

Excerpts from the Israel Country Reader

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ISRAEL

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Bilha Bryant	1949-1959	Israeli Citizen, Haifa
Daniel Oliver Newberry	1949-1951	Vice Consul, Jerusalem
Harry Fleischman	1950	Jewish Labor Committee
Edward Warren Holmes	1950-1952	Consular/Political Officer, Tel Aviv
Wilbur P. Chase	1951-1955	Principal Officer, Haifa
Richard B. Parker	1951-1953 1957-1959	Consul General, Jerusalem Desk Officer for Jordan, Israel, and Iraq, Washington, DC
Harry I. Odell	1952-1954	Consular Officer, Haifa
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Margaret L. Plunkett	1953-1954	Labor Adviser, Technical Aid Mission, Tel Aviv
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Eugene H. Bird	1955 1956-1958	Israel-Jordan Desk, Washington, DC Vice Consul, Jerusalem
Harriet Curry	1956-1958	Secretary to the Ambassador, Tel Aviv
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Alfred H. Moses	1956-1980	Lawyer, Covington & Burling, Washington, DC
Victor Skiles	1958-1959	Deputy Mission Director, USAID, Tel Aviv
Michael H. Newlin	1958-1963	United Nations Affairs, IO, Washington, DC
Murat Williams	1959-1961	Deputy Chief of Mission, Tel Aviv
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Stephen E. Palmer, Jr.	1963-1966	Chief, Political Section, Tel Aviv
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Michael E. Sterner	1964-1966	Bureau of Near East Affairs, Washington, DC
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Mark C. Lissfelt	1965-1967	Staff Aide/Commercial Officer, Tel Aviv
Arthur J. Goldberg	1965-1968	Ambassador, United Nations, New York
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David A. Korn	1965-1967	Bureau of Near East Affairs, Washington, DC

	1967-1971	Political Officer, Tel Aviv
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Arnold Schifferdecker	1966-1968	Staff Aide, Tel Aviv
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	1971-1974	Chief, Political Section, Tel Aviv
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Arthur R. Day	1972 1975	Consul General, Jerusalem
Edward G. Abington	1972-1975	Political Officer, Tel Aviv

Betty Jane Jones	1973-1976	Deputy Consul General, Jerusalem
Nicholas A. Veliotos	1973-1975 1977-1978	Deputy Chief of Mission, Tel Aviv Bureau of Near East Affairs, Washington, DC
Dean Rust	1974-1976	Staff Assistant to Director Fred Ikle, ACDA, Washington, DC
Malcolm Toon	1975-1976	Ambassador, Israel
Thomas J. Dunnigan	1975-1977	Deputy Chief of Mission, Tel Aviv
Edward G. Abington	1975-1977	Staff Aide to Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, Washington, DC
George E. Lichtblau	1975-1978	Labor Attaché, Tel Aviv
Edmund James Hull	1975-1979	Political Officer, Jerusalem
Michael Newlin	1975-1980	Consul General, Jerusalem
Michael G. Newlin	1976-1978	Israeli-Arab Affairs, Washington, DC
Owen W. Roberts	1976-1979	Sinai Field Mission, Sinai
Michael E. Sterner	1976-1979	Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Near East Affairs, Washington, DC
Donald A. Kruse	1976-1980	Deputy Principal Officer, Jerusalem
C. William Kontos	1976-1980	Director, Sinai Support Mission, Washington, DC
Gilbert D. Kulick	1976-1978 1978-1981 1981-1982	Israeli Desk, Office of Israel and Arab- Israel Affairs, Washington, DC Deputy Political Counselor, Tel Aviv Sinai Planning Group, Washington, DC
Arthur A. Houghton III	1977-1978	Deputy Director, Office of Arab-Israel Affairs, Washington, DC
Samuel F. Hart	1977-1980	Economic and Commercial Counselor, Tel Aviv

David I. Hitchcock, Jr.	1977-1981	Public Affairs Officer, USIS, Tel Aviv
Richard N. Viets	1977-1979 1981-1984	Deputy Chief of Mission, Tel Aviv Ambassador, Jordan
Samuel W. Lewis	1977-1984	Ambassador, Israel
James H. Bahti	1978-1979	Sinai Field Mission, Sinai
Kenton W. Keith	1978-1980	Special Assistant to Deputy Director, USIA, Washington, DC
Sally Grooms Cowal	1978-1982	Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS, Tel Aviv
Leon Weintraub	1979-1980 1980-1982	Hebrew Language Training, Foreign Service Institute, Washington, DC Consular Officer, Tel Aviv
William Jeffras Dieterich	1979-1982	Press Attaché, USIS, Tel Aviv
William Andreas Brown	1979-1982	Deputy Chief of Mission, Tel Aviv
Robert W. Duemling	1980-1982	Sinai Field Mission, Sinai
David N. Greenlee	1980-1982	Political Officer, Tel Aviv
Thomas Macklin, Jr.	1980-1982	Personnel Officer, Tel Aviv
Brandon Grove	1980-1983	Consul General, Jerusalem
Dennis C. Jett	1980-1983	Science Attaché, Tel Aviv
Maurice E. Lee	1981-1988	Public Affairs Officer, USIS, Tel Aviv
Richard M. Fairbanks, III	1982-1983	Special Negotiator for the Middle East, Washington, DC
Arthur S. Berger	1982-1986	Embassy Spokesman, Tel Aviv
David M. Evans	1982-1986	Political Advisor to Commander in Chief, U.S. Naval Forces in Europe, London, England
Robert B. Petersen	1982-1986	Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS, Tel Aviv
Wat T. Cluverius, IV	1983-1985	Consul General, Jerusalem

Sally Grooms Cowal	1983-1985	USUN, Deputy Political Counselor, New York City
Kenton W. Keith	1983-1985	USIA, Deputy Director for Near East and South Asia, Washington, DC
Douglas R. Keene	1983-1986	Deputy Principal Officer; Jerusalem
Joseph G. Sullivan	1984-1988	Deputy Political Counselor, Tel Aviv
James E. Taylor	1984-1988	Political/Military Officer, Tel Aviv
Louise Taylor	1984-1988	Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS, Tel Aviv
Wayne Leininger	1984-1988	Consul General, Tel Aviv
Morris Draper	1986-1988	Consul General, Jerusalem
Paul H. Tyson	1985-1986	Sinai Multi-National Force & Observer Mission, El Gorah, Sinai
Roger G. Harrison	1985-1987	Political Counselor, Tel Aviv
Leon Weintraub	1986-1988	Israeli Analyst, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Washington, DC
Arthur H. Hughes	1986-1989	Deputy Chief of Mission, Tel Aviv
William A. Pierce	1987-1989	Deputy Public Affairs Officer, NEA Bureau, Washington, DC
Aubrey Hooks	1988-1991	Economic Counselor, Tel Aviv
Phillip C. Wilcox, Jr.	1988-1991	Consul General, Jerusalem
William Andreas Brown	1988-1992	Ambassador, Israel
Philippe de Chateau	1988-1992	Chief, American Cultural Center, USIS, Tel Aviv
Richard T. McCormack	1989-1991	Undersecretary of State for Economic Affairs, Washington, DC
Charlotte Roe	1989-1991	Labor Attaché, Tel Aviv

Henry L. Clarke	1989-1992	Economic Counselor, Tel Aviv
David Winn	1989-1992	Deputy Consul General, Jerusalem
Mike Metrinko	1989-1993	Consul General, Tel Aviv
William C. Harrop	1992-1993	Ambassador, Israel
Joseph G. Sullivan	1997-1998	Co-Chairman, Israel-Lebanon Monitoring Group, Washington, DC

FRASER WILKINS
Recognition of Israel

Ambassador Wilkins was born and raised in Nebraska and educated at Yale University. He entered the Foreign Service in 1940, where he became a specialist in Middle East Affairs. His overseas posts include Halifax, Baghdad, Tangier, New Delhi and Teheran, where he served as Minister/Counselor. In his several assignments in the Department of State in Washington, Mr. Wilkins dealt with Middle East matters. He also served on the Policy Planning Staff and as Inspector General of the Department. In 1960 he was appointed Ambassador to Cyprus, where he served until 1964. Ambassador Wilkins was interviewed by Peter Jessup in 1988.

Q: You were saying that – which raises a point which we might get to when we talk about Palestine – that a political appointee quite often has the ear of the President, or certainly the White House. That brings up the question of who spoke to the President last? And in your experience on the Palestine business, and the recognition of the independence of Israel, wouldn't you say that who spoke to the President last- - such as Clark Clifford, and so forth, with President Truman – that had a bigger impact than people who didn't have that access?

WILKINS: There's a simple answer to that, and it's yes! I will explain if you want me to. It's a rather long story.

Q: We're wandering around and I did have the opportunity to read some of your excellent work you did with the MacKenzie – of the Truman Library. After studying that it raised certain questions. One of which is: you were asked what could have been done that was different? And your answer was that we could have been more closely in touch with the British, in the days before independence of Israel.

WILKINS: Before they referred it to the U.N. in 1947?

Q: Yes. Could you amplify on that?

WILKINS: Well, I would amplify this way. After the Anglo-American Committee Report. I only returned to the Department in December 1946, when Secretary Burns was in charge, and he left shortly thereafter. As I recall, he had not been on good relations with Prime Minister Bevin, in London. I was all during that very active period, you know, when there were troubles in Iran in 1946 – in Azerbaijan – and the British were facing difficult political and military situations in Greece and Turkey.

I think what I had in mind when I made that remark earlier, was that we have been working more closely with the British, and encouraging them to make moves toward compromise between the Jews in Palestine, the Arabs and the Arab States. Sort of taking steps leading up to a compromise solution between the parties.

Q: You implied we just considered it a British headache, to a certain extent.

WILKINS: Well, the British treated it that way. The British, in effect, left the baby at the doorstep of the U.N. They said that they were not going to go on trying to keep peace in Palestine merely because the Arabs and Jews couldn't reach agreement. And unless they reached agreement they intended to withdraw.

But meanwhile, they wished the United Nations would convene a special mission and decide what to do about the problem. In other words, the British just evaded their responsibilities under the Mandate, by turning it over to the United Nations, in frustration of the years of the internecine warfare within the Palestine Mandate itself.

Q: And on that business of 11 minutes after Israel became independent, Truman recognized the state of Israel. General Marshall's opinion, according to you-Secretary of State Marshall – was that you shouldn't recognize a state until it's been established, until you know whether it's going to continue to exist. Was he as surprised as the people in New York, that when Truman made the announcement, that it would come so rapidly?

WILKINS: I don't think so, because after the May 12th meeting, Mr. Lovett and the Secretary were in constant touch with Mr. Clifford and the White House. My comments now would be an extension of the May 12th meeting at the White House, in which Secretary Marshall, Mr. Lovett, Mr. Clifford, David Niles, Matthew Townley, Bob McClintock, and I were present. I think that's pretty well recorded in the foreign relations of the United States.

At the conclusion of that meeting, it was my clear impression that the President had postponed a recognition of the state of Israel, prior to May 14-15, as recommended by Clifford and company. They thought that we ought to beat the Russians to the punch. You see, the Russians had also supported the Partition Plan, as we had. They thought that this would be a coup against the United States. It would please the Israelis, and perhaps settle down the situation if a big country like the United States recognized Israel before its independence, on May 14th.

Anyway, we left the meeting – I did anyway – thinking that it had been put off for the time being. And when I went back to the Department I told Mr. Henderson – who had not attended the meeting – that this was what I thought. And we were quite surprised, frankly, within the

Department. Maybe it was because I was fairly low on the totem pole.

The President did recognize Israel within 11 minutes. And what had happened, apparently, was that between May 12th and May 15th, at midnight when Ben Gurion stood up in Tel Aviv and declared the independence of the state, was all sorts of pressures had been brought to bear on the President. Dr. Weizmann was here, and Mr. Jacobson, his former partner in Missouri – they all spoke with him. And great pressure was brought in many other ways, I'm sure, on the White House. Even if he couldn't recognize Israel beforehand, at least to recognize it immediately on independence. That's what happened, according to the general information that was available at that time.

Q: General Hilidring's remark that the State Department had the pieces to pick up was quite prophetic, wasn't it?

WILKINS: It surely was. You can see what's happening today. You have the grandsons of Arab refugees throwing rocks at Israeli tanks. Because the hostility has existed since 1948, when most of the refugees fled from Palestine, when Israel became an independent state; after the massacre at Dir Yassin. These children in the camps are the descendants of the people who fled in '48, and here it is 40 years later. Those people, by in large, have not been assimilated into any of the Arab states: Lebanon, Syria, Jordan. Of course, Saudi Arabia is out of the picture, or Egypt, in the sense of the Gaza Strip. The refugees have probably increased from around 600,000 to between 2 or 3 million, and they are all in the camps.

Q: Would you say that it unfair, or pro-Israeli, to say that the Jews did the best they could to take care of their own refugees after the Holocaust, and to apportion them wherever they could, with all the H.L.A.S, and all their structure, to help? But that the Arabs did very little to absorb any of those? Was that a fair question?

WILKINS: That's quite correct. But I'd like to make three comments, amusing comments in a way. One is, there is a colony of so-called black Jews in Cochin, India. I know this because I was political counselor in India, from 1950 to 1953, and traveled widely in that area. These black Jews were really Indians, but they'd been taken on as servants by the Jews that came to India after the death of our Lord, under Saint Thomas. Saint Thomas was killed in Madras, you know, with his spear. He's buried there, actually.

But these Indian servants – of Jews from Palestine settled in India way back – were very cliquish. They had their own synagogue, with Dutch tiles. They would not allow their daughters to walk in the streets, unless they married Indians and could pass from roof to roof, by night and so forth.

Of course, when Israel became independent many of them decided to go back to the homeland. But after they were there a while, they didn't like it and returned to India.

The other thing is that the Oriental Jews – so called, say from the Morocco area – when they came to Israel they didn't like it. Or rather, putting it the other way around, the Israelis didn't like them, because they were so backward.

There was a third point I wanted to make. Prime Minister Ben Gurion was distressed that immigration, in those years, among American Jews was very small. Very few, in fact, wanted to go to the new state.

Q: Except as tourists.

WILKINS: That's right.

Q: But now, of course, the Sephardic Jews – the ones from the orbit of North Africa, and the other countries of the Middle East – they outnumber the Ashkenazi – the ones originally from Eastern Europe.

WILKINS: That's interesting. I really didn't realize that.

Q: That's why those are the people who were behind Begin and Shamir. And they are the ones who are more intensely opposed to the Arabs.

WILKINS: As a matter of fact, I know many Sephardic Jews, because I served in Tangier, Morocco from 1944 to 1946. My banker there was Moses Abensur, from Moses Barriente. The Jewish bankers in Morocco were very influential ever since the days they were forced out of Spain. I don't know what the situation is in North Africa now.

With respect to the Ashkenazi coming from Eastern Europe, you know the story, of course, or the two theories about the Jews of the immigration? I heard this from Fans El Khoury, the one-time Prime Minister of Syria, when he came to the United Nations in 1957. He said that in the 8th or 9th century A.D. there was a kingdom named Kiev in Western Russia, with a very enlightened monarch. He summoned all the wise men and philosophers of his day to court, and said, "What is the best religion?"

They considered the matter and declared for Judaism. And he converted his people, willy-filly, to Judaism – as kings could do in those days. Well, eventually the kingdom collapsed and many of what were Ashkenazi Jews fled westward, and settled in Eastern Europe. Later on, when Hitler rose to power-and having taken over Eastern Germany and Austria and so on – most of the Jews that went to Palestine were originally descendants of people from the Kingdom of Kiev, and were not, according to the Arabs, really entitled to go back to Palestine.

The other theory is this: During the declining days of the Roman Empire, the Roman legions were running out of manpower. And so they were drafted from the mandate area into the Roman Army. Then after the Roman Army broke up, in 5 or 600 A.D., those troops of Semitic Jews remained behind, having intermarried locally. It was their descendants – according to the Arabs – who were immigrating. So you see the two opposite theories on the subject. You can take your money and take your choice. I'm inclined to think it was the latter, because it seems unlikely that there could have been a complete conversion of all the people of the Kingdom of Kiev.

Q: That sounds a bit legendary.

WILKINS: There's no doubt in my mind that they were, actually, the Jews of Eastern Europe. But their origin may have been genuine, you know. The Arab theory is that they are all descendants of the mixed blood – maybe it was a combination of both.

Q: Now, during the time when you were in Washington, and the creation of Israel, Truman actually did make the remark that the State Department was anti-Semitic, or there were anti-Semites in the State Department. You know what he meant. And McKenzie, I believe asked you about that, and you said that really wasn't true. Do you still feel that way?

WILKINS: Yes, of course, I do. I never saw any evidence of anti-Semitism in practice, for fact. I do know that several officers resigned about the time of partition and independence. For instance, Colonel Eddy, who had been American Minister in Saudi Arabia, and my boss at the Department Gordon Merrill – although, he retired for reasons of health, being very hard of hearing, Of course, Eddy was a very prominent man. He'd served in Saudi Arabia. He was present with President Roosevelt when he saw Ibn Saud, aboard the deck of USS Quincy – at Bitter Lakes – after the Yalta Conference. President Roosevelt made his famous, semi-commitment to that he would – in the form of a memorandum – take no action with respect to the Arabs and Jews, regarding the British Mandate in Palestine, without first consulting both parties.

Q: Well I think maybe some of the origin of this reverse prejudice – so stated by President Truman – is based on, possibly, there were quite a few Foreign Service officers who married, or were the sons, or connected closely with missionaries and missionary families in the Middle East. And they were naturally more closely attuned to Arab ways, and Arab culture. It was believed unfriendly to the insertion of Israel, and America's heavy leaning on Israel is that possible?

WILKINS: I must say that in my experience, having served in Iran, Iraq, in effect in Palestine, in Cyprus, and in Morocco, I never saw any evidence of this. I don't want to talk in clichés, but it seems to me the attitude of the average American Foreign Service officer is that he's an American first; he's pro-American in effect. He's neither pro-where he is, or for example, when I was in Cyprus, I never considered myself as either pro-Greek or pro-Turkey. I think the same thing is true of most people. Because you have to look at it from the point of view of the interests of the United States. As you know, in the Middle East we had tremendous interests out there: in oil, in communications, in transport, in religion, and so on. So it's wrong to take a biased point of view. In a situation like that you have to think of what is good for us.

As I said at the outset, I don't want to put it in terms of clichés, but I think that's the approach most American Foreign Service officers take.

Q: That's an interesting point. Shall we continue?

WILKINS: Yes, please.

Q: I might ask you about your experience of Americans serving in the U.N. For instance, at the

time of the independence of Israel, Ralph Bunche was up there at the U.N. I think you quoted him as saying he had to do a lot of work for the Arabs, because they didn't do their own homework very well.

WILKINS: That's correct.

Q: Did the Department of State, or the administrations that you served with, have any role in assigning Americans to the United Nations, and seeing that better people got there? For instance, the Russians ignored the UN for quite a while, and then sometime in the '50s they decided this was a wonderful place to put key people, wield influence, maybe fill some KGB slots, and so forth like that. What was the attitude of the Department about Americans serving in the UN? Because McCarthy was very angry at some of the Americans who were working at the UN, figuring they were leftists, and so forth.

WILKINS: I think that's completely wrong. I think the United States government was interested in proper staffing at the United Nations from the outset, in 1945.

Q: But, could the State Department send people up there to apply? Or how did it work?

WILKINS: Of course, people would even leave the State Department and join the staff of the United Nations; or go up there on special assignments. I don't know the details of Bunche's early career, but he was a United States government officer – not only in State, but perhaps elsewhere. Anyway, he was well known here in Washington, and he was on the staff at the United Nations. I think he's a living example of the attitude of the Department of State, with regard to the quality of people we wanted at the United Nations.

Later on, as you know, he took the place of Count Bernadotte in his dual role as conciliator and mediator. That was when I had that conversation with him. I was, at that point, serving as his advisor to the American representative in the Palestine Conciliation Commission; and made a trip from Beirut to Rhodes to find out how he was progressing in his truce arrangements with the Arab states of Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt. He considered himself in a very embarrassing position because the Arabs, in their usual matter, didn't really prepare themselves very well for meetings. To have a fair truce agreement, he would be forced to take their side. And of course, the Israelis complained about that.

One other thing about Bunche: you know, later on he was offered the job – showing another example of his quality – of Assistant Secretary State, for Near Eastern Affairs. But he declined. He felt that he could not afford to live in Washington and raise his family here, being black. And his salary would be taxable, whereas by serving at the United Nations his salary was non-taxable. So for two reasons it was more desirable for him to be in New York, in the high position that he was – not only after [inaudible], but later on at the U.N. itself. So I think all of this is testimony to the type of man the State Department wanted in the U.N.

Q: But I still don't understand – most of the staff positions in the U.N., that were held by Americans, were not Foreign Service officers; they were people of other origin.

WILKINS: Well, I'm not up on that.

Q: One thing – since we're skipping around – in a previous conversation we had, not recorded, you talked about the difference of style of Secretary Marshall, and Secretary Dulles – in dealing with assistants and staff people. Could you point out the differences? How Marshall would want you beside him, and I think you said Dulles [inaudible]

WILKINS: Well, they were certainly different types of secretaries. But, at the same time, they had many characteristics in common. I'll describe a couple of incidents with respect to each, if you like.

Q: I think that would be interesting to the people in the future.

WILKINS: This may take a little time. With respect to Secretary Marshall: shortly before Israel became independent on May 14-15, 1948, Marshall was having one of his weekly press conferences in the State Department. Carl Humelsine was Chief of Staff at that point, and he called me up. Marshall never called me. Marshall, they always said, when he wanted one of his aides and couldn't remember his name, he would say, "Send me that general with the pint eyes."

I said to Carl Humelsine, on the phone, "What does the boss want?" He said, "He just wants to talk to you about his upcoming press conference."

So I went up to the 7th floor and went into Carl's office, and he said, "Go right on in." I went in, and Secretary Marshall was sitting there in his red leather chair, at his desk. At the two opposite corners of the desk were Mike McDermott (the press secretary) and Chip Bohlen, who at that point was counselor to the Department. They were obviously preparing for the press conference. There were many subjects that could come up, and I suppose that's why Bohlen was there also.

Anyway, Marshall said to me, "Well, sit down in that chair in the corner and I'll be with you in a minute." I felt like a dunce in school. But I sat down in the chair, Marshall continued, and then he told them they could go in a very abrupt sort of way. I thought it was a funny way to treat Bohlen, who after all in '48 he'd been the confidant of President Roosevelt at Yalta. He was one of the ablest officers in the Department.

Anyway, when they left, Marshall said, "Now, tell me what I should say at my press conference," very abruptly, as though I were a school boy. So I took the chair beside his desk. He said, "There are 150 newspaper men waiting down there, and they want to know what the United States is going to do."

You see, at that point we had not recognized Israel; this was before that day. So I told him what the present military situation was in the Mandate, and around Jerusalem. And we had had no word, either from Israel or from the White House as to what they planned to do. Obviously, the decision by the President – to recognize Israel – had not yet been made. I said, "It seems to me [we should] tell the President, because of the fluidity of the situation, it's impossible to predict at this moment what will happen – whether the Arabs will continue fighting with the Israelis, and what the White House intends. Anyway, Israel has still not declared its independence."

So, he said, “Good, you can go.” Now Dulles, on the other hand, he treated his *staff* like assistants in a big New York law office. He came originally, and used to be associated, with Sullivan and Cromwell. This was his method of operation. I wish I could think of the name of his one officer that was very close to him. He later went to Johns Hopkins.

Anyway, as far as I was concerned, he used to call me up practically every morning around 8:00, 8:30, so I’d have to get into the office around 7:00 or 7:30 and read the telegrams. You see, the action copies of telegrams would come to the desk officer – or me, being Director of Near Eastern Affairs – first, for action. The Secretary, of course, would have a copy. He would want to know, “What are you going to suggest we answer this one?”

WELLS STABLER
Vice Consul
Jerusalem (1944-1950)

Bureau of Near East Affairs
Washington, DC (1950-1953)

Bureau of Near East Affairs
Washington, DC (1957-1960)

Ambassador Wells Stabler was born in Massachusetts on October 31, 1919. He received a bachelor’s degree from Harvard University in 1941 and entered the Foreign Service in the same year. His career included positions in Israel, Jordan, Italy, France, and Washington, DC, and an ambassadorship to Spain. Ambassador Stabler was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1991.

Q: So you went to Jerusalem in late 1944. How did you get there?

STABLER: That is a long, long story. I was visiting the family of a close friend of mine, who is actually my brother-in-law, who had gone overseas with OSS. I had gone up to Coopertown to visit his family and while I was there I telephoned Personnel and was told that I was going to be vice consul in Jerusalem. Obviously one knew about Palestine and Jerusalem, but I really had to go look up a map because I hadn’t had it in mind at all, except in the Biblical sense. Although I had, when we lived in Venezuela, I was down there one summer, met (my father and mother were great friends of the British Minister and his wife) Field Marshal Lord Allenby who had liberated Jerusalem from the Turks in the First World War and was visiting Caracas. A very nice man. Little did I think at that time that one day I would be walking the streets of Jerusalem.

I left in early November, 1944. I took a Portuguese freighter from Philadelphia. We spent two weeks crossing the Atlantic, flying the Portuguese flag with a big spotlight over it at night hoping that the German U-boats would see the flag of neutral Portugal and leave us alone. We crossed without incident stopping briefly at the Azores, but we were not allowed ashore. We

finally got into Lisbon two weeks after leaving.

At that particular time, in order to go on...there was a flight once a week, I think, from Lisbon to Gibraltar. I could have gone on that plane the day after I arrived, but the Chargé d'Affaires in Lisbon was an old friend of mine from the days I worked in American Republic Affairs, Newby Walmsley [his wife Theresa and he are now both long dead] and he wanted me to stay for a visit. So I accepted their kind invitation and stayed for a week in Lisbon by which time there were no more planes for Gibraltar. So I had to go by Portuguese Airline via Tangier and Casablanca from which one went to Cairo.

When I got to Casablanca I stayed at the famous Anfa Hotel where the Casablanca Conference had taken place. It was under US military control. They informed me that there was no way I could possibly get out of Casablanca under a week. So I had a week in Casablanca and made a visit to Rabat. I flew up to Algiers in a US plane. Spent three days there. Then took a Royal South African Air Force plane which was a cargo plane full of Christmas packages and had no seats, so I sat on some of the packages. We finally got into Cairo shortly before Christmas of 1944. At that time the US Minister was Pinkney Tuck. His number two was an old friend as well from my days in Latin American affairs, Cecil Lyon. I telephoned the Consulate General in Jerusalem to inform them that I had at least gotten as far as Cairo because the last they had heard of me was sometime in early November. They said, "Oh, we are glad you have gotten this far, but don't you dare come near Jerusalem until after Christmas because no one can do anything about you."

Q: Even towards the end of the war there were still people coming in there...pilgrims and that sort...

STABLER: Absolutely. And of course there were enormous numbers of US troops that ploughed into Palestine, particularly for the Christmas period, Christmas services in Bethlehem. So, the YMCA, which was the one place one could stay was completely crowded and booked. So I was told to stay out of Jerusalem. I stayed in Cairo for another week and had a wonderful time. I had never been in the Near East and did some sightseeing. I think it was the 27th of December that I finally got a British Royal Air Force plane that took me to Jerusalem, to Lydda, the airport.

I thought I would not wire ahead but just arrive in Jerusalem and go up to the Consulate and present myself. I got to Lydda and the first person I saw was Field Marshal Lord Gort who at that point was the High Commissioner for Palestine and Transjordan. He was just on his way out for good. I wondered how I would get to Jerusalem. At that point a very nice British Army officer who saw me sort of stranded said he was going to Jerusalem and offered me a ride. I rode in his car through beautiful country. The orange blossoms were out. It was a beautiful day, cold, but beautiful. We drove on up into the hills and arrived at the Consulate where I presented myself.

They said they would have met me if I had let them know. Well, I didn't want to bother anybody. I reported to Lowell Pinkerton, who was then the Consul General and Christian Steeger, who was the number two. I set myself up in the YMCA and there began almost five years between Jerusalem and Amman.

Q: What was the situation in early 1945 in Jerusalem as you saw it?

STABLER: The war was still on. The US had camps in Palestine. Of course the British had substantial forces there, although the war had by that time passed on. The Middle East was no longer a theater of operations as such. There was a Middle East theater but no war operations. It had all shifted basically to Europe.

The Jews and the Arabs were in an uneasy truce during the war. Most of the terrorism and the civil disorder that existed prior to the war had come to an end. There were incidents. The Jews were bringing in illegal immigrants which was annoying the British and, of course, the Arabs. The Arabs had resented the British efforts even to let some of the Jews in legally and they felt the British were being unfair to the Arabs. The result of that was that there was a certain number of Palestinian Arabs who openly declared themselves for the Nazis.

[The grand mufti of Jerusalem] had indeed thrown his lot in publicly by going to Berlin. He was regarded by the British as a war criminal although he was never brought to trial.

In spite of these things the terrorist operations against the British that had been seen in Palestine in the years preceding the war had pretty much come to a halt. Jews and Arabs alike had participated in the war effort. As a matter of fact, just as a matter of interest, there was in Jerusalem a thing called the Middle East Center of Arab Studies which had been set up by the British Foreign Office for purposes of teaching Arabic to British officers who would either stay on in some civil administrative capacity or go in to the Foreign Service. It was run by Colonel Bertram Thomas who had quite a background in the Arabian desert. He was a bit of a four-flusher, but nonetheless he was there. One of the main assistants who spoke absolutely perfect Arabic was a gentleman who was a British Army major, Major Aubrey Eban, who later became Abba Eban.

So there was a truce. I traveled extensively in Palestine and it was basically perfectly safe for anybody to do that. Curious enough, it was on the 27th of December, 1945, exactly one year to the day I arrived in Jerusalem, that I almost got blown up. A bomb, Jewish, had been placed in a British police compound. That began again the whole cycle of violence that went on right up until the British got out in May, 1948. The truce had broken down. The Arabs and the Jews started again against each other. The Jews against the British particularly, to protest British efforts to stop Jewish immigration into Palestine from Europe. Of course they ran many ships in illegally. Beached them and the immigrants would get off and disappear into the Jewish areas of Palestine along the coast.

The Arabs were aware of this. They objected to it. The level of violence simply escalated. You remember, later on, maybe '46 the King David explosion...the Stern gang had brought in milk drums in the basement of the King David Hotel which also housed the British Secretariat for the Mandate and blew it up. It was a ghastly scene.

Q: When you first arrived there was this truce going on. What were you doing and what was the main interest of our Consulate General in Jerusalem?

STABLER: The main effort, really was, of course, observing what was happening. The Consulate General had the rather unique position of being one of the two Consulate Generals that reported directly to Washington.

Q: It and Hong Kong.

STABLER: Yes, it and Hong Kong. The exequaturs were issued by two foreign powers, Great Britain as it related to Palestine and then, even though Transjordan was not independent, we were commissioned vice consuls for Palestine and for Transjordan.

Q: So you covered Transjordan?

STABLER: We covered Transjordan as well.

Q: Which would be today on the other side of Jordan.

STABLER: At that point it was still an emirate. There was a British Resident there. Abdullah, King Hussein's grandfather, was the Emir at the time. But he also had certain authority and we had an exequatur from Transjordan as distinguished from the exequatur signed by King George for Palestine. In 1946, Transjordan became independent.

In any event, the role of the Consulate General at that time was one of really tracking what was happening there. The Consul General, Mr. Pinkerton, was someone who played his cards quite close to his chest when it came to the substantive side of things. I really never did know to what extent he was turned to for advice as to what we should be doing about Palestine.

My role at that time was simply as vice consul in charge of visas. In addition I handled cultural matters. I used to take films out to kibbutzims and Arab groups and give little talks about American history, etc. It was interesting going to some of the kibbutzims and showing films produced by OWI on a variety of things related to the United States. The visa work was tremendous. Not so much the first year because no one went anywhere due to strict regulations and lack of transport, but when the war ended there was an overwhelming number of passports, etc. that had to be dealt with in terms of getting people back to the States. There were ships that came in to do this sort of thing...to take people back who had been stranded.

Shortly after I got to Jerusalem, the early months of 1945, Mr. Pinkerton apparently had learned that the Emir of Transjordan was unhappy with him because although he was accredited to Transjordan he never went there. He decided that he better go down and see the Emir. Abdullah had winter quarters in Shuneh in the Jordan Valley, on the other side of the Jordan, not terribly far from Jericho. He was down there and Pinkerton decided he would go down but he seemed to think he needed an excuse to go down. The excuse was to present me as a new vice consul.

We went down and to one of 26 it was pretty heady stuff seeing an Emir. Abdullah was very nice and it was very pleasant visit. The following Sunday I decided that I would go back down and personally sign the book. I got down to Shuneh and was very much impressed by all these Arab Legion soldiers who would snap to attention and salute when they saw a consular license plate.

When I got to the winter quarters I said to one of the guards who came out to ask what I wanted that I wanted to sign the book. He disappeared and came back a few minutes later and said, "I am terribly sorry the book is in Amman, but the Emir is here would you like to see him?" I said that that would be splendid. So I went in and had a nice chat with Abdullah and told him how impressed I had been by the Arab Legion that I had seen along the roads. He said, "Well, I am having a maneuver in about three weeks time and I would like you to come as my guest." I said, "That is very kind of you, Your Highness, of course I would like to come."

After three weeks I had still heard nothing at all. One morning I was in the file room of the consulate hunting for some document and came across a letter from Glubb Pasha, who was then the British Commander of the Arab Legion, addressed to Pinkerton saying that the Emir was holding a maneuver on such and such a day and commanded me to invite you, Pinkerton, to come to the maneuver. I was crestfallen that I had been forgotten by my new friend.

The appointed day for the maneuver came and I went to my office in what used to be affectionately called "the turnip shed" of the Consulate General -- a little horrible shed that was heated by a big potbelly stove. I had been in my office not more than 15 or 20 minutes when the phone rang. It was Mr. Pinkerton down at the winter quarters saying, "You get on down here as quickly as you can. The Emir said that the invitation was for you and he won't start until you get here." I thought to myself, "That's a lot of fun, but the end of my career."

I pulled myself together and drove down. As luck would have it I got a flat tire and got stuck in the sand somewhere. By the time I finally got to the maneuver it was over. The Emir was very nice and invited Mr. Pinkerton and me to lunch in his tent.

That was the beginning of a long relationship and friendship that I had with Abdullah and his son, Crown Prince Talal who reigned very briefly after Abdullah was assassinated, and his grandson, the present King Hussein.

Q: To get a feel of the atmosphere in the Consulate General. This must have been sort of annoying to Mr. Pinkerton wasn't it?

STABLER: Well, curiously enough you would have thought it would have, but it really didn't seem to. I think in a sense he was somewhat relieved that he didn't have to worry about Transjordan. He wasn't that interested in it. He didn't really enjoy going over there.

Q: What was his background?

STABLER: Pinkerton was a career man. He had been in Personnel, had been somewhat of an administrator. I can't now remember where he came from.

Q: But he was an Arabist.

STABLER: No, he spoke no Arabic. I don't think he spoke any foreign language at all. He got along well with the British, they liked him. But he had no real interest with the Transjordan thing. He left in '46 at some point. I can't remember quite when. I was invited personally by the

Emir to come to his independence days celebrations and the Consul General was also invited but I don't remember whether that was Pinkerton or not...I think it was Pinkerton. But by that time I was fully known in Jordan and was regarded really sort of the US presence, if you will. I don't think Pinkerton really resented it, if he did, he never said anything.

I had lots of things that I did in Jerusalem. I became a good friend of the High Commissioner, General Sir Alan Cunningham, and his staff. I generally had a pretty good position in the Palestine government, although I didn't really deal with the political side of it. Although, for example, when the Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry came to Jerusalem in '46...the British were already discussing what it was that they should do with Palestine because it was becoming more and more a burden for them. Violence was continuing. There was the problem of Jews in Europe. They eventually said that something had to be done. They suggested a group go to Palestine, including Americans, to see what could be done about it. So the Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry was appointed and the senior US delegate to that was William Phillips, a former Under Secretary of State and Ambassador to Rome in the early part of the war before we went into it, and whose wife was my godmother. So Pinkerton assigned me to look after that delegation. I also was given the responsibility for acting as escort for quite a few Congressional delegations that came to Palestine. Jack Javits was one of them who came.

Q: He later became Senator and a major figure in the Jewish-American scene.

STABLER: Absolutely, a very fine person. There were a number of others. So I wasn't ostracized or cut out by Pinkerton, although I did not play any role in political substantive work. He did that entirely himself. He never showed us any of his messages that he sent back and forth on substantive questions. He played it all very close to his chest. I never quite understood why he didn't take some of us into his confidence, but he didn't.

Q: To get a little feeling for the atmospherics within the Consulate General at the time, this was before the King David business...

STABLER: Well, that was '46, the King David thing.

Q: Okay, at that time, were you under any constraints about talking either to the Jews or the Arabs?

STABLER: No, not at all. I traveled extensively and saw lots of both sides. I did a good deal of work on the Arab side too. But I never ever prepared, curiously enough, during the period Pinkerton was there, any sort of political report. I went around extensively and talked to people but my role was not that of a political reporter.

Q: That is odd. In other words, the younger officers who generally get around more were not being used.

STABLER: No. We had Pinkerton, a commercial man named Malcolm Hooper, an officer who handled American citizen passports, etc., an OSS representative, and two of us who did visa work. Pinkerton was the only one who did the political work.

Q: It is interesting because what you are saying is that Pinkerton was not a particularly experienced political reporting officer.

STABLER: I don't really recall what his background was. My recollection was that it was more administrative -- personnel. He was quite well regarded. He finally ended up as Minister in Beirut and as Ambassador to the Sudan. Loy Henderson, the top man in Middle East affairs, had regard for him. But I never really had any idea of what Pinkerton did politically because I never saw a report.

Q: You know, it is hard to recreate the time, but it really took a decade or so for the real enormity of what had happened to the Jews and others in Europe during the war to sink in. The Foreign Service came pretty much from the educated class in the United States and was not particularly responsive to the Jew in the United States. I can recall hearing, not so much in college, but in prep school, anti-Semitic jokes. At that time, particularly with turmoil obviously beginning to come with ships docking all the time, was there an annoyance with the Zionist movement?

STABLER: For one thing, for those of us who were serving in Palestine, it was clear that in a demographic sense that the majority of the residents of Palestine were Arabs. There were about a million and a half people in Palestine of which about a million were Arabs and roughly 500,000 were Jews. So in the demographic sense, the majority was clearly Arab. On the other hand, as you drove around Palestine, which I did extensively, at all hours of the day and night, you couldn't help but marvel at what the Jews had produced in their part of Palestine along the coast in particular. It was a miracle what they had done agriculturally and to some extent industrially. They worked terribly hard. They were aggressive, of course, in terms of what they hoped to ultimately achieve. One probably didn't know at the outside a great deal of what had been happening in terms of the genocide in Germany. I happened to live part of the time in Jerusalem in a small apartment in a Jewish house. The owner was a marvelous woman who was a Dutch Jew, and who, after I left, unhappily was killed in one of these horrible terrorist actions where the Arabs shot up the bus in which she was in. You couldn't help but have great admiration at what they had done, but also you recognized that there was this constant encroachment on what was a demographic majority in the area. You couldn't help but be rather disgusted by some of the terrorism they pulled off in Palestine. A lot of one's British friends were killed as a result of incidents like King David, etc.

Q: Which includes some of the people who later, like Menachem Begin and the present Prime Minister, Shamir.

STABLER: Yes. Menachem Begin at that time was someone who had a big price on his head. There was the Irgun Zvai Leumi and the Stern gang. One had someone by the name of Sartori, I think his name was, who was the Ford representative in Jerusalem and also represented I think the Palestine potash company, the Dead Sea. He was socially everywhere. Everybody knew him. The day the British left Jerusalem, May 15, 1948, he turned out to be all this time one of the important members of the Stern gang. I eventually dealt with Moshe Dayan. He was a very aggressive, abrasive individual, very difficult to deal with, but at that particular point he was

fighting for his survival.

There was this constant sort of friction involving British, Jews and Arabs which got fairly tiring. I have to admit it was very hard to be entirely neutral. You invariably felt more one way than another, although our official position was that of being entirely neutral between the two. I always cite what happened to me on the 15th of May, 1948 when the British left as evidence of my following instructions to the letter. When I was caught in the crossfire between the Jews on one side of the street and the Arabs on the other side I ended up with 37 bullet holes in my car, and still being alive at least I was neutral to the extent of saying, "Who shot at me?" It was very tense. You had the feeling that the British administration was more sympathetic to the Arab cause than the Jewish cause. And the Jews knew that.

We had difficult moments. The Consulate General was not very far from the building of the Jewish Agency. One morning there was an enormous explosion. It was quite clear that it had come from the Jewish Agency. One was sorry that this had occurred but we were even sorer when we realized to our absolute horror that the Consulate car had disappeared. What had happened was that one of our Arab drivers had taken the Consulate car, had it loaded with explosives, drove into the Jewish Agency courtyard (allowed in because of the Consulate plates), got out, disappeared and the car blew up. So it was the Consulate car that was responsible for a lot of damage; fortunately nobody was killed. Our driver vanished and eventually we learned that he had ended up in Honduras. I went there some years later and discovered there was a large Palestine population there.

So there was this constant tension that existed which took its toll on people. It was hard on people, there were curfews, bombings and god knows what. After the Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry, of course, then those things went on; the British finally said enough is enough and turned it over to the UN.

Q: Did a new Consul General come out before the British left?

STABLER: Yes, he did.

Q: Was there a change in the atmospherics within the operation? You knew you were getting ready for a cataclysmic event.

STABLER: Yes, there was because Pinkerton went off as Minister to Beirut before we had embassies. Robert Macatee came out from the Department...I don't now remember what other jobs he had had. I knew him before when he was assistant chief of Personnel in 1941. We are talking about five or six years later. I think he came from Washington at the time. He was quite different. By that time I had been there for going on three years and was probably, with the exception of the OSS fellow...

Q: He was the equivalent to our CIA people later on.

STABLER: Yes. There was just one man who was dressed as an American major. He was known by the British, obviously, for what he was.

I had been there for quite a few years by then and had become more involved in the substantive side of things and would do occasional political reporting. I did do a great deal more, and became sort of the political advisor, along with the OSS fellow to Macatee on a great many things.

Yes, he was there before partition because I remember that shortly after partition Frances Bolton, who was then member of congress from Ohio came out on a visit to sort of test the waters. She was rather pro-Arab basically and was rather annoyed with this partition because again we were talking about a country which had a majority of Arabs and here they were dividing it up and giving part of it to the Jews. So Macatee was there at the time.

Partition came along because the British said, "We have enough of this. We are getting out in 1948 and you better do something before then because if you don't there will be total chaos and there won't be anybody here."

Q: Was this really saying, "Here you Americans have been talking about Jewish homeland, etc. and this is your problem."

STABLER: The Jewish homeland was what the British themselves had been talking about, the Balfour Declaration of 1917. But by 1947 there was clearly increased pressure in the United States because of what had happened in Germany which by then was fully known. There was real pressure of what do you do? We were not prepared to open up our immigration to let them all come into the States, so the next question was, "Where do they go?" By this time clearly the Zionist movement had decided that Palestine must become the national home for the Jews. Everything that they did was aimed at that time in terms of immigration to get them into Palestine. This was becoming a tremendously difficult thing for the British who had a large army, several divisions of troops, in Palestine. After all it is not a very large country, about 140 miles long and 70 miles wide. They had a tremendous concentration of first class British troops. And a fairly sizable police force which was composed of both Jews and Arabs, but the leadership was all British.

I think you are quite right that part of it certainly was directed to the United States. The British said, "We couldn't find anything through the Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry; no one can come up with any solution; we don't want to have anything to do with this; we can't cope with it; we are getting out; so do what you will, we aren't going to be here."

The UN came up with the Partition Resolution which, of course, was strongly resented by the Arabs. I was advised ...again I would make a good many trips across the Jordan to see what was happening there...by the British when I went over there to take my car and have two Arab Legion soldiers with submachine guns sitting in my back seat. I did this and got over to Amman and my Jordanian friends asked why I was doing this as I was well known and no one would do anything. They thought it was sort of an insult to come with two Arab Legion guards. So, I never had them again and nothing happened.

But there was very strong resentment. Temple bombs increased and we recognized, of course,

that the day would come before very long, this was 1947, that the British would be out and where would we be. So we decided that in terms of safeguarding the Consulate we would have the British come and give us an expert estimate as to what it would need to guard the Consulate. They came up with a figure of 285 marines, which would be 24 hours guard service plus road escorts. We sent a telegram to Washington saying that, in terms of the future, here is what has been recommended. Washington obviously went into a dead faint because they never answered it.

About a week before the British left, Washington suddenly threw on top of us something like 30 civilian guards...young men who after the war, not knowing what to do had answered some sort of ad and signed up as embassy guards. They came from all walks of life. One man had ended up as head of the commissary in Rome, but still was a guard and found himself in Jerusalem wondering what the hell he was doing there. None of them knew how to shoot a gun. I had to take them out personally to a range, although I had never shot a tommy gun, to teach them how to shoot tommy guns. They were totally undisciplined. In addition to that all of a sudden they sent us, which was very useful, a 10 or 12 man navy communication team which turned out to be the only way we could keep communications going. I think we had in the Consulate General 15 of these civilian guards who were very nice young man but who were basically undisciplined. They drank quite a lot; one of them got mad at me one evening and chased me with a machine gun. It was really chaotic.

We asked for an armored vehicle for the Consul General...they had set up a United Nations Truce Organization which was made up of Consul Generals from France, Belgian and the United States. The meetings were usually held at the French Consulate General, which was right under the walls of the old city. In order for our Consul to get back and forth he had to go in a car without armor or walk. So we requested an armored car. They said they couldn't send a car but could send an armored personnel carrier which doesn't have any armor on top; it just had armor on the side with a canvas top. We never got that either. The Consul General was killed by a sniper's bullet. The fact of the matter is that the Department of State was totally not prepared for anything of this sort.

Q: After Mr. Pinkerton left you were able to get a little better feel for the relations. Were instructions coming in from Washington?

STABLER: We were sort of left out of the loop on these things. There were a lot of conversations between London and Washington which we were not privy to. So a lot of these things were being done without our knowing what was going on.

Q: Just as an aside because people sometime forget how things are. There was no embassy in Tel Aviv, there was no embassy in Amman or anything like that. You were it.

STABLER: I jumped ahead a little bit because I talked about the Consul General being killed by sniper fire. It was not Macatee, it was Tom Wasson and he didn't come until just before the British left when all married men were removed. But no, Tel Aviv didn't exist as far as a US post is concerned. There wasn't a Jordan. I was the only contact with Transjordan. I was no longer accredited to Transjordan because Jordan gained independence. I traveled there as a friend.

Q: There was no mission in Jordan?

STABLER: There was nothing at all. The only thing that existed was the Consulate General in Jerusalem. I don't have any recollection that we were really consulted a great deal on these things or that we had much of an input on partition or were asked very much of what we thought about these things. I don't recall that we were kept up on the happenings in the UN. Things would happen and we would not have had advanced knowledge of what was going to happen. So we were really cut out of the loop. I suppose the High Commissioner was being queried because the British are better about these things than we are I think. Most of what we knew was gleaned from the British.

Q: During my last job I was seconded to the Historian's Office. Among other things I did a history of our Consulate General in Jerusalem. In the 1920s after the Balfour Declaration had come out, our officers there...the Jewish community was small and I think there was a certain antipathy towards the Zionist movement, a pro-Arab feeling ...were reporting again and again saying, "Zionism is all fine, but a homeland here means blood on the streets, and this is just not going to happen." Their predictions, of course, are true, there has been a tremendous amount of fighting which continues really to this day. Were you able to give reports saying that there was going to be a blood bath?

STABLER: Yes, one was giving Washington reporting of the views of various communities on this subject -- the Arabs and the Jews and some of the religious leaders who have an interest in all of this, and also the views of the British. We reported on what was actually happening there -- the various acts of terrorism, the strong feelings of the various Jewish and Arab communities. Keeping Washington not only abreast of what was happening, but what probably would happen if certain things were done.

Again, Pinkerton, I don't know what he said. I do know...because we did do a lot of reporting after Macatee got there in which I was involved...giving various points of view and letting them know actually the tensions that were existing between the communities and what might happen if certain things were done. And then, of course, after the Partition, we brought them up to date on that.

Q: Prior to Partition. In your reporting did you feel any concern about...okay, if you report this, this report might be looked with disfavor by both the Jewish community and those sympathetic, there was still a residue of the New Deal Administration which had had very strong Jewish support...did you feel any constraints?

STABLER: I think Pinkerton may have felt some constraints because he was a very cautious man and didn't want to upset anybody particularly. It may be that some of that could have come through in his reporting. After him there was a greater openness in expressing points of view. I mean not worrying about the political side. One tried to call the shots such as they were. The Arabs expressed very strong views about things, those views would be reported without regard to whether they would upset somebody or not. By the same token the views of the Jewish Agency, the official Jews, were also reported, plus the British who were more apt to favor the Arab cause

than the Zionist cause. But I don't think political considerations entered into this reporting at all. Although one knew what the feelings were in Washington with the Department of State on one side and domestic political aspects on the other side. But when the time came for Truman to make his decision to recognize Israel de facto on the first day the British had left, I can assure you that we were neither consulted nor informed.

Q: I don't think anybody was informed.

STABLER: I don't think anybody was. Although the effort was made at that particular time to persuade the President that if he was going to recognize Israel de facto that he could temper it by recognizing Jordan de facto, even though Jordan had been independent since 1946 and we are talking about 1948. The President declined to do so.

Q: Was there a problem about not recognizing Jordan then? Was it budgetary or was there...?

STABLER: No, I think when Jordan became independent no one in Washington really bothered to think about recognizing it, regarding it pretty much as a British affair. In 1948 it was entirely a political thing. The President made the decision that this would have to be aimed at Israel and not be tempered in any way by also recognizing an Arab state. By that time the general outrage of the Arab world had already been felt with respect to what was happening with Partition and therefore it would be regarded by the Jews as probably insulting to try to balance it. So he declined to do that and it was only in January, 1949, when we recognized Israel de jure that the decision was made to recognize Jordan de jure at the same time.

Q: I want to stop at the Partition time where we will pick it up later. One last question. What was your feeling and those at the Consulate General about the British letting go? Were you thinking, "Oh my god, they have a responsibility, and shouldn't get out." or "Obviously they can't control the situation and lets see where the chips fall."?

STABLER: Obviously everybody recognized there would be utter chaos and almost anarchy once the British left. It was well known as a result of everything that had transpired before -- the Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry and then various UN studies, etc., and the British statement that they were getting out. One can sympathize with the British because this had become an enormous burden to bear, extremely expensive in terms of money and lives with no returns, which they had been carrying on for a great many years. There was no way that they were going to be persuaded to stay on. Pressure was brought to bear on them to stay on. They may have considered it for a while, but by that time the Labor Government had come in and I think that they finally just realized that there was no way they could do it or really wanted to do it.

We all knew that Partition wasn't going to be viable because everybody was against it. It was a big unknown that we were embarking on the day that the British pulled out. But the political situation had reached the point where there was no alternative. They wouldn't stay and the UN had no ability or capacity to put a force in there. It was just one of these machines that gathered speed and there was no stopping it. The United States had no power to stop it either because we were behind the Partitioning. We certainly weren't going to take over from the British.

Domestically it was quite clear that this was what the Jews wanted because this was the creation by partition of the homeland. As it turned out they got the whole thing.

We knew in the Consulate General that there was the Haganah.

Q: That was the Jewish army.

STABLER: Yes, that was the Jewish army. It was illegal, but the British didn't do much about it. They knew it was there and had some utility in the defense of kibbutzims and things of that sort. They got their arms helter-skelter by stealing from British ammunition depots and things of that sort. That was sort of the unofficial army. Then there was the Stern gang and the Irgun Zvai Leumi. The Irgun Zvai Leumi was the larger group and the Stern gang the smaller group. They also existed. One knew that the Jewish Agency ran a fairly efficient operation and the assumption was that the Haganah would acquit itself pretty well in the struggle against the Arabs.

But as you added up the Arab manpower for the Arab armies, it was hard, frankly, to see how in the final analysis the Jews would be able to withstand this onslaught. Added to this, of course, was the view in all the Arab capitals -- American representatives in all the Arab capitals were reporting that this better not happen because the Jews would be pushed into the sea. At times the war between our representative, James McDonald, in Tel Aviv and our representatives in the Arab countries was worse than the fighting because those in Arab countries took one side and McDonald the other.

Q: What was in Tel Aviv?

STABLER: On the 15th of May when Truman recognized Israel de facto, we set up a diplomatic representative's office in Tel Aviv. James Grover McDonald came to Tel Aviv as the first American representative. Although he was not an ambassador in the strict sense of the word, he was the American Representative in this de facto situation. The office was set up in Tel Aviv as indeed if it were an embassy with communications. Messages would be repeated Tel Aviv and Arab capitals.

As I say, on paper it certainly looked as if there was no way the Israelis could withstand the Arab onslaught.

Q: Can we focus on what you were doing at the time of the Partition, on May 15..?

STABLER: No, May 15 was when the British left in 1948. Partition was the previous year in 1947.

Q: Well, then when the British left, because I...

STABLER: They are two distinct things. The Partition was the United Nations resolution to divide Palestine into Jewish and Arab states. Maybe we went over that last time. If we did, then lets take it up to May 15, 1948.

Q: Yes, that is what I had marked on the last tape.

STABLER: When the British pulled out of Jerusalem, they pulled out of Palestine a day or two later because they moved with the High Commissioner up to Haifa and had an enclave and then they shortly afterwards pulled out completely.

In any event, May 15, 1948 I was at the Consulate General. The staff there by that time had been reduced by many. Those of us who were there were all bachelors including the Consul General, Tom Wasson.

Q: I might mention at this time that it was the policy in those days that when trouble started you got rid of the families and also, if possible, you put bachelor officers into a place.

STABLER: Yes, it certainly was the policy as far as Jerusalem was concerned. We had a number of married officers there and they all transferred. Those of us who remained were bachelors and there were, I think, several officers who were brought from other posts for temporary duty who were bachelors. For example, Stu Rockwell, who also became an ambassador later on, was in the embassy in Ankara and was detailed as one of the officers to augment the staff. And then there were one or two others but I don't offhand remember who they were.

In any event, on the morning of May 15, Major Andronovich, Nick Andronovich, who was the CIA representative in Jerusalem, and I drove out in my personal car. The Consulate General by that time had no car because it had been blown up -- I think I mentioned it last time. We drove out to a little airstrip called Colombia and found there a small plane and British troops drawn up in battle array with a battery of field artillery with guns aiming in the direction of Jerusalem. In due course the High Commissioner arrived, Sir Alan Cunningham, who was a friend. He was received with full honors at the little airstrip. After saying goodbye to me and Andronovich and his staff, he took off in his little plane headed for Haifa. The guns were hitched up and bit by bit the British forces also departed.

In a very short period of time Andronovich and I were left standing on an extremely empty airfield feeling really quite lonely, because with the departure of the British forces all public security in Jerusalem came to an end. There was no neutral police force, no security provided by a third element, that is to say, Jews, Arabs or the British.

Andronovich and I drove back into Jerusalem and I came to the Consulate General and found sitting on the steps going up to the office a group of members of the staff including civilian guards who had recently come in and one other officer, Bob Houghton, by name, who is dead now. They were all rather irritated because they had wanted to go up to the hotel which was not too far from the Consulate General on the main streets near the YMCA. When they had walked in that direction they had been shot at. The British had gone, and public order had completely collapsed. They went back to the Consulate General and asked to borrow a car which was refused them. They didn't want to risk walking up there again and being shot at.

I said, "Look here, I have my car with a couple of flags on it. Hop in the car and I will drive you

up there." This was around noon time on the 15th. In they got along with me and my little dachshund. We drove up the street around the corner from the Consulate General and almost in no time we started getting shot at. I drove the car right up on the sidewalk and let the people in the car get out. They almost fell into the hotel.

As soon as they had gotten out I started driving up the street towards the YMCA at which point I was taken under machine gun fire -- on one side by the Jews and the other side by the Arabs. I decided it was a no win situation and backed my car down the sidewalk and came really within a hairbreadth of having a bullet right through my head. It was scary. I was able to get out and fall into this hotel, literally.

There we were stuck for over 24 hours. That night...there was virtually no food in the hotel, there were no lights and we were concerned that during the night either a Jewish or Arab patrol might come in to this hotel and shoot first and ask questions later. Things were very tense at that time and the Jews and the Arabs were really after each other.

It was while we were all sitting in that hotel -- we did have a battery radio or some sort of communication -- that we learned that Mr. Truman had announced the de facto recognition of Israel, which made us all even more nervous because this was the area where there were quite a few Arabs around and we didn't think that decision would be very popular.

In any event while we were there one, possibly two, of the men who were with us there, part of the Consulate staff, got rather antsy about being cooped up and without my knowledge or permission, I was the senior officer there, went out onto the street and were promptly shot. Fortunately, neither of them were killed; they were picked up by Red Crescent ambulances (very brave ambulance people indeed) and taken off to hospitals. One of them was a civilian guard who was well into his 60s by this time.

Q: This was the type of person they sent out?

STABLER: This was the sort of harebrained scheme they thought up. Ages went all the way from the 60s down to the early 20s. This gentleman was in his 60s.

Anyway, he was taken away and, of course, we had no idea where. At that point we didn't know whether he was dead or alive. I think there may have been two, certainly there was one.

In any event, in due course the people at the Consulate General were able to arrange with the International Committee of the Red Cross, which had people in Jerusalem at that time trying to help in keeping some semblance of humanity in all of this that they come down to the hotel under the protection of a Red Cross flag -- I think these were mostly Swiss and extremely brave men because this was a wide open street absolutely visible from any sort of sniper's post. They came down by small groups and began removing the people in this hotel. Being senior officer I was the last to leave. Just before I left they started mowing the streets with bullets of one sort or another so we had to hold up awhile. We all got out and went back to the Consulate General. Those were the events of May 15.

There then began a period of one month in which really we were under siege -- the whole of Jerusalem really. The Arab Legion had occupied the Old City and were lobbing mortar shells into the New City. We lived there at the Consulate General with our own generator. We had a naval communications unit which was just across an alley way in a convent. We had the sort of guard force that would shoot street lights out and do all sorts of things.

During that period we had a number of casualties. One of the naval communicators at one point was walking behind the Consulate General, I don't know why he was there after dark. He ran across a patrol, we don't know whether it was Jews or Arabs, and was shot. He eventually died. Two of the guards, two young men, heard screams and went out behind the Consulate into this no man's land and brought Walker, I think that was his name, back into the Consulate. We had a US Public Health doctor assigned to the Consulate General at that time and he was able to give first aid and got him into a hospital. Eventually, I am sorry to say, he died.

The Consul General, Tom Wasson, was a member of the Security Council Truce Commission which was composed of the United States, France and Belgium, as I remember, and was supposed to keep in touch with the Jewish and Arab communities with the idea of somehow getting a truce from the fighting that was going on, which was widespread. The Egyptians had come into Gaza, the Iraqis had marched a division into Palestine, the Syrians had fiddled about a little bit up in the north, the Arab Legion had occupied the West Bank and the Old City. The Truce Commission met in the French Consulate which was just under the Walls of the Old City. Wasson was obliged to walk the distance, which was relatively far and fairly open between the Consulate General and the French Consulate. On his way back from one of these meetings he was crossing a street just behind the Consulate wearing a bulletproof vest, but a sniper, and to this day no one really knows whether it was Jewish or Arab, shot him in the arm which was the one area that was not protected by the vest. We got him to the hospital but he died very shortly thereafter.

At the time he was hit I was in the Consulate General, the only officer there at the moment. We had a number of communications at that point. We had the navy and a special CIA/OSS operator on the road, who was also wounded in a mortar attack in due course. I had to decide who was going to be the acting Consul General. We had Bill Burdett who was assigned there; we had Stuart Rockwell from Ankara who was on temporary duty but senior to Burdett. But I made the decision that an officer permanently assigned to Jerusalem should be the acting consul general. I sent the message informing the Department that Consul General Larson had been shot and seriously injured and I assumed charge, signing it Bill Burdett. So Bill Burdett indeed was acting consul general for a month or so until a replacement came.

During that period we were pretty much holed up. You could get around and some people lived outside the Consulate General. I lived in the Consulate General and slept with telephone and tommy gun by my bed. We ate ten-in-one rations that had been brought in before.

Q: Ten-in-one rations being a military combat type of ration.

STABLER: Yes. Enough food for one man for ten days or for ten men for one day, something of that sort.

Q: I might add, not the greatest food in the world.

STABLER: Not the greatest, but it was the only food we had because all the markets were closed.

Q: He hadn't been around a lot but seemed to have more of a world view than many. Did he use you as a sounding board to find out what this peculiar place, the United States was? Because America really had very little influence in that area, the Middle East, at that time.

STABLER: There wasn't a great deal. We began to have a good deal more. We had some degree of influence, but not in the north because obviously Iraq was in the British sphere, and Lebanon and Syria were more or less in the French sphere. Very shortly after I got to Jerusalem there was the uprising in Syria and the French were eventually pushed out.

He was interested, of course, in the political views of the United States. I don't think he ever quite understood why he wasn't regarded more favorably by the States. The fact there was no recognition obviously galled him. He assumed, in a way, that as he regarded the American President as an important figure the American President by like token regarded him, Abdullah, as an important figure, which of course obviously wasn't the case. He had that sort of a vision of the world where he saw himself in a larger role than he really had. This also was somewhat likened to what he regarded as his role vis-a-vis the British Queen. The British did look upon Jordan in their way as an important element and he looked at the Queen as a fellow monarch.

Q: Actually it would have been the King.

STABLER: Yes, you are right. I was flying across the Channel in 1950 when I got word that the King had died. So it was the King.

He had very little idea of what made this country tick. I think they were all aware of the rather strong domestic political influence of the American Jewish community which, of course, distressed him.

Q: Did he talk to you about this?

STABLER: He never really took me to task about the general Arab view that our policy in the Middle East was dictated by domestic considerations. I don't ever remember him talking a great deal about that. He was apt to talk about the larger picture of how he viewed and looked towards the future and some peaceful arrangement where Jordan would be a bigger state and Israel would be there, etc. He obviously very much wanted to have a formal relationship with the United States.

In January 30, 1949, I went down to the cable wireless where I had to go to pick up my messages -- by this time I was alone again, I didn't have any clerk -- and found a US info message in the clear put out by USIA which declared that the United States had recognized Jordan and Israel de jure. Then there was a coded message. I had to go back to the house and get my one time pad out

and laboriously decode the message which said exactly what the message had said that was in the clear. I was to inform the King that Jordan was recognized de jure. Then I had to sit down and type the message out, sign it, get into my car and drive to the Palace, see the King and hand him the note. This was about 11:00 in the morning. He said, "Yes. Where have you been? I have been waiting for you since 8:00 this morning." It had been on the BBC. Yet, the Department had seen fit to give me no warning or opportunity to have at least the advantage of appearing to be on the inside. It had all been made public, yet I had to go through this business of decoding this stupid message which said all the same things as the public message.

The King was pleased but I think he would have been more pleased if I had been able to go in the night before and say, "Your Majesty, I just have come to inform you that we are announcing tomorrow morning that we are extending de jure recognition."

Q: When you went back to Washington afterwards, did you ever find out why this happened?

STABLER: I am afraid it is just our system which never really functions terribly well with these things. Part of it comes from the White House which sometimes doesn't tell the State Department when it is going to do something. The State Department is frightened to death of sending any message ahead of the White House. Nobody in the White House stops to think about the other side that maybe some foreign policy advantage could be gained by doing some of these things in a slightly different way.

Q: I might add that I have had some interviews with people who were in the middle of a civil war where we recognized one side or the other in Africa leaving our embassy extremely exposed because they were under the power of the group not accorded the recognition.

STABLER: I think, as a general rule, we have been extremely lacking in using our information sometimes to our best advantage. We don't tell our people in the field sometimes what they ought to know. We don't tell them in a timely enough fashion. We generally view the ambassador as someone who is there but not really considered as a primary matter. The British are much better than this. They consider the ambassador an important person and a priority member of the team. He is told what he has to know in plenty of time. I don't mean to make a capital case that our relations with Jordan were forever compromised by that. All I am saying is that it would have been a good gesture to have told the King in advance, but we didn't do it.

He was pleased and we set up the legation in Amman. The British Royal Air Force sent an honor guard to the Legation the morning I raised the flag, which was in February because I think it took them a month to get all the staff out and formally set up the Legation.

That year, the fourth of July, the first one where we had formal relations, the Arab Legion sent a brass band to play at the reception that I gave that afternoon. It was all done with good humor. The King was obviously pleased to have the United States finally a member of the diplomatic corps in Jordan. It didn't change a great deal because one had already worked as a mission.

Nothing really spectacular happened during that period. A lot of it was dealing with the question of the future and how to settle the problem with Israel. What to do, etc. Then, internally, the

King spent some time trying to decide...I spend a certain amount of time with him. We discussed and debated what we should call Transjordan. It was called the Kingdom of Transjordan and he wanted to change it. The discussion was whether we call it the Hashemite Kingdom of the Jordan, or Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Ultimately it was decided to call it Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. While I was traveling with him we would spend time trying to design a new decoration. Things of that sort. Just sort of amusing household details.

Q: You were there more because of your long term visiting and as a friend...although there was quite a difference not only obviously in rank but also in age. Do you think he was reaching out to you in some of these ways either as a counter to or difference with the British, because they had been there so long?

STABLER: I don't think as a counter. I think he obviously enjoyed the idea that he had a "special relationship," if you want to call it that although it really wasn't, with representatives of the great powers. To him the French were not very important and they had all been involved in the business of denying him the Kingdom of Syria; the Fourth Republic was a mess, not to be taken very seriously. Obviously he had nothing to do with the Russians; they weren't there and they were bad. He had had all these years of close relationship with the British, now suddenly the United States had become a friend too. I am sure that going back to what I mentioned very early on when I first went over to Amman in early 1945, with Pinkerton who had been criticized for not taking an interest in the Emir, and took an interest, and although I was only a vice consul that seemed to appeal to him too and for some reason we struck it off quite well personally. But certainly there was no question that I represented his contact with the other great power. It was never a counterbalance to the British because there was nothing we did. The British provided arms for him, they provided military officers, and trade, etc. And we provided nothing.

We did, however, recognize that he was a force for stability in that part of the world and that view is still held today. In spite of the fact that Hussein, for his own good reasons, did what he did, we are not prepared to get rid of him.

Q: To put this in context, we are talking about just after what was called the Gulf War between the United States and its Allies and Iraq in which Jordan and King Hussein were at least verbally giving a great deal of support to the Iraqi side which was not appreciated by the United States at all.

STABLER: One has to remember that King Hussein has a great many Palestinians in his Kingdom and at that time Saddam Hussein was trying to use the Palestine ploy to garner support; King Hussein is a survivor. The fact is that Jordan does represent an element of basic stability and we are not just about to abandon them, and certainly in the period I am talking about, 1948, Jordan was the only country that showed at least some degree of sensitivity and rationality when it came to Israel.

During that period I saw a lot of the King. He gave me a horse that I used to ride. He used to play polo in Amman with Arab Legion officers which was fun but dangerous. One had really an interesting time with not only the Jordanians and Palestinians but with the foreign community. It was a very small town. Everybody knew what everybody else was doing. There was a lot of

intrigue and things of that sort. But it was a wonderful experience. I was amused at one point when Stanton Griffis, US Ambassador in Cairo, came over to Amman. I showed him around and took him down to the Winter Quarters in Shuneh to have dinner with the King. He was quite taken with all this performance and apparently wrote to Bob Lovett, who was then the Under Secretary of State, recommending that I be made the first US Minister to Jordan.

Well, I was only 28 or 29. That fell, as you can imagine, not only on deaf but scandalized ears in Washington...the idea that someone at the lowest grade in the Foreign Service should suddenly become a Minister. Of course some of my colleagues in the Middle East like Keeley, who was US Minister in Damascus, didn't think it was a very good idea either. Anyway, it didn't get very far. So I became the first Chargé d'Affaires in Amman and then in August, 1949 I was transferred. David Fritzlan came out as the Chargé d'Affaires.

Q: I have done an interview with him.

STABLER: You have done an interview with David?

Q: Yes.

STABLER: Then, as you know, the Minister was selected, a man by the name of Barnes, I think it was. He suddenly disappeared from sight and didn't go. The first US Minister was Gerald Drew who came out in early 1950.

I was told to return to Washington without delay, the fastest possible means. I rushed back, rushed to the Department to the greeting, "Oh, you are here? Why did you come back so fast?" No one then knew why I had been told to come back so fast. I worked on Palestine Affairs for a while. Then in January, 1950 I became Political Advisor to the US Representative to the UN Trusteeship Council which met in Geneva from January, 1950 through March, 1950, to draft the statute for the international city of Jerusalem -- the Corpus Separatum. This was an interesting three months of activity where the Trusteeship Council very seriously went through step by step, chapter by chapter setting up an international city of Jerusalem and for the holy places in what had been Palestine, so that Bethlehem, Nazareth, etc. would be under the control of the administrator of this international city with an international police force.

That was pursuant to the Partition Resolution in 1947. At the end of the session, the plan was given to the representative of Israel and the representative of Jordan, who then controlled the holy places in Jerusalem and the West Bank. Within a matter of a very few minutes those representatives turned the plan down. And that was the end of that.

WILLIAM C. BURDETT
Vice Consul
Jerusalem (1948-1950)

Ambassador William C. Burdett was born in Tennessee in 1920. He entered the

Foreign Service in 1941 and served in the U.S. Marine Corps during World War II. His career in the Foreign Service included posts in Iraq, Israel, Turkey, Great Britain, and Malawi. Ambassador Burdett was interviewed by Richard Nethercut in 1988.

Q: The Mid-East is very much on peoples' minds now in view of the possible breakthrough in Arab-U.S. dialogue. Could you tell me about your involvement in Mid-East policy and which assignments were the most significant?

BURDETT: My first significant involvement in U.S. policy towards the Middle East arose during an assignment to Jerusalem. I went there in May of 1948 as a Vice Consul 0-5, Foreign Service Officer-Class Five, arriving four days before British troop withdrew. Unhappily our Consul General, Thomas Wasson, was killed by a sniper several days later. As a consequence I became Acting Consul General and the U.S. member of the (UN) Security Council Truce Mission.

Q: That must have been quite an unusual experience for somebody at such a junior point in his career. Can you recall some of the feelings you had, and how this worked out?

BURDETT: The entire situation was unusual. Jerusalem was divided into Jewish and Arab sectors with feelings of apprehension all around. There was sporadic firing, mortar barrages, some of the shells falling in the Consulate General compound. Our movements were limited, but we maintained telephone contact with the British Consulate General in the Arab sector. The British proved most helpful throughout in keeping us abreast of developments in the rest of Palestine. I attended meetings of the Security Council Truce Commission in the French Consulate General. We were in regular communication with officers of the Jewish Agency, and the Jewish Defense Forces. Occasionally, we could also reach the commander of the Arab Legion in the old city of Jerusalem, and other Arab officials. Fortunately, we established early a close working relationship with Colonel Moshe Dayan, commander of Israeli forces in Jerusalem.

Q: What about communications with the State Department? Were they reliable and did you get rather detailed guidance, or were you forced to make a number of decisions on your own?

BURDETT: Shortly prior to the British withdrawal the State Department established a Naval Communications unit across an alley from the Consulate. We had our own generator and thus perhaps the best communications that existed in Jerusalem with the outside world. We could receive messages almost instantaneously from Washington. In the confusion then existing the Department allowed us to take the initiative in determining our activities and reporting to the extent we could. The Department realized the restrictions on our movements and did not press us for jobs that were not feasible. We made the facilities of our communications unit available to members of the American press.

Q: You mentioned that one of the people you negotiated with, or had contact with, was Colonel Moshe Dayan. Would you care to elaborate on this contact with him?

BURDETT: As a member of the Security Council Truce Commission we worked with Colonel Dayan and Lieutenant Colonel Abdullah el Tel of the Arab Legion and UNTSO in drawing up detailed cease-fire lines for the Jerusalem area and monitoring the truces. Dayan was a tough negotiator but as a sabra knew and had grown up with the Arabs. Fortunately the personal relations between Dayan and el Tel were good which facilitated the work of the Truce Commission.

Q: Looking back now in the context of subsequent American policy towards the area, what effect do you think your role at this time had on subsequent American policy in the area?

BURDETT: We encountered constant difficulties with the Jewish civilian authorities and had the impression that they would reach an agreement and when they thought it advantageous would ignore it. This was shown in the question of bringing supplies to Jerusalem after the Security Council imposed truce. We became involved in a public controversy with Bernard Joseph, the top civilian Jewish official. The truce agreement provided for a "standstill" so that neither side could take advantage of the truce to improve its position. Contrary to this provision Jewish trucks entered Jerusalem regularly, ignoring a check point the Security Council Truce Commission tried to establish. Most importantly the Jews took advantage of the truce period to construct what was known as the "Burma Road" beyond the range of Arab Legion guns linking Jerusalem to the main Jewish areas. Thus, by the end of the truce the Jewish authorities had successfully broken the siege of Jerusalem. Thereafter they enjoyed military superiority in the area, while before that this advantage had rested with the Arab Legion.

Q: I see. Now at what point did you then complete your assignment as Acting Consul General, and did you stay on in Jerusalem after a new Consul General had been appointed, or what happened?

BURDETT: During the summer of 1948 John MacDonald was assigned as Consul General. He was transferred shortly thereafter, and I resumed charge of our office just before the assassination of the UN mediator Bernadotte. I was then in charge of the office until early in 1950 when a new Consul General arrived, and I was transferred to Tabriz.

Q: Did this experience in Jerusalem stamp you as a Mid-East specialist and have an impact on your subsequent career development?

BURDETT: Unfortunately I am not an "Arabist", and have no scholastic or linguistic knowledge of the Middle East. I've maintained a professional interest in the area ever since and did receive assignments related to that area through a large part of my career.

Q: From Jerusalem I judge that you were subsequently involved in the Mid-East crisis involving the Suez Canal. Could you please explain your involvement there?

BURDETT: From Iran I was transferred to the Department and assigned to the Office of Near Eastern Affairs and then the Bureau of Near Eastern and African Affairs. President Nasser's decision to nationalize the Suez Canal in 1956 marked the failure of an ambitious program of Secretary Dulles intended to seal off the area from "international communism". To contain

Soviet expansion, Mr. Dulles adopted a policy of impartiality in the Arab-Israel problem and set about creating a Middle East Defense arrangement. I participated in developing a detailed proposal for a comprehensive Middle East settlement. We thought Israel obtained word of our plans (Israeli intelligence on our planning was "remarkable" indicating inside leaks), found them distasteful, and deliberately adopted policies including aggressive border raids, to make it politically difficult for Nasser to move towards an accommodation. At the same time Israel's supporters in Congress blocked the provision of military aid. In 1955 Nasser reached the conclusion that he could not count upon the United States to restrain Israel politically. He also concluded that the U.S. would not meet his requests for military assistance sufficient to enable him to protect Egypt from Israeli aggression. Nasser decided to turn to the Soviet Union for military assistance. Increasingly he adopted a non-aligned anti-Western stance.

The deterioration in relations was rapid. In the summer of 1956 we replied negatively to the Egyptian demand for a "yes" or "no" answer on an outstanding offer to finance the Aswan Dam. Nasser used this in part as a pretext for nationalizing the Suez Canal. A mighty scramble then ensued to find ways to assure the continued international use of the canal and to provide the British and French a face saving alternative to the use of force to regain control of the canal. Two major conferences were held in London. Nasser in effect rejected the proposals coming from those conferences. In late summer of 1956 the British and French military preparations were well publicized. However, we thought these were in the nature of bargaining postures and contingency planning. The actual decision of Britain, France and Israel to attack the Suez Canal caught us by surprise. We made a last minute effort to forestall the attack unsuccessfully.

The Administration was then confronted with an "agonizing reappraisal". President Eisenhower decided that we had no alternative but to oppose the British, French and the Israelis.

Q: You were very much involved on the Washington end of things and I wonder if you could describe how the State Department related in this case to the formulation and the implementation of President Eisenhower's policy?

BURDETT: Once the decision was made to oppose the British, French and Israeli attack, Secretary Dulles became in effect the "Desk Officer". Our efforts were coordinated by his office. I was the bag carrier when Bob Murphy was sent to London to reconnoiter prior to the attack, and I served as "bookkeeper" in the sense of assembling briefing books and doing staff work.

BILHA BRYANT
Israeli Citizen
Haifa, Israel (1948-1954)

Bilha Bryant was born in 1934 in Bulgaria. Bryant served in the Israeli Army and worked in the private sector before joining the Israeli Foreign Service in 1959. Bryant resigned from the Israeli Foreign Service and married Edward (Ted) Bryant in 1963. With her husband, Bryant was assigned overseas to Mozambique, Ethiopia, Pakistan, Korea and India. Bryant then began to work for the State

Department and served in the Soviet Bureau, Eastern European Affairs and Congressional Relations. Bryant was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1998.

Q: What was the Mixed Armistice Commission in those days. We're talking about 1950-ish, aren't we?

BRYANT: Well, '53 or '54. Representatives from the Israeli and Syrian or Lebanese military would meet once a week to discuss border incidents; it could be as minor as a donkey crossing the border, or something serious such as kidnaping across the border or shooting at working farmers. Of course, United Nations officers also participated. Eight to 10 people usually attended the meetings, not more than that, depending on the seriousness of the incident. Not much was happening on border with Lebanon, but there was always something going on with the Syrians.

Q: What sort of things were you doing?

BRYANT: At that point the Syrians were sitting high up on the Golan Heights and were shooting at Israeli farmers, or fishermen on the Kinneret (Lake Tiberias). Both my superiors were high-ranking officers conducted the discussions. I was only a second lieutenant and my job was to sit quietly and take notes of the proceedings and then follow up.

Q: How were these meeting at that time there with the Syrians?

BRYANT: The meetings were very civilized. There was no social chatter and exchange of jokes, but at the same time there was no hostility as such. I think the hatred came later on when the Arabs started losing part of their territories. The Syrians, as you know, lost the Golan Heights.

Q: So the '56 war would be the Suez War?

BRYANT: The Suez War. As soon as the war broke out, I, like thousands other Israelis, was mobilized. I was assigned to the Public Affairs Office of the Israeli Army, specifically, to escort foreign journalists who were reporting on the war. A very interesting thing happened then; if you remember, the Israeli army was moving very fast across the Negev. So there we were, riding across the desert in a convoy of buses following the conquering army. At one point we lost track of the army but were able to continue by following the hundreds of shoes and boots left behind in the desert by the retreating Arab forces. Actually, I found that to be a very sad sight. Finally we did get to Sharm el Sheikh.

Q: Had things changed at all after the '56 war?

BRYANT: No, they hadn't. Perhaps at first the glory of victory helped morale in the country, but it also brought a new and horrific factor to everyday life - terrorism. While I haven't lived there for over 35 years, I still remember well the horrors of terrorism for the ordinary Israeli. I still get upset at the thought that the Arabs lost the Suez war fair and square and that the only way they could stand up to Israel was by killing and maiming innocent people, including small children.

DANIEL OLIVER NEWBERRY
Vice Consul
Jerusalem (1949-1951)

Daniel Oliver Newberry was born in Georgia in 1922. He received his bachelor's degree from Emory University in 1944. He then served overseas in the US Army from 1943- 1946. His career included positions in Jerusalem, Turkey, New York, Laos, Iran, Turkey, and Morocco. Mr. Newberry was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in December 1997

Q: How did you get into Jerusalem?

NEWBERRY: With difficulty! [Laughter] It was really rather a gripping experience for somebody like me who really didn't know very much about how to conduct himself as a Foreign Service officer. The airstrip at "Columbia" was literally just a landing strip. The paved, asphalt road from Ramallah to Jerusalem ran across the landing strip. There was vehicular traffic going across the landing strip! It was that kind of situation.

It was getting rather late in the afternoon, and the pilot had to fly on to Beirut that same day. He had to get to Beirut before dark because in 1949 they didn't have any landing lights at Beirut airport. So the pilot and the crew of the airplane were eager to get out of "Columbia" airstrip. While they were getting all of the cargo unloaded, which was destined for delivery to the UN Mission up there at Government House in Jerusalem, I was talking to an obviously European soldier in the uniform of the Arab Legion. He turned out to be an ex "Afrika Korps" German who had somehow escaped becoming a prisoner of war. He had enlisted with the Arab Legion. So there I was, chatting away with him in German, never realizing that I was closing the "trap" around myself by being seen and heard speaking German.

The point I'm leading up to is that a woman Major in the Arab Legion, and remember that this was in 1949, was in charge of the arrivals and departures of all persons at this airstrip. She was the only officer in the Arab Legion who could speak four foreign languages. Her name was Major Asia Halaby. She held a commission in the Arab Legion. We eventually got on fairly cordial terms, but not that day! She took one look at my passport and said: "Mr. Newberry, you cannot land here!" I said: "Where can I land? I don't have an assignment to Beirut. At least, I'm assigned as a vice consul in Jerusalem. It says so in my passport." She repeated: "You can't land here!"

I realized that I was in trouble. So I talked to one of the American Sergeants who had been a passenger on my plane from Athens. I said: "When you get up to the UN Mission at Government House, pass the word back to the American consul over on the Israeli side that the new American vice consul is out at the 'Columbia' airstrip and is in trouble." This Major Halaby had said: "Okay, you can stay, but you're a prisoner of war!" That's when I said to this American sergeant: "For Heaven's sake, get the word to the American consul and tell him what my situation is."

Well, as it turned out, this Sergeant went to a cocktail party and forgot all about me. However, another one of the UN military people was staying at the same "Bed and Breakfast" place where I was under "house arrest." Three days later, he saw the American consul, Bill Burdett, on the street in Jerusalem and said: "What are you doing about Newberry?" Bill is now dead, God rest his soul. He said: "Newberry? He's still in Washington." I found out about this conversation later on. Anyway, once the consulate knew that I was out at "Columbia" airstrip, another vice consul came out and "bailed me out." That was my arrival at my first post. I had literally been declared to be a "prisoner of war."

Q: Dan, could you explain, both for me and for the historical record, what the situation was in Jerusalem in 1949 when you arrived there? How did it appear to you?

NEWBERRY: I'll be glad to do so. First, let me say what the "technical" situation was. What was referred to as the "Old City," that is, the entire walled city of Jerusalem, plus the eastern side of the city, including Mt. Scopus and all of the area adjoining it to the East, was controlled by Jordan. This was the situation left over from the first Arab-Israeli War of 1948. The Jordanian Army, made up principally of the Arab Legion, held what is now the West Bank of the Jordan River. That is, the "Old City" of Jerusalem, plus the West Bank of the Jordan River. Israel controlled what was called the "New City" of Jerusalem and everything West to the Mediterranean. So, in effect, we had to deal with two governments in Jerusalem.

We dealt with the Jordanian "Mutusyarif," as they called him, the Governor of the "Old City." On the Israeli side, the Israelis still had a "Military Governor" of Jerusalem. So that was technically the political division of authority.

As it turned out, we had a little difficulty in getting me started on my assigned duties. Bill Burdett, the American consul in Jerusalem, had already decided that I would have one of the most irksome jobs in the American consulate, because that's what they always do to the most junior officer. [Laughter] That was arranging "clearances" for American travelers to get through what was called the "Mandlebaum Gate." That is, from the Israeli to the Jordanian occupied sections of Jerusalem. Mandlebaum Gate was actually a square, or a "Platz," as they say in German.

Since the "cease-fire lines" happened to be laid in place, Mandlebaum Square was "no man's land" between the Jordanian held sector and the Israeli held sector. There weren't very many American travelers whom either side would allow to cross to the other side. In particular, the Jordanians didn't like people to come first to Israel and then to Jordan. It was my job to arrange for all of these "clearances," to go and meet these people, and to walk them through "no man's land" and help them with their baggage, since no vehicles could go through this area. That is, unless I happened to have a consulate jeep, which couldn't carry much luggage in any case.

The only kind of vehicle allowed to go through the Mandlebaum Gate was a foreign, consular vehicle. Everything else was stopped. It was like being on the bank of a river where there was no ferry boat. People literally walked across the demarcation line.

So this was one of my first, assigned duties. However, our old friend, Major Asia Halaby, of the

Arab Legion, was also the person who handled the clearances for the Jordanians. During the first two or three weeks that I was doing this job, I had some other duties to handle on the Jordanian side, but my name was not on the Jordanian "clearance list." Finally, the American consul took the matter up with the Jordanians. Major Asia Halaby said: "We suggest that you assign somebody other than Mr. Newberg" [sic] to that duty.

Of course, Bill Burdett stood on principle. He got his friend, Wells Stabler, who was the American Chargé d'Affaires in Amman, Jordan, to go to the Jordanian Foreign Ministry. Major Halaby was then ordered to let me perform my duties in clearing people to go from the Israeli to the Jordanian side of the line.

Q: I think that she must have thought that you were Jewish, because she heard you speaking German.

NEWBERRY: That's why I mentioned the fact that I was heard speaking German. Eventually, she told me this. She said: "Your name is Daniel, and I heard you speaking German. What else was I to think but that the State Department had committed the great effrontery of assigning a Jewish vice consul here?" As I found out later, that was what was bothering her, although I didn't know it at the time. Actually, I think that the State Department would have had every right to assign a Jewish vice consul to this position. It might have been a little hard on the incumbent, but there was nothing wrong with the principle of assigning a Jewish consular officer to the American consulate in Jerusalem. We had Jewish FSOs and have had them assigned to Jerusalem, but not in 1949. When I thought about what might have happened if the Jordanians had had an American "prisoner of war" in those circumstances, it did not leave me with a very cozy feeling.

Q: What was the military situation there? Was there a cease-fire at that time?

NEWBERRY: There was a cease-fire. As I recall it, the truce talks at Rhodes were still going on, although I will have to check the dates. They already had in place the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), or had it on hand very soon after that. There were multinational contingents monitoring the borders between Syria and Israel, Jordan and Israel, and Egypt and Israel. They had these UN "Truce Supervision Units" based around there. It was a pretty "hairy" [dangerous] business. Some of the personnel assigned to these units came close to great, personal peril in handling this job. It was a very tense time, indeed.

It was also particularly dangerous. I remember, from the time when I was still under "house arrest" at this "Bed and Breakfast" place which was called the "American Colony Hotel" [North of the walled city of Jerusalem]. Actually, it's more than a bed and breakfast place, but I was a newcomer and didn't know the difference.

I wanted to go to the Anglican Cathedral to attend religious services. They told me at the American Colony Hotel to stick to the main road because there were still land mines that had not been "defused." It was still a combat situation in May, 1949, even though there was a truce in effect.

Q: What was the American consulate general in Jerusalem doing in those days in its relationship with the Arabs and the Israelis?

NEWBERRY: It was more a case of what the consulate general was trying to do. It was really an anomalous situation in terms of our relations with our own colleagues. The American ambassador in Tel Aviv insisted that the consulate general in Jerusalem was a "constituent post" of the American mission in Israel. He tried to give orders to the consul general in Jerusalem, but the consul general would have none of it. In consular terms, the consulate general in Jerusalem reported directly to the State Department and not to the embassy in Tel Aviv and not to the Legation in Amman, Jordan. This was about the time when they stopped referring to the country as "Transjordan," calling it simply, "Jordan." That was sort of the bureaucratic situation that we had.

In traditional, Foreign Service practice we all got to know and to cultivate the Military Commander of the Jerusalem Garrison on the Israeli side. He was a colonel named Moshe Dayan [later Israeli Defense Minister and a major Israeli political figure]. He was very approachable. He and his wife were obviously very ambitious. They had what the Europeans used to term a "calling day," a certain day when new arrivals could go to Dayan's house and meet all sorts of interesting people.

That's what I did, even though I had no reason to meet higher ranking officials. So I got to know Moshe Dayan and his sister, who was being "courted" by one of our officers. I won't say which one. Moshe Dayan's sister-in-law married a young Israeli Air Force Lieutenant. I was lucky enough to be invited to the wedding. That young Lieutenant was named Ezer Weizman, who is now President of Israel. [Laughter]

It was an unusual situation where a young, low-ranking Foreign Service officer, in fact, the most junior FSO, had regular access to these Israeli "movers and shakers." Just as during a later part of my experience in Jerusalem, toward the end of my tour there, I just "happened" to be on the Arab side of Jerusalem one day in August, 1952, when something terribly dramatic happened inside the Old City. I found out that King Abdullah of Jordan had been assassinated in a mosque! I was the only officer in our consulate general who knew this. I was trying to alert the other side of the line, while still doing my job as a reporting officer.

So for the next several days all of us in the consulate general were trying to piece together what had happened. Obviously, the Jordanian Police moved in and arrested people right and left. However, it was just my luck that I happened to be in a place where nobody in the American consulate general would have known about what had happened for hours until the BBC [British Broadcasting Commission] reported what had happened. I was able to contribute to the reporting on this event.

Q: You mentioned that you had contacts, even as a young officer, among the "movers and shakers" on the Israeli side. What about on the Jordanian side?

NEWBERRY: I was just going to say that, in the context of this quick "round up" of people who were arrested by the Jordanians, was what I thought was one of my best contacts. He was

explaining a lot of things to me. I guess that he was a nephew of the famous Mufti Hajamin al-Husseini, who was very prominent among Palestinians. My friend was arrested and eventually hanged for alleged involvement in the conspiracy to kill King Abdullah! I began to think that acquaintanceship with my friends, the people whom I was cultivating, was potentially dangerous.

Q: What was your impression of Jordan when you first arrived in that country, including how it was run, where it was going, and all of that?

NEWBERRY: Well, Stu, I can only give a very circumscribed response to that very good question. As a "new kid on the block," I was so concentrated on getting my work done, and it was a very busy job, that I didn't really have the leisure to go out and sort of "explore" things.

We didn't have "professional" diplomatic couriers. We took it in turn to drive our diplomatic pouches over to Amman, Jordan. I would chat with the people in our Legation there, which consisted of two rooms in the Philadelphia Hotel. So I picked up impressions regarding the situation. However, my recollection of those years is very limited. The British were still very much "running the show." That impression has lingered with me, especially after King Abdullah was assassinated. Abdullah's successor, King Khalal, was mentally so limited. Then, it was some further time before the "Brave, Young King," Hussein, really began to take control of the situation. But during all of this time, from 1950 to about 1960, it seemed to me that the British were still very much "calling the shots."

Q: What about Israel? What was your impression and the reaction of our people in Jerusalem toward the Israelis?

NEWBERRY: I have to say, quite candidly, that I was personally shocked, when I arrived at the consulate general in Jerusalem, to find that, to a man, our people were all very "anti-Israeli." I was shocked at this because, first of all, as I told you, some of my best friends and closest "buddies" in the U.S. Army during World War II had been Jewish refugees from Nazism. I was prepared to be "open minded" about Israel. However, as I learned more about some of the more terrible things that the "Hagganah," the most prominent of the Jewish organizations, did during the first Arab-Jewish War [in 1948], I began to appreciate that there really were two sides to the Arab-Jewish conflict.

Then, at a certain point, the line from "Romeo and Juliet," about "a plague on both your houses" appeared more reasonable to me. "A plague on both your houses" was pretty much my attitude during the rest of my time in Jerusalem, because such outrageous things were done on both sides. I think that I was honestly "neutral" by the time I finished my tour of duty in Jerusalem.

Q: Either then, or not too long afterwards, our consul general was killed, and nobody, even to this day, knows who killed him.

NEWBERRY: I heard many, almost eyewitness stories. I think that it is beyond debate that our consul general, Tom Watson, was killed by a sniper. They still had his "bulletproof vest" hanging up in the consulate general which was supposed to protect him. However, the bullet entered right under his armpit and went right past the "bulletproof vest." So, despite taking precautions, he

was killed in that way. I haven't made a detailed study of this matter, but on the basis of circumstantial evidence I believe that the sniper could only have been on the Israeli side. Well, I don't really know. However, the point is that, when he was killed, Consul General Watson was either going to or coming back from a meeting of the Special Consular Commission which was trying to implement the truce. He was on an errand of peace, either coming or going, when he was shot by this sniper.

Q: Do you think that that contributed to the bitterness of the people in the consulate general toward the Israelis?

NEWBERRY: It may have, because the man that I replaced was also shot, presumably from the same direction. However, he survived. So that's part of it. I think that the natural, sort of "social" contacts of the Americans in the consulate general, especially those who couldn't speak any other language but English, was with the military and civilian people in Government House. I would have to say that they were pretty much anti-Israeli.

Q: What about the relations between the consulate general and I guess that by now it was our embassy in Tel Aviv?

NEWBERRY: We had an embassy in Tel Aviv. The ambassador was a "political" appointee.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

NEWBERRY: His name was James McDonald. He was a prominent and perhaps the leading, Gentile "Zionist" in the United States. He was "rushed out" to Tel Aviv shortly after the United States recognized Israel in 1948. He didn't know much about the State Department, but he thought that he had access to the White House, [then under President Truman]. He attempted, without success, to persuade the consulate general in Jerusalem to consider itself a "constituent post" of the embassy.

Ambassador McDonald's performance in Tel Aviv is interesting, in retrospect. I liked him personally but I thought that he was not a good choice to be ambassador in Israel at that time. He didn't serve in Tel Aviv until toward the end of the Truman administration. We had a career FSO as the second American ambassador to Israel, Lynette Davis.

I was assigned to temporary duty in the embassy in Tel Aviv for the last few months of my tour in Israel. This was during the interim period when we were waiting to know who the new ambassador to Israel would be. I remember hearing a youngish Israeli Foreign Ministry official telling me: "Well, we hope that the new American ambassador will be a career officer, because we know that in the State Department they discounted everything that Ambassador McDonald said. We want an American ambassador who will report accurately what we say to him." Of course, since Ambassador McDonald was such a partisan of Israel, he was interpreting what the Israelis said to him, and the Israelis didn't want that. The Israelis just wanted an accurate report of what they told him.

I had not been in Israel since that first tour, but the Israelis had obviously learned how to

"operate" in Washington. However, at that time, which was just a year after Israel became independent, they were still "feeling their way" as to how best to influence the development of U.S.-Israeli relations. Having an all-out, pro-Zionist American ambassador in Tel Aviv was not their idea of the ideal situation.

Q: It still isn't. Just recently our ambassador to Israel was actually an Australian citizen who had also been a lobbyist for the Israeli government. Then he was naturalized as an American citizen and is now the Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs.

NEWBERRY: Well, you said it, Stu. I didn't, but I'm not disputing any of the irony in your remark.

Q: This is a very "dubious" situation, to say the least.

NEWBERRY: I think that, as an aside, that applies to sending, how should I say it, "hyphenated" Americans as ambassador to any country where they are closely associated with either the culture or the politics of the country in which they are supposed to represent the United States.

Q: I know that recently we had a Greek-American ambassador to Greece. I heard that his views on Greek-American relations were completely discounted in Washington, because his reporting was so "biased."

NEWBERRY: There's another side to such a situation, too. I am talking now, not so much of the ambassador, but of American Jews who may be assigned to the embassy in Tel Aviv. When I was in Jerusalem and then, briefly and for several months at the embassy in Tel Aviv, the labor attaché at the American embassy was a very sharp guy. His name was Milton Fried. He was the only identifiable, Jewish-American officer in the American embassy.

The reason he was chosen for the position of Labor Attaché, and he told me this himself, was that he was the son-in-law of Sidney Hillman, a very prominent American labor leader. However, he said privately to me: "This is not a place for an American Jew to be assigned. All of the Israelis think that, because I'm a Jew, they can 'use me.' In fact, I'm an American, and I resent this attitude." Those were pretty much his words. It's awkward to be in such a situation.

Q: We've run across this in a number of countries. Well, during the time that you were in Jerusalem, were there any incidents or events which particularly come to your mind which you or the consulate general had to deal with?

NEWBERRY: I can tell you of some "colorful things" that I had to deal with.

Q: Let's hear them.

NEWBERRY: In the Table of Organization of the consulate general in Jerusalem, I was called the "citizenship officer." We did not issue visas, thank God. I think that most Foreign Service officers who haven't done visa work consider themselves very lucky not to have had that kind of assignment. I have great respect for visa officers, and some of my best friends are visa officers,

and all of that. However, I consider that my assignment to the consulate general in Jerusalem was very interesting, and I learned a lot about consular work, but very little about visas.

Let me get on to citizenship matters. This had a particular angle because I was assigned to Jerusalem. In 1949 one of the things that the citizenship officer in Jerusalem had to do was to keep track of all of the American veterans in our consular district who were entitled to receive benefits under the "GI Bill" [legislation enacted in 1945 to help veterans attend college or other training courses]. There were lots of veterans in Jerusalem at the time, and they all wanted their checks delivered on time. I had to make sure, if they were attending Hebrew University, for example, that they received their money on time. This involved a big, administrative problem.

There were other aspects of this citizenship job. There were many naturalized American citizens in the Jerusalem consular district who were probably very close to the "point" of automatically expatriating themselves. Under the Nationality Act of 1949, a naturalized, American citizen could not remain overseas indefinitely. So I found myself having to prepare certificates of expatriation for American citizens. When I learned the job, I anticipated this situation and I would call them in and tell them that if they didn't go back to the U.S., they would lose their American nationality.

Most of these people didn't speak any English. They spoke Yiddish. So there I was with my college German. I spoke German to them, and they would answer in Yiddish. So that's the way we communicated.

I think that most people who are acquainted with that part of the world are aware of those extreme, Orthodox Jews who have been sort of caricatures. These Jews, many of them from Poland, wore big, black hats, had side curls in their hair, and big, black gabardine coats. There was a community of these Orthodox Jews in a certain quarter of Jerusalem who were American citizens. I had them as "customers," too.

Of course, I didn't have any political objection to them, but I had to keep on good terms with them. First of all, because they were American citizens and, secondly, because we had to pass through their community, even on the Sabbath, to get to the Mandlebaum Gate. Several times I had stones thrown at me in this area, the Mea Sharim quarter of Jerusalem, because they considered that I was "desecrating" the Sabbath. In fact, I was like a postman, doing my appointed rounds, but they didn't like it when I passed through their quarter on the Sabbath.

What I'm leading up to is that these people were a very important, colorful, and even "pungent" part of my recollection of Jerusalem. These people took their ritual baths before they came in to meet me, but they never washed their clothes! You can imagine, in a warm climate like that of Jerusalem, what they smelled like when they came into my office! I'm not kidding you. I reached the point where I would have to stand by the window and keep them all the way across the room, just to be able to talk to them. It was that bad! Sorry to go into this aspect in such detail, but if you want to talk about "color," that's one of the more "colorful" sides of doing citizenship work in Jerusalem!

Then, over on the Jordan side of the consular district, I had more "colorful" experiences. Of

course, when I first got to Jerusalem, we didn't have any sort of office over on the Jordan, or Arab, side of the city, because, as it turned out, the office building of the consulate general was on Ramallah Road in the "New City" of Jerusalem.

As it turned out, we were eventually able to use a couple of rooms in the building housing the American School of Oriental Research in the Old City of Jerusalem. The citizenship officer (that is, me) held office hours there, one day a week. Anybody who had claims to Social Security checks or who needed to register the birth of one of their children who had claims to being American citizens (for many Arabs were American citizens), could meet with the citizenship officer at the American School of Oriental Research.

On another day in the week I went up to Ramallah, which was perhaps half an hour's drive from Jerusalem. I had office hours at the Quaker School in Ramallah one morning a week for Arab Americans who came in to discuss citizenship problems. I can give you an example. It is curious to note that some of these people were actually shepherds. Their parents, or some of the older members of this community, somehow had gotten jobs in war industries in the U.S. during World War II. They stayed on in the U.S. long enough to acquire rights to a Social Security pension. Then they came back to Palestine and were re-absorbed into their own culture. When their children were born, they may or may not have been eligible to be registered as American citizens. So I really had to know U.S. citizenship law, inside and out. Otherwise, I would have been "zapped" [disavowed] by the Passport Office back in Washington.

Q: Did you get into any difficulties with Jordanian or Israeli authorities as you went along your appointed rounds? I mean, after you got over the initial problems you had with the Jordanians.

NEWBERRY: Not really. I can't recall that either side treated me discourteously, once they understood what I was doing. My greatest fear was that, because of the sort of "front line" atmosphere, I might wind up taking the wrong road. I remember once on a beautiful, spring day some friends of mine and I went out with a picnic basket. We took the wrong road and wound up in the middle of "No Man's Land." We tried to sneak back as quietly as we could, because in that atmosphere any frontier guard might have just shot us, if he'd seen us out there. My main concern was inadvertently making the "wrong move." As far as courtesy or discourtesy, helpfulness or unhelpfulness, I never encountered any of that. Granted, I was doing things which were politically pretty much "neutral." If you asked my superiors for their views, such as the consul general, if he were still alive, you might get an entirely different answer.

Q: Who was the consul general?

NEWBERRY: The first one was Raleigh Gibson. He had not yet arrived, and Bill Burdett was acting consul general. Gibson had been consul general in Salonika, Greece. I remember his telling stories about the famous "Wood and Pulp Case." I think that he was consul general in Salonika at that time. He finished his tour of duty as consul general in Jerusalem. Younger officers who don't know their way around Washington and don't have a "network" of friends and supporters back in Washington may have trouble finding out what's going on. After Gibson left Jerusalem, we had another long period of time when there was no consul general assigned. Roger Tyler then became acting consul general and served in that capacity for quite a long time. He

replaced Bill Burdett. We didn't have Raleigh Gibson's successor as consul general until I had left Jerusalem.

I was out in Jerusalem for two and one-half years. We had a fully accredited consul general there for a little less than a year during that period of time.

Q: You mentioned that the officers in the consulate general in Jerusalem were basically "anti-Israeli." What would you say was the root cause of this attitude?

NEWBERRY: I mentioned their association with the UN people, and there were still a lot of British officials around. The British in Jerusalem had particularly bitter memories of what the Hagganah [Jewish Agency] and what the Irgun Zvai Leumi [IZL] did to the British troops in Jerusalem. My colleagues in the consulate general, who had been in Jerusalem longer than I, would talk about "horror stories" dating back to this period. Well, that's about the best answer that I can give.

I had so much on my mind about learning how to do my job that I can't say that I spent a lot of time analyzing the views of my own colleagues. That's just my recollection of the situation, and I can't help you much more than that.

Q: Did you have many visitors to the consulate general in Jerusalem?

NEWBERRY: Yes, in spite of everything. You asked for color. I'll give you some color. I was assigned to make all of the arrangements for official Americans crossing through the Mandlebaum Gate, both from Israel to Jordan and from Jordan to Israel. I think that this particular incident happened during the second Christmas time that I spent in Jerusalem.

A strange, shall I say, "coincidence," or whatever the word is, occurred. Former Governor of Minnesota Harold Stassen, a famous name in American politics of that era, came to visit Jerusalem. I've forgotten what his position was at that time, but he was a perennial [and unsuccessful] Republican candidate for President. I can't recall precisely when this happened. Maybe he was still Governor of Minnesota. Anyway, we learned that he was coming to Jerusalem by way of Tel Aviv. I was asked to arrange for him to go across into Jordan through the Mandlebaum Gate at night. He wanted to go to Bethlehem to attend a Christmas Eve ceremony of some kind.

Meanwhile, we got word that old Senator Theodore Green (Democrat, Rhode Island) was coming to Jerusalem for a visit. However, Senator Green was coming to Jerusalem by way of Jordan. Senator Green was just about as durable in his own way as Senator Strom Thurmond (Democrat and later Republican, South Carolina). They both wanted to go to the Christmas Eve celebration, including Midnight Mass, in Bethlehem. So the consul general arranged to get over there, at the Mandlebaum Gate, and meet the car that brought Senator Green from Amman, Jordan. They were waiting in the car on the eastern side of Mandlebaum Gate at about 11:00 PM on Christmas Eve. I was coming from Israel and making my way to Mandlebaum Gate with Governor Stassen. We got over in the car, a large car. So I got Governor Stassen, the consul general, and Senator Green into this large car. However, I had the impression that Senator Green

wouldn't speak to me!

What I discovered as we moved along was that this was one of the "tricks" of old Senator Green. He could fall asleep with his eyes open! In fact, he used to do that on the floor of the Senate in Washington. So that was why he apparently wouldn't speak to me. He was asleep!

Q: This is the second interview done with Daniel O. Newberry. This is in 1997. I guess that we are just about the end of your tour in Jerusalem. One thing you might discuss. Did you feel, in Jerusalem, the "heavy hand" of the pro-Israeli press and politics in the United States? Or did this really come later?

NEWBERRY: Stu, my impression was that the pro-Israeli press had already won, hands down. There was no contest, from our perspective. There wasn't any pro-Arab press in the U.S., from our perspective. All of the American news media, including radio and what there was of television [TV] at the time, were pro-Israel. At least, that is the impression that we had out there.

Q: Was there any concern on our part about the Arabs who, for one reason or another, had been forced out of their traditional homes in Greater Palestine, which is now part of Israel, as refugees? Were we reporting or thinking about that at all?

NEWBERRY: We were reporting on it, insofar as the small staff at the American consulate general had the leisure to report these things. The embassy in Tel Aviv was not particularly interested in that aspect of the subject. The legation in Amman did some reporting because they had huge camps of Palestinian refugees on the East bank of the Jordan River.

Yes, we were concerned about this. We were talking previously about the "well springs" of anti-Israel feeling. I could see this with my own eyes. This is a technique that the Israelis still use. You create refugees when you want to, quite simply by bulldozing their houses. That is still a standard technique.

When I first went to Jaffa, which is a suburb of Tel Aviv, it looked like one of these old European cities destroyed during World War II. Jaffa, as a city, goes back to the time of the Crusades and before that, even to Biblical times. Jaffa looked like one of these old, European cities which were absolutely devastated during World War II. I asked people: "Where was all of the fighting? Nobody said anything about pitched battles here." I was told: "Oh, no, the Israelis demolished the town after the fighting was over." The Israelis had just about flattened the entire, old city of Jaffa, just to make sure that the Arabs didn't have any place to come back to. That is just an example of their attitudes.

Q: When you came back to Jaffa, did this type of thing cause feelings of revulsion among your colleagues, and maybe you? At this point the American public was sort of cheering for the "plucky Jews" to beat back the Arabs and all of that.

NEWBERRY: People tended to speak of "brave, little Israel." However, Stu, I have to say that in the "culture" of the Foreign Service in those days nobody was particularly interested in "debriefing" junior officers freshly back from their posts.

Q: They still don't. They don't "debrief" the senior officers, either. The closest thing we have to debriefing is the process that's going on here, 50 years after the fact.

NEWBERRY: Anyway, inexperienced officers like me were wondering what was going to happen to them next. I have no memory or any impression of anybody wanting to "pick my brains."

However, when I got to Atlanta for home leave, somehow "the word" got around that a local, home town boy had returned from being a vice consul in Jerusalem. The Hadassah Business Women's Club [Jewish community group] invited me to be a speaker at one of their meetings. I wondered how many businesswomen there were in Atlanta, and Jewish businesswomen at that. Atlanta was still not a very big city in 1949. This program was held at a Jewish country club in Atlanta. I was graciously received and then taken into the room where I was going to make my little speech. There were about 800 women in the room! They all wanted to hear everything that they could possibly hear about Jerusalem.

I would have to contrast this reception with the attitude of officers in the State Department toward one of their professional colleagues in talking about his experiences in Jerusalem. They might even have learned something from my talk! These Jewish businesswomen in Atlanta wanted to get everything out of me that they could. They were a very good, sharp audience.

Q: You were there in Jerusalem from 1949 until when?

NEWBERRY: From the first part of May, 1949, until some time in October, 1951. As I said before, during the last few months of that period I was on temporary duty at the embassy in Tel Aviv, although still technically assigned to Jerusalem.

Q: Let's talk a little about your reaction to being in Tel Aviv. I am speaking now of the atmosphere in our embassy there, as opposed to the consulate general in Jerusalem. Was there a difference in how things were regarded and dealt with there?

NEWBERRY: There was a definite difference in the atmosphere, because the people in our embassy in Tel Aviv had no contact, to speak of, with Arabs at all. That led to a built-in difference in outlook. It was a "different window on the world."

Of course, I had never been in an embassy before. I didn't even know how to work in an embassy. I was assigned to temporary duty in the Economic Section of the embassy. I had a certain set of subjects that I worked on. Talk about "color"? I'll give you another bit of "color." In those days we had "despatches," as you may remember. This was the only time that I ever wrote a despatch. The State Department was very proud of spelling the word "despatch" with an "e," rather than with an "i."

One of the things that I got interested in, and this was one of the ironies of the Foreign Service, was the "vanity" of my superiors. They wanted their sections to be fully staffed and to show that they were "overworked." In fact, the embassy was not "overstaffed." Nevertheless, they insisted

on getting this young officer, me, who had been assigned to Jerusalem, moved up to the embassy.

There really wasn't enough work for me to do. There wasn't enough office space, either. There were four officers in a room half as big as this room. You know the dimensions of it. It was like the "City Room" of an old newspaper. We almost literally had to "climb over" each other to get in and out of the office. However, there I was in the embassy, even though I wasn't really "needed."

I thought of subjects to write reports on. I decided to write a report on the Israeli fishing industry. It was very poorly developed in those days. I realized that one of the keys to the fishing industry was the dietary laws and the "Kosher" rules about what kind of fish could be eaten. That is, whether the fish were scaled or unscaled, skinned or unskinned, and so forth. I had a Biblical quotation at the beginning of my despatch. In my experience this was the only time that I dared start off a despatch to the Department of State, quoting the Bible. This may still be rare.

However, I had a lot of fun and learned a lot about why the Israelis, at that point, hadn't done anything with their fishing industry. This despatch had to do with that. In Turkey, in the olden times, it had been the Greeks who did all of the fishing. The Turks had to learn how to catch fish, and the Israelis also had to learn how to be fishermen.

HARRY FLEISCHMAN
Jewish Labor Committee
(1950)

Mr. Fleishman was active in labor organization, Jewish and Socialist Party affairs in his earlier years, serving as Campaign Manager for Socialist Candidate Norman Thomas in his campaigns for President in 1944 and 1948. Joining the Voice of America in 1950, he reported on international Labor Affairs and current anti-communist topics for foreign audience consumption. Throughout his career, Mr. Fleishman served with US organizations furthering Labor and Anti-Communist objectives. Mr. Fleishman was interviewed by Morris Weisz in 1992

Q: Harry, please describe the Jewish Labor Committee and your relationship to trade unions?

FLEISCHMAN: Right. Well, the Jewish Labor Committee was an organization set up initially by the needle-trades unions and the Jewish led part of the American labor movement in the early 1930s to help in the fight against the Nazis and, when the war came, also against the Fascists in Italy and against Japan. It helped bring more and more workers to support these struggles and also to press for specifically Jewish issues, like the fight against discrimination against Jews in employment, in school quotas, and in all sorts of areas. It had the attitude, which is one that I have always had too, that to support the rights of the Jews in the United States, you had to support all minorities and to work for social justice on every front. So it was natural that I should be working with them, but they didn't have any [permanent] job available at that time. I also

wrote a pamphlet of questions and answers about Communism for the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), which was another Jewish agency that worked on discrimination.

Then there were questions about getting a job with some government agency, and I remember that at that time one of the people that I contacted was you, Murray, who had certain ideas about jobs that might be possible including one, if I recall correctly, with the CIA, because you felt that there were some people in the CIA who were very soft on Communism, and that it might be useful for me to be there. Well, I did go to see. . .

EDWARD WARREN HOLMES
Consular/Political Officer
Tel Aviv (1950-1952)

Edward Warren Holmes was born in Beverly, Massachusetts in 1923. He received a bachelor's degree from Brown University in 1945 and a master's degree in international law from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in 1946. Mr. Holmes joined the Foreign Service in 1946. He served in Nicaragua, Venezuela, Israel, South Africa, Ethiopia, Malawi, Ghana, and Washington, DC. Mr. Holmes was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1993.

Q: What was the situation when you arrived in Tel Aviv? Give a little feel for how you saw the situation in Israel. In the first place, we recognized Israel in 1948, didn't we?

HOLMES: Yes, we were the first country in the world to recognize the new state. When we went there in '50, the embassy had been there for about a year. We had to change ships, of course, in Milan, and got a small ship that sailed down to Tel Aviv. And the first thing we did was have to pass the baby, in a basket, over the side, lower it down into a boat, because Tel Aviv was not a real port; it was only used by lighters. So the baby went down, and then we went down the side on a rope ladder sort of thing, down into this lighter, with a few suitcases, and they took us into Tel Aviv. That was our introduction.

Q: Oh, boy.

HOLMES: Well, it was a very exciting situation. Israel was still at war with its neighbors. Of course, it still is, even today, technically. But it actively was, then. There were blackouts every night. There were sandbags around all the entrances to buildings, public buildings and apartment houses. And so, if you went to a party at night, you went in the pitch black, and you'd feel your way around the sandbags to find the door and then get in. It was total blackout until you'd get to someone's apartment, and then there would be lights there, the windows all sealed. So we lived in sort of blackout conditions, which was very exciting, in a way. Now there were no air raids, there was nothing of that sort. But the Israeli government, of course, was not at all certain there wouldn't be. With good reason, because it had been a very tough war of independence, and their independence was precarious. So the blackout was rigidly enforced. When we would drive at night, we had little slits in the headlights, just tiny, tiny little slits, the absolute minimum of light.

So that was sort of exciting after South America, very, very different...

But it was a very exciting time. The people of Israel were extremely friendly. The people that we dealt with in the Foreign Office were extremely well-educated, highly intelligent, proficient people to deal with. I mean, these were refugees from Germany, Poland, Hungary, or wherever, who had come to the new state. They were the elite, obviously, the intellectual elite who were in the Foreign Office. That was under Ben-Gurion, who was the prime minister. Moshe Sharett was the foreign minister, who spoke seven languages and at a reception could flip from one language to another just effortlessly in the receiving line. I was always impressed that he would jump from German to Hungarian to, of course, Hebrew, to French to English. A brilliant, brilliant man. So the quality of the government was incredibly high, and I was struck by that, I must say. Not drawing any invidious comparisons, but it was a type of brilliance that you rarely see in a government, all the way down through the Foreign Office, even to the more junior people. So that was interesting, and the whole situation was interesting.

While we were there, we traveled all over the country, with the assistance of the government. We had to go in convoys to the outlying areas; it was not wise to go on your own. We went to the Hula swamps up north that they were draining in those days, Stu, for agricultural purposes. They were channeling it into the Jordan River, draining the swamps. That was a big project. Took us all the way down through the Negev to the south. We'd drive cheek by jowl with Arab troops with machine guns, right along the border. It's a very narrow border, and the road goes right along the border.

We could get to Jerusalem once a month, the old city of Jerusalem. Jerusalem was a divided city, with barbed wire right down through the city. We could get to the other side through arrangements with our consulate general in Jerusalem. That is, they had to get permission from the Jordan government, and they would give us a certain time to cross the border, like a Friday afternoon. That was the typical time; you could go for a weekend. Then we would drive up through no-man's-land in Jerusalem. There was a little opening in the barbed wire, through this no-man's-land, which we were warned was heavily mined on both sides. So we'd stick to just the track. We'd drive along there and as we approached, the Arab Legion, which was the Jordan army, would have machine guns trained on us all the time as we went along through no-man's-land. Then we'd get to their post, where they often spoke no English. They would have a list of border passings for that particular time frame, and it was all in Arabic. So the Arab officer would look at this list, and we would present our passports, and if he could find something in Arabic that sort of corresponded to Holmes, he'd let us through. If he couldn't, you couldn't get through. There was no way if your name was not on the list. That was the list that was arranged through, as I say, the Jordan Foreign Office, which would send it to the military people and so forth. So, once a month, we did try to get over, basically to buy food. We had the one baby, and food was extraordinarily scarce in Israel; there was very strict rationing. Sometimes a half a can of peas, for instance, would be a ration. You'd go and you'd bring a jar with you, and they'd pour half a can of peas and take your little ration ticket. So it was very rational, and they were spreading out the food they did have to feed the population. But it was hard, with a new child, to get the types of food that we particularly wanted. And so, once a month, we'd go over and load up with food. We could bring food back; neither side cared if we did that. They would inspect it. We would buy for lots of other people, always, lots of meat and vegetables and milk and just everything,

and bring it back.

Q: What was your job in Tel Aviv?

HOLMES: I was supposed to be in the Political Section, but when I got there, though, there was a need for me to be in the consulate. So I was in charge of the consulate, which was very, very busy.

Q: I'm sure it was.

HOLMES: Those were the days of American citizens who had been over fighting for the new State of Israel during the independence war and now wanted to go home, and the question was, had they lost their citizenship? Our citizenship laws were quite strict: if you enrolled in a foreign army and took an oath of allegiance, you jeopardized your American citizenship. So we had lots of those cases that were handed to me, I remember, to deal with. There were all sorts of things, but the big problem there was American citizens of Jewish faith and the question of their citizenship. A lot had come over to help the new State of Israel, and a lot had voted in the first election. Now voting in those days was enough to make you lose citizenship. Well, not exactly, it was sort of a grey area.

Q: Well, it was very complicated.

HOLMES: It was complicated.

Q: But essentially voting, service in a foreign military, and an oath of allegiance all could jeopardize your citizenship. And we enforced it in those days.

HOLMES: We did enforce it. We tried to enforce it. But I used to have lawyers argue with me the fine points of American law and decisions, and already the law was beginning to change a little bit. It's changed a lot since then, I believe, but in those days, we were told by the State Department to enforce the law, basically. But then the question was: did a young man take the oath of allegiance? Because the State of Israel permitted people to be in the army without an oath of allegiance, knowing our immigration law. So the question was: did he or didn't he take an oath of allegiance? Well, that's rather hard to prove. There were certain lists available. So my time essentially was taken up with the whole question of American citizenship problems. I don't think I did much with visas at all; I think there was some other officer that handled visas. So it was sort of interesting.

Q: Well, I'm sure. Speaking as a veteran consular officer, I can imagine what you must have been up against. Later it became very powerful, but did you find there was what one could call a Jewish lobby in Congress that was giving you a great deal of trouble on taking away citizenship from these freedom fighters or whatever you want to call them?

HOLMES: Yes, indeed. Yes, indeed. There was a very powerful lobby in Washington, and it affected us in many, many ways.

Ambassador McDonald, you may know, was not very au courant with the State Department. His line of command was President Truman. And he would pick up the phone, frequently, and talk to President Truman whenever he wanted certain instructions. And within a few hours, we'd get the instructions that he wanted, which he had arranged with President Truman. He had that close in. In those days, the State Department was torn on the whole Israeli policy. There were many who said we shouldn't have recognized the new state; we did it prematurely, allegedly, by certain elements within the State Department. It was alleged that the Middle East Division was pro-Arab, anti-Jewish. So it was a very interesting political problem. As I say, Ambassador McDonald was a very able person, and he utilized his friendship with President Truman very much and, in a sense, would circumvent the State Department if he felt that it was important. He was very desirous to help the new State of Israel progress in as many ways as possible, with our AID program (it wasn't called AID in those days; Point Four, I think it was called) and different things to assist the new state get its feet on the ground and develop. He was very interested in Israel as a functioning entity, a new state, and did everything he could to help the new state develop.

Q: Well, now, give a little of the spirit of the officers. All right, you have this well-connected ambassador, McDonald.

HOLMES: A political appointee.

Q: A political appointee, who was extremely pro-Israel. You have the Department of State, which was very dubious.

HOLMES: It was mixed.

Q: Mixed, but essentially a very practical, pragmatic approach was, you've got a lot of Arab countries, and you've got one small country that's going to be a thorn in the side. And now, forty-odd years later, it's still a thorn in the side and causing all sorts of trouble.

HOLMES: And you had a president who was pro-Israel.

Q: A president who was way ahead of his Department of State on this. Now here you are, an officer coming in with no particular commitment one way or another -- you're not an Arabist, you're not of the Jewish faith, you've come out of Latin America. I think it's important to get a feel. How did you feel, as an officer there? Israel was a dynamic place. Did you get caught up in this? And not just you, but the others around you. And did you feel that maybe your colleagues in Egypt or in Jordan or in Syria were almost kind of the enemy? What was your feeling when you got into that situation?

HOLMES: I think you summarized it very well. First of all, the ambassador, McDonald, made it very clear that if people didn't agree with his mission, they might as well leave.

Q: It was really a mission in those days.

HOLMES: In his view, it was a mission, in that he was placed there by the president to carry out

certain functions. In his view, it was to help Israel, okay? In those days, we had no military assistance or anything like that, but it was to assist the new state. That was his mission and his function, and he made it clear that's what he expected his staff to do. Once again, it was a small embassy, quite small. It was a new embassy, and there were very, very difficult living conditions. We lived in a beauty parlor, I remember that, amongst all the dryers and blowers and things. That's where we lived because we couldn't find anyplace else at first. We lived there six months, in a beauty parlor, with a new baby, in amongst all this machinery.

Q: What had happened to the owner?

HOLMES: The lady was a Hungarian, and she had gone back to Hungary for a while, for a long holiday. We were extremely fortunate, because up to then, we had to live with members of the staff in their homes until we found this thing. So that's where we lived; it was tough living. But I think the morale was high in the embassy. I think people absorbed this mission idea. It was an exciting place.

Q: Oh, of course it was.

HOLMES: The Israelis were doing all sorts of things. I mentioned the draining of the Hula swamps. Well, that was a tremendous project, but it was progressing. And they were doing all sorts of forestation work, and they were putting in irrigation, and they were having tremendous groves of trees; agricultural development was happening. You know, they didn't just talk about it, they did it.

Q: This was a natural affinity to the American can-do feeling.

HOLMES: Yes. They were dedicated people, and they were brilliant people, working hard. And, of course, they had all the kibbutzim movement, which we used to be invited to visit and see. The spirit was tremendous amongst the Israeli people, and I think the embassy absorbed that spirit. As I say, if somebody was anti, then I think he would not stay. I mean, I think the ambassador would suggest that perhaps he should move on.

In a sense, the ambassador was fighting about five other ambassadors in the surrounding countries. But he was an able fighter, and he wrote very well, and the backing of Mr. Truman in the White House sort of helped his hand. But it was a constant battle, in a sense, because some of the other nearby embassies didn't care much for Israel, and they would see it from their viewpoint.

There were frequent border incidents, the usual things, stealing sheep across the border, and incidents at night where there would be some firing on the border, and who fired the first shot? God, you know.

We were trying to assist Israel by bringing peace with Jordan, and we were dealing with Abdullah, the king of Jordan. We did manage to have negotiations take place, secretly, across the border in Israel and in Jordan, by emissaries of Ben-Gurion and the king. I don't think they ever met, themselves, but their emissaries did. We were knee-deep in this, and this was a major desire

of U.S. foreign policy, to bring peace with one of the countries. The feeling was that if they could get it with one country, then maybe you would start the process with other Arab countries, to bring peace. This was building up to a very hopeful point, when Abdullah was assassinated, which ended that possibility for the time being.

But that is what Ambassador McDonald was involved in...I shouldn't say full time, but a large portion of his time was involved in it. He personally with Ben-Gurion, and our ambassador on the other side, trying to do this. So I don't think people would fight that sort of thing; both sides were agreeable. That is, our embassy in Amman. I think we were both trying to get this to happen. That is, we weren't dictating the terms, but we hoped that if they would negotiate, maybe they could draw a border and establish relationships.

It made enormous sense from all sides, if they could get over the war period and have a period of cooperation. Israel had, as I mentioned, brains and ability for development, and they could help the other side very much. And they needed food; they would buy the produce of Jordan. So, economically it made a lot of sense. And then the Jordan River could have been used both intelligently and in a very good way, by both sides, in irrigation schemes. Elaborate schemes were developed by us and consultants and so forth, with the idea of helping both sides. It didn't happen; Abdullah was assassinated. I think it was Abdullah.

Q: It was Abdullah. He was the grandfather of King Hussein. I think the crown prince was not right mentally or something like that.

HOLMES: Yes, they were gradually coming to the point where they might have achieved a peace agreement. The entire time I was there, that was our number-one objective.

Q: Were you in the Consular Section all the time there?

HOLMES: No, just at first. Once again there was that situation where there was a sudden need for me in the Consular Section. And so, when somebody else arrived, in x months, then I moved over to the Political Section. That's what I was slated to do originally.

Q: Because it was a small embassy, can you remember who the DCM and who the chief of the Political Section were?

HOLMES: [chuckle]

Q: Well, we can fill this in.

HOLMES: I remember Milton Freen was the labor attaché. He was very, very active in the Political Section. It was of course the Labor government there, his side was government, and he was a very able labor attaché. He was the son-in-law of a very prominent American labor leader. When I was in the Political Section, he and I worked very, very closely together; he was labor attaché, I was political officer. I was the only political officer.

Q: How did you deal with the Israeli government? What did you do in order to report?

HOLMES: Well, all the usual functions.

Q: But remember, I'm looking for somebody who is not familiar with how it works. What are the usual things that you do?

HOLMES: Well, a lot of dealings with the Foreign Office on whatever, all the minutiae, let's say, of relationships. Now there we had a lot of visitors. The ambassador told me he wanted visitors to be handled properly, and, as the political officer, my function was to be sort of in charge of visitors. And by visitors, I mean congressmen, prominent businessmen, journalists, a lot of political people. A lot of senators and congressmen come to Israel in great numbers, or they did in those days.

Q: They still do.

HOLMES: Still do, I'm sure. So I had to do a lot of the arranging of their schedules. And this took a lot of liaison with the Foreign Office, to be sure. And the Foreign Office was very good about it; they wanted these people to have a good view of Israel. And so this meant arranging for transportation, programs, visitations, where to go and when and so forth. These visitors wanted to see the kibbutzim; they wanted to see the countryside; they wanted to see this, that, and the other thing. And Israel was keen for them to do it. But we were operating under difficult conditions. They couldn't go some places because it was unsafe, so they would have to go with convoys. That meant liaison with the army to arrange protection for them. So that took a lot of time, as well as reporting.

Now we didn't have any threat of coups, as in Latin America, none of that sort of thing, but there were opposition parties. There was the Herut Party, which subsequently has become the government, but in those days was the opposition. It was headed by a well-known terrorist who had been involved in the King David situation, Menachem Begin. He was a member of parliament.

Q: How did you view him, as somebody sort of basically... You just put both of your thumbs down. He was sort of a scary figure, wasn't he?

HOLMES: Well, he was a well-known terrorist, there was just no doubt about it, and he was an extremist, whose speeches were...

Q: And Shamir had been involved with an assassination.

HOLMES: Shamir, oh yeah. But I don't remember Shamir, I remember Begin. Begin was the head of the Herut Party.

Q: Later became the Likud Party.

HOLMES: Yes, Likud is an umbrella organization, I believe, Herut and some others.

Q: But basically Begin was the...

HOLMES: He was the powerhouse. He was a brilliant guy. I did meet him, and he was very impressive, in a sense. I mean, mentally he was a very powerful guy. Of course, he was a young man in those days. One never thought he would ever become prime minister, I don't think, in those days. It didn't seem possible. The Labor government was well ensconced, well run, and it had all sorts of, of course, connections with the Histadrut, which is the federation of the labor organizations.

But we reported on all these things, the currents of the opposition party, debates in parliament, the politics of the country, which were very interesting and very intricate; they were not easy. You had the religious parties, which were allied with Ben-Gurion. Ben-Gurion was Labor, but if he got a certain number of votes, he was allied with the ultra-religious parties. And they had their own agenda. So we very much had to report on what their agenda was, their outlook. It was a very busy political time.

Q: I'm sure it was. Did you feel any constraints, which came later, maybe, that whatever you reported would immediately end up on the desks of either the Jewish lobby or the senators from New York or California who had large Jewish constituencies? This later became quite a problem. I was wondering if it was at that time?

HOLMES: I don't recall such constraints. A lot of it was setting the framework of a new government. It was a new country, so the State Department wanted information and information galore.

Q: You were just scooping up information.

HOLMES: Yes. What is the Teachers' Union, for instance, and how does it fit into the picture? Sometimes there were little strikes of different groups, so how does that fit? Why were they striking? The doctors went on strike at one point. Why? What is their political influence? Each group had influence, in a way. I never could do enough reporting; I always felt there was more I would like to do.

Q: It sounds like a young political officer's dream. Here you were, in a new nation which was obviously on the front burner as far as American foreign policy. You were in on the ground floor.

HOLMES: It was very exciting. It was an exciting time to be there. There was an enormous amount of enthusiasm in the country, and idealism. For the first time in hundreds and hundreds of years, the Israelis had their own state, and they were excited about it. A lot of the people we met were out of concentration camps, escapees from the horrors of the holocaust. They had lost their whole family, many of them, and they were the only surviving member. But they were there in Israel, and they were totally dedicated to helping develop this new state. Tremendous idealism and enthusiasm.

Q: When you went over to Jerusalem, did you talk to our officers at our consulate general?

HOLMES: Not really. No, I didn't go over in a political mission at all. It was a food mission, plus tourism. We saw all the holy places, which was wonderful to be able to visit and to walk through the streets of Jerusalem, with no automobiles, you just walk through, as well as buying a few rugs and being a tourist, basically. Well, I met some of our people over there; they would invite us sometimes. But it was a constant flow. They knew we came over to shop, basically, and to be a tourist.

Q: How did your wife find this? I can understand her traumatic arrival and having to live with the hair dryers and all that. How did this work out?

HOLMES: Well, it was tough. It was tough, particularly with a young child and the lack of food. I remember we had cases of baby food under the bed. We finally found a small apartment and managed, one way or another, frankly, by paying in U.S. dollars, the only way we could possibly get it, which was illegal under our regulations at the time. There was just no other way. There was no other way. We got an apartment, which was very hard to get; housing was just incredible. So we moved out of the beauty parlor into an apartment, and that was nice. Well, it was one bedroom, but we felt ourselves fortunate, because it was on the ground floor and had a nice terrace, so the baby, a boy, could be out on the terrace, which was fine. It was right on a busy street, but the terrace had grillwork, so the baby could be out there and sort of watch the passersby, who would speak to him. The Israelis love children. So we felt, you know, this was wonderful. But it was tough, the whole thing of buying food three months in advance.

And then, too, it was just an awfully embarrassing thing that we would have food for the children, and the other people in the apartment, whom my wife got to know, didn't have food. We were told we can't possibly share it. Well, we did share it a bit, because sometimes a woman would come down, weeping, and just say, "I have nothing to feed Yanni," who was the little boy who played with our little boy, you know, just little toddlers. And so, obviously... Under our bed were just cases of stuff, so we would share it to some extent, when we weren't supposed to. There were lots of things you weren't supposed to do, but frankly, I think the ambassador said, "You've got to live here."

Q: We've all gone through that.

HOLMES: We'd get paid in dollars, and through a New York bank account, we'd send a check or something. What the heck. I mean, I don't think it was too illegal. But we felt it because the ambassador would say, "These are the regulations." On the other hand, he tended to look a little bit the other way -- he didn't ask. In those days, the embassy didn't help get a place. You found your own place; you went out and knocked on doors to find someplace to live. The apartment we found was owned by a prominent actor in the Hadassah Theater there (I think it was called Hadassah). He was going to live in it himself, but he liked the idea of some dollars that would permit him, then, to visit the U.S. and so forth, which he wanted to do, so we got the apartment.

Q: Did you have any dealings with any of the people who were in the leadership, particularly of the Labor Party?

HOLMES: Oh, yes.

Q: What was your impression of them?

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