



## George Abed Oral History Interview, December 16, 2014

### **Title**

“An Economist and Policymaker Works to Stabilize the Middle East”

### **Date**

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### **Location**

Institute for International Finance, Washington, D.C.

### **Summary**

In the interview, Abed discusses his upbringing in Palestine and his family background, his early education, and his decision to move to the United States and pursue further schooling at Oregon State College.

In recalling his Oregon State years, Abed notes his initial impressions of Corvallis before describing his academic progression, including his shift away from engineering in favor of the social sciences. He recounts his heavy involvement in student government and reflects on his experiences as Oregon State's first foreign-born student body president. He likewise recounts his association with other student groups while an undergraduate, including three different fraternities and a Model United Nations, and shares his memories of meeting three major political figures - John F. Kennedy, Nelson Rockefeller and Mark Hatfield. He concludes his reflection on his Oregon State experience by discussing Linus Pauling's clash with the institution, which was on-going during Abed's tenure on campus.

Abed next describes his stint in graduate school at the University of Oregon before outlining his decision to move away from the study of law and toward economics. His relocation to Berkeley to commence Ph.D. studies and his participation in student activism while a doctoral candidate round out his description of his life as a student.

The arc of Abed's career in international development is a major focus of the interview. In this, he discusses his hire by the International Monetary Fund, his initial activities in Lebanon and Iraq, the impact made by the oil crisis of the mid-1970s, and the beginnings of the Lebanese civil war. From there he reflects on the creation of the Jerusalem Fund and the Palestine Welfare Association, as well as his role in their respective evolutions.

Abed next discusses the specifics of his interests in professional economics, international development and policy creation, as well as the ways in which these interests have changed over time. He also details his involvement with the Palestine Monetary Authority (PMA), his interactions with Yasser Arafat, the invitation that he received from Mahmoud Abbas to join the Palestinian government, and the successes to which he contributed as head of the PMA.

The session concludes with Abed's memories of the financial crisis of 2008 and his subsequent involvement with the Institute of International Finance. He reflects on the ways in which his Palestinian roots have impacted his approach to work, shares his thoughts on potential pursuits in retirement, and offers his advice to today's students.

### **Interviewee**

George Abed

**Interviewer**

Janice Dilg

**Website**

<http://scarc.library.oregonstate.edu/oh150/abed/>

## Transcript

**Janice Dilg:** So, today is December 16th, 2014 and I am at the Institute of International Finance with George Abed, Senior Counselor and Director for Africa and the Middle East here at the IIF and an alumni from the Oregon State University class of 1962. My name is Janice Dilg and this interview is part of the OSU sesquicentennial oral history project. Good afternoon.

**George Abed:** Good afternoon, pleasure to see you Janice.

**JD:** Likewise. So, we are here in 2014 but I'd like to start by going back to a few years earlier, and if you would begin by talking a little about where you're from and you're early kind of life and family before you came to the states.

**GA:** Yes, I was born in Jifna, which is an ancient little town in the district of Ramallah, which is part of what you might call the Governorate of Jerusalem, in Palestine. At the time it was called Palestine. December 18th, 1938, it was, Palestine was being governed by the British mandate where the United Nations, or League of Nations at the time, mandated to sort of manage the development of Palestine and facilitate the creation of the Jewish home in Palestine, at the time. The majority of people were Palestinian Arabs who have been there for centuries. My own village is, goes back in history to the Old Testament, about three thousand, three hundred years. It's been always there. When I grew up it was a strictly Christian village. Now of course, it's gotten much bigger and more diversified in terms of population. The village was well-known for the reasonably high level of literacy and education.

Many of the young people grew up going to denominational schools, which was the form of education available to many Christian families, and became teachers, females became nurses and so on, so it was reasonably prosperous, middle class community. Less than a thousand or so. My father is from the same village, my mother's from the same village. I was one of eight children. I was second in terms of age. I had an elder sister which—who is still alive and she lives in Bethlehem, in Palestine. I was number two. My father, from the beginning, emphasized the importance of education. So, all of us went to school, despite the burden that it would place on my father, who was essentially a small merchant landowner. And he insisted on sending us to the best schools, so we practically all went to private schools which required that they have tuition and so on. But some of us were clever enough to get some scholarships, some financial aid and we managed to, at least all of us, graduate from high school and I went on to college, of course.

I have a younger brother who went on to college. In fact, the younger brother, younger than I am, came to Oregon State the year I graduated from Oregon State, graduated from Oregon State in engineering. He now lives in the U.S. Another brother went on to study in the UK, became a pharmacologist. He had his Ph.D. in pharmacology, became a professor of pharmacology and so on. My sisters, the eldest one became a nurse and the other three sisters, well two sisters became teachers and one sister married after high school, so she never went to college.

So, we also went in our own ways. I came to the U.S., my younger brother followed me and I have a second brother who actually followed him and they both live in Seattle, Washington. The sisters are married in Palestine. One is in Jordan, the other two are in Palestine and the eldest sister is now a widower in Bethlehem.

Any case, so the family grew up in that environment, we all—every Sunday we went to church, my grandfather was a priest, the priest of the village, one of two priests in the village. And so, we grew up in a reasonably happy, middle class family in a fairly cohesive community, Christian community that goes back centuries. The town itself is built on ruins, Roman ruins, Canaanite ruins.

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There is in fact a Byzantine church that was discovered when I was a child. In fact, my father discovered it. He was digging up some, a field right near our house and then he discovered there were capitals at the top of columns laid down, further down and discovered the Byzantine village, Byzantine church from the seventh century. The village also has, actually, a crusader castle, which is still there. It was turned into a restaurant at one point and so on, but it's still there in the village.

So, there is quite more than just one history, and deep roots. And that gave me, also, a sense of permanence, a sense of origin that is very firm, very rooted in long history of the country. I remained attached to the village and to the country as I grew up and pursued my career outside Palestine.

**JD:** And you mentioned your schooling a little bit, I'm not quite sure, in the states it's elementary, then maybe junior high, then high school and then college if you go on to that. What were the levels of schooling and the types of schools that you attended?

**GA:** In our system there were elementary school, which went from the first grade to the seventh grade, and then there were four grades in high school. And I started fairly young. My sister, who was a year and a half older than I was, started pre-kindergarten and, within weeks, I didn't want to stay home by myself, I followed her and started school more or less with her, although much younger. And then after the third grade, I think I skipped the fourth because I was advanced for my years, in English and math and everything else, and so I went through grade school easily, went to high school and graduated just after I was sixteen, sixteen and a half, and became, in fact, a teacher before I was seventeen.

And that's one reason my father didn't want to let me travel abroad. He thought I was too young and also he needed some relief, I guess, in terms of expenses, so he said "why don't you work for a couple of years, then you can go where you want." I enjoyed my work at teaching school, teaching mathematics and science to young students. It was an English school in Jerusalem, St. George's. I enjoyed my time there, enjoyed my residence in Jerusalem, became very socially active, made a lot of good friends.

Jerusalem, at that point, was divided between the Jordanian side that was still part of Jordan and then the Israeli side behind the wall. There was no mixing of the two sides, and we didn't think much about what was the wall that was Israel, it was there, we didn't have any relations. And Arabs living in Jerusalem in the West Bank at the time really looked to the east, it was Jordan, because we were part Jordan and the seat of government in Jordan was now in Amman. But, the West Bank was reasonably prosperous, it has good agriculture, good industry, education, people and so on, so I enjoyed myself, so I spent three years instead of two years and just before of my third year I decided I'd better pursue my education somewhere else.

And I looked into scholarships and there was offered by the American Consulate in Amman, and that I saw advertised, which required you go to Amman, take some kind of examination and if you pass the examination, I think they had two or three scholarships that year, I got one of them. And that scholarship, essentially, had already been originated by the IFC at Oregon State, the Interfraternity Council of Oregon State. They had set up the scholarship for the foreign students to come study at Oregon State. So, that turned out to be the one scholarship I got, so I began to prepare myself to travel to the U.S., to fly to New York, from New York to Portland Oregon and then, I think I took the Greyhound bus from Portland to Corvallis, arrived there late September in 1958.

**JD:** And you mentioned that you studied or were fluent in English, talk a little about how you learned English and why that was important, because that ended up, I'm sure, being a huge advantage to you when you came to Oregon State.

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**GA:** Yes, all the schools I went to were private schools and most private denomination schools, well private schools generally, had a dual curriculum with English language starting exactly the same time you started learning Arabic: kindergarten, first grade and so on. In the school I went to for high school, all the subjects other than Arabic language and Islamic history were actually taught in English. So, chemistry and western history, mathematics, all the sciences, social sciences were taught in English. So, we became fairly fluent in English. I had a proclivity in languages and I think I didn't have a difficulty learning English. I had two uncles who were English language teachers, who lived right nearby where I grew up and they had books in their house and I was already starting to read books as a child, and I didn't really have difficulty with English. I was fluent in English from my earlier years, I think.

**JD:** So, had you heard about Oregon previously or was it just that the scholarship was from Oregon State University and so that was how you came here?

**GA:** That's about it. I didn't know anything about Oregon but frankly, as a young man who's out to explore distant horizons, I thought that was even more exciting than coming to New York, about which, of course, I heard a lot. And I thought Oregon sounds very exotic, you get to be very far and, you know, you acquire bragging rights that you, among your peers and other kids, you went the farthest away from home and you sought learning in the farthest corners of the globe. It was kind of a fun thing, why not, and I liked the idea of coming to Oregon. I didn't know much about it. I read about it as soon as I was told that I would get this scholarship. And I found out it was, you know, very green state, it was a beautiful state, it has lakes, it has mountains and all that and that sounded very, very appealing.

**JD:** And so then, what were your first impressions with the reality versus what you had encountered in the books?

**GA:** Well, I landed in Portland I think from—well in Portland I stayed one night. I just, kind of to wind down, and stayed at a local hotel, I don't remember which one it was. It was very expensive, obviously, and then the next morning I went down to the, I didn't know how to get to Corvallis from Portland. I figured well, the best thing is I inquire, and they told me when the buses run, frequently, down to Corvallis. So, I went and bought a ticket on a Greyhound bus and I rode the bus down to Corvallis the next day, arrived mid-afternoon. And I had informed the fraternity Pi KA that I would be arriving around that time. So, they were expecting me because we had exchanged letters and they knew who I was and they knew they would be hosting me for the first quarter. I had a couple of names as contacts and I called them from the bus station. In fact, they were expecting my call somehow. And one of them came down by car and picked me up from the bus station in Corvallis and took me up to the fraternity which was, I think, on Ninth Street in Corvallis.

And when I got to the fraternity, I found a bunch of young people in their grubbies, cleaning up the house, painting, taking down drawers and fixing things up. It was a week before school registration, so I guess that was a work party to get the house ready. And I was assigned a roommate. I think his name was John Weigant, who is in engineering himself. I think he was a sophomore at the time, and I roomed with him and we all, of course, slept in the same dormitory in the house. And John was very kind, very nice to me, he introduced me to all the other fraternity brothers, he introduced me to the campus, I walked with him to campus the first, second day I was there, and he was kind of my buddy for the first quarter.

Unfortunately, at the end of first quarter we had to move to another fraternity and then third quarter to another fraternity. That was the package. Then after that you decide whether to stay in the country and pursue education or go back. The experience would have been worthwhile. I decided, of course, to stay and went on to study at Oregon State, got my degree and did what I did.

**JD:** And what were other's first impressions of you? I'm not sure how many people from Jordan many Oregonians knew or how much they knew about the country, what kinds of questions did people have of you?

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**GA:** There was one Palestinian who actually came ahead of me and he had studied engineering and I think he received the same scholarship three years earlier, or two years earlier. His name is Elie Sifri and he graduated probably in 1960. There may be, there may have been one other Jordanian/Palestinian, but that's it. There weren't too many foreign students there. There was some—a few from Europe, some maybe from India, very few. There weren't too many, in fact. We had a Foreign Student Association—some from Latin America, by the way—and I remember meeting, in this Foreign Student Association which met once a month or so, about forty, fifty people, maybe thirty-forty people. It may have been more, some graduate students. In fact, there were quite a few graduate students from, including from the Middle East, a few Egyptians, Indians, Latin Americans who were studying, doing their graduate studies in fields for which Oregon State was already famous: forestry, fisheries, food technology, things of this sort. They came specifically to Oregon State for those specializations, but there weren't too many of them.

I mean they—remember this is 1958, long before the 1968 rebellions by the young people that tore up kind of old institutions and old ways, the way society was organized and the way we knew things. It was a very quiet town, very safe obviously, people do not really lock their doors in these houses. We never locked the door at the fraternity and I think families I visited did not lock their doors. Corvallis was a small town at the time; maybe there were about probably fifteen thousand students in the university and Corvallis itself was probably smaller than that or maybe about that size, I'm not sure.

To most of the people I met in Oregon State, other than those who had travelled abroad—professors would travel abroad, some families went, well obviously had traveled abroad, not too many, usually the—someone who had served in the Foreign Service or was a missionary or something, and the family knew about countries abroad, but by and large, they didn't, and obviously someone like me was quite exotic to them and they wanted to learn more about Middle East and so on. And we engaged in conversation about everything and kinds of questions you ask me now, but also kinds of other questions. Of course, situations changed radically now. People are much more sophisticated in why they travel and much more knowledgeable.

But those were the early sort of days of—we started school right about ten days after I arrived, I think. Registration was a bit hectic, I didn't understand the process, I don't know. I understood what people told me; my fraternity buddies told me where to go, I went and listened to some opening remark by someone and then I think they put us through some tests to see how to place us, as freshmen. And we took an English test, I think, and then we took a math test. The math test I aced very easily and I went to the second round, so I took an advanced math test, although I hadn't been to school for three years, but I could remember my math. And they ask you what you wanted to study and I said "I'll study"—initially I wanted to study physics. And I had some people in the fraternity who were actually at physics and I spoke with them and I knew what the courses were about so I went, in fact, the first week, second week to the physics classes.

At the same time, my roommate John Weigant was an engineer. I think it was chemical engineering. And I noticed that by this end of the second week, the physics students hadn't really done any homework, but the engineering students were getting heavy homework immediately almost. And I thought well, you know, I—it looks like I'm sitting here not doing any homework, I'm not learning anything that's kind of appealing and I figured I'm not getting my money's worth or my scholar's worth. So, I decide well, you know, I think maybe I'll take engineering, sounds kind of challenging, interesting, you guys do all these difficult problems for homework and I like to be engaged, I don't like to sit around just reading my chapters in physics. And I got the impression that that's what I wanted to do.

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So, I went to talk with the professor in physics and in engineering to see if I could switch in the second week. And the engineering professor was surprised. He said "most people start in engineering and switch to other fields and we have very few customers who want to come into engineering, but you're welcome to try." So, I did and I finished. So, I went through the first quarter, took my basic courses and I think I came out with a 3.9 average the first quarter. So, I managed to do okay and I continued to do okay, but by the third year I began to drift from engineering because the first two years were very, it was a lot of fun, it emphasized the basic theory, physics, chemistry and mathematics and so on. I enjoyed that but then when we got to the applied part, third year, I began to lose interest.

Also, I began to develop interest in other things: politics, history, social studies, liberal arts, because I hadn't really been exposed to that and I somehow was missing it, so I started taking courses in the other fields and I found them more interesting and I eventually switched and graduated in social sciences and liberal arts. Most of my fourth year was all liberal arts. I had to make up for the two and a half years I wasn't taking any liberal arts courses. So, I really crammed my schedule, despite the fact that I was also student body president at the time. I enjoyed it, I don't regret any of that. I didn't know what to do next. We can discuss that.

**JD:** So, as you're taking these other courses, I'm guessing just kind of the atmosphere or the focus, certainly, in the liberal arts courses were quite different, probably engaged with a different set of students than you had been in engineering, can you talk just a little bit more about the types of courses and what the differences were when you started doing these other, you know, history and, courses.

**GA:** Yes indeed. Engineering fact takes you sort of into narrower and narrower paths. When you start as a freshman, you study basic principles, you know, physics, of chemistry, how the universe is put together, so to speak, which is fascinating for a young man. And then, as you move on, you get sort of—you shed these courses and you begin to take applied courses, solving mechanical problems, you know, like thermal transfer and things of the sort and you have a lot of calculations and you drill down into very specific problems. It got narrower and narrower and even the environment, so to speak, becomes much more competitive and again, drilling narrower.

And my colleagues in engineering, who I enjoyed to meet early on, having sort of met a lot of students and having sort of done my socialization, I found them a bit, sort of limited in their interests and the fact that they were busy all the time, doing this not enormous amount of homework, didn't really give them a chance to socialize. And engineers, you know, in any university, are known as being sort of geeks and so on, and I found that environment somewhat limiting.

At the same time, I got interested in student politics, I got interested in history, philosophy; as a young man, you know, you're mind is opening up all the time, coming from a traditional and somewhat kind of confined environment into the wide world, you begin to ask a lot of questions, beginning with the meaning of life all the way to "who's going to be my girlfriend, who's going to be my dancing partner at the prom?" All kinds of questions come to your mind and you kind of discover yourself, discovering your likes and dislikes and stretching the limit sometimes. And that fascinated me, the experience fascinated me. I thought I might as well take advantage of this intellectually stimulating environment and delve into some deeper questions.

And the first course I took, the first one or two courses I took in social sciences, I found the teachers fascinating, interesting. I think the head of the department was a Professor Walters at the time. There was a young Professor Green. I think he went on to teach in the Midwest somewhere. He was young, come from the university in the east and taught political science with an interesting twist, I found. I had not really been in a democratic country, so I didn't really understand the importance of constitutions and rules of the game and checks and balances and how power gets acquired and how it's used in society and political systems and so on.

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I felt that was fascinating. So I, he and I ended up being very good friends. And I took a couple of courses from him, wrote a couple papers that he found very fascinating. And then I took philosophy course from Professor Unsoeld who, as you know, was a great hero for us all because of his mountain climbing prowess and his fame. I found him one of the best teachers I ever had, stimulating and great. I had a history teacher who was Canadian, I forgot what his name was, who again opened my eyes to all kinds of understandings of contemporary history and late medieval and early European history. So, I found all that fascinating and I just, I loved it and I did that.

I was still active in politics. Surprisingly at, before the end of my sophomore year, I was elected junior class president, and obviously I met a lot of people in the year and a half I was there, so obviously that was kind of interesting, and that kind of whet my appetite for going for the top office, which is the student body president, and I campaigned for that and won. But in the process, I had met a lot of people, visited a lot of people in their homes, enjoyed my stay in Oregon and discovered, you know, the beauty of the state and the friendliness really and the casual nature and laid back nature of the Oregonians generally. I kind of enjoyed that. It gave me a chance to grow and experiment and visit people and get to know people. It's kind of a good experience for me. The faculty at Oregon State were very supportive; I found my interactions with them very constructive, they were very helpful to me and helpful to other foreign students, so the place was very friendly and very, very helpful.

**JD:** So, you've broached the topic of your involvement in student government and why don't we explore that a little further, about how you decided that you were going to actually run for student body president, and a little about your party and your campaign.

**GA:** Yes. Again, as I said, democratic practices were totally new to me. I mean, I—I mean we, when I grew up in Jordan, we had one what I would call free elections. I think it was 1956, but not the same; our parties were not organized in the same way that they are organized here. And the actual campaigns there were just kind of very amateurish. Politics in the U.S. I found a very fascinating field because it's almost developed into some kind of a science. I studied the demographics of the constituency, you have to appeal to certain majorities, you have to do that, and I think that, to me, was an interesting social experiment and I thought you know, why not get involved.

I was active with the Foreign Student Association initially and then I joined a couple of groups on campus, I think the YMCA and a couple of other groups, I don't remember, and sort of began to find that, you know, that some—and began also to see that student leaders were highly regarded on campus and somehow they were looked up to. I remember when I, in my orientation as a freshman, the student body president at the time, I think his name was Will Post, who I think was student body president three years before I got there, or four years, I'm not sure. And we were all in the—it was in the

auditorium, I think we were. I'm not sure where, whether it was the basketball court or whatever. He addressed the entire student body and I thought he's a leader and it's nice to—and you know, those were the days when you wanted to become a leader, you wanted to lead in science, in politics or something.

So, leadership, to me, was always something that I wanted to do, because I was first in my class, I always was up in the front on anything I've done and I thought why not try that as well. To me, it was fascinating, to me. So, I think at some time in my sophomore year I consulted with some friends and asked them to help me, from the fraternity mainly, fraternity brothers that I had met in the three fraternities I lived with. And I said, you know, "I would like, in fact, to run." And I think they—they were supportive, they said, some of them were not interested anyhow in challenging me or—politics is not for everyone and many of them did not show a great interest. But they were happy to support me. I had become very good friends with a large number of people.

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And in fact, we organized a small campaign and I ran for junior class president. I was elected. I was surprised I was elected. You had to campaign, you had to go out and talk to fraternity and the sororities and the dorms and introduce ourselves and why we wanted to run and so on. But that was kind of the precursor to a larger campaign the following year. And the following year, I decided to go for the student body president. And in fact I, financially I wasn't that comfortable. In fact, I was still working for myself, working part-time on campus. In the summer I would work in Portland, make—save some money and finance myself.

One—the other thing is I had not really developed the idea of organizing a party. I thought I would run, why not, but then I found out that the way these campaigns are run is that at least three people come together, a candidate for president of the student body and a vice—two vice presidents, one male, one female. And the female usually comes from Mortar Board and the male comes from some leadership position from the junior class, because there's a junior class council. Well, I didn't know, somehow there were other people interested in organizing parties and I decided well, let me see what I can find.

There was one person who was quite active with student government. His name was Tom Schooley. I didn't know him that well but I got to like him and I found him very dynamic, active, good ideas and so on, and I said "why don't we go for this?" He initially was thinking of running for student body president. I said "I think I'll take that position, but you're welcome to run as a vice president." He said he would. And then I didn't really spend much time to look for a female to be my vice president. I could have, there were many females that were very close friends of mine and I could have, but I didn't and actually we ran kind of a truncated party, Tom and I.

The party was—the competing party was headed by Erskine Austin, who was actually well-liked in the institution. He was with ROTC, I think, a marine, I believe, or air force, I'm not sure, very handsome, tall young man. And he selected, as a vice president, Mike Vidos, who evidently was well-known from his high school days. And as a female vice president, Barbara Altpeter?

**JD:** Mhmm, Altpeter.

**GA:** Altpeter. And I was friends with Barbara. Mike I did not know, but Erskine I had known because I was junior class president, I was—I sat in the student council and he was representing IFC I believe or something like that, so we got to know each other. So, I said "that's fine, I'll run with Tom and you guys run on your own." And they—we called our party the Action Party, Action sort of presaging the idea of taking actions for some reforms on campus, one of which was extending opening hours for young ladies in the dorms and other such things, but also some things related to campus environment. And Erskine and his colleagues called themselves, I think, the Thumper Party. So, and we debated, we had debates actually, on campus and so on. In the end, I was elected, Tom was not elected, Erskine was not elected and the two vice presidents were elected.

So I, we ended up with a kind of a, what do you call it, a hybrid government with myself as president and Mike and Barbara as vice president. I didn't have any problem with that. And in fact, I asked Erskine if he would serve as public relations director. And he came in the cabinet, so he was part of the cabinet. I had worked with him very closely. But in a way, I stood out from the others because I had quite a more liberal, I was a proactive liberal, left-leaning agenda for the



campus. They were a bit more conservative, I would call it. More politically correct and kind of nice people who were not about to rock the boat the way I was sort of challenging things.

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And—but in any case, we worked together for a year and this—I served a year that was, I thought, was very successful. I think I had a couple of crashes with, I believe, the administration or something. I don't remember what it was, but with the *Barometer*, the newspaper who took the side of the administration and I thought it should have been more neutral, and in fact if anything, pro-student, not pro-administration. I don't know what the challenge was. It had to do with, I don't remember, in fact. It's some regulation, I don't remember what it was. But I remember an emergency meeting of the senate that I called, in which I criticized the administration, criticized—James Dodge was a *Barometer* editor, he was on, sitting in the council, he was Blue Key as well and one of the leaders of campus and so on. And I insisted on writing a letter to the editor that he had then—that he published, objecting to some policies. But any case, that was kind of, kind of fun, I don't know.

But I—it was a great year and all that time I was taking a heavy workload of courses and so on and so forth and I did graduate in four years. But, it was an interesting year. It kind of puts you in a high from which, if you don't have plan, a bit of a let-down once I went to Portland, because I didn't know what to do next. I hadn't really thought about doing—I thought of going to graduate school, I thought I'd go to law school. We'll come to that later, but the idea is, you know, from there I essentially wanted to work for a while, just to see where I had to go, to get some experience.

And I walked into the office of the father of one of my colleagues from a fraternity in Portland who was the director of the Office of Planning and Development for Governor Hatfield. And as soon as he met me, he offered me a job, within five minutes. He—and he said, he called the general manager or the director of the department, said "listen, I have a young man here," and I remember his words, he said "he's a real pistol." I don't know what that means. And he said "you should take him." So, I went and met the director, so within a few days I was hired. I was very pleased to have a job, full time job, paid reasonably well, and I wanted to settle down a bit to see what I have done, how do I want to define myself other than to my homeland, how do I want to chart my future, education, everything else, and that would have been a good year. The experience was good. I was working with educated people doing studies and so on, so it was kind of fun.

I did that for a year and then I, marking time, I was asked by immigration to make up my mind, so I went back to school, but the easiest way to go back to school I—in again, liberal arts or economics, I went to University of Oregon for nine months, thought I'd go check out the graduate school. It was okay but it wasn't really satisfying. I—they had some good professors and I took some good courses, enjoyed economics, but it wasn't really satisfying and I wanted to go away somewhere, and at that point, I can go through that. Of course, I met my future wife the following year and decided to stay a little longer before I went on to my long-term career, which was to go to graduate school in economics, although that wasn't what I thought I would do first.

**JD:** So, just to fill in a few more details about your OSU years, I know you were involved in several other groups besides student government. You've mentioned Blue Key a couple of times, and you were part of the Acacia fraternity and you had also, early on, mentioned the Arab Student Association. Maybe just expand a little on your interest in being involved with those groups and sort of what your activities were with them.

**GA:** With the Arab Student Association, after the first two years, once I was elected junior class president, I lost interest and I—as I picked up interest in the campus life more generally and in what I would call American issues or American campus issues in the U.S. kind of issues. But I stayed in touch with my colleagues and we stayed friends and some of those who graduated later, we continue to be in touch.

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In the fraternity, I really enjoyed Acacia. I mean, of the three fraternities, probably Acacia was my choice, and it was, in the end. It was academically near the high-end. People, young people who were there were quite good achievers, they were very friendly to me, in the sense that if I didn't have any money, they told me not to bother, it's okay, and I eventually, I'd pay it back. When I worked in summer I paid back. They were very accommodating and again, I was only foreign student at Acacia. They thought that was kind of nice and we had very, very good time. The Acacia itself,

it was not a wild fraternity. Actually it was, as I said, academically oriented and it appealed to me as a place that's a little quieter than some of the others; serious, lovely people in there who came from different places, even outside Oregon, from California, from Washington, a couple other states, Idaho and so on. So, I thought the group was quite interesting and I settled in nicely. I participated in the various activities at Acacia Fraternity but I did not take leadership positions there because we had a housemaster and so on. I did not get into that.

The only other group that I remember being active with was the YMCA initially, my freshman and sophomore year. And that was led by—it actually had an office on campus. It was led by someone who was left of center, obviously. I think—during those days, you know, the Cold War was a big issue and how you dealt with the Soviet threat and with global politics was important, whether you want to bomb the heck out of the Soviet Union or you were working for peaceful negotiations, a rapprochement with the Soviet Union, were very diametrically opposed positions. And the vast majority of people in Oregon and on the campus were largely conservative. They viewed the Soviet Union as a source of evil, mischief, wars and all that. I was of the view, having come from an underdeveloped society and seeing that the Soviet Union, at the time, was for example supportive of Egypt against the invasion from, let's say, the British and the Israelis and French. So, where the Soviet Union was giving scholarships to a lot of my friends and colleagues to study in the Soviet Union, was giving aid and assistance in other countries, in Africa and the Middle East, I viewed it somewhat differently.

And without necessarily thinking through about what the consequences of my views were, I thought I was less hostile and what you might call, I was left of center, obviously, arguing that we should work for peace, we should not try to destroy each other, it's quite dangerous to build atomic bombs and prepare for war and all that. Suicidal. I would argue with my colleagues that way and I think the YMCA was a group of people, at least we had seminars and discussions, whatever meetings, where we discussed these issues. Other than that, I don't remember if I was active in any other groups.

**JD:** I had one note that perhaps you were involved in Model United Nations?

**GA:** Yes, that's right. I forgot about that. Yes, in fact I got interested in—of course I was into International Affairs from the time, from—because of my background in being in a region where, obviously, conflicts and the United Nations was active up in the region, on behalf of refugees and peacemaking and so on. So, I thought I would be interested in that. In fact, I asked and I joined, and I think it was two years. First year—or one year, I'm not sure, but I found it very interesting. I had a Canadian professor who was coach and we divided into countries. We had two country teams, I was—and then we went to a conference in San Diego. I remember one time when I was a junior at Coronado Beach. We traveled by bus. I think there was a whole busload of us, maybe. Or car, I'm not sure we went by van or bus, but there were several of us, maybe eight or ten or twelve, and my group represented, at the time, Canada and we were trying to simulate or emulate what Canada would do in the United Nations.

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And in those days, Canada was one of the peacemaking countries. It was not as, let's say, ideologically opposed to the Soviet Union as the U.S. had to be to because it was the leader of the western camp. But it was not left-leaning to the point where, let's say some of the most socialist countries in Europe were. Canada was in-between and always kind of played the role of mediating and trying to find peace. And I remember making the case about some conflict in the conference in San Diego, on behalf of the Canadian foreign policy. So that was kind of fun. Again, it taught you to get up, speaking English, and address people, try to be convincing and all that, and that came in handy when I campaigned for student body president. So, that was one area I enjoyed and I thought was interesting and educational.

**JD:** Well, and you're mentioning that it was the years of the Cold War, very much kind of the height of the Cold War, and being a university campus, often national and international politics are certainly part of the debates and sometimes there's visitors to campus and in our earlier conversation as we were talking about this interview, you mentioned that you had met, I believe he was then Senator John F. Kennedy?

**GA:** Yes.

**JD:** And Governor Nelson Rockefeller. Maybe they were fleeting meetings, but what does that mean to a college student?

**GA:** Well, I went to listen to, I think in '61, or sorry, '59 John F. Kennedy came to the campus and actually gave a speech. And I remember his speech was very uplifting about public service. In those days, serving in Washington was a noble mission. And he had sort of epitomized, you know, the educated, sophisticated, wealthy young man who wants to spend his life in public service and encourage other people to do the same. And he gave a speech in one of the auditoriums and at the end I came up and shook my hand, shook his hand, and thanked him for this. I told him it was inspiring. And in fact, after that I was—or during that time, I was thinking of taking up a career later on in international civil service, because I was not American and I was oriented toward the United Nations. That's why—that's not my interest, and model U.N. came up. So, I thought that was very inspiring.

Nelson Rockefeller, I met him at the University of Oregon. He was, I think, campaigning in '61. Again, it was a small, actually the auditorium was rather small. He gave maybe a big speech at the big auditorium, but somehow I find myself in a smaller place. And he gave a speech. I remember, actually, a quip that he made. I think it was a, he dropped a nickel on the stage and he said "you know, my father wouldn't let a penny drop. This nickel is, you have to—is the interest on a dollar for a whole year, so it's very valuable. He was trying to set himself as a sort of prudential kind of a person. And I went up and spoke with him a few words after, when everybody else was running up to the stage to talk to him, so. And sort of seeing these people who were inspiring to lead the U.S., it was very inspiring, I thought, and uplifting. And that got me even more interested in politics, and a long journey from the days when I started engineering. So, in a way it kind of opened my eyes that the U.S. and the western-based values are, in terms of democracy and participation and being very frank and open and so on and so forth. I thought it was fascinating, yeah.

**JD:** And so, when you were finishing your studies at OSU, you published an article, or an article was published written by you, called "My Four Years."

**GA:** Yes.

**JD:** What do you recall about the origins of that and how you shaped what you put into that piece?

[0:49:53]

**GA:** You know, I haven't read it since I wrote it, I don't think. It's just that the editor saw something interesting in my experience there, having come, not knowing a single person on campus and by the end of the second year, being president of the junior class and before my end of my third year, running for and winning the position of student body president and my, the kind of, some of the, what should I say, excitement I caused around some issues I was debating as a student body president, and wanted to do an interview with me I think, just to ask me, a Q&A and everything and so on. So, we agreed maybe it's best that I write a piece and so relate my four year experience. I'm not sure I did but I raised a number of issues, questions, and I wrote this article that summarizes what I saw on campus and what I felt and experienced as a student. At the time, I think it represented my thoughts, although my thoughts frankly evolved a lot since that time.

**JD:** Oh, sure.

**GA:** Even within a year or two. My thoughts of what is important, what is not, what I want to do with my career and so on, changed. But it was kind of interesting and it's for the record, so it's always there and people can reflect on that. So looking at it, I haven't read it but I think when it was republished in conjunction with that piece about my service as a governor, I looked at it quickly, and I must admit it's not badly written for someone who studied engineering and then social science. I've just been in the country less than four years, so it's there but I mean, I can't say much more about it.

I remember, though, putting in a comment, a sentence or two about the issue that I raised with the dean and the school itself, the university administration about inviting Linus Pauling to speak. Again, we're in the midst or at the height of the Cold War, Linus Pauling was a leading peace activist and I was fascinated by this scientist who came from Oregon, who made such great breakthroughs in science and now, on behalf of Oregon, in the service of peace, why not bring him in for either graduation or for a major speech on campus? And I think that the Dean of Students and others simply frowned at the idea and the idea got "absolutely no way." I think it was a general atmos—a general environment, general feeling around the university of denial of Linus Pauling at the time. It's true that he went to Oregon State but so he went, he veered off the course and he is *persona non grata*. Obviously, when in time, the university came about to honor him, of course, and recognize his achievements and his connection to Oregon State. But that's part of—so, as I said earlier, by

viewing the world somewhat differently from a typical Oregon State to campus student and I thought, you know, therefore people thought of him, perhaps, as being radical left of center, whatever.

And I kept raising issues like this in public. So in a way, some people respected the fact that I brought these up, others were irritated, perhaps. But it was kind of an interesting experience. Again, but everybody was very friendly, I mean nobody actually tried to silence me or sort of objected to my raising these issues, but I did have a sentence or two about the conservative environment on campus and why, in a campus, there should be openness towards free thought, dissenting opinions and so on, including the idea of inviting Linus Pauling that had been shot down by the administration more than once. And that was taken out of the article, so it stopped there. Any reference to Linus Pauling stopped there. You can see, yeah.

**JD:** I didn't know that.

**GA:** No.

**JD:** And you mentioned in passing about meeting Governor Hatfield. How did you—

[0:55:02]

**GA:** Well, he came to the campus and I was student body president and he made a—gave a speech perhaps, and he had his wife Antoinette and he recognized me as a student body president and shook my hand. Actually, he came up to shake my hand and started talking to me about my background and so on and later on, when I went to work for the State Department of Planning and Development, he knew that I started working for the state and sent a message that I could come down to Salem and see him whenever I wanted to, I and in fact, I did. I had some friends who were actually colleagues I met in Portland who were, one of them was Chief of Staff or the Majority Leader of the Assembly in Salem, and I used to go down with him to Salem and I did see Governor Hatfield once or twice after that. He remembered me, knew where I came from and so on.

So, he knew I was working in one of the agencies and that department was actually favored by Governor Hatfield. The department was set up, essentially, to wean Oregon's economy out of dependence on lumber mills and forestry and go in the direction of technology and science and education and so on. In other words, to get away from the smokestacks and move towards high value economic activity. It was a very visionary view, actually, and perception that he had. And the job, or the mission of that department, was to look for industries that could make use of the facilities and the advantages offered by the state in order to locate in Oregon and develop, especially in the direction of more environmentally friendly industry and more scientifically based industry, because Governor Hatfield was convinced that Oregon had a very high level of education and literacy and could offer advantages to high value, scientifically based activities, such as, I think Tektronix, was it? And Beaverton and a bunch of other companies that we were trying to promote. So, that was the idea. So, he was aware of the department, he gave it a lot of importance, he visited the department once or twice and he knew that—it was one of his favorite departments, in fact. So, and he knew I was there. So, for the time, first year or two, after that we lost contact.

**JD:** So, during this time, and I'm not quite sure of the order of events, whether you were there first and then went to U of O to study?

**GA:** Yes, I was, I studied for—I'm sorry, I worked for a year then I thought well, I better do something, so I registered for Economics at University of Oregon, there was a professor there, Professor, I don't remember his name, in a minute, who was quite well known, has authored many books and has, was involved in teaching international trade and economic development. So, I went down to see him, he encouraged me to come and he said "I'll offer you a scholarship so you can work with me on some research," and offered me a fellowship. So, actually paid, more than paid my expenses. So, I went down there, I enjoyed working with him and I took a couple other courses and I thought it was fine, but I thought I really wanted to get out of Oregon. I didn't want to stick around and for another four or five years, get a Ph.D. His name was Mikesell, Raymond Mikesell. And he was well known and I was interested in that, but I thought that kind of—working with him and taking some graduate courses. So, it whet my appetite to doing more advanced work in economics.

But my first love was really law. I wanted to study law and I wanted to go east rather than stay on the west coast. I'd been to the west coast, I'd been to California and Oregon, Washington, I wanted to go somewhere else. So, I applied—when I was working the first year, I applied for—or the second year, I'm not sure, when I was in Oregon—yeah, when I was early in my year at Oregon doing work for a masters and Ph.D., I applied for law school on the east coast. I applied to Columbia, I applied to NYU and to Harvard. Columbia accepted me and offered me to come and I think they gave me housing. NYU gave me a scholarship and Harvard didn't offer anything but they encouraged me to apply.

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And then I finished the graduate school at Oregon and I thought instead of just jumping into law school on the east coast, I'll find out what lawyers do. I knew some lawyers in Portland who were young lawyers. I was active with the junior chamber of commerce. So, I subscribed to the law journal of University of Columbia, which was one of the leading journals, and I tried to read some of the articles in the law journal and just as in the case of engineering, I discovered engineering gets narrower and narrower and more specialized, I found out that in law, whereas I was motivated by some grand principles and values of western civilization and how those gave rise to constitutional government and basic rights, human rights and the notion of citizenship and all that, which is how to organize, but inside I was really fascinated by all these issues and how the individual rights can be harmonized with the collective will of the people through institutions and all that. And I was fascinated by that.

But I found the law, the law journal articles to be very specialized and you find a thirty page scholarly article on some clause in the commerce clause of the Constitution, you know. Very detailed, case by case by case and citations and all that and I thought do I really want to do that? So, that turned me off a bit. At the same time, I was interested in economics because economics had just become fashionable, you know, with Kennedy and Walter Heller, being his chief economic advisor, recommending tax cuts to simulate the economy, and issues of economic policy became somewhat prominent in public discourse. And I thought well, I really don't know much about that, why don't I study this, that sounds interesting?

And so, I looked into University of Berkeley, was very well known, and I had visited Berkeley when I was at Oregon State once and I was, I loved the campus. And in the meantime, I was going with my future wife, Paula, and so I was—we were not sure we were going to get married before we go or, I certainly didn't want to leave her somehow. We wanted to do it together. And I thought perhaps, instead of going to the east coast, we would probably stay on the west coast and go to Berkeley. And Berkeley was a beautiful campus, great department and great university. The more I learned about it the more I got fascinated by it, so I applied there. I went down for interview, was immediately accepted. And I did not get a scholarship first semester.

Towards the end, just before we went down there, we had our first child, so took our first child, went down there, moved into student housing from my savings working at the State Department of Planning and Development and my wife was working at a bank. We had some savings, so we started the year there without any scholarship, with one child. Paula went to work for a bank, like she was before working, which helped a bit, but at the end of the first semester I got straight A's with an A+, A++, I think, in one of the theory courses. And I was immediately offered a fellowship. And from then on, I coasted because I was offered the fellowship or assistantship all the way through and then I found work in the summer, so in graduate school we were living large, so that was good.

But I enjoyed Berkeley, that was the tail end of the Free Speech Movement, the beginning of the protest against Vietnam, a lot of fervor, ferment—ferment and fervor on campus. Again, anti-institutional revolts and dissidence everywhere and I really absorbed that period, enjoyed it tremendously and opened my eyes to a lot of issues, a lot of sort of unexplainable issues in the U.S. politics, and met a lot of people with different points of view, especially people from other countries outside the U.S., from the U.S., were actually quite radical in their views and a whole intellectual ferment going on in Berkeley. It was a very, very exciting time.

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Although I was a married student and I was working part time and pursuing a degree, did not really give me the leisure and freedom to spend much time in demonstrations and so on, but I could see it, I sympathized with some of it and then I helped organize a group from the non-U.S. regions. We called it the Tri-continental Group or Tri-continental Association, made up of Asia, Latin America and the Middle East, students from these three regions. And we joined

the anti-establishment or the anti-institutional movement in Berkeley and went on strikes with them and so on. But I continued to focus on my graduate studies and finished my graduate studies essentially by '71, but I stayed one year and taught at California State University at Hayward, taught economics, and I was offered a tenure position then. But I also was invited to teach at University California, Santa Cruz and I almost went there but decided to not stay on campus or not stay on the west coast because I received an offer from the IMF.

The IMF recruiter came out to the campus, was looking for graduate students in economics finishing their Ph.D. And when he went back to Washington he offered to send me a letter of an offer of a job. And the offer at the IMF was very attractive. It involved international work. I had missed kind of traveling to the Middle East, I was way out on the west coast, enjoyed all the experiences I had gone through but I wanted, now as a professional economist, to address issues of development and growth and trade and so on in the Middle East or globally. And the IMF was a great opportunity. In fact, the salary they offered me was almost forty percent higher or fifty percent higher than what I was offered at University California Santa Cruz and with benefits and all that stuff. So, I figured well, that's a good organization to go in. So, at the end of that year we moved to Washington. We had gone home first to see my family, so then from there we came back to Washington.

**JD:** And you were there for quite a few years?

**GA:** Off and on. I was there for the first two years and then again, there was, there's a sort of an attractive force that kept pulling me towards the Middle East and I had some friends who lived in Beirut. One was a professor at the American University whom I had known and we corresponded. I think we met at a conference, he saw some of my papers and then he was putting together a think tank in Beirut in 1973, '74.

'73, '74 were pivotal years for the Middle East. That's when the oil price, which had been two dollars and twelve cents a barrel for twenty years, suddenly shot up thanks to actions by the Shah of Iran and Venezuela and other countries who wanted to liberate the price from the control of international oil companies, move to the direction of nationalizing the oil industry or pressing the companies to pay them more for every barrel they pull from the ground. So, there was an upheaval in the oil market and immediately prices shot up twelve dollars, fourteen dollars and higher. And that's a lot of money for countries that were receiving less than, well the price was two dollars, they received about twenty cents a barrel. All the sudden they're getting ten dollars a barrel and they're producing millions of barrels.

So, all this money began to flow into the Middle East, especially the oil-producing countries, and Beirut at the time was a financial center for the Middle East. So, this group raised money and said "let's establish a think tank and that as scholars, let us try to help the governments develop their economies, buildup the skills and open universities, research centers, health centers and so on, because they're getting a lot of money and instead of having that wasted, wasting money or resources on their own type of projects, we as scholars who have studied in the west, are familiar with all that, we're going to advise them on this."

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So, this person, who was a physicist actually, had heard about me, so he came to Berkeley and tried to recruit me for this group. And in fact, I was fascinated by the opportunity to go back to the Middle East and work as an economist and help countries in the region develop and prosper. And so, my wife and I and our three small children moved to Beirut and then I took over a project in Iraq, in Baghdad in '74. Long-term planning projects for administer, planning to sort of outline the kind of policies they have to undertake and investments they have to undertake in the education and scientific field, in order to make the county, in the future, more prosperous and with greater capacity to undertake industrialization, based on science and technology and education.

It was a very exciting adventure, I headed the project and teamed up with a large of number of scholars, and so I was only thirty-five years old. We had a large group of people, something like a hundred-sixty people on the project, something like twenty-seven, twenty-eight Ph.D.s from Iran, from the Arab countries. A lot of young people who were just coming out of university, trained them and so on. So, we were doing surveys of the educational system and developing plans for future education, so that was exciting.

And I ran the project for two years and when I finished, I decided should I stay in the Middle East or not. Our headquarters was in Beirut, so we came to Beirut in the fall of '75, looking for a place to live. I was going to stay there. But you recall that that year the civil war in Lebanon started. And in walking around, looking for an apartment, my wife and I began to feel the eeriness in the atmosphere, that there had been some clashes among some of the issues and it was unsettling and we decided this is not the place to try to settle with three kids here, because it looks like it's heading towards conflict. In the meantime, the IMF was after me to come back. They had offered me a double promotion if I could come back and so on, so I told them "well, let's go back to Washington and sit this out so we don't have to go through it." So, we came back to Washington.

So, I had actually resigned and left and I wasn't going to come back but then the situation in Beirut deteriorated. And in fact, it's good we came back because the war went on to a very destructive course and ended over fifteen years later. And then, at the IMF I did very well but then within less than ten years again I was called back to the Middle East. I resigned again and I went to, again on a new project that we were setting up. I was asked to help establish and organize a foundation, private sector-funded foundation that would provide humanitarian relief and development assistance to Palestinians everywhere; Lebanon and Syria and Jordan, Palestine itself. And I went there, helped set it up, organized it and organized the economic structure with a lot of the donors, the rich people, rich Palestinians providing money, and we organized. The association was called The Welfare Association, Palestine Welfare Association, set it up from scratch, wrote all the rules and programs for it and organizational structure, the fee structure, the financing and everything else, and enjoyed it. I was living in Geneva, Switzerland and doing a lot of good work in the Palestinian communities at the time. Again, private sector, we would not be associated with any official entity. We raised the money privately from very successful and wealthy Palestinians throughout the world and we put it to good use in small-scale projects to employ and train Palestinians in Palestine and Gaza and Lebanon, focus on women and children, education, health, cultural activities, training, skill development and so on. So, that was very, very good. And I left in '93, left it in good hands. It's prospering, it's still running very well. I served on the board for a few years and chaired one of the committees, but I don't have time for it now.

A year and a half ago we celebrated the thirtieth anniversary in Amman, Jordan. I was invited and I spoke at the thirtieth anniversary of its establishment. It's doing very, very well. It has very high reputation, very professionally run, one of the most efficiently run corporate ties to foundation. You know, foundations there are mostly family foundation, which means you know, the son leaves it—the father leaves it to his son and the sisters and the brothers sit on the board and they dispense with the money in certain ways. This foundation doesn't belong to anyone, it's really publicly, openly governed. It has very transparent government system, you can Google it and download all the material.

[1:15:35]

**JD:** I did. It's very active and it looks like they're doing amazing work.

**GA:** Yeah, yeah. That was my creation in '85. Actually, we signed the foundation, the charter in '83 and I volunteered for a year and gave back the fund, hoping that somebody else would take it. But they put in, they wouldn't let me go, so I went back and ran it.

**JD:** And with—

**GA:** When I finished, then I came back to the IMF again. Again, sort of "home sweet home" in a way. Well, I missed my professional work in economics and that was kind of, economics worked a different way but again, running a large foundation like this, raising money and doing projects on a small scale is fun but then after a point, you know, it's not my niche, it's not my kind of work. And I wanted to come back to economics.

**JD:** So, can you elaborate a bit on what type of economics, and when you say professional economics, what that means and what your areas of interest and expertise were, or are?

**GA:** Well, my interest in economics when days I was in Berkeley actually changed depending on my own age, my own evolving view of the world and where I think I find problems interesting. When I was at Berkeley, actually, the emphasis there by the professors, by the school, the school's famous for that, was on mathematical economics and I got fascinated by that. Having studied engineering and with good mathematics background I enjoyed that and I thought I would teach

theoretical economics. But then I got interested in a couple of issues. One is the whole question of the government of poor countries, how do poor countries escape the poverty trap and become more developed?

So, we began to—I took a course in development, found it fascinating. And the other issue that I was—I got interested in all the sudden, which came up to the seam unexpectedly is the question of oil and energy and all that. That was the time when the billions of dollars were pouring into Middle East and there was upheaval in the organization or the industry globally, the international oil companies were being eased out or renegotiated in terms of contracts where the host government, host government's going to get better share, or nationalize the industry, change the contractual arrangements. So, there was a lot of commotion in that field and I thought well, that looks interesting. You know, after all, I come from the Middle East.

So, I got interested in that, so those are the things I began to focus on, development and energy, oil and energy. And I did that for a while and at the IMF, initially, I worked for the Middle East department and I traveled to many of the countries in the region and I would advise them on the proper policies to follow to absorb the oil money and put it to good use in the interest of developing the country. Many of these countries were still poor. Even Saudi Arabia was a poor country at the time. So, I found that fascinating, working with governments and advising them on setting the right policies in order to chart the most optimal course for their development. Where do you invest the funds, how do you invest the funds, how do you run the budget and how do you manage the economy in such a ways that you don't—you avoid inflation and yet you provide the incentives for the private sector to grow and prosper and for the government to do the right thing in terms of providing public goods? So, that was interesting.

When I came back from Beirut I wanted to continue to do that and I came back, in fact, to the Middle East department. But then when I, as a Palestinian, again drawn to Palestinian issue at the time all my life, for me the opportunity came when a group of rich Palestinians asked me if I could help them organize this. Why they asked me, because a colleague of mine, friend of mine and I had set up a foundation here in Washington called The Jerusalem Fund, in 1977, raised money for it and ran it, basically that focus on education. We provided scholarships to young people, young Palestinians, especially in Israel, who in those days were still discriminated against as access to the best education in Israel. We thought we'd give them a leg-up by providing them with annual stipends of two or three hundred dollars to a thousand dollars, to get them to be able to move from their villages in Israel, to be able to live in Tel Aviv or Haifa, Jerusalem, because they came from small farming families and normally, although they were accepted at the university, they couldn't actually go and live in Jerusalem because it's rent and transportation and books and fees and all that.

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So, we established this fund to try to help these students and again, established it in a professional manner with appropriate board and management and assistance to evaluate the applications, for example. How do we know which student should get in? So, I developed a set of criteria for judging the application and for follow up. We had, we hired, I suggested we hire a local field coordinator, which we did, to make sure that these guys are actually studying the way they said they would, and so on. So, we established this kind of, that was our first experience in setting up a foundation of this sort, to help Palestinian students. And also we, well we donated money to other small charities at times, especially that are involved in education and the education field.

So, and through that experience somehow, which I shared with the late Hisham Sharabi, he was a professor at Georgetown University, well a very well-known intellectual. We got to be known as, from my experience in that foundation, got to be known by some of the Palestinian leadership in the private sector who wanted to establish this foundation. A couple of them I knew already personally because we were raising money for this foundation. I met some of them, they knew me, and they had known my role in organizing this foundation. So, that's why they called me into Geneva to ask me to join, to see if they can—if I could help them set up the foundation, and I did. And actually, February 12th, 1983 when we signed the papers and then I volunteered from '83 to '85, but then it got big and I had to go back and actually manage it full time and we moved to Geneva, spent a—lived there for eight years.

So, that was the other experience. So, that's one foundation here and the other foundation there. And they're still ongoing. Jerusalem Fund's doing well because I insisted in each of the foundations that we establish an endowment so that it generates the revenue to keep it going, so it doesn't, it doesn't fall under. And in fact, in most of these foundations, we established that the endowment would fund the administrative and overhead costs and the donations themselves that



came in would be transferred to the beneficiaries without any overhead deductions. And that's the same with the Welfare Foundation.

So, and that in fact, what that does to you, it helps you team up with other donors who want to send money to the Palestinians. I'm talking about institutions. But they don't have the capacity to monitor what happens to it when the money gets there, or the ability to process applications, so we offered ourselves at the Jerusalem Fund and later at Welfare Association. We would do that ourselves and absorb the costs, because we have an endowment from which we can drive that. In fact, the endowment generates more money than is needed for the administration, so we were comfortable doing this, and that's how we were able to enlarge our scope of operations and get more money from other sources.

The Jerusalem Fund is doing less of that now. We sort of graduated into cultural and social and political kind of discussions and educational material. More recently it's gone towards culture, so it's films and art exhibits and so on. And provides some humanitarian assistance to Palestinians in Gaza or on the strip in places. The Welfare Foundation, I think, sort of continued and grew, grew basically through these partnerships they developed with other institutions, including AID, including the Swiss development fund, the French development fund, the FID in the UK, Scandinavian funds that were trying to channel muck funds to the Palestinian communities, many of them come through Welfare now, so they have a budget about forty million dollars a year. Their own money is only about five to seven million dollars, for example. And that was the principle I set up from the beginning. In fact, it's doing very well.

[1:25:13]

**JD:** And would your reputation in those organizations in those areas factor into your involvement in the Palestine Monetary Authority?

**GA:** Yes, I provide, you know, spending so many years raising funds and channeling it to quote, unquote "good causes" for Palestine gave me the, you know, the credibility and I think the sort of the moral capital that I could use anywhere I wanted in Palestine. People knew me. People knew me also because I reached very high levels at the IMF. I was the director of the Fiscal Affairs Department, the largest and most weighty and intellectual department, and later director of the Middle East department where I oversaw the policies of the IMF in thirty-two countries. And the only Palestinian to have arrived at that level and the second Arab in the history of the IMF. In sixty years of IMF history there have only been two Arab directors of the Middle East department. I was one of them. So, they knew me. It didn't require much for people in Palestine to know who I was. And given the fact that I've given so much of my time and I left my job to do this gave me a lot of credibility. So, I had very good relations with everyone, I knew Arafat, he respected what I've done.

Also, in that context, when I finished the foundation in '93 and came back to the IMF, remember there was the Oslo Agreement to establish a transitional administration in Palestine for the Palestinian authority that ultimately would develop into a state. And when that agreement was signed here at the White House in '93 with President Clinton present and Arafat and Rabin in Paris, I had just arrived at the IMF a month before, two months before. I arrived in August, the agreement was signed, I think, September. And so the IMF and the World Bank both wanted to help in this process of establishing a Palestinian autonomy, and ultimately a state. The IMF had never dealt with that issue before. So, the managing director of the IMF, who was the top man at the IMF, looked around and asked and found out that I had been actually active in Palestinian affairs, and in fact I had written a couple of—three books that one was just reissued by Routledge called *Palestinian Economy*. They just sent me a copy. It was out of print, so they reissued it.

**JD:** Excellent.

**GA:** And my writings on the Palestinian conflict were recognized. I have many other writings on the issue but—so he asked the director of the department, I was just a senior advisor, if I could help to coordinate the technical assistance or the expertise of the IMF, put to good use in helping the Palestinians establish an autonomous government. So, I went in November 1993, two months after the Oslo agreement, at the head of a mission to see how we can transfer the civil authority from the Israeli military in the West Bank and Gaza to the new Palestinian authority so they can run their own affairs and collect their own taxes and their own budget and so on. So, we ended up meeting with the generals or Israeli generals who were running the administration of both the West Bank and of Gaza, met with all the Israeli experts who were running a budget and finance and banking system and so on.

And I kept going back there every two or three months to see how that process is going, and we had the Palestinians form teams specializing in different aspects of the economy and we would meet with them and would provide them with guidance and reports and so on, how to set up the Ministry of Finance, how to set up the Central Bank or monetary authority and how to collect taxes, whom do you have to train to be able to do that, the administration to be set up everywhere. So, I was a leading person in that group from the IMF and I coordinated with the World Bank, with the Europeans who were giving money, with the USAID and anybody else. So, I did that for about two, three years.

[1:29:53]

In the meantime, when Oslo agreement was signed in September, September 13th, 1993, Arafat was still living in Tunis and PLO hierarchy was still all in Tunisia. And the first trip I took in November to Palestine, I met with the Israelis. I went to Tunis through Rome to report to Arafat on what I saw and what he expects to inherit if he goes in there. He hadn't yet gone that September. He didn't come in, actually, until July 4th the following year, '94. So, during that period I would go in on behalf of the IMF and the World—together with the World Bank and push the agenda forward, push the process of transfer of authority and training Palestinians and guide them and take the authority away from the Israelis and train the Palestinians how to do it. And then I would go to Tunis and report to Arafat. So, I got to know Arafat. I had actually met Arafat before when I was in the foundation. He knew what we were doing. And I knew him.

So, but during this period I worked with him and his people in Tunisia to prepare them to come in. And eventually, the second year, by July 1994, Arafat came to Egypt and Gaza and established a limited autonomy over in Gaza and Jericho, initially, I mean eventually, the West Bank. So I had been involved in that as well, in addition to my work in the foundation. And when I, when—Arafat had wanted me to come back and serve as Administer of Finance and for other capacity and I refused. One, I was attached to the IMF and the professional work that I wanted to do and I'd had enough of Palestine for the time being and I liked what I was doing at the IMF. And I was getting to be a senior in a responsible position, I enjoyed that. I let it go, but he pressed me two or three times and I said "no, I don't want to come."

When he passed away and Mahmoud Abbas was elected, he was elected on a peace platform. He wanted to pursue the role of the state for Palestinians through peaceful means. He did not want to go to—in fact, he was against the violence. And he wanted to build institutions and establish kind of a new—the basic foundations of a Palestinian state. So, he got in touch with me, asked me if I could come and take over the Palestine monetary, which is kind of a scaled down central bank for the banking system. They had had some difficulties with the fund, with the authority because it was partly politicized and, to some extent, the management of the leadership of that authority was not very affective and it was in kind of a bad shape.

I was actually asked by him, also, if I wanted to become a minister of finance or minister of whatever. I said "no, I don't want to be—I don't want to minister. If you want me to come and take over the monetary authority and see if I can fix it, I can do that." He said "it's yours," so I went back and immediately after I finished the IMF, within three or four months and became Governor, Chairman, I reorganized the board, he had kicked off the old board, got a new board, changed the law, passed a law, we structured the whole institution, took over some of the banks that were in bad trouble, reorganized them and closed one bank and straightened out the financial sector, anyhow. And the Palestine Monetary Authority was essentially completely modernized in about three, three and a half years that I spent there.

And the IMF had sent a mission. The IMF, part of what it does, it sends missions or experts to work with central banks, to help them modernize and improve and reform their systems. They had come, initially, when I got there in the spring of 2005 and they suggested a number of reforms and then, just before I left towards the end of 2007, they came again. And there were—and they had followed the progress we'd been making, because I was come—I would come back to the IMF and report to my colleagues. I knew them, so. And they were really quite stunned by the distance we had covered in these three years. And I remember their assessment before I left was that "the PMA has undertaken such fundamental reforms that it has, as central bank, has become a model for other central banks in the region and beyond." That was their statement.

[1:35:02]

So that was a nice job but then we had a son who has very serious health conditions. Actually, he's in the hospital just now. He has liver disease and Crohn's disease and a bunch of other stuff.

**JD:** Oh, I'm sorry.

**GA:** And he was getting a bit seriously ill frequently, so I told President Abbas "I have to leave." I didn't finish my term but I continued, he wanted me to stay as an advisor. Fortunately I had brought someone from the Ministry of Finance who was my deputy for two years, as a Deputy Governor and I was promoting him to become Governor after I—he was ready to take over so it was easy. I had good relations with them and President Abbas wanted me to stay as an advisor and I went back two or three times to make sure that they continued on the same path. So, then I came back here.

When I came back I wanted to slow down a bit but then the financial crisis hit in two thousand—late 2007, early 2008—and the managing director of this institute, Charles Dallara, and the chief economist here grabbed me and said "you have to come here." The financial sector was imploding, practically. Wall Street was collapsing, government was coming in with seven hundred billion dollar bailout. The economy was going south almost on a downward spiral. Nobody knew what the unemployment would be, nobody knew whether we were going into a deep depression like the thirties or other countries going through the same experience, and as an institute that answers to the global financial institutions around the world and is funded by them, we were supposed, as a think tank, to think through all these problems and advise the banks as to how best to proceed and have a dialog with the official side as to what policies would be best suited for the situation so we can get out of the crisis. And although I was sort of close to the end of my second or third career now, it drew me in and I decided well, that was too exciting to me, so I stayed. And now, next to this coming year, 2015, I probably will retire. Not retire, but I will move on. The situation has calmed down now, so I think it's not so scary as it was five or six years ago. So, I was hired as special advisor to the managing director and he asked me "do you want to take the Middle East and Africa?" I said "that's fine, I'll look after that, I know that region very well." So, I was special advisor to the managing director and director for Africa and the Middle East and then, now we have a president in place of the managing director. I've been a counselor to him at the institute and director for Africa and Middle East. And I hope I will be able to move on to other things.

**JD:** As you've been talking about all these different positions that you've held and various projects that you've helped set up and direct and get off the ground, I've wondered whether you feel that kind of your hybrid of your Jordanian roots and your education in the U.S.—

**GA:** Palestinian roots I would say, more than Jordanian.

**JD:** Palestinian, alright, thank you, how kind of that blended perspective has shaped how you think about these issues and your approaches to your economic work? Or is it not a factor?

**GA:** You know, I was very deeply engaged in the Palestinian cause and Palestinian issues for most of my life. In the last few years, I've begun to move away from that to some extent and be more interested in global issues. So, my interest now really—not now but has been the last few years—more on global financial issues, global economic issues, larger challenges facing Middle Eastern countries. Well, that interest of a combination of world economics and political economy, geopolitics and so on, and frankly, going forward, probably I would begin to settle down my interest or engagement, involvement in economics.

[1:39:41]

One of my passions is art history and opera music and opera and I'm going to spend more time there. I, I've come along the last twenty years or so, longer than, I would say, maintained an interest in studying a number of issues around the sort of flowering of western art in the early part of the Renaissance; Italy, Europe or Germany, and there—whether that had roots outside Europe, especially in the Middle East. And that's what I'm fascinated by. I would probably end up writing something, another book or series of papers on kind of the eastern origins of the Renaissance in Europe, the coming of Byzantine art and Byzantine art being inspired by Islamic art, which is then Persian art. So, my interest extends across that region all the way into the first two or three centuries of the Renaissance art. So, that and my enjoyment of music and opera will probably take up some of my time.

I might do some advisory work in economics. I'm being invited to give papers and lectures and I'll do that probably, but I'm not going to work with only economics. In fact, I'll probably donate most of my economics books. I have a library at home which is consisting, mostly now, I have a large Middle East section and then a history section, most of the rest is art,

and economic and science, very reduced, I'd probably donate the rest of those, so that's it, completely all of that around the last fifteen years.

**JD:** Well, I guess to bring it full circle, the interview full circle, you've reflected a lot on your time at OSU and sort of what it brought you and how it's affected your life and your professional choices and I thought we might end with some final thoughts or advice that you might have to current and future OSU students about what they should expect from the university or try and accomplish while they're at OSU?

**GA:** You know, I think part of my experience is colored by the fact that I tried to specialize in engineering too soon. You know, most liberal arts universities in the U.S., especially in the eastern part, but also the western part to some extent, have this two year, little education foundation for all students before they can go on junior, senior year to specialize in something, field, and then go on to graduate school or law school or medical school. I came to appreciate that and in fact missed those two rich years when I was really young and my brain was still fresh and green, to be exposed to the great literature of the world and to the classics and to the fundamental issues of philosophy and getting a perspective on history and culture, all that. So, I began to compensate for it later in my life. I spent a lot of time in museums and churches in Europe studying Byzantine art. I have been all over the place in Athens and the Middle East looking at icons and trying to relate, you know, the development of Byzantine art and looking at the Islamic on Byzantine art and then earlier Renaissance, spent many weeks in Italy looking at churches and paintings and museums and studying all that. My—I think that kind of thing I should have done probably early in my life to satisfy my curiosity and then went on to do what I wanted to do. I don't regret what I did but I find that is missing.

I think my advice to Oregon State, despite the fact that it is a university that's focused on the sciences, especially the applied sciences, all the engineering, oceanic stories and forestry and everything else, that they really make space for young people who come with a lot of questions, give them the opportunity to ask those questions and seek answers, to debate basic issues the first year or two before they sort of shove them into the narrow fields of specialization to produce technically equipped graduates.

[1:44:56]

And if I could do anything for the liberal arts scholars, I'd probably do it. And in fact, I will at some point donate something to the university in liberal arts, to encourage people to spend time in the library, to look at books, to read history, material, people of the Renaissance, what they thought, what they bring to the history of the great scientists of history, whether they're the Arabs or Persians or whatever, astronomy and science, and see how civilization moved over time and what were the basic issues facing civilization over time and how Europe tore itself apart with prodigious wars and how we came out of all that to create a modern cooperative and harmonious civilization.

These are questions, I think, that, you know, I'm asking now and I've studied them, I've been reading all this stuff, but I mean it would be nice for a young man to go through an intensive experience, actually, understanding that. Not necessarily a hundred percent, because young people will never get it a hundred percent. To be part of that dialog and that discourse with professors who are experts or other students who are more equally inquisitive, for a period of a couple of years and then maybe spend three years to graduate, or five years. That would be my best advice to young people coming in. And if I can do anything at all I would. In fact, what I might do is donate some funds to get people to spend a bit more time looking at art, looking at culture, looking at historical issues and delve deeper into it and write papers about them, discuss them, debate them, and then move on to the upper classes, junior, senior, graduate, whatever they want. I think there's some, there's merit to that.

I mean, obviously there are many scholars who wrote about this, Bloom and others who think that, you know, western education is going the other way. People drop out of college in order come—to start small tech companies. Pretty soon they're just geeks becoming rich. And there are—there's room for those, obviously, but I still think there's room for also, what do I call it, the humanities and the kind of education that opens people's eyes and opens people's minds to make them actually better citizens and, I hope, happy individuals.

I keep saying, you know the British Empire was essentially managed by a few thousand civil servants. It was huge, covered one third of the earth. Three thousand civil servants, most of whom, we don't want to say came from good families, but most of whom had gone to Oxford, Cambridge and studied the classics. Most of them studied classics. They

did not study administration or management or leadership or any of this crap that we pay attention to now. They were scholars of Greece and Rome, they were—they could speak Latin, they could write in Latin or Greek, and in fact if you read the documents of the British Empire's fleet, you see a lot of phrases in Latin thrown in, into their writings about India or about Kenya or about the Middle East or wherever. And I think you need people who are bright, who will have absorbed the culture and the values of societies that got organized and became prosperous and how we all got around and about—so we're about to do that. So, there's room for that and I think I would encourage Oregon State to continue to invest in liberal education and young people to go that way, at least for the first two years.

**JD:** Do you have any additional thoughts that I perhaps, in error, a topic that you wanted to make sure we talked about that I didn't specifically ask you about?

**GA:** Well, I think we did a lot, I don't know if you can take all that down.

**JD:** We did. Well, then I'll thank you for your wonderful, thoughtful recollections.

**GA:** Thank you.

**JD:** Thanks for participating in the project.

**GA:** Okay, thank you. And thank you for taking the time. I hope you find something that can—useful material in all that.

**JD:** Certainly.

[1:49:14]