ARAMCO WORLD
magazine

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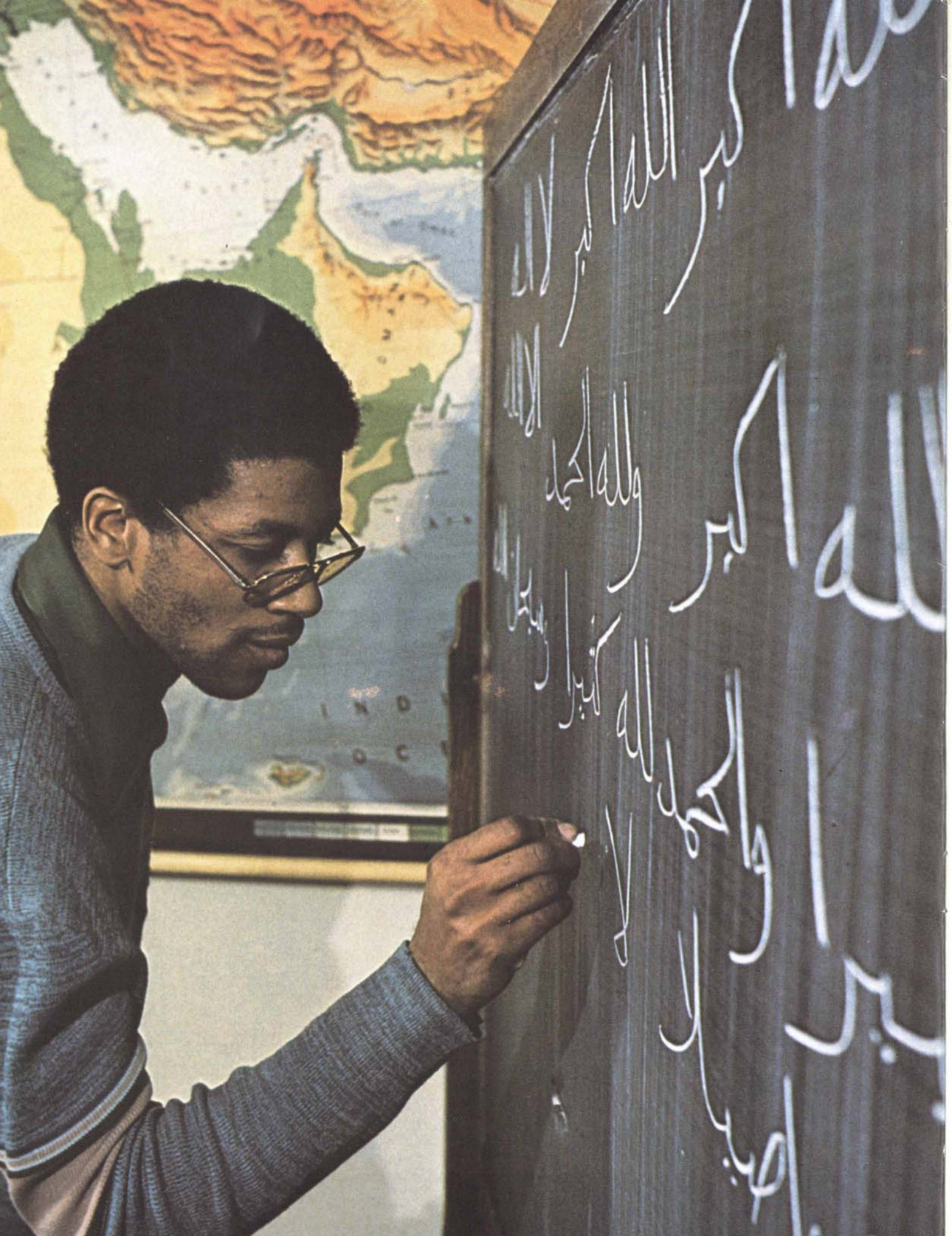
MAY–JUNE 1979

AMERICA AS ALMA MATER



ARAMCO WORLD magazine

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THOMAS

For this issue of Aramco World, *Katrina Thomas, who wrote most of it and photographed all of it, crisscrossed the United States, spent a week at Harvard and squeezed in two extra weeks of interviews and photography during a Christmas ski trip to Utah. For Thomas, however, who is based in New York, long trips on* Aramco World *assignments have become standard practice. For her first assignment – "The Arab Woman" (March-April 1971) – she traveled throughout the Arab world, and for "Partners in Growth" (January-February 1977) she made five long swings through the United States. For William Tracy, who researched and wrote most of the material concerning U.S. alumni in Saudi Arabia, the assignment presaged a homecoming. A former assistant editor of this magazine, he now works in Dhahran, where he grew up.* –*The Editors*

TRACY

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Cover: Like thousands of their compatriots, these six young Saudi and Kuwaiti Arabs will soon be able to claim America as their alma mater. Photographed on the University of Utah campus, they are (left to right) Talal Fetaihi, Mohammed Abahsain, Nadia Fetaihi, Dawood Khamees, Abbas Bafakih and Balkees al-Najjar. Abahsain, Bafakih and al-Najjar are all graduate students, the others undergraduates, in Utah. Rear cover: Suad Ismaily and Rashida al-Harthy, both from Oman, look over class notes on the campus of the University of Arizona. Photographs by Katrina Thomas.

◀This American physics major at the University of Chicago is also a beginning Arabic student; here he practices the flowing Arabic script.

AMERICA AS ALMA MATER

Late one summer evening, the president of the University of Southern California drove out to the beach cottage of a prosperous business friend. He was to be a guest at an informal dinner party his friend was giving for a group of USC alumni who were thinking of setting up a new chapter of the alumni association. Nothing unusual about that in the schedule of a modern university president.

Except that the beach was not on California's Pacific coast and neither the prosperous friend nor the alumni were Californians – or even American. The dinner took place on the shore of the Red Sea, in Saudi Arabia. The host was Ahmad Abdullah al-Sulaiman of Jiddah. And his 25 guests were some of the more than 200 Saudi Arab businessmen, academics and government officials to whom USC is alma mater.

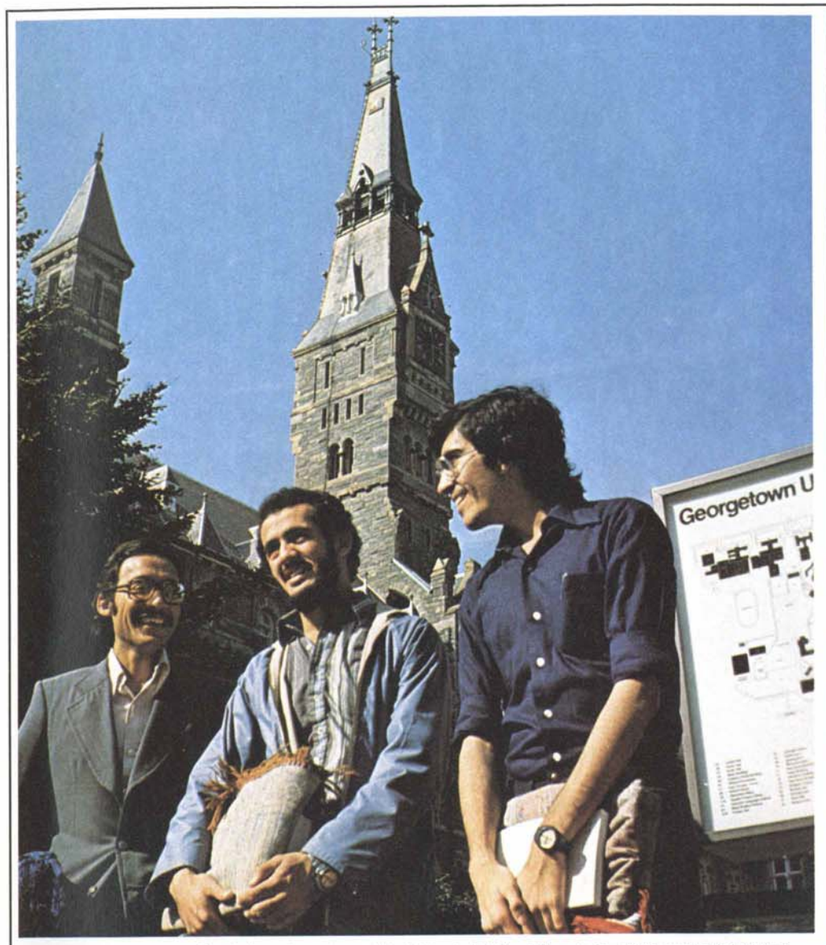
What is unusual about that story, however, is that it is *not* unusual. Although USC alumni in Saudi Arabia are certainly distinguished – they include, among others, two ministers of the kingdom's cabinet, the governor of the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency and the rector of one of the country's own universities – they are not unique. The University of Southern California is only one of many institutions across the United States that have been welcoming, instructing and graduating ever-increasing numbers of Arab students since World War II. Today, as a result, hundreds of the brightest and most promising leaders in the Middle East are alumni of American institutions who – almost without exception – cherish their memories of America as alma mater.

This is particularly true in Saudi Arabia where, increasingly, men with high educational qualifications – in academia, of course, but also in commerce, the oil industry and at the top levels of government as well – are graduates of U.S. colleges and universities. When King Khalid reorganized and expanded his cabinet to 26 members, four years ago, 10 of the men he selected – more than a third of the cabinet – had studied at American universities. Their portfolios include petroleum, industry, agriculture and water, commerce, information, labor and foreign affairs.

> *I had a beautiful time in the United States. I took my wife and two kids and all four of us went to school. The U.S. system really gets you to study; it's in the atmosphere. A tremendous way of teaching. You never know when there will be a quiz, you always have a paper to write, you have to learn to use the library. You have 15 or 20 people in a class, not 1,000 in one room like a big movie theater where if one person coughs you miss the lecture.*
>
> **Abdullah Baksh**
> *Businessman, Jiddah*
> *M.B.A., USC, 1967*

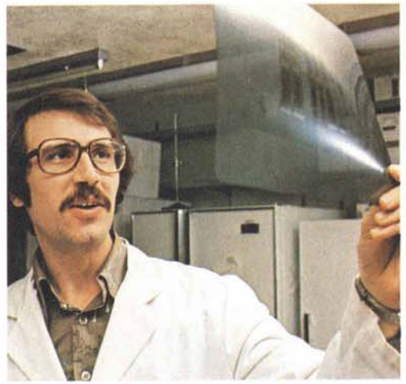
U.S. graduates are also well represented in Saudi Arabia's private business sector. Jiddah businessman Abdullah Baksh, for example, has a master's degree in business adminstration from USC. He started out in the hotel business and is now involved in insurance, construction and – in a joint venture with an American firm – prefabricated housing. One of his brothers, Muhammad, also attended USC; another, Adnan, went to Whittier College, and a third – Adil – is at San Francisco State. According to Baksh, his son will probably be next. "He's already running after me to go to the States," Baksh said, "and of course that's where I'll send him. For me, there's no alternative."

In fact, there are alternatives. European universities have been admitting Arab students since at least the days of Egypt's viceroy, Muhammad Ali. And since the 1960's the Arab countries themselves, particularly in the Gulf, have been investing an impressive share of their revenues in higher education at home. (See *Aramco World,* November-December, 1969; July-August 1974) In the last 15 years Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain have opened new universities, colleges, junior colleges, teacher training colleges and technical colleges. They

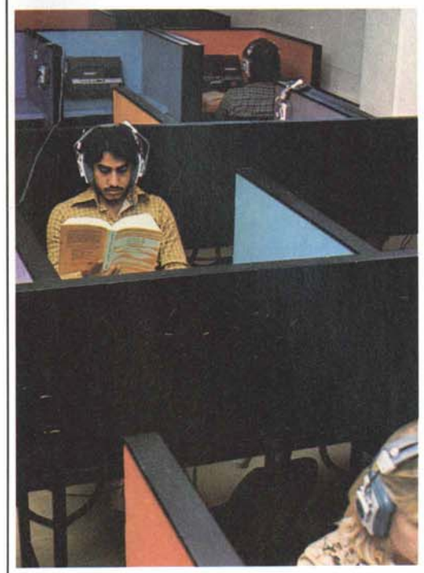


Carrying prayer rugs as well as books are Georgetown students Mounir al-Raffa, al-Hussein Hamididdin and Adel al-Nadhari.

Students from Abu Dhabi and Dubai at American University.

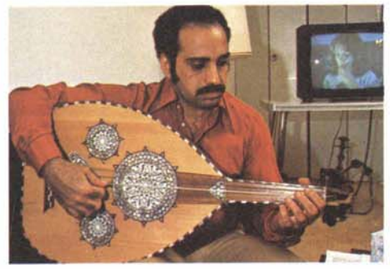


Ghazi Jamjoon, Ph.D. in microbiology, University of Texas.

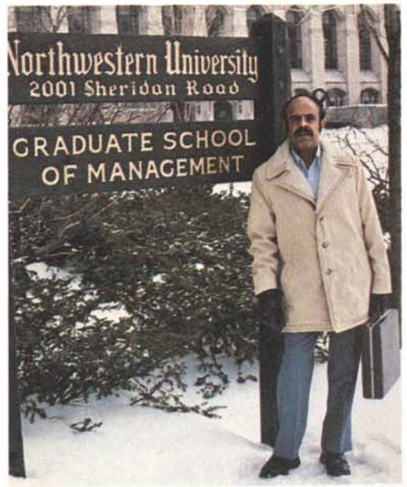


Rashid Addeweesh studies phonetics for his M.A. in linguistics.

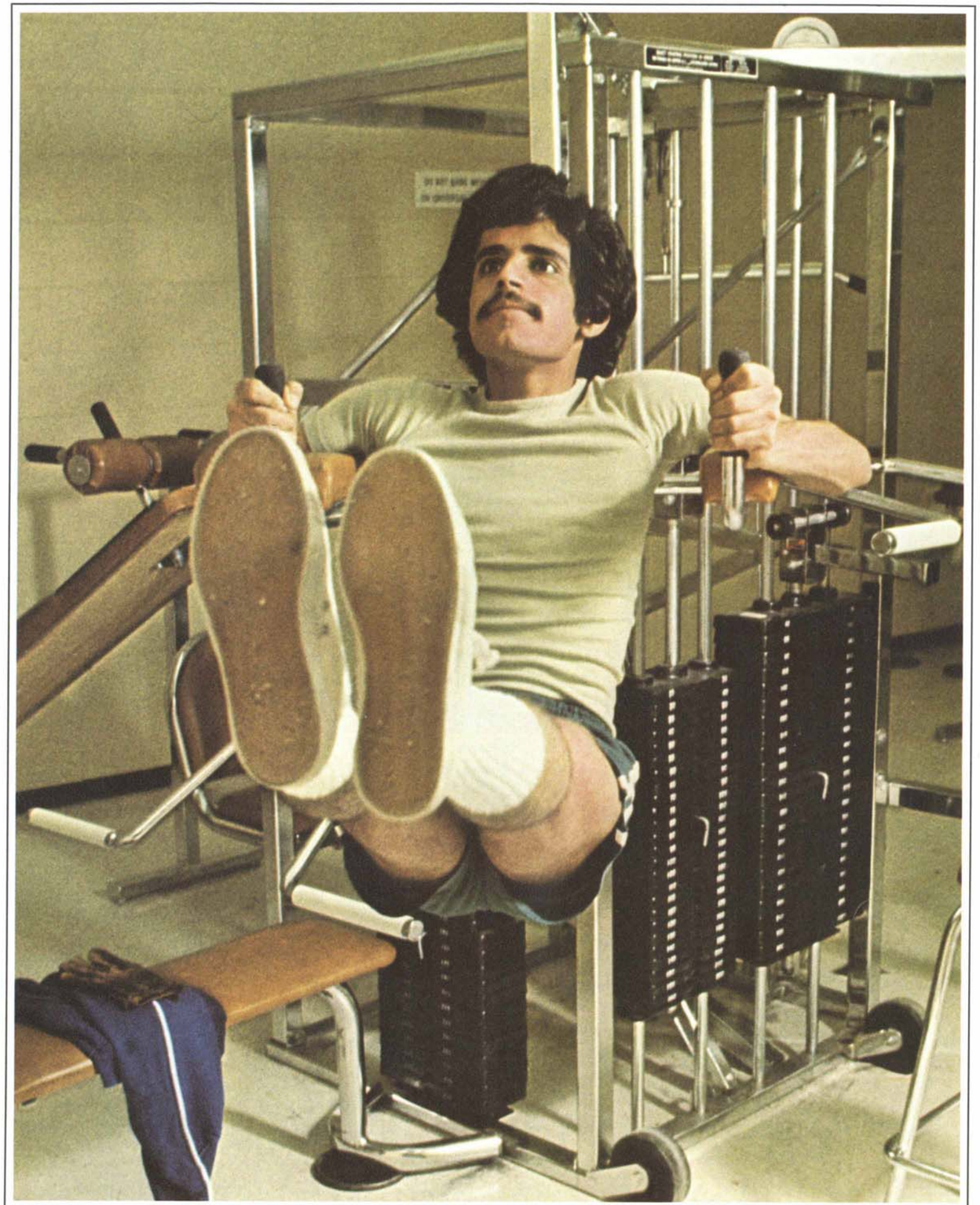
Hayfa Zayani and Menal al-Zayani at Texas University.



Khalid Jindan, a Saudi, is earning a Ph.D. at Georgetown.



Aramco's Saleh Hindas earned his M.A. at Northwestern.



Between workouts, Kuwaiti Dawood Khamees is earning a degree in meteorology at Utah.

have also enlarged and modernized existing institutions and the end results are impressive. In Saudi Arabia, for example, there were 23,600 university students enrolled in the kingdom's own institutions during the 1977-1978 academic year.

To accommodate the swelling numbers and needs of their students, however, governments in the Gulf have had to send more students to study abroad. From Saudi Arabia alone, according to the Saudi Educational Mission, some 11,000 students were studying in the U.S. during the 1978-79 terms, Kuwait sent 1,600, the United Arab Emirates nearly 800, Qatar nearly 500, Bahrain about 100 and Yemen and Oman approximately 250 each.

The reasons, say officials, are obvious. Foreign universities can help fill the inevitable gaps that occur in rapidly expanding educational systems in which facilities, courses and staffs fall short of the multiplying demands – particularly in technical fields. Universities abroad also provide opportunities for faculty members and graduate students to get advanced or highly specialized training for which demand is still limited in the Middle East. Equally important, officials and graduates agree, studying abroad provides students with an opportunity to broaden their cultural horizons by living, studying and working in an environment different from their own.

> *I learned far more than one thing from my academic and living experience in the United States. One could write an essay describing what, how and why he was influenced: efficiency, organization, a sense of responsibility, self-discipline, ambition, all coupled with hard work and the free democratic system. I also learned from the negative aspects of American life what we should be careful not to acquire here in Saudi Arabia. If you asked me to limit myself to one single positive thing, I would say self-discipline, which unfortunately I believe we lack. I brought it back with me.*
>
> *I would choose to go to America again if I had to decide. In fact, that is exactly what I have done with regard to my own children, who will either do their graduate or postgraduate work there.*
>
> *Saudi Arabia is working very hard to establish enough universities at home to meet our undergraduate requirements. But we must send our sons and daughters abroad for specific branches in their postgraduate studies. The distance between us and technology is rather vast, and it still can't be shortened by our local institutions. Of course, before recommending a U.S. university I would want to know the subject to be studied. For instance, I could easily recommend Harvard for law, business administration or medicine, MIT for engineering, and the Colorado School of Mines for mining or geology.*
>
> **Ahmed Zaki Yamani**
> *Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources LL.B., University of Cairo, 1951; M.A., NYU, 1955.*

Abdullah al-Omar, for example, is a Kuwaiti who in 1978 was earning a Ph.D. at Harvard and writing a dissertation on the reception of Darwinism in the Arab world. But he was also fascinated by U.S. educational television and so videotaped *Nova,* a popular series on science, for later review. And Balkees al-Najjar, earning her doctorate in linguistics at Utah, has learned to ski in the American Rockies – as has Dawood Kamees, an undergraduate majoring in meteorology. Other examples include the Razzuqi sisters, Maha and Hana, studying industrial and biological engineering respectively, and Khadija al-Ali, a pre-med student. All three attend Syracuse University, where they may wear Kuwaiti national dress on formal occasions but wear jeans to class.

Students from the smaller Gulf states, or from Oman or Yemen, are often the sole representatives of their countries working for a degree at a given university. But this is rarely true of Saudi students. The 11,000 students sponsored by the Houston-based Saudi Educational Mission – which oversees the education of government-sponsored students and their wives – are enrolled in English-language institutes, colleges and universities in more than 550 cities in nearly every state.

In addition to the mission's count, there are several hundred children of Saudi students enrolled in American primary and secondary schools, and still other students sponsored by the Saudi Arab armed forces, by Saudia, the national airline, and by Aramco – as well as those who pay their own tuition and are sponsored, just like most American students, only by their families.

Most Saudi students in the U.S., however, are sponsored by their gov-

The Princes of Princeton

By the attention and encouragement that he gave to the education of his sons, Saudi Arabia's late ruler King Faisal set a personal example that paralleled his country's policy of enthusiastic support for students seeking higher education abroad. Of the King's eight sons, seven went off as boys to the United States for preparatory work at Hun School in Princeton, New Jersey or at nearby Lawrenceville School. All seven then went on to universities in the United States or England.

The first to study abroad was Prince Muhammad, the second oldest son. He attended both Lawrenceville and Hun School, then Swarthmore College. He earned his B.S. in business adminstration at Menlo Park in California. Back in Saudi Arabia, he worked at the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency and the Ministry of Agriculture, became governor of the Saline Water Conversion Corporation, and then went into private business.

Prince Khalid, now Amir of 'Asir Province (See Aramco World, January-February 1974), graduated from Hun School and spent one year at Princeton University – where he captained the soccer team – before going on to Oxford.

Prince Sa'ud, the fourth son, also went to Hun School and Princeton. After his graduation in 1965 with a B.A. in economics, he served nearly 10 years in the kingdom's General Petroleum and Minerals Organization (Petromin) and in the Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources, finally becoming deputy to Shaikh Ahmed Zaki Yamani, the minister. None of King Faisal's sons served as ministers in their father's cabinet, but Prince Sa'ud has been appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs in the government of his uncle, King Khalid.

Military careers have absorbed Prince Abd al-Rahman and Prince Bandar. Now an officer, Prince Abd al-Rahman graduated from Hun School and then from England's prestigious Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst. After leaving Hun, Prince Bandar attended Pomona and Whittier Colleges in California and later,

A.K. Chadun

Princeton graduate Prince Sa'ud, Saudi Arabia's foreign minister.

after completing Royal Air Force pilot training at Cranwell, England, went on to the University of Washington. He is now a captain in the Royal Saudi Air Force.

The sixth Saudi prince to attend Hun School was Prince Sa'ad. He too went on to Princeton University, but moved to an English university after a year and a half. Then, with a law degree from Cambridge, he returned for his first assignments: in Petromin and the Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources.

Prince Turki, the youngest of the seven who studied abroad, attended Hun School and graduated from Lawrenceville. He studied at Princeton and Georgetown Universities in the United States, then at Cambridge University and the University of London, where he graduated with a degree in Shari'ah law in 1972. He now serves as an advisor to the government of his uncle the king.

As the youngest brother, Prince Turki says, he couldn't wait to join the others and constantly pleaded with his father to let him go. King Faisal eventually agreed, and, in telling the young prince, explained his views on education, especially education in America.

"I remember him telling me that although he'd prefer I were a little older — I was 13 — he'd decided to let me go because my brothers were there to look after me. But he told me I wasn't too young to remember that education isn't an end in itself, but a means to an end. The more you excel, the more you are able to achieve your goals."

"And he stressed that even though my brothers were there, I should make friends with my American classmates, because I would learn from them as well as from the teachers. He chose the United States for our education because he felt it was a great opportunity for us – not only academically, but also to see life there as it was actually lived by Americans... As a result we came to know the United States, and to learn that Americans are not all rabid monsters out to exploit us..."

He and his brothers, Prince Turki went on, took full advantage of the opportunity to see an unvarnished America. He himself, for example, decided to attend Georgetown University, which simultaneously introduced him to Jesuits and national politics.

Georgetown, for Turki, was a wholly new experience after the relatively sheltered life of Princeton. Going to Washington D.C. from Princeton, he said, was a definite change. It was leaving a quiet village for a city that was, as one local radio station liked to call it, "the capital of the Free World."

The university was also a substantial change, the prince said. "It would have been for any Saudi Arab student, because it was a Jesuit school. As I gradually got to know the teachers, I was struck by a similarity in our outlooks quite different from what I'd expected beforehand from reading history. I discovered that we shared a motive in life: to serve God and, through work, to worship God."

"For me," Prince Turki added, "this means living the life of a true Muslim; learning to use modern methods and technology in order to better worship God in a modern age. Some people are anxious lest, as we adapt the technology of those who hold views different from ours, our values be eroded because they won't be portrayed as 'progressive.' But the majority in Saudi Arabia believe that our faith in God is such that it can endure the enticements of materialism."

Saudi engineering student Talal Fetaihi and Balkees al-Najjar of Kuwait, a doctoral candidate in linguistics, skiing in Utah.

One of a Kuwaiti contingent at Syracuse University in New York, pre-med student Khadija al-Ali studies biology in her dorm room.

I had Hollywood cowboy impressions of the United States before I went and I was really surprised to see firsthand how law-abiding and religious Americans were. I also gained a better understanding of how people there conduct their lives and businesses, and in comparing my own way of life and thinking with that of my host country, I learned how to look at the pros and cons of issues.

When I returned to Saudi Arabia I was appointed General Manager of the Saudi Government Railroad. I'll tell you frankly, I would hesitate a moment to accept now. It was probably the best experience I've ever had, but it was a real trial by fire. I eventually moved on to head the civil service and then serve as a Minister of State before coming to SAMA as Governor. Of course it will take a bit longer for a graduate to climb the ladder now, but the opportunities today are even greater than in the past, because with our present Development Plan there is so much activity in every sector, government and private.

In my mind the lack of enough skilled manpower is still the number-one problem in this country. Our problem number one, two and *three. We have Saudi Arabs who are highly qualified, but not yet in sufficient numbers. We need quantity as well as quality. To build a port, for example, it takes maybe a year or two. To begin to develop a nation, with a pool of technocrats, you need a minimum of 30.*

Abdulaziz al-Khuraishi
Governor of the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency
M.B.A., USC, 1960

ernment which, a spokesman said, "will sponsor any qualified student who wants to study something that is not in conflict with tradition." But unless the student has demonstrated a strong interest and ability in a specific discipline, the government will direct him or her to a field of particular value to the kingdom. One third of the Saudi students, men and women, are enrolled in engineering courses and one sixth are in business and management. Other fields in which Saudi students are presently concentrated – and concentrating – are the social sciences, computer science, education, health services and psychology, but they are also represented in dentistry, urban design, solar energy, horticulture, poultry husbandry and forestry.

The tendency of Saudi Arabian students to seek higher education abroad goes back decades. According to A. L. Tibawi, in his book *Islamic Education,* Saudi Arab students began to travel abroad for a university education during the early 1940's – at first to Egypt, later to Lebanon and Syria. It was not until the end of World War II that they began to go further afield – to Europe and the United States – except for one man who went earlier: Dr. Fadil Gabani. Sent to America before the war by his family, Gabani later, in 1954, received a Ph.D. from the Colorado School of Mines. As Saudi Arabia's first Deputy Minister of Petroleum for Mineral Affairs he was responsible for initiating an extensive program of Saudi cooperation with the United States Geological Survey which continues to this day. He has also served as his country's representative to the European Atomic Energy Commission in Vienna, and last year was elected chairman of the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna for the 1978-1979 term.

The second young Saudi to earn a degree in America was probably Abdullah Tariki, later the kingdom's first Minister of Petroleum and now a private petroleum consultant; he earned an M.A. in geology and petroleum engineering in Texas in 1947. Another of the very early students, and probably the first to go to the University of California, was a young man named Ali Abdallah Alireza, who was at Berkeley in April 1945, when the representatives of 46 nations met in San Francisco to draft the United Nations Charter. King Abd al-'Aziz cabled the 23-year old student to take time out from his studies to join the Saudi Arab delegation at the conference, which was headed by his son, Prince Faisal, later king. Alireza accepted

"Being subjected to a new atmosphere is extremely important in the making of a man. A student gets away... from dependence on his parents. He rents a room... deals with a landlord... buys and cooks his food... deals with problems. Suddenly he finds himself...

I remember being extremely happy during my university days in California. I was active in various club activities, in writing for the student newspaper, in the International Club, the Model United Nations. I was really active, and I enjoyed it tremendously, making speeches all over the place – though I wouldn't want to remember what I said then. Part of my happiness there was the ease of getting along with fellow students, the professors, people in the Santa Monica community... The contrast of two cultures! I feel I learned to look at things objectively, to act realistically, to appreciate the value of debate.

I don't know any Saudi Arab who has studied in the United States who has come back with a feeling against it. As a matter of fact we've been accused here in Saudi Arabia of favoring America. One former ambassador of a European country called us the California Mafia because so many people in the decision-making process have studied at various California institutions... I don't think that is necessarily true. Of course, there is no doubt that in a variety of fields America is the most advanced country. That's just a fact we have to recognize. U.S. business has won many projects in Saudi Arabia – but on merit. And merit shall continue to be our criterion of selection."

Hisham Muhyi al-Din Nazer
Minister of Planning
B.A., UCLA, 1957; M.A., UCLA, 1958

Hana and Maha Razzuqi of Kuwait – and Syracuse, N.Y.

Gifts and Grants and Grateful Grads

When a bank draft arrives from an Arab country to help finance a U.S. university program, or help to fund its scholarship needs, there is little publicity given to the gift although it is invariably received with quiet rejoicing. And so it was an unusual campus event when, on a sunny October day in the fall of 1977, Arab dignitaries from the Kuwaiti delegation to the United Nations and a half-dozen photographers showed up at a Saturday soccer game inaugurating the Youssuf al-Marzook athletic fields at the University of Hartford in Connecticut. A successful Kuwaiti businessman—and former campus soccer star—Faisal al-Marzook had donated $250,000 to the university to construct the playing fields named for his father. The gift, he said, was given in gratitude for his education and for the friends he had made in the community; the inscription in Arabic and English on the slate tablets at the entrance read: ".... to the encouragement of international peace through academic cooperation and interchange."

Faisal al-Marzook's gift may have been the largest made by an individual Arab alumnus to his American alma mater, but it was far from being the most important recent donation to Middle East studies in the United States. According to one professor, "There is more Arab generosity filtering into U.S. institutions than is publicized."

The gifts include:

– $1 million to endow the King Faisal Chair for Arab and Islamic Studies at the University of Southern California, from the government of Saudi Arabia;

– $1 million to endow a medical chair at St. Luke's Hospital, an affiliate of Columbia University, from the government of Kuwait;

– $200,000 for a program of Islamic and Arabian development studies to Duke University, from the government of Saudi Arabia;

– $100,000 each to the Universities of Pennsylvania and Georgetown and to Johns Hopkins SAIS to develop Arab studies programs, and $25,000 for the appointment of a professor of Near Eastern science at New York University, given by Sultan Qabus of Oman;

– $750,000 from the government of Libya for the al-Mukhtar Chair of Arab Culture at Georgetown University, and $88,000 to help fund an interdisciplinary program on Arab development at the University of Utah;

– $250,000 from the United Arab Emirates to support a visiting professorship of Arab civilization at Georgetown University;

– A grant from the Ministry of Education of Qatar to help publish al-Arabiya, *a journal devoted to the Arabic language, produced by the American Association of Teachers of Arabic.*

– An annually endowed chair at Harvard University, the only chair in the history of Islamic science in the world, from the government of Kuwait;

– Two-thirds of the funding for Georgetown University's new Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, given by a group of Arab countries. The center's board of advisors includes representatives from Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Qatar, Oman, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

U.S. colleges and universities, many of which are fighting for their lives in the face of rising education costs and dwindling support from foundations and the federal government, are looking to alumni, both at home and abroad, and to the countries of the Middle East for support of international programs devoted to better cross-cultural communications in a shrinking world.

Bryn Mawr College, which has students enrolled from 10 Middle Eastern countries, is the first to embark on a drive for scholarship funds intended expressly for women from those Arab countries which lack the means to send women abroad for study. The college has raised enough money to enable three students – a Yemeni, a Jordanian and a Palestinian – to pursue four-year courses.

Bryn Mawr believes that bringing female students to the U.S. from the Middle East does more than provide educational opportunities for Arab women; it also enriches the learning and cultural experience of its American students. Munira Fakhro, a Bryn Mawr graduate student from Bahrain in the School of Social Work and Social Research, would agree. "We really need more cross-cultural information," she says. "I am the only foreigner in my seminar and study is pretty well limited to American problems and communities. Learning the methodology is important, but the problems of a changing society like Bahrain's need different solutions. I get extra books to read about developing countries, but the other students are rarely interested in our problems. Their concerns are strictly American."

It is possible that other students gain more from the experience of having Munira in the seminar than either she or they are aware of, and this mutual benefit is one reason why Arab countries are encouraged to send students and to help finance Middle East studies. The academics, responding to criticism that the donors are buying influence, say that the Arab governments are simply paying part of the educational costs for wider knowledge of the language, the history and the culture of the Middle East.

An Egyptian-born professor, Dr. Abdulhamid Sabra, who occupies the Harvard chair of the history of Islamic science, explains: "The Arab nations know they have a stake in American education. They are not well enough understood, and they know it will benefit them when Americans know more about them than how many barrels of oil are being imported, and what it costs."

> *The academic degree is only part of the experience of studying in America. You gain perspective. You find out you are only a small part of this big world. You learn about Americans' work ethic and their forthrightness.*
>
> *Saudi Arabia has two big problems, manpower and infrastructure. We are trying to solve the first by training and education, the second simply by building. There is a great role for America here.*
>
> **Dr. Soliman Solaim**
> *Minister of Commerce*
> *M.A., USC; Ph.D., School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins*

– and immediately began to grow a beard in order to look a few years older. Today, still bearded, he is Saudi Arabia's distinguished ambassador to the United States in Washington.

In the spring of 1948 a second Saudi student enrolled at Berkeley: Salih Alfadl. He stayed on at California to earn an M.A. in economics in 1953, then returned to Saudi Arabia and worked five years for Aramco. Today Alfadl is a member of the boards of the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency and Petromin (the General Petroleum and Minerals Organization), and chairman of the board of the Arabian Drilling Company.

In a way, Salih Alfadl's enrollment marked a turning point, for although he was sent to the United States by his parents to study at their expense, he had only been at Berkeley a short time when he was awarded a full scholarship by his government. He joined a group of seven youngsters who in 1947 had arrived in San Francisco – where Aramco's U.S. headquarters were located at the time – as the first contingent of students officially sponsored by the kingdom. At the government's request, Aramco not only helped this first small group of "bursary students" find prep schools where they could have intensive English instruction, but also escorted them to a department store to outfit them for the unfamiliar rigors of an American winter.

Those were the first tentative but eager steps of Saudi Arabia's headlong run toward higher education in the United States. The first scholarship students returned to their homeland in the early 1950's; by the 1960's the kingdom was sending students to the United States by the hundreds and in the 1970's by the thousands. Tibawi writes that 360 Saudis were studying in America in 1964; if his figure is correct then their number increased almost exactly 10 times during the subsequent 10 years, and then more than tripled between 1974 and the end of 1978.

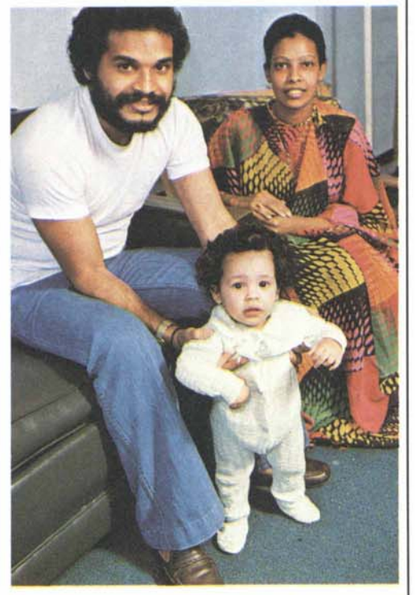
Although student migrations on this scale probably date only from this century, the phenomenon itself is as old as history. The bold, the bright and the ambitious have always been drawn toward the flame of invention and learning. As Arab students, justifiably proud, can be quick to remind you, nearly 1,000 years ago the great seats of knowledge were in Baghdad and Cairo, and in medieval times it was European students who flocked to study at the feet of Muslim scholars in such centers of scholarship and science as Cordoba, in Spain. (See *Aramco World*, September-October 1976)

> *Nowadays the role of agriculture is becoming appreciated. And it seems the people who are enthusiastic, who are putting themselves out, are the grads from the U.S. It may be a coincidence, but they seem more adventurous, more willing to go into the field and get their hands dirty. They've seen it and they're used to it.*
>
> **Taher Obeid**
> *Former Deputy Minister of Agriculture*
> *B.A., Chico State University*

Now the pendulum has swung the other way, and in the second half of the 20th century an American education is seen as at least advantageous and in some cases vital. And when the Saudi Arab graduates return from America, the skills and experiences they've gained are quickly put to work. Most fill urgent needs for managers and planners; others, teaching, begin to pass on what they've learned. It is significant that seven of the 10 U.S. alumni now in the cabinet have served as teachers or adminstrators in one of Saudi Arabia's own universities after returning from their studies in America.

For those who have already studied in America and for those studying there now, the experience has been unequivocally rewarding – and not only in academic terms. As Taher Obeid, Saudi Arabia's former Deputy Minister of Agriculture put it: "In America, schools don't just plug students into a specialised field; they broaden horizons. The degree is an important element, but for the student just being there, being exposed to the society, is perhaps equally important."

Hayfa Zayani of Bahrain at a television studio control console at the University of Texas at Austin. A director's post with Bahrain Television is her goal.



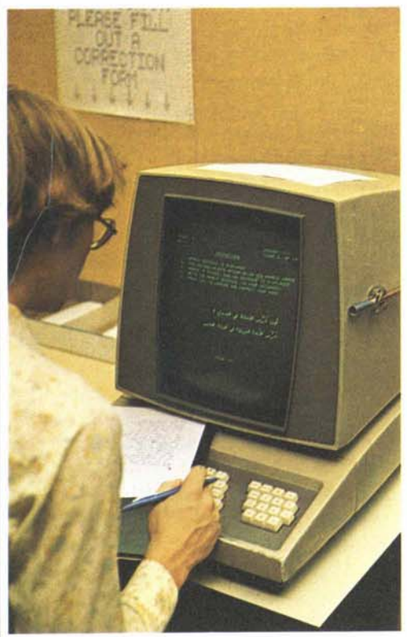
Practicing writing in Bloomington at an Arabic-language school for children of Arab students. Right, Indiana University students Aziz Ali Amry (biology) and Fatima al-Mugheiry (economics) from Oman.

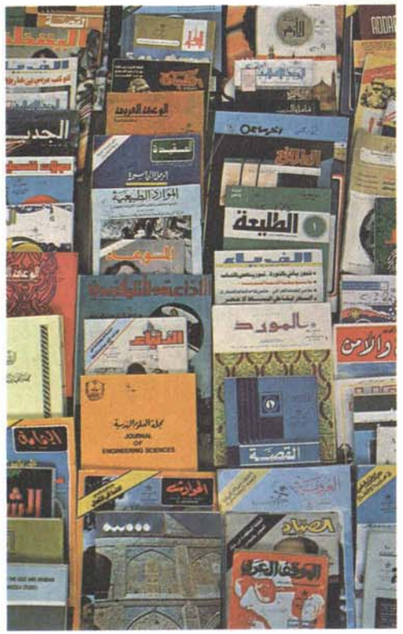
These fine old copies of the Koran are among the Arabic manuscripts gathered by Dr. Aziz Atiya for the University of Utah's collection.

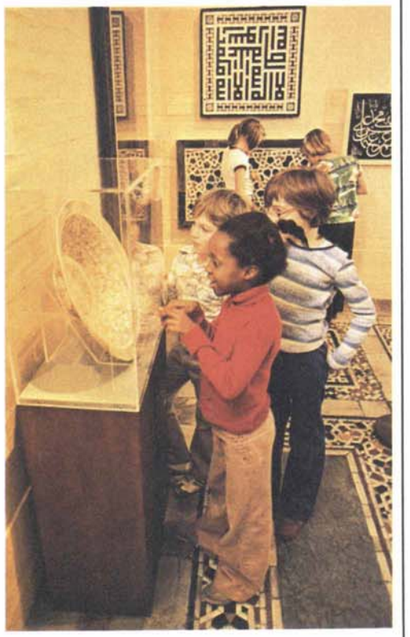
ARABIC, ARABISTS AND ACADEMIA

About the time students from the Middle East were beginning to study in and about America, Americans were also beginning to study about and in the Middle East. Today, some 30 years after emerging as an accepted academic discipline, Middle East studies are suddenly, and widely, popular at American colleges and universities. Courses in Arabic and other Middle East subjects – once tailored for diplomats and missionaries – now draw students who plan careers in banking, business, law, public health, education and urban studies. More surprisingly, perhaps, university "outreach" programs are developing and providing courses on the Middle East for both high school and adult-education programs.

Some American universities, certainly, have included Middle East courses in their curricula for years. Harvard introduced Arabic – as an adjunct to Biblical studies – in 1754 and Yale has offered Arabic since 1841. But as late as the 1930's only a dozen or so universities offered courses in Arabic – and at the graduate level only. More extensive scholarship in the field was limited to a handful of Orientalists who pored over classical Islamic texts or traveled abroad to dig up the ruins of ancient civilizations. In fact, neither







At Texas, computers teach Arabic, and Arabic-language publications flood in. Children visit the Islamic Gallery of the University of Pennsylvania Museum.

> *I was working on my Ph.D. at the University of Michigan when I came home to attend my sister's wedding and gather data for my thesis on development and social change. Suddenly I found myself with an architectural office, which in just one year has grown to a staff of 40. It all sort of fell into place. I wasn't planning on it.*
>
> *Saudi Arabia is undergoing change which I can actually see every day. It attracted me like a magnet. I found it super-exciting and I wanted to be part of it, be a part of building the country.*
>
> **Zuhair Fayez**
> *Architect, Jiddah*
> *B.A. and M.A., University of Colorado, 1971*

Arabic literature nor Islamic culture was accepted as an academic discipline until 1947, when the late Philip K. Hitti finally persuaded Princeton to establish its Department of Near Eastern Studies.

Hitti (See *Aramco World,* July-August 1971) had been pushing for formal recognition of Middle East studies since 1927 and had, in 1935, pioneered summer institutes in Arabic and Islamic studies. But today's proliferation of Middle East studies is more the result of key historic events: World War II, the post-war expansion of American international interests and responsibilities, the Soviet Union's launching of Sputnik and, in 1973, the beginning of the energy crisis. Those events, together with developments related to them, slowly persuaded foundations, universities and governments to back programs of instruction in Middle Eastern languages – especially Arabic – and in Islamic culture and history.

The first development – World War II – created a demand for experts in areas of the world previously of no interest to the U.S. – areas such as the Middle East. To meet that demand the U.S. Army recruited and funded a few men like Hitti to set up crash programs in Arabic. Next came the post-war growth in America's international interests – which brought a measure of support from foundations and corporations such as Aramco. Then, a turning point, the Soviet Union successfully launched Sputnik, the first space satellite, in 1957.

That achievement, a cold war coup that alarmed the United States, triggered a reappraisal of American education, galvanized the U.S. Congress into action and led to passage of Title VI of the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) – which authorized support for strategic language and area studies. Under Title VI the U.S. Office of Education has subsequently allocated nearly $13 million to centers at qualifying universities to create or expand such programs. In the 1978-1979 academic year, for example, Title VI funds allocated $1,850,000, the largest sum ever, to 14 universities: Harvard, Princeton, Michigan, Chicago and Pennsylvania, long-time ivory towers for Orientalists, and to the universities of Arizona, Texas (at Austin), Utah and Washington, Portland State, Georgetown, New York University, UCLA, and the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS).

In addition, Title VI money provided 142 graduate fellowships in Middle East studies, 109 of them for the Arabic-language area. The most recent of nearly 2,500 awarded since the passage of NDEA, those fellowships will help provide a continuing flow of qualified instructors for 123 American universities and colleges that now offer graduate and undergraduate programs in Middle East studies.

The energy crisis, which intensified American interest in the Middle East – and subsequently generated additional funding – stimulated another wave of interest in Middle East studies. But by then the approach to such studies had begun to change. Where Orientalists of the Hitti era once pursued knowledge for its own sake and concentrated on linguistics, today's Middle East specialists advocate a more utilitarian approach. As Walid Khalidy put it, "It is a pity that so many Middle East centers are still housing classical Arabic and pre-Islamic odes when, next door, nuclear proliferation is being discussed." Khalidy, a professor of political science at the American University of Beirut and recently a visiting fellow at Harvard, says that today's needs are more topical and urgent. "Today there is much interest from many quarters which reach deeply into academia, and everyone has become more intellectually inquisitive about the Arab world."

Universities which continue to emphasize the roots of Islam and medieval studies – notably Princeton and, to a lesser degree, Harvard, Chicago, Michigan and Pennsylvania – argue that the modern "area studies" approach is too broad, and not demanding enough, to produce professionals with an adequate historical perspective and language ability. And even those in the utilitarian camp admit that they have a point. "No doubt about it," admits a professor who teaches interdisciplinary courses, "the

At a joint Harvard–MIT – Fletcher School graduate seminar on Middle Eastern economics, below, Professor A.J. Meyer of Harvard and Emeritus Professor Everett Hagen of MIT listen as a paper is presented. Above, Yemeni Ph.D. candidate Abdulaziz Saqqaf joins in the discussion.

Of Catalogues and Computers

In the ivy-covered Gothic fortress that houses the University of Washington's classics department, Professor Pierre MacKay sits in an office crammed with books and monographs and festooned with yards of green and white computer print-outs.

The books and monographs are Greek, Latin and Arabic classics, and obviously belong in a classics department office. But the green and white print-outs? They're part of an experiment: Professor MacKay's attempt to perfect a system of transliterating Arabic by computer.

Transliteration, quite different from translation, is a difficult process; it is the attempt to spell the words of one language in the alphabet or characters of another. Professor MacKay's system is an effort to do it by computer – to program a computer to either swallow the Roman alphabet and print out a corresponding Arabic script, or accept an input of Arabic and disgorge a corresponding Roman-lettered output. Originally devised to edit and publish medieval texts inexpensively, Professor MacKay's system is now being adapted to produce business contracts, economic and statistical reports and – a particularly important use – library catalogues.

Rapid transliteration of library catalogues is important today, partly because of the burgeoning interest in Middle East studies, but also because library acquisitions of materials in Arabic have increased tremendously. Although authors' names and book titles are printed in Arabic script on the books, the catalogue cards are usually written in Roman letters. Harvard's library, for example, is the only one that has its Arabic collection catalogued entirely in Arabic script: more than 100,000 cards written by hand. Computerized transliteration of Arabic script into Roman letters, therefore, will be immensely helpful, particularly if introduced at the Library of Congress, which catalogues most American library materials.

The Library of Congress, in fact, has already begun to computerize its cataloguing. It is the only way, librarians say, to cope with today's avalanche of printed materials in all languages. The library has begun with the Near East National Union List, a compilation of Arabic, Persian and Turkish monographs and serials, although for now the list will be catalogued in the Roman alphabet. When the use of Arabic script will begin is anybody's guess; computerized transliteration is not simple. As Professor MacKay ruefully admits, "It's a good deal easier to teach the Arabic alphabet to undergraduates than to teach the same thing to a computer."

The dramatic increase in American acquisitions of Arabic materials – books, monographs and serials – is, curiously, the result of a law concerned with foreign sales of American agricultural products. Because that law – Public Law 480 – provides that payment for the sales be made in local currencies which, in turn, may be spent in the countries making payment, the United States has accepted, in lieu of cash, some 360,000 Arabic books, plus hundreds of magazines and newspapers. These have been given to 25 participating libraries: the Library of Congress, the New York Public Library and 23 university libraries, many of which rely almost entirely on P.L. 480 imports for their Arabic materials.

Some universities, of course, have other sources. Princeton, which has been building its collection since the 1930's, leads the country with the largest number of catalogued Arabic volumes – approximately 60,000 titles – and both the University of Utah and UCLA have been compiling notable collections since the 1950's. Utah, already despite its late start, has more than 33,000 volumes. Some of the collection came through P.L. 480 purchases, but the greater part is due to the tireless efforts of Dr. Aziz Atiya, founder of Utah's Middle Eastern program. For years Dr. Atiya has made trips abroad to acquire modern works and, in addition, a notable collection of Korans, manuscripts and Arabic papyri. And UCLA has a collection of nearly 3,000 Arabic manuscripts, including some rare 15th- to 18th-century medical and scientific texts.

While these holdings cannot rival those of the great Middle Eastern libraries, such as Cairo or Istanbul, the larger collections in American university libraries are greater than those of some Middle Eastern countries: Harvard, Michigan and the Hoover Institution at Stanford University each claims to have more than 100,000 titles in its Middle East collection in all languages.

The Arabic-language library holdings also serve an indirect and more subtle function merely by their presence – a function that Portland State University's Millar Library has chosen to emphasize. The library participates in the P.L. 480 program and has acquired over 20,000 Arabic titles covering a tremendously broad range of topics. Unlike many other libraries, however, Portland's has integrated Arabic titles into the main collection of English-language works, along with books in German, French and other languages. As a result, a student searching in the stacks for books on irrigation techniques, early childhood education or the nature of science is likely to see Arabic books alongside the English ones on the subject – and to realize, perhaps, what undiscovered treasures of knowledge and wisdom lie hidden in Islamic culture and its incomparable language.

narrow philological basis of the Orientalists was thorough."

Because of this conflict, Georgetown has developed still a third approach by establishing a new center for concentrated area study, the Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, to answer a need for *Arab* studies as distinct from Middle East studies. The reason, says Professor John Ruedy, chairman of the program, is that the utilitarian approach made the same fundamental error as the Orientalists, "in assuming that all the people of the Middle East could be studied as 'the other' just because they were different. This does not solve modern problems – economic, social or developmental. We hope to produce experts who will be functional in the Arabic language as well as professionally functional."

Despite their differences, however, Middle East specialists remain allies and together grapple with the problem of determining how a university can best teach, back research, maintain high academic standards and, at the same time, graduate men and women qualified for diverse careers and roles in a changing world.

Another change in approach – arising from a scarcity of professorships and other doctoral-level positions – involves a new emphasis on master's-level programs for those who are career-oriented. Some of these are in Islamic studies or Arabic literature and linguistics, some are an interdisciplinary concentration on the Middle East. The University of Chicago, for example, now awards an M.A.T. degree to teachers with a sub-speciality in the Middle East. And Michigan has established a unique master's program for teaching Arabic as a foreign language; not only Americans have enrolled but also Arabs sent by universities in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Syria.

Other new programs provide joint training with a university's professional schools: business administration, law, public and urban policy, public health, diplomacy and communications. Pennsylvania's law school now offers a diploma in Islamic law, while Harvard, Pennsylvania and the University of Washington offer graduate courses in Middle East economic systems. One of them, a graduate seminar on the economics of oil – open to students from the Harvard Business School, Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Tufts' Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy – recently included four Japanese, one Pakistani and the public relations director of the Yemen Arab Republic.

Undergraduate courses in Middle East studies have also proliferated. In many universities undergraduates can include a concentration on the Middle East in their major, and some, like Texas, UCLA and Arizona, award an interdisciplinary degree in Middle East studies. Ricker College in Houlton, Maine has since 1969 offered a B.A. in Muslim world studies, and gives academic credit for a junior year abroad at a college or university in a Muslim country. (See *Aramco World*, March-April 1975). Funded by the late King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, the government of Kuwait and Aramco, this program is intended to provide background to students who plan further specialized study and careers in fields dealing with the Middle East.

Leaning on a computer terminal, Professor Abboud counsels a University of Texas student confronted with four different forms of a single Arabic letter.

At the undergraduate level there are even students studying in Arab countries full-time. An estimated 50 American Muslims, for example, have been admitted to Saudi Arabia's universities – including the Islamic universities at Mecca, Medina and Riyadh – some with the help of the Muslim World League and the Muslim Students Association, others on their own. And in the 1970's two American graduate students who were *not* Muslim also studied in the kingdom. One was James Piscatori, now assistant professor of government at the University of Virginia. He says that he was the only Westerner among thousands of students on the Riyadh campus in 1974, where he lived in a youth hostel while working on his dissertation. More recently, Philip Suse, now completing his master's degree in international studies, attended the Arabic Language Institute in Riyadh.

In the U.S., so far, Portland State's is the only undergraduate program funded by NDEA, but recently some other U.S. grant money has been made available. The National Science Foundation, for example, has given a grant to the University of Chicago to locate and classify texts and translations – in the university's own collections – that are literary classics of Islamic civilizations. And John Marks, the program's administrator, hopes that translations of Islam's "50 great books" may some day be available to undergraduates. Another grant, from the National Endowment for the Humanities, will help a committee headed by North Carolina history professor Herbert Bodman to produce an updated atlas of Islamic history plus a microfiche collection of printed materials, slides, syllabi and teachers' guides – the beginning of a data bank from which instructors can draw materials they need to teach undergraduate courses.

Middle East studies are also filtering into secondary schools and adult-education programs through what are called "outreach" programs – an attempt to offset what Arab-Americans see as cultural bias and ethnic stereotyping. Funded by the U.S. Office of Education, "outreach" centers tailor their programs to the needs of their communities, holding workshops for teachers and providing teaching materials. Arizona's center has outfitted a van with colorful photographs and

To Learn the Language

We do not pretend," write the authors of an Arab-language primer, "that the would-be student of Arabic is confronted by an easy task." Yet Arabic is the official language of nearly every nation from Morocco to Oman, and is spoken as well in the southwestern corner of Iran, in parts of the Central Asian republics of the Soviet Union, and in some areas fringing the south Sahara. For many American businessmen and diplomats, therefore, some knowledge of Arabic is vital and today, as a result, thousands of students, in those fields and others, are taking Arabic in American universities and colleges.

Twenty years ago, this mass interest in one of the world's most difficult languages would have been inconceivable. There were, in fact, no more than 371 students enrolled in American university Arabic courses. But in the wake of the post-war and post-sputnik surges in international studies, Arabic language study has soared. By the opening of the 1977-1978 academic year, according to the Modern Language Association, 3,070 students were enrolled in Arabic courses in 105 colleges and universities and the number may even be higher now.

Most American students study modern standard Arabic – the language of broadcasting, journalism, advertising, formal speeches, modern literature and scientific writing. Those who will work in Islamic studies go on to learn classical Arabic; others, especially those who will work in the Middle East, often continue with one of the Arabic vernaculars: the spoken Arabic of Egypt, Syria, Morocco or the Gulf countries. But none of the courses, as the textbook author said, is easy. As Philip Hitti put it, in introducing Arabic at Princeton, Arabic was the first really foreign *language that his American students had encountered. He meant that most languages studied in America – such as Latin, French, German and Spanish – have common roots, as well as a common alphabet.*

This is not true of Arabic. Learning Arabic involves not only an entirely new vocabulary and grammar, but a whole new system of grammatical concepts, as well as a new and difficult writing system. It is so difficult, in fact, that 20 years ago only half of each first-year Arabic class survived for the second year.

Today's attrition rates are much lower. Because of post-war progress in language instruction, a far larger percentage of beginning students perseveres through three or four years of study. Arabic students, moreover, reach a higher level of competence sooner than their counterparts of a generation ago.

One important element in this change is the purely audio-lingual approach to language study developed during World War II by the U.S. Army, when it became clear that traditional language-teaching methods were neither fast enough nor successful enough for the military's purposes. Although that approach has been modified for college use since the war – by reintroducing grammar and writing at early stages of instruction – it has also been expanded. Today the teaching of Arabic is no longer confined to the classroom and the language lab; it has moved into audio-visual and computer centers as well. At the University of Pennsylvania, first-year Arabic is taught with the aid of 46 hours of video tape and at Harvard, and at the University of Texas, with the help of a computer.

At Texas, Professor Victorine Abboud claims that students can now learn to write in Arabic with only four to six hours of computer-terminal instruction – while the classroom method took some 36 hours of instruction. At Harvard, the computer drills first-year and intermediate Arabic students on grammar and vocabulary, and its programmer, Wilson Bishai, hopes one day to be able to add a sound synthesizer so the machine can pronounce Arabic as well. Teachers of Arabic do not suggest that the computer will eliminate classroom teaching altogether, but they agree that the machine can give students a self-confidence rarely found in the ranks of beginning students of Arabic. A computer, Bishai points out, can call the student by name, reinforce correct answers with praise, and joke about errors. The computer, furthermore, never gets impatient and never has an off day – something the best professor can rarely claim.

For those who believe that no language can be learned except in the country where it is spoken, two programs of intensive Arabic study abroad have been available for American students, one in Egypt, the other in Tunisia. The Center for Arabic Study Abroad (CASA) at the American University in Cairo, begun in 1967 and administered by the University of Michigan, accepts 20 graduate and undergraduate students a year for an eight-week summer program of colloquial Egyptian Arabic and modern standard Arabic. Fifteen more students are accepted for a full academic year of advanced Arabic.

A similar program, instituted in 1971 and run by the University of Utah, formerly sent as many as 40 students a year to the Bourguiba Institute for Modern Languages at the University of Tunis, where study ranged from modern standard Arabic and conversational Tunisian to advanced grammar and phonetics. The Tunisian government also awarded fellowships each year to two summer program students, giving them the opportunity to continue their study for a full academic year, and to audit university courses.

Both programs provided "total immersion" in Arabic, and by the end of the summer, according to one of the Cairo students, "you have learned two or three thousand new newspaper words and are having intelligent conversations in Arabic." By the following spring, he added, "I was learning the meters of Arabic poetry and chanting the Koran with proper pronunciation." Still not an easy task, but no longer the discouraging challenge that it was for the American student two decades ago.

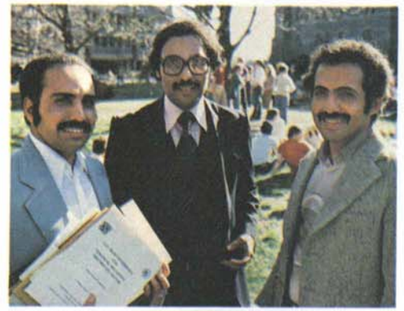
artifacts which goes around to Tucson schools – sometimes accompanied by one of the university's Arab students. Harvard and the University of Utah have sent teachers, administrators, librarians and media specialists abroad for a first-hand view of the Middle East. It's expensive, but important, says Barbara Aswad, anthropology professor at Michigan's Wayne State. "How can a teacher generate enthusiasm in the classroom when all his knowledge comes from books? When you see a culture whole then you can revise your ideas and understand it better."

The "outreach" programs are also helping American businessmen in their quest for needed export markets. Traveling to the Middle East for the first time, many businessmen have learned how little Americans know of foreign language and culture – particularly in the Middle East. Today, therefore, they gratefully pack outreach-sponsored elementary grammars into their attaché cases, and, at the University of Pennsylvania, take televised instruction in a language lab. At the University of Arizona, the Thunderbird School of International Management offers two-week seminars led by American experts and the cultural attachés of Arab embassies.

Some universities have also instituted lecture series and mini-courses, both credit and non-credit, and mounted exhibitions in university museums. Others have turned to television. Professors from Princeton and New York University, for example, have offered courses on the Middle East on "Sunrise Semester," an early-morning, nationally televised production.

According to some of the professors, the response has been astonishing. Frank Peters, an NYU professor of Islamic philosophy and theology, offered lectures on Muhammad and the Koran and found that "there are an enormous number of people who can't sleep or else get up early to learn something." A similar response was reported by Bernard Lewis, Princeton's eminent professor of history who breezed through his series, and also by Peter Chelkowski, director of NYU's Near Eastern center, who didn't. He was so nervous on his debut before the cameras that he lapsed into Polish – a switch the control room did not notice but which delighted his Polish-American viewers.

American academics, these days, are also traveling more. Involved in burgeoning cross-cultural exchanges, some are on the road constantly, one day reading papers – in Arabic and English – at a University of Riyadh conference on history, the next attending a USC conference on the life of King Faisal. They attend such gatherings as Utah's international conference on comparative law (Islamic, Talmudic, Roman and British), Georgetown's on U.S. – Arab commercial and financial relations, and the University of Petroleum and Minerals' conference on solar energy.



Three Saudi Ph.D. candidates – Khalid Jindan, Alawi Asaud and Saud Assubai – at a symposium sponsored by Georgetown University's new Center for Contemporary Arab Studies.

They also undertake research projects – like UCLA's two-year study of the economic relationship among states in the Middle East – and manage to attend the annual meeting of the Middle East Studies Association (MESA). A three-day convocation of some 700 academic, business, and government people, MESA offers panel discussions, workshops and papers on every aspect of Middle East studies.

Academia is also providing professors for Arab institutions of higher learning. Some 100 Arabic-speaking Americans now teach in Saudi Arabia. Most are specialists in such fields as engineering, computer science, and the humanities – but some, in a coals-to-Newcastle situation, are even involved in Arabic. One example is Dr. Zaki Abdel Malek, assistant professor of Arabic and linguistics at Utah, and director of a new program for teaching Arabic to Americans at Dhahran. Other American professors are teaching Arabic at Riyadh's Arabic Language Institute.

America's corps of Middle East specialists, moreover, has pushed far beyond the groves of academe. In what are clearly examples of the utilitarian approach, some specialists virtually commute between their campuses and Arab countries.

This is particularly true of those at universities with alumni in Saudi Arabia, many of whom now head university departments and government ministries. Economists from Harvard and MIT, for example, advise Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Planning on the country's third Five Year Development Plan, while specialists from USC help Bahrain tackle its problems of growth. They make surveys and evaluations on subjects as varied as nomadic response to irrigation development and the progress of family planning programs.

Despite that, however, the ivory tower contingent has by no means given up; indeed it seems to be making a comeback. Even as social and economic problems seem to be absorbing the attention of American Arabists, some universities have quietly begun to refocus their attention on subjects dear to the Hitti-era Orientalists. At the University of Pennsylvania, for example, a series of summer institutes on medieval studies recently brought together international Latinists, Byzantinists and Arabists to study the interaction of those cultures. It is not, obviously, a topical or urgent problem. But it is, says George Makdisi, Pennsylvania's professor of Islamic studies, important.

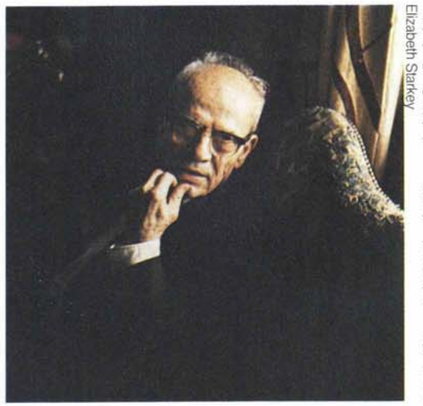
"We can no longer study these medieval cultures separately," Dr. Makdisi insists. "What we learn on one side of the Mediterranean throws light on the other. If there is so much of Arabic Islamic culture in medieval Latin culture, that means *our* culture in the West has been formed by many elements, among them, and very strongly among them, the Arab Islamic elements. We all belong to the same culture. Muslims are not Oriental in the way the Far East is Oriental. They are more like us."

A SCATTERING OF SCHOLARS

Last year in Washington, the Egyptian embassy awarded Egypt's Order of Merit to Princeton's Philip K. Hitti and cited him as the "cornerstone of Arab culture in America." At the same ceremony Egypt also honored two other eminent Arab scholars, Majid Khadduri and Aziz S. Atiya, for "their contribution to learning" and for "strengthening the bonds of friendship between the Arab world and the United States."

Individually, those honors were well merited. Dr. Hitti, who died shortly afterward, had been the prime mover in the establishment of Princeton's Department of Near Eastern Studies, the first in the United States. Dr. Khadduri, once an adviser to Iraq's delegation at the founding of the United Nations, began teaching at Indiana University in 1947 as a visiting lecturer, and is now a professor at Johns Hopkins. He is also the man who taught the first U.S. course in Islamic law. Dr. Atiya, who once taught in Europe and Egypt, was co-founder of the Coptic Institute, has been a history professor at the University of Utah since 1952 and still, at 82, produces important papers and advises a half-dozen doctoral candidates.

But the honors were collectively merited too. For together, Hitti, Khadduri and Atiya were trailblazers. Born, raised and educated in the Arab world, they were among the first scholars from the Arab East to teach their own culture in America. Until they, and a few others like them, appeared on the scene, Arab culture was not taught by Arabs – or even Americans. In those days the foremost experts in Middle East studies were European.



Elizabeth Starkey

Philip Hitti: father of Middle East studies in America.

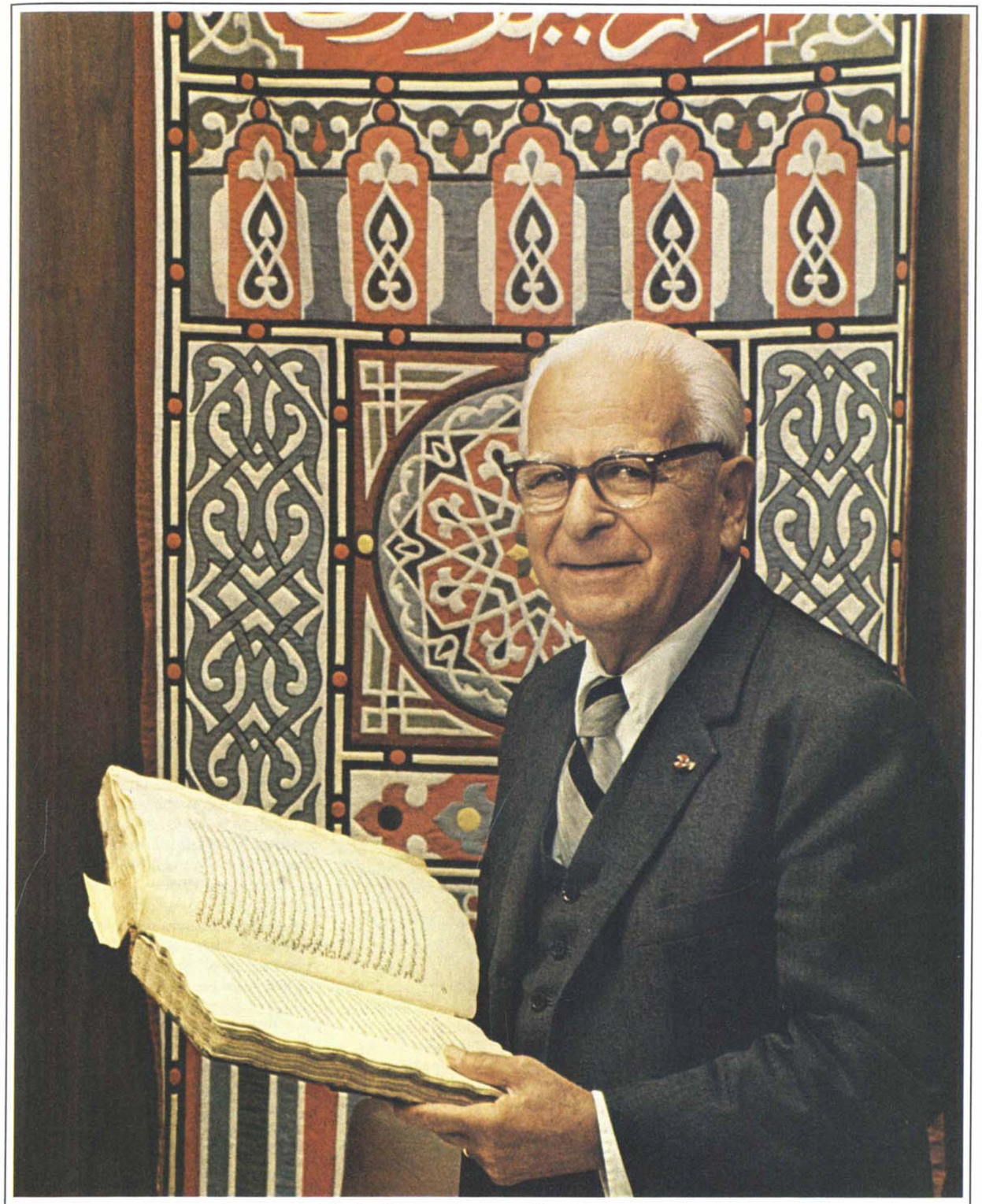
Majid Khadduri: the first U.S. teacher of Islamic law.

It was, for example, a British scholar, Sir Hamilton Gibb, who set up Harvard's Middle Eastern Center. And it was a German scholar, Dr. Gustav E. von Grunebaum, who did the same at UCLA.

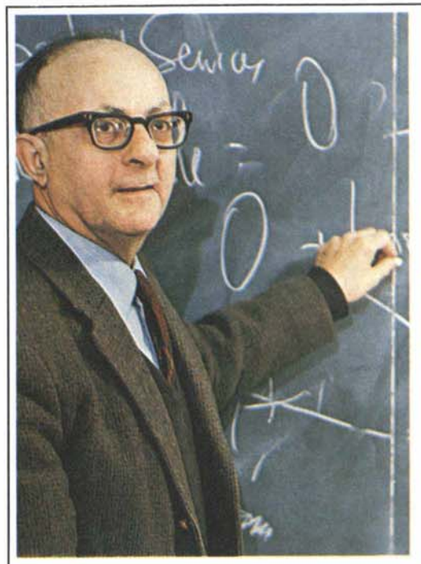
Today all that has changed. According to one estimate – by the Association of Arab-American University Graduates – there are more than 2,000 professors from the Middle East teaching in America now. Some are naturalized Americans, some are not, and some have gone into fields as diverse as anesthesiology, insurance and urban planning. But they all share a common heritage: an intimate knowledge of their own language, history and civilization. And some 200 to 300 of them are directly involved in teaching some aspect of that culture.

This change still astonishes at least one of the trailblazers: Charles Issawi, a Cairo-born economist who is now the Bayard Dodge Professor of Near East Studies at Princeton and head of the Middle East Economic Association.

Dr. Issawi, who once taught at the American University of Beirut and at Columbia University in New York, is credited with giving the first course in



Aziz Atiya taught in Egypt and Europe, then founded Utah's Middle East studies program and helped build a 33,000-volume library. Here he holds a 15th-century manuscript.



Economist Charles Issawi: from the U.N. to Princeton.

Hisham Sharabi, Ibrahim Oweiss and Halim Barakat are three of the professors at Georgetown's Arab studies center.

Middle East economics at an American university. While working for the United Nations, in 1950, he participated in a summer institute at Harvard and introduced the subject for the first time – and has been teaching it regularly since, first at Columbia and now at Princeton.

Remembering his early Columbia days, when he taught a one-evening-a-week course for graduate students after a day's work at the U.N., Dr. Issawi marvels at the number of out-of-the-way places where Arab professors now teach – some of them in the field he introduced: Abbas al-Nasrawi at the University of Vermont, Abdeleem Sharshar at Virginia Commonwealth in Richmond and Ibrahim Oweiss, the Egyptian economist at Georgetown, credited with coining the term "petrodollar." Dr. Issawi mentioned too Regaei El Mallakh at the University of Colorado in Boulder – where he founded the International Research Center for Energy and Economic Development.

Some Arabs coming to the States to fill non-academic positions were, like Issawi, lured into academia. Others, trained in one field, have branched out into another. Edward Jurgi, a Syrian, initially taught the course in Islam at Princeton Theological Seminary and ended by being Professor of Religions there.

In academia, however, where professorships are in short supply, some Arab scholars must compete with their American colleagues in order to teach their specialty. Some, like Abdulhamid Sabra, have no trouble. An Egyptian, Sabra occupies Harvard's chair of the history of Islamic science. There is also Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, a much respected Palestinian professor of political science, who is Director of Admissions of Northwestern University's graduate program, and Jihad Racy, a Lebanese professor of ethnomusicology at UCLA, who teaches Arab music and gives instruction on traditional Arab instruments.

On the other hand, many able scholars – like Dr. Fauzi M. Najjar, a Lebanese at Michigan State who specializes in Islamic political theory, and Dr. Najm A. Bezirgan, an Iraqi at Texas trained in Islamic logic – are able to give only occasional courses in their field. Instead, they must answer the demand for general courses in the Middle East or in beginning Arabic.

> ***'I felt there was a need for Islamic studies in American education and I worked to make a place for them. But I was a voice in the desert. No one would listen ... 'Teach Arabic? Why should we teach Arabic? ...' 'Because,' I said, 'there are 500 million Muslims and 100 million speak Arabic. We have to deal with them and understand them.'***
>
> **Philip Hitti,**
> *Emeritus Professor, Princeton University (in a 1971* Aramco World *interview)*

Palestinian poet Salma Jayyusi is in a similar situation. Because there is not yet enough demand for modern Arabic literature – her field – most campuses cannot justify the cost of full-time professors, so she must move from one Middle East center to another as visiting professor or research fellow. Luckily, Dr. Jayyusi likes the changing scenery, but she does decry the lack of courses in her field. Literature, she believes, whether studied in the original language or in translation, is "the best communicator of the Arab experience and perspective".

Some professors, responding to the increasing demand for Arab studies, have expanded their expertise to teach outside their original speciality.

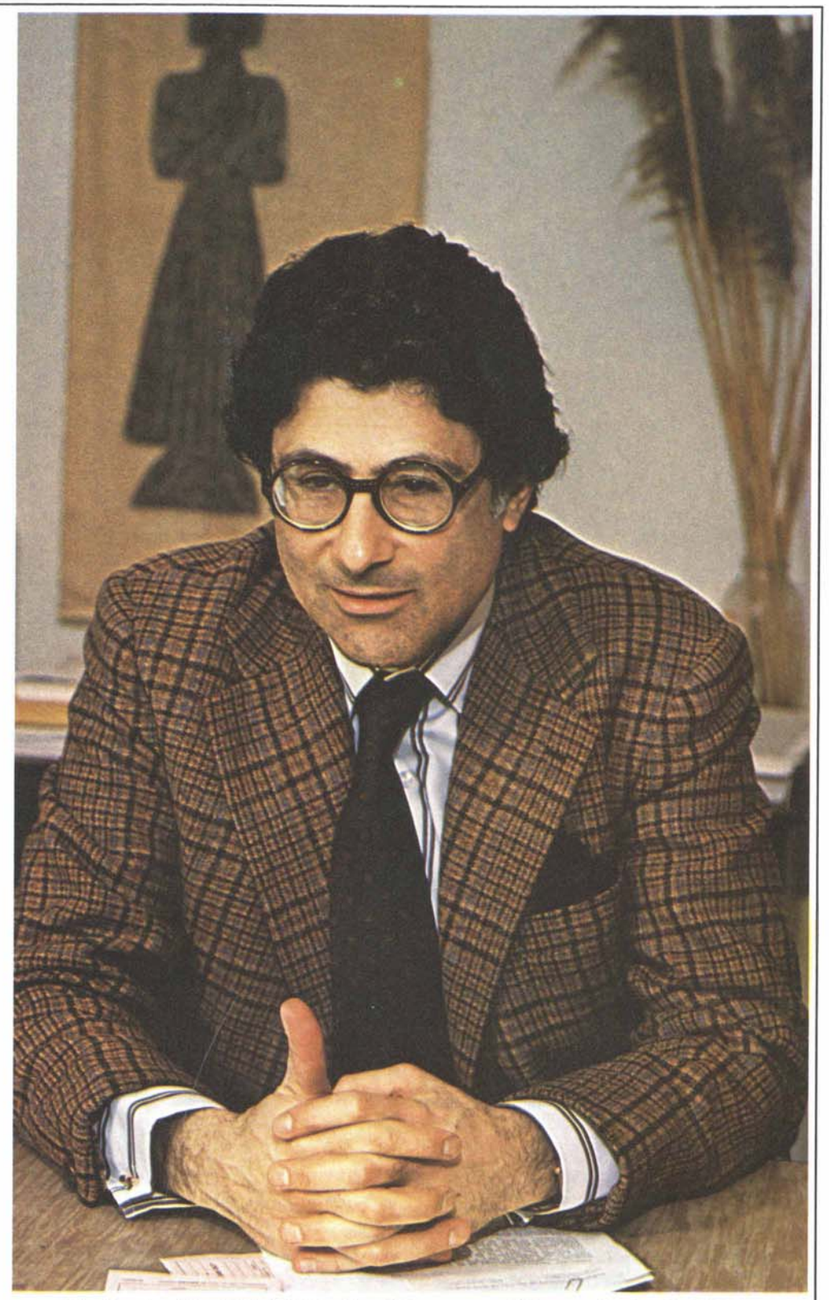
Hisham Sharabi, Palestinian professor of European intellectual history at Georgetown for more than 25 years, now occupies a chair of Arab culture and gives courses in the history of Arab society. In addition, Sharabi, whose teaching load is still 90 percent European history, writes extensively on the Middle East, edits the *Journal of Palestine Studies* and serves as president of the National Association of Arab-Americans – the only Arab-American group registered as a congressional lobby.

There is even one Arab, Edward W. Said, Parr Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University, who has never taught about the Middle East. But he has written a book called *Orientalism*. Published in the U.S., England and France, and slated for Arab translation, *Orientalism* is being argued about and applauded on both sides of the Atlantic.

"Orientalism" is Professor Said's term for the Western conception of the Muslim East as mysterious, sensual, unchanging and ultimately inferior – a view which has been conditioned by Western cultural hegemony, fostered by two centuries of Western scholarship, and popularized by romanticized visions of the East – such as Edmund Dulac's once-famous Art Nouveau treatment in numerous books in the early 20th century. Far from experiencing the reality of the Arab world, he asserts, Westerners view the Middle East through a framework of ideas promulgated and perpetuated by past and present Orientalists.

Arab students in the States will affirm at least part of Said's thesis. Adel Alloughe, a Tunisian doctoral candidate, digging into original sources on microfilm in the University of Utah library, says: "When you have studied some of these manuscripts, you realize that most of what is over there on the shelves is superficial – a rehash of famous Orientalists quoted over and over again."

Saad Sowayan agrees. A Saudi anthropologist who has been studying in the U.S. over a period of 13 years, he maintains that he has heard teachers of Islamic civilization give evaluations that are both "untrue and counter-instructive." As a result, he adds, "I have come to think the most qualified teachers are native Arabs. We may be subjective but at least we are recognizable as such."



Columbia professor Edward Said's book Orientalism *criticizes some aspects of Western teaching about the Middle East.*

According to Said, however, even "native Arabs" can be affected by "orientalism." As many of them have received their doctorates in the States, or at least in the West, they too have fallen under its spell.

On the other hand, Said says, modern scholars – both Americans doing research abroad and Arabs teaching their own culture – can, if they're wary, overturn the tradition of "orientalism." And Hussein Fahim, a visiting professor of anthropology from Egypt at Utah, asserts that the Arab-born professor, in providing a native's perspective, may or may not contradict a former point of view but can surely qualify it and put it into an appropriate context. "Our objective", he says, "is to get students... to raise questions... challenge the professor and make us rethink our own views concerning issues, questioning what *we* may have taken for granted."

Besides, says Amal Rassam, profes-

NYU professor Mona Mikhail, translator of Egypt's Musa.

To transfer technology and knowledge, the Aswads hope more Arab-American professors will teach in the Middle East.

sor of anthropology at the City University of New York, many Arab professors serve not merely as "informants" but as "culture brokers." A naturalized American born in Iraq, Professor Rassam says that "when we are here, we interpret Arab culture to Americans. When we go back home we are asked to make sense of American culture. We have access to both and stand apart from both – not being truly of one or the other."

But what happens, she adds, is that the accelerating rate of change in the Middle East, although uneven, is such that an absence of a few years puts her out of touch. "The culture in which I was brought up has already become history."

Still, with jet travel, most Arab professors do get back to their homelands often, sometimes on sabbatical leave during which they do further research, sometimes on short trips. Either way such visits strengthen the ties between native land and adopted country.

Nazli Choucri, for example, a professor of international political economy at MIT and one of the few tenured women professors there, flies to Egypt every six weeks. Associate director of a research program on technology transfer and development problems – co-sponsored by MIT, Cairo University and the Egyptian government – Dr. Choucri feels she has a mission: to bring the dimension of social issues to students of engineering.

But not all the Arab scholars in America go back simply to strengthen ties, says Adnan Aswad, Syrian chairman of the Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering at Michigan's Dearborn campus. "Arab professors", he says, "have their minds in the United States but often their hearts are in their homeland..."

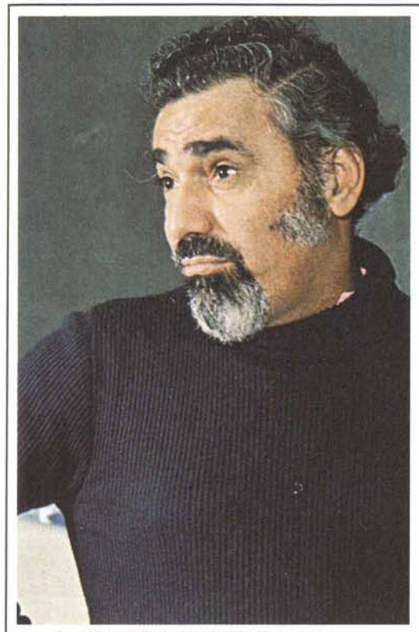
On the other hand, he continues, too few go back for more than a visit – and they should. Whether Arab professors are "culture brokers" or not – as Professor Rassam believes – Dr. Aswad would like to see more professors who know the two cultures return to their countries to teach or at least to lecture. His theory is that just transferring the educational technology which most Arab professors admire – libraries, laboratories and computers – is not enough. "The investment must be in... brains. Brains are the investment for future generations."

Dr. Aswad himself – who has returned to Syria, but not often enough to suit him – is very much established in the United States. Like many Arab professors, he is married to an American: Barbara Aswad, professor of anthropology at Wayne State. But Barbara is so actively involved in Detroit's Arab-American community, and in writing and teaching about it, that she is described as "more Arab than Adnan".

These two professors have found that their Arab colleagues are models for young Arab-American students, who have become increasingly interested in the Middle East and are proud to have their roots there.

In addition to the expatriate Arab scholars in the U.S., numerous Arab academics and other Arab alumni – to whom America is alma mater – are turning up in the U.S.A. too. They come as visiting fellows, guest lecturers and featured speakers.

Recently, for example, Dr. Abdullah Masry, director of Saudi Arabia's Department of Antiquities (See *Aramco World*, March–April 1979) lectured on campuses all across America on the subject of archeology. And last year in Santa Barbara, Saudi Arabs were prominent among the 200 scholars, diplomats and officials who gathered in California to hold a three-day seminar on the impact of the late King Faisal on the history of the Middle East. Among them were Dr. Ghazi al-Gosaibi, Saudi Arabia's Minister of Industry and Electricity, Dr. Abdulaziz Sowaiyyagh, and Dr. Abdullah Sindi from King Abdulaziz University at Jiddah. Also taking part was Dr. Fouad al-Farsy, an assistant deputy minister in the Ministry of Information who had, earlier, lectured at Duke University, his alma mater.



Iraqi Najm A. Bezirgan, a logician, lecturing at Texas.

Arab-American professors can act as "brokers" between Arab and American cultures, says anthropologist Amal Rassam.

Because of the demands of its own expanding universities, the Arab world's representation on American campuses – other than the expatriates – is necessarily limited to what, numerically, is a mere scattering of scholars. But as the Arab countries are sending an increasing number of graduate students, as well as undergraduates, to the U.S., one result has been an increase in dissertations, theses and special research papers. According to one survey, Arab students in the U.S. have turned out more than 150 such studies since 1960 on Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries alone.

The addition of such studies is helpful. Although dissertations in general are rarely major works, they do add information about areas not thoroughly covered by scholars. Dr. al-Farsy, for example, developed his doctoral dissertation into a book: *Saudi Arabia: A Case Study in Development*. Published in 1978, it may be the first publication in English by a Saudi on his country's development.

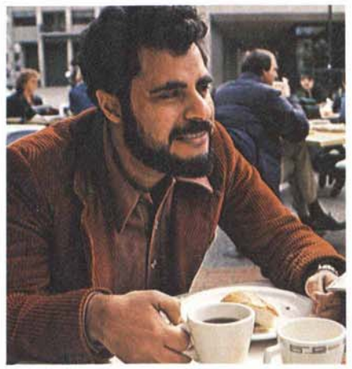
Until recently, Saudi Arabia was known largely through the books written by Burckhardt, Doughty, Philby and other Western travelers, and through such works as a history of 19th-century Arabia by R. Bayly Winder, now professor of history at New York University; still an important text, it is to be republished this year. Other Western research in Saudi Arabia includes *The Oasis of al-Hasa* by Federico Vidal – now professor of anthropology at the University of Texas – carried out while working for Aramco. The field, consequently, is still wide open to the new scholars.

The new scholars, in both American and Arab universities, will also supplement the ranks of those now coping with U.S. needs for more courses in Middle East studies and, at the same time, help change the distortions of what Dr. Said calls "orientalism."

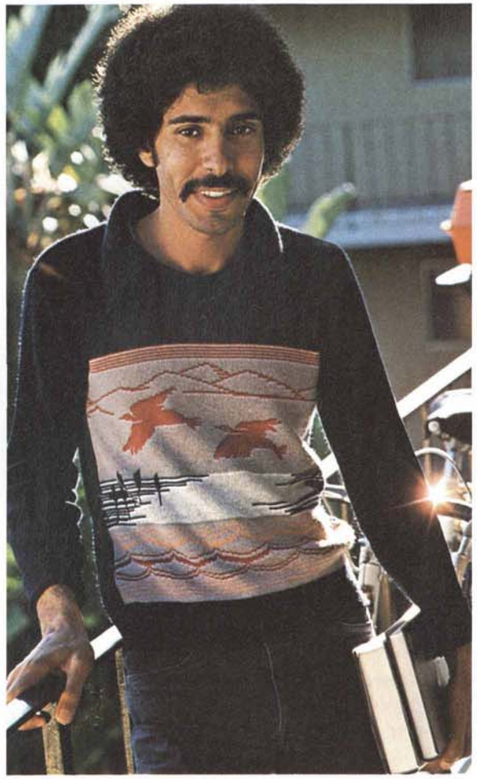
Already, in fact, the Arab professors, scattered throughout the States, have begun to break down the stereotypes and to bring East and West closer. More and more are publishing papers, research and books on the Middle East, and others are publishing articles in magazines and newspapers. One example, and there are many, is Fouad Ajami, a Lebanese professor of political science at Princeton, who writes regularly for *Foreign Affairs, Foreign Policy,* and the op-ed page of the *New York Times.*

In addition, some translations of modern Arabic literature are beginning to appear – poetry and novels like Sabri Musa's award-winning novel, to be published by Houghton Mifflin under the title *In the Wilderness of Corruption* and translated by his Egyptian compatriot, NYU professor of Arabic Mona Mikhail. More and more Arabs, furthermore, are heading university departments and Middle East programs. Today's leaders in the field include Muhdin Mshfi of Iraq, at Harvard, Farhat Ziadeh, a Palestinian, at the University of Washington, Wadi Jwaideh, an Iraqi, at Indiana University, Anees Haddad, a Lebanese, at Loma Linda University in California, Issa J. Khallil, a Palestinian, at San Diego State, Ayad al-Qazzaz, an Iraqi, at California State in Sacramento and Salah El-Shakhs, an Egyptian, at Rutgers.

All are directors of programs at those universities, all serve on committees and some serve on the board of the Middle East Studies Association. MESA's president, in fact, is an Arab woman: Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid-Marsot, professor of Islamic and Middle Eastern history at UCLA. Like their eminent predecessors and colleagues Hitti, Khadduri and Atiya, such scholars are also making contributions to learning and strengthening the bonds of friendship between the Arab world and the United States.



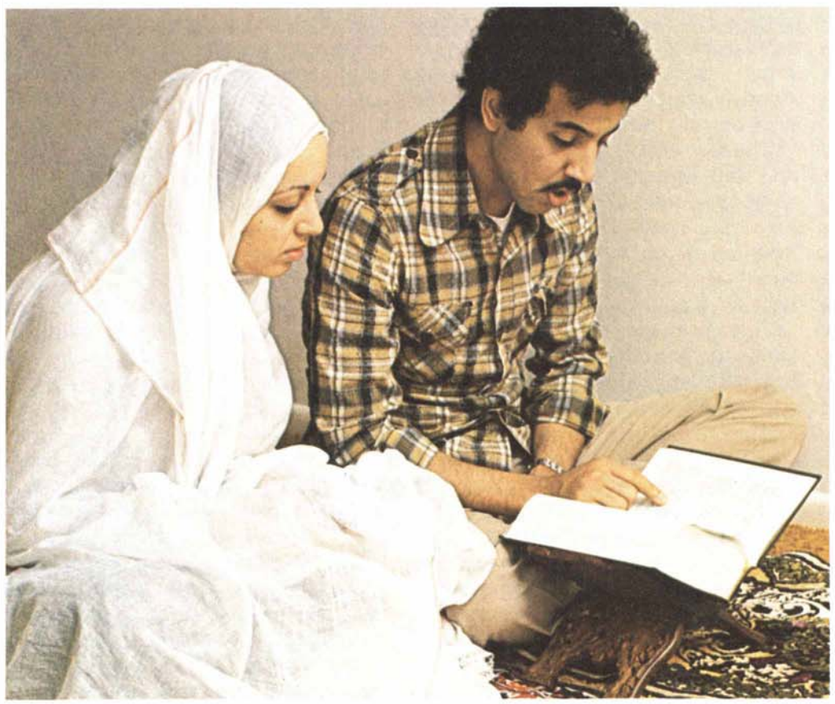
Saad Sowayan, Ph.D. in anthropology, Berkeley.



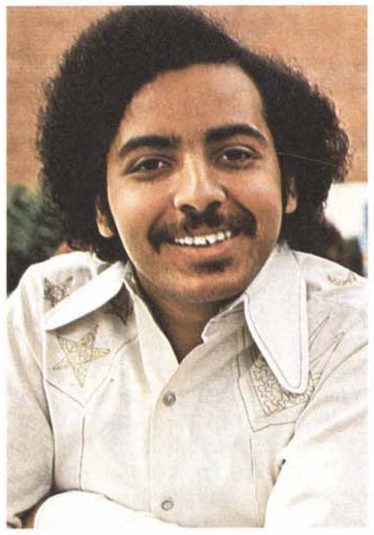
Naelah Mousli (master's, petroleum engineering, Tulsa) and Saud al-Khidr (California Polytechnic), both Aramco-sponsored students.

Saudi student couple entertains friends at coffee.

Stanford doctoral candidate Mohammed-Amin Gashgari.



A Saudi student of computer science and his wife, a biology student, at prayers in their Texas apartment.



Rehab Massoud, B.A., economics and international relations.

THE STUDENTS AND THE STATES

I had heard that America was a paradise, all green and covered with flowers."

"I thought everybody was rich and had cars six meters long."

"I heard Americans used technology for everything and so I saw them in their kitchens just pushing buttons to get their dinner."

"I expected America to be all big cities with high buildings and streets filled with cars."

Such images, it seems, are common to the young Arab students now pouring into American colleges and universities and seeing the United States for the first time. They quickly learn, of course, that their impressions are false – and sometimes that comes as a surprise.

Khadija Harery discovered in Syracuse that American flowers bloom only in season, and that the ground was usually covered with snow – pretty, but not a paradise.

Mohammed – Amin Gashgari, now writing his dissertation on polymer engineering at Stanford University, found that a good many Americans can't afford big cars, that students on his Palo Alto campus own more bicycles than automobiles and that some even take the bus.

In Chicago, Abdullah Zaid, a candidate for his doctorate in history, discovered that he could get coffee, Coke and candy by pushing buttons, but not meals.

And Adnan Khodary, studying public administration at the University of Southern California, discovered that the country had slums as well as skyscrapers – but also that America's scenic grandeur is incomparable. An ardent traveler, like many Saudis, he has explored inner cities, high-rise apartments and the glories of the Grand Canyon.

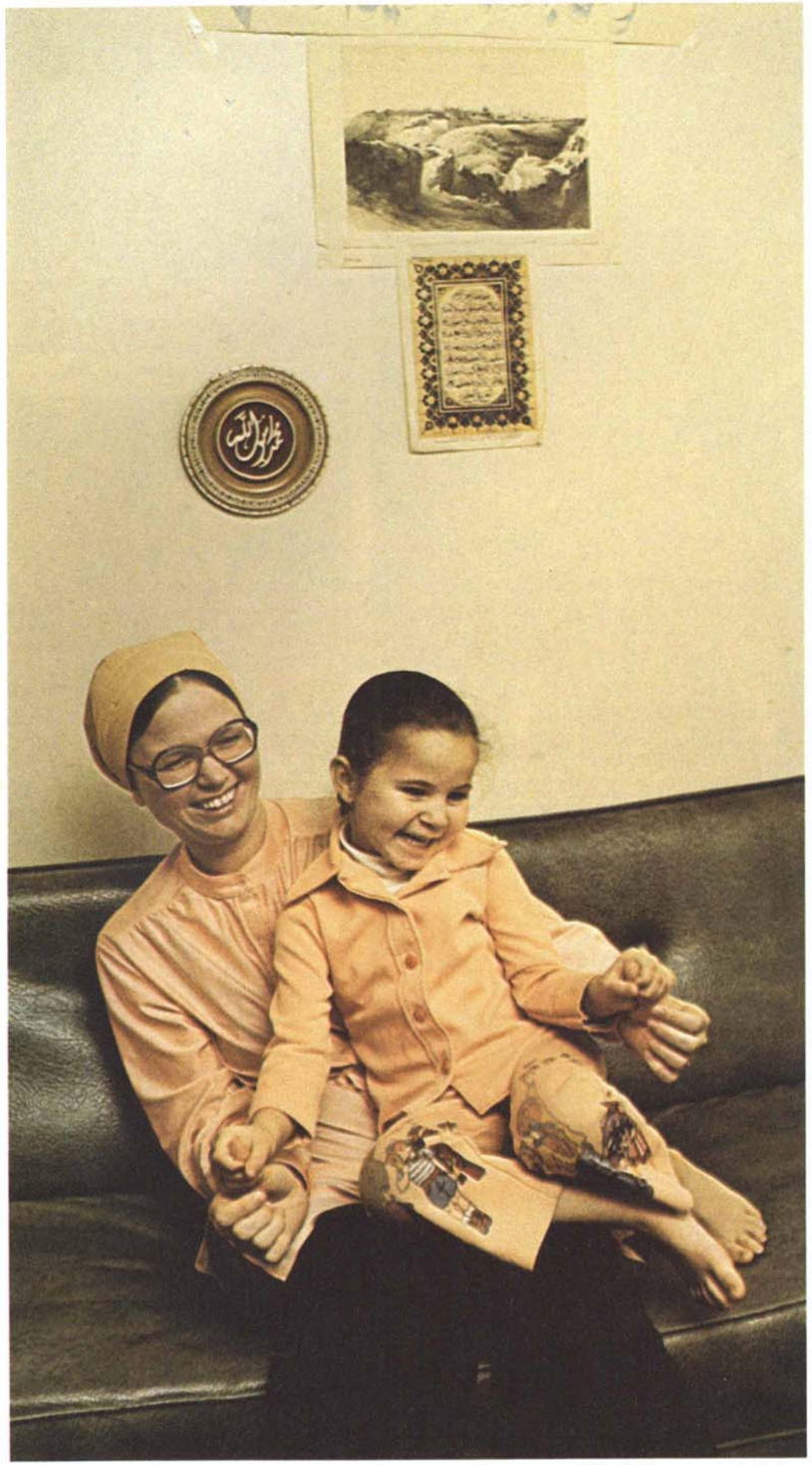
Adnan is not unusual. Many Arab students are tireless travelers and the Saudi students in particular are always ready to hop on planes to Hawaii or Florida or to pack themselves and a few friends into a car and drive off to see Disneyland or Niagara Falls. Most can rattle off the names of the states they have driven through and one at least traveled by train from Washington, D.C. to San Francisco "just to see the country."

Outside the classroom, some students also ski, swim, play tennis or ride. Unlike Americans, however, they do not regard sports as a serious enterprise. Though some of the large universities have Saudi students on their soccer teams, or even unofficial all-Saudi teams, sports are loosely organized and purely for fun.

Like all students, Arab students in the States also spend a lot of time listening to music – but not, they add, the high-volume hard rock so popular with their American brethren. Although many like American pop and country music – and some understand and enjoy Western classical music – few like what they call "crazy music." Instead they play tapes of Arab music, brought with them or mailed to them by their friends. They much prefer the calmer statements of the *'ud* and *rebaba* or, during Ramadan, the recorded voice of a *muqri* chanting the Koran.

Each student, of course, responds differently to the challenge and strangeness of life in the United States. Some hug their traditional ways, spending most of the time outside the classrooms with their families or with Arab

> ***"Our culture has taught us clearly what is right and what is wrong, but here we are bewildered by a lot of new ideas and ways of doing things. Often we must decide instantly – with only an occasional cue – how to behave.***
>
> ***When I first came, I stayed with a family. About two days after my arrival, a young woman from next door came in to show off a new dress. I passed her in the hall and instinctively turned my head to look away. That was insulting to her. Today I would say, 'What a nice dress!'"***
>
> **Saleh al-Hathloul**
> *Candidate for Ph.D. in Architecture, Art and Environmental Studies, MIT*



Meccan Khadija Harery, here in her Syracuse apartment with her daughter Kholoud, accompanied her husband to the United States, determined to earn a degree. She succeeded, winning a master's in public administration.

> *In America you feel part of the university. If you have a problem the profs have an open door. You're exposed to a variety of subjects, sociology, culture, attitudes. Not just one specialty. You can choose courses outside your required major. You hear different viewpoints.*
>
> *Americans are friendly, but it can be very lonely there at first. You learn to be self-reliant. Gradually you learn to feel at ease, converse with anybody. Every day in my present work I'm in touch with U.S. businessmen. They feel relaxed with me. Easy. Informal.*
>
> **Abdul Mohsen Moushegah**
> *Businessman, al-Khobar*
> *B.A., Whittier College, 1969*

friends at home, while others adapt easily to life in dormitories or shared graduate housing and claim to have had, while in the United States, more American friends than Arab.

But even students who have little contact with American students usually develop ties to at least one American family, often one they meet through a foreign students' club or similar organization. And invariably, they say, they find themselves at ease. In the family atmosphere of a traditional American Thanksgiving or Christmas, or on holiday visits to American families in their summer homes, they find at least a semblance of what nearly all Arab students miss most: the closeness and warmth of their families.

To Arabs, family ties are stronger and more important than time, money or work. Students in the States, therefore, frequently run up enormous telephone bills talking to their families halfway around the world. At three dollars a minute, they talk to everyone at home at the time they ring, maybe once a week or once a month.

For that reason they are puzzled by the offhand attitudes of American students who "only send a postcard when somebody in the family is sick," and are openly shocked by American youths who criticize their parents and seem to leave home either casually or eagerly.

It is not, however, the only shock. By

and large Arab students like America and Americans. They like America's openness, its great variety – of landscapes, cities, people, food and music – and its efficiency: public service systems that work and universities that offer a wide selection of courses and provide well-equipped libraries and laboratories. They also remark on the number of people who take evident pride in their work, and on the speed with which things get done. But adjustment, nevertheless, is difficult.

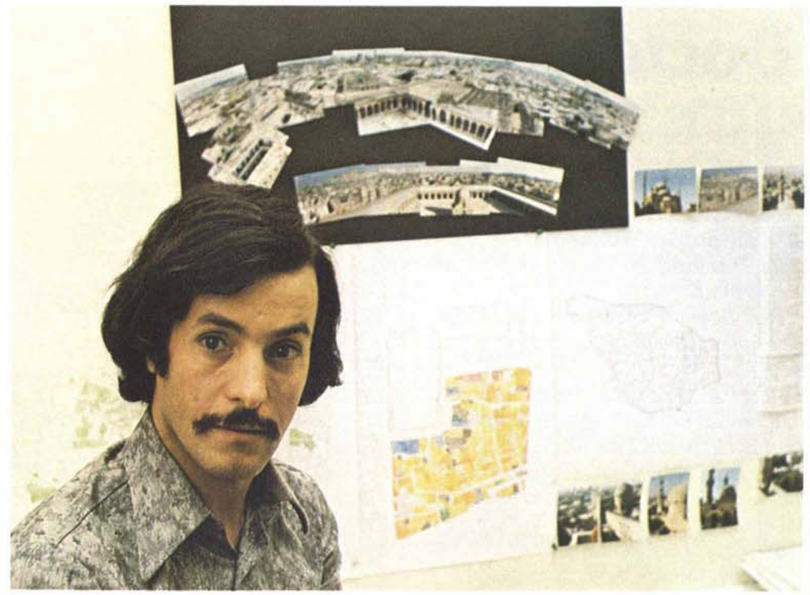
This is especially true for Saudi students, according to one Saudi Arab graduate student's dissertation on cross-cultural education. Saudi students, he wrote, "come from a traditional society with a restricted culture to study in a modern, highly technological society with nearly unrestricted cultural diversity."

That observation is certainly true. But what does it mean? It means laying aside their national dress, the flowing white *thobe* and *ghutra,* and substituting western clothes. It means facing a wide range of unknown dishes at every meal – and learning to identify forbidden pork in its various disguises. It means learning to eat hamburgers, pizza and artichokes with their fingers but lamb and rice with a knife and fork. It means awakening to church bells on their new day of rest instead of rising to the call of the muezzin to prayer. It means coping, for the first time, with standards of dress and behavior that would be utterly unacceptable at home – and with the realization that few in the States are shocked at them.

It is not an easy adjustment, says Saleh al-Hathloul, an MIT doctoral candidate in architecture, art and environmental studies. "When you first come, you see the cultural differences, but you are not sure how you are supposed to react. Our culture has taught us clearly what is right and what is wrong, but here we are bewildered by a lot of new ideas and new ways of doing things. Often we must decide instantly – with only an occasional cue – how to behave."

"When I first came, I stayed with a family. About two days after my arrival, a young woman from next door came in to show off a new dress. I passed her in the hall and instinctively turned my head to look away. That was insulting to her. Today I would say, 'What a nice dress.'

"Feeling your way, you learn how society operates, but it takes longer to find out that there is not just one right way to behave. I really began to change when I moved from engineering – where one plus one is two – into architectural design, where there are so many variables, so many points of view, so many ways to handle a problem. Now I see that there is not just a Saudi way and an American way, and I have learned to appreciate all kinds of opinions even if I don't agree with them."



City plans and photographs of Medina line the walls above Saleh al-Hathloul's drawing board.

> *In the U.S. studies are flexible. You can choose electives to suit your interests. They're not really isolated from your major. One day you'll benefit. You learn research methods. You learn how to deal with people, learn to listen, how to cope with problems.*
>
> *Accounting you can study anywhere. But exposure to others, a way of life! You learn how to look for something better, get ideas and make them come true.*
>
> **Sami Khalifa Algosaibi**
> *Businessman, Riyadh*
> *B.A., USC, 1971; M.A., USC, 1974*

Arab students in the States are also confused by apparent gaps and dichotomies in American thinking. Television, for example, which offers some Arab students their first view of American values – both in the Arab world, where American programs are widely shown, and in the U.S. – seems to consider violence as entertainment. Yet Americans constantly warn the new students about unsafe streets. This, to many Arabs – and especially to those from Saudi Arabia, where street-crime is rare – is difficult to comprehend.

Some students are also dismayed by television's wildly inaccurate or outdated portrayals of the Arab world: the exclusive emphasis on dunes, tents, camels and belly dancers. "Because of TV," one student said, "Americans are sophisticated but not really knowledgeable."

Arabs are disturbed too by lighthearted questions such as: "Do you live in a tent? Do you ride camels?" Even Arabs who understand American humor – and know that no insult is intended – find such comments difficult to dismiss and would agree with anthropologist Saad Sowayan of Berkeley, who found many Americans "not really unkind, but insensitive."

Arab students are also troubled by the differences in personal relation-

Doctorates for the Distaff

Not all the Arab students on American college campuses are men. Women are also studying in the United States, many on government scholarships. Some, in fact, are reaching for – and earning – their doctorates. And, again, students from Saudi Arabia are in the forefront.

Because government schools for girls were not established in Saudi Arabia until 1960, many Western observers overlook the fact that some Saudi women have been studying abroad for years. Usually they went to Egypt and Lebanon, but as early as 1955 some Saudi women began to attend college in the United States and others have been unobtrusively earning degrees in a variety of disciplines since.

Soraya Ahmed Obeid, for example, received a government scholarship in 1961 for study at Mills College and later went to Wayne State to earn a doctorate in English literature. Fatin Amin Shaker received a doctorate in sociology from Purdue and returned to the kingdom, where she became the first woman to talk on radio and write about women's affairs. Ibtisam al-Bassam earned her doctorate in education at Michigan State and is now dean of the Girl's College in Riyadh. Soraya al-Torki, a Ph.D. from Berkeley, is the only Saudi woman to have taught in an American university: in the anthropology department at Northwestern in 1976-77.

Naila al-Sowayel is another example. The daughter of a former Saudi Arab ambassador to the United States, Naila is simultaneously working part-time as Washington correspondent for the Saudi Press Agency and writing her doctoral dissertation on Saudi Arabia's role in international organizations at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. She is also a firm believer in the potential of Saudi girls. "Women," says Naila, "are Saudi Arabia's greatest untapped natural resource."

Until the Saudi government started paying tuition for wives who attend college while their husbands are on scholarships, married women had to pay for university courses themselves.

One example is Khadija Harery, a lively, articulate blonde from Mecca who married after high school and came to America with her husband. "I was determined to get an academic degree," she says, "and the only way was to learn the language." She taught herself English by watching television with a dictionary in her hand. "I would not see other Arab women those first months; as soon as I knew enough English words I went to the YWCA, where I found foreign women who would talk to me."

Later, when she was admitted to Ohio State to study accounting, her husband, majoring in chemistry there, said he would go without food if necessary to stretch their living allowance to cover her tuition. But he didn't have to; at the end of a year, the government granted her a scholarship which has since financed her master's degree in public administration from Syracuse University.

> ***We have serious manpower shortages and if we don't give women an opportunity to contribute to society I don't see how we can hope to achieve the goals of our second Five Year Plan. Yes, I am optimistic. I believe women can retain Muslim traditions, be good wives and mothers, and still participate as useful citizens.***
>
> **Mohamed Jokhdar**
> *Businessman, Jiddah*
> *B.A., UCLA, 1956; M.A., USC, 1958*

Because of tradition in Saudi Arabia, many government jobs – those in which women would work side by side with men – are closed to Khadija. But Khadija, undeterred, plans to teach if she can at the women's college at King Abdulaziz University. "I just want to give something back to my country," she says.

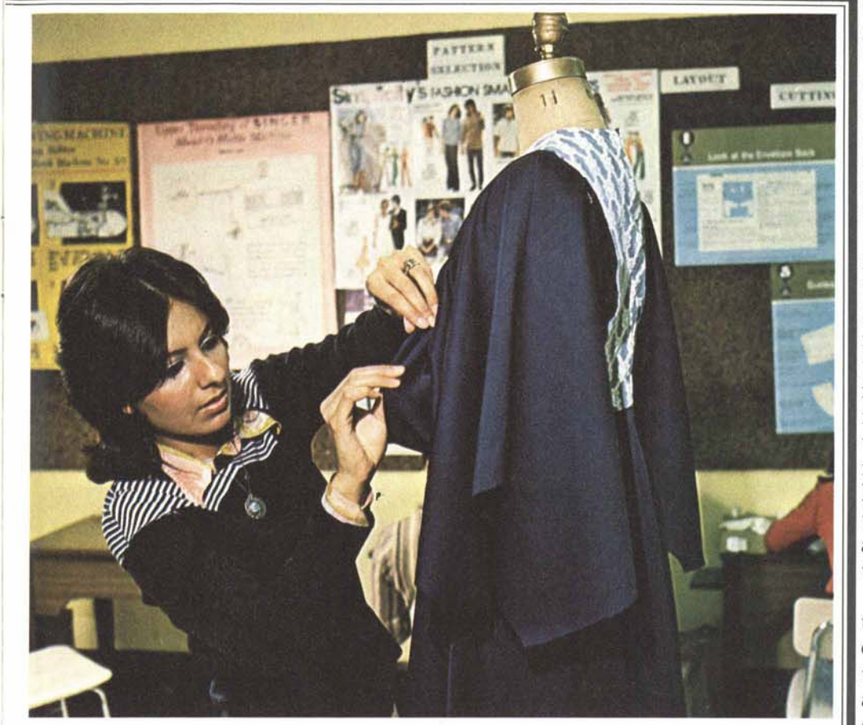
Another example is I'tadel al-Harithy, who is working for a master's in international development from the American University in Washington D.C. "I'm fascinated by the new economic order which is looking at the problems of poor nations and trying to help them. This is what interests me, and although I know it will be difficult to find a job in this exact field, I can probably teach international studies. And perhaps one day..." I'tadel has good reason to hope; her sister, who received her undergraduate education at Portland State in the 1960's, is today one of three adminstrators of the King Faisal Specialist Hospital in Riyadh, directing the out-patient clinic.

Then there is Nasmah Mukharech, who is studying civil engineering at Boston University while her brother, Kemal, is taking his degree at MIT. Nasmah chose engineering because of her strength in math and science. "I wanted a major which would make me use my intelligence and my capabilities. Maybe I'm being unrealistic, but..." she shrugs. "I want people to know I have a head on my shoulders," she says, "but I also want to remain feminine."

Since femininity to all women usually involves the demands of domesticity, some of the women students have had difficulties. Nearly all Saudi women, for instance, live with their husbands or with other members of their families, and one, who had been sharing an apartment with her brother and a nephew, found that instead of studying, she could not break the habit of looking after their needs. To get on with her studies, therefore, she moved into a campus dormitory for women.

In some cases, the men of the family simply pitch in and help with household tasks. During one interview, Abbas Bafakih, who is writing his dissertation on Arabic literature at the University of Utah, brewed tea, poured it and talked

Dina and Serine al-Sowayel are following their sister Naila (center) – now at Johns Hopkins – through Wellesley.



Ferial Shaker, youngest sister of one of Saudi Arabia's first woman Ph.D.'s, is now studying at Syracuse.

while giving his nine-month-old daughter Alhan her bottle because his wife was attending class. "I never thought I'd be doing this!" he laughed, as he put the nipple back into the baby's mouth.

Considering that most Saudi men are not in the habit of sharing the housework or tending babies, Abbas' adjustment has been easy and graceful. But he is not unique. One Saudi claims he is now doing half the cooking for his fellow students – his wife and his sister – as one part of the adjustment to student life in America.

Perhaps the best indication of the future is that many men are now well aware of women's capabilities. The King Faisal Scholarship, awarded for the first time this year by Saudia, the national airline, went to a woman: Soad Lary, a young teacher who has taught English in Jiddah schools. She was chosen from among nine finalists – seven men and two women – by an all-male board on the basis of an interview and an essay she wrote on the importance of children's education, in particular the education of girls. Soad is getting a master's in elementary education at the University of Tulsa while her husband is studying auto mechanics at Oklahoma State.

In short, the Saudi women on U.S. campuses are proving their value, astonishing their American professors and displaying a determination to succeed at what they set out to do. Yet they also recoil from women's liberation as they see it in America. To the contrary, they value the culture and the traditions from which they come.

One girl, for example, is working on a dissertation on an American campus, but strongly supports arranged marriages. "I think they are more successful," she says. And Naila al-Sowayel, despite her 10 years in America working and studying with men, still says that she is skeptical about dating. "The strong tradition of family and tribe never leaves us," she says, "and going off alone with someone is something we don't think about."

What they do think about, says Naelah Mousli, is helping their country. Now studying for an M.A. in petroleum engineering in Tulsa, Naelah feels that Saudi girls simply want to help. "Our country needs its men and its women," she says. "There is a need for creativity and hard work and we just want to be part of it."

ships. Although they enjoy the ease of casual American friendliness, they find that most Americans are "too busy" for real friendship. Neighbors who merely nod a perfunctory "good morning" and go their own way, or acquaintances who never respond to a casual invitation, but need a definite date and time, puzzle the inexperienced Arab student.

With a background of extended family, clan and community, he is accustomed to close interlocking relationships which take precedence over immediate individual concerns. To him, therefore, Americans seem always to be in a rush, "even on weekends," their lives ruled by a clock which determines where they should be from moment to moment. Few Saudis' lives, for example, have been tightly scheduled – with this time exclusively for work, that for play and that for family obligations – so they tend to live more flexibly.

Student social life is often difficult too. "At first I didn't know how to refuse a drink," said one Saudi student. "I was torn between the tenets of my religion and my desire to participate in American life – so I used to pretend I had an allergy to alcohol that kept me from drinking. Then I learned to say, 'I'm a Muslim and I don't drink', and I found that Americans respect this more than they respect allergies."

American life, nevertheless, does intrude. University schedules, the pressure of academic studies and the distractions of college life mean that it is difficult for devout Muslims to practise Islam to the letter: praying five times a day, or fasting from sunrise to sunset during the month of Ramadan. Some students, consequently, do not meet all their obligations.

> *What I like about America is that although people are respected for their knowledge or position they can still be approached as persons, on an equal level. And you may be wrong, but you are always entitled to argue your position. For example, in class you have an open exchange with your professor, and don't just write down what he says unquestioningly.*
>
> **Khalid al-Qahtani**
> *Businessman, Dammam*
> *B.A., Seattle University, 1975*

On the other hand, some students report that their experience in America has strengthened their attachment to Islam. "At home I prayed because someone reminded me to do it," one said. "Now it is my responsibility and I pray because I want to thank God for what I have. You do not always have your family with you, or your friends, but you do have God with you all the time."

For some Arab male students in the United States, the most difficult adjustment is sharing their everyday world with women. Arab students from the conservative countries, for example, are accustomed to family participation in arrangements for marriage; thus they find the easy permissive friendships between young men and women difficult to accept.

Student responses to this vary. Some conservative students – often the most religious, and active in the Muslim Students Association – say that they have never initiated a conversation with a female student, even though they work beside and with women in the classroom or the laboratory. Others have broken the hearts of, and had their own hearts broken by, young American women. The majority, however, have taken a reasonable and cautious course. While they are friendly, and occasionally do date, they prefer socializing in groups, men and women together but with the sexes often apart in the same room. Marriages, therefore, are rare.

Nasmah Mukharech and her brother Kemal, both engineering students.

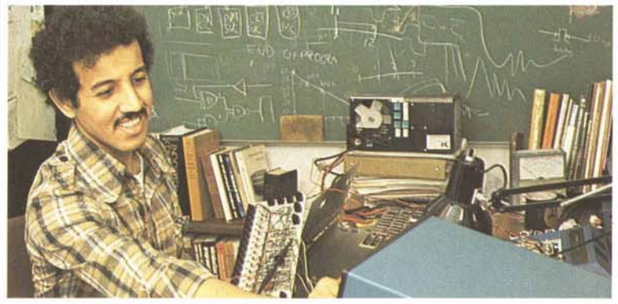
Some Arab students, of course, do marry in the States, but Saudi students almost invariably marry a Saudi girl in Saudi Arabia, often because they are lonely, but also because they want to share their American experience. As one graduate student said, "I had become different during my years here and I wanted a wife who would understand me. And I thought it would be good for both of us to start life away from our families and get to know one another." Another, who has written home to his family and asked them to consider a wife for him, said, "Just as America has opened my eyes to many things, I want to bring back a wife and open her eyes and say: 'Look at all this.'"

America, then, surprises, upsets, delights, challenges and – to some extent – changes Arab students. Most, nonetheless, remain Arab to the core. Virtually no Saudi students, for example, elect to remain in the United States when their degree is won. Instead they return to Saudi Arabia – proud of it, confident of its cultural values and ready to work for its future.

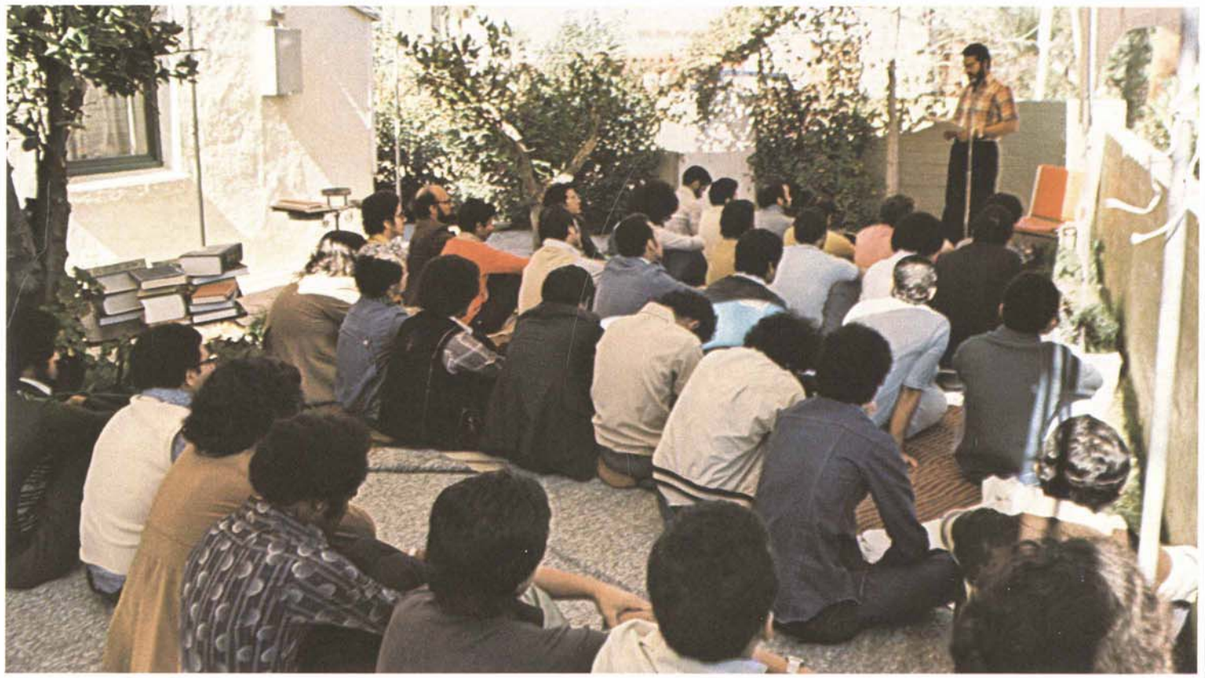
Rehab Massoud, an undergraduate at USC, is a good example. He believes he is there to find out how America works and how its citizens think and act. He has, therefore, visited a variety of churches and temples, attended weddings and funerals and "asked a lot of questions about religious belief." He emerged, he said, "satisfied with my own."

Saudi Arabs, Massoud went on, want to take the good things from America and avoid the mistakes. "We will take the technology, the scientific things, but not the customs or the culture. To put it in another way, I want to be able to put myself in other people's shoes, but I am not going to lose my own."

Abdulrahman al-Assailen (M.A., education, Indiana University) shops with wife, Salwa Halawany.



Above, Khalid Thabit at work at Rice University. At right, Siham Sowaigh and Abdulaziz al-Oshban are earning husband-and-wife master's degrees at Northwestern.



Despite the demands of a busy schedule, a group of Muslim students at the University of Arizona gather for Friday noon prayers.