

Perfectly Frank
A Palestinian-American Journey
By Kameel Majdali

The story you are about to read represents a life—a long and colourful life, full of ups and downs, tragedies and triumphs. It is not a comprehensive story, nor is it even complete, though it spans eighty-two years. But it is a story that deserves to be told. It is about a man who sought to leave a great legacy, to make history, to be “perfectly Frank.” And it starts in the most famous city in the world.

British Palestine: Where the Story Begins

Mr. Radwan lived in Ottoman Palestine. The fruit of the land was often the biggest and sweetest in the world. One delectable piece of fruit was the apricot. One afternoon while he proceeded to devour one, the seed got stuck in his throat. It bulged like a woman with child. His companions looked with amusement, notice the lump, and nicknamed him *al Buzlameet*. And just like the seed, the name stuck! An entire family, indeed a tribe, with many brothers and children, now bear this name throughout the Middle East.

One of the Buzlameet boys, Abd el Razzak aged eighteen, tried hard to stay calm. His seventeen year old wife Mahidiyyah was in labor. This was not her first time—she had given birth the year before to a daughter named Fakhriyya, who died and was buried in the cemetery at Mamillah, not far from the Old City in Jerusalem. Nor was he her first husband—she had been married off to an older man when she was barely a teenager. Whether she had a divorce or annulment was not yet clear, but Mahidiyyah broke free from her first husband in order to take on a second. She was only fifteen years old. The year was 1922. According to Abd el Razzak, the first time he laid eyes on his wife was the day they got married.

Originally from the city of Hebron, known as the burial place of the Patriarchs, Abd el Razzak moved to Jerusalem. Though the prize of Babylonians, Romans, Greeks, Arabs, Turks, and Persians, the Holy City was now in the hands of the British, courtesy of the League of Nations endorsed Mandate over Palestine. For the first time since the Middle Ages, Jerusalem was ruled by Europeans and Christians. Their putative goal was to prepare the country for independence. Of their ability to tutor in areas of governance, there was no doubt. The main question is: to whom would they hand the country over—to the Jewish community of 80,000, the Arab community (called “non-Jewish inhabitants” by the 1917 Balfour Declaration), or both. However the answer to this question would be answered by another power on another day, twenty-three years later.

Yet Abd el Razzak would neither concerned himself with political, historical nor religious issues. His father, Hajj Ali, was married to four women, not simultaneously, and was in his seventies when Abd el Razzak was born. Raised

in the Muslim religion, Abd el Razzak, warm-hearted, fun-loving, personable, and gregarious, would have little time or patience for religious matters. Nor was he impressed with those who shoved religion down people's throats.

Living in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City, just a stone's throw away from the Western (Wailing) Wall, Mahdiyyah finally gave birth. The two teenagers were now the proud parents of a son. They named him Fakhri. The date was July 27, 1924.

It was the last birth the young child would see on the receiving line. In February 1929, when he was four and a half years old, he allegedly saw his mother in great labour pains and called the midwife to "come and bring my brother Fahmi." And Fahmi arrived. Of the subsequent eleven births his mother would give, Fakhri would name each and every one of them. Sadly, only four out of the eleven survived, namely Hamdi (1935), Widad (1939), Hisham (1942), and Wajdi (1946).

The Buzlameet family was poor. Even the poor people called them poor. They were fortunate to have a roof over their heads, and usually that was in a one room flat. Abd del Razzak sold kerosene part-time and spent the rest of his day playing cards or games with the other men. Mahdiyyah was at home with the children. Neither father nor mother were literate, and survival, not education, was the highest priority.

Nevertheless, Mahdiyyah, as well as her family the Toubjis, apparently took a high view of education. She endorsed her son's valiant efforts to gain an education in the face of pressures to leave school and work, or marry young. However, Fakhri understood that education would be his passport and visa out of the ghetto. Thus, to be "perfectly Frank," he would seek education anywhere, at any cost, even though it would bring misunderstanding, ridicule, and even exile from Palestine.

Fakhri made it to matriculation at the Arab College on Jebel Mukkabir, on the same mount where the British High Commissioner was located. Not only was he fluent and literate in his native Arabic, but he also mastered the King's English. Fakhri memorized Shakespeare's play MacBeth. At the age of nineteen, he went to teach at Beersheba for one year, where the sweetest water in Palestine could be found. On occasion, he would go on holiday to a village called "El Majdal" (The Tower) next to the Philistine city called Ashkelon. He had cousins who lived there. Though the city was wiped from the map after 1948, Fakhri would have his own means of keeping the memory of the city alive.

Fakhri decided to continue his education in the United States. It was an impossible dream. The boat fare from Haifa to New York was the equivalent of USD 900, which in 1946 was a fortune. Procuring a US visa would also be a major challenge, because the would-be visitor needed to have funds in their bank account. Sheer determination and seeming good-luck helped win the day. Armed

with fair-skin, boyish good looks, endless charm and hard-headed determination, the twenty-two year old Fakhri won favor at the American consul, who waived his need for funds in his pocket—"you're young enough to find a job and work while in America." As for the boat fare, it was substantially reduced in price and a deal was struck.

Yet, the challenges were not finished. His friends and cousins thought he had taken leave of his senses. Fakhri did not apparently have a bank account and all his savings for the boat trip to America were kept in a jar in the family's one room dwelling. Abd el Razzak apparently helped himself to the money in the jar, saying he was spending it for his son's own good.

Despite the lack of support—and even overt opposition—Fakhri made his trip 170 kilometers north of Jerusalem to the port city of Haifa and boarded the US-bound ship. So in September 1946, a young man boarded the America-bound ship at Haifa harbour. While on the pier, he was Fakhri al Buzlameet. But once he was on the ship, he took the town of Majdal with him and became known as a "Majdali."

Welcome to America—and Louise

Upon arrival in the United States, he studied for a short time at the University of California at Berkeley in drama and the arts. But since Hollywood and Los Angeles were the mecca on the performing arts, he re-enrolled at the University of California at Los Angeles, better known as UCLA.

On Valentine's Day 1948, he met a demure American-born Louise Haddad, daughter of Charlie and Edma from Lebanon. Fakhri immediately decided that she would be his future wife. To be "perfectly Frank," he needed a wife from a good family. The Haddads fit the bill. Though in many ways, they were like any other immigrant family, the graces of aristocratic Edma, the high moral standards of Charlie, and the obvious atmosphere of familial love—not to mention good Middle Eastern stock—made them a worthy target. Fakhri passionately believed that a high-standard family would produce high standard children. So he knew, without hesitation, that Louise was the one for him.

But his chances did not look good. First, Charlie was a very hard working man and religious Syrian Orthodox Christian, who did not allow his daughters to date. Second, it would be out of the question that he would allow his daughter to marry a Muslim, even a non-practicing one (though Charlie did not know Fakhri's religion when he first met him). But the same determination that got Fakhri to America would help him snatch Louise.



Louise Haddad in
1947, age 23

Charlie eventually relented and let Fakhri and Louise date—provided that two of her sisters were allowed to accompany them. So one issue was resolved. But what about the second issue, namely Fakhri’s religion? Charlie really wanted to know, but declined to ask Fakhri directly. Instead, he decided to ask the young Palestinian Arab suitor about his Bible knowledge. It would be the litmus test of Christian faith. Being an intelligent Palestinian who was raised in Jerusalem, Frank was able to provide adequate answers to the Bible questions. Duly impressed, Charlie allowed the date to be set for the wedding: 1 August 1948.

Shortly before the wedding date, Charlie called UCLA to inquire to which Christian organizations Fakhri belong. “Christian?” came the stunned reply, “Fakhri is a Muslim.” Upon hearing these words, Charlie became physically sick. The unthinkable was about to happen: his daughter was schedule to marry a Muslim. Louise did not even know what a Muslim was and she seemed unfazed by the prospect. But Charlie, coming from Zahle, Lebanon, where Muslim and Christian interaction was a fact of life, knew all too well.

So just like a scene from the hit movie, “My Big Fat Greek Wedding,” Fakhri underwent a face-saving rite of Orthodox baptism to make kosher the upcoming wedding, which was now re-scheduled for 8 January 1949.

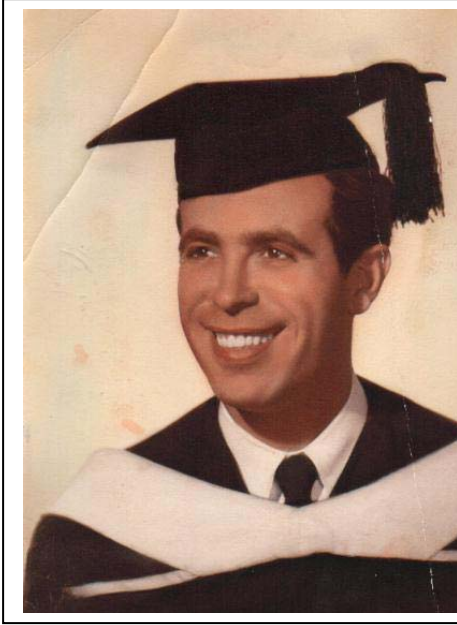
Fakhri and Louise were married in the Orthodox Church. When asked whether the vows should be said in English or Arabic, Fakhri jokingly replied: “In Arabic.” Louise did not understand Arabic, though both her parent were fluent in the language. So the whole of her vows were now said in a language she did not understand. Once the church service had finished, Fakhri and Louise walked out as husband and wife. In Louise’s case, she also walked out of the church her father forced her to attend, and did not return to religious services on any regular basis for another twenty years.



Wedding Day: 8
January 1949. From
l. to r., Fakhri &
Louise Majdali, Joe,
Edma & Charlie
Haddad

Fakhri was born to a Muslim family and Islam was clearly part of his identity and culture. He even gave mental assent to its main tenets. But, like his father Abd el Razzak, he was not religiously observant and had little patience with those wore religion on their sleeves, regardless of the faith. Fakhri had no hesitation to question or even criticize religious issues he did not like or understand: Noah's Ark was totally unfeasible (where would they put all the animal dung) and Abraham's near-sacrifice of Isaac was downright dumb. If God told him to sacrifice his son, he would simply "fight God." He was probably more comfortable with the tenets of humanism than religion. As he grew older, he also became interested in environmental issues, and was an unswerving fan of Ralph Nader.

He was uncomfortable with the religiousness, and dismissive attitude, of his new father-in-law, though he respected him for his convictions and his strictness of upbringing. On the other hand, he adored his new mother-in-law, Edma, a regal Christian from the city of Baalbeck in Lebanon. Edma was the second daughter of Aziz Arah, a Maronite Catholic Ottoman-era judge, who spent part of the First World War in exile in Turkey. She was the uncrowned queen of the Los Angeles Lebanese community and her warmth, charm, and cuisine won over all who met her.



Fakhri's Graduation
Photo, 1952

A Painful Transition: From Palestine to Israel

During his 1948 courtship with Louise, trouble was brewing in his homeland. The British, tired of losing troops in the Holy Land months after the close of World War II, handed the problem of Palestine to the newly-created United Nations. On 29 November 1947, the UN voted to partition Palestine into a Jewish and Arab state, with Jerusalem becoming an international city under UN supervision. The security situation deteriorated immediately. Highways were no longer safe, random acts of terrorism could pop any where from either Jewish or Arab side, or the road to war had begun.

When the mandate ended and Israel declared as a nation, war broke out between the young nation and five Arab armies. Abd el Razzak & Mahadiyyah, with their five remaining children, did not live in any permanent quarters and could move anywhere. They were also penniless and vulnerable to the vagaries of war. With the battle for Jerusalem looming, the Buzlameets headed eastward where they became refugees in Jericho.

Naturally, Fakhri was very anxious about the welfare of his family but he was extremely limited in what he could do. Once the Red Cross located them, he was able to send them regular financial support. While the issue of Israel and the disappearance of Palestine from the world map would be a source of personal pain, however private, Fakhri was never heard to have uttered a disparaging word against Jewish people, whom he admired and befriended.

Fakhri had hesitated to take United States citizenship—he was known to have said “not without my people.” After all, he loved his Arab heritage and his country

Palestine. He hoped that with a good education, wife, and family, he could make a difference there.

There was, of course, one glaring problem—there was no Palestine to return to! At best, the future of the region looked unsettled, at worst, bleak with the possibility of all-out war always present. To be “perfectly Frank,” he would have to adopt a position of solid realism. Where did his future, and that of his family, lie? The obvious answer was the United States of America.

So Fakhri became an American citizen in March 1955. Not only did he go from being “stateless” to becoming a citizen of one of the world’s superpowers, he also gained a new name. Because “Fakhri” was hard to pronounce, and could easily be misused, he adopted the name “Frank,” especially since his friends said he was so honest. So “Fakhri” officially became “Frank” and thus he would continue down the road to perfection.

His naturalization led to the next big event: a reunion with his long lost family from Palestine. Fortunately for all concerned, the McCarron Act in the mid-1950’s enabled 5,000 Palestinians refugees to migrate to the United States, provided they had sponsors. Louise Majdali stepped forward to sign the papers. So in February 1956, Abd el Razzak and Mahdiyyah, along with their only daughter Widad with sons Hisham, and Wajdi, arrived in Los Angeles. Hamdi came separately and Fahmi arrived back in 1950. Essentially, they had left the “Promised Land” of the Bible to start a life in a new promised land in the New World.

Domestic Situation

Back in 1954, Frank and Louise purchased a block of land in Gardena, California, where he built his first house. Louise commented that she would never live in a house that her husband built. Nevertheless, he proceeded with the building. Instead of hiring an electrician, he bought an electrical manual and wired the house himself. It passed the inspection. So they moved into the house that Frank built.

Frank and Louise became parents to two sons: Kameel and Kim. While Louise worked consistently for thirty-seven years at the telephone company (known as American Telephone and Telegraph or AT&T), Frank had a variety of jobs while he studied. Eventually, he worked for himself. His background on computers and architectural design would be exceptional. He was also a master cook. Nor would he stay out of the headlines. In one case, there was a major write up in the newspapers about an Arab man who was going to buy the Portland (Oregon) Meadows Racetrack. Media attention was intense. Who was this man? Drum roll: Frank Majdali. All this while he was still trying to find a job!



Frank, Kameel,
Abed, & sister
Widad in 1956.

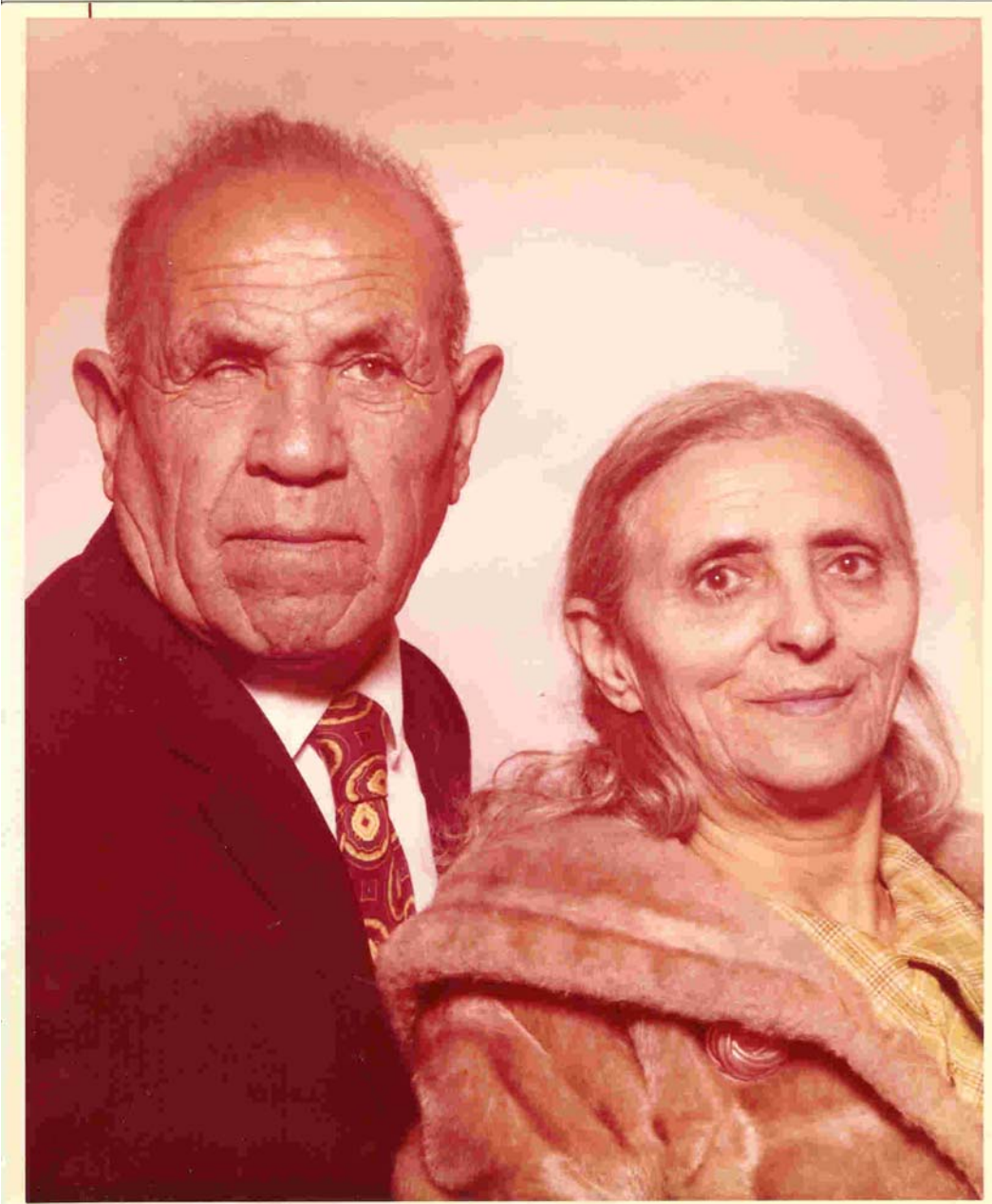
Abd el Razzak in America

Shortly afterward, the rest of the family made themselves at home in Frank's house. The clash of cultures was in full swing. The new Majdali migrants would turn up the volume of the radio and television simultaneously, and then start yelling at each other. Thirteen year old Hisham was more mesmerized by watching American television with a blanket over his head, than rescue his one year old nephew Kameel, who was screaming from the soap suds in his eyes. A crisp smack across the face was Frank's response to Hisham's recreational activity.

Eventually, the new migrant Majdalis moved to Gage Avenue, Los Angeles, and then to 823 West 124th Street, Los Angeles, two houses away from ever-long Vermont Avenue. They were a very short distance from the Watts District, the scene of major riots in 1965 and not far away from the Los Angeles "Rodney King" riots of 1992. Abd el Razzak, who never had much money or stable employment in his life, began to demonstrate some of the same determination that his own son demonstrated.

America was like heaven. He now had his own house multi-bedroom house, with two bungalows, and fruit trees. Never mind that the house was built in 1928 and in a rough neighborhood. It was Abd el Razzak's house! Then, he decided to start his own business. He sold clothing material door-to-door, both in his neighborhood as well as in temperamental Watts neighborhood, scene of savage riots in 1965. Many of his customers were African Americans, and they just loved their new Arab friend called "Abed." *Being perennially short of money in Palestine, he was in his element having money in his pocket from the material*

business. He wouldn't dream of putting the money in the bank—and out of his sight. Instead, he enjoyed carrying it as a wad of cash in his pocket, despite the potential security danger in his neighborhood. Counting the notes in bed night after night helped to lull him into sleep.



Abd el Razzak (1905-1979) & Mahidiyyah Majdali (1907-1995), parents of Frank

One story had it that he went to give some change to his customer. He took out the big roll of cash and began to count out the money. One man, seeing the bulging roll of money, could not resist temptation. He mugged Abd el Razzak and took the cash. Incensed that their good friend was treated in such a shabby manner, the on lookers “mugged the mugger” and returned Abd el Razzak’s money to him.

A house, money, what more could Abd el Razzak want? Life in America just would not be complete without an automobile. Yes, he had enough money to purchase one, in fact, several. But Abd el Razzak was not content just having the car sitting in his driveway. He wanted to get a driver’s license. Considering that he did not read or write, and had one blind eye, this would not come easily. But again, determination won the day when Abd el Razzak, the “man from Palestine,” managed to obtain a California Driver’s License in his sixties. With his famous wad of money, he bought a car, and then two, and then three. He felt like royalty—a house, money, cars—Abd el Razzak never had it so good. His children found spouses and settled into the good old American melting pot. They would give him and Mahdiyyah twenty-three grandchildren. Though he would return three times to the old country--to a hero’s welcome--he would always call America home. Of course, Abed’s escape from the Jericho refugee camp to living the good-life in America would not have been possible unless his oldest son had been “perfectly Frank.”

Frank the Idealist

Like many Americans, Frank was greatly inspired by the 1961 inaugural speech of United States President John F. Kennedy. Who could forget those seemingly immortal words, “*Ask not, what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country.*” His idealism went into full drive. He started what was called The Cybernation Centre where it would provide quality computer programs to help save corporate and taxpayers money. Frank apparently thought that the government would be pleased with such a goal.

He was a man who had some interesting opportunities, like the possibility of buying land on a hilly outcrop south of Los Angeles. He did not pursue it but it became known as Rolling Hills/Palos Verde, one of the top real estate areas of the metropolis. Later on, he did purchase acreage in Santa Barbara County, on a plateau that overlooked the picturesque Californian coastal town of Carpinteria, and apparently not far from the property of Ronald and Nancy Reagan. Frank called the acreage “The Ranch,” and managed to build a little cabin on it. But it was never developed and he eventually sold it to Faberge. The good thing about America is that it is not a crime to dream big.

At the same time, he and Louise raised their sons in various locations: Gardena, Hawthorne, Thousand Oaks, and Ventura, California. They averaged moving house (and changing schools) about once a year. Eventually, Frank took a

position in the Washington State Department of Highways in the computer section. Leaving family and familiar surroundings behind, the Majdalis moved from California to the State of Washington in April, 1968, and began a new life.

Back in the 1960's through 1980's, Washington State was (and still is) very scenic, but compared to the activities and options of Southern California, it was a backwater. No Disneyland, no Knott's Berry Farm, no warm beaches, just mountains, lakes, and heaps of rain, almost like "the days of Noah." But Frank was thrilled with his adopted state. After living in arid brown Palestine, Washington looked like the Garden of Eden. A year later, Louise received a promotion as "Chief Operator" of the Vancouver, Washington office of Pacific Northwest Bell. So the family moved to Clark County in April 1969, where they have lived ever since, across the Columbia River from Portland, Oregon.

The Sky Is Falling: Stage One

Until now, life had gone smoothly. The Majdalis were both gainfully employed, their sons were growing up nicely, and they lived in a lovely home on Corregidor Road, in Vancouver, Washington. The home had a priceless view of the 1,900 kilometer Columbia River, the international airport, and the entire skyline of Portland, Oregon. The scene was better than television! But in September, 1970, the world began to come to an end. The Black September movement emerged on the world scene, blowing up planes in the Jordanian desert. A war broke out between King Hussein and Arafat's PLO, leading to their eventually expulsion to Lebanon. Egyptian President and Arab nationalist leader, Gamal Abdel Nasser, dies suddenly in Cairo. Frank's sister, Widad, had gone to Amman to marry her second husband, only to be trapped in her cousin's basement for nine days while mayhem rained in the Jordanian capital. Widad had lived through the 1948 War and it seemed like she was reliving it all over again.

In September 1970, Frank's picture was plastered on the front page of *The Daily Olympian* and the *Vancouver Columbian* newspapers. He was a one-man crusade against the Washington State Highway Department. Three months earlier, he was fired from his position at the department for the twin reasons of "incompetence" and "insubordination." Normally such an event would not even make it in the fine print of a newspaper; however, Frank succeeded in drawing attention to what he claimed was government corruption and possible racial discrimination. They had no interest or intention of implementing his money saving programs and he decided to blow the whistle. For Frank, the manner of his termination, as well as the bigger issue of government corruption, were the issues that propelled him.

Now unemployed and being a one-man lobbyist, Frank recruited his sixteen year old son Kameel, a student at Hudson's Bay High School in Vancouver, to be his personal secretary and lobby coordinator. According to Frank, the government campaign of corruption took extreme lengths, including reports of harassment by

being followed by unmarked police cars and overhead helicopters. He claims that one of the government officials implied that even Louise's job in a private sector company could not be taken for granted. The campaign lasted, on-and-off, for almost four years.

In 1974, Frank and Louise moved from their Vancouver home with the million-dollar view to live in the "hillbilly" town of Battle Ground, about eighteen kilometers to the north. This hamlet of a few thousand was not exactly "Arab-friendly" and during the early years, there was some anti-Middle Eastern backlash, though whether it was physical or merely verbal has not been made clear. Because of his intellect, impatience, and boredom at regular employment, in order to be "perfectly Frank," he would work for himself.

And being "perfectly Frank" required big dreams and assertively pursuing them. No one would ever accuse Frank of lacking confidence. Back during Kameel's junior year in high school, Frank reluctantly attended a parent-student meeting. He almost did not go at all. Kameel insisted. As person after person went to the microphone to have their say, Frank seemed to be daydreaming. Then, with an about-face, Frank startled Kameel by marching up to the front. In a spell-binding manner, he gave an impassioned impromptu speech without notes about the honorableness of teachers and the priceless nature of education. The speech was punctuated with much spontaneous applause. The transformation from apathy to passion was instantaneous and electric. As a result of his intervention, Frank was appointed to a parental committee.

Another occasion was in 1987. Evangelist to Africa Reinhard Bonnke from Germany was speaking to a large crowd in the thousands at the Portland Coliseum. Kameel had encouraged his father to see the renowned preacher for himself. Frank agreed. After the meeting, Frank decided that he would like to meet Bonnke for himself. He went back stage, past the guards, and entered right into Bonnke's dressing room. Bonnke was polite, but clearly tired and had other matters on his mind. Never mind. Frank told him about his son Kameel and asked if he knew him. He refused to be ignored.

Frank and Louise were reasonably moral and decent people, who certainly modeled the same to their two sons. But they did not force or encourage their children to adopt any particular creed or religion. Believing in God and being good were the main goals. However, Louise became concerned that the boys had no religious input and with their teenage years looming ahead, it would be good to go back to church. Across the river in Portland, the St. George Syrian Orthodox Church, on Holgate near 122nd, provided the ideal solution. It helped the Majdalis connected with the local Arab-American community while giving some kind of religious input. Though Frank continued to claim allegiance to Islam, he had no problem taking his wife and children to church. Such action, he said, was consistent with his religion. Apparently, the church seemed to like Frank, too. He was appointed treasurer of the church. While it seems absurd to

have a Muslim as the treasurer of a church (like a Christian as a treasurer of a mosque), it must be remembered that Frank had undergone Orthodox baptism over twenty years earlier and also he was a good Arab. Apparently, this was sufficient to entrust him with this honored position.¹

Though Frank liked most everyone, there was one man whom he did not like at all. His name is Sam Teeny, who is two months younger than Frank. Not that Sam was unlikable; on the contrary, he was a friendly, joyous man who had great charisma with young people. More than that, Sam was 100% Lebanese and originally of Orthodox background. He ran a successful Middle East bakery in Portland and spoke Arabic with a great Middle Eastern accent, then switch over into gleeful American slang.

With such credentials, why wouldn't Frank like Sam? It had to do with Kameel. While Frank and Louise were upstairs in main liturgy, which was recited in classical Arabic, Kameel and Kim were downstairs in the Sunday School, which was in English. Initially, the school was run by some of the Arab mothers, but they did not exercise much child control and pandemonium was not uncommon. Like other ethnic groups, Middle Eastern children could be very spoiled and rambunctious, so that only a "whip and chair" could bring them to heel. No doubt, the chaos in the Sunday school contributed to these untrained mothers neurosis and "husky voices" for all the screaming they had to do.

Sam, who had a great track record of children's and youth ministry, was invited to come. Sam had long ago departed from the Orthodox Church to become a "Protestant"—actually an Evangelical. But, like Frank, he had been baptized "Orthodox" and that probably helped make his appointment as Sunday School director palatable. Sam issued one condition: he would only teach the Bible, not Orthodox Church traditions. He said that even the Orthodox Archbishop of America was not permitted to change this arrangement.

Sam had the children of the Sunday school eating out of his hands. Order had been restored and the fun began. They did an array of engaging activities. Sam even brought students from the Multnomah School of the Bible to help give the gospel message to the children. One who was particularly attentive was Kameel. He sat and listened to Sam give the Gospel message in a very clear and simple way. What was even more impressive was that Sam was always smiling. He had a permanent "wall-to-wall" grin.

All of this made a lasting impression. On the last Sunday of May, 1971, Kameel approached Sam and said he was ready to ask Jesus into his heart. But there

¹ The same church appointed (Muslim) Kim, Frank's son, as the youth leader. Even though the number of youth attending the meetings increased, the church insisted that their youth leader undergo baptism. When Kim refused, he was relieved of his responsibility.

was one caveat: Sam was not to tell anyone what Kameel had done. The reason: Kameel was concerned there would be much tension in his home should it become known. Neither parent would be overly pleased to have their son become a “Jesus Freak,” right in the midst of the “Jesus Revolution” of the 1970’s. While the worse thing that could happen was a bit a loud yelling, this would be very unsettling to Kameel in his final year at high school, when he was preparing for pre-college exams. So Sam said he would keep the news to himself.

Within two weeks, the yelling had begun. How did Frank find out? Two things must be kept in mind. Teenagers live under a myth that parents can be easily hoodwinked; what Kameel discovered is that parents are very smart. They know their children better than they know themselves. Second, when Kameel left the room after saying “The Sinner’s Prayer,” he felt a great sensation of joy he had never had before. What he didn’t realize is that he had just inherited the “Sam smile.” That ever-present grin was a giveaway to the Majdalis of what had happened. And Sam was to blame for it all.

At the conclusion of his university studies, Kameel had an encounter with the Holy Spirit at the local Evergreen Christian Center, an Assembly of God Church in Olympia, Washington. This event was more dramatic than his initial conversion. Despite the periodic tension with his parents regarding his faith, he called them without hesitation to invite them to his water baptism. To his amazement, they accepted the invitation and Frank, Louise, and Kim drove the 170 kilometers for the event. It was February 1975. The officiating pastor was the Rev. Glen Cole, who would go on to pastor the mammoth Capital Christian Center in Sacramento, California. As one of about 30-40 baptismal candidates, Rev. Cole briefly interviewed Kameel before his baptism and asked where his father was from. “Jerusalem,” came the reply. “Jerusalem,” said Cole, “that’s wonderful. And one day we will all live in Jerusalem that is from above.” Frank later quipped that the pastor should be on television!

After his baptism, Kameel made it a solid goal: to pray for his father’s salvation. Little did he realize that it would be thirty year journey and the ride would be wild! For starters, seven months after Kameel’s baptism, Frank was in a near fatal accident while trying to turn left onto the family property from the main Highway 219. In fact, he was hit from behind and the car crumpled like an accordion. The only section that did not collapse was the driver’s seat. It was a miracle! But there would be no change—Frank would continue to be Frank.

One thing that did change immediately and for good. Never again would Frank disagree with Kameel about his Christian faith. All his objections simply evaporated, never to return. After all, good Christian boys make good sons.

“Imperfectly Frank: I Did It My Way”

Frank was always eager to make history; or at least to leave a decent legacy. Yet despite his commendable rise in education, migration, and marriage, he chose a pathway that would lead him into trouble and sorrow. That way could be described simply as the “Frank Sinatra Method;” he did it “his way.” And “his way” would mean that life would not be “perfectly Frank.”

Indeed, life itself would get rocky once the prayer intensive ensued. Frank had built a house for his sister Widad, who was living on welfare after her second marriage broke up. For some strange reason, he put the house in the name of his youngest brother, Wajdi. When the time came to sign the house over to Widad, Wajdi refused. A brief “cat-and-mouse,” “hide and seek” episode ensued. Then Fahmi weighed in on Frank’s side while Abd el Razzak came to Wajdi’s defense.

A very sorrow family reunion ensued when Fahmi and Frank sat opposite a civil court from Wajdi and Abd el Razzak. The date was October 1978. Widad unexpectedly joined the defense. Frank lost the case. His relationship with his father also ruptured, never to be properly repaired again.

Kameel was very concerned about this growing family rift and sought the advice of his pastor Dale. Dale’s simple solution: get your father to come to Christ. Even if he loses a house, he wins the ball game! Frank, however, was showing no inclination of coming to anything. More rocks would be strewn across the road. During this time, he also had one known affair with a married woman, the effects which would cost him dearly in the years ahead.

In these things, Frank's showed no hunger or desire for spiritual solutions.

Back in the Middle East

During the long years in America, Frank had very little contact with the Middle East, particularly after his parents and siblings moved to the United States. But eventually he would make a reconnection, if only for a time. In March 1974, just months after the conclusion of the October (Yom Kippur) War between Israel, Egypt and Syria, Frank made his first return visit to the Middle East, twenty-seven years after he left. But he did not go to either Jerusalem or Haifa. Instead, he went to a city he had never been before: Amman, Jordan. Many of his relatives, especially from the extended Buzlameet family, lived there.

Despite the initial indignity and hardship of being dislocated from Palestine, some of them had done very well: living in large homes, with much food and clothing. While a few lived in refugee camps, most did not. One man in particular, Musa al Buzlameet, had a booming furniture business. He was reconnecting with boyhood cousins and one in particular, Ahmed Rasheed Ziadeh, would be a

fateful encounter. Ahmad, also known as Abu Rasheed, lived like a country squire on the Nile island of El Minial in Cairo, Egypt. He had eight attractive children (five boys and three girls) and gave unsurpassed hospitality. He also had Arabian horses, which was like a golden frame around a classic picture. Both Musa and Ahmed lived like rich men and this would prove very attractive for some of their American cousins.

Frank returned home with tales of blessing and grandeur, a bit reminiscent of the Queen of Sheba returning from Solomon's court. His brother Wajdi and son Kim were particularly interested in what they heard about Abu Rasheed, his horses and daughters. Eventually, both made the pilgrimage to Cairo, met two of the daughters, and decided to marry them. Wajdi and Kim were slated to have a double wedding with the two sisters. Kim, always open for a bargain and only twenty years old, would only have to pay the smaller portion while the uncle gave the larger contribution.

Frank's return to the Middle East meant an "open door" for both of his sons. Kim would go, meet Fatima, and marry. For many Arab Americans, this was a desired outcome: marriage to a girl from the "Old Country." Kameel also visited the Middle East and ended up doing a Master's Degree at an American school in Jerusalem, with pro-Israel inclinations.

One would think that Frank would embrace the wedding of one son to a fellow Arab while reject the goal of other son to study at the American institute. But the opposite was true. Frank disapproved of the wedding but supported the studies. In one sense, this is not too surprising since Frank was very pro-education and only spoke in the highest terms of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. But it also highlights the complexities, too.

Initially, Frank enthusiastically supported the union but after a subsequent visit to Egypt, he learned some things and saw others that led him to conclude that the impending union would be a disaster. He tried to persuade Kim to put some conditions on Fatima to test her compatibility. Kim refused. He counseled delay. Again, Kim refused. In what would become one of the most painful episodes in Frank's life, he participated in an epic battle of wills with his younger son. Yelling and threats were the norm. Kim was disowned several times. The whole affair clouded Frank's life for months and months. It was if he let a genie out of the bottle and now desperately tried to stuff it back in—without success.

Kim announced that it was his decision to marry Fatima and he alone would take the consequences for its success or failure. Kim's wedding to Fatima proceeded but he had neither his parents nor brother present, though Abd el Razzak, Mahdiyyah, and Cousin Karen (age 11), went to Cairo for the festivities.

Fatima was a very attractive bride and adapted to America quickly, but her relationship with her new father-in-law was love-hate. The same probably could

be said for her husband Kim. The marriage did not last three years. There was much drama, passion, and upset, spliced with some good times. Frank was initially distant, but eventually gave in and built a house for the young couple.

One other encounter would punctuate the troubled reunion with the Middle East. After a tour of the Arab world, Kameel had made a comment to his father Frank: Whatever you do, do not go into business with a Saudi. It was one of those comments that seemingly came out of thin air but was actually very prophetic. Two years later, in 1981, a 23 year old Saudi came to Frank, gave him \$70,000, and said to commence a business which he would be the senior partner. The putative goal was to build low cost housing for the needy. Yet this partnership resulted in some of the most bizarre and entertaining actions you could imagine: phone calls that cost \$1,000 or precipitous trips to London to seal a gold deal.

One of the most comical—and ridiculous—episodes was when Frank rushed visit to the Portland Hilton Hotel, wearing a farmer john flannel shirt with the tail hanging out, taking a written offer for a billion dollar loan to two well dressed men. They barely looked up, noticed Frank's appearance and only dryly quipped that he had failed to put the offer on letterhead.

The partnership kept him so busy that Frank only had a matter of minutes to visit with his newborn first grandchild, Haifa, before getting off to London for another one of his partner's "pie-in-the-sky" schemes. The low cost housing seemed to vanish into thin air. When the partner sued Frank on his fortieth wedding anniversary for the \$70,000, plus interest plus costs, the case was thrown out when Kameel, having been interviewed by phone from Australia, queried why the case was even in court because the statute of limitations had passed. The judge agreed.

What was slowly becoming obvious is that the reason for some of the Middle Eastern miss match is that both Frank and the Middle East have moved on since 1946, and in very different directions. He had been in America so long that he had forgotten, to some extent, to think the way the Arabs do. For example, he went to visit his cousins in Gaza. This city was around 17 kilometers from their former home in El Majdal, where Frank spent happy summers. Despite the proximity between El Majdal and Gaza, they might as well have been on two different sides of the universe. Gaza was the unhappy mass refugee camp where stateless Palestinian Arabs were crammed into space eight by forty-three kilometers and, until August 2005, thirty percent of this miniscule space was occupied by eight thousand Israeli settlers. El Majdal, on the other hand, had disappeared off the map and its ruins, with the minaret as the most potent reminder, were overshadowed by the thriving Israeli community of Ashkelon, with a vibrant South African Jewish community in Afridar.

For dislocated Palestinian refugees, Israeli Ashkelon's supercession of El Majdal represents in miniature the Jewish takeover of Arab Palestine. To have dealings

with this city is to collaborate with the enemy. Kameel, raised in the United States, but having spent nearly two years in Jerusalem, knew how they thought. Frank did not. So when he was reunited in Gaza with his cousin from Gaza, whom he had not seen in over thirty years, but somehow managed to run a lucrative blue jean factory, there was initial joy and great warmth. Frank innocently commented that he and Kameel had spent the night at Ashkelon. Kameel almost froze when this comment was uttered. He knew the atmosphere would change for the worse. Frank naively thought his cousins would be happy that he had briefly returned to their old playground. They were not. The cousin's warm gaze turned to daggers—immediately.

Within days, Frank had visited the Bir Zeit University, where Kameel served as an English teacher. He began speaking to one of the professors. This Palestinian Arab man had studied in America, married an American, and, Frank assumed, would be as open and broadminded in a western way as he was. So he invites the professor to Kameel's upcoming Jerusalem wedding to an Australian girl named Leanne Sayle from Geelong, Victoria, scheduled for Anzac Day, 25 April 1980. So far, so good.

Then he offers some additional, unsolicited information. Kameel's wedding was going to be multi-cultural and multi-faith: Jews, Christians, and Muslims would be present. The American educated professor replied, without missing a beat or losing his smile: if Jews are present, I will not come. Frank stopped cold. Why did he not realize that in his part of the world, they don't forget...and they don't forgive?! Thomas Friedman, author of the bestselling *From Beirut to Jerusalem*, calls the Arab-Israeli conflict the mother of all tribal wars. Frank was simply too immersed in the American dream, especially after his parent's and siblings' immigration, to keep tabs on the brainwaves or heartbeats of the Arab people. .

The Good Times Return?

At the age of sixty-five, when many Americans get ready for retirement, Frank embarked on a new career. He started up an adult care center, a sophisticated name for an old folk's home. It began in a most unusual way.

Abd el Razzak had not seen his son Frank in a proper manner since the time he sat on the opposite side of the courtroom with Wajdi and Widad in October 1978. He faced some pressures domestically, since his marriage to Mahdiyyah was no picnic. He also has some legal challenges due to some car accidents (he was not insured and caused several accidents, which he paid off with his never ending wad of cash). In addition, he had a most disappointing return visit to the Middle East in April 1979. He called up Frank to tell him that he was going to die very soon. Frank was cold and skeptical. But the father insisted that this was the last call. Two days later, on Monday 30 April 1979, while helping pick up a refrigerator, Abd el Razzak had a heart attack and died.

Mahdiyyah made an unusual widow. Her mourning period was very brief. In one on her tyrannical moods, she allegedly told one of her sons, who was not compliant to her wish: "I put your father in the grave...and you are next!"

At first, she insisted on staying in her home at 853 124th Street, Los Angeles, though she would be all alone, her eyesight was failing, and she stood at four foot nothing. Such a crime-riddled neighborhood was no place to house an elderly Palestinian lady who only spoke the English she learned on "I Love Lucy." So her children took turns having her as a boarder. This would be difficult task. Though very friendly and kind to her grandchildren and those who do not speak Arabic, her tongue was apparently sharper than a sword to those who did.

Part of her problem was a phenomenally long memory. She could recite with detail and venom offensive events and people in her life, even though the incident happened fifty years earlier halfway around the world to those who were long dead. But such a memory created a torrent of bitterness that defiled those who had the misfortune to be in her verbal crosshairs. When the remainder of her children could no longer have her stay in the home, the last child left was Frank. If he couldn't handle her, there would be no where else to go.

While Frank and Louise had there struggles with Mahdiyyah, there experience was exceedingly mild compared to the others. Frank would not tolerate nonsense. When Mahdiyyah did another of her attention-getting acts by feigning a fainting spells, an exasperated Frank said that if she did it again, she would be wrapped in a sheet and buried immediately, Islamic-style. The thought of being buried alive was enough to cure her of this antic.

But the measure of how the elderly Mahdiyyah could still be too hot to handle comes from a story about Frank and Louise. They were having an argument in their bed one morning. Finally, Frank announced to Louise, "Okay, I've had enough. I'm leaving." Louise retorted, "Go ahead, and leave." Then she quickly added, "And take your mother with you!" With that comment, the wind left the sail! Frank went very quiet. He then silently returned to the bed, got back in, and put the covers over his legs. Apparently, the thought of going out into the cold cruel world, armed only with Mahdiyyah, was a prospect he could not bear.

So Frank took the big white Spanish-style family home he built in Battle Ground in 1976, and added bedrooms until it totaled fifteen. Then he started a business called the Majdali Care Center. Every bedroom had its own en suite. Residents received personalized attention and home-cooked food. Mahdiyyah, who was called "Yum'ma" (mother), was now in a functional social environment, where she could mingle with American seniors her age. It probably was the happiest time of her life. Widad's mother-in-law, Esther age 96, was also a resident. So Mahdiyyah's housing predicament became the catalyst for this new business which began in 1989.



Majdali House in Battle Ground, Washington, USA

What also helped Mahdiyyah is that her grandson, Kameel, prayed for her and her previous unhappy situation. After the prayer, Frank reported that his mother was a new person: no more complaining, no more criticizing, no more bad moods. She was happy, pleasant, and social. Mahdiyyah even sang! This wonderful disposition lasted for the next eight or nine years. When she died, on 25 March 1995, it was a “good death.” No illness, no discomfort, she was in the highest of spirits, saying how wonderfully blessed she was, and then laid her head on the pillow and entered eternity. Do not underestimate the power of prayer!

Frank’s business was going well, the care center was almost full, it was a warm, happy, ambience, and the cash flow was the best he had in years. A church was planted in the care center, with a chaplain from the local Pentecostal church visiting the care center on a regular basis. Frank made his one, and only, visit to Australia in April 1990 to visit his son, daughter-in-law Leanne, and two grandchildren Haifa (1982) and Ania (1985). He even reported great favor and cooperation with the Washington State government, which sounded too good to be true. However, his scrap with them was twenty years earlier and surely, everyone had moved on. Or had they?

The Sky is Falling

Yes, everything at the Care Center was going well. It seemed that for once, there was no conflict, law suits, or financial uncertainty. But a few months after Frank’s seventieth birthday, a brief incident occurred that would change his world irreversibly.

An unwed mother with two young children came to live at the Majdali Care Center. She was suppose to work for the Center but at the same time Frank was “mentoring” her in basic life skills. There was some disagreement, she took her children and left the property. Then, inexplicably, she returned the next day in a trailer. Frank went to visit them that night in the trailer. He greeted the women

and her two children. What happened after that is unclear—but what is very clear is that Frank’s world was about to go into a tailspin. The date was October 8, 1994.

The public prosecutor indicted Frank on charges of child molestation and rape. In the State of Washington, the penalties for these crimes are very stiff. This is the state that gave the world the Wenatchee Sex Scandal, a 1990’s version of the old Salem Witch Hunt trials.¹ It is during this time and in this environment that Frank faced his greatest challenge ever. From that point until this very day, he has consistently claimed his innocence in this matter.

The trial was 2-3 November 1995. By that time Mahdiyyah was dead and Frank’s brother Fahmi, the one he was probably closest too, died two months later. Though from a large family, Frank would face this trial all on his own.

His defense attorney, Charles Buckley, gave a spirited defense. Frank did not testify. A polygraph operator claimed that Frank said that “he did not know if he had touched the girl or not.” The jury deliberated. They came back with a verdict: “Guilty” of child molestation but “Not Guilty” of rape. One juror commented that Frank’s hand was too big and had he raped the girl she would have screamed to high heaven.

Now Frank, age seventy-one, was a convicted felon. He was heading for prison. His lawyer would try to argue that he should have a lighter sentence due to his advanced age and health. Indeed, he had a heart bypass in March 1996, but it would make no difference whatsoever.

Kameel spoke to him on Father’s Day 1996, and there was pensiveness in his voice. He claimed that he was framed by the same state government that he fought with twenty-five years earlier.

Two days later, he appeared before Clark County Judge Barbara Johnson, who sentenced him to the legislature mandated prison term: **sixty-eight months**. Frank was immediately hauled away by the police. One former family friend married to a Palestinian came to the sentencing and shouted to Frank as he was led away: “*Ya Shay-tan, ya Sha-tan*” (O Satan, O Satan). The date was June 18th, 1996.

If I Make My Bed In Hell

The next few days were sheer hell. Frank did not have his heart medication and he was put in cells with people young enough to be his grandchildren. Overwhelmed by the entire experience, Frank passed out. Though some thought he was doing a Mahdiyyah-style fainting spell, this was for real. He was kicked and told to stop acting. Then he was transferred to local hospital, but all the while he was either jabbed with needles or yelled at by the attendants. After all, why

should he be treated nicely: he was a convicted child molester and treated like the scum of the earth. Rumor had it that child molesters were so despised that they were assaulted by the other prisoners. Such assaults, the rumor concluded, were tolerated, if not encouraged, by the prison officials. How could Frank, on the eve of his seventy-second birthday and still recovering from a heart bypass, survive all of this?

After a few days he was transferred from the Clark County jail to a medium security prison, the Washington State Corrections Center in Shelton. This would be his home for the next two and a half years. A few more harrowing days awaited him. In one case, a young inmate shared the cell with Frank. He started smoking marijuana. Frank choked. He then masturbated on Frank while he slept. Enough was enough—Frank allegedly got up and kicked the young offender in the groin, until he was floored. Then he was transferred. A semblance of peace ensued. In December 1996, Frank had a serious coronary problem. He passed out and stayed on a stone cold cement floor for several hours. Eventually he was taken to hospital. Though it is not clear, Frank could have been in serious physical peril and was saved through constant prayer.

Though Shelton was only two hours from Battle Ground, family visits were very rare. Louise was only able to visit once and that was when Kameel came from Australia. Kim came between two to five times in the sixty-eight months. Frank's sister, Widad, visited the prison a couple of times. Kameel came once a year, but did several visits while in the US. Granddaughter Haifa also made one visit, after Frank was transferred to McNeil Island near the picturesque city of Steilacoom, Washington. Kameel arranged for a local Assembly of God pastor in Shelton named Leland Geer to go visit Frank on a regular basis. This kind man was his most dedicated regular contact with the outside world—until Frank was transferred to McNeil Island. Then even those pastoral visits stopped.

Amazingly, an eerie sort of normalcy ensued as the years dragged on. The other prisoners were much younger and a lot bigger than Frank. Many were Hispanic or African American, but there were a few Caucasians. Some of them looked clean-cut with an “all American” preppy appearance. Yet apparently the prisoners were respectful or even kind to Frank. At worse, they were indifferent and left him alone. On the rare occasion that Frank attended the prison chapel, the other inmates were overjoyed to see him. “Hi Frank” said one guitarist. His appearance was clearly a pleasant surprise. Apparently, there would be no bully-boy tactics on this elderly Palestinian. In addition, Frank was in unusually high spirits, not unlike Mahdiyyah in her last decade. Perhaps it was his coping mechanism, but Frank is a natural optimist and, in the absence of a living faith, this optimism would be his life raft. In reality, it was the constant prayer that kept him sane.

Just weeks before Frank's discharge from prison, he fell ill and was taken to a Tacoma hospital. At one point, a hospital attendant was going to inject a needle into him. He didn't know what it was or why, but was determined—always part of

Frank's character—that no one was going to jab a needle into him. How did he know if it wasn't an extra dose of morphine to help him slip into eternity? "Don't you touch me" he commanded. The attendant complied.

It's Not Over

Discharge day was February 16, 2002. Frank was seventy-seven and a half years old. For over five and a half years, he had been kept out of the outside world. Like a Rip Van Winkle, he was about to wake up to some hard core realities. Kim came to pick up his father from the Shelton prison. Frank had lost a lot of weight and his trousers were big around the waist. Kim, ever the quick one-liner, commented that his father look like an advertisement for a Subway sandwich ad. He then delivered him, not to the family home, but to a Vancouver motel which would be his home only for a few days.

For starters, Frank was labeled as a Level Three Sex Offender. This category means that wherever he lives, posters with his picture will be distributed to the neighbors, saying that a convicted level three sex offender is their neighbor. The police flier would make many unsubstantiated claims about Frank, far beyond his actual conviction. The television will also comment on the paroled man's whereabouts. Kim, who lived on the family property with his two daughters Ariana and Jasmine, was concerned that locals in Battle Ground would harass his children if their grandfather returned. The Department of Corrections also forbade him to return to the family home; since it was there that the alleged crime occurred.

The result was that Frank could only stay in a motel for a period of a few days. Any longer and the police would be knocking on every door of the establishment, telling the hotel's clientele that a sex offender was nearby. This would be a disaster for any hotel and, no doubt, they would ask Frank to leave immediately if they knew. So every few days was "moving day." Yes—the nightmare continued.

But the biggest blow of all was that after fifty-three years of marriage and sixty-eight months of prison, Louise divorced Frank and, despite her children's plea, changed her name from "Majdali" to "Haddad." The divorce became final just a couple of months after Frank was released.

Frank had offered her a divorce early during his incarceration, but she did not respond. She faithfully and promptly sent him money whenever he asked. As late as mid-2001, she even tried to help him find post-prison accommodation and was even willing to live with him in it (though they had not lived in the same dwelling for many years prior to his incarceration). But a few months later, she decided to file for divorce.

At the age of seventy-seven, Louise had a flare up of her long standing condition of tic delaroux and said she just could not handle all the problems and

complications that Frank would bring once he was released. Though she initially claimed to have no hostility, nor did she have any contact with Frank once he was released. If this was not all, other relatives also disowned him.

You would think that after all these trials and tribulations: accusation, indictment, trial, conviction, imprisonment, divorce, and rejection, Frank would be willing to turn to God? No, not yet. His “high spirits” from prison stayed up in the air. He had big plans to create a model Arab community, a university, cement block factories in Aqaba, Jordan, and more. His dream machine and idealism were in full swing.

After twenty-nine years, Kameel still prayed for his father. But he was wondering if it was too late or if he should give up? NO! As long as there was breath, there was hope. But one wonders how could he handle all his many crises: the Wajdi-Widad house debacle, the love affair with the married woman, Kim’s failed first marriage, the failed Saudi partnership, Louise’s 1983 brain surgery that failed to stop her tic delaroux, various law suits, plus incarceration, divorce and rejection. Why did he not at any of these points want to turn to the Lord in a real way?

One can only surmise, but Frank is a very strong individual. Being a Jerusalem-born Palestinian, he could hardly be anything else. Horrible as his imprisonment was, it was hardly his first brush with adversity. Somehow, he had learned to “roll with the punches” and still keep his optimism and idealism intact. But even Frank was not superhuman. Eventually, without divine sustenance, something would give.

Free At Last

Kameel had started a new ministry called Teach All Nations Inc. in February 2004, after having run a leading Australian Bible college for many years. He noticed with great concern how his friend Bob Mendelsohn, Head of Station of Jews for Jesus Australia and an effective evangelist, made two emergency visits to the United States to bury his elderly Jewish parents within months of each other. Both were in their eighties and neither had made a known commitment to Jesus Christ. All Bob could say is to rest on the words of the Patriarch Abraham: shall not the judge of the whole earth do right?

Kameel was horrified for he was in the same situation as Bob, as far as his father was concerned. Though Louise had accepted Christ during her first visit to Australia in 1987, Frank declined. Even when an acclaimed British healing evangelist came to town, Frank went to the meetings, even went up for prayer, and despite the evangelist’s claims to the contrary, Frank left the meetings no more Christian than when he came. While his Muslim background may be part of the explanation, what is more likely is that he was simply “being Frank”—I must do things my way.

Kameel realized that it was a “now or never” proposition. He needed to get to America and invite his father to meet the Lord. An amazing opportunity came: Frank’s health had deteriorated and at the age of eighty, he was suffering from heart and kidney complaints. Kim said he would help Kameel find the money to come to America. It was April 2005.

When Kameel called Frank on arrival, he heard him speak in a manner that was unprecedented. Frank was down. Frank was depressed. Indeed, his opening words were, “I envy the Pope (John Paul II), because he is dead!” Not even in the depths of his incarceration had Frank nursed discernible depression, let alone a death wish. Fortunately, Frank now had a home to live in on St. Johns Boulevard in Vancouver. One of his roommates is Sarge, a man half his age became his de facto son. Kameel decided to go to work.

On Monday, 11 April 2005, Kameel took Frank to his favorite restaurant, the Red Lobster. It was a very happy occasion. Then he drove him back to the house. While in the car, Kameel spoke to Frank about the past: about how as a young child, he was impressed how his Christian grandparents had a total surety of where they were going when they died, whereas his Muslim grandparents, as lovely as they were, had no such assurance. He then recounted a dream his maternal uncle Joe, just hours before his death in January 2005, had about heaven. He saw Christ, his father, mother, and recently deceased brother “Georgie” all praising God in heaven. Yes, they knew where they were going and now they were there! Kameel asked Frank if he knew where he was going. Then he went further. “I have been a good son and have sought to honor you all of my life, especially as a Christian. Now, I want you to honor me. I want you to give me a ‘coupon’ which means you will do whatever I say. For eighty years, you have gone your own way. Sometimes you have succeeded and sometimes you failed. But now is the time for you to go God’s way. Will you give me the coupon? Will you do what I ask?”

Frank said “yes.”

“Okay,” continued Kameel, “I want you to accept Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord.”

Frank replied, “Okay.”

Kameel almost fell out of his chair.

So, like Sam Teeny thirty four years earlier, Kameel led Frank into a clear, amplified, and unambiguous “sinner’s prayer.”

When it was over, Kameel remarked, “Dad, I have waited and prayed for this day since January 1975—thirty years!” Frank was stunned. Thirty years is a long time to be devoted to a single prayer request.

Frank, the Palestinian Arab had now met the most famous Man to ever come from Israel-Palestine. Though he had walked in the footsteps of Jesus in his native Jerusalem, he now could walk in His footsteps in the way of faith.

The very next night, Frank attended the Russian Church of Truth in Vancouver.

Less than forty-eight hours after saying the sinner's prayer, Kameel had to return to Australia. The good Lord provided Frank with a new adopted son: Evangelist Milton Alvarez, a Castilian Jew. Milton went above and beyond the call of duty in follow-up and care. He took Frank to Shiloh Fellowship in Vancouver, pastored by Jerry and Mary Thurston. The Thurstons have known Frank for almost thirty years, since they were Kameel's pastors earlier. Frank has been regularly attending Shiloh Fellowship every since. His roommate, Sarge, also came to Christ thanks to Milton and was recently baptized. He, too, has become a "son."

Then Frank's care-giver since his release from prison, Cheryl Boes, is also a practicing Christian and rejoiced to see Frank finally come to the Lord. Cheryl currently lives in Battle Ground with Louise and is her care-giver, too.

Milton prophesied that God would restore to Frank what the locusts have consumed and that his best days were yet ahead.

Suddenly, this man who was all alone, forsaken by family and friends, living no longer in a big family home but in a simple rented quarters with two other ex-convicts, financially sustained on a meagre Social Security payment and Medicare, now had a reason to live: new family, new friends, new purpose. He is seeing Louise again on a regular basis, as friends, and an amazing reunion with Sam Teeny. The two octogenarians had the time of their lives with Kameel: one the natural father and the other the spiritual. In June 2006, Frank, Louise, Kameel, and Kim were reunited for a dinner, the first time in ten years!

Frank's story is not finished and there are some loose ends, but as he said himself, he is doubly certain of where he is going when he dies. Jesus came to give His followers abundant life (John 10:10) and Frank, determined as always, wants to live it to the full. After so many starts and stumbles, and with Christ in his life, he learned that it was faith—and only by faith—that he could finally and permanently become "perfectly Frank."



Family Reunion Photo June 2006

Front: Frank & Louise

Back (left to right): Kameel, Jasmine, Ania, Nick, Kim, and Jonell

ⁱ A policeman was driving his two foster children through the city of Wenatchee, Washington. The children would point to various houses, usually inhabited by migrants and Pentecostals, and claim that they were raped or molested house after house. Something like sixty people were accused of these crimes. Families were split, the children sent to psychiatric hospitals in neighboring Idaho, and many were imprisoned. The policeman double-up as the investigative detective (a clear conflict of interest) and many “convictions” were obtained. Later on, the two girls confessed that they made the stories up. But Wenatchee was not just the work of a rogue policeman: the whole of the judicial system worked together in what could be one of the greatest miscarriages of justice modern America has seen, according to the series in the Seattle Post-Intelligencer *The Power to Harm* (1998).