

Is That So?

By EUGENE BURNS
Ranger-Naturalist

Damascus — Damascus is said to be the oldest continuously inhabited city in the world, and it is definitely one of the most beautiful.

Its beauty is due as much to its surroundings as to its ancient buildings and its more than 200 mosques. It stands on the northern edge of a fertile plain, close to the foot of the Anti-Lebanon range.



Small, cold rivers run through and by it to fan out over the plain that is dotted with scores of villages.

Though the entire area, including the city, is like an immense garden and orchard, densely populated — Damascus itself has over 300,000 people — I had a clear reminder of how close this seat of civilization is to the wild.

We were driving back to the city when we stopped to admire a late sunset view from a little knoll on the plain's edge. We had been there maybe five minutes when the guide drew my attention to a dog standing on a nearby hillock. He was looking down the slope, ears pricked up and switching his bushy tail.

"Jackal," the guide said, and it was. We got a good look at another a little later in the lights of the car and we also heard their coyote-like cry which few domestic dogs can duplicate. They have a dark, yellowish-gray coat, stand maybe 15 inches at the shoulder and measure about two feet from nose tip to base of the tail.

Common in Area

As for our luck in seeing one, they are so common in the Damascus area it would have been strange if we hadn't.

Though great carrion eaters, they vary their diet more readily than the hyena. They hunt singly or in packs. Any game, from a mouse to sheep will do, but they have a sweet tooth for fruit of almost any kind, which rather takes the pressure off stock raisers.

In fact, it may well be that the fox of the story of the fox and the grapes was actually a jackal instead.

They are easily tamed, and since they interbreed readily with domesticated dogs, and are still to be found in southeastern Europe, it is highly likely that many of the dogs we have in the states have a jackal or two somewhere in their family trees.

(Released by McClure Newspaper Syndicate)

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Navy Career Leads To Life as Painter

New London, Conn.—(UPI) Kenton R. Pope joined the Navy to see the world and wound up painting it.

During his 17 years of service, Pope, 36, has been painting, sketching and sculpturing. He has done 350 paintings of submarines, netting as high as \$150 for a single picture.

Pope, chief engineman on the submarine Diablo, didn't even let a war stop his artistic career. He kept at it while on patrol against the Japanese.

The Navy is so impressed with his work that it has commissioned him to do several paintings for the U.S. Submarine Base here.

When he retires to civilian life, Pope, a native of Kansas City, Mo., plans to devote full time to fine arts.

"During my time in the Navy I have gained unlimited material and sketches for future mural work," he said.

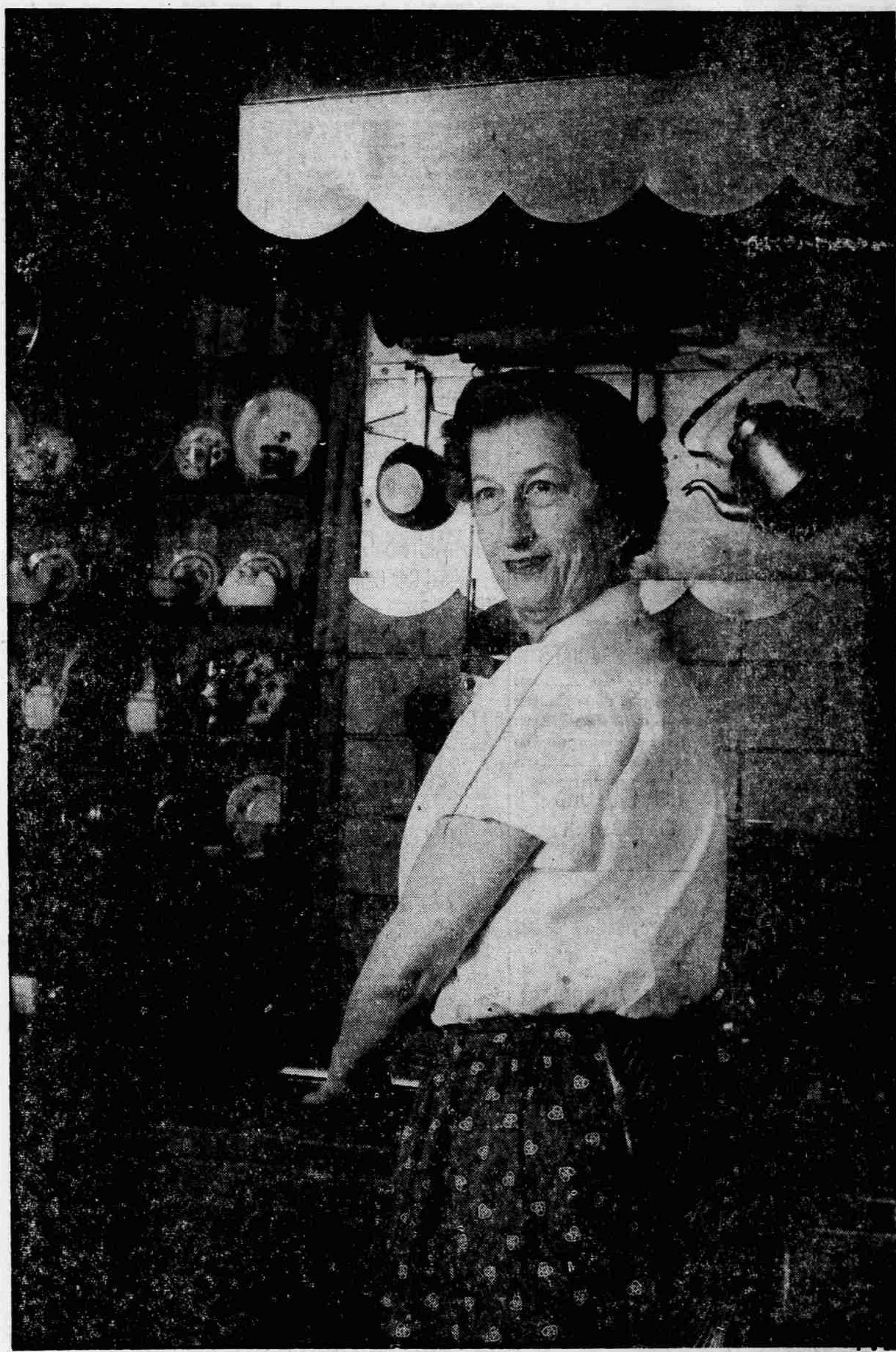
FIRE DRILL

Gorham, Me.—(UPI)—Fire Chief Wiley P. Chandler dropped his lawnmower and ran next door to fight a \$2,500 fire at the home of Leon Carpenter—also a fireman.

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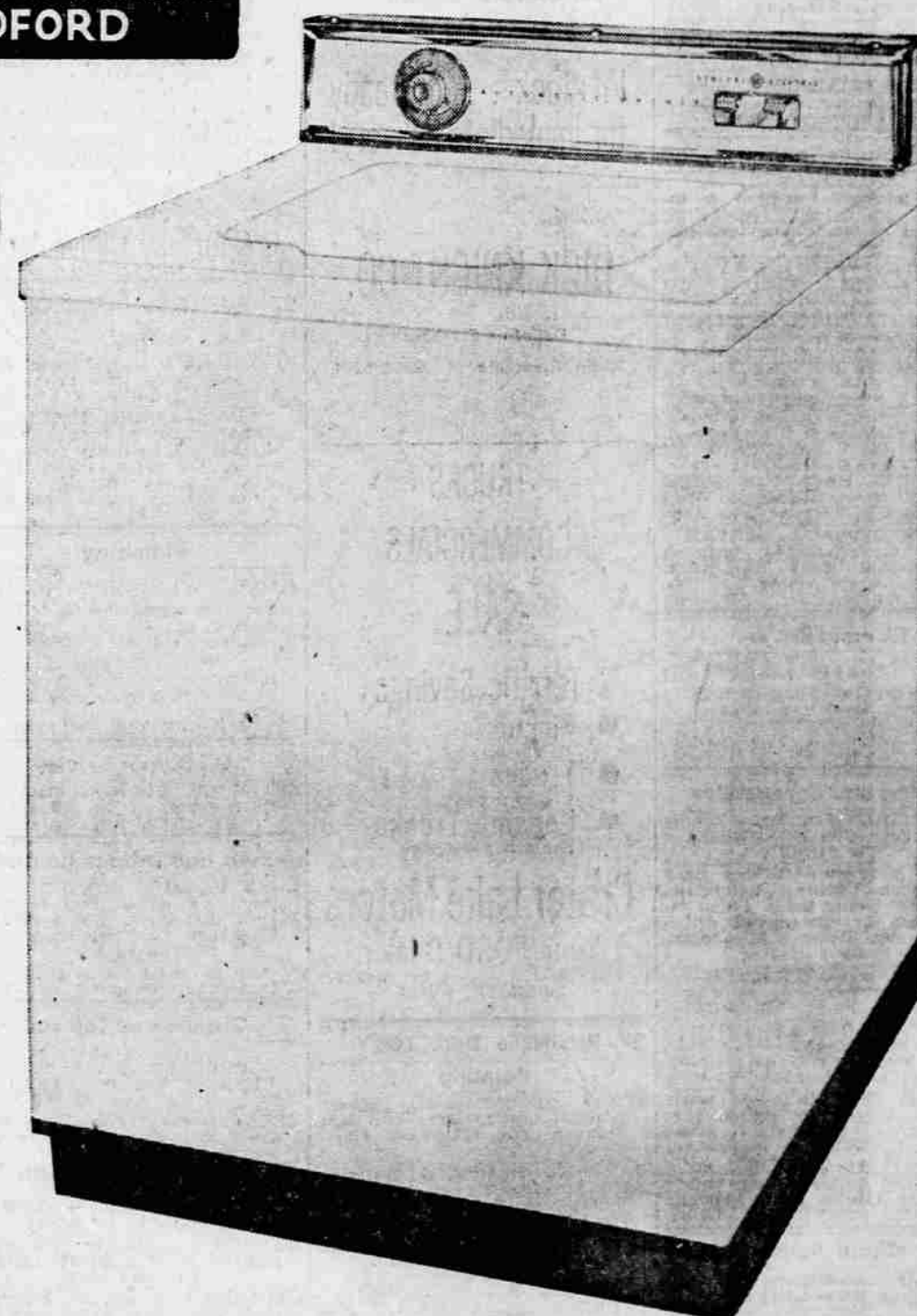
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