



Uganda Jubilee – a participant's account

WALKING THROUGH THE acacia grove with the scent of wild jasmine touching the senses on the slight breeze at Mboro National Park at 7.30 in the morning, I had space to think of the previous week at the Jubilee Celebrations in Kampala and elsewhere. It had certainly been a moving experience. I hadn't been prepared for the wealth of emotions that had flooded upon me. The children kept on asking what was wrong as they saw the tears flowing freely down my cheeks, and all I could limply say was, "It's very moving." The audacity of it all is probably the most astonishing thing.

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Friends from the UK contingent outside the House of Worship in Kampala

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In Kampala, the electricity goes off at random moments and everywhere that has them switches to generators – of course most places don't have generators. The telephone system doesn't work so you can't just call someone up to help – often you have to go in the car to the relevant office. And that's an adventure in itself. The roads, wow, talk about rally driving in a capital city. Yet the National Spiritual Assembly of Uganda had miraculously managed to organise a five day set of three conferences, hundreds of kilometres apart with 500 visitors for whom they found accommodation, entertainment and provided meals.

The first five pioneers from the UK and Iran had audaciously and sacrificially given up their future plans and present prosperity and, following the request and call of Shoghi Effendi, had travelled to Cairo not even knowing the country of their destination and faithfully awaiting the decision of the UK Africa Committee. Finally they heard it was to be Uganda, so not knowing anything about the country,

but with instant, complete and exact obedience they flew to Kenya, bought a car and drove to the border. There they had a feast with the only Bahá'í in Kenya and on August



Lois and Philip Hainsworth with Ali and Violette Nakhjavani

2 entered Uganda. Five adults and one three year old girl – intrepid souls totally in love with the Faith. With no jobs awaiting, no homes awaiting, no friends awaiting, they stopped on the hill on the road from Jinga and looked at Kampala and said, “This is our home.”

The visitors at the conference came from all over the world: Norway to Namibia, Iceland to Iran, Australia to

America and most of the countries in Africa. So I sat in the conference hall and listened to the names of the countries being called out on the first day and thought of how this had all come about – 105,000 Bahá'ís later, a National Spiritual Assembly with five Bahá'í schools and various socio-economic projects, an active Office of External Affairs, an Advancement of Women Committee, and realised that the audacity and faith of those first six had been the parents of all this.

Ali Nakhjavani spoke right at the beginning of the conference of the love of the Universal House of Justice and the need to really involve youth and women. Then there followed a host of speakers sharing their memories and histories; Philip Hainsworth, Violette Nakhjavani talking about Amatu'l-Bahá; Rá'hAyyih Khánum and her love of Africa and her tours, Lois Hainsworth on the building of the Temple, Edith Senoga of how she became a Bahá'í through the love of Violette, and many, many others. One moving section led to another. In between was music and drumming and more music. Messages and gifts were presented by many National Spiritual Assemblies including the UK where Kishan Manocha, on behalf of our National Spiritual Assembly presented a copy of “Unfolding Destiny”, (edited by Philip Hainsworth) and their message which was printed in the October issue of the Journal.

Following the main conference, there was a morning conference on the advancement of women where the

Minister for Gender Studies spoke with great affection about the Faith, and then the masses converged at the Temple site via numerous minibuses up that impossible Temple road. Well I thought it was difficult, but then that might have something to do with the hire car we had which didn't seem to recognise first or second gear. The road had been improved

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Mr Nakhjavani & Uganda's Minister of Health at the celebration at the House of Worship in Kampala

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Dance Group at the Louis Gregory Bahá'í School, Tilling (The school is in the village of Tilling, the province of Tesso, the birthplace of Hand of the Cause Enoch Olinga)

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because the President was due to attend the ceremony so the pot holes and gullies were considerably reduced.

That Temple, will always be the most beautiful to me – no doubt because my infancy was spent in its surroundings. But it is a graceful building whose dignity and grace is

impossible to understand from photos. The nine tones of green tile of the dome fuse Seurat-style into the glowing green of the savannah and inside the sun pours through the green, blue and yellow stained glass windows to cast gentle light upon the long wooden benches. The ceremony with the Bahá'í choir was electric with excitement and tension as well as a devotional attitude. Afterwards the throngs moved outside joined by those who had been sitting outside the Temple and the many visitors who had come to watch. Under the sun, the trees or the awnings, everyone sat to listen to the various speeches and dances performed by dignitaries and the University Drama group respectively. Guest of Honour was the representative of the President, the Ugandan Minister for Health who read the message from the President. Truly awe inspiring were the comments of these dignitaries who praised the Faith and praised the Bahá'ís in the most uplifting tones. They asked the Bahá'ís to spread their Faith throughout Uganda, saying that we all know that spirituality is the corner stone of human society, that the country needed the Faith and its tenets of practical spirituality spread throughout its peoples.

The grounds of the Temple, a favourite picnic spot for anyone visiting Kampala, are laid out in avenues with the Temple at the centre. Each avenue has plants, trees and shrubs with the same colour flowers. The avenue which goes from the door facing the Qiblah, has all white flowers and walking down that avenue you look over the city of Kampala and its original seven hills. That day, instead of the usual tranquillity, those grounds were flooded with people, all of whom enjoyed the dancing and music and heard those speeches proclaiming the greatness and necessity of this Faith.

For me the events in Uganda were a revisit to the land of my birth and the colours, sights and smells of my early years, but it was also a reawakening of that knowledge that just as the first souls in Uganda followed the guidance and requests of Shoghi Effendi and the institutions with love and devotion – this was rewarded with an unknown future, still glorious fifty years on. So too, we all have the same opportunities. If we, individually, were to follow the guidance and requests of the House of Justice and its agencies with the same fervour and sincerity as those early pioneers, what future could there be here, in the UK, fifty years hence?

Zarin Hainsworth-Fadaie

