Chapter 4

Against All Odds,
Coming of Age in the Forties

Charity bears all things, believes all things,
hopes all things, endures all things.
1 Corinthians XIII: 7

Summary: Baghdad College during this decade

After their first hectic decade the Jesuits faced another challenge with the Rashid (Rasheed) Ali Coup of Spring 1941 when World War II spilled over into Iraq. Once the initial danger to Baghdad College had passed there was a surprisingly sharp increase in enrollment, especially among Muslims, due in some part, to the evident persistence of the Jesuits who were not frightened away by the war. This increase in the size of the student body called for increasing the size of faculty and a greater expansion in classroom buildings and the boarding school. Early in the forties the Al Iraqi yearbook blossomed and later there were some minor changes in the curriculum. During this time there were many colorful Jesuit experiences and their influence on the Baghdad community became more apparent.

The superiors of the mission and rector of Baghdad College during this decade included Fr. Sarjeant (38-45) and Fr. Madaras (45-52). The principals (mudeer) were Fr. Devenny (40-42) and Fr. Connell (43-52). Fr. Quinn and Fr. Kelly were the assistant principals (muawin). Jesuit officials are not elected by any form of ballot and are not allowed to ambition an office, so these men were all appointed by the New England Provincial. This
would have been done on the advice of the four province consultants in Boston and the four mission consultants who lived on the mission. In fact the latter group usually would have the greater input.

To a Muslim country in the early forties, plagued by the memory of four centuries of Turkish domination, jealous of its recent independence and sensitive to its own internal weaknesses, the Jesuits constituted a triple threat: being all at once Americans, Catholics and Jesuits. There was a wave of propaganda current in the Middle East at the time which seemed to justify the suspicions of Iraqi officials on all three scores. The war years were the turning point. When hostilities reached the Mediterranean area, the sons of upper-class Muslims for whom education abroad was traditional, were compelled to remain in Iraq. Several of the more venturesome families of this class registered their boys at Baghdad College as a somewhat desperate experiment. The boys became enthusiastic propagandists for the school, familiarity bred respect and knowledge which dissipated suspicion and the American Jesuit Fathers actually became popular. Soon there were Cabinet Ministers, Deputies in Parliament and tribal chieftains all wanting to register their sons or nephews in the school. A partial list of sons of prominent Iraqi citizens is found in Appendix D.

The Rashid Ali Coup of Spring 1941

Near the beginning of the Second World War old Iraqi political rivalries took on an Axis-Ally coloring in World War II. Nouri el-Said (Saeed), the Prime Minister, and the Regent were pro-English; their opponents turned to the Axis. Turkey had managed to remain neutral, and Rashid Ali's visit to Turkey had convinced him this was the track to take. In addition, he was housing the Mufti of Jerusalem, Hajj al-Ameen al-Husayni, who was being chased by the English for his anti-British activities in Palestine. Neutrality, of course, was impossible.

In her book The Modern History of Iraq, Phebe Marr narrates the story of what led to the "second British occupation". Former Prime Minister Rashid (Rasheed) Ali was asked by Nouri el-Said to form a new cabinet since Nouri was stepping down from that post. He did and it became quite clear to the British that his interests were more in sympathy with Iraqi nationalism than what would be useful for the British. Britain offered the Regent Abdulllah two choices: keep Rashid Ali or retain Britain's friendship - but not both. The Regent's consequent actions made it necessary for Rashid Ali to act outside the constitutional system, and this
became known as *The Rashid Ali Coup*. He deposed the Regent, appointed another and then formed a new cabinet. Holding out the bait of recognition, the British requested permission to land troops in Basra. Rashid Ali still wished to find a compromise and agreed on April 17 to British troops landing in Basra, but then found he could not contain them. Soon the British far from recognizing the regime moved their troops through Iraq. Rashid (Rasheed) Ali replied by surrounding the British air base at Habbaniyah. The British reacted, and between their air force at Habbaniyah and a column of the Arab Legion from Transjordan, they soon took affairs back in hand. By the end of May, Rashid Ali was going into exile while the Regent and Nouri el-Said were returning. Phebe Marr relates the consequences both immediate and long range.

The rest of the story is soon told. The battle was not fought on the ground but in the air. Within hours, the RAF had destroyed twenty five of Iraq's forty planes. Taken by surprise, the Iraqi army withdrew to Fallujah, destroying the Euphrates dams and flooding the area. This delayed the British advance but hardly stopped it. In the meantime, British reinforcements began to stream in from Jordan, including contingents from Glubb Pasha's Arab Legion. Fallujah was captured on 19 May and the way lay open to Baghdad. The government collapsed shortly. On 29 May, as British columns approached Baghdad, the four highest officers escaped to Iran, where they were soon joined by Rashid Ali.

Thus ended the most serious attempt since the 1920 revolt to sever the British tie and to unseat the regime they had established. The crisis had profound repercussions for the future; all the participants paid a price sooner or later. Many supporters of Rashid Ali were executed or imprisoned; suspected sympathizers were dismissed or confined in camps. Retribution to the Regent and Nouri came later, in 1958. The British also paid at this later date with the fall of the regime they had done so much to foster. Those who were executed for precipitating the events of 1941 were regarded as martyrs by much of the army and the Iraqi population. The young officers who overthrew the regime in 1958 believed they were but completing the task left unfinished in 1941.
(Marr, 1985, pp. 85-86)

Rashid Ali's home was across the street from the Jesuits which has been mentioned earlier regarding his 1936 request of the Jesuits to give a section of their newly purchased land to the city
for a police station. In spite of the fact that there was a large contingent of Iraqi soldiers in the vicinity during the 60 days the Jesuits never endured any harassment. During these dangerous two months when British subjects and Americans were being evacuated from Iraq, the fact that the Jesuits made no effort to depart but went about business as usual impressed the Iraqi government officials. It was evident in the noticeable change in enrollment the following September. After that sons of prime ministers, governors, sheiks, and professional men accepted the discipline and the learning imparted by the Jesuits. Nevertheless this 60-day war had put the Jesuits in a precarious position and Edmund Walsh, S.J., attempted to find out what he could and he sent this telegram to concerned Jesuit superiors in Boston.

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4 1108A REV JAMES DOLAN= 300 NEWBURY ST=
STATE DEPARTMENT REPORTS THIS MORNING FOLLOWING CABLE FROM AMERICAN MINISTER BAGHDAD "AMERICAN JESUITS SAFE AS FOLLOWS SARGEANT, MERRICK, MADARAS, DEVINNEY, GOOKIN, CRONIN, FENNELL, MCCARTHY, ARMITAGE, WHITE, SHEEHAN AND MAHAN. SHEA ASSUMED SAFE AT BASRA". THIS MEANS ALL SEEM SAFE BUT NO MENTION IN MINISTERS TELEGRAM OF MIFSUD ALTHOUGH THAT MEANS NOTHING SINCE HE IS NOT AN AMERICAN CITIZEN AND WOULD NOT BE INCLUDED IN AMERICAN LIST TO STATE DEPARTMENT.
WILL KEEP YOU INFORMED = EDMUND WALSH.

There was very little mentioned about the Rashid Ali coup in the correspondence between the superiors in Iraq and in America. The following report of the superior, however, throws some light on some of the anxieties caused during these difficult days noting their trust lay more in their Iraqi neighbors than any help from the American Embassy.

The American Legation had warned several times that Iraq might enter the war at any moment and by urging the return of all American subjects to the U.S.A. They had washed their hands of us, in strict legality. However plans were made for British and American subjects to take refuge in the event of trouble in the Legation or the British Embassy. It was decided that we would not go but would send chaplains to each place and we were to be informed if there was a need of a chaplain at Habbaniyah at the outbreak of hostilities. The atmosphere was thus charged with apprehension until the fateful day in May
when the storm broke. Fr. Mifsud, as a British subject was taken into custody but released after a week at the insistence of the Apostolic Delegate. Throughout the month of war there was never any question of disorder in our neighborhood. The house and headquarters of Rashid Ali were beside us on the north and the communications office of his government beside us on the south. We were therefore at the heart of his headquarters. While we were un molested by the unruly crowds, it was important for us not to come to the notice of our neighbors. What had been begun had to be finished and our 1500 foot wall all through this nerve-racking month went steadily up. Class had stopped in the beginning of May and things were still in too great a turmoil at the beginning of June, when the little war had finished, to resume class, to have examinations, or to run graduation. Boys were passed or failed on their marks of the previous months. The government examinations were postponed until September. (Letter of Fr. Sarjeant: N.E. Province Archives file #510)

Weekly salute to the flag

The expansion of Baghdad College during this decade

Enrollment
The immediate effect of student travel restrictions caused by the April-May war and also of the composed Jesuit reaction in the face of the risks involved was a sudden increase in the Muslim enrollment as well as an increase in the number of boarding students. Families who, for want of adequate educational facilities at home, had traditionally sent their sons elsewhere, now felt it wiser to keep them close at hand while hostilities lasted. These increases are evident in the following table. The 1942 entering class almost doubled, and between 1938 and 1945 the total enrollment quadrupled while the number of boarders tripled.
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**Construction in the forties**

The war had halted the building program but the increased enrollment in both the school and in the boarding section led to overcrowded conditions, so that the College was obliged to refuse some qualified applicants for lack of space. The admissions standards were kept high in order to use the precious resources as effectively as possible. The conviction prevailed that the work was so vitally important for the Church in Iraq and the resources so slim that only potential leaders could be chosen. Students' competence in two languages was presumed: in English to pass the school exams and in Arabic to pass the government exams. This was more than some students could handle, so they had to be turned away.

Although the school originally was planned to accommodate only 200 students (there being 7 classrooms, with 30 students to a class), and the dormitory and other facilities only 30 boarders, by the fall of 1945 over 425 students were enrolled in the school, of whom 70 were boarders. This overcrowding was solved by dividing the "assembly hall" into three classrooms, by building a one-story annex of six classrooms, and by renting two houses in the immediate neighborhood for the overflow of faculty members and for boarding students.

In 1945 Fr. Madaras wrote an account of the Baghdad Mission to Cardinal Tisserant in Rome requesting personnel as well as financial aid so that the mission could expand and capitalize on its current dominant position in education. This request fell on deaf ears, but in the letter he mentioned that an anonymous American benefactress had given money making possible the classroom and administration building, as well as some of the buildings that followed. A combined student dormitory and a faculty residence had gone up due to the benefaction of this same lady. Benefactors could not get over the fact that the first building cost a mere $50,000.
The architects

The growth of the physical plant kept pace with the school's expanding prestige, but the problem of providing adequate laboratory, library, and other necessary facilities for the ever-growing upper classes was not easily solved. Even during the war, a classroom annex was constructed to bring the number to six buildings completed - including two dormitories. Fr. Madaras and Fr. Guay were the architects, contractors and clerk-of-the-works for the Rice Memorial science building. Fr. Guay blueprinted every detail of construction beginning with the underground drains to the astronomy observatory that tops the central tower. It was built following the Arabic architectural pattern begun by Fr. Rice who started constructing the buildings in 1937. This science building was second to none in its category of secondary science buildings throughout the Middle East, for its ample space, its large classrooms and laboratories, its two sloped classrooms and its bright cheerful environment.

Getting the best brick

1940 graduation ceremony with Dr. Sami Shawkett & Dr. Fadhil Jamali
Baghdad College campus: 1934-1969
(looking west)

1. 1934 Old house boarders/faculty
2. 1938 Administration building
3. 1939 Boarding house
4. 1940 First classroom "Annex"
5. 1941 The circumferential wall
6. 1942 Canteen
7. 1945 B.C. Workmen housing
8. 1949 Jesuit Residence
9. 1951 Rice Science building
10. 1953 Sacred Heart Chapel
11. 1953 Cemetery
12. 1954 Cronin building
13. 1955 Madaras classroom Annex
14. Pump house and garage
15. Hikmat Sulayman house
16. Bacosi house - minor seminary
17. Rachid Ali house
18. Police station

A chronological record of the Baghdad College buildings, starting with the first "old house" #1 until the last classroom building named after Fr. Madaras, #13. The workmen's housing #7 was a large complex since 24 families of workers lived on the property.
"Mens sana in corpore sano" {a sound mind in a sound body}

Baghdad College continued to pay special attention to the preparation for government intermediate and secondary examinations. To this end teachers required that its students prepare for the following day's classes by at least 2 hours of homework. Underlying all this was taught reverence for God, reverence for parents, and reverence for the State. History afforded striking confirmation of the need for a God-centered education.

Sports were seen as a means of learning self-control as well as a school of sociability and cooperation. From his involvement in sports, the student learned to respect official decisions, a lesson he carried with him in his private and public life. Sports are a very useful instrument of training in ethical values. One of the many mottoes attributed to Baghdad College concerned athletics: "We should pray for a sound mind in a sound body." Mens sana in corpore sano. The Roman poet Juvenal had written this in the second century in his tenth Satire (Line 80), the Jesuits simply borrowed it from him.

From the beginning the school had followed the policy of accepting new students only in the first high class, because students who wished to transfer from other schools into the upper classes were usually below standard, particularly in the English language. This was a very plausible reason for the policy since the first year introduced the student to the world of classes in English so that the difficult courses which came later would proceed more smoothly. All subjects at Baghdad College were taught in English, with the exception of history, geography, and the Arabic language, which the Government Educational Law of 1940 stated must be taught in Arabic by teachers appointed by the Iraq Government.

The third and fifth year students finished class at the end of April, about a month earlier than the others, so that they could study for their all-important government exams in early June. To facilitate this exercise special classes in Arabic were given in the then empty classrooms at Baghdad College, so the students went into the exams knowing how to confront the science and mathematics problems in Arabic as well as in English.

Composition of the Student Body

In the forties the enrollment quadrupled from 139 to 556 and then doubled again before the Jesuits were expelled. The chart below displays some interesting trends. In its last year, 1968-69, the student population of Baghdad College was half Muslim and half Christian and the following enrollment table shows the
gradual increase in the proportion of Muslims to Christians (while both were increasing in absolute numbers). As has been seen already the most dramatic increase for all came in 1941.

Baghdad College enrollment data according to religion:

The following table illustrates the growth of the student body over the years distributed according to rite (Chaldean, Syrian, Armenian Catholic, Greek Catholic, Latin Catholic) and religion (Armenian Orthodox, Other Orthodox, Muslims and Jews). During the years between 1946 and 1952 all Catholics were counted together without distinguishing the rite.

These statistics were gleaned from papers in the Jesuit Archives at Campion Center in Weston, MA. Some data were in letters, some were in reports to the Provincial, but not all data were not available since many papers had been lost after the expulsion.

*The courageous builders in precarious circumstances*
Baghdad College Enrollment data according to religion

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Key: {Catholic rite} and [Religion]: Tot = total number.
{Chaldean, Syrian, Armenian Catholic, Greek Catholic, Latin}
[Armenian Orthodox, Other Orthodox, Muslims and Jews]
It is estimated that in its 37 years B.C. educated 5,000 students (4,000 graduated).
From the outset the students at Baghdad College had come from all classes of society and from the numerous religions and rites prevailing in Iraq, whether Muslim, Jew, or Christian. Most of the students were drawn from the middle and upper classes because of the fact that Baghdad College, unlike the government schools charged tuition. There was a serious but unsuccessful attempt to recruit poor Muslims from the environs of Sulaikh (Shargawiyn). In the early thirties the fee was ID 4.800 per year (at that time equivalent to $16.80) but increased during the decade of the forties to ID 25 per year, which included transportation. Despite these relatively high rates, applicants for admission to the school kept increasing. Provision was made for poor boys so that some 11% of the students had free tuition in whole or in part.

In contrast to the initial practice at the American University in Beirut which persisted for a good number of years where Muslims were required to attend chapel services, at Baghdad College there was no attempt to make Muslims into Christians at Baghdad College. In fact the non-Christians were not allowed to attend religion classes or services. This policy allayed whatever suspicions there may have been in the minds of the Muslims at the outset, and they enrolled in ever-increasing numbers. There had been relatively few applications from Jews because they had their own private educational institution of high quality, the Frank Iny School.

Fr. Quinn at assembly, about to send scholars to class
The El Iraqi-Al Iraqi Yearbook

One of the activities which later became a permanent record was the yearbook. It was named El Iraqi from 1934 to 1950 and Al Iraqi from 1951 to 1969 and from the beginning was published by the senior students. Initially the El Iraqi was a quarterly magazine with essays by the students. In 1940 it was published in book form and became the official record of the graduating class, celebrating the students, their teachers and the major events of their five-year tenure at Baghdad College. The earliest printings were done in Baghdad but in 1947 the work was carried out at the Jesuit printing press "Imprimerie Catholique" in Lebanon. Each year they were available for the graduates, in fact for all students, at graduation time.

The editors of El Iraqi - Al Iraqi worked during the whole school year to prepare the annual yearbook gathering the pictures and written material for the book as well as advertisements from Iraqi businessmen who were eager to support the school. The Arabic teacher for both the students and the Jesuits, Mr. Bechir Khadhury, would supervise the Arabic section and Fr. James Larkin photographed the groups appearing in the book. Many of the students showed their interest by their participating in the literary contest, and looking forward to the thrill of seeing their prize-winning essay in print, as noted by Waiel Hindo.

The two year books Al Iraqi and Al-Hikma were two fields where students could express their abilities in writing in both Arabic and English languages, and also, in photography and drawing. During the sixties Fr. Paul Nash played a big role in improving and expanding these two publications.

(Waiel Hindo, B.C. '60, A.H. '64)

Many perceptive and revealing articles appear in the annual Al Iraqi. Below a Kurdish student expresses the pride of many Baghdad College Kurdish students in their origins and describes the Kurdish Tribes in Iraq.

I am now eighteen years old, and I have spent most of this time among the Kurdish Tribes of Iraq. I think I have quite enough information about them, for I am one of them. You would be surprised if you saw nature's beauty up in the northern part of the country. The north is full of rivers, mountains, valleys, and forests, which all together form an attractive territory. The people live in small, romantic villages among high and rocky mountains. All do not live in
villages. Some are scattered in small groups among the painted hills and along the river banks and in gorgeous green valley, each doing his own work separately, but joining with others in defense of their territory. Some live in huts made of mud and wood. Others, having no stationary home, travel from place to place, looking for food for their animals. A third group live in big houses, made of white stone.

The Kurdish people are divided into entirely different tribes. Each tribe lives in a certain place, and each tribe has a chief of its own. More than that, each tribe performs a different kind of labor. All are kind to every stranger that enters their village or nest-like home. But there is no stranger among them, for they treat each single human being gently and with respect.

When Kurds grow up, they are not educated men. The fault is not theirs, for they have no schools to study in. They are clever, but they cannot show it, because they do not go to school. The few rich boys who study in cities far away from their homes are bright enough to stand on equal terms with their school companions. When I say the Kurdish lads are clever, I do not mean all, but certainly many of them are very intelligent.

The majority of the people do not know science, but they know one thing that is useful occasionally to every human being, and that is, how to fight. The Kurdish people are so skillful in fighting that one might think they are born to fight. They do whatever their chief tells them to do even if the request requires their lives. Most of them are fiery-tempered, and I think it is their temper which makes them courageous.

There is one undesirable thing in the character of the Kurdish people, and that thing may be called "Feud Blood". When something dishonorable is done to them, they never forget it, and they must take their revenge. They never forgive anyone who has done wrong to them in any way, and that is because "feud blood" is in their veins. They never realize that fatalism is wrong, but they do what they have decided to do, whether the action is right or wrong.

The Kurdish population in Iraq is not more than one-half million, but the Kurdish people speak four different dialects and wear four different kinds of costumes. This difference makes the Kurdish people lose their unity, because there is no relationship among those who speak different dialects and wear different costumes.

Though many wonderful things are to be found in
Kurdistan, one thing is missing, and that one thing is modern civilization. But that is approaching nearer and nearer, and gradually it will spread over all Kurdistan. (Tahsin al-Amin, Al Iraqi 1952 pp. 77-78)

The boarding division

Offering housing for students enabled the Jesuits to reach past the outskirts of Baghdad to far away students and this introduced Baghdadis to the culture and customs of the rest of Iraq. It lasted almost three decades from 1938 to 1965.

The boarding section during the first decade housed over 200 individual students who cherished it as their home. In 1938 Fr. Leo Shea, the first director, welcomed the first group of 23 boarders to the old Baghdad College building on the banks of the Tigris. For the next 27 years the Jesuits bestowed the daily attention it demanded with untiring (and sometimes tiring) devotion from early morning until far into the night.

Boarding applicants reached a peak enrollment of 68 in 1944. But the boarding facilities were never able to keep pace with the expanding enrollment so that many applicants could not be accepted. In 1942 the boarders for the first time were divided into junior and senior sections with a nearby residence leased for the accommodation of the senior boarders. The seniors profited from this arrangement by finding a freedom and fellowship which could not be enjoyed when they shared the residence of the younger boarders.

An armed boarder

Disarmed boarders
It was the boarding school which made Baghdad College so thoroughly an "Iraqi school for Iraqi boys". While the non-boarders, a majority, gave the school its Baghdad character, it was the boarders who gave the school its Iraqi spirit. Boarders gathered from all corners of the land, from Mosul, Faish-Khabur, Basra and Kirkuk, from the desert reaches beyond Hai and Diwania to the rugged mountain slopes of Sulaimaniya and Halépcha. Sons of sheikhs and doctors, of merchants and carpenters; they lived together for five years in a common life. They contributed their regional virtues to the school and also learned to suppress their differences in order to pursue their common interests and to live harmoniously as one family with understanding and esteem for each other. Companionship ripened into fast friendships that endured through life. The Iraqi boarders even found a more broadening influence in contacts with a small number of other fellow boarders who had come from Egypt, Transjordan, Palestine, Syria, Kuwait, and Iran.

The order of the day for the boarders tended to develop the powers of his body, mind, and will. For the Christian boarder, the day began with Mass, and for all there were regular periods of study that were supervised by the Jesuit Fathers. During the times of recreation, all sports were supervised by the Fathers, and ample playing fields were available for getting plenty of exercise. There was always zest for spur-of-the-moment games from table tennis to tawli (backgammon).

Boarders did not easily forget the Saturday night soirees with varieties of parlor games and prizes for the winners. Fr. Mahan, a long-time director, placed great stress on productive use of leisure time. The Fathers were always present to encourage the boarders to employ their leisure time profitably by taking an active interest in dramatics, debating, drawing, photography, music, Sodality, scientific society, the school library, etc. Certainly, one of the most satisfying thoughts for parents was the intimate concern the Fathers had for the welfare of their boys.

Living in most friendly association, under the same roof as their teachers, the boarders enjoyed the advantage not only of sympathetic counsel but also good example in courteous ways, good manners as well as lofty and noble ideals. They exercised a fatherly care and kindly supervision of their boys. All money for the personal expenses of the boarders was sent directly to the college treasurer. The student would then draw out this money in small amounts as he needed it, with the approval of the Jesuit Prefect.

An increasing faculty
The active teaching and administrative staff in 1946 numbered
21 Americans, 8 Iraqis, and 2 Egyptians. Of the Americans, 17 taught classes leaving four in administration. The Iraqis and Egyptians were engaged for the most part in teaching Arabic-language subjects.

Curriculum at Baghdad College in the Forties

This "Iraqi school for Iraqi boys" was really a junior college and a high school in American terminology. It offered a five-year college-preparatory science curriculum, with three years spent on physics, three on chemistry, three on biology, and five years on mathematics, all taught in English. Most of the other subjects, religion, history, and geography were taught in Arabic. Prior to 1936 the program of the school had been broader, embracing such subjects as French, German, drawing, hygiene, sociology, economics, etc. When the military Conscription Law of 1936 made it necessary to bring the program of the school into conformity with that of government schools so that the students could take the Government Examinations, it became necessary to restrict the program, putting much more emphasis on the natural sciences. A forties graduate comments.

Respect for national curriculum: the college was proud to declare that it was an Iraqi school for Iraqi boys. This commitment was kept alive in spirit and letter. The national curriculum was strictly adhered to, quantitatively and qualitatively. The college endeavored to enable its people to achieve an increasingly harmonious and positive interaction at all levels into their environment. (Farid Oufi, B.C. '48)

The ordinary class week consisted of 29 class periods and four study periods. A period was 45 minutes in length. Thursdays and Saturdays were half days, classes ended before noon, and Sunday was the day off. Since nearly all the students took the comprehensive Iraq Government Examinations in Arabic at the end of the third and fifth year, they attended optional science and mathematics classes in Arabic offered at Baghdad College to prepare for this crucial exam.

The science program prepared the students for more than these comprehensive government exams, it also prepared them for their university studies, as many of the students discovered, much to their delight. When they came to American colleges to study science, for instance, they found that they were much better prepared than their American classmates. Also there was formed a strong bond among the students that lasted a lifetime, and more than a few graduates have commented on this.
I was so lucky to have met and made true and lasting friends that to this day are as close to me as my family: Maxin Thomas, Nazar Shemdin, Jamal Bushara, Ramzi Hermiz and Sargun Rustum. Academically I was so well prepared for College (St. Louis University), that I breezed through my first year. (Adolf Forage, B.C. ’48)

Textbooks
Except for Religion and English literature all the textbooks used were the same textbooks in Arabic which were commonly used in the Iraq Government schools. Supplementary texts in English were used for the mathematics and science courses. The methods and principles of education at Baghdad College reflected those of the Jesuit schools throughout the world. The curricula of the other Jesuit schools, however, was more humanistic and less scientific than that of Baghdad College.

Influence of Baghdad College on education in this decade

In 1969, when the Iraqi Government seemed about to take over Baghdad College and expel the Jesuits, some Baghdad University professors who had become familiar with Baghdad College graduates emphasized that the Jesuits had brought many innovations to Iraqi education. Only one who knew the country in the early thirties could verify this. Baghdad College was in a better position to experiment with curriculum, with student activities, with athletic events and with boarding facilities to find out what worked best for Iraqi students.

One reason for this was its location, unencumbered by political and social unrest in the city. The Catholic hierarchy wanted the Jesuits to settle in the city and in the middle of the Christian community and thus be close by to help solve the community problems as well as to serve the community sacramentally. This was not the Jesuit plan because it reflected a ghetto mentality. There proved to be many advantages to having the school away from the center of the city and having Muslim neighbors, not the least of which was constructing a bridge of understanding between Islam and Christianity.

Besides, growth of the city was inevitable. In the early thirties when the population of Baghdad was concentrated between the areas of North and South Gates, one appreciated the venturesome move of purchasing school property so far from the heart of the city. At the time, many considered the action foolhardy. It was not long, however, before the city began to expand northward from North Gate plot by plot getting closer to
Sulaikh. Hundreds of new homes and merchants' shops mushroomed. Other Baghdad educators envied the spacious Baghdad College grounds, set apart from the diversions and politics of the city in a place where students could enjoy an uninterrupted campus atmosphere. From the outset Baghdad College had attempted to identify itself with the best interests of Iraq. The Jesuits, continually evaluating their effectiveness, came up with adaptations suited to customs, temperaments, aspirations, and language of their charges. This was noted by an Al-Hikma graduate Premjít Talwar.

Another thing that impressed me is the Jesuits' knowledge of and sensitivity to local culture and customs which are usually ignored by foreign enterprises. It is remarkable that they have continuous feedback to correct for the reality they perceive. Every business should do this, but a key question is: "Why do Jesuits do this? How were they trained to be so sensitized to local conditions?" (Premjít Talwar, A.H. '68)

From the time of the Jesuits arrival they did not escape the suspicion that they were agents of imperialistic interests. Their actions and methods were subjected to close and constant scrutiny. Gradually, though, the Iraqis came to realize that these Fathers had no intention of trying to pour Iraqi youth into the mold of an American schoolboy. Eventually Iraqis were convinced that the Jesuits were devoted to sharing the treasures of 20th century American education with this growing country and this ancient civilization. Then Iraqis honored the Jesuits with their confidence.

The Jesuits made every effort to be worthy of the trust placed in them by making Baghdad College a distinctive Iraqi school for Iraqi youth. Once an Iraqi under-secretary of State suggested to the principal of Baghdad College: "If anyone accuses your school of being imperialistic or non-patriotic, simply publish your student roster which reads like a complete list of Iraqi patriots. Baghdad College is a school of patriots, a school of patriots' sons."

Among Baghdad College students were found many of the sons of Iraqis prominent in government, education, the professions, the armed forces and business. For example, during one scholastic year sons of four different cabinet members attended Baghdad College. In the appendix are listed the names of students' parents who were ministers of government along with other prominent citizens.
Influence of Jesuits as perceived by some alumni.

In an account of his days at Baghdad College (1943-48), Farid Oufi wrote enthusiastically in the school yearbook Al-Iraqi, and Ramzi Hermiz wrote of his wonderful background when competing with the elite from American schools. Another Baghdad College student, Stanley Marrow '47 later became the first Jesuit vocation from the school, although not the first priest since Fr. Abdul-Ahad Estepahn (who became a diocesan priest) preceded Fr. Marrow to the seminary. Fr. Marrow wrote about his introduction to the Jesuits and to their school. After this follows a translation of an Arabic letter sent by an anonymous Baghdad College graduate. The letter expresses the feelings of gratitude and appreciation that many alumni shared about the work of the Jesuits in Iraq. First though, we hear from Farid Oufi.

Alumni owe an immense debt to Baghdad College which instilled self-confidence in its pupils through its academic agenda as well as the human values it imparted. They profited from learning a second language as a social necessity while maximizing effort to keep the native language fully and very much alive; offering to everyone the opportunities of acquiring beliefs and concepts that would help meet challenges ahead; gaining knowledge of the way to stronger faith in God; learning civil duties and the love of homeland; and harmonizing the process of learning with physical activities. The school landscape was "the fountain of life" to show the way to perpetual success and a "lamp which gave us a bright light to illuminate our path in times of misfortune and hardship."

After 45 years of ups and downs of real life I can say with confidence that B.C. years are still remembered with respect and admiration. I do not think I am making out too idealistic a case for the Baghdad College experience, but reminiscences of my days at Baghdad College bring forward three major things which, I believe, have characterized the school life. Academic standards were extremely high as recognized by many people, and that is why pupils from different segments of the population sought enrollment. The college was to transmit moral values together with knowledge, accompanied by the traditional discipline which the Jesuits were, and still, known to sustain in their educational institutions.

In spite of the fact that B.C. embraced pupils from different social backgrounds, there was much harmony in the school life during those days. We lived as a big family. The college offered clear, compassionate instructions in civility.
Graduates gained a sense of worth, a sense of being valued. They also shared a sense of community spirit. This explains, perhaps, why they are tremendously enthusiastic about their alumni. (Farid Oufi, '48)

During the first session of Orientation Week at Princeton (School of Engineering) it was then explained to us that statistics from recent prior years indicate that one of every three of us would not be in the School of Engineering next year. We were cautioned to have no comfort from knowing that we were at or near the top of wherever we came from ... because, that applied to just about everyone of us.

We were then familiarized with a "competitive" grading system that divided the students of a subject class into Seven Groups. "Group Seven" and "Group Six" failed the course subject no matter how well they did in the exams. "Group Two" was needed (every year) to retain an academic scholarship (for the following year). "Group One" meant that you knew just about everything that the professor expected you to learn from the course.

Sometimes (but not often), when a professor needed to recognize and express that a student had done so well in the subject and went beyond what he had personally taught, the grade was "Group One Plus". At the end of my first college semester at Princeton Fr. Sullivan's teaching in mathematics and Fr. Guay's training in chemistry were recognized at "Group One Plus". (Ramzi Hermiz, B.C. '48)

That summer of 1942 the Fathers had extended an invitation to the boys in Baghdad to go up to SulaiKh on one or two days of the week to use the playgrounds. A bus, actually a partially
converted army lorry, picked up youngsters from the area of Karrada and brought them to Sulaikh to play handball and volleyball and have lunch in the then minuscule canteen which consisted mainly of an area shaded from the heat of the sun by a corrugated iron roof. It was my first sight of the school where, starting that September, I would spend the next five years of my life.

My mother brought me to the campus for registration. When it was finished she held me by the shoulder and said to the principal, Father Devenny, "Father, he's your son!" To this day, more than fifty years later, Father Devenny remembers the incident as the best commentary on the "Behold your son!" in the Gospel of John. Father Connell, who replaced Father Devenny as principal, recounted many years later an identical situation. The father of the boy being registered at Baghdad College, said to him, "Father, keep the flesh, just give me the bones!" The trust in the Jesuits and, implicitly, in the Jesuit system of education was almost instinctive among these people who, while the world was going through its Second World War of the century, had one thing less to worry about: the education of their sons right in their own country.

Once the Atom Bomb fell on Hiroshima, Father Guay explained in chemistry class, in matter of fact and perfectly comprehensible terms, how it was done. He went on to say that, sooner or later, they would achieve a process, closer in its workings to the sun's own powerhouse of energy. Word got around and he was then asked to give a public lecture at Baghdad University on the as yet unpublicized Hydrogen bomb.

Father Guay ran summer days for us between our fourth and fifth years. I realized later that was one of the best classes Baghdad College ever had. The enjoyable mornings were spent doing experiments in the laboratory, learning triangulation outside, taking meteorological readings on the roof. One memorable morning it was 132 F in the shade of the little weather station, and the humidity was just 8 %. It alarmed Father Guay sufficiently to order all of us home immediately. He was right. That afternoon we had one of those unforgettable sand storms. (Stanley Marrow, B.C. '47)

In the 1940's, I was a shy young boy from a conservative Muslim family in Baghdad. My father was a judge who, having received part of his education at the American College in Beirut, was open to western ideas. He suggested that I move from the government school in Baghdad. Naturally, it was not easy for someone at my age to move because I had friends at the
government school that I was attending. At that time, a son could not argue with his father about anything, so I tried to get my mother to intercede with my father on my behalf. However, at the end, I had to submit to my father’s wishes, and on the way to the Boarding House of the Jesuit School, I heard my father speak three sentences that I will never forget.

My son, he said, the Jesuits are religious people but are not out to influence others with a different religion. However, they will teach you values, self control and obedience, and the education you will receive from them will help you succeed not only in Iraq but anywhere in the world. My father went on to assure me that I would find new friends and establish relationships with others who would be successful in the future, and that even failure at the Jesuit Baghdad College could be a learning experience.

At the time, I was still a young boy and did not appreciate those great utterances of my father. My father died and I am now sixty-five years old, and I find that everything he told me turned out to be true. All these memories crossed my mind when I received your letter inviting me to attend the next Jesuit Reunion in Detroit. I especially think of meeting friends of more than 50 years, many of whom have been successful in life, at work and in upholding good values. This I would consider as one of the most important objectives of the reunion. How I wish for the Jesuits to return back to Iraq so that I could enroll my grandchildren in their school and offer them the same advice that my father gave me when I was a little boy. (Reunion Yearbook VIII, 1992, p. 8)

Reactions from the Baghdadi Jesuits

Life was different from most other Jesuit missionaries. For one thing not many of their fellow missionaries spent their evenings on the roof, as Fr. Madaras narrates. They along with Fr. Ryan were surprised at the facility their charges had in many languages.

Roofs

For the benefit of our new readers we mention that we sleep out on the roof in summer. This year Father Coffey was the first one out, just as last Fall he was the last one in; on this latter occasion it took a terrific storm to convince him that the natives were right when they said that year-round sleeping on the roof was not advisable. This year he stood it inside until April 22. We followed him a few days later, all except Father Mifsud, who was blown in by a dust storm last year shortly
after he arrived, and has lost all taste for sleeping on roofs.
The natives were surprised when they heard that we were already sleeping outside, and we found out why a few nights later. We were awakened by rain in the face. Rain at all, at such a time of the year is a rare phenomenon, and we thought it wouldn't last long. But somehow, whether in reality or only seemingly, it kept sprinkling intermittently all through the night. At 3:45 Father Coffey beat a hasty retreat. The rest of us, who had experienced this thing once before, stuck to our beds, determined to leave only if the rain should come through the blankets. (Madaras, 1936, p. 152)

Languages
American Jesuits accustomed to speaking one language have always been in awe of their students who spoke a variety of languages with great ease; Arabic, English, Armenian, Aramaic and Turkish. They thought nothing of it. Fr. Ryan asked a student who grew up in the old Turkish city of Kirkuk (where Turkish was the common language spoken at home) how he would say a particular word in Arabic only to be asked: "which Arabic, classical or colloquial?" Fr. Ryan did not give up but asked: "Well, how would you say this to your brother?" "To my brother I would say it in Turkish!" The student then revealed that Arabic was not his first language and when he went to primary school he had to learn Arabic sounds as if he were a foreigner. Fr. Ryan who had experienced the bloody entrance made by learning such sounds was even more amazed at the young man's persistence as well as linguistic ability.

*Tanus of Sala'adin cooked for the Jesuits*