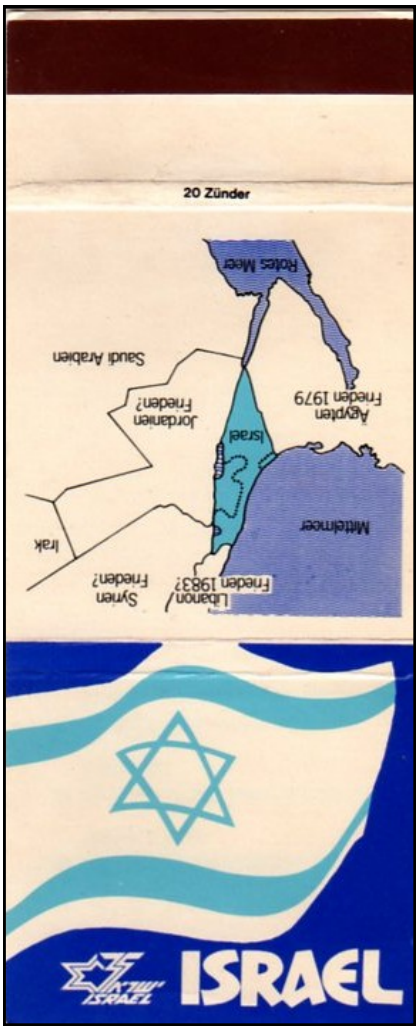
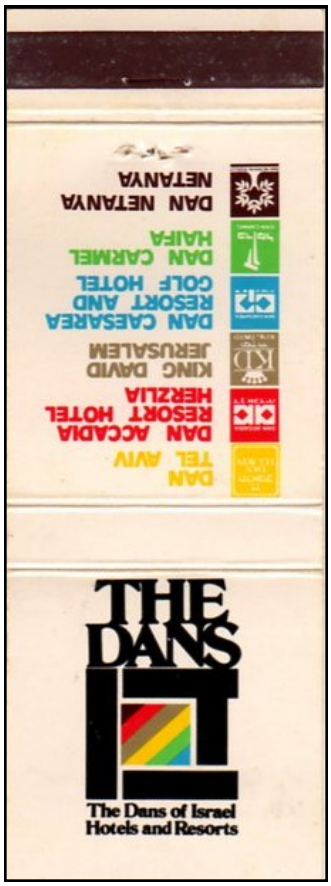
Israel: 50 Years Of Living On The Edge

[Reprinted from Jul/Aug Lone Star Bulletin, courtesy of...me!]

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the modern state of Israel—and a miraculous half century it's been: from a Third World protectorate to a modern nation, surrounded by hostile neighbors, two leaders assassinated, four wars, and a plethora of "minor" military actions. The miracle is that it's survived!

In the 1880s, Palestine was part of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottomans lost WW I, however, and Britain was given a League of Nations mandate to administer the area. In 1937, in the wake of violent Arab-Jewish conflicts, the Peel Commission recommended a partition of Palestine which would include a Jewish state, but this was never implemented. In 1947, the United Nations came to the same conclusion. When Israel was created in 1948, five Arab countries immediately attacked. Israel won, but there were more wars to come, plus the PLO and a number of other anti-Jewish groups. Israel still is contending with it all today.

Adding to the miracle are the facts that this is a tiny country (290 miles long and 85 miles wide at its widest point) and 45% of that is desert, with another 16% mountains. The population is only 5.94 million (we have ***cities*** bigger than that!). In spite of it all, much of the country has been turned into an oasis; it's attracted brainpower from all over the world; and it's managed to absorb over 2 million immigrants. I was there in 1972 was very impressed; now it's 26 years later.

Over 2 million tourists visit Israel each year now—which is how the rest of us manage to end up with Israeli covers—I have to be honest, though, I'm not going to be one of them any time soon...just too much violence in the area. Imagine living there...***Life on the Edge!***