



# THE BAHÁ'Í WORLD

AN INTERNATIONAL RECORD

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# IN MEMORIAM

## JOHN FERRABY

1914–1973

John Ferraby was born in Southsea, England, on 9 January 1914 and grew up there. He was educated at Malvern and at King's College, Cambridge, to which he won a major scholarship.

It was in 1941 that he was told about the Faith by a non-Bahá'í. Wanting to know more, he found Dr. Esslemont's book in a public library. He was by then living in London, so he started to look for the Bahá'ís there, but he had difficulty in finding them because during the blitz the Bahá'í Centre was empty most of the time. However, finally he found someone and after a couple of visits he wanted to be accepted as a member of the community. Almost immediately he began to work for the Faith, becoming in less than a year a member of the London Spiritual Assembly and of the National Spiritual Assembly. In 1943 he married a fellow member of the National Assembly, Dorothy Cansdale.

In 1946 he became secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly, working at first in his spare time and from 1950 as full-time secretary. This work he continued, living in the National *Ḥazíratu'l-Quds* in London from December 1954, until he went to serve in the Holy Land at the end of 1959. During a good deal of the time he was also manager of the British Bahá'í Publishing Trust, as well as being an active teacher and committee member. From 1951 to 1956 he was busily involved in the work of the Africa Committee and during the opening of the various territories in Africa, at that time mostly colonies or protectorates, he attended to most of the government relationship, acting in his capacity of national secretary. He attended the first Intercontinental Conference, held in Kampala, Uganda, in 1953, as well as the successive Intercontinental Conferences which were held in Europe.

In January 1955, he made the pilgrimage to the Holy Land and was in the presence of the



*John Ferraby*

Guardian, which deepened his already great devotion to Shoghi Effendi. This of course made a tremendous impression on him and it was in consequence of advice from Shoghi Effendi to write for the Faith that he produced his book *All Things Made New*. He seemed to have received some special stimulation and wrote at fever heat in every moment of his spare time until it was completed, as if he had been inspired and could not stop. The book has been widely used, running to one edition in the British Isles and three in the United States.

In 1957, in the last group of Hands of the Cause appointed by the Guardian, John Ferraby was included, and consequently he carried a big share of the work and responsibility for the arrangements when Shoghi Effendi died and was buried in London. After that he took part in the first sorrowful gathering of the Hands of the Cause in Haifa and stayed on there for over three months to help. In December 1959, John

went to live in Haifa as one of the Hands of the Cause resident in the Holy Land and remained there until Riḍván 1963. After that he returned to England and lived in Cambridge for the last ten years of his life, working for the first few years as one of the Hands of the Cause in the continent of Europe, dealing with their secretariat and travelling a good deal. Later it became no longer possible for him to serve in this way.

John's whole life as a Bahá'í was one of activity and intense devotion. From the moment of his declaration the Faith came absolutely first with him and nothing else mattered, and this was true until the end of his life, whatever his circumstances and condition.

DOROTHY FERRABY

### VIOLET MCKINLEY

1882–1959

Knight of Bahá'u'lláh

Born on 25 May 1882 at Enfield, north of London, into the prosperous trading environment of the late Victorian epoch, Violet Jessie McKinley (*née* Watson) was blessed with two great spiritual advantages: an extremely delicate constitution, which kept the thought of the other world very close, and a persistently enquiring mind—she always wanted to know 'Why?' This condition was stimulated by an orthodox but solid education at home. Too frail to go to school, she had a Continental governess for eight years, with hard study of the nineteenth century romantics: Schiller, Goethe, Victor Hugo, Heine, Lamartine, etc. Her study was conducted all in German one week, all in French the other, and this, coupled with a deep religious sense that had been instilled in her by a very narrow but thoroughly sincere and right-minded nurse during her early childhood, developed a viewpoint totally unsympathetic to the shallow and materialistic background of her class and daily life.

Just before the first World War she left her family and went to live with friends where she could have freedom to act as she thought right. Always interested in ideas and intolerant of the narrow dogmatism offered to her as 'religion', she now studied what she could find of the other

beliefs of the world, coming into contact with the Theosophical Society which commended itself to her as being rather broadminded with regard to doctrine. It was while going to meetings at the Theosophical Lodge in Exeter, where she was living after the war, that she met Dr. McKinley, an Irish surgeon, who had abandoned operative medicine for osteopathy and dietetics. Like her, he was dissatisfied with orthodoxy, yet sure that there must be some master theme of life to put right the tortured world that had succeeded the armistice. They were married in 1922 and went to live in Oxford where their child, Hugh, was born two years later.

At a meeting of Theosophists in that city, soon after their arrival, they heard a Mr. H. Wooller give a talk on the Bahá'í Faith. They were deeply impressed and he lent them Dr. Esslemont's book *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*. They read this through together and on coming to the end they looked at each other and simultaneously said, 'This is it! This is what we've been looking for.' Although Bahá'ís were not formally registered in those days a number of people left the Theosophical Lodge at the same time as the McKinleys and thought of themselves as believing in the 'Bahá'í Movement'. (Subsequent enquiry has ascertained that Mr. Wooller himself did not become a declared believer in later years, though he spoke at Oxford as 'a member'.)

Almost immediately after hearing of and wholeheartedly accepting the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, Dr. McKinley was taken seriously ill. The family moved to Cornwall for his health but he passed away there in 1927, leaving Violet with a very young child to bring up and with extremely restricted means; naturally she had no commercial qualifications. She lived very quietly in that part of the world until 1932 when she and Hugh went for a holiday to London. While there she found out the address of the London Bahá'í Centre and wrote asking for an appointment to talk of the Faith with some of the friends. This was a wonderful meeting and she went back to Cornwall radiant and inspired, but still deprived of any but written contact with the believers. Lifelong friendships with Mrs. Isobel Slade, Miss Evelyn Baxter (who was to become the Knight of Bahá'u'lláh for the Channel Islands) and Mrs. Routh date from that meeting.



*Violet McKinley*

Three years later Violet moved to Devonshire for Hugh's education. In 1936 she met Mark Tobey at Dartington Hall, Bernard Leach, Arnold van Ogtrop and also Charles and Helen Bishop who were then visiting Torquay from the Bahá'í International Bureau in Geneva. When the first Local Spiritual Assembly was established in Torquay, a little later on, she was one of the members, although living several miles out in the country; civic limits were not applied in those days.

On leaving school Hugh went to work on the land, and from the beginning of the second World War was 'frozen' in this occupation until 1946 when a providential road accident enabled him to be classified as a disabled person for the purposes of the Act. Forthwith Violet and he moved into Torquay town to assist in the work of the Cause there. The next year, after consultation, they made a pioneer move to Cardiff, and assisted in the formation of the first Local Spiritual Assembly there. Further pioneer moves to London and to Brighton took place in 1950 and 1952.

As soon as Violet and Hugh read the communication from Shoghi Effendi calling upon

the believers, at the onset of the Ten Year Crusade, to arise for the purpose of establishing the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh throughout the world they cabled the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles offering to go anywhere. A project was worked out in consultation, and confirmed at the subsequent intercontinental conference held in Stockholm, routing them to Cyprus, Hugh departing first, and Violet following in November 1953. Cyprus has a unique reputation in Bahá'í history as the place of exile of Mírzá Yahyá, the treacherous half-brother of Bahá'u'lláh, stigmatized by Shoghi Effendi in *God Passes By* as 'Arch-breaker of the Covenant of the Báb . . .' Tests and difficulties fell thick and fast for the pioneers who were labouring under conditions already made arduous because of a heated and militant political situation. They were sustained by their recollection of their pilgrimage to the Holy Land and the assurances given them on that occasion by Shoghi Effendi that whatever pool of negative force might have been left by Mírzá Yahyá, and however great the tests that would assuredly confront those who arose to offset this baleful influence, the ultimate victory would be, in proportion, overwhelming.

An influx of pioneers from America, the Netherlands and Írán, as well as the confirmation of local believers, resulted in the formation of a Local Spiritual Assembly in the capital, Nicosia, in 1956. Two years later the McKinleys were encouraged to move to Famagusta, the very place where Mírzá Yahyá had lived and died.

By this time Violet's health was entirely broken; too weak to stand, she could only lie in bed, occasionally getting up in her room. Amidst rabid communal strife and terrorism no organized teaching work could be initiated, but individually two or three people were attracted and their interest aroused. During the ten-day period of her final illness, books were placed in the library of the Army Educational Centre serving Eastern Cyprus.

Violet McKinley passed away shortly after dawn on 16 August 1959. Informed of her passing, the Hands of the Cause residing in the Holy Land, who were then serving as the custodians of the Faith in the interregnum before the election of the Universal House of Justice, cabled in terms that can only constitute her crowning epitaph:

GRIEVED PASSING DEVOTED SELFSACRIFICING  
 KNIGHT BAHAULLAH VIOLET MCKINLEY  
 HIGHLY ESTEEMED BY BELOVED GUARDIAN  
 EXAMPLE PERSEVERANCE UNFORGETTABLE  
 PRAYING HOLY SHRINES PROGRESS SOUL  
 REALMS BEYOND STOP FEEL IMPELLED BUILD  
 HER GRAVE TRIBUTE HISTORIC SERVICES.

Violet's grave in the English Cemetery at Famagusta, is marked by a plain slab of Carrara marble bearing the nine-pointed star and a quotation from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, secured from Italy and put into place during the early 1960s. It has been visited by some of the Hands of the Cause and other distinguished Bahá'ís.

HUGH MCKINLEY

ALFRED JAMES LOFT

13 July 1908–22 May 1973

James (Jim) Loft, a Mohawk Indian, was born in Hiawatha, Ontario and spent his early years in Belleville and Oshawa. His parents were poor and at the age of twelve or thirteen Jim went to work. He did not like school because he felt discriminated against and, as a result, achieved little formal education; but he had a keen mind and was quick to learn and he read avidly. Although it did not show on the surface, he sought, from early childhood, for something that would enable him to feel equal to the rest of humanity. He was puzzled by, but took comfort in, his very earliest recollection: Jim was sitting on a fence as a small boy watching a train crossing the landscape. A man clothed in flowing white robes was on the train smiling and waving at the child who, in confusion and delight, toppled backwards. This childhood memory lingered vividly. When he found the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, Jim recognized the figure on the train as 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

In 1930 Jim married Melba Whetung, a beautiful Chippewa Indian from Curve Lake, near Peterborough, Ontario. They established a home in Detroit, Michigan where their two sons were born, James Gordon in 1933 and Arthur Edwin in 1934. Jim worked for Chrysler Corporation and was transferred to Marysville, Michi-

gan where their daughter, Evelyn Irene, was born in 1938. It was at this time that Melba, who was seeking explanations to the mysteries of life through religion, encountered and accepted the Bahá'í Faith. Although there were a few American Indian believers in the Southern United States by that date, Melba was the first Canadian Indian believer.

Jim was active in community life. He was a foreman at Chrysler Corporation. He acquired a comfortable home and became the first Indian in Michigan to be accepted into the Masonic Lodge. He enjoyed having a good time and appeared to have succeeded in putting to rest the spiritual questions which had troubled him in his youth. Melba quietly began a life of active Bahá'í service and Jim went his own way content in the knowledge that he provided well for his family and feeling that to live a good life was sufficient. He was not to become a Bahá'í for ten years. Eventually he grew curious about his wife's commitment to Bahá'í activities and began to call for her at meetings. He was impressed by the friendliness and sincerity of the Bahá'ís and in May 1948 he declared his belief in Bahá'u'lláh at the home of Mrs. Kettle in Marysville.



*Alfred James Loft*

'I was overjoyed that Jim had accepted the Faith and that we could now work together as a Bahá'í family', wrote Melba. 'But I knew that my life of ease and comfort was over, for I realized that Jim would not rest until he had found some way to serve the Faith that would bring happiness to the beloved Guardian for whom he had already conceived an overwhelming love.'

In September 1948 he wrote to Shoghi Effendi asking what service he could best render the Cause. The reply dated 14 October 1948 written on behalf of the Guardian by his secretary stated, in part: 'He would greatly welcome your returning to your own tribe, and giving them this great message you and your dear wife have accepted.' The acceptance of the Faith by the Indians of North America, the letter continued, represents the fulfillment of the hopes 'Abdu'l-Bahá held for them and 'marks an important step forward not only in the evolution of our Faith itself, but also in the history of the Indian peoples, for, through the universal teachings of our Faith, they will come to not only be loved as brothers by their compatriots of European origin, but also develop the potentialities God has endowed them with, and thus contribute their share to world progress and world unity.' The Lofts, in consultation with the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, took immediate steps to return to their home reservation in Canada, Tyendinaga, in Ontario. It is perhaps significant that Tyendinaga is the birthplace of Deganawidah, the fifteenth century figure whom tradition regards as the founder of the Iroquois Confederacy. Regarded as a prophet by the Indian people, Deganawidah, who was Huron by birth and Mohawk by adoption, united various tribes under one law and devoted his life to establishing peace, righteousness and civil law.

Leaving their beautiful home the Loft family came to Canada in January 1949 in sub-zero temperature. The only accommodation available to them on the reservation was a small three-room house without doors, windows or plumbing. A small cookstove provided meagre heat and required to be refueled throughout the night. For some period they slept huddled in sleeping bags, the parents waking frequently to check on the children. Drinking water was carried from a school. To the physical and economic difficulties another burden was

added—their fellow Indians did not accept them. They were treated with suspicion and hostility and it was made clear to them that only church members could be buried in the consecrated ground of the reservation. It was an inauspicious beginning. The nearest Bahá'ís lived 120 miles distant and there was no one on whom they could call for help. The Lofts settled in to teach the Faith and continue the education of their children. The first fireside meetings held in their new home were conducted against the background of the sound of water dripping through the holes in the roof into pails on the floor.

Jim found work as a mechanic in Belleville, a few miles from the reservation, and in December 1949 one of his fellow workers, Bert Curtis, became a Bahá'í, together with his wife, Elizabeth. It was the beginning of a lifelong friendship. Not long after, Mr. and Mrs. Russell Hill and their seven children found themselves homeless. Jim offered them the use of some of his land on the reservation for the construction of a small dwelling. In September 1950 the Russell Hill family became Bahá'ís. They were the first Indian believers. Slowly the teaching work developed. Jim and Melba frequently drove long distances to Toronto, Ottawa and Kingston to support the teaching efforts and their humble home was a centre of activity, filled with laughter. Jim had a marvellous sense of humour and his love for all was felt. 'I feel that they inspired many of the pioneers who followed them', one friend writes. 'Some of their firesides were almost electrifying in intensity. One summer weekend there were approximately 25 believers at their home; some slept on the floor, and some outside under the stars. Simple but nourishing meals were provided and coffee was made in an open pan; everyone claimed that Melba's coffee was the best they ever tasted. Looking back, I realize that they were conducting a Bahá'í institute, long before the concept became generally accepted in Bahá'í communities.'

'The Lofts were partly instrumental in my becoming a Bahá'í,' Roger White, the first believer of Belleville contributes, 'and I attended my first Nineteen Day Feast in their home. I remember the bus ride to Tyendinaga, the long hike from the highway across the unlighted reservation, the warm welcome, the meal of potato gruel, the laughter, Melba moving with



*Gravestone of Alfred James Loft*

the dignity of a queen in the rude surroundings, and the great reverence with which the devotions were recited. I was a new Bahá'í and although enchanted with the prayers, I had not yet discovered the writings of Shoghi Effendi. Jim read aloud, and we discussed a recent communication from the Guardian. The love the Lofts felt for the Guardian was like a palpable force in the room and I suddenly yearned, too, to become his servant. Their love for him had the quality of that usually seen in those who had met Shoghi Effendi, though they never did.'

Tragedy touched the Lofts when, in 1954, their eldest son was killed in a motor accident leaving a young widow and three small daughters. Due to family circumstances which arose after the young man's death and his wife's remarriage, Jim and Melba adopted one of the children and raised, loved and educated her. Indeed, throughout the years many homeless children were brought into their home and became part of the Loft family. Jim and Melba loved children and many of those whom they helped to raise and educate became Bahá'ís, and all show great respect for the Bahá'í Faith. As the years passed the Lofts won increasing love and respect from the residents of Tyendinaga.

On 21 May 1973 after attending a happy gathering of friends and relatives held at the home of their daughter in Cobourg, the Lofts returned to Tyendinaga. Shortly after midnight Jim suffered a heart attack and passed into the Abhá kingdom. His wife was by his side. 'Promise me,' he asked as the end drew near, 'to remain in Tyendinaga. That is what the Guardian wanted.'

Although arrangements had been made for his burial off the reserve in order not to offend the people of Tyendinaga, the clergy and Indian Band Council requested that he be buried in a church cemetery on the reservation. His funeral was attended by hundreds of Indians and non-Indians from all walks of life. Bahá'í friends attended from as far away as Marysville, Michigan. The clergy from the churches of Tyendinaga reservation came and paid their respect and church bells tolled the passing of this servant of the Lord. His grave marker—within the shadow of the monument erected to the revered Deganawidah—bears the simple legend 'Alfred (Jim) Loft—Bahá'í Pioneer' and is engraved with the Indian thunderbird symbol and a nine-pointed star.

On 13 June 1973 the Universal House of Justice wrote to Mrs. Loft: 'Through a fellow Bahá'í we have learned of the passing to the Abhá Kingdom of your dear husband James who, with you and your children, has pioneered these long years in the Mohawk Indian Reserve. The work among the spiritually gifted indigenous groups of the American continent was dear to the heart of the beloved Guardian, whose summons to pioneering you both heeded more than a quarter of a century ago. We shall offer prayers at the Holy Shrines of our Faith that your husband's immortal soul will progress in the worlds of God, and that you may be enabled with high heart and unflinching devotion to continue your services in the vital teaching of the Indian peoples.'

EVELYN LOFT WATTS

CHARLES JARDINE



## ISHRÁQÍYYIḤ DHABÍḤ

1891-1973

GRIEVED PASSING DEVOTED MAIDSERVANT  
ISHRAQIYYIḤ DHABIḤ STOP HER LONG SUS-  
TAINED SERVICES CAUSE GOD FIELDS TEACHING  
PIONEERING EDUCATION DISTINGUISHED HER  
AMONG WOMEN BAHAI COMMUNITY PERSIA  
STOP SUPPLICATING DIVINE THRESHOLD  
PROGRESS HER SOUL ABHA KINGDOM.

*Universal House of Justice*

This remarkable tribute from the Universal House of Justice is a striking testimony to the indomitable spirit that animated the soul of Ishráqíyyih DhabíḤ whose passing plunged the entire Bahá'í community of Írán into profound sorrow and deprived it of an outstanding worker and faithful exemplar of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. Her life was a reflection to an eminent degree of His exhortation that knowledge and action must be wedded to each other. The admiration expressed for her conduct by both 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi attests this truth.

Ishráqíyyih Khánum's radiant countenance and charming smile will long remain in the memory of those who knew her and her countless services and selfless care for her fellow-beings will not be soon forgotten. Throughout her long life she was mindful never to cause grief or lay a burden on any soul. Her life was devoted to teaching the Cause and educating children in the capital and other towns and villages in Írán.

Miss DhabíḤ was born in 1891 in Tíhrán. Her grandfather, Hájí Mírzá Ismá'íl DhabíḤ, surnamed Anís (Companion) by Bahá'u'lláh, had the priceless privilege of acting as host to the Báb when He visited Káshán. Her father, Ghulám-'Alí, was a devoted believer who twice attained his cherished desire of entering the presence of Bahá'u'lláh. Ishráqíyyih was only an infant when her father died. Her mother, Nargis Khátún, a member of a distinguished Bahá'í family, was left destitute with three children to raise, a son and two daughters. Ishráqíyyih was the youngest child. She received her elementary education at home from her mother and subsequently attended the American missionary school.

The family lived in a home situated in the southern sector of Tíhrán, a home known in the neighbourhood as 'the Bábí house' because of



*Ishráqíyyih DhabíḤ*

the constant coming and going of Bahá'ís through its portals. The sacred remains of the Báb had rested in that house and this invested it with a halo of sanctity and endeared it to the hearts of the friends. The DhabíḤs were not immune from the persecution to which Bahá'ís at that time were subject at the hands of their enemies. The members of the family were the objects of vile remarks and molestation on the streets and on retiring at night were never sure whether they would live to see the morning. Even their moving to another sector of the city with a large proportion of Bahá'í residents did not secure for them the immunity desired and in their new quarters they were often the target of attacks by rough characters. On one occasion a group of ruffians broke down their door and entered threatening to kill Ishráqíyyih's brother, Mírzá Jalál. Her interposition saved his life but the violence of this incident profoundly affected the family. In Ishráqíyyih it produced a strange reaction and revealed the beauty of her character which the early period of her life, replete with afflictions, had forged. As a result of a complaint lodged by her brother, backed by the support of a Bahá'í in high position, against the recent assailants, their ringleader was arrested

and sentenced to be flogged but Ishráqíyyih's intervention procured his release. Such was the generosity of her nature; such the kindness of her soul.

American missionaries at this time established a high school in Tíhrán where Ishráqíyyih studied until her graduation in 1913. Not only did she resist attempts to convert her to the Christian faith but continued regularly attending Bahá'í teacher training courses. She qualified as a teacher of Bahá'í classes and was fired with new zeal and conviction.

At the American school prize-giving ceremony in her last year she was expected to appear unveiled. She asked 'Abdu'l-Bahá what she should do. His Tablet written in reply did not touch upon the subject at all! Instead He wrote that she should be thankful for having gained her objective, for having remained firm and steadfast in the Covenant and bade her 'rise then, now, to serve and teach the Cause.' With a heart brimming over with happiness she showed the friends this Tablet. She possessed two certificates now, she affirmed. One attested her secular knowledge (a creditable enough achievement for a woman of her circumstances in those days) and the other, the Tablet, much more highly prized, testifying to her faith and steadfastness.

Not for a moment after this did she seek rest. She obeyed the Master's behest. From her spiritual guide, Dr. Susan I. Moody,<sup>1</sup> she learned the way to contact and teach people and spread the Faith. The illustrious Dr. Moody showed her how to go about this with a smile on her lips and love in her heart.

Ishráqíyyih gave private tuition at home and took classes in the Tarbiyat Girls' School and all the while was mindful of imparting the Bahá'í principles in an indirect manner to all her students. On Fridays, the weekly holiday, she conducted character training classes for Bahá'í youth. At the suggestion of the friends she was appointed headmistress of the Ta'yíd Bahá'í School at Hamadán when she was only twenty-seven. Three years later she returned to the capital and was put in charge of the kindergarten section of the Tarbiyat School, newly introduced on Dr. Moody's recommendation. She supervised it until the school was closed by the Government. She later organized kindergar-

ten classes in a non-Bahá'í school until the death of her mother who had been in her care left her free to devote all her time to teaching the Cause. At the outset, she undertook the supervision and organization of the newly established 'Abbás-Ábád Bahá'í School situated near Tíhrán. She would travel on a donkey or even on foot to the surrounding villages to teach the children as well as their illiterate mothers. Concurrently she established fireside meetings too but after a couple of years hostility by non-Bahá'ís put a stop to these.

Ishráqíyyih returned to Tíhrán and subsequently went on teaching and training trips to Arák, Káshán, Najaf-Ábád, Sarvistán, Shiráz and Işfáhán. In some places, the enemies of the Faith inflicted upon her shameful indignities of the kind suffered by the early believers. Once, during disturbances directed against the friends in Sarvistán, she was taken into custody and conveyed to Shiráz in a shameful and cruel manner. The humiliations heaped upon her did not crush her spirit nor curtail her activities in Shiráz, Işfáhán and the adjacent areas.

She subsequently applied for a visa to India where she hoped to pioneer, but was unsuccessful, whereupon she donated to the Bahá'í Fund the entire sum she had reserved for this purpose. Then, at the direction of the Spiritual Assembly, she went to Bábul. Here, and in Sháhí and surrounding areas, she rendered noteworthy services, greatly appreciated by the National Spiritual Assembly. After some years she returned to Tíhrán to tend her sick nephew, 'Izzatu'lláh Dhabíh.<sup>2</sup> After his death, she lived with another nephew for the last decade of her life in comparative seclusion due to her increasing weakness.

Even to the last her greatest joy lay in the visits of the friends. She died in June 1973 at the age of eighty-two. The large number of friends at her burial in the Tíhrán Bahá'í Cemetery was a tangible indication of the esteem in which she was held.

It is appropriate to close this memorial with a reference to a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi in which, in effect, the Guardian assured Ishráqíyyih Dhabíh that her steadfastness and faithfulness were remembered and that he would pray that she might attain the good of this world and of the next.

<sup>1</sup> See 'In Memoriam', *The Bahá'í World*, vol. VI, p. 483.

<sup>2</sup> See 'In Memoriam', *The Bahá'í World*, vol. XIV, p. 390.

## QUDRATU'LLÁH ÁZAMÍKHÁH

1911–1973

Qudratu'lláh Ázamíkháh was born in 1911 in 'Ishqábád where his father spent his last years in service at the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár. When Qudratu'lláh was sixteen his mother and her children settled in Persia where Qudratu'lláh actively participated in Bahá'í community life and quickly distinguished himself as a result of his steadfast and devoted service.

In 1952 he pioneered to a number of difficult areas in Saudi Arabia where he assisted in the establishment of the first Local Spiritual Assembly of Medina and the first Bahá'í group in Mecca, the chief spiritual centre of Islám. He was imprisoned for his beliefs and expelled from Saudi Arabia. The hardships he endured in so many difficult pioneering posts only increased his ardour and he constantly sought new areas of service. He was a member of the first Spiritual Assembly of Khartoum and when this community was securely established he pioneered to Port Sudan to build a Spiritual Assembly there. He was unable to find employment during the year and one-half he spent in the Sudan but he cheerfully accepted every vicissitude which befell him. Just as he found employment that would enable him to maintain himself in Sudan

there arose an urgent need for Bahá'í pioneers in Chad. Abandoning the financial security he had just been offered he moved to Chad but unfortunately he was unable to secure a residence visa and in October 1961 he went to the neighbouring Central African Republic, where he supported himself by repairing primus stoves and engaged in the great task of teaching and consolidating the Faith in that newly-opened country. He saw his efforts rewarded in the following year by the formation of the first Spiritual Assembly of Bangui. The National Spiritual Assembly of the Central African Republic has paid tribute in these words: 'Although there had been a few Bahá'ís in Bangui since 1956, Mr. Ázamíkháh was a catalyst to this young community. He actively taught the Faith and held evening meetings in his home. He quickly became known and respected for his knowledge of the Bible and the Qur'án. Although he was compelled to leave Bangui in May 1962, thanks to his efforts the first believers in the Central African Republic were well deepened in their knowledge of the Faith. He can really be called the instigator of the teaching work in the Central African Republic. His consecration, sacrifices and dynamism have been and will always be an inspiration graven upon our spirits.'

Unable to remain in Bangui, Qudratu'lláh chose Brazzaville, in the Congo, as his next post. Here he gathered together the first few early believers and began teaching the Cause. Due in part to his efforts the first Local Spiritual Assembly of Brazzaville was formed at Riqván 1964. Again he supported himself by repairing petroleum lamps, by which means he was brought into contact with many people. Soon the northern part of this country was also opened to the Faith.

During the eleven years he spent in the Congo, Mr. Ázamíkháh's home was a meeting place for the Bahá'ís and their friends. Despite his limited means he was generous to everyone and was able to provide for the education of a few African youth. He had no desire in the world but to further the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. It may be said that to a great extent the establishment of the National Spiritual Assembly of Congo (Brazzaville) and Gabon in 1971 (the following year to become the National Spiritual Assembly of the Congo Republic) was the fruit of his tireless services.



*Qudratu'lláh Ázamíkháh*

In 1971 he was appointed a member of the Auxiliary Board. This appointment increased his opportunities to travel and teach in neighbouring countries. Despite an ailing heart and diabetes his pace was not slowed until the end came on 25 July 1973. His passing was a deeply-felt loss to the friends in the Congo and many Bahá'ís and other friends participated in his funeral service. He is survived by his wife and three children. His unforgettable services were acknowledged by the Universal House of Justice in its cable of 26 July 1973:

DEEPLY GRIEVED SUDDEN PASSING OUTSTANDING SERVANT FAITH QUDRATULLAH AZAMIKHAH HIS SERVICES VARIOUS TERRITORIES AFRICA UNFORGETTABLE ASSURE RELATIVES FRIENDS FERVENT PRAYERS SHRINES PROGRESS HIS SOUL ABHA KINGDOM STOP ADVISE HOLD MEMORIAL GATHERINGS BAHAI CENTRES CONGO.

'IZZATU'LLÁH TA'ÍD

### ANNA KUNZ

1889-1973

Anna Kunz, the eldest of ten children of the Reverend Adolph Bolliger, a prominent clergyman of the Reformed Church, was born in the parsonage in Ober Entfelden, Aargau, Switzerland on 13 July 1889. Soon thereafter the Reverend Bolliger was named Professor of Theology at the University of Basel and in time became its president; thus it was in Basel that Anna spent her school years. Under the guidance of her conscientious and serious parents she received excellent spiritual and moral training which served as the foundation of her character throughout her life. After graduation from high school, she longed to enter the university, but her father insisted that she study in a home economics seminary in Berne, on whose faculty she later became a teacher.

At twenty-four years of age she married Dr. Jakob Kunz, a distinguished Swiss physicist who was a research professor at the University of Illinois in Urbana, Illinois. Thus she moved far away from her homeland, across the Atlantic Ocean, to the new world. Instantly she fell in love with America and throughout her life she loved to relate stories of the great kindness

showered upon her as a bride in the midwestern university town of Urbana which became her home for thirty-five years. The hospitality, openness and magnanimity of the Americans overwhelmed her. With her conservative, traditional Swiss background, she gradually learned a new life style. Her two daughters, Annamarie Kunz Honnold and Margaret Kunz Ruhe, were born and raised in Urbana. Dr. Kunz gained recognition for his invention of the Kunz cell and, among other things, collaborated on the first sound-on-film developments.

Dr. and Mrs. Kunz, active members of the Methodist Church, were serious and religious in their bent. Dr. Kunz, who was endowed with a deeply searching mind, was prompted in 1914 or 1915 to attend a lecture about the Bahá'í Faith, accompanied by his wife and their good friends, Edwin and Annie Mattoon. They soon found themselves regular students in a class on the tenets of the Bahá'í Faith given by Unitarian minister, Albert Vail, an eloquent and inspired teacher of comparative religions. Mrs. Kunz almost at once recognized Bahá'u'lláh as the Manifestation of God for this day and became one of the founders of the Urbana Bahá'í community which served as the seed-bed for many teachers of the Faith.

Despite ill health, timidity, the burdens of tending small children and the emotional conflicts resulting from life in a new culture, Anna Kunz quickly showed signs of leadership, administrative ability, firmness and steadfastness in the Faith. She studied the Bahá'í Writings assiduously and resolved to live her life according to those teachings. Beauty of spirit radiated from her and was felt by those around her.

In 1921 Dr. and Mrs. Kunz made their pilgrimage to the Holy Shrines in Haifa and 'Akká and attained the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá; this was the pinnacle of Mrs. Kunz's life. She adored 'Abdu'l-Bahá; He became her Exemplar and her Master. In an article published in *Star of the West*, vol. 13, No. 6, September 1922, she wrote about her pilgrimage. Of her first meeting with 'Abdu'l-Bahá on 27 March 1921 in a hotel at Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee where 'Abdu'l-Bahá used to go for rest and change of air she stated: 'It was a bright and luminous Easter morning when the Master called us into His room . . . Though I feared to approach Him, after His loving words of welcome this fear vanished. Here we sat



Anna Kunz

before our Master, in a little room, with only the most necessary furnishings, on top of the hotel, with a view of that blessed lake. His look seems to go into one's very heart. Yes, he knows His children and their need. As I think of Him now, I always love to think, first of His great simplicity, His marvellous humility which knows of no self-existence, and last . . . of His boundless love. To us His outward appearance seemed similar to that of the old Hebrew prophets; His humility, His simplicity and love were like the Christ. This boundless love conquered the hearts at once. 'Abdu'l-Bahá talked to us with a ringing, piercing voice which will forever sound in my ears.'

On Monday, 28 March, 'Abdu'l-Bahá looked at the picture of their two daughters for a long while and He said: 'They have bright faces. They will be real Bahá'ís because they will have a Bahá'í education. They will become good Bahá'ís.' Later, He revealed a wonderful prayer for them which is recorded in *Star of the West*.

In the afternoon of that day He spoke these words: 'This lake is very blessed. His Holiness Christ and the other prophets walked along its shore and were in communion with God all the time and spreading the divine teachings. Now, praise be to God that you reached this land

safely and we met one another on the shore of this same lake! You will receive great results from this visit afterwards. You will become the cause of the illumination of the world of humanity. You will release the hearts of the people from the intense darkness of different prejudices, so that each soul may love all the people of the world, without distinction. Just like a shepherd who is affectionate to all his sheep, without preference or distinction, you should be affectionate to all. You should not look at their shortcomings. Consider that they are all created by God who loves them all.'

Returning to Urbana with renewed zeal, Mrs. Kunz served for long years on the Local Spiritual Assembly of that city. Much of the time she served as chairman. She also worked diligently on many committees, and for years she was elected delegate to the National Convention. At the age of fifty she studied typing in order to increase her ability to serve her beloved Faith.

The Kunz home was a haven of peace, rest, beauty and hospitality for all who came there. Dr. Kunz entertained Rabindranath Tagore and other philosophers and scientists. Not only were Bahá'í classes and meetings held in the home but also a steady stream of Bahá'í teachers spent the night there.

Mrs. Kunz was thoughtful of people in small and large ways; she took time to listen to them and was perceptive of their inner needs and aspirations. She liked to remember others with flowers, home-baked cookies, small gifts. At the age of forty-three she learned to drive a car, and one of her services was to drive about Urbana gathering the Bahá'ís and their friends for the meetings. In the personal and intimate details of her life she was a complete Bahá'í: cleanliness, neatness, frugality and meticulousness were her hallmark. Her person was immaculate, and her house was shinningly clean. Her spirit, humble and pure, knew the power of prayer. Her prayer book was always at her side. She prayed many times each day and loved to share the prayers with her family and friends. 'May we have a prayer together?' she would say.

After the death of her husband Mrs. Kunz was free to pioneer and, having offered her services to the beloved Guardian, she sailed from New York in July 1947 at the age of fifty-eight, returning as a pioneer to her native Switzerland, thus beginning a whole new phase of her life. She settled in Berne, one of the goal

cities of the second Seven Year Plan, where Shoghi Effendi wrote to her as follows:

'I welcome your arrival in Europe and particularly in Switzerland where, I feel, your work will be of the utmost value. You will surely be blessed and sustained in your historic task, and I look forward to the day when through your exertion and those of your devoted collaborators the first Spiritual Assembly will be established in that land. Persevere in your magnificent mission.' She worked tirelessly towards the establishment of the Berne Local Spiritual Assembly. After this goal was accomplished, she returned to Urbana in 1949, feeling that she was needed there. Shoghi Effendi wrote to her as follows:

'The services you have rendered the Faith are truly remarkable and deserve the highest praise. I feel truly proud of your achievements, and am grateful for the spirit that so powerfully animates you in the service of our glorious Faith. I will pray ardently on your behalf, that the Beloved may abundantly reward you for your accomplishments, and enable you, in the years to come, to enrich the splendid record of your services to His Faith and its institutions.'

The pioneering spirit had taken hold, and when news reached her in Urbana of the urgent needs in Switzerland, Mrs. Kunz felt restless and torn. To be near her children and grandchildren was her personal longing and wish. She again wrote to Shoghi Effendi seeking his advice. For a long time there was no answer. She was relieved. Then came the stunning reply—proceed as quickly as possible to Switzerland. She was crushed, but in October 1952 she valiantly set forth once again, this time locating in Zurich, a goal city. In the spring of 1953 she was elected a member of the newly-formed National Spiritual Assembly of Italy and Switzerland and to her consternation was elected secretary of this historic twelfth National Spiritual Assembly, which post she held for nine years. Now she understood why in mid-life she had been prompted to take up typing! At the request of Shoghi Effendi she moved back to Berne, though by personal wish she would have chosen to remain in her splendid apartment in Zurich. At Riqdán 1962 the National Spiritual Assembly of Switzerland was formed and she was again elected secretary for one year. She continued to serve on the National Assembly until 1969 when, once again elected, she asked

to be relieved as she was approaching her eightieth birthday and her health was not the best.

In 1957 she flew to London—her first flight—for the funeral of Shoghi Effendi. Like many others she had always harboured the wish to be in his presence, but alas, she had waited too long; now his sudden passing was a terrible blow.

In 1963, forty-two years after attaining the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, she returned to the Holy Land, this time to fulfill the historic mission of being an elector of the first Universal House of Justice. How Haifa and 'Akká had changed! But the same spirit of power and love emanated from the Holy Shrines as she knelt in prayers of gratitude and adoration at the Holy Thresholds.

Her later years were plagued with a series of illnesses, but her spirit was ever radiant and bright. She gave up her loved apartment and later moved to a nursing home in the suburbs of Berne where she died peacefully in her sleep on 10 August 1973. The Universal House of Justice cabled, in part:

DEEPLY GRIEVED PASSING ANNA KUNZ STEAD-  
FAST DISTINGUISHED HANDMAID BAHAUULLAH  
HER ASSOCIATIONS BELOVED MASTER DEVOTED  
PIONEERING SERVICES EUROPE OVER EXTENDED  
PERIOD UNFORGETTABLE . . .

MARGARET KUNZ RUHE

## ISAAC EZIUKWU

1934–1973

Isaac Eziukwu was one of the first believers to accept the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh in Bangui, Central African Republic. He was a Nigerian, born at Umuokehi village near Umuahia, and had come as a trader to Bangui several years before encountering the Faith. He was active in his own church as a lay preacher. One evening in 1956, on the threshold of the home of a friend, he chanced to hear a Bahá'í prayer being read in English. The prayer so moved and attracted him that he asked to borrow the prayer book. After only a few days he returned it to the Bahá'í to whom it belonged saying, 'I am convinced that I



*Isaac Eziukwu*

am wasting my time with other religions. As from today I must be a Bahá'í.' He spent much time with his new friend, an English-speaking Cameroonian who was the first Bahá'í to come to Bangui. Isaac eagerly accepted the new Revelation and immediately arose in its service with a devotion and enthusiasm that never failed. After his friend returned to Cameroon in 1960, it was Isaac who held aloft the standard of the Faith in Bangui until the arrival of Qudratu'lláh Ázamíkháh<sup>1</sup> who came there as a pioneer in October 1961. Isaac, athirst for greater knowledge and understanding of the Cause, welcomed the new pioneer and eagerly worked to establish the first Local Spiritual Assembly of Bangui which was formed at Riḍván 1962. When Mr. Ázamíkháh was compelled to leave shortly thereafter, Isaac was again the mainspring of the small community, continually offering encouragement to the other believers.

When the Universal House of Justice called for pioneers at the beginning of the Nine Year Plan, Isaac left as soon as possible for Gabon and arrived in Libreville in June 1964. Behind the market-place in Libreville he worked as a

repairer of kerosene lamps, a skill taught to him by Mr. Ázamíkháh, and gradually was able to teach the Faith and gather together the first believers. In April 1966 the first Local Spiritual Assembly was formed in Libreville.

Greatly encouraged by visiting Bahá'ís, Isaac began to teach the Faith in localities near Libreville and later visited areas far inland. With the help of another pioneer the Local Spiritual Assembly of Mounana was established, and so the Faith began to spread to various parts of Gabon.

Beginning in 1971, Isaac devoted himself to the task of gaining recognition of the Bahá'í Faith in Gabon. The by-laws of the Local Spiritual Assembly of Libreville were prepared and submitted to the proper authorities and Isaac was hopeful of success. However, to his deep disappointment, months and finally years went by without result. In July 1973 he heard of the passing of his dear friend and fellow pioneer Mr. Ázamíkháh who had settled in Brazzaville. He was heard to say, after reading some prayers, 'If it please Bahá'u'lláh to take my own life and let the Faith be recognized here in Gabon, I will be grateful.'

Shortly after this it became evident that Isaac was not well. His condition worsened rapidly and in October 1973, with his wife and infant son, he returned to Nigeria where he died on 23 October. He is buried near his father's house in his home village.

It may be truly said of Isaac that he was a lover of Bahá'u'lláh. From the time he was first attracted to the Faith until his passing, he lived for the Cause and the task he set himself, to raise the call of the Kingdom.

On learning of Isaac's death the Universal House of Justice wrote in a letter dated 6 December 1973 to the Local Spiritual Assembly of Libreville:

'... the sad news of the passing of Mr. Isaac Eziukwu was received and it brought deep sorrow to our hearts. This devoted and steadfast believer was a sincere promoter of the Cause, and a true lover of the Blessed Beauty. He spent his days in detachment and service, and set an example of dedication to his fellow-believers wherever he was. We assure you of our fervent prayers at the Holy Shrines for the continued progress of his noble soul in the Abhá Kingdom ...'

<sup>1</sup> See 'In Memoriam', p. 519.

## KAREN BARE

1942-1974

Karen (Stamper) Bare was born on 5 May 1942 in Cheyenne, Wyoming. She was in Hawaii in 1968 waiting for news of her husband, William Bare, an officer of the United States Air Force who had been reported missing in action, when she became attracted to the Bahá'í Faith. She immediately identified herself with the Cause and became a member of the Bahá'í community of Hawaii where she was supremely happy. A year later, in response to a call for pioneers to Africa, she volunteered to serve in the United Republic of Cameroon. Within a few weeks she arrived at her post, serving first in Douala and later in Victoria. Her activities as a pioneer were varied. She served as a member of the National Spiritual Assembly and on a number of national committees, was elected to the Local Spiritual Assembly of Victoria, devoted considerable time to travelling as a teacher of the Faith and offered friendship and hospitality to believers and visitors.

Mrs. Bare was killed in an automobile accident on 4 January 1974 while visiting her family in the United States. The National Spiritual Assembly of the Cameroon Republic wrote, in part:

'The tragic news of the death of our dearly-loved young Bahá'í sister, . . . (an) ardent promoter and protector of the Bahá'í Faith, came as a great blow to our Bahá'í community. The friends in Cameroon are grief-stricken and . . . memorial meetings have been held in a number of places.

'Karen Bare was especially loved by the Cameroonian women and children, on whom she poured her love. She forgot ease and comfort and even during the Fast in the heat of the day would walk several miles to visit villages around Victoria for teaching and deepening.

'Her home was the home of all visitors and pioneers who came to Victoria. The Persians are famous for their hospitality but several remarked that they had seen none to equal hers.

'When the Bahá'ís of Cameroon read the cabled message from the Universal House of Justice, they will feel some comfort for their sorrowing hearts. We hope that the youth both here and in her motherland will be inspired by her devoted service (in the) pioneer field (and) splendid example.'

A friend has written: 'Karen had a deep love for the Faith, a sound knowledge of Bahá'í administration and a strong sense of justice. Her loyalty to the Universal House of Justice was truly ardent. Her life held many tragedies and disappointments, but her devotion to the Faith was the source of her strength.'

A fellow pioneer to Africa, Mr. Jean-Christophe Casu, paid tribute to the memory of Karen Bare in a poem from which the following excerpt is taken:

'Angel is dead, she is in the Kingdom now!  
Oh joie spirituelle tu distribuais la force  
aimante pour la Cause primordiale,



*Karen Bare*

l'accomplissement divin. Source tu prodiguais l'énergie,  
l'eau merveilleuse régénératrice de l'humanité  
entière,  
toi frêle femme jusqu'à épuisement, jusqu'au  
bout!

Angel is dead, she is in the Kingdom now!  
Tu vis parmi nous semence prodigieuse,  
toujours en symbiose avec  
nos âmes qui prient et nos oreilles palpitantes  
entendent,  
entendront éternellement ton 'Alláh-u-  
Abhá'!



Aimable, fraternelle, généreuse pour tout le peuple de Bahá.

Angel is dead, she is in the Kingdom now!

Karen's Bahá'í books were presented to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United Republic of Cameroon by her mother, Mrs. Stamper, and they will form the nucleus of the Karen Bare Memorial Library.

On 10 January 1974 the Universal House of Justice cabled:

DEEPLY GRIEVED UNTIMELY DEATH VALIANT  
DEDICATED MUCH LOVED MAIDSERVANT  
BAHAULLAH KAREN BARE STOP HER DEVOTED  
SERVICE PIONEER FIELD SPLENDID EXAMPLE  
OTHER YOUTHFUL BELIEVERS STOP ADVISE  
HOLD MEMORIAL SERVICES STOP PRAYING  
SACRED THRESHOLD RICH REWARDS BLESSINGS  
ABHA KINGDOM.

### PHILIP A. MARANGELLA

1895–1974

'A native returns . . .' These words were written in the summer of 1973 on the occasion of the visit to Potenza, Italy by my father, Philip Antonio (Amalfi) Marangella, who was present there for the Italian Bahá'í Youth Conference, held for the first time in the province of Italy where he was born on 18 October 1895. Although my father was a naturalized American citizen and loved America deeply, he always retained a special love for the land of his birth and it was a particular pleasure for him to make one last trip to Italy during the last summer of his life. In the summer of 1973 he had been a Bahá'í for fifty-two years and it seemed very significant to him to be visiting his birthplace.

My parents first went to Green Acre, Eliot, Maine in July 1921 and attended their first Bahá'í meeting at Fellowship House. The speaker was the renowned Bahá'í teacher Jináb-i-Fáḡíl who spoke on the subject, 'The Liberators of Mankind'. This was Professor Fáḡíl's last lecture in America and he left the following day for New York to take the ship back to Haifa to report to 'Abdu'l-Bahá on his one year trip. The chairman of the meeting was Mr. William H. Randall of Boston, a member of the United States Shipping Board of which my father was

an employee, but Dad did not know of Mr. Randall's connection with the Faith at that time. Following their visit to Green Acre, my parents became Bahá'ís.

A few years later we moved to Portsmouth, New Hampshire in order to be near Green Acre. Each summer many wonderful Bahá'í teachers came to share their knowledge with others. It was at Green Acre that my father derived the inspiration and the desire to devote his life to teaching and spreading the Faith. He became a deep student of the Writings and developed capacities as a public speaker. Being blessed with a beautiful speaking voice and a deep reservoir of enthusiasm, the result was a dynamic presentation. However, most of his desire to teach and pioneer came as a result of his love for and devotion to Shoghi Effendi, the beloved Guardian of the Faith. Although my father did not have the bounty of meeting the Guardian, he frequently wrote to Shoghi Effendi and, in turn, received many letters from him encouraging my father in his efforts to teach the Cause.

My father's travels on behalf of the Faith are too numerous to mention but some stand out as being of special interest at the time because he wrote to Shoghi Effendi about them and received replies. In 1932 my father sent to Shoghi Effendi an account of his teaching trip through the southern United States and the Guardian replied through his secretary, adding the following note in his own hand:

'Dear and valued co-worker: I have read your splendid report and I am thrilled by the news it conveyed. You have certainly rendered a service which deserves to be ranked as one of the most outstanding achievements in recent years in the teaching field. May the Beloved bless, sustain and guide your efforts and enable you to render still greater services in the days to come. Persevere, and rest assured that my prayers will continue to be offered in your behalf. Your true and grateful brother, Shoghi.'

In 1933 my father was still very active with inter-racial work and in response to a report the Guardian's secretary wrote on his behalf: 'The news of your splendid activities in connection with inter-racial work greatly cheered his heart and confirmed his hopes for the future of your efforts for the promotion of racial unity and peace in America. May your selfless endeavors along this line be increasingly blessed and

become a means whereby many eager and sincere souls can be led to accept the Teachings.'

Another way in which my father spread the Teachings was through his original poetry, some of which he sent to the Holy Land. In a postscript to a letter dated 6 August 1933 the *Guardian* wrote: 'Your poem dedicated to Nabil deeply touched me. I urge you to revise it and put it into final form and send to me a copy of it for inclusion in the next issue of *The Bahá'í World* . . . I would also welcome any other poems from your gifted pen on any phase or episode recounted in Nabil's immortal narrative. You are rendering the Cause unique and notable services. Be happy and persevere in your high endeavours.' The poem entitled 'Nabil' appeared in *The Bahá'í World*, vol. V, on page 673. His poem entitled 'Zanjan' appeared on page 674 of the same volume. Two poems he composed in memory of Keith Ransom-Kehler were acknowledged by the secretary of Shoghi Effendi who wrote on 27 February 1934 stating that the *Guardian* hoped that the poems would enable both Bahá'ís and non-Bahá'ís to 'better appreciate the magnificent services which that devoted servant of the Cause has rendered it during her long and active career of service to the Faith'.

For a long time my father had a great desire to go to a Spanish-speaking country or island to teach the Faith. He wrote of this desire to the *Guardian* whose secretary responded in a letter of 30 September 1937 stating on the *Guardian's* behalf that it would be preferable for my father to 'travel to Cuba and to endeavor while there to establish a group of believers who could be able to carry on the work after your departure'.

My father made a trip to Cuba, remaining there nine days. He sent a report of this to Shoghi Effendi which was acknowledged by his secretary on 24 March 1939. In his own hand the *Guardian* penned: 'Your letter and enclosures rejoiced my heart. I feel proud of the spirit that so powerfully animates you . . .' Later in 1939 my father was situated as a pioneer in Cuba where he remained for a year.

By the year 1947, however, my father was pioneering in Italy and he wrote, as always, reporting his activities to Shoghi Effendi. To a letter dated 23 August 1947 Shoghi Effendi appended the following postscript: 'I deeply appreciate your magnificent and historic services. I will supplicate for you, from the depths



*Philip A. Marangella*

of my heart, the Master's richest blessings. You are often in my thoughts and prayers, and I feel confident that the Beloved is well pleased with you, and will reinforce your meritorious and high endeavors.'

Father remained as a pioneer in Italy for a year and in 1948 he returned to the United States where he spent the years until 1953, broken briefly by an extended trip to Jamaica where he visited Bahá'í communities. He left the United States in October 1953 and settled as a pioneer in Japan where he spent the next twenty years. The last two years of his life were spent pioneering in Hong Kong where he passed away on 31 January 1974.

In this last period of his life my father devoted his teaching efforts to the East, travelling throughout Japan from its northernmost island of Hokkaido to the southernmost island of Kyushu. He also visited Korea, Taiwan, the Pescadores Islands, Okinawa, Macao, Vietnam and India. He was elected as a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of Northeast Asia for ten successive years, serving in various capacities.

In addition to his teaching work in Japan, Hong Kong and adjacent areas, father had the experience of making several very outstanding journeys of a wider nature. He attended the Jubilee celebration in London in 1963 and had

the bounty of being a delegate to the second International Convention in Haifa in 1968. He obtained permission to make a pilgrimage at the end of 1970 while on a round-the-world teaching trip. This tour was of more than six months' duration and took him to numerous countries of Europe and Asia as well as to the United States. In 1971 the Universal House of Justice asked him to visit the seats of twenty established and four newly-formed National Spiritual Assemblies. This was a travel teaching programme, but it utilized his many years of experience as an accountant and auditor and he was asked to prepare a handbook for National Assembly treasurers. In 1973 he attended the third International Convention to which he was a delegate.

During the more than thirty years since my marriage, I kept in close contact with Dad through correspondence, and we met for brief visits in London, Paris, Frankfurt, Amsterdam, Venice, Vienna and other places. The most memorable, however, were his lengthy stays at our home in Zweibrücken, Germany during the last three summers before his passing. Although he felt an urge to retire finally and be with us for his remaining years, he felt the even greater call to fulfill the ever-burning desire to spread the Bahá'í teachings and help consolidate the victories won, so he remained at his pioneer post in Hong Kong to the very end.

The most appreciated tribute to his long years of devotion to the Faith was accorded him in a cablegram from the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of North-east Asia on the occasion of his passing:

DEEPLY GRIEVED LEARN PASSING PHILIP  
MARANGELLA DEVOTED SERVANT BAHAUULLAH  
STEADFAST SUPPORTER COVENANT HIS PIONEER  
SERVICES TIRELESS WORLDWIDE TRAVELS  
BEHALF FAITH MOST PRAISEWORTHY PRAYING  
SHRINES PROGRESS HIS SOUL ABHA KINGDOM  
ADVISE HOLD BEFITTING MEMORIAL SERVICE.

AYNED LOUISE McCOMB

## DAOUD TOEG

1897-1974

DEEPLY GRIEVED PASSING FAITHFUL OUT-  
STANDING PROMOTER FAITH DAOUD TOEG HIS

RECORD DEVOTED SERVICES FAITH IRAQ UN-  
FORGETTABLE ADVISE HOLD MEMORIAL  
GATHERING NATIONAL HAZIRATULQUDS STOP  
CONVEY FAMILY LOVING CONDOLENCES ASSUR-  
ANCE PRAYERS SHRINES PROGRESS HIS SOUL . . .  
*Universal House of Justice*

On 1 February 1974 Mr. Daoud Toeg, a staunch and faithful servant of Bahá'u'lláh, passed away in Hull, Quebec where he had been a pioneer for almost three years.

Mr. Toeg was born in Baghdád, 'Íráq, of a wealthy, well-educated and devout Jewish family. He received an excellent education and mastered seven languages but grew dissatisfied with the Jewish Faith and became an atheist. Eventually he met Mr. Ezra Sofer, a Bahá'í of Jewish background, and became attracted to his ideas and the solutions he proposed to the problems of individuals and nations. Knowing that Mr. Sofer was not highly educated, he always wondered what might be the source of his ideas. The night Mr. Sofer told him of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh they talked in a coffee shop until morning came and when they separated Mr. Toeg rushed to a library and obtained all the available Bahá'í books. He studied the Bahá'í Writings for the next three years and in 1927 declared his belief in Bahá'u'lláh. In this period it was customary for those who accepted the Faith to send a written declaration of acceptance directly to the beloved Guardian, but Mr. Toeg waited until he had enrolled eight other believers before he sent his and the other letters of declaration to the Guardian. All these believers remained steadfast and served faithfully on local and national administrative bodies in 'Íráq and elsewhere. They also raised children who became dedicated servants of the Cause.

In the early 1930s Mr. Toeg pioneered to Italy for about a year and a half. On his return to 'Íráq he served on the first National Spiritual Assembly of that country. He was elected to that body for twenty-five years and was many times its chairman.

Mr. Toeg was a hardworking merchant of substantial means and an adviser to the branch director of a well-known British trading company established in London. Mr. Toeg and his wife, Latifa, were married in 1942 and had three sons, Jamál, Kamál and Jalál, who assisted him in the teaching work and other Bahá'í activities.

Mr. Toeg had the bounty of making his pilgrimage to the Holy Land twice. On his first pilgrimage, the Guardian was temporarily absent from Haifa, but he met the Greatest Holy Leaf on this occasion. On his second pilgrimage, in 1935, Mr. Toeg spent twenty days in the Holy Land and attained the presence of Shoghi Effendi on many occasions. Four years earlier, at the behest of the Guardian, Mr. Toeg had learned the Persian language which aided him greatly in deepening his understanding of the Faith and further increased his capacity and effectiveness as a Bahá'í teacher.

In 1954 Mr. Toeg was appointed an Auxiliary Board member for 'Íráq on the first Auxiliary Board of Asia. He served the Faith in this capacity for sixteen years.

One of Mr. Toeg's outstanding services to the Faith in his homeland was the supervision of the construction of the National Ḥazíratu'l-Quds in Baghdád, for which purpose he abandoned his job for six months. The Guardian was very satisfied with the design of the building and the way in which the work was carried out. Mr. Toeg was also helpful in securing land for the Temple in 'Íráq, a goal of the Ten Year Crusade.

For twenty years of his life in 'Íráq, besides serving the national community, Mr. Toeg rendered valuable services to the Guardian in channelling communications between the Holy Land and the Persian community at a time when there was no direct means of communication. Correspondence, Tablets revealed by the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, relics associated with the Holy Family and the heroes and martyrs of the Faith, contributions to Bahá'í funds, Ḥuqúqu'lláh payments—all these passed through Mr. Toeg's hands on their journey from Persia to the Holy Land. He also received from the Guardian his messages for transmittal to Persia. The Guardian, in appreciation of this vital service, sent Mr. Toeg approximately fifty letters of encouragement, assuring him of his continued prayers and blessings. Mr. Toeg also served as representative of the Ḥuqúqu'lláh fund for the believers in 'Íráq.

Mr. Toeg was involved in other spheres of Bahá'í activity, some of which are of great historical importance. He was in the vanguard of those who located and visited the caves of Sar-Galú in Sulaymáníyyih, Kurdistán, which are associated with Bahá'u'lláh's two-year solitary retreat and meditation in the wilderness,

from 1854 to 1856. Mr. Toeg took a number of photographs and was able to interview several local inhabitants who had seen Bahá'u'lláh. He sent an album of photographs to the Guardian with his report, documentation which the Guardian declared would be invaluable to future historians of the Faith. On one of his three visits to Turkey, Mr. Toeg was able, with the assistance of local friends, to determine the exact location of the house which Bahá'u'lláh had occupied in Constantinople, and on another visit was able to locate the houses or the sites of the dwellings where Bahá'u'lláh was kept prisoner.

During the Ten Year Crusade, the Toeg family pioneered to Kirkuk in north-eastern 'Íráq where they spent seven years until they were requested by the National Spiritual Assembly to return to Baghdád in order to give support and encouragement to the Bahá'í community.

In 1970 circumstances forced the Toeg family to leave 'Íráq, and in the early part of 1971 they settled in Canada. At the request of the Canadian National Spiritual Assembly they pioneered to Hull, Quebec, where they helped to re-establish the Spiritual Assembly which had fallen below strength. Mr. Toeg was a member of that Spiritual Assembly until the time of his



*Daoud Toeg*

passing. The home of the Toeg family in Hull became well known throughout the Ottawa Valley for its weekly fireside meetings. These were regularly conducted by Mr. Toeg and Bahá'ís and their friends were always assured of a most warm welcome.

The stresses and strains which Mr. Toeg endured in his latter years sapped his strength. The evening before his passing, he stayed up until after midnight, talking and joking with his family. The following day his heart failed and he passed away in the early evening. He had the distinction of being the first Bahá'í to be buried in Hull. At the commemoration service held on 3 February 1974 and the funeral service the following day, Bahá'ís from the Ottawa Valley, Montreal and Quebec City were present.

### 'INÁYATU'LLÁH AḤMADPÚR

1890–1974

'Ináyatu'lláh Aḥmadpúr was born in the Persian province of Milán, the home of many outstanding Bahá'í scholars, calligraphers, teachers and pioneers. His father, Ḥájí Aḥmad Milání, was a prominent silk merchant who was among the first to support and promulgate the teachings of *Shaykh-Aḥmad-i-Aḥsá'í* and Siyyid Kázim-i-Rashṭí, the 'twin resplendent lights' who heralded the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, and the family became followers of the Báb when His Revelation was brought to Milán by the Letter of the Living, Mullá Yúsif-i-Ardibílí.

On 11 July 1850, two days after the Báb was martyred in Tabríz, His remains were wrapped in a cloak and secretly removed to the silk factory of Ḥájí Aḥmad Milání where they were deposited in a small wooden casket.<sup>1</sup> This was the first of a long succession of places of concealment before the remains of the Báb were befittingly interred on Mt. Carmel.

'Ináyatu'lláh's father died while the boy was quite young and he was cared for by his mother and older brothers who surrounded him with such love that in later life he often remarked that he did not feel that he had lost his father. Once as a small child he was attacked and throttled on the street by a cruel and antagonistic butcher who fled at the approach of one of the believers,

leaving the child fainting. When his brothers established a commercial centre in Tabríz, 'Ináyatu'lláh went to work for them. He became a very studious believer and participated in all the Bahá'í activities.

As a young man he made the pilgrimage twice during the lifetime of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and twice again during the lifetime of Shoghi Effendi. One of his treasured memories of the time spent in the presence of the Master was the procession of believers who in spiritual exultation transported to Bahjí the beautiful carpet which one of the friends had presented as a gift for use in the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh. He often spoke of the joy of that day when the friends sang songs in the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Throughout his life he strove to follow the example of the Master, and his loving nature, his thoughtfulness and generosity, won him the appellation 'Uncle', a title of affection and respect by which he was known throughout his life not only by the Bahá'ís but by some Government officials.

'Ináyatu'lláh left a touching written account of his pilgrimages in the time of the Guardian, recording that Shoghi Effendi asked him various questions about what 'Abdu'l-Bahá had said when 'Ináyatu'lláh was in His presence. The Guardian treated him with much love and kindness, enquired after his family and commented that 'Ináyatu'lláh should be grateful that the members of his family were devout, steadfast and veteran believers. He said that 'Ináyatu'lláh had been twice confirmed in his service to the Cause; that he had been confirmed in the days of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and had continued to render outstanding services after His passing. The Guardian requested that 'Ináyatu'lláh chant the verses of the Báb on his behalf when he visited *Chihriq*.

After being elected a member of the first National Spiritual Assembly of Írán, 'Ináyatu'lláh transferred his residence from Tabríz to Tihrán. His house in Tihrán gradually became a centre for the gatherings of the friends and a haven for the believers who poured into the capital from the provinces.

At a time when the believers in a village in the mountains of *Ádhirbáyján* were about to be engulfed by tribulations instigated by a fanatical element, the Guardian asked him to go to the village immediately and make plans to protect the Bahá'ís. 'Ináyatu'lláh obeyed and upon his arrival approached the chief instigator of the

<sup>1</sup> Shoghi Effendi, *Information Statistical and Comparative 1844–1952*, p. 20.



'Ináyatu'lláh Ahmadpur

revolt against the Bahá'ís. As a result of the sincerity, bravery and purity of love displayed by 'Ináyatu'lláh the man softened and not only prevented an uprising but opened his heart to listen to the fundamental verities of the Cause. In a later period, again at the request of Shoghi Effendi, 'Ináyatu'lláh settled in Chihriq where he built a house and lived alone for a very long time, developing friendships with the Kurds, the townspeople and the government officers which no doubt contributed to the safeguarding of the Bahá'í historic sites in that area.

Eventually he had a heart attack which resulted in partial paralysis but did not prevent him from continuing his services to the Faith he defended so valiantly, loved so abundantly and supported so generously. He drew much happiness from the knowledge that his own children were dispersed as pioneers throughout the world in Asia, Europe and Africa.

The physical temple gradually gave way. With his passing in Tíhrán in February 1974, the Persian friends lost a kind and loving 'Uncle' whose services were extolled by the Universal House of Justice in a cable dated 21 February:

HEARTS GRIEVED PASSING DEDICATED  
STAUNCH PROMOTER CAUSE INAYATULLAH  
AHMADPUR STOP HIS PERSEVERANCE LOYALTY

LONG RECORD SERVICE LOVINGLY REMEM-  
BERED PRAYING SHRINES PROGRESS HIS SOUL  
CONVEY WARMEST SYMPATHY RELATIVES AD-  
VISE HOLD BEFITTING MEMORIAL GATHERINGS  
THROUGHOUT COUNTRY

A. Q. FAIZÍ

## MARY ASHLEY ELSTON

1898-1974

DEEPLY GRIEVED PASSING DEVOTED HANDMAID  
BAHAULLAH STEADFAST PIONEER HIS CAUSE  
VARIOUS LANDS MARY ELSTON ASSURE DEAR  
ALLEN RELATIVES PROFOUND SYMPATHY LOV-  
ING PRAYERS HOLY SHRINES PROGRESS HER  
SOUL. *Universal House of Justice*

Mary Ashley Elston was born in Albion, Michigan on 23 November 1898 of an English father and an American mother. Her father, John P. Ashley, was President of Albion College in Michigan. Mary attended Albion College and then Grove Schools in California.

I first met Mary and her four children in 1951 when she was married to Raymond Farwell who became a Bahá'í in that year. Mary had embraced the Faith a year or so earlier. It was in their home that I accepted the Faith.

Shortly after becoming a Bahá'í, when I was in Alaska, I learned of Raymond Farwell's death. Future events led to my marriage to Mary and our decision to pioneer. Mary told me that it had always been in her heart to perform some mission for God and asked me to consider pioneering some place with her. Little did she know that this was my intention when I became a Bahá'í. We wrote to the Guardian for instructions in response to which his secretary wrote on his behalf drawing attention to the great need for pioneers in Africa and Europe.

We left Seattle, Washington in November 1952 and attended the Intercontinental Conference held in Kampala, Uganda, in February 1953, the first of the four Bahá'í Intercontinental Conferences held in observance of the centenary of the birth of Bahá'u'lláh's mission. We decided to remain in Kampala as pioneers.

Mary was always in the thick of things and was very much loved by the African believers



*Mary Ashley Elston*

and other Bahá'í friends everywhere. During her fourteen years in East Africa, Mary made five major moves to places in that territory within the countries of Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. During this time she helped to establish many Local Spiritual Assemblies and for twelve years served as secretary of various Local Assemblies. Mary enjoyed reasonably good health for the first ten years even though she contracted the dreaded tick-typhus the first year. In 1954 her doctors recommended that she move to a lower altitude, preferably the sea-coast, but she laboured on undeterred. Only the last eight years of her pioneering efforts were spent by the sea in Tanga, Tanzania. In that period she served on the Tanga Local Spiritual Assembly as secretary and, in 1964 when the National Spiritual Assembly of Tanzania came into being, she served as secretary. In 1965 she again was elected to the same office.

During the last eight years of our pioneering efforts in Africa I noticed a decline in her ability to perform her secretarial duties, a burden she had carried cheerfully, without criticism or complaint. Parkinson's disease had been slowly taking its toll and in the winter of 1965 I insisted that we return to the United States. Mary finally agreed and we left for Florida where we lived for a year. Mary served on the Local Spiritual

Assembly of Fort Myers for the first part of 1966 until we moved to Marco Island where a Bahá'í group was formed. My work at Marco Island ended in May 1967.

We promptly made the last move in our Bahá'í activities to Kailua-Kona, Hawaii. Mary was elected to the Local Spiritual Assembly of Kailua-Kona and again took on the responsibilities of secretary. She had to relinquish her duties after the first year and over the next five years she slowly deteriorated and eventually became completely immobile. She passed away on 3 March 1974.

I was with her when she died and saw her buried in the very beautiful Bahá'í plot at the Hawaiian Memorial Park. The green rolling hills surrounded by the cathedral-like cliffs bordering Nuuanu and Kalihi Valleys, a small pond close by populated with swimming mallard that Mary loved so well—this is my earthly idea of what Mary would be very happy with.

Mary and I made our pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1954. During the ten days which were spent in the presence of the beloved Guardian he infused us with a spirit that caused us both never to fear again.

ALLEN ELSTON

#### MARY OLGA KATHERINE MILLS

1882–1974

Knight of Bahá'u'lláh

Olga Mills was born on 24 October 1882 in Grimma, in what was then the German State of Saxony. Her mother was Katherine Swinburne Biemann of Northumberland, England and her father was Ferdinand Biemann, a German lawyer. Olga married Halford Percival Mills, an Englishman, while she was working in the United States. Possessed of an enquiring mind and an adventurous spirit, Olga began to travel widely at the age of twenty-two. She visited many European countries and through the assistance of her brother, an officer in the German Navy, she visited China, Manchuria, Japan and Russia. Until the end of her life she was able to tell fascinating stories of her travels and particularly of her visit to the grave of Confucius in China, an experience which thrilled her.

Olga's broad experience with the people of other religions led her along the path of search

until she found the Bahá'í Faith. Although the exact date she visited the Holy Land is not known, it occurred some time before 1930; she remained there for a month at the request of the beloved Guardian to be companion to Effie Baker who was preparing to leave for Persia to photograph the Bahá'í holy sites. Olga would vividly describe her first meeting with the Greatest Holy Leaf; she ran to her and flung herself on the ground at the feet of Bahá'íyyih Khánum 'sobbing her heart out'.

The only record we have from those days is a letter written on behalf of the beloved Guardian, dated 12 July 1931, which refers to one she had written to him exactly a month earlier. The letter refers to Olga's 'last visit to the Holy Shrines' and her subsequent visit to the Bahá'ís in Leipzig and Berlin and the talks she gave there. An interesting reference is made in this letter to 'our zealous and competent Bahá'í teacher, Mr. Benke,<sup>1</sup> who had gone to Sofia in order to help Miss Jack'.<sup>2</sup> Apparently Olga had befriended George Adam Benke and, during World War II when she found herself stranded in Leipzig with her brother, she maintained close contact with Lina Benke, the widow of Mr. Benke. During the 'time of prohibition' in Germany, these two devoted ladies met several times a week for study and prayer and even when Mrs. Benke went to Neckargemünd (about May 1944) they kept in touch by correspondence which continued after Mrs. Mills left Germany.

On 4 July 1947, Olga wrote again to Shoghi Effendi and mentioned the possibility of her moving to England. Through his secretary, the Guardian expressed happiness that she had 'survived the terrible ordeal of the war' and in his letter to her of 2 August 1947 he encouraged her to seek the advice of the British National Spiritual Assembly.

Olga arrived in England during the period when the believers in the British Isles were engaged in the Six Year Plan which extended from 1944 to 1950 and which was described by Shoghi Effendi as 'the first collective enterprise undertaken by them for the spread of the Faith



*Mary Olga Katherine Mills*

and the consolidation of its divinely appointed institutions' and 'one of the most significant undertakings embarked upon by members of the Bahá'í National Assemblies during the opening years of the second Bahá'í century'.<sup>3</sup> In the service of this teaching plan Olga began to stand out as a spiritual giant. She was of small build, was apparently affected by the privations she had suffered in Germany and was quiet by nature; but she was widely read, possessed a great sense of humour and was immediately welcome in any society. She served as a travelling teacher in England and in early 1948, even though she had reached her sixty-sixth year, she pioneered to Nottingham. In March of that year she wrote to the Guardian about her experiences as a pioneer and her efforts to teach and become self-supporting. He graciously replied on 11 April assuring her of his 'loving and fervent prayers'. In October 1948 she again pioneered, this time to Belfast. Within the next year she pioneered to Edinburgh and St. Ives. By February 1950 we read of her moving to Brighton and, in the concluding months of the Six Year Plan, she moved into Bournemouth. Six pioneer moves to three countries in just over

<sup>1</sup> George Adam Benke, 'first European martyr for the Faith'; letter dated 21 June 1956, written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany. 'In Memoriam', *The Bahá'í World*, vol. V, p. 416.

<sup>2</sup> Marion Jack, 'immortal heroine', 'shining example to pioneers'; Shoghi Effendi, cablegram dated 29 March 1954. 'In Memoriam', *The Bahá'í World*, vol. XII, p. 674.

<sup>3</sup> *The Bahá'í World*, vol. X, p. 53.



two years on the part of a gentle lady in her late sixties who always sought to be self-supporting, is service of the highest order! Yet on 4 August 1950 she again wrote to the Guardian offering to pioneer overseas. The Guardian's secretary replied on his behalf 'It does not seem to him you could very well undertake service outside the British Isles . . .' but Shoghi Effendi added in his own handwriting, 'May the Almighty bless, guide and protect you, aid you to extend the range of your activities, remove all obstacles from your path, and enable you to win great victories for His Faith and its institutions . . .'

That was sufficient for Olga. When the Ten Year Crusade was launched in 1953 she begged him to allow her to move to another country. In July of that year he responded urging her to 'leave as promptly as possible for either Malta or Cyprus, preferably Malta, and there engage yourself with all your powers in teaching the Faith'. In a postscript in his own hand Shoghi Effendi expressed the hope that she would be rewarded 'for your valour' and enabled 'to win innumerable victories in the service of His glorious Faith'.

Within three months this indomitable, indefatigable stalwart of the Faith wrote to the Guardian stating that she had joined the Knight of Bahá'u'lláh for Malta, Miss Una Townshend, at her post. The Guardian added Olga's name to the Roll of Honour and his secretary wrote on his behalf, 'He is praying for you both and urges you to persevere and never lose heart.'

By July 1954 Olga was able to write to the Guardian that she had been joined by Dr. John Mitchell who had resigned as treasurer of the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles to pioneer to Malta and for whom she was acting as housekeeper. In one of her many reports to the European and Asian Teaching Committee, this faithful soul, as zealous as ever in her seventy-second year, wrote that she had met '... an old lady who knew Professor Browne<sup>4</sup> and his family in Oxford, and seemed alert . . . !'

Malta proved to be a difficult pioneer post to maintain. Miss Townshend had to leave; Mr. Mitchell returned home due to an illness from which he never recovered; pioneers tried to settle but were unable to stay for long; conditions for teaching were difficult and progress

was minimal. In 1956 the Guardian's secretary wrote on his behalf: '... He advises you, if the situation should become worse, to try your utmost to remain at your post, which he knows is the deep desire of your heart, also. He greatly appreciates your constancy and your spirit.' In a letter written in March 1957 she again received encouragement which gave her renewed strength: 'He is happy to see that, although your local resources have been depleted . . . you nevertheless are remaining to "hold the fort", a service to which he attaches the greatest importance . . .' The letter invited her to take comfort in the knowledge that eventually receptivity to the Faith would increase and the Cause would become firmly established in Malta. This was the last letter she received from the beloved Guardian and she was to sustain many vicissitudes before witnessing her greatest triumph.

At the end of the Ten Year Plan she spent some time in hospital because of a fractured wrist but even during her convalescence she wrote regular reports to the Teaching Committee. A letter written in June 1963 and which took three days to write describes the deformity of her right wrist and fingers: '... It is suggested I should have my wrist broken again and re-set, which is risky at my age. I do not feel the courage to go through another four months like the last . . .' But a month later one of the pioneers wrote that Olga had visited her to commemorate a Bahá'í Holy Day and that '... she seems much her old self again, though her wrist tires easily'.

Ten years were to pass before the exciting, long-awaited day arrived and this dear soul was able to witness the establishment of the first Local Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Malta, in the spring of 1973. In the photographs taken of this first Spiritual Assembly and of the subsequent visit to Malta of the Hand of the Cause Ugo Giachery we have our last glimpses of Olga Mills, ninety-one years of age, happy and triumphant, her constancy rewarded. Gilian Adamson who pioneered to Malta shortly before Olga's death has written: 'Everyone was filled with love for her . . . Those few days we had the honour of visiting her in hospital had a powerful and lasting effect on us. Her very being seemed to sing, "Teach for Bahá'u'lláh!" One of the friends said that the beloved Guardian had told her to remain in Malta "until the wind blows you away". For twenty-one years she has

<sup>4</sup> Edward Granville Browne.

lived in Malta . . . we will always be grateful for her devotion and her smile which inspires us to proclaim His Cause.'

On 2 May 1974, in her ninety-second year, after twenty-seven years of dedicated pioneering in four territories, Olga passed away. The Universal House of Justice cabled:

PASSING NOBLE SOUL OLGA MILLS GRIEVOUS  
LOSS BRITISH BAHAI COMMUNITY STOP HER  
LONG STEADFAST DEVOTION BAHAUULLAH  
SHEDS LUSTRE ANNALS FAITH THAT COM-  
MUNITY STOP ISLAND MALTA HISTORICALLY  
FAMOUS CLASSICAL CHRISTIAN ISLAMIC ERAS  
RECIPIENT NEW SPIRITUAL POTENTIALITIES  
THROUGH HEROIC SERVICE KNIGHT  
BAHAULLAH DEDICATED BAND PIONEERS STOP  
EXPRESS FRIENDS RELATIVES LOVING SYMPATHY  
ASSURE ARDENT PRAYERS PROGRESS SOUL.

PHILIP HAINSWORTH

## PRUDENCE GEORGE

1896-1974

Prudence George became a Bahá'í in St. Lambert, Quebec, Canada in 1941. Her first pioneer move was from St. Lambert to Moncton, New Brunswick in answer to a call for pioneers during the first Seven Year Plan of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada, which ended in 1944. In response to the Guardian's appeal for pioneers to Europe, in 1946 Prudence moved, with her daughter, Patricia, to Blackburn, England, thus returning to the country she had left in 1928 to live in Canada. She pioneered to many places during the Six Year Plan in response to requests from the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the British Isles, including Norwich and Bournemouth and, in the years that followed 1950, Edinburgh and Portsmouth. In 1959 she settled in Luxembourg, filling a number of pioneer posts during her four-year stay. At the beginning of the Nine Year Plan she reopened to the Faith Guernsey in the Channel Islands. During her stay there her health began to deteriorate and she moved once more to fill a pioneer post in opening Chelmsford in Essex. Pioneers were needed to help open virgin territory in the Canary Islands and, once more, Prudence responded and

moved to fill a pioneer goal in one of the islands.

In 1969 she returned to the United Kingdom to pioneer in Hereford, and then St. Austell in Cornwall. Due to health problems it became necessary for her to move into the Birmingham community to be with her family, which she did in early 1971. Her health improved and as soon as she began to feel better she insisted on responding to the call from the Universal House of Justice for pioneers to the Canary Islands. She returned there in 1972 and at Riḍván 1974 she helped to form the first Local Spiritual Assembly of Arucas, Canary Islands. However, her physical condition had worsened and in May 1974 she was forced to return to the United Kingdom. Although mentally and spiritually still active, her health continued to deteriorate and she passed peacefully to the Abhá Kingdom on 12 July 1974, in her seventy-eighth year. Her resting place is at the Brandwood End Cemetery, Birmingham. Thus ended a pioneer service that spanned thirty years and covered three continents. At all times Prudence George was truly dedicated to the teaching of the Cause and would seldom let a day pass when she did not find an opportunity to mention the Faith to someone, an acquaintance made in a music appreciation group or a stranger in a bus queue.

In order to support herself during her many pioneer moves she had a wide variety of employment, often as a saleswoman. She particularly enjoyed her venture in Scotland selling pressure cookers from door to door. It was later discovered that she had spent more time teaching the Faith than extolling the virtues of the merchandise; 'The soul is more important than the body,' she said.

Her utter faith in the power of the Greatest Name was illustrated during her stay in the Canary Islands. On one occasion a youth attempted to snatch her handbag and her immediate reaction was to call out in a loud voice, 'Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá!' whereupon the lad stopped in his tracks, dropped the handbag and ran. Prudence was left calling him back with open arms in order to give him the benefits of the Message of Bahá'u'lláh. Prudence felt that no one was too high or too low to receive this great teaching. On becoming a Bahá'í in Canada, having been a very devout Christian, her first desire was to pass on this precious gift to the Anglican Bishop of Montreal and she was utterly amazed when he rejected it.



*Prudence George*

There must be many Bahá'ís in all parts of the world who have their own particular memories of Prudence George but common to all must be a recognition of her exemplary dedication to the service of the Bahá'í Cause and her deep love of Bahá'u'lláh.

Informed of the passing of Prudence George the Universal House of Justice wrote to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United Kingdom on 25 July 1974:

'This ardent servant of Bahá'u'lláh rendered devoted service to His Cause in the pioneering field and we are confident that she now has her reward. Please convey to her daughter and relatives the expression of our loving sympathy; they may derive great comfort from the memory of her constant services and the fact that she passed away in her daughter's home and not in some remote and lonely outpost.'

#### LAURA CLIFFORD DREYFUS-BARNEY

1879-1974

ASCENSION DISTINGUISHED MAIDSERVANT  
LAURA DREYFUS BARNEY FURTHER DEPLETES  
SMALL BAND PROMOTERS FAITH HEROIC AGE

STOP MEMBER FIRST HISTORIC GROUP PARIS  
TAUGHT BY MAY MAXWELL SHE ACHIEVED  
IMMORTAL FAME THROUGH COMPILATION SOME  
ANSWERED QUESTIONS UNIQUE ENTIRE FIELD  
RELIGIOUS HISTORY STOP OFFERING ARDENT  
PRAYERS SACRED THRESHOLD PROGRESS HER  
SOUL ABHA KINGDOM URGE ALL COMMUNITIES  
FRANCE HOLD MEMORIAL GATHERINGS GRATI-  
TUDE OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT. *Universal  
House of Justice*

Laura Barney was born into a family of scholars and artists in the United States of America. She completed her education in France during the last decade of the nineteenth century. With her keen intelligence, logical mind and investigating nature, she devoted her whole life, from adolescence, to improving human relations, bringing together peoples of different races, classes and nations. She was a brilliant speaker and made several trips around the world lecturing on the impelling necessity of a united world. She was a true pioneer in this field of activity at a time when the world was still geographically and politically divided and quite insensible to the call of spiritual unity. Her enthusiasm for this ideal never lessened. Those who had the rare privilege of knowing her over a period of many decades can testify that her undaunted zeal for the objective of the brotherhood of man remained alive and glowing to the very last day of her life on earth.

She became acquainted with the Bahá'í Revelation through May Ellis Bolles (Maxwell) in Paris *circa* 1900. Laura Barney's encounter with the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh proved to be the spark that ignited a fire never to be quenched. Her ideals and aspirations found fulfilment in her activities in the service of the Bahá'í Faith, services that were joyfully rendered, with steadfastness and perseverance, for nearly four score years. Of the early pilgrims from the West who visited 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the Holy Land toward the end of the last century and in the opening years of the present one, she emerges as one of the most dedicated and active followers of Bahá'u'lláh. The writer recalls her vivid description of her first meeting with 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the expression of rapture and wonderment with which, from time to time, she related many details of her various visits to His household and the devoted services she was able to render.

As her visits to the Holy Land became more frequent, she was privileged to spend long periods of time with the Master and His immediate family. She met Shoghi Effendi when he was a small boy and wrote of that first meeting: 'Shoghi Effendi! How well I remember the first time I saw him in the Holy Land. He was then a little boy of five or six years of age, clothed in a brown Persian garment, chanting a prayer in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's presence; his earnest eyes, his firm mouth looked predestined.'<sup>1</sup> Her recollections of that extraordinary child were vivid and authentic. She became aware of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's plan to provide for His grandson an education in English literature. At the time of one of her visits, Shoghi Effendi had an Italian governess. Laura Barney was able to secure the services of a refined and cultured English lady who proved to be a great asset in the education of that gifted child in the study of the English language, a study which he joyfully pursued and which led him to master that idiom to perfection in the years that followed. Laura Barney's affection for the child grew into an ever deepening sense of admiration and respect.

Visits to 'Abdu'l-Bahá became the centre of Laura Barney's life and inspiration. On a month-long visit in 1905 she was accompanied by her mother, Mrs Alice Barney,<sup>2</sup> who had become a Bahá'í. Mrs. Alice Barney was a poet, a painter, a musician and an architect. Her paintings even now can be seen in the National Museum of Washington, D.C. In 1903 she had painted a portrait of the celebrated Bahá'í teacher, Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl, during his visit to Washington.

Among Laura Barney's many achievements and services in the Faith the most outstanding is the one that has immortalized her name the world over—the compilation of the renowned volume *Some Answered Questions*. Unique in all religious literature, the book consists of 'table talks' given by the Master in response to the questions of Laura Barney. *I have given you my tired moments*, Laura Barney records the Master as saying as He arose from the table after answering one of her questions. These informal discussions took place in the period from 1904 to 1906 described by Shoghi Effendi as the most troublous and dramatic of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's ministry when He was still confined to 'Akká as a



Laura Clifford Dreyfus-Barney

prisoner of the Turkish government and permitted to receive only a few visitors. 'It was at this juncture,' states Shoghi Effendi in *God Passes By*, 'that that celebrated compilation of His table talks, published under the title *Some Answered Questions*, was made, talks given during the brief time He was able to spare, in the course of which certain fundamental aspects of His Father's Faith were elucidated, traditional and rational proofs of its validity adduced, and a great variety of subjects regarding the Christian Dispensation, the Prophets of God, Biblical prophecies, the origin and condition of man and other kindred themes authoritatively explained.' The work was first published in London in 1908.

The existence of such a remarkable manuscript prompted the distinguished French scholar, Hippolyte Dreyfus,<sup>3</sup> the first French believer, whose acceptance of the Faith dated from 1901, to offer to translate the document into French. M. Dreyfus and Laura Barney collaborated on the translation and, as she later related, it was during this undertaking that they discovered how well they could work together. They were married in 1911, but the intervening years were filled with many activities undertaken jointly, including travels, at the

<sup>3</sup> See Shoghi Effendi's tribute to Hippolyte Dreyfus-Barney, letter of 21 December 1928, published in *Bahá'í Administration*, pp. 157-159, and in *The Bahá'í World*, vol. III, p. 210.

<sup>1</sup> 'Only a Word', *The Bahá'í World*, vol. V, p. 667.

<sup>2</sup> See 'In Memoriam', *The Bahá'í World*, vol. V, p. 419.

request of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, to Máh-Kú and other parts of Persia, to *Ishqábád*, Russian Turkistán, where the construction of the first Bahá'í House of Worship was being completed, and to Indo-China and other regions of eastern Asia.

After the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, but fortunately before the beginning of the second World War, the original Persian text of *Some Answered Questions* as well as some important and precious Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá addressed to Laura Barney and to a close friend, Mrs. Tewksbury Jackson, were transmitted to the Guardian through a trusted person.

Laura's abiding devotion to the Master, the Greatest Holy Leaf and Munirih *Khánum*, the wife of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, was repaid with trust, love and gratitude. 'Abdu'l-Bahá extolled the variety of her services in many Tablets, and the ladies of the household presented her with many gifts, mostly pieces of jewellery, which were entrusted to this writer and delivered by him to the Universal House of Justice a few years ago.

At the request of Mrs. Tewksbury Jackson who on one occasion accompanied her to the Holy Land, Laura Barney helped in the project of purchasing the land and of constructing a suitable home for 'Abdu'l-Bahá and His family at No. 7 Haparsim (Persian) Street, Haifa.<sup>1</sup> In relating this episode to the writer later, Mme Dreyfus-Barney said: 'For some time, therefore, and meeting with many obstacles, I was occupied with purchasing the land, having a design for the house made—of course with the approval of the Master—and seeing that its construction was carried out efficiently and promptly. All this kept me occupied for some time.'

To recount in chronological order the Bahá'í services of Laura Dreyfus-Barney in America, Europe and other parts of the world is beyond the scope of these few pages but mention should be made of some of her humanitarian and social activities in her work for world peace.<sup>2</sup> During World War I she served in Paris in the American Ambulance Corps, took part in the establishment of the first children's hospital in Avignon, and worked in a hospital with war refugees. At the end of that global conflict she placed her

faith in the League of Nations and represented the International Council of Women in that body, playing an important role in cultural exchange. She was the only woman named by the League Council to sit on the Sub-Committee of Experts on Education, a post which she held for many years, beginning in 1926. On 23 July 1925 she was appointed *Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur*. In that same year she formed under the aegis of the League of Nations the 'Liaison Committee of Major International Organizations to promote through Education better Understanding between Peoples and Classes' and became a permanent member of the committee as well as its liaison officer. In 1934 she became a member of the Advisory Committee of the League of Nations on Teaching; she was also a member of the French Committee on Intellectual Co-operation.

Her services with international organizations were indeed extensive. She became the convener of the Cinematographic and Broadcasting Committee of the International Council of Women, and in 1931 she organized, under the auspices of the International Institute of Educational Cinematography of the League of Nations, the first congress for women, held in Rome in 1934, specializing in the dissemination of educational material for peace by means of motion pictures. At this Congress she was elected one of the six vice-presidents, the only woman chosen. In 1937 she was appointed, by the French Minister of Commerce, a member of the cinema section of the International Exposition. In the same year she was elevated to the rank of *Officier de la Légion d'Honneur* by a decree dated 31 January, having been elected president of the Peace and Arbitration Commission of the International Council of Women.

After the death of her husband in December 1928, she tried to overcome her loneliness by intensifying her efforts for the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh and the cause of peace. In 1941 she was a member of the American delegation to the Conference on Cultural Co-operation held in Havana, Cuba. In May 1944, at the request of the Guardian, she attended the celebration in Wilmette of the first centenary of the birth of the Bahá'í Faith, although the second World War was raging in almost every continent of the globe. She gave, on that special occasion, a moving address that recalled her early days in 'Akká, and a review of forty years of

<sup>1</sup> See 'The House of the Master', *Bahá'í Holy Places at the World Centre, The Universal House of Justice*, 1968; pp. 54-57.

<sup>2</sup> For a full account see *Who's Who in America*, vol. 29.

developments in the Faith in which she mentioned the names of many Bahá'ís who, like her, had laboured to spread the fragrances of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation in many parts of the world.

During the period of the second World War, Laura Dreyfus-Barney was the delegate of the French National Committee of Women to the Commission on Racial Affairs. At the end of the war, with the birth of the United Nations, she became an officer of the Commission of the Council of Women for the Control and Reduction of Armaments, located in Geneva. During the years that followed she was very active in the work of the Economic and Social Council of United Nations in that city. As this writer had been appointed Observer for the International Bahá'í Community, we frequently met at United Nations gatherings. When the Food and Agriculture Organization moved from Washington to Rome, early in 1950, she often visited Rome and was a welcome guest in our home. Those were unique opportunities to listen to the reminiscences of her dedicated Bahá'í life and to hear at first hand many episodes and facts from her personal experiences with 'Abdu'l-Bahá, His family, Shoghi Effendi, and her much loved husband, Hippolyte. After my wife and I returned to Europe from America in 1969, we called on Mme Dreyfus-Barney whenever we were in Paris and there spoke joyfully of all that was dear to our hearts.

For the last few years of her life she remained at her home, seeing some friends occasionally and living with the memories of her active and fruitful life. Although her body was handicapped by rheumatism, her mind was as alert and brilliant as ever. Her beautiful earthly life came to an end on 18 August 1974, five years before the centenary of her birth. She is buried in the Passy Cemetery of Paris.

(Excerpts from an English translation of 'Laura Clifford Dreyfus-Barney—An Appreciation' by Ugo R. Giachery, published in *La Pensée Bahá'íe*, No. 56, June 1976.)

### MATILDA (BETTY) BECKER

1887–1974

ASSURE PRAYERS HOLY SHRINES PROGRESS  
SOUL BETTY BECKER VALIANT SERVANT FAITH

PIONEER ALASKA PUNTA ARENAS CHILE MADE  
VITAL CONTRIBUTION ROOTS CAUSE NORTH  
SOUTH AMERICA STOP SUGGEST MEMORIAL  
MEETING YOUR COMMUNITY. *Universal House  
of Justice*

Betty Becker was born into a German Mennonite family and was raised on a farm in Kansas, U.S.A. where she learned to love the good and simple things of life. Her quest for spiritual truth was triggered by a childhood experience of which she later wrote: 'I remember when my brother, who was a few years older than I, was baptized. The first thing I did was rush him to my room and ask him whether he felt changed and had received the Holy Spirit. He replied in no uncertain terms: "No, I did not. And don't you ever go up there in front of everyone and make a fool of yourself." This confused me very profoundly and marked the start of my search for truth.'

The search for a religion to which she could commit herself continued even after Betty completed her university education and business training and began to work for an insurance company in Kansas City, Missouri. She maintained an open outlook towards all religions, seeking one that would answer her needs. She attended many churches, sang in their choirs and listened to the clergy but still was left unsatisfied. In 1933 she attended a lecture by Mrs. Orcella Rexford<sup>1</sup> (Louise Cutts-Powell) and through her learned about the Bahá'í Faith which she accepted in November of that year. Betty's love of life and people, coupled with her serious study of the teachings, qualified her as a radiant and attractive teacher. She welcomed a constant flow of guests to her home to hear the message of Bahá'u'lláh. When a Local Spiritual Assembly was formed in Kansas City in 1935 she was elected its chairman.

Betty said that all her life she had felt a desire to go to Alaska or to South America, or both. When the Guardian mentioned Alaska in his cablegram of 26 January 1939 encouraging pioneers to settle in nine specific unsettled goal areas in North America under the first United States Seven Year Teaching Plan (1937–1944), Betty responded. She left Kansas City on 11 July 1939, attended the Bahá'í Summer School in Geyserville, California, sailed from Seattle,

<sup>1</sup> See 'In Memoriam', *The Bahá'í World*, vol. XI, p. 495.

Washington a few days later and arrived in Juneau, Alaska on 1 August. Her efforts to settle in Juneau and Sitka proving fruitless, she joined Honor Kempton in Anchorage where she became permanently established in March 1941 and was a stable member of an ever-changing Bahá'í community for the next eighteen and a half years. In 1943 when the first Local Spiritual Assembly in Alaska was formed in Anchorage, Betty was elected recording secretary and served on that body for many years.

Betty was active in the U.S.O. (United Services Organization) in Anchorage from its inception and throughout World War II was a senior social hostess. She also sponsored recreational activities for civil servants and military personnel and contributed the money she earned in this way to support the construction of the Bahá'í House of Worship in Wilmette. She also helped to establish the Anchorage United Nations Association and was one of its officers. As a Welcome Wagon hostess she helped newcomers become acquainted with Anchorage and assisted them in finding housing accommodation during the scarcity of the war years. Her Sunday morning waffle breakfasts held on a regular basis she described as her most fertile teaching activity. These were always well attended and many enquirers became Bahá'ís as a result of these informal and friendly gatherings.

At the age of seventy-two, after spending twenty years in Alaska, Betty sought a new field of service, confident that she was leaving behind in her adopted and much loved land a firm foundation for the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. She offered her services to the International Teaching Committee of the United States and was assigned to Chile. On 8 October 1959 she arrived in Santiago and within three weeks took up residence in Valdivia, a city with a large German-speaking population. Betty's fluency in German enabled her to begin immediately teaching the Faith even as she began a study of Spanish.

On 12 May 1960—only nine days before a devastating earthquake hit Valdivia—Betty opened the final chapter in her physical life by pioneering to Punta Arenas, Chile, the southernmost outpost of the Faith in the world, a city greatly praised and often mentioned by our beloved Guardian. The Local Spiritual Assembly of Punta Arenas was formed in 1945,



*Matilda (Betty) Becker*

one of the first in South America. Betty tirelessly served as a member of this assembly for fourteen years.

Despite the difficult climate of this austral region and the apathy and indifference she encountered, Betty's radiant nature overcame these obstacles and she served the Faith with a vitality and vibrancy of spirit which belied her years. She displayed great generosity and kindness and during the course of her never-ceasing activities she greatly widened her social contacts. Impatient with her weakening physical condition she continued—in her own words—to recharge daily her spiritual and mental batteries, to keep on going and not despair. Although her eyesight began to fail she was able to attend the great Bahá'í World Congress held in London in 1963 and to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1970. She also travelled to various centres in Chile to attend conferences and conventions.

For fourteen years Betty sowed the seeds of the Faith in Punta Arenas. Perhaps it was during this constant struggle that a dream was born in her soul, the establishment of a permanent Bahá'í Centre in Punta Arenas, a goal toward which she contributed sacrificially until her death.

In April 1973 Betty suffered a stroke which kept her bedridden. One year and five months later she contracted pneumonia which proved fatal to an already thin and frail body. On this same day the deed to the Punta Arenas Bahá'í Centre, the first local Ḥaẓíratu'l-Quds in Chile, was placed in her hands. Seven days later, in her eighty-seventh year, she passed to the Abhá realm, on 27 September 1974.

From Anchorage to Punta Arenas this valiant handmaiden truly lived these Words of Bahá'u'lláh, forever inscribed above her resting place:

*Let not a man glory in this, that he loves his country; let him rather glory in this, that he loves his kind.*

### MAḤBÚBIH NA'ÍMÍ

1899–1974

GRIEVED NEWS PASSING DEVOTED HANDMAID  
BAHAULLAH MAHBUBI H NAIMI HER LONG REC-  
ORD SERVICES TEACHING PIONEERING FIELDS  
UNFORGETTABLE SUPPLICATING HOLY SHRINES  
RICHEST REWARDS PROGRESS HER SOUL ABHA  
KINGDOM CONVEY MEMBERS FAMILY LOVING  
SYMPATHY. *Universal House of Justice*

Any survey of outstanding Bahá'í women in the Formative Age of our beloved Faith should prominently include the dear name of Maḥbúbih Na'ímí. Generations yet unborn will derive encouragement and inspiration from contemplation of her feats, her self-sacrificial efforts, her dedication and heroism. She was a distinguished promoter of the Cause and achieved signal victories in the teaching and pioneering fields. At a time when their share in Bahá'í community activities was minimal, Maḥbúbih Na'ímí was a source of inspiration and provided much-needed spiritual leadership to the Bahá'í women of Persia. The predominant passion of her life was teaching the Bahá'í Faith, a love she must have learned from her immortal, devoted and radiant father, the late Jináb-i-Na'im, one of the greatest teachers and poets of the early days of the Cause in Persia.

Maḥbúbih Khánum was born in 1899 in Ṭíhrán, in a district where Bahá'ís lived, and studied at a small Bahá'í school. Her learned father tutored her in Persian and Arabic litera-

ture and she became an eloquent speaker and fluent writer. She later studied in the American School for Girls where she learned English. She married Jináb-i-Shaykh Muḥsin who, immediately after declaring himself a Bahá'í as a result of the teaching efforts of Jináb-i-Fáḍil Máẓandirání, sold all his possessions including his collection of precious and rare old books and made his way to the Holy Land to enter the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The Master called him 'Dabír Mu'ayyad', meaning 'confirmed writer'; he became an erudite and dedicated exponent of the Faith.

Mrs. Na'ímí and her husband were asked by the Spiritual Assembly of Hamadán to go to that thriving Bahá'í community and assume responsibility for the management and the teaching of classes of the Ta'id and Maḥabbat Bahá'í schools. Maḥbúbih Khánum became seriously ill when in Hamadán and everyone despaired of her life. At this time she dreamed of the Master Who ordered her to arise. She humbly replied in that vision that she was unable to do so because of illness. Again the Master repeated His command and concluded by exclaiming that this is the day of arising. The memory of this experience stayed vividly with Maḥbúbih throughout her life and the Master's words everlastingly inspired her responses to the needs of the Cause. When, after many years, she reached the shores of Africa as a pioneer, she told the friends of her dream and emphasized the significance of arising to pioneer, teach and dedicate one's life to the service of the Cause of God in this day.

For many years Maḥbúbih Khánum actively served on local and national teaching committees including teaching committees for youth and women, the Nineteen Day Feast Committee of Ṭíhrán, and taught Bahá'í children's classes. She was instrumental in winning many people to the Faith and in deepening their knowledge of the teachings. She lovingly attended to the needs of her family and the education of her children but always gave unstintingly of her time and energy to the promotion of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh.

After the death of her husband when her children were scattered in many different parts of the world, Maḥbúbih Khánum left her home and possessions and began her service as an international pioneer. She first settled in Zanzibar and helped in the formation of its first Bahá'í community. Later she moved to Tan-



zania and opened the town of Morogoro to the Faith. When the Local Spiritual Assembly of Dar-es-Salaam requested her to go to Mwanza for the formation of the first Local Spiritual Assembly she immediately moved there, arriving on the eve of the first day of Riḍvān, and was met at the railway station by many Bahá'ís and their guests. The large and joyous reception accorded the arrival of this seemingly insignificant and unassuming Persian woman created some suspicion on the part of the Police Department. Becoming aware of this, Maḥbúbih Khánum visited the Chief of Police, introduced herself, and explained the situation; in this way the Cause became well known to the officials, the Bahá'ís continued to teach the Faith without obstruction and the Local Spiritual Assembly of Mwanza was formed. 'When we arise to serve,' she wrote at this time, 'we receive the promised confirmations and we actually behold the angels who help us. We also will be privileged to discover the hidden treasures of God . . . individuals who are soon ignited by the love of God and ignite others.'

Instructed to settle in Morogoro again, she launched this time a full-scale teaching programme. Alone and unaided, she travelled to the neighbouring villages, walking many miles in sun or rain to bring the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh

to new centres or to visit her spiritual children in their homes. Her hospitable home in Morogoro was open to the Bahá'ís and their friends; all were received with kindness and love. Although she was sometimes ill and weak she continued to conduct deepening classes for new Bahá'ís and enquirers and persisted in her efforts to carry the Faith to the villages of the Uluguru mountains.

After years of service in Tanzania she returned to Persia to attend to some personal matters and shortly after was asked by the National Spiritual Assembly of Persia to move to Holland where pioneers were much needed. She settled in Haarlem for the formation of its first Local Spiritual Assembly and after approximately a year, in response to a message that her spiritual children in Africa missed her keenly, she returned to Morogoro where, after considerable effort, she was successful in having the education authorities accede to her request to have included in the curriculum of an African agricultural school an hour of Bahá'í religious study. Twice weekly she walked to this class which bore considerable fruit. From early morning until late at night students and enquirers would call at her home for further discussion of the Bahá'í Faith. Her house was a port of call for all Bahá'ís travelling in the area and her hospitality was limitless.

She served for many years on the National Spiritual Assembly of Tanzania and various national and local committees and remained at her post until her health broke down and she sought a more moderate climate. She returned to Haarlem and later pioneered to Lübeck, Germany to assist in the formation of the first Local Spiritual Assembly. Her last years were spent in Hamburg where she served on the Spiritual Assembly, instituted classes for children, conducted deepening classes for youth and devoted her rapidly diminishing strength to the teaching work.

Maḥbúbih Na'ímí had the privilege of making a pilgrimage to the Holy Land three times and attained the presence of the beloved Guardian twice. To the last breath she remembered her African children and continued to pray for them. Two days before her sudden passing on 2 October 1974 a letter came from Africa: 'Come back to us, dear mother, we need you so much.' Alas, this time she could not respond.



*Maḥbúbih Na'ímí*

HÚSHANG NA'ÍMÍ

## SEYMOUR MALKIN

1923-1974

Seymour was born in Chicago, Illinois, on 19 June 1923. His mother, Leona Luber, was of Romanian descent. His father, Jacob Malkin, was born in Russia and came to the United States while still in his teens, shortly before World War I, to escape the religious persecutions of that time. Seymour was raised by his father and paternal grandmother. His grandmother was a devoted and saintly follower of the Jewish Faith and to her Seymour attributed all his spiritual guidance during his childhood.

At the age of nineteen, Seymour enlisted in the United States Air Force and served for three years in the Philippines and Australia. His duties were in radio and special services to uplift the morale of the servicemen through entertainment and radio programmes. Upon his discharge in 1945, he settled in California and studied theatre arts and drama. He did some acting and later opened his own school of drama in Hollywood where he coached aspiring theatre, cinema and television actors. Shortly before hearing about the Bahá'í Faith, Seymour abruptly closed his school, informing his students that he was going to search for God. He felt that life was the true theatre and his specific goal was to find the real purpose of existence. Although he had explored many avenues of religious thought, he had never found the spiritual satisfaction he sought.

Soon after closing his school in 1954, Seymour heard the word 'Bahá'í' from one of his former students. In the home of Sando Berger he saw a copy of *The Hidden Words* by Bahá'u'lláh and knew at once that it was an inspired book. He attended firesides and within a few weeks, after an intense study of the Bahá'í Writings, Seymour wholeheartedly accepted Bahá'u'lláh and decided to dedicate his life to Him. Jesma Herbert was one of his most beloved spiritual teachers and he named his daughter for her.

Seymour began his Bahá'í life as a pioneer, first settling in various goal cities near Los Angeles and then, in 1958, in Guadalajara, Mexico. At Ridván of that year he attended the national convention of the National Spiritual Assembly of Central America in Guatemala City where he met Margot Miessler. They decided on their future together at that convention. Seymour soon moved to Tegucigalpa, Honduras



*Seymour Malkin*

where Margot had been pioneering for four years and on 12 November 1958 they were married there. Their honeymoon was spent teaching in the Juan Fernández Islands off the coast of Chile where they remained for about four months. They then went to Campinas, Brazil to help form the first Local Spiritual Assembly of that city. Here, Jesma Layli, their daughter, was born in 1959. A year later he took his family back to the United States and settled in Kokomo, Indiana to help establish its first Local Spiritual Assembly in 1961. Their son, Edmund Jacob was born there. In 1962 they settled in Muncie, Indiana to assist the struggling Bahá'í group there. Within a few months he received a call from the Hand of the Cause Dhikru'lláh Khádem asking if he were willing to go to Chile immediately. Seymour's response was always immediate and wholehearted. He arrived in Chile within three weeks and was met and assisted by the Hand of the Cause Abu'l-Qásim Faizí. Seymour's family joined him shortly after and they settled in Temuco. During this period Seymour was named an Auxiliary Board member and collaborated with the Hand of the Cause Jalál Kházeh in the work of the protection of the Faith. Although he was unable to fulfil his longstanding desire to attend

the London Congress in 1963, Seymour felt spiritually compensated by being able to witness the beginning of mass teaching in Chile and the acceptance of the Faith by the first Mapuche Indians.

The Malkins returned to the United States and served in various centres between 1964 and 1970. A third child, Vali, was born in 1964. They returned to South America in 1970 in response to an appeal from the International Goals Committee of the United States and settled in Santo Amaro, Brazil where they helped form the first Local Spiritual Assembly the following year.

From the day Seymour accepted it, the Faith became the dominating passion of his life. Wherever he lived there was a weekly fireside held in his home. At the last Nineteen Day Feast he attended before his death he had the happy experience of welcoming his daughter, Jesma Layli, as a declared Bahá'í.

During the last month of his life he often referred to his readiness to enter the next world, when called. The family attended a beautiful gathering commemorating the birth of the Báb on 20 October. At this meeting one beautiful spiritual quality was attributed to each of the Bahá'ís to demonstrate the beauty and power of the Bahá'í human flower garden of the São Paulo/Campinas areas. Seymour was called 'Elegance' and Margot 'Courage'. He brought home the love felt by all at the gathering and bestowed it on his wife and children all evening. His heart became overwhelmed in its task of keeping him here any longer; at about 2.00 a.m., with the words 'I'm going', his soul was freed.

The Universal House of Justice cabled on 24 October 1974:

GRIEVED LEARN PASSING PIONEER SEYMOUR  
MALKIN DEVOTED FAITHFUL SERVANT  
BAHAULLAH STOP ASSURE MARGOT OTHER  
MEMBERS FAMILY ARDENT LOVING PRAYERS  
PROGRESS HIS SOUL ABHA KINGDOM.

MARGOT MALKIN

### 'ABBÁS IḤSĀN BAGHDĀDĪ

1915–1975

'Abbás received his primary and secondary education in 'Irāq and pursued his higher studies in Europe, first in Berlin and then in

Bern where, in 1951, he obtained his doctorate in geology.

In 1947, while in Switzerland, 'Abbás was directed and encouraged by Shoghi Effendi to work closely for the spread of the Cause with the members of the European Teaching Committee of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States.

Commencing in the 1960s, 'Abbás taught geology at the University of Baghdád. In the autumn of 1971 he was invited by the Government of Morocco to serve on the faculty of the University of Rabat. Arriving in Rabat he learned to his surprise and disappointment that he was expected to teach in French rather than English. He communicated with the University of Baghdád about this unexpected situation and, meanwhile, complied with the wishes of the National Spiritual Assembly of North West Africa by visiting a number of Bahá'í centres under its jurisdiction, imparting spiritual joy to all those with whom he came in contact. In this period he also visited Bahá'í communities in France and Spain and had the opportunity of visiting the resting place of the beloved Guardian.

'Abbás had been requested by a number of believers in Morocco to consider settling there. He referred the question to the Universal House of Justice and received a reply stating that it would be highly meritorious if he were to remain at his post in Baghdád in the vicinity of the House of Bahá'u'lláh however great a sacrifice this might represent. He wrote again offering to lay down his life as a spiritual ransom for the sublime purpose of hastening the redemption and restoration of the House of Bahá'u'lláh. In reply the Universal House of Justice expressed appreciation of this indication of his dedication to the Cause and assured him of its prayers for the attainment of all his aspirations in service to the Faith.

'Abbás resumed his work as professor of geology at the University of Baghdád for a year or two. The decree of the 'Irāqí Government disbanding all Bahá'í institutions and banning all Bahá'í activities was by then in force and resulted in considerable hardship for the believers in that country. Whenever it was necessary, 'Abbás called upon the authorities concerned, stating the Bahá'í position with courage and dignity, especially during the few months preceding his own imprisonment.



'Abbás Iḥsán Baghdádi

On 27 December 1973 'Abbás was arrested and badly treated by security men on the ground that he was an active Bahá'í. He was sentenced to life imprisonment. When he displayed symptoms of a lung condition he was transferred to a jail hospital. After giving him thirty injections for his condition which was diagnosed as tuberculosis his doctors discovered that he was suffering from cancer.

Writing from the hospital in October 1974 'Abbás told of his fast deteriorating health and of his total resignation to the will of God. He felt that the end was quickly approaching and expressed the hope that his humble services to the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh and his prolonged suffering would be acceptable in the sight of the Universal House of Justice. He was released from this world on the morning of 20 January 1975.

On 24 January 1975 the Universal House of Justice cabled:

SADDENED NEWS PASSING DEVOTED STEADFAST  
SELFLESS SERVANT BHAULLAH DOCTOR ABBAS  
BAGHDADI WHOSE OUTSTANDING SERVICES  
SHED LUSTRE ANNALS HISTORY FAITH MIDDLE  
EAST STOP HIS SACRIFICES WILL NOT BE IN VAIN  
STOP SUPPLICATING DIVINE THRESHOLD PRO-

GRESS HIS BLESSED SOUL REALM ON HIGH STOP  
CONVEY RELATIVES FRIENDS DEEPEST SYM-  
PATHY.

HASAN ŞAFÁ

## FAWZÍ ZAYNU'L-'ÁBIDIN

1911–1975

Knight of Bahá'u'lláh

DEEPLY GRIEVED PASSING KNIGHT BHAULLAH  
FAWZI ZAYNUL ABIDIN HIS SELFLESS SERVICES  
TEACHING PIONEERING FIELDS LOVINGLY RE-  
MEMBERED CONVEY MEMBERS FAMILY WARM-  
EST SYMPATHY FERVENTLY PRAYING SHRINES  
PROGRESS HIS RADIANT SOUL. *Universal House  
of Justice*

Two words from the message of sympathy of the Universal House of Justice capture the essence of a life consecrated to the Faith of God, for Mr. FawzÍ Zaynu'l-'Ábidín was truly a 'radiant soul'. He and his wife and children were honoured by the beloved Guardian by being named Knights of Bahá'u'lláh for service in the pioneering field in the virgin area of Spanish Morocco.

Fawzi Zaynu'l-'Ábidín, also known as 'Zayn', was born in Cairo, Egypt on 28 January 1911. His father Zaynu'l-'Ábidín Ismá'íl, surnamed by the Master 'Zaynu'l-Mukhlisín' (the adorning of the sincere ones), was a native of Hamadán, Írán, who became illuminated by his belief in Bahá'u'lláh; while in Egypt, 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke in his home. His mother, Ḥamídih Khánum-Áqá, was a native of Shiráz who embraced the Faith in her youth.

In a childhood blessed with an aura of spirituality stood an unforgettable memory: for a very brief moment in Port Said, Fawzi Zaynu'l-'Ábidín saw 'Abdu'l-Bahá walking in the distance.

The young man was a solace to his parents, and a loving and generous soul towards his brothers and sisters, all faithful Bahá'ís. At the early age of twenty he embarked on an artistic career, first as a highly respected teacher and then as Inspector of Technical Art Schools in Egypt. In an international competition he ranked first for his unsurpassed watercolour rendition of a celebrated mosque.

A humble and devoted Bahá'í, he exemplified high standards of hospitality and courtesy and served on the Local Spiritual Assemblies of Cairo, Port Said and Tanta. His design for a monument<sup>1</sup> in the Bahá'í cemetery of Cairo, honouring Lua Getsinger and Mirzá Abu'l-Faql, was approved by the Guardian.

In 1946 he married Bahíyyih 'Alí Sa'd'id-Dín, daughter of a devoted Lebanese believer who, in obedience to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's wishes, came to Egypt where he married 'Ishmat 'Alí Effendi, the daughter of the first Egyptian Bahá'í.

Following an inspiring appeal for pioneers, voiced by the Hand of the Cause 'Alí-Akbar Furútan, Mrs. Zayn challenged the family to arise as pioneers. From that moment, Fawzí Zayn and his wife became an inseparable, spiritually unified couple, dedicated to the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. With their two sons, Kamál and Sharíf, they arrived in Tetuán, Morocco at the onset of the World Crusade, on 11 October 1953. The seemingly insurmountable difficulties of language, material resources and permission to remain in their adopted home beyond the fifteen days for which their visa was originally issued, simply vanished; they had received assurances through the Guardian's secretary of Shoghi Effendi's appreciation and prayers.

The years that followed were years of miracles and victories. Mr. Zayn's reputation as an artist and his impeccable character inspired the respect of students and high officials, Moroccan and Spanish. He became a member of the faculty of the Fine Arts School of Tetuán and was asked to exhibit his work locally, then in Rabat, and won resounding praise from dignitaries and the press. From the beginning, friendships were established that were instrumental in enabling the family to acquire permanent residence and in facilitating discreet yet successful Bahá'í teaching. A family photograph with the first two believers 'deeply impressed' the Guardian who extended 'a hearty welcome into the Faith to the new Bahá'ís'. Mr. Zayn's profound knowledge of the Writings, his deep spiritual insights, his very sensitive approach to the needs of his hearers and his warm eloquence in his native Arabic attracted the hearts of many youth who joyously accepted the Faith and shouldered in turn the responsibility of spreading the message of Bahá'u'lláh. A Local Spirit-



*Fawzí Zaynū'l-'Ábidín*

tual Assembly was thus elected and came to be exclusively formed by Moroccan Bahá'ís. For nine years the Zayn home was the focal point of an expanding community that gave birth to Bahá'í groups in northern Morocco.

In 1961 some of the believers were imprisoned for their beliefs, yet the staunch faith of these youth, some of whom were under sentence of death, became the mark of distinction of that community. At the beginning of this turmoil, which was to end miraculously a year later, Mr. Zayn who in the eyes of the authorities was responsible for introducing the Faith, was asked not to associate with fellow Bahá'ís and was dismissed from his job. Great was the sadness of separation felt by the believers and unspeakable the sorrow of this sensitive soul who, by the force of events, had to leave a country where the best of his spiritual life in this world had taken place.

In Morocco, Mr. Zayn was the secretary of the National Teaching Committee and in Tunis, Tunisia, from 1962 to 1966, he served on the Local Spiritual Assembly with undiminished enthusiasm. From 1966 to 1975 he served on the Local Spiritual Assemblies of Glendale, Arizona; West Hollywood; and Glendale, California.

<sup>1</sup> See *The Bahá'í World*, vol. X, p. 23; vol. XI, p. 196.

His contribution to Tunisian art is attested by the high esteem in which he was held by his superiors in the Arts and Crafts section of the Government. Of his several exhibits in the United States, the most noteworthy was presented in the Brand Library of Glendale, California. His delicate masterpieces, from Iranian miniatures and landscapes to ceramic compositions and Arabic calligraphy, convey a peacefulness that speaks of his Faith. An artist of the soul who painted to glorify the beauty of God's creation, such was the life of this true believer, enamoured with the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh, and detached from worldly desires and ambitions.

He passed away in Glendale, California on 23 March 1975. His last words were a plea to the friends to deepen their knowledge of Bahá'u'lláh's Writings, 'because,' he said, 'this is the only thing that remains in the heart.' Many will thank this gentle father for having led their steps towards the majestic shores of the ocean of Bahá'u'lláh's utterance.

*I ask of Thee by the splendour of the orb of Thy revelation, mercifully to accept from him that which he hath achieved in Thy days. Grant then that he may be invested with the glory of Thy good pleasure and adorned with Thy acceptance.*

KAMÁL (ZAYN) ZEIN

#### CHRISTOPHER V. KUHLASE

1937-1975

*O Son of Spirit! My first counsel is this: Possess a pure, kindly and radiant heart that thine may be a sovereignty ancient, imperishable and everlasting.* Bahá'u'lláh

These words of Bahá'u'lláh were the lodestar of the life of Christopher Vikelizizwe Kuhlase. His 'pure, kindly and radiant heart' won for him friends of all ages and from all walks of life. Just seeing his beaming smile, one would say 'he is unquestionably a Bahá'í.'

Christopher was one of the early Bahá'ís of Swaziland who, as a youth, accepted the Faith when he was a student at the Swazi National High School at Matsapa. He was born in the rural area of Nhlangano, Swaziland in 1937, the

oldest in a family of four brothers and one sister. His brother, Samuel, was high in his praise of Christopher who, he said, had to make a tremendous effort to obtain an education. In an environment that discouraged children from attending school, and with no money to pay school fees, a child really had to display great determination to persist in his schooling. It was necessary for a sincere student to persuade the Department of Education to give him a bursary and then to measure up to a high standard of achievement; no second chance was given if a child failed a course.

When Christopher was attending Matsapa High School the acting Principal learned that Chris had become a member of a strange religion called 'Bahá'í' and was spreading its teachings among his fellow students. The acting Principal threatened him with expulsion if he continued to spread what were considered false ideas. Chris pointed out that Matsapa was a Government school and that the Government stood for freedom of religion. The acting Principal still tried to intimidate him but did not take the step to expel the youth, as Chris asked for a written reason for his dismissal. It took great courage on his part not to recant his belief in the Bahá'í Faith, although refusing to do so could have resulted in Christopher's being deprived of a higher education after working so hard to gain entry into the only school that could qualify him for this.

After graduating from Matsapa High School he entered Pope Pius II College at Roma, Basutoland (now Lesotho) and qualified for a junior secondary teacher's diploma in 1963. From college, he entered the teaching profession and quickly rose to the rank of Headmaster of the Bhunya Primary School which has a student body of 1,000 pupils. His success in raising the standard of education there resulted in his appointment to the position of Headmaster at the Secondary School of Lobamba in the heart and administrative centre of the Swazi nation.

During these years Christopher was exceedingly active in his service to the Bahá'í Faith. He was on various national and local committees and was a member of the first National Spiritual Assembly of Swaziland, Lesotho and Mozambique which was elected in 1967. He served as assistant secretary to this body until he was assigned overseas duties by the Swazi nation.



*Christopher V. Kuhlase*

He was a brilliant and convincing speaker and travelled to many parts of Swaziland giving the message of Bahá'u'lláh.

Swaziland gained its independence in 1968 and those of talent and recognized capacity were called upon to assist the developing nation. Christopher was selected by His Majesty King Sobhuza II to serve on the staff of the Embassy of Swaziland in Washington, D.C. He also served as an alternate member of the delegation representing Swaziland at the United Nations headquarters in New York.

When he returned from the United States in 1969, Christopher joined the Department of Establishment and Training as Assistant Secretary and later was appointed Secretary of the Public Service Commission. He then became Under-Secretary in the Ministry of Works, Power and Communications. In 1972 he was transferred to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as Under-Secretary, the position he held until the time of his fatal accident.

During his travels in his capacity as an employee of the Swaziland Government, both in the United States and in various countries which he visited as a representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he met many Bahá'ís and gained a deep knowledge of the

Faith and an appreciation of its capacity to solve the complex problems of the world, and he was able to impart that knowledge to many outstanding people whom he met from diverse nations of the world.

His death, even as his life, was given in service to his beloved Bahá'u'lláh. Shortly before the untimely automobile accident which took his life on 29 March 1975, Christopher had instructed his wife that he must be given a Bahá'í burial, little knowing how soon the occasion would arise. His funeral was conducted from the Leroy Ioas National Bahá'í Centre in Mbabane, Swaziland and was attended by between 400 and 500 mourners. The procession of cars which slowly made its way to the immaculate and beautiful gardens of the Bahá'í Centre was over a mile in length. Many of his friends from Government service attended the funeral and spoke most lovingly of his services to the Government and to the people of Swaziland; they expressed the hope that another of his calibre of integrity, honesty and brilliance would arise in the service of the nation. No event the Bahá'í community could have arranged could have afforded an opportunity for a more eloquent proclamation of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh.

BENJAMIN N. DLAMINI  
VALERA F. ALLEN

## RÚḤÍ ARBÁB

1914-1975

Rúḥí Arbáb was born into a distinguished Bahá'í family in 'Ishqábád, Russian Turkistán where his forebears had emigrated from Írán. He was a bright and capable child and had an exceptionally good memory. He studied in the Bahá'í primary school in 'Ishqábád and then entered the State intermediate school. He acquired an extensive knowledge of the Faith from notable Bahá'í scholars including Muḥammad-'Alí Qá'íní, Siyyid Mihdí Gulpáygání and 'Alí-Akbar Furútan. He enjoyed literature and was encouraged to write articles and stories about the Faith.

Rúḥí was among those youth who were expelled from the University of Leningrad and exiled to Persia because of their affiliation with the

Faith. The young men submitted the details of their case to Shoghi Effendi from whom they received a loving reply exhorting them not to be saddened or grieved by the event and stating that if it were the will of God their exile and banishment might be the source of attracting divine confirmations in large measure. If love of God and turning to Him be accounted a crime, the Guardian wrote in effect, what can be better than that; and were steadfastness and firmness, servitude and selflessness to rank as a sin, what can excel it?

Rúhí's father, Naşru'lláh, had nothing to offer him for the expenses of his journey but a gold watch he had saved. This he gave to his seventeen year old son as a parting gift with his blessing when Rúhí left for Persia. His mother could add only a scarf and her tear-laden kisses.

For a time, Rúhí lived in Mashhad. Then he sold his watch to obtain funds with which to travel to Tíhrán. The sensitive young man, already gravely affected by the enforced interruption of his schooling, now suffered further ordeals. Illness, privation, discomfort and solitude contributed their share to making his lot almost unbearable. Other misfortunes now befell him: the imprisonment of his father in 'Ishqábád, followed by his death; the exile of his brother and his disappearance; and the banishment of his mother and his brother's family to Írán. When informed of the death of Rúhí's father, the beloved Guardian whose gracious kindness sustained Rúhí throughout this dark period, in a letter written on his behalf by his secretary, consoled the young man with the thought that whatever had befallen the sore-tried and faithful Arbáb family had been in the path of service to the Beloved.

Rúhí secured a job in a newspaper office and later worked in the Finance Ministry. His youth in Tíhrán was spent in service to the Cause and the sterling qualities of his character endeared him to his friends, Bahá'í and non-Bahá'í. He married in 1941 and continued his services to the Faith in such a manner as to evoke the appreciation of Shoghi Effendi.

Laying great stress upon the education of his children, Rúhí and his wife Furúgh agreed that she would reduce her Bahá'í activities and he would increase his in like ratio. Accordingly, he devoted only one-half the day to earning a livelihood and the other half to Bahá'í work. In order to increase his knowledge of the Faith he



*Rúhí Arbáb*

spent three years studying under such eminent teachers as Fádíl-i-Mázandarání and Jináb-i-Sulaymání. He also devoted some time to a study of Islám acquiring as much knowledge of the subject as he considered requisite for teaching the Cause. He then broadened the scope of his service by conducting teacher-training and character-forming classes for Bahá'í youth and children. After an unsuccessful attempt to serve as a home-front pioneer in 1943, Rúhí returned to Tíhrán and played a conspicuous part in teaching Bahá'í youth and motivating them to arise and serve the Faith. In 1955 he was elected to membership of the Local Spiritual Assembly and served as its secretary until the outburst of turbulence in that year which resulted in the demolition of the dome of the National Házíratu'l-Quds and the curtailment of all Bahá'í administrative activities.<sup>1</sup>

During this upheaval, Rúhí was like a rock for the persecuted friends who repaired to his home for advice and help. To discharge the duties devolving upon him in increasing measure under such circumstances proved to be a burden that taxed his health. After spending a brief period in the United States, Rúhí returned to Tíhrán and was again elected secretary of the

<sup>1</sup> See 'The Bahá'í International Community and the United Nations', *The Bahá'í World*, vol. XIII, p. 789.



Local Spiritual Assembly. Later he served as a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of Írán and on various committees. In 1968 he was elected secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly and served in that capacity until his death.

When he was himself a father of two children, he decided to study law. He obtained a law degree in 1950 and then studied Russian in the university. He served in the Ministry of Agriculture and the Veterinary College. He was next transferred to the secretariat of the university and thence to the Ministry of Water and Power. His services attracted the favourable attention of the authorities, chiefly because of the honesty and integrity which characterized all his work.

When his services at one of the national colleges in Tíhrán were terminated because he was a Bahá'í, he devoted his time to translating valuable books into Persian; here he met with the same success as in the Bahá'í sphere. He also produced a general book for children consisting of stories from different sources from various countries translated into Persian and offered to his countrymen. He translated for the benefit of youth biographies of some of the world's great men. Some of his translations were put to use by members of the teaching profession. He made a significant contribution to the Bahá'í community of Persia by producing a work in five volumes for Bahá'í children under the title of *Stories of the Faith*.

With the close of the National Convention at Rídván 1975 it seemed that Rúhí Arbáb's work on earth had terminated. His body could no longer bear the strain it had endured over the years. He was taken to hospital where he died on 5 May. Though his passing was tragic, it seemed a fitting climax to a life devoted to serving the Cause of God with no thought of self, rest or comfort.

Informed of his passing, the Universal House of Justice cabled:

PROFOUNDLY SADDENED GRIEVOUS LOSS  
STEADFAST DEVOTED SERVANT PROMOTER  
FAITH RUHI ARBAB STOP HIS TREMENDOUS  
EFFORTS TEACHING ADMINISTRATIVE FIELDS  
CULMINATING IN HIS OUTSTANDING SERVICES  
AS SECRETARY NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY  
UNFORGETTABLE HIGHLY MERITORIOUS . . .

FURÚGH ARBÁB

(Translated from Persian by Rustom Sabit)

## ROBERT HENRY PATTERSON

1925-1975

Robert Henry Patterson was born in Greenock on the west coast of Scotland on 19 September 1925. He worked as an accountant until his departure for Australia in 1949. After travelling around Australia for several years he eventually settled in Brisbane, Queensland and it was here, in 1956, that he learned of the Bahá'í Faith and embraced it.

From the beginning, Bob played an active role in the Bahá'í community and his selfless devotion was greatly admired by all with whom he came in contact. He pioneered to Ipswich to assist in the formation of the Local Spiritual Assembly and he was also a founding member of the Queensland University Bahá'í Society.

During the Nine Year Plan he responded to the call of the Universal House of Justice for pioneers to the Pacific islands, and in April 1968 arrived in Apia, Western Samoa, where he worked as chief accountant for one of the largest firms of general merchants in the Pacific. His home was always open to both Bahá'ís and their friends, and weekly firesides were held. Regular teaching trips were made to villages outside Apia and on many occasions he was



Robert Henry Patterson

joined by Mr. Sam Ale Ale, a devoted Samoan believer, who acted as his translator.

Bob was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly of Samoa when it was formed in 1970 and served as national treasurer. He also served on the Local Spiritual Assembly of Apia until the last months of his life when his severe illness precluded active participation. In the same year he had the bounty of making his pilgrimage to the Holy Land and on the journey visited his family in Scotland for the first time since 1949.

Early in 1971 Bob married Miss Peleiupu Lesā, a non-Bahá'í, of a well-known family in Apia and became integrated into the social fabric of the island. The birth of their daughter, Mary Elizabeth, brought them much joy.

During 1974 Bob was stricken by a severe illness which terminated in his death on 19 May 1975. He was the first Bahá'í pioneer of Samoa to give up his life at his post.

At Bob's request, the National Spiritual Assembly of Samoa consulted with his wife and her family regarding his funeral and in deference to their Christian background and because of the love and devotion which they had always showered upon him, it was agreed that prior to the Bahá'í service a few prayers and words of eulogy would be spoken in the family church. On the day of his burial, as a sign of respect, the firm for which he had worked flew its flag at half mast. The many non-Bahá'ís who attended the funeral at the National Centre and the burial in the Bahá'í cemetery were deeply moved by the Bahá'í readings and prayers and many lingered to ask questions about the Faith.

On learning of the passing of Robert Patterson the Universal House of Justice cabled on 21 May 1975:

DEEPLY GRIEVED LEARN UNTIMELY PASSING  
DEVOTED PIONEER SAMOA ROBERT PATTERSON  
PRAYING HOLY SHRINES PROGRESS HIS SOUL  
ABHA KINGDOM PLEASE CONVEY LOVING SYM-  
PATHY MEMBERS FAMILY.

Robert Henry Patterson lies with his fellow believers in Magiagi Cemetery. The melodies and words of many Bahá'í songs waft over their graves when the friends gather at the National Centre a short distance away. Bob will always be remembered in the hearts of many for his loving spirit with its kind and gentle qualities.

A few months after the passing of her be-

loved husband, Peleiupu (Pele) Patterson informed her family that she wished to be a Bahá'í and carry on his work. Since then she has become active in the Bahá'í community following in the footsteps of her husband.

*Centre your energies in the propagation of the Faith of God. Whoso is worthy of so high a calling, let him arise and promote it.*

Bahá'u'lláh

## BLANCA VICTORIA MEJIA

1911-1975

Blanca Victoria Mejia was the first Bahá'í of Nicaragua. She learned of the Faith through Mathew Kaszab,<sup>1</sup> one of the first pioneers to Central America, who settled in Nicaragua in 1939. Blanca enrolled in the Faith on 21 April 1941 and was unceasingly firm and devoted to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. Her dearest wish was to leave this world on the anniversary of the declaration of the Báb or Bahá'u'lláh. She died on 23 May 1975.

Blanca was born on 3 December 1911 in León, Nicaragua of very educated and cultured parents. At the age of three she was struck by poliomyelitis which left her with a crippled left foot and paralyzed her right hand. Although her speech was also affected and she stammered and slurred her words, this did not hinder her from studying and teaching the Bahá'í Faith. She completed high school and an advanced course in the university, then taught school for thirty years. Never married, she was retired and receiving a pension at the time of her death. She wrote many stories and poems which were published in newspapers and magazines.

The growth of the Faith in Nicaragua is due largely to the labours of Blanca. She taught many prominent people about the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh and some have become active in the Faith. In spite of her delicate health her free time was spent in visiting the Bahá'ís and their friends. People from many different backgrounds sought her friendship because she was loving, amiable, kind and sincere to everyone. When Mathew Kaszab was imprisoned by the

<sup>1</sup> See 'In Memoriam', *The Bahá'í World*, vol. IX, p. 614; *The Bahá'í Centenary 1844-1944*, p. 196.



*Blanca Victoria Mejia*

Nicaraguan government for his Bahá'í activities<sup>1</sup> she never failed to visit him and bring him food and persisted in her fruitless attempts to obtain his release. When one of the Bahá'ís met with an accident and was in hospital, Blanca recited many times daily the *Tablet of Ahmad* until the believer recovered and returned to his home. This man is now a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of Nicaragua. These incidents serve to show how highly spiritual she was, and how loving to the Bahá'ís.

Through the generosity of some Bahá'í friends, Blanca attended the centenary celebration of the Bahá'ís of the United States held in Wilmette, Illinois in 1944. She was always very proud to show the photograph taken during that centenary convention. She can be seen standing in the right-hand corner of the picture which appears in vol. X of *The Bahá'í World*. Unfortunately her copy of the photograph was buried during the earthquake which struck Managua in 1972. Blanca escaped uninjured and moved to León to live with one of her nieces. One day she fell, breaking her right thigh, and died two days later, fulfilling her wish to leave this earth on the anniversary of the

declaration of one of the Founders of the Faith. She was a member of the first Local Spiritual Assembly of León, and is buried there. Her place in the history of the Cause in Central America is assured, for the Universal House of Justice cabled:

SADDENED LEARN PASSING BLANCA MEJIA  
FIRST RECORDED BELIEVER NICARAGUA HER  
DEVOTED SERVICE CAUSE FOR OVER THREE  
DECADES LENDS LUSTRE ANNALS FAITH CENTRAL  
AMERICA PRAYING HOLY THRESHOLD  
PROGRESS HER SOUL ABHA KINGDOM.

ROSE T. MANGAPIS

### JAMES HENRY ISAAC BEETON

1907–1975

James Beeton, the first Cape Barren Islander to become a follower of Bahá'u'lláh, was born on 15 April 1907 on Cape Barren Island, the second largest island in the Furneaux group, north-east of Tasmania. Jim, as he was known to his family and friends, spent his early years on the island and when he grew up he raised sheep. Later he moved to the Tasmanian mainland to manage a farm in partnership with his two brothers.

In April 1970 Jim retired to live in Glenorchy, near Hobart, Tasmania's capital city. Here Jim and his wife, Eliza, came into contact with the Bahá'í Faith through Mr. and Mrs. Harry Penrith. Harry is a full-blood Australian Aboriginal and his wife, Leone, a white Australian. It was a rare and beautiful experience for the Cape Barren Island people in the Hobart area to meet an interracial couple and they listened with respect to the Bahá'í teachings on the unity of the human race. At that time the Cape Barren Islanders regarded themselves as a separate race and tended to associate only with other Cape Barren Islanders, holding themselves aloof from the white and Aboriginal population.

The fiftieth anniversary of the Ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá was marked by a public service held on 27 November 1971 at Hobart Town Hall with approximately forty people in attendance, three-quarters of them Cape Barren Islanders, friends of Mr. and Mrs. Penrith. Jim Beeton who had never before attended a Bahá'í meeting was in the audience. A brief intro-

<sup>1</sup> *The Bahá'í World*, vol. IX, p. 616.



*James Henry Isaac Beeton*

duction to the Faith was presented and excerpts were read from a compilation of the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The service was followed by a dinner and informal Bahá'í gathering. The Cape Barren guests who have scant social life expressed their delight at being in a gathering of people of many races and listened with interest to the remarks of Miss Thelma Perks of the Continental Board of Counsellors in Australasia who described her travels in various regions of the Pacific and spoke of the uniting influence of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. During the evening Jim Beeton expressed his desire to be a Bahá'í. A humble and loving soul, he at first hesitantly said that he felt he was 'too old and uneducated to become a Bahá'í,' but his shining eyes betrayed that he had already accepted the Faith in his heart.

Shortly after declaring his acceptance of the Cause, Mr. Beeton became seriously ill with diabetes. Despite the restrictions this imposed upon him he participated in Bahá'í community activities to the extent he could and served on the first Local Spiritual Assembly of Glenorchy. On the evening of 24 May 1975 he passed into a coma and left this world. He was laid to rest in Launceston, only yards from the resting place of

two Knights of Bahá'u'lláh, Miss Gretta Lamp-rill,<sup>1</sup> the first Bahá'í in Tasmania, and Miss Gladys Parke,<sup>2</sup> the first Bahá'í in Northern Tasmania.

### SIYYID AMÍR-SHÁH MUJÁHID

1936-1975

Siyyid Amír-Sháh Mujáhid was born in a village in the Province of Maydán, Afghánistán in 1936. His father being a religious man encouraged him from childhood to study theology. Amír-Sháh from an early age displayed a great talent for acquiring knowledge. He soon excelled in Persian and Arabic and showed a keen interest in religious subjects. He went to Kabul, the capital of the country, to complete his studies with a famous 'ulamá and while still a young man became a mullá entitled to teach classes in theology. Although Mr. Mujáhid was a member of the Shí'ih sect of Islám he was open-minded. He studied Sunní literature and without any hesitation had contact with Sunní priests. Such was his integrity and character that he had the confidence and respect of the 'ulamás of both sects. He won great popularity and respect by denouncing from the pulpit those who, in the guise of priests, sought material gain and worldly acclaim. He was a pious and highly-principled man. When a friend presented him with funds to enable him to make a pilgrimage to Mecca he refused the gift explaining to his friend that if his intention were sincere the money should be distributed among the poor. He lived modestly in a very humble dwelling.

How Mr. Mujáhid became interested in the Bahá'í Faith is an interesting story. Two Bahá'ís independently dreamed that 'Abdu'l-Bahá told them to give the message of God to Siyyid Amír-Sháh Mujáhid, and they did so. After a very brief investigation of the teachings and a perusal of the Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, Mr. Mujáhid was confirmed in the Bahá'í Faith, exclaiming that what he had read could only have been the revealed Word of God. Although he was advised that a man in his position might not relinquish his duties as a mullá too soon, he did not agree, and he refused immediately to con-

<sup>1</sup> See 'In Memoriam', *The Bahá'í World*, vol. XV, p. 534.

<sup>2</sup> See 'In Memoriam', *The Bahá'í World*, vol. XV, p. 457.



*Siyyid Amír Sháh Mujáhid*

tinue giving lessons in Islamic theology, stating that it was dishonest to waste the time of his students on subjects which he now knew were of no importance to the advancement of their souls. However, because of popular demand, he continued for some time to preach from the pulpit.

As a Bahá'í, Mr. Mujáhid travelled to various Provinces and was instrumental in bringing a number of people into the Faith. He wrote two little booklets, one being an outline of the proofs of the Bahá'í Faith and the other a dissertation on the laws of Bahá'u'lláh.

Unfortunately, his life as a Bahá'í was very short and he died on 19 June 1975 after a brief illness. A number of famous 'ulamás attended his funeral and praised him publicly as one who loved the truth and who was courageous in following the right path at all times.

#### ELIZABETH ANN (ANNA) ASHEN

1895–1975

Elizabeth Anna Jessuren Ashen was born on 19 October 1895 and served the Bahá'í Faith with

dedication for thirty-five years. She died at her pioneering post in the Canary Islands on 10 June 1975.

One knows a great deal about the spirit of Ann Ashen after reading the pioneer application which she filled out in January 1961 at the age of sixty-six. In the area reserved for preferred pioneering location, Mrs. Ashen checked Europe, Central America, South America, Asia and Africa. At that time she was not in good health and her resources were limited to a small Social Security cheque. In spite of this she began a period of renewed service as an overseas pioneer, completing fifteen years in European goals before her passing. She represented her beloved Faith in Finland, in Luxembourg and, at the very end of her life, in the Canary Islands.

The Bahá'í friends in Las Palmas, calling for her to take her to a prayer meeting, found her lying on the floor, her hip broken as a result of a fall. She was operated on in the local hospital the following day, 10 June. When a number of Bahá'ís, including Virginia Orbison, called to see her after the surgery, they were told that she had died just as they arrived. One later reported, 'She looked as if she were seeing something wonderful!' Burial took place in the Bahá'í cemetery the following day and a memorial gathering was held that evening.

Miss Orbison, recalling the passing of Mrs. Ashen, has written: 'Her stay, and her passing in the hospital, provided opportunities for speaking about the Faith. She did the best she could without knowledge of the language. The supervisor, who was with her at the end, had been extremely kind and attentive; she spoke English well and received the Message of Bahá'u'lláh with great interest . . . I am thankful for having had the bounty of seeing Ann on . . . my first visit to the Canary Islands. It was a very moving experience. All the believers were deeply touched, as they loved and admired Ann . . . Just two weeks before her fall, she had spoken to the friends in a meeting and all mentioned her radiance and the wisdom of her talk. Surely her soul is soaring into the heights of the Abhá kingdom.'

Mrs. Ashen spoke very little about her early years, but she did mention that her parents had emigrated from Holland to the United States, and that she had had the opportunity to study German in school. After graduating from high school in 1915 she worked first as a bookkeeper



*Elizabeth Ann (Anna) Ashen*

and later became a licensed practical nurse. She embraced the Bahá'í Faith in 1940 and from that time onward her efforts were directed towards the goals of the Bahá'í teaching plans. As early as 1945 she wrote to Shoghi Effendi about her desire to pioneer to Mexico. Eventually her homefront pioneering led her to Alaska, where she served in Ketchikan. At the time that she applied for overseas pioneering, the National Spiritual Assembly of Alaska referred to her as a 'diligent and ceaseless worker'. Exactly two months after she volunteered to pioneer abroad, she arrived at her post in Lahti, Finland and wrote to the European Teaching Committee: 'The friends here are very delightful and I am sure that we will be able to do great things . . . I spent Thursday and Friday in Stockholm at the Ḥazíratu'l-Quds and then went to Turku where I had a long visit with Mildred Clark and Loyce Lawrence and the Turku friends . . . There is such a wonderful Bahá'í spirit here and such love that the Faith cannot help but grow.'

At the end of the Ten Year Crusade, Mrs. Ashen offered to remain in Europe and, after making pilgrimage to the Holy Land early in 1964, she relocated in Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxem-

bourg. In its farewell letter the National Spiritual Assembly of Finland wrote: 'We are very grateful for your devoted services always in helping our country to reach her Crusade goals . . . May our Beloved Bahá'u'lláh richly bless your efforts wherever you toil in the work of establishing His Kingdom on this earth of ours.'

After serving for some time in Esch-sur-Alzette, Mrs. Ashen settled in Lamadelaine; here, her dreams of assisting the youth were realized, with many attending her numerous fireside and social gatherings. Mrs. Ashen was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly of Luxembourg at the 1964 convention and served on that body for one year. By the time her failing health prompted her to leave the unfavourable climate of Luxembourg and pioneer to the Canary Islands, a Local Spiritual Assembly had been established in Lamadelaine.

Informed by the National Spiritual Assembly of Spain of the passing of this devoted servant of Bahá'u'lláh, the Universal House of Justice wrote on 8 July 1975: 'We were profoundly sorry to learn of the passing of Ann Ashen whose devoted services in the pioneering field will long be remembered. That she has laid her mortal dust to rest in the soil of the Canary Islands is a crown to her pioneering achievements which will assuredly be abundantly blessed in the Abhá kingdom. It is our prayer at the Sacred Threshold that the believers in the Canary Islands will be inspired by her example to win great victories for the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh.'

BETH MCKENTY

### ISFANDÍYÁR BAKHTÍYÁRÍ

1895–1975

Isfandíyár Khudádád Bahrá<sup>m</sup> Bakhtíyá<sup>r</sup>í was born in Nirsi-ábád, Yazd, Irán in 1895. He received little education and after completing elementary school he took up the family occupation of farming. Hardworking and quick to learn, he became adept at his work. Isfandíyár's family were zealous Zoroastrians and as a young man he clung to his beliefs fanatically and held a deep-rooted prejudice towards the teachings of other Faiths. He loathed to hear the Mu'adh<sup>dh</sup>in raise the call to prayer and he hated Isfandíyár Ardshí<sup>r</sup>, a Bahá'í teacher of



*Isfandíyár Bakhtíyári*

Yazd, joining with other youths in harassing him. In 1914 he married Sarvar Khánum, the daughter of Rustam Jamshíd of Maryamábád.

The turning point came for Isfandíyár Bakhtíyári a year or so later when he met Burzú Isfandíyár, a nephew of a noted Bahá'í, at a memorial gathering held at the home of a relative. The Bahá'í refrained from drinking wine which is a part of the Zoroastrian ceremonial for the departed, and read extracts from Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh which so impressed the young Bakhtíyári that he began to investigate the Bahá'í Faith. As soon as he became attracted he turned to Isfandíyár Ardshír whom he had so vehemently opposed, was lovingly forgiven and, under his tutelage, began a serious study of the Bahá'í Cause which he soon wholeheartedly espoused. This declaration on the part of one so orthodox gave rise to a battalion of sorrows for Bakhtíyári. Relatives and friends deserted him and it became impossible for him to continue farming. Disgusted by the blindly dogmatic activity surrounding him he disposed of his land and in 1917–1918 with his young wife he sailed for Bombay where he became a part of the active community of Bahá'ís and eventually established himself as a partner in a hotel. He

wrote a letter to 'Abdu'l-Bahá which he signed 'Isfandíyár Khudádád' and was favoured by a Tablet in reply in which the Master addressed him as 'Isfandíyár Khudádád, known as Bakhtíyári' (literally, befriended by good fortune or destiny). From that day forward he adopted the name Bakhtíyári and even applied for his identity card under this name.

In 1920 he attained the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the Holy Land. The pilgrimage brought him contentment, joy and a firmer belief in the Cause of God. A brighter future dawned for him and he acquired increased devotion and some measure of economic security. In 1921 he and his wife pioneered to Karachi, then a small developing city. He served successively on the National Spiritual Assembly of India and Burma which came into being in 1923 and on the National Spiritual Assembly of India, Pakistan and Burma which was formed in 1947, and in 1957 when an independent National Spiritual Assembly was established in Pakistan he was its first chairman. In the half century during which he served on these bodies he often held the office of chairman or treasurer. He did not relish being called treasurer and would style himself the trustee of the Bahá'í funds. Although he professed himself ignorant of accounting procedures, he was of the highest integrity and was well suited to his service. He continued to be elected to the National Spiritual Assembly of Pakistan until he was appointed to serve as a member of the Auxiliary Board.

Bakhtíyári radiated love and affection, a capacity which attracted hundreds to him and won many friends for the Faith. He established friendly and enduring relationships with municipal officials, Government officers and leaders of the business community. The elite of the city considered it their privilege to serve the Bahá'í community.

During the half century of his Bahá'í service Bakhtíyári travelled extensively in the subcontinent and in Burma, Ceylon and Bangladesh. The teaching tour on which he accompanied the Hand of the Cause Martha Root<sup>1</sup> in 1938 was a landmark in the history of the Faith in southern Asia. They visited many centres and had audiences with several outstanding figures including the Maharaja of Travancore and Dr. Rabin-dranath Tagore. On another occasion he also

<sup>1</sup> See 'International Survey of Current Bahá'í Activities', *The Bahá'í World*, vol. VII, pp. 95–98.

accompanied the renowned Bahá'í scholar, the Hand of the Cause Ṭarazu'lláh Samandarí, in his travels in India. His own teaching excursions took him from Kashmir to Cape Comorin and from Karachi to Rangoon. The second World War had ravaged Burma. He undertook long and tiring visits to the Bahá'í communities there to encourage the friends who had suffered and to revisit the resting-place of the Hand of the Cause Muṣṭafá Rúmí at Daidanaw. Travelling and teaching became for him a way of life. For months on end and sometimes for intervals of up to six months he would be away from home teaching the Cause here, consolidating a centre there and encouraging the friends wherever he went. His travels were facilitated by the full co-operation of his understanding wife whose loneliness can only be imagined, for the couple had no issue. She passed her days in prayer, content that her husband was engaged in the service of God. Bakhtiyári's business partners, too, consented to his travels so he was able to move about with a light heart in serving his beloved Cause.

Mr. and Mrs. Bakhtiyári were twice able to visit the Holy Land and attain the presence of Shoghi Effendi. In 1963, Isfandíyár again went to the Holy Land to participate in the first election of the Universal House of Justice.

Bakhtiyári's devotion to the Guardian may be measured by his dedicated implementation of Shoghi Effendi's advice to shift the national headquarters of the Bahá'í community of India from Poona to New Delhi. As treasurer of the National Spiritual Assembly he spearheaded a drive for funds during the course of which he travelled thousands of miles, and successfully negotiated the purchase of the present National Ḥaẓíratu'l-Quds of India. He was also responsible, with the help of various friends, for the purchase of a site on which was constructed the first Bahá'í endowment in the Indian subcontinent, a structure which became the present National Ḥaẓíratu'l-Quds of Pakistan. He also acquired two adjacent lots which he donated to the Faith and on one of which a building was placed which he named 'The Happy Home' and for which he settled a trust for a future Bahá'í kindergarten.

The last two decades of his life were spent in pioneering to difficult areas in northern Pakistan, first to Sargodha and then to Murree, a hill station. In the spring of 1975, in relation to his

duties as an Auxiliary Board member, he began a tour of Frontier Province, an area inhabited mostly by the Pathans. Here the laity tend to be orthodox and the mullás prejudiced. He based himself at the Bahá'í Centre in Rawalpindi and began his work but his extensive travels and age took their toll at last and he fell ill. During his illness his indomitable spirit prevailed and in an attitude of prayerfulness he breathed his last on 24 June. He was buried in the Karachi Bahá'í cemetery, in land which he had struggled to acquire from the municipality.

On 24 June 1975 the Universal House of Justice cabled:

DEEPLY GRIEVED PASSING VALIANT SELFLESS  
STEADFAST PROMOTER FAITH ISFANDIYAR  
BAKHTIYARI STOP HIS LIFELONG SERVICES SHED  
LUSTRE ANNALS FAITH ENTIRE SUBCONTINENT  
STOP ADVISE HOLD BEFITTING MEMORIAL MEET-  
INGS STOP SUPPLICATING DIVINE THRESHOLD  
RICH REWARD HIS LONG DEVOTED SERVICES  
CAUSE GOD.

### JAMES VASSAL FACEY

1896–1975

James Vassal Facey passed to the Abhá kingdom on 9 July 1975. He lived an exemplary Bahá'í life, one that was completely dedicated to Bahá'u'lláh's service. His goal was total commitment to the Cause he loved so dearly and to which he contributed his utmost for thirty years.

Jim and his wife Gladys—called Maisie by her friends—accepted the Bahá'í Faith in June 1945 and were among the first harvest of souls who responded to the teaching efforts of Cora Oliver and Louise Caswell who opened Panama to the Faith in 1939. Mr. and Mrs. Facey shared the distinction of appearing on the membership roll of Panama's earliest believers and were among the first five privileged to promote the Cause of God in Panama.

Born in Jamaica on 8 August 1896, James Facey came as a boy to Colón, the ancient Atlantic seaport of Panama, with his widowed mother. While she worked to support herself and her son, Jim lived in the home of an Anglican priest, Father Edward Cooper, and



went to school. As a youth, he served as acolyte in the church of which Father Cooper was pastor. As Jim grew to manhood, both Father Cooper and his mother encouraged him to study for the ministry. At first Jim accepted training for this vocation but he became increasingly dissatisfied with doctrinal teachings and finally was convinced that the ministry was not for him. He stopped attending school and feeling that under the circumstances he could no longer accept the hospitality of Father Cooper he left the parsonage and found employment in the Colón Import and Export Company where he remained as accountant for over fifty years.

In 1924 he met and married a young Colón secretary, Gladys Abrahams, who was also a free thinker in matters of religion. They agreed that they would not affiliate with any church and, for the next twenty years, they practised no formal religion, though a high moral standard of conduct was practised in the home and their four children, Cedric, Kathleen, Alicia and Betty, were exhorted to achieve an education.

In the early 1940s, Maisie met the two pioneers who were then living in Colón, Cora and Louise, and became attracted to the Bahá'í teachings. After a course of serious study it did not take the Faceys long to realize that they were Bahá'ís and they applied for membership. One other student who was attending the class, Iola Edwards, was accepted formally as a member with the Faceys, and thus was formed the first Bahá'í group in Colón, the second largest city in Panama.

When the first Local Spiritual Assembly was formed in Colón, *circa* 1950, both Jim and Maisie were members. Jim was elected as treasurer, a service he rendered all the rest of his life. Their daughter, Kathleen, declared her faith in 1953 and their daughter, Alicia, the following year. The girls were in their early twenties and both served on the Local Assembly.

Jim was a member of the regional National Spiritual Assembly of Central America and the Antilles which came into being in 1951 and served as treasurer of that body until 1957 when the regional National Spiritual Assembly of Central America was formed. When an independent National Spiritual Assembly was established in Panama in 1961 he was again elected as treasurer and in this office continued to render faithful and dedicated service until 1968. The National Spiritual Assembly of



*James Vassal Facey*

Panama was assigned the groundwork responsibility, under the guidance of the Universal House of Justice, for the acquisition of a site and the subsequent construction of the Mother Temple of Latin America. His dedication to the work relating to the construction of the first Bahá'í House of Worship on the soil of Panama knew no bounds. When he was appointed as one of the readers at the dedication of the Temple in April 1972, his gratitude for this bounty was immeasurable.

Jim's total commitment to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh was readily apparent to all those who came into contact with him. To him, the Cause was like an ocean, and he was a fish swimming in this ocean. He taught the Faith for thirty years with a steadfastness which was as natural as breathing. The stranger sitting beside him on a public park bench, his fellow passenger on a bus, train or plane, within seconds would hear, however briefly, of the Bahá'í Faith. His ever-burning zeal to present to others the verities of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings was perhaps his greatest weakness in that his patience with anyone reluctant to recognize or accept was often thin. Being so totally convinced himself, he could not understand how anyone could fail

to see the truth. He avidly supported extension teaching projects on the national and local levels and he placed into circulation countless Bahá'í books and pamphlets. He would never write a letter to a non-Bahá'í which did not contain some reference to the Faith.

Jim had a keen grasp of the administrative principles of the Faith. He studied this aspect of the Faith avidly and applied the principles in his relationship to his fellow Bahá'ís as members of institutions or on a personal plane. Always an outstanding example of loyalty to these divinely inspired guidelines, he expected the same loyalty from others. As his service to the Colón Import and Export Company lengthened, he was increasingly able to arrange his vacations to coincide with Bahá'í conferences and institutes, both in Panama and abroad, and made an effort to attend as many as possible, it giving him much satisfaction that he was able to finance his own travelling expenses thereby saving the struggling national fund thousands of dollars. In 1952 he was privileged to witness the dedication of the Mother Temple of the West in Wilmette, Illinois and he was also present at the All-America Intercontinental Teaching Conference in Chicago in 1953 when the Ten Year Crusade was launched. He attended the International Convention in Haifa in 1963 for the first election of the Universal House of Justice and served as a teller during that epoch-making event.

When the Faceys embraced the Bahá'í Faith they became targets for taunts and ridicule from friends and members of the clergy who prophesied that their allegiance to this 'strange cult' was destined to be short lived, that they would soon abandon it in disillusion. Jim's faith was exposed to yet another test when the beloved Guardian announced that Bahá'ís should resign their membership in secret organizations including Freemasonry. A prominent member of the Masonic Lodge for years, Jim unhesitatingly dissociated himself from this fraternal tie. For him, there could be no other course; the Bahá'í Faith was the most important thing in his life.

Five years before his final illness, Jim retired from business and built a new home at Puerto Pilon, a suburb of Colón, where he laid out and planted an extensive garden. He remained interested, active and in good health until his late seventies, continuing to carry on his Local

Assembly duties and private teaching and making an occasional trip.

He was ill for only three months before his death and passed away quietly with Maisie sitting beside him. We know that when the history of the Bahá'í Faith in Panama is written, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá's prophecy about Panama's role in the development of the Faith shall have been fulfilled, James Facey's contributions to its earliest stages will merit singular recognition.

*... ye must give great attention to the Republic of Panama . . . That place will become very important in the future. The teachings, once established there, will unite the East and West, the North and South.*

*'Abdu'l-Bahá, Tablets of the Divine Plan*

#### FRED GRAHAM

1913-1975

Two weeks before his passing, Fred Graham attended the conference at Wilmette in 1975 that brought together the two great branches of the Administrative Order, on both of which he had served for many years. The Universal House of Justice had called together all the 'high ranking officers' and 'senior administrative bodies' of the Faith in North America for special consultation on the future protection of the Cause. It was in many respects the culmination of his life, for his intensely enquiring mind had had a unique opportunity to explore through consultation some of the most important themes in the Writings of the Bahá'í Faith, and the genius for loving which Fred possessed was fully utilized in this gathering whose principal achievement was to bind more closely than ever before the institutions of the Faith. Stepping out of the Temple shortly before the closing session of the conference, Fred was seen taking a stroll in the gardens. His face was literally radiant, his hat cocked on the side of his head in a fashion that was characteristic of him when he was especially happy, and his step was so jaunty that the phrase 'walking on air' seemed not at all inappropriate. But what most struck those who saw him was his smile; he smiled as if he had discovered some marvellous secret.

His discovery of that secret began in 1949



*Fred Graham*

when his former piano teacher, Miss Gertrude Barr, was moved to reacquaint herself with him for the express purpose of teaching him the Faith, after his name had come to her repeatedly during prayer. Aware of her interest in an unfamiliar religion, Fred at first tried to avoid her, but she was determined and finally succeeded in telling him about Bahá'u'lláh. It was not long before he responded to the wonderful nature of her message. He embraced the Cause in 1951 and immediately began a course of teaching which lasted until his death on 21 July 1975.

Fred was born in Rose Valley, Prince Edward Island, Canada on 18 August 1913 and spent his childhood in both Canada and the eastern United States. As his father's work involved a great deal of travelling, Fred's early education took place in many different towns and cities, a circumstance which may have contributed to the impression he gave throughout his life of being at home in whatever situation he was in. His work also reflected this flexibility for not only did he at one time manage a large chain of restaurants and establish his own successful business in Hamilton, Ontario, but he later became equally adept in the automotive field.

He saw in every experience further confirmations of the Providence that guided his entire life.

His ability to see the good in everything was applied not only to his own life but to the lives of all who came in contact with him. To his family and friends he was a constant inspiration, a source of wit and a dear companion. He would frequently ask 'Are you happy?' with such a pure reflection of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's spirit of love that he imparted happiness in the asking. He was both a serious student and a spontaneous optimist. He approached young people with the same open humility as he did leaders of thought. This humility, coupled with his humour, invited others to share in his delight with everything around him, and made him able to evoke in others a quality of response which they were unaware that they possessed. While remaining remarkably unaware of his own noble qualities, his audacious mind seemed to put him in touch with ideas that were at the very forefront of the unfoldment of the Cause, for he always strove to unravel their implications, and derived new joy from doing so in his teaching and administrative service.

In 1954 he was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada on which body he served for nine years, participating in the first election of the Universal House of Justice. In 1964, following a heart attack, he was appointed to the Auxiliary Board and, as his health improved, devoted increasing time to extensive travelling teaching throughout his area of responsibility. Fred's service to the Cause was marked by a profound awareness of the importance of its institutions and a deep love for them. During his years as an Auxiliary Board member the National Assembly derived great strength and assurance from his efforts to communicate to the friends the ardent appeals so often made by the Guardian that they should 'rally round' their local, and in particular their national, centres of activity. This special service was paralleled by Fred's love and appreciation of the institution of the Hands of the Cause. His life became an occasion for the institutions of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh to meet, to appreciate the gifts with which each had been endowed, and to serve the common purpose for which they had been created.

On 22 July 1975 the Universal House of Justice cabled:

ASSURE FERVENT PRAYERS HOLY SHRINES  
 PROGRESS SOUL ABHA KINGDOM AUXILIARY  
 BOARD MEMBER FRED GRAHAM DEVOTED  
 SERVANT BAHALLAH INSPIRING TEACHER  
 CAUSE STOP EXTEND SYMPATHY WIFE FAMILY  
 FRIENDS THROUGHOUT CANADA LOSS WARM-  
 HEARTED EXEMPLARY BELIEVER.

### VERENA VENTURINI

1878-1975

On 13 August 1975 the noble soul of our unforgettable Bahá'í sister, Mrs. Verena Venturini, took its flight to the Abhá kingdom. My hand is stilled and unable to pen the loving remembrance and the sorrow that her departure evokes in innumerable friends. Her life in the Bahá'í Faith, lasting well over half a century, sets an example, arouses admiration, inspires and infuses courage.

In 1909, in the city of New York, at the home of her sister, Mrs Maria Schober, Mrs. Venturini for the first time heard the names Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. It was the eve of her departure for Italy, as her husband Guido Venturini, a distinguished musician, wished their child to be born in Rome. That evening Grace Ober and Ella Robarts visited Mrs. Schober and spoke of a Personage Whose description made a deep impression upon Verena. Religion had been very important to her since childhood; therefore she was attentive and anxious to know Who He was. She was told: He is the Son of Bahá'u'lláh; His name is 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The next day Mrs. Venturini departed for Rome.

Mrs. Schober later became a Bahá'í through May Maxwell and accompanied her on one occasion in 1912 to the hotel where 'Abdu'l-Bahá was staying. Having attained His presence and, overcome with awe, having forgotten everything she had wanted to ask the Master, Mrs. Schober remembered only her sister of whose difficulties she spoke to Him, and received 'Abdu'l-Bahá's assurance that He would pray for Mrs. Venturini.

The death of Mr. Venturini initiated for Verena a period of anxiety and difficulties. She was in a desperate situation at the outbreak of World War I in 1914 and was attempting to support herself and her little daughter, Evan-

geline, by giving German lessons. She managed to book passage for herself and the child on the last steamer leaving Italy for New York. Had she waited one more day she could not have left.

Some time after reaching America she married a Mr. Kropf and went to live in Michigan. Her interest in religion continued and deepened. On one occasion in 1915 she attended a Nineteen-Day Feast in a private home and on hearing the beautiful prayers read recognized that this was the Faith of God for this day, the Cause of which her sister had been speaking and writing to her for so many years. Once when she was invited by a literary society in Lowell, Michigan to conduct one of their meetings, she felt it was her chance to offer the message of Bahá'u'lláh; a Bahá'í friend, Mrs. Perry of Grand Rapids, read the principles of the Faith and Verena spoke of Ṭáhirih.

Mrs. Agnes Parsons who had given up her worldly life and become a dedicated believer made her pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1918. Verena was prevented by family obligations from joining her, so she contented herself with sending 'Abdu'l-Bahá a pair of tan silk gloves.

When her sister's family moved to San Francisco, she was asked to join them there. Among her new friends she counted John and Louise Bosch.

Two hard blows came in rapid succession through the deaths of her second husband and her physical and spiritual sister, Maria Schober. Mrs. Schober's Bahá'í burial was conducted by Mrs. Ella Cooper in Brentwood, California.

The desire of her daughter, Evangeline, to start her university studies in the fine arts and music in Italy brought Verena back to Rome in 1928. During the long period she spent in Rome, from the date of her return to the end of World War II, she remained steadfast in the Covenant and was delighted to receive from time to time Bahá'í travellers who visited Rome. In 1947, when Dr. and Mrs. Ugo Giachery arrived in Rome as pioneers, she was the first one to join them in their efforts to form the first Local Spiritual Assembly of Italy in that city in 1948. On page 145 of his *Recollections of Shoghi Effendi*, Dr. Giachery has written: '... on the wall by the head of his bed, Shoghi Effendi had placed the photograph of the first Italian Local Assembly, that of Rome ... nothing had pleased him more than the establishment of a Bahá'í administrative institution in the Christian



*Verena Venturini*

capital of the world,' and the Guardian said, "There are three religious centres in the world with distinct functions: Rome, Mecca, and Cairo, where the Cause will register its greatest victories for the Faith in the future."

Upon learning that a Local Spiritual Assembly was to be formed in Rome, Verena became aflame. She immediately purchased many Bahá'í books and memorized many of the beautiful prayers. One day an American writer, Mrs. Frances Toor, came to her with a letter of introduction from mutual friends in the United States. She was invited by Mrs. Venturini to a meeting at the Giachery's home and later accepted the Faith. Mrs. Isabella Argenide Papa, her daughter's mother-in-law, also met Dr. and Mrs. Giachery and subsequently accepted the Faith. How great was her joy! Having one member of her family embrace the Faith was the source of one of her greatest spiritual comforts during the years she lived in Rome.

Mrs. Venturini attended the Intercontinental Teaching Conference held in Stockholm in 1953, one of the four conferences signaling the launching of the unique Ten Year Crusade of Shoghi Effendi, and during the years that followed she attended some of the Italo-Swiss Bahá'í Summer Schools held at Bex-les-Bains.

She never missed a Nineteen-Day Feast, although her home was at least fifteen kilometres from Rome; and even when she was eighty years old, if there was no one to accompany her, she would take a bus or tram in order to be present. Unfailingly she brought bouquets of flowers which the younger believers recognized as the fragrant and gentle signs of her presence. Unforgettable are the memories of the Nineteen-Day Feasts she hosted yearly, usually in the spring, at her beautiful home. This setting was a perfect fusion of the beauty of her soul with the scent and colour of the flowers and plants in the surrounding gardens.

In a letter dated 16 July 1931 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi it was stated: '... He expects from you splendid achievements and these you can certainly accomplish as you have been endowed with a deep and unwavering faith in the principles and the teachings of the Cause.' Appended in the handwriting of the beloved Guardian were the significant words: 'With the assurance of my loving prayers for your happiness and spiritual advancement...' What perfect consonance came with time to exist between the contents of the Guardian's letter and the life of our dear friend and spiritual sister!

For many years in succession she was elected to the Local Spiritual Assembly of Rome. Her wisdom and love of the Cause of God were a source of inspiration to her colleagues on that body. Her faithful service will never be forgotten, and it was with much regret that she was allowed to withdraw from active administrative service because of her advanced age.

We pray that she may intercede for us, and help to accelerate the progress in this world of those ideals whose universal acceptance, throughout her whole life, was her heart's most ardent longing.

MARIO PIARULLI

### GHULÁM-'ALÍ 'UBBÁDÍ

1899-1975

Ghulám-'Alí 'Ubbádi was born in Tīhrán in 1899. His father was a highly placed government employee and a devout Muslim, as were all the members of the family. When Mr. 'Ubbádi was in his early childhood his father died and he

was cared for by his only brother until he reached fifteen years of age at which time he left his brother's house where he was unhappy and began to work in the business world. He applied himself diligently, working far into the night, and soon became successful and prosperous. He was highly respected by his colleagues and tradesmen. He was a leading citizen in his neighbourhood and won the respect of the local residents. One day the representative of the road sweepers' organization, a clerk, came to him requesting a certificate approving the manner in which the sweepers had performed their duties. Mr. 'Ubbádi who was punctilious in all affairs personally inspected the streets of the district and then signed the certificate. The clerk, who was a Bahá'í, was impressed by Mr. 'Ubbádi's character and invited him to his home for tea. A friendship developed between the two men and eventually the clerk arranged a meeting between Mr. 'Ubbádi and an outstanding Bahá'í teacher. All that Mr. 'Ubbádi heard during that first meeting disturbed him, but his heart was attracted to this new message. After a period of uneasiness he requested another meeting between the Bahá'í teacher and some of his Muslim friends who were well versed in Islamic theology. Mr. 'Ubbádi was distressed that his friends

had extreme difficulty in challenging the logic of the teaching presented by the Bahá'í and he and his associates left the house in a state of anger and perplexity. Mr. 'Ubbádi resolved to have nothing further to do with the Bahá'ís. The clerk did not change his behaviour towards Mr. 'Ubbádi but continued to visit him and on one occasion presented him with a Bahá'í book. In time Mr. 'Ubbádi's heart was changed by what he read. He sought out the Bahá'ís and became a devoted and active member of the Bahá'í community. He was at this time about twenty years of age. He eventually married Riḡváníyyih Rawshān-Damir, a member of a distinguished Bahá'í family, and she was in all circumstances a constant source of encouragement and help to him and a sincere and loving collaborator.

In 1943, Mr. and Mrs. 'Ubbádi pioneered to Shāh 'Abdu'l-'Azím, on the outskirts of Tīhrán, where they were successful in establishing the first Local Spiritual Assembly. Mr. 'Ubbádi served as a member of the Bahá'í Training Institute in Tīhrán. A boarding school had been established for orphaned and needy children. Mr. 'Ubbádi helped the institute both financially and spiritually. In his new home he continued to supervise the education of children and engaged a teacher from Tīhrán for their instruction. Unfortunately, after two years, he became seriously ill and suffered extreme pain and had to return to Tīhrán, but he continued to send children to the institute and to pay their expenses. When his condition worsened and his physicians despaired of his life, Mr. 'Ubbádi wrote to the beloved Guardian requesting prayers for the restoration of his health. Receiving an assurance of Shoghi Effendi's prayers through a letter written by his secretary on his behalf on 14 November 1945, Mr. 'Ubbádi gradually regained his strength and continued his service in the cradle of the Faith. In 1955 Mr. and Mrs. 'Ubbádi made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and entered the presence of Shoghi Effendi who told them he was well pleased with their services. The visit to the holy Shrines and the moments spent with the Guardian were Mr. 'Ubbádi's most cherished memories.

The most fruitful period of Mr. 'Ubbádi's life was the last twenty years which he spent as a pioneer in Morocco. He and his wife came to Rabat on 23 August 1955, two years after the launching of the Ten Year Crusade. Mr. 'Ubbádi was elected to the Local Spiritual



*Ghulam-'Ali 'Ubbádi*

Assembly of Rabat and served on this body for nineteen years, often in the capacity of chairman or treasurer. His broken health prevented his continuing this service during the last year of his life. During the period from 1965 to 1967 he was also a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of North West Africa. Despite the distance, his advanced age and his uncertain health he travelled to the meetings, some of which were held in Algeria and Tunisia. He had a profound affection for the friends in Morocco. He had a warm and generous nature and was always the first to offer assistance to those in distress. His help was always extended in a most discreet manner.

Although his most signal services were rendered in Morocco, Mr. 'Ubbádi served the entire Bahá'í world through his unstinting generosity. He was indeed like a fathomless spring, constantly pouring out his resources to advance the work of the Faith throughout the world, through contributing to the purchase or construction of Ḥazíratu'l-Quds, Temples, Teaching Institutes and the publication of Bahá'í literature. He received from Shoghi Effendi many expressions of gratitude including a cable acknowledging with 'deep appreciation' his 'historic service' in purchasing the National Ḥazíratu'l-Quds of Morocco. Among his papers were found more than 80 letters from the Universal House of Justice, many of them containing expressions of appreciation of his unfailing generosity in contributing to a wide variety of Bahá'í projects in every continent.

On 19 August 1975, while in London for medical treatment, Mr. 'Ubbádi passed on to the Abhá kingdom in his seventy-sixth year, mourned by a wide circle of Bahá'í friends. A floral tribute was received from the broken-hearted believers in Morocco who had loved and highly valued him. He is buried near his heart's beloved, Shoghi Effendi, in the Great Northern London Cemetery, New Southgate.

The following cable from the Universal House of Justice summarizes in a few words the qualities we loved in Mr. 'Ubbádi:

REQUEST NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY INFORM RIDVANTYYIH UBBADI DEEPLY GRIEVED PASSING GHULAM UBBADI HIS STEADFAST DEDICATION HIS GENEROUS FINANCIAL SUPPORT VAST NUMBER VITAL PROJECTS HIS DEVOTED SERVICES PIONEERING TEACHING FIELDS AL-

WAYS REMEMBERED ASSURE PRAYERS HOLY SHRINES PROGRESS HIS NOBLE SOUL.

F. MIŞBÁH

### G. S. SANTHANAM KRISHNAN

1945-1975

In the Heroic Age of the Faith thousands of God-intoxicated men, women and children joyfully sacrificed everything, including their very lives, for their Beloved. In the Formative Age such souls are rare. G. S. Krishnan was one of them.

Krishnan was born in Singapore on 1 October 1945. A quiet boy by nature, he would never quarrel and he went his own way without troubling anyone. A very devout Hindu, he would frequently be found meditating or in prayer. He became a Bahá'í following the Oceanic Conference of the South China Seas, held in Singapore in January 1971. Thenceforward he never looked back, but gave his whole heart and soul to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh.

He immediately began to serve the Faith by teaching and by working on committees, and he even changed his residence in order that he could provide a place for meetings. He was the chairman of the Local Spiritual Assembly of Katong and was one of the nine delegates at the national convention for the election of the first National Spiritual Assembly of Singapore in 1972. He served as secretary of the regional Bahá'í Youth Council of Singapore and was its press officer. His relations with the local press were good and Krishnan would personally ensure that the Bahá'í Holy Days and other Bahá'í observances were announced. He would deprive himself to give whatever he had to the Bahá'í Fund. While attending the Bahá'í Summer School in Johor Baru before he left Singapore, he gave away his camera although he knew he would be lost without one.

Although Krishnan was slim and of slight stature, his heart was large. His purity of heart, selflessness and good humour endeared him to the friends. When he visited Malaysia in connection with his employment he would contact the Bahá'ís and offer his services, and he was very much loved by the believers there. He was always punctual and never broke a promise.



*G. S. Santhanam Krishnan*

Krishnan arrived in India in January 1974 and proceeded to his parents' home in Kumbakonam. He served the Cause in India just as eagerly as in Singapore, systematically making appointments with local dignitaries and presenting literature to them. Soon a Bahá'í group formed and he enthusiastically assumed the responsibility of deepening the friends. A prolific writer, he directed a steady flow of letters and reports to the National Spiritual Assembly of India and the State Teaching Committee. After a period of six months the National Assembly appointed him as a travelling teacher. He later became an assistant to Auxiliary Board member B. Afshín.

He was sent to Karaikal to assist with the work in a number of villages in the Thirunallar area where he visited government offices, schools and colleges and spoke to members of service organizations including the Lions Club and the Rotary Club. As he did not find any friends of his calibre there, he felt lonely. He attended all Bahá'í conferences, near and far, to revive his spirits through the joy of Bahá'í fellowship. In the villages of Thirunallar he was handicapped in teaching because he could not speak Tamil and he was distressed by the widespread

drunkenness he witnessed. The only way to lay a foundation for the Faith, he concluded, was to educate the unspoiled children. He vigorously pursued this plan and started children's classes in seven villages, one for each day of the week. He conducted a children's class at Karaikal each Sunday morning and in the evening he offered classes for adults, but no one came and he was in great despair.

Karaikal was opened to the Faith in 1953 through the pioneering efforts of Mrs. S. M. Noorani and Mrs. Salisa Kermani and after years of struggle a Bahá'í Centre was constructed through the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Kermani. During her historic tour of India in 1964 the Hand of the Cause Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum had called for Bahá'í teachers to visit Karaikal where she found a receptivity to the Faith, but she cautioned that they needed to be physically strong and capable of visiting the villages on foot over the rice-paddy walks. Krishnan visited the villages on foot but as time went on his health declined. The spicy local food did not agree with him and he existed mainly on bananas and rice. He became dispirited and wanted to leave Karaikal. In June 1975 he obtained an appointment in a school in Lucknow and there, too, he taught the Faith incessantly although he spoke no Hindi.

At a regional teaching conference in Hyderabad he volunteered with some other Bahá'ís for a teaching project in an interior tribal area in Warangal. When the call for funds was made at the conference he gave his watch, then all his money and finally his sandals. He proceeded with the team to Warangal where they had some success but Krishnan soon fell ill. He was admitted to the University Hospital there and succumbed to an internal haemorrhage which took his life on 6 December 1975. In his small battered suitcase were found only Bahá'í books and notebooks containing quotations from the Bahá'í Writings and carefully transcribed prayers.

The National Spiritual Assembly of India wrote at the time of his passing: 'Mr. Krishnan served the Faith most diligently and sincerely . . . He was a young man . . . full of enthusiasm, devotion and love for Bahá'u'lláh and had dedicated his life to the service of the Faith. In spite of the offer of a good job in Singapore he preferred to continue his full-time services in India and had informed the National Assembly



that till the end of the Five Year Plan he would not leave his post.'

In reply, the Universal House of Justice wrote on 22 December 1975: 'We were grieved to learn of the passing of the devoted, brave and steadfast pioneer, Mr. S. Krishnan. His passing in the field of service to the Cause of God no doubt will confer upon him a special bounty which will be a cause of the progress of his soul in the eternal Kingdom of God.'

'In his lifetime he has established a link between the Bahá'í communities in India and Singapore. This bond of love and co-operation between your two countries will be further strengthened by his passing.

'Please convey our deepest sympathy to his relatives and friends in Singapore and in India. We shall offer prayers at the holy Shrines that the mercy of Bahá'u'lláh may rest upon his soul.'

### MUNÍR VAKÍL

1900–1976

Knight of Bahá'u'lláh

It is very difficult in a brief memoir to cover all aspects of the life and services of this courageous and devoted servant of Bahá'u'lláh whose passing to the Abhá kingdom on 14 February 1976 ended a brilliant page in the annals of the history of the Faith in 'Iráq and deprived the Bahá'í world of an outstanding and firm believer.

He was born in Baghdád in a house adjacent to the blessed House of Bahá'u'lláh. His grandfather and father accepted the Faith during the days when Bahá'u'lláh was in Baghdád and they served the Cause devotedly and looked after the blessed House during their lifetimes. This close association with the House was a privilege which Mr. Vakíl and his family treasured. He was also privileged, as a young boy, to be in the presence of the beloved Master in the Holy Land. His mother and elder sister served 'Abdu'l-Bahá's household for a short period during which Munír befriended the young Shoghi Effendi.

With the passing of his father, Munír Vakíl, who was then still a young man, inherited the responsibility of tending the blessed House in



*Munír Vakíl*

addition to caring for his family and pursuing his studies. Under difficult circumstances, and with perseverance, he obtained a degree in law, and was subsequently enrolled in the army as part of the reserve force.

The 1920s witnessed a stream of very significant events in 'Iráq. King Faisal I of 'Iráq handed the House of Bahá'u'lláh to the Muslim authorities. The entire Bahá'í world community was mustered, by the beloved Guardian, to rise and protest against that shattering decision which, in the words of Shoghi Effendi, deprived the Bahá'ís 'of yet another Bahá'í Shrine, the House occupied by Bahá'u'lláh for well nigh the whole period of His exile in 'Iráq, which had been acquired by Him, and later had been ordained as a centre of pilgrimage, and had continued in the unbroken and undisputed possession of His followers ever since His departure from Baghdád.'<sup>1</sup> Munír Vakíl, acting as the caretaker of that blessed Spot, carried out the instructions of the beloved Guardian with zeal, hope and selfless devotion.

Mr. Vakíl served on the first National Spiritual Assembly of 'Iráq and was enthusiastically

<sup>1</sup> See *God Passes By*, Shoghi Effendi, pp. 356–357.

involved in the progress of the Faith there. His position in the Ministry of Defence reached a peak when he was promoted to legal counsellor to the Ministry with the rank of Brigadier. His colleagues and superiors came to know Mr. Vakíl and witnessed his uprightness, fidelity and devotion in the discharge of his duties. He conveyed the Bahá'í spirit in every aspect of his life and work, especially in looking after the interests of minorities and upholding the rights of individuals regardless of class, rank or creed. His outstanding record and integrity won the respect and admiration of many military officers.

At the onset of the Ten Year Global Crusade of the beloved Guardian Mr. Vakíl attended the Asian Intercontinental Teaching Conference held in New Delhi in October 1953. Immediately after the conference he arose to answer the call of the Guardian for pioneers to virgin territories. He left directly from India to settle in the Kuria Muria Islands, a group of five rocky islets in the Arabian Sea off the south-west coast of Oman, an action for which he was named by Shoghi Effendi a Knight of Bahá'u'lláh. The conditions on the islands were extremely difficult, poor and perilous. He spent a hazardous period of nine months during which he shared his primitive hut with the few domestic animals of the island. The natives who lived entirely on the proceeds of fishing were initially very sceptical of the presence of Mr. Vakíl in their midst. The presence of a foreigner who sought to live as they did was without precedent. He ate and dressed like the natives and shared their subsistence-level existence. He was visited only once by the British military representative of the Hadhramaut and Masqat area. This man and his wife were intrigued by the presence, in such a remote and non-civilized island, of an 'Iráqí of high military rank. It was through this contact that Mr. Vakíl's family received the sole report that reached them about the conditions under which he lived; it was coupled with the admiration expressed by the British Governor for his selfless devotion and perseverance.

Following a period of illness Mr. Vakíl was forced to return to Baghdád where increasing pressure was placed upon him by the Ministry of Defence to resume his job and accept promotion. However, the flame of pioneering service continued to blaze in his heart. This led him

to leave 'Iráq within five months of his arrival and to proceed to the Seychelles which was a goal area assigned to the National Spiritual Assembly of 'Iráq. He stayed there arranging for his entire family to join him, but was recalled to Baghdád in 1954 following the death of his mother. In April 1955, Mr. Vakíl and his family moved from 'Iráq to settle in the Seychelles. His activities in increasing the number of believers, particularly among the native population, were untiring. The Vakíl family stayed in the Seychelles until 1962, by which time the first Local Spiritual Assembly on these islands was established and the number of believers had been increased considerably. Mr. Vakíl purchased for the Faith the Ḥaẓiratu'l-Quds in Victoria, Mahé and maintained it until he left the islands.

After his return to 'Iráq he continued unceasingly his vigorous service to the Faith and later served on the National Spiritual Assembly. Following a heart attack, he became bed-ridden for a long time. During the period prior to his passing, he was a tower of strength to the faithful believers in 'Iráq and his steadfastness and obedience to the orders of the Government were exemplary.

The meritorious life of this valiant servant of the Blessed Beauty is summarized in the following cable of the Universal House of Justice which bestowed loving praises for his rich record of service:

DEEPLY GRIEVED PASSING DEVOTED KNIGHT  
BAHAULLAH MUNIR VAKIL HIS SELFSACRIFIC-  
ING SERVICES TEACHING ADMINISTRATIVE  
PIONEER FIELDS LOVINGLY REMEMBERED SHED  
LUSTRE ACHIEVEMENTS HEROIC COMMUNITY OF  
WHICH HE WAS SUCH DISTINGUISHED MEMBER  
PRAYING SHRINES PROGRESS HIS RADIANT  
SOUL ASSURE FAMILY FRIENDS HEARTFELT  
SYMPATHY.

RIÐVÁN MUQBIL

EDWARD L. BODE

25 August 1906–13 March 1976

Edward and Mary Bode—these names are entwined in the history of the Bahá'í Faith as were their services in life. From the time of their

marriage in 1936, 'they together had but one goal . . . They were like migratory birds, going where the divine wind of Bahá'u'lláh blew them: the world was their nest; their food: the goals of the Divine Plan; their only security: *God will assist all those who arise to serve Him.*' (G. S.) This unity in service—so tenacious and touching—was often remarked by the Guardian of the Faith, who launched their marriage with the hope that 'this union may serve to impart to your heart and to the heart of your dear husband a renewed and powerful stimulus to assist in spreading far and wide the Divine Word.'<sup>1</sup> Ten years later he urged them 'to persevere in your task, however great the sacrifice involved . . .', and, a year after, expressed his admiration of their 'passionate spirit of devotion to the service of our Faith . . .'<sup>2</sup> Fulfilling to the utmost of their powers the Guardian's trust, they attained that height of 'living sacrifice' to which Shoghi Effendi had called the 'spiritual descendants of the dawn-breakers' of the Heroic Age.

Edward's father had come from Germany to the United States as a child, and at the time of Edward's birth his family lived in a small Missouri town, moving to St. Louis when he was only three or four. Here, in vacations and after graduation, he gained experience in a hardware store which qualified him for his duties, during World War II, as a civilian attached to the United States Air Force for the supply of flying training fields in Arizona and California. Before this, after his family's move to California when Edward was seventeen, he had made his way in Hollywood, as actor and assistant director in silent films, and as theatrical agent; to him came Mary, who had appeared in a number of plays in New York. Their marriage and Edward's acceptance of the Bahá'í Faith, into which he was welcomed by Shoghi Effendi 'as a dear fellow-worker in the Divine Vineyard', set these two on the path of their 'pioneer labours, so faithfully and selflessly rendered'<sup>3</sup> in North and South America, Europe and the island of Madeira.

Their desire to pioneer had been awakened through membership, in 1941–1942, of the Inter-America Committee during the first Seven Year Plan. Even before war's end, they had turned their thoughts to South America, and

<sup>1-4</sup>Numbered quotations are from letters written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi.



*Edward L. Bode*

arrived in Rio de Janeiro on 16 January 1946. At long last they were 'enabled to . . . serve in those foreign fields' that had for 'so long been luring [them] from afar!'<sup>4</sup> The formation of the first Local Spiritual Assembly of Rio de Janeiro the following April, its incorporation, and the development of a Bahá'í Publishing Trust for the Portuguese language were notable achievements in which they shared during their three years in Brazil. There followed short periods of teaching in Holland and Portugal in 1949–1950. In 1952 Edward required major surgery in the United States; convalescence was long, but the Guardian's 'loving fervent prayers' and their own strong determination brought complete healing and return to the pioneer field, this time in Mexico, where from October 1954 to January 1956 they worked in Cuernavaca, Puebla and Mexico City, then briefly in the Canal Zone, Panama. The next two years found them active in teaching in Mississippi and Florida, but longing 'to win still more brilliant victories, in distant fields . . .' (Shoghi Effendi)

In October 1959 they began their remarkable services to the Dutch Bahá'í community, lasting for nine and a half years, in Arnhem, The Hague and Rotterdam, during which time Edward served for five years as a member of the

National Spiritual Assembly. The years 'we spent in Holland,' he wrote, 'were a mixture of delight, frustration, hard work and gratification. The Dutch people furnished the delight. . . . But their interest in the Faith was a thing of slow and laborious growth. . . . So the years in Holland were filled with work . . . for the Faith . . . for Bahá'u'lláh. And what is more glorious than that?'

In the spring of 1969, Edward aged sixty-three and Mary ten years older, both seriously disabled in health, bravely took up their pioneer post in Funchal, Madeira, recommended to them by the Universal House of Justice. Within six months, Mary's death occurred in Lisbon. Edward had received from his parents, Wilimina and William Bode, whom he greatly cherished, an example of love in marriage, and for forty years Edward, by his 'patience, love and care' for Mary, had enriched his own marriage; 'their togetherness was endless and of classic beauty'. (G. S.) 'Words cannot express my feelings of despair as we were like one unit,' Edward himself commented.

For nearly three years Edward soldiered on, ceaselessly, cautiously teaching; reinforced in 1972 by others, but again alone in 1973 when Muriel Ives Newhall arrived in April to find him with 'the look of another Lincoln—solitary and bowed'. She set herself to be, in Mary's stead, 'the hands and feet' to see to his physical care and to share with him the continuous demands of pioneering in restricted circumstances.

Edward's last service was to find the Bahá'í Centre, a 'lovely house' where enquirers happily gathered.

But Madeira's climate was unsuitable for Edward. In January 1976 he developed an agonizing bronchial asthma after influenza, recovered slowly, but suffered it again in March, followed by a stroke; a day later, on 13 March, he rejoined his dear partner in the Abhá realms, whose presence, Muriel wrote, 'was so strong and real' as 'his breathing became fainter and fainter, lighter and lighter, till it was like the beat of butterfly wings. . . .' Edward's burial was in the British Cemetery. He was known in Madeira as '*O homem de Deus*' (man of God), for 'he was more of a saint and hero than anyone will ever know . . .' (V. O.) He had held to Madeira until the end, and was extolled by the Universal House of Justice in its cablegram dated 15 March 1976:

... HIS FIRM DETERMINATION REMAIN POST  
MADEIRA EXEMPLIFIED SPIRIT DEVOTION CAUSE  
HE SERVED FOR MORE THAN THIRTY YEARS AS  
PIONEER AMERICAS EUROPE . . .

MARION HOFMAN

*Note:* The author is indebted to Gini Sijlsing, Virginia Orbison and Muriel Ives Newhall for their letters about Edward Bode's life and service; their initials are given after quotations from them. The National Spiritual Assembly of the United States kindly sent Mr. Bode's report, 6 May 1975, describing his and his wife's pioneering in Brazil and Holland. The 'In Memoriam' article about Mary Hotchkiss Bode appears in *The Bahá'í World*, vol. XV, pp. 460-461.

### Errata



Eduardo Duarte Vieira, 1921-1966, the first African Bahá'í martyr, whose 'In Memoriam' appears in *The Bahá'í World*, vol. XIV, pp. 389-390, where his name is incorrectly given. Information subsequently received at the World Centre confirmed the spelling of his name as set out above.



Salomón Pacora Estrada, known as Pacora Blue Mountain, 1889-1969, one of the first of Inca descent to embrace the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. His 'In Memoriam' which appears on p. 467 of *The Bahá'í World*, vol. XV, is illustrated by the photograph of another believer.