

## CHAPTER 11: SAUDI ARABIA – LIVING IN THE PAST

### Into The Belly Of The Beast

A few days after our return from Italy with our new car John Inglis arrived and immediately began preparing for his first trip to Saudi Arabia. John spent two weeks in Riyadh and upon his return recommended that I join him on his followup visit in August to smooth things over with several very unhappy customers. During John's absence I devoted my time to other pressing matters...the continued implementation of the support plan for the King Faisal Specialist Hospital (KFSH), preparing a support plan for HP Iran, and proceeding with the development of our Athens support operation.....with an emphasis on business administration.

#### **PLAN YOUR WORK AND WORK YOUR PLAN.....Gathering Up The Loose Ends**

##### **The King Faisal Specialist Hospital.....All Eyes On HP's Largest Order**

Completing a successful installation at the KFSH was our top priority. At over one million dollars the KFSH order was the largest in HP history and consequently the project was receiving a lot of visibility. To ensure that we had absolutely anything and everything that we could possibly need I ordered additional spare parts, service kits, test equipment and documentation for our support office at the hospital. Claude and I would fine-tune the list one last time during our August visit with John to Saudi Arabia.

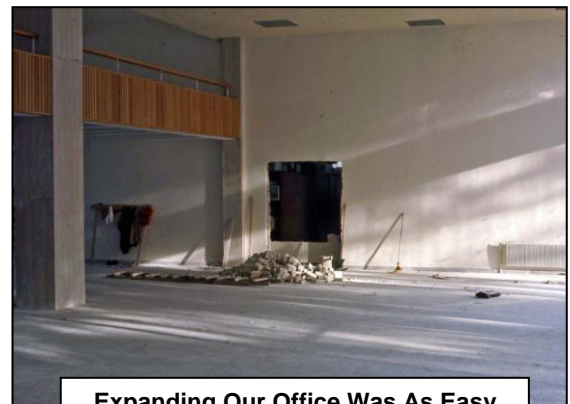
##### **HP Iran.....Moving Ahead With Plans To Replace MCI**

The second item on my priority list was the completion of the support plan for HP Iran (or MCI). Based on HPSA's shipment history and on our sales plans I prepared a list of the required support materials, determined the quantity of service engineers, prepared a list of required training course, and designed a tentative floor plan for the operation. Having already prepared similar plans for HP Taiwan, HP Canada and for HP Athens this was not difficult, just time consuming.

##### **HP Athens.....Getting The Business Up And Running**

I was pleased with the progress we had made in Athens. I had added three new people to the personnel that I had inherited and now all seven of us were operating as a team. With the implementation of the support plan for the KFSH underway, the support plan for HP Iran awaiting approval from HPSA, and Inglis taking charge of our technical problems in Saudi Arabia I turned my attention to the administrative aspects of the service operation.

I asked George Panos to look into setting up a bonded warehouse arrangement for us so that we would be able to more conveniently import and export tools, parts and kits. I also spent a significant amount of time setting up administrative procedures and processes (accounting and reporting, parts ordering, etc.), designing and printing customized documentation (work orders, service contracts, etc.) for the operation, helping Anne organize our office (ordering office equipment, setting up our filing systems, etc.), and suggesting to George that he rent the empty office space next door to accommodate our expected growth, which he did.



**Expanding Our Office Was As Easy  
As knocking Out A Wall**

By the end of July I was beginning to express my concern about the continual errors and omissions that I was discovering each month on our income statement (Schedule 8). After five months of operation all of the financial reporting problems should have been resolved, but they were not. In addition to not having the correct amount of complement income credited to service there were a lot of allocation errors. For example, service was picking up all of the occupancy charges for our Algeria presence even though there was a resident sales engineer, George Grazziani. The usual cause of the errors was the inability of the HP Athens and HPSA accounting departments to effectively coordinate their activities. These coordination problems would complicate the targeting (budgeting), accounting and reporting processes throughout my entire time in Athens.

Back on the technical side of our business, with the help of David Lincoln, our HPSA personnel rep, I continued my search for an experienced medical products service engineer. Our contractual commitments at the KFSH and new medical orders made this a high priority. Until we found someone we would have to continue borrowing Walter Brunner and Daniel Paul, medical specialists, from Switzerland.

### **MY FIRST TRIP TO SAUDI ARABIA.....And My Last To Beirut**

As previously mentioned, based on the report that John had given me following his July trip to Saudi Arabia we had concluded that it would be beneficial for me to return to Riyadh with him In August. As Claude would soon be moving to Riyadh to take charge of the KFSH installation he would be joining us. The plan was for John and I to meet Claude in Beirut. The three of us would then fly to Riyadh the following day. When our work was finished Claude and I would return to Beirut and he would begin packing for his six month stay in Riyadh. John would travel to Baghdad for the first time and, in a rerun of what he had done in Saudi Arabia in July, would visit our few customers in Iraq. This trip would be a real adventure for all of us, but especially for me.

### **Getting A Visa Without Getting Some Religion**

To keep undesirables, who were defined by the Saudi government as Jews and atheists, out of the country it was necessary to present a "baptismal certificate" when applying for a visa. Well, I did not have one, and being a person who believes that most of the world's problems were (are) caused by religious intolerance, I wasn't about to get myself baptized just to go to Saudi Arabia. This is when I made a visit to the previously referenced St. Andrews Anglican Church in Athens to buy my bogus baptismal certificate.

### **LEBANON.....The Last Good Days Before 15 Years of Darkness**

Our trip to Beirut, my second in three months, was to be just a short stop-over. We had no plans to visit Costas Macridis or any customers, although I was dying to get even with him for the embarrassing treatment he had subjected me to at the casino during my previous visit. Our reason for being in Beirut this time was simply to make a flight connection to Saudi. We would be in Beirut for one night while waiting to catch the Saudi Arabian Airways (SAA) flight to Riyadh late the following afternoon. This would be my last visit to Beirut. The following spring the country would descend into a civil war that would eventually involve Israel and last 15 years, with Hizballah becoming the only beneficiary.

Claude met us at the airport and drove us to the Phoenicia Hotel. The plan for the next day was to run a few errands with Claude and then take a short trip out to the historical site at Byblos before catching our SAA flight. On the afternoon of our arrival we visited Claude's apartment to have a look at his small workshop, where he had been repairing (per his arrangement with Kurt Aeberli) all of the pocket calculators that had managed to make their way into Lebanon. Luckily for me our recently signed APD Dealer had just relieved Claude of this responsibility, making him available for the important role he would play at the KFSH. That evening we treated Claude and Lea to dinner at the top of the Phoenicia, which had a beautiful view of the entire city. So far everything was going well.

The next morning Claude picked us up at the hotel and after a few stops along the way we headed for Byblos, which is located on the coast about 25 miles north of Beirut. The drive out to Byblos provided the first of several memorable events that would take place on this trip.

### **The Palestinian Funeral.....A Surrealistic Experience**

Our route that morning took us through the outskirts of the Shatila Palestinian refugee camp. Following the civil war in Palestine in 1948 hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees made their way into neighboring countries, primarily Lebanon and Jordan. As refugees they had no political rights and over many decades this situation produced a great deal of tension between the growing population of disenfranchised Palestinians and the government of Lebanon. The more militant Palestinians (PLO, PFLP, etc.) would occasionally express their displeasure by attacking the Lebanese army, Christian enclaves, or some of the Israeli settlements along the border. On these occasions the Lebanese or Israeli Air Force would usually strafe one of the refugee camps just to remind the residents that there was a price to pay for making trouble.....and that they were still just guests in the country.

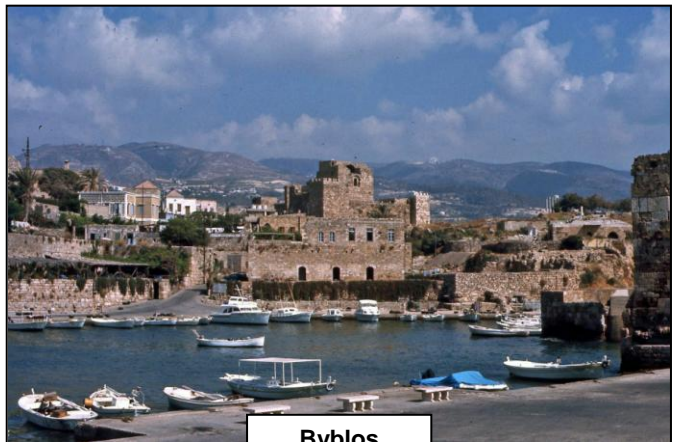
One of these strafing episodes had taken place just before our arrival the previous day. Unknown to us at the time our trip to Byblos would involve us in a public wake for the Palestinians who had been killed. By the time we figured out what was going on we were stuck in the middle of it. There was so much noise and excitement that the event looked to me more like a celebration than a wake. Hundreds of people were in the street blocking traffic. The women were waving away and many of the men were brandishing AK47's, which they were recklessly and randomly firing into the air with little thought given to the certainty that what goes up must eventually come down. In their world, getting killed by a stray bullet was no big deal. Life was cheap.

As a life long resident of Beirut Claude had experienced these situations before, but for John and myself it seemed surreal. It was shocking to see so many armed people running amok.....and there was no telling what the reaction would be if foreigners (especially an American) were found attending what was probably meant to be a private affair. I say private because I am sure that the participants figured that no one in their right mind would be attending a Palestinian wake unless they were Palestinian. It was just bad timing that we were there. In any event, Claude quickly reacted by telling us to hide our passports under the back seat and to let him do the talking, which seemed quite appropriate being as John and I were by this time totally speechless.

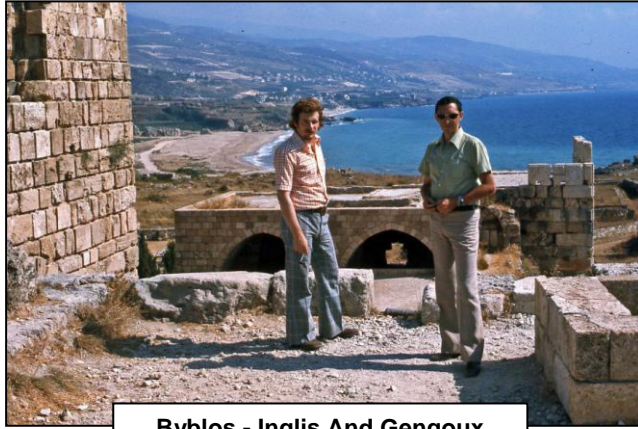
When a scruffy fellow with what looked like a five-day growth of beard and an AK47 came over to the car Claude spoke with him in Arabic. Even though neither John nor I could understand Arabic it was easy to see that Claude was doing his best to remain polite and to be extremely respectful while explaining that we had business in Jubayl (the modern name for Byblos). When the gunman looked into the car to check us out I thought he might ask more questions when he saw John's red hair and fair complexion, but he didn't, and as we looked somewhat terrified and definitely non-threatening he waved us through the crowd. My camera was on the floor and I would have loved to have taken some photos, which would have probably been a big mistake, but I was so busy concentrating on not wetting my pants that the thought didn't even occur to me. If this episode had happened a few years later the situation would surely have not ended well.

### **Byblos.....The Bible's Namesake**

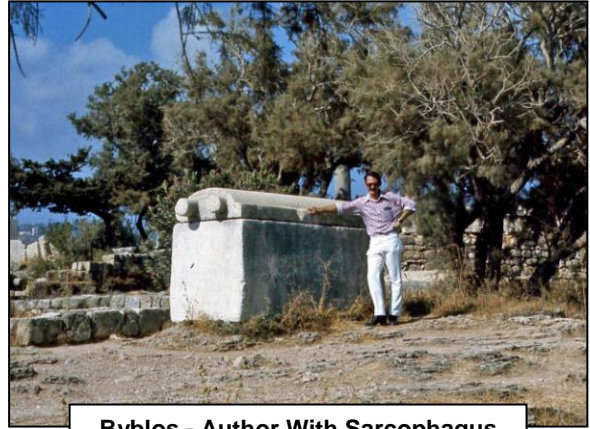
We arrived in Jubayl with no further complications. The city is believed to be about 5,000 years old, putting it in competition with Damascus for the title of the oldest continuously inhabited city in the world. The Phoenician name for the city was Gebal, but the Greeks referred to it as Byblos because it was through the port at Gebal that Egyptian papyrus (early paper) was imported into Greece. The English word "Bible" is derived from the name Byblos.....the first Bibles were written on papyrus.



**Byblos**



Byblos - Inglis And Gengoux



Byblos - Author With Sarcophagus

**Monctezuma Takes His Revenge**

In all of my travels I had never had any trouble with “La Touristas”, but Monctezuma finally caught up with me in Lebanon. On our return trip to Beirut my intestines began sending me messages and just after we reached the hotel I developed a full-blown case of diarrhea. For the next hour my time was split almost evenly between packing and sitting on the toilet. At that point I was debating whether I should even attempt to make the SAA flight later that afternoon but, not wishing to be left behind by my fellow travelers, I decided to give it a try. By the time we arrived at the airport nature was calling again, and using my better judgment I decided that I should not get on an airplane in that condition. The possibility of having to spend the entire flight on the toilet wasn’t very appealing and if things got more serious there was better medical assistance in Beirut than in Riyadh. It was a good decision. On the way back to the Phoenicia I was hoping that the room I had checked out of a few minutes before would still be available and, fortunately, it was.

After Claude arrived in Riyadh he called Lea and asked her to check on me, which she did, offering to take me to her doctor if I needed help. I told her that I would just let the problem run its course and hope that I would be back to normal in a day or two, which is exactly what happened. After two days of eating soda crackers, drinking bottled water, and ingesting copious amounts of Pepto Bismol, I was ready to accept Lea’s invitation to a light (very light) lunch and her offer to help me rebook my flight to Riyadh. Although at that time Lea’s English language capability was limited we had no trouble communicating and had a good time together. It was nice to get out after being shut away in my hotel room and we had lunch at a very nice restaurant in the hills above Beirut that had a small stream cascading through the dining area. We then paid a visit to the SAA office where I rebooked my flight for the following afternoon. After a three day delay I was looking forward to getting my trip back on track.



Lea

**Saudi Arabian Airlines.....Institutionalized Corruption and Inefficiency**

The only remaining problem that I had in Beirut was trying to check in at the airport for my Riyadh flight. When I arrived at the SAA check-in counter the chaos reminded of my experience at the Syrian border crossing in April. There was no queue. Whether or not I would manage to get a seat on the plane depended entirely upon the length of my arms and the amount of money that accompanied my ticket and passport. If I could push my way up near the front of the crowd..... and if I could manage to get my passport and ticket in front of the face of the SAA rep..... and if the bribe was sufficient.....I would get a seat. At 6 foot 2 inches I had a long reach and thanks to the 50 Lebanese pound bank note I had included, I was able to get a boarding pass. This experience was just a small sample of the inconvenience that John, Claude and I would be subjected to when leaving Saudi Arabia a week later.

During my four years of traveling in the Mediterranean and Middle East area I never got used to the inability, generally speaking, of the people living there to organize anything. It seemed that getting organized was a completely foreign concept to them. I have a theory about how this came to be. Have you ever wondered why the people and the economies of the Northern European countries are much more advanced than those of the southern countries? I believe that it has to do with organization and self-discipline, traits that are in short supply in the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern countries. In earlier times the Northern Europeans knew that if they did not have shelter and a source of fuel and if they did not plant, harvest and store their crops before winter came, they would all perish. On the other hand, in the Middle East and in the countries bordering the Mediterranean where winter does not bring hardship, all the population had to do to survive was to pick dates and olives and kill an occasional sheep or goat. The rest of the time they just went to the beach. Their survival was never in question. I believe that this behavior/attitude lives on in the DNA of the residents of that area. In the recent European economic crisis, with few exceptions, the most serious problems occurred (and still are) in Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal.....with the northern countries bailing them out. I think the likely possibility of these events occurring was easily foreseeable when the EEC was formed but was ignored as the Europeans attempted to build their dream of a United States of Europe. It is now too late for second thoughts.

### **SAUDI ARABIA.....A Schizophrenic Existence**

To better understand the Saudi Arabia that we were dealing with in the 1970's I need to take you through some history. To say that Saudi Arabia is a country of many contrasts is an understatement. To knowledgeable westerners Saudi Arabia is a country suffering from a major bi-polar disorder. On the one hand the Saudis are getting rich using modern technology and methods to extract oil from their huge reserves. They have become shrewd businessmen and are educating their people (mostly at American and European Universities) and modernizing their country at a rapid pace. On the other hand the Saudis govern their country using an Islamic legal system (Shariah law) that was created before the dark ages.....the Koran is their nation's constitution. Hopefully, the following paragraphs will help create a better understanding of why the Saudis insist on maintaining a balance between the past and the present.

### **A Brief History**

**Exile In Kuwait:** From the beginning of time until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Arabian Peninsula was occupied exclusively by Bedouin tribes. Although they were primarily nomadic, by tradition each of the tribes had control of a particular geographic area and were constantly at war with each other as they attempted to protect and expand their turf. In 1891 the Al-Sa'ud tribe, whose territory was centered in Riyadh, was defeated by a rival tribe, the Al-Rasheeds. After spending several years wandering about the Rub-al-Khali ("The Empty Quarter") in the south-eastern corner of the Arabian Peninsula, Abdul Rahman ibn Faisal, the leader of the Al-Sa'ud, and his family arrived in Kuwait. There they received protection from the Al-Sabah tribe, who still rule Kuwait today. Oil had not yet been discovered in Kuwait but, due to its strategic location, Kuwait had become a major port of entry for goods and people who were connecting with caravans headed for the interior. The income derived from trade and commerce had made the Al-Sabah tribe very wealthy and they wanted to keep it that way.

**Retaking Riyadh:** By the late 1890's the Al-Rasheeds had also begun to threaten the Al-Sabahs. Motivated by this threat Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah told Abdul Rahman's oldest son, Abdul Aziz ibn Sa'ud (known simply as Abdul Aziz), the future founder of modern day Saudi Arabia, that he would finance a military campaign against the Al-Rasheeds. If the campaign was successful the Al-Sabahs would no longer live in fear and the Al-Sa'ud would be able to return to Riyadh. In 1901 Abdul Aziz and his followers left Kuwait and by early 1902 had managed to run the Al-Rasheeds out of Riyadh.



**Abdul Aziz**

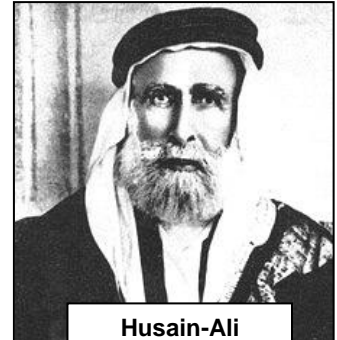
With the successful completion of his campaign against the Al-Rasheeds Abdul Aziz quickly gained control over the entire eastern half of Arabia and began a long campaign to acquire the entire Peninsula. He accomplished this with very little bloodshed by giving gifts to tribal leaders, marrying into their families

and promising them protection. However, to gain control of the western half of the peninsula and the holy cities of Mecca and Medina he would have to defeat the powerful Hashimite king, Shareef Husain ibn Ali (known as Husain-Ali). The Hashimites were solidly entrenched on the Red Sea coast and as descendants of Mohammed had been in control of Islam's holy places for more than a thousand years.

**The Hashimites:** During World War I the Turks were allied with the Germans, making the British very nervous due to the close proximity of Turkish forces to the Suez Canal. The Ottoman Empire, which was already beginning to disintegrate under its own weight, was having trouble maintaining control of the region and the British hoped to force the Turks entirely out of the western Arabian Peninsula by unifying and arming the Bedouin tribes. To this end the British Military command based in Cairo sent T.E. Lawrence ("Lawrence of Arabia") to meet with Husain-Ali, whose traditional family home was located in Jeddah, on the Red Sea, on the fringe of Turkish occupied territory. Before the Turks had arrived in the area the Hashimites had controlled the entire Red Sea coast, which is southern approach to the Suez Canal. Husain-Ali was continually fighting them in an effort to regain this territory and the British were prepared to help him accomplish this.



Lawrence



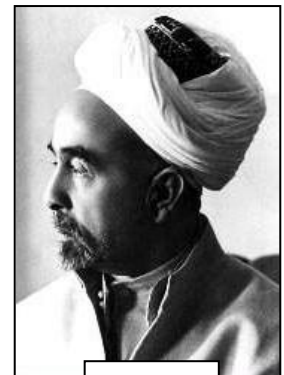
Husain-Ali

Lawrence's only qualification for this task was his experience as an archeology student. While in school he had spent some time in the Middle East. The message that he carried to Husain-Ali was a promise that if the Hashimite tribe could recruit other tribes in the area and force the Turks out of the Arabian Peninsula the British would support the creation of a unified Arab nation after the war. Of course, to get his agreement Husain-Ali was promised that he would become the king of this new political entity. The effort to force the Turks out of the Arabian Peninsula became known as the "Arab Revolt" and was led by Lawrence and Husain-Ali's son, Feisal (played by Alec Guinness in the movie "Lawrence of Arabia").



Churchill

As was the usual case with colonial powers, the British had no intention of keeping their promise to Husain-Ali when the war ended. In 1916 British and French diplomats, Mark Sykes and George Picot, met to discuss how the two powers would carve up the Middle East after the war had ended. The result was the Sykes-Picot Agreement. To that end, in 1921 the Minister for Colonial Affairs, Winston Churchill, convened a special meeting in Cairo to implement the agreement. The Sykes-Pico Agreement turned much of the region into British and French mandates (i.e., colonies). These mandates became the present day countries of Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Palestine (Israel).



Feisal

The power vacuum that remained when the British and French left the region decades later was gradually filled by a hodgepodge collection of unstable political systems. The consequences of the decisions made in 1921 were very evident when HP Athens was created and are still being felt today.



Abdulla

As a reward for assisting the British during the war Husain-Ali's sons, Feisal and Abdulla, were given the territories of Mesopotamia (now known as Iraq) and Trans-Jordan (now known simply as Jordan). Although there have been multiple governmental changes in Iraq over the years Jordan is still in the hands of Husain-Ali's descendants and is known as The Hashimite Kingdom of Jordan.

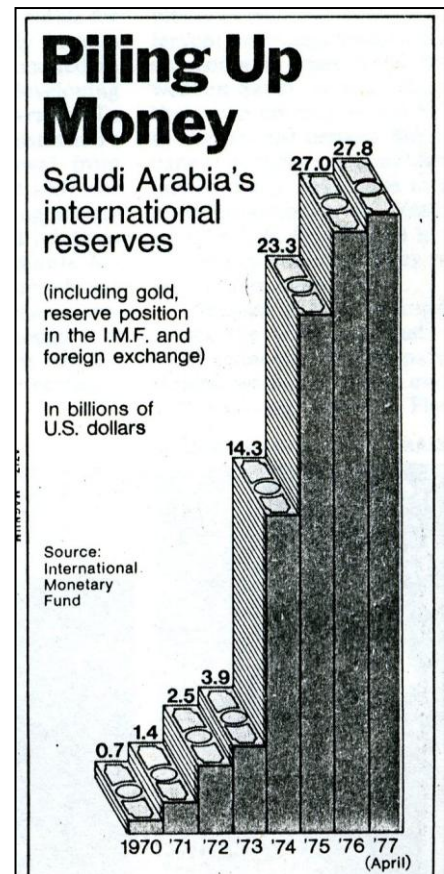
**Abdul Aziz ibn Sa'ud Takes Control of the Arabian Peninsula:** One of the obstacles that Abdul Aziz expected to encounter in his quest for control of the entire peninsula was the British. He felt sure that the British would back the Hashimites, their Arab Revolt allies, but the British decided to stay out of the fray and waited to see what would happen. The British might have been more interested in the outcome if they had known that the winner of conflict, the Saudis, would eventually control one of the world's largest sources of oil.....and form a long lasting relationship with American, not British, oil companies.

Husain-Ali had a powerful army that would be difficult for Abdul Aziz to defeat if he met it head on.....the Hashimites still had the weapons that had been supplied by the British during the Arab Revolt. Abdul Aziz needed an equalizer and he found that help in the form of a tribe of fierce warriors and religious fanatics known as the Ikwans. The Ikwans were devoted followers of Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhabi who taught that everyone should live their lives as spelled out (literally) in the Koran. Forced conversions were the order of the day. If a caravan accidentally wandered into an Ikwani encampment they would be allowed to leave only after they had convincingly embraced Wahhabism. Travelers (or anyone for that matter) who did not want to convert were viewed as non-believers and were killed. Because the Al-Sa'ud tribe had had a long friendship with Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhabi, Abdul Aziz felt that he could enlist the Ikwans to help him push the Hashimites from the holy places in western Arabia. To assist the Ikwans Abdul Aziz gave them all of the support they needed to gradually spread their message westward into Husain-Ali's territory. Abdul Aziz also gave them something else.....he promised that if they helped him unify the Arabian Peninsula Saudi Arabia would forever be governed by Islamic law (Shariah law, the law of God). He kept his word. We would normally say that he made a deal with the devil to get the results he wanted. However, in this case, he made a deal with the Ikwans, which in the long run wasn't much different.

With the support of Abdul Aziz the Ikwans continued to slowly expand their influence westward and in September of 1924 they overran the Hashimite stronghold in Taif, near Jeddah, and forced Husain-Ali to abdicate. For months Husain-Ali had been bragging to the British that he was going to become the Caliph of the Arabian Peninsula. After spending 4 years trying to rid themselves of the Turkish Sultan in Istanbul the British were in no mood to help Husain-Ali build a new empire. He was exiled to Cyprus in October. From that point onward the Arabian Peninsula became known as Saudi Arabia.....it belonged to the Al-Sa'ud.

**Oil and the Modern Era:** Until Oil was discovered in 1929 very little was known about Saudi Arabia and no one in the west cared about what went on in that isolated part of the world. However, due to the growth of the oil industry and the growth of the Al-Sa'ud family's wealth, they began to play a more prominent role in world events. Also, the influx of foreign workers and the desire of the Saudis to educate their children abroad begin to bring liberal western ideas and influences into the country. This societal evolution was viewed as a threat by the ultra-conservative religious community.

As the money flow increased substantially following the 1973 oil embargo the Saudis found themselves sitting on the fence between the liberal western influences of Europe and America, where religious devotion is optional and vices are acceptable, and the ultra-conservative (Wahhabi) community of Islamic fundamentalists. As time passed it became evident that it would be impossible to keep all of the 4,000 or so Saudi family members from occasionally falling off on the liberal side of the fence. This happened with growing frequency, which was quite embarrassing for the Saudis, the self-proclaimed protectors of the holy sites and defenders of the faith.



NOTE: In the mid 1990's Osama bin Laden would become a big problem for the Saudis. He was a devoted believer in Wahhabism and was also an educated man with huge financial resources at his disposal. This positioned him to challenge the Saudi's practice of fence sitting. He would attempt to force them to decide on which side of the fence they wanted to be.....were they decadent westerners or were they devoted to Wahhabism like their ancestors had been? Even though the members of the Saudi family had differing levels of devotion to Islam the one thing that they all could agree on was that Osama was not good for business (and a possible threat to their power). So, they solved the problem by banishing him from the kingdom.

Saudi Arabia in the early 1970's was still very backward. Not much development had yet taken place and the country was being governed by Abdul Aziz's second-born son, Faisal. At the time of King Faisal's birth the Al- Sa'ud were just another tribe of poor Bedouins. Now, within a single generation they had become the world's richest people. The Saudi's were overwhelmed by their new wealth and that was reflected in the chaotic business climate in the country.....and a severe shortage of hotel rooms as an influx of foreign businessmen soon arrived to see if they could get a piece of the action. We were among them. Vondjitis told me that he had to share a hotel room with 5 strangers during one of his visits. Also, the country's marginal infrastructure and unprepared service providers were overwhelmed by the exponential increase in business activity. The backlog that understaffed freight forwarders were faced with was tremendous. Thousands of incoming shipments were lined up along the runway at the Riyadh airport because there were no bonded warehouses and a shortage of customs inspectors and transport services meant long delivery times.....sometimes months. After sitting outside through several sand storms a large shipment of IBM card readers was deemed totally worthless by the time it reached the customer. The customer claimed that the damage was the result of an act of God and refused to pay. The force majeure clause in the purchase agreement, which released IBM from any liability was meaningless in Saudi Arabia. IBM had to eat the loss if they hoped to continue doing business in the kingdom.



**Don't Ask, Don't Tell:** For the Ikwans and their descendants time stopped when Mohammed died, but not for the rest of world. With few exceptions the new breed of educated Saudis liked to party in Las Vegas as much as the rest of us, but it would not be acceptable for that knowledge to become public. So, the Saudis developed an earlier version of Bill Clinton's don't ask don't tell policy. Within Saudi Arabia you could get anything you wanted if you knew where to go....just don't talk about it....and don't to get caught.

To keep the religious community as happy as possible the Saudis built "compounds" where foreigners could live in relative freedom. Residents could get away with most anything within these compounds, but if the Saudi police were called in for any reason and objectionable material (i.e., liquor, porno tapes, etc.) was found everyone involved would be arrested. But, just like in Taiwan under Chiang and Greece under the Junta, if you didn't make any trouble and kept a low profile there would not be any problems. Of course, human nature being what it is, having a problemless society 100 percent of the time is impossible.....and when there was an occasional slip up things could get ugly. Just before Christmas in 1976, which of course was not celebrated in Saudi Arabia, a bunch of guys who were working for British Airways got drunk and decided to make a cassette recording of their own version of the Twelve Days of Christmas. The modified version conjured up a vision of "King Khalid sitting in a pear tree". When a copy of the cassette tape inevitably made it out of the compound there was a big diplomatic flap and all involved were deported. They were lucky. The punishment for insulting the King could have been much worse.

### **King Faisal Is Assassinated.....Islamic Fundamentalism Meets The Real World**

Khalid became king after Faisal was assassinated in 1975. Although I am again jumping head in my chronology the assassination of King Faisal provides a good example of the extreme culture clash that was taking place within the kingdom in the mid-1970's. On March 25, 1975 King Faisal was assassinated by his nephew, Faisal ibn Musa-id. This event was described in great detail in Robert Lacey's book, The Kingdom.



*“Prince Faisal ibn Musa’id had hopped from college to college in America, smoked pot at Berkeley, had been picked up with LSD in Colorado, and had gotten into at least one bar-room brawl with his girlfriend. The State Department had to work hard to keep the prince out of the courts. When Faisal ibn Musa’id returned home, his uncle, the King (King Faisal) decreed he be detained inside the Kingdom for awhile. He had disgraced the family with his escapades abroad and some said that the travel ban was the reason for the young prince’s anger.*

*On the night of 24 March 1975 Prince Faisal ibn Musa’id sat drinking whiskey with another of his brothers, Bandar, and some friends. It was the typical bored evening with the bottle which passes for nightlife among more inhabitants of the Kingdom than they care to acknowledge, and it was to go on with Bandar ibn Musa’id and his friends until 6.a.m. the next day.....television, whiskey, cards, whiskey, a bit of food, some more whiskey, until soon after dawn everyone was stretched out asleep on sofas around the room. It was not so much a party, more a way of whiling away the night for people to whom the day had still less to offer.*

*But Faisal ibn Musa’id did have plans for the coming day, and he drank little. He went to his room before midnight, and the next morning around 10 a.m. he was at the palace of his uncle the king, waiting in the anteroom outside the royal office. A delegation from Kuwait was there, come to discuss oil; and Ahmad Zaki Yamani (Saudi Oil Minister) went in ahead of them to brief the king before the meeting.*

*Ahmad Abdul Wahhab, King Faisal’s Chief of Protocol, was puzzled by the arrival of the young prince, whom he did not recognize. Family meetings were usually held at Faisal’s home, not in office hours, and Abdul Wahhab went in with Yamani to find out what the king wanted to do about his nephew.*

*Faisal ibn Musa’id, meanwhile, discovered that he knew one of the Kuwaiti delegation, Abdul Mutalib al Qasimi, the young Oil Minister, whom he had met during his brief time in Colorado, and when the door was opened to welcome in the Kuwaitis, the young prince went in with them.*

*Ahmad Zaki Yamani, Ahmad Abdul Wahhab and a television crew filming the king’s reception of the oil delegation were horrified spectators of what happened next. As King Faisal reached forward to embrace and kiss his young nephew, the young prince pulled a small pistol from the pocket of his thobe and shot three times at point blank range. The first bullet went under the chin, the second through the ear, the third grazed the forehead. King Faisal was rushed to hospital still alive and was given massive blood transfusions while doctors massaged his heart. But the artery in his neck had been torn apart and within four hours the king was dead”.*

Lacey’s account provides excellent insight into the schizophrenic nature of Saudi Arabia and the hypocritical attitudes of young Saudi princes. Their patriarch, Abdul Aziz, had made a commitment to the Wahhabis that under his family’s rule Saudi Arabia would remain an Islamic theocracy strictly governed by Shariah law as spelled in the Koran. However, just as absolute power corrupts absolutely, the same can be said about obscene wealth. Sending hundreds of wealthy princes such as Faisal ibn Musa’id out of the country for their education was bound to result in western influences corrupting the official moral values of the Saudis in a very public way. King Faisal’s assassination was a good example of what could be expected when a whiskey drinking, acid dropping, gun-toting prince returned home from California and Colorado with a chip on his shoulder. As noted above, King Faisal’s chief of protocol was Ahmed Wahhab. This is a good indicator of how closely the Saudi family was still linked to the Wahhabis.

### **Our Visit**

Because of my brief illness in Beirut I arrived in Riyadh three days after John and Claude, who met me at the airport, which was more of a landing strip than a real airport. After I paid the obligatory bribe (to find my “lost” reservation) at the Al -Yamama hotel’s check in counter we all went to our rooms to freshen up before dinner. While I was unpacking my bag I received a phone call from John, whose room was just

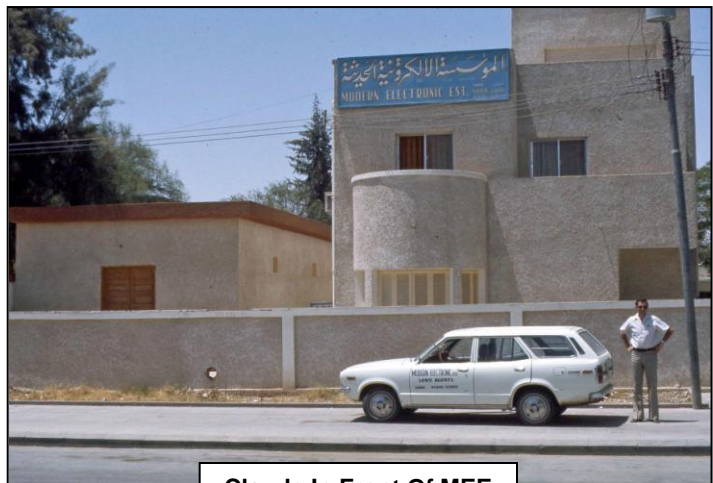
down the hall from mine. He was in a panic. Although most of what he said was unintelligible, I got the idea that he needed my help because a “giant black bug” had just flown out of the bathroom and hit him squarely in the face. So, I dashed down the hall to have a look. By the time I arrived John had somehow mustered up enough courage to trap the bug under an overturned glass that he had taken from the bathroom. When I entered the room I found him cowering behind the partially closed bathroom door. Pointing at the glass he manage to stutter out the question, “W-h-a-t, w-h-a-t is that?” Although John knew what a cockroach was he had never before seen one that was four inches long and could fly. Having had my apartment in Taipei invaded by these harmless creatures and having also seen sidewalks covered (totally) by them, I reassured John that there was nothing to be afraid of but he should cover the tub, sink and floor drains before going to bed if had did not want them to join him during the night. I then flushed the bug and all was well.

Killing bugs aside, I had several objectives while in Saudi. The first was to check out the Modern Electronics Establishment (MEE), the distributor that had recently joined us, and discuss plans for the development of their service operation. The second was to accompany John while he visited several angry customers, including the University of Riyadh, where their HP 9600E system was delivered late and was still not functional following John’s first visit. I was also going to deliver some information from Cees Slenters, HPSA’s KFSH project leader, to Ron Larsen, the Hospital Corporation of America’s (HCA) KFSH project manager and executive director. The balance of my visit would be spent with Claude having a look at the overall progress of the KFSH project as well as the living conditions and costs that he and Pierre Souccar would encounter when they arrived in Riyadh on assignment a few weeks later. My wife, Joella, had also given me a personal objective.....to buy her a couple of gold chain necklaces. The Saudi gold shops had the real thing.....24 carat.

**Hashim Kudsi .....If You’ve Got it, Flaunt it.**

After the cockroach incident we headed for the MEE office to meet with their Riyadh branch office Manager, Hashim Kudsi. Hashim was a personal friend of Farouk Nasser, the part owner and general manager of MEE. They were both experienced Palestinian businessmen who had become wealthy taking advantage of the many deal-making opportunities in Saudi Arabia. Hashim was a very talkative, jovial and flamboyant character who seemed to subscribe to the adage, if you’ve got it, flaunt it. He was dressed in a very expensive custom made silk suit, probably Italian, and was covered with diamond encrusted ruby jewelry. The works: cuff links, tie clasp, wristwatch, etc. The watch alone must have set him back at least \$10,000. After a few minutes of introductions and small talk in the office Hashim drove us to his villa in a new Oldsmobile Toronado to meet a few of his business associates before taking us to dinner.

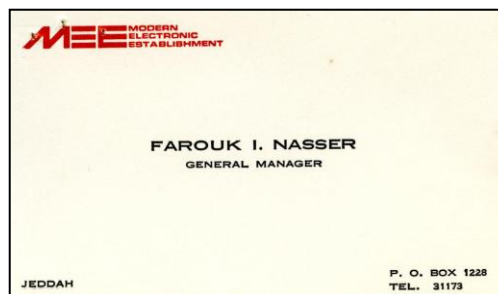
As we entered the main room in Hashim’s villa we were greeted by a gentleman who turned out to be Aramco’s chief legal counsel. He was wearing a traditional Saudi thobe and had a glass of scotch in his hand. There was a half-full bottle on the table in front of him. Showing surprise (and my naivete’), I quietly asked Hashim where the whiskey had come from because I understood that possessing it was illegal and the penalty for getting caught was severe. He told me not to worry about it and to show us what little regard he had for Saudi laws Hashim then took us all down into his basement, which was filled with hundreds of cases of White Horse scotch. It seemed that in addition to working for MEE Hashim also had a lucrative side business going as a major whiskey supplier (smuggler).....John Inglis would find this relationship valuable after he moved to Riyadh in 1976.



**Claude In Front Of MEE**

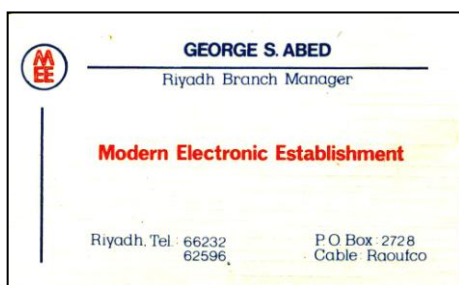
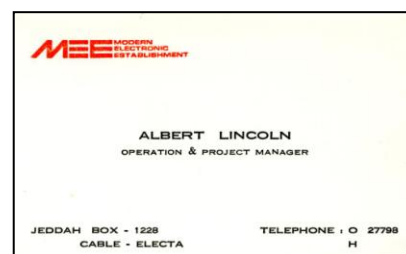
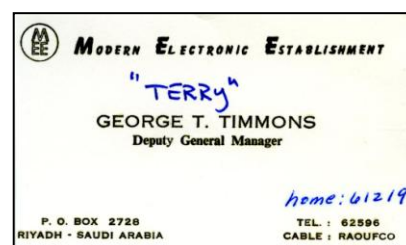
## The Modern Electronics Establishment (MEE)

By the time of my arrival in Athens Cherif had met with Farouk Nasser several times and had already signed MEE as our new Saudi Arabian distributor. MEE was part of the Alfaisalia Group of companies owned by Prince Abdullah bin Faisal Al Saud (King Faisal's oldest son). In Saudi Arabia, with few exceptions, the princes, the male descendants of Abdul Aziz, controlled most of the government ministries and, due to their wealth, were either owners or major stake holders in most businesses. MEE had gained notoriety by becoming the highest volume Sony dealer in the world. It seems counter-intuitive that a Sony distributor in a country with such a small population and no television could make this claim, but the absence of television broadcasts forced the population, the majority of whom were foreigners, to buy VCR's, television sets and taped programming. The Sony business created a windfall for MEE. Following this success Prince Al-Faisal and Farouk, who was his minority partner, decided to expand the distributorship beyond consumer electronics. When Farouk contacted HP his timing could not have been better. With most of the civilized world's wealth flowing into the Middle East, and with the founding of HP Athens, HP was looking for distributors in the oil exporting countries. MEE seemed like an excellent candidate to fill the role of HP's Saudi distributor. Thanks to their high volume Sony business MEE was well known in the kingdom and, thanks to Prince Al-Faisal, very well connected.



## Farouk Nasser .....It' Nothing Personal, Just Business

Farouk was another interesting character that crossed my path during my years in Athens. The first time we met was during this trip. As the MEE headquarters was in Riyadh Farouk also resided there. The morning after I arrived Farouk and I met with George "Terry" Timmons, who Farouk had assigned as the HP liaison person. As far as my visit was concerned, I was on a reconnaissance mission to assess MEE's service capabilities and to begin formulating service development plans with their management. As we began discussing the investments that both MEE and HP were going to have to make it was evident from the start that Farouk was going to be difficult to deal with. Even though MEE would be receiving a large commission on their sales, as well as a major portion of our service complement with which to fund the service buildup, Farouk's position was that HP should absorb the entire cost.



I would soon learn that working with Farouk and MEE was like trying to hit a moving target. The people Farouk assigned to work with HP must have also had a difficult time with him because Terry soon moved on, followed by his replacement, Al Lincoln,



followed by his replacement Joe Dini. By my next visit my contact was George Abed, an Arab-American. George told me that one of his responsibilities (given to him by Prince Al-Faisal) was to keep Farouk honest, which would require a constant effort and, in the end, be impossible. Everyone had trouble with Farouk. Trying to deal with him could be a frustrating and maddening experience. He was completely disorganized and, in my opinion, a pathological liar. It didn't take long for all of us to figure out that Farouk had no problem reneging on promises or telling outright lies if it suited his purpose. If there was something in a contract that Farouk did not like he would conveniently ignore it and if pressured to meet

his obligation would attempt to renegotiate until he got exactly what he wanted. When confronted, his standard reply was that he had changed his mind, which for him was apparently an acceptable answer.

Farouk and Hashim were not former residents of some Palestinian refugee camp. Not all Palestinians are refugees or the poor battered occupants of the Gaza Strip who have become the focus of the world news media in recent years. There are tens of thousands of well-educated Palestinians living all over the world and many of them are very wealthy. Farouk and Hashim were members of this group. I have enclosed an excerpt from a 1980 Time Magazine article entitled, "The Voices of Palestine", which makes this very clear.

## The Voices of Palestine

Monday, Apr. 14, 1980

With a fortune estimated at \$100 million, Farouk Nasser, 50, can afford to live anywhere he wants in the world; in fact he has homes in London and San Francisco as well as a sumptuous permanent hotel suite in Beirut. One of the most successful of Palestinian businessmen, he heads the Modern Electronics Establishment, with headquarters in Saudi Arabia. Nasser, whose family founded Bir Zeit University, still dreams of returning to his birthplace. "I'll tell you why I want to go back to Palestine," he says. "I belong to this land. I was born there. I know the trees, I know the streets, I know everybody, and I always think that my grave should be next to my mother's and father's. I live like a king, but Palestine belongs to me. What is Begin? He's a Pole."

Through a combination of driving hard bargains and questionable business practices Farouk had become rich. I am sure that he was getting more out of MEE than Prince Al-Faisal. Rather than being intellectually gifted, Farouk seemed to be instinctively clever, like a cat stalking a mouse. He did not have a friendly outgoing personality like Hashim. No small talk. Business conversations with Farouk could be intense. After an hour with him I felt like I had just completed a full day of manual labor.

Cherif, who was also an experienced Arab businessman and tough negotiator, was easily up to the task of dealing with Farouk. When the original distributor agreement was signed Farouk did not push back hard on any of the conditions. He seemed to be happy that he was able to comfortably get his foot in the door and pick up a few concessions, such as HP covering the cost of factory training for some of MEE's engineers. As far as I was concerned there was nothing special about MEE. MEE was just one of many distributors that we would be developing over the next few years per our master plan for the Middle East. But, as time passed it would become evident to all of us that the potential for business in Saudi Arabia was greater than we had originally anticipated and the importance of this revelation was not lost on Farouk. He quickly realized that HP would need MEE to take advantage of the growing opportunities in Saudi Arabia. This would increase Farouk's bargaining power, enabling him to squeeze more concession out of HP. It did not occur to me at the time that most the concessions would be mine, and not by choice.

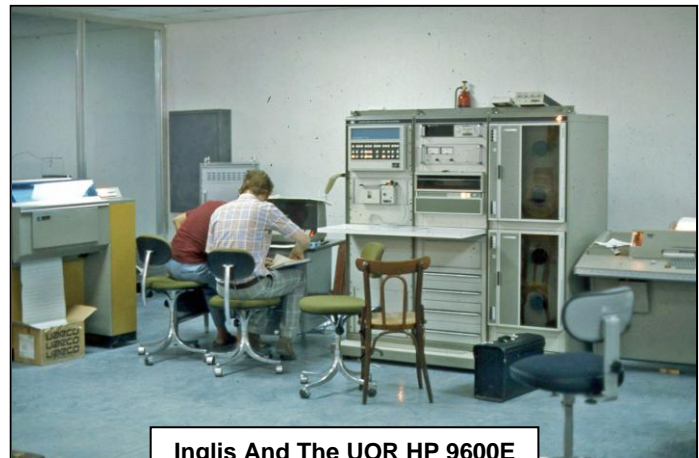
Jumping ahead once again, because I had continually pointed out to HPSA management throughout 1975 that the original MEE distributor agreement was having a negative impact on my bottom line, I had been assured that I would be involved when the agreement came up for renewal in 1976. As the time approached I spent two days with our new admn manager, Phil Smith, editing the existing agreement so that it would be more equitable. By this time Cherif had left HP and this fact combined with the recognition that Saudi Arabia was becoming a very important market for HP gave Farouk the leverage he needed to change the venue of the real negotiations from Athens to Geneva. None of us were aware of this. After meeting with us in Athens Farouk immediately traveled to Geneva and met directly with HPSA's Managing Director, Dick Alberding. The HPSA management team had no idea who they were dealing with. Now that Cherif was out of the picture Farouk had a field day. The standard distributor agreement, which we had signed with him just the day before, was scrapped and replaced with a "special relationship agreement" that looked more like a joint venture. From my point of view it was a disaster. The HP Athens service operation would pay more than 50% of the cost of the on-going MEE service buildup while receiving only 15% of the service revenue. With such a one-side deal was it any wonder that we were not profitable. After the meeting in Geneva, which no one from HP Athens knew about, the final version of the

agreement appeared to have been written by Farouk. I complained so bitterly and vocally about HPSA giving in to Farouk's demands at my expense that I received a call from Alberding. His first words to me were, "Buckle yourself in, we're going to talk". The conversation was all downhill from there. I was right and he knew it, but he didn't like anyone questioning his decisions. Of course, I never received an apology, but some positive opportunities later came my way. It is interesting to note that some years later, after we had both retired, we would, just by coincidence, become neighbors in the Ocean Colony in Half Moon Bay. We weren't close.

### **The University of Riyadh..... Back From The Brink**

Returning to August of 1974.....Following my meeting with George and Farouk, John and I headed over to the University of Riyadh. Having only arrived the evening before, I had not had a chance to pay much attention to the conditions in Riyadh. By the time we departed from MEE it was mid-day and the 125 degree temperature quickly reminded that I was in the heart of the desert in central Saudi Arabia. The high temperature was not a problem for me due to the low humidity in Riyadh. Actually, the environment reminded me of my hometown, Bakersfield, California.....hot, dry and dusty and, by coincidence, another oil town. The day I graduated from Bakersfield High (go Drillers!) it was a very dry 117 degrees. Riyadh also reminded me of Bander Abass, in southern Iran, where Merkel and I had changed planes en-route to Dubai. Like Bander Abass, Riyadh probably had not changed much since Abdul Aziz had retaken the city from the Rasheeds in the early 1900's. Every building in town was the same color as the desert.....beige, and none of them had more than three stories. Thanks to some neon signage the "commercial area" had a little more color than the rest of the town and the interiors of most of the shops were very modern and air conditioned.

Our mission at the University of Riyadh was to meet with Dr. Sabagh, the dean of the College of Engineering, Dr. Mansouri, the vice dean, and Dr. Khadr, the director of the computer science department. The delivery of their HP system, an HP 9600E, had been six months late. When John traveled to Riyadh in July to install the system he found so many problems that he could not complete the work with the service kits that he had with him. The card reader, tape reader, DMA, all disc drives and the memory were defective. In addition to the failed equipment the configuration of the system was not as ordered and the peripheral cable lengths were too short. To top it off, all of the accessories and consumables were missing along with most of the software manuals. Dr. Sabagh was especially unhappy about the cost of the programmers who had been sitting around with nothing to do.



Communicating with the Dr. Sabagh and his colleagues was not a problem. The UOR people were all fluent in English. Although I did not ask at the time, my guess is that they had all received their PhD's either in Britain or the U.S. I found this to be the case with most of our customers, especially in the pro-western oil exporting countries, and assumed it was because of their governments' long and mutually beneficial relationship with American and British oil companies.

Even though everyone present was fluent in English, Dr. Sabagh did all of the talking. To say that they were unhappy would be an understatement, and who could blame them. Although they were pleased that John had solved some of the problems and that he had returned as promised, their system was still down. Dr. Sabagh made it clear that his patience was nearing an end and if we did not quickly resolve all of the problems he would start proceedings to have HP blacklisted in Saudi Arabia. There was no doubt in my mind that he could and would do it. At that point in the conversation I spent some time describing

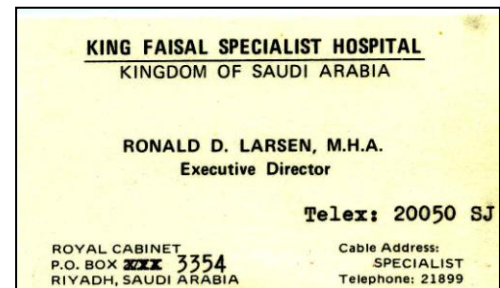
HP's recent commitment to the Middle East and added that following John's last trip he had acquired all of the materials needed to bring the system up and would do so on this visit. There would still be a lot of loose ends relative to missing manuals, etc., but at least the programmers and students would have a system to work with. I also promised them that they would no longer be forgotten. John would be returning each month. We all shook hands on it. Thanks to John's efforts the University of Riyadh became a wonderful reference account for HP. I doubt that anyone ever gave John credit for keeping HP off of the Saudi's black list. His actions were surely responsible for HP's on-going success there.

Other than accompanying me on a short visit with Bassam Saffarini and Hasan Faroun at Al-Muhandis, and engineering firm, and a brief encounter with Ron Larsen of HCA, John spent the remainder of his time in Riyadh at the University.



### Ron Larsen ..... Shooting The Messenger

Prior to my departure from Athens I was asked by Cees Slenters to deliver an envelope to Ron Larsen, the Executive Director of the KFSH. Cees, who had been involved in the KFSH order from day one worked for Tony Polsterer, the HPSA Medical Products Sales Manager. It was Cees' job to make sure that nothing went wrong with HP's largest-ever order. After the shipment arrived my operation would have responsibility for the installation and on-going maintenance. When I asked Cees what was in the envelope he told me that it was a list of the equipment being provided by one of HP's OEM's (a third party supplier), Scicon. Unknown to me at the time was that Ron had previously had a rather contentious meeting in Geneva with Cees and Tony about support for the Scicon products.



The morning after I arrived in Riyadh I asked someone at MEE to notify Ron's office that I had an envelope for him from Cees. When I returned to the MEE office after the UOR meeting there was a message from Ron requesting that I meet him for lunch the following day at his hotel. Because John would probably be servicing some of the systems at the KFSH I asked him to accompany me so that he could meet Ron.

In an initial demonstration of disrespect Ron was a half an hour late for our meeting. His time was obviously more valuable than ours. When he finally arrived there was no apology. After we introduced ourselves Ron immediately began asking a lot of questions which appeared to be tailored to determine whether or not we were important enough for him to talk with. When he opened the envelope from Cees I could see the expression on his face transitioning from one of arrogance to one of anger as he read the content. He then threw the documents on the table in front of us and said, "You can go back to Geneva and tell that son-of-bitch Cees Slenters to quit playing games with me." I am quoting here word for word. Just prior to this outburst Ron's son, who was about 16, had walked in and, seeing that his boy was watching dad in action, Ron cranked up the pomposity in an obvious effort to impress the lad. As he was walking away I heard him say something like, "You see son, sometimes that is how you have to deal with people to get what you want." They then went into the dining room for lunch and left us just sitting there. John looked at me and said, "What was that all about?" I shrugged my shoulders and replied, "I don't know. Did you enjoy your lunch?" We left. This was my introduction to Cees' devious management style. He knew in advance that Ron was not going to like the information contained in the envelope and had set me up to take all of the arrows for him. I wouldn't forget it.

## **The King Faisal Specialist Hospital .....Saudi Health Care, The Best In The World**

Unlike Saddam Hussein, who spent most of Iraq's wealth on palaces and monuments honoring himself, there were several governments in the Middle East that had a social conscience....at least where their own citizens were concerned. In one way or another, the governments of Kuwait, the U.A.E., Saudi Arabia and several others shared their country's wealth with the general population.

In the early 1970's the government of Saudi Arabia decided to build a state-of-the-art medical facility in Riyadh that would provide its citizens with the best and most comprehensive medical services in the world. Medical care in Saudi Arabia would be provided at no charge, completely free. The cost to build the facility, equip it, and staff it with thousands of trained foreign nationals was of no concern. This ultra modern medical center would become known as the King Faisal Specialist Hospital and Research Centre.



King Faisal's inner circle of advisors, "The Royal Cabinet", had hired the Hospital Corporation of America to oversee the entire project, which would eventually cost the kingdom several hundred million dollars. The HCA project manager, Ron Larsen, reported directly to the Royal Cabinet. Unfortunately for Ron and everyone else involved, including HP, the conservative Royal Cabinet retained most of the decision making authority. This created a bottleneck that slowed the progress of the project significantly and was especially problematic for suppliers and sub-contractors who were waiting to be paid. By the time I arrived in Riyadh the project was way behind schedule.

While John and I had been meeting with customers and Ron Larsen, Claude had dedicated himself to checking out the KFSH site. As the on-site HP project leader he would have full responsibility for the success of our small piece of the action. After two days of snooping around he had concluded that the project was in a state of absolute disarray. Ron Larsen's KFSH Coordinating Committee was not coordinating anything. All of the sub-contractors were working independently and, consequently, key aspects of the project were completely out of sync, which would require a great deal of rework. According to Claude, the Coordinating Committee's attitude was that the project would be finished when it was finished. This was not a very encouraging sign for subcontractors like HP that had timed their shipments as well as their hiring, training and the arrival of on-site resources based on HCA's master schedule.

Claude also discovered that there was no storage facility for the HP shipment, which was already on its way. Additionally, the central air conditioning did not work because a key component that was aboard a ship sunk in Syria during the October 1973 war was still on backorder. Claude, who had already become familiar with the site preparation specifications for all of our medical products, made up a list of problems that would need to be addressed by the Coordinating Committee before we could complete our portion of the project. These were relative simple things such as doorways that were too narrow for our system cabinets to pass through, missing electrical and data connection points, etc. Even so, his best guess was that the entire project was at least 3 months behind schedule. After the treatment we had received from Ron Larsen the day before I was thrilled that he was going to get his ass kicked by the Royal Cabinet.

As far as our portion of the project was concerned, HP's initial commitment was to have two engineers on site to handle the installation and on-going maintenance. A third engineer would be provided when the KFSH signed a maintenance agreement. Claude would be joined in September by Pierre Souccar, who had been in training for almost a year at the Waltham Medical Products Division. Having been involved in the production testing of the KFSH order, Pierre was intimately familiar with all of the products and John Inglis would be available to provide system backup if necessary. An initial supply of spare parts and

documentation were included in the product shipment and I had already ordered additional materials and equipment that I knew we would need. And, based on Claude's recommendations, on my return to Athens I would order more items, such as special test fixtures. According to Claude, who had previously worked in Riyadh, living conditions were better than he remembered and seemed to be continually improving as money and foreign workers flowed into the country. However, the cost of everything was sky high, especially suitable housing, which was in great demand. Rent for a no-frills apartment was \$30,000 a year, payable in advance. In 1974 this would have been enough to purchase a home in San Jose.

## LARGEST SINGLE SHIPMENT!

On August 9, 1974 over two years' work was culminated with the shipment of the King Faisal order. This order, well in excess of a million dollars, was the largest single customer shipment in the history of MED and may possibly be the largest single shipment ever made by HP.

The equipment, which encompassed everything in the MED product line including four medical computer systems, is going to be installed in the King Faisal Specialist Hospital in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The hospital, probably the best equipped in the world, is due to open in January, 1975 and will cater to special cases on a referral basis only.

Some vital statistics on the shipment are as follows: 220 boxes ranging in weight from 10 lbs to 1,720 lbs; total weight - 40,499 lbs or more than 20 tons (!); the shipment required 3 large vans with linear floor space of 105 ft to carry the equipment to Logan Airport. TWA then transported the equipment to Frankfurt, Germany where it was picked up by Saudi Arabia Airlines for transport to Riyadh. The shipment was due to arrive in Riyadh on August 13th - just three days after it left our back dock!

Jeff Johnson, Manager of International Customer Services East (ICSE) handled the traffic coordination and the air freight bill which was in excess of 50 thousand dollars!

This order marked a new concept in order handling at MED. Just two people coordinated the entire order - Cees Slenters, now Regional Service Manager at HPSA, Geneva, had account responsibility as well as handling customer negotiations and interfacing. Mark Halloran, Computer Systems Integration Manager at MED, coordinated the order processing, order clearing, instrument and final systems test, integration packaging, and shipment.

The installation team for Riyadh includes Mark Halloran; Jerry Lange, MED Systems Technician; Pierre Souccar, who has been in training here at MED for one year preparing for his role as Riyadh Service Engineer; as well as Claude Gengoux and Walter Brunner, both of the Athens Office. It's estimated that the installation of the equipment will take 3 to 4 months to complete and it's expected that Pierre Souccar will remain for two years in Riyadh to maintain and service the equipment.

All who participated in this project should be congratulated on its successful shipment.



*Pierre Souccar, Dean Morton, Lew Platt, and Mark Halloran*



*Jeff Johnson, Dean Morton, Lew Platt, Pierre Souccar, Mark Halloran*



**Getting Loaded In Waltham**

Although the original KFSH order included funds to cover the cost of the installation, in the end the delays would result in a large cost overrun. We would eventually receive payment from the Royal Cabinet but only for the amount they judged suitable and only after months of wrangling with them. Upon seeing both Farouk and the Royal Cabinet in action I realized that their behavior was just standard Arab business practice. After getting what they wanted they could change the rules.



Regarding the warranty, the clock began running on the factory warranty 30 days after the shipment and would stop in 3 months. Due to the delays caused by the KFSH Coordinating Committee all of the factory warranty and a good portion of the extended (complement) warranty would expired while the products were still in storage. Regardless of who was at fault, the Royal Cabinet expected a full 12 month warranty following their "acceptance" of the products. After some discussion the Waltham Medical Division agreed to start the warranty clock after the installation. The period following the warranty also created a problem for me. The Royal Cabinet wanted a service agreement, which we were happy to provide, but due to the usual delays it took them a year to sign it. By that time I had two dedicated engineers on-site with no source of income to support them. We were stuck. Any threat to pull out our resources would have resulted in blacklisting. Per usual, the Royal Cabinet eventually paid what they deemed appropriate, which was nowhere near the quoted amount and nowhere near what we had actually spent.

**The Enforcer.....My Close Encounter With Goliath**

That evening, after looking at housing and general living conditions, I asked Claude to accompany me while I visited several of the gold shops "downtown" to purchase the pieces that Joella had requested. Gold is so popular in the Middle East that gold shops were as numerous as 711 stores are in the U.S.

As a result of the 125 degree heat the streets did not begin to fill with shoppers until the early evening when the temperature had dropped to a more comfortable level. As I was curious about life in Riyadh Claude and I decided to do a little people watching and window shopping before we got serious about looking for the gold jewelry. After wandering about for a while we found ourselves in a very modern bookstore. At about that same time a muezzin began calling the faithful to evening prayer from the minaret in the neighborhood mosque. At this point the owner of the store, who was an Indian (and probably a Hindu), told us that he had to close during prayer time and that we could either go outside or join him in his office for tea while we waited for his store to reopen. We accepted his offer. While having tea the proprietor expressed his displeasure with Islamic law. Having to close 5 times a day for prayer was not good for business. When I asked him what would happen if he did not close for prayer time he told me that the local mutawwa, "religious policeman", who is tasked with enforcing the law, would use his giant cane to smash the shop's windows. The Mutaween represent the "Committee for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice", a group of religious fanatics. In March of 2002 the Mutaween prevented schoolgirls from escaping a burning school in Mecca because they were not wearing headscarves and abayas and were not accompanied by a male guardian. Fifteen girls died. >>>>>>>



**Riyadh House**

When Claude and I departed from the bookstore it was dusk. I then noticed a very bright green neon sign across the street that said 'Riyadh House', which was the local HP

Advanced Products dealer. I thought that a photo of the sign would make a nice intro to my collection of Riyadh 35mm slides.

**Saudi police 'stopped' fire rescue**



The Mecca city governor visited the fire-damaged school

Saudi Arabia's religious police stopped schoolgirls from leaving a blazing building because they were not wearing correct Islamic dress, according to Saudi newspapers.

In a rare criticism of the kingdom's powerful "mutaween" police, the Saudi media has accused them of hindering attempts to save 15 girls who died in the fire on Monday.

About 800 pupils were inside the school in the holy city of Mecca when the tragedy occurred.

According to the al-Eqtisadiyah daily, firemen confronted police after they tried to keep the girls inside because they were not wearing the headscarves and abayas (black robes) required by the kingdom's strict interpretation of Islam.



15 girls died in the blaze and more than 50 others were injured

One witness said he saw three policemen "beating young girls to prevent them from leaving the school because they were not wearing the abaya".

**Religion Can Be Hazardous To Your Health**

After asking Claude if it was okay to take the photo now that prayer time was finished he said that it was. So, I snapped the picture. At that point we decided to find a gold shop and then return to the hotel for dinner.

Two blocks down the street we found a gold shop. A bell connected to the door rang as we entered and the shopkeeper came out to greet us. Claude explained in Arabic what I was looking for and the owner began laying out samples on top of the glass display case. While I was looking at the gold chains and medallions I sensed that there was a commotion of some kind brewing outside. The noise drew our attention to the large plate glass window at the front of the shop. There must of have been 20 or 30 children of various ages, all laughing excitedly, with their noses pressed up against the glass. Behind them were quite a few adults also looking in. I commented to Claude, "haven't these people ever seen a foreigner before?", and then I redirected my attention to the jewelry. Not more than a minute had passed when the bell on the door rang again as someone else entered the shop. Then I felt something striking me, multiple times, on my right calf and shin. I turned to confront whoever was acting so rudely and found myself staring straight into the chest of man who must have been seven feet tall. He had a long gray beard and wore a white floor length robe. He looked like Moses. He was the local mutawwa. Claude's comments were not encouraging...."oh, oh", he said. Then he began to speak in Arabic to this giant of a man.

The mutawwa had been advised that some 30 minutes prior a foreigner had taken a picture of a veiled woman, which is against the law, near the bookstore. Of course, it was me who he was looking for and the crowd was hoping to see someone (me) take a beating. I had no idea that I had managed to include a passing woman when I took the photo of the Riyadh House. At this point I was preparing myself for the worst. Then the shopkeeper, whose attitude toward religious law was similar to that of the bookshop owner, intervened and told the mutawwa that I had been in his shop for the past 30 minutes and, therefore, the person he was looking for could not possibly have been me. After a brief heated discussion the mutawwa departed and the disappointed crowd disbursed. It should be noted here that the woman who made the complaint wasn't even in the photo. She must have just seen the camera pointed in her direction.



My Favorite Gold Shop

If the shopkeeper thought that giving me an alibi would help close the sale on the jewelry he was absolutely correct. I thanked him profusely for saving me from a painful and embarrassing public beating, hastily bought all of the pieces on the counter and quick-stepped it up the street with Claude before the mutawwa could change his mind and return. Over dinner we had a good laugh about the whole experience, but it could have ended up very badly for me without the help of Claude and the shop owner.

### **Hurry Up And Wait.....An Extreme Abuse Of Royal Privilege**

As we headed for the Riyadh airport the following morning I was looking forward to getting home. We would all be heading back to Beirut, where I would catch a connecting flight to Athens, John would connect with a flight to Baghdad, and Claude would prepare for his return to the KFSH. We had no idea that the day would become another example of Murphy's Law.

We arrive at the airport by taxi in the early morning, around 7:30. A bunch of children with an average age, I would guess, of about twelve was waiting for us. They surrounded the taxi in the hope of earning a tip by carrying our suitcases into the terminal. When the taxi driver opened the trunk the kids quickly grabbed everything in site. John and Claude were able to wrestle their luggage from the grasp of the gang of kids, but I wasn't so lucky. The competition to get that last suitcase, mine, was so fierce that the

handle was torn off in the scuffle. When that happened everyone scattered, leaving me to awkwardly carry the case into the airport terminal. John and Claude thought it was all very funny, watching me trying to figure out how to carry a suitcase with no handle. Claude commented that we were all lucky. If we had been in Cairo the children would have quickly disappeared along with all of our suitcases.

Like many other airports in the Middle East at this time the Riyadh Airport terminal building was very small, a simple affair constructed from cement cinder blocks. It was air conditioned, but not well enough to keep the waiting area comfortable. When we had arrived the outside temperature was already above 100 degrees, headed for 125 again. The check-in process was a breeze, nothing like what had happened to me in Beirut. Our SAA flight had not yet arrived and as the morning stretched into the afternoon, and with the inside temperature rising to well above 100 degrees, all of the passengers were getting fed up with the usual bullshit airline excuses for the delay. The excuse of choice on this day was that the plane, a Boeing 707, had a mechanical problem and was delayed in Beirut.....but don't worry, it will be here soon. Well, it arrived at 8:00 in the evening. Then the truth came out. Early that morning a Saudi prince had commandeered the plane to take some of his friends to Mecca. Now that he was back the paying passengers, who had been waiting in the 100+ degree heat for 12 hours, could finally be on their way. Naturally, by this time any connecting flights that we had in Beirut were long gone. We finally boarded the plane about 9:00. The only thing good so far that day was that we had first class seats and it felt just fine getting the temperature back down to 72 degrees.

### **Excuse Me, But Would You Mind Moving Your Airplane?**

During this early stage of Saudi Arabia's development not much had yet been done to improve the airport facilities and equipment. About the only pieces of equipment they had on hand were the portable stairs for boarding passengers, baggage transportation carts and portable power generators. Because there were no tractors, and therefore no way to move the aircraft, all of the arriving flights parked end-to-end, parallel to the terminal building so that they could just pull away during departure. As far as our flight was concerned, almost as soon as the engines started and the pilot began to swing the plane away from the gate, the engines were shut down again. The reaction of the passengers can be summed up in two words, "Now what?" Was there going to be another delay on top of the 13 hours we had already been waiting to depart? The answer to that question was simple, of course there was.

From my window seat on the terminal side of the aircraft I could easily see the problem. When the plane had arrived the pilot had taxied in and shut down too close to the plane in front of us. As a result of that miscalculation we could not depart without our wing tip clipping the tail on the other aircraft, a Boeing 707 transport. With no tractor available to move either plane, the airport staff had to go into town to find the crew of the other plane and bring them to the airport so that their plane could be moved forward, about 3 feet. This required an additional two hours. By that time I was beyond caring. I was enjoying the A/C and the comfortable seat so much that I just fell asleep. I woke up when we finally lifted off.

The remainder of the trip was uneventful. The morning after another (very short) night at the Phoenicia John and I made new flight arrangements. That afternoon he went on to Iraq to service the HP 9600E system at the Iraqi Nuclear Research Center and install the new HP 2000E timesharing system at the University of Basra (both of which had been ordered before I arrived in Athens). I caught a Middle East Airlines (MEA) flight back to Athens from Beirut. In spite of its name, MEA was a good airline. It felt good to be headed home and, as I looked back on the trip while sipping my glass of chilled white wine, I was happy to have survived it: I had been stuck in the middle of a well armed and emotional Palestinian funeral procession; I was delayed for two days in Beirut due to a bad case of diarrhea; I had to bribe airline officials to get a seat on my Riyadh flight, I had met a whisky smuggler masquerading as the manager of MEE's Riyadh office, I had been snubbed by one customer and threatened by another; I had almost received a public flogging; I had my luggage destroyed; and I had been roasted in the terminal at the Riyadh airport. What a great trip!

"Welcome home dear, how was your trip?" "Oh, it was fine. You know, just another week at the office. What's for dinner?" ■

