The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR WILLIAM A. STOLTZFUS, JR.

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Initial interview date: May 18, 1994

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INTERVIEW

Q: Ambassador Stoltzfus, could we begin by your telling us something about your background, where you were born and a bit about your parents, where you were raised, where you went to school and so on?

STOLTZFUS: Yes. My parents were missionaries for 40 years in Syria and Lebanon. My father was a Mennonite...grew up as a Mennonite in Ohio. My mother, who was from Minnesota, was Presbyterian. They met in Lebanon where both had gone right after World War I when the Turks had been defeated and there were many orphans and extensive devastation. Various organizations (under a program called Near East Relief) sent teams to help in one way or another, especially in education and health.

My mother went out to teach in an orphanage in Sidon, Lebanon. My father was basically a driver of supplies and handyman around the various mission activities in the country. They met and decided to get married and become Presbyterian missionaries. So I was born in Beirut in 1924 at the American University Hospital there.

My father had various posts in Lebanon, in Nabatiya in the south and in Suk al-Gharb, which is a town in the mountains in the middle part of the country. And then he was transferred to Aleppo to become principal of the North Syria School for Boys, which later became Aleppo College. We were there for ten years. Dad was transferred in 1936 to Beirut to become president of Beirut College for Women, which was then known as the Junior College for Women. He turned it into a four year college. Now it is co-educational and called the Lebanese-American University.

So I grew up as a tiny tot in Nubatiya and Suk al-Gharb and subsequently in Aleppo. My brother Jim and I were sent to boarding school (the American Community School) in Beirut, I guess in the early 1930's. And then we went off on a furlough to America in

1935. We returned to Lebanon in 1936. Dad was back as president of the college in Beirut. I remained in Beirut until 1941, when I came to the States.

I attended Deerfield Academy in Massachusetts for two years and then Princeton University, and then I was in the Naval Air Corps for two years between Freshman and the rest of college years. I graduated in 1949 and then went into the Foreign Service.

Q: Tell me, when you were very small and in Aleppo and other cities, what languages did you speak?

STOLTZFUS: There was no really good school for us little kids in Aleppo. We went to Beirut to the American Community School when I was eight and my brother Jim was six. So before that we weren't really at school, but we did have some tutoring by an American who had come through Aleppo...George Rentz, who later became a well known Arabist who worked in Saudi Arabia for ARAMCO for years. But this was his first trip abroad. George Rentz was the son of an admiral from California and he was just on a trip around the world. My father talked him into teaching at the school for a year. So he was our tutor there.

So we were tutored and talked in English, but our friends were mainly Armenian. Armenians had been thrown out of Turkey after the massacres there. They were dirt poor people but they were our only playmates really. There was a family or two that lived across the street and we used to run around with them. So we knew a certain number of Armenian words. We learned a little French and some Arabic as well. As little kids we were thrown pretty much on our own up there. It was a very small American community.

Q: Did you learn Arabic on the street?

STOLTZFUS: Well to some extent. When I went to Beirut, we were largely an ex-pat community one has to say. The area was under the French mandate. Lebanon and Syria both. And the French didn't encourage Arabic studies. The schools were required to have French studies so we did study French. And of course we learned Arabic on the streets and from the servants we had and from the people who helped around the school and so forth, and in the summer time when you were up in the mountains and went camping, you were dealing with the mountaineers. So we had more of a feel for the language than a knowledge of it.

To really learn it I went to school later on at the Foreign Service Institute and then used an interpreter and got serious later on. But earlier it wasn't something we focused very much on, I must say. We knew what was called "kitchen Arabic".

Q: Enough to get along on the street.

STOLTZFUS: Enough to get along on the street and in the mountains.

Q: How often were you in America on home leave? Do you remember much about

coming to the States?

STOLTZFUS: No. The only thing I remember is we came when I was two years old. We came on a year's furlough. I'm not sure where we stayed. All I remember is the elephants in the zoo in Chicago. About the only thing I remember is those huge beasts.

Q: Lincoln Zoo?

STOLTZFUS: Yes. That is the only thing I remember.

Q: Who lived in Chicago?

STOLTZFUS: I haven't a clue! I don't remember at all. I don't think we were there any length of time. I'm not sure where we stayed. We may have stayed in Minneapolis which is my mother's home. We certainly did in 1935-36 when we came back and Dad got his MA from the University of Minnesota. Of course I remember that a lot better.

My brother and I both went to the local school there - the public school. And we lived out at the lake for awhile. We had a house that we rented near my mother's brother at Lake Minnetonka, on Gray's Bay, and we went skiing in the winter. I remember that sort of thing.

Q. *That was something different.*

STOLTZFUS: It certainly was. The temperatures were down to 40 degrees below zero...it was down to below 25 degrees for two weeks.

Q: Below zero.

STOLTZFUS: Below zero. And that was an unusual situation. Although there is fine skiing in Lebanon. Lebanon is great snow country.

Q: Very few people know that.

STOLTZFUS: Then it was back to Beirut where Dad was from 1936-58, I think. He continued as the president of Beirut College for Women.

Q: Now why did they send you to Deerfield?

STOLTZFUS: Well, Frank Boyden ("the Quid"), who was the headmaster of Deerfield, was very encouraging. He liked to have boys from all over the world. And we had some earlier families that sent their kids there. Let's see...Talcott Seelye, I doubt you would know him, he went there and David Dodge went there - he is a couple of years older than me. So, it was kind of a natural thing to pick that school. And Boyden also, for the somewhat impecunious missionaries, offered excellent financial aid...I think the full tuition at the time was $1600. And we went for about $400.

It was a school that was well known to us through our other connections. And Princeton was well known too. I was certainly glad to be able to go to Princeton. Now of course the competition is fierce. But at the time if you went to Deerfield and got decent marks and behaved yourself up there, Frank Boyden, who really frowned on people who went to any place but Amherst, thought Amherst was the place to go, and if you were really first class you went to Amherst, which was just down the road from Deerfield.

Williams was, well, not quite outside the pale but really not quite there. And Princeton was just...why would they want to go to Princeton? That was a terrible thing to do. But he insisted that he would write a recommendation. And a recommendation from Boyden was automatic acceptance just about. I mean Princeton University may say no now but I never had any doubts that I would be able to go there.

If the Quid made the proper noises then I would get in. And I went with Arthur Close, who has been my life long friend, who was also at Deerfield. He was also from Beirut. His father was a chemistry professor at the AUB - the American University there. So that is pretty much how I went to Princeton. At the end of my Freshman year I went into the Navy.

Q: Before you say that, did you have any particular plan of study at Princeton?

STOLTZFUS: I had always sort of two kinds of tracks in mind. One was diplomatic service because we had a number of friends in the service; we had George Wadsworth, who was a very famous curmudgeon from the old days. He and his wife were close friends of my parents. And he was Minister to Lebanon and Syria and they used to see each other. And then there were a couple of others, like the French Consul. The foreign community knew each other but in those days it was a much smaller group, in Aleppo or wherever it was. So I had that as one track.

And the other one was totally out in left field which was something someone talked to me about one time: vocational guidance and I guess I didn't know what vocational guidance really was. I guess if you behave yourself reasonably well you can tell other people to be good and get their lives focused and so on. I don't know why that sort of stuck in my mind as a kid. Somebody must have sat me down and talked to me about that. So that sort of rattled around in my mind.

But I finally realized I wanted to work abroad; anything foreign. I would have gone with an oil company, for example. Later on as I got older I felt an instinct to stick with my strengths. If you have a strong suit at least get yourself started in that and then if you want to branch out, fine. But the Middle East and Arab countries were areas I knew well so I figured that is where I would go, whatever the organization was. That would be the way I would tackle the first part of my career, whatever it was.

Q: You were aware of your superiority of information about the Middle East compared to anyone here in the United States?

STOLTZFUS: Well, nobody cared much...not even Washington cared. That was a great thing for those of us that got started in those days because nobody really cared about it. There was some interest in Israel and getting that started. There was a lot of interest in that country, as everyone knows, from 1946, a very important year for the start of Israel. So people saw the Middle East strictly in terms of Israel and its benefits.

And also of course, the oil situation. Oil was not on the front burner in the sense it is now, but certainly if anyone had been asked what our interest in the Middle East was, they probably would have included oil. But going out there at that time, you were very much on your own. Washington really didn't want any unpleasant surprises. I mean your job was to kind of keep things on an even keel and the fact that you knew the area and were crazy enough to want to go there was helpful; nobody else wanted to go there. And that was a good thing because that meant you had a chance to advance in the career in a place which you knew and which nobody else cared about. And they were awfully glad that you cared enough to do it because they certainly didn't want to.

And that way I never got out of the Foreign Service because there was always some reason to take the next step. There was always an opportunity to take the next step in your career right where you were and not take the chances on getting in a cold world outside.

Q: No Paris or London?

STOLTZFUS: No Paris or London, where you'd be swallowed up and never seen again as far as I could tell. And the Far East was fine. Or Africa was fine but I didn't know enough about either to feel I was credible. I asked for London any number of times later and of course I didn't have enough political clout to get there. I mean I was nobody. The ones who got there were David Newsom and Hermann Eilts and those kinds of heavyweights. Those are the ones that got those jobs.

Q: When did you take the Foreign Service exam?

STOLTZFUS: I took it in Cairo in 1949, I believe. In 1949 I entered the Service and they had what was called the intern program at the time. The intern program was just an effort to have some trainees or some people or kids selected from various colleges around the country to try to get away from this concept, as I understand it, that the Foreign Service officer corps were just a bunch of WASPS from the East Coast. So they had some trainees from all over. But of course they also had some from the east. And Princeton is not exactly the boonies from the educational point of view.

Anyway, we were about 35 to 40 men and women. You had a training program and they told you about the Foreign Service and you had various courses together. And then we were assigned to certain bureaus and certain offices for three month stints.

I was in the Bureau of Public Affairs for awhile. I had to write an article on the visit of the fire chief of Mecca. The fire chief brought his son with him. I don't know exactly why

the fire chief of Mecca in Saudi Arabia would be visiting the States at that time. I guess he was learning how to put out fires or something. Anyway I interviewed him and wrote a little paper. But there was nothing too much that happened in the intern program except that you did learn about the Foreign Service and it was an effort to bring in people from the outside who would not normally be on that kind of...Georgetown, Princeton, Harvard, Yale kind of circuit.

Then some of them left and went back home and some of us stayed on. And some stayed in Washington on the domestic side and some of us went into the foreign field. So my first assignment was as a foreign service staff (FSS) to Alexandria, Egypt. That was the first foreign post.

Q: Yes, Alexandria. Economic assistant?

STOLTZFUS: My job was to write routine reports like flax production reports and stuff.

Q: Good vice consul stuff?

STOLTZFUS: Yes!

Q: And you were there from?

STOLTZFUS: Not very long.

Q: Just for a year. 1950?

STOLTZFUS. Yes. Even less. I was there just a few months. Amazing what you do when you're young. ..I had the effrontery to arrive in Alexandria and meet the Consul General there whose name slips my mind now. I have a picture of him somewhere. Anyway, I had the effrontery to say, "I haven't had any vacation so I'd like to go off to visit my parents in Lebanon." Right out of the barrel! He swallowed hard and said, "Why not?" So I left immediately for a month with my family in Lebanon. That shows how light a view I took of my career when I was young. At least I showed not too good judgment to start with. Anyway, he was very kind about it. I spent about a month in Beirut and then came back and was transferred to Benghazi from Alexandria.

Q: You were in Alexandria in 1950? Do you remember?

STOLTZFUS: I remember it was the last days of King Farouk. You had a feeling that society was pretty sick. There was the Alexandria Sporting Club for amusement. I wasn't very serious about life at that time. I was single and there were a lot of pretty girls around and a lot of tennis. And tennis and pretty girls were about all I was interested in.

And the Consul General didn't take life too seriously either. So I was his tennis partner and he was much more interested in my being in shape to play tennis properly with him than whatever I did in the office. I wasn't that bad. I did write reports and so on. But if he

thought I was going to be out late or something he would say, "Well, we have a match coming up so if you are busy tonight maybe you'd better take off now and get some rest before we play this match." So that was kind of the once over lightly way I started.

Q: You weren't paying much attention to British cruisers coming into port and the unrest in Cairo?

STOLTZFUS: Well, this was...let's see. I'm trying to remember. No. I mean, I'm not sure what was going on at the time except for my own interests. There was the Alexandria Sporting Club and my friends were mostly Jewish cotton merchants and Greeks and Italian investor types. The thing I remember most is how they had no respect whatsoever for the Egyptian lower class. Forget that! You never spoke Arabic. Your Arabic was just for servants. You spoke French. French was the language you spoke.

And I remember the police were terribly badly paid and they could be corrupted by just giving them a few pounds. I remember times we would be out at night and it was notoriously crazy. A friend of ours, he had the car, and if he saw a policeman on the sidewalk, he'd drive him right off the sidewalk. I mean, he would drive right up at him and say, "Ha, ha. That was great fun." That never appealed to me very much, that type of thing. But there was no way that policeman would ever have been able to do anything. No way. That is just an example of the kind of situation you had there. The upper crust did anything it wanted to.

I might mention one thing before I forget it. One of the Wahba family (real Egyptian "Brahmins") was the Egyptian Ambassador to the Court of St. James at the time. For some reason I got to know his daughter and I went to call on her one time to have tea. As we were talking I said - I knew she was the "upper crust" and the upper crust spoke only French - but I said something about "you Arabs" and my relations with her were never the same after that. She said, "We are not Arabs. We are Pharonic. We are not Arabs. Don't ever call us Arabs." And I have never forgotten that as being the way things were at the time.

The Arabs were just what somebody would say well, that riff-raff out in the bazaar. That is what the Arabs were to the upper crust there at the time...pre-Nasser.

Q: You took the Foreign Service exam while you were there?

STOLTZFUS: In Cairo.

Q: They were giving it at the embassy?

STOLTZFUS: Was it Cairo? Or?...Yes, I think it was Cairo. You can take the Foreign Service exam if it is ahead of time. I mean, you can take it whenever they give it and they did give it in Cairo. But that was a three day stint then. I'm not saying it is any easier now but it is not the same as then.

Q: Was it three? I thought it was five days.

STOLTZFUS: Maybe five. It was a lot. So, I passed with a 69.5, 70 being passing. But I was allowed to pass because I got 69.5. Anyway, very close and they gave me the benefit of the doubt there.

Then I came back to the States at some point to take the oral. I paid my own way back from Libya to take the oral and flunked it. There was Ambassador Greene, or somebody named Greene, who had the panel and one of the panel asked: "Name 11 ports on the Mississippi River." Well, I could name Minneapolis and New Orleans, but I couldn't name very many others. They asked a little bit about Roman history and that was okay. Anyway, the long and the short of it was that Greene and his troops decided that I was very good Foreign Service material but I didn't know enough about the United States. I should go and learn more about the United States. So I bought a book or got hold of a high school textbook on the history of the United States and read that. And the next time I had no trouble answering.

Q: So you took the oral a second time.

STOLTZFUS: I took the oral a second time. I was back in the States by then. (Tape 1, Side A ends here)

STOLTZFUS: I had a short, very short time in Alexandria. It was basically a few months. I was not there very long. I was transferred to Benghazi, which was a Consulate that was just opening. And this was before Libyan independence, so we had our main post in Tripoli of course. But Bollard Moore was opening the Consulate in Benghazi. The town had been 85% destroyed in the desert campaign. That was the main focus of the desert campaign between the British and Rommel.

The whole place was just one big rubble except for the Catholic church and the British military installations including the club - the British Club. So we just did economic and consular work and a lot of traveling around, sort of putting the post together. I was there until 1952. Then I went back to the US.

So I was still staff during that time, FSS. I applied to the language area program. And when I was accepted into that, I went back to the States. And it was about a year I would say that I was at the FSI to study language area. Then I went to Beirut, to the FSI school in Beirut.

And that was where I met my wife, Janet. She had come out to be a teacher at Dad's college. She and I went around together and decided to get married. I was there in Beirut until I was assigned to Kuwait.

Q: Go back to Benghazi. There was the Consul Bollard Moore?

STOLTZFUS: Consul Bollard Moore, and there was another, Marion Rice...I can't

believe I can remember that name. Marion Rice was his deputy. There were three of us Americans there, plus local staff.

Q: Do you remember...I think it was in 1951 and at that time the independence of Libya was the big subject and it seems they had two capitals at that point. Benghazi and Tripoli. And it was moved.

STOLTZFUS: Yes. Well, King Idriss, I think he used both as capitals. Cyrenaica, Tripolitania and Fezzan, those are the three provinces in Libya. And Fezzan didn't amount to much. I mean, of course it probably does now...but that's oil. At the time, and I may be wrong on this, I think King Idriss preferred to be in Tripoli. Wherever the king was...like in medieval times, wherever the king was really was where the capital was.

Q: Were there any people coming out of the UN about this?

STOLTZFUS: No. It was a very quiet time. Benghazi was not on the main circuit. Tripoli was, I'm sure. We didn't get any business as I recall of any significance at all. I don't recall anybody of any significance coming while I was there.

I used to run around with the British officers. We used to go deep into the desert and do reports on the topography of the areas and roads you might use if you were evacuating and that sort of thing. I spent a lot of time with the British officers and we were always out in the desert doing one thing or another. We went down to the oases and so on.

But again, we were not on the political circuit at all. I don't remember anything about that at all.

Q: In the UN they were talking about you but I guess they didn't come out and...did we have some American bases?

STOLTZFUS: Wheelus is in Tripoli. I don't know when that started. It certainly wasn't there when the British were there, I don't think. Maybe the Americans took it...I don't remember.

Q: I have a 1951 date but I don't know if that's...

STOLTZFUS: Well, 1951 is when...

Q: December of 1951 is the independence...

STOLTZFUS: The end of 1951 because it was almost 1952 basically. It could have been December 1951 that the British pulled out of Wheelus and I think the Americans took over. Because the Americans wouldn't have been there if the British were there. I don't think they would have been there. Of course it became an American base after that until Qadhafi thought it was not a good idea.

Q: And from there you went to the Arabic language school?

STOLTZFUS: I went to Arabic language training as I said for about a year in the States and about a year in Beirut.

Q: How many students were in that group?

STOLTZFUS: I would have said less than ten. Probably six or eight. Carl Brown was one, I think. I must be careful again. They had sort of classes. It was very unstructured and I was working on my own most of the time. There was very little interplay among the various people and students.

Q: This was in Washington?

STOLTZFUS: This was in Beirut. In Washington John Root left; John Root was one of the students. He later worked for Exxon. He was a very promising young officer but he...at that time you couldn't marry a foreigner without permission. And he fell in love with a lovely Greek girl. They checked her out and she had some security problem...it would be difficult not to have something...that kind of Balkan, Turk and Greek and so on, my goodness! And probably very few people would be untainted in some way or another. Anyway, they said, "No." And he said, "Okay, buster, I'm leaving." So he married her and went off and went to the oil companies. He was a good friend of mine at the time. I don't remember too many others who were there. There were others, of course, but I don't remember them.

Q: You did the FSI part and then you went to Beirut.

STOLTZFUS: And Beirut was FSI as well. They had a branch there.

Q: But sort of in the area of Arabic speaking.

STOLTZFUS: Arabic language training they called it. The British had their place and still do. Actually, I'm not sure if they still do. But they had MECAS as they called it: Middle East Center for Arabic Studies, in Chemlan, a little town above Beirut. Which we always were a bit jealous of because it seemed much more likely that you would learn the language outside of the big city and all of its distractions. But FSI kept its school in Beirut.

Q: But you did learn Arabic?

STOLTZFUS: Yes. I never learned Arabic to my total satisfaction. I'm studying French now. I've never known French to my total satisfaction either. I am fluent in both languages but I don't consider myself in any way bi-lingual.

Q: The 8th of June, 1996. And we want to begin today, Ambassador, with your assignment to Kuwait as Vice Consul. Am I correct? This was your first assignment after

you actually entered the Foreign Service after the examination?

STOLTZFUS: Yes.

Q: And oral?

STOLTZFUS: That's right. I was an FSO by the time I went to language school and then after language school I was assigned to Kuwait. I recall that we drove from Beirut through Baghdad and down through Basrah. I was accompanied by...I think he was the DCM at our Beirut Embassy and his name was Emerson. I can't remember his first name. He had some medical problems. He had some kind of brain tumor. I think he died later, not too long after that. But I think he was the DCM.

Then there was John Devlin who was my apartment mate when we were in language school. He was with CIA. Anyway, they just came along for the trip. It took us a couple of days. We stayed overnight at the Consulate in Basrah. A great big fellow - I've forgotten his name - was Consul there. It was just going along the telephone poles d

own to Muslih, which is the promontory before you drop down into Kuwait town.

It was just totally different obviously from now. We have a modern city there in Kuwait now with all the high rise hotels and everything else. But in those days, there was a mud wall around it. And you entered through a gate. And they closed those gates at night. It was a real medieval wall. It was a mud wall, so every time it rained they had the laborers come out and slap mud back up onto the wall. I recall that.

Just after we arrived they had one of the biggest rainstorms that any of them could recall. I have pictures buried somewhere in our attic of the land around Kuwait City - it is clay so the water just stayed on top. It looked as if you were in Venice. Except for a few streets that were somewhat elevated, the place looked just like a sea of water. It was the most amazing thing.

Most of the buildings at that time were adobe with grass roofs and I guess mud on the roofs as well. So whenever it rained, of course, it just rained through the roof as well. The Consul and his wife had to move out of the Consulate, which was a mud building near the sea. It was outside the wall.

One of the sheikhs, Abdullah Jaber, one of the most important members of the royal family - ruling family - had his big establishment and guards out there, and he gave us one of his little out houses for the Consulate. But after the rain the Consul, Harrison Symmes, and his wife moved out and went to some rather nice quarters, relatively speaking, that the oil company had there. Gulf and BP were the two oil companies who ran the Kuwait oil business.

I stayed in the Consulate and kept moving my cot around to avoid the water pouring in through holes in the roof. But I recall those were very interesting days. Any old person

can say this, but it was a great deal more interesting in those days than it became later as far as I am concerned.

I mean, the way they lived there, the quiet way they lived and the interesting back and forth when you walked and visited people. On feast days you went and called on certain families who were "at home" that day, and you had your cup of tea or coffee or couple of sweets, and then you moved on to the next group that were at home. They still do that but now you rush around in cars. In those days you were right on the waterfront, walking between calls, and the Gulf waters just rolled in onto the beach. The Kuwaitis would sit out on these high trestles to gossip and greet passers-by...it was hot all the time, and practically no air conditioning. (We got air conditioning later.) You'd sit out on these high straw benches and chat and look at the sea. And go down and see the fishing boats and so on. It was a very enjoyable life. The physical side didn't bother me.

Q: Why were we in Kuwait?

STOLTZFUS: We had the only Consulate in Kuwait. The United States was the only country the British allowed to have a Consulate. I think they did that somewhat reluctantly too. The rationale for us was the Gulf Oil Company and the fact that we needed to service Americans who were there.

Kuwait was under the British...it was a protectorate of the British which meant that they were in charge of the foreign affairs and the security of the country. But they also basically ran it. The Political Agent in Kuwait was one of a number of Political Agents in the Gulf who reported to the Political Resident in Bahrain, which was the headquarters of the British presence in the Gulf. The Political Resident would visit the various Sheikhdoms from time to time.

Gradually they had, under the British administration, Arabs coming along. They weren't all Kuwaitis. In fact, most of them were either Palestinians or Lebanese or other Arabs. The Kuwaitis were more the ones who had the businesses and were the merchants. And they weren't really used to working that way. That was not the sort of thing a Kuwaiti did. They were either Bedouin from the desert or they were sophisticated businessmen. Families such as the al-Ghanims, Bebehanis, al-Bahars and others were longtime pearl merchants and importers and exporters to Iraq and Saudi Arabia, to India, Zanzibar.

Kuwait was an entrepot and still is...an entrepot to a lot of goods moving around to bigger neighbors. There were Indians and others there. So it was quite a cosmopolitan group. The administration of the government was really run by foreigners, British, Arabs or Indians.

The Kuwaitis were given certain top jobs; the head of security was a Kuwaiti. They were basically under the British until independence, although prominent ruling family members began to take over the various ministries.

Q: So the British had a sizable office there.

STOLTZFUS: Yes. They had the Agency.

Q: Inside the walled city or outside?

STOLTZFUS: Inside. The wall ran from water to water.

Q: Yes.

STOLTZFUS: The open part of course was to the sea. There were several gates and the Political Agency was inside the walls. And all of the government agencies. The only activity (except for animal grazing and hunting, of course) outside was occasionally as time went on when someone would take a piece of land and then build a house or business outside the walls and move there because the walls were no longer any kind of military protection. They were kept up because they had always had them, I guess. And it was a very picturesque situation. I always regretted their taking the wall down. They preserved the gates so that you have those symbols anyway. For example, the Jahra gate which leads toward Iraq is in the center of a traffic circle now. You can go take a close look at it if you want to. It is near one of the big hotels. The first ring road is where the wall used to be.

The oil companies were a little bit south. They had their own oil compounds in a place called Ahmadi, which is about 20 minutes south of Kuwait City. Also at Mina Abdullah, Mina Saud and in the Neutral Zone. And that is where the oil tankers would come in. In those days to produce a barrel of oil was 10 - 12 cents a barrel. And they were producing a million and a half to two million barrels a day. They were producing a lot more oil then, if I'm not mistaken, than they are now. They had substantially bigger production then than they've ever had in later times when the oil would cost more.

But there were very few paved roads. For example, the main road out of town was just a dirt track. In the middle of town Indians and others had big general stores that you went to and you just parked your car in open unpaved areas and puddled across the sand or dirt (or mud in winter), bought your stuff and got back in the car and went home. Down the coast were beautiful, empty beaches. Now the coast is just one solid line of chalets and marinas and clubs for swimming and so on all the way to the neutral zone border with Saudi Arabia.

But in those days it was just beautiful sand beaches and you just drove down to one of them on a Friday - Friday being a day off in a Muslim country. You would pack up your kids and maybe some friends in your jeep, go on down a few miles, park in the desert and walk across the sand dunes. You could stop anywhere. The water was clear. Now of course you can hardly see the coastline for all of the big chalets and so on.

Q: So did you have a car or a jeep?

STOLTZFUS: Yes. We had a couple of cars. Well, we had our own car. But we had a

Chevy for company business. And I'm sure the Consul, Harry Symmes, had his own car too.

Q: What was your function in the Consulate?

STOLTZFUS: We were three. Harry Symmes was the Consul, I was the Vice Consul and then we had a...Inger Voslef was her name. She was the...

Q: Secretary-Communicator?

STOLTZFUS: I suppose so. We had no communications except a bag or pouch. There were no telephones or anything.

Q: No telephone?

STOLTZFUS: We didn't have a telephone at that time.

Q: So you couldn't send cables?

STOLTZFUS: No, no, no. Not at that time. In fact that was...

Q: Did you write any coded messages?

STOLTZFUS: Yes, you could. But you had one time pads. We used one time pads for coding, which was kind of fun. You didn't want to make your message too long. Some of these messages from Washington, if you got half way through them or even after a few sentences, you realized you didn't need all that junk. But anyway they would send it. But our main job from the British point of view was to take care of Americans who required passport and the usual citizen services and got into trouble occasionally.

There was a Palestine Refugee Program as I recall where there was an elaborate way of issuing entry visas, immigrant visas for these various displaced Palestinians. Washington sent us a special person whose name escapes me now whose job was just to process those immigrant visas.

Q: These were refugees?

STOLTZFUS: It was a special refugee program for Palestinians. You had to check their police records at their previous places of residence. It was a very long and cumbersome process that they sent somebody to do. So we didn't have to do that. But you know, we wrote reports...we would talk to various people. Just the normal reporting. But it was very high powered. We were not supposed to be stirring up anything.

The British and the Americans with their oil royalties coming into the ruling family - of course the ruling family was happy to get all that income. Everything went very peacefully. The only thing...the Americans would once in awhile get into trouble. For

example, there was a young Kuwaiti who took a shine to the teenager of an American family in Bahrain. He pretended that he really was interested in the mother. And the mother seemed to think the Kuwaiti was after her and not after the 13 year old daughter. So he didn't disabuse her of that. Eventually the two of them, the mother and child, came up to Kuwait to look for this guy. And it was clear by then his shine was to the little girl, not the lady.

So the mother theoretically tried to commit suicide. She was in the hospital in Kuwait when I got a call very late one night. I went down there. She was a bit worse for wear but not in excessively great distress because her supposed lover had jilted her. The Kuwaiti chief of police, Jassim Qitami, was there. I got to know the police very well through various exercises of that sort. Anyway, the woman went back to Bahrain and the girl stayed. The girl was very cool; these young teenagers take everything as it comes. The fact that he was chasing her didn't seem to bother her too much. She seemed quite indifferent. We took her in and she stayed with my wife and me for awhile until we shipped her back to Bahrain.

There were various events. You know, some of these citizenship problems and taking care of Americans lead you into some very interesting situations.

Q: And you were there for two years then?

STOLTZFUS: Two years.

Q: And it was a fairly quiet...

STOLTZFUS: I don't recall...the problems were mostly with Americans, not with any Arabs or others.

Q: And you weren't affected very seriously by the events that were going on in the Israel area and Suez?

STOLTZFUS: This was 1954 - 1956. No. We were very much outside that stream of problems further west. I was going to tell you something else about...

Q: Date is June 8, 1997. Ambassador Stoltzfus, you want to continue with some other remembrances about Kuwait, I believe.

STOLTZFUS: Briefly it was the kind of life in the past in which, as I said before, the entertainment was entirely seeing each other in the evening. And you were always outside because it was always so hot all the time. We would have small tennis tournaments and various diversions. The American Dutch Reform Mission there had a church and the Kuwaitis, unlike the Saudis, allowed the Christians to have our own church, which was nice.

Harry Symmes left the post after his two years. I was in charge briefly until Bill Brewer

came there to take over. During that interim period I got a message saying I was transferred to Khartoum. I sent a message back saying well, that is fine. You are leaving Inger Voslef in charge if that is what your plans are. I got a very hasty reply saying, "No, no! You are not going to Khartoum. Stay right where you are." Some of the Washington procedures were not quite as smooth as I assume they are now. Maybe they are not any smoother now.

We left Kuwait in March of 1956. We went back to the States and I was assigned to Syria.

Q: Damascus?

STOLTZFUS: Damascus. And of course Damascus was right in the hub of area affairs. Plenty of action from the very beginning of my assignment. I took over from Alford Atherton, who was the political officer. Ed Waggoner was head of the Political Section. The Syrians are very sophisticated people. We led a totally different life in Damascus. And the Suez crisis was developing. It was clear that trouble was brewing. Our American evacuation out of Damascus occurred fairly early on. I was only there about six months as I recall.

My job there was the typical political officer's job where you seek out people who seem knowledgeable in terms of politics and so on. One didn't settle down very well because the situation was so uncertain. James Moose was Ambassador there at the time. And there wasn't an awful lot of freedom of action. I was the junior man in the political section then.

Q: The worry seemed to be, I thought at that time, whether there would be some influence from the Soviet Union as they were trying to get some kind of base or position in that area. And had offered arms or to build something...I don't know if it was a pipeline?

STOLTZFUS: I'm really fairly vague on that myself. I was there such a short time. Again, it is very interesting. My entire career was peripheral to the Arab - Israeli question. I had very little direct activity at all with that problem. The policies I related to were to keep the oil flowing and to keep the Soviets out of the area if we could. Peripheral also for me was the 1956 invasion of Egypt by Israel and France and Britain, which of course Eisenhower opposed.

Nevertheless, the Soviets were looking for any opportunity to get in. A senior official of their Foreign Ministry - Shepilov, his name was - came to visit Damascus when I was there. I went out to the airport just to view the scene. He was there obviously to make as many nickels for the Soviet Union as possible. They were becoming extremely active. I don't recall if that was their first effort there but certainly that was a major effort by the Soviets to make inroads in Syria. Which of course became very successful later on. I think it was mainly an offer of arms and obviously support against Israel and so forth. It gave them their opening.

Q: And Syria was saying they were afraid they were going to be attacked so they needed to be...

STOLTZFUS: The Syrians...the Arab world was virulently against our pro-Israeli policies. Of course in the beginning, from 1946 on, there was a constant barrage of criticism by the Arabs. Unfortunately the Arabs were always fighting wars that they lost. Each time they lost the war they would say, "Well, we'll take what you had offered before the last war." They were always one war too late. If you would just take what was then offered, you'd certainly be far ahead because once you lost the war, then you were losing some more. They couldn't seem to understand that once you lost you were not likely to have the same conditions as you had before the war. And they just constantly did that. I am very fond of my Arab friends, but basically in terms of the policies of their governments, they are real losers. They have always been losers as far as I can see.

But the Syrians were virulently anti-American. They weren't on an individual basis. Those of us who were out there were always accused of being pro-Arab and loving the Arabs and all this. Robert Kaplan has written a book about Arabists, which you may or may not have seen, which is the usual accusation that American and British Arabists have fallen in love with the Arabs and therefore they can't see anything beyond their emotional attachment. They are just a bunch of romantics that don't understand "real politique". That is basically it.

Of course those of us who were out there have a feeling that is a total misreading of what we were trying to do. Which is first of all to stay in touch with the Arabs. And you don't stay in touch with them by rubbing their faces in your differences. You make clear what American policy is and then you show some personal sympathy for some of their points of view. And you also try to tell Washington a little bit about what the other side is. Instead of saying, "Yes, you are right." And our domestic situation is such that we are strongly influenced by the domestic scene as much as by the foreign scene. We were non-PC, obviously. I don't mind being accused of not being politically correct from Washington's point of view. But I certainly resent people suggesting that we were just a bunch of romantics who didn't understand. You have to present the situation as you see it, and that would be presumably one of the primary jobs of a foreign diplomat: to present the situation as he sees it on the spot. That's what he's there for. That's what he's paid for.

Anyway, the Syrians have always felt that they were the cutting edge of Arab resistance to Israel and that they have always rejected the idea that Israel should exist at all. But now of course they are gradually getting to the point where they are trying to come to some accommodation which would mean their getting back lands that were taken away from them by the Israelis.

Of course, the Israelis, again, they won the war so you have to realize that the people who lose things don't necessarily get them back very quickly without quid pro quo. But the Syrians were obviously using the Soviets. And the Soviets were using Syrians during those days to counter American influence in the area through Israel. There was a congruence of interests, obviously.

Q: So you were actually in Damascus a relatively brief time as you said a few minutes ago. Can you explain what happened?

STOLTZFUS: I got word from Washington that I was being transferred to Jeddah. The Ambassador in Jeddah was a character of the old school and quite a maverick. His name was George Wadsworth and he was known throughout the service as being cantankerous and contentious. He was the bane of many a junior officer. He just went about his own business in his own unorthodox way.

We had a large Embassy compound at Jeddah. Wadsworth's residence was at one end of the compound. He had built his own golf course there. That is what he always did wherever he went. Whether it was Ankara or Jeddah, he built his own golf course. That was a wonderful thing because it was a community thing. Everybody, all of his colleagues and the rest of us, could use the course. From that point of view he had a very good and kind sense that there isn't much to do in places like that. So he had a golf club; it was a very, very nice community thing.

But he worked entirely in his own residence. It is claimed that in his three or four years there he only went to the Chancery a couple of times and that was to explain to his DCM what he wanted done about the golf course. Whether that is absolutely accurate or not, he never went to the chancery once when I was there.

Jeddah is now a Consulate General, the Embassy having moved to Riyadh years ago.

Q: And you were his aide, I think?

STOLTZFUS: Well, Washington was worried about the situation. The Ambassador had his safe and everything - all his papers, everything - in his residence. He didn't do anything in the Chancery at all. The DCM was just his flunky who saw him occasionally if the Ambassador felt like seeing him. He had nothing to do with any of the Ambassador's meetings with the King or senior ministers or other ambassadors. Nothing to do with political or military or oil (ARAMCO) reporting. He simply administered the Chancery.

Well, the person Wadsworth worked with was a Saudi by the name of Mohammed Masoud, who later became Deputy Foreign Minister. But he was trusted by the King and was very influential with the King. And he was also the interpreter and assistant to the American Ambassador.

So he was the only one who was at the residence with the Ambassador. And they would do all the cables, all this top secret stuff. Everything that went through, Mohammed Masoud would see. Whether he informed or not - and undoubtedly he did - our relations with Saudi Arabia were so good that you weren't talking about some sort of terrible thing that was going to happen.

But to say the least it was a breach of security for the Ambassador to be doing all of his cables and all of his work with this Saudi.

So I was sent down to take over from Mohammed Masoud. Now the Ambassador didn't ask for me. He had no notion I was coming. That is an interesting situation to put one of your junior officers into. To send him down there and then he is supposed to take over from the person who is spending night and day with the Ambassador.

The Ambassador used to get up at 10 or 11 in the morning and work until three or four in the afternoon. And he'd play golf in the afternoon. After dinner he'd play bridge with his diplomatic colleagues and then he'd say, "Bill, let's get to work." It would be nine at night and then we'd work all night until about three or four in the morning. I never saw my wife. I don't know how we had a child there. We did somehow.

But back to Mohammed Masoud. So I showed up at the residence. The Ambassador said, "I knew your parents." He and his wife, who had passed away - he had been Minister to Lebanon and Syria - had met my parents and they were good friends to him. "Well, I know your parents. Good people." I said, "Mr. Ambassador, I am here..." "I know you're here, don't know why." So I said, "What can I do?" He said, "Do? Be helpful, just be helpful! Go and sit with Mohammed and, you know, correct his English or something." Well here is a very sensitive subject. And Mohammed sort of looked at me: what is this guy doing here? I realized right there it could be a very uncomfortable situation for me unless I was very careful. So I said, "Mohammed, I just want to be helpful to you. If there is anything I can do..." And as we chatted over the next few days he began to relax and respond. I never made any effort to interfere in any way whatsoever between Masoud and the Ambassador. Otherwise my life would have been totally impossible because the Ambassador didn't want me there. And Mohammed certainly didn't want me there. He saw me as a spy who had come in to check him out. He was no dodo. He knew it was a rather unusual situation for him to be in. And it was a nice, cozy arrangement. Now here is this guy, this young American coming in and he is going to take my place and so on.

Q: That is what the Department wanted though.

STOLTZFUS: That is what the Department wanted.

Q: Didn't they tell the Ambassador to get that man out of there?

STOLTZFUS: No. Of course not. Oh, no. They treated George Wadsworth with kid gloves. Nobody would do that.

Q: Even...?

STOLTZFUS: It is just amazing. But he did it.

Q: It's incredible.

STOLTZFUS: Isn't it incredible? That is just the most marvelous thing. Anyway, I said, "Mohammed, let's chat." When he wasn't doing something specific, we'd talk. And we got to be fast friends because he didn't want to take the notes. He would interpret for the Ambassador and I was the note taker.

And the Ambassador, once he realized that we were getting along all right - we were three bugs in a rug for over a year. I mean we were constantly together. We would go and see the King. Take off in the plane and see the King. The king was often out in the desert hunting. And we'd go and land on some bit of wind swept desert somewhere. King Saud at the time had these huge tents which were air conditioned in the hot season, and he had these huge trucks with food galore. We would land right on the stubble desert and in winter it would be just freezing - you know that blowing wind - and he'd have these big sheepskin jackets and we would put them on. And then we would keep them. You couldn't give them back...they were presents. I still have one.

And then we would sit with the King and talk about whatever business there was. Mohammed was the interpreter and I was the note taker.

Q: At least you knew what was going on?

STOLTZFUS: Yes. I knew what was going on. I did all the cables for the Ambassador. I got so that I wrote them all too. I got so that I would write the way he did. I would find myself saying, "I would venture to say that so and so..." You know, you just become totally immersed in somebody else's psyche and somebody else's way of doing things. For a year we dealt that way there. And then Mohammed later became Deputy Foreign Minister; he went on to higher things.

Q: But the whole time Wadsworth was there, Mohammed was in the house?

STOLTZFUS: At first, yes. But gradually, it worked out fine. Mohammed had a family...he didn't want to be there all the time. And he used to complain to me about it as we got to know each other better. He'd say, "I spend my entire life here." So he got so that he would spend less and less time there except when we were on a trip. And I was there. I had to be there all the time. Actually, I didn't mind it because I learned so much from that. I would say from George Wadsworth I learned more than I did from anyone else in the entire service.

Wadsworth and Dave Newsom are the two most important people in my career, in the advancement of my career.

Q: What was Wadsworth teaching you?

STOLTZFUS: Well, the way he operated, how he would talk to the King, how he wanted his cables done. At first he'd write the cables and he'd also send in all of my notes. I would spend the whole rest of the night doing notes, you know...setting them up and he would write the cable from those notes. But then later on I even wrote the cables. I wrote

a lot of them, showed them to him, and sent them off.

Q: Did he speak Arabic?

STOLTZFUS: No. I don't think so. He never used it. I don't think so. When time came to write efficiency reports I said to the Ambassador, "You're not leaving me to the tender mercies of the Political Officer and the DCM to write my report, are you?" Of course the fact that I was exclusively with the Ambassador all the time didn't do me any good with the DCM and the rest down at the Chancery.

Al Jenkins was DCM when I arrived. The fact that he was shunted aside by the Ambassador didn't seem to bother him. But then another guy came in named Joe Sweeney. Joseph Sweeney. The Department, really, talk about how they handled this thing. First they sent me into the lion's den, and they obviously told Sweeney what the situation was. And that Sweeney was supposed to do something about it. And that Wadsworth probably wouldn't be there very long so that Sweeney would get the Embassy's operations back to a normal situation.

Well of course Wadsworth didn't leave for quite a long time. And Wadsworth thought that Sweeney was less than a small bug on a rug, and could have cared less about anyone including Sweeney. And Sweeney was a real boiling Irishman. He didn't like that one bit. And of course I think it was a little unfair. Maybe I was a little arrogant working with the Ambassador. I tried to make some effort to say, well, I'm really part of this Embassy. He wouldn't let me in the door at all. He said in effect, "You are up there with the Ambassador. Forget it. I won't have anything to do with you." In fact, we weren't speaking for about four or five months.

And there was another problem. Our new Public Affairs Officer was Issa Sabbagh, formerly with the British Broadcasting Corporation, and the Voice of America. He was assigned to Jeddah and he got in Dutch with Sweeney, so Sweeney would not speak to Issa nor to me at all. We were absolutely dead...we were not ever invited to the Chancery. We didn't have an office and weren't allowed in the place. So it was a bit dicey.

Anyway, I said, "Mr. Ambassador, you are going to be leaving. I have been working with you all this time and you're not going to leave me to have Joe Sweeney write my efficiency report, are you?" "Well," he said, "you don't think I'm going to write it, do you?" And I said, "Well, yes." He said, "You know, I recall when I was a junior officer I had to write my own report. Why don't you write your report." So I wrote, "William Stoltzfus has done an outstanding job for the Ambassador. There is very little to criticize in him. Maybe he doesn't make the martinis exactly right but he has been superior in every respect. I have no complaints. I think he should be promoted as soon as possible." I went on and on and on. He looked at this report and he said, "Bill, don't you think this is a little bit thick?" I said, "You asked me to write it." He changed a word or two that I wrote, excerpted parts of the report written by the Political Officer, who of course had no relation to my duties at all - and sent it in.

Q: A junior officer's dream, right?

STOLTZFUS: Just perfect...that's why you can say he did me a big favor. Well, I mean actually, I worked with him night and day. It was very seldom that I got home before dawn.

Q: For over two years?

STOLTZFUS: Well, no. A year and a half? And then the next Ambassador was Donald Heath. He was out in Cambodia before. Well, he was a piece of work too, but in a totally different way.

He was pretty lazy to be honest with you. And so I became the interpreter as well as the note taker. Whenever we went to the...

Q: Mohammed left?

STOLTZFUS: Mohammed had left by that time.

Q: When Wadsworth left, Mohammed left?

STOLTZFUS: Yes. And as I said, he was high up in the Foreign Ministry; he became Deputy Foreign Minister. And so I became the interpreter for Donald Heath. We would go and see the King and Prince Faisal, who later became King, who was the Prime Minister then. Saud and Faisal didn't get along. Of course politically it was an interesting time. King Saud, who was an intriguer, a spendthrift and had wrecked the finances of the country, really was an embarrassment to the ruling family.

And Prince Faisal had most of the royal family behind him except those in big time with the corrupt and spendthrift King; the real strong people wanted the ruling family to be headed by King Faisal. Faisal spent much of his time in Ta'if, which is a town in the Hijaz not far from Mecca, and he stayed in the Western province. King Saud stayed in Riyadh and went hunting and so forth in the eastern part of the country.

I had a lot of interesting experiences during that time because by then Washington had decided that since the new Ambassador was there things had gone...

Q: So you were talking about the period of time after Wadsworth left. And I wanted to ask a question. While Wadsworth was there did anyone from Washington visit the embassy to see what was going on?

STOLTZFUS: Absolutely not. The situation was left exactly as it was. I was sent down and then Sweeney was sent down but nobody else made an effort to rectify the situation as long as Wadsworth was there. It was obviously a total disaster from the security point of view but there didn't seem to be any serious consequences that would come of that situation.

Our relations with Saudi Arabia, as I said before, were excellent; we were as thick as thieves. There was no reason to think that King Saud or Faisal or Mohammed Masoud or any other Saudi in the government would use highly classified information that we had there against the US. And probably, and this is just speculation, Washington was rather careful about what it sent to us. It probably didn't send a lot of things that might have been very sensitive - activities in the other areas of the world. Further to that, maybe they did, but Wadsworth didn't allow such reports, if any, to get into Mohammed's or my hands. I mean, there may have been another...

Q: Channel?

STOLTZFUS: Channel that he...

Q: You never saw it though?

STOLTZFUS: Nothing I ever saw. It doesn't occur to me that is too likely, but it was perfectly possible. The Ambassador certainly would not have shown any CIA reports to Mohammed.

Q: Did you ever talk to the desk officer when you came on?

STOLTZFUS: No. No. Well, the desk officer was David Newsom, and David Newsom knew all about this. Of course he did. Newsom had a great sense of humor; nobody has a better sense of humor and nobody is brighter or more intelligent or knows better how to get things done - knows what should be done and what should not be done. I think his feeling was that there wasn't a lot of damage here, that actually it was quite an interesting situation. I think it intrigued him.

Q: Maybe we were getting more than we were giving.

STOLTZFUS: Yes. That is quite possible. When I got back after my Saudi experience, David and I used to talk about some of it. And he got a tremendous kick out of the whole thing. And so nobody...I don't fault David at all for this...there was no reason really to roil the waters there. It really didn't seem to be worthwhile. At least I assume that is what his decision was. We both loved the situation. It was a lot of fun in a way.

We came back one time with King Saud to the States in connection with the Dhahran airfield agreement, and that is a long story too about the various happenings in Washington and the various people there during his visit.

Q: Was this about the time we were renegotiating the air base?

STOLTZFUS: Renegotiating the Dhahran air agreement. That's right.

Q: Was the Ambassador involved?

STOLTZFUS: Of course. Very heavily involved. He and I joined the King when he came to visit his great good friend, Eisenhower.

Q: This is in 1957?

STOLTZFUS: I guess that is probably right. 1957. Anyway, Washington sent this instruction to Wadsworth: please go and see the King and tell him he is very welcome to come and stay at Blair House, and six or eight people are welcome to come with him. Well, probably just the coffee boys and the shoe shine boys are six or eight people. I mean, you haven't even started with that number. But the King said, "Oh, that's very nice. Please thank my friend." A little bit later we found out there were 20 going, and another time when we checked there were 45 going. And I think the final number was about 80 people. Which of course in those days was a lot but now, I mean for Bush and Clinton, that is nothing. They are worse than the Saudi Kings ever were in the number of people they cart around. But in those days it was unbelievable that anyone would have more than just a handful of people with him.

He had a bunch of his sons along, and the thing that was funny was that a number of his slaves came with him too. And of course all the slaves had the same name, so their last names were al-Saud also. Washington said, my God, how many princes are coming! Well the princes were so-and-so al-Saud, and also the slaves; because they were part of the household, they took the same name. So we had to sort out the fact that they weren't all princes. The King brought six or eight princes with him including his little crippled son, which generated a bit of publicity. He had come to have his son checked out medically. I don't remember what happened to his son.

But on the ship coming to the US the most interesting thing occurred. (The Ambassador and I met King Saud's ship out of Genoa, I believe.) On the way, while I was walking around the deck, a young American came up to me with one of the Saudi entourage and he said, "I'm teaching him a little English." And I said, "Gee, that's great." He said, "I'm trying to tell him the difference between a slave and a servant." So I said to the king's man in Arabic, he is trying to tell you the difference between "abd" (slave) and "khadim" (servant). The man replied, "I am abd. I am part of the king's entourage. I'm no bloody servant." I have always remembered that. It was just fantastic. The American was blown away. He just couldn't understand that being the slave of the king meant that you had real clout. They were an arrogant bunch anyway.

Q: It was the next thing to being royal blood.

STOLTZFUS: Sure. They had the name and they had cradle to grave security. They were not just somebody who takes a salary and sweeps the floor. "We don't do that sort of thing."

Q: We have servants who do that.

STOLTZFUS: That's right! The poor American just couldn't understand...this was a crazy culture to him.

Q: What ship were you coming on?

STOLTZFUS: I think it was one of the American export line if I'm not mistaken.

Q: So did the Saudi king take over the whole first class?

STOLTZFUS: Oh, yes. For heaven's sake. We must have taken over the whole first class and then some.

Q: And you went with him?

STOLTZFUS: There were two bigger ships. There was the Constitution and then there was...I'm sorry, I don't remember the name.

Q: The Independence?

STOLTZFUS: There was the Independence and the Constitution.

Q: I sailed on both of them.

STOLTZFUS: Oh, sure. We both sailed on them. I'm not sure which one it was. We took over the whole place.

Q: And you were coming with the entourage and who else from the embassy?

STOLTZFUS: The Ambassador and Mohammed.

Q: Was Wadsworth still there?

STOLTZFUS: Yes. Wadsworth.

Q: You sailed into New York?

STOLTZFUS: We sailed into New York and let's see. That was dicey because the Mayor...

Q: Wagner.

STOLTZFUS: Mayor Wagner said he wouldn't see the King; there would be no reception in New York for the Saudis.

Q: I saw the headline in the New York Times: Wagner Snubs King.

STOLTZFUS: Yes. We got that word about two days out, but King Saud had no problem with that. He said, "My friend...I am going to see my friend Eisenhower, I could care less about the Mayor of New York." That was not a problem. He came in to New York and Eisenhower took care of the whole situation.

Q: Why was Wagner doing this?

STOLTZFUS: Why would any New York Mayor do that? To make...

Q: Constituency?

STOLTZFUS: Yes, of course. Absolutely. That was his way of trying to show what a great Mayor he was of New York. And I bet you that 99% of the Jews were embarrassed by that too. That is just meanness.

Q: You may disagree but you don't say it.

STOLTZFUS: I doubt seriously that most Jews thought that was a good thing to do.

Q: How did he get to Washington?

STOLTZFUS: I don't remember if it was by rail or by car or by plane maybe. I'm not sure how he got there. In Washington there were a lot of meetings with our military about compensation for our use of the Dhahran airfield. Due to Saudi sensitivities we did not use the word "airbase". The King wasn't in on all of those. Yusif Yassin was the Deputy Foreign Minister and leader of the Saudi team. The Foreign Minister had to be a prince. So Prince Faisal was the Foreign Minister - as well as the Crown Prince - but the Deputy Foreign Minister did all the work. Yusif Yassin was a Syrian who had become a Saudi, and he looked like Rasputin. I became very fond of him. He was a mischievous type and a very tough negotiator too. So they were negotiating the new agreement, and arms and equipment and training, and the compensation of the advisory group and all that.

Q: Maybe Ambassador Louden was there at the time at the UN. Was he?

STOLTZFUS: I guess he probably was.

Q: Did you meet him?

STOLTZFUS: Yes, I met him. I don't recall those detail too much. But I was in on the talks. I had to take notes on the military side. And then King Saud visited a couple of places but he was not in terribly good health himself. He was vastly overweight as many of those princes are including the present King. And so he didn't do a lot of physical moving around. But it was a successful trip and then I stayed on for a bit.

Q: So the King went down to Washington after he landed and continued his visit.

STOLTZFUS: Yes. His were mostly protocol activities of various sorts, especially of course kicking off the visit with meetings with President Eisenhower, dinner and so forth. The rest of his flunkies were there in the negotiations led by Yusif Yassin.

Q: Say it again.

STOLTZFUS: The chief negotiator was the wily, old Syrian, Yusif Yassin. He looked like Rasputin. I'm sure he didn't have the same activities but he was a very tough negotiator. And he was the one who led the Dhahran airfield renegotiation talks. Those worked out fine. I mean the agreement was renegotiated and that was taken care of. And we all went back to Saudi Arabia.

Actually, I went to Beirut to join Janet and our little boy Bill. Because the Suez Canal was still choked with vessels sunk during the 1956 hostilities, we had not been able to ship our new Chevrolet to Jeddah. So partly for adventure and partly for practical reasons we decided to drive the car down. I had obtained a document from the King, a sort of laisser passer. It stated that we were traveling in Saudi Arabia under the protection of the King, and his seal was on it.

The trip took five days and was more than we bargained for. From Beirut David Burns of USIS, Janet and I drove to Damascus, then to Mafraq, then down the Trans-Arabian pipeline - Tapline - the oil line from Dhahran to Sidon. We stopped first at Turaif where the local Governor, one of the bin Musa'ad family, gave us a fine dinner. The bin Musa'ad, like the Sudairi and the bin Jiluwi families, are allied to the Sauds, helping the ruling family maintain control in far-off parts of the kingdom. We were housed comfortably in the local Tapline living quarters that night. Incidentally, our second son Philip was born about nine months later in Dhahran and I have always suspected he was, very suitably, conceived in Turaif, Saudi Arabia.

The road down the Tapline was unpaved but perfectly adequate. But at Qaisumah we left the pipeline and headed toward Riyadh en plein desert. No road, only widely scattered tracks made by trucks through several hundred miles of sand and gravel plains. In some areas the wind and sand had obliterated the tracks. We had extra gas, a tiny compass and five days worth of water and food, but traveling alone in an ordinary sedan was not the smartest thing we ever did. In sandy patches we let air out of the tires for better traction but we did get seriously stuck once. We were not in that predicament for long before several Bedouin appeared. They set right to work pushing us out and would take nothing for their efforts. No money, not even matches.

We stayed in Riyadh for a night or two and then left for Jeddah, 600 miles away via sand track. All was well until we arrived just east of Mecca. Of course as non Muslims we could not enter Mecca, but another problem was that our car simply gave out. After four days of bumping and grinding over inhospitable terrain the car was exhausted. Various vehicles stopped and their occupants promised to get a mechanic to come out from town, but no one showed up. Finally a truck with a driver and helper stopped and offered to tow us around Mecca through the Wadi Fatimah which, by the way, is the water source for

Mecca.

As I recall it was after dark and we were winding through some hills when our guides suddenly stopped in a dry stream bed, got out of the truck and started toward us. I immediately had thoughts of a holdup and I still don't think I was wrong. What to do? Janet had the presence of mind to say, "Show them the King's pass." That certainly did the trick. The two spun around, walked back to the truck, untied our car - and deserted us! But strangely enough at dawn our car, having "rested" for some hours, started up again. Carefully we picked our way through the Wadi until we reached the paved road on the other side of Mecca. As we breezed along on the final leg into Jeddah we were met by Joe Donahue of our Embassy who was concerned at our delay in arriving, and with him as an escort we reached the airport on the outskirts of town just in time to collect our son Bill, who flew in from Beirut in the care of an airlines stewardess. We had no further trouble with our car and gave General Motors full marks for producing a great vehicle. Amazing really. It just got tired, but after a proper rest was able to carry on!

I meant to mention, before I got sidetracked on our desert journey, that some interesting things happened when King Saud was in Washington. Of course what you do as a great King is hand out goodies all over the place. He had trunk loads of watches. We all got watches; he just handed out things all over town and that was a big deal, of course; here is this Eastern, oriental potentate giving out largesse - the press obviously had a lot of fun with their stories.

But one of the gifts - I've forgotten the name of the Protocol Officer, but he or his wife was given a car, a Pontiac, I believe. That was a substantial gift and the Protocol Officer made the mistake of accepting it. Now he had gone to Saudi Arabia and accompanied the King and had taken care of all the protocol side. I'm sure he did a marvelous job and all that, but the one thing he shouldn't have done was take this gift.

Q: Was this Purse?

STOLTZFUS: Purse! Victor Purse! You've got it! You are marvelous. That is good.

Q: I read that recently.

STOLTZFUS: Yes. Victor Purse. The poor guy, he got nailed for that. It was very unfortunate. There was something else. What was the other thing we were going to talk about? You triggered my mind on something. Yes. The sensitive part of our relations with Saudi Arabia was Jews of course. And Jews not being allowed into the country. Or at least Zionists...unless they were violently anti-Zionist like David Lilienthal and his "At What Price Israel?" I mean that type of person was of course welcome in Saudi Arabia. If you were Jewish you were assumed to be Zionist and then that was terrible. And of course that was a very dicey situation because we for obvious reasons would never accept that the Saudis would not allow Jewish diplomats or Jewish oil company people or Jewish businessmen in their country, you know. That is one side.

The other dicey thing was the fact that they didn't allow any non Moslem religious services. Theoretically you couldn't have chaplains. You couldn't have open services. Now anyone who got to know Saudi Arabia reasonably well realized that you could do anything in Saudi Arabia as long as you didn't make an issue of it. Of course many Christians feel they have to be witnesses and so on. That is not very practical in Saudi Arabia because it is not allowed. The chaplains were there in Dhahran and they had their services. The point was not to make an issue of it. Just do it in private.

But naturally that would be an situation for people to make something of. And I'm not saying they shouldn't. It just wasn't something that would be very helpful in terms of our relationship. In our Embassy, Wadsworth could care less as far as I could see whether he went to church or not. But his successor, Donald Heath, did hold services in his offices in the Embassy. That was Okay because the Embassy was "American soil". Some of our staff brought in taped sermons, you know, like Norman Vincent Peale and others. Then what we would do, my wife and I would often make a service where you dubbed in some music and you had a reading and those of us who wanted to go would go to "church" in the Ambassador's office on Sunday mornings.

One time at our own home we were taping one of the services, putting it all together. In those days as now, of course, alcohol was not allowed at all. But the Saudis kind of winked at that as long as you didn't make it too obvious. One of our neighbors downstairs had made beer and they had capped the bottles. Suddenly, while we were preparing the service, you could hear pop, pop, pop, pop! I didn't really think about it too much at the time but some of the bottle tops were blowing off from the pressure. Well, during the service, all of a sudden, pop, pop, pop. It was on the tape! Of course the Ambassador didn't know what it was and said, "What's going on here?" That was really funny.

In those days of King Saud, you could not go from one town to another without permission. This was also true in Yemen. You needed the permission of the Foreign Ministry to go to another town. Well, I got so that I knew my way around. I was always with the King's entourage and I knew Yusif Yassin very well. That experience and Yemen were by far the most interesting things I did in the Foreign Service. I was just in my element there.

Q: Those two posts.

STOLTZFUS: Those two posts. So one time I went to...I was in a hurry and I wanted to go to Riyadh. And I didn't bother to get permission. I just got on a plane and went. The Egyptian Defense Attach or Military Attach was in Riyadh too. He had come over from Jeddah also. I wasn't seeing him or anything but it happened we were in town at the same time. You always knew who everybody was. You know, it was not a high powered situation at the time. When I saw Yusif Yassin he said, "Oh, it's very interesting, Bill, it's nice to see you. I don't recall seeing anything about your coming." I said, "No, Sheik Yousef, I just came." He said, "That's okay." He and I were always very good friends. He knew I was up to no skullduggery.

While I was there several days, I saw various people as usual. I did most of the reporting for the Ambassador. As I said, Ambassador Heath didn't like to travel around. It was not that easy to travel. You'd go down to the airport and then if a prince wanted to take the plane, you just waited. The plane went off and forget it! We did not have a plane of our own. And Heath preferred playing golf and sitting around. He was sort of at the end of his career and I don't think he...Saudi Arabia was just kind of a bonus given to him at the end of his career. I don't think he was very happy with that. I did much of the work and that was perfect for me. I got all over the place.

So while I was in Riyadh that time a couple of bombs went off. Mysterious bombs went off. And nobody knew or I'm not sure that they knew that the Egyptian Military Attaché had anything to do with it. And you certainly would not think that he would be in Riyadh when it happened. I mean, nobody would be that dumb to have bombs go off when he was there. But he had come without permission. At least Yusif Yassin said he had. He got kicked out of the country for having come to Riyadh without permission.

Relations with Egypt were not good under King Saud. King Saud had all sorts of zany ideas on how to get rid of Nasser. They were just pathetic. He was always trying some intrigue...to do some dirty work. Nothing ever succeeded, of course. We was a misguided missile, that guy, King Saud. He was a very kind man. But simple, loved his comforts and really was just a very bad King unfortunately.

Ambassador Heath came to Saudi Arabia with his own mind set about royalty. He had previously served as Ambassador to Cambodia, another royal situation, and he was accredited to the King and so on. So he felt the same way in Saudi Arabia. That he was accredited to the King and therefore dealt primarily with the King and he supported the King.

Well, by that time Joe Sweeney and I were talking. Since Joe Sweeney was now able to be a DCM in a proper sense. And Sweeney and I knew that Saud was not going to be there very long. That was a really interesting thing because what you wanted to do was show Faisal that you supported him without having the King get the idea that he was being subverted by us. And you never knew what the King might do. I mean, he ordered bazookas. He ordered all kinds of stuff...you know, his own security forces. You never knew what he might do.

Actually the Saud family, except for a few on the lunatic fringe, had enough sense of self preservation to realize that they could argue among themselves. You know there are about 5,000 princes. It is a huge group. So you could have a lot of different, almost parties among them. But they managed to stay together enough so that they wouldn't all go down the tubes together. They seemed to have enough instincts for that.

So Sweeney and I were pro-Faisal. The Ambassador was basically pro-Saud. And it was difficult because he was grumpy. And he would say, "What are you guys talking about? We have to support the King." And we were trying to indicate that the King could be a very serious drawback if he did anything silly. Faisal was very careful not to show any

public opposition to the King. And Washington wasn't all that clear on it either. We were sort of left to our own devices on it.

But I remember one time going to see the King. I went over on my own. I decided it was time to see what the King really thought. So I went over to Riyadh. I didn't want anyone to know I was seeing the King including the Saudis.

Now the head of the Royal Garage was a man by the name of Id bin Salim. The Royal Garage consisted of hundreds of cars and trucks. So it was no mean, low level job. He was not a garage mechanic. He was an administrator...but aside from that he was also a close confidant of the King. I knew that. So I went to his evening mejlis, to where they all sit around in his office in the evening: prominent citizens, favor seekers, or anyone who is anybody. And anyone who wants to come in and sit there all night can do so. I mean you don't have to ask or be invited. If you wanted to carry on any business you walked up and sat next to him and talked in his ear if you didn't want others to hear. A Saudi office is not a place where you have a secretary and keep the door closed. It is an open thing. Everyone expects to be able to get in and out any time they feel like it. And stay as long as they want to.

Anyway, I knew that he had the confidence of the King. I went in and saw him and whispered in his ear, and I said, "I'd like to see the King. Can you arrange that?" He never asked me why or showed any surprise or hesitation. He said, "You go back to the hotel. I'll send a car." He gave a description of the car. "And the car will be there at 8:00." That evening I got in the car and was driven to the back side of the palace. This huge garden and all of this Shangri-la type of place. Id bin Salim was there. He opened the back gate and we walked in through the back, through all of these gardens toward the palace. And within those walls it was just - the women weren't veiled or anything. They were wandering around. It was sort of like a paradise, honestly. You felt it was something like what the Moslems think of heaven - where you have all these houris walking around and all these beautiful gardens and so forth.

Q: Or Cecil B. DeMille.

STOLTZFUS: I suppose. We walked down a long corridor and down to the king's bedroom. He had this huge bed in there and also a gigantic round - what do you call it - pouf?

Q: Hassock.

STOLTZFUS: Hassock. Huge hassock in the middle of the floor. The King greeted me and sat down on the hassock and motioned me to do the same. I had brought questions I had written out to ask him. The gist of them was, how do you get along with Prince Faisal and where do you think the future of the Family lies, etc....I mean absolutely impertinent questions. But I figured it was about time to find out what the answer was. And of course the King said all the right things. We get along fine, he is my brother and no, we won't have any major disputes and so on. I had asked him point blank: Do you think

everything's going to be all right with the ruling family and so forth and so on. He didn't bat an eye. He answered the questions and so that was the end of that. So I said, "Good-bye" and walked out and got into the car and rode back to the hotel.

I wrote up my report. The Ambassador didn't ask me why I'd done it either. Basically I could do what I wanted there. It was unbelievable. It was by far the most exciting part of my career. I could see anybody I wanted to, including the King, and nobody would say nay!

The report was secret but needless to say Washington, government being the sieve it is, can't keep its mouth shut. Sulzberger of the New York Times was the man who got hold of the cable. He had the kind of clout and in with officials to get anything he wanted. So he wrote an article...I've always wished I kept that. I suppose it is in the archives somewhere. In it he disparaged our sources, saying that "the type of sources they have in the Embassy is to go through the garage man." I never said anything. But Sulzberger didn't know what he was talking about. I mean, this guy was the closest man to the King as far as...

Q: He was the way in.

STOLTZFUS: He was the way in. He was a very close confidant of the King.

Q: He wouldn't have known that.

STOLTZFUS: And these guys love to use their half-baked knowledge to write up stuff that people read. Anyway, I've always been amused by that.

Q: As you were saying, the Ambassador that followed Wadsworth in, was it 1957?

STOLTZFUS: Probably.

Q: In 1957 was Don Heath. And at that time was Yemen still part of that Embassy's control?

STOLTZFUS: I'm not sure. Yemen, you'd have to look up its history. Yemen moved under Egypt. Egypt had a lot of interest in Yemen. And they had a senior representative down there who was getting close to Crown Prince Badr. That is a whole other story.

During the time of Wadsworth we went down on a visit to Yemen to see Imam Ahmad, the Ruler. I'll have to do a little thinking about this before I continue and I'll have to talk to my wife to see if I can recall the facts a little bit better. I'm not exactly sure why we went. Whether it was just a routine visit or we were getting ready for Eisenhower...not Eisenhower himself but the Eisenhower doctrine, through which you gave money to people so they wouldn't go under the Soviets. And Yemen was one of the countries targeted.

Q: We continue our interview and discussion with Ambassador William Stoltzfus. And I think we wanted to go back with Ambassador Stoltzfus to early 1958 at the time that Ambassador Heath had just been appointed to come to Saudi Arabia and I think Sweeney was the Chargé. There were important changes you were saying in the royal family at that time.

STOLTZFUS: Yes. Some of the details I probably was not privy to - not being at the top levels there as far as rank and those who were talking about the actual changes were concerned. But as I said before, there was tension building up within the ruling family of Saud. People like the Crown Prince Faisal were distancing themselves from the king. And Faisal tended to stay in Taif when the King was in Riyadh.

It was a time when it was clear that something was building up there. King Saud was, and I also think I mentioned this before, kind of a misguided missile. He was thinking he could do something about...vaguely had ideas about overthrowing Nasser. He had some of his spies and his people running about and informers telling him what he might do. He was trying to get hold of some special military equipment without Faisal knowing or without Faisal's consent.

Sweeney and I were quite concerned over a period of time about that. It was perfectly clear to us that Faisal was the one with his head screwed on and the one who should really be controlling things. The family, major members of the family, certainly were moving in that direction and certainly would agree. It was a tricky question in the ruling family; one had to be extremely careful because you didn't want to have a major blow up in the family which could easily have the influence of the family deteriorate.

A country like Saudi Arabia is really basically a personal fief of this huge family that runs to at least 5,000 princes and maybe more. You are probably talking 10,000 to 15,000 in the family at least. They are a very formidable force of course. They have the money to pay for their continued influence there. But once they start to break up...it is big enough that you can have major factions, it is almost like different parties among the different family groups.

And so it is a very unwieldy situation. A very dangerous one if it starts to become public that there are major disputes. So Faisal was always being a very careful man. A very wise man in many ways, very intelligent. He was careful not to publicly criticize the King or reduce his stature in the family publicly. Of course privately he and others were working hard because they knew things couldn't go on like this. And Saud was becoming, if he hadn't always been, incompetent.

Incidentally, he was not the first choice of Abdul Aziz, the original, most famous ibn Saud, who met Roosevelt on the ship in the Suez and was the one who allowed our oil companies in. The granddaddy of them all. His first choice to succeed himself had been his first son Turki. I believe his name was Turki. Some say he was the sublime choice for the job. But he was probably not quite as fantastic as he was painted to be. Anyway, he was the choice but he suddenly passed away and I think Saud was probably Abdul Aziz's

second son and so the throne devolved down to Saud. Not a favorable thing for the ruling family at that time. You really had a period of time there where King Saud, when he became King, was under the influence of a number of advisors. Some were okay from Abdul Aziz's day. Others were not, such as the Minister of Finance, a Sudanese. We've got this written down somewhere. He encouraged, or at least made no effort to curb the king's urge to spend and spend and spend. Saud built palaces and he pretty well cleared out the exchequer. Finally a Pakistani was brought in to help out with finances; his name was Anwar Ali. Anwar Ali was from the World Bank, I believe. He was a very important person and tried to get the finances back on the rails in that 1956 - 57 period.

But Sweeney and I were pro-Faisal. And Ambassador Heath (although as an Arab you would say, when someone dies, "God have pity on him; he has passed away so I don't like to criticize him too much" had come from being (this is my own interpretation) Ambassador in Cambodia. There was a King of Cambodia. Anyway, he always felt that he was accredited to the chief of state, which I guess is fair enough. You are supposed to be, as the Ambassador. But he had what Sweeney and I thought was a too uncritical view. We were trying to tell him that Saud was bad news. He felt and was probably quite right by his own lights that he was accredited to the government of which the chief of state was King Saud. He was not the one to take our advice. I don't know whether Washington was telling him to shake this guy up or anything. I have no idea. Certainly you never saw anything though.

Q: This is Wadsworth you are talking about?

STOLTZFUS: No. I am talking about Heath. Saud's problems had started during Wadsworth's time, of course. It wasn't yet coming to a head as I recall, not coming to a head in the same way. If we go back a little bit, I only remember when I was there that Wadsworth was very cozy with King Saud. And that was okay at that time.

Finances were in bad shape and so on. But there didn't seem to be or at least I wasn't aware that there was much tension between Faisal and Saud at that time. Because then we went to the States and they renegotiated the Dhahran Airfield agreement and all that. Then Wadsworth left, and I believe that was late 1957 or early 1958.

There followed some interim time when the DCM was not highly active with seeing the King or anything, but just kind of holding the fort. When Heath came he was...he'd probably deny he was pro-Saud but he felt that his job was to be dealing with King Saud. For whatever reason - his own experience with kings - Heath felt that he should deal with the King. And of course we did see the Crown Prince once in a while but the Ambassador wasn't about to rattle King Saud's cage at all. I think he was probably right in that.

But Sweeney and I, who were not of course ultimately responsible, were on a little riskier course. But we were convinced that Faisal was going to have to do something. I think one of the things that Faisal and a lot of people felt was that the advisors around King Saud were a bad influence, like the Minister of the Economy or the Minister of Finance who handed out all the goodies. He was sacked at some point. Then there was Yusif Yassin,

Rasputin, who probably had no use for Faisal and vice versa. I don't suppose any of the advisors around the King had a lot of use for Faisal because their eggs were in Saud's basket.

So they gradually left. Either Faisal was able to engineer this directly or more likely through a lot of the arcane business that usually goes on in Saudi Arabia. It began to be clear to these advisors that they should retire. And they gradually did retire. Jamal Husseini was another one. And of course Faisal had his own Achilles heel. Like Kamal Adham. That is another story. Adham is still a billionaire who lives in London and doesn't spend a lot of time back in Saudi Arabia. He is probably another one who over time could have been usefully put aside. And he was later on, after Faisal. But there were all of those people in this very introverted and very...I don't know if I'd call it feudal but it was a court. A big royal court and I'm sure that is the way royal courts in the past have been. Where you had those who had influence and weight which waxed and waned depending on where the power play was. That was fascinating too. Really interesting.

Anyway, Heath did go and see Faisal. And so he kept up that side. Faisal was always extremely cautious about talking about the King. He always said, "I am totally loyal to the King." And he was careful not to give any idea that anything was afoot. But it was clear that something had to be done.

Q: Did Faisal at this time...my question actually was: What about our oil companies during this period? Did this affect them at all, Faisal coming in?

STOLTZFUS: No. The lifeblood of the Saudis of course is the oil. And we never crossed Faisal in any way...that is an interesting point. Because if it had not been played correctly and we had been too pushy on this I think we could have raised some difficulties between us and the Saudis, especially with Faisal.

I think Sweeney and I were worried that we would get Faisal's nose out of joint somehow. And that Faisal would have thought well, you guys should certainly know things are not going that well. You should be supporting me. But he was not that direct about it. He could have done that. And I think that would have expedited matters somewhat. But our oil companies were thick as thieves and always have been with the Saudis from Abdul Aziz's time, when he gave the concession to them, to the present. I have often said this. Saudi Arabia is really second only to Britain in terms of closeness of our relations. We are very, very close to the Saudis.

That has its good and bad features. But of course, oil is the name of the game and as long as they are a major oil supplier, that is when everything else fades into the background. Oil is still king. And the Saudis over time...the ruling family, though it at times took a position about Israel that was critical of Israel, it never allowed that to affect its relations with the United States in terms of security and oil. Because the Saudis are smart enough to know that if they get on the wrong side of the US probably the days of the Saud family would be numbered in small digits...small numbers.

So they are very careful of that. And that is one of our Achilles heels, to get out of context here. I've always felt we were too much in bed with these autocratic ruling families who are buddies because they provide us with oil. We are reluctant to press them for democratic changes, and that is one of the reasons why we have so much difficulty in the area. The vast majority of Arabs feel that we are not concerned with their interests. We are thinking only about our own oil needs; without our support, the leadership could change. The belief is that the leadership would be a lot better if we weren't there to support those "backward" rulers.

Q: I think in 1959 sometime you must have gone on home leave, you said.

STOLTZFUS: Yes. As we said, Faisal was being very cautious. He was very clever and cautious about the way he gradually took more and more power, backed by the important princes clearly. In periodic confabs within the family it was clear that Faisal was taking over and the King was reduced to a figurehead but typically, Faisal, as long as his brother was alive, was not going to take over as King by force. There is no way he would have done that. But eventually Saud yielded executive powers to Faisal for extended periods and in 1964 he was deposed by the royal family, the ulema and the Council of Ministers, and went into exile in Greece, where he died in 1969 or thereabouts.

Saud was ill and just kind of corrupt. But then he passed away. But he was given no pomp and ceremony whatsoever on his death. He was brought back to Saudi Arabia and swiftly interred. The authorities wouldn't even mark his grave. Not only not mark his grave...but in the listing of the succession of kings starting with Abdul Aziz to the present, they omitted his name. No picture of him appeared anywhere, just as though he hadn't existed.

This went on for some years. I think it has been very recently that the authorities finally decided it was a bit much to ignore one of their monarchs. Saud was after all a part of their history and, you know, time heals and so forth. There is a university outside of Riyadh called Saud University. I'm not sure that refers to this Saud but it presumably does. And certainly most people would think it did. That is a religious university. It is on the way to the airport in Riyadh.

Anyway, Faisal, once Saud was exiled, became King Faisal; he was the next in line. All the kings so far have been Abdul Aziz himself and sons of his line. That is one of the problems of the succession now. That is in the papers right now. Fahd is now 73 and he is not very well, and the next guy in line is Abdullah, who is about 70, and then comes Sultan. These men are all in their ‘70s or close to it. Practically speaking you don't want to have a change every couple of years - the king dies and you put another septuagenarian or octogenarian in there. This system of going down from one brother to another is getting a bit sticky now.

Q: Rather than to the son?

STOLTZFUS: Rather than to a son. The al Saud family is a huge one with a lot of

important princes who don't necessarily feel obliged to go and kneel before the King anymore. I mean it isn't quite the same as when the family was smaller and poorer. It is still a very autocratic regime in Saudi Arabia but there are many influential and feisty princes. I imagine this is sort of like the Middle Ages too. A senior prince may not have his own vast domains as in medieval Europe, but he certainly has power through the pecking order and his money. Some of those guys are billionaires and they carry a lot of clout. So just how are they going to get what they want? Maybe they would like to have one of their sons as King. It is a dicey situation and becoming more so. King Faisal took over and then again, look how long he lived before he was shot by one of his family. But that was after my time there.

Q: We will begin again where you were. Talking about your sort of final months in Jeddah.

STOLTZFUS: Very quickly. I arrived in Jeddah in 1996 and I think that December Ambassador Wadsworth went down to Yemen because that was part of his bailiwick. And I think it was just a visit to the Yemenis to talk about relations and so forth.

Yemen is just...it is something you had to see to believe. Absolutely if you read about how things were in the Middle Ages in Europe, it had to be the same. There were very few vehicles. The roads were not paved. Their ruling family was the Hamid al Din. Their monarch was called the Imam. Imam Ahmad had taken over after his father had been assassinated on the road near Sanaa. And then there were all those tribes in the north that were being paid by the Saudis. They are Zaydis, who belong to the Shiite sect of Muslims. The people in the south are Sunnis. The two groups still don't have much use for each other even today.

But at that time Yemen was totally feudal. The tribes in the north, the Hashid, Bakil and Khawlan, were constantly restless and defying the Hamid al Din rulers. It was much like medieval times where the king had control of some areas but not over the whole country. He had to pay people to stay in line.

In Taiz there is a hill or mountain called al Qahira, the word for Cairo in Arabic. It is steep sided and at the top of it is a fort, a castle.

Q: You were talking about this interesting fortress named Cairo on the top of a hill in Taiz.

STOLTZFUS: Right. The atmosphere in Yemen in those days was absolutely fantastic, and a throw back to the 12th century. One thing I want to say up front is that the Yemenis are the nicest, the most friendly and hospitable people that Janet and I have ever known.

And yet they lived under this completely autocratic and medieval tyrant. Of course he had his preoccupations because, as I said, some brooding chieftain who thought he should be the potentate instead of the Imam was always waiting in the wings. So the Imam had his hands full.

In Taiz there is a mountain called al Qahira. And on the top is a fort cum prison. The Imam would snatch a son or two of his major rivals and keep them hostages in that fort. They were hostage to the good behavior of their families. That was one of his systems of control. He didn't have much in his treasure chest and the coffee trade had gradually dwindled. The famous Mocha coffee...Yemeni coffee plantations were not as great as before.

Coffee was largely replaced by qat, a mild narcotic grown on coffee-like bushes. One chews the little leaves of the bush. Many Yemenis still chew qat and export some. But the Imam didn't have a lot of income from taxes. The Saudis were the ones with bucks, which they used to influence affairs in Yemen. In the 1930's the Saudis with then Prince Faisal at the head of the army invaded and defeated Yemen. Saudi peace terms were generous. However, the south western part of Saudi Arabia is really an extension of Yemen, geographically and socially. Yemen's border might be further north today if the Yemenis had not lost that war.

The Imam didn't allow any schools except the so called kuttab. At the kuttab you only study the Koran. You sit there and learn the Koran. You memorize it and learn to chant. The students are taught by religious sheikhs. But they do not study the "Three R's" or science.

There was virtually no electricity. We had electricity several hours an evening when the ancient town generator was working. Our refrigerator ran on kerosene and didn't do badly I must say.

One of my most vivid memories when I was assigned to Yemen was the sound of chains. It was commonplace to see somebody who had committed a misdemeanor clanking along in public with chains on his legs.

Q: You would hear that on the street?

STOLTZFUS: Well, sure you could hear it on the street. There was a Yemeni who had become an American citizen and had come back to Taiz on a visit. I don't remember what trouble he got into but he came to call at the Legation one time and he had a chain clamped on one of his ankles with the other clamp up his leg. His jailers had undone the one to his other leg so he could walk over to the Legation. He was indeed clanking along, but he didn't seem that distressed. He felt that he was going to be released pretty soon. I asked him, "Is there anything I can do?" And he said, "No, I just wanted to talk to somebody here." I never heard from him again. So I guess that eventually he left.

Traveling in Yemen was another unique experience. If we were on a trip to Sanaa, for example, to call on ministers there, we would stop at a town where there were no public hotels. In fact there were no commercial hotels at all in the country at that time. There were royal guest houses, and the royal guest houses were not exactly outfitted with the latest plumbing or sleeping or dining facilities. One of the stops on the way to Sanaa from

Taiz is Ibb, an attractive town reached in those days over muddy tracks. It was nice to get there but though Ibb was less than 100 miles from Taiz, driving there could take you all day because you'd get stuck in the mud or break down.

Below the Ibb guest house was the local jail. From your room you could hear clanking and the murmur of prisoners. They were in chains which you could hear all night long.

Q: In jail they were chained as well?

ST0LTZFUS: That's right. And outside of Sanaa there are or were these little cubicles. You'd think they were empty or maybe meant for sheep or goats. Then you'd hear these clanking chains. There would be two or three guys in there incarcerated for whatever they were incarcerated for.

Q: What were the crimes?

STOLTZFUS: Mostly theft. It was a poor country, you know. Either theft or some insult to somebody. I don't know that justice was all that arbitrary but the usual misdemeanor...you know, your camel ran over somebody. There would be some reason that they would be locked up. Then of course they had public beheadings too. I never felt the urge to go and watch one but that was just the normal procedure for treason or murder - those ultimate crimes. The authorities would make it known throughout the area that a beheading was about to take place and you were expected to go and watch.

Q: How did they spread the word about the beheadings?

STOLTZFUS: Well, you just knew. It's like small communities with no radio, no electricity, no TV, no nothing. You just know. It never occurred to us to communicate in any way except either send somebody next door if you wanted to have a party and invite them, or go yourself. It was just...these things were known. You'd have a public crier go through town maybe. That is the normal way to do it. He would just go through town calling out the fact that such and such was going to take place at such and such a time.

Ours was a very small community and all of us foreigners knew each other intimately.

We were always at each other's houses. And Yemenis would come to certain events. But obviously the Imam did not encourage his subjects to get any bad ideas by spending time with foreigners. They were careful about that. My wife started a school in Taiz and that is another story - quite an interesting story. Her school is still running. I got permission from the Imam to have that school, which was the first normal kind of school in the history of that country.

When we went down with Ambassador Wadsworth...as I recall it was basically a routine call so we could report what was going on in Yemen.

Q: Where did you stay if there was no...?

STOLTZFUS: We stayed in one of those royal guest houses in Taiz. The Yemenis had done their best to spruce it up and clean out the rather primitive bathrooms and all that sort of thing. It was really quite comfortable actually. But you know, there were no modern facilities of any sort.

Q: You did get the message to them somehow that you were coming?

STOLTZFUS: I assume it was through Bill Crawford, our Consul in Aden, who also covered Yemen. Bill incidentally lives in Washington and somebody must definitely talk to him about Yemen. Because he and his wife fell in love with Yemen the way we did. He visited Yemen for us and reported on the situation in Southwest Arabia.

The Yemenis were so gracious. It was such a unique place. The charm and uniqueness were great for us foreigners to experience. But for the Yemenis themselves it was very tough. They had the dirty end of the stick. There is no doubt about that. They were held under ruthless control and they weren't allowed education or basically any modern amenities. It was the same policy as that of Said bin Taimur, the ruler of Muscat, father of the present Sultan. He had this same idea that you don't give your subjects notions about the outside world lest their eyes be opened to what they are missing at home.

I'll never forget one time when we stopped along the road on one of the trips to Sanaa. The Yemenis are such picturesque people. They wear their turbans and jambiyyas, a dagger attached to an ornate belt, and in the countryside everyone carries a gun. Such a man was passing by so I asked him how things were and how he was. His answer was, "We don't know anything except the Imam." That was his answer. He was not going to say a thing to me, not even whether his feet hurt. He was perfectly cordial and nice, and if we'd asked him to help push us out of the mud, he would have done it. If we had said we were hungry he would have given us his last piece of bread. At the same time he was absolutely firm on not saying one single thing that might indicate he wasn't happy or that might be reported by us to Sanaa. I'm sure he could imagine my saying, "I met so and so on the road and he said things are tough." He was going to be very careful that nothing like that ever happened. He didn't know anything except the Imam. That was what he said to me.

That was the way it was in those days.

Q: So then after you had home leave in 1959 you were assigned to Aden.

STOLTZFUS: I was assigned as Consul to Aden to follow Bill Crawford.

Q: There were two Yemens then?

STOLTZFUS: Yemen is a unified country now but in the '50's South Yemen consisted of the British Crown Colony of Aden and the Aden Protectorate. The port of Aden was an important fueling station for the British navy. There was a large refinery nearby in Little

Aden. That was the Crown Colony. And then there was the rest of "South Yemen" that the British had as a buffer between them and Yemen, called the Aden Protectorate. They never had good relations with Imam Ahmad of Yemen. The Protectorates were divided into half a dozen domains and there was a ruler for each one of them. They were proteges of the British of course. But they were treated as rulers of their domains.

In Aden some local political activity was permitted to leaders of the Trade Union Congress, the precursors of the Marxist government that came into being at independence. The south has always been leftist, progressive; the north conservative. The women are bright and active in both areas but in the south they have had much more freedom, therefore more education and influence in society. This became clear to me when I attended a conference on the upcoming union of North and South Yemen held in London in the late '80's. The women who spoke at the conference were all from the south, and their energy, outspokenness and obvious freedom irked some male members of the audience, young male northerners who found these southern women unseemly and brazen. They should be at home with the kids and cooking!

We did not stay long in Aden - about six months - before we were transferred to independent Yemen, a much more interesting assignment. We did however have one notable adventure while in Aden. We wanted to see something of the Protectorate, so when an expedition was being assembled to allow some agriculturalists to look at land in the interior and the military to inspect the frontier with North Yemen, the British authorities permitted Janet and me to join it. Several Protectorate Rulers were also included.

We first drove through Lahej, the area of most agricultural interest, and then continued to Dala, traveling over stony tracks through narrow wadis and passes, ideal for ambush. As I've said, relations between the Imam of Yemen and the British and their proteges in the South were poor and security throughout North and South was fragile. Assassinations were frequent; even a British agent in the Protectorate was killed now and then. So our convoy was heavily guarded and it stopped periodically to allow soldiers to run up the ridge on both sides of the wadi to ensure that no hostile force was in the vicinity.

Dala was the province which bordered on independent Yemen. We stayed overnight with a British detachment at the foot of the mountain near the frontier. At this remote outpost there was obviously little in the way of entertainment. After drinks and dinner with the officers we were privy to a little game they played. Rooms in their living quarters were cooled by large ceiling fans, so in the common room the officers gathered around while one of them climbed up on a table and began to ease his bare head against the whirring fan. As he applied more pressure, the fan began to slow. And so on until he had it stopped. This was one of their amusements. They laughingly told us that one inebriated fellow had so miscalculated that he scalped himself. Now, whenever I see one of those overhead fans I'm reminded of the bizarre game we witnessed those many years ago.

The next day we climbed the mountain to check out the frontier. Most of us walked while the Rulers rode horses. One of them seemed quite embarrassed to see a lady - Janet -

walking, but I don't recall that his discomfort extended to offering her his horse. A sort of nineteenth century note was struck when Fadl, our butler or "bearer" as the British would say, who had accompanied us from Aden, held an umbrella over Janet to protect her from the sun as they climbed.

On a ridge at the top we could look across the valley to the opposite promontory and the gun emplacements of the "enemy". It was amusing to think of that scene only weeks later when, having been transferred to Taiz, we were comfortably at home in Yemen and friends with that enemy.

That night we stayed in a crude stone fort, very similar to the little crumbling castles you see in Britain or Europe, dark and dank. The ground floor was for animals, covered with dirty straw. The narrow winding stairs took you to the upper floor. In one room dinner was served, strictly hot Yemeni food; we sat on the floor. This scene was not for Janet or for one of the agriculturalists, who retired to another large room which was the bedroom for everyone. This arrangement was not so bad but the bathroom situation was, for ladies, nothing short of desperate. The toilet was a hole in the floor of a tiny room with no door. Janet's husband - me - was not especially sympathetic. Luckily we were in the middle of nowhere, so divorce proceedings could not be initiated immediately! The return trip was accomplished without incident.

Q: So what did we have then? A Consulate in Aden and an office or something in Taiz?

STOLTZFUS: No. We had nothing in Taiz.

Q: We had nothing. It was under the Embassy in Jeddah?

STOLTZFUS: Yemen was under the Embassy in Jeddah. And Crawford or whoever was Consul in Aden would be the one who made most of the trips up and who reported to Jeddah on the state of affairs and what was going on. Bill Crawford was an excellent reporter. His reports of his trips make fascinating reading. He did a super job of that.

At some point, I'm not sure exactly when, towards the end of Crawford's time, we decided to have an office in Taiz. And I think probably at that time is when we shifted Yemen to be under Cairo instead of Jeddah. That might have been 1958 even. Charlie Ferguson was the first official American to reside in Yemen. He was the one who set up our office in Taiz and as Charge he reported to Cairo.

Then for one reason or another Ferguson decided to go with an oil company, or at least he decided that he wasn't going to stick with the Foreign Service anymore. So he left. I was Consul in Aden and wanted the job so I said, "How about me?" Washington replied, "Well, we have somebody else in mind. His name is Philip Ireland." Philip Ireland was assigned to go. But when Ireland made the assignment conditional on certain things, he put it in jeopardy. I don't blame him. He was getting on in years and Yemen was primitive. I mean it was for a young person. That was not an assignment for somebody who needed medicines or who couldn't handle discomfort.

In those days we were perfectly willing to sleep out in the rain if necessary. I mean...we just loved being in that country. But Ireland asked for certain things, like special arrangements to bring in food and so on from Asmara, Asmara being the Eritrean city where we had a listening post. We had a lot of military there, including of course a PX. But we never asked for that sort of thing. Crawford never would have asked for it. If you needed anything that you didn't have in Taiz, you went yourself or you sent your driver down to Aden to get it. Much of our food was out of tin cans, and there were guinea fowl in the mountains that we shot. We ate off the land as much as we could. There wasn't very much to eat and the eggs were all rotten and so forth.

But it was not the sort of situation that Ireland could relish. To make a long story short, the Department decided that it would be a lot easier to deal with Stoltzfus who was too crazy to ask for anything. So I got the job.

Q: You went to Taiz a few months after you arrived in Aden?

STOLTZFUS: Yes. We were not in Aden more than six months or so. We were in Yemen from some time in the late autumn of 1959 to the summer of 1961 when the Department decided it was time to bring me back home for a little change of scenery. I then was assigned to the Personnel Department.

Q: So you were in Yemen for two years. And you were the only person there in this Consulate?

STOLTZFUS: It was a Legation.

Q: Crawford had opened the place.

STOLTZFUS: No. Crawford did the reporting and covered it from our Aden Consulate.

Q: And Ferguson?

STOLTZFUS: Ferguson came in and basically oversaw the building of the office and quarters.

Q: We actually built a building?

STOLTZFUS: Yes. A stone structure like everybody else had up there.

Q: No electricity?

STOLTZFUS: The electricity was on for a few hours a day. At sundown. You could hear the motor start up...chug, chug, chug. You had electricity for the evening hours, that's all. But we got a kerosene refrigerator and I must say, kerosene refrigerators are great. They work fine. It was amazing. I never expected them to work like that. So we had that to

keep things cold. And then we didn't have many demands. We gradually lost weight. I got down to about 158 lbs. by the end. But we were fine. We just thought it was great. We loved it.

Q: How many people were in the office?

STOLTZFUS: Eventually there were seven. People came and went. I took Ferguson's place and Richard Mitchell - I'm not sure what he did before - he was a young officer and came in as my deputy. We had a communicator, Ralph Gandy. And then when Mitchell left...well, we had a problem there. The CIA put in a radio that I should never have allowed. And that is another story. It was installed in Mitchell's house because the CIA determined it would operate better there than at the office.

Well, so they set it up in Mitchell's house and put up a huge antenna. Needless to say it wasn't 24 hours before one of the Imam's informers told him about it. The Imam said, all right, the Charge will have to leave. I was declared persona non grata. It was sort nip and tuck there for awhile. One of the Imam's brothers was the Yemeni representative to the UN. He said to the Imam, we can't have this guy thrown out, there is no way we can do that. Another brother, Abd al Rahman, came up to talk to me and then to the Imam, and he got the Imam somewhat quieted down. But the Imam said, "Someone's got to go."

Anyway, for about a week, I suppose, it was unclear whether I would stay or not. But finally the Imam relented. All of his advisors said no, do not expel the Charge. So they kicked Dick Mitchell out instead, the radio being in his house. That made a good excuse to say, well, it's his fault and so on. So poor guy, he had to leave and was replaced by Bob Brown. And then when I left in 1961, Robert Stuckey took over from me.

Q: And while you were there in 1959, it was rather unsettled?

STOLTZFUS: Oh, yes. My goodness! There were any number of efforts made to assassinate the Imam. I wrote a dispatch once, "Who Killed the Imam?" And there were about six or seven possibilities. And I made a list of who they might be and who might have done it. It was interesting. It was difficult not to have interesting reporting out of there because there was always something happening.

The Imam was definitely marked for assassination and the Egyptians liked his son better. Crown Prince Badr had some sexual proclivities that they took advantage of and so forth. The Egyptians were grooming him to be the next Imam and Imam Ahmad was not really strong enough to do anything about such interference. He rarely saw his son.

Again, that is like the relationship between the Muscat Sultan, Said bin Taimur, and his son, Qabus, who is now the ruler of Muscat. Father and son only communicated by note and lived in different parts of the palace. Said never saw his son. Well, this situation was somewhat similar.

Imam Ahmad took whatever he could get from East and West, while his son was always

hobnobbing with the eastern bloc. The eastern bloc representatives were in Sanaa and the western bloc, including us, were in Taiz. I have to correct that and say that the Russians and Chinese were also in Taiz but Sanaa was where all the other Communist country diplomatic offices were: Poles, Czechs, East Germans, etc., doing things to get themselves in good graces. The Imam liked to divide and conquer where he could.

The Imam himself preferred Taiz and the coastal plain of Tihama, Hodeida and Sukhna. Ostensibly Sanaa was bad for his health, it being high in the mountains, cold and rainy, bad for his arthritis. However, since his predecessor Yahya had been murdered on a road outside Sanaa, his reluctance to hang around that city is understandable. Son Badr stayed in Sanaa. He was called the Red Prince. And he had visited Russia. By the way, the Egyptians were also in Sanaa.

Q: The Communists were trying to get a foothold on the Arabian Peninsula?

STOLTZFUS: We were all - East and West during the Cold War - battling for Yemen at that time. I mean, we all had our own projects. And of course the Yemenis were happy to take advantage of that. We had the road between Mocha and Sanaa through Taiz. That was our road building project. The Russians had the road from Mocha to Hodeida. And the Chinese had the road from Hodeida to Sanaa. So it was kind of a triangle. Each one having his own side. The Chinese also built a textile factory. The Russians improved the port of Hodeida. The East Germans, the Czechs, they all had their little projects. We had a project to improve the water system in Taiz. That was under AID.

We were all there like a bunch of fish in a fish bowl. Each of us doing our own little thing. And the Yemenis were reaping the benefit. That was all right. They were poor. But our job, along with the Italians, British, West Germans and French, were to keep our own influences going there.

Q: And the whole thing was because of location?

STOLTZFUS: Absolutely. See, the bab al Mandab is the bottom of the Red Sea and you have Ethiopia and Somalia on the west side and Yemen on the east. That is a very strategic point, very strategic - the lower end of the Red Sea. Absolutely.

Q: Which the Brits knew long before.

STOLTZFUS: The Brits had known this for a hundred years. That is right. Well, there are many stories about Yemen.

Q: Tell us some stories.

STOLTZFUS: Well, among the various things...we were always looking for ways to do some dirt to the eastern bloc side and get some advantage for ourselves. At the same time we were friendly with the Russians on a social level. Not so with the Chinese.

Yemen could be said to be a microcosm of what was going on in the rest of the world. Beside the US - Soviet rivalry the Russians and the Chinese clearly had no use for each other either. But the Russians had to show at least the outward niceties, so at their diplomatic parties or some shindig at the Russian legation, they would invite us - the Americans and the Chinese. The Chinese always came on time or early. One time after my wife and I had arrived and been greeted by the Russian Charge and his wife, we found ourselves approaching six Chinese men. When they saw us they immediately spun around and faced the wall. Like six pictures on the wall, they just faced the wall and stood there as we came in. It was a most amusing sight. And the Russian Charge said, "What can we do with these people?" He found their behavior totally crass. The Chinese would have nothing to do with us of course.

Although I did have a conversation once with the Chinese Chargé. Just strictly on the "QT". I'm not sure I reported that. He was an elderly gentleman, clearly of the old school, and in other times we would have been good friends. And we didn't go very deeply into politics as I recall. Simply wishing mutually for better times.

Q: Interview and oral history with Ambassador William Stoltzfus. This is June 14, 1997. Before we had to put in a new tape, Ambassador, you were telling me about this conversation with the Chinese Chargé in Taiz, in maybe 1959 or 1960.

STOLTZFUS: Yes. It was either very late 1959 or 1960. We just strolled around in the garden and chatted. I think he was taking some chance doing that. Certainly there were enough of those fanatical, wide eyed people in the embassy who would have reported on him. I'm not sure why he took a chance like that. Anyway, he was very cordial. We had a pleasant talk. And as I say, it was not a lot of high politics, nothing very memorable. It was clear that he was no Communist thug, but a real gentleman.

We always had a lot of fun with the Russians. We were really very close to the Russians there. Just on a personal basis. The Russians always liked to drink of course and when I'd call on the Chargé in the morning, he always had bottles of vodka and cognac ready. I said to myself, "Wait a minute." But we got to have fun with it. It was in the time of...what was the spy plane?

Q: Gary Powers? U-2?

STOLTZFUS: Gary Powers. U-2 incident. There were interesting things going on in the outside world, so we had plenty to argue about. And we were certainly not supporting each other in any way, but on a personal level we had a lot of fun. He'd say, "All right now, I've got to get you drunk so you will tell me things." So I'd have a few vodkas and so on. Then when he came up to call on me, of course I had the scotch and the bourbon and everything out. We had fun on a personal basis.

We also did a lot of entertaining because there was nothing else to do there. We had films. The Russians had films. So we would invite each other back and forth. One of the Russians was a man called Organientz, who was quite a rogue. I don't know whether he

was their intelligence or their information service man, but whatever he was, he was entertaining.

Q: You had electricity if you were having films. Or was this your two hours of electricity?

STOLTZFUS: No. I think we must have had a generator.

Q: A better generator by this time.

STOLTZFUS: No, you are right. I mean, how did we do those films? I guess we must have had some kind of generator.

I must emphasize, of course, that on a political basis we and the Russians were in stiff competition. When Dick Mitchell was thrown out over the radio incident, you know, we weren't very happy about that. The foreign minister at the time was friendly to us. There were some indications that the Russians blew the whistle on us. This is probably not true at all, I think that it is much more likely that one of the Yemeni informers reported the radio. However, we let it be known that possibly the Russians did the informing. That was not on...that was a very bad thing to do.

There was a political officer in the Russian Legation whose name was Sultanov. He had an attractive personality. He knew English well and he was always good for a party. We had a party one time to which he came dressed up as a western sheriff. But he had pinned on his lapel the word sheriff spelled with one "f". And I said, "Hey, man-sheriff, our sheriffs are spelled with two 'f's'." I have never seen a guy's face drop like that. I thought of it as just a joke at the time, but I realized later that here was a guy who had supposedly learned English well enough to pass for whatever the Russians might want him to pass for. But here he was caught short. I'll bet he never reported or mentioned his mistake to anybody. As a Russian agent you wouldn't want to make mistakes like that if you wanted to pass as an American sometime.

Anyway, in our game of give and take with the Russians, Sultanov became a victim. The Yemenis were sensitive to our rivalry and knew we were unhappy about Mitchell. In probably a trumped up charge Sultanov was accused later on of an unacceptable indiscretion. He had called at the foreign ministry and when whatever official he met with had left the room for a bit he supposedly was caught trying to peek at some papers on the desk. So they thought this was a good excuse to get rid of the guy. This was a typical balancing act in Yemen. We build a road, the Russians build a road and the Chinese build a road. We get somebody thrown out so they must have somebody thrown out. You know, this balancing act got down to quite a fine art there.

Q: Actually the balancing seems to have started when we moved an office there. We probably did it because the Chinese and the Russians were...

STOLTZFUS: Oh, absolutely. As you mentioned, Yemen is and was poised there in the southwest corner of the Arabian peninsula. It is a very important and strategic location.

Q: Well, let's take up Yemen again when we have our next session. It is a very, very interesting country.

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Q: This is June 22, 1997. And the interviewee is Ambassador William Stoltzfus. We are talking still about Yemen and this very interesting period that you were there. You talked a bit about the Chinese and the Russians having emissaries there. But what other countries were already in Yemen before we came in?

STOLTZFUS: The three major powers - China, Russia and the United States - had their legations in Taiz. Then from there on it was a split between East and West. The British and West Germans, for example, were in Taiz. The Italians were in Taiz.

Czechoslovakians, East Germans and some others of the eastern bloc were in Sanaa. The Imam kept foreigners separated; the second tier of powers was divided - the East in Sanaa and the West in Taiz.

As I said, Imam Ahmad never went to Sanaa for security reasons. It was dangerous for him to be up there. Well, to answer your question, we may have been one of the late comers up there. But when I was there what I have described was the basic split out among countries. And I don't know that any other countries came in after us. So I guess we were probably the last. The UK was already there. The Italians had long been there. They were in Taiz of course. The French kept their Consul in Aden and continued to cover Yemen from there. They did not put a Legation in Yemen.

To revert to 1959. The Imam was said to suffer from syphilis. He didn't have anything of the sort. He had very bad arthritis, but he was an amazing man. He could ride a horse full gallop without using his hands on the reins, although his legs were almost useless. He could barely get around on his legs but on a horse he was in total command at full gallop when he was showing off to his people.

He went to Italy for medical reasons. While he was gone his son, Badr, who was a weakling - and is (I suppose he is still alive) a weakling - was maneuvered by various "liberal" groups including, no doubt, the UAR and Nasser. He was talked into asserting some authority that clearly the Imam had never given him. The Imam having left the country, it would be normal for him to leave the government in the hands of the Crown Prince, just as the DCM takes over when the Ambassador is gone. But he had no notion or certainly gave no authority to Badr to do anything except just hold the reins.

But it was interesting because in Ethiopia there was a similar situation at somewhat the same time. When the Emperor was out of the country and his son was left in charge, his son tried to do some things to liberalize the government, but he was squashed like a bug when his father came back to Ethiopia. And similarly when the Imam came back he is reported to have said, "Is there anything for an old man like me to do around here in this

government anymore?" Shortly thereafter he took some draconian measures to squash any liberal thoughts that anybody had - including various mutilations and beheadings.

Beheadings were a fairly normal way of asserting authority in those days. His son he simply punished by what I guess would amount to house or palace arrest. He was kept in Sanaa and not allowed any authority. You never saw him and he was kept very much under wraps after that. That was one of the major things that happened early on in the time I was there.

As time went on there were constant efforts to get rid of the Imam. There was a lot of unrest and a lot of discontented people. The Saudis were as always subsidizing and stirring up the tribes in the north. Their chiefs - sheikhs - thought as I may have mentioned earlier that they had just as much right to the Imamship as did the Hamid al Din family. I'm sure that they were being constantly encouraged to stir things up.

The Imam, ostensibly for health reasons, spent most of his time in Sukhna, a little town inland from Hodeida, still on the plain before you start into the mountains. There were warm springs, hot springs, there and I'm sure that was a good place for him to be for his arthritis.

But he also didn't move around much for security reasons as I mentioned. And there was as I said a lot of tension. The Russians were active and we were a symbol of change also. And certainly the UAR and the Saudis were stirring the pot. We weren't opposing the Imam but his obviously archaic regime was the kind that, with all of the liberal tendencies of Nasser on one side and the highly conservative Saudis on the other, fostered a hot bed of restlessness.

I am not sure whether I mentioned the various assassination attempts on the Imam. And because he kept escaping from them, the belief grew that bullets or other harm would not affect him and that he couldn't be killed by normal means.

He liked to ride in a Land Rover bedecked with all the royal flags and ornaments that you could get on a vehicle. He would sit in the back of the car, which was properly upholstered for a potentate. He'd have outriders holding on to the sides, the driver and someone else in front. And then he'd have maybe one of his family in back with him. There was a stretch of paved road from Hodeida to Sukhna. At that time the country's roads still had not been paved so there was just this one piece of straight road. With people packed in the car with him and his retinue clinging to the sides, the Imam would order the driver to "floor it". That was one of his entertainments.

One time he was riding at top speed when a truck appeared ahead. The truck was parked on the roadside. Just as the Imam came up, the truck made a turn in the road. It was clearly a deliberate move. Of course the Imam's vehicle went kerpluie right into it. The outriders were killed, others injured, but he was not even scratched. This episode was interpreted as another indication of his sort of "heavenly protection".

There were various attempts to do him in. One of the most serious was when he was caught in an ambush with some 25 bullets shot at him at close range. He received four or five bullets in him and a young relative, Prince Hassan bin Ali, who was with him, had a close shave. For days afterward that young man proudly went around wearing the same clothes he had on at the ambush because there was a bullet hole through his robe and he liked to show how close he came to being hit.

The Imam was badly wounded. He was put to bed, the bullets were removed, and he survived. Of course this was a major event and therefore one of those East - West Cold War opportunities. We sent a doctor to attend him. The Italians already had doctors there. The Russians sent a doctor. There was a battery of doctors. It was ludicrous because here were all these members of both sides of the Cold War - pro and anti-Imam - fussing over the Imam and showing how important he was.

Of course, people like the Russians and the Egyptians and many Yemenis would have been happy to have him dead. But it was the better part of discretion and valor to show that you gave the Imam proper attention and cluck-clucked over him. One of my missions was to fly over to Asmara. There wasn't a single x-ray machine in the entire Yemen. Ali Mugassas, one of the few Yemeni pilots, had a single engine plane so he and I flew to Asmara to pick up an x-ray machine from our military establishment there in Eritrea. We flew back with it low over the waters of the Red Sea.

Q: Well, that was one up on the Russians.

STOLTZFUS: We were always trying to go one up on the Russians. I may have mentioned the Hodeida fire and the Russians. Well anyway, let me finish this. The Imam survived the assassination attempt. I guess it may have shortened his life though. I'm not exactly sure when he died. Maybe it was late in 1962 when he died. And then Badr took over after that. But I had left by that time and Bob Stuckey was in charge when Badr took over as Iman.

I had occasion to see Badr. Crown Prince Badr came over to Taiz one time, presumably with his father's permission. I went to call on him. I took the bit in my teeth and I said, "You know, it is very important for your reputation, for your ability to influence things in this country and be a proper leader, that you get around more. You should see people, call on them." And he said, "That's right. Of course we should do that." But clearly he had a problem. No leader's life was safe in certain parts of the country where there were people who would be glad to do the leadership in and take over themselves. Badr clearly didn't have the inclination to tour the country either. I don't think he loved his subjects that well to be a real politician. I think he probably appreciated what I said, but he certainly had no intention of taking my advice.

As I mentioned before, one of the interesting events that happened while I was in Yemen occurred in the port town of Hodeida. One of the Russian enterprises was to dredge the port and build it up. So it happened that there was a fire in Hodeida. The poor section of town was pretty well burned out by this conflagration as you would expect in any kind of

shanty town. It was very quickly consumed.

It wasn't a terrible tragedy. People lost their homes, but there were few or no deaths. But it was a good opportunity again for one nation or another to show that they cared a lot about Yemen. The British and the Italians and we Americans started bombarding our governments to do something. The US Navy had a destroyer that was on its way somewhere, maybe to the Persian Gulf or the Far East. It was not far away so the Navy, at Washington's behest, diverted it to Hodeida. The destroyer brought in tents and blankets. Our military also sent a medical team from Asmara to inoculate against the spread of epidemics. We were very pleased to note that the first military presence in the Russian port was an American destroyer. That was a coup. That was the kind of thing we considered a coup.

Captain Klepack, who was captain of the destroyer, was a little nervous about the fact that the pilot who brought the ship into port was a Russian. The Russian actually brought the destroyer in, although for local prestige and for nationalistic purposes the Yemeni director of the port, whose name was Salal, stood on the bridge also. The Russian could not have been more cooperative, and he clearly enjoyed the bizarre situation, so we realized he was not going to run the ship aground or do any mischief. It was a rather unique experience to say the least.

The tents and the blankets were off loaded and the medical team flew over from Asmara. We all stayed in the Hodeida guest house. A tricky moment came up when the Imam decreed that no ship could come in to his port that didn't fly the Yemeni flag. The US Navy doesn't permit other flags flown on its vessels. Catching the spirit of our situation, Klepack contacted his superiors. Our Navy made an exception and allowed the Yemeni flag to fly on that ship while it was in port. That may be a unique event in US naval history.

Then as a grand gift to the crew of this mighty ship, the Yemenis produced a cow - a live cow. And this cow was brought down to the pier. Of course there is no way that beast should ever have been on a ship. That is strictly against the rules too. But to humor the Yemenis the Captain said it was a great present, we'll take it. There was no proper gang plank. It was wobbly with just a rope to hold on to. A very dicey situation. The cow got no farther than halfway up the plank before it fell into the water between the pier and the ship. Then there was a desperate attempt to keep its head above water so it wouldn't drown. Some young men climbed down the side of the pier, put a rope around its neck and held its head up out of the water. It took an hour or more to get this unwieldy beast out from between the pier and the ship. They finally found a net and hauled it out. The poor thing was not too much the worse for wear. It was able to stand on its feet. It was tethered on the fantail. The Yemenis' idea of course was that the cow was fresh meat for the troops.

Well, there was no way the Navy would ever allow anyone to eat uninspected foreign meat like that. That was out of the question. But anyway, the cow was on the poop deck and the crew began to become attached to it. They took care of it and they thought it was

great. I'm not sure what they called it but it became the pet of the ship. It was still standing placidly on board as the destroyer departed at the end of the visit. But once out of sight, I am told it was sent to cow heaven and disposed of over the side. The cow incident was one of our favorite memories of Cold War Yemen.

Q: You were in Hodeida observing this?

STOLTZFUS: Yes, we were in Hodeida because of this fire and overseeing our operations there...by "we" I mean our group from the office. My wife Janet may have been there too. We were down there once in awhile anyway. Janet and I were visiting Hodeida when there was the attack I mentioned on the Imam. We were in the guest house when we heard some shots fired and my wife went to the window to look out. I said, "For Pete's sake, dear, get away from the window." There were bullets flying all over. Later that night we found out about the attempt on the Imam's life. That is why we were able to respond quickly, because we were already there. Otherwise communications were so bad that had we been in Taiz it could have been quite a while before I ever learned anything about it.

But we happened to be in Hodeida for one reason or another when this attempt was made and when those bullets were fired. The authorities caught or they ostensibly caught the people doing the shooting and chained them up in the walled yard of a large building. But everything was quite open. There was no attempt to shut the yard gate. A day or two later I saw one of the suspects in the courtyard. His weren't ordinary chains. It was as though he was in the stocks. His ankles were so heavily manacled that he could barely shuffle. I remember those manacles. He could not lift them off the ground.

One of the conspirators, who had killed himself rather than be captured, was later stuffed into a basket, the kind they used to carry qat. The corpse was trussed up, put in the basket and hauled up by rope into a tree, then left to swing in the breeze for a few days. I remember that as a fixture on a Hodeida street for a while.

Q: How many baskets were there swinging around?

STOLTZFUS: There was just that one basket but there were others who were picked up during that time. Later there were several beheadings. I never thought it particularly appetizing or a particularly good idea for the Chargé to watch one of those spectacles. For personal and professional reasons I had no interest whatsoever in watching them. Although we were all encouraged to go. It was a public beheading and you were supposed to go.

Q: Were we interested in watching the Russians build that port and how they used it? Was that of any interest?

STOLTZFUS: No, I don't think so particularly. There was no evidence that the Russians were using the port for military or intelligence purposes, and Yemen needed the port; it was an extremely poor country. This project was a way of making sure that the Russian

presence was welcome there and they could keep their oar in.

Yemen's foreign policy under the Imam was simple. One brother, Hassan bin Yahya, was the Yemen UN representative. He was pro-West. Another brother, Abd al Rahman was also pro-West. Basically the leading princes were pro-West and, as I've said, the Imam was just a total opportunist. His son Badr was known as the "Red Prince"; he was the liberal one, more at home with the eastern bloc and very much out of sorts with his father. And out of sorts with the other princes, who were all pro-West.

It was a balancing act...and a way of getting aid from these various countries from the Yemeni point of view. And from our point of view the southeast corner of the Arabian peninsula was important. We certainly weren't going to leave it to the Russians and the Chinese.

In the wings were the Egyptians who, as I mentioned before, had their representative in Sanaa. He was sent by Nasser to cultivate Badr as the next Imam. It was clear that the UAR had a strong interest in Yemen. They didn't have big programs there. But sub rosa they were very much involved. And they were determined to have Badr in their pocket.

Badr was weak and, while I am not sure this is really fair to say, we all suspected that he liked little boys. The Egyptians were suspected of taking advantage both by providing boys and also by holding such activities over Badr's head since they are pretty much a no-no in the Moslem world. This was something obviously they had on him.

I remember we got to know the Egyptian representative, Ahmad Abu Zaid, very well. He was Nasser's presence in Yemen. He was a typical fun-loving Egyptian on the surface. And we all had a very good time. We would have a few drinks with him at his place in Sanaa. And we would go out shooting rabbits and birds with him on occasion. Our battle cry was "lazim arnab" (we must get a rabbit). He was very friendly and took a shine to our boys Bill and Philip. He once said to Philip, this was during the days of the shots at the moon, "See, Philip, that is the Russian moon." He was tweaking us by implying that the Russian space project was ahead of ours.

He also gave Philip a rather inappropriate present of a very fine antique dagger. There were some valuable antiques to be bought in Sanaa in those days. I think they are pretty well cleaned out now, although one can probably still acquire jambiyyas, those curved daggers that Yemenis wear with the fancy belts.

But from the overall political and international points of view, our relations with Nasser were such that they would not likely spill over into the Yemeni situation. Things were reasonably quiet in terms of each of us foreigners having our own projects and really not getting in each other's way. We were trying to outdo each other in a rather gentlemanly way, on the surface. However, the Egyptians certainly had an agenda. And the Saudis were watching closely. It was a restless time in terms of trying to get rid of the Imam and introducing some liberalization. The Egyptians would have liked to add Yemen to their client state base. That is what they were after.

Communications were so bad in the country that it wasn't a question of very well coordinated maneuvers. I mean, if you wanted to do something or see someone you just got in a jeep and drove to the desired place, through mud, mountains and rocks. There were no telephones. There was Morse code, but that was pretty cumbersome. And you were supposed to have permission even to leave town. As in Saudi Arabia, as I explained earlier, you were supposed to have permission before you left the town you were in, or the environs. You were allowed to hunt and hike about in your area, or at least nobody stopped you. But you weren't supposed to drive down the road to the next town. At the edge of town there would be a wooden bar across the road. Assuming the man at the check point was not in a torpor with qat, he would ask for you "fakk" - permission to travel. It was a means of keeping track of people...and there were spies everywhere, of course.

Q: What kind of spies?

STOLTZFUS: Well, the informers, the Yemenis. They were all Yemeni. And then there were spies for those against the Imam and spies for those with him. One of the interesting characters there was Ahmad Sayyaghi, a prominent opponent of the Imam. Typical independent operator, paddling his own canoe. He was the Na'ib of Ibb. As I mentioned, Ibb was a town on the way to Sanaa from Taiz. Very picturesque place that we loved to stay in overnight. Although the guest house was over the local prison and your evenings were spent hearing clanking chains down below.

The Na'ib (that means governor of the area) was a pretty tricky character, a swashbuckling, romantic type. Every once in a while the Imam would try to catch him, whereupon he would jump in his jeep with his retainers and race down to Baihan, part of the British Protectorate at the time. He would hole up there until the chase cooled off and then he would come back.

Occasionally on his way to Baihan just ahead of the Imam's men, he would stop at the Legation and we would have a chat. "Well," he would say, "I think I'd better go down to Baihan for awhile." He would complain of the Imam's evil regime and how it wasn't doing anything for the people; of course he was about as feudalistic as the Imam.

Q: And it is June 22, 1997. Ambassador Stoltzfus, you were talking about the chap that was going to Baihan when we had to change the tapes. Perhaps you would like to continue.

STOLTZFUS: Yes. Well, the point is that the country was primitive enough in those days that all kinds of people pursued their own independent agendas. There was no central police force or overall security group that could organize or keep track of things. It was a very chaotic situation. The influences and fortunes of the Imam and his friends and enemies ebbed and flowed.

In my opinion our most valuable contribution while we were in Yemen was my wife's

school. She has always been a teacher. There was no school in the normal sense in the whole country. So she was giving our kids lessons. Then the Ethiopian Charge«, whose children were rattling around having nothing to do, not learning anything, asked my wife Janet if she would let his kids come to some classes, and she said, "Okay."

In the beginning the understanding was that anyone who was non-Yemeni would be permitted to attend the school. The Imam did not allow normal schools in the country as I mentioned earlier. The only ones allowed were the kuttab, which are schools strictly to study the Koran.

Q: Not reading or writing?

STOLTZFUS: Reading, writing and arithmetic, science, all verboten. Also libraries were out. Book stores were out. No newspapers. None of those things was allowed. So it was obvious that the Imam would not take kindly to a school being started for Yemenis. But then the chief of police in Taiz said he wanted to send his kids. We said, "Wait a minute here. That is not too good an idea." Then the Foreign Minister wanted to send his kids. And there was another Yemeni also. They were insistent. They said, we really need this.

The Foreign Minister arranged for me to see the Imam in Sukhna. When you went to see the Imam you never could get a firm appointment. Forget that. You languished in the sparse local guest house for several days until his eminence or his majesty or his glorification decided he would see you. There was an occasion when we were in Hodeida and met the Pakistani Ambassador, who also was staying at the guest house. He was the Ambassador to several countries including Yemen and by his own admission had made the mistake of coming down to this part of his bailiwick. He had been in Hodeida six weeks and he had not seen the Imam yet. He was absolutely around the bend and then some by the time we saw him. Every evening he would climb on the flat mud roof of the guest house and pace up and down, up and down. He was going absolutely bananas. That is the kind of thing that happened. The Imam couldn't have cared less. You know, have a nice time here, go for a walk. Go hunting. Do what you want, but I am not ready to see you yet.

I finally got to see him. When I entered the "throne room", the Imam was reclining on the floor on these nice carpets and pillows and so forth. His courtiers were kneeling all around him. We are not people who bow and scrape and kneel to anybody, potentate or otherwise, so since he was on the floor I planned to sit down beside him. Before I could do so, he grabbed my belt. And he jerked. He had very bad arthritis; he could hardly walk but his upper body was built like a gorilla's. From the waist up he was a very powerful man. I dropped like a limp rag beside him. He growled, "What is this I hear about a school?" And I said, "Well, yes. We have a school. My wife has a school and it is for foreigners and strictly for non-Yemenis, but I have understood that there are certain..." He interjected, "Well, my chief of police wants his children to go there." I thought it best to say nothing to that. Anyway, he asked, "Who teaches in the school?" And I said, "My wife." And he said, "Only your wife?" And I said, "Yes, she has a young West German girl who takes the kids to the bathroom and makes sure they don't fall off the cliff and so

forth." And he said, "You must promise me that only your wife will teach, then you can have the school." I couldn't believe it. The school flourished after that, with numerous Yemeni students. And it is still going. The AID finally took it over, and later local parents. It was the first school that Yemen ever had that was not religious. I would consider that our number one accomplishment in the country.

One time when I was in Sukhna waiting to see the Imam I brought a film along. It was called "Seven Brides for Seven Brothers". I'll never forget that film. The Imam sent word that he wanted to see it.

Q: How did he find out about it?

STOLTZFUS: Oh, there were no secrets. I mean once someone saw the film case, it was immediately known. I suppose every move I made would be reported to the Imam. If I were to talk to the wrong person or something, or wandered out somewhere. Anyway, there were no secrets. Besides, I probably offered to show it to whoever wanted to see it.

Q: What would you use for electricity?

STOLTZFUS: Well, the Imam's palace had its own generator of course. He certainly had his own facilities. There wasn't one in town but he had his own generator.

Q: These are gas generators?

STOLTZFUS: Gas, or perhaps oil.

Q: He was in Sukhna you say. Where is that?

STOLTZFUS: Sukhna, as I explained earlier, is a town in the coastal plain, against the mountains, between Hodeida and Sana'a.

Q: And he had a palace there?

STOLTZFUS: He had a palace there.

Q: What was it like?

STOLTZFUS: Well, the palace was a large adobe type structure. Usually the ground floor of such structures was for the cattle, goats and sheep. Then you climbed a circular staircase as in castles you might see in Europe of the olden days. You walked up circular, very dark stairs. They were truly medieval structures.

In the Imam's palace the second and third floors where people lived and ate were of course much bigger versions of what the average Yemeni would have. There would be camels in the courtyard bringing food supplies and whatever the Imam and his entourage needed. There were a few vehicles, and of course the Imam rode around in a jeep. But

travel and commerce were mostly by camel back.

Q: Did he have his own mosque right in the...?

STOLTZFUS: Yes. And he had his wives and ladies in waiting and a lot of children, servants, etc. in the place. It was a big establishment. Anyway, he heard about this film. So I brought it to the palace and set it up. He wanted it set on the roof, which was flat of course. There was a partition that extended about halfway along the roof. At the narrower end of the roof I set up the projector, and there the men sat. The screen was set up at the wide end of the roof beyond the end of the partition. Thus the women could be out of sight of the men but still see the screen. The women and girls were supposed to be out of sight around the corner, and theoretically we couldn't see them. And we would show the film that way. Every once in a while some of the young ladies would peek around the corner and then get bolder and more visible. Periodically the men would tell them to go back. And then they would come out again. Yemenis like to have fun and their women are not allowed to be trodden on. They like to tweak their males and see how far they can get before the male members of the family really get angry. They stop before that. They like to flirt. So we had fun with that.

I showed that film every night for at least a week. Every single night. I wasn't allowed to leave. You can't leave without the Imam's permission. His guest house was a little mud place on the other side of the compound where we stayed. And the days got pretty boring, even with books and walking around and trying to get permission to leave. Well as long as they wanted to see the same film, I was stuck. So I showed it seven or eight times and they finally let me go.

Q: How long were you there?

STOLTZFUS: I was there a couple of weeks. Time means nothing. You are just there at the pleasure of the Imam. What I am about to say is in the book that Robert Kaplan wrote called "The Arabists". For my sins, I am mentioned in the first chapter of the book. Anyway, he recounts what I told him.

One time when I was visiting the Imam one of his retainers brought in a cage. Inside was a wild cat that they had caught. A civet or whatever it was. It was a good size. In its cramped quarters it was full of fury. I felt bad for it. The Imam ordered the guy to open the cage and stuck his hand in it. The cat struck and raked his hand with its claws. The Imam watched for a second or two and then drew his hand out, looked at the blood, wiped it off and seemed quite pleased. He seemed to get some satisfaction from being attacked by this beast. Then somebody took it away. That is one of the events down there that I will never forget.

Q: Could you tell us something about the Legation itself and what it looked like and how it operated? What the people were doing on a normal sort of day. What your relations were with the State Department. How you received and sent anything to and from them.

STOLTZFUS: Our Legation was initially housed in one of the rather ancient structures of Taiz of those days. Then Ferguson, my predecessor, oversaw the building of the new Legation and apartments for staff. One of the staff, Ralph Gandy, was our communicator. Ferguson also had the Chargé's house built. It was a stone structure with a bare yard surrounded by a wall. The Legation was quite nicely built with a long hall in between offices. All the buildings were close to each other, but they didn't constitute a compound.

By the time we were settled in our house it was basic but comfortable. The furniture was fine. It was not a primitive situation from that point of view.

Q: How did you get the furniture shipped in there?

STOLTZFUS: It must have been trucked in from Aden or Mocha. It certainly wasn't flown in. Mocha is a small port town along the coast south of Hodeida. We put on an addition to our house because we had a couple of kids, so we increased the bedrooms from two to four. We had a nice verandah that overlooked the town and the valley. We were quite comfortable. Our Legation consisted of the Charge, the number two, a secretary and a communicator. Much of the admin was done in Aden. The AID had quite a good size mission there.

Q: When did they arrive?

STOLTZFUS: I am not sure when they arrived. It must have been sometime in late 1959 or 1960. Their local project was the Taiz water system which was to bring in piping and proper distribution of water for the town, which had no running water at all.

AID was under local criticism from the start. The problem was that in order to get established they felt that they first had to have houses built for their staff. So for months and months all that was happening was getting houses built for the people who were supposed to be doing something. And it raised the local real estate prices. That is the usual thing when Americans go to a place. It raises the prices all around of everything. Whether it is housing or servants or whatever, when Americans arrive they need a certain standard that puts pressure on prices all the way around. And that causes a lot of complaint, not just from the locals but from other foreigners who don't have the kind of bucks that we have.

That was not a very good time for me. It took a long time for them to get going and there was a certain tension between us and AID for their lack of showing something happening on the ground for the Yemenis, as opposed to feathering their own nest. Ralph Workinger, who ran the AID operation there, was a crusty old guy. And there was Jim - can't remember his last name - who is now in the UN, who was also there for awhile.

Everything we attempted took a long time of course. If you ever needed to see somebody or report something it was a laborious process. Officials were always willing to see you but it was a question of getting where they were or finding them. Transportation was difficult wherever it was. Communications to the Department were written airgrams. We

sent virtually nothing by electrical means because it was just too much trouble. We had no communications equipment at the Legation except one-time pads.

We did receive coded telegrams from the Department and this was another unique experience. The local people in the telegraph office didn't know any western language. All they could do was look at the shape of the letter and then try to copy the shape. Deciphering telegrams was a heck of a job even with your pad. You know, an "L" and an "F" and a "P" for example were all in long hand and very hard to distinguish. They didn't print. Imagine us trying to copy Arabic letters not knowing any Arabic.

We had a bi-weekly pouch service flown in from Asmara to the Taiz airport.

Q: A courier?

STOLTZFUS: A courier would come in. It was no mean feat to land or take off in Taiz. It was always a risky venture because the runway was built with a mountain at one end and a cliff at the other, and it wasn't very long. And unless the pilot started his run with full power and was able to take off smartly, he had a real problem with the cliff ahead. And you couldn't always land into the wind. A plane of any size - larger than a DC-3 - couldn't approach from the promontory side because that meant heading into a mountain at the other end of the simple runway. So you had to maneuver and drop down from the mountain side and put on the brakes before reaching the cliff. It was not a place that people liked to come in and out of very often.

I remember one time taking off with a Yugoslav pilot. The plane was an Air Commander. And an Air Commander is not one that takes off very quickly. It takes a good runway to get it off the ground. That day the wind was blowing hard and toward the cliff. The pilot said, "We're not taking off down wind in this plane. We have to take off the other way despite the projection in front of us here." He revved up, put on full brakes until we were just shaking like a leaf, and he let go. Faster and faster we went but were still not off the ground. We could see into the hangar as we flashed by. He finally was able to pull the plane up and we just barely got off and made a sharp turn away from the mountains.

When we were clear of the mountain I looked at him and he was breathing heavily and soaked with perspiration. He was absolutely shaken as he looked back at me and we agreed we had had a brush with death. Taiz was a tricky place to get in and out of.

It was always an event to go out to the airport when this little DC-3 came and landed and the courier got off. We would have a little confab with our colleagues and others who also came to see the plane in.

Q: Whose DC-3 was it?

STOLTZFUS: The local airlines.

Q: And the same courier came?

STOLTZFUS: Well, whoever it was. It wasn't the same courier each time.

Q: Did he bring you any goodies as well?

STOLTZFUS: We didn't do a lot of that. There wasn't much room in those planes. They were small as you probably know. I don't know how many seats a DC-3 has. It doesn't carry more than about 10 or 12 maximum I would say. It came only once a fortnight, and people and baggage were going back and forth. There really wasn't a lot of goodies. And we didn't think about that so much you know.

Q: No bananas or eggs?

STOLTZFUS: Well, no. Speaking of eggs, the eggs bought locally were usually a week or two old and smelled rotten. We used to eat them anyway. Fresh meat was not terribly appetizing in the local markets because the butchers' shops would have sheep, goat and beef carcasses hanging right out on the street, which was a dusty pathway in between the rows of shops. And between the dust and the flies covering the meat (it was always thick with flies) you didn't feel too much like having them cut down a side of beef or more likely sheep or goat, which I like fine but my wife is not very fond of. So I used to go out hunting, especially if we were hosting a function. These we had often since there were no restaurants worthy of the name and everyone entertained at home. I would go out and shoot guinea fowl.

The best time to hunt guinea fowl is just after harvest. You were right in the middle of the mountains, so all the arable land was terraced. You could walk along these terraces and the guinea fowl would come in to eat the seeds and whatever edible was left after the harvest. And as you came and they would fly off you'd shoot down one or two. In an afternoon, if you were lucky, you could bag a dozen or so. It required a good bit of cooking with lard and wine to tenderize them because they were pretty tough birds.

And there was also mountain hen or partridge. There were gazelles. I didn't shoot gazelles. I was out on some hunting parties where they did but we didn't eat that as meat ourselves. That is another thing my wife wasn't too keen on either.

We had some memorable characters there. One of them I have already mentioned was Ahmad Sayyaghi. The Italian Charge, Amadeo Guillet, was a very interesting man. He was a royalist and had been an Italian cavalryman. He was an expert horseman. During World War II he was part of a cavalry unit with the Italians in Ethiopia. He fought against the British and others during the war, but he was a royalist at heart and never had any use for Mussolini.

At the end of the Italian campaign in Ethiopia he continued to lead guerrilla skirmishes against the British, but as the risk of capture grew he decided to escape. So he dressed himself as an Arab, as a Yemeni. He pretended that he was slightly off his rocker so he didn't have to speak. His Arabic was fluent but he could never have passed as a Yemeni

with his accent. He managed to get across the straits and over to Yemen. He holed up in Yemen until the war was over and he could return to Italy. Later the Italian government assigned him to its Legation in Yemen as Minister. He was a striking character. He knew everybody there was to know. He brought in Italian doctors and through his efforts Italy became the preferred foreign country. The Imam felt very comfortable with the Italians and went to Italy whenever he went abroad.

Amadeo eventually retired with his wife, Biche, to Ireland. He loved horses. He had a string of horses in Yemen which we used to ride now and then. He was the best known and the preferred foreign diplomat in the country. He was the Dean, and mentor for all us Westerners.

One of the finest gentlemen we met in the Foreign Service was Frederick Reinhardt, our Ambassador to Egypt and Yemen when I was Chargé in Taiz. He visited Yemen at least once - maybe twice - during our tour there. The Imam was usually holed up in Sukhna in those days and I'm not sure Reinhardt ever called on him. At least I don't remember it.

Ambassador Reinhardt took all the inconveniences of our medieval habitat in stride. I think he positively enjoyed it. It was after all unique! He spoke French, German and Russian and of course was a sensation in our little diplomatic and local official communities of Taiz and Sanaa. We will never forget the unhappy Russian Chargé, Mr. Lavrov, who had had a tour in Washington, dressed in clothes obviously bought in the US, and found Yemen beyond the beyonds. He was thoroughly disliked by his staff. But we had an official reception at our residence for Reinhardt and when he spoke in fluent Russian to Lavrov, the Soviet was literally overcome; he found himself back in the real world for a few fleeting moments.

Reinhardt was a huge success with the Yemenis and with our Egyptian eminence grise, Ahmad Abu Zaid. Here I have to interject that the Yemeni stage and players at that time in history were absolutely unique. The real life scene was the 13th century in the 1950's. We were Connecticut Yankees in King Arthur's court. The Cold War was in full swing and Egypt was plotting the overthrow of Imam Ahmad. Yet all of us foreigners - through our common amazing experiences - could feel a kinship, tolerance and fellowship totally outside of politics and the normal outlook on life.

I accompanied Reinhardt to Sanaa, where we called on local officials. Abu Zaid, typical Egyptian, expansive, energetic, exuberant, suggested a hunt. "Lazim arnabi!" The Ambassador, despite a painful back, was all for it. Shotguns and cartridges were provided and we set forth - in the middle of the city! There were no rabbits in town, but pigeons galore, flying along the parapets and crenellations of the whitewashed, adobe buildings, some six or seven stories high along the street.

Needless to say, our party quickly drew a crowd as we walked along.. Several excited young men pointed to the pigeons and said, "Shoot, shoot!" Without much thought the Ambassador raised his gun and fired. Pigeon falls to the ground - but also some chunks of a parapet, now become rubble. On closer examination we discover the building hit was a

mosque. Oh my God, will the religion crazed mob attack and lynch us? Nothing of the sort. Cheers and congratulations and eagerness to please. Nevertheless, no more shooting in town.

Another individual Janet and I will never forget is John Mecom. "Big John" was the quintessential Texas oil man: bearlike build, decisive, commanding voice, generous. Like many of his ilk he preferred being an "independent" and was said to have made and lost several fortunes in his day. His previous key to success was his interest in salt domes. Apparently there is oil to be found under certain salt domes. As I recall, Mecom first approached the Egyptian government for a concession but later, or in addition, settled on the Yemenis, whom a couple of his pilot fish had found receptive to a bid for a concession. Of special interest to Mecom was the salt dome at Salif, a coastal town north of Hodeida. Needless to say I was active in promoting this welcome show of American enterprise in Yemen.

Mecom arrived in Yemen and was received with great excitement by Yemeni officialdom. He had brought with him two breeding bulls. They were huge and magnificent and I wondered, rather crudely, whether the poor little scrawny local cows would be able to accommodate their obvious prowess.

The oil lease was speedily signed and on a subsquent Mecom visit we all drove to Salif to watch the test well being spudded in. We have some home movies recording that event. Unfortunately the tests did not show promise and no oil in commercial quantities was found in Yemen until years later. Mecom's interest in the Middle East came to an abrupt end when some years after the Salif venture one of his planes was shot down, probably inadvertently, over Egypt.

While in Yemen on one of his visits, Mecom came up to Taiz. On learning of Janet's school he graciously paid it a visit. What he thought of the somewhat dingy school room and facilities available in those days in Yemen, the modest equipment and furniture, and the motley collection of students, he never said, but he handed Janet a check for two thousand dollars, the school's first significant income.

Another unforgettable character was my British colleague Christopher Pirrie-Gordon. Typical of many Englishmen of his generation abroad in the military or diplomatic service, he was a confirmed bachelor, highly educated with broad interests. He had a perfectly delightful sense of humor, was extremely hospitable, and above all loved poetry and Italy. During the Hodeida fire episode, when all of our Western diplomats were urging our governments to provide aid to the victims, Christopher once said, "Well, I have spent the morning telling London, Washington, Paris and Rome what to do."

One afternoon on our way down the road between Taiz and Aden we ran across Pirrie-Gordon. It was raining and his Land Rover had broken down. There he was, seated on a rock by the side of the road, sheltering under an umbrella, reading Italian poetry, oblivious to his surroundings and his situation, leaving it to his driver to fuss and fume over the hood of the vehicle.

A favorite poem of his was a tongue-in-cheek portrayal of a scheming seducer and the poor, defenseless damsel: "Have some Madeira, my dear...You really have nothing to fear..." Following dinner at his residence he would offer an after coffee drink saying, "This is not a signal for you to leave." His number two, Ken Oldfield, appropriately called that final brew "one for the ditch". Christopher enjoyed conversations and late evenings.

Years later Pirrie-Gordon was posted to Venice where he won acclaim for his role in raising funds to restore buildings and art treasures damaged in a flood which occurred there.

Michel Harriz, an Arab American with AID, became a good friend. He was an adviser on aagricultural projects in the Tihama. On one of his visits to Taiz he brought a little steam engine - it really worked on steam - as a present to our boys. Incidentally, boys are a great favorite with Arabs. Egypt's representative Abu Zaid, whom I have mentioned, loved to talk to our two. Perhaps he missed his family.

Q: Did you get and local produce or grain or fruit of any type?

STOLTZFUS: Well, the local bread was okay. We brought in as much food stuffs as we could from Aden. We had canned goods from Aden. I guess we could have eaten entirely Yemeni food but I think it would have been hard on us over time.

Q: What do Yemenis eat?

STOLTZFUS: Well, as Arabs they eat lamb and goat meat and rice. At least in those days fresh vegetables and fruit were scarce. And they are fond of heavy sweet desserts. My wife has no use for those. They are pretty cloying. Well-to-do Yemenis, like their fellow Arabs elsewhere, have access to all those dishes created by Turks, by Greeks, by North Africans, Indians, Africans, Egyptians. In all the Arab world that is what you eat plus European and American dishes. For parties Yemenis did not serve their own native dishes exclusively.

Q: And what did you have to drink?

STOLTZFUS: We boiled water of course. And there were juices...canned juices. Everything came in cans. Then we had our liquor, the main item we got from Eritrea. There were plenty of alcoholic drinks.

Q: Did you serve them to Yemenis as well?

STOLTZFUS: We tried not to. We didn't ply them with liquor at all. As I said, the Russian and I used to ply each other with liquor just for fun. And for foreigners we always had receptions where we served alcohol. Some Yemenis drank; you couldn't really refuse them. One thing we did not do was sell liquor to them. There were

foreigners who did. And that was most unfortunate and a great mistake. Occasionally a Yemeni would ask for a bottle, and if he was a prince it was a little hard to refuse.

The Yemenis would say "your qat (i.e. whiskey) works a lot quicker than ours." In other words, your form of getting dizzy is more effective than ours.

Q: How about tobacco?

STOLTZFUS: Oh, yes. Everyone smoked like a chimney.

Q: Where did they get it?

STOLTZFUS: They were all foreign cigarettes.

Q: They didn't raise it themselves?

STOLTZFUS: Not that I know of. The traditional cash crop was coffee. Mocha coffee is of course famous. But they didn't tend the coffee bushes very well in later years and they gradually found that the market was difficult to sell to. Earlier, Greek merchants in Hodeida carried on a good business sorting and marketing Yemeni coffee and there are a number of varieties. It is very good coffee. I think in recent years it has become less and less a good crop for them. Maybe because of prices or because later as things became more chaotic it became more difficult to harvest and export the beans. Whereas with qat, you just let it grow. It is a bush and you cut off the fresh leaves, bundle them up and sell them. Drugs are more profitable and a lot easier to sell.

Qat is a mild narcotic. Something similar to hemp. You chew it like a cow. It is a tremendous time waster. Most afternoons the men (and women separately) would sit in an upper room of their house, open the window to let the breezes in, and talk all afternoon chewing this qat. Some of the more modern thinking Yemenis have called qat a curse on the country. But they have never been able to get rid of it. It is a national pastime and an addiction. A qat session can be a good time to call on Yemenis because they are relaxed and they will chat. Their tongues tend to be loosened. So it is not a bad time to call, assuming they are making any sense. They are invariably friendly in any case.

When you arrive you are given your own bundle. Not about to chew that whole bundle, you might take a few twigs out and you chew and you chew and you chew. It tastes like grass or ordinary leaves. For proper effect you should be thirsty and hungry. And it does assuage hunger. That is probably the original reason poor people chewed it. After chewing a while you take some swigs of water which supposedly enhances the "high". Well, we don't tend to be thirsty and hungry so qat doesn't do much for us. It never had the slightest effect on me. I chewed away and couldn't get any results at all. One of the problems with it of course is if your driver has been chewing it and then you go hurtling down the mountain. He thinks he is Schwartzenegger or somebody and he can do anything. This can be kind of risky to life and limb. In those cases I took over the wheel

and said, "You sit quietly until you get your brains back."

Yemen as we knew it in the late ‘50s was truly medieval. It was charming for us privileged foreigners. The only modern buildings were those of foreigners, mainly our Legation and AID housing and offices. There was a wall around Taiz. And you went in and out of the city gate. The Italian Legation was an old Yemeni building inside the wall. The rest of us were up against the mountains.

Everything looked like what you would read in history about the 12th century: walled towns, stone redoubts, twisting unpaved roads, animal driven carts, only an occasional vehicle, men in chains, men with daggers in their belts. The old road to Aden skirted some rocky cliffs up to the palace of the Imam, which he never used himself. But Badr occasionally used it. The Imam kept a couple of lions there. You could stop and see them, sometimes in a cage and sometimes on the wall, like those of the Emperor of Ethiopia in Addis Ababa. Very picturesque.

Q: Mr. Ambassador, I believe on the last tape we had come to the end or partially to the end of your service in Yemen. And in 1961 I believe you were transferred to the Department.

STOLTZFUS: Yes. We left Yemen in 1961 and I went to work in Personnel, Washington Assignments. I think that the Department had decided that I had spent enough time in the medieval parts of the Middle East and needed a change of scene. It certainly was a change of scene. I assume the arrangement remains the same. Responsibility for placement of officers was split geographically and around the world: Europe, Asia and so forth. Each one of us was in charge of his own part of the world.

We called it the "slave market" and we had some rather rude words for those that were difficult to place. Then there were those whom we all tried to get for our own vacancies. You'd be looking at dossiers and other information and find out that so and so was very good. And then everybody else would find out too although you would try to hide the guy. We had an interesting and amusing time. I had been rather dismayed at going back to such an assignment. But actually I enjoyed it very much and learned a lot about the Department as a result.

Q: This was Personnel?

STOLTZFUS: Yes. Personnel placement. It was the placement of officers in jobs. Each of us had books with officers up for transfer on one side and the openings that needed to be filled on the other. If an officer was good you tried to get him and if his record was not that good we might say, "That one is worse than a gap." In other words, you were saying that leaving a vacancy unfilled was better than putting that particular officer in it. That wasn't very nice. Especially in Washington there were a number of older officers coming close to retirement that were difficult to place. We called them "turkeys".

There was a lot of politics involved. But it was very interesting. I learned about who was

in the Department. In those days my career probably would have benefitted from more time in Washington. But I didn't want to stay there. The front line was where I liked to be. I was in Personnel for two years.

An opening came up in Governor Harriman's office. He was Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs. Several of us were invited to be interviewed. For some reason he found me acceptable. I worked for him for a few months. It was a fascinating assignment because of his vast experience and his contacts. He was a very interesting man. He had his own strong views on things, no question about that. He had his own views on the President and the Presidency. He said, "Bill, just remember...it is the position of President of the United States that is important. One should respect that position no matter who is in it or what you think of the person in it. The institution of the Presidency like our other government institutions is very important. It is worthy of respect even if whoever is in it is not." Left unsaid was his less than total respect for President Kennedy. One might also note that Harriman himself had had ambitions to be President.

And then there were the usual troubles in the Middle East. That meant big politics of course with Israel and Jewish lobbies and others on the opposite side trying to put pressure on the government. Averell Harriman had been governor of New York state and the Jewish interests could assume that his would be a sympathetic voice. I thought he was amazingly balanced considering the pressure he was under from these people from the old days. Perhaps one reason he asked me to be part of his staff was that I had spent a lot of time in the Arab world and had not been that exposed to the domestic implications of Jewish views of Israel.

To further my education as to the political facts of life, one day Harriman sent me over to the White House to talk to one of the staff members there who handled Middle East affairs. I was shocked to hear him say "we" and "they", "we" being Israel and "they" being the Arab side. There obviously was room for more balance at least among some of the staffers. That was an interesting eye-opener.

Harriman's right hand man and protégé was Bill Sullivan, later Ambassador to Iran. He was sent out to Vietnam periodically. He was a Far East expert and especially useful to Harriman during the Vietnam war.

I think both Bill and the Governor thought they were not using Stoltzfus as much as they had anticipated. So, I was transferred to the Algerian desk. And again, that was a very interesting time. President Kennedy was assassinated while I was on the desk there. The funeral arrangements were a tremendous global affair. Many chiefs of state attended. The Emperor of Ethiopia was there. Charles De Gaulle was there. I had charge of the four representatives from Algeria. The Foreign Minister Boutaflika was one, and Abbé Berenger. I shepherded them around to the various events at the White House and Arlington cemetery, and Janet and I hosted a dinner for them at our house.

That was probably the most interesting thing that happened while I was on the desk. Such exciting events do occur at times and travel is fun, but a desk officer's duties can be

humdrum as well. For example, calling up the local Embassy to ask them not to keep parking their cars illegally. And all kinds of problems with renting houses, petty legalities, that sort of thing. I assumed the Algerian staff would be revolutionary minded and Spartan and was shocked to see how lavishly they set themselves up in Washington. The Ambassador had a huge house and a lot of expensive tastes. Anyway, that was interesting.

Come to think of it, my five years in the Department from 1961 to 1965 were quite varied. Another opportunity came up in 1963 between the departure of the Ambassador to Kuwait and the arrival of his successor, Howard Cottam. I was sent to Kuwait for about five months during the summer of 1963 to cover the Embassy between Ambassadors. While still in Kuwait as Charge I was asked by Cottam if I would stay on as DCM but I had an opportunity to go to the War College, so I replied that while his offer was very flattering, I believed I shouldn't pass up going to the War College.

Q: But you did go out to Kuwait, you were saying?

STOLTZFUS: Yes. Kuwait in those days was still the "old" Kuwait: mud city wall, unpaved streets, few modern amenities. The Foreign Minister, Sabah al Ahmad was a member of the ruling family, as were the Ministers of Public security and Public works. Foreign Affairs and Defense were still in the hands of the British. But it was very simple days. There were the usual tensions with Iraq sniffing around but it was still very much a time when the Kuwaitis were transferring from British rule to their own independence. So it wasn't the kind of high pressure place it is now with all of the damaging things that have happened to it since. I was, as I said, just covering between Ambassadors.

At the War College we went to NORAD in the Colorado mountains and then I went on the African tour, which was fascinating. Particularly Angola, which was still under the Portuguese at the time. I remember their guard of honor. There were about 12 in the guard of honor, I guess. With one token black in it - I'm sure for our benefit. We went deep into the country by train to a dam they were building, supposedly a great thing they were doing for the natives and so on.

That was really part of the heart of Africa, more of which I saw later, much later, when my youngest daughter was in the Peace Corps and I visited her in the Central African Republic. That was even more interesting. Our War College tour took us to the Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Madagascar, Kenya and Tunisia. My next assignment was Ethiopia.

Q: And in the Department you received your next assignment. This was in 1966?

STOLTZFUS: Yes. Very shortly after commencement at the War College in the late spring of 1966 I was assigned to Addis Ababa, at that time our fourth largest Embassy in the world. It had a large Military Advisory Group and a Mapping Mission in addition to the regular Embassy functions. Ethiopia was our "pet" in East Africa. Our interest was making sure that it was friendly to us. Ethiopia was ours and Somalia was the Russian pad at the time. In an ironic twist of history, the inevitable revolution came, Emperor

Haile Selassie was deposed and the Russians held sway with a Marxist regime in Ethiopia. The reverse took over in Somalia. The pro-Russian faction was out, so our influence was paramount in Somalia. An exact reversal of interests.

But at the time I was there, Ethiopia was in transition. Emperor Haile Selassie wanted to modernize his country, at least after his own fashion. But he was having his problems with the church, with the landed gentry, with the students - the upcoming intelligentsia, with Eritrean separatists, etc. The Emperor had his heart in the right place but the country was incredibly backward and the problems daunting. The Ethiopian Orthodox church, which is analogous to the Copts in Egypt, enjoyed a hold over the country very like that of the Catholic church over England before Henry VIII. With large holdings, monasteries, a great deal of wealth it wielded great power. Traditionally it was the Emperor's main support. Needless to say the Church was less than happy, along with the landed gentry, when the Emperor was trying to distribute some of the land to people and to reform the agricultural side of things.

That was one side that was coming apart, with the Church very upset about being drawn down in that way. Another was the Emperor's encouragement of education in the country. After the expulsion of the Italians in World War II he ordered the re-establishment of schools and later started the University of Addis Ababa, where students began to learn things. And as students do everywhere, when they found out about freedoms they wanted and weren't getting they became restless. They began testing the limits with demonstrations, to the dismay and displeasure of the authorities. On a social level, though, Ethiopian men are generally conservative. Thus the male students didn't like the turn of events as far as their sisters and their female cousins were concerned. They didn't approve of the efforts of women to become more modern: miniskirts and running around without scarves on their heads. That was going too far.

The Ethiopians play their cards close to their chests. Theirs is a secretive and isolated existence, particularly among the two Christian tribes, the Amharas and the Tigres. They are proud of themselves and consider themselves superior to all other Africans. In fact, they don't consider themselves "black". They are very attractive people from our western point of view. The gorgeous women like to point out that they have narrow noses and thin lips and straight hair and that they are not like the lowland people who live around them. Ethiopians are reluctant to invite you into their homes for fear of being looked down on, so there is not a lot of rapport. It takes an awful lot of effort to break down the reticence and the feeling of defensiveness that is so prevalent there.

In addition to the Amharas and Tigres there are the Gallas, probably the biggest tribe and mostly Moslem. Ethiopia contains about 37 tribes and an equal number of languages. So it was an empire in a real sense of the word.

The southern part consists of wide savannas with wild animals and rain forests. In the north are ancient Christian towns, Axum, Gondar, very historic places...Prester John and all that mystique of the past. So it is an absolutely fascinating place to be in.

Our Ambassador, Ed Korry, didn't mind being...controversial, I guess you'd say. He really was his own person. He didn't have any background in the Foreign Service. He was a political appointee. A very good reporter who had been editor of Time-Life, I think. He knew how to go about getting the information he wanted. But even he had a tough time with the atmosphere of secretiveness so pervasive in that country. He didn't have much use for the Foreign Service officers. I think he felt we were a bunch of cookie pushers. We were not very high in his estimation.

We were not an entirely happy group in Addis, although I had respect for Korry as a person who tried to get to know the Ethiopians and knew what American interests were. So I guess you'd have to say that he was a good man to have sent there, but as far as the Foreign Service personnel were concerned, we didn't have much rapport.

We served in Addis from June or July of 1966 to July of 1968 and about halfway through Korry left and Robert Hall replaced him as Ambassador.

But at some point before Korry left Richard Nixon paid a visit to Africa. He arrived in Addis with only a photographer and I must say I will never forget his visit. He was with us only a couple of days. One day the Ambassador said to me, "Bill, I want you to go with Mr. Nixon to the souk (the bazaar or mercato as it was called). He wants to have his picture taken in the bazaar. You take him."

So I was in the company of Nixon for quite a while. A very quiet man. There wasn't a shadow of arrogance or irritability - very patient, almost diffident, I would say. He wandered around and had his picture taken sampling fruits and vegetables, and had his shoes shined by a local shoe shine boy. He didn't have any money with him so I paid the boy. I found him a perfectly attractive person.

Th Ambassador asked him to give his views of the world to the country team. For about half an hour or forty-five minutes he spoke about world affairs, passing from country to country and area to area. It was a fascinating tour de force. I found myself greatly respecting the man. He had so much to offer and so much going for him, and it was an absolutely ridiculous mess he got himself into later on. Anyway, that was that.

The big event in Ambassador Hall's time was Vice President Humphrey's visit to Africa and his stop in Addis. One of the reasons for a stop in Addis is that it is headquarters of the OAU, the Organization of African Unity. Every African state is represented in it, and it added a lot of interest to an Addis assignment because you weren't just involved with Ethiopian affairs. The Nigerians were prominent. The West Africans especially were always full of beans. They loved late parties and they loved music. They were fun to be with.

Q: Which West Africans?

STOLTZFUS: Well, Ghanaians, and the Senegalese and the Cameroonians and the Nigerians and the Gambians. They were really "rock and rollers" for sure. Anyway,

Humphrey came and I was named control officer. Anyone who has been control officer for a President or Vice President knows that is a unique experience to say the least. For six weeks you are night and day involved in the intricacies and logistics of the program, who and what is to be seen, of making sure the wrong people aren't hiding behind the curtains, that you have instant communications with the White House. The Secret Service is all over, making sure there are no bombs under the cars. It is just a tremendous undertaking.

And then of course he had his large entourage and all of them had to be taken care of. The main ones coming with him were Mr. and Mrs. Andreas, who were big time contributors to Humphrey, in the grain business I believe in Minnesota. They were close to the Humphreys. Ed Bronfman and his wife were also on the trip. We had some pretty heavy hitters that had to be taken care of. Some of them were easier to look after than others. The wives came along for the ride and some were charming and interested in what they were experiencing - and some were a pain. My wife Janet and other Embassy wives were responsible for seeing to it that these ladies were taken care of.

The Ambassador's wife controlled our wives. There was no question about it. I don't think it is that way anymore. But it certainly was in those days. My wife had Mrs. Andreas, who was a pleasure. She went into the mercato and spent a lot of money. She told Janet she had heard Humphrey's speech ten times and didn't want anything to do with his side of things.

But the visit was frenetic. Humphrey was such an ebullient person. Just bubbling over with energy. He had been to I don't know how many countries night and day but he kept up his hectic pace. He was a politician par excellence. I have never seen anyone who loved politics and loved to be in the limelight the way he did. Exuberant, ebullient, every word you can think of.

Molly Thayer was a free-lance writer who knew everybody in Washington and had traveled a lot. I am sure most people in those days knew who Molly Thayer was. We had known her on her visits to Saudi Arabia. Well, Molly showed up in the middle of one of the scheduled events. There were crowds around Humphrey, who was greeting the people when Molly came into view. He spotted her immediately, threw out his arms and shouted, "Molly!" And from the other side of the room she shouted, "Hubie!" Everyone stood around somewhat bemused while they went through their theatrical act. Another souvenir.

Humphrey hosted the Emperor at dinner at the Ambassador's residence. That became a major, major problem because it turned out that the dinner fell on a fast day. It was tough enough to figure out what to feed the Emperor and all his top counselors on an ordinary day, but about every other week the Ethiopian church has a fast day when you can't eat meat or anything that comes from an animal of any sort, fat or milk, cheese or eggs. So what to feed them?

One of the AID wives in Addis was a woman from Texas, Mildred Logan, an expert

shopper and cook who was used to catering to large groups. She and her husband had been in Saudi Arabia before coming to Ethiopia. She took over the kitchen at the residence and came up with a gorgeous dinner that contained no forbidden items. A masterful exercise.

The Emperor arrived and everybody was ready. Hundreds of guests and reporters around. The photographers were ready to "click" and so they all clicked at the same time and all the lights went out. Everyone thought the coup had come. Everyone was frantic - except the Emperor, who stood quietly and calmly and suddenly there was no problem. No doubt the lights had gone out in his palace plenty of times. The only one who did not flap was the Emperor. He groped around in the room and said, "It is no problem. Just find me a seat and we will wait until the lights come on." You can imagine what the Secret Service was going through.

The Emperor left in due course - not too late - and most of the guests followed. Humphrey said, "The night is young. And I am sure there are a lot of people in the kitchen, Americans, who have been working hard on this dinner. Let's have a party." He said, "Put on the music." So he went out in the kitchen and rounded up the women of the Embassy who had been working in the kitchen and serving, and he danced with all of them. And Mrs. Humphrey danced with some of us. I think she was ready to pack it in. But not him.

Then he learned that there was a beauty contest going on at the main theater in Addis. And he said, "I want to go to that." The Secret Service said, "Hold it!" And they rushed downtown and tried to case the theater with to them dubious results, so they said, do you really have to do this? And he said, "Yes, I do. I want to get there just when the final selections are made." We timed it so he arrived at the theater about a quarter of an hour before the finals. The front row had been cleared for the Veep and his party, so we all had prime seats.

Then Humphrey was brought up to crown the winner, the beauty queen. "This is an honor," he began. He always had a speech at the ready; he was never at a loss for words. He told the audience how great the show was and how beautiful the winner was and what a fine event it was. But he added, "I have to say my heart really goes out to the runner-up because I know exactly how she feels." Whether the audience understood the significance of his remark or not, they clapped and cheered lustily.

So that was a great success, a wild event. Humphrey's visit was one of the more active events of my tour there.

As I've said, Ethiopians are reticent about having you to their homes, but we were once invited to a wedding. There is nothing like an Ethiopian wedding. We arose before dawn to attend the church ceremony, which lasted some three hours. Later in the morning the couple drove to a park near Addis with a waterfall. It is de rigeur for bride and groom to visit the falls on their wedding day - the first day, that is. The happy couple does other things which we invitees were not privy to, but the big show is in the evening.

We guests, in the hundreds, came to one of the large Addis hotels for the reception. The native drinks, Tej and Tella, flowed down everyone's throats with abandon. Tables groaned under every sort of delicacy and the walls were lined with beef carcasses, very like a slaughter house. Ethiopians like their meat raw. You grabbed a plate, hacked off a slab of red shoulder or thigh, scooped up some hot sauce that took the top of your head off, piled on rice and vegetables and went to it. Drinking the local water was not wise, so you would try to cool your scorched mouth with droughts of Tej. An hour or two of such gorging transformed all (the men, anyway) into bellowing bulls and roaring lions.

In this state of mind the guests would from time to time climb the hall stairs to the salon where the bride and groom sat on embroidered thrones, looking as though they thought it would be nice if everyone went home. Finally, at a signal, the couple rose and tried to walk toward the stairs. Suddenly the whole salon became a mob scene. Following traditional ritual, the male relatives of the bride claimed they couldn't let her go. They had changed their minds; the bridegroom couldn't have her. The groom's relatives retorted "tant pis", or words to that effect. A mock battle ensued. Bedlam, pushing and shoving, a seething horde. Gradually the bride's army was driven back, across the room, down the stairs and out the entrance to the waiting cars. There some of the more exuberant (read totally inebriated) young men threw themselves on the hood of the wedding couple's car or under the wheels in one last ditch effort to prevent their escape. Finally the cavalcade was allowed to depart and everyone went home - or had another drink.

But there was a darker side to our life in Ethiopia. Especially in the spring of 1968, there

were major riots in Addis. Not just by the students wanting more freedom and protesting "imperialists" and western introductions of miniskirts and rock music and so on. But they took on a more general anti-American turn because the activists felt that we were protectors of privilege and the status quo, and protecting the Emperor, which we were. As the Emperor's position deteriorated, it reflected on Americans.

Our USIS library was downtown and in a very vulnerable spot. Well, it was located where the USIS wants to be. Where men and women in the streets will stop in and browse. But when trouble comes, downtown can be a dangerous place. One night USIS hosted a big reception. I had told people in my section that I didn't want anyone going to that party because I thought there was going to be trouble. Those who didn't feel I had the authority to say that went. To the women in my section I said, "I don't want you to go down there. I am ordering you not to go." My number two's wife was furious and said, "Why are you doing that? I told her, "I want you to stay home...period." The car that she would have been in was stoned and all of the windows smashed. One of the men who was in the car lost an eye. She called me up later and said, "Thank God you told me not to go." But that was the worst anti-American demonstration.

Q: Was this Communist?

STOLTZFUS: No doubt the Marxists were hard at work there. But the situation toward

the end of outworn imperialist regimes is favorable to determined opponents whatever their political bent might be. The students were upset, the intelligentsia didn't feel it was being given enough freedom, and the Church was upset because it was losing all its perks. The Emperor was getting old. And the people began to see that things were starting to unravel.

And so I think there was fertile ground for whoever was orchestrating trouble. I wouldn't say a Communist-Marxist element wasn't present because that is what took over. It was like the end of the Shah's time too in Iran.

Q: How big was your political section at that time in Addis?

STOLTZFUS: The Foreign Service side in Addis was relatively small. There were three officers in our section. One of the most interesting was Alison Palmer. I am sure some people will remember who she is. She was a young political officer at the time. And she certainly had her view of things. I got along extremely well with her. She was very generous, very thoughtful. But she had very strong views even at that time of the rights and drawbacks of being a female officer.

I tried to be aware of that and I think we got along pretty well actually. I am not sure whether this was an early assignment of hers but it certainly was well before she became famous for her activities later on.

The Economic Section was probably about the same size. We had the DCM and the Ambassador of course. The Administrative Section was pretty big because there was a lot of compound to take care of there. But you know, in comparison with the military, we were not a large group.

Q: A small Consular Section, I suppose.

STOLTZFUS: The Consular Section was small, not more than two or three. If you add the locals, probably five or six altogether. There were a lot of Americans to service, but not that many visitors or immigrants to the US.

The visits to the countryside were by far the most interesting thing to do. I could see from my wife's letters that I always had to cajole the Ambassador into letting me go. The Ambassador was a very good reporter, but as I said he didn't have much time for Foreign Service officers. I think he also didn't like the idea that some of his officers would find out something he didn't know. He was very defensive and jealous about that. But I have always insisted on travel and would break him down.

East Africa as a whole is fascinating and spectacular, and Ethiopia most of all. It is a wild and woolly country of tremendous mountains and valleys, steppe land, bush country full of wild life, rain forest, crocodile infested rivers, multiple tribes, wild looking priests and holy men who roam at random with their long staves topped by crosses. There are canyons on the road between Addis Ababa and Gondar which rival our Grand Canyon.

I took several interesting trips in the area during our tour. One I remember least about was to Djibouti, the French administered enclave opposite Aden at the bab al Mandab. I called on the local leaders, who were testing France's tolerance for a greater degree of autonomy. I didn't have time to visit the most interesting people there, the Danakil, known for their ferocious sense of independence. My recollection is that the Danakil prefer to stay by themselves in their parched habitat, leaving the political scene to two other tribes or groupings; the Issas are one - and the name of the other escapes me just now.

Another fascinating trip was to Harar and Dire Dawa in east central Ethiopia, for the purpose of orientation and also to visit some agricultural projects supported by AID. Harar is a fortress city with medieval walls, a protection for the highlanders against the Somalis of the plains to the east. One evening we went to see the "hyena man", a famous local character. We drove out of the city after dark along the walls and parked our vehicle, leaving the headlights on. There ahead of us was a man sitting on the ground with a large bag of meat and bones. To the sides of and beyond the man in the gloom were dozens of pairs of eyes clearly reflecting our headlights. The man would pick out a chunk of meat or a bone and wave it. There would be an excited movement in the pack. Then a hyena, conquering his fears, would timidly approach the man, hoping he would throw him the tidbit. The man tossed the first morsel a few feet away. Then another hyena and another would be emboldened to approach. Gradually the man would toss the meat or bones closer to himself while the hyenas would make quick lunges for the food and dart away.

In the next stage of the performance the man held the pieces in his hand, motioning for the hyenas to come and take them. Again this required a new leap of courage on the part of the hyenas, which were pathetically timid, obviously ravenous, but not the least hostile. They would approach to within a few feet of the man, obviously hoping he would throw them the piece in his hand. But when he wouldn't and kept offering it, they would steel themselves and with a burst of bravado snap up the piece without touching the man's hand.

In the final act, the man held a large piece of meat in his teeth, bent his head forward and kept up his steady encouragement for a beast to come forward and take it. Clearly with the utmost reluctance one large beast mastered his dread and snapped up the meat. His mouth and the man's had to have touched, but the man was completely unscathed.

On another orientation trip my family and I plus a second carload of Embassy marines and secretaries visited Gondar and Axum, basically covering the core of the Amhara country. The most unforgettable part of this trip was the monastery of Debre Damo. That area is marked by flat topped mountains. Mesas, you might call them. On top of one of these is the monastery of Debre Damo, reached by an incredible, rocky road of tight hairpin curves. At a number of these curves you had to start the steep turn, then back down without losing yourself over the precipice (no parapet of course) to give yourself enough space to get around the curve. Breathless after staring at rock faces on one side

and infinity on the other, we arrived at the foot of a cliff. I imagined the cliff to be a hundred feet high but I doubt it was really more than 60 to 75. The cliff was sheer, however, with only hand and toe holds in its face. The priests of the monastery apparently had watched our ascent because one or two of them were peeping over from the top and lowered a rope which my son Bill and a marine and I in turn were instructed to tie around our waist. (Since women were not permitted in monasteries, the females in our group had to stay below.) The rope was a safety measure, not to haul us up. I started to climb, fumbling nervously into each hand and toe hold. About halfway up I started to turn cold and hesitated. What on earth am I doing here, was all I could think. Then above me I heard a strong voice: "Coraggio!" That did it. I calmed down and finished the climb. Strong arms grabbed me at the top.

After collecting ourselves we looked around. Ahead stretched a large, flat, green pasture with sheep grazing on it. Another world. We toured the chapel and the quarters of the priests and the young boys learning to be priests. Best of all, we were ushered into an unlit cave where, in the gloom, we sat down on a ledge hewn out of rock. Then came bowls of Tej, the strong mead made of fermented honey. The drink you read about in histories of medieval Europe. After a bowl or two of that brew you felt like the Lion of Judah. Climbing back down to the ground was a piece of cake! Janet said later she watched an elderly priest casually approach the cliff and nimbly climb up, ignoring the hanging rope.

One of my most vivid memories of Ethiopia was a trip I took to Sidamo province in the south, bordering on Kenya, at the invitation of Sam Logan, an AID agriculturist. We had known the Logans previously in Saudi Arabia. It had been raining - as usual - and our Land Rovers had to negotiate mountain passes where the track, cut into the mountainsides, was slick as grease and often sloping toward the precipice. It was extremely tense inching along the track, as close to the cliff side as possible.

Farther south the land levels out to rolling countryside of acacia trees and bushes and grasses, where zebra, all kinds of deer, ostriches and many other beasts roam. As I recall, the AID people were surveying the water resources of the area. We camped a couple of nights in a pleasant hollow; all of the setting up, cooking and so forth were done by AID's Ethiopian employees, so we foreigners were in the lap of luxury.

One day Sam decided to make a flying tour of the border area, known for cattle smuggling between Ethiopia and Kenya. AID's pilot flew his four-seater down from Addis to pick up Sam, another AID expert and me. For about an hour we flew over the savanna, spotting water holes and stirring up all kinds of wild animals. Suddenly we came upon a large herd of cattle, driven along by several men carrying rifles. Clearly they were rustlers heading for the border. We flew overhead the first time without incident. But then the pilot got it into his head to buzz and stampede the herd. Big mistake! This time one of the herdsmen whipped up his rifle and fired at us, at close range because we were low. The bullet entered the underside of the fuselage, through the pilot's seat, through the pilot's buttocks and popped - literally - into his lap.

Luckily the bullet did not hit a bone but the wound started bleeding profusely and the pilot began to feel faint. "Do any of you know how to fly?" he asked. I quickly said I did, having been a naval aviator during World War II. The pilot and Logan were in the front two seats, the other AID man and I in the back. We were all six footers plus. It took unbelievable contortions to squeeze Sam back and me forward to his seat in the front. The pilot meanwhile cinched his seatbelt as tightly as he could and this seemed to slow the blood flow. He pulled himself together long enough to get to a small strip, which we dropped onto like a ton of bricks. But we were safe. Hours later a truck came by and the pilot was transported over many agonizing miles to a mission clinic and thence back to Addis.

At one point in our tour I contracted a serious case of pneumonia. Addis, at 8000 plus feet with a clammy climate is not the healthiest of places. During my convalescence Don McClure, one of our missionary friends, suggested that I accompany him to one of his stations at Gambela, near the Sudanese border, so that I could recoup away from the highlands. We flew from Addis, down, down off the mountains to enter a flatland of elephant grass, marshes and rivers. Huge wild buffalo and elephant families frolicked in the grass and in pools. Slow moving streams were the homes of crocodiles. The land and people of the Gambela area are more in tune with southern Sudan than with the highlands of Ethiopia. The two main tribes there are the Nuers and the Anuaks. The women are especially striking with intricate designs on their necks, shoulders and breasts. These are not tattoos but tiny, artistic scars made with a pick or knife. For some days I rested in a delightful, comfortable thatched roof cottage, watched the activity of the mission and took strolls with Don McClure's son, Don, Jr. The missionaries were totally at home in this environment, and they loved their life.

Ethiopia may be different now, but the Ethiopian government under the Amharic emperors was more Byzantine than Byzantium. The Ethiopian religious authorities were not about to allow foreigners to proselytize among their own flocks. But American, British and European missionaries were welcome among the Emperor's animist, pagan and Moslem subjects. These missions might have administrative offices in Addis but their work must be conducted on the periphery, away from Prester John. Once missionaries in a given and perhaps hostile area had "gentled" the local people, the government moved in its own Christian Copt administrator and took over.

The vast area of the Ogaden, eastern Ethiopia, has always been a bone of contention between Ethiopia and Somalia. In fact the sparse numbers of inhabitants there are 99% Somali. The proud Amharas and Tigres of the highlands abhor the idea of serving there as officials or soldiers, let alone living there. As a part of maintaining control of that despised segment of the Empire, the government had built an air base at Gode (I believe that's the name), in the flat desert, in the middle of nowhere. Don McClure and I once took a flight down to have a look. The airstrip could accommodate the largest jets, and several buildings housed maintenance equipment and living quarters. A well or two attracted an assortment of rugged desert dwellers and their goats and sheep to the vicinity. Not a place to spend time without a library of books. During the night I could hear lions arguing among themselves in the bush just beyond the runway.

Q: When we last spoke you were talking about the Embassy in Ethiopia and the military group that was there.

STOLTZFUS: Yes. I think what I was referring to was that Ethiopia was one of our clients in that part of the world during the Cold War, while Russia had Somalia. And later on in the usual twists of fate and politics, after the revolution Ethiopia was a client of the Russians, backing the Marxist regime. And we were backing the war lords in Somalia.

And I mentioned that we had a large post as a result. A Mapping Mission of hundreds and a MAG - a military advisory group. I did not mention the apparent Israeli interest in Ethiopia and Addis. The Israelis had a top level mission there, partly for the OAU but more importantly because Ethiopia is on the southern flank of some of Israel's enemies like Egypt and Saudi Arabia. It was an important post for them.

I was reassigned from Addis to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, as DCM in July of 1968. Our Ambassador was Hermann Eilts. He was anxious to get off on leave so I was in charge of the post during the summer while he was away. DCMs of course are like American Vice Presidents. When the Ambassador is at post the DCM is dealing with the more mundane aspects of the mission. It is not nearly as exciting as being either political officer in Ethiopia or Chargé on a long term basis.

My first job there really was to make sure that we had sent in a report assessing the longevity of the Saudi regime. This is a perennial thing you do with the Saud family. How long are they going to last? That is of course an extremely important question for us and for our relations there. To observe the flow of Mideast, especially Saudi, oil is also important. We projected that probably nothing would happen in the next two or three years. As usual we listed all of the factors that could be serious in affecting the regime like: what is the position of the military? What about the ruling family, which consists of 5,000 plus princes and nobody knows how many princesses? A whole tribe. Are there different points of view in different parts of the family - when the family gets that large it boils down to the branches of the family - and are these differences politically significant, leading perhaps to internal disorder?

The branches are based mostly on who the mother was. With polygamy being the name of the game there in the past, many branches emerged. King Abdul Aziz, the original king who put modern Saudi Arabia on the map, had a number of wives. The most important one was from the Sudeiri family from northern Saudi Arabia. Her progeny have been most of the kings and have had most of the primary positions in Saudi Arabia ever since. What that means of course is that other wives that had other children can feel jealous that they are not on the front line. That they are not given the positions they are due. That creates a lot of tension within the family. That is something you watch. It can get pretty nasty. I mean, it can get to the point where one of the younger members from a "wronged" side of the family kills King Faisal. That was the kind of thing one was concerned about, probably more than a revolution from below or from the military. Or even from outside.

Unless there was some frontal attack such as from Iraq, which would bring the US and Britain into the game pretty fast, change would more likely come in the form of disintegration from the top than it would from the rats getting into the cheese down below. Nevertheless the bombing of American soldiers in al Khobar and later threats to our forces in the country make it clear that internal opponents to the regime do exist. You do have dangerous elements that are hard to track down. Some might be Iran inspired as the Saudis say, but others are simply disaffected activists who feel they are not getting a fair share. The element most watched and mistrusted by the Saud family are the Shiites.

The royal family are Sunnis, and the Shiites of the Eastern Province were always kind of restless because they felt, again like the wrong side of the Saud family, that they were not getting a fair shake. They were kept under control by agents of the Saud family, usually the stern and ruthless Bin Jiluwi family, also Sunnis. Because the Shiites are linked to the Shiite country of Iran there is that risky feeling that you've got a fifth column in your country.

Well, to get back to our reports, you watched to see what was happening in the royal family and in the military; also the kind of rumblings that were going on in the east. And you always came to the same conclusion, which was that the Saudi regime was probably okay "for a couple of years". We were not going to project out much beyond that. Of course that was 1968 and now we are almost at 1998 so there is some longevity there. But the factors for disintegration, the factors for danger from our point of view - a change in regime - are always present. Anyway, I got that report off as a first order of business.

The military and the National Guard were of major interest. We had a very active Defense Attaché there by the name of Bob Marino. He had worked his way into close relations with Saudi Air Force officers, to the extent that he and his wife would entertain high ranking Saudi officers and their wives fairly frequently. Since the Marinos and we were good friends, he would invite my wife and me to some of the parties. It was very interesting.

You have to be extremely careful about what you discuss in terms of politics and internal affairs of a country as closed as Saudi Arabia. But it was clear that these Air Force officers did not think that things were right in the country. Too backward. Most of them had had training in the United States, where they were exposed to unaccustomed freedom. Although the US and Saudi Arabia were and always have been close allies, the kinds of free experiences that Saudi men and women get when they go abroad, particularly to the US, can make them a destabilizing factor from the ruling family point of view when they return home.

What happened was that the Saudi Air Force finally came under suspicion. The officers had been too outspoken, had been spied on and reported to the Palace. Later on we were saddened to hear that they had been slapped into jail, accused of disloyalty to the Saudi regime. Of course the wives were extraordinarily upset for good reason, because the conditions under which the officers were being held and the treatment they were getting

can only be left to one's imagination. I don't think that I am mistaken that very few of them were ever heard from again, certainly not in our time. When I left in 1971, they were still incarcerated. It was very unpleasant to contemplate the fate of those people we had been friendly with.

That was one of the major events in the first part of our tour.

In the summer of 1970, I believe, Ambassador Eilts was replaced by Nicholas Thacher. His wife is Beanie. No sooner had they arrived than we learned of Black September, when Palestinian guerrillas in Jordan tried to knock off King Hussein and take over.

Probably the only thing that made matters a little less dicey, if I recall correctly, was that Syria, which could easily have taken advantage of this situation, did not get directly involved. The aspect that affected us in Jeddah was that the supplies and military equipment sent by us by plane to shore up King Hussein and his beleaguered troops had to overfly part of Saudi Arabia, presumably because the Israelis didn't want them flying over Israel. I guess that is the reason.

The crisis broke out late one evening. In those days communications were not exactly instantaneous in Saudi Arabia. While our Embassy had ready access to the key people in the government, endeavoring to get the government of Saudi Arabia cranked up fast enough to alert all their people to allow these overflights was not an easy thing to do. In the meantime Dean Brown, who was Ambassador in Jordan, was bleating and screaming and saying to stop pussy-footing around - the planes are on their way. So it was a bit tense.

Nick and I didn't know each other that well at the time and initially he didn't like my taking umbrage at Brown's talking about pussy-footing. Having just come from Washington, he was a little more sensitive to Washington's pressures. So he sort of brushed me off. We didn't get off to a really good start on that. We finally did get the clearance. I guess Nick Thacher thought later that he wasn't going to let Dean Brown's criticism go by entirely. In a cable he replied, "I'm not pussy-footing around. We are doing the best we can." Anyway, we got the overflight and the supplies got to Hussein.

As I said, Nick was just new there. So I went on a lot of his initial calls with him, to the Minister of Defense and others whom I knew very well anyway. The Ambassador, whoever he was, normally did most of the interesting work.

During that second tour in Saudi Arabia Janet and I decided to take our R and R (Rest and Recuperation) in Yemen, where ten years previously we had enjoyed the best tour of our career together. Ahmad Abi Said was our host in Taiz, where we marveled at the changes, especially the new and expanded buildings and facilities of the school Janet had started.

We visited some familiar sites in Sanaa also and from there we split up, Janet taking a hair raising ride in a taxi down the mountain to Hodeida and a flight back to Jeddah, and I

going to Abha in Saudi Arabia to call on the Governor of the Asir, Prince Turki bin Faisal. The Asir is totally different from the rest of Saudi Arabia. Geographically it is really an extension of Yemen: mountainous, blue colored vistas, water whispering through grassy slopes, forests. Beautiful country. In fact the Hejaz mountain range north of Yemen not only looks like Yemen but the inhabitants are of Yemeni culture in terms of their music, their houses, their clothes, their unveiled women.

Prince Turki asked me how I was returning to Jeddah. I said by plane, I guess. He said, "No, you must see this part of the country up close. I'll send you a car tomorrow morning." Early the next day a pick-up truck appeared at my door. The driver and another man greeted me and I brought my bag to throw on the back. The cargo section was covered by canvas over a frame, like a Conostoga wagon, and inside was a pile of bedding, cooking gear, water, gasoline and a baaing sheep.

Saudi Arabia now has a network of first class roads, and that's progress of course. But moving at 60 plus miles an hour can't give you much more feel of the country you're passing through than flying. At that time the Abha - Jeddah road was a rock strewn track, now up and down mountains, now disappearing in dry wadi beds, now deeply rutted by trucks. Traveling by donkey, horse, or camel or on foot would give you even more feel of the land, but a truck going at five to 15 miles an hour is a pretty good compromise. Frequent stops to move a boulder or push the truck out of a stream or to refuel or stretch the legs gave us a sense of being part of the scene. The sounds of people and animals, the wind, the earth, the bushes. I loved every minute of that trip.

Most delightful was our stop for noonday prayers. Muslims need water (if available) for ablutions before praying. Toward noon my companions started looking for a likely spot near a well. We passed wells but the driver didn't stop. Finally the two agreed on a roadside well. Why this well? Because they had spotted a comely young lady there drawing water. The right time of day be damned. The right circumstances were more important!

In fact there were a half dozen girls, mostly children, around the well and they all bolted as we approached. The young woman, however, stuck to her job, showing no fear. The men politely asked for water which she immediately proceeded to draw for them. Needless to say, the men were in no hurry to go off and pray. They were delighted to have this rare opportunity to look at and speak a few words to a pretty girl. But it wasn't seemly to hang around so they reluctantly took the bowl of water and went off to pray. They eyed me jealously - the unbeliever, who wasn't going to pray and had the pleasure of the further company of the lady while they did.

We stopped for the night with some acquaintances of my companions. They killed the sheep and while the carcass was roasting over an open fire, they made a delicious entree of the liver and kidneys and whatever else in a dark sauce. I don't know what all the makings were, but I've rarely tasted anything better. We slept rolled up in quilts and blankets on straw mats, with cool mountain breezes blowing over us. I said good-bye to my friends in Taif, having literally carried out Prince Turki's admonition to see his part of

the country.

Another event that I recall being of interest and importance to me in, I think, July, 1971, was the visit of Vice President Spiro Agnew. Agnew had been on a trip to Korea, and Jeddah was one of his stops on the way back. He had already stopped in Singapore and Kuwait. The Ambassador made me control officer, and of course my great experience with Humphrey was very helpful background. A young officer by the name of Bob Jingles arrived as advance man. He and I spent some weeks getting this visit organized.

In a highly conservative country like Saudi Arabia these visits can be rough on local relationships because the Secret Service has its job to do and the White House communications people have their job to do. And they don't brook any opposition to what they think is necessary for security and communications. So when one is working in a sensitive and closed society, touchy moments can arise. The Secret Service insisted on casing every house to be visited. Not only where the Vice President and his people were staying, which was the King's guest house - that wasn't a problem except from the communications point of view. The communications people wanted instant contact with the White House not only for the Vice President but for senior members of his staff, which meant digging holes in the walls to put cables through since the palace was not exactly wired for White House or NORAD type communications.

It was a pretty nail biting time with the Saudis upset, saying that obviously you don't trust us because you must have all this. It took us a while to smooth feathers down but it worked out all right in the long run.

And then for events like going to the Crown Prince's palace for a function, the Secret Service would go in ahead of time and insist on seeing every room in the house, at least the rooms adjoining or anywhere near the reception room. That could mean an invasion of the harem side and of course that is a no-no. Strange men are not supposed to be wandering around in the harem. That again ruffled feathers of course.

Anyway, Agnew appeared relaxed and to be enjoying himself at that time. His entourage was also a happy group. He was very considerate of everybody. Of course, like a politician, he wanted to shake everybody's hand. He could not have been more charming and pleasant. He had dinner with the King and that went very well. Obviously King Faisal was taken with him. They had a good talk. The whole visit went extremely well.

Q: They were speaking English then?

STOLTZFUS: Faisal knew some English but I wasn't right beside them when they were talking. So I'm not sure. I'm sure they had an interpreter there. One of the Saudi interpreters. Incidentally, whenever I called with the Ambassador on someone who didn't know English (the Minister of Defense, for example, wasn't too good at it) I was the interpreter for him. I had done a lot of interpreting in the past for various admirals in the Persian Gulf and Ambassador Heath so I was fairly up to speed. Agnew's visit was not eventful from any point of view other than I think the Saudis were happy that he had

decided to stop by on his way back to the US. So everything went fine there.

I remember some of the less important but more fun times with the Vice President. He was known as a keen but errant golfer. People would joke that you had to stand well behind him because he never knew where the ball was going to go. Well, he wanted to practice his golf. There was a golf course on the Embassy compound that Ambassador George Wadsworth had put in. It is nine holes, a very neat little sand course that we all enjoyed a lot. He wanted to practice his driving. So of course we raced around to get a bucket of balls and so on. The Secret Service men said, "All right, but before he hits any balls, we have to be sure that everything is safe. Let's see the balls."

Several of us clustered around while the Secret Service men bounced every ball. One of them suddenly looked up and said, "You know, this is kind of silly, bouncing these balls. Here we are all standing over this bucket. If there was any problem with one of these balls, we'd be gone." But none blew up and we took the bucket of balls out to one of the tees. The tees on that desert course were rubber mats, needless to say. Agnew wasn't familiar with them. So I was showing him. I would tee the ball up for him. He finally said, "I really don't think a DCM should be teeing up my ball." And I said, "It's my pleasure."

He drilled balls all over the place and my sons and the Ambassador's son shagged balls and brought them back for him. It was in the middle of the day and it must have been 150 in the sun. It didn't bother him a bit. He just sweated like mad. We all sweated. He enjoyed that. "Makes the juices flow," he said.

Then he wanted to go swimming and that was fine. Every time he moved of course there was this bevy of people running around doing this or that. Getting towels, cleaning up the place. Then he wanted to play tennis. I was to be his opposition.

Q: In that heat?

STOLTZFUS: Yes. Well, it was towards evening by then. But still, it is not exactly cool there even at night. But he wanted to play tennis. So down we went to the courts. One of the Vice President's aides said, Now, you know, the Vice President doesn't like to lose, so just keep that in mind. I said, Okay. So we started playing. I did my best to drop a couple of games but after a while I said to myself, I can't do this, this is for the birds. So I cleaned his clock and beat him 6 - 2. I dropped a couple of games and then finished him off. At the end of the set he said, "Well, you play very well. This is fun." Then he said, "Now you be my partner and let's play against someone else." I chose my older son Bill and Thacher's older son to be the opposition - they were quite good. While we were playing my son was getting nervous because I kept coaching the Vice President: "You know, if you bent your knees you could hit the ball better." Bill whispered, "Are you sure you should be talking like that to him?" The Vice President was great. He said, "You mean I'm too rigid?" He couldn't have been more charming or obliging.

Those were some of the fun things that I remember from the visit that made all the work

we did on it palatable. I thought no more of it - just felt relief that the trip had gone well. It wasn't too much later that we received a report on the Vice President's trip and his stops on returning from Seoul. According to the report, the VP told the President that the Ambassadors in Singapore and Kuwait were not doing the job.

Particularly in Kuwait. We learned later that the Ambassador there, who was John Patrick Walsh, had unfortunately and unwisely spoken to the press, in which Palestinian journalists were especially active. You had to be very careful about what you said to the press. But Walsh had made the mistake of saying that the Vice President's trip was of course just a boondoggle. So, the day the Vice President arrived, huge black headlines in the English paper trumpeted: "Ambassador Calls the Vice President's Trip Boondoggle." Well, I don't know if there was anything else that our friend Walsh did that disturbed the VP, but I think those headlines were not too good for starters.

The report from Washington indicated that the VP didn't think the Ambassador in Kuwait was really up to snuff and should be removed. But he had a suggestion for his replacement...and that was William Stoltzfus from Jeddah. Talk about manna from heaven! Everything we did on that visit by the Vice President to Jeddah turned out to be a golden opportunity for me.

Another interesting thing that happened, I don't know exactly what year it was but it was at a time when I was Chargé, was a visit from Qadhafi. Qadhafi, in his usual misguided missile way, suddenly decided he wanted to go on the Umra, that is, the little pilgrimage. The main pilgrimage is two months after Ramadan. But the Umra is a little pilgrimage that you can make any time that you come to visit Mecca and Madinah. Qadhafi was in his own plane an hour out of Jeddah when he notified the Saudis that he was coming for the Umra. No formal notice. He said, "I am coming." And was said to have added: "Look, I am just a pilgrim. I don't want any protocol. I am just coming as an ordinary believer to pray." Well, the Saudis were not about to let a Chief of State "just come", especially not the unpredictable Libyan leader. The governor of the province was routed out along with everyone that they could find that was notable, and the diplomatic corps. And we all raced out to the airport to greet the eccentric Muamar Qadhafi.

He left the airport for the Libyan Embassy while Saudi protocol slapped together a dinner for him. I mean, it was a state dinner. They weren't going to accept any of this business of his coming in and wandering around by himself. And anyway he was the Chief of State. But since Qadhafi had not come for that purpose he had no suitable clothes for it. So the story was that he went to the Embassy. One of the staff had a civilian suit which Qadhafi donned for the occasion. It was an ill fitting suit, and he looked quite unimposing. He was a slender, young, nice looking guy, a young officer at the time. But he really looked funny in that ill fitting nondescript, ugly, brown colored suit. Poor guy. And he didn't look very happy with what he was wearing. I had been invited as Chargé.

Q: What was his position?

STOLTZFUS: He was Chief of State.

Q: Of Libya?

STOLTZFUS: Yes. He was ruling. He was the head. He followed King Idriss, who was king when I was there in the 1950's. The governor of the Western Province told me later about Qadhafi's Umra. He said, "Qadhafi was just amazing on the Usmra." He was accompanied by the major religious figures in Mecca and Madinah who found themselves unable to keep up with him. His knowledge of the Koran astounded them. He would say to his hosts, show me where the Prophet saw so-and-so or did such-and such. Then came embarrassing moments when the religious leaders would excuse themselves to consult or refresh their knowledge of details of the Prophet's life that Qadhafi was referring to. He knew the Koran backward and forward and he knew it a lot better than these people, according to the governor, who was quite amused.

So the Saudis found it embarrassing that they really were not anywhere near his level of knowledge of the Koran. Here is this revolutionary, dangerous man who knew their book much better than they who were keepers of the holy places and supposedly the "creme de la creme" as far as religious knowledge was concerned.

But back to our Embassy. Our Embassy later moved to Riyadh, where it is now. But at that time it was in Jeddah. We had a compound that on my first tour there in the 1950's was out of town. It was north of the town and practically by itself right by the water. You could leave the compound and walk along the shore of the Red Sea.

When I was there the second time, extensive land fill had pushed the Red Sea out of sight and the whole area had been overrun by new housing and streets and shops. The compound was still on the old site. It now contains the Consulate General. The Saudis would like to have the compound back because it is prime property. And becoming more and more so. Kamal Adham, the King's son-in-law and the head of security, lived nearby. The King's royal guest house was right next door. There were other major diplomatic missions housed in the area. It was a very valuable piece of property.

On the compound was the Embassy. None of it was very prepossessing, but it was attractive. The Chancery was near the south main gate and the Ambassador's residence was about in the middle of the compound. And we had other houses for the DCM, administrative officer, communicators, secretaries, maintenance people and so on. In the rest of this large compound was the golf course built by Ambassador George Wadsworth. It had six holes and nine tees. Really a neat course. He had done an excellent job. The course kind of meandered through the property as well.

It was not a large Embassy. We had a couple of people in each section. We had the Air Force attaché. The Military Advisory group was in Riyadh and Taif where our people were training the Saudis up in the mountains, and where the summer palace was located - the summer watering hole for the Saudi royal family. Our air force was at Dhahran.

Q: At that time did we have any functions at all in Riyadh? Or did you go back and forth?

What was going on in those two places?

STOLTZFUS: The Embassy was in Jeddah because the Foreign Ministry was in Jeddah. The Saudis preferred having all of the foreigners as much in one place as possible, especially the diplomatic corps. That is the way it was when I was there both times.

We did have a USIS library in Riyadh. We also had an important Consulate General in Dhahran to take care of our large number of Americans with the Arabian American Oil Company (ARAMCO). And as I said, we had Air Force personnel at the Dhahran "airfield", really an airbase.

We would go to see the King wherever he was, and by tradition he and his court divided his time in several parts of the country during the year.

In the 1950's when Saud was king, he moved around more than Faisal did in the 1970's as I recall. But still the idea was that the King would spend roughly a third of his time in each of three places. Riyadh in the winter. Riyadh was the capital of course. Then the King and his court would move to Jeddah for a spell, and then to Taif, and back to Riyadh. The Saudi kings should have spent time in the Eastern Province but none of the Saudi family was very comfortable there. Because of this, as I explained before, the easterners, many of them Shiites, felt slighted and it was kind of a troubled area. That is where the oil is so it has always been an important part of the country. But the King always found an excuse not to spend much time in the area.

King Saud loved to hunt, but in comfort. He would go out to the desert with his air conditioned tents, huge supply trucks and every possible amenity. Often he would go into the north country of Qassim which has since developed, thanks to its excellent agricultural and water resources.

Faisal was not a hunter and I don't think he liked to move all that much. But still, whenever the Ambassador went to see the King, it would be wherever the King was. A bit like the medieval days when a court would move here and there. So if the King was in Taif, we would go to Taif.

Q: And how long were you posted to Jeddah?

STOLTZFUS: We were in Jeddah from July, 1968 to the tail end of 1971. And then we went back to the States on leave. I think we were there over the Christmas holidays of 1971. And in early 1972 we went out to Kuwait. That was when the British had left the Gulf area. They had Sir Jeffrey Arthur who was the British Resident in Bahrain. The British had a set up where they had the "Resident" in Bahrain who was the overall representative of Britain in the Gulf. And then they had Political Agents in each one of the countries along the pirate coast of Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah and so forth. There were seven principalities. I will get to those later. And Qatar and Kuwait. So the American Consul's counterpart in Kuwait when I was first there in the 1950's was the Political Agent. But by the time I got there as Ambassador in 1972, there was a British

Ambassador in Kuwait.

I think Kuwait independence came in 1961. So they had been independent for some time before I arrived as Ambassador. In the Gulf the British had tried to make a federation of those various principalities, nine of them. Qatar, which stands by itself as a kind of thumb pointing up on the western side of the Gulf, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) which consists of seven states, and Bahrain, an island. But it was not surprising that the Rulers were jealous of each other. The Qatari and Bahraini Rulers were not about to bow to Sheikh Zaid, the Ruler of Abu Dhabi. Because Abu Dhabi is the biggest and most important state in the UAE, if they had joined the UAE they no doubt would have had to play second fiddle.

The Ruler of Dubai, who was of the Maktum family, also thought he should not be subservient, but Dubai is too small to be independent. Also, the Dubai Ruler does as he pleases anyway. It turned out that the UAE with the seven states formed one group.

So I was Ambassador to Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the UAE and Oman.

Q: When did you learn that you were nominated to be Ambassador?

STOLTZFUS: I mentioned this letter or missive or whatever it was that came from Washington to the Ambassador after the Agnew visit to Jeddah. Thacher then told me that I was being recommended to be Ambassador to Kuwait. So when I was back on leave I was on consultation. I was nominated somewhere toward the end of 1971. It must have been November or December, 1971. It was either in December or very early the next year that I went before the Senate Foreign Relations committee. Everything worked out okay. And then I left.

Q: You didn't have a long wait?

STOLTZFUS: No, no. It went quickly. They wanted somebody there pretty quickly.

Q: Do you recall any of the things that the Senate committee asked you or what they seemed to be looking for? Did they know what they were asking during your interview?

STOLTZFUS: It was pretty proforma. There were some questions about the oil companies. Who were the oil companies and where they were and so forth. There was not a lot of cross examining there. I did have one irritating experience though. The State Department gives you various suggestions for whom you should call on in Washington before you leave for your post. One was calling on my Senator from New Jersey, who was Senator Case. I'd always voted for Case. When I got to his office he just stood up behind his desk with his arms akimbo, rocking on one foot and then the other, making it grossly clear that I was not to sit down. I could see that his secretary was quite embarrassed by this. She clearly was uncomfortable. Anyway, he said, "Glad to hear you are going out. And we have an important base in Bahrain." He acted or pretended that he knew something about it. I wasn't there for more than two or three minutes at most, so

that was not very good. But anyway, he voted for me so I guess I could say I was happy about that.

The questions by Senate committee members were basically designed to find out if I knew anything about the area. Who are the Rulers in various places? Or, what is the situation there? What is our interest there? You know, the sort of obvious questions that would be asked. But they were friendly. You might have thought that with my strongly Arab experience and background somebody might have asked, are you going to be balanced on the Palestine issue or something of that sort. I don't recall any questions like that, and I don't recall it being a difficult session at all. Then we went out to Kuwait.

Q: Who was your DCM?

STOLTZFUS: Walter McClellan was my first DCM. The first order of business was to present credentials of course. I did that in Kuwait fairly promptly. Issa Sabbagh, who was with USIS, was in Kuwait at that time. As I have already mentioned, he was a very interesting character. He was of Palestinian background and had been with the BBC and then Voice of America. He spoke impeccable English and could mimic the British accent to the nth degree. An absolutely perfect British accent; he didn't use it officially but he certainly could put on the act.

He was also extremely strong in Arabic. He had a fabulous knowledge of classical Arabic and so he translated all the speeches that I made in my ultimately five presentations of credentials into classical. I was able to read in Arabic; my Arabic is by no means impeccable - fluent, but not impeccable. But to be able to read in classical Arabic was very effective with the various Rulers. Issa accompanied me on these presentations. The first one was in Kuwait. And then I went to Bahrain. The Ruler, Sheikh Isa Al Khalifa, speaks good English but was pleased to have me speak in Arabic. Then to Qatar. Then to the UAE for Sheikh Zayed al Nahayan, the Ruler of Abu Dhabi and also Ruler of the UAE Federation.

The Federation Rulership was supposed to rotate. Sheikh Zayed was to be first and Sheikh Rashid bin Maktum of Dubai to be next and then the others in turn. But it never happened. Zayed has remained head of the Federation. That is one of the reasons Rashid of Dubai was unhappy with the Federation arrangement. I'm sure he knew perfectly well that his rival Zayed would not relinquish, and wouldn't have to because he was more important and powerful.

Either at the presentation of credentials of at later meetings I was accompanied by one or the other of my sons, Bill or Philip, who were in their late teens.

Q: Not your wife?

STOLTZFUS: No. Ladies were not invited to such occasions. But Arabs love children and particularly boys. So Bill and Philip had periodic opportunities to be in on the meetings, fascinating for them. Our meetings with Zayed were in Al Ain, which is where

he preferred to be within the country, not far from the Saudi border. Also not far from Buraimi, which years before had been a sticking point between the Saudis and Abu Dhabi, then under the British. The Buraimi oasis was in dispute for prestige reasons and because it might contain oil reserves.

But Al Ain was a favorite retreat, an attractive oasis. All along the road between Abu Dhabi and Al Ain, Zayed had had thousands of trees planted. The whole road was lined with these trees. And he did a lot of other reforesting. Or rather, foresting since there probably never were trees there before. The trees needed a great deal of water in that parched country. I complimented him. I said, "You have done a beautiful job. And of course that will bring more rain too. When you've got forests, they will encourage rainfall." And he said, "You know, Mr. Ambassador, my view of it is that Allah in his heaven looks down to see what his people are doing. When he sees them doing good things, planting trees and trying to make his earth beautiful, he takes pity on them and brings rain. That is when the rain comes." I thought that was a nice touch. He was a great hunter as well. He liked to go out in the desert. Didn't do a lot of shooting of animals but just liked to see them, like the ears of a fox lurking behind a bush.

So then I guess the last credentials presentation was in Oman with Sultan Qaboos. Oman is outstandingly picturesque, still reminiscent of the French Foreign Legion, a sort of "under two flags" type of atmosphere. Very much British oriented. The military is in the British tradition. The British are very comfortable there.

Particularly striking is Muscat, which is built right into lava mountain rocks - extinct volcanoes. Of course it is as hot as it can be with the sun off those rocks. But it is very attractive none the less. The original port is an old volcano filled with water with the opening to the sea. And on either side of the opening are Portuguese forts in excellent condition. In previous times one of the forts was a prison, a real Chateau d'If. Any romantic image that came to mind would be perfectly in tune with the way Muscat looked.

Qaboos was ruler. He is the son of Sultan Said who, as I mentioned, spent most of his time in Salalah, Salalah being the part of Oman on the Indian Ocean. Muscat is on the Gulf of Oman. When I first met Qaboos he had no rank as far as I could tell and was not on speaking terms with his father. The two lived on opposite sides of the palace. But when Bill Eagleton and I said we wanted to see him, the Sultan assented and said, "I'll have my son take you around." So Qaboos took us around on a tour. He was pleasant, boyish and informal then, quite a contrast to his imperious manner as Sultan. So now he was Sultan when I presented my credentials. And he was doing good things for the country and people. Oil had recently been discovered so now the Omanis were really in the big time money.

Q: Did you find the Embassy in Kuwait set up to do what you needed to do there?

STOLTZFUS: The Embassy was on a choice piece of property owned by the Emir of Bahrain, right on the sea front. One of our periodic visitors was the Emir's agent, who

would come up from Bahrain and say, "Don't you think you'd like to move to some other place?" And I would say, "No, I don't think we would at all." It was in fact a very desirable piece of land in a very good spot. The Chancery itself was just one of those, what do you call them? Pre-fabs. It was a sort of one story, rambling pre-fab. It was unprepossessing. I don't think it is much better now really.

The Ambassador's residence was nice but small. There wasn't enough space for our children still at home and our many guests. So we had it redone. My wife, our three girls and I moved out to Salmiya, which is a suburb of Kuwait City, and rented out there for at least four or five months while the residence was being worked on. We had a guest wing put on and the whole interior upgraded. In fact the first person who came to visit and stayed in our guest suite was Senator Fulbright. So it was known thereafter as the "Fulbright Suite". It was an attractive set up we had.

Occasionally something quite unexpected happens that gives one an insight into other people's attitudes toward life and society. Janet and I recall one particularly amusing episode that illustrates this. During our stay in Salmiya while the Embassy residence was being renovated and expanded, we rented a house on a compound owned and lived in by members of the important al Hamad family. Our immediate neighbor kept some chickens in a coop against the wall dividing our two yards. One day our frisky daschund Theseus burrowed a hole in the mud wall, entered the coop and killed a chicken. Of course we felt bad about it, but in the busy ensuing days of Id celebrations and calls we didn't get around to telling our neighbors what had happened.

A week went by and, probably on the off-day, Friday, I was in our back yard hitting some of my usual shaky chip shots. I wasn't watching Theseus, who took the opportunity to bolt through the fence again. This time he killed five chickens, almost all of the remaining flock. Further cover up of our dog's outrageous behavior was now unthinkable.

I went to our distinguished neighbor's door and asked to see him. A polite young man greeted me to say that unfortunately his father was ill; was there any message? I replied there certainly was. It was my sad duty to report that our dog had killed six of his chickens, and appropriate compensation was due him from me.

The young al Hamad listened to my story and then shrugged his shoulders. "It is your dog's nature to kill so he his not to blame. Also it was clearly the chicken's time to die. It is Allah's will, that's all." Subject closed as far as he was concerned.

Feeling quite persuaded that the chickens would not have died had Theseus not gotten his teeth into them and believing that canine crime should have its consequences, our driver Abdul Mu'ti and I went to the animal souk, bought a falf a dozen fine chickens, brought them back in the official car and offered them to our neighbors. Young al Hamad was firm. Nothing doing. Cannot accept them. No point arguing.

We said we would accept defeat but we didn't have a coop and we couldn't keep the chickens in the back of my car. Al Hamad eyed us suspiciously. "You plan to trick us by

putting them in our coop," he protested. No, no we said. We would take them as soon as we could build our own coop. Grudgingly al Hamad allowed the new chickens to "board" at his coop while we dealt with the logistics of henhouse construction. I doubt any Admin Officer ever had chicken coop construction in his job description, but there's a first time for everything. A coop was designed to repose at the end of the residence yard on the Embassy compound, but the project kept getting delayed (not exactly a high priority).

One night we returned to our Salmiya house after a late dinner to discover a stern message under the front door. It read: "Do not forget your chickens!" A few days later we moved our hens and the few eggs they'd laid while boarding ("Unthinkable that we should eat your eggs," said young al Hamad) to the Embassy coop and there the fowl lived happily enough.

My father came from a farming family in Ohio and although as a child I rarely visited our farming relatives, I have periodically dreamed of having a farm. Not much could be more absurd since I know nothing about agriculture and, more important, I abhor rising with the dawn. However some of my earliest recollections are of sheep and goats. I can see myself at a tender age feeding lambs in a field, and I remember my father slowing to a stop on a foreign road as our car was engulfed by a river of white fleeces - sheep being driven by the thousands from pasture to market. Anyway, I felt the need of having my own sheep in Kuwait, as we had from time to time at a farm we owned for a while in Virginia. I bought several ewes and a mighty ram. He was impressive, very large, sturdy and black. One day he lifted my littlest child Rebecca right off her feet with a butt to the rear. Another time, one evening, we had several International Executive Service Corps (known to us as the "Paunch Corps") volunteers and their wives to drinks at the residence. They were staying at the Hilton hotel, across the street from the Embassy, on one of the upper floors so they could look down on our compound. One of the ladies exclaimed, "Where are your buffalo?" "Buffalo?" we asked, puzzled. "Yes, the buffalo we can see in your yard from our hotel room." Yes, lady, right.

Among the al Sabah Sheikhs we remember best were, first, Abdullah al Jabir, our Consulate landlord during our first tour. He was friendly, gracious and accommodating. No one took him too seriously, however, ridiculing him surreptitiously for his many marriages. He was not allowed more than four wives at once under Koranic law, of course, but he married and divorced with dizzying speed, over fifty times all told. But there was one wife he could not divorce, a daughter of the Gharabelly family. You don't divorce a Gharabelly, even if you are of the ruling family. Janet remembers calling on the Gharabelly wife who had just had an infant son, only to learn that Sheikh Abdullah had recently married "Miss Syria". When Janet commiserated with her, she made it very clear that on the contrary she was delighted. She showed my wife wedding pictures of the Sheikh and his Syrian bride and gloated, "I have my house, and my baby, and my jewels, and I don't have to have him anymore!"

Another senior Sheikh was Fahad al Salim, head of the Public Works Department. He spent most of his time enjoying himself but his wife Badria was a power to be reckoned with. She became a prominent and successful business woman with her own company.

Most of her children were educated in the States, kept under the wing of a former member of the Dutch Reform Mission in Kuwait. I remember that at the beginning of one of the banquets Fahad gave periodically for foreigners - "sheep bashes", the British called them - he asked a missionary guest present to say grace. A number of his retainers, seated way down the long table, had already dived into the meat and rice. They certainly never had heard of saying a prayer before meals. Under the Sheikh's reproving glare they sheepishly sat back and submitted to the missionary's tactfully ecumenical blessing.

I have mentioned Abdullah Mubarak, who thought he should be higher in the ruling family hierarchy. Under the British Kuwaitis could not be Ministers but various Sheikhs, like Fahad, headed what later became government Ministries. Abdullah Mubarak could be said to have been head of Public Security in the mid 50's. A cause celebre took place during out first tour in Kuwait one time when, out on winter desert maneuvers with his troops, the Sheikh lost a valuable ring. For the next several days hundreds, or thousands, of his men were put to work sifting through the ground of the whole exercise area. They may not have honed their military skills but they did find the ring.

Sheikh Abduallah al Ahmad was what we would call head of Interior Affairs. He commanded the police and ran the prison. Public beheadings, unlike Yemen or Saudi Arabia, were rare, but public beatings, often for fast violations during Ramadan, were common. The victim would be stripped to the waist and tied to a post or scaffold. Abdullah al Ahmad would light a cigarette, the signal for the beating to begin. The flogging ended when the Sheikh put the cigarette out.

Jabir al Ali was another restless member of the al Sabahs, harboring resentment similar to Abdullah Mubarak's; he thought he should be higher in the pecking order. Jabir al Ali owned a charming garden - an oasis - in the desert north of Kuwait City. He welcomed our visits to his place anytime. Once he was there when we arrived. Sitting on mats under the trees, we drank coffee with him and his many companions. We had brought our own food so we declined his invitation to lunch. But later as we ate in another part of the oasis servants brought us camel's milk, fruit, goodies of all sorts and a horse for us all to ride.

Like many Kuwaitis Jabir al Ali loved the desert. He would hold horse and camel races, raising huge clouds of dust and sand along the barren plain.

During our second tour Abdul Rahma al Ateeqi was Minister of Finance. Rough and ready, outspoken, impatient of niceties, Ateeqi "took a bit of knowing" as the British would say. He hid his admiration and basic liking for Americans and Westerners in general behind a stern and critical attitude. When David Rockefeller came through Kuwait I warned him just to listen to Ateeqi through his anti-US tirade, not argue, not agree. Simply take note and get to business. Later, after the call on the Minister, Rockefeller said, "If you hadn't given me that advice, I would never have imagined him a friend."

During the distasteful period of arms merchanting, I had occasion to meet with Ateegi in his office regarding the bills for the Raytheon missiles and other hardware that Kuwait

was buying from us. He started the session with a blast. "You obviously don't consider us friends...you have no respect...we are just little inferiors to be treated like dirt and taken advantage of..." On and on he went. At one point he turned to his Deputy, Khalid Abu Su'ud, and said, "Take notes, you're taking notes, aren't you?" Khalid looked at him and assured him he was taking notes. In fact he was not writing anything, which was clear to me and had to be to Ateeqi as well.

Then Ateeqi suddenly stopped fuming, smiled, and pulled open a drawer. He dismissed Abu Su'ud and said to me, Okay, now let's have some tea. I have many kinds here, which would you like? We had tea, a very pleasant chat, no more talk of prices. I reported to Washington that Ateeqi and I had discussed military costs and his hope that we could keep them down as much as possible. I didn't report a word of his tirade. No point in trying to explain to a humorless bureaucracy back home a Kuwaiti Minister's ploy.

Near the end of our second Kuwait tour I was confined to bed for several weeks with a painful disk problem. Ateeqi came to call one afternoon. Our conversation moved to the subject of oil reserves under the Gulf's waters and the disputes between Iran and Kuwait and other Arab Gulf states as to where the boundary in the water lay. At one point I said I had a map in our bedroom closet. My wife, arriving with a tray load of refreshments a few minutes later, was horrified to see Ateeqi's feet protruding from our closet as he rummaged around in a mess that would make Fibber Mecgee proud, digging out the map. Ateeqi could be a dangerous adversary. And he could be a wonderful friend.

We were close friends of the al Turkis. Abdul Aziz al Turki was a Saudi we had known in Jeddah. He married Barbara, one of our Embassy secretaries. While he spoke impeccable English, was an avid tennis player and married an America, yet he retained conservative Saudi attitudes. Abdul Aziz was a protégé of the famous oil Minister Ahmad Zaki Yamani. He became Deputy Minister of Oil under Yamani and later headed OAPEC, the Organization of Arab Petroleum Countries, based in Kuwait. A complex and in some ways troubled person, he represents a breed of Arab that has been educated and exposed to Western ways so that they have an identity crisis. It shouldn't be surprising then that conservative Islamic societies in countries like Iran and Saudi Arabia are so antagonistic to Western influences which they see as undermining their basic values.

We had outstanding local employees in Kuwait. Abdul Mu'ti Haroun was the Ambassador's driver. One hot summer day in 1954, I believe, a ragged, dirty, smelly Palestinian came to the door of a Consulate looking for a job. "What do you do?" I asked. "Driver," he said. "Get in this car," I told him, "and drive." The car immediately smelled like a cross between a skunk and rotten eggs. I steeled myself. He drove - very well. Back at the Consulate I said, "You have the job. Now go and wash and never be dirty again." Abdul Mu'ti walked away. When we next saw him he was spotlessly clean, shaven and neatly dressed. It is no exaggeration to say that for the next 30 years at least (I think he's now retired) he was never less than impeccable, along with being an exceptional driver.

Another unforgettable character was our butler Gulzaman, who had originally been hired by the Kuwait Oil Company. Back in the ‘50s when L.T. Jordan, then manager of the

company, learned that Harry Symmes, our Consul, was looking for a good servant, he offered Gulzaman. A Pathan, over six feet tall, with his white loose blouse, baggy trousers and a turban folded so that the colorful end flared up like an Indian feather, Gulzaman was an impressive sight. He was the epitome of a British Raj's butler, discreet, imperious, skillful, reliable. He remained with our Consulate and then our Embassy for many years.

The end was sad, though. When we arrived for our second tour in Kuwait an older Gulzaman seemed to have lost his joie de vivre and his energy. He became further downhearted when we dismissed a woman employee of the residence. We had Dinke, our Ethiopian nanny, so we didn't need the other woman. Finally, early one morning when we were living in Salmiya awaiting the completion of the residence renovations, our cook came running to us breathlessly. "Gulzaman, something is wrong with him," he said. Something was indeed. He was lying dead on the floor of the downstairs bathroom. It took several of us to haul his large, lifeless body up the stairs and out to the back seat of the car. Abdul Mu'ti drove the body to a hospital. In Gulzaman's room were some pills and powders that we sent to the Mission hospital for analysis. I don't recall what the report on them was. Presumably not drugs. It was a sad end to a dignified and proud man's life.

One of the main American groups in Kuwait was Raytheon, which was putting in an anti-missile program. Of course the oil company was the most important group. Gulf and BP were the two companies that formed the Kuwait Oil Company, with headquarters in Ahmadi, a town south of Kuwait City.

Q: How big was your staff?

STOLTZFUS: We were about a dozen Americans; it was small, a "Class Four" Embassy. As time went on and our responsibilities increased, we thought it should be upgraded. It eventually became a "Class Three" post. But at the time it was one of our modest ones. Mainly there for the oil company.

Our relations with Kuwait were good. Kuwait did not break relations with us as did a number of other Arab states after the June 1967 war. While Kuwait never wanted to appear to be in our pocket, as a very small state it has had to rely on others for its security - first the British and then us.

Q: Did you see much difference in Kuwait when you came as Ambassador compared to you first service there in 1954?

STOLTZFUS: Oh, it was completely different. In 1954, oil was just starting to come in. Kuwait still had its mud walls and virtually no paved streets. You went through gates in the wall to get into town. And after rains, the laborers would slap mud on the walls. The American Consulate was a ways out of town in a little leaky, mud-adobe place on a sandy beach that was owned by one of the Sheikhs, Abdullah al Jabir. Those were really modest times.

By the time I got there as Ambassador, the wall was down and there were paved streets. The cemetery in the middle of town had been removed and there were major buildings all through the city. It became a city. And the atmosphere was totally different. It was on its way to looking the way it does today. I would say if you exchanged the buildings in Dallas for those in Kuwait, nobody would know the difference. I mean, nobody would know the difference. Kuwait looks like Dallas on the sea. Tall buildings and spread out city and ring roads. It was a completely different scene from the mid ‘’50s.

Of course as an old timer who grew up in the area, I found it more interesting in the "old days". It was much more informal. It was friendly and relaxed and everyone, right up to the Ruler, was easily accessible. Important dignitaries might be sitting out on their verandahs or by the sea. By 1971 you had to set up appointments well in advance, and everything was much more bureaucratic.

Q: I think we were talking about your post to Kuwait where you were Ambassador to Kuwait, Bahrain and the Emirates. And you started with your arrival and the size of the Embassy.

STOLTZFUS: Yes. We arrived in the early part of 19972. My job was not only to present credentials and get settled in Kuwait but also to start setting up our posts down in Bahrain and Qatar and the UAE and Oman. Over the course of the four years I was there, I spent a great deal of time down the Gulf as well. But I considered it the best job in the Foreign Service because of the variety and the interests and the different rulers and countryside. You could never be bored because you were in one place for awhile, and then you moved out and were paying visits down the Gulf.

In 1972 Secretary Rogers visited Bahrain and Kuwait. Our government had devised what was called the "Rogers Plan", which was an effort, one of the myriad efforts, to solve the Middle East - Palestine problem. It was a good plan but it ran into our usual domestic political obstacles and so went down the tubes like all the rest of those plans.

My first year was largely a matter of establishing our various posts down the Gulf. 1973 started to get really interesting because in March of 1973 the Iraqis made some threatening moves on the Kuwaiti border. The fact is the Iraqis have never accepted Kuwait as an independent country. They have always coveted Kuwait and periodically have tried to grab it. Well, this was one of those times. They made a feint at the border, which the Kuwaitis were very upset about.

The Iraqis also claimed a couple of islands owned or at least also claimed by Kuwait. One is Bubyan and the other Muskan, I believe, just around the corner from Kuwait City. It is very close quarters there. From the Iraqi point of view these islands, especially Bubyan, block a good part of Iraqi territory at the head of the Gulf. The British had some troops that they were prepared to deploy if something really serious happened. So the Iraqis backed off and just harassed the Kuwaitis. They are very good at that. They would take any occasion to harass the Kuwaitis, trying to keep them off balance. I remember a

visit by Crown Prince Saad al Abdullah, who was also Minister of Defense, to Baghdad where of course he was showered with Arab brotherly love and all that kind of thing. But he got the treatment all right. "So sorry we have upset you. You know very well that Baghdad is your capital and Kuwait is our capital and we are all brothers together." All of us who heard about the visit guessed that the Kuwaitis would be more concerned about the latter part of that sentence than the former, to say the least.

So that was the main thing that happened in 1973. And what it resulted in was an effort to sell arms. Of course, we are the biggest arms merchants in the world. We didn't waste any time and neither did the British or the French to offer the Kuwaitis military equipment that I doubted seriously would ever enhance their security. At least it made them feel good. Like Raytheon with its missiles and anti-aircraft system. Lockheed with various security devices. And fighter planes. We were the security and missile types. The British were the tank types. And the French were trying to sell their Mirage planes as well. These activities were carried on sporadically during that year.

Then in October, 1973 was the Yom Kippur war, when Nasser decided on a surprise attack which strangely and uncharacteristically the Israelis were unprepared for. The local atmosphere was tense for some weeks. Any American in the Arab world was at risk in this situation. The Kuwaitis, however, were very anxious to keep everything calm, and they did remarkably well on that. There were no demonstrations and Americans were not put in a position of feeling that there was a high degree of danger there.

We did hit on something we felt had no political aspects to it, just a humanitarian gesture. The Kuwaitis had called for blood donations. So my wife, Janet, went to the blood center to see about giving blood. The assumption of everybody was of course that they wouldn't take an American donor. Americans shouldn't be hanging around those places and so forth. She found a long line of Kuwaiti women waiting to have their blood drawn. And they were all extremely nervous. They had never done it before. They didn't know whether they were going to or not. The nurses took Janet right up to the front of the line. She kind of protested, you know: "I don't want someone else's place just because I'm a foreigner." They said, in effect, look, if you are willing to do this it will be a very good example for the rest of them. We need someone who will do this so we can get these nervous nellies to go along. So that was very helpful. And we certainly felt that whatever young man needed blood, no matter what side he was on, should have it. This was not a political matter. We never got any flack for doing that. I doubt we ever reported it anyway.

The serious aspect of the crisis, of course, was the Arab threat led by King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, to cut off the oil. That caused a tremendous brouhaha in the western world and sent oil prices up ten fold. Everyone was in a great tiz over this. In the event, the oil was never cut off. But it was a pretty nasty situation. It certainly rocked the energy and the financial markets. The result of these painful oil prices was a massive effort by the west to recycle petro dollars by selling goods - whatever they could sell - to the Arab world, particularly, of course, to the ones who could pay: the ones that had the oil and that were making the fantastic profits.

Armaments are the best thing to sell because they are the most expensive. There you are talking about billions of dollars instead of selling cars or refrigerators or whatever for relative peanuts. That was big time. I became, much to my distaste, an arms merchant. I mean, I was seeing the Minister of Defense often, assuring him we had the best stuff.

My competition was my British and French colleagues, friends of mine. John Wilton was the British Ambassador and we were thick as thieves. We played tennis and so on. Paul Carton, whom I had known at other posts, was the French Ambassador and we were also close friends. Here we were battling each other over who would sell the most arms for the most money. I found it highly distasteful. For example, I told the Minister of Defense that he didn't have to pay hundreds of millions of dollars to the French for Mirages; we had perfectly good, refurbished fighter aircraft for a fraction of the cost of new ones. So I had our Air Force fly in these planes to show them off. They put on a good show. We went out to the airport to watch these planes take off like rockets. They were impressive and the Minister professed to be impressed. Of course he was too polite to say otherwise.

They would have been perfectly adequate planes. I mean, I don't think any new or old planes would have been of any real use to him if Kuwait were attacked by a big neighbor like Iraq. These would have been just as good as any, and in my opinion the best buy. But you don't buy second hand. You are a Kuwaiti, for heaven's sake! You aren't going to buy anything second hand. Some cast off from another country? Never! So obviously it had to be Mirages, which cost them three or four times as much.

We had tanks but the British also had tanks, and of course the Kuwaitis were anxious to spread their arms purchases around. The choice would be the British Chieftain. So Raytheon and Lockheed mainly were the companies that we dealt with. And it took forever for the Kuwaitis to make up their minds. They would hem and haw over the choices, and I didn't really personally care whether they bought them or not. But of course you do your job. So I pressed them periodically.

One of the checks that was issued by the Kuwait government was for eight plus million dollars - in my name! I was a bit taken aback when it came in and returned it quickly. Obviously I was not going to pass checks through my name. Aside from the fact that it wasn't my money, I didn't want to be taxed for eight million dollars by the IRS! And spend the rest of my life in debtors prison. But I wish I had taken a picture at least of this check of $8,120,000 pay to the order of William A. Stoltzfus, Jr. It was a pleasant thought for a few seconds. That would have been a nice chunk of money.

Then came the assassination of Roger Davies in Cyprus and of Cleo Noel in Khartoum. And our Embassy in Beirut was blown up. Those were depressing times. I lost a lot of enthusiasm for what I was doing when that sort of thing happened.

It is not only that you are concerned about your own safety and that of your wife and children. All Americans were at risk. The children were going to school in town. We would get CIA reports on hit squads in town. So you had a car follow you everywhere.

The Embassy did a complete job of installing iron grilling and sub-machine guns and surveillance equipment in the Chancery and the residence. I have a tendency to claustrophobia anyway. I found it extremely uncomfortable and I would have a lot better taste in my mouth for the latter part of my career if those horrendous events hadn't taken place. And I suppose I have to admit I was scared.

It was not a pleasant situation. You couldn't go anywhere. You couldn't walk along the beach. You couldn't go out to the desert. As I said, I became claustrophobic and I felt I was in a citadel. What is interesting to me in my reflecting on my feelings about that is how elusive security really is. The more you try to make yourself safe with concrete, steel and weapons, the less secure you feel. You realize that a professional is going to know how to get in regardless.

It makes me think of the Israeli and Palestinian situation where the Israelis are so concerned - quite rightly - about security. And the lengths to which they go to protect themselves, and to not move forward on peace arrangements with the Palestinians except very grudgingly because of this preoccupation with security. The problem is you can never be one hundred per cent secure. I mean, there is no doubt that hit squads from the Hammas and other Islamic militants can get through sooner or later, one way or another to do some terrorist act.

That was my state of mind when I was in that situation in Kuwait: that the more security measures we took, the less likely we were to feel secure. There is no such thing as one hundred per cent security without digging a hole and just sitting underground somewhere. Even that probably wouldn't do it. Somebody would roll a rock on you. It made me extremely uncomfortable to be spending so much time trying to make everything secure. It is such a negative exercise and it just turned me off, I must say.

By 1975 I was getting pretty antsy. I decided that I didn't really want to go back to a job in Washington. Whether I could have gotten another post abroad was another matter. I learned later that Bill Schaufele, the Deputy Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, had wanted me to go back to be one of his deputies. It happened that one of my Princeton classmates, Bill Sword, came out to Kuwait on a visit. He was an investment banker at that time, just leaving Morgan Stanley to set up his own firm. And he said, "Why don't you join me?" In retrospect, there are pros and cons to my having decided to do that, to go with him, which I did.

In 1975 I also developed a back problem and was in bed for awhile, but that worked out okay. My Egyptian doctor there said, "I am not going to operate on you. If you want an operation, you have to go to the States." Well, I told him I didn't want an operation, to which he replied that he thought he could get me back on my feet. He and his therapist did a first class job. When I got back to the States the doctor said, "We would have operated." And I said, "Thank God I wasn't back here in that case."

A little bit later the Minister of Finance, Anwar al Ateeqi, paid a visit to the States. I asked the Department if I could come along with him. He and I were good friends, and I

thought I might be of some help to him and his aides during their visit. The Department said "okay". So I accompanied the Minister of Oil on various events that took place in Washington and elsewhere. One of his interests was handicapped children. There was a care center in Kuwait for handicapped kids which my wife was involved in. At Ateeqi's request, he and I went to Wilmington where Dupont has a major facility for handicapped people. I thought there were some very positive aspects to that visit.

I tendered my resignation from the Foreign Service in September, 1975 but offered to stay in Kuwait until the Department found it convenient for me to leave the post. I didn't get an answer right away. Finally, I guess it was December, I was told it was okay to come out. So I was there for another three months.

The period of the mid '70s was a very active time. There were a lot of visitors. Throughout, there were a lot of visitors. I think I mentioned Fulbright; he came twice, once while still a Senator, later as a private citizen. After 1972 as I remember, America suddenly found out where Kuwait and the Gulf were. There were agricultural visits - it is not too clear to me why. Congressman Poage was the Chairman of the House Agricultural committee. He was an aging Texan who had served in Congress for over three decades. We had Senator Fulbright. We had Senator Hatfield and Senators from North Carolina, South Dakota, California, etc., etc. coming through. Congressman Solarz of New York, a Jew, was nevertheless welcome in Kuwait. Senator Percy of Illinois and his wife Louise came. Percy was sufficiently impressed with his Mid East trip that he later made some public statements that got him in trouble with the Israeli lobby in Washington. We had a whole host of visiting officials who came so they could say they knew something about this crucial area. Some of them were pleasant and thoughtful and others pretty demanding; the latter were nothing more than boondogglers. One Congressional worthy, whose name is mercifully forgotten, invited himself to my secretary's apartment, plied himself with liquor and promptly passed out on her bed.

We also hosted a blue ribbon mission of top US corporate executives, on the lookout for opportunities to recycle petro-dollars back to the US. Iacocca of Ford was one of the most prominent visitors. Ford of course had been on the Arab boycott list for many years but Kuwaiti businessmen were literally panting after Ford and Coca Cola, later removed from the banned list.

Most of these visitors were interesting. We got a good view of how they felt about US politics. We always liked to talk to them about that. There were visitors right up to the time we left. We left in early January, 1976.

Q: What was Fulbright looking at?

STOLTZFUS: Well, the first time he came Fulbright was Chairman of the Foreign Relations committee, touring the area. He came to Kuwait from Teheran and a call on our great friend the Shah of Iran. It isn't always clear why these people take the trips they do but they are not always boondoggles. The Chairman of a committee can pretty well dictate his own terms about what he wants to do. And after all the Gulf and oil and the

Middle East in general were hot items. It was useful for Congress to have some first hand knowledge of the situation post the 1973 war, especially with the Israelis upset by what had happened.

I think they all felt they needed to have some knowledge so they wouldn't show their ignorance in a debate on oil or Arabs or Israel. Or when somebody might ask, "What do you think about the Middle East, Chairman Poage?" He wouldn't want to say, "Well, I have never been there." I think they really felt that they needed to know something about the hottest spot in the world at that time. So that would be their reason for coming.

To me, looking over my career, I must say I had infinitely more fun in the early years than in the last. As I've said, I'm slightly claustrophobic and I don't like a lot of pomp and ceremony and formality. Perhaps I never took myself as seriously as I should have. I always felt at home in the Middle East. I was born in Beirut. I just felt very comfortable with Middle Easterners whether they were Arabs or Jews or whatever they were. It was my part of the world and therefore I was able to do a lot of things on my own.

My bosses let me roam around when I was younger to do whatever I thought was useful. I was much freer to go and visit people and talk to them and bring back reports of how people felt and what the countryside looked like and so forth. The farther you get up in the ranks, of course, the more formal things become. There is truth in the joke about owning a boat. The two best days of owning a boat are the day you buy it and the day you sell it. With some exaggeration I would extrapolate that to say probably the best two days of my tenure as Ambassador were the day I made Ambassador and the day I left. So...to some extent I didn't have a lot of regrets leaving.

And looking over my career, I realize I did a lot of things that were fun to do. I would say primarily Libya, where I first started abroad, and certainly Yemen are at the top of the list. And Saudi Arabia, where on my first tour I literally spent day and night with George Wadsworth, who was a unique character in the Foreign Service. He did things entirely on his own, much to the distress of the State Department on occasion. Later in that tour Ambassador Heath gave me incredible full rein - to the extent of seeing the King in his boudoir, on my own initiative.

Q: Wadsworth built a golf course everywhere he went.

STOLTZFUS: Yes, he did. He was very unorthodox. But I was with him constantly. It got so I was thinking the way he thought and writing as he wrote. He liked to work at night and sleep late in the morning. I never saw my wife for weeks at a time. But it was a year in which I learned a tremendous amount. That was great.

Donald Heath was kind and gentle and not very energetic. He has now passed to his reward so I can say that. He preferred playing golf and he gave me incredible rein. I could just go ahead and do things on my own. I would take off to Riyadh and call on anyone from the King down to the garbage collector. That was a fantastic experience, to be able to do pretty much what I wanted to do. I would come back to the Embassy, write

up my report, and he would send it in to Washington. He had been Ambassador to Cambodia, a kingdom, so he was already very much royalist oriented when he got to Saudi Arabia, where Saud was King. King Saud was a most unfortunate ruler, not mean or cruel but totally inept. He bankrupted the country building palaces, concocting crazy plots and indulging his every whim. His brother Faisal was Crown Prince who took over later, as I have mentioned. Saud had to be removed. He couldn't handle the job.

But Ambassador Heath was focused on the fact that he was accredited to the King. Some of us in the Embassy felt that it was important not to ignore Faisal, who we knew was very unhappy with Saud. At the same time it was obviously up to the ruling family, not us, what they did about their problems.

Q: Back to your ambassadorship in Kuwait. You had an enormous district to cover. I mean from Kuwait to the last of the Emirates is practically 2,000 kilometers. How did you do that? And how often did you make these trips to represent the United States in these far-flung little places?

STOLTZFUS: Before about 1973, the communications were not that great. There were not that many flights. A certain amount of overland travel was required. But once Gulf Airways got organized, there were plenty of planes and plenty of flights. And it is less than an hour by air to Bahrain island, for example. It is about the same to Qatar. It would be an hour and a quarter or an hour and a half to Abu Dhabi or Dubai. Going to Muscat in Oman would be two hours. But it was really not that far.

Q: Did you always fly?

STOLTZFUS: Well, no. I went overland when I could. It was a question of time, of course. I hate flying. I would infinitely rather drive. So we would occasionally drive and I would take the boys down. And we would drive through Saudi Arabia to Qatar.

Q: What were the road conditions at that time?

STOLTZFUS: Well, they gradually improved. Initially they were sand roads and rubble and dirt roads. As time went on they kept improving. The coastal road from Kuwait to Dhahran was okay. It was not too bad. It was trickier to drive across and into Qatar And you were in pretty deserted country there. Still, it is not that far. I mean it is not like crossing Saudi Arabia which I had done before when the roads were just dirt tracks. And you are talking 900 miles from Dhahran to Jeddah. Whereas here, well - maybe 200 - 300 kilometers, 200 miles. It would take all day but it wasn't all that bad.

I really wanted to drive from the Emirates to Oman. But it was only later that the road was good enough so that you weren't spending days on the journey. It was a question of time and opportunities. You weren't sure that you could see the Rulers or the people you wanted to see exactly when you wanted to see them. And in particular, if it was a Thursday or a Friday, which is a day off, that was not a time to be there. You might go down on a Friday and be there by Friday evening and try to make calls the next day. If

that plan didn't work out, you simply had to wait for the summons. In Yemen that wait might be days or even weeks. In the Gulf Rulers and Ministers were more considerate or at least more up-to-date. A Ruler isn't at your beck and call, though. So it might take some time to see him. I imagine at least every quarter I visited one place or another. It was fascinating. I loved that. That was just great.

Q: Did your officers make these trips and cover these small Emirates?

STOLTZFUS: Yes. The economic officer, for example, would go down because as the posts were being set up they weren't fully manned. And so he could be considered a regional officer. As time went on and the facilities were established - the Embassy and the housing and so on - then each post had its economic and political officer. In time it became less of a chore for anybody else but me to travel down the Gulf.

We had chargés in each of those posts. Initially they were occupied with setting up. As I explained earlier, the late 1960's to early 1970's were a time when the British were withdrawing from the Gulf and establishing independent countries. These little Sheikhdoms were just barely independent. We moved quickly to set up posts, as did the French. And of course the British were already there. All they had to do was change a Political Agent to a British Ambassador. So from 1972 - 1976 I was Ambassador to Kuwait. And from 1972 - 1974 I was Ambassador concurrently to Bahrain, Qatar, the UAE and Oman.

During those times I paid a lot of visits to the posts, working with the Chargés. We were gearing up for an Embassy and an Ambassador. By the end of 1974 Ambassadors were coming into the posts. On their way to those posts they would come through Kuwait and we would have consultations and so on. By the time I left there were Ambassadors in each one of those countries.

By 1976 and perhaps by 1975, even, Muscat, Bahrain, Doha, which is the capital of Qatar, and Abu Dhabi all had Embassies and Ambassadors. In the case of the UAE we also had a Consulate in Dubai, an important economic center. Our main activities of course revolved around oil issues. These were the key matters. And then once in a while there would be tiffs between the states. What Hermann Eilts would have called "an Ox-Bow incident". Some people will remember a fine Western movie with Henry Fonda called The Ox-Bow Incident. I was reminded of that film when these little dust-ups occurred. I'm not referring to the Iraqis. They were always tough. But the Bahrainis and the Qataris, for example. They had and probably still have disputes over where the line is between them in terms of oil in the Gulf. Because there is oil in the Gulf. It is not just on the land. There is oil under the water as well.

More serious were the Iraqis and perfectly serious also were the Iranians on the east side of the Gulf. There was supposed to be a line dividing the east and west sides of the Gulf but if you found that the oil was slightly on the wrong side from your point of view, why, of course there are well known ways of drilling down and then bending the drill across. Nobody trusted anybody else. Then there were the Gulf island disputes. Our great buddy,

the Shah of Iran, was busy making remarks such as, Bahrain really belongs to us. And by the way, Abu Musa and the Tumbs also really belong to us.

Then Dubai and Sharja would take exception on the islands issues. So there was always plenty of action going on that gave you occasion to report to Washington; you never knew where somebody would start shooting. Probably never terribly serious when it came to one little principality on the Arab side against another. But when the Iraqis or the Iranians flexed their muscles, this was trouble at another level. The Iraqis had gun boats and they would periodically steam up and down the Gulf, making the Kuwaitis, the Bahrainis and the UAE very nervous. Let me say that in Abu Dhabi several of the senior advisors to Sheikh Zayed were Iraqis, but not of the revolutionary stripe. They were from royalist times, certainly not on the side of these Iraqis with gun boats. The Iranians also were a threat, especially the Shah and his demands on the islands.

The state on the Arab side that had the best relations with Teheran at that time was Dubai. Dhow owners from Dubai traditionally smuggled gold to India and they kept their lines open to Teheran and to the Iranians for all manner of goods. There was always hanky-panky going on between Iranian shores and Dubai. The Omanis were also on pretty good terms with the Shah. They were careful to keep their lines open too. The Shah even offered troops to Oman at one point. I have forgotten the circumstances.

The Gulf area was and always will be a very interesting area, very unsettled. It will always have the potential for trouble.

Q: What was the makeup of the royal family, I guess that is what it was, in Kuwait at the time you were there?

STOLTZFUS: The Saudis are the only ones who allow themselves to have Kings and Princes. The other Rulers and male family members in Kuwait and down the Gulf are called Sheikhs. The Sheikh of Bahrain, Sheikh of Kuwait and so on. The Ruler of Oman is called a Sultan. Their families are the Rulers and usually family members retain the most important, key ministries as well.

The Saudi royal family is huge. There must be ten or twenty thousand of them. They are a huge, huge family, bigger than most tribes. The Kuwaiti family is much smaller. But of course they have their disputes among themselves too. While we were there we would learn about arguments regarding succession among various branches, and I think I mentioned the same was true in Saudi Arabia, the branches there being based on the wife, the progeny of a particular wife. This is family politics in a very real sense.

As I explained, in Saudi Arabia the branches form political groupings. The government is basically an inner family elite with its own parties or branches totally exclusive of the rest of the country. The rest of the country has no look in, in terms of leadership. This was true in Kuwait as well. But Kuwait, I always thought, was a little more democratic. The Kuwaitis have had a parliament, off and on. They did allow criticism as long as you didn't criticize the Ruler directly. Every once in a while some member of the family

would try to assert a claim to move up on the ladder of succession. If he persisted enough to be troublesome, the family would send him out of the country for a while to cool him off.

Probably the most important of these dissidents when I was there was Abdullah Mubarak, a senior member of the Sabah family but not of the favored "Ahmad" branch. He was asked to stay out of the country for a number of years.

Q: Wasn't he at the United Nations?

STOLTZFUS: I thought he cooled his heels in Egypt or France. But maybe he represented Kuwait at the UN for a time. I am not sure. It probably would have been a good spot for him. That was a favorite way of getting rid of an important troublemaker: giving him an Ambassadorship. You don't have to use him. Just park him out of the country.

Succession is of course a problem in any undemocratic society. Take President Assad of Syria. Assad is only 66 but he is not in the best of health. He wants one of his sons to take over. His brothers are giving him a problem I guess. Particularly Rifaat, whom he sent out of the country for trying to stir up the military. Later Assad allowed him back in and to keep his Vice President title, but he keeps a wary eye on him. That is a good example of ruling family squabbles. Assad could be a Sheikh or even a King. He is unquestioned now but cannot automatically assume his choice is going to take over when he's gone or his authority has been weakened.

There are two main branches in Kuwait. The descendants of the "Great Mubarak" are the al Ahmad branch and the others are the al Ali branch. The family tries to keep the two in balance but in recent years the al Ahmads have tended to be stronger. Not surprisingly the shenanigans tend to be from the weaker side and therefore that group loses credibility. So there is considerable jockeying around. Right now the ruler is Jabir al Ahmad from the al Ahmad branch and the Crown Prince is Saad al Abdullah al Ali. Whether Sheikh Saad would actually ever take over is not clear. I think he is about the same age as the Ruler. So down the line they may have a little bit of a problem.

But it is not the same problem as in Saudi Arabia because the merchant class and the business people in Kuwait have always exerted a very strong influence. The religious leaders and the Saud family are the ruling duo in Saudi Arabia, while it is the business class and the Rulers who are the duo in Kuwait. The Kuwaiti ruling family can't afford to alienate the business community. In fact top Kuwaiti families like the al Ghanims consider themselves just as good as the Sabahs. And some of them, at least in the past, felt they should be Rulers instead. And I can see why they might.

Before oil it was the business class that controlled the wealth: the pearling, the trade with India, East Africa and neighbors. Who would have supported the ruling family if it hadn't been for the business people? So they always enjoyed a very strong position.

Q: Were some of them actually related to the central family of that tribe?

STOLTZFUS: Well, yes, I guess. The ruling family of Kuwait are originally Anaiza, one of the main Saudi tribes. They came originally from Saudi Arabia, which at that time was Arabia. The Sabahs have been in Kuwait for several centuries, but in one way or another Kuwait has always been subject to encroachment from the desert.

Along the coast the towns were inhabited by fishermen and merchants, not desert tribesmen. The traditional merchants from way, way back considered themselves just as important as the ignorant desert Sheikhs in the palaces. They supported the Rulers in exchange for full say in decisions affecting the country's welfare until the oil came in. With oil the power balance shifted in favor of the Rulers. They managed to acquire the lion's share of the oil income and could do with it what they wanted. They made sure that money filtered down to the business community, but clearly the merchants no longer had quite the same hold over the Rulers that they had before.

Q: I guess that is because the oil was actually found by foreigners, not by these merchant families.

STOLTZFUS: Yes. And the oil deals were made with the Rulers, not the businessmen. In the case of Kuwait, the British were in control. So they could pretty well dictate what happened. They arranged that one third of the oil income would go to the ruling family, one third to developing the country and one third to what is called a "fund for future generations".

Of course the money from a couple million barrels a day gave the ruling family a lot of clout. The merchants did not have direct access to the money. Kuwait has a parliament now which has a say in the state's budget, but at first the "government" was the Ruler and his Ministers, with members of his family in the key ministries. It was the government who decided how money would be spent in the country. Of course to placate - and not only to placate but to develop - the country the government would make sure that the business class got the contracts and got plenty of the country's trade. Most of the business was in the hands of probably no more than 50 of these families, who became extremely wealthy but remained restless. They look down on the ruling family, which is not as well educated or modern oriented as themselves. And in fact the Sabahs cannot be compared with the senior families of the business community: the al Ghanims, al Bahars, Behbehanis, Qabazards, some of whom are related to people in Iran and others related here and there up and down the Gulf. Their sons and daughters received education in Europe and the States while the Sabahs went abroad to gamble, play about and engender bad publicity. The Sabahs have probably done better in recent years. But they certainly were considered, as I guess George Bush or Bob Dole would say, "bozos". They are probably still considered bozos.

At the same time, it has been convenient for the merchants to have an on-going leadership that they at least have some influence over. And that is basically the way they look at the ruling family. Being conservative themselves, they find it better to tolerate the

Sheikhs than to risk the possibility of a revolutionary figure rising to rock the boat.

Q: Did the ruling family in Kuwait have any kind of significant military units or presence? Or did they ever develop that after the Brits left?

STOLTZFUS: While the British were in control they made themselves responsible for foreign affairs and defense. They did train men who presumably formed the nucleus of an army when they left. I guess in recent years the military has improved, mainly in response to Iraqi threats. The perennial problem is that Kuwaitis don't want their kids in the military and certainly not below officer rank. That would be beneath them.

So what you do is recruit Bedouin from the desert. There is always that problem in Kuwait of who is a Kuwaiti? Of course traditionally there were no borders and those established by outside powers didn't stop the nomadic tribes from going back and forth across them. And when you have small country like Kuwait, a little piece of territory between two large entities like Iraq and Saudi Arabia, there is nothing to prevent tribes from wandering in and out at will, regardless of where they came from. So any tribesman could say he was a Kuwaiti and the Kuwaitis, needing soldiers, probably wouldn't ask too many questions. Thus it would be a little difficult to see where their loyalties lay. The officers were members of the royal family or senior people. They were all kind of spoiled. It didn't seem like a real army that could do very much. But in fairness, no matter how good they were, they wouldn't be a match for any neighbor, and they were kind of pragmatic. What could they do against an Iraqi juggernaut? The Saudis you could scarcely call a juggernaut, but their forces certainly were much stronger and bigger than Kuwait's.

If you are an Iraqi tribesman you are going to go where the water is and the pastures are. And so will the Saudis. And if that leads to Kuwaiti territory, so be it. The Kuwaitis traditionally counted on the British to defend them. When the British left, they still felt an obligation to come to Kuwait's aid when needed. Well, of course we do too. As in the Gulf war. All these little Gulf states are going to need our backing if they are going to remain independent.

So far it is to our interest that they do. That is the reason they are still there. Because they are defended by Europe and the United States. It becomes more obvious every day how important it is for their defense that the US or the British or the French or whoever it is, is prepared to defend them. Otherwise they would be gone.

Kuwait and Saudi Arabia are quite different in many ways. In the case of Kuwait, the British set up the current system of a constitution and the three-way split of the oil income. In the case of Saudi Arabia, the whole country is treated as a fief of the ruling family, of the al Saud family. The oil income is controlled directly by the King. He is careful to dole it out to government ministries, the military, his restless tribesmen and, in contracts, to major families like the bin Ladins, Ali Rezas and other top merchant families in Jeddah, Riyadh and the East. The powerful religious lobby also must be catered to. And they would have problems if they didn't pass out plenty of money. In

short, Saudi Arabia is an autocracy.

The Arabian Peninsula has three major countries: Saudi Arabia, Oman and Yemen. The little Arab Gulf states are no more than blips between the Gulf and Saudi Arabia, except for Bahrain island. Other than the Arab townsmen the population of these little states consists of foreigners - Pakistanis, Indians, etc. - and people from the hinterlands of Saudi Arabia and Oman. These latter are the workers and soldiers and policemen. Some are still Bedouin, some have become settled. The indigenous populations of all these states are exceedingly small, Kuwait being far the largest with perhaps 400,000. As I said before, the whole desert hinterland where these tribesmen go back and forth has no boundaries, and nationality there has little meaning.

The nomads can play that game very well. They can be Saudis for part of the time and when it suits their purpose they can say, "Well, we are Omanis." And of course they have tribal connections within all of the smaller countries too. So they can say, "Well, my cousin Ahmad there is from Abu Dhabi and I am from Abu Dhabi too. And I'd be glad to join your army because I am not doing too well with my flocks." Many used to say that the UAE army is made up mainly of Omanis.

What is the UAE? Except for Abu Dhabi, the UAE consists primarily of several coastal towns or cities that traditionally looked outward to the Gulf and to India and to Zanzibar. They were the Trucial or Pirate Coast that the British eventually subdued and where they installed the ex-pirates as Sheikhs of their towns.

Q: Without the British the borders of these so-called countries wouldn't be there in the first place.

STOLTZFUS: That is true. My first visit to the lower Gulf was in the 1950's when I was stationed in Saudi Arabia. I was sent over periodically from Jeddah to be the interpreter for the COMMIDEASTFOR that is, the Commander, Middle East Forces, who was an Admiral in Bahrain. We have always had a naval presence in Bahrain. I would join the Admiral to be interpreter for his various visits around the Gulf. It was great fun to travel on his ship and visit all those exotic places.

We certainly can conclude that the Gulf will be an important - and hot - spot for oil there. Or, let's put it this way - as long as the West needs the oil. Presumably if we in the United States ever seriously studied our energy alternatives, we wouldn't continue to be hostage to this oil. There are plenty of other sources of fuel. Of course oil is still the most convenient fuel on the scale that we require it. Other types of fuel will not take the place of oil for a long time. But clearly the area will not have the same importance once oil is gone.

I think that is probably all my ancient brain can produce at the moment. I will be going down to Washington to look up some of my old reports and read some more things that I have around the house and start filling in the gaps. In the meantime, I guess that is it.

End of interview