

*Eve
Nicklin*

She of the Brave Heart

Boris Handal

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"Your steadfastness, your devotion, your historic services are assets that I greatly value"

— Shoghi Effendi —

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Foreword

Preface

By the righteousness of God, should a man, all alone, arise in the name of Bahá and put on the armor of His love, him will the Almighty cause to be victorious, though the forces of earth and heaven be arrayed against him.

2 "In the Hands of God" Bahá'u'lláh ¹

3 From Deaconess to Power

4 To the Conquest of Power

It has often happened that one blessed soul has become the cause of the guidance of a nation.

6 A Bahá'í Community in the West 'Abdu'l-Bahá ²

7 Master of Power

8 The Living Will

Just one mature soul, with spiritual understanding and profound knowledge of the Faith, can set a whole country ablaze — so great is the power of the Cause to work through a pure and selfless channel.

11 A Hindustani of Persia Shoghi Effendi ³

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FOREWORD

Forward: The Big Yes

Heroism comes in all shapes and sizes. In Eve Nicklin's case, it animated a middle-aged, single woman to leave a traditional religious background for the radical, newborn Bahá'í Faith, and then to leave the soft green hills of the eastern U.S.A. forever. Settling in the grittier reality of Peru, she answered a call to service that she couldn't deny and roused an inner greatness the world might never have known if she hadn't said yes.

Like a number of other middle-aged, single Bahá'í women, she became a pioneer. Bahá'ís who go abroad to teach their Faith aren't missionaries, but pioneers. There are no clergy in the Baha'í Faith. Pioneers settle in a new place and earn their living immersed in the everyday life, culture and language of that adopted home. Eve pioneered in Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela, but Peru was the land of her heart and Peruvian Bahá'ís immortalize her as their spiritual mother.

The call that she answered first, that started her on her journey, was that of Bahá'u'lláh, the Glory of God, (1817-1892), a Persian nobleman inspired, Baha'ís believe, by the same sacred energy that lifted Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Mohammed and other founders of universal religions. Because He announced Himself as the divine revelator for a new day, Bahá'u'lláh endured torture, exile and imprisonment. Undaunted, He propagated His message that religion is one, all races one, women and men are equal, and earth is one country under one God. He taught His followers that no matter what calamities befell

humanity, world peace would prevail if they made it the law of their own lives and brought it into the lives of others.

Before His death He named His son, 'Abdu'l-Bahá (1844-1921), the Servant of Baha'u'llah, as the example of a perfect Bahá'í and the only interpreter of His teachings. 'Abdu'l-Bahá left the Bahá'ís in the hands of His grandson, Shoghi Effendi (1897-1957), the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith. Now the Bahá'í World Centre, with its gardens and golden-domed shrine, graces Mount Carmel in Haifa, Israel, and the Universal House of Justice, elected by the world Bahá'í community, guides the religion's progress.

It was Eve Nicklin's good fortune to learn of the Bahá'í Faith through three pioneering teachers who had been forever transformed by meeting 'Abdu'l-Bahá. It was her privilege to answer calls for pioneers issued by the Guardian, to correspond with him, to receive his guidance and praise. He signed his letters to her and to all the Baha'is, "Your True Brother". If Eve, in her peregrinations, felt the need for any other family, she didn't disclose it.

In this independent spirit she was one with sister pioneers – Leonora Armstrong, Marcia Steward, Marian Jack, Anna Kunz, and others. Like them, she followed the path set by one of the first female Bahá'ís, Tahiri, the Iranian poet and activist who, to proclaim the dawning of the new era, broke her culture's greatest taboo when she unveiled herself before a gathering of men in 1848. Eve Nicklin and her peers also broke taboos of tradition and prejudice in their zeal to live Bahá'u'lláh's prophesized Most Great Peace despite tragic, ongoing wars.

In the future, in an age of fulfillment, looking back, people will see Eve Nicklin's brilliant star shining through the smoke and dust of her anguished time. Because one of her Peruvian spiritual children, Boris Handal, has so lovingly preserved her legacy in *She of the Brave Heart*, they will understand how, by saying yes to a universal love transcending self, she pioneered peace.

Janet Ruhe-Schoen, Beacon, NY, 2011

PREFACE

These pages tell the story of a life that transformed so many individuals and communities with her natural warmth, modesty and thoughtfulness. They review the accomplishments of Miss Eve Blanche Nicklin, an early American Bahá'í pioneer to South America.

Born in the mining town of Roanoke, Illinois, in 1895, Eve came from a profoundly religious family and was a parish deaconess in New Castle, Pennsylvania. She became a Bahá'í in 1932, taught by the legendary Mabel and Howard Ives. The immortal Hand of the Cause of God, Martha Root, also inspired Eve, and suggested her to go to South America which led Eve's settling in six South American countries for nearly five decades. A courageous woman she went to her posts with few personal belongings but with a lot of faith.

Eve traveled extensively on teaching and administrative appointments, taking opportunities to live among indigenous people as well as paying special attention to the education of younger generations. Her life was driven by a strong belief that Bahá'u'lláh's teachings were the means to achieve world unity, universal peace and the brotherhood of all faiths. Eve never wavered in promoting these new principles to all whom she came across.

Even at an advanced age, in fragile health, she remained an inspiration to all until she died in 1985 in Peru – a country that she always called home. The beloved Guardian and, later, the Universal House of Justice, with much love praised her brilliant services to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh.

Tracking Eve Nicklin's life in so many countries proved to be a formidable task in terms of interviewing and corresponding with believers and institutions around the world. I am very grateful to all who one way or another lent me a hand and made this work possible.

This research would have not been possible without assistance from the Bahá'í World Centre as well as the national spiritual assemblies of Peru and the United States which made available historical documents and photographs. I also would like to thank the local spiritual assemblies of Peoria (Illinois), Arequipa, Lima and Chiclayo (Peru) for facilitating my research work for this book. My thanks extend likewise to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia for reviewing and approving the manuscript.

The spelling of some terms in this book remains as in the original sources. For instance, the word *Bahá'í* sometimes is spelt as *Bahai* or *Baha'í* in some early publications. For the sake of consistency, the use of the Spanish *accent marks* (´) has been deliberately omitted in all the words (e.g. Peru and Perú).

An unfortunate cleaning mishap at the Bahá'í Center of Lima caused the loss of most of Eve's personal and precious written records and memorabilia, as well as other primary sources, that had fed my early research twenty years ago. If the present writer can claim any credit it is that Eve's literacy and stories were providentially kept for posterity in the early Spanish manuscript. Consequently, some of Eve's narrative and correspondence embedded in this book had to be translated back into English from my early translation into Spanish. When this has happened I have indicated it in the notes section at the end of the book.

This has been an extraordinary journey from which I have gained invaluable life experiences. Without this research work it would have not been possible to meet and interview some amazing early believers who have already left this earthly existence. Nor, I would not have been allowed to hear all those remarkable tales of audacity and love that were narrated to me by those early believers, often with tears in their eyes. Separated by the curtain of death I can still hear their enthusiastic voices while I read again their narratives. My work also took me to visiting old historical Baha'i places, libraries, newspaper archives or early believers who for decades had not contacted their communities. As any biographical research entails, there were long periods of tedious work such as transcribing extensive interview tapes and looking for specific information through thousands of archive materials at the Peru National Centre, the early seat of Baha'i administration for the ten South American countries. Eve Nicklin never kept a diary so collecting data and putting together the whole story seemed to be an endless and insurmountable task. Yet, my imagination was always flying away with the astounding story that, like a wonderful tapestry, my writing was unfolding. The support of the institutions and the friends from all over the world was precious and kept me on my feet as I had to struggle with other daily commitments.

There were so many blessings to be thankful for, which I experienced during my research, such as when I came across an original Shoghi Effendi's letter kept like a treasure by an elderly believer who for decades had not seen other Baha'i friends, a document which had not been sent to the Baha'i World Centre. I was also given access to many unpublished letters of the Guardian and read avidly about his vision of

the spiritual destiny of the Latin American people within the Baha'i World.

In the final analysis, I believe, there is something of Eve Nicklin in everyone of us, either latent or evident, whenever we are conveying the Message of Baha'u'llah with happiness, following unreservedly the calls from our institutions or fostering love in our communities. No doubt, as someone commented, in the future, schools, hospitals, universities and all types of humanitarian institutions will be named after her.

This book is dedicated to my wife Parvin and my daughter Camelia who at every stage and over many years encouraged me to continue and complete this biography. Without their support this work would have never seen the light of day.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There were many friends who facilitated the process of collecting information and the editorial work. Among those are: Fred Harris, Eugenia Pritchard, Gayle Woolson, Richard Hollinger, Alejandro Reid, Margaret Mills Leonard, Terry Vojdani, Janet Beth Alexander, Athos Costas, Gilbert Grasselly, Dolores Swastley (Eve Nicklin's niece), Mario Leon, Alberto Lobaton, Dr. Guillermo Aguilar, Mercedes Sanchez, Isabel de Sanchez, Dr. Enrique Sanchez Rivera, Enrique Sanchez Camacho, Nora and Ada Tirado, Margot Malkin, Ben Levy, Rosario Urteaga de Molero, Oscar Salazar, Kristine Burgess, Dora Bravo, Nima Idelkhani, Rosario and Alberto Guerrero, Sarah Newton-John, Rosemary Beckett de Baily, David and Mary Beckett, Robert Stockman, Tahereh Ahdieh, Roger Dahl, Lewis Walker, Morris Taylor Jr., Katharine Meyer, Mirna Leon de Donaies, Sara de Rosell, Iza de Meza, Artemus Lamb, Margot Worley, Demetrio Taboada, Satu Hessar-Amiri, Ellem Sims, Amelia Buxton, Frank Ayers and Nur Mhrshahi.

Boris Handal
Sydney, Australia

INTRODUCTION

Many spiritual accolades can be credited to Eve Nicklin. Before arriving in Lima, Peru in 1941 she had already responded to Shoghi Effendi's call for pioneers in 1937 during the Seven Year Plan and settled in Brazil. It is due to her efforts that in 1944 the first Lima Assembly was formed — an event that Shoghi Effendi called "a great victory". She subsequently lived in Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela but always called Peru her "adopted country".

Although Eve became the Spiritual Mother of Peru, the same informal designation can in some ways be applied to her services in Paraguay where she served at three different times. Eve came back to Peru at several stages to live in five other cities in order to successfully form local spiritual assemblies.

In the administrative field, Eve was elected to various local spiritual assemblies, as well as a member in 1951 of the first National Spiritual Assembly for ten South American countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela). In 1957 when two regional national assemblies were created in South America, for the southern and the northern countries, Eve remained in the membership of the latter and years later she served as an Auxiliary Board member under the direct guidance of the Hands of the Cause of God. Such duties involved not only Bahá'í administration engagement but also extensive travelling throughout South America to Assembly meetings, regional events and visiting and strengthening the emerging Bahá'í communities.

Eve Nicklin lived in a spirit characterized by obedience, perseverance and wisdom. She responded almost instantaneously to teaching appeals, both general and specific, from the beloved Guardian, the Hands of the Cause and the Universal House of Justice through the successive unfoldment of the first Seven Year Plan (1937-1944), the second Seven Year Plan (1946-1953), the Ten Year Crusade (1953-1963), the Nine Year (1964-1973), the Five Year Plan (1974-1979) and the Seven Year Plan (1979-1986).

Eve traveled and served in almost every South American country with unswerving dedication and zeal. She showed no hesitation nor vacillation – whether a pioneer was needed at the southernmost and freezing tip of the continent, or visiting isolated Bahá'ís in the deep jungle, or someone was required to settle in the very heart of the Andes — she was the first to joyfully accept any mission.

On arriving in Peru she was a woman in her late forties, far away from family and friends, without money or knowledge of the language, no Bahá'í literature in Spanish and surviving on a bare income as an English teacher in schools and hospitals. There were no Bahá'í institutions at hand or other pioneers to turn to in times of difficulties. She was living amid political uncertainty, in a new culture and pressured by immigration regulations hostile to the entry of foreigners, particularly missionaries. Eve Nicklin's sole source of guidance and encouragement came for many years only from her correspondence with the beloved Guardian and the Inter America Teaching Committee, both located thousands of miles away.

That is probably why Eve calls herself *She of the Brave Heart* in a poem talking about her early struggles. Postal services

were long delayed, people still traveled by sea and cablegram communication was expensive. Despite all those daunting conditions she persevered and achieved much.

Someone once described her as a "quiet and unglamorous personality" and yet she had the spiritual acumen to reach all layers of society having brought into the Faith peoples from all walks of life, from the university professor to the illiterate and simple folk, from dignitaries to the commoner, both the young and the old, whether from a rich or a poor background. As early as in the 1950s, Eve was among the first in reaching out indigenous populations particularly with the Guarani and Quechua ethnics groups in Paraguay and Peru, respectively. She developed Bahá'í literature in their native languages, organized teaching institutes and traveled and pioneered in their areas. She also became very skilful in delivering the Message through visual aids in the form of albums depicting a whole variety of teachable issues.

Trained originally as a Methodist missionary, she became good at building, developing and drawing communities together while still reaching the individual soul. Eve had particularly a special rapport with the youth and children with whom she enjoyed working. In fact, she published professional literature on child education for the broader community in both English and Spanish. Coming from a traditional mining family, Eve became also an excellent miner but rather than coal she worked with the human soul which Bahá'u'lláh had referred as a "mine rich in gems of inestimable value".⁴ The Universal Friendship Club which she formed in Lima embraced the youth, both Bahá'ís and their friends, and became instrumental for the enrolment of a large number of new believers in the early years of the Faith in Peru. Infinite love and patience

towards her spiritual children and all were among her main pioneering attributes.

What is it that makes us look at great people like Eve Nicklin? It has been said that we all sit on the shoulder of giants. The lives of these great souls are central to understand the early development of the Faith, and for us, their spiritual heirs, help us to realize where do we situate as Bahá'ís at this point of history. As a matter of acknowledgment, these souls devotedly built brick by brick the foundations which we are now standing upon. Since their arrival we have come a long way ahead. More importantly, their labor of love permeates our existence, enriches our lives with insightful meanings and enlighten us with examples of faith and courage. As spiritual giants their work took us to greater spiritual heights to see things that we could not have experienced otherwise.

Shoghi Effendi praised her pioneering attributes at different times and referred to her work as: "your notable and unforgettable services" ... "your meritorious and indeed historic labours" ... "your truly remarkable efforts and services"; "I deeply appreciate your high endeavors and the spirit that so admirably animates you in the service of our beloved Faith"; "You are certainly seeing the harvest begin to come in, many seeds of which you yourself sowed with such devoted care and sacrifice!"; "Your invaluable services, rendered with such exemplary devotion and in such distant fields, evoke my deepfelt admiration" and "... profoundly grateful for your steadfast and noble endeavors" and was assured "that the Beloved is well pleased with the standard of your achievements in the service of His Faith".

All world religions have heroes and saints whose memory is kept alive and admired. The Bahá'í Faith stands proud and

affectionately honors their first pioneers, those who made history and constructed national communities from the ground, as spiritual mothers and fathers. Such family-like designation makes us by default their spiritual children. It also creates within us the obligation to continue their legacy so that captivating legends such as Eve Nicklin continue to live forever.

THE MANDATE TO GO SOUTH

Whereas the light of Christianity took fifteen centuries to reach the South American coasts, itself diminished by the conquerors' violence, the arrival of the Cause of Bahá'í Faith to the same shores was characterized by a different pattern. In fact, it took less than three decades after Bahá'í Faith's passing in Palestine (1892) when His Faith had already begun to illuminate the southern hemisphere of the New World. The early years of the advent of the Bahá'í Faith in South America were also characterized by the living and solitary apostolate of a number of souls whose spiritual dimension in this adventure of glory we can barely weigh now.

They were Martha Root, Leonora Armstrong, May Maxwell and Eve Nicklin. Martha the "Leading Ambassador of His Faith"; Leonora Armstrong, the "Spiritual Mother of South America"; Eve Nicklin "the Spiritual Mother of Peru" and May Maxwell "the Pioneer Martyr."

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THE MANDATE TO GO SOUTH

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They were Martha Root, Leonora Armstrong, May Maxwell and Eve Nicklin: Martha the "Leading Ambassadors of His Faith" ⁵, Leonora Armstrong, the "Spiritual Mother of South America", Eve Nicklin "the Spiritual Mother of Peru", and May Maxwell ⁶ "the Pioneer Martyr".

There were many other early pioneer women including Marcia Steward Atwater to Chile (1940), Priscilla Rhodes (1938) and Gwenne Sholtis (1942) to Venezuela, Gayle Woolson to Costa Rica (1940), Rouhiyyah Jones and Katherine Didier to Puerto Rico (1940), Elizabeth Cheney to Paraguay (1940), Eleanor Smith Adler to Bolivia (1940), Margaret Lentz (1938) to Dominican Republic, and Louise Caswell and Cora Oliver to Panama (1939).

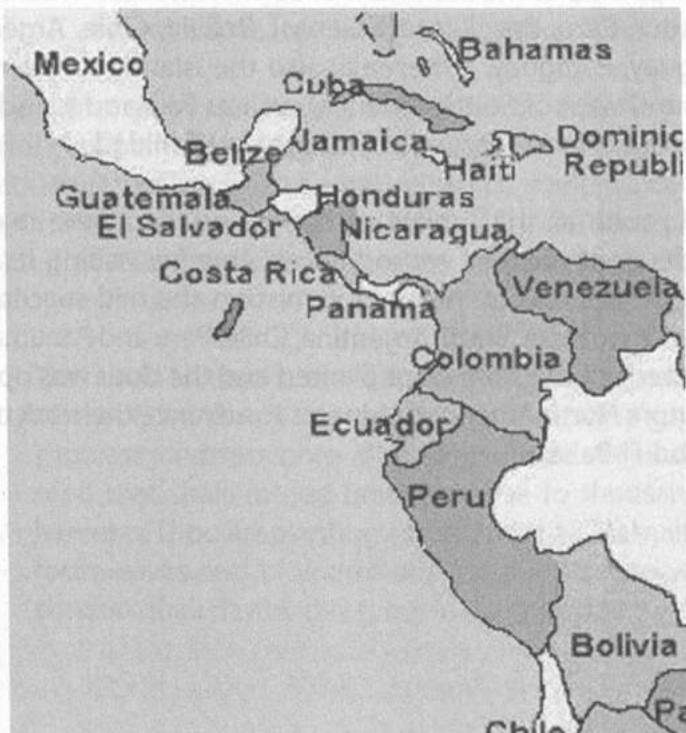
Shoghi Effendi wrote that the "boldness" of Bahá'í women praised by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, was "in the course of time and throughout the length and breadth of the vast and virgin territories of Latin America, be more convincingly demonstrated, and win for the beloved Cause victories more stirring than any it has as yet achieved." ⁷ Such effusion of religious zeal the New World had never seen before.

The Tablets of the Divine Plan

The scene for such a glorious enterprise was set up in 1919 when the immortal Tablets of the Divine Plan, which were revealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada, were presented at the American Bahá'í Convention held in New York City. Many believers took the exhortations with special fervour and immediately stood up to carry them out and establish the Faith in distant lands. Two of those special souls were Martha Root and Leonora Armstrong. In those Tablets Peru is mentioned twice as one of those republics where "[selected] important personages, or else they by themselves, becoming severed from rest and composure of

the world, may arise and travel".⁸ 'Abdu'l-Bahá's summons to go out and pioneer was electrifying and inspiring:

I desire for you eternal success and prosperity and beg perfect confirmation for each one in the divine world. My hope for you is that each one may shine forth like unto the morning star from the horizon of the world and in this Garden of God become a blessed tree, producing everlasting fruits and results.⁹



Map of Latin America

'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote in a Tablet to the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada that "His Holiness Christ says: 'Travel ye to the East and to the West of the world and summon the people to the Kingdom of God' " (Mark 16:15). He wrote further exhorting to go to "... Mexico... to be familiar with the Spanish language ... [as well as to] Guatemala, Honduras, Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama and the seventh country Belize... Attach great importance to the indigenous population of America ... Likewise the islands of ... Cuba, Haiti, Puerto Rico, Jamaica, ... Bahama Islands, even the small Watling Island ... Haiti and Santo Domingo ... the islands of Bermuda ... the republics of the continent of South America — Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, [the Guianas], Bolivia, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Venezuela; also the islands to the north, east and west of South America, such as Falkland Islands, the Galapagos, Juan Fernandez, Tobago and Trinidad...." ¹⁰

As soon as the Tablets of the Divine Plan were released Martha Root traveled around South America visiting its main cities. At the end of this unique mission she had successively visited Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Peru and Panama. The first seeds of the Faith were planted and the door was opened for future North American pioneers to advance the work traced by 'Abdu'l-Bahá.



Martha Root, Hand of the Cause of God

In a tablet addressed to Martha Root, 'Abdu'l-Bahá praises her efforts and admirable dedication evidenced in that journey. In that document we find something which could be called a vision of the establishment of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh in those regions. The Center of the Covenant, as quoted by Shoghi Effendi, goes to say:

That art, in truth, a herald of the Kingdom and a harbinger of the Covenant. Thou art truly self-sacrificing. Thou showest kindness unto all nations. Thou art sowing a seed that shall, in due time, give rise to thousands of harvests. Thou art planting a tree that shall eternally put forth leaves and blossoms and yield fruits, and whose shadow shall day by day grow in magnitude.¹¹

Going South

Seventeen years later at the 1936 American National Convention a directive from Shoghi Effendi formally instructed the believers in the United States and Canada to look south and systematically launch themselves into the spiritual conquest of Latin America:

Appeal to assembled delegates ponder historic appeal voiced by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Tablets of the Divine Plan. Urge earnest deliberation with incoming National Assembly to insure its complete fulfilment. First century of Bahá'í Era drawing to a close. Humanity entering outer fringes most perilous stage its existence. Opportunities of present hour unimaginably precious. Would to God every State within American Republic and every Republic in American continent might ere termination of this glorious century embrace the light of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh and establish structural basis of His World Order.¹²

Garreta Busey recalled the powerful effect that Shoghi Effendi's message brought upon those attending:

The Convention was electrified. The American Bahá'ís were at first dazed and then galvanized into action by the sweeping demands of the message. To most of the people in the United States, the countries of South and Central America ... were unknown, romantic lands much more distant than the continent of Europe.¹³

The message led a series of consultations that ultimately brought about the formation of the Inter-America Teaching

Committee and the launching in 1937 of the First Seven Year Plan by the beloved Guardian. One of the "triple tasks" ¹⁴ of the Plan was to create a permanent center in each of the Latin American republics, "for whose entry into the fellowship of Bahá'u'lláh the Plan was primarily formulated." ¹⁵

Shoghi Effendi had written in 1937:

It should not, for one moment, be forgotten that Central and South America embrace no less than twenty independent nations, constituting approximately one third of the entire number of the world's sovereign states, and are destined to play an increasingly important part in the shaping of the world's future destiny. ¹⁶

The progress of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh until 1944 on Latin American soil now had had an extraordinary impulse from the launching of this Seven Year Plan. 'Abdu'l-Bahá had entrusted the American believers with the implementation of the Tablets of the Divine Plan towards the spiritual conquest of the planet — they had seriously assumed this historical responsibility. Shoghi Effendi had said that in this establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth, the North American believers were the executors of the Divine Plan while the Canadians were their allies and the Latin American believers their associates. Shoghi Effendi wrote years later:

In the far-flung Latin American field, where the first fruits of the Divine Plan, operating beyond the confines of the North American continent, have already been garnered in such abundance, the Latin American Bahá'í communities, from the Mexican border to the

extremity of Chile, should bestir themselves for the collective, the historic and gigantic tasks that await them, and which must culminate, ere the expiration of the present Plan, in the formation of two national spiritual assemblies for Central and South America.¹⁷

Such were the victories that by 1940, within twenty-three years after Abdu'l-Bahá's passing, only two Latin American republics required pioneers. Shoghi Effendi indicated that the teaching campaign in Latin America was "one of the most glorious chapters in the international history of their Faith".¹⁸ By 1944 there were already 57 centers and 15 local spiritual assemblies. These rising communities were lovingly raised by the resident pioneers and travel teachers coming from North America. They were maturing rapidly in the Bahá'í administration, finding a place for themselves in the Bahá'í world under the direct care of the beloved Guardian and the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada with its executive arm — the Inter America Teaching Committee.

So exceptional had growth become that Shoghi Effendi felt moved to state some years later that:

No community since the inception of the hundred-year-old faith of Bahá'u'lláh, not even the community of the Most Great Name in the North American Continent, can boast of an evolution as rapid, a consolidation as sound, a multiplication of centers as swift, as those that marked the birth and rise of the community of His followers in Latin America.¹⁹

In 1952 Shoghi Effendi referred to the same impetus: "Compared with the length of time it took the North American,

the British and the French communities to grow up and spread, their [Latin American communities] growth is like lightning".²⁰

Shoghi Effendi had described the Latin believers as "...the eager, the warmhearted, the spiritually-minded ... this privileged, this youngest, this dynamic and highly promising member of the organic Bahá'í World Community."²¹ He asked them to remember and reflect on the message that Bahá'u'lláh had directed to the rulers of the American continent, contained in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas (the Most Holy Book), where the Greatest Manifestation advises them:

Hearken ye, O Rulers of America and the Presidents of the Republics therein, unto that which the Dove is warbling on the Branch of Eternity: "There is none other God but Me, the Ever-Abiding, the Forgiving, the All-Bountiful." Adorn ye the temple of dominion with the ornament of justice and of the fear of God, and its head with the crown of the remembrance of your Lord, the Creator of the heavens. Thus counselleth you He Who is the Dayspring of Names, as bidden by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. The Promised One hath appeared in this glorified Station, all beings, both seen and unseen, have rejoiced. Take ye advantage of the Day of God. Verily, to meet Him is better for you than all that whereon the sun shineth, could ye but know it. O concourse of rulers! Give ear unto that which hath been raised from the Dayspring of Grandeur: "Verily, there is none other God but Me, the Lord of Utterance, the All-Knowing." Bind ye the broken with the hands of justice, and crush the oppressor who flourisheth with the rod of the commandments of your Lord, the Ordainer, the All-Wise."²²

Latin Victories

Before the Centenary of the Faith in 1944, which coincided with the end of the first Seven Year Plan, local spiritual assemblies in the City of Mexico and Puebla had already formed (Mexico) as well as those in Buenos Aires (Argentina), in the city of Guatemala (Guatemala), Santiago (Chile), Montevideo (Uruguay), Quito (Ecuador), Bogota (Colombia), Lima (Peru), Asuncion (Paraguay), Tegucigalpa (Honduras), San Salvador (El Salvador), San Jose and Punta Arenas (Costa Rica), Havana (Cuba), and Port-au-Prince (Haiti). The Centenary celebration took place with great solemnity and had much publicity in the auditorium of the Temple of Wilmette on May 24, 1944, and was in no doubt homage to the valiant American pioneers who adventured in those virgin territories with some laying their bones in their soil like Eve Nicklin. Justly, Shoghi Effendi wrote to the 1944 Centenary Convention:

The magnificent victories achieved in the teaching field and the sphere of administrative activity by the American Bahá'í community crowned with glory the historic services rendered by the followers of Bahá'u'lláh throughout the West during the last fifty years of the first Bahá'í Century. I rejoice in the brilliant celebrations befittingly consummating the record of splendid achievements. Immediate attention should be focused in the course of the opening year of the Second Century on consolidation of the nobly-won victories through reinforcement of newly formed Assemblies, multiplication of groups and increase in number of Assemblies as well as corresponding effort through Latin America.²³

What follows is the story of one of those great souls, Miss Eve Blanche Nicklin, an American Baha'i heroine, and how she conquered Peru — the land of the Incas.

2

"IN THE HANDS OF GOD"

A two-hour drive from the Baha'i House of Worship at Wilmette, Illinois, the village of Ivanhoe sits in a tranquil spot as the place where Eve Nicklin was born. It is located in a region known as the Great Plains where herds of buffaloes once roamed freely through the vast and fertile grasslands.

The first white settlers arrived in the region by the 1830s to occupy the land once inhabited by the Sac, Fox and Pottawatomie tribes. The relationship between Native and European Americans was said to be friendly since the beginning. Ivanhoe itself was formally founded in 1875 and the region had already attracted large number of pioneers looking for agricultural land or work as miners. Ivanhoe at that time was inhabited by less than 1,000 people. They came from many States in the Union as well as from the old continent countries such as England, Germany, France, Italy, Switzerland and Ireland who belonged to various Christian denominations that co-existed together in peace.

2

"IN THE HANDS OF GOD"

A two-hour drive from the Bahá'í House of Worship at Wilmette, Illinois, the village of Roanoke still stands tranquil as the place where Eve Nicklin was born. It is located in a region known as the Great Prairie where herds of buffalos once roamed freely through the vast and fertile grasslands.

The first white settlers arrived in the region by the 1830s to occupy the land once inhabited by the Sac, Fox and Pottawantomi tribes. The relationship between Native and European Americans was said to be friendly since the beginning. Roanoke itself was formally founded in 1875 and the region had already attracted large number of pioneers looking for agricultural land or work as miners. Roanoke at that time was inhabited by less than 1,000 people. They came from many States in the Union as well as from the old continent countries such as England, Germany, France, Italy, Switzerland and Ireland who belonged to various Christian denominations that co-existed together in peace.

At the heart of Woodford County, central Illinois, Roanoke was the place selected by William and Mercy James Nicklin to settle with their five children from England in the summer of 1880. William Nicklin himself, by then 33 years old, was a coalminer and that might have been the reason why he chose this booming coal-mining region for the family residence. Working in the Roanoke coal shafts was hazardous, with poor ventilation, and even children were employed in the industry. For instance, four miners lost their lives and many others were wounded in a tragic accident that shook the whole village on June 20, 1906.

The Nicklin Clan

William's immediate ancestor had been a saddlebag preacher back in England. Saddlebag ministers were pastors that used to travel on horseback within specific geographical jurisdictions to serve rural villages and isolated and unorganised communities. William (1847-1933) was born in the town of Tipton, Staffordshire and married Mercy James (1852-1898), born in Dudley, Worcestershire. The wedding took place on May 20, 1872.

Nobody knows the exact reason why the Nicklins moved to America but one might recall the heavy pollution belched by factories' chimneys as well as the overcrowded living conditions that made Tipton, by then an intensive coal-mining city, be known as the "*the quintessence of the Black Country*". Dudley, a few miles away from Tipton, had similar industrial conditions having been declared 'the most unhealthy place in the country'. Probably due to the lack of public drinking

water and sewage the average age of death was 16 years and 7 months in 1852.²⁴

Such deplorable urban environments typical from the Victorian Era might have inspired them to cross the Atlantic and fulfill - like many others - the legendary American dream. Better work opportunities and higher wages made immigration peak in the second half of the nineteenth century and so there was competition among liners that were delivering passengers in about ten days, depending on the seacraft speed and therefore the fare. There were no immigration offices and New York was the typical arrival port. From there, immigrants could take trains to various states or by waterways.

From William's and Mercy's union nine children came into the world: Mary (1873), Isaac (1875), Sophia (1878), Arthur (1878), Eliza (1880), William (1883), Alice (1884), Lily (1893) and finally Eve Blanche (1895). Arthur, William and Lily died very young. The sadness at the loss of the last baby might have been relieved when two years later on January 25, 1895, a promising child was born to them. She was Eve Blanche James Nicklin.

After two years shadows again rose over the family fortunes when Mother Nicklin passed away. Her last words, which Eve always felt to be a prophetic omen, were: "I leave this baby in the hands of God." She was consequently raised by her father and older sisters. Eve very often would acknowledge a sense of permanent awareness of divine guidance in her life and would say that she had always "been raised by God and always talked to God."



Eve Nicklin as a child

The 1880 United States census reveals that the Nicklins were temporarily living in the small village of Braceville in the Grundy County of Illinois, taking board at the home of William and Annie Redford. Little we know of Eve's childhood except that other members of the Nicklin clan also emigrated from England and likewise settled in Roanoke. It must have been certainly a happy environment surrounded by her siblings and many cousins, uncles and aunties. We also know that in 1906 tragedy again struck the family when her maternal auntie Elizabeth was murdered by her husband. The local newspaper reported that: "She was a faithful wife and loving mother and was respected by all who knew her. She was a member of the M. E. [Methodist Episcopal] church for a number of years and lived a faithful Christian life."²⁵ Young Eve attended the funeral, an event that might have made a strong impression on her tender mind. One wonders whether that incident along with

her mother's early passing, affected the way she looked at life and made her live looking for higher spiritual insights, or as a friend of hers referred to many years ago, Eve's inner "ability to see what was invisible to the eye physically." By then a number of the Nicklin family members had married and settled outside Roanoke.

We do not have much information about Eve's growing up into maturity in Roanoke. However, it is easy to guess that there were limited opportunities in a small township in the Illinois countryside for young women apart from working at home. The economy mostly rotated about the functioning of the Roanoke Coal Mining Company that at one point of time employed 300 men. Corn and grain crops dominated the agricultural production in the countryside which was being mechanised through coal-fuelled engines. Life usually revolved around church events with ten different denominations, mostly Protestants, living at the same time. Services accompanied by preaching and singing were at the core of religious services including the traditional Sunday school. There were a range of schools in the area which had been established mostly through community initiative to promote the education of children and young people. The township was linked by steam trains served by Santa Fe Railways which carried both passengers and coal and helped to reduce economic and cultural isolation.

Two history-making events can be identified within Eve's period of growth into womanhood. The Great War (1914-1918) saw some Roanoke citizens die in action overseas, a conflict that had shaken the core of American life killing 116,709 American servicemen and leaving 205,690 others wounded. Life in a small town of 1,000 people particularly during that bloody period and the subsequent years must have been

dreary and lackluster. 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself had predicted the breakout of the Great War two years before in 1912.

In 1912 'Abdu'l-Bahá had blessed the region when He visited Northern Illinois four times in 1912 particularly in the city of Chicago. On May 1st of the same year 'Abdu'l-Bahá laid down the cornerstone of the Baha'i House of Worship on the shores of Lake Michigan just 117 miles (190 kilometers) from where Eve was living. Referring to the spiritual promise of the region, 'Abdu'l-Bahá stated in one of the Tablets of the Divine Plan revealed on February 8, 1917:

Continually my ear and eye are turned toward the Central States; perchance a melody from some blessed souls may reach my ears -- souls who are the dawning-places of the love of God, the stars of the horizon of sanctification and holiness--souls who will illumine this dark universe and quicken to life this dead world. The joy of 'Abdu'l-Baha depends upon this! I hope that you may become confirmed therein ...²⁶

The decline in Roanoke's coal mining industry in the mid-twenties impacted seriously on the local economy and many people emigrated. In 1925 Eve and her almost octogenarian father moved to the city of Delavan, Wisconsin, to live in the home of her sister Eliza, fifteen years her senior.

For a while Eve went to work as a clerk for the company Holstein Guernsey. She quickly made friends with her colleagues and with the family formed a walking club for enjoyment. They would go early in the morning to the countryside, afterward making a fire and preparing breakfast.

"In the Hands of God"

Dolores Swatsley, Eliza's daughter born in 1918, created a strong bond with Eve that kept them in touch throughout all her long pioneering years in South America.



Roanoke Labor Day Celebration in 1911

3

FROM DEACONESS TO PIONEER

It was probably the religious background at home that led Eve to enrol at the National School for Deaconesses and Methodist Missionaries in Kansas City in the fall of 1925, when she was thirty years old. The purpose of the institution was to provide training in missionary service to country areas and also abroad. The minimum requirement of registration was to have completed high school. Among the courses that formed the curriculum were: Hebrew history, social sciences, recreation, industrial arts, home economics, history of the church, the Bible, missions, New Testament themes, history of education and civilization, child psychology and storytelling.

Eve stood out with her special artistic talents. May F. Brown, her best classmate, has said: "Eve used to paint, draw, and write prose, fiction and poetry. She had the soul of an artist. Her body was fragile and her appearance was misleading for both her body as spirit were strong. Eve was quick to see what was invisible to the eye physically. She also had a keen sense of humour.

I was in her class in the year before, and soon we became friends. She was a conscientious student". In another facet of her literary life, she wrote a half-hour play entitled "The Christ of Youth". Its purpose was to highlight a life consecrated to serve others. To May she wrote the poem "Speaking psychologically":

It has been said
If we hate
All of hatred from
Past eons
Becomes our legacy;
And love
It attracts Love
Then
All the great friendships
Through the ages
Belong to me.
Because
I have a sympathetic friend
And she will be mine
For all eternity ²⁷

Eve stayed in the school until the autumn of 1928 when she finally completed her studies having her consecration on October 12, 1928. In a letter written to a close friend forty-four years later, Eve tells us about the providential way through which she decided to serve as a deaconess in the city of New Castle. It is there where Eve was going to take one of the most wonderful steps of her life. According to Eve:

Sometimes my thoughts go back to the time when a woman from the Personnel Department came to Kansas City ... She asked me if I had any place in particular where I wanted to be sent to work. I said no, and she said she wanted to locate the best graduates, and sent me to New Castle, Pennsylvania, just where later I found Bahá'u'lláh through Martha Root and the Ives! ²⁸



Eve Nicklin as a young woman in the United States

Eve the Deaconess

1930 saw the Great Depression in full swing following the famous Black Tuesday stockmarket crash. In the same year Eve Nicklin began working as a deaconess at the Methodist Church in Croton Avenue, New Castle, Pennsylvania. That was one of the four Methodist churches in that city. The names of two of the three other churches were the *First Methodist Church* and *Epworth Methodist Church*.

Deaconesses were meant to assist in the work of the church serving children, the youth and the elderly. Eve lived in a diaconate with three other deaconesses from the other churches. Every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon Eve conducted children's classes. She also taught crafts, sewing and English to immigrants and of course, religion. Prayer meetings were on Wednesdays from seven to eight in the evening while on Sunday morning the church service and Sunday school took place. There was another service on Sunday night as well as the regular youth gathering.

Because of her job Eve had to wear the deaconess dress which she hated. It consisted of a wide ruched white collar and a black bonnet with white ribbons. Dr. Eugenia Pritchard, to whom we owe a valuable work on Eve's pre-Bahá'í days indicated that Eve did not like the bonnet and had to arm herself with great courage to wear the black hat. Also, Eve did not like her role belonging to the mourner's women's bench. When the faithful came to the altar of the church, these women had to come and pray for other peoples' sins, Eve had to kneel with them and pray. It was very difficult for her to do that role.²⁹



The Croton Avenue Church — Courtesy: Stephanie Parrott

It is in those days when Eve began her great friendship with Amelia Buxton, who had started working as a volunteer in the same church. At some stage Eve lived far away, on the south side of town and had to take two trams to get to the diaconate. On Sundays she was invited to Amelia's home, just one and a half blocks away from the church, as Eve had to be there both in the morning and the afternoon. Even when Eve was invited to other places still she used to go to Amelia's home for a *siesta*.

Amelia tells us about the curiosity permeating those days:

We were four (Eve, Leona, Nolan and Sara ...) and I who met frequently. I do not know why, but you could not imagine such a well-integrated group. Sara was a very quiet person and never had strong personal opinions, and Leona was similar but had no views but was rather chatty and not into much thinking (a really sweet person and I still miss her): she never could appreciate the Bahá'í Faith, nor did she try. One evening they were with me for lunch because of Leona's birthday. We all lived near except Eve ... When we were having lunch Eve always guided the conversation sooner or later to the subject of religion. We were talking and during the course of the conversation Eve said: 'Now, Leona, what is your idea of heaven, what do you think heaven look like?' Well, Leone, became very serious, thought for a minute and said, 'Well, I do not know. I guess it is just a place where we will all sit down together and talk'. She had no more than what came out of her mouth, and the beloved Eve lifted her arms upward and said, 'Oh, I do not expect that, it would be hell for me'. Well,

it shocked us all three because she was so serious ...
Often we talked about it ...³⁰

Becoming a Bahá'í

It was then that they both began searching for other religious and esoteric movements such as the Rosicrucians, astrology, etc. It was also when Ruth Wright, Eve's friend from a New Age Group Club (presumably a Bahá'í group) and herself not a Bahá'í, invited her to a talk at the city public library. The talk was given by Howard Colby Ives and his wife Mabel — renowned Bahá'í teachers confirmed by Abdu'l-Bahá. Eve informed Amelia of the talk and both went in Amelia's car. The presentation was about the Progressive Revelation. It was God who was opening this big door in their lives.

In an interview conducted by Mario Leon in 1975, Eve told him that "[O]ne day some friends invited me to a talk about the Bahá'í Faith. The talk was given by a lady named Martha Root." Mario asked her: "Did you enter the Bahá'í Faith through Martha Root?" Eve replied: "Yes, she was my spiritual mother. Later I met Mabel and Howard Colby Ives. They were my dear teachers who were ordered to deepen my knowledge of the Faith."³¹

In a letter to Amelia, forty years later, Eve wrote: "... It was also her (Martha Root) whom I asked how to become a Bahá'í. A year later, in another letter she said: "... It was then that I met Bahá'u'lláh through Martha Root and the Ives."³² This might have happened the year that Martha Root spent touring various American cities including Chicago and Madison (where Eve's family resided) and traveled throughout the state of

Pennsylvania. It is not possible to ascertain exactly whether Martha Root was in New Castle.



Leonora Armstrong, Spiritual Mother of South America, arriving to Bahia in 1921

That city was Martha Root's home town and she might have returned in 1931 and met Eve and Amelia. However, many years later, Amelia did not remember Martha Root. Putting aside historical issues, Amelia tells us:

She [Eve] was very weak. She was very thin and became tired quickly. So when we heard about that talk, I said, 'Well, Eve, I'll drive'. Howard Colby Ives had three names ... He was there, but he had had an operation or a serious illness and was convalescing. That is why they rented a farm somewhere in the countryside. Do not ask me where. I could not take you again although I wish I could because it was a beautiful place, or perhaps we thought it was beautiful. We started going to meetings and I have no idea how many times I took

Eve. She was kind enough to tell in one of her letters: 'I remember the time when you took me to Ives' farm and I think that perhaps I would not be teaching the Faith here in Peru and South America had it not been for you and your car.'³³

Dr. Pritchard wrote about the same days:

Afterwards, every Sunday the Ives held meetings at their farm-house which they rented in August, although Howard Colby Ives was recovering ... Eve and Amelia enjoyed these meetings and were attracted to them like a magnet. It was there in that beautiful farmhouse located on a hill facing the mountains that the Holy Spirit made His home in Eve Nicklin's pure heart. Her search was over, her dreams were fulfilled, her path became clear. It was in the beautiful surroundings of that home in the countryside, accompanied by the sounds of birds and scented by the fragrance of flowers that Eve turned her being towards God, drank from the cup of love of God and devoted her services to Bahá'u'lláh. The drop had returned to the ocean and the small sprout had blossomed into a beautiful flower.³⁴

Even until in 1971, Eve reminded her colleague Beulah McGruder of the past days: "... and I remember you Beulah, and I clearing my head with these new Teachings and not knowing how to deliver these Teachings and half-scared of letting you know that I was already Bahá'í and so on and trying to keep my mouth closed."³⁵

Eventually Eve embraced the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh and left the Methodist Church. In a letter to Amelia in 1965 she writes

about the effect that the separation had on their coreligionists: "We were shocked anytime someone left the herd." Her enrolment took place on February 2, 1932 in New Castle — according to a card she filled in 1936 for the Bahá'í archives. Her recorded address is 129 South Street, Delavan, Wisconsin. Such must have been a difficult moment in Eve's life coping with her father's death in 1933 as well as making her full transition into the Bahá'í Faith.



Mabel and Howard Colby Ives

"I think," Amelia Buxton wrote, "she left the church soon after. She wrote articles to make some money because she had only what she earned. She could have stayed in the church simply because she could not find anything else searching for a job. About belonging to the Church in her heart, I do not think she belonged to that church after the first night she heard the talk about progressive revelation by Mabel Ives. That gave me so much food for thought."³⁶

The most "difficult" part of the journey, that is, the full recognition of Bahá'u'lláh as a new Manifestation of God, was achieved. In a way she had put the cart before the horses, because while studying the Bahaí Faith she was considering herself a Bahá'í at times. Jesus Christ had been lovingly enthroned for over thirty years in her life and conciliating her traditional belief system with Bahá'u'lláh's teaching must have been difficult. Yet, her new Faith encouraged her to love Jesus Christ as much as she did before. Eve had found that Bahá'u'lláh was actually the return of Jesus Christ and in broader terms the Promised One of all religions. Like Peter, Andrew, James and John (Mathew 4:18-22) she did not need elaborated theological evidences because truth is simple and the proof itself was already in her heart. While at the beginning her feet might have been in two camps, gradually she sailed away on her own mystical journey to see God's creation with new vistas. She experienced new things, discovered new meanings and understood new realities to the stage when suddenly the point of no return had been crossed. The fear of losing her social or religious identity turned into courage, happiness and awe. She was a Bahá'í for good.

In 1933 and 1934 Eve worked as director of the Methodist orphanage "Ruth M. Smith" in Cheffield, Pennsylvania which had been established in 1922. In 1935 she requested leave of absence for the purpose of going to a "school" in Chicago and in the following year the Church gave Eve "an honorary discharge". *Bahá'í News* reported in the same year that 1935 "an attempt was made to found a Sunday School in the House of Worship for children whose parents were attending the regular afternoon meeting ... This Sunday School was under the direction of Mrs. Howard Ives, assisted by Miss Eve Nicklin, Mrs. Inez B. Ford and Mrs. Philip Marangella."³⁷ This all shows

that Eve had made the transition well having her heart filled with joy and peace.

Beulah McGruder eventually accepted the Faith through Eve. She was the deaconess of the First Methodist Church and president of her class at the School of Missionaries in Kansas City. Both had lived together in the diaconate. Years later she became a Bahá'í pioneer to Colon, Panama. We also know that she spoke to her colleagues with courage about the Faith and that two of her teachers in the School of Kansas accepted this Glorious Cause.

In October 1935 Eve wrote to Shoghi Effendi of her relationship with the Methodist Church receiving the following communication from his secretary dated November 17, 1935.

Dear Bahá'í Friend,

The Guardian has deeply enjoyed reading your letter of October sixth and feels greatly appreciative of your immediate whole-hearted response to his instructions regarding non-membership by the believers in religious organizations and groups other than those instituted by the Cause. He particularly values the self-sacrifices you have undergone for the sake of upholding this vital principle the importance of which will be increasingly unveiled to all the friends. He feels certain that Bahá'u'lláh will fully repay you for all the material losses you have incurred as a result of your dissociation from the Methodist Episcopal Church. For you have, indeed, set a beautiful example of courage, loyalty and devotion which every sincere upholder of the Cause cannot fail to admire. It is hoped

that through it those among the believers who are as yet not sufficiently convinced of the necessity of dissociating themselves from their churches will be so deeply distressed as to sever official connection with them, and thus become whole-hearted and unqualified in their allegiance and loyalty to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh.

Assuring you again of Shoghi Effendi's abiding appreciation of your services, and with his prayers and best wishes for you, and all the friends in your center,

Yours in His Service,

H. Rabbani

With the renewed assurance of my loving prayers for your spiritual advancement and for the success of your self-sacrificing efforts in the service of our glorious Cause,

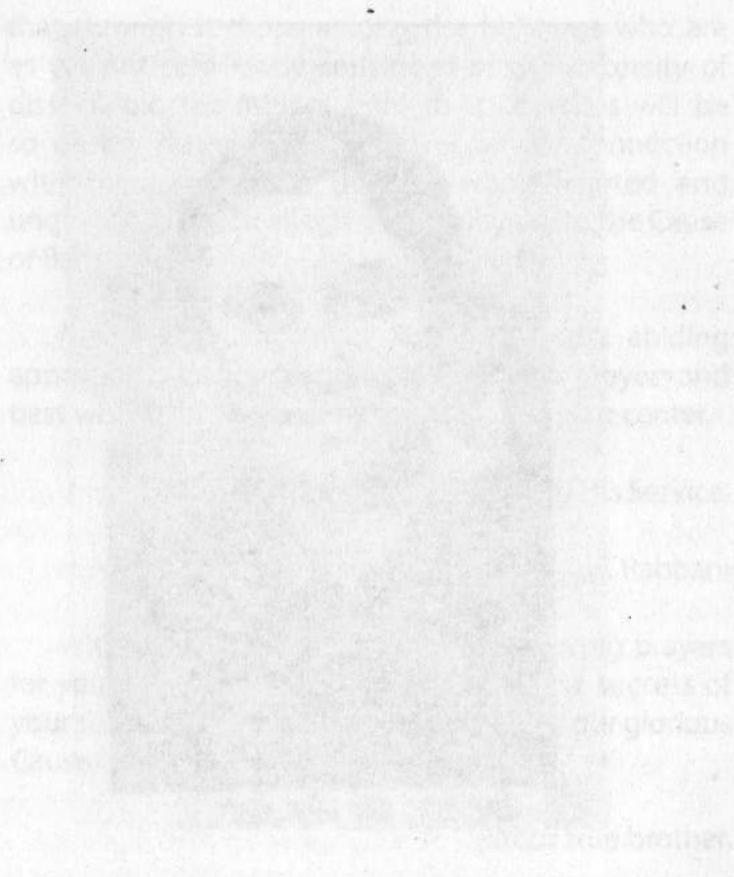
Your true brother,

Shoghi³⁸



Eve Nicklin in 1935

It was Martha Root who asked her if she wanted to be a pioneer in the First Seven Year Plan which was launched in 1937 by the beloved Guardian. It was also she who helped Eve to commence her first teaching experience in the international field that same year in Brazil. This was happening at a time when Eve was a five-year-old Bahá'í. But this is the topic for the next chapter.



Eve Nicklin in 1932

It was Martha Root who asked her if she wanted to be a pioneer in the first seven year plan which was launched in 1937 by the beloved Guardian. It was also she who helped Eve to commence her first teaching experience in the international field that same year in Brazil. This was happening at a time when Eve was a five-year-old child. But this is the topic for the next chapter.

4

TO THE CONQUEST OF PERU

During 'Abdu'l-Bahá's life Martha Root visited Lima at some point in her South American tour. Although short the one-day stopover in October 1919 was nevertheless the first step paving the way for the coming of future teachers and pioneers.

Martha Root in Lima

Martha Root's description of her short time in Lima is found in the October 1920 edition of the *Star of the West*.

Lima, in Peru, the seat of the old Inca civilization, was the most important city visited after leaving Valparaiso. Its population is 250,000. Dr. Vargas [a friend from her Argentina visit] had given to Miss Root letters of introduction to nineteen cities and towns and four were to his friends in Lima, which is his native city — one was to a newspaper owner, one to a senator, and

two to physicians. As Lima is a half-hour from the port Callao, and the ship only stopped three hours in the early morning, it was a problem how to get there, find these men, and get back on time. On the electric tram Miss Martha Root met two young men from the ship who spoke English and Spanish. They took her to the leading hotel to inquire from the manager how to reach these people. He was an old man and wonderfully kind. He told Miss Root to sit down and write her message to each man and he would take them with her letters of introduction, Bahai booklets and magazine clippings to each man. He assured her the newspaper owner would use an article and volunteered to translate it into Spanish. It was all done so easily and quickly, and the two young men from the ship, getting interested, mailed to their sisters in Australia and New Zealand, Bahai booklets from that hotel. After Callao no more letters of introduction could be used as the ship was not allowed to stop at any more ports owing to fever conditions.³⁹

Those activities had earned 'Abdu'l-Bahá's love Who later wrote to her:

Praise be to God the Call of the Kingdom has been received in South America and the seeds of Guidance have been sown in those cities and regions. Certainly the heat of the Sun of Reality, the rain of the Eternal Bounty and breeze of the Love of God will make them germinate: have confidence.⁴⁰

It is noteworthy that in the same year when Martha Root visited Lima, Kenzo Torrikai (1882-1965), a Japanese citizen

who became a Bahá'í in the United States, was also living in Peru for some months. Later Kenzo Torrikai went to live in Japan.⁴¹

Leonora Armstrong and Bahia

Leonora Armstrong was another soul who perfectly understood the need expressed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá for the promotion of the Cause in the southern lands. She had written to Martha Root for guidance. A prompt reply told her to travel to Argentina inspiring Leonora to begin to take Spanish classes. In the meantime, Martha had received a letter from friends made on her trip to Brazil requesting a Bahá'í teacher. As a result, Martha recommended Leonora to go to Brazil.

Leonora's relatives and friends were her first tests as she began making plans. They warned of the dangers in carrying out her intentions. She was doubting and thinking of going to Canada when May Maxwell, the mother of Rúhíyyih Khánum, lying sick in bed, told her in vibrant tone: "Leonora, what are you waiting for? Go!"⁴²

Leonora obeyed and established herself forever in Brazil. She arrived in February 1921 and died there on October 17, 1980, thus gaining enduring glory for her pioneering services, and serving in her last years as a member of the Continental Board of Counsellors for the Protection and Propagation of the Faith in South America. Leonora Armstrong settled in Bahia following 'Abdu'l-Bahá's advice in the Tablets of the Divine Plan: "Likewise the city of Bahia, situated on the eastern shore of Brazil. Because it is some time that it has become known by this name, its efficacy will be most potent."⁴³

So the tree planted by Martha Root continued to grow and bear those abundant fruits predicted by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. As seen early, Eve Nicklin was one of those spiritual fruits who had also received advice from Martha to go to South America, and so she did.

Eve's "Debut" in Brazil

In an interview conducted by Mario Leon (ML), Eve Nicklin (EN) talked of how she was conducted by Martha to render her now historical services throughout South America decade after decade.

ML: Eve, Could you tell us something of Martha Root?

EN: She was a wonderful Bahá'í teacher. A great pioneer. Not without reason, the beloved Guardian called her the "*star-pioneer*". She traveled the world teaching the Faith to kings, princes, personalities throughout the world. You have to study the life of Martha in-depth.

ML: How did you decide to become a pioneer?

EN: One day she told me that the beloved Guardian had launched a plan. The plan was called the "Seven Year World Crusade". He was asking the American Bahá'ís to leave to South America as pioneers. She asked me if I could go.

ML: So ... what did you answer?

EN: I told her that I would think about it. She told me that I should to write to the Inter America Committee if I decided. So I did.⁴⁴

The committee's response took Eve to Brazil to support Leonora's work. Martha Root helped her with a hundred dollars and a ticket on a steam ship. Eve eventually returned the money. On February 28, 1937, Martha Root gave her a scroll with the Greatest Name, which is still preserved in the Bahá'í National Archives in Lima, Peru. According to Amelia Buxton:

I had visited Eve in New Castle on February 28, 1937. She gave me a book from which she wanted me to copy a few things to it. I single-spaced typed this material and also made carbon copies for her which I delivered after a week. Then on May 23 I went to see her because I knew soon she would travel to Brazil. I returned the next night to visit her again. She said she was going to be in the park the next morning and asked me to come and see her there. I did it because I had a bathing suit and a light jacket for her as gifts which I gave her. She left the port of New York on June 5 for Brazil. I knew she was going to return in six months so that I came back in December and I learned that I had a card from her. She wrote on Christmas on the boat coming to New York and sent it to me from New York. Meanwhile, I had received a card from her sister saying that she was going to go home on the first day of the year or so, because her visa had been cancelled.⁴⁵

The dictatorship in Brazil did not recognize her passport and therefore she had to leave the country. However, Eve to her satisfaction had already assisted Leonora in her work,

especially in the school for orphans and poor children in Bahia that she had initiated and hoped that Eve would lead.

Such a humanitarian work was praised by Shoghi Effendi as a way to reach the local population. There were about seventeen children between four and eleven years of age. They all lived in a big rented house with a big garden where children could play with occasional outings to the beach. The daughter of a Bahá'í couple was the caretaker and also acted as the foster mother. Eventually, Eve took over her position and lived in the school with the children. Bahá'í prayers and principles were also taught to the kids. In addition, Leonora hired a teacher for them as well as a seamstress. This lady used to mend the children's clothes and teach them some sewing practical skills. In her book in Portuguese about Leonora Armstrong, Gabriel Marques describes how Leonora had to stretch her meagre financial resources to support the school as food and other necessities were provided. Dental and medical care was outsourced from local professional who offered their services for free at Leonora's request.

Unfortunately Eve's poor knowledge of Portuguese did not help her much which made her feel a bit frustrated. Later she moved to a pension of an English lady who found some students for her to teach English. This apparently made her happier as Eve was able to simultaneously connect directly to the wider population and teach them the Baha'í Faith. Her poem "Christmas in Brazil" written during her "first tropical Christmas" reflects some homesick feelings:

What? there are not socks

Hanging in a row;

There is no Santa Claus,
Neither winter snow nor sleighs?
There are no Christmas trees
Real and alive,
To circle them around and
Sing, and to freeze the toes,
No Christmas!
Oh! But there are shoes
Waiting in line
For Santa Claus,
To hide there
Their gifts,
And royal palms,
And seas and skies
Blue and warm
And friends' hearts
Wishing you, "Merry Christmas".

According to Eve, she had had her "debut" and already "carried pioneering blood". She was impatient and eager to continue in that wonderful field of service especially in South America. The National Assembly of United States and Canada reported in the *Bahá'í News* that "Miss Nicklin proved that a believer with professional training can establish himself financially in another country..."⁴⁶ Upon her return she pioneered to West Virginia at Wayside Farm in Parkersburg. We find her serving on the Regional Teaching Committee for Ohio, Indiana and Western Pennsylvania. Above all the Brazilian difficulties, the spirit of Eve had yielded one of its first fruits. According to Doris McKay:

Eve Nicklin returned in September. She had been with us for a few days in the spring and, while she

was away from the orphan asylum, her supervisor had opened some of her Baha'i mail. Eve was in trouble because her job was with the Methodist Church and the woman who had opened the mail was not very warm about it. She had called in Eve's two assistants, Wreatha [Cranston] (a Baha'i) and Betty (about to become a Baha'i). Eve eventually lost her job with the Church, the job for which she had been trained. Now she was living in Rochester working as a housekeeper. She told us how she had been saving money from her paltry wages; how she had been preparing to offer herself as a pioneer to Peru. As she described her intentions, Willard and I exchanged a glance which needed no words. We gave Eve one of the two hairs of Baha'u'llah that Martha Root had given Willard after his southern tour with Louis Gregory. Eve was leaving Jamestown to consult with members of the National Assembly about pioneering. But this Eve, of the daring black beret and bright red earrings had left her lipstick at home. She fretted, "I'm sure they won't take me without my lipstick." I made a concoction from cinnamon candy which worked as a poor substitute. Eve was accepted and became the second pioneer to leave from Jamestown for South America (John Stearns ⁴⁷, ... was the first.) I saw Eve several years ago in the movie, *Green Light Expedition. Hand of the Cause, Ruhyyih Khanum*, had called her the "Mother of Peru".⁴⁸

We also know from Eve that she wrote to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada informing them about her pioneering experience.

Eve was told to think of another country. Years passed until she received a communication asking if she would like to go to Peru. She responded positively and immediately went to the library to find out everything about Peru. Its history particularly fascinated her. The month before her departure the beloved Guardian sent the following cablegram:

Assure [Eve] Nicklin prayers [for] success [in] Peru. Convey [Elizabeth] Cheney loving concern, fervent prayers [for her] recovery [and my] deepest admiration.⁴⁹

That was how she embarked to Peru, a country totally strange to her, without knowledge of its language, people or culture. That was however the country which she would later call "my adopted country." Edna True from the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada arranged her ticket and told her "Well, you've had your 'curtain lifted on'. That was Bahia." Nevertheless, travelling overseas again must have been another painful separation from her family as Eve loved them as much as they loved her.

After Martha Root's visit, Lima received some Bahá'í travel teachers from North America such as Mrs Loulie Mathews, who was accompanied by her husband and travelled to Latin America in 1935 at Shoghi Effendi's suggestion. Other visitors included Elizabeth [Isabel] Stebbins Dodge (1935-38) and her mother Joel (May) Stebbins (1937), as well as Stuart W. French and his wife Nellie S. French (1936).⁵⁰ Martha Root had passed away in September 1939 in Hawaii.



Lima in the 1940s

Dodges' Teaching in Lima

As indicated earlier, Isabel Dodge had been living in Peru for a period of time at the Morococha mines, in the central Andes. She and her husband, a mining engineer, had left Peru three years before Eve came. Isabel's recollections of her teaching work were as follows:

The first Bahá'í meeting in Peru was conducted in July 1937 at the home of Mrs. Garcia Rosell in Lima. Francis Benedict, an American Bahá'í, had met Mrs. Garcia Rosell. I was told during a trip to the United States in 1936 that she had favourably responded to Bahá'u'lláh's message. Her address was also given to me.⁵¹

I went to Peru in July 1935 with my husband, a mining geologist, who worked at the Cerro de Pasco Copper Corporation. We lived at a mining camp in

Morococha, Peru, 14,000 feet high in the Andes and about 100 miles from Lima, the capital of Peru. During my first year in Peru, I wrote to Miss Leonora Holesapple (Armstrong) that lived in Bahia, Brazil. She had made a Spanish translation of "Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era" by Dr. Eslemmont and sent me a number of paperback issues for use in the teaching work. They arrived by land mail after a journey of several months through the Pichis route [Amazon basin] by mule. Many volumes were stained with water spots.

In February 1937, Ms. Nellie French stopped in Lima for a day on a trip around South America. Ms. French and I visited the National Library and presented a copy of "Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era". We also visited some of the offices of newspapers in Lima but could not get any publicity for the Faith.

When my mother, May Stebbins (Mrs. Joel), came to Peru for a visit during the summer of 1937, we visited Mrs. Garcia Rosell to ask if she could arrange some sort of meeting for us to introduce the Bahá'í Faith. She said she would be very happy to do so because she knew a number of liberal thinkers in Lima ... Also, her son, a dentist, knew English and could help translate for us. Accordingly, the meeting was conducted in the Rosell's apartment with nearly twenty people in attendance. My mother gave a talk on the Faith which was translated into Spanish by Dr. Garcia Rosell. Then I spoke in Spanish on the construction of the Temple in Wilmette and its symbolism of the unity of all religions. The audience was receptive and we distributed copies of "Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era" to those who wanted. At that time we did not have brochures in Spanish.

About a month later a smaller meeting was held at the [Garcia] Rosell's home with mostly new people. In early October 1938, my husband Theodore Dodge, a non-Bahá'í at that time, gave a talk on the Bahá'í principles at the Garcia Rosell's home to a number of seekers, many of them Theosophists. The Message was also given to other individuals when we had the opportunity to do so during our three-year stay in Peru.

It was difficult to do some follow up work after these meetings because my husband and I did not live in Lima and could only "come down" from the mining camp on holidays. My mother and I spent two months in Lima in a pension house during the summer of 1937. My husband gave his talk in October 1938 just before boarding his boat back to the United States at the end of his contract.⁵²



Nellie Stevinson French (1868-1954)

Source: Bahá'í Media Bank

Isabel's teaching activities reports appeared on the December 1937 and July 1938 editions of *Bahá'í News* and were instrumental in educating American believers as to how Latin people reacted to the Bahá'í principles. Those isolated pieces of information coming from overseas certainly were read by Eve and made her cognisant of the local receptivity. Dodge's addressees in the meetings consisted of "men and women, engineers, business men, naval, and military officers, and their wives, and also a number of young men and girls."

Mrs. Garcia Rosell published the *Universal* magazine in Lima and managed to invite a selected group of "liberal thinking" people. For Mrs. Garcia Rosell "these doctrines were the highest, the most elevated in the world". According to Isabel Dodge, Mrs. Garcia Rosell "would put notices in the papers and send out invitations so that as many people as possible could hear mother [May Stebbins] speak".

Peruvians also "thought it [the Bahá'í Faith] a magnificent plan for the world" whose principles "were very good, very important". Dodge reported that the Peruvians were very interested in the principle of independent investigation of truth because as an attendant paraphrased her "we must 'know with our own understanding and not by the understanding of any in the world'" The Dodges "had been somewhat anxious about offending anyone" due to religious sensitivities, "but no one criticized or attempted to argue with us on any point" but were warned that "there were many fanatical and conservative people here."

The talks focused on topics such as "The Temple", "The Oneness of Mankind", "Security for a Failing World" and "Science and Religion". "There seemed to be a considerable

amount of interest aroused as people began to discuss our answers, more questions ..." and "we passed around pictures of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the Temple" whose construction attracted special attention and many questions. They were also curious about the Bahá'í stance on the immortality of the soul and reincarnation as well as the definition of religion. A professor of economics became interested on the Bahá'í principles in that field. The group was spiritually hungry, loved the new teachings and asked for more.

A study group was proposed to study all the chapters of 'Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era' a plan that Mrs. Garcia Rosell promised to carry on after the Dodges left. Dodges' activities were significant because, although small in scope, the Bahá'í teachings were for the first time formally introduced to local people at a discussion based environment. Moreover, such activities were run by friends of the Faith accompanied of literature and advertised through public notices. As Isabel Dodge put it: "We were delighted that our audience had been entirely Peruvians and if it were not for the Rosells we would have met only Americans and English in Lima."^{53, 54}

Upon her arrival, about three years later, Eve tried repeatedly to make contact with Mrs. Garcia Rosell but only managed to meet with her on one occasion. The meeting was not very productive because Mrs. Garcia Rosell did not speak English and Eve did not understand Spanish. However, the Dodges' experience had assured Eve that souls were receptive and waiting, eager to listen about the Message of Bahá'u'lláh.

5

A MAJOR VICTORY

The sea trip to Peru took fifteen days. At the port of Callao, the gate of Lima — the "City of Viceroys", the "Three Times Crowned Royal Villa", the "Pearl of the Pacific" and the most important center of Spanish christianization in the Americas — making history, Eve Nicklin arrived on Friday October 3, 1941, with the mandate to conquer spiritually a whole country.

Settling in Lima

Eve came with fifty dollars, her clothes, few Bahá'í books in English and no understanding of Spanish at all. With that money she could pay forty-five days of boarding. The boarding was previously arranged by Gertrude Hanks, the director of the Lima Methodist College, an old acquaintance of North America as well as a personal friend. She sent someone to receive Eve at the port and also helped her to get established, the first concern of every pioneer. After a few weeks Gertrude

had secured a job for Eve. No matter what Eve's new religious affiliation was, the friendship was genuine and continued. Someone said that Methodists are among the best of the ecumenical community but certainly God was already working.



Eve Nicklin (date unknown)

Having begun her settlement, Eve continued her simple plan of adjusting to a new life and culture, making contacts and learning the new language. However, she had not arrived at the best time in Lima's civil and religious life. It was actually a time of transition and crisis in Lima's society. We could say that history was creating the right conditions for Eve's arrival: the day before an armistice was signed to end the military conflict which had been stirring on the northern border. The storm of the Second World War was also shaking the peoples of the world spreading belligerent unrest everywhere.

As war ironically prompts feelings for peace, nationalism induces those for universalism. Lima was experiencing a

thirst for knowledge about other countries. News of the war circulated like an informal geography lesson. Many enrolled in English classes, particularly young people, wishing one day to taste fortune in the great Republic of the North — the United States of America. That was the period of the beginning of commercial aviation, the atom and the radio airing new ideas such as world peace, religious tolerance, unity of nations, freedom and democracy. Those were years of change.

A new Constitution had clearly instituted freedom of worship eight years ago after a long struggle initiated by reformative elements. Despite such a milestone, some conservative groups were still advocating against anything that could mean the development of alternative religious movements and the entry of foreign missionaries.⁵⁵ Eve seemed to have perceived the prevailing atmosphere and developed an indirect method of teaching to reach people.

We have Eve's first report to the Inter-America Teaching Committee dated two days after her arrival and from her new accommodation at 513 Maximo Abril Street in Lima.

Dear Miss True, Mrs. French:

This is Sunday morning and I thought that it would be a good idea to get caught up on letters. We arrived in Lima on the third. I guess we made up some time by not staying so long at different ports. We were in a part of a hurricane that swept through the Caribbean seas. We were tossed about a bit — even out of our chairs onto the floor. I didn't realize we were in a hurricane because they didn't tell us. We just thought it was a

bad storm. Some were frightened, however, and seasick. I was neither. (Maybe I was too "dumb" to know the danger). Some of us gathered into one cabin during the storm, and braced ourselves against whatever we could. Religion naturally was brought up, so it gave me an opportunity to talk about the Faith. One woman was so frightened during the storm that she swore off drinking, and she actually did, too. That is while we were aboard the ship.

We didn't have much of a stop at Panama, but a letter was waiting from Mrs. Oliver, and I got in touch with her at Washington Hotel, and we did have a visit short and sweet.

Miss [Gertrude] Hanks was out of town so she sent another teacher to meet me and take me through customs. They are so strict here as this teacher said. They were too, with some, but you know they hardly looked at mine, and didn't care at all about the books. They looked at one group of University Book Shelf that I brought with me. They were interested in silk dresses and furs, and the like. One lady that was with me had a terrible time about her things. They even held one suitcase.

This lady that had such a time at custom is a Mrs. Gray. She was so sweet – travelled all over the world, and had seen and met Abdul-Baha and his wife. Can you imagine that? She is a Catholic woman, and very broad in her thinking but still she is a Catholic. She is a great friend, too, of the Bahais. She has nothing but the greatest admiration for Abdul-Baha. And I guess,

has defended the Faith many times when people have criticised it. Well, she and I came to the same Pension — one that Miss Hanks had recommended — and were together that first night and next day which was yesterday. She is a great friend of the American consul's wife, Mrs. Boyce, she called her up, and Mrs. Boyce came after us with her car. Took Mrs. Gray back to customs to get her bag [sic]. (at this moment a call came and invitation to a union church, so I will go.)

There were about 40 in church, and after dinner I met quite a few people. One young man who teaches in the Boy's School here in Lima and stays here at this Pension walked back with me, and we got onto the subject of why I was here, and I told him about the Faith. He had heard of it, but knew very little about it.

To go on with my story — Mrs. Boyce took us to immigration office and got my Passport checked—finger prints taken, and picture and number etc. They took quite a few soles away from me, too, and I think I have to pay twenty more before I get my little booklet that serves as a pass. I think I have to pay 10 soles every month to keep it up to date. It was nice having Mrs. Boyce along. It made things easier having the American Consul's wife with me. She invited Mrs. Gray and I to her house for lunch and we had a lovely time. (Not so bad for the first day in Lima was it? I think it was all because Mrs. Gray had seen and heard Abdul-Baha a long time ago that it all turned out this way. You see on board ship [sic] when she found out I was a Bahai she had confidence in me, and it was through her I met the American Consul's wife and was helped

through Immigration. Mrs. Boyce gave me several names of connections at the University. They give a summer course there for about fifty soles. (Six and one half soles to \$1). It might pay me in contacts to take a course there, and would also bear out the idea that I'm coming to study, too. But I believe their summer course doesn't start until our summer. In fact it is given then for our benefit. People from States coming down. I can go and sit on any lecture, I understand, now. I won't know much as to what they are saying yet, but it will get me accustomed to sound of language, and also CONTACTS. I don't think there will be any objections to my teaching, but of course that will take time to get pupils. I have been sounding people out about it, and telling them I'd like to help pay my expenses while I'm studying here.

... I saw the President of Peru this morning coming away in his car from some special day at one of the churches. He rides about quite unprotected.

Lima is a lovely city, and so very beautiful.....⁵⁶

Beginning to Work

Eve's first job as an English teacher for children of members of the Lima Country Club was obtained by Gertrude Hanks. Children's mothers have approached Gertrude looking for a suitable teacher. This was Eve's first encounter with the warmth and spontaneity of the Lima population. She was happy because her mornings were busy and because the education of children and young people was her professional job which she deeply liked.

The loneliness of being without her family and friends along with her difficulties in communicating in the local language were gradually overcome as she became familiar with Lima's culture, a city with over 600,000 inhabitants. She would walk on the streets and into contacts' homes while saying Báb's prayer for difficulties. Eve tells us about her first months in Lima:

It was not until the 1942 summer when the opportunity came to teach English at a school, and then to teach the same course at one of the nurses larger hospitals in Lima.

Schools and hospitals do not offer much opportunity to talk about the Bahá'í Faith, but students have asked me for my religion and I have made a simple statement. Once I gave a few words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá as a memorization task — those words with a universal message: 'Light is good in whatsoever lamp it is burning! A rose is beautiful in whatsoever garden it may bloom! A star has the same radiance if it shines from the East or from the West.'⁵⁷ As we talk about these words and their meanings, the girls seemed to grasp their inner meaning and expressed their desire to learn.

I had already met my colleagues as well as the mothers and fathers of my kindergarten group. At each time one is aware of using the art of directing a conversation in a way that people ask about the Faith. To an educator one has the opportunity to talk about the Bahá'u'lláh's principles of universal education, to an artist about the beauty of the Universal House of Worship, unity of mankind to those who feel tormented by racial prejudice, and to the refugee the hope that justice be manifested over the earth

As soon as my winter classes ended, I was asked to teach English at the Peruvian North American Cultural Institute. The members are composed of a strong section of working people such as mail workers, employees, salesmen, clerks and businessmen. In one of the advanced courses we have been discussing plans for a reorganized world and reading excerpts from major magazines including our own World Order. We are following our discussions through different class sessions. The general consensus of opinion is that we must work for a lasting peace.

When a travel teacher, Philip Sprague, came to Lima on 23rd October 1942, we had a meeting at the Hotel Bolivar and 19 friends were present. Later, those especially interested came by invitation. At the table there were Americans with Peruvian names and Peruvians with American names. After an informal chat, selections from Bahá'í books were read. The guests spoke of the beauty of the Bahá'í Writings and they asked for books for them to read. There were later more teas. This intimate and natural way of giving the Message seems to draw the attention of the South Americans.⁵⁸

In a letter to Mrs. French dated October 31, 1942, Eve reported:

Well, at last I feel there is a little Bahá'í light shining through the dark clouds of Lima. I do feel that Philip's [Sprague] visit was timed just right. It was really because of this last move that I made that I met a certain woman that helped us a lot. (She is the one I

told you about lending some books to, and had lived in States for a while). She is the mother-in-law of a woman with whom I live. Well, in order to get a few people together to meet Philip I called up this woman and invited her to tea at Bolivar to meet him there first. Then she invited us for a Sunday drive. At this time it was easy to suggest we have a few together to meet and hear Philip. Her response was wonderful. Another day my friend and pupil the artist invited Philip and I to tea, and invited in her friend — a man who speaks very good English and has travelled all over the world. We invited them to our meeting. This man also took Philip around the city and he had a chance to tell him the message although he could not get to the meeting that night. I took Philip with me to my class at hospital in order for him to meet this school teacher friend I have there. We invited Ana and her brother to the meeting. Philip made another contact with a man in business here, too. Thursday we had a meeting in the hotel, and 16 were there. There were several that seemed especially interested. I am having a tea this coming week, inviting in those who want to hear more...

I am much heartened by the response accorded to Philip's visit. It needed just that — for I could say I had a friend that I wanted them to meet and to hear, and Philip does have a way with him that does win them over. He thinks I should get rooms in Lima...⁵⁹

Eve had been living in 119 Grimaldo del Solar Street in the suburb of Miraflores. Her previous addresses were: 785 Conquistadores Street, San Isidro, in the autumn of 1942; and

951-5 Arequipa Avenue in Miraflores (November-December 1941). In those years, Miraflores was a suburb six miles (about ten km) away from downtown Lima.



Eve at her home on 785 Conquistadores Street — Lima

Eve and Philip wrote to the Guardian and in response a letter dated February 22, 1943, was received:

Dear Bahá'í Sister,

Your letter of Oct. 24th has just been received, together with that of Philip, and the Guardian has instructed me to answer you on his behalf.

He was very happy to hear that you are now well established in Peru, and he hopes that ere long you will be able to confirm some of the Peruvians in the Faith, and thus start an active and devout nucleus of the Cause of God there.

You may be sure the Guardian will offer his ardent and loving prayers on your behalf in the Holy Shrines, that sincere and devout souls may be led to you and to accept the Divine Message.

He will be pleased to hear from you and of your work there and those whom you contact.

With Bahá'í love

R. Rabbani

Dear and valued co-worker

I deeply appreciate your high endeavours and the spirit that so admirably animates you in the service of our beloved Faith. You are often in my thoughts and prayers as you labour in that far-off land. Persevere in your glorious task, and rest assured that the Beloved will abundantly reward you for your meritorious services.

Your true and grateful brother,

Shoghi⁶⁰

Before leaving the United States, Eve was told about Alberto Lobaton Meza a Peruvian who became a Bahá'í in 1941 in New York. She managed to locate him later in 1945 in Lima as seen in the next chapter. Eve realized that the only way forward was to make contacts and friends in order to form a permanent center of believers in the capital Lima according to the Guardian's First Seven Year Plan. Eve, however, prayed fervently, not only for a group but for the formation of a Local Spiritual Assembly.

1943 was a propitious year because several travel teachers came to Lima to help Eve: Ettamew Lawrence on April 19, 1943, and Flora Hottes on December 7, 1942. Flora came from La Paz, Bolivia, where she resided as a pioneer. Her purpose in coming to Lima was taking a vacation and helping Eve. Flora stayed until the following month. On December 10, Mary Barton also came to Lima. Eve indicated that Marcia Steward Atwater, an American Bahá'í later the Spiritual Mother of Chile, arrived in Lima and that the four ladies spent their "Bahá'í Christmas" together. Flora Hottes again returns to Lima in December 1943 for a month.

The First Bahá'í Center

In the spring of 1943, Eve moved from Miraflores to a classier apartment at La Colmena Avenue 323 — apartment 405. The move proved to be strategic as Raffo Building was located at downtown Lima. In subsequent years the vast majority of early Peruvian believers were confirmed in this apartment to which Eve Nicklin gave a lot of warmth and informality. She called it the "first Bahá'í Center" of Peru and it became the realization of one of her dreams: having an independent place for firesides and adorned with carpets and Peruvian handicrafts.



Raffo Building, first Lima Bahá'í Center

Flora Hottes wanted to be close to Eve's apartment and began looking for boarding. Eve recalled having known of a pension house around the neighbourhood but trying to remember the whereabouts was difficult. She said: "Well, let's turn around this street and see whether there is a pension nearby." Flora and Eve did so, and guided by Bahá'u'lláh, they found one at the first house they asked. The pension was located at 815 Chancay Street. Alfredo Barreda opened the door and told Eve that there was a vacant room. Flora Hottes went to live there for that month. Other travel teachers also stayed there. Over the years it was nicknamed as the "Bahá'í pension". Alfredo worked for the government and his wife Isabel looked after the pension.

The first Bahá'í in Peru was Maria Isabel Tirado Barreda who enrolled on February 7, 1944, and then her husband Alfredo Barreda on March 2, 1944. Obviously Eve would have felt very happy and blessed with these early believers that added hope to the formation of the first Spiritual Assembly of Lima in the next month.

Those must have been the days when Eve was well-integrated into Lima's society, having an abundance of friends and contacts. In a letter to her friend Amelia, Eve speaks of her settlement:

Life is more interesting. I now have here a fellow American who has an apartment a few blocks from me and we have lunch together many times. The government invited her to teach in the North American Peruvian Institute where I teach too. Well, there is another teacher, an English woman married to a Peruvian who I like more. We became great friends. I was invited to a Peruvian party on Saturday. It was the birthday of my Peruvian friend Victoria ... I danced with her boyfriend but alas, when I was young I used to lose myself dancing and now it is difficult to keep the rhythm. I like it so much! When we danced at the Institute students want to dance with me. There are [the Peruvians] excellent dancers. I'm hoping that soon two Bahá'ís come to help me. There are lots of seeds sown, but it's a bit difficult to make them sprout in the South American countries. 1944 is the centennial anniversary. A great time at the [Wilmette] Temple this year. Today is a holiday and I with my two friends are going to do some things for the Boy Scouts ... ⁶¹

Undoubtedly, she was having a great time in Lima! And by then Eve had already won the affection of her students as they accompanied her walking on her way home. She then would invite them in for tea. As Eve assisted them with their English learning the coming of Bahá'u'lláh was always brought up, first carefully but later very openly. Her amiable character and

charisma was a magnet of attraction for all souls especially for young people. It was in the cosy atmosphere of the Raffo Building apartment where conditions were prepared for the establishment of the first Spiritual Assembly of Lima in April 1944.

Ray Betts and Reginald Reindorp

A few days before Christmas John Stearns from Quito arrived in Lima. He was the first American pioneer in Ecuador arriving there in May of 1940. Because he was very ill with cancer and required special medical treatment John remained in Lima. He was interned at the Institute of Radiotherapy. Despite suffering from crippling pain, John began to help Eve and also to do business. John also established a close friendship with Raymond (Ray) Betts and Reginald Reindorp, both Americans. The first was the manager of the Cream Rica restaurant chain in Lima who knew and appreciated very much the Faith thanks to the intervention of Eve and Flora Hottes. He had lived for twelve years in Peru and was married to a Peruvian wife, Irma. However, for some reason Ray was undecided about taking the big step to become a Bahá'í. John and Ray became business partners.

According to Eve: "It seemed to me that Ray wanted to hear the views of a man. Then, when John Stearns arrived and was hospitalized to undergo a treatment of radiotherapy, we try to put in contact with each other. John recovered and soon the two friends went to a weekend in the *Baños de Churín* in Ica where Ray was confirmed in the Faith. On his return he became Bahá'í ..." ⁶² Ray's enrolment in the Cause is registered

on April 20, 1944. His wife Irma declared in 1946 in the United States.

Reginald (Carl/Carlos) Reindorp (1907-1992) was the director of Languages for an important North America – Peruvian educational program which required him to constantly travel throughout the country. He had an excellent command of Spanish. On April 9, 1944, he delivered a live talk at Radio Nacional on the Panamerican Day. Reginald talked about "Prospects for the Pan American Solidarity" elaborating about the history of Panamericanism and the theme of continental unity mentioning the four freedoms and their importance.⁶³ The talk closed with a long quote on "The Destiny of America" by Shoghi Effendi and a quotation from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh pointing them out as the drive from which these ideals originated. Many friends of the Bahá'ís coincidentally listened the talk which was also published in the leading newspaper of Lima. The same night Reginald joined the Faith. Virginia Orbinson relates an interesting anecdote in a letter to the Inter-America Teaching Committee dated 12 July 1944:

I hope to go to another town here where Carlos [Reginald Reindorp] met a 'Bahá'í' on one of his trips. He is a Peruvian living in Chiclayo, who has a shop in a big market. He says his brother is a Bahá'í and has something to do with the Temple. If you know anything let me know. I am going to try to find him again, as Carlos did not have time to get his name and address. As he was taking pictures in the Plaza, this man came up to him and said that he was a Bahá'í and asked Carlos if he were also one! Well, this is pioneering in South America – anything might happen.⁶⁴



Reginald (Carl/Carlos) Reindorp

Virginia Orbinson, an American Bahá'í travel teacher on tour in various South American counties, arrived from Bolivia to Lima in January 1944 to assist Eve in the formation of the first Spiritual Assembly. She was asked by the Inter America Teaching Committee to stay for at least three months but she remained seven months which proved to be very valuable. This is Virginia's impression of Eve's teaching work few weeks later:

First I want to pay a deeply felt tribute to Eve Nicklin. No attempt could I make to state accurately and adequately her qualities, so will say only that she is solid, courageous, dogged in her determination to serve in spite of all the obstacles and difficulties she has had. She has a quiet and unglamorous personality and has had few advantages in her life, but she has made most extraordinary use of what she has in her favour. I can see very clearly now, and so can she, fortunately, why the way has been slow here, and the reason

for it. The first foundation of loyal and affectionate friendships that she has made here with solid people of excellent reputation — mostly educators, and some families of children she has taught, plus her association with various well-known institutions, and most recently with the Peruvian-American Institute for Cultural Affairs, which also gives her much prestige, has somehow planted a seed of spiritual dynamite which is now set off, and is taking mighty effect (that is, in our small way!) ... I can see all the steps and each one has been normal and right — even if slow. ⁶⁵

Eve recalled those days having Virginia as her associate:

We worked together very well [with Virginia]. By that time I had obtained a teaching job at the first Summer School for teachers of English in Peru — teaching American literature. This enabled me to contact with 100 or more Peruvian teachers. Since the subject was about taught literature and library work, it was easy to introduce Virginia as guest speaker to my classes. Her experience as a research librarian for Paramount Pictures, Hollywood, gave her a good standing. She spoke about the research library ending with a Bahá'í note in her talk. I invited all who wished to come to my apartment to listen more, insinuating that there were other things interesting to hear. This was the beginning of a very busy time. Several activities took place such as talks, teas, and teaching, almost every afternoon. Virginia and I spent "the best moments of our lives" because the great opportunity to give the Bahá'í Faith to Peru. These teachers were not only from Lima but also from provinces. ⁶⁶

"I invited over a hundred of my contacts," is another Eve's recollection, "One night I was preparing tea repeating the Greatest Name as she [Virginia] was giving an excellent talk".⁶⁷

Virginia Orbinson relates:

The first Bahá'í Youth Day to be held in Peru took place in the historic and beautiful city of Lima, on Sunday evening [March 12, 1944], at the home of Sra. Isabel de Barreda and Sr. Alfredo Barreda (the first two believers to sign in Peru ... On this day, so near to the end of the first Bahá'í century, more than twenty-five young people gathered to hear —some for the first time — a short talk about the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh as the basis for the new world culture.

Eve Nicklin, the courageous and faithful Bahá'í pioneer, who has so steadfastly and selflessly built up the knowledge of the Faith in Lima, was of course present. Due to her laying of the foundation, this fine young people's gathering was made possible.

Señorita Mercedes Barreda made a short introduction to Virginia Orbinson's talk, which was followed by refreshments, some singing and considerable discussion of the Faith, although so few had ever heard of it. The guests consisted of some young members from one hundred persons attending a teachers' course at the Instituto Peruano-Norteamericano, friends and pupils of Eve's. Sons and daughters of others, and friends and relatives of the Barredas. They are all young people of capacity and unusual alertness. Many wish to attend a meeting of

Youth on the following Thursday, and out of this, we hope to start a regular Youth Group...⁶⁸

We also know that Eve went to Arequipa and Cusco in late March for a few days for a short vacation.

Virginia's visit can be considered as the final impulse to achieve the formation of the Spiritual Assembly of Lima on the first day of Ridván 1944 and therefore the beginning of the Administrative Order of Bahá'u'lláh on Peruvian soil.

On April 14, a week before the Ridván period, a number of contacts joined the Faith: Luz Saenz, an English teacher at the North American Peruvian Institute, Ricardo Calderon Palma, a young man working at the New York Bank and Eve's student, Manuel Ortiz and Georgina Bouverie, another English teacher. On the first day of Ridván the new Spiritual Assembly of Lima was then constituted as follows: Isabel Barreda, Raymond Betts (Coordinator), Georgina Bouverie, Ricardo Calderón (Treasurer), Manuel Ortiz, Reginald Reindorp (Secretary), Luz Saenz, John Stearns and Eve Nicklin.

A Major Victory



The first Spiritual Assembly of Lima in 1944 with Virginia Orbinson (seated first row right) and Alfredo Barreda (standing second row right) – Eve Nicklin is at the center. Courtesy: Bahá'í World Centre

The pioneer was very happy, so much that she quickly wrote to Shoghi Effendi. The victory and the trophy was hers. Her reward was certainly his response:

Haifa May 29th 1944.

Dear Bahá'í sister:

Your welcome letter of April 23rd reached the Guardian; and the news you convey in it of the spread of the beloved Faith brought him great joy. The formation of an assembly in Peru was indeed a great victory, and added to the chain of Central and South American Bahá'í another precious link.

Eve Nicklin: She of the Brave Heart

He is so happy over the work accomplished by the valiant pioneers — and so proud of the record of the American believers achievements: an assembly in every province and state of N. America and a center in every Latin Republic — and so many spiritual assemblies!

He will especially pray for you in the Shrines, and he is deeply appreciative of all you have done for the Cause these last few years in Peru.

With warm Bahá'í love,

R. Rabbani

Dear and valued co-worker:

Your steadfastness, your devotion, your historic services are assets that I greatly value. I will fervently pray that the Beloved may bless your efforts, guide your steps, cheer your heart and fulfil your dearest wish in His service.

Persevere in your high endeavours and rest assured and be happy.

Your true and grateful brother,

Shoghi⁶⁹

6

A BAHÁ'Í COMMUNITY IN THE MAKING

Peru!

Land of Peru!

What I will have

To remember more of you

When I am far away?

Would it be perhaps the High Andes,

The sands of the desert,

The thickness of the jungle

Or an hidden fresh patio

Hidden after a garden wall?

But I think,

On the other hand,

What I will remember

More than all the things

The friendly words

Your people saying

"Your country, my friend!"

That assures my heart
A welcome to your land.⁷⁰

To the Universal Friendship Club
July 28, 1945
Eve Nicklin

What follows after the election of the first Spiritual Assembly of Lima was a period of intensive growth. The Assembly's first meeting took place on April 25, 1944, and its first Nineteen Day Feast celebration three days later. They also received a cable from Shoghi Effendi congratulating them for the formation of their spiritual assembly marking the birth of the Administrative Order in Peru. The beloved Guardian sent a cable for Lima on May 27, 1944, congratulating the new Assembly via Virginia Orbinson: "Assure Assembly loving appreciation greetings praying brilliant victories"⁷¹ And in a letter written on his behalf to Virginia dated July 28, 1944, he wrote: "The news of the formation of the Spiritual Assembly there (Lima) greatly rejoiced his heart, as you already know. It is practically impossible for those who take part in these first stirrings of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh in new lands to properly estimate their value and place in history"⁷²

In Lima the historical occasion of the Centenary of the Faith, opened the doors to a successful public activity in the home of the Barredas. The believers met and invited their friends to share such an auspicious milestone in a spirit of joy. Forty people were present and that was the first public talk in Peru. The meeting was held on May 22 at 6:30 pm. The program textually read:

1. Mr. Raymond Betts, President
Welcome and introduction of Ms. Eve Nicklin
2. Ms. Eve Nicklin, resident pioneer
The purpose of the celebration. Translation done by Dr. Luis Fernandez Briceño
3. Mr. Alfredo Barreda
Reading of cables received from the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada, and from the Bahá'ís of La Paz.
4. Mr. Reginald C. Reindorp
The meaning of the Centenary
5. Mr. Raymond Betts
History of the Declaration of the Báb
6. Mr. Ricardo Calderon
History of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.
7. Mr. Alejandro Franco
The importance of the Bahá'í Faith for Peru and for the youth.
8. Mrs. Isabel Barreda
The reading of her delegate message to the Convention of Wilmette
9. Ms. Virginia Orbinson, teacher travelling throughout South America.
10. Mrs. Luz Saenz
Prayer for all the nations.

A week before the celebration day, Alejandro Franco, an enthusiastic young man working for the Navy, entered the Faith. Because Manuel Ortiz eventually withdrew his name from the Assembly, Alejandro took his place raising himself to serve the Faith with great eagerness. He was the one suggesting holding firesides in the Raffo building under the name

"Nights of Universal Friendship". By June 1944, the Assembly had formed the Youth Committee appointing Alejandro as its director. The idea was a great success and encouraged by the participation, the firesides turned into a small club. Initially it was given the name of "Little Friendship Club" to be changed later on for the "Universal Friendship Club". A constant flow of contacts mainly interested in learning English came to the firesides where current affairs such as an international language, universal brotherhood, abolition of prejudices, a world government, and so on were discussed. The first talks were on the inventions in the last one hundred years and the roots of this new impulse in the world. The intention of the club was to attract young contacts to the meetings without presenting the Faith directly to them. They had sports and theatre activities as well as picnics with noticeable success. The firesides were on Wednesday nights while Saturday evenings were reserved for Bahá'í meetings. According to Eve, in that year of 1944, nearly six young people from this club became Bahá'ís.



Some members of the Universal Friendship Club in 1945

John Stearns, on the other hand, recovered from his treatment, having been several times hospitalized and subjected to intense radiotherapy to deal with his throat cancer. He had settled in Miraflores where he held Bahá'ís classes on Sunday evenings. Also, between June and July, Ray Betts left for the United States for several months on business, leaving his wife Irma, in a house twenty minutes away from downtown Lima. By that time Irma was studying the Faith. She and Eve took care of John Stearns.

The First Peruvian Delegate

The All-America Centennial Convention (May 17-24, 1944) held during the Centenary celebrations at Wilmette was called by the Guardian and was going to congregate United States delegates and representatives from each of the twenty Latin American countries. Isabel Barreda was chosen five months before by the Lima Bahá'í community to represent Peru but she later declined due to the difficulties of the travel and her inability to speak English. The Local Assembly of Lima then chose Luz Saenz but she did not travel either due to miscommunications.⁷³ There were representatives from Guatemala, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Panama and Chile.

Because many Latin American delegates could not attend the May celebrations in Wilmette, the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States called for a special conference during July, 9-15, 1944. Isabel de Barreda and Raymond Betts from Peru attended the conference as well as representatives from Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, El Salvador, Chile, Dominican Republic, Honduras and Paraguay. The conference engaged on

an intense consultation among the delegates and the members of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States towards the further development of the teaching work in Central and South American lands. Isabel de Barreda reported back to the community:

Being a Bahá'í means to be a brother for all as it was demonstrated by the love showed to the delegates upon their arrival in Chicago and in the Temple. There were dinners and they heard the voice of 'Abdu'l-Bahá by the radio and saw a film where 'Abdu'l-Bahá was always surrounded by children. There was also a meeting with the National Assembly to discuss delegates' issues. There are thoughts about establishing a center in Panama and another one in Buenos Aires for the extension of the Bahá'í Faith. Each delegate received a photography of 'Abdu'l-Bahá as a gift. At their departure, they were farewelled with much love and affection. All the Bahá'ís there sent their loving regards. The Temple is very beautiful with many decorations. It was very touching to see the cornerstone⁷⁴ in a niche where people go to pray.

The purpose of the Convention was to become familiar with the problems that we must confront in South America as well as for the delegates from different countries to get to know each other. The purpose was also that the delegates breathe that atmosphere and learn how to run Bahá'í matters. The National Assembly of the United States was satisfied with the information that Mrs. Barreda brought and is going to study all the problems and send information to the several communities by mail. Each delegate read their report and noticed that all had their problems.



National Assembly of the United States and Latin American representatives, July 9, 1944 — Isabel Barreda is sitting second from the left

The National Assembly of the United States is going to send information on the Faith and the aims of the Cause to all the American consulates and embassies so that they facilitate the Bahá'ís affairs at any time and place. Each delegate had the occasion to meet individually with the National Assembly and with the Secretary and the President, Mrs. Baker and Mrs. True. They asked about how the Assembly had formed, how many members there were, and so on. At that moment, each delegate had to read their list.

Mrs. Barreda brought with herself copies in Spanish of several talks that took place in the Convention ... The National Assembly of the United States has much interest in the formation of National Assemblies in the Latin American countries and somebody made the suggestion for having a Convention in South America in the future.⁷⁵

The minutes of the meeting dated August 1, 1944, closed: "Then a prayer for John Stearns was read who has gone to hospital for an operation. Ms Nicklin also read another prayer and the prayer for the Guardian..."⁷⁶ The *Prayer for the Guardian* was always said in the Assembly meetings in those years. It reads

That the Beloved may bestow upon our Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, all the strength and vigour that will enable him to pursue over a long and unbroken period of strenuous labour, the speedy triumph of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh.

This prayer was the believers' adaptation of what Shoghi Effendi wrote in 1923: "I cherish the hope that, from now on, the Beloved may bestow upon me all the strength and vigor that will enable me to pursue over a long and unbroken period of strenuous labour the supreme task of achieving, in collaboration with the friends in every land, the speedy triumph of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. This is the prayer I earnestly request all my fellow-brethren and sisters in the Faith to offer on my behalf."⁷⁷

And as the number of believers increased, Eve was feeling more confirmed in her pioneering services. "The simple fact to hear the name of Bahá'u'lláh in people's lips was a reason for much joy and happiness", commented Eve Nicklin, "And later, when people exhibited the photo of 'Abdu'l-Bahá or the Greatest Name, the emotion was indescribable.... I used to say 'Thanks to Thee Bahá'u'lláh, the Faith is established in Peru'".⁷⁸

Passing of John Stearns

It was July 1944 when John Stearns's condition deteriorated. At the beginning of August he was operated on but his health kept getting worse until his passing on November 7, 1944, at 4:45 pm at the age of 37 years. The burial was a simple ceremony in the Callao British cemetery on the following day at 4:30 pm with his friends present.

The Guardian sent a cable to the Bahá'í world mourning the loss of this valuable pioneer:

RADIANT SELFLESS SERVICES DEAR JOHN STEARNS
WILL NOT BE FORGOTTEN COUNTRY INDEED BLESSED
WHERE PIONEER NOT ONLY TAUGHT BUT REMAINED
DIED STILL GLORIFYING HIS FAITH.⁷⁹

In a cable dated November 19, 1944, Shoghi Effendi said:

SHARE GRIEF AT PASSING OF DEVOTED, FAITHFUL
PIONEER [JOHN STEARNS] HIS SERVICES HAVE BEEN
UNFORGETTABLE AND HIGHLY MERITORIOUS. ADVISE
THE CONSTRUCTION OF A MEMORIAL. ASSURE FRIENDS
IN LIMA [Peru] MY DEEPEST, LOVING SYMPATHY.⁸⁰

The Assembly of North America sent the following cable:

HEARTFELT SYMPATHY GRIEVOUS LOSS HEROIC
SELF SACRIFICING BAHAI PIONEER JOHN
STEARNS HIS DEATH LIGHTS ONE MORE SPIRITUAL
BEACON ILLUMINATING PATH UNITY AMERICAS IN
BAHA'U'LLAH'S REVELATION⁸¹

On August 14, 1945, Eve Nicklin received the following letter from the beloved Guardian in response to her report on John Stearns:

Dear Bahá'í Sister:

Your letter of Nov. 9th, 1944, reached Haifa some time ago, but due to pressure of work the Guardian has not been able this winter and spring to attend to his mail promptly, otherwise he would have written you before. He feels sure you will understand the delay was not caused by any other reason!

He was very sorry to hear of the death of John Stearns; he was a fine believer, and it is a pity he should have passed away so young — but his reward is assured and his name will be forever preserved in the roll call of the early Bahá'í pioneers to South America.

The news of the progress of the Cause in Peru greatly pleased him, and he hopes that on the modest but sound foundation that has been laid there a flourishing and exemplary community will arise and reward you and the other dear friends for your devoted and unsparing labours.

A Bahá'í Community in the Making

You may be sure he will certainly pray for you and for the success of the fine work you are doing there.

Please convey his loving greetings to all the dear Bahá'ís there.

With warm Bahá'í love,

-R. Rabbani

May the Beloved bless your efforts in the service of our beloved Faith, and enable you to promote at all times the vital interest of its institutions.

Your true brother,

Shoghi⁸²



John Stearn, Spiritual Father of Ecuador

We also read that Eve writes to Rodella Stearns, John's mother, in truly moving terms which reveals the stress of those months:

I think I understood John very well, especially when he came this way for the first time and I was his only friend. I realized certain timidity and reserve that he maintained. He came one year ago to this time. One day I went to the post office and found a letter from John asking me to visit him in the hospital. I had the opportunity to meet with him at your home in Jamestown. You were absent in that time, but Fred (Kings) and Audrey and the McKays were there.

John came to Lima with great hopes to get well very soon. He had had treatments in the beginning with X-rays and thought that would be everything. I guess that he got tired in Ecuador. Well, things did not happen as fast as John had hoped. Then the time came when doctors said to John that eleven radium needles had to be put in his tongue. The treatments had not had the reaction that they should have. He would humorously call the needles his "phonograph needles" — but they were no joke, because he had to have them for three days. I never saw somebody so patient and without complaining like John. X-rays burned their neck and throat to the extent that at times he could not eat or speak. I knew shortly after that he was near to dying at that time.

I was going to see him every day and used to bring things to him — Coca Cola, milkshakes, custards, but I guess he did not like them due to his burned throat. The treatment took weeks in the hospital. That was the time when I called a friend Mr. Betts, so that he could come and see John (at the beginning of 1944).

I thought that John needed a man. They became very close friends and were together in businesses.

It was certainly a miracle that he left the hospital (July 19, 1944). We asked the Guardian for his prayers and he said that he was praying fervently but never had he assured to us that he would be better. In fact, we felt that there was a reason why John became better that first time, because it was through John that Mr. Betts became a confirmed believer. John was very happy with him. We knew from him that John was in pain but that he strived to hide it.

It was not then a surprise when he said one day to me that he was going to return to the hospital for a control, as he called it. I knew then that he was very serious. He had cancer in his neck (beginnings of August of 1944) and they operated... By this time Mr. Betts had gone to the United States. His wife, Irma and a friend Cora Wilson and I myself were in the hospital while John was being operated on. He was on the table from nine until four. As you know, they cut muscles from his neck. They should have never operated on him completely. The cut muscles caused his neck to incline to the side. He was very impatient with himself and the hospital became tired of him. You could not reproach him. So we transferred him to the American hospital. He liked its atmosphere but still he thought that they were not doing anything for him. You will see he never resigned his hopes, which is typical of people with cancer, and that he never admitted what he had. He referred it to me as a tumour.

Irma Betts felt so much pain for him that he had to take him to her house. We tried to suggest to him to return home to the United States before it was too late. The situation was very complicated. He did not admit defeat. He seemed to wish to live so much.

John could rise and walk to the small patio in Irma's house and sit under the sun. Visiting him became very difficult because he could not speak much and we did not know when our presence was irritating to him. So we had to take him back to the hospital as the pain was increasingly stronger and Irma could not take care of him anymore.

We managed to get a doctor who would come to give him injections. We knew that it would be difficult because he hated hospitals. They gave him a strong injection to force him to enter the hospital. He did not allow me to help him to come down the stairs. Always he wished to do things by himself. And I always let him do what he wished. If he wished that I read, I did it or not; talk or not — and I guess he appreciated this.

John called to me so that I can help him to enter the taxi. We knew that the reaction would begin as soon as the injection had effect, but he entered the hospital and seemed comfortable and jovial.

He did not live much longer and he was delirious until the last moment. Irma, Cora and I were with him when he died and he passed away very peacefully. So we were very thankful because we thought that possibly he would choke.

The Guardian wrote that he wished to assure to the friends in Lima of his deep and loving sympathy and advised the construction of a monument.

Your daughter spoke about wishing to place a gravestone. How would you wish to do it? Would it be convenient if Bahá'ís erect a monument with your advice? Also, would you mind having the GREATEST NAME engraved and some words of the Bahá'í Teachings? There is no great haste. Ray Betts and I will ask for prices and other details.

I am certain that the reason for which John never wrote to you anymore was because he did not want to worry you - actually, he said that to me. I guess that his experiences in South America somehow soothed him. When some people in the beginning become Bahá'ís, they cannot see why the entire world does not see the same thing. As the time goes by, they get to understand more, perhaps.

Tell all the Bahá'ís in Jamestown that I send them my love. If Doris and Willard return there please give them my love.

Ray and Irma were so good with John - they were like family. Ray feels so thankful to John for the part he played in convincing him about the Faith. Irma is not a Bahá'í. She would like to believe, but one thing or another interposes on the way.

With love to you and prayers for your peace,

Eve Nicklin⁸³

Ray Betts had returned from the United States but had to be hospitalized immediately due to bad health and therefore could not attend the funeral. In May 1945 the Betts returned to the United States and bought a farm in East Bern in New York. The July 1980 issue of *The American Bahá'í* reported his death as being on November 19, 1979, in East Berne, New York. Irma Betts passed away on April 9, 2006, in East Berne being 91 years of age. The May 1981 *Bahá'í News* issue also carries the news of Ray Betts' passing in the article "Rabbani" by Stephen Waite about the Rabbani School at Gwalior, India:

... Ray Betts, a 71-year-old pioneer from the U.S. and Belize who had years of experience in tropical agriculture. Mr. Betts spent nearly a year at the Rabbani School improving the soil and fruit trees, introducing composting and the use of natural fertilizers and mulching. With great humour, he persevered through the trials of inspection by curious villagers, and being hard of hearing, which made learning a new language quite difficult. Mr. Betts recently passed on to the Abhá Kingdom.⁸⁴

Four months later, Virginia Orbinson left Peru en route to Bolivia having made magnificent work. She returned to Lima in October on her way to Ecuador for ten days. Virginia eventually settled in Spain and became its Spiritual Mother.

At the death of John Stearns, Demetrio Taboada of Callao was elected as his replacement in the Assembly. Demetrio had enlisted in the Cause on November 4, three days before his election to the Assembly and had been attending the meetings at Eve's apartment becoming soon an enthusiastic supporter.

He was Alfredo Barreda's friend and bank colleague. Alfredo took him to Eve's meetings. Demetrio related that in order to be accepted as a new Bahá'í the *candidate* would have to read certain books such as *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era* and the *Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*. At a meeting with the Spiritual Assembly questions were asked regarding the books, after which he had to request their acceptance as a new member.

We also know that by November, the Assembly librarian informs that copies of "The Wisdom of 'Abdu'l-Bahá" have been sent to the libraries of the Military School of Chorrillos and the National Pedagogical Institute. According to Eve, 1945 "was a time to attract new members, learning responsibilities through team work, deepening themselves in our Faith."⁸⁵ That was the year in which the community grew up to 23 believers and received the visit of several Bahá'ís. Jorge Sarco Manrique from Guayaquil, Ecuador, came on February 26; Gwenne Dorothy Sholtis on July 8 for one week; Elizabeth Cheney, a pioneer to Paraguay, on October 18; and Virginia Orbinson on April 7 and again on October 25. Similarly, Haig Kevorkian arrived from Argentina on November 15 for one week en route to his pioneering post in Ecuador, and Emeric Salas and his wife in December.

Mrs. Braddock and 'Abdu'l-Bahá

In the previous chapter we saw how, on her journey to Lima in October of 1941, Eve met a lady by the name of Mrs. Gray who had known 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the Holy Land. Eve experienced a similar anecdote when she encountered another lady who had also known the Master. Mrs. Braddock was visiting a house in Lima when suddenly she read the name of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in

a book. Being very surprised, she pronounced His name so loudly that her host was prompted to ask Mrs. Braddock what was happening. Mrs. Braddock then tells her host that she had known 'Abdu'l-Bahá and asked her where she had obtained the book. That is how she learns of Eve Nicklin and decides with her daughter to meet her. Eve related later:

A book lay open on the small table beside her chair. Mrs. Braddock glanced down at it. Suddenly, a name was alive on the printed page. "Abdu'l-Bahá!" She spoke the name aloud. Her hostess looked up from her knitting. "What did you say, my dear?" "The name in this book!" she said, "Abdu'l-Bahá — I knew Him. Where did you get this book?" "A woman lent it to me," Mrs. Braddock and her daughter found their way to the Bahá'í Center. She told us of her life as a young Armenian woman, living in Egypt, of her visits with 'Abdu'l-Bahá and His family in Haifa, Palestine. "Although I was just a child, I remember Him too," said the daughter. "I remember Him too," said the daughter. "I remember sitting at His feet with the other children." She added, "And He gave me a ringstone that I treasured very much." We showed them the *Bahá'í World* books. How eagerly Mrs. Braddock searched through them for pictures of familiar faces! There was an especial face that she wanted to find — Lua Getsinger. "Lua was a guest in our house," she said, "and it was there that she died." "We all loved her very much," she added softly. We told her that Lua had been named The Mother Teacher of The West.⁸⁶

Mrs. Braddock invited us unto her home to meet her husband, an Englishman. They showed us their albums of photographs. One picture was of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

walking along a path, His cloak billowing in the wind. Mrs. Braddock seemed surprised when we informed her that the Faith which 'Abdu'l-Bahá had advanced, was becoming recognized around the world. She had not thought much about religion through the years, but she had often remembered the way of life exemplified by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. His selfless life of service had said louder than words that He was a Bahá'í; she could not speak His name without betraying her emotion. To us, who had not known 'Abdu'l-Bahá personally, yet loved him with an overwhelming love, Mrs. Braddock had brought another glimpse of His Matchless example of Bahá'í living. We in turn, shared with the Braddocks, His writings.⁸⁷

Eve and the Children

In 1945 Eve published in Lima a children's book entitled *Read Me a Story* in both English and Spanish. The printing of the book was possible through Irene Silva de Santolalla's assistance.

Irene (1904-1992) was a prominent educationalist and feminist. A member of Lima's upper class and intelligentsia, Irene became in 1956 the first woman to be elected to the Peruvian Senate and had been named the *Woman of the Americas* also in 1956. An author and a sought-after lecturer in Peru and overseas, she wrote many books and articles on family education and child development. Her name is mentioned in a letter from Shoghi Effendi quoted in the next chapter.



Irene Silva de Santolalla

Dr. Aguilar had introduced Irene to Eve and soon they became good friends. Although a very close admirer of the Teachings, Irene never became a Bahá'í. She prologued the book by describing Eve Nicklin as "a specialist in story-telling and children books. She is well acquainted with child psychology issues due to her vast experience working daily with them. She has been a pre-school supervisor and consultant for youth summer schools, both for boys and girls, in the state of Pennsylvania of the United States of North America."⁸⁸

Eve wrote:

Irene is a well-known writer of books on parent education. We were having tea together; our talk centered on the topic of education. I brought out stories that had been prepared for pre-school children, and let her read them, commenting that Bahá'ís believe that character-training is of paramount importance, that accordingly the aim of these stories was to influence the child to keep his word, to be on time, and to be thoughtful of all creatures. Then I quoted from *The*

Wisdom of 'Abdu'l-Bahá: "For unless the moral character of a nation is educated, as well as the brain, and talents, civilization has no basis." Irene was thoughtful. "My people here in Peru need this type of training," she said, "May I translate these stories into Spanish? I'll help you have them printed too," she added. After much labor the task was finished. It is dedicated to an organization that Irene had founded, "The Crusade of Education for the Future Mothers of Peru," and also to that generation of children that will make a new and better world. In the prologue of the little book, one may read Irene's own words, "... thinking people everywhere are realizing the importance of child-training as a firm basis for a better humanity"⁸⁹



Book cover of "Read Me a Story" by Eve Nicklin

Eve's talents in education constituted the foundation of future children's classes in Peru which started at her apartment classes. According to one of the first believer's testimony:

I already had the idea that if the Faith spread roots in the children we would have not to worry as much, because each of those children was going to be a pillar, because each child would begin to live with their faith! In one of the meetings, as we were exchanging ideas, every Nineteen days, we decided to bring children. This came in relation to my little daughter whom I have been taking to the meetings. Then, the idea came that we should bring children. Eve Nicklin said it in English. So we decided to carry out the plan. As of a Sunday, we invited the children for tea. Then we decided to do it every Sunday; and so Sundays were like madness [because of the children]. Then we decided that parents send their children to a matinee function. And so children began to arrive and lots of games were played... that Eve Nicklin knew, because she enjoyed working with children. I was in charge to tell stories to the kids. As you walk down towards Callao there was a cake shop that until now exists. I went and got cakes (the bakery trusted us)... Later we made the collection and we paid — that was not the collection of the Nineteen Days.⁹⁰

Consolidating the Community

According to Eve, 1946 was a year full of promises of increased Bahá'í activity:

In January members of the community began giving their own talks. Up to now we have had our regular classes of Saturdays led by me only, but the great day came when Dr. Aguilar [a new Bahá'í] announced that he was now ready to lead one of the meetings. His topic was 'Divine Economy'... and he did it so well that we are hoping to have him speaking more often. Manuel Vera (our capable translator) took the next talks on 'Evolution of the Thought'. The way he answers questions shows that he is obtaining a deep knowledge of the Faith. Mary Angulo (Beckett) and Albert Lobaton are the next speakers. The deepening classes are on Thursdays. People come on Mondays for a study circle and on Wednesdays for the Club evenings.⁹¹

In August of 1946 the Bahá'ís of Lima initiated the proceedings for the official recognition of the Bahá'í Faith at the Religious Affairs Department. After intense activities they formally received the news that no registration was needed because in Peru there is freedom of religion. However any publicity should have first the Governor's permission. In any case, we found that on December 30, 1947, the "Bahá'í Assembly (NUR)" is formed and incorporated on the Public Records on February 12, 1948, as a cultural association. These steps were explored by the Local Assembly as the Lima Bahá'ís began considering expanding the Faith to other cities such as Cusco, Huancayo and Callao. In October 1946 Eve visited Trujillo to see possibilities of moving to this northern city, but apparently nothing eventuated.

One of Eve's strengths was her professional training with children and youth. She had a way to establish a quick rapport with young people as well as a repertoire of activities to

work with them. That is how the early years of the Peruvian Bahá'í community were energized through the active participation of the youth. A particular approach she developed was making pictorial albums to illustrate Bahá'í concepts to her contacts. It might have been a reaction to her poor Spanish speaking skills or that she found visual means more effective to teach people. In any case, Eve developed the skill of creating very appealing albums on a broad range of topics, quoting Bahá'í writings along with paper clips she cut from magazines and newspapers.

Eve always found an interesting way to deliver Bahá'í concepts to the youth. For example the celebration of the Declaration of the Báb on May 23, 1947, was portrayed in a small drama where telegrams were prepared beforehand. At the night of the anniversary, Bahá'ís and their friends each received a message taken from "The Wisdom of 'Abdu'l-Bahá". This was meant to symbolize the Declaration of the Báb, the birth of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the delivering of the first telegraphic message.

Another opportunity arose when the youth of the Universal Friendship Club asked Eve to celebrate Christmas at the Bahá'í Center. Eve, in her wisdom, did not refuse their request but let them prepare tea and have a small celebration. The Bahá'í youth were in charge of the program. At a signal, the electric light was turned off and a great white candle was lit while all the guests gathered around forming a circle.

• According to Eve,

The brightness of the central light reflected on the faces of the young people as they were told a history of

the coming to Earth of a progression of great prophets and messengers of the Light, such as Moses, Christ, Muhammad, the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. When the history finalized, four young people, representing the East, the West, the North and the South, brought their candles forward and lit them from the central light; then they ignited the smaller candles held by each guest, symbolizing the diffusion of the light of the truth of the world... Tied to each small candle there was a message of Light from the Pens of the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. A special guest was the Bahá'í instructor Gwenne Sholtis. She led the young people to sing the Song of Love of Nina Benedict Mattson.⁹²

We also find that: "... they [Peruvians] used the method of discussions at round tables in their public meetings of every week. The Peruvians enjoyed taking part in the talks and visual aids were used. Mario Rodriguez, with a special talent for the art, painted announcements and graphical letters for this purpose. Graphic talks were given to explain the Teachings more comprehensively."⁹³

Eve's Universal Friendship Club kept growing and yielded the Lima Bahá'í youth group as its finest fruit. Through his letters to Eve, Shoghi Effendi also educated them — at a time when there was no Bahá'í literature in Spanish — as it seems in this letter from his secretary on November 17, 1947:

There are so many movements in the world at present akin to various Bahá'í principles, indeed we can almost say that the principles of Bahá'u'lláh have been adopted by thinking people all over the planet. But what they do not realize, and what the Bahá'ís must therefore

teach them, is that these principles, however perfect, will never be able to create a new society, unless and until they are animated by the spirit which alone changes the hearts and characters of men, and that spirit is recognition of their Divine origin in the teacher sent from God; in other words, Bahá'u'lláh. When they recognize this, their hearts will change and a change of heart is what people need, not merely a change of intellectual outlook.⁹⁴

7

MOTHER OF PERU

Before leaving the United States, Eve was told that there were three Peruvian Bahá'ís, namely, Octavio Illescas, Pacora Blue Mountain (Salomon Pacora Estrada) and Alberto Lobaton who had accepted the Faith in that country. These early believers were already shining in the field of teaching particularly in regard to Latin American populations. More importantly, those stories reveal the bridge that despite of the distance God was building between the more established North American Bahá'í community and the nascent South American ones.

With Eve's arrival new believers came into the Faith who soon became engaged in the service to the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. Watching them to grow into fine believers brought much happiness to her heart. It was another confirmation that her services were accepted and blessed. For these new converts, Eve became the epitome of their new espoused Faith from

whom guidance and inspiration were drawn. Like a mother carefully looking after the development of her children, Eve demonstrated great patience and forbearance. That was at a time when there was no Bahá'í literature in Spanish and no strong local administrative structures to rely upon. Money was also short but Eve offered the little she had to provide an environment where these new believers felt comfortable enough to meet and learn to live as a community. She superbly succeeded because it was done with immense and pure love.

Octavio Illescas

Octavio Illescas and his wife, Inga Illescas, were enlisted in the Bahá'í Faith on January 29, 1940. At that time he was residing in Beverly Hills, a prosperous community adjacent to Los Angeles, and was therefore a member of that locality. Octavio had emigrated from Peru as a single man in 1910.

The Illescas became members of the Bahá'í community of Los Angeles on January 21, 1941, when they moved to that city. They apparently remained in that community until 1946. On July 21, 1946, they transferred from the Los Angeles community to the city of Clovis. Clovis is a small city to the north of San Francisco in the north of California. They were both the only Bahá'ís in that locality.



Octavio Illescas

Courtesy: US Bahá'í National Archives

Octavio might have moved to Fresno in that year because his wife died of cancer in a hospital in that city on November 1, 1946. He was still apparently in contact with the Bahá'ís of Los Angeles at that time because the Local Assembly and Bahá'ís sent flowers for her funeral.⁹⁵ By 1947 we find that Octavio Illescas was serving as a special consultant for South America at the Inter-America Teaching Committee. Eve and Octavio never met.

We know that Inga was a member of the 1943 Inter-America Committee along with her husband. We also know that Octavio was the coordinator of the Inter-America Teaching Committee in 1945. In the "Bahá'í World" we read that Octavio Illescas along with Dorothy Baker were teaching in Mexico and after her return, he remained "several weeks with the believers in Mexico City, further encouraging and strengthening them with his loving sympathy, wisdom and clear understanding of the Bahá'í Faith."⁹⁶ Octavio also went travel teaching to Havana. Octavio Illescas is known to be the first Peruvian Bahá'í.

According to the September 1940 *Bahá'í News*: "Mr. Illescas who is a native of Peru and a graduate of the University of Minnesota and therefore well qualified to offer the most valuable advice to those contemplating service in this glorious field."⁹⁷ At the Centenary he gave a talk indicating that "The religious heritage, the known fervor and devotion of the masses, in the Latin American nations will be the fertile soil on which the seeds of the Bahá'í Faith, a religion of action, a religion in which service to humanity is worship of God — will grow and bear rich fruits."⁹⁸

Alberto Lobaton

The story of Alberto Lobaton and Pacora Blue Mountain goes back to New York, the City of the Covenant. It is equally interesting and helps us see the Hand of God mysteriously raising from North America the pillars of the Faith in Peru. Let's listen to Alberto Lobaton's oral version:

We [Alberto Lobaton and Pacora Blue Mountain] gave an Inca music concert in New York. And that pleased much the secretary of the Spiritual Assembly Bahá'í of New York who was present there at that time. Then she invited us to participate in a literary-musical evening function that was being organized by the Spiritual Assembly Bahá'í of New York; and we attended. Pacora Blue Mountain ... that played the piano very well, was a great pianist, and I played the *quena*. And the secretary of the Spiritual Assembly Bahá'í of New York liked [the presentation] very much because she was of Persian origin and she said to me that there was a

great similarity between the Peruvian and the Persian music. Then we were there [at the Bahá'ís meetings] and we became familiar with the ideas, the doctrines, the ideals of the Bahá'í Faith, about what the Bahá'í Faith advocates. We agreed immediately. Then, just a short time later, we had already signed our cards as members of the Spiritual Assembly Bahá'í of New York. First me and then Blue Mountain. His enlisting was almost immediately because this Mr. Saffá Kinney,⁹⁹ that was the coordinator of the Spiritual Assembly, was a man of a great culture and a great gentleman. Immediately he won our affection. We got along with him very well. And it did not take much when we were already performing in the meetings of the Bahá'í Faith in New York.¹⁰⁰

Alberto, or "Albert", worked in the School of Tourist Guides of Lima where he met Julia Mendoza, a Bahá'í. Since his arrival, Alberto was looking for the Lima believers till Julia mentioned Eve Nicklin to him. Simultaneously, Eve had been looking for Alberto based on the information provided to her by the Inter America Teaching Committee before her travelling to Peru. However, she had been looking for him by Alberto's maternal surname, that is, Meza. Alberto's membership to the Lima community is dated August 1945. Since then Alberto became Eve's right arm as her translator in Bahá'í classes and public talks.



Meche Sanchez and Alberto Lobaton in the late 1990s

The Second Seven Year Plan initiated in 1946 — after a two-year “truce” — contemplated among its four objectives the formation of three new national spiritual assemblies, one in Canada, another one in Central America and the third one in South America.¹⁰¹ In November of 1946 the first Bahá’í South American Congress took place in Buenos Aires. There were four consecutive congresses which culminated with the election of the first National Spiritual Assembly of South America for ten countries in 1951.¹⁰² Alberto Lobaton was the official Peruvian delegate but Roque Jimenez also attended. According to Alberto’s reminiscences, the Congress was very moving and a series of public talks were held on various premises with a diverse public. He traveled by land up to Puno on the border with Bolivia, crossed the Titicaca Lake by boat and took the train to La Paz, capital of Bolivia. In La Paz, Alberto stayed with the Cuellar Family and from there he went by train to Buenos Aires arriving after four days.

A gifted public speaker, Alberto was blessed with two letters of Shoghi Effendi in 1946 and 1947. The second letter dated February 18, 1947, reads:

Dear Bahá'í Brother:

Your letter dated Oct. 14th was received by our beloved Guardian, and he has instructed me to answer it on his behalf.

News of the wonderful success of the Buenos Aires Conference has already reached him, and he feels that it truly marks a turning point in the development of the work in South America. It also has demonstrated that the believers of Latin America are going to be able to not only elect their two national assemblies, when the time comes, but will be capable of managing the affairs of the Cause in these republics of the New World with dignity, efficiency and success.

The news you gave him of the teaching work being carried on by your Assembly in Callao ¹⁰³ gave him great satisfaction. This work is of the utmost importance, and he assures he will pray that it may be very successful, and that a flourishing Bahá'í Community may soon exist there.

Your donation to, and love for, our glorious Cause touches him deeply and he will pray that your services may be richly blessed by Bahá'u'lláh.

With warm Bahá'í love,

R. Rabbani

Eve Nicklin: She of the Brave Heart

Assuring you of my deep and abiding appreciation of your meritorious and historic services to our beloved Faith, and of my fervent prayers for your successful and the speedy realization of every hope you cherish for its extension and promotion,

Your true and grateful brother,

Shoghi ¹⁰⁴

Pacora Blue Mountain

According to Eve, Alberto "knew of the Cause from one of those famous Sunday meetings that took place in the house of the Kinneys in New York" and that Pacora Blue Mountain (1899-1969) took him there.



Pacora Blue Mountain

Courtesy: US Bahá'í National Archives

The Hand of the Cause of God 'Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánúm once stated: "The Beloved Guardian considered Mr. Pacora Blue Mountain to be the first known Bahá'í of Inca descent, and for this reason has a photograph of Mr. Pacora Blue Mountain placed in the Mansion of Bahji where it may still be seen".¹⁰⁵ From 1941 to his death on Christmas 1961, Pacora Blue Mountain brilliantly served the Faith as a pioneer in Ecuador. As seen earlier, his confirmation in the Faith took place in the home of Safá Kinney. On August 9, 1941, Safá Kinney wrote to the beloved Guardian:

Pacora Blue Mountain, an ... Inca Indian, has been most important in the spread of the Cause in both Mexico and South America. He is a faithful attendant to my meetings and absorbs deeply all I have had to say. ... I have been giving out the strongest kind of spiritual food, dealing with actualities and truth — indeed, he says it was just that which made him a Bahá'í¹⁰⁶

The Guardian through his secretary responded to Safá Kinney two months later:

The Guardian was most happy to learn that you have been able to confirm souls from South American countries, such as Mr. Blue Mountain and Mr. Torres. He will pray for their dedication to the wonderful work of spreading their new-found belief in Bahá'u'lláh amidst their countrymen who so greatly need these glorious Teachings. He was particularly happy than Mr. Blue Mountain, an Inca descendant, should have embraced the Cause, thus bringing nearer the realization of the Master's command to confirm the Indians"¹⁰⁷

And on March 28, 1942,

He [Shoghi Effendi] was very happy to hear of the successful teaching work which Mr. Blue Mountain is carrying on. The conversion of the original inhabitants of North America and South America to the Faith is a cause for great rejoicing, and will no doubt bring rich blessings in its wake.¹⁰⁸

In "Heroes of God" Helen Hornsby describes what happened to Pacora Blue Mountain after his enrolment into the Faith:

After becoming a Bahá'í, he spent most of his time in small towns teaching the Faith. He would return home on weekends and give concerts for crippled children and at other hospitals. He married an Ecuadorian young woman and after that he always wanted to pioneer to her country.

In March 1961 he came to Ecuador as a pioneer and at Ridván he was elected to be a member of the local Assembly of Guayaquil. He was so well liked by the Bahá'ís and appreciated that the local Assembly made an official request to the National Assembly that he be allowed to remain with them in that city. However, Pacora enjoyed working in the more primitive areas of the country and devoted time to the community of Naranjapata where he kept a room for Bahá'í meetings. During the year, he was privileged to attend the first major Indian Teaching Congress in Ecuador at San Pablo near Otavalo.

While in Guayaquil, he gave many piano concerts interspersed with the Bahá'í writings and also radio programs on "Ondas del Pacifico" (The Waves of the Pacific). He received many letters from the Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, to whom he was extremely devoted and he composed a chant for the Guardian entitled "Ya Shoghi Effendi Val-e-Amrollah." Ruhíyyih Khánum said that the Guardian loved him so much.¹⁰⁹

On January 13, 1970, the Universal House of Justice wrote to the National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador: "His long and devoted services to the Faith in Latin America and in Ecuador will be long remembered". Before passing away, Pacora Blue Mountain, donated his property in Sullana, Piura, his native town, to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Peru to be used as a Bahá'í center. He visited Lima once in the 1960s.

Dr. Guillermo Aguilar

Returning to the Lima of 1945, two other outstanding enrolments were Manuel Vera and Guillermo Aguilar. Manuel was a young man who rapidly understood the teachings of the Faith. He acquired a deep Bahá'í knowledge becoming Eve's capable and enthusiastic translator at the Universal Friendship Club. Eventually he traveled to the United States and settled there.

Dr. Aguilar was a prominent new enrolment who joined the ranks of the early Peruvian Bahá'í community. He was born in the Peruvian highlands and held a doctorate in economics from Sorbonne University being a professor at the University of San Marcos. From the very first moment of his Bahá'í life,

Dr. Aguilar was conscious of the step that he had taken when accepting Bahá'u'lláh. He was a gifted public speaker. He had recalled the events that led to his encounter with the Cause of God.

I went to improve my command of the English language in the North American Peruvian Institute where I met Eve Nicklin. I had requested [the Institute] to have a native English teacher to acquire the accent. And they directed me to Miss Eve Nicklin. In the following months I tried to learn as much as I could from her and she considered me as one of her best students. She frequently asked to come to the front and repeat by heart a story about Peru or story about America. Once she invited me to her house for a cup of tea and spoke to me about her religion. "I had a thorough knowledge of history of mankind [he said to Eve].... but I believed in a Supreme God, I am deist'. She took advantage of the ideas and said then, there is good material here [laughters] because we can make a Bahá'í out of him. Indeed, the things that she said to me were so new and so different from which I had acquired until that date, that I liked them and I began to frequent her company so that she continues speaking to me of the Bahá'í Faith".¹¹⁰

At that time, Dr. Aguilar along with his wife belonged to a prominent political party. He might have felt concerned whether belonging to a political party was compatible with the teachings of the Faith. She consulted with Eve and both turned to Shoghi Effendi for guidance. As a result the following letter dated November 17, 1945, was received.



Dr. Aguilar (left) translating for the Hand of the Cause of God Mr. Hasan Balyuzi, Lima, 1961

Dear Bahá'í Sister:

The Guardian was very happy to receive your letter of Aug. 17th, together with that of the Bahá'í youth, and to see how well the Cause is progressing there.

Regarding your reference to Dr. Aguilar, who seems to be a very enlightened and sincere man, the Guardian feels that you might point out to him that if he, as a Bahá'í, should insist on the right to support a certain political party whose platform he considers highly meritorious, he cannot very well deny the same degree of freedom to other believers; which would mean that within the ranks of a Faith whose primary objective is to unite all men as one great family under God, there

would be Bahá'ís opposed to each other, and because of the very nature of politics, in violent disagreement with each other. Where then would lie the example of harmony and unity for which the world is seeking?

The Guardian will pray that Dr. Aguilar may feel moved to sacrifice his political associations in order to fully support the Divine system which is the remedy for all the ills of all the people in the world. He will also pray that your friend Irene Silva de Santolalla will feel moved to courageously espouse the Faith which she so admires.

Your long and patient service in Peru has yielded a fruitful harvest, and the Guardian is very pleased over the reports you have given him. He feels you are the best to decide whether you should at present go home for a rest or not, as you can better judge if your temporary absence will seriously affect the work there or not. Meantime you may be sure he will pray for your continuous success, guidance, and health.

With warm Bahá'í love,

R. Rabbani

P.S.: He thinks it would be an excellent idea to translate some of the teachings into the native Indian languages.

With the assurance of my lively and abiding appreciation of your truly remarkable efforts and services, and of my continued and fervent prayers for the extension of your valued activities, and the full

realization of your dearest hopes in the service of our beloved Faith,

Your true and grateful brother,

Shoghi ¹¹¹

Shoghi Effendi's words brought reassurance to Dr. Aguilar's heart and consequently he resigned from his political affiliations while Eve put aside a possible trip to the United States. He became an active believer and for many years he served on the Spiritual Assembly of Lima and the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Peru. He was also elected in 1952 to the National Spiritual Assembly for ten South American countries along with Eve Nicklin. In addition, Dr. Aguilar acted as the Peruvian representative to the United Nations in Lima. The January 1953 issue of *Bahá'í News* reports that: "In Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Mr. Guillermo Aguilar, former chairman of the Lima, Peru, local Assembly has been directing the establishment of a technological school for Haiti on behalf of the United Nations. He has been very active in Bahá'í work in the Port-au-Prince Community, and has spoken on the United Nations." ¹¹² Dr. Aguilar died in 1988 aged 86 years old in Lima after a long service to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh.

Mercedes (Meche) Sanchez ¹¹³

Meche (1912-1999) joined the Faith in Lima, Peru, on Christmas 1946 through Eve's club. As seen earlier, Eve Nicklin had established the Universal Friendship Club at her place to attract people to the Faith. The club consisted of firesides where topics like unity and brotherhood were discussed

along with social activities such as picnics, games, sports and other outdoor activities. Most early Peruvian Bahá'ís had been students of English and were confirmed through the love that Eve instilled in those gatherings.

A successful dressmaker for Lima's upper class society, Meche had decided to take English lessons so that she could undertake a correspondence course to improve her dress design expertise. She then approached a German, teacher of English, who after considering Meche's work schedule too complex for arranging lessons, referred her to Eve Nicklin. Meche was warned, however, that Eve Nicklin had a "strange religion". In Meche's words:

When I met her [Eve Nicklin], she was forming it [the Universal Friendship Club] and her Local Assembly was elected two years earlier. I got invited to that club. She said: "Well, I hope to see you here on Wednesday, we have a club." Well, I was not a Bahá'í and I had difficulty understanding new ideas. I saw the pictures and just asked, "Who is the man on this table?" which was 'Abdu'l-Bahá. There was a young interpreter, Manuel Vera, who explained it to me ... Then I went on Wednesday and there was an American, Gwenne Sholtis, who was en route to Bolivia being a pioneer there, and then she played a game, where we were all sitting on the carpet on the floor. We were all young and the questions and answers were all in English. It was very simple and nice which I seemed to like. Eve then asked me to read from her worn out book *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era* a passage about equal rights for men and women. I read it and she told me, "Ah, you read very well Meche. Do you not want to come on Saturday

to talk about this point?" "What happens on Saturday?" I said. [Eve replied]: "The youths meet and we all read from that book. You will read and Manuel Vera will give the explanations that I am going to give in English because he is the translator." All this was in English. "Perfect," I said.

I went and told a close friend who I know since we were children. His name was Demetrio Molero and he worked with me. I said, "Demetrio, you know, I have been invited by a lady Eve Nicklin. She is nice and gives classes on Saturday. I will read this paragraph from this book and then we will comment, but you know, I am a bit scared because I do not know what it is, whether it is political because it [the book] speaks of rights of men and women and I have also heard about a universal currency." And he told me: "But Meche, why do you get involved with those things? You do not know." "Well," I told him, "but we must also have new experiences in our lives. And that's why I invite you because you are my friend. I will invite my brother Enrique and a few of his university friends and some other people. It would not be that they will throw tomatoes at me [laughing]. "Well," he said, "let's go together".

Saturday came and I had already read and prepared myself on that book. I went with my brother, my brother-in-law and some friends of my brother. When I finished reading the book I gave my opinion, because I was always concerned with achieving justice, social justice, but not through religion but by other means. Then Eve Nicklin explained and gave me an account of what the Bahá'í Faith is.

I was astonished when Demetrio raised his hand and said: "What do I have to do to join this movement?" "Well, you have to read such and such book" replied Eve. On Monday, when he came to my house I told him: "But Demetrio, what have you done? Belonging to this movement? If here it says that this movement is religion." "Yes Meche, [he replied] because I have always been a free thinker ... my mind is completely different".

So, for almost a year I was bothering the Bahá'ís, sometimes mocking at them within myself because I thought, "These four people, what do they think? Jesus Christ is the Son of God ... and how can they say that Bahá'u'lláh is the return of Christ". And then I went through my internal strife, my spoken confessions with Father Fordín, who had been my spiritual guide since I took communion at the age of seven years. And I explained to him that they [the Bahá'ís] forbid nothing to me. He, a very intelligent man, said: "We have to be careful because they may be the false prophets who will come ... But anyway, if they do not forbid you anything, keep investigating" And so, after a year in December, I said "I want to belong to this Faith".¹¹⁴

By that time the Lima Bahá'í community had no more than thirty members. The following year Meche was elected to the Local Spiritual Assembly and also chosen by the community to represent Peru at the Second South American Bahá'í Congress to be held in January 1948 in Santiago, Chile. Meche and Eve embarked on a small ship that stopped at every port en route, taking fifteen days to reach their destination. The only people

on the ship were the captain, his wife and a few women to whom the Faith was delivered. They also taught the Faith at each port along the way.



Bahá'í Congress in Chile, 1948. Eve is sitting at the right extreme — Meche is sitting third from the left

This congress which was followed by a summer school had a great impression on Meche and on the other native believers. There, these few early South American believers, armed with a very basic knowledge of the Faith and scattered through the vast subcontinent, realized that they were part of a major brotherhood linking them, despite the tyranny of distance. There were delegates from Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Peru, Uruguay and Chile. Their inspiration and guidance came from the beloved Guardian Shoghi Effendi who through personal correspondence from Haifa was lovingly guiding them step by step. The delegates also realized that they were all learning, asking simple questions, focusing on teaching

methods to expand their Faith. As a result, a public talk was held and an article on the Faith appeared in *El Mercurio*. The beloved Guardian also sent a special message for the event.

Meche's participation in the Santiago Congress enhanced her capabilities and enthusiasm to serve the Cause of God at the local, national and international level. Being a successful business woman, she offered a rented flat where she used to rent evening gowns, to serve as the Lima Bahá'í center for many years. It is in this venue where CEBSA, the Bahá'í Teaching Committee for South America, after transferring its seat from Santiago to Lima, began an intensive publishing program producing Bahá'í literature in Spanish such as *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*, with the assistance of an old mimeograph and the local youth. Her house was also a place where both international and national visitors were generously accommodated.

In 1951 Meche was elected to the first Regional National Spiritual Assembly for ten South American countries (Peru, Ecuador, Chile, Bolivia, Venezuela, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, Colombia and Argentina). Such a body was later re-arranged into two regional national assemblies each with five countries under their jurisdictions where Meche also served with great devotion, frequently travelling overseas for institutional meetings and other events. She made innumerable teaching trips to the interior of the country and served as homefront pioneer to help establish the Local Spiritual Assemblies required by the goals of the Ten Year Crusade. In 1961 the National Spiritual Assembly of Peru was formed and two years later Meche had the privilege of being present at the first election of the Universal House of Justice in

1963. Some few years later, Meche was appointed a member of the Auxiliary Board to the Hands of the Cause, continuing her teaching trips to the interior of the country and encouraging the friends in summer schools and other events. It is fair to say that to a certain extent Meche had inherited much of Eve Nicklin's spiritual attributes of patience, understanding and consecration.

The 1997 National Convention of Peru paid a beautiful homage to Meche when she, for health reasons, was released from her almost forty-year long services as Auxiliary Board member. At the closing of the event, someone asked that all those who served as Assistants to Meche should stand up. It was emotionally overwhelming to see that almost all attendants, including all attending Auxiliary Board and National Spiritual Assembly members, instantaneously rose to their feet. There were dozens of friends that during decades and under various circumstances had served under her loving guidance and care, and now were paying tribute to her work whose loving education was later affectionately known as "Meche's School". At her death the Universal House of Justice wrote to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Peru:

We are grieved to learn of the passing of the much loved, staunch maidservant of Bahá'u'lláh Mercedes Sánchez. Her many decades of selfless, consecrated service in the teaching and administrative spheres are exemplary. Present and future generations of Peruvian believers will warmly remember her kindness, her love, and her nurturing spirit. You are urged to hold memorial meetings in major centres of your country.

Be assured of our ardent prayers in the Holy Shrines for the progress of her radiant soul in the worlds to come. Kindly extend our heartfelt condolences to her family.¹¹⁵



The CEBSA team in 1951 — Eve Nicklin and Meche Sanchez are second and third from the right, respectively

The Becketts and Callao

David Beckett, a British subject, was a young man who worked as an officer at the British Consulate in Lima. Juanita Cordoba, a friend of the Bahá'ís had invited him to participate in the meetings of the Universal Friendship Club. At the Club meetings, David met Mary Angulo who eventually became his wife. David was the son of a Protestant missionary and was raised under a strong Biblical education. But David had

been attracted to the Faith through Eve's intervention and so he embraced it in 1946. Their parents, living in England, were surprised when he wrote them asking for their consent to marry Mary, a permission that eventually was granted.

The wedding took place on October 31, 1946, being the first Bahá'í marriage in Peru and also in South America. Eve created a fictitious dialogue to illustrate certain moments of the Bahá'í history of Peru. In the dialogue, Henrifer Morales Macedo and Rosemary Beckett, two Bahá'í children from the Lima community, talk together about the details of the ceremony.

Rosemary says: "The wedding took place in the Bahá'í Center which was the house of the resident pioneer (Eve Nicklin). The room facing the East was chosen to solemnize the marriage which had been decorated with beautiful flowers and the Greatest Name. Among the attendees were: Eve Nicklin, resident pioneer, Manuel Vera, vice-chair of the Assembly and Mario Rodriguez who read the Table of Marriage of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. My mother had a precious memory in her hands, hair from Bahá'u'lláh's sacred head that had been placed in a frame in the form of book. The relics were a gift originally from Bahíyyih Khánum to Martha Root".

"And the guests?" Henrifer asked.

"There were Bahá'ís, their friends and relatives as well as David's fellow workers from the British Consulate. There were about sixty people altogether. I remember my father saying how interested was the Consul trying to read the Greatest Name. It seems that

he had served in Persia and had met some Bahá'ís in his work, but he did not know much of the Faith until attending the wedding".

"The marriage of your father and your mother, was the union of the old and the new world, isn't?" Henrifer commented.

"Yes, my mother is Peruvian and my father is English."

I remember part of the letter that the Guardian sent to them through Rúhíyyih Khánum: "He [Shoghi Effendi] hopes that you, representing the old and the new world, will render many valuable services for the Cause."¹¹⁶

About that date, Eve writes to the Guardian enclosing a photo of the new couple, and although the answer arrives late due to the pressure of his work, the communication brings more blessings again. The beloved Guardian wrote to her:

Assuring you of my loving and continued prayers for your success and for the extension of your meritorious, your historic and deeply appreciated activities.¹¹⁷

It was in 1946 when the Lima friends decided to open Callao, the main Peruvian city port as a goal. David Beckett's father was the representative of the Biblical Society in Peru and that branch had a small office in Callao. When Mr. Beckett senior left the country for England he had rented the premises

to the Bahá'ís. Eve tells us that there were boxes of Bibles which were covered and used for sitting with some cushions. The initial furniture was a table and a writing desk. The Bahá'í Center of Callao began operating on October 3, 1946, with a capacity of thirty and seven people. By December of 1946 there were five believers in Callao.

For the 1946 Gregorian New Year the Bahá'ís of Callao had a youth celebration with fifty guests followed by a talk. Eve tells that in January the Club of the Universal Friendship in Callao was formed and that the president "is studying the Faith". For the two first sessions of the Club there were sixteen members. The work in Callao also continued enthusiastically in 1947. Mr. Demetrio Taboada opened his home to the Faith and at the celebration of the birth of the Báb there were about sixty people.

Because the Bahá'í Center contract expired in Callao, with much difficulty Eve and the friends found another place but could only be used two nights each week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays. English classes were delivered as well as conversations about the Faith including education issues. The locale became operative on July 7, 1947, on 169 Domingo Nieto Street. The *Bahá'í News* issue of May 1947 reports that:

Eve Nicklin and the Assembly of Lima, Peru, are working against time in Callao. They have a foundation of 5 members and have built up a large class of students. Eve reported that 100 attended their last public meeting. They are trying out the plan of visiting the various lodges, especially the workmen's lodges, and offering a speaker on any cultural topic which may be

selected by the lodge. This topic is then presented from the Bahá'í point of view without being a direct Bahá'í talk. At the close, the members are invited to come to the Bahá'í Center to hear the real stuff.¹¹⁸

In October 1949 the Becketts move to Callao along with Eve in order to hasten efforts to achieve the formation of the Local Spiritual Assembly of Callao. They lived on 865 Grau Street. By that time, Callao had already five believers and getting near to the goal. According to the March 1951 *Bahá'í News*: "A novel means of attracting new contacts is being tried out in Callao, goal city of Peru. A roof garden connected with the apartments of Miss Eve Nicklin and Mr. and Mrs. David Beckett, has been arranged as a shuffleboard court and a game of darts also set up. Here friends are welcomed for a social hour each Sunday afternoon. Bahá'í meetings are also held in this roof garden."¹¹⁹

Several months earlier, Mr. Luis King offered his home to work as a Bahá'í Center, on 459 Cockrane Street, which actually helped greatly in the consolidation of the community along with the other Bahá'í Center that the Beckett couple had opened in their home. Also, by July 1949, Bahá'í slides began to be shown in two Callao cinemas. In November 1949 the friends began broadcasting Bahá'í programs at Radio Victoria based on the "Celestial Song" by Howard Colby Ives, as well as promoting the Bahá'í meetings in both centers. We also know that the Regional Teaching Conference for Peru was hosted in the Callao Bahá'í Center on September 7, 1950 with Eve talking about the twin Covenants of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá.



The Bahá'í Community of Callao (Peru) in 1951

At Ridván in 1951 the Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Callao was finally formed being comprised of: Luis King, Eve Nicklin, Etelevina Marquez, Rosendo Marquez, Esteban Ramos, Mary Beckett, David Beckett, Alejandro Garro and Moraima Casas. By that time, there were already eleven believers. Callao became the second spiritual assembly of Peru — an event that made the Guardian very happy. In a letter written on his behalf dated October 31, 1951, Shoghi Effendi's secretary stated:

He [Shoghi Effendi] was delighted to hear the work in Peru is going ahead and that the Callao Assembly is so firm and fine.

You are certainly seeing the harvest begin to come in, many seeds of which you yourself sowed with such devoted care and sacrifice! Truly you and the other pioneers have been richly rewarded and blessed.¹²⁰

Such success in such a short period of time was certainly related to Eve's personal attributes which are the subject of the next chapter. At that stage, we see Eve developing herself as an effective pioneer, being asked to perform similar services in other lands such as Punta Arenas en Chile.

8

PIONEERING VIRTUES

Notable among Eve's personal attributes was her ability to relate to people. This was particularly evidenced in how the early Peruvian Bahá'í community was taken care of. As a loving mother Eve showed by deeds how much she cared about her spiritual children. It was obvious for her that building a community of believers required establishing as well as deepening bonds of friendship among its members. This was evident in her work in Lima and in Punta Arenas, Chile, her next pioneering destination.

The Gift of Nurturing

Meche Sanchez recalled this loving facet of Eve's personality:

She had a very special way of working. She demonstrated a great ability and patience. She had a very special way of attracting young people. First-of-all, as she lived in

La Colmena [Lima's downtown], the tram going to the beach resorts of Callao and La Punta passed in front of her house. Throughout the summer, she invited us on Sundays to bring a lunch box and be at her home at nine o'clock or ten. We used to go to Callao and our preferred bathing spot was La Punta. She was a good swimmer. Then, we used to play first, talk and then went for a swim. At lunchtime she always chose a lonely place for lunch. It is where she began with a book "Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era" to give her first classes. Then we were all to hear her reading, someone translated for us, and she gave her views. In the afternoon we came back. The tram made its last stop almost in front of the house. So we [were tired and] wanted to go to our homes. And she used to say: "Please let's go up for a moment and make some tea ... after all this day at the beach you need to have something hot." There were always some cookies and we sat on the carpet, on the floor, and then she, taking advantage of the time, gave another class.

That was in summer. In winter, we have the resort town of Chosica ¹²¹ with sunshine all year long and we went by train. That was a very beautiful thing. The train was four blocks away ... So we rose early because the train was leaving at eight o'clock in the morning and returned at four in the afternoon. Then with our lunch boxes we went out with Eve. Those excursions in that train to Chosica were truly a wonderful trip for us. When we arrived we looked for a place on the river where we could bathe and at the same time she was looking for places with trees and grass. There we sat, talked, and then studied, and then we bathed followed by lunch. There was so much joy. She was allowing us

to get to know each other better, to be like brothers and sisters, feeling like a real family.



A 1945 picnic to Chosica (Lima, Peru) — Eve is number 7

Upon our return from Chosica we followed the same pattern [as Callao's] "We have to go up and have tea [Eve used to say]." Now it was winter. "Have some tea and a little rest and then go home." It was usually half past four p.m. We went up to her apartment, prepared tea, and then we sat on the carpet while Eve began with another reading and another class. This was how she really began to strengthen this Assembly in Lima.

She was the first teacher in visual aids. As she could not speak Spanish well, she would cut out pictures and stick them on cartons. She always had colour

magazines She used to teach the principles: equal rights for men and women, always put women on one side, the man on the other side, for a balance ... She did wonderful things [with those pictures]. To explain, for example, that there should not be class differences, she put a Chinese, one black, one white, in brief, different races, making them a circle and always spoke of that unity that was supposed to have. She did all with pictures. She had huge albums about all our principles to be able to explain. That was how she started working...

One of the most beautiful things that our pioneer [Eve] had was that she never was in a hurry. She was a person who did not want to have links with her country people. We, I, at least always used to tell her: "Eve, why do you not invite some American friends because there is a beautiful colony here." She said: "No, my friends and my children are you Peruvians." There was never any rush for lunch, for lunch or for food. If she saw that we were entertaining, studying any book or helping them with their visual aids, she was happy. I have the feeling that she wanted us to feel at home. I remember that in those early years (about 1947, 1948) a Bahá'í said at her apartment: "Eve, what if I paint it?" "Okay kids, get the colour you want, this is your home," [she said]. And we painted it with Demetrio Molero, the living room was beautiful as well as her bedroom, kitchen and the bathroom. Eve made us feel that this was our house.¹²²



**The Universal Friendship Club, February 1946 —
Eve Nicklin is in the center. Courtesy: US Bahá'í National Archives**

The Second Bahá'í Congress in Chile

Meche continues her narrative:

I remember that one day there was the election of delegates to the Second [Bahá'í] Congress in Chile in January 1948 and I was elected delegate [and] to accompany Eve. It was when we were approaching Valparaiso [Chile's main port] when I realized my responsibility. And I said to Eve: "But if I do not know anything ... I do not know anything ..." "No," she said, "you Meche will present very well." It was sunrise and I was on deck, watching when I heard someone calling: "Mercedes Sanchez, Eve Nicklin." He was a Chilean who came to welcome us. He, Esteban Canales, climbed

the stairs quickly and hugged us. I then realized that this is the universal family that Eve Nicklin had been talking to us about. Then I felt protected and told him: "Esteban I do not know anything." "Do not worry Meche, [he said] we are all on the same pathway." In Valparaiso I was taken to Rosita Caro's home ... There we stayed one night to rest.

I would like to tell a story because it shows Eve's ability. That was Saturday. On Sunday I heard church bells and I stood up and got dressed. Eve also got dressed and came out behind me. She said, "Meche, you do not know where you are going". I said: "But I hear the bells over there Eve Nicklin ... Over there must be a church, a temple nearby." And it happened that there was temple very close. And I went in as I was still in need to need to hear mass. Eve Nicklin also came in into the temple, I kneeled down, she did the same until I left ... She was a pioneer with great tact, a quality that lacks in many people.

And then we took a train with Esteban Canales to Santiago. This Second Congress was in a very beautiful house. And then I realized that we were all just learning. We all started to ask infantile questions which now seem to me out of place"¹²³

This congress in January 1948 proved to be very inspiring because the few scattered Bahá'ís in the ten South American countries were aware of each other's teaching developments and felt part of a big brotherhood.

Margot Worley, the delegate from Brazil, who had met Eve on her short 1937 pioneering to that country recalled: "She wrote a little comedy on how to form an assembly and how elections should be conducted as well as the meetings of Assembly, which was very funny, and we all learned, because at that time, few of us knew for sure how to form an assembly and other procedures; we were all making history and everything was taken very seriously."¹²⁴

During this congress the participants received the call from the beloved Guardian for a pioneer to move to consolidate the Spiritual Assembly of Punta Arenas at the southern tip of Chile. Artemus Lamb, the resident pioneer had to leave the post. The attendees decided on Eve since she "was the only person available by then." According to Eve, "when I returned from Santiago and gave the news [to the Bahá'ís of Lima] they all protested. They argued a number of reasons ... I myself was afraid of leaving them."¹²⁵

Although she entertained the idea of going to Punta Arenas, her fears were too many and therefore she writes in consultation to the Guardian. On January 30, 1948, Shoghi Effendi, through his secretary, wrote:

He heartily approves of your going to Punta Areas to strengthen the work there, as he considers it a very important outpost of the Faith and one that must be maintained at all costs.

The news of the very successful congress held in Santiago pleased him very much. Now that more of the Latin believers are active and beginning to assume responsibilities, the work will go forward on a more

permanent foundation, as pioneers from a foreign land can never take the place of native believers, who must always constitute the bedrock of any future development of the Faith in their country.¹²⁶

She decided to leave her apartment in the hands of two believers but the community complained arguing that there was already a Spiritual Assembly and that they would be responsible for keeping it until her return. Eve finally acceded to the request and soon embarked on the "San Sebastian" on February 28, 1948. A group of friends farewelled her at the port of Callao.

Punta Arenas

Punta Arenas (Sandy Point, in Spanish) was visited first by a Bahá'í in the person of Marcia Steward¹²⁷, the earliest pioneer to Chile. Marcia had recommended that a man should settle in that town which was considered the southernmost city of the world. Punta Arenas is located 3000 km from the capital Santiago at the extreme south of the continent having an annual average temperature of 6.5°C. It was a pioneering place very close to the Guardian's heart.

Artemus Lamb, another American believer, had heard Shoghi Effendi's pioneering call to Punta Arenas at an Inter-American Convention and in due course moved there arriving in October 1944. Artemus described his destination with these words:

Punta Arenas was also quite cosmopolitan, albeit still a bit primitive. Some Spanish families, a good number

of British, a colony of Yugoslavs who were descendants of the survivors of a Yugoslav ship-wreck, an American Vice-Consul and a few other diplomats, temporarily a geophysical team from the U.S.A. in search of oil, and native Chileans. Punta Arenas, located on the Straits of Magellan, across from Tierra del Fuego, had been a former Chilean penal colony.¹²⁸

It was eventually decided that Marcia should return to Santiago and that a young new believer would come to assist Artemus. Soon after, in April 1945, the first local spiritual assembly was formed, an event that brought much happiness to the Guardian. Artemus, however, had to re-allocate to Santiago in June 1947 to help with the establishment of CEPASA, the newly created Bahá'í International Teaching Committee for South America.

Eve stayed in Punta Arenas from March 1948 to May 1949. Although the Spiritual Assembly had been formed in 1945 there was a need for further expansion and consolidation. Eve eventually managed to consolidate the Spiritual Assembly in that remote place so valued by Shoghi Effendi. However, her hard work was hampered by the terrible winter, snow, heavy rains, and her rheumatism — she was a woman in fifties. Eve felt that in Lima there were people but no propaganda, but in Punta Arenas there was propaganda but no people. Nevertheless her pioneering work was intensive, giving herself as much she could, delivering broadly the Faith to the inhabitants of the *Land of Fire*. She writes to the Guardian and receives the following advice:

Dear Bahá'í Sister,

Your letter to our beloved Guardian, dated Nov. 1st, has been received, and he has instructed me to answer you on his behalf.

He fully realizes the difficulties involved in maintaining such an assembly as that of Punta Arenas. But he urges the friends, and you, not to lose heart, but rather to try new means of contacting a different range of people. Perhaps, through becoming active in some social or other type of clubs, or assistance in charitable works, or promotion of U.N.O. Support in ways such as these — you and the believers may succeed in making new contacts which would not ordinarily respond to public meetings, advertisements or broadcasts.

He will pray for your success and the protection of your assembly in the Holy Shrines, and he greatly appreciates your determined and devoted labours.

With Bahá'í love,

R. Rabbani

Dear and valued co-worker:

I am so pleased to learn of the progress of your work in so important and distant a field, am profoundly grateful for your steadfast and noble endeavours. Persevere in your glorious task and rest assured that the Beloved will guide and sustain you in your labours,

and will aid you to render still more notable services to His Faith and institutions.

Your true and grateful brother,

Shoghi ¹²⁹

Eve reported some of her Punta Arenas experiences as follows:

There is not lack of charm in the landscape of Patagonia, but there are also large territories which for geographical and climatic reasons must be reckoned among the most desolate on earth. There are the ice-bound, glacier-covered portions of the High Cordilleras, and in the western part of the Strait of Magallanes, glaciers which reach all the way down into the sea and form icebergs. Deep esteros, or fjords, cut through the mountains into the sea — fjords that are said to resemble those of Norway. This is Patagonia, or the "Big Foot", a fantastic land, where the Strait of Magallanes and the Beagle Channel make sea lanes for travel and commerce among the nations of the world. Patagonia, which has long held a fascination for explorers, is now becoming a great tourist attraction.

It is in this far, southern country, in the city of Punta Arenas, Chile, that I met Mary. Mary is a tourist. In her early years, she taught philosophy in a State University, travelled in many lands, and even won fame for herself as a mountain climber. But this is her first trip to Patagonia, and here in this southernmost outpost of the Bahá'í Faith she has heard the name Bahá'u'lláh for the first time. She is destined to stay in Magallanes for

many weeks because the boat that is going to the fjords is under repair. The other day she said to me, "I can't understand this delay, but," she added philosophically, "there must be some good reason." I said, but not aloud, "Yes, Mary, there is a good reason. This delay will give you an opportunity to hear the most important Message of all times the news that the Promised One of all ages has now come! Oh, I know that you have told me, by implication, that my religion cannot be as important as I think it is, for otherwise you, with your wide experience and learning, would surely have heard of it. But, I pray, that you will grasp its importance when you read through the literature that I have chosen for you. I shall not force these teachings on you, Mary, but I shall be praying that you will investigate them with a humble heart. You are a woman with a keen mind, and fine innate qualities. God can, if you will let Him, bless your closing years with the most wonderful career of your life — that of becoming a humble teacher of great Truths, and a wayfarer in the Path of God."¹³⁰



With Bahá'ís in Punta Arenas in 1948, Chile

Courtesy: US Bahá'í National Archives

Many times, it so happens that the person who is not yet ready to give a listening ear to the Bahá'í teachings, is the means of acquainting another, who has long wanted to hear it, that there is a worldwide, unified faith at work today, building a civilization founded upon spiritual and universal principles.

Last Sunday, Mary invited me to go to the house of a European family to whom she had given a letter of introduction. The young mother in the family is an artist. She has thought up the interesting occupation of designing and having Magallanicos made into saleable articles, ski suits, sweaters, mittens, slippers and caps. She uses the wool from sheep raised on the Patagonian pampas; penguin and seal skins from the coast and nearby islands; feathers supplied by the ostriches; white crystals picked up in the mountains and which make pendants and pins. My interest in her work resulted in her acceptance of an invitation to visit the Bahá'í Center to see materials from Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador that are used there as decorations. Almost upon entering the room, my new friend asked me to explain to her the significance of the sign on the door "Centro Bahá'í". Forgotten for the moment were ponchos, mantos, llamas and rugs, in the excitement of hearing for the first time the Message of Bahá'u'lláh. She commented: "These are my ideals. One reason for my learning many languages, was in order to know my fellow men better." From the Bahá'í bookshelf I took three books, Spanish, English and French translations, of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings. "Someone has borrowed the German copy, I remarked; "In which language do you wish to read His Message?" "I'll choose the French book,

she said, "I'm teaching French," When we parted, we planned to have tea together and more talks. All day long, my heart said, "Another opportunity to give the Glad Tidings, and thanks be to God, to hearing ears."¹³¹

But Eve's heart was, in truth, in her "adopted country" and her "spiritual sons," her "babies". Eventually, the Bahá'í Teaching Committee for South America (CEBSA) chose Mr. Tony Fillon¹³² to substitute Eve whose health had become an issue due to the rough environment.¹³³ She writes to Shoghi Effendi a letter on May 2, 1949, but the response arrives after October 1949. Eve arrived in Lima on May 26, 1949. The Guardian wrote to her in his response:

Your invaluable services, rendered with such exemplary devotion and in such distant fields, evoke my deepfelt admiration. I will continue to pray for your success from the depths of my heart. Persevere in your meritorious and indeed historic labours, and rest assured that the Beloved is well pleased with the standard of your achievements in the service of His Faith.¹³⁴

In an interview with Mario Leon, Eve reveals her feelings about that time.

EN: I kept a close collaboration with them [Lima Bahá'ís]. I kept abreast of everything that happened. When describing some of their problems I tried to guide them on what I would do. Of course, whatever was beyond my ability was referred to the beloved Guardian.

ML: And didn't they ask you to return to Peru?

EN: Of course. Some friends told me that the problems were getting worse and were in need of my return.

ML: And, when did you return?

EN: Well, once their problems became worse or they thought they were. They decided to cable the Guardian for my return. They never mentioned that they had cabled.

ML: And how did you find that they had cabled the Guardian?

EN: [Laughters] I do not exactly remember. But someone asked me what the Guardian had told me. To which I replied that the goal in Punta Arenas had been achieved, then the Guardian thought that was time for my return. But, they insisted that the Guardian had said something regarding their request.

EN: What did you ask?, I asked them.

Your return! [They replied]

And did you get an answer?, I asked them again.

Sure! [They responded]

Where is it? Can I see the answer?

Ah, the answer is that you're here!¹³⁵

9

SIGNS OF MATURITY

The temporary absence of the "Spiritual Mother" did help the community very well, as the Guardian had promised, with many signs of reaching maturity being evident.

"Well, everyone to walk," said Demetrio Molero, the treasurer of the Assembly seriously. They could no longer continue with the Eve's policy of putting a little bowl to receive small contributions to the Fund. This time was different as they had to pay 140 soles in arrears plus tips to the elevator man. Demetrio told everyone that in future contributions will not be voluntary. The Assembly met and decided to consult each member of the community who should give according to their income and set a quota. Demetrio was in charge of going to everybody's workplace each month in order to carry out the collection. It should be clarified at this point that in the Bahá'í Faith all contributions are strictly voluntary and without any form of compulsion, however, the friends were not well aware of this principle. Every week there was a committee of

two people for cleaning and for the celebrations. Demetrio was in charge of keeping the center open every Saturday for meetings. Whatever the number of visitors was, the Bahá'í center remained open. Suddenly the community saw themselves more responsible and active while the Assembly was meeting more regularly. There were eight new Bahá'ís as well as a wedding and many public teaching events.

Eve and the South American Teaching Committee

It was in February 1949 when Demetrio Molero traveled as a delegate for Peru to the third Bahá'í Congress in Sao Paulo, Brazil. He traveled to La Paz and from there he flew to Sao Paulo. At the congress he was asked whether Lima could host the next event. Demetrio responded that they were not prepared but then he suddenly received a letter from Mercedes Sanchez. The letter announced that she was planning to buy a house for the next congress. Consequently, Lima was chosen as the venue for the next congress in May 1950. The news that Lima would be the headquarters of the Fourth Congress caused a rush job. This coincided with the decision of transferring CEBSA, the Bahá'í Teaching Committee for the ten South American countries from Santiago (Chile) to Lima (Peru). Eve was appointed as one of its members. According to Meche Sanchez,

... [I have] many beautiful experiences and memories of this [CEBSA] work that began in Lima. A very old mimeograph was used where we wrote chapters of *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*. We, the youth, after finishing our day jobs used to go to Ocoña Street. Every day we all went there and did the typewriting,

worked with the old mimeograph, some were stapling, and so we produced a book that we still keep. All the friends began, accompanied by Eve Nicklin, to make this labour of unity and little by little we learned more about the Bahá'í Faith.¹³⁶

According to David Beckett, one of the most enthusiastic: "We were going united around the table singing, each putting a sheet down and Eve was with us ..." Even friends of the Bahá'ís joined that happy band. David Beckett said: "I found in her (Eve) a kind of mother. I am convinced that her mission was to come here to do the job she did."¹³⁷ Very often they worked till very late at night.

Eve was absent from the country during November and December 1949 and January 1950, when she traveled to the Teaching Regional Conference for Peru and Bolivia held in La Paz at a breathless altitude of 13,313 feet above sea level. At this event Eve begins to look seriously into teaching indigenous people in compliance with the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. In the Tablets of the Divine Plan, the Master had envisioned a glorious future for these native peoples within the Faith:

Attach great importance to the indigenous population of America. For these souls may be likened unto the ancient inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula, who, prior to the Mission of Muhammad, were like unto savages. When the light of Muhammad shone forth in their midst, however, they became so radiant as to illumine the world. Likewise, these Indians, should they be educated and guided, there can be no doubt that they will become so illumined as to enlighten the whole world.¹³⁸



**Regional Bahá'í Congress in November
1949, La Paz, Bolivia — Eve is at the front**

In Bolivia, a country largely populated by indigenous people, Eve began considering the idea of living in Cusco, Peru, the cradle of the Inca Empire and a region in the Andes predominantly populated by Quechua people. From La Paz, she wrote to Shoghi Effendi who in turn reminded her of the noble services of Leonora Holesapple Armstrong as well as his happiness in hearing about the spiritual progress of the Latin Americans already carrying on their shoulders the responsibilities of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh.

The Fourth South American Congress

The big day came with the hosting of the fourth and last South American Congress. The reception was held at the Hotel Crillon and the meetings at the home of the Sanchez family. There was an interview on Radio America as well as a public lecture at the Asociacion Guadalupana. In this Congress,

Lima was appointed as the seat of the First South American Convention to be held the next year 1951 for the historic election of the National Assembly for ten countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela). Dorothy Baker came to represent the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada. In response to the delegates' warm message, Shoghi Effendi cabled on May 7, 1950:

Deeply touched message welcome pledge supplicating fervently abundant blessings realization hopes appreciate support services Dorothy [Baker] urge redouble efforts deepest love Shoghi.¹³⁹

A summary from Eve Nicklin's notes sheds light on the highlights of the event:

Well organized committees of preparation facilitated the Bahá'í Congress at Lima, Peru to begin the session with dignity and order; and with the aid of a very efficient Chairman this dignity and order were maintained throughout every session.

The keynote of the Congress was a desire to deepen in the fundamental knowledge of our God-given institutions and in the Spirit of our Faith. The opening chord was struck when the delegates demonstrated their fervent desire to have a deeper understanding of the Covenant around which revolves all Bahá'í life. A plea for more material was made in order that study classes may be formed for deepening purposes.

Again the keynote was manifest in the wish to amplify their knowledge of the history of our Cause and to know how to familiarize the friends with historical materials. It was at this session that C.E.B.S.A. presented the booklet, *Bocetos Historicos de la Fe Bahá'í*, a collection of stories translated into Spanish from the English. It represented the cooperative effort of the friends in each of the South American countries.

And yet again the keynote was heard in the hour dedicated to methods of maturing in the spiritual life, through obedience to the laws of Bahá'u'lláh.

A high note of the Congress was the presence of Mrs. Dorothy Baker a representative of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States.¹⁴⁰ The eagerness on the part of the delegates to give as much time as possible in order to gain first hand knowledge of the working of a National Bahá'í Assembly which has been functioning for many years, demonstrated anew the earnest desire of the friends of Latin America to make ready for the time when they will have their National Spiritual Assemblies. The precise as well as the inspirational way in which this material was presented by the representative caused the delegates to remark over and over, "We see it all so much clearer now." It was perhaps this thirst for more profound knowledge of our spiritual institutions that helped the congress members to eliminate the lesser things that often waste precious time at congresses, and to go straight to the heart of the more important issues.

The emphasis that the delegates placed on action, and not simply words, showed a spiritual maturity that was indeed heartening. They seemed eager to go back to their countries to reestablish lost assemblies, make groups into assemblies, and consolidate present assemblies. Latin American pioneers arose to go into fields where help is sorely needed.

This observér [Eve Nicklin] at the Fourth Bahá'í Congress of S.A. prays that our high enthusiasm may be sustained throughout the year and that victory in the Power of God shall be won.¹⁴¹



Eve Nicklin with Hand of the Cause Dorothy Baker at the Fourth Bahá'í Congress in Lima, 1950

After the Congress Eve flew to the United States as she was formally invited to attend the commemoration of the Báb's

martyrdom. She stayed overseas during June, July and August 1950. Eve went back home after nine years to see friends and family. According to the October 1950 *Bahá'í News* Eve "spent a summer visiting and lecturing in her homeland". Meche relates:

Our whole community supported her. She needed that trip that she had really earned. In Lima we commemorated that event with two major meetings ... One at noon, the martyrdom time, in the small place we had on Ocoña Street,¹⁴² and another, in the evening, with more than a hundred people at the Sanchez Family home. Upon returning from the United States, Eve brought us a little present, she said, for her children. And Eve said that she had already heard that the commemoration of the Centenary of the Martyrdom of the Báb had been a success: "I congratulate you, and you are now ready to continue by yourself."¹⁴³



The Baha'i House of Worship in Wilmette Illinois

Source: Official Site of the Baha'is of the United States

The First South American National Spiritual Assembly

We also know that Eve ran Study Institutes in Lima and La Paz, Bolivia, in the second and last week of September 1950, respectively. Ridván 1951 was fast approaching and with it the election of the first South American Convention for ten countries. This was a historical milestone as the administration of the Faith was transferred from the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'í of United States to an equivalent board representing ten South American national communities. Shoghi Effendi had written:

To the eager, the warm-hearted, the spiritually minded and staunch members of these Latin American Bahá'í communities who, among the followers of Bahá'u'lláh, already constitute the most considerable body of recruits from the ranks of the most deeply entrenched and powerful Church of Christendom; whose motherlands have been chosen as the scene of the earliest victories won by the prosecutors of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Divine Plan; launched on their crusade for the spiritual conquest of the whole planet; the establishment of whose projected national spiritual assemblies must constitute a notable landmark in the second epoch of the Formative Age¹⁴⁴ of the Bahá'í Dispensation; whose leading spiritual assemblies are now establishing direct contact with the World Centre of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh in the Holy Land; the photographs of whose elected representatives, at their chief, will soon adorn the walls of His Mansion at Bahjí; a few of whose members have already arisen to carry back the torch of divine guidance entrusted to their care to the peoples and races from which they

have sprung — to this privileged, this youngest, this dynamic and highly promising member of the organic Bahá'í World Community, I feel moved, before I dismiss this aspect of my theme, to direct this general appeal to rise to the heights of the glorious opportunity which destiny is unfolding before its members. Theirs is the opportunity, if they but seize it, to adorn the opening pages of the annals of the second Bahá'í century with a tale of deeds approaching in valor those with which their Persian brethren have illuminated the opening years of the first, and comparable with the exploits more recently achieved by their North American fellow-believers and which have shed such luster on the closing decade of that same century.¹⁴⁵

With such inspiring terms the Guardian showed the believers and communities what we might call the spiritual place of Latin America in the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. The election of the National Spiritual Assembly took place on April 21, 1951, resulting in Eve Nicklin's membership. Paul Haney,¹⁴⁶ representing the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, brought as a gift from the Guardian consisting of Bahá'u'lláh's sacred hair to be stored in the archives of the new National Assembly. There was also a radio program and a public lecture at Hotel Bolivar.

The reception for the delegates took place at Hotel Crillon and the whole Convention was held at Leura Hotel in Miraflores (222 Grimaldo del Solar Street). In Eve's words:

The hotel where the event took place was right on the same street where I had lived in the beginning. Naturally, my thoughts went back to those days of

struggle against the language, climate, loneliness, trying to gain contacts for the Faith and all the things a pioneer has to face in the pioneering field. But how different was that day! All those experiences could be counted as pure joy. I shared some of these experiences with Edna True and Paul Haney, those two beloved representatives who were sent by the Assembly of the United States of North America.¹⁴⁷

The delegates also studied the message from the Guardian to the two Latin American Conventions.¹⁴⁸ Shoghi Effendi cabled the delegates in response to their cable:

PROFOUNDLY APPRECIATE SENTIMENTS ASSEMBLED
DELEGATES STOP PRAYING UNPRECEDENTED
BLESSINGS FULFILLMENT OBJECTIVES¹⁴⁹

To the new National Spiritual Assembly, the Guardian cabled the following day:

SUPPLICATING DIVINE BLESSINGS GUIDANCE GREAT
VICTORIES NEWLY ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES
DEEPEST LOVE¹⁵⁰

A new stage in the development of the Bahá'í Faith in South America had started. The message from the Guardian itself bears witness to such a momentous event:

Hail [with] joyous heart convocation[of] first twin
historic Conventions [of] followers [of] Faith [of]
Bahá'u'lláh [in] Central America, Mexico, [the] Antilles
[and] South America, assembled [to] elect twin
National Assemblies constituting sustaining pillars

[of] divinely appointed administrative order [in] Latin America. Congratulate assembled delegates [for the] magnificent triumph marking [the] culmination of the fourteen year old process linking [the] concluding years [of the] first with [the] opening decade [of the] second Bahá'í century. Acclaim fulfillment [of the] vital objectives [of the] two momentous campaigns successively launched beyond [the] confines [of the] North American continent by [the] American Bahá'í Community [in] conformity [with] 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Divine Plan. Gratefully recognize in these epoch making assemblages held simultaneously [in] Peru [and] Panama, representing wellnigh four score localities spread over [an] area stretching [from] Mexico [to the] Magallanes, embracing incorporated communities [in] almost all capital cities [of] Latin American Republics [the] initial repercussions [of the] clarion call voiced eighty years ago [by] Bahá'u'lláh [in the] Most Holy Book addressed collectively [to the] Rulers [of the] Republics [of the] Western Hemisphere. [I] appeal [to the] incoming National Assemblies standing [on the] threshold [of the] second epoch now unfolding [in the] evolution [of the] Faith [of] Bahá'u'lláh [in] Latin America [to] arise [in] complete unity, exemplary fidelity, greatest wisdom, utmost dedication, unswerving resolve, heroic self-sacrifice [to] befittingly discharge [their] three-fold, sacred, inescapable responsibilities, first, [to] consolidate [the] two newly-erected pillars [of the] world administrative order [of the] Faith; second, [to] stimulate [the] propagation [of] its teachings; third, [to] enrich [the] spiritual life [and] deepen [the] understanding [of] its avowed supporters. [I] have



**The First National Spiritual Assembly of
the Bahá'ís of South America, 1951**

**From left to right. Front Row: Edmund J. Miessler (Brazil),
Margot Worley (Brazil), Eve Nicklin (Peru), Manuel Vera (Peru).
Back Row: Dr. Alejandro Reid (Chile), Gayle Woolson (Colombia),
Esteban Canales (Paraguay), Mercedes Sanchez (Peru),
Rangvald Taetz (Uruguay)**

dispatched through [the] distinguished co-worker, Amelia Collins, two locks [of the] blessed hair [of] Bahá'u'lláh as inaugural gifts [to the] first communities belonging [to the] Latin races, attaining maturity [and] achieving distinction through [the] formation [of] independent National Assemblies, to be deposited [in

and] preserved [for] posterity [in] two specially-instituted national archives designed [to] commemorate [the] twin, outstanding spiritual administrative victories won [in the] course [of the] Formative Age [of the] Bahá'í Dispensation [and] shedding great lustre [on the] annals [of the] opening decade [of the] second Bahá'í Century.¹⁵¹

10

SERVICES THROUGHOUT SOUTH AMERICA

After the Convention, Eve remained in Peru in order to strengthen Callao, her "assembly-baby", which was formed in Ridvan 1951, as well as to assist CEBSA, the South American teaching committee, and the work of the newly formed National Spiritual Assembly. It was determined that its headquarters would be in Lima. Successive South American conventions to which Eve had to attend were held in Argentina (1952), Peru (1953), Chile (1954), Bolivia (1955) and Uruguay (1956).

The circle of her responsibilities stretched to include not only attending regular institutional meetings in different South American capital cities but indeed a lot of traveling supporting the nascent local communities spread throughout the vast subcontinent. Distance was a tyranny. Within the first national assembly three members were on the Eastern coast, three on the Western coast, one member on the top North,

one on the Southernmost city, and the other one in the very heart of South America, totaling 11,000 miles of traveling for a single meeting.

In 1957 the South American National Assembly was separated into two new assemblies, one for the north with Lima as headquarters, and the other for the south with Buenos Aires as the center. Eve remained in the membership of the northern national assembly. As a member of those nascent institutions, she had also to attend summer schools and other regional events in various South American locations as well as visiting Bahá'í communities en-route to Assembly meetings.

End of the Second Seven Year Plan (1946-1953)

Going back to 1952, Eve traveled to the Second South American Convention in Ezeiza, Buenos Aires. After the Convention she stays on to participate in an international summer school. It was then when, at the request of the National Assembly, Eve went to settle in Montevideo. Uruguay was one of the weakest countries in the Faith at that time.



At the Bahá'í Summer School in Ezeiza, Buenos Aires, 1952.

Margot Malkin talks about their teaching work together in Montevideo:

I enjoyed Eve a lot ... When we arrived at the beginning, we rented a long and beautiful space from a British couple where we could live and try to invite friends to visit us occasionally. I immediately found a job as a secretary at a travel agency ... She never had much, and always, we pioneers were trying to supplement our income with English classes.

Eventually, Eve and I rented a small furnished apartment, which was much better. Our goal was primarily to strengthen the existing Local Spiritual Assembly, which was not working, as I recall, and to revive and expand the Bahá'ís while looking for new ones. The teaching was very slow in those days. I tried to meet with young people to bring them to know Eve at home.

Eve was always very loving, calm and patient in teaching. She liked using illustrative methods for teaching cutting albums and made drawings or pictures from magazines to describe the message that she wanted to give, in an affectionate manner. One of its most effective albums, as I recall, was to teach members of the Local Spiritual Assembly as to how they should conduct themselves during the consultation during the meetings of the Local Spiritual Assembly, using pictures of babies with very expressive faces and attitudes ...¹⁵²

In a letter written on June 10, 1952, Shoghi Effendi through his secretary addresses both Eve and Margot:

Dear Bahá'í Friends:

Your letter of May 22nd has been received, and the beloved Guardian has instructed me to answer you on his behalf.

He is pleased to see that you are going to serve the Faith in Montevideo, as he considered it an important Center of South America, and he assures you that he will pray for the success of your labours during the coming year.

Please give his loving greetings to all the believers there.

With Bahá'í love,

R. Rabbani

May the Almighty bless, guide and sustain you, and enable you to promote, at all times, the vital interests of His Faith,

Your true brother,

Shoghi¹⁵³

In July 1952 Eve traveled to Lima for the meeting of the National Assembly. On her way she visited Chile, Argentina and Paraguay, always deepening and encouraging believers

in those countries. In fact, all those National Assembly meetings across South America were accompanied by teaching trips and visits to Bahá'í groups.

Eve and Meche traveled together in April 1953 to the United States for the opening of the Bahá'í Holy Year which commemorated the centenary of the beginning of Bahá'u'lláh's mission. That was an occasion for the dedication of the House of Worship in Chicago as well as the launching of the Ten Year Crusade. Shoghi Effendi, through his secretary, had written to Eve on March 1953:

Your labours have been of such great service to the Faith in Latin America, that he hopes you will continue, at least for part of the coming Ten Year Crusade, to work in that area.¹⁵⁴

With the launching of the Ten Year Crusade Eve Nicklin's services became more internationalized. This was in response to the Guardian's summons to engage the Bahá'í world in a major spiritual enterprise to reach all parts of the globe before the election of the Universal House of Justice in 1963. His message to the Bahá'í world in May 1953 reads:

The hour is ripe to disencumber themselves of worldly vanities, to mount the steed of steadfastness, unfurl the banner of renunciation, don the armor of utter consecration to God's Cause, gird themselves with the girdle of a chaste and holy life, unsheathe the sword of Bahá'u'lláh's utterance, buckle on the shield of His love, carry as sole provision implicit trust in His promise, flee their homelands, and scatter far and wide to capture the unsundered territories of the entire planet.¹⁵⁵

Upon her return from the United States and in response to the goals of the Ten Year Crusade Eve settled in Asuncion, Paraguay. She also accompanied Hand of the Cause Mr. Valiyu'lláh Varqá on his teaching tour to Panama, Quito, Guayaquil, Lima, Santiago and Montevideo, from where he continued on unaccompanied to Brazil.

The Ten Year Crusade (1953-1963)

During the Ten Year Crusade launched by the beloved Guardian, where the Faith had to reach all the corners of the globe, Eve successively settled in Asuncion (Paraguay), Arequipa (Peru), Encarnacion (Paraguay) and Cusco (Peru). Her mission was about forming and strengthening new local spiritual assemblies as well as reaching indigenous populations for the Faith. This period of her life was crowned with her well-deserved pilgrimage to the Holy Shrines at the Holy Land in 1963.

Asuncion (Paraguay)

Due to its central geographical location in South America, Paraguay is known as the "Heart of America". Its capital, Asuncion, is called the "Mother of All Cities" for being one of the earliest Spanish settlements in the New World, having been founded in 1537, as well as for its strategic location for the whole region.

Eve relates about her teaching work in Paraguay:

I was in Paraguay when Ellen Sims accompanied by her ten-year old daughter [Terry Vojdani] arrived

in Asuncion. Later Alice Bacon arrived. With this reinforcement the Local Assembly restarted its operation. It was time to buy a National Center in Paraguay. After an arduous search, we found a colonial house that would serve as a kind of reestablishment of the Faith in the hearts of the native believers ... But I was not intended to live in that house for long. It was Ellen and Alice who made the Bahá'í Center a place of hospitality for all those entering it ... ¹⁵⁶

Terry Vojdani, Ellen Sims' daughter, wrote her recollections of living with Eve in Paraguay:

My mother [Ellen Sims] and I arrived in Paraguay in August 1954. Eve and my mother had been writing to each other for several weeks before we left (our trip was arranged quite quickly, as I remember it) and Eve told my mother that it was not really cold in Paraguay. People used to joke, saying that there were only two stations [the words for "stations" and "seasons" are the same in Spanish]: summer and the train station! When we arrived, freezing, Eve was waiting for us at the airport in a fur coat! Then Eve said to my mother: "Ellen, if you want to be a good pioneer, forget that you are American" (which my mother did). Eve always had her "can openers". These were albums that she made using pictures cut out of magazines and quotes from the Faith. She used them to talk with the people and teach the Faith. When we had to form another Local Assembly in Paraguay in order to be able to elect its first National Assembly - around 1958-59 - Eve and two other pioneers moved to the city (which at that time was just a town) of Encarnacion with a family of Persian

pioneers who had just arrived in order to form the LSA. Many times, when letters came from the Holy Land or other places that were very important and urgent and they were unable to get a quorum of Asuncion's LSA together, Mom and Eve would visit the assembly members one by one, say prayers, read the letter together and the members gave them their opinions. The last house they visited was that of the Assembly's secretary so that he would write the letter. It obviously wasn't the best thing to do, but at times they had to in order to send the answer on time. Eve, Alice Bacon (another American pioneer who lived in Paraguay for several years) and my mother bought what is still Paraguay's first National Bahá'í Center.¹⁵⁷

In Paraguay Eve began teaching the Faith to indigenous people. Eve was instrumental in the publication of a booklet in Guarani language in 1954. On March 14, 1954, the Guardian through his secretary wrote to her on that regard:

Dear Bahá'í Sister:

Your letter of February 15th has been received by the beloved Guardian, and he has instructed me to answer on his behalf.

The Guardian was indeed happy to see the booklet gotten out by the Bahá'í National Committee for Indian Work in South America, printed in the Guarani language. This is a most meritorious service, and of great importance in the teaching of these people. He is hopeful that this booklet will become the means of

introducing the Faith to many receptive souls among the Indians.

The Guardian deeply appreciates the services of your Committee, and send you his loving greetings.

With Bahá'í love,

R. Rabbani

May the Beloved bless, guide and sustain you, and enable you to promote at all times, the vital interests of His Faith.

Your true brother,

Shoghi¹⁵⁸

Eve recounted her sentiments about teaching the natives:

I remember it was in the 1954 Convention, in La Paz, Bolivia, when for the first time emphasis was on the conversion of indigenous peoples. Since my childhood I had an interest in this race, maybe that was why I was asked to prepare a special report on the indigenous peoples of South America with photographs and paintings in order to stimulate interest in the appeal for pioneers which would be made in the Convention. Three of us volunteered. The National Assembly decided that I should go to Arequipa, Peru. I was hoping to find someone to speak Quechua to act as a translator in the surrounding villages. The Guardian had suggested that it would be the first step to bring the message to indigenous peoples.¹⁵⁹

Arequipa (Peru)

Arequipa, in Aymara language stands for "ari" and "quipa", the equivalent to "peak" and "lie behind", respectively. This is so because Arequipa stands at the majestic feet of the Misti, a volcano that last erupted in the 14th century. Arequipa is the second largest Peruvian city also known as the "White City" due to the pearly volcanic rock used by the local constructors. This beautiful city, with its unique colonial architecture, is surrounded by scenic farmlands which takes its people to popular weekend picnics. Arequipa is also the main gateway to the southern Andes having a significant indigenous population, both Aymara and Quechua, which must have attracted Eve's interest.

Eve describes in her words the first attempts to teach indigenous people:

After settling in Arequipa [in 1955] I began sharing my intentions to make friends with the natives, until a new Bahá'í told me that he had worked with peasants, though no longer used *poncho*,¹⁶⁰ but they came from the villages and spoke Quechua. We decided to hold a meeting with them in the constructor's office and three of his labourers entered the Faith. One of them named Victor said that during his vacation he would go to his people, would take literature and teach the Faith.

That year some American pioneers arrived which got the Local Assembly consolidated and a booklet called 'The Coming of the Messengers of God' was published in Quechua.¹⁶¹



Eve Nicklin and Bahá'í friends at a picnic in Tiabaya, Arequipa

In Arequipa, Eve found work teaching English in the Peruvian-North American Cultural Institute. Her first address was to the Wagner Board, San Agustin Street 115 but later she rented a house with Rosario Guerrero, a homefront pioneer. Eve used to invite her students to practice their English but using Bahá'í books in that language. In the process of translating them her students learn about the Faith. Many of them became believers including two future members of the National Spiritual Assembly.

A few months before her arrival, Arequipa had been visited by Meche Sanchez and Yolanda Urteaga. There were other pioneers visiting Arequipa such as Wilma and Irvin Thomas, Patty and Edward Beane and Pauline Dunn who stayed the longest assisting Eve. Many Lima friends also came and together with their Arequipa friends went for picnics to the beautiful

countryside in Tiabaya y Sabandía. Finally, in March 1957 the first Local Spiritual Assembly of Arequipa was formed with Eve as one of its members

In April 1956 Eve traveled to Montevideo for the National Assembly meeting. On her return trip she stayed six months in Santiago doing Bahá'í work and waiting for her visa to enter Peru again. At Ridván 1957 the new National Spiritual Assembly for the five northern countries of South America (Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela) was formed with Eve in its membership. The historical convention was held in Lima with the attendance of the Hand of the Cause of God Horace Holley.

A few months later the devastating news of the passing of the beloved Guardian in London ¹⁶² on 4 November 1957 was received. The Hand of the Cause Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhiyyih Khánum, Shoghi Effendi's wife, cablegraphed this sad news to the whole Bahá'í that had occurred at the midst of the Ten Year Crusade:

BELOVED ALL HEARTS PRECIOUS GUARDIAN CAUSE
GOD PASSED PEACEFULLY AWAY YESTERDAY AFTER
ASIATIC FLU STOP APPEAL HANDS NATIONAL
ASSEMBLIES AUXILIARY BOARDS SHELTER BELIEVERS
ASSIST MEET HEARTRENDING SUPREME TEST STOP
FUNERAL OUR BELOVED GUARDIAN SATURDAY
LONDON HANDS ASSEMBLY BOARD MEMBERS INVITED
ATTEND ANY PRESS RELEASE SHOULD STATE MEETING
HANDS SHORTLY HAIFA WILL MAKE ARRANGEMENT
TO BAHAI WORLD REGARDING FUTURE PLANS STOP
URGE HOLD MEMORIAL MEETINGS SATURDAY.

RUHIYYIH ¹⁶³

Eve Nicklin's consternation was evident as she had received at least sixteen individual letters with loving guidance during his ministry and many others as a member of the institutions. At one point Eve had commented: "He [Shoghi Effendi] is so dear to us all. How much we have learned to love him! He has been our personal guide through all these years in South America. How precious are all his letters"¹⁶⁴



Shoghi Effendi, Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith

The Hands of the Cause of God who assumed the reins of the Faith after Shoghi Effendi's passing called all believers to raise up to complete the goals of the Ten Year Crusade and work forward the election of the Universal Houslice in Ridvan 1963. For the rest of the Crusade, believers around the world rallied together and worked even harder in anticipation to such an auspicious history-making event.

Encarnacion (Paraguay)

In the third year of her residence in Arequipa, the Western Hemisphere Teaching Committee asked Eve if she could go back to Paraguay in order to form a Local Spiritual Assembly in Encarnacion, a simple town that most likely reminded her of the ancestral Roanoke. Despite being the second important city in Paraguay, Encarnacion was, in the words of a pioneer, a "horse and buggy town" without paved streets, electricity would go off for no apparent reason and there were no facilities such as supermarkets and so on. Situated 230 miles (372 km) away from the capital Asuncion, Encarnacion was inhabited by a large indigenous population. It was founded in 1615 by the Jesuits and eventually became a multicultural city mostly with immigrants displaced by the two World Wars such as the Ukranian, Polish, Czech, German, Russian, Italian and Slovaks. The city is located on the Parana River across Posadas on Argentine soil. In 1990 a modern bridge between the two cities was completed but in Eve's times transportation between the two cities was by boat.

The formation of a spiritual assembly in Encarnacion was seen as fundamental for Paraguay to elect its independent National Spiritual Assembly in 1961. Like many other Latin American countries these national assemblies were considered the pillars of the Universal House of Justice which was going to be formed in Ridván 1963.



Bahá'ís of Encarnación — Eve is second from the left.

Courtesy: US Bahá'í National Archives

Eve traveled to Paraguay in May 1959 and remained there for four years. The Encarnación assembly was formed at Ridván 1960, Eve being in the membership as well as Sra. Adelina Piava, the first native Paraguayan Bahá'í. The pioneer Margaret Mills Leonard, who later settled in the Falkland Islands, Argentina, told us of those times in Encarnación as well as going to Posadas for teaching the Faith and do some shopping. Posadas was located on the left-hand shore of the Parana River, opposite to Encarnación, on the Argentine side. Margaret relates:

We lived in Encarnación, Paraguay, from 1960 to 1963. Alice Bacon and Reszi Sunshine were also pioneers there. Eve had an English academy on the hill. She lived in the back of the school and possessed only what is indispensable for her basic needs. Her students were very affectionate towards her and followed her home after class. Some of them became seekers and joined the Faith ... Eve adapted well to any circumstance. She

may have had a lot of discomfort and inconvenience, but never complained.

I remember the trips we undertook to Posadas [by boat] on the Parana River. We had to spend several days in government offices before getting permission.¹⁶⁵ Eve waited patiently despite the fact that people pushed and pulled around. The following day we had to wait among a crowd in order to board the boat. Women with baskets of live chickens and ducks on their heads exchanged friendly words with us. In Posadas we used to rest in one of the cafes. The men were taking their coffee and talked about politics. Eve was very relaxed in any environment. She had the gift of being very social.

When she was seventy-three years of age, she came to visit me here in Falklands. She had more energy than both of us and insisted on exploring the surroundings after a long walk.

Eve did not get scared by frightening events. She lived in the upper suburbs of Encarnacion. Once during an aborted revolution, she was visiting the lower part of the city when a bomb hurled at the gas station almost next door to where she was visiting. The bomb was false. Eve was not scared. In addition, she lived alone for a year of political unrest with gunfire and soldiers everywhere.¹⁶⁶

The pioneer Gilbert Grasselly recalls:

I met Eve Nicklin for the first time in Paraguay in 1962. She was a pioneer in the extreme south of Paraguay

in the city of Encarnacion, a city having one of two local spiritual assemblies sustaining the National Spiritual Assembly, which was formed in 1961. Eve spoke Spanish with a strong American accent, but was easy to understand. Her favorite method of teaching the faith was by using illustrated albums. She spent a lot of time preparing her albums and illustrated materials and never taught the Faith without them.

Everyone loved Eve ... She always had a warm and loving smile for everyone and was ready to laugh even if she was surrounded by difficulties and problems. I rarely saw her sad and I cannot recall having seen her depressed. She relied heavily on prayer and I remember how worn her prayer book was. ¹⁶⁷

David Baral also wrote her impressions of Eve:

To me she symbolized many of the virtues of the first group of pioneers, especially in perseverance throughout extended periods and under difficult conditions. She has been properly considered as the mother of the Peruvian Bahá'í Community, but something very similar could be said of her services in Paraguay. She returned to Paraguay at different times in the history of the Faith; contributed to the teaching and consolidation work in many different ways; and certainly had a significant impact on the growth of the Paraguayan Bahá'í Community. This was fulfilled in such a simple and modest way that many failed to recognize the extent of her contributions until many years later. ¹⁶⁸



Encarnacion, Paraguay circa 1958 - Sitting in front Eve Nicklin

Courtesy: US Bahá'í National Archives

Eve's work with indigenous people continued on in Paraguay particularly among the Guarani natives of El Chaco. In 1961 she received an invitation from the National Spiritual Assembly of Bolivia to assist in a training course for Bahá'ís teachers among indigenous populations. En route to Peru, she first went to Oruro and La Paz, crossed Lake Titicaca at 12,500 feet above sea level and then went by train to Arequipa to reunite with her "Bahá'í family" who met her at the station. From there she flew to Lima where the friends, glad to see her, celebrated her 66th birthday.

The return to Bolivia for the Indigenous Congress followed the same route. Of frail health due to her advanced age, she was impressed by seeing for the first time, the process of entry by troops. *Bahá'í News* reports that:

The first Indian Congress of Bolivia was held in Oruro on Feb. 21-25, 1961, with 116 Indians participating. They came from forty-six different places in Bolivia. Visiting teachers were Eve Nicklin and Edmond Miessler. At the end of the sessions twenty-two new believers were enrolled. The activities in Bolivia during the past year have been mostly devoted to deepening the knowledge of new believers and preparing them for the historic first National Spiritual Assembly of Bolivia. This has been done through extensive programs of visiting their villages or inviting them to the summer school, different classes and conferences. Just before Ridván 1961, the number of Indian believers has passed the one thousand mark.¹⁶⁹

As said, this was an unforgettable experience for Eve, one that she would like to replicate in other areas. The way was being prepared for undertaking mass conversion in Peru.



A well-deserved break

Cusco (Peru)

On her way back to Encarnacion, Paraguay, Eve received a letter from the National Assembly requesting her to go to the Cusco region in the Peruvian Andes to begin a mass teaching project for the first time. By then, the Bahá'í community of Encarnacion had grown and was consolidated. Eve accepted the challenge and settled in Urubamba in 1962 getting previous permission from the National Assembly of Paraguay.

Urubamba is a small rural town in the Cusco region which means "flat land of spiders". It is situated at an altitude of 9,500 feet in the Sacred Valley of the Incas along the banks of the Urubamba River and under the snow-capped Andean mountains. To reach Urubamba the traveler needs to take a road trip which in Eve's time could have taken two hours. It is a beautiful but isolated place surrounded by small agricultural land parcels cultivated by millenniums by Quechua-speaking peasants living still in the traditions of the great Inca culture. A small market of vegetables, native clothes and handicrafts adds to its picturesque landscape with occasional tourists and backpackers. The 17th century historian Antonio de Leon called it the biblical Garden of Eden due to its natural beauty, peacefulness and fertile land. Peruvians usually talked about telluric forces vibrating in the sacred Urubamba valley which no doubt were energized by Baha'u'llah's revelation that Eve brought.

The presence of a foreign lady of advanced age in the town must have caused some degree of curiosity in the population who, due to its small size, each other knew very well. It must have also been a totally new experience used as she was

to urban settings. Any outsider must have felt in such a rustic environment a sense of crude solitude. Eve, however, related of her experiences while in Urubamba with a spirit impregnated of adventure and fondness:

In Cusco I found a young man of Arequipa who had gone [to Arequipa] for a few months and then returned. He had given me a letter of introduction to the inspector of schools in Urubamba,¹⁷⁰ the Sacred Valley of the Incas. He helped me to find a place with two rooms for renting. Through the director of the Cultural Institute I found some English classes to teach at the Normal School of Urubamba. I settled in but still I needed a translator to communicate with the Quechua indigenous people.

I wrote to the National Spiritual Assembly requesting to send me the two young men that I knew. Victor was from Arequipa, and the other, Fidel Flores from Huancayo. Victor stayed for three months and Fidel for a month. I had a room in the patio and I arranged it for them. This was our headquarters in Urubamba. The two youths began to go up the mountains in search of souls, sometimes spending the nights in villages.

On one of those trips they met Exaltacion Quispe. He had been sitting in the plaza of Urubamba. Victor gave him the Good News of God. Since then, Exaltacion frequented my house very often. He was from a village called Ocutuan, four hours away from Urubamba. He, for some reason, had to see

the authorities. One day I told him that Bahá'u'lláh had said: 'My calamity is My providence, outwardly it is fire and vengeance, but inwardly it is light and mercy.'¹⁷¹

With the innate understanding that indigenous people have, he understood it. Exaltacion was the first Bahá'í from Cusco. Victor and Fidel returned home. Exaltacion brought the friends and relatives who could, and served as a translator because he spoke both Spanish and Quechua.



With native Bahá'ís in Urubamba, Peru

One day he told me that if Fidel or Victor return, he would introduce them to the people of his village and other villages. We sent the message to the National Assembly. Fidel returned in early 1963. Fidel Flores

came back to Urubamba and went to visit the people, especially Ocutuan, to teach the Faith and also to work with the friends on their farms. However he could not stay there long. The friends, when they could travel the distance of four hours of walking, brought me potatoes as a gift. They liked the flowers I had in the yard, especially the women who asked for them to adorn their hair, as was their custom. They liked the prayers and Exaltacion Quispe learned several of them and when he went to Ocutuan or vice versa, he used to say them on the road.

That is how mass conversion began in the region of Cusco. Before the Ten Year Crusade ended, Exaltacion Quispe and Fidel Flores had managed to form the Local Spiritual Assembly of Ocutuan. Now we have others in the region, of course. We had our first training school for people from the villages. A meeting was conducted in Lima with representatives of Huancayo, Cusco and Puno. It was on the trip that Fidel Flores made for such a meeting, when he felt very ill and never recovered. He died and went to the Kingdom of Abha. We had testimony from peoples from the villages that felt his spirit influencing them and encouraging them to carry forward the work of teaching to whose cause he gave his life so devotedly.¹⁷²

the authorities. One day I told him that Bahá'u'lláh had said: 'My calamity is My providence, outwardly it is fire and vengeance, but inwardly it is light and mercy.'¹⁷¹

With the innate understanding that indigenous people have, he understood it. Exaltacion was the first Bahá'í from Cusco. Victor and Fidel returned home. Exaltacion brought the friends and relatives who could, and served as a translator because he spoke both Spanish and Quechua.



With native Bahá'ís in Urubamba, Peru

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11

A HANDMAID OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ

After her work in Cusco and until her death in 1985 this veteran warrior kept battling in places so geographically apart as Trujillo (Peru), Encarnacion (Paraguay), Caracas (Venezuela), and Ica and Lima (Peru) as well as on embarking on innumerable travel teaching trips throughout South America visiting and encouraging communities and individuals.

Interestingly, *Nicklin* is an Anglo-Norman name meaning *conqueror* derived from the Greek words *nikan* (to conquer) and *laos* (people). Although probably unaware of such etymologic background Eve had become a true conqueror of citadels and lands for the Faith of Baha'u'llah. She was certainly an extremely talented conqueror but one for whom human hearts were her ultimate treasure.

In doing so, Eve's life was always guided by higher order insights and metaphors making her a being of considerable spiritual perception and radiance. Many Baha'is remembered

her as a woman of great kindheartedness, tolerance and tact whose life touched so many people in so many different places. Curiously, the name Eve stands for "life-giving" in Hebrew. On one of her books she drew a picture of a lamp sitting on a window and wrote the poem "But Let There Be Light" reflecting on her own spiritual life:

I will open my window
In the morning
To let in God's light
And then at eventime
I will place
A candle there to
Shine out - out
Into the night.

1963 was a unique year for the Baha'i World due to the first election of the Universal House of Justice, the supreme body of the administrative order of the Bahá'í Faith, an institution created by Bahá'u'lláh Himself in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the Most Holy Book. The national spiritual assemblies supported by their local spiritual assemblies were the pillar upon which the Universal House of Justice would be established. We all know how hard Eve worked to build and develop Baha'i national communities throughout the subcontinent since her first arrival to Brazil in 1937.

Ten South American national spiritual assemblies were among a total of the fifty-six pillars upon the Universal House of Justice was first erected, namely Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela. They were all represented in the first election that took place on April 21, 1963 in the Holy Land.

In the same month Eve traveled to London for the subsequent Great Jubilee that took place commemorating the centenary of the Declaration of Bahá'u'lláh and the election of the first Universal House of Justice. She visited the United States on her way to see relatives and friends after ten years of absence. The London event congregated about 6,000 Bahá'ís from all over the world met at the Albert Royal Hall. Surely it must have been a wonderful experience for Eve who was always used to small groups in remote places. At the Great Jubilee most of the Hands of the Cause of God were also present providing a unique spiritual environment to the celebrations. The Universal House of Justice referred to this great event with these words:

The review of the progress of the Cause; the presentation of believers from the new races and countries of the world brought within the pale of the Faith during the beloved Guardian's Ten Year Crusade, of the Knights of Bahá'u'lláh, those valiant souls who carried the banner of Bahá'u'lláh to the unopened and often inhospitable regions of the earth; the spontaneous outbursts of singing of "Allah-u-Abha," the informal gatherings, the constant greetings of Bahá'u'lláh's warriors known to each other only by name and service; the youth gatherings; the unprecedented publicity in the press, on radio and television; the daily stream of visitors to the beloved Guardian's resting-place; the radiant faces and heightened awareness of the true and real brotherhood of the human race within the Kingdom of the Everlasting Father, are among the outstanding events of this supreme occasion, the crowning victory of the life work of Shoghi Effendi. ¹⁷³

The Ten Year Crusade was followed by the Nine Year Plan. In October 1963, the Universal House of Justice announced that the Nine Year Plan constituted "the second of those world-encircling enterprises destined in the course of time to carry the Word of God to every human soul".¹⁷⁴ The House also announced that the Bahá'í Faith was entering "... a new epoch, the third of the Formative Age. It must now grow rapidly in size, increase its spiritual cohesion and executive ability, develop its institutions and extend its influence into all strata of society."¹⁷⁵

On the ensuing years until her passing in 1985, Eve dedicated her life to serve on three world plans enunciated by the Universal House of Justice, namely, the Nine Year Plan (1964-1973), the Five Year Plan (1974-1979) and the Seven Year Plan (1979-1986). These three plans encompassed the third epoch of the Formative Age of the Bahá'í Faith.^{144, 176}

Eve had the privilege of serving in the first three epochs of the Formative Age which were consecutively led by the beloved Guardian (1921-1957), the Hands of the Cause of God (1957-1963) and the Universal House of Justice (1963 onwards).

The Nine Year Plan (1964-1973)

The Nine Year Plan was a busy period in Eve's Life as she had to undertake several international teaching missions frequently travelling as an Auxiliary Board member, throughout South America as well as attending Bahá'í functions such as conferences, conventions and summer schools. During this Plan Eve

also settled as a pioneer in Trujillo (Peru), Venezuela and back in Paraguay at the request of the Bahá'í institutions.

Trujillo (Peru)

Trujillo is popularly known as the "City of Eternal Spring". It is situated at over 500 miles (800 km) north of Lima, the capital of Peru, being its third largest city. Gifted with a benign and sunny climate throughout the year, Trujillo was founded in 1534 and had a long cultural tradition of musical and cultural festivals. Rich in colonial architecture, it stays close to the site of the great Chimu civilization whose main city is considered the world's largest adobe city. Eve must have been found herself at ease in this beautiful and pleasant city also because of its traditionally friendly population.

In 1964 Eve went to live in Trujillo where there was already a small Bahá'í group. She lived in a building called Klar on a main street where she had her Baha'í meetings with contacts obtained through her English classes. Eve was visited by several members of the Lima community. She was also visited by the Hand of the Cause Mr. Jalál Kházeh who later continued to Cajamarca on the Peruvian Andes to visit the Leon family, homefront pioneers there. We also know that Eve visited the Leons in Cajamarca on a different occasion.

Along with pioneer Patty Beane, Eve visited the Amazon region in the months of June and July 1964. On this journey they visited Iquitos, Leticia (Colombia), Marcos (Brazil), Ramón Castilla, Islandia and Puerto Alegria (Peru). They traveled by river motor boat facing all kinds of obstacles. That visit proved

to be of great success, especially in places where there were scattered believers and also was instrumental in exploring further possibilities for improving the Bahá'í work in the Amazon jungle.

Venezuela

From Trujillo Eve traveled for a month to Arequipa to strengthen the Local Spiritual Assembly in September 1964. In the next year she went back to the Andes visiting communities in Cusco. By 1965 there were fifteen local spiritual assemblies in Peru. Also in 1965, she received the news of her appointment by the Hands of the Cause of God as a member of the Auxiliary Board of Propagation in Venezuela where she stayed for two years engaged in teaching the Faith and deepening the believers.

Eve then was seventy years old, and travelling broadly, her pioneering spirit strong, and accomplishing all her duties with excellence. For example, in July and August of the same year, she participated in the Regional Bahá'í Congresses in Georgetown, Guyana, as well as in Bogota (Colombia) in the company of the Hand of the Cause of God Mr. Jalál Kházeḥ. In February 1967 she was attending and teaching in a summer school in Lima surrounded again by her spiritual children who had grown vastly in numbers.

Paraguay again

A few months later, Mr. Kházeḥ was informing all the national spiritual assemblies and members of the Auxiliary Board that

"the well-known and beloved Auxiliary Board member Miss Eve Nicklin" will be assigned to Paraguay.

On the way to that country Eve passed through Brazil and participated in its seventh national convention held in Aguas de Lindonia. Also, in October 1967 Eve attended a teaching conference in Panama for laying the foundation stone of the Bahá'í Temple in Panama, and at Ridván of 1968 Eve participated in the National Convention of Uruguay as a representative of the Hands of the Cause of God.



The Bahá'í House of Worship in Panama

Source: Bahá'í Media Bank

Eve also traveled to the First Oceanic Conference in Palermo in the island of Sicily, Italy, which commemorated the centenary of the arrival of Bahá'u'lláh in the Holy Land in August 1968. This was a memorable event with more than 2,300 Bahá'ís attending including the Hands of the Cause of

God Ugo Giachery, 'Alí-Akbar Furútan, Dhikru'lláh Khádem, Adelbert Mühlischlegel, Jalál Kházeh, Paul Haney, Enoch Olinga, William Sears, John Ferraby, Rahmatu'lláh Muhájir and Abul-Qásim Faizí. About 1,800 friends from the Palermo Conference gathered together again in the Holy Land for the commemoration observance.

From the conference she traveled to Haifa for pilgrimage to the Holy Shrines. According to Gilbert Grasselly:

As Eve aged, she became more forgetful. In 1967, she expressed her desire to go to the Palermo Conference ... and we encouraged her to go. She lamented that she did not have money enough to go and that the traveller's checks that she had been saving would not be enough. We suggested she gather up her papers and together we began to add up the totals of unused checks. We discovered to her surprise that she had enough money for both her travel and her expenses. The itinerary of the conference also included a pilgrimage to the Bahá'í World Centre and this would be Eve's first visit to these holy places.

There is no doubt that the happiest time of her life was her visit to the Holy Shrines of the Faith that she had served as a pioneer since the launching of the First Seven Year Plan of the beloved Guardian. She returned from this trip immensely strengthened and radiant and it was the subject of her conversations for several months afterwards. This visit to the Holy Land, without a doubt, sustained her until the end of her days.¹⁷⁷

Memories of her first years in South America must have crossed her mind thinking of her beloved Guardian who had sustained her from that Sacred Spot through long periods of solitude. It was Shoghi Effendi who had been accompanying her through correspondence since the early days of her becoming a Bahá'í. It was he who had guided her through at least fifteen letters until his sudden passing in 1957. Not having the opportunity of meeting her "true and grateful brother" during her life, the occasion was in due time to kneel in gratitude at the Holy Thresholds for all the bounties she had received in the path of her Lord. After thirty years of ceaselessly work, the Cause was now established in South America with native believers increasingly assuming their responsibility with devotion and steadfastness. Her pioneering dreams had come through but there was plenty of more victories still to be won.

Eve's return to Paraguay coincided with a surge in teaching activities. She was present at the Regional South American Proclamation Conference at Porto Alegre, Brazil, held in the first week of September 1967, which was attended by Bahá'ís from Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay and Brazil. The Hand of the Cause of God Dr. Rahmatu'lláh Muhájir was present continuing next to Asuncion, Paraguay, where he met and addressed the community. *Bahá'í News* reports the spiritual momentum at such a historical visit and the progress that the Paraguayan community had already achieved in a matter of a few decades:

The National Spiritual Assembly of Bahá'ís of Paraguay has accepted the additional goal of opening the eight Departments still virgin to the Faith. Many of the friends have undertaken vigorous teaching projects.

The "Asamblea Espiritual Nacional de los Bahá'ís del Paraguay" is now listed officially as an associated non-governmental organization working with the United Nations information center in Paraguay. The second annual Winter School for Paraguay was held in Asuncion August 23-25, 1969 ... The National Spiritual Assembly's plan for raising the number of local assemblies from eight to thirteen, and the number of groups from eighteen to twenty-one, met with enthusiasm. With much joy, after years of strenuous sacrifice, the first all-Indian institute in the Chaco, Paraguay, was held October 25-26, 1969. Among the delegates were Guarani, Guasurango, and Chulupi Indians. This historic institute was the first where all classes were taught in Guarani, the native language of Paraguay. Auxiliary Board member Eve Nicklin and three Paraguayan traveling teachers ... assisted in teaching the classes. ¹⁷⁸

Eve continued to travel extensively until the end of the Nine Year Plan in spite of health problems. She traveled to Bolivia and Argentina in 1970 for Bahá'í activities. The following year she went again to Argentina and in December 1971 Eve traveled to the meeting of the Counsellors and Auxiliary Board members held in January 1972 in Lima. That same year, from Paraguay where she lived, Eve traveled to the United States for health reasons.

The Five Year Plan (1974-1979)

This Five Year Plan also took Eve to several teaching engagements and to a new pioneering post despite her advanced

age and frailty. The Plan goals, as enunciated by the Universal House of Justice, were: "preservation and consolidation of the victories won; a vast and widespread expansion of the Bahá'í community; development of the distinctive character of Bahá'í life particularly in the local communities".¹⁷⁹



With the Bahá'í youth of Lima, 1975

In June 1975 we found Eve in Lima participating in the National Teaching Conference. The conference was attended by the Hand of the Cause 'Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum, widow of the Guardian — who was visiting on the occasion of the "Green Light" Expedition. At that conference 'Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum instructed Eve to speak about the Bahá'í history of Peru. She returned to Lima after three months and remained in the capital for one week during the Counsellors' meeting. The Counsellors decided to ask Eve to return to Peru. She therefore traveled to Paraguay in order to fix things up and was back in Lima after three weeks. It was now September of 1975.



Rúhíyyih Khánum and Eve in Lima

Already octogenarian, Eve Nicklin pioneered in 1976 to the coastal city of Ica in order to assist with the goals of the Five Year Plan. Ica, at 153 miles (246 km) south of Lima, is known as the "Land of the Sun" because of the many months of sunshine all year-round. Surrounded by vast sand deserts, like an oasis, Ica stands as the capital of a region rich in cotton and vineyards. Various pre-Spanish cultures, some 10,000 years old, flourished in the region including the famous Nasca lines. During the Spanish domination it drew a large slave population which was sent to the *haciendas* to do agricultural work. Ica is also distinguished by its people's affability and receptivity and that facilitated much Eve's mission.



**Eve Nicklin with the Hand of the Cause of God
Rahmatu'lláh Muhájir at the Summer School, Lima, 1977**

In the company of the homefront pioneer Dora Bravo, and at the request of the National Spiritual Assembly, Eve aimed at establishing a Local Spiritual Assembly there, a goal that eventually was achieved.

Dora Bravo and Eve Nicklin did a wonderful job in Ica. Dora worked as seamstress while Eve taught English. Both were living in one room without comforts, going to the university to teach the Message of Faith and then forming a club in their bedroom. Eve was surrounded by young people who sat on her bed or on the floor and were attracted by the love of this

old lady, this servant of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Even when her physical and mental capacities were diminished, she was still opening the rest of Peru to the Faith. Dora relates that in the neighbourhood there was an eight-year-old boy, so attracted by Eve's love, who every morning without fail would accompany Eve for her usual walk. For Dora Bravo, being allowed that period of time to be with Eve was a "reward from God".

Eve attended the International Bahá'í Teaching Conference in Bahia, Brazil, in January 1977. That was the city that forty years ago had been the first arena of her South American services along with Leonora Armstrong. 'Abdu'l-Bahá had referred to this city in His Tablets of the Divine Plan: "Visit ye especially the city of Bahia, on the eastern shore of Brazil. Because in the past years this city was christened with the name, BAHIA, there is no doubt that it has been through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit."¹⁸⁰ Both distinguished luminaries would meet again in Lima in the occasion of the first International Conference of the Baha'i Women in South America held between December 1, 1977, and January 1, 1978 which was attended by 200 women from ten South American republics as well as from the United States, Australia, France, New Zealand, Panama and Trinidad. Great victories they were witnessing after years of laborious work.

They shared several things in common. While Leonora was the "Mother of South America" Eve became the "Mother of Peru" and in a way of Paraguay too. Both were long standing pioneers, the first two to arrive to South America, having served hand-to-hand in Brazil during Shoghi Effendi's first Seven Year Plan in 1937. Leonora had been appointed to the Continental Board of Counsellors for the Protection and Propagation of the Baha'i Faith in South America and Eve was serving as member

of their Auxiliary Board for Propagation. They also lived long lives, being of the same age and finally passed away at their original pioneering posts with their lives profusely celebrated by the Universal House of Justice. Both had been encouraged by the Hand of the Cause of God Martha Root to continue her 1919 teaching endeavours in South America. Leonora and Eve were now certainly witnessing the growth of the spiritual tree promised by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Martha Root which "shall eternally put forth leaves and blossoms and yield fruits, and whose shadow shall day by day grow in magnitude".¹¹

The Bahá'í Conference was also a great success. It was one of the eight international teaching conferences called by the Universal House of Justice held at the middle of the Five Year Plan. The Hands of the Cause of God Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánúm, Enoch Olinga and Paul Haney attended the event along with thirteen hundred believers from thirty-seven countries and seventeen indigenous tribes from the Americas. It must have been a rewarding confirmation to Eve's and Leonora's spiritual and material struggles four decades ago. The momentum built at the end of the Plan was transmitted to the new Seven Year Plan where each national community had been given goals for these first two years, "designed to continue the process of expansion, to consolidate the victories won, and to attain, where circumstances permit, any goals that may have had to remain unaccomplished at the end of the Five Year Plan."¹⁸¹

The Seven Year Plan (1979-1986)

A fall at the Lima summer school the following month forced Eve's return from Ica to Lima forever. She remained under the

loving care of Bahá'í families and believers of Lima. Eventually she went to live in a geriatric clinic and finally stayed on the second floor of the National Hazíratu'l-Quds for her four last years of her life — visited and always surrounded by her many spiritual children. Less mobile, Eve always maintained her always encouraging nature, deepening the friends, sharing stories about the early history of the Bahá'í Faith in Peru as well as showing them and explaining her many teaching pictorial albums.

Until the closing stages of her life, Eve continued to teach through her albums. The author evokes with much fondness this old and frail lady, using a walking stick, with white hair and a strong American accent, sharing her albums with visitors at the Bahá'í Center of Lima where she was stationed. Over the years she had developed the skills of conveying comprehensively deep concepts with ease and familiarity through pictures that connected the reader to real life situations. Eve used to leave her albums on a small table at the Bahá'í Center for anyone to peruse through at their own pace and time. The creative composition of content grasped almost immediately people's curiosity and impelled them to go through more albums. In her visual aids, in teaching Indigenous people, in her community building, detachment and courage, in her work with youth and children, she was certainly ahead of her times.

Her persona had certainly evolved from being a simple country girl into an icon of service to humanity and for that, with justice, she had entered history. No doubt the austere years of the ancestral Roanoke as the daughter of an immigrant coalminer had made an everlasting imprint of resilience and persistence on the young Eve accounting

for such a splendidly uninterrupted international record. Unquestionably, the strong family religiosity had contributed to valuing the sacred and the godly in her life. Some might be inclined to ponder how well her Methodist missionary training had skilled her in the art of building communities and empowering people. Whether in the provincial Bahia, the citified Lima, the dreary Encarnacion, the remote Punta Arenas or the rustic Urubamba, there was something convincing Eve of the spiritual worthiness of her endeavors. In the final analysis, her powerful belief in seeking divine assistance to achieve success was a major life driver.

Many friends recall this bedridden ninety-year-old lady in her very last year, with her mind suspended between heavens and earth, only able to articulate loudly the invocation *Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá* (O Thou Glory of the Most Glorious) that had galvanized her fifty-five years of uninterrupted services to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh in North and South America.

On June 10, 1985, a few months away from the conclusion of the Seven Year Plan, at nine o'clock in the National Hazíratu'l-Quds in Lima, far away from the Roanoke prairies, Eve Nicklin passed away after a long illness at the age of ninety years. Eve had ended her services in this world to start them in the Kingdom of Abhá, blessing forever Peruvian soil, a country that she always called home, becoming worthy then of those words of her Lord:

They that have forsaken their country in the path of God and subsequently ascended unto His presence, such souls shall be blessed by the Concourse on High and their names recorded by the Pen of Glory among

such as have laid down their lives as martyrs in the path of God, the Help in peril, the Self Subsisting.¹⁸²

Following a night vigil at the National Hazíratu'l-Quds, Eve Nicklin was laid to rest on June 11 at four o'clock in the afternoon in the new section of the same British Cemetery where John Stearns — the Spiritual father of Ecuador — both Jamestown citizens, had been buried forty years before. The cemetery is located in the same port city that saw her arriving in 1941 with fifty dollars and no language.

There were over a hundred people in attendance, many children, including Eve's former students and three members of her Universal Friendship Club. Dr. Aguilar, the longest survivor member, read an emotive eulogy outlining the beginnings of the Club back to the 1940s and praising Eve's dedication, patience and love in establishing the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh in Peruvian soil.

At her passing, the Universal House of Justice praised Eve's life with these uplifting terms:

SADDENED LEARN PASSING AUXILIARY BOARD MEMBER
EVE NICKLIN DEVOTED STEADFAST HANDMAID ABDU'L-
BAHA HER MANY YEARS DISTINGUISHED SUCCESSFUL
SERVICES SOUTH AMERICA ARE BEFITTING MEMORIAL
HER TOTAL CONSECRATION CAUSE BAHÁ'U'LLAH
CONFIDENT LOVING WELCOME ABHA KINGDOM
PRAYING SACRED THRESHOLD PROGRESS.¹⁸³



With Dr. David Ruhe, member of the Universal House of Justice visiting in Lima, in the 1980s

She who as an infant at her mother's deathbed was put "in the hands of God" had now returned unto Him ennobled as the spiritual mother of a nation by providential means. Forty-four years after her arrival to Peru, at the time of her passing, the local assemblies in Peru had reached six hundred in number¹⁸⁴ while her spiritual children could be counted in thousands.

With her passing a momentous period in the history of the Bahá'í Faith in South America had been enriched, one which represented a continuous wave of indomitable believers predominantly women, who left everything at once and oblivious of uncertainty, discomfort and strangeness ventured themselves to open new territories to the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh.



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34. **Pritchard, Eugenia.** *Eve Nicklin.* 1984, pp. 3-4. Author's rendering into English from a previous Spanish translation.
35. **Nicklin, Eve.** *Letter to Amelia Buxton dated January 1, 1971.* Author's rendering into English from a previous Spanish translation.
36. **Pritchard, E.** *Eve Nicklin.* 1984, p. 4. Author's rendering into English from a previous Spanish translation.
37. Bahá'í News. April 1936, p. 7. No. 99.
38. **Shoghi Effendi.** *Letter on his behalf to Eve Nicklin dated November 19, 1935.*
39. **Martha Root.** A Baha'i Pilgrimage to South America. *Star of the West.* October, 1920, Vol. XI, p. 215. The present writer

- reviewed newspapers and magazines at the National Library as well as the archives of "El Comercio" –the leading Lima newspaper- finding no traces of Martha Root's articles.
40. **Zinky, Kay.** *Martha Root, Herald of the Kingdom.* New Delhi, India: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1983, p. 74.
 41. **Sims, Barbara.** *Traces that remain: A Pictorial History of the Early Days of the Bahá'í Faith among the Japanese.* Japan : Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1989.
 42. Bahá'í News. August 1982, p. 7.
 43. **'Abdu'l-Bahá.** *Tablets of the Divine Plan.* Wilmette, Illinois: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1993 (reprint), p. 33.
 44. **Leon, Mario.** *Letter to a Pioneer.* Unknown date. No. 1.
 45. **Pritchard, Eugenia.** *Eve Nicklin.* 1984, p. 17. Author's rendering into English from a previous Spanish translation.
 46. Bahá'í News. June 1938, p. 9. No.116.
 47. See chapter 5 for more information about John Stearn.
 48. **McKay, Doris, in collaboration with Paul Vreeland.** *Fires in Many Hearts.* Manotick, ON, Canada: Nine Pines Publications, 199, pp. 263-264.
 49. Bahá'í News. October 1941, p. 6. Cablegram received September 30, 1941. No. 147.

50. **Nellie Stevinson French.** See "In Memoriam", *The Bahá'í World*, Vol. XII, pp. 699-701.
51. Mrs. Garcia Rosell was not a Bahá'í.
52. **Dodge, Isabelle.** *Early Bahá'í Activity in Peru.* Unknown date. Author's rendering into English from a previous Spanish translation.
53. *Bahá'í News.* December 1937, p. 6. No.112.
54. *Bahá'í News.* July 1938, p. 10. No. 117.
55. **Howard, Jorge.** *Libertad Religiosa en America Latina.* Buenos Aires: Imprenta Metodista, 1945.
56. **Nicklin, Eve.** *Letter to the Inter-America Teaching Committee dated October 5, 1941.*
57. **'Abdu'l-Bahá.** *Paris Talks.* London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1972, p. 136.
58. **Nicklin, Eve.** *Book of Records of the Spiritual Assembly of Lima.* Unknown date. Author's rendering into English from a previous Spanish translation.
59. **Nicklin, Eve.** *Letter to the Inter-America Teaching Committee dated October 31, 1942.*
60. **Shoghi Effendi.** *Letter on his behalf to Eve Nicklin.* February 22, 1943.

61. **Nicklin, Eve.** *Letter to Amelia Buxton dated October 12, 1943.* Author's rendering into English from a previous Spanish translation.
62. **Leon, Mario.** *Carta a un Pionero.* No. 5.
63. Freedom of (1) of speech and expression, (2) of religion, (3) from want and (4) from fear. The four freedoms were enunciated by United States President Franklin Roosevelt in 1941.
64. **Virginia Orbinson.** *Letter to the Inter-America Teaching Committee dated July 12, 1944.*
65. **Orbinson, Virginia.** *Letter to the Inter-America Teaching Committee dated March 8, 1944.*
66. **Nicklin, Eve.** *Book of Records of the Spiritual Assembly of Lima.* Unknown date. Author's rendering into English from a previous Spanish translation.
67. **Leon, Mario.** *Carta a un Pionero.* Unknown date. No. 4.
68. **Orbinson, Virginia.** *Bahá'í Youth Day - Lima, Peru.*
69. **Shoghi Effendi.** *Letter on his behalf to Nicklin, Eve dated May 29, 1944.*
70. **Nicklin, Eve.** *To the Universal Friendship Club.* July 28, 1945. Author's rendering into English from a previous Spanish translation.

71. **Shoghi Effendi.** *Cable to Virginia Orbinson dated May 27, 1944.*
72. **Shoghi Effendi.** *Letter on his behalf to Virginia Orbinson dated July 28, 1944.*
73. **Nicklin, Eve.** *Book of Records of the Spiritual Assembly of Lima.* Unknown date. Author's rendering into English from a previous Spanish translation.
74. The cornerstone of the Temple was laid by 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself in May 1912.
75. **Spiritual Assembly of Lima.** *Book of Records of the Spiritual Assembly of Lima.* 1944.
76. **Spiritual Assembly of Lima.** *Book of Records of the Spiritual Assembly of Lima.* 1944, p. 7.
77. **Shoghi Effendi.** *Letter dated November 14, 1923.* Available at: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/19252/19252-h/19252-h.html> (last retrieved: December 2009).
78. **Leon, Mario.** *Carta a un Pionero.* Unknown date.
79. **Hornsby, Helen.** *Heroes of God.* Quito, Ecuador: Arqtelier, 1984, p. 11.
80. **Hornsby, Helen.** *Heroes of God.* Quito, Ecuador: Arqtelier, 1984, p. 11.
81. **Hornsby, Helen.** *Heroes of God.* Quito, Ecuador: Arqtelier, 1984, p. 11.

82. **Shoghi Effendi.** *Letter on his behalf to Eve Nicklin dated August 14, 1945.*
83. **Reis, Fred.** *Prelude to History.* Unknown date, pp. a1, a2, a3. Author's rendering into English from a previous Spanish translation.
84. Bahá'í News. May 1981, p. 5. No. 602. *
85. **Nicklin, Eve.** *Book of Records of the Spiritual Assembly of Lima.* Unknown date.
86. Lua Getsinger (1871-1916) was one of the first Western Bahá'í believers having joined the Faith in 1894. She was one of the first Bahá'í pilgrims to the Holy Land in 1898. 'Abdu'l-Bahá appointed her "Herald of the Covenant".
87. **Bahá'í World Centre.** *The Bahá'í World.* Wilmette, Illinois: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1952, p. 762. Vols. XI 1946 - 1950. Reprinted with permission of the Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Wilmette, IL.
88. **Nicklin, Eve.** *Leeme un Cuento.* Lima, Peru: Libreria Internacional del Peru, 1945.
89. **Bahá'í World Centre.** *The Bahá'í World.* Haifa, Israel: Bahá'í World Centre, 1956, pp. 762-763. Vols. XI 1946-1950. Reprinted with permission of the Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Wilmette, IL.
90. **Taboada, Demetrio.** *Oral recorded version.*

91. **Nicklin, Eve.** *Book of Records of the Spiritual Assembly of Lima.* Author's rendering into English from a previous Spanish translation.
92. **Nicklin, Eve.** *Historia de los Albores de la Causa Bahá'í en el Perú.* Unknown date. Author's rendering into English from a previous Spanish translation.
93. **Nicklin, Eve.** *Historia de los Albores de la Causa Bahá'í en el Perú.* Unknown date. Author's rendering into English from a previous Spanish translation.
94. *Bahá'í News.* December 1950, p. 2. No. 238.
95. **Hollinger, Richard.** *Letter to the author dated January 12, 1987.*
96. **Bahá'í World Centre.** *Bahá'í World.* Wilmette, Illinois: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1949, p. 792. Vols. X 1944-1946.
97. *Bahá'í News.* September 1940. p. 6.
98. *Bahá'í News.* September 1944, p. 17.
99. Edward (Saffá) Kinney, see "In Memoriam", *The Bahá'í World*, Vol. XII, pp. 677-679.
100. **Lobaton, Alberto.** *Oral recorded version.*
101. The additional goals included completing the interior decoration of the Temple, a systematic campaign in Europe and consolidating the work in Latin America.

102. The second congress was held in Santiago de Chile in January 1948, the third congress took place in Sao Paulo (Brazil) in January 1949, and the fourth congress in Peru in May 1950. Another congress was also held in Mexico City in the January of 1948.
103. Callao was Lima's seaport which was being opened to the Faith.
104. **Shoghi Effendi.** *Letter on his behalf to Alberto Lobaton dated February 18, 1947.*
105. **Bahá'í World Centre.** *The Bahá'í World.* Haifa, Israel: Baha'í World Centre, 1976, p. 468, Vols. XV 1968-1973.
106. **Bahá'í World Centre.** *The Bahá'í World.* Haifa, Israel: Baha'í World Centre, 1976, p. 467. Vols. XV 1968-1973.
107. **Bahá'í World Centre.** *The Bahá'í World.* Haifa, Israel: Baha'í World Centre, 1976, p. 467. Vols. XV 1968-1973.
108. **Bahá'í World Centre.** *The Bahá'í World.* Haifa, Israel: Baha'í World Centre, 1976, p. 467. Vols. XV 1968-1973.
109. **Hornsby, Helen.** *Heroes of God, History of the Bahá'í Faith in Ecuador 1940-1979.* Quito, Ecuador: Arqtelier, 1984, pp. 158-159.
110. **Aguilar, Guillermo.** *Oral recorded version.*
111. **Shoghi Effendi.** *Letter on his behalf to Eve Nicklin dated November 17, 1945.*

112. *Bahá'í News*. January 1953, p. 263.
113. Extracts of this section to appear in the *Bahá'í World*.
114. Sanchez, Mercedes. *Oral recorded version*.
115. **The Universal House of Justice**. Letter dated August 3, 1999, to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Peru.
116. **Nicklin, Eve**. *Historia de los Albores de la Causa Bahá'í en el Perú*.
117. **Shoghi Effendi**. Letter on his behalf to Eve Nicklin dated June 10, 1947.
118. *Bahá'í News*. May 1947, p. 2.
119. *Bahá'í News*. March 1951, p. 7.
120. **Shoghi Effendi**. Letter on his behalf dated October 31, 1951.
121. Lima's highlands.
122. **Sanchez, Mercedes**. *Oral recorded version*.
123. **Sanchez, Mercedes**. *Oral recorded version*.
124. **Worlwey, Margot**. Letter to the author dated May 28, 1986.
125. **Leon, Mario**. *Carta a un Pionero*. Unknown date. No. 8.

126. **Shoghi Effendi.** *Letter on his behalf to Eve Nicklin dated January 30, 1948.*
127. **Bahá'í World Centre.** *The Bahá'í World.* Haifa, Israel: Bahá'í World Centre, 1968, p. 305. Vols. XIV 1963-1968.
128. **Lamb, Artemus.** *The Beginnings of the Baha'i Faith in Latin America: Some Remembrances.* West Linn OR 97068: M L VanOrman Enterprises, November 1995.
129. **Shoghi Effendi.** *Letter on his behalf to Eve Nicklin dated December 6, 1948.*
130. **Bahá'í World Centre.** *The Bahá'í World.* Haifa, Israel: Bahá'í World Centre, 1956, p. 765. Vols. XI 1946-1950.
131. **Bahá'í World Centre.** *The Bahá'í World.* Haifa, Israel: Bahá'í World Centre, 1956, pp. 765-766. Vols. XI 1946-1950. Reprinted with permission of the Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Wilmette, IL.
132. He was declared a Covenant-breaker in 1960 by the Hands of the Cause of God.
133. *Bahá'í News.* June 1949, p. 9.
134. **Shoghi Effendi.** Letter on his behalf dated October 12, 1949.
135. **Leon, Mario.** *Carta a un Pionero.* Unknown date. No. 9.
136. **Sanchez, Mercedes.** *Oral recorded version.*
137. **Beckett, David.** *Oral recorded version.*

138. **'Abdu'l-Bahá.** *Tablets of the Divine Plan.* Wilmette, Illinois: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1993 (reprint), p. 33.
139. **Shoghi Effendi.** *Cable to the IV Bahá'í Congress dated May 7, 1950.*
140. Dorothy Baker was appointed Hand of the Cause of God in 1951.
141. *Bahá'í News.* July 1950, pp. 8-9. No. 233. Reprinted with permission of the Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Wilmette, IL.
142. Meche Sanchez had leased a shop where she used to rent evening gowns. One of the rooms was used as a Bahá'í Centre.
143. **Sanchez, Mercedes.** *Oral recorded version.*
144. Each epoch represents a new stage in the development of the Bahá'í Faith. The Formative Age will evolve through epochs until the advent of the Golden Age of the Bahá'í Faith. The first epoch of the Formative Age of the Bahá'í Faith ranged from 1921-1944/46, the second epoch from 1946 to 1963, the third epoch from 1963-1986, the fourth epoch from 1986 to 2000 while the fifth epoch began in 2001. See also note 176.
145. **Shoghi Effendi.** *Citadel of Faith: Messages to America 1947-1957.* Wilmette, Illinois: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980 (reprint), p. 19.
146. Paul Haney was appointed Hand of the Cause of God in 1954.

147. **Leon, Mario.** *Carta a un Pionero.* Unknown date. No. 12.
148. The other convention was held in Panama City for ten Central American national communities.
149. **Shoghi Effendi.** *Cablegram to the 1st South American Convention dated April 26, 1951.*
150. **Shoghi Effendi.** In *Noticias Bahá'ís Sudamericanas.* July 1950. No. 21.
151. *Bahá'í News.* June 1951, pp. 11-12. No. 244.
152. **Malkin, Margot.** *Letter to the author dated August 28, 1986.* Author's rendering into English from a previous Spanish translation.
153. **Shoghi Effendi.** *Letter to Eve Nicklin and Margot Malkin dated June 10, 1952.*
154. **Shoghi Effendi.** *Letter on his behalf dated March 8, 1953.*
155. **Shoghi Effendi.** *Messages to the Bahá'í World: 1950-1957.* Wilmette, Illinois: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1971, p. 49. From cablegram of the Guardian dated May 5, 1953.
156. **Nicklin, Eve.** *The Crusading Years.* Unknown date. Author's rendering into English from a previous Spanish translation.
157. **Vojdani, Terry.** *Letter to the author dated October 5, 2008.*
158. *Letter on his behalf dated March 14, 1954.*

159. **Nicklin, Eve.** *The Crusading Years*. Unknown date. Author's rendering into English from a previous Spanish translation.
160. A traditional indigenous cloak made of a rectangular or circular sheet of fabric with a slit in the middle to put the head through. Indigenous people migrating to major cities usually did not wear ponchos.
161. **Nicklin, Eve.** *The Crusading Years*. Unknown date. Author's rendering into English from a previous Spanish translation.
162. The beloved Guardian passed away on November 4, 1957.
163. **Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhiyyih Khánum in collaboration with John Ferraby.** *The Passing of Shoghi Effendi*. London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1958.
164. **Nicklin, Eve.** *Letter to Amelia Buxton dated January 16, 1952.*
165. As they were foreigners, they needed permission to leave Paraguay for a short while to return, and permission to enter Argentina (Posadas) for a day.
166. **Mills, Margaret.** *Letters to the author dated June 25 and October 7, 1986.*
167. **Grasselly, Gilbert.** *Letter to the author dated October 2, 1986.*

168. **Baral, David.** *Letter from David Baral to Gilbert Grasselly dated December 12, 1986.*
169. *Bahá'í News.* May 1961, p. 10. No. 362.
170. Urubamba is a small town one hour north of Cusco.
171. **Bahá'u'lláh.** *The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh.* Wilmette, Illinois: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1985 (reprint), p. 52.
172. **Nicklin, Eve.** *The Crusading Years.* Unknown date. Author's rendering into English from a previous Spanish translation.
173. **The Universal House of Justice.** *Wellspring of Guidance: Messages 1963-1968.* Wilmette, Illinois: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1970, p. 5.
174. **The Universal House of Justice, 1968-1973.** *Messages from the Universal House of Justice.* Wilmette, Illinois: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1976, p. 14.
175. **The Universal House of Justice, 1968-1973.** *Messages from the Universal House of Justice. 1968-1973.* Wilmette, Illinois: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1976, p. 17.
176. **The Universal House of Justice.** *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963-1986: The Third Epoch of the Formative Age.* Wilmette, Illinois: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1996, p. 712. Compiled by Geoffrey W. Marks.
177. **Grasselly, Gilbert.** *Letter to the author dated October 2, 1986.*

178. *Bahá'í News*. February 1970, p. 8. No. 467.
179. **The Universal House of Justice.** *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963-1986: The Third Epoch of the Formative Age*. Wilmette, Illinois: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1996, p. 262. Compiled by Geoffry W. Marks.
180. **'Abdu'l-Bahá.** *Tablets of the Divine Plan*. Wilmette, Illinois: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1993 (reprint), p. 104.
181. **The Universal House of Justice.** *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963-1986: The Third Epoch of the Formative Age*. Wilmette, Illinois: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1996, p. 404.
182. **The Universal House of Justice.** *Wellspring of Guidance: Messages 1968-1973*. Wilmette, Illinois: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1976, p. 102.
183. The Universal House of Justice. *Cable to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'í of Peru dated June 13, 1985*.
184. *Bahá'í News*. August 1985, pp. 10-11.

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