

Druze History in America

History of the Druze in America

Synoptic Outline

Introduction

The term history has been applied to two somewhat different concepts. On one hand, it designates the sum total of human activities, and on the other, history is the record of the events rather than the events themselves. The object is to know about everything including the thought process, hope, feelings, and the actions of the community. Whatever success daring or indefatigable individuals may achieve, the fact remains that the history of the community must be more and more a cooperative work. The understanding of the vital facts, which contributes to the growing spirit, mutual tolerance, appreciation, and sustaining the values and culture of the community, is the essence of the whole endeavor. It is but human that the truth gets replaced by truth, nevertheless, the attempt should be made to approach deep truth by defining undercurrents, events and their projections.

The inflow of the Druze immigrants increased in the beginning of the 20th century. America was the melting pot of various cultures and traditions. It was essential for the Druze to sustain their identity, culture and faith. The ingenuity of the Druze in this respect has been the driving force for their survival and their history in America. Therefore, early Druze settlers established a system and an organization which was designed to protect the Druze identity, culture, faith as well to serve the Druze brethren in the highest traditions of "Bani Marouf." These concepts and undercurrents caused the creation of the first Druze organization in America in 1908.

This organization extended itself in different states where Druze habitats were established. The movement helped make a family of the Druze families in America and brought them closer to each other. Within their meager means, they served the cause of the community and the faith. It was in 1947 when the American born Druze were encouraged to take over the leadership of the Druze community in America. They expanded the concept, system and organization which could not only sustain the Druze identity, culture and faith, but also provide grounds for development and extension of the same on national level.

The results of such movement and encouragement to the American born Druze created a tradition of a yearly convention. An informal but strong organization which adopted the name and style "American Druze Society" was thus born. In 1962, the American Druze Society could work out a Constitution and Bylaws which provided the foundation for further development of the organizational structure of the Druze community in America.

On the 25th convention (Silver jubilee) in 1971, a thought process was initiated where the need for a formally incorporated organization with a tax exempt status could be realized with the cooperation and support of the community as a whole. Thus, the Druze activities which started on a national level in 1947, provided a formal organizational structure in terms of constitution and bylaws in 1962, finally crystallized as an incorporated body under the name and style the "American Druze Society." The tax

exemption was obtained in 1978.

The history of the Druze community and its organizations could be perhaps understood better by dividing it in three periods. The first period from the early Druze immigrants to 1946 where the community established and sustained itself. The second period from the 1947 to 1970, where the community broadened its base and moved towards developing and formalizing organizational infrastructure along with yearly conventions. The third and the final phase from the 25th convention in 1971 to the present day which led to the incorporation of the American Druze Society and expansion of the activities of the Druze community. The material has been taken from authenticated written sources. It was discovered that some information was missing as there were no records available for some years. It shall be our endeavor to trace all published records and improve the articulation of the history of the American Druze Society, and its organizations.

Druze Emigration and its Aftermath

By Julie Makarem

The true name of the Druzes is 'al-Muwahhidun' which means those who believe in the Unity of God. Although this does not apparently distinguish Druzism from other faiths, it has a deeper meaning which does, indeed, make it unique. Druzism united in the first time in the history of philosophy between matter and form, or in other words, between the First Cause and the Final Cause.

In ethics, the Druzes class truthfulness and veracity to be their final moral code. In Jurisprudence, they were the first to give equal rights to women. Moreover, they declared slavery illegal, abolished social discrimination, and preached fraternity and equality one thousand years ago when such noble ideas were not considered in the world to be even worthy of being discussed. For this reason, we must be proud of being Druzes, the followers of such a progressive religion, the motto of which is "Reason Is Above All."

Druze emigration to North America began in the nineteenth century. The Druzes were settled in the areas of southern Syria, Lebanon, and Galilee. These people have preserved their identity wherever they have resided, and they have remained a closely integrated society. They have always defended and preserved their independence, and they have upheld their virtue.

Since a Druze considers his body a mere robe for the soul, he does not fear death for it is only a tearing of his robe. In Epistle 35 of the Druze Scriptures, Hamza ibn 'Ali says, "Whoever fears a human being like himself falls under his sway; the Unitarian is valiant by virtue of his faith." Belief that the number of days of one's life is fixed, not to be exceeded or diminished by a single day, and that the soul after leaving one body is immediately reborn in another, enhances courage and dispels fear of death. Thus, when the Druzes began to emigrate, they were not running away from the changes and the upheavals that were constantly surrounding them in their father-land; on the contrary, they merely intended to have a short absence from their countries to be able to better provide for their families and do away with poverty for their families.

Thus, the early Druze emigrants had no intent of a long absence from their homelands, nor did they envisage a permanent stay in the country to which they had immigrated. The married men had left their wives behind, and those who were single returned to their homeland for a bride when they decided to marry. Few brought their wives to live with them in the West until well after the turn of the century.

The Druzes now live in Latin America, especially in Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina, and Mexico, with smaller communities in Chile and Colombia. There are also some Druzes in the West Indies and the Philippines. Several thousand reside in the United States of America and in Canada."

In the United States, the Druze have established 'El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat,' the 'American Druze Society,' the 'American Druze Foundation,' and the 'Druze Council of North America'.

The Druzes in Canada have formed the 'Druze Association of Toronto,' the 'Druze association of Edmonton', and the 'Druze Association of Montreal.'

Those in Brazil have founded the 'Lar Druzo Brasileiro' or the Druze Center in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

In Mexico, there is 'La Lega Drusa' or the 'Mexican Druze Committee.'

A Druze Association has also been established in Buenos Aires, Argentina, under the name of 'Association de Beneficencia Drusa' or the 'Druze Bacora of Argentina.'

In Venezuela the Druze have formed the 'Venezuelan Cultural Druze Society.'

In Adelaide, South, Australia, 'The Lebanese Druze Community Incorporated' has founded 'The Druze Hall,' where the Druze community meets on occasion. In Melbourne, the Druzes have established 'The Australian Druze Association of Victoria,' and in Sydney, they have established 'The Australian Druze Association of New South Wales.'

The Druzes in Europe have formed the 'British Druze Society', and the French Druze Association'.

In Africa, the Druzes have established the 'Nigerian Druze Committee.'

When the Druzes began to emigrate, they were not running away from the changes and the upheavals that were constantly surrounding them in their father-land; on the contrary, they merely intended to have a short absence from their countries to be able to better provide for their families and do away with poverty for their families. c

The first Druze immigrants landed on the shores of the North American Continent in the late 19th century, and as the numbers of these immigrants rose, there was a strong desire and need for brotherhood, fellowship, kinship, and camaraderie among them. In 1907, a group of those immigrant

Druzes who had settled in and near Seattle, Washington, and who were known for their sincerity and enlightenment, organized the first fraternal organization which they called "El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat." (El-Bakaurat) is an Arabic word and means the first fruit. It was properly used to indicate the first fraternal-Druze society in the United States. There is on record that Mr. Assaad Cramery from Ain Zahalta, Lebanon, along with Dr. Nasseem Saleem from Jubieh, Lebanon were the original founders of the "El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat." Mr. Henry Flehan, ADS historian, has on record an emblem of the Seattle organization dated February 8, 1908. Mr. Abbass Dakdouk from Cleveland, Ohio gave Mr. Flehan the emblem in trust.

(El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat will be used throughout this work for the spelling of the Society regardless of the manner in which it was written in any of the accounts researched to produce this work. This spelling was taken from the badge of Branch #2 El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat in Detroit, Michigan).

Therefore, a fraternal organization in Seattle, Washington under the name of El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat was dully and legally registered under the laws of that State. On Sunday, February 1, 1908 and in the city of Seattle, Washington, the first meeting of The Duruz Society was held. Its aim was to promote unity and brotherhood among all its members. A set of Bylaws was written and all members present ate salt from a bowl symbolizing unity, harmony, and oneness. Each member took an oath saying, "I affix my name and join this organization, agreeing and accepting all its rules. I swear by the Creator of all beings, and by the Druze honor to help and uphold all of its laws." Everyone then signed his name in his own handwriting. The following is a list of the signee's:

Kassem Saad El Deen Shaar, Ali Kassem Jaber, Sleiman Hassan Harb, Khalil Hussein Wahbeh, Mahmoud Ali Abou Ali, Ousman Ibrahim Al Gharib, Nassib Milhem Bshir, Nayef Mahmoud Al Hameedy, Salim Najm Jaber, Kassem Rasheed Melhem Al Shaar, Hussein Kassem Yahaia, Troudy Mohamed El-Jowhary, Rasheed Melhem Jaber, Kassem Hassan Zayour, Abdallah Youssef Najm, Mahmoud Salman Najm Raydan, Hassen Farris Rizk Karamah, Daoud Hassan Harb, Hussein Mahmoud Abou Saady Slim, Shaheen Mohamed Attaya, Mahmoud Abdallah Ahmed, Kassem Hassan Zayour, Saeid Abdallah Ahmed, Youssef Salman Al Ghazel, Ameen Hamdan El-Jowhary, Saleem Salman Faraj, Shaheen Ali Abou Ali, Najeeb Moustafa Jamal, Kassem Mahamed Yahia, Morshid Salman Najm, Hussein Hamad Shaheen Al Mishhim, Rasheed Slim Yousef Hamad Salman, Ibrahim Mahmoud Najm, Najm Kassem Jaber, Mohamed Fahd Hassen, Mohamed Hussein Hamadeh, Shahram Rada Hassen, Yousef Zain ElDeen Wahbeh, Ameen Hassen Hussein Hamadeh, Ali Ahmed Shamseldeem, Mohamed Mahmoud Nasr, Ameen Hussein Ali Karamah, Saeid Kassem Mohamed Assaf, Mohamed Kassem Nasr, Daoud Ismail Kassem Hammed, Moustafa Ameen Al Gharib, Salman Youssef Al Mishhim, Youssef Hussein Youssef, Hussein Mahmoud Karamah, Farris Melhem Hassen, Ibraheem Assad Nasr, Saleem Mahmoud Abou Ali, Majeed Saad Al Deen Al Shaar, Melhem Ibrahim Salah, Faye Keywan, Shaheen Mohamed Wahbe, Rasheed Youssef Yahia, Ismael Hamad Abou Ltife, Kassem Ahmad Hamed, Fandi Kassem Mohammed, Mohammed Salman Nasr, Melhem Mohammed Abdel Salam, Saeid Hussein Alwan, Nassif Mahmoud Abou Ali, Salman Jammoul Al Hassanieh, Aref Amin Al Gharib, Ali Al Abine, Daoud Melhem Jaber, Mohammed Abbass Yahia, Najeeb Ahmad Naked, Saleem Wahbah, Majeed Farris Jaber.

During the early years, the organization provided financial and civil assistance, as well as moral support to all its members. On July 25, 1911, an Agreement to Incorporate was drawn up, and on the 3rd day of August, 1911, The Duruz Society was incorporated as AL BAKOURAT ALDERZIET in Seattle, Washington. The document of the ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION OF AL BAKOURAT ALDERZIET is in the National Office of the American Druze Society archives. It reads as follows:

AGREEMENT TO INCORPORATE

THIS AGREEMENT made this the 25th day of July, A.D. 1911.

WITNESSETH:

FIRST: That we, the undersigned, S.A. Cramery, C. Albert, Thomas Jaber, Salamon Hamad, and D. M. Jaber, subscribers hereto, have associated and do hereby associate ourselves for the purpose and with the intention of forming a corporation.

SECOND: That the name of the said corporation shall be AL BAKOURAT ALDERZIET.

THIRD: That the objects for which said corporation is formed are and shall be: To render fraternal aid and assistance to any members of said association who might become sick, to pay the sick benefits and fraternal expenses of any of its members; to acquire, furnish and maintain a place or places for reading rooms, libraries and social meetings for the members of this association, and in all lawful ways to acquire, hold or dispose of any and all real and personal property necessary or convenient to carry on the uses and purposes now or hereafter made the objects of this association; and finally to cultivate acquaintances and good fellowship, and form a more perfect union among its members; and do all the things deemed best to further the objects and interests of this association.

FOURTH: The said corporation shall be located in the City of Seattle, King County, State of Washington.

WITNESS our hands the date herein first above written (signed by each of them) that the following notice to-wit:

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

Notice is hereby given that on the 3rd day of August, A.D., 1911, at the hour of 4:00 p.m., on said day in the New York Block, situated in the City of Seattle, County of King, State of Washington, there will be held a meeting of the subscribers to an agreement to incorporate the Al Bakourat Al Derziyet, for the purpose of effecting an organization of said corporation and adoption of the By-Laws and the election of officers. The following officers were elected:, to wit:

S.A. Cramery, President

Thomas Jaber, Vice President

Salamon Hamad, Secretary

D.M. Jaber, Assistant Secretary

C. Albert, Treasurer

Attest: (Their signatures and that of the notary.)

(Mr. S.A. (Assad) Cramery was obviously the person among the group who could read and write English since he could sign his name on the document. The signatures of the other officers were in such a way which was apparent they could not read nor write English. There is no record of the true names of the officers since they were not recorded in Arabic. My sleuthing leads me to believe Najm Kassem Jaber could have been changed to the westernized Thomas Jaber, and D.M. Jaber changed from Daoud Melhem Jaber. These names on the list of the original members. As for C. Albert and Salaman Hamad, I would venture at the name, Saeid Abdallah Ahmed, on the list of members to be C. Albert. My only clue for this guess is that there was a Saeid Abdallah Kabbul from Ain Zahalta in Detroit, Michigan who went by the westernized name of Sam Albert).

The 'El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat' meetings were held once a month, and the members met on the first Sunday of every month. Organized meetings were conducted, and impeccable records were kept. Dues of .50 cents per member were collected monthly, and absent members without a valid reason for the absence were fined 25 cents. A 25 cent fine was also levied on a member for tardiness, as well as for talking out of turn. If a member talked badly of another member in public, and if a member's conduct was not conducive to the Druze Social Values, the member was suspended from the meetings for a definite period of time.

The goal of the Society was brotherhood, and it carried out this goal in every sense of the word. The 'El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat' paid doctor bills and hospital bills for any member who needed the help. Invariably, these members were able to pay the money back to the Society when they had recuperated. The Duruz Society also paid the cost of funerals for those whose families who required the assistance. Loans were made to members threatened with bankruptcy, as well as to those who needed help in starting a small business. As the organization grew, it thrived from its good deeds and the perception of brotherhood among the Druze community. The 'El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat' was as it should be! Unity, harmony, and oneness among all the members. The Society flourished and continued to be very effective and active. It contributed to the cultural, educational, and modernizational projects undertaken by the Druze in Lebanon and in Syria. In the name of patriotism and Druzism, the Seattle 'El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat' showed a great sense of responsibility and commitment here at home in the United States and abroad in Lebanon and in Syria.

Seattle's Mother Branch' continued to be very effective and active, and 'S.M. James recalls, 'In July of 1914, the Druze held their first convention in the Middle West. At times during the convention, there were 500 or 600 people. Visitors came from Canada, Mexico, and Central America. The executive committee of the convention rented a big building. They put in a kitchen to serve Syrian food everyday.

The city invited the city officials of St. Joe. After dinner, the mayor and the Chief of Police thanked the committee and admitted that they had never tasted such good food as they had that night. The convention lasted almost ten days. There was my Mujwizw, Dapke, Ghanna, and lots of fun day and night."

As the early immigrants settled in the United States, they inquired into the possibility of beginning branches in their cities with the Seattle branch as the 'Mother Branch' because the need for brotherhood among the Druze immigrants grew very strong. The candle had been lit, and Druze esprit de corps had begun, there in Seattle, Washington. One of the Seattle settlers, Mr. Assaad Cramey, moved from Seattle, Washington to Cleveland, Ohio and settled among the large Druze community there. He was instrumental in having organized the first branch of The Druze Society in 1916 in Cleveland, Ohio. It was called Branch #1 El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat.

The organization continued to grow, and as the founding members had done, the new members shared in eating the salt that marked unity, harmony, and oneness among all the members. For the newcomers, the eating of the salt signified his initial pledge to the group; for the old members, it was a renewal of their commitment . There were ten branches throughout the United States by the year 1946.

BRANCH #1

Branch #1 El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat in Cleveland was the promising child of an urgent need of a cohesive group of an ethnic community scattered over a large territory in a foreign land. It fulfilled that need bravely and creditably and without regret nor tarnish. It lacked a recognized National Authority, but though local and narrow in its organization, it kept a lively exchange of dialogue, correspondence, and visitation among its several branches.

Branch #1 El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat started in Cleveland, Ohio when Mr. Assaad Cramey, moved to Cleveland from Seattle, Washington. He came from the village of Ains Zahalta in the Chouf Mountains of Lebanon on April 16 in the year 1916 and first settled in Seattle, Washington. The Cleveland Branch was founded by mostly members of the Seattle El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat who had moved to Cleveland, Ohio. They wanted to continue the work that they had begun in Seattle. Most of these people were from Aramoon, Lebanon in the Gharb district. The majority were from the Yahyia family.

Mr. Said Kabalan, says that his father came to the United States in 1913 and became a member of Branch #1 El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat in Cleveland, Ohio. His father was not among the founders; however, he played a large role in the Cleveland Branch and was instrumental in incorporating the Branch as a non-profit, cultural, social, and welfare corporation. This was done in 1926. Mr. Said Kabalan says that the original charter has been placed in the archives of the Western Reserve Historical Society in Cleveland, Ohio for safekeeping and preservation for use by researchers of the history of Cleveland.

Mr. Said Kabalan says that an influential person from Cleveland, Ohio who was instrumental in promoting and organizing eight branches of El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat was Dr. Mohammed Yahyia. Dr. Yahya worked diligently in promoting the unity of the Druze in the United States. He was the first Druze

to obtain a medical degree in the United States. He received his Pre-medical degree from the University of Washington, and his Medical Degree from Rush Medical College of the University of Illinois.

The address of the Branch #1 El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat in Cleveland was P.O. Box 373, Cleveland, Ohio. The local officers were: Mohamed Fahd Hassen, Milhem Ali Zayour, Nayef Assaf Slim, Saeid Abdallah, Youssef Mohamed Fahd, Saied Assaf, Ali Abou Jaoudeh, Daoud Hassen, Mahmoud Al Mishhim, Farris Hassen Abou Ghader, and Sleiman Ali Zayour.

Mr. Abbass Dakdouk from Cleveland, Ohio was a charter member. He was 16 years old when he emigrated to this country from Aramoon, Lebanon in 1913. He recalls: "I arrived in the United States, and the brotherhood I found among my fellow Druzes through the Branch #1 El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat sustained me. We shared the joys and sorrows of each other, and we traveled long distances to attend weddings and funerals." He was the president of Branch #1 El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat in Cleveland for 12 years, and he was able to list the members and their village of origin. They are as follows:

Nasseem Saleem (Jubaa), Hussein Helal (Karnayel), Youssef Fahed, Saleem Wahbe El-Buinnieh, Alie Ahmed El-Buinnie, Rasheed Ahmed El-Buinnieh, Sulieman Zayour, Milhem Zayour, Mohammed Fahed, David Harb, Assaad Cramey (Ain-Zahalta), Hassan El-Sayegh (Chouroon), Moustafa Ghareeb (Fafer Matta), Saied Nasser(Bshatfeen), Mohammed Alem El-Deen, Mahmoud El-Mushham(Aghmeed), Hussein Yahyee, Milhem Ebraheem Yahyee, Said Yahyee, Rashid Saleem Yahyee, Kassem Mohammed Yahyee, Abbass Dakdouk, Saleem Mohammed Dakdouk, Hani El-Moghtar, Kabalan Dow Bshatfeen, Toufeek Alie El-Moghtar, Najeeb El-Moghtar, Youssef El-Moghtar, Mohammed Ahmed El-Jowhary, Hassan Alie El-Jowhary, Ajaj El-Jowhary, Anees Milhem El-Jowhary, Mohammad Abbas Abo-Fokher, Milhem Najeeb, Hussein Kabalan, Saleem Kabalan, Saied Hamdan, Fandy El-Jowhary, Troudy El-Jowhary, Alie Nassar El-Jowhary, Mohammed Saied El-Jowhary, Mohammed Saleem El-Jowhary, Assad Ahmad El-Jowhary (Aramoon), Abdallah Sandeed, Abdallah Sandeed (Alley), Alie Hamzey (Obiediat), Kassem Atalla, Milhem Atalla (Aindara), Saleem Syfe (Neigha), Mahmoud K. Ganem (El-Warhaniet), Rasheed El-Shaar, Hussein El-Shaar, Majeed Shaar (Ainab),Khattar Shukier (Arssun), Farhan Saab , Kamal Saab, Ajaj Saab(Chouifat), Fayez Mackarem, Mohammad El-Halaby, Anees Mackarem (Rass El-Maten), Hamad Nasser (Araman, Jabel El-Druze, Syria), Hussein El-Jowhary (El-Kafar, Jabel El-Druze, Syria).

Newcomers to Branch #1 El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat in Cleveland after 1930: Fawzy Baddour (Rashiya), Rafeek Alammy, Sulieman Mohammed Alammy, Farris Alammy (Aghmeed), Shafeek Dakdouk, Saied Kabalan, Saleem Afeef, Anees Dakdouk, Hikmat Dakdouk, Kameel Dakdouk, Jamal Dakdouk, Fareed El-Jowhary, Nabeel El-Jowhary, Fahed El-Jowhary, Adel El-Jowhary, Ghazi El-Jowhary, Youssef El-Moghtar, Hameed El-Moghtar, Youssef El-Halaby.

EL-BAKAURAT ED- DIRZIYAT BRANCH #1 in Cleveland, Ohio carries an advertisement in the Booklet of the Sixth Annual Convention of the ADS at the Hotel Carter in Cleveland, Ohio. The year was 1952.

BRANCH #2

Branch #2 El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat in Detroit, Michigan was founded May 27, 1917. The branch started

through the efforts of Farris Hassen Abou Ghader from Cleveland, Ohio. The address of Branch #2 El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat in Detroit, Michigan was 1337 East Palmer Street. The first officers of Branch #2 El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat in Detroit were: Abbas Salman Abou Ghanem, Ali Salman Abou Ghanem, Khattar Moustafa Abou Shakra, Mahmoud Ali Dargham, Ibrahim Ali Dargham.

It included members living in the surrounding areas of Flint and Saginaw. It has always been the cornerstone of many Druze achievements in the West, and particularly the American Druze Society. It remained a very strong branch of the El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat until the years 1973-74 when it joined the ADS as Chapter #1."

Mr. Nafe Katter from Saginaw, Michigan became a member after he emigrated to this country from Bethloun, Lebanon in 1920. He joined the Branch #2 El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat in Detroit, Michigan in 1920 soon after his arrival. Mr. katter (Uncle Nafe) was able to list the early members. They are as follows:

Fred Massey, (Aynab), Farris Mullin Abu Ghanem (Bmhrine), Abbass Amin Abu Ghanem, Olie Amin Abu Ghanem, Hussein Mullin Abu Ghanem (Rhamliyyi).

A badge with a ribbon was worn by the members of the EL-BAKAURAT ED-DIRZIYAT. Written on the ribbon is EL-BAKAURAT ED-DIRZIYAT BRANCH 2 Detroit, Mich, the name of the Druze Society. Above this writing on the ribbon is a badge which is another insignia with a logo composed of a five pointed star encircled by a crescent, and above the crescent is a sword. Around the logo, the name of the Druze Society, EL-BAKAURAT ED- DIRZIYAT BRANCH 2 Instituted May 27, 1917, is written. This is encased in the round gold badge. Above the badge are two American flags crossing each other, and above the flags is another badge, oval in shape, with two hands grasping each other in a handshake. This badge is also encased in gold. Thus the esprit de corps among the American Druze immigrants began over ninety year ago.

EL-BAKAURAT ED- DIRZIYAT BRANCH 2 in Detroit, Michigan carries an advertisement in the Booklet of the Sixth Annual Convention of the ADS at the Hotel Carter in Cleveland, Ohio (1952), the Tenth Annual Convention of the ADS at the Fort Shelby Hotel in Detroit, Michigan (1956), the Eighteenth Annual Convention of the ADS at the Daniel Boone Hotel in Charleston, West Virginia (1964), the nineteenth Annual Convention of the ADS at the Sheraton Park Hotel in Washington, D.C. (1965), the twentieth Annual Convention of the ADS at the Statler Hilton Hotel in Detroit, Michigan(1966).

BRANCH #3

There is no information on record concerning Branch #3 El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat. However, in the files of Sami and Afaf Aboul Hosn, there is recorded a third branch that was started in Butte, Montana. The name of Abbas Al Sakaan was recorded in relation to Branch #3 El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat in Butte, Montana. In another article in "Our Heritage", by ADS historian, Mr. Henry Flehan " El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat - The Mother Organization" has published a picture of the El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat Branch No. 3 banner with the Words El-Bakaurat El-Dirziyat Branch No. 3 Instituted, 1918, Butte, Montana.

However, in the Convention booklet "The First Mihrajan of AL-BAYAN", there appeared an advertisement of the Branch No. Three in Danbury, Connecticut which confirms the branch was still active in 1947. The Arabic sentence under the advertisement translates to: "Branch #3 El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat in the State of Connecticut and surrounding areas salutes your accomplishments and loyalty." There are no further records.

BRANCH #4

Branch #4, El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat was established in 1924 in Princeton, West Virginia. It was very prosperous during that era. Many immigrant Druze chose to settle there. They settled mostly around the mining fields such as Princeton, Bluefield, Matoka, and Kimbell, Mullins, Norfolk, Welch, War, and Bradshaw. All of the original immigrants started in the business of back peddling until later years when they began to learn the basic common words of 'give and take' in English. Learning the English language branches to a less back breaking means to make a living. The businesses these first immigrants opened were then called 'Dry Goods Stores.' They also opened shops that sold the American basic foods, the hamburgers and the hot dogs. Mr. Harry Hamdan Aboulhosn was the only living member of the original Druze settlers in West Virginia when the research on the Branch #4, El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat in Princeton, West Virginia was made. Mr. Hamdan emigrated to the United States from Bteghnay, Lebanon June 23, 1921. He settled in Kimbel, West Virginia; then, he later moved to Princeton, West Virginia. He and his wife, Najla Bahmed Aboul-Hosn and their four children, Joe, Raymond, Nabeel, and Norman were active in the ADS since its inception. The names of the early members of Branch #4, El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat in Princeton, West Virginia are as follows:

Mr. Harry Hamden Aboul Hosn, Jimmie Mosrie, Richard Mosrie, Said Mosrie, Abdallah Mosrie, Farris Mosrie, Sulieman Hassen Mosrie, Towfic Zieneldeen, Najib Hamad Mosrie, Najim Hyden Mosrie, Kassem Flehan, Najeen Mahmoud Aboul-Hosn, Kassem Abed El-Khalek, Kassem Mosrie, Jameel Sangid Aboul-Hosn, Jaber Shukier, Majeed Milhem, Assaad Ali El-Awar, Hamad Mosrie, Ameen Roydon, Sulieman Akel, Mohammad Hussien Aboul-Hosn, Richard Hamdan Aboul-Hosn, Ahmad El-Zoaa, Milhem Atalla, Mirshed Kassem Aboul-Hosn, Slieman Moothad (Modad), Hussein Helal (He moved to Princeton, West Virginia from Cleveland, Ohio), Olie El-Olie Aboul-Hosn, Olie Sangid, Rasheed Sangid, Youssef Hamad Aboul-Hosn, Mohammad Zaher Eldeen (Henry Flehan who is the ADS Historian), Wadeh Sangid Aboul Hosn, Joseph Hamdan Aboul-Hosn, Shaheen Mosrie, Sami Hamad Mosrie, Farris Shaheen, Fowad Mosrie, Shakeeb Hamden Yawl Hosn, Baheej Aboul Hosn.

An application for incorporation was made on February 20, 1940. On record is a copy of the Certificate of Incorporation, State of West Virginia. Article I states that the name of the corporation shall be Branch #4, El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat.

Article II states that the location where all business shall be conducted shall be in Princeton, Mercer County, West Virginia.

Article III states that the objectives of the El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat in Princeton, West Virginia are to aid, foster, develop and assist in preserving the American type family life; to give individual service to

families in restoring them to independence and the normal way of life; to aid in betterment of factors relating to home, family, and domestic relations; to do charitable and civic acts; to furnish cooperation and leadership with other agencies in programs for social betterment; to make By-Laws, rules and regulations for the government of its members and contributors; to aid and protect its members and to do all things necessary and incident thereto in carrying out the principles and objects of this organization. Not to be conducted for profit and without shares of stock - simply to promote the moral, social and educational welfare of its members.

Article IV states that this corporation is not to be operated for profit and will not issue capital stock. It shall be a charitable and fraternal association made up of members of the Ed-Dirziyat in the United States. The By-Laws will provide fee for entrance and a monthly contribution paid into the corporation in the form of dues.

Article V states the names and the post office box of the incorporators as:

Albert Ameen (Welch, West Virginia), Albert Mosrie (Princeton, West Virginia), Joseph Najar (Princeton, West Virginia), Jimmie Mosrie (Princeton, West Virginia) Joe Jaber (Matoka, West Virginia). These people were also the signees on the papers of incorporation dated September 20, 1940.

EL-BAKAURAT ED- DIRZIYAT BRANCH 4 in Princeton, West Virginia carries an advertisement in the Booklet of the Tenth Annual Convention of the ADS at the Fort-Shelby Hotel in Detroit, Michigan (1956)

BRANCH #5

Branch #5 El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat was established in the year 1935 in Kingsport, in the eastern part of Tennessee which included Bristol, Virginia and Tennessee, and Johnson City. This branch was like all the others, strong and supportive of all Druze affairs, and it maintained complete cohesion with all the Bakaurat el-Dirziyat branches, especially in Princeton, and Charleston, West Virginia. They were, in their rights, successful business men in all their endeavors and well respected in their communities.

Mr. Faheem Mohammed Mire Aboul-Aboul Hosn from Kingsport, Tennessee joined Branch #5 El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat in later years as a young man. Mr. Yawl-Aboul Hosn, despite his young age, is the only living member in that area of Tennessee when he related the account of the history of that branch. The names of the first members who started Branch #5 El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat are not on record. The names of some of the original members of Branch #5 El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat follow:

Mohammad Hani Kontar, Saleem Shukie, Olie Shukier, Hussien Yawl-Aboul Hosn, Kassem Sangid Yawl-Aboul Hosn, Saied Hyder, Hassen Rafeea Yawl-Aboul Hosn, Alie Rasheed Yawl-Aboul Hosn, Najib Shaheen Mosrie (He later moved to Princeton, West Virginia), Saied Najjar, Mohammad Makarem, Saleem Makarem, Abed Elhameed Fathayel, Saleem Massaoud, Assaad Milhem Mughrabi, Mustafa Saied, Najib Abi Ezeldeen, Alie Sulieman Jaber, Ared Zieneldean, Sulieman Alam-Eldean, Rasheed Sulieman Yawl Aboul Hosn, Hussien Milhem Yawl-Aboul Hosn, Mohammad Mire Yawl Aboul Hosn, Youssef Kabboul, Alie Jaber Yawl Aboul Hosn, Toufeek Hussein Aboul Hosn, Shaheen Akley Aboul Hosn,

Youssef Kassem Aboul Hosn, Slieman Saied Areeth, Rasheed Kassem Aboul Hosn.

New Members After 1946 were: Mickey Sangid Aboul Husn, Sami Akley Aboul Husn, Farris Shaheen Aboul Husn, Wajeeh Sangid Aboul Husn, Mansour Mosrie, Rasheed Shakier, Najeeb Hamad Aboul Husn, Dawwod Slieman Aboul Husn, Hussien Assad Aboul Husn, Faheem Mohammad Mire Aboul Husn, Fouzy Mohammad Mire Aboul Husn, Ramez Kassem Aboul Husn, Jameel Shaban, Kameel Hyder, Ezzat Dakour Aboul Husn, Jameel Barakat Sangid Aboul Husn, Mahmoud Shehabeldean Aboul Husn,

EL-BAKAURAT ED- DIRZIYAT BRANCH 5 in Kingsport, Tennessee carries an advertisement in the Booklet of the Tenth Annual Convention of the ADS at the Fort-Shelby Hotel in Detroit, Michigan (1956).

BRANCH #6

Branch #6 El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat was established in 1937 in Charleston, West Virginia. It too, was very active in the surrounding areas of West Virginia and Tennessee.

Details of Branch #6 El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat were given to Mr. Henry Flehan by Mr. Aref Kassem Mire from Charleston, West Virginia. In 1921, Mr. Mire came to the United States with plans to settle. He was just seventeen years old. However, when he reached Ellis Island, he was turned away for health reasons, and he returned to his home in Lebanon. In 1934, Mr. Mire again set sail for the United States, and this time he was admitted. He made his home in Charleston, West Virginia where he became a member of Branch #6 El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat in Charleston, West Virginia.

The original members of Branch #6 El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat are:

Ameen Yousef Mire, Sulieman Yousef Mire, Khaleel Shibley Mire, Assad Shibley Mire, Dawood (David) Denaan Mire, Toufeek Said Mire, Aref Kassem Mire, Fakher El-Deen Assrawy, Naseef Assrawy, Najeeb Ajaab, Hassan Ajaab, Mickey Sangid Yawl-Husn (He moved to Charleston, West Virginia from Kingsport, Tennessee, Rasheed Shaar, Saleem Shaar, Hussien Yahyee, Said Yahyee, Rasheed Yahyee, Hassan El-Sayegh, Hassan El-Jowhary, Sulieman Saleem, Ameen Abo-Saeid, Mahmoud Barakat.

In the Convention booklet "The First Mihrajan of AL-BAYAN," there appeared an advertisement of the Branch No. Six in Charleston, West Virginia which confirms the branch was still active in 1947.

EL-BAKAURAT ED- DIRZIYAT BRANCH #6 in Charleston, West Virginia carries an advertisement in the Booklet of the Tenth Annual Convention of the ADS at the Fort Shelby Hotel in Detroit, Michigan(1956).

Branch #7

Branch #7 El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat was in Richmond, Virginia.

EL-BAKAURAT ED- DIRZIYAT BRANCH # 7 in Virginia carries an advertisement in the Booklet of the Tenth Annual Convention of the ADS at the Fort-Shelby Hotel in Detroit, Michigan. The year was 1956. There are no further records.

BRANCH #8

Branch #8 El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat was in Hopewell, Virginia, and it was established in 1936. There are no further records.

BRANCH #9

Branch #9 El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat was later established in Seminole, Oklahoma.

In the convention booklet, the names of the committee members of the "First Mihrajan of AL-BAYAN," appear in a list and "Branch #9 El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat, Seminole, Oklahoma" appeared in that list. There are no further records.

BRANCH #10

Branch #10 was in Texas.

EL-BAKAURAT ED- DIRZIYAT BRANCH #10 in Texas carries an advertisement in the Booklet of the Tenth Annual Convention of the ADS at the Hotel Fort Shelby in Detroit, Michigan. The year was 1956. There are no further records.

SUMMARY

The ten branches of the El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat flourished up to and throughout the 1940's. The members of all the branches of the El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat were good and uprights, ethical, and honest citizens of their adopted country, the United States of America; yet, they preserved the traditions and the culture of the Druze Faith, all the while, striving to maintain and reserve the Druze Social Values in which they were raised. They imparted the Druze Social Values to their children, however, the time and pace of the world was rapidly changing, and there were other interests for those first generation Americans. The branches of the El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat began to become inactive; one after the other.

In 1969, The mother branch, El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat in Seattle, Washington became inactive. Money left in its account was sent to the Druze Orphanage, Dar el-Yateem, in Abey, Lebanon. Since its inception, the Seattle branch had supported this worthwhile cause, the Dar el-Yateem in Abey, and they had also contributed to the Institution for the Elderly and Disabled Druze in Lebanon, 'Maawa Al Oujaz.' These early immigrants had been pioneers of Druze culture in the United States, and they had served with honor through their beloved society, El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat.

In the Convention booklet "The First Mihrajan of AL-BAYAN," there appeared an advertisement of the Seattle Branch El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat which proves the branch was still active in 1947. It reads :"
Compliments of members of AL-BAKOURAT EL -DURZIYEH, Seattle, Washington. Hassen W. Sayegh, Sam Smeil, David Smeil, Sam Hassen, Fred Deen, Ali A. Shamseldin, Saeid Hassen, Kamel Hassen, Fred Hassen, Kelly Hassian Wahby, Joe Wahby, Mike Imen.

An appropriate epithet for the El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat branches is what was said by Mr. Faheem

Mohammed Mire Aboul-Husn from Kingsport, Tennessee when he finished relating the history of Branch #5 El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat in Kingsport, Tennessee : "It is indeed sad, as in my case and others, to remember the golden years of the El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat branches wherever they were located. Particularly, when one visited these branches, it was as visiting your relatives in the homeland. It did not matter who you were, but only the fact that you were Druze. If we were to trace their habitat and business places of yesteryears, we could visualize and hear the echo of their presence. You miss seeing the neon signs of their identity, and their welcoming gesture when you appear. Yes, it is indeed sad when one looks to the past and remembers the old as I do today, when old acquaintances have passed away."

They are gone forever, but forgotten, not ever!

Branch #1 El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat in Cleveland, Ohio

Branch #2 El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat in Detroit, Michigan

Branch #3 El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat in Danbury, Connecticut

Branch #4, El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat in Princeton, West Virginia

Branch #5 El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat in Kingsport, Tennessee

Branch #6 El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat in Charleston, West Virginia.

Branch #7 El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat in Richmond, Virginia

Branch #8 El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat in Hopewell, Virginia

Branch #9 El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat in Seminole, Oklahoma

Branch # 10 El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat in Texas.

The concerned members of the El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat throughout the ten branches in the United States became aware that this society would soon be dormant, if not extinct, in the years to come. This created a new trend of interest, which persisted for several years to follow. It was discussed at every opportune occasion.

At no time was there a large membership of young Druze in any of the ten branches of the El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat because the Bylaws of the El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat required that communications be in the Arabic language. Nafe Katter from Branch #2 El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat called a General Meeting for all the members of that branch to vote on an amendment to the Bylaws changing the Arabic language to English. He had furnished the officers with a list of names of 45 young intelligent and eager American

Druze boys and girls from the Michigan area who wanted to be together in a club. However, the resolution to change the Bylaws that Uncle Nafe had made was defeated.

But that did not deter the youth. Eddie Igram from Flint, Michigan chaired the first meeting of the El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat Youth Club which was held in the Durant Hotel in Flint. This was in 1943. The Michigan Youth Club drew up Bylaws and formed their own organization with English as the official language. However this was not the case throughout the rest of the country. The Druzes were greatly alarmed because there was no fellowship among the Druze youth, so they began to concern themselves with organizing a club for all the Druzes to become involved. This concern finally reached reality in the year 1946. The Druze then and before had not had an opportunity nor occasion to meet in large groups other than at weddings and funerals. The year 1946 gave them both.

In 1946, all Druze gatherings in Michigan discussed the necessity of forming a lasting organization that would unite the Druzes of the United States and bring them together once a year under one roof.

Also in 1946, a group of men, all members of a branch of the El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat, was instrumental in having a Convention in Charleston, West Virginia. "Al-Bayan" was one of the oldest Arabic newspapers in the United States, and it was in dire need of funds, as well as support from the members of the El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat in order for it to sustain itself and continue its publications. Mr. Mahmoud Sadek from Washington, D.C., and a group of men who belonged to various branches of the El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat, began a tour of the United States wherever there was a concentration of Druzes.

The other men in this group were: Sam Rafey from Hopewell, Virginia (Salim Abou Rafeh); Fayz Rasheed from Richmond, Virginia; Brahim Shoukier from Munday, Texas, Saeid Waheed from Lubbock, Texas, and Jimmie Silman who had just moved to Saginaw, Michigan from Texas, Samia Shoucair Salam from Washington, D.C. and her two daughters, Nadeen and Alva Salem and Wadad Silman, the wife of Jimmie Silman, Sr., and their daughter, Polly (Pauline) Silman were also among the group. As well as gain support for the Arabic newspaper, Al-Bayan, this group wanted to have a Convention that would bring all the Druzes in the United States under one roof.

On June 23, 1946 the Druze attended the Historic Meeting at the home of Mahmoud (George) Sadak for promoting "Al Bayan," the Arabic newspaper owned by Ameen David Fayad. Present were Uncle Nafe Katter, Ameen David, Aref Al Awar, Rashid Hassen Rashid, Sam Rafey, Najm Basheer, Slyman Sadak, (Mahmoud's brother), Said Kabalan, Salim Showker, Khatteer Rashid, Mansour Showker, Said Rashid, Salim Massoud Abdul Khalek, Ferris Sadak (Mahmoud's son), Fayez Rashid (seated), Jamil Sayegh, Abbass Nasrallah, Yusuf Aboul Hosn, and Ali Sleiman Jaber.

The First Convention was planned with the purpose of rallying the American born Druzes to become acquainted with each other, as well. As the group toured the United States to demonstrate support for the Al-Bayan, they proposed that each member of the El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat take his wife and children to the First Mihrajan of the Al-Bayan. Thereafter, on October 15, 1946 at the house of Zakia and Sylamn Joseph of Charleston, West Virginia, the decision for holding yearly conventions found universal support

among the community members. This would be done in the name of the "Al-Bayan", its stockholders, subscribers, supporters, and friends.

"Al-Bayan" is an Arabic newspaper published in Washington, D.C. At that time, there was a strong movement to support the continuing publishing of the Al-Bayan as it was the only source of communication among all the Druze community. It was working then, as it always had been, in accordance with its constitution: to strengthen and promote better relationships between our country of adoption and that of our origin. The Druze community was determined to find support to continue publishing the Al-Bayan. This group of supporters decided there should be a gathering of all the Druzes in the United States for this cause, as well as for brotherhood among the community."

To the best of our knowledge, the following people were present at the home of Zakia and Slyman Joseph: Nafe Katter, Saeid Fayyad (brother of Ameen David Fayyad), Yusef Bomorra, Farris Milhem Abu Ghanem (Mullin), from Michigan. Melhim Yahya, Fayz Makarem, from Ohio. Rashid Al Shaar, Melhem Atallah, Najib Mosrie, Sami Mosrie, Farris Mosrie, Aref Kassem, Henrey Flehan, Harry Hamdan, Hussein Helal, Mahmoud Jaber, Rashid Mosrie, Slyman Joseph, Ameen Joseph, from West Virginia Ameen Fayyad David from Washington, D.C. Fayez Rasheed, Mahmoud Shaban, Kassem Shaban, Nejim Basheer, and Salim Abou Rafey from Virginia. George Salem, Wadia Dakkour, Shakeeb Dakkour, Shakeeb Ameen. Anis Silman Ameen, Azzat Dakkour from Texas.

A group of men decided they would go to many states as heralds and invite the Druzes in those states to Charleston, West Virginia where this first great event would take place. Among those ambassadors were James Silman, Sr. from Saginaw, Michigan, Faze Basheer from Richmond, Virginia, Brahim Shoukier from Lubbock, Texas, Sam Rafey from Hopewell, Virginia, and Mahmoud Sadek from Washington, D. C. They went to many homes in each state, and they invited the Druze community to come together in Charleston the following year to attend the Druze Convention. In the interim, the Al-Bayan carried the message of the forthcoming convention to the Druzes in all the United States.

The immigrant members of the El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat realized that they had to establish a means to create interest toward more fellowship among all the Druze in the U.S.A. - to acquaint the younger generation with one another and bring together a large number of Druze once a year at different locations in this country.

Thus, the need for brotherhood has been fulfilled, and the American Druze Society celebrated its 50th Anniversary Convention in 1996. The strong bond among the Druzes and dedication to brotherhood has prevailed abroad in North America as it has at home.

1947. Charleston, West Virginia

The year 1947 and Charleston, West Virginia are the date and the place of the FOUNDATION OF The American Druze Society. In 1947, the AL BAYAN Corporation held The First Mihrajan of the Al-Bayan July 21, 22, 23 1947, Kanawha Forest, Charleston, West Virginia.

It is recorded in the first souvenir issue: "It is with great pleasure that we take this opportunity to extend to you individually and collectively our heartiest welcome to this first Mihrajan of Al-Bayan. It is, indeed, a historic occasion that which brings together for the first time the family of Al-Bayan ...".

"Al-Bayan, as you all know, is one of the oldest newspapers in the United States. It was founded by the late Sheikh Sulayman Baddour in 1910. It has rendered through these years invaluable services to the cultural, educational, social, and public welfare of our Arab speaking Americans. It has always been in the forefront in supporting every movement that was in the interests of our beloved land of adoption, the United States of America ...". The first convention program appears was as follows:

Monday, July 21: Arabic concert from 12 noon to 7:00 P.M. at the Boat Club. Karawan Al-Wadi and his orchestra will entertain the public.

Tuesday, July 22: Arabic dance (Dabki) and various kinds of social and musical activities from 12 noon to 7:00 P.M. at the Boat Club.

Wednesday, July 23: Meetings in the afternoon in the Boat Club, Banquet at 8:00 P.M. in the Daniel Boone Hotel, All details of social and musical activities will be announced daily.

Julie Mullin Makarem remembers that on Tuesday evening, after the Arabic band had left the Boat Club, all the adults went to the homes of some of the locals to spend the rest of the evening. The younger Druzes, all gathered in the cars of the local West Virginians: Norman Shaar, Rufus Canon, Romes Joseph (Mire), and there were others. The locals stopped at a place that had water melons for sale. Each car was loaded in the trunk with the watermelons. Then, the group set out to a park for the remainder of the night. There was no time for sleep at this first convention. When the Druze Convention ended, all that had attended vowed to keep in touch with each other, and of course, to attend the second convention which would be in Washington, D.C. Thus, the American Druze Society.

The convention booklet throughout contains advertisement. On other pages, there are lists of names for other purposes. One such page contains: The First Mihrajan Committee Members. These names are in Arabic, and the English translation has been provided.

Daoud Abi Al- Mona, Aref Kasem Merhi, Raji Daher, Abbass Dakdduk (Branch #1), Rasheed Hassen Rasheed, Abdel Hamid Fadayil, Rashid Yahya, Abdel Hamid Yusuf, Rafic El Rasamny, Abdel Rahman Abdallah, Saied Baz Radwan, Ali Ameen Abu Ghanam, Saied Daoud Zahareldeen, Ali Hamzi, Saied Rasheed, Ali Slyman Jaber Abi Elhasen, Saied Salman Abdel Khalik, Ali Mahmoud Shadid Abu Hassen, Saied Ali Ghannam, Omar Hleik, Saied Kabalan, Farris Ali Kabitah, Saied Mohammed Halloway, Fays Rasheed, Saleem Abu Rafeh, Saleem Ameen Abu Hassen, Saleem Shoukier, Saleem Ali Seif, Salman Assad Ameen, Salman Al Aridi, Salman Fayad, Slyman Salman Abu Izzidine, Slyman Saleem Ali, Slyman Makarem, Slyman Yusuf Merhi, Shibley Tajeldeen, Shukri El-Khouri, Fareed Abu Muslih(Branch #2), Mahmoud Ghanem, Fareed Rasheed, Mahmoud Fayad, Kasem Shoukier, Mustafa Saied Abu Fakhridinne, Kamel Abu Hatoum Hamady, Mansour Shoukier, Kamel Ghanem, Nafe Katter (Branch #2),

Kamal Yakhthan Rasheed, Najm Rasheed (Branch #7), Majid Sharafeldinne Abi Elhasen, Najib Shaheen Elmosrie, Majid El Shaar, Najib Mahmoud Ali Elmosrie, Majeed Farag, Nassib Ali Slyman Rasheed, Mohammed Zeineldeen Makarem, Nassib Nakid (Branch #2), Mohammed Said Massoud, Wadih Eldakour, Mohammad Kantor, Whey Chatter (Branch #2), Mohammed Merhi, Yassine Mashal, Farris Milium Abu Ghanem (Branch #2), Amine Shuman, Mohammad Saied Abi Elmona, Yusuf Habhab, Mustafa Saied Abi Elmona, Yusuf Chatter Elmahithawi, Mohammed Ali Abi Elmona, Yusuf Rasheed, Mohammed Hani El Kantar, Yusuf Rayyes, Mahmoud Shaaban, Yusuf Saleh, Mahmoud Sadaka, Youssef Kasem Abi Elhasen, Fays Mohammed Merhi, Yusuf Mahmoud Najjar.

The above information was taken from 'The First Mihrajan of the Al-Bayan Year Book.'

Nafe Katter, recalls: "In 1947, the Al-Bayan Corporation held their first convention at Charleston, West Virginia. Mr. George (Mahmoud) Sadek was the President, Mr. Nafe Katter, Sr. was the Vice President, Mr. Richard Rashid was the Secretary, and Mr. Haney Abou Mislak (Massey) was the Orator. Mickey Sanjid was the Chairperson. We all agreed to have a 'General Meeting' because there were members present representing several different states (This apparently was the result of those present having attended the Convention, and the "General Meeting" was held after that Convention - The First Mihrajan of the Al-Bayan. That first meeting was held in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Selman Morhey. It was very constructive, and it approved the adoption of our name 'The American Druze Society'. There was an encouraging number in attendance with everyone showing much interest for its continuing the following year. In fact, they agreed on several locations where several future conventions would be held. It has become the cornerstone of the American Druze Society."

The First Mihrajan of the Al-Bayan convention provided joy, happiness, and the feeling of family togetherness. The younger generation enjoyed the continuous entertainment of dancing, singing, picnics, and sport competitions, while the old folks reminisced about old times, exchanged news, and conducted the unfinished business of El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat. The business of the Al-Bayan newspaper was discussed, and when the Convention ended, brotherhood and fellowship was inherent among all who had attended. All of the young people at that convention were first generation Americans, and they were overjoyed with meeting each other.

They each found that the struggles a first generation American Druze has with other American teenagers is insignificant. Each teenager vowed to attend the next convention in Washington, D.C., and from that point on, lasting relationships were made. The Al-Bayan newspaper wrote extensively of the success of the first convention, and this made people in the Druze community even more determined to attend the following convention.

The role of the annual American Druze Society Conventions was known by one and all - bringing together the younger members of our people so that they become better acquainted and join forces in working towards becoming better citizens of our great United States. This role has never been questioned! And, fifty years later, two people who had become acquainted with each other at the third convention in Detroit, Michigan, Romana Williams from Kingsport, Tennessee met Ali Alley from

Berwick, Pennsylvania, met and they married, and today, Helen Romana Williams (Aboul Hosn) Alley (Kansao). Her son, Andrew Ali, met Neda El Awar from Detroit, Michigan at the 45th convention, and they married in 1995. The forces started by the Founding Fathers are still at work!

1948. Washington, D.C.

After that convention, The First Mihrajan of the Al-Bayan, the organization took on the name of The Annual Convention of the American Druze Society. The Second Convention of the American Druze Society the following year, 1948, was held in Washington, D.C. under the leadership President Mahmoud Sadak and Vice-President Dallal David from Washington, D.C., and Polly Silman from Saginaw, Michigan was the chairperson . (The above information is from the Memoirs of Nafe Katter, Sr.)

1949. Detroit, MI

Detroit, Michigan was the site for the Third Convention of the American Druze Society on August 8, 9, and 10th in 1949. The conventions began as just three day conventions. The Third Convention of the American Druze Society in Detroit, Michigan was sponsored by Branch #2 El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat. The President of the American Druze Society was Edward Igram from Flint, Michigan, and the officers were , Maxine Dahook from Saginaw, Jimmy Sams from Bay City, Kenneth Katter from Saginaw, Eddie Igram from Flint, Marian Rogers from Saginaw, Eleanor Katter Hamady from Saginaw - then Flint, Hamad Bomorro from Flint, Sidney Modad from Detroit, and Mabel Mullin from Detroit. The Honor Chairman was Michael Hamady from Flint.

1950. Richmond, Virginia

The President of the American Druze Society and Chairperson was George Rafey from Hopewell, Virginia. There is no other records.

1951. Cedar Rapids, Ohio

The President of the American Druze Society and Chairperson was Dr. Eddie Richards. There is no other records.

1952. Cleveland, Ohio

Cleveland, Ohio was the site for the Sixth Annual Convention of the American Druze Society on June 30th, July 1st and 2nd, 1952 at Hotel Carter, Prospect Avenue at East 9th Street. The President of the American Druze Society and Chairperson of the Convention was Fred Mullen, and Norman Shaar the Vice President. The officers were: Mae Richards, Secretary and Treasurer Mabel Mullin, Corresponding Secretary, Eddie Richards, Sergeant at Arms, Floyd Saley, Art Editor Fred Mullen in his welcome message said: " We, the convention committee of 1952, extend to you our heartiest welcome to the City of Cleveland. It's convention time in Cleveland, Ohio. To each we give a key to the City of cities. We want you to use it through these coming hours of many enjoyment that are offered. Unless we help to bring joy and laughter into the lives of others, we are entitled to very little fun ourselves. Our hats are off to you and the door shall always remain open - for you, one and all, to join in making this biggest convention ever.

The program was full of joy and happiness. It included Luncheon, Picnic at Rocky River Reservation, Berea, Ohio, Sightseeing tour of Cleveland, Square Dance, Syrian Entertainment, Semi-formal Dance and the Annual Banquet.

1953. Dallas, TX

The President of the Society was Mr. Azzet Joseph and the Convention Chairperson was Mr. Polly Silman. There is no other records.

1954. Washington, D.C.

Washington, D.C., was the site of the eighth Annual Convention of the American Druze Society on June 28th, June 29th and June 30 at the Sheraton Park Hotel. The President of the Society was Jim Silman Jr. and the convention Chairperson was Polly Silman. Officers: Mona Alley, Delal David, Nadine Silman, Norman Akel. Committee members: Selma Sadak, Jimmy Silman, Bashir Aridi, Mrs. George Slaem, Braheem Choukier. Guest speaker: Dr. Farid Zeineddine, Syrian Ambassador.

1955. Charleston, West Virginia

The President of the American Druze Society was Mickey Sanjid and the convention Chairperson was Bill Hamady. There is no other records.

1956. Detroit, Michigan

Detroit, Michigan was the site of the Tenth Annual Convention of the American Druze Society on June 25th, June 26th and June 27, 1956 at the at Hotel Fort Shelby on West Lafayette at First Street. The President of the Society was Roger Mullin and Vice President was Grant Hamady. The officers were: Julie Mullen, Secretary-Treasurer, Fadwa Shibley, Corresponding Secretary, Nafe Bomorro, and Kamel Kasem was Master of Ceremonies. Other Committee members were: Sidney Modad, Sam Albert, Helen Dow, Helen Igram, Jemila Salamy, Mouner Kasem, Fred Gazaley Malakie Fayad, Fred Mullen, Advisors: Jack Hamady, Sam Amin.

The Detroit Convention Committee, dedicated the 1956 program book in the memory of William Igram who chaired the 1949 Convention. Monday, June 25th, the conventioneer gathered for a luncheon. The program included a tour of the Ford Motor Company, Picnic at Belle Island, Moonlight Cruise on Lake St. Claire, Business meeting, Square Dance, Arabic Entertainment.

Michael Hamady from Flint, Michigan wrote in the program booklet of the Tenth Annual Convention in 1956, " I regret very much that because of ill health, I am unable to attend your convention, but I assure you that I am with you in spirit. This convention has the most commendable purpose of bringing together the younger members of our people so that they become better acquainted and join forces in working towards becoming better citizens of our great United States. I am heartily in accord with the purpose and work and wish you the best of success in all your activities. My best wishes to you one and all." The Convention Booklet dedication was to the late Mr. William Igram of Detroit, Michigan.

1957. Atlantic City, New Jersey

The President of the Society was Jim Silman Jr. and the convention was chaired by Delal David. The only information found concerning that convention was from Mr. Silman. He mentioned that all had lots of fun, but unfortunately low attendance.

1958. Richmond, Virginia.

Richmond, Virginia was the site of the twelfth Annual Convention of the American Druze Society on June 22nd, June 23rd and 25th at Hotel Jefferson. The president of the Society and the convention chairperson was George Rafey. Officers were: Eddie Richards, Jameel Ameen, Edna Joseph, Joe Nappa. It was supported by many branches of the Bakourats.

1959. Washington, D.C.

The convention was held at Woodner Hotel. The President of the Society was Jim Silman, Jr. and was Chaired by Edwards Richards. Again the comments of the Jim Silman, Jr.: "It was a huge success with a huge turnout." There is no other record.

1960. Charleston, West Virginia

The Fourteenth Annual Convention of the American Druze Society was held from June 19 through June 21, 1960 at Richmond, VA. The President of the Society and the Convention Chairperson was George Rafey. There is no other records.

The successful conventions became more and more popular each year, and Druzes throughout the United States, as well as in other countries began to know of its existence and even attend the conventions. The convention was hailed by those great Druze leaders who had so diligently worked toward the success of its continuity

1961. Flint, Michigan

The fifteenth Annual Convention of the American Druze Society was held at the Duran Hotel from June 19 through June 21, 1961. The President of the Society and convention chairperson was Roy. R. Hamady and J. Raymond Najar was the Vice-President. The Convention was chaired by Officers were: Nadia Abraham, Secretary - Treasurer, Madeline Hamady, Corresponding Secretary, Hamad Bomorro , Sergeant at Arms. Advisors: Robert M. Hamady, Jack A. Hamady, Nafe Katter, Ernie Mullen, Fred Sefa, Jim Silman, Khalil Wahbey. Committee Chairmen: Nafe Bomorro, Joan Sefa, Roger Albee, Jim Silman, Sr., Lilian Sefa, Helen Dow, Fred Sefa, Hamad Bomorro, Nafe Bomorro, Nora Wahbey, Malakie Fayad, Joe Nappa, Jack Hamady, Joe Sefa. The program included an Early Birds Party, Welcoming Luncheon, Picnic at the Flushing Park, Flushing, Michigan, Brunch and Business Meeting and Annual Banquet.

1962. Chicago, Illinois

The Sixteenth American Druze Society Convention was held in Chicago, Illinois at the Hotel Sherman. The dates were June 24, 25, 26, 27, 1962. The President was Julie Mullin Makarem. She and her husband, Dr. Sami Makarem, were still on their honeymoon while she presided as President at the Convention. Sami referred to himself as 'Prince Phillip.' They had met each other at the 1961 Convention in Flint, Michigan and gotten married just two weeks before the Chicago Convention on June

9, 1962 in Detroit, Michigan. They lived in Ann Arbor, Michigan for one year, and Sami and Julie moved to Lebanon with their two-month old daughter, Sahar, on July 9, 1963.

Mack Joseph Azzam, the Convention General Chairman, and his wife, Salimi, were the only Druze residents of Chicago, Illinois. Single handedly, they sustained the American Druze Society by sponsoring the Convention in Chicago. The officers were:

Vice president, Salimi Joseph Azzam, Secretary-Treasurer, Nadia Abraham, Corresponding Secretary, Joan Sefa, Sergeant-At-Arms, Amin Ally, Executive Secretary, Joe H. Nappa, Advisors: Robert M. Hamady Flint, Jack A. Hamady, Roy R. Hamady, Nafe Katter, Sr. Saginaw, Charles Dahook, Ernie Mullen, Fred Sefa, Jim Silman, Sr., Khalil Wahbey. Convention Committee: Roy R. Hamady, James Albee, Selma Joe Bomorro, Ajaj Andary, Selma Dahook, Emma Saley, Salimi Azzam, Joan Sefa, Nafe Bomorro, Alexander J. Sim, Lily Hamady, Floyd Saley, Sami Nassib Makarem, Ralph Modad, Slyman Kysia.

Julie Mullin was elected the National President in 1961, and with her team of officers, she carried the Society through another tumultuous year. She was the first woman awarded Life Membership for her devotion and dedication to her beloved American Druze Society. Julie met the criteria for the 'Life Member' and under the recommendation of Robert Hamady from Flint, Michigan, and seconded by Uncles Nafe Katter from Saginaw, Michigan, and Jack Hamady from Flint, Michigan, and Rafic Rasamny from New York, Julie was awarded Life Member status during the Banquet. In her "A Message from the President" she writes in the Convention Booklet: "It is with pleasure that I write this annual Presidential message. This year marks the Sixteenth Anniversary of the American Druze Society. Since its inception in 1947, this Society has done the best it could in order to fulfill its manifold task. Every year, it becomes more and more aware of the increasing responsibilities it has to face. These responsibilities make us firmly believe in the indispensability of our American Druze Society for they can only be achieved by sincere cooperation through such a society. . . . It is the message of the American Druze youth who are proud of being Americans, as well as being Druzes. It is, therefore, a message of the youth, a firm will, and a continuous progress from the good to the better."

The program included Early Bird Party, Luncheon and Welcome by President Julie Mullin Makarem, a Chicago Shoreline Cruise, Picnic at the Clayton F. Smith Forest Preserve, Continental Breakfast, Arabic Movies ('A New Day in the Middle East' & 'Baalbec Festival'), Annual Banquet and American and Arabic Music.

It is important to mention, with respect to this history, that the precious year of 1961 gave this society the legal name of ADS by its first Constitution and Bylaws.

1963. Richmond, Virginia

The President of the Society and Chairman of the Convention was George Rafey, and Jameel Ameen was the Vice-President. Officers were: David Ameen, Edna Joseph and Haney Fayed. There is no other records.

1964. Charleston, West Virginia

The Eighteenth Annual Convention of the American Druze Society was held at Daniel Boone hotel from June 25 through June 27, 1994. The President of the Society and the Convention Chairperson was Fred H. Joseph and Vice President was Norman Shaar. Officers were: Ameen Joseph, Jr., Secretary - Treasurer, Rose Marie Joseph, Corresponding Secretary, and Kamal Shaar, Sergeant-at-arms. The committee Chairmen were Faye Basheer, Olga Joseph, Fred Yaha, Eddie Najar, Jimmy Najar, and Mickey Sanjid.

The program included an Early Bird Reception, Luncheon, Business Meetings, Picnic at the Holiday Park, Annual Banquet and Arabic and American Music Entertainment.

1965. Washington, D.C.

The 19th Annual Convention of the American Druze Society was held in Washington, D.C. on June 28, 29, and 30, 1965. The place was the Sheraton Park Hotel. The President of the Society and the Convention Chairperson was Randy Shaban and Farris Sadak as Vice President. Officers were: Dr. Ernest Rafey, Secretary-Treasurer, Gamille Sadak, Corresponding Secretary, and Nabeel David, Sergeant-at the Arms. Convention committee members were: Samia Salem, Samia Fayyad, Mansour Showkier, Nada Hassen, Camilla Ameen, Zee Sadak, Larry Rafey, Alva Salem, Mohammed Fayyad, Chafic Abou-Hosn, Mahmoud Sadak, Jimmie Silman, III and Dallal David.

In his "Welcome to Washington' Message from the President" Randy Shaban writes in the Convention Booklet: " ... After traveling throughout the country visiting with many members of our society, I find that the convention means a lot more to our people than I had ever imagined. We should all share the responsibility of participating and encouraging other Druze to participate in the spirit of the American Druze Society."

The program included welcoming coffee, Picnic at the Rock Creek Park, Private tour of the White House, Business Breakfast, Movies of Lebanon and Baalbek, a Visit to the Lebanese Embassy, Annual Banquet, and Arabic and American Entertainment. On the first day of the convention, Mr. & Mrs. Ameen David invited all the conventioners to be their guest at a cocktail, Buffet Supper and Discotheque party in the Champagne Room in Washington.

1966. Detroit, Michigan

The 20th Annual Convention of the American Druze Society was held in Detroit, Michigan on July 7, 8, and 9, 1966. The place was the Statler Hilton Hotel which was located in downtown Detroit. The Convention was sponsored by Branch #2 El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat in Detroit, Michigan. The President of the Society and the Convention Chairperson was Nafe J. Bomorro and the Vice-President was Ajaj Andary. The Officers were: Jihad Alkateeb, Secretary-Treasurer, Selma Jo Bomorro, Corresponding Secretary, Frank Hamady, Sergeant-at Arms. Advisors were Jim Silman, Ernie Mullen and Floyd Saley. Convention Committee members: Lily Sob, Fred Mullen, Enda Corte, Hamad J. Bomorro, Laura Mullen, Virginia Mullen, Nora Wahbey, Helen Dow, Kalil Wahbey, Essam Naim

In the Dedication of the Convention booklet, Fred Massey wrote, "Branch #2 El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat in

Detroit, Michigan hails the 1966 Annual Convention of the American Druze Society and bespeaks full enjoyment for all participants and meaningful achievements for its worthy aims. Branch #2 El-Bakourat Ed-Dirziyat in Detroit, Michigan further, cordially greets all sister locals of this fraternal organization and trusts they are all animated by ardent interest in its life and sustained determination for its growth. Let us rally around the banner of our Fathers raised fifty years ago. Let us pledge out united fidelity to the Druze unity they envisioned and consecrated. Let us give continuing evidence to their gospel of high purpose, vigorous dialogue, and true friendship and understanding in our ranks.

The program included Early Bird Party, Luncheon and Fashion Show, Panel Discussion, Question and Answer Period (Mr. Fred Massey, Speaker), Dancing - Arabic and American, All day Picnic at Edward Hines Park, Surprise Party, Breakfast and Business Meeting , and the Annual Banquet

1967. Daytona Beach, Florida

The 21st Annual Convention of the American Druze Society was held at Daytona Plaza Hotel, Florida from June 26 through June 28th, 1967. The booklet of the convention was dedicate to late Robert Hamady. The President of the Society and its Convention Chairman was Farris Shaheen and Fred Deen was the Vice President. Officers were Delores Deen, Secretary-Treasure, David Mosrie, Sergeant-at-Arms and Baheej Abulhosn General Chairman. Advisors were: Arif Hatoum, Mack Hamed, and Sam Ackley. Convention Committee members were Helen Alley, Elia Peres, Julia Alden, and Atef Hatoum.

This convention was for the first time in Florida and had neither a large Druze community there nor a branch for the Bakourat. It was a huge success. The program included Early Bird Party, Luncheon, Picnic at the Tomoka Park, Breakfast and Business meeting, Annual Banquet and American and Arabic music.

1968. Charleston, West Virginia

The 22nd Annual American Druze Convention was held at the Daniel Boone Hotel from June 24th through June 26th, 1969. The President of the Society and Convention Chairman was Adil H. Najar and William Hamady was the Vice President. Officers were: Secretary-Treasurer, Norman Shaar, Corresponding Secretary, Linda Nameen, Sergeant-at-Arms, Ernie Joseph. Advisors: Harry Hamdan, Mickey Sangid, Freddie H. Joseph, Randy Shaban and Nora Wehby. Convention Committee members: Emily Joseph, Joe Joseph, Fouad Ynava, Nahia Joseph, Lila Kannon and Jamal Richards. Speaker: Dr. Abdallah Najjar, Chief International Affairs Office, National Communicable Disease Center, United States Public Health Service. The program included Early Bird Party, Picnic, Breakfast and Business meeting, Annual Banquet and American and Arabic Music.

1969. Richmond, Virginia

The 23rd Annual Convention of the American Druze Society was held at the Holiday Inn West from June 15th through June 18th, 1969. The President of the Society and the Convention Chairperson was George A. Rafey and Jameel Ameen was the Vice President. Officers were: Secretary-Treasurer, David Ameen, Corresponding Secretary, Enda Joseph, Sergeant-at Arms, Haney Fayed. Advisors: Sam Rafey, Najim Basheer, and Ameen David. Convention Committee: Nadia Rafey, Idell Ameen, Evelyn billy, Julia Ameen, Virginia Fayed, Ralph Shibley, Michael Billy, Said Ameen, Roma Ameen, Clara Ameen and James Sams.

The program included President's Reception, Orientation Meeting, trip to Williamsburg, Arabic Buffet, Crowning of "Miss Druze" 1969, Picnic at St. Anthony's Recreation Area, Breakfast and Business Meeting, Druze Panel Discussion, Banquet and Arabic and American music.

1970. Detroit, Michigan

Detroit, Michigan was the site of the 24th Annual Convention of the American Druze Society on July 6, 7, 8, and 9, 1970 at the Detroit Hilton Hotel. The President of the Society and the Convention Chairperson was Nafe J. Bomorra and Ernie Mullen as Vice President. Officers were: Secretary-Treasurer, Dan Sefa, Corresponding Secretary, Selma Jo Bomorra, Sergeant-at Arms, Riad Ellassal. Advisors: Jihad Alkateeb, Jack Hamady, Nafe Katter, Mike and Zabad Saleem, Kalil and Nora Wahbey. Convention Committee members: Laura Mullen, Fred Mullen, Nadia Alkateeb, Ajaj Andary and Hamad J. Bomorra. The program included Sip and Chat Party, Luncheon, Druze Panel Discussion, Picnic at Belle Isle Park, Breakfast and Business Meeting, Arabic and American music and continental

Summary

The first seed sown in 1908 in Seattle, Washington, El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat, has brought forth the American Druze Society (ADS). The goals of the ADS complement the goals of the Branches of the El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat. The initial goal of those first Druze immigrants, the pioneers, has been fulfilled and is alive in the American Druze Society as it was in the Branch #1 El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat, as well as all the other nine branches. Their aim was to keep Druzism alive in the Western Hemisphere, as well as to keep all the American Druze, from generation to generation, proud of their heritage. They had a dream that the name of Druzism must live on anywhere its descendants might locate during the first period of immigration and thereafter. The dream materialized into ten El-Bakaurat Ed-Dirziyat branches. They shared the joys and sorrows of each other, and traveled long distances to attend conventions.

History of the Druze in the United States from 1971 to 1996

By Ajaj Andary

1971. Pipestem Park, West Virginia

The American Druze Society celebrated its 25th Anniversary Convention at the Pipestem State Park from June 27th through July 1, 1971. The president of the Society and the Convention Chairperson was Raymond Hamden, and Vice-President was Adil Najjar. Officers were: Recording Secretary: Sharon Hamady, General Chairman and Treasurer: Baheej Aboul-hosn, Corresponding Secretaries: Mona Hamden and Nadine Mosrie, Sergeant-at-Arms: Kamal Aboulhosn, State Correspondence: Bobby Jaber. Advisors: Harry Hamden, Jack Hamady, Henry Flehan, Joe Hamden, Bill Hamady, Fouad Mosrie, and Hon Higinbotham. Convention Committee: Nadine Mosrie, Mrs. Jimmy Mosrie, Mrs. Jimmy Sangid, Ajaj Andary, Hussein Aboul-Hosn, Norman Hamden, Nabeel Hamden and Mrs. Harry Hamden. The 25th Convention attracted hundreds of Druze from all areas of the United States, as well as international visitors making this convention extremely successful.

The 1971 convention awareness about the need of a formal organizational structure on national level gained momentum. A special meeting of the previous convention chairpersons and founding members was called specifically to discuss two main issues. The first issue was to reorganize the American Druze

under the banner of one national society and to draft a new constitution and by-laws to meet the legal requirements for its incorporation. The second issue was what steps needed to be taken to obtain tax exemption status for the same. Members who attended this historic meeting were: Nafe Katter, Jimmy Silman Sr., Jimmy Silman Jr., Fayez Bashire, Harry Hamden, Raymond Hamden, George Rafey, Jack Hamady, Rafic Rasamny, Abdallah Najjar, Wade Hamd, Jihad Alkateeb, Ajaj Andary, Floyd Saley, Henry Flehan, Adel Najar, David Najar, B.A. Husn, Kamal Abul Hosn, Bill Hamady, Norman Shaar, Dr. Richard Baz, Dr. Ali Alley, Mickey Sangid, and Dr. Sami Sangid.

After consensus was reached on common goals and aspirations of the American Druze community, Jihad Alkateeb and Ajaj Andary were appointed to draft a new constitution of the American Druze Society and to seek the help of an attorney to qualify the ADS as a charitable and religious organization with the IRS. The members present at this meeting pledged contributions to defray costs of the attorney to ensure the incorporation and obtaining the tax exempt status with the IRS. Immediately after the 1971 convention the Alkateeb-Andary committee commenced work on the draft of the ADS constitution and by-laws. With the guidance of Jack Hamady and the advice of his personal lawyer the committee was able to draft a constitution with the acceptable substance and wording to meet the strict code of the IRS without compromising any of the basic Druze beliefs.

The "Preamble" of the new National ADS Constitution stated that "We, Americans of Druze Faith and/or of Druze descent, in the United States, and wherever else Druze people may be found, do ordain and establish this constitution of the American Druze Society."

The National Constitution of the American Druze Society was designed to promote charitable, educational and social pursuits of the Druze community. This intent was emphasized while articulating the primary purposes of the society thus expressly stating that, "The primary purposes of the society are to perpetuate the universal teachings of the Druze faith, the enhancement of fellowship among the Druze and Druze descendants, the advancement of Druze religious, literary and cultural knowledge through education and research and the betterment of all Druze people through charitable work."

The organizational structure was based upon establishing chapters and branches subject to the policies and guidelines set forth by the National organization with the emphasis on centralization of its policy making and decentralization and national diffusion of its activities and structured relationship between the national organization and the local chapters and branches. The final draft of the National Constitution emerged after lot of reviews and revisions. The American Druze Society was incorporated on October 27, 1971.

1972. Pipestem Park, West Virginia

The 26th Anniversary Convention was held from June 25th through July 1st, 1972 at Pipestem State Park. The ADS President and Convention Chairman was Baheej Aboul-husn and Adel Najar was the Vice President. Officers were: Recording Secretary: Sahron Hamady, Treasurer: Raymond Hamden, General Chairman: Jouadat Aboul-hosn, Corresponding Secretaries: Najat Hamden and Nadine Mosrie, Sergeant-at-Arms, David Najar. Advisors: Harry Hamden, Joe Hamden, Bill Hamady, Norman Shaar, Jim Nassar,

and Henry Flehan. Convention Committee members: Kathy Altizer, Mrs. Jimmy Sangid, Mrs. S. M. Mosrie, Mrs. Woody Aboul-hosn, Ajaj Andary, Freda Sob, Ambassador and Mrs. Baheej Aboul-Hosn.

The general assembly's first action was the adoption of the new National Constitution and Bylaws of the ADS presented by Jihad Alkateeb and Ajaj Andary. The second resolution was the authorization of Dr. Abdallah Najar and the religious committee to seek the assistance and help of Dr. Sami Makarem to write the first English manuscript about the Druze faith. The third resolution adopted at this convention was the decision to hold the 1973 convention in Lebanon. The fourth historical event was the election of the first national officers and Board members of the American Druze Society keeping in view the 1973 Convention in Lebanon.

Officers and Board members Elected were: Baheej Aboul-Husn National President and Convention Chairman, Abdallah Najar, National Vice President, Adel Najar, Assistant Vice President for Finance, Ajaj N. Andary Secretary General, Floyd Saley, Assistant Secretary, Freda Sob, Assistant Secretary, Edna Joseph, National Treasurer, Raymond Hamden, International Relations Director, Board members: Rafic Rasamny, Ray Helal, Nancy Naim, Sami Masrie and Ghazi Aboulhosn.

Immediately following the adjournment of the 1972 convention, the National Board of Directors began to prepare for the convention in Lebanon. Baheej Aboul-Husn, National President and Convention Chairman, with his team solicited the support of the Druze community, Charter flight companies, travel agents and commercial airlines. Field investigations were conducted for the ideal convention site, hotel accommodations and convention activities.

1973. Beirut, Lebanon

The 27th Convention of the American Druze society was held at the Mirador Hotel from July 15th through July 22nd, 1973.

On July 9th, 1973, 250 members of the American Druze Society and their friends came from all over the United States and Canada and boarded the OAW flight from Detroit Metro Airport. Officials of the Lebanese Ministry of Tourism and other government agencies met the members at the plane and showered them with flowers and Lebanese flags. A committee from the Majlis Al Mazhabi (Druze Religious Congress) were also present to welcome us. In the V.I.P. Lounge Rafic Rasamny, Mack Joseph, Baheej Aboul-Husn and Ajaj Andary met Lebanese reporters for newspapers, T.V., and radio. A folklore troupe performed the dabke. The American Druze Society had finally arrived in Lebanon to be with the relatives they loved, cherished and admired.

On July 15th, the official opening ceremonies of the Convention commenced. Hundreds of immigrants, relatives, government officials and leaders of the Druze and Lebanese community attended. Fuad Nafa'a represented the President of Lebanon.

The ceremonies began with Raymond Hamden and Nancy Naim singing the Lebanese and American National Anthems. Rafic Rasamny, the Master of Ceremonies, welcomed the people and introduced the

president of the ADS, Baheej Aboul-Husn, who delivered the opening speech. Ajaj Andary introduced the A.D.S. delegation and expressed their feelings as American Druze returning to Lebanon. Mr. Sam Amin (Abbas Abu Ghanim) received a standing ovation for returning to Lebanon for the first time after 55 years. Jimmy Silman and Raymond Hamden expressed the feelings of the American-born Druze. In the evening, the conventioners were entertained by a Lebanese folklore troupe and western music.

On July 16, 1973 after the morning business meeting, the members made their first official visit to His Eminence Sheik Al- Akl Mohammed Abu Shakra at the Dar Al Taify (Druze Home). Religious sheiks, civic leaders, social and charitable organizations' members gathered to welcome the American Druze and to share with them the honorable feeling of belonging to a great and rich heritage. This meeting with the Sheik Al-Akl gave the opportunity to convey to His Eminence the wishes and needs of the American Druze in terms of religious guidance, English books, and religious representatives to perform marriages, write wills, and pray at funerals. This historic meeting laid the foundation for the religious procedures that the Druze in the U.S.A. have today.

On July 17th, the buses left the Mirador Hotel to visit Beiteddine, Sidon, and Tyre. This trip to the historical places was very much enjoyed by both the American and Lebanese born. Some of the highlights were walking under the Arch of Triumph which was built by Alexander the Great, visiting the ruins of Tyre, learning about the historic glory of the Fortress of Sidon and tracing the tree of rulers of Lebanon in Beiteddine. Jimmy Silman Jr., after the guide finished explaining the history of the Druze Ma'any Rulers with emphasis on the role of Amir Fakhr-Eddine as the true leader who united, flourished and protected Lebanon's destiny, turned toward us and said, "I never felt as proud as I do now!"

On July 18th, all the members visited Beit El-Yateem (Druze Orphanage) and met with the founder, Aref Bey Al Nakadi. Many of us were overwhelmed by the great accomplishments of Aref Bey, the founder the scholar and the humanitarian. As we toured through the home we met hundreds of Druze youth and infants who were not only given shelter and education, but also love, hope and ambition. For the first time the ADS youth could really understand the need to support this institution.

As a result of the extensive planning and numerous contacts by Baheej Aboul-Husn, all of the ADS convention members were invited to visit the President of Lebanon on July 19th. The caravan of buses and cars journeyed to Zgarta, where President Franjeieh welcomed everybody with warm words by stating, "Beni Ma'arouf are the original inhabitants of these mountains and have been the defenders of Lebanon's unity and independence throughout its history. Welcome to your home country!" The members presented His Excellency with a gift of a gold tray commemorating this occasion.

From the palace of the president, the members drove to Bcherie, the birth place of Gibran Khalil Gibran. This is the same Khalil Gibran who was quoted by President JFK in his famous address the words, "Ask not what your country can do for you ..."

From Bcherie, they visited Mar Sarkis Fountain for lunch. His Excellency, the Governor of North Lebanon. Sheik Qassim Imad joined the group for lunch. After that the group reached the gigantic and famous

Cedars of Lebanon. The group stopped briefly at Kafar Hareez, and were welcomed by the mayor, city council and the people of that city.

On Friday, July 20th, 1973, the election of the National Officers and Board took place. The state of Michigan was selected as the sight of the 28th convention. On July 21 the conventioners set off on a two hour trip to Baalbek. The Ministry of Tourism and Historic Resources had arranged for English speaking guides to explain to the ADS members the history of the "City of the Sun". After the tour the members traveled on to the Berdowni in Zahle where feasted on the variety of "maza" for which this place is famous.

The final night of the Convention, the Banquet Night was held on July 22, 1973. This was attended by ADS members, their relatives, government officials, representatives of Druze social and religious institutions, and newspaper, radio, and T.V. reporters. Due to health reasons the planned main speaker, Sheik Najeeb Alameddine was unable to attend and Dr. Abdallah Najjar delivered the main banquet speech emphasizing "The Druze's Role and Dilemma in America."

Although the official convention ended several receptions were held for the members in their honor during the next few weeks: Anwar Al-khalil - Carlton Hotel, Faud Najjar - Aley, Aref Al-Awar - Karneyel, Ambassador Abdallah Najjar - Beit Merry, Dr. Sami Makarem - Beirut, Druze Woman Society - Aley, Congress for Social Action - Aley, and Nabil Harfoush -Hariesa .

A committee of A.D.S. delegates visited Kamal Jumblat and Emir Majeed Arsalan and discussed with them the hopes and aspirations of all the Druze immigrants and their need to unite efforts towards perpetuating the Druze culture, history and religion. Dr. Abdallah Najjar and the Religious Committee continued the follow up on the printing of the first English copy of "The Druze Faith" by Dr. Sami Makarem and "The Druzes" by Ambassador Najjar. Rafic Rasamny printed, at his own expenses, the first ADS directory and donated it to the society.

On August 16, 1973, 250 ADS members boarded the chartered plane that would take them back to the U.S. taking with them, apart from material gifts, a sense of belonging to a great society with a rich heritage and the unforgettable memories of a brief time spent in the land of their forefathers.

In October 1973 the Druze of Michigan unanimously voted to adopt the new Constitution and Bylaws and thereby became the first chapter of the national organization. This supportive move by the Michigan Druze paved the way for the national organization to function within a wide spectrum of interest under the National Constitution. The aim of the new organizational structure was to adopt a dynamic program of activities which would meet the demands of the young generation by providing them with an educational substance to strengthen the roots of their heritage and unite their efforts to carry the torch of Tawhid faith into their future. The following major actions were taken by the national officers:

English version of "The Druze Faith" by Dr. Sami Makarem and "The Druzes" by Ambassador Abdallah

Najjar, translated to English by Fred Massey, were distributed to Druze Families and were placed in the Library of Congress and libraries of major universities.

His Eminence Sheik Al-Akl Mohammed Abu Shakra appointed three representatives: David El Jawhary, Michigan and Ohio; Sheik Suleiman Abilmona, Greater Washington DC. area, and Dr. Ghaleb Maher of Massachusetts.

A documentary under the name and style "Druzes of Lebanon" filmed in Lebanon by Kathy Jaber Stephenson and Dr. Sami Makarem was completed. The ADS National Board of Directors decided to purchase a copy of the film for the Druze in United States and Canada. This film was very informative and provided a visual aid which added to the educational process of the American Druze.

Commemoration of Prince Fakhr El-Din Al-Maani II - The government and Druze of Lebanon decided to commemorate the Great Maanid Prince's 400th anniversary by forming a committee to build a monument in Baakline honoring the great leader who "combined legendary courage with wisdom, shrewdness and sincerity." The ADS participated in the project by donating one thousand dollars.

ADS's relationship with the Arab-American Community- The emphasis was also on an organizational participation in the Arab American community by ADS. To strengthen and foster this new approach, Arab consulates, religious institutions and non-profit organizations were contacted and handed a written notice informing them of the ADS aims and purposes and included the names and addresses of the National officers.

1974. Boyne Mountain, Michigan The 28th Annual Convention of the American Druze Society was held from July 1st through July 7th at Boyne Mountain Lodge. The National President and Convention Chairperson: Ajaj N. Andary, Vice President: Ray Helal, Secretary: Freda Sob, Treasurer: Nadia Alkateeb, Parliamentarian: Samah Helal. Board members: Nancy Naim, Jimmy Silman Jr., Raymond Hamden, Dr. Abdallah Najjar. Advisors: Harry Hamdan, Jack Hamady, Henry Flehan, Nafe Katter, Riad Al-Awar, Enda Joseph, Rafic Rasamny, Charles Wahbey, Wade Hamd, Fawzi Zaineldeen, Jimmy Silman, Sr., and Adil Najar. Convention Committee: Baheej Aboulhosn, Dr. Wahbey Sayegh, Nora Wahbey, Veda Katter, Mounir Kasem, Kalil Wahbey, Melhim Dow, Freda Hamd, Joe, Linda, Najwa and Adal Solomon, Kamal Shouhayib, Salma Carter, Helen Dow, Salman Dahouk and Asma Hamd, Nawal Saley, and Adel Andary. The following decisions were taken at this 28th convention:

The establishment of a Newsletter to be published once every two months under the auspices of the National Board of Directors and to be distributed to all American and Canadian Druze on the mailing list for a period of one year. Mrs. Emma Saley was appointed editor of the ADS Newsletter. The first issue was published and mailed to members by October 1974.

The Bylaws were amended to include three new classes of membership: Charter, Sustained, and Life.

Miss Freda Sobe was appointed as the ADS Historian to collect all news items, stories, pictures, social ,

cultural and charitable activities and achievements of the Druze in the U.S.A. and Canada since the first Druze immigrant arrived. It was hoped that this valuable information could be collected in a booklet, published and distributed on a yearly basis.

Creation and appointment of new committees:

Religious & Culture: Floyd Saley, and Dr. Adil Abou-Assi as Co-chairperson. Hafiz Ghousayni, Henry Flehan as Co-chairpersons of Charitable Affairs. Chairperson of the Youth Committee was Samia Kansoa, and Chairperson of Student affairs was Riad Al-Awar.

A scholarship fund started under the auspicious of the Educational Committee to help Druze Students in the U.S.A. who need financial help to continue their education. The Charitable Committee was instructed to set up a plan to raise money to help the Druze Charitable institutions.

1975. Washington, D.C.

The 29th Annual Convention of the American Druze Society was held in the L'Enfant Plaza hotel in Washington, D.C. The President was Ajaj N. Andary, Vice President: Ray HeLal, Secretary: Freda Sob, Treasurer: Nadia Alkateeb, Parliamentarian: Samah HeLal, Newsletter Editor: Emma Saley. Board Members: Kathy Jaber Stephenson, David Najjar, Janeen Silman, and Mounir Kasem. The Convention Chairperson was Nadine Silman and the Committee members were: Selam Sadak, Samia & Mohammed Fayyad, Faouzi Zaineldeen, Randy Shaban, Jim Silman, Jr., Polly Shadyac and khaled Fayyad.

The Silmans (Nadine, Jimmy, and Janeen) used their years of experience by planing one of the most eventful and enjoyable conventions. The Convention witnessed social activities, business meetings seminars, lectures, sports, entertainment and banquet night planning in accordance with the new constitution and by-laws format. The desire of the American Druze to unite and solidify their strength was shown during the 1975 convention. It was indeed a very healthy sign for our earlier organizational endeavors when there was a competitiveness for the next convention site and for individuals to run for national office.

1976. Pipestem Park, West Virginia

The site for the 30th Annual Convention of the American Druze Society was Pipestem State Park from June 19th through June 23rd. The President of the Society was Floyd Saley and Hafiz Gosaynie as Vice President. The Officers were: Treasurer: Nadia Alkateeb, Parliamentarian: Samah HeLal, Newsletter Editor: Emma Saley. Board members: Janeen Silman, Henry Flehan, Fawzi Zaineldeen, and Dean HeLal. The Convention Chairperson was William Hamady and the committee members were Raymond Hamdan, Ameen Joseph, Jr., Idell Hamady, Sharon Hamady, Olga Joseph, Norman Hamden, Mr. & Mrs. Harry Hamden, Mr. & Mrs. Baheej Aboulhosn, Mr. & Mrs. Adil Najjar, Mickey Sangid, David Sangid, Rufus Kannon, Simera Modad Houchins and Norman Shaar.

The program included Early Bird Party, Breakfast, Educational Seminars on "Our Arabic Heritage Through Scripture" and "Druze Theosophy", Business Meeting, Breakfast, Annual Banquet and Arabic and

American music and entertainment.

The re-organization process continued throughout 1976 along with the religious heritage awakening which was led by Dr. Abdallah Najjar, Mr. Samah Helal and the members of the National Board of Directors.

1977. Bay City, Michigan

The 31st Annual Convention was held at the Bay Valley Inn from July 5th through July 9th, 1977. The President of the Society was Floyd Saley and Vice President Hafiz Ghusayni. Secretary: Freda Sob, Treasurer: Marilyn Safa, Board members: Micky Sangid, Samah HeLal, Raymond Hamden and Omar Kassem. The Convention Chairperson and Newsletter editor was Emma Saley. Convention committee: Jenny Katter, Helen Dow, Ken Katter, Mounir Kasem, Grant Hamady, Arif Sams, Helen Sams, Frank Hamady, Veda Katter and Lilly Hamady.

Jack & Lilly Hamady from Flint Michigan became the first lifetime members according to the new Constitution and Bylaws. Dr. & Mrs. Fred O. Williams were sustaining members. All the meetings and seminars were planned to be in the mornings, leaving the afternoons free for golf, tennis, swimming, and tours.

The most significant event in 1977 was the IRS. final approval of the ADS as a tax exempt organization. After three years of preparation, hard work and persistence another milestone in the history of the ADS was achieved thanks to Floyd and Emma Saly, Nadia and Jihad Alkateeb, Jack Hamady and Ajaj Andary. Finally all donations to the ADS were Tax deductible as a charitable contributions provided for in section 170 of the Internal Revenue Code. The Tax Exempt Identification number given to the ADS was 23-71-55194.

1978. Houston, Texas

The 32nd Annual Convention was held at the Astro Village Hotel from July 4th through July 8th, 1978. The President of the Society was Muneer Zaineldeen and Samah Helal as Vice President. Secretary: Sayma Kansoa, Treasurer: Mohammed Fayyad, Acting Treasurer: Marilyn Safa, Advisor: Floyd Saley. Board members: Tamie Flehan, Dr. Nadim Kassem, Dr. Anis Makarem. Newsletter Editor: Emma Saley. The Convention Chairperson was Earnest S. Ameen and members were: Sheryl Ameen Saunders, Jeanne Cassem Laughlin, Billie Jean Ameen, Fedwa Israwi, Camilila saffady, Jimmie Richards, Hamza Halaway, Casey Kasem, Larry Ameen, Camille Silman, Hani Chtay, Soad Ameen, Izzat & Mofeda Dakour, Dick & Sally Waheed, Sue and Fred Hassen, Don and Terry Waheed, Ray Helal, Charlie Assad, Nana Hassen White, Fawaz Assad, and Fareed Hassen.

The 1978 Convention was very successful in terms of attendance and activities due to the efforts of Earnest Ameen and his wife, the Houston Community and the National Board. Muneer Zaineldeen, appealed for unity of our community by encouraging people to join the ADS. Earnest Ameen's tireless pursuit in Texas resulted in two new chapters being formed. (Killeen and Lubbock).

Also in 1978 the ADS Relief Fund Committee was formed to help the Druze people in Lebanon. Its members are Fowzi Zaineldeen - Washington D.C., Hafez Ghusaini - Ohio, Dr. Anis Makarem - California, Rafic Rasamny - New York, Nafe Katter - Michigan, Mickey Sangin - West Virginia and Ray Helal - Texas

The election of the 1978-79 National Board took place and Ray HeLal was elected President and Dr. Anis Makarem the 1979 Convention Chairman. Mr. Ray HeLal called for a meeting of the Board of Directors that was held October 13 through October 15, 1978. This meeting represented yet another milestone in the History of the ADS because of the proposed amendments to the Constitution, Bylaws, convention program, and relationship guidelines between the National Board and Local Chapters. Immediately following this meeting Mr. HeLal, in his determination to upgrade the organizational structure of the ADS sent letters to many Druze members requesting them to write down their proposals and visions for a viable organization to represent the American Druze current and future organization.

1979. Los Angeles, California

The 33rd Convention held in Huntington Sheraton Hotel from July 2nd through July 7th was attended by hundreds of people from the United States, Mexico, Venezuela and Lebanon. The President of the Society was Ray HeLal and the Vice President was Emma Saley. Past President: Mouneer Zaineldeen, Secretary: Camilla Safady Rasamny, Treasurer: Selwa Najjar. Board members: Earnest Ammen, Dr. Nadim Kassem, Dr. David Najjar and Salim Israwi. Advisors: Henry Flehan, Ralph Modad, Samah HeLal, Ajaj Andary, Jihad Alkateeb, Floyd Saley, Bajeej Aboulhson and Wajde Kabor. The convention Chairperson was Dr. Anis Makarem and members were Casey Kasem, Safwat Israwi, Raja Zahr, Donna Halaby, Dr. Sami & Leila Masri, Shakeeb Aboulhson and Daoud Jamaledine, Fadi Saab, Samir Makarem, Bahij Abu Khzam, Akram Masri and Samir Assaf.

The hospitality of the Druze Community in Southern California was well appreciated and their commitment to advance the cause of the National Society was well received when they voted in December 22, 1979 to become a chapter of the ADS National organization.

The 1979 Convention was also important historically because it was the beginning of the establishment of the "Thousand Club" by Uncle Jack Hamady. The aim of the "Thousand Dollar Club" was to raise \$100,000 for establishing a National Office to be managed by a full time director to administer the affairs and further the aims of the ADS in an efficient and business like manner. This will assure the safe keeping and continuity of the ADS records and will also bring focus to our society, giving information on religion, origin and heritage of all of our people through ADS publications and News of the Druze people from all factors of life and the globe."

1980. Toronto, Canada

Toronto, Canada was the site for the 34th Annual Convention of the American Druze Society. The president of the Society was Ray HeLal, Vice President: Khatter Fayyad, Past President: Mouneer Zaineldeen. Board members: Dr. Nadim Kassem, Salim Israwi, Dr. David Najjar, Wajid Jaber, Kemal Casey Kasem and Dr. Raymond Hamdan. The Convention Chairperson was Victor Botrie.

1980 was active and productive year in terms of reorganizational structure, setting goals and working for their accomplishment. The main issues were: the amendment of the Constitution and Bylaws which includes revision of the preamble, setting the number of National Board Members to Eleven including the Immediate past president (not elected) and council of chapter presidents, setting election procedure and term of office for the National Board of Directors, Developing and publishing the "Chapter's Guide" handbook by Ray HeLal, setting the terms of the chapters officers and Board members for 2 years starting in 1980, Redefining the classes and duties of memberships, and the duties and responsibilities of the Convention Chairperson, setting up the financial and accounting procedures, the council of Presidents shall nominate and elect a chairperson. Establishment of the following standing committees : Committee of Religious affairs (CORA), Scholarship Fund, Publications Committee, Committee on Charitable affairs (COCA), Youth of American Druze Society (YADS), Fund Raising Committee, Nomination and Election, Council of Elders, Membership Committee, Human Rights Committee.

Another major event that occurred in 1980 was the appointment of Dr. Raymond Hamden and Cathy Hamden as the Editors of our newly named "Heritage" magazine (previously the ADS Newsletter).

Also in 1980 the YADS lead by the youth of Southern California and Headed by Babette Israwi, Tammy Flehan (N.C.), Janeen Silman, (Washington D.C.), Linda Hamd (Michigan), Bobby Jaber (Georgia- and Fred Ameen Jr. (Virginia), started organizing the young adults in their respective states to participate in the various activities which would meet their needs to prepare them as the future leaders of the ADS.

The recommendation of the religious committee Chairperson, Dr. Nadim Kassem supported by Ray HeLal that the ADS obtain the services of Shiek Mohammed Naim from Suwayda, Syria who will reside in the U.S.A. and attend the annual convention and many of their functions also became a reality in 1980.

1981. Washington, D.C.

The convention was held from June 30th through July 5th, 1981. The President of the Society was Ray HeLal, and Kattar Fayyad was the Vice-President. Board members: Selwa Najar, Dr. Nadim Kassem, Dr. David Najar, Salim Israwi, Dr. Raymond Hamden, Dr. Abdallah Najjar, Muneer Zaineldeen, Kamal Shouhayib and Wajdi Jaber. The Convention Chairperson was Muneer Zaineldeen.

The theme of the 1981 convention in Washington D.C. concentrated on encouraging American Druze Youth to participate in the ADS activities. Muneer Zaineldeen, Convention Chairperson, sent an appealing message to the youth and President Ray HeLal outlined the benefits and opportunities of belonging to the ADS. Ray HeLal, in his yearly message to the American Druze Community emphasized the "great pride and awareness of our young people" as they learn the tenants of the Druze faith and become knowledgeable of their history and heritage.

In 1981 the search for an executive director was finalized when the Board of Directors appointed Kathy Jaber Stevenson for this position starting after the 1981 convention. Another important event which started in 1981 was the beginning of research to document the early history of the American Druze Society by Henry Flehan and Ajaj Andary

1982. Traverse City, Michigan

The annual convention, held in Michigan, and chaired by Emma Saley was superb. The President of the Society was Dr. Nadim Kassem and Randy Shaban as Vice President. Board members: Selwa Najjar, Veda Yakzan, Mike Fayyad, Samia Fayyad, Walid Harb, Wajdi Jaber, Dr. David Najjar, Emma Saley, Kamal Shouhayib, Ray HeLal.

Dr. Nadim Kassem, National President continued the efforts to address the importance of religious awareness for youth by announcing that CORA had written the first draft of material addressing religious and historical aspects of the Druze Faith. Dr. Kassem's second goal of his administration was to establish a research committee to study and make recommendations to purchase and set up centers or homes for our various communities. It is important to note here that the Southern California Chapter established a "Housing Committee" of Salim Israwi, Casey Kasem, Raja Shaar, Ron Hamady, Showki Aboulhusn, and Akram Masrie. Also the Southern California Chapter appointed Mrs. Leila Masrie as chairperson of the Ladies Auxiliary Committee. The NBC magazine and David Brinkley noted Casey Kasem as the network's number one voice. People magazine also called him "the most listened to voice in America"

In 1982 the ADS Director Kathy Jaber-Stevenson obtained the approval of the National Board to make the necessary improvements to change "Our Heritage from a newsletter to a magazine. In his annual address to the members, Dr. Nadim Kassem announced that the ADS had set up a special Relief Fund Committee, chaired by Sami Merhi, to aid the needy Druze who suffered because of the war in Lebanon. A relief committee was set up in every state where medicine, clothes, and money were collected and sent to Lebanon to be distributed to the needy.

The student Loan Fund chairperson, Kamal Shouhayib, announced that two more Druze students had been selected to be granted loans for college, bringing the total to five Druze Students to whom the ADS had granted loans.

Dr. Wahbah Sayegh and the Religious Committee had completed the writing of the First Book of "Tawhid Faith" which was published by the ADS. Another important accomplishment in 1982 was the revisions of the ADS Bylaws, elections of officers and board of Directors (Nomination, filing, qualification, proxies and election date and time). The 1982 ADS yearbook was dedicated to the great hero of legend, the symbol of courage, dignity, justice and hero of independence - Sultan Basha Al-Atrash, "the Lion of the Druze".

1983. San Antonio, Texas

The President of the Society was Dr. Nadim Kassem and Randy Shaban as Vice President. Board members: Selwa Najjar, Veda Yakzan, Evelyn Abraham, Mike Fayyad, Samia Fayyad, Walid Harb, Wajdi Jaber, Ralph Modad, Dr. David Najjar, Emma Saley, Moustafa Moukarim, OKhaldoun Salha. The convention Chairperson was Ray HeLal.

The 1983 Convention held in San Antonio, Texas was successful and very enjoyable. Attendance from all

over the world was very noticeable. Mr. Halim Fayyad, the Governor of South Lebanon was the main speaker at the Banquet Night. Ray HeLal, convention Chairperson, experimented holding a convention where there is no Druze community concentration. The convention was almost flawless and proved that this can be done.

On January 31, 1983 the National Board of Directors and chapter presidents met with the representatives of the National Security Council to discuss the concerns about our brethren in Lebanon. Mr. Robert MacFarlane, Deputy assistant to the President of the U. S. and Mr. Geoffrey Kemp received the ADS delegation. Dr. Nadim Kassem presented the ADS position paper about the situation in Lebanon and expressed the deep concern about the fate of Druze of Lebanon. Those who attended the meeting in Washington D.C. were: Dr. Nadim Kassem, Sam Aboulhosn, Moustafa Moukarim, Randy Shaban, Samia Fayyad, Ralph Modad, Shaheen Alawan Ferris, Walid Harb Dr. David Najar.

The newly formed American Druze Public Affairs Committee(ADPAC), chaired by Muneer Zaineldeen and Dr. Raymond Hamden, issued press releases defending the position of the Druze of Lebanon and educating the American Public. On the Humanitarian issue, The ADS Relief Fund, Chaired by Sami Merhi, was able to wire \$50,000 to Druze charitable institutions and hospitals in Lebanon. 1780 pounds of medicines and pharmaceutical supplies were also air freighted.

1984. Orlando, Florida

The 38th Annual Convention of the American Druze Society was held from July 3rd through July 7th, 1984. The President of the Society was Sami Merhi and the Vice-President was Dr. David Najar. Board members: Veda Yakzan, Evelyn Abraham, Dr. Nadim Kassem, Nadim Abou-Said, Mike Fayyad, Samia Fayyad, Shaheen Ferris, Walid Harb, Moustafa Moukarim and Khakdoun Salha. The convention Chairperson as Dr. David Najar. This 38th annual convention was very enjoyable and there were young adults attending. The registered attendance was 650.

The ADS efforts to support and defend our people's struggle to defend their existence continued. President Merhi reported that "The ADS Relief Fund Committee was able to raise \$220,000 in addition to shipping over 3000 pounds of medical supplies and tons of blankets and clothing." The Relief Fund Committee recognized the efforts of Moustafa Moukarim, Dr. Anis Obeid, Halim Zahr, Jack Aboul Husn, Sam Aboulhosn, Adel Andary, Hasib Abdulatif, Toufic Chami, Raja Aridi, and Ramsey Kaedbey and all local coordinators. On behalf of the ADS, President Sami Merhi held many T.V. and Cable news interviews and appeared on C-Span, CBS, NBC, ABC and local channels and newspapers. "

In November 1984 the ADS established the Newline in Washington DC to bring daily news to our members around the country. Mr. Afif Khodr of the Permanent Bureau of Druze Institutes in Lebanon supplied the News and Mr. Ramiz Saab directed and broadcasted the bulletins."

Later, in a letter to President Sami Merhi from Mr. Essam Makarem, and Board Secretary Mr. Ziad Hamadeh of the Druze Foundation for Social Welfare the following was stated: "In assessing our activities for the year 1984, we found out that the works and efforts of the American Druze Society were

enormous and most fruitful in assisting the Druze Foundation at all levels. We come to you in this letter to extend to you personally and to all your associates at the Society our thanks and profound appreciation for your vigor, strength and dedication in upholding the Druze Cause".

During this critical period of time when much of our energy and time was focused on the crisis in Lebanon we did not neglect our concern for the ADS at home. The Board of Directors during their Orlando, Florida Meeting in 1984 passed a resolution to purchase a building in Washington, DC area. Mr. Shaheen Ferris was appointed chairman of the National Home Committee. The ADS Council of Advisors was also formed and Dr. Abdallah Najjar was elected chairperson. This council was made up of experienced and long time members of our society and their advice was to be yet another tool to help achieve our goals.

In March of 1984 Mr. Merhi traveled to Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Lebanon where he met with leaders of those countries informing them of the ADS activities and our efforts to help our Lebanese brethren. In Lebanon he presented the ADS Board's recommendation to his Eminence Sheik Mohammed Abu Shakra to appoint more representatives to perform religious rites in various geological locations. Those appointed were: Walid Farhat - Connecticut, Riad Abi Faker - New York, Dr. Ghaleb Maher - Massassutes, Aref Hatoum - Florida, and Sami Merhi - New Jersey.

After almost four years of hard work and much professionalism Kathy Jaber Stevenson tendered her resignation as the ADS Executive Director and Newsletter Editor on March 1, 1984.

1985. Los Angles, California

The 39th Annual Convention of the American Druze Society was held at the Sheraton At University City, from June 25th through June 20th, 1985. The President of the Society was Sami Merhi and Vice President Dr. David Najar. Board members: Tammie Flehan, Eveyln Abraham, Dr. Mona Aboulhosn, Shaheen Ferris, Bobby Jaber, Moustafa Moukarim, Mark Najjar, Nabih Nasserdeen, Emma Saley, Dr. Nadim Kasseem and Nadim Abu Said. The convention chairperson was Dr. David Najar. The program included: Video taped message from His Eminence Sheik Al Akl Mohammed Abu Shakra, Panel discussions on the Tawhid Faith book two, International presenters and reports from the Druze Foundation for Social Welfare, Permanent Bureau of Druze Institutions, and Foreign Druze Societies. Once again Dr. David Najar organized a successful convention with the help and support of the California Druze Community.

In 1985 the tireless efforts of Sami Merhi, the Relief Fund Committee and the American Druze Community continued. The Relief Fund Committee continued to raise money, gather medical supplies, and collect clothes and send them to Lebanon on a regular basis. Other important events which occurred in 1985 were: The purchase of the American Druze Society Headquarters in Alexandria, Virginia was announced by President Sami Merhi. The house was about 3,000 sq. feet located on property approximately 51,500 sq. feet. The price was \$180,000 with a down payment of \$35,000. An ADS Building Fund collected \$41,410. Unfortunately, this long awaited dream of the founding fathers and every American Druze did not live beyond the year 1986 due to technical zoning issue and interpretation

differences amongst the board members. Emma Saley was appointed as "Our Heritage" Editor in Chief and was assisted with an Editorial Staff of Dr. Mona Aboulhosn, Dr. Nadim Kassem, Dr. Abdallah Najjar, and Dr. Wahbah Sayegh. Dr. Wahbah Sayegh and his CORA Committee completed Book Two of the Tawhid Faith. Copies were available for distribution by the 39th Annual Convention in California.

1986. Seacaucus, New Jersey

The 40th Annual Convention of the American Druze Society was held at the Meadowland Hilton from July 1st through July 5th, 1986. The president of the Society was Kamal Shouhayib and Randy Shaban as Vice President. Executive Secretary and Treasurer: Emma Saley, Past President: Sami Merhi, Board members: Dr. Moan Abul-hosn, Shaheen Feris Alawan, Hani Chtay, Dr. David Najjar, Nabih Nasserdeen, and Dr. Marwan Ramadan. Dr. David Najjar was the convention Chairperson and the Convention Committee of the Tri-State planned an exciting and enjoyable convention. There were many very organized social-cultural, sports events and entertainment events to celebrate the 40th Convention.

President Kamal Shouhayib and the new board concentrated on improving communication with the chapter presidents and the general membership. They sought membership growth by explaining the benefits and goals of the ADS. This effort resulted in doubling the paid membership in 1986. Dr. Sami Abd-el-Baki addressed the Convention on behalf of the Druze Foundation of Social Welfare and Mrs. Adele Halim Takieddine delivered the Banquet Night Speech. The 1986 yearbook featured "Forty Years of a Great Idea" and included articles on the history of the ADS, Convention pictures, chapter news, CORA's activities, and an outline of the society's future goals. In 1986 New Bylaws were ratified to include the office of President elect and 10 other Board Members. Voting was changed to secret ballots by mail prior to the convention with the results to be announced at the annual convention.

1987. Durango, Colorado

The 41st Annual Convention of the American Druze Society was held at Tamarron Resort from June 30th through July 5th, 1987. The President of the Society was Kamal Shouhayib and the Vice President Randy Shaban. Board members: Emma Saley, Dr. Mona Aboulhosn, Dr. David Najjar, Nabil Nasserdeen, Hani Chtay, Behjat Jurdi, and Salim Israwi. The convention chairperson was Randy Shaban. This was a mountain resort and the beauty and peacefulness brought joy and satisfaction to the many conventioners. Jihad Zuheiry, Abbas Halaby, Ziad Hamady, and Issam Makarem were our guests from Lebanon. Hafiz Abilmona was appointed Chief Editor of the publication of "Our Heritage" magazine and supported by a staff of English editors. Emma Saley continued on as Secretary and Treasurer. The Student Loan Fund had granted scholarship loans to 20 needy students. The "1000 Club" under the leadership of Jack Hamady advanced some of the donated money to help pay for executive office expenses. It is important to note that the "1000 Club" had collected \$88,000 by 1986. Dr. Wahbah Sayegh announced that CORA had published Book III entitled Ethics and Morality. The California Chapter had raised \$150,000 toward the purchase of an ADS Cultural Center in Southern California led by the efforts of Salim Israwi, Behjat Jurdi, Uncle Jack Hamady, Ladies Auxiliary, and YADS of Southern California. President Shouhayib and the ADS Board supported these efforts. A "housing Committee had begun a search for a suitable location.

On November 1, 1987, Salim Israwi submitted his resignation as National President due to health problems and irreconcilable differences with the Board of Directors interpretation of the Constitution and bylaws. A group of concerned Druze then responded to the call of Mr. Jack Hamady to meet in Florida to discuss the resignation of Mr. Israwi and to provide plans for the future to insure the continuity of the organization. The meeting, to the best of my recollection, was attended by Jack Hamady, George Rafey, Dr. Abdallah Najjar, Ajaj Andary, Salim Israwi, Kamal Shouhayib, Ray HeLal, Sami Merhi, Dr. David Najjar, and Adil Najjar. A vote of confidence was given in favor of Dr. David Najjar, the Vice President at the time, to assume the office of presidency vacated by Mr. Israwi. Behjat Jurdi was then appointed Vice President.

Dr. Najjar assured the community of the unity and commitment of the Board to preserve our heritage and faith in spite of the different ideologies amongst the members. The duty of every Druze is to uphold the Tawheed faith in his/her mind and soul and to the American Druze it is to unite, to promote and strengthen the goals of the American Druze Society. Dr. David Najjar also assumed the role of convention chairman and invited the American Druze community members to attend the 1988 convention.

1988. Tampa, Florida

The 42nd Convention was held at Innisbrook Resort in Tappon's Springs, Florida from June 28th to July 2nd, 1988. The president of the Society was Salim Israwi and Vice-President Dr. David Najjar. Board members: Behjat Jurdi, Hani Chtay, Hafiz Abilmona, Fouad Halaby, Akram Jurdi, Muneer Zaineldeen, Raouf Richani, Eddie Smien, bobby Jaber and Ajaj Andary. The Convention Chairperson was Behjat Jurdi.

Dr. David Najjar's experience and Behjat Jurdi's dedication resulted in a very successful and enjoyable convention. The convention was full of educational, social, sports activities, music, and entertainment. Dr. David Najjar announced the appointment of Ray HeLal as the Executive Director effective July 15, 1988. Immediately after his appointment Ray HeLal implemented the recommendation of the Board of Directors to purchase the necessary computer and office equipment to upgrade our filing systems, update mailing addresses, and computerize the financial statements and to produce our Heritage and Newsletters by desktop publishing.

The Board of Directors was very active and met on a regular basis in different cities where ADS chapters existed. On August 20, 1988 the Board met in Mesquite, Texas and adopted the following resolutions:

The ADS was to hire a CPA to prepare the tax returns and audit the books and a detailed financial report was to be prepared and published.

Muneer Zaineldeen was appointed to represent the ADS with the Council of Presidents of National Arab American Associations.

Ajaj Andary was appointed chairperson of the constitution and by-laws Committee and was appointed the Our Heritage Arabic editor.

To make the convention more cultural, educational and religious oriented and less social.

To Ensure that all chapters are duly registered with their state governments.

To implement religious services at the chapter level.

Ray HeLal acting as the full-time Executive Director and Our Heritage editor devoted all his time to organizing the National office, communicating with the chapters, researching and compiling facts and figures regarding our accomplishments to encourage our community to join the ADS.

1989. Washington D.C.

The 43rd Annual Convention of the American Druze Society was held at the Washington Sheraton hotel from July 4th through July 8th, 1989. The president of the Society was Dr. David Najar and Vice-President Behjat Jurdi. Board members: Ajaj Andary, Hafiz Abilmona, Sara Aboulhosn, Mouneer Zaineldeen, Fouad Halaby, Akram Jurdi, Raouf Richani and Bobby Jaber. The convention Chairperson was Behjat Jurdi.

" We are shining in Washington DC." Wrote the executive director about the 1989 convention. We have recorded the largest pre-registration ever. Fellow Druze and families from the U.S.A., Canada, Mexico, Venezuela, England, Switzerland, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Lebanon attended the convention and enjoyed the Historical sites, the convention activities and Washington D.C.'s Druze community's hospitality. The Druze community was very proud and honored to have Selwa (Shokair) Roosevelt and the honorable James Abourisk as guests of honor and main speakers. Also, Jihad Zuheiri delivered Mr. Walid Jumblatt's message, Dr. Abdallah Najjar spoke on behalf of the Druze Foundation for Social Welfare and Sami Merhi for honoring Mr. Shakib Nakadi.

Success for this convention can be attributed to the hard work and efforts of Dr. David Najar, Jimmy and Nadine Silman, Behjat Jurdi(Chairperson), Kamal Najjar (Co-ordinator), Samia Fayyad and Ghassan Abdel Khalik. Ajaj Andary was sworn in as president along with the new board .

On July 8, 1989, Ajaj Andary conducted his first meeting as National President of the ADS. He asked the co-operation of the Board and Chairperson of every committee to help achieve the goals and ideas he established for 1989-1991. The goals and plans included:

Concentrating on Chapter re-organization. Appointing a membership chairperson to contact inactive members to rejoin the ADS and to attract new members, and to assist with an up-to-date census of the American Druze. Assign on Board member to: visit their designated chapter at least twice each year; b. work with chapter officers and the community; help CO-ordinate chapter activities with the national activities; plan Eid-al-Adha celebrations;

plan religious and educational seminars on a yearly basis; and provide assistance to the chapters as

needed and report on their progress and problems to the National Board.

Establishing a youth program (educational, social and athletic). Establishing a Board of Trustees to work with the Board of Directors to address and plan the social, cultural, religious and financial needs of the society. To actively support the efforts of CORA to plan and sponsor religious retreats, especially for the young adults. To plan an exchange program for Druze young adults with other overseas countries. To actively support the efforts of COCA and encourage our members to contribute to the orphanage and other worthy Druze charities. To publicize the student loan fund contribution to the education of needy students and to raise money and make loans available. To encourage chapter participation in the convention by sponsoring a lecture, seminar, talent show, debke, play, arts and crafts. To honor and recognize members who graduate with special achievements, who succeeded in business and who are gifted and talented. To appoint a committee to contact Druze communities throughout the world for mutual exchange of ideas, talent and programs that address the common needs of our people. To create an ADS liaison Committee to co-ordinate and play a larger role with the Arab-American community. To appoint a committee to revise and update the chapter guidelines. To publish an outline of the duties and responsibilities of the chapter and the national convention committee chairperson. Every board member is to submit a detailed list of proposals to be discussed at the next board meeting.

President Andary corresponded with the chapters and general membership of the society informing them of the goals for the following two years and appealing to everyone to join the Board of Directors and committees in contributing to the success of these objectives. A positive response to the President's appeal came from the American Druze Youth Headed by Mazin Chami and Nezar Andary who sent an open letter to the Druze youth urging them to organize, to state their objectives and goals and discussing how they could participate and contribute to their faith, and culture.

Chapter presidents expressed their willingness to participate in national board meetings. They welcomed the idea of assigning one board member to work with them all year long. COCA pledged to continue their efforts to raise money for charity and the student loan foundation promised to publicize the program to reach all students in need. The amendment and ratification by the Board of the Bylaws. Dr. Wahbah Sayegh, CORA Chairman, wrote an article in Our Heritage explaining why the Druze celebrate Eid-al-Adha. It was very encouraging and CORA urged a simultaneous celebration of the Eid throughout the US. Ajaj Andary visited the Tri-State area chapter, Connecticut Chapter, Boston Chapter, Washington DC Chapter, Dallas Chapter North Carolina Chapter, and met with Virginia, Houston, Miami, Kileen, Michigan chapter presidents and discussed future goals and ways and means to improve their relationship with the national Board.

Another event which took place in the fall of 1989 was the resignation of Ray HeLal from the executive director position effective January 14, 1990. President Andary thanked Ray on behalf of the ADS for doing an excellent job that was desperately needed for the growth and progress of our society. Ray's commitment, dedication, and professionalism for many years has set a high standard for Our Heritage Magazine and for the business procedures. The search for a new executive director came to a happy ending when President Andary announced the Board's approval of Miss Sahar Muakasa for this position.

1990. Costa Mesa, California

The 44th Annual Convention of the American Druze Society was held at the Red Lion Inn at Costa Mesa, California from June 26th through June 30th 1990. The President of the Society was Ajaj Andary and the Vice President was Behjat Jurdi. David Najar was the Past-President. Board members: Hafez Abilmona, Sara Aboulhosn, Emad Aboulhosn, Raja Aridi, Fouad Halaby, Ghassan Khalek, Akram Jurdi, and Muneer Zaineldeen. National Treasurer: Sahar Muakasa. The National Committee Chairpersons were: Jack Hamady (C.O.E.), Dr. Wahbah Sayegh (CORA), Sami Merhi (COCA), Kamal Shouhayib (Student Loan Fund). The convention chairperson was Behjat Jurdi.

The 1990 convention in Costa Mesa, California was extremely successful. The active participation and interest in the seminars, panels and presentations were the result of considerable advance planning. The selection of topics were focused on history, heritage, faith and the role of the Arab American. The participation of our Druze scholars and educators included Dr. Anis Obeid, Dr. Abdallah Najjar, Dr. Nadim Kassem, Dr. Hayel Said, Dr. Wahbah Sayegh, Dr. Intissar Assam, Dr. Foazi El-Barouki, and Dr. Souraya Aboulhosn. Casey Kasem was introduced by Nezar Andary to address the Young American Druze on " Growing up Arab American". Ambassador Nassib Lahoud of Lebanon was the main speaker at "President's Night."

The year 1990 recorded the realization of the long awaited ADS dream. The National Board of Directors unanimously approved the purchase of property located at 2239 Merton Avenue, Eaglerock, California as the first "Druze Cultural Center" in the U.S.A. during their meeting on May 27, 1990. The dream and goal of Salim Israwi since the early sixties, the planning of Emad Aboulhosn, Behjat Jurdi, Shakeeb Aboulhosn, the dedication of Southern California Druze Community and the moral and financial support of the American Druze Community throughout the United States lead to this great accomplishment.

The National President, Ajaj Andary, in his message to the American Druze community stated "the cultural center in Southern California is a "home" for all the American Druze people. It is a symbol of our unity, pride and determination. There is now a place for our children to learn the Arabic language, their history and their faith. Our adults have a place to meet, our elderly have a Majlis to pray on Thursday nights and our community has a place to hold their functions and meet regularly."

The 1990 convention in Costa Mesa, California was extremely successful. The active participation and interest in the seminars, panels and presentations were the result of considerable advance planning. The selection of topics were focused on history, heritage, faith and the role of the Arab American. The participation of our Druze scholars and educators included Dr. Anis Obeid, Dr. Abdallah Najjar, Dr. Nadim Kassem, Dr. Hayel Said, Dr. Wahbe Sayegh, Dr. Intissar Assam, Dr. Foazi El-Barouki, and Dr. Souraya Aboulhosn. Casey Kasem was introduced by Nezar Andary to address the Young American Druze on " Growing up Arab American". Representatives of the Arab American community namely ADC and NAAA also addressed the convention on issues related to the unification of the Arab American community. Ambassador Nassib Lahoud of Lebanon was the main speaker at "President's Night."

Another organization, the American Druze Foundation (ADF), was established with tax-exemption status. The ADF's main goal is to raise funds to sponsor programs designed to introduce and preserve the richness of the Druze culture and religious traditions amongst American Druze and other Americans. Dr. Wahbe Sayegh and the Committee on Religious Affairs published Book Four of the Tawhid Faith titled "Pioneers and their Shrines."

1991. Dallas, Texas

The 45th Annual Convention was held from July 2nd through July 7th, 1991. The President of the Society was Ajaj Andary, Vice President: Behjat Jurdi, President Elect: Muneer Zaineldeen, Board members: Emad Aboulhosn, Sara Aboulhosn, Toufic Alghawi, Raja Aridi, Walid Farhat, Fouad Halaby, Ghassan Khalek and Dr. David Najjar. National Treasurer: Sahar Muakasa

The Convention Chairperson was Raja Aridi and the convention committee members were: Mark & Katia Hamdan, Halim Zaidan, Hala Azzam, Maan Baz, Marwan Aridi, Ramzi & Hourri Kaedbey, Ziad Dalal, Hani & Judy Chtay, Mazin & Ramzi Aridi, Ramzi and Hafez Ghraizi, Yasser Elnemer, Richard Assed, Abdul-Magid Ghreizi, Linda Al-Awar and Jihad Attar.

The success of the 1991 Convention at Dallas, Texas was crowned by the attendance of our scholar and highly respected authority on religion Sheik Salman Masri. Sheik Masrie's wisdom, eloquence and open-minded views enriched the convention participants. Dr. Anis Obeid, Dr. Wahbah Sayegh and Dr. Mohammed Halaby translated for the audience the lectures, presentation and question and answer sessions held during the convention. Sheik Masri also visited California and met with the Druze community at the Cultural Center where he emphasized the importance of strengthening the relationship among the Druze community and their country of origin. Sheik Masrie's presentation centered on understanding the faith and the Unitarian teaching of the Druze faith.

Sheik Masri also visited the states of Indiana, Michigan and Connecticut. The Boston and Connecticut chapters invited Sheik Masrie for dinner and to lecture on the Druze faith. Druze members attended this event from Connecticut, New York, New Jersey and New Hampshire. The Lebanese Ambassador to Canada, Dr. Assem Jaber was the main speaker at the "President's Night." Dallas Convention was very enriching and cultured.

In 1991 the National President Ajaj Andary and the National Board of Directors intensified their efforts to improve and implement the programs to increase membership, to improve communication and to encourage the youth participation. The National President, Ajaj Andary, appealed to the chapters to hold one social-cultural activity per year where the proceeds would be donated to support the ADS Cultural Center in Southern California. An Ad Hoc Committee to reorganize the American Druze youth was formed by Nezar Andary, Mazin Chami and Toufic Alghawi. Nezar Andary corresponded with the American Druze youth and sent a detailed outline of the objectives and goals of the newly formed "Bani Ma'arouf" Youth Committee.

1992. Rutherford, New Jersey

The 1992 Convention was held at the Sheraton Meadowlands Hotel from June 30th through July 5th. The President of the Society was Muneer Zaineldeen and Vice President Raja Aridi. Board members: Ajaj Andary, Sara Aboulhson, Toufic Alghawi, Haitham Ballout, Babette Israwi, Ramsey Kaed Bey, Julie Makarem, Dr. David Najar and Dr. Samer Elrayess. National Treasurer: Sahar Muakasa. The convention chairperson was Lina Rasamny and convention Co-coordinator was Sami Merhi. Convention Committee: Linda Kanso, Houssam and Ghida Halaby, Ghassan El-Eid, Nabil Kassem, Nezar Andary and Aida Farhat.

The 1992 Convention was successful in both social activities and in interesting seminars. The convention was highlighted by the presence of the distinguished scholar and theologian Sheik Anwar Abou Khzam, who had been invited by the National President and the Board of Directors to attend the convention and meet with the American Druze Community. Sheik Aboukhzam was able to communicate with the young adults on a person to person basis because of his excellent command of the English language. He also gave three informative lectures about the Druze faith which was appreciated by everyone.

Other honored guests at the convention were His Eminence Metropolitan Philip Saliba, His Excellency Ambassador Simon Karam of Lebanon, Dr. Clovis Maksoud and the Honorable Antoine Chedid.

Following the convention, Sheik Anwar Abou Khzam visited California and gave a very scholarly and informative lecture on the Tawheed faith at the ADS Cultural Center.

President Muneer Zaineldeen established new committees such as "Career placement network," "Kids Camp in Lebanon," and an "International Fund Raising Committee." President Zaineldeen in his message to the community stated that "the success of any program depends on the community members participation." He encouraged the Druze community to pull together and support the establishment of career placement network, contribute to the fund raising Committee to help pay the principle loan on the Cultural Center in California.

The Southern California Chapter and the community started developing programs, sponsoring activities and establishing procedures to raise funds to support the Cultural Center. Barbara Israwi, Leila Masri and other ladies supported the promotion of the food certificate program. Ray Najar donated six months of his time to organize and help raise funds for the Center. Casey Kasem and his wife Jean sponsored a Halloween Party at their home. The Chapter board of directors raffled a car to help in raising funds for the Cultural Center. An Arabic School started to teach the children the Arabic language.

1993. Miami, Florida

The 47th Annual Convention was held at the Doral Resort and Country Club from June 29th through July 4th, 1993. The president of the Society was Muneer Zaineldeen, Vice President: Raja Aridi, President Elect: Sami Merhi. Board members: Toufic Alghawi, Dr. Samer Alrayess, Haitham Ballout, Ziad Dalal, Maan Hamdan, Ramsey Kaedbey, Julie Makarem and Dr. David Najar. National Treasurer: Sahar Muakasa. The convention chairperson was Toufic Alghawi and the Convention Co-Chairman was Akram Jurdi. The convention committee members: Wissam Alghawi, Hind Richani, Diana Hassan, Nisreen Alghawi, Nadim Halabi, Lamia Israwi, Adel Radwan, Mark & Katia Hamdan, Bassam Abi Faraj, Salah A.

Ghannem, Akram Boughannam, Sleiman Timani and the Ladies Auxiliary of the Miami Chapter.

The 1993 Convention at the Doral Resort and Country Club in Miami, Florida was a model in organization and all activities were well planned. Functions started on time and finished on time. CORA held a seminar on "The Fundamentals of Tawhid Faith". This was chaired by Dr. Mohammed Halabi. CORE program included a video on the Druze of Palestine presented by Zaidan Atshe. An Arabic Poetry Symposium was held chaired by Dr. Anis Obeid and Fouad Ghannam. There was also Athletic competitions (ADS Olympics), children's programs, picnic, Beit Al-Yatim program, music and entertainment. The main feature on Saturday night was the wonderful performance of the South Florida Chapter Debke Troupe. There was high praise for Toufic Alghawi, Salimi Azzam and the Miami Community for a job well done.

For health reasons Muneer Zaineldeen was unable to attend this convention and vice-president Raja Aridi chaired the business meeting.

The main historical event of 1993 occurred on October 9, 1993 which was the Grand Opening of the ADS Cultural Center of Southern California. As a result of the continuous and tireless efforts of Salim Israwi and his commitment to the well being of the Druze Community this event was made possible. Salim Israwi arranged with the help of his friend Dr. Ray Irani, the visit of H.E. Walid Jumblatt to the ADS Cultural Center in Southern California. Prior to the Grand Opening Celebration, Dr. Ray Irani hosted a \$1000 a plate luncheon honoring Mr. and Mrs. Jumblatt at the Occidental Petroleum Headquarters. The proceeds from this function was paid toward the principle loan of the Cultural Center.

This historical event was highlighted by the presence of Dr. Ray Irani, Occidental petroleum Board Chairman, Dr. Farid Abboud, Lebanese Council General, Mr. Dory Shamoun, Mr. Hani Salaam, Judge James Kaddo, Sheik Ziad Kasfi, and Mr. Casey Kasem, Mr. Sami Merhi, ADS National President, Mr. Ghassan Saab from Michigan, Mr. Abdul Majid Ghreizi and family from Texas; and Mr. Wajih Al-Awar from Seattle, Washington; members of the ADS National Board; and many others from the Southern California Arab American Community.

Ms. Misner, representative of the City of Eagle Rock, presented the ADS Chapter president with a certificate of congratulations on the opening of the ADS Cultural Center; certificates of welcome for Mr. Walid Jumblatt and Mr. Hani Salaam; and certificates of appreciation for Dr. Ray Irani, Mr. Salim Israwi, and Mr. Casey Kasem.

The symbolic ceremony of cutting the ribbon to officially open the ADS Cultural Center was performed by Mr. Walid Jumblatt and this was followed by a tour of the center for the distinguished guests. Later they joined the hundreds of people who came from all over the world to celebrate this historic event. The event was covered by the Arabic Press and local TV Stations.

1994. Long Beach, California

The 48th Annual Convention was held at the Hilton Long Beach Hotel from June 27th through July 3rd,

1994. The president of the Society was Sami Merhi, Vice President: Salimi Azzam Joseph, Past-President; Ajaj Andary. Board members: Toufic Alghawi, Dr. Samer Alrayess, Haitham Ballout, Ziad Dalal, Maan Hamdan, Ramsey Kaedbey, Julie Makarem and Dr. David Najjar. National Treasurer: Sahar Muakasa. The convention chairperson was Fouad Barakat and the Convention Co-ordinator was Ajaj Andary. The convention committee members were: Aboud Assaf, Rima Ghosn, Ranya Ghosn, Mahiba Merhi, Nasiba Abu-Hamdan, Soad Abul-Hosn, Hamad Nawfal, Bassam Abou-Shakra, Bud & Sami Wehbe, Adel Salaheddine, Nidal Ramadan, Emad Hassanieh, Hussam Barakat, Yasser Andary, Neman Takieddine, Leila Masri, Fouad Hariz, Nabila Aboukhzam, Khaled Zahr, Nezar & Janan Andary, and the Ladies Auxiliary of the Southern California Chapter.

The 1994 Convention was very successful in terms of various activities, seminars, lectures, sports, entertainment and honored guests. Mr. Halim Hamd discussed the "Reconstruction" of Lebanon" and one of the best received seminar's was about various Role Models given by young Druze Professionals. Another memorable event was the all day visit to the ADS Cultural Center, the feast served to 400 people and the address of Dr. Salah Salman on "Future of the Druze". The famous poet, Mr. Samih Al-Kassem from Palestine was our Guest of Honor. He recited many exciting poems on Friday Night. Also, Mrs. Nazek Abed addressed the convention on the role of "Women in Lebanon". H.E. Minister Anwar El-Khalil was the keynote speaker on Saturday night. Later that evening everyone was very much entertained by the Southern California Debke Troupe as they danced and did performed skits for the audience. It is important to mention that the Ladies auxiliary under the capable leadership of Nabila Aboukhzam and the young adults, under the leadership of Rima Ghosn, and Mahiba Merhi contributed much to the success of the 1994 convention.

Sami Merhi, the National President, began the year 1994 by introducing the "Life Membership" plan to help guarantee a stable financial base for the ADS. He visited and corresponded with many Druze Scholars, Theologians, poets and professionals from Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine and extended an invitation to them to attend the 1994 Convention. He called on the 15 chapters to establish a fund raising plan to help reduce the ADS cultural Center in Southern California's principal loan. He encouraged the participation of the young adults and passed a resolution by CORA to adopt the publication of the book, "On Druze Identity" by Nezar Andary.

On Jan. 26th 1994 the American Druze Community had to say farewell to Uncle Nafe Katter of Saginaw, Michigan. Uncle Nafe, was a founding father and pioneer in the services of the Druze Community. Prior to his death, he requested the National Board to have the 50th Convention in the State of Michigan. The Board obliged Uncle Nafe's request unanimously.

On July 18, 1994 Bobby Jaber, sent out the first issue of Dialogue to students and young adults. Bobby Jaber also has been in charge of our needy children's program for many years. He has as been an active participant in the Conventions and ADS from the early beginnings.

It is very important at this time of our history to emphasize the importance of having a Druze Cultural Center in Southern California and what this means to our people in terms of achievement, pride and

caring for the future generations. During 1994 - 1995, the Southern California Chapter President, Ajaj Andary and the local Board of Directors planned and sponsored many social, cultural and religious functions at the Druze Center. Some of these are as follows:

Monthly family Day which takes place on the First Sunday of every month. Pot-luck luncheon, special children's programs, games, videos and social activities take place during this day with no society business discussed except announcements.

Eid El-Adha Celebration.

Sahra Karawiya - the Ladies Auxiliary sponsors the event at the Druze center to show the traditional evening gathering in a Druze village.

Arabic School - This is the pride and joy of the Druze Community. The school teaches more than 65 students from the Druze and Arab-American Community. Mrs. Asmahan Masri is the Principal and the teachers Nabila Aboukhazam, Jinan El-Rayes, Iqbal Wahbe, Neda Andari, Nazek Zeitouni, and Hoda Wahbe are volunteer teachers on a regular basis.

Cultural Events - The Southern California Chapter encourages cultural activities at the center such as plays and famous Arabic musician and composers.

Thursday Night Prayer - The Majlis at the Cultural center has been open every Thursday evening for the community to come and pray.

The cultural Center was used for Honoring Dignitaries. On October, 1994, the Lebanese Minister, Rida Wahid, and the Lebanese delegation were honored and a reception-dinner honoring Dr. Farid Abboud, the Council General of Lebanon was held prior to his return to Lebanon.

New Year's Celebration at the Cultural Center.

Beit El-Yateem Day is held every year at the Cultural Center. Mrs. Afifi Masrie and the Mother of the Yateem, Anisa Assaf sponsor this event which is supported by all the Druze Community.

The Center is also a place to celebrate weddings, birthdays, graduations, Mother's Day, Young Adult's Social Nights, and a place where funeral services take place.

1995. Arlington, Virginia

The 49th Annual Convention was held at the Crystal Gateway Marriott Hotel from July 4th through July 9th, 1995. The president of the Society was Sami Merhi, Vice President: Salimi Azzam Joseph, President-Elect: Faouzi Moakrem. Board members: Ramona Alley, Toufic Alghawi, Ziad Selman Dalal, Haitham Ballout, Maan Hamdan, Ramsey Kaedbey, Abdul-Magid Ghreizi and Dr. David Najjar. National Treasurer: Sahar Muakasa. The convention Co-Chairs were Nadine & Jim Silman and Convention Coordinator was

Faouzi Mokarem. The convention committee members : Alva Salem, Samir Abimourched, Walid Harb, Hicham Abouzeki, Samia Fayyad, Mohammed Fayyad, Kamal Najjar, Ghassan Abdul-Khalek, Elsie Belman, and Muneer Zaineldeen.

Nadine and Jimmy Silman put together a spectacular convention in Washington, D.C. Social, cultural and entertainment activities were well organized . The President's Night Dinner speakers were H.E. Ambassador Riad Tabbarah, followed by Dr. Clovis Maksoud, Ms. Raghida Dergham, Senior Diplomatic Correspondent of Al-Hayat Newspaper, Mr. Afif Saab, President of the Venezuela Druze Society and the poet Youssef Abdul Samad. On Saturday afternoon a very special and moving event occurred. The afternoon was dedicated to honor "Uncle Jack" Hamady, the living legend of our time. Family and friends shared memories and feelings about "Uncle Jack".

Dr. Naji Jurdi presented a seminar on "Concept of God" that was thought provoking and erudite. This was received very favorably by almost everyone attending. Similarly, Dr. Wahbah A. Sayegh delivered a scholarly lecture titled "Impact of Greek Philosophy on Tawhid Theosophy" which was well received by the attendees. There was also a seminar held by the Young Druze Professionals that was informative and attended by a large number of our young Druze Professionals.

The hospitality of the Washington, D.C. Community added to the wonderful job of Nadine and Jimmy Silman and the Convention Committee.

In 1995, President Merhi, Faouzi Makarem, President Elect, and Mr. Youssef Abdul Samad visited the Saudi Embassy and presented His Royal Highness Prince Bandar Bin Sultan, with a Koranic Verse on a plaque and a letter outlining the services of the Center.

President Merhi announced the establishment of the Young Druze Professional Committee chaired by Mr. Nabil Kassem of New Jersey.

Mr. Bobby Jaber informed everyone that the "Tuition Program" for needy students is now in its ninth year and over \$15,000 had been sent to support more than 280 needy children.

1996. Detroit, Michigan

The 50th Annual Convention of the American Druze Society was held at the Westin Hotel, Renaissance Center, Detroit, Michigan from June 25th through June 30th. The president of the Society was Faouzi Mokarem and Abdul-Magid Ghreizi as the Vice President. Board members: Ramona Alley, Riad Al-Awar, Dr. David Najjar, Ramsey Kaed Bey, Julie Makarem, Haitham Ballout, Hani Chtay, Sami Merhi and Ziad Alameddine. National Treasurer: Sahar Muakasa.

Riad Al-Awar was the Convention Chairperson for 1996. The Convention Committee members: Khalil Harfouche, Labiba Harfouche, Amin Musleh, Susan Musleh, Moutasem Abu-Hamdan, Madeleine Al-Awar, Fadi Hemadeh, Omar Abu-Hamdan, Wajdi Abouchakra, Layla Hatoum and Nawal Chehayib, Samir Makarem, Lama Makarem.

Kamal Shouhayib was the Chairperson of the Golden Jubilee Committee. The members of the Golden Jubilee Committee were Maya Jaber, Chakib Jaber, Fadi Hamadeh, Khalil Harfouche, Nawal Obeid, Ajaj Andary, Ramona Alley, Julie Makarem and Dr. Rima Muakkassa.

President Mokarem, in an attempt to strengthen the finances of the ADS, worked hard to get the ADS registered with the Combined Federal Campaign in order to solicit funds for the ADS. This beginning of inflow of funds from completely different sources has begun and is likely to increase in the coming years.

The 50th convention was very successful in terms of various cultural, entertainment activities and honored guests. Dr. Wahbah Sayegh presented CORA Book V that deals with the "Fundamental Beliefs" of the Druze Faith. Dr. Sayegh has made possible, for the American Druze Society members, a way to study the Druze Faith, for without CORA Books, the knowledge we now have of our faith would not have been possible nor so easily accessible.

Mr. Faouzi Abed, from Lebanon, gave a lecture on the importance of Education in Lebanon. Mr. Fayeze Salaheddine, from Lebanon, represented the Druze Foundation for Social Welfare. The Druze Foundation for Social Welfare is an organization that looks after the needs of the Druze Community in Lebanon. Mr. Salaheddine gave an interesting and informative lecture in which he updated the work of the Foundation for the year. Mr. Nabih El-Saadi, from Sweida, Syria gave an interesting lecture about tenets that constitute the "Druze Identity." Dr. Marwan Abou-Chakra, Director General, Ain Wazein Hospital was the representative to the Health Establishment of the Druze community. From Syria, Mr. Hazzaah Aboufakher and Mr. Mohammed Tarabieh represented the Syrian Druze Orphan's Home.

Dr. Naji Jurdi introduced the lecturers who prepared an interesting seminar on the ADS History from 1908 - present. Ms. Julie Makarem (1908 - 1946), Ms. Romana Alley (1947- 1970), and Mr. Ajaj Andary (1971 - 1996).

The President's Night Dinner honorary guest speaker was Sheikh Makram Alameddine who came from Lebanon to join the conventioners in celebrating the 50th Annual convention. The master of Ceremony was Mrs. Ramona Alley. Other guest speakers were Mr. Fayeze Salaheddine from the Druze Foundation for Social Welfare in Lebanon, Sheikh Sami Abilmona representing Irfan Establishment in Lebanon, Sheikh Salman Abdel Khalik, representing the Iman Hospital in Alley, Lebanon, and Mr. Hazzaah Aboufakher, Director of the Druze Foundation for Social Welfare in Sweida.

The Master of Ceremony for the Grand Banquet was Dr. Anis Obeid. Jamie Helal sang the National Anthem. This was followed by a piano recital by the renowned pianist, Mr. Walid Hourani. The children sang under the direction of Mrs. Nawal Obeid. The children, who were from all over the United States, were Natalie Boukhzam, Ghida Hamad, Zeina Houtum, Nabil Harfouche, Ashraf and Ayman Malaeb, Leila and Fuad Muakkassa, and Nada and Sarah Shouhayib. Mr. Moutassem Abou-Hamdan read a Message from Mansour Pacha AL-Atrash from Syria extending his sincere wishes for the Druze community in

America in celebrating their 50th convention.

Unbeknownst to the recipients, the elders (age 70 and above) who were attending the convention were presented with bronze medallions that would be worn around the neck. There were about thirty two elders who received the award. Dr. Fuad & Leila Muakkassa, Ms. Anise Assaf, Mrs. Afifi Masri, Mrs. Salimi Azzam Joseph, Uncle Jack & Lily Hamady, Mr. George Rafey, Mrs. Dorris Bouchar, Mrs. Adele Williams Aboulhosn, Mrs. Dorothy Halawy, Dr. Richard Baz, Dr. Abdallah Najjar, Mr. Kamal Najjar, Mrs. Lilian Sefa, Mrs. Hisson Bomorra, Mrs. Bill Taylor, Mrs. Florence Najjar, Mr. Amin Abukhzam, Mrs. Zabad Radwan Jawhary, Mr. Anis Halime, Mr. Joseph Hamady, Mrs. Sally Hamady, Mr. Hussein Al-Awar, Mr. Sleiman Al-Awar, Mrs. Hajjar Hamady, Mr. Ameen Fares Al-Awar, Mr. Adil Najjar, Mrs. Helen Abou-Ismael Sams, Mrs. Amal Abu-Hamdan, and Mrs. Wadad Radwan.

His Excellency, Ambassador Riad Tabarrah, Ambassador of Lebanon to the United States was the guest of honor. Ambassador Riad Tabarrah said, "You are to be commended for your attainment of high education among your people. You have prospered abroad and become successful in all fields. You are to be commended for the formation of this American Druze Society which you have kept alive here in these United States for fifty years. You are to be applauded for your good works to your people back home, and you are to be praised for your good name in America."

Mr. Kamal Shouhayib, Chairman of the Golden Jubilee Convention, announced the opening ceremony of the Photo Exhibition. The Photo Exhibition displayed the story of the Druze in America for the last 100 years. The Ribbon Cutting Ceremony was done by Mrs. Salimi Azzam and Uncle Jack Hamady. The Photo Exhibition brought tears to many ADS members who were fascinated by the collection of 300 photos displaying Druze families in America and the past 49 ADS conventions. The Photo Exhibition remained on display throughout the remainder of the Convention.

Summary

As can be seen from the above much progress has been made since the inception of Al Bakourat Al-Durziat, and the establishment of the American Druze Society. There has been growth in numbers of members as well as activities. Conventions have continued yearly with the cooperation of the local community and national board and each year improvements are seen. Our conventions continue to demonstrate the unity, closeness and caring among our people. As we celebrated our Golden Jubilee convention, let us begin yet another chapter in our history as we continue to work together as one unit to seek the truth, and encourage our youth to actively seek the truth in order to understand our heritage and religion.