dive safety in the company. Much to our amazement, Recreation arranged for Jim Williams, the founder and president of PADI International, to come to Dhahran from the U.S. to train 16 people from the four Aramco communities.

Luckily, the introductory BSAC course Don and I had completed met the PADI Divemaster requirement for PADI Instructor training, so we gained entry to that level. As the only female in the group, and at just over five feet tall in a cohort of mostly six-foot men, I had my work cut out for me.

We trained 30 days in classrooms and pools after work and all day on the weekends in Half Moon Bay. It felt like Navy Seal drills, perhaps because Williams and his assistant, Warren Glaser, were former Seals and pushed

us beyond what PADI required.

On July 23, 1979, we all graduated with the highest median class score in PADI history. Upon completion Williams informed me I was not only the first female PADI Instructor in the kingdom, but also the first in the Arab world.

In the glory years of our Aramco diving, in addition to adventurous expeditions on dhows to Juraid and Jana islands in the Gulf, we were free to dive almost anywhere along both coasts. Each year during the Hajj holiday we caravanned 930 miles from Dhahran to Rabigh on the Red Sea and camped on the beach, diving in the psychedelic-colored reefs whenever we wished, day or night.

For freshwater dives we occasionally explored the wells in Hofuf and Qatif, up to 60 feet deep.

I left the kingdom in 1986 and didn't return until the Expatriates Reunion in 2015, when I gave a presentation to the Dhahran Dive Assn. on the history of Aramco diving. I called it "The Dhow Jones Report" in honor of former Aramcon Mike Jones, who had instilled a love of diving in so many of us. I was surprised to learn that diving





experiences such as beach camping in many of our favorite areas, dhow trips and well-diving were no longer allowed.

Two years later a high-school friend who knew my dive background sent me a message titled “A Woman After Your Own Heart,” along with a Google link about Nouf Alosaimi, a young Saudi who was breaking barriers in scuba diving in the kingdom. Raised in Taif, she had been encouraged by her father to lead a life exploring nature and discovering what lay beyond Saudi Arabia’s borders.

After earning a tourism-management degree in Manchester, England, and missing the sun and warm weather of her homeland, she vacationed in Sharm El Sheik, Egypt, in 2008. Its iridescent Red Sea waters enticed her to take a PADI introductory dive class, and it was love at first sight.

She soon completed PADI Open Water, Advanced, Rescue and Divemaster certifications in Sharm El Sheik and began a three-year career there as an underwater photographer and dive guide. By



2013 she had become a PADI Instructor and formed a scuba group called Pink Bubbles Divers in Jiddah to empower women to explore the underwater world.

She later became the first Saudi female PADI Technical Diver, held the record for the deepest dive in the kingdom, and was named the first female PADI AmbassaDiver in the

Middle East, a title bestowed upon just a few people who have made a huge impact in the diving world.

I mustered the courage to write to her, explaining a little of my ancient dive

history. She replied almost immediately with a wonderful message, ending it with, “You are officially now the Mermaid of Arabia.”

We communicated for two years, dreaming of the day we could dive together. Every July, PADI holds Women’s Dive Day at sites all over the world. The stars finally aligned this July and I booked my ticket to Jiddah to attend the event orchestrated by Nouf.

This year held special significance as I had just celebrated my 70th birthday and Women’s Dive Day coincided with the 40th anniversary of our PADI Instructor course in Dhahran. I am the proud mother of three accomplished daughters, but none shares my passion for diving. I would be able to meet Nouf, whom I now know as “Bintee.”

When I arrived at Jiddah International Airport on July 9 she ran up to give me an emotional hug and a big bouquet of flowers. We went out for a late-night meal of nouvelle Arab cuisine at a restaurant where the staff serenaded me with drums, chanting “Welcome Back.” I was home!

The next day Nouf and her best friend Marwa Al Saeedi picked me up for the 90-minute drive north to King Abdullah Economic City (KAEC), with Nouf at the wheel. There the luxury yacht *The Captain Sparrow* awaited our group of 24 for a history-making first all-female liveaboard on the Red Sea.

On the way we passed several road signs showing the distance to Rabigh, the location of our beach camping site 40-plus years ago. Nostalgia was in hyperdrive.

KAEC is an impressive development where Nouf participates in oceanographic research as the head of Diving in Marine Services. Our boat, an Egyptian vessel with a crew of 13, was a far cry from the wooden dhows I was used to.

No longer did I have to walk gingerly to avoid slipping on fish oil from the previous day’s catch or choke from the engine’s diesel fumes. We boarded about 6 p.m., and the remaining divers arrived.

They ranged in age from 24 to 41: two hailed from Yemen, one from Bahrain and the rest from the kingdom. Their PADI credentials ranged from Snorkeler to Instructor, and their educational and professional backgrounds ran the gamut from international financiers, university staff and interior and graphic designers to

Nouf Alosaimi, **top**, who organized PADI Women’s Day in the Kingdom, floats in a garden of coral in the Red Sea off King Abdullah Economic City, as the author, **above**, explores in the same vicinity.

professional photographers and educators. Our common bond was a passion for diving.

That night we enjoyed the first of many sumptuous buffets, decorated with impressively carved fruit. The meals were an eye-opening contrast to my previous Red Sea repasts: Dinty Moore beef stew out of a can.

In the morning *The Captain Sparrow* headed out for three days of diving.

Our first dive on Nizar Reef, about 14 miles due west, was to check out each diver's comfort level and experience. I was blown away by the technical expertise of every woman.

The attention to safety and equipment, and each one's awareness of others in the group, made every dive seem like a military operation. I'd never seen such scuba professionalism.

We finished off with a night dive and traveled overnight to the next stop. I luxuriated in my "honeymoon" suite, a bonus as guest of honor.

We woke up at Rose Reef, 11 miles west-southwest of KAEC and I truly felt home again. The riot of the coral colors and explosion of sea life brought back memories of our shore dives in Rabigh. Tiny gold Anthius fish with their purple eyes greeted me, followed by Domino Damsels, Candy Cane shrimp, Queen Angels, Blue Tangs and majestic Lionfish.

I discovered a Stone Fish, one of the most venomous creatures on the planet, hiding in the coral. During our camping days we'd heard stories of people who accidentally stepped on them in the shallows and suffered an excruciating 45-minute death. As is the case with many sea creatures, if you keep your distance you can safely admire their beauty and uniqueness.

That evening I gave my presentation about the history of Aramco diving. The women were astounded to learn of our Indiana Jones-like adventures and see how far scuba diving has come over the years



Top: "A-OK," signaled a Red Sea diver in July. **Above:** A nudibranch (sea slug), one of the more colorful Red Sea creatures, joined the diving group.

in terms of equipment and techniques.

I think they were surprised that I shared their fear of the deep and sharks when I first entered the sport. Most of all, they could relate to my efforts to make diving in the kingdom something that females—even those just five feet tall—could enjoy.

Following the presentation, they gave me a gold bracelet engraved "Women's Dive Day Jeddah 2019" on the outside and "Pink Bubbles Divers" on the inside. In return I laid out a number of gourmet Panamanian chocolate bars and several tourism books representing the country where I have lived and worked for the last 14 years.

It was a small gesture of thanks for the love fest I was experiencing. I felt like I now had 23 *binnet*, not just one *bint*, in the kingdom.

That last night the ladies fashioned a female-only disco on the ship's upper deck, draping strings of white lights along the railing to create a fairy-like atmosphere. The far end was equipped

with multicolored disco lights and a booming sound system. We sat under the stars and the almost-full moon savoring the friendships we'd forged under water and on deck, with bittersweet thoughts of this dream coming to end.

The next morning we did a final dive on Shark Reef where we saw Moray eels and beautiful Feather Duster worms and bid goodbye to our glorious surroundings. Then Nouf presented all of us with "certificates of survival" on the first KSA Female Liveboard.

We relished a final meal of fresh-caught fish and lobster served al fresco and then headed back to KAEC. After many farewells seven of us piled into Nouf's SUV for the trip back to Jiddah.

Meeting all these incredible women was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Nouf led the group

with exceptional *joie de vivre*, attention to detail, technical expertise and overall knowledge. At 31, she is a powerful force in and out of the water. She lectures throughout the kingdom and on television, sharing her passion for diving, encouraging female empowerment and expressing her concern for the future of Arabia's marine ecology.

Equally impressive was 25-year-old Shoug Al Saud, who took brilliant under water photos with her enormous, state-of-the-art camera gear. I was shocked to learn that she had been shooting under water for just six months.

Countless memories from the voyage continue to bombard me in strobe-light fashion: Samah entertaining us constantly with her hilarious antics; Fatima exuding quiet elegance; Marwa flashing her illuminating smile; Munirah pushing feminist boundaries; Mariam leading yoga sessions; my adorable dive buddy Nuha; Rehab taking underwater videos of Capt. Ahmad partnering me in an impromptu undersea jitterbug.



Just over a quarter of the first KSA Female Liveaboard contingent linked up for this photo on their final dive day in the Red Sea.

AmbassaDiver.

On my final day in the kingdom Nouf and her mother hosted a traditional feast for five women from the trip and several other friends and family members.

I was especially touched by the story of 40-year-old Amani, the second-oldest diver in the group, who took up diving so that she could share the sport with her teenage son.

I was fortunate to spend an additional six days in Jiddah during the first Jiddah Season Festival, part of the 11-city Saudi Seasons initiative launched this year by the Ministry of Tourism and National Heritage. It was head-spinning to see or hear about a concert by the Backstreet Boys, open-air cinemas, light-filled displays along Jiddah's Corniche and an MTV extravaganza including the U.S. rap star 50 Cent, who later jokingly referred to himself as "50 Halala."

I declined an opportunity to attend the MTV event (at age 70 my mosh-pit days may be over), opting instead for a night out with Nouf in Old Jiddah.

One of the Jiddah Season events I was scheduled to attend was Saudi Arabia's first immersive-theater production, held in a traditional Jiddah house (see p. 31). Todd Nims (DH95), the son of my scuba-instructor buddy Don Nims, produced the show, assisted by Kristina Owen (DH03).

I spent another day watching a U.K. film crew shoot a documentary about successful Saudi women—Nouf among them, on an excellent dive boat in the bay.

Each day topped the previous one with incredible experiences. Nouf took me to

meet her boss, Ahmed Shaker, Marine Services director at KAEC. An oceanographer, he has an extensive diving and sailing background.

He invited another coworker, Sarah Abdullah Bogdadi, into his office to meet me. In 1988 she became the first Saudi female PADI Instructor in Saudi Arabia.

It was a special moment when the three of us posed for a photo commemorating many female dive milestones in the kingdom: mine as the first female PADI Instructor; Sarah's as the first Saudi female PADI Instructor; and Nouf's as the first Saudi female PADI Technical Diver and the first female PADI

It was a beautiful ending to an extraordinary homecoming. I unsuccessfully fought back tears as I said goodbye. Dropped off at the Jiddah airport July 28, I was back home in Panama just over a day later, my life forever changed.

P.S. I think the universe was telling me it was time to go home. Over the last three days of my visit the 'abaya I'd had for years was incrementally disintegrating. Like Hansel and Gretel, who left a trail of breadcrumbs, I'd left a track of buttons and button loops throughout Jiddah. I intend to return to follow their trail at the earliest opportunity.

"My life forever changed." That's how the author (right) summed up the friendships she forged with young divers like these on her return to the kingdom in July.



THE FLORENCE Serves Up 'Cool' Pool Memories

By Arthur Clark

how to hold our breath under water!).”

The twins, then 19, had arrived in Dhahran from California a couple of years earlier with their father, driller Roy Haug, Sr., who'd worked earlier in Bahrain and Dhahran, and their mother Pauline. Their brother Roy (known as “Buddy”) had joined Aramco just before they arrived and the siblings all became full-fledged Aramcons themselves, raising families in the kingdom and on assignments abroad.

The Ballet Swimmers trained six days a week for six weeks to prepare for the five-day Aramcocade. The rigorous workouts paid off and the event proved a great success, even though the swimsuits Chadwick ordered for the performers did not arrive until after the show had closed.

That didn't faze the coach, who

The restaurant's name, The Florence, first caught Joyce Kriesmer's eye.

“I'm not interested in seeing new restaurants,” said the spunky, 90-year-old annuitant, but the aquatic headline in the June 27 *San Diego Union Tribune*—“The Florence takes unconventional plunge into dining scene”—made her wonder. As she read she made a remarkable discovery: “Here's an article about Florence Chadwick!” she shouted to her twin sister Jackie Voskamp.

Then she contacted Pam Kragen, the reporter who filed the story.

“Seventy-one years ago, Florence Chadwick worked for Aramco in Dhahran,” she wrote from the retirement-community apartment that the twins share in San Diego. “On her off time from work she self-trained in preparation for her record-setting feat of swimming the English Channel.

“She did this by going to the local beach where she would drive a stake into the sand, attach a rope to it, then around her waist, and off she went into the Gulf, as far out as the rope would allow, thus building up her endurance.”

Right: Twins Joyce Kriesmer, left, and Jackie Voskamp talked about discovering a new San Diego restaurant named after Florence Chadwick, the former Aramcon who smashed records swimming the English Channel in the 1950s, at an interview in their home in July. They recalled her tough training routines—for themselves in the Dhahran pool, and for herself at the end of a long rope in the Gulf (**above**).

In addition, Chadwick directed the 1948 Aramcocade, a multipart show at the Dhahran pool. She also coached The Ballet Swimmers, 13 women—including the twins—who performed a 20-minute synchronized-swimming program as part of the two-hour extravaganza.

“[It was] an incredible aquacade using employees, wives and kids,” Kriesmer wrote to the reporter. “We became well acquainted with Florence.... Jackie and I still remember her with fondness and a lot of respect for her patience and hands-on encouragement (especially



BOTTOM: BERT SEAL; TOP: COURTESY JENNIFER BAKER





Top: The twins posed second and third from right with fellow Aramcocode Ballet Swimmers in 1948; **above and left:** A card from The Florence features Chadwick on the Gulf coast, and the swimmer herself relaxes in the pool; **below:** Nick Sanderson, a partner in the Florence, shows off a photo of Chadwick's welcome home in 1950.



focused more on results than fashion.

“She was so laid back,” said Voskamp. “I’m amazed that we could do it. Florence drew a talent out of us. It was a huge accomplishment on her part.”

“Here was a woman who set world records and she was our teacher!”

Chadwick’s devotion to the sport is reflected in the photos, posters and even the vintage suitcases that decorate The Florence, located in the San Diego community of Sabre Springs.

She began swimming in the ocean just off San Diego as a youngster and won her first trophy in a race across San Diego Bay in 1930 at age 11.

In high school she commuted to Los Angeles to swim with the Athletic Club there. Between the ages of 14 and 22 she won seven rough-water swims over a 2.5-mile course from San Diego’s Scripps Pier to La Jolla Cove, reported the *San Diego Reader*.

She even got a whiff of stardom in 1944 when she appeared in the film *Bathing Beauty* with Red Skelton, Basil Rathbone and star swimmer Esther Williams as a member of a synchronized swimming troupe.

She continued to swim after marrying (and divorcing) twice and attending law school on the side. She began working in one of her mother’s two restaurants in San Diego in 1948 when her second marriage ended, but she wasn’t happy with that.

Then she chanced on a newspaper story about an American woman employed by Aramco on the coast of Saudi Arabia who had been able to save most of her substantial salary. Thinking that might be the route to realizing her dream—swimming the English Channel—she applied for a secretarial job with the company. After passing bookkeeping and typing tests she signed on.

Afraid that her parents would try to keep her from traveling so far and scoff at her plan to swim the channel, however, she didn’t tell them she was leaving until the day before her flight from San Diego. That earned the silent treatment from her mother for the two years she lived in Saudi Arabia.

During her first year, in Dhahran, “she filed, did bookkeeping and occasionally decoded messages regarding trade secrets,” said the *Reader*. “After work each day she swam in a nearby swimming pool.”

“At first training was painful; her muscles had grown flabby in the previous year of restaurant work. Sometimes

after going home she cried herself to sleep, thinking she'd never be able to get in shape for the channel.

"She shared a home with seven other American women," but not her dream of swimming the channel "for fear they would think her idea was crazy."

In 1949 she transferred to Ras Mish'ab, the northern Gulf port that Aramco had built to support construction of the Trans-Arabian Pipe Line. She wanted to devote even more time to swimming.

There, she wrote, she "bribed" a couple of male coworkers to drive her to the beach and watch while she worked out.

"They would take turns driving her to the Gulf where she would swim four hours a night after work and seven hours one night a week before the Muslim holy day..." said the *Reader*. "She rarely socialized, concentrating instead on her training."

Chadwick devised a special routine: "She tied a rope around her waist and attached the other end to a trashcan on the beach that was weighted down with rocks...and then swam at the end of the rope."

She would demonstrate a stroke to her chauffeurs on the shore and ask them to tug on the rope if they noticed anything wrong. "Just before it was time to come in," a special tug "would signal her to sprint to develop speed," said the *Reader*.

"After two years, Chadwick had saved about \$5,000 from her job," so she left Aramco. "As her plane was preparing to take off from Saudi Arabia [for France] a small boy ran up to it waving an envelope in his hand. It was a letter from her father [saying] he was joining her...to help her train."

In France, she tried to enter the



Above: Florence Chadwick strides ashore in France from her second Channel swim, in 1951, after in 16 hours, nine minutes in the water. She spent four hours of the difficult west-to-east crossing ill from inhaling her escort boat's diesel fumes. **Opposite:** Jackie Voskamp and Joyce Kriesmer, right and center, view a framed Chadwick swimsuit with Nick Sanderson, a partner in The Florence.

"half-century" channel contest sponsored by the *London Daily Mail*, but was turned down because she lacked experience. So she hired her own boat and crew.

She failed on her first bid to make the 23-mile crossing, after 14 hours in the water. On the second try, on Aug. 8, 1950, the 31-year-old set a women's record of 13 hours, 23 minutes, smashing the old mark by an hour and 11 minutes.

"I feel fine," she said after she finished. "I am quite prepared to swim back."

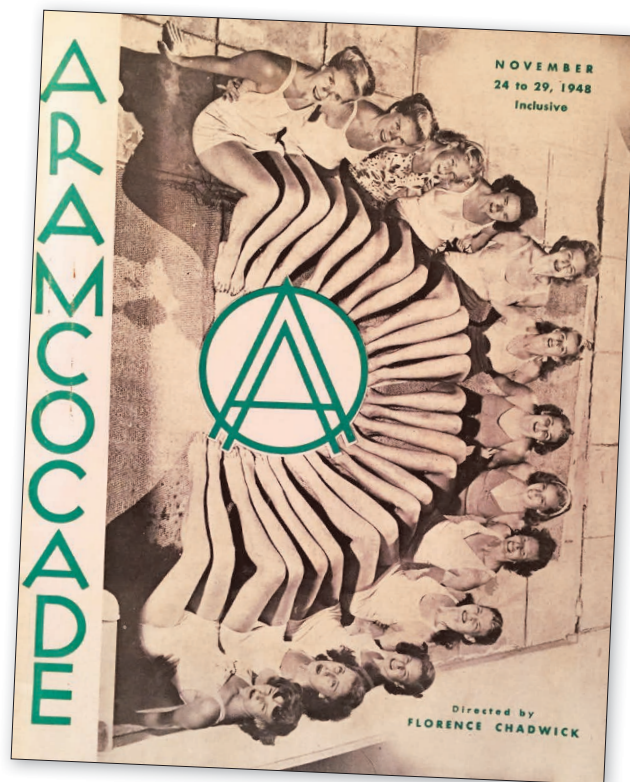
A year later she did swim back, becoming

the first woman to cross the channel in both directions. She added two more crossings after that, setting a new England-France record for men and women (14:42) in 1953 and another new mark for that route (13:55) in 1955, among other swimming feats.

The Channel Swimming Assn. honored her, along with five other women, with the title "Queen of the Channel," and Aramcos proudly watched her set new records from afar.

"Aramco again breaks into the news with former stenographer Florence Chadwick

Left: The Florence has developed a solid clientele among local residents who knew the Chadwick family, but few realize that the local woman after which it is named has a close company connection, as reflected in the Aramcocode she directed in Dhahran in 1948.



OPPOSITE: BERT SEAL; BOTTOM LEFT: ARTHUR CLARK; TOP: COURTESY JENNIFER BAKER



swimming the English Channel in record-breaking time,” Ken Webster wrote to his parents from Dhahran on Aug. 11, 1950. The letter is part of the Webster family’s “Dear Folks” Aramco correspondence compiled by their grandson Ken Slavin.

“We are all so proud of Florence Chadwick,” Webster’s wife Mildred wrote the same day. “She really is a wonderful swimmer.”

On Aug. 19 they both followed up: “We are all delighted that Florence Chadwick made the Channel and we weren’t too surprised. She is the one who taught [daughter] Judy and the girls all the stuff in the Aramcocade—and holds the world’s backstroke record, lacking ¼ of a second... [to qualify] for the Olympics.”

She set at least two records at Aramco in 1948. An *Arabian Sun & Flare* story shows her winning the 60-yard freestyle at a Dhahran swim meet that September in 45.6 seconds, with the note, “The record for this event is held by Florence Chadwick, established at Dhahran on July 4.” She was a member of the 120-yard mixed relay team that set a record that same date.

Chadwick returned to Dhahran once, in 1953. “I just came in from a luncheon for our friend Florence Chadwick,” wrote Mildred Webster on Oct. 21. “We were all so glad to see her.

“She came down from Istanbul, via Beirut, yesterday and will have to leave tomorrow. She looks wonderful and certainly doesn’t look as if she had just broken all the records for the three major swims she made this summer.

“There is a big reception on the Club patio tonight for the folks to visit with her, then she is off for a year of all sorts of

contracts—television, sports, etc. She says she is through swimming channels now!”

Those “major swims” included her record-breaking third Channel crossing, and crossing the Strait of Gibraltar in 5:06, a record for both women and men. She also did one-way crossings of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles in Turkey.

Her triumphs earned her “a guest spot on the TV game show *What’s My Line?* and [she] made an Ovaltine commercial and was welcomed at the White House by President Dwight D. Eisenhower,” accord-

‘We are all delighted that Florence Chadwick made the Channel and we weren’t too surprised.’

ing to the website “Junkets and Jaunts.”

Chadwick finally hung up her swimsuit in 1960 to become a stockbroker in San Diego, but she continued her work as a coach. In 1970 she was inducted into the International Swimming Hall of Fame. She died in 1976.

Nick Sanderson, a partner in The Florence, which opened April 1, said he and his partners had learned that the Chadwick family once owned the land where they would finally build a restaurant.

“The idea for a restaurant came first,” he said, but the legend of Florence Chadwick fit perfectly into what they were planning. “We were looking for a brand to build here,” he said.

“This is a tight-knit community. We wanted to embrace the history of this land.”

“A lot of people in this area knew Florence Chadwick,” said Sanderson. “They come here specifically for that that.”

The restaurant’s Chadwick links are obvious, and not just on its marquee and the swimming memorabilia of the \$4 million, 10,000-square-foot facility. Its menus carry a female-diver logo, and an illustration of Chadwick appears on a restaurant postcard showing the Gulf coast and Bahrain. (A photo of her on a camel in front of the Great Pyramid is on the other side).

The swimming theme is reflected on the patio outside the restaurant where signs tell visitors “No Swimming,” and under a “boathouse” portico decorated with lane markers. Buoy-like lighting carries the nautical message indoors.

When Kriesmer and Voskamp visited The Florence in July, they found a “coastal American” menu with several nods to Chadwick’s time in the Middle East. For brunch there was “Moroccan baked eggs” with ground lamb and garbanzo beans as a main course, and shrimp Louis with falafel on the side. The dinner menu offered a main-course falafel bowl.

The twins caught Sanderson’s ear with tales of training under Chadwick.

“We haven’t had any connection from the Saudi world. This is fascinating,” he said.

“She put on a swimming show [in Dhahran]. That’s cool!”

Kriesmer said the restaurant’s décor, including pictures of Chadwick and other stars—like one of her demonstrating a swimming stroke to boxing great Rocky Marciano—and posters like one from the film *Bathing Beauty*, “are a very nice tribute to her.”

Another photo shows the swimmer in a convertible on San Diego’s Broadway at her “welcome home” in 1950. She and her father had flown from New York to San Diego, where she boarded a seaplane that landed at the foot of Broadway, where a crowd (including her mother) was waiting to meet her.

Framed on another wall is the light-blue swimming suit she wore on one of her channel crossings.

“I’m blown away by what we’ve found here,” said Kriesmer.

“So am I,” said Voskamp.

And, for a moment, it’s almost as if the 71 years separating the twins from Florence Chadwick and their memorable Aramcocade had simply disappeared.

'RED PALACE'

SHEDS LIGHT ON

KINGDOM **AND** COMPANY



WRITTEN BY
**ARTHUR
CLARK**



PHOTOS BY
**MOHAMMED
ASKANDRANI**



Former Aramco photographer Bert Seal would have been forgiven for rubbing his eyes if he'd attended the "The Red Palace," an art exhibition by Prince Sultan ibn Fahd Al Saud in Riyadh and Jiddah this year.

Seal's Aramco contemporary José Arnold, the late steward and maître d' for King Sa'ud, would have been equally forgiven, for both men worked in the palace from which the exhibition took its name—and where much of its artwork originated—more than six decades ago.

Saudi Aramco would also have been intrigued.

The exhibition ran in its namesake Riyadh building, the home of Crown Prince Sa'ud ibn Abdulaziz from 1944-'53, in March and April. In June and July it appeared in the Khuzam Palace in Jiddah, the site of the 1933 signing of the oil Concession Agreement with Standard Oil of California, the event to which Saudi Aramco traces its roots.

Located near King Abdulaziz's mud-brick Murabba' Palace and the National Museum in the King Abdulaziz Historical Center, the Red Palace was the first structure in Riyadh built of reinforced concrete.

It served as the office for the Council of Ministers after Sa'ud became king in 1953 and became headquarters of the Board of Grievances in 1988. But around the turn of the century it fell into disuse—until the art show this spring.

Both Seal and Arnold worked in the

Bert Seal and his daughter Lynda Field posed in front of the Red Palace when they attended the 2015 KSA Expatriates Reunion. Seal worked there as a "loanee photographer" from Aramco, covering royal events from 1955-'60.

palace on loan from Aramco. Seal photographed King Sa'ud meeting heads of state (and explored the premises when he wasn't on duty), while Arnold ran the kitchen and thought up themes for royal banquets.

"Aramco would loan me to the king when he had visitors and I would stay at the Red Palace," said Seal, who worked in the Photo Unit from 1955-'60. "When I was staying there I could just wander and walk through and take candid photographs of the royal family and people around.

"I didn't get too intrusive when they were just sitting there, nothing going on, but I do have lots of pictures just of the royal family."

He visited the palace with his daughter Lynda Field during the 2015 KSA Expatriates Reunion, and returned with his grandson Sam during the 2019 reunion in March. But he had to settle for outside views on both trips.

Arnold began working in the palace in 1950, the year he impressed Crown Prince Sa'ud with a meal when he visited a desert camp for men building the Dammam-Riyadh railroad. Arnold left Aramco, and the king's kitchen, in 1960.

The art show comprised seven chapters, starting with the eponymous "The



Red Palace" and concluding with "Prayer Room." In between came "1979" (the year militants took over the Grand Mosque in Makkah), "Labor," "Gulf War," "Holy Economy" and "Dinner at the Palace."

Prince Sultan's eye-grabbing *To Dust*, which opened Chapter 1, displayed chandeliers he found gathering dust on the floor of the palace and then refurbished and jumbled together in open-sided air-conditioner cases.

"Wow!" said Seal, who remembered photographing dignitaries like Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, Egyptian President Gamel Abdul Nasser and Syrian President Shukri al-Kuwatli with King Sa'ud beneath those lights.

The same thing went for the mirrors stacked against one wall in another display, in which Seal once might have seen himself.

Chapter 6, "Dinner at the Palace," featured table items once used at the palace, drawn from Prince Sultan's collection, along with a new video focusing on the workers who prepared and served royal banquets.

The prince told *Canvas* magazine that he had found his "large collection of china, silverware and glassware that were used in the palace's ceremonies...in my trips to the market over the last five or six years."

"I'm a collector by nature, whether the objects are used in my artworks or not.... I like the idea of creating

Opposite: A pile of restored chandeliers from the Red Palace, painted gold, glitter in air-conditioner cases in the opening chapter of "The Red Palace" exhibition in Jiddah, while **above** a photo of a palace hall in the late 1950s by Aramco photographer Bert Seal shows the working chandeliers. **Left:** Neon lamps splash diacritical marks on prayer rugs in the exhibition's concluding chapter, "Prayer Room."





Top: A display of royal tableware, backdropped by vintage mirrors, is part of the “Dinner at the Palace” display; some of the same glassware, used when King Sa’ud hosted Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru at the palace in 1955, appears in Bert Seal’s photograph **below**. Steward José Arnold, like Seal an Aramco loanee, stands wearing a tie in the background.



something extraordinary from the ordinary,” added the prince, whose works for the “Holy Economy” chapter included vacuum bottles with colorful scenes from Makkah or Madinah and verses from the Qur’an, mounted on cement blocks.

His presentation of rugs on which neon lamps splashed diacritical marks in “Prayer Room” was another example of turning the ordinary into the remarkable.

“I grew up when the prayer mat was like a backpack or a security blanket—you could roll up everything in it,” he said. “You took it to school, wrapped your books in it, sat on it in the *majlis* and prayed on it....

“My aim for people is to look at everyday things from an entirely new perspective.... Knowing that these artifacts contain memories and histories is what draws me to live with them, examine them and learn how they represent the foundations of our history and our lives as individuals.”

The prince regularly visits Riyadh’s marketplaces, using advice from his mother to buy objects. “When I was young I was shy,” he told *The National* newspaper, “but she made me try it. They ask for 1,000 and she’d say, ‘I’ll take it for 100.’”

The prince’s persistence led to “The Red Palace” exhibition.

The building had been targeted to become a museum. When that didn’t happen he proposed that it host a live “dinner exhibition...to revive [its] historical moments and celebrate the labour force...,” he told *Canvas*.

But after he entered the palace and studied “its artifacts, history and decisions that were made there,” his vision expanded to an exhibition that would “tell the stories of the different time periods in a simple manner.”

He told the KAWA website that “The Red Palace” was a survey of “Saudi modern history [expressed] by the means of contemporary art,” saying that “found objects” from the palace and the *suq* were “major components” of his work.

“I wanted to go through Saudi modern history by means of contemporary art...,” he said. “With opening up the palace and the entire show I think [this] is the message I wanted to convey: the importance of innovation in contemporary art as well as pushing the boundaries.”

Prince Sultan’s motivation to mount “Dinner at the Palace” would likely have pleased maitre d’ Arnold.

“The main idea [was to] document an era and pay tribute to the large number of people who had participated in it,” *Canvas* quoted him as saying. “I wanted to celebrate the anonymous women and men chefs, coffee-makers and waiters behind such occasions. They all had a major role to play, but remain largely unknown.”

Indeed, the prince could have used Arnold’s descriptions in his 1963 book *Golden Swords and Pots and Pans* to arrange the display. In the mid-1950s, wrote Arnold, the Red Palace was the only royal residence “that had been opened with a functioning kitchen.”

Describing a dinner there for Egyptian President Nasser in 1956, he wrote: “The tables were beautifully arranged. The



Vacuum jugs decorated with scenes from the Holy Cities and verses from the Qur'an, **left**, are part of the "Holy Economy" exhibition chapter. **Right**: A pile of hundreds of gas masks figures in the "Gulf War" chapter.

pastry chef had utilized his sugar-spinning artistry to fashion to miniature pyramids, which were set before the places of King Sa'ud and President Nasser.... Egyptian and Saudi Arabian flags were prominent on the tables and walls. Flowers, flown in from Asmara, completed the décor."

The show's "Gulf War" chapter displayed hundreds of gas masks piled in the corner of a room. Many of the masks came from the palace, from which the Board of Grievances distributed them during the 1990-'91 conflict.

"The Gulf War was palpable for people who lived in Riyadh, or in the eastern

region...." the prince told *Canvas*. "[The gas masks] were destined to become part of the exhibition."

A key artwork in the exhibition is *1440m*. It comes from an Aramco photo of King Abdulaziz visiting company facilities in 1947, an oil worker and oil tanks reflected on the door of his sedan. However, the artist has "flipped" the picture so that the king appears in the driver's position rather than on the passenger side where he actually sat.

The image, which *Canvas* called the show's "tour de force," takes its title from the depth at which Well No. 7 struck

commercial quantities of oil in 1938.

"Following many experiments I shifted King Abdulaziz's position...flipping the image so that he appears to be driving us," Prince Sultan said.

That artwork summed up one of the multifaceted show's central messages.

"The king lived and died in a mudbrick house—he was a very simple man," Prince Sultan said. "He is one of those rare historical figures to whom I felt needed to be paid tribute and I was trying to find the right way to make that portrait. We have not changed, although we are where we are today because of oil."

1440m, a "flipped" Aramco photograph of King Abdulaziz visiting company facilities in 1947, put the king in the driver's seat. The artwork takes its name from the depth at which the kingdom's first commercial oil well hit pay dirt in 1938.





The Gift of a Lifetime

BY HASSAN IBN YOUSSEF YASSIN

I am holding onto a pregnant cloud filled with water, with tears of sadness and joy. As the cloud floats over Riyadh, I steer it toward the grave of my father, sprinkling the earth around it with some cloud tears to call his spirit to join me. Together we fly over a city that has changed such a great deal since his time, since that giant of a man King Abdulaziz united a peninsula torn apart by tribal warfare into one of civility and progress. We smile at the fond memories of us children running around King Abdulaziz's palace while he and my father held important meetings.

Our pregnant cloud floats across 500 miles of desert, of mountains and childhood dreams. We see oryx, gazelle and lizards scuttle across the desert. A falcon soaring, the sand sparkling, plants and animals yearning for the few drops of water that I squeeze from our cloud, perhaps indicating a spectacular desert bloom of wild iris, desert rose and acacia.

We leave the desert and its untold mysteries behind us, reaching the mountains of Hijaz, where golden-flowered cacti hoard the little water they receive. Our cloud moves through the valleys of Makkah, admiring the humanity of religious observance and the richness of our religion and way of life handed to us by our Prophet Muhammad.

We reach Jiddah, where the mother of all humanity lies buried, but also my own

mother, my brothers Anas and Abdulaziz, and my sisters Lamis and Anoud. Our cloud sheds some tears, but we experience only joy in this beautiful assembly of spirits. Together we cross the magnificent Red Sea to Egypt, watching the history of human civilization unfold as we glide over Luxor and Karnak, following the life-giving Nile, its people joyfully welcoming our cloud all the way to Cairo.

For a moment our cloud is seized by the hypnotic voice of Umm Kalthum. The world owes much of its knowledge to Egypt, as do I, remembering the tumultuous but happy years of my schooling and my family's time in Egypt.

Setting out from Alexandria over the Mediterranean...my mind is flooded with unforgettable trips...with my friends.... Our pregnant cloud absorbs all it can

of the sea, blowing on over France and through Paris, dodging the Eiffel Tower and reminding me of times spent in that beautiful city with my closest friends.

Our cloud is retained for some time above London, adding to the habitual drizzle, as I am back in my lovely house in Kensington, attending the wondrous musicals *My Fair Lady* and *Miss Saigon*....

Gathering yet more moisture, our cloud sweeps off across the Atlantic, breaking land in New York. I look down at the city I encountered in the early 1950s, the bull-horns of the mighty Empire State Building touching the sky.... I remember watching *The Robe* starring Victor Mature—the first film in widescreen CinemaScope—a mesmerizing experience for a young man from Arabia. In New York I discovered the magical new world of capitalist genius and



seduction, with billboards singing to me: “Buy One Suit. Get One Free!” I was truly won over by that innocent, optimistic attitude of an America whose winds of confidence were sweeping across the world.

Another wind now swept my cloud across the American continent to California, which, I learned recently, received its name, by way of the Spanish, from the Arabic word caliph.

The pregnant cloud whiles away some time with its cohorts over the Bay Area, allowing me to look down at the University of Berkeley, where I received my education—in the classroom, of course, but also in life. Amid a generation of hope and enthusiasm I fell in love with a beautiful American girl, Betty, who became my wife in the 1960s and gave us two lovely children, Sara and Raad.

My children are like my branches, and they have also become my roots, spreading further with my talented and beautiful grandchildren.... As I dream about all they mean to me, my cloud drifts back over Virginia, where I am comforted by the family lives they lead today, and suddenly our cloud is blown back across the Atlantic toward the African continent.

From above Africa I can see across the vast savannas we visited with my dear friend Prince Sa’ud Al-Faisal and

his extended family, in every sense of the term. I see Africa again through the eyes of Prince Sa’ud.... With great respect for the splendid animals of Africa we watched age-old rituals play out...going back far beyond the history of our own species.

Seeing Africa then and again now from my pregnant cloud, I cannot but admire the equilibrium of the natural and animal world, so far removed from the mess that we humans have made of our planet and its natural beauty and riches.

A wind again sweeps our cloud away from the African coast, returning it home to my Saudi Arabia, the cloud bursting with the fullness of life, of great adventures, discoveries and so many people I hold dear. I try to hold onto that pregnant cloud, not wanting to land now, forever reliving the moments of my life. I want to tell my children and grandchildren of its fullness. I want to tell them how much I love them and how much I have enjoyed the entire journey of my life.

Softly, I wake up clutching my fluffy pillow, my cloud, grateful for the life I have led and for the life I still have in me. The pregnant cloud of tears has given me yet more to live for. I have more stories to tell and I can take comfort that in time I will be reunited with my family in the sky.

The author’s father, Youssef Yassin, standing right, confidential secretary to King Abdulaziz, played a key role in oil-concession negotiations with Standard Oil of California in 1932 and again in 1939. Hassan Yassin followed in his father’s footsteps into government after earning degrees in the U.S., joining the Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources in 1959.



Hassan ibn Youssef Yassin, a man with longtime connections to Aramco, wrote “The Gift of a Lifetime” in the Aug. 10 issue of the Arab News, which granted permission to reprint it. Retirees

may find a mirror image of themselves in Yassin’s reflections on a life fully lived. While he traveled west as a young person, they moved east; in common, they can savor rich memories.

Yassin, 85, was born in Makkah, the son of Youssef Yassin, who served as confidential secretary to King Abdulaziz and King Sa’ud. After earning degrees at Berkeley in the ‘50s, he returned to Saudi Arabia with his American wife. He worked closely with Petroleum Ministers Abdullah Tariki and Ahmed Zaki Yamani from 1959–‘67, headed the Saudi Information Office in Washington, D.C., from 1972–‘81, and served with the Arab League observer delegation to the United Nations from 1981–‘83.

Yassin told Al-Ayyam Al-Jamilah that his column was a gift “to my children and friends,” and went on to talk about Aramcos such as Tom Barger, Frank Jungers and Mike Ameen. Ameen, who served as Aramco’s representative in Riyadh in the 1960s and early ‘70s, and later as director of the company’s Washington, D.C., office, was a first-generation Arab American and “we took pride in his success,” Yassin said.

The same thing applies to Saudi Aramco, he explained: “Aramco was an American institution that came to help Saudi Arabia with expertise in the oil business...and also with ice cream and chewing gum. We bought out the Aramco partners, but we never divorced from Aramco’s characteristics and talents. Americans should be very proud of an institution with continuing worldwide impact.”





'Quintessential Brat Moments'

Highlight 17th Biennial Reunion

Written and photographed by Jenn Harbert (AB75)

Maybe it's the sand and sizzling temperatures, or the soft, starry nights, but the biennial Brats get-togethers that take place in Arizona are always popular. Our 17th Reunion (I always capitalize Reunion), held in Phoenix May 23-27, was no exception, with 636 attendees, including 16 from abroad!

The spacious Pointe Hilton Squaw Peak Resort venue featured many gathering places, so it was a little more difficult to find people than in the past, but we persevered. Cell phones and social media helped, and staff members did everything they could to accommodate our large group, constantly ferrying people around in golf carts.

Since the resort is less than two hours from our home in Prescott Valley, my husband Wayne (AB75) and I drove there, accompanied by my sister Jan (AB62) and her husband Durwood. Durwood had never attended Reunion, but he'd grown up in the high desert of California, so with his adolescent stories

of desert shenanigans he fit in very well.

We Brats weren't hard to spot.

When my classmate Yolanda Mathey checked in she mentioned she was part of a group. The person at the desk replied, "Oh, the bunch with all the bracelets?" When Yo related this to me, we had to laugh. During Reunions, we women love to wear every bit of gold we acquired in Saudi Arabia. Most forearms are adorned with many bangles.

It's almost like we've taken on a Bedouin tradition and wear our savings on our bodies. We do this so naturally I'd never really thought anyone might notice.

The initial first-time Reunion attendee I ran across was John Ellis (AB84). His dad Leonard worked as a pipeline inspector from 1977-'84. John arrived from Los Angeles and said he was "thrilled" with the immediate feeling of belonging.

Regardless of which community or class Brats hail from, we

share memories of the sounds, smells and places we loved. It turned out that 40 members of John's class attended, the largest cohort, so he had a great Reunion.

The oldest Brats there were Mike Ford and Clairene Townsend, both DH57. Mike played baseball with my brother John Harbert (AB57). Whenever I see Mike he asks about John and remembers how well the team played and what fun they had.

There were a couple of Brats from '58: Karen Hanson-Fallon from Abqaiq and Diane Armstrong-Beresford from Dhahran. I met Karen while we were bowling and found out that she married Albert Fallon (AB60), returning with him to the kingdom.

Albert, an electrical inspector in Ras Tanura, retired as a supervisor in 1999. I'm amazed Karen is still sane because she had the responsibility of managing returning students in Student Recreation.

Their two kids were born and raised in the kingdom: Michele Fallon-Scott (RT87) and Stewart Fallon (RT84). Michele attended Reunion, too.

Speaking of bowling, the party I played with was so much fun! Pam Branch (AB79) and I have been Reunion roomies several times, so we used this as catch-up time. I knew Michael Ulissey (RT74) and Jackie Milne-Skakel (DH76) because our families were friends back in the day. David Cooke (RT76) was new to me for about two minutes: We quickly found common Brat ground and parted as Facebook friends.

We might not be physically "home" at our Reunions, but the immediate connection we feel to each other brings us home anyway.

Jeff Neal (DH86) did a great job organizing the bowling, just like his fellow Planning Committee members did all-round. Events

of this size don't just happen. A lot of people expend tons of energy in planning and they deserve a huge *shukran!*

Bridget Halpin (DH77) chaired the Reunion Committee, composed of Liz Germani (RT84), Marie Littlejohn-Dunn (DH77), Sandra Kerr-Louchard (DH84), Caroline Homolka-Masters (RT84), Leslie Homolka-Craigmyle (DH80) and Amber Perkins-Neal (DH86)—all Aramco Brats, Inc. (ABI) board members.

One of the best places to find people is the *Suq*, which keeps getting bigger. We've been spoiled by seeing many of the same wonderful vendors Reunion after Reunion, and there were a new ones to discover.

Rick Snedeker (DH65) offered his new book *3001 Arabian Days*, which is how long he and his family lived in Dhahran. They arrived in 1953. We also welcomed a T-shirt vendor, Mary Brevor-Whitiss

(RT79), who was busy every time I went in.

Several younger Brats, Steffi Acevedo, Natalie Baldwin and Hollyn Owen (all DH12) came and made merry with us. May they enjoy many more Reunions to come!

I also met a few "brattlings" (children of Brats). The youngest was seven-year-old Abigail Young, daughter of Danielle



Top: Bowlers (l-r) David Cooke (RT76), Michael Ulissey (RT74), Pam Branch (AB79), Jackie Milne-Skakel (DH76) and author Jenn Harbert are ready to roll. **Above:** Outgoing ABI President Hirath Ghori (DH75), right, and his daughter Shaheen pose with Wayne Harms (AB75).



Opposite: Three strong Brats stage a procession to the pool carrying, not riding, their inflatable camel. **Right:** Lydia Crawford (DH79), left foreground, chats with Julie Light-Githens (DH78), in a happy crowd waiting for the Reunion kickoff dinner May 24.



Left and right: Chris Henry (DH79) views vintage *Arabian Suns*. A March 1978 issue plugged the Abqaiq Jr. High play *Cinderella*, picturing (l-r) Yolanda VerHoeven, Mike Simms, Samir Noman, Chris Ward and Jamie Todd.



Loncki-Young (RT92), who was well-spoken and interested in the hoopla all around her.

We gathered Sunday evening for the banquet, at which we traditionally hold an auction. No one ever quite knows what will be offered for sale.

Sure enough, Tom Owen (DH68) and Bill Westuba (DH69) each brought something exceptional to the auction block: the ponytails they'd been growing for two years. Tor Hermansson (AB74) led the spirited bidding and the locks ultimately sold to Mimi Wasson (DH74), who had the pleasure of cutting them off.

The proceeds went to ABI and the hair was donated to Locks of Love in honor of Tom's and Bill's late brothers David and Danny, respectively.

We also auctioned off a two-seater inflatable "camel" pool raft deployed at the River Ranch on Reunion grounds for most of the weekend. Marie Littlejohn-Dunn asked volunteers to retrieve it and drop it into the North Point pool next to the Convention Center area. Three guys brought it through the archway, raised over their heads like some grand processional with a sedan chair!

Brats packing the pool area cheered and ululated as the men wound their way around the patio, and finally refloated the raft in the pool. It was one more "quintessential, spontaneous Brat

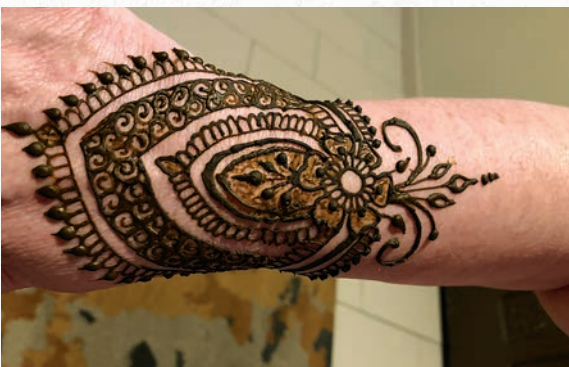


moment!" Marie said.

The new ABI officers were also announced at the banquet: Liz Germani (RT84), president; Sandra Kerr-Louchard (DH84), vice president; Amber Perkins-Neal (DH86), secretary; and Tom Littlejohn (DH84), treasurer. All are incumbents but Germani, who succeeded Hirath Ghori (DH75). Many thanks for your service, Hirath!

This was a wonderful Reunion. Once again we listened to our garage bands. We quietly leafed through old *Arabian Suns*, looking for a name or a photo or two to bring back memories. We laughed and hugged on old friends and shared stories with new friends. We strolled along the resort grounds looking up at the Milky Way.

When we come together at Reunions we're a tribe united by our common desert home. It feels so good, these few days, because we are a unique combination. We have roots in Saudi Arabia and in the U.S., but we belong entirely to neither. And, together for a while, we have the freedom to truly be ourselves.



Second from top: Karen Herman-Martin (RT73) and her husband Dan staff her Creative Memories booth. **Above:** The henna art of Diane Klipfel-Slinghuff (AB75) decorated many an attendee. **Above right:** Duane Hopple (RT79) gets a *ghutra* check from his wife Keri.

NOW SHOWING

Brats Behind Groundbreaking Theater in Jiddah that 'Frightens and Delights'

Enter an atmosphere filled with a colorful cast of characters that will frighten and delight. Test your courage and wits. Will you unravel the mystery?

That's how *Destination KSA* described *Bait Al Dahaleezi*, one of two shows that Saudi Aramco Schools' graduates Todd Nims (DH95) and Kristina Owen (DH03) helped bring to the stage in Jiddah this summer.

Set in a 200-year-old traditional house in Jiddah's historic al-Balad district, *Bait Al Dahaleezi*—the kingdom's first-ever immersive-theater production—ran twice a day from June 24-July 18, while nightly performances of the colorful street-theater production *Ozawa Street* unrolled nearby.

Nims, the son of Don and Cherry Nims, is the CEO of Riyadh-based Empty Quarter Productions. He produced, co-wrote and directed *Bait Al Dahaleezi*, in which the audience entered the house and interacted with mysterious spirits known as *jinn* to unravel a murder; he also produced *Ozawa Street*.

Owen, the creative producer for both shows, is the daughter of Tom and Kathy Owen.

Vlad Vukovic served as *Bait Al Dahaleezi*'s production director. Nims and Vukovic worked earlier in film and theater production, respectively, at the King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture in Dhahran.

The storyline for *Bait Al Dahaleezi* was "developed in conjunction with al-Balad historian and well-known writer Dr. Lamia Baishen," the *Arab News* reported. Meanwhile, interior designer Nawaf Nahar Alnassar (who grew up in al-Balad), lighting designer Abdulaziz Alazem and sound designer Hassan Alhadraash "created an enveloping experience for our audiences," Nims said.

In the play, guards lead audience members into the house where they receive a handmade papier-mâché mask and a sheer black cape, rendering them anonymous.

"They, along with the inhabitants of the home, are now suspects in the murder of the homeowner," said Owen. "Out of a dark space a *jinn* would pop out and laugh or lure you alone into its room, and you'd realize how cutting edge this production really was."

Ozawa Street, a family-friendly play, tells the story of a young man who spends all his money on colorful fabrics for his bride-to-be and can no longer pay her dowry. But his community comes to the rescue to help him meet the expenses.

"The costumes were colorful, the characters were based on real 1950s residents, and the improvisations were comedic, a mixture which attracted hundreds of guests each night," Owen said.



From top: Brats Todd Nims (right) and Kristina Owen, and former Aramcon Vlad Vukovic, worked with Saudi colleagues in Jiddah to craft and stage *Bait Al Dahaleezi*, creating "exciting theater," said the *Saudi Gazette*. Nearby, Nims and Owen helped bring the street-theater show *Ozawa Street* to life.

IN MEMORIAM

ROSEMARY E. ARCHER

August 15, 2019

Survived by her husband, retiree Adrian Archer, and children Heather Smith and Talitha Archer. Correspondence may be sent to Adrian at ajresearcher@verizon.net.

STUART BAXTER

April 18, 2019

He joined Aramco in 1980 and worked in Abqaiq until 1995. Survived by his wife Gill.

DR. HUBERT F. BONFILI

August 29, 2019

He worked in occupational medicine in Dhahran. Survived by his former wife Claudia and sons Hubert and Daniel. The family may be contacted c/o Bagnato Funeral Home, 50 Jefferson St., Carnegie, PA 15106.

RAYMOND L. CAVNESS

August 9, 2019

He joined Aramco as a dentist in 1980 and retired in 1993.

LARRY L. COLHOUER

June 25, 2019

He joined Aramco in 1978 and retired in 1992 as Abqaiq Maintenance Shop foreman. Survived by his wife Patricia, daughters Pamela Colhouer and Debra Anderson, and stepdaughters Janice Baker, Rhonda Newberry, Pamela Fisher, Deloris Rogers, Genie Zimmerly and Angela Scott. Correspondence may be sent to Patricia at larpat4@yahoo.com.

WAYNE MILLER COMPTON

June 19, 2019

He worked at Aramco's New York office as a process engineer from 1954-'59, transferred to Dhahran in 1960 and retired in 1986.

NORMA L. CUMPSTON

April 28, 2019

She taught at the Dhahran Schools from 1952-'79. Predeceased by her husband, retiree Milo Cumpston, and survived by children James, John and Jeffrey. The family may be contacted c/o St. Paul's Episcopal Church, P.O. Box 1190, Fayetteville, AR 72702.

LOUIS (LOU) J. M. FAVRE

May 17, 2019

He joined Aramco in 1956 and worked in Dhahran, Houston and The Hague, retiring in 1996 as managing director, Aramco Overseas Company. Survived by his wife Els and children Loek, Madeleine, Ron, Mariëtte and Mirella. Correspondence may be sent to the family at madeleinefavre@yahoo.com.

ELMER F. HARTLEY

April 17, 2019

He joined Aramco in 1956, worked as a camp manager and superintendent of Marine Services, and served in The Hague and Houston. He retired from a position at the Saudi Consolidated Electric Company in 1980. Survived by his wife Lucille and daughters Wanda and Karen Hartley. Correspondence may be sent to Wanda at wandahartley52@gmail.com.

BARBARA S. HICKS

April 20, 2019

She taught at the Aramco School in Dhahran. Predeceased by her husband Kenyon Hicks, Sr., and survived by sons Stephen, Kenyon, Jr., and Leroy. The family may be contacted c/o Bethany Village East, 325 Wesley Dr., Mechanicsburg, PA 17055.

CHARLES E. JACKSON

June 20, 2019

He joined Aramco in 1981 as a project engineer and retired in 1991. Survived by his wife Jacqueline and sons Mark and Scott. The family may be contacted c/o Crystal River United Methodist Church, 4801 N. Citrus Ave., Crystal River, FL 34428.

BASIL N. KORITSAS

July 31, 2019

He joined Exploration in 1982 and retired in 1994. Survived by his wife Vickie and children Elisabeth and Dimitri. Correspondence may be sent to Elisabeth at lizkorry@gmail.com.

JOSEPH J. KOSCINSKI

June 24, 2019

He joined Aramco Services Company in New York in 1970 and retired in 2002 as head of General Ledger in Houston. Survived by his wife Stacy and son Christopher. The family may be contacted c/o Eagle Heights Church, P.O. Box 156, Sugar Land, TX 77487.

MAEVE SHENA MAINS

July 12, 2019

She joined Aramco in 1955 and retired as secretary to the manager of Community Services in 1973. She was 100 years old.

JOHN McCUE

May 10, 2019

He completed a 28-year career in 1986 as general supervisor, Exploration Planning and Programs. Survived by sons Daniel, Stephen, Eric and Gary. The family may be contacted c/o Church of the Nativity, 6309 El Apajo, Rancho Santa Fe, CA 92067.

SHIRLEY ANN OSBORN

July 23, 2019

She lived in Dhahran from 1981-'95 and worked as a secretary for the guidance coun-

selor and later as secretary to the principal at the Dhahran Schools. She was married to Larry Osborn. Survivors include her daughters Cindy Hawkins and Lisa Osborn. Correspondence may be sent to Lisa at 5702 Shreveport Dr., Austin, TX 78727, or Cindy at 10223 Bridgeport Rd., Bridgeport, IL 62417.

WILLIAM H. POWELL

June 11, 2019

He joined Aramco as an industrial engineer in 1982 and retired in 1999. After retirement he moved to Costa Rica to live with his wife Lilliam, to whom correspondence may be sent at camposlilliam@yahoo.com.

TANVEER RIZVI

May 4, 2019

He joined Aramco in 1980 and retired in 1999 as supervisor of the Estimating Services Div. Survived by his wife Tabassum and children Farhan, Usman, Adnan, Omar and Shadia. Correspondence may be sent to Tabassum at rizvitab@yahoo.com.

MICKEY SCHWARTZENBURG

July 14, 2019

He joined Aramco in 1981 and retired from his IT position in 2000. He helped start the BMX track in Dhahran and coached softball and soccer. Survived by his wife Debra and son Sean. Correspondence may be sent to Debra at 253 Appaloosa Ct., The Woodlands, TX 77382, or schwardo@gmail.com.

MARY SMILEY

March 21, 2019

She joined Aramco in 1948. Predeceased by her husband, retiree Walter C. "Pete" Smiley, whom she met in the kingdom, son Steven and stepson Peter, and survived by children Deborah Yamashita, Margaret Womack, Leilani Page and Michael Smiley. Correspondence may be sent to Margaret at 2219 Orange Ave., Escondido, CA 92029, or WomackLC@cox.net.

ROSEMARY BERKA STOELZEL

July 7, 2019

She taught sixth grade in Dhahran from 1966-'73. Survived by her husband Wally and children Judy Estrada and Don. The family may be contacted c/o St. Luke's Episcopal Church, 7050 McNutt Rd., La Union, NM 88021.

GEORGE DAVID "DAVE" WORSHAM

August 2, 2019

He joined Aramco in 1962 and retired in 1980. Survived by his children Danny and Davi Denise Mascaro. Correspondence may be sent to Danny at samargolfer@gmail.com.



MARTE POWERS REMEMBERED FOR 'BOUNDLESS GENEROSITY'

By MARY NORTON

Marte Marie Ledahl Powers, wife of the late Aramco President and Vice Chairman R.W. "Brock" Powers, passed away peacefully Aug. 16, 2019, at her home in Austin, Texas.

Born in Minneapolis on Nov. 28, 1922, she attended local schools before entering the Minneapolis School of Art and Design, where her fashion designs won several first prizes. After graduation she moved to California, and appeared destined for a successful career as a fashion designer until fate showed up and all bets were off.

Flashback to December 31, 1950: A group of students heading for a New Year's party spots a fellow student buying a ticket to the movies. They insist he join them and, finally, the young man (on leave from Aramco to earn a degree in geology at the University of Southern California) is persuaded. "When the clock struck 12," Marte later wrote, "I was in one corner of that small

room and Brock was in the other. We looked across at each other, met in the middle and the die was set."

He invited her to the Rose Bowl game the next day and a few days later invited her to marry him. She said yes, and three weeks after that they were married at the Rose Bowl Chapel in Pasadena.

Brock returned to Aramco in 1952 and Marte followed in 1953. "It was a whole new world, a world I learned quickly to love and feel at home in," she wrote.

For most of the next 20 years, until Brock was named president in 1973, her life centered around the usual activities of an Aramco wife and mother. As first lady, Marte was much admired for her graciousness, elegance, sense of fun and egalitarian spirit.

When the Powerses retired to Austin in 1979 they kept the Aramco spirit glowing by hosting social events for retirees including, for more than 20 years, a glorious annual Christmas Brunch, later cohosted by Frank and Mary Fugate. And up to and including 2018 Marte enjoyed holding court and renewing friendships at the annual Aramco Christmas Party in Austin.

She was predeceased by her husband and children Dirk and Cydnie, and is survived by granddaughter Samantha Marie Powers, to whom correspondence may be addressed at 11001 South First St., #1012, Austin, TX 78748.

Marte will be remembered for her easy charm, integrity, serenity and, above all, her boundless generosity.

Marte Ledahl met R.W. "Brock" Powers on New Year's Eve 1950 and they married about a month later. He went on to become Aramco president and vice chairman and she a remarkable "first lady."

CENTENARIAN TREASURED ARAMCO 'DREAM'

by ARTHUR CLARK

Johnnie B. Rusher Merritt, who died in San Antonio on July 30, 2019, just shy of her 105th birthday, treasured her 22-year career at Aramco. "I often think about the whole story and it feels like a dream," she told *Al-Ayyam Al-Jamilah* in 2018.

She signed on as a secretary in 1948 and laughed about being booked for men's quarters because of her name when she arrived in Dhahran. She quickly corrected that misapprehension and went on to work in the Engineering Dept., Personnel and Government Relations.

One of her favorite jobs was greeting new employees when they arrived in Dhahran, ensuring their entry into the company

was smoother than hers.

She was predeceased by her husband Jim, a pilot she met at Aramco.

Recent highlights of her life included attending a reception for Crown Prince Mohammed ibn Salman in Houston and taking part in the Annuitants Reunion in Austin in 2018, said fellow Texans Judy and Bill Herman, who met the Merritts in 1997 and became fast friends.

The Hermans attended a "celebration of life" for her by fellow residents of The Towers retirement facility in San Antonio on Aug. 2, where there was a special screening of her 2018 oral-history interview with Aramco Services Company.

Correspondence may be sent to the Hermans at judyfnp46@gmail.com.



Johnnie B. Rusher Merritt arrived in Dhahran in 1948 and spent 22 years at Aramco. She celebrated her 103rd birthday in San Antonio, Texas, in 2017.

Al~Ayyam Al~Jamilah الأيام الجميلة

ISSN-1319-1512

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Houston, Texas 77252-2106

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'Arabian Nights' Birthday Fête

Some 65 retirees, Brats, friends and neighbors turned out for an "Arabian Nights" birthday party for Karen and Mike Morrow (DH74 and DH69), hosted by their mother Harlene at her home in Austin, Texas, on Sept. 14. Karen, 60, and Mike, 65, are pictured **below right** flanking Lisa Rich Hunter (DH73). The tri-generation Aramco family's fête featured a "stylized Bedouin tent with carpets, pillows...and lots of Middle Eastern food," said Harlene, standing back left, next to her son, in the group photo. Her father Harlan Wilson joined Aramco in 1947 and she and her mother Edith followed in 1949. Harlene's husband, the late Bob Morrow, joined the Finance organization in 1957 and retired in 1986, during which time she worked at *The Arabian Sun & Flare* and in Government Affairs. Mike retired in 2005 with 18 years of service.

