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Y. M. C. A. JERUSALEM
IN
JORDAN

CENTRE FOR ARAB GULF STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF EXETER

A NEW BEGINNING IN SERVICE 1949 — 1960

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THE STORY OF A TENT



CHRISTINA H. JONES

JERUSALEM - JORDAN

1960



A solitary tent pitched on the border of Aqabat Jabr Camp, Jericho became the nucleus of the significant program that was to develop in a most spectacular way through the years.

THE STORY OF A TENT

They were only five, these young men from the Jerusalem, Palestine Y.M.C.A., of the vast number of refugees that was to swell to a million before the summer of 1948 was over, but they were not daunted by the catastrophe created by the Partition of Palestine and they set to work at once to meet its challenge. They were an unusual team for the work: a waiter, a janitor, a gardener, a swimming instructor, and a business-secretary. As they met to decide what to do, any plans had to be tentative for they fully expected to be able to return to their former posts in the Y.M.C.A. building in Jerusalem at any time.

To start a Y.M.C.A. program in the midst of the misery, fear, and hopelessness of the Jerusalem of 1948 was out of the question and, quite wisely, the Team did not attempt it but turned instead to the very pressing immediate needs of the uprooted thousands who had crowded into the hill country about Jerusalem. Aside from the physical needs of shelter and food, these people needed to feel that someone was trying to help them.

The services of the Y.M.C.A. Team were quickly accepted by the government of Trans-Jordan (later Jordan), in the distribution of food, and by the International Red Cross to help with clothing. But distribution was difficult as no one knew how many refugees must share these commodities. Ramallah, Birch, Beir-Zeit and other villages in Jerusalem sub-district were crowded with people with no roofs over their heads, constantly moving about trying to

find shelter. There was an urgent need to find out, if possible, how many refugees there were in the area, in other words, a census was called for.

The almost impossible task of numbering the refugees was solved by the simple expedient of asking the Trans-Jordan government to place a six hour curfew over the entire area. During that period a large number of volunteers, teachers, social workers, and former government officials went into action and the task was accomplished with reasonable accuracy, perhaps a more accurate census than has been made in any attempt since then. A modest office which had been opened in Ramallah by the Y.M.C.A. served as the center of this activity. Then followed the first organization for large scale distribution of food for the refugees, which was supplied by the government of Trans-Jordan. More important, this census gave the International Red Cross a workable basis when it was called on by the U.N. in November, 1948 to set up a relief programme.

Through the hot summer days, the Y.M.C.A. Team, and others who volunteered to help them, laboured to bring relief and hope to the people and did its share in maintaining a remarkable degree of personal dignity and confidence in a situation where one might have expected anarchy and lawlessness.



Snow in Jericho
1950 - the first snow
since 1660

JERICHO

DECEMBER 1948

The rains came early in 1948 giving a foretaste of the cold winter ahead. Refugees, used to the warmth and gentler climate of Jaffa, Ramleh, and Lydda, suffered in the cold nights on the hills. They had brought only what they could carry on the long climb from the plains and their clothing was wholly inadequate. They endured the chilly nights of the summer months because there was the constant hope of an early return to their homes, but with the first unusual rain in September they were compelled to think of the Jordan Valley, hot and treeless, but a haven in winter for people destitute of clothing. The problem of water for this vast multitude was a grave one on the hills but in Jericho there was an ancient fountain, and water from mountain streams could be caught before it was lost in the salty soil of the valley. Some few preferred the hills to be near their former homes, but by December large numbers trekked to the valley, 4000 ft. below, and 1290 ft. below sea level, the lowest place on the earth's surface.

When the International Red Cross set up large camps for the refugees, the Y.M.C.A. Team was on hand to help and supplement with its programme. Thanks to the World Service Program of the International Committee of YMCA's in the U.S.A., this program was made possible and its support continues to the present time.



Children from the Camp attend the Y. M. C. A. school Aqabat Jabr has remained the largest refugee camp in the Middle East.

It is estimated that at the beginning of December, 1948 there were 67,000 refugees in the Aqabat Jabr camp alone. This camp has remained the largest refugee camp in the Middle East, having at the present time a population of 38,000 persons.

The United Nations through the agency of the International Red Cross could provide food, shelter, and medical care for the people but the Y.M.C.A. Team saw that some program of education and recreation must be introduced to care for the young people, who comprised almost one-half of the camp.

A school seemed a logical beginning, but when fifteen hundred boys applied within a few days after a start was made, the idea had to be given up temporarily as there was no equipment or facilities of any kind. The resources of the Y.M.C.A. were the team, and a solitary tent pitched on the border of the Camp area. This was the office and residence of the General Secretary and it became the nucleus of the significant program that was to grow through the next ten years in a remarkable way.

The Y.M.C.A. General Secretary decided that if a school could not be started at once, a recreational program was possible and he immediately organized one for the 1500 boys who had applied. Sports, lectures, and discussions provided wholesome, constructive activity throughout the first winter. U.N.I.C.E.F. milk distributed daily at the Y.M.C.A. Center augmented the 1500 calorie ration the boys were getting at home. This was a seemingly modest beginning where the need was so tremendous, but under the conditions existing in the Palestine of 1948-1949, it was an achievement that was to make the Y.M.C.A. trusted by the refugees and their future work possible.

SUMMER - 1949

THE HILL COUNTRY AGAIN

Summer came with its burning heat, and the hills which had offered protection from the winds from the west during the winter now cut off the cool winds from the west which might have made life possible in the valley in summer. The refugees from the plains who had enjoyed the Mediteranean Sea in summer, found Jericho almost unbearable and they moved up to the hills in large numbers. The Y.M.C.A. Team followed. Three schools were started in tents. One was on the playing field of the Friends Boys School in Ramallah, another at Beir-Zeit College, and the third at Nebi Yacoub, between Ramallah and Jerusalem. The clear, stimulating air on the hills combined with a good program of school work and recreation was a great service to the boys and the communities alike, and when the boys had to return to Jericho in the fall, they were eager for school work. These summer schools were also made possible through gifts from the World Service Program of the International Committee of the Y.M.C.A. in the U.S.A.

Sports provide wholesome activity and relieve the monotony of camp life.





Formal Schooling begins alif, ba, etc. .

FORMAL SCHOOLING BEGINS

When a formal school program was organized in the fall of 1949, 750 boys were enrolled. From the beginning, the government curriculum was followed from kindergarten to third secondary. As funds became available adobe huts, cheap and practical for the sub-tropical climate of Jericho, replaced the tents. Within ten years thirty-one such buildings for classrooms, workshops, recreation hall, and store rooms were put up to meet an expanding program.

Seen from the Jerusalem-Jericho road today, the Y.M.C.A. compound presents an attractive, orderly, business-like appearance, and as one looks across to the great concentration of refugees in this Camp served by the Y.M.C.A., he is thankful for the vision and courage which led the Y Team to initiate a program only a step from the tents which were to be the refugee homes for the first eight years. Fortunate the boys who could spend eight hours a day in the clean, cool rooms of the Y buildings getting on with their education in a busy, disciplined atmosphere with classes, sports and excellent physical care.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING



As time went on and the return of the refugees to their homes seemed increasingly remote, it became clear to the Team that something should be done for young men beyond school age. There were hundreds of them spending their days in enforced idleness, exposed to all the temptations that Satan proverbially finds for idle hands and keen minds, and this presented a new challenge to the Team. The answer came in 1950 when some tools were offered to them by the World Alliance of the Y.M.C.A. No one on the team had vocational training or any experience in that line, but they were learning to adapt themselves to the new and unusual and they were willing to tackle almost anything that offered hope. They were fortunately able to find among the refugees men with skills, eager to be using them, and soon a small project was started in carpentry and iron-work. It is significant that this project which started so simply in a tent with a handful of boys, six to be exact, was to develop into the most spectacular aspect of their program.



Vocational training started in a tent with a handful of boys.

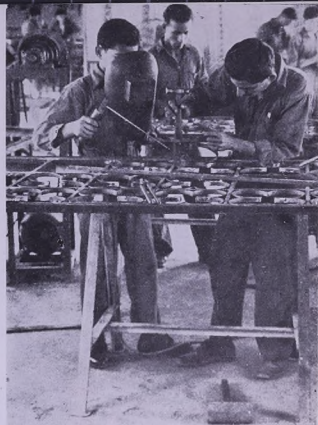


To-day, eighty young men are learning to be skilled artisans.

The project caught on and soon more young men were enrolled and more machinery needed. Mr. Nasir, the General Secretary, brought this to the attention of the Near East Christian Council Committee for Refugee Work. The opportunity to give relief constructively to the youth of Jordan appealed to the committee and in time it was able to contribute to the operating budget to such an extent that Mr. Nasir could report in 1958: "The vocational training center owes its continuing existence, in the first place, to the NECCCRW." Others besides the NECCCRW have given generous help. The Evangelical and Reformed Church, the Presbyterian Church, the Disciples of Christ, the Church of the Brethren, the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief, Tapline, Beirut, and numerous individuals have been moved to give machinery, tools and other aids. Today, visitors to the Vocational Training Centre see eighty young men learning to be skilled artisans. They make wrought-iron and wooden furniture of great beauty, and are trained in electric-welding, painting, spraying, french



Spraying—Deep concentration as the finishing process is done.



Wrought-iron work and welding.

Making a stool to be sold in Jerusalem.



Under the expert training of a master sent by the German Y.M.C.A., a young man learns to be an upholsterer.

polishing, and laundry work. Recently, under a master sent by the German Y.M.C.A. in the interest of world fellowship, upholstery has been developed. Equipment is of a high standard and the finished work, sold in the Y.M.C.A. shop in Jerusalem, is eagerly bought. This shop, set up in a town of considerable size in any country, would attract attention with the beauty of its display from the magnificent wrought-iron door through which you enter to the smallest table in the corner. It is compelling evidence that these ancient skills live on in the people of Palestine.

BY THEIR FRUITS YE SHALL KNOW THEM

Splendid as these achievements are, Mr. Nasir and his able staff feel that the most successful aspect of the program has been psychological. In the early days of vocational training, it was hard to keep the boys long enough for them to become highly skilled. Eager to be earning, more eager to be getting away from the limitations and restrictions of camp life, they tended to leave as soon as they acquired a few skills. In addition, it was almost impossible to persuade boys who had reached secondary grades to learn handicrafts. Today, young men who have passed the matriculation examinations, the equivalent of College Boards, are applying for places in the vocational school and there is not room for all. The breakdown of the "white collar complex", the recognition of the dignity of labour, and pride in skilled workmanship are a source of greatest satisfaction to the staff and ample reward for the years of quiet, patient effort to attain this goal.

The staff can point with pride to their graduates. Ramadan is one of many. He was among the first to enroll in the elementary school in 1948, and he remained to get the school certificate. He entered the Vocational Training School when other boys with certificates felt that they must have "white collar" jobs. Intelligent, alert, ambitious, Ramadan entered into the vocational program with zeal. He worked hard and took pride in making the lovely furniture which was being sought after so eagerly by people trying to



Two years out of the Vocational Training School finds Ramadan an employer of six men and taking his part in the development of Amman the capital of Jordan.

The staff taken pride in the achievement of Ramadan Hamed. Over the door he has written: "PALESTINE Ramadan H. FURNITURE" a sign that recalls his beloved homeland.

rebuild their homes and which made the showroom in Jerusalem so much admired. He completed his course in 1957 when he was eighteen. Two years later, he has his own carpenter shop in Amman and employs six workers. Thus in a short time seven families are benefiting from the industry of one graduate. It took marked initiative for a young man to start his own business and hard work to make it succeed, but Ramadan had acquired the confidence necessary to go ahead from the exacting training and manifest achievements of the Vocational Training School in Jericho. His example is an inspiration to the boys in the school and has helped break down the prejudice against manual work by young men who hold school certificates.

Graduates of the Jericho Y.M.C.A. Vocational Training Center may be found in many parts of the Middle East. They are earning good salaries and contributing to the support of their families. Trained, as they are, to be skilled artisans, they can look to the future with confidence, and the changing economy of the entire area offers them growing opportunities.

One other feature of the Jericho program which shows the vision of the General Secretary is the summer program for the younger children. The school has classes now from first to sixth elementary. When the spring term ends, academic work ends too, but a summer program is set up to provide suitable activities during vacation days.

The refugees no longer migrate to the hills in summer and camp life is difficult for the children. To the teachers and leaders who willingly remain in the heat of Jericho for this program special tribute should be made.

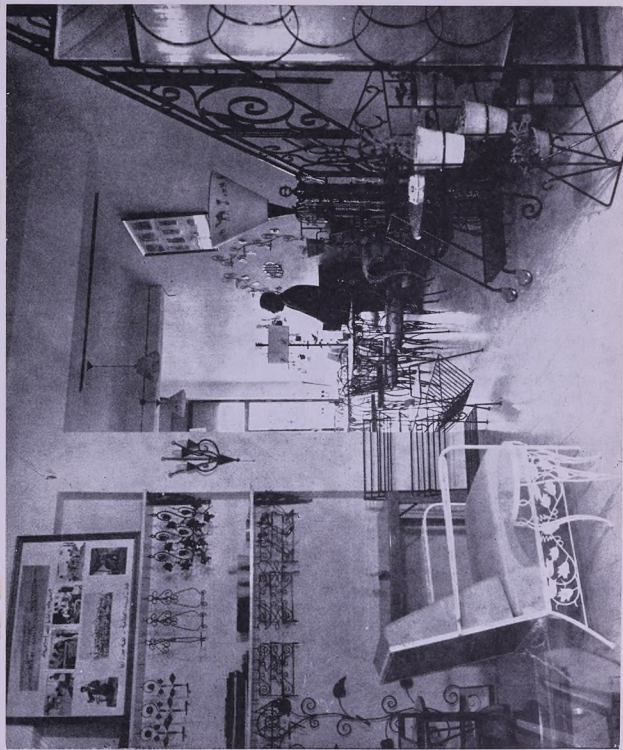
YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS

Brooding over Aqabat Jabr Camp with its thousands of refugees is the Mount of Temptation. Here is the traditional place to which Jesus retired after his baptism and the realization that the time had come for him "to be

about his Father's business". He was young and the world called to him. Should he use his glowing personality as a miracle worker, a conqueror, or as a teacher bringing to mankind the truths of God. His decision is the heart of the Christian message today and the Y.M.C.A. was organized originally to keep before young men this ideal. The Y.M.C.A. Team working through the years in quiet service to youth at the foot of the Mountain is a testimony to Divine leading. Here is "Christianity in Action" in an association of young men. Some members of the Team might have gone to other countries in 1948 and with their training and experience found plenty to do. They, at a critical moment of decision, remained to share the lot of their people. Their service to the refugees has never been interrupted and has withstood the various crises that have threatened the security of Jordan from time to time. That has been the test of their work and it bears the stamp of approval of the leaders of the camp.

This chapter of the story of the Jericho work may well be concluded by the following extract taken from a statement by Dr. Van der Meulen, noted Dutch diplomat, administrator and traveller, after he had visited the Vocational Training Center:

"Important visionary work is being done here by Palestinians for Palestinians. ...What I especially like in this center is its nearness to the daily life of the boys. There is no cleft between the camps and the schools. They are outwardly nearly the same, the difference is inwardly. This institution does not raise jealousy, does not take the boys away from their families and physical surroundings. The leaders told me that when in 1955 the disturbances occurred, they were in no danger and they could refuse protection by police and military force — they did not want it."



Exhibition room in Jerusalem for Jericho Products.

This shop has many buyers attracted by the beauty of its display from the magnificent wrought-iron door through which they enter to the smallest table in the corner.

JERUSALEM

The basic and continuing work of the Jordan Y.M.C.A. must inevitably be centered in Jerusalem. Y.M.C.A. work has been carried on in this area for eighty-one years but its greatest period followed the dedication of the "most beautiful Y.M.C.A. building in the world" during the Easter season, 1933. This building was the realization of a vision of service and made possible by the Christian stewardship of two successful American business men, Mr. James Newbegin Jarvie and Mr. Charles Davidson, and Dr. A.C. Harte, their schoolmate, who gave a life of service to the Y.M.C.A. Dedicated leaders maintained the ideals, of the Y.M.C.A. through the years and it became a remarkable Christian witness in the City of Calvary.

With the Partition of Palestine and the further partition of Jerusalem, this building is now in the Israeli sector of the Holy City. Since the U.N. plan was for an international city, it seemed wise to the Y.M.C.A. Team to carry on with the emergency program for refugees pending a return to the mother building, Jerusalem, in 1948-49 and later, suffered much from the effects of war, through loss of property, business and population, and its future was still uncertain. Most of the Arab population had lived in the new part of Jerusalem. When they were driven out in the spring of 1948, they had to seek refuge in Ramallah, Bethlehem, Trans-jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, and Syria. Some had property within the walls of the Old City but that was not safe during the dark days, and it was much later that the Old City was considered reasonably secure. People who could not afford to go far, however, fled to the convents in the Old City where many of them remain to this day. The situation was not propitious for starting a Y.M.C.A. program, but again the Y Team proved its faith and courage.

The only building available at the time was the shell of a lovely home on the Nablus Road and extensive repairs were necessary. The USA International Committee of



Mr. Nasir, Vice Chairman of the Jordan Olympics Sports Committee, with prize-winning weight lifters.

the Y.M.C.A. sent funds for this and the house was soon filled with young men for whom almost no recreational or other facilities had been available for a long time.

Fortunately, before the partition line through Jerusalem became the fixed entity it is today, Mr. Nasir was able to get seventeen English and Arabic typewriters from the big Y.M.C.A. which had been used in their program. This made it possible to get on with classes in typing, and Mr. Nasir, a professional accountant, taught classes in book-keeping and accountancy to competent young men and women. Funds were also made available to help thirty boys complete the remaining year or two of their high school courses.

The Lind house soon became too small for the activities of the Y, as the young people finding "something to do, something to help us get on" crowded its doors. In 1953, Miller Hall, named for Alvah L. Miller who for sixteen years was the beloved secretary of the Jerusalem Y.M.C.A., was built behind the house. Classes were now provided for 172 young people. During the past year, 1958-59, 110 have been enrolled but summer enrollment brings the number to 160.

Much emphasis is placed on the sports program. Mr. Nasir, the General Secretary, is Vice-Chairman of the Olympic Sports Committee for Jordan and his team acquitted themselves well at the Second Arab Olympic Sports Meet in Beirut in 1957. All entrants won medals and they took the first two places in the weight-lifting contest. Locally, they have basket-ball, tennis, football, volley-ball, calisthenics, weight-lifting, and recently boxing has been added.

BOYS WORK

Although work for young men is obviously the chief function of a Y.M.C.A., implicit in its name, the Jerusalem Y.M.C.A. considers its program for boys one of its most important duties. It is the only organization in Jordan which has a recreational program for boys between eight and fifteen years of age.

During the summer of 1959, 115 boys were fortunate enough to be enrolled in the Y.M.C.A. during the long morning hours of vacation, and many more had to be turned away, for this number strained all the facilities available. When the new building was planned, the needs of a Boys Department were considered and provided for, and this program will have an important place in the general program.

Within its limitations, however, a varied and interesting program was provided for the boys. The playing-field across the road from the main building was available for tennis and basketball. Indoors, when the sun was hot, chess, ping-pong, and dominoes furnished exciting contests, and for the quiet, studious boy, there was the reading-room and library. Walks to historic and Biblical sites furnished abundant activity for the "Get to Know your Country" club and camping at the Shepherds Field away from home, was an experience in growing-up and learning to live with others outside the family circle. Lectures and good movies rounded out the program, filling the days with wholesome recreation in keeping with the three-fold purpose of the Y.M.C.A., Building Body, Mind, and Spirit.

SERVICE TO THE WIDER COMMUNITY

The Y.M.C.A. serves the wider community by providing musical evenings, lectures, and forums. Through the hostel it reaches a World Community, for here men and women coming from many lands find a congenial atmosphere and friendly service during their stay in the Holy Land. The hostel at present has only eleven rooms for eighteen guests, but it has in an emergency expanded its facilities to care for sixty-nine persons, some of them youth hostellers.

A Y.M.C.A. in Jerusalem has a special responsibility, for here is the centre of the Christian faith and the places associated with the great events in the life of the Master, places held in reverence by Christians throughout the world. In confused and troubled times people turn to these places and their associations, hoping to find answers to their present needs. For them a visit to the Holy Land is an emotional and spiritual experience of great moment.

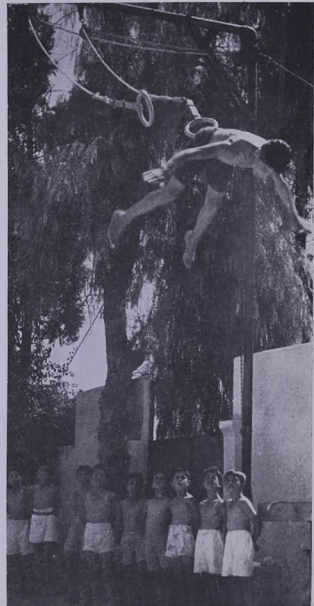
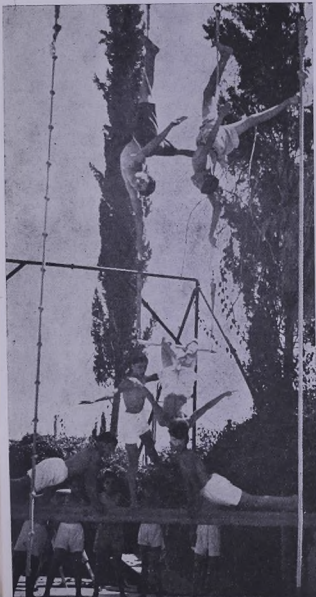
The Y.M.C.A. is mindful of all this. It helps to arrange tours, provides intelligent and understanding guides, and surrounds the visitor with sincerely interested care.



Boys Work
in Jerusalem

Y.M.C.A. Ideals
in action.

BUILDING BODY
MIND and
SPIRIT.



OLIVET ON PALM SUNDAY

Visitors in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday are invited to join members of the Y.M.C.A. on the walk from Bethany to the Mount of Olives. Starting at dawn, the party walks up the slope of the mountain, past Bethphage and on to the Mount of Olives to a site from which Jesus might have looked into Jerusalem and wept over it. The city lies serene in the morning light, and the rising sun catches the lovely colours of the tiles of the beautiful Dome of the Rock, casting a glow over the Temple area. In the brief service held here, the pilgrim tries to sense the experience of Jesus as he wept over the city, realizing he was about to face the great challenge to his teachings, and a clearer vision may come of the swift-moving events that led to Calvary. From here, also, he can visualize the happy throng that led Jesus to the Temple, strewing palms in his way, singing and dancing as they went, a scene, however, which was to be followed in five days by the loneliness of the journey to Golgotha.

A quiet, solemn hush enfolds the party as it returns to the Y.M.C.A. for a Fellowship Breakfast.



Palm Sunday in Jerusalem.
Sunrise over the Mountains of Moab seen from Bethany.



Approaching the Mount of Olives.

Meditation at a place where Jesus might have wept over Jerusalem.





Bethlehem - Christmas Eve.

Sheep grazing in the Field of the Shepherds, in the foreground is the cave.

BETHLEHEM

CHRISTMAS EVE

Another special service which the Y.M.C.A. offers is through the service at the Shepherds Field near Bethlehem on Christmas Eve. This plot of ground was bought by Dr. A. C. Harte, secretary of the Jerusalem Y.M.C.A. from 1918-1930. For many years, members of the Y, their friends and visitors, have gathered for an annual service and supper such as shepherds might have shared. At this place, away from the noise and confusion of the town, it is easier to think of the shepherds gazing into the clear, starry skies and seeing the one star that was to lead them to the Child.



Service in the Shepherd's Field on Christmas Eve.

Each year the group that meets here is larger. A service of Christmas hymns and prayers and a talk is held. The discovery in recent years of a remarkable cave has added to the atmosphere of the Shepherds Field. Nowadays, the sheep for the "feast" are roasted in it and following the service each visitor has a piece of lamb with freshly baked whole-wheat bread.

But the Shepherds Field is not kept as a shrine or a "museum-piece". It is a year round place of activity. In 1955, an attractive hostel was built through the kindness of Mr. Donovan Beachley of Hagerstown, Maryland, and the International Committee of the Y.M.C.A., New York. Its purpose is to serve as a retreat and a summer camp center and it is ideally situated to serve both purposes. To people no longer young, its serenity and simplicity assures rest and inspiration, and it provides a place where leaders of the Y.M.C.A. can meet to plan their work. During the summer, 180 boys camp on the spacious grounds in two-week shifts. Away from the Old City with its crowded streets, it affords plenty of room for games and constructive recreation of all kinds under the trees.

In the summer of 1959, it was placed at the disposal of the Y.W.C.A. for a ten-day camp for school girls. They came from Amman, Jericho, and Jerusalem and under able leadership the girls had a happy time. Study and play

under the trees in the daytime and "sings" under the stars in the Shepherds Field before bedtime cannot but be a beautiful memory to help these girls through life.

A NEW BUILDING FOR THE NEW DAY

The present membership of the Jerusalem Y.M.C.A. is 350 and it is open to young men of all creeds. The miracle of the Jerusalem Y.M.C.A. in Jordan today is that it does so much with such limited facilities. The need for a larger building is urgent as membership grows and new opportunities for service develop.

Recently, the land adjoining the present Y.M.C.A. has been purchased and a new building designed. The date of the purchase of the land was November 29, 1958, exactly eleven years after the fateful decision of the United Nations to Partition Palestine, Nov. 29, 1947, with its repercussions on all aspects of the life of the people. The Y Team had worked hard under difficult circumstances during the years and had cause to feel that the date of the signing of the papers, unplanned as it was, was more than a coincidence.

The new building will be on the main road going north from Jerusalem, the Nablus Road or the Road to Damascus, and face the Mount of Olives. It has been planned first of all to serve the young men, particularly the boys, of Jordan for they are the hope of this country. Because the area available is not large, the building will have to be high but the architect's drawing shows fine proportions and one does not think of it as being too high or out of keeping with the country.

The basement of the building will provide a swimming pool, bowling alley, an arts and crafts or hobby room, changing rooms, and a men's club room, in addition to the heating units.

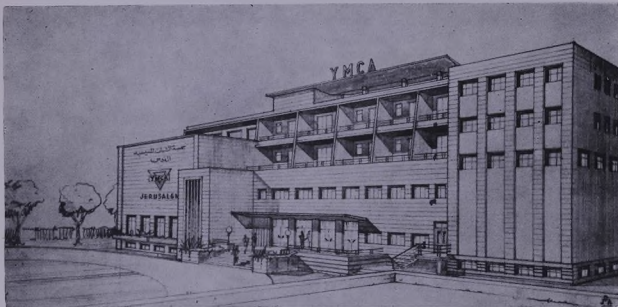
On the ground floor there will be lounges, a restaurant, soda-fountain, kitchen, gymnasium, weight-lifting room, squash court, junior club games room, and last, but not least, a library.

On the first floor there will be an auditorium—the only one in Jerusalem — which will serve the wider community in many ways as a lecture and concert hall, and reception room when necessary. It will have a seating capacity of 320. There will also be four class-rooms on the same floor and a room for meditation overlooking the Mount of Olives.

The second and third floors will be for the hostel with eleven double rooms and six single rooms on each floor, thirty-four in all for fifty-six guests.

Friends of the Y.M.C.A. pray that the new building may be worthy of the special place the Jerusalem Y must have in the world movement. The City must ever hold the love and affection of the Christian world and any organization which bears the name must be worthy of the Master. The Y.M.C.A. is a center in Jerusalem where brotherhood is lived out as young people mingle in happy fellowship, and a place where Christianity is weighed in the balance set in the heartland of the Christian world. To it the poor and needy come for help beyond the usual function of a Y, and to the world traveller it is a spiritual home in the Holy Land. And so the new building has been designed to achieve beauty and serenity, with facilities adequate for its task, and to stand in Jerusalem as a symbol of the world service of the Y.M.C.A..

A New Building for a New Era



Facilities of the new Y.M.C.A. Building

BASEMENT

1. Swimming Pool
2. Bowling Alleys
- ✓ 3. Arts & Crafts for Boys
4. Changing Rooms:
- ✓ (a) Boys (b) Adults (c) Mens club.
5. Boiler room.

GROUND FLOOR

1. Library
2. Squash Court
3. Gymnasium
4. Weight-Lifting Room
- ✗ 5. Juniors' Club Games Room
6. Soda Fountain
7. Restaurant
8. Kitchen
9. Lounges

FIRST FLOOR

1. Auditorium
2. Four class Rooms
3. Meditation Room

SECOND FLOOR

1. 11 Double rooms x 2 = 22
2. 6 Single rooms = 6

THIRD FLOOR

1. 11 Double rooms x 2 = 22
2. 6 Single rooms = 6
- 34 rooms total beds = 56

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JERUSALEM - JORDAN

This pamphlet has told the first part of the Story of a Tent. The second chapter is for the future, much of which depends on our friends. May we invite you to have a part in the development of this program.

Contributions toward the new building or any aspect of the work may be sent to

Mr. Labib Nasir,

General Secretary
Young Mens Christian Association
P. O. B. 23, Jerusalem, JORDAN.

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THE Y. W. C. A. OF JORDAN

AND

WORLD Y. W. C. A. WORK WITH ARAB REFUGEES.

REPORT FOR THE YEAR NOV: 1954 TO OCT: 1955.

Another year has gone by and still the needs of the Arab Refugees are as great as ever. The United Nations has agreed to care for them for another five years, but this very fact bringing with it a sense of greater permanence is depressing. Better and more schools have been built, though in the Aqabat Jaber Camp the extra accommodation is for boys and the capacity for girls is the same as in October 1954 when it was increased. It will be seen therefore that the World YWCA School (or Centre as it should now be called for it is so much more than a school) is serving a very real need for women and girls in the largest camp in Jordan.

The addition of a kitchen and storeroom built very largely with the first profits of the small doll industry, have been invaluable for the cooking classes and for the safe keeping of the food for these, clothing when available, and other stores.

Anniversary celebrations were held early in December, when eleven girls received certificates for dress making having successfully passed an examination. An entertainment was given by the girls to a large audience, which included songs, recitations and a short drill display.



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Doll Making

One of the older girls has proved herself so useful she has now been taken on the staff to help with teaching literacy and other simple subjects to the younger girls, for which she receives a monthly salary. It is most interesting to note how the girls, who have been attending regularly now for two years have developed in every way. They are more alert mentally, self respecting, reliant and helpful.

A kind gift from the American Friends of the Middle East made it possible to build a poultry house and start a poultry project with hens from the Arab Development Society. The girls are taught the correct feeding and how to keep the birds healthy and the house and run clean and fresh. The eggs, which are in great demand, are all stamped with the name of the centre. A second house for the rearing of baby chicks is now being built, also from the profits of the doll industry.

This little industry has succeeded beyond all expectations. During the summer when the UNRWA school was closed and about sixty extra girls were taken into the centre for dress making cooking and doll making, there were one hundred and seventy girls on the register and the huts were very overcrowded. There were so many orders for the little models in national costume that seventy girls received payment for work done in addition to the two staff members employed for this. One of the best girl workers now receives a monthly salary instead of being paid by piece work. In the last six months gross takings have been Jordan Dinars 250. As orders come from overseas payments are often slow in coming after the dolls have been dispatched, so this figure is only approximate and does not include outstanding amounts due. When all expenses, salaries and wages have been paid all profits are put back into the centre in improvements of some kind.

The women's group has grown so large it is impossible to meet all together. There are now one hundred and twenty members and they meet twice a week in two groups. In order to encourage the mothers to keep their children clean and healthy a Baby Show was held in the early summer with three classes, under three years, two years and one year. Prizes were given in each class and every child entered received a suitable garment. The UNRWA camp Health Education Officer and nurse come from time to time to give talks in addition to those given regularly whilst the mothers knit sew or spin. A literacy class is also held for those who wish to learn to read and write.

Personal help is given whenever possible. Halimeh, aged seven years, had a very badly infected toe during the winter and it was thought she would have to lose her big toe, but treatment in hospital saved it. Other girls also had sore toes all from running about barefoot, so it was felt something must be done to provide footwear. A special fund was raised and every girl was supplied with a pair of sandals made by a shoemaker in the camp. It is hoped to renew these at the beginning of this winter. Arifeh had an eye removed last year. She still has a little sight in the other, but it was realised that she could never join in the



Elia Photo-Service Jerusalem Some of the Women's Group

classes with the others so a place was found for her in a Home for Blind Girls in Jerusalem. As she is nine years old and rather odd to settle down to such a very different life it took time, but she is now a happy, useful inmate of the home learning braille and handwork. Aziza was the innocent victim of a family tragedy. Her mother and elder sister were both members of the women's group and just ordinary normal people and then one day the girl aged only sixteen was found hung in a shed in the little compound. Rumour said the mother had murdered her daughter and both parents were taken away by the police. Aziza was left in such tragic circumstances to care for her four brothers and baby sister. Through the kindness of the Bishop help was secured from a special fund and extra nourishment supplied and the family was visited and encouraged until the parents were released some weeks later.

It would be impossible to carry on the centre so successfully without the continued devotion and loyalty of Miss Mary Hishmeih and the other members of the staff, who work regularly and faithfully never complaining of the great heat in summer or of extra work when necessary. Their reward is the love and happiness of the girls and the undoubted success of their work.

Thanks are due again to many friends for interest and help. To the World YWCA and National Associations helping through the Geneva Office both financially and with gifts in kind, to the UNRWA for food for cooking classes and other help especially with transport, to the YMCA for frequent assistance, to the A.F.M.E. for the Poultry House and the Arab Development Society for advice and help with the poultry project, to the Mennonite Central Committee for materials for dressmaking and the women's group, to the N.E.C.C. for a grant towards salaries and clothing, to the I.W.F. for gifts of food and to other groups and individuals for gifts both large and small which not only make the existing work possible but also encourage new enterprises which are already being planned.

The Y.W.C.A. of Jordan is increasingly taking over responsibility for the Refugee work done by the World YWCA in the area. A most useful link between the two was established when a Leadership Training Course was held in the Centre in the camp last December. Those attending were mostly YWCA members from Amman, Jerusalem and Jericho, by occupation Teachers, Welfare Workers, Secretaries etc. Sleeping accommodation was provided in Jericho town and transport arranged to and from the camp. All meals for about forty people were cooked by the cooking class under the direction of one of the centre staff. A Netball match was played between YWCA members and refugee girls as well as friendly mixed games. This course was of great value and will be repeated this year. The girls in the camp benefitted in every way from the friendly contact with the outside world.

A new centre has been opened at Madaba and a school group in Amman so that there are now five centres and two school groups in Jordan with a total membership of about five hundred. In Amman Home Economics Classes have been started for refugee and other needy girls in addition to the dressmaking and literacy classes which are continued. Meetings for the mothers of the girls are also arranged. A Federation of Women's Organisations which was initiated by the YWCA during the year is now working well. Efforts are being made to co-ordinate the social work done and to prevent overlapping. Help is to be given to the Refugee Camps and the YWCA has undertaken to give talks on Public Health. The Hostel, which has only accommodation for nine residents is full and girls working in Amman are frequently unable to find beds. There is no other similar hostel so the need for larger premises is very urgent. A building fund has been started which has already reached over JD. 800.

With great faith and courage the Jericho Centre has rented a much larger house and hope to encourage visitors both to stay for short or long periods, and also to make use of the Tea Garden which is to be opened. The little school for needy girls still continues to serve a useful purpose. Jerusalem Hostel is being increasingly used by tourists. Missionaries, teachers, students and others are glad to find cheap homely accommodation instead of staying at the expensive hotels.

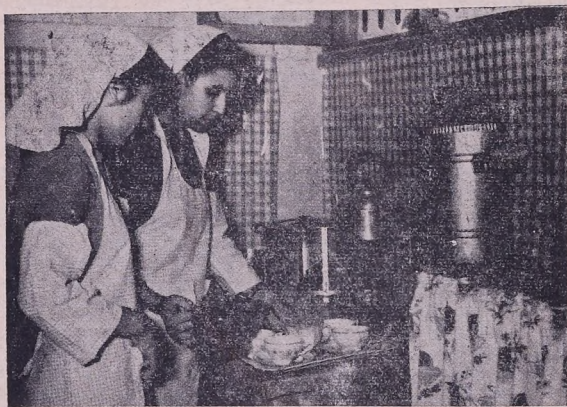
As in Amman the work is seriously handicapped by the small premises and there is urgent need to move to a more adequate house. Club Activities are carried on in all centres.

Owing to the generosity of other YWCA National Associations it has now been made possible through the Mutual Service Committee of the World YWCA. to have a paid National General Secretary working full time for the YWCA of Jordan and taking over gradually the responsibility for the Refugee Work. Miss Julia Awad formerly General Secretary in Amman and a YWCA worker of many years experience, has been appointed to this post.

Two delegates from Jordan went to the World YWCA Council meeting held in London in this centennial year of the YWCA, during which the Association was accepted into full affiliation with the World YWCA. This experience of meeting with three hundred women from nearly sixty different countries was inspiring and enriching and they should have much to contribute to their own association. Although their fares were found in other ways the local centres gave JD 60. for their council expenses so these delegates could truly feel they were sent by their fellow members. With this happy spirit of loyal co-operation the YWCA of Jordan looks forward confidently to the future.

HILDA G. POLE

Jerusalem, Nov. 1955



London Studio Amman

Home Economic's Class, Amman