



N E W S L I N E S

Vol. 8 No. 1 *The Newsletter of the West Virginia Committee on U.S.-Arab Relations* Fall 2000

Notes from the Director's Desk ...

Malone Trip to Yemen and Syria

A group of fifteen, escorted by Dr. John Duke Anthony, CEO of the National Council on US-Arab Relations, enjoyed an outstanding study trip to Yemen and Syria from July 20-August 12, 2000. Our delegation was composed of individuals from Texas [2], Colorado, California, Florida [3], Virginia, Illinois, New York, Montana, Illinois, Washington, D.C. [2], and West Virginia. Not only was the geographic representation diverse but the academic backgrounds were equally diverse. One of the strengths of this study visit was the veteran character of the group. All had international travel experience, not necessarily to the Arab World, that helped us bond together quickly.

Before the trip began, we had one and a half days of orientation in Washington, D.C. We met with the National Council's staff to orient each of us with the personnel changes that have recently occurred within the office. After this, we had a number of briefings from individuals providing background on the countries that we would be visiting. That night, as a indicator of exquisite things to come, we attended an excellent restaurant, Marrakech. Yes, the restaurant had dancing!

After a long flight to Yemen, we began our whirlwind tour of Yemen the following day. Although I had been to Yemen in 1995, the sights and sounds were just as breathtaking this time as before. We saw the wonderful architecture of Sana'a, including a tour of the Old City [the old city is still behind a huge wall with narrow streets]. We enjoyed numerous lunches with traditional Yemeni food [once in a while we also had dishes from other countries
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thrown in]. Normally, there was more food than we could possibly eat! While in Yemen, we had the opportunity to visit Manakah, Shibam [yes, there are two Shibams in Yemen], Kawkaban, Thulla, as well as Say'un in the Hadramawt. We had the opportunity to visit numerous suqs and museums in different locations throughout the country.

We met with President Saleh, the Prime Minister, the Speaker of the Parliament, the Foreign Minister and other high ranking officials. The president provided us with excellent photos of our meeting with him PLUS some excellent gifts that we were able to bring home. We also met, on several occasions, American Ambassador Barbara Bodine

We had excellent accommodations while in Yemen! We stayed in one of the best hotels in Sana'a, the Taj Sheba. Our host, Sabri Saleem, provided an escort for our travels in and around Sana'a and looked after us in excellent Arab fashion! He was even able to put us into business class for our return trip to Frankfurt, Germany. Thanks Sabri for all you did for us!

Since we had little time in Syria, we mainly toured the country and met but a few important individuals. Some of the more important places that we were able to visit



Malone group visiting American Ambassador Barbara Bodine (center) in Sana'a. Notice that our nametags are written in Arabic!

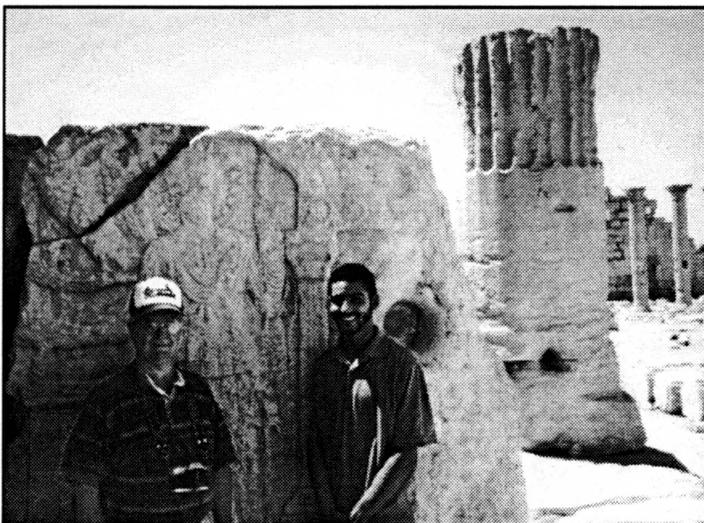
were the Omayyad Mosque, the Chapel of Ananias, the Azzam Palace, Moloula [Aramaic] village, the Golan/Qunaitra/cease fire line, the Shrine of Sitt Zainab, Palmyra, Aleppo Citadel, Aleppo Museum, Crac de Chevalier/Crusader Fortress, and of course, Damascus.

As with all the Malone trips, we have the opportunity to visit the American Ambassador. The difference that I found with the visit to Ambassador Crocker was the amount of business that was transacted. Syria is hungry for more American interaction. Universities were wanting to establish more student/faculty exchanges and an owner of a large company wanted to hire more middle management people from the U.S. In addition, Dr. Anthony, Mario Pascale, and myself spent a lot of time giving an interview to a Syrian newspaper reporter who wanted to know everything about what the National Council and State Committees. I was exhausted after this reception!

While in Syria, we were able to hook up with some American students that were with the "Study in Syria" program that is conducted by the National Council. What an enjoyable experience this was! I think we were all impressed by the quality of college students that participated in this activity. One of the students that I was pleased to assist was Paul Abernathy from Wheeling Jesuit University. There is a letter from him published in this newsletter.

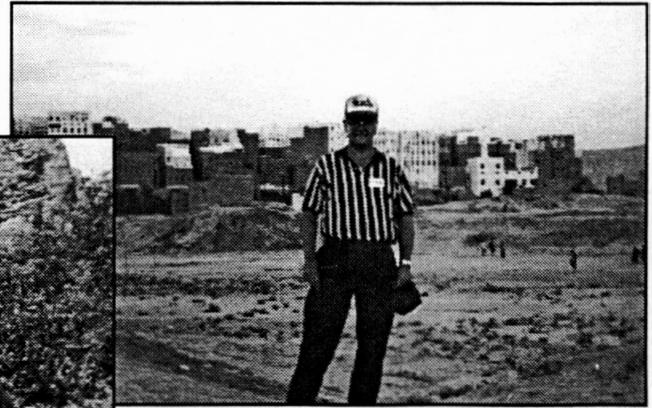
I am sorry the other Malones from West Virginia were unable to attend this outstanding study trip. Make sure you attend one in the future! Log on to The National Council's web page to keep abreast of all the opportunities available to you and your students.

Rollie Williams
Director



Roland Williams (left) and Paul Abernathy, Wheeling Jesuit University student, visit pre-Roman ruins in Palmyra, Syria.

Malone Trip to Yemen and Syria



Roland Williams standing in front of the legendary city of Shibam, Yemen. Yes, the cap I'm wearing remained in Syria!

Our group visiting the "Rock Palace" in Yemen. The two men carrying rifles were attending a nearby wedding.

Honoring Dr. John Duke Anthony

Dr. John Duke Anthony is the founding President and Chief Executive Officer of the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations and is a founder, board member, and Secretary of the U.S.-GCC Corporate Cooperation Committee. He is also the founding president of the Middle East Educational Trust, a founder of the Commission on Israeli-Palestinian Peace, the founding president of the Society for Gulf Arab Studies, a founder and board member of the National Commission to Commemorate the 14th Centennial of Islam, founder of the annual U.S. Mideast Policymakers Conference, and chairman of the U.S.-Morocco Affairs Council. For the past 25 years, Dr. Anthony has been a consultant and regular lecturer on the Arabian Peninsula and the Gulf states for the Departments of Defense and State. For nearly a decade, he taught courses on the Middle East at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, DC. He has also been a Visiting and Adjunct Professor at the Defense Intelligence College, the Defense Institute for Security Assistance Management, the Woodrow Wilson School of Government and Foreign Affairs at the University of Virginia, the Universities of Pennsylvania and Texas, and the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School.

In 1983, Dr. Anthony received the Distinguished Achievement Award of the Department of Defense's Institute for Security Assistance Management, one of two granted to Middle East specialists in the Institute's history. In 1993, he received the Department of State's Distinguished Visiting Lecturer Award, one of three awarded over a span of 25 years, in recognition of his preparation of American diplomatic and defense personnel assigned to the Arabian Penin-

sula and the Gulf states. In 1994, he received the Stevens Award for Outstanding Contributions to American-Arab Understanding. On June 22, 2000, H.M. King Muhammad VI of Morocco personally knighted Dr. Anthony, bestowing upon him a medal of the Order of Ouissam Alaouite, one of Morocco's highest awards for excellence.

A member of the Council on Foreign Relations, Dr. Anthony is a frequent participant in its study groups on issues relating to the Gulf region and the broader Islamic world. He is the only American to have served as an international observer in each of the parliamentary elections in Yemen and the only non-Arab to have been invited to each of the GCC Heads of State Summits. Dr. Anthony is the author of three books and more than 100 articles and monographs dealing with America's interests and involvement in the Arab countries, the Middle East, and the Arab world. His best-known work is *Arab States of the Lower Gulf: Peoples, Politics, Petroleum*.

Dr. Anthony holds a B.A. in History from the Virginia Military Institute, an M.S. in Foreign Service (With Distinction) from the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University, and a Ph.D. in International Relations and Middle East Studies from the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies.

(Editor's Note: A recent knee replacement could not keep John from going to Yemen and Syria. With a crutch under his arm, he was with us all the way! We honor John for all his intestinal fortitude on this trip!)

Report on the Middle East (Syria)

by Paul Abernathy

Editor's Note: During the summer, Paul Abernathy, a student at Wheeling Jesuit University, Wheeling, W.Va., had the opportunity to study in Syria. The following are Paul's observations.

One who travels in Syria follows the footsteps of kings, emperors, saints, prophets, and various other assortments of history's greatest individuals. It is literally the cradle of civilization and is home to over eight hundred ancient dead cities. It is also the cradle of faith being the land where Judaism, Christianity, and Islam were first spread. Despite these facts, few Americans know or care to know anything about Syria. In fact, most books written about Syria were written by people who have never been there. The result of this is that few people have exposure to the true state of both the land and the people of Syria. Only by going to the country or by exposure to one who has can one receive an accurate presentation of Syria's current situation.

Recently I have been to Syria. I was part of an American delegation of students sponsored by the National Council on U.S.- Arab Relations. The program was six weeks long and entailed a complete immersion into the history, anthropology, culture, politics, and language of Syria. Although six weeks is not a long period of time, complete immersion into another culture can enhance one's capability to learn in a very strong way.

Given the current situation of the contemporary world, one may fail to see the importance or relevance of history and anthropology in today's world. There is, however, a great deal of relevance when putting these issues into proper perspective. An accurate presentation of the Syrian people cannot be made without taking into consideration the role of history in their identity as a people.

Since the beginning of civilization, the Syrians have always been ruled by someone. From the Assyrians to the Babylonians, to the Persians, to the Greeks, to the Romans, to the Turks, and to the French there has always been someone ruling the current state of Syria. Ethnically, the Syrians are a combination of all of the peoples that ruled over them. Each time the Syrian people were conquered, the victors would try to breed them out, making them an ethnically very mixed breed of people.

Politically this also has a great deal of repercussion. In 1943 Syria, for the first time since the beginning of civilization, was free to rule itself and the French did not even leave until 1946. As a result, Syria's government changed over a dozen times between 1946 and 1970. This should be of no surprise given the fact that there was absolutely no framework for a stable government resulting from thousands of years of rule. To understand Syria one must first understand this.

Culturally, Syria is a nation that holds a high standard of cultural values. It is not that one should do something because it is right, it is one's duty to do what is right. They are quite eager to help a stranger in need and are very warm when receiving another. It also seems as though the Syrians have an amazing ability to exercise self-discipline. Even when they have an opportunity to do something that would benefit them they often times do not out of respect for their cultural and religious values.

Politically, Syria is not what an American might expect. The people of Syria are very happy with their government. They enthusiastically have given their full support to the late President Hafez al-Assad. They are equally optimistic about the their new leader President Bashar al-Assad. The government of Syria, although perceived as being very hard by the west, exercises no extreme dictation of power over its people. In fact, the only lack of freedom seems to be the freedom of press and the freedom of speech. This, however, does not seem to bother the Syrian people a great deal. They very openly discuss with one another their political

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beliefs and opinions with no fear of oppression.

The reason why the Syrian government is not free to exercise oppression is because it is a minority government. One of the things that makes the American political process so amazing is that in it the minority has rights, thus preventing the majority from doing as they please with the minority. Syria is actually one step higher in this mode of logic. The government of Syria is a minority government. The Allouites, who make up 11.5-12.5% of the population, are in control of the government. Because Syria is 70% Sunni Muslim, the Allouites are not free to do as they like. The political relationship between the government and the people is good because the minority government must keep the majority happy.

The nature of this article is very broad and indeed within this article there are sentences that present topics on which an entire book could be written. I claim no authority to any of these topics other than I have been to Syria. Furthermore, I went to Syria as an academic with the intent of learning, through both study and observation, as much as I could about the history, anthropology, politics, and culture of Syria. The program through the National Council on U.S.-Arab relations permitted me to do so in a thorough manner. We as Americans, with the ability to exercise public opinion, must strive to do so in an educated manner. It is a duty to strive for truth just as it is equally a duty for those of us who have been there to present the truth and that is where the true value of such exposure lie.

Interns...Apply Online!

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