

**Wallace Stegner's Arabian Discovery: The Imperial Entailments of  
a Continental Vision**

Robert Vitalis  
Fellow, International Center for Advanced Studies  
New York University

Working Paper: #8  
September 2003  
The Cold War as Global Conflict  
International Center for Advanced Studies  
New York University

## **Wallace Stegner's Arabian Discovery: The Imperial Entailments of a Continental Vision**

*He had no truck with...the boomers and boosters, the "snarling states-rightists," the plunderers, and the Gilpins who made up the "myth-bound West."*

*--Charles Wilkinson<sup>1</sup>*

*Worse yet has been the amazing, if often passive, collaboration with these practices on the part of intellectuals, artists, journalists whose positions at home are progressive and full of admirable sentiments, but the opposite when it comes to what is done abroad in their name.*

*--Edward Said<sup>2</sup>*

While I once thought that the work I do, which I call political economy, was a kind of excavation project of material lying beneath the surface of ideology and culture, now I see it more like the reverse engineering of particular processes of myth making. In studying industry building in Egypt I ended up working on the invention of the comprador. In turning since the mid-1990s to the oil industry in Saudi Arabia, I have found myself working on the invention of America's Kingdom--a remarkable place between the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf that is said to be exceptional in a way that many others believe is true about Saudi Arabia's beneficent and merciful protector, the United States. The reverse engineering of the myth-making process in Saudi Arabia's eastern province leads to the American west, another "oasis civilization" in the words of Walter Prescott Webb.<sup>3</sup>

In the late 1940s, executives from the Arabian American Oil Company (ARAMCO), launched a massive effort at building an identity for the firm as an agent of development and uplift in the Arabian Gulf and beyond.<sup>4</sup> They paid journalists in Cairo and Beirut, produced feature length movies and magazines in English and Arabic, hired writers, subsidized scholars, and built Middle East Centers. Scholars and center directors today continue to confuse this particular identity with history, in the way that photographs are

sometimes thought to be objective statements of facts, "mirrors of reality."<sup>5</sup> Many accounts of the Saudi-American encounter thus re-enact a familiar ritual, reducing "complex events into "typical scenes" based on the formulas of popular literary mythology."<sup>6</sup> The ingredients of one of the most potent of these formulas, the frontier epic, include a "howling wilderness," the coming of civilization, pipelines and oil pumps, another frontier's passing. There are the counter-myths of the global frontiers, of course, from *Mudun al-milh (Cities of Salt)* to *Dances with Wolves*, but we typically do not confuse these with history quite so routinely.

It turns out that there were writers in the 1930s in the United States who, just as the Standard Oil Company of California began investing in Bahrain and eastern Saudi Arabia, were attacking the premises of western frontier history for mythologizing what was in reality a process of "internal empire" where a colonized western region was pillaged by the east. The most popular of the writers was Bernard De Voto (1897-1955), a Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award winner who published "The West: A Plundered Province" in *Harper's* in August 1934.<sup>7</sup> Wallace Stegner (1909-1993) was DeVoto's friend, biographer, and, in an important sense, heir.

His biographer, Jackson Benson, calls Stegner "possibly the most accomplished person of American letters in our time--award-winning novelist, award-winning short story writer, award-winning historian, outstanding teacher and founder of one of the finest writing programs in the country, and for decades a leading voice in the fight to save our environment."<sup>8</sup> Stegner is often credited with anticipating much of the work today that takes on the popular myths about the American west, looks at the continuities across time, and above all brings together environmental and social history, nature and people.<sup>9</sup>

Few, however, know Stegner's account of the pioneering days of American oil exploration in Saudi Arabia in the 1930s and '40s.<sup>10</sup> *Discovery! The Search for Arabian Oil*, originally ran in fourteen issues of *ARAMCO World*, beginning in 1968, about ten years after Stegner had turned in the manuscript to the oil firm's public relations department. *ARAMCO World*, like *Discovery*, is an artifact of that moment in the 1950s when ARAMCO's resources went to composing the mythology of U.S.-Saudi relations and of Saudi state formation--what J. B. Kelly calls the "ARAMCO version" of history.<sup>11</sup> The book ultimately was published by the Middle East Export Press in Beirut, owned by the New York firm that made movies for the oil company and that was put on earth to spread the ARAMCO gospel to the Arab world.

*Discovery* appeared in paperback edition only, early in 1971, the year Stegner retired from Stanford and published *Angle of Repose* and the year before he won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction. Yet, as Jackson Benson notes, *Discovery* has "never been available to the general public except as a relatively rare used book."<sup>12</sup> Chronologies of his life and lists of his works routinely leave out the trip to Saudi Arabia and the publication of the book.<sup>13</sup> Those who discuss Stegner's historical writings omit any consideration of *Discovery* too.<sup>14</sup> The richly detailed, 422-page biography of Stegner published in 1996 includes a single index entry for the book and Stegner's trip to Hasa, referencing a discussion that takes up all of two pages.

Since the likelihood is small that western writers or their critics know much about Saudi Arabia or that Saudi specialists read much American literary criticism, the problem posed by *Discovery* has gone unsolved. The book complicates the picture that we have of Stegner as a destroyer of American western myths and a forerunner of the social and environmental turn in western history.<sup>15</sup> In writing about Saudi Arabia, Stegner does all the things, deploys all the tropes that his admirers say he avoids in his work on the American west. He ostensibly "had no truck with...the boomers and boosters...the

plunderers...who made up the "myth-bound West, " according to Charles Wilkinson. But in *Discovery* he is a booster for ARAMCO, a mammoth oil exploration and production company. He takes the opportunity in the book's introduction to rehearse every myth about American multinational enterprise abroad that the company had invented about itself. "It was magical," he says.

Is it a contradiction or inconsistency that has to be accounted for? This would seem the obvious way to go. It is indeed the way one or two critics who admire him do go. But another path takes one much farther. The two ostensibly opposing points are not contradictory at all. Rather they are logical and complementary parts of a particular ideology about *American* society and nature that Stegner's interpreters call his "continental vision," in his own words, a view from "deep in the continent."<sup>16</sup> To judge from reading *Discovery*, Stegner's long intellectual journey from chronicler of the despoiling of the west by eastern oil and copper barons to defender of cultural diversity and the collective commons *stopped at the water's edge*. Reading Stegner in this way extends our understandings of the regional and ideological bases of support for American expansionism after World War II, since both the mountain west and the environmental movement are more typically described as sections of society that after World War II opposed the course of American expansionism.

The continentalist's vision is zero-sum. Conservation of resources in one place, the American west, say, means heightened exploitation in other places, like Saudi Arabia, still the world's biggest source of untapped petroleum and the lowest production costs. As Nathan Citino points out, Stegner takes for granted such elements of the twentieth century western landscape as the motel, filling station, and "roadside" vistas--what his mentor DeVoto recognized as "the new motel civilization."<sup>17</sup> Stegner's own writings on the west took note of increased mobility, urbanization, and the vast automobile-centered society. Petroleum was the resource that underpinned it. And by the 1950s, it

was already commonplace to argue that the Middle East was the key source for future world oil supplies.

The continentalist may also have believed that other places on the world resource frontiers were destined to recapitulate the story of the west, "its exploration, settlement, development, and imminent degradation."<sup>18</sup> Conservation comes last. Thus, what is lauded as conservationism at home in the 1950s is derided as "emotional nationalis[m] ... disseminated by hostile propagandists" in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere. For example, Stegner was an outspoken defender of public ownership of grazing lands. As he once noted: "[I]t may be taken as gospel that the strongest antagonism to government ownership and management will be found among those who would profit most from their elimination."<sup>19</sup> In the Saudi case, Stegner would assert without a defense that the Saudis had no choice but to develop their oil resources and that ARAMCO represents the better alternative to "willful nationalization."

Stegner wrapped much of this up in thinly disguised boilerplate lifted directly from company annual reports and the by then deeply internalized mythology of a Saudi-American "partnership." He went out on a limb to argue that the unique American approach is likely to prove durable--"it would be short-sighted to discount it too soon." A year after the book came out, however, the nationalization of the American company was underway.

I

If you have traveled the path of a typical student of the Middle East rather than of the American west, then somewhere along the way you have come across *ARAMCO World*: the glossy magazine published by the Arabian American Oil Company.<sup>20</sup> ARAMCO was a subsidiary, originally, of two firms, Texaco and Standard Oil of California (later Chevron), which jointly owned the concession rights to produce and

market Saudi oil.<sup>21</sup> The first issue of *ARAMCO World* appeared in November 1949. It began as a nameless four-page newsletter, run out of the New York headquarters on Park Avenue, and targeted mainly at the Manhattan staff. The newsletter linked them to the firm's operations on the east coast of Saudi Arabia, with its center in Dhahran, then and now the largest American enclave in the Middle East.

Early volumes of *ARAMCO World* constitute an archive that repays the investment in time in working inside it. Firms do not usually open their own records to researchers, notoriously so in the case of the transnational oil companies.<sup>22</sup> They are more apt to dissemble about or destroy documents.<sup>23</sup> All of ARAMCO's owners, however, produced magazines of their own. For instance, the *Texaco Star* dates to around 1913, and California Standard began publishing the *Standard Oil of California Bulletin* at the same time, which eventually became *Chevron World* in the 1970s. We know that such company magazines were often the result of or response to strikes or other kinds of threats to labor control.<sup>24</sup> The creation of company publication in the United States was one element in the large, capital intensive firms' efforts to construct a kind of paternalistic order--"members of a family," in the words of Exxon's (Jersey Standard's) Walter Teagle--in pre-New Deal America.<sup>25</sup>

The founding of *ARAMCO World* followed a period both of high turnover rates among western expatriates and strikes by all segments of its multinational work force, and the story of its origins can be told in terms of the building of a welfare capitalist enclave for ARAMCO's white American employees in Saudi Arabia.<sup>26</sup> The project was generally successful although even the most privileged still grumbled from time to time, as can be seen in one of the songs that a pioneer of the 1940s wrote to the tune of "Home on the Range."

*Home no more in Dhahran, where the Arabs and Bedouin play*

*Where a shamal always blows, and God only knows*

*What causes a white man to stay.*<sup>27</sup>

Management in New York nonetheless viewed the problem of labor control in relation to a wider set of political challenges they faced. In 1948 ARAMCO was under public attack for its efforts to stop the partition of Palestine and the creation of Israel. In 1949-1950, following Venezuela's lead, the Saudis began pressing for a renegotiation of concession terms. At the same time, the U.S. Federal Trade Commission was launching its highly public investigation of the world oil cartel, which directly implicated ARAMCO's owners.<sup>28</sup>

*ARAMCO World* was one possible means to neutralize the effects of these campaigns on the firm's operations, beginning with its workforce. Indeed, as the number of political challenges multiplied in the 1950s, *from both inside and outside the region*, so too did the number of the firm's public relations projects. Arabic-speaking publics began to be targeted, and the welfare capitalist provisions would ultimately be extended to the Saudis in the 1960s, couched in the same paternalist rhetoric used by many firms in the 1920s.<sup>29</sup>

The extension of a 1920s paternalist project to a white settlement in Dhahran is a better explanation for the creation of *ARAMCO World* than the one provided by the magazine itself on its fiftieth anniversary. There it is described as “a kind of informational magazine of our intercultural world,” its origins a consequence of the precocious “cultural sensitivity” of the firm’s principals who sought means to “bridge the natural but enormous cultural gaps between its expatriate, largely American, workers and their Saudi counterparts and hosts.”<sup>30</sup> Reading between the lines of the retrospective account one can sense a hint of the discrimination, on the one hand, and the strikes, on the other hand, of the 1940s and '50s that to this day the magazine will not discuss in

print. Yet a venture designed originally for and focused on its stateside employees can't do the heavy lifting that the writer, a second generation "ARAMCO" and true believer, needs it to do. We need a more complicated story, recognizing the multiple publics that were being targeted by *ARAMCO World* and the various other projects launched in this period.

Studying the magazine offers insight into the multiple identities that the firm's principals and agents constructed as part of the business of producing oil. The imagery relied unselfconsciously on the widely circulated products of the modern mass entertainment industries in the United States. An American Orientalist style is one obvious but by no means most important source of the imagery that animate *ARAMCO World*. The more profound source for or *orientation* of the writers, Arabists, editors, and others of the firm's identity-makers is the western frontier mythmaking enterprise that was "America's National Entertainment."<sup>31</sup> Perhaps, as embodied in the remarkable *Keeoma* (1896) by Charles M. Russell, *the "Near" West and the Near East are merged myths of identity and desire in modern American mass culture.*<sup>32</sup>

The pictures and articles that fill the pages of the first ten years of the company's flagship publication turn the Eastern Province into another western frontier. Stegner's *Discovery* is by no means the only example. The same images filled the 70mm screen during the Saudi segment of Lowell Thomas's 1956 Cinerama spectacular, *Seven Wonders of the World*. "The meeting of the old and the new, in the midst of the wasteland, oil derricks, pumping wealth out of the ground, a million dollars a day for King Sa`ud; the Arabian-American Oil Co. establishment in Dhahran, where American boys are Cub Scouts and play baseball."<sup>33</sup> The images multiply dramatically in countless reminiscences, diplomatic dispatches from "boomtown" Dhahran, letters home, and other extant records. These deeply-rooted ideas are crucial to the

construction of the firm's identity as an agent of progress and partner in development with the Al Sa`ud.

We also know that these kinds of ideas are intertwined with other ones, given that successive generations have sought to reconcile exceptionalist beliefs about progress and development with the record of American settler colonialism, conquest, slavery, and Jim Crow. As I have shown elsewhere, Dhahran and the other oil enclaves built in Saudi Arabia in the 1940s were segregated as was the practice in all the western mining camps of the 1800s, in the oil camps at the turn of the century and in the overseas enclaves across the Caribbean, the Central American isthmus, Panama, in the Pacific, and so on.<sup>34</sup> In 1940 segregation in the oil industry was still the norm within the United States.<sup>35</sup> In a number of unpublished sketches and notes for a history he had hoped to write, William Mulligan, who left Dhahran in the 1980s, traces the "Texan herrenvolk atmosphere" during his time in part to the racism of southern whites and in part to management's falling under the baneful influence of British imperialists in nearby Bahrain. So he tried but was never able to convince the editors of *ARAMCO World* to publish accounts of the workers' protests against the Jim Crow system in Dhahran.<sup>36</sup>

The color of the firm's paternalism is displayed in a series of ubiquitous uplift photographs that appear in virtually every issue of *ARAMCO World* for ten years.<sup>37</sup> A white man teaches a dark skinned employee safety practices or English or baseball. The future of Hasawis is revealed in a remarkable account of the modernization of a Mohawk family in Brooklyn, accompanied by a map of the United States divided into tribes. The story of Chief Bright Canoe is the only time that America's own multicultural landscape is ever evoked inside *ARAMCO World's* pages unless one counts the photo from the ARAMCO Follies 1951 of four New York employees in blackface, singing "Waitin' for the Robert E. Lee"<sup>38</sup> The uplift pictorials disappeared suddenly around 1960 when the Saudis started talking seriously about nationalization of ARAMCO for

the first time. In the wake of successful challenges to paternalism an increasingly defensive attitude would eventually take hold among white Americans in Dhahran.

### *Island of Allah*

Not surprisingly, it is in the 1955 film version of the Saudi Arabian frontier epic, *Island of Allah/Jazirat al-`Arab* where one sees the mass entertainment industry's influence on ARAMCO's version of history working most powerfully and unselfconsciously. If only the public relations department had understood this particular consumer market, then its filmmaking might have mattered. As it is, *Island of Allah* was the only feature length film released by the firm. The public relations department had experimented with educational shorts (*Water* and *The Fly*) and made one commercially released short in 1953: the 18 minute long *Out of the Earth*, by Universal-International, distributed free to exhibitors.<sup>39</sup> Richard Lyford, the award-winning director of *Titan*, an earnest and mildly successful biography of Michaelangelo, was hired to make *Island of Allah*. The epic narration was provided by Frederic March. The actors were mostly ARAMCO employees, including an American, John Jones, who played the hero `Amir `Abd al-`Aziz, better known as Ibn Sa`ud.

The film's title echoes one of the most popular novels of the early twentieth century, the *Garden of Allah*, by Robert Hichens, which was published 1904 and reprinted 44 times. The novel was turned into a Broadway play in 1907, which was revived in 1911. That revival fueled a remarkable campaign of tie ins--perfume, lamps, hotel and department store promotions, and Maxfield Parrish's famous Garden of Allah print. There was also a silent film version made by the Edison studio, which is now lost, a remake in 1926 by Metro Golden Mayer, starring Alice Terry and Ivan Petrovich, and a second United Artists' remake in 1936, with Charles Boyer and Marlene Dietrich in her first technicolor feature. The Rock Island Lines began promoting its luxury Golden State Route from

Chicago as “the way to the *Garden of Allah* and its Winter Playgrounds” in Arizona and California. In Hollywood, Dorothy Parker and many others made the Garden of Allah, which opened in 1927 and included a seedy bar, sharp restaurant, hotel, and renter’s cottages on the Sunset Strip, a landmark of the so-called Golden Era. As Holly Edwards writes, the phrase “echoed loudly in popular culture for decades.”<sup>40</sup>

ARAMCO’s *Island of Allah* begins with the arrival of three bearded American geologists to Saudi Arabia. Around the campfire their guide Kahlid tells them the story of Arabia. Through this device and with the help of some low budget animated sequences, the audience is treated to a six thousand year chronicle, all prelude to the triumph by Ibn Sa`ud over his enemies in Riyadh in 1902. What the firm’s public relations department called “highly dramatic battle footage” reminded me, watching the film in a room in Dhahran decades later, of the western serials shown at Saturday matinees. Rather than ride into the sunset, however, `Abd al-`Aziz unites the disparate regions of the Gulf and then forges a partnership in development with the American oilmen.

The Arab language version, *Jazirat al-`arab* or *Island of the Arabs* rather than *of Allah*, was produced for distribution in Cairo, Damascus, Baghdad and Beirut, intended as a response to Bandung era challenges to American economic and cultural penetration of the region. Even before its premier, the rough cut of the film faced a tough audience in Dhahran in the person of George Rentz, the firm’s senior Arabist. Rentz recommended reshooting the scene that had the bedouin guide holding a coffee cup in his right hand and wiping his moustache with the left (a “deviation [that] would very likely be detected by an Arab audience”). He wanted the narrator to get the names right of the princes who fought in the war for the Hijaz. And he pressed the director to cut the scene toward the end in which ARAMCO’s legendary geologist, Max Steineke, pronounces, “*Truly, the Arabian Peninsula is the island of the Arab. It is floating on oil.*” Rentz thought it might backfire on ARAMCO in their negotiations with those officials who were seeking

increased production at a time when the firm was bent on keeping Saudi oil off the market. He downplayed his many other criticisms (“poor chronology, obvious anachronisms, and downright errors in historical fact”). The “floating on oil” line was kept in.<sup>41</sup>

*Island of the Arabs* had its world premier at a gala at the Cairo Palace in June 1955. The U.S. ambassador was there. So were two now long forgotten starlets and a posse of oilmen. The film began and ended with on screen appearances by the new king, Sa`ud bin `Abd al`Aziz, which were scenes not found in the English-language *Island of Allah*.<sup>42</sup> In New York, however, the distributor had spliced a belly dance sequence to the end of the film before he would show it to paying customers. As one reviewer noted, "Princess Yasmina offers a torso-twisting dance which has nothing to do with the continuity."<sup>43</sup> Even with the bellydancer the firm was unable to package a tale of adventure and conquest in a way that, like Lowell Thomas's famous travelogues, "was accessible, entertaining and conformed to all the comfortable stereotypes."<sup>44</sup> *Jazirat al`Arab* was the first film shown when ARAMCO began Arabic language television broadcasting, the first inside the Kingdom, at its Dhahran station two years later, but *Island of Allah* was never seen in the west again.<sup>45</sup>

Just as it was being unveiled, *Island's* producer, Ray Graham, telephoned Wallace Stegner with the proposition that he write “the story of American oil pioneers in Arabia.” *Discovery* is essentially a second version of *Island of Allah*, by a better writer but still a fable of empire. Stegner would be paid a minimum of \$6500 and expenses or what today is around \$42,000 for 13 weeks of work. He was confident, obviously, that he could produce a draft quickly, but worried that the company would interfere. “I have no liking either for muckraking or for whitewashing jobs; I should very much like to make this book straightforward and honest history... To do that properly I shall need my elbows free.”<sup>46</sup>

## II

Mary and Wallace Stegner left California in November 1955 on board the private ARAMCO plane, the *Flying Camel*. He had just begun a year's residence at Stanford's sparkling new Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences. He had been teaching at Stanford since 1945, where he had launched its renowned creative writing program. The late '40s and early '50s were years when his novels did not sell well, and he had turned to other kinds of projects. He had been working hard on *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian*, his biography of John Wesley Powell, and was writing short stories and magazine features on travel and on conservation.

Mary Stegner says she was a major force in swaying her husband to take the assignment "because she had had dreams of Arabian Nights and had always wanted to see that country."<sup>47</sup> The contract covered travel and expenses for both of them along with the costs of a housekeeper and nurse for their son who stayed behind in Los Altos. The *Flying Camel* set down first in the Hague where a subsidiary, ARAMCO Services, managed the supply lines—food, building materials, and so on—to the Middle Eastern oil fields. In Lebanon, their next stop, another ARAMCO offshoot named TAPLINE operated a massive oil pipeline, built by California's Bechtel Brothers, which snaked from Dhahran through Jordan to a terminal in Sidon, 40 miles south of Beirut. Lebanon was also the country where Americans had the longest presence in the region as missionaries and teachers.

A few pages of typed notes from the trip detail Stegner's itinerary. He and Mary toured the markets of Beirut, the Bekaa valley, Damascus, and the Roman ruins at Baalback. In the crowded shops of the gold market he was struck by the way Arabs appeared "to wear their savings on their arms, the way a Navajo will." The Stegners enjoyed long lunches, cold wine, and the hospitality of their host in Sidon, John Jones, the TAPLINE

supervisor who had taken the star turn as Ibn Sa`ud in *Island of Allah*. What stood out for Stegner was the casualness with which Jones and others sprinkled their conversations with a particular Arabic word, *Yuhud* or “Jew.”<sup>48</sup>

Stegner’s sensitivity to the slurs makes good sense. A decade earlier, *Look* magazine had paid him to tour the U.S. for a photoessay against intolerance, which came out as a book under the title *One Nation* in 1945. David Dodge, an Arabic-speaking prince of the legendary Phelps Dodge copper kingdom in Arizona, whose family’s wealth paid for the missions and schools in Lebanon, worked for TAPLINE from 1949 to 1976. In an interview, Dodge spoke frankly about the anti-Semitism of the upper class Protestants of the pre World War II era. Such prejudices are sometimes difficult to disentangle from ideas about undue Jewish influence as opposed to “Big Oil” in the political process as well as from a business calculus that rewarded deference to the folkways of one’s Saudi and Lebanese hosts.<sup>49</sup> Stegner would repeatedly run up against this tangle of racism and readiness to “let sleeping dogs lie” in the course of researching and writing *Discovery*, which he was apparently eager to begin. He had imposed upon his hosts in Beirut to cut short the sightseeing, which would gain him two or three extra working days in Dhahran.

The Stegners remained in Saudi Arabia for two weeks, staying in one of the guest houses inside the main compound originally called American camp. He toured the well sites, flew with the reconnaissance teams along the pipeline route, traveled with geologists, and explored the desert. At home, he had already coming to be regarded as master portraitist of the arid environment, across the line “into the brown country where the raw earth showed...the grass got sparser and the air dryer and service stations less grandiose and the towns rattier.” But Saudi Arabia, where all the outcroppings and domes there seemed “to look the same,” frustrated the writer. He interviewed those still in Dhahran from the 1930s and 1940s and gathered company reports, photo archives,

and the like. Mary complains that she sat by the pool all day listening to Muzak. She may have played golf, gone riding or swimming at Half Moon Bay Beach or shopping in the nearby town of al-Khobar, where the first department stores were being built. It goes without saying that the nights at American camp were spent drinking.

Dhahran--comprising the US Air Force base, the company's headquarters, American camp, which after the strikes was renamed Senior Staff Camp, and the camps that housed non-American workers—Italian/Intermediate Camp, Saudi/General Camp--as well as the informal "Arab town" that had begun to emerge beside Saudi Camp--was at the peak of a boom that had begun in the waning days of WW II. ARAMCO had just completed its first massive expansion program, in the process drawing tens of thousands of workers from the oasis towns of the province and across the relatively recently defined international borders. Skilled labor, clerks, engineers and managers of course came from even farther away--Cairo, Palestine, India, Pakistan, Coalinga, North Dakota, and lots of engineers from Stanford.

One can see why the American oil settlement might have intrigued Stegner. In his view, for the few years after 1933 when the first geologists landed at Jubayl, followed by the wildcatters, the men without women, Dhahran was a real frontier. At the same time, the field work had weakened his resolve that he could deliver the book the public relations people wanted in time, and he expressed his doubts in a letter to New York written from Dhahran. On the one hand, the firm wanted a book written that would promote its self-image as a private Point Four project in the Middle East ("free for the American taxpayer") and, on the other hand, it was reluctant to open the archives fully or discuss the increasingly complex political environment in which it operated.<sup>50</sup>

It is very clear that there is a great story here, one important not only to the company and to Saudi Arabia but to the whole world, and in greatly diverse ways. It can be told as a simple success story, as the story of a new kind of frontier, as a new alignment of political and economic forces,

as a meeting and fusion of cultures, and someday someone will do the whole thing and make a superb book of it. But it is also clear that a good deal of the story can hardly be told now, except for the company files.<sup>51</sup>

What Stegner was beginning to discover in Dhahran was the contradiction at the heart of the firm's self image because challenges—some might say resistance—to the oil company's operations were continuing to mount in the 1950s. And if some inside ARAMCO wanted the history told others feared what it might reveal or what use might be made of such a book by the company's growing ranks of critics. The most famous foreigner in Saudi Arabia, Harry St. John Philby, the Muslim convert, counselor to Ibn Sa`ud, and paid ARAMCO agent, had been thrown out of the country in May 1955 after publishing an article *in Foreign Affairs* and giving lectures in Camp that the new king found insulting. The Saudi view seemed to be "you do not drink at the well and then throw a stone in it."<sup>52</sup> Another home-grown critic, `Abd al-`Aziz bin Muammar, a young, fiery technocrat whom the Americans inevitably held in much lower esteem than they did Philby, was imprisoned for a year, accused of writing the pamphlet then circulating underground that described ARAMCO and the Al Sa`ud as partners in the pillaging of the country's wealth. Stegner argued for limiting the project to what he called "the pioneer story." "There seem no political or policy reasons for not telling the story of the pioneering," he wrote in his letter to New York, "which might make volume one of the total history."<sup>53</sup> At the same time, it was probably all that could be handled under the terms of the thirteen week schedule, assuming the firm's continued good will in assembling materials.

Stegner wrote twelve chapters in all, later split into fourteen, and later still, he wrote an introduction that contextualized the pioneer era and brought the story up to date. Many of the chapters did not have titles at first, and most of the titles in the published book were probably generated by an *ARAMCO World* editor, Paul Hoye, who serialized it for use in the magazine. The book is fast-paced, character-centered, and focused

throughout on the men who settled the oil frontier. The opening scene is of the American Lloyd Hamilton, who led the negotiations for the concession, landing at Jidda. The first draft has the buildings of the old port and town tilting “drunkenly,” a trope that was excised early by Dhahran. Some said that the first chapters on the negotiations dragged, but few complained about the rest. He recounts the coming of the first geologists, the beginning of production, the exploration of the southeastern interior, the boom years and the creation of the company town through World War II, when the wells were shut down and the wives sent home, a period known in ARAMCO lore as the “Time of the Hundred Men.” *Discovery* ends with a chapter titled “The Frontier Closes.” “American involvement in Middle Eastern economic, cultural, and political life...would grow deeper, more complicated, and more sobering... But that is another story. This one is purely and simply the story of a frontier, and the return of seven war-exiled wives to Dhahran...in February 1945, is as good a date as any to mark its passing.”

Stegner ends the book by paying homage to ARAMCO’s pioneers, taken directly from the journal of one of them, Phil McConnell. “[T]hey were building something new in the history of the world: not an empire made for plundering by the intruding power, but a modern nation in which American and Arab could work out fair contracts, produce in partnership, and profit mutually by their association.” Nonetheless Stegner may have known, because the same unpublished McConnell diary records just a few months later, that in July 1945 the Arab partners rose up against the miserable terms being offered them. Two thousand workers joined this first strike by Arab labor before it was violently put down by the `Amir of Hasa.<sup>54</sup> Other strikes would follow, with the largest lasting more than a month in 1953 and drawing the attention of many in the region to the racialized order in Dhahran.

Writers in Cairo and Beirut were beginning to contest the kind of frontier success story that Stegner had been hired to produce. For example, in March 1954, Egypt’s rising

star, Ihsan `Abd al-Quddus published "Christ in the Land of Oil" in *Ruz al-yusuf*, the popular Cairo weekly magazine he edited. The young Quddus focused on the blatant inequities in the luxuries provided the Americans, who despite their privileges, were unhappy and homesick, and the company's expatriate Arab and Saudi workers, who were forbidden to enter paradise. Scrutiny of the enclave, the American military forces in Dhahran, and King Sa'ud, the "slave of ARAMCO, stooge of imperialism," as Cairo's *Voice of the Arabs* described him, would intensify over the course of the 1950s.<sup>55</sup>

### III

Back in Los Altos by early December 1955, Stegner began to assemble the pieces of what he would call "Arabian Discovery" or, as the pace threatened to overwhelm him, "Stegner's Folly." Pressuring ARAMCO's New York office for documents, he reported "I am not stopping for Christmas or New Year or anything else, barring a half day to rustle Christmas wrappings and another half day to watch UCLA get clobbered in the Rose Bowl, and so I would hate to see the holiday on your end do me out of working time on this end."<sup>56</sup> The firm came through with the promised resources. He brought retirees to Stanford for supplementary interviews. He put his son Page on the payroll to type the letters that Tom Barger, who would be named president of ARAMCO in 1959, had written home as a young geologist in the kingdom in 1937. Most crucially, a researcher named Kemper Moore, working in ARAMCO's New York office, arrived for a ten-day visit armed with a three volume internal history she had produced using company files.

He wrote *Discovery* at an astounding pace. When his thirteen-week contract ended on January 26, 1956, he had 75 pages completed and was writing five to ten pages a day. "I am working days, nights, and weekends to complete a draft up to some logical and effective stopping place," he reported on taking up the optional four-week extension of the contract. Two weeks later he had given over 35 thousand words to his typist,

finished 7 thousand more, and over the weekend hoped to “get through another 6 thousand and in one grand-finale ten days I will get another 25 thousand or bust.” He told ARAMCO’s H. O. “Tommy” Thompson

This will be a rough manuscript of the first volume of ARAMCO’s history from the human side, with just enough outline of official events to keep things straight. It will end (I think) about 1944, but the period from 1939 to 1944 will probably be treated pretty sketchily, partly for lack of material and partly for lack of time.

I feel like a juggler with eighteen knives in the air.<sup>57</sup>

On March 3 he mailed two copies of the completed first draft—he called it a working paper---to ARAMCO and sent word to one of his contacts, Admiral Angus Sinclair, who was also apparently writing a history of the firm, that

operations have ground to a limping halt and the offensive has been temporarily called off. Yesterday I sent off to Thompson two copies of a 357-page triple-spaced manuscript. I am positive the smell of it will bring mail inspectors around to 505 [ARAMCO’s Park Avenue Address], but at least it is temporarily out of my hands.

May the lord bless and crown your labors. And if I ever write 80,000 words in a month again, for any price, take me to Bethesda and have my head examined.<sup>58</sup>

Stegner heard nothing more from the firm for the remainder of the year. The vetting of the manuscript had to compete with other, more pressing concerns facing those on the ground in Dhahran beginning with a new round of strikes by Saudi workers in June.

The year 1956 turned out to be a momentous one in the Middle East. In July, on the fourth anniversary of the “revolution,” the military officer who ruled Egypt, Gamal Abdel Nasser, seized the foreign-owned Suez Canal Company, pledging to use the resources for Egypt’s modernization, specifically, for the building of a massive dam on the Nile. The Saudi king had sought futilely for some strategy of accommodation with Nasser, whose Free Officers movement had overthrown the Egyptian monarchy, and with

Nasser's brand of Arab nationalism. Even as King Sa`ud joined a short-lived military alliance with Syria and Egypt, Nasserists and other radicals were working covertly against him. The war launched by Israel, Britain, and France against Egypt in October failed to destroy Nasser but it was costly to the Saudis who depended on the Suez Canal for shipment of its oil to the West. Revenues plummeted just as the king was launching himself as a modernizer, building up his army and his capital at Riyadh.

One of the most remarkable aspects of the Eisenhower Doctrine, the U.S. response to the unfolding events, was the attempt to promote King Sa`ud as a counter to Nasser in the region. In an address to Congress on January 21, 1957, President Eisenhower sought authority to "assist any nation or group of nations in the general area of the Middle East in the development of economic strength," "to undertake...programs of military assistance," and if necessary to employ the armed forces of the United States to secure and protect the territorial integrity and political independence of such nations...against overt armed aggression from any nation controlled by International Communism."<sup>59</sup> King Sa`ud signed on and made the cover of *Time* magazine in January. More important, he extended the agreement that permitted the U.S. Air Force to use the base America had built in Dhahran, and he was rewarded with weapons sales, jets, upgraded facilities for the airfield, and an upgraded training military training mission, worth over \$300 million.<sup>60</sup>

The king's highly publicized trip to the White House just weeks after the new Eisenhower Doctrine was promulgated generated a great deal of controversy in the United States, in a form that we are still familiar with today. Hard-line anticommunists and Republican stalwarts supported the alliance with Sa`ud, who was named honorary president of the International Commission for the Prevention of Alcoholism. Evangelicals wrote letters of protest ("God told me in a dream that ADLAI STEVENSON IS AN ASSISTANT TO MOHAMMEDANISM... For all I know [King Sa`ud] is the Anti-

Christ and here you are entertaining it and I understand Gamal Nasser is next... As for the Gaza Strip, search the scriptures... The United Nations or the United States did not create Israel.”). The American Friends Service Committee applauded the king’s “pursuit of peace,” which was bizarre, given that there was no peace process being pursued, but Sa`ud was reliably anti-Zionist and that was good enough. For the same reason, neither New York’s mayor, Robert Wagner, nor the governor Averell Harriman, would agree to meet the king when his ship docked at Manhattan, which outraged Secretary of State Foster Dulles. Catholics and Jews condemned religious discrimination inside the kingdom. The New York Council of the CIO protested Eisenhower’s “inviting to our country the feudal despot who rules Saudi Arabia as a guest of the American people. This man who rules his people with medieval cruelty and who permits the enslavement of many, many thousands of men, women and children in his feudal domain is the very antithesis of everything that American democracy stands for.” The Executive Council of the national AFL-CIO followed with a motion of censure put forward by A. Philip Randolph, the president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, for hosting the “slave owner and plotter against the free world.”<sup>61</sup>

No one was more concerned with the micromanagement of the King’s visit than ARAMCO’s vice president and chief Washington operative, James Terry Duce. In the weeks before the trip, Duce was pressing the Saudi embassy to use a public relations specialist hired by the firm. Likewise, he was urging the state department to have the U.S. ambassador in Jidda intervene to make sure that King Sa`ud did not bring any of his slaves with him to America.<sup>62</sup> On the eve of his arrival there were demonstrations by the Workers Defense League and a long article in the *New York Times Magazine* by a London officer of Save the Children Federation that focused on the slavery issue. Given this sudden elevation of Saudi Arabia in the United States as a consequence of Sa`ud’s “aiding and abetting” American “grand strategy in the Middle East” (*New York Times*, 16

June 1957, p. 3), Stegner's book project was more important than ever to ARAMCO and, for the same reason, more risky.

#### IV

A myth has grown up among the Arabists and oilmen of ARAMCO regarding the fate of *Discovery*, once the project was shelved and the manuscript locked away for nearly ten years. When an editor of *ARAMCO World*, which in the 1960s was being published out of Beirut rather than New York, managed to locate a copy, William Mulligan, who managed the Arabian Research Department, took credit for killing the project back in 1958. He says that he convinced Tom Barger, one of the original backers of the project, and that Barger in turn convinced ARAMCO's president to pull the plug.

My argument went something like this. Although the book was well written and honest, it could not help but offend Saudi Arabs. Inherent in the glorification of the early ARAMCO pioneers was a certain denigration of the country and the people. Stegner waxes eloquent about the obstacles that had to be overcome. Those early pioneers had to put up with fierce heat, unskilled Arabs, shortages of everything but flies...<sup>63</sup>

Mulligan burnished this account over the next two decades. In 1979, a *Harper's* editor was seeking an original copy and the newly-installed Saudi managers of ARAMCO's public relations arm turned to Mulligan for the facts about *Discovery*. In 1986, he wrote and circulated a short article about it, based on the files he had stored in his basement when he still dreamed of writing his own history of ARAMCO.<sup>64</sup> But the records preserved in the Stegner papers offer a more complex account of the fears that led ARAMCO to bury *Discovery*.

News of the death of two of his informants, Ed Skinner and the wife of ARAMCO geologist Max Steineke, led Stegner to write to ARAMCO's Tommy Thompson in January 1957. The deaths he said confirmed the wisdom of gathering the materials for the frontier story although he didn't "expect to hear much until the Middle East simmers

down, but which time I may be with Skinner and Mrs. Steineke.” In fact, Stegner heard three months later, in April, that the company was ready to move forward on a second draft. Stegner was unable to, however, given his teaching schedule and a summer’s worth of other writing commitments, but he said he might be able to “come back on the ARAMCO job around the beginning of the year.” In the interim ARAMCO public relations assigned an in-house writer to collate the comments and corrections of the dozen reviewers and to prepare a new draft. Negotiations resumed in earnest in December, and Stegner finally learned of the fate of his draft at the hands of reviewers in Dhahran. Thompson had with some reluctance sent him the company’s internal report.<sup>65</sup>

In pointed letters of response to Thompson and to Jack Butler, the public relations officer in Dhahran who produced the critique, Stegner protested the company’s demands for changes.

As you know, this kind of book may be either of two things: It may be frankly a “company history,” written by Company employees according to Company specifications and published with the Company’s backing or at the Company’s expense. This makes it, essentially, a public relations job. Or it may be a book written by an outside observer, with more or less cooperation from the Company and with greater or less access to its records, but representing his interpretation of people and events and published under his name and at his responsibility. Done on this basis, its aim is the truth of history insofar as its author can attain it, and not the immediate and uncritical promotion of Company purposes and prestige. What we have been doing so far, I am afraid, is straddling two stools—having me, as a consultant on the Company’s payroll, do a book that will represent my best understanding of ARAMCO’s first ten years in Arabia, and that may be published under my name, but that at the same time will be satisfactory to the Company and subject to its approval or disapproval. There are some real problems in this straddling...<sup>66</sup>

The Butler summary of views in Dhahran had nothing at all to say about what Mulligan would later call Stegner’s glorification of the early American oil men at the expense of the Saudis. The marginal comments on the draft do reveal some sensitivity to the issue.

Someone wanted Stegner to cut an anecdote reported in a letter by the lawyer who negotiated the original concession, where he described his fears at first meeting Ibn Sa`ud, "scared to move through most of the interview, for fear of treading on the King's bare feet and having his head lopped off by one of the soldiers." Bare feet made the king look primitive. Barger wanted the term "native workers" replaced by "Saudis" ("natives is a bad word respectable only in California and new England. Elsewhere it means "downtrodden colonials.""). References to what at the time had been called "coolie camps" by the Americans were to be changed to "Saudi camps."<sup>67</sup>

The problem, as Stegner more accurately described it, appeared to be his attempt at verisimilitude or "speaking frankly on Arabs and Arab-Company relations." Stegner argued that the "conflicts of culture and personality" were a defining feature of a frontier. "In these matters it is very hard to know where discretion shades off into timidity on the hand and into rashness on the other."<sup>68</sup> Stegner sought to capture the rough-hewn nature of most of the wildcatters ("They were marked, as a class, by great practical skill, a general lack of patience with unskilled people, a general lack of comprehension of the fine points of inter-cultural relations, and a general rough good nature."), their perceptions of the people they found themselves thrust up against, and the slow emergence of modes of cooperation and accord. As he wrote in one contested passage, "It is hard for a man who has spent ten years or so of his life drilling holes in a desert, living in a bunkhouse or a prefabricated cottage, and learning to get along with strange and foreign people wearing robes on their backs and rags on their heads to realize the ways in which his daily actions contribute to the mighty pressures that raise and lower nations and empires and great segments of the world's people." He drew liberally on diaries and letters, but they wanted him to omit the entry by Phil McConnell that describes a thief having his hand amputated. And Dhahran objected to his

recounting of an incident in the 1930s when a Saudi worker was beaten up by one of the Texas roughnecks.

Stegner took even greater umbrage at Dhahran's *other* objections to his draft, on matters that had nothing to do with the alleged cultural insensitivity that Mulligan would later claim was *Discovery's* undoing. Rather, the text seemed to lend weight to the charges that critics at home and abroad leveled against ARAMCO. The list was long, beginning with the characterization of the negotiations for the original oil concession, recounted at length in the opening chapters. Stegner portrayed it as a "high stakes poker game" that Dhahran said made it look as if the oil companies were trying to reap maximum gains, and he was told to change it. But the poker game analogy came from the company's own negotiators! "I find it hard to believe that harm can come from showing the negotiation as a game in which clever antagonists each set out to win from the other the best deal possible. To make altruists and disinterested gentlemen of them would be to falsify the process and the personalities both."<sup>69</sup> In the same fashion, Stegner was told to remove references from the Hamilton letters (Hamilton was the chief negotiator) that described the rival companies' colluding to control production, and in later chapters, to ARAMCO always operating "in accordance with orders from San Francisco," as the archives showed, and that it had pursued and obtained "a monopoly of virtually all the potential oil lands in the Arabian Peninsula and the coastal regions south of it."<sup>70</sup>

References to the southern frontiers of the Kingdom or to oil deposits there worried the firm in 1957 in particular because of a continuing, bitter, five year-long dispute known as the Buraimi Crisis. This was a small war for an oasis that pitted Saudi Arabia, the Eisenhower administration, and ARAMCO on one side against the British government, ARAMCO's old nemesis, the British Petroleum Company, the shaykh of Abu Dhabi and the sultan of Muscat and Oman on the other side. In the course of the conflict,

ARAMCO had transported Saudi troops to occupy the oasis, the Arabian Affairs Department under Mulligan provided the research, maps, and other data to support the Saudi claims to Buraimi, and it published the Saudi government's massive memorial for the international arbitration tribunal in Geneva in 1955. London, publicly charging the Saudis with attempting to bribe both witnesses and judges, pulled out of the tribunal and sent Abu Dhabi's troops led by British officers into the disputed territory. British intelligence privately reported that ARAMCO had been working behind the scenes against his majesty's government, and other sources insist that ARAMCO conspired with the CIA. In the British Foreign Office, ARAMCO was being branded "the greatest obstacle to Anglo-American harmony in the Middle East."<sup>71</sup>

Little wonder, therefore, that Dhahran blue-lined virtually every reference to the firm having shown interest in Saudi Arabian boundary issues and to anti-British actions of the American oilmen. Stegner clearly was dumbfounded.

Dhahran has struck out several casual mentions of the Company's inevitable involvement in Saudi Arab boundary problems, but it has left untouched whole sections of the text dealing with the experiences of Tom Barger and Dick Hattrup in the surveying of these disputed boundaries. Is the one permissible if the other isn't? And in fact, aren't both so intimate a part of ARAMCO's frontier experience in Arabia that they can hardly be censored out?<sup>72</sup>

"Finally," Stegner wrote, there was the question of "antagonism against Israel and the Saudi prohibition against Jews... I think it has to be admitted that the Company (like the U.S. Air Force) has had to accede to this [prohibition] and other conditions in order to stay in business in Arabia." He was correct that the issue was one the one of greatest interest to many in America who would read the book, as was witnessed in the vast outpouring of criticism of the Sa`ud during his recent trip to the United States, but for the same reason, the Company (and Foster Dulles's State Department) dissembled on this particular matter and, in the case of *Discovery*, sought to excise any mention of the

company's few Jewish employees or even of a romance that once blossomed in 1930s Beirut between an ARAMCO roughneck and a young Jewish woman from Haifa.

Stegner concluded by outlining the obvious choices at the current juncture: end the project because it was too risky, publish it without his name attached, give it to the writers in ARAMCO to rework in a manner acceptable to Dhahran, or let him finish what he had started. "But I would not want my name on it unless I could feel that what I sign is really what I can believe in."<sup>73</sup> In fact, he was given the go ahead to produce a final draft. Stegner's agent concluded a deal by May. Stegner would receive an additional flat fee of \$9,250, just under \$57,000 today, to produce a final version, including an introductory chapter that would situate the pioneer story and bring it up to date. The question of who would finally publish the book—ARAMCO or Stegner—was left open.<sup>74</sup> Stegner promised the redraft in five months, by September, and he turned the manuscript in on time. He pointedly ignored most of the requested changes. His contact in ARAMCO's New York office, Gordon Hamilton, wrote in October to apologize for the "mysterious silence," explaining that there were delays in copying and distributing the revised draft for review, but took pains to reassure him. "From just barely cracking the cover, I would say that this looks like a real "Stegner job." Any other words would seem superfluous at this moment."<sup>75</sup> A ten-year gap then appears in the records.

It is reasonable to assume that the manuscript became a hostage to the perilous politics of 1958 and the regional upheavals that threatened the Saudi monarchy itself. Egypt and Syria had joined forces in February as a union of two increasingly radical nationalist or "socialist" states, the United Arab Republic. The American project for bolstering Sa`ud against the Arab left-leaning regimes had fallen apart in March, the king exposed for paying Syrians to assassinate Nasser, and his brother Prince Faisal taking over for the king to govern a shaken Saudi state. A second military-led "revolution" modeled after Nasser overthrew the monarchy in nearby Iraq in July. The

United States landed troops in Lebanon in August in response, fearing the collapse of the governments there and in Jordan. The space for criticizing the American firm had grown larger, the talk more threatening, as radical commoners led by ARAMCO's nemesis, the oil minister Abdallah Tariki, and "liberal princes" began to talk of constitutional monarchy, unions, Saudization of ARAMCO, and creation of OPEC. As Madawi al-Rasheed writes, relations with the United States and with ARAMCO remained fraught through 1962-1963 when the radicals finally were eclipsed, Tariki dismissed, and Faisal, who became King in 1964, began to rebuild the alliance.<sup>76</sup>

The Stegner manuscript was unearthed in 1967 by Paul Hoyer, then a young reporter just beginning his own two decades-long career as editor of *ARAMCO World*. He is the man who is credited with lifting a "run-of-the-mill, black-and-white company house organ to...[the] heights of world-class corporate journalism."<sup>77</sup> Hoyer quickly sought and gained Stegner's approval for serializing the story in *ARAMCO World*. "Time is working a few changes in ARAMCO, I gather, and one of them is a slight broadening of attitudes." Stegner replied, "I'm interested to know that Arabian Discovery is still there in the safe... When I was working on it, I thought it was a marvelous story, a sort of modern Hudson Bay or East India Company adventure." Hoyer asked Stegner why the book hadn't been published when it was written. "I would like to know so I can marshal answers to possible objections before I propose running the excerpts," but Stegner's records do not include his answer.<sup>78</sup>

The old Dhahran hands protested Hoyer's plan, albeit without much passion. Hoyer sent new drafts, in sections that he edited to Saudi Arabia. Mulligan began to spin the account of his deep-sixing *Discovery* back in the 1950s due to its cultural insensitivity. The excerpts apparently proved popular and Hoyer began to plan to issue the magazine pieces as a book. Mulligan's colleague in Dhahran, Malcolm Quint, who had taken over the reviewer's role, fired a final volley aimed at Stegner's reworked introduction

The fact that we Americans are the salt of the earth and if it were not for us, these poor, ignorant Arabs would still be in the Stone Age comes across as clearly--and as offensively--in this as it did in the original unexpurgated manuscript...

I certainly hope that you will be able to bring the hyperbole into manageable limits. I supposed that hyperbole and purple prose are Stegner's great charm-but perhaps you can, by the judicious use of the blue pencil, make it somewhat less offensive and retain the charm and readability. Go with God.

Stegner's *Arabian Discovery*, shortened to *Discovery*, was finally released in early 1971. The cover, a montage of scenes from the book--a well fire, the first flight of an ARAMCO reconnaissance plane, and so on --included a drawing of the legendary king Abd al-`Aziz. His feet are bare.

Mulligan's story about Stegner and ARAMCO is at best a partial explanation for the book's delay and one that reads, frankly, anachronistically. That is, the complaint that Stegner or others writers might have lauded the Americans at the expense of the Saudis is one more at home with the sensibilities of the 1960s when Mulligan first sets it down on paper. Was Mulligan perhaps exaggerating this point and by doing so making a case for his cohort's own seemingly precocious awareness of problems in ARAMCO's mythology? One consequence of his doing so is obvious. The burden is shifted from the firm and its agents to others, in this case, writers who seemingly misunderstand the historical process or more plainly don't have the expert knowledge possessed by the company Arabists. It is a variant of the same story these men told about the labor strikes of the 1950s that prompted the public relations campaign in the first place. As Tom Barger and his crew wanted to believe, ARAMCO's troubles were the product of a host of forces beyond their control: the creation of Israel, the rise nationalism region-wide, the influence of Arabic magazines and newspapers on an unsophisticated and easily swayed population, and even the Federal Trade Commission's suit against the oil firms, all of which allegedly contributed to nascent anti-American currents in Saudi

society. The company's own policies could not be the problem, except residually and inadvertently, the "growing dislike for Americans...in some instances has been justified by the attitude and behavior of *some* of our own people."<sup>79</sup>

On the eve of his death in 1986, the *ARAMCO World* editor Paul Hoye said something similar in reply to Mulligan's last short account about *Discovery*. "As for your story, I am not as uncomfortable with it as you were with Stegner, but I am a bit uncomfortable so let me briefly comment on it." He began with the familiar mantra,

1. The US oilmen *were* mythic figures; they *did* overcome ignorance; they *did* approach Saudi Arabia with a quite different attitude from that shown by the British. It may have been greed instead of ideology but to those involved simple greed was, and is, I think a more natural, less harmful approach--and surely the Saudis benefited in myriad ways.

2. If Stegner was "patronizing," I for one, didn't see it, but if it is there it is an accurate, very accurate reflection of the letters of Tom Barger, which Stegner and I both have read, and the manuscript of Phil McConnell which he generously (too generously) shared with Wally. In any case, I subsequently found Stegner's approach to be bang on.

3. The Stegner story may have been poor public relations with the Arab world but the Arab world was most assuredly not the readership for which an American novelist was hired to write...<sup>80</sup>

For Hoye and others the real value of the book was its refutation of "the blanket indictments of "economic imperialism" that have obscured the enormous contributions that fair enlightened, far-seeking companies like ARAMCO have made in the development area."<sup>81</sup> Indeed, Stegner and his critics in Dhahran shared the same highly positive view of ARAMCO. As repeated in speeches, press releases, films, and by the writers that the firm subsidized and the journalists that they feted, ARAMCO in Saudi Arabia pioneered a third way against autarchy in the global economy and old discredited forms of colonial exploitation and tutelage.

Thirty years on, a man like Mulligan who had helped invent and propagate the ARAMCO myths in the 1950s may have distanced himself from some of them, but his own so-called insensitivities were still on view in New Hampshire, where he had retired. Once, after his godson David McDonald, son of another ARAMCO veteran, visited, he sent Mulligan a letter seeking to understand "your disgust with American Indians.... So what still intrigues me is why you are so adamantly anti-Indian when, if I understand correctly, they (the Indians of Washington) did not pose a threat to you or even hinder your personal progress."<sup>82</sup>

V

Reading *Discovery* together with the archival record may leave one less convinced than Patty Limerick, who has not read them, that "Wallace Stegner faced facts." She argues that Stegner was "Just as dramatically ahead of his time in the matter of race relations as he was in environmental affairs."<sup>83</sup> Others writing in the same vein situate him as part of the "tradition of the great American literary environmentalists of place," inheriting and extending the ideology of Thoreau, Muir and others.<sup>84</sup> As is well known, his discovery of the costs exacted on the west's unchecked development led him from his early celebration of such wonders as the Hoover Dam. He later condemned it as a kind of "original sin" and he embraced conservationism in the early 1950s.<sup>85</sup>

Stegner was an important activist and publicist in particular for the Sierra Club under David Browder's leadership in the 1960s. Most of all, according to his biographer Jackson Benson, he was "uncompromising", the "ultimate realist," his work "devoted to the job of getting behind the myths, behind pretentiousness and deception, to find the truth."<sup>86</sup> These qualities combine to make up what the conservationist Curt Meine describes as Stegner's "continental vision" in the service of a "usable past" that would

allow "Americans in general to orient themselves in the present and shape a sound future."<sup>87</sup>

Armed with such a long list on the plus side of the ledger, his admirers are even ready to discuss the blindspots. Stegner himself apparently recognized "his failure to document in greater detail the experience of Native Americans." University of Arkansas professor Elliott West shows how Stegner never quite abandons the idea of the wilderness as a static natural world free of human influence. "History doesn't really get going until Europeans show up and start changing things." He often resorted to the tropes of empty lands, virgin continents and imported populations. And where Indians are considered, they are more like nature than agents, "static holdovers from that timeless wilderness world."<sup>88</sup>

These criticisms are certainly applicable to *Discovery* with Bedouins standing in for Indians. He writes on page v of the introduction, "What existed, outside Jidda, Riyadh and Mecca, was the barren land alone, with its scattered palm gardens and its coastal pearling towns and its desert oases, its wandering tribes, its holy places, its religious zeal and its austerity and its suspicion of foreigners. All that began to change when ARAMCO came to the Eastern Province." This is Stegner's claim about one of the richest parts of the eastern Gulf, whose date exports provided the wealth that the Al Sa`ud used in their conquest of the north Arabian peninsula. And, this was about a place where the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century had built forts, ports, schools and tax offices.<sup>89</sup> The critique is important but it is also the easy and obvious one to make. As we have seen, it is one ARAMCO managers in Dhahran began to make soon after Stegner turned in the book.

In his biography of Stegner, Jackson Benson says that when read carefully *Discovery* reveals the same ambivalence about development that was hallmark of his work

beginning with *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian*, published the year before he left for his whirlwind tour of Saudi Arabian. The point is unconvincing. Unlike his discussion of other books, Benson offers no textual references or examples in defense. He cannot. The argument is by someone who knows less than even Stegner did about the place and its times--the world oil frontier in the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>90</sup> Again, in the introduction, where one presumably would find the clearest expression of concern for the changes wrought on the natural environment and its people, Stegner wrote "Every American knows that ARAMCO is one of those "legendary institutions, in the words of James Morris, whose influence extended across the face of the earth, whose bank balances rival the resources of many complacent republics and whose authority is one of the great imponderables of modern affairs."<sup>91</sup>

Most of the above passage was excised before the book came out, an example of the hyperbole that men like Mulligan and Quint eventually ended up protesting. The final sentences were left intact, however. Stegner compared the transformation engendered by ARAMCO to the Marshall Plan.

This, whatever the intention was, has been one of ARAMCO's most significant results and...to a historian ARAMCO's effect upon Saudi Arabia and its auguries for the future seem at least as significant as its annual production of crude or its annual distribution of dividends. It may even, as anthropologist Carleton Coon predicted, "go on record as one of the outstanding jobs of social engineering in this phase of the history of the world."

One searches in vain for acknowledgement that any of the critics of the oil industry in the United States, Europe, and in the Arab world had defensible points to make about contemporary mechanisms of exploitation in the world economy. The absolute silence about the hierarchies produced abroad that were familiar from the American past is more striking still when we consider what Stegner said about the boosterism of the mining firms and the reality that it obscured. "There was nothing democratic about the

actual history of the West, whether the people you're talking about are miners or homesteaders or cattle people," Stegner said. "There is a big money, power elite which runs large numbers of essential wage slaves."<sup>92</sup> Historians today might argue with this too stark view of American political development, but, as an approximation of the political economy of the oil frontier in Saudi Arabia and of state building in the Gulf, it works better than ARAMCO's portrayals of Ibn Sa`ud as a desert democrat and of the oil giants as a Point IV program for Arabia.

Stegner may have grown more skeptical as he grew older, as Mulligan appears to have done. Back in the 1950s, seeking the company's business, he swore that he was no muckraker. There is no sense in exaggerating his identification with the working man let alone the labor organizations that Saudis were beaten, imprisoned, tortured, and banished for advocating as a means to improve their positions in the race and class hierarchies of the Eastern Province. And Stegner received a princely sum for his labors on behalf of ARAMCO, some \$100 thousand dollars in today's terms. Nonetheless, the story he tells in *Discovery* is consistent with American continentalism's zero sum world. Pristine open spaces and continuous capitalist growth, particularly in his beloved western region, *requires* the increased exploitation of other places. It was anything but magical.

---

**Author's Note:** Research for this article has been supported by the Shelby Cullom Davis Center at Princeton University, the Higgins School of the Humanities and the Dean of the Graduate School at Clark University, the University of Pennsylvania's Humanities Forum, and the International Center for Advanced Studies at NYU. Joel Beinin made it possible to use the Bancroft Library and the Hoover Institution archives (and see Stegner's Stanford). Two friends, Steve Aaron at UCLA and Karen Merrill at Williams, have served as trusty guides into the wilds of the New Western History and were who first told me about Wallace Stegner's significance for their peers. Since then, I have learned a great deal more while writing this article from Nate Citino, Linda Gordon, Melani McAlister, Anna McCarthy, David MacDonald, Allen Hunter, Molly Nolan, Nicole Sackley, Madawi al-Rasheed, Richard White and to others in seminars at CIRLA (Banf), EUI (Florence), NYU, the WHA (Colorado Springs) and Yale.

<sup>1</sup> Charles Wilkinson, "Introduction" in Curt Meine, ed., *Wallace Stegner and the Continental Vision: Essays on Literature, History, and Landscape* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1997), p. 11. William Gilpin was an indian fighter, governor of the Colorado Territory, and tireless advocate of the economic development of the west. Stegner's *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian* (1955) begins with Gilpin's extravagant exhortations on behalf of the "continental mission."

<sup>2</sup> Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage 1994 [1993]), p. xxiii.

<sup>3</sup> As quoted by Wallace Stegner. See James R. Hepworth, *Stealing Glances: Three Interviews with Wallace Stegner* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), p. 42.

---

<sup>4</sup>"Large corporations generate not a hegemonic ideology but rather plural identities. If legally still defined as individuals, in practice corporations have not been unitary." David E. Nye, *Image Worlds: Corporate Identities at General Electric 1890-1930* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), p. 159.

<sup>5</sup> Nye, *Image Worlds*, p. 155; Pierre Bourdieu, *Photography: A Middle-brow Art* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), pp. 73-77.

<sup>6</sup> Richard Slotkin, "Buffalo Bill's "Wild West" and the Mythologization of the American Empire," in Amy Kaplan and Donald Pease, eds., *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 166; Wallace Stegner, *Discovery! The Search for Arabian Oil*, As Abridged for ARAMCO World Magazine (Beirut: Middle East Export Press, 1971), pp. iv-v, 190.

<sup>7</sup> DeVoto's key work in this regard is *The Year of Decision 1846* (Boston: Little Brown 1943). I have relied on John L. Thomas, *A Country in the Mind: Wallace Stegner, Bernard DeVoto, History and the American Land* (New York: Routledge 2000). For an assessment of this first generation of revisionist scholarship, see William G. Robbins, *Colony and Empire: The Capitalist Transformation of the American West* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1994).

<sup>8</sup> Jackson J. Benson, *Wallace Stegner: His Life and Work* (New York: Viking, 1996), p. xiii.

<sup>9</sup> See for example Elliott West, "Wallace Stegner's West, Wilderness and History," and Thomas R. Vale, "Nature and People in the American West: Guidance from Stegner's Sense of Place," in Meine, ed., *Wallace Stegner*; and Patricia Nelson Limerick, "Precedents to Wisdom," in Page Stegner and Mary Stegner, eds., *The Geography of Hope* (San Francisco: Sierra Club), 1996.

---

<sup>10</sup> More crucially for purposes of my argument, most area studies specialists don't know who Stegner is or the position he occupies in American letters more generally. In 2000, I proposed to give this paper at a conference at Yale devoted to Middle East-United States *Cultural Encounters*. I was asked to write about *ARAMCO World* magazine instead, which was judged more important because it was better known than Stegner!

<sup>11</sup> J. B. Kelly, *Arabia, The Gulf and the West* (New York: Basic Books, 1980), pp. 258-259.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, p. 240.

<sup>13</sup> See for example Nancy Colberg, "Chronology," in Stegner and Stegner eds., *Geography of Hope*, pp. 133-34, and the volume of his essays published just before his death, *Where the Bluebird Sings to the Lemonade Springs* (New York: Random House, 1992), which includes an otherwise complete list of his books. Benson lists *Discovery* in the 1996 biography's list of published materials by Stegner (p. 424) but leaves it and Stegner's trip to Saudi Arabia *out* of the chronology included with his later *Down by the Lemonade Springs: Essays on Wallace Stegner* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2001 (p. 152).

<sup>14</sup> See Part II, Stegner as Historian, essays by West, Nugent, Flore and Meine, in Miene ed., *Stegner*.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>16</sup> Wallace Stegner and Richard Etulain, *Conversations with Wallace Stegner on Western History and Literature* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1983), p. 33. The critics who discuss *Discovery* in this way are Jackson J. Benson, *Down By the Lemonade Springs: Essays on Wallace Stegner* (Reno: University of Nevada Press,

---

2001), pp. 54-59; and Ann Ronald, "Stegner and Stewardship" in Charles E. Rankin, ed., *Wallace Stegner: Man and Writer* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), pp. 91-96.

<sup>17</sup> Citino's email to author, January 7, 2003 (for which I am grateful); Thomas, *Country in the Mind*, pp. 203-204.

<sup>18</sup> Thomas, *Country in the Mind*, p. 63.

<sup>19</sup> "One-Fourth of a Nation: Public Lands and Itching Fingers," *Reporter*, May 12, 1953, pp. 25-29, as cited in Benson, *Stegner*, p. 161.

<sup>20</sup> The American firms that started ARAMCO and *ARAMCO World* transferred their ownership rights to the Saudi concession almost two decades ago. History has finally caught up with this curious artifact of an era when private American oil multinationals dominated the Gulf. In September 2000, the magazine's name was finally changed to ***Saudi ARAMCO World***.

<sup>21</sup> The company originally organized in 1933 to operate in the Saudi field was named the California Arabian Standard Oil Company (Casoc) and commonly referred to as "Calarabian." California Standard, the original concession holder, is more commonly referred to as Chevron. The Texas Company or Texaco, took a 50% share in the venture in 1936. The joint firm was renamed ARAMCO in 1944. In 1947, Standard Oil of New York (Socony-Vacuum or, later, Mobil) and Standard Oil of New Jersey (Esso/Exxon) obtained a long-sought share in ARAMCO. All four American giants gave up their concession rights in stages in the 1970s and '80s. "Saudi ARAMCO" is now a state-owned enterprise. In October 2000 the two original partners in ARAMCO announced the merger of their entire worldwide operations. The new firm is Chevron-Texaco.

---

<sup>22</sup> See Irvine Anderson, *ARAMCO the United States and Saudi Arabia: A Study of the Dynamics of Foreign Oil Policy 1933-1950* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), for one historian's failed efforts to gain access to the records of ARAMCO and its ex-owners.

<sup>23</sup> "Corporations edit archives, control access to papers, underwrite favorable works, destroy evidence (more often through neglect than by design), and lay down a barrage of favorable publicity that tells customers and stockholders how they ought to be understood." Nye, *Image Worlds*, p. 3.

<sup>24</sup> See Roland Marchand, *Creating the Corporate Soul: The Rise of Public Relations and Corporate Imagery in American Big Business* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), pp. 108-110.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 109. See Sanford M. Jacoby, *Modern Manors: Welfare Capitalism Since the New Deal* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 3-5 and 11-34 for the nature of the emerging system of "welfare capitalism" designed to thwart both government intervention and union building.

<sup>26</sup> For details on both the strike wave of the 1940s and the racial order of American Camp, see See Robert Vitalis, "Crossing Exceptionalism's Frontiers to Discover America's Kingdom," *Arab Studies Journal*, 6 (Spring 1998), pp. 10-32 and idem., "ARAMCO World: Business and Culture on the Arabian Oil Frontier," in Karen Merrill, ed., *The Modern Worlds of Business and Industry: Cultures, Technology, Labor* (Brepols, 1999), pp. 3-28.

<sup>27</sup> Mimeo, July 1954 and signed Phil McConnell, Folder13, Phil McConnell Ballads, Box 29, Discovery Correspondence, Wallace Earle Stegner Papers, MS 676, Special

---

Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City [hereafter cited as Stegner Papers with filing information].

<sup>28</sup> On Palestine, see Robert Vitalis, "Black Gold, White Crude: An Essay on American Exceptionalism, Hierarchy, and Hegemony in the Gulf," *Diplomatic History* 26, 2 (2002), pp. 159-185; on the Saudis' demand for 50-50 profit sharing, see Anderson, *ARAMCO*, pp. 186-197; on the FTC, see John Blair, *The Control of Oil* (New York: Pantheon, 1976), pp. 17-76. Still more adverse publicity accumulated through year-long congressional hearings on a matter closely related to ARAMCO's operations in the Middle East, the Roosevelt administration's subsidies to the Trans Arabian Pipeline Project from Dhahran to Sidon, Lebanon.

<sup>29</sup> Writing about the 1920s, Marchand says, "[w]e may justifiably remain skeptical of the power of the family metaphor...to reshape worker consciousness. But this imagery often functioned in tandem with efforts to decrease worker alienation through humanizing systems of employee representation and paternalistic welfare programs. In fact, programs in which the company "became a partner in providing basic family needs, such as medical care, relief, recreation and housing," provided much of the content of company magazines." Thirty years later, ARAMCO began to fashion its identity as a "partner in development" of Saudi Arabia, which, later analysts would come to believe, sets it apart from other firms! see Vitalis, *Black Gold*, for details.

<sup>30</sup> William Tracy, "ARAMCO World Turns 50," *ARAMCO World*, November-December 1999, p. 9.

<sup>31</sup> Slotkin, "Buffalo Bill's "Wild West," p. 169.

---

<sup>32</sup> Holly Edwards, "The Near East and the Wild West," in *Noble Dreams, Wicked Pleasures: Orientalism in America, 1870-1930* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000) a catalog of the exhibit curated by Edwards.

<sup>33</sup> Vitalis, *ARAMCO World*.

<sup>34</sup> Robert Vitalis, "The Graceful and Liberal Gesture: Marking Racism Invisible in American International Relations," *Millennium*, 29, 2 (September 2000), pp. 331-356. Even today, Halliburton, the oil field services firm, "has a segregated restroom policy, keeping separate restrooms overseas for its American and foreign employees. Halliburton said the policy was "no different than Eastern countries that often designate facilities for use by Westerners.'" Maureen Dowd, "The Tao of Dick," reporting on an A.P. dispatch by Larry Margasak (n.d.), *New York Times*, September 10, 2000, p. 17.

<sup>35</sup> See Carl B. King and Howard W. Risher, Jr. "The Negro in the Petroleum Industry, : Report No. 5 in the series The Racial Policies of American Industry, University of Pennsylvania, Wharton School of Finance and Commerce, Industrial Research Unit, 1969.

<sup>36</sup> See Robert Vitalis, "The Closing of the Arabian Oil Frontier and the Future of Saudi-American Relations," *Middle East Report* (July-September 1997), p. 17.

<sup>37</sup> In the two most important works on corporate identity by Nye, *Image Worlds*, and Marchand, *Creating the Corporate Soul*, the race of firms goes unnoticed and unremarked upon, save, in Marchand's case, for a single footnote to the lack of African American images in corporate public relations.

---

<sup>38</sup> "The Story of a Modern American Family," *ARAMCO World*, April 1955, pp. 13-16, but see "Injun Talk," about a Social educational film made in 1946 and reported in the same issue as "Partners in Oil and Progress," *Bulletin* (Autumn 1946), pp. 3-15.

<sup>39</sup> "Out of the Earth," *ARAMCO World*, February 1953, pp. 6-7.

<sup>40</sup> Edwards, *Noble Dreams*, p. 44.

<sup>41</sup> Memo to file by JRJ [John R. Jones], 3 April 1954, Screening of Work Print on Company's Historical Film-Jazirat Al-`Arab, Box 2, Folder 39, Arabian Affairs Division, Chronological Files, April 1954, William E. Mulligan Papers, Special Collections Division, Lauinger Library, Georgetown University, Washington, DC [hereafter cited as Mulligan Papers with filing information].

<sup>42</sup> "Island of the Arabs," *ARAMCO World*, July 1955, pp 4-5..

<sup>43</sup> William E Mulligan, "The Arabian Peninsula In Living Color," column from the *Arabian Sun* , undated (but from the mid-1970s presumably). Box 6, Folder 15, "Arabian Sun Articles", Mulligan Papers.

<sup>44</sup> Edwards, *Noble Dreams*, p. 226.

<sup>45</sup> One of the king's sons, Prince Muhammad bin Abd al-`Aziz, told a U.S. embassy officer who appeared in the film (when still in ARAMCO's employ, "I enjoyed your acting, but from the point of view of history it was a hodge-podge of surmises and imagination." See Jidda to State, Despatch 26, 20 July 1959, Prince Mohammed Deplore Arab Disunity, Attacks the Arab Press, and Extolls Former King Abdul Aziz, RG 59, 786A.00/7-2059. English language television broadcasting began two years earlier in June 1955 at the U.S. airbase, the first in the Middle East. Baghdad followed in 1957. ARAMCO's was the third. ARAMCOs tuned in their radios to hear the

---

broadcasts in English. See William Mulligan, "The TV Picture in Arabia," *Arabian Sun*, March 6, 1974.

<sup>46</sup> Telegram, Graham to Stegner, 7 July 1955, Folder 5, Correspondence, Ray Graham 1955; Letters, Stegner to Phillips, 3, 13, 22 (muckraking quote) August and 2 October, 1955, Folder 17, Correspondence, T.O. Phillips, 1956-1956, 1968; contract dated September 19 September 1955, Folder 27, Contract for Services of Consultant, 1955, 1958; Box 29, Discovery Correspondence, Stegner Papers. I used a consumer price index to determine relative value of the contract in 2001 dollars, available at [www.eh.net/hmit/](http://www.eh.net/hmit/).

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 239.

<sup>48</sup> See Typed Notes, entry for 7 November 1955, Folder 11, Notes for Book, Box 27, Stegner Papers.

<sup>49</sup> Interview with David Dodge, Princeton, NJ, October 1995.

<sup>50</sup> On ARAMCO as a private Point IV mission see Editorial, "Point \$ Without the Taxpayers." *Los Angeles Times*, 20 March 1951. Stegner argued the same thing.

<sup>51</sup> Stegner to H. O Thompson, Draft, Dhahran, 14 November 1955, Box 29, Discovery Correspondence, Folder 19, Correspondence, H. O. Thompson, 1955-1956, Stegner Papers.

<sup>52</sup> Jidda to State, Despatch, 180, 19 May 1955, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, 1955-1959, 786A.00/5-1955, National Archives, Washington, DC (hereafter cited as RG 59, with filing information, series years omitted).

---

<sup>53</sup> Stegner to H. O Thompson, Draft, Dhahran, 14 November 1955, Box 29, Discovery Correspondence, Folder 19, Correspondence, H. O. Thompson, 1955-1956, Stegner Papers.

<sup>54</sup> Philip C. McConnell, *Journal*, entry for 16 July 1945, Box 3, Philip C. McConnell Papers, 1937-1963, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, CA.

<sup>55</sup> Radio Cairo Broadcast, Sawt al-Arab (Voice of the Arabs), 5 December 1961, transcribed in report, Vidal to Jones, 14 Nov 1961, Folder 10, Arabian Research Division, Chronological Files, Nov-dec 196, Box 3, Mulligan Papers.

<sup>56</sup> Stegner to Phillips, 16 December 1955, Folder 17, Correspondence, T.O. Phillips, 1956-1956, 1968, Box 29, Stegner Papers.

<sup>57</sup> Stegner to Thompson, 7 February and 17 February 1956, Folder 19, Correspondence, H. O. Thompson, 1955-1956, Box 29, Stegner Papers.

<sup>58</sup> Stegner to Sinclair, 7 March 1956, Folder 18, Correspondence, Angus Sinclair, 1955-1956, Box 29, Discovery Correspondence, Stegner Papers.

<sup>59</sup> *Department of State Bulletin* 36, 917 (January 21, 1957), pp. 83-87.

<sup>60</sup> Eisenhower's project of promoting Sa`ud as a counterweight to Nasser is a standard subject for diplomatic historians. The newest, most comprehensive and judicious account is Nathan J. Citino, *From Arab Nationalism to OPEC: Eisenhower, King Sa`ud, and the Making of U.S.-Saudi Relations* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2002), pp. 117-134. For the total aid and arms sales figure, see Anthony Cave Brown, *Oil, God, And Gold: The Story of ARAMCO and the Saudi Kings* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1999), p. 217 (\$350 million total arms sales and aid). Brown does

---

not give a source. Readers should consider the figure as at best an estimate, which may have to be reduced more than I do here.

<sup>61</sup> Winton Beaven, ICPA, to Eisenhower, 7 February 1957, RG59, 786A.11/2-757; Ferris Fitzpatrick, Lansing, MI, to Dulles, 24 February 1957, RG59, 786A.11/2-2457; Telegram, Michael J Quill, New York CIO Council, to Dulles, 25 January 1957, RG59, 786A.11/1-2557; *New York Times*, 1 February 1957, p. 3. Mayor Wagner's stance was backed by the City Council's democratic majority leader, Joseph Sharkey, "1,000 per cent. When we entertain half these monkeys who come over here, it's on orders of the state department." Sharkey later "regretted his use of the word "monkeys." He had meant to say "characters." Charles Bennett, "Mayor Bars Fete for Saud," *New York Times*, 30 January 1957, p. 1.

<sup>62</sup> Robert K Sherwood, Memorandum of Conversation, Visit of King Saud, 10 January 1957, RG59, 786A.11/1-1057.

<sup>63</sup> Mulligan to Ellender [vice president, public relations, ARAMCO], 16 March 1968, Folder 23, Mulligan William E-Correspondence, 1961-69, Box 11, Mulligan Papers.

<sup>64</sup> Mulligan to Peter A. Iseman, 10 September 1978, Folder 27, Correspondence, 1978; Telegram from Ismail Nawwab to ARAMCO Services, and Memo to File by Mulligan, Phoned to Kombargi, 21 May 1979, Folder 28, Correspondence, 1979, Box 11, Mulligan Papers.

<sup>65</sup> Stegner to Thompson, 5 January, 1957; Thompson to Stegner, 2 April 1957; Stegner to Thompson, 6 April 6 1957; Stegner to Thomspson, 6 December 1957; Thompson to Stegner, 9 December 1957; and Stegner to Thompson, 16 December 1957, Folder 19, Correspondence, H. O. Thompson, 1955-1958, Box 29, Discovery Correspondence, Stegner Papers.

---

<sup>66</sup> Stegner to Thompson, 24 January 1958, Folder 19, Correspondence, H. O. Thompson, 1955-1958, Box 29, Discovery Correspondence, Stegner Papers.

<sup>67</sup> See the annotated manuscript chapters in Folder 2, First Draft II, The Negotiators, Box 26, Discovery, First Draft, Reader's Copy; and Folder 3, III The Wildcatters; Folder 7, VII, p. 302-312; and Folder 9, The Wildcatters, Box 27, Discovery, Stegner Papers.

<sup>68</sup> Stegner to Thompson, 24 January 1958, Folder 19, Correspondence, H. O. Thompson, 1955-1958, Box 29, Discovery Correspondence, Stegner Papers.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Folder 2, First Draft II, The Negotiators, and Folder 7, First Draft, VII, Commercial Production, Box 26 Discovery, First Draft, Reader's Copy, Stegner Papers.

<sup>71</sup> Tore Tingvold Peterson, "Anglo-American Rivalry in the Middle East: The Struggle for the Buraimi Oasis, 1952-1957," *International History Review* 14, 1 (February 1992), pp. 71-91, "greatest obstacle" quote on p.87; Citino, *From Arab Nationalism*, pp. 82-85, 90-91; Brown, *Oil, God, and Gold*, p. 212. Homer Mueller, the ARAMCO Arabist who met secretly with Egyptian and Saudi intelligence officers to promote a rebellion against the British in southeastern Arabia was himself an undercover CIA officer.

<sup>72</sup> Stegner to Thompson, 24 January 1958, Folder 19, Correspondence, H. O. Thompson, 1955-1958, Box 29, Discovery Correspondence, Stegner Papers.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Copy of Contract between Stegner and ARAMCO in Folder 27, Contract for Services of Consultant, 1955, 1958, Box 29, Discovery Correspondence, Stegner Papers.

- 
- <sup>75</sup> Hamilton to Stegner, 2 October 1958, Folder 6, Correspondence, Gordon C Hamilton, 1957-1958, Box 29, Discovery Correspondence, Stegner Papers.
- <sup>76</sup> Madawi al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 117-121.
- <sup>77</sup> See Ismail Nawwab, "Paul Hoye: In Memoriam," *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* (November 1986), p. 20, [http://wrmea.com/Washington-Report\\_org/www/backissues/1186/8611020.html](http://wrmea.com/Washington-Report_org/www/backissues/1186/8611020.html).
- <sup>78</sup> See Hoye to Stegner, 31 January 1967, Stegner to Hoye, 12 February 1967, and Hoye to Stegner, 13 March 1967, Folder 8, Paul Hoye, 1967-1970, Box 29, Discovery Correspondence, Stegner Papers.
- <sup>79</sup>"Confidential, Local Government Relations Department Program, Endorsed by Management Committee," p. 5, Folder 19, Barger 1955 Paper, Box 4, Mulligan Papers, emphasis mine.
- <sup>80</sup> Hoye to Mulligan, 3 February 1986, Folder 2, History Project, Box 8, Mulligan Papers.
- <sup>81</sup> Hoye to Ellender, 6 February 1968, Folder 23, Correspondence, 1961-69, Box 11, Mulligan Papers.
- <sup>82</sup> David McDonald to Bill Mulligan, 1 January 1982, Folder 30, Correspondence, 1981-82, Box 11, Mulligan Papers.
- <sup>83</sup> Limerick, "Precedents to Wisdom," in *Geography of Hope*, pp. 21-22.
- <sup>84</sup> Meine, quoting Dan Flores, "Bioregionalist of the High and Dry: Stegner and Western Environmentalism," in Meine, ed., *Stegner*, p. 83.
- <sup>85</sup> See the accounts in Dan Flores, "Bioregionalist of the High and Dry," in Meine, ed., *Stegner*, and in Benson, *Stegner*.

---

<sup>86</sup> Benson, "Writing as the Expression of Belief," in Meine ed., *Stegner*, p. 21.

<sup>87</sup> Meine, "introduction," in Meine, ed., *Stegner*, pp. xix-xxi.

<sup>88</sup> Elliott West, "Wallace Stegner's West, Wilderness, and History," in Meine, ed., *Stegner*, pp. 87-90.

<sup>89</sup> See Vitalis, "ARAMCO World;" Frederick Anscombe, *The Ottoman Gulf: The Creation of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, 1870-1914* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1997).

<sup>90</sup> Benson in fact reveals his lack of knowledge in taking the eastern oil hinterlands to represent the country as a whole. "*Saudi Arabia* before oil development was a true frontier with few roads and almost no amenities--you couldn't even buy a paper clip or safety pin *anywhere in the country*." Benson, *Stegner*, p. 239, emphasis mine. The truth is, of course, that the western province, the Hijaz, and its commercial capital, Jidda, was a major trading port, and Mecca a world city.

<sup>91</sup> Ms. of 1970 introduction enclosed in Quint to Hoye, 3 Oct 1970, Folder 1, Box 5, Mulligan Papers.

<sup>92</sup> Gail Schontzler, "Wallace Stegner and the Real West," *Bozeman Chronicle*, March 8, 1998.