

The Memoirs of Ardeshir Zahedi

My Contacts with American Political Figures



Ardeshir Zahedi with Nelson Rockefeller and his wife

My acquaintance with Nelson Rockefeller started in 1958, when at the invitation of David Rockefeller, the chairman and chief executive of Chase Manhattan bank, and as part of the IEBC programs I visited the branches of that bank in New York, Chicago, and Puerto Rico.

Those friendly relations were strengthened when I, together with my wife Princess Shahnaz and our daughter Mahnaz, went to America and lived there between 1959 and 1961. During the period when Nelson Rockefeller served as vice president to President Gerald Ford, our friendship was further strengthened. When Nelson

Rockefeller died, I was with the Shah. I asked him to allow me to attend the funeral accompanied by His Royal Highness the Crown Prince Reza. Although I had been duly invited to the funeral, which was also attended by the then President Carter, due to a delay in my flight I did not arrive in New York in time to attend the funeral and to express the Shah's condolences to the Rockefeller family.

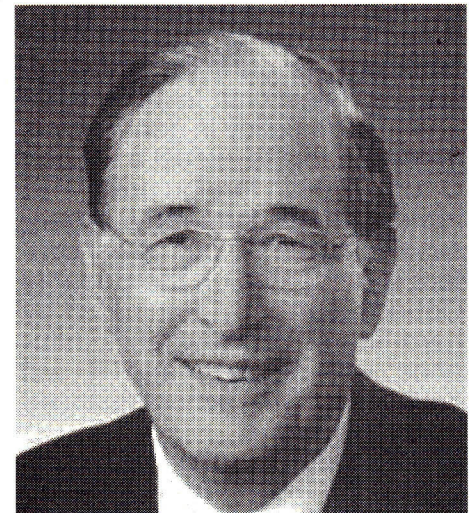
During President Gerald Ford administration, when the Shah paid an official visit to the United States, Nelson Rockefeller arranged a sumptuous reception in his honor on his own private estate, from where the Shah flew

straight to Europe. Nelson Rockefeller also took part in the ceremonies in the Shah's honor at the Kennedy Center, followed by a reception at the Iranian Embassy in Washington.

Those friendly relations, which were partly due to the efforts of an honorable man, former Senator Claiborne Pell, helped to cement close relations between the Shah and Nelson Rockefeller, and those relations continued until after the Iranian revolution.

I should add that when the Shah was looking for a place to live aboard after the Iranian revolution, Nelson and David Rockefeller, as well as Henry Kissinger, made great efforts to find a suitable place for the residence of the royal family. When the Shah was in Aswan in Egypt, David Rockefeller got in touch with me from Greece and asked to visit him. We arranged for that meeting to take place, and it had a very positive effect on the morale of my dear monarch.

Senator Jay Rockefeller, a great

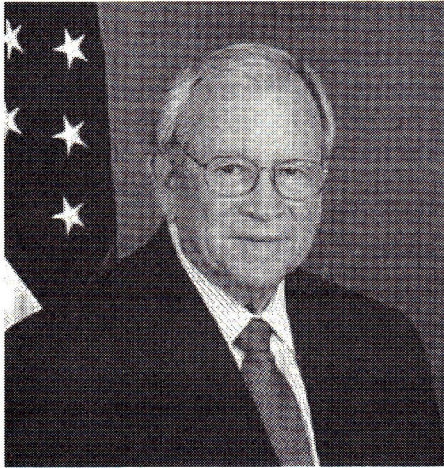


person and member of the Rockefeller family, is a kind and faithful friend. During his inauguration ceremony as the governor of West Virginia, which took place during the Carter administration, I was the only foreign ambassador invited. I flew to the ceremony in a small aircraft and was warmly received by him and by Nelson

Rockefeller and Senator Percy. Senator Percy asked me to go back to Washington in Mr. Rockefeller's private plane, and as the Secretary of State Cyrus Vance was also with us on that flight from Virginia to Washington, it provided an opportunity for us to talk and to become closer.

My personal friendship with the members of the Rockefeller family still continues.

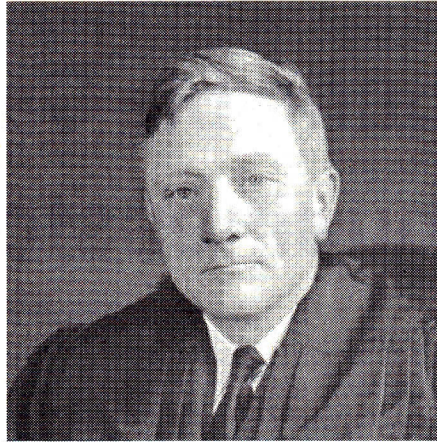
Senator Howard Baker was an



influential Republican senator, and his first wife Joy was the daughter of a former Senate minority leader, Everett Dirksen. When Princess Fatemeh, the Shah's sister, was studying in Washington, D.C., she was a fellow student and friend of Mrs. Baker and the sisters of General Dr. Moarefi. General Moarefi was active in the purchase of weapons from the United States, especially under President Carter.

During President Reagan's administration, Howard Baker served as the White House chief of staff. He has continued his friendship and correspondence with me right to the present time.

During President Kennedy's Presidency, **Chief Justice William Orville Douglas** was an associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. He was a very



kind man and an Iranophile who had a great deal of respect and affection for the Shah. In the 1950s, he traveled to Iran, accompanied by one of the Kennedy brothers, and visited different parts of the country, including the areas inhabited by the members of the Qashqai tribe that had adopted anti-Shah policies.

The Qashqai brothers, who unfortunately were the supreme examples of the saying "being a pen in the enemy's hand," filled the minds of the visitors with many mistaken and hostile ideas, so much so that when the American visitors returned home they did not have a good impression of the Shah and the Iranian government. Chief Justice Douglas even published a book, called **Strange Lands, Friendly people**, which was very critical of Iran.

When I went to the United States on my first mission as ambassador, in various meetings and discussions with the Americans I persuaded them that what they had been told about Iran had not been correct and had been the views of some people who were hostile to the government. As the result of those discussions, not only did Chief Justice Douglas change his mind about Iran, but we also managed to establish close relations with each other.

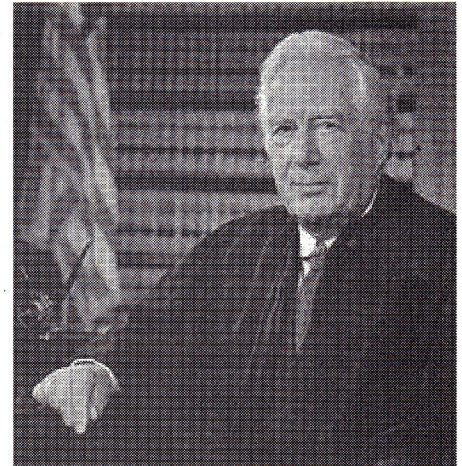
At that time, on the initiative of Professor Arthur Upham Pope, the famous American archaeologist

and historian of Iranian art, and with the help and efforts of the Iranian Embassy in Washington, a conference was organized with the participation of prominent Iranian and American scientific and cultural figures. President Kennedy sent a message to that conference that was to be read out by Chief Justice Douglas. He went to the podium but instead of reading the message said, "As this message is really addressed to the Iranian ambassador, I ask him to come and read it himself."

As the result of that kind act by that famous man, our relations grew closer. Those close relations continued even after Princess Shahnaz and I left Washington.

Another prominent American who had close and warm relations with me was the distinguished judge,

Chief Justice Warren E. Burger.



That eminent man and his wife, Mrs. Elvera Burger, were responsible for my meeting with William P. Rogers, the U.S. attorney general, in 1959 during the Eisenhower administration. My friendship with Chief Justice Warren Burger was strengthened during my two terms as ambassador to Washington and continued till after the Iranian revolution.