

Abdulla Fouad
and
A Journey of Perseverance
and Challenge

Khaled Abdulla Bu'ali

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SAQI

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To my father ... to my mother who spent many a night looking after me

To my uncle Abdulla Fouad bin Jasim Abubshait who taught me by
candlelight

To my grandmother Mariam bint Ahmed al-Kulban who sold her house to
help me

To my wife Mariam Hassan Satir (mother of Fouad), wife and mother
May God have mercy on them all!

To my wife Suham, my sons Fouad and Faisal and my daughters

To all those who have been kind to me and those whom I have loved and
who have loved me

Table of Contents

Introduction by Khaled Abdulla Bu'ali
The Story of Abdulla Fouad
Roots
Emigration
In the Beginning
Birth: The Year of the Storm
Divorce
Return to the Homeland
First Steps
The Man Known as Abdulla Fouad
Escape from Death
A Number at Aramco
Air Raid on al-Dhahran
Dismissed Because of Arsène Lupin
Return to Bahrain
Belgrave and I
Prison
The Death of Abdulla Fouad
I Become a Man
An Uncertain Future
A Journey of a Thousand Miles
First Project
Tapline: The Early Years
My First Fortune
A Second Wife
Tamimi & Fouad
Growth
Diversifying our Sources of Income
The Loss of 800 Million Riyals
Settlement

Troubles Never Come Singly
Starting Over ... Again
Development
My Country
The Journey of Life
People who Live on
Appendices
Charity First
Father
The Bubshait Clan: Scholars and Sheikhs
What Others Say about Abdulla Fouad
Acknowledgments

Introduction

by Khaled Abdulla Bu'ali

The Story of this Book

History is the most hazardous form of writing and biography is even more complex, for all subjects need to be presented in their correct place and time. This rule, though, does not usually apply to the writing of personal histories.

In the middle of 1996, Sheikh Abdulla Fouad told me that he wished to record his experiences for future generations. The book would tell the story of the life of this person who has played such a significant role in the private sector in the Eastern Province and of the long journey he has made.

My first instinct was to refuse. I shrank in particular from this kind of narrative writing of history but my fears were soon dispelled by Sheikh Abdulla Fouad himself during our first meeting to discuss the book. He started to recount events from his early years, marked by deprivation and struggle as much as by challenge and adventure. It was a story full of secrets, and it swung between success and failure.

The frankness with which Abdulla Fouad told me about his life was key to the project. At the same time his career from early childhood onwards provided a very rich narrative which deserved to be read.

After half a century, Abdulla Fouad's name has become a byword for perseverance. He has refused to retreat from or submit to his difficulties, no

matter how large. It is up to history to record his philanthropy and the successes he has achieved and to impress them on the minds of a new generation, some of whom have not yet been born. I hope that those who study his story and are curious to know about his character will gain here a clearer idea of what he has done during his long career and how he has been able to build a distinguished name for himself and become a witness of his times.

I encountered many obstacles while I was writing the book, the most challenging of which was the lack of specific information about Abdulla Fouad's early years, which are regarded generally as the most significant period in any biography. When he was starting out, neither he nor others like him had the opportunity to record the details of their lives. At that time, the most pressing concern was subsistence. However this period coincided with the beginnings of Aramco and the start of oil production in the region, so the history of the region's people was closely tied to this event. I also had recourse to historians and people who were contemporaries of Abdulla Fouad, as well as studies and historical records, in particular those relating to the history of the Eastern Region, all of which provided me with an abundance of valuable information.

I have chosen to divide the material into short chapters as I wished to present the information in the words of Abdulla Fouad himself, to provide the reader with a particular insight into his experiences. This is especially true of the chapters which tell the story of his beginnings. I have also tried to give an overall view of the Eastern Province, which includes its social and economic history, its history of ideas, and its development to the present.

In addition I have included appendices which focus on Abdulla Fouad's journey, history and achievements as seen through the eyes of others. The most significant of these is titled 'What Others Say about Abdulla Fouad' and comprises the opinions and memories of twelve well-known personalities from inside and outside Saudi Arabia. I took pains to find photographs which would add meaning to the text. The book contains rare photographs, some of which are being published for the first time. Most of the earliest ones come from the Saudi Aramco archives, while the remainder come from Abdulla Fouad's archive and private photography unit.

I and the team working with me have tried to be rigorously accurate and objective and to observe the rules of scientific and historical research in order

to produce a worthwhile publication which will meet the expectations of its readers. I hope that I have succeeded in presenting a true history of a man whose name is linked so closely with that of the Eastern Province.

The Eastern Province

The Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia has a history which is rooted in antiquity. Human occupation can be traced back to almost 5000 BC, for many peoples were attracted by the region's rich agricultural potential, its coastal and land resources and its strategic position on international trade routes.

Historians believe that the first inhabitants of the region were the Canaanites who lived there before 3000 BC. They emigrated from the central lands of the Arabian Peninsula, escaping from the drought and aridity. Their descendants, the Amalekites who were famed for their agriculture and the digging of wells and springs, settled in the region as did their other descendants, the Phoenicians, who later moved to the Fertile Crescent; chroniclers believe that the Dilmun Kingdom, which held sway in the region from 3200 to 1800 BC, was the original Phoenician homeland, which they founded before emigrating to the shores of the Mediterranean.

In the first millennium BC, Chaldaeans moved to the region from Babylon in Mesopotamia and established the city of Gerrha, near the present-day port of al-Uqair. Its large market was famous across the Arab world and contributed to the wealth of its citizens who came to be known as Gerrhaeans. Arab tribes also travelled to the region and among those who settled there in the first century AD were the Quda'a and the Azd, who were followed by the Ayad and the Banu Abd al-Qais and the related clans of Bakr bin Wa'il. The tribe of Banu Abd al-Qais was well known. It revived the intellectual and cultural life of the area and set up markets such as Hajar and Jowatha, which resembled seasonal cultural assemblies.

After the appearance of Islam, the people of the region sent a delegation to the Prophet (Prayers and Peace be upon Him) declaring their obedience. Many people became Muslims and their acceptance of the faith was sincere. The Prophet (Prayers and Peace be upon Him) sent al-Ala bin al-Hadrami to the province as his representative, and the inhabitants paid allegiance to him;

he collected *zakat* (alms) from those who had become Muslims and *jizya* (poll tax) from the Magi (adherents of Mazdaism) who held on to their religion. The Books of the Sira mention that the first moneys to be brought to Medina were sent by Ibn Hadrami from Bahrain in the tenth year of the Hijra. They also state that the first Friday prayer to be held outside the Prophet's mosque in Medina took place in Jowatha; this was the first mosque to be established in the Eastern Province of the Arabian Peninsula.

At that time, the region was an important trading and cultural centre and continued to be so until it came under Caramathian rule in 900 AD. The Caramathians built the town of al-Ahsa and made it their capital. In 1080 the Ayounioun seized power, putting an end to Caramathian rule, and governed in their stead. They were followed by the Banu 'Amer, the Al Jarwan, the Al Jabr and the Al Mughamis, whose period of rule was cut short by the arrival of foreign invaders. The Portuguese were the first Europeans to reach the province, arriving at its shores in 1506; they occupied the islands of Tarut and al-Qatif and ruled for forty years. The island of Awal, which had broken away from the other two, was the only one to be named Bahrain, as al-Ahsa had previously fallen under Ottoman control. The Al Khaled succeeded in expelling the Ottoman Turks from the region and ruled the province for the next 128 years until the first Saudi state was established.

In 1793 al-Ahsa came under Saudi rule at the time when Imam Abdulaziz bin Mohammed bin Sa'ud and his son Imam Sa'ud (may God have mercy upon them) were in power, but in 1818, after twenty-five years of peace and security, the Ottoman state sent a military force led by the governor in Egypt to occupy al-Ahsa. They withdrew the following year and the province thereafter was ruled by the Al 'Are'ar from Bani Khalid and was only nominally part of the Ottoman Empire. In 1830 Imam Turki bin Abdullah bin Mohammed bin Sa'ud and his son Imam Faisal (may God have mercy upon them) were able to recover their land and resume building the Saudi state of which al-Ahsa now became a part.

However in 1839 the region once more fell under Ottoman control, when the governor of Egypt attacked al-Ahsa and Najd for a second time. The following year Mohammed Ali was forced to withdraw his forces after the Treaty of London was signed, under which the governor of Egypt agreed to call a halt to his expansionism. In 1843 the province returned to the Saudi

state and enjoyed peace and security until Ottoman forces occupied it again in 1871. For the next forty years, the people of the province suffered oppressive taxes and a military regime. The Saudi rulers did not forget this part of their country and continuously strove to free their people from Ottoman rule.

On 8 May 1913 the late King Abdulaziz bin Abdulrahman Al Sa'ud reclaimed al-Ahsa after a heroic battle which has gone down in history books. He also took back al-Qatif and the region became an inseparable part of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, ushering in an era of widespread peace and security. The region became an important centre of knowledge and finance, a focus for people from all parts of the Arabian Peninsula.

Those who live in the Eastern Province cherish their land and it is good to them in return. It has produced merchants and economists, men of learning and education, of culture and ideas. Many of its families have become famous and given birth to noble men whose names are recorded in history and mentioned by historians. Among these is the Al Abubshait family which is now famous in the Province as is its son Abdulla Fouad, who is one of the area's leading men. It is his story we tell in this book. It is a story of devotion to this land . . . and of a journey of perseverance and struggle.





Roots

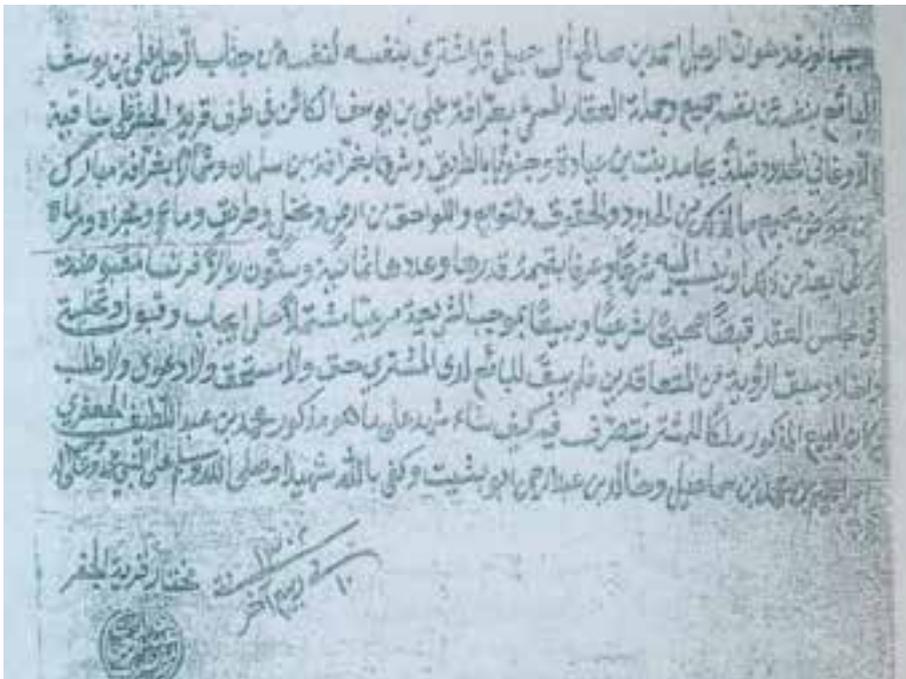
In the beginning ... many, many years ago, we learned our history from the stories that we heard our fathers and grandfathers tell on moonlit nights, stories with which we sometimes warmed ourselves in the cold of winter. They recited lists of names and talked about people whose lives were completely different from our own, who appeared unique to us though they probably regarded themselves as nothing uncommon. The lives of those early bands of men was far from easy, and seems harsh and difficult to us today. But was that how they saw it? You cannot know how awful your situation is unless you have something better to compare it with and these people knew nothing else. They saw no one outside their community, no one who wasn't from the same background as themselves, nor of a different mien; they all did similar jobs and their lives were all difficult and hand-to-mouth. They were extremely simple people with few concerns beyond their daily routine. I pieced together their history from stories I had heard, and also learned something from history books.

In those early years, our forefathers struggled with the harsh terrain and climate, the poverty and scarce water resources. They were brought together by similar circumstances and one land but they spread out in their search for a livelihood. The families who had settled in the Najd began to roam further afield in search of a better life. The decision to move from the land they were attached to and on which they had lived for hundreds of years was not an easy one. Despairing of their current situation and buoyed up with hopes for the future, they set off for new lands and associations, taking their few possessions with them. Some of the Al Bubshait clan settled in al-Ahsa, others went to Bahrain and others to Kuwait.

Al-Ahsa looked to have a stable economy. It had good agricultural land, and an energetic population that was strongly attached to the land. It benefited from a growth in trade between all parts of the Arabian Peninsula, India, Africa, and places in the Arabian Gulf, which contributed to its material prosperity. Caravans carrying merchandise from east to west passed through the territory, and brought relative wealth to its people.

Many of them vied with one another to build schools and mosques and set up *awqaf* (religious endowments) for the pursuit of knowledge. Rulers in different parts of the Gulf donated sums of money to be spent on these students. Generations of people grew up with a respect for the educated and people of religion and with a love of the Arabic language.

The numbers of learned people who were free to teach and proselytise increased; students and people in search of knowledge arrived from elsewhere in the Gulf and across the region to study *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), *hadith* (the sayings of the Prophet), grammar, *sarf* (grammatical inflection) and literature. Among the many gifted people who taught at these schools and mosques was Imam Mohammed bin Abdulwahab who lectured on Islamic jurisprudence and *sharia'* law. The learned men and sheikhs debated various aspects of religion, and history also records how a great many scholars and



Historical document bearing the stamp of Khaled bin Abdulrahman

sheikhs from the Province were the principal authorities on *fiqh* and *fatwa* (legal opinion) for the Arab Gulf Emirates. These learned men travelled to India, Bahrain, Kuwait, Basra and the Najd to attain knowledge, to work, preach and give spiritual guidance, in the same way that seekers after knowledge came to the Province from elsewhere and studied at the schools and hospices which the learned and wealthy had built for the sake of God.

At this time my forefathers from the clan of Bubshait settled in the village of al-Jafr in al-Ahsa which later became the capital of al-Hofuf district. It was a village with a good climate and abundant fresh water. During this time, a number of notable people emerged from the family, some of whom held important positions and were loved and respected in the community, including, for example, Sheikh Khaled bin Abdulrahman Abubshait, who was *mukhtar* (village head) of al-Jafr. Many sheikhs from the family opened their houses to those in search of learning and wrote religious books that were widely read. These included Sheikh Mohammed bin Ahmed bin Mohammed Abubshait's *al-Durrat al-Thaminiyah fi Madhab al-'Alim lil-Madinah* (A Priceless Work on the Spiritual Path of the Learned to the City) and Sheikh Yousif bin Sa'id bin Ahmed Abubshait's *Ba'd al-Manzumat fi Ilm al-Fara'id* (Some Poetical Works on Religious Duties).

The members of the family who had settled in Bahrain pursued a similar course and became well versed in many different forms of knowledge. The Bubshait clan was famous at the time for being learned and for having a generous nature. Sheikh Sa'id bin Ahmed Abubshait was among the most famous scholars of the time and also well known for his great powers, as was Sheikh Khaled bin Yousif Abubshait who delivered *fatwas* (formal legal opinions) and *ra'y* (subjective legal opinions). Many people had recourse to him in matters of life and religion. Others from the family were well known for their work as imams in mosques and sheikhs of learning.

In his book, *'al-Tuhfa al-Nabahaniya fi Tarikh al-Jazira al-'Arabia'* (The Nabahani Bequest to the History of the Arabian Peninsula), a tract about the scholars and sheikhs of Bahrain, the distinguished Sheikh Mohammed ibn al-Sheikh Khalifa ibn Hamad ibn Musa al-Nabahani al-Ta'i wrote:

When His Highness Sheikh 'Isa bin Ali was ruler of Bahrain, the most famous scholars in the country were Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashed

Previous page: Reply from Sheikh Khaled bin Yousif Abubshait to a question put by Sheikh Ibrahim bin Mohammed al-Khalifa from Bahrain, on the meaning of the phrase, 'the two worlds', 1338 AH.

Following pages: (Left) Directive from Sheikh Khaled bin Yousif Abubshait, 1352 AH.

(Right) Two documents written by Sheikh Khaled bin Yousif Abubshait, 1343 AH.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الحمد لله وحده والصلاة والسلام على من لا نبي بعده سيدنا محمد وآله
 أما بعد فإني أكتب هذه الرسالة لآل الله وحده لأشرك له وأشهد أن
 محمد عبده ورسوله أرسله بالهدى والبرهان وقوله الحق وأنه الذي جاء به
 محمد حق وإن الجنة حق وإن النار حق وإن الساعة آتية لا ريب
 فيها وإن الله يبعث من في القبور أوصي وأولاؤي وأولاد علي
 بنفوس الله جل جلاله والعمل بما في كتاب الله وسنة رسوله
 والاجتهاد في طلب العلم الشريف لانه أعلم حياة والمجمل موت
 وأوصيهم بالثواب بديهم والتواصل والترف بالصفار
 من الأولاد والبنات وأهل البيت وأفظم ثلاث من ما أمكث
 جميع من بعد وفاء الدين على يد الولد محمد وكيل يفعل فيه صدقة
 وطحية كل سنة وأطعام في شهر رمضان للفقراء والمساكين
 وقرأت القران في رمضان وقل هو الله أحد في سائر الأيام
 لكل ولدي ما تيسر خصوصا هذه بسورة الأختار
 ويذهب الثواب كل ولد بسنة والوكيل إنك في غير البر
 والسائر يوالي أخوانه وأهله والعيال الأولاد والبنات
 خصوصا بنات المرحوم راشد ولا تشون اسمه الدعاء
 والاستغفار والدعاء المطلوب في موضع الأجايد
 في السجود ودر كل صلاة وأخر الليل ونزول الغيث
 واستل الله من فضل وكرمه من يار الله العيار ويصلح
 وينزههم في الدنيا ويرغبهم في عمل الآخرة ويصلح
 نياتهم وأحوالهم على المنهج الشرعي والله ولي
 الهداية والتوفيق

حقه خادم الشرع الشريفين
 خالد بن يوسف بن أحمد
 بوبخت قاضي القطيف

الفتاوى
للشيخ
الفاضل

يوم ١٠ عشر من شهر ربيع الثاني الفاضل الشيخ الاجل محمد بن قلاوون حرس الله سره سناه ارتل الادعية التي
تسبحه انكم البويه وانشر بين الامم اعمالكم لتزنيه في البكرة والعيشه وادعوا لله تعالى بدموع
حلوا ليع سعدكم في اشرف المقامات ساطعة ومكارم اخلاقكم بكل خصلة حميدة جامعة اعرجت
ان الاحسان من جملة الاعمال التي تخلد الذكر للانسان وتكسبه الاجر الجزيل من الملك الدنيا
فانفسه ليدلح المساعمة باحسانه وذلك التصرف الجميل بالفعل الحميد باه نقاذكم
الفضل المسكينه اهل الوضائف الكلا زميريه من امام ومقرره اكتبتم من الجميع احسن
الثناء الجميل ومداختم بكل وصف جميل اما شول من شيمكم الكريمة وعواظكم ارحم
تفضلوه بمساعدة ~~وتفضلوا~~ لقاضي القضاة معونة لوظيفته لانه في غاية الاحتياج
ومنفوع للمجتمع والحكومة جميع القاطنين به بوظائفهم في عملة الدمام في جوار الامام
فان مكارمكم عندنا جميع مساندة منكم في سائر الخصال يقول لكم مني ثناء بكل وقت جزيل ودعاء مستجاب
هذا وانتم تشرفوا بحضرة المصطفى الامام الزمعه هذا الشانه حب عاركم المعروف عن الانسان
ولا زلت في حفظ الملك الدنيا

ابراهيم الخليل

من خالده بويوسف بوايشيت الى جنابكم الامام محمد بن قلاوون حرس الله سره في الاحكام وكفاه العظام
السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته على الدولم وان سلت عن حالنا انا وفضلنا كما تحب وبعثنا
جنابك الشريف باننا صرنا جوارا لجنابك في الدمام وتغاطب مع احمد بن ماضي وزوجهم ابنتهم
والمرسل ربعاية ربه حال قبضها منهم وطلب منا احمد بن ماضي ان يصير لنا بكم معلوم هذا ما نسئ
ابلاغ اللهم الاولاد والاشوار واجماعهم ورحمة الله علينا الاولاد والجناب يسلموه وانتم جوارا لجنابك الاولاد

١٢٤٢



al-Husseini al-Maliki who held the office of judge until he died, Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Ja'afar al-Tayar, Sheikh Abdulrahman ibn Abdullatif Al Mubarek, Sheikh Ibrahim Abdullatif al-Suhaf, Sheikh Qassim bin Muhaza', Sheikh Sa'ied bin Ahmed Abubshait, Sheikh Abdullatif bin Mohammed bin Sa'ad, Sheikh Khaled bin Yousif Abubshait and others.

Emigration

At the end of 1923 AD the Abubshait family, headed by Sheikh Khaled bin Yousif Abubshait, moved from Bahrain to the Eastern Province in Saudi Arabia along with several other well-known families who had been living in the same place. Chief among them were the al-Dawasir, headed by Sheikh Ahmed bin Abd Allah al-Dosari.

Several decades previously, these families had moved to al-Badia' village in Bahrain, in the hope of making a living there. They had stayed on even in times of scarcity, when there was barely enough to live on. The men worked as divers and traders and the women sewed and embroidered dresses. Their decision to leave Bahrain for Saudi Arabia had a major impact on the history of the Eastern Province as a whole. It boosted the number of settlements in what was shortly to become the most economically significant place in the world and opened up a new page in the history of the previously uninhabited al-Dammam-al Khobar coastline.

When differences arose between the al-Dawasir who were the leading clan in al-Badia' and the English political agent in Bahrain at the time, Major C. K. Daly, the families concerned made a joint decision to leave Bahrain and go to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to seek justice from the late King Abdulaziz bin Abdulrahman Al Sa'ud, may he rest in peace, whose justice had become a byword for the rest of society.

The family leaders decided to leave al-Badia' at night. At ten o'clock, after the boats had been equipped and loaded with possessions, furniture and livestock, the people set sail for the shores of the Eastern Province. But a violent storm blew up and scattered the boats, and had it not been for the



mercy of God and his deliverance, the people in them would almost certainly have been swallowed up by the waters of the Gulf. Fate divided the travellers into two groups: the first group, led by Mohammed bin Rashed bin Jaber al-Dosari, landed at al-Khobar; the second group, led by Sheikh Ahmed bin Abdulla al-Dosari, which was the larger of the two and included members of both the al-Dawasir and the Abubshait clans, reached its intended destination and landed at al-Dammam.

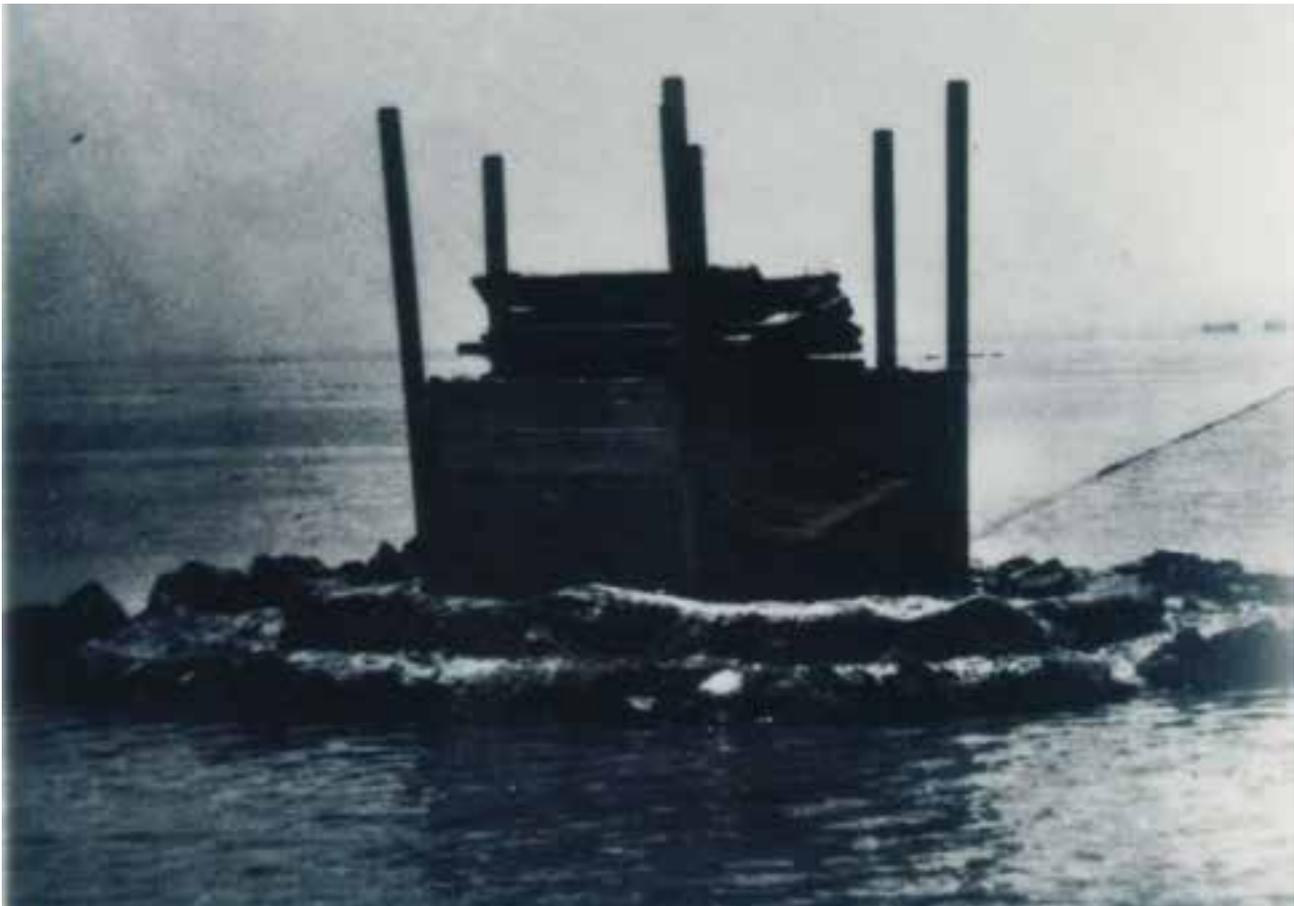
Al-Dammam and al-Khobar were desolate tracts of land at the time, the few shepherds who wandered there with their herds were the only sign of life. al-Dammam is said to have derived its name from *al-damdam*, the word given to the rumbling sound of the drum, which is beaten at the beginning and end of the pearl fishing season. It had been populated in ancient times and we were often told how the Portuguese had visited it when they were based on the Arab Gulf coast. al-Khobar for its part was named after *al-khabra*, a term used to denote a place in which rain and flood waters collect.

Immediately after they landed, the new arrivals built huts made from palm leaf stalks and leaves. The need for water was a pressing problem. The group which had landed at al-Dammam set off for a fort, built by Jabir bin Rahmeh al-Jalahimeh, which was thought to contain an ancient well. It now lies several miles inside the waters of the Gulf. They found it covered over with sand and had to clean it out before they could take the water they needed. They were only able to get to the well at low tide when the waters of the Gulf receded. At high tide the well was inaccessible. Meanwhile, the people who had gone to al-Khobar dug wells in a water hole known locally as Julban.

Both groups were convinced that the others had drowned, but one day they met up with each other again by accident, when the people who were living in al-Khobar passed through al-Dammam on their way to buy basic provisions from the market in al-Qatif, a fertile agricultural oasis and the commercial centre of the area.

Previous page:
(Top) The Jabr bin Rahmeh bin 'Adhabi al-Jalahimeh fort; the inhabitants of al-Dammam used to get their water from a well in its grounds.

(Bottom) Men, women and children around the well



In the Beginning

When the new arrivals had recovered sufficiently and were starting to feel more composed, they decided to send a delegation to Riyadh to pay their respects to the King Abdulaziz Al Sa'ud and began collecting the wherewithal for the journey. The delegation, composed of fifteen men, was led by Sheikh Ahmed bin Abdullah al-Dosari and also included Sheikh Khaled bin Yousif Abubshait, my father Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Abdulrahman Abubshait, and my uncle Khaled bin Abdulrahman Abubshait. It was a gruelling journey. Riyadh was 375 kilometres away and it took seven days to get there on camel back across barren desert. When the delegation arrived in Riyadh, it had the honour of meeting the late King Abdulaziz who welcomed its members and treated them honourably. He appointed Sheikh Ahmed bin Abdullah al-Dosari as ruler of al-Dammam and Sheikh Khaled bin Yousif Abubshait as *qadi* or judge, and at the same time ordered the new ruler of Dammam to give land to anyone who wanted it.

The delegation returned to the Eastern Province after being shown every kindness and consideration. However, when they reached al-Dammam, a curious thing happened which has never been forgotten. Ahmed bin Abdullah, the ruler of al-Dammam, summoned the people of al-Dammam and al-Khobar and told them they could take what land they wanted, but most of them didn't take up the offer. They were satisfied with the land they already had, on which they had built their houses and where they felt psychologically at ease. They were content with their simple lives and unconcerned about material possessions. As time went by they went back to pearl diving and fishing – the

Previous page:
(Top) Al-Qatif was a fertile agricultural oasis whose market was the main source of provisions for the surrounding towns (1928).

(Bottom) A fresh water well, later discovered by the inhabitants of al-Khobar which provided them with their needs.

work they had done before – which was the mainstay of the region's economy at the time and their preferred way of earning a living.

The waters of the Arabian Gulf were famous for the valuable pearls that could be found in their depths and Bahrain was renowned for its craftsmanship and its large market, where pearls were displayed and traded. The pearl fishing industry employed many people in the region and at the beginning of the season large numbers of divers headed for Bahrain, Qatar, the island of Darain and Kuwait. Pearl diving was not just a way of earning a living but a valuable culture in its own right, with its own customs and traditions.

The diver was a respected member of society, and felt himself to be superior to those engaged in other occupations. The *nakhudas* or wealthy men who owned the sailing boats played an essential role in the operation as they funded the fishing expeditions. Each boat carried between twenty and thirty men. When they went diving, they divided up the yield proportionally in a manner that had been agreed in advance. If they met with bad luck while they were out diving, and the harvest failed to meet expectations, the *nakhuda* made a note of his outlay on the three-month trip and set it against the divers' income for the coming year. Immediately before they left on a fishing trip, the *nakhuda* advanced his men another sum of money, which provided for their families during the months they were away.

The boats headed out to specific areas, determined by the *nakhuda*, which were called *hir*. The divers knew which places to dive in. The depth of the water varied between five and twenty-five metres. They were frequently very knowledgeable about these areas, and knew a lot about them such as how deep the water was and other factors. As soon as the boat arrived at its destination the divers took off what they were wearing (*al-azar*) and dressed themselves in black clothes known as *shamsbul*, which helped them avoid being stung by jellyfish when they were in the water. Their equipment was very simple, consisting of a bag for collecting the oysters hung around the neck and a tortoiseshell clip fixed to the nose.

Before diving, they tied ropes round themselves and fixed lead weights to their feet, known as *hajar* or stone, which helped them sink to the bottom more quickly. Each diver was paired with a *saib*, whose job it was to stand on the deck and hold on to the rope. He first hauled up the *hajar* and then pulled up the diver when he signalled that he was ready to come up by tugging on the

rope. The divers made around ninety dives a day, with each one lasting around two minutes. The following morning, they opened up the oysters. Any large pearls or *dana* that were found were held in safekeeping by the *nakhuda*. The Bahraini pearl dealers were known as *tawawish*.

The people constructed their *‘ashash*, or huts made of palm fronds, close together to make it easier to visit and help each other. In summer they cooked outside but in winter they made their fires inside the huts. As a result, they sometimes accidentally set fire to them, when sparks flew up and landed on the palm matting and set it alight. If the men were unable to put out the flames almost immediately with water and soil, the fire would spread and soon the neighbouring five or six huts would be ablaze. When a hut was burnt down, the people banded together and built a new one. They lived communally. If someone was cooking and found out that his neighbour had not eaten that day, he would send him what he could. My grandfather Sheikh Khaled, may

Pearl divers preparing to enter the waters of the Arab Gulf.



God have mercy upon him, would feed his neighbours before he fed the people in his own house.

Most of the women at the time worked. They embroidered women's dresses and made *busur* mats and *muhaf* fans from palm leaves, which they took to the al-Arba market in Bahrain. The market, which was so called because it took place on a Wednesday, was held on the decks of small sailing boats called *'ibra*. They sold what they had made and bought dates, rice, tea, coffee and other provisions. They sold their handicrafts to the people living in the area and helped their husbands provide for their families.

Fishermen on a sailing boat.



Birth: The Year of the Storm

In the summer of 1343 AH/1925 AD, the whole region was affected by a catastrophe, which was as terrible in its consequences as an earthquake or a volcano. A violent storm struck the Arabian Gulf one night at the height of the pearl fishing season, when people were asleep in their boats. Many divers were drowned as a result. It is said that people from al-Qatif, Tarut Island, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and elsewhere fished corpses, cast up by the waves, out of the sea and buried them. I have heard so many different accounts from people who escaped the tragedy that I find it difficult to give a balanced version of events. Some people said that sons died while their fathers looked on helplessly and were unable to save them. Others said that people were out for themselves and tried to save their own lives without giving a thought to what was happening to those around them. Some people clung to bits of driftwood until they reached land and were granted a new life. However, everyone was agreed on one thing and that was the enormity of the tragedy.

Sir Charles Belgrave, the adviser to the government of Bahrain, described the storm in his diaries as follows:

When I took up my job as advisor in 1925, I knew virtually nothing about Bahrain or the Gulf states, but I came across the name of Bahrain in several reports from that year while I was doing my research. These gave details of a violent storm that had struck the Arab Gulf and led to decimation of the pearl fishing fleet and the loss of many boats . . . the memory of that calamitous year lived on and the people of Bahrain never forgot what had happened. They subsequently referred to it as the 'year of the storm' and after that described anything that happened in the country as being 'before' or 'after the storm'.

The tragedy not only resulted in a great loss of life but also caused people to lose their provisions and valuables, since it was customary to keep such things on the boats, where they believed they would be safer, should their *'ashash* burn down.

I was born in the year of the storm. Some people thought it as unlucky to be born at such a difficult time, when people were widely dispersed and suffering, and unable to provide comfort and security. But I look on it differently. Perhaps fate wanted to accustom me to the shocks I would suffer in later years. My mother, may God have mercy upon her, described how people were lamenting the dead while she was going through the pangs of childbirth and how she endured both pain and grief at the hands of the midwife.

I was born in the house of my grandmother, Mariam bint Kulban, in al-Dammam, which was then only a small village of a couple of hundred people, who lived in small huts known locally as *barastis*, thatched with palm fronds and branches. At the time, there was no official record of births or any method of documenting the numbers of new children or the days on which they were born. When I was older and wanted to register an exact date of birth, I linked it to the day the storm occurred, in the middle of the summer pearl fishing season, calculating it to be 22 July 1925, and recorded it thus.

At this time, my father Abdulaziz, may the Lord have mercy upon him, was frequently away at al-Ahsa, where large numbers of scholars and sheikhs congregated to study with Sheikh Abu Bakr. His *madrassa* was a beacon of knowledge and attracted students from across the region. Many sheikhs and scholars received their education from him. Accordingly, it was left to my mother to attend to me. She and my aunts on both sides of the family helped my grandmother Mariam make incense and embroider dresses which were sold to the women who traded in the Bahrain market, and we lived on what she was able to make.

Divorce

I was born in cruel and harsh circumstances. As a newborn baby, I cried for long periods for no discernible reason. Maybe it was because I was hungry or perhaps I was sick. Before the discovery of oil, the overall standard of healthcare in the Eastern Province was poor and there was a lack of proper medical facilities. Bahrain and in particular the American Mission Hospital was the nearest place providing a modern health service, but it lay beyond the reach of many people in the Province, being difficult and expensive to get to. People relied on primitive medicines and practices instead, which included Indian ointments, cauterization, bathing, cupping and drinking potions made from fenugreek or castor oil. They also read the Qur'an over the sick.

When I was eighteen months old my parents had an argument which resulted in my father divorcing my mother. Although I was the direct cause of the quarrel, a contributory factor may have been the fact that my father had just returned from al-Ahsa, and was fatigued and weary from the long journey. When he arrived home and found me bawling my head off he became angry and quarrelled with my mother, pronouncing the words of divorce. Their divorce brought increased distress to me and placed more responsibility on my mother's shoulders.

My mother moved out of my father's house, and naturally took me with her. She suffered considerably because of the divorce. She was still young and had little experience of life. Divorce was a blow that shrouded the future in gloom and uncertainty. In 1927 we went to stay with her grandfather, Sheikh Khaled bin Yousif Abubshait, who was very highly regarded both in al-Dammam and in al-Qatif where he worked as a judge. His opinions were much sought after

and his house was a popular destination for those in search of knowledge, wisdom and spiritual guidance. We lived with my grandfather and his wife Noura Abubshait for eighteen months. They made us very welcome, as did my mother's uncles, and their wives and children.

After that, my mother decided to go and live with her father, Sheikh Yousif bin Khaled Abubshait, who lived in al-Jisr village near al-Badi'a in Bahrain. So at the start of 1928, we boarded one of the ferry boats which sailed between al-Dammam and Bahrain and set out on our journey.



My father,
Sheikh Abdulaziz
Abubshait, in 1980.

We arrived at Manama, the capital of Bahrain, after a difficult crossing which lasted almost seven hours and straight away went to my mother's uncle's house, in al-Hurh. We rented two donkeys there, one for me and my mother to ride and one for the escort who would accompany us to the house of my grandfather, which was a three and a half hours' ride from the capital.

When we arrived, my grandfather Sheikh Yousif provided a *barasti* hut for us to live in. Even though my mother had returned a divorced woman, something which was a great sorrow to him, he was pleased that we had come to live with him. This was especially so as he had refused to accede to his own father's request that he move to al-Dammam, once Sheikh Khaled had settled there, preferring instead to remain in al-Jisr because of his many connections and friends in the place and his position as imam of the mosque.

My grandfather was a sensitive and kind-hearted man, who did good and helped everyone. I can still remember an incident that happened when I was living with him which well demonstrates his sensitivity. One day when he had taken me hunting with him, we came across a bird that was still alive. Although we brought it home and looked after it, it died three days later. I was much affected by the loss and started to cry. He took down his game bag and went straight off to find me another bird, but unfortunately was unsuccessful. I was still crying when he returned home. He tried to comfort me and promised that we would go out the next day and look for a live bird. We caught four big birds but they were dead when we found them. After that he stopped hunting birds because of me and no longer ate them, but took up fishing instead. He attempted to explain that many birds died when they were hunted and that God, the most high, had created them and allowed us to eat them, but I was still a small child and thought like a child, and I had been brought up in an environment in which compassion played a significant role.

Return to the Homeland

In 1930 my grandfather Sheikh Yousif finally decided to move to al-Dammam following numerous attempts by his father, Sheikh Khaled bin Yousif Abubshait, to convince him to rejoin his family there. He told my mother what he had decided, and so when I was five years old, we went back with him to al-Dammam. I have few memories of the journey, though my mother later told me how tiring and burdensome it was travelling with a young child in such difficult circumstances. She told me,

I felt tired all the time; I think my divorce in particular was preying on my mind and making me anxious. During the journey, I thought back over my life and remembered what you were like when you were very young and how you had cried continuously. I felt you needed a father to protect and look after you and this was what I thought about most during that journey.

When we reached al-Dammam, Sheikh Khaled asked Sheikh Yousif to live in a mud hut that he had had built near his house. People in al-Dammam were beginning to build mud houses, rather than the traditional *barasti*, which had caused them many problems and afflicted them with many physical ailments. My mother was given a room in the large family home, in which Sheikh Khaled lived with his sons, Mohammed, Hamad and Abdulrahman and his six unmarried daughters. A regular feature of those years was listening to the evening recital of 'stories and tales' by the daughters. These took place in the *kobars* which were especially built for such performances. They were structures whose walls were made of mud and palm matting and they were roofed over

with tree trunks, palm leaf mats and palm fronds. Each married son had his own *kobar* for his wife and children.

Many of the poor families from al-Dammam who lived in straitened circumstances would go to Sheikh Khaled's house, for he was well known for his generosity. I soon got to know a group of boys who were the same age as me, including Abdulqader bin Abdullah Abubshait and Ahmed bin Abdulrahman Abubshait. We played our own games and teased the girls of the family. Despite the often harsh circumstances, I enjoyed that time. We had no responsibilities and we were only concerned with having a good time and amusing ourselves. I can still remember things that happened then and see them as clearly now as if they had happened only yesterday. Most of the things I remember from this time concern my loving mother. I remember one incident very clearly.

I was playing with the other children in the courtyard one day, when our grandmother Noura Abubshait asked us to cut down some branches from a palm tree and collect the fronds so she could use them to light the fire, on which she cooked and prepared coffee. She gave us an axe and told us to hurry as it was time for her to start cooking. We set about the task immediately, laughing and playing as we hacked away at the tree. We took turns at wielding the axe. When I had finished my turn, my cousin Ahmed bin Abdulrahman Abubshait took over. He was not watching what he was doing and brought the axe down on my head by mistake and cut it open. Blood gushed out. My mother, who had just finished sewing painted buttons onto a dress she was making, dashed over as soon as she heard the screams, and picked me up. I can still remember the fear I saw on her face and the terrified look in her eyes. It is almost as if the events are unfolding in front of me right now. She rushed me to the kitchen, where she put ashes on my head to stop the bleeding, a primitive remedy that was used at the time. Next she tore her *milfa'* shawl, which she used to cover her face, into strips and, after putting a damp cloth on the wound, bound up my head. Then she went next door to our neighbours and borrowed some musk perfume. She undid the dressing on my head and put a little perfume on the wound and then rebandaged it. I was crying from the pain and she was crying because I was crying.

This incident left its mark on me. It bound me closer to my mother and made me love her more than ever and become more determined to be like

her. Once the pain had passed, I returned to the game I was playing with my cousins and she went back to her embroidery. She didn't quarrel with anyone over what had happened or scold or blame my cousin. She was a good woman with pure intentions. Despite being so young at the time, I can still remember how hard she worked to raise me and provide for me. She took in sewing and made dresses for whatever women were able to give her in return, even if it was just an egg or two, which she would give me for breakfast. She was a wonderful woman who sacrificed a great deal for me.

First Steps

When I was seven years old, my mother asked my grandfather Sheikh Yousif to enrol me with Ahmed ibn Ghulab, the local *mutawwa* (religious instructor), so that I could study and learn how to recite the Holy Qur'an with him. At the time, he was the only *mutawwa* in al-Dammam who taught children. In winter, the pupils met in Ibn Ghulab's house, but in summer he held his classes outside in a small place known as Baraha al-Hassan, which was near the house of Ahmed bin Abdullah al-Dosari, the then ruler of al-Dammam. A *baraha* was a bit like a square and was the term used at the time to describe the open space around which the houses were built. Ibn Ghulab only asked for payment once the child had completed the Qur'an. I began to go to him every day to learn the Qur'an. Like all children I sometimes said I wanted to stay at home and play rather than go to the *mutawwa*, which earned me a clip across the head and a word of censure from my grandfather Sheikh Yousif and my uncle Mohammed. In the end, I would give in and go off with my head bowed in submission.

While I was attending the *mutawwa*'s classes, I caught smallpox. The big house I was living in was crowded with children and people were worried that I might pass on the illness and infect the others with the disease. So Sheikh Khaled asked my mother to take me to my grandmother's house and there Mariam bint Kulban and my mother looked after me and took it in turns to sit up with me at night. They treated me in the traditional manner as there were no hospitals or doctors in al-Dammam. They heated up sand on the fire and once it was hot mixed it with herbs which my grandmother had collected in al-Qatif. This mixture was then spread on large strips of cloth which they tied

round my body. They carried out this procedure twice daily and repeated it over a three-week period until I was completely rid of the disease. My skin is still pockmarked, though I no longer notice the scars, but the way my mother and grandmother cared for me during my illness left an indelible impression on me and I have never forgotten it.

Once I was better I went back home and recommenced my lessons with the *mutawwa*, until I had learned to recite the whole of the Holy Qur'an. Reciting the whole Qur'an was no insignificant matter in those days, but rather cause for great celebration and many parties. Once the boy had demonstrated to the group that he had learned to recite the Qur'an correctly by reading it seven times without making a mistake, the celebrations started. If the boy had passed, he put on his new clothes and wore an '*aba*' (a cloak like woollen garment), an '*iqal*' (headband holding the *kufiya* in place) and a sword and dagger strapped to his waist. Some of our friends didn't have their own and had to borrow them from relatives. Ibn Ghulab walked ahead and I followed behind as we visited the houses of the merchants and well-to-do. At each house, we chanted the following poem:

Praise be to almighty God who has guided us to religion and Islam
 Praise be to Him, the Creator. Praise be!
 Through his grace we have learned the Qur'an
 We praise Him and it is right to praise Him
 For He has caused the flowers to appear and the rain to fall.
 Pray each time the camel drover chants,
 Pray to the Prophet Mohammed who comes from the Bani Hashem
 This boy has read and has written.
 He has learnt letters and oration.
 Be generous to him, oh son of noble Arabs.
 Drop dirhams and gold onto his slate.

Following Page:
 Education developed
 and regular schools
 started to appear: a
 class in progress in a
 al-Hofuf, 1949.

We visited the various areas of the village to which we had been invited. It was customary for the father of the boy who was being feted to provide a big feast for his son's teacher, his friends and members of the family, but as my father was not there, I had to do without this and it would be true to say that I



missed my father on that occasion. When I returned home, I saw my mother's face light up with joy. She was overcome with happiness and cried and rained down kisses upon me. I remember feeling at that instant that she had reaped the reward for the many sacrifices and troubles she had gone through on my account and, despite the fact that I was still a young boy, I felt happy for her.

The Man Known as Abdulla Fouad

At the beginning of 1934, when I was nine years old, my mother remarried at a simple family ceremony as was the custom at the time. Her new husband was Abdulla bin Jasim Abubshait, who was known as Abdulla Fouad, and was an uncle of mine on my father's side. A week after the wedding I sailed for Darain Island, which was to be my new home, with my uncle and mother. At that time it was one of the most important ports on the Arabian Gulf and was one of the villages belonging to the town of Tarut. A few days after we arrived, my uncle enrolled me in a *kuttab* where I would learn elementary reading and arithmetic. My teacher at the new school was Said Saleh. I soon got to know my fellow pupils and often went down to the beach with them, where we would practise swimming in the sea or watch the boats as they rode at anchor or returned from their diving or fishing trips.

I adored the sea and maybe it loved me in return. It fascinated me. I longed to travel and the waves enchanted me so much that I wanted to climb on their backs and let them take me to the furthest reaches of the world, a world about which I knew absolutely nothing. But my attachment to the sea was soon to teach me a hard lesson.

One day, instead of going to school, I went down to the beach. I soon lost track of time and swam and amused myself for a couple of hours. As bad luck would have it, my uncle Abdulla Fouad went to the school to look for me and found I wasn't there. At the time I was walking along the road looking for somewhere else to bathe. When I finally got home, Uncle Abdulla Fouad was waiting for me. He immediately began to beat me about the head, and even though I cried and my mother begged him to stop, he carried on hitting



me. In fact he beat me even more ferociously when she intervened and tried to take me away from him. Finally he threw me out of the house.

When he came after me, I thought he was going to punish me further but he hesitated when he saw that my spirit was broken. I began to wail again, calling out for help and cried, 'That's enough, Father.' As soon as he heard these words, he froze in his tracks. Perhaps he felt sorry for me, or perhaps the word father had touched him – whatever the reason, he regained control of himself. After that I promised him that I would not play truant from school any more, nor go to the sea when I should be studying. Although I was angry with him at the time for beating me so violently, I came to regard the punishment as a valuable lesson. It taught me that I had to work hard and not waste time on useless activities.

I might have hated him because of the beating, but that didn't happen. I grew to like him and in time became very attached to him. Our relationship grew stronger and we became friends in spite of the difference in our ages. We often sat together and talked about all manner of things. He was of medium height with brown skin and a kind face and spoke in a refined manner. He told me about the many strange things that had happened in his life and the difficult situations he had been in, when he had almost died. One day, he told me the real story behind the man called Abdulla Fouad and how he had come to marry my mother. Up to that point, I had not really thought of him as my mother's husband. It was a cold winter's night, I remember, and my mother was preparing supper. The wind was blowing outside, and the harsh sound made me tremble with fear. He said:

My son, it has been my fate to have a sad and dangerous life but God in his wisdom has made it like that. When I was a boy, I lived with my family in Bahrain but when I was fifteen, I began to work for a merchant, who was well known on the island. I became close to the family who depended on me to go to the *suq* and do their shopping for them. They were honest and sincere people and I soon earned their love and respect. They treated me as if I were a member of the family and took me to India with them, where I learned to speak English properly. My life was neither easy nor trouble-free, my son, and I suffered a great deal and struggled to survive, but my experience taught me many things. One of the main lessons I learned was that there is nothing more important and useful in life than having a good reputation. Don't believe people who tell you that children or wealth will bring you that.

Previous Page:
A few 'ashash built
close together were
all that existed of al-
Dammam, 1935.

People began to call me Abdulla Fouad, although this was not my real name, because the merchant's wife called me *fouadi* (my heart). She used to shout out, 'Come here, *fouadi*' or 'Where is *fouadi*' when she was looking for me. She really was a wonderful woman and took the place of the mother I had lost, and gave me the loving care I'd been missing. Gradually everyone began to call me Abdulla Fouad and soon it had become not only a nickname but the name by which I was generally known.

In 1932 I stopped working for the family and went back to Saudi Arabia, where, helped by the fact that I had a good knowledge of English, I found a job as a customs officer and translator at Rufay'ah airstrip in Darain, where the plane from Bahrain landed once every two weeks. I was employed under the name of Abdulla Fouad bin Jasim Abubshait.

After working there for a time, I took the boat to al-Dammam to visit my family. I went to Sheikh Khaled's house and stayed there for a day before returning to Darain. While I was there, Sheikh Khaled told me that there were several families with girls and women of marriageable age and suggested that I marry one of them. After returning to Darain, I decided to ask for your mother's hand. Perhaps you're surprised that I chose your mother when there were other young girls available, but the truth is that I had often heard about her and her constant struggles and efforts to raise you. The first time I saw you, my heart went out to you and though you probably won't believe me when I say it, I thought of you as the son I had never had. I sent a message to Sheikh Khaled and told him that I wished to marry your mother. It didn't take long for him to agree and so we got married.

Following page:
(Top) Small 'ashash
built next to each
other in al-Khobar,
1935.

(Bottom) Bedouin
camp in the middle
of the desert in Hafr
al-Batin, in 1936.



Escape from Death

One day when my Uncle Abdulla Fouad and I were returning from a visit to my family in al-Dammam, we met with a dangerous accident which almost cost us our lives. We had boarded the boat for Darain and, as we sailed across the turbulent sea, I sat looking at the clear blue sky and watching the crashing waves and the seagulls following close behind. After about half an hour a huge storm blew up. At first, people thought it was a passing breeze but the wind grew stronger and stronger. Soon the boat was tossing and turning like a feather blown by a gale. Suddenly it overturned and everyone was thrown into the water. On all sides, people screamed and yelled and begged for help.

I was probably the only person on board who didn't know how to swim, for although I loved the sea so much, I still had not properly learned how. My uncle was soon carried away from me by the waves but luckily, and with the grace of God, the captain was close by. He took me on his back and as I screamed and screamed and swallowed copious amounts of water, he swam with me to the shore. My uncle meanwhile was also swimming as hard as he could. When he reached the shore at Sihat, he found me on the beach where the captain had thrown me down, still terrified at what had happened and suffering from shock.

With the help of people from Sihat, the passengers dragged the boat out of the sea, something made easier by the shallowness of the water in those parts, and began to bail out the water. We boarded the boat again and continued our journey to Darain.

This was the first time in my life I had come face to face with danger. We had fought against death; our attempts to cling on to life were strengthened

by the human desire to survive. I had not realized how precious a man's life was until this happened but after the incident I understood that man would do almost anything to keep from dying. I was very relieved that my mother had not been with us on the boat, for I could not imagine what I would have felt if I had seen her in danger.

In 1937 my uncle Abdulla Fouad left his job in Darain at the urging of my grandfather Sheikh Khaled Abubshait who wanted us to come and live near him in al-Dammam. So we returned to Saudi Arabia once again and settled in the family home. Life became more difficult, however, as my uncle did not have a job. At the time, I sensed that my uncle Abdulla Fouad was very depressed, which was natural, given that from a young age he been used to working; now he was unemployed, he probably felt defeated, for one of the most devastating things a man can face in life is to find himself unable to provide for his family. He started to look for suitable employment but it was not easy. He was continuously frustrated and most of the jobs he found were unsuitable. However he went on trying until he finally got a job as passport officer in al-Khobar in 1938 and thereby became the first official in the town to have the right to issue travel documents.

At the time Aramco was starting up, and had opened a port in al-Khobar especially for the motor launches which brought their workers from Bahrain. We moved from al-Dammam to al-Khobar, where we were given two tents, one of which we used for sleeping in and the other for cooking. There was no electricity, so we used candles, lamps, wood, *dawafir* and charcoal. After that we moved to a house built from stones and bricks.

As time passed I grew more attached to Uncle Abdulla. He took a constant interest in me and encouraged me to learn. I can still remember those dark nights when he would teach me English by candlelight. When I looked back on it later I thought how strange it was that he was so intent on teaching me English. It was almost as if he knew what an impact it would have on my future.

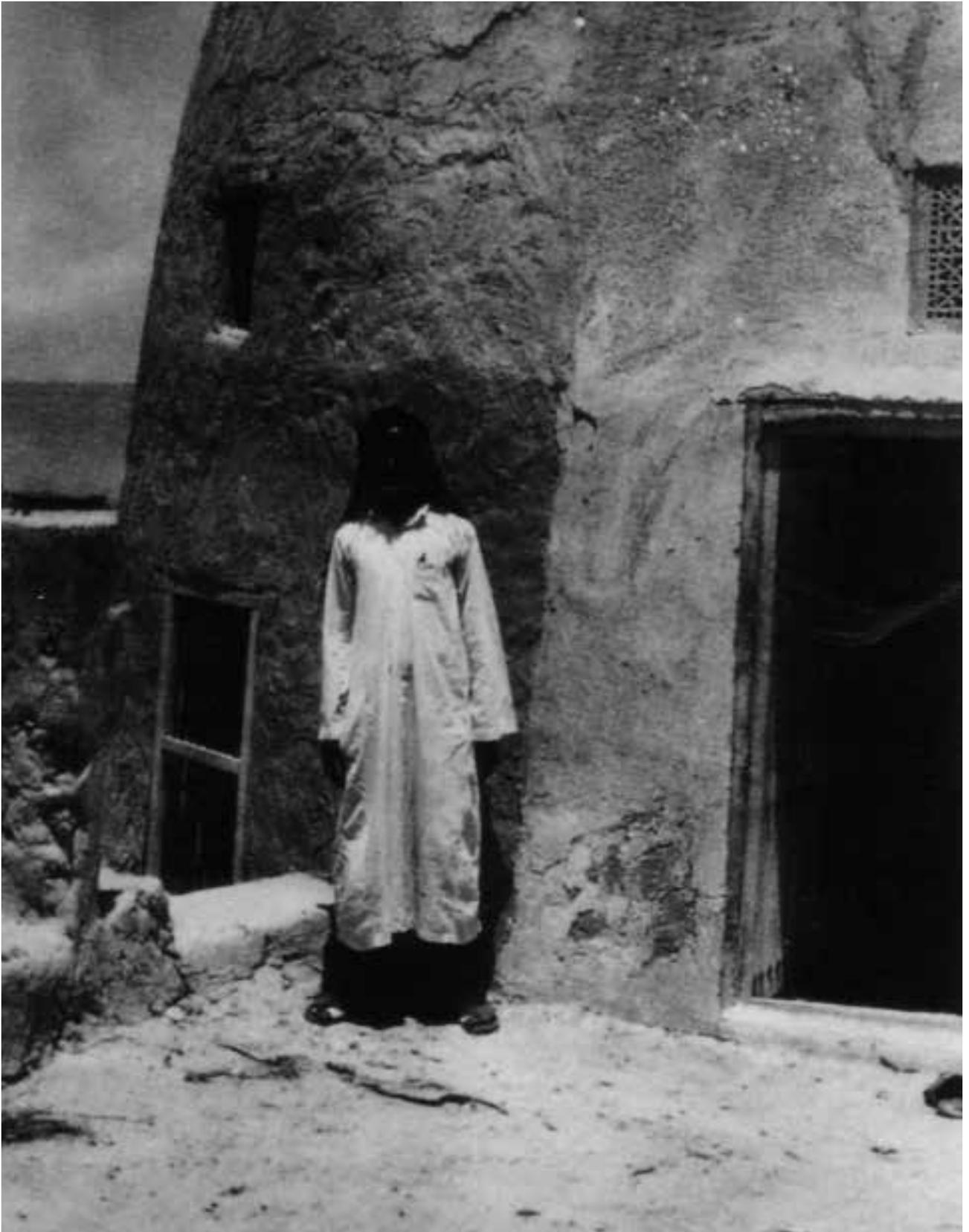
Because he was so keen for me to learn, he found a position for me with the family of an American employee of Aramco. He arranged with the American that I would help in the house and in exchange receive English lessons from his wife. On the same day he talked to the American, my Uncle Abdulla drove me over to al-Dhahran, in the pick-up he used to take the mail between al-Khobar and al-Dhahran, to meet the wife. After speaking to her, we returned

to al-Khobar so that I could begin work the following day. I was to cycle over every day. Uncle Abdulla Fouad had bought me a bicycle in Bahrain, since they were difficult to get hold of in the Province. In my wildest dreams I had never expected to own a bicycle. Up to then I had been happy just to stand beside a man holding a bicycle, so you can imagine the joy I felt on the day I was given my own. It was the fulfilment of one of the most cherished dreams of my childhood. Uncle Abdulla Fouad started teaching me to ride straight away. I fell off a lot at the beginning and had he not followed behind and caught me, I would have been hurt by my many tumbles. On the first day of my new job I cycled from al-Khobar to al-Dhahran, a journey which took two and a half hours because of the rough road.

As soon as I arrived the American woman asked me to clean the house and wash the dishes, and when I had done what she asked, she began to teach me some words of English. She did this by pointing to an object and saying the word. For example she said 'needle', pointing to a needle, or 'thread', pointing to the thread, and did the same thing with several other words. I found out what the words meant, and then she made me repeat them several times. Although I had previously heard my uncle say some of these words, learning them from someone who had English as their mother tongue was very different to learning from someone who had themselves learned the language from other people. I continued to work in the house and have my lessons. My uncle asked me on an almost daily basis what new words I had learned, and appeared overjoyed when I aired the new expressions, grammar rules and vocabulary. He constantly encouraged me to benefit as much as possible from the experience.

The wife of the American was a good woman who was very kind to me. She often patted me on the head affectionately and in time I almost began to regard her as a mother figure. When I did my work well, she gave me a tin of milk as a reward. Soon she was giving me milk regularly, telling me to drink a glass in the morning and one in the evening every day, something I was only too happy to do since I felt that the milk in some way represented a real salary. After four months the American man's contract with Aramco came to an end and he decided not to renew it. I was extremely sad as, with the family's departure, I lost the different way of life I had become accustomed to and people I had grown fond of because of the friendliness they had shown me. But what could I do? It was God's will.

Following page:
The earliest
photograph I have
of myself, taken in
Darain when I was
nine years old.



A Number at Aramco

In 1940, a week after I had stopped working at the American's house, my uncle Abdulla Fouad took me to the Aramco personnel office where he hoped to get me a job, even if it was only as a cleaner or messenger, so that I would be able to improve my English and become proficient in the language. Because of his excellent contacts with many of the staff there, he succeeded in getting me a job as an office boy on a salary of 75 halala a day. My employee number was 3825.

I was later made a cycle boy. My job was to take mail and papers from the main offices and deliver them to the workshops, warehouses, transport depots, clinics, and offices outside the main complex. I worked hard and soon attracted the attention of my bosses, who were always commending me for my efforts. I also became acquainted with other young men who were working for the company – including Abdulaziz a-Mansur, Khalifa al-Majdal, Mahdi al-Bahraini and Sa'ad al-Dosari, in addition to Abdulqader bin Abdulla Abubshait who worked with us as well.

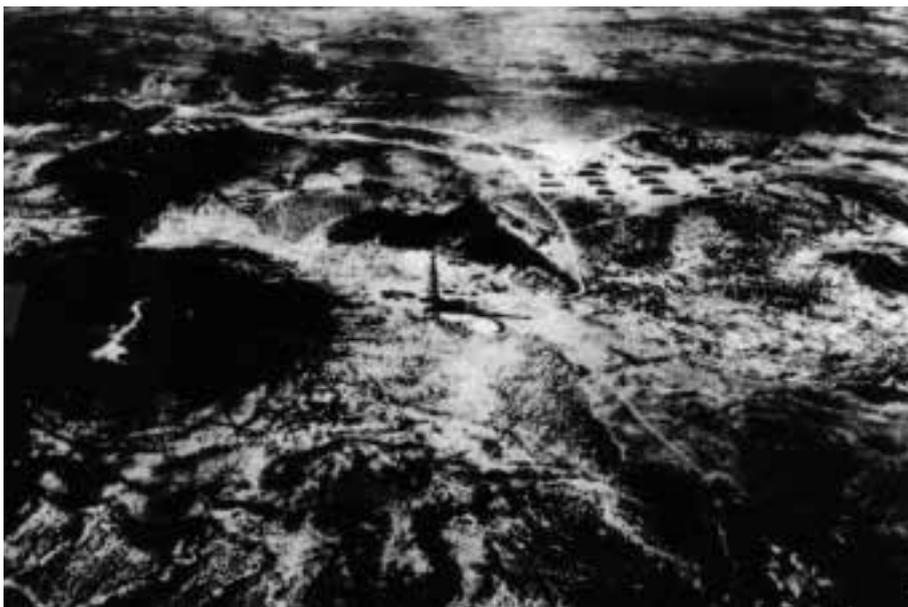
In those early years Aramco represented an unobtainable dream for people of my generation. Like those who came after us, we were well aware of how Aramco had come to be founded. As we know now, it has gone on to become the largest oil company in the world, and put the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia high up on the list of oil-producing and exporting countries.

The discovery of petroleum in the region went back to the autumn of 1920 when Major Frank Holmes, the representative in the Gulf of the British company, the Eastern and General Syndicate, was drilling for water in Bahrain. While he was conducting his operations, he discovered a natant layer of oil below the surface of the earth. In 1923 he obtained the concession to search

for oil in the land along the eastern coast of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as well as in the Neutral Zone, situated between Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. As his company did not possess sufficient money to search and develop the oil fields, however, in 1925 it sold its concession on to the American company, Gulf Oil, for a paltry sum. Soon after this drilling experts and geologists belonging to the company began work in the region. They carried out an initial survey which established the existence of rare grade oil under the Saudi desert.

On 29 May 1933 the late Sheikh Abdullah bin Suleiman, the Saudi Minister of Finance at the time, and Lloyd Hamilton, a representative of Standard Oil of California (Socal), which has since become Chevron, signed an agreement in the royal palace of Jeddah, which was to remain in place for more than sixty years. Under the terms of the agreement, the company received exploration and drilling rights to the majority of land along the Saudi coastline in the Eastern Province as well as the right to drill and extract oil, refine, sell and export it. Socal subsequently signed an agreement with the American company, Texas Oil, which at the time owned the largest fleet of oil tankers and best distribution network in the world. The company which was set up to exploit the oil wealth of the Kingdom was called Aramco, an acronym of Arabian American Oil Company.

Barely four months after the agreement had been signed, the first drilling

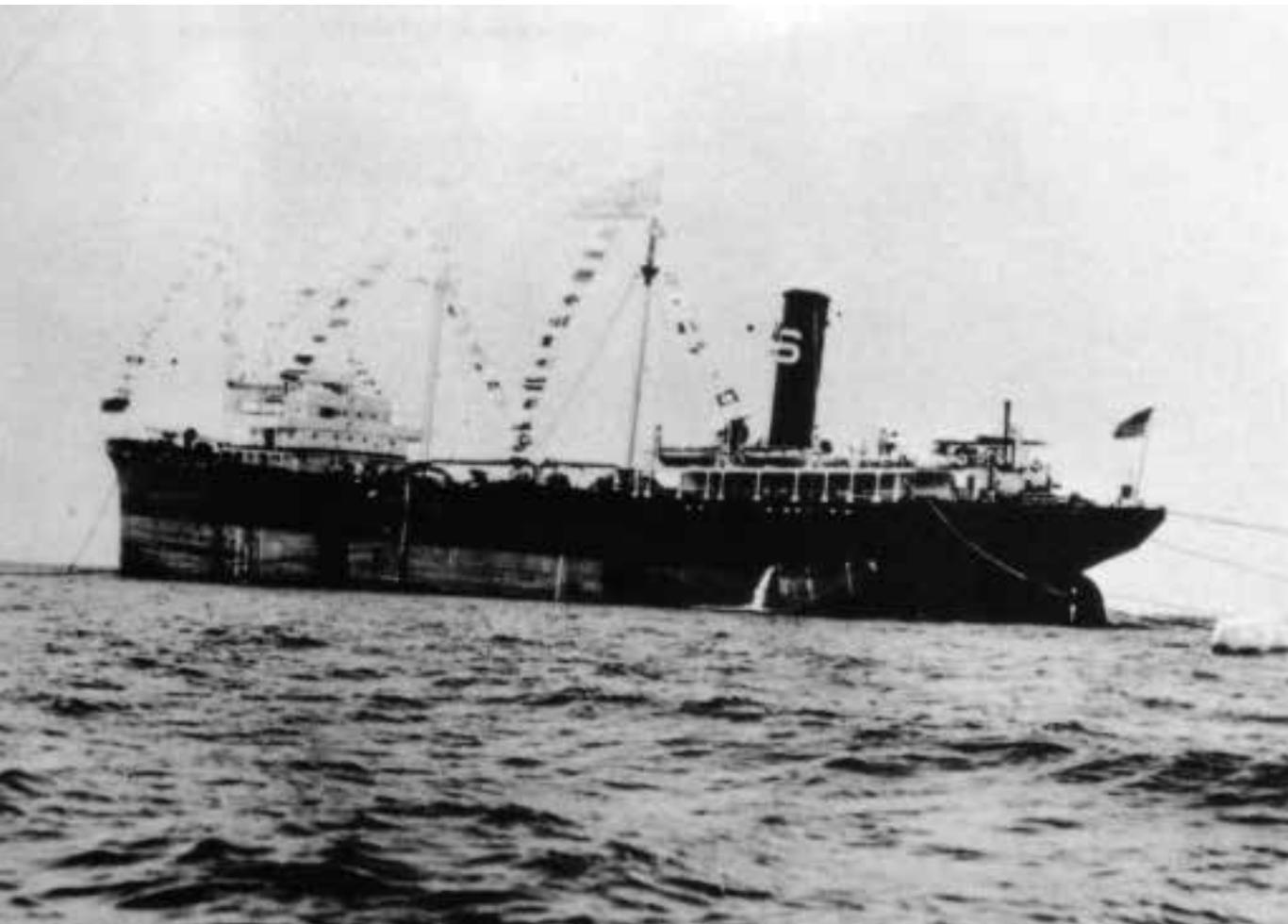


Al-Dhahran, 1935,
showing Well 1 on al-
Dammam Dome.

crews arrived in the Eastern Province. Early indications pointed to the existence of oil in a hilly area, which the oil men had seen from Bahrain and named the Dammam Dome, and the company immediately began to move workers, materials and drilling equipment to al-Dhahran from the USA. Work started on the first Dammam well on 3 April 1935 amid high hopes that oil existed in large quantities, but early results proved disappointing. The well was dry. Over the next couple of years, another nine wells were drilled to the same depth and geological stratum at which oil had been discovered in Bahrain, but the experts appeared to have miscalculated, because there was little to show that oil actually existed in the region.

The directors of the company, particularly those working at the head office in the United States, began to get nervous as the large sums of money they were continuing to invest in the operation showed no visible return. Fifteen

The D. G. Scofield tanker, leaving Ras Tanura port on 1 May 1939 with the first consignment of Saudi crude oil.





months after they had started drilling, they decided to take Well Seven down to a depth of 1441 metres, which was deeper than they had drilled in Bahrain, and in 1938 the crew finally struck large amounts of oil. Initially the flow started at 1,585 barrels a day, but after three weeks, this had risen to 3,810 barrels per day. Two more wells were sunk in the same area, and the age of oil production in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia had begun.

That same year, the company started to export crude oil from the small port of al-Khobar, which served as a storage and freight facility. Oil was transported from the field to the port along a 15-centimetre diameter pipeline, where it was then loaded on to freighters and transported to Bahrain and the Bahrain Petroleum Company. Aramco later developed Ras Tanura as a tanker port and it was from here that on 1 May 1939 the *D. J. Scofield* set sail with the first load of Saudi crude oil, after an official party which was attended by His Highness the late King Abdulaziz Al Sa'ud, may he rest in peace.

The late King Abdulaziz Aal Saud during his visit to the Eastern Province on the occasion of the loading of the first consignment of crude oil on 1 May 1939.

Air Raid on al-Dhahran

The Second World War began on 1 September 1939, when Hitler's troops carried out a bombing raid on Poland. The Nazis had soon extended their influence across Europe and beyond, through military force and a network of spies, who were dotted all over the world. The world war came without warning, and no one knew how it would end. There was a general feeling among workers at Aramco that the coming years would be very bleak and they were much affected by this murderous war which was beginning to wreak havoc across Europe and would soon touch all parts of the world. On 3 September 1939 Britain came to the assistance of Poland and declared war on Germany; soon afterwards, France declared war on Germany in its turn. Poland fell to the Nazi forces. Britain began a blockade of German ports and gradually fighting broke out in many parts of the world.

At that point I had not really grasped what world war meant. In fact, until the incident in al-Dhahran, I had not even grasped what a war was. If you want to understand exactly what was going through my mind, then you must imagine what my life was like at the time. It was primitive, poor and very innocent. We lived peacefully, did our jobs, slept, exchanged visits and treated each other well. The air raid came as a rude awakening.

The explosion occurred on Monday, 19 October 1940, at 5.10 AM. The date has been forever etched on my mind. It was during the holy month of Ramadan when our community was more than usually filled with a sense of harmony, friendliness and compassion. At that time in the morning, people in the village were still asleep, though it was not long before they would awake to take *sabour*, in readiness for the fastday ahead. The town was shaken by the

noise of a loud explosion which could be heard all over al-Dhahran. People were terrified. They froze where they were, incapable of asking what had happened. They were stunned by the noise, thinking perhaps that it heralded the dawning of a new age, and the introduction of technology which hadn't been seen before.

In fact, as we later found out, the explosions had been caused by an air raid, which had been carried out by a Savoia-Marchetti S-82 Italian fighter plane. The dictator Mussolini had sent a fleet of planes to carry out a bombing raid on Bahrain and neighbouring areas, in order to cut off oil supplies to the British and their allies. The planes dropped two bombs near the company offices, and although they didn't cause any real damage, it later became clear that one of them hadn't exploded. I don't believe that Hitler could possibly have imagined that the war he had started in Europe would ignite places as far away as Bahrain and the Eastern Province.

After this incident, Aramco took measures to protect the site, which included the building of air raid shelters and protective walls around the oil wells. They also installed warning sirens and put the control button in the central telephone exchange. In addition, they decided to increase the number of people working in the exchange and appointed a number of extra telephone operators, of which I was one. I was only fifteen years old at the time but I was given the job because of my good English. I was very pleased to have been appointed and little knew what the days ahead held in store for me.

The company also distributed leaflets, which explained what to do and where to go in the event of an air raid warning. A round-the-clock shift system was introduced: in case of danger or an air raid, the telegraph office was charged with telling the person on duty to set off the sirens to warn the employees to go to the shelters.

Dismissed Because of Arsène Lupin

I began my shift at the exchange at eleven o'clock at night and remained on duty until seven o'clock the next morning. Three of us worked the shift and divided up the hours between us. We worked three hours each and then slept for the rest of the night after waking up the colleague who came after us. I was responsible for the period between 2 and 5 AM.

One night, after my colleague had handed over to me, I put the receiver to my ear and then opened a book of Arsène Lupin stories, since I was convinced that there would be no phone calls at that time of the night. However I soon began to feel tired. I yawned and yawned until my eyes watered and my eyelids were puffy and red. I wanted to lie down again and go back to sleep. I don't know if what happened next came about as a result of some inner wish but suddenly I was overcome by tiredness. If the matter had ended there, then the incident wouldn't be worth mentioning, but unfortunately, I inadvertently placed my arm on the warning button, thereby setting off the alarm and causing the siren to sound across the compound.

The wailing terrified all those who heard it. Some people rushed out to the shelter, others tried to phone us to find out what was happening, but all three of us were fast asleep and dead to the world. Suddenly I felt as if a wall had collapsed on me and struck me a blow on the head. I came to and realized that rather than being hit by a wall I had just been given a hefty slap by our American boss who was speaking into the telephone and calming people down on the other end of the line. He then headed for his office where he found my colleagues fast asleep and gave them a nasty kick in the stomach.

Of course the expected happened. Nevertheless it still came as a severe

blow and hit me harder than anything that had happened in my entire life. At seven o'clock in the morning, the boss told us to report to the personnel office. When we arrived, we were given our notices of final dismissal, and told that we could not work for the company again. It seemed like the end to me. I cried bitterly and bemoaned my bad luck. My mind was a jumble. I had been dismissed from my job at Aramco. Can you imagine what that meant for a young boy like me, who had such high hopes of working for this company? I thought about my Uncle Abdulla Fouad and wondered what I would say to him. How could I explain my dismissal?

But regrets wouldn't get me anywhere. Unfortunately the matter didn't end there; when I was being given the wages that were due to me, I saw a phrase written across my file that only added to my misery: 'Forbidden to work for Aramco again.' I was overwhelmed with feelings of bitterness and despair. I got on my bike and began pedalling towards al-Khobar. I could barely see the road in front of me, as my eyes were swimming with tears. I had lost the future I had longed for, the dream that I had invested so much hope in. I had lost everything. As I was telling my uncle about everything that had happened, I felt completely crushed. Although he was unhappy about the situation, he showed me how to be strong in the face of disaster. He lost no time in trying to get me reinstated and went to the office the following day. But the seriousness of what I had done proved too much and his efforts were unsuccessful. I was forced to accept the situation.

Return to Bahrain

After being dismissed from my job I remained at my mother and Uncle Abdulla Fouad's house in al-Sabikha. It was near my uncle's office in the port at al-Khobar and I fell into the habit of taking him his coffee and tea during the day in place of the soldier who usually fetched them from the house. My uncle went on teaching me rules and simple expressions in English whenever he had the time, but it soon became apparent that, although the situation suited me, I didn't suit the situation.

One day, after a month and a half had passed, my uncle sent the soldier to the house as usual to fetch his tea and coffee. I told him to go back to the office and said that I would bring the drinks over myself. He ignored me however and appeared determined to take the tea and coffee back with him. I said something and then he said something. I shoved him in the chest and he pushed me in the face and soon we were fighting for real. I didn't realize how violent I could be until I started laying into that soldier. I took out all the anger and rage I'd been feeling since leaving Aramco on him and punched him repeatedly.

The soldier went away and told my uncle what had happened. When I arrived at his office with the tea and coffee he immediately began to hit me, in front of the soldier. The people who were in the office tried to hold him back but he wouldn't let me go on my way, and attacked me again. They intervened again and this time were able to get me away from him and take me back home. When I told my mother what had occurred, she was extremely shocked and tried to point out the error of my ways. She was in a difficult position, caught between a son who represented her future and a husband who guaranteed her

present, and was powerless as a result. She was a simple woman who possessed few resources with which to fight against feelings and circumstances.

The matter did not end there. When my uncle arrived home, his face was still suffused with rage. He told me to get my things together. 'I've decided to send you to Bahrain to live with your father,' he said. 'You have become more and more of a problem and as far as I can see things will only get worse. Perhaps you need to experience how difficult life can really be, as you haven't learned anything up to now; you do not worry, you do not pay attention, your ability alone will decide if you survive or not. For it is written that ships that come through the storms will last for many years.'

I began to cry and begged him not to send me to Bahrain. I apologized over and over again. I had never thought of living away from my mother and even the idea of leaving Uncle Abdulla Fouad was unimaginable. Although I knew that I had a father and brothers elsewhere, I regarded him as my father. I was strangely fond of him and was used to his loud voice and sharp tone. The thought of being away from his gentle touch unbearable. He had always been someone to lean on, someone to look to for help in times of crisis. My mother started to cry in her turn and pleaded with him to have mercy upon me, but he refused to give in to her or go back on what he had decided. His mind was made up. This was an even worse calamity than being dismissed from my job at Aramco.

The next day my Uncle Abdulla Fouad took me to a *nakhuda* who was about to sail for Bahrain and paid him to take me to my father's house in Rafa' al-Sharqi village. In addition he gave him a sum of money which was to be given to me when I reached my destination. In Bahrain, the *nakhuda* rented a donkey and mounted me on it and we set off for Rafa' al-Sharqi. When we arrived at the village, he asked the people the way to my father's house, and they pointed it out. I was overcome with dread, bewildered and suspicious of everything about me. My legs felt as if they were too weak to carry me and my heart beat as violently as if I had come face to face with a terrifying wild animal. I wished the earth would open and swallow me up to put an end to my agony.

Suddenly I was standing in front of the house and the *nakhuda* was knocking on the door. It opened and my father's wife appeared. After greeting me, she told me that he was away from home at the moment, but she received me

nicely and took me in. When my father and brothers finally returned they were very happy to see me. They made me very welcome and their kindness helped soothe my broken heart. They did their best to ease my despair and sense of defeat, but despite their efforts, I was unable to get the image of my gentle mother out of my mind. I couldn't stop thinking about her nor about my Uncle Abdulla Fouad, with whom I had lived for the past seven years and from whom I had learned so much. In the days that followed, I suffered a great deal of bitterness, but as time went by I made an effort to forget. My father tried to help me adjust to my new life. He enrolled me in Rafa' al-Sharqi school, which I attended with my brothers Sa'ud and Mohammad.

Belgrave and I

In the middle of 1942 I told my father that I wanted to work and asked him to help me find a job. We set off for Manama, and went to the area of the town where members of the family lived whom he hoped would help to find me employment. At the time I felt empty; I was having difficulties adjusting to the new environment, for although I was living with my real family, I didn't know them properly. I tried to behave normally, so that they would not be aware of how difficult I found it living in the same house as them, but it wasn't working. Ultimately the only solution seemed to be to find a job. My cousin Issa bin Ibrahim Abubshait, who worked as a guard for the political adviser C. D. Belgrave, proved very helpful. Through his contacts with people working in the Residency, he was able to get me an interview there.

The following day I went to the Residency to meet the man who was responsible for hiring workers. He interviewed me in English and asked me what I could do. When I told him that I had worked as a telephone operator at Aramco, he agreed to employ me in a similar position on a trial basis. I would receive a salary of 21 rupees a month and begin work officially the following day. After that he sent me to the head clerk to complete my paperwork. It was at the beginning of 1943 and although C. D. Belgrave was well known in Bahrain, I knew nothing about him when I started the job or how important he was. This was not surprising. I had a limited education, was rather introverted and was principally concerned with my own family problems.

Although it was some time before I saw the political adviser face to face, I soon found out what he looked like from the picture of him hanging on the wall. In age, he appeared to be a man nearing the end of his forties or beginning his

fifties. He had nice features but his eyes were sharp and sunken and gave him an inscrutable expression, although he seemed to me to have an approachable look on his face. I was therefore surprised to find my fellow workers regarded him with extreme caution. Nevertheless I looked forward to meeting the man whose name was on everyone's lips, so that I could find out what he was really like.

I was the only Arab employed at the Residency. From the first day I felt harassed by my fellow workers who were all Indian and who treated me differently because of my nationality. They disliked me because I worked so hard and were afraid that I might cause them to lose their jobs or bring in my relatives to take their place.

One day I finally came face to face with Belgrave. I was terrified by the sight of him. I saw that he was completely different from his photograph. He had an awe-inspiring gravity and strength of presence which affected everyone around him and made me feel as though I was working for someone who was different from anyone I had ever met before. Although he left a powerful impression on me, he didn't appear to notice me and passed me by without a second glance. I saw him several times after that on the days he came to the office, but his work often took him away and he spent a lot of time elsewhere.

I never felt comfortable in the Residency. Although the house was magnificent and the food was good, I did not feel that I was ever regarded as a person who had feelings and who maybe felt sadness or anger or cried when he was on his own. At the time I was living with my Aunt Mariam and her husband, Uncle Mohammed bin al-Sheikh Sa'ud. My aunt was very kind to me and loved me almost like the mother I had lost.

After I had been at the job for four months, during which time I was made to suffer considerably by my fellow workers, the head clerk summoned me and told me I was being dismissed. I was completely taken aback since I had been working hard and carrying out my job properly. I later learned that my fellow workers had painted a bad picture of me and told the adviser that I was lazy and slow. I do not want to boast of my abilities and this is of course only the outline of what was said. But unbeknown to me, there were people there who were plotting against me and who were able to get rid of me. After I had been dismissed, my Uncle Isa spoke to the officials and tried to get me reinstated but he was unable to get me my job back. There was nothing for it but to return to my father's house in al-Sharqi.

Prison

I began to feel the need to be more self-reliant, for I could not go on being at the mercy of circumstance and fate, forced to accept whatever each day brought. I had to play a role in determining my own future. I asked myself who I was. I couldn't provide a proper answer, because at that time I had no clear identity or specific characteristics. Nevertheless I decided that the time had come for me to take a hand in shaping my own destiny, and a week later I told my father that I was going to look for a job, to which he agreed.

The next day I went to 'Awali, a five-kilometre walk away, where the headquarters of BAPCO were situated and where I intended to apply for work. Once the security guards had let me through the gates, I made for the personnel office and asked to see the manager. I enquired whether he had any vacant situations and told him that I had previously worked for Aramco and at the Residency as a telephone operator. He sent me to the company communications director to carry out the necessary tests. Given my previous experience, I received an excellent report and a recommendation that I be appointed. I returned to the personnel office to complete the process and was employed in the company's telephone exchange with a salary of 45 rupees a month, starting the following morning.

As I left the company's compound and began walking back to al-Sharqi, I was bursting with joy for I had managed to find a job for myself without anyone else vouching for me. I felt I had finally become a man and from then on would be capable of doing anything. I felt as tall as the clouds in the sky. I was so pleased at having found a job that I barely noticed the distance I had to

walk or how tired I was feeling. As soon as I got home, I told my father what had happened and he and my brothers were overjoyed at the news.

The next morning, 12 July 1943, I waited at the bus stop with the other workers and then boarded one of the company buses which would take me to where I was going to work. I had no difficulty in adjusting to the job. The work was very similar to what I had been doing in Aramco. The equipment was virtually the same, as was the working routine. Three of us alternated with each other in working the shifts and there were three shifts a day.

I thought that my luck was finally beginning to turn and that from now on I would be able to realize my potential and get proper respect. But this was not to be, for as before, unfavourable winds blew up around me and the bad luck that seemed to dog my heels wherever I went struck again. One night I was on duty for the first part of the night shift. When I had completed my stint I went as usual to the company boss's office and slept. I had chosen to sleep in this room in particular because it had a thick carpet on the floor. My colleague woke me up in the morning and I went home to my father's house in al-Rafa'.

Almost two hours after I had got home and before I had gone back to sleep, I heard a loud knocking on the door. When I opened it I was terrified to see a car and policemen from BAPCO outside. The policemen told me that I had to go with them immediately and straight away drove me to Manama and put me in a 'detention cell', which scared and confused me even more – particularly as no one would tell me what I had done. I asked the policemen what crime I had committed and why they were detaining me, but they refused to answer. Later the same day my father came to see me. He told me that he had gone to the company to find out why I was being held and had been informed that I had stolen the company director's pen, which he had left on the desk in his office. As I was the only person who had slept there that night, they presumed I was the thief. My father asked me whether I was responsible for the theft. I swore to him that I knew nothing about it and had not even seen the pen.

My father returned to al-Rafa', leaving me alone in my cell. As I sat there I was full of sadness as I thought about the troubles and difficulties that had befallen me without reason or any wrongdoing on my part. I was like a bird that had been robbed of its wings. The whole world seemed to be lying in wait for me and there appeared to be no way out.

I was held for three days, after which the company's security guards came and released me and took me back home to al-Rafa'. Although I was glad to have my freedom back, something which I had been demanding ever since my arrest, I was still unhappy for I had not committed a crime or any punishable offence. The guards explained that the company director wanted me to go and see him the following morning. Apparently he had found the pen in the pocket of a black suit he had been wearing at a dinner party, on the second night after my arrest. I was not surprised that the director had found the pen on the second day of my incarceration but had waited till the following day to have me released – for one simple reason. I was not important or consequential enough to be worth bothering about and did not merit a swift apology or release. That experience taught me something else, namely that the weak had no option but to accept disgrace as they lacked the power to make others respect and honour them.

That night I couldn't sleep. My mind raced with thoughts of the future; I couldn't work in that place any longer or face my fellow workers as I felt that my honour had been besmirched. In the morning I went to the office and met the communications manager. He apologized for what had happened and told me that the company director wanted to see me and apologize himself. He took me to his office and the director expressed his apologies and also said that I would be credited with the three days' pay I had lost while being absent. I almost laughed at the thought of being paid for the days I had missed but then he asked me not to sleep in any of the offices to avoid such a mistake happening again.

I was determined to be independent but was prevented by my straitened circumstances. Instead I opted for a transfer and asked him to move me to a job at the company's oil refinery at al-Rafa', which was nearer my home. He agreed instantly and sent a letter to the personnel office asking that I be given a job as a gauger (a meter or gauge reader at an oil refinery) and I applied myself to the new job.

The Death of Abdulla Fouad

Once I had started work at the BAPCO refinery, I felt relatively content. The job suited me. I began to feel myself again and was filled with a sense that things were proceeding as well as I could wish, given the painful circumstances and psychological separations which had dominated my life during this period.

Although I was able to forget many of the things that had happened in the recent past, I was unable to blank out memories of my Uncle Abdulla Fouad. Sometimes when I had finished work and shut myself away in my room, I thought about the past, and the pleasant and painful things that had happened to me, or more truthfully the painful. For the first time in my life, I realized that pain has a melancholy beauty about it when it becomes a memory. I thought of the incident when I had hit the soldier, which had ended my relationship with my spiritual father Abdulla Fouad. I could still feel the blows my uncle had meted out to me, as well as the kindness and the fatherliness he had shown me. He was a man of contradictions but in the end it was impossible not to love him.

I was filled with a desire to go and see him and talk to him as I had in the past. Maybe he would be pleased with me now that I had started to grow up. But whenever I fixed on a time to go, the pressure of work or something else intervened and prevented me. Fate constantly frustrated me as if to prove how powerless I was.

In the middle of 1944 my Uncle Abdulla Fouad fell ill and was brought to Bahrain for treatment. There were no hospitals in al-Khobar, and when someone fell very ill in the Eastern Province at the time it was normal for their families to send them to Bahrain. My mother stayed behind in al-Dhahran to

wait for news of the man who had protected her in times of deprivation and misery. After enduring the rigours of the journey, my uncle was admitted to the Missionary Hospital where he was immediately operated on for a ruptured hernia. When we learned where he was I had to go to him.

I found it hard to believe that my uncle Abdulla Fouad, who had always seemed rock solid, could now be lying on a bed in the Missionary Hospital, without the strength to stand on his own legs. I was stricken with sadness and couldn't imagine what it would be like to see this man who had been like a giant in my eyes. My family sensed how concerned I was to hear of his illness and my father and brothers decided to come with me to visit him.

I was scared by the sight of him. He lay on the bed unable to move and appeared to be only half in this world. I couldn't believe that life could be so harsh and cruel. I could still remember how he had talked to me on cold dark winter nights and the way he had tried to make me work and get to know the world properly. He had not treated me as a stepson but rather as his own flesh and blood. Tears came to his eyes when he saw me and he cried and so did I.

He was in a bad way. The operation they had carried out on him had not been successful and the doctors did not think he would recover. As there were insufficient beds and other patients waiting for them, the doctor who was treating him asked my father to take him home. So, despite his weak and dispirited condition, we transferred him to my father's house in al-Rafa' al-Sharqi. I stayed up with him for two nights, but it was useless; he was growing worse by the day.

Once, when he was conscious, he entrusted my mother to me and urged me to strive for my future and work, to behave modestly and to love others. When he barely had enough strength to speak, he told me: 'My son, everything comes to an end in life. All of us are nothing but voices. Some are strident, others muffled, some beautiful, others, ugly. Be a man . . . be a hawk. Try to make your way in the world. Work and be cheerful, do your best and watch out for yourself.' Then he closed his eyes and sank into a deep sleep with a contented smile on his face.

On the third night I went to work. My shift began at the end of the night and when I returned in the morning they told me Abdulla Fouad had gone to his Maker. I couldn't believe that my uncle had died. I felt as though I had been struck. I was unable to speak for several minutes. I ran to his room but

when I opened the door, he wasn't there. I realized they had taken him to the al-Haniniyah graveyard in al-Rafa' al-Sharqi to bury him.

I was close to complete collapse. For a moment, everything blurred. The events we had shared since he had married my mother and I had first known him passed disjointedly in front of my eyes. I thought of the candle he had used to teach me by. I don't know why I remembered that candle so particularly. Perhaps it was because they resembled each other.

I ran to the cemetery and threw myself on his grave. I was overwhelmed with grief and wept bitterly. I screamed 'Wake up, father!', but my shouts were blown away by the wind. I bade him farewell. Abdulla Fouad bin Jasim Abubshait had died and his body had been buried but he still lived on in me.

After that I decided to return to al-Khobar to stay with my mother. I resigned from my job and took the money that was owed me. I left for Saudi Arabia after telling my father about my decision, which he agreed was the right thing to do.

I Become a Man

I returned to al-Khobar and told my mother that my Uncle Abdulla Fouad had died. She broke into a fit of weeping and then collapsed. She remained in that state for many days, but God comforted her and gave her the solace of oblivion, which is one of His blessings. Were it not for this, this woman who had endured such pain would have probably died, but she submitted to God's will and to what He had decreed.

As it was impossible for her to live on her own and fend for herself, it was up to me to provide for her, for I was now a young man of nineteen. Naturally, moving to al-Khobar to be with her brought its own set of difficulties. I had to look for another job. I suggested we move to al-Dammam, to live with my grandmother Mariam bin Kulban, and she agreed. When my uncle died, my mother called me 'Abdulla Fouad', as a sign of her loyalty to him and to preserve his memory. From that time on, I was known as Abdulla Fouad.

I asked the customs officer who had been appointed in my Uncle Abdulla Fouad's place to help us take our belongings to al-Dammam. He lent us one of the Aramco trucks, and the following day we moved to my grandmother's house, where her son, my uncle Khaled Abubshait, also lived.

During this period I was becoming increasingly aware that I was now a man, but I was assailed by conflicting emotions. On the one hand I was frightened of what lay ahead, on the other I felt the need to settle down and provide for a future in which I could be financially secure and also have the loving home I longed for, where I could feel at ease and be my true self. Marriage seemed the only way to achieve this and I decided that what I really needed was a wife. But how could I get married when I was so preoccupied with my own and

my mother's concerns? The question had to be addressed. I told my mother what I was considering and she was happy with my decision and gave me her blessing, thinking perhaps that her son had finally become a man.

She asked my Uncle Khaled for the hand of my cousin Mauza, who lived in the same house as us. My Uncle Khaled agreed and my grandmother Mariam blessed the marriage. We decided to postpone it for a time, however, not only because I hadn't found a job yet but more particularly out of respect for the memory of my Uncle Abdulla Fouad, whose death was still so recent.

As time passed my father resolved to reunite the family and take my mother back under his protection. He came to al-Dammam and put the idea to her. She agreed and their marriage took place a short time later. Sheikh Khaled presided over the ceremony and married them at a *majlis*, which was held at my grandmother Mariam's house. I handed round coffee and tea to those attending.

Soon after that my father and Uncle Khaled agreed to go to Riyadh to pay their respects to King Abdulaziz and decided that I and my brothers Sa'ud and Mohammed should accompany them on the journey. We travelled from al-Dammam to al-Ahsa by donkey, which took almost two and a half days, then we rented camels in al-Ahsa and set out for Riyadh. This stage of the journey was much more difficult and lasted for seven days, during which we ran out of food and drink more than once, either of which could have led to our deaths. We finished the water we were carrying in the goatskin bags and all the wells that the guide pointed us to turned out to be dry. We travelled for many long hours without water. It was very hot and we were in the middle of a barren desert. Were it not for the grace of God, we would not be alive today.

Finally we came upon a water hole that still had water in it, although it was green and filthy and full of dung beetles. Despite this the guide drank from it, and my father and Uncle Khaled followed suit after first covering their mouths with their *ghutra* (head coverings). My brothers and I laughed at them at first, surprised at what they were doing, but we ended up copying them because we were so thirsty. Our guide also used the water to prepare some food. After journeying for another day we stumbled across an artesian well which King Abdulaziz had ordered to be dug to provide water for travellers and their camels and other livestock. We drank our fill and prepared our food and felt life flow back into us.

When we arrived in Riyadh my father and uncle went to pay their respects to King Abdulaziz, who ordered that they be given money and somewhere to stay. However, when we had been in the city for three days my brothers and I felt really homesick for al-Dammam and asked my father to let us return. He tried to convince us to stay on but finally gave in, and asked one of the officials at the King's palace to help us. We were given a lift on the lorry which took mail from Riyadh to al-Dammam and brought petrol back on its return journey, and we arrived in al-Dammam three days later. My father and Uncle Khaled remained in Riyadh for another week.

On their return I asked them to fix a date for my marriage and they decided that it could take place immediately. The preparations were made and I was married that same week in September 1944. It may seem odd that I agreed to get married even though I didn't have a job. I wanted a woman to share my life with, a wife who would assuage my loneliness, for I felt very isolated and strangely alienated from the rest of mankind. I wanted to feel that I was the same as other men, that I had a house of my own that I could come back to, and a wife who would be kind to me.

Marriage was regarded as an important way of maintaining relationships within the community, and the many customs and traditions connected to it reflected that. The situation was very different to that at the end of the twentieth century and cannot be compared. For example, the father felt that it was his responsibility to find a bride for his son, and the engagement would usually take place when the young man had attained his majority. The bride always came from within the family and would be known to the bridegroom's family. The marriage contract would be complete when the *mamluk* (the one contracting the marriage) was summoned to the bride's father's house and the marriage was performed. The girl's opinion of her future husband was not taken into consideration. It was also customary for the bride to go into *pardah* before the marriage and to be seen by no one apart from young unmarried girls.

At the time a dowry was anything between 30 and 100 riyals. The bride's trousseau would be carried to the bridegroom's family house in a wooden chest especially made for the clothes and the gifts she would have been given at the *sabahiyya* (morning ceremony), and which also contained nuts and almonds. A feast would be held for the guests, for which one or two sheep were killed.

Gold jewellery also played an important role in the wedding ceremony because it demonstrated how rich the bridegroom was.

At the beginning of October 1944 my father and Uncle Khaled decided to return to Bahrain in search of a better livelihood and to buy a couple of houses in al-Rafa' al-Sharqi. Because I didn't have a job I decided to go with them. My new wife accompanied me and we lived in her father's house in al-Rafa' al-Sharqi.

An Uncertain Future

As soon as I arrived in Bahrain I began searching for work and soon found a job as a gauger at the oil refinery near al-Rafa' on a salary of 45 rupees a month. Things went on as they had before. Life was difficult and I found it hard to get by. I had to face up to reality. After I had been working at the oil refinery for a short time, my wife fell pregnant. When I first heard I was overjoyed but my feelings soon changed when I began to think about the future. I felt confused. My happiness was tinged with fear and my hope with despair. I couldn't see how things could change if I remained where I was, so I began to search for a way out. After a lot of thought I decided to return to Saudi Arabia to look for a better job, so I resigned from my post at the oil refinery at the beginning of 1945. When I told my wife, my father and my uncle what I had decided, they didn't stand in my way but wished me luck instead.

When I arrived in al-Khobar I went to see my grandmother Mariam in al-Dammam. I spent two days there before visiting the Saudi Agency, which was responsible at the time for overseeing financial and customs matters and issuing work permits for Aramco. Given the severe shortage of people who were able to type in two languages, I found a job as a typist in English and Arabic quite easily. I started the job immediately, but the work didn't really suit me. I still had dreams of a brilliant future in which I would amount to something and make my name known, so after two months I tendered my resignation.

I felt I had lost my way and plunged into a deep depression. One of the main things that can strike a man down is not finding a job that will help him to live. I gave a lot of thought to where I could work. I didn't have many choices. In fact they could barely be counted on the fingers of both hands. It

was very clear that the future at the time lay in Aramco. The company had a large workforce and their employees received good salaries and benefits. Oil was increasingly important and investment was pouring in – particularly with the end of the Second World War, which finally came about in 1945 with victory for America and her allies, though only after five years of terrible destruction in which many countries were ruined.

How could I get back into the company again? I hadn't forgotten how I had been dismissed for setting off the warning siren accidentally and declaring a Second World War, nor the nightmare I had gone through because of Arsène Lupin. I felt highly frustrated and wondered how I could work for the company again given that the phrase 'Forbidden to work in Aramco again,' was stamped across my file. But I didn't give up like I usually did and I was lucky. Fate intervened in my life during this period in a way that I could not have imagined.

The story begins when I walked from al-Dammam to the Aramco offices in al-Dhahran. I made for the personnel office and initially stood fearfully in front of the window, unsure of what to say. I was so nervous that my legs were shaking and my limbs trembling. I tried to change my shape and appearance so that no one would recognize me. Suddenly the window opened in front of me, taking me by surprise, and one of the clerks asked me why I was standing there. I told him I wanted to work for the company and that I had good English and could type. He asked about my previous employment. I told him what skills I had and where I had worked before. He then asked me again if I had ever worked for the company. I told him that I had recently arrived from Bahrain and that I hadn't worked for the company before. I tried to remain calm. I didn't want to give myself away or make him suspect me. I suggested that I speak to the head of personnel and tell him what skills I had to offer.

He took me to meet an American man called Mr **Zadorkin**. After giving me a test, he pronounced himself very pleased with my performance and asked whether I had worked for the company in the past. This time I told him I had and gave him the number I had held before. Personnel files, in particular those belonging to people who were forbidden to work for the company again, were usually returned to the personnel department, but for some reason my old file had disappeared and they were unable to find it. I don't know what happened to it. Could such an important company as Aramco have lost my

file? I decided that fate had intervened to save me. They immediately issued an order to take me on, on a salary of 560 riyals a month.

I was very pleased to return to Aramco and determined that I would make up for what had happened to me before. The world seemed to be smiling on me again. The bad luck that had dogged me for so long seemed to have abandoned me. I resolved to profit from the opportunity and avail myself of every chance I had. I had to be Abdulla Fouad and everyone would take note of my name.

Once I was appointed to the job I moved to al-Dhahran where I had my own room in the accommodation reserved for the workers. I made my own food, washed my clothes, cleaned my room and saw to everything that concerned me personally. It was my first practical experience of life and, although I was working for Aramco, life was far from luxurious. Most of the time I ended up eating *'adis* (lentils), which I made for breakfast, lunch and supper and had with bread. I had learnt to cook the dish from my uncle Abdulla Fouad and applied myself to it until I felt in need of a change, but change was not so easily come by. I wished I was richer so that I could get what I wanted, eat what I wanted and enjoy whatever the world had to offer, but that seemed a long way away – more like a hazy dream than anything else, a daydream. For the time being everything began and ended with *'adis*.

It was about this time that I received the terrible news from Bahrain that my wife Mauza had died. My Uncle Khaled sent a message with someone who was coming to al-Dammam. I asked this person what had happened and he told me that she had died in childbirth after giving birth to a daughter. It had been too difficult to take her to the Missionary Hospital. I mourned the young woman deeply and felt intensely sad at her death, for she had always encouraged me with loving words. Joy at the arrival of my first child was tempered by sadness at her mother's death, but as time went by I realized that God had been kind to me because of my youth and had compensated me for the loss of my wife by giving me a daughter in her place. I was truly happy for that.

I immediately went back to Bahrain to mourn her officially, though of course I had missed the burial. When I arrived I held my daughter in my hands and felt a sense of fatherhood for the first time and a strange affection for the little scrap of flesh I was holding. I lifted her up to the sun and told her, 'You're the daughter of Abdulla Fouad. You will be proud of your father

one day.' I had to think of a name for this unfortunate child who had lost her mother on the day she was born, and decided to call her Aneesa, though I'm not sure why.

Not long afterwards I asked my Uncle Khaled if I could marry his younger daughter, as I thought that I needed a woman to look after me and care for my daughter. He refused however, because of bad feeling that existed between him and my father at the time, and urged me to look for another girl instead. Seven days later I returned to al-Dammam, having given Aneesa into the care of her aunt on my mother's side. An aunt is like a mother as the saying goes.

A Journey of a Thousand Miles

I worked hard at my job, often putting in more than ten hours a day and my efforts and long hours of patience were soon noted by my boss Mr **Zadorkin**. Only a week after I joined the company he began to ask me to carry out various tasks for him because of the confidence he had in my work and the meticulous manner in which I carried it out. I continued to work hard and gained a lot of experience. Gradually my views on life changed. My options and goals became clearer to me; I knew that I wanted to become powerful.

After I had been working in the personnel office for a year and a half the company opened a new office in Rahima on the eastern shores of Saudi Arabia beside the Arabian Gulf. The town of Rahima as it then was bears no comparison to what it is today. In the middle of 1946 it was only a small place and the few people who lived there worked at the Ras Tanura refinery. Mr **Zadorkin** appointed me to head the new personnel office. I was very pleased with my success. I had been promoted to a higher position and my salary had gone up to 750 riyals a month.

I transferred to Rahima when my appointment came through. My work essentially consisted of recruiting and processing all matters relating to new recruits. I directed them to the various offices and also supervised any changes among staff and workers. Although this was probably the first time I had held such an administrative post, I was not particularly conceited about it because I was still aspiring to something better. I remained on very friendly terms with the other employees and did not dismiss anyone from the company nor try to harm anyone, trying to ensure that anyone who suffered an injustice was



fairly treated. I gave the more slovenly and negligent workers several chances to prove themselves in different places, something I was very successful in.

With the help of five other employees who worked under me, I carried out my job effectively. I rarely left until work was officially over for the day because I loved it so much. I stayed in my office until I had completed everything I had to do, and thereby gained experience in in all aspects of the company. Soon after this I was given the task of translating contracts and journals since the company needed people to check business contracts. I succeeded in my new job and benefited from it, learning about everything connected with business, be it small or large.

(Top) Sitting in front of my office in Ras Tanura with one of my staff, 1946.

(Bottom) Pictured with Murshid al-Dosari who owned a shop selling spare parts for cars, 1946.



Following Page:
Al-Dhahran, 1946.



The First Project

By the middle of 1947 I was beginning to feel constrained by the job. I was working for a fixed salary which did not match my ambitions and abilities and was tired of being an employee. I wanted to work for myself. I decided to take on private work with a view to becoming a businessman in the future. I had gained good experience and felt ready to do so. I asked my boss, Mr Howards, to help me obtain contract work from the company, which was now using Saudi contractors to carry out its projects. He promised to try and help me on condition that I remain in my current job. I agreed and at the end of that



Standing beside my second car, a Buick, which I bought in Bahrain.

year he helped me obtain a small contract washing company cars from the Rahima district.

This was the first contracting job I had undertaken and the first step on my thousand-mile journey. I was extremely pleased with it and felt that it would be the beginning of something good. I went to my uncle Suleiman Khaled Abubshait and suggested that he come in with me on the project. He agreed to my proposal and moved to Rahima where he lived in my tent for the duration of the contract. The work was comparatively easy and proceeded satisfactorily. We tended to work at night, which enabled me to carry on with my proper job in the morning. The twelve workers we employed worked a shift system, with 'four on each shift' and as a result we were able to wash ten cars a day.

The enterprise proved profitable, which made me more determined to work for myself and give up my job. I told Mr Howards what I wanted to do but he urged me to bide my time and not to be in too much of a hurry. He asked me for time to think it over and said that he would give me an answer later.

That same year I used the profits I had realized from my first contract to buy a new Bedford car for 9,000 riyals from the Abdulaziz al-'Ujaji & Brothers Company in Bahrain. I shipped it to al-Dammam and was among the first people not only in al-Dammam, but in Rahima and Ras Tanura as well, to own a private car. After that I bought a Buick from Bahrain which I also shipped to al-Dammam.

In January 1948 I was involved in an accident which almost cost me my life. Two weeks after I had bought my new car, a group of people who worked for the customs office in al-Qatif came to see me. After introducing themselves, they asked if I would drive them over to Ras Tanura where an English ship had docked at the port and was selling tinned vegetables, cheese, biscuits and other English products. I agreed to take them and we set off for Ras Tanura.

On the way we came across an area where workers from Aramco were erecting electricity pylons. One of the men from the group had the job of raising a red flag to warn oncoming vehicles when the giant crane was crossing. Unfortunately we didn't see him and only realized what was happening when we were adjacent to the crane. The driver was lowering the upper sheave in preparation for driving under the electric cable at the very minute we drove in front of him. He was unable to control the sheave, which came crashing down onto the car. I received a crack on the head as did the other passengers

and we were taken to the Aramco hospital where we stayed for a week, only leaving after we had received the necessary treatment.

When I went back to work I asked Mr Howards what he had decided about my position and was surprised when he told me that he had arranged for me to carry out a 17,000 riyal contract at Ras Tanura port. Once again, however, he made it a condition that I remain at work until I had finished the contract. As I felt that matters were proceeding well and that they would get better, I agreed.

I went to Bahrain and found the twelve men I needed to carry out the project. At the time, it was common practice for contractors from the Eastern Province to employ workers from Bahrain and they now represented the majority of contract labourers in the region. I agreed to pay them between 150 and 250 riyals a month and to provide them with accommodation. In addition I undertook to supply the tools and equipment they would need to carry out the job. We succeeded in fulfilling the contract within the allotted time and satisfied the Aramco company officials. I realized a net profit of 6,000 riyals on the contract, which was a good sum, everything considered.

In the middle of 1948 I submitted my resignation, although my boss once again tried to dissuade me. This time my determination, coupled with the fact that I had been awarded a subcontract from the office responsible for company tenders to carry out work on the Tapline project, made him accept my resignation.

Pictured with my brother Sa'ud (in the middle) and a number of Aramco employees at Ras Tanura, 1948.



Following Page:
Aerial view of al-Dammam in 1948. The town is beginning to get bigger as the region develops.



Tapline: The Early Years

After successfully completing the Ras Tanura port project I was awarded another contract by Aramco, this time on the Tapline project, in what was to be the start of my true career. Fellow contractors included Suliman Olayan bin Mutarid, al-Suwaikat, al-Sihati and the joint company of al-Tamimi and Abu Hussein.

The initial phase of the Trans-Arabian Pipeline project (Tapline) began in the first quarter of 1949, when work started on the section of the pipeline which ran westwards from 'Abqaiq in Saudi Arabia to al-Qaisumah. In autumn that same year work started on the section which ran eastwards from Lebanon across Syria and Jordan. The two sections were finally welded together on 2 September 1950 and a few months later the first shipment of Saudi Arabian crude left Sidon, the Lebanese port on the shores of the Mediterranean. The pipeline, which remained in service till 1990, carried a daily throughput of 32,000 barrels a day at the beginning, rising to 450,000 in 1958. It started in 'Abqaiq in the Eastern Province, Saudi Arabia, and completed its journey in Sidon, Lebanon, after passing through al-Qaisumah, al-Rafha, Badanah, 'Ar'ar and Turaif, where the main pumping stations were positioned.

The construction of the pipeline across areas of the desert, had a huge impact on Saudi Arabia, with towns and residential areas later being built along the route, and led to an increase in prosperity. The development of many of these towns owed much to the pipeline as the government had made this a contractual obligation in return for agreeing to Tapline's construction.

The overall value of the contracts put out to tender was 14 million riyals and the project was the largest and most important I had ever undertaken.

Following Page:
(Top) A street in al-Khobar, 1949.

(Bottom) Modern buildings start to appear in al-Dammam.





After winning it I set up tents and shelters on each site to house the workers and technicians I would be employing. The project was too big for me to handle on my own and as I wanted to help my brothers and train them in the work, I went to Bahrain and asked my father, Uncle Khaled and my brothers to move to al-Dammam and run it with me. They all agreed to my proposal, and when they had fulfilled their obligations in al-Rafa' al-Sharqi, came back to Saudi Arabia with me in the middle of 1948.

I was very pleased with their decision to come, especially as it meant that I would now be closer to my daughter Aneesa and be able to see her whenever I wanted. I loved her very much and worried constantly about her when she wasn't with me. I rented two houses, one for my Uncle Khaled and his family, and the other for my father and his two wives – my mother, Hissa, and his other wife, Khadrah – and his children, my brothers Sa'ud Mohammed, Ali, Abdulrahman and Ahmad. I then divided up the work among my brothers and appointed them to specific sites. Abdulrahman and Ahmad were too young at the time, though I took them with me in the car whenever I went to look at the work and see how it was progressing.

I worked night and day, inspecting the sites, supplying everything the workers required, and providing wages or equipment, when necessary. We encountered many difficulties and the job required a lot of persistence, perseverance, strength and patience to deal with them. Things began to go well and we obtained excellent results in spite of the problems we had. Driving, for example, could be particularly difficult. The al-Mish'ab road was often covered with sand, I remember, and always caused us a lot of trouble. When we went to al-Jubail, we had to take strips of iron and wood with us, which we placed under the tyres when the cars got stuck in the sand. It could take anything from three hours to a whole day to free ourselves. It was about this time that I was robbed for the first time in my life. The thief was one of my employees, an Indian in origin who worked as the cashier. He had gone to al-Khobar to cash a cheque at the bank to pay the workers' wages, as people were paid in silver riyals. We had to use a pick-up or lorry to bring the coins back from the bank, which handed the money over in large sacks, containing 1,000 riyals each. We then paid the workers and employees on the various sites.

One day in 1948 I gave the man a cheque for 18,000 riyals as usual, which he was to cash and bring back to pay the workers. However when cashing the

Previous Page:
I went to Iraq whenever I got the chance if my work took me nearby. These photographs were taken while I was there.

cheque he changed the money into rupees and sailed for Bahrain the same day on one of the launches which plied the waters between al-Dammam and Bahrain. He appeared to have carefully planned the operation since he had packed up his belongings and personal possessions and taken them with him. We waited for him to return, but when he did not come back I began to feel that something was not quite right. The next morning I went to the custom's office in al-Khobar and found out that he had left for Bahrain the day before. We did not hold on to our employees' passports or documents at that time. Of course he went on to India immediately afterwards. From then on I realised I had to be more careful and take the necessary precautions. I thanked God that I hadn't given the cashier a larger sum and went to the bank myself and withdrew sufficient money to pay the wages. As a result of this incident I learned to trust no one except those who had earned it.

Work proceeded satisfactorily and my material income improved substantially. At the beginning of 1949 I again thought about making a second marriage, especially as I really felt in need of a wife to take care of me. My family urged me to go to Bahrain as we didn't know any families with girls of marriageable age in al-Dammam, and my father agreed to accompany me on the journey. When we arrived in Manama we were taken to a matchmaker. We told her the kind of girl we were looking for and she asked us to wait for a couple of days while she made enquiries. Three days later she came back to us and said that she had found a good family who went by the name of Hassan Satir.

We went with her to see the family, and the father, who was blind, received us properly and made us welcome. We asked for his daughter's hand and he consented on condition that she remain in Bahrain after the wedding, to which we agreed. The following day we brought a dowry of 2,000 rupees as well as a pearl, worth 1000 rupees, which would pay for the clothes and marriage feast. We arranged for the wedding to take place a week later and I remained in Bahrain until then, when I married Mariam and settled down to married life again. A week later, I decided to return to Saudi Arabia to carry on with my business and told my wife that I had to leave. She was determined to come with me and asked me to go with her to tell her father. He gave in to his daughter's wish and didn't oppose her. In al-Dammam we initially lived with my father, after which I rented a house especially for us.

Following Page:
In front of the
translation office
talking to a friend,
1950.



My wife became pregnant in 1950, and on 9 July 1951 God blessed me with a son. I called him Fouad in memory of Abdulla Fouad, the man who had had such an influence on my life and whom I had never forgotten. The birth of my son brought me great joy and ensured that my name would live on. My wife Mariam was a great support to me. She stood by me in the difficult times we went through and made things easy for me; she brought me comfort and happiness and later bore me three daughters. She cared for the children and took some of the responsibility off my shoulders, particularly when I was away at work at the beginning. I never worried about the children when I was away for long periods. She looked after them and it is true to say that, had it not been for her support, I would not have been able to realize my dreams.

As I grew better off I began to expand my business interests. My father and I agreed to buy houses and other forms of property. We used some properties for our own purposes and rented out the remainder. At the end of 1950 I opened a translation office in al-Dammam and concluded an agreement with Aramco to translate selections from newspapers, cables and private contracts for them. I staffed the office with Bahraini and Palestinian translators and also asked my brother Ahmed to work there as a typist. In addition, I opened a carpenter's shop as there was no such thing in the town at that point, and brought in two men from Sudan to operate it. I also carried out several other projects for Aramco and the railway at the same time. I bought an electric generator from Bahrain, which we used for work but also hired out to people who lived near the workshop as we didn't have electricity in al-Dammam at the time.

The blow fell in 1951. We had completed work on the Tapline contract and the employees and labourers had returned to al-Dammam to collect what was due to them. They handed over the IOU vouchers I had given them instead of silver riyals, which could not be kept safe in the remote places they were working. I was stunned at the size of the sum I owed. I did not have sufficient funds to cover it. I was genuinely puzzled about what to do and went to my father and put the problem before him. We agreed to sell the property we had bought to pay them the money they were owed. I closed the translation office and sold the carpentry workshop for the paltry sum of 4,000 riyals to the Sudanese man, Mohammad. My grandmother Mariam bint Kulban also sold her house for 23,000 riyals and gave me the money so that I could pay off my outstanding debts. I have never forgotten what she did for me. She was

an outstanding woman. I decided to work for myself after this, and dissolved the partnership with my brothers. I had emerged from the most important contract in my life with nothing to show for it except the experience I had gained about doing business.

Apart from Sa'ud, who continued to pursue a business career, my other brothers found work at the General Railways Corporation in 1952. I was greatly affected by my losses, but I had learned an enormous amount from the incident, and was not going to allow despair to get the better of me. Instead I was determined to build myself up again.

For a time I pursued various trading ventures but before long I fell victim to a fraud perpetrated by a crook from Dubai whom I had gone in with on a deal to export copper and ironware from Saudi Arabia. He possessed a licence which he had obtained from Prince Sa'ud bin Jilawi, Ruler of the Eastern Province, may God have mercy upon him, which permitted him to export copper and iron from Saudi Arabia. He used this licence to lure me into the trap. I agreed to put up the money up for the purchase. He would then buy the goods and export them from Saudi Arabia. I paid 55,000 riyals and we bought copper and iron scrap. He persuaded me to export it to Bahrain where it would be easier for him to handle. I agreed in good faith, but he cheated me and sold it on to some Indian traders, who loaded it onto a ship sailing for India. I learnt afterwards that he had made a huge profit on the transaction and gone back to Dubai.

I was shocked when I heard what had happened and didn't know what to do. I sought advice from various people who recommended that I go and see the late Sheikh Rashed bin Maktoum, ruler of Dubai, who might show me a way out of my problems. My father went with me and we took the small plane that flew from Bahrain to Dubai once a week. We arrived at Dubai airport, a rather grand name for the collection of wooden boxes and dirt runway, which was all that was there at the time, and were told by customs officials that we needed a visa to enter Dubai from Bahrain. The countries were British protectorates at the time. There was nothing for it but to return to Bahrain the same day. We were almost dead from exhaustion and depression but the money we were seeking was worth tiring ourselves out for. We obtained our visas the next day but had to wait in Bahrain for another five days until the next flight to Dubai.



When we arrived in the then small and insignificant town, dependent for its income on pearl fishing, we went to Sheikh Rashed's palace, where we were informed by a servant that the Sheikh only received people in the afternoon. We went to the small hotel which was the only one in Dubai and later in the afternoon returned to the palace, where we found the Sheikh sitting in his *majlis* with four other people.

He was a simple man in character, with no liking for outward display, and was generally deemed to be an impartial judge. I recounted the story of how I had been cheated and asked him to see that justice was done. He told me that the man I was talking about was a swindler and had cheated many other people. Although he had been summoned to appear many times, he had never shown up. He suggested that we report him when we returned to Saudi Arabia and have him arrested if he ever came back. We flew back to Bahrain and from there went on to al-Dammam. The trip had been a failure. We were out of pocket, exhausted, and had lost a lot of time. The thief meanwhile had got off scot-free. We neither saw nor heard from him again and I never got my money back. But I was determined to succeed and this ambition gave me the will to fight back for all I was worth. I worked in many areas but my longing for contract work still caused me sleepless nights.

In 1953 the form of currency then in use underwent a significant change, which helped alleviate the problems from which many people were suffering. For trade the Province had used a number of currencies over the years, which included the Indian rupee and the French Maria Teresa dollar. The Persian tawila was commonly used in al-Ahsa and the majidiya riyal circulated widely after the Ottoman takeover of the region. The most commonly used currency in the period before oil was discovered was the Indian rupee, which was also the official currency in Bahrain and Kuwait.

In 1924 the King Abdulaziz ordered that copper coins be struck in one qirsh, half qirsh and quarter qirsh denominations, which would be used alongside other currencies. Two years later the first monetary system was introduced, based on the Saudi silver riyal. Ten years later a further set of coins were struck which included the silver riyal, the half riyal and the quarter riyal. The riyal weighed the equivalent of 11.66 grams of silver.

Once oil was discovered and revenue from taxes increased, there was an upsurge in the local economy and many new job opportunities were created,

Previous Page:
(Top) At the translation office with other employees. We translated newspaper articles, correspondence and legal documents for Aramco.

(Bottom) I also opened a carpentry workshop. I am pictured here inspecting the work.

but it soon became apparent that the silver riyal was inadequate for large-scale financial transactions. People who worked for Aramco received their salaries in silver riyals, which caused them many problems. According to an official company report at the time, the average weight in silver of a single worker's salary, which he received every two weeks, was 4.5 kilograms. In 1950 the company's wages weighed a total of 60 tons of silver which necessitated special means of transport and guards to secure the money, as well as equipment and workers to carry and store it.

In 1953 the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency started issuing Pilgrimage Cheques, commonly known as 'white receipts', to make transactions easier during the Hajj season. Initially these were for 10 riyals, and 5 riyal notes appeared at a later date. The Pilgrimage Cheques marked the true beginning of the paper currency which is in use today.

Following Page:
Working with the silver riyal caused many problems. In the top photograph, workers from Aramco are loading four million silver riyals onto trucks in al-Dhahran. Below, a group of workers from the company receive their wages at Ras Tanura, 1948.



My First Fortune

Despite my early experiences I went back to working as a contractor as I believed that contracting was best suited to the life I wanted to lead. This was for a number of reasons: not only was it very profitable but it also required something of an adventurous personality and a love of risk-taking, characteristics which I had in abundance. I carried out a number of simple contracts which included the building of several small schools and providing labour for companies working in the region. However I knew that I would be unable to take on larger projects unless I had a partner with the necessary capital to carry them out.

At the time I was looking for projects which matched my financial means but unfortunately the majority of the many contracts that were coming up for tender were connected to the creation of a regional infrastructure and were therefore very large, requiring a substantial amount of capital investment. I realized it would be very difficult for me to carry them out as I possessed little beyond my expertise. I didn't belittle the importance of this, however: it represented the single resource I had in plenty. Although I was under an enormous amount of personal pressure, I refused to succumb to despair and continued to search for suitable projects, believing that I would reach the goal I aspired to.

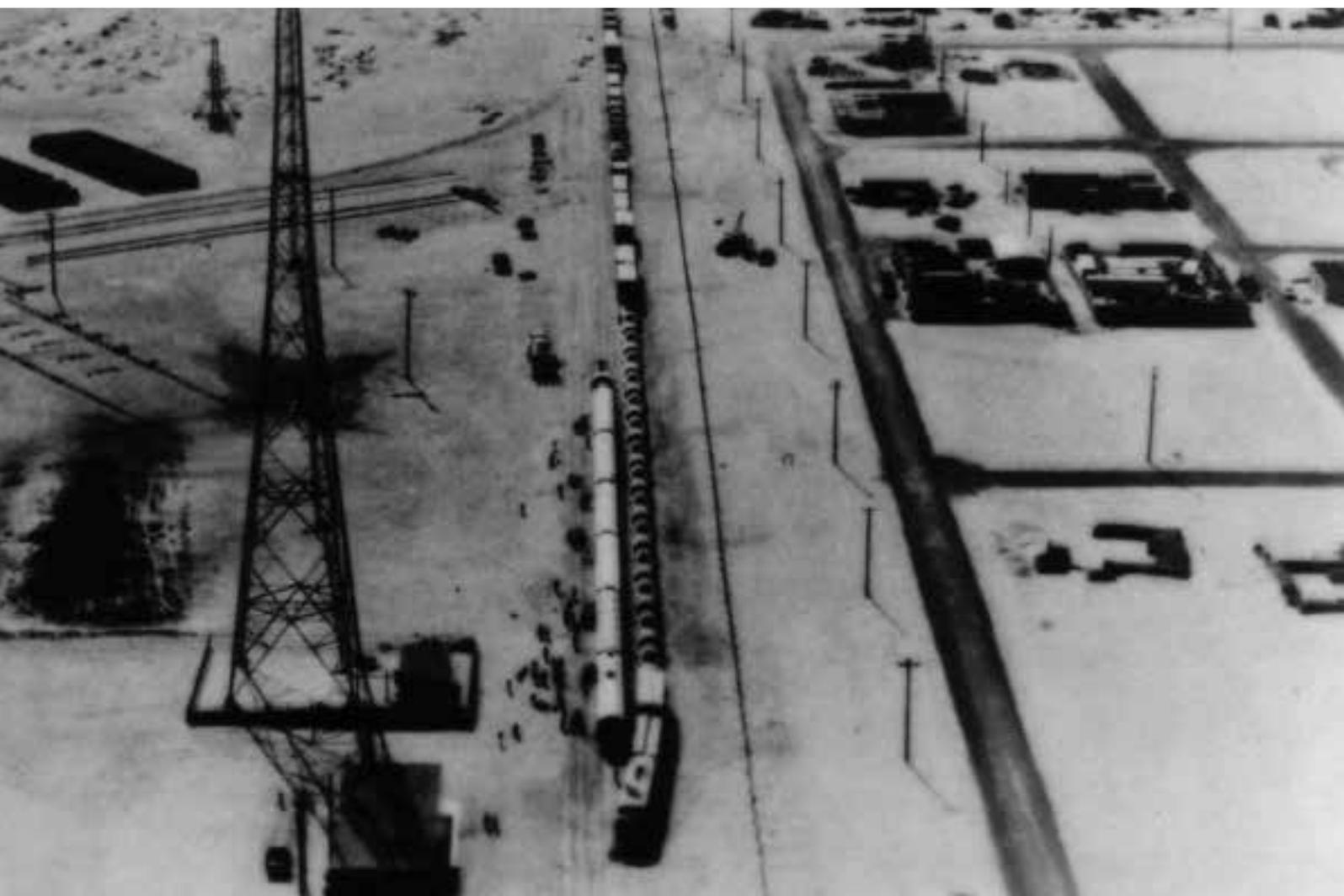
In 1954 I won a small contract from an American company to carry out work on Dhahran airport. I needed 10,000 riyals a week to fulfil it and didn't have the sum in my possession. I thought about going into partnership as this seemed the only possible solution and after looking about me for a time, I agreed to go in with two brothers, Abdulaziz and Sa'ad al-Mojil. Gradually

my financial position began to improve and my life got better. We completed the contract with a profit of 10,000 riyals. This definitely appeared to be a step in the right direction and I was encouraged by it and cautiously optimistic. I began to work harder and did all I could to rebuild myself.

Things took a marked step forward in 1955 when I won a contract from the General Railways Corporation to build the bases for seven telecommunications towers and assemble them in conjunction with an Italian company at a cost of 35,000 riyals per tower. Naturally I was extremely pleased to have won the contract which I hoped would make up for some of the money I had lost in the recent past. I went to Bahrain to look for labourers with the necessary experience for working on such a project, since the installation process required people with the ability to climb up telephone masts. As I have already mentioned, Bahrain was a good source for labour and I was able to find the kind of men I was looking for. We returned to Saudi Arabia and initially began work in 'Abqaiq and al-Dammam, and later moved to al-Ahsa, Haradh, al-Kharaj and Riyadh, to erect the other towers. Having completed the first bases in al-Dammam and 'Abqaiq, we received the first tranche of money, payable under the terms of the contract, which we used to settle debts incurred during the initial stage of construction.

When we started work on the other towers, and particularly while we were carrying out the assemblage and installation process, we began to encounter terrible problems with the weather that we had not factored in at the beginning. Violent dust storms blew continuously across the region and delayed our installation programme by as many as forty days per tower. I had to pay the workers for doing nothing, and was running out of money to pay their wages. The conditions in 'Abqaiq were terrible. We lived in tents and *barastis*. When we went to work in the morning we covered up the rice, dates, and oil to protect them, but when we returned in the evening we usually found the covers had been blown away and the food was full of sand and dust. Because we were so hungry, we ate it without looking at it too closely. It was a truly dreadful time which we bore with fortitude.

With respect to my financial circumstances I was able to raise a loan from Abdulaziz and Sa'ad al-Mojil, the brothers whom I had worked with before, as well as other people I knew at the time. I also reached an agreement with the workforce that I would pay them on a monthly basis, rather than every



week as I had been doing up to then. In spite of these measures, my difficulties continued. I could not meet the wage bill and my other debts increased until I concluded that I would not be able to complete the contract.

I wrote to the railway officials and informed them that I was unable to continue because of the bad weather which had made it difficult for the Italian company to install the towers on time. I said that if I was to continue, I would need them to amend the value of the contract and to give me a sum on account. After they had looked at the situation, they agreed to what I was proposing and raised the amount per tower to 120,000 riyals, which was based on the expenditure on the first two towers that we had completed in 'Abqaiq and al-Dammam.

Once we had come to the new agreement I felt that fortune was smiling on me again. The weather conditions improved, which helped us to proceed with the operation and work as hard as we could. The Italian company we were collaborating with upped the number of working hours a day as they wished to complete the task as soon as possible and return to Italy. I came to an agreement with the workforce that they would work the extra hours and we finished the job in record time, completing each successive stage in a shorter time than the one which had preceded it. After handing over the towers and completing the contract, I realized a net profit of 220,000 riyals, which was a large sum and made me look towards the future and plan for larger business.

I frequently visited the Aramco contract office in the hope of obtaining more business and that same year I applied for a contract to build a number of schools in 'Abqaiq. On looking closer look at the project, I recognized that I would be unable to finance it on my own, so I came to an agreement with Abdulla Hamoud al-Shuwayer that we would make a joint bid for the contract. If we were successful, we would take on the business in both our names, though he would provide the necessary funds for the first stage of the project, which he would then recover from subsequent payments advanced by Aramco.

We started building the school in 'Abqaiq, which I had contracted to build in my name and the school in Ras Tanura, which was in his name. I had employed an excellent Italian engineer called Giacomo **di Nalzo** who worked with me on implementing the 'Abqaiq school project. However we encountered many problems from a Dutchman who was overseeing the project on behalf of Aramco, who hindered the work and caused us heavy losses. Abdullah al-

Previous Page:
(Top) Abqaiq, 1955.

(Bottom) One of
the communications
towers we built in
Abqaiq.

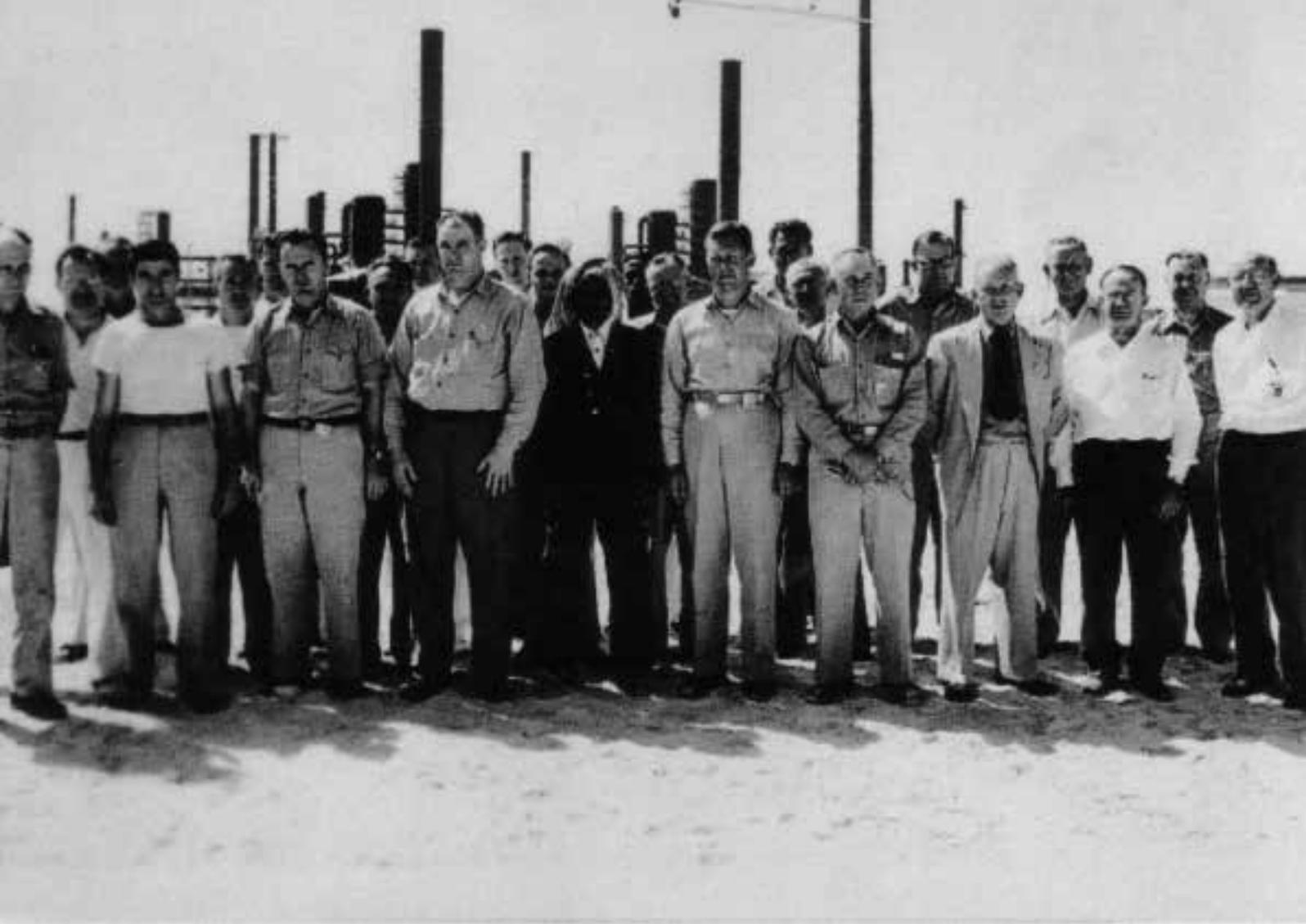
Shuwayer began to appreciate how much he might lose on the project and asked to withdraw from the partnership, to which I agreed. We met and settled our accounts amicably and easily during our first session, with each one taking what was owing to him. I have always believed that a trader's or contractor's reputation is more important than his capital and that you should remember that you may be forced by circumstances in the future to deal with someone whom you disagree with at the present.

Although my partner had withdrawn from the project, I not only completed it successfully but subsequently built an annex to the school at the request of Aramco, making a profit of 50,000 riyals on that project, which to some extent compensated me for the losses I had suffered while building the school.

Following my successful completion of the job Aramco awarded me a 750,000 riyal contract to build a gas injection and separation station at 'Ain Dar. I was extremely pleased – it represented the chance of a lifetime, as they



With my son Fouad, and Abdulhadi and Abdulwahab al-Mu'min, in front of the school in Abqaiq, 1955.



say – and I was determined to carry it out if at all possible since I expected to make a lot of money on it. I threw my energies into the project and agreed to take it on, with little personal investment, relying instead on the payment I would receive from Aramco at the end of each stage of the project. This was an extremely risky undertaking as I didn't have sufficient capital to cover the initial expenditure and outlay, but as always I was prepared to risk everything, spurred on by my wish to make my way in life. With my meagre resources, I began work.

At the beginning everything went very well, but the supervisors from Bechtel who had been appointed by Aramco to oversee the project interfered frequently and kept on asking us to redo parts of the work that we had already completed. I gave in to their demands against my will because in order to execute the contract satisfactorily we had to meet the specifications laid down by the supervising company. However I was running out of assets that could be converted into cash. Without enough money to pay my workforce, I took out a 10,000 riyal loan from a merchant using the deeds to my house

Members of the Aramco verification committee with inspectors from Bechtel.

in al-Dammam as security, after which I returned to 'Ain Dar and paid the workers their wages.

At the same time, I put in a claim to Aramco on account of the delays caused by Bechtel that had prevented me from completing the work, and the heavy losses I had sustained as a result, presenting evidence to support my argument. Consequently, the board assigned by the company to verify the matter amended the value of the contract upwards to 1.5 million riyals. After that I received the money I was owed. I repaid the sums I had borrowed and emerged with a profit of 450,000 riyals. From then on, things proceeded smoothly and I felt I was finally on the right road. I was awarded successive contracts by Aramco and, although they were only minor projects generating quite small profits, I did not mind particularly as the most important thing for me at this stage was to succeed in what I was doing and gain a secure footing in the marketplace.

Following Page:

(Top) In Mohammed Saleh al-Damami's room, 1957. He worked for Aramco in al-Abqaiq.

(Bottom) In front of the house I built in al-Kahraba' district in al-Dammam. I bought the land for 10,000 riyals and my workers constructed the house in 1957.



A Second Wife

I decided to get married again and, as I wanted my second wife to be Syrian or Egyptian, I went to a Palestinian colleague of mine called Hashem **Fatayargy** and asked for his help. He told me he would be happy to accompany me on my mission, and so we left for Lebanon in 1959 and went to Tripoli, where we met Hashem's mother and other members of his family. When we explained why we had come, they suggested that I should wait outside the girls school at the end of the day with a man from the family, and watch the girls as they came out. If I found one of them attractive then Hashem's mother would go and put the proposal to her family once we had found out where she lived.

At first I thought it was a good idea, but after thinking about it a little more, I realized it would not be that easy, so instead I asked Um Hashem to enquire whether any of her relatives had daughters who were of marriageable age. She agreed to do so, and on the third day after our arrival we visited a family who had a daughter fitting my requirements. When the girl appeared, however, carrying a cup of coffee, she didn't appeal to me. We agreed to visit a number of other families so that we could choose someone else but I didn't find the girl I was searching for and decided to try my luck in Syria.

I went to Homs where I called on several more families. As I didn't know the girls' names, I gave each one a nickname based on a particular feature, which would enable me to distinguish her from the others in the future. I also marked them on how beautiful they were. From Homs I went to Aleppo, where I phoned a relative of Hashem's, called 'Usim al-Ubarawi, and told him about my quest. He took me to his home where I met members of his family. His wife told me about some good people who lived near them called

Naqshabandi, who had two daughters whom she described as 'very refined and beautiful'. She said she would ask if they were looking for a husband for one of them.

I left 'Usim al-Ubarawi's house and went for a walk in the town. I looked at the shops and houses, the cars and the crowds and the girls walking along the streets with the utmost simplicity. I won't hide the fact that I was shaken by the way things had turned out initially but I was determined to go on looking. I had the address of a Palestinian family that a friend of mine in al-Dammam had given me and I went to visit them in the hope that they might have a suitable daughter. Their daughter wasn't at home because she worked in a bank, and they asked me to return later. I never did go back, because immediately after arriving at the hotel in which I was staying, I found 'Usim al-Ubarawi, who had been waiting for me for some time. It appeared that his wife had approached their neighbours, who had agreed that we should visit them the following evening. We went and met the family and after a short time a young girl of about fifteen emerged as usual, with a tray in her hand bearing a cup of coffee. She seemed very young and innocent. I nicknamed her 'pony tail' because of the way she wore her hair.

From Aleppo we went to Damascus where we visited three families in one day. When I failed to find the kind of girl I was looking for, I went on to Cairo on my own for the same purpose, for I had heard that Egyptian women were very lovely. I enjoyed wandering the streets of the city. In the 1950s, Cairo was completely different to anything I had ever known. It teemed with all kinds of political and economic ideas; Arabs and foreigners thronged the shops. I saw Arab students at the university who were caught up in the life of the city in a manner that amazed me, for they seemed to have been born to it.

But none of that really concerned me. I was there for another purpose. I was looking for a girl to marry, who would meet my conditions. I visited several families I had been put in touch with through friends and acquaintances, and recorded my observations as I had done before. I saw many beautiful girls and as a result my head was soon spinning. Finally I concluded that I had visited enough families and it was now time to make my choice. I wasn't quite sure how to go about this, as in my opinion most of the girls I had seen were very attractive. In the end I decided to write down the names, or rather the coded

nicknames I had given the girls, on a piece of paper, then close my eyes and pick out one of them. I swore to myself that I would marry the girl I selected.

I wrote down the names and closed my eyes. When I opened them I saw that I had picked out 'Pony Tail', the fifteen-year-old Syrian girl I had seen in Aleppo. I was surprised because I had left her days ago, and now it seemed I would be going back to marry her. I telephoned Hashem and asked him to speak to her family and ask for their young daughter's hand on my behalf, and to let me know as soon as possible what they said. He telephoned me shortly afterwards and told me that they had agreed to my proposal. I went to Beirut and from there to Tripoli to meet Hashem and his family. We went on to Aleppo together and immediately called at the girl's house where her family made me very welcome.

We confirmed the engagement and agreed on everything. I told her mother that I wanted to get married the following day. Despite the shortness of time and the lack of preparations, she helped me arrange everything and on 22 April 1959 I married Suham Naqshabandi. Two days later I returned to Saudi Arabia. I was unable to have a honeymoon, since I had pressing engagements to attend to, which I could not put off any longer. My wife conceived in our first month of marriage and I was blessed with my first daughter by her. We had another six daughters after that, and then God blessed us with a son whom we called Faisal. It is true to say that the happiest years of my life have been spent with Suham, for during her time with me she has not only made me happy but has also more than made up for the many troubles I have suffered in life.

My visit to Aleppo,
Syria in 1959.

Following Page:
(Top) On a visit to
Quanarus village in
Italy, 1959

(Bottom) Visiting
Cairo with my friend
Abdulla al-Nu'aimi,
1957





Tamimi & Fouad

In 1960 I won a contract to build three schools in al-Khobar, al-Dammam and Rahima for Aramco, which I successfully completed in August 1962. Giacomo di **Nalzo** again worked with me on the project and proved to be very competent. The project not only made a lucrative profit but also earned us a good reputation. At that time I was working out of an office I was renting in the Jabr building in al-Dammam.

In the middle of October 1962 I went to al-Dhahran and called in at the contracts office belonging to Aramco to find out what jobs were up for tender. I saw Ali al-Tamimi there who had previously carried out a number of projects for Aramco and asked him what was available. He told me that there was nothing except the pipeline extension through the Haradh desert. As I didn't have the necessary expertise to carry it out on my own, I proposed that we take on the project together and put forward both our names. I told him about the Italian engineer who had been working with me and explained that he was amply qualified to carry out the project. He agreed to my suggestion and added that he had equipment in Riyadh that we would be able to use for the job. We met that same evening in his office and agreed to set up a company that would be called Tamimi & Fouad, once we had won the contract, though we would make a single offer in the names of Ali Abdullah al-Tamimi and Abdulla Fouad. After carefully studying the project with Giacomo di **Nalzo**, we put in a joint bid to Aramco, giving notice of our partnership, and were selected to carry out the contract because our price was the most competitive of the tenders they had received. This project marked the beginning of my collaboration with Ali al-Tamimi, which was to last for more than twenty-four years.



Aramco gave us three months to raise the money and prepare the accommodation, equipment and anything else we needed for the job. Because I had insufficient liquid cash, I was forced to sell eight pieces of real estate to raise the money to pay the first instalment to the Zahid Company, from whom we had bought the heavy equipment we would be using for the project. We intended to pay the remainder of the sum in instalments from money we would receive from Aramco. We bought tents for the labourers and signed a deal with a contractor to supply us with welding machines from a mechanic who would be responsible for maintaining and operating them. We provided everything that would be needed to execute the project, during which time Ali al-Tamimi remained in al-Khobar to oversee the work there.

Before the three months that Aramco had given us were up, we set off for the Haradh desert where we would start work. We pitched our tents near the al-Dammam–Riyadh railway line in order to be close to a source of water. The first section of the railway linking the Eastern and Central Regions had been completed in 1951. It was 562 kilometres long and passed through al-Hofuf, Haradh and al-Kharaj before ending its journey in Riyadh. The project, opened by the King Abdulaziz Al Sa‘ud, had continued to expand until it had forty-three engines and fifty-eight passenger cars and had cut the journey time between al-Dammam and Riyadh to seven hours.

We had many problems to begin with. The welding machines we had hired were not in a fit state of repair and were constantly breaking down. In addition, the Bechtel supervisors who were overseeing the project were continuously finding fault with the welding we had completed, which they said failed to



A group of labourers laying tracks for the railway line between al-Dammam and al-Ahsa, 1951.

meet company specifications. As a result we had to cut the piping and weld the lengths together more than once, which resulted in delays and led to us falling behind in our schedule.

The weather caused us other problems. We had started work in the middle of winter and suffered considerably from the cold, which was bitter in the middle of the desert. At night the water froze over and in the morning the cars, equipment and welding machines wouldn't start or work properly. We had to heat up the car radiators until the ice melted before we could start up the equipment. We wasted more than two hours a day on this procedure, which meant that we fell further behind. In addition the labourers sat idly around the fires we had lit to keep warm and valuable working hours were lost. The project supervisors did not take the difficult conditions into consideration, however, and we were unable to lay the ten pipes a day we were supposed to because of their comments. As a result of the setbacks caused by all these problems Aramco set up a committee to look into the reasons for the delay and ruled that much of our equipment was unsuitable for the job. During all this time, we were paying wages to workers who were not working.

I asked Ali Tamimi to come to the site so that we could study the situation together and discuss ways of raising more money for the project, since the initial sum we had raised had now been used up. At our meeting, we agreed to approach the al-Bank al-Saudi al-Fransi and ask them to finance the project. We went to al-Khobar, where we met the bank officials and proposed that they fund the project. The bank agreed to the loan after a while, on the condition that we put up all the property and equipment we possessed as collateral as well as any moneys that would be paid in the future by Aramco as part of the contract. All the parties involved in the project agreed, and Aramco paid a deposit directly into the bank.

On receiving the first tranche of the loan from the bank, we paid the workers' wages and the instalments that were due on the equipment. We then bought new welding machines to help to speed up the work. Using the experience which we had gained, we were able to increase our output considerably after that and weld thirty to forty pipes a day. This was excellent progress as far as we were concerned, although Aramco and Bechtel wanted more. They asked us to buy more equipment and increase the number of employees, which we were unable to do immediately as our money was almost





finished. Although we had made significant advances in the work, it was still not up to the standard required of us, so we decided to approach al-Bank al-Saudi al-Fransi again for additional money to pay our workers' salaries.

This was a very stressful time. I was living on the site and only rarely managing to get home to see my wife and children. I was involved in every aspect of the job. I acted as foreman and driver, worker and assistant welder and took part in every area where I could play a role. I started work at four o'clock in the morning every day. As soon as I got up, I woke the cooks and ordered them to heat water so that everyone could carry out their ablutions for dawn prayer and then prepare breakfast for the workers. The terrible physical and psychological pressure I was living under mounted. One day I fainted and was taken to the Fakhri hospital in al-Khobar.

After the doctors had examined me and carried out various tests, they told me that I was suffering from heart disease brought on by the stress and dust which was a particular aspect of the region. They advised me to slow down and not work so hard nor expose myself to the dust storms which had caused my illness. I spent ten days in hospital and when I was discharged tried to limit myself to supervising the work from afar. However this proved unfeasible and since it was impossible for me to take a back seat on a project which represented the biggest challenge I had ever faced, I ignored the medical advice and returned to the site to take up the work again. Soon the work began to run more smoothly and I was able to return to al-Dammam. I set up the new

Trade begins to flourish in the region. A street in al-Dammam in 1960.

Previous Page:
(Top) With supervisors from Aramco as preparations get under way on the oil pipeline extension project.

(Bottom) 48. With the Aramco and Bechtel verification committee in Harad. I am third from the right.

offices for the Tamimi & Fouad Company in the First Industrial Area, though I kept on my own office as well, and began to supervise the work from there.

Before we had finished carrying out the project, Aramco invited us to tender for another large private contract, this time to extend the 42-inch pipeline from 'Abqaiq to Ras Tanura. We won the contract and after we had completed work in Haradh transferred our equipment to 'Abqaiq and brought in an additional number of supervisors, clerical staff and labourers. This time we carried out the project very successfully and in record time. After five years of continuous work, we were able to use the handsome profits we had made to pay back the loans which we had taken out from banks and other businessmen.

Growth

Tamimi & Fouad developed rapidly and our business grew and expanded. We started to diversify our investments. We not only bought real estate but also shares in banks, a new departure for us. In addition we established companies, factories and hotels and became the agents for large international concerns. One of our key policies was to provide opportunities for Saudi students and enable them to work in the company during the summer holidays so that they could gain experience and skills. In time our group of companies became one of the most successful in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with a workforce of 7,000 employees who came from twenty-two different countries across the world.

We were the first to set up a division specializing in pipeline extension projects, which had provided the basis for establishing the company in the first place in 1962. The division went on to win more than 60 per cent of all pipeline projects in Saudi Arabia. We also executed numerous projects in different regions in which we used the most up-to-date technological methods and sophisticated means of production. In conjunction with Rashed al-Rashed, Imran al-Imran and Abdulaziz al-Imran, we set up the Company of Civic Works which specialized in the building, maintenance and implementation of projects in the road and sanitation sectors and also undertook a number of major projects, which included the construction of the Dammam 'Ubari Hotel (now the Sheraton). We also established the Basic Chemical Industries Company with Mahna al-Muaybid and Darwish al-Darwish, for the production of chlorine and alkaline base. It was the first company to manufacture chemical materials in Saudi Arabia and soon established a large client base for its products inside and



outside the country, something which has made it one of the most important chemical product distribution companies in the Middle East today.

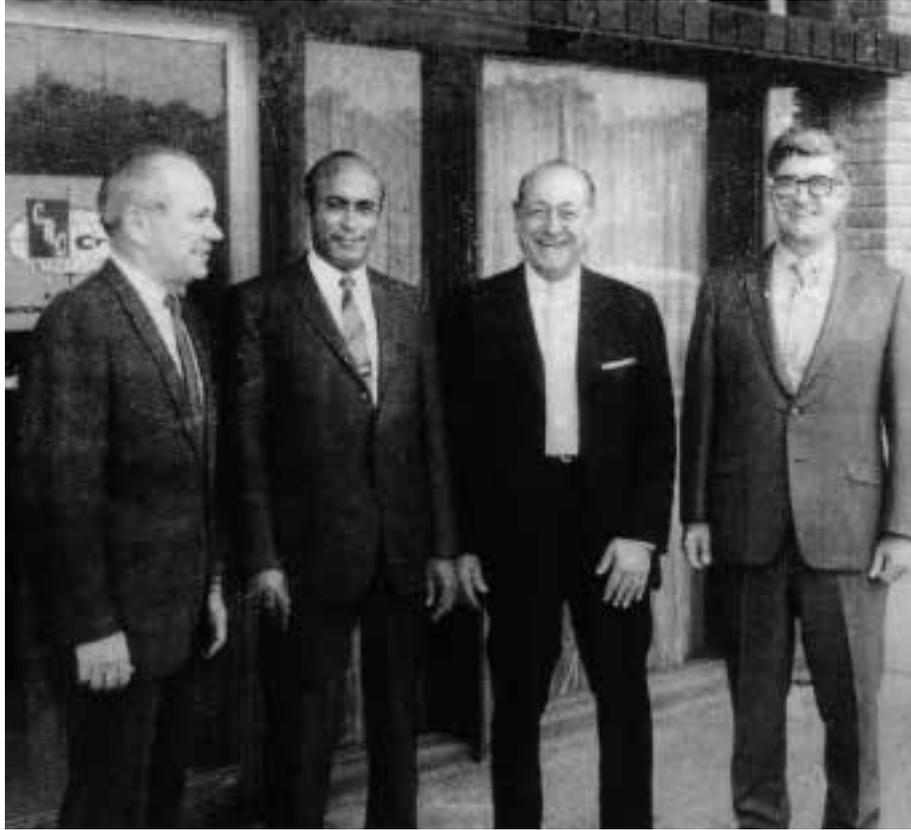
We also went into partnership with the Yousif bin Ahmed Kanoo Group and Otis Engineering to set up Otis Saudi Ltd, which concentrated on distributing equipment and production services for marine oil and gas fields. At the end of 1976, following a series of agreements with Aramco, Otis Saudi Ltd brought into service three fully crewed self-propelling jack-up platforms for maintenance and production, for use in the Arabian Gulf, along the length of the Saudi coast. After that we established the Tamimi Fouad Niigata Company, with two Japanese companies, Niigata and **Nitshamon**; the company specialized in the building of oil and gas production facilities, refineries, petrochemical factories, industrial installations, pipelines, pumping stations, firefighting systems at airports, and loading and unloading facilities for oil storage depots.

After its success on early projects such as the 142-kilometre, 26-inch diameter 'Abqaiq-al-Kharees oil pipeline extension, the company gained a good reputation in this field and executed a large number of major projects

Standing in front of the airplane I hired during a trip to the United States, 1965.

Previous Page:
With Ali al-Tamimi on a trip to the Philippines, 1974.





for leading private companies and government agencies, including Aramco, Petromin, General Organisation for Water Desalination, Arab Oil, Central Electricity, and the Saudi-Bahraini Cement Company (now the Saudi Cement Company, SCC). The Scaffolding Company, which was regarded as the first company to offer a complete scaffolding service in the Eastern Province, developed rapidly, as did the Awazel Company, which offered a complete consultancy service on the import and installation as well as the design and manufacture of thermal and sound insulation systems. We carried out a number of major contracts for infrastructure construction projects.

With S. J. **Jarufs/Grufus (Griffiths?)**, we established the Arab American Construction Company, which played a major role in carrying out projects to develop the infrastructure in Saudi Arabia as well as large-scale fencing projects at the principal airports. With the same company, we also established a new company which we called Arab Asphalt, which manufactured asphalt concrete products to a high specification at its factory in al-Jubail Industrial City. The mechanical division of the Group TAFMAC was set up to service

During my visit to the USA I bought modern equipment from Fibeck for the Harad pipeline extension project. I am pictured here with three of the company directors

large-scale factories working particularly in the petrochemical and oil related fields as well as projects to do with natural gas installations, such as liquefied natural gas refineries, oil refineries, thermal stations, desalination plants, sites for oil and gas separation units, and effluent lines for oil and gas.

TAFCO, the construction division, was the largest and best known division of the Group. It worked on road and airport construction, excavation engineering and large-scale civil work projects which included water treatment stations, electric power stations and prefabricated industrial buildings. We also founded Tamimi and Fouad Global (**TAFGHA**), which specialized in

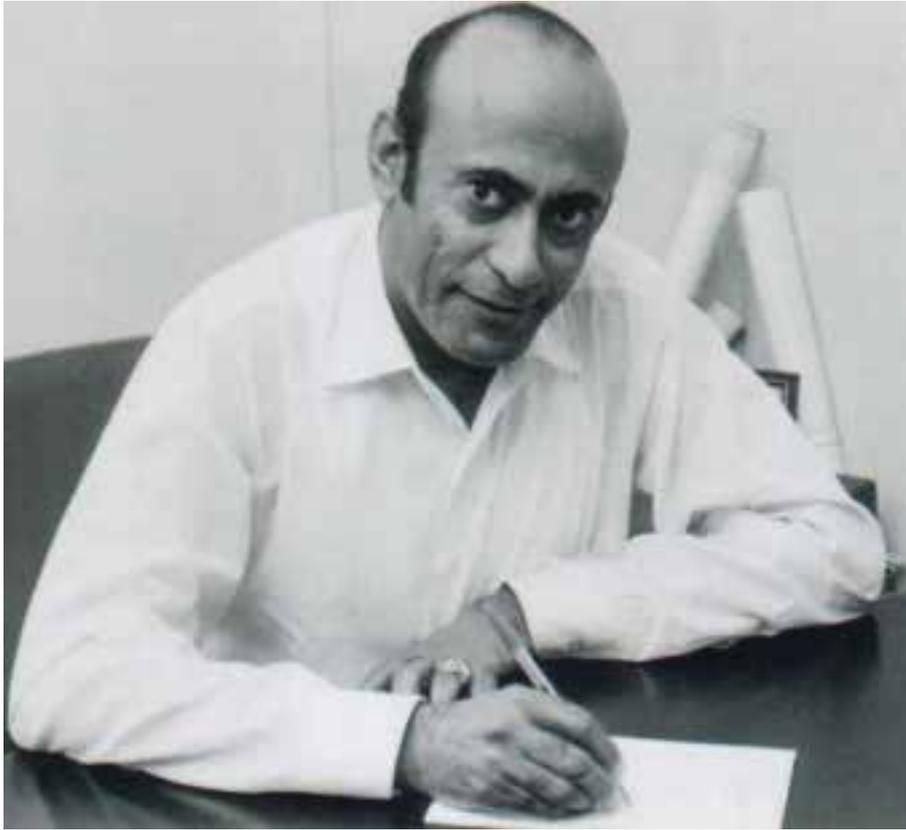
With the late Prince Abd al-Mohsen bin Jalawi, former governor of the Eastern Region (may God have mercy on him), on a visit to Safeway stores in al-Dammam. My son Faisal also appears in the photograph.



Giving the welcoming address at the opening ceremony.

servicing support systems for commercial, manufacturing and government projects in everything related to the operating and running of life-support facilities. It also carried out projects on behalf of the Royal Commission for Jubail and Yanbu, Aramco and other leading companies. We also penetrated the insurance field through the **Trajex (?)** company.





In 1979, a short time after founding the al-Tamimi and Fouad Company for Global Foodstuffs, we pioneered the concept of modern centralized shopping in Saudi Arabia and opened the first supermarket in al-Khobar, which was operated and run under a management contract with the American company, Safeway. We subsequently opened another supermarket in al-Dammam as well as three others in Riyadh and two in Jeddah.

Although we concentrated on investing inside Saudi Arabia, as it served our goals of continuous development, the Group also expanded and developed its operations abroad. It invested in areas that supported its interests inside the Kingdom, as was the case with its investment in a number of five-star hotels in Australia, or as a means of directly expanding its investment activities. The investments performed well and yielded a high rate of return. In addition, and based on a desire to gain experience in the global market, we invested in a number of financial markets and international finance companies. We were among the founding shareholders of Investcorp Bank and among the first companies to invest in major Saudi banks and companies.

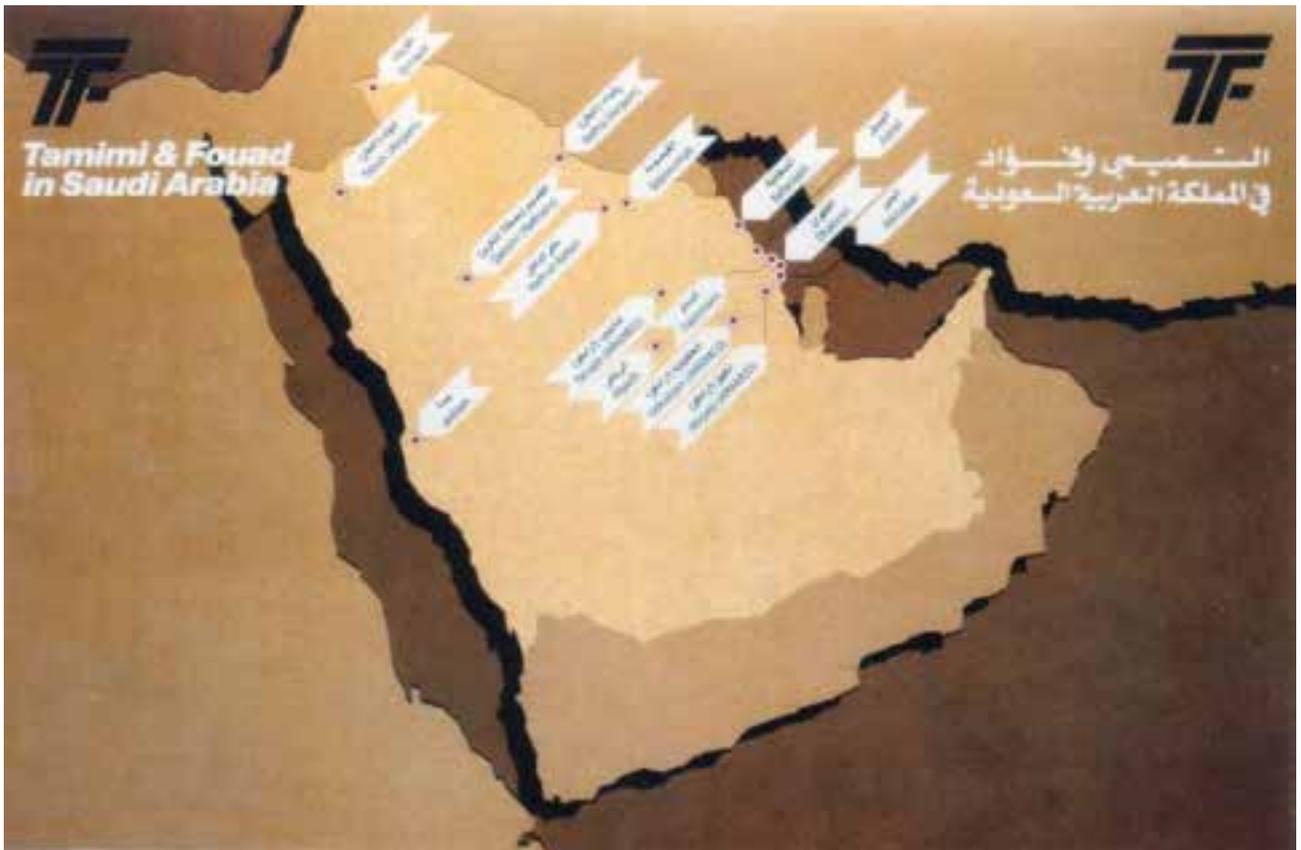
Working in my office at Tamimi & Fouad.

Following Pages:
Left: (Top) Abdulla al-Fouad and Ali al-Tamimi

(Bottom) Abdulla al-Fouad and Ali al-Tamimi.

Right: Map of Saudi Arabia showing the location of Tamimi & Fouad operations.





Diversifying our Sources of Income

When I set up the Tamimi & Fouad Company with Ali al-Tamimi, we agreed from the start that we would each have the right to make individual investments. Ali Tamimi pursued his own particular commercial concerns while I set up the Fouad Abdulla Fouad Company (FAFCO) on 28 August 1971, in addition to the original firm of Abdulla Fouad. FAFCO was initially a contracting company. It carried out a number of major projects for Aramco and other leading Saudi companies and was also involved in building the Abdulla Fouad Hospital, the Group's head offices and a number of factories and housing complexes. As we expanded and diversified, however, we restructured the business and formed the Abdulla Fouad Group of Companies, which worked in the industrial sector and manufactured protective piping for electric wiring, paper products and conditioning systems among other things.

In 1973 I also set up the commercial services division, which represented a large number of American, Japanese and European companies, and offered services and support to companies and various government organizations. In 1974 I established the appliances and electric division, through which we supplied building materials, electric cabling, street lighting and electric pylons to a large number of major projects both inside and outside the Eastern Province. This eventually became one of the largest divisions within the Group. Its commercial division, which had begun by manufacturing buildings and structures, was able in a very short space of time to achieve a great deal and was soon supplying factories and companies with all the equipment they required. I also established the Fouad Agency for Travel and Tourism.

In addition, I continued to invest in joint enterprises. With Abdullah



مستشفى مولانا يوسف
MOULLA YOUSOF HOSPITAL



I-Nu'aimi, I set up the National Industries Company, which supplied Saudi Aramco, Petromin, the Bahrain-Saudi Cement Company and the Saudi Army among others with cotton and woollen clothing for their employees and also established FABCO, with Abdulla Bubshait, which manufactured paper and plastic piping.

Although my business dealings with al-Tamimi & Fouad and the Abdulla Fouad Group continued to prosper, I think that the most important scheme in which I invested was the Abdulla Fouad Hospital in al-Dammam. I not only funded but also oversaw the construction of the hospital which I intended to provide excellent healthcare services for the people of the region. My decision to go ahead with the project was not based on financial grounds, as I did not need the money, but rather on a desire to combat illness using whatever means lay within my power. I wished to build a completely modern hospital, which would be capable of providing the most advanced medical expertise available.

To that end I asked al-Dammam council to let me have a piece of land in the Aramco employees' compound, which did not appear to have any houses on it. Initially, they were sceptical about my ability to complete the project and turned down the request on the grounds that another businessman had earmarked a site in the same area for a similar project in 1971, but had failed to deliver on it. However I was determined to carry out the scheme and did not give up. I

I attached enormous importance to the Abdulla Fouad Hospital in al-Dammam, a project that was close to my heart. I visited it frequently to follow what was going on.

approached the council again and this time suggested that the deeds of any land they provided me with would only be transferred to me once the building of the hospital was complete, at which point the land would become mine. They agreed to the proposal, and gave me a building licence.

I drew up the plans and began construction on the hospital through FAFCO which belonged to the Group. My other business interests, meanwhile, were prospering and expanding and growing inside and outside Saudi Arabia. In 1980 work on the 310-bed hospital was complete. When it opened it was officially classified as the only first-class hospital in the Eastern Province – at the time, there was only one other hospital in the whole of Saudi Arabia which had a similar classification – and marked the true beginning of a renaissance in sophisticated medical care in the country.

As part of the project I also wished to help young Saudi doctors and to that end concluded an agreement between the hospital and the medical faculty belonging to the King Faisal University which would allow medical students to attend the hospital and benefit from the international and specialist expertise which members of the hospital staff offered in all areas. The results were outstanding. A large number of doctors trained at the hospital and benefited considerably from the experience.



A model of the Abdulla Fouad Hospital in al-Ahsa. I wanted it to offer the most advanced medical services in Saudi Arabia.

Despite the success the hospital achieved in the medical field and the important impact it had, the financial returns were lower than expected. Income did not cover expenditure and we lost money. As my losses accumulated I considered raising the fees to make them correspond more closely to the cost of services on offer. However I decided against this course of action, and instead continued charging fees at the same rate as before. I also built a mosque and public park for the people of the area.

As long as I achieved what I was striving for, I was satisfied with the losses I was sustaining, which did not inconvenience me that much. I was very pleased when one of the largest districts in al-Dammam was named after me. I did not set up these enterprises to make a profit but because I believe that it is the duty of businessmen and the materially well off to help members of their community and to provide services which will be of use to them. I think such people have a vital role to play in helping develop the society they are a part of. Despite the losses I had made on the first project, I decided to invest in another hospital, which would serve the densely populated region of al-Ahsa, which as yet didn't have a hospital of its own. I began to set things in motion and earmarked 'Ain Najm as a possible site, hoping as I did so that the hospital would become the best provider of medical services in Saudi Arabia in the future.

In 1975 I headed a delegation of Saudi businessmen to India. We were received by the then prime minister Indira Gandhi.

Following Page: (Top) 63. At a conference abroad, as a member of the Saudi delegation.

(Bottom) My business grew and expanded inside and outside Saudi Arabia.





The Loss of 800 Million Riyals

My businesses continued to grow and expand, out of a desire on my part to diversify my sources of revenue as much as possible, and my companies were now active throughout Saudi Arabia and beyond. Towards the end of 1981 the global market experienced an economic downturn and as a result foreign banks in Bahrain were forced to ask business clients including those from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States to repay their loans.

At the time I had an overdraft and loan facility of more than 800 million riyals, which must appear a somewhat disturbing and frightening amount of money. However, I was not only terrified by the prospect of losing such a sum of money but by what the loss would symbolize. If my companies collapsed, it would mean the end of everything I had worked for. I had begun at the bottom and climbed to the very top and now everything that I had struggled to achieve over the years and given so much to attain was at risk. It is not surprising that they say that it is more difficult and more important to stay on top than to get there. I began to imagine what my position would be like if I went bankrupt at this point in my life. I would be regarded as a failure by my friends in the business community. I pictured newspaper headlines describing what had happened to me and economic analyses of my losses and my collapse in the market.

The grace period as it was called came to an end and I received a slew of demands from the banks that all arrived at the same time, possibly aggravating the situation as I was unable to follow everything in detail. These demands were for sums of money I had borrowed at various times, some to finance

long-term projects and some to cover losses I had sustained in my contracting businesses, FAFCO and Petcon.

We had jointly founded Petcon on 19 April 1977 with an Italian company whose subsequent bad management had contributed to the very heavy losses we sustained, the most recent of which were on a project in al-Jubail – more than 80 million riyals. After four years in a row during which the company had operated at a loss, the Italian company learned that the grace period granted by the government for non-payment of tax was almost up and that consequently it would be liable for taxes as soon as it declared its profits. They proposed that we buy its shares in the company, because of the heavy losses we had sustained. We agreed to the proposal without realizing what they were planning and incorporated the company into FAFCO. To make matters worse prices had fallen as a result of heavy competition in the market, and FAFCO was also facing heavy losses. After the merger both companies continued to run at a loss.

This was not the only problem I had to face. Driven by my continuing desire to expand and diversify the business and through a misplaced trust in others, I had become embroiled in three operations which later proved to be fraudulent and which cost me a large amount of money.

In 1975 I had accepted an invitation to go to the Philippines from the director of a company, which was drilling for oil off the Philippine coast, and was accompanied on the trip by my brother Ahmed and four other friends. On arrival we attended a reception given in our honour where we were introduced to the company directors and executives, after which we were taken to a huge hotel where the penthouse suite, which looked out over the beautiful capital of Manila, had been reserved for us. The managing director of the company, a man named Jo, called on us soon afterwards accompanied by ten of his colleagues and told us that he had prepared a complete programme for us, part of which included a tour of the country in which we would be escorted by four of his colleagues. We had a fleet of cars, two aeroplanes and a helicopter at our disposal and were given more than ordinary attention.

They held a succession of parties for us, attended by large numbers of guests, and we were taken to visit many of the islands by helicopter. On one such visit we landed in a grove of banana trees because there was no airport. However our escorts told me that the farmers would be compensated for the

losses they had incurred, something which inspired me with confidence in the company. After four days of excellent hospitality, Jo invited me to his office and proposed that I buy shares in the oil company he managed. I agreed to the proposal and transferred a million dollars to the company through the Banque de France. I was given share certificates and appointed a member of the Board of Directors. At the same time, the company held a general meeting to announce that I had joined its stockholders.

However, in 1977 it became clear that the director of the company had cheated both me and other stockholders. He had introduced a Saudi businessman into the company and taken his other measures with the sole aim of inflating the importance of the company and raising the value of its shares. He subsequently sold his shares to me and to others and left the company. Three years later it went bankrupt. The banks came in and seized control of its assets and I lost everything I had invested in it.

I was also swindled by a Swiss fraudster with whom I had gone into partnership and set up a joint company to invest in a chain of hotels in Europe and America. It later emerged that he owned another company in his wife's name into which he was siphoning off money from mine and others' accounts. Once again I lost everything I had invested in the enterprise, in addition to more than a million dollars which I paid to extricate myself from the situation. This meant that I lost 13 million riyals in total, though the company itself is still trading and making a good profit.

Even members of my family caused me problems. When a relative asked me to help him by guaranteeing a loan of 15 million riyals from one of the banks in Bahrain, which he and his partners wished to take out, I agreed without a second thought. Unfortunately they failed to meet their payments, the business collapsed and the bank claimed back the whole sum from me at a time when I was in dire financial straits. I was forced to hand over property I owned in Bahrain to meet the debt.

At the beginning of 1982 the banks began to claim back the money that I owed to them. This represented one of the most serious difficulties I had ever encountered in my life. It appeared that the only way out of the problem was to sell off all my assets, as I did not have sufficient cash to pay the sums being demanded which were huge by any standards. Only drastic measures could save me from my current predicament. I had to consider my options carefully.

I had frequently taken a tumble in the past but had always managed to rise again and get back on track. The strongest horse only emerges at the end of the race, or so they say. Although I was afraid of going bankrupt I had to avoid getting ahead of myself. The first thing I had to do was compile an inventory of my assets and investments.

In addition to my complete holdings in the Abdulla Fouad Group of Companies and its various divisions, I part-owned the following companies: Tamimi & Fouad Company, Civil Works Company, Chemical Industries Company (BCI), National Industries Company, and FABCO (Abdulla Fouad and Abubshait). My assets in the Group included the Abdulla Fouad hospital in al-Dammam, the Abdulla Fouad hospital in al-Ahsa, foreign investments, the import and services division, international agencies, Fouad Abdulla Fouad Company (FAFCO), the Saudi Electro Mechanical Construction Ltd (PETCON), Abdulla Fouad Impalloy Company for Cathodic Protection Systems, Mantech Computer Company, as well as investments and shares in local and international banks and companies.

I loved sailing and fishing and welcomed the peace it brought me when I had something serious to think about. Despite the serious predicament I was in, I was doing my best to appear strong and in control of things, especially in front of my family, so one day I decided to go sea-fishing, an abiding passion of mine. The trip proved disastrous. I met with an accident that put my own life and that of my young son Faisal, who was not yet nine years old, at risk and was potentially more serious and dangerous than any of my financial problems and debts.

I was a keen angler and had recently bought a medium-sized boat for my fishing trips which I had stocked with everything we would need on the outing. I decided to try my luck in Ras Bu Ali area off al-Jubail in the Gulf and the rest of the family agreed to drive over and meet us there. The problems started even before we reached al-Jubail. The lorry that was transporting the boat suffered a tire blow-out and we had to stop at Safwa to get it mended before we could continue our journey. We finally reached al-Jubail at half past five in the evening and immediately went to the border guards to obtain a permit to take the boat out. After we had lowered the boat into the water, I told my driver to take the car to Ras Bu Ali and wait for the rest of the family to arrive, then we raised anchor and set off.

This was the first time I had sailed off al-Jubail and I knew little about the currents. When I saw the lights of the many other boats and ships I lit the extra lights on my own boat. Soon after we left, the wind began to get up. The waves grew higher and water washed over the deck. I didn't think much about it at first. I was feeling happy for the first time in ages. My worries had dropped away and I felt as free as a boy again. Suddenly the lights on the boat went out. The battery which worked off the engine hadn't been properly charged. The engine in turn started misfiring and then stopped working altogether. At that moment I began to feel afraid – not so much for myself but for the young boy who was with me, my son. I was filled with a sense of doom. It was like being in the middle of a nightmare over which I had no control, and I felt like a feather being blown this way and that by the wind.

I tried to do something to rescue us from the awful dilemma we were in. In an effort to keep the boat steady and prevent it being tossed about by the wind, I dropped anchor and told Faisal to go to sleep. I hoped that a passing freighter or fishing boat would see us in the morning and take us back to al-Jubail port. But the winds blew more fiercely. The boat rocked from side to side, the motion of the waves sending Faisal to sleep. Little by little water began to seep into the back of the boat. At first I was not aware of what was happening and it took me some time to realize that we were taking on water at such a rate that the boat was going to sink.

For a second I almost lost my head. I got to my feet and looked around at the pitch black darkness around us. I wanted to scream at the wind and the waves and tell them to stop, and I did actually let out a howl but my voice was blown away by the wind. All the wealth and the treasures of the world I had amassed were unable to save us now. I had to do something quickly so I cut the ropes securing the spare rubber dinghy, and lowered it into the water, but when I turned round to get Faisal I couldn't see him. At that point, I almost collapsed. The next minutes passed in a blur. I can't remember exactly what I did, though I do remember calling out to God and begging him to save my son. The next moment, I turned round and saw him swimming in the sea. When the boat started sinking, it had dragged him into the water with it and had it not been for God's care of him, and the fact that he could swim, he would have drowned.

I swam over and grabbed him by the hand, then pulled him behind me

to the dinghy and pushed him into it. I tried to get in behind him but wasn't able to. I was desperate. In my mind's eye I saw the boat sinking to the bottom and my son Faisal caught between death and life as he was tossed about by the churning waves of the dark sea, at the mercy of the predatory sharks that lived in these waters. I tried to climb into the dinghy again and finally succeeded after several attempts. After that I began to calm down. The faraway lights from the Jubail factories seemed closer somehow, and I felt more relaxed and hopeful about our chances.

We didn't have the oars to the dinghy so I began to paddle with my hands and taught Faisal how to do the same. But as the proverb says, the wind blows when the ships least want it. That was the case that night. The wind began to blow again and we could make no headway against it despite all our efforts, so we decided to wait for dawn to come. Oddly enough we were no longer afraid, something that surprises me whenever I look back on the incident. A marvellous stillness seemed to have stolen into our hearts and taken away the fear. We began to talk about this and that and were so deep in conversation that anyone who had seen us at that moment would have thought we were insensible to what was going on around us, so unconscious were we of the wind and the waves which rocked our boat incessantly.

I told Faisal the story of the time I had almost drowned forty-five years earlier when the boat I was travelling on with my Uncle Abdulla Fouad sank on the way back to Darain from al-Dammam and how we had escaped. I remembered how my Uncle Abdulla had been so afraid for me. Now I was in his place and my little son was in mine. Indeed, the wheel of time turns swiftly – or perhaps it is life that is so short. When the sun came up we began to see other craft on the water and Faisal attempted to attract their attention by blowing the whistle on his life jacket but they were too far away to hear us.

At the same time, unbeknown to us, people were already looking for us. Members of my family had begun to grow anxious. They had waited until midnight and, when there was no sign of us, had phoned my son Fouad, who was in al-Dammam, and told him that we had not returned from the trip. He in turn got in touch with the regional authorities and border guards who immediately organized an official search of the area which proved to be unsuccessful. In the morning His Royal Highness Prince Fahd bin Salman, deputy ruler of the Eastern Province at the time, ordered a plane to join the

search, but as they didn't have our coordinates, they did not know where to look.

We were finally spotted by the crew of a huge tanker belonging to Saudi Aramco, which was on its way to Ras Tanura port with a cargo of marine wells and passed close to us. At first they didn't stop. They were under strict orders to be on their guard against anything that might be considered dangerous. The Iran–Iraq war was at its height at the time and had caused widespread fear and unease. However when they heard the radio message put out by the border police asking people to keep an eye out for us, the captain signalled his manager in Ras Tanura and told him that he had seen two people answering the description, who were probably the ones they were looking for. After asking us our names they took us on board, where we were treated very well. They gave us something to eat and drink and looked after us until the boat belonging to the border guard arrived to pick us up.

We were taken to their offices in al-Jubail where we were reunited with members of our family. They had been very frightened when we failed to turn up, and were overjoyed to see us. Curiously, the front part of the boat floated to the surface and was subsequently found by the captain of one of the search vessels, who rescued it with the help of his colleagues and towed it back to port. It was returned to me four days later and I got rid of it.

The accident left a lasting impression on me. I kept wondering what would have happened to my family if I had died and left them to deal with the debts. I made up my mind to settle my affairs immediately and to pay off my debts.

Settlement

I started to reconsider my position and think about ways of bringing my problems to an end. I held a number of meetings with the banks, after which I was convinced more than ever that they would take out an action against me. I hurriedly contacted my partner Ali al-Tamimi and we reached an understanding over the future of Tamimi & Fouad. We agreed that he would buy out my share of the company and we would dissolve the partnership. This would not only prevent the banks getting hold of the assets but would also afford my partner and associate some protection.

After that I began negotiating with local banks and reached a settlement with them. The foreign banks brought an action against me in Bahrain and also lodged a complaint against me with the regional branch of the Ministry of Commerce in the Eastern Province. I was subsequently able to reach a settlement with them under the auspices of the Ministry of Commerce. I will never forget the kindness and respect I was shown by our discerning government and the Ministry of Commerce, which was headed by His Excellency the Minister Dr Suleiman al-Salim. I felt that God had rescued me twice over, first by saving me from drowning at sea and second from dying of a broken heart.

Settling my debts was not an easy matter. I was forced to sell off most of my assets and investments, including, worst of all, my life project, the Abdulla Fouad Hospital, at a time when real estate and share prices were at rock bottom. But I'd learned from experience that, while money comes and goes, once you have lost your reputation in business, you cannot get it back. Although some of my friends advised me to wait for a couple of years and settle my debts when

the economic situation improved, I preferred to set my mind and that of my family at rest and was convinced that I had taken the proper decision.

I knew that people are more important than money. I learnt a lot from what had happened; in fact I learned more from this incident than from anything else in my entire life. It taught me the importance of placing my trust in the right people and only helping those who deserved my help and of distinguishing between those who were worthy of my trust and those who were not.

Maybe one of the things that affected me most during this period was the disloyalty of certain business associates whom I had helped get started in life. I had worked with some of them and had helped others without knowing who they were, but when I was in difficulties few of them came forward to offer their help or to tell me they would stand by me in my hour of need. On the contrary, they fled from me in case I asked for help, something which I would never have done, and for the most part forgot about what I had done for them in the past. This was not true of everybody. There were a very few people who remained loyal and kind to me. They still recognize me today and are proud of what I have given them. I am proud of them and the decency they have shown and I am grateful to them, in the knowledge that I didn't ask them for any help in the crisis I went through.

Once the crisis was resolved I felt a great sense of relief. It had not been easy to get through and could have ended badly, not only bringing my own life to a sad and painful conclusion but also irreparably damaging my sons' future. But God helped me to survive what was the most difficult period in my life.

On 1 January 1989, after undergoing some of the worst times in my life, I wrote a piece of advice for my sons and for anyone else who was enduring any kind of problem. I wrote the message down on a piece of white paper and displayed it in a prominent place where I would be able to see it and where it still remains today:

Don't be afraid, defend what is rightfully yours, never let the size of your opponent or thoughts of your own weakness get you down. You must be patient and never give up. Persistence is half the battle. When you run out of patience, it is the beginning of surrender. If you encounter difficulties, problems and crises, it is not the end of the world. Millions of people face adversity and overcome their tribulations. They fall to the

ground and try to get up again. They fail a number of times but succeed in the end. Look at those who have succeeded in life. Their success hasn't come easily. They have fought with everything they have. They have gambled with their lives, and put their health at risk. They have undergone hardship and overcome obstacles and only after that have they attained glory and success. So let patience, defiance and success be our allies with the grace of God.

When night falls, turn on the light; if the electricity is cut off, then light a candle, if the candle melts, then strike a match, and if the match goes out, then close your eyes and wait for the sun to rise in the morning.

I sold off everything to preserve my reputation ... including the Abdulla Fouad Hospital in al-Ahsa which was on the point of completion.



Troubles Never Come Singly

My life as a whole continued to be affected by what had happened. I felt that age was beginning to take its toll on me and my strength and ability to take risks were slipping away from me. I had given everything I owned to pay off my debts and the only thing I had left was my name. However the name Abdulla Fouad was enough. It would help me return to what I used to be. I had to reorganize myself and my business whatever the circumstances.

I used the contracting division of the company as the basis for rebuilding my fortunes. This included the pipes and the equipment which represented part of my share in the Tamimi & Fouad Company on the Ras Tanura-al-Dhahran Highway. I transformed its offices into the headquarters of Fafco and Petcon. I took a close look at the business and decided to sell off the equipment used for pipeline contracts and cease working in this sector altogether, concentrating on other business with Fafco and Petcon instead. This was in 1988–9. The omens looked good and there was little to show that the region as a whole was about to be shaken by a series of disastrous events, which would have an impact on everyone.

On 2 August 1990 Iraq troops invaded Kuwait and once again the whole region was in turmoil, subjected to a series of problems which had a negative impact on the entire Arab Gulf economy, and which we thought had come to an end with the conclusion of the Iraq–Iran war in 1988. The world as a whole condemned the illegal occupation and most countries supported Kuwait's battle to reclaim its territory. Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States and other countries in the Arab world took in our brothers from Kuwait and helped them and made them welcome. The Eastern Province was closest to Kuwait and the

Kuwaiti people and played a major role when the crisis broke. In accordance with official directives and through the Chamber of Industrial Commerce, the business community supported the home front and helped our neighbours.

The memory of that time with its harsh and complex problems is still fresh in my mind, but it also demonstrated the extent to which the people of this good country harboured affection for their leaders and their land. They showed immense bravery. They did not budge from their homes or their businesses. They took to the battle lines to defend right and duty. Businessmen proved that there was nothing to equal the love for one's country. No one fled, not one of them shirked or avoided what they had to do.

The members of the Security Council passed a resolution on 15 January 1991, calling for the withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait and presenting the Iraqi president with an ultimatum. This decreed that international force would be used to expel the Iraqi army by force, if they failed to meet the deadline. The Iraqi president did not respond to this call for reason and refused the repeated peace initiatives. The following day, the war to liberate Kuwait began. It lasted for five weeks, at the end of which the Kuwaiti people were able to return home. So the first act of the drama was played out, but its repercussions had long-term consequences for the economy of the Gulf States and the region as a whole.

The crisis contributed to the economic recession, particularly as many foreign companies with interests in the region were sufficiently concerned about the situation to halt their operations. We were unaffected by this however. I continued to reorganize my affairs and invest increasing amounts of money in Saudi Arabia which time had taught me was the safest place in all fields. The business quickly moved forwards and during the period 1992–3 things continued to improve. As they say, however, troubles never come singly and my misfortune continued.

In 1994 I was involved in a car crash which almost put an end to my life. It seemed my run of bad luck was set on continuing, though God was watching over me and saved me from death. On 23 March 1994 I was on my way to Riyadh to attend the wedding of the son of my partner and friend, Imran al-Imran. I was at the wheel of the car and my driver was sitting beside me. I was going very fast, as I did not want to be late. After we had been on the road for about an hour, I moved out to overtake a convoy of huge trucks transporting

prefabricated houses. The car lost its balance, swerved sharply, and came off the road. No sooner had its wheels touched the sand than it hit the crash barrier separating the two lanes. Heavy rain in the area had made the ground very muddy, and the slippery conditions caused the car to overturn. I was staring death in the face and thought my life was over. But God's might rescued me from an almost certain death.

The car rolled over a couple of times until it finally came to a stop on its roof with its wheels in the air. The driver and I could barely believe what had happened to us. A car coming from Riyadh stopped and the driver got out and halted the speeding cars, fearing for our safety. The traffic police arrived and after they had freed us from the wreckage, took us to the traffic centre, after which they conveyed us to the nearest garage, at my request, so that we could pick up a car to take us back to al-Dammam. I had escaped from the accident through the kindness of God and soon recovered from its effects in the same way that I had recovered from my debts. I had to start again despite my age and losses and fear and continuous frustrations. I had to begin again and be the Abdulla Fouad I knew.

My car was completely destroyed in an accident which almost cost me my life, and from which I only escaped by the grace of God



Starting Over ... Again

My business began to pick up again and the companies which were part of the Group gradually grew and expanded their activities. After I had cleared my debts and freed myself from my financial worries I was left with a substantial sum in hand, having made a good profit on the transactions. I began to take a closer look at my affairs and focused in particular on reorganizing the business.

I started off by reallocating responsibilities and positions and, together with my son Fouad, who was president of the Group, drew up a business plan which aimed at developing the activities of the commercial division and other companies belonging to the Group. Its activities expanded and grew to a noticeable extent as a result.

The agency division represents major international companies in Saudi Arabia, while the computer division specializes in developing solutions to support various activities in addition to offering a line-up of programme applications, development tools and communications. The Group also owns the international franchise for distributing super computers which are manufactured by the American company Cray Research Inc. as well as for other computer companies, which include Sun Microsoft Systems, Compaq and Digital, and offers the requisite support to clients in all the various businesses.

The communications division is able to provide advanced technology to people who benefit from it in all parts of the country. The engineering and oil exploration division was among the first to bring advanced technology to the region, with its installation of the first computerized seismic workstations in

the Middle East for use in oil exploration. For this it continues to offer support and back-up services, in addition to having supplied the sophisticated systems to a number of major projects through the advanced technology which it provides to scientists and geologists.

Despite having to sell off the Abdulla Fouad Hospital I retained the division of the company which imports medical equipment and acts as agent for a number of international companies who specialize in the supply of the most up-to-date medical technology and equipment. We have also set up training programmes for our clients throughout Saudi Arabia in order to train their employees in the use of advanced equipment.

The Travel and Tourism Agency returned to work aggressively in a competitive market and soon emerged in a leading position, helped in part by our pioneering reputation. In response to market demand in particular from Saudi Aramco, we established an auctioneering division which has enabled companies to profit financially from the sale of capital assets. The business of this division expanded rapidly and as a result a number of large companies now organize public auctions. My son Fouad introduced Toy Towns into the country, the first of their kind in the Middle East. They proved popular and the business expanded as the entertainment centres became a focus for families from towns all over Saudi Arabia. The Group now owns four entertainment villages situated in al-Khobar, al-Dammam, al-Dhahran and al-Jubail, and is currently implementing plans for similar projects elsewhere in the Kingdom.

The commercial section and the agencies linked to it are now managed by my son Fouad. Through his continued efforts, he has contributed enormously to making the businesses in which we are involved a major success.

I restructured Fafco and Petcon, which formed part of the contracting division, and appointed my nephew Walid Ahmed Abubshait as managing director. Their business has grown and expanded and there are now more than 2,500 employees working for the companies. They have carried out and continue to carry out major projects, the majority of which are on behalf of Saudi Aramco, though they have also been involved in projects for the Saudi Company for Basic Industries (SABIC), the Arab Pesticide Industries Company MOBEED, S. A. Saipem Ltd, **Flor Arab Company** and Belleli SHI Ltd. The company has improved its performance as a result and is now among the leading companies in this field.

As part of business development, I evolved a new strategy which involved carrying out an in-depth study of every project we were considering entering into. This would enable us to guard against exposing ourselves to unexpected losses, and to avoid unforeseen competition, while at the same time permitting us to hold onto good marketing and focus on innovation and development. I opened up the Group to Saudi employees and introduced a special programme to impart skills and expertise in different administrative fields. This programme has come about as a result of my belief in the importance of investing in the Saudi people who represent our most significant resource. I believe that any investment in them will be most advantageous and beneficial.

I felt that there was an urgent requirement at this stage to come up with an overall management philosophy which would govern the allocation of responsibilities among the directors of the divisions and branches of the Group and the administrative and financial directors. With my son Fouad I started to put a coherent plan in place which would bring this about. We made it our business to oversee the course of business and set in motion general policies

My group of companies grew and expanded. I am pictured here with Sa'ad al-Mojil, former head of the Chamber of Industrial Commerce, Za'id al-Sakibi, former governor of al-Dammam City and my son Fouad at the opening ceremony of Toy Town on the al-Dammam Corniche in 1996.





Architect's impression of the Group's new headquarters, which we are planning to start work on in the future.

Following Page:
At the beginning of 1998 we held a party for our employees to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Group, which was attended by more than 1000 guests. I hope that we will move forward and that our success will continue.

for the Group. It brought about excellent results which impacted positively on the activities of the companies. After we had put the affairs of our companies in order, we started to diversify our investments by buying shares and real estate, and by helping to set up new Saudi companies.

Once things had returned to normal I decided to restructure the Group and remodel it as a family business in which all members of my family would have a stake. I divided up the capital among my sons, daughters and wives on a legal basis and only held on to 4 per cent of the shares myself. The reasoning behind this was very simple. At my age I only need a very little. I merged the contractual, commercial, agency and entertainment sections into a new company that was entrusted to my son Fouad, who was appointed president, and I appointed Faisal, who was currently studying in the United States of America, as his deputy. I also appointed Walid Abubshait, Yousif Sayadi, Sirdar Ghalib, Samir Na'aman and others as deputies to the chairman of each section.



Development

There is no doubt that Saudi Arabia has witnessed an extraordinary level of development over the last sixty years, something which is visible in every aspect of the country's life. When we look at Saudi Aramco, with which I was involved when it was only a fledgling company, we can see that, for the eleventh year in a row, this year, it has headed the list of the world's top 100 oil producers. A royal edict issued in 1988 established Saudi Aramco as the successor to the Arab Oil Company (ARAMCO), the company to whom the original concessions were granted and whose shares were owned by Chevron, Texaco, Mobil and Exxon. We know the enormous significance the Saudi government attaches to the economy and the support it gives it. The Saudi youth of yesterday have now become the men who run the largest oil company in the world.

I was very pleased to witness the manner in which the Saudi government brought this about. Between 1973 and 1980 it gradually bought up shares in Aramco and took control of the right to exploit its assets, though Aramco continued to run the business as a representative for the government until 1988. In 1993 a royal edict ruled that Saudi Aramco would take charge of refineries and production and distribution installations in the Kingdom. The new company was responsible for almost all oil-related business in the Kingdom, from the actual drilling and production of oil to its refinement, transportation and marketing. By the end of 1997 the reserves of crude oil had gone up to 259.1 billion barrels. If the Kingdom's share in the deposits in the neutral zone between Saudi Arabia and Kuwait are taken into account, the overall size of the reserves accounts for a quarter of the world's oil reserves, which makes

the country the owner of the largest oil reserves in the world. The gas reserves stand at 204 trillion cubic feet.

The work of Saudi Aramco is no longer limited to the production and sale of crude oil, but to its refining, transportation and marketing and the selling of different petroleum products inside and outside Saudi Arabia. When we look back to the beginning of Aramco, when oil was first freighted to Bahrain in 1938, we find things have changed considerably. Today Vela International Marine Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of Saudi Aramco, employs twenty-three huge oil tankers (very large crude carriers) and four freighters ships for the transport of petroleum products, making its fleet one of the largest and most up-to-date transport fleets in the world.

The company has made concrete achievements in all fields, and through sourcing the majority of its requirements within Saudi Arabia, it has contributed to the Saudi economy, supported Saudi companies and helped the local business sector. In 1997 Saudi companies, or partly owned Saudi companies, were responsible for carrying out the majority of contracts put out to tender by Saudi Aramco. Similarly, Saudi manufacturers and retailers supplied 86 per cent of all materials purchased globally to support the oil and gas business and capital projects, as well as housing and industrial installations.

The company has benefited a large number of businessmen and continues to support Saudi employees. By the end of 1997 the number of Saudis working for the company had gone up to 56,345. Almost all administrative positions were filled by Saudi Arabians and 95 per cent of posts in the oil and gas sector. The company advanced them loans to build their own homes and 40,400 homes were built between 1951 and 1997.

I am very pleased with what the Saudi government has achieved in every sector and the way it has worked to provide the citizens of the Kingdom with every comfort and a dignified way of life. In its efforts to make the country more food self-sufficient, it has supported agriculture and encouraged farmers to diversify their classes and produce, by offering them loans to develop their businesses. In the desalination sector, which has counted as one of the principle strategic priorities in successive development plans, the government has started to expand the capacity of desalination plants to meet the needs of the ever-growing population and the demands for water from a variety of consumer sectors. In the industrial sector, there has been a steep increase in the amount of capital

investment in processing plants in the government and private sectors. In the past electricity was something that people in the country could only dream about but now general electrification is a reality for everyone, whether they live in cities or villages, bringing domestic, agricultural and industrial benefits.

Communications have also developed across the Kingdom, with everyone having access to telephones. A modern transportation system now exists, based primarily on a network of paved roads linking most cities and villages in the Kingdom, which are a minimum of two lanes wide. The situation as regards housing, education, social services, health, agriculture and commerce is similar, with all seeing exponential growth and development. The Eastern Province has received its share of support in all fields, as has been the case with other regions in the Kingdom.

The Chamber of Industrial Commerce in the Eastern Province was founded forty-eight years ago, and since then has accomplished an enormous amount. Its activities have coincided with a notable increase in the business and economic life of the region. The Chamber plays an important role in servicing the economic sector and business community in the Province and is also active in providing a suitable environment and favourable conditions for the business community that will allow them to play a more important role in building the national economy, in conjunction with the development plans which are implemented by the government. The Chamber has also made strenuous efforts to make the Eastern Province an important centre for Gulf industry and manufacture and to attract capital and investment to the region. The unique experience of the past has shown that the return on inward investment is twice as high as that gained by investing outside.

It gives me enormous pleasure to see companies, businesses and banks, which I have been involved in setting up, achieving notable success. Among these I should mention the international investment bank, Investcorp, which celebrated its sixteenth anniversary in 1999. Over that time it realized a sevenfold increase in its paid-up capital of \$716 million, of which \$225 million went to its shareholders as cash dividends. It held on to \$591 million as retained earnings, which were added to the shareholders' assets. I regard the bank's successful record in investment as a personal achievement and see each one of its sixty-eight transactions, which represent an acquisitions value of \$105 million, as proof of my ability to invest soundly and make appropriate

choices. I can well remember the day in 1981 when Nemir Amin Kirdar, the president and chief executive officer of Investcorp, invited Ali al-Tamimi and myself to his office and outlined his plans for setting up the bank and asked us to become founding shareholders. We agreed immediately and were among the initial investors. I was also a founding shareholder of the Company of Civil Works which now numbers among the largest companies in its field, and the al-Dammam Hotel Company, and Ali al-Tamimi and myself were also founding shareholders of al-Bank al-Saudi al-Fransi.

Every time I drive across to Bahrain I think back to the days of the sailing boats and remember how long it took us to travel between the two countries. The journey to Bahrain would start with a donkey ride to the coast, where we then boarded one of the sailing boats which would take us across the dangerous waters of the Gulf. After long hours at sea we mounted another donkey when we reached Bahrain to travel to our final destination, a journey which could take another three or four hours. Today the situation has changed considerably. Since the King Fahd Bridge, which cost 2.9 million riyals to build and which links Saudi Arabia to Bahrain, was opened on 26 November 1986, the age of sail has come to an end and a new era has started.

I am exceedingly proud when I remember that we helped contribute to its construction and that Petcon played a part in implementing some of the



The King Fahd Bridge which connects Saudi Arabia to Bahrain.

subcontracts. The massive bridge is clear proof of the government's interest in and devotion to the concerns of its citizens. It was constructed according to the most modern specifications and is the longest and largest bridge in the Middle East, and the second longest bridge in the world. In the first ten years since its opening, it has carried more than 38 million passengers, with an average of 10,628 people a day passing over it. When we compare those numbers with previous statistics, we can see the enormous difference that exists between the past and the present.

It is also clear to see that the situation we are now living in and the high standard of living we enjoy has come about as a result of successive development plans drawn up by men whose only concern is the welfare of the country and its citizens. There is not a single field which has not been touched by this development. The age of popular medicine and home remedies is over, and instead of going abroad for treatment, people now flock to our hospitals. I do not think I was wrong when I invested in the medical and health sector despite the losses I incurred.

Saudi Aramco continues to flourish in all parts of the Kingdom ... even in the Empty Quarter where the Shaybah oil field has now come on stream.



My Country

I praise God and thank him profusely for the situation which my country now finds itself in as it celebrates its glorious hundredth anniversary. A sense of well-being prevails throughout the Kingdom; there are charitable projects and development in every city, village and agricultural settlement; every region in Saudi Arabia has witnessed extensive progress, and every sector has seen extraordinary growth. A succession of minutely detailed development plans, aimed at improving the lives of the citizens, have been drawn up and executed. All of this has been achieved with the grace of God and thanks to the interest shown by the Protector of the Holy Places, King Fahd bin Abdulaziz al-Sa'ud, and His Royal Highness, Second Deputy Prime Minister, Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz.

I was born in this generous country when the late King Abdulaziz was alive. Under him I grew to be a man, started work as a clerk, and then left my job to work for myself. Under the late King Sa'ud, the late King Faisal and the late King Khaled, I pursued my career as a businessman and my businesses expanded and diversified. Under the Protector of the Holy Places, 'May the Lord protect him', my plans reached fruition and I have prospered. It has been a golden age in the full meaning of the word and my well-being and happiness have increased.

For the record, I would like to acknowledge my great thanks to His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Fahd bin Abdulaziz, Ruler of the Eastern Province, who has been unstinting in his efforts to support all endeavours and activities in the region, and has done his utmost to raise the international profile of the area. Likewise I would like to thank his deputy, His Royal Highness

Prince Sa'ud bin Naif, and His Royal Highness Prince Fahd bin Salman bin Abdulaziz, former deputy ruler of the Eastern Province, all of whom have worked tirelessly to serve the Eastern Province and its people, and I would also like extend my thanks to all honest men.

The Journey of Life

Life is like a long journey full of pain and weariness. When you are starting out you believe that you will become something great and perhaps you aim to create an individuality that is exclusively your own, but when you have accomplished your goals, you realize that you haven't achieved anything at all. This has been the case with me.

When I was starting out I intended to become someone important, perhaps someone of repute who would be pointed out to others or who would own a huge financial empire. But when I had fulfilled my ambitions and achieved what I had dreamed of becoming, I continued to wish for something more and had aspirations for the future. Can you imagine that someone like me, who began at the very bottom and who from his earliest years suffered from many terrible obstacles in his path, but went on to own enormous wealth and run a great empire, who is now numbered among the elite and treated by some as they would treat a famous leader – can you imagine that such a man would now feel that he has achieved nothing in life?

But I look upon these achievements as very insignificant. They have not been able to tempt me. I have not been blinded by the world or my wealth. Modesty is my watchword. Praise be to God, I have succeeded in what I set out to do. I have achieved an enormous amount and accomplished things that I never imagined I would accomplish. That is how the world is.

I am now semi-retired. I still go to my office every day early in the morning, as I have done for the past fifty years, and keep abreast of business through reading the reports which the contracting division gives me. I follow the prices and movements of shares, I read the newspapers, I attend social occasions

and celebrations and I spend more time with my family. I feel happy at the thought of the struggles I have gone through and the things I have achieved, at the many challenges I have faced and succeeded in overcoming. Praise be to God who has given me so much of the happiness which every human being is striving for, for money and children are an adornment to the life of the world. The happiest times I have now are those I spend with my children and grandchildren. When I see them I forget the cares of the world and the problems I have suffered in the past.

Now as I come to the end of my journey I seek forgiveness from anyone whom I have wronged unintentionally. For my part I forgive those who have done me wrong because the world is like that. Nothing endures but honest work, and you will only be remembered for your good and praiseworthy actions. How many people have obtained wealth but lost their reputation and passed away without a trace? How many simple people are still remembered in history and will remain so for evermore because of the good deeds they carried out? I say to those who are interested: 'Arm yourselves with patience and remain optimistic. Countless are the people who have fallen again and again. If it were it not for their determination and resolve they would not have got up again nor would they have possessed the blessings of the world.'



People who Live on

I have mentioned many people in this book who have influenced my life, some of whom in particular I have shared many moments with. Though they have gone to their Maker, I have not forgotten them and they live on in the depths of my heart. May God have mercy on them all and grant them eternal rest in Paradise.

They include:

- My father, Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Abdulrahman Abubshait
- My mother, Hissa bint Yousif Abubshait
- My uncle, Abdulla Fouad bin Jasem Abubshait
- My wife, Mauza bin Khaled Abubshait
- My wife Mariam bint Hassan Satir
- My brothers, Sa'ud, Abdulrahman and Ali
- My grandmother Mariam bint Ahmed al-Kulban
- My stepmother, Khadra
- Sheikh Yousif bin Khaled Abubshait
- Sheikh Khaled bin Yousif Abubshait
- Sheikh Mohammed bin Khaled Abubshait
- Sheikh Hamed bin Khaled Abubshait
- Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Khaled Abubshait
- Sheikh Khaled bin Abdulrahman Abubshait
- Sheikh Mohammed bin Ahmed Abubshait
- Sheikh Sa'ied bin Ahmed Abubshait.
- Sheikh Yousif bin Sa'ied Abubshait

- Sheikh Ahmed bin Abdulla al-Dosari
- Sheikh Abdul Latif bin Abdulwahab Abubshait
- My religious instructor, al-Mutawwa Ahmed bin Ghalab
- Isa Ibrahim Abubshait
- Abdul Qader bin Abdulla Abubshait
- Hassan Satir
- My partner, Ali al-Abdulla al-Tamimi
- Abdulla Hamoud al-Shuwayer
- Rashed Abdulrahman al-Rashed
- Muhanna al-Ma'aibid

Appendices

Charity First

Abdulla Fouad was not born with a silver spoon in his mouth. On the contrary, he was born at a time when people found it very difficult to satisfy even their most basic needs. This has given him an acute awareness of the poorest members of society who struggle to make a living, or who like him have started out with nothing. It is not surprising that he has a particular empathy with the poor and destitute and has tried hard to repay if only in a small way the bounty he has received from this rich nation.

He has earmarked a portion of his wealth to be spent on charitable works and annually contributes any profits he makes on his minority shareholding in the Group, which is all that remains to him after dividing up the other shares among members of his family, various charities and those in need. This is in addition to the large donations that the Group gives every year to support public charitable activities in the region. Abdulla Fouad began his charitable and public works programme with the construction of the upper floor of the Abubshait Mosque in al-Dammam market, which is one of the largest mosques in the region. He then built the Abubshait Mosque in the Abdulla Fouad district in Hisa.

Abdulla Fouad believes that it is the duty of every businessman and every well-off person who has been raised on this earth and partaken of its goodness to invest in non-profit-making enterprises which will serve the

good of humanity. He is convinced that the business community must work with the government to build a fundamental structure for the people of the country. The electricity company was one such socio-economic concern in which he participated and which served all the sectors of the region, bringing to an end the age when homes and businesses in the Eastern Province were lit by lanterns or *sarj*. The Electricity Company also contributed enormously to the rapid drive towards industrial development.

Abdulla Fouad has never forgotten that he was forced to get rid of the Abdulla Fouad Hospital in al-Dammam as well as the Abdulla Fouad Hospital in al-Ahsa, which is currently the maternity hospital. The former was the first specialist hospital in al-Dammam and represented the beginning of a modern medical service in the region. It fulfilled two aims: first to make available to the people of the region a complete healthcare service which would provide the best and most suitable expertise and up-to-date facilities and ease their sufferings from illness, and second to provide the steadily increasing population with their own hospital as there was none there at the time. Indeed he built and planned the entire building so that it would become one of the best providers of medical services in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The Ministry of Health was negotiating to rent it from him when the crisis he suffered in 1982 forced him to divest himself of his most precious and valuable investment and the one that was closest to his heart.

He has always taken a special interest in supporting the Saudi employees in his workforce and has encouraged a large number of them. He has been generous and given them every opportunity. Many of them have gone on to achieve success and have become well-known members of the business community. He pursued and continues to pursue a policy of Saudiization within the Group and has been so successful in this that his company now ranks among the leading Saudi companies in this field and employs a high number of Saudi employees in the workforce.

As well as investment in the training and enabling of Saudi members of the workforce, Saudiization means increasing the national workforce and at the same time decreasing the numbers of foreigners working in the country, thereby reducing the enormous sums of money which the state treasury has to spend in the fields of education and health in particular. It also means reducing reverse remittances and the flow of capital abroad, which in turn will lead to

national revenue seeping back into the local market, something which will help stimulate capital growth and develop national wealth.

Abdulla Fouad regards this as a fundamental goal in all the work he has carried out with the companies in the Group. In addition he believes that productive citizens represent the true wealth of a nation which should be made use of and relied upon. He continues to pay subscriptions to numerous charitable and social projects. He believes that, in addition to the good fortune that God has given him, one of the secrets of his success has been his interest in the human and social side of his business. It is absolutely essential for every businessman to carry out such works and to look after them assiduously.

Abdulla Fouad on a podium

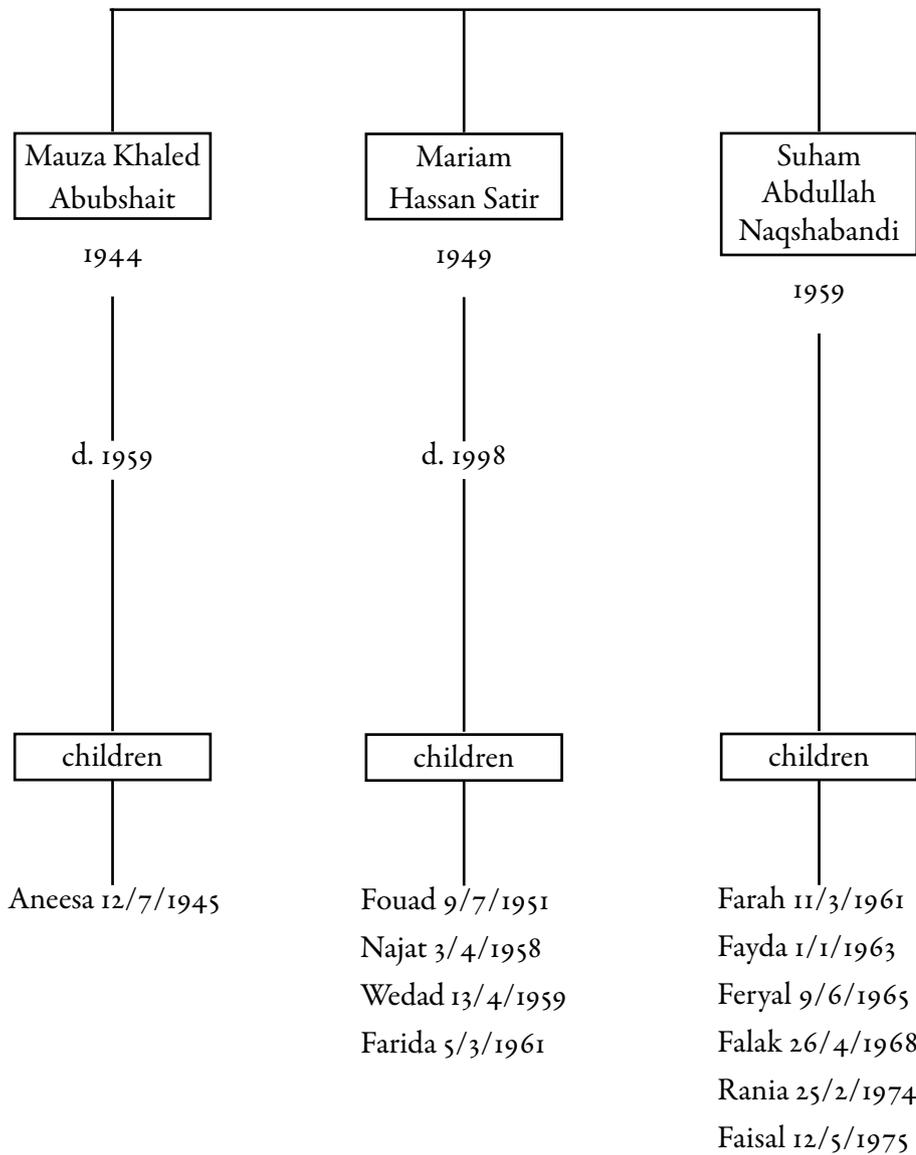


Abdulla Fouad bin Abdul Aziz Abubshait

born

22/7/1925

married





Father

The happiest time of Abdulla Fouad's life is spent with his children and grandchildren. When he is with them, he forgets his work, and the problems associated with it, and is truly content. He has cared for them and worked on their behalf and struggled to give them what they need in life and thereby has planted in them the seeds of love, charity and modesty.

So what do his children say about him?

Fouad

My parent as father has played a fundamental role in creating the person I am today and I can never forget the goodness he has shown me and my brothers and sons. He has been a loving and kindly father to us all and has done everything in his power to provide for his children and members of his family and has given them every comfort and happiness. I am proud of him as an honest and noble man and have seen the human goodness in him. He is one of those men whom you are proud to know, and even more proud to have as a father. I look on him in that way and so do my sons. We are proud of him.

He is a distinguished man whom you may have differences with but whom you will always love and respect. He has always advised me well and counselled me to be modest and to love others. I have learned one maxim from him in particular which I have adopted as my motto: 'Whatever a man's importance or wealth, there is always someone more important and wealthier than him.' He used to repeat this proverb to me to sum up the importance of being modest, both in oneself and with others. I value Abdulla Fouad as a human being, a father, a teacher and a friend.

Three aspects of his character – his extreme generosity, his charitable nature and his absolute trust in others – were the root causes of the major financial crises he has gone through at different stages in his life. He was able to come through them and emerged a stronger man than before. These crises earned him an excellent reputation of being committed to the rights of others.

I still listen to his advice and take instruction from him and benefit enormously from his experience. He is the chairman of the Group's Board

Previous Page:
Fouad Abdulla
Fouad in various
photographs going
back to the 1960s





of Directors, the chief executive and key decision-maker, though he always includes us in the decision-making process. He listens to what we have to say and gives his point of view, though it is true to say that we sometimes differ over business decisions which have the interests of the Group as a whole at heart. Wishing to see his sons continuing to work together, he set about establishing a family company and distributed the shares among us and only retained a minority shareholding for himself.

He has now handed over complete responsibility to me and given me the necessary authority to run the business. By doing this he has clearly demonstrated the confidence that he has in me. He groomed me as the oldest son to take over the business and he trained me for the job during the summer holidays while I was still a student. I will never forget his kindness as long as I live

*You are not only my day, but my morrow and
My yesterday, you who are so giving and kind.
You are unsparing in your love, a passionate lover,
Though time comes between families and their children if the truth be
told
I am so proud to have a father
With such honesty, strength and good character
A dear father whom I can turn to in the darkness of the night
And beg a candle that will soothe my worries and my pain
A beloved brother whose advice I seek
When days oppress me, or raise me to the heights
Because of your favour, oh generous one, I have a country
Because of your virtue, goodness, children and happiness have come.
You reside in my heart ... let the coming days be fair to us*

Portrait of Fouad
Abdulla Fouad

Previous Page:
(Top) Fouad kisses
his father Abdullah
Fouad during the
fiftieth anniversary
celebrations in 1998

(Bottom) Abdulla
Fouad and his son,
Fouad, pictured in
front of Toy Town
on al-Dammam
Corniche, 1996

*Oh noble one, bounteous, most honourable man
I love you above all else, except for God who has created us,
My heart is filled with such pride as I pen you this poem.*

(An ode written by Fouad, son of Abdulla Fouad, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Group, 1 January 1998.).



Faisal

I became aware of the world through the gentle face of my father, his loving voice and his kindness and generosity. I have always been very attached to him. He has taught me about everything that is good and has cared for me, looked after me and raised me. He has been my primary teacher in life; his great heart is full of love and kindness. Everything I have experienced in life has been through him.

I went through the most difficult and dangerous moment of my life with him by my side, when in 1984 we almost drowned in the waters of the Gulf. I can remember the day distinctly, even now so many years later. I have never forgotten how strong and determined he was and how he refused to give up, though he was terrified on my account for I was still a young child. He talked to me and calmed my fears and told me that we would escape from the situation even as the water seeped into the boat and it began to sink. When it sank below the waves he shouted as loud as he could and kept calling my name, Faisal, Faisal, Faisal. What a terrible time that must have been for him!

What difficult moments he must have passed through! We escaped from our plight, by the mercy of God and through the strength of my father's belief and prayers.

I love him so much. My brother, sisters and I have wanted for nothing. Throughout his life, he has worked hard for us and suffered considerably on our account. He fell many times and each time picked himself up again and came back stronger, and more resolute and experienced than before. He learned from experience and time and he in his turn taught us what he had learned. I am very, very proud of him. I am proud to be the son of such a strong man, such a giant of a man.

Aneesha

Abdulla Fouad has been an example to all of us. He has been a constant source of love that has never run dry, a kind and loving father who has borne the cares of the world on our behalf. He has been as steady as a lofty mountain when confronted by calamity. He has never trembled and never fallen. His struggles have been recorded on the pure white pages of history. He has planted a love of goodness and tolerance in us, and has been the lamp which lights up our way, the example which leads us to righteousness.

Najat

Abdulla Fouad is like the star which lights up my universe, the only oasis in my desert, a symbol of generosity and dedication, the light of my entire life. His love fills my heart and being. He abased himself in front of God and God raised him up. He is distinguished for his praiseworthy character, for his tolerance of others, for his generosity and goodness, for his magnanimity and love of doing good, for his grace and honesty ... he is the best of us, a crown whom we can wear on our heads with pride.

Wedad

I am unable to write about him – for he is too wonderful to be described. I

think of him as being like the tree of life, with its roots deep in the ground and its branches raised up to the sky. I think of him as being the beam of a lamp that lights up our paths and the paths of our children who come after us. I think of him as being a beautiful piece of music, an original tune that is more beautiful than any symphony of life, a love that will never come to an end, not now nor in the distant future.

Faten

Abdulla Fouad is a very great man. He showered me and my siblings with love and generosity and did everything he could to make us happy. I am and will always be proud of him. He has been a truly wonderful father. People revere his name for the generous and fine deeds he has performed, for his tolerance and his modesty, for the richness of his soul and the purity of his heart; he wants good things for everyone, so God has given him goodness and granted him success.

Farida

He has lain his head on a pillow of hope and wrapped himself up in the cloak of his work; he has been long-suffering in the face of storm clouds and has swallowed his disappointments in order to realize his hopes and dreams later on. He is distinguished by his generosity and is never mean. He is quick to help those who need his assistance; he is a merciful and giving, kind-hearted and compassionate man who loves everyone. I am fortunate to be his daughter.

Farah

I cannot express the love, respect and esteem that I feel for my father, nor do I have the words to describe the glorious deeds he has performed. The great love I bear him can only be understood by fathers and children. I am proud and pleased to be the daughter of a man whose heart overflows with love for everyone. I am proud to have been born his child and to bear his name.

Fayda

Abdulla Fouad is a loving father who has sacrificed a lot for us, a friend whom we see constantly and with whom we take refuge when times are hard. He is like a generous-hearted teacher who has brought up a new generation and preached to them and instilled wisdom in them. Time has taught him patience, and given him experience, strength and firmness, modesty and compassion and love for all.

Feryal

Abdulla Fouad is a supreme example to me; he has taught us the best of sayings, the noblest of actions and the truest of emotions. We have learned generosity from him through his giving, and munificence from his goodness and magnanimity from his actions. He has taught us to have faith and trust in God and to bear hardship with patience. He is like a father in his compassionate behaviour towards us, a brother in the way he advises us, a friend in the affection he shows us and a guide in the kindness he bears us. Who could be a finer father or a kinder parent?

Falak

His name is the most valuable word that my tongue can utter, for he is a great man who has made me proud to be his daughter, a generous and considerate man, who has struggled and sacrificed much for us. He has given and is still giving much. He is as steadfast as a mighty mountain when confronted by tribulations, and has never become agitated or swerved from his course. He has been persevering and patient so as to become stronger. His love is a treasure that I am proud to possess; he is a symbol of tolerance and love and generosity.

Rania

He is a kind and generous man, a fighter who has been an example to me throughout my life and a lamp which lights up the darkness of my path.

Throughout his life he has fought and struggled and achieved an enormous amount of success but he has never changed and has always remained the same as he has ever been, a modest man who is willing to help others. We can never forget what he has done for us as long as we live.

Overleaf:

The opening of the Safeways store in al-Dammam. Pictured in the photograph are the late Prince Abdul Mohsen bin Jalawi, governor of the Eastern Province, Abdulla Fouad and his son Faisal, 1982.

Abdulla Fouad and his son Faisal, 1998.

Abdulla Fouad and his sons Fouad and Faisal, with his grandson Abdulla on a trip to Rih, 1996.

Abdulla Fouad, his son Faisal and some of his grandsons.

Abdulla Fouad returning from a business trip to Abqaiq with a bed that he had bought for his daughter Faten, 1960. It can be seen in the back of the car – he still has it to this day.

Abdulla Fouad with his son Fouad and his daughter Aneesa in Egypt, 1975.







The Bubshait Clan: Scholars and Sheikhs

For hundreds of years, the Bubshait clan dwelt in the Eastern Province. They were well known for their learning and knowledge of jurisprudence, for their culture and ideas; many high-minded people, scholars and sheikhs graduated from their *madrāsas*, for they were generous and open-handed and did not begrudge others what God had given them, but welcomed to their homes anyone with a desire to learn or to work.

Among the sheikhs from the family who have gone down in history, particularly in the field of learning, are Sheikh Mohammed bin Ahmed bin Mohammed Abubshait, Sheikh Sa'ied bin Ahmed Abubshait, Sheikh Yousif Sa'ied bin Ahmed Abubshait and Sheikh Khaled bin Yousif Abubshait. A number of other members of the family also pursued a similar path, and occupied elevated positions of learning. Some of these men contributed to the flowering of learning in al-Ahsa at a time when an increasing number of scholars in the town devoted themselves exclusively to study and piety.

Seekers after knowledge arrived from across the Gulf region and benefited and profited and learnt about *fiqh*, *tafsir* (commentary on the Qur'an), *hadith* (the sayings of the Prophet), grammar, *sarf* (inflection) and literature. Others studied lore and *fiqh* from scholars and sheikhs such as Sheikh Abdulatif bin Abdulwahab Al Bubshait, who wrote *Hidāya al-masālik limu'addi al-manāsik* (Guidance on the Right Way to Perform Religious Rituals), who had studied at the feet of Sheikh Abu Bakr at al-Hofuf and then gone to Bahrain to study further under Sheikh Yousif bin Mahazi' and Sheikh Khaled bin Yousif Abubshait. He subsequently returned to al-Jafr and founded a *kuttab* where

Following Page:
(Top Left) Sheikh
Abdulrahman bin
Khaled Abubshait.

(Top Right) Sheikh
Mohammed bin
Khaled Abubshait.

(Bottom Left)
Sheikh Yousif bin
Khaled Abubshait

(Bottom Right)
Sheikh Hamed bin
Khaled Abubshait.



the sons of the village and neighbouring district learnt the Qur'an. He later worked as a deputy headmaster in three regular schools which were opened in al-Ahsa and then became headmaster of al-Jisha school, 'the fourth school in al-Ahsa'. Sheikh Mohammed bin Khaled bin Yousif Abubsheit was the first person authorized to carry out marriages in al-Dammam. He was taken to the mercy of his Lord in 1983 and had an elegy composed for him by the poet Sa'ud bin Abdulaziz al Dosari.

Al-Dosari was one of the most important poets in the Province. He had studied *fiqh* at the hands of Sheikh Khaled bin Yousif bin Ahmed Abubshait and had written a poem welcoming the late King Abdulaziz when he visited al-Dhahran in 1939, the opening line of which is as follows:

*You are an adornment to the world of abandoned encampments and dwellings
Dammam and Dhahran now join together in welcoming you.*

He wrote a long elegy for Sheikh Mohammed bin Khaled Abubshait, part of which is reproduced here:

*The arrows of death fall hideously on all creation
Arrows of destruction, which must strike at all mankind
Arrows of death which so catch the heedless unaware,
As they assault, rip into and cause pain
Ibn Khalid, an eternity now comes between us
The union is now severed that yesterday was whole
I mourn; mourn as your brother who spent eighty years with you
Though time never dimmed the love I bore you.
We spent nights together engaged in high-minded, noble pursuits
Guiding the community to charity and good causes
We recited the Qur'an, and read valuable books
Repeated fiqh to each other as we lay on our beds
If our Noble God has decided to separate us, my brother
This is what the Merciful has prescribed for his people.
They brought you to the house which is your resting place
And placed you there in your final abode
You were carried from the world on your restful bier
If only I had been one of those who escorted you.*

Another famous member of the family was Sheikh Hamad bin Khaled bin

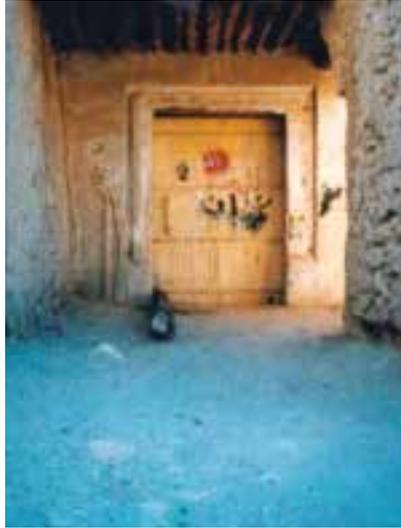


Yousif Abubshait, who was known for his knowledge and temperance. People used to go to him to seek his counsel and to be treated with the Holy Qur'an. His son Sheikh Khaled similarly worked tirelessly on summoning people to God and spreading knowledge. He was imam at the Abubshait Mosque in the middle of al-Dammam, one of the oldest mosques in the city, and used to deliver the Friday *khutba* (sermon). People profited greatly from his words. Basam bin Abdulla al-Ghanim al-'Atawi and Usama Khaled Abubshait later collected a hundred of his sermons into a book. In the introduction, it was written:

Sheikh Khaled was blessed with a marvellous forbearance, and a kind heart. He never blamed anyone nor did he ever get angry with anyone who did him harm. He never bothered with gossip nor any form of nonsense but rather spent his time remembering God and keeping a tight rein on his heart. All those who came into contact with him were struck by his joy and serenity, even when he was very ill. His smile never left his face and he only opened his mouth to utter the name of God the most high. He did his utmost to be charitable and exerted himself to do good works and to be loved by people. In 1989, after suffering an illness in London, God took him to his mercy.

His body was taken to al-Dammam and prayers were recited over it after evening prayers at the al-Nur Mosque. People packed the mosque to pay their last respects. The prayer hall and courtyard were crowded and worshippers blocked the roads leading to the building. A similar number of people prayed for him once more in the graveyard, and after he had been buried yet more people prayed for a third time over his grave and

This page and following page:
View of ruins and family home in al-Jafr village in al-Ahsa.



the cemetery was filled with so many followers that we had not seen its like before. His followers only left the cemetery when sunset fell. Many scholars and students attended his funeral. Among the joyful stories told about his death is one recounted by Sheikh Adil al-Sa'idan, which he recorded in his book, *Tadhkira al-Ikhwan* (Memories of Brothers). It had been told to him by the person who washed Sheikh Khaled's body. 'I washed Sheikh Khaled Abubshait's body, may God have mercy upon him and it shone after it had been washed. When I went down into the grave to smooth over the sand, I picked up a handful of earth and put it to my nose and it smelt of musk. When we lowered him into the grave the air was filled with a beautiful fragrance. I had sprinkled his body with sandalwood, aloes and saffron but this scent was different to that.'

A number of prominent men in the field of education were members of the family. They were among the first people to be educated when formal education was still at an early stage in Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. Until 1935 there were only five elementary schools in al-Dammam, which taught the Holy Qur'an, *tajwiid* (recitation of the Qur'an), reading and writing. Of these three were run by members of the Bubshait clan. They taught their pupils to read the Qur'an and recite it correctly and also schooled them in elementary reading, writing and arithmetic. They made a considerable contribution to the dissemination of religious and worldly knowledge and were characterized by their passion for schools where preaching and spiritual guidance were taught, which increased people's respect and regard for them.

شجرة عائلة آل بوشيت



مجموعه اسناد و کتابخانه ملی جمهوری اسلامی ایران
کتابخانه و اسنادخانه مجلس شورای اسلامی

کتابخانه و اسنادخانه مجلس شورای اسلامی
مجموعه اسناد و کتابخانه ملی جمهوری اسلامی ایران

What Others Say about Abdulla Fouad



A Strong Man

My close links with Abdulla Fouad go back to the middle of 1950. I met him through a group of friends who worked or did business with Aramco, soon after returning to Saudi Arabia after completing my studies in Britain. Our relationship developed quickly, particularly as our families had been closely connected for many years in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia.

I got to know him better when we founded a company together whose aim was to implement one of Aramco's projects in Dhahran. A number of Saudi businessmen and a foreign company invested in the company and we were both on the board of directors. We met frequently to discuss plans and strategies for the company and I was struck by his devotion to his work and his perseverance. He did not hesitate to do anything that would serve the interests of the company and fulfil its objectives. Out of this partnership, a close kinship was born which I cannot do justice to in words.

Abdulla Fouad is a man who loves taking risks and has achieved much through having a strong heart and through applying wit and logic. He forged

a life for himself when times were hard and refused to let problems get in the way of his ambition, persevering and struggling on. With the late Ali al-Tamimi (may God rest his soul) he founded a contracting company which went on to become one of the largest companies in Saudi Arabia. Its activities multiplied and diversified and it grew until it was ranked among the top companies in Saudi Arabia and beyond.

He possessed a kind of courage that is rarely found in businessmen. He was quick to invest in any project that appeared to be of value and would be of benefit to the country, particularly if he was convinced by its potential.

He did not restrict his activities and business to Saudi Arabia but also operated abroad and invested in major projects outside the country, most of which yielded substantial profits, particularly during the 1970s.

He will go down in the history of the region as the first person to take an interest in the health sector, which at the time was regarded as being outside his sphere of expertise, and to undertake a major project in this field. He constructed the Abdulla Fouad specialist hospital in al-Dammam, which provided a sophisticated health service to the people of the Eastern Province – although it failed to become economically viable. He was determined to offer a sophisticated medical service to ease the suffering caused by illness without regard to the profit he would make.

He is known for his many excellent qualities. If he promises to do something, he will keep his word and if he has to do something, he will always do it immediately. He has confronted difficulties with courage. The crises he has gone through have only served to increase his strength, faith and patience. It is true to say that no ordinary man could have borne what he has borne.

We remain closely connected and are constantly in touch with each other. I have many beautiful memories of the times we have been through together and even more beautiful ones of the relationship which I have been fortunate to enjoy with him, Abdulla Fouad, a man of strength.

Sheikh Abdulaziz Qasim Kanoo

Deputy Chairman of the Yousif bin Ahmed Kanoo Group



Partner and Friend

I got to know Abdulla Fouad through his father Abdulaziz Bubshait, may peace be upon him, when we came to live in al-Dammam many years ago. As time passed and we became friends, we conceived the idea of jointly founding a contracting company, which we called Fouad and Mojil Contractors, which proved very successful. Two years after we had set up the company I decided after much deliberating to leave the Eastern Province and to find work elsewhere. We agreed to dissolve the company and within a couple of hours of taking the decision Abdulla Fouad arrived with all the necessary documents. Twenty minutes later we had liquidated the company and each one of us had taken what was owing to him. The company continued to operate for a short while longer under his management to fulfil its remaining obligations. We resumed our friendship when I returned to the Eastern Province and we frequently exchanged ideas or sought advice from each other on many of our business ventures.

Fouad and Mojil Contractors acted as a springboard for both of us and we benefited from the experience considerably in our subsequent businesses. We have never once fallen out with each other. Our ideas have often coincided and our opinions have for the most part corresponded with each other, something which has facilitated and consolidated our success, particularly as it has been built on mutual honesty, frankness, faith and trust.

Abdulla Fouad is a businessman who is distinguished by his spirit of adventure. He never hesitates when taking a decision, something which has driven him to invest in projects which lie outside his sphere and to succeed in them. He has never shown indecision or fear and has invested in every project that he believed to be viable. This is one of the secrets of our friendship which

has lasted for such a long time and continues to this day. He is my former partner and my dear and current friend.

Sheikh Sa'ad al-Mojil

President, Abdulaziz and Sa'ad al-Mohammed al-Mojil Group



A Self-Made Man

As a Saudi, I am very proud and pleased with what Abdulla Fouad has achieved. He is a self-made man who has been able to accomplish an enormous amount, solely on his own merits. We are bound to each other by a friendship which is tinged with respect and esteem. I rejoice at the continuing success of his business and its expansion, which has made a huge contribution to the national economy and, as is the case with Saudi businessmen, I am bound to him not only by memories of common enterprise but also because I respect and honour him very much for the many successes he has achieved through the activities of his group of companies.

Sheikh Saleh Kamel

President, the Dallah al-Baraka Group



Dedication to Country

My acquaintanceship and subsequent friendship with Abdulla Fouad dates back to the time when I was appointed general manager of the railways in 1975. He can properly be described as one of the leading businessmen of the Eastern Province. My first impressions on meeting him were that he was a calm man with a sober tongue who only talked about things that he considered important. As time passed I discovered that he was dedicated to his country and that he tended to concentrate on projects which were of use to the public, by supporting charitable organizations, building medical institutions and generally being open-handed and generous.

Abdulla Fouad is a highly successful and honest businessman, who has given much to his community and earned the respect and esteem of the community at large as well as becoming a symbol for all those who work and struggle to get on in life. He is distinguished by his courage and the progressiveness which he has shown in most of his commercial dealings, and he has achieved the enormous success he aspired to. He has not been affected by the problems he has encountered but rather he has met them with courage and strength.

Our relationship was and is characterized by the esteem and respect we feel for each other. He is one of the most important businessmen to come out of the Eastern Province and will always be remembered in the area for the services he has rendered to it and the great works he has done.

His Excellency, Sheikh Faisal bin Mohammed al-Shuhail
Chairman of the Board of Directors for the Eastern Company for
Newspapers, Printing and Publishing



A Wise Man

Abdulla Fouad's is an illustrious name and needs no introduction. Whatever is said about to him will not do him justice. My relationship with him goes back to 1980 when I took up my job as head of al-Dammam Council. He respects others and cares for the weak rather than the strong, the poor rather than the wealthy, and these traits are only given to people whom God chooses by distinguishing them with the love of others.

Since getting to know him I have discovered how generous and high-minded he is. He is remarkable for his boldness and daring and for knowing the most suitable time to take a decision. Although he has gone through many crises, he has not been affected by them; he has never stood back from helping those in need and, more important than that, he has never treated anyone unfairly but has always paid his dues. He has been able to survive the many ordeals he has endured with wisdom.

When he went through his last financial crisis, he put up everything he had to maintain his good name and reputation. His problems never led to disputes with his partners or those he had dealings with. I remember that he had a piece of real estate in al-Khobar at the time that he put up for sale to help repay what he owed to the banks. A friend proposed that I should go in with him and buy it. It was selling for well below its proper value but when Abdulla Fouad heard what we were intending he contacted me to tell me that he agreed to the sale. I refrained from buying it because the price was too low and he was being compelled to sell it to end his problems. I am very happy to see that the property still bears his name today.

Abdulla Fouad is a very rational and highly competent man, and a rare type of businessman. His successes testify to that. He is an intelligent man who has

made use of his abilities to return to the top once more, and an organizer who has been able to face any circumstances.

In my position as head of the council, I also came to see the human side to his character, through his actions to those in need, and in the many charitable and social works he carried out in the region, the most notable of which was the construction of the Abdulla Fouad Hospital in al-Dammam, which at the time was the most modern hospital in the whole of Saudi Arabia. He also built a 20,000 m² park and a mosque in the same district of the city which was later named after him as a sign of respect and esteem and to acknowledge the great work that he had done for the region.

His Excellency Za'id Fahd al-Sakibi

Chairman of the Board of Directors, The Eastern Company for
Printing, Press and Publishing



A Generous Man

I first met Abdulla Fouad in the summer of 1981, at his office at al-Tamimi & Fouad, when I was outlining my proposals for setting up Investcorp. He favoured the idea and he and his partner, the late Ali al-Tamimi, may God have mercy upon him, were founding shareholders of the bank. I visited him several times after that and have met him at many functions.

Abdulla Fouad is courteous and generous and a man of high standing. He has a clear vision and is honest in what he says. He has earned my love, esteem and respect.

Mr Nemir Amin Kirdar

Mandatory Member and Executive President (Investcorp Bank)



A Man with a Good Reputation

My acquaintanceship with Abdulla Fouad goes back many years though I do not remember exactly when we first met. We have become good friends since then for which I thank God, and it is no exaggeration to say that we are more like brothers than friends and have a deep love and respect for each other. We cemented our friendship in the mid-1970s when we met at various functions, especially those thrown by Aramco. I was working as deputy assistant at the Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources at the time and Abdulla Fouad was a leading contractor who did a lot of work for Aramco. Despite our ever closer relationship, I cannot think of a single instance when Abdulla asked me to use my position at the Ministry to help him, something which increased the respect and esteem I had for him.

Before I got to know Abdulla Fouad, I had heard a lot about him. Everyone talked about his many good qualities. When I got to know him, however, I did not think their descriptions had done him justice. Abdulla Fouad is a generous man who is never slow in helping others and much given to charitable work. These good qualities have helped spread his fame beyond the Province.

I remember an old friend of his telling me how he first got to know Abdulla Fouad.

When I came to work in the Eastern Province, no one knew me and I did not have the necessary expertise to carry out a job. Soon after I arrived, I applied to carry out some project or other. However the agency which would implement the project stipulated that I provide the name of a sponsor. At the time I did not know any businessmen in the Province personally. I had heard a lot about Abdulla Fouad so I told them that he was my sponsor. At that point, without a moment's hesitation, they

agreed. After that I went to see Abdulla Fouad and told him what had happened. He didn't become upset or angry. Instead he asked me whether there was anything he could do for me and proposed that I enter into partnership with him. It was then that I realized what kind of man Abdulla Fouad was and how he had gained his good reputation. It was based on his deeds and words and had led to him occupying such an exalted place in the community.

I was part of a Saudi delegation which visited Australia in 1983. The delegation was led by the Minister of Commerce and included representatives from various ministries as well as a number of Saudi businessmen, chief among whom was Abdulla Fouad. He made the visit a pleasurable experience for every member of the delegation. Most of us only knew about the country because of his investments in it. Members of the delegation were wont to say that we were there as his guests rather than as the guests of the Australians.

He loves doing good work. His decision to build the Abdulla Fouad Hospital, which was to have a major influence on the development of medical and healthcare services in the Province, was prompted not by a desire to make a profit so much as a desire to do good. I asked him about it at the time and he said, 'It is a way of making recompense to this country which has given me so much. It is my duty. I do not expect to make a profit from it, for I have enough money.'

Abdulla Fouad is distinguished for his boldness and honesty, his strength and firmness. He never wavers when taking a decision. I have seen his strength and no artifice. He is completely frank; he does not know how to be falsely courteous; he is a great conversationalist and extremely knowledgeable; his experience in life has earned him a good reputation and a name that will not be forgotten.

Mr Ahmed al-Zamel, Chairman of the Board of Directors
Eastern Province Cement Company



An Academy of Commerce

Whatever I say about Abdulla Fouad will not do him justice. I am very proud to have known him. My own relationship with him stems from the long-standing relationship he enjoyed with my father Suliman Olayan, which dates back to the days when the two of them were colleagues at Aramco in the 1940s. I got to know him when I started to work for our Group of Companies after completing my studies in the United States in 1975. We became better acquainted and visited each other from time to time.

Abdulla Fouad is one of the most outstanding and successful businessmen in the Eastern Province. He has achieved this success through his own efforts and through his continuing commitment and dedication to his work. I am proud to know him. He has a noble history. He succeeded in building himself up through his own efforts, relying on God in everything he did. His success sprang from his firm belief, his perseverance and dedication and his love for his job. He was very ambitious and not content to have a job in which he would work for eight hours a day and then go home to relax. He dreamed of becoming someone important and achieved everything that he had aspired to. He is distinguished by his courage and straightforwardness and has an indescribable ability to face and overcome problems which he encounters in his work.

Everyone knows that business is a risky occupation and can be as unprofitable as it is profitable. Most businessmen are well aware of this fact and take it into consideration, though some are so affected by their losses that they can become severely depressed and their performance and the way they carry out their daily business suffer as a result. Abdulla Fouad has been exposed to many financial crises which have cost him a great deal of money. But he has overcome these

difficulties. Rather than affecting him in any noticeable way, or preventing him from pursuing his path towards success, such difficulties have increased his stubbornness and self-belief.

Abdulla Fouad is a businessman who has been honed by the trials and the crises he has gone through. They have strengthened his sense of obstinacy and sharpened his love and fondness for adventure. This is most clearly illustrated by his willingness to enter into investment projects which are outside his particular field of expertise but which have nevertheless brought him success and made a great contribution to the Province.

Despite the strong ties which exist between our family and Abdulla Fouad, we are linked only by friendship and have not collaborated in a business sense. I regret this very much because I truly believe that working alongside him would have taught me a lot and given me a valuable experience.

My father had a very close relationship with him. They were in constant contact and their friendship cemented the strong ties which still exist between the Olayan and Bubshait families. I am very close to his son Fouad. We meet frequently on a formal and informal basis. We visit each other and during the summer try to ensure that we holiday in the same countries with our families. Abdulla Fouad is a unique teacher and many businessmen have attended his 'academy of commerce' and learned from it.

Mr Khaled Suliman Olayan

Chairman of the Board of Directors, the Olayan Group of Companies



A Warrior

The struggles that Abdulla Fouad has contended with throughout his working life represent a true history that is pure and clean. He has been able to build a great reputation for himself. He struggled a lot at the beginning but he was not brought down by the difficulties he endured nor was he diverted from continuing upon his path.

Abdulla Fouad has faced many crises which would have been sufficient to finish off any other businessman, but each time he has come back stronger than before and his many achievements are proof of this. He has made an effort to perform charitable work and has concentrated on playing a distinguished role in this field.

The story of Abdulla Fouad's life is exemplary and one that other businessmen would do well to follow, for he has faced gruelling difficulties and situations. However, he has an ability to solve problems and overcome any obstacle, which is only possessed by a few, and is characterized by superior intelligence and wisdom.

He has earned the respect and esteem of everyone, through his proper conduct, his refined character and trustworthiness and the way he gives everyone their due immediately and without delay. He is a fine example of a Saudi businessman whom others should bear in mind.

Engineer Khalid al-Abdullah al-Zamil

President, Saudi Chambers of Commerce Council, Chairman of the
Chamber of Industrial Commerce, Eastern Province



An Example

Abdulla Fouad's life has been one of struggle, challenge and perseverance in the face of obstacles. He started with nothing and went on to climb to the very top.

I began my working life in 1950 as a contractor for Aramco, which supported and encouraged local contractors. In 1953 I became acquainted with Abdulla Fouad at the company's contracting office and from that moment we became close friends. In 1962 I returned to Bahrain and I set up a contracting company, which today owns twenty-seven diversified companies and businesses, while Abdulla Fouad continued to pursue his own path with steadfastness and strength. Our friendship has continued to grow ever since.

Abdulla Fouad is a man who made his own way in life. He faced up to the many difficulties he encountered and never despaired. When beset by problems he did not weaken. He is notable for his courage and bravery. He is a living example of those Gulf Region businessmen who began at the bottom with nothing but quickly rose to the top. The story of their success is now widely known and they have become models for anyone who wants to do well.

We planned to go into business together but circumstances were against us. We travelled abroad to look at other projects which further study showed were unviable. However I gained his friendship. We frequently exchange opinions and seek each other's advice on projects that we are considering embarking upon.

Abdulla Fouad is a man whom the youth of today should model themselves on. He is a self-made man whose life has provided an example for others to follow.

Mr Abdulla Ahmed Nass

Bahraini Businessman



A Man of Charity

Abdulla Fouad was like a dear brother to my father Rashed Abdulrahman Rashed, may God have mercy upon him. They shared a strong bond of friendship which was based on mutual respect, friendship and trust.

Thirty years ago the Eastern Province was a small place in which it was easy to get to know people. My father started out as a merchant and supplied many places, including Aramco, with provisions. Abdulla Fouad on the other hand began his working life as a clerk for Aramco. Their friendship began during this period.

I look on him as one of the dearest people I know and among those who are closest to my heart. I got to know him properly when I started working with my father in 1973, after I had completed my studies abroad. My acquaintanceship with him brought me great happiness. He is a very courteous man, characterized by integrity and good humour. Alongside this, he is a self-made man. He has always shown himself to be very determined, whatever the circumstances, the clearest proof of which was the vigorous way he faced up to the financial crises he went through, which would have spelled the end for anyone else and forced them to give up the world of business and finance.

Uncle Abdulla Fouad has a formidable ability to endure. Perhaps his strong faith in God, may He be praised and exalted, is behind this. With God's help he succeeded in coming through the crises he faced. In fact it was apparent that he emerged a stronger and tougher person as a result. I think that these incidents were not at all easy for him. The crises and situations he went through increased my respect and admiration for him, for I am proud of people who work seriously and with determination.

My father, may God have mercy upon him, and Uncle Abdulla Fouad were

alike in one thing: they were afraid of no one. Perhaps this was because they started at the bottom and made their way in a world that was full of difficulties and pain. One enterprise in particular which brought the two men together was the Civil Works Company which they started with limited capital and prospects. However with the dedicated efforts of both its partners, and as it diversified and developed its activities, it soon became a well-known firm. Five years after founding the company, Uncle Abdulla Fouad announced that he wished to withdraw from it because of personal circumstances affecting him at the time. We all suffered from his departure.

I have learned an enormous amount from Uncle Abdulla Fouad. He urges everyone to do good works as he urges himself. He tends towards modesty; he takes comfort from performing a service for someone else. I cannot remember a single instance when he has not been generous with his advice or counsel. He has taken pains to teach me when he has seen that I am in need of his advice. I have benefited hugely from his experience and expertise. He is famous for his generosity and kindness and his numerous charitable works and investments bear witness to that.

Mr Abdulaziz al-Rashed

Mandatory Member of the Board of Directors for the Rashed
Abdulrahman Rashed and Sons Group of Companies



A School of Giving

Uncle Abdulla Fouad and my father the late Ali al-Tamimi, may God have mercy upon him, enjoyed a friendship that was as close if not closer than that shared by two brothers. It was not just a relationship based on work. They were as one in the way they thought, planned and even implemented a project. That is how I would describe the relationship between Uncle Abdulla and my father, and it was a relationship that lasted many decades.

Ever since I can remember, my father's name has been linked to that of Uncle Abdulla Fouad. I used to ask my father about how he started and he would say 'Ask your uncle, Abdulla Fouad, for he knows more about me than anyone else.'

Their relationship began in the 1960s, when they were both employed at Aramco. But they didn't stay long at the company – they were too ambitious for that. My father left his job after a few years and Uncle Abdulla Fouad followed soon afterwards. Circumstances brought them together once more and they founded the al-Tamimi & Fouad Company at a time when Aramco was starting to open its doors to Saudi contractors and employ them on its projects. The young company carried out a series of major projects on Aramco's behalf and subsequently expanded and developed as a result of my father's and Uncle Abdulla Fouad's good management, grasp of affairs and ability to steer the business.

Although Tamimi & Fouad soon became one of the leading companies of the time their ambitions did not stop there and they continued to look at ways of expanding the business and diversifying. They became the agents for international companies in Saudi Arabia and were involved in many different areas. At the end of the 1970s, they won the concession to set up a franchise for

the American company Safeway in Saudi Arabia which at the time represented a major gamble, but they were both driven by a love of risk-taking and did their utmost to distribute the products of this giant company to the various regions of Saudi Arabia. Two years later, on opening the commercial division, the partners decided to turn the company into an integrated commercial and manufacturing group. This operated in every field and included manufacturing, real estate, investment and commerce as well as the contracting which had been its starting off point.

In 1982 Uncle Abdulla Fouad announced that he wished to end the partnership with my father because of circumstances he was going through. The announcement came out of the blue. My father had never considered such a thing would happen, particularly as the partnership had lasted for more than twenty-four years. He found it a very difficult decision to accept, and tried extremely hard to convince Uncle Abdulla Fouad to maintain the partnership, but his mind was made up. He wished to protect my father from problems he was facing from the banks. His actions reflected his loyalty to us and love for us all. My father missed him greatly and was very sad when the partnership came to an end.

My own relationship with him began in 1982 when I finished my studies in the United States of America and returned to take up a position in the Group. This was after he had taken his decision to leave. I remember those days very well. He spent long hours working and teaching me at the same time. I listened to him and to his advice on how to manage the business. I will never forget the favours he did for me. I learned much from him and from my father. They were very generous teachers.

Uncle Abdulla Fouad listened to what I had to say even though I had virtually no experience in the job; he took pains to give me every opportunity to express my opinion and then discussed it with me. In the time I spent working with him, which very sadly did not last long, his courage and love of risk-taking quickly became apparent.

Uncle Abdulla Fouad is distinguished by his ability to face up to difficulties and take difficult decisions quickly, firmly and boldly. His daring is one of his most outstanding qualities and most distinguishing features, a trait which is synonymous with his name. He has invested in numerous projects in many different countries and enjoyed dazzling success with high rates of return.

My father, may God have mercy upon him, died in 1992, but our ties with Uncle Abdulla Fouad remain as strong as ever. I do my best to visit him frequently, either in his home or in his office. I have never hesitated to ask for his opinion on many of the decisions I have had to make and I say that with both pride and pleasure. Once when I was thinking about carrying out a multi-million riyal plan to modernize and develop one of the divisions of the company, I phoned Uncle Abdulla Fouad to see what he thought. He advised against the idea and after studying it thoroughly, I realized that he was right. I have benefited and continue to benefit considerably from his lessons and his knowledge. I hope to collaborate with him on a project in the future and I am in no doubt that it will be a success, not least because the man behind it will be Abdulla Fouad, a veritable institution in commerce and ethics.

Mr Tareq al-Tamimi

Chairman of the Board of Directors, the al-Tamimi Group



A Businessman who does Not Recognize the Impossible

Abdulla Fouad bin Abdulaziz Abubshait was born in al-Dammam in 1924 and spent his early years moving between al-Dammam, Bahrain, Darain and al-Khobar. He had a difficult and tough childhood by any standards, but despite his youth he was able to learn a great deal from his experiences and to benefit from them. When he was sixteen he found a job with Aramco on a salary of 75 halala a day, which stood him in good stead, after which he did other jobs in Saudi Arabia and Bahrain and gained a variety of experiences. In 1946 he returned to work for Aramco and was gradually promoted until he was made head of personnel at the company's office in Ras Tanura.

Through his job he acquired excellent expertise, leading the company to award him a series of contracts to carry out projects on its behalf, which included work on the Tapline project. After that he resigned his job and founded his own company which later became one of the largest integrated groups of companies in the country. With the late Ali al-Tamimi he also founded the Tamimi & Fouad group of companies which ranked among the leading Saudi corporations of the time.

Abdulla Fouad believes that every member of the business community has a duty to carry out social and charitable work, something he has focused on to a large extent. He undertook a number of new projects in the region that helped provide the people of the region with excellent services, including the Abdulla Fouad Hospital in al-Dammam and another hospital al-Ahsa. One of the districts in al-Dammam has been named after him in recognition of his distinguished efforts in this field.

Abdulla Fouad went through several financial crises which he overcame with his wisdom and ingenuity. He emerged from them stronger than before and with a heightened reputation, something that has contributed to the leading position that his group of companies occupies in Saudi business, proving that he is a businessman of a rare breed who does not recognize the impossible.

This year Abdulla Fouad celebrates the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of his group of companies and the success he has achieved inside and outside Saudi Arabia. He is particularly proud of the Saudiization of the workforce in

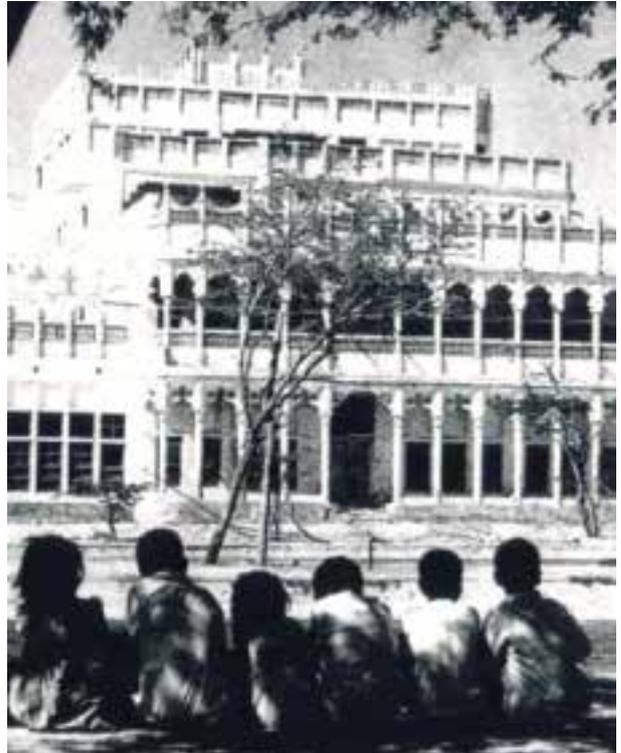
Previous page:
Abdulla Fouad and
Ali Tamimi at the
opening of Safeway
supermarket in al-
Khobar in 1980.
Tareq Ali al-Tamimi
appears in both
photographs..

his group of companies, given his strong belief in the importance of employing, training and enabling Saudi worker. The group has been able to achieve continuous success in this field.

Abdulla Fouad has two sons, Fouad and Faisal, and ten daughters. His hobbies are hunting and reading.









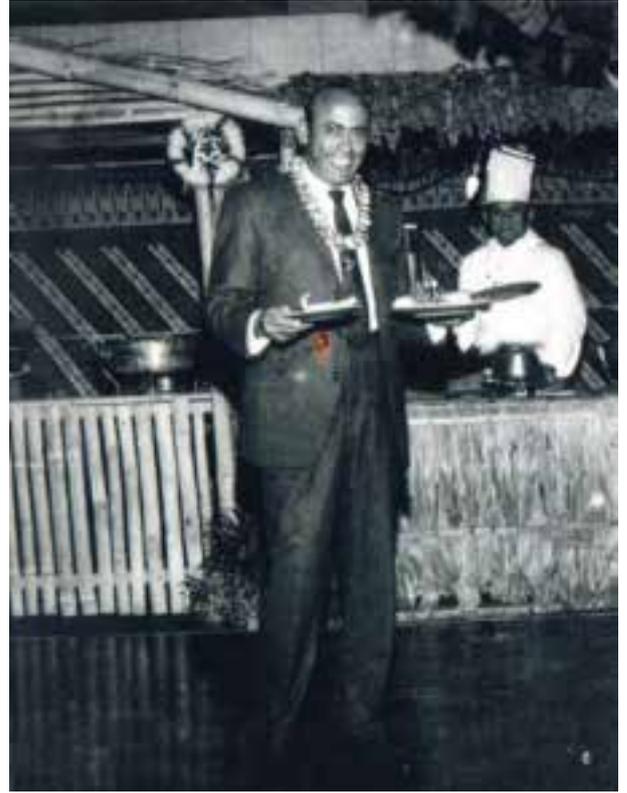








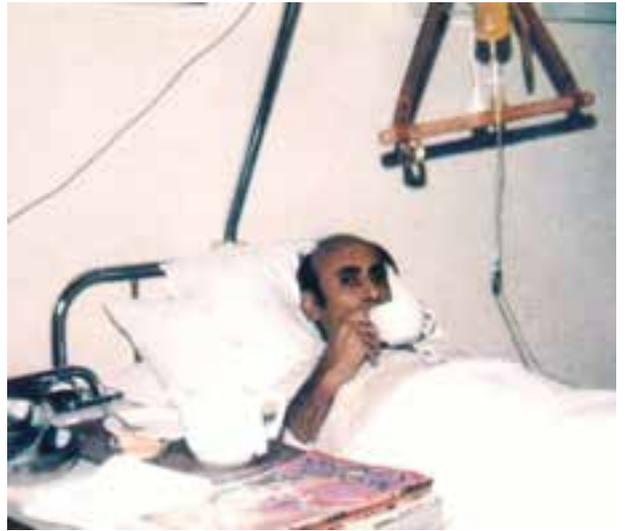
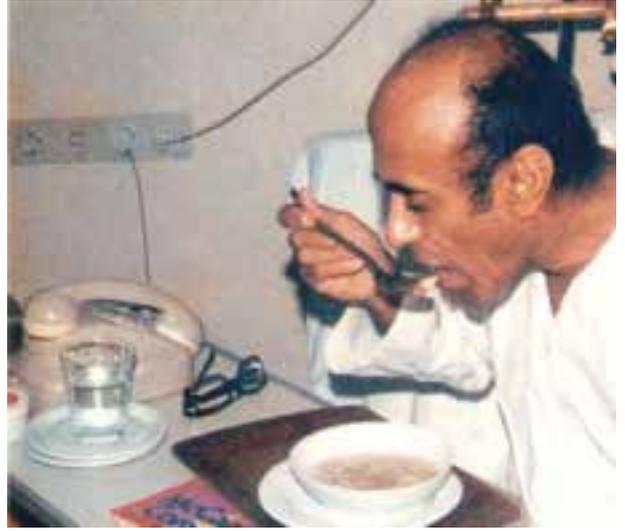


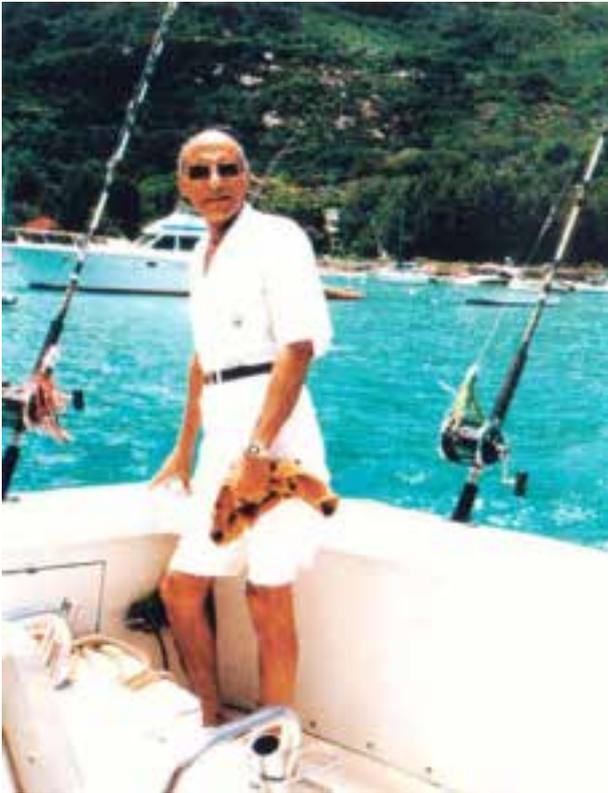






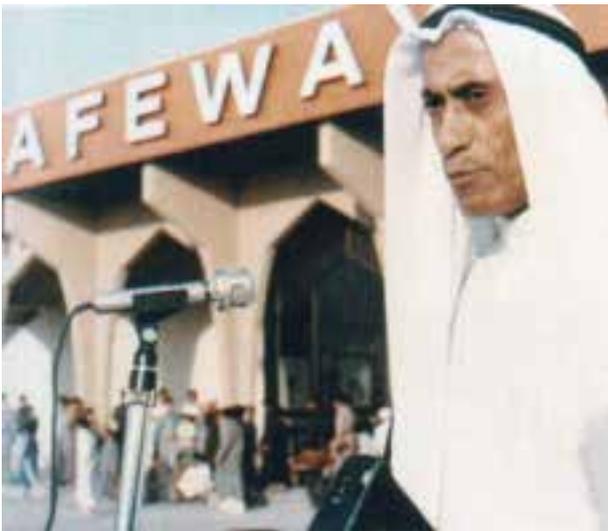














الرجل

ARRAJOL

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عمر العيسى الضاح:
الرجل الذي زار
الأميركي في دمشق



رائد غلامه:
مطرب يقبض في الطائرة



نبيلة كبيدة:
نخال علي «معالى الوزير»

عامل السفنزال الذي صار
أحد كبار رجال الأعمال
عبد الله فؤاد:

فقدت
طعم المال
بعد الملايين
الأولى





ومن جهة ذلك فؤاد عبد الله فؤاد رئيس الجمعية إن التكرم بأن يحيا شكر وتقدير لكل من عمل بالجمعية وسواءه بمؤسساته وخبرته من أعضائها كما شهد على أن الجمعية وخلال الخمسين عاما التي مرت على تأسيسها وبصحة رشاقة الشباب وبمجموعه كعائلة فؤاد التي تعد من النماذج الرائدة في العمل في مجالات عديدة منها العمل في القوات والبحار والصناعة والخدمات.

أقامت مجموعة عائلته فؤاد أخيراً حفلة لا بمناسبة مرور خمسين عاماً على تأسيسها بحضور أكثر من ألف مدعو من موقفي الجمعية. وأكد عبدالله فؤاد رئيس مجلس الإدارة أن الأصدقاء الذين أحاطوا بالجمعية يأتي بعد أن أقيمت خمسين عاماً منذ تأسيسها في عام 1964م، وقال إن العمل بكل قوة وكثافة من مدعو في هذه الجمعية وتطورها خلال الخمسين عاماً من عمرها والتي استطاعت أن تحفل فيه مناسبات عديدة، عمل أبرزها العمل في دعم عملية السعودية وأعمال الخيرية والتطوعيات والتربية بشكل جيد. وشهد العمل تكريماً للموظفين الذين أهدوا مناسخاً من العمل في العمل لدى الشركة منذ أن عتصم سنوات 1964م و2004م وأكثر، وقدمت لهم الشهادات التقديرية نظراً لقدمهم من جهد الشركة خلال عملهم بها.

"عبدالله فؤاد"
تحتفل به
(50) عاماً
من النجاح

لقطات من المؤتمر الخليجي، الأمريكي

ويقدمها المهندس أسامة الكوي الأمين العام المساعد في مجلس الغرف السعودية.

***جان كلسكي مستشار وزارة التجارة الأمريكية أكد لـ الإخصائية، أن الخليج يعد منطقة جذب استثمارية متميزة، وشدد على أهمية تنمية العلاقات الثنائية.**

*** ركزت كلمات الافتتاح على أن العصر الحالي، عصر التغيرات الاقتصادية المتكاملة، ودعت إلى تطبيق ذلك فعليا.**

*** بدأ المؤتمر متأخراً عن مواعيدته الرسمية عشر دقائق، بسبب الإقبال الكبير من قبل رجال الأعمال، وتأخر البعض الآخر عن الحضور.**

*** الجلسات المشاركة في تنظيم المؤتمر وزعت العديد من مطبوعاتها على الحضور، إلا أنه لوحظ أن الكثير منها قديماً يعود لأعوام ما قبل التسعينيات.**

*** فاهم بن سلطان القاسمي الأمين العام لمجلس التعاون الخليجي، قال إنه من حسن الطالع أن يتوالت المؤتمر في البحرين مع حصولها على المركز الثالث بين أفضل الدول التي تتمتع بالحرية الاقتصادية من مجموع 142 دولة، شملتها دراسة ميدانية أجرتها مؤسسة التراث الأمريكية.**



يوسف الجراح



عبد الله فؤاد

*** شهدت فترة ما قبل المؤتمر وما بعده مناقشات جانبية بين رجال الأعمال الخليجين والأمريكيين عموماً، وبين رجال الأعمال السعوديين خصوصاً. أقيمت المناقشات حول المؤتمر وطرق استثماره بالشكل الصحيح، وكان عبد العزيز التويحي، عبد العزيز كاتو، وليد الجفالي، إبراهيم الصبيح، يوسف الميحي، عبد الله فؤاد، الدكتور فهد الحزام، الدكتور خالد الخلف، عبد الرحمن التركي من أبرز أطراف تلك المناقشات.**

*** شهد المؤتمر حضوراً متميزاً من الجانبين الخليجي والأمريكي بشكل فائق ما كان متوقعاً.**

*** جذب المؤتمر عدداً من رجال الأعمال والإعلام المشاركين في مؤتمر «الاستثمار» الذي يبدأ فعالياته الرسمية صباح اليوم في فندق الميريديان.**

*** توقع أحد رجال الأعمال المشاركين في المؤتمر أن تشهد فعالياته إقبالاً كبيراً، خاصة مع بداية حلقات العمل الرسمية.**

*** المشاركة السعودية فيما يتعلق بالحضور من قبل رجال الأعمال كانت متميزة، أما المشاركة في جلسات العمل، فكانت مبعودة حسب الجدول المحدد، وتقتصر تلك المشاركة على جلسة العمل الرابعة، الشامل التجاري ودور منظمة التجارة الدولية.**

شركة عبد الله فؤاد تفوز بوكالة BIOTRACE البريطانية في الشرق الأوسط

من المنطقة للطلب فحسباً ثم زرعتمها وحضنتها لمدة 48 ساعة لمعرفة النتيجة الأمر الذي سيساعد على تخفيض الكثير من حالات التسهم الفشلاني.

بذكر أن مجموعة عبدالله فؤاد قتي تتخذ من اهتمام مقراً رئيسياً لها تعمل في مجالات عديدة منها أعمال اللقارلات والتجارة والصناعة والخدمات حيث تعمل في مجال اللقارلات شركتها فانكو وريكن وفي المجال التجاري تتوزع الأنشطة بين التسام التجارية، وقوكالات، الكومبيوتر والخدمات الطبية وتتملك الجمعية وكالات شركات عالمية كبرى في السعودية مثل تسن كترتك، جهات سثيل، توكا كالميسوا كوكي، ميديسوبيشي كاكوكي كالميسا، جوك وتيك، كروي، كومبلك، كومودور.

فازت شركة عبدالله فؤاد، بسم القوائم الطبية، أخيراً بوكالة شركة BIOTRACE البريطانية في المملكة والشرق الأوسط.

وتقوم الشركة البريطانية بإنتاج أجهزة متطورة ودقيقة لكشف التلوث الجرثومي بلباس البلاطة (APP) كالتنظية من البكتيريا حيث لا يستغرق الاظهر سوى عشرين ثانية ويستغرق غير الفتي القيام بذلك.

وتتميز الأجهزة التي تنتجها الشركة بالسعة والقدرة وتستخدمها الكثير من مساحات الأغنية الأوروبية والأمريكية الكبيرة، وتوفرت مصادر مطلعة أن عمل هذه كالتنظية الحديثة سهل الطرق كالتقليدية والتي تعتمد على أخذ عينات

تجاوب مع دعوة الأمير محمد بن فهد لرجال الأعمال نصف مليون ريال تبرع من عبدالله فؤاد لإنشاء برج طبي

تبرع رجل الأعمال عبدالله فؤاد بمبلغ نصف مليون ريال تجاوباً مع التوجيه الكريم من صاحب السمو الملكي الأمير محمد بن فهد بن عبد العزيز آل سعود أمير المنطقة الشرقية في دعم المشروع الإنساني المتمثل في إنشاء برج طبي لتسهمي الخدمات الصحية لـ 1200 مريضاً وتتمتع بخدمات متطورة البرج 500 مليون ريال والذي به العديد والعديد من قبل الجمعية العامة لسعودي الصحة ما كمنطقة الشرقية ليقوم بنملا من المصافي القديمة بالتوسيطي وفهد دعا الأمير محمد بن فهد بن عبد العزيز صاحب رجال الأعمال للمنطقة لتتساعده في هذا المشروع الإنساني والذي سيشهد أيضا المنطقة الشرقية من قبل حياض والتكثيف من قبل فهد، ووجه سمو أمير المنطقة الشرقية لرجال الأعمال عبدالله فؤاد بتبرعه بتغييره مشارسته في التساعده في إنشاء هذا البرج الطبي الذي سيعود أيضا المنطقة الشرقية.



عبدالله فؤاد

باستثمار ٦٥ مليون دولار شركة سعودية، كندية لإنتاج المحاليل والأمبولات

استثمرت مجموعة عبد الله فؤاد، مقرها الرياض، إحدى الشركات السعودية، وشركتها Wafco كندية في إنشاء مصنع للأمبولات والحقن الطبية في المنطقة الصناعية الجديدة في الرياض. على مساحة ١٥ ألف متر مربع، وذلك بالتنسيق مع عبد الله فؤاد رئيس مجلس الإدارة في المجموعة منذ ٢٠٠٤ في إنشاء الشركة المتخصصة في تصنيع الأمبولات والحقن الطبية. وتحت إشراف عبد الله فؤاد، الذي يشرف على الأعمال التجارية في المنطقة الصناعية، في حين يدير الشركة كندية الشركة المتخصصة في تصنيع الأمبولات الطبية من المواد البلاستيكية عالية الجودة. وتحت إشراف عبد الله فؤاد، الذي يشرف على الأعمال التجارية في المنطقة الصناعية، في حين يدير الشركة كندية الشركة المتخصصة في تصنيع الأمبولات الطبية من المواد البلاستيكية عالية الجودة.



عبد الله فؤاد
مؤسس ورئيس
الشركة في
الرياض

بليارد ووصفات

الصحة الجيدة وأهمها العناية من خلال الرياضة في الطريق الممتد للمحافظة على الصحة. هذا ما فتحه به رجل الأعمال السعودي عبد الله فؤاد وعقله حريصاً. ورغم مشاغل الرجل في متابعة النشاط التجاري لشركته المتعددة فإنه لا يتردد أن يعطي الرياضة حلقها وتأتي ما بين يوم وآخر أن يسارع الرجل إلى ممارسة التمارين الرياضية وبعث أصدقاءه جدول أعماله اليومي ليجتمع عبد الله فؤاد إلى إنشاء صالة ألعاب كاملة مجهزة بمرافقه القريبة من فؤاد يرتبطون بين منافسته التمتعة وتوقه بغيره وبين الأجهزة الرياضية المختلفة الموجودة في صالة الألعاب. وربما كان ذلك هو السبب في ازدياد نسبة الرجال رجال الأعمال على شراء الأجهزة الرياضية الحديثة.



عبد الله فؤاد رئيس مجلس إدارة المجموعة عبد الله فؤاد، الذي يشرف على الأعمال التجارية في المنطقة الصناعية، في حين يدير الشركة كندية الشركة المتخصصة في تصنيع الأمبولات الطبية من المواد البلاستيكية عالية الجودة. وتحت إشراف عبد الله فؤاد، الذي يشرف على الأعمال التجارية في المنطقة الصناعية، في حين يدير الشركة كندية الشركة المتخصصة في تصنيع الأمبولات الطبية من المواد البلاستيكية عالية الجودة.

PETER HINSON'S Melbourne

SAUDI SHEIKH WHO 'FEEDS A NATION'

Arabian supermarket supremo is the tycoon of the sands

IT has been said that, being born in Saudi Arabia, Sheikh Abdullah Fozad, "feeds the nation".

The sheikh, here in Australia on a fast-moving mission, along with the country's Minister of Commerce, Sultan Asad, has a magnificent stable equipped with Australia's latest equestrian gear.

They are called the Arab and Fozad stables. They are said to be the largest stable in the Arab States.

Well, that is only a small part of the vast stables which the sheikh owns, built with the latest equestrian equipment and in the largest stables of the Arab States.

The sheikh is also a keen and budding sportsman, interested in polo, tennis, golf, and other sports. He is also a keen and budding sportsman, interested in polo, tennis, golf, and other sports.

Arabian supermarket supremo is the tycoon of the sands. The sheikh, here in Australia on a fast-moving mission, along with the country's Minister of Commerce, Sultan Asad, has a magnificent stable equipped with Australia's latest equestrian gear.

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Sheikh Fozad gets the top of some Australian sand. The sheikh is also a keen and budding sportsman, interested in polo, tennis, golf, and other sports.



Sheikh Fozad, Minister of Commerce, Saudi Arabia, with other officials during a visit to Australia.

عبدالله فوزاد، تدشين مشروع ألعاب الليزر

تدشين مشروع ألعاب الليزر في مدينة الرياض، بحضور وزير الثقافة والرياضة، ووفد من المسؤولين السعوديين. المشروع يهدف إلى تطوير قطاع الألعاب الإلكترونية في المملكة العربية السعودية.



Portrait of the author, Peter Hinson.

استثمارات الداخل

تعد الاستثمارات الداخلية من أهم مصادر التمويل في المملكة العربية السعودية. وتشهد هذه الاستثمارات نمواً مستمراً في مختلف القطاعات الاقتصادية، مما يساهم في تحقيق التنمية المستدامة.

باستثمارات 120 مليون ريال توقيع عقد إنشاء مصنع «مبيد» بالجبيل



Signing ceremony for the construction of the Mubid factory in Jubail.

توقيع عقد إنشاء مصنع «مبيد» بالجبيل، بقيمة استثمارية قدرها 120 مليون ريال. المشروع يهدف إلى إنتاج منتجات كيميائية عالية الجودة، مما يساهم في تعزيز القطاع الصناعي في المملكة العربية السعودية.

عبدالله فؤاد

رجل أعمال لا يعرف المستحيل

ولد عبدالله فؤاد بن عبدالعزيز ابوشيث في العام ١٩٢٤م ، وعاش طفولته متنقلا بين النعام البحرين ، دارين ، الخير ، والتي كانت صعبة وقاسية بكل المقاييس . الا أنه استطاع خلالها ان يتعلم كثيرا ، وأن يكتسب خبرات متنوعة على الرغم من صغر سنه ، وعندما بلغ السادسة عشرة من عمره ، التحق بشركة ارامكو براتب ٧٥ هائلة يومياً ، واستقاد من عمله في ارامكو خلال تلك الفترة ، وبعد ذلك التحق بأعمال أخرى في السعودية والبحرين اكتسبته خبرات متنوعة ، وفي عام ١٩٤٦م عاد للعمل بشركة ارامكو ، تدرج في المناصب حتى وصل الى وظيفة رئيس مكتب شؤون الموظفين برأس تنورة .

وخلال عمله اكتسب خبرة متميزة دفعت الشركة لاختياره كمفاوض لتنفيذ عدد من مشروعاتها ومنها مشروع التابلاين ، بعدها استقال من الوظيفة وأسس شركته الخاصة التي تحولت فيما بعد الى مجموعة عملاقة متكاملة الأنشطة والخدمات ، كما أسس في الوقت ذاته مع المرحوم علي التميمي مجموعة شركات التميمي وفؤاد التي تصنف ضمن أكبر المجموعات السعودية حينها .

ويؤمن عبدالله فؤاد بأن العمل الاجتماعي والخيري واجب على كل رجل أعمال ، الامر الذي دفعه للتركيز على ذلك بشكل كبير ، واختار عددا من المشروعات الجيدة التي نفعنا في المنطقة

ساهمت بشكل كبير في تقديم خدمات متميزة لأهالي المنطقة كمستشفى عبدالله بالنعام ، ومستشفى آخر بالاحساء ، ومشروعات أخرى ، وقد تم اطلاق اسمه على أحد أحياء النمام اعترافا بجهوده المتميزة في هذا المجال .
ومر عبدالله فؤاد بأزمات مالية استطاع ان يتخطاها بحكمة وحنكة ، وخرج منها أقوى وكسب منها سمعة طيبة ، الامر الذي جعله يعود بمجموعة شركاته الى مصاف الشركات السعودية المتقدمة ، ويثبت انه رجل أعمال من طراز نادر لا يعترف بشيء اسمه "مستحيل" .

وخلال العام الجاري احتفل عبدالله فؤاد بمناسبة مرور خمسين عاما على تأسيسه لمجموعة شركاته ، وبالإنجاز الذي حققته داخل وخارج السعودية ، ويفخر عبدالله فؤاد كثيرا بتركيزه على سعوية الوظائف بمجموعة شركاته نظرا لإيمانه القوي بأهمية تشغيل وتدريب وتأهيل الكوادر السعودية ، وقد استطاعت المجموعة ان تحقق نجاحات متتالية في هذا المجال .

عبدالله فؤاد لديه من الأبناء فؤاد وفجصل وعشر بنات

ويهوى الصيد والقراءة .



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