

Except when his fine-drawn temper runs away with him, General Burns is a shy and reticent man, known in the Army as a gifted story-teller, an exceptional pianist, and a man of many and varied interests with an encyclopedic mind.

Music and gardening are his hobbies. He has written some poetry and prose good enough to be published. He learned French as a boy and speaks it with the same fluency as English. He learned to speak German adequately while studying aerial map-making in Germany. His contribution to this phase of military science won him the Order of the British Empire in 1935. He won the Military Cross in World War I.

His has been described as one of the world's most thankless tasks. Supervising the precarious armistice he has no military force at his disposal. Until recently he had won praise from Arabs and Israelis alike for his good counsel, fairness and impartiality, mixed with a sense of humor and friendliness.

From: CANDID CANADIAN
New York Times, - July 31, 1956.

The Chief of the U.N. Commission in Palestine is not an easy man to know. Hundreds of Canadians have met him either in the army or during the postwar period of readjustment. Few of them could honestly say they know him. Quiet, precise and unsmiling, General Burns has never appeared concerned with making a quick or flattering impression. The effect of his personality is like that of gamma rays - unseen, unfelt but potent.

He is no waster of words, which he regards highly and uses well. He possesses an uncanny knack for revealing questions and a gift for direct answer. An Army colleague once described him as "the brain that marches like a soldier," and even in civilian life that has proved to be so.

General Burns has deep set, probing eyes and a firm jaw line. He wears a trim moustache. Together with his quiet capable manner, these make him a formidable man, in or out of uniform.

From: ISRAEL TRUCE FATE RESTS ON CANADIAN
By - Peter Dempson,
Toronto Telegram, - December 2, 1954.

The U.N. Truce Supervisory building is as calm a place as a Canadian country mansion. General Burns works in his shirt sleeves at a large desk in a spacious office once owned by the British mandate government. One wall is covered with maps of Israel. Heavy lines mark the borders, and I got the impression immediately that some heavy lines have formed around General Burns' eyes from watching those borders.

In a slow, pleasant, unmilitary voice General Burns said, "My chief problem here is suspicion. Sometimes I am able to bring the Israelis and the Arabs to agree with me around a conference table. But then next day I read in the paper that the people I have spoken to say that the other side is not really willing to accept my proposals. I don't think that I am fighting a losing battle here. I think that eventually peace will come to this area. But it's going to take a long time and we must be patient. I think that both sides really want to make peace."