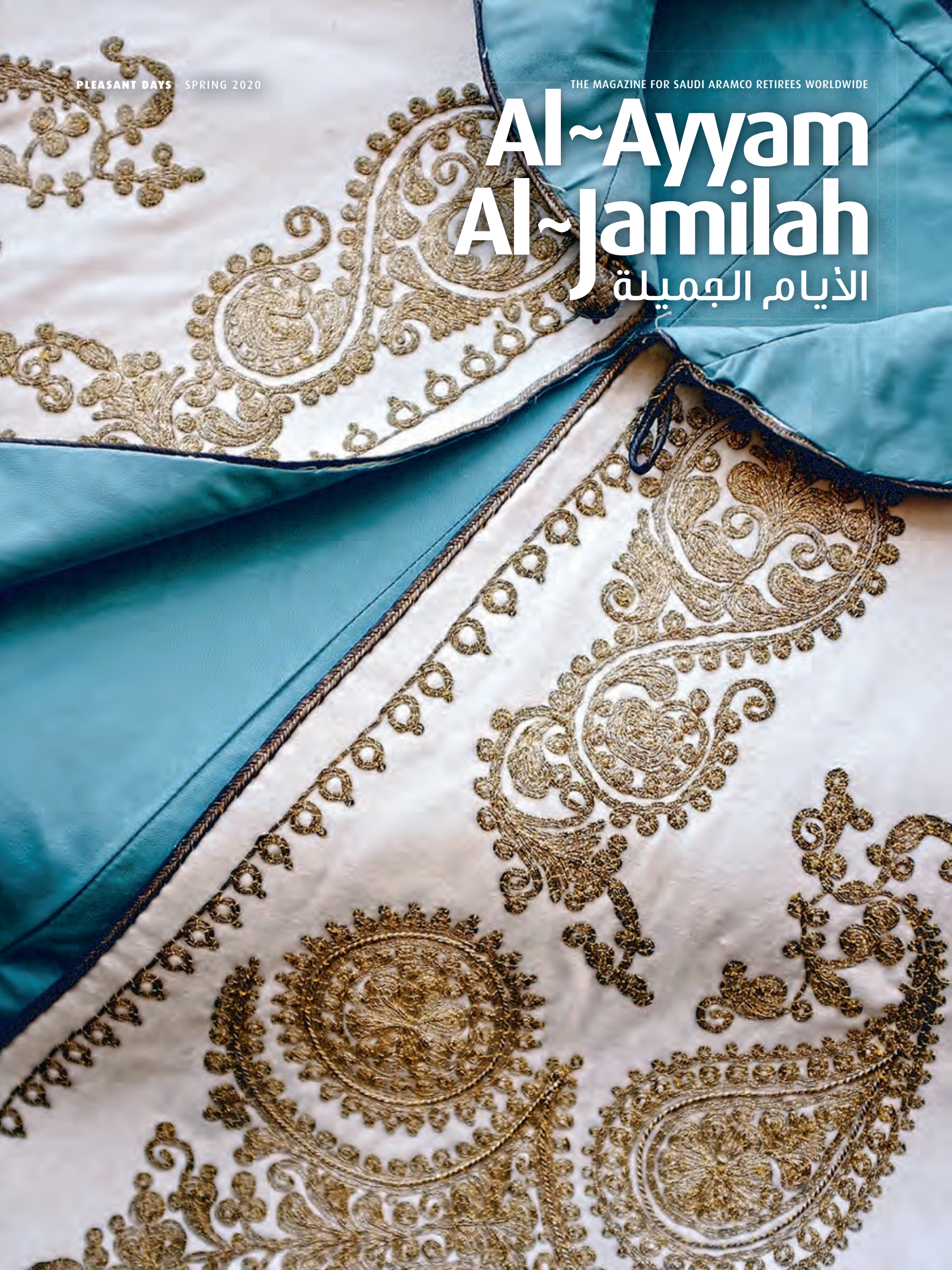


PLEASANT DAYS SPRING 2020

THE MAGAZINE FOR SAUDI ARAMCO RETIREES WORLDWIDE

# Al~Ayyam Al~Jamilah

الأيام الجميلة





## 10 Aramcons Celebrate!

Nöel surprise! Bill Walker receives a door prize from his wife Judy at the Aramco Annuitants Christmas Party in Austin on Dec. 4. Around 130 retirees and family members enjoyed the company of colleagues at fêtes in Austin and Houston, while four 1950s "Swinging Singles" members recalled old times and friends in Berkeley, Calif.



## 18 Remembering Sultan Qaboos

Sultan Qaboos ibn Said Al Said, who died in January, left a profound mark on Oman, the country he ruled for 50 years. Many Aramcons who visited the sultanate experienced his cultural impact firsthand, and a few had closer connections.

### Al-Ayyam Al-Jamilah

"Pleasant Days," is produced for annuitants, families and friends of Aramco, now Saudi Aramco, and its associated companies by Aramco Americas.

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## 12 The Cape And the Couturier



Can an article of clothing link yesterday to today—and tell a love story, too? The cape worn for a photo in 1940 by Kathleen Ray Barger en route to meeting her geologist husband Tom in San Francisco, and renewed by her granddaughter, couturier Amelia Brown, proves that's certainly true.



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## 21 Peripatetic Photographer Wins New Prize

Shaikh Amin, 92, embarked on a new photographic journey—to Australia—last year, and also added to his trove of image awards by reprising a favorite subject in Saudi Arabia: the Sacred Mosque in Makkah. Read about the derring-do behind one of the former chief photographer’s most popular pictures.

## 24 Beginning To Look Like Home

Etta Sutton’s 1967 journal has only four months filled in, but they are crucial ones covering a journey to the kingdom that “transformed my entire family’s trajectory,” writes Jodie Castellani (AB76). Discovering her late mother’s journal gave her a deeper understanding of an “amazingly brave” woman.



## 28 Brat Recounts California Blaze Escape

Mike Keller (AB69) and his wife Christina escaped the latest wildfire to scorch Sonoma County, Calif., last year. He looks at the damage left by the flames, pays tribute the firefighters who saved their hometown of Windsor and draws lessons from what happened.

## 30 Reunions Reconsidered

As *Al-Ayyam Al-Jamilah* went to press, the impact of COVID-19 had resulted in postponement of the eighth UKaramcons Reunion for a year, until October 2021. In the U.S., the hosts of the 32nd biennial Annuitants Reunion were watching developments closely, hoping to hold the biennial get-together in September as planned and fill these seats in Colorado Springs.



Cover: This ca. 1890s cape, with hand-embroidered, gold-couched cord work and fine embroidery, all on ivory wool, passed down from Kathleen Ray Barger, the wife of pioneer company geologist Tom Barger, to her granddaughter Amelia Brown, an up-and-coming couturier, who renewed its frayed lining in blue silk. Kathleen went on to a life in Saudi Arabia, where she’d dreamt of residing as a child.

**Story ideas? Please share your tales with readers by contacting the editor at [arthur.clark@aramcoamericas.com](mailto:arthur.clark@aramcoamericas.com).**

أرامكو السعودية  
saudi aramco





Sami Juraifani's Aramco T-shirt sparked a chance reunion between the RT72 graduate and Debbie Urenovich-Vassallo (DH84) in Philadelphia.

## T-shirts Spark Friendships

October 7, 2019

I'm very proud of Aramco and I walk around wearing Aramco T-shirts because you never know who will stop you on the street and say they worked for Aramco, or knew somebody who worked there, or they may even be friends I had not seen in many years.

I wore Aramco T-shirts in Austin, Texas, where many Aramcons live, but no one stopped me to ask. But guess what? While I was in downtown Philadelphia last September a fellow Brat, Debbie Urenovich-Vassallo (DH84), stopped me because I was wearing an Aramco shirt.

Below is a summary of what I posted on Facebook. Debbie and I got 329 likes and 50 beautiful comments, the most I have ever personally received.

*On Sept. 13, while visiting Philadelphia...to assist our son Ziyad, 20, move from his old apartment at Drexel University, my wife Elizabeth and I had the pleasure to meet Debbie Urenovich.*

*Debbie and her husband Nick were moving their daughter Madeline, 20, into the same apartment building where my daughter Hannah, 24, and Ziyad have lived for several years.*

*To make a long story short...while Debbie was walking out of the building she looked at my T-shirt and nicely asked, "Do you work for Aramco?"*

*I proudly told her that I used to work for Aramco and am now retired in Texas. Then Debbie said she was an Aramco Brat.*

*I apologized...and said her name did not ring a bell. So we started throwing names at each other and...we realized that we were both at the Brat Reunion in Phoenix in May 2019....*

The posts from all our mutual friends show what a special gift Aramco Brats have.

I would like to say "thank you" to Debbie for taking the effort and time to say "hello." Like they always say, "When you see something (an Aramco T-shirt, hat or bumper sticker), say something!"

**Sami Juraifani (RT72)**  
[sjuraifani@hotmail.com](mailto:sjuraifani@hotmail.com)

**NOTE:** Sami's father, the late Hamad Juraifani, joined Aramco in 1951 and retired as vice president of Corporate Planning in 1999. Sami retired from Crude Oil Sales & Marketing in 2012 after a 35-year career. As of 2020 his siblings Khalid, Tariq, Dina, Ziyad and Hatim are all Aramco employees, giving the Juraifani family a whopping total of 253 years of company service. Debbie's father Mike worked in the Process Computer Dept. from 1974-85, and her mother Mary was a nurse at the Dhahran Health Center. Debbie lives in Souderton, Penn.



**March 5, 2019**

As an Aramco employee from 1977 through 2006 I never got a chance to travel for enjoyment. After retiring to Karachi I decided not to work anymore, but instead enjoy traveling in Pakistan and around the world.

In December I saw an advertisement for a trip to the interior of Sindh, my home province in Pakistan, so I booked a trip with my two grandsons, Obaid and Habib, in February. The members of our group came from the USA, Egypt, Australia and Syria, as well as Pakistan.

Imagine my surprise when visiting Rani Kot Fort—the largest in the world, dating back some 1,100 years and surrounded by walls some 20 miles long—that I met another Aramco retiree!

After visiting the Great Wall I decided to stay back and relax, and a couple joined me. As it was midday, I took off my jacket. My T-shirt said "Ras Tanura Producing Department," my last department at Saudi Aramco.

Abdul Saeed Rajput saw my T-shirt and said he worked as a scientist in the Laboratories Dept. in Dhahran from 1975-95. What a great coincidence that we never met in Saudi Arabia and now we were meeting in a remote desert area of Sindh!

**Retirees Iqbal Khan and Abdul Saeed Rajput (first and second from left), who'd never met, "reunited" at Rani Kot Fort in Pakistan when Rajput spotted Khan's "Ras Tanura Producing Department" T-shirt.**



TOP: COURTESY SAMI JURAIIFANI; LOWER: COURTESY ENGR. IQBAL AHMED KHAN

He wanted to know about the changes that took place after he left. I explained more about Ras Tanura and a little about Dhahran.

We talked about two and half hours and exchanged details for future communications. It was a historical meeting and discussion on Saudi Aramco and the long stay we had there. We made a pledge to meet in California on my next visit.

**Engr. Iqbal Ahmed Khan**  
iqbalkhan.2010@live.com

## 'Arabian Nights' Remembered

**October 31, 2019**

Thanks so much for including the story about Karen and Mike's "Arabian Nights" birthday party in the latest issue. It was a special event for us and seeing it in print really gave us something to remember.

**Harlene Morrow**  
harmorrow@aol.com

## Mermaids of Arabia

**November 1, 2019**

I'm starting to get lots of compliments regarding the article "Joining the 'Mermaids of Arabia'" [Fall 2019] from friends in the States....

My next diving goal is to break the world record for oldest female scuba

The Fall 2019 issue featured "cover girls" Jennifer Simpson (right) and Nouf Alosaimi.

diver. I only have 24 years to go. Nouf Alosaimi said she and the Pink Bubbles Divers in Jiddah will help make that happen.

Thank you again from the bottom of my heart for everything you did to make my dream come true.

**Jennifer Simpson**  
simpsonfuronos@gmail.com

**NOTE:** Jennifer wrote again Dec. 12, saying, "Big news about Nouf." She said Nike had chosen her Saudi diving friend to introduce a new line of swimming suits. A story with her photo in the full-body suit appeared in that day's Arab News under the headline, "Why Nike's New Modest Swimwear is a Game-Changer."



Florence Chadwick wades ashore in France after crossing the English Channel in 1951.

## Swimmer's Story Catches Eyes

**November 1, 2019**

We are genuinely honored to have been included in the unusual and interesting story about Florence Chadwick and the new restaurant in San Diego named after her ["The Florence Serves Up 'Cool' Pool Memories," Fall 2019]. If we become famous it will be

thanks to *Al-Ayyam Al-Jamilah!*

**Joyce Kriesmer and Jackie Voskamp**  
joyce@thekriesmers.com

**November 4, 2019**

Ruth and I... were very interested in the article about long-distance swimming because one of the engineers at Wright Water Engineers (WWE), Karl Kingery, is a long-distance swimmer.

In September, Karl provided support to Sarah Thomas of Conifer, Colo., as she broke the record for four consecutive crossings of the English Channel [starting from England].

She began the swim just after midnight Sept. 15 and finished Sept. 17 at sunrise, 54 hours and 10 minutes

later. She is a survivor of breast cancer, for which she completed treatment in 2018, and dedicated the 82.5-mile swim to other breast-cancer survivors. She is giving a WWE lunchtime presentation Nov. 12.

All that is to say that *Al-Ayyam Al-Jamilah* is always relevant and interesting!

**Ken Wright**  
krw@wrightwater.com

**March 5, 2020**

I was astonished and stunned to read that a woman, Florence Chadwick, crossed the English Channel. [Was she] a genie? I don't have words for her courage, endurance and willpower.

Shahid Husain

husainshahid@rediffmail.com

## 'Special' Fall Issue

**November 2, 2019**

I always enjoy reading *Al-Ayyam Al-Jamilah* cover to cover, but I especially connected with the Fall 2019 issue.

I was trained to scuba dive in Saudi Arabia by one of the originally certified PADI instructors (Bob Neff) and



have been scuba diving ever since, most recently in the Galapagos. Jennifer Simpson's article brought back many fine dives in the Arabian Gulf and Red Sea.

As I am also an open-water swimmer (usually in Puget Sound, the Columbia River and Lake Washington), I was inspired by the article about Florence Chadwick (although the English Channel is not on my bucket list).

I had the pleasure of getting acquainted with Bert Seal at the 2009 KSA Reunion and was delighted to learn of his experience as a "loanee photographer" at the Red Palace.

Finally, as someone who documents her travels in "trip reports," I was moved by "The Gift of a Lifetime" by Hassan ibn Youssef Yassin, who turned his travels into a poetic cloud.

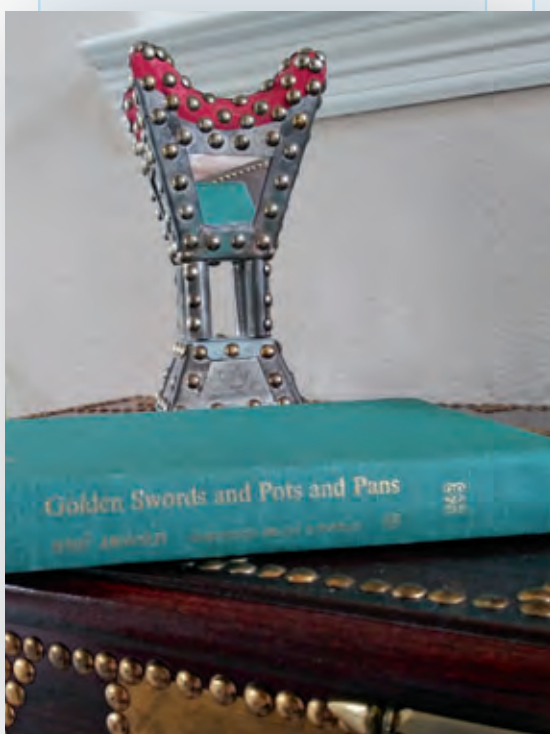
**Clydia Cuykendall**  
[cjcuken@aol.com](mailto:cjcuken@aol.com)

## 'Red Palace' Strikes Chord

**November 5, 2019**

Seeing the picture with José Arnold in the background in the "Red Palace" story [Fall 2019] reminded me of

*Golden Swords and Pots and Pans* by Aramcon José Arnold reflects the kingdom's culture.



his book *Golden Swords and Pots and Pans*. It is worth reading as it provides history of the early days of King Sa'ud and the connection of Aramco and the king....

It remains one of my favorite books because of José's personal recollections.

**Bonnie App**  
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**February 19, 2020**

The "Red Palace" story really took me back in history! It made me re-imagine everything I saw as it might have looked like back in the day.

I also imagined how amazing [Bert] Seal's experience must have been photographing in the palace in the '50s. It is an honor to have my name on top of this story.

**Mohammed Askandrani**  
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**NOTE:** Saudi photographer Mohammed Askandrani and Bert Seal, an Aramco photographer from 1955-60, provided photos for the story about Prince Sultan ibn Fahd Al Saud's "Red Palace" exhibition in Jiddah in 2019.

## Dubai High

**December 9, 2019**

For Christmas, the girls [Monique and Arleen] gave me a trip to Dubai for they agreed that I needed to warm up my bones....

I flew out with Monique from Holland on Jan. 15...and before I knew it we were landing back to a place I left over 29 years ago with my late husband Hans. Hans's last assignment was in Dubai for nine months, so I was looking forward to seeing if things had changed.

To those who haven't been in Dubai since the '90s then, yes, they definitely have. My first few days I walked around with neck cramp just looking up at the most spectacular buildings ever.

During my stay Monique and friends Paul Rendek (RT85) and Grant King made sure I kept extremely busy. I went to the old suqs, to most of the malls, saw



Janny Slotboom, who lived in Dubai with her husband Hans on assignment in 1989, returned from "wet and cold" Holland to see her daughter Monique in early 2019 and early 2020.

Burj Khalifa, went to the "Roads of Arabia" exhibition and viewed a Rembrandt painting at the Louvre Abu Dhabi.... I spent many days at the beach and enjoyed the Friday fireworks ringing in the weekend....

Dubai has definitely changed. It's expensive, but also a place with spectacular architecture, and if you can dream it then they can build it!

I had such a wonderful time that by the time my departure date came up I really didn't want to leave so Monique extended my trip for another month. I finally left two months later!

**Janny Slotboom**  
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**NOTE:** Janny enjoyed Dubai so much that she flew back "from the wet and cold in Holland" to warm up early this year, said Monique. Hans Slotboom joined Tapline at Qaisumah in 1963 and Janny and Monique joined him in 1966; Arleen (RT86) was born in 1970. Hans joined the Marine Dept. in Ras Tanura in 1980 and retired in 1990.

## Knox Flies East for Wedding

**P**atsy Knox, a dietician at the Dhahran Health Center (DHC) from 1981-94, flew back to the Middle East from her home in Mary Esther, Fla., last summer to attend the wedding of the daughter of her late friend Antonio Moukarzel, longtime Middle East Airlines reservations supervisor in al-Khobar.

Knox, a member of the Arabian Section of the Ninety-Nines, the international organization of women pilots, attended the marriage of Lea Moukarzel and Roy Challita in Domaine de Padoue, a small monastery in Ghebale, Lebanon, in the mountains above Jounieh, on Aug. 11.

Houda Mattar, a Lebanese member of the Ninety-Nines, and the bride's brother Yorgo met her at the Beirut Airport.

At the bride's home in Kahale, near Beirut, "a band played as the mother of the groom came to get the bride and then everyone left for a one-and-a-half-hour ride in white limousines (with flowers and ribbons) up the mountains," Knox wrote.

"The setting was beautiful...everyone facing west as the sun set. Altar arch of pastel roses. Full moon.

"Nice remembrances of Antonio and

other friends who have passed were read by their friends....

"Wonderful dinner with every Lebanese dish imaginable, even ice-cream cones of a favorite local nut. Usual tradition of tossing the bride and groom in the air... As midnight came the disco played 'Hit the Road Jack.'"

During her visit to Lebanon, Knox renewed her friendship with Balkis Kib-

lawi and her husband Saleem, who was a pulmonary specialist at the DHC. They went to a restaurant in Chemlan, built in 1936, "the same year I was born, with a wonderful view of the sea, the airport and Beirut," Knox said.

Patsy Knox stands second from left, between bride Lea Moukarzel and her brother Yorgo. To the bride's left are her sister Lynn and their mother Gretta.



## Aramcon's Wife Wins 'Witness of History' Award

**A**leksandra Ziolkowska-Boehm, whose late husband Norman Boehm worked in Saudi Arabia and the New York office between 1952 and 1974, received a "Witness of History" prize from the Institute of National Remembrance (INR) in Warsaw, Poland, on Oct. 29. INR President Dr. Jaroslaw Szarek presented the award to her and six others for their work to preserve and promote knowledge of recent Polish history.

Ziolkowska-Boehm lives in Delaware. Three other prizewinners hailed from Ukraine and one each from Italy, Balarus and Hungary.

Szarek praised Ziolkowska-Boehm for "familiarizing the American reader with Polish history in an accessible way." She has published six books dealing with Polish history.

She also wrote the foreword to her husband's book *From a Small Town to the Big World*, which included chapters on his career with Aramco. The couple married in 1990 and Norman died in 2016, the

same year his book was published.

"Norman was reserved, attentive and had respect for other people," Ziolkowska-Boehm wrote about her husband, who was assigned to Ras Tanura as a member of the Research & Development group.

Indeed, he wrote that living and working there meant "exposure and contact with Saudis constantly. They exuded a warmth and pleasant manner usually with a smile."

"As an annuitant," he added, "I am also privileged to receive *Aramco World*,"

providing insights into the Arab and Muslim worlds. "One [issue] dealt with the love of the pure Arabian horse by the Polish, its importation into Poland and their continued breeding of the line. My Polish-born wife shows that issue with pride to visitors."

Author Aleksandra Ziolkowska-Boehm, whose late husband Norman worked for Aramco between 1952 and 1974, appears right with the six other "Witness of History" prizewinners in Warsaw, Poland.





## Aramco Pedigree Puts Brat In “Jeopardy!”

By Mae Ghalwash (DH78)

**Q:** This quiz-whiz kid grew up in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, and became “Jeopardy!” champion last fall.

**A:** Who is Ryan Bradley (DH88)?

That’s right. Ryan Bradley, the son of annuitants Pat Bradley and Linda Hunsberger, defeated his rivals Oct. 21 to become the champion on “Jeopardy!” dubbed “America’s most-popular quiz show.” He returned in the next episode but was eliminated.

Tens of thousands apply to appear on the show annually and the selection process—packed with quizzes and interviews—can take more than two years. Last year 80,000 applicants took the initial online quiz and only 2,500 made it to auditions. Bradley became one of 400 who made the stage, doing so in just five months.

Bradley, a senior marketing vice president at DreamWorks in Glendale, Calif., believes his upbringing in Dhahran intrigued the contestant-search team during his audition.

The search team said, “Come up with... interesting facts about yourself,” he recalled. “The fact that people are always excited about is that...I grew up in Saudi Arabia!” he added with a laugh, saying the team bombarded him with questions about life in the kingdom.

Bradley arrived in Dhahran with his family in 1980. He was in the second grade and his brother Matt was a year ahead. His dad worked in the Transportation Dept. and his mom worked part-time, including a job as a

teacher’s aide. His father retired in 1995.

“Jeopardy!” was a family favorite, said Bradley, who has fond memories of playing along with his grandparents during summer vacations in the United States.

“It was a show I would hang out and watch with them,” he said. “It was a bond.”

Airing in its present form since 1984, “Jeopardy!” is popular among knowledge-game aficionados like Bradley, whose preferred game growing up was Trivial Pursuit. “Jeopardy!” contestants face off in groups of three to compete for the title and money by answering questions on an array of trivia.

The show’s top players include Brad Rutter, who has won nearly \$5 million, and Ken Jennings, who holds the longest winning streak at 74 games and has amassed more than \$4.3 million, according to Corina Nusu, “Jeopardy!” senior contestant coordinator.

During his audition—which included more quizzes, interviews and a mock “Jeopardy!” game—Bradley charmed the selection team not only with stories of Saudi Arabia, but also with tales of his dog who has her own Instagram account (@scruffabella) and his enjoyment of the game, said Nusu.

“Ryan was vivacious and lovely and light and had fun playing the game,” she said. “We like...that [contestants] be competitive and also know how to have fun.”

Bradley listed his long fandom and memories of his grandparents as key motives for applying. And there was Alex Trebeck, the beloved host of “Jeopardy!” who is battling pancreatic cancer.

“Jeopardy!” host Alex Trebeck welcomed contestant Ryan Bradley (DH88) and his dad Pat to the quiz show’s taping. Bradley won the “Jeopardy!” crown Oct. 21.

“I thought that if I was going to be on “Jeopardy!” I wanted to be on it when he was there,” he said.

He was not disappointed. When Bradley arrived at the studio in August to tape the show Trebeck was gracious, taking time to chat with audience members including Bradley’s dad.

“He’s...an inspiration to the degree that even through [his illness] he’s the constant professional” as a host, Bradley said. “If you didn’t know that he had cancer, you wouldn’t know.”

Bradley started his first match pumped but focused. “It’s hard not to be nervous on stage,” he said, noting the difference from playing along at home, but “I got in the zone.”

He certainly did. He crushed the categories on Canada and gender-free terminology, securing the title and winning \$9,100.

Unfortunately, Bradley’s next game, which aired Oct. 22, was taped just 15 minutes after the first (five episodes are taped per day) and that put him off his stride.

“I was so excited that I won...that I wasn’t fully present in the second game,” he said, expressing frustration over forgetting the accomplishments of Barbara Streisand in the final question. “There was no excuse... I have her albums!” he said.

After winning another \$1,000, Bradley ceded his crown.

“I would have liked to stay around longer,” he said. “But I’m still a “Jeopardy!” champion!”



## It's a Small (Aramco) World

By Dan Norton (DH79)

**"A**re you a Brat?" With that question a friendship began. Twenty-five years later it's still going strong.

In July 1995, Air Force Maj. Jeffrey Kendall came to the RAND Corporation in Santa Monica, Calif., where I work to serve a one-year tour as a research fellow. A fighter pilot, he soon found himself in a project meeting with me.

After the meeting I asked Jeff if he'd been deployed for Operation Desert Storm in early 1991. When he said he had flown F-15s out of the Dhahran Air Base during the campaign I mentioned that I'd grown up next door, prompting Jeff's "Brat" question.

It turned out we had more in common than we realized.

Jeff, the son of Aramco retirees Chris and Connie Robbins, had visited Dhahran as a returning student when he was at the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colo., in the late '70s and early '80s. My dad, the late Howard Norton, and my mom Mary were longtime Aramcons. My dad retired in 1988 and Jeff's

father retired in 2003.

When I mentioned meeting Jeff to my father in 1995, I learned that he not only knew his parents but had worked with Connie in Mechanical Services.

During 1995 Jeff and I worked together on a few projects and enjoyed lunch with Chris and Connie during their visit to California.

The following summer Jeff moved to the Republic of Korea for an assignment. He went on to an illustrious Air Force career, retiring as a brigadier general in 2013. In addition to assignments in the Far East and Middle East, he served in Europe and the United States and held two more think-tank fellowships.

In his last assignment, as director of Warfighter Systems Integration, he sponsored a RAND study on the effects of cyber weapons on combat operations.

I moved ahead in my career, too, leading a series of studies for the Air Force on the way to becoming a senior analyst at RAND.

In the summer of 2013, a chance encounter at the Pentagon put us back in touch. We had lunch several months later and Jeff, who had had just retired,

expressed an interest in working together again.

I was leading a study on hypersonic weapons and needed someone with deep expertise in combat operations. I thought, "When you get a chance to hire someone of his caliber, you take it," and Jeff proved a perfect fit.

That feeling was mutual.

"I had a great experience serving as a RAND Fellow and remembered how much direct impact their research was having," Jeff said. "The study I sponsored re-familiarized me with the organization's reputation for critical research.

"My reintroduction to RAND was a way of continuing to give back through my international and defense-related expertise, as well as using the experience of working with other think tanks, to contribute to studies that have an impact on decision-makers. And I loved the chance to work with Dan and other old friends again!"

Dan Norton (DH79), a RAND Corporation senior analyst, stands right, next to retired Air Force Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Kendall, whom he hired to work at RAND. Kendall is the son of Aramco retirees Chris and Connie Robbins.



## Nonagenarians Celebrate in Texas

**D**oris Bedrossian Bobb and Marion Rich DeFord celebrated nonagenarian birthdays this winter, turning 97 and 92, respectively.

Bedrossian Bobb arrived in Dhahran with her husband Dr. Arthur Bobb and sons Fred, Alan and Andrew in 1963. She returned to her home in Drexel, Penn., in 1980 and now lives in Houston.

Rich DeFord celebrated her birthday at her assisted-living facility in Austin with her daughter Lisa Rich Hunter and her husband Sun Down, her son Stephen and other family members and friends.

As a five-year-old in 1933 she moved with her family to Palestine where her father John Wier worked for So-

cony Vacuum—which became an Aramco shareholder and was later named Mobil.

She married the late Bill Rich, whom she'd met when she worked for Gulf Oil in Venezuela, and Lisa and her brother were born there. Rich worked in Dhahran and Yanbu' and retired in 1985.



**Above:** Doris Bedrossian Bobb, who turned 97 on Dec. 2, poses with a visitor at her apartment complex in Houston. **Left:** Marion Rich DeFord blew out "92 candles" at her birthday party in Austin on Nov. 6.

## Friendships Renewed in Toronto

**F**orty-four retirees and family members renewed old friendships at the sixth Aramco Reunion in Toronto on Nov. 2.

Jasmine Carvalho and Yasmin Khory reprised their roles as hosts. Javaid Hamid coordinated with BarBQ Tonite for a memorable afternoon get-together.

A slideshow of the 2019 reunion in Saudi Arabia and the previous year's Toronto reunion, combined with some nostalgia photos, "made for interesting

conversations and brought back memories of our lives in Saudi Aramco," Khory said.

Guests enjoyed two lively games of bingo, but "most of all the reunion was a great time to meet and catch up with friends," she added.

Most attendees hailed from the Toronto area, but Ahmed Munir came from Midland, Mich., while Adrian and Ilene Vandenbroek drove from Sarnia, Ontario, and Dr. John Ashbourne and his daughter

Jessica drove from Peterborough, Ontario.

"There is something about meeting other Aramcons where all the excitement, nostalgia and friendships come together to make an exhilarating feeling in each one of us," Khory wrote later. "That's what we felt when we met all of you."

The sixth Aramco Reunion in Toronto on Nov. 2 drew a crowd of 44 happy retirees and family members. Retiree Ahmed Munir drove the farthest—from his home in Midland, Mich.



## ‘The Cricketer’

**N**aushad Shah was just four years old when he left Saudi Arabia with his family in 1978 upon the death of his father, Aramcon Yousaf Shah. However, tales of his dad’s fearsome batting on company cricket fields, enhanced by “treasure boxes” of pictures in his home in Lahore, Pakistan, have kept him close to the company.

“My father learned shorthand to cope with piled-up assignments including stock-taking and inventory management in the A-Block [the Admin. Bldg.] in Dhahran, but he was famous in the community as a cricketer for the Aramco team,” Naushad said.

Yousaf Shah arrived at Aramco in 1956 from Pakistan, where he excelled at cricket.

“My father played cricket in his early days at the district level at Sialkot, a city of sports heritage and culture in Punjab,” said his son. “After he was hired by Aramco he started playing cricket for a company team.

“He had an honor of becoming the team captain. At Aramco, his team won many matches.

“I was very young at that time, but

it vaguely comes to my mind that his batting was his strength and his ‘cover-drive’ was one of the deadliest during matches. His teammates were of different nationalities....”

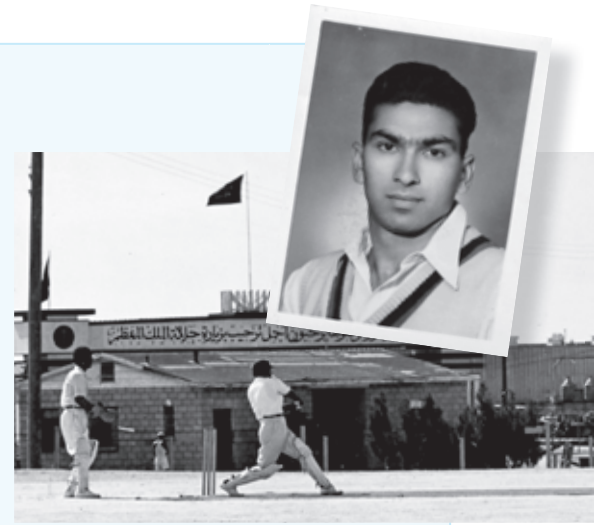
Shaikh Amin, who joined Aramco in 1948 and retired in 1985, recalled watching Shah play against teams from Ras Tanura and Abqaiq.

“He was an excellent batsman...making so many runs,” said Amin. “If he had not joined Aramco he probably would have been picked by Pakistan’s National Team.”

Naushad returned to the kingdom in 2019 for the Fourth KSA Expatriates Reunion. He said he was struck by nostalgia in al-Khobar where he was born and lived with his family, and in Dhahran when he remembered his dad’s stories.

“Most of the things had changed a lot in al-Khobar, but some of the monuments were still in place, with some renovations,” he said.

One thing that had not changed was cricket’s place in the Shah family. “I play cricket as a recreation activity with my kids and friends every fortnight,” said Naushad.



**Top:** Yousaf Shah, renowned for his batting prowess, led a winning cricket team at Aramco. **Above:** His son Naushad poses with his family in Lahore, Pakistan.

## Karachi Reunion Proves Popular

**By Engr. Iqbal Khan**

**T**he 22nd gathering of the Saudi Aramco Ex-Employees Association (SAEEA) in Karachi on Jan. 5 drew 132 members and dependents who enjoyed meeting old friends at a delicious luncheon at Hotel Mehran.

The SAEEA welcomed new members including Amjad Hus-sain, who worked for the Training Dept. in Jiddah from 1977-2005, Ahmed Jamal Qureshi (Pipelines Dept., Shedgum, 1983-92) and Irshad Ahmed (Power Distribution Dept., Yanbu’, 2002-17). Longtime member Moin Hashmi, who lives in Islamabad, about 700 miles from Karachi,

attended his first SAEEA reunion.

The group mourned the deaths of five members, Mahmood Alam, Farrogh Ahmed, Mohammad Sabir, Ahmad Shah Khan and Syed Mohammad Abu Zafar, since the previous reunion in August.

Attendees enjoyed instrumental

performances by SAEEA members Zafar Ahmed and Sabir Ali Khan and songs by Iftikhar Baig.

Retirees Mohammad Iftikhar Baig (left) and Moin Hashmi enjoyed the SAEEA luncheon Jan. 5. So did Armeen Rauf, granddaughter of retiree Shafiq Ahmed Khan and Shahnaz Shafiq.



# ARAMCON'S

## *Celebrate*

### HOLIDAYS IN HOUSTON AND AUSTIN

Around 130 retirees and family members celebrated the holidays with longtime friends and neighbors in Austin and Houston, catching up on old times and enjoying each other's company.

#### *Austin*

David and Vicki Jessich, assisted by Judy Walker and Jack Meyer, presided over a Dec. 4 dinner party at the Austin Club near the Texas capitol that drew 74 guests.

David congratulated the oldest and youngest retirees in his opening remarks: Lucy Templer, 93, and Ike Bellaci, 58.

Templer met her husband Jim after arriving in Dhahran as a secretary in 1955, and the family lived in Dhahran, Beirut and The Hague. He retired in 1982.

Bellaci, who retired from Reservoir Engineering in 2018 after a 20-year career, attended with his wife Valorie.

"Just seeing everybody and reminiscing

about old times" made the get-together fun, he said. "It's always about the people...seeing how they've changed or haven't changed."

His wife and four other members of the Beta Sigma Phi philanthropic sorority in Dhahran—Randa Owen, Maria Kean, Maria Teresa Berg and Kathy Owen—reunited at the dinner. As a group, their memberships spanned 1985-2018.

Attendees included family members formerly and currently based in the kingdom.

Retiree David LaRue attended with his daughter Laurie LaRue Kamin (DH97), who lives in Dhahran with her husband Clayton and their daughter Eloise. LaRue retired from Drilling and Workover in 2008 after a 17-year career.

His wife Debbie couldn't make it to the party: She was home in Conroe practicing for the town's holiday play. Her thespian career in the Dhahran Theatre Group included roles in "Les Miserables,"

"A Chorus Line" and "42nd Street."

Elsewhere, the conversation turned to seasonal sports at Aramco—basketball in particular. Tom Doody and John Fitzmaurice, who played on the Legal Eagles and Spligs, respectively, in the 1980s and '90s, remembered good times with pals in the Third St. gym.

"There were some really good players," said Fitzmaurice, among them Ernie Kent, who headed a local Saudi team and went on to coach at the University of Oregon and Washington State University, and Buddy Vance, a 1960-64 standout at the University of Kansas.

#### *Houston*

Bill Smart and Sally Johnson welcomed 54 guests to the Houston Area Retirees Holiday Luncheon at the Royal Oaks Country Club on Dec. 10.

Peter Thatcher, who closed a 42-year



Seventy-four party-goers in Austin took time out to pose for a picture at the Austin Club near the Texas capitol.

ARTHUR CLARK



Fifty-four guests attended the Houston Area Retirees Holiday Luncheon. “Miss Willie” Atkins (seated front row, second from left, next to longtime retiree group member and host Verne Stueber) had celebrated her 89th birthday the previous day.

career in mid-October, was the most recent retiree. He attended with his wife Sarah Sherbrooke, who called the event “a family Christmas party.”

Travis Green, who retired from Aramco Services Company (ASC) in March 2019, was the second-most-recent retiree. “It’s nice to be back with a bunch of people you know,” he said, singling out “Miss Willie” Atkins, whose smiling presence at the ASC cafeteria was legend.

She joined the company in 1990, retired in 2016 and celebrated her 89th birthday Dec. 9. She called the holiday gathering “beautiful.”

Bonnie App, who joined Aramco in 1959 when she was 24 and retired from ASC in 1994, fondly recalled watching holiday celebrations on the ballfield in Dhahran the year she arrived. “That was a wonderful experience,” she said.

Bill Smart recalled the retiree group

members who had passed away in 2019: Shafiq Kombargi, Billy Jones, Ed Martin, Mike Betler, Joe Koscinski, Gladys Thailor and Marjorie McQuillen.

He thanked Paul and Margaret Daffin for hosting the December holiday luncheon, and those who had hosted previous 2019 luncheons: Dawn and John Mack, himself and his wife Mary, Stan and Peggy McGinley, and Eric and Janice Madsen.

## Swinging Singles Remember ‘Happy ‘50s’

The Swinging Singles held a joyful mini-reunion Jan. 12 in the Claremont Hotel in Berkeley, Calif., overlooking San Francisco Bay, trading “happy stories of Dhahran from the early 1950s,” reported Ken Wright, who attended with his wife Ruth, whom he met in Dhahran.

“Our first order of business was to toast Nancy Rushmer, who passed away in July 2019,” Wright said, adding that she and Ruth had developed “a special bond” when they worked together with experts who were studying Saudi Arabian culture.

“We talked about Nancy’s trip to Iran in 1954 to marry Jack Rushmer, whose father Lawrence was Ras Tanura district manager...and her adventurous spirit that never wavered,” he said.

Carol Keyes Rader “talked about happy memories when accompanying her

father, Aramco President R.L. Keyes, to high-level meetings and dinners with company management and Saudi officials,” Wright said. “She described the warm hospitality she always received from the Saudi families during her visits.”

The group reminisced about their absent Houston buddy Verne Stueber and how he met his late wife Becky, a nurse in Dhahran, at a “singles” party. Wright recalled that he’d introduced the couple after being cared for by Becky.

Conversation soon turned to sailing in the Gulf and Half Moon Bay on weekends.

“Sailing helped us learn about the Gulf and water recreation, including scuba diving with the Dhahran Scuba Club, organized by Len Lucas, one of Carl Renfer’s Construction Dept. supervisors,” Wright said.

Wright worked with both men on projects ranging from corrosion protec-

Pictured front row from left are Carol Keyes Rader, Ruth Wright, Jennifer Rader and Klaus Kutz. Back row: Doug and Fran Grant and Ken Wright.



tion for the Trans-Arabian Pipeline to an underwater pipeline to Bahrain.

Fran Grant, who met her late husband Bob in the kingdom, attended with her son Doug. “The Grants especially appreciated their many years of living in the region, which taught them so much about the rich local culture and the history of the Arab countries,” Wright said.

Attendees ended the reunion by sharing photos of themselves in the 1950s “when we were all young and happy Aramcons,” he said.





# The CAPE and THE COUTURIER

*By Jane Waldron Grutz*

Our story begins in August 1940 when Kathleen Ray Barger traveled from North Dakota to San Francisco to join her husband Tom, a geologist on leave from the California Arabian Standard Oil Company (later Aramco) in Saudi Arabia. It had been three years since the young couple had married and last seen one another, and after such a long separation Kathleen could hardly wait to join Tom.

Never having been to the Arab world, she knew little about it. In fact, her only connection was an embroidered cape given to her by her great aunt, Agnes Crawford, who—the story went—had received it from a suitor in the 1890s.

Decorated with golden embroidery in the Ottoman style, it seemed just right for her long-awaited reunion with her husband. Soon, she believed, they would be in Dhahran, and she happily wore the cape to have her photo taken.

But things did not work out the way Kathleen had hoped.

The Bargers traveled from California to Kathleen's home in North Dakota and while there, on Oct. 19, an Italian warplane dropped a load of bombs on Dhahran. They caused little damage and injured no one, but the company evacuated all expatriate dependents and it became clear that Kathleen's move to Saudi Arabia would have to wait.

It seems unlikely that she ever wore

the cape again. But some 80 years later a young admirer did just that.

In early 2019 Amelia Brown, one of Kathleen's 13 grandchildren and a couturier by training, visited San Francisco on business and had her photo taken wearing the same cape. The cape, Amelia says, reminded her of her adventurous grandmother, "this incredible woman, a daredevil North Dakotan rodeo queen who married a man she loved in secret, moved to Saudi Arabia and raised a big family

**Clockwise from opposite:** Couturier Amelia Brown, granddaughter of Kathleen and Tom Barger, in 2019 chose San Francisco to model the cape—relined in blue silk—that her grandmother had worn there en route to meeting her geologist husband, on leave from Saudi Arabia, some 80 years earlier. She calls her grandmother "a daredevil rodeo queen who married a man she loved... moved to Saudi Arabia and raised a big family...while keeping the wildness of the North Dakota Badlands in her soul."



with love and devotion while keeping the wildness of the North Dakota Badlands in her soul.”

Kathleen finally arrived in Saudi Arabia in February 1945, toward the end of World War II. Tom had spent the intervening years there, with one trip home, getting on with a career that would lead him to the office of president of Aramco in 1959 and chairman of the board in 1968.

Kathleen worked hard there, too, helping to establish the Hobby Farm as a riding stable—hearkening back to her days as a “trick rider” in North Dakota rodeos—and assisting Arab refugees in Palestine, while raising the couple’s six children, all of whom retained close ties with the Middle East.

Son Tim, who died in 2018, published several books about the company and Saudi Arabia, among them *Out in the Blue: Letters from Arabia—1937-1940*, a rich collection of his parents’ correspondence. He also wrote two books about

## ‘I was thrilled!’... The Victorian era cape was ‘inspired by traditional Ottoman design and probably made in France.’

his life in the kingdom, where he grew up and worked independently for a time.

His siblings Michael, Norah and Teresa majored in Arab studies at American universities, and Michael later worked for Citibank in Riyadh. His sister Mary earned a nursing degree and—after a summer at a clinic in a refugee camp in Jordan—spent a year working in a hospital in Riyadh. Annie, the eldest Barger child, followed in her father’s footsteps to the University of North Dakota. She spent most of her life in Dhahran, until her husband Vern Hebert retired from Aramco in 1987.

With so many Arab connections in her family, it was hardly surprising that Amelia, the daughter of Teresa Barger and her husband Travis Brown, concentrated her studies on Arabic, along with fashion design, at Cornell University and concurrently in Tunisia and Egypt, where she spent the summers of 2009 and 2010 in the State Department’s Critical Language

Scholarship Program.

Those influences helped her choose a career path, but an internship in India probably inspired her designs the most.

Encouraged by a friend whose relatives ran a sewing-and-embroidery workshop in Mumbai, Amelia had traveled there in 2007. She spent many of her daytime hours searching the market for “carved buttons, metal threads and silk ribbon trims” for the workshop, she says. When time allowed, she lingered over the worktables, watching embroiderers make the tiniest of stitches to enmesh pearl beads into the fine lace often used in the workshop’s gowns and veils.

This, she discovered, was the kind of craftsmanship she hoped to include in her own designs.

After graduating from Cornell in 2012, Amelia worked with Indian American fashion designer Naeem Khan and the fashion collective Maiyet before launching her own collection in New York in 2017.

That’s when Kathleen Barger’s cape entered her life.

Kathleen died in 1971 in La Jolla, Calif., where she and Tom had retired in 1969. Tom died in 1986. The cape lingered in the family home for a time, but eventually found its way to the home of Annie and Vern Hebert in Charlotte, N.C.

It was never less than beautiful, but over the years the lining had frayed. Remembering Amelia’s dressmaking skills, Annie and her daughter Elise decided to give it to Amelia.

“I was thrilled!” Amelia says. She had seen similar designs in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and realized immediately that the cape was from the Victorian era. It was “inspired by traditional Ottoman design [and]... probably made in France,” she adds, noting the hand-embroidered, gold-couched cord work and fine embroidery, all on ivory wool.

Amelia relined the cape in blue silk and had her photo taken wearing it. With her upswept hair she bears a marked resemblance to Kathleen, just as her embroidery designs bear a marked

**Top:** Barger sisters (l-r) Annie, Mary and Teresa posed at the American University in Cairo centennial celebration at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in May 2019. Mary and Teresa wore gowns designed by Amelia Brown, Teresa’s daughter. **Right:** Amelia, wearing a dress of her own design, admires paraonic artwork at the Met.

resemblance to the those on her grandmother’s cape.

Amelia loves embroidery and often works it into her fashion designs, basing her patterns on ones she’s seen on her travels or on antique textiles she’s found. She uses beadwork and lace as well, along with textiles specially dyed to her specifications.







**Left:** Amelia Brown, flanked by Saman Khan (DH00), left, and her sister Saira (DH98), wore gowns designed by Amelia to the American University in Cairo centennial event at the Met. **Below:** A smiling Pharaoh Amenhotep III looks over Amelia, her sister Medora and their mother, all wearing gowns created by Amelia.

She sends the delicate embroidery and beadwork to partner artisanal shops in India to be completed, while she concentrates on designing gowns that are as comfortable to wear as they are elegant to view.

It's a combination that seems to work: Amelia's designs have been noted in *Bespoke Magazine*, a lifestyle publication focusing on the Middle East, and featured in fashion shows in the United States and Dubai. A sampling of her gowns may be seen at [www.AmeliaBrown.com](http://www.AmeliaBrown.com).

Nowhere were they seen to better advantage than at the dinner marking the 100th anniversary of the American University in Cairo (AUC), held in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in May 2019. To emphasize the event's Egyptian connection diners were seated in front of Egypt's ancient Temple of Dendur.

"It's not often you eat dinner with history!" says Annie Hebert, who attended with her sisters Mary and Teresa (who did post-graduate work in Arabic at AUC and is an AUC trustee), and Amelia and her sister Medora.

Annie wore a caftan she'd bought some 50 years ago in Beirut, while Mary, Teresa and Medora wore dresses designed by Amelia. Amelia also wore a dress of her own design and she designed the dresses worn by fellow attendees Saira and Saman Khan (DH98 and DH00), the daughters of Aramcons Sanaul and Farhana Khan.

Saira dressed in teal blue for the occasion; Saman wore a black gown and jacket, embellished with embroidery not unlike that on Kathleen Barger's cape. The elegant gowns evoked a Middle Eastern tradition that Amelia hopes to maintain in all her fashions, whether designed for women in the East or women in the West.

"It was like wearing a piece of art," says Saira, an observation Saman quickly echoes.

Very likely, Kathleen Barger felt the same when she donned the beautiful embroidered cape that she wore in San Francisco some eight decades ago.



# Love Letters to *AND* from Arabia

**NOTE:** Letters between Tom and Kathleen Barger early in their marriage show how much they looked forward to their 1940 reunion in San Francisco, where Kathleen wore her remarkable cape for a photo, after three years of separation. Here are some excerpts of their correspondence published in *Out in The Blue: Letters from Arabia—1937-1940*.

**January 4, 1940**

**Bismarck [N. Dakota]**

*Just think, our red-letter year. It's been a long time coming hasn't it? ...Please let us have next summer together.*

**February 18, 1940**

**Camp Jabrin [Rub' al-Khali]**

*On Valentine's Day I received three letters from you—all at once. As if that weren't enough, one of the letters had pictures in it, three pictures of you! As I have said before, pictures of you make me shiver and shake.*

*I'm coming home this August. Rather than have me stay for a few months over my contract, Max [Steineke, chief geologist] says they would rather have me go home this summer and come back with you on a second contract.... Further, Max says we can come back together across the Pacific. Many of the men coming back have been sent across the Atlantic while their wives come across the Pacific. Anyway...it seems I am in good favor with the company and they want me back again...*

*It sure is our red-letter year.... If God wills, the war will be over by the time we are ready to return, and we can make a leisurely sort of trip across the Pacific.*

**March 30, 1940**

**Bismarck**

*It is just not possible for me to keep my mind on anything but summer and you. I intend to go to Medora [North Dakota] and rest for two months, then you shall have no rest for the remainder of your life—isn't that simply awful to look forward to?*

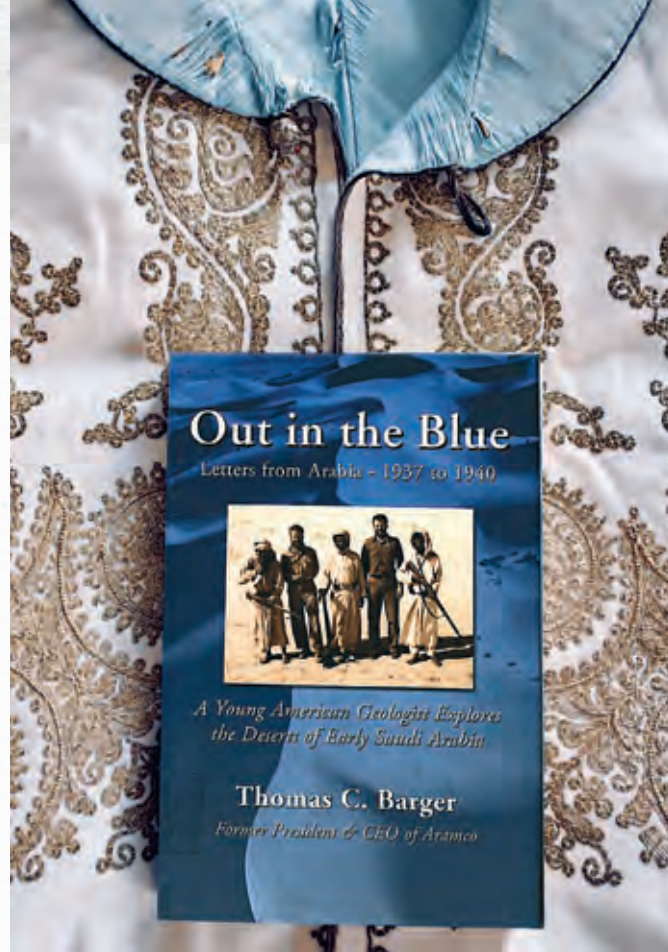
**June 29, 1940**

**Dhahran**

*Don't ask me how I am coming home. No one knows...but I shall come home to you as soon as I can. Boat service in the...Gulf has been cut down, at least temporarily [due to World War II] to one slow boat a week....*

*There is also some doubt as to whether we will be coming back at all. It depends on the war. The company may cut exploration to a minimum, so that they won't need many geologists.... We shall see...."*

That's the last letter in *Out in the Blue*, but the book included Tom Barger's recollections of his trip home to the United States on a 62-day vacation (after nearly three years in Saudi Arabia, during which he took a couple of local vacations) in which he mentions his reunion with Kathleen in San Francisco and their return to her parents' home in Medora.



**Top:** *Out in the Blue*, the letters between Tom and Kathleen Barger from 1937-40, in part tells the love story represented by the cape she wore to San Francisco for their 1940 reunion. **Above:** The couple posed happily at a ranch in North Dakota in September 1937, two months before they secretly married and three months before he departed for Saudi Arabia.

When the Italian bombing of Dhahran in October 1940 put off the couple's plans to return there together, he wrote: "I had no intention of leaving Kathleen again, so at the end of vacation, we returned to San Francisco" where he looked for another job, "but the market was still poor and I found no decent prospects." The couple lived in San Francisco for a while after that. Tom



**From top:** Tom Barger (right) appears with fellow geologist Johnny Thomas in this 1939 photo from Jabrin in the Rub' al-Khali; Barger and a Bedouin tracker study an ancient tomb at Jabrin in 1940; the young Bargers made a dashing couple; Kathleen and her children (l-r) Annie, Michael and Tim posed for this picture around 1948.

did jobs for J.O. "Doc" Nomland, a senior geologist at Standard Oil of California (Socal), "and tried to either obtain permission to take my wife to Arabia or be reassigned to another country where she could accompany me. Both efforts were in vain."

"Finally," he wrote, "Doc Nomland ran out of jobs for me to do...and I had to make a decision." He decided to return to his job at the California Arabian Standard Oil Company, Socal's Saudi subsidiary, alone.

The Bargers delayed their second separation for as long as possible. They sailed to Hawaii, and the day after they arrived, on March 7, 1941, Tom caught a boat heading west and Kathleen returned to the United States.

However difficult that must have been for her, she probably played a key role in Tom's decision to return to the kingdom.

"Years later," he wrote, "Kath told me that Max Steineke had taken her out to lunch [in San Francisco] and said, 'Kathleen, you just have to let Tom go back to Arabia.... It's going to be a big operation, and someday he's going to run the whole thing. You've just got to let him go back.'"

A letter from Dhahran to company headquarters in San Francisco on Nov. 2, 1940, further explained Steineke's plea to Kathleen, and presaged her future move to Dhahran.

Floyd Ohliger, resident manager in Dhahran, called Barger "an outstanding man, desirous of, or willing to make foreign geological work a career." Circumstances prohibited Barger from bringing Kathleen to Dhahran in 1940, Ohliger wrote. But he added, "We do plan a house for him and his wife can be brought out as soon as our policy concerning families is changed."

## *Prophetic Dreams*

When she was just nine years old, Kathleen Barger wrote around 1970, she would settle into a scuffed brown-leather rocking chair in her home in North Dakota, where she "devoured" travel books by John L. Stoddard.

"I decided that I must see the Taj Mahal, visit Venice and that I would live in Arabia," she wrote. "I called these my prophetic dreams, for dreams they were, but I knew they would happen."

Her second such dream dawned at the University of North Dakota in Grand Forks when she noisily entered a room wearing a device on her foot to help heal an infection, drawing the attention of everyone, including a young man whose "amused, dancing, brown eyes" moved her to sit beside him.

"When I looked at him, I wanted to laugh out loud," she wrote. "I suddenly knew that this was the man I was going to marry.... It was as easy as that."

It turned out that the man with the "dancing eyes" was Tom Barger, a 26-year-old professor at the university's School of Mining, "who was sent to make all my dreams come true."

In fact, realizing those dreams took more than she'd imagined. Tom's parents opposed the union, so they married secretly in November 1937 and traveled to New York, where Tom boarded a ship for his first journey to Saudi Arabia and Kathleen sat lonely in their hotel room before starting home.

It took until 1945 for Kathleen finally to fulfill her dream to "live in Arabia," where she and Tom led a rich life for nearly a quarter century.



Artists perform “The Great Journey” at the Royal Opera House Muscat in 2017. The opera house, which offers performances in Western classical and Arab music, is part of the cultural legacy of Sultan Qaboos.

## REMEMBERING

# Sultan Qaboos

BY EDWARD FOX

When I worked for Aramco in Dhahran many years ago, I used my free time to travel around the region as much as I could. I had an amateur’s love of the history and geography of

Arabia, and a few Arabic verbs were still rattling around in my head from graduate school (this made me the peer of Philby and Gertrude Bell!). ❁ Thanks to my job in the Public Relations Dept., I was able to travel to interesting sites in the kingdom where Saudi Aramco was active. But when my time was my own an exit visa was required. In the spring of 1989, when ‘Id al-Fitr meant a weeklong break from work, I decided to go to Oman. ❁ I mention this now in recollection of Sultan Qaboos ibn Said Al Said, who died Jan. 10, 2020, after a reign of 50 years.

There is a difference between ruling and reigning. Reigning is something only a king can do. It includes ruling but adds a mysterious extra element: some combination of personality, charisma, culture and visual splendor as an instrument of rule. Qaboos did not just rule in Oman: He reigned.

Anyone who visited Oman—as many Aramcons have done—will tell you that the country has a style making it unlike other countries in Arabia. Oman is dressed differently, for example, in clothing of various pastel shades and

with colorful headgear.

Sultan Qaboos had a style of his own. His influence, though substantial, was subtle.

I’d read in a newspaper that on the occasion of the ‘id Sultan Qaboos would greet well-wishers at his palace in the capital, Muscat. In doing so, he was observing the Arabian tradition in which the ruler makes himself personally accessible to his people. This was the tradition of the *majlis*, in which any man, whatever his station, could approach the ruler—for a moment at least—as an

equal, to offer courtesies or request his intervention.

At this time Shaikh ‘Isa ibn Salman Al Khalifa, the *amir* of Bahrain, held a weekly *majlis* which anyone could attend; I had been to one of those. But Sultan Qaboos added an element of grandeur to such proceedings.

Very early on the Friday morning of the ‘id, with the temperature already as high as you can imagine, I joined the queue at al-‘Alam Palace in old Muscat to offer my good wishes for the holiday to Sultan Qaboos. I was possibly the

only non-Muslim in the line; but I was certainly not the only non-Omani, for a cross-section of the country's diverse population was there. I was wearing, as I recall, a sensible Brooks Brothers seer-sucker suit.

The event took place with the kind of efficiency that's so smooth you barely notice it. The queue steadily advanced toward the front of the palace—a curious composition of blue and yellow columns with a flat roof looking out at the sparkling water of a compact bay. Eventually, we entered a high-ceilinged hall at the end of which Sultan Qaboos sat to receive his visitors.

My turn came and I approached. I made a kind of bow and said, “*Id sa'id wa mubarak*” (Happy and blessed holiday). I took his soft hand, which remained on his lap. The merest twitch of his cheek suggested a smile. “*Shukran,*” he replied.

I went back to Oman for a longer visit about a year later (no longer an Aramcon by then). I wrote about these trips in a chapter on Oman in my book *Obscure Kingdoms*, about traditions of kingship in non-Western countries, published in 1994.

On this trip to Oman I had a specific assignment, which I mention because it illustrates how the personality of Sultan Qaboos radiated from him in the form of policy.

I bore a letter of introduction from the head of the Traditional Music Collection of the National Sound Archive of the British Library, and formidably professional recording equipment it had lent me. With the help of the Omani Embassy in London, I contacted the Dept. of Traditional Music at the Oman Ministry of Information—which assisted me in a project to make recordings of traditional music in Oman.

I got support in this undertaking because the encouragement and promotion of music in Oman was one of the

sultan's personal interests. Accordingly, the Dept. of Traditional Music assigned a man named Salah to travel around the country with me in my rented car. He was a drummer and knew practically everyone who played folk/traditional music in Oman.

I know what you're thinking: That sounds like fun. You're right; it was. The recordings that the drummer Salah helped me to make are now in the British Library.

One thing that people outside Oman tend to know about Qaboos is that he loved Western classical music. This interest took root during years he spent as a young man in England, educated by a private tutor in Suffolk, before he enrolled at the British military academy, Sandhurst.

When he became sultan he turned this enthusiasm into policy: He made scholarships available to talented young Omanis to study music abroad, and in 2011 the Royal Opera House Muscat (ROHM) opened to offer performances of Western classical and Arab music.

In February, for example, ROHM hosted the world premiere of “*Tarh El Bahr*” (The Sea Treasures), a production about the life and adventures of a fisherman in a coastal Arab community, with the music by the Royal Oman

Symphony Orchestra. When that show closed, performances of Rossini's comic opera “*L'inganna Felice*” (The Fortunate Deception) followed.

There are countless further examples, great and small, of how Qaboos's personal taste was reflected in government policy and in the style of modern Oman.

One was the program to restore the country's nobly proportioned, mudbrick Ottoman-era forts, an undertaking that stands as a model for cultural-heritage preservation in the region. On a smaller scale, I recall hearing on my trip to Oman in 1990 that Sultan Qaboos had decreed that air conditioners had to be enclosed in wooden boxes to conceal their ugliness.

Finally, I'd like to give an illustration of Sultan Qaboos's style of kingship that has an Aramco connection. I was lucky enough, during that same trip in 1990, to meet a couple of distinguished Americans who played an important role in the development of Oman in the early years of Sultan Qaboos's reign.

Dr. Donald Bosch and his wife Eloise went to Oman in 1955, when the country was governed by Qaboos's father, Sultan Said ibn Taimur. They brought along their three children, one of whom—David—went on to a career in Aramco's Government Affairs



A rare display of an oversized portrait of Sultan Qaboos took place at a naval pageant in Muscat harbor celebrating National Day in November 1990.



A *khanjar* sculpture in a traffic roundabout in Nizwa in Oman's interior reflects the broad impact of Sultan Qaboos's cultural policy.

organization and has kept his family's close connection to the sultanate.

Donald Bosch served as a surgeon in the American Mission Hospital in Muttrah and his wife taught at the American Mission School in nearby Muscat. He later became chief medical officer at Khoula Hospital in Muscat, the first surgical hospital in the country.

Upon Dr. Bosch's retirement in 1982, Sultan Qaboos gave the couple Omani citizenship and awarded him the Order of Oman, the country's highest civilian honor. He also built a beautiful house for the family overlooking the Arabian

Sea at Haramel, near Muscat, in recognition of the Bosches' many years of service to the people of Oman.

Along with doctoring, Donald Bosch devoted himself to scholarship in the field of the conchology of Oman. He and Eloise, aided by their children and grandchildren, identified more than 20 new species of seashells, a number of which bear their names.

I attended a talk Dr. Bosch gave at the Officers Club at Petroleum Development Oman, the national oil company. There he described, among other things, a species of oyster found only in Omani waters

that changes sex halfway through its life.

I confess that I was only reminded of this after looking at my notebooks from the time, but I do remember exquisite examples of seashells on display in their seaside home.

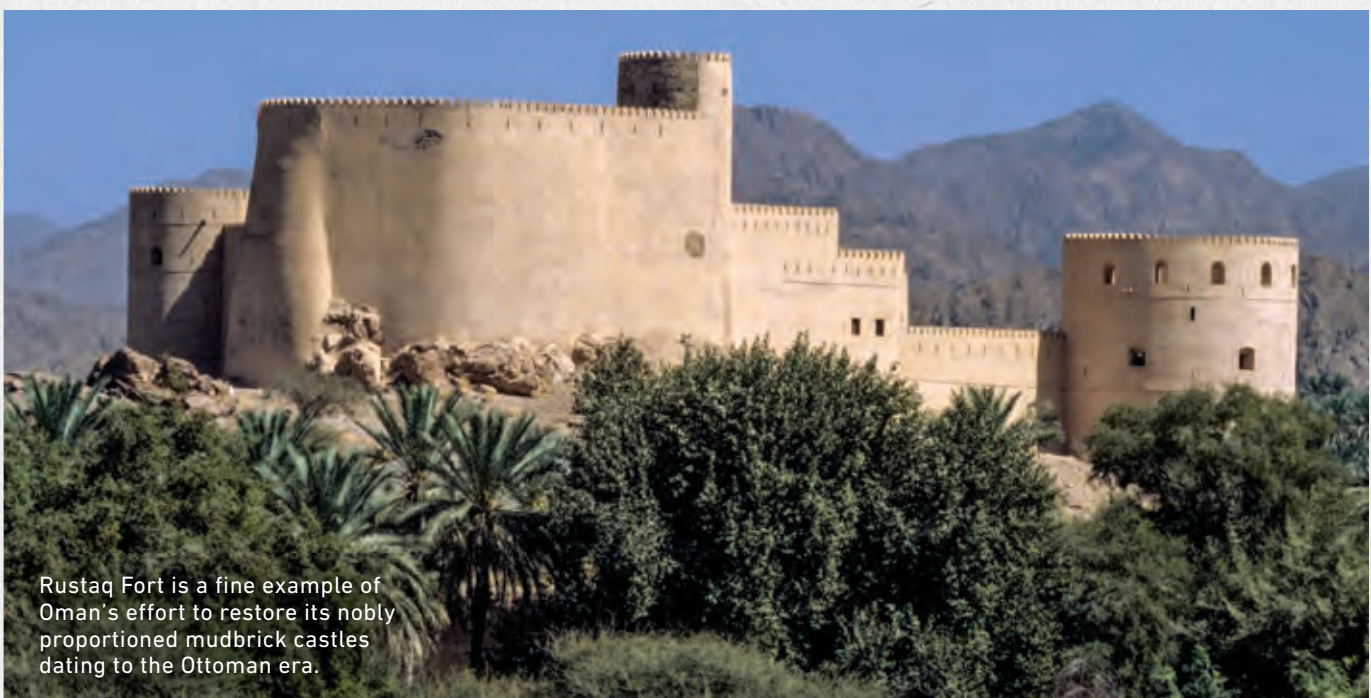
David Bosch probably has as deep an appreciation of Oman and the late sultan as any Aramcon because of his family's long ties to the country. He worked in Dhahran when I was there and later directed the Washington, D.C., office of Aramco Services Company.

Dr. Bosch died in 2012 at the age of 95 and Eloise Bosch died in 2016. David, now retired himself, and his wife Leslie spend part of the year in the family's home in Oman.

David expressed his sadness and concern about the death of Sultan Qaboos. The late sultan "is widely seen as the father of the country," he said, adding that "the succession of Sultan Haitham ibn Tariq was very well handled and the new ruler has broad support."

Sultan Qaboos left a profound imprimatur on Oman, one reflected best in his vast cultural, rather than expressly personal, legacy.

Indeed, when I made my first visit to Oman more than 30 years ago it was only after a good amount of hunting in the markets of Muscat and Muttrah that I succeeded in finding a set of six Arabic coffee cups with Qaboos's portrait on them. I still have them, and they are not for sale.



Rustaq Fort is a fine example of Oman's effort to restore its nobly proportioned mudbrick castles dating to the Ottoman era.



**PERIPATETIC  
PHOTOGRAPHER  
\\ WINS \\  
NEW PRIZE**

Former Chief Photographer Shaikh Amin reprised one of his favorite subjects—the Sacred Mosque in Makkah—to capture his most recent international photo award. His picture, “House of God,” won the bronze medal in the “People and Portrait” category last year at the First International Exhibition of Photography of the Digital Camera Club of America (DCCA).

Amin, 92, also changed pace in 2019: After fulfilling a pledge to attend Photo Society of America conferences for 25 straight years in 2018, the peripatetic photographer flew east rather than west to visit his granddaughter and her family in Australia and compiled

a new portfolio in the process.

Amin shot the prizewinning DCCA photo when he performed ‘Umrāh (the lesser pilgrimage) in Makkah after attending the KSA Expatriates Reunion in March 2015, during a period of heavy construction around the Sacred Mosque.

“I cleaned and removed the construction equipment from the top using Photoshop,” he said. “The colorful dresses of ladies in the foreground caught my attention, which resulted in the bronze medal award.”

Amin joined Aramco in 1948, became a member of the Photo Unit in 1965 and retired to Islamabad in 1985, returning to the kingdom to shoot special assignments for a decade after that. He continues to take pictures and compete in photo shows today.

He has won more than 70 medals in a variety of national and international exhibitions, along with three United Nations awards.

He shot his most memorable photo of the Sacred Mosque in 1967 while clinging to the top of one of its twin 165-foot minarets at night. That year he took his wife,

daughter and parents to Makkah for the first time. Then he climbed some 300 steps to the top of the minaret for the shot.

“At the risk of my life, I was hugging the pillar with the left arm and using my camera with the right hand, holding the camera with the pillar to avoid movement for a time exposure,” he said.

“Two pilgrims helped to hold my back tight from falling to avoid any slip or mishap as there was no support on the stair-steps. Any slip...would have ended the story forever!

“Luckily, due to my strong determination and will, everything went smooth and I finished my shooting in three to five minutes and landed down safely and thanked my strong helpers....

“We were lucky to stay around. It was not possible to come up again due to police restrictions.”

The photo appeared in *Aramco World* and *Oil Caravan Weekly* and was displayed as a mural in the lobby of the Dhahran International Airport during the Hajj period in 1971. That same year Amin won

a gold medal for the image at the second Pakistan International Color Slide Exhibition and it appeared as the cover image for his book *The Holy Journey to Mecca*, published in 1976.

Amin flew east to Australia last fall, taking up an invitation to visit his granddaughter Maryam Nasir and her family in a Sydney suburb. She is the daughter of Amin’s daughter Farhat.

He traveled to Australia before wildfires charred huge areas across the country. The locale where his granddaughter lives escaped the blazes.

“This was my first-ever visit to Australia,” Amin said. “I was fully dependent on my granddaughter’s family, unlike in the USA or Canada where I know places, friends and families.”

He spent most of his time in and around Sydney, with a daylong trip to Canberra, the capital. “Luckily, on that day Canberra was celebrating an annual tulip festival, which I enjoyed very much and took a lot of photos,” he said.

Below are some highlights of his visit.

**Previous page:** Shaikh Amin’s prizewinning photo of the Sacred Mosque in Makkah, shot in 2015, and the photographer with his trove of honors. **Opposite:** Amin’s “most memorable” photo of the Sacred Mosque, which he shot clinging to the top of a 165-foot minaret in 1967. **Below, counterclockwise from bottom left:** A street artist works in Sydney; Shaikh Amin poses with his granddaughter Maryam Nasir near her home in a Sydney suburb; tulips figured prominently in Canberra’s annual Floriade; the Three Sisters area of the Blue Mountains, an hour’s drive west of Sydney; water flows down worn rock in the Blue Mountains; a ferry chugs under Sydney Harbour bridge.



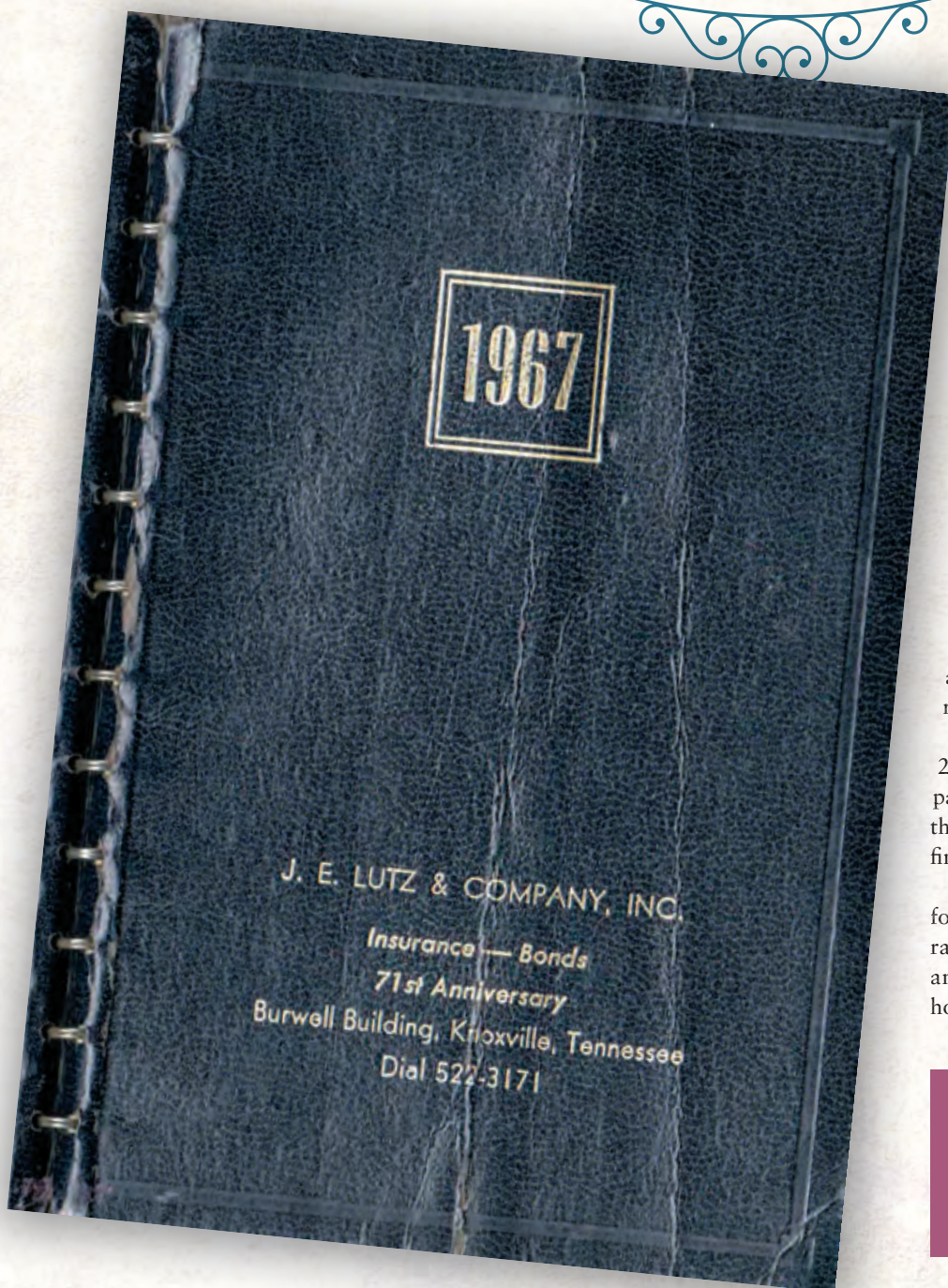




BEGINNING TO LOOK LIKE

# H·O·M·E

• BY JODIE CASTELLANI, PH.D. •



**My mom, Etta Teague, a country girl from Greene County, Tenn., thought she'd made it "big" when she moved to Knoxville, Tenn., at age 16 during World War II. She soon found herself working in nearby Oak Ridge, the "Secret City" of the Manhattan Project, where the atomic bomb was made.**

She met Joe "Rog" Sutton at Oak Ridge and they married in 1948. He joined Aramco in Ras Tanura in 1966 as a mechanical-craft-specialist instructor and Mom and I traveled there in January 1967. Dad retired from Abqaiq Plants Maintenance in 1984.

My father died in 1989 and my mother died in 2015. Dealing with parents' belongings after they pass on is an ordeal I don't wish on anyone. However, there have been a few bright spots, and a surprise find—my mother's 1967 diary—was one.

Her entries are brief and the journal covers just four months. It starts out with last-minute preparations to move from Tennessee to Saudi Arabia and concludes on April 11: "Beginning to look like home."

Etta Sutton's 1967 diary, with entries from January to April (from Tennessee to Ras Tanura) tells a remarkable adventure story for a "country girl from Greene County...who'd rarely ventured beyond the Tennessee-Florida corridor," says her daughter Jodie Castellani.

While there are many accounts of Aramco community life in the 1960s, this one is a bit different as the focus isn't on the memorable but the mundane. It's an insider's view of "ordinary life" in the days immediately prior to and after our move halfway around the globe.

The journal's few pages are priceless to me. Until reading them I had known my mom at that time only through a child's eyes, for I was only five when we moved. I quickly learned that she was entirely human, headache-prone and amazingly brave.

My mom had rarely ventured beyond the Tennessee-Florida corridor, and she had never traveled by air, before moving to Saudi Arabia. And yet, three years after I was adopted, she packed us up, got us on the plane and flew far from everything and everyone she had ever known.

It was the start of a new chapter in our lives, to be sure, but it ended up being far more than that. Her decision—which began with this long trip—transformed my entire family's trajectory in ways we wouldn't fully know or appreciate for years to come.

Once in Ras Tanura, Mom easily adapted to expatriate life, primarily because she was so extroverted. Her social talents were well-oiled from years of modeling, sororities and honing her hospitality skills with her friends.

My dad signed on with a two-year contract, promising Mom that time would pass quickly, yet they ended up staying close to two decades. That speaks volumes about how much she loved it there.

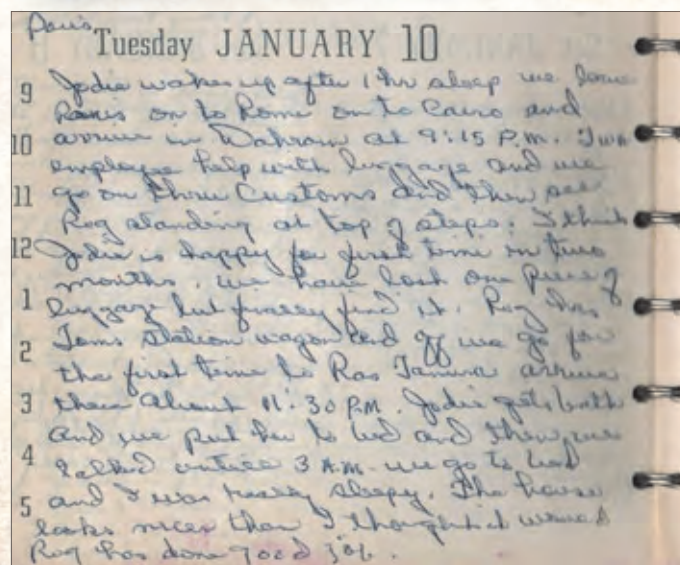
Although I wish she had continued her journal, I am grateful she wrote and preserved the few pages she did. It showed me, many decades later, how a small-town family ended up moving halfway across the planet and making another small town, which just happened to be in eastern Saudi Arabia, "home."

Here's to Mom: world traveler, small-town socialite and explorer extraordinaire...and

here are some of her memories of an extraordinary journey in her own words.

## JANUARY

- 1: [Sons] Leslie, Lynn [and] Jodie and I went to church. Ate Ky. Fried Chicken and went back to Central [Church in Oak Ridge] for last time tonite.
- 2: All my family came down to spend last day with us before we leave for Arabia. Lynn goes back to Clarksville and Leslie back to Johnson City. It was a lonely nite for Jodie and myself, but lots of work to do must go on.
- 3: Finished sorting and packing things for our trip. Everything is upside down and a lot yet to do. [Brother-in-law] Joe Daily called and says he has a buyer for the Plymouth, but...I can keep it until Sat. when I go to Greeneville. Jodie is excited about seeing Daddy but hates to leave her cats behind.
- 4: I awoke with a migraine headache...and the movers are supposed to be here to pack tomorrow. Polly Varnadore called and wants me to go to dinner Thurs. nite at Park Hotel with girls from church. Have to go to bed early my head is popping. Called Momma Teague. She will call in morning to see if I'm better.
- 5: I didn't sleep at all last nite so sick with headache.... Packers will be here at 8 a.m. Momma Teague called and said she will be down to help.... We have hardly eaten all day. I didn't go out with girls and Polly, Shirley, Nita, Lois, & Christie came by with gift at 10:30. I have to take Momma & Jodie to McDonalds for hamburgers. They are starving.
- 6: ...Feeling some better. Errands to run. Go to Oak Ridge and don't get back until 6:30. Loaders still there. Momma & Jodie holding down fort. We



Etta Teague takes a break from work Oak Ridge, Tenn., site of the Manhattan Project, where she met her husband Joe "Rog" Sutton. They married in 1948. He joined Aramco in Ras Tanura in 1966 and in 1967 she traveled with her five-year-old daughter to join him.



**Left:** Etta Sutton poses with Jodie in front of their first house in Ras Tanura around 1968. **Right:** Jodie reenacts the Brownie pledge for the camera. "I was extremely sincere and passionate about being a Brownie!" she says.

finally get rid of movers [at] 7:30.... Momma takes bath sewer runs over so I don't get one. ...Get to bed about 12:30....

- 7:** Pouring down rain. ...Momma got her hair fixed [in Greenville] and Jodie & I looked for a pair of shoes. Picked Momma up and on to the house to fix supper. Went to bed early my head still hurts.
- 8:** ... [Brother] Billie took luggage to weigh—about 10 lbs. overweight. [Sister] Jacky repacks and I end up with 131 lbs. Leslie came down after church tonite and took Jodie to town for a milkshake & hamburger. We all went to bed as have to get up early.
- 9:** Get up at 6 a.m. Leslie, Jodie & I left Greenville about 8 a.m. ... Left on plane for N.Y. at 2 p.m., arr. at Newark at 3 p.m. Carried all that luggage miles thru terminal and caught helicopter to Kennedy at 4:25. Arrived at Kennedy, treated royally and waited there until 7:30 when we boarded TWA for Arabia. Weather rough so we go over London. Jodie finally goes to sleep at 2 a.m. I am tired but can't sleep. We arrive in

Paris at 3 a.m. our time. It is Tuesday at 8 a.m....in Paris.

- 10:** Jodie wakes up after 1 hr. sleep and we leave Paris on to Rome on to Cairo and arrive Dhahran at 9:15 p.m. TWA employee helps with luggage and we go thru Customs and see Rog standing at top of steps. I think Jodie is happy for the first time in two months. We lose one piece of luggage, but finally find it. Rog has Tom [Clabough]'s station wagon and off we go for the first time to Ras Tanura. Arrive there about 11:30 p.m. Jodie gets bath and we put her to bed and then we talked until 3 a.m. We go to bed and...really sleepy. The house looks nicer than I thought it would. Rog has done good job.
- 11:** We slept until 11 a.m. Rog has a five-day [Id al-Adha] holiday. The Wards [Roger and Peggy] & Hicks [Charlie and Mary Lynn] are spending it down here. They came by to say hello and in meantime...the bathroom floods and Rog calls plumbers. We go up to eat at Snack Bar and then to pool where I [meet] Helen & Tom Clabough. We go out to eat dinner with the group,

then play shuffleboard & billiards.... We came home about 10 p.m. Jodie has hardly eaten a bite in over a week and looks as if she has lost 10 lbs. She goes to sleep real fast.

- 12:** We sleep late again. The weather is beautiful but I have been burning up, leaving 20° weather to come to 70°. We still have sewer problems. Have used all the towels catching water. We are all invited to Claboughs for dinner tonite.... I still am turned around in my directions when I go out of house.
- 13:** We wake up at 1 p.m.... The Hicks came by & wonder where we have been. We decided to go home [to Abqaiq] with them and ride bus back. We borrow their vacuum cleaner and clothes hangers, go eat a bite, and catch the 10 p.m. bus. Change buses at Dhahran and the driver goes to sleep and the fog is so thick you can hardly cut it. We sure don't get sleepy we are too scared. Finally make it home & to bed. We won't ride the late bus again.
- 14:** Still sewer problems. The holiday crew is working.... We go to pool for a little while then we clean house & finish unpacking. This looks and feels like Fla. We are still eating out as the commissary is closed until Sun.
- 15:** Rog has to go back to work but he goes



**Above:** Etta Sutton multitasks in the kitchen of the family's second Abqaiq house in the early 1980s. "Polishing brass was an ongoing and thankless job," says her daughter. "She spent hours and hours talking her to friends, so that long cord was important." **Right:** The Suttons cut cakes at a "double" retirement in 1984. He was working at Abqaiq Plants Maintenance and "she was probably working for Personal Effects at the Abqaiq Mall at that time," Jodie says.



## FEBRUARY

**24:** Had a horrible headache this a.m. Rog had to go to Clinic to get medicine for me. ...Jodie had infected eye and stayed with me. Rog & Jodie went to golf course to watch Roger Ward play. Peggy came by here but I was passed out and didn't hear her.

feeling too well but is about ready to leave for the States. She is going to doc. in morn at Dhahran.

**12:** Norma Branch and two girls, Pam & Beth, came over. Brought brownies. They are from S.C. Her husband [Ray] is an engineer and [they have] been here since Aug. Jodie surprised them by reading all the books to them.

**13:** Snook & Charlie didn't leave. Will get their shipment back & stay.... Supposedly, Charlie got a big raise.

## APRIL

**10:** Jodie & I took a walk on beach and as we came back saw the van parked at house with furniture shipment: 53 crates 11,000.00 lbs. [We] worked until 8:30 uncrating and carrying in. What a mess! Rog had to call a basketball game so I put up the beds and got some linens on them. We finally went to bed at 1:30. Looks worse than at 8. Can't even walk for boxes and the yard appears as if we were building a new house.

**11:** Worked all day. ... Beginning to look like home.

by school to enroll Jodie. She...will start to school tomorrow morning.

**16:** Jodie goes to kindergarten at 8:30... and I have a carpenter fixing my kitchen countertop. The sewer is still plugged. They decide to give us a new toilet & basin and work on bathtub....

**17:** ...Jodie loves school and is eating better. We go to the commissary when Rog comes home from work. The prices are cheaper than they were at home. Some items might be more, but it doesn't even out....

**18:** ... Mrs. Young who gave us some dishes came by to visit. She has two small children. Tomorrow the weekend starts. We are invited to [the] Goughs for Mexican dinner tonite. We all loved the food. Will have to learn to cook it. Jodie really ate a good meal.

**19:** Rog and I mopped and cleaned the whole house. Am beginning to feel at home now. The weather has been a little cooler this week. Rog was called in to work. First overtime he has had.

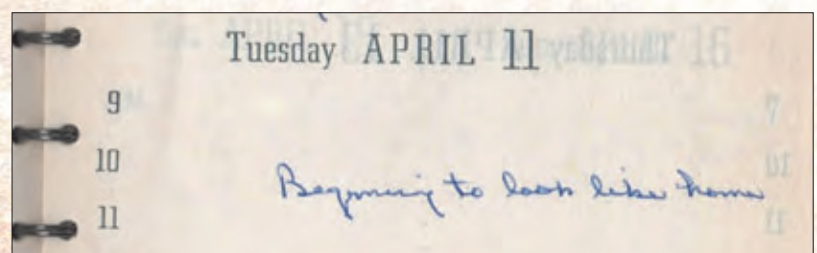
**20:** ...Rog had to work so I went with Helen then we had lunch at Surf House and Jodie and I were by ourselves until Rog came home to dinner.

## MARCH

**8:** The School had open house tonite. Jodie is real excited. The kindergarten will sing Do-Rey-Mi [from "The Sound of Music"]. The program was real good. They sure have a good music director at the school. After the program we went to Jodie's room then came home and watched the Clay-Liston fight on TV.

**10:** Went with Helen & Tom to Abqaiq to tell Snook [Mary Lynn Hicks] & boys goodbye. The Wards & Balls [Opal and Curly] were there too. We ate lunch out then made two freezers of ice cream. Helen and Tom gave their dog away. Helen was sad all the way home. We arrived home about 8:30 and Rog went to get hamburgers while I bathed Jodie.

**11:** Snook called to say she is not



# BRAT RECOUNTS CALIFORNIA BLAZE ESCAPE

BY MIKE KELLER (AB69)

**When the world's eyes turned to the awful scenes of large swathes of Australia burning under sky-high temperatures and brutal winds this winter, we could relate in northern California—where my wife Christina and I escaped a wildfire in the fall.**

We live in Windsor in Sonoma County, about 60 miles north of San Francisco, and we've faced two blazes in recent years.

In early October 2017 we experienced the Tubbs fire, then the most destructive in California history. It was one of more than a dozen large wildfires that erupted and burned simultaneously in eight northern California counties.

By the time it was contained Oct. 31 the Tubbs fire had blackened nearly 37,000 acres, destroyed 5,643 structures and killed at least 22 people in Sonoma County.

Jean Dell'Oro, an Aramco whose ties with the company stretched back to 1947, about as far as my family's roots in the kingdom, had to flee her home in Santa Rosa, about 10 miles south of

Windsor, on Oct. 8.

Tragically, she died two days later, and the Dell'Oro family home with all its Middle Eastern heirlooms was lost in the flames.

Nothing, not even the blistering heat of Saudi Arabia where my grandfather, Clement Gibbs, arrived in 1944 to work as a machinist at Aramco, can prepare you for a wildfire.

My mom Gloria and my grandmother Marie joined him in Abqaiq in August 1947. My dad Elwood "Woody" Keller arrived in Abqaiq that December to service drilling rigs.

As luck would have it, he met Gloria, they dated and married in 1950. I was born in Dhahran in 1954 and my sister Andrea arrived four years after that.

**Above:** Mike Keller's wife Christina and the family's dog Lando sheltered with him in a studio apartment in Santa Rosa, Calif., after they were chased from their home in Windsor, 10 miles to the north, by a wildfire Oct. 26. **Right:** Mike Keller, his sister Andrea and their mother Gloria took advantage of a trip to Abqaiq, their old hometown, during the 2009 Expatriates Reunion to meet Sa'ad al-Shammari, whose father, driller Hamid al-Shammari, had worked with the head of the family, Elwood "Woody" Keller.



The heat of the desert that we experienced as kids can be deadly, for sure. But it's always there in the summer—and you can survive with enough water and the right shelter.

A wildfire's different: Its skips and jumps depending on the wind, lighting new blazes here and there, and no shelter can protect you from a roaring fire. I know that because I'm a builder and I've seen too many houses turned to ashes in recent years.

Almost exactly two years after the Tubbs fire, on Oct. 23, a similar event seemed to be looming. My wife and I had just gone to bed when we heard a loud banging on our door and our neighbor shouting: "There's a fire coming our way and I'm leaving! You might want to consider doing the same!"

The Kincadee fire had started about 15 miles northeast of us and it was being fanned by 70-mile-per-hour winds.

Could this really be happening—again?

The fire burned the next two days in largely rural northern Sonoma County. By Oct. 25 it was heading in a more southerly direction toward Windsor.

On Oct. 26 Windsor received mandatory evacuation orders. We packed our cars with essentials and joined the exodus of tens of thousands of people getting onto the freeway and heading south for safety.

The evacuation order was later extended to include parts of Sonoma County westward to the coast, impacting close to 200,000 people. We found refuge in a studio apartment I had just remodeled in Santa Rosa and set up camp to wait it out.

Late the morning of Oct. 27 more than 200 firefighters with dozens of pieces of equipment joined a nearly overwhelming battle to stop the blaze from overtaking the town, let alone jumping nearby Highway 101 and burning a trail of destruction all the way to the coast.

All we could do was wait.

Then, on Oct. 30, we got the "all-clear"—and returned to find our house still standing. The firefighters had prevailed, protecting every single home in our town of 27,000 people and substantially curbing the fire's spread.

The sky was gray, the air smelled of smoke and soot, and ash covered our yard. We had electricity, but no gas for three more days. Life slowly started to return to normal as residents trickled back.

The Kincadee fire was 100 percent contained by Nov. 6. It had burned nearly 80,000 acres and destroyed 374 buildings, but remarkably did not result



**From top:** The Kincadee fire that started Oct. 23 burned down 374 buildings in Sonoma County, but those in Mike Keller's hometown of Windsor were saved by the heroic work of 200 firefighters the morning of Oct. 27. Roadblocks stopped local residents from returning until the fire was out. Flags flying along smoky county roads stood out during the blaze.

in any fatalities.

As a carpenter and builder I know that my fellow residents, the construction industry and I need to look at design features and materials that homes of the future likely will need as wildfires become an even more "normal" part of our collective reality due to climate change and other, naturally occurring, factors.

I know that careful construction and an emphasis on fire resilience can put homes in a better position to withstand the onslaught of a blaze.

I know that we were lucky last fall.

And I know that I'd take the 115° heat of a "pleasant" Abqaiq summer to the smell of smoke and the fear that a wildfire stokes any day of the week.

CONSIDER YOURSELF...

# INVITED

Reunions in Colorado Springs in 2020  
and Norwich, England, in 2021



## STILL SET TO UNFOLD

**Work to mount a memorable 32nd biennial Annuitants Reunion from Sept. 26-30 in Colorado Springs, Colo., continued apace when we went to press, as reunion hosts John Palmer and Doreen Cumberford and Doug and Elizabeth Cook kept a watchful eye on the developing COVID-19 situation.**

Meanwhile, the biennial UKaramcons Reunion, planned for Norwich in early October, has been postponed for a year due to the pandemic.

“All of us on the organizing team are concerned that the reunion in Colorado Springs may need to be canceled or postponed if the government Coronavirus restrictions are still in place,” Palmer said late in March. “If we need to cancel this year’s event we will do so with at least one month’s notice, and we will refund everyone’s money in full—no cancellation charge—and the hotel will also refund any money you have paid in full.”

He urged anyone planning to attend “not to cancel at this time, since the situation may improve.”

The hosts hope annuitants and family members will be able to discover what the *New York Times* reported in January under the headline, “The secret is out about Colorado.” It called Colorado Springs one of the 52 “top places to go” in

America this year.

“See for yourself why this historic city embodies so much of Colorado’s incomparable spirit,” the report said. “Change your state of mind.”

“We’re happy that the *Times* has discovered us,” said the hosts, who all hail

from Colorado. “Colorado Springs has a lot to offer.”

Seven months out from the *hafla* (family party), it looked like attendance would exceed 300.

At the end of March about 260 people had registered to stay at the Cheyenne Mountain Resort, the reunion venue, and around 20 attendees planned to stay elsewhere, Palmer said. There is dining and dancing space for as many as 450 guests, but the number of hotel rooms is limited.

Registration for the reunion is open until Sept. 15. Instructions may be found at [www.aramcoexpats.com](http://www.aramcoexpats.com) under “2020 Aramco Hafla Annuitants Reunion.”

The same site has instructions for making reservations at the resort. It also contains the reunion agenda and a list of the current registrants, and sign-up sheets for tours.

“The reunion requires an army of volunteers,” said co-host Doreen Cumberford. “Consider this an invitation to volunteer and contribute a bit of time and energy to making this a big success for everyone.”

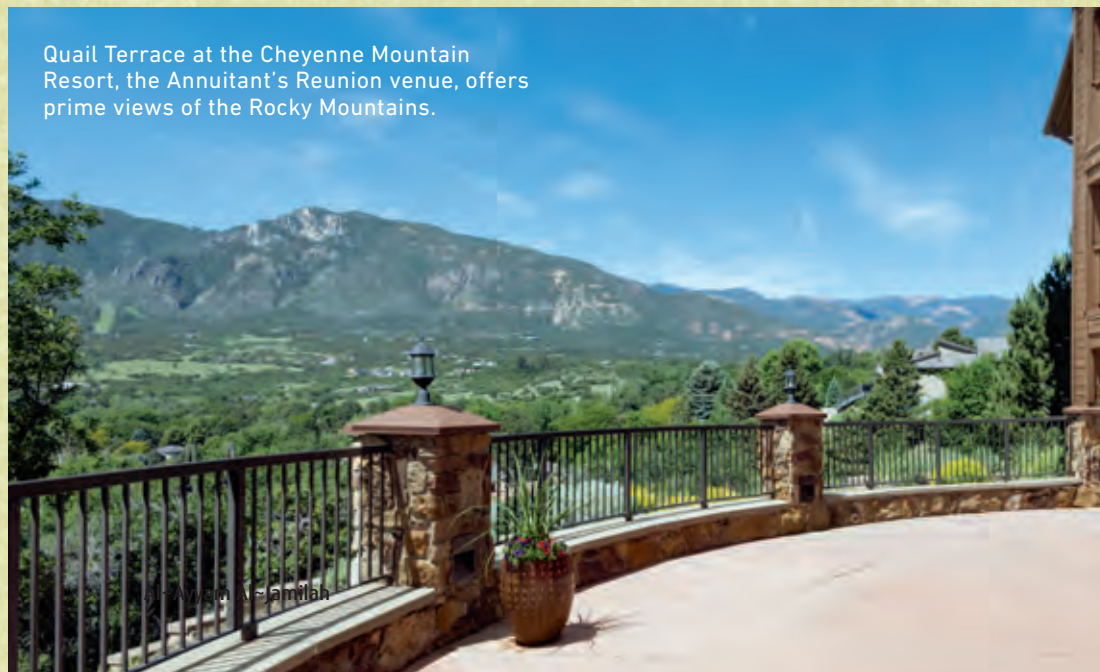
Volunteers for decoration teams, graphics and printing, and gift bag teams are needed the most. Anyone interested in volunteering at the reunion, and anyone with questions about the event, may contact the hosts at [haflah2020@gmail.com](mailto:haflah2020@gmail.com).

The reunion “officially” opens with a barbecue-buffet dinner and dance Sunday, Sept. 27, but so many people have signed up to stay Saturday night there will be an opening reception that evening.

The *hafla* includes three dinner/dances. Those Sunday and Tuesday will be outdoors, with sunset views of Pikes Peak. The traditional gala dinner sponsored by Aramco Americas will be Monday, with a speaker who will talk about the company and the kingdom.

“The committee has arranged great entertainment for each night, including the

Quail Terrace at the Cheyenne Mountain Resort, the Annuitant’s Reunion venue, offers prime views of the Rocky Mountains.





Flatiron Jazz Orchestra, the best big band in Colorado, on Monday, complete with dancing instructors to lead us in swing dancing,” said Palmer.

Tours will take place Sunday, Monday and Tuesday. They will go to the top of Pikes Peak; to Cripple Creek, the site of a 19th-century gold-mining town; and to Garden of the Gods with its beautiful natural rock formations, and the Air Force Academy.

Co-host Doug Cook, a geologist, will lead two special geological tours of Garden of the Gods and other rock formations around Colorado Springs on Monday and Tuesday.

A doubles tennis tournament is slated Sunday, a golf tournament Monday and a pickleball game Tuesday. A bridge tournament will take place Monday afternoon.

Colorado Springs is “home to more than 55 unique things to see and do. Enjoy stunning natural scenery, endless blue skies and exciting choices for outdoor adventure,” said the *Times*.

The *hafla* hosts second that, and they urge you to find out for yourselves.



Diners will have a scenic backdrop for evening events Sept. 27 and Sept. 29.



Reunion-goers arriving late in the afternoon will find this picture-postcard greeting at the Cheyenne Mountain Resort.

## EIGHTH UKARAMCONS REUNION

### *Postponed until 2021*

The biannual UKaramcons Reunion, scheduled for Oct. 2-4 in Norwich, has been postponed for a year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Host Maggie Creswell said March 28 that the eighth UKaramcons Reunion had been moved to the first weekend of October 2021 and that the reunion after that would take place in 2022.

She said the venue for the delayed reunion would remain the Mercure Hotel in downtown Norwich.

Activities for the 2021 reunion are expected include a Quiz Night and buffet supper, the Tom Henderson Memorial Golf Tournament, named in honor of the UKaramcons Reunion founder, and a dinner hosted by Aramco Europe.

Anyone with questions may contact Creswell at [maggiemartham@gmail.com](mailto:maggiemartham@gmail.com).



The placid River Wensum in Norwich, where the rescheduled eighth UKaramcons Reunion will take place in 2021, boasts a lovely urban landscape.

# IN MEMORIAM

## MERCEDES AMSTALDEN ABIB

December 1, 2019

Predeceased by her husband, retiree Osmar Abib, and survived by her sons Osmar Jr. and Roberto. The family may be contacted c/o St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church, 7801 Bay Branch Dr., The Woodlands, TX 77382.

## OTHEL "JACK" ALLEN, JR.

December 14, 2019

He worked for the company as a petroleum engineer. Survived by his daughter Terrie, who may be contacted c/o Eisenhour Funeral Home, 2500 N Council Ave., Blanchard, OK 73010.

## ALBERT M. AMARA

November 20, 2019

He joined the New York office Mail Room in 1952, transferring to Manufacturing and Oil Supply and becoming embargo coordinator in 1973. He moved with the office to Houston in 1975 and transferred to Crude Forecasting and Scheduling in Dhahran in 1990, retiring in 1994. Survived by his wife Laura and eight children. Correspondence may be sent to Laura at 18 Crazy Horse Court, Palm Coast, FL 32137.

## ANN LOUISE BILLINGS ANDERSON

March 7, 2020

She joined Aramco as a secretary in the early 1950s and met her husband Conrad in Dhahran. Predeceased by her husband and survived by children Fritz and Amanda. The family may be contacted c/o Grace Memorial Episcopal Church, 100 W. Church St., Hammond, LA 70401.

## ILYAS ANWAR

September 15, 2018

A senior geophysicist specialist, he worked in Croydon, England, and Dhahran for nearly 20 years, retiring in 1994. Survived by his wife Rubena who may be contacted at [ianwarme1@me.com](mailto:ianwarme1@me.com).

## STEPHEN BRUNDAGE

January 11, 2020

He joined the Public Relations

Dept. in 2004 and retired in 2014. A talented musician, he played the guitar and performed in Dhahran and Bahrain—almost always dressed in black. Survived by his wife Shirley Gast and children Jean-Paul Brundage and Marisa and Shawn Gast. The family may be contacted c/o Starks Menchinger Funeral Home, 2650 Niles Rd., St. Joseph, MI 49085.

## JOHN "JACK" BUNTING

December 9, 2019

He joined the New York office in 1948, worked in Beirut for Tapline and in Dhahran from 1954-60, and for Air Traffic at Aramco Services Company from 1976-87 and 1991-93, when he retired.

## JOHN P. "CRIF" CRAWFORD

December 2, 2019

He joined the company in 1972 and retired from Corporate Planning in 1992. Survived by his wife Kate and children John, Laura and Lydia. He was born in Beirut and he and his family spent a year in Lebanon where he studied classical Arabic prior to joining Standard Oil in New York in 1970. Lydia may be contacted at [Lydia.P.Crawford@wellsfargo.com](mailto:Lydia.P.Crawford@wellsfargo.com).

## CHARLENE ANN DEEL

June 26, 2019

Survived by her husband, retiree William Deel. He may be contacted at Apt. 106, 900 Gross Rd., Kingsland, GA 31458.

## ANTHONY ESPOSITO

January 26, 2020

He worked for the Aviation Dept. from 1952-82. Survived by his daughters Linda, Susan and BJ. The family may be contacted c/o Wild Nature Center, 45 Vars Lane, Bradford, RI 02808.

## DELORES ANNE "DINAH" HERMAN

September 11, 2019

Survived by her husband, retiree Richard Herman, and children Karen, Donald and Susan. She worked at the Najmah School as a teacher's aide,

typing teacher, secretary, art teacher, crossing guard and bus monitor. Correspondence may be sent to Richard at [herman\\_r\\_g@juno.com](mailto:herman_r_g@juno.com).

## MARY LYNN "SNOOK" HICKS

February 17, 2020

Survived by her husband, retiree Charlie Hicks, and sons Doug and Dave. Charlie may be contacted at 934 Westcourt Dr., Knoxville, TN 37919 or [dhab76@gmail.com](mailto:dhab76@gmail.com).

## CAROL LEE HUDSON

March 29, 2020

She joined Aramco in the early 1980s and taught at the Dhahran Schools for 27 years. Friends remembered her as "the driving force behind some great programs for the kindergarten, plus a major part of the Dhahran Theatre Group." Survived by her sister Jo Anne Settles and brother Stanley. The family may be contacted c/o Weed Corley Fish Funeral Homes, 411, Ranch Rd., 620 South, Lakeway TX.

## MARY LOU KING

February 10, 2020

Predeceased by her husband William, whom she met while working for Shell in San Francisco and married in 1949. He joined Aramco's New York office and the family transferred to Saudi Arabia. Survived by her daughters Nancy Cheeseman and Kathryn Bradley. Correspondence may be sent to the family c/o Plymouth Church, 126 Ingersoll Ave., Des Moines, IA 50312.

## JON MANDAVILLE

August 5, 2019

A 1952 graduate of the Najmah School, he joined Portland (OR) St. University as a professor in 1965, directed its Middle East Studies Center from 1996-2004 and wrote about Islamic and Middle Eastern history for academic publications and *Aramco World*. Survived by his wife Diane, children Alison, Kate and Cristin, and siblings Jim and Judy. Jim may be contacted at 11688 N. Ribbonwood Dr., Oro Valley, AZ 85737.

## FRED McCONNELL

August 28, 2019

He joined the company as a geologist in the late 1950s and departed five years later to earn an MBA, returning in 1970 to work in the Treasurer's organization. He retired as Credit and Collections supervisor in 1984. Survived by his wife Asuncion and children Christopher and Bronnie. Asuncion may be contacted at 9140 Periwinkle Loop NE, Lacey, WA 98516.

## ETHEL M. McCOY

February 1, 2020

Predeceased by her husband Arthur "Red" McCoy, who worked for Aramco from 1965-72. Survived by her children Michael, Thomas and Cathleen. The family may be contacted c/o St. Mary's Church, 130 South St., Wrentham, MA 02093.

## JOHN P. McGOVERN

November 28, 2019

He joined the New York office in 1952 and retired in 1994 as assistant treasurer, special assignment, after serving in the Treasurer's organization in Dhahran, New York and Houston. Survived by his wife Kathleen and children John, Thomas and Kathy. John may be contacted at [jackmccovern@centuroncorp.com](mailto:jackmccovern@centuroncorp.com).

## MARJORIE A. McQUILLEN

October 18, 2019

She joined Aramco in 1956 as a nurse and met her husband John, an accountant, in Dhahran. Survived by her husband and daughters Mary Patterson and Marie Beven. John may be contacted at 2026 Tangle Lake Dr., Kingwood, TX 77339-3358.

## ALTHEA M. NIEHAUS

December 26, 2019

Predeceased by her husband, retiree Ralph Niehaus, and survived by children Marcy, Ted and Julia. The family may be contacted c/o St. Matthew's Episcopal Church, 2620 Crestview Dr., Edinburg, TX 78539.

## JAMES E. NORTH CUTT

February 6, 2020

He worked for the Aviation Dept. as a flight engineer. Survived by his wife Charlotte and sons Mike, Steve, and Mark. The family may be contacted c/o Ebensberger-Fisher Funeral Home, 111 Rosewood Ave., Boerne, TX 78006.

## MARY PAPPAS

December 28, 2019

Predeceased by her husband George, whom she met and married in Greece, her homeland, on his first vacation from Aramco in 1953. The family spent three decades with the company. Survived by her children John, Margaret and Irene. Irene may be contacted at [pappas.irene@gmail.com](mailto:pappas.irene@gmail.com).

## JOHN HENRY REBOLD

December 3, 2019

He joined Aramco in Abqaiq in 1958 as a reservoir and petroleum engineer and retired as executive assistant to the senior vice president, Oil Operations, in 1981. Survived by his daughters Jeanette Rebold Rost and Janis Rebold. Jeanette may be contacted at [jrr@ecpi.com](mailto:jrr@ecpi.com).

## NANCY E. RUSHMER

July 21, 2019

She joined the Industrial Relations Dept. in the early 1950s and met her husband Jack, who predeceased her, in Dhahran. Survived by her daughter Tracy who may be contacted c/o Carmel Valley Library, 650 W. Carmel Valley Rd., Carmel Valley, CA 93924.

## ROBERT "BOB" SANTIMO

November 7, 2019

He worked at the 'Uthmaniyah Gas Plant from 1980-85 and Abqaiq Plants Instrumentation Dept. from 1990-97. Survived by his sister Kay Balyeat who may be contacted at 2201 Dutcher St., Flint, MI 48532.

## GEORGE SCHOLZ

September 16, 2019

He worked in Training in Abqaiq and Dhahran from 1982-90. Survived by his wife Celeste and daughters

Kristina and Liz. Celeste may be contacted at [celeste.scholz@gmail.com](mailto:celeste.scholz@gmail.com).

## DONNA L. STEWART

January 21, 2020

Predeceased by her husband Doyle and survived by sons Michael and Garry. The family lived in Dhahran for six years in the 1980s and '90s. Her children may be contacted c/o First United Methodist Church, 905 Glendale Ave., South Charleston, WV 25303.

## JANE K. STUDEBAKER

January 24, 2020

She joined Aramco as a secretary in 1953. Predeceased by her husband John, whom she met in Dhahran and married in 1955. She spent 31 years with the company in the kingdom and the Netherlands. Survived by her sons James, a Saudi Aramco retiree, and John and Mark. James may be contacted at [studebakerjw@yahoo.com](mailto:studebakerjw@yahoo.com).

## ALFRED E. "SULLY" SULLIVAN

October 11, 2019

He retired in 1992 after a 15-year career in food-service operations. Survived by his wife Satu and children Hugh, M. Aelish Clifford, Owen and Deirdre. The family may be contacted c/o Barrancas National Cemetery, 1 Cemetery Rd., Pensacola, FL 32508.

## RICHARD "RICH" TOWNSEND

February 24, 2020

He joined the Dhahran Health Center as a nurse in 1978 and retired from its Education group in 2003. Survived by his brothers Max, Ray and Gene. The family may be contacted c/o Headwaters Trail System, P.O. Box 187, Three Forks, MT 59752.

## MARY F. VICKREY

May 17, 2018

Predeceased by her husband Doyt. The couple spent 32 years with Aramco. Survived by her niece Rosalie Liddell who may be contacted at 666 Grafton Park Dr., Chico, CA 95926.

PLEASANT DAYS SPRING 2020

# Al~Ayyam Al~Jamilah الأيام الجميلة

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## Found!

Bob Thielhelm (DH55) found this print, along with several other watercolor scenes by A. Ma'alouf, when looking through storage boxes belonging to his late parents, annuitants Harry and Helen Thielhelm. Harry entered the oil business in Venezuela in 1937, joined Aramco in New York in 1950 and transferred to Dhahran in 1953. He retired from General Office Engineering in 1967. Bob himself retired from the Pipelines organization after a 15-year career in 1991. The print is captioned only "Saudi Arabia," but what remains of the palace in the background is reminiscent of the one built by pearl merchant Muhammed ibn Abdul Wahhab at Darin on Tarut Island, north of Dhahran, in the 1880s.