

# Carolinas Committee on U.S.–Arab Relations

## NEWSLINES

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*Converse Palestinian Outstanding Delegation at National Model*

## The National Model Arab League Again is Dominated by Southeast Model Schools

Amidst the dramatic ongoing events of the so-called “Arab Spring,” the National Model Arab League convened April 1-3, 2011 at Georgetown University, with a keynote panel that included Sameh Alfonse, the Arab League Congressional and Media Affairs director; Frank Anderson, President and CEO of the Middle East Policy Council; and Dr. Abdelrahim Foukara, Washington Bureau Chief of Al Jazeera. Each speaker was very good, and Dr. Foukara as always was

exceptionally profound. Every minute of the conference was dominated by the headlines of events in Libya and throughout the Arab world. In the Plenary session, the Revolutionary Interim Government of Libya was seated in place of the Gadhafi regime.

The largest National Model on record included schools representing all twenty-two Arab League members and two observer states—Eritrea and

*(continued on page 2)*



## NEWS AND ARTICLES



*Preparing Resolutions for the Political Council*



*Faculty Confer at National Model*

Turkey. Participating institutions were Northeastern University, University of Pittsburgh, Mount St. Mary's University, Roger Williams University, University of Utah, Northwestern University, University of Houston, Grand Valley State University, Mercer University, Pomona College, the United State Military Academy at West Point, Adrian College, Converse College, Kennesaw State University, George Washington University, University of Arkansas—Little Rock, American University of Cairo, Georgia State University, University of North Texas, University of North Carolina—Charlotte, Miami University, and Montana State University.

Beyond the work of the seven councils, a complicated crises situation based on real-time events brought several

councils and the Arab Court of Justice into the drama. To keep up with the latest news and to sort out real actions from real-time manufactured crises, students consulted their laptops constantly. Both the regular work of the model and the crises simulation were ably managed by Secretary-General Matthew Cournoyer (Northeastern University) and Assistant Secretary-Generals Hillary Berry (Converse College) and Louie Baldwin (University of North Texas).

Prior to the awards ceremony, HRH Prince Abdulaziz bin Talal bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, a popular speaker at previous National Models, offered incisive commentary and gracious remarks; and he later participated in handing out individual delegate awards. Virtually every delegation wished to have their picture taken with the Prince. Linda Morrison, the retiring faculty sponsor of the Kennesaw State University delegation teams, received the National Council's Lifetime Achievement Award. Dr. Joe P. Dunn of Converse College, the last recipient

of this honor, made the presentation.

Demonstrating once again that the Southeast Model is the powerhouse of regional models, the five award-winning schools at the National Model were the same five schools in the same order that took the awards at the Southeast Model. Outstanding delegation awards went to Converse College (Palestine), Georgia State University (Syria), and Northeastern University (Algeria). Kennesaw State University (Qatar) and the University of North Carolina—Charlotte (UAE) received honorable mention citations.

The best chair award went to Catia Sharp (Northeastern, economic council) with Ashton Lesiak (Converse College, Arab cultural summit) and Katie Sizemore (Kennesaw State, political council) as honorable mention citations. The Model concluded with the naming of the Secretariat for the 2012 event that will be headed by Secretary-General Hillary Berry of Converse College.



*Political Council at Work*

## NEWS AND ARTICLES

### Another Successful Southeast Model

The 23rd Annual Southeast Model Arab League was held, March 11-13, 2011 at Converse College. A total of 238 delegates participated, and with the faculty, staff, and judges present, the number at the conference approached three hundred. All 22 members of the Arab League were represented with two observer nations—Eritrea and Chad—also included. New schools to the model were Texas State University at San Marcos and Spartanburg Community College. Central Piedmont Community College from Charlotte returned after an absence of several years, and the Air Force Academy made its second appearance.

The keynote speaker was Valerie Brock Naglich, Converse 2003 alumni, who is presently an executive-level administrator with the Center of Disease Control International Division. Valerie had recently returned from the Republic of South Africa, where she served as a contract foreign service officer for infectious diseases in southern Africa. In the next months, she will return to Namibia and Botswana for shorter-term assignments. In May 2009, Valerie was chosen from the 9000 worldwide CDC personnel as the employee of the month. During her years as an undergraduate, Valerie was a four-year member of the Converse Model Arab League delegation, a consistent awarding delegate, a best chair winner at the Southeast and National Models, Secretary-General of the Southeast Model, and the Converse co-head delegate who administered Converse's program during her senior year. She completed a Masters in Public Administration at the University of Georgia, where she was named the outstanding graduate student, she was



*Joint Defense Council at Southeast Model*



*Oman Delegate Kathleen Hines Makes a Point in Political Council*



*Hafta Banquet*



## NEWS AND ARTICLES



*Southeast Model Summit*

named as a Presidential Management Fellow, and she presently serves on the advisory board of the Georgia MBA program. Valerie spoke about the importance of an international perspective, foreign service careers, and the role that Model Arab League had played in her development from a vocal performance music major to a budget control officer on the international level.

The historical happenings of the “Arab Spring,” dominated the proceedings of the Model. In the plenary session, the Libya delegation renounced the Gadhafi regime and received a unanimous vote to be credentialed as the Revolutionary Interim Government of Libya or Free Libya. Laptops brought the unfolding events of the region into each council session. On Saturday afternoon, a crisis simulation centered on a resolution to endorse a No-Fly Zone over Libya and to authorize military action against Gadhafi’s forces. The lively debate that followed previewed the real-world action that occurred several days after the model ended.

At the awards ceremony, Palestine (Converse), Syria (Georgia State University), and Algeria (Northeastern University) received outstanding delegation citations and Qatar (Kennesaw State University) and UAE (University of North Carolina at Charlotte) were cited for honorable mention recognition. Samantha Nicholson (Converse) was named the outstanding chair for her leadership of the Joint Defense council and Hilary Koss (Converse) in the Palestinian council and Katie Sizemore (Kennesaw) in the Political council were cited as honorable mention. Hillary Berry (Converse) served as secretary general and Valerie Naglich performed duties as the alumnae guest assistant secretary general.



*Converse Delegation at Southeast Model*



*Spartanburg Community College First Time Delegation*

## NEWS AND ARTICLES

As always, one of the highlights of the Southeast Model was the Hafla banquet prepared by Sodexo Dining Services. The 24th Annual Southeast Model will meet at Converse College, March 16-18, 2012.



*Secretary General Hillary Berry Presides at Summit*



*Hafla Banquet*

## Converse Dominates at Northeast Regional Model Arab League

Returning for the first time in five years to the Northeast Regional Model Arab League, held November 11-14, 2010, at Northeastern University in Boston, Converse College made a strong showing. The Converse Palestine delegation won individual awards in all seven committees and took the best delegation award. The Oman delegation, comprised primarily of freshman, finished third in the award total and received honorable mention status. Participating schools included Northeastern University, the U.S. Military Academy, University of Pittsburgh,

University of Massachusetts at Lowell, Fitchburg State University, Bard, Colby, Simmons, Roger Williams, Endicott, and Emerson with several of the institutions entering two delegations.

Other features of the model included an Arab lunch and a cultural event. The Arab Court of Justice held two demonstration cases—one at the beginning and the other at the conclusion of all the ACJ formal cases. During their visit, Converse students enjoyed the opportunity to explore Boston, including walking the Freedom Trail, visiting the John

F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, viewing Boston Harbor, and eating at local restaurants.

At the model, Ashton Lesiak (Special Summit on Arab Culture) and Monica Lineberger (Palestinian) served as council chairs and Shannon Bishop, Morgan Roach, and Ashley Blount served as vice chairs in their respective councils. Monica Lineberger was voted honorable mention best chair. The outstanding chair award went to Matthew Cournoyer of Northeastern University and Russell Thomas of Roger Williams University.





Linda Morrison Receives Award at Southeast Model



Morrison Recognized at National Model

## EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE AWARD

Linda U. Morrison  
2004-2011

Some individuals make a difference. Linda Morrison has. Following a 31-year career in the public schools, where her high school Model UN delegations distinguished themselves by their performance, Linda, Mrs. M. to her students, joined the Kennesaw State University adjunct faculty in 2004 to bring her skills, leadership, and motivation to the college level. In these eight years, we have witnessed the results. The Kennesaw State delegations are always well prepared, diligent, poised, and formidable. They reflect the qualities of their faculty sponsor.

Linda has traveled the globe with her students providing them opportunities and experiences of a lifetime. She fights for them daily in the internal and external conflicts for funding and dignity. They count on her support, and all of us have witnessed the respect and affection that they have for her. But this admiration is not limited to her delegates. Her faculty peers and the students from other schools recognize a person dedicated to what she does and the quality and professionalism of how she does it. Moreover, she brings a style and elegance to the models that most of us wish that we had the ability to emulate.

With the announcement of her retirement at the close of this season, today we honor Linda Morrison, Mrs M., with a citation for Excellence in Service. To her students, we join you in the sadness that she will no longer lead you. Her faculty colleagues will miss her. We have been graced by our association with her. We know that the Southeast Model will be lesser without her presence.

Linda, thank you for your dedication, your spirit, and your friendship. You are a model of what a Model adviser should be.

*Presented by the Directors and Faculty of the  
Southeast Regional Model Arab League, at Converse College,  
Spartanburg, South Carolina, March 13, 2011*

## Profile of a Model Arab League Adviser



Each issue of *Newslines* profiles one or more Model Arab League. This year focuses on Dr. Kevin Freeman of the University of North Carolina at Pembroke.

I grew up in a military family, and at a fairly young age I had considerable opportunity to travel and live abroad. Seven of my first eighteen years were spent in foreign countries. This early exposure to different cultures, ideas, and lifestyles set the stage for how my career would unfold. My interest in the global world led me to gain a masters degree in international relations at Baylor University (1994) and a Ph.D. in political science, with a concentration in international relations, from the University of Alabama (2000).

I first became involved in Model Arab

League in 2001 when I was an adjunct professor at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. The faculty advisor who normally led UAB's delegation was unable to attend, and he asked me to serve as a substitute. I served as UAB's faculty advisor for the next two years until I left in 2004 to accept a tenure-track position at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke, where I am now the department chair and continue to serve as the primary advisor for both the MAL and MUN teams.

In the early 1990s, UNCP had a strong MAL delegation that participated in the National Model, but it had been dormant for more than a decade. When I joined the faculty, I decided to resurrect the program. It was not an easy task to build a new program from scratch, and even after six years, UNCP's model is still in its early stages. I first had to convince students that this was something that not only would be interesting, but also would benefit them later in life.

Next I had to secure funding from the university administration to support the endeavor. The present challenge is

to recruit freshmen and sophomores into the program who can participate in multiple years and not only hone their skills but also prepare other underclassmen that will follow after them. UNCP has made good strides in the early years of the program, and we hope to become regular award winners soon in our annual participation in the Southeast Model.

Without exception, UNCP students who participate in Model Arab League leave the conferences understanding its value, and invariably they look forward to doing even better the next year. The MAL team is recognized by the university's administration as one of the leaders in the internationalization of the campus which is an important part of UNCP's overall mission statement. Not only do the participating students learn about parliamentary procedure, public speaking, diplomacy, and comparative cultures, but they realize that above all the engagement is fun. Moreover, the connections they make and the skills they develop will help them in their future after university life is over.

## Traveling to Aqaba, Jordan

Joe Dunn

In 2004 Ms. Hoor Hwamdeh, who teaches at the Modern Montessori School in Amman, Jordan, contacted me about sending some of the leaders of our Converse Model Arab League delegation to assist in the inauguration and running of a high school MAL conference in Amman. During 2004 and 2005 we send teams to perform these duties that helped to launch the program. This past fall Hoor contacted me again to assist with a larger regional Model, the Mubadara MAL, sponsored by an organization called Beyond Discovery, to be held in Aqaba, Jordan

in February 2011. Three Converse students made the two-week trip that included travel throughout the country to include, Amman, Petra, Wadi Rumi, the Dead Sea, Jurash, Salt, and other places. The highlight was their involvement in running the high school model. It was a great experience for the students. Two of them have written brief essays below on their adventure. Katie Hudson graduated this spring with double majors in history and politics and she will participate in a six-month internship working with Youth in Mission on the issues of the sex trafficking of young

girls. She will train in Las Vegas, Nevada before going into the field in India and Nepal. Monica Lineberger graduated this spring with a double major in politics and modern languages. She received a lucrative fellowship and teaching assistantship to pursue a Ph.D. in international studies at the University of South Carolina. The third member of the group was Stephanie Jennings, a politics and German major, who will spend a year as a Fulbright Scholar in Germany prior to accepting a full fellowship to the George H.W. Bush School of International Studies at Texas A&M.



## A Novice Traveler in Jordan During Arab Spring

Katie Hudson

Unlike many of my peers, I had no international travel experience, and indeed until the previous fall, I had never been on a plane. But my first venture was a monumental one. Hoor Hwamdeh of the Modern Montessori High School in Amman, Jordan, contacted Dr. Joe Dunn about sending some leaders of our Model Arab League delegation to help run a high school Model in Aqaba, Jordan. Dr. Dunn selected our three head delegates to fulfill this

task. Our two-week trip consisted of immersing ourselves in the culture of Jordan, in the capital city of Amman, the ancient stone city of Petra, and Aqaba, the resort city on the Red Sea. I can't say that my parents were pleased by their sheltered daughter traveling to the region as the events of the Arab Spring were exploding, but I was excited and determined to keep an open mind about what I would experience. I wanted to be surprised and I was.

I had so many new experiences that the following are just a small sample of things that surprised me. I was taken aback by the extent of smoking. It seems that most people, both men and women, smoke anywhere and anytime. There is no division of smoking and non-smoking in restaurants. I had to make adjustments. I had heard about "Arab time", and we lived it. We learned quickly that time is more relaxed in Jordan. We jokingly referred to



*Lineberger, Hudson and Jennings at the Citadel in Amman*

delays as "A.T.," or "Arab time." We learned to be flexible and not worry about a rigid itinerary. Planning our daily schedule was a process that was adjusted many times as the day progressed. Travel was an adventure. The Jordanian driving style is wild, reckless, noisy, and quite scary; but amazingly, I didn't witness any accidents. Walking is as adventurous as riding. There were no crosswalks and few sidewalks or stoplights. Stop signs don't seem to exist. To cross the street, one simply plunges bravely into the street and hopes the drivers slow down. I found street crossing to be mildly terrifying.

Once one survives crossing the street though, it is very pleasant to walk among the people, who were incredibly hospitable and welcoming. As we walked down a street, we were sure to hear numerous people use the little English they knew to say "Welcome! Where are you from?" We obviously did not blend into the crowd, and we garnered much attention. Some days, I was convinced that Jordanian men had never seen a blonde woman. Never before had I felt so conspicuous. In the more conservative, older district of downtown Amman, almost all the women we saw covered their hair and I seriously considered wearing a scarf on my head so that I would not be quite so obvious. However, most of the attention we received was from curious, yet welcoming people. We made friends with taxi drivers, hotel staff, teachers, and our servers at restaurants. The best part of this trip was that unlike a tourist excursion with other Americans, we were able daily to immerse ourselves in the normal lives of ordinary people in Jordan.

The very best part of experiencing Jordanian life was the food, which was wonderful. I miss the mint tea, labnah (thick cheese spread), lamb, falafel sandwiches, and especially

the fresh bread and olive oil. Everything we ate was fresh and had few preservatives. A whole account could be devoted just to the food.

In the Middle East one can never separate culture from politics. They are intertwined. As a four-year member of the Converse MAL teams, and this year representing Palestine, I had done much research on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, so I knew the issues fairly well. I had debated them extensively. But real life experience on the ground is a far better than reading on-line news articles. The trip and meeting with individuals who daily are affected by the politics of the situation gave me much deeper perspectives on the lives of the displaced Palestinians. I did not realize the large number of Palestinians that live as Jordanian residents. The Palestinian people compose a huge sector of Jordanian society and business. Jordan's government is administered by Jordanians, yet much of the economy is Palestinian. I was actually shocked by how small is the territory involved and the close proximity of Israeli, Palestinian, and Jordanian peoples. Driving to the Dead Sea, we could see the West Bank and Jericho through the haze, and at dusk we saw the lights from across the sea. At Aqaba we were only minutes from Eilat, Israel, and we saw the lights of that city from our hotel on the beach.

However, Palestinian politics were not the only political events that we experienced in Jordan. Egypt was at the peak of its revolution and we shared in the excitement and anticipation within the Jordanian community. During the MAL conference that we facilitated at Aqaba, Egyptian President Mubarak resigned; the evening before the actual resignation, students and teachers were glued to television in expectation. This proximity made the experience much deeper than we

could have felt in the United States, and we will remember these days for the rest of our lives.

Although I did not focus on the conference in this piece, I will say only that with the exception of two or three individuals, most students at the start of the conference were timid and hesitant to speak. At the conclusion of the conference the next day, each student was fully participating and vocalizing their country's policy. We were highly impressed by the articulation and knowledge of these high school students who performed entirely in English. To conclude the conference, students hosted a bazaar with handmade crafts. Princess Alia of Jordan attended. We purchased several souvenirs to take home to remind us of this wonderful experience.

Returning to the political agenda, we questioned many people about their thoughts on the uprisings in the region and their opinion of Jordan's government. An overwhelming consensus, at least of the Jordanians as opposed necessarily to the Palestinians, expressed satisfaction with their form of government. "A revolution will not happen in Jordan, not for a very long time," we were told. The affection for the King appeared genuine. When we inquired about the demonstrations in Amman that we had heard about on the evening news before we arrived in Jordan, the response was, "Demonstrations? What demonstrations? The one we had two weeks ago over the Prime Minister? Our king listened to us and replaced the Prime Minister, so we have no more complaints." The country appeared calm and stable, and we felt quite secure. We were in the Middle East during a very turbulent time period, and we were blessed to experience these events in a much more dramatic way than we could have ever garnered from the evening news in South Carolina.



## Some Thoughts on Travel to the Arab World

Monica Lineberger

When I told my father that I would be traveling to Jordan in February, his first response was “Will you have to wear a rag on your head?” Slightly taken aback, I laughed off the question with “of course not,” and I wondered whether he intended it as a joke. But as I told more people about my upcoming trip to the Middle East, I received other similar questions, “What will you wear? Is it safe? Aren’t you worried about traveling to the Middle East as a woman?” I was surprised that this trip attracted the amount of attention it did. I had already been to Morocco and I planned to travel to Tunisia in January (although most people thought Tunisia was in Asia). Even before the uprisings and revolutions in the region, the trip concerned my family members and close friends. As it turned out, I was in Tunisia on a Converse College January Term trip when the protest battles broke out there. The College pulled the plug on the trip and we were brought home. Not surprisingly, this raised questions among my family about me going to Jordan two weeks later. My mother was barraged with incredulity from her co-workers because she was allowing me to return so soon after “getting stuck” in Tunisia. But my desire to travel and stubbornness prevailed and I boarded the plane to Amman with a great sense of adventure.

I thought that my experience in Morocco and Tunisia would prepare me for traveling in Jordan, but I was mistaken. The two previous school-sponsored trips with faculty members were highly organized and structured. This time, three of us were going as individuals and we each spoke only a smattering (one semester’s worth of formal study) of Arabic. We were not always alone, but when we were, it was always the most entertaining. Trying to go to the Citadel that overlooks the capital city Amman, I said to the taxi driver “Jamal! Jamal! Jamal!” and later realized I was say-



*Floating in the Dead Sea*

ing “Camel! Camel!” instead of hill (which is pronounced jabal.)

It was these kinds of moments on our own engaging the local day to day life that are my favorite memories. Nightly Arabic lessons with the hotel manager of our modest non-tourist establishment led to a friendship and some unforgettable experiences. We were extremely excited to meet many Palestinians in the area and a few of them are now Facebook friends. They spoke passionately and frankly about any subject or question that we asked them. The first morning we were eating breakfast with our host Ms. Hoor and the conversation almost immediately turned to the Palestinian-Israeli situation, a topic that was always an exciting adventure for us. It was refreshing to be in an environment of directness, honesty, and extreme hospitality.

In another of those precious memories, while relaxing at the Dead Sea one afternoon, a group of Saudi Arabian female students and their family approached us to talk. They helped us find the “healing” mud to rub on our bodies and shared their Arabic coffee and delicious date snacks with us. We took pictures of the girls cov-

ered in the abaya but sporting Gucci sunglasses and peace signs!

I have heard some Americans say that we are hated in the Arab and larger Muslim world, but in my travels I have found little evidence to support this conclusion. Whenever I attempted to speak Arabic with anyone, I would be asked, “Why are you learning Arabic?” Some of them viewed their language as irrelevant for an English speaker since English is the universal global language, but others expressed obvious excitement by the interest in the culture to attempt the language. While I will not generalize and say that all the people want to open themselves to western culture, I have sensed in my travels an affinity for the West. More importantly, I find that most people are looking for a human connection. They want to relate to you on the same levels that we relate to our immediate friends and family. They are looking to share, learn, and experience the world, just as we were in Jordan. Although traveling to a different culture is the first step, the real key is to interact and connect with the locals to truly understand the world around us on deeper social, political, and psychological level.



*Dead Sea Mud*



## NEWS AND ARTICLES



Amy Grace in Abaya

### My Saudi Adventure

Amy Grace Peele

reciprocal activity in the Kingdom. The goal of this fellowship was to bring American students to learn about the culture and country in hopes that Americans can have an accurate and well-versed understanding of Saudi Arabia.

Our agenda took us to three cities--Riyadh, Dhahran, and Jeddah—in quite different regions of the country. In each place, we visited cultural sites, and we met with business leaders, government officials, and Saudi female college students. In Riyadh we met with university officials and engaged in political talks with a royal advisor, two princes, several business men, and a women’s rights activist. In Dhahran we focused on oil as we visited Aramco and also toured several schools. In Jeddah we met more students and learned about business opportunities for women, the history of the city, and the joys of shopping in the markets. We were able to talk with important public figures and average women. In all these opportunities we gained immeasurably from listening, asking, observing, and experiencing. It was the adventure of a lifetime.

The most important thing that I learned from this trip was that one gains far more by immersion in the culture than by any amount of academic preparation. I have studied Saudi Arabia in the classroom, and valuable as was that knowledge, it proved only a peek into engaging the complexity of the Kingdom. It is one thing to read about the decisions and opinions of leaders; it is another to hear His Royal Highness Prince Turki al-Faisal tell the story of how he as the Saudi Ambassador to the United States challenged President Bush’s comments in a State of the

Union address. It is one level to read about the condition of women draped in black abayas trapped in their homes because they cannot drive. It is a completely different perspective to have your own male guardian, wait for transportation to arrive, and hide yourself away under an abaya and hijab. After wearing the abaya myself and learning first hand of the limitations and freedoms that it brings (yes, it does bring some freedom), I have a much better understanding, not merely a judgment, about this aspect of Saudi women’s lives.

I understand that it is a cliché, but the trip changed my life. I had the opportunity to ask the hard questions, stereotypical questions, and the personal questions. My lens of the world widened as I was able to view situations from perspectives very different than my own. We talked to individuals of all social and political persuasions from the very conservative to the very liberal. We met people that had great respect for America and others that were extremely critical. Each comment like the lens of a microscope focused attention on something new and provided new insights. I particularly enjoyed the front page headlines of Arab News every morning with its coverage of events in the United States, and I saved the copy from every day to help me remember. I was challenged by questions posed to us about our country and our culture both by officials and average people. The perspective of a country with a hereditary monarchy governed by the Quran and Sharia law counter posed against my commitment to a secular state and representative democracy. As important as any other factor, I learned about my own understanding of God as I heard the call to prayer

Where were you on New Year’s Eve 2010? Will you remember in twenty years? I will. I welcomed in the new decade in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, eight hours ahead of my family and friends in a country with no public celebration of the new secular year.

A few days after Christmas, I joined nine other female college students and our three trusty guides for a day of briefings and a long plane ride to take us to one of the most elusive and misunderstood countries in the world, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Sponsored by full-paid scholarships from the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Higher Education in conjunction with the National Council on US-Arab Relations, our group went to the Kingdom to experience for ourselves what this country and culture were really about. There are currently approximately 32,000 Saudis studying in the United States on various scholarship programs such as the King Abdullah Scholarship, but essentially no Americans are in

## NEWS AND ARTICLES

and watched an entire nation stop to pray to God five times daily.

My journey ended with heavy bags and a heavier heart and mind. My bags may be unpacked, but my experience will leave me unpacking its meaning for far longer. My thinking will forever be more cautious to pass judgment or condemn a culture without an effort to first understand and experience. I won’t soon forget how the year 2011 began for me.

For a more detailed account of my travels, visit [www.sctosa.blogspot.com](http://www.sctosa.blogspot.com) to see the daily blog postings and a few pictures.



Two Buildings Reflect Saudi Architecture Ancient and Modern

### Greenville Technical College Middle East Conference

Over the past two years, Greenville Technical College has employed an Undergraduate and International Studies Grant (Title VI-A) to establish Arabic language and Middle East studies courses. A key event funded by the grant was the conference, held April 7-9, 2011 at the institution, to bring to the larger community, particularly to two-year colleges, some of what the college has learned and accomplished. Approximately 60 individuals attended the event.

The keynote speaker was Dr. Abbas Barzegar from Georgia State University, who addressed “Teaching Middle Eastern Studies at the Community College.” The Friday night evening dinner speaker was Ronnie Porat, former Israeli Consul in Cairo, 1991-1994, who spoke on “Egypt and Israel—From Cold to Future Warm Peace.” Other notable presentations included “Addressing Common Stereotypes and Com-

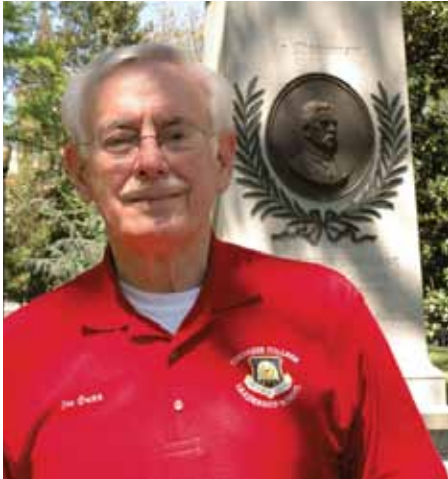
plex Realities in the Classroom” and “Youth Culture and New Media in the Middle East” by Barbara Petzen (Education Director of the Middle East Policy Council); “Gender and Cultural Differences in the Middle East” by Elizabeth Zack (University of South Carolina—Upstate); “Recovering the Forgotten Front: Teaching World War I in the Sinai and Palestine” by Edward Woodfin (Converse College); “The Arab-Israeli Conflict” by Martin Slann (University of North Carolina-Pembroke); “The Middle East Meets Middle Tennessee: Mosques, Academic Programs, etc.” by Allen Hibbard (Middle Tennessee State University); and “the Model Arab League as a Teaching Venue,” by Joe P. Dunn (Converse College). Dr. Dunn, who also serves as the Executive Director of the Carolinas Committee on U.S.-Arab Relations, was joined on his panel by three Converse students—Amy Peele, Monica Lineberger, and Stephanie Jennings—who spoke about recent trips to the region. Ms.

Peele participated in a ten-day visit to Saudi Arabia and Ms. Lineberger and Ms. Jennings helped to run a high school Model Arab League conference in Aqaba, Jordan.

Other panels included David Cloer (President of International Industries Corporation) and Elnora Stuart (University of South Carolina-Upstate) on “Current Middle Eastern Business Practices”; “Current Events in the Region” by Michael Herb (Director of the Middle East Institute at Georgia State University); and a Greenville Tech faculty group who spoke about how the Title VI-A grant has helped to integrate the Middle East into the college’s curriculum.

The conference included a lunch and two Middle Eastern dinners catered by a local restaurant. In every regard this was a most valuable event and it was enjoyed by all participants and attendees.

# LEARNING RESOURCES AND OPPORTUNITIES



## Book Review

**Dr. Joe P. Dunn**

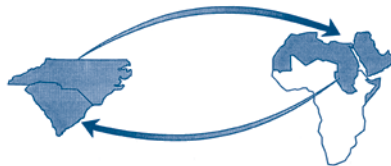
**Charles A. Dana Professor of History and Politics, Converse College**

Robert Lacey's *The Kingdom: Saudi Arabia and the House of Saud* (1981) was banned in Saudi Arabia. Much changed in the 25 years before the British journalist returned to the Kingdom to live for three years and to offer this analysis of life in current Saudi Arabia in the context of the post 9/11 world. The book's subtitle is its best characterization, and it is a fascinating account. The underlying theme is the paradox of a society fighting for its very soul as it operates in a vortex of supra-modernity, tradition, progressive efforts, and retrogressive forces.

Lacey weaves vignettes, intriguing behind the scenes accounts, and personal portraits in a largely-successful effort to make sense of the vagaries of a most

complex society and political order. In the process he shatters many stereotypes and misconceptions. The story is bracketed by the actions of the radical Juhayman Al-Otaybi, whose attack on the Grand Mosque in 1979 propelled terrorism into the front ranks of Saudi concerns, and the anguish of the endemically conservative King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz as he strives to push the Kingdom forward in major reforms before he dies. Lacey's prime hero is Abdullah, the putative arch reactionary traditionalist who may be the greatest modernizer since his half brother King Faysal bin Abdul Aziz, whose reign from the mid-1960s to mid-1970s seems almost hundreds of years ago at this point.

But the vignette that is the most powerful in capturing the complexity, darkness, and slight glimmers of hope that characterize contemporary Saudi Arabia is the story of the rape of a young Shia woman and the intrigue that followed. The tale of this young woman, the "Qateef girl," which leaked out from the closed society to garner international attention, reflects the prejudices, hatreds, tribalism, inertia, and ineptitude of medievalism that hangs like a shroud over the efforts of modernity and international respect desired in the Kingdom.



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## Inside the Kingdom: Kings, Clerics, Modernists, Terrorists, and the Struggle for Saudi Arabia

By Robert Lacey

Other fascinating stories include the adventures of the mercurial Prince Bandar, his American connections and his wheeler-dealer mentality that got him into trouble with his superiors back home and finally brought down the Washingtonian potentate; the Bin Laden family; Muslim fundamentalists of various stripes; the Gulf Wars; the struggle for women's rights; liberal, reformer, and radical voices; the treatment of the Shias; hidden sins and discretions suppressed from view in the society; and the normative lives of ordinary Saudis.

Although crammed with detail, the book is an easy read and is accessible to a popular if necessarily astute audience. Not as potentially inflammatory as many of the more recent Saudi exposes such as Mia Yamani's *Changed Identities* (2000) and *Cradle of Islam* (2009), John Bradley's *Saudi Arabia Exposed* (2005), Craig Unger's *House of Bush, House of Saud* (2006), or Steve Coll's *The Bin Ladens* (2009), the account is favorable to the Kingdom but not hagiographical. My students in Islamic and Middle East Politics were captivated by the book as they struggled to come to grips with the paradox and dilemmas of Saudi Arabia, and other readers will have the same response.