

Kingdom

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Prince Ahmed Bin Salman



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Former Editor Recalls Boom Days of Jeddah

Dave Kaiser

I joined Arab News in 1977, as managing editor of its news bureau in Houston, Texas. After working there for several years, I was asked to come to Jeddah as editor of Arab News. My wife, Sabia, and I were uneasy about moving there; we had never been to the Middle East, but we decided to give it a try. It was one of our best decisions. Nowadays Jeddah and the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia seem more like home than the United States.

When we flew into the old Jeddah airport, only a few miles east of the old Arab News office, Muhammad Al-Shibani, Arab News editor in chief picked us up and drove us to the company-owned apartment building, where we lived on the ground floor. Keep in mind that back in those days there were only one or two local television channels; we did not even have a telephone in the apartment for more than a year.

My wife was one of the first American women to live on our street and was a real oddity. When she walked to the market, large groups of young children followed her, hoping to get a glimpse of her blonde hair, sticking out from her scarf, or her blue eyes; and the neighbors would come out and hang off their balcony to wave as she walked by.

While we were in Jeddah, in addition to editing the newspaper, I enjoyed writing numerous features about our experiences as newcomers to the Kingdom: Our first visit to the appliance souq; Sabia's first visit, alone, to the Jeddah souq right in the middle of a shamal; our first visit to the beach on the Red Sea coast about 100 miles south; our first visit to Taif; and other enjoyable experiences in the Western Province.

Since returning to Saudi Arabia to work for Saudi Aramco, we have visited Jeddah several times and didn't recognize it! Even during the 15 years we lived in the Eastern Province, the changes we saw there were amazing. We remember Jeddah and the Eastern Province before they grew so tremendously large and often long to go back to visit our old friends.

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