

## Political science professor came to the United States to be taught and wound up standing before a classroom for nearly 30 years

*From Bethlehem to Elon College: one professor's story of becoming a US citizen*

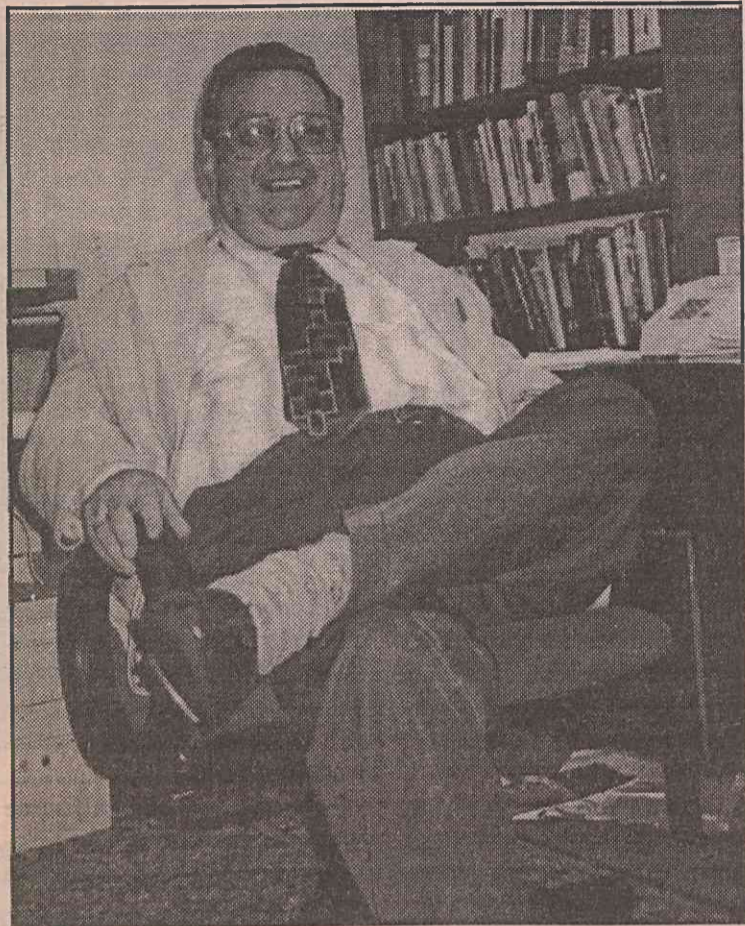


photo by Tammy Tripp

**From One Country To Another**  
After almost 30 years of teaching, Dr. Rudy ZarZar has made a place for himself at Elon College.

### Tammy Tripp *Focus Editor*

Had life taken Political Science professor Rudy ZarZar in a different direction, he might have been practicing medicine somewhere in Bethlehem, Israel today. But that narrow edge that fate twists on, forced ZarZar to stay in the United States and to major in political science instead of going Pre-med.

ZarZar is a United States citizen now, but once upon a country, his citizenship was of a place known primarily for its religious history. Life is a bit different for the Elon professor now, but not as different as one might think.

In 1957, a young ZarZar came to the US to further his education. The road to his Ph.D. led to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. A desire to help others fueled his medical ambitions, but instead he decided to major in political science in the hopes of becoming a diplomat.

"Finally, the day of decision came and I had to decide what to do next," he said. "I wanted to go back to Bethlehem."

But political tension in the Middle East – Bethlehem was then on the front lines of the Arabic-

Israeli wars – would not allow such a decision and he remained in America to get his Ph.D. – and also to teach.

The usually lengthy application process of becoming a US citizen was relatively painless, unlike many immigration stories. He was already teaching at Elon by this point, which made the process easier.

"Immigration asked me to submit a paper from Elon College saying I was expected to teach here indefinitely," he said. "Six weeks later, I got the application approved. It was as painless as jumping rope."

Three years later, in the 1970s, he took the oath of citizenship. He then began what would be a long career as a professor. Part of the reason ZarZar has stayed in the US is because of the freedom a democratic society allows in the classroom. Back home, his freedom as a professor would have been limited and he would not have been able to teach what he wanted.

"The life as a professor of political science is precarious," he said.

Life as a political science professor in his homeland would have been that much more precarious and a far cry from the classrooms in

the US. There was no guarantee that a university would have been open because at that time his home in West Bank was a virtual battleground between terrorists and the Israeli army.

ZarZar says he has adjusted well to life in a democratic culture. Before he stood before young impressionable minds and taught them, he too was a young impressionable mind who absorbed American culture through movies.

"One of the things people often ask is if my coming here was a cultural shock, but the answer is no," he said. "People here often expect people in the Middle East to be running after camels."

That was not the case for ZarZar, however. Since then, he has grown continuously more adapted to American culture. This is not to say he never questions his decisions. Like most people, he would have liked to go back to his homeland to make a contribution. And he often misses home.

He is not discontent with life as an American citizen, though.

The thing that impresses me the most about America is its free-spirit," he said. "Freedom is essential for self realization, as Gandhi said."

## America: A country founded by immigrants, closed to immigrants

We are often times questioned about our heritage where we came from, who our ancestors were. Most of us are proud to claim that we come from various foreign cultures.

Most would be quick to assume that because I was born in America, I am not an immigrant. I, for one, am of Dutch heritage. My great-grandfather came over from the Netherlands in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Theoretically I could be living in the Netherlands today. On my mother's side, I have German and English in me, more signs of being an immigrant.

You can rightfully assume that my great-grandfather is by definition an immigrant. Therefore if you are strict in your thoughts of immigration, you could quickly shoot to the point that I am also an immigrant, and be correct in doing so.

The fact of the matter is that we are all immigrants, unless of course we are not proud of our culture. Since many of us use culture as an excuse for past events, I guess it

would be safe to say that most of us would be proud to be called immigrants.

Unfortunately, America shuns modern immigrants. When we hear the word immigrant, most of us are quick to stereotype the term and point at Hispanics. The simple fact is that Hispanics have done a great deal of good for our country in the past 20 years. Most immigrants from south of the border are honest hard working citizens of our country. Unfortunately, many of the honest had to work hard to even get a foot across our border.

Sadly, the bad overshadows the good when it comes to immigration. There are many people who come to the United States for the free ride that we unconstitutionally provide. Those of us who are against open borders say that they feel that too many diseases (i.e. AIDS) would be

let into our country. They feel that the United States would be giving too much away.



land of handouts. We can not give immigrants welfare as soon as they cross the border. This just breeds more "bad" immigration and that is what brings disease and other negatives into our country. We can not give immigrants, or anyone for that matter, free education.

Free education, or education

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period, is not available in many countries. When a potential immigrant sees they can come to America and live off the hard workers, (which includes settled Americans and the honest immigrants), they will come carefree of the diseases and other problems they bring.

So yes, we must have an open door policy in America. Throw out the border patrol, but at the same

time, eliminate government welfare, government schooling and every other free ride we provide. Return the system of "giving" back to the charities, back to the churches. Return the schools back to the parents and to the private sector, which provided world class education many years before government involvement.

Doing this eliminates the need for closing our borders. It returns us to our founding principles, which were provided by immigrants. Those principles are that we are the sole determinants of where our lives and our money go.

#### *Top Ten Countries from which the U.S. received legal immigrants*

*Mexico, mainland China, the Philippines, Vietnam, the former Soviet Union, the Dominican Republic, India, Poland, El Salvador, and the United Kingdom*

There is a simple solution to all of the problems that come with immigration. The solution is to return to the system that our founding fathers envisioned. We are a land of opportunity, but we can not be a