

Center for Middle Eastern Studies

Why I Give

I first learned of the Center in 1991 as I was making my decision to retire from the Foreign Service in Tucson. My father lived in Tucson and my brother, son and daughter were or had been students at the University of Arizona. The Center Director at the time was Jerry Green. I was working at the U.S. Embassy in Riyadh and Jerry was visiting as part of a U.S. government sponsored speaking tour to the Middle East. As I moved on to U.S. Ambassador in Muscat, Oman, Jerry and I stayed in close touch. I came often to Tucson and Jerry would introduce me to people in the Tucson community who were keenly interested in the Middle East.

Back in Oman, I discovered to my surprise that over 100 Omanis had graduated from the University of Arizona. I persuaded then University of Arizona President Manuel Pacheco to visit Muscat and hosted a reception for him attended by over 70 Omani graduates. The message I took away from that occasion is that the most effective way to improve relations between Americans and Middle Easterners is to foster personal relationships.

Those of us who have lived and worked in the Middle East are aware of how little most Americans know about the Middle East. The failure to anticipate the September 11 attacks and the unwise decision to invade Iraq cost us thousands of lives and did enormous damage to our politics and our economy. I decided that an important mission during my retirement would be promote better personal relations between Americans and Middle Easterners and to share what I know about the Middle East with as many Americans as possible.

Given the convergence between my own mission with that of the Center, collaboration made perfect sense. The Center supports the teaching of Middle East languages as well as teaching and research anywhere on campus that is related to the Middle East. Center Director Anne Betteridge and her experienced and capable staff also manage an extensive program of outreach to schools throughout the area as well as to the wider community. While the Center gets funding from the U.S. Department of Education and the University, there are always more potential projects than there is money to pay for them.

The Center has strongly supported my efforts to educate students and the general population about Middle East history, economics, politics and culture. These efforts include more than 20 years of teaching, writing and speaking to various groups in Tucson and elsewhere in the country. I give back by serving on the Center's Governing Board and making a modest annual financial contribution.