

Stephen and Penny Freeth honor their grandparents' Kuwaiti legacy

Dickson grandchildren reflect on Kuwait's historic friendship

By Chaitali B. Roy
Special to the Arab Times

KUWAIT CITY, Nov 28: Kuwait's most famous expatriate couple, Colonel Harold Dickson and Dame Violet Dickson, remain an enduring symbol of British-Kuwait friendship and understanding decades after their demise. Last week, Stephen and Penny Freeth, children of Zahra Freeth, the Dicksons' daughter, were in Kuwait to commemorate the ongoing 125 years of British-Kuwait diplomatic relationship and to further refresh the memories of their family's ties with this country. "We are overwhelmed by the generosity and kindness extended to us by Kuwait," remarked Penny Freeth, granddaughter of Colonel Harold and Violet Dickson. We were speaking on the sidelines of the opening of an insightful photographic exhibition, followed by a talk by Stephen Freeth titled "Dickson Family Memories of Kuwait".

On November 20, Essa Yahya Dashti BEM, an expert on Kuwait-British relationship, and the National Library of Kuwait under the patronage of Sheikha Halah Bader Al Mohammed Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah hosted the opening of a fascinating photographic exhibition at the National Library on Gulf Road. The opening was attended by Sheikha Halah Al Sabah, Belinda Lewis, Ambassador of Great Britain, Christian Doods, Ambassador of Belgium, Stephen and Penny Freeth, Jaber Al Hendel, a long-standing friend of the Dickson family, Essa Dahsti and a host of dignitaries.

This year, Essa Dashti, a researcher and prolific writer on Kuwait-British relations, has organized several events, including lectures, seminars, and articles to commemorate 125 years of Kuwait-British diplomatic ties. Speaking of the visit, Dashti said, "Everyone in Kuwait knows the value of the Dickson family in Kuwait's history. They have done excellent service to Kuwait through their work and their books. Their articles and books are now an important source of Kuwait's history. They have also documented Kuwait's history through their camera lens. Most of Kuwait's 1930s, 40s, 50s and 60s photos are related to the Dickson family. The Freeth grandchildren have great memories of Kuwait and know the hidden story of Dickson House, their grandmother's home. They have shared with us what cannot be found in books." The British ambassador, Belinda Lewis mentioned the importance of living history and documenting and preserving memories. "We often talk about the concept of living history in terms of historical reenactments and bringing the past to life through actors and costumes," she said. "The visit to Kuwait by Col and Dame Violet Dickson's family was a powerfully authentic version of this. It was a very moving experience to stand at Col Dickson's graveside with his relatives and listen to their first-hand recollections. It was also very special to examine the photos in the National Library exhibition while standing next to people in those pictures who could remember what the weather was like that day and explain the circumstances that led to the photo being taken. It is so important to keep telling these stories and ensure these precious memories are preserved."

The primary purpose of photographs is to document and memorialise, and the pictures on display at the National Library do that. The exhibition looks back through a camera lens at life in Kuwait from the beginning of the 20th century with the help of images selected from the private album of an English girl who made this country her home when no facilities existed, from that of her mother and aunt and later, her children. The old scratchy, black-and-white photos are displayed somewhat chronologically and around themes relevant to the Dicksons, creating a visual narrative that captures a quiet country where camels sauntered. Goats, sheep, and hens



Dickson grandchildren honored with Kuwaiti token of appreciation.



The grandchildren of the Dicksons revisit cherished Kuwaiti history.

played in the yard, where men rode horses and spent hours under the tent in the desert chatting over endless cups of coffee. Women covered themselves up in swathes of cloth under a relentless sun. The images slowly give way to coloured pictures of more recent times showing an oil-producing country moving towards development and modernity. It is a fascinating kaleidoscope of snapshots taken from the early 1900s and ending with the 1970s.

The little details in these photographs make them compelling. "It's a very special collection of photographs, some that I've never seen before and others with which I'm very familiar as they were published in my book on Dame Violet Dickson," remarked Claudia Farkas Al Rashoud, Kuwait's most renowned photojournalist, and the author of many books. "Many of

them depict a traditional way of life in Kuwait that has completely vanished, although the photographs were taken not so very long ago," she shared. "It was great catching up with Stephen, Penny, Richard and Lizzie, and so good to see that the close ties between this special family and Kuwait are being fostered."

The Dicksons, including their two children Sa'ud and Zahra, arrived in Kuwait in May 1929 on a British India steamer and were carried ashore on chairs by porters. At this time, Kuwait was a walled city. After arriving in Kuwait, the Dicksons very quickly gained the trust and respect of the ruling family and Kuwaitis in general through their kindness, generosity and understanding of Arab customs and behaviour. Colonel Dickson was bi-lingual, having been born in Jerusalem. The fact he had an Arab wet nurse was a positive factor in his relationship with the Arabs. The Dicksons were genuinely interested in Arab ways and frequently travelled into the desert when the weather was cool. Violet Dickson's book 'The Wildflowers of Kuwait and Bahrain' and Colonel Dickson's two lengthy volumes on Arab customs and traditions, 'The Arab of the Desert' and 'Kuwait and Her Neighbours' still make fascinating reading.

In his presentation, Stephen Freeth brought the photographs taken from private family albums alive with his wry sense of humour and eye for detail. In most photos, Zahra Freeth typed out captions using a manual typewriter. Stephen Freeth spoke fondly of his grandparents' great love for Kuwait and the devotion they received in return. An enormous ladies' litter "that goodness knows how it stayed on", Kuwait 81, the number plate on Col Dickson's car, Hamda, the nanny "who taught my mother Arabic and some rude words", Dr Mylrea, a close friend of Col Dickson "a great friend of the Arabs who did some wonderful medical work with the Bedouins and Arabs and is buried in the English cemetery," the old British agency, the new British Embassy with its deep balcony that "Col Dickson insisted on", camels and livestock drinking water from rain-filled craters, fortune tellers, the exotic Dora Philby who came visiting - extraordinary pictures of a bygone era brought to life by Stephen Freeth's anecdotal narrative.

Penny Freeth, the quiet granddaughter of Dame Violet Dickson, shared some insightful memories and observations of her own. Dame Violet frightened young Penny with her upright and almost masculine bearing. "My grandmother was a powerful personality," she recalled. "She was no-nonsense, wanted things her way, and if something didn't interest her, she dismissed it. I found her rather frightening." Unlike the women of her time, who stayed home and looked after the family, Violet Dickson went against the tide. "My grandmother did not like to spend much time with the women," she shared. "She didn't find them interesting. As soon as she gave birth to her two children, she decided she had done her duty to her husband. She kept her children in the nanny's care and ventured out to know more about the country and people." Penny agrees that it took Kuwaiti men to get used to her grandmother's forceful personality, but with time, Violet Dickson and the locals developed love and respect for each other. To the extent that Dame Violet decided to stay on after her husband died instead of returning to Britain.

Dame Violet was carried into Kuwait when she arrived in 1929, and, as fate would have it, she was also carried out. The companionway stairs were too steep for the stretcher, and passengers left their seats to carry her onto the aircraft. Dame Violet Dickson died in a nursing home in Goring-on-Thames in January, 1991, with her family around her. Thus, the extraordinary story of an English woman in Kuwait ended, and a legend began.

FAIPS-DPS celebrates its Annual Day for Grade 4 with grandeur and enthusiasm

KUWAIT CITY, Nov 28: Fahaheel Al Watanieh Indian Private School, Kuwait, celebrated its Annual Day for Grade 4, with splendour and enthusiasm. This vibrant and spectacular event took place on Wednesday, 20th November 2024, at the grand school auditorium showcasing the immense talent, creativity, and cultural diversity yet embodying the spirit of unity that thrives within our community. Themed 'Hakuna Matata', the program carried a profound, heart-warming, universal and timeless message encouraging a healthy detachment from unnecessary stress, urging all to embrace the beauty of the moment and find contentment in the here and now. A total of 466 talented students took part in the unforgettable celebration, captivating the audience with their spellbinding performances, ending in joy and jubilation for all.

The festivities commenced with invoking the blessings of the almighty and the salutation to the Kuwait National

Flag followed by the Kuwait National Anthem, and the ceremonial Lighting of the Lamp. The Principal, Mr. Ravi Ayanoli, welcomed the esteemed guests for the day - the Chief Guest, Dr. Rawda Hildegard Awwad, President of the American University of Kuwait, Guests of Honour, Mr. Reaven D' Souza, Managing Editor, The Times - Kuwait and Mr. Sunoj Nambiar, the Founder and Director of Indiansinkuwait.com, chief guests from the Ministry of Education, Ms. Boshra Al - Abdel Hussein, Supervisor of Foreign Schools, Ms. Sarah Fahd Al-Ajmi, Social Studies Technical Supervisor and Mr. Arun Choudhary, CFO and Head Strategy, Al Rayan Holding Company.

In his inspiring welcome address, the Principal Mr. Ravi Ayanoli, emphasized on how important it is for parents to trust and support the teachers, towards the holistic development of the children not only in academics but also in co-curricular activities.

The highlight of the event was the cultural program, featuring performances by students in various categories, including dance, music, and drama. Each act was a testament to the talent and creativity that the students of FAIPS DPS nurture throughout the year. The performances received an overwhelming response from the audience, who cheered and applauded the young artists for their hard work and dedication.

The cultural events commenced with a melodious English song inspiring all to have a positive and an uplifting outlook towards life followed by a mellifluous Hindi song influencing all to indulge in the simple pleasures of life.

What followed was a series of immaculately choreographed dance performances in captivating, colourful and vibrant costumes which left the audience mesmerized and spellbound. The welcome dance, 'Rhythm of Life', came with the message to let go of our worries and enjoy life to the fullest. A fascinating dance, 'Rise and Shine' motivated the audience to embrace each moment of life with joy and jubilation. The delightful French dance 'Bailala Joie De Vivre' was a joyful reminder that every breath we take is an opportunity to savour the journey of life.

An enchanting dance drama titled 'Believe and Bloom' displayed the magic of family love and self-discovery. The audience were treated to a beautiful Arabic dance 'New Hope, New Day' celebrating the spirit of optimism. The enchanting dance 'Vigorous Warriors' came with a message to stop worrying, focus on our goals and share the happy moments of life. After this was an enthralling dance segment 'Azaadi Ki Udaan' prompting us to discover our hidden potential and soar to new heights. The bedazzling Grand Finale induced the spirit of leadership to help one another embark on a journey of happiness. The auditorium echoed with the thunderous applause of the audience who witnessed a colourful and spectacular program leaving all in a trance.



Top & above: Photos during the Annual Day celebrations for Grade 4.

Men's Voice & Junior Choir present annual Christmas musical concert

KUWAIT CITY, Nov 28: The Men's Voice & Choral Society - Kuwait, in conjunction with their Junior Choir, will present their 24th annual Christmas Musical Concert - "Glorious Light," on Thursday, December 5, 2024, at 7:00 pm at the NECK Church & Parish Hall.

Since 2001, this esteemed Christian musical group has spread the joy of Christmas through their performances, and this year promises to be no different. In collaboration with KTMCC, the concert will highlight the theme of light as a symbol of love, goodness,

and hope.

With a total of 85 choir members, including juniors, the performance is set to captivate the audience and create a memorable celebration of the festive season.

All music lovers are warmly invited to join and enjoy the spirit of Christmas through the choir's beautiful melodies and harmonies.

For more details contact 94064465/99656419/66910059

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Hublot's new boutique at 360 Mall.

Hublot expands Kuwaiti presence with a new boutique at 360 Mall

KUWAIT CITY, Nov 28: Hublot, the renowned Swiss luxury watchmaker, and partner Behbehani is proud to announce the opening of its second boutique in Kuwait, located in the prestigious 360 Mall. This new boutique, fitted within a space of 54m², showcases Hublot's signature audacity and avant-garde. The design highlights Hublot's mastery of the "Art of Fusion," with the boutique featuring a curated selection of materials that exemplify the Manufacture's exceptional skills and expertise.

"The 360 Mall boutique represents a significant new chapter in Hublot's journey in Kuwait. This location not only highlights our commitment to the country but also embodies our passion for showcasing watchmaking excellence. We are eager to welcome our clients into this sophisticated space and share the unique Hublot experience that transcends timekeeping, offering a true celebration of craftsmanship."

David Tedeschi
Hublot Managing Director For Latin America, Middle East & Africa

The opening was celebrated with a soft launch event, featuring a ribbon-cutting ceremony attended by esteemed guests from the media and Hublot's valued clientele, including Regional Director David Tedeschi.

The boutique at 360 Mall promises to be a destination for luxury watch enthusiasts, offering an exclusive glimpse into the world of Hublot.

"We are immensely proud to be Hublot's partner in Kuwait, by together bringing unparalleled craftsmanship and experiences to the heart of Kuwait. This boutique is a testament to our shared vision of luxury and excellence and expansion within the country. We are dedicated to creating an inviting atmosphere where Kuwaiti clients can immerse themselves in the world of Hublot. Together, we aim to elevate the luxury retail experience in Kuwait, showcasing the best that Hublot has to offer."

Ali Behbehani
President, Morad Yousuf Behbehani

Savour truffle season at Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Nov 28: Chef Enrico Zambi brings his homeland's greatest gastronomic gifts to Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait this winter. From November 14 to January 2, Dai Forni's seasonal truffle menu showcases Italy's coveted Alba truffles across five elevated dishes in the 21st floor restaurant. Available for lunch and dinner, the menu also invites diners to add black or white truffle by the gram to any other existing Dai Forni dish.

Available daily from 12pm to 4pm and 6pm to 11pm, the truffle menu showcases two of the world's most coveted culinary treasures: the delicate white Alba truffles, with their subtle hints of oak, nut, and sweet earth, and the rich, aromatic black truffles, known for their deep, earthy flavor, sourced from the wild forests surrounding Alba, a small town in Piedmont, Italy.

Fresh white truffle is the star of the



Dai Forni's seasonal truffle-infused menu

first of two starters: Burrata y Tartufo Bianco with a sautéed peach syrup and sourdough. In Zuppa Di Funghi e Tartufo Nero, whipped black truffle cream and fresh truffle snow enhances a fragrant mixed mushroom soup. Mains include wood-fired Pizza al Tartufo Nero, combining ricotta black truffle sauce and shaved fresh truffle with mozzarella fior di latte and foie gras mousse. Richly comforting Papardelle al Ragu di Agnello e Tartufo

Bianco fuses fresh white truffle with homemade pasta and white lamb ragu. Finally, the indulgent Dai Forni Burger features black truffle cream and fresh truffle snow with a double smash Wagyu beef burger.

The seasonal truffle menu perfectly complements Dai Forni's 'Mix and Mingle' every Thursday until the end of the year. This sophisticated event combines Italian comfort food - including half price savings

on starters - with custom Martini Mocktails plus live music from renowned Kuwaiti maestro Zak Musawi overlooking a stunning view.

Together, the new seasonal truffle menu and Mix and Mingle invite a celebration of fine dining and festive energy for a winter season to savour.

For more information on the seasonal truffle menu or Mix and Mingle event at Dai Forni at Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait please contact 2200 6000