Chapter 5

The Fifties and Sixties in the Prime of Life

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Matthew 5:16

Summary: Baghdad College during these decades

After its first decade of survival and its second decade of phenomenal growth, quadrupling in size, Baghdad College seemed quite secure. It seemed impervious to the numerous political upheavals surrounding Baghdad, also it survived financial and enrollment problems. The fifties then offered a peaceful time to consolidate its growth and plan for the future. In the middle of Baghdad College's last two decades Iraq changed from a monarchy to a republic but this seemed to make little difference in the atmosphere of the school. Also in this time occurred the extension of Jesuit educational efforts from Baghdad College to Al-Hikma University. The Baghdad College Sulaiikh campus hosted the fledgling university until it had its own buildings on the Zafarania campus which the government had given to the Jesuits.

During these two decades from 1950 to 1969 the American segment of the faculty changed from being mostly Jesuit priests to a much larger proportion of Jesuit scholastics (not yet ordained) and Jesuit lay volunteers. In some years like 1955 there were 19 Jesuit scholastics and this number of scholastics was not
surpassed by any of the five other high schools in the New England Province. The student body became more numerous and more buildings were built to accommodate them. One such building was Fr. Guay's beautiful creation, the Chapel of the Sacred Heart with its wonderful innovations. The curriculum was expanded to include a commercial section for students who were not completely at home with the sciences but wanted a Jesuit education. All sports events of the city schools found Baghdad College in prominent positions, and frequently city school coaches would attend the Baghdad College games to find out how best to plan their strategies. Baghdad College's ample playing fields provided great opportunities for young athletes.

The Arabic House of Studies for Jesuits started and Jesuits began to undertake a serious inculturation step by becoming bi-ritual (celebrating Mass in two or more rites) as their brother Jesuits had done in Lebanon. Jesuit vocations as well as vocations to the local clergy started to emerge. The Jesuits spent much energy and effort in planning for the future of their school, so frequent meetings were held by the Jesuits to plan how to achieve their goals in a more effective way.

These decades had much to build on and much to thank the men who prepared the way during the previous 18 building years. The superiors of the mission and rector of Baghdad College during this decade included Fr. Madaras (1945-52) followed by Fr. Hussey (1952-58) then one of the many McCarthys, Fr. Michael McCarthy (1958-64) and ended with Fr. Carty (1964-69). The principals (mudeer) were Fr. Connell (1943-52), Fr. Sullivan (1952-60) and Fr. Powers (1960-69). Fr. Kelly was the assistant principal (muawin) until 1963 except for one year's absence which was filled by Fr. Mahoney (1955-56). Fr. Kelly was followed by Fr. Pelletier who ran a very taut ship until 1969.

During the last decade, for the first time, the superiors of the mission were distinct from the rector of Baghdad College. This was a necessary result of the growth of the mission, now boasting of two schools, a language house of studies and later a novitiate. The superiors were Fr. Williams (1961-67) followed by the brief but very important tenure of Fr. John Donohue (1967-69).

**Growth during these last two decades**

**The growth of the student body**

When the marks for the government exams were published in the Baghdad newspapers, the citizens found another reminder of Baghdad College because it would have multiple honorable mentions for high marks. Professors found their way to the Baghdad College campus as invited lecturers for various clubs and
extra curricular activities and as part time lecturers. They found the Baghdad College students gracious and charming. Although there was no Baghdad College stamp on their foreheads the Baghdad College graduates were recognized by their intelligence, their manners and their ability to think and express themselves.

Baghdad College students came from more than 60 different primary schools all over Iraq. Certain schools always led the list and an example can be found in the entrance data for the scholastic year beginning in 1953. Here are the names of such schools sending 116 freshman to Baghdad College in 1953-54:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>School Name</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>School Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Adil Primary</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Armenian United</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Battaween Primary</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Ghazi Primary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Hidad in Basrah</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Hikmat Primary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Kadhimia Primary</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Latin Primary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Mashriq Primary</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Najib Pasha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Nashia Primary</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Saadun Primary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Syrian Primary</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Tatbiqat Primary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After several decades Baghdad College had become a familiar landmark. Its students were attracting attention in the intellectual, social and athletic life of the city and its graduates were making their mark in all phases of society. One of the few areas of Baghdad included in the city's bus maps was the Sulaikh property of Baghdad College at the northern edge of the map - and later Al-Hikma would be included in the southern lower edge of the map. Throughout the whole city Baghdad citizens were accustomed to seeing the orange Baghdad College buses filled with exuberant scholars traveling to and from class. One parent had a plan to build bus-stop shelters throughout the city to keep these same scholars shaded or dry during the sun or rain. It was said that one such was built but a small family moved into it claiming it by imminent domain, so the project was abandoned.

More buildings

Buildings continued to rise through the fifties and even the sixties. The new buildings answered all the needs of the growing school. Fr. Quay's glorious chapel was a wonder of beauty and practicality, and left in awe not only the students but also the many visitors who came to see it. The Rice Science Building had better facilities than any of the other schools back in New England, as the Jesuits who went to teach in them after the expulsion found out, one marvel was the sloped classrooms. The Cronin Building was adaptable for many things: large classrooms, a small auxiliary chapel, physics lecture rooms and an auxiliary residence for Jesuits.
Fr. Madaras and Fr. Guay who had a Ph.D. in chemistry and was a naturally gifted scientist, planned and built the nine buildings bringing taste as well as practicality to their work. Both adapted well to the materials on hand: a good example is a process peculiar to places like Iraq who had rapid drying gypsum cement which allowed for jack-arching. Two I-beams were placed horizontally (or at a slant for a stairway) two feet apart, then the mason would start at one end of the support building small arches of four bricks set in between the beams. Since the mortar dried so rapidly he was able to kneel on the newly laid brick and moved across to the other support, thus constructing a section two feet wide in a very short time.

*Jack arched sections*

Gregarious by nature Fr. Guay met an interesting man in 1945 named Buckminster Fuller and spent many hours in conversation with him, since they were both aboard the same ship traveling from America to the Middle East. The agreement was that in order to pass the time on the ship, they would exchange information on their respective fields so that when the journey was over Buckminster Fuller knew much more about chemistry and Fr. Guay knew a great deal about architecture.

Many people of Baghdad cooled their houses by using a column of air flowing over watered brush. Because of the low humidity there was little problem with dampness when a continual stream of water falling on camel thorn (a'gool) which had been placed at the mouth of the air pumps would evaporate, thus cooling the air pumped into the ducts. Fr. Guay utilized these principles of a simple tropical air-cooling method for individual windows, to develop an efficient mechanized centralized system for air cooling the rooms of an entire building. After making his walls two feet thick, he built large ducts leading throughout the building, carrying a continuous stream of cooled air forced in by powerful pumps which had been placed at strategic sections of the exterior wall. This was not air conditioning as we know it but rather air cooling (called "desert cooler" in Arizona) and it worked because
the average humidity of Baghdad was an extremely low 15%.

The New Chapel

Fr. Guay's work on the chapel was no less remarkable. One of his many challenges was to make a rose window which he fashioned out of colored glass set in a frame of the local fast drying mortar. The exterior dimensions were 164 feet by 84 feet. The cross surmounting the tower rises 80 feet above the ground. An architect with vision and a mason skilled with the tools of his trade can transform brick, a derivative of common clay, into a thing of surpassing beauty.

Fr. Guay was single minded about his buildings. He designed a building that would embody the best and most economical construction that he could devise with local materials and local workmen, keeping in mind the sacred functions for which the chapel was primarily designed. The result was a happy and harmonious blending of styles, a fusion of East and West. The ornamental motifs of the exterior had been developed from ancient Babylonian, Assyrian and Arab styles and were characteristic of other buildings on the campus. His bricklayers were particularly adept at doing this sort of thing. With a special axe-like tool they carved the brick like a sculptor manipulating stone or wood.
The dignity and simple beauty of the main altar was impressive. The stone was of buff color with a vein of orange and was quarried in Lebanon where Hiram, the King of Tyre had cut the giant cedars that adorned the Temple built by Solomon in Jerusalem. The altar steps, as well as the sanctuary and the central aisle of the nave blended nicely with the pastel green of the sanctuary walls.

*Interior of the chapel showing Fr. Guay's rose window*

The altar stood in a spacious sanctuary that was raised three steps above the floor level of the nave. Flanking the apse were two large sacristies furnished with vesting cabinets that provided ample space for nine priests vesting simultaneously for Mass at each of the chapel's nine altars. One of the neighbors confided to a Jesuit: "We were Chaldeans but had decided to become Syrian Catholics. Now after seeing this church we have decided to become Jesuits."

*Upon completion of a building a sheep would reluctantly provide for a party.*
New undertakings during these last two decades

The Secondary Commercial Section

Not all people are cut out to be scientists and doctors, just as not all are cut out to be poets and merchants. Some of the students were clearly not at home with the sciences and were still quite intelligent and had much to offer. It was decided in the middle of this decade that the time had come to start a section for commercial studies.

Here is presented the documentation from the minister of education giving permission for the beginning of the Secondary Commercial Section.

DOC # 64 No. 397000 September 25, 1956
Ministry of Education
Directorate-General of Education
Directorate of Higher Studies/Private and Foreign
Subject: Opening of a Secondary Commercial Section
To: Baghdad College Administration
We approve what was contained in your letter # D/M/490 dated September 7, 1956.
(signed)For Director-General of Education
Dr. Mohammed Hamid al-Tai

The Arabic House of Studies for Jesuits

A language house was started in the Saadun section of Baghdad in 1952. Here the Jesuits were able to concentrate their talents and energy to the study of Arabic and the culture of the Arab world. The language house was started by Fr. Madaras who named it after St. Joseph. It is not clear why but many of the Jesuits were partial to Joseph; in fact 14 out of the 60 men in the missions' last days were named Joseph. If there is one, the patron saint of language schools for Jesuits struggling with a second language, it probably is the North American martyr Noel Chabanel, S.J. (1613-1649). Noel was born in southern France, entered the Jesuits and became a brilliant professor of rhetoric in France. He requested to serve in the Huron mission and arrived there in 1643. There he found that he had no aptitude at all for learning the Huron language and each attempt only brought loud laughter from the natives. His first sermon was filled with vulgarities taught him by a mischievous Huron tutor. Since then, Jesuits who have struggled with foreign languages have identified with Noel's frustration. In fact more than one Jesuit language school has been named Chabanel House in his honor.

The language school occupied three different houses in as many periods in the Saadun area from 1952-1968. Several of the
Jesuit scholars recall their experiences.

I remember, most fondly, Yusuf Masconi, my mentor in Arabic was very faithful in coming to Rawaf St. and sitting down with a young scholastic, teaching him the intricacies of the language. How young, inexperienced, and ignorant I must have seemed to him but he never let on to any of this. I used to drive him home after every lesson and we would have tea served by Columba his wife. He only asked one thing of me, as he turned my Arabic composition from charcoal to pearls and this was to visit his grave if ever I came back to Baghdad. Maybe, sometime I will be able to do this. (Fr. Hicks)

The establishment by the Jesuits of a "language house" at Saadun meant that superiors were totally serious and expected us to stay in Iraq for a very long term. For me it meant that now I could enter the culture more deeply. One year of classroom teaching at Sulaimk gave me a very strong desire to learn the Arabic language in order to get to know Iraqis better and to feel more at home in their culture. After two years of very difficult study and practice, under the tutelage of Frs. Richard McCarthy and John Mahoney and Prof. Faraj Raffouli, I felt more and more confident in the language and also felt I now wanted to spend the rest of my life in Iraq after ordination. Unfortunately, my religious Superiors decided otherwise and I did not return to Iraq. But Arabic was of great use to me in my later ministries among refugees in Sudan and even later when working in Jordan. Praise God! (Fr. Smith)

Bi-ritual Jesuits

Priests who were ordained to celebrate Mass in more than one rite, "bi-ritual", were very common in the Near East Province. In the 1969 Jesuit catalog the Jesuits of this province were listed with their rite and most of them had three or four rites after their names: Maronite, Byzantine, Coptic, Syrian, Melkite, Chaldean, Armenian and Latin. Usually a man celebrates Mass in the rite in which he was born, but for Apostolic reasons they would assume another rite.

A number of Baghdadi Jesuits chose to apply for permission from the Patriarch of the rite and then they applied themselves in earnest to learn the language and the rubrics of that rite. The first steps were taken in 1956. Several of the Fathers had obtained permission to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in another rite in addition to the Latin rite. Fr. Edward Banks in the Chaldean rite which he exercised in Baghdad from about 1960 and
then later in Beirut for seven years; Fr. Campbell and Fr. Scopp, the Chaldean rite; Fr. James McCarthy in the Melkite rite; Fr. Young in the Syrian rite; Fr. Como in the Chaldean rite; Fr. Bonian in the Maronite rite; Fr. Taft in the Russo-Byzantine rite. Fr. Edward Banks recalls his journey into the Chaldean Rite.

In 1956 Fr. Campbell sent a transcription (the writing of the Aramaic words in English letters) of the Nestorian Liturgy from the U.S. It occurred to me that the Chaldean Liturgy (nearly the same as the Nestorian) could thus be transcribed and with a knowledge of the rubrics and a general sense of the meaning of the texts one could celebrate the Chaldean Liturgy when asked to offer Mass for a Chaldean congregation.

I proposed this idea to the Rector, Fr. Hussey who agreed and so I made an appointment to see the Patriarch, Yusuf Ghaniña. I never actually saw him; I was interviewed by Bishop Ghanni, then secretary to the Patriarch. After I made my proposal, Bishop Ghanni excused himself to consult with His Beatitude. On his return he gave the response of the Patriarch: "No, let the young man learn the Aramaic language". After consultation with Khoury Yusuf Tumma, the priest at Gailani Camp, I got in touch with a shammass (deacon) in Shaqlawa, northern Iraq and arranged to spend some time there learning to read Aramaic.

Khoury Yusuf took care of rubrics instruction. Shammas Yusuf Mairi of Baghdad instructed in Aramaic and Chant. Faraj Raffoulì took care of Arabic. Finally I was able to say the Mass well enough so that I could celebrate public Mass at Gailani Camp each Sunday and at Baghdad College once in a while. That was the beginning of Jesuit bi-ritualism in Iraq.

Fr. Walter Young was ordained by Bishop Bakhos, the Syrian Bishop of Baghdad, as a priest of the Syrian rite. This took place in our chapel at the college. Fr. Dennis Como was ordained at Weston for the Chaldean rite and spent some time in Baghdad as a Chaldean priest, notably in the minor seminary (at the time directed by the Jesuits). (Fr. Edward Banks)

On April 12, 1965 Fr. Young transferred from the Latin to the Syrian rite seeking a closer identity with a large segment of his flock. He was ordained by Baghdad’s Syrian Archbishop, the late Athanasius Bakose, in the chapel of Baghdad College. The next day he offered his first Mass in the Syrian Cathedral which was located in the Christian quarter of the old city. He later elected to do theology studies in Lebanon with Arabic-speaking seminarians rather than return to the United States. One of his fellow seminarians during this period, was a young
Jesuit named Peter Hans Kolvenbach who is now the Superior General of all Jesuits. (Fr. Young)

Vocations (Jesuit and Diocesan)

The first graduate of Baghdad College who became a priest was Fr. Abdul-Ahad Estepahn and he celebrated a Mass at Baghdad College chapel in 1956. Others were Raphael Cheiko and Abdul Salam Hilwa and the six Jesuits, Frs. Stanley Marrow, Solomon Sara, Clarence Burby, Hikmet Emmanuel, Yusuf Seferta and Stephen Bonian.

Stanley Marrow came to Baghdad College, together with almost all his classmates from the Carmelites' Saint Joseph "Latin" School. In 1947 five students from Baghdad College came to the United States to study in Santa Clara (John Mangassarian), U. of Arizona (the late Sylvain Serkis), U. of Detroit (Francis Faraje), U. of St. Louis (Shakir al-Badir), and Boston College (Stanley Marrow). Like the rest of them, Stanley came to study "science". Unlike them, he decided to become a Jesuit. When Stanley spoke to Father Devenny of his desire, he was asked, "Do you realize that this will involve many, many years of study?" "That's what I'm coming for."

Lacking both Latin and Greek made entry into the Jesuits of New England very difficult. Messages between Boston and Baghdad resorted to the use of "Stanislaus" to conceal this business from prying eyes in the Rashid Street post office. Finally, on September 14, 1949, Father Devenny drove Stanley to the Novitiate in Shadowbrook. He was the first Baghdad College Jesuit vocation.

Syrian Archbishop Bakose conferring on Fr. Marrow minor orders, 3/10/56

At the end of his study of philosophy, in 1955, he finally returned to Baghdad College with one of the largest groups of young
Jesuits ever to leave for the mission. All the young Jesuits in that group had received Minor Orders at Weston before leaving except Stanley, who, being a member of the Syrian Rite, was to be ordained by Archbishop Bakose in the new chapel of Baghdad College. The very long ceremony took place (on the very day when the Novitiate in Shadowbrook burned down) in the presence of a chapel full of students, friends, and relatives. He still remembers his return to the sacristy to unvest after the ordination, where the great (and the adjective is not used idly) Fr. Madaras embraced him and, with tears in his eyes, said, "This is what the mission is all about!" It was then that he understood the reason for the joy that filled him when, at the end of his first year as a novice, he was told that a second Jesuit from the Baghdad mission was to join him, Shlaimun Issa Sara Shamun, B.C. '50.

People may think that all the Iraqi vocations to the New England Province came from Baghdad. Even though all did join from Baghdad, not all of them were Baghdadis. Sam Sara's family (the New England Province version of his name) actually came from Mangaish, a small town in the Kurdish territory. In 1945 he came to Baghdad to study at Baghdad College, and upon graduation in 1950 he joined the Society. Before leaving town, he visited Mrs. Marrow, the mother of Stanley Marrow, the first Iraqi to join the New England Province, and it was here he felt that he was seriously leaving home. Even though this was their first meeting, her maternal care and sadness at the departure made leaving Baghdad a melancholy affair.

After seven years of Jesuit studies he returned to Baghdad for his teaching experience from 1957 to 1960. The return home was full of expectations, but nothing could have prepared one for the richness and the heavy commitments of the Jesuit faculty and their lay colleagues, both Christian and Muslim, to the school and the city. The multi-ethnic, multi-religious and linguistic diversity of the school gave it a cosmopolitan air. He found plenty to do and was in great demand by everyone, students, lay faculty and other Jesuits.

Clarence Burby, born in Iraq, often spoke of his happy days at Baghdad College and his desire to see other Iraqi youth respond to the seeds of grace planted by the Baghdadi Jesuits. Hikmet Emmanuel also spoke of his fond memories of Baghdad College.

It was the week before Christmas, 1989, when I stopped at Baghdad College to reflect with nostalgia on the happy years I had spent there. As I looked at the main building, I began to think of my education, the good example of the Jesuits, and the cherished memories of my former teachers. As I reflect on the
sentiments of many Baghdad College Alumni, I sense in them similar feelings of gratitude and loyalty consistent with members of an extended family of Baghdad College graduates. (Hikmet N. Emmanuel)

Jesuit scholarship

The Jesuits from the beginning were aware that they had to adapt themselves to their new surroundings. They were there to educate Iraqis and education in Iraq was not education in New England. Early on people were set aside to study Arabic and the language opened up unexpected vistas, but there remained a desire to go even deeper into culture and the history. Fr. Richard McCarthy was set aside for studies in Islamic theology and became one of the modern authorities on the theologian al-Baqalani. Fr. Hamil and Fr. Campbell were directed towards literature. Fr. Hamil’s study on Ja’far al-Khalili was translated into Arabic, and a Dictionary of Arab authors directed by Fr. Campbell came off the press. Fr. John Donohue opted for history and studied the 10th century when Shiism (Shee’a ism) prevailed in the Middle East. Fr. Martin McDermott followed up on Shiite (Shee’a) studies and his work on al-Shaikh al-Mufeed had been translated into Persian and Arabic which merited him an invitation to Qumm in Iran for the millenary of Shaikh al-Mufeed. (Fr. Donohue)

Jesuit planning during these decades

As the enrollment increased the problems became more intricate and required more formal structures to confront them such as committees and sub-committees with decision making more delegated and sub-delegated. Life in the Jesuit community lent itself very readily to discussions since the meals were in common. The men talked a great deal about their interests, the school and the students. As a result old customs and approaches were called into question and new proposals were put forth. There was always the nagging feeling that they could be doing the job better.

From the early days, B.C. followed the program prescribed for secondary schools by the Iraq Government. There was no desire on the part of the Jesuits to transfer American programs of study to Iraq. In the framework of the Iraqi program the Jesuits offered their students a distinct advantage - bilingualism in Arabic and English. The students studied science and mathematics in English and in Arabic. Thus they were prepared to take the final Government Exams in Arabic and also to pursue further scientific study at Baghdad University through the medium of English. Also
several were judged competent by the Government to study abroad in the U.S.A. and Great Britain.

From evidence available and from the response of Professors in Baghdad University, the Jesuits judged that they were making a substantial contribution to education in Iraq during a crucial period in its development. Many graduates went on in medicine and engineering - the two status professions in the developing world. Very few went into politics. The Jesuits never considered themselves purveyors of political ideology and deliberately refrained from entering into the complexities of Iraqi politics and from currying the favor of any political faction; this neutral stance was an asset for 37 years. (Fr. Donohue)

To interest graduates staying in Iraq

One of the real concerns of the Jesuits was the fact that some of our students were leaving for Western countries and not returning to Iraq. Jesuits came to help the Christians as well as Muslims find their way in a Muslim society. They became discouraged to find themselves in Iraq and some of their charges in America. Their aim was to help build a vibrant and involved Christian community and continue the great work that Iraqi Christians had been doing for 19 centuries. They did not blame the graduates for leaving but they asked if the sacrifices they made to come to Baghdad were not backfiring on them. After all, the English that the Jesuits taught facilitated migration to America and acceptance into foreign schools. facetiously they asked: "Why not run our school over in the U.S. for students as they arrive? It would be easier on everyone." Of course it was perfectly understandable for some of the graduates to leave; they needed higher degrees and did not want to go to the local colleges and jobs were difficult to find.

The "A" sections

At Baghdad College in the fifties, much thought was given to the special "A" sections which had the best students homogeneously grouped. It started perhaps after the model of advanced placement programs in America. Teachers knew from experience that bright students get bored when the matter is being explained to others at a painfully slow pace. Then there is no alternative for the smarter students but to raise Cain. The program was meant to motivate students to try harder by competing with other smart students and emulation was always part of Jesuit education. The program was nearly abandoned in 1961 when the 5A class raised much more Cain than was allowed.
Jesuit influence during these last two decades

There were many expressions by former students of the Jesuit influence in their lives. A few alumni are quoted here, one of whom is Stanley Marrow, S.J. who had a memorable first teaching experience as a Jesuit teacher at Baghdad College.

I would need thousands of words to describe how helpful the curriculum was. However, it was even more helpful doing the homework assignments which forced us to think on our own, and taught us to formulate our ideas. (Yull Eprim)

Few moments could compare with the thrill of discovery on my first day of class. The second year students trooped into the class, uncertain how to react to the new "Father from America". Father Fennell had left everything in its proper place for the new teacher in the new classroom next to the chemistry lab on the second floor. Prayers were said; the students sat down. One or two potential clowns made half-hearted attempts at reassuring their fellow-students in a language they thought the teacher did not know. I explained to the students what the course was all about, reminded them of the daily routine of the quiz on half a yellow sheet, and urged them to buy the Arabic chemistry text book. I picked it up, showed it to them, opened it and began reading from one of its first pages. Never in my life have I seen such a melange of emotions on any group of faces: astonishment, surprise, pleasure and perhaps even disappointment that "lek hadha moo amrikani!" (Beware! This is not an American.)

An industrious biology lab

That year was the year of the Suez Crisis. There was no school for weeks on end, and the Jesuit Community had to
manage without student tuition. In those financially difficult
days, the Fathers were given the option between letting the
school workers go or giving up tea, coffee, sugar, etc., until
the crisis had passed.

To a man the Community chose to give up the ordinary
staples of daily life so that they could keep the workers. The
bleak breakfast of bread and water stands out as sharply in my
memory as the day when the crisis finally ended. Never in
those days did I hear a single complaint from anyone in the
Jesuit Community. It was, and it will always remain in my
mind, as one of their finest hours. (Fr. Marrow, B.C. '47)

Jesuit Influence on other schools

Educators of elementary, secondary, and college levels showed
great interest in Baghdad College and visited the school often,
admitting that they had come to find programs and policies that
they could use. Examples were the organization of graduation
exercises, building planning, classroom and laboratory setup,
teaching methods, dramatics, elocution, library, year book, and
student poor relief. They were interested in the tiniest details of
school organization, such as the school seal, format of diplomas,
pencil sharpeners, and bubblers. Much of what they learned they
did incorporate, or at least attempted to incorporate, into their
own schools. There was scarcely a graduate of Higher Teacher and
Queen Aliya College in the decade of the fifties that had not spent
some time in a Baghdad College classroom observing classroom
organization and pedagogical methods.

Baghdad College's influence in the Baghdad world of sports was
much greater than one would expect from a small school. The
Baghdad College varsity teams were the first to wear manufactured
uniforms with the Arabic insignia. It was not merely that Baghdad
College had been able to point the way in organization or in
equipment, it was the deeper lesson of sportsmanship, qualities of
generosity and fair play which sports encourage. A minister of
education expressed his gratitude for Baghdad College participating
in the city's track and field events with an inferior team. In doing
this they demonstrated more interest in the success of the city's
sports program than the prestige of personal victory. For many
years Baghdad College teams in track and field were preeminent in
Baghdad track meets. Fr. Hussey in a letter related the friendly
and outgoing behavior that typified Baghdad College students
which was acknowledged by neighbors.

Democracy is very much a reality on the Baghdad College
campus. By precept and example, the students learn the God-
given dignity of each human being, whatever his accidents of birth or position. Rich boy and poor sit side by side in the same classroom, strive on equal terms for class leadership, win the privilege of wearing the gold and maroon uniforms of varsity teams by learning to work together. Day and night in the boarding school, they share everything together. A taxi driver stops in the city to offer the principal a free lift back to the campus. Although his son has just been dismissed from the school, he says: We love Baghdad College, because you are not afraid to give the same treatment to the son of a Prime Minister that you give to a taxi driver's son. (Fr. Hussey)

A number of Iraqi citizens noticed that Jesuits stuck to education and did not get involved in politics and they admired them for this. This had been clear during dangerous times of student demonstrations and city tensions. Several times the U.S. Information Service buildings had been attacked, the U.S. Embassy was protected by heavy guard, but Baghdad College had always been unprotected and unmolested. People pointed sharply to the facts that although frequently government schools locked their students in the school compounds, the students broke down the bars and marched away; whereas Baghdad College left the campus gates wide open, and the students remained on campus even after school hours. During the revolt of May, 1941, the Baghdad College faculty did not take refuge with other foreigners in either the American or British Embassy, but remained at the College, a gesture of confidence which the people of Iraq appreciated. This

was a constant for the Jesuits during their time in Baghdad in other similar eruptions which seemed dangerous to others but not to the Jesuits who had great confidence in the civility of Iraqi people even when they were justifiably angry.

Frequently Iraqis with no connection to the school pointed with pride to the beauty of the Baghdad College buildings and campus. Aware that buildings and campus were benefactions of generous Americans, they mingle pride of possession with gratitude for what these Americans were doing for their country.
A grateful alumnus wrote a letter on June 8, 1984 to the B.J.A.A. (Baghdad Jesuit Alumni Association), to be published in its fourth yearbook, and at the time he was Minister and Head of the Iraqi Interests Section at the Embassy of India. He expresses gratitude for his Baghdad College training. Here is part of his letter.

Baghdad College has played an important role as a leading example looked upon by all levels, both in the educational and scientific processes. The influence of the Jesuit Fathers was not confined within the physical walls of Baghdad College, on the contrary it surpassed that of most of the high schools in Baghdad during that period, for Baghdad College and its students were the examples to be looked upon due to their high scientific levels, great sportsmanship spirit, and the distinct intimate relationship between the teacher and student, and among the students themselves. Hence, the Jesuit teachers were educators of excellent caliber, and undoubtedly ought to be proud of what they have accomplished in their educational, cultural, and scientific missions. These factors have collectively left durable marks on all the students who graduated from Baghdad College.

I have learned so many things, at that school, which have been of great benefit in my life later on. One of the most important of these things is to respect the other's opinion, and truthfully open the ground for discussion based on that principle. However, there are many governments, organizations, and individuals that, regretfully, still lack this principle and instead resort to intransigence, self-centeredness, and double standards. This conduct destroys societies from inside, as well as international relations in our world. (Reunion Yearbook IV,1984, p. 24)

Life with Father during these decades

Crime and punishment

An imaginative penalty (but of questionable usefulness) consisted in raising a number like 6789 to the 12th power. Although some knew logarithms they found that this short cut did not work since they could never find logarithm tables accurate beyond the 7th decimal, but actually accuracy to the 48th decimal was needed. In any case penalties were boring, according to Wael Hindo (B.C. '60, A.H. '64): "Discipline at Baghdad College most of
the time took the form of staying after school to write words from the dictionary or cleaning the baseball field from all papers."

But sometimes it was possible to use preventative measures. In 1966 Fr. MacDonnell taught mathematics to all 160 seniors and Fr. Sheehan taught the same group physics (four classes of 40). Not far into the scholastic year Fr. Sheehan fell ill and had to return to the U.S. so Fr. MacDonnell went to the mudeer and volunteered to take Fr. Sheehan's class along with his own. It meant that he would take 80 students at a time instead of 40 in the great sloped classroom of the Rice science building. He got to know the 160 students quite well and they him since they met nine times a week. So when the time came for the first exam, he waited until all 80 students filed into the great sloped room, watching each maneuvering for position. He said the prayer before class and then made an announcement. "Everyone now, pick up your chair, turn it 180 degrees so that you face the back of the room. Don't feel insulted, during exams I would not trust my own grandmother." There was surprise, followed by laughter, and then applause. He had done his homework. If anyone sits in such a sloped classroom and has normal vision he can copy from at least 12 people without moving his head, thereby arousing no suspicion. If those 12 sets of answers were not satisfactory, he could read 8 more with a slight twist of the head. Whereas with the chairs facing the back of the room, it would take an obvious 90 degree twist of the head to see only one paper. Fr. MacDonnell admitted afterward that he exaggerated, he would trust his grandmother.

Fr. Regan being gregarious by nature was often out at the basketball court while the local youngsters were playing and he got to know many of them. He was intrigued by what they were learning in their school.

I met Mahmud one day in front of the residence in Sulaiikh. Like many youngsters he appeared to be studying while walking back and forth. Mahmud stopped me on this day and in broken but intelligible English asked if I would write a brief paragraph to his English teacher praising his use of the English language. I did as he requested. Some days passed
before I met Mahmud the next time. He was beaming. I understood that he submitted my paragraph as his composition and received a very high grade. My reaction was mixed but I felt that Mahmud had made the most of a situation (our first encounter), and so I showed some enthusiasm for his ingenuity while at the same time wondering what exactly went on in his English classes at the public high school in our area.
(Fr. Regan)

Fr. Gerry at his post in the bookstore

The Fathers were treated with great respect on the public bus which traveled back and forth from Baghdad to Sulaiikh. After all Fr. Guay was called the "mayor of Sulaiikh" because he hired so many local workers for his buildings. Fr. MacDonnell found himself next to a friendly garrulous Arab gentleman who had great admiration for the Fathers as well as "that great American, General Montgomery". He trained race horses and invited Fr. MacDonnell to come to his ranch nearby and take a ride; the assumption being that all Americans ride horses.

Fr. MacDonnell enjoyed his conversation with Hamid but did not take the offer seriously. Any man who thought Montgomery was American probably did not have horses either. In any case he looked forward to riding a horse with as much enthusiasm as he would a trip to the dentist. A week later Hamid came to the front gate with a horse. He asked for Fr. MacDonnell, who by the way had never ridden a horse not to mention this Arabian steed pawing the ground. Somehow he managed to get on and with urging from Hamid's whip the horse galloped at great speed out into the desert with a frantic rider holding both reins and mane without a clue as to how to communicate with the beast. Eventually, perhaps due to thought of dinner at Hamid's ranch the horse turned around and galloped back to Hamid. Fr. MacDonnell has not ridden a horse since.
The Floods

Water for beautiful campus gardens came from the Tigris through an elaborate system of dams, tunnels and ditches. Eventually, in the sixties, Fr. Loeffler built a large catch basin as an auxiliary water well for his many gardens on the 25 acre Sulaiikh property. The money for the well was donated by a friend of Fr. Leo Shea. Sometimes there was too much water.

The well, however, was not always necessary. Torrential rains fell in late March of 1952 to add their volume to the rising waters of the Tigris, already swollen with the melting snows of the mountains of Turkey and Northern Iraq. The result was a flood scare beyond anything since Utna Puristeem of the Sumerian Gilgamish Epic who had built his ark to escape the deluge. Baghdad College had a close call. The dikes burst above and below the city so that the surrounding desert became a sea reaching beyond the horizon. Our own dikes held so B.C. sustained little damage, but many neighbors were forced to flee their homes. The Jesuits spent several days raising everything portable off the ground. Foodstuffs and household supplies were carried to the second floor. The Community was divided into work committees and plans were made for any eventuality. When Fr. Sheehan seemed preoccupied with saving his notes on Latin poetry, some cynic suggested that they should be heaved into the river, being likely dry enough to absorb the superfluous water. Brother Parnoff constructed seaworthy rafts just in case. We did not have to test them, fortunately.

In 1954 the whole City of Baghdad became an island when the two rivers flooded. Many people lost their lives and possessions. Students from Baghdad College participated in carrying sand bags to the rivers banks. (Wael Hindo, B.C. '60, A.H. '64)

A not too curious American visitor

The Jesuits kept their distance from the American Embassy
personnel except for an occasional softball game between the "Fatheria" and the Embassy Marines. It was not that the Jesuits were being haughty and aloof, but rather it was a determination that American policies have nothing to do with the presence of the Jesuits in Iraq. Jesuits wished, by keeping their distance, to emphasize this. On the other hand the Embassy personnel, often came from that part of pluralistic America who were taught that Catholics and in particular Jesuits were up to no good. A case in point is an anecdote related by Fr. Anderson who uses an alias for "Senator X".

A group of American Senators were touring the Middle East to study conditions there at first hand. They deplaned at Baghdad on a Thursday afternoon and that evening our Ambassador held a reception in their honor. Prominent figures from various circles of Iraq's public life had been invited to meet them. In the course of the evening, the Iraqi Prime Minister was talking with Senator - I had better call him - Senator X. They were joined by Father Madaras, the Rector of Baghdad College; the Prime Minister put a friendly arm about the Rector's shoulder and paid this significant tribute to the school saying: "Senator X, when you return to the United States, I want you to thank the American people for having sent these Fathers to us, to help educate our young men. They are conducting the finest school in Iraq". It was all the more effective because only a few hours before, the worthy Senators had dismissed a suggestion that a visit to Baghdad College would be worth their while. (Fr. Anderson, Archives file #510)

Fr. Madaras had many jobs, many of which were administrative. When in 1953 he was 'promoted' (as the faculty used to say) back into the classroom, he needed to be certified by the Iraqi Government as a teacher again. The details of his "sad story" are related in the Al Baghdadi newsletter with the subtitle What Price Glory?

What Price Glory?

Among all the Baghdadis Fr. Madaras was the oldest Jesuit in point of service. He together with the late Bishop Rice were the real Founding Fathers of the College, the first American Jesuits to arrive, back in March, 1932. We mention this, not to date Fr. Madaras, nor to give the impression that he was around when the postman was still delivering clay tablets to Abraham down in Ur of the Chaldees. We just wish to stress the fact that Fr. Madaras was no stranger in these parts.
Chapter 5  The Fifties and Sixties in the Prime of Life

He slipped back into the classroom in 1953 after years of administrative responsibility including terms as Superior of the Iraq Mission, Rector of Baghdad College and first Superior of the House of Arabic Studies. His name was accordingly submitted to the Government on our list of teachers. That is a little precaution required of all Private Schools to insure that none but properly qualified teachers will mold the young Iraqi mind. You might not believe it, but he was asked to report at the Ministry of Education to prove his competence to teach at Baghdad College. Of course, he got an unmerciful ribbing from the rest of us. But his students were indignant that there should be even a minor official in the Ministry who does not know Fr. Madaras. For they were very proud of their eminent teacher who, by the way, was the founder of this (Al Baghdadi) journal at Baghdad and its sole editor and contributor for nearly a dozen years. (Al Baghdadi Newsletter, 10/53 p. 3)

Jesuit guests at a couzzi of Shaikh Famar al-Faisal 3/26/53

The mysterious American timer

In 1956, during Al-Hikma's first year (on the Baghdad College campus) one of the faculty members was Fr. MacDonnell who ran the Thermodynamics and Mechanics laboratories and even wrote the manuals. Some of the experiments required large chunks of ice. On the lab mornings he would call the home of the janitor and ask him to bring a block of ice to work with him that day. He had memorized the proper sentence and would carefully say; "gib ana rub' calib thelage bil mustaba sar thman u nus, min fudlik". He was always disconcerted with the response: "Hello Father" and wondered how could they tell it was him.

Baghdad's electrical supply contrasted with America's not only in voltage (220 instead of 110) but also in cycles (50 instead of 60). As a result in Iraq, motors made in the U.S. ran at five sixths the speed they were meant to. Fr. MacDonnell used a timer for an electrical spark in an acceleration experiment, and instead
of sending out 10 sparks per second it sent out 8.33 (five sixths of ten) sparks. The students were at a loss as to why Americans would use such bewildering numbers.

The Imposter

The Baghdad Jesuits enjoyed a well-deserved reputation for hospitality. Many visitors, religious as well as lay, were given room and board as they journeyed through Iraq, especially during vacation periods when groups could sleep in empty classrooms. In the Fall of 1957 a gentleman came and took advantage of this generosity. He was blind, dressed as a priest and claimed to be of the Malabar rite. Fr. LaBran organized his Sodality to help, and raised $800 to help this poor man. Bro. Foley was suspicious of his request for narcotics from the infirmary, so was less generous. A month after he departed a letter from Rome warned the Jesuits of this man because he was an impostor.

A month later a group of Jesuits while on a Christmas pilgrimage to Bethlehem saw this same man, but because of the crowd were unable to reach him to inquire about his behavior. They did the next best thing and informed the Franciscan Custodian of the Holy Land who was superior of the hostel where most pilgrims stayed. He dealt with the matter immediately and brought the culprit to justice.

The scheduling board

In 1956, there appeared in the assistant principal’s office a 5 foot by 4 foot wooden frame embedded with 810 small nails from which hung numbered and color-coded tags which would be used for scheduling classes. Fr. Pelletier relates its origin, and also relates a few more items of these decades.

The Baghdad College scheduling board was way ahead of its time. The previous scheduling method required five men listening and recording a litany read by a sixth man of all possible combinations of possible class assignments according to subject, year, class time, teacher and classroom - one man for each item. The idea was to avoid missing classes and not have two teachers in the same classroom together. The tedious and confusing sessions lasted at least 12 hours, thereby requiring 60 man-hours of work. Once one arrangement was finished it would have to be done over again and again since subtle, but serious errors would creep in and a different arrangement was needed; e.g. a teacher (or a whole class of students) would be in two places at once, or fourth year would have 6 (or 3) classes a week instead of 5.

A simpler solution occurred to Fr. MacDonnell who drove 810 nails into a board lined up in 27 columns and 30 rows;
the rows matching the number of classes and the columns matching the number of teachers. Then distinct colored tags were assigned for distinct subjects; e.g. five red (for mathematics) tags marked with a 4 represented the 5 classes per week the fourth year students would have. Since there were only 5 tags and all were used, the fourth year would have exactly the required math classes and neither teacher nor students would have to bilocate. As with all great inventions, he was told that it would never work and the old way was better - it worked so well that we eventually made a second one for the Mudeer's office. One drawback to the new method involved the thin colored paper tags we used. One day, a janitor came to clean the room and decided to open a window - that night a wind came up and wiped out the schedule. Resourceful as we were, however, we quickly got it restored. (Fr. Pelletier)

A coach's conflict of interest

In the late sixties football seemed to replace baseball as the most popular sport since it was a more natural sport for the students and due in part to Fr. Loeffler, who put up the goals. We were able to map out four football fields so intramural contests were started and championships played. All-star teams between years were chosen and I remember one mother calling the mudeer (Fr. Powers) saying how utterly distraught her son was because he did not make the All-star team. We added him to the roster to keep peace in the family. One afternoon, we formed a team of first year students and took them to play a local school run by the British. During the game, one of our opponents hurt his leg and he came over to me and said: "Father, take me out." I said that I couldn't because I wasn't his coach - perhaps he thought the Fathers had special influence. (Fr. Pelletier)

Busing

Our fleet of buses made two shifts everyday - they were well maintained and stood out in the city traffic - one parent suggested that we erect shelters at the various pick-up points around the city so that our students could be protected from the weather - needless to say, we did not do this. The penalty for misbehavior on the school buses was not being allowed to ride the bus for a day or two - each student had an assigned seat (three to a seat) - this was a major job for the Assistant Mudeer in compiling seat positions and lists. More than once, a misbehaving student would hide on the floor to escape notice so that he would not have to take the long time-consuming bus
Some spectacular events

The 1957 Visit of the King on Baghdad College's 25th Anniversary

His Majesty, King Faisal II of Iraq, paid an official visit to Baghdad College and Al-Hikma University of Baghdad April 1, 1957 to congratulate the school on its 25th anniversary. In the Royal Suite with His Majesty were the Regent Abdul-Ilah; Mr. Tahsin Qadri, Master of Ceremonies at the Royal Palace; Mr. Abdullah Bakar, Assistant Master of Ceremonies at the Royal Palace; Mr. Khalil Kanna, Minister of Education in the Iraq Cabinet; Mr. Abdul-Hamid Khadhimm, Director General of Education in Iraq; Mr. Majid Al-Douri, Director of Education in Baghdad, and several Aides-de-Camp of His Majesty.

The Royal Party was met at the Jesuit Residence and welcomed by Fr. Michael J. McCarthy, S.J., acting superior of the Baghdad Mission. After a short reception the guests were led on a conducted tour of the campus, beginning with a visit to the Chapel of the Sacred Heart. Coming out of the Chapel they were greeted by more than 750 students, lined up on the athletic field. His Majesty marched through the lines in a colorful procession to the administration building, where he was met by Fr. Robert J. Sullivan, S.J., principal of Baghdad College, and after a short inspection he proceeded to the Rice Science building, where he manifested a keen interest in the science laboratories and classes. He was then conducted to the Cronin building, temporary home of Al-Hikma University, where he was greeted by Fr. Ryan, Dean of Al-Hikma University.

The engineering students were doing thermodynamics experiments in the physics lab of the Rice Science building under the direction of Fr. MacDonnell, who had previously warned them about the danger of repeating experiment #8 on the vapor pressure of water. Water boils at room temperature after a
vacuum pump lowers the pressure over the water. As the pressure is allowed to increase more heat is required for it to boil. After ten stages the water is 100 degrees C. If the experiment was started again (by turning the vacuum pump on again) before the apparatus had cooled down, the apparatus would explode.

King Faisal II enjoyed the labs of Baghdad College

Needless to say, as King Faisal came to the laboratory the student assigned to #8, had just finished his experiment and had nothing to show the guest. As King Faisal approached his station the student, more eager than prudent, turned on the pump - alas, too soon - there followed a loud explosion accompanied by flying glass and debris. No one was injured except for the bruised ego of an embarrassed student, but all present came away with great respect for the alacrity of the Palace Guard who surrounded the King with drawn weapons that seemed to come from nowhere.

For the visit of the King, the students assembled on the chapel lawn
Some Spectacular events

At the conclusion of his visit King Faisal appeared before the entire student body. Mr. Khalil Kanna, Minister of Education, addressed the students, and showing that he understood Jesuit education, declared the following day a holiday - a venerable Jesuit custom on the occasion of visiting dignitaries.

The July 14 Revolution

The Revolution came unexpectedly for the scholars at Baghdad College, most of whom apparently were not effected. Among those who were effected deeply was Wael Hindo who described how he spent his day.

It was about 6:30 on a Monday morning of the fourteenth of July, 1958. I had just finished serving a six o’clock Mass at the Sacred Heart Church of Baghdad College and was returning home to Sulaih, a few blocks away from the college. As I approached the house of a class mate of mine, Fikrat Al-Khoury, I heard the loud rumblings of martial music and nationalistic songs. He was cleaning his car, and he told me that during the early hours of the morning the army had staged a coup d’état, the King [Faisal II] had been killed, and my father, Brigadier General of the Third Division, had been arrested. I bolted home where my mother confirmed the rumor, and listened to the news broadcasts on the radio. The units of the Third Division had orchestrated the coup, which would come to be called the July Fourteenth Revolution, led by Brigadier Abdul Karim (Kareem) Qasim. Brigadier Qasim, the Leader of the Revolution would become Prime Minister (though he never became President).

What effect did this have on Baghdad College? Baghdad College students had from the start been a diverse lot. Practically every religion practiced in Iraq and every income group - wealthy, poor, middle class - were to be found. There were students whose fathers were in positions of power in the country as well as students whose fathers and who themselves counted themselves in the opposition to the monarchy. Thus when the dust of the Revolution had settled, only the internal relationships among students had changed, and the composition of the student body remained the same. Those who had opposed the government came to the fore, while those previously privileged fell into disfavor. Moreover, the rapid recognition of the Revolution by the United States that very August, prevented a backlash against the American Jesuits who established and administered the school, so life at B.C. continued smoothly for some years after this first upheaval.

During the first year after the Revolution (1958-59), the
school year was marked by two seminal events. The first was the formation of the first student union at Baghdad College. It was this same student union which would play a significant role in future coups and the eventual Iraqization of B.C. and Al-Hikma (1968-69). The second was a series of decrees announced by the new-formed government, universally promoting all students to the next grade, regardless of failure in the examinations. Baghdad College quietly refused to honor these decrees and did not promote failing students.

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