

TABLE OF CONTENTS
HOUSTON CHRONICLE ARTICLES
PUBLISHED BY
SHAHZADA IRFAN, HOUSTON CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER
AND DANIEL PEARL FELLOW
AT ALFRED FRIENDLY PRESS FELLOWSHIPS

Articles	Page
1. <u>Learning the American Way</u> September 17, 2009	2
2. <u>The puzzle that grips Pakistan: Expectations high after Obama victory</u> August 30, 2009	3
3. <u>Holocaust's untold heroes</u> August 28, 2009	5
4. <u>Sudan looks to Houston for help</u> July 11, 2009	7
5. <u>Marvels of Muslim scientists on display</u> July 5, 2009	9
6. <u>Prominent Pakistani in Houston blasts strikes on Taliban</u> June 22, 2009	11
7. <u>Taking Off Gradually</u> June 19, 2009	13
8. <u>Parris ran iconic hotel in city</u> June 9, 2009	15
9. <u>Visiting Pakistani female legislators dispel stereotypes</u> June 8, 2009	17
10. <u>Aid sought for those displaced in Pakistan</u> June 8, 2009	20

Personal Blog Available at: <http://shahzadairfan.blogspot.com>

1) http://blogs.chron.com/lahore/2009/09/learning_the_american_way_1.ht



September 17, 2009

Learning the American way

Time flies by fast. I arrived in Houston on May 21, and in less than two weeks from today, I'll leave this place. Born and bred in [Lahore](#), a centrally located city in Pakistan, I have never lived away from home for so long. I never thought I would ever leave my home and family, and live continents away, on my own.

I was quite unsure whether to apply or not, for the Daniel Pearl fellowship -- courtesy of which I am here in Houston. Finally, I did, on the insistence of some former fellows.

I wondered at the time if all the hardships and sacrifices would be worth it. Today, when I am almost done with the fellowship, I have no qualms saying, "yes, it is."

I have learned a lot during my stay in the U.S., and see myself a better journalist and an individual with a well-rounded personality. My experiences with the lifestyles, cultures, work ethic and even the idiosyncrasies of American people have been my best teacher.

The fellowship, managed jointly by [Daniel Pearl Foundation](#) and [Alfred Friendly Press Fellowships](#), gives Muslim journalists an opportunity to work in U.S. newsrooms for five months.

Brief stints at [Missouri School of Journalism](#) and [Poynter Institute](#) are also part of the program. Here the fellows are mentally prepared to absorb the cultural shock they are bound to experience and acquainted to the requirements and realities of American journalism.

Once the fellows are selected, two every year, the organizers hunt for a host newsroom to accommodate each of them. It can be anywhere in the U.S. I found placement in Houston Chronicle.

Never in my life, had I lived longer than two weeks at any place other than my hometown. After a four-month living stint in Houston, I can safely say I know this place more than any Pakistani city, other than Lahore.

I had numerous unforgettable experiences in the US. I will share them on this blog, and continue updating it from Pakistan where a huge reverse cultural shock awaits me.

2) <http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/editorial/6594316.html>



NEWS SPORTS BUSINESS ENTERTAINMENT LIFE TRAVEL BLOGS JOBS HOMES CARS CLASSIFIEDS

 5 Comments  2 Recommend

The puzzle that grips Pakistan

Expectations high after Obama victory

By SHAHZADA IRFAN
HOUSTON CHRONICLE
Aug. 30, 2009, 8:43PM

Pakistanis celebrated the election of President Barack Obama with almost the same fervor that was seen among his supporters in his own country. They had pinned all their hopes on him. He was seen as a savior, a trustworthy friend, a mediator, a statesman and everything that his predecessor George Bush was not.

Their expectations were very high and to many of them even realistic. Obama's lineage and middle name gave an ordinary Pakistani a reason to relate to him. This extraordinary acceptance for him was also for the fact that he had succeeded Bush — the person deemed responsible for most if not all the calamities befalling the state of Pakistan in the preceding eight years.

Pakistani enthusiasm for Obama suffered a setback when he intensified drone attacks in the tribal areas of the country. They are still going on, leading to intense public pressure on the Pakistani government, and the latter's subsequent quests to have access to the drone technology. Thousands of innocent people have died in these attacks, and the country's international boundaries have been violated.

These attacks started during the administration of Gen. Pervez Musharraf, but as the head of army and an all-powerful dictator, he was not vulnerable to criticism. The civilian and democratically elected government of today, however, cannot ignore the concerns of citizens and its coalition partners.

The U.S. has had a long history of supporting dictators in the areas where their interests lie. Pakistan is a perfect example of this. The U.S. has backed dictators in this country to overcome resistance from within to its pursuits in the region.

This policy served the purpose of the U.S. but compromised the interests of ordinary Pakistanis, who saw the state as an oppressor and usurper. The dictators flourished during these times and sought legitimacy for their rules from the U.S. and its global partners and did nothing for the masses.

All the foreign aid coming to the country was concentrated in the hands of a few, the economy collapsed and budget deficits were met by reducing spending on social services.

In the backdrop of all this, one can say that the worst thing that can happen to Pakistan now is the rise of another dictator. It is something that the country cannot afford. Fortunately for the people of Pakistan, Obama acknowledges this fact and has incorporated it in his Afghanistan-Pakistan policy. "To avoid the mistakes of the past, we must make clear that our relationship with Pakistan is grounded in support for Pakistan's democratic institutions and the Pakistani people," Obama said. These words offer hope to the people of Pakistan.

This brings us to the debate on how the U.S. can support the people of Pakistan and win their support in return. In the struggle to win their “hearts and minds,” the key to success lies in making the people believe they have benefited by siding with the U.S. So far, all they can think about are the deafening explosions of bombs, illegal weapons, destruction, Afghan immigrants, internal displacements, drugs, militancy, lawlessness and poverty.

Most Pakistanis believe the militancy in its turbulent northwest is a legacy of the U.S.-backed war against the former Soviet Union. These elements are a leftover of that offensive and were never taken care of effectively.

The first thing the U.S. can do is to help institutions develop in Pakistan and stop backing those who destroy them. Unfortunately, there was not even a word of condemnation from the U.S. when Musharraf sacked senior judges, whom he saw as a hurdle to his re-election. The top U.S. officials declared it Pakistan's internal matter and refrained from interfering. But ultimately they had to morally support the public demand to restore the judiciary in Pakistan.

The next to follow is the role the U.S. can play in the socioeconomic development of the country, especially the areas affected directly by the war. The international community and financial institutions will have to be generous if they want to see the world a safer place.

Poverty and lack of quality education in these areas make people, especially the youth, vulnerable to the overtures of militants. So, the calls to maximize nonmilitary aid to this region, set up priority industrial zones, build infrastructure, open international markets for their products, and introduce an education system that differentiates between an inspirational teacher and a terrorist must be answered without delay. The list may be exhaustive but the aforementioned steps, if taken well in time, will pave the way for economic recovery and lasting peace in the region.

Obama's assertion that “our efforts will fail in Afghanistan and Pakistan if we don't invest in their future” is not far-fetched. This has happened in the past. When the Soviets withdrew, the Afghan Mujahideen were abandoned by the U.S. Their country was destroyed during the war, and they had nothing to do except what they had been trained for. A repeat of this will be the worst thing that can happen to the world of today.

To sum up my argument, I would like to quote Joanne King Herring, a Texas socialite and philanthropist whom I talked to in Houston last month. She had organized a conference of 12 nongovernmental organizations that are serving the masses in 27 provinces of Afghanistan. She said, “Most Afghans have never seen an American without a gun.” Her point was that these NGOs are changing that perception and the government must also step in, in a big way. The situation in the turbulent north of Pakistan is not much different from Afghanistan, and the same remedy will work for both.

Irfan is assistant editor and special correspondent for The News International in Pakistan and a 2009 Daniel Pearl Fellow at the Chronicle.

- 3) <http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/metropolitan/6592238.html> and http://www.chron.com/CDA/archives/archive.mpl/2009_4782770/holocaust-s-untold-heroes-their-story-is-rarely-to.html

Holocaust's untold heroes

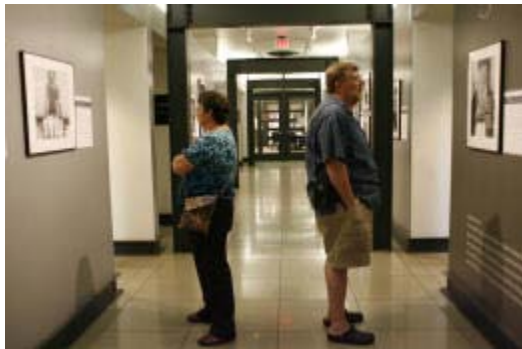
Their story is rarely told, but Albanian Muslims took in fleeing Jews during World War II, saving thousands of lives

By SHAHZADA IRFAN
HOUSTON CHRONICLE
Aug. 28, 2009, 10:47PM

When no other European country dared to withstand the wrath of Nazi Germany, it was the Muslims of Albania who saved a large number of Jewish people from extermination.

Albania, a Muslim majority country in Europe, opened its borders during World War II and took in thousands of Jews fleeing from different countries. They were treated like honored guests, and many were given fake names and even passports.

This little-known chapter of history is the focus of the photographic exhibition *Besa: Muslims Who Saved Jews During the Holocaust*, which kicked off in July at the Holocaust Museum Houston and continues through February.



Julie Koehn For the Chronicle

The Holocaust Museum Houston is displaying photographs and stories of Albanians who rescued Jews during World War II. The project by Norman Gershman is an attempt to build bridges between Muslims and Jews.

The exhibition displays photographs taken by Norman Gershman, a Jewish photographer based in Colorado, who traveled to Albania in 2003 to research the topic.

Gershman said it took him six years to complete the project. He interviewed Albanians who had harbored Jewish people at that time and were still alive and the relatives of those who were not. He took their photographs to accompany their individual stories in his book *Besa: Muslims Who Saved Jews During World War II*.

The photographs and stories displayed at the exhibition are taken from this book.

Everyone had a different story to tell, but one thing was common.

“They were compelled to act the way they had by Besa, a code of honor deeply rooted in Albanian culture and incorporated in the faith of Albanian Muslims,” Gershman said.

He said they were dismissive of the attention they were getting.

“To them it was nothing unusual,” he said. “They believed any Albanian would have done the same in a similar situation.”

Yad Vashem, the Holocaust museum in Israel, is the sponsor of this traveling exhibition.

Taking action

Marci Dallas, director of Changing Exhibits at the Holocaust Museum Houston, said the exhibition gives the message that no one should stand by during human suffering.

Eileen Reed, a visitor to the exhibit, was surprised how different people could decipher teachings of their faith differently.

“The Albanian Muslims derived inspiration from their religion to save Jews,” she said. “They were so different from those who perpetrate violence in the name of the same religion.”

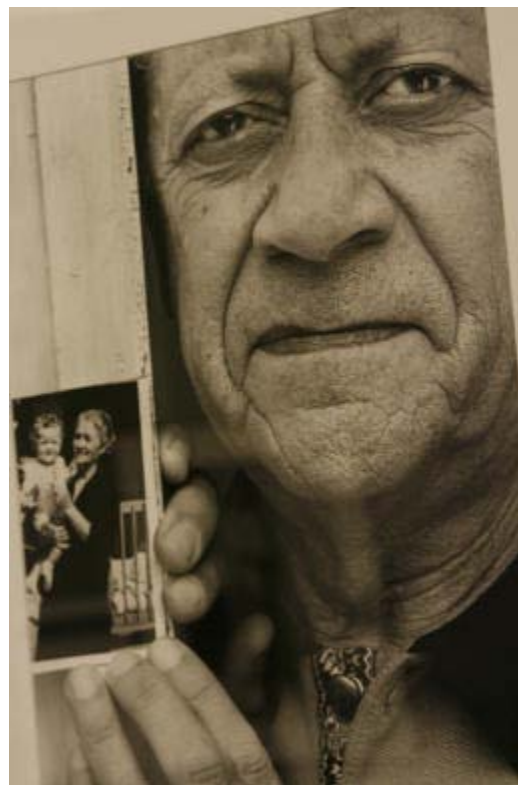
Unknown history

These stories have remained unknown for decades, even to students of the Holocaust. Rob Satloff, director of the Washington Institute of Near East Policy in Washington, D.C., offers an explanation.

“First, we — Jews, Israelis, Western historians — didn't look very hard,” Satloff said. “And second, they — Arabs and Muslims, even those who rescued Jews — often did not want to be found. The result is a tacit conspiracy of silence about this lost chapter from the Holocaust.”

Satloff wrote the book *Among the Righteous: Lost Stories from the Holocaust's Long Reach into Arab Lands*.

Ellen Kennedy, interim director of the Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at the University of Minnesota, believes these stories remained untold because many surviving Jews and Albanians were reluctant to share them.



Albanians who were interviewed cited Besa, a code of honor, as a reason for helping the Jews.

“When survivors first began speaking about their experiences in the years immediately after the war, they were met with disbelief,” Kennedy said. “The public simply could not imagine that such horrors occurred.” Gershman's work is an attempt at building bridges between Muslims and people of Jewish faith.

“Islam and Judaism are Abrahamic faiths, and we have lot of things in common,” said Dr. Aziz Siddiqui, president of the Islamic Society of Greater Houston. “We must strive to highlight these as Gershman has done and avoid everything that tends to divide us.” - - shahzada.irfan@chron.com

4) <http://www.chron.com/dispatch/story.mpl/headline/metro/6525207.html>



NEWS SPORTS BUSINESS ENTERTAINMENT LIFE TRAVEL BLOGS **JOB**S HOMES CARS CLASSIFIEDS

2 Comments 0 Recommend

SUNDAY CONVERSATION

Sudan looks to Houston for help

By SHAHZADA IRFAN
Copyright 2009 Houston Chronicle
July 11, 2009, 9:56PM

The governor of oil-rich Jonglei state in southern Sudan, Kuol Manyang Juuk, was in Houston last week. Here he met U.S. business people and invited them to explore myriad investment opportunities in his state. The southern Sudan is struggling to rebuild as the decades-long civil war in the country has come to an end, at least for the time being. Juuk shared his vision and experiences with Houston Chronicle reporter Shahzada Irfan.

Q. Tell us briefly about the recent history of Sudan.

A. The country had been at war with itself since 1955. The socio-economic marginalization of its peripheries by the center and its attempt to impose religious laws were the main reasons of the conflict. The war concluded in 2005 with a peace agreement brokered by the U.S. Now there is one unity government with two different systems for northern Sudan and southern Sudan. The Muslim majority north has Islamic Shariah laws in place whereas the south comprises minorities and is secular. In 2011, there will be a referendum that will decide the fate of the unity government. If majority of people in southern Sudan vote for independence it will become a separate country.

Q. What are the urgent issues confronting your region?

A. The biggest are unemployment, lack of social services for people and non-existence of infrastructure. People indulge in cattle raiding and fight each other for sustenance. Then there is shortage of food. There are security issues as well, but we have been successful in minimizing them.

Q. What sectors are you trying to develop?

A. Our focus is on developing agriculture and setting up physical infrastructure. We have enough water and fertile land. Then comes the oil and energy sector. Southern Sudan has huge oil reserves. So far it sells crude but we are asking investors to set up refineries. Building rail and road networks and producing power are our other priority areas.

Q. What stops your economy from growing?

A. Our economy is suffering from the aftermaths of civil war. There are no roads in the state, making it difficult to move goods. The international community pledged aid, but little money is coming. Another is the neglect shown by the unity government. We share 50 percent of our oil revenues with them but don't get anything return.

Q. How can the U.S. help build your economy?

A. The U.S. is a major guarantor of the peace agreement. It can help bring stability to the region which in turn can boost community. It can also convince the international community to help us out. Then the people of the U.S. country can make investments in different sectors. The U.S. State Department has organized a visit of U.S. businessmen to my state. They are leaving on July 12. The U.S. imposes trade sanctions on Sudan but the southern states are exempt from them. So, it's already helping us grow.

Q. What brought you to Houston?

A. There are several similarities between Houston and Jonglei. Both have enough flat land and adequate water. Their people rear livestock and grow food. Their climates are the same. Their economies are greatly dependent on oil. Though we do not have a seaport like Houston, we have the concept of building river ports in Sudan. Houston is already Sudan's largest trade partner in the U.S. with trade above \$75 million in 2008.

Q. How was the response in Houston?

A. We had meetings with top business leaders in Houston, and they were all excited. We have invited them over to Jonglei. As seeing is believing, they will be in a better position to decide once they see things on ground.

Q. Why would one invest in your state?

A. Simply to make money. There are so many untapped resources which the investors can explore. A lot of them are attracted by our incentives, including provision of land on lease and the permission to repatriate home the money they make. The standards of governance are very high in my state and setting up business very easy.

shahzada.irfan@chron.com

5) <http://www.chron.com/dispatch/story.mpl/metropolitan/6513023.html>

 80 Comments  25 Recommend

Marvels of Muslim scientists on display

Display shows contributions to astronomy, math and science

By SHAHZADA IRFAN
Copyright 2009 Houston Chronicle
July 5, 2009, 4:28PM

In the annals of aviation history, names such as the Wright brothers, Charles Lindbergh or Chuck Yeager come to mind. But what about Abbas Ibn Firnas?

Very few people know that this Muslim scholar tied himself to a feathered glider in Cordoba, Spain, in the ninth century and took the first piloted flight in history.

John H. Lienhard, a professor at the department of mechanical engineering and history at The University of Houston, acknowledges this flight in his award-winning work *The Engines of Our Ingenuity*.

A model of this flying machine is on display among many other artifacts at the exhibition *Sultans of Science: 1,000 Years of Knowledge Rediscovered*, at the Islamic Da'wah Center in Houston through Sept. 7.

The exhibit, which debuted last week, honors contributions of Muslim scientists from the eighth century to the 18th century, known as the Golden Era of the Islamic World.

It focuses on disciplines such as art, astronomy, inventions, optical sciences, mathematics and architecture.

Hands-on exhibits



James Nielsen Chronicle
Lily Foster looks into a kaleidoscope at the *Sultans of Science* exhibit.

The exhibition offers hands-on activities, re-created models of engineering tools and interactive maps that take visitors back to the medieval ages.

Visitors can grip a pulse sensor to see their heartbeats displayed against the backdrop of Ibn Nafi's diagram of the human circulatory system. Or they can use a replica of the Islamic quadrant to measure the angle between two stars.

The cluster on optics showcases works of 10th-century Muslim physicist Al-Haytham, who invented the pinhole camera and discovered how the eye works. Visitors can conduct experiments at Al-Haytham's optical laboratory using convex and concave lenses, prisms and the model of the camera he invented.

Another attraction is the model of the elephant clock designed by Muslim engineer Al-Jazari. This was the first clock that employed the flow of water to regulate timekeeping.

"We knew this nonreligious exhibit would attract people of Houston for its self-guided and non-imposing nature," said Ameer Abuhalmeh, executive director of the Islamic Da'wah Center.

He said the exhibit was designed to increase awareness of Muslims' contributions to fields of learning and highlight the importance of building bridges between civilizations.

Film also showing

The exhibition is owned by MTE Studios, based in Cape Town and Dubai, which designed Ibn Battuta Mall, a thematic shopping mall in Dubai. The exhibits at the center are small replicas of ones on display at that mall.

Ibn Battuta was a Muslim explorer from Morocco who traveled 75,000 miles and visited 40 countries in 28 years. The explorers section of the exhibition tells the story of this man.

Abuhalmeh said that to complement the exhibition, the Houston Museum of Natural Science is showing the IMAX film *Journey to Mecca*, a documentary based on Battuta's travels.

Joanne King Herring, a member of the exhibition committee, said she hopes this event acquaints people with the works of good Muslims. King said there are good and bad people in every religion. "But all the nice work by good people gets obscured in the smoke of war generated by the bad ones," she said.

She said she had special interest in the Muslim world, as she had served both Pakistan and Morocco as their honorary consul general in Houston.

shahzada.irfan@chron.com

6) <http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/hotstories/6492663.html>

 105 Comments  6 Recommend

Prominent Pakistani in Houston blasts strikes on Taliban

By SHAHZADA IRFAN HOUSTON CHRONICLE
June 22, 2009, 11:07PM



World Affairs Council of Houston

Imran Khan, a former athlete turned politician, discussed Pakistan's future during a luncheon hosted by the World Affairs Council of Houston.

Imran Khan, a prominent Pakistani politician, social worker and former cricket captain, on Monday said the military offensive against the Taliban is the main cause of rising terrorism in his country.

Khan spoke on "The Future of Pakistan" at a luncheon hosted by the World Affairs Council of Houston.

He said launching an armed offensive in an area where risks of civilian deaths are so high is "insane."

"How can one avoid harming the innocent in aerial bombings? They die in big numbers," he said.

When this happens, he said, people join militants to avenge the deaths of their loved ones.

Khan has been a vocal critic of U.S. involvement in Pakistan. He said the Pakistani army, accused of fighting a proxy war for the U.S., is despised in tribal areas.

The ongoing military offensive against the Taliban has displaced 3.5 million people from their homes.

The 'ordinary' suffer

Khan said militants are easily able to disappear into the mountains when troops arrive and return when they leave.

“Only the ordinary people suffer, who leave their homes, shops, farms etc.,” he said.

Khan said the Taliban and al-Qaida are two different entities and should be dealt with differently. The Taliban is a political movement that won mass support for ensuring rule of law in Afghanistan.

“It was not their brand of Islam that made them popular,” he said.

He said the solution lies in holding talks with the Taliban and pressuring them to drive away al-Qaida.

Khan had great success as a cricketer and then as a social worker, but his party did not do well politically.

He was captain of the team that won the Cricket World Cup in 1992, and he set up a modern cancer hospital in Pakistan. On Sunday, Khan and his supporters were in Sugar Land, where they raised \$300,000 for the hospital, which runs primarily on donations

shahzada.irfan@chron.com

7) Taking Off Gradually - Friday, June 19, 2009 -
<http://shahzadairfan.blogspot.com/>

Though I reached Houston on May 21, it was not until June 1 that I could settle down in the city and take up any assignments. I had already been introduced to everyone at Chronicle through internal office memos and was welcomed by the staff when I reached there. They all knew a lot about me and even the reason for my joining the paper late. I was quite relieved to find them so receptive and courteous.

Just after a day at the office there was a long weekend because of the Memorial Day. This was the time that I spent on reading reporters' blogs on the paper's website and familiarizing myself with the issues that were hot in the city and its neighbourhoods. I would take a bus and go to some place. There I would simply roam around, observe the environs and read anything that I could find written on plaques, signboards or notice boards.

In fact I was able to talk to a delegation of Pakistani women legislators in the very first week but it took me good ten days to get the story published. It was while working on this story that I realized that sometimes it is very difficult to get people's comments even in the United States.

The legislators wanted the story to be based on their statements and what they thought they had achieved during the visit. But the editors wanted the story to have some point of interest for the readers. Back home our newspapers publish endless texts of speeches made by politicians without even thinking it for a moment that readers have no interest in such trash. I totally agreed with this point and pegged my story on Americans' perceptions about women's role in Muslim countries.

I worked on this story for a while and would share the draft with the editors on city desk. They helped me write the lead again and again, till it took a pretty good shape. I really enjoyed going through this practice as it is one of my ambitions to learn writing attention-grabbing news leads.

The next to follow were the interviewing techniques and finding experts who could dwell on the issue. I talked to public relations officials at two big universities and from then onwards it was their headache. I talked to the experts introduced by PR people and added their comments to my story. In fact I had to talk to them repeatedly as the editors were always asking for more information.

For a moment I get frustrated but then realized that the American readers want to read in-depth reports supported by logic and do not believe in cliches. You can simply go through readers' comments on a story and get endless ideas for follow ups on the same issue. For example there was a comment that comparing the lives of these women with the lives of ordinary women in Pakistan is just like comparing the life of Paris Hilton with that of an ordinary American women. This comment was very helpful for me. I think I should also have discussed the plight of ordinary women in Pakistan.

In Pakistan, reporters do not normally take pains to go into extra details. I am sure the reading habits are far changing in Pakistan and such practices will soon take roots there as well. Now I believe it's the responsibility of journalists to produce quality content for readers and do not make assumptions on their own.

Coming to problems, I think I have been unable to fully understand the accent of the people who I talk to. Some speak too fast whereas there are those also who mince words or use slang too much. Lately, there has been an improvement on this front also.

I have learnt how to use newspaper archives and find material relevant to different news stories. Unfortunately, our newspapers only keep last one year's issues in their online archives. My paper has a huge collection of newspaper clippings but it is of not much use as this data is not searchable digitally. I will try to convince my editors in Pakistan to get this content digitized and explain it to them that how useful it can be for the publication.

I used the archives to write an obituary of a famous hotelier. I had some information that even the family members of the deceased did not have with them.

Over the last three days I have had a series of discussions with the Chronicle staff, my mentor and the editor of the paper. At a brownbag session I gave a presentation to the staff on life, politics and journalism in Pakistan. It was followed by a reasonably long Q&A session. It was good to be at the receiving end this time. There were some really good questions. I got an idea of how to frame a good question and say something harsh in a way that it doesn't hurt the person it's meant for.

Next week I will be moving to the editorial and column writing section. I have also talked to the editor about the possibility of starting a blog of mine on Chronicle website. So, there seems to be a lot of action and fun in store for me. I'll narrate all that I go through in my next blog posting. Till then Good Bye

8) <http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/business/6467687.html>



↑ NEWS SPORTS BUSINESS ENTERTAINMENT LIFE TRAVEL BLOGS JOBS HOMES CARS CLASSIFIEDS



Comments



Recommend

Parris ran iconic hotel in city

By SHAHZADA IRFAN HOUSTON CHRONICLE

June 9, 2009, 8:05PM



© GITTINGS

Porter Parris had a 50-year career with Hilton hotels.

Porter Parris, who went from working the front desk of a Hilton in Lubbock to running some of the chain's flagship hotels, including the iconic Shamrock in Houston, has died. He was 91.

Parris headed several hotel industry groups, including the American Hotel and Motel Association, during his 50-year career with Hilton that saw him rise to the level of regional senior vice president.

He died in Houston on May 31 from a lung infection.

The youngest of five children, Parris was born on a family farm near Gilliland in 1917. The family moved to Denton when he was seven.

Parris completed his studies at Texas Tech University, which later named him a distinguished alumnus. It was there that he took a job with the Lubbock Hilton and married his college sweetheart, Mary Rose Edwards.

Hotel for world leaders

Parris later managed affairs of the legendary Shamrock Hilton — a Houston landmark — for seven years for the first time and then again for five years.

The hotel, which was sold to the Texas Medical Center for \$14.9 million in 1985 and later demolished, had hosted the likes of presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Ford and Reagan, as well as Fidel and Raul Castro, Henry Kissinger, Elvis Presley and Elizabeth Taylor.

The other hotels that he managed included The El Paso Hilton, The Conrad Hilton, The Palmer House and The Plaza in New York. "He was versatile, congenial and generous. He would do people lots of favors," said son Thomas Parris.

Had sense of humor

Parris had a beautiful voice that made him popular everywhere he went and a great sense of humor, his son said. He also had a passion for hunting.

Parris is survived by two sons, Porter and Thomas, and their wives, two grandchildren and several great-grandchildren. His wife and his son, Robert, preceded him in death.

A memorial service for Parris will be held at Christ Church Cathedral, 1117 Texas, on Thursday.

shahzada.irfan@chron.com

9) <http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/headline/metro/6458754.html>



↑ NEWS SPORTS BUSINESS ENTERTAINMENT LIFE TRAVEL BLOGS **JOB**S HOMES CARS CLASSIFIEDS

 6 Comments  3 Recommend

Visiting Pakistani female legislators dispel stereotypes

By SHAHZADA IRFAN Copyright 2009 Houston Chronicle
June 8, 2009, 9:58PM

When five Pakistani female legislators made an official visit to Houston last week, they braced themselves for questions they hear often when traveling to Western nations.

“Do women go out of their houses in your country?” “Can women move around without a veil?” “How could you get a modern education in a society like that?”

But the mere presence of the female Pakistani parliamentarians in the U.S. challenged those misconceptions. They toured the country at the invitation of the U.S. State Department and called on several American businessmen in Houston and City Controller Annise Parker, who is running for mayor.

Encouraging response

The delegation was in Houston to study the political and electoral process here and to meet local Pakistanis. They also lobbied members of Congress and mobilized the Pakistani community to raise funds for displaced people back home. The ongoing military operation against militants in the northwestern part of Pakistan has forced millions to leave their homes.

The legislators were content with the encouraging response they received from their American hosts and the way they were listened to during the discussions.

“They realized women have faced the same tribulations all over the world but were impressed with the increased number of women legislators in Pakistan,” said Marvi Memon, who leads the delegation, which plans to return to Pakistan on Saturday.



Courtesy of Pakistan Chronicle
Marvi Memon led the delegation of female members of the Pakistani Parliament who recently visited Houston.

During the last government of former President Pervez Musharraf women were given 60 seats in the parliament. The plan was to enable them to gradually have 33 percent of the seats at the federal, provincial and local government levels. These are reserved seats and allotted to political parties in proportion to the seats they win in general elections. It's still very rare for women to win a general election.

Memon brushes aside the perception that women parliamentarians are just there to project a positive image of Pakistan.

"The situation is quite contrary to the general perception about us. ... I have the most adjournment motions, resolutions, bills to my name. ... I am one of the four parliamentarians who got their bills passed in the entire first year of the parliament," she said.

Fozia Ejaz Khan, another member of the delegation, defends having quotas for women in the Pakistani parliament. "Reserved seats are the best way to get women into politics in a closed male chauvinistic society," she said. "This helps women who can't afford to pay millions to fight an election."

Memon challenges the belief that Islam prohibits women from playing roles outside their houses. "A wife of Prophet Muhammad was a businesswomen and another led forces in a battle."

Unlike others, Khan does not quote examples from early Islamic history but refers to Fatima Jinnah, the sister of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan.

"She would go out working with her brother and won't sit back home," Khan said.

Taint of the Taliban

Misconceptions about Muslims have a very long history, said Elora Shehabuddin, an assistant professor at the Center for the Study of Women, Gender and Sexuality at Rice University. She said today's basic stereotypes are that Muslim men are bearded terrorists and Muslim women are oppressed and wear burkas.

"We're talking about more than a billion people here!" Shehabuddin said.

Shehabuddin said most recently the actions of groups such as the Taliban in Afghanistan and their limits on women's rights have been used to taint all Muslims.

There are many wrongs that to need to be corrected by Muslims, said Faegheh Shirazi, an associate professor at the Department of Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Texas.

"When our fathers and brothers treat us badly, how can others build a positive image about us?" she said.

Shirazi, who studies material culture and its influence on gender identity and discourse in Muslim societies, is referring to a YouTube video. In the video, members of Afghanistan's parliament can be seen throwing coffee on their female colleagues and even slapping them.

"If this is what the world is going to see, how can a positive image emerge?" Shirazi said.

She said she would often hear from students, "Why do you drive? Aren't you a Muslim or do all men have seven wives in your country?" Her answer would be simple. She would say Muslims in different parts of the world behave differently the same way French, German and Mexican Catholics are different from each other.

shahzada.irfan@chron.com

10) <http://www.chron.com/dispatch/story.mpl/headline/metro/6464403.html>



↑ NEWS SPORTS BUSINESS ENTERTAINMENT LIFE TRAVEL BLOGS JOBS HOMES CARS CLASSIFIEDS

 8 Comments  0 Recommend

Aid sought for those displaced in Pakistan

By SHAHZADA IRFAN HOUSTON CHRONICLE

June 8, 2009, 9:55PM

Leaders of Houston's Pakistani community are encouraging residents to participate in a global effort to help the millions displaced from the war-torn northwest region in Pakistan.

According to United Nations estimates, more than 3 million displaced people are living in camps in Pakistan. The U.N. has only received about \$119 million of the \$543 million it seeks for relief from donors and the international community.

Aqil Nadeem, consular general of Pakistan in Houston, said he hopes Houstonians help meet the challenge. After all, Pakistanis here are more affluent than those settled in other areas, he said.

"There are 700 Pakistani doctors in the greater Houston area alone," he said. "Then there are engineers, management professionals and those who own businesses."

'Charity fatigue'

While response is strong, he said "charity fatigue had set in to an extent."

They raised funds for the victims of a 2005 earthquake, the opening of new schools in Pakistan and the establishment of the Charlie Wilson Chair on Pakistan Studies at the University of Texas at Austin, he said.

So far, donations received by Pakistani consulates in the U.S. exceed \$50,000.

"But you don't know how much they are giving to charities or directly to (the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees) through text messages from their cell phones," Nadeem said.

Americans can send \$5 donations by typing 'Swat' on their cell phones and sending it to number 20222.

Nonprofits pitch in

Since some people are reluctant to donate to the government, leaders of Houston nonprofits are determined to do their share.

Helping Hand, a relief organization, raised \$45,000 dollars in three programs aired on local community radio channels and \$70,000 from a concert at Marriott Westchase Hotel.

"We have established medical camps in the affected areas in Pakistan and are currently working on a tent village to be set up in a place called Takht," Chaudhry said.

Islamic Relief, another charity, raised about \$70,000 at a fundraiser last month at Houston's Pakistan Center.

Providing the basics

Rahim Akbar, a volunteer with the Hidayah Foundation in Houston, said the response from the community has been huge.

The organization launched a drive to collect used household items on May 28 and plans to send a 40-foot container to Pakistan once it's filled. (To make a donation, visit [this site](#).)

"We're interested in clothes, backpacks, school supplies, shoes, pots and pans, bed sheets, towels, toys and any household items that can be readily used." Rahim said.

He said they had established seven collection points in the city, including the World Food Warehouse at 14625 Beechnut.

"I hope there will be a huge push," he said.

shahzada.irfan@chron.com