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MAY - JUNE 1968

NEWS FROM THE ARAB WORLD

At night, on Juraid Island in the Arabian Gulf, a 300-pound female green sea turtle slowly excavates a sandy pit about two feet deep in which to deposit her precious eggs. Story on page 17.

ARAMCO WORLD magazine

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Cover: Joe Alex Morris, Jr., chief of the Los Angeles Times Middle East bureau, is only one of nearly 50 permanent news correspondents from throughout the world who cover the Arab world. But as a seasoned veteran who has worked for local, state and national newspapers, a wire agency and a news magazine, he is also representative of this hard-working corps of newsmen assigned to one of the most important news areas of the world. Photo by Khalil Abou El-Nasr.

the dhahran fashion show

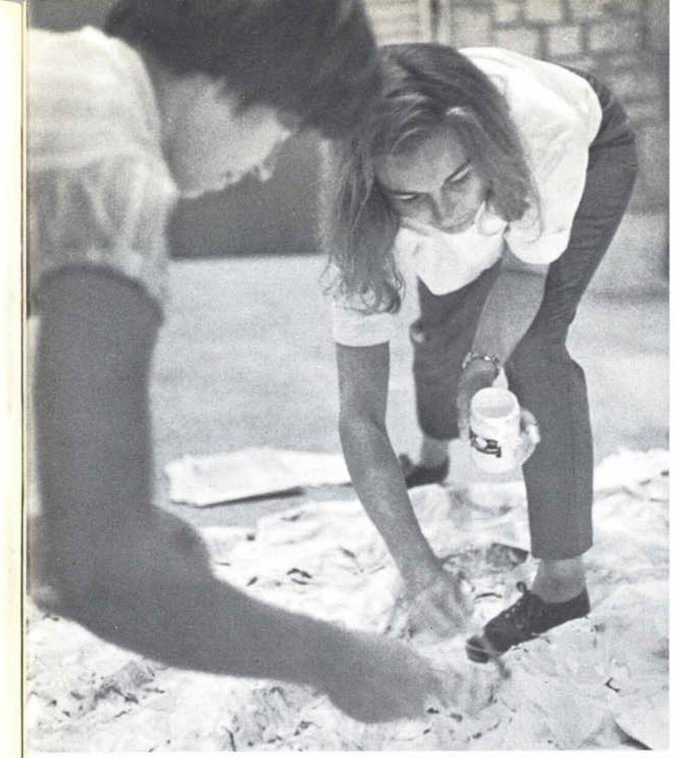
BY BRAINERD S. BATES / PHOTOGRAPHED BY BURNETT H. MOODY

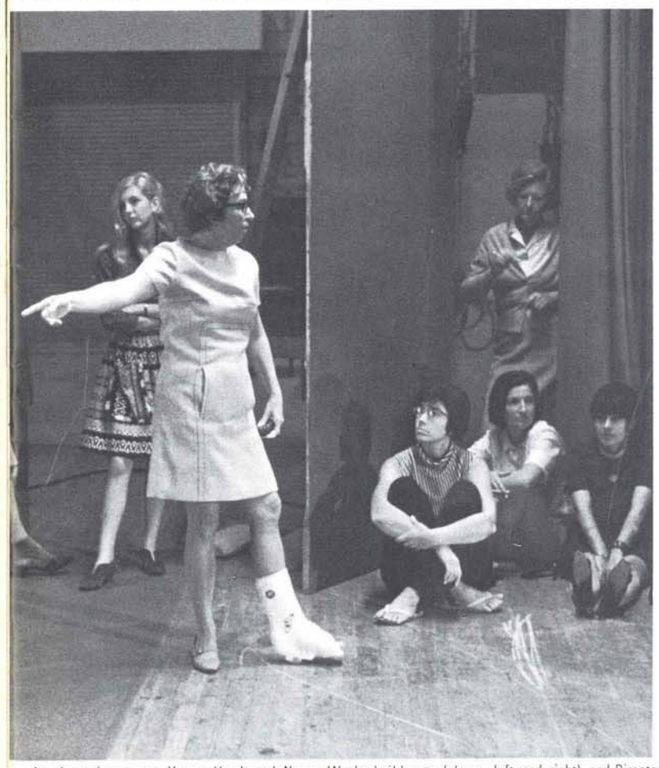
Weeks of preparation went into the show: choosing patterns and fabrics and reproducing the latest fashions down to the last spangle.

Out onto the red-carpeted ramp they came, 27 beautifully coiffured ladies wearing some of the most stunning creations ever seen east of Paris. Before a capacity house, they moved on stage against a background of soft, lilting music and the voice of a commentator rippling off those famous names: "Christian Dior ... Jacques Griffe ... Simonetta of Rome." It was the fashion event of the year and it took place in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, headquarters of the Arabian American Oil Company (Aramco).

Dhahran, naturally enough, has never been a fashion-conscious community. The nature of the weather, a preference for casual living and the lack of frequent contact with the style centers in Europe and America have combined to restrain the female instinct for high style dressing. But even in towns more normally interested in petroleum than Pucci—Dhahran, Abqaiq and Ras Tanura—there were always many women who made their own clothes. And a growing number of them in the past few years had gone on to *haute couture* sewing. Taking advantage of original-design patterns as conceived in such famed European houses as Nina Ricci, Jeanne Lanvin and Ronald Peterson of London, and the increasing range of fabrics appearing in the local markets, these women began to satisfy their craving for more formality in their mode of living by reproducing in Saudi Arabia the best from the fashion houses of the West. When the suggestion was made that the ladies of the three oil communities put on a fashion show to help the Arab refugees in Jordan, they eagerly responded.

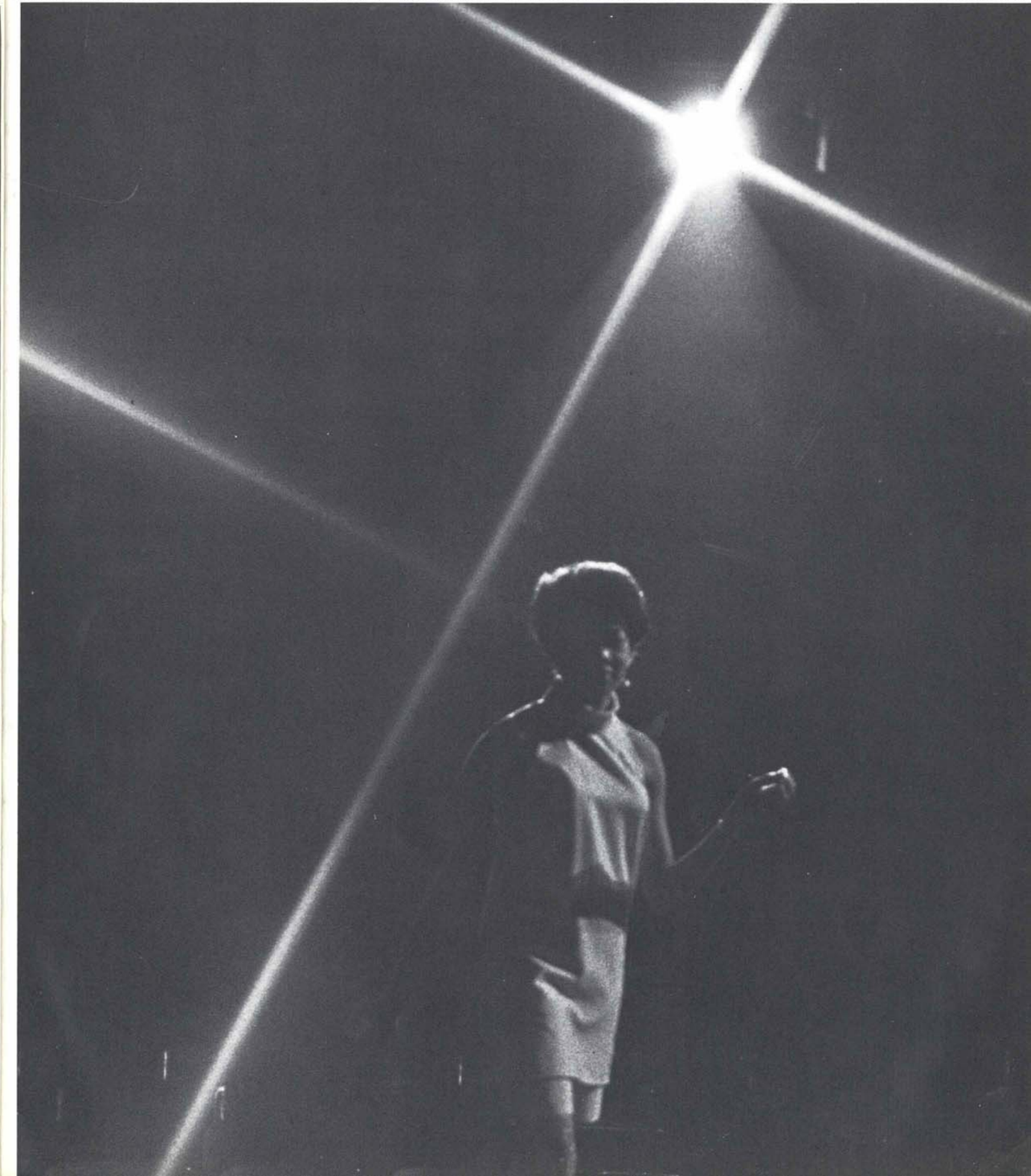
Weeks of preparation went into the event; at times it seemed as if all of Dhahran were participating. On the big evening more than 600 people turned out, including large numbers of male spectators, drawn by a mixture of pride in their wives' talents and a desire to help alleviate, in a small way, the plight of the Arab refugees. The result was an evening of glamor in one part of the Arab world that would bring a bit of comfort and gladness to another less fortunate one.





As show time nears, Yvonne Vetch and Nancy Weeks build sets (above, left and right) and Director Bettie Appleby (below, left) gamely ignores broken toe. Opening night, Doris Grant applies makeup.

Anne Guenther (top, left) beautifully gowned in "turquoise Indian silk with dramatic ... ostrich boa"; Blanche Sequeira (bottom, left) splendid in a sari in "soft pistachio green with silver-thread flower motifs"; Sue Long (center) ablaze in "sinuous, swirly sequins ... with a built-in dazzle"; and Barbara Noble (right) "half siren and half little boy" in red silk tunic top and matching shorts.

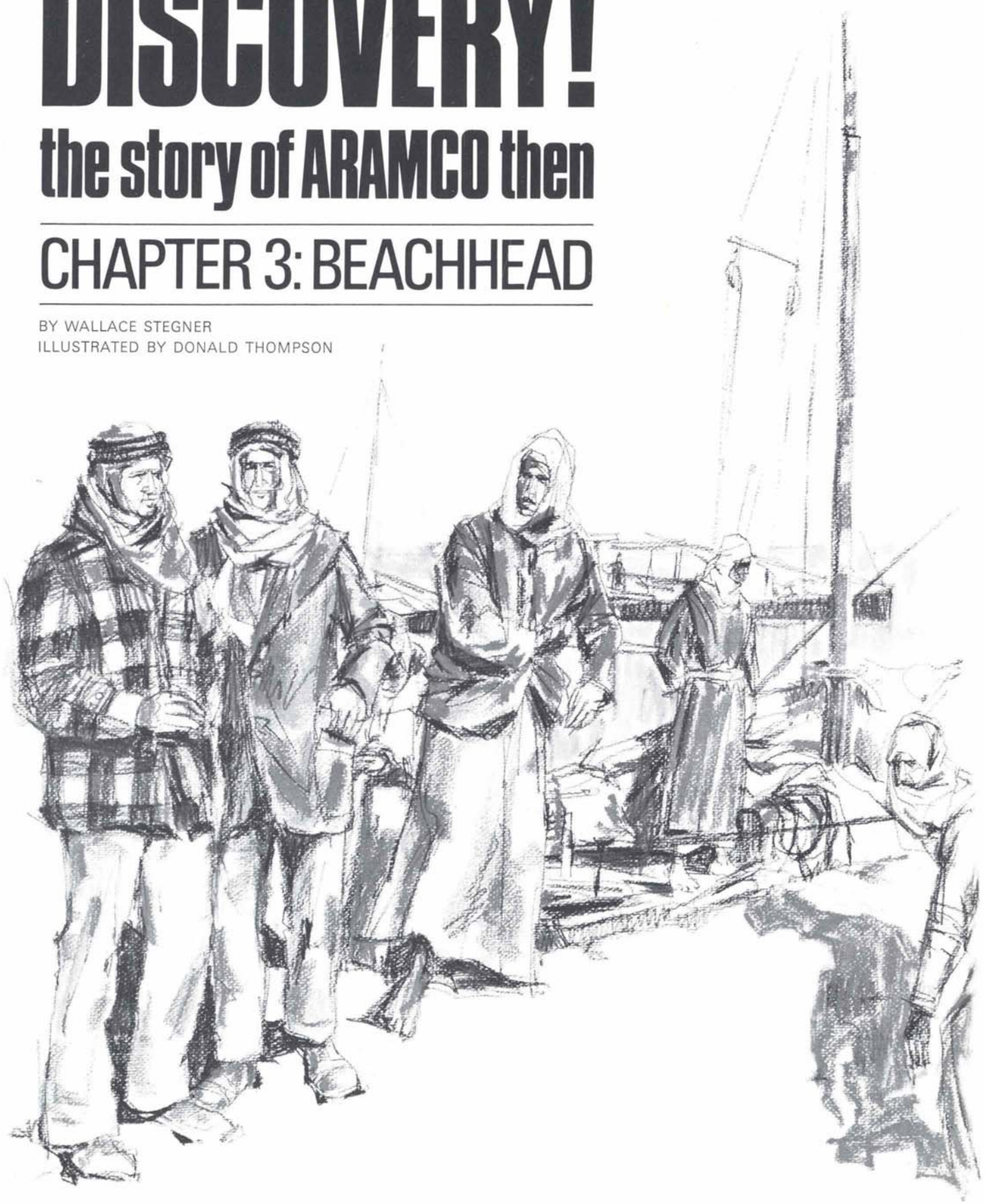


DISCOVERY!

the story of ARAMCO then

CHAPTER 3: BEACHHEAD

BY WALLACE STEGNER
ILLUSTRATED BY DONALD THOMPSON



SYNOPSIS: On a hot August day in 1933 an American mining engineer named Karl Twitchell carefully counted out 53,000 gold sovereigns onto a table in the Netherlands Bank of Jiddah. He pushed them across to the representatives of King Ibn Sa'ud of Saudi Arabia and gravely accepted a receipt. It didn't take long, but when it was over so was the first act in the drama of Arabian oil.

The curtain had gone up on that drama many years before when a group of London financiers won control of a concession on the island of Bahrain in the Arabian Gulf and then sold the concession to the Standard Oil Company of California. For everyone concerned that sale was to have tremendous implications. Not only did it admit an American oil company to the Gulf, but it aroused the company's interest in the Saudi Arabian mainland just as the country's monarch, Ibn Sa'ud, was weighing the advisability of seeking foreign help in developing the mineral wealth of his kingdom.

During these years no one was at all certain that there was oil in Saudi Arabia. At the suggestion of his adviser Harry St. John Philby, and the American philanthropist Charles Crane, King Ibn Sa'ud had brought in Karl Twitchell to assess the possibilities and Twitchell's report had been encouraging. But there was still no evidence. Then, on June 1, 1932, Socal found oil on Bahrain, decided they had better take a closer look at Saudi Arabia and dispatched land lease expert Lloyd Hamilton to work out terms.

Hamilton arrived in Jiddah February 15, 1933 and that night held his first meeting with the King's representatives —the first of many meetings that would stretch out over three and a half months. Although Socal by then had hired both Twitchell and Philby as advisers, Hamilton still had to cope with skilled negotiators, English competitors and even the shattering effects of the American depression. But at last a concession was agreed upon and Hamilton departed, leaving Twitchell behind to effect the transfer of the gold with which Socal had promised to make its first down payment. Twitchell did and 29 days later—September 23, 1933—Socal's first skirmishers arrived to make a beachhead on the east coast of the peninsula.

From the point of view of the men who made the beachhead, what they came to do was a job like other jobs. From the perspective of history and with the map in mind, it was an assignment to challenge the most rash; seen in retrospect it has the nostalgic, almost mythic quality of an action from the age of giants.

The job was the exploration, above ground and below, of some 320,000 square miles of desert, most of it barely known, most of it casually mapped, some of it visited by Westerners only two or three times in all its history. And they were to do the job in the face of enormous difficulties: a transportation system consisting of a handful of cars supplemented by camels and donkeys; roads that were often little more than trails; and an uncertain, rudimentary network of wireless stations for communications. They were, furthermore, half a world away from their base of supplies, and with hardly a shop or store or warehouse where they could buy so much as a nail or a pair of pliers, much less the complex spare parts of a mechanized civilization.

Not the least of the difficulties was the uncompromising nature of the country itself: the crystalline basement rocks of the Red Sea coastal plain, rising into worn mountains on the border of Yemen; the long curve of westward-facing cliffs just east of those mountains; the belt of dunes linking two great sand deserts; the broken limestone of the Summan Plateau fading into flint desert along the Kuwait and Iraq borders and into the gravel plain called Abu Bahr, the "father of the sea"; the moving dunes south of Jubail, blowing along the Gulf and across the salt flats of the coast to melt into the Jafura Sands.

The concession area took in the whole eastern portion of Saudi Arabia, from the Gulf to the Dahana and from the Wadi al-'Ubayyid on the Iraq border to the mountainous southern edge of the Rub' al-Khali—an area larger than all Texas.

From their base map—the 1:1,000,000 British War Office map—and from Twitchell and Philby and the writings of Lawrence and Bertram Thomas, the men who made the beachhead knew these things in a general way; the particulars, including what lay underneath the often featureless desert, were all to be learned.

To start the job there were at first two men. A little later a third would come to open a government relations office in Jiddah. And over a period of weeks and months a few others would dribble into al-Hasa by one's and two's, handpicked for pioneering work and bringing with them elements of the absolutely indispensable equipment. When they had their full complement there would be, in al-Hasa itself, a total of 10.

Theirs was a landing touched with wonder, imminent with consequences. They came like discoverers and if they did not often stare at each other with

wild surmise, being practical men with a job to do, they could not be insensible of the things around them and their capacity for wonder would not go totally untested.

When Robert P. (Bert) Miller and Schuyler B. (Krug) Henry crossed the channel from Bahrain to Jubail in Saudi Arabia they brought with them a combined total of two and half years' experience on Bahrain, a smattering of Arabic and a determination to get to work right away. But as the Saudi Arab customs launch slipped past the careened dhows on the mudflats inside the breakwater they and Karl Twitchell, who had crossed the peninsula to help them get started, saw that getting down to business was going to be a little harder than they had expected.

On shore were gathered robed throngs of people, throngs who obviously represented more than the normal population of the town. As they stepped out to be greeted by the local Amir and the soldiers who were to form their compulsory escort, they learned that several dignitaries from Jubail and Qatif, the big oasis down the coast, had come to greet them too, as well as many Bedouins from the hinterlands. All apparently were planning a big celebration of welcome.

Miller and Henry, however, had other plans and after paying the proper courtesy calls and drinking the appropriate number of cups of coffee, they spotted a jabal to the south and learning that it was called al-Jabal al-Barri, piled into the two touring cars that Twitchell had rented from the government in Jiddah and driven across country for their use. If they had hoped to discourage the holiday spirit of the crowds they were disappointed. Everyone climbed aboard camels and white al-Hasa donkeys, and streamed after them.

For part of the 12 kilometers to Jabal al-Barri the cars served them; then the going got sandy and rough, and amid much laughter they accepted a lift from the camels that the soldiers had forehandedly brought along. They looked over Jabal al-Barri without finding anything to excite them, came down again, mounted the camels and started back across the great *sabkha*. Suddenly the solid earth veered before their eyes, the intense light flawed and changed and unknown Arabia grinned at them—a sudden distorted grin—as the ring of the horizon boiled and floated with mirages. Around its edge, dunes and runty palmettos were stretched and warped until they looked like cliffs or forested headlands. Camels and their riders came over the rim as tall as towers. The cars parked on the flats loomed like grain elevators on the Nebraska plains and the pearling town of Jubail, which they knew had only a thousand or so people, threw up a skyline like New York's, a vision of cloud-capped towers and gorgeous palaces.

The geologists, a little dazed, clung to the camel saddles, tried their best to adjust comfortably to the camel's rocking ride and headed back to the town. Beyond the jut of rocks and the careened dhows, out between the muddied waves slapping the beach and the bank of dark blue sea that underlined the horizon, they could see the Gulf's own images of persistent unreality. The waves ran quartering, and along the meeting-line of green water and blue, a *jalbout* beating up the coast seemed to drive at a tremendous clip. They saw it racing past, but looked again in a few minutes and found it still there, and looked in an hour and found it still there, painted against its backdrop of sea and sky, entranced in its mirage of motion. They observed it curiously, not knowing then that during their Arabian experience, on the occasions when they had a minute or an hour to observe and think, they would feel as entranced and frozen in unreal motion as that *jalbout* beating up the coast in slow motion.

One of the first decisions Miller and Henry had to make was where to set up headquarters. It was the opinion of Muhammad 'Ali Tawil, the local customs officer and government representative, and other Saudi Arabs that Hofuf, in the great al-Hasa oasis, would make the best headquarters location. Miller and Henry had their doubts, and they could be satisfied only by a look.

Within the first week, accompanied by their guards, cooks, interpreters, drivers, mechanics and hangers-on, and carrying shovels to help them get the cars through, they explored westward as far as al-Hinnat and southward to Qatif and its great palm gardens and flowing wells. They spent a day on Tarut Island. Five days after their landing, on September 28, they were walking around among the limestone hills called Jabal Dhahran that they and Davies had seen from Bahrain. Reasonably sure that the structure had good closure, they marked this area as one worth detailed study, and named it the Dammam Dome. By the last day of the month they were down at Hofuf, where they set up a kind of office in a house rented from the great merchant family of the Gosaibis, Bahrain agents of King Ibn Sa'ud. A few days later they drove north

to al-Hinnat and closed the traverse of their first Arabian reconnaissance.

By the end of those first hot disorganized days, more things were clear than that the humpy jabals near Dammam warranted closer study. It had been made abundantly clear that al-Hasa simply wouldn't do. The flies were maddening, the palm gardens were cut by canals that bred far too many anopheles mosquitoes, and the canals had very inadequate bridges for motor traffic.

Miller chose instead Jubail, the place of their landing. It was, by comparison with Qatif and Hofuf, a cool and breezy town, and it had a fair port for the landing of supplies from Bahrain. So he kept as a branch office the Hofuf house the Gosaibis had provided, and had the Gosaibis engage him another in Jubail. It could have been much worse—an enclosed court 300 feet square, with rooms built against the inside of the wall and only one great arched gate. There was plenty of locked space for storing equipment. The roof was open: they found early that it was a good place to sleep. All the house needed was a few modern improvements, and all the two pioneers needed was reinforcement and supplies.

Reinforcement came first to Jiddah, where Bill Lenahan, a baby-faced young University of California graduate with six years of South American experience, a marvelously persuasive and mellow speaking voice, and a temper like a wildcat, arrived on October 18. His arrival caused no ripple in the lives of the party in al-Hasa, for he was 750 air miles away, an indefinite time by the Saudi telegraph, seven to ten racking days by car, more than two weeks by the fastest racing camel. But the al-Hasa pioneers felt solidly strengthened by the arrival at al-'Uqair on October 22 of a geologist named J.W. (Soak) Hoover, with a mechanic, a helper, two drivers and three Ford touring cars. Still reacting as if he had only a few days before al-Hasa would sink into the sea, Miller wasted not an hour on indoctrination or acclimatizing: he got Hoover unloaded and brought him straight to the Dammam Dome, where he and Henry set up a camp nine miles south of the village of Dammam to start the detailed study of the jabal area. They had with them two cars, not too mobile in the dune sand, and a driver and a mechanic whose information on the high-compression engine was somewhat indefinite.

As soon as the reinforcements arrived Twitchell took the two government cars and the remains of his Hijaz retinue and made his fourth and final trip across Arabia. The man whose explorations and recommendations had guided the King's decision to talk to Socal (which on November 8 created a subsidiary named California Arabian Standard Oil Company—Casoc) would end his connection with the company at the close of the month, after he had helped Bill Lenahan get established in the Bait Baghdadi in Jiddah.

Immediately after Twitchell's departure, as if to emphasize both the need of good government relations and the difficulty of maintaining them, Muhammad

'Ali Tawil, the local customs officer, got it into his head that he was obligated to collect duty on the food and supplies Miller had shipped in. Until then Tawil and the Americans had got on very well: obviously Tawil and the local Amir had strict instructions to be friendly, agreeable and helpful; as for the Americans, they were determinedly being the pleasantest people the Arabs had ever known. But on the duty problem Tawil was adamant. He read his orders that way. Miller, knowing that such duties were specifically forbidden in the Concession Agreement, refused to pay them. Away went a long, tangled, coded message to Lenahan asking him to straighten out the matter and have the Minister of Finance send the proper instructions to Tawil.

In Jubail, Tawil regularly came with his dignified white beard and requested payment of the duties. The geologists steadfastly refused. The quarters in the compound remained almost as bare as the tent camp at Dammam, without plumbing or electricity, refrigeration or fans or Flit. They ate rice and boiled sheep and dates, dates and boiled sheep and rice, and ate them with the less patience for thinking about the Stateside luxuries that lay piled up on Tawil's docks. Only the weather treated them well. Though at midday the temperatures were still in the nineties, and though they sometimes felt that they could wring water out of the air simply by closing their fists, the nights were cooler, and the shamals, which inland would be loaded with sand, came in at them in gusty rushes from the Gulf. This was what would one day be called "executive weather," the pleasantest time for visits of inspection by big brass from the States. The pioneers waited for Lenahan's reply, and ate their rice and sheep and dates, and got along.

On November 10 the beachhead expanded again. Art Brown and Tom Koch came into al-'Uqair with two $2\frac{3}{4}$-ton rear-wheel-drive trucks equipped with dual high-pressure tires. They brought also four Hijazi drivers whom Twitchell had taken to Bahrain for training in the Bapco shops. Then on the 21st, Hugh Burchfiel arrived, fussy, finicky, able, bald as a cue ball. He had come out from the States with a mechanic named Felix Dreyfus, but Dreyfus had burned his hand and had stayed behind on Bahrain for treatment. Early in December an engineer, Allen White, came ashore with three pickup trucks, an interpreter and a cook. All were welcome, especially White, whose seasoning in foreign oil work had begun in Venezuela, and who had been one of the Bapco pioneers on Bahrain. He had surveyed that entire concession, and was the only real Arabic scholar in Casoc's early days in Saudi Arabia. The interpreter, then only a boy, was 'Ajab Khan, who had come originally from Peshawar, now in Pakistan, and who over the ensuing years was of great service to the Company.

Meanwhile, the disagreement with Muhammad Tawil continued. Tawil came around regularly to collect the duty; Miller continued to refuse it; the canned goods and dehydrated foods that they coveted piled up in the Jubail and al-'Uqair customs houses. Finally, it came to a head when Tawil, demanding the duty which it was his job to collect, lost his temper and rose to stamp out of the room. But before he could reach the door he met a messenger, part of the Saudi telegraph system, bearing the word of Abdullah Sulaiman that the food for the geological parties was to be admitted free. The embattled geologists praised the name of Lenahan and the institution of the Jiddah office and radically altered their diet.

By Christmas time, when Miller went over to Bahrain to meet "Doc" Nomland, chief geologist from Socal headquarters, the landing party had had its period of trial and discovered some of its errors. The location of their headquarters at Jubail was confirmed when Nomland, coming back with Miller and the new mechanic, Dreyfus, took one look at Qatif's picturesque, inadequately bridged and wriggler-filled ditches. At that time Hoover, Henry and Burchfiel were working out of Jubail and Koch and Brown in the country out from Hofuf, where Allen White had charge of the sub-office. They had begun to cover ground, among them, and had learned a few things. They had discovered that the trucks, with their hard dual tires, were worthless in sand, though they could use one for limited service in Hofuf. The other was left for a while at al-'Uqair and then with some difficulty got up to Jubail after the winter rains. The usefulness of these trucks was more inspirational than practical. The experience of digging and brushing and pushing them out of sand and *sabkha* was good for the character; it was also good for the imagination. It demonstrated comprehensively and at once the need for all-wheel drive and low-pressure tires in this country where all work for a good many years would be off-road work. This was a challenge that would beget a response, a necessity that would be the mother of invention, and some of the pioneers in al-Hasa would be pioneers also in the development of low-pressure flotation of heavy equipment. For the moment, they cursed their trucks and found little use for them. The touring cars did get around, though they were often stuck and though they showed a pernicious habit of breaking springs and front cross-members.

As for Arab-American relations, diplomats might have learned from either side. Except for the difficulty with Tawil about the duty on food, there had been nothing approximating an incident. The Americans were energetic and enthusiastic, knew their geology and went about their work as if they were in Colorado. The Amir of Jubail, the *qadi*, the guides, the soldiers, were friendly. Cautiously, visitors and residents explored each other's peculiarities. It was surprising to both sides to find that Arabs and Americans laughed in the same places; it was at first a possible irritation and later a basis for respect when the Americans found Saudi Arabs tough, independent, and disinclined to give in in an argument, and the Saudis found Americans more willing to fraternize than the British.

Still, there were minor sources of friction. The soldiers supplied by the Amir of al-Hasa, Abdullah ibn Jiluwi, Ibn Sa'ud's first cousin once removed and old battle companion, were well-behaved enough, but there were 16 of them to each field party, far too many, the Americans thought, simply to demonstrate to the Bedouins that the foreigners traveled under the protection of Ibn Sa'ud. Their supplies and gear burdened a dozen camels, and the flocks of animals that were necessary for their support seemed to draw after them all the flies in Arabia. Since the trucks had proved useless in cross-country work, all camp luggage had to come by camel, and though a good pack camel could take 400 pounds, it required many such camels to keep two geologists and their keepers and protectors in the field. The result was they were all but immobilized by the size of their supporting parties and the amount of work done was very much less than the geologists, left to themselves, could have done alone.

There was, however, no apparent way of cutting down, for not only did the Government insist that the soldiers were necessary for their protection, but the Arabs were constitutionally and culturally inhibited from combining jobs. A driver drove, a mechanic repaired, a camel driver tended the camels, a cook would not be caught dead doing a houseboy's job of serving, a houseboy would quit before he would remove a cook's kettle from the fire. As a result, whenever any two geologists took off into the desert, there went with them an interpreter, a cook, a cook's helper, a houseboy, a mechanic, a mechanic's helper, a driver, anywhere from 15 to 30 soldiers, and four camel drivers. Their equipment would include a Ford touring car, a half-ton pickup, a minimum of 20 riding camels, and a dozen big baggage camels. On these last would be piled three 10×20 tents of goat hair, with grass matting for the floors, a 10×12 silk tent, collapsible tables, chairs, cots, food, cooking utensils, gasoline stoves and lamps, and (if it hadn't already been sent out on a supplementary camel train) gasoline in five-gallon cans.

Also aboard somewhere or set up for use en route would be a chronometer, a transit, sketchboards of a type designed by Miller allowing use of continuous rolls of sketching paper, three Brunton compasses, drafting equipment, four one-gallon water cans, six *ghirbas* or waterskins holding from six to ten gallons each, four oversized waterbags, and an assortment of tools and spare motor parts and spare tires and spare front springs. No radios: those didn't come along until the spring of 1934. No geological party went into any area without first notifying the government representative, who notified the Ministry of Finance, which then issued permission and assigned guards and soldiers. To get such an outfit going was like starting a military offensive.

Nevertheless they were beginning to know their job—then the preliminary job of geological reconnaissance—and were beginning to get it done. They had already discovered that they desperately needed an airplane, but also that it would be some time before a plane could be shipped out to them. So, by car and camel, they worked doggedly on.

Hoover and Henry, who had been detailing the Dammam Dome, had gone over to join Burchfiel, mapping the country west of Jubail as far as al Haba, and down the coast to Qatif. Brown and Koch were still working out of their camp at 'Arai'ra, between Hofuf and Hinnat. Allen White was still in the Hofuf office, keeping Brown and Koch in touch with the rest of the parties and sending them the things they needed in the way of supplies. And Doc Nomland, having given his blessing to all those arrangements, was driving to Jiddah to decide if Socal would compete for another concession in the Hijaz. The car gave out before he arrived and Lenahan and the Government had to sent out rescuers to bring him in. He went on to the Northern Hijaz, found the rock all igneous and recommended that Socal forget it.

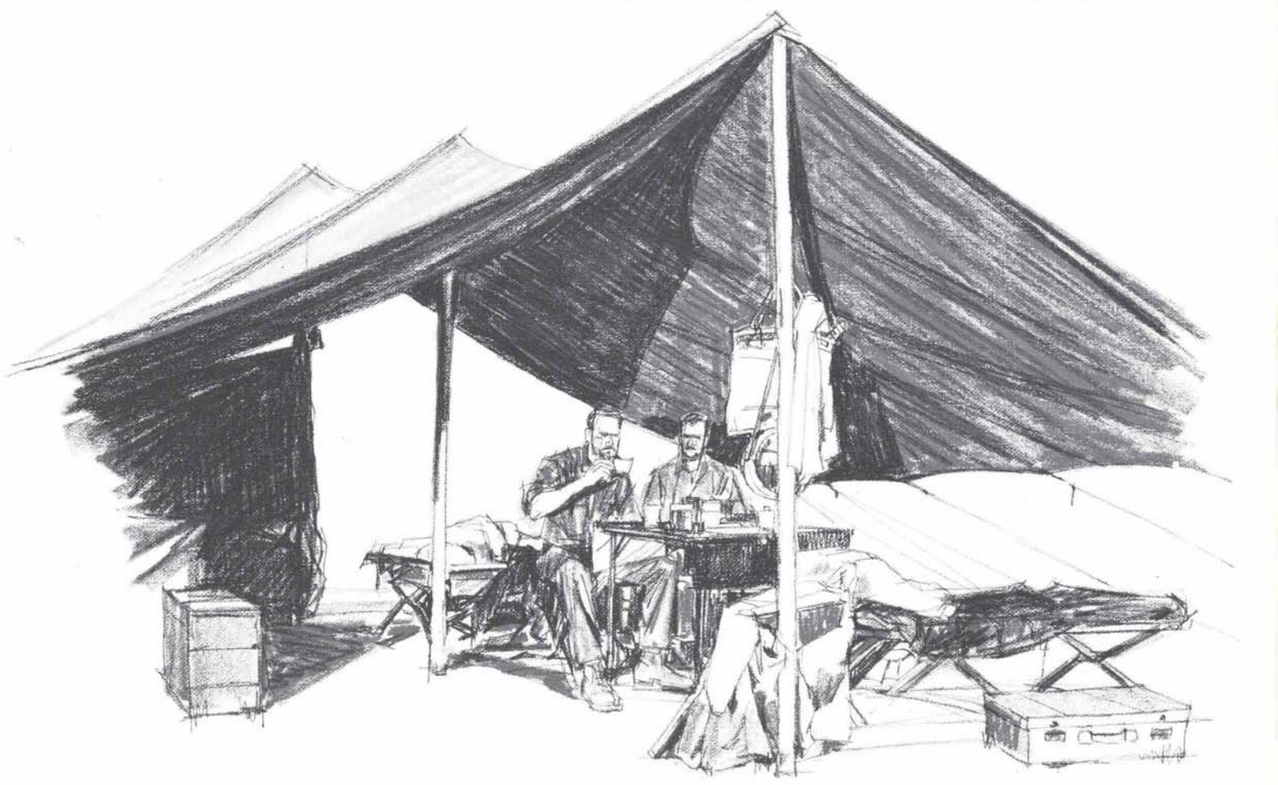
If the men who made the beachhead had thought

to add up the hours they worked, they would have found themselves doing time and a half or double time, but they seldom thought of the hours. If the weather was good, they worked, lining themselves out across the low sand ridges and the dunes; and with Brunton compass and speedometer they made great traverses, mapping as they went and checking the traverses with Brunton triangulation and occasional astronomical fixes. It wasn't exactly mapping of a geodetic accuracy, but it was far and away the most accurate mapping that had ever been done in Arabia, and for their immediate purposes it was quite accurate enough.

In bad weather, when shamals blew the whole world into a gritty red-brown darkness, or heat waves jiggled the jabals and clanged in the brainpan like gongs, or when, as it did in December and January, the wind grew raw and icy, they stayed in their tents, inked in the field pencil work on the maps and slept. Once in a while they took part of a day and went gazelle hunting with the soldiers. But most days they were in the field all day and at their drafting boards half the night, and up at five for another run and slowly, the unrelieved and featureless country began to take shape on their rolls of sketch paper, more real there than it sometimes seemed in the heat dance of noon or with the shadowless dusk of a sandstorm sweeping across it.

In spite of constant and acute discomforts, this was a contented group of men by and large. They grew mighty beards, competitively, and horsed around and tried their muscles as young men will, and mourned, without complete conviction, the lost company of ladies and the drink that used to cheer a glum time of day. They watched carefully to avoid friction with their Arab helpers, and did their level best to be charitable when some Arab customs jarred their sense of logic. They practiced their Arabic on children and soldiers and houseboys and visitors from the towns, drank pots of sweet tea and cardamom-flavored coffee and learned not to use the left hand in eating. Finding Arabs like other people elsewhere, they learned to like some of them better than others, and they made some progress toward knowing themselves and the country in which they worked.

These were the days, it seemed later, when Saudi Arabia's astonishing push toward modernization began, the days when a revolution of *things* began in eastern



Saudi Arabia. For whatever they may think of the nations which produce and possess them, whatever distaste they have for their beliefs, their dress and their politics, no people in history has been able to resist for half an hour the *things* that people like this small contingent of geologists bring with them. The Saudis were no different. However odd they found these newcomers among them, the things this crowd of tinkerers, mechanics and gadgeteers brought with them, imported later or ingeniously improvised, were irresistible.

Shortly after the first supplies began to arrive, a boy who had been hired to supply the Casoc compound with water ran into a very odd situation. He emptied the usual number of *ghirbas* of water into a 55-gallon drum at the side of the house, only to see it vanish. He inspected the drum for a leak, shook his head and brought more water. Again he looked in. Again it had vanished. It wasn't until he had spent two hours pouring water in that the level of water reached the top of the drum, at which point he wrapped his *ghutra* across the lower part of his face and hastened uneasily away. What he didn't know was that the tinkerers and gadgeteers club had spent an hour or two installing a huge indoor tank and hooking it up to the drum outside.

Such improvisation was just the beginning. When, in the spring of 1934, a shipload of tools, nuts, bolts, wrenches, dies, pipes, fittings, wire, insulators and other industrial bric-a-brac cascaded off a supply ship, the tinkerers and gadgeteers club really went to work. They installed showers fed by gravity from the roof, modernized the mud-brick privy with a combination of lime and Flit guns and, with a hundred yards of fabric screen that some foresighted individual had ordered, screened off their building from the ever-present swarms of flies.

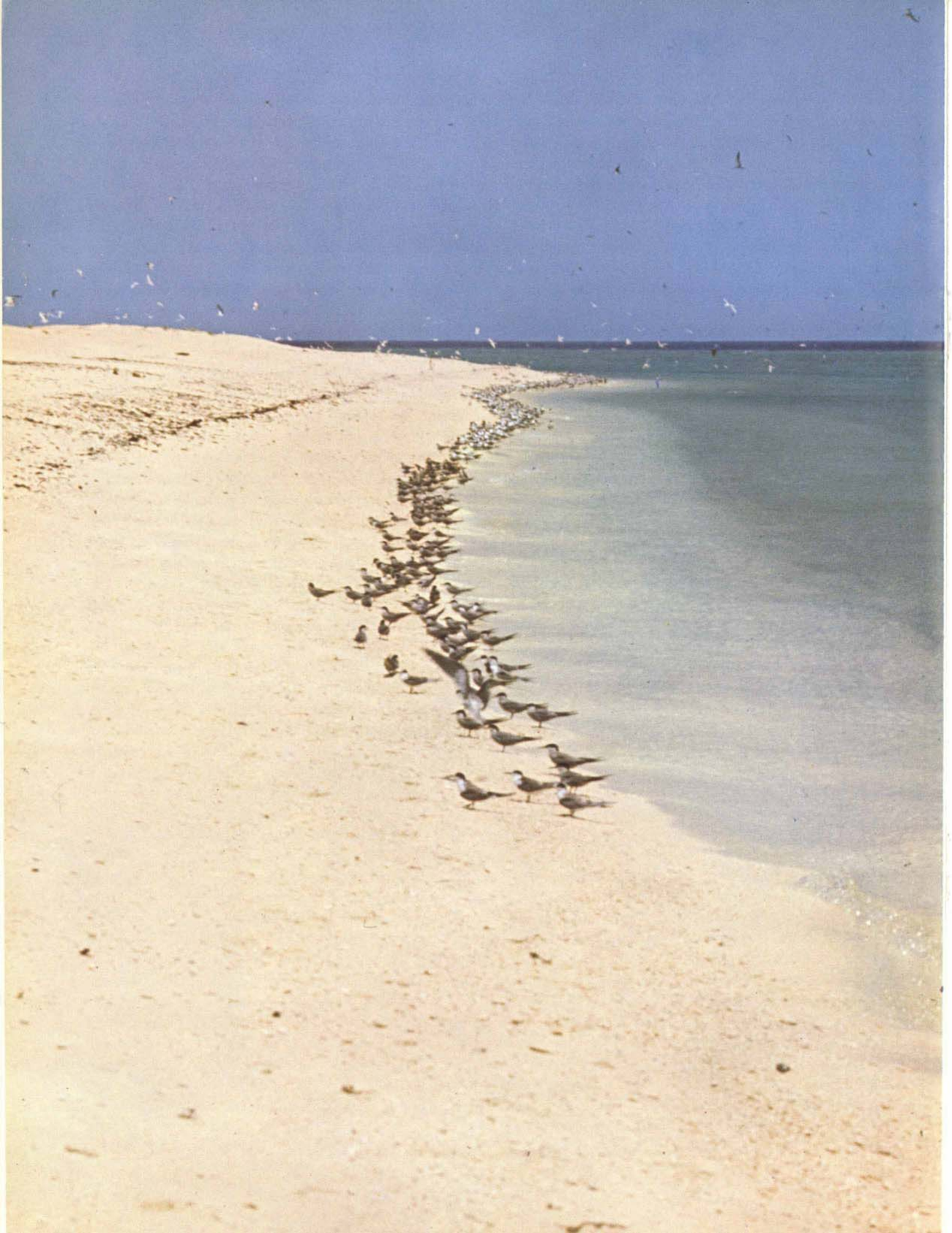
One of the major improvements in their lives came about with the construction of a still that could produce several gallons of distilled water a day. That innovation, some of them insisted later, saved at least the sanity and possibly the lives of the hypochondriacs who tasted water the way the Borgias tasted wine. And if they feared, as some did, that distilled water would not replace the minerals they lost by evaporation, they could judiciously mix it with well water until the flavor and saline content suited them. They had as many formulas for drinking water as Americans at home have for martinis.

For many Arabs the most fascinating innovations were the two 32-volt, 3,000-watt Kohler generators. Many Arabs had seen electricity on Bahrain, of course, but the less sophisticated were quite startled when the little glass balls hanging from the ceilings suddenly lighted up one night. A few may have suspected the work of *jinns*, but most noticed that the wires from the little balls led into the walls and out to a power panel of brass knobs and handles of black wood and on to the gasoline engines in the compound. They noticed too that along with the light bulbs there appeared on window sills in the dining room and at various spots in the living quarters, and even up on the roof where the Americans were sleeping, certain small instruments with spinning blades inside a wire frame. At a signal they began to turn with a humming noise, then disappeared in a blur. It didn't take them long to learn that it was dangerous to poke their fingers behind the wire and that it was pleasant to sit in front of the current of cool air on a hot day.

For the tinkerers' society the photo lab was a major challenge. The aerial films that would be used when the Company's airplane arrived were 10 inches wide and 100 feet long; there were no trained helpers; the water came in lukewarm even from the oversized waterbags where they cooled it by evaporation. And the lab was very dark and hot and oppressive. After a time, in the outside wall of the darkroom there appeared a loop of six-inch pipe like a loop of gut from a sheep's opened belly, and this fitted into two five-gallon gasoline tins, one on top of another, which had been stuffed with wool made from fibers of glass. Somewhere within these cans or inside the loop of pipe or inside the lab was a fan, and those who worked in the darkroom after that reported that even in a sandstorm the air which blew from the end of the pipe was clean and almost cool.

All this made an impression in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. For when they had turned on the fans, shot down the flies with their Flit guns, screened the windows, turned on the lights and spread oilcloth across their tables, they began to entertain. And when the Amir came and the *ra'is al-baladiyah* or mayor came, and the *qadi*, and dignitaries such as Muhammad Tawil, Muhammad Gosaibi of the great merchant family, and Arif Effendi, chief of the local Saudi police, it was not long before they remarked on the value of these comforts and casually inquired where they might obtain some of the same. Long before anyone knew the phrase, a revolution of rising expectations had begun. Saudi Arabia would never be the same.

TO BE CONTINUED



OF TURTLES AND TERNS

BY TIMOTHY J. BARGER
PHOTOGRAPHY BY KHALIL ABOU EL-NASR

Some jottings and musings on the wildlife of Juraid Island

On a hot, pitch-black early morning last summer, six American college students, all sons of employes of the Arabian American Oil Company (Aramco), set out from one of the boys' houses to spend four days and nights on Juraid Island, a tiny, remote island in the Arabian Gulf. They were going to Juraid to study marine and wildlife and collect specimens under the guidance of a Medical Department epidemiologist and a natural history specialist and to star in a documentary motion picture being filmed by Aramco's supervisor of film projects.

Into a huge Kenworth truck standing on a dark street beside the meeting place, they piled all the gear and supplies needed for the trip: tents, aluminum boats, fishing gear, scuba tanks, electric generators, emergency two-way radio equipment and a newly-fabricated cage to protect underwater cameramen from sharks while they filmed the teeming marine life in the reefs off the island. There was also enough food to sink the island. The boys themselves, who had grown up in Saudi Arabia before going away to school, brought with them such important equipment as a deep understanding of the ways of their adopted country and an enthusiasm for exploration. Each, furthermore, was a practiced scuba diver.

From Dhahran they drove to Jubail, loaded the gear onto dhows, made the three-hour trip to the island, pitched their tents and went to work. The boys were: Charlie Armstrong, San Jose State College; Tim Barger and Jeff Jones, University of Santa Clara, all of California; Steve Bates, Goddard College, Plainfield, Vermont; Mike Benjamin, University of Oregon; and Jim Mandis, who attends Regis College in Denver. —The Editors

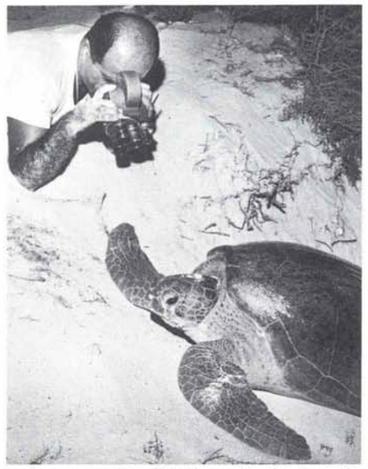
The first thing we noticed about Juraid Island were the birds.

There were thousands of them, it seemed, and they rose in flocks from the beaches and wheeled into the sky screeching and cawing. Some of us who had seen Hitchcock's *The Birds* thought the continual screeching added an eerie flavor to the place and all of us were delighted since it was the profusion of wildlife that had brought us there in the first place.

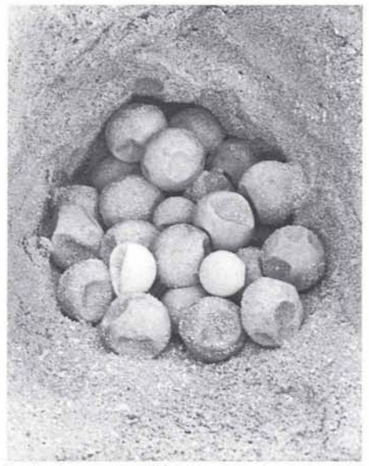
Juraid Island is a low, sandy, shrub-covered islet, bigger than it looks and located about 20 miles northeast of Jubail, an old port on the coast of Saudi Arabia. We had picked it because it was supposed to be an important biological center of the Arabian Gulf. We were not disappointed. In addition to the birds the island is alive with sea turtles, crabs, lizards and mice. One skittish member of the expedition even reported seeing a tiger so we assumed there might be some wild cats prowling about too.

Our first research, however, had to do with terns not tigers and we immediately made a most interesting discovery: three varieties of this graceful sea bird had apparently divided up the island in accord with the "territorial imperative." This is the theory that each species of animal and sometimes each animal has a drive to possess his own bit of property—a drive, according to the theory, that is as important as the drives for food and sex. In any case the terns *had* divided up the island: the yellow billed or lesser crested tern *(Sterna bengalensis)* occupying the northern shore and using it as nesting grounds, the bridled tern *(Sterna anaethetus)* inhabiting the shrubs and bushes of the island itself and the smaller flocks of white cheeked terns *(Sterna repressa)* clinging to the less desirable beaches.

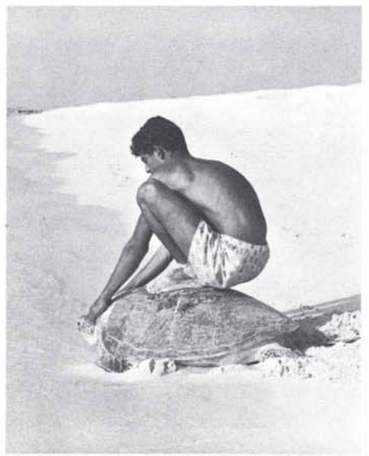
The terns, of course, were not the only kind of birds we saw. There were also some *Upupa epops* commonly known as the "hud-hud." The Arabs regard the hud-hud as a good omen and since our trip so do I; we sighted them only on our arrival at Juraid and at our departure, and our stay was not only without mishap but blessed with extraordinary luck: the chance to observe the nesting



An Aramco cameraman films the nesting of a sea turtle.



The female lays up to 100 leathery eggs in a sandy hole.



A giant sea turtle easily gives a Saudi youth a lift.

of the green sea turtles from beginning to end.

For the great green sea turtle—a 300-pound creature known scientifically as *Chelonia mydas* and popularly as the main source of turtle soup—nesting is no easy matter. Not, at least, for the female. During the nesting season—June to October—the turtles mate offshore after which, on some subsequent dark night, the female swims to the island to lay her eggs. She may go ashore as many as seven times, at 13-day intervals.

Once on the beach the going gets rough. She has to make her way uphill to a point above the high water mark. Unused to moving her 300-pound body on land, she climbs slowly, panting and gasping, resting for a minute every 30 seconds, her eyes streaming tears. The tears purge sand from her eyes and possibly rid her system of excess salt, but her climb is so hard that we found ourselves wondering if the tears weren't really for the young which she will never see.

Reaching her destination the mother digs a nest, using her fore and hind flippers. The nest is a pit about four to five feet across and two feet deep and the shore of Juraid is dotted with them. Within this pit she digs a secondary hole; this is the actual nest and she prepares it by first loosening the sand with her rear flippers and then carefully lifting it out until she has a depression eight inches in diameter and a foot deep. In this hole she lays her eggs. There are maybe 75 to 100 eggs, each shiny-white, leathery and the size of golf balls. She then covers the hole thoroughly, kneading the sand in her flippers much as a baker kneads his dough. After the sand is sufficiently kneaded she partially fills the main pit and then, her body exhausted and her eyes weeping profusely, she waddles back to the sea and swims away.

Through all this, she gets no help from the male. He never comes ashore unless he has either some irritation of the shell or a disease. This peculiarity is used to advantage by Iranian turtle hunters. They enlodge a small dart, attached to a line and a small buoy, in the turtle's shell. Then they follow the turtle to the beach where they easily capture the helpless creature.

About 60 days later—between August and late November—the eggs begin to hatch and the baby turtles dig themselves out of their nests and make their journey to the sea. Comic creatures, with bodies the size of silver dollars and oversized flippers, they rush straight to the sea tripping over their flippers all the way. It's a funny performance, but one touched with poignancy too, because their awkwardness makes them easy prey to their enemies. In the daytime the terns swoop down on them; in the night hermit crabs, sinister sand crabs and rodents. One member of our expedition just turned away for a few minutes while he was playing with a baby turtle and when he returned, it was dead—beheaded by a large hermit crab.

In the water the baby turtle has even more enemies than on land for it is defenseless against any large fish, and in the reefs that extend out from Juraid more than a quarter of a mile into the Gulf, there are many, many large fish.

These reefs, though basically composed of brain coral *(Meandra)* and antler coral *(Acropora palmata)* are embellished with countless other types of coral and marine growth that have created in the reefs gaily-colored mazes of canyons, tunnels and plateaus.

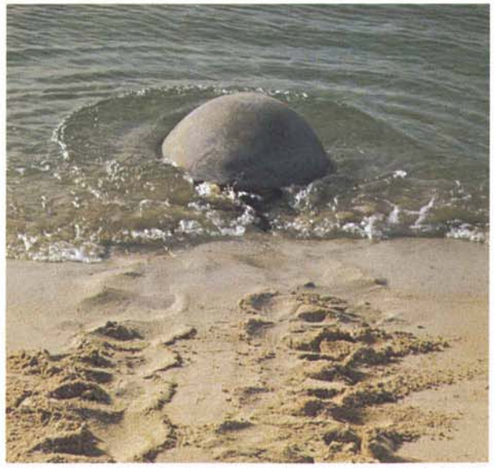
The inhabitants of these reefs are as varied as the inhabitants of any big city. There are the invertebrates. There is the cone shell, a mollusk which sheathes within its beautiful shell a lethal barb that can kill a man. There are the delicate sea anemones (anthozoas) ranging in color from deep purple to bright green and sometimes, living among the anemones in amused immunity to the poisonous tentacles, there are also the lowly sea urchins (echinoderms of the genus *Diadema*) safe behind their needle-sharp spines.

The reefs teem with fish of every sort: the stately angelfish, the smaller

Untidy and unshaven, after four days on the island, the students and J. P. Benjamin, producer, return to mainland.

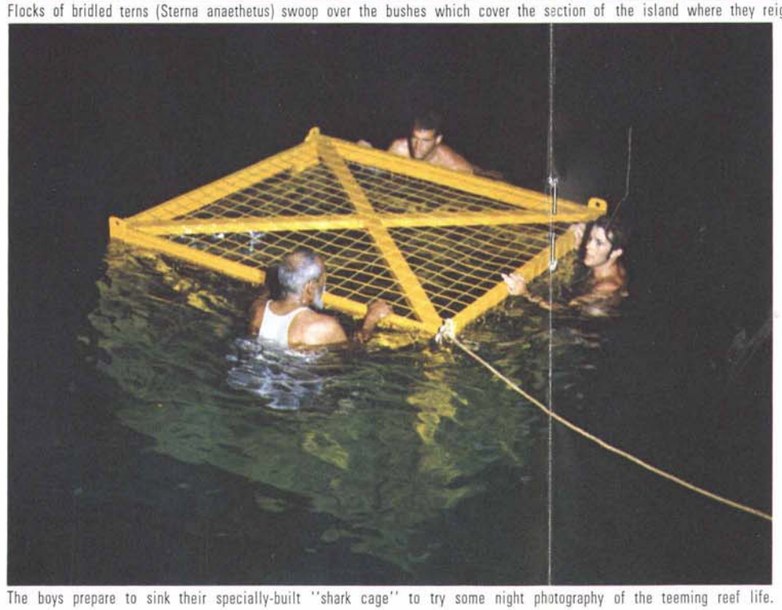
Three varieties of tern, students reported, predominate on the island.

While the students collected specimens they left one of their dhows at anchor in the shallow waters off the tip of Juraid Island, here scarcely more than an exposed sandbank.

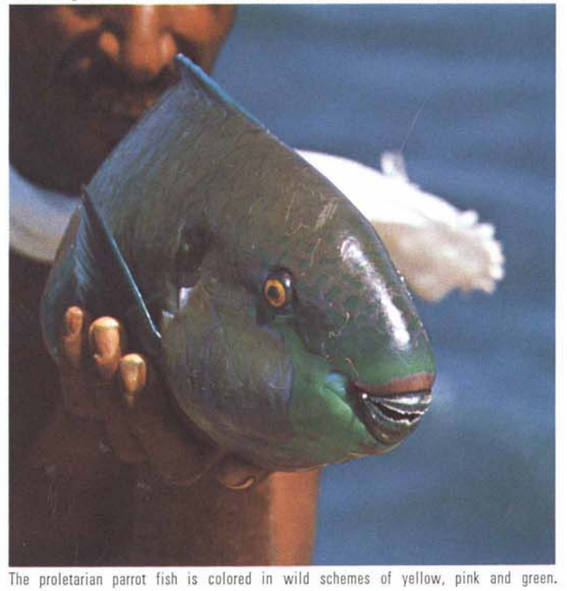


Nesting over, a weary female turtle drags her heavy bulk toward the sea.

Flocks of bridled terns (Sterna anaethetus) swoop over the bushes which cover the section of the island where they reign unchallenged in what students said was an example of the "territorial imperative."



The boys prepare to sink their specially-built "shark cage" to try some night photography of the teeming reef life.



The proletarian parrot fish is colored in wild schemes of yellow, pink and green.

more brightly-hued butterfly fish, the proletarian parrot fish loudly colored in wild schemes of yellows, pinks, greens, blacks, countless schools of pelagic fish, some nearly transparent, others reflecting light off their bodies like tiny mirrors. Amid this flurry of color and activity lies the lethargic grouper basking in the sun.

As in all communities, however, there are deadly elements too. There is the ornate, delicately colored zebra fish *(Scopaenidae pterois)* confident in its possession of 21 deadly spines. The anti-social moray eel (family *Muraedinae*) waits in its hole for a victim, its powerful jaws working slowly. Inoffensive sting rays *(Dasyatidae)* flap their winglike bodies as they drift through coral canyons apparently unaware of the lethal barb at the base of their whiplike tails.

Occasionally we sighted sea snakes too *(Hydrophis)* ominously moving their ribbonlike bodies through the water. The Gulf sea snake is one of the deadliest creatures in the world. Its venom, although it's an academic point, is fifty times as potent as that of a king cobra, to which, in fact, it is related. Fortunately the sea snakes are generally timid, but nevertheless we kept a wary eye on them; they're too dangerous to ignore.

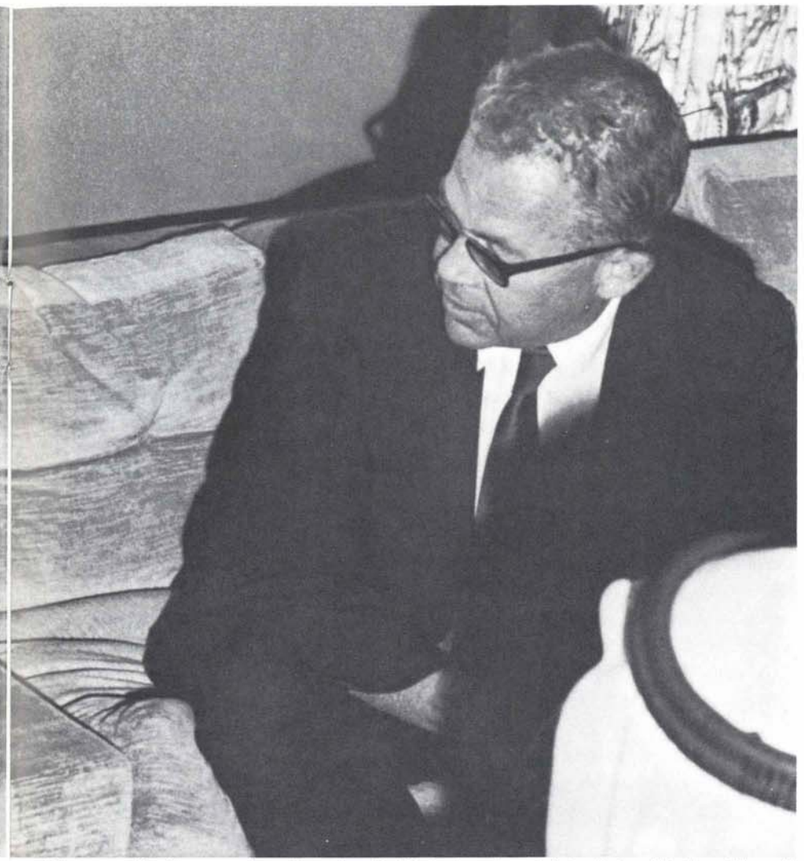
In the waters off Juraid, there are also many types of sharks. We sighted a six-foot Hammerhead shark *(Sphyna zygaena)* one of the fastest of the shark family and a proven man-eater. However, one member of our expedition equipped with a special spearhead that explodes a shotgun shell on contact went out and killed it with ease.

Four days was not nearly long enough to do more than make superficial observations on Juraid but the wildlife was so varied and rich that when we left, tired and unshaven, our specimens in hand, we carried away memories almost as colorful as the creatures that live there. Memories and a determination to return.

Timothy J. Barger, a student at the University of Santa Clara in California, grew up in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia and still spends summers there.

King Faisal of Saudi Arabia grants an interview to Tom Brady, Beirut-based Middle East correspondent for the **New York Times**, who has covered the area for the past three years. Brady is only one of the scores of foreign correspondents who are based in Beirut and report events in the Arab world to the outside world.

King Hussein of Jordan holds a press conference in Amman for members of the international press corps during the troubled events of last summer when the West Bank of his Kingdom was occupied.



Through an interpreter, Joe Alex Morris, Jr., chief of the Middle East Bureau of the **Los Angeles Times**, talks to Arab refugees.

NEWS FROM THE ARAB WORLD

"That's a good story," she said: "Does it say who wrote it?"
"Yeah. A guy called Joe Alex Morris, Jr. from the Los Angeles Times."

BY ELIAS ANTAR

In the Canadian city of Vancouver one day last July, Dr. John Richmond sat at his breakfast table reading his daily copy of the *Vancouver Sun*. He read the headlines and glanced at the tennis results on the sports page as his wife put coffee, eggs, honey and toast on the table and sat down opposite him. Then a story on the front page caught his eye.

"Listen to this," the doctor said, "It's a story about Arab refugees from the war last month." "Go ahead, dear, I'm listening," Anne said between sips of coffee.

"I'll read you the beginning. It's written from Amman, the capital of Jordan," Richmond said. This is what the doctor read:

"The little girl stood patiently in line.

"She was barefoot, and her once brightly colored smock was grimy brown after weeks of continuous wear. In her right hand, she held a bright galvanized tin water pail.

"The line of women moved slowly forward, toward the back end of a Mercedes water-tanker truck. The driver, a big rough Bedouin with his kaffiyah wrapped around his head against the desert breeze, manipulated the rubber hose skillfully from one water pail to the next.

"Their pails filled, the women balanced them gracefully on their heads and moved off to their tents.

Milan J. ("Mike") Kubic, correspondent for **Newsweek**.

"At last, it was the little girl's turn. As she held forth her pail, the last drops of water splashed into the bottom. She just looked, and continued to hold up the pail.

" 'Ma feesh mai (no more water)' the driver told her, a cigarette dangling from his lower lip. She stood there, as if she didn't understand, with the pail still proffered.

"The driver repeated it several times, his voice rising in volume each time. Still the barefoot little girl stood there. Finally he shrugged and turned away, got into the cab and drove off.

"The little girl watched him go, not a trace of emotion on her face, as the big Mercedes truck lurched across the desert towards the highway. She was a refugee from the recent Arab-Israeli war, and perhaps there was no emotion left in her, not even fear.

"Dickensian scenes like this one are everyday occurrences in the Middle East today in the wake of the war. This one took place at a spot appropriately named Wadi Daleil, or 'the Valley of the Lost'."

Richmond looked up from his reading at Anne, the eggs on the plate before her growing cold and her coffee momentarily forgotten.

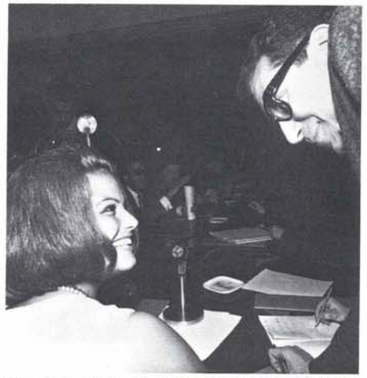
"It goes on to say there are about 230,000 Arabs displaced because of the war, crowded in schools and camps like this poor kid, and the U.N. is going to need an extra $8 million to care for them," the doctor said.

"What a mess," Anne remarked, shaking her head sadly. "That's a good story though," she added. "Does it say who wrote it?"

"Yeah. A guy called Joe Alex Morris, Jr. from the Los Angeles Times."

Two days earlier and halfway around the world in Beirut, Lebanon, Joe Alex Morris, Jr., chief of the Middle East Bureau of the *Los Angeles Times*, was just starting to read through the local papers when a messenger came in with a cable from his editors in Los Angeles. Morris tore open the cable envelope and read his instructions: fly to Jordan, investigate refugee conditions following the war and file a story within 36 hours. Morris booked a first class seat on the evening Royal Jordanian jet to Amman, phoned his wife Ulla, asking her to pack his overnight bag, and cabled an acknowledgment to his paper. Then he settled down to finish the papers.

That evening Morris boarded the red and white Caravelle and headed for Amman, a short hour's flight across some of the loveliest areas of the Middle East: the twinkling lights of Lebanon's mountain villages, the snow-streaked summit of Mount Hermon and, off to the left, Damascus, a spray of jewels glittering against the dark velvet of the surrounding desert. In Amman he breezed through customs, took a taxi to the



Elias Antar of the AP with actress Claudia Cardinale.

al-Urdon Hotel, the city's biggest and best, where his familiar figure brought smiles of greeting from the staff. From his room, he telephoned a few Jordanian sources to say hello, tune in on the situation in Jordan and obtain the names of the officials in charge of the refugees who were still pouring across the Jordan River from Israeli-occupied land. The sources—Arab businessmen, Foreign Ministry functionaries and Royal Palace officials — warned Morris, an American, to be sure to take a guide along from the Ministry of Information. Angry refugees, they said, were showing open hostility toward Americans. Before turning in, Morris also set up an appointment with an

Time's anchor man in the Middle East, Abu Sa'id Abu Rish.

official of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and walked the few hundred yards from his hotel to the Ministry of Information to arrange for a guide and a car to drive him to the camps.

Early the following day, Morris and his companion from the Ministry drove some 25 miles across the desert north of Amman to the Wadi Daleil Camp, where the correspondent was introduced to the refugees as "a man from Finland." There, as he took copious notes on what the refugees told him through the interpreter, he noticed the little girl with the water pail, waiting so pathetically in the choking, windblown dust of the squalid camp. He went on with the interviews, but his mind kept returning to the girl. What better symbol, he thought, of these homeless, hopeless Arabs than this little lost girl?

Back in Amman, Morris called on the officials who had been gathering facts and figures on the refugees since the end of the fighting three weeks before, checked UNRWA offices to find out what the agency was doing to care for them—and also to cross-check his other statistics. Finally, he talked to a well-informed diplomat for a briefing on the political situation in Jordan.

That evening he flew through the summer dusk back to Beirut, drove to his office, sat down at his Adler typewriter, clamped a Dutch cigar in the corner of his mouth, and began to write. When he had finished, he telephoned the Lebanese censor's office, told the censor what the story was about and got a prompt OK. He went down the corridor to the offices of United Press International (UPI), whose facilities he uses, turned it over to the UPI and waited while the story was telexed—at 60 words a minute—to a communications center in London used jointly by the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Washington Post*. From there, the story was sent by high-speed tape relay at 750 words per minute to Washington, then on by direct wire to the head offices of the *Los Angeles Times* on the West Coast.

The story had taken less than an hour to travel from Beirut to Los Angeles. Along the way, a copy had automatically been made in London for distribution to the European subscribers to the *Los Angeles Times/Washington Post* news service. And from Washington the news service sent it out on leased wires to the American and Canadian subscribers to the service, one of which is the *Vancouver Sun*. Thus Dr. Richmond, in Vancouver, Canada, was able

Paul Delifer of Agence France Presse checks Teletype.

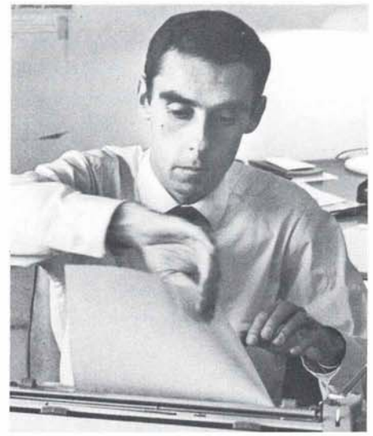
to read a lucid, moving story on the plight of the Arab refugees less than two days after Morris's editors sent him off to get it.

Joe Alex Morris is only one of the scores of foreign correspondents based in Beirut who report events in the Middle East to the outside world. They cover everything from war to peace, shipwrecks to art exhibitions, revolutions to bank failures, and their dispatches are published wherever newspapers exist.

More than 120 correspondents make their homes in Beirut, covering the area for publications in 28 countries as far apart as the United States and Czechoslovakia, Sweden and Indonesia, Yugoslavia and Senegal. One hundred and seven publications from all over the world receive dispatches from their own correspondents in Beirut, and news agencies with offices in the Lebanese capital provide coverage for thousands more in more than 100 countries.

The cream of the press, radio and television in the U.S., Britain, France and West Germany are among those represented in Beirut, including the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the Associated Press, United Press International, *Time-Life*, *Newsweek*, the National Broadcasting Corporation, the McGraw-Hill news service, the *Christian Science Monitor*, the *London Times*, the *Daily Telegraph*, Reuters, the British Broadcasting Corporation, *Le Monde* and *L'Express* of Paris, and one of West Germany's three nationwide newspapers, the *Süddeutche Zeitung*, and its news service, DPA. There are 19 American news organizations with correspondents in Beirut, 16 organizations from Britain, 11 from West Germany, 9 from France and 2 from the Soviet Union—TASS, the official Soviet news agency, and *Pravda*—and 1 from Yugoslavia, Tanjug, the Yugoslav agency. By comparison, there are only 17 resident correspondents in Damascus, and usually not too many more than that in Cairo and Tel Aviv.

Not all of the 124 correspondents officially listed in the Beirut foreign press corps are full-time career newspapermen, however. Only some 50 correspondents, including three women, provide the bulk of serious coverage of events in the Middle East. Many in the press corps are not foreign at all, but Arab nationals working for overseas organizations—men like *Time's* Abu-



John Lawton, bureau chief of United Press International.

Sa'id Abu Rish, the magazine's anchor man in the Middle East for 18 years and Ihsan Hijazi, a *New York Times* stringer and editor of the invaluable *Arab World*, an English summary of news in the Arab press and radio. The remainder file dispatches only occasionally, or on special request, or very seldom, according to their disposition.

The 50 hard-core correspondents, like correspondents everywhere, tailor their work to suit the importance of the news and the needs of their newspapers, radio stations or wire services. The amount of copy they file—most of it focused on politics and economics—varies greatly, depending on whether the region is quiet or bubbling, but a conservative estimate of 10,000 to 12,000 words a day would not be far off. In times of crisis—such as the Arab-Israeli war last June—the sky's the limit and the daily average might leap to 90,000 words.

Some correspondents in Beirut cover only Lebanon, but the majority cover all the Arab Middle Eastern countries and Iran, with Turkey and Cyprus thrown in in some cases. The North African

states—Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco—are usually covered by correspondents based there or in Europe. Occasionally, a journalist in Beirut will have an extra wide beat, like Joe Morris, who covers all the territory from Morocco on the Atlantic Ocean to Iran. In extreme cases, the bailiwick may be intercontinental—George de Carvalho of *Life* magazine covered stories in Brazil and Nigeria and Tor Eigeland, a free-lance photographer who works frequently for *Time*, *Fortune* and *Newsweek*, has been as far as Australia on an assignment for *National Geographic*.

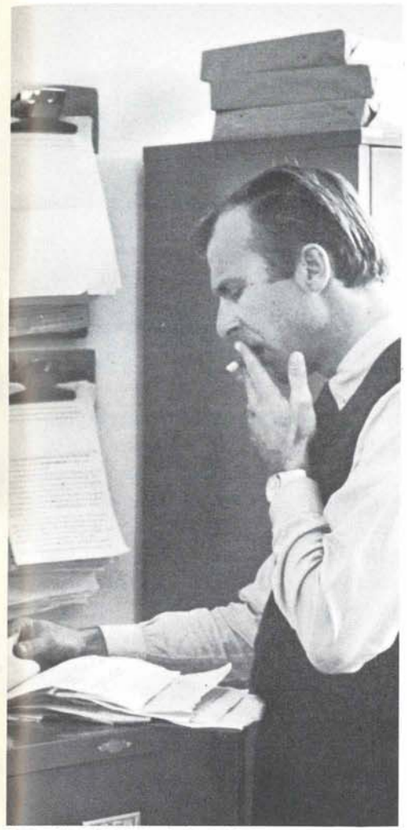
Correspondents from the U.S. and Europe are also continually passing through Beirut on special assignments but the most experienced eye belongs to the resident correspondent, and among the best are Morris, Tom Brady of the *New York Times*, Eric Downton and Dick Beeston of the *Daily Telegraph*, Nick Herbert of the *London Times*, Roy Essoyan and Dave Lancashire of the Associated Press, and Rudolph Chimelli of the *Süddeutche Zeitung*, to name but a very few.

Morris, whose writing matches the excellence of his reporting, has been a journalist for 20 years, but although his father is a noted newsman (who wrote the story of his life with the UPI in a book called *Deadline Every Minute*), Joe never studied journalism or thought of it as a career. "I just fell into it, and I like it because it's better than working," he says with a grin.

A native of Denver, Colorado, he broke in with the *Minneapolis Tribune* summers while studying at Harvard, spent a year on the *Hartford Times* after leaving college, then, in 1950, switched to UPI. He left the agency a short while later and joined an overseas oil company as a public relations man, but returned to UPI in 1953. Stationed first in London and then in Frankfurt, Morris covered the controversial visit of Russia's Bulganin and Khrushchev to Britain in 1956, during which England's top World War II frogman, Lionel Crabb, disappeared in mysterious circumstances.

In his study, with all Beirut spread out below, Morris tries to catch up on his reading despite 7-year-old Maria's teasing.

Ulla Morris and daughter Maria are old hands at packing a bag after a hurried telephone call from far-ranging Joe Alex, Jr.



In his office, Morris checks the day's incoming news bulletins.

In Yemen, Morris, and **Christian Science Monitor's** John Cooley.

Morris first came to the Middle East as a journalist in 1957, a year before the U.S. Marines landed in Lebanon. Except for short stints in the United States, he has been in the area ever since, some of the time based in Cairo, always on the run after such front page stories as Pope Paul's historical visit to Jerusalem in 1964, last June's war, and all the sudden upheavals of a land in ferment.

During this period, he worked for UPI, the *New York Herald Tribune* and *Newsweek* before becoming the *Los Angeles Times* Middle East Bureau Chief three years ago. He met his German-born wife Ulla in Cairo, where they were married in early 1959. Although Ulla has never worked in the press and devotes most of her time to their three unbelievably blonde daughters—Maria, 7, Karen, 4 and Julia, 2—she wrote a first-person story for the *Los Angeles Times* last June on what it was like to be a housewife in Beirut during the six-day Middle East war. It won very wide play and Joe's boss sent her a congratulatory cable.

Joe Alex works in an office crammed with newspaper clippings, magazines, maps of the region, reference books, clipboards sprouting thickets of messages to and from his editors, and an overflowing wastepaper basket. On one wall is a British reward poster from Aden, offering 600 pounds to anyone turning in a bazooka. Next to it is a pencil drawing of "Daddy, by Maria" that looks like no daddy on earth. It is an office that somehow suits a man who still prefers a bow-tie and has just recently traded in a rakish French beret for a canvas hat that, to an unfriendly eye, looks as if it had just come out of the washing machine. It also suits a man who enjoys working by himself and playing by himself—at such loner sports as skiing (especially at Lebanon's famous Cedars) and swimming. (He once swam across the Bosphorus from Europe to Asia.)

Joe Alex, moreover, is representative of the men who cover the Arab world, men like:

● **Tom Brady,** a restless, energetic, gravel-voiced *New York Times*man who has been in Beirut for almost three years, ranges the Middle East extensively and once traveled the mountains in royalist-held Yemen on a mule. Brady works out of a spacious apartment overlooking the Mediterranean, where he tends a flourishing balcony garden. An informal dresser, who rejects shoes for open sandals whenever he can, Brady is a familiar figure wherever a top story is breaking.

● **Eric Downton** of the *Daily Telegraph*, one of the most experienced Mideast hands. A 50-year-old Canadian whose first tour was in 1947, Downton has covered most of the climactic events in the Arab world, starting with the 1948 Palestine war and including the Egyptian revolution and the war last June. In 1952, just three days after the coup that expelled Farouk, an Egyptian journalist friend pointed out a colonel called Nasser among a group of officers. Downton said: "Who?" but interviewed him anyway. The study in his flat overlooking the sea is lined with ancient silver daggers, a flintlock rifle, poisoned arrows from the Congo, and a poster by Toulouse-Lautrec.

● **Nick Herbert** of the *London Times*, a specialist in sparkling writing and interpretation particularly suited to the leisurely format of the *Times*. Herbert has been a journalist for 10 years, sweated out the 1962 Cuban missile crisis in Washington and came to the Middle East two years ago. He was in Jerusalem during the fighting in June and found it hard to sleep "because of the firing and the shells, you know." Herbert, 33, would like to find more time to potter around his thatch-roofed house in England, painting a wall here and repairing a rafter there.

● **Dave Lancashire** of the Associated Press, a recently departed veteran of seven years in the Beirut foreign press corps. Although he concentrates much of his time on bright features, 37-year-

old Lancashire, a former jazz trombonist, has been strafed by jet fighters in Pakistan and jailed in Syria.

● **Rudolph Chimelli** of the *Süddeutche Zeitung*, whose adept mixture of color, solid political information and background, is perfect for the paper's sophisticated readers. A newspaperman for 15 years—part of the time with the *Louisville Courier Journal*—Chimelli has been with the *Süddeutche Zeitung* for 10 years and has been reporting out of Beirut since 1964. Chimelli's fluent knowledge of English helps him in covering an area where relatively few people know German. His study is crammed with the usual array of maps, books and newspaper clippings that are the trademark of the serious journalist, but over in a corner is something from another world—an authentic mummy of an ancient Egyptian dog representing the pharaonic god Anubis.

Vanna Beckman of the Swedish Broadcasting Corporation.

● **John Lawton** of UPI who joined the wire service the hard way: by hitchhiking across Europe four years ago. A 29-year old Briton, he worked for local newspapers in Manchester after he quit school, then spent two years in the British Army and a further two years doing different jobs all over Europe. But newspapering was what he did best, so he applied for a job with UPI in London one day, and was told there was a post available for him in Istanbul provided he accepted on the spot and made his own way to Turkey. "I had enough money to pay the fare from London to Dunkirk, but no more, so I hitchhiked from Dunkirk to Istanbul in four days," Lawton recalls. An energetic traveler and crack reporter, Lawton has been based in Beirut for two years and settled down to married life a little over a year ago.

● **Ivor Jones,** correspondent for the British Broadcasting Corporation. In the Middle East for only a year, he has covered such stories as the first British atomic bomb test, and the Hungarian uprising in 1956, and he made the first public broadcast from over the North Pole.

● **Ed Hughes,** newly arrived correspondent for *Time*. A *Wall Street Journal* foreign editor, Hughes joined *Time* in 1954, spent two years in Africa, three in Germany and in 1962 became a senior editor in New York.

Americans, Britons, Indians or Swedes, foreign correspondents in the Arab world all face substantially the same problems and frustrations in covering the area. In quiet times, when pressure on newsmen is relatively slight, the frustrations can be shrugged off with a grin, but when the area heats up they can lead to exasperation and seriously hinder the correspondents' work.

Most correspondents consider Beirut now as the only possible place from which to cover the many countries in their territory because of its openness and the availability of communications. One reason is that Lebanon, like Switzerland, offers asylum to spokesmen for so many politically opposite elements that correspondents can always hear all sides of any given story. Beirut is also a major junction for international air traffic and a correspondent can usually be on the scene within a few hours of a story break in most of the countries of the region. Most important, telex, cable and telephone communications to Europe and the U.S. are very good.

There are problems. Censorship, for example, has long been the most difficult part of a newsman's job in the Middle East. Witness the experience of Joe Morris in one country one night during a particularly inept military regime.

Nick Herbert, correspondent for the **Times** of London.

"We spent half the night sitting with a colonel at the post office, arguing virtually over every line in the story," Joe recalls. "He'd read a line, then say 'Why did you say that?' and I'd say 'because I saw it' or 'because a diplomat told me' or 'because it was in the General's last speech.' And he'd say 'No, it wasn't in the speech' and I'd say 'Well, it was in a copy of it that I have,' and he'd come back with 'No, I'm sure it wasn't. Just a minute.'

"Then he'd call up the Information Department, and it would take him three calls to get through, then another call to get the right man, and after the salutations he'd get around to the point that Morris was here with a story and that he had said that the General had said such and such, and was that true?

"And of course the guy at the other end didn't know either, and said he'd have to go and check, and it went on like this all night."

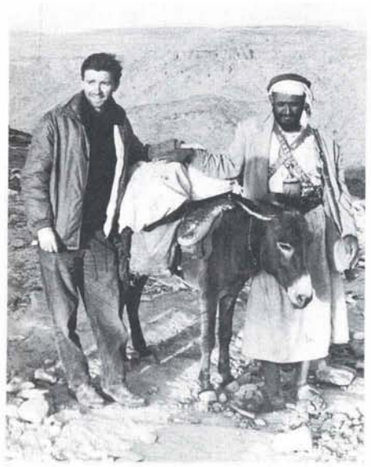
Morris, at least, was able to argue. In other cases the correspondent hands in his copy at the cable desk and hears no more about it—until an anguished message arrives from his editors asking why they got only two sections out of a three-section story.

Censorship on outgoing news in the Middle East is by no means new, however. Downton recalls jousts with Egyptian censors in the days of King Farouk. "They had a great habit of intercepting all service messages from the paper in London," he says. "The editors would send me a cable requesting such and such, and the censors would hold it up. So of course, the paper would get no answer from me, and send another message, which would also be intercepted. More frantic messages from the paper would follow.

"Then the censor would walk in one day with a great pile of messages and ask accusingly: 'Now then, what's all this about?' "

Apart from sketchy communications and censorship, which most of the correspondents have learned to live with, there are obstacles inherent in the region which are difficult to surmount. In some countries officials refuse to talk for publication and consider just about everything as secret. There are also difficulties with visas, postponed appointments and the inaccessibility of top leaders. With the exception of King Faisal of Saudi Arabia and King Hussein of Jordan, few leaders ever give interviews.

Another part of the problem, correspondents say, is that the complexities of Middle East politics, both national and international, require simplification, if they are not to be meaningless in Europe and the United States. Another is, quite simply, Arab rhetoric that has misled many newly arrived correspondents into misinterpreting sheer enthusiasm for serious statements of policy.



Dave Lancashire of the Associated Press touring Yemen.

Such conditions have led on numerous occasions to serious distortions in information coming out of the Middle East and to the belief among many Arabs that the western press corps has often presented an unfavorable picture of the Middle East. That this has happened, no one denies, but almost to a man the correspondents reject accusations of bias and deliberate distortion.

"Without access to top figures, without access to verifiable statistical data, with censorship and with the always dangerous problem of translation from a particularly fluid and difficult language, there are undoubtedly distortions going to the West about the Arab world," said one journalist. "But deliberate bias? Never."

Notwithstanding these difficulties, the correspondents in Beirut do their best and this is often excellent. After Vietnam, in fact, the Middle East was the top foreign story in the American press, and a leading one in Europe for most of 1967 and 1968. The dispatches of Morris, Brady, Herbert, and the others are given wide play and, if the news is important enough, are splashed on the front pages of their papers. By and large, correspondents say, the dispatches are printed as written without significant change in editorial content.

"What misleads many people in the Middle East," one correspondent said, "is that all papers reserve the right to print editorials attacking or criticizing the events, speeches or other activities reported in the dispatches. And this is fair as long as the factual reports from the scene get a proportional play."

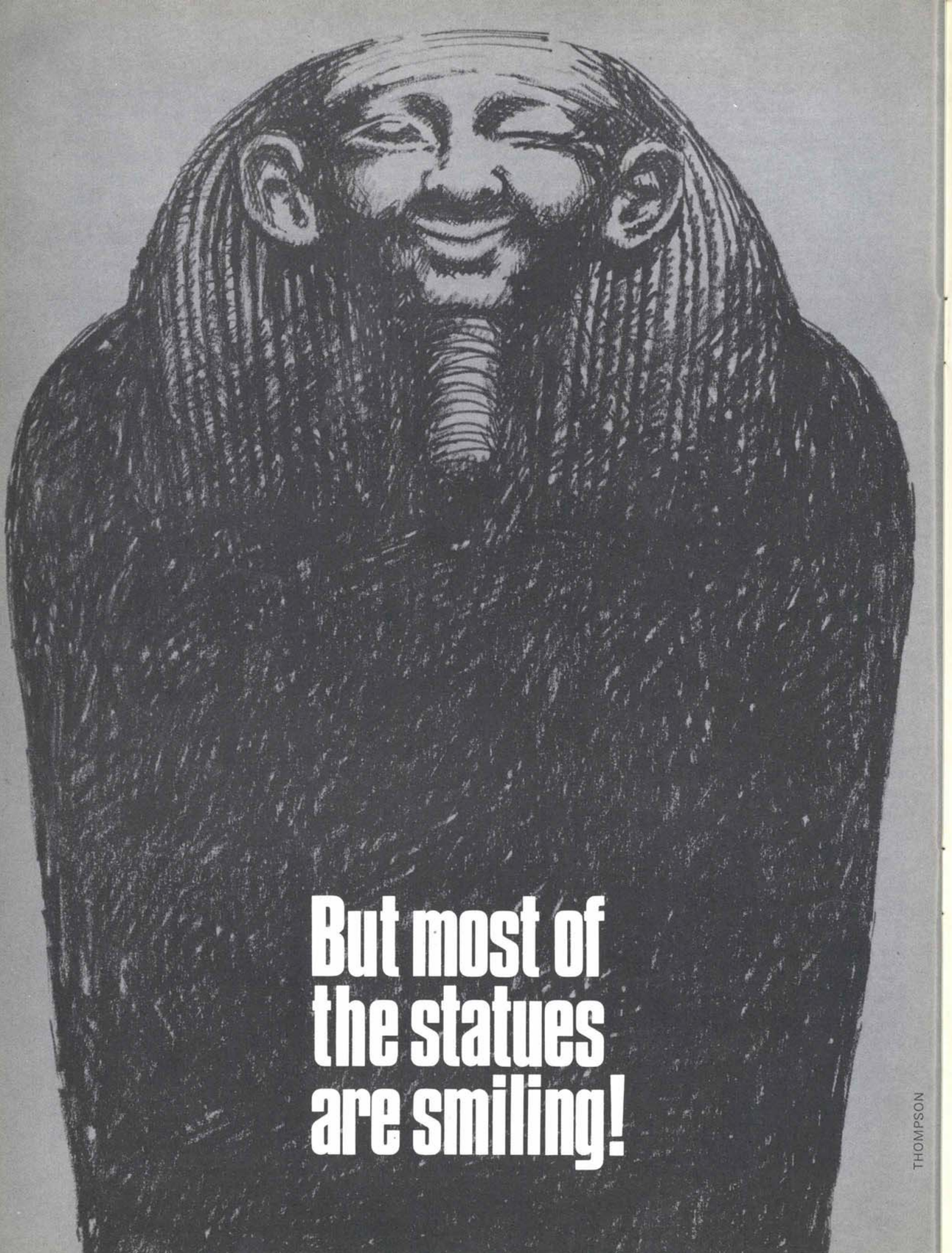
The myth that says a correspondent can learn all about the Arab world by having a few drinks in the bar of the St. Georges Hotel in Beirut is just that—a myth. Correspondents in the Middle East work hard to get their stories and some of them are away from their homes in Beirut up to half the time—but wouldn't change it for the world. Despite the rush of events memorable moments are frequent.

Downton, who has had so many narrow escapes in so many wars that he has stopped counting, remembers with nostalgia an assignment that sent him out with the pearl divers of Bahrain in the Arabian Gulf. Paul Delifer, correspondent of Agence France Presse, was in Jerusalem when hundreds of people threw themselves on the ground trying to kiss the feet of Pope Paul. Lawton was in a jeep in Aden that was peppered with five hand grenades in the space of 20 minutes. Tom Brady, on that mule-back trip in Yemen, was seized by a band of guerrillas who held him for ransom. He was released when other tribesmen interceded. "So I never got to know how much I was worth," Brady quips.

Rudolph Chimelli of the German paper **Süddeutche Zeitung.**

But for Morris, one of his most memorable recollections doesn't concern the Middle East at all. He was sitting on top of a bus careering through the Khyber Pass into Afghanistan and every time it went round a bend, the whole bus leaned over into space. Why was he on top of the bus? Because the passengers along for the 20-hour ride inside included several goats, and the windows were closed.

Elias Antar is an Associated Press correspondent who works out of Beirut and who has covered the Middle East for six years.



HUMOR FROM THE TOMBS

BY WILLIAM A. WARD

Most people, I imagine, think of ancient Egypt as a somber land of temples and tombs built by a race of grim people preoccupied with death. And with those thousands of statues of dead Egyptians crammed into those hundreds of tombs I can see why people do think so. Such casual observers, however, overlook one thing: most of the statues are smiling.

Now to jump from that observation to the conclusion that the Egyptians were really a race of practical jokers would be stretching it, I admit. But the fact remains that beneath the pompous facade of their grander achievements the Egyptians were just ordinary human beings, able to laugh like anyone else and able to make others laugh with them.

The walls of a tomb, for example, wouldn't strike modern man as an especially appropriate place for jokes. Yet on the wall of the main temple of Queen Hatshepsut at Dier el Bahri some ancient artist with a wry sense of humor has inscribed for eternity a cartoon poking fun at a certain queen whose figure, apparently, was as majestic as her position.

The temple was built to perpetuate the memory of a ruler of Egypt. On the walls of one of the porticos, there is a series of stone reliefs commemorating a voyage to the land of Punt on the shores of the Red Sea. One of the reliefs shows the Egyptians meeting the local king and his wife, portrayed as a woman of very substantial proportions. Another merely shows a very tiny donkey plodding along with an inscription explaining why this donkey was singled out for distinction: "The donkey that carries the queen." One need only compare the figure of the queen to see the monumental job assigned to the donkey, and why the artist was amused by the idea.

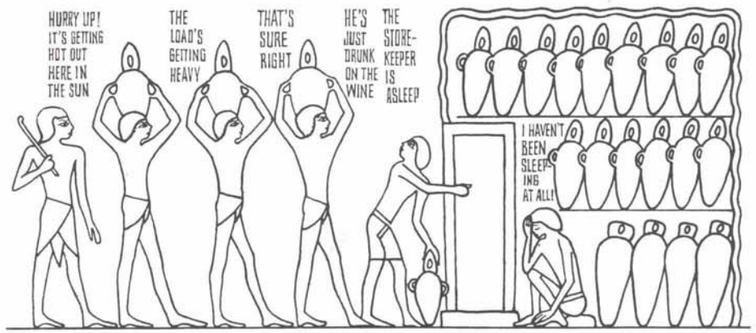
The artist intended no disrespect to the dignity of the Queen of Punt nor to the mortuary cult of the Queen of Egypt. He simply included an amusing detail of the expedition along with the rest—thus providing those who came to participate in the temple rituals a quiet chuckle as the processions marched past.

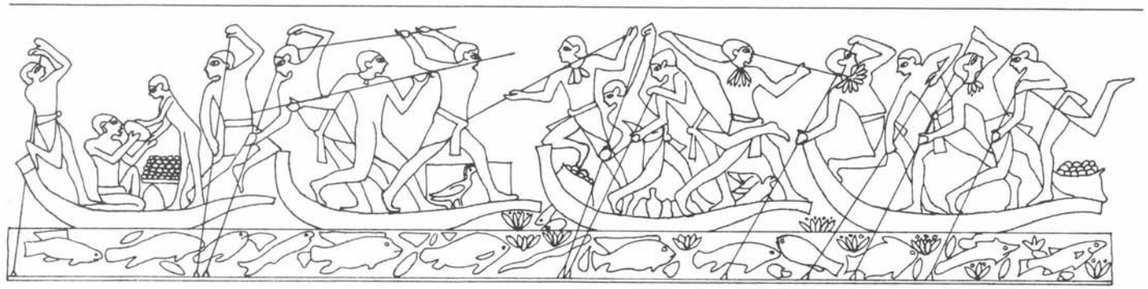
Unlike the gravity of modern burial places, the Egyptians permitted smiles everywhere. In tomb-chapels, for example, decorations consist not only of hymns, prayers and religious scenes, but also scenes of daily life. Peasants sing in the fields or vineyards. Nobles go fowling in the marshes. Aristocrats dine amidst dancing girls and the music of full orchestras. There are glimpses of a garden in a villa, boats on the Nile, carpenters shaping wood. No, Egyptian tombs were anything but dead.

In a tomb at Thebes there is a delightful panel showing an overseer following four porters carrying jugs of wine fresh from the winepress to the storehouse. Inside, the storekeeper is rubbing his eyes, having obviously fallen asleep on the job. Everyone has something to say and, while the text is somewhat damaged, the general drift of the conversation is clear. The overseer, anxious to get the day's work done, says, "Hurry up! It's getting hot out here in the sun!" Each of the porters adds his own remark. The first mutters, "The load's getting heavy." The second offers the equivalent of "That's for damn sure." The fourth, who has knocked at the door of the storehouse, announces, "The storekeeper is asleep." The third has other ideas: "He's just drunk on the wine." From inside comes the muted defense: "I haven't been sleeping at all!" The storekeeper, perhaps with a guilty conscience, ignores the jealous reference to his enviable post among the rows of full wine jugs. This incident must have brought a knowing grin to those who stopped by the tomb-chapel to say a prayer or leave an offering. The sleepy doorkeeper was probably as inevitable in Egypt then as the bored concierge is throughout Europe and the Middle East now.

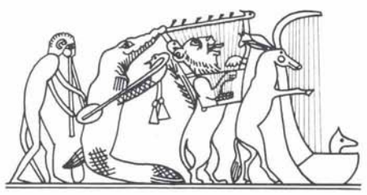
Not all servants were quite as placid. Everyone loves a good brawl, and the huskier the combatants, the better the brawl. A common scene in Egyptian tombs is the river battle between boatloads of fishermen or fowlers engaging in a lively struggle with long poles, the way lumberjacks do on logs.

One such illustration, showing the crews of three boats fighting, has an added twist. Off on one side is a fourth





boat, and floating serenely in this boat is the "Chief Sculptor Ankhonptah," quietly eating his lunch. Apparently the sculptor in charge of decorating this tomb took the liberty of immortalizing himself by placing his own figure among the hundreds he carved in the dozens of scenes on the walls—rather like Alfred Hitchcock's custom of appearing briefly in every movie he makes. This was truly a liberty since, as a rule, Egyptian artists remained anonymous no matter how brilliant their work. This one found a



way of leaving his signature by showing himself in the last place one would look for a man of his dignified position—at the edge of a brawl.

These examples of humor in Egyptian art are very much like the modern cartoon. The joke depends primarily on a picture which may or may not be accompanied by a short inscription. In the case of the Queen of Punt and her donkey the words are necessary to show the association between two separated pictures. The doorman asleep on his feet needs no explanation even to the modern viewer. The official eating and drinking amidst the battle on the Nile has its own humor as a picture. The inscription adds a further subtle laugh by identifying this calm picnicker as one we should least expect to find there.

Such humor is certainly intentional, but it is not immediately obvious since the cartoons are only details in great expanses of relief scenes which cover whole walls. One clear example of this is the group of pets frolicking under the throne of Queen Tiye. This detail comes from a large formal scene showing the queen in ceremonial dress on a state occasion. Though the whole scene seems to adhere rigidly to the strict canons of Egyptian style, close inspection shows that under the throne these canons have been somewhat relaxed: the family cat embraces the family goose, while a monkey leaps around in abandon.

Today, of course, humor in a tomb seems incongruous, but in ancient Egypt it wasn't at all. Tombs and funerary temples were built and decorated primarily to assure kings and commoners of a continuing life after death. By sympathetic magic, the essence of what was portrayed in pictures on the walls was transferred to the realm beyond the grave. Funerary monuments, therefore, were filled with the necessary religious texts and pictures to make sure one reached that realm. But since life after death was thought to be patterned after the present existence, artists also tried to send along as many of the ordinary pursuits of daily living as possible. The presence of such scenes in the tombs meant that the peasants would work eternal fields, the aristocratic banquets would go on forever, and men would always hunt and fish in the Nile marshes. Since everyday life has its humorous moments, it was only logical to provide a few chuckles for eternity too.

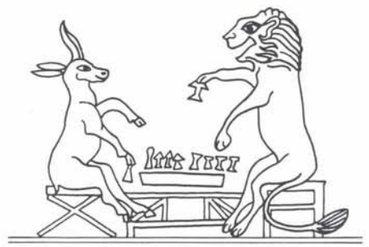
Humor in Egyptian art was not restricted to tombs and temples. Pottery, for example, also provided surfaces on which humor could be expressed. On one fragment found, there is a traditional scene of a Pharaoh in his chariot surrounded by his army attacking a walled city, while another fragment shows the same scene in caricature. Here all the essential features of the original are given, except that mice have replaced the Egyptian army, cats defend the walls and the mouse-king's chariot is pulled by dogs rearing like horses. Each detail of the traditional scene finds its counterpart in the caricature, right down to the scaling-ladders and defenders on the wall.

The substitution of cats and mice in familiar scenes from formal art is fairly common in Egyptian popular art. Another example is the traditional group of the noblewoman being served and coiffured by her servants. But on one ostracon—a piece of broken pottery on which texts or pictures could be drawn—a stately Madame Mouse sits drinking wine through a drinking-tube while two cat-servants arrange the wine-jar and adjust her hair. Madame Mouse wears the long linen dress of the wealthy and, like any Egyptian lady of aristocratic birth, sniffs at the lotus blossom in her hand. Just as in the formal portrait of Queen Tiye, the family cat and goose are also present. Madame Mouse, however, has an attraction not possessed by the queen—the family goose is happily munching a mouse tail.

Another scene shows Madame Mouse seated with her lotus-blossom while a cat presents offerings—a parody on the offering scene found in every Egyptian tomb.

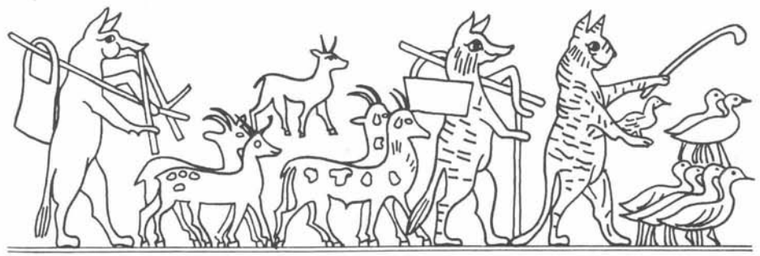
These are just a few of many examples where cats and mice act out the roles of humans in scenes drawns from the traditional repertoire of Egyptian art. Oddly enough, it is always the mouse who plays the part of the hero. Like our modern Tom and Jerry cartoons, the mouse always outwits the cat—suggesting perhaps that people haven't changed much in the last few thousand years. No matter how much we cheer the inevitable winner, secretly we enjoy seeing him lose once in a while.

Animals in human roles were also popular in informal Egyptian art. In one



example an animal orchestra plays on musical instruments which are exact copies of instruments unearthed in excavations.

The donkey and lion strum harps, the lion giving forth with joyous song as well. A crocodile with a banjo and a monkey with a double-flute complete what looks like a Pharaonic jazz quartet. Another scene shows a cat with her staff driving a flock of geese and two wolves



taking the part of goatherds. A third example shows a lion and gazelle engaging in a lively game of checkers.

The frequent substitutions of animals for human beings suggest that such pictures may have illustrated stories of some kind. These pictures never occur in a formal artistic context. As noted above, jokes do occur within the formalized art of the tombs and temples, but these always involve people in humorous human situations. On the other hand animals cast in human roles appear on papyri and ostraca whose purpose is basically to provide amusement. These are examples of popular humor, meant to be enjoyed in this life, not as eternal jokes for the hereafter.

An analogy with Aesop's Fables or the more modern Uncle Remus stories immediately comes to mind. Is it possible that in these ancient Egyptian drawings we can identify a "Br'er Donkey" or a "Br'er Lion?" At present, scholars can't be certain. There are no manuscripts which preserve such tales. But folk stories with animals playing very human parts abound in the world's literature and it is not unreasonable to suppose that the Egyptian peasant would have derived immense enjoyment from seeing the usually stubborn donkey playing a harp for Madame Mouse in her role as the high-born Egyptian lady.

Such a scene is more fully understood in its own social context. The animal cartoons of ancient Egypt deal with the daily life of the upper classes. If, as is probably the case, these drawings accompanied stories or fables, we may assume that these likewise were parodies of aristocratic life. As we enjoy today stories poking fun at political and social leaders, so did the Egyptians then—again suggesting that man has not changed very much. He has always enjoyed poking fun at the gentry.

It is true that the idea of caricaturing aristocrats in story and cartoon does not fit with the usual modern concept of the absolute oriental monarchy. In reality, the social structure of ancient Egypt was quite different from

popular supposition. Unlike contemporary peoples, the ancient Egyptians had no strict caste system in society so that a man of humble origin could rise to any position his ambition and talent could command. Aristocrats, therefore, could not surround themselves with a sacrosanct wall of inviolability; it was no crime to poke fun at the upper classes. If they commanded respect, it was respect touched with humor. The aristocrats themselves, in fact, went along with the gags; it was in their tombs, after all, that nodding door-keepers appear on the walls. And there is every reason to suppose that the aristocrats also enjoyed the stories about Madame Mouse. Perhaps even the Pharaoh himself would tell the stories of the mouse-king to the royal children at bedtime.

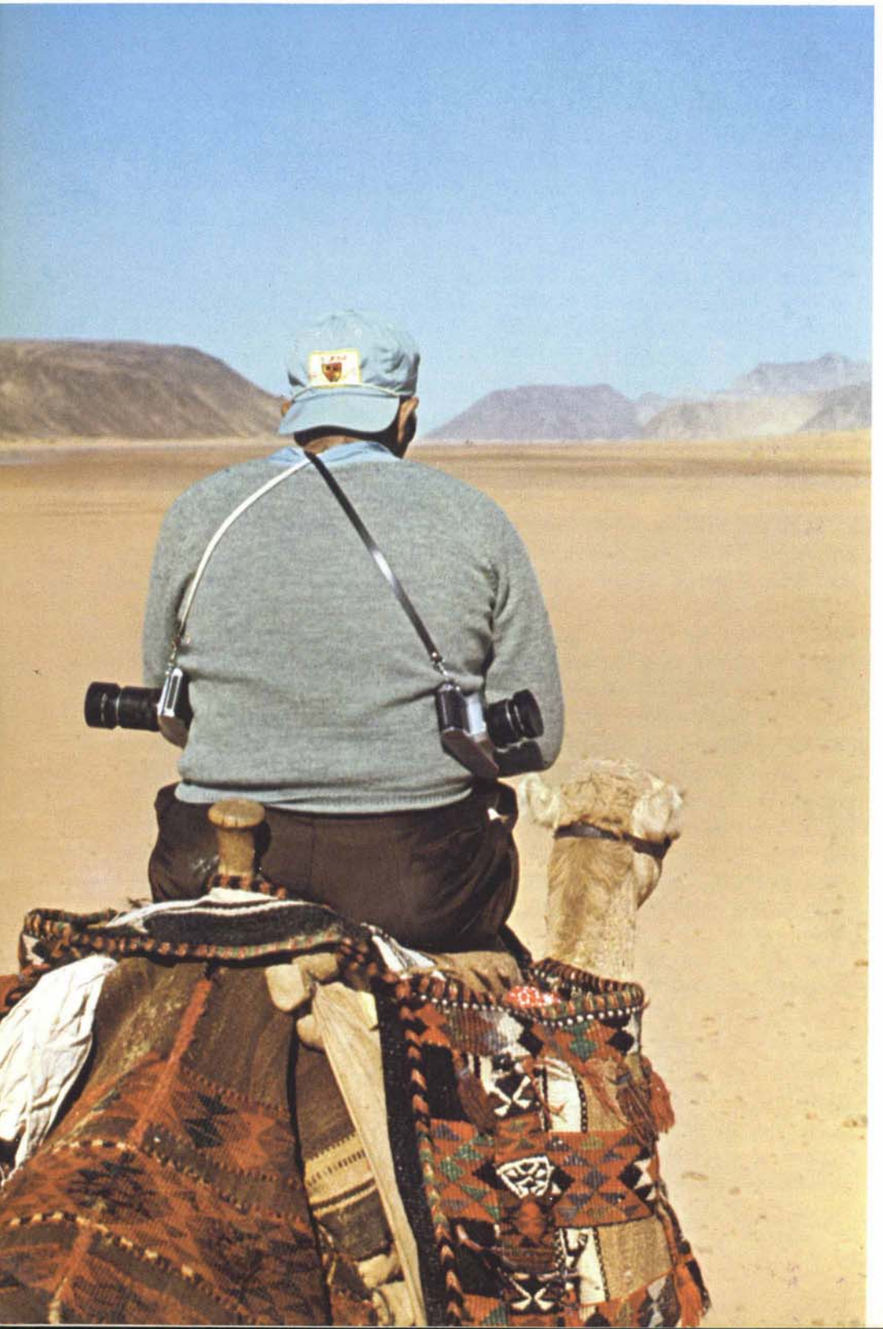
The smiling statues of ancient Egypt, therefore, are clues to the character of the people who made them. Although the Egyptians created a highly formal and stylized art, an art leaving an impression of stolid dullness in the mind of the casual viewer, there was, beneath the facade, a lively and very human people and a puckish wit, part of the great legacy that Egypt wished to pass on to eternity. The Egyptian heaven must have been full of quiet laughter.

William A. Ward, a regular contributor to Aramco World Magazine, *is a professor of ancient history at the American University of Beirut.*

TOURIST CARAVAN

BY WILLIAM TRACY / PHOTOGRAPHY BY KHALIL ABOU EL-NASR AND WILLIAM TRACY

From the deserts of Jordan, the most exciting idea in tourism since the African safari...



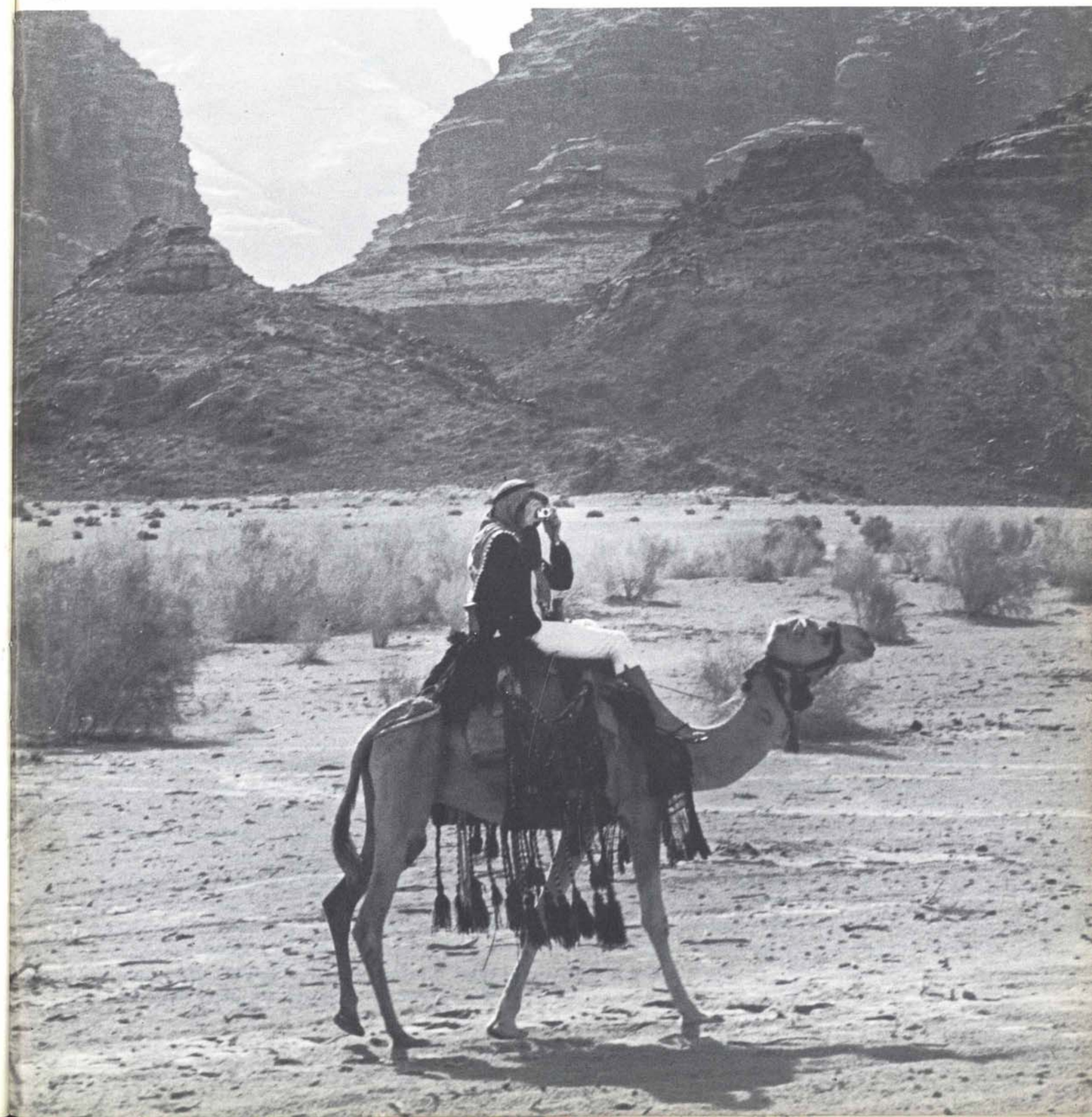
The first time we heard him say it was when the camel stumbled and threw the rider into a stream. Adnan, our Bedouin guide, chuckled. "As-sahara!" he said.

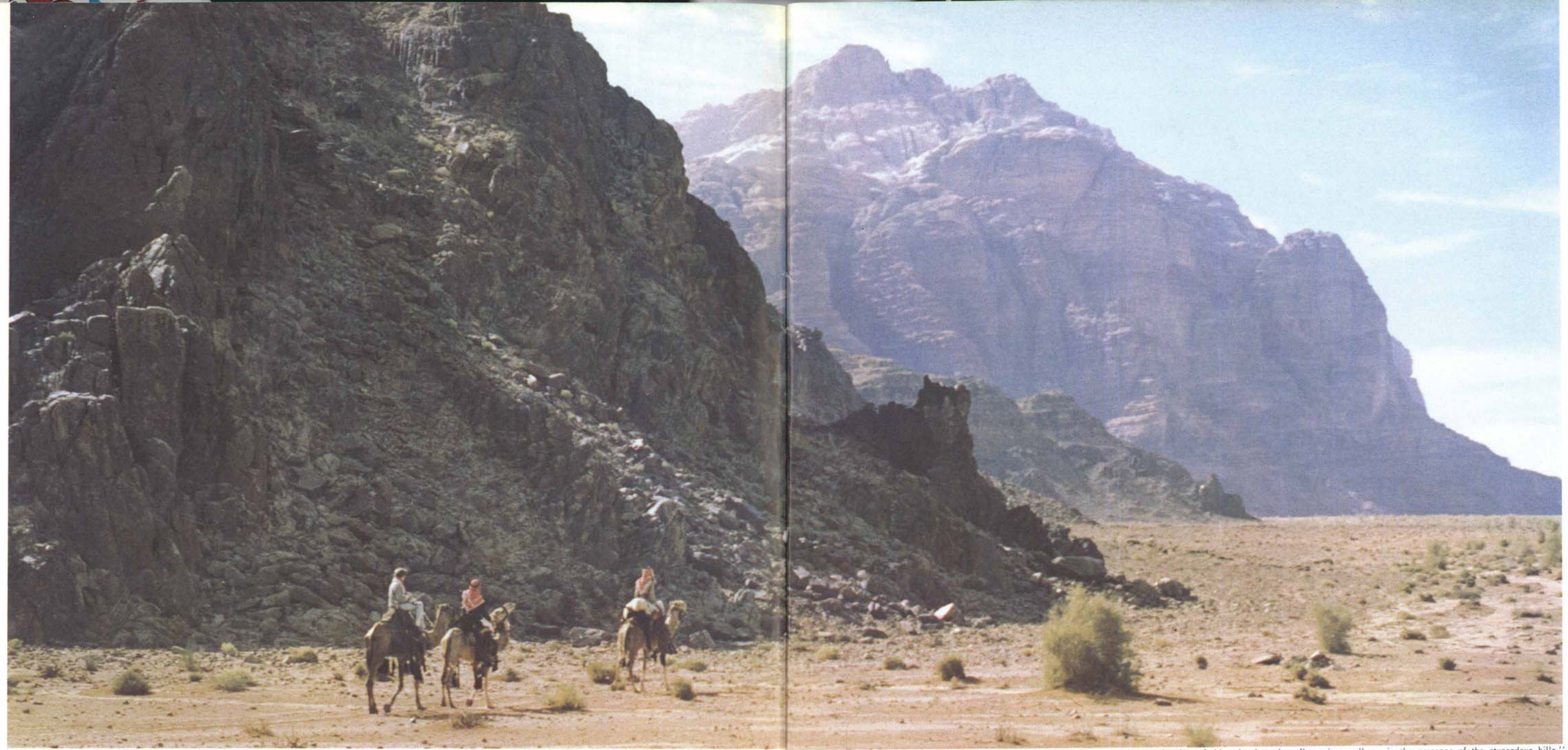
Later, we realized he said it often: when clouds drenched our clothes with rain; when hailstones the size of cherries pounded down on our unprotected heads; when we thankfully eased our creaking bones off our mounts each evening and hobbled painfully to our tents. On each of those occasions, and others, we could always count on cheerful Adnan. "As-sahara!" he would shout cheerfully. "That's the desert!"

Yes, Adnan, that is the desert: unpredictable, sometimes harsh, demanding; but also gentle, welcoming and—even in its rage—awesomely beautiful.

Now an organization in Amman called Camel Caravans is opening up the mountainous red desert of southern Jordan in all its beauty to western tourists in search of something different. It's an off-beat trip on camel-back into the land of Lawrence of Arabia. And it's designed for that growing breed of rugged individualists who think of tourism in terms of a safari in East Africa or a hike in the Himalayas, those who have "done"—and have done with—the capitals and fashionable watering places of Europe.

For Jordan, tourism has long been an important source of foreign exchange and the loss of Jerusalem and the West Bank in the war last June was a serious blow to this small country's economy. Thus Jordan has made special efforts to develop and publicize the country's remaining attractions on the unoccupied East Bank. Tourists can be lured back in substantial numbers, officials feel, to explore the extensive Roman ruins at Jerash, the unique tombs of Petra,





Early one morning during the tourist caravan's week-long trip, the lead riders, full of wonder, enter the great pink avenue of the Wadi Ram. Lawrence wrote of these mountains, "Such whelming greatness dwarfed us ... Our little caravan grew self-conscious, and fell dead quiet, afraid and ashamed to flaunt its smallness in the presence of the stupendous hills."

crusader castles, the Omayyad hunting palaces and the fashionable beach resort at Aqaba. But the tourist caravan is their ace in the hole, an exotic drawing card which offers a rare travel experience and a fascinating opportunity to see a beautiful land and its proud people at close hand.

To put the new attraction to a test awhile back, a group of us in Beirut handed over $280 fees—a special introductory rate—to the various travel agents who offer the tour and set off for Amman. We made a stop at Kerak Castle first and spent the night at Petra, but on the afternoon of the second day we turned off the asphalt highway, scrambled into Land-Rovers and from the picturesque railroad station hotel in Ma'an, headed into the desert.

Throughout the afternoon, escorted by another Land-Rover of the Jordan Highway Patrol, we bounced along an unpaved truck trail cutting through patches of deep dust that rolled back like waves from a ship's bow. The trail stays close to the roadbed of the old Hijaz Railway to Medina in Saudi Arabia. Along the way we saw signs of the past and the future: in one dry river bed a blackened culvert blown up by Lawrence and the Arabs in their struggle to gain independence from the Ottoman Turks; in another crews of workmen building steel and concrete viaducts for a section of the railway now being reconstructed.

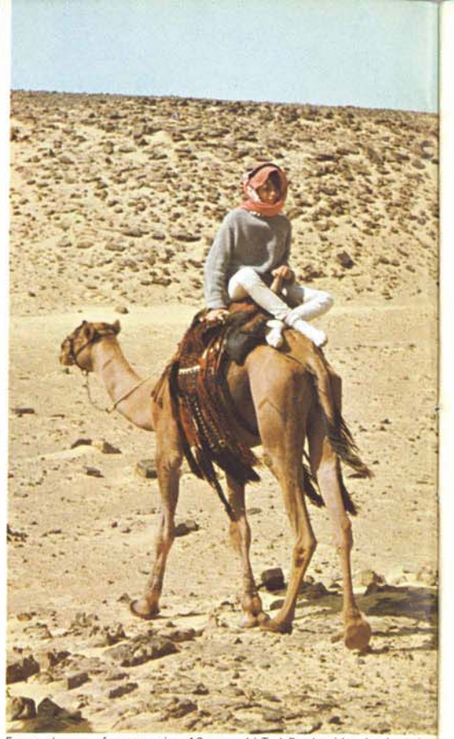
About sunset we pulled into an abandoned railway station called Fassou'a, near the edge of the high Jordanian plateau, and saw for the first time how carefully the trip had been organized. In the dusk the headlights of the Land-Rovers picked out a neat row of white two-man bell tents, a support truck, a large army-style canvas tent for the work crew and another for the kitchen. To one side were two small tents with portable latrines and showers. Each sleeping tent had a small rug, two folding cots, a flashlight, a Coleman lantern, a mirror, a bar of soap and box of Kleenex, towels and bedding. They even provided two red-checked *khafiya*—the Bedouin head cloths. Most welcome of all after a day in the desert was a basin of steaming hot water waiting before each tent.

By the time we arrived, the Bedouins had hobbled their camels, started a fire and had coffee and tea boiling on the coals.

Waiting in front of the kitchen tent was personable Tony Hallak, who, with his American partner, Ed Nevins, started working on the caravan idea shortly after the award winning *Lawrence of Arabia* hit American screens.

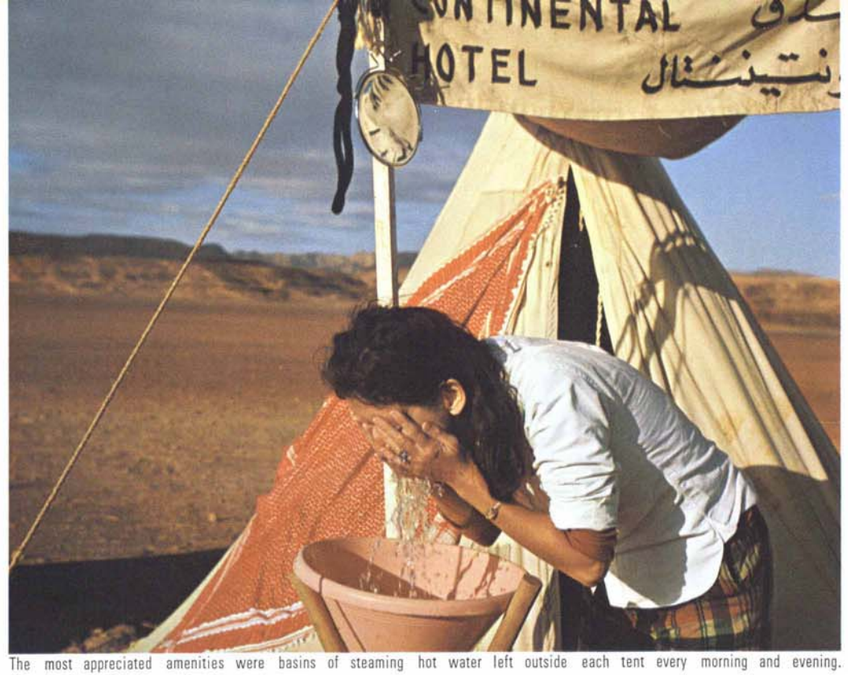
The camps, Tony explained over the grateful gaspings and gurglings at the hot water basins, would be taken down each day after the guests left and sent on ahead on the support truck. There were 25 on the staff, he said, nearly twice as many as the number of guests: three policemen from the Highway Patrol sent along to provide radio contact; two soldiers of the Bedouin Camel Corps; five camel drivers; five vehicle drivers and assistants, eight cooks and waiters, Tony himself and his assistant Jack Koschkarian, a genial Armenian recently of Jerusalem. Most of the staff, however, would move to the next camp by Land-Rover and would take a quite different route so as to avoid intruding the roar of engines into the desert silence, yet get there in time to pitch tents, heat the shower water and get the coffee boiling before we swayed in on our camels after the day's trek.

Gathered for a group portrait: truck drivers, camel drivers, soldiers, highway patrolmen, cooks, guides, tourists—and camels.



For a change of perspective 13-year-old Tad Brady rides backwards.

Drenched by a sudden hailstorm which passed as quickly as it came, the tourists urge their camels across the flat flint desert towards the shelter of their camp and a waiting hot meal.



The most appreciated amenities were basins of steaming hot water left outside each tent every morning and evening.

That first night at Fassou'a set a pleasant pattern for the next four evenings in a desert camp: the easy laughter of the Bedouins around the fire, the complaining of the camels as they chewed their cuds in the darkness beyond the firelight, a hot dinner served at a long table formally and incongruously set in the sand behind the tents, the spectacle of countless pin-sharp stars overhead, lightning playing on the horizon, and, very early, the feel of thick blankets as we slipped into exhausted sleep.

The next morning saw us "making friends with our camels" as the brochure explains it, a process that involves adjusting the foam rubber cushions beneath the woven saddle bags, stretching one leg across the kneeling camel's back and hanging on frantically as the mount lurches to its feet grumbling and protesting. Once up, however, riding a walking camel is as easy as sitting in a rocking chair. Unfortunately the chair keeps rocking and rocking and rocking.

The back of a camel is too broad to let both feet hang down—and there are no stirrups. The easiest way to ride, as the camel drivers demonstrated, is to wrap one leg around the tall saddle horn and tuck that foot beneath the other leg which is allowed to dangle. You can also wrap both legs around the horn and sit Indian fashion, rest one or both legs on the camel's neck, ride side-saddle for a change and even kneel back with the feet stuffed into the saddle bags. As for your hands, you can hold the reins gently, grasp a camel stick or clutch the saddle horn in desperation. But once you are accustomed to the camel's constant rocking gait you can almost be lulled to sleep. The ladies in the group were at first enthusiastic about the reducing possibilities of the ride and one talked of canceling her membership at a Beirut reducing salon.

We had not ridden far that day when the desert showed us a quite different aspect from the placid one we had seen before. The tall clouds which had been sailing the flat horizon suddenly closed in on us and blotted out the sun; the lightning which had played in the distant evening sky crackled overhead; thunder echoed and re-echoed about us like the report of Lawrence's cannons; and great black curtains of rain came sweeping over the dusty, barren plains on both sides. Unprepared and exposed, we wrapped our khafiyas tight around our heads, urged our camels into a straight line, their backs turned to the gale, and waited. It came swiftly, raindrops clicking across the flint desert like a million tiny hoofs, drenched us instantaneously in one shivering bucketful and moved on beneath the arch of a brilliant rainbow. "Hiyee, Hiyee!" Adnan shouted, "That's the desert!"

Soon the camels were picking their way carefully down the flooded course of one of the small wadis leading down from the plateau. From time to time we caught sight of the railway construction where the roadbed descended in a great hairpin curve. In the valley below, fruit trucks bound for Saudi Arabia waited on the trail for the muddy torrents of water to subside.

We turned away from the old railway and the truck trail and at dusk found our tents waiting beside the rugged stone outcrops of *Batn el-Ghoul*, "the ghoul's belly." The highway patrolmen went hunting and returned with just one rabbit—from an area that just fifty years ago teemed with gazelles, ostriches and ibexes.

The next morning—we had already lost track of the days—brilliant sunshine again bathed the rocky escarpments and the golden sand covered with a mosaic

of red-brown cinder and flint. We plodded on, alternately dozing, daydreaming or staring with fascination at the dramatic mesa country. For lunch the Bedouin guides led us to a rocky overhang in a dry wadi where ancient floods had undercut a low bluff. Their purpose was to offer a refuge from the sun but as soon as we arrived, a Beirut housewife wrought a small miracle that made us appreciate the shelter. "I'd love a drink of water with ice," she said. Moments later the sky darkened again, giant hailstones began to fall and Adnan's voice came booming over the rattle of the storm: "That's the desert!"

In the afternoon we threaded our way among thunderheads, slanting columns of light and sudden squalls of rain and hail. Flash floods raged down distant wadis and row upon row of jagged red mountain ridges faded into the mist. In the evening we camped on the edge of a great mudflat now a lake several feet deep.

The next day was clear again, but the storm had left the desert wet in places and our camels, nervously treading slick patches of clay, made better time than the truck which bogged down six times during the morning.

By then we had all decided that we were well on the way to becoming thoroughly professional camel drivers. Thus at lunch that day we had begun to think that instead of making the spectacular journey into Wadi Ram by Land-Rover as scheduled, we might keep our camels for another day. By evening, as we made camp at the base of the towering 1000-foot cliffs that guard the entrance of the great valley, we had decided. The Land-Rovers would drive in on the new gravel road on the far side of the valley and meet us at about noon at the Camel Corps fort. Then they would drive us rapidly out of our desert isolation to Aqaba to spend the last of our seven days relaxing at a comfortable hotel on the Gulf.

Dinner around the campfire that last evening in the desert was especially festive. We were camped near the homes of our Bedouin guides and the tribe's shaikh and the village schoolteacher joined us for the traditional Bedouin feast of lamb and rice smothered with a yoghurt sauce. Beneath a full moon we ate and talked and joked. The Bedouins sang and danced and questioned us closely: why would American tourists leave the comforts and conveniences of the city to ride camels in the desert?

We explained that sometimes man feels the need for peace and they said, yes, they understood that but why had we come here to their desert where life is hard and the sun is hot? We mentioned the beauty of the sand, the red mountains, the grandeur of Wadi Ram which Lawrence had extolled in his writing and into which we would ride the following morning.

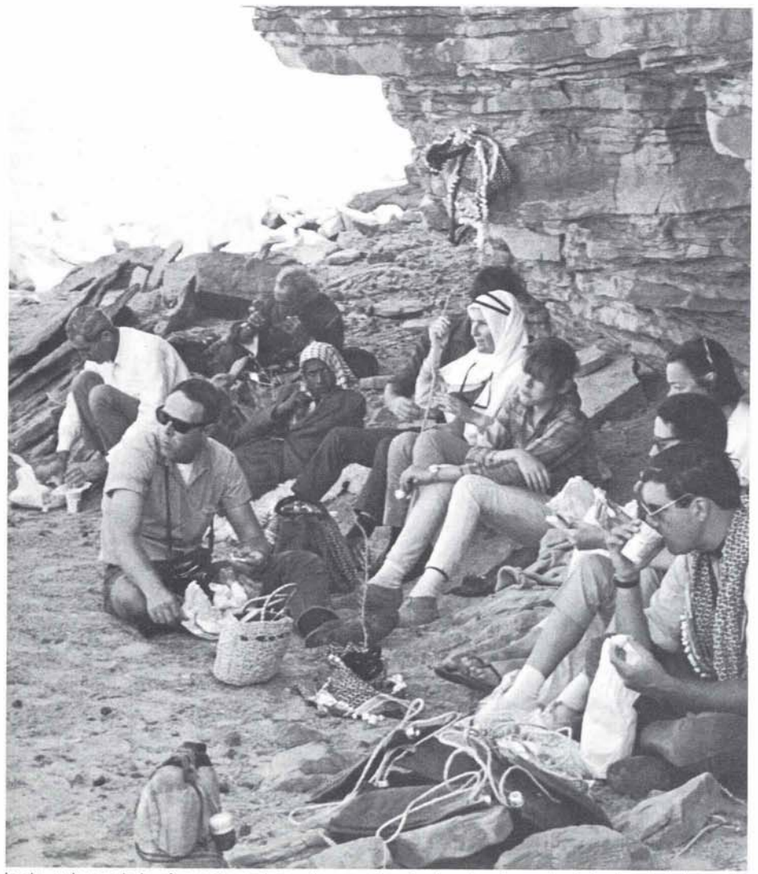
"Yes, yes, and you are always welcome here," they said. "But surely there are many other places of beauty? Our desert can be hard. Here there are sand storms and cold winds."

"Who knows why we come?" we continued. "Perhaps it is the purity of the air, the stillness of the night, the clear star-filled sky, the friendly welcome of the Bedouins..."

There was a pause when we had finished and then the strangely subdued voice of Adnan broke the silence.

"Yes," he said. "That is the desert too."

William Tracy is Assistant Editor of Aramco World Magazine.



In the welcome shade of a rocky overhang, the group has lunch and enjoys a break in the day's long ride.

Cliffs and then tents catch the early morning light.