

**ḤABÍBOLLAH MA'NAVÍ**  
1915–1993

**ṬARABANGÍZ  
SAMANDARÍ-MA'NAVÍ**  
1921–1995

SADDENED NEWS PASSING  
MAID-SERVANT BAHÁ'U'LLÁH,  
ṬARABANGÍZ SAMANDARÍ-  
MA'NAVÍ. HER DEVOTED SERVICES  
FAITH TURKEY, UNITED KING-  
DOM LOVINGLY REMEMBERED.  
HER PASSIONATE LOVE FOR  
BLESSED BEAUTY SUSTAINED HER  
THROUGHOUT LIFE. PRAYING  
HOLY SHRINES PROGRESS HER  
NOBLE SOUL ABHÁ KINGDOM.  
CONVEY OUR LOVING SYMPATHY  
MEMBERS FAMILY.

Universal House of Justice  
February 27, 1995

**T**arabangíz (Ṭarab) Samandarí-Ma'naví was born in 1921 in the city of Qasvín, Iran. Her great-grandfather, who was named Samandar by Bahá'u'lláh, was one of the Apostles of Bahá'u'lláh. Her father, Agamirza Mohammed, was a devoted believer and teacher of the Faith, as a consequence of which he was imprisoned for a period whence, because of his frailness, he was taken ill. Following his release he never fully recovered and passed to the Abhá Kingdom at a young age.

Her mother, Lega Khandum Andalibi, was from a distinguished Bahá'í family. She was a teacher in a school for Bahá'í children in Qazvín and was left to bring up six children. Their grandfather, the Hand of the Cause of God Mr. Ṭarázu'lláh Samandarí was their spiritual father. Although travel kept him away for long periods, nevertheless Mr. Samandarí had a profound influence on his grandchildren, making them ardent followers and servants of the

Faith who spent their lives pioneering in different parts of the globe.

Having completed her secondary education in Qasvín, Ṭarab moved to Ṭihrán to obtain employment so that she could assist her mother financially. It was during this period that Lega Khandum was taken seriously ill and passed away. Ṭarab stayed in Ṭihrán until the start of the Guardian's Ten Year Crusade in 1953. She communicated with her grandfather, Mr. Samandarí, and informed him of her desire to pioneer. He invited her to join him in Shíráz. She spent two years with him there under his loving influence, and in 1955 she pioneered to Turkey. There she met and wed her husband, Ḥabíbolah (Ḥabíb) Ma'naví, who had been pioneering in Istanbul since the beginning of the Crusade.

Ḥabíb was born in Ṭihrán in 1915. His father, Davoud, was of Jewish background. Ḥabíb embraced the Faith at the age of fifteen and was disowned by his family. He was a keen student, applying himself to a study of the Bahá'í writings from an



*Ṭarabangíz Samandarí-Ma'naví*

early age. He shone academically at school and at university, where he studied law and economics. Having obtained his doctorate from Ṭihrán University, he practiced law there until 1953 when he moved to Turkey.

Pioneering and teaching the Faith in Turkey were never easy. The Turkish government was suspicious of the Iranian friends, who they put under continuous and close surveillance. The Bahá'ís often had difficulty in securing visas and work permits, and many Iranian pioneers were asked to return to Iran. Ḥabíb, through his tactfulness, wisdom, and honesty in the Grand Bazaar where he was engaged in business, succeeded in obtaining a residence visa for his family, and he spent the next forty years serving the Faith there.

Ṭarab and Ḥabíb's home was an open house for meetings, for teaching, and for hospitality extended to friends visiting from other parts of the world. They both had a pure and unconditional love for all, irrespective of race, religion, nationality,

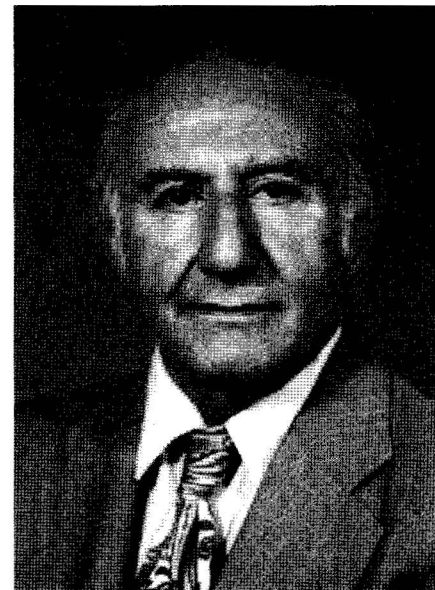
or class. Ṭarab's smile emanated this love, conveying a warmth that was in her heart.

Ḥabíb's priority in life was serving the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh and its believers. He served on the National Spiritual Assembly of Turkey and on Local Spiritual Assemblies for many years. In 1963 he was one of the delegates who had the honor of electing the first Universal House of Justice in Haifa.

Ṭarab's warm and loving personality and her famous hospitality easily won her friends with the locals, many of whom became lifetime friends. When Ṭarab spoke to them about the Faith, she emphasized Bahá'u'lláh's mission to unite the world and to bring love and harmony to its citizens. Many of her friends accepted the Faith, but the influence of the Islamic culture and fear of family reprisals prevented many others from declaring their belief in Bahá'u'lláh. Those who did declare brought their families into the Faith and are still amongst the most ardent servants of Bahá'u'lláh in Turkey.

This was the fulfillment of Ṭarab's wish. During her pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1956, she confided to the beloved Guardian that her only wish was to overcome her shyness so that she could befriend people easily and teach them the Faith. For the rest of her life she never had difficulty in approaching others and in communicating a sincere love and ready kindness.

During their pioneering years Ṭarab and Ḥabíb had the privilege of having the Hand of the Cause of God Mr. Ṭarázu'lláh Samandarí stay at their home during the summer months. Mr. Samandarí, then in his nineties, needed to recuperate from his travels. His presence in Turkey was received as a great bestowal from the Kingdom of Abhá by the friends there. Many meetings were held at Ṭarab and Ḥabíb's house, during which the friends enjoyed the fruits of his deep knowledge. Many contacts



*Ḥabíbolah Ma'naví*

were brought to meet this man who had attained the presence of Bahá'u'lláh at the age of fifteen. These occasions filled Ṭarab's heart with happiness, and nothing gave Ḥabíb more pleasure than accompanying Mr. Samandarí on travel teaching trips to different parts of Turkey. Many accepted the Faith and became great servants as a result of these trips.

However, there were times when the growth of the Faith in Turkey was slow. The friends worked with wisdom and caution, but on more than one occasion Bahá'í meetings were raided by the police, and the friends were arrested in numbers. They were released after harsh interrogations. Many were the seeds planted then, the fruits of which can now be observed.

Ṭarab served on the Local Spiritual Assembly of Kadikoy and on the teaching committee. In 1965 she pioneered with her four-year-old son to the island of Imbros (Gökçeada) in the northern Aegean Sea. Imbros was inhabited by a Greek majority and had a very small population. Life was simple, and almost everyone on the island relied on their own resources to make a living. The Greeks were adamant in refusing to have contact with the Turkish, but Ṭarab befriended many and spread the Faith among them. This raised the suspicion of Turkish officials, and she was asked to leave the island six months later.

The passing of Mr. Ṭarazu'lláh Samandarí in 1968 brought great sorrow. Ṭarab dearly loved and revered her grandfather, often reminisced about the times they spent together in Turkey, and missed him greatly until the end of her life.

In 1972 Ṭarab moved to Sheffield, England, to supervise the education of her two sons who were then in their teens. The social and political upheavals in Turkey were a cause of serious concern for many parents whose children could not attend schools

and universities in safety. Her house became the venue for many meetings and firesides, and now that she was in a country where one had the freedom to propagate the Faith, her enthusiasm for teaching intensified. In 1981 she established "Peace Guest House." Literature was readily available to her guests, and she gave the Message of Bahá'u'lláh to many willing ears. Many wrote to her later thanking her for her kindness. During these years Ṭarab served as a member of the Local Spiritual Assembly.

In the meantime, Ḥabíb continued serving in Turkey. The revolution in Iran in 1980 and the subsequent persecutions forced many of the friends to cross the mountains into Turkey, leaving Iran without travel documents. During this difficult period Ḥabíb helped these friends to secure refugee status in welcoming countries around the globe. He helped them with travel arrangements and regularly liaised with the Universal House of Justice to ensure the protection of the Faith. Much of his time was taken up with the varied circumstances of the refugees and with difficult negotiations with Turkish authorities. Ḥabíb was drained emotionally as day after day he listened to the heartrending, firsthand stories of the persecutions. Years afterward the refugees continued to remember his selfless assistance.

In early 1993 his health declined, and he was flown to Sheffield in the United Kingdom. He passed to the Abhá Kingdom in March, and on the 10th of that month the Universal House of Justice sent this message to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United Kingdom:

Our hearts are saddened by the news of the passing of Habib Manavi, stalwart upholder Faith Bahá'u'lláh. His long years devoted service extending several decades fondly remembered.

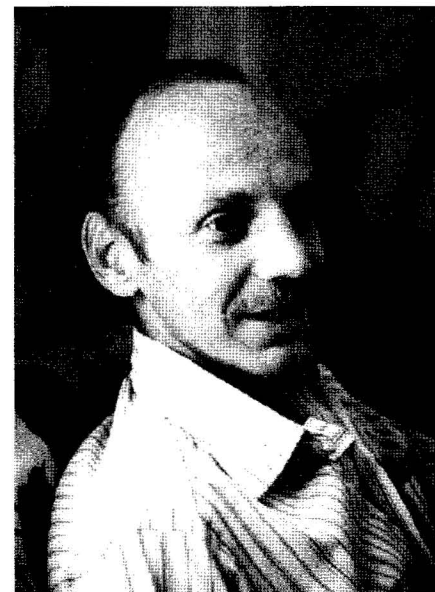
In the Cradle Faith he ably defended interests Bahá'í community. In Turkey where he pioneered early years Ten Year Crusade, he served with unfailing steadfastness in teaching and administrative fields.

Ṭarab pioneered to Gibraltar for a brief period in 1992. She attended the centenary of Bahá'u'lláh's Ascension in the Holy Land as a member of the delegation from that country. Ill health prevented her from staying, and she returned to Sheffield to spend the last years of her life running her guest house. Following an unfortunate accident she passed away February 23, 1995.

*Samandar Ma'navi*

#### WILLIAM ANTHONY CARTER 1945-1995

William Anthony (Tony) Carter, called Antonio or don Antonito by most of his friends and Tony by many others, was



*William Anthony Carter*

born in Fort Worth, Texas, on June 5, 1945.

In his autobiography Tony said that he was a lonely child even though he had several brothers and sisters. (He was the seventh of eight children.) Using his father's tools he made his own toys, and he liked to read. An important event of his childhood was his winning a drawing contest. When he was a young man, he used to dream about becoming an engineer and designing cars. He did well in school in almost all subjects. When his schooling was over, he worked at a store until he was recruited to go to Vietnam. He enlisted in the United States Air Force, where he trained in electronics.

Tony said that during his time in Vietnam he read a lot; he studied the Bible and discovered that he could write poetry. He returned from Vietnam, and according to his dear friend Nancy Dobbins, he rekindled his relationship to Catholicism with a confidence and a purity of intention that enabled him to investigate the Bahá'í Faith, which was first mentioned to him by his brother-in-law. He soon accepted the truth of Bahá'u'lláh's station, declaring his Faith on September 17, 1969, and engaging in the activities of the Fort Worth, Texas, Bahá'í community.

Nancy recalled that during his first months as a Bahá'í, Tony was especially active with the youth. He had a big car in which he transported groups of young friends to different Bahá'í activities. He was very calm by nature and possessed a humble spirit. He was happy, always seeming to have a ready smile and a willingness to serve whenever he was needed.

In 1970 he attended his first summer school, and there he filled out an application to pioneer to a foreign country. He later admitted that he had not fully realized what he had applied for. He was surprised

when he received a letter from the National Pioneer Committee inviting him to go to Bolivia.

Tony went to Aiquile, a town located between the cities of Cochabamba and Sucre, where the majority of people are Quechua farmers. Unable to speak Spanish Tony tried to teach the Faith, struggling with the language aided only by a small dictionary. He could answer one question in Spanish. When asked, "Where are you from?" he would reply, "I am a world citizen." Many who met him in Aiquile listened to him and shook their heads. "He does not understand the question," they said.

Undaunted by his limited Spanish Tony traveled to nearby Mizque and later to the city of Sucre to give the Message of the Bahá'í Faith. He may not have had the language, but he had a happiness that attracted people and a kindness, courtesy, and generosity that won him friends who were willing to encourage him. His friends had patience and were willing to explain many things to him. An English teacher at the Aiquile school taught him Spanish, and little by little he acquired a facility.

In 1971 he moved to Cobija, a northern city bordering Brazil. He lived there for three years, teaching the Faith and helping to form Assemblies in Cobija and in neighboring towns. He made many friends and played on a basketball team that represented the city. Having acquired a working knowledge of Spanish, he began to study Portuguese so as to teach the Faith and form Assemblies in Brasílea<sup>126</sup> and Rio Branco in Brazil.

On January 6, 1972, he married Noemí Delgado Ponce, a mathematics

professor whom he had met in Aiquile. Their wedding ceremony was celebrated in Cochabamba, after which Tony and Noemí moved to Cobija where they lived until 1975. With the decline of his father's health, Tony and Noemí moved to Forth Worth, Texas, to be with him. Within a few months his father died. What Tony wanted most was to return to Bolivia, and in 1978 the Carters settled in La Paz with Tony working as a technician for Burroughs Corporation, servicing bank computers in the major centers. He was active in the Bahá'í community life of La Paz and was elected to the Local Assembly several times.

Tony was a person of many interests. Steve Pulley, a fellow pioneer, lent him the book *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain*, and Tony took up a serious study of art; his works were featured in a number of exhibitions in La Paz. He thought deeply about art and its relationship to the Faith and was particularly interested in how it was influenced by indigenous cultures. He wrote a book about his musings entitled *Hokam Kiva* (unpublished).

He also had dramatic talents. He acted in a stage play, and shortly before his death he was a bit actor in the motion picture *Cuestión de fe* (directed by Marcos Loayza). Mr. Pulley remembers:

When Tony was asked to participate in the movie *Cuestión de fe*, the role offered him was that of a priest. Tony was unsure but said he'd think it over, and then went home and told his wife about it. He said, "What do you think I should do? A Bahá'í pioneer playing a Catholic priest?" Noemí, who was a Catholic herself, smiled and said, "Well, Tony, you know your parents [also Catholics] always wanted you to become a priest, and here's your opportunity to grant

them their wish." Tony laughed at the irony of it, and replied, "Okay, then. Maybe I'll do it after all." And he did.

On the morning of March 1, 1995, while he was going to work at the Colegio Calvert (American Cooperative School), Tony died in a tragic automobile accident. The principal of the Colegio Calvert said, "During all those years that I have worked in this institution, I have never before met a person loved by *all*." He then repeated, "a person loved by *all*, without exception."

An article in the "Bahá'í Gaceta" said of Tony, "He loved the Bahá'í Faith. He reflected love, in his eyes, in his smile, whenever he expressed himself on Bahá'í topics." At the time of his passing, he was a member of the Local Assembly of La Paz and had been a pioneer for more than twenty years.

On March 2 the Universal House of Justice cabled the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Bolivia:

SADDENED NEWS DEATH  
DEVOTED LONGTIME PIONEER  
WILLIAM ANTHONY CARTER. HIS  
STEADFAST SACRIFICIAL SERVICES  
WARMLY RECALLED. ASSURE FER-  
VENT PRAYERS HOLY SHRINES FOR  
PROGRESS HIS SOUL IN REALMS  
ON HIGH. KINDLY EXTEND LOV-  
ING CONDOLENCES TO HIS FAMILY  
AND MANY FRIENDS.

*Adapted from an article written  
in Spanish by Noemí D. de Carter  
and supplemented by information  
provided by Steve Pulley*

## ENOS EPYERU 1917-1995

DEEPLY GRIEVED PASSING DEARLY  
LOVED ENOS EPYERU. HIS COUR-  
AGE IN EMBRACING, PROMOTING  
FAITH GOD, HIS STEADFASTNESS  
IN UPHOLDING ITS PRINCIPLES  
HIGHLY VALUED. CONVEY RELA-  
TIVES HEARTFELT SYMPATHY,  
ASSURANCE FERVENT PRAYERS  
PROGRESS HIS NOBLE SOUL ABHÁ  
KINGDOM.

Universal House of Justice  
March 6, 1995

Enos Epyeru, the second person of the Teso tribe to accept the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, suffered a stroke during the night of March 1, 1995, and ascended to the Abhá Kingdom from Soroti Hospital in Uganda. His body was buried the next day in Kumi.

Mr. Epyeru was seventy-eight at the time of his passing. Born in 1917 in Opot, Teso, Uganda, he trained as a teacher and held a bachelor's degree in education. In 1937 he married Edisa Ilemungolet, and their marriage produced six children.

He became a Bahá'í in 1952, and during the Ten Year Crusade he pioneered to Eldoret in Kenya. During the time of the Intercontinental Teaching Conference in Uganda, he made a traveling teaching trip to Monrovia, Liberia.

Mr. Epyeru served on Local Assemblies, on the National Teaching Committee, and on the National Spiritual Assembly. He also worked to translate Bahá'í literature into Ateso—the language of his people.

<sup>126</sup> A settlement near the Brazil-Bolivian border, not to be confused with the capital city of Brasilia.

## HORACE "MOZART" NEWTON 1925–1995

The Universal House of Justice was saddened to learn of the passing of Mr. Horace Mozart Newton, the first Barbadian to declare his faith in Bahá'u'lláh. His love for the Cause and devoted services are warmly remembered. Kindly assure his family and friends of the heartfelt prayers of the House of Justice in the Holy Shrines for the progress of his soul.

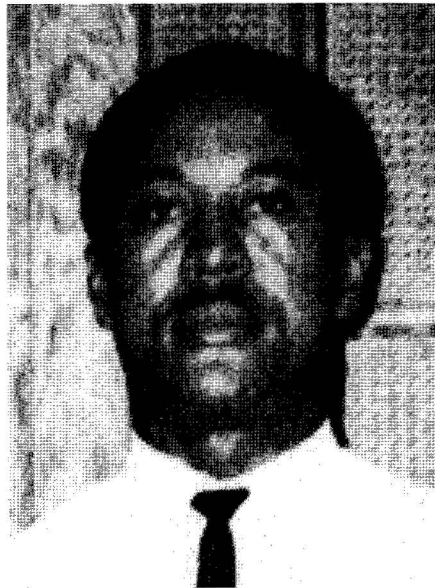
Department of the Secretariat  
March 8, 1995

In the early predawn hours following the first day of the Fast of 1995, the soul of Horace "Mozart" Newton took flight to the Abhá Kingdom.

From his earliest years Horace showed a deep interest in music history and form, and later in the forties he expressed himself by playing jazz and dance music with the ensembles in Barbados that were greatly influenced by the big bands of North America of a decade earlier. He learned to play piano and organ and was an accomplished guitarist and saxophonist, but piano was his forte.

He first played with some of the top-rated bands of the day at the various venues around Barbados—The Royal Barbados Yacht Club, Club Morgan, Marine Hotel, and Sam Lord's Castle. In time he formed his own group called "The Newtons." His great love for music earned him the pet name of Mozart; he was Mozart to everyone. How well the older Bahá'ís remember him "tickling the ivories" at social events; give Mozart a piano, and he gave you a proper performance.

As a young man Mozart apprenticed to *The Advocate* newspaper as a linotype



Horace "Mozart" Newton

machine operator, working there for many years before immigrating to the United States. He did not stay in North America long, however. He was back on the island when, in August 1964, Mrs. Etta Woodlen of Wilmington, Delaware, arrived in Barbados as the first pioneer.

The story goes that he was at the airport, and when Mrs. Woodlen inquired of him where she could stay, he informed her unhesitatingly that she could stay with his aunts in Chancery Lane. The aunts were both unmarried and had a house with lots of room, and moreover they loved to have company. Mrs. Woodlen was grateful and stayed with the Misses Durant until she found her own house in the same parish of Christ Church.

Mozart was introduced to the Faith by Mrs. Woodlen, and he declared his belief in Bahá'u'lláh early in 1965, having the distinction of being the first Barbadian to become a Bahá'í on the island.

Mozart soaked up the teachings, and he was fortunate to have traveling teachers

deepen him, especially Mrs. Marguerite Sears, wife of the beloved Hand of the Cause of God William Sears. Throughout his life Mozart spoke in glowing terms of Mrs. Sears and acknowledged that she did so much to inspire him, offering to him a model of a true Bahá'í. She gave him books and sent him literature. His most precious possession was a miniature book of teachings presented by Mrs. Sears on behalf of Mr. Sears. It is now in the Barbados National Bahá'í Archives.

Mozart hit the ground running with his new Faith. It was his Faith, and he let everyone around him know that he had taken ownership of it. Nevertheless he would share it as a precious gift with his friends and to all who would listen. His fellow musicians were the first beneficiaries. He would invite them to Mrs. Sears' talks and to the firesides Mrs. Woodlen gave. Quite a number of them enrolled, and some served with Mozart on the first Local Spiritual Assembly of Christ Church elected at Riḍván 1965.

One of the friends recalled an occasion when the band was scheduled to practice for an important competition (which they later won), but Mozart prevailed on the members to come to a talk by Mrs. Sears. He told them that the talk was more important than what they were going to do then or ever do in the future. Mozart, never at a loss for words, was persuasive; they preempted their practice and went to the talk.

Mozart left the island for North America again in 1966, going first to New York City. On his return to Barbados seven years later, Mozart did not resume work with his band but gave his attention to helping others in the music industry, particularly with its distribution. For the next few years he managed an all-girl band that played island-wide, including a performance at the

1973 Bahá'í Convention in Martin's Bay, St. John—a Convention at which Mozart was elected a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Barbados and the Windward Islands.

Mozart was one of the anchors of the Local Spiritual Assembly of Christ Church and played a vital role in the development of the local community. He brought a level-headedness to the deliberations when the consultation appeared to be difficult. Mozart emphasized the positive; he was that sort of person. At one meeting of the Assembly after his passing, Mozart's chair was left vacant. A difficult consultation ensued. When unity was established, an answer found, and a decision made, it was as though he were there. One of the friends turned to the empty chair and said, "Thank you Mozart."

Mozart knew that God's greatest gift was teaching, and he fulfilled his duty to share the Word of God. He would walk with his bag slung over his shoulder—a bag crammed full with literature, pamphlets, and copied prayers. Everyone to whom he spoke received a treat from that bag. He was a warrior for Bahá'u'lláh, and he went into battle with his pouch of ammunition.

For those who were poor readers Mozart would work with them on a one-to-one basis. He believed in the dignity of the Faith, and that included reading the revealed Word well. Mozart took the prayers seriously and committed several to memory including the Tablet of Aḥmad, the Fire Tablet, and the Long Healing Prayer.

The Fast, however, was Mozart's favorite aspect of the Faith. For him there was no such thing as arising at 5:30 AM and then to be reminded of the precise time when the first rays of the morning sun were expected to seep through the window. Oh no, the Fast meant being up no later than 4:00 AM.

To Mozart that was dawn. He was the Bahá'í crier, like some muezzin summoning the faithful to prayer. A friend recalled, "He would start phoning the Bahá'ís at 5 AM. 'WAKE UP! WAKE UP! It's time for our prayers! Bahá'u'lláh is waiting to hear from us all!' Needless to say, the phone call was not always appreciated."

Mozart had a great sense of humor. He loved to laugh and to see others laugh. In later years he recounted the story of how, as a new Bahá'í, he invited a colleague in the band, who was a fresh declarant, to a Nineteen Day Feast. The new declarant fasted the entire day and several times during devotions and the administrative portion asked Mozart, "When is the Feast?" Mozart recounted how he was very patient with his friend and then got a kick out of describing the friend's reaction when the physical feast finally arrived and Kool-Aid and sweet biscuits were served.

Horace Mozart Newton passed away on March 3, 1995, at the age of seventy-one. The friends will remember him for his indefatigable love of teaching, his unique approach to the Fast, his humor, and his humility. Shortly after his passing a national teaching project was launched in his name. He was survived by his wife and five children.

### PIETER J. DE VOGEL 1930–1995

DEEPLY DISTRESSED NEWS PASSING VALIANT SERVANT CAUSE PIETER DE VOGEL, WHO PLAYED CRUCIAL ROLE DEVELOPMENT AUSTRALIAN BAHÁ'Í COMMUNITY THROUGH DISTINGUISHED SERVICE ALMOST THREE DECADES NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY, INCLUDING LENGTHY PERIODS

SECRETARY, TREASURER, CULMINATING HIGHLY MERITORIOUS WORK ESTABLISHMENT OFFICE GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS. HIS HIGH SENSE RESPONSIBILITY, TOTAL DEDICATION PROMOTION INTERESTS FAITH WILL STAND EXAMPLE OTHERS CALLED UPON SERVE ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER YEARS AHEAD. KINDLY CONVEY LOVING CONDOLENCES WIFE, FAMILY, ASSURANCE PRAYERS HOLY SHRINES PROGRESS HIS LUMINOUS SOUL.

Universal House of Justice  
March 5, 1995

Pieter de Vogel brought to every task a unique blend of devotion, dignity, competence, enthusiasm and vision. His skills as a communicator and his wide experience on two continents equipped him to represent the Bahá'í community with distinction in this period of its emergence as a significant contributor to the social processes leading to the resolution of global problems and the establishment of a peaceful and prosperous world.

Our loss is felt equally in the personal dimension, since Pieter was a much-loved and valued associate and friend.

Our hearts and prayers are with his dear family, the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia, and the Australian Bahá'í community. The Board of Counsellors shares your sorrow and sense of loss, tempered by the awareness that Pieter's illumined spirit will continue to inspire us as we move forward in all the areas of endeavor to which he

devoted himself so effectively and wholeheartedly.

Continental Board of Counsellors

At the time of his death, in Bathurst, New South Wales, on March 5, 1995, Pieter de Vogel was the national treasurer and director of the Office of Government Affairs for the Australian Bahá'í community. He had served on the Australian National Assembly for twenty-seven years, being its secretary for ten years and its treasurer for sixteen.

He was born in Rotterdam, Holland, in 1930, and after living through World War II, he graduated from the Hotelschool (hotel management college) in The Hague in 1949 and immigrated to Australia in 1952.

Pieter became assistant manager of the Hotel Canberra, which was then the largest hotel in the national capital, and later he worked for the National Capital Development Commission as an architectural model maker.

While in Canberra in 1956 he became a member of the Bahá'í community, meeting "Mother" Dunn<sup>127</sup> a few days after his declaration, thereafter devoting his life to the service of his Beloved Lord, Bahá'u'lláh.

His skill in art and model-making is well expressed in the five beautiful models he made of the Sydney Bahá'í House of Worship. These models became available to Bahá'ís interstate so that knowledge of the beautiful Temple, then under construction, could be conveyed to the public together with the Bahá'í teachings.

He was a founding member of the Canberra Assembly in 1957, and his first national Bahá'í appointment was in the late 1950s when he became government liaison officer. Pieter was elected to the National



*Pieter J. de Vogel*

Spiritual Assembly in 1965 and elected as its treasurer the same year serving in this capacity until 1968, when he was elected as the National Assembly's first full-time secretary.

He remained secretary through the formative years of the growth of the national administration until September 1975 when he and his wife, Kay, with their little daughter Miesje pioneered to Belgium after visiting Iran and making their pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

Pieter was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly of Belgium in April 1976 and served on that institution until the family returned to Australia in September 1977. In Australia again Pieter and Kay's second daughter Annelies was born. They settled in the homefront pioneering goal of Bathurst, opening it to the Faith, and Pieter later became a member of its first Local Assembly.

His early training in hotel management enabled him to obtain a position as manager of the division of conferences and

<sup>127</sup> The Hand of the Cause of God Clara Dunn (1869-1960).

catering at Mitchell College in Bathurst. Under his direction the number of annual conferences the College attracted was increased threefold. Pieter was made a Fellow of the Catering Institute of Australia, and he helped found the Australian Tertiary Institutions Commercial Companies Association (ATICCA).<sup>128</sup> He represented the association presenting a paper at an international conference in Lulea, Sweden, in 1982. Pieter was also business manager for the residential colleges and from 1980 secretary/manager of Mitchellsearch Limited, the associated research, consultancy, and publishing company.

Pieter was reelected to the National Spiritual Assembly in 1978 and served as treasurer from 1979 to 1990 and as secretary from 1990 until 1993. Throughout the period of his service on the National Spiritual Assembly, he served on committees including the legal committee for which he was closely involved in the drafting of an Act of Parliament for the incorporation of the National and Local Spiritual Assemblies. He had participated in proclamations made to prominent people and government officials including Prime Ministers Sir Robert Menzies and Harold Holt. He also served on the Board of Bahá'í Publications Australia, to which he contributed the knowledge and skills he gained from his publishing and managerial experience at Mitchell College.

The period of Pieter's service was one of great expansion of the Australian Bahá'í community. During this time Australia witnessed a vast increase in the number of Local Spiritual Assemblies and a corresponding development in the extent and complexity of the national administration that was endeavoring to serve the

emerging needs of the Bahá'í community and to take advantage of new and exciting opportunities.

Pieter's life was characterized by great dedication, exemplified by the long hours he worked as treasurer for many years. One would see him writing short notes on the receipts till after midnight in order to keep in personal contact with the friends.

He will be remembered for the courage and loyalty with which he championed the interests of the Faith, particularly in the area of proclamation.

Many of today's adult Bahá'ís remember with gratitude the care, encouragement, and inspiration he showered upon them when they were youth.

He was decisive in his views and acted with vision and great perseverance. In his last years he was again an administrative pioneer founding the Office of Government Affairs and working to create many favorable opportunities in the nation's capital for the greater recognition of the Faith and the protection of the worldwide Bahá'í community. He will be greatly missed by his family, friends, and colleagues in Australia and around the world.

*From an article prepared by the  
The National Spiritual Assembly  
of the Bahá'ís of Australia*

### SALVATOR "SUE" BENATAR 1917-1995

Salvator "Sue" Benatar was born on October 31, 1917, in Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia, now known as Harare, Zimbabwe. His parents emigrated from the Island of Rhodes with many other Sephardic Jewish families at the turn of the century. He was the youngest son in a family of seven children, only one sister being younger. His father was one of the founders of the Sephardic Hebrew Congregation in



Salvator "Sue" Benatar

Salisbury, and for some years the services were held in his home. The name "Sue" is a diminution of his Hebrew name, Yeshua, which was used by his father. Although most of his family called him Salvator, he was generally known for most of his life as Sue.

After matriculation he went to the University of the Witwatersrand to study chemical engineering, but when the war broke out he felt he had to cut short his studies and follow in his brothers' footsteps and join the army. He joined the Medical Corps, but because of a shortage of infantrymen, he was sent to an Officer Cadet Training Unit (OCTU) course in Nahariya, in what was then Palestine. He was seconded as a lieutenant to the King's Royal Rifle Corps serving in North Africa, Italy, and Austria. He was twice Mentioned in Despatches for acts of heroism. Owing to a lack of funds at war's end, he was unable to resume his studies and complete his degree.

Sue had begun to box as a young boy and eventually became Rhodesian amateur welterweight champion. He also boxed for South African universities and won a "blue" for competing at the highest levels of the sport during the years 1937, 1938, and 1939. He continued to box during the war years but had stopped by the time he was repatriated.

Another skill he had acquired before the war was competitive ballroom dancing, achieving the status of advanced amateur champion on several occasions. It was through this art form that he met his wife, the pianist Sylvia Schulman. They became life as well as ballroom partners, marrying in the Sephardic synagogue September 12, 1949.

After a few false starts in business partnerships, he joined the leading photographic firm in Salisbury and for the rest of his working life was either a manager or owner of photographic retail firms. The one exception was 1954, the year he worked for a furniture store where he met Dr. Kenneth Christian, his wife Roberta,<sup>129</sup> and their twelve-year-old son.

Kenneth and Roberta had recently arrived in the country, becoming Knights of Bahá'u'lláh, and as far as Sue and Sylvia knew, they had no friends as yet. After much scouting Sue arranged an interview for Kenneth with the administrators-to-be at the University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. They promised Kenneth a position in eighteen months time when it was anticipated the university would open.

The two families became very close friends, but since the Benatars were Jewish and had assumed the Christians to be Christian, religion was never mentioned. After six months the Christians moved

<sup>128</sup> Presently known as "Knowledge Commercialisation Australasia" or KCA.

<sup>129</sup> See "In Memoriam," *The Bahá'í World*, vol. XV, pp. 497-98.

to Athens, spending their last two weeks in the Benatars' home. The parting was painful for both families, but a regular correspondence kept them in touch.

In December 1954 pioneers Mr. and Mrs. Larry Hautz arrived in Salisbury and immediately contacted the Benatars, giving them the message of the Bahá'í Faith at their first opportunity. Sue and Sylvia were taken aback initially, but just before Ridván 1955 they became Bahá'ís enabling the formation of the first Local Spiritual Assembly of Salisbury. In fact, it was the first Assembly in the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland,<sup>130</sup> which was then under the jurisdiction of the National Spiritual Assembly of South and West Africa. The Benatars were the third and fourth to become Bahá'ís in the country and the first whites to declare there.

The National Conventions were held in Salisbury in the early years, and Sue was usually the official photographer. He was soon elected to the National Spiritual Assembly and became its treasurer. Soon after John Robarts and William Sears were appointed as Hands of the Cause; Sue was appointed as an Auxiliary Board member responsible for the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, Angola, Mozambique, Ruanda-Urundi (presently Rwanda and Burundi), and various countries on the northwest coast of Africa—countries that were contacted mainly by correspondence.

In 1958 the Benatars, together with their fourteen-month-old son, Mark, and an African believer, Willard Mahlunge,

traveled by Land Rover to Kampala for the laying of the foundation stone of the Kampala House of Worship. Sue was the official photographer.

In 1960 their daughter, Odette, was born. At the end of 1962 Sue became ill and was advised to see a specialist in Cape Town on his way to England where the family had decided to settle. He recovered and enjoyed good health for most of the time, but the illness presaged the leukemia that later took his life.

In England Sue served on the Local Spiritual Assemblies of Cambridge, where he lived for eight years, and Bedford, to which he made a homefront pioneer move in 1971. He was also on the National Audio-Visual Committee for many years.

Sue went on his first pilgrimage in 1967 and was soon contacted by the Audio-Visual Department at the World Centre. While he was working with camera retailers in Cambridge, he was instrumental in supplying the World Centre with a good quantity of photographic equipment.

He was the official photographer for several international Bahá'í conferences and was frequently asked to take photographs for the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United Kingdom. He also served as chairman of several Bahá'í summer schools at Harlech, North Wales.

In 1976 the family made its final homefront pioneer move to Luton. And in 1977 they pioneered overseas to Cape Town, South Africa, to fulfill a goal of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United Kingdom.

Sue served on the Local Spiritual Assembly of Cape Town for three years before moving to open the suburb locality of Milnerton. At various times he was appointed to different national committees and was, of course, official photographer

<sup>130</sup> The Federation lasted from 1953 to 1963 when Northern Rhodesia gained its independence becoming Zambia, and Nyasaland established its independence as Malawi. When the Federation dissolved, Southern Rhodesia became known as Rhodesia, and not until 1980 when it gained independence was it known as the Republic of Zimbabwe.

attending all events. He has left behind thousands of photographs and negatives.

In 1990 he was diagnosed as having hairy-cell leukemia, a slow blood cancer that must have lain dormant since his bout of illness thirty years earlier. He underwent treatment for four and a half years with courage, fortitude, and never a complaint. He was a constant supporter and companion to his wife, Sylvia, and proudly accompanied her to her musical activities. He continued to attend all Bahá'í events, including the Centenary of the Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh in the Holy Land and the International Summer School and Music Festival in Harare, Zimbabwe, at the end of 1994. During the forty years of his Bahá'í life, he was privileged to have visited the Holy Land five times, two of which were as a pilgrim. A serious fall in his house weakened him considerably, and a week later, on April 5, 1995, his spirit winged its way to the Abhá Kingdom. The following day, the Universal House of Justice conveyed its condolences:

SADDENED LOSS OUTSTANDING  
PROMOTER FAITH SOUTHERN  
AFRICA, SALVATOR "SUE" BENATAR.  
HIS DEDICATED BAHÁ'Í SERVICES,  
IN VARIOUS CAPACITIES OVER  
SEVERAL DECADES, WILL BE LONG  
REMEMBERED.

PRAYING HOLY THRESHOLD PROG-  
RESS HIS RADIANT SOUL ABHÁ  
KINGDOM. KINDLY CONVEY OUR  
CONDOLENCES HIS DEAR WIFE  
AND CHILDREN.

Sue left behind his wife Sylvia of Table View, Cape Town; a son Mark in Holland; a daughter Odette Freeman of Rising Bridge, Lancashire, England; and five grandchildren.

### SARAH MARTIN PEREIRA 1909–1995

Sarah Martin Pereira, a member of the Continental Board of Counsellors for the Bahá'ís of North America (1973 to 1985), died on April 5, 1995, in Matthews, North Carolina, after an illness of more than a year.

She was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States in 1960 and served until her appointment as a Counsellor. In her highly distinguished service to the Faith, she was among the first Auxiliary Board members of the Western Hemisphere, serving from 1954 to 1964.

Further she served on the Local Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Washington DC (1962–1971); on the Spiritual Assembly of Silver Spring, Maryland, (1971–1973); and on the Spiritual Assembly of Charlotte, North Carolina, (1985–1994), on the latter as its corresponding secretary into her eighties.

Sarah was a member of numerous local and national Bahá'í committees, among them the Interracial Service Committee, a predecessor of the national Race Unity Committee. She was also elected several times as a delegate to the Bahá'í National Convention.

She will be remembered in North, Central, and South America and the West Indies as an outstanding conference speaker, comfortable in English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese.

Her professional and academic careers were also distinguished. A professor of romance languages, Sarah held teaching and administrative positions at several universities including West Virginia State University, Tennessee Agriculture and Industry University, District of Columbia Teachers College, the University of the District of Columbia, and after her

retirement the Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, North Carolina. She began her teaching career at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina, the city of her mother's birth.

Additionally she served as acting head of the humanities department at West Virginia State College, as chairman of the division of foreign languages and later as acting associate academic dean at the District of Columbia Teachers College, and as acting academic dean and chief executive officer at the Georgia and Harvard Campus of the University of the District of Columbia. At Johnson C. Smith she was both a professor and the creator and director of the university honors program. A scholar, Sarah authored a number of articles in professional journals.

From one of the earliest Bahá'í families of African-American background, Sarah was born December 12, 1909, the daughter of Alexander H. Martin Sr., a lawyer in Cleveland, Ohio, and Mary Brown Martin, who served on the Board of Education—the first African-American to hold this position in Cleveland.

Following in the tradition of her father, who was one of five Negroes elected to the Phi Beta Kappa Society in the nineteenth century, Sarah also received this academic distinction. She received a BA degree from the Ohio State University, a MA degree from Case Western Reserve University, where five members of her family received degrees, and a PhD from the Ohio State University.

Sarah's parents became Bahá'ís in 1913, having attended a lecture by Louis Gregory in 1912, following 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit to Cleveland. The four children of the family—Lydia, Sarah, Stuart, and Alexander—all became Bahá'ís. A photograph of this distinguished African-American family was hung by the Guardian in the Mansion



*Sarah Martin Pereira*

at Bahjí as an indication of a significant milestone in the growth of the Faith.

Sarah was a consummate teacher of the Faith, sharing the Message with many leaders of thought through her professional associations and Bahá'í travels. Among those to whom she introduced the Faith was Dr. Magdalene Carney, who would become a member of the National Spiritual Assembly and later a Counsellor member of the International Teaching Centre.

For those who remember Sarah as a dear friend, she was more than a scholar, professor, and administrator; she was an extraordinarily feminine lady with a penchant for beautiful hats, a bright-eyed adventurer who found delight in everyday pursuits, a gentle mentor who shaped the lives of many through her wise guidance and assistance, and a remarkably dedicated and articulate teacher of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh.

On April 6, 1995, the Universal House of Justice transmitted the following message in her memory:

DEPLORE IRREPARABLE LOSS  
STALWART PROMOTER, VIBRANT  
TEACHER CAUSE GOD SARAH  
MARTIN PEREIRA. RADIANT  
FAITH, INDOMITABLE SPIRIT,  
CHEERFUL DISPOSITION CHAR-  
ACTERIZED HER MANIFOLD, OUT-  
STANDING BAHÁ'Í SERVICES FOR  
OVER SIX DECADES INCLUDING  
HOMEFRONT PIONEERING AND  
MEMBERSHIP FIRST AUXILIARY  
BOARD WESTERN HEMISPHERE,  
NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY  
UNITED STATES, CONTINENTAL  
BOARD COUNSELLORS AMERICAS.  
HER ACHIEVEMENTS HAVE LEFT  
TRACES FOR GENERATIONS TO  
COME. CONFIDENT HER JOYFUL  
REUNION COMPANY HER DISTIN-  
GUISHED FOREBEARS AND SIB-  
LINGS ABHÁ KINGDOM. PRAYING  
HOLY THRESHOLD PROGRESS HER  
SOUL DIVINE WORLDS.

ADVISE HOLD MEMORIAL SERVICES  
HER HONOR MOTHER TEMPLE  
AND THROUGHOUT COUNTRY.

*Jean Norris Scales*

#### ALEXIS GILBERT ROBERT 1922–1995

DEEPLY GRIEVED PASSING DEVOTED  
SERVANT BLESSED BEAUTY GIL-  
BERT ROBERT. HIS VALIANT SER-  
VICES FAITH IN MADAGASCAR, IN  
FRANCE AND IN RÉUNION IN PRO-  
MOTION TEACHING WORK AND  
IN VARIOUS INSTITUTIONS FAITH,  
NOTABLY HIS MEMBERSHIP CON-  
TINENTAL BOARD COUNSELLORS  
AFRICA. UNFORGETTABLE. ADVIS-  
ING NATIONAL ASSEMBLY UGANDA  
HOLD MEMORIAL GATHERING HIS

HONOUR IN HOUSE WORSHIP KAM-  
PALA, AND NATIONAL ASSEMBLIES  
INDIAN OCEAN HOLD BEFITTING  
GATHERINGS THEIR COMMUNI-  
TIES. CONVEY SYMPATHY DEAR  
MEMBERS HIS FAMILY, ASSURANCE  
LOVING PRAYERS HOLY SHRINES  
PROGRESS HIS LUMINOUS SOUL  
ABHÁ KINGDOM.

Universal House of Justice  
April 12, 1995

Gilbert, poet of the light, was born in Hell-Bourg, Réunion Island, on March 12, 1922. He studied in Madagascar and on Réunion Island, and at about the age of fourteen he was revolted and cruelly disillusioned by his professor who was in holy orders, and he subsequently lost his faith in the Catholicism in which he was raised.

At the declaration of the Second World War in 1939, he left Réunion and returned to Madagascar. In 1942 he enlisted in the Free French Forces and was posted to Indochina (Vietnam) in 1945. He became very ill. On his hospital bed he plunged into a study of the Indian, Khmer, Chan Chan, and Islamic civilizations. The horrors of the war had made him an atheist. Returning to Madagascar in 1948, shortly after the rebellion of the Malagasy, he was suicidal.

He met Daisy whom he married in 1949. The birth of his first son reawakened in him haunting memories of the war. His happiness was tainted by the image of a little Vietnamese girl of six, who raised her arms before him when he entered her hut, submachine gun in his hands.

Gilbert then began to study all religions, comparing them and searching for a universal moral teaching which could save humanity. One day, while he was admiring the beauty of nature, he said, "God, if





*Alexis Gilbert Robert*

You exist, show me the way which leads to peace." At the time he frequented the Theosophists' meetings on weekends. A young Malagasy man arrived one Sunday and said to the group that there was a woman who was talking of a new religion and that they must meet her. It seemed this religion was called "Batoula." Gilbert had not encountered this religion in his studies and declared that this name meant nothing to him at all and that he did not want to waste his time. The young man persisted, and the group of Theosophists decided to arrange a meeting.

Mrs. Meherangiz Munsiff, a Bahá'í pioneer, had been teaching the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh since her arrival in Madagascar in April 1953. No one seemed to be interested in what she was proclaiming, and she wrote to Shoghi Effendi about her failure. His reply gave her hope. The Guardian asked her to be patient, "They are coming," he wrote.

Gilbert's first meeting with Mrs. Munsiff took place on July 25, 1953, the

day on which she had received the letter from Haifa. She was privately convinced that Gilbert would become a Bahá'í.

Gilbert was touched by her personality and her eloquence and simplicity. Her words enthralled him. He was amazed to discover the Message of Bahá'u'lláh. The group of Theosophists was overwhelmed with astonishment and admiration as they listened to the reading of a Bahá'í brochure, "Vers un monde uni" (Toward a United World). Gilbert returned home with growing enthusiasm and told his wife. Assiduously he attended Mrs. Munsiff's classes for some weeks.

Then one day, September 23, 1953, he decided that he was not going to listen to her any more, because, he said, this person thinks that I will become Bahá'í, and I, myself, have no intention at all of becoming one. It so happened that owing to some problems, Mrs. Munsiff's hosts could no longer offer her accommodation, and she would have to go to a hotel. On the same day that he had decided not to see her again, Gilbert offered her hospitality in his house. The saintly and active life of Mrs. Munsiff touched his heart and that of Daisy.

One morning while he was tying his necktie, he listened to the prayers that Mrs. Munsiff was saying, and he was seized by a terrible anguish. At that moment he declared his belief in Bahá'u'lláh. Daisy did as well, and on December 27, 1953, they became the first Bahá'ís of the Mascarene Islands in the Indian Ocean.

Following the departure of Mrs. Munsiff on January 18, 1954, Gilbert, who had been appointed director of a large store—a job which permitted him to travel often by plane—began to contact the Malagasy and the French in the capital and the surrounding towns and villages and teach them. The first Local Spiritual Assembly of Tananarive

(Antananarivo) was formed on April 21, 1955, and Gilbert was elected chairman. He was appointed a member of the Auxiliary Board for Propagation, serving from 1957 to 1964. He traveled during all his free moments and vacations, maintaining regular contact with the believers of Madagascar, the Comoros, Réunion, and Mauritius. It often happened that during his teaching trips in Madagascar, he slept on a mat on the bare earth.

The declining political climate in Madagascar obliged him to take his family to France in 1964. Gilbert never knew how to rest. After arriving in France he was elected a member of the National Spiritual Assembly there, and he served on it for eleven years. He made teaching trips to Belgium, Switzerland, and Luxembourg. He also took up studies of the human body and of the medicinal properties of plants, passed his thesis, and received a doctorate in naturopathy in 1977. From 1986 to 1988 he was an Auxiliary Board member in France.

In November 1988 he left France for Réunion Island to enjoy his retirement and to work on his writing. He wrote poetry, children's stories, and articles on nutrition and herbal medicine.

Appointed a Counsellor for Africa in October of the following year, he packed his suitcase again and traveled to several countries, sharing his joy in being Bahá'í. He enabled the friends to realize the importance of being Bahá'ís. "Throughout the world," he would say, "there are many problems; the suffering of humanity has reached an unthinkable level, and every time the Bahá'ís do their best to put into practice the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, and each believer applies His laws and principles, then, by the example they give, the new race of men will be visible and real." He begged the friends to study the writings,

to deepen themselves, to pray, to set an example, and to do all in their power to become true Bahá'ís.

After a serious illness Gilbert Robert left this earthly world on April 11, 1995, having Bahá'u'lláh in his heart until his last breath.

Gilbert often said, "If every human being could make the star which he has in his heart shine, all these small lights when together would make a wonderful sun of light, of beauty, of self-forgetfulness, so that each and every one could live in harmony."

*From a translation of a memorial article written in French*

#### OWEN BATTRICK 1919–1995

DEEPLY GRIEVED PASSING OWEN BATTRICK, WHO RENDERED DEVOTED SERVICES CAUSE FOUR DECADES. HIS ENTHUSIASTIC COMMITMENT PROPAGATION FAITH EUROPE AUSTRALASIA DISTINGUISHED BY PIONEERING NEW CALEDONIA LOYALTY ISLANDS, DEDICATION ADVANCEMENT CAUSE FRENCH-SPEAKING AREAS PACIFIC. RECALL HIS HIGHLY VALUED PARTICIPATION ADMINISTRATIVE WORK FAITH INCLUDING MEMBERSHIP NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLIES OF BRITISH ISLES, SOUTHWEST PACIFIC, NEW ZEALAND, CROWNED SERVICE NINE YEARS MEMBER AUSTRALASIAN BOARD COUNSELLORS. WILL LONG BE REMEMBERED RADIANT SPIRIT, EXEMPLARY DEDICATION WORK CAUSE TO VERY LAST BREATH. KINDLY CONVEY WIFE FAMILY CONDOLENCES, ASSURANCE

PRAYERS PROGRESS HIS LUMINOUS SOUL. ASKING NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLIES AUSTRALIA SAMOA HOLD MEMORIAL GATHERINGS MASHRIQU'L-ADHKÁRS.

Universal House of Justice  
April 17, 1995

Owen Battrick was born in the village of Pinner, a suburb of London, on December 6, 1919, the third of four children born to Alfred and Olive Battrick. Although he grew up during the Depression, it did not touch the family as his father rose to a position of some consequence in the insurance business. As his grandfather had been Head Coachman to the Bishop of York and in the choir of York Minster, Owen's father had an overdose of church-going while he was growing up, and though bringing his own children up with a high moral code, he only obliged them to go to church three times a year.

As a child, Owen was afflicted with a middle-ear infection that left him with reduced hearing. His son Richard recalled that the hearing aids he wore were put to great effect entertaining grandchildren and many others. "Pod," as he was known to those close to him, which incidentally stood for "Poor Old Dad," would have the hearing aid placed against the children's foreheads while they held their fingers in their ears. He would then explain to the enraptured children about cranial bone structure.

After receiving an excellent education at Merchant Taylors' Public School, he joined the army in 1939, gained a commission as second lieutenant in the Staffordshire Yeomanry, and was posted to Palestine. He served as a navigator for his battalion in the North African Campaign during the battle that defeated "the Desert Fox," Field

Marshal Rommel, and later he served as a captain in operational intelligence assigned to Operation Overlord, the invasion of Normandy.

Returning to work for an insurance company in London and finding it was not for him, he decided to go to the Lausanne Hotel School in Switzerland. There he met Jeannette Wayman Rodgers, a war widow with a two-year-old daughter Ilona. In April 1947 they were married, and for the next two years, they managed a hotel in North Wales. They then started their own company, Reading Caterers, in the south of England. Reading Caterers operated England's first tea bar, which served two thousand customers a day before branching out into food reform and becoming the largest health food store and vegetarian restaurant in the south of England. During these years they had a son, Richard, and a daughter, Sarah.

Owen and Jeannette were becoming concerned about their growing spiritual lethargy, and their interest in finding solutions to pressing social questions led them to seek diligently for the truth. They investigated various groups and sects, and as their search seemed fruitless, they grew dispirited. One day Owen visited a church, and finding himself quite alone, he passionately called out to God for guidance. Not long afterwards, he noticed a book in the local library about life after death. Again visiting the church, he apologized to God for having spoken to Him in such a forthright manner but again affirmed his dilemma. Back in the library he again picked up the book, and in the footnotes Owen read the words "Bahá'í Faith" for the first time. Other books increased his interest in the Faith.

Two months later, Beryl de Gruchy, a pioneer to Reading, advertised a public



Owen Battrick

meeting. Although neither Owen nor Jeannette was able to attend, Owen managed to drop in while en route to an appointment. Jeannette had exhorted him to get there early because she felt that there would be thousands in attendance, but when he opened the door he found only four people, all of them Bahá'ís! "It's all right, I believe, but I can't stay," said Owen, and he hurriedly bought ten books and left for his appointment. He and Jeannette accepted the Faith and were delighted when the next public meeting, held in the Town Hall, was attended by 120 people.

The Battricks were the third married couple to declare simultaneously in the British Bahá'í Community. In those early days they were deepened by Ḥasan Balyuzi, Ian Semple, and David Hofman, then members of the National Spiritual Assembly. Within two months of declaring, Owen was serving on a Bahá'í committee along with Marion Hofman and Dan Jordan.

It was the beginning of the Ten Year Crusade, and the Battricks threw themselves into the service of Bahá'u'lláh with total commitment. In the fourth week of February 1957, they went on pilgrimage. The beloved Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, advised them to teach in the pivotal centers of the United Kingdom: London, Edinburgh, Cardiff, Belfast, and Dublin, and also in the islands of the North Sea, until the end of the Ten Year Crusade. He intimated that they could then go to the Pacific. The Battricks returned to England with a galvanized sense of purpose and direction and did indeed teach in all these centers, except for the Faroe Islands in the North Sea, a task fulfilled by their daughter Ilona. That year Owen became a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United Kingdom in a by-election.

At the end of the Ten Year Crusade, Owen earned a teaching degree in geography, and the Battricks sold their home and businesses at a loss and moved to the Pacific. En route to New Caledonia, Owen stopped in the Solomon Islands to help Knights of Bahá'u'lláh Alvin and Gertrude Blum.<sup>131</sup> Within two weeks he had taken charge of their businesses, had been elected to the Regional Spiritual Assembly of the South Pacific Islands (which he served as secretary), had taken up responsibilities as the sole staff member of the national office, and had been appointed to the National Teaching Committee. Overwhelmed, he prayed a lot, adjusted, survived, and served.

While Owen was in the Solomon Islands, Jeannette, with her two youngest children, sailed for New Zealand. She was elected secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly of New Zealand at Ridván 1968. She traveled extensively throughout the

<sup>131</sup> See Gertrude Blum, pp. 65-70.

North Island, especially conscious of the need to teach the Maori people. Having helped the Blums, Owen went on to New Caledonia where there was a small and loving Bahá'í community. He managed to find work, a small flat in which to house his family, and a car that would enable them to explore their new country. "Bahá'u'lláh will always take care of your needs," Owen would say with a smile, "a piece of bread, a scrape of butter, no jam." After working several different jobs during their first years in New Caledonia, he found a job with the Shell Oil Company that he kept for some time.

In 1971 the National Assembly of the Solomon Islands was formed and the seat of the Regional Spiritual Assembly of the South Pacific—which maintained a jurisdiction over the French-speaking islands of French Polynesia, New Caledonia, and New Hebrides—was transferred from Honiara to Noumea. By 1973 the economic crisis forced the government to replace working expatriates with French nationals, but the Battricks were granted permission to stay in New Caledonia as they had means of support. They moved to the goal area of Ouvéa, an outer island where they built their little garage/house, which they felt had a quietness that restored the soul. Every month they flew to Noumea for National Assembly meetings. Nine months later, Owen was appointed as an Auxiliary Board member.

After seven years of remission, the cancer that first struck Jeannette in the late 1960s reappeared, forcing them to go to New Zealand for her medical treatment. Owen continued to travel from New Zealand to New Caledonia to carry on his Auxiliary Board work. In 1975 he received a cable from the Universal House of Justice

appointing him to the Continental Board of Counsellors for Australasia. Jeannette served as his secretary while undergoing rigorous chemotherapy. She passed away on October 10, 1978.<sup>132</sup> In 1980 Owen married June Ritter.

Released from the Board of Counsellors in 1986, he was elected to the New Zealand National Assembly for two years and served as treasurer for one. In August 1987 he suffered heart abnormalities and was fitted with a pacemaker.

When his service to the Bahá'í institutions ended, he offered himself as a traveling teacher to French-speaking Europe, French Polynesia, the islands of the Indian Ocean, and the Caribbean. His 1994 trip to England was glorious; he took part in summer schools in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and in a teaching project in Liverpool. At every opportunity he shared his knowledge of Bahá'í administration and his love for the Guardian. He held classes on *The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh* and met with old friends.

His son Richard recalled that during the last few years of his life, Owen enjoyed his family, and they were privileged to spend some quality time with him. "We consulted with him in the depths of the night about our lives, our children, our work and business ventures; and he poured forth such love to us."

His last project was a fifteen-day trip to Tahiti on behalf of the National Spiritual Assembly of Hawaii in 1995. Owen, with his extensive knowledge of the area, and Ron Pratt, a former pioneer to Tahiti, made a perfect team. They arrived in Tahiti on April 8, and during the next week they

<sup>132</sup> See "In Memoriam," *The Bahá'í World*, vol. XVII, pp. 470-71.

**LUELLA MCKAY**  
Knight of Bahá'u'lláh  
1918-1995

"Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee."

Isaiah 60:1

Luella Miland McKay was born in Portland, Oregon, October 10, 1918, of William Earl and Olivia Elodia (Goff) Cranshaw. She was the eldest of the family's four children and was reared in Walla Walla, Washington, where she attended St. Patrick's Parochial and St. Vincent's Academy. While she was in her teens, the family moved to San Francisco, California, in a never-ending attempt to improve their humble circumstances.

"My father," she wrote in her autobiography, "was an impressive, natural speaker. Early in his life, he decided he wanted to become a lawyer, a profession for which he was well suited. But, during his high school years, an incident occurred which

spent their days visiting the friends and their evenings in holding deepenings at their hotel, assisting the preparations for the reelection of the Spiritual Assembly of Papeete. Ron said, "The friends all showed a deep affection for Owen and called him 'their angel'." Owen and Ron were also searching for a suitable site on which to build a Hazíratu'l-Quds.

After attending a deepening on the evening of April 13, Owen awoke in the early hours of the next morning feeling dizzy but slept again. He became gravely ill a few hours later and quickly passed away shortly after 4:00 AM on the fourteenth. He was seventy-five years old. His wife June described him as having been "in a place that he loved, doing what he loved best—serving his Lord."

June, along with their three children and friends, gathered with the local community for the funeral that took place in the cemetery in Papeete where the first Bahá'í of Tahiti is buried.

The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of New Zealand wrote of "being comforted by the knowledge that Owen passed to the Abhá Kingdom in full harness, as he would have wanted to do. He had a particular love of the French-speaking territories in the Pacific, and his ability to contribute to their progress only hours before his unexpected passing is a befitting tribute to his worthy endeavors in the pathway of service."

*From an article by June Ritter Battrick and Richard Battrick*



Luella McKay

altered the course of his direction." Luella continued:

It had been a time when he was looking forward to graduating from the high school he attended in St. Mary's, Kansas. The principal of the school, however, who was an obvious racist, remarked that he would never graduate a Negro from his school.

The remark, of course, shocked my father—dealt quite a blow to his young pride. So, feeling hurt but standing firm, he pushed along a route other than the law profession. He became a Red Cap (porter) for the Southern Pacific Railroad Company.

My mother's name was Olivia Goff Cranshaw. As a young single woman in her early twenties, she received an apprenticeship in mortuary science. How she got in to the profession is a remarkable story.

Not caring to continue filling jobs which offered no real advantage such as housemaids, etc., she decided to make a change. And make a change she did. She answered a newspaper ad—a request for an assistant in a funeral home. In spite of her racial handicap, she went forth with confidence.

The management, after eyeing her with some hesitancy, became intrigued by the little woman. She was pretty, well-groomed and professional-seeming in manner; and she had dared to cross the barrier of race. As it turned out, she got the job. Quickly and easily adjusting to the place and the routine, she dispelled the stereotypical notion that Black folks were afraid of dead folks.

Her most serious work began when her employers, recognizing her aptitude and abilities, decided that she could learn to embalm. She had watched

the others work and, learning quickly, became skilled in performing autopsies upon request by the doctors.

I commend her for breaking away from the traditional patterns which have so often affected Black people's advancement and their quest for equality and justice. She could well serve as a heroine for those who struggle for identity and freedom.<sup>133</sup>

When the family moved to San Francisco, Luella's mother negotiated for the purchase of a large, three-story Victorian building, which they subdivided into apartments during World War II to generate income.

In 1937 Olivia was not satisfied with the status-quo religions. Her search led her to Rosa Shaw, a Bahá'í who would become her spiritual mother. After attending a series of firesides in the home of the Shaws, Luella declared her belief in Bahá'u'lláh, probably in 1943—an event that was followed by the declarations of her mother, sister, and brother.

Luella became the first black Bahá'í youth in the city, and here she met such notables as the Hands of the Cause William Sears and Horace Holley. She was often asked to speak at Bahá'í functions, something that helped prepare her to be a teacher.

Luella graduated from high school and entered professional training at the Delores Premier Don Lux Beauty Academy. She continued her training at the Oakland School of Hairdressing and obtained

<sup>133</sup> "Excerpts from the Autobiography of Luella Cranshaw McKay" in her book *America's Slaves: Descendants of the House of Israel*, published by Goff Hammond, Detroit, Michigan, 1981, pp. 289–91.

her instructor's license for the state of California.

On June 10, 1945, she married Jasper Lewis McKay and bore a son, Nicholas William. In San Francisco, she taught at the Juliette Beauty Academy, and while her husband pursued his degree at Olivet College, she studied cultural history, anthropology, and the Martha Graham style of modern dance. But the center of Luella's life was the Faith.

In 1953, while attending the dedication of the Wilmette Temple and the Intercontinental Teaching Conference at Chicago, she volunteered to pioneer to Africa in response to the Guardian's Ten Year Crusade call. In her application she noted that her three-year-old son, her mother, sister, and friend Alyce Janssen would accompany her. As Alyce was white, Luella wrote that "our considerations were for areas unprejudiced toward mixed groups" and specified their preferences as Madeira, Spanish Morocco, or Tangiers. The United States Africa Teaching Committee approved them for Spanish Morocco, informing them that there was no freedom of religion there. Despite urgings from friends and some family members who insisted that she was too genteel and burdened with a child to venture so far, she trusted in God and prepared for the adventure. Her mother did not accompany her, and the group was comprised of her sister, Earleta, and Earleta's husband, John Flemming, as well as Alyce Janssen. They arrived in October of 1953 and were all, with the exception of baby Nicholas, accorded the title of Knight of Bahá'u'lláh<sup>134</sup>. Later, in writing the "In Memoriam" for Alyce Janssen, Luella noted:

The writer of this memoir, whose family together with Alyce and others composed that pioneer team, recalls with profound tenderness the feeling of oneness, the mutual sharing of resources both tangible and intangible, that marked every step of what might otherwise have been a harrowing and distressing experience: the bedsprings without mattresses, the leaks in the ceilings, the unwanted lice, the bugs in the flour. These physical inconveniences intensified our fervor and increased our dedication to the goal we had set out to accomplish.<sup>135</sup>

Luella served the Faith in Africa from 1953 to 1959, helping to establish the first Local Spiritual Assembly in the tiny seaport town of Ceuta, Spanish Morocco. In Ceuta she used her skills as a cosmetologist to identify and treat cases of head lice, prevalent among the poor villagers.

In the summer of 1954 she became interested in pioneering again, "when, through a letter from Leroy Ioas, the Guardian stated that he was wondering if any of our Group could move to Spanish Guinea." That country was a difficult goal. An American, Elise Schreiber, had earlier traveled to Madrid and secured a visa rarely granted to single women. She was able to spend a month in Spanish Guinea,<sup>136</sup> but her visa was not renewed, the local police explaining to her that never in the country's history had a single woman entered before. The United States Africa Teaching Committee shared this information with Luella noting, "Thus no pioneer is at present on Spanish Guinea

<sup>135</sup> See "In Memoriam," *The Bahá'í World*, vol. XIV, p. 315.

<sup>136</sup> Elise Schreiber was named a Knight of Bahá'u'lláh for Spanish Guinea, May 1954.

<sup>134</sup> Fawzi Zaynu'l-'Abidin and family also arrived in October of 1953 and were accorded the title Knights of Bahá'u'lláh.

and we are of course very anxious to have this area filled. However, we are doubtful if it is wise for a single woman to again undertake this assignment, in the light of Elise's experiences." Nevertheless Luella applied for a visa.

On September 15, 1954, she received a letter written on behalf of the Guardian:

He was most happy to learn that now you are endeavouring to gain permission to enter yet another African country as a pioneer; and that you are using every effort to get into Spanish Guinea. If you succeed, you can render the Faith a most meritorious service.

The Guardian would advise you to keep in close touch with Mr. Banani and the Africa Committee, and to follow their advice. He hopes you may accomplish this goal on which your heart is set, and not only enter, but settle and remain in that land.

The Guardian had added in his own hand:

May the Almighty, whose Cause you serve so splendidly, reward and sustain you always, remove all obstacles from your path, and enable you to achieve your heart's desire.

Your true brother, Shoghi.

In December she was granted a one-month visa, and in March 1955 she informed the Guardian that she was sailing for Fernando Pó.<sup>137</sup> In early July she wrote to another pioneer:

<sup>137</sup> Santa Isabela was the capital of Spanish Guinea. In 1968 the territory gained independence as Equatorial Guinea, and the city, which is still the capital, is now called Malabo. The island of Fernando Pó has also been renamed and is now known as Bioko Island.

Good news. I have been given an additional 6 months to stay here, to study the native music and languages. I shall be changing my address and moving to Bata (Continental Guinea) in August. There I shall be in a better position to complete my studies.

The matter of her being a single woman was never raised. A short time later another pioneer had arrived, a person known for his zeal. Leroy Ioas wrote:

Of course great caution will have to be used in the teaching work; and it would be my thought that you should write . . . to be very cautious in his teaching work, and to cooperate closely with Mrs. McKay in the work that she is doing. If he teaches too publicly, he may precipitate a situation which might result unfavorably for the Faith and bring about the expulsion of Luella McKay. We hope of course she will be able to stay until a strong Assembly has been established of native people.

In August the governor asked Luella to leave. She wrote, "[M]y name has been connected with . . . who acted very unwisely and without authority in teaching his creed. He became carried away with his enthusiasm and so was misunderstood and jailed."

She left behind one declarant, Titus Appan Uwak, a native of Nigeria. She had deepened him, and before she departed she was able to leave him with her Bahá'í library.

At the risk of great personal danger, Titus, with the help of a close and trusted friend, smuggled the books out of the hotel under their clothes, and brought them to his home where he buried them underground for safe keeping. It took nearly five days before the last book was removed, as precautions

had to be taken so not to reveal any bulge from under their clothing.

In 1956 Earleta and John Flemming left for the United States, returning to Spanish Morocco later. Alyce Janssen had departed the country earlier. Luella continued to teach and to consolidate the Cueta community until April of 1959.

Returning to the United States, Luella took up her profession at the Detroit School of Cosmetology. Giving her attention to the poor and the dysfunctional, she is credited in Marquis' *Who's Who of American Women*<sup>138</sup> as having established the first certified school of cosmetology for the inmates at the Detroit House of Corrections—the Ruth McEvoy Beauty School, where she was an instructor and an administrator. She also served on the Board of Cosmetology—the licensing and regulatory agency for the state of Michigan—and was its president in 1971, 1974, and 1977.

Luella continued to serve the Faith by giving lectures, by hosting deepenings and firesides, and by assuming her Assembly responsibilities. She also served on the Goals Committee for Michigan. She was gratified to be reconnected with Titus Uwak who found her address and wrote to her many years after their parting in Spanish Guinea. He had returned to Nigeria and had become a teacher of the Cause there.

In 1981 she wrote and published *America's Slaves: Descendants from the House of Israel*, in which she called the blacks of America to a spiritual awakening of the noble role they must play in the building of the Kingdom of God and the new world order.

Luella was seventy-six years old at the time of her passing, April 15, 1995, in Southfield, Michigan. Upon learning of

her death the following cable was sent on April 20 to the National Assembly of the United States by the Universal House of Justice:

SADDENED LOSS DEVOTED KNIGHT OF BAHÁ'ULLÁH LUELLEA MCKAY. HER PIONEERING ACTIVITIES IN AFRICA, INCLUDING SPANISH MOROCCO AND SPANISH GUINEA, WARMLY REMEMBERED. PRAYING HOLY SHRINES PROGRESS HER SOUL ABHÁ KINGDOM. KINDLY CONVEY OUR CONDOLENCES HER FRIENDS AND FAMILY.

*Adapted, in part, from an article by Nicholas McKay*

### SAMIHEH BANÁNÍ 1907-1995

DEEPLY GRIEVED PASSING DEARLY LOVED SAMIHEH BANÁNÍ. RECALL WITH PROFOUND AFFECTION HER DEVOTED SERVICES CRADLE FAITH, HER INDEFATIGABLE PIONEER ENDEAVOURS AFRICA IN SUPPORT ACTIVITIES HER ILLUSTRIOUS HUSBAND, FOLLOWED BY HER VALUED EFFORTS IN PROMOTION INTERESTS BELOVED CANADIAN COMMUNITY. FERVENTLY PRAYING SHRINES PROGRESS HER RADIANT SOUL ABHÁ KINGDOM. ADVISING UGANDA NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY HOLD MEMORIAL GATHERING MOTHER TEMPLE AFRICA. CONVEY HEART-FELT SYMPATHY HER CHILDREN, MEMBERS FAMILY.

Universal House of Justice  
May 8, 1995

<sup>138</sup> Eighth edition, p. 634.

Samiheh Banání—called “Mamajan,” first within her own immediate family circle and subsequently by all who came to know her—was born in December 1907 in Tīhrán, the first child to her parents. She came from a distinguished Bahá'í family. Her father, Siyyid 'Abdu'l-Ḥusayn Ardistání, was a second generation Bahá'í, who, upon the instructions of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, undertook extensive teaching trips to India and Burma and later to Najaf and Karbilá. Her mother, 'Atiyyih Khánum, was the granddaughter of Muḥammad Riḍá Javáhirí who became a Bábí in 1844 and was later martyred in the Síyáh-Chál in 1852. Her paternal grandfather, Siyyid Rafiá Ardistání, was a most ardent and devoted believer in the days of the Báb and instrumental in the spread of the Faith in Ardistán. And her maternal grandmother, Maryam Khánum, was one of the earliest educators of girls in Tīhrán.

Before her birth, her father went on pilgrimage and asked 'Abdu'l-Bahá for a name for his unborn baby. The Master graciously suggested both feminine and masculine forms of the name: Samiheh for a girl and Samih for a boy. This gift from 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself truly mirrored Mamajan's character, which was generous, kind, gentle, and righteous. The virtues of her name were manifested both physically and spiritually in her nature. She was candid itself; no matter what her mood, you could read her like an open book. Love, sympathy, and goodness flowed from her to all who crossed her path.

Mamajan's early childhood was spent in Ardistán, her father's ancestral homeland. At the age of ten she was sent to Tīhrán to be educated. She resided with her cultivated maternal grandmother, who was known in the family as Bibijan. In addition to attending school during the terrible years of the First World War when Iran was gripped by

famine, disease, and lawlessness, she had to care for her ailing mother and both of her maternal grandparents, who died within weeks of each other in the great Spanish flu pandemic of 1919. It was a time of great hardship that strengthened her ability to face future tests. After her graduation from the newly established Bahá'í Tarbiyat School for Girls in Tīhrán, she taught for a short time.

In December 1925 she married Músá Banání.<sup>139</sup> Her marriage, though traditional and arranged, was quite unusual and the cause of some stir in the community. She came from siyyid stock, descendent of the Prophet Muḥammad, and she had married a man twenty-two years her senior of Iraqi-Jewish extraction. Between them there were many differences of temperament and upbringing, of culture and habit, but the magnet that held them together was their love of Bahá'u'lláh and their ardent desire to raise their children under His shadow. The Cause came first for both of them, in all things. Their marriage lasted forty-six years, during which time their devotion to each other deepened and sweetened.

Mamajan was a very intelligent woman, far in advance of her time. She had an open mind, a quick wit, and was always eager to learn. This quality remained as keen in her old age as it had been early in her life. Her sense of humor, her lightheartedness, and her boundless love, not only for her family but above all for Bahá'u'lláh, His Covenant, and Shoghi Effendi, the point of guidance for the Cause, left a profound impression upon her children. Her prodigious memory, which to her last day never diminished, was a constant check on family and friends who might

<sup>139</sup> See “In Memoriam,” *The Bahá'í World*, vol. XV, pp. 421–23.



*Samiheh Banání*

misremember or misrepresent dates of birth or other important life events.

Her home was always full of people, her table never without guests. When, in 1934, she had the privilege of going to the Holy Land on her first pilgrimage together with her husband and their eldest son Amín, she determined to arise and answer the call of her beloved Guardian to pioneer and serve in distant lands. Although the opportunity to fulfill this desire did not come until seventeen years later, she had been ready and waiting.

For many years she served on the National Committee for the Advancement of Women in Iran, of which her mother had been an original member. She was still active in this capacity in 1950 when she left her homeland. Toward the end of that year, the call of the Guardian had been raised for the friends in Iran to settle in Africa—the call launching the Two Year African Campaign. The flame of pioneering touched the hearts of both husband and wife to the extent that, with the ardent joy

of youth and with the intoxicated eagerness of lovers, they sold their goods, abandoned their newly built marble mansion in the north of Tīhrán, and within six months found themselves in Uganda.

The years spent in Uganda from 1951 until 1973 were the happiest years of Mamajan's life. Their home at 3 Kitante Road in Kampala was the hub of local and national and intercontinental activity; they witnessed the unfolding of the Ten Year Crusade from their front veranda. One of the highlights of that time was their journey to the Holy Land in February 1952. On the last day of their pilgrimage, Shoghi Effendi told Músá Banání that he had been appointed a Hand of the Cause of God. One year later three African pioneers—two of whom became Knights of Bahá'u'lláh including Enoch Olinga who would later become a Hand of the Cause—set out from the Banání home on their journey across the continent to open virgin territories in Central and West Africa. Although Mamajan was her husband's constant companion and helper, she always maintained her own independent relationship with the Covenant and never justified her actions on the basis of her family's connections or her husband's rank. Her faith was her faith alone.

Mamajan loved cooking and feeding all and sundry. She was particularly attracted to youth, for even in old age her spirit remained vigorous and young. She left Africa in 1974 in the wake of the upheavals of Uganda and spent the remaining years of her life in the Canary Islands with her mother and sister, in the United States with her granddaughter, and in Canada with one of her sons. Wherever she lived, she was at the hub of Bahá'í activities and found ways, despite growing infirmities, to raise large sums of money for the Fund through her cooking, which attracted many

of her friends. She passed away in Toronto on May 8, 1995, survived by five of her six children, eleven grandchildren, and six great-grandchildren.

*Violette Nakhjaváni*

**ANNAMARIE M. BAKER**  
1921–1995

Annamarie Mattoon was born to Mr. Edwin W. Mattoon and Mrs. Annie E. Mattoon on February 23, 1921, in Champaign, Illinois, in the United States. She died on May 13, 1995, in Cochabamba, Bolivia.

Her mother was pregnant with Annamarie when her father wrote to 'Abdu'l-Bahá for permission to go on pilgrimage. Her mother added a postscript saying, "even if just for one day." They were granted permission to travel to the Holy Land in that historic year, and little Annamarie was only three months old when she was in the presence of the Master. He named her Zivar and held her in His arms.

The Mattoons were a widely known Bahá'í family. Many of Annamarie's fond memories were of the ride from their home in Arcola in an open touring car to attend Nineteen Day Feasts in Urbana, Illinois. The family was part of the Champaign-Urbana Bahá'í community, even though Arcola was about forty miles away. Annamarie could not remember a time when she did not consider herself a Bahá'í, although she attended Sunday school regularly in the local churches, a common practice at that time.

Her father worked as a school administrator, and about 1929 during the early Depression, he accepted a teaching post in the Chicago public schools for financial reasons. The family moved to the Chicago area, eventually settling in Wilmette. Annamarie finished high school

there and then attended Lawrence College in Appleton, Wisconsin, receiving a bachelor of arts degree in primary education. During this period of her life, she was very involved in Bahá'í youth activities and served on the National Youth Committee.

Annamarie was an outstanding and well-loved teacher. Kindergarten was her first choice, and she taught that level for most of her career. Even after she had retired, many years later in Cochabamba, Bolivia, her former students would greet her on the street, in stores and restaurants, and wherever they encountered her. It was a source of joy and pride to Annamarie that her former kindergarten students asked her on several occasions to take part in their high school graduation ceremonies; she was often mentioned in the speeches of the valedictorians, and in 1993 she was invited to give the graduation address.

On December 23, 1947, Annamarie Mattoon and William "Bill" Baker were married in Wilmette, and together they had a loving and harmonious married life for forty-seven years. Their first two children, Frank and Crystal, were born in Lima, Ohio, where Bill worked in the family bakery. Bill decided to continue his education, and the bakery was sold. The family moved to Champaign, Illinois, where their third child, Robert, was born. During these years, Annamarie was raising the children and did not teach school. However, she was very involved in Bahá'í activities, serving on the Local Spiritual Assembly, teaching children's classes, and hosting Nineteen Day Feasts as well as fireside meetings. With her warm personality and good memory for names, she was always an excellent hostess. She also provided the loving support her husband needed to complete bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees at the University of Illinois by 1960.



*Annamarie M. Baker*

After leaving Champaign, the family moved to the North Shore area of Chicago, settling finally in Deerfield, Illinois, to help establish a Local Spiritual Assembly there. Her home was open for Sunday morning activities for separate groups of children, youth, and adults. The Sunday morning gatherings were popular, and they were finally moved into the Deerfield Park facility. Sunday was a very busy day with morning classes in Deerfield and afternoon activities such as choir, guiding, or reading at afternoon services at the Wilmette Temple. It was also a very sociable time, and frequently there were visitors for supper.

In Deerfield Annamarie became very conscious of racial discrimination as African-Americans had been excluded from residency in the town. The family lived in a nice home in a pleasant neighborhood, but when the pioneer call came, Annamarie responded by asking, "If we don't go now, when will we go?" The family decided to go, and the sale of the house was left to her. There were several visits a day by

prospective buyers. One day a real estate agent brought an African-American couple who offered the listed price. Immediately, two white families also offered the listed price. Annamarie called a family conference and recommended that the house be sold to the African-American family. It was a happy choice. The neighbors were initially very upset, even hostile, but eventually they got along well, and Deerfield took a step toward integration.

On November 14, 1968, the family arrived in Lima, Perú, around 1:00 AM. Annamarie was forty-seven years old, accustomed to an upper-middle-class suburban life, and found it difficult to learn Spanish, but she was happy to be a pioneer and to be of service to the Faith and to the family.

They settled in Arequipa, a rather inactive Bahá'í community, and Annamarie soon made a home and started firesides. The lack of Spanish was a problem for her, but she found the Arequipeños to be friendly, and soon the family had an active social life. Those were years in which she could travel and teach, though she devoted considerable time to homemaking. She also spent many hours and days on the preparation and distribution of the national Bahá'í bulletin, and she always included a well-received children's page. She also was an active and enthusiastic supporter of her husband's activities, and their home was a center to regularly receive and teach groups of Aymara and Quechua friends.

In 1974 the family decided to move to Bolivia. Annamarie went ahead to find a house and was elected to the Local Spiritual Assembly of Cochabamba, so momentarily she was on two Local Assemblies in two countries. She served on the Assembly of Cochabamba until the last month of her life—a period of twenty-one years.

She hosted weekly firesides and often organized and taught children's classes.

Her home was always open to visitors, and breakfast was a particularly busy time. Many friends from the rural areas would drop in to visit between 6:30 and 8:00 AM, and Annamarie welcomed them with loving hospitality.

Hers was a devoted life. She served both her family and the Bahá'í community. Annamarie endeavored to make every event a happy one; she truly gave delight and joy to everyone. Nothing could dampen her spirits or change her nature, which was one of joy personified. Perhaps that is what she learned in the arms of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Her parents told her that the Master had laughed as He held her. And Annamarie did find humor, even in the smallest things and in the simplest circumstances. Her joy and her love reached out to the world.

On May 14, 1995, the Universal House of Justice sent the following message:

GRIEVED NEWS PASSING DEDICATED WARM-HEARTED PIONEER FAITH ANNAMARIE BAKER. HER MANY YEARS OF EXEMPLARY SACRIFICIAL SERVICES LOVINGLY REMEMBERED. ASSURE PRAYERS HOLY SHRINES FOR PROGRESS HER RADIANT SOUL IN WORLDS OF GOD. KINDLY CONVEY OUR SYMPATHY TO HER DEAR FAMILY.

*William K. Baker and Crystal Baker*

### WILLIAM R. FOSTER 1912-1995

He was very pleased to have the first pioneer from America go forth under this organized African campaign; he was doubly happy that it should have been an American Negro who went. This is highly appropriate and surely has delighted the heart of

'Abdu'l-Bahá who watched over the race with particular love, tenderness and understanding.

Written on behalf of the Guardian,  
*Bahá'í News*, February 1952

William Rositter "Bill" Foster was born in Chicago, Illinois, on June 6, 1912, the descendant of American slaves. He attended public schools and went on to study tool and die design at the Illinois Institute of Technology. He began his professional career as an architectural draftsman, and at the time of his response to the Guardian's call for pioneers, he was a partner in a general construction company employing eight tradesmen.

Sometime in 1951 the Hand of the Cause Amelia Collins insisted that Bill write to the Guardian about pioneering, and Shoghi Effendi responded by pointing the way to Africa. With the support of his wife, Ruth, and two children, Tahereh and Badi, aged then thirteen and nine, Bill arrived in Liberia in January 1952. All the doors seemed to have opened for him. A few weeks later he reported to the US Africa Teaching Committee (USATC):

Tonight I am preparing or planning the first "Feast" to be held in the Republic of Liberia, while Benjamin Miller,<sup>140</sup> the first Liberian Bahá'í, is writing his first letter to the Guardian. We started to function yesterday about 4:30 PM as a Bahá'í nucleus, and we are confident that we will attain group status very soon. Our need at the present is literature, books, a large photo of the Temple in Wilmette suitable for public display.

<sup>140</sup> William Foster later noted that "Benjamin Miller was an American Negro who had several business enterprises in Cleveland, Ohio." He moved to Liberia toward the end of 1951, applied for, and was granted Liberian citizenship.



*William R. Foster*

This is truly a wonderful country once you catch the spirit of the people. I have placed all my affairs in the hands of Bahá'u'lláh and with the prayers offered in [my] behalf just wonderful things have happened . . . We can publicize the Faith with more impunity than any place I know of including Chicago . . . We live together in a beautiful cottage on the campus at the University of Liberia . . . We have made the necessary contacts with the right people and are socially accepted as Bahá'ís.

Bill had also written that "I've been fed free of cost by the Liberian government on the best American food available" and painted a rosy picture of his job prospects. He explained that the US government was installing a sewer and water system in the city of Monrovia, and as there were no professional plumbers in the country, he had offered to train Liberians in the trade. He was hired by the Department of Public

Works and Utilities and made chairman of the committee drafting the plumbing code for the city. His salary was set by President Tubman, and William wrote, "I plan to send my first pay check, which is due Friday, to my wife."

He went on to catalog the tropical diseases prevalent in Liberia and to express his concerns for his family. "I take my medicine religiously to prevent malaria, but so do all my American friends that are suffering from malaria. I don't know what to say or how to advise my wife and children about coming here under these conditions."

During the summer months Bill spent much of this time away from Monrovia, near Buchanan in Grand Bassa County. "I'm supposed to survey the site, design, and install water, electricity, plumbing, and sewerage before the president returns [in six weeks]." This enabled him to teach prominent people in Grand Bassa and the fledgling group in Monrovia, which had now grown to eleven members, to become less dependent upon him and to practice the skills of consultation and prepare for the formation of its first Assembly.

The need in Monrovia for administrative experience increased as the group grew, and the arrival of pioneer Valerie Wilson<sup>141</sup> was eagerly anticipated. She arrived in November 1952 and found, as Bill had, that all the doors opened before her. She quickly found accommodation and was also employed by the Liberian government.

In early December President W. V. S. Tubman arrived aboard his yacht in Grand Bassa for the formal dedication of the hospital there, for which Bill's work had been critical. Bill was a member of the first party given the honor to board the yacht and was well received by the visiting physicians,

<sup>141</sup> See Valerie Wilson, pp. 85-88.



World Health Organization officials, and the president.

On December 11 Bill and Valerie were stunned to receive letters of dismissal from the government advising them to leave the country at the first opportunity—a serious blow to the Guardian's Africa Campaign. It seemed that Bill had done something improper, and Valerie had said something indiscreet. Valerie explained to the USATC:

The occasion of the dedication of the hospital in Grand Bassa in which Bill had installed all the plumbing, which was the reason he was absent from Monrovia so much, took place on December 8. The president and most of the dignitaries were up there for the occasion. The superintendent of the county asked Bill to take pictures of the entire proceedings which lasted three days. On one occasion Bill was requested to take some posed pictures of various members of the Grand Lodge F.A.A.M. These persons were using a dump truck for transportation—very few cars—and were in full dress for the occasion (laying of the cornerstone). Some held the positions of top ranking officials of the Liberian government. This was presented to the president as a candid shot that was taken for the sole purpose of belittling the efforts of the Liberian people and that Bill was not in sympathy with their efforts.

While living in Ducor Hall and at dinner I mentioned as light conversation the difficulties the dignitaries had in transportation while in Bassa. One of the ladies at the table became indignant and said that could never have happened. So it is believed by many that she reported in a twisted way what I said to the president. Therefore

the president thought that Bill was my informant, but this is not so as I had repeated what had been told me by another party who had participated in this dedication.

Ever since my arrival, and not being Bill's wife, people have been circulating immoral rumors because of our constant association . . . This is all that we have to go on until we see the president.

Bill appealed to the president in writing and was very direct in explaining his motives.

I came to Liberia eleven months ago for two reasons, namely:

1. To promulgate the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh the Founder of the Bahá'í World Faith.
2. To make my contribution to the progress that is being made here by my race.

Prayers were offered by the friends in the United States, Britain, and the Holy Land. In February they attended the first Intercontinental Teaching Conference in Kampala, Uganda, and consulted with members of the African Teaching Committee. Knight of Bahá'u'lláh Matthew Bullock visited Liberia a few months later and further helped smooth relations with President Tubman. Valerie was reinstated, but Bill's continuing employment was still in question.

The crisis was also a setback for the development of the Bahá'í community, and the formation of the Assembly was jeopardized as "four of the friends weakened when it looked as if we were going to be expelled from the country."

Bill had been granted permission by the Guardian to journey from Kampala to the Holy Land to make a pilgrimage. He wrote to his wife that Shoghi Effendi had

asked him to return by the twenty-first so as to supervise the election of the first Local Assembly in Monrovia. But he had also been given a special assignment. He wrote:

Been using [William Sutherland] Maxwell's office to make drawings and sketches, one pertaining to the dome of the Shrine of the Báb. My main work here is to erect two gates at Bahjí, one 12 x 18 ft. and the Collins main gate 36 x 16 ft., also four sets of marble steps adjoining the Holy Precincts of the Shrine at Bahjí. So far the Guardian is well pleased with my work.

After he returned to Monrovia and after its first Assembly was elected, Bill wrote to the USATC, "I don't have a job but I'm able to pick up little jobs that will keep me eating . . . The prospects of real work here aren't too bright at present because of a delay of from six to nine months in the installation of the water and sewer, so in the meantime I'm holding daily teaching and deepening meetings . . . The Guardian also gave me a silver cup to help soothe or assuage the feelings of President Tubman."

Bill was elected chairman of the Assembly but had to resign as he was spending more time in Bomi Hills, a mining town north of Monrovia where he guided the formation of the Bomi Hills group.<sup>142</sup>

Despite efforts his relationship with President Tubman was not reconciled. His work prospects continued to be uncertain, and the period of his separation from his family was drawing out. Bill investigated every lead and availed himself of his professional contacts and friends but without success. Toward late summer he was becoming disheartened. "I'm leaving no stone unturned to find steady employment. I even

had good jobs during the Depression; this is a real test." In the meantime his days were filled with work for the Faith. Finally the United States National Assembly approved his request to resettle in Morocco, where it was hoped his prospects would improve and his family could join him. Valerie Wilson was seriously ill with jaundice and malaria at this time, and Bill delayed his departure until her recovery was assured. He arrived in Casablanca in May 1954 and was elected secretary of the Assembly the following April.

Bill secured a permanent civil service job at the US Air Force base, and Ruth and the children joined him. Teaching the Faith was more restricted, and because of curfews meetings were usually held on Sundays. If Liberia was the frying pan, Morocco was the fire. The Fosters' tests intensified. Ruth wrote:

Badi has a terrible case of homesickness. He saw a man closed in his car and burned to death during the rioting (we lived a few blocks from the bombed café). Badi was caught out in it on the way home from a scout meeting—when he didn't arrive home Bill went out to look for him—thank goodness I didn't know until the next day they were shooting and beating the Arabs on sight—Bill and the kids are often mistaken for Arabs—even by the Arabs.

As in Liberia Bill's employment was short-lived.

He was called into the security office and told he was considered a poor security risk for the top position he held . . . The FBI questioned him off and on for three hours but of course would not give him any exact charge to protest against other than they objected to his international connections and that

<sup>142</sup> Vivian Wesson (see pp. 108-13) and Mavis Nymon pioneered to Bomi Hills in 1954.

some one in Chicago said they had seen his name on a communist membership list.<sup>143</sup> They asked such questions as "Are you a representative for an international organization?" "Have you received traveling funds from it?" "How did you, a Negro, get to stop over in Kenya?" "Why were you in Haifa?" "What were you doing in Liberia?" "Is your wife white?"—on and on. Of course they had all the answers, and there would have been no use for Bill to use the old dodges of travel for education, writing, research, etc., especially since the letters from the NSA vouching for us were handed in with our applications for passports. The Liberian government knew Bill was teaching the Faith from the beginning; in fact they had given him written permission to do so—a photostat copy of which was given to the FBI along with a Bahá'í pamphlet on the aims and purposes of the Faith, also his passport—all of which were photostated and returned. There was a record in Liberia of the money sent by National for the expenses to Kampala. The FBI . . . knew the National had helped support his family. Bill signed a sworn statement that he had never been a communist or belonged to a front organization and said he was willing to take a lie detector test . . . Nevertheless the Air Force dropped him, and he was advised that since he had been hired from tourist status on a temporary basis for the first year he would have to go back to the States and hire a lawyer there to fight it . . . Bill felt he should not rock the boat . . . and jeopardize

the status of the other Bahá'ís working on the base (five at the time).

There followed a period of pre-independence political and economic instability. Bill and Ruth were in the process of selling their house in Chicago, and Ruth was pregnant with their third child, Zarrin. While their situation did not improve, the Fosters remained in Casablanca, hoping to please the Guardian. Eventually the US African Teaching Committee intervened on their behalf and appealed to the US National Assembly in early 1958:

Ruth and Tahirih are the only wage earners . . . Ruth's mention of the water having been turned off, the electricity having been off for more than a month, their having to borrow from ISA and Bahá'í friends . . . was what led us to ask for the cabling of \$200 to meet the emergency . . . The situation which Bill faces there is far from promising so far as jobs are concerned.

Bill eventually secured a clearance and taught English as a second language for USIS (the United States Information Service). The Fosters remained in Casablanca until 1963 before returning to Liberia where he and Ruth lived until 1967, when they settled in the United States. Bill made travel teaching trips throughout Western Africa and the Turks and Caicos among other places. The Fosters lived in the Princeton, New Jersey, area in the 1970s, and later Bill went to the Hawaiian Islands and served on the National Assembly there for a total of twelve years. He also was a member of its National Education and Properties committees. Bill Foster died of cancer on May 18, 1995. On May 22 the Universal House of Justice cabled:

<sup>143</sup> This was during the postwar period of intense anticommunist paranoia known as McCarthyism or the "Second Red Scare."

DEPLORE LOSS WILLIAM R. FOSTER, LONG-STANDING SERVANT BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, TIRELESS PROMOTER BAHÁ'Í TEACHINGS, RADIANT CHAMPION ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER. APART FROM HIS EXTENSIVE INVOLVEMENT VITAL ACTIVITIES COMMUNITIES UNITED STATES AND HAWAIIAN ISLANDS, HIS VALIANT, SACRIFICIAL ENDEAVOURS AFRICA BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER TEN YEAR CRUSADE ENSURE INDELIBLE RECORD ANNALS FAITH, ESPECIALLY REGARDING MOROCCO AND LIBERIA. FLAME HIS LOVE SHOGHI EFFENDI, INTENSIFIED BY HIS DIRECT CONTACT WITH HIM WHILE ASSISTING WITH DEVELOPMENT BAHÁ'Í WORLD CENTRE PROPERTIES DURING BRIEF PERIOD 1950S, HAS LEFT ENDURING TRACES IN HEARTS MANY STUDENTS HIS CLASSES ON GUARDIAN'S WRITINGS. EXTEND LOVING SYMPATHY MEMBERS HIS DEAR FAMILY. ASSURE ARDENT PRAYERS HOLY SHRINES FOR PROGRESS THROUGHOUT DIVINE WORLDS THIS NOBLE SOUL WHOSE ASSOCIATION CAUSE BLESSED BEAUTY EXTENDED BEYOND SIX DECADES.

In 1985 the Foster Bahá'í School was established in Princeton. While Bill and Ruth were living in the area, they hosted as many as six study classes a week and trained many of the friends to become teachers of the Cause. Bill's love for the Guardian inspired him to a profound study of the Writings, and the school noted that "He constantly exhorted the friends to study the Writings, to build their faith on these precious Words of God. It is this spirit

that permeates those Bahá'ís who had the opportunity to study with him. And it is in this spirit that this school is dedicated to Bill and Ruth Foster."

*Paul Vreeland with gratitude  
for the assistance of Roger Dahl,  
US National Archives*

### VERNE STOUT 1897–1995

Verne Stout credited his pinochle<sup>144</sup> partner for bringing him to an acceptance of Bahá'u'lláh. He was living in Geneva, New York, and in 1943 when Verne was forty-five years old, working in the defense industry, Kenneth Christian wrote to him asking if he would consider pioneering to Alaska to help form its first Spiritual Assembly. Alaska had been successfully opened during the Seven Year Plan (1937–1944), and with extra effort it would be possible to form an administrative institution before the Plan's conclusion. Verne was fond of recalling that Kenneth's first-class letter, which beckoned him to the pioneering field, needed only a two-cent stamp.

Verne agreed and became the first man to pioneer for the Bahá'í Faith to Alaska. Eleven women had preceded him in serving in that far-north place, which has long had a reputation as the land of sourdoughs and other "he-men." When Verne arrived in Anchorage in June of 1943, it was difficult for him to find a place to stay. He was finally able to rent a bed, which was his for a few hours each day, before someone else would come to sleep in it.

He met his future wife, Janet Whitenack, when she arrived in Anchorage from Tuluksak, Alaska. She too had been asked to move to Anchorage to form that

<sup>144</sup> A card game.

first Spiritual Assembly. Verne rented a taxi and went to the train depot to pick her up. He remembered that she had thirteen small boxes, which constituted her luggage, and he had to pay the driver separately for each parcel. That was his first adventure with his wife-to-be.

The Spiritual Assembly of Anchorage was duly formed on September 8, 1944. The membership consisted of Verne, one other man, and seven women. Shortly thereafter the other man left Alaska. After the by-election the Spiritual Assembly consisted of bachelor Verne and eight women, most of whom were single. He married Janet<sup>145</sup> who was also from New York State. Their home on Tenth Avenue was the center of much of the Anchorage Bahá'í activity for over a decade until the Stouts—Verne, Janet, and their children Richard and Dorothy—pioneered further afield in 1958.

Verne was chairman of the memorable Alaska State Convention of 1953. At that time there were some forty Bahá'ís living in eleven different communities in Alaska. All had been stunned by the news that Alaska was to have its own National Spiritual Assembly. Someone suggested starting a fund for a National Hazíratu'l-Quds. A heated discussion followed. It was argued that it was impossible to start such a fund before the National Spiritual Assembly was elected. Verne, as chairman, monitored the discussion, reached into his pocket, pulled out a dollar bill, slapped it on the table, and said, "This is the first dollar for the Hazíratu'l-Quds of Alaska. Now, tell me it can't be done." In January 1954 the Hand of the Cause Leroy Ioas, writing from the Holy Land, said that the Guardian "was



Verne Stout

pleased with the establishment of the fund for the Hazíra for Alaska."<sup>146</sup>

That was not the end of Verne's involvement with the Hazíratu'l-Quds. A log cabin was found in Anchorage at 810 Eighth Avenue, but it needed a lot of work. Verne was the major force behind its renovation, working on it up until a half hour before Florence Mayberry conducted the formal dedication in August of 1954.

In 1957 Verne and Janet were elected to the first National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Alaska. During that first year he took early retirement from the Alaska Railroad and pioneered with his family to the Matanuska Valley. He built a home six miles south of Palmer, where he lived for nearly thirty years until moving into a retirement home in 1986.

In 1963 Verne attended the first International Convention in Haifa, Israel, for the

<sup>146</sup> *High Endeavours: Messages to Alaska* (National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Alaska, 1976), p. 55.

formative election of the Universal House of Justice. From there he went to London for the first Bahá'í World Congress.

His services to the Cause have been legion, rarely missing a Bahá'í event until deterred by the infirmities of age. The Stouts were the first Bahá'ís in the Matanuska Valley. By the time of Verne's passing, the area had four Spiritual Assemblies, two of which were incorporated, plus two active groups. His gentle manner, kindness of heart, demeanor, composure, and aura of serenity were best expressed by an acquaintance who offered these simple words with a musical lilt, "Now, there is a gentleman." Verne's portrait is one of seven of the early believers that are displayed at the National Hazíratu'l-Quds of Alaska.

On June 28, 1995, at the age of ninety-seven, fifty-two years after arriving at his pioneer post, Verne's soul winged its flight to the 'Abhá Kingdom. He was preceded in death by ten years by his wife, Janet, and he was buried by her side. Two illustrious pioneers, side by side, their bones buried in their field of service.

News of his passing was conveyed to the Universal House of Justice, and the Department of the Secretariat responded on June 30:

The Universal House of Justice has received your email conveying the news of the passing of Mr. Verne Stout at the age of 97. He is warmly remembered for his long service to the Bahá'í community of Alaska, particularly for his services during the Faith's early years there. Pioneering to Alaska in 1943, Mr. Stout had the honour of serving on both its first Local Spiritual Assembly and its first National

Spiritual Assembly. His dedication is most warmly remembered.

Rest assured that the House of Justice will offer loving prayers in the Holy Shrines for the progress of his soul.

John Kolstoe

**GHODRATOLLAH BIDARDEL**  
(Qudratu'lláh Bídárdil)  
1931–1995

Ghodratollah "Ghodrat" Bidardel graduated from high school in Tíhrán in 1949, as the Persian Bahá'ís were nearing the end of their Forty-Five Month Plan. He had intended to continue his education and was set to travel to Germany to study agriculture, but messages from the Guardian were urging the Bahá'ís to pioneer. Ghodrat determined to postpone his education and help spread the Message of Bahá'u'lláh in Arabia. He reported to the Pioneering Committee but was told that he could not go since he had not performed his military service and therefore did not have a passport. He was very disappointed and went outside to a stream and wept.

In his mind's eye Shoghi Effendi appeared, and Ghodrat said to him, "You told me that I should go pioneering. Why am I not allowed to do it now? It is as if one has been invited to dinner, comes in, sees the fully laden table, but is not allowed to eat anything." Shoghi Effendi answered, "Who said that you are not allowed to pioneer?" Ghodrat thought over the matter and asked for a new consultation. Afterward he was told that he should make an attempt, and should he be successful, he should then report back from his pioneering post. He managed to

<sup>145</sup> See "In Memoriam," *The Bahá'í World*, vol. XIX, pp. 661–63.

get across the border and never returned. His "attempt" lasted forty years.

Ghodrat was born on October 1, 1931, in the town of Marághih, in a prosperous agricultural area of East Ádhirbáyján, Persia. His parents were Hossein Páshá and Ziba Bidardel, both Bahá'ís. The word "bidardel" means "awakened heart." It is a beautiful, mystical word that the family had found in the writings of Shoghi Effendi and had taken as its own.

When Ghodrat was but an infant, his family moved to Tíhrán, where he attended public schools and Bahá'í classes. As a youth he had the privilege of studying with Ríyáḍ Qadími, a very inspiring teacher, and he became totally involved in Bahá'í activities. On Thursdays, for example, he went to villages on the outskirts of Tíhrán and gave Bahá'í lessons to the children. While serving on a teaching committee, he met Raf'at Ra'fat, another active Bahá'í youth. He would meet her again after they had both pioneered.

Determined as he was, it took some time for Ghodrat to obtain all of the permissions needed for him to leave Iran. Finally in April 1953 he was able to go to Dubai, and after three months there he received permission to enter Al-Hasa, the eastern region of Saudi Arabia. On the way he spent a week in Bahrain with Abu'l-Qásim Faizí, who was pioneering in this island nation with his wife and children and who was later named a Hand of the Cause of God.

In the city of Ad Dammám, Saudi Arabia, Ghodrat learned the trade of joining<sup>147</sup> to support himself. After seven months he moved to Hafuf, where he helped to form the first Spiritual Assembly.



*Ghodratollah Bidardel*

Later he moved to Ta'if, a resort town in the mountains near Mecca, where there were several Bahá'í families including that of Raf'at Ra'fat, a fourth generation believer whom he had met in Tíhrán. When she was only five years old, her father had taken the family pioneering to Sulaymáníyyih, instilling in her a love for pioneering as strong as Ghodrat's.

In 1954 Ghodrat participated in the ritual of Hájj (pilgrimage) to Mecca, and then he moved to Medina. He asked for Raf'at's hand in marriage, and they became engaged at Naw-Rúz 1955. The first Spiritual Assembly of Medina was formed at Riḍván, and on June 1 the wedding took place. Two days later he was imprisoned together with all of the other Persian Bahá'í men—the result of the resumption of the persecutions of the Bahá'ís in Iran. The National Bahá'í Center in Tíhrán had been pillaged, and a list of Bahá'í pioneers in Saudi Arabia had been sent to the national government of Saudi Arabia. The prisoners

were freed two weeks later but were ordered to leave Saudi Arabia within four months.

Ghodrat and Raf'at traveled to Baghdád, 'Iráq, and their eldest daughter Shárzád was born in March 1956 in a hospital built on the site of the Riḍván Garden. Later the family moved to Karbilá, where Ghodrat opened a small joiner's shop. They lived modestly and were rewarded a year and a half later when the first Spiritual Assembly was formed there.

As the administrative goals of the Ten Year Crusade were being filled, Ghodrat began to feel that he could finally fulfill his desire to study at university. After consulting with the Assembly, he left for Germany to investigate the possibilities of working and studying there. He did not have much of an opportunity to settle; he attended a meeting during which the Hand of the Cause of God Dr. Adelbert Mühlischlegel called for pioneers for Europe, and Ghodrat offered to move to Finland. When he returned home and told Raf'at, she asked, "Should I pack the suitcases right now?"

In April 1960 they left for their new post, and the Regional Spiritual Assembly of Scandinavia and Finland asked the family to settle in the goal city of Tampere, Finland. Ghodrat found work there, and in 1961 the first Spiritual Assembly was formed—the same year their second child, a son named Shahríyár, was born.

With the consolidation of the European homefront came the announcement from the Hands of the Cause that eleven new National Spiritual Assemblies would be formed at Riḍván 1962. Ghodrat was elected to the first National Spiritual Assembly of Finland and was thus a delegate to the first International Convention in Haifa. After the election of the Universal House of Justice on April 21, 1963, he went on to attend the first Bahá'í World Congress in London a week later.

The Bidardels returned to Germany, living in the Hazíratu'l-Quds in Frankfurt until the dedication of the Mother Temple of the European Continent there in July 1964, when the National Assembly asked them to be its caretakers.

Their daughter Fariba was born in June 1967. A year later Ghodrat opened a carpet shop in the goal city of Coblenz, and in 1979 its first Local Assembly was finally formed.

In 1983 the German government granted Ghodrat citizenship, replacing the Persian citizenship he had lost as a Bahá'í. To him this meant increased pioneering opportunities, and he traveled to Sofia, Bulgaria, to see whether he could be of service to the Faith there. While he was away, the Office of Personnel at the Bahá'í World Centre in Haifa called to ask whether the Bidardels were prepared to serve at the World Centre. In January 1984 an invitation came from the Universal House of Justice offering the couple service as custodians of the Shrines of the Báb and 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

The Bidardels moved into the house that had formerly accommodated the Eastern pilgrims in Haifa. Their duties included preparing the Shrines to receive the many pilgrims and visitors arriving from all over the world and organizing the volunteer staff who served as guides. In the evenings Ghodrat held classes on the Qur'án, the Bible, and other Holy Writings, as well as on the Persian language for the friends living at the Bahá'í World Centre.

Ghodrat and Raf'at left Haifa returning to Germany in November 1994 for reasons of health. Eight months later, in July 1995, Ghodrat was called from this earthly world. Upon learning of his passing, the Hands of the Cause of God Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum and 'Alí-Akbar Furútan

<sup>147</sup> Traditionally a joiner is a woodworker specializing in the cutting and fitting of joints without nails or mechanical fasteners.

sent letters of condolence, and the Universal House of Justice sent the following message on July 13:

GRIEVED PASSING DEVOTED PROMOTER FAITH GHODRATOLLAH BIDARDEL. HIS LIFELONG DISTINGUISHED ACHIEVEMENTS IN PIONEERING AND TEACHING FIELDS IN VARIOUS COUNTRIES, CROWNED WITH HIS SERVICE AS CUSTODIAN OF THE SHRINE OF THE BÁB, LOVINGLY REMEMBERED. ARDENTLY PRAYING HOLY SHRINES PROGRESS OF HIS ENLIGHTENED SOUL ABHÁ KINGDOM. EXTEND SYMPATHY, LOVE MEMBERS HIS FAMILY.

*Based on a memoir written by Anneliese Bopp*

### SUHAYL AHMAD 'ALÁ'Í 1927–1995

DEEPLY DISTRESSED NEWS PASSING SUHAYL 'ALÁ'Í WHO RENDERED EXEMPLARY SERVICES PIONEER SAMOA MORE THAN FOUR DECADES, PLAYED VITAL UNFORGETTABLE ROLE PROPAGATION FAITH CONSOLIDATION INSTITUTIONS ENTIRE PACIFIC REGION, SERVED MEMBER FIRST NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY SOUTH PACIFIC, AND LATER OVER TWO DECADES BOARD COUNSELLORS AUSTRALASIA. RECALL WITH PROFOUND ADMIRATION HIS KINDNESS, LOVE PACIFIC PEOPLES, HIS SACRIFICIAL DEDICATION ADVANCEMENT THEIR INTERESTS, HIS ROLE CONSTRUCTION HOUSE OF WORSHIP SAMOA, HIS INVOLVEMENT WORK CAUSE TO LAST HOURS EARTHLY LIFE.

ADVISE HOLDING MEMORIAL SERVICES HOUSE WORSHIP, BAHÁ'Í COMMUNITIES THROUGHOUT SAMOA. ALSO REQUESTING NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY OF AUSTRALIA HOLD MEMORIAL GATHERING HOUSE OF WORSHIP.

OFFERING PRAYERS HOLY SHRINE PROGRESS HIS LUMINOUS SOUL ABHÁ KINGDOM. KINDLY CONVEY HEARTFELT CONDOLENCES HIS MOTHER, HIS WIFE, AND FAMILY.

Universal House of Justice  
August 16, 1995

Suhayl 'Alá'í was born on January 5, 1927, in Tíhrán, Iran. At birth, his mother named him after the early morning star she could see in the sky. Little did she know that he would grow into a brilliant star shining throughout the entire Australasian region, finally settling in the heart of the Pacific Ocean in the islands of Western Samoa.

Suhayl, a fourth generation Bahá'í from a family distinguished for their sacrificial services to the Cause, was the second child of Ni'mat'u'lláh<sup>148</sup> and Ghodsieh 'Alá'í, valiant pioneers in Afghanistan, Samoa, New Zealand, and Malta. His maternal grandparents were Ghulám-Radáy-i-Isfahání, surnamed Amin-i-Amin, the third Trustee of the Huququ'lláh, and Masoud Khánúm, who was known for her selfless service, hospitality, and musical talent. His paternal grandparents were Siyyid Muḥammad Názim'u'l-Hukamá, a physician attached to the court of the Sháh, and Khadijeh (known as 'Bibi Ján), an educated and determined woman.

As a child and teenager, Suhayl had a curious and sharp mind and a playful, mischievous nature. He was very kind,

<sup>148</sup> See "In Memoriam", *The Bahá'í World*, vol. XV, pp. 448–49.

always wanting to share what he had with others. As a member of the Tíhrán Bahá'í Youth Club, he organized sporting and social events for youth. Under the training and example of his parents and Bahá'í teachers, he developed a profound love for and knowledge of the Teachings. During his youth and early adulthood, he served on a number of national committees such as those for youth, library, and publications.

When he was nineteen, his family pioneered to Afghanistan. Because of their Faith, they were placed under armed police guard and exiled back to Iran after nine months.

In Tíhrán, Suhayl graduated from Alborz High School in May 1947, and for the next two years he worked as a technician at the Ardakani Company, an irrigation and water supply firm.

In March 1950 Suhayl left Iran to undertake university studies in New Zealand where he attended Massey Agricultural College, graduating in October 1954 with a Diploma in Agriculture (specializing in sheep and dairy farming) and a Diploma in Wool and Wool Classing. He played in the All New Zealand Basketball Teams for two years, receiving College Blues and Honors for basketball and soccer. At the same time he actively participated in Bahá'í community life.

It was while attending summer school in Auckland, New Zealand, in December 1953 that Suhayl met Lilian Wyss, an Australian Bahá'í en route to Samoa where she would become a Knight of Bahá'u'lláh. In November 1954, East and West united in the Pacific when Suhayl and Lilian were married in Suva, Fiji. Theirs was the first Bahá'í marriage in the South Pacific. Returning with Lilian to Samoa, he became the third Bahá'í there. Their three children (Badi, Sitaríh, and Riaz) were born and raised in Samoa.



*Subayl Ahmad 'Alá'í*

Suhayl's life manifested the virtue of service: service to the Cause, to society, to family, and to friends. To him all acts of service were equally important. There are hundreds throughout Australasia who recall Suhayl in various service roles: as a speedy dishwasher at a conference; a diligent and compassionate Counsellor; a strong laborer on a building site of a center; a gourmet cook at a summer school; an eloquent speaker; a defender of the downtrodden; a radiant teacher at firesides; an upholder of justice on elected institutions; a warm and hospitable host; a quality printer of literature; a visionary businessman; a hilarious joke-teller; a trusted confidant; a loving husband, father, grandfather, son, brother, and friend; and a master organizer. Every talent, skill, and ability he possessed, he would offer in service. Never would he ask of others what he would not do himself.

To Suhayl teaching and consolidating the Bahá'í Faith were one and the same, and he participated in all aspects of community

life. There were regular firesides, deepening classes, and dawn prayers at his home. He served on Local Spiritual Assemblies in Samoa, the United States, and Australia. In Samoa, he served on many regional and national committees and was a member of the National Spiritual Assembly in 1993 and 1995.

Suhayl was a key driver in obtaining formal recognition for the Bahá'í Faith and in the acquisition or building of local and national centers. He played significant roles in the purchase of properties that now comprise the grounds of the House of Worship of Samoa and in the construction of the beautiful edifice that was dedicated in 1984.

The crowning achievement for the Samoan Bahá'í community occurred when His Highness Malietoa Tanumafili II became the first reigning monarch in the world to accept the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. For nearly two decades Suhayl was the liaison between the Universal House of Justice and His Highness Malietoa. A close and loving relationship ensued over the years. A tribute to their relationship was given when His Highness attended Suhayl's funeral and openly wept over the loss of his dear friend.

Suhayl played a vital role in the development of the Faith throughout Australasia. He served on the first Regional Spiritual Assembly of the South Pacific (1959) that later became the National Spiritual Assembly of the South Pacific. In 1968, the first Continental Board of Counsellors was brought into being, and Suhayl was one of three Counsellors appointed by the Universal House of Justice to serve Australasia. He was a Counsellor for twenty-two years and traveled that vast oceanic region on foot and by bus, canoe, boat, airplane, and seaplane, visiting and encouraging isolated believers, groups,

Auxiliary Board members and their assistants, and Local and National Spiritual Assemblies. With the exception of French Polynesia, he made many visits to the nations of Australasia. Suhayl truly loved the peoples of the Pacific, and they loved him. An avid photographer, he captured on film the spirit of the people and left behind a photo collection depicting the growth and development of the Faith in Australasia.

Suhayl worked in a variety of management positions in the areas of trading and tuna production. In 1969, Suhayl and Lilian founded Pacific Services, which was later to grow into Pacific Products Inc. and Pacific Marketing Inc.—diversified import/export companies trading throughout the Pacific. They bore incredible stresses in their business in order to support their family and to enable other pioneers to work in Samoa. Businesses were established in several other Pacific nations so that pioneers could have access to earning a livelihood. Suhayl's Samoan employees regarded him as "father."

Instrumental in drafting its first constitution, he was a cofounder and treasurer of the American Samoa Chamber of Commerce. He was also a charter member of the Rotary Club and in later years the American Samoa representative for the Australian Executive Overseas Programme. He was active in the United Nations Organization in Samoa. At the time of his death, business colleagues described him as being a gentleman, possessing the qualities of honesty, integrity, inspiration, and humor.

Somehow, Suhayl found time for his hobbies, friends, and family. In addition to being an excellent photographer, he loved fishing and animals. He raised pigeons and had dogs, cats, and tropical fish as pets. He was an excellent handyman and

cabinetmaker and wove his first child's bassinet. An innovative chef, Suhayl created wonderful delicacies, incorporating the cuisine of the many countries he traveled to. But he never forgot his Persian roots; it was a common sight to see him dressed in an island lava-lava and thongs, fanning the coals of the samovar, and preparing tea and chelo kebab for guests.

Bahá'u'lláh says, "The goodliest vesture in the sight of God in this day is trustworthiness."<sup>149</sup> To many, Suhayl was their most trusted confidant. He had the ability to empathize with human suffering and with profound love, kindness, and compassion, to heal a broken heart.

His soul left this world unexpectedly at 8:45 PM on August 14, 1995. As he had not been feeling well, he had gone to the hospital that morning, still planning to catch the evening plane to Hawaii. The distressing news of his sudden passing reverberated around the world. Hundreds of messages poured into Samoa.

Suhayl was befittingly laid to rest on August 21, 1995, within the grounds of the Samoa Bahá'í House of Worship, next to the grave of the Hand of the Cause of God, Dr. Ugo Giachery. His funeral was attended by hundreds of people from all walks of life: the Head of State; government officials; business colleagues; representatives of national, continental, and international Bahá'í institutions; and many of his friends and global family. There was widespread coverage of his life by the media in both American and Western Samoa and in the official gazette of the Western Samoan Government.

Suhayl 'Alá'í was a trailblazer, moving with insight, conviction, and practicality. Bahá'u'lláh's vision for humanity guided all

his actions, and 'Abdul-Bahá's words "Make me as dust in the pathway of Thy loved ones"<sup>150</sup> illumined his life of dedicated service. May there be others who will arise to follow his footsteps.

*Sitarih 'Alá'í-Soraya*

### HABIB TAHERZADEH

(Habib Táhirzádi)

1908–1995

**H**abib Taherzadeh, born in 1908 in Yazd, was the sixth child of Liqá Khánum and Jináb-i-Háj Muḥammad Táhir-i-Málmiri, who lost five children before Habib was born, three of them as a result of the persecutions of the Bahá'ís of Yazd.

In 1914 Habib, then a child of five, accompanied his parents on pilgrimage and was blessed by receiving the tender favors and affection of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. After his primary schooling in Yazd, Habib's father encouraged him to further his education in Tíhrán. Habib consulted the beloved Guardian and received an encouraging letter in which Shoghi Effendi hoped that Habib would be assisted by the breath of the Holy Spirit, and he urged him to seek the company of the righteous and those who are endowed with insight among the believers, to strive to obtain knowledge, and to live a life of upright conduct and virtuous character. The Guardian prayed that God might aid him in attaining his heart's desire and surround him with His blessings throughout his life.

In Tíhrán, at the Tarbiyat School, Habib became well known for his intellectual gifts, his diligence, and especially his excellence in English, French, and Esperanto. When

<sup>149</sup> *The Compilation of Compilations, Volume II* (Ingleside, N.S.W.: Bahá'í Publications Australia, 1991), passage 2013.

<sup>150</sup> *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, ¶ 237.5.

Martha Root visited Tīhrán in 1929, Habib delivered an eloquent talk in Esperanto at a large gathering of the friends, which brought great joy to her heart.

Upon completing his studies he moved to Khuzistán in the south of Iran. An ardent Esperantist throughout his life, he established Esperanto associations and corresponded with other Esperantists in Europe regularly, elucidating for others the verities of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. He also prepared a glossary of Esperanto words and their equivalents in English, French, and Persian.

Habib was sent to Britain to further his education, especially to perfect his English. Returning to Iran in 1937 he made a second pilgrimage to the Holy Land and had the bounty of meeting the Guardian. This meeting set him aflame with a fire that continued to blaze as long as he lived. He embarked on a career of service to Bahá'í institutions. For several years, as a gifted member of the committee in Tīhrán for the translation of the Holy Writings, he helped to translate the English works of Shoghi Effendi into Persian and also produced a bimonthly journal in English entitled *Bahá'í News and Reviews*.

Habib married Farrukhliqá Mitháqíyyih, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Núru'lláh Mitháqíyyih, in 1943. Their two children, Riaz and Nura, have been serving the Faith in the United States and Brazil with devotion.

When the Ten Year Crusade and its goals were announced to the Bahá'í world in 1953, Habib and his family responded to the call. Relying upon God they left their homeland and immigrated to Brazil. There, Habib and his family had many unique opportunities to serve the Cause. Habib deepened the believers, taught the Faith to non-Bahá'ís, and helped establish the Bahá'í administration. When the first National Spiritual Assembly of Brazil was established in 1960, Habib was elected to



*Habib Taherzadeh*

that body. The benefits of his indefatigable services to the Brazilian community are highly impressive and innumerable.

In 1970 the Universal House of Justice invited Habib to the World Centre to translate Bahá'í Writings from Arabic and Persian into English. Joyously obedient he undertook this weighty task for seven years with sincerity, humility, zeal, and diligence. His efforts were vital to the publication of two major books, *Selections from the Writings of the Báb* and *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas*. Returning to Brazil he continued to translate other Sacred Writings.

As a discerning and capable translator he constantly studied the English works of Shoghi Effendi, contemplated the manner in which every Persian or Arabic phrase was translated by the beloved Guardian, and made records of his findings. The results of these ardent efforts comprise a glossary containing over seven hundred pages. In this valuable unpublished work Habib alphabetically compiled and organized the Persian

and Arabic words and expressions that the Guardian used in his English translations.

Among his published works are the biographies of Hájí Muḥammad Táhir-i-Málmírí<sup>151</sup> and Dr. Yúnis Khán-i-Afrúkhtih;<sup>152</sup> the English translation of a comprehensive article by 'Abdu'l-Hamid Ishráq-Khávári, introducing the most significant Writings of Bahá'u'lláh;<sup>153</sup> *The Coming of the Lord*, published in 1967 (also in Spanish); an article in Portuguese on the destiny of the twentieth century and the principles of universal peace, printed in 1986 by the Association for Bahá'í Studies in Brazil; and a booklet recounting the lives of three early martyrs in Yazd (Portuguese translation published in 1995).

A noticeable feature of Habib's life was his intense love for the Blessed Beauty. It was this unbounded love that often evoked in him feelings of ecstasy and rapture when he read the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh and contemplated the greatness of His Revelation. He recognized the sublimity of the utterances of Bahá'u'lláh and approached the task of translation in a spirit of devotion to Him.

Usually he would not engage in translation of a Tablet until he found himself in love with its contents. He often carried in his pocket a page of the Writings he wished to translate. He would read it repeatedly to himself and often to his friends, would commune in spirit with its Revealer, and when he grasped the significance of the Tablet and became fully exhilarated by the grandeur of the utterances of Bahá'u'lláh, he would then engage in their translation.

Habib lived modestly and virtuously, surrendering his will to God without hesitation. He was a loving and true friend to

everyone. His mind and soul were focused upon teaching the Faith and servitude at the Sacred Threshold. A warm and vivacious being filled with the love of Bahá'u'lláh, he spoke from his heart and wrote eloquently. His talks at the gatherings of the friends created excitement and enthusiasm and had tremendous effects on the spirits of his listeners. The youth in Brazil and other Latin American countries loved him dearly.

Habib Taherzadeh ascended to the Abhá Kingdom on August 18, 1995, in Curitiba, Brazil. With the dignity and reverence truly worthy of his noble soul, the Bahá'ís buried in the public cemetery this beloved friend, admirable educator, meritorious teacher, and detached pioneer who, for forty years, had earnestly served their community and who was called their spiritual father. The Universal House of Justice sent the following message the day of his passing:

HEARTS FILLED WITH GRIEF OVER LOSS MUCH-LOVED, STAUNCH, HIGHLY ADMIRABLE PROMOTER FAITH, HABIB TAHERZADEH. HIS INDEFATIGABLE ENDEAVOURS TEACHING AND PIONEERING FIELDS, HIS NOTABLE CONTRIBUTIONS TO ENRICHMENT BAHÁ'Í LITERATURE. HIS EXEMPLARY STEADFASTNESS, SELF-ABNEGATION AND DEDICATION WILL ALWAYS BE TENDERLY REMEMBERED. ASSURE MEMBERS BEREAVED FAMILY LOVING SYMPATHY. ASSURANCE FERVENT PRAYERS HOLY SHRINES PROGRESS HIS NOBLE SOUL ABHÁ KINGDOM.

ADVISE HOLD MEMORIAL GATHERINGS IN HIS HONOUR THROUGHOUT BRAZIL.

*Adib Taherzadeh*

<sup>151</sup> "In Memoriam," *The Bahá'í World*, vol. XII, pp. 692-94.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 679-81.

<sup>153</sup> *The Bahá'í World*, vol. XIV, pp. 620-32.

**SALVATORE "TONY" PELLE**  
1917–1995

Salvatore "Tony" Pelle passed away in Mesa, Arizona, on August 26, 1995, ten days shy of his seventy-eighth birthday. He was born September 5, 1917, in Brooklyn, New York.

Tony entered the Army Air Force during the Second World War and rose through the ranks. When the joint military command split into two services, Tony chose to enter the Air Force. He rose to the rank of colonel and was head of US Air Force public relations in Europe at the time of his retirement from active duty.

A long time futurist and philosopher, Tony became a member of the Bahá'í Faith in Alaska in 1947. He immediately drew up plans for an organized public information office to disperse accurate information about the new religion. He was attracted to the Bahá'í Faith, in large part, by its approach to humanity's need for peace with justice.

He settled in Wilmette, Illinois, in 1967 near the Bahá'í National Center and remained there until 1972. It has been said that Tony "brought public information to a new level when he served in Wilmette, establishing one of the first Bahá'í offices of public information." He headed the publicity campaign for the 1967 Bahá'í International Conference in Chicago and designed the first system whereby simultaneous Bahá'í conferences on each of the five continents were joined by a telephone conference call. This may have been the first time such a conference call was ever made. Intercontinental conference telephone exchanges were to become a feature of other Bahá'í conferences.

Tony designed media presentations for the dedication ceremonies of the Bahá'í Temple in Panama, the dedication of the

Louis Gregory School in South Carolina, the first US National Bahá'í Youth Conference (Wilmette), and a memorable 1971 Bahá'í conference in Kingston, Jamaica. In 1985 he was invited by the Universal House of Justice to serve the committee charged with the dedication of the Lotus Temple—the Bahá'í House of Worship in New Delhi, India.

One of Tony's legacies is the development, training, and coordination of an all-volunteer public information network of Bahá'í community members throughout the United States. His pattern has subsequently been followed by Bahá'í communities in other parts of the world.

After moving to Hawaii in 1972 Tony was made chairman of the local branch of the American Cancer Society, and he helped to bring about some of the state's environmental antismoking legislation. He managed the first International Bahá'í Youth Conference held in Hawaii, was a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of Hawaii, and was the "father" of the Bahá'í office of public information there. While in Hawaii Tony established the Agnes Alexander Award for service to humanity and helped to produce the television program "Dawn of a New Day."

Active in the World Futurist Society as a consultant in the production of video documentaries, he was sensitive to the importance of delivering accurate information and to the power of the media.

After his wife, Charlotte, passed away, he moved to Chandler, Arizona, and married Marcia Swenson during the last year of his life.

After a brief hospital stay in August 1995, Tony passed away of complications from diabetes. His family and friends miss his keen sense of humor, his passion for peace and the unity of humankind, and his insightful way of seeing to the heart of

problems. The Universal House of Justice cabled on August 28, 1995:

PROFOUNDLY GRIEVED LOSS  
DEVOTED, ENERGETIC, RESOURCE-  
FUL SERVANT BLESSED BEAUTY  
SALVATORE PELLE. HIS LONG  
INVOLVEMENT DEVELOPMENT  
HOLY CAUSE THROUGH PARTICI-  
PATION TEACHING AND ADMIN-  
ISTRATIVE WORK ESPECIALLY  
DISTINGUISHED BY HIS ENDURING  
CONTRIBUTIONS EXTERNAL RELA-  
TIONS COMMUNITY THROUGH  
PUBLIC INFORMATION ACTIVITIES.  
HIS CREATIVE ENDEAVORS WHICH  
HE PURSUED WITH UNUSUAL  
VIGOR TEMPERED BY HUMOR  
AND GENUINE HUMILITY HAVE  
LEFT INDELIBLE MARK ANNALS  
FAITH. ARDENTLY PRAYING HOLY  
SHRINES PROGRESS HIS RADIANT  
SOUL ABHÁ KINGDOM.

Colonel Salvatore Pelle was laid to rest with a Bahá'í funeral service the following day, August 29, 1995, at Valley of the Sun Memorial Park, Chandler, Arizona.

**JAMES LEONARD**  
**"PAPSIE" MONCHO**  
1907–1995

The year is 1956, the place, the town of Mafikeng in racially divided South Africa. Under the cover of darkness a car approaches the house of the Moncho family and flashes its headlights. In response Mr. James Moncho goes to his window and waves an oil lamp. In the car are John and Audrey Robarts, Knights of Bahá'u'lláh for Bechuanaland; inside the house are the African members of the first Local Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Mafikeng. Mr. Moncho, the first chairman of that Assembly, is signaling to the car that it is

safe for white people to come into his house in an area reserved under South Africa's racial laws for Africans.

Another occasion, that same year, this time in the part of town reserved for whites, Mr. Moncho and his wife, Stella, are holding an animated discussion about the Faith in the Robarts' living room. Some white neighbors appear at the gate, coming for a visit. In an instant Mr. Moncho becomes a servant in the kitchen washing the dishes; his wife becomes a maid sewing in a back room. It would have been a scandal if black servants were to be seen chatting in the living room with their masters!

Mr. Moncho was loved and respected by both high and low alike and was known as "Papsie" by everyone, including President Sir Ketumile Masire who once worked as a schoolteacher under his jurisdiction.

Papsie came from a family of religious pioneers, so it is perhaps not surprising that on December 26, 1955, he became part of that first small group of Africans in Mafikeng to accept the Faith from the Robarts. His father, Lepodisi Moncho, was one of the first Christian missionaries to the western Kalahari Desert. Papsie, who was born on July 30, 1907, in Ganyesa, South Africa, traveled with his father on some of the arduous missionary journeys, long before any roads existed in the shifting sands and acacia-thorn scrub of the desert. Travel was then by ox wagon, with many stops of a day or more to send the oxen either back or ahead to the nearest watering place. At night large fires were lit in the middle of the camp to ward off marauding lions. Later on in life Papsie traveled these same roads again, this time as the first "native" inspector of schools for this remote region. The British colonial administration for Bechuanaland, for whom he worked, at first gave him a bicycle for his travels, but later he was given a lorry





James Leonard "Papsie" Moncho

and a driver—a privilege normally reserved for Europeans.

Where no schools existed, Papsie established them. Where children stayed away from school because of hunger, he successfully pushed for the introduction of feeding programs for pupils in the remote areas.

Many years later after his retirement, Papsie traveled these roads one more time to bring the Bahá'í teachings to the people of the Kalahari. An indelible memory of this trip is of the old man sitting on a rock atop a huge sand dune in the village of Tsabong. A minister and his congregation who were on their way to church were gathered around him, delaying their church service so that they could listen to him explain how Bahá'u'lláh fulfills the promises contained in the Bibles they were carrying.

Papsie married Stella Motshedi in 1938, and they had four children. They came to be the first Bahá'ís of Botswana when the border between South Africa and the Bechuanaland Protectorate—the

future Botswana—was marked by the boundary commission, that mistakenly placed it along the wrong river leaving the administrative capital, Mafikeng, inside South Africa. Thus the Moncho family lived under apartheid rule in South Africa, even though Papsie worked for the Bechuanaland administration. When the Protectorate gained independence as the Republic of Botswana in 1966, Papsie was stationed inside its boundaries, and the family chose to remain there, not only as citizens of the new country, but also as its first Bahá'ís.

Believers were few and far between in those days, and there was no Bahá'í community that the Monchos could be part of. Nevertheless their firmness in the Faith was constant throughout these years, and a Bahá'í community with a Local Spiritual Assembly later grew up around the farm where they lived. They did their best to bring up their children as believers, and their daughter, Lally Lucretia Warren, later became the first native Tswana to be appointed to the Continental Board of Counsellors in Africa.

It was in these early days that Papsie started translating some selections of Bahá'í Scriptures. In June 1972, during their visit to Botswana, the Hand of the Cause of God Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum and Violette Nakhjavání met with the Monchos, and in 1986 Papsie and Stella were able to return the visit when, in their late seventies, both made a pilgrimage to the Holy Shrines.

Papsie typified the Bahá'í virtues of uprightness, honesty, and steadfastness in the Faith, combining a sparkling wit with a lack of self-importance. When worn out during his final years, he seemed to gain a new life when given the opportunity to talk to someone about the Faith. The lasting legacy of Papsie will be his contribution to

the translation of the Holy Writings into the Setswana language. His command of English, his deep knowledge of Setswana, and his unwillingness to compromise standards of accuracy and beauty in translation meant that he could always be relied upon as a final arbiter of the nuance of a certain Setswana word or the appropriateness of a certain phrase. He leaves behind him a priceless legacy in the form of a published book of extracts from *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh* called *Dinaledi tse di Phatshimang* (The Brilliant Stars). It is a masterpiece of Setswana literature as well as a befitting translation of the Holy Word. In addition he leaves behind draft translations of both the *Kitáb-i-Íqán* and the entire *Gleanings*, completed during the twilight years of his life.

He slipped away from this life on September 5, 1995, in his eighty-eighth year, surrounded by his family. As he lay semi-conscious the prayer "Create in me a pure heart. . ." was read to him in Setswana, and as the last word of the prayer was uttered, he breathed his last. On September 7 the Universal House of Justice paid him the following tribute:

We were saddened to learn of the death of Mr. James Moncho, who served the Cause of God with unflagging ardour across some four decades and who is particularly remembered for his translations of the Sacred Texts into Setswana and for his valiant efforts in promoting the Faith among the people of Botswana. Be assured of our ardent prayers in the Holy Shrines for the progress of his radiant soul in the Abhá Kingdom.

Gerald and Lally Warren

**MOHTARAM ZABIH**  
(Muhtaram Khánum Dhabih)  
?–1995

DEEPLY GRIEVED NEWS PASSING DEARLY LOVED STALWART PROMOTER FAITH, MOHTARAM ZABIH. HER ACTIVITIES IN SERVICE CAUSE FROM HER YOUTH, HER PROMOTION TEACHING WORK IN IRAN AND AS PIONEER TO AUSTRIA, HER SUBSEQUENT SERVICES HOLY LAND, HER LOVING, RADIANT HOSPITALITY TO PILGRIMS AND VISITORS AND HER SELF-SACRIFICING DEVOTION AS CUSTODIAN OF THE SHRINE OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, IN COLLABORATION HER DISTINGUISHED HUSBAND, ARE UNFORGETTABLE. ASSURE ARDENT PRAYERS PROGRESS HER NOBLE SOUL ABHÁ KINGDOM. CONVEY LOVING SYMPATHY MEMBERS FAMILY.

Universal House of Justice  
September 6, 1995

After the martyrdom of the Báb many people in Dawlatábád, a suburb of Işfahán, became Babís through a Bábí derwish who visited the town. Among them were Mr. Muḥammad Báqir, his wife, and his four brothers. When Hájí Mirzá Haydar-‘Alí was assigned by Bahá'u'lláh to travel teach in Iran, Bahá'u'lláh told him that a seed had been planted in Dawlatábád that needed to be watered, and He encouraged him to travel to that area. A large number of the people became Bahá'ís; among them were three of the brothers of Áqá Muḥammad Báqir's wife, who went to Akká and had the privilege and bounty of visiting Bahá'u'lláh.

On their return to Dawlatábád a severe wave of persecution mounted against the Bahá'ís, and the friends were forced to leave



Mohtaram Zabih

their homeland. After the release of the Imám-Jumih of Isfahán from prison, these friends were moved discretely to Tíhrán where, after a period of long-suffering, they settled. 'Abdu'l-Bahá in a Tablet in honor of this family praised them, "O pioneers (Muhájirin) who have suffered in the path of God." After receiving this Tablet they chose Muhájir for their family name. The Hand of the Cause Dr. Muhájir is from this family.

Mr. Muḥammad Báqir was not successful in visiting the Blessed Beauty on that trip to Akká. During 'Abdu'l-Bahá's ministry he went to the Holy Land and had the honor of serving in Haifa for nine years. When 'Abdu'l-Bahá wanted to deposit the Sacred Remains of the Báb into the new coffin, He asked Mr. Muḥammad Báqir to come closer to Him and hold one side of the coffin on behalf of the Bahá'ís in Iran.

One evening Mr. Muḥammad Báqir was thinking of his children in Iran whom he had not seen for nine years, and he felt very homesick. The next day 'Abdu'l-Bahá said to

him, "You are yearning to see your children and they miss you too," and He granted him permission to return to Iran. Mr. Muḥammad Báqir was then sorry he had had this thought because he had no intention of leaving 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the Holy Land. Later he was honored by a Tablet from the Master in which he appreciated the services Mr. Muḥammad Báqir was rendering in the Holy Land and praised their significance as a bounty and blessing that would be the desire of future kings.

Into such a dedicated and faithful family Muhtaram Khánum Dhabíh was born. Her father Mirzá 'Abdul-Husayn and her mother Rubábíh Khanum were of the Muhájirs. Muhtaram was three months old when her father passed away, and she was raised by her mother and grandfather Mr. Muḥammad Báqir. She had the best of Bahá'í education.

She married Mr. Yadu-lláh Dhabíh when she was fifteen years old. Mrs. Dhabíh was teaching the Bahá'í children while she was still one of the students of the Bahá'í classes. She was a member of the Education Committee until 1946, when she and her beloved husband pioneered to Ridáiyiyih for four years during the Forty-Five Month Plan. They were both elected to the Local Assembly of that city.

In 1954, during the Ten Year Crusade of the beloved Guardian, the Dhabíhs pioneered to Austria, settling in Vienna. Three years later following the Guardian's request, they pioneered to Salzburg and helped form the Local Assembly there. Only through their efforts and those of a great number of pioneers from Iran and the United States was the National Assembly of Austria formed in 1959.

After twelve years of service in Salzburg, Mr. Dhabíh managed to find a job. At this same time they were invited by the Universal House of Justice to serve in the

### MILLICENT BRAVO 1904-1995

The Universal House of Justice . . . was grieved to learn of the passing of Mrs. Millicent Bravo, steadfast early believer, whose devoted services to the Faith are warmly remembered. The House of Justice will offer prayers in the Holy Shrines for the progress of her soul and for the comfort of her family.

Department of the Secretariat  
September 24, 1995

Millicent Bravo was born in London, England, in 1904 of Jewish parents. She came to Chile while she was quite young. From her marriage to Mr. Schulder she had two sons, Paul and Emilio.

Her first contact with the Faith was early in 1941 during the beloved Guardian's first Seven Year Plan launched shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War—a time of high social and political

Holy Land—an invitation they accepted immediately.

The Dhabíhs had the honor of serving at the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh and the Mansion of Bahjí for a quarter of a century. They were very punctual in attending meetings and in being with the pilgrims; they never delayed any assignment. They were very content and very careful in their spending, living a very simple life. They were extremely humble, and this humility and dedication to the Faith continued all their life. The Dhabíhs arrived in the Holy Land selfless, and they left the same. They avoided ostentation and were very obedient; they carried out all orders without argument, modification, or consideration of their own opinions.

Their behavior, courtesy, and respect toward the Holy Shrines and toward the pilgrims were outstanding and admirable. The dignitaries such as presidents and ministers they received, as well as the tourists, noticed their courtesy and while in the Shrines attempted to follow their example.

Once, when there were no security guards serving the Holy Places, they had an armed robbery in their home. Three or four thieves broke into their bedroom at midnight, and all their valuables were stolen. Mr. and Mrs. Dhabíh refused to accept any compensation from the Universal House of Justice when it was offered.

Toward the end of their stay Mrs. Dhabíh served at the Office for the Study of Sacred Texts. In 1990 they left the Holy Land and settled in Saarlouis, Germany, where they helped to form a Local Assembly. Mrs. Dhabíh taught Bahá'í children's classes there until her passing. Her pure soul soared to the Abhá Kingdom on September 5, 1995, after a long illness.

*Based on excerpts from translations of talks given by 'Ali Nakhjavání and Firaydún Gulmuḥammadí*



Millicent Bravo

tension throughout the world. It was then that she met Mrs. Marcia Steward (Atwater) who, in December 1940, had recently arrived to pioneer in Chile. Marcia had taken up residence in Santiago in order to comply with Shoghi Effendi's wish that a Local Spiritual Assembly be established at least in the capital city of each independent country of Latin America during the Plan. While other seekers came and went, Millicent was one of the few who missed none of the fireside meetings that Marcia held, first in her room at the Hotel Crillon and later at a home she rented in order to establish a more friendly atmosphere.

One day Millicent came with her twelve-year-old son Paul who had been reading the books Marcia had lent her. This young boy asked many questions and became the first person to express a desire to become a Bahá'í. However, because those who later accepted the Faith were adults without small children, and on account of his studies, Paul did not remain active. But Millicent continued to participate and became one of the first four to be formally accepted as believers and who, with Marcia, formed the first Bahá'í group in Chile on April 21, 1941. Millicent was elected secretary of the group. She was again elected as secretary in 1943, but now it was as a member of the first Local Spiritual Assembly, a post she continued to serve loyally for several years. In 1946 she was a member of the third Local Assembly elected in Chile—that of Valparaíso.

Millicent was a slim woman of medium height with dark hair and hazel eyes. Marcia described her as "loyal, sincere, serene, and deep" and as one "who absorbed the hidden gift of the spirit like a thirsty and silent plant thankfully accepts the summer rain." Although unable to continue participating actively on account of her health, which was always quite delicate, Millicent never

failed to take a keen interest in the progress of the Faith, and whenever possible she attended Bahá'í meetings and special events.

As time went by she found it necessary to leave Santiago to live with her son Paul, now a grown man who had traveled abroad and had taken up residence in Canada. Several years later she returned to Santiago where she lived for a time with her second son Emilio.

In 1993 the Bahá'ís of Chile held a special memorial meeting in Santiago to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the first Local Spiritual Assembly in that country. Notwithstanding her frail condition Millicent was a special guest at the ceremonies, the only living believer from those early times.

Her last days were spent at the Jewish Home for the Aged where she passed away two years later on September 17, 1995. She was ninety-one years old. A wreath was sent by the Local Spiritual Assembly of Santiago to the Jewish home, and a very moving joint Jewish-Bahá'í burial ceremony was held at the Jewish Cemetery in Santiago. On the anniversary of her passing a year later, the family invited the Bahá'ís to a Jewish memorial service at the main synagogue in Santiago.

*Alexander Reid*

VUTHÚQU'LLÁH BULBUL-I-MA'ÁNÍ  
1926–1995

O God, bestow healing through your  
generosity  
On this faithful nightingale, a  
devoted Bahá'í.  
O God, grant me a joyful heart,  
Strength to serve your blessed Cause  
To soar towards Kampala  
To offer up my life in your path.  
O ye nightingale of the garden of  
"Ma'ání"  
Sing your song in an everlasting  
melody.<sup>154</sup>

The late Vuthúqu'lláh Bulbul-i-Ma'ání, the son of Siyyid Bad'ú'lláh and the eldest grandson of Mullá Aḥmad-i-Mu'allim-i-Ḥiṣári, was born in 83 BE (1926). Mullá Aḥmad had been one of the students of Siyyid Kázim-i-Rashtí and had also spent some time teaching Siyyid Kázim's children. This was the reason Siyyid Kázim gave him the title "Mu'allim" [teacher]. He attained the presence of the Báb in Mákú. Later he became a follower of Bahá'u'lláh and attained His presence in Baghdad.

In his memoirs, Mr. Ma'ání writes:

Both Jináb-i-Mu'allim and my father wrote poetry, and I inherited the bounty of [writing] poetry from those two great souls. We lived in *Khurásán* until 102 BE [1945]. Then, we went to *Ṭihrán*, and this eager nightingale [Bulbul] began to sing in that rose-garden.

In the winter of 101 [at nineteen years of age], I wrote a letter to the beloved Guardian, in which I wrote a poem. I received a response as follows.

[Mr. Ma'ání shares the text of a letter dated July 1, 1945, written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, in which his secretary expresses the Guardian's hope that Mr. Ma'ání may always be engaged in uttering praise and thanksgiving to God, in the acquisition of heavenly knowledge and the study of literature and languages, and in serving and teaching the Faith. Shoghi Effendi also instructs Mr. Ma'ání to consult with and follow the advice of the Spiritual Assembly regarding his project to write a history of the Faith in verse.]

While living in Mashhad, I benefited from participating in the study classes taught by scholars such as Mr. *Ishráq-Khávarí*, Mr. 'Abbás 'Alaví, and Mr. *Núshábádí*. At one of these meetings, I recited for Mr. *Ishráq-Khávarí* a poem I had composed about the advancement of women. He asked for a copy of it and submitted it to the National Spiritual Assembly of Iran, in response to which the Assembly sent me a kind letter that changed my life. This letter had a great influence on me, as I was at the height of youthful enthusiasm at that time, so that, when I went to *Ṭihrán*, I began to warble melodies in that rose-garden and to serve in the gatherings of the youth by composing Bahá'í poems and songs.

In *Ṭihrán*, I partook of the presence of great Bahá'í scholars who were living there at the time. Among them I can mention Mr. 'Alí-Akbar *Furútan*, Mr. Kázim Kázimzádh, Fádil-i-Mázandarání, and Mr. *Vahíd Kashfí*. While working, I also continued my studies until I rose up to pioneer in 112 BE [1955]. I was working as a storekeeper for the Red Cross and had one more year to finish my studies in the literature department at the university,

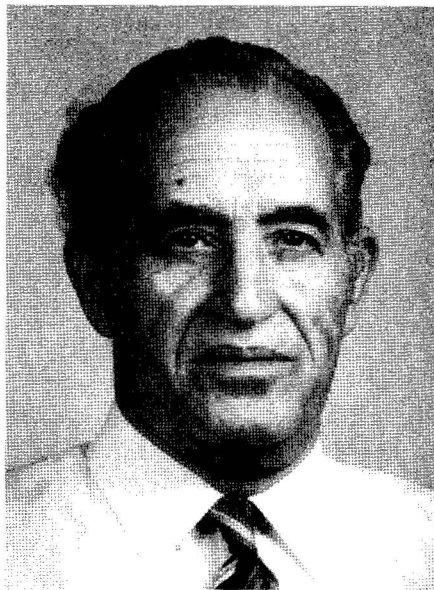
<sup>154</sup> A courtesy translation of a poem written by Mr. Ma'ání a few days before his passing.

when a spiritual tempest transported me from one world to another.

Mr. Ma'ání continues in his diary:

On the ninth day of Riḍván [1955], a celebration in honor of the tenth year of the publication of *Áhang-i-Badí* took place in the presence of the delegates to the National Convention, the members of the National Spiritual Assembly and the Local Spiritual Assembly of Ṭíhrán, and a large number of the friends. One of the highlights of this meeting was an eloquent speech by the beloved Hand of the Cause 'Alí-Akbar Furútan. I consider the fruit of this luminous gathering to be the reading of the translation of a most mighty telegram from Shoghi Effendi, sent in response to a letter from the gathering. Mr. Furútan read [the text of the telegram, which says that the delegates and the friends have no alternative but to focus their attention on the fulfillment of the Ten Year Crusade and on pioneering, and that they must act immediately, for any negligence or delay will have serious repercussions].

Reading this telegram created great excitement and enthusiasm in me. I immediately decided to pioneer. Through a fortunate coincidence, I met and had some preliminary discussion with Mr. Ḍiyá'u'lláh 'Adlparvar, a pioneer to Kuwait, who urged me to go with him. Of course I had definitely decided to pioneer, and, unlike previous times when those around me dampened the flame of my enthusiasm, this time I persevered against all discouragement. The process took about three months, and I finally received credentials from the National Pioneer Committee and concluded my work at the Red Cross.



*Vuthíqu'lláh Bulbul-i-Ma'ání*

Since I had studied technical draftsmanship, my friends in Iran suggested that I work as a draftsman in Kuwait. However, when I consulted the Spiritual Assembly in Kuwait, it suggested to me that, in order to be a pioneer who could travel anywhere and have my own business, it would be better for me to learn radio repair. This suggestion seemed very strange to me. However, since I had learned, from the beginning of my life, to obey the Bahá'í institutions, I agreed to do so. I moved near Mr. Valíyyu'lláh Ḍhu'l-Jalálí in Faḥáḥíl, forty kilometers from [the city of] Kuwait, a place which needed a pioneer. I began to learn radio repair under his supervision. At that time, a year had passed since the formation of the Local Spiritual Assembly of Faḥáḥíl, but some of the members were living in Kuwait and only came to take part in Assembly meetings and Nineteen Day Feasts. Therefore, when I settled there, one of these Assembly members resigned, and

I had the honor of becoming a member of the Assembly. This was about three and a half months after my arrival at my pioneering post.

I entered Faḥáḥíl in the fall of 1955. At that time there was no electricity there. In one of the notes written a year after my arrival, I read the following:

Yesterday, 4 Asmá' 113 [August 25, 1956], marked a whole year since the day I entered Kuwait. I passed through such stages during this period that I was truly transported from one world to another. In Ṭíhrán, I considered it beneath my station to ride a bicycle; here, my bicycle is my best friend, without which I cannot live. In Ṭíhrán, my face was always shaved and my clothes always pressed; here, I sometimes do not shave for a whole week and pay no attention to the pressing of clothes. In Ṭíhrán, I had no interest in food, except at Bahá'í gatherings; here, I have a healthy appetite and care nothing about what the choice of food is. I get very tired and endure physical hardship, but I experience great spiritual joy because I see that I have attained my desire to pioneer. I am very happy. I hope that this endeavor will obtain for me His good-pleasure.

As the result of a large number of friends pioneering to Kuwait, the Bahá'í community was consolidated. Four Local Spiritual Assemblies were formed, and some of the friends pioneered to Failaka Island.

Shoghi Effendi decided that the first National Spiritual Assembly of Arabia should be formed. He therefore instructed that the first National

Convention of Arabia be held in Manama, Bahrain, at Riḍván 114 BE [1957].

Because it was difficult for Iranians to enter Bahrain, Mr. *Khusraw Khusraví*, Mr. *Ḍhabíḥu'lláh Gulmuḥammadí*, and I traveled by boat to Dubai in order to get Arab permits to go to Bahrain. From there, we went to Qatar, where the beloved Hand of the Cause Ṭarázu'lláh Samandarí, the Guardian's representative, and General Hidáyatu'lláh Suhráb, the representative of the National Assembly of Iran, were also waiting to obtain visas.

The Hand of the Cause Abu'l-Qásim Faizí was living in Bahrain at that time and was exerting great efforts to obtain visas for us with the help of Mr. Muḥsiní. He told us that he kept going to the visa office to get visas for Mr. Samandarí and Mr. Suhráb until he finally obtained them on the last day at 9 AM. When he left the office, visas in hand, he heard the volley announcing Naw-Rúz.

Mr. Ma'ání further writes:

In addition to Mr. Samandari and General Suhrab, seventeen delegates from all over Arabia took part in the first National Convention of Arabia on the tenth day of Riḍván 114 BE. Shoghi Effendi's message was read, the sessions continued until the twelfth day of Riḍván, and the first National Spiritual Assembly of Arabia was elected.

This beloved poet, Bulbul-i-Ma'ání, took part in different conferences and also traveled to numerous countries to teach the Faith. Among them he attended the International Conference in Hong Kong and traveled to Thailand, Malaysia, Burma,

India, and Pakistan; he went to the conference in Spain at which Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum and the members of the National Assemblies of the Arabian countries were present; and he traveled to Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Kyrgyzstan to reach and encourage the friends. In all he undertook more than nineteen spiritual trips during his life.

He had the honor of being a member of the National Assembly of Kuwait for twelve years, from the time of its formation until his last days, and he served as its secretary for many years. He was also a member of the Local Assemblies of Faḥáḥíl and Sálímíyyih for many years.

He is survived by five children—two sons and three daughters—who are all Bahá'ís and are engaged in service to the Faith at different pioneering posts.

He ascended to the Abhá Kingdom on Thursday, October 12, 1995, from a heart attack. May his soul attain eternal happiness. On that day the Department of the Secretariat conveyed the message, which when translated from the Persian read:

The Universal House of Justice was grieved to hear the news of the passing to the Abhá Kingdom of the beloved pioneer and promoter of the Cause, Mr. Vuhúqu'lláh Bulbul Ma'ání.

We have been instructed to write that, praised be God, that precious being spent his entire life in the path of devotion to the Beloved Beauty. Kindly assure his friends and relatives of the prayers of the House of Justice in the Holy Shrines for the progress of his noble soul.

Some time later, on December 5, 1995, the Department of the Secretariat wrote to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Kuwait:

The Universal House of Justice has prayed in the Holy Shrines for the progress of the noble soul of the devoted servant of Bahá Mr. Bulbul Ma'ání.

Mr. Ma'ání, who for many years was engaged in services to the Holy Threshold and persevered as a pioneer, was indeed blessed to be surrounded by infinite bounties until the very end, and will undoubtedly be rewarded immensely in the Abhá Kingdom for the services he rendered in this earthly life. Kindly convey the affection of the House of Justice to his friends and relatives.

*From articles translated from Persian*

#### ERUCH MANEKSHA MUNSIFF 1920–1995

Eruch Munsiff was born on September 29, 1920, in the seaport city of Bharuch (Broach), India. In 1945 he wed Meherangiz, and a daughter, Jyoti, was the fruit of their marriage.

When India gained independence in 1947, Eruch was amongst the first group of officials to serve the country's diplomatic mission abroad; he was posted to the High Commission in London.

Eruch became a Bahá'í sometime in 1948. From 1949 to 1955 he served on the Local Spiritual Assembly of London, often as its chairman or treasurer. In November of 1952 his was the first family from the United Kingdom to go on pilgrimage after the war. They were in the Holy Land for eleven days, on ten of which Eruch and his wife had the bounty of being with the beloved Guardian as the only Eastern pilgrims in the group.

When the Ten Year Crusade was launched, he assumed the total care of

Jyoti so as to enable Meherangiz to pioneer to Madagascar in 1953 and to French Cameroon in 1954. She was named a Knight of Bahá'u'lláh for her efforts in the latter. As Jyoti noted, "[I]t was a joint effort although my mother was technically the pioneer."

In March 1955 Eruch was transferred to the Embassy of India in Washington DC where they remained until 1958. During this time he was on the Local Assembly of Silver Springs, Maryland. Offered posts in Peking or Shanghai, he, acting on the guidance of the Guardian, resigned from diplomatic service because it would involve political work.

The following year the family returned to the United Kingdom. He served again on the London Assembly until its dissolution<sup>155</sup> and thereafter on the Assembly of Wandsworth until his death. For twelve years he was secretary of the European Pioneer Committee.

Eruch had a talent for organizing large-scale events and functions for the Bahá'ís of London. In 1964 he single-handedly took nearly two hundred friends from the United Kingdom to the dedication of the Temple in Frankfurt, Germany.

As well as traveling teaching in the United States, he made efforts for the Faith in Spain, Switzerland, Denmark, Canary Islands, Greece, Germany, Finland, Holland, Belgium, and Portugal. He gave seminars and courses at Landegg Academy

and at various summer, winter, and youth schools.

He passed away at the age of seventy-five on October 15, 1995. The following day the Universal House of Justice offered its condolences:

GRIEVED NEWS PASSING DEARLY  
LOVED LONG-STANDING PRO-  
MOTER FAITH ERUCH MUNSIFF.  
RENDERED DEVOTED SERVICES  
CAUSE GOD UNITED KINGDOM  
WITH TENACITY AND LOV-  
ING SPIRIT. FOR SEVERAL YEARS  
ASSISTED EFFECTIVE MOVEMENT  
PIONEERS AS SECRETARY EURO-  
PEAN PIONEER COMMITTEE.  
SUPPLICATING HOLY SHRINES  
PROGRESS HIS NOBLE SOUL. CON-  
VEY OUR LOVING SYMPATHY HIS  
BELOVED WIFE AND DAUGHTER.

*From material provided by Jyoti Munsiff*

#### SHRAMRAJ PRADHAN ?–1995

We are informed of the passing away of one of the oldest and early believers of Sikkim, Mr. Shramraj Pradhan, on 15th October. Mr. Pradhan served the Faith with devotion and steadfastness for many years as member of the then National Spiritual Assembly of Sikkim (India).

The National Spiritual Assembly  
of the Bahá'ís of India

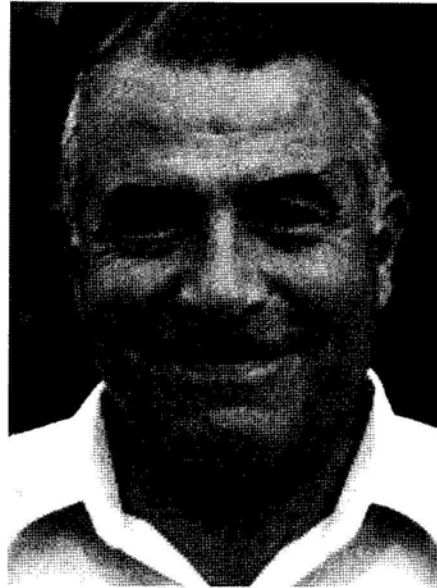
<sup>155</sup> "In 1955, Shoghi Effendi instructed that membership of a Local Spiritual Assembly should be drawn from those residing within the local government boundaries. As a result, fifteen of the twenty-four Bahá'í communities formed in 1950 dissolved, but by April 1963, fifty Local Spiritual Assemblies had been established, all conforming to the areas of jurisdiction." *The Bahá'í Faith in the United Kingdom: A Brief History*, Dr. Moojan Momen.

**NURODIN SORAYA**  
(Nurreddin Soraya)  
1920–1995

We are distressed to learn of the passing of Dr. Nurodin Soraya, who served the Faith in Indonesia with exemplary devotion and unswerving loyalty for over four decades, and whose staunchness of faith and dedication were an inspiration and a model to others during the periods of difficulty which the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh has experienced in these years. He will long be remembered as a pillar of strength in the development of the Indonesian Bahá'í community, and future generations of believers in that country will glory in his achievements. Kindly convey our condolences to the members of his family, who are serving the Faith with such distinction in many parts of the world, and assure them of our prayers in the Holy Shrines for the progress of his soul.

Universal House of Justice  
October 15, 1995

Dr. Nurreddin Soraya was born into a distinguished religious family on March 6, 1920, in Isfahán, Iran. He was the youngest of eleven children of whom five survived. Dr. Soraya's father, Ali Mohammed, was a leading ulama and became a Bahá'í in the early 1900s during the troubled period of *Shaykh* Muḥammad Taqíy-i-Najafí. Suffering persecution as a believer, including his wife's opposition to the Faith, Ali Mohammed spent many years away from his family and served the Cause as far away as Madras, India. He was the recipient of a number of Tablets from 'Abdu'l-Bahá and died in *Shíráz* in 1943, never knowing that his youngest child



*Nurodin Soraya*

would independently accept Bahá'u'lláh two years later.

Dr. Soraya was raised by his mother, Fatimih, a staunch Muslim who established an Islamic religious school in Isfahán. He grew into a knowledgeable and active propagator of Islam and as a teenager was a religious teacher in her school. He graduated from high school with distinction and subsequently worked as a high school mathematics teacher in *Búshir*.

In 1943 Dr. Soraya passed the highly competitive entrance examination to the University of *Ṭíhrán*'s Medical School, and for his academic excellence he was awarded a university scholarship. His parents died during these early years, and he was filled with immense grief. He also became disillusioned with the manner in which Islam was being practiced. He hungered for a new vision. Frequently absent from lectures, although his academic performance remained unaffected, he angered medical authorities who threatened to revoke his scholarship. Dr. Soraya was so distraught

by their attitude that he terminated the scholarship, and for the remainder of his medical schooling he supported himself as a factory medical superintendent in the evenings and later as a Ministry of Health cholera inoculator. The Hand of God was shaping his life.

His inoculation assistant was Mr. Moheb, a Bahá'í. They had extensive discussions on religious matters, and Dr. Soraya found him to be a decent, kind, and knowledgeable man. Once Mr. Moheb was sick, and Dr. Soraya visited him at home. He sighted a book Mr. Moheb was reading and inquired about it. Mr. Moheb said it was the Most Holy Book of the Bahá'í religion. Dr. Soraya borrowed *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas* and read it, and that same evening in 1945 he recognized its power and truth and accepted the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh.

The next day he went to the Bahá'í center in *Ṭíhrán* to declare his Faith. He was not accepted, for he was known to be a staunch and fanatical Muslim. Dr. Soraya was advised to find three suitable character witnesses who would testify to his belief. This proved difficult as no one had taught him the Faith, but he persevered. Two years later Dr. Soraya was registered as a Bahá'í, his character witnesses being the eminent believers Mr. *Ṭarázu'lláh* Samandarí, Mr. 'Alí-Akbar Furútan, and Dr. 'Alí-Muḥammad Varqá. From that day Dr. Soraya actively served the Faith and was a member of the *Ṭíhrán* Youth Teaching Committee.

In 1949 Dr. Soraya graduated as a physician, specializing in internal medicine and pediatrics. He immediately pioneered to *Balúchestán* and served on the Local Spiritual Assembly. He was Head of the Imperial Polyclinic and was permitted to work as a doctor while in compulsory military service as a colonel.

In 1952 he made a pilgrimage and attained the presence of Shoghi Effendi. The overwhelming love he felt for the Guardian, and the Guardian's encouragement transformed his life. The Guardian dispatched him on missions to Bern and London, and returning to Iran Dr. Soraya pioneered to *Níshápúr* where he served on the Local Spiritual Assembly.

While visiting Mashhad he discovered a jewel, Bahereh Sharifi, who was to become his valiant partner in life. He often recalled that her character was a "shining light." They were married in January 1953. After the launching of the Ten Year Crusade, Dr. R. Muḥájir encouraged him to pioneer to Indonesia, a country desperately in need of medical doctors. The Sorayas with their baby Bahiyyih left Iran on a two-month journey by sea and air and arrived in Indonesia on January 1, 1954, never to leave their pioneering post.

Indonesia was in tremendous upheaval. After years of colonialism and war, this new independent nation comprising over three hundred ethnic groups and languages was in the process of being reconstructed. There were massive economic and social problems, and the people were overwhelmingly poor and illiterate. Indonesia had very few educated people, and doctors were scarce. The population was growing at an unprecedented rate. The next fifteen years would witness separatist movements, guerrilla warfare, and a major military coup in which half a million people were imprisoned or slaughtered.

In this hostile environment Dr. Soraya's optimism never failed; he always saw the mysterious ways in which the spirit of Bahá'u'lláh dictated the course of his life, as well as the historic forces at work in the world. Forgoing an expatriate contract that would have provided privileged benefits, he was appointed a civil servant

to the Ministry of Health in April. Over the next three years he worked in North Sumatra, South Kalimantan, Jakarta (where he served on the Local Spiritual Assembly), and West Java. During this period his children Ruhangiz and Ruhullah were born.

In these remote areas life was extremely difficult; medical facilities were limited and primitive. As one of the few doctors he was responsible for a vast geographical area. He often spent days traveling over rough terrain. His family was left alone for long periods while he attended to frequent epidemics of cholera, malaria, and dysentery.

In September 1957 Dr. Soraya was sent to Bojonegoro, East Java, one of the most poverty-stricken areas of the country. From Bojonegoro it was an eight-hour drive over potholed roads to the nearest city. Here the family resided for over thirty-eight years. His children Jasbieh and Rahmat were born there. (His sixth child, George, was born in London during the time of the World Congress.)

Dr. Soraya helped to build the local hospital where he worked during the day. In the evenings he established a home clinic to support his family of eight, as local wages were minuscule. He was well known as a highly skilled doctor, and some patients would make a ten- to fifteen-hour journey to see him. They would eat and sleep in his home, returning to their villages the next day. He gave equal treatment to the rich and the poor, giving the latter his special measure of love, free services, and money to feed or educate their families. Dr. Soraya would utter the Sacred Writings to ease the pain of his patients and to bring cheer to their hearts. Patients believed he had magical hands and recounted that looking into his love-filled eyes immediately released most of their difficulties.

Practicing Bahá'í principles of nondiscrimination and setting an example to local

people, he sent his children to Bojonegoro's local schools.

Dr. Soraya taught and consolidated the Faith across the length and breadth of Indonesia, frequently visiting all the provinces with the exception of Irian Jaya (Papua). In this largest Muslim nation of the world, he was well known for his knowledge of Islam and comparative religion. He was so courageous in expounding religious proofs that both government and religious authorities were in awe of him. During the Ten Year Crusade the Bahá'í population of the East Java province vastly increased, and many Assemblies were established. For thirty-five years he hosted monthly residential institutes in his home, where as many as seventy believers would gather for intensive deepening. These were the happiest moments of his life, and the institute remains one of his legacies.

Dr. Soraya was a staunch promoter and fearless defender of the Faith, and his actions frequently caused government authorities to revoke his work permit, which deprived him of his income and raised the threat of expulsion. For weeks and months he would visit various government departments, and eventually his permit would be temporarily restored. He knew that the road to serving the Cause was paved with pain, and he diligently persevered in service to Bahá'u'lláh. Ultimately Dr. Soraya received a commendation from the government for his outstanding medical services to Indonesia, and in 1968 his entire family was granted an exceptional permanent residency permit. In 1982, through a presidential decree, Indonesian citizenship was granted to them.

In 1962 the Bahá'í Faith, along with six other international organizations, had their activities banned in Indonesia. Bahá'í schools were closed, properties confiscated, and the Indonesian believers faced

persecution. Dr. Soraya's home became a twenty-four hour open refuge for the friends. Whenever they suffered persecution, he would rush to help and defend them. He often risked his life, and acts of kindness were performed without fanfare, most often secretly. Dr. Soraya financially supported the families of persecuted believers, in some instances for well over ten years. He would send food to believers in prison. Inside the food he would hide paper containing the Holy Writings to encourage the friends. When they were released from jail, he provided funds to enable them to resettle and reestablish their homes. He faced interrogation by the authorities, who became captivated and silenced by his eloquent answers. He appealed to the highest authorities to remove the ban, but they were unshaken.

For ten years the institutions remained intact, and Dr. Soraya served on the National Spiritual Assembly for a period. In 1968 he was appointed an Auxiliary Board member. He left his civil servant post as a medical officer and maintained a private practice. His clinic would be open for six months, and the remainder of the year he would devote completely to serving the Faith. As an Auxiliary Board member he traveled to thirteen Asian countries and also helped to facilitate mass teaching in the Philippines.

In 1972 the Indonesian government reaffirmed the ban that now encompassed Bahá'í institutions. Dr. Soraya continued his service as part of a consulting group, which guided the believers through the years of restrictions. At the age of seventy-five, at the request of the National Spiritual Assembly of India, he traveled to New Delhi to share with the friends his knowledge of Islam. On arriving he became ill and immediately returned to Indonesia, suffering a major stroke, which left him partially blind.

For five months Dr. Soraya's health continued to deteriorate. To ease his pain he would stand against a wall chanting prayers and visualizing his meeting with the Guardian in 1952. Seated in a wheelchair he continued to host monthly deepenings and inspire the friends. At 3 AM on October 15, 1995, in the sparse and ill-equipped Bojonegoro hospital with no air-conditioning or life-sustaining equipment, Dr. Soraya uttered final words to his grief-filled family, "I am saying good-bye now, and I leave you all under the protection of God," and his soul ascended.

He was buried within twenty-four hours in the cemetery of his desire where the poor of Bojonegoro rest. Over the next week seven hundred people—believers, patients, townspeople, authorities, and friends—flocked to his home and graveside paying their final respects. Dr. Soraya had been their doctor, teacher, defender, confidant, friend, and beloved father. With steadfastness and courage he heroically served the Faith and the Indonesian people. He inspired a generation of believers to remain staunch and active in the path of God. May his soul be blessed by the Concourse on High.

*Soraya Family*

### ŞABRÍ ELIAS

(Şabrí Ilyás 'Abdu'l-Masîh Badawí)  
Knight of Bahá'u'lláh  
?-1995

Şabrí Elias embraced the Faith while he was still a young boy of fourteen years of age, having learned of it through his brother Şubhí<sup>156</sup> and his uncle Ibráhím 'Abdu'l-Masîh. He quickly integrated

<sup>156</sup> See "In Memoriam," *The Bahá'í World*, vol. XVIII, pp. 746-48.

into the Bahá'í community of Alexandria, Egypt, participating in its activities, teaching the Faith to a number of people, and visiting localities for the consolidation of the Bahá'í communities.

He was honored by meeting the beloved Guardian who encouraged him and bestowed upon him his loving kindness and support. This had a lifelong effect on Şabrí, who mentioned the Guardian to the last breath of his life.

In the early thirties he pioneered and was the first Bahá'í living in Ethiopia, then known as Abyssinia. He published a thousand pamphlets in one of the local languages and succeeded in having *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era* translated into the Amharic language. The well-known Bahá'í teacher Miss Martha Root presented a copy of this book to the then-exiled Emperor Haile Selassie during his visit to Jerusalem.

Şabrí was successful in teaching the Faith to a number of people in Addis Ababa, ensuring the election of the



Şabrí Elias

first Local Spiritual Assembly there in November of 1934. He was its secretary. When the Guardian received news of the Assembly's formation, he cabled back, "REJOICED, PRAYING, LOVE, GRATITUDE." Shoghi Effendi later honored the Assembly by placing a photograph of its members in the Mansion of Bahjí.

In 1935 Ethiopia was occupied by Italy, meetings of the Assembly were suspended, and Elias was forced to return to Egypt.

In January 1944 he pioneered again to Ethiopia, this time with his wife, Fahíma, and their two children, Husayn and Şafá. They traveled through Sudan after having met with the Guardian who bestowed upon them his abundant love and encouragement.

Şabrí remained in Ethiopia for some time, and he succeeded in attracting many to the Cause. His efforts helped to foster Ethiopia as a center for the illumination of the light of the Cause of God and contributed greatly to the formation of local Assemblies and Bahá'í localities and more recently the emergence of the National Assembly of Eritrea.<sup>157</sup> He was once again a member of the Addis Ababa Assembly when, in July 1950, it commemorated the centenary of the martyrdom of the Báb.

With the blessings of the Guardian, Şabrí and Fahíma left their two children in Addis Ababa to continue their education, while they pioneered to French Somaliland (presently Djibouti) in May 1954. In spite of the harshness of life there, they succeeded in teaching the Faith and in enabling the formation of the first Local Spiritual Assembly in that country. In achieving this end Şabrí and his wife confronted

<sup>157</sup> The National Spiritual Assembly of Eritrea was formed in 1995. Until that time Eritrea was part of the Regional Assembly for North East Africa formed in 1956.

many difficulties and withstood humiliation. They almost certainly would have been killed had it not been for divine providence. For these sacrifices Şabrí and Fahíma were named by the Guardian as Knights of Bahá'u'lláh.

In the mid-sixties Şabrí and his wife pioneered to Tripoli in Libya, and in the seventies the Bahá'ís of Ethiopia invited them to a joyful and gracious reception held to honor Şabrí as the spiritual father of their national community. The next decade saw them traveling to Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, encouraging the Bahá'ís and assisting them in their teaching efforts.

Şabrí wrote several books on teaching the Cause in addition to poems extolling the Founder of the Faith, His aims, and His purposes. He also recorded, in his own voice, recollections of seventy years of service to the Cause and the history of the Faith in Egypt.

Suffering a long period of illness, his soul fluttered to the Most Exalted Companion on October 22, 1995. Bahá'ís from all over Egypt came to bid him their last farewell, and with the utmost honor and dignity he was buried in the Bahá'í cemetery in Cairo. A commemorative address was delivered on that occasion, recounting the history of his life, his virtues, and his achievements and sacrifices. The National Assembly of Ethiopia offered its condolences, and commemoration meetings were held throughout that country.

The following telegram dated October 23, 1995, was received from the Universal House of Justice:

HEARTS GRIEVED PASSING KNIGHT  
BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, DEVOTED SPIRITUAL  
CONQUEROR ETHIOPIA,  
CONSECRATED INDEFATIGABLE  
PROMOTER PIONEER HIS CAUSE  
ŞABRI ELIAS. EXTEND LOVING

SYMPATHY HIS DEAR WIFE MEMBERS  
FAMILY. ASSURE FERVENT PRAYERS  
PROGRESS HIS RADIANT SOUL ABHÁ  
KINGDOM.

*Adapted from a translation  
of an article written in Arabic by  
Amin Abu'l-Futiḥ Baṭṭāh*

### EILEEN DEWAR HILL

1914-1995

Eileen Dewar was born in British Guiana (presently Guyana) on November 22, 1914. At the age of twenty-five she married James Hill, and together they had one son.

Eileen was one of the early believers of British Guiana. She learned of the Faith through her sister, Mrs. Clarine Savory, who had accepted the Cause brought to the country by Knight of Bahá'u'lláh Dr. Malcolm King<sup>158</sup> in 1954. As the sisters were always close, it was not long before Eileen saw the light, became convinced of its reality, and declared her faith on April 1, 1956.

A zealous Bahá'í, Eileen went about teaching on a regular basis. On Sundays she and Clarine, together with their close friends Richard and Vida Backwell (pioneers from the United Kingdom from 1955 to 1962), and a few others would go out to teach in areas they felt to be in greatest need. One rainy day at Plaisance, a village five miles outside of Georgetown, Eileen slipped and fell on the muddy road. When she was upright again, she said with a smile, "Never mind, it's for the sake of Bahá'u'lláh."

From 1958 to 1980 Eileen served the Guyana Society for the Blind as a home visitor and later as the supervisor of its

<sup>158</sup> See "In Memoriam," *The Bahá'í World*, vol. XIV, pp. 316-17.



headquarters. After office hours she would often read Bahá'í books to those who were interested, and as a result of her teaching activities three members of the society declared their faith. Her one regret was to discover that a man who had wanted to sign his declaration card on a previous visit had passed away. She was very upset about this because she felt that he had not learned enough and that she had prevented him from enrolling in the Faith.

Eileen was elected in 1970 to the first National Spiritual Assembly of the Guianas and continued to serve it until she pioneered in 1982. For most of the time that she was on that body, she was its treasurer, having a reputation for meticulous bookkeeping.

In 1973 she first visited the Holy Land as a delegate to the International Convention. She also served on the Local Spiritual Assembly of Georgetown and was its librarian from 1957 to 1982, a period of twenty-five years.

In 1982 at the age of sixty-eight, Eileen moved to Grenada, fulfilling Guyana's first international pioneer goal. "Auntie" or "Auntie Hill," as she was fondly called in Grenada, was elected to that country's first National Assembly at Riqván 1984 and served on it for six years, functioning as its treasurer for two years and its secretary for two years. In addition she acted as its librarian for many years. She also served on the Local Assembly of Springs/Woodlands from 1984 until the time of her return to Guyana in December 1993 for reasons of health.

She visited the Holy Land a second time in 1988 as a delegate to the International Convention, and in March of 1989, at the age of seventy-five, she made a two-week teaching trip to St. Vincent.

Eileen passed away on October 23, 1995. She will be remembered as an illustrious



*Eileen Dewar Hill*

figure in the history of the Faith in Guyana. Described as an irreplaceable loss, her service to the Faith was always given with dedication, dignity, and careful attention to the guidance of the writings. On April 7, 1996, the Department of the Secretariat wrote:

The Universal House of Justice was saddened to receive the news . . . of the passing of the steadfast, devoted and tireless promoter of the Cause Mrs. Eileen Hill. Her many years of dedicated service in Guyana and as a pioneer in Grenada are lovingly remembered. The House of Justice will offer prayers at the Sacred Threshold for the progress of her radiant soul throughout the worlds of God.

*Adapted from an article submitted by The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Guyana*

### DIANNE STOGRE POWER 1945-1995

We are profoundly distressed to learn of the passing of Ms. Dianne Stogre Power, who rendered highly meritorious services to the Faith as a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of New Zealand for many years, and as an experienced and talented contributor to proclamation endeavours. Kindly convey to her family and friends our condolences, and the assurance of our prayers on her behalf in the Holy Shrines.

Universal House of Justice  
October 31, 1995



*Dianne Stogre Power*

Dianne Stogre Power's sudden passing in the early hours of Saturday, October 28, 1995, came as a great shock to her family, the Bahá'í Community, her friends and colleagues, as well as to the believers at the Bahá'í World Centre who were expecting her there within a few days to take up an administrative appointment.

The circumstances surrounding her untimely passing are tragic, mysterious, and yet beautiful. While attending her farewell party in Wellington, in the presence of family and many friends, she suffered a massive brain hemorrhage and died peacefully in hospital a few hours later surrounded by her loved ones. She had very tidily closed the chapter on one era of her life and was awaiting the opening of the next. She had completed her work for Radio New Zealand and for the New Zealand Bahá'í community, had said her goodbyes, and had prepared everyone for her departure. She was always one for ensuring everything was done well.

As in life, so in death, her funeral was testimony to her extraordinary capacity to foster warm relationships with people

from all walks of life. Admiring, respectful tributes flowed from representatives of government, Radio New Zealand, the Chinese Friendship Association, UNIFEM (United Nations Development Fund for Women), UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund), Māori people, and representatives of people with disabilities, youth, and children. Her funeral service was held on a Māori *marae* (sacred place) in Wellington in accordance with her wishes and with special permission granted by the local Māori—an honor usually reserved for their own tribesmen.

Dianne was born on April 10, 1945, in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. She first heard about the Faith at the age of seventeen from the owners of a local bookshop who were Bahá'í pioneers. In 1967 she moved to Toronto and became a Bahá'í there in June of that year. Dianne pioneered first to St. John's, Newfoundland, a Canadian homefront goal, and later to the islands of St. Pierre et Miquelon, a French possession off the Newfoundland coast.

In 1972, after marrying, she moved to the Solomon Islands, having spent six months traveling teaching in Fiji. After a year in the Solomon Islands, illness forced Dianne and her husband to find a more temperate climate. New Zealand was close by and needed pioneers.

Dianne's entire Bahá'í life might be summed up by the word "pioneer." In all her undertakings in service to her beloved Cause, her valiant pioneer spirit challenged her to new heights of creativity, to an open-minded exploration of ideas, and to the courageous seizure of opportunities. She encouraged others and applied the Bahá'í writings as the unyielding measure to all that she undertook, and with a strong sense of the practical she managed to find a balance.

This pioneer spirit influenced Dianne's work as a broadcaster and senior producer with Radio New Zealand. She seized opportunities to produce radio programs about the Faith, including a three-part series on Bahá'u'lláh during the Holy Year. Dianne believed her profession was synonymous with worship, and drawing on the principles enunciated in *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, she produced dozens of educational programs for adults and children—programs which brought a wide range of controversial social issues to public attention in an entirely new way and particularly addressed the well-being of women, children, and the disabled. Dianne was awarded the 1985 Media Peace Prize for Radio as coproducer of the program "The History of Peacemaking in New Zealand." In 1994 she received a Winston Churchill Fellowship for her study of public radio's response to the linguistic and cultural needs of indigenous people in Fiji, Hawaii, and British Columbia.

Before her passing Dianne represented UNIFEM on a tour of the Pacific islands

made by the Minister of External Relations and Trade—a wonderful opportunity to develop contacts for the Faith. She completed meticulous and comprehensive reports of this trip for UNIFEM and the National Spiritual Assembly just two weeks before she died. As one person noted:

Dianne was steadfast; there is no doubt about it. She never took a holiday from the Faith. She seemed to know that it was important to make efforts every day for the Faith. Her journals are full of her personal goals. When a plan would come out, she would make her own plan to fit in with the worldwide plan. She made great plans and saw no reason why they couldn't be accomplished.

During the mid to late 1980s, when the National Spiritual Assembly undertook delicate negotiations with the New Zealand government to sponsor hundreds of Bahá'í refugees from Iran, Dianne's untiring work in fostering cordial relations within diplomatic and government circles proved to be crucial. Likewise her highly respected work with national radio greatly assisted the Faith in New Zealand in gaining prominence and prestige in the eyes of the public and with people of influence. Such was her unique ability to integrate her Bahá'í service with involvement in the wider life of society. A visionary, she worked diligently to encourage Bahá'ís to strive in areas of proclamation and public relations. Her own fine example is her legacy to the New Zealand Bahá'í community.

Dianne made it clear that she drew her inspiration for her extensive public relations work from two sources: first from the beloved Guardian of the Faith, whose model and methods she cited often, and second from Martha Root, whose life and example she studied assiduously.

Dianne was always seeking opportunities to teach, but she also took time to equip herself for the task. She learned the Māori language so that she could better reach Māori people. She took up Chinese studies to prepare herself for China, and she took courses on public speaking and bilingual education.

Dianne was a founding member of three Local Spiritual Assemblies: St. Johns, Newfoundland, and Lower Hutt and Hutt Valley in New Zealand. In New Zealand she served on the National Teaching Committee, the first Public Relations Committee, and the first Bahá'í Advisory Committee. She was the Bahá'í International Community Officer for United Nations matters and the Bahá'í representative on the commission for the International Year of the Child. In 1981 she was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of New Zealand and served until 1989, twice as its chairman.

Dianne's heart had a huge capacity for love which endeared her to others. Her notes of encouragement, praise, and love, often beginning "Dear heart," are treasured by many. As one friend gave tribute:

It was from Dianne's lips that I first heard the word Bahá'í, and it was she who, with deep sensitivity, patience and understanding, allowed my youthful spirit to find its way to the Cause of God. There were many challenges and difficulties in that period of search, but her kind heart, her loving attention, her capacity to listen to some very odd ideas, and her constancy in friendship drew this youth over a rocky and uncertain path into the community of Friends.

*From an article submitted by  
The National Spiritual Assembly  
of the Bahá'ís of New Zealand*

**GAIL AVERY DAVIS**  
Knight of Bahá'u'lláh  
1903–1995



*Gail Avery Davis*

When the Knight of Bahá'u'lláh Gail Avery Davis passed away, the Alaskan Bahá'í community lost a significant link with its foundations.

Gail was a grandmother in her forties when she heard of the Bahá'í Faith, and she returned to school for nurse's training to better serve the Cause she embraced.

In 1953 she went to the Jubilee in Chicago that launched the Guardian's Ten Year Crusade, and she decided to pioneer. Baranof Island was the responsibility of the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, and Gail left her Montana home to fill the post. Her nurse's training enabled her to work at the Mt. Edgecumbe Hospital and the Sitka Pioneer Home.

Her gentle manner and lively wit made her welcome anywhere. She was actively involved with the native community; adopted

as a Tlingit, she had married Albert Davis, head of the Coho Clan of Tlingits for Sitka. Theirs was a close and loving relationship, and after thirty-eight years of marriage, Albert was separated from Gail by death for only forty-five days. On November 10, 1995, the Universal House of Justice responded to her passing as follows:

GRIEVED NEWS PASSING DEARLY LOVED KNIGHT BAHÁ'U'LLÁH GAIL AVERY DAVIS. DEVOTED SERVANT AROSE CALL OF BELOVED GUARDIAN, FULFILLING GOAL TEN YEAR PLAN NSA CANADA, MAINTAINING POST IN SITKA ALASKA OVER FORTY YEARS. WINNING HEARTS CONFIDENCE ESPECIALLY TLINGIT PEOPLE. SUPPLICATING HOLY SHRINES PROGRESS HER STALWART SOUL ABHÁ KINGDOM.

*John Kolstoe*

### HESHMATOLLAH FARHOUMAND 1913–1995

Heshmatollah Farhoumand was born in Hamadán, Iran, on December 10, 1913. He was the son of Hákím Naṣír, a physician of Jewish background who accepted the Faith when he married Nushafarin Soleiman. His mother was the granddaughter of Hákím Agha Jan, a physician and rabbi, who was the first in Hamadán of Jewish descent to embrace the Faith.

The love and steadfastness for Bahá'u'lláh that were hallmarks of Hákím Agha Jan's life were passed on to his progeny, among them Heshmatollah, who from early childhood demonstrated an intense love for the Cause. He recounted that he had recognized the station of Bahá'u'lláh at the age of seven and had memorized the entire *Hidden Words* by the age of

twelve, and he would chant them and weep because he was so overwhelmed by them.

He read every book available to him. When he was twelve his father gave him a Torah, and young Heshmatollah spent years studying and underlining the passages that dealt with prophecies of the advent of the Lord of Hosts.

His mother had instilled in him a love for Bahá'u'lláh that seemed to grow as he grew older. He attended the Ta'íd School (Bahá'í School in Hamadán) and had passed into the ninth grade when it was closed by Reza Sháh. He then attended the American College where he completed the eleventh grade, and then he went to Tíhrán where he finished his high school education and was accepted in the newly opened dental school. In 1936 he completed his studies, graduating at the top of his class; his picture and achievements were noted in the newspapers.

From Tíhrán he was sent for two years of military service as an officer in Kurdistán. There he was an exemplary Bahá'í. Once he was asked to hide his Bahá'í identity for fear of offending military officers who were opposed to the Faith. They later found out that they were asking for the wrong actions from an unlikely candidate because Heshmatollah stood in defiance and told the officers that his belief in the Bahá'í Faith was his only source of pride and joy. As a result of this courageous act, his superiors regarded him with the highest respect. Furthermore, much of the meager salary he drew from his military services he donated to the Faith and sent a fair amount to help his family.

When he returned to Tíhrán, he opened a dental practice with his older brother Manouchehr Farhoumand,<sup>159</sup> a physician. The Farhoumand brothers became very well

<sup>159</sup> See Manouchehr Farhoumand, pp. 313–16.



*Heshmatollah Farhoumand*

known in the social circles of Tíhrán for their qualities of character and their skills; they were referred to as “the Bahá'í brothers of Chahrah (Plaza) of Ḥassanábád.” Heshmatollah was very skilled as a dentist, and he often tendered his services to the poor. While in Tíhrán he was very much involved in the teaching and consolidation efforts of the Faith. He was very knowledgeable, well versed in Persian literature, and blessed with an ability to comprehend even the most difficult of concepts and had a natural gift for memorization with a recall of seemingly innumerable Persian poems.

In 1946 he married Fourough Vahid Ekhatani, and in 1947 their first child, Delnawaz, was born. In 1950 a second child, Farshad, was born, and it was soon after this time that the call of the African Campaign to arise and pioneer had come from Shoghi Effendi to the Bahá'ís in Iran. In 1952 Heshmatollah sold his office and left his family to go to Africa, hoping to find a place to reestablish himself according to the wishes of the Guardian. Three

days before leaving his home in Tíhrán on December 26, 1952, his mother, Afarin Kḥanúm, asked him, “Heshi Jan, where are you going?” He replied, “Mother, I only know one thing: this journey of mine is like a boat without sails or a mast that is floating in an endless turbulent ocean, but I am only sure about one thing—this ship is in the hands of Bahá'u'lláh, and the Guardian is sitting at its helm, and they will never leave me to myself.”

He first went to Tanganyika where he was unsuccessful in securing a permanent resident visa. While he was there a letter was received from the Hand of the Cause of God Leroy Ioas, addressed to him and Mehdi Samandarí: “The beloved Guardian has asked me to assure Drs. Samandarí and Farhoumand of his prayers on their behalf. He is praying that every obstacle may be removed from their paths of service and that they may be both guided and confirmed in their work, and that the seeds they are sowing may yield many harvests.”

Heshmatollah proceeded to Kenya where he worked tirelessly to secure a visa, but the authorities did not accept his credentials. His ordeal had taken more than a year, and finally he moved on to Eritrea where destiny had meant him to be. There he was able to secure his residency, and in 1954 his family joined him. In that year a third child, Farnaz Ziba, was born, followed in 1959 by the birth of Foad Hossein. In Asmara, Eritrea, Heshmatollah opened a dental clinic on Via Giuglietti and practiced his trade until 1963.

The most prized possession of his life was a telegram he received from the Guardian who had sent his love and gratitude. Dated September 30, 1953, it read, “ASSURE FARHOUMAND DEEPEST APPRECIATION HISTORIC HIGHLY MERITORIOUS SERVICES SHOGLI.” This telegram was received after

Heshmatollah had secured the recognition of the Faith by the then-ruling government in Eritrea and had mailed the document to Shoghi Effendi. This brought great joy and happiness to the Guardian who placed it in the Mansion of Bahjí.

Heshmatollah was well known for teaching the Faith to his patients while they sat in his chair holding their mouths open. Some of the people he was successful in teaching included Dr. Leo Niederreiter, Mr. Augusto Robiati, and Mr. Techeste Aherom. He also went to meet Reverend Miller<sup>160</sup> who had come to Eritrea to discredit the Faith. With the courage of a lion he told Reverend Miller that he had come too late and that the successes of the Faith would not be derailed.

Since he was the second pioneer to Eritrea after Šabrí Elias,<sup>161</sup> the Knight of Bahá'u'lláh (French Somaliland), Heshmatollah was instrumental in opening the way for many other pioneers from Iran. Now regarded in high esteem in government circles, Heshmatollah facilitated the visa applications for the newly arrived. During his sojourn in Asmara, with the help of the other pioneers, the Faith witnessed a tremendous growth among Eritreans and Italians of all walks of life. Heshmatollah was also instrumental in securing the Bahá'í cemetery from the government at no cost to the Faith.

In 1956 he was granted permission to go on pilgrimage to Haifa. He spent nine glorious days in the company of Shoghi Effendi, who showered him with his love and spoke to him about the future of humanity. The Guardian said, "The pioneers

are in Africa to serve the Africans," and he promised Heshmatollah that he would be visiting the Holy Land on two other occasions—promises that were fulfilled when he returned in 1963 and in 1968 for the first and second elections of the Universal House of Justice. Heshmatollah also begged the Guardian to pray for his children to be of service to the Faith, and Shoghi Effendi answered him with these words, "Rest assured that they will participate in the international teaching efforts of the Faith."

In 1963, after participating in the first election of the Universal House of Justice,<sup>162</sup> he moved with his family to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. There they were blessed with another daughter Farah.

In Addis Ababa he purchased land for the Bahá'í center when Emperor Haile Selassie made it possible for foreign residents to acquire property, and he was involved in securing the funds for the construction of the building. Heshmatollah also purchased land in Awassa and donated it to the Faith.

As a dentist he served most of the members of the imperial family of Ethiopia, with the exception of the emperor. However, in the early seventies he was summoned to the Imperial Palace. The *Sháh* of Iran was visiting Emperor Haile Selassie and was afflicted with a toothache. When the *Sháh* discovered that the dentist attending him was Iranian, he asked Heshmatollah what he was doing in Ethiopia, so far away from his homeland. With great assertion Heshmatollah replied that he had come as a pioneer to bring the Message of Bahá'u'lláh to the peoples of Ethiopia. The *Sháh* continued by saying that Iran was a very good place to live, why did he give

it up? Again Heshmatollah replied, "Your Imperial Majesty, I have already stated that the purpose of my stay is to bring the Message of Bahá'u'lláh to the people of this country."

After the Ethiopian Revolution most of Heshmatollah's children went to America to study, and he, longing to join them, asked the permission of the Universal House of Justice to leave his post and emigrate to America. The request was granted, and in 1976 he moved to Vienna, Virginia. The nineteen years that he spent in America, he enjoyed with his extended family of grandchildren, but his services to the Faith occupied his foremost attention.

Heshmatollah made teaching trips to Ecuador, Brazil, and the Caribbean Islands. In Ecuador he was influential with the government in securing resident visas for Iranian Bahá'í refugees who had gone there to seek asylum after the Iranian Revolution. In Brazil he befriended immigration officials and was also able to secure visas for Iranian Bahá'í refugees.

In May 1995 he was invited by the Universal House of Justice to attend the election of the first National Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Eritrea. This was for him a great moment, and his greatest reward was to witness the fruition of his efforts and dedication. In a way he knew that his days on this earthly plane were coming to an end. He talked about it often, and he went to see his old friends to say his "au-revoirs." In the last days of his life he wrote to his younger brother Parviz, "When elephants become old and have to die, they separate from the herd and look for a place to pass on. I hope that I can find that place soon."

His bedroom was surrounded with Bahá'í books and Tablets. He read and meditated into the early morning hours. On the last evening of his earthly life, the

last words he had apparently read were found at his bedside in a Tablet by 'Abdu'l-Bahá—a Tablet summoning God's help in staying firm in the Covenant and begging for His guidance to be extended to His family after His passing.

On November 8, 1995, after a short illness caused by a stroke, surrounded by family and friends, Heshmatollah winged his way to the Abhá Kingdom. He was interred on November 12 at the King David Memorial Cemetery in Falls Church, Virginia. His funeral was attended by hundreds of people, and the proclamation that ensued was a further testament of his services continuing from the world beyond. On November 9 the Universal House of Justice cabled:

DEEPLY SADDENED PASSING  
DEVOTED PROMOTER FAITH  
DEDICATED PIONEER ETHIOPIA  
ERITREA HESHMAT FARHOUMAND.  
CONVEY MEMBERS FAMILY LOVING  
SYMPATHY ASSURANCE FERVENT  
PRAYERS HOLY SHRINES PROGRESS  
HIS SOUL ABHÁ KINGDOM.

To further honor this humble servant of the Faith, the Eritrean Bahá'í Community is establishing a Bahá'í Institute, which at the request of the Universal House of Justice will be named the H. Farhoumand Bahá'í Institute.

#### DANIEL DEFENDER 1925-1995

**D**aniel Defender was born on December 4, 1925, in Shields, North Dakota. A Sioux Indian, Dan grew up on the extensive lands of the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation that straddles the borders of western North and South Dakota.

The ancestry of the Standing Rock Sioux derives from the Lakota band of

<sup>160</sup> William McElwee Miller. See Douglas Martin, "The Missionary as Historian: William Miller and the Bahá'í Faith," *Bahá'í Studies*, vol. 4, December 1978.

<sup>161</sup> See Šabrí Elias, pp. 255-57.

<sup>162</sup> As a member of the Regional Spiritual Assembly of North East Africa.

the Great Teton Sioux Nation, which until the mid-eighteenth century inhabited the forests of eastern Minnesota and parts of Wisconsin. Internecine warfare, the encroachment of white settlers, the introduction of the horse and the gun to their originally semi-agricultural culture, and their pursuit of the buffalo all became factors that eventually led the Lakota to move west into the Great Plains, especially the region spreading out from the foot of the Black Hills, long sacred to the Sioux, today comprising the Dakotas.

The Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 established the boundaries of the Great Sioux Reservation. Under the treaty the Sioux were guaranteed that settlers would not intrude upon their land. When gold was discovered in the Black Hills, the federal government opened up the reservation for white settlement. In 1889 an Act of Congress subdivided the Great Sioux Reservation into five, and the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation was eventually reduced to about a quarter of its original treaty allocation.

Dan's name in his native tongue, "Itancan-Agdi," translates roughly to "Brings Back Leadership," and to many on the reservation, that is what Dan stood for. An article published in the *Bismarck Tribune*<sup>163</sup> following his passing noted that "he was a tireless fighter for justice on the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation."

Still in his teens during World War II, Dan served in the US Navy as a "frogman"—an underwater demolition technician. As he told the story, not long after enlisting, the natural abilities of the frogmen hopefuls were put to their first test as they were dumped into a muddy lake in Idaho. "They pushed us out, and

those who made it to shore made it," Dan explained. He credited his own success to his childhood days of swimming in the reservation's narrow and murky Porcupine Creek. During the Vietnam era Dan served in the US Merchant Marine.

By the time he encountered the Bahá'í Faith in the late 1960s, Dan had reached middle age, had traveled considerably, and had acquired a global perspective. He made the decision to become a Bahá'í during one of his returns to the Standing Rock Reservation, more specifically to Fort Yates, North Dakota. He formally enrolled as a Bahá'í on January 25, 1970.

His enthusiasm for his new Faith, his maturity, and his depth of experience in Indian affairs and as a member of the Fort Yates Spiritual Assembly quickly made him attractive for service at the national level. Appointments to the American Indian Teaching Committee in 1974 and 1975 followed.

In October 1981, after taking a bachelor's degree in social work, Dan volunteered for service in the United States Peace Corps. His assignment to San Jose, Occidental Mindoro, in the Philippines, provided him with an opportunity to combine government work with international pioneering service for the Faith. When he returned to the United States in 1984, a Filipino bride, Jacinta Nacawili del Rosario Defender, accompanied him. Their union brought them two children, Honorata and Quddus. They raised several foster children as well. Jacqueline Left Hand Bull-Delahunt remembers them for having devoted their meager resources to the care of children with physical and intellectual disabilities.

The Defender family established its new home in Fort Yates on the familiar rolling hills and outstretching grasslands of the Standing Rock Reservation. There they hosted Feasts, Holy Day commemorations,

and firesides; and Dan served on the Local Assembly. Jacinta recalls that they made great efforts to get their children to all possible winter schools and gatherings.

Dan died on December 3, 1995, at the age of sixty-nine and was widely mourned. In the *Bismarck Tribune* article cited above, his sister observed:

He went through the real pain our people went through. He saw what caused our pain, and he knew there'd be no way to change that unless he alleviated the pain. It wouldn't change by itself; it wouldn't change by applying Band-Aid measures on some deep-seated problems.

Dan's body was returned to a knoll on the land of his grandfather, Tall Man Sees the Bear, north of Shields, North Dakota. His sister, Mary Louise Defender Wilson, remembers that Dan had fasted on that hill a few years before.

The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States offered the Defender family its condolences:

Our hearts are saddened with the passing of Daniel Defender whose life was spent in service to humanity as a teacher of the Cause of God on the homefront and as a pioneer to the Philippines and as a loving father for physically challenged children whom he sheltered . . . We pray for the ascent of his noble soul.

And on December 11, 1995, the International Teaching Centre remembered Dan and his family:

With saddened hearts, we received your email . . . informing us of the passing of a dearly devoted servant of the Cause Mr. Dan Defender

on December 3, 1995. Please assure his wife and children that we will offer prayers at the Sacred Threshold for the progress of his soul and for Bahá'u'lláh's blessings to comfort and sustain his family in this difficult time.

*From an article submitted by Thomas Murphy and supplementary information provided by Jacinta Defender*

### MARION HOLLEY HOFMAN 1910-1995

To few indeed is given the rare honor of advancing the Cause of God so notably and directly. The Universal House of Justice calls on both "present" and "future" generations to "emulate" the "shining example" of her life. Yet to understand one of the truths of Marion's life is to regard it in the light of a warning as well as an inspiration. The passing away of each individual is a timely warning to his fellows to prepare for the time when they, too, shall be called to divine account. To consider Marion's life is thus to see to what great account a single life can be turned and to be inspired in turn to make the most of all opportunities and gifts. It is clear that Marion exerted enormous influence through her life by her "distinguished labours." But it is well also to consider the influences that shaped her life, for it is in these spiritual connections that the radiance she came to embody was first enkindled.

Marion Elizabeth Holley was born in Visalia, California, on May 17, 1910, the eldest child of Harry and Grace Holley. The influences of her family life were auspicious; both her parents were college graduates, her mother being one of the first women to graduate from Stanford University. Grace received and accepted the Bahá'í Revelation

<sup>163</sup> Peter Salter, *The Bismarck Tribune*, December 7, 1995, front page.

through Isabella Brittingham, one of the first Bahá'ís in America. She later received a Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá in which she was instructed to kiss each of her dear children on his behalf. Harry also became a Bahá'í.

Already at sixteen an active Bahá'í, Marion followed her mother to Stanford where she studied social sciences. Her studies countered the influence of her home; taken up with college life and immersed in her subject, Marion found herself drifting toward agnosticism and unsure of herself and her Faith. She excelled at debating and in sports; indeed, she was a member of the United States 1928 Olympic team, going to Amsterdam for the games. At eighteen she transferred to the University of California at Berkeley where she majored in anthropology, coming second highest in her class and returning to Stanford for her degree, graduating magna cum laude. She was artistic as well, singing and performing on the piano and organ.

Marion was approaching a critical juncture in her life. Her studies and social activities were flourishing, but though she served on the Spiritual Assembly of Visalia, she felt distanced from the Faith. Her mother, an active Bahá'í, had many visitors, among whom were the distinguished teachers Martha Root and Keith Ransom-Kehler. Keith exercised an especially potent influence on Marion at this time. She stayed with the Holley family for a month but never spoke of the Faith to Marion directly. She gave three talks a week, and Marion said that these talks "pulled me up by my bootstraps." They gave her an intellectual appreciation of the Faith, which prompted her to make a formal declaration in Pasadena, California, in 1932. As one of the three Bahá'í youth in attendance, she represented the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and



Marion Holley Hofman

Canada at the World Council of Youth that year. This council was intended as a "mental counterpart" to the Olympic Games then in session, so that for a second time Marion represented her country at an event of worldwide significance.

Marion was also writing. Her essays appeared in *The Bahá'í World* and *World Order Magazine* and revealed wide-ranging intelligence and penetrating analytical powers. She returned to the same theme time and again: "Religion must aid in and hasten the development of culture," and "Philosophy and art ought to be cultivated in connection with the modern religion." Keith Ransom-Kehler had brought her intellectually into the Faith, and Marion now wrote persuasively that all hope of restoring mankind's powers lies primarily in the awakening of true spiritual dynamics. All the observations, knowledge, and training in which she had immersed herself at college were pressed into the service of a greater cause, a universal influence. She could pinpoint precisely the issues at the

heart of modern man's distress and describe the remedy frankly; her eloquent call still reverberates powerfully:

For by what right does any man walk abroad and call himself a citizen of the world, if he be not cognizant of its condition and enamored of its promise.

Of this description, Marion was such a citizen.

To her intellectual appreciations were now, in 1934, added spiritual confirmations when she met May Maxwell, whom she considered her spiritual mother. Through May she became fully integrated, spiritually, mentally, and socially related in her inmost being to the three Central Figures of the Faith and polarized upon the Guardian, in whom she perceived the radiating power of the Covenant, a tie which became ever stronger as she advanced in spiritual maturity.

It was through May that she met her future husband, David Hofman, who had lived in Canada for eight years and was at this time touring the United States. David left California and went home to England, and the two kept in touch by correspondence, but not until nine years later were they able to marry. David sent a telegram to Marion inviting and urging her to come over and marry him. The telegraph office in San Francisco delighted her sense of humor with the telephoned greeting, "Good morning. This is cupid calling."

The ten intervening years were marked for Marion by increasing levels of activity and energy, stimulated perhaps by the memory of that great soul Keith Ransom-Kehler, who died a martyr in Iṣfahán in 1933 and who had so positively influenced Marion at a crucial point in her life. By the time she and David were married in December 1945, Marion had acquired experience and distinction in her service

to the Faith, as attested by a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles:

In this connection [the Six Year Plan] he hopes you will use the services of Marion Hofman to the full. She is a gifted speaker and writer, and has had invaluable experience in America as a member of the National Teaching Committee during the Seven Year Plan. Both she and Mr. Hofman are wholly dedicated to the service of the Cause and eager to do all in their power to help accomplish the goals of your Six Year Plan.

In pursuit of these goals the Hofmans became two of the first nine pioneers to Northampton, Birmingham, and Oxford. Later, during the Ten Year Crusade, they pioneered to Cardiff and Watford. During this period Marion served as a member of the National Spiritual Assembly and the National Teaching Committee, and she was among the first Auxiliary Board members appointed by the Hand of the Cause George Townshend.

When David was elected to the Universal House of Justice in 1963, Marion assumed full responsibility for the family publishing business of George Ronald in Oxford, whose books spread far and wide the Writings and Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, as well as continuing the work of the beloved Guardian in educating the believers. By this action and by organizing the household removal to Haifa, she enabled David to go there shortly after the election. Some time later Marion devolved her management of George Ronald to their son Mark and made teaching tours as far afield as North America, Australasia, India, Pakistan, and Europe. When David resigned from service on the Universal House of Justice, he and

Marion returned to England, where she continued to work for the Cause she loved through the influence of her personal contacts. Only ill health impeded this service, and only death could have kept her from it.

The depth and scale of her accomplishments are great and awe-inspiring. But to understand the meaning of her life it is necessary to consider those individuals, pursuits, companions, and affections that permitted the gifts of this stalwart handmaiden of the Blessed Beauty to be laid at the Sacred Threshold.

The achievements of the life of Marion Holley Hofman are rooted in the influences radiating from the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh to which she dedicated her total loyalty. At this intimate level, as at all others, she is exemplary.

The Universal House of Justice summed it up in the cable it sent on the day of her passing December 5, 1995:

PROFOUNDLY LAMENT LOSS DEARLY LOVED, HIGHLY ADMIRING, STALWART HANDMAIDEN BAHÁ'U'LLÁH MARION HOFMAN NOW GATHERED GLORY ABHÁ KINGDOM. COMMUNITY MOST GREAT NAME ROBBED OF ONE ITS TIRELESS PROMOTERS WHOSE ACCOMPLISHMENTS WERE PRAISED BELOVED GUARDIAN. HER SERVICE NATIONAL TEACHING COMMITTEE UNITED STATES DURING FIRST SEVEN YEAR PLAN, NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY BRITISH ISLES, FIRST AUXILIARY BOARD EUROPE, AND AT WORLD CENTRE FAITH LOVINGLY REMEMBERED. HER PROMOTION TEACHING PIONEERING PLANS THROUGHOUT BRITISH COMMUNITY, HER NOTABLE CONTRIBUTION ENRICHMENT BAHÁ'Í LITERATURE, HER INDOMITABLE

FAITH, UNSWERVING DEVOTION COVENANT, COUPLED WITH HER LOVING NATURE, UNFLAGGING ZEAL AND RADIANT SPIRIT, GREATLY AIDED ADVANCEMENT CAUSE GOD. CONFIDENT HER DISTINGUISHED LABOURS EXTENDING OVER PERIOD SIX DECADES BRITISH ISLES, UNITED STATES WILL INSPIRE PRESENT FUTURE GENERATIONS BAHÁ'ÍS EMULATE SHINING EXAMPLE HER LIFE.

ASSURE FERVENT PRAYERS HOLY SHRINES PROGRESS HER NOBLE SOUL. CONVEY OUR LOVING SYMPATHY MEMBERS HER FAMILY. ADVISE HOLD BEFITTING MEMORIAL MEETINGS HER HONOUR THROUGHOUT BRITISH ISLES.

*David Hofman*

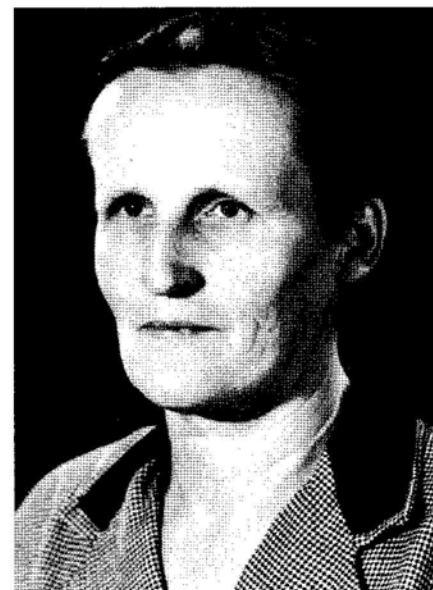
### MARIA EHLERS

?-1995

With grieved hearts we have to inform you about the passing of Mrs. Maria Ehlers, a staunch and devoted handmaiden of the Blessed Beauty. Her loyalty and steadfastness in face of the persecutions of the German Bahá'ís during the Third Reich are unforgettable. She was among those seven Bahá'ís wrongly accused of continuing "the organization of the dissolved and forbidden Bahá'í sect" in a public trial in 1944.

We humbly offer prayers for the progress of her precious soul in the Abhá Kingdom.

The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Germany to the Universal House of Justice



*Maria Ehlers*

We were deeply saddened to receive your faxed letter of 22 December 1995 and learn of the recent passing of Maria Ehlers. The example of her unwavering faith during the early years of the Cause in Germany and her constancy in the path of service will surely be long remembered by the German believers and abundantly blessed and rewarded in the spiritual world.

Kindly express to her family and friends our loving sympathy at their loss. We shall pray at the Sacred Threshold for the advancement of the soul of this beloved maidservant of Bahá'u'lláh.

Universal House of Justice  
December 27, 1995

Maria Ehlers, née Klingeberger, passed away on December 16, 1995, following a short stay in the hospital. Together let us sojourn with her for a while longer and review her life on this earth.

Maria was born in Jauer, in Silesia, nowadays a region in Poland. She left her parental home early, freeing herself from the religious narrowness that she had, until then, experienced. She joined the German Youth Movement and became influenced by Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophy. At length she moved to Heppenheim (Germany) and found work there as a nursemaid.

Here she came to know the Bahá'ís, doubtless the most decisive event in her life. She was inspired by the Bahá'í vision of peace and the notion that world peace must be founded on amity among the great religions and that all religions are expressions of the will of the one true God who has created them. The Bahá'í Faith provided her with a new, positive disposition toward religion, and she saw it in a true sense liberating, universal, and peace-bringing for all cultures.

In 1936 she accepted the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh and became a Bahá'í. From that point onward her life was molded by her new-found faith. At that time the Bahá'í religion was just ninety-two years old and had been represented in Germany for roughly thirty years. Bahá'u'lláh calls upon the peoples of the world to unite to form a worldwide league of cooperation, which leaves room for the manifold variety of cultures, while at the same time enabling the solutions of the world's problems and finally the establishment of world peace. In the words of Maria Ehler's favorite prayer, "Let the religions agree and make the nations one, so that they may see each other as one family and the whole earth as one home."<sup>164</sup>

From the time of her declaration, Maria Ehlers carried these thoughts wherever she went. The Bahá'ís in Darmstadt (Germany) are thankful that she planted the seed of

<sup>164</sup> *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 138.

faith in their midst. Her undaunted courage cost her interrogation by the Gestapo and a severe fine during the period of suppression of the Bahá'í Faith during the Third Reich, which considered the notion of the equality of all races to be subversive.

Maria discovered in the Bahá'í Faith a freedom rather than suppression; and her social circle included not only Bahá'ís but also innumerable friendships with people from all walks of life, ranging from beekeepers, whom she knew through her husband, to Salesian exiles and members of the Jewish-Christian organization of Buberhaus in Heppenheim.

In 1937 Maria married the toolmaker and beekeeper August Ehlers. As a consequence of the bee breeding, they were allowed to set up home in a nature reserve near Heppenheim, where they lived in natural surroundings for a considerable time with neither water mains nor electricity. Their home became a refuge and a center of hospitality for Bahá'ís and non-Bahá'ís alike; everyone felt at home there. The ideals of the Bahá'í Faith formed the basis of every conversation, and every visitor was destined to learn something.

Maria and August had two children, Rainer and Heidrun, and through them three grandchildren. During the Second World War and afterward, the Ehlers provided shelter for displaced persons, first for his parents, then for hers, then for one of Maria's aunts, and in the end for two additional families. Theirs was a demonstration of the true meaning of sacrifice. Thanks to the extensive grounds they were able to keep goats during the years of want and thus hold the enlarged family above water. All four of their parents lived with them until their passings, and Maria tended them one and all.

Maria's granddaughter Natascha lived close by for four years. As late as October

1994 the two undertook a journey to the World Centre in Haifa, Israel. In the spring of 1995 Maria moved into an old people's home where she was once again glad for the opportunity to talk about the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh.

Maria Ehlers was spirited, courageous, independent, and vivacious, thankful in every life situation. As she loved nature so much, I should like to describe her homeward journey with a simile. She left the constraints of this world like a butterfly that has broken out of its cocoon, spread its wings, and conquered a world on which we, as caterpillars, cannot adequately dream. Let us try to overcome the pain of separation by sharing with her the joy of her liberation.

*From a funeral oration  
offered by Claudia Gollmer*

#### ELIZABETH SCHELLENG KAPPUS 1921-1995

The sun will set, the shadows fall,  
But the stars will shine, a new day  
dawn,  
So do not pity me, envy me,  
For I still know the Love  
For which there is no end in parting.

Elizabeth Kappus

Elizabeth "Betty" Schelleng was born on September 21, 1921, in Fulton, New York. The Schellengs lived in nearby Hannibal for about four years before her father, Clarence, took a job teaching industrial arts at Oneonta high school. Her mother, Eleanor, taught grade school.

After high school Betty went to Genesee State College and studied library science. Then she moved to Lackawanna, a city near Buffalo, New York, and served as a children's librarian. She met her husband, Frederick Kappus, at a YWCA dance in Buffalo.



*Elizabeth Schelleng Kappus*

As they got to know each other, he taught her about the Bahá'í Faith, and in a short time she said, "I want to become a Bahá'í." She was one of those pure-hearted people who immediately believe in the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. After becoming a Bahá'í, she began to teach others.

Fred and Betty were married on June 16, 1948, under the auspices of the Hamburg Bahá'ís. They settled down on a fruit farm in Newfane, New York, and had four children.

In 1958 they sold the farm and answered the call of the Guardian for pioneers to go to South America. It was a long journey from New York to Arequipa, Peru, with their children. Nancy was then ten years old; Gail, eight; Tom, four; and Janet just eighteen months. Betty loved this white city with its white buildings of lava rock and the mountain El Mistí above it. Eve Nicklin, an American pioneer, came to live with them, and their house became the Bahá'í Center. Many people came there to hear about the Bahá'í Faith.

After one and a half years they sold their belongings and answered a call for pioneers to go to Otavalo, Ecuador. There they helped form the first Bahá'í Spiritual Assembly and met Raul Pavon<sup>165</sup> who came to help teach the rural Indian<sup>166</sup> people living in the mountains.

Betty and Fred always welcomed the Indian and local people into their home. Raul brought many of the Indians who had come down from the mountains to go to the market to them. Betty served them and taught them the Faith. Some of the Hands of the Cause came to visit and to help with the teaching. A wonderful tribute was made to the Kappus family by the Hand of the Cause A. Q. Faizi in his book *Meditations on the Eve of November 4th*:

My heart leaps up when I think of that family who always have groups of Indians in their house. They talk to them, teach them, entertain them and share with them their own daily bread. In these great services father, mother and four children participate.<sup>167</sup>

Their children went to a local school. Later Betty began to teach them along with the other pioneer children, and the Kappus house turned into a school for nine Bahá'í children. (There was no school for girls beyond the fourth grade in Otavalo.) It was a busy time for Betty; she enjoyed this and was happy serving the Cause.

After five years of pioneering service (1958-63), they returned to the United States, bought another farm, and returned to teaching in the rural areas there.

They made many trips back to Ecuador to help with the teaching work. Betty saw

<sup>165</sup> See "In Memoriam," *The Bahá'í World*, vol. XIX, pp. 616-19.

<sup>166</sup> Indigenous people of the Americas.

<sup>167</sup> *Meditations on the Eve of November 4th*, p. 14.



the beginning of Radio Bahá'í Ecuador and the expansion of the Faith in that country. She also attended the Continental Conference in 1970 in La Paz, Bolivia.

They later bought a van to travel to Central America during the winter, returning to the farm in the spring. Fred and Betty visited the Bahá'ís in Nicaragua, Uruguay, and Mexico. The two older girls, Nancy and Gail, went to college and spent the summer teaching the Mayan Indians in the Yucatan Peninsula.

Back in New York Betty served on many local support groups, and she was always willing to help on Bahá'í projects and to support the Bahá'ís in western New York State. She also volunteered regularly at the Louhelen Bahá'í School to help catalog the library. She died on December 16, 1995, while visiting the Dominican Republic. On the 19th the Department of the Secretariat conveyed the loving condolences of the House of Justice:

The Universal House of Justice was deeply saddened to learn . . . of the recent passing of Mrs. Elizabeth Kappus.

Dear Betty will be long remembered for the loving dedication with which she and her family served the Faith for many years, in numerous countries, and will be sorely missed by the friends whose hearts she touched in countless ways.

Be assured of the prayers of the House of Justice in the Holy Shrines for the progress of Betty's soul in the Abhá Kingdom, and that her husband, Fred, and her children and their families may be solaced, during this trying time, through the divine grace of the Blessed Beauty.

*Fred Kappus*

### MAURICE "MAURY" WILLOWS 1909–1995

Maurice Sheppard Willows Jr., or Maury, as he liked to be called, first heard of the Bahá'í Faith at a fireside he had been invited to at the home of Laura Platt in Los Angeles. The speaker was Virginia Foster, and Maury became so enamored with the message that he asked Virginia if she would speak to some of his friends. Thus he started hosting firesides before he enrolled as a Bahá'í. He did not have much success in teaching until he wrote to Shoghi Effendi. On January 1, 1949, he declared his belief in Bahá'u'lláh and stated in his letter to the Guardian that he and his friend, Churchill Ross, were holding firesides with the hope of attracting others. In response the Guardian's secretary wrote that Shoghi Effendi was glad that Maury "intended to do something about being a follower of Bahá'u'lláh and not just bask in [his] own spiritual good fortune." A postscript in Shoghi Effendi's own hand read, "Assuring you of my fervent prayers for your success and spiritual advancement. Your true brother, Shoghi." From that date onward the firesides were a success, and Maury hosted them regularly for more than forty-seven years.

Maury was born in Birmingham, Alabama, on August 13, 1909, and named after his father who was a great humanitarian and pioneer social worker. Notably Maurice Sr. was "the compassionate director"<sup>168</sup> of the American Red Cross in Tulsa, Oklahoma, during the horrendous race riots of 1921 that were described as being the worst civil disturbance in American history since the Civil War. Maurice Sr.'s

<sup>168</sup> "Tulsa Race Riot," A Report by the Oklahoma Commission to Study the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921, State of Oklahoma, February 28, 2001, p. 14.



*Maurice "Maury" Willows*

work was credited with saving many lives, and it has been reported that in the midst of this degrading turmoil, the relief efforts of the American Red Cross under Maurice Sr.'s supervision "provided a model of human behavior at its best."<sup>169</sup> In his final report Maurice Willows Sr. indicated that the total number of riot fatalities may have mounted as high as three hundred. Eighteen deaths alone occurred at what was then called the Maurice Willows Hospital. Young Maury would have been an impressionable eleven-year-old. He never forgot the carnage, his father's sense of horror at the injustices perpetrated, nor his mother's tenderness while physically tending to the victims.

While attending Oklahoma University Maury discovered that he had talent as an actor. By the late 1920s he had made his way to Hollywood where he worked as a bit player at Universal Studios appearing in several movies including the classic *All*

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

*Quiet on the Western Front* (1930). Later he was loaned to RKO Studios for *Babes in Toyland* (1934) with Laurel and Hardy. He also worked under contract to Fox Studios. Maury appeared in the stage productions of *Young Sinners* in Santa Barbara and San Francisco.

At the Palm Springs Tennis Club Maury was befriended by Templeton Crocker, heir to a San Franciscan family fortune. "Temp," as his friends called him, had had a 118 foot schooner built that he had called the *Zaca*—a vessel he sailed around the world. Temp was writing a book about his adventure and needed someone to help type and edit it. Maury was offered the job. In the meantime Temp was planning a second trip, this time a scientific expedition to the Galapagos Islands and the coasts of Central and South America. He would take along several scientists including the well-known American naturalist, explorer, and author, William Beebe. In order to go along as an assistant, Maury was tutored in collecting at the Academy of Sciences in San Francisco.

As it turned out Maury went on seven expeditions on the *Zaca* to Central and South America and to the South Pacific, six of which were sponsored by the American Museum of Natural History, the other by the Bishop Museum in Honolulu. Each voyage was of six months' duration. The other six months were spent in preparation for the next trip and in traveling to Europe to exchange artifacts with the British Museum and with the Trocadéro in Paris. Maury would write, "My advice to anyone who wants to make the most out of travel is to go on a splendidly outfitted yacht with a multimillionaire with impeccable taste in everything." Temp also paid for the trips to Europe.

World War II put an end to this way of life. Maury enlisted in the Navy, entering

as a quartermaster and rising in rank to lieutenant commander in four years. After the war Maury found that everything had changed. He wrote, "Things that used to be exciting and fun didn't have the same appeal." His friend Templeton Crocker had died, acting no longer interested him, and Maury could not find a job that suited him. It was during this time of restlessness that he and Churchill Ross happened upon the Bahá'í Faith. He wrote:

As much as I had always been skeptical, especially about religion, I finally came to the conclusion that this was it! This was really what I had been looking for all my life. It sounds a bit corny I know, but that's the way it was. I knew that since I had found and proved it to myself, [that] if I did not accept it wholeheartedly, I would be a hypocrite of the first order and would have to admit that I was not truly searching for the truth. Now that situation leads to a dilemma. Either you do or you don't. You are or you are not.

Maury did and he was.

In 1953 Maury married Lois Hall, a third-generation American Bahá'í who was described by a friend as having "beauty, wit, wisdom and warmth rolled into one character." She became the hostess of Maury's regular firesides of which it has been said, "there is almost no place on the planet untouched by the Willows firesides, as it has generated pioneers, traveling teachers, and lovers of Bahá'u'lláh too numerous to count."

Pioneers were being sought to go to the Hawaiian Islands, which were among the territories to be consolidated during the Ten Year Crusade. In 1960 the Willows were able to help fill this goal. Maury supported the family by working as sales manager for the Encyclopædia Britannica's

"Great Books of the Western World" program, and he supported the work of the Faith by giving firesides,<sup>170</sup> speaking at deepening classes, and serving on committees. Maury was on the Local Spiritual Assembly of Honolulu for a number of years, often as its chairman, and Lois was elected to the first National Spiritual Assembly of the Hawaiian Islands when it was formed in 1964.

After ten years in Hawaii the Willows returned to their home on Benedict Canyon Drive in Beverly Hills, California, which they had been renting out. They had three daughters, Deborah, Kimberly, and Christina, and they created a home in which, as one friend noted, there was "limitless radiance and joy"—a home noted for "outstanding hospitality." The heart of activity around which all of this revolved was their Friday night fireside.

Maury served on many committees and on the Local Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Los Angeles for many years, and he was often a delegate to the National Convention from Southern California. He was also appointed to serve as an assistant to an Auxiliary Board member.

Maury and Lois attended the first Bahá'í World Congress held in London in 1963. In 1965 they had the privilege of going on pilgrimage to both Israel and Iran. They made a second pilgrimage in 1981, and Maury went to the Holy Land one more time, as a representative of the United States to the Centenary of the Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh during the Holy Year, 1992. Later that year the family attended the second Bahá'í World Congress in New York.

In August 1994 the Bahá'ís of Los Angeles held a surprise party for the Willows. Messages of love and appreciation poured in from around the world,

<sup>170</sup> See Rachel Lei Chapman, pp. 117–19.

including one from the Universal House of Justice which read, "Loving greetings to the friends gathered to honor dear Maury and Lois Willows after some fifty years of dedicated services to the Cause. May many follow the example of their much-blessed and long-standing firesides."

In a journal entry made during the last year of his life, Maury wrote that the things that had meant most to him in his life were beauty, excellence, his family, and their firesides. Maury passed away on December 19, 1995.

The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Hawaiian Islands wrote:

The entire Hawai'i Bahá'í Community has been reflecting on Maury Willows and the greatness of his deeds here. Our Friday fireside at the National Centre, which featured Maury as the regular speaker when it began thirty-five years ago, quickly became the most productive teaching event in the Islands, and continues to this day in lasting tribute to Maury's prodigious efforts for the Faith in the 1960s here. We grieve with you all in our separation from him, but it cheers our hearts to know that your firesides continue on the other side of the Pacific too, as we long to drop in at the Willows's fireside one Friday soon. The Honolulu Spiritual Assembly joins us especially in sending you our most tender love and heartfelt prayers.

On December 22, the National Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States received the following message from the Universal House of Justice:

DEEPLY SYMPATHIZE LOSS TO  
AMERICAN BAHÁ'Í COMMUNITY

MAURY WILLOWS, FAITHFUL SERVANT BAHÁ'U'LLAH WHOSE CONSTANCY IN TEACHING WORK OVER SEVERAL DECADES HAS LEFT WORTHY EXAMPLE DEVOTION CAUSE GOD. HIS SERVICES AS PIONEER HAWAIIAN ISLANDS INDELIBLY ETCHED ANNALS FAITH. EXTEND LOVING SYMPATHY MEMBERS HIS FAMILY. ASSURE ARDENT PRAYERS HOLY SHRINES PROGRESS HIS SOUL THROUGHOUT DIVINE WORLDS.

**MARY ZABOLOTNY McCULLOCH**  
Knight of Bahá'u'lláh  
1918–1996

GRIEVED LEARN PASSING MARY ZABOLOTNY MCCULLOCH WHOSE WHOLEHEARTED RESPONSE GUARDIAN'S APPEAL NEEDS TEN YEAR PLAN WON HER IMMORTAL DISTINCTION KNIGHT BAHÁ'U'LLÁH FOR ANTICOSTI ISLAND. HER GREAT LOVE FOR CAUSE, UNQUENCHABLE SPIRIT OF TEACHING AND UNFAILING CHEERFULNESS UNDER TESTS MAKE HER LIFE EXAMPLE FUTURE GENERATIONS CANADIAN BELIEVERS. ASSURE HEARTFELT PRAYERS PROGRESS HER ILLUMINED SOUL. KINDLY CONVEY DEEPEST SYMPATHY HER HUSBAND KENNETH AND DAUGHTER LAURA. ADVISE HOLD APPROPRIATE MEMORIAL GATHERINGS TORONTO, WINNIPEG.

Universal House of Justice  
January 9, 1996

I do not recall exactly when my dream happened. Many years ago I had dreamt about the feast spread in our home, and the King and Queen and many guests



Mary Zabolotny McCulloch

visiting us. I remember well the table bountifully spread with good food, and the bejewelled wraps of the guests. The Queen beckoned to me, and asked me to fetch her wrap from the closet. In the closet were many garments, studied with jewels. Some of the furs were colored, in purple, etc. There was a crimson evening gown hanging upside-down. I wondered at this, and thought, "Is this mine?" Many years later, after becoming a Bahá'í, I had read the Tablet of Ahmad (which opens with the words "He is the King, the All-Knowing, the Wise! Lo, the Nightingale of Paradise . . .") one evening, and some of the truth of the dream dawned upon me. "He is the King" meant God and a new Revelation; "the Nightingale" was Bahá'u'lláh.

Such is the seed of a Bahá'í life described by Mary McCulloch in *To Diffuse the Fragrances*, the memoir she and her husband Kenneth wrote.

Mary was born on November 9, 1918, in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Her parents, Michael and Theodora [Olinyk] Zabolotny, were Ukrainian immigrants. Mary was their first child; a son, Vladimir (later named Walter), was born the following year. Of her early years she wrote:

Except for the occasional children's squabble, we were a happy family, and if my father and mother had their arguments, I was always the peace-maker [as I] had developed a talent for settling their disputes. At a very early age I had also developed a talent for drawing. At the age of seven I joined the library, and gained a love of books. My parents taught us the love of art, music and poetry, and emphasized many a time the importance of getting a good education, of which they had been deprived.

Mary's education was completed in Winnipeg. After elementary and high school, she entered Wesley College (now the University of Winnipeg). For her second year she transferred to the University of Manitoba, and finally she went to the Winnipeg Art School. Mary wrote:

At that time LeMoine Fitzgerald was the Principal of the School, and a most understanding and wise teacher, whose students adored him. He had been a member of the "Group of Seven" artists, who had become famous for finding new ways of expressing Canadian art.

After she graduated she worked as a commercial artist, and she attended refresher courses at the Art School where she met fellow artist Frances Boyce. Over the years Mary and Frances made several trips to the Yukon and Alaska, paying their way by working at whatever jobs were available or by selling some of their paintings.

After these painting trips were finished, and I was back home in Winnipeg, I began to search for a way of life that would approach what my spirit craved, although at the time I did not know what that was.

Mary had her dream and . . .

[T]hen, in 1951, a friend from my Art School days, Leonard Woods, sent me a pamphlet on the Bahá'í Faith, saying he thought I would be interested. That was all he said, but after reading the Principles, and a little of the history of the Faith, it seemed to me that I had at last found the Truth, and was ready to support these Principles, but I needed to know more about them. Leonard had said that a friend would contact me . . . I waited three months and no one contacted me. Then Leonard came from Vancouver to Winnipeg on a holiday. He asked me if I would like to attend a fireside at the home of Angus Cowan,<sup>171</sup> a Winnipeg Bahá'í businessman . . . That was to be a Friday night I would never forget, as this was my first contact with Bahá'ís. Young people met there every Friday to discuss various aspects of the Faith. Angus and Bobbie Cowan were very kind and hospitable, sharing much fun and laughter, and with radiant hearts [they made] everyone feel that they were wanted and respected. Many speakers came to that house to talk about some aspect of the Faith, including Glen Eyford and Jamie Bond, both of whom later served on the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada.

On the Anniversary of the Birth of the Báb, October 20, 1951, Mary declared her belief in Bahá'u'lláh. Soon after her declaration she pioneered to Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, helping to establish the first Local Assembly there. She later arose to help form Assemblies in the Quebec communities of Verdun, St. Lambert, and Westmount. When the Ten Year Crusade was launched, she again offered to pioneer, and the New Territories Committee asked her to go to Anticosti Island, a goal designated by the Guardian.

He [the Guardian] realizes that this is a very difficult assignment, but feels that the hand of Bahá'u'lláh will assist those who arise to carry on this work, and that the doors will open, somehow or other. He hopes your committee and the National Assembly will realize the great importance of someone being settled in Anticosti, and will continue to press the matter.<sup>172</sup>

Anticosti was entirely owned by the Wayagamack Pulp and Paper Company, and residence on the island would necessitate employment with the enterprise. Mary moved to Anticosti in March of 1956 but was unable to keep her job and had to leave after a few months. For her efforts she earned the accolade of Knight of Bahá'u'lláh. She managed to visit the island on three occasions in later years.

Mary married Ken McCulloch in 1958, and they had one daughter, Laura. After the wedding Mary joined Ken in Baker Lake, Northwest Territories,<sup>173</sup> where he had been pioneering. There, they worked on ensuring

<sup>172</sup> Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to Canada*, letter written by Leroy Ioas on behalf of the Guardian to the New Territories Committee dated May 6, 1954, pp. 197-98.

<sup>173</sup> Presently Nunavut, officially separated from the Northwest Territories in 1999.

<sup>171</sup> See "In Memoriam," *The Bahá'í World*, vol. XIX, pp. 703-06.

the translation of Bahá'í literature into Inuktitut and on helping to establish Baker Lake Bahá'í House. They remained in the north until 1979.

After Baker Lake the McCullochs lived briefly in Churchill, Manitoba, and finally settled in The Pas, Manitoba, where an Assembly was formed at Riḡván 1991.

In her later years Mary worked on translating *The Hidden Words* and the *Tablet of Ahmad* into Ukrainian. Some of her other translations have been published.

Mary was not well when she and her husband attended the observances of the Centenary of the Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh in Israel in May 1992 and the Bahá'í World Congress in November of that year. Early in 1993 she had surgery for cancer but had recovered by the time she and Kenneth went on pilgrimage in November of that year. In April 1995 they returned to Baker Lake for a one-week visit. Then, in August, Mary had an accident and was hospitalized for nineteen days. She grew weaker; it appeared that the cancer had come back. On January 7, 1996, she passed away. A few weeks earlier she had told one of the home-care people attending her that she had fulfilled her life's objectives.

*Adapted from articles by Kenneth C. McCulloch and Susan M. Lyons*

## RUTH EYFORD

?-1996

SHARE GRIEF FRIENDS ACROSS CANADA AT LOSS DEAR RUTH EYFORD. HER DEDICATION TO COVENANT AND SPIRIT OF WHOLEHEARTED DEVOTION TO INTERESTS CAUSE ILLUMINED LONG YEARS OF SERVICE AS OVERSEAS PIONEER, TEACHER OF FAITH, MEMBER AND OFFICER OF NATIONAL SPIRITUAL

ASSEMBLY AND MEMBER AUXILIARY BOARD. PRAYING FERVENTLY HOLY SHRINES PROGRESS HER RADIANT SOUL ALL WORLDS GOD. KINDLY EXTEND HEARTFELT SYMPATHY HUSBAND GLEN, CHILDREN HELGI AND THORA, MEMBERS FAMILY.

Universal House of Justice  
January 12, 1996

Ruth (née Monk) Eyford, an exemplar to many for her qualities of radiance, loving hospitality, steadfast service, and noble character, ascended to the spiritual realm on Wednesday, January 10, 1996.

She was born and raised in Sydney, Nova Scotia. She studied nursing and psychiatric nursing. In 1957 she married Glen Eyford in Montreal, and together they had two children, Helgi and Thora.

Her service to the Covenant and to humanity as an Auxiliary Board member for both Propagation and Protection, as assistant secretary and later chairman of the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, and as member of a number of Local Spiritual Assemblies and national and local committees will be long remembered by her many friends in Canada and abroad. In addition to her heroic administrative service, Ruth served with her family as a pioneer to Iceland and India and, on the homefront, to St. Albert, Alberta. She also traveled across Canada many times teaching and consolidating the Faith, educating the friends, and providing counseling and encouragement.

Ruth was best known for her tireless service in the field of Assembly development and consultation. Her determination for meticulous research and for the diligent application of the Writings to the development of the community gave many Bahá'ís their first taste of personal and community transformation. Every meeting

with her was an occasion to study and to seek to apply the Writings to our daily lives. Ruth also applied the healing Message of Bahá'u'lláh to her work as a nurse and counselor in hospitals and volunteer agencies and with the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission.

The wish of Ruth's many friends for the progress of her radiant and loving soul can best be expressed by the words of the Beloved Master:

I ask of God to draw thee ever closer, hold thee ever faster, to rejoice thy heart with nearness to His presence, to fill thee with light and still more light, to grant thee still more beauty, and to bestow upon thee power and great glory.<sup>174</sup>

*Based in part on an article prepared by Ruth and Glen Eyford*

## FRANCIS GILBERT 1929-1996

The Universal House of Justice was saddened to learn . . . of the passing of Dr. Francis Gilbert, devoted servant of the Faith and long-time pioneer to the Turks and Caicos Islands. His radiant spirit and praiseworthy example will be warmly remembered and sorely missed. Be assured of the prayers of the House of Justice at the Sacred Threshold for the progress of his soul in the Abhá Kingdom, and that his wife, Evelyn, may be so-laced through the divine grace of the Blessed Beauty.

Department of the Secretariat  
February 13, 1996

Francis "Frank" Gilbert was born on September 21, 1929, to Gerard and Diane Gilbert in Manchester, New Hampshire. The son of French-Canadian parents who migrated to the United States, Frank grew up speaking French with his sister Madeline and his brother Leo. Frank played football in high school and excelled in academics throughout his youth, enabling him to graduate high school with honors and enroll in the University of New Hampshire in Durham. He embarked on a theological degree, planning to be a priest, but later determined to pursue a career in medicine.

At his cousin's wedding in 1949 Frank became acquainted with one of the bridesmaids, Ms. Evelyn "Evie" Charpentier, and they were wed March 1951. Frank enrolled in the Boston University School of Medicine and obtained his MD in 1954, with a specialization in obstetrics and gynecology. Subsequently the Gilberts relocated to Portsmouth, Virginia, where Frank provided medical services as a lieutenant in the US Navy.



Francis Gilbert

<sup>174</sup> *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, ¶ 158.13.

In 1960 the Gilberts moved to Waukesha, Wisconsin, where Frank joined a medical office and later established a private practice with his wife who was by then a registered nurse.

One afternoon in 1966 Frank went to the public library searching for a copy of Pope Leo XIII's encyclical entitled *Rerum Novarum* or *Of New Things*, but he happened instead on *All Things Made New*, an introduction to the Bahá'í Faith by John Ferraby. Frank read the book, actively sought out firesides, and declared his belief in Bahá'u'lláh on May 26, 1967. An avid student of comparative religion Frank wondered if he would ever become disenchanted with his new religion as he had with others, but the flame of his love for Bahá'u'lláh burned with increasing brilliance throughout the remaining three decades of his life.

The following year Evie became a Bahá'í, and the Local Spiritual Assembly of New Berlin, Wisconsin, was formed with Frank serving as chairman. From the time of his declaration until the family's departure six years later, he gave presentations on the Faith in local high school and university classes and helped introduce the Faith to prominent people including the mayor. The Gilberts converted their large garage into a multiuse space that served as an Assembly meeting room, the New Berlin Bahá'í School, and the Bahá'í reference library. Every Sunday the Gilberts hosted a children's class in the morning and a fireside in the evening. Their home was the center of regular socials for friends and seekers who often stayed late into the night. Nurtured in this unique environment each of the four Gilbert children declared their belief in Bahá'u'lláh upon reaching the age of maturity. The local community witnessed many new enrollments and an astonishing growth in activities.

After going on pilgrimage in 1979 the Gilberts returned to the United States determined to become long-term pioneers, but the opportunity did not arise until 1987 when they responded to an advertisement in *The American Bahá'í* calling for a doctor in the Turks and Caicos Islands. After visiting the Islands the Gilberts sold their home, gave away their belongings, and bequeathed their Bahá'í reference books.

Upon arriving Frank became the first permanent doctor of the Providenciales Health-Medical Center, where he remained until 1991. In a social environment afflicted by racism, bribery, malnutrition, and disease, news spread quickly of Frank's medical expertise and his equal treatment of native and nonwhite patients; he became known as the "little people's doctor." A Turks and Caicos news article applauded the "kindness and humane approach which Dr. Gilbert has established with his patients . . . This no doubt stems from his religious convictions, as he sees all persons as being equal, whether black or white." Frank's reputation led to his appointment in 1989 to the Health Practitioners Board of the Ministry of Social Services, making him the Board's first nonnative member. In 1991 he accepted a position as a government doctor.

In 1988 Frank and Evie were elected to the newly formed Local Spiritual Assembly of Providenciales, with Frank serving as chairman and Evie as secretary. Frank sent a steady stream of substantive letters updating the US Bahá'í International Goals Committee on the progress of the Providenciales Bahá'í community. These letters have been compiled as "The Francis Gilbert Papers."<sup>175</sup>

<sup>175</sup> The papers include his report "A Brief History of the Progress of the Bahá'í Faith on the Island of Providenciales, Turks and Caicos Islands, BWI from January, 1982, through November, 1989."

The Gilberts' distinguished characters and their Bahá'í identities became widely known, prompting a curiosity about the Faith that they were happy to satisfy. Notwithstanding their grueling work schedules the Gilberts hosted firesides every Tuesday night, often using the ambulance to transport guests. They drew upon their command of Creole and French to reach out to the islands' native peoples and to the Haitian exiles. One evening, after Frank gave an inspired presentation, all fourteen of the Haitian guests declared their belief in Bahá'u'lláh. (One hundred and thirty-five people in the Turks and Caicos Islands enrolled in one year.)

In 1993 the New Era Medical Center (NEMC) was opened in Blue Hills, Providenciales, giving Frank and Evie their own private clinic. It was the realization of a vision shared by the Gilberts and an Iranian-American Bahá'í entrepreneur, Mr. Vahid David Hedayati. The NEMC sought to prevent disease and maintain wellness through good nutrition and positive lifestyle habits. The treatment offered there was complemented by Frank's program "Your Radio Doctor" that broadcast presentations addressing what he saw as the island's nine controllable health problems: hypertension, obesity, diabetes, high cholesterol, sexual promiscuity, drug and alcohol abuse, lack of exercise, and smoking.

Frank's greatest wishes were to minister to the needs of the people until the day of his death, "to die with his boots on," and be buried in the Islands. One evening toward the end of his life, he turned to his wife and asked, "Evie, you didn't have a dull life with me, did you?" to which she immediately replied, "Oh, heavens no, Frank!"

On February 1, 1996, he suffered a heart attack while seated at his desk facing a picture of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and died

"with his work boots on." During the next twenty-four hours the Gilbert residence saw a constant stream of visitors including Turks and Caicos natives, Haitian exiles, government officials, and expatriates. The next day, after a dignified and poignant funeral service, Frank's body was buried at a gravesite close to the ocean.

During Frank's nine years of service in the Turks and Caicos Islands, the image of the Bahá'í Faith, previously tarnished by a backlash to earlier teaching efforts, was rehabilitated by loving and skillful teaching. In this sense Frank's success in Providenciales was surely a "providence" of its own for the Turks and Caicos Islands. The assurance of the Universal House of Justice that "His radiant spirit and praiseworthy example will be warmly remembered and sorely missed" will prove as true for the people of Providenciales as for the friends and family of Dr. Frank Gilbert.

#### MARION CARPENTER YAZDI 1902-1996

Born on October 9, 1902, Marion Carpenter Yazdi first heard of the Bahá'í Faith when her mother read aloud a newspaper article about 'Abdu'l-Bahá that appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*. She became a Bahá'í in 1914.

For Mrs. Yazdi the Bahá'í Faith was the center of gravity around which her life revolved. Among her family are the earliest members of the Bahá'í Faith in California. She served the community at large as a teacher and a businesswoman, and she served the Faith as a member of several national and local committees. For many years she was secretary of the Local Spiritual Assembly of Berkeley.

In 1926 she married the noted Bahá'í lecturer and writer 'Alí M. Yazdí. Marion later compiled *Prophetic Days: Memories*

of *'Abdu'l-Bahá*, written by her husband in 1975.

She was the author of *Youth in the Vanguard: Memoirs and Letters Collected by the First Bahá'í Student at Berkeley and at Stanford University* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982). In it she writes, "Uppermost in my mind was my desire to inform people in a winning way about Bahá'í principles." Of her student days she says, "I had certain objectives in mind . . . above all to spread the teachings of the Bahá'í Faith in the wake of the beloved Master. I knew I had a responsibility, and I welcomed it."

Marion Carpenter Yazdi passed away on February 2, 1996, in Natick, Massachusetts. On February 9, the Department of the Secretariat wrote the following letter on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the Yazdi-Markert family:

The Universal House of Justice was deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Mrs. Marion Carpenter Yazdi, long-standing and stalwart maidservant of Bahá'u'lláh. Her praiseworthy achievements and contributions to the development of the Faith over many years will be warmly remembered, and her radiant spirit will be sorely missed.

Be assured of the payers of the House of Justice at the Sacred Threshold for the progress of dear Marion's soul in the Abhá Kingdom, and that the divine grace of the Blessed Beauty may surround and solace you all.

AGNES ELISABETH  
"LISBETH" ANDERSEN  
1916–1996

The Universal House of Justice shares your sadness on learning of the passing of Mrs. Lisbeth Andersen, whose notable contributions to the upbuilding of the Cause in Scandinavia, from the early days of its establishment in that region, are gratefully recalled. Kindly extend to her relatives and friends the loving sympathy of the House of Justice at their loss and assure them of its prayers in the Holy Shrines for the progress of her radiant soul through all the worlds of God.

Department of the Secretariat  
April 4, 1996

Lisbeth Andersen was born in Copenhagen on March 2, 1916. Her father was an engineer with the navy and her mother a housewife. Lisbeth and her older sister, Gudrun, were not brought up in a very religious atmosphere, but as a child Lisbeth felt close to God through the Christianity taught to her at school.

In 1943 she married Asser Nygaard, the son of Frederik Nygaard, a writer of some reputation within the inner circle of artists in Copenhagen. Asser and Lisbeth had two children, Gerd Lisa and Tue Martin.

From an early age Lisbeth was gifted with a talent for drawing. Among her belongings are some drawings she made when she was eight or nine years of age—drawings that clearly show her talent and her interest in the world about her. As she and her family lived in the center of Copenhagen, Lisbeth would, during her youth, spend her free time at the Royal Theatre watching the dress rehearsals and

sketching the actors and actresses, some of whom became well known later.

Lisbeth's interest in art and drawing led her to join the Royal Academy for Fine Arts. She attended seminars at the Academy with student architects who were interested in the relationship between architecture and color design. This field of work later led her to the beloved Faith. Her education as an artist resulted in a number of commissions over the years. Among them were the planning of color schemes for educational institutions, housing estates, and Danish village churches, the latter commissioned by the National Museum. She also displayed her work in exhibitions. In her later years, although Lisbeth was ill and unable to venture outdoors, she would still find energy to express herself through her paintings.

In the early 1950s the Copenhagen County started building a military hospital in connection with a large hospital in the center of Copenhagen. The new building was chosen as an experiment in cooperation among architects, designers of nurses' uniforms, and color coordinators. Lisbeth was invited to participate in the project that was carried out over three years. It was during this time that she encountered the Bahá'í Faith.

Two of the earliest Bahá'ís in Denmark were Jean Deleuran and his wife Tove.<sup>176</sup> Jean was an architect working on the hospital project, and it was he who told Lisbeth about the Faith. She later explained that she borrowed a book about the Faith, but that what she really wanted was to read the words of Bahá'u'lláh. From His words she felt it would be possible to determine whether the claims of the Faith were true or not. The records show that the Local Spiritual Assembly of Copenhagen invited



Agnes Elisabeth "Lisbeth" Andersen

Lisbeth to enroll at the Feast of Asmá', August 19, 1952.

Lisbeth was soon involved in Bahá'í activities. Eight months after her declaration, she was elected to the Local Spiritual Assembly of Copenhagen, which was then the only Assembly in Denmark. When the first National Spiritual Assembly of Scandinavia and Finland was formed in 1957, Lisbeth was elected to it. And in 1962, she was elected onto the first National Spiritual Assembly of Denmark. A year later she attended the first election of the Universal House of Justice in the Holy Land.

Lisbeth served on the National Spiritual Assembly and on the National Teaching Committee until the late 1980s when her health began to suffer. At the time of the publication by the Universal House of Justice of *The Promise of World Peace*, she was engaged in contacting people of prominence throughout the country. She also continued to be an active member of the Local Assembly.

<sup>176</sup> See Tove Deleuran, pp. 368–70.

Lisbeth was an ardent teacher of the Faith, and she would often find time to invite friends to her apartment for afternoon tea and for discussions on art, psychology, pedagogy, philosophy, and other themes that were of interest to her. Her teaching efforts brought quite a number of people into the Faith, including her son and daughter.

As well as having a gift for art, Lisbeth had a facility for languages. Early in her life as a Bahá'í, she was involved in the translation of Sacred Writings from English into Danish. The earliest book published in Denmark, translated by her, is probably the *Kitáb-i-Íqán*. Her other translations include Bahá'u'lláh's "Tablets to the Kings and Rulers" and a portion of *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. Probably the most challenging task given her was the retranslation of the English prayer book. This was a valuable gift to the Danish Bahá'í community; its language is beautiful and poetic. Over the years Lisbeth was also busy with translations of teaching materials and messages from the Universal House of Justice and the Hands of the Cause.

Among her many contributions was the teaching of children's classes. A result of her love for educating a new generation of Bahá'ís is a series of six booklets that she wrote during the years 1975–78, collectively called *A Stroll Through the History of the Bahá'í Faith and Its Holy Writings*. Using simple words, it presented significant events from the history of the Faith.

At several summer schools she staged plays with the children and taught them the history of the Faith through drama. One of the last tasks she performed for the Bahá'í community was a drawing of women of different races that was to appear as the cover of a booklet written by the much-loved late Miss Lami Khodadoost.

Not only did Lisbeth manage to be a wife, mother, grandmother, great

grandmother, and working artist (a job which often demanded her absence from home) but also a Bahá'í, constantly engaged in service to the Faith she loved so much.

Lisbeth, though physically ill, was in her later years spiritually alert, and during her last few months she approached the next world through dreams. She would dream that all the questions about the universe had been explained to her. Her last three or four paintings were, as she said, "souls of people floating in the universe," one of which was her own. She passed away peacefully on February 3, 1996.

*Adapted from an article provided by The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Denmark*

### LEONOR PORRAS

1905–1996

Leonor Porras was born on January 22, 1905, in Bogota, Colombia. Between the years 1930 and 1940 she, together with Miss Inés Sarmiento, operated a school for young boys and girls. She learned of the Faith through Mrs. Aura de Sánchez,<sup>177</sup> a mother of children attending her school who happened to be the first Colombian Bahá'í. Leonor declared her belief in Bahá'u'lláh in 1943.

Recognizing the import of the Message, she wanted to share it with parents and students, but she had to be very discreet. At the time Catholicism was the only official religion, and it was dangerous to speak of any other. Someone who heard her seize an opportunity to teach went to the parish priest, threatening to have her school closed. The priest then asked Leonor what it was that she taught the children in religion class. With great dignity, seriousness, and

<sup>177</sup> See "In Memoriam," *The Bahá'í World*, vol. XX, pp. 838–39.



Leonor Porras

confidence, she told him that at no time would she violate the norms established by the Ministry of Education; that her purpose was to guide and transmit to her students the sciences, the arts, and morality; and that they were well informed of the prestige of her institution. She explained that, if asked, she had no intention of denying that she was a Bahá'í. When pressed about the matter of teaching a religion besides the Catholic faith, she answered that she always taught high moral standards and principles and proper behavior, being conscious that she was responsible for training youth who were worthy and decent and good future citizens. From that time she was never bothered again.

She was a member of the first Local Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Bogota, which formed in 1943. Over the years she was constant and firm in teaching and deepening others, often taking the initiative to guide and counsel seekers and new believers, attracting them to a deeper understanding of the teachings. On February 21,

1959, she officiated the first Bahá'í wedding ceremony in Colombia, and with great sensitivity and respect, she instructed the couple on the significance and implications of Bahá'í marriage. She was later asked by the Assembly to conduct deepening classes for the friends. Through these classes she became better grounded in her understanding of the administrative order.

At the end of the 1950s she moved to the city of Manizales to assist in forming the Local Spiritual Assembly there, helping to guarantee the number of Assemblies required for the election of the first National Assembly of Colombia in 1961. She was elected to the National Assembly, and as one of its members she participated in the election of the first Universal House of Justice and attended the first World Congress in 1963.

Toward the end of the 1960s she sold the school to dedicate herself completely to the service of the Faith, serving briefly as an Auxiliary Board member. She spent a year in Venezuela, where she taught tirelessly. Later she moved to Jamundi in the Department of Valle del Cauca, Colombia. In Jamundi she taught the Faith and supported national conferences, institutes, training workshops, and gatherings of youth, pre-youth, and children. She was happy and blessed to have received encouragement and guidance from Dr. Farzam Arbab, and she was motivated to teach wherever she was needed.

Leonor mirrored the qualities of recititude, integrity, seriousness, and deep love for the Faith. Her great desire was to transmit the grandeur of the Cause. She promoted the respect of the friends for each other, emphasizing, for example, the punctual start of meetings. Although some characterized her as being strict, she had a refined sense of humor that brightened the meetings.

She was an excellent friend and confidant, one who could be trusted without reservation. On many occasions the friends asked her for advice, and she was very receptive and insightful, clear in her arguments.

Her health gradually deteriorated, but in spite of this she maintained herself in high spirits. Her loyalty, firmness in the Covenant, and humility were reflected throughout her life. For example, a few months before her death, while she was confined to her home, she asked a visiting youth to study a Bahá'í book with her. She felt that she had the temperament of a "general" and thought that the study would help her to improve her character.

On February 21, 1996, her soul ascended to the Abhá realm at the age of ninety-one. She died at her homefront pioneering post in Jamundi, having donated all her belongings to the Cause. On February 23 the Universal House of Justice wrote:

LAMENT LOSS OUTSTANDING  
EARLY COLOMBIAN BELIEVER  
WARM-HEARTED, MUCH-LOVED  
MAIDSERVANT FAITH LEONOR  
PORRAS. HER NOTABLE RECORD  
OF SERVICE OVER FIVE DECADES  
LOVINGLY REMEMBERED. PRESENT  
FUTURE GENERATIONS  
COLOMBIAN BAHÁ'ÍS OWE DEBT  
OF GRATITUDE HER EXEMPLARY  
STEADFASTNESS ESPECIALLY DURING  
FIRST DECADES DEVELOPMENT  
THAT COMMUNITY. URGE  
HOLD MEMORIAL MEETINGS  
MAJOR CENTRES. OFFERING FER-  
VENT PRAYERS HOLY SHRINES FOR  
PROGRESS HER LUMINOUS SOUL  
ABHÁ KINGDOM.

**JALIL MAHMOUDI**  
(Jalíl Maḥmúdí)  
1912–1996

GRIEVED PASSING DEVOTED SER-  
VANT CAUSE JALÍL MAḤMÚDÍ.  
DECADES SELFLESS LABOURS PRO-  
MOTING CAUSE OF GOD BOTH IN  
CRADLE OF FAITH AND IN UNITED  
STATES LOVINGLY REMEMBERED.  
ASSURE RELATIVES FRIENDS  
ARDENT PRAYERS HOLY SHRINES  
PROGRESS HIS RADIANT SOUL  
ABHÁ KINGDOM.

Universal House of Justice  
March 10, 1996

**B**orn into a Bahá'í family on February 25, 1912, in Kirmán, Iran, Jalil's father, Mahmoud Mahmoudi, and mother, Maryam, had accepted the revelation of Bahá'u'lláh sometime in the late 1800s in Yazd. In Iran Jalil served on the Local Assemblies of Karaj, Gholhak, and Zargandeh and on the committee for the translation of Sacred Texts that was then working under the guidance of Shoghi Effendi. Jalil was also on the East-West Relationships Committee, the International Pioneering Committee, and the External Affairs Committee.

In 1940 he married Badri Mahmoudi who, after her own investigation of the Cause, declared five years later.

In 1944 Jalil received a bachelor's degree in agriculture from the College of Agriculture of Iran in Karaj. Later he served the college as its dean. His other professional positions included director general of the Education and Publication Department. He was also an economic advisor, and at one time he headed an Iranian agricultural delegation to the United States, England, and Germany.

In 1959 Jalil and Badri relocated with their three children (then aged seventeen, sixteen, and ten years) to Logan, Utah, in the United States. Jalil chose Logan because it was the home of Utah State University, which had accepted him for postgraduate studies. In 1961 he received a master's degree in agricultural economics. While pursuing his master's, he served on the Local Spiritual Assembly of Logan.

Later, after taking a course in sociology, he decided that it was the field for him. He pursued a doctorate from the University of Utah in Salt Lake City and completed his studies in 1966 with a dissertation entitled "Sociological Analysis of The Bahá'í Movement." He was on the Local Assembly of Salt Lake City from 1963 to 1971.

In 1966 Jalil became a professor of sociology and languages at the University of Utah, and upon his retirement in 1977, he was appointed professor emeritus. He was a visiting professor at the University of California at Los Angeles during the summer of 1968 and at the University of Washington during the summer 1969.

Jalil served on the National Committee for Bahá'í Summer Schools and as an Auxiliary Board member for Protection from 1971 to 1981 with a territory that encompassed Utah, Wyoming, Colorado, and California.

Having begun his publishing career while still in Iran with *Dry Farming* (1946) and *How to Teach a Foreign Language* (1949), Jalil was a prolific writer. His books and articles ranged from agriculture to sociology, religion, and poetry. His other works include "The Institutionalization of Religion" (*World Order* 1967), "Dysfunction of Religion and Why" (*World Order* 1968–69), *Navay-i Hamnavá'i* (Persian poetry, 1972), "Social Thought in Ancient Iran" (1973), "Irfan, Gnosis, or Mystical Knowledge" (*World Order* 1973), *The*

*Story as Told* (Naturegraph 1973), *Abang'i Hamahangi* (Persian poetry, 1974), *Persian Phrase Book and Dictionary* (with Homa Mahmoudi-Snibbe, 1976), *A Concordance to the Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh* (Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Wilmette, 1980), and *Sokhan-i-Ashna* (1985).

Jalil and Badri had very active lives of service in the United States. They held successful firesides at their homes in Logan and Salt Lake City where they proved to be effective teachers, enabling many to embrace the Faith. They made regular travel teaching trips to American Indian reservations, and they traveled to summer and winter schools in places such as Alaska, Hawaii, Europe, Asia, South America, Australia, and New Zealand.

In 1977 after he retired from the University of Utah, Jalil and Badri moved to Santa Monica, California, where Jalil continued to serve as an Auxiliary Board member and to be involved in teaching activities throughout the United States and abroad.

Dr. Jalil Mahmoudi died on March 8, 1996, in Santa Monica. He had been married to Badri for fifty-six years. He left three children, Homa, Massood, and Hoda Mahmoudi, and through them, three grandchildren, Jason Cameron Snibbe, Naysan Jalil Mahmoudi, and Bijan Mahmoudi DaBell.



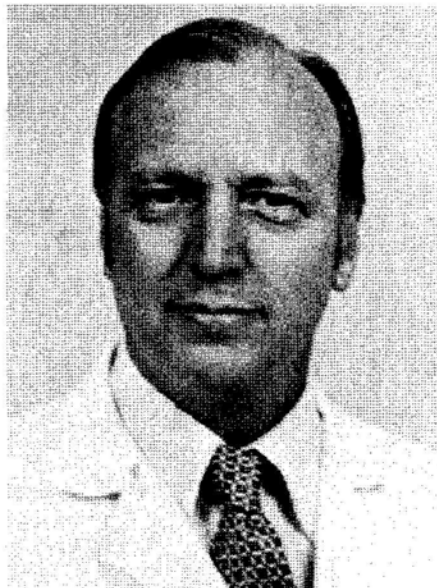
**RODNEY BELCHER**  
1931–1996

This is worship: to serve mankind and to minister to the needs of the people. Service is prayer. A physician ministering to the sick, gently, tenderly, free from prejudice and believing in the solidarity of the human race, he is giving praise.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Dr. Rodney (Rod) Lynn Belcher,<sup>178</sup> a member of the Ugandan Bahá'í community, was shot and killed on March 11, 1996, in a carjacking that occurred in the parking lot of his office at Mulago Hospital in Kampala.

Little is known of Rod's early life. He was born on November 2, 1931, in



Rodney Belcher

<sup>178</sup> Rodney Belcher, MD—photo originally appeared in the *JBJA Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery—American* 1996–1998, March 1997, vol. 79-A, no. 3, and is used with permission of copyright holder, The Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery, Inc.

Roanoke, Virginia. He attended St. John's High School in Washington DC and then moved to Indiana to enter the premedical program at the University of Notre Dame. He was successful in gaining admission to graduate studies at the University of Miami. While studying there in 1953, he married Dawn A. Dayton, and three years later he was one of twenty-six students graduating with MDs in the Miller School of Medicine's first commencement ceremonies. Dawn accompanied Rod when he returned to Washington DC to complete an internship at the District of Columbia General Hospital (Georgetown University Residency Program). During this time he was also a flight surgeon in the US Navy Reserve. In 1958 their first son, Christopher, was born. A second son, Mark, followed in 1960, the year the Belchers moved to Rochester, Minnesota, where Rod commenced the orthopedic program at the Mayo Clinic.

In 1963 he opened a private practice in Arlington, Virginia, and took up the directorship of orthopedic education for Georgetown University at Arlington Hospital. That same year Rod was said to have discovered and accepted the Bahá'í Faith.

In 1974 he was granted a clinical assistant professorship as chief of the Department of Orthopedic Surgery at Arlington Hospital, a post he held for two years. But by this time Rod had had a taste of Africa. He had interrupted his work in Arlington and had taken up the teaching of orthopedics at the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania from 1970 to 1972, during which time he revitalized and supervised the trauma unit at Muhimbili Hospital.

The Belchers returned to East Africa in 1983; Rod, having been granted a Fulbright Fellowship, was then a visiting professor of

orthopedic surgery at Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda. One of his students was Dr. Specioza Wandira Kazibwe. At the time of Rod's death, she had become vice president of the country, the first woman to hold the position. She represented the national government at his funeral. "He left the beauty of Arlington, Virginia, in the USA," she said, "and came in the midst of gunfire to develop health services in Uganda." She warmly remembered the encouragement he gave her as she undertook a specialization in surgery—a specialization that was not welcoming to women at that time.

The violence of the Ugandan civil war intensified, and the Belchers were forced to leave in 1985, the year President Obote was overthrown in a coup d'état. Rod completed his fellowship in Kenya at the University of Nairobi in 1986, and the Belchers returned to the United States where Rod assumed the position of chief of orthopedic surgery at Cooper Green Hospital and Jefferson Clinic and clinical associate professor at the University of Alabama in Birmingham.

They returned to Uganda in 1988, and Rod was the medical director for Health Volunteers Overseas overseeing the USAID-funded "Orthopedic and Physical Rehabilitation Project for the Disabled" at the Mulago National Hospital, which, as a result of the civil war, was in shambles. He was also appointed professor and head of the Department of Orthopedic Surgery at Makerere.

Where the project called for the training of forty Ugandan medical students, Rod, within seven years, met the goal more than tenfold. Where the project called for the provision of one operating theater, he designed and supervised the building of two, described as being the best in sub-Saharan Africa.

Working with the British Red Cross Society, he rebuilt the Mbale Orthopedic Workshop that had burned down and reinstated programs to manufacture wheelchairs, artificial limbs, braces, crutches, and other equipment for amputees and victims of polio. A year later, in 1992, a school for prosthetic technicians was opened, and Rod was in the process of establishing two other workshops.

While the World Health Organization (WHO) claimed that there had been no cases of paralytic polio in Uganda since 1979, Rod's persistence verified the existence of polio virus within a forty mile radius of Kampala and convinced WHO and the Ugandan Ministry of Health to launch massive public immunization campaigns. He was elected chairman of the Presidential Polio Appeal Fund.

He was concerned with extending care to more rural areas and had recently renewed the orthopedic program of up-country visits. To enhance the flow of physicians, surgeons, and nurses brought into Uganda by Health Volunteers Overseas, he had a safe and comfortable guest house built near the hospital. He and Dawn welcomed many of the medical specialists who came and contributed to the orthopedic training program.

His greatest achievement was said to be the development of a four-year training program in orthopedics leading to a master's degree with standards comparable to the requirements of American boards of certification, the first such program in East Africa. At the time of his passing the program had three residents.

His colleagues at Mulago Hospital called him "the Father of Orthopedics in Uganda," and the orthopedic department was quickly becoming a regional center and was accepting patients who were victims of wars in Rwanda and Sudan.

On March 13, 1996, Senator Patrick Leahy of Vermont addressed the US Senate:

I was fortunate to have known Dr. Belcher. Seven years ago, shortly after I established the War Victims Fund, a \$5 million appropriation in the foreign aid program to provide medical and related assistance to war victims, Rod Belcher signed on with Health Volunteers Overseas. He had lived in Uganda before the civil war there, and the Agency for International Development sent him back to start a War Victims Fund program to assist people who had been disabled from war injuries. He and his wife Dawn had been there ever since.

There were tens of thousands of amputees, many of them victims of landmines, without access to artificial limbs. The Mulago hospital and medical school, once the pride and joy of that country, were in ruins. There were not even basic medical supplies. There was not a single trained orthopedic surgeon in the country. The Ugandan Government was bankrupt.

Rod embraced that enormous challenge with enthusiasm, good humor, patience, and a deep, personal commitment to the Ugandan people. Over the years he won the trust and respect of the Ugandan Government and of the successive United States Ambassadors and the ambassadors of other countries who witnessed the impact he was having on the lives of so many people. He rebuilt the orthopedic clinic and trained every orthopedic surgeon in Uganda today.

When my wife Marcelle and I visited Uganda in 1990, Dr. Belcher took us around the orthopedic clinic. We saw what a difference the War Victims Fund had made as a result of his efforts and

the efforts of the Ugandans who worked with him. It was an experience that neither of us will forget. We saw what a difference this one American had made.

Since then I have often thought of that trip, and Rod Belcher became the model for the volunteers that have been recruited for other War Victims Fund programs. He exemplified what we looked for in others. He had a warmth and gentleness, and a commitment to Uganda that was extraordinary . . . For the past seven years he lived and worked in a country where getting even the simplest thing accomplished often required incredible ingenuity and persistence. Rod had both.

At his funeral, Dr. Belcher was honored by the Ugandan Vice President, the Minister of Health, the director of the hospital, the dean of the medical school, the American Ambassador, the British High Commissioner, and many others. The orthopedic clinic that he worked so hard to establish was formally named after him. The streets were lined with people who knew him personally or had heard of the American doctor who had done so much for the Ugandan people.

Rod Belcher will be terribly missed. But he leaves a legacy that anyone would be proud of. He gave the War Victims Fund its start, and for that I will always be grateful. And he leaves a score of trained Ugandan orthopedic surgeons who loved and admired him, who will carry on in his place.

The minister of health spoke at his service. He said that the Ugandan government was about to designate Rod Belcher as an honorary consultant to the Ministry of Health, the highest honor.

US Ambassador E. Michael Southwick said, "He was the kind of person who makes us proud, not only as Americans, but as human beings. He transcended nationality. He transcended religion. He represented the best of us. He was the kind of person the world needs, and doesn't have enough of."

His wife Dawn, said, "Here, where there are so many people who have so little opportunity, he could, with a single operation, get them walking again . . . He died on the way to doing what he loved." On March 11, 1996, the Universal House of Justice cabled:

DEEPLY GRIEVED BRUTAL MURDER DEDICATED OUTSTANDING PIONEER RODNEY BELCHER WHOSE INDEFATIGABLE SERVICES WILL ALWAYS BE LOVINGLY REMEMBERED. SELFLESSLY, ENERGETICALLY AND COURAGEOUSLY, TOGETHER WITH HIS DISTINGUISHED WIFE, HE LABOURED AMONG HIS COMPATRIOTS IN THE UNITED STATES AND WITH EVEN GREATER DISTINCTION SINCE 1970 IN TANZANIA, KENYA AND UGANDA, SERVING THE POPULATION THROUGH HIS MEDICAL PROFESSION AND PROMOTING INTERESTS BELOVED FAITH IN THESE COUNTRIES.

PRAYING HOLY SHRINES FOR PROGRESS HIS LUMINOUS SOUL ETERNAL KINGDOM, AND FOR COMFORT AND SOLACE HIS DEAR WIFE AND MEMBERS FAMILY.

ADVISE HOLD MEMORIAL MEETING HIS HONOUR IN HOUSE OF WORSHIP ASK TANZANIAN KENYAN NATIONAL ASSEMBLIES HOLD SIMILAR GATHERINGS IN HIS NAME.

More than two thousand people attended his funeral, many of whom filed by his casket in wheelchairs or aided by crutches, canes, or rustic walking sticks. Dr. Rodney Belcher is buried near the Kampala Bahá'í Temple not far from the graves of the Hands of the Cause Enoch Olinga and Músá Bananí.

#### ROBERT E. "PAT" MOUL 1924-1996

Robert E. "Pat" Moul, a longtime Bahá'í and pioneer, passed away on April 4, 1996, at his home in Boulder City, Nevada, after a long illness.

Pat, who got his nickname from his St. Patrick's Day birthday, was born to Bahá'í parents on March 17, 1924, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He majored in business psychology at the University of Wisconsin and joined the US Navy as an officer after graduation. He had achieved the rank of lieutenant junior grade and was aboard ship, on his way to his first potential combat experience in the final assault on Japan, when the war ended.

After the war he moved to Chicago to work, and although he had never signed a Bahá'í declaration card, he served on the National Youth Committee. His parents and older Bahá'í friends soon remedied the situation by targeting him for a fireside meeting, to which they also invited a Bahá'í woman nearer his age and presumed interests. The plan worked. He joined the Faith, and on October 26, 1952, he married the young woman, Georgine Arnold.

Pat and Georgine determined to make their lives a service to the Faith, and by their first anniversary they were on a ship heading for a pioneer post in Alaska, responding to the Guardian's call to the Ten Year Crusade. They were always self-supporting and moved to a new post only



Robert E. "Pat" Moul

after they had replaced themselves and formed a Local Spiritual Assembly. The Assemblies they served included Anchorage in 1953; the virgin goal city of Ketchikan in 1954, where their daughter Vicki was born; and the virgin goal city of Douglas in 1957, where Doug and Larry joined the family. In that year Pat was elected to the first National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Alaska, and he served it until their departure seventeen years later.

In 1970 the Moul family became the first pioneers to fill a foreign goal for the National Spiritual Assembly of Hawaii, relocating their entire family to American Samoa, where they ran a print shop and stationery store. All the members of the Moul family participated in its operation.

In Samoa Pat served on the National Spiritual Assembly and also on the Local Spiritual Assembly of the village of Aua. They remained in Samoa for four years; then Pat's ill health forced them to sell the print shop and move to Guam. In Guam Pat and Georgine helped form the first Local Spiritual Assembly of Yona, and they

served the community by giving firesides and deepenings.

In 1978 Pat, Georgine, and Larry (Vicki and Doug were on their own by then) moved to Hawaii, where Pat continued to give firesides and where he and Georgine served on the Honolulu Assembly. They were members of the Hawaii Bahá'í history calendar staff until Georgine's illness prompted their resignations in 1985. After Georgine's passing in 1986, Pat was again elected to the Honolulu Assembly. He was a financial advisor to the Assembly and also served as the Honolulu community librarian.

In the summer of 1994, after his plan to pioneer to the Caribbean was curtailed by ill health, he moved to Boulder City, Nevada, where he was immediately elected chairman of the Assembly. He continued to serve in that capacity until his passing. The night before he passed away, Pat was teaching the Faith to his hospice nurse.

His body was interred privately in a walnut casket made without nails, and on Easter Sunday a small service for family and friends was held in a park near his home. It included the reading of the following message from the Department of the Secretariat dated April 7, 1996:

With deep sadness the Universal House of Justice read of the recent death, at Boulder City, Nevada, of Mr. Robert "Pat" Moul, warmly remembered for his many years of devoted Bahá'í service in various localities, including Alaska, Samoa, Guam and Hawaii. Be assured of its fervent prayers in the Holy Shrines for the progress of his soul in the Abhá Kingdom.

Pat is survived by his daughter Vicki Peterson, sons Doug and Larry, and five grandchildren.

*Lynne Ellen Hollinger and Larry Moul*

## MARC TOWERS

1927-1996

We were saddened to learn of the passing of Mr. Marc Towers, an indefatigable servant of Bahá'u'lláh whose services to the Faith will be lovingly remembered and whose spirit will be sorely missed. Kindly assure his wife, Florence, and their son David, of our ardent prayers in the Holy Shrines for the progress of dear Marc's soul in the Abhá Kingdom, and that they may be divinely comforted during this difficult time.

Universal House of Justice  
May 8, 1996

Marc Towers was born in New York City on January 23, 1927. When he was three years old, his family moved to Miami Beach, Florida, acting on the advice of a doctor treating Marc's younger brother for a rheumatic heart.

While being schooled there Marc discovered an interest in acting. When he graduated from high school, the family returned to New York, and Marc entered Columbia University, taking classes in writing and acting. During his summers Marc auditioned for and got major roles with a number of "road company" troupes performing Broadway shows. Deciding on a career as an actor, he left school to pursue his goal full-time.

Marc auditioned for roles on Broadway and was cast in several musicals. When none proved to be a major "hit," he accepted an offer from an agent to move to Hollywood in 1955.

He made many friends, and within a year he was invited to a Bahá'í fireside. He investigated the Faith thoroughly. He often said that although he "felt his heart

move" on first hearing of the Cause, he wanted to be sure that he had, indeed, found the truth. In August of 1958 he made his declaration. He put the Faith first and cared little for his acting career if it interfered with activities to further the Cause of God.

He served on Local Spiritual Assemblies and taught anyone who would listen. In 1962 he received a cable from the Hands of the Cause, assembled in Haifa since the passing of Shoghi Effendi, appointing him as an Auxiliary Board member. At the time many of the friends were not sure what that meant, but it was a further opportunity to serve, and Marc accepted. His territory was everything west of the Mississippi River—from that river running through the United States, to the continent of Australia and New Zealand! He was asked to travel to Hawaii to assist in forming the National Spiritual Assembly there. It was decided he could better serve the Australasia territory if he relocated to Hawaii, and without hesitation he did so, moving to Honolulu



Marc Towers

where he secured employment at a local radio station.

While based in Hawaii Marc made many trips to other Pacific islands, assisting the pioneers and bringing the Message of Bahá'u'lláh to villages in Samoa, the Fiji Islands, Tonga, the Mariannas, and the Solomon Islands. Often he traveled with the Hands of the Cause of God, the adventures and bounties of which he often recounted in talks to friends in the United States.

After three years in Hawaii he was asked by the Hand of the Cause of God Collis Featherstone to relocate to Australia, and he moved to Sydney in 1967. He continued traveling throughout Australia and New Zealand, teaching and assisting the friends.

In 1969 he developed a respiratory illness that he could not seem to shake. He found himself without funds and could not get work, and reluctantly, but with the understanding of Mr. Featherstone, he resigned his position and returned to the United States, settling again in the Los Angeles area.

As he slowly recovered his health he continued to teach his beloved Faith. He was called upon to speak at firesides several times a week, and he never said no. His "Tales of the South Pacific" proved to be the attraction for many young people to investigate the Faith.

For the next nine years he was elected and served as a delegate to the National Convention from the Southern California district.

As his strength returned so did his resolve to do more for the Cause. During the 1979 Convention in Wilmette, Illinois, Marc was asked to read the letter from the Universal House of Justice. One of the items in that letter was a call for four volunteers to pioneer to the Virgin Islands. After a brief consultation with his wife, Florence, he arose and volunteered on their behalf to help fill that goal.

In 1979 Marc and Florence moved to the US Virgin Islands, where they remained until 1994. Marc served on the National Spiritual Assembly of the Virgin Islands for thirteen years. Because of illnesses suffered by Florence, they decided that a move back to the United States was necessary.

They made the move in May 1994 to Hendersonville, Tennessee, a suburb of Nashville. Within a few months of their arrival, Marc began to suffer from severe headaches and loss of memory. He was seen by top medical experts in Nashville, where, following a series of tests, X-rays, and MRIs, he was found to have an extensive, inoperable, malignant brain tumor as well as a malignant tumor in his lungs. He was hospitalized in mid-March, 1996, and passed away on April 28, 1996.

In death, as in life, Marc is serving the Faith. He is the first Bahá'í interred in Hendersonville. His tombstone bears a nine-pointed star with the word "Bahá'í" in the center, and the inscription on the stone reads, "Thy trust hath been returned unto thee—Bahá'u'lláh."

#### FRIEDRICH "FRITZ" SEMLE 1896–1996

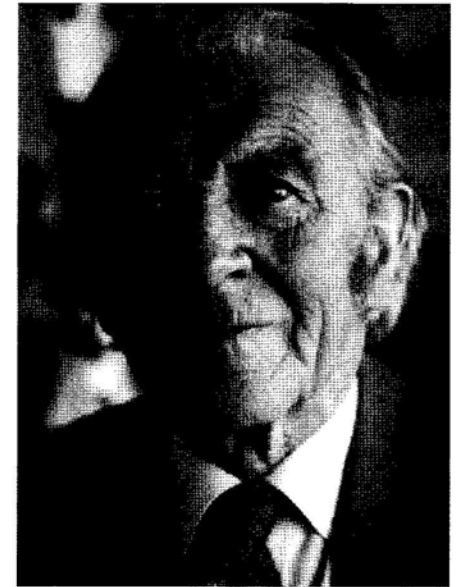
The Universal House of Justice was saddened to learn recently of the passing of Mr. Fritz Semle, stalwart, devoted and tireless champion of the Cause of God. His unflagging work on behalf of the children of his country, and his many years of dedicated service to the Bahá'í community of Switzerland are remembered with particular admiration. You may be assured of the loving prayers of the House of Justice in the Holy Shrines for the progress of Mr. Semle's soul throughout all the

divine worlds. Prayers will also be offered for the solace and strengthening of his dear family.

Department of the Secretariat  
May 9, 1996

Fritz Semle was nineteen years old when he was called into the German army at the outbreak of World War I. After six months of intensive training he was sent to the front. He fought at Flanders and the Vosges and witnessed the horror of the Somme Offensive where more than a million soldiers were slaughtered within four months. He remembered most vividly July 24, 1916:

This day the attacks and the slaughtering seemed so horrible that it couldn't get worse. I was in a German troop that had had 500 men: by evening only 12 were still alive. I was covered with blood, looking like a butcher, and was one meter above the ground as it was covered with dead bodies. All of a sudden the French attack started again. When I saw the first line of men running towards us I shouted, in French, that we were injured. We wouldn't have had a chance. We didn't have guns left to defend ourselves; the only thing I had was a revolver. They started running in our direction, man beside man with rifles ready to kill. I shouted again in French that we were injured and that they shouldn't shoot. About 20 men approached us and formed a circle with me standing in the middle. I started talking to them in French and they were very surprised that I spoke their language. I told them that I had been to Geneva, Switzerland—in the middle of that battlefield we started a discussion. They kept asking me questions and I kept answering. Then,



Friedrich "Fritz" Semle

suddenly, a French Captain came and saw us talking. He approached us with a revolver in one hand and a whip in the other. He shouted, "Allons en avant!" ("Get on!") and they all disappeared. He himself came closer. About two meters in front of me he stopped and aimed his revolver directly into my face, his finger on the trigger. I thought, "That's it." I was sure that he was very angry and full of hatred for all Germans. I didn't say a word. He stood there, aiming at me but he didn't shoot. Suddenly he said that I should turn around and run. "What a gentleman," I thought. "He will shoot me in the back." I turned around and started running. Just in front of me I saw a big shell hole and jumped into it. After a short while I turned around and nobody was there anymore. Everybody was gone. I was all by myself. I suddenly heard an inner voice that kept repeating: "It's no coincidence that I am still alive, it's no coincidence that I am still alive."

After four years in French captivity, Fritz was released and went to Nürnberg, Germany, where his mother was living. He had become a rebel; he was searching for something that would change the world and never allow war to happen again. About two months later he had a dream in which he saw a majestic figure standing by the door of his room in a long robe and wearing a turban. Fritz was haunted by that king-like image.

Soon afterward Fritz went to see his aunt in Stuttgart, Germany, and she introduced him to the Schwarz<sup>179</sup> family who were Bahá'ís. As he entered their living room, he saw a photograph of 'Abdu'l-Bahá Whom he immediately recognized as the majestic figure he had seen in his dream. Fritz accepted the Faith at once and stayed in Stuttgart to learn as much as possible about it.

Early in 1921 Fritz went back to Switzerland settling in Amriswil, near Lake Constance, where he became the manager of a toy factory. He tried to find other Bahá'ís, but he was the first in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. (Much later he learned of Professor Auguste Forel and Mr. and Mrs. De Bons in the French-speaking part of the country.)

His parents, Fritz and Betty Semle-Tröster, were from Nürnberg, Germany, where young Fritz was born on October 27, 1896. The Semle family later moved to Lucerne, Switzerland, where he finished his schooling. Before meeting the Bahá'ís Fritz's religious education had come from his father, who had talked with him about God during their hikes together on Mount Gotthard. In his opinion God was much closer to us out in nature than in "some incense-laden churches."

Fritz returned to Nürnberg to begin an apprenticeship as a cook and pastry chef. After three years he planned a round-the-world trip, working his way in different first-class hotels. But World War I changed his life forever.

On September 8, 1924, Fritz married Ella Itin, who also declared her belief in Bahá'u'lláh. Their son Niels was born the following year. The family lived in Amriswil where Ella worked in a home for children. Soon a little group of seekers was gathered, and in 1928 Fritz sent the news to the beloved Guardian and received a reply:

He [Shoghi Effendi] was very glad to hear from you and to know of your "association" in Amriswil and all your activities there. He wishes you all success in your efforts for the various subjects you had talked about to your society and for the Esperanto classes you had started. He does hope and pray that you will in time establish a truly Bahá'í centre there and will arrange to keep in close touch and association with various Bahá'í groups in Germany and Austria.

Martha Root visited Fritz and Ella that year. The night she arrived, she gave a talk in Esperanto to friends that the Semles had invited, with Fritz translating into German. At that time Esperanto seemed to be a great tool for teaching the Faith. Fritz had seriously studied the language and taught Esperanto classes.

In 1932 the factory where he worked closed and moved to a small town in the Rhine Valley. It was the Great Depression, and the Semles decided to move so that Fritz could continue working for the firm. They bought a house in Wolfhalden with a view overlooking Lake Constance and then

all the way to the Austrian and German borders. The Semles called their new home *Morgensonne* (Morning Sun), a name it has kept.

In considering the move they worried about the children in the home where Ella worked, most of whom had been abandoned in the aftermath of the war. Ella and Fritz were concerned that they would not receive proper care. Their solution was to unofficially adopt all of the youngsters and take them with them to Morgensonne. They also took their foster-child Alice and Lotti Häbig, a young girl who worked with Ella.

A friend described Morgensonne:

. . . twenty-five happy faces around the very long table in a simple dining room of a Swiss chalet, flooded with sunshine pouring through small but many windows, each window a picture of hilly countryside overlooking a lake. Blue sky, green hills dotted with fruit orchards and the darker green of the fir trees on the heights above seem to form one whole with the joyous atmosphere of this home, where sunshine radiates from the hearts, and where life is a joyous song of thanksgiving and praise to the Merciful Father of all.

Plates are busily filled and passed on from hand to hand, a contented "Thank you Daddy, thank you Mommy," signaling that a plate has reached its destination. When each one has his or her share, all heads incline, all hands are joined, and a grace is murmured in unison, which translated runs like this: "Let all mankind become as brothers, Let the earth be filled with Thy peace. Bestow upon us quietness and

strength. Help us to build the Peace of the World."

There are no "servants" or "maids": all are daughters and sons. Mr. and Mrs. Semle are Father and Mother to them all.

When Hitler imposed a ban on the Bahá'í Faith in Nazi Germany in June 1937, the correspondence between the Swiss and German Bahá'ís was restricted. Fritz received one last postcard from Stuttgart where the Grossmanns, the Mühlischlegels, and the Schmidts had gathered.

There were but a few Bahá'ís in Switzerland: two in Geneva, three in Zürich, and two in Wolfhalden. They started to meet regularly and arranged to get the German translation of J. E. Esslemont's *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era* from Germany, even though the Gestapo was searching everything at the border control. They had it printed in Switzerland.

In 1943 the Semles hosted the second summer school for all the Swiss Bahá'ís. Later a message came from Haifa:

To the dear Bahá'í friends who were gathered in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Semle for Bahá'í Summer School on August 2nd, 1943.

Dear Bahá'í Friends:

The Guardian has just received your loving message dated Aug. 2nd, from Wolfhalden, and he has instructed me to answer on his behalf. He was so happy to hear that you had all met, in such a spirit of love and unity, in the hospitable home of the dear Semle family, and he hopes that year by year this institution of a Bahá'í Summer School, though now in the embryonic state, will

<sup>179</sup> Frau Alice Schwarz-Solivo, see "In Memoriam," *The Bahá'í World*, vol. XIV, pp. 377-78.

grow until it becomes one of the best known and most learned in the Bahá'í world.<sup>180</sup>

It is only right and fitting that Switzerland—a country of such noble ideals—should produce, in the course of time, an exemplary Bahá'í community.

He assures you, each and every one, of his loving prayers on your behalf and for the success of your teaching work.

With warm greetings,  
R. Rabbani

During this time Ella gave birth to their second child, Elisabeth Ruha, and Fritz, having changed his citizenship, was called into the Swiss Army to protect the border near Geneva.

In 1947 the first Local Assembly of the Bahá'ís in the region was established in Heerbrugg, close to where the Semles lived. The teaching activities intensified when the first American pioneers came to Switzerland. Anna Kunz, born in Switzerland, returned from the United States and settled in Bern. That same year, Elsa Steinmetz and her sister, Fritz Shaver, arrived and settled in the capital as well. At the beginning of the Ten Year Crusade in 1953, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Italy and Switzerland was formed, and Fritz was elected to it.

In 1962 Switzerland was able to elect its own National Spiritual Assembly, and Fritz was elected one of its members. Just a year later he was able to join the other delegates

from around the world at the International Convention held in Haifa for the first election of the Universal House of Justice.

Ella passed away in 1967, and three years later Fritz married Lottie Häbig, and they continued to live in Morgensonne. Meanwhile the Bahá'í work in Switzerland slowly began to flourish. In 1979 almost sixty years after Fritz arrived in the country, there were thirty-two Local Spiritual Assemblies around the republic.

In August 1992 the Hand of the Cause of God Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih *Khánúm* visited Fritz in Wolfhalden. On this occasion he handed to her all the original letters he had received between 1928 and 1956 from the Guardian. Sitting in his garden with Rúhíyyih *Khánúm*, Fritz enthusiastically shared his life's experiences with her. Then he said, "Being now at the age of ninety-six, I hope to be able to continue to serve the Bahá'í Faith during the coming four years."

On May 2, 1996, in his ninety-ninth year, Fritz Semle passed on to the Abhá Kingdom, surrounded by his wife, children, grandchildren, and great-granddaughter. He left them a legacy of steadfastness and faith. Among his many notes was found:

I am grateful and happy that I was allowed to serve God and His Messenger Bahá'u'lláh and I will also do so in His infinite, spiritual Worlds.

*Based on a memoir by  
Leyla Neilsen-Göltenboth*

ELSE JENSEN FYNBO  
1916–1996

A few years ago Else asked me if I would make the memorial speech at her funeral. She became very ill after her journey to Australia in 1984, and she remained in Denmark for her last twelve years. From time to time family and friends would take her out for a ride away from her isolated daily city life in Copenhagen. In her later years she was able to move about in an electric wheelchair and go to King's Park (Kongens Nytorv) near her home. She enjoyed so much seeing the changes of nature, and her eyes delighted in the growth and transformation of the flowers. We know that Else was in King's Park just a few days before she passed on. She was there to talk about what was most precious to her, the Faith. This is the life she would have wished mentioned on this occasion.

The apartment she shared with her husband, Peter, was the site for countless firesides she held, a habit she maintained throughout her Bahá'í life. She had great insight in taking care of herself and her physical suffering. Always happy to receive visitors and guests, she had to struggle her way to the door, but never complaining, she acquiesced to her circumstances. She thought little of her physical limitations and lived for her Faith.

Else was born in Kalundborg on June 1, 1916. She loved her father dearly, a well-founded businessman. Later she was a dance teacher and beauty specialist, and for many years she worked as a secretary to a doctor specializing in allergies.

The American pioneer from California, Dagmar Dole, was in Denmark from 1947 to 1953. Else met her and became a Bahá'í in 1948, and her spiritual life changed. It also changed the night she was on board the *M/S Kobenhavn* when it struck a World

War II mine in the Bay of Alborg. As she described it she had to choose between heaven and the sea. The spiritual path led her into the shock of the deep, dark, and cold sea that night.

Her much-loved Peter also saw how their home had changed to a teaching center. He lived with all the visitors that Else brought to their home. She served them with reverence, with spiritual thought, and an abundance of love. There was a warm, welcoming spirit in their home that everyone could sense.

In 1953 there were thirty-eight Bahá'ís from Stockholm and elsewhere in Sweden for a gathering for chocolate, tea, coffee, and cakes, meeting in their thirty-six square meter apartment. Peter stood up and asked, "What can I do to serve you?"

We can probably all imagine Peter's lovely smiling face—serving Else's friends with joy and kindness and bringing cheerfulness to every heart. Never did Peter prevent Else from bringing strangers home, no matter their nationality or color. On



*Else Jensen Fynbo*

<sup>180</sup> Fritz remembered these words when, in his eighties, he witnessed the establishment and growth of Landegg Academy, not far from where the summer school was held. The Academy, later named Landegg International University, closed in 2004.

the contrary, one day on their walk, Peter teasingly challenged Else by saying that she wouldn't dare approach two black men, well-dressed in African style, who were nearby. In those days blacks were seldom seen in Denmark.

Else accepted the challenge, and the men came home with them for coffee, and a sharing of the Word, no doubt. Peter was always open, hospitable, understanding, and cooperative, and on his deathbed he declared his Faith in Bahá'u'lláh. Else never gave birth to a child, but she had many spiritual children.

Else served the Scandinavian Teaching Committee that was the precursor of the Regional Spiritual Assembly of Scandinavia and Finland.<sup>181</sup> In 1956 and 1957 she was its secretary. She helped the pioneers in every way she could, even providing bikes to some. At that time there were thirty believers in greater Copenhagen. In 1950 at a European Teaching Conference she met Edna True, chairman of the European Teaching Committee, and the Hand of the Cause of God Ugo Giachery. She had close contact with another Hand of the Cause, Adelbert Mühlischlegel, when he was assisting the work of the Regional Assembly in 1960.

Else participated in the Intercontinental Teaching Conference in Stockholm in 1953, the third of four conferences initiating the Ten Year Crusade. She attended the Intercontinental Conference held in Frankfurt in 1958, and in 1963 she went to London to attend the first World Congress. Five years later she traveled to the Holy Land as a delegate from the National Spiritual Assembly of Denmark attending the International Convention for the election of the Universal House of Justice.

She went on her first pilgrimage after the Ten Year Crusade, during which time she was a guest of Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum. Her second pilgrimage was made in September of 1977. She visited Haifa and Akká and then went on to Tíhrán, Shíráz, and Işfahán followed by Istanbul and Adrianople (Edirne) in Turkey. She visited the Houses of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh—a symbolic journey. Her third pilgrimage was in 1986 when she was accompanied by Bente Gustafson.

Else Fynbo was ever hospitable, a constant and faithful handmaiden. No compromise did she make in her wholehearted service and the bringing of the teachings of the Faith to her fellow men. Those of us who knew Else realize that she is now where she had been longing to be and patiently waiting to approach. Those of us who were acquainted with Else's inner thoughts will also know what a spiritually motivating power and determined, devoted dear sister we have lost. After a long illness Else passed away on May 5, 1996. On May 17 the Universal House of Justice cabled:

NEWS FINAL RELEASE DEAR ELSE FYNBO FROM LONG YEARS PAINFUL ILLNESS CALL TO MIND HER DECADES ARDENT STEADFAST SERVICES CAUSE GOD, HER WHOLEHEARTED DEVOTION TO BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, HER UNQUENCHABLE CONFIDENCE TRIUMPH HIS FAITH. PRAYING HOLY SHRINES PROGRESS HER SOUL ALL WORLDS GOD. CONVEY LOVING SYMPATHY FAMILY AND FRIENDS.

*From a tribute by Michaël Gjero*

SARA FRYE  
1914–1996



*Sara Frye*

Sara Margaret Frye was born in Washington, Pennsylvania, on December 3, 1914. We do not know the details of her early life or how she became a Bahá'í shortly after the death of her husband. A professional nurse since 1936, she was forced to retire in 1966 because of failing eyesight.

At the age of sixty-three, widowed and legally blind, she left a good job in Little Rock, Arkansas, in the middle of winter and moved to Pierre, South Dakota, where she took up residence in a hotel. Assisted by her efforts the first Local Assembly of Pierre was formed in 1977 with Sara as its chairman. While in South Dakota she was one of two adults blessed with the opportunity to work with the youth on the Pine Ridge Reservation—work that would spearhead the Amos Gibson Project in the 1980s.

She moved to South Carolina to help with the consolidation work after the advances made during the Five Year Plan (1974–79). In a matter of two years her father became ill, so she moved back to Pennsylvania to care for him until his passing.

In 1980 she pioneered to the Falkland Islands, living in rooms that used to house a bakery. The ovens were still intact, one of which had a false bottom used during the war years to safeguard the Bahá'í books and papers of importance. She lived there for two and a half years before moving to Denmark where she helped many youth come into the Faith.

Sara undertook a traveling teaching trip in January of 1985 to India and Western Samoa, following which she served the Faith in Tinian and Saipan in the Mariana Islands and Molokai in Hawaii.

Sara came back to the United States, settling in Selma, Alabama, a city noted for a history of racial difficulties. Accepting as a housemate a young black woman, she created something of a stir.

She moved to Springfield, Illinois, before going to Winter Haven, Florida. At the age of eighty she was planning to reenter the pioneering field. Her Local Assembly wrote, "The Assembly feels that Sara's most significant strength is her willingness to serve. Her long history of service is a lesson to us all. The Assembly hesitates to call Sara's age and her legal blindness weaknesses; her indomitable spirit has turned these into something different."

Sara passed away on May 9, 1996. She was eighty-one years old. In its message to the friends gathered at her funeral, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States wrote:

Indefatigable heroic maidservant  
Sara Frye will always be lovingly

<sup>181</sup> The National Assembly of Sweden was established in 1962.

remembered. Her devotion to her Lord was exemplified by her services as a pioneer to the Falkland Islands, Denmark, Mariana Islands, and the Hawaiian Islands despite failed eyesight. Sara Frye's dedication and commitment to the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh are her legacy to present and future generations and inspire each of us to greater service.

**ABBAS AFINÁN**  
1924–1996

**D**r. Afnán came from a noble line. Both his father, Mírzá 'Abdu'l-Laṭíf, and his mother, Hoviyyeh Khánúm, descended from the uncles of the Báb. Dr. Afnán's childhood was spent in Shíráz, Iran, where he received his initial schooling. At the age of eighteen he entered the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Tíhrán. Following his graduation in 1949, he pursued postgraduate medical studies in Switzerland and in France. Initially he specialized in ear, nose and throat, and cosmetic surgery, publishing his dissertation in the French medical literature.

As a student in Tíhrán, Dr. Afnán took an active part in Bahá'í administration and served as a member of the National Pioneering Committee. During the Forty-Five Month Plan that began in 1945, he accompanied many pioneers to the Persian Gulf islands.

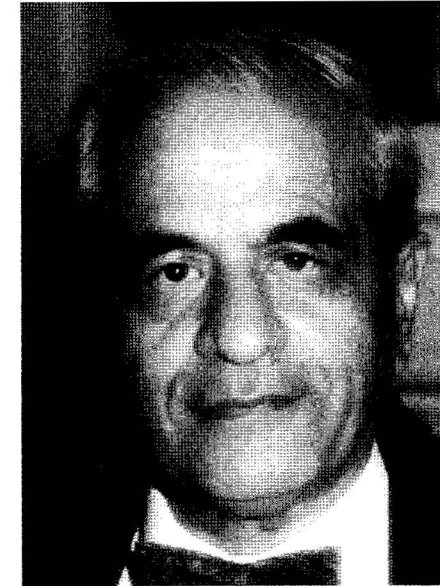
In 1951, Dr. Afnán attended the Bahá'í Summer School in Cottingham, Yorkshire, in the United Kingdom where, through Dr. Luṭfu'lláh Ḥakím, he met his future wife, Shomais 'Alá'í. Significantly, he framed his marriage proposal in terms of service: "I want a life of service—and you are the only girl I want that life with." They were wed within the year, the marriage garnering

considerable publicity, for it was reported in newspapers both in Yorkshire and Northampton (Shomais's home). According to Dr. Ḥakím, the beloved Guardian said that this marriage of two distinguished Bahá'í families of Iran proclaimed the Faith. Dr. Ḥakím added that, through the bounty and mercy of the Guardian, their wedding album was placed in the room of Jináb-i-Abdu'l-Faḍl in the mansion of Bahjí.

Dr. and Mrs. Afnán's plans to pioneer to Africa during the Two Year Plan of 1951–53 were radically altered by a cable from the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United Kingdom dated March 8, 1952: "APPROVE SHOMAIS DEPARTURE AFRICA. ABBAS RETURN TO PERSIA APPRECIATE DEEPLY SELF SACRIFICE. SHOGHL." Dr. Afnán soon left for Iran and was given the privilege of making a pilgrimage and of visiting the Guardian en route.

The Guardian directed Dr. Afnán to go to the Bahá'í community of Yazd, which was then under great pressure. He was told to remain until Mrs. Afnán was established sufficiently to gain a visa for him, at which time he could join her in Africa. Their separation lasted nearly two years. During his time in Yazd, Dr. Afnán enthusiastically assisted the development of deepening classes, the arts, and artistic exhibitions. In an atmosphere of spiritual excitement, the community's fears diminished, and many arose to render services to the Cause. In a letter written on his behalf to the Bahá'ís of the United Kingdom dated June 12, 1952, the Guardian wrote, "The wonderful spirit shown by Dr. Afnán and his wife is certainly an example to all pioneers. He hopes that Mrs. Afnán will settle herself successfully in Africa, and soon be able to have her husband join her."

Dr. Afnán joined his wife in Ethiopia in March 1954. Working for a United Nations



*Abbas Afnán*

project based in Gondar, he trained medical students in several hospitals. When the Crown Prince of Ethiopia was injured in a car accident, Dr. Afnán was summoned to the palace to attend him; later Emperor Haile Selassie also summoned him for medical attention.

In 1958, Dr. and Mrs. Afnán went to the United Kingdom so that Dr. Afnán could study preventive medicine and public health with a view to serving better in their African post. During their preparations for departure following the completion of his studies, they received a request from the National Spiritual Assembly of the United Kingdom asking them to consider pioneering within the country to support the Ten Year Crusade. Dr. Afnán had to retake his medical exams to secure recognized credentials, and the couple moved to Dublin so that he could complete a one-year internship and register with the General Medical Council.

In Dr. Afnán's first post, Burnley, he was employed as the assistant medical officer

of health in 1960 and later promoted to deputy. Within a year the Local Spiritual Assembly of Burnley was established, and within three years there were fifty new believers.

From Burnley, Dr. and Mrs. Afnán moved to Norfolk, where Dr. Afnán was appointed medical officer of health—the first "foreigner" in Britain to hold a tenured position of such responsibility. His appointment faced opposition in the medical council, and when asked during a BBC interview whether his beliefs would prevent his practice of medicine, he elucidated the principle of the harmony of science and religion.

Dr. Afnán served as a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United Kingdom for twelve years. However, his greatest joys remained pioneering and teaching. He was never happier than when expounding the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh through the Bible and the Qur'án, both of which he knew and loved deeply.

In 1975, the Afnáns pioneered to Grand Falls, a small town in central Newfoundland, Canada. The power and authority of the church dominated the town, whose population seemed to be divided between the devoutly Christian and the indifferent. Nevertheless, Dr. Afnán found ways to inform the people of the message of Bahá'u'lláh. At this time, as throughout their married life, Dr. Afnán undertook to maintain a home base so as to allow his wife to carry out extended teaching trips, some lasting up to a year. Their separations were made possible not only by Dr. Afnán's sacrifices but by the couple's devotion to the Faith and by their constant consultation on all matters.

In 1988, following a car accident, Dr. Afnán's health deteriorated, and taking early retirement, he and Mrs. Afnán returned to England. However, he could not



settle to a life without vigorous teaching. Consequently, Dr. and Mrs. Afnán pioneered again, this time to Yugoslavia, to the city of Ljubljana, Slovenia. Following the change of political regimes, Dr. Afnán was invited to lecture on the Bahá'í Faith for the comparative religion course at the University of Ljubljana. The spiritual excitement he generated made an enduring impression on his students.

A further decline in his health forced Dr. Afnán to again return to England, where he settled in Stratford-upon-Avon, close to his son and family. During his several hospital admissions, though very ill, he asked for books and pamphlets with which to teach his nurses and doctors. To his last breath he was, above all, a devoted teacher of the Faith. The decision to settle in Stratford-upon-Avon had been purely personal, but their arrival allowed the formation of the first Local Assembly of that town. Dr. Afnán passed to the Abhá Kingdom at his final pioneering post on May 10, 1996.

Over 150 people from all over the world attended Dr. Afnán's funeral, and more than three hundred messages were received from Counsellors, National Spiritual Assemblies, Bahá'í friends, and those whose lives had been touched by his selflessness and warmth. The Universal House of Justice wired the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United Kingdom:

HEARTS FILLED WITH GRIEF NEWS  
PASSING MUCH-LOVED HIGHLY  
ADMIRING STALWART SERVANT  
BAHÁU'LLÁH ABBAS AFNÁN. HE  
SERVED THE CAUSE WITH DISTINC-  
TION THROUGH INDOMITABLE  
FAITH, LOVING NATURE AND RADI-  
ANT SPIRIT. HIS DEVOTED ENDEA-  
VOURS TEACHING, PIONEERING,

ADMINISTRATIVE FIELDS OVER  
FOUR DECADES IN FOUR CON-  
TINENTS ASIA, AFRICA, EUROPE,  
NORTH AMERICA CONTRIBUTED  
GREATLY TO EXPANSION CON-  
SOLIDATION FAITH. PRAYING HOLY  
SHRINES PROGRESS HIS NOBLE SOUL  
ABHÁ KINGDOM. CONVEY LOV-  
ING SYMPATHY ALL MEMBERS HIS  
FAMILY.

Universal House of Justice  
May 12, 1996

In a letter to the family, the Hand of the Cause Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum wrote:

His unflinching devotion to the Cause of God and many services during the lifetime of our beloved Guardian and after his passing are exemplary and I trust all his family will emulate his noble example.

Surely to arise in his memory and perform deeds of service in his name are the finest memorial for his loved ones to erect in his memory.

*Shomais Afnán*

**WILHELMINA "GWENDOLYN"  
HIRD WILLEMS  
1906–1996**

We were grieved at the news of the passing of outstanding, steadfast early Chilean believer Wilhelmina Willems, and are offering prayers for the progress of her radiant soul in the Abhá Kingdom.

Universal House of Justice  
May 17, 1996

Born in Canada on December 4, 1906, of Anglo-Dutch extraction, Gwendolyn was still a child when she arrived with her parents in Punta Arenas, a small but strategic port on the Straights of Magellan at the southern extremity of Chile.<sup>182</sup> English was the only language spoken at home, and her education was completed at the British School of the Anglican mission. After graduation she pursued studies in the arts in England.

Gwendolyn married, and her husband, a musician, died at an early age. From their marriage came three children: one boy, Luis, and two daughters, Helen and Cecilia.

In order to support herself and her children in a Spanish-speaking country after the passing of her husband, Gwendolyn gave private lessons in English—an activity that placed her in contact with many people of diverse ages—people who showed great respect for her and her talents.

The beloved Guardian, knowing of the strategic and spiritual importance of Punta Arenas, was particularly elated when he received news of the first pioneers to visit there during the last year of the First Seven Year Plan:<sup>183</sup> Mrs. Marcia Steward in 1943 and Mr. Artemus Lamb together with the first Chilean pioneer, Mr. Esteban Canales, in 1944. During the visits of the pioneers Gwendolyn and a few other residents were attracted to the Faith.

Artemus Lamb writes of this time:

Marcia Steward was still in Punta Arenas and it was decided, with the approval of the Guardian, that she would return to Santiago, and a young Chilean Bahá'í, Esteban Canales, would come to help me, as my Spanish was still not fluent. 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 shipwreck, 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, across from Tierra del Fuego, had been a former Chilean penal colony.

Teaching the Faith was not easy. Most of the population was there for material reasons. Neither the climate, the town nor the countryside were attractive, food was scarce, and entertainment totally lacking, except for one motion picture theater and two radio stations. After consultation and prayer, we decided to use radio as the people were almost always in their homes at night. We composed a weekly program entitled: "The City of Certitude," in which Esteban Canales and four friends, including the director of the radio station, took part. The program soon became famous, with everyone waiting to find out the meaning of the title, which was not divulged for many weeks.

At Naw-Rúz, we sent a cable of greeting to the Guardian. On April 4, 1945, came a reply, which included the following words through his secretary: "You can be sure that his prayers will sustain you in your efforts to establish an Assembly there in April of this year." I thought Esteban was going to have a heart attack. There were still no Bahá'ís there except for ourselves, and we had not even thought of the possibility of an Assembly at Riḍván. I tried to assure Esteban that when the Guardian said he was praying for something, all we had

<sup>182</sup> Punta Arenas claims to be the southernmost city in the world.

<sup>183</sup> 1937–1944.

to do was make the necessary efforts. However, he remained very disturbed, and kept repeating: "But Artemus, it's impossible!"

Seven days later, we invited all our eight contacts, including the four participants in the radio program, to explain to them the situation, and ask who would like to become Bahá'ís. All eight accepted. The Guardian had his Assembly.

This time I thought for sure that Esteban was going to have a heart attack from joy, and now he kept repeating, "but Artemus, you told me." We cabled the Guardian and immediately received the following reply, "Loving appreciation. Greeting. Admiration. Delight. Gratitude. Fervent prayers. Shoghi Rabbani."<sup>184</sup>

Gwendolyn Willems was among those declaring belief and becoming members of the first Local Spiritual Assembly in that distant outpost—the second Local Assembly to be established in Chile.<sup>185</sup> Such was the Guardian's delight over this victory that he placed a photograph of this first Local Assembly of Punta Arenas in a hallway near the top of the stairway of the Mansion of Bahjí, on the wall facing the photograph of Áqá Ján-i-Khamsih—the colonel who carried out the execution of the Báb. By this gesture, Shoghi Effendi emphasized the truth that the will of God prevails over the will of man.

The history of the Faith is one of alternating crises and victories. Artemus Lamb continues:



Wilhelmina "Gwendolyn" Hird Willems

The new Assembly began to function. Weekly "fireside" meetings were held, radio was continued, and all was going well. Then fell the blow. Five of the Assembly members departed on the same boat to return to their home towns of Santiago, Valparaiso and Valdivia. Through frantic prayers and teaching efforts, new souls were attracted, and the Assembly reinstated.

Many believers accepted the Faith in Punta Arenas, and a community soon developed. However, as in many ports, only a few were permanent residents, and the community suddenly found its number dwindling through migration. Thus the first believer to become established in Valdivia came from Punta Arenas, and the first believer to take up residence in the far northern city of Iquique also came from Punta Arenas. Others took up residence in Valparaiso, the main port of central Chile, where the third Local Spiritual Assembly was established in April 1946.

Over the years all of the early believers either passed away, left town, or became inactive. Gwendolyn remained, and her home was ever the place for Bahá'í meetings, contacts with seekers, and a constant center for activities. Pioneers, traveling teachers, and Hands of the Cause would come and go, but she and her home were the stable rallying point for all. Her enthusiasm and encouragement were always ready for the offering.

Gwendolyn stayed in Punta Arenas, but her own steadfastness was not without tests. Despite the trials of Covenant-breaking, which involved the defection of her own daughter, Gwendolyn remained firm in the Cause she loved and was ever obedient to her beloved Guardian's wish that she remain in Punta Arenas.

Shoghi Effendi had written:

Nor should the valuable and meritorious labors accomplished since the inception of the first Seven Year Plan in Punta Arenas de Magallanes, that far-off center situated not only on the southern extremity of the Western Hemisphere, but constituting the southernmost outpost of the Faith in the whole world, be for a moment neglected in the course of the second stage in the development of the Divine Plan. The assembly already constituted in that city, the remarkable radio publicity secured by the believers there, the assistance extended by them to the teaching work in other parts of Chile, should be regarded only as a prelude to the work of consolidation which must be indefatigably pursued.<sup>186</sup>

In November 1962, during a critical period in the development of the Faith in Chile, the Hand of the Cause of God Abúl-Qásim Faizí visited Punta Arenas and was inspired to write a short essay, *Meditations on the Eve of November 4th*. It was in part "a humble tribute to the pioneers and a poor description of the almost inexplicable conditions under which many of the new members of our world-wide Bahá'í family are living"<sup>187</sup>—a tribute to the qualities of those who, like Gwendolyn Willems, are "beacons built on solid rocks amidst the tempestuous seas. The waves attack them cruelly but only wash off the dirt and the lamp remains shining more brightly than ever before."<sup>188</sup>

Far from the usual routes of travel, this distant community passed through many difficult times. Notwithstanding adversities the Bahá'ís of Punta Arenas lived up to the expectations of Shoghi Effendi, who insisted that under no circumstance should the Local Assembly established there be allowed to lapse. In 1995 the community commemorated its fiftieth anniversary of uninterrupted existence—an achievement made possible, to a large extent, by the dedication, warmth, steadfastness, and love evinced by our very dear friend and co-worker, Gwendolyn Willems. It was she who reminded the friends of Assembly meetings, Nineteen Day Feasts, and anniversaries; it was she who, year in and year out, called the believers to renew the election of the Local Spiritual Assembly.

In 1992, on account of age and ill health, Gwendolyn made a round of good-bye visits to the resting places of her relatives and local believers and told her friends that "her ship was ready to unmoor." She then left Punta Arenas to

<sup>184</sup> *The Beginnings of the Bahá'í Faith in Latin America: Some Remembrances*, Artemus Lamb, 1995.

<sup>185</sup> The first Assembly was elected in the capital, Santiago, on April 21, 1943.

<sup>186</sup> *Citadel of Faith: Messages to America, 1947–1957*, pp. 17–18.

<sup>187</sup> *Meditations on the Eve of November 4th*, pp. 16–17.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

live with her son in Santiago. That year, she was among the nineteen Chilean friends attending the centenary of the Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh in the Holy Land. Later she went to Guayaquil, Ecuador, to see her grandchildren, and in 1996 she returned to Chile where, near Vina del Mar, she winged her flight to the Abhá Kingdom on May 13, 1996, at the age of eighty-nine.

*Based on an article by Alexander Reid and information provided by Paula S. Siegel*

**VELMA L. SHERRILL**  
1911-1996

SHARE YOUR DEEP SENSE LOSS IN PASSING VELMA L. SHERRILL, LOYAL, DILIGENT MAIDSERVANT BAHÁ'U'LLÁH. HER UNFLAGGING DEVOTION INTERESTS FAITH OVER PERIOD SOME FIVE DECADES HAS LEFT LASTING IMPRESSION DEVELOPMENT AMERICAN BAHÁ'Í COMMUNITY. INDOMITABLE WILL, INDEFATIGABLE ENERGY, UNFAILING EFFICIENCY CHARACTERIZED HER EXTENSIVE ACTIVITIES WHICH INCLUDED HER INVOLVEMENT NATIONAL ADMINISTRATION TEACHING WORK, MEMBERSHIP NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY, DUTIES AS AUXILIARY BOARD MEMBER, AS EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT HAND CAUSE KHÁDEM AND SUBSEQUENTLY AS CONTINENTAL COUNSELLOR AMERICAS. EXTEND LOVING SYMPATHY HER DEAR HUSBAND LLOYD. FERVENTLY PRAYING HOLY SHRINES PROGRESS HER SOUL ABHÁ KINGDOM. ADVISE HOLD MEMORIAL SERVICE HER HONOR HOUSE WORSHIP WILMETTE.

Universal House of Justice  
May 21, 1996

I met her, a young professional woman working out of a downtown office of a personnel agency, in the fall of 1944, when I was looking for a job. When she interviewed me for a secretarial position in St. Louis, Missouri, she impressed me deeply. In my eyes she was the epitome of a mature, intelligent, and gracious woman. To my surprise she asked me to lunch! As a result of this encounter, she soon became my Bahá'í teacher and lifelong friend. I later realized that she had influenced the lives of countless souls, an evidence of the strength of her faith, the depth of her compassion, and the clarity of her understanding.

Born in Wallace County, Kansas, on June 27, 1911, the second of three children, Velma Kammer showed great promise in her youth, graduating from high school at the age of fifteen. She learned of the Bahá'í Faith in Kansas City, Missouri, and embraced its teachings around 1935. She studied with some of the outstanding early teachers of the Faith including Emogene Hoagg, Orcella Rexford, and Ruth Moffett and, after moving to Chicago, with Horace Holley.

In 1957 Velma and her husband, Lloyd Sherrill, along with seven other believers formed the first Spiritual Assembly in Webster Groves, Missouri. (It is interesting to note that Velma was again secretary of that Assembly at the time of her sudden departure from this earthly life.)

Since enrolling in her youth, Velma's life was one of continuous service to the Faith in the fields of teaching and administration, nationally and internationally. She served as secretary of the American National Teaching Committee during the Ten Year Crusade, was appointed as an Auxiliary Board member serving six mid-western states in 1957, and in 1961 she was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States.



*Velma L. Sherrill*

When the Universal House of Justice decided that Auxiliary Board members could no longer hold elective and administrative posts concurrently, Velma resigned from the National Assembly to continue serving as an Auxiliary Board member.

Her illustrious service continued to grow, and in January 1967 she was named an executive assistant to the Hand of the Cause Dhikru'lláh Khádém. In 1973 she was appointed to the Continental Board of Counsellors for North America and in 1980 to the Continental Board of Counsellors for the Americas.

Velma was an active teacher not only in the Bahá'í community but also through her participation in other organizations, bringing the knowledge and spirit of the Faith to those graced by her presence. During the last ten years of her life, she was an enthusiastic supporter of the St. Louis Dialogue Group of the World's Religions and Philosophies. David Oughton, founder of the group, describes it as "[c]omposed of representatives of fifteen different religious

traditions, the purpose of this group is to understand different viewpoints and to cooperate with people of different religions." In 1991 Velma and other Bahá'ís organized the Fifth Annual Gathering for Peace. In 1993 she was thrilled to be part of the program that featured His Holiness, the Dalai Lama. The Tenth Interfaith Gathering that took place on October 27, 1996, was dedicated to the memory of Velma. Two months before her death Velma spoke to the St. Louis Dialogue Group on the Bahá'í answer to the question of the existence of God.

Another program that Velma supported was the annual Bus Tour/Prayer Pilgrimage to the houses of worship of the different religions in St. Louis. Velma participated in these tours and explained the Bahá'í Faith to her fellow pilgrims until the time of her passing on May 17, 1996.

At her funeral, representatives of Christian, Sikh, Vedanta, Confucian, Tao, and Buddhist religious traditions expressed their feelings of affection and respect for her.

Eunice Braun, former Auxiliary Board member, who served under Velma's direction added, "Among Velma's many superior qualities was an ability to discern the capacity of others. She admired the gifts of others and did much to inspire and guide them into recognizing and utilizing their talents in productive and creative ways for the Cause. Velma had an ability to make you feel good about your efforts in a way that freed you to stretch a little harder. There are many souls, here and in the Abhá Kingdom, who were nurtured by her confidence in their ability to become far more productive teachers and administrators of the Cause than at first seemed possible." Olive McDonald, an office assistant to Counsellor Sherrill from 1981 to 1985, observed, "Her organizational abilities were exceptional."

From Velma I gained an appreciation of the Covenant and the administrative order and of the vital role Shoghi Effendi played in elaborating the significance of Bahá'u'lláh's blueprint for a new civilization. Velma encouraged me to study the writings and to prepare for whatever was needed in the promotion of the Faith. Her personal commitment was a constant source of inspiration. My close association with her over a period of fifty years confirmed my original view of her outstanding characteristics. She was an independent thinker and was interested in alternative modes of health care. Recognizing my needs, she introduced me to chiropractic and to natural foods and remedies and helped me to shape my own views regarding health and healing. We were friends, but she was a private person, and although I frequently shared my problems with her, she was always the strong one—the trusted confidant, advisor, and Bahá'í sister.

Among her papers was found this poem:

What is it to work with love?  
It is to weave the cloth with threads  
drawn from the heart,  
even as if your Beloved were to wear  
that cloth.

*L. Naomi McCord*

#### ALEXANDR KUKLEEN 1950–1996

Alexandr Kukleen was born on July 28, 1950, to Nadezhda Fyodorovna Kukleena and Innokentiy Grigorevich Kukleen in the village of Dementevo, Kuzhnersk, Region of Marijskaya Republic, Russia.

Having finished school in 1969, Alexandr started working as a metalworker at a shipyard in Volgograd. His work was



*Alexandr Kukleen*

interrupted by his service in the Soviet Army. He returned to the shipyard in 1971 and later graduated from the correspondence department of the Volgograd Industrial Technical School.

In 1977 he entered the All Union Financial and Economics Institute and was offered a job in the Sovietsky Regional Financial Department in Volgograd. In 1981 Alexandr moved to the city of Dnepropetrovsk where he worked as a controller (comptroller), first in the regional department of the Ministry of Finance Administration of the Ukrainian-Soviet Socialist Republic. Then he worked as a controller in the city financial department until 1989. Meanwhile in 1983 he graduated from the institute with a degree in economics.

From 1989 to 1993 he worked at a pipe-producing factory. Then he became the leading controller at the Agro-Industrial Bank of Ukraine.

Alexandr was introduced to the Faith by Mila Shagum in July 1992, and he declared his faith on the 5th of September. For two

years, 1995 and 1996, he was elected to the Local Spiritual Assembly of the city of Dnepropetrovsk.

On April 30, 1993, the first Bahá'í wedding in Dnepropetrovsk took place when Alexandr and Mila Shagum were married.

With hearts full of sorrow we inform you of the passing on 23 May 1996 of a dearly-loved member of our community and of our Local Spiritual Assembly—Alexandr Kukleen, age 45. He died by electrocution in a tragic accident when he fell from a high-voltage electrical station onto some cables below and then plunged another 12 meters to the ground.

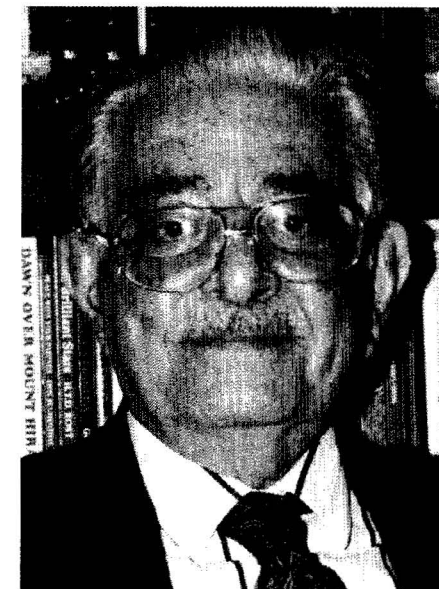
We ask the House of Justice to remember him in prayers at the Sacred Threshold that his progress in the next world will be great. Please remember also the grief-stricken members of his family, particularly his wife—Mila Shagum. Theirs was the first Bahá'í wedding in our community.

On May 30, 1996, the Department of the Secretariat responded:

The Universal House of Justice received your email of 27 May 1996 and was saddened to learn of the tragic death of Mr. Alexandr Kukleen. Kindly convey its loving sympathy to his wife and family, and assure them that the House of Justice will offer prayers in the Holy Shrines for the progress of Mr. Kukleen's soul, and for their comfort and consolation.

*From information provided by Mila Shagum and the Local Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Dnepropetrovsk*

#### MANOUCHEHR FARHOUMAND 1904–1996



*Manouchehr Farhoumand*

Manouchehr Farhoumand was born in Hamadán, Iran, on November 16, 1904. His father, Ḥakím Naṣír, was a physician of Jewish background. His mother, Nushafarin Soleiman, was the granddaughter of Ḥakím Lalehzar, a physician and rabbi—the first Jew in Hamadán to embrace the Faith. It is said that her uncle Ḥakím Agha Jan, at the time of his death, opened his eyes following many days of coma and instructed those present to stand as though they were in the presence of Bahá'u'lláh. His family was amazed by the subsequent receipt of a Tablet from Bahá'u'lláh in which He said, “We were present at the hour of his passing.”

From an early age Manouchehr was immersed in the Bahá'í writings. He was extremely bright and able, a brilliant scholar. Under the guidance of the well-known Bahá'í headmaster, Dabeer Moayed

Naimi, he graduated from Ta'íd School (the Bahá'í school in Hamadán) and then from the American College in Hamadán years ahead of the other children his age. Although he was a gifted mathematician, he decided to follow in the footsteps of his forefathers and pursued a medical profession. He attended the American University of Beirut in Lebanon from 1924 to 1929 graduating with honors. He continued his postgraduate studies at the Medical Faculty of Lyon in France, obtaining his MD with a gold medal, specializing in psychiatry and legal medicine in 1930. He returned to Tíhrán and was the director of a military hospital until 1933 when he turned to general practice. He opened a surgery, the reception room of which he shared with his brother Heshmatollah Farhoumand.<sup>189</sup> The two doctors became very successful before giving up their practices in order to pioneer to Africa.

Manouchehr married Nirvana, the daughter of Youness Khán Afrukhteh, the personal secretary and interpreter for the beloved Master, and Zarintaj, the granddaughter of Razal-Rooh, the renowned Bábí martyr.

In his book *My Experiences as a Pioneer Doctor to Tanganyika*, written when he was ninety years old (published in 1995), he wrote:

During the Easter vacations of 1925 I was among about thirty Bahá'í students in the American University of Beirut who were invited by our dear Guardian to Haifa. While we were there the Guardian came up the slopes of Mount Carmel every evening to the Pilgrim House in the grounds of the Shrine of the Báb where we residents stayed, and then we followed him on his

garden walks listening to his edifying words . . . again in the Easter vacation in the year 1927 we were invited by the beloved Guardian to Haifa. On this occasion only two of us, Mr. Mahmood Hafezí and I, had the privilege of visiting the Shrines and the Guardian. Those were the most unforgettable days of my life. Every morning I had the opportunity of hearing the Guardian's beautiful voice while he was chanting the Tablet of Visitation in the Shrines of the Báb and 'Abdu'l-Bahá . . . It was during my third visit (March 21, 1952) that the Guardian advised everybody who had the means to pioneer, to do so, and he encouraged me to go to Africa. I suggested that while some might judge me to be a competent physician, hardly any would be found to rank me among capable speakers or teachers. "Pioneering is in itself the most effective form of teaching," the Guardian replied. Then and there my resolve was formed. I would obey his command. I would go to Africa. Another day my mother-in-law, while seated next to the beloved Guardian, placed both her hands on his knees and begged him to allow her to sacrifice her life for the Faith. The beloved Guardian answered, "This is not the time for sacrifice. Pioneer to Africa and carry forward the torch your husband (Dr. Youness Khán) has handed you."

In April 1954 accompanied by his three young children—Noushin, Shahpar, and Mínerva—he left Iran for Dar es Salaam, the capital of Tanganyika. His wife, Nirvana, and his mother-in-law, Zarintaj, who had become ill with cancer, were to join him later after going to Geneva. In a telegram, the Guardian suggested that he remain in Dar es Salaam, open a surgery,

and teach the Faith. It was at this point that a simple decision made on Bahá'í principles produced far-reaching results. He refused to have a separate waiting room for white patients and another waiting room for Indian and African patients, as was the customary practice in the country at that time. In his book, he writes:

With such edifying words, "The earth is but one country and mankind its citizens," before me, how could I separate the Indians and Africans from the Europeans. On the other hand, this was the custom. Now I was indeed in a predicament. Some friends warned me that disregard of this particular custom might lead to the annulment of my license and the closing down of my surgery. After deliberating on the subject I finally chose to do what was implicit in Bahá'u'lláh's teachings. I decided to have but one waiting room for all communities, black, white, or brown, so the notice outside the front waiting room went up, "All patients are welcome in here." . . . Word soon got around that here was a white doctor who did not discriminate against colored and black people.

The decision, while turning away a few white patients, attracted a number of educated Africans who, respecting his Bahá'í beliefs and his dislike of racial prejudice, continued to be his patients after the nation achieved its independence.<sup>190</sup> These patients included President Julius Nyerere, Vice President Karume, and Prime Minister Rashadi Kawawa, as well as a considerable number of ministers, visiting ambassadors, and other dignitaries. It was said that his surgery that adjoined his house was the

only place in the country where one could see the American and Russian ambassadors or the Israeli and Egyptian ambassadors sitting happily together. Without exception they all knew about the Faith.

Manouchehr used to take great joy in going out on teaching trips to Morogoro with his family, especially in the company of the Nakhjavání and Yazdání families. They would meet with Mrs. Naimi and the believers and contacts there. He continued to practice and to teach in Dar es Salaam until 1971 when he decided to retire and join his family in London, England. His wife had taken his children to London two years earlier so that they could continue their education. When President Nyerere traveled to England, he invited Manouchehr and Nirvana to meet with him, and he invited the Farhoumands to visit him in Tanzania. Manouchehr loved Africa and the Africans, and it was his ardent wish to return there with all the members of his family.

Manouchehr was a brilliant doctor and a talented linguist who could speak fluent Persian, English, and French, as well as some Hebrew, Arabic, Turkish, and Swahili. He played the Persian musical instrument "tar" and was a strong swimmer, an able horseman, and a keen gardener. He served on the Local Spiritual Assemblies of Shemírán (Iran), Dar es Salaam, and Three Rivers (United Kingdom) as well as on the National Spiritual Assembly of Tanzania.

His proudest moments were during the World Congress in New York when he was surrounded by a crowd of believers, each of whom insisted on shaking his hand, reminding him that he had either saved his or her life, brought him or her into this world, or assisted the deliveries of his or her children.

There cannot be many people who have published a book at the age of ninety and who have managed to go on pilgrimage

<sup>189</sup> See Heshmatollah Farhoumand, pp. 262–65.

<sup>190</sup> Tanganyika achieved independence in December of 1961. In 1964 it was joined with Zanzibar to become the nation of Tanzania.

for the seventh time at that wonderful age. When he received the date for his last pilgrimage, he wrote back to the Universal House of Justice to cancel, believing that he would not live long enough. The visit was not canceled, and he was informed that he was expected to come to Haifa as planned.

He was especially proud that his youngest brother Parvis, his son Noushin, and more recently his grandchildren Ashley and Nirvana have decided to continue the long family tradition of becoming doctors.

Manouchehr Farhoumand died on June 15, 1996, surrounded by friends and relatives following a stroke a few days earlier. He was happy to discover that the senior consulting physician assigned to him was an African. Manouchehr remained conscious until the arrival of his brother Rouhollah from Canada and the receipt of a telephone message from 'Alí Nakhjavání informing him that prayers had been chanted on his behalf in Haifa.

On June 18 the following cable was received from the Universal House of Justice:

PROFOUNDLY SADDENED PASSING MANOUCHEHR FARHOUMAND. HIS DEVOTED SERVICES CRADLE FAITH AND MORE PARTICULARLY TANZANIA REMEMBERED WITH LOVING APPRECIATION. CONVEY DEEP SYMPATHY HIS DEAR WIFE AND BELOVED CHILDREN. PRAYING HOLY SHRINES PROGRESS HIS NOBLE SOUL ABHÁ KINGDOM

He must be delighted by the choice of his place of interment, near the resting place of the Guardian and next to old friends Salim Noonoo and Isobel Sabri.

*Noushin Farhoumand*

### FERDAWS AFNÁN

1927-1996

Ferdaws Afnán was born in January 1927 to a Bahá'í family. She was related to the Báb through both her mother and her father. Her mother, Ághá Bagum, was the great grandchild of an uncle of the Báb, and her father was Mírzá Ḥabíbu'lláh, the son of Áqá Mírzá Áqá who had been given the title of Núru'd-Dín by Bahá'u'lláh. Her father was the custodian of the pilgrim site of the House of the Báb, and in order to fulfill this task efficiently, he resided in one of the houses next to the Holy House. The pilgrims came from all over Iran and in later years from the West. Ferdaws was largely responsible for looking after them.

At an early age she was a sweet and pleasant child who attracted the attention of friends and relatives. She started her primary education in Shíráz where she was a successful pupil. Unfortunately, at the age of eleven, she was afflicted with rheumatic fever that was misdiagnosed by the physicians in Shíráz who prescribed the wrong treatment. The consequences of the illness and its treatment adversely affected her heart. In spite of her illness, she continued with her education. While undertaking her secular studies, she attended Bahá'í children's classes and subsequently deepening classes conducted by well-known Bahá'ís such as Ḥájí Mírzá Buzurg Afnán (her uncle), Hand of the Cause Mr. Ṭarázu'lláh Samandarí, Munír Nabílzádiḥ, Ḥasan Núshábádí, and Mr. Suheil Samandarí. She was thoroughly acquainted with the history of the Faith, the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* and the *Kitáb-i-Íqán*, and the works of major Bahá'í teachers. Despite her health, she took responsibility for Bahá'í children's classes and was actively involved with the youth activities. She also maintained correspondence with a large number of pilgrims.



*Ferdaws Afnán*

Her father passed away in January 1952. His death was a big blow to Ferdaws. Fortunately, Mr. Samandarí was at that time in Shíráz, and through his extraordinary kindness, loving counsels, and daily visits, he helped the family to cope with the tragedy. About that time, Shoghi Effendi allowed the resumption of the pilgrimages to Haifa and 'Akká, which had been stopped for several years. This good news was conveyed by a telegram from the beloved Guardian to Mr. Samandarí who urged Ferdaws not to miss this rare opportunity. Mr. Samandarí applied to Shoghi Effendi for permission for Ferdaws and a group of other Bahá'ís in Shíráz to go. The request was accepted, and on April 9, 1952, Ferdaws arrived in Haifa. On the 12th she attained the presence of the Guardian who showered her with kindness. She was present at seven meetings with him and took detailed notes of his talks, which she took back to Iran as a present for the local Bahá'ís. During her pilgrimage, she was honored by Amatu'l-Bahá Rúḥíyyih

Khánum with an invitation to lunch. On the last day of her pilgrimage, the Guardian instructed her to travel to Nayríz and to share with the friends there his loving greetings. Furthermore, he told her that she should adopt the same standard of care of the pilgrims that she had observed in Haifa for the friends who visited the House of the Báb in Shíráz.

Upon her return to Iran, Ferdaws traveled to Nayríz and other cities around Shíráz sharing with the friends Shoghi Effendi's counsels and instructions. Her health, however, prevented her from serving the Faith to the extent that she wanted. At that time, Shíráz did not have the medical facilities needed for her treatment, and she was sent to Ṭíhrán. There, her doctors determined that she needed a heart operation. Dr. Manúchíhr Ḥakím advised her against having the operation in Iran, suggesting that she go to England instead. Her brother, Abul-Qasim, was to go with her, but as he was the custodian of the House of the Báb, he sought via Dr. Luṭfú'lláh Ḥakím the permission of the Guardian to leave his post. A telegram was subsequently received from Dr. Ḥakím: "BELOVED APPROVED. ASSURE FERDAWS FERVENT PRAYERS HOLY SHRINES."

The arrival of this telegram was a great source of joy for Ferdaws, and while she was suffering considerable physical pain, the message renewed her vigor and her sense of humor. Within three days she arrived in London where, through the assistance of Mr. Hasan Balyuzi, a hospital bed had been reserved for her. A surgeon of world-renown succeeded in performing the operation.

After three months, she returned to Iran, going first to Maṣḥhad where she had been invited to visit Mr. Samandarí. Later, back in Shíráz, she joined her brother in working to care for the pilgrims to the

House of the Báb. For the first time in over ten years she felt healthy and able to carry on her Bahá'í activities.

Ferdaws was also interested in helping others with heart problems, and she decided to work in a hospital in *Shíráz* run by American doctors. Eventually she became an electrocardiogram (ECG) technician.

In 1976 she traveled to England for a health checkup, and she learned that within a few years she would need another heart operation. She returned to England three years later, and in February 1980, she had a pacemaker implant. Unfortunately, her body rejected this, and she had to undergo another operation. Rather than returning to Iran, Ferdaws decided to stay in England.<sup>191</sup> Once again she recovered and felt herself to be in good health. She was able to go on pilgrimage to Haifa and 'Akká again and to travel to the United States, Canada, and Europe to visit her friends and relatives.

Ferdaws had been taking various medications for her heart that eventually caused internal bleeding. She was operated on in Oxford, and as a result of this operation, she passed away on June 16, 1996. The Hand of the Cause Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum honored her family with a loving condolence, and the Universal House of Justice, in a message dated June 17 paid tribute:

DEEPLY GRIEVED PASSING DEDICATED MAIDSERVANT CAUSE FIRDAWS AFNÁN WHOSE SELFLESS EXERTIONS CRADLE FAITH, PARTICULARLY IN SERVICE BÁB'S BLESSED HOUSE SHÍRÁZ, FOLLOWED BY HER DEVOTED EFFORTS TO PROMOTE INTERESTS FAITH

UNITED KINGDOM WILL ALWAYS BE LOVINGLY REMEMBERED. PRAYING HOLY SHRINES PROGRESS HER LUMINOUS SOUL ABHÁ KINGDOM. CONVEY PROFOUND SYMPATHY HER BELOVED BROTHER AND THROUGH HIM OTHER MEMBERS DISTINGUISHED AFNÁN FAMILY.

*Abul-Qasim Afnán*

**BEVERLY W. KOLSTOE**  
1930–1996



*Beverly W. Kolstoe*

'Abdu'l-Bahá said, "To be a Bahá'í simply means to love all the world; to love humanity and try to serve it; to work for universal peace and universal brotherhood."<sup>192</sup> That well describes the life of Beverly Kolstoe.

Beverly was born on April 18, 1930, and raised among the blue-collar workers of industrial northern Illinois. From her

<sup>192</sup> *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*, p. 81.

earliest days she seemed immune from the rampant race and class prejudice of the area. Her mother said, "I think Beverly was meant to become a Bahá'í. Even when she was a little girl; she would stick up for people whom others looked down on."

Beverly attended the National College of Education in Evanston, Illinois, close to the Wilmette Temple. She wrote, "I was familiar with the House of Worship with its nine doors always open to those of all faiths but did not investigate Bahá'í beliefs until John and I went together." Her husband-to-be, John Kolstoe, was in the navy. They married in August 1952 and became Bahá'ís in April 1953 during the First Holy Year and the launching of the Ten Year Crusade. They lived in Portsmouth, Virginia, and later moved to North Dakota, following which they went on to graduate school at the University of Minnesota.

In 1957 the beloved Guardian called for four Continental Conferences to be held the next year. "Beverly and I had talked of pioneering in three or five years after finishing graduate school," recalled John. "Then, I went to the Conference in Chicago and plans speeded up. Unknown to me, she had expected me to volunteer at the Conference. Upon my return to Minneapolis, she immediately and directly asked where we were going. I told her Alaska. She calmly replied, 'Oh, I was hoping for some place warm.' Warm or not, we went north that summer."

After selling their mobile home and their car—all they owned in the world—they moved to Anchorage, arriving in August 1958. Beverly became a speech therapist at a treatment center for disabled children, and John was a counselor at Anchorage High School. During their three years there they fostered one child and adopted two. "It had always been a puzzle to me why God had not seen fit to give us children, when

we wanted them so much," wrote Beverly. "I had many pregnancies, always with the very best of medical care, yet all ended prematurely. When we adopted Tahirih and Karl, both Athabascan Indians, we had not thought of pioneering to an Athabascan village. Nor had we specified race when we applied for adoption." The children enabled many doors to open for them when they pioneered to Fort Yukon, an Indian<sup>193</sup> village on the Yukon River. The decision to move there had been Beverly's choice and was made when the Hand of the Cause of God William Sears visited Alaska in 1960 and made a call for pioneers.

"While John was away, I went to Fort Yukon on my investigative trip," recalled Beverly. "I loved it immediately. It was a picturesque settlement of tiny log cabins clustered along the Yukon River." Beverly and John both found work as teachers. Their initial greatest difficulty centered around the house they had rented and which they had spent two weeks cleaning. They then found out that it had been sold, and they had to move out! They eventually found a small four-room log cabin down by the river. Beverly continued:

Obviously, Bahá'u'lláh knew what He was doing, but we only realized it in retrospect . . . The good thing about this move was that it was down in the village among the Indian people. We were village people, not white schoolteachers. The Indians were familiar with the house and comfortable with it, so they came and went, and were our friends. It was there that the first Local Spiritual Assembly of Fort Yukon was formed, on August 1, 1962.

The bad part was that because it was so close to the river, it flooded nearly

<sup>193</sup> Indigenous or Native American.

<sup>191</sup> The House of the Báb was destroyed by the revolutionary government in 1979, and in 1981, the site was paved for a road and public square.

every year and washed away the mud foundation, leaving the floor boards exposed to sub-zero temperatures. That first winter was the coldest on record, with weeks of 50 to 60 [Fahrenheit] below zero temperatures.

Their adopted baby son Karl got pneumonia, and despite penicillin shots, he just was not getting any better. "We had nearly reconciled ourselves that our baby boy would be a sacrifice to our pioneering post, but we wrote to the Hands in the Holy Land and asked for prayers. Suddenly, miraculously, Karl got well! A few days later we received a letter from the Holy Land: 'We prayed for your son at the Shrines today.'"

After three memorable years in Fort Yukon, they moved to Fairbanks, and during the summer of 1964 they moved to Tanana Valley community, outside Fairbanks, where they spent the next five years.

"In 1969, during the Nine Year Plan, there was a great need for homefront pioneers in Alaska and so we moved again, this time to Palmer in nearby Matanuska Valley," recalled Beverly. "John's company had no objection to moving his office to Palmer, and so, in September, just before school started, we moved the family down. We found a large house on the main street, which we purchased and lived in for sixteen years. The Local Spiritual Assembly of Palmer was formed in April 1970."

After twenty-seven years of service in Alaska, it was time for me to get my original wish, a chance to pioneer in a warm place. John was finishing his twentieth year with his insurance company and was eligible for a pension. The children were pretty much raised. We began looking forward to this new arena of service. Our grandchild, Terianne,

had been living with us for several years. We approached her mother, Tahirih, for permission to adopt Terianne. So our first grandchild became our fifth adopted child. And we set our faces toward a goal for Alaskan pioneers, in St. Lucia. At last, a warm place!

In 1985 Alaska was given two international goals: St. Lucia and Iceland. Beverly was serving on the Bahá'í International Goals Committee, and she chose St. Lucia before anyone else had a chance at it. The family stayed there for five years, and she loved every minute of it. But then, she loved every minute of life.

She poured out her love generously and bonded deeply. Once, on a long trip she said, "The thing I miss most about Alaska is the women from our community." Service was her constant joy: children's classes, Nineteen Day Feasts, entertaining, and teaching the Faith. Beverly served on numerous local and national committees including the Child Education Committee, National Teaching Committee, and her dearest love, the Bahá'í International Goals Committee; the "Big C" she called it. She was a fixture as secretary of the Alaska National Convention for six years in a row, and she served on the National Spiritual Assemblies of both Alaska and St. Lucia.

Beverly loved children. In addition to five adopted children of various races, there always seemed to be one or two others living with them.

While pioneering in St. Lucia she found that in many villages there were Bahá'ís eager to teach children's classes, but they had little material or training. So she wrote a simple yet thorough and systematic curriculum that could be used by people who had no other resources, experience, and training—materials that have been used

effectively in many countries and for which plans were made for publication.

Her greatest joy came in 1987, while her mother was living with them in St. Lucia. At the age of eighty-three, she accepted Bahá'u'lláh, thirty-six years after her daughter had. Tears flowed for two days.

Beverly's energy and enthusiasm for life made her seem like the emblem of health, and she thought of herself as a healthy person. Yet she had been plagued by serious medical problems all of her life, having been told at sixteen that she only had five more years to live. She actually lived fifty more. One week after returning from the Bahá'í World Congress in New York, she suffered a severe heart attack. Though her energy was limited, she did what she could and would radiantly explain, "My days are as good as anyone else's. They are just shorter."

She had had quadruple bypass surgery in 1975. Twenty-one years later, on Monday, June 10, 1996, she had additional heart surgery. Complications set in, and she had no reserve energy left. About 10 AM on Tuesday, June 18, she peacefully slipped away.

A few months before her passing, she learned that John had purchased a burial shroud for her. She was delighted but felt the white shroud was too plain. So, she bought some lace trim with little pink hearts. She said she wanted "to go out in style." Before her surgery she calmly sewed on the trim, "Just in case."

Her life was full, and she described it best in her own words. During a sleepless night three years before her death, she wrote a thirty-eight stanza poem in free verse that she called "I have had the most AMAZING LIFE." In it she recounts the extraordinary things she had done and concluded with, "Thank you, God. I have been most blessed! Your humble servant . . . Beverly."

Learning of her passing, the Department of the Secretariat sent the following message

to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Alaska on June 19, 1996:

The Universal House of Justice was grieved to learn of the passing of dear Beverly Kolstoe. Her steadfastness in the Covenant, long and devoted services as an international and homefront pioneer, membership on the National Spiritual Assembly, special love and relationship with children, and dedicated endeavours as a teacher of the Faith are remembered with particular warmth and admiration. The House of Justice will offer prayers in the Holy Shrines for the progress of her radiant soul in all the worlds of God, and for the comfort of her dear family.

*John Kolstoe*

#### ELNA LØDRUP ?–1996

Elna belonged to a respectable, noble family from Bergen, the second largest city in Norway. She lived a good part of her life in Oslo, although her childhood was spent mostly in Bergen, and in Trondheim where she completed her education. Some members of her family had immigrated earlier to the United States. As a youth she visited them in California and heard about the Faith from one of her relatives there, but she did not pay much attention to it then.

Early in 1963, during one of her travels in Sweden, she met Knight of Bahá'u'lláh Mildred Clark<sup>194</sup> on a train. Mrs. Clark was then a pioneer in Norway, and she spoke of the Faith with a personality and a

<sup>194</sup> See "In Memoriam," *The Bahá'í World*, vol. XIV, pp. 303–4.



wisdom that impressed Elna deeply. When Elna returned to Oslo, she maintained a correspondence with Mrs. Clark, who was then residing in Trondheim.

She attended a public meeting organized by the Local Spiritual Assembly of Oslo in 1963 and embraced the Faith on the twenty-fifth of November of that year. Afterward she became an active member of the Local Assembly. Her home, which was centrally located in Oslo, was often used as a venue for meetings of the National Assembly, and she held regular firesides there for some time. Elna was later elected to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Norway and served it as secretary for several years. In 1968 she participated as a delegate to the International Convention in Haifa.

In the meantime she held an important position with the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), a directorate under the Norwegian Ministry for Foreign Aid. She retired from NORAD in 1988 to become a consultant. During her later years Elna chose to work in the field updating NORAD's archives in places such as Kenya, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique. In this way she came closer to the third world and a sense of global responsibility. This was far removed from the star-spangled world of Hollywood where she had once worked.

Elna was invited to be interviewed about the Faith on the Norwegian Television Network—the first time the Faith was introduced by this medium.

In her later years Elna served the Bahá'í Publishing Trust of Norway and in spite of poor health continued her work with devotion and consecration.

Because of an accident suffered in Africa, her lung capacity had been weakened, and in mid-June 1996 she became ill. Elna did not recover and passed on to the Abhá Kingdom on the twenty-third. In her will she left all her possessions to the Bahá'í

community of Norway. The Universal House of Justice sent its condolences on June 27:

DEEPLY SADDENED TO LEARN OF RECENT PASSING TO ABHÁ KINGDOM BELOVED HANDMAIDEN BAHÁ'U'LLÁH ELNA LØDRUP, WHOSE MERITORIOUS SERVICES FOR CAUSE SPANNED MORE THAN THREE DECADES INCLUDING LONG YEARS MEMBERSHIP ON NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY. MAY HER CONTRIBUTIONS TO DEVELOPMENT OF DIVINE INSTITUTIONS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH'S WORLD ORDER IN NORWAY DRAW BLESSINGS UPON YOUR PRESENT ENDEAVOURS.

SUPPLICATING IN HOLY SHRINES FOR EXALTATION HER RADIANT SOUL IN ALL THE WORLDS OF GOD.

*From articles by Hooshang Rafat and Jon Sandsmark*



*Elna Lodrup*

### MARGARET CHAMBERLIN CHANCE 1912-1996

DEEPLY SYMPATHIZE IN YOUR LOSS DEARLY LOVED MARGARET. HER CONSTANT DEVOTION CAUSE BAHÁ'U'LLÁH; HER SACRIFICIAL SERVICES WORLD CENTRE OVER LONG PERIOD PARTICULARLY AS UNSTINTING SUPPORTER YOUR EFFORTS FULFILL WEIGHTY RESPONSIBILITIES MEMBERSHIP HOUSE JUSTICE, AS GUIDE HOLY SHRINES AND AS TEACHER BAHÁ'Í CHILDREN'S CLASSES; HER HIGH PRINCIPLES, CHEERFUL DISPOSITION, GENTLE HUMOR REMEMBERED WITH GRATITUDE AND AFFECTION. REST ASSURED OUR ARDENT PRAYERS SACRED THRESHOLD THAT HER NOBLE SOUL MAY PROGRESS THROUGHOUT DIVINE WORLDS AND THAT YOU AND YOUR DEAR DAUGHTER MAY BE SURROUNDED BY STRENGTHENING GRACE BLESSED BEAUTY.

Universal House of Justice to  
Hugh E. Chance  
June 27, 1996

Margaret Chamberlin Chance was born June 6, 1912, in St. Paul, Minnesota, the daughter of Allen and Olive (Pratt) Chamberlin. Margaret's family moved several times from the time of her birth to her teenage years, living at times in South Dakota and Ohio.

When Margaret was a teenager, her family moved to Muscatine, Iowa, where her father bought and operated a photography studio; he was the only photographer in town. Margaret graduated from high school in 1929 and went on to attend Cornell College in Mount Vernon, Iowa,

graduating with a bachelor's degree in education in 1933. She had met Hugh Chance at the college the year earlier. They courted and were married in 1934.

Margaret taught school in the rural community of Castana, Iowa, in the fall of 1933, while Mr. Chance went on to complete a Juris Doctor program at the State University of Iowa in Iowa City. Mr. Chance passed the bar exam in 1935, and they moved to Muscatine. With the exception of the war years, when he served in the US Navy, Mr. Chance practiced law in Muscatine until 1948. During this time Margaret gave private piano lessons. They were members of the Methodist Church where Margaret taught Sunday School. She was also the chairman of the Ladies Aid Society.

Margaret and Mr. Chance had two children. Mary Ann was born in 1937, and a son, Robert William, in 1942. Robert did not live to see his first birthday.

The Chances moved to Davenport, Iowa, in 1948 where, a few years later, Margaret taught fourth grade at Washington Elementary School.

Margaret learned of the Bahá'í Faith in 1954 when Drs. Stanley and Mariette Bolton, war-time colleagues of Mr. Chance, visited them. Margaret declared right away after hearing the Message of Bahá'u'lláh; Mr. Chance waited two or three months. Mary Ann also declared. Thereafter they gave firesides in their home every Thursday night for the students of the Palmer College of Chiropractic. Two years later the first Local Spiritual Assembly of Davenport formed.

In 1960 Mr. Chance was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly. A year later he was elected its secretary, and they moved to Wilmette, Illinois, to be close to the National Center.

Mr. Chance was elected to the Universal House of Justice in 1963, and he and



*Margaret Chamberlin Chance*

Margaret moved to Haifa. Margaret served as a guide at the Shrines, a position she took up the day after arriving. During this time their daughter had settled in Australia, and so Margaret and Mr. Chance had the opportunity of making several trips to the South Pacific. As well as Australia, they visited the friends in New Zealand, Hawaii, Samoa, Fiji, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore. Having contributed thirty years of service to the Bahá'í World Centre they retired to Winfield, Kansas, in 1993.

Margaret had a passion for playing the piano, and when they moved to Haifa, they were unable to bring their piano. Margaret missed it so much that she had Mr. Chance buy her a new one and have it transported from England. She was proud of it and often told the story of it.

Another of her passions was letter writing. Margaret received mail from all over the world because she wrote to people all over the world. Faithful and diligent, she would sit down at her typewriter after dinner every evening and compose at least

one letter, sometimes more. This was but one aspect of her daily routine.

Margaret suffered a double stroke in September of 1995, and she was unable to continue with her correspondence. Every so often she would sit down and try and would realize that she could not. She passed away on June 26, 1996.

*From articles by Julie Warren  
and Mary Ann Chance*

### PATTI THOMAS BEANE 1902-1996

Patti Thomas Beane was born in Richmond, Virginia, on June 2, 1902, the youngest in a family of seven girls and a half brother. Her father died a year after her birth, and the family moved to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Two years later her mother died, and she was raised by her older sisters who instilled in her their mother's values of the importance of comportment and education.

At age fifteen Patti entered the Christianburg Normal and Industrial Institute, a work-study school in Cambria, Virginia. Graduating five years later, she was awarded a scholarship to the Cheyney Training School for Teachers in Cheyney, Pennsylvania, from which she received her teaching certificate in 1925.

Patti's first teaching position was in a two-room schoolhouse in Port Deposit, Maryland. Later she went to New York City, where she worked at the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) and attended Hunter College. During the Depression she taught in Glassboro, New Jersey.

In 1937 she married James Beane in New York City, and during World War II she worked as an adjudicator for the War Department in Newark, New Jersey.



*Patti Thomas Beane*

In 1949, after much study and prayer, Patti was enrolled in the Bahá'í Faith by the Spiritual Assembly of New York City. In 1954 she responded to the call for pioneers and went first to Colombia, then to Peru. Her husband joined her there a year later. In March 1957 they were members of the first Spiritual Assembly of Arequipa, assisting the efforts of Eve Nicklin, the first pioneer to Peru (1941).

Patti and James moved to Chiclayo in the northern part of the country, where they founded an English academy. Patti recalled that the people were so eager to learn that many of the students came to classes as early as 6:00 AM. Because of the distances they needed to travel, some resided at the school during the week.

Patti had the fortune to travel to London for the First World Congress in 1963, and in 1964 she participated in a teaching trip along the Amazon River to villages in Peru, Colombia, and Brazil.

She and James remained in Peru for fourteen years before returning to the

United States and settling in Lincroft, New Jersey. They maintained contact with their "Peruvian family," some of whom traveled and settled in the United States. In her seventies, Patti worked as a substitute teacher and as a home health aide. She was a member of the Spiritual Assembly of Middletown Township, taught Bahá'í children's classes, and hosted many meetings. Every Monday evening for many years, prayer meetings were held at her home. Those who knew her remember her all-encompassing love, affection, and warmth.

In 1989 at the age of eighty-seven and despite physical restrictions, Patti made her pilgrimage to the Bahá'í World Centre accompanied by her friends Paul and Betty Turko. Afterwards she would often recall her meeting with Counsellor Magdalene Carney and Magdalene's request that Patti hold firesides in her name. Patti also attended the Second World Congress in New York City in 1992.

In her later years, Patti moved to Red Bank, New Jersey, where she worked as a volunteer for the Red Bank Senior Center, the American Red Cross, the Office on Aging, and Red Bank Social Services. Even into her nineties Patti was hard at work helping senior citizens. In 1989 the local branch of the National Council of Negro Women honored her with its first Mahala Fiel Atchison Award for her "undying dedication to serving others through education and spiritual enlightenment . . . Indeed, Mrs. Beane is a true humanitarian, role model and inspiration to us all." This award was accompanied by a citation by US Congressman Frank Pallone Jr. for "her outstanding contributions to the community as a teacher, missionary and a truly dedicated volunteer with the Red Cross."

James died in 1982, and her only remaining family was comprised of nieces

and nephews. Though she never had children of her own, many who knew her came to love her as a mother or grandmother.

Patti Beane passed away on June 28, 1996, at age ninety-four. On June 30, the Universal House of Justice cabled the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States:

DEEPLY SADDENED NEWS PASSING  
PATTI BEANE, LOYAL, DEVOTED  
MAIDSERVANT BAHÁ'U'LLÁH.  
HER HIGHLY ACTIVE BAHÁ'Í LIFE  
DISTINGUISHED BY MANY YEARS  
PIONEERING ALONG WITH HER  
HUSBAND TO PERU IN RESPONSE  
BELOVED GUARDIAN'S TEN YEAR  
WORLD CRUSADE. HER HIGH  
SENSE SERVICE, RADIANT PERSON-  
ALITY, GENEROUS SPIRIT WARMLY  
AND GRATEFULLY REMEMBERED.  
PRAYING ARDENTLY HOLY SHRINES  
PROGRESS HER SOUL THROUGH-  
OUT DIVINE WORLDS.

*Adapted from an article by Patricia M. Whyte and an essay by Boris Handal Morales*

### DENISE FOX 1931-1996

DEEPLY GRIEVED PASSING  
DEVOTED HANDMAIDEN  
BAHÁ'U'LLÁH DENISE FOX. HER  
STALWART HEROIC PIONEER SER-  
VICES WITH HER BELOVED HUS-  
BAND AND CHILDREN IN BRITISH  
ISLES, ESPECIALLY IN ISLAND OF  
MULL, AND SUBSEQUENTLY IN  
BASQUE REGION OF FRANCE,  
IMPERISHABLY RECORDED ANNALS  
FAITH IN THOSE AREAS, CONSTI-  
TUTE SHINING EXAMPLE FUTURE  
GENERATIONS FRENCH AND BRIT-  
ISH FOLLOWERS CAUSE GOD. CON-  
VEY HEARTFELT SYMPATHY JEREMY

FOX AND MEMBERS FAMILY. PRAY-  
ING HOLY SHRINES PROGRESS HER  
NOBLE SOUL ALL WORLDS GOD.

Universal House of Justice  
July 4, 1996

Denise Girardo was born in Le Cannet, near Cannes, France, on June 21, 1931. Her mother, who declared her faith in Bahá'u'lláh in 1983, was originally British, and her father, like so many from Côte d'Azur, was French, but his family was originally Italian.

Denise was brought up in Provence, with the exception of a difficult period during the war when the family moved to Toulouse and her mother went into hiding. Denise was subsequently transferred to a farm in the Pyrénées with the help of the Red Cross.

After school she worked for a while as a shop assistant on Promenade de la Croisette in Cannes. Later she went to London to discover the English side of her family. She stayed on to qualify as a nurse at Bolingbroke Hospital and then returned to France to work at the American Hospital, first in Nice and later in Paris. After a year and a half of nursing, she returned to England to qualify as a midwife at the Mill Road Maternity Hospital in Cambridge. Mahin (Tofigh) Humphrey taught her midwifery and the Faith.

We met at the firesides held at the Bahá'í Centre (4 Gonville Place), and she became a Bahá'í shortly after me, just in time for the Fast in 1961. We were married in 1962.

Just after our wedding Denise went short-time pioneering, sometimes referred to as "last-minute ditching" or "the Riqvân shuffle." She went to Peterborough in 1962 and to Southport in 1963. We met briefly at the World Congress in London where she was serving as a simultaneous



*Denise Fox*

translator. Denise also served on the Spiritual Assembly of Cambridge before our departure for Swansea in 1964. A year later I had obtained my teacher's diploma, and Swansea had become a goal town of the Nine Year Plan. The National Assembly asked us to stay on as pioneers. Swansea became one of the first Local Assemblies to be formed during that plan. Our first daughter, Nickie, was born in Swansea in 1964, followed by our son, Jago, in 1966. He died twenty months later after an accident and is buried near the Guardian's grave in London.

In 1968, in consultation with the Pioneer Committee, I obtained a choice of teaching posts, one in Ghana and the other on the Isle of Mull in the Inner Hebrides. Denise had a preference for the Hebrides, and so we went there thinking it would be for three years. We stayed for twelve. Rhiannon, our second daughter, was born there in 1972, and the first Spiritual Assembly of Mull was formed in 1975. As a member of the Scottish Teaching

Committee, Denise became known as my peripatetic wife. From 1978 she worked as a district nurse and midwife, probably the happiest time of her life, despite the poor health she suffered.

Conscious of her French origins and that we were both French speaking, we consulted with the British and French National Assemblies and set off in October 1980 for the Basque region with our two daughters and a tent. Flooded out of the camp site we hastily found our first flat in Saint Jean de Luz. One year later, and a lot poorer, Denise found a grueling, sixty hours a week night-duty job in a sanatorium in Cambo-les-Bains. Fortunately some while later a new law reduced the shift to thirty-nine hours while maintaining the same salary. From this time on her health deteriorated steadily until she died of cancer on July 1, 1996.

The funeral was a little short of a miracle, taking place as it did in the village of Sare, one of the bastions of traditional Basque culture and where, so recently, we encountered opposition to the presence of a "foreign" faith or sect, and the mayor forbade the participation of the Bahá'ís at a book exhibition where we had regularly had a stand over the past five years.

Our main difficulty was to find suitable premises for the funeral ceremony. The local curate would not let us use the lovely chapel in our part of the village, and in the end the mayor lent us the youth hall, which was not obviously suitable, but the only real possibility, and Nickie and Rhiannon transformed it beyond recognition.

Over one hundred people were crowded into that inadequate hall, and without any direct explanation of the Faith, its depth and beauty were evident and felt by all in a way no formal or intellectual presentation could ever have done. Each person received a copy of the program. Never has Denise

taught so many, so well, as the day she left us! It was the climax to a life of teaching by example.

*Jeremy Fox*

**LEX MEERBURG**  
Knight of Bahá'u'lláh  
1925–1996

Our hearts were grieved to learn of the passing of Knight of Bahá'u'lláh, distinguished servant and pioneer of the Faith, Lex Meerburg. We lovingly pay tribute to his devoted labours together with his dear wife to establish the Cause in Dutch New Guinea and to his lifelong steadfastness in the path of service. Be assured of our prayers in the Holy Shrines for the progress of his soul throughout the realms of eternity. Kindly extend our deepest sympathy to Elly Meerburg-Becking, members of his family and friends.

Universal House of Justice  
July 23, 1996

Among the many who came together on July 15, 1996, at the General Cemetery in Zaandam to pay their last respects to Hector Alexander "Lex" Meerburg were friends from The Hague, Amsterdam, and Zaanstad—three communities that had meant much to him.

Lex and his dear wife, Elly Becking, belonged to the first followers of Bahá'u'lláh in The Hague. The public meetings initiated by the American pioneer Eleanor Hollibaugh were where they first encountered the Faith and each other. When the first Local Spiritual Assembly of The Hague was formed in 1952, Elly was part of it. Lex followed her and joined the Faith two years later.



*Lex Meerburg*

Elly, who had grown up in Indonesia, was then working at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fishing and Food Supply and offered to be transferred to Dutch New Guinea (Western New Guinea) at a time when it was still a virgin territory for the Faith. She departed with a three-year contract and an engagement ring from Lex. The Guardian wrote to her, expressing his hopes "that, in the near future, your future husband will decide to join the ranks of the followers of Bahá'u'lláh, and will lend his reinforcement to your teaching activities." A year later they were married by proxy. Lex changed jobs and entered the service of the ministry, taking up a post that enabled him to leave for Hollandia (presently Jayapura City) in Dutch New Guinea with a three-year contract as well. Shortly thereafter Lex became a Bahá'í.

Their joyous time in Dutch New Guinea, during which their only daughter, Monica, was born, lasted only a few years because of political unrest. From the remotely situated house that they had built, they continued

to reach out and teach, thanks especially to Elly's command of the Malaysian language.

Returning to the Netherlands in 1959 the work of establishing a home and a normal life in Amsterdam during a period of postwar scarcity and housing shortages was a challenge for them. They served as members of the Local Spiritual Assembly of Amsterdam, then moved to the locality of nearby Diemen, where they were the first Bahá'ís. They lived there for many years before moving to Koog aan de Zaan in 1978. In 1994 Lex and Elly gave their support to the formation of the Spiritual Assembly of Zaanstad, even though Lex had to struggle with various ailments.

On July 9, 1996, Lex passed away rather suddenly at the age of seventy-one years. He had been happily married to Elly for more than forty-two years. Let us remember Lex and Elly in our prayers, thankful for that which they have done for the Faith.

*Lottie Tobias*

**BARBARA ANNE INAHARA**  
1946–1996

Barbara Anne Inahara began her earthly life in Chicago, Illinois, on December 26, 1946. Her parents, Betty and Ted Inahara, later provided her with a brother, Dale, and a sister, Rhonda.

"Bobbie," as she was affectionately called, became a Bahá'í at the age of twenty-one. She traveled extensively, learned French, and utilized her bilingual abilities in a number of jobs, including seven years at the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Labour Office of the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland. She was a pioneer there as well as in France, Cameroon, and Italy.

She moved back to the United States sometime in the late 1980s, settling in Texas.

She served on the Local Assemblies of Houston and Bellaire and in the homefront pioneer community of West University. For five years she served on the District Teaching Committee of East Texas #2. The last great teaching effort Bobbie was engaged in was the Amatu'l-Bahá Teaching Crusade in the greater Houston area. She gave up her car to that project. It was used to transport teachers to The Woodlands. Bobbie often cooked for the teachers in Sugar Land. She made sure they were well cared for and fed, and she cleaned up afterward. If you were foolish enough to ask her why she went to so much trouble, she would want to know why you were not doing the same. Her belief in the statements of the Universal House of Justice, the Guardian, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá on the process of entry by troops was unshakable. What the rest of us are learning now, she was already living.

Those who knew her knew of her commitment to community service. As well as the Bahá'í institutions and committees that



*Barbara Anne Inahara*

were the beneficiaries of her contributions, the Communities for Youth (CFY) program was the recipient of her time and efforts. For more than three years she supported the work of the CFY by enrolling “youth at risk,” providing transportation, and when needed, offering food to ensure that the youth would remain in the program. She mentored as many as three youth at a time and began to serve on the board of directors in December of 1995.

Bobbie was also interested in Native Americans and served the Intertribal Council of Houston. She was on its telephone committee and assisted with cooking and raffles at the Native American Indian powwows at Traders' Village. She also assisted with its newsletters, annual children's Christmas parties, and annual food and blanket drives for the benefit of the Kickapoo Traditional Tribe of Texas.

She was attracted to the Mastery of Learning program—a commercial venture endeavoring to help people rediscover the joy of learning. She served as an assistant at weekend workshops for over ten years.

Bobbie worked with SEARCH—a non-profit organization dedicated to serving the homeless—and was on its board of directors.

In 1989 she was one of the cofounders of the Center for the Healing of Racism. The center promotes the recognition of the oneness of humanity—a oneness that racism violates. As well as her volunteer activities, she held down a full-time job.

Bobbie was involved in a car accident in Artesia, New Mexico, on her way home from a powwow. She was taken to the University Medical Center in Lubbock, Texas, where she passed away July 17, 1996. She was fifty years old, a member of the Bellaire Spiritual Assembly at the time.

A friend described her: “This was a person who believed in service and lived

it, believed in justice and fought for it, demanded that integrity be the guiding principle of all personal interactions, and she dealt with everyone in the same way with love, generosity, and frankness.”

Over two hundred people attended her memorial service, representing many social strata and cultural backgrounds; each person had been touched by Bobbie's service. It was a testimony to how one person's love and service can become a magnet through which hearts and lives are transformed in a community.

*Adapted from articles by Andrenea M. King and Jackie Newberry*

### HASSAN SAFA BAGHDADI 1901–1996

*His purpose, however, is to enable the pure in spirit and the detached in heart to ascend, by virtue of their own innate powers, unto the shores of the Most Great Ocean.*<sup>195</sup>

Bahá'u'lláh

**H**assan Safa, beloved friend of the Bahá'í community of France, attained the shores of the Most Great Ocean on Thursday, the sixth day of Kalimát 153 (July 18, 1996). The last person in France to have met 'Abdu'l-Bahá is now gone from our sight. Those who were fortunate enough to know Hassan Safa will recall how his face lit up whenever someone asked him to recount yet again his memories of the Master. He became young, illumined by the presence of our Exemplar. And he conducted us into that Presence. Happily a tape of his recollections is in the archives of the National Spiritual Assembly of France, accompanied by a text written

<sup>195</sup> *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, sec. XXIX.

by Hassan. Thus future generations will be able to hear the tones of his enthusiasm as he relived with us his moments spent with the Center of the Covenant.

Should all those who met Hassan Safa, during his long life of service to the Cause, gather together to compile their evaluations of his character, it is unlikely that they would be able to encompass the essence of a spirit, beneath whose open, natural appearance lay hidden riches which long friendship could not exhaust. With Hassan, there was always more to discover.

Hassan's Bahá'í roots reached toward the very inception of the Faith; his great-grandfather, Shaykh Muḥammad-i-Shibl, a noted Siyyid and scholar, was a disciple of Siyyid Kázim-i-Raṣhtí. His grandfather, Muḥammad Muṣṭafá Baghdádí,<sup>196</sup> while yet a child, served as translator between Ṭáhirih and the 'ulamá when this poetess-martyr visited Baghdád, and later he was among the first to believe in Bahá'u'lláh and to promote His Cause.

With the ascension of Bahá'u'lláh the services of Muḥammad Muṣṭafá and those of his wife, Sakineh, were dedicated to the Center of the Covenant. Their home in Beirut was a haven for pilgrims to the Holy Shrines and a point of passage for the remains of the Báb, when these sacred relics were transferred to Haifa. Shoghi Effendi designated Muḥammad Muṣṭafá an apostle of Bahá'u'lláh. 'Alí Ihsán Baghdádí and his wife, Fatemeh, the father and mother of Hassan, moved to Turkey at 'Abdu'l-Bahá's bidding at the outbreak of World War I in 1914. Fatemeh returned to Beirut with her children after the war, where she rented a room for Shoghi Effendi and served him during his schooling in that city.

<sup>196</sup> *Memorials of the Faithful* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1997), pp. 131–34.

Hassan Safa was named by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, during one of many visits the family made to Haifa. The last visit, from December 28, 1919, to January 15, 1920, when Hassan was eighteen, was the most memorable.

'Abdu'l-Bahá had said, “Let this century be the sun of previous centuries, the effulgences of which shall last forever, so that in times to come they shall glorify the twentieth century, saying the twentieth century was the century of lights, the twentieth century was the century of life, the twentieth century was the century of international peace, the twentieth century was the century of divine bestowals, and the twentieth century has left traces which shall last forever.”<sup>197</sup>

Born at the dawn of the twentieth century,<sup>198</sup> Hassan's life paralleled the fortunes of his epoch. He came to manhood in the Near East, but his life bridged westward. A student in Paris from 1924 to 1935, he met and married his wife, Suzanne, there. She accompanied him to Bahá'í meetings, though she did not become a Bahá'í until 1936 in Baghdád.<sup>199</sup>

At the Conference of Palermo in 1968 Marion Little presented the needs of France during the Nine Year Plan to Hassan and Suzanne, in such wise that at Riqvân 1969 they moved from Iran to install themselves as pioneers in Tours. Hassan was a member of the Spiritual Assembly of Tours until the last days of his life.

The experience of meeting 'Abdu'l-Bahá that so profoundly confirmed Hassan in his Faith remained vivid throughout his life,

<sup>197</sup> *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 174.

<sup>198</sup> April 1, 1901, in Iskenderun (Alexandretta), Turkey.

<sup>199</sup> Dr. Kamran Ekbel adds that Hassan was a member of the National Assembly of Iráq 1936–1937. In 1946 he and his family settled in Ṭihrán, and he served for many years as the treasurer of the Spiritual Assembly at Qulhak (Gholhak).

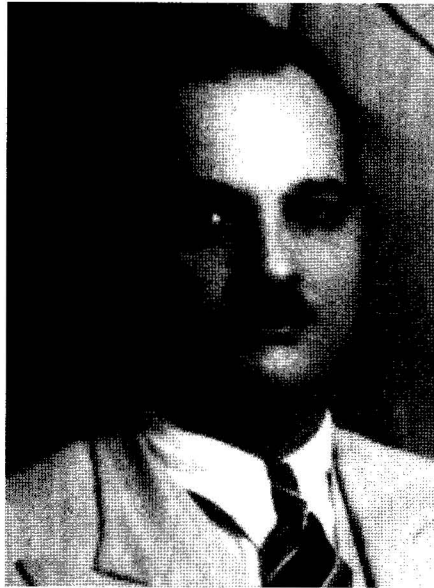
aiding him in many difficulties. We who endeavor to live the Master's injunction to "Look at Me, follow Me, be as I am" can appreciate how much the direct memory of that Face might help. Hassan's life was not lacking in difficult periods. Without evoking them all let us recall the loss of his beloved Suzanne on July 1, 1973, during a voyage to Beirut, where her grave is located. Two years later his brother 'Abbás 'Ihsán Baghdádí<sup>200</sup> was martyred in a Baghdád prison. Then in 1984 the passing of Miriam, their adopted daughter, was another test.

Nevertheless each difficulty spurred our friend to greater efforts. His multiple contributions to the French Bahá'í community included service on the National Booksales Committee, precursor to the present Bahá'í Bookstore. Serving the Committee for Teaching by Correspondence, his assiduity in finding the quotations that best responded to each seeker's questions and his intuition that addressed, not only the written queries, but also unexpressed spiritual needs, helped great numbers of correspondents.

And then there were his translations, many of them texts not previously put into French, including his grandfather's as yet unpublished documents in Arabic. From this treasure Hassan created an exceptional cultural interface. These documents are in the French national archive as well as the Research Department in Haifa.

However, it is possible that his deepest contribution, certainly the one most appreciated by the youth who so loved him, was his enthusiasm, the gift of himself, a joyous herald of the Kingdom of Abhá.

The terrestrial envelope of Hassan Safa was buried on Thursday, 13 Kalimát 153 (July 25, 1996) at Tours, in the presence



*Hassan Safa Baghdadi*

of a goodly number of friends. A message from the Universal House of Justice dated July 22 was read to them:

We were deeply grieved at the news of the passing of dearly loved, highly motivated servant of the Blessed Beauty, Mr. Hassan Safa Baghdadi. His devoted services and unremitting efforts to promote the Faith over a period exceeding seven decades, in the Middle East and in France, will always be remembered with deep affection. Kindly convey to his relatives the assurance that loving prayers will be offered in the Holy Shrines for the progress of his radiant soul in the Abhá Kingdom.

The prayers and the thoughts of the community of France accompany this beloved tie with the Master. From Hassan's devoted life, may benefits continue to shower upon this country and the world.

*David Ned Blackmer*

### FRANCES GAIL FLETCHER 1923-1996

The Universal House of Justice was deeply saddened to learn . . . of the passing of the devoted maidservant of God, Mrs. Frances Fletcher. Be assured of its fervent prayers at the Sacred Threshold for the progress of her soul in the Abhá Kingdom, and that your hearts may be so-laced through the divine grace of the Blessed Beauty.

Department of the Secretariat  
July 25, 1996

Frances Gail Fletcher was born to Albert and Decima Green in Fort Bragg, California, on September 3, 1923. She and her younger brother, Virgil, grew up in nearby Ukiah where, within the context of home, church, and community, her strong faith in God, her devotion to children's education, and her singing voice began to develop. Soon after graduating from high school, she married Robert F. Fletcher and later settled in Healdsburg, California, where she raised two children—Susan and Steven. During those years she eagerly participated in the religious education of children and youth and in local activities planned for them.

Area travels frequently took the Fletchers past the Geyserville Bahá'í School. Curious about the place she did not learn about it until she hired Alla Dakserhof as a piano teacher for her daughter. She found in Alla a spiritual mother for herself. After a period of intense study, prayer, and consultation with her minister, Frances declared her faith in Bahá'u'lláh in 1953. Now, with increased enthusiasm for serving her Lord, she began to teach her new Faith to family and friends. Her home was always open to seekers, and as a loving hostess and

patient teacher, she was instrumental in establishing the Local Spiritual Assemblies of Healdsburg, Fullerton, and Rohnert Park in California.

Throughout her life Frances studied art, music, and human development. She pursued postsecondary education later than most, graduating from Santa Rosa Junior College at the age of forty with high honors in nursing.

Circumstances in her life changed, and she considered the options of pursuing additional education, of continuing a moderately comfortable lifestyle surrounded by family and friends, or of seeking other adventure. Since she was only truly happy when serving others, it was no surprise that she chose to fulfill a dream of pioneering.

In 1978, at the age of fifty-four, she moved to Africa where she became active in the expansion and deepening work in Lesotho. She was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly there, serving it as secretary for several years. In 1982 she moved to the small town of Hlatikulu in Swaziland,



*Frances Gail Fletcher*

<sup>200</sup> See "In Memoriam," *The Bahá'í World*, vol. XVI, pp. 543-44.

where she worked selflessly to keep rural Bahá'í communities alive. She also saw a need, and an opportunity, to serve the communities with a preschool at the Regional Bahá'í Center.

Frances began to gather material for the training of teachers and eventually wrote a valuable manual, appropriately titled *The Tender Years*. She trained hundreds of preschool teachers from within and without Swaziland.

As the years and heavy workload became an obvious strain, she was often encouraged to leave Hlatikulu for places that were physically less challenging. Even though the jobs of training teachers and caretaking the Bahá'í center became for her a formidable tasks, she chose to continue these services. She completed the training of a group of five teachers just two months before her passing. She affected the hearts and lives of hundreds of teachers, and by doing so, she has touched the "tender years" of countless thousands of children.

On July 21, 1996, while standing up to serve others at the Regional Bahá'í Center, she lost consciousness of this earthly plane and drifted peacefully and radiantly away into the arms of her Lord. The Bahá'ís of Hlatikulu asked the local authorities for permission to bury her at the center. This was not possible, but they offered the Bahá'ís four hundred square meters of the local cemetery. The spot has a glorious view over Hlatikulu and was gratefully accepted, and plans were made to develop it.

The funeral was preceded by an all-night vigil. Prayers, songs, and tributes were paid to "Gogo" Fletcher for her outstanding contributions to the Swaziland community. The funeral service, though breaking with many norms, was conducted in accordance with Bahá'í law with great dignity and an abundance of spirit.

The funeral service was also a momentous proclamation event. Among the many who spoke fondly of Frances was Ms. Alice Dlamini representing the Ministry of Education. She said, "The Ministry of Education treasured the contributions she made toward improving education in the country, by committing herself to training preschool teachers, who in turn transmitted the knowledge and skills acquired to young children." Referring to the Bahá'í center in Hlatikulu where most of the training took place, she said that it "has become the fountain of knowledge where those aspiring to be preschool teachers flock to draw the living waters of wisdom which are enhanced by love, kindness, respect for others, and good character building."

Although it was raining and very cold, children from the preschool participated in the funeral program. Each carried a red rose and deposited it into the grave after the lowering of the casket.

This handmaiden of God was a most courageous and special soul. Her dedication, sacrifice, and unconditional love for all people had and will continue to have a marked influence on those who were privileged to know and learn from her. The many people she taught in quiet conversations, luncheons, firesides, teas, study groups, potluck suppers, training sessions, and children's classes now have touched many other hearts throughout the world. Both of her natural children, along with her many other "spiritual" children, are active participants in Bahá'í communities all over the globe.

*From an article submitted by  
The National Spiritual Assembly  
of the Bahá'ís of Swaziland*

### ELENA TARTABÚ HERNANDEZ 1928–1996

The Universal House of Justice was saddened to learn . . . of the passing of Mrs. Elena Hernandez, the first Bahá'í in Margarita Island, whose years of devoted and faithful service will be long remembered. Kindly convey to her family and friends the condolences of the House of Justice and assure them of its fervent supplications at the Divine Threshold for the progress of her soul throughout all the worlds of God.

Department of the Secretariat  
September 17, 1996

When Knight of Bahá'u'lláh Katherine Meyer came to Margarita Island in October of 1953 to open it to the Faith, Elena Hernandez was a young single woman who spent her days looking after her parents and sick relatives. Born on February 17, 1928, in a large but simple colonial house her father had built on Calle (street) Zamora in Porlamar, she was still living there when Katherine arrived. Her parents were humble people, her father a fisherman, her mother a seamstress.

Although she had only been to primary school, Elena was thirsty for knowledge, and in her rare moments of rest she liked to read or to listen to classical music.

Elena, after cooking and cleaning for the entire household, would spend hours baking. She never wanted to be a burden on her parents and learned to make beautifully decorated cakes that she would sell to earn some money.

Katherine, whom everyone called "la profesora" (the teacher), besides teaching English to earn a living, did "little kindly things for the people," as Shoghi Effendi had advised her to do during her

pilgrimage. One of these little things was to help a niece of Elena in her studies. As the niece became interested in the Faith, Katherine lent her a book, and when Elena saw the book, she asked if she could read it.

Of course, Elena became a Bahá'í, the first Margaritan, in 1961. Katherine said that she really had the spark of faith in her and that she quickly learned to teach the Faith with wisdom and constancy. After Katherine left the island in 1964 Elena never flinched in her efforts to spread the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. She taught all her relatives with love, patience, and a sense of humor that never abandoned her. She also shared the Teachings of God with her neighbors on Calle Zamora and with many people on different parts of the island.

Thanks to her efforts, Local Spiritual Assemblies were formed in Porlamar, Boco del Rio, la Isleta, and Villa Rosa.

After years of ill health and months of agonizing pain, during which time Elena amazed her family and friends with her strength, patience, smiles, and evident



*Elena Tartabú Hernández*

contentment with the will of God, she winged her flight to the Abhá Kingdom on July 22, 1996. Faithful to her wishes, at her funeral her Bahá'í friends and relatives proclaimed the Faith to the crowd that was present.

Her strong faith and admirable steadfastness are a source of strength for the pioneers she left behind in Margarita.

*Hélène Neri*

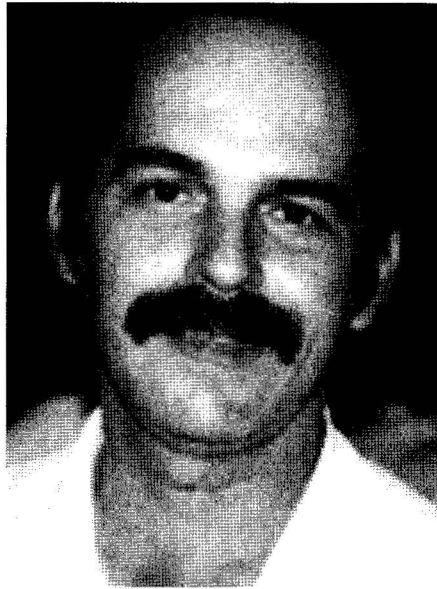
### **SERGIO RESENDE COUTO** 1942–1996

The Universal House of Justice was distressed to learn . . . of the passing of long-time servant of the Cause Mr. Sergio Resende Couto. His devotion to the Faith and his vigour in its service will be remembered for years to come. Prayers will be offered in the Holy Shrines for the progress of his soul in the divine worlds. Prayers will also be said for his dearly loved wife, Ann, his daughter Clara and her family and the relatives of Mr. Resende Couto that they may be comforted and strengthened.

Department of the Secretariat  
July 31, 1996

Sergio Resende Couto was born in Aracajú, Sergipe, Brazil, on May 8, 1942. He moved to Salvador, Bahia, and embraced the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh while a pre-youth, participating in the youth club which brought Bahá'ís and non-Bahá'ís together for social activities.

Sergio accepted Bahá'u'lláh in his heart when he was twelve years old. Nevertheless he had to wait impatiently until he was fifteen to be officially accepted into the Bahá'í community. As was the practice in those days, the youth had the privilege of



*Sergio Resende Couto*

writing a letter directly to the Guardian announcing their acceptance of the Cause. Shoghi Effendi responded to Sergio's letter by welcoming him and recommending that he take the teachings to the indigenous people.

While the Hand of the Cause Dr. Muhájir was visiting Bahia in 1961, he learned of the letter and encouraged Sergio to fulfill the beloved Guardian's desire as soon as possible. At the time Sergio had been enlisted in the army for obligatory military service for a little more than a week. After prayers and with great courage, Sergio requested a personal interview with his commander, informed him of his plans to go and visit the indigenous people, and requested to be released from military service. Two days later he was called to another meeting with his superior and some other generals. With a map in hand they began to locate indigenous villages in the region that they thought should be visited. Two weeks later Sergio was out of the military, and in early February 1962

Sergio and another Bahá'í youth took the Cause for the first time to the villages of northeast Brazil, where they were welcomed by the people of the Kiriri tribe.

Sergio participated in the first Bahá'í summer school in Brazil and in the Bahá'í youth movement. In 1963 he attended the first World Congress in London and met a young Irish woman, Ann Brew. They married in 1970 and lived in Rio de Janeiro, where they participated in the first mass teaching activities. They moved to São Paulo in 1974 from where Sergio visited the principal cities in the south and southeast, raising the call to teaching, remembering the stories of the first believers, and deepening and consolidating the friends in special weekend meetings and in winter and summer schools. His love was so intense that countless youth and adults became aflame with the fire of the love of God.

He attended the National Teaching Conference in 1975 in São Paulo and had the joy of once again being with Dr. Muhájir. This time Dr. Muhájir encouraged him to return to the city of Bahia where, the following year, a great call for mass teaching was raised at the National Convention held in Bahia. Upon seeing Sergio, Dr. Muhájir called to him saying, "How good to see that you have come to stay!" And he stayed! In the following months his wife, Ann; daughter, Clara; and belongings also arrived in Bahia.

The National Spiritual Assembly's plans gave a new impetus to mass teaching. The presence of Dr. Muhájir and Counsellors Athos Costas and Raúl Pavón made that year a special one. Sergio was appointed an Auxiliary Board member for Protection, and a group of about ten youth stayed with him in Bahia—the fruit of the spiritual deepening of previous years. They joined the Bahá'í friends already residing in Salvador. Sergio, his family, and the

youth traveling teachers went to live in the Bahá'í Institute. At that time it was a small and simple house on the outskirts of the city. Sergio became the coordinator of the group and its teaching activities. They generated an enormous spiritual force going from neighborhood to neighborhood, street to street, door to door opening many new localities to the Faith and enrolling hundreds of new believers. In the city of Salvador alone, more than fifty-two Nineteen Day Feasts were held in different neighborhoods.

So intense was the teaching work in that period that the Bahá'í activities rapidly increased and produced a new spirit of dedication among the friends in all parts of Brazil. This progress served as a preparation for the International Teaching Conference held in Salvador, Bahia, in January 1977. Once again Sergio was with Dr. Muhájir as well as the Hands of the Cause Enoch Olinga and Paul Haney. The conference transformed into a victory celebration and a new starting point for further advances in the development of the Brazilian community. Mr. Olinga stayed at the Bahá'í Institute after the conference, fueling the fires in Sergio's already intensely flaming soul and creating within him a new ardor for mass teaching. On countless occasions mystical meetings of communion with the spirit of the early martyrs and heroes of the Cause were held, creating an impressive sense of mission among the friends.

Sergio's close personal relationship with Counsellor Raúl Pavón, maintained through letters as well as regular visits, instilled in his mind and heart an unceasing search for practical solutions for consolidating the successive waves of new believers. He came up with the idea of basic deepening groups called "live cells," which when they grew were divided, forming new study groups. He translated into Portuguese texts to be



used in the meetings, and he developed new materials for the teaching and deepening of new believers. For almost a decade Sergio carried out the programs, giving courses to prepare traveling teachers and pioneers and dedicating himself especially to the youth, traveling and educating the friends and communities in a vast geographical area of Brazil. For all of these efforts the National Spiritual Assembly of Brazil considered him the "Father of the Permanent Institutes of Brazil."

In July 1980 he offered his home for the special care of the aging Mrs. Leonora Armstrong, the "Spiritual Mother of Brazil and of Latin America." During the following three months he personally cared for her with extreme affection and dedication until her passing on October 17 of that year.

Sergio was also known for his spirit of generosity. As a psychotherapist he dedicated his last years to care for people who were dependent on drugs and those with family and marital difficulties. It is estimated that more than five hundred people were directly assisted, and many were transformed by his attention. His faith and unshakable confidence, his frequent use of the Sacred Texts, his explicit and constant mention of God, and his love and dedication to others, as well as his knowledge of psychology, made him an outstanding healer.

Sergio died at the age of fifty-four in the city of Salvador, Bahia, on July 26, 1996.

#### ALBERT KAUMBA 1924–1996

Albert Kaumba was born in Angola in 1924 and lived there until he was nineteen years old. He worked for Bata System from 1949 until 1959, when he settled in Mwinilunga District of Zambia, Chief Kanyama's area, where he joined the



*Albert Kaumba*

New Apostolic Church. He later joined Christian Missions in Many Lands and became a priest. He also was a party chairman for United National Independence Party (UNIP)—a Zambian political party.

In 1974 Mr. Kaumba was taught the Bahá'í Faith by the late Kasito Plain Mukanzu, and he became a Bahá'í that same year. In 1975 he was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly, and as a member he was a delegate attending the fifth Bahá'í International Convention.

Mr. Kaumba was a devoted and steadfast Bahá'í. He lived nine hundred kilometers from the capital Lusaka, and it took him two or three days of traveling to get to National Spiritual Assembly meetings. In the twenty-one years that he was a member, he seldom missed a meeting. His membership on that institution throughout the years provided a golden opportunity for the Assembly to be in touch, through him, with the grass roots. He served it until his tragic death July 29, 1996, in a road accident that occurred on his homeward journey from

#### MONIB 'ABDU'L-HOSSEIN COLLESTAN 1922–1996

a National Assembly meeting. He had accepted a ride with three other Bahá'ís who were primary healthcare workers going to a workshop in North-Western province. On the way a tire punctured and an axle broke near Chingola. Another Zambian Bahá'í, Gilbert Mukonchi, a clinical medical officer, also died in the accident. Mr. Kaumba left two wives, (married before he became a Bahá'í), seventeen children, and twelve grandchildren, many of whom are Bahá'ís.

Mr. Kaumba was an active teacher of the Faith. He undertook countless teaching trips and carried out various assignments for the National Spiritual Assembly, and he was instrumental in the expansion of the Faith in North-Western Province. In Mwinilunga District where he lived most of his life, nearly ten percent of the population is now Bahá'í. Over one thousand people came to his funeral to pay their loving respects. On July 31, 1996, the Universal House of Justice wrote:

DEEPLY GRIEVED TRAGIC DEATH  
ALBERT KAUMBA. HIS DEVOTED  
SUSTAINED SERVICES BELOVED  
FAITH OVER FOUR DECADES WILL  
BE LONG REMEMBERED. NEWS  
PASSING GILBERT MUKON-  
CHI SAME ACCIDENT EQUALLY  
SADDENING.

CONVEY ALL RELATIVES HEART-  
FELT SYMPATHY. ASSURE LOVING  
PRAYERS HOLY SHRINES THEIR  
SOULS. ALSO PRAYING SPEEDY  
HEALING INJURED FRIENDS.

*From an article submitted by  
The National Spiritual Assembly  
of the Bahá'ís of Zambia*

Monib 'Abdu'l-Hossein Collestan, MD, homefront pioneer to and founding member of the first Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Seminole County, Florida, was laid to rest in the Highland Memory Gardens in Orlando on Sunday, August 11, 1996. Surrounded by his wife, Rezvanieh Eghrari Collestan; their two children, 'Alá Balsam Collestan and Goli Young, and their spouses; all seven grandchildren; and a large number of his admirers, melodic and moving prayers sped the immortal soul of this very special servant of Bahá'u'lláh on his way to the Abhá Paradise.

Born on September 1, 1922, in Cairo, Egypt, he passed away in his sleep on August 7, 1996, after having just returned from a strenuous international traveling teaching trip to Albania with his wife and companion of forty-two years. This was his great longing, to die as a martyr or in active service, "with his boots on."

A message dated August 16, 1996, and addressed to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States by the Universal House of Justice read:

DEEPLY SADDENED PASSING  
MONIB 'ABDU'L-HOSSEIN COL-  
LESTAN FAITHFUL SERVANT  
BAHÁ'U'LLÁH VIGOROUS PRO-  
MOTER DIVINE TEACHINGS. HIS  
UNTIRING EFFORTS AS PIONEER  
SUDAN, LIBYA, TUNISIA AND AS  
TRAVELLING TEACHER NUMBER  
COUNTRIES AFRICA, AMERICAS  
AND EUROPE GRATEFULLY REMEM-  
BERED. EXTEND OUR LOVING SYM-  
PATHY MEMBERS HIS DEAR FAMILY.  
ASSURE ARDENT PRAYERS HOLY

SHRINES PROGRESS HIS NOBLE  
SOUL ABHÁ KINGDOM.

A descendant of the Prophet Muḥammad and a fifth generation Bahá'í on his maternal side, he grew up in Egypt and studied with such renowned teachers as the Hand of the Cause of God Muḥammad Taqí-i-Isfáhání. Inasmuch as his grandparents, Siyyid 'Alí Yazdí and Hubiyyih, were residing in the Holy Land, as a child he had the privilege of visiting the Holy Shrines, the Greatest Holy Leaf, and the beloved Guardian many times over a period of fourteen years.

While in medical school and on Dr. Collestan's twenty-first birthday, he wrote to the Guardian offering his services and asking to become a spearhead for the Faith. In response Shoghi Effendi mentioned that he prayed for Hossein (the name given Dr. Collestan by the Greatest Holy Leaf) to succeed in the field of enlightening the people about the Faith as well as healing people physically. It was this encouragement that set him off on his lifelong journey of service to the Cause of the Most Great Name in foreign lands.

His profession first took Dr. Collestan to Sudan and later to the southern part of the country where he served in an impossible role as surgeon for a population of two million. Later, on returning to Egypt and hearing of the pioneering plan for Africa, he offered his services, and through the Hand of the Cause of God Amelia Collins the Guardian advised him to go to Libya where he became its first pioneer.

From 1952 to 1959 he remained steadfastly at his Libyan pioneer post. Through him the first member of the Berber tribe accepted the Faith. This brought great joy to the Guardian. Dr. Collestan established the first dispensary in the desert, in the town of Ajedabia, where he was physically attacked,

an experience which was to embolden him in his undying commitment to the Cause.

He met Rezvanieh Eghrari who had been pioneering in Libya since October 1953. They married in Cairo on January 17, 1954, and promptly returned to their pioneer post in Benghazi, Libya, where their two children were born. Bonded spiritually as a lifelong teaching team, Rezvanieh had already gained spiritual kudos for her humble pioneering service in England and Scotland, following the direction of the Guardian. On completion of the British Six Year Plan in 1950, she departed as a pioneer to India.

When his medical service contract was completed in 1959, Dr. Collestan, accompanied by his family, pioneered in Tunisia where he was offered a position and served the Faith until 1961, whereupon they headed for a pioneer post in Sunderland, England, remaining there until the completion of the Ten Year Crusade. It was following the first Bahá'í World Congress that the family departed for Iran, where they stayed until 1967.

Then a new chapter in their lives opened upon their arrival in the United States. They dedicated themselves to propagating the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh in this new land, especially in the state of Illinois. A ceaseless flurry of intense teaching and deepening activities was to characterize their lives. Dr. Collestan's admiration for America stemmed from his awareness of its spiritual destiny as outlined by the Master and amplified by the Guardian.

In retrospect it must be said that his insatiable thirst for spiritual knowledge resulted in Dr. Collestan's having spent most of his life studying the Faith and particularly its relationship to Islám. His understanding of the Bahá'í administrative order had been continually enhanced as he had served as a member of various



*Monib 'Abdu'l-Hossein Collestan*

Local Spiritual Assemblies since the age of twenty-one. He attended several intercontinental conferences, and in 1971 he and his family made their pilgrimage.

He shared his knowledge during teaching trips and speaking engagements at summer and winter schools and in deepenings and seminars for children, youth, and adults. His facility with Arabic, Persian, French, Italian, and English complemented his knowledge and enhanced his effectiveness in delivering the Message to many cultures and peoples. Chanting prayers in Persian and in the melodic Arabic *Hijázi* style, no one could but be moved by his exquisite voice.

The latter years of his full life were anchored in the new family homefront pioneer post of Seminole County, Florida, where they moved in 1979 and helped form the first Spiritual Assembly there the following year.

The river of his traveling teaching service in foreign lands took Dr. Collestan from his various pioneer posts to Canada,

Belize, Bahamas, Turks and Caicos Islands, several Caribbean islands, and Mexico; to Algeria, Benin, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Ivory Coast, Morocco, Kenya, Uganda; as well as to Albania, England, France, and Italy. In the land he was wont to love, he went on traveling teaching tours in homefront areas in at least half of the fifty states of the United States. Let others follow his noble example of love and service to the Cause of the Most Great Name.

*Benjamin Levy*

### JAN DREYER 1931-1996

SADDENED NEWS PASSING OF DEDICATED TEACHER FAITH JAN DREYER. HER LONG AND INSPIRING RECORD PIONEER SERVICES IN EL SALVADOR LOVINGLY REMEMBERED. ASSURE FERVENT PRAYERS IN THE HOLY SHRINES FOR THE PROGRESS OF HER SOUL IN THE ABHÁ KINGDOM. KINDLY EXTEND HEARTFELT CONDOLENCES TO HER FAMILY AND FRIENDS.

Universal House of Justice  
August 13, 1996

Jan Dreyer was born Elaine Schechter into the Jewish home of Philip and Sara Schechter on May 15, 1931, in Brooklyn, New York. Elaine was introduced to the arts as a young child. She received singing and dancing lessons and first appeared professionally on stage at the age of four. She received classical voice and ballet training through her teens and was selected to attend the renowned New York School of Music and Arts. Shortly after graduating from high school, she began to travel with a well-known dance band as the principal female vocalist, visiting most of the major cities of the United

States. She spent her summers singing in the hotels of the Catskill Mountains of New York State. She performed as well in the clubs of New York City under the name of Elaine Anderson for classical appearances and as Jan Winters when she was billed as a popular song vocalist, appearing with such well-known stars as Sammy Davis Jr. and Don Rickles. She moved to southern California to continue her show business career but abandoned it after being disappointed with the decadence there.

Besides having been blessed with an extraordinary singing voice and disarming amber green eyes that could perceive the auras emanating around those she met, Jan was exceptionally bright and articulate, a clear thinker, and a meticulous dresser. She easily entered the Los Angeles business world and became the manager of a large employment agency.

In 1963 a neighbor investigating the Faith, well aware of Jan's keenness, asked her to evaluate some passages of the Bahá'í Writings he was reading. He was so delighted with her clear and positive insights that he suggested she attend a Bahá'í meeting herself—a suggestion she accepted. She would later relate how the talk struck her like a bolt of lightning as she listened to the young lady sharing the Message at the fireside, a woman seemingly speaking directly to her. She stayed up that entire night and most of the following day reading about the Faith, and she declared her faith in Bahá'u'lláh the following evening.

She was blessed with a deep understanding of the Faith early in her Bahá'í life, an understanding that led her to the front lines of service. She assisted in the formation of the Local Spiritual Assemblies in the California communities of Monterey, Morrow Bay, San Louis Obispo, and Redondo Beach. She also gave a class on Shoghi Effendi at the Geyserville



*Jan Dreyer*

School. She was briefly married to John Williams, and of their union a son, Tracy, was born.

Notwithstanding her chronic bouts with asthma, Jan's earnest desire was to respond to the Guardian's directives to pioneer overseas. She found a companion who shared this life-purpose in Marvin Dreyer. They met in 1968 when Jan was asked by the Los Angeles Local Spiritual Assembly to sing at an activity to proclaim the Faith. Marvin, a Bahá'í composer and guitarist, was asked to accompany her on that occasion. A few weeks later, on his way to a study session at Geyserville, Marvin stopped in San Louis Obispo to say "Hello" to Jan and little Tracy. They had dinner together, and Marvin spent the night with a local Bahá'í, anxious to get an early start the next morning for Geyserville.

The morning Marvin was to leave, Jan suffered a severe asthmatic attack and needed to be hospitalized. Marvin postponed his trip to take care of two-year-old Tracy.

Marvin took an apartment and nursed Jan back to health for the next three months. Jan's brother, knowing of her desire to serve the Faith and thinking a change of climate and surroundings might contribute to her health, offered to finance a year's teaching trip to wherever she might like to go. However, Jan had fallen in love with Marvin. After many prayers, and considering what would be best for the Faith, Jan decided to travel teach in Latin America. She planned to leave Tracy in the care of pioneer friends in Honduras while she went on to visit the friends in Panama, the Caribbean, Colombia, Ecuador, Chile, Argentina, and Brazil. As Jan and Tracy were boarding the plane, Marvin asked for her hand in marriage, and Jan accepted. He was to catch up with them in Colombia six months later.

Three days later Marvin received a call from Jan's pioneer friends and learned that she was gravely ill in a Honduran hospital. Marvin took the next plane to Central America. Upon his arrival Jan's health returned, and they were married at a Bahá'í summer school in Tegucigalpa, the capital of Honduras. At the wedding Jan and Marvin met a pioneer to El Salvador who invited them for a week's visit, an invitation they accepted.

Jan and Marvin arrived in El Salvador the first week of 1969. During their stay they were overwhelmed by offers to do folk concerts throughout Central America and the Caribbean. Although there were no US pioneering goals for El Salvador, they postponed their South American travels and took up temporary residence there. They sang, learned Spanish, and taught the Faith for a year. Shortly thereafter the US pioneering goals were expanded by three for El Salvador; and Jan, Tracy, and Marvin were delighted to fill them. A few years

later, Jan and Marvin were blessed with the birth of a daughter, Diann.

When Jan arrived in El Salvador, the Bahá'í community numbered less than four hundred. Jan and Marvin developed a slide show outlining the principles of the Faith, and together with a seasoned Bahá'í speaker and a bevy of Bahá'í youth and a sound system, they sang and taught throughout the countryside. The program consisted of popular songs to attract attention, an introductory talk on the Faith, the slide show, and then Bahá'í songs. Later the youth would discuss the Faith with members of the audience, and usually there were declarations. Within a few short years the El Salvador Bahá'í community had grown to over ten thousand as a result of the proclamation efforts. Jan, along with other team members, traveled to Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Honduras to share the teaching technique.

In 1972 Jan and her husband, upon the request of the Universal House of Justice, travel-taught using this formula in Mexico, Central America and Panama, Colombia, Venezuela, Trinidad, Barbados, St. Martinique, Antigua, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Puerto Rico. They also appeared on television and radio, proclaiming the Faith in each of these countries.

Jan's dedication and organizational capacity bolstered the Bahá'í administration in El Salvador. She served on the National Spiritual Assembly and on the Local Spiritual Assemblies in the three cities where they resided. She also served on the National Teaching Committee, the National Proclamation Committee, the National Television Committee, and the National Correspondence Course Distribution Committee and as the Project Coordinator for various teaching campaigns in El Salvador. Jan weathered many

physical and spiritual tests as a pioneer to El Salvador, on two occasions injuring herself on teaching trips. She and Marvin often hosted youth breakfasts during the Fast. Jan was a devoted wife and mother and a talented, obedient, radiant handmaiden of God. She was also the Bahá'í representative to the Office of the United Nations for Central America.

Jan Dreyer passed away on August 11, 1996, after suffering poor health for several months.

When they hear of the Faith or are visited by traveling teachers, people from different walks of life in the cities of Central America and peasants throughout the countryside still ask about "Doña" Jan.

*From an article submitted by  
The National Spiritual Assembly  
of the Bahá'ís of El Salvador*

#### GORDON W. ESTES 1911-1996

Gordon Estes, a former pioneer to Costa Rica and traveling teacher to Romania, Mexico, and Guatemala, died on August 12, 1996, at the age of eighty-five.

Gordon learned of the Faith when he was a soldier stationed in Palestine during World War II. He remembered looking at Mount Carmel and asking a woman soldier he had just met, "I wonder who is buried there?" The woman, who was Jewish, later became his wife and a friend of the Faith.

Gordon left Los Angeles in 1973 to settle in Costa Rica and served that community for two and a half years. He then returned to California but was eager to teach the Faith in Central America whenever he could. In the summer of 1976 he, his daughter Eileen, and other friends traveled to Mexico and Guatemala, teaching and deepening throughout the summer months. In the

summer of 1979 they returned to Mexico, visiting the native peoples and endearing themselves to all they met. The National Teaching Committee of Mexico expressed its appreciation for their "devoted and sacrificial efforts" in reaching the indigenous populations. Another trip to parts of Mexico was undertaken in December of that year. Gordon and Eileen returned to Guatemala as traveling teachers in the summer of 1981.

When Gordon was eighty years old, he and Eileen served the teaching plans of the young Bahá'í community of Romania for a full year (1991-1992). After receiving news of his passing, the following message was sent on August 20, 1996, by the Universal House of Justice:

WITH DEEP SADNESS WE HAVE LEARNED OF THE PASSING OF DEDICATED, LONGSTANDING PROMOTER OF THE CAUSE OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH GORDON ESTES. HIS MANY YEARS OF SERVICE AS A PIONEER TO COSTA RICA AND TRAVELING TEACHER TO OTHER COUNTRIES IN LATIN AMERICA AND EUROPE ARE FONDLY AND GRATEFULLY REMEMBERED. WE EXTEND LOVING SYMPATHY TO THE MEMBERS OF HIS FAMILY. BE ASSURED OF OUR ARDENT PRAYERS IN THE HOLY SHRINES FOR THE PROGRESS OF HIS SOUL THROUGHOUT THE WORLDS OF GOD.

#### DAVID M. EARL 1911-1996

David Earl, former pioneer to Japan, Korea, Palau, and Guam and long-time servant of the Faith, passed away in Scottville, Michigan, on August 23, 1996, at the age of eighty-four. Born on October 23, 1911, in Missouri, David spent his youth in Punjab, India, where his father was employed. He returned to the United States where he graduated from college. In 1933 he married Joy Hill.

After having studied the Bahá'í Writings, he enrolled in the Faith in 1938 and actively served on Local Assemblies and regional committees and as a teacher at Bahá'í schools. In 1952 the Earls pioneered to Japan supporting Agnes Alexander and others to reestablish the foundations of the Faith in that country. David assisted in some of the early translations of Bahá'í materials into Japanese. He served on the National Spiritual Assembly of Northeast Asia from 1958 to 1964, during which time

he was secretary for two years and chairman for three. David was on the faculties of two universities in Japan while pursuing his doctorate in Far Eastern studies, completing his PhD in 1957.

The Earls pioneered to Korea from 1963 to 1965. In Korea David served as chairman of the National Spiritual Assembly. In his professional work he was in charge of the University of Maryland's program in Korea, a position through which he was able to travel and serve in Labrador, Taiwan, Ryukyu, Greenland, Germany, and France. He also taught in Bahá'í summer schools in Japan, Korea, and Taiwan.

In 1965, owing to Joy's ill health, the Earls returned to the United States, settling again in Michigan. David's contributions during this period included service on Local Assemblies, a regional teaching committee, and the Davison Bahá'í Council. He was also a national treasurer's representative and a teacher at US and Canadian summer schools.

In 1972 Joy Earl passed away.<sup>201</sup>

At a conference in Alaska in August of 1976, David responded to an appeal for pioneers to the Pacific islands and set out the next year for Palau, one of the Caroline Islands. He was elected to the new National Spiritual Assembly of the Caroline Islands in 1978, serving that body as chairman. He transferred to Guam in 1979 where he served both as secretary and as treasurer of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Mariana Islands from 1980 to 1982, the year in which he was appointed to the Auxiliary Board for Protection.

Finding himself in weakened health at the age of seventy-five, David returned to his familiar community in southern Michigan where he was much loved and cared for in



David M. Earl

<sup>201</sup> See "In Memoriam," *The Bahá'í World*, vol. XV, pp. 531-34.

his declining years. David authored several books and articles, among them two articles for *World Order* magazine.

Upon learning of his passing the Universal House of Justice wrote to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States on August 29, 1996:

Our hearts are deeply saddened by the passing of David M. Earl, steadfast, valiant promoter of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. His many years of devoted service, distinguished by his extensive pioneering efforts in the Far East and the Pacific region, have left indelible traces in the annals of the Faith. Be assured of our ardent prayers in the Holy Shrines for the progress of his noble soul.

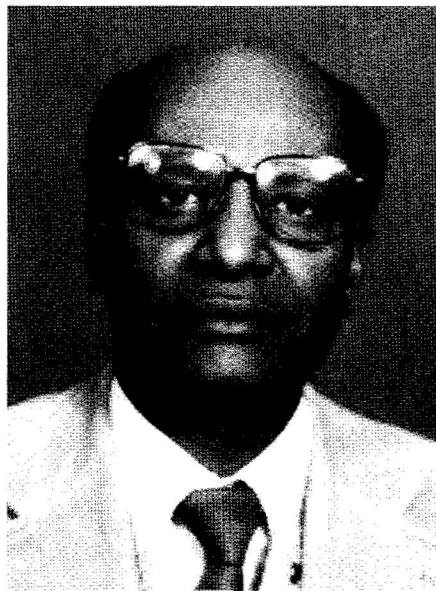
David Earl was buried next to his wife, Joy, and their infant son in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

### ASMEROM FEKADU 1938–1996

DEEPLY GRIEVED SUDDEN PASSING  
DISTINGUISHED STAUNCH PRO-  
MOTER CAUSE ASMEROM FEKADU.  
HIS INDEFATIGABLE DEVOTED SER-  
VICES UNFORGETTABLE. ASSURE  
RELATIVES FERVENT PRAYERS  
PROGRESS HIS RADIANT SOUL  
WORLDS GOD.

Universal House of Justice  
August 28, 1996

Asmerom Fekadu was born in 1938 in Asmara, Eritrea, of Corporal Fekadu Reda and Mrs. Hiwot Gebratayios. He completed his elementary and secondary education at the Comboni (Catholic) School in Asmara. He interrupted his education to become a schoolteacher for a year and later enrolled at the Gondar



Asmerom Fekadu

College of Medicine and Health Sciences, graduating as a health officer.

During his days at Gondar College, he was fortunate to come under the wings of Dr. Abbas Afán<sup>202</sup> and his wife Shomais. He was nurtured by their love—a love that enabled him to achieve higher levels of spirituality. He loved the Afáns and considered them as parents. He was one of the five Bahá'í youth who embraced the Faith during the first Bahá'í school in Eritrea in 1957.

Dr. Asmerom married Beletu Alemayehu, and they were blessed with two children, a daughter, Firehiwot, and a son, Henock. He continued his education and earned his MD at the University of Addis Ababa. He then pursued a specialization in tropical diseases in Liverpool, England, and industrial medicine in San Francisco in the United States. He became an assistant professor and a medical director and eventually assumed the position of

<sup>202</sup> See Abbas Afán, pp. 304–6.

industrial safety advisor in the Office of the Prime Minister of Eritrea.

Dr. Asmerom put the Faith first throughout his life in such a way that his great love for it infected those around him; he inspired others to believe that they too could accomplish worthy deeds for the Cause. It was not so much that his deeds were extraordinary, but the motives he brought to the tasks he undertook and the quality of character he displayed were truly outstanding and exemplary. It was his great love that led him to arise, even before the end of the Ethiopian Civil War, to reestablish the Bahá'í community of Nazareth (Adama). His detachment enabled him to arise to travel teach during those dark and restricted days. He inspired others to homefront pioneer and personally deputized believers to travel teach to areas he could not reach.

The systematic approaches to teaching and deepening that he developed while in Asmara, and especially in Masawa, bore fruit at the end of the civil war (1974–91) when they were applied to the reestablishment of the communities of Nazareth and Modjo.

Dr. Asmerom was also systematic in his own deepening, being particularly interested in biblical prophecies concerning the advent of Bahá'u'lláh and the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh related to the reality of man. He approached these studies in a very careful and scholarly way and spoke eloquently on these topics and mesmerized his audiences.

He was a member of the National Spiritual Assembly and at the time of his death had been working on an assignment of the Assembly—a draft proposal of a Four Year Plan.

He was shocked to learn of Dr. Abbas Afán's passing, and he died suddenly and peacefully about a hundred days later on August 24, 1996. Two nights before his

passing he had given an enlightening talk to the youth at the Hazíratu'l-Quds in which he had told them, "Teach the Faith and don't you be afraid at all."

Dr. Asmerom is remembered with love, respect, and admiration by the Bahá'í community and by the public. He was a true Bahá'í doctor. His medical intuition was remarkable, and his patients, mostly the poor from the rural areas, came from miles around and waited as long as necessary to be treated by him. They trusted him because he was exceptionally kind and because he showered them with tender and loving care.

*From a memoir submitted by  
The National Spiritual Assembly  
of the Bahá'ís of Ethiopia*

### ETELKA "ETA" SZASZ 1910–1996

Etelka "Eta" Szasz was born in 1910, and as a graceful and lithe young girl she displayed an extraordinary sensitivity. She first trained as a professional dancer and entered upon a promising stage career. In the 1930s she was the first Hungarian classical ballet dancer to be invited to tour Japan. Prior to her departure, she fell on the stage and broke both her ankles, an accident that effectively put an end to her career.

In search of new paths of artistic expression, she turned to other performing arts. Eta created a puppet theater for children and offered performances at schools, orphanages, and other social institutions, enchanting generations of young hearts with her lively renderings of stories and fairy tales.

Capitalizing upon a natural talent for languages, Eta became fluent in German and later learned English. Having been convinced of the need for a world language, she became an ardent Esperantist. Very



Eitelka "Eta" Szasz

active in the Esperanto movement, Eta participated in the organization of a world Esperanto congress in Budapest in the mid-sixties and was a promulgator of Servas.<sup>203</sup>

World War II brought fear and danger to the young woman's life. Because of her Jewish origins she could have been arrested at any time by the Nazis who had occupied the country. To save her life her husband had provided her with a new identity, the details of which she had to learn by heart so as to be prepared to answer interrogators. Her husband tested her by waking her in the middle of the night.

<sup>203</sup> Servas, which means "we serve Peace" in Esperanto, is an organization described as "an international, non-governmental, multicultural peace association run by volunteers in over 100 countries. Founded in 1949 by Bob Luitweiler as a peace movement, Servas International is a non-profit organization working to build understanding, tolerance and world peace," through an international program of cooperative cultural exchange.

Eta and her husband were not afraid of taking further risks; they hid more than ten other Jews in their apartment during the last months of the war, an act punishable by death.

After World War II she toured the schools around the country, telling tales and giving puppet shows. She also worked at a publishing house, becoming well-known as an editor of children's books.

A short time after the end of the war, a good friend of Eta's showed her a book he had found in the ruins of a Budapest house. Though the book was ragged and torn, the contents had remained legible; it was Esslemont's *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*. Eta was much taken by the ideas expressed in it. As the nascent Bahá'í community that had existed before the war was now virtually extinct and as Bahá'í meetings were forbidden by the Communists, Eta had no opportunities to search further.

She encountered the Bahá'í Faith again in Vienna around 1965 while participating in an Esperanto conference. Later she often told members of the Hungarian community about a lady with a red hat who had sat next to her on a park bench in Vienna. Actually she had met two Bahá'í women. One was Mrs. Ludmila van Sombeek,<sup>204</sup> an American traveling teacher, and the other, Mrs. Ursula Kohler, the future wife of the Hand of the Cause Dr. Adelbert Mühlischlegel. Eta declared her faith, acknowledging that she had long ago accepted Bahá'u'lláh in her heart.

After her declaration she returned to Hungary, then under the strong yoke of a Communist regime. Teaching the Faith openly was out of the question; the practice of religion was then punishable by the loss of employment and other more severe

<sup>204</sup> See "In Memoriam," *The Bahá'í World*, vol. XVIII, pp. 689-90.

consequences. The Communists were not sympathetic to people they felt were participating in activities inimical to the State.

After the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, Eta went on pilgrimage. As there were no diplomatic ties between Hungary and Israel, she had to travel through Vienna without divulging her destination to anyone. Her visa had been printed on a separate sheet of paper so that she could discard it on her way back to Hungary. Unfortunately the Israeli border guard was not attentive and stamped her passport instead. Eta had to tear out the page, and as a result of this her passport was withdrawn, and she was not permitted to travel abroad for many years.

Eta labored valiantly, yet cautiously, teaching the Faith to her close relatives and acquaintances and also helping traveling teachers who visited Budapest. She was the only active resident Hungarian Bahá'í under the atheist regime. Her apartment at 42 Martirok utja (today Margit korut) became a rallying point for traveling teachers and, later, for pioneers.

Restrictions with Western countries eased after 1980, and many more friends came to Hungary. An essential stop on their itinerary was a visit to Eta Szasz. They openly invited people to her apartment. Eventually she was called to report to the secret police and was interrogated about her "clandestine activities."

Eta's steadfastness was rewarded in 1990 when she witnessed the rebirth of the Budapest Local Spiritual Assembly. She became a member of that body, the only living link to the dark Communist night of the Hungarian Bahá'í community, much respected for her love and deep understanding of the Hungarian mind.

Though suffering more and more from poor health, she continued to take an active interest in the concerns of the Budapest community and was happy to converse in

any of four languages with the friends who came to visit her.

She passed away peacefully on August 24, 1996, her mind firmly set on Him Whom she had faithfully served through so many difficult years. The friends were given one last chance to pay tribute to this seemingly fragile, yet inwardly strong, great lady when they gathered for her funeral. It was the first Bahá'í funeral conducted in Hungary, and it was the first occasion on which the Prayer for the Dead was chanted in Hungarian.

#### JULIA NODADA 1916-1996

Julia Nodada was born in 1916 in Dangwane, a village ninety kilometers north of Umtata (presently Mthatha), Transkei. Her father passed away when she was very young. Julia remembered that her mother was very strict, so much so that as a child she sometimes doubted if she really was her mother. Later she was grateful to her.

Her grandfather was a kind man with an intense love for the Creator and a strong conviction in the power of prayer. He used to stay with her family and made a deep impression upon her. Julia was proud of him. As a teacher he established the first school in Dangwane.

When she was about fifty years old, a Bahá'í traveling teacher visited Dangwane. The teacher had been given Julia's address by Cecilia Nodada,<sup>205</sup> a Bahá'í who lived in Umtata working as a nurse there. The traveling teacher stayed a week with Julia, but Julia said that the Bahá'í made no impression on her at the time. Julia was

<sup>205</sup> Credited as being the first Bahá'í in northern Transkei. See "In Memoriam," *The Bahá'í World*, vol. XVIII, pp. 719-21.

a staunch Methodist—a secretary for the church hoping for a promotion and greater recognition. When the Bahá'í left Dangwane, Julia's problems began. Her husband traveled to Cape Town looking for work, and she received no news or financial help from him. The excitement she had found in the church now looked uninteresting. And she had a dream of 'Abdu'l-Bahá that confused her. In the dream 'Abdu'l-Bahá promised her, "Julia, do not worry. Your station will soon be higher than these people. Be humble and steadfast." Her friends laughed at her dream.

As her situation worsened, she remembered the traveling teacher. She had another dream advising her to borrow money from a certain lady so as to make a trip to Durban. She heeded the dream, borrowed the money, and went to Durban where she met the Bahá'ís. This time the teachings of the Faith and the love and care of the Bahá'ís made an impression on her. She declared and returned to her children in Dangwane.

The Bahá'ís told her that she was expected to teach the Faith. Alone and with no news or contact from anyone, Julia found this to be difficult. A few people from the Assembly of God came to her and wanted to use her house as a prayer center, and she consented. Eventually all of the surrounding neighbors joined the church, except for Julia, who was providing the venue for its growth. The leader of the church tried to convince her, but Julia could not ignore her Faith. She said that her only companion during this time was 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Through her efforts more people in Dangwane accepted the Faith, and a Local Spiritual Assembly was formed. From Dangwane the teachings were taken to neighboring communities, including Essek Farm and Magusheni. In Magusheni the

Bahá'ís were met by stiff opposition, and their lives were threatened; however, today there is a strong Bahá'í community there.

In 1980 the first National Spiritual Assembly of Transkei was formed with its seat in Umtata. Julia was elected to it and served it for twelve years.

She was asked by the National Assembly to translate the Tablet of Aḥmad. During this time she was losing her eyesight, and she begged the Assembly to leave her out of such work. Again she had a dream. This time the dream encouraged her to push on with the task of translation. Julia wiped the tears flowing from her eyes and continued to work on the translation. When she finished, her eyesight was completely restored. To the end of her life she was able to see perfectly without glasses.

On September 1, 1996, her eightieth birthday was celebrated by a gathering of many friends and family members. That night<sup>206</sup> Julia died in her sleep in Dangwane—the village in which she had spent her entire life. Some four hundred people came to pay respects, most of whom were non-Bahá'ís. The Bahá'ís had been praying for the completion of their Bahá'í center, which was accomplished in time for the funeral. Julia, who had often expressed her wish to have Bahá'í prayers said in the center, heard, from the realms above, the first prayers chanted there. Several of the friends referred to her as the "spiritual mother of Transkei." On September 5, the Universal House of Justice wrote:

We were deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Julia Nodada, dearly loved, loyal handmaiden of Bahá'u'lláh. Generations to come will undoubtedly draw inspiration from her historic services as one of

<sup>206</sup> September 2, 1996.

the first believers of her region and a founding member of the National Spiritual Assembly of Transkei at a critical period in the evolution of the South African nation. Kindly extend our loving sympathy to the members of her family. Be assured of our ardent prayers in the Holy Shrines for the progress of her soul throughout the divine worlds.

*Based on an article which draws upon a recording of Julia narrating the story of her life made by the Local Spiritual Assembly of Umtata in April 1996*

**RICHARD THEODORE SUHM**  
Knight of Bahá'u'lláh  
1926–1996

GRIEVED LOSS KNIGHT  
BAHÁ'U'LLÁH RICHARD T. SUHM.  
HIS LONG YEARS ENERGETIC,  
DEDICATED EFFORTS PROMOTE  
HOLY CAUSE DISTINGUISHED BY  
HIS PIONEER SERVICES MOROCCO  
IN RESPONSE URGENT DEMANDS  
TEN YEAR CRUSADE. EXTEND  
LOVING SYMPATHY MEMBERS HIS  
FAMILY. FERVENTLY PRAYING HOLY  
SHRINES PROGRESS HIS SOUL ABHÁ  
KINGDOM.

Universal House of Justice  
September 10, 1996

Richard "Dick" Suhm was five years old<sup>207</sup> when his parents accepted Bahá'u'lláh and enrolled in the Faith. The oldest of four brothers, Dick grew up in a very active and dedicated Bahá'í family, one of the first in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. His dad, Herbert, was chairman of the Milwaukee Spiritual Assembly off and on for thirty-five years. Herbert's brother,

<sup>207</sup> He was born on April 17, 1926.

Clarence, was elected chairman on many alternate years, and his mother, Dessel, served the community in many valued capacities.

As a youth, Dick was active in social activities at Bay View High School. He wrote for the school paper and was a national table-tennis champion, an avid tennis player, and a member of the swim team. After graduating from high school in 1944, he attended the University of Wisconsin in Madison for a year until he was inducted into the US Army. He served as a medical technician in Manila, the Philippines, and in Pusan, Korea.

Upon his discharge in 1946, he reentered the University of Wisconsin in Madison, graduating in 1951 with a bachelor of science degree in economics and a major in finance. Shortly after his graduation he obtained a job with the Standard Register Company as a systems analyst-sales trainee. It was with that company that he felt he had a chance to build a career.



*Richard Theodore Suhm*

Bahá'u'lláh evidently had other plans for this active, enthusiastic Bahá'í. Dick attended the National Convention in Wilmette in 1951 and met his future wife, Mary Louise Kelsey. Their wedding was held on October 19, 1952, at the Evergreen Cabin in West Englewood, New Jersey.

A few months after the couple set up an apartment in Milwaukee, they learned that Whitefish Bay needed two believers in order to form an Assembly. They moved to that community, where they held weekly firesides and counted seven enrollments the first year.

It was at the Intercontinental Conference held in Chicago in 1953 that the Ten Year Crusade was announced. Although they were expecting their first child, they started corresponding with the National Spiritual Assembly, which put them in touch with the newly appointed Africa Committee. Not much was known about many of the countries in Africa that the beloved Guardian had indicated were to receive pioneers, and Dick and Mary found it difficult to get information.

Their son Gregg was born on December 2, 1953, the day before Mary's parents, Curtis and Harriet Kelsey,<sup>208</sup> left to go on pilgrimage. When the news was conveyed to them by phone, the Kelseys asked Dick and Mary Lou if they would like to send a message to Shoghi Effendi. The answer was, "Yes, please ask him where he would like us to pioneer."

A month later the couple received a postcard with the news that Shoghi Effendi had said that Dick and Mary Lou could go to Algeria, Tunisia, or to Tangier, Morocco. Tangier was closer, and as it was an inter-

national zone,<sup>209</sup> that did not require visas, they chose it as their post.

They made many attempts to find passage but to no avail. Mary Lou's brother finally went to the docks in New York and purchased the last two bunks on D deck on the last Italian ship going to Gibraltar before the tourist season. The couple and three-month-old Gregg arrived in Tangier shortly before Rídván 1954, just in time to form the first Spiritual Assembly with seven other pioneers.

During his pioneer days in Tangier, Dick worked for an American investment bank in securities and transactions. In 1956 Mary Lou became ill with polio. The beloved Guardian advised them to return to the United States for medical treatment. By that time their daughter, Wendy, was six months old. Settling in Hackensack, New Jersey, they were able to help form an Assembly. Later they moved to the town of Ramapo, New York, where, after many years of weekly firesides, an Assembly was also formed.

While his children were growing up, Dick was an active teacher and speaker. He served as secretary on the District Teaching Committee and wrote its newsletters. Sometimes he was elected delegate to the National Convention.

His work as an industrial engineer took him out of the country or to different parts of the United States. He was always willing to serve whatever Bahá'í community he visited. About this time Dick and Mary separated, and in 1974 Dick left Lennox Hill Hospital in New York City, where he headed the Industrial Engineering Department,

<sup>209</sup> Morocco was partitioned into French and Spanish protectorates in 1912. In 1923 Tangier became an international zone with an administration shared between France, Spain, Britain, and later Italy. Morocco gained independence in 1956, and Tangier was reintegrated.

<sup>208</sup> See "In Memoriam," *The Bahá'í World*, vol. XV, pp. 468-73.

to accept a job at St. Luke's Hospital in Houston, Texas. A few years later he moved to Dallas. Shortly after arriving there Dick sought out an adult singles group at a United Methodist Church where he made many contacts, and over the years he gave talks and classes on a variety of subjects. It was there he met the owner of a newly created magazine. He was fascinated by her project and asked the owner repeatedly if he could join her in the business. She was unable to put him on the payroll, but he went to work anyway. For several years he wrote monthly articles on holistic medicine and nutrition, and as society editor he had many opportunities to attend social events, assignments that he loved.

Dick is fondly remembered by the Dallas Bahá'ís as being one of the most active members of the Bahá'í Office of Public Information, which he served from 1978 to 1986. His specialty was media relations—the writing of press releases to newspapers and television and their follow-up.

From 1992 to 1996 Dick served on the Board of Directors of the Dallas Chapter of the United Nations Association. Although no other religion was given a chair, the Association created a Bahá'í chair especially for him. He served as chairman of its Media Relations Committee. In almost every meeting of the Board, he found an opportunity to talk about some facet of the Bahá'í Faith.

Each year that he lived in Dallas, Dick took part in the Senior Olympics, placing first or second in the events he entered. He competed in tennis and table-tennis tournaments throughout Texas, and he took part in the Texas Senior Games. It was fitting that Dick's last moments on earth were spent doing what he loved. He died suddenly on the tennis court, while playing his usual Saturday morning game with a friend on September 7, 1996.

On May 8th, a few weeks after his birthday, Dick had written to his family, "at the age of 70 I am still in pursuit of life, the soul, love, and the meaning of a full and happy life. In my mind I don't feel older. I might even be a bit more experienced and wiser. It's just that my body does not work as well as it did when I was younger."

He is survived by his former wife, Mary Louise; sons, Gregg and Grant; daughter, Wendy Kvalheim; and six grandchildren. His brothers, Douglas, Lawrence, and David were among the two hundred people who attended the funeral.

Mary Louise Subm

**SA'ÁDAT OSTOVAR**  
(Sa'ádatu'lláh Ustuvár)  
1931-1996

The news of the passing of the beloved pioneer Mr. Sa'ádatu'lláh Ustuvár saddened our hearts. Please assure his family and friends that the Universal House of Justice will pray for the progress of his soul, whose only wish was to serve the Cause of the Blessed Beauty and who entered the Abhá Kingdom while in the arena of service, so that, God willing, he may be blessed under the sheltering shadow of His love. Also please assure Qudssíyyih, his beloved wife, and his son Herald of prayers in the Holy Shrines so that confirmation and patience may be bestowed upon them by the Blessed Beauty.

Universal House of Justice  
September 17, 1996

Sa'ádat Ostovar died September 10, 1996, in Dushanbe, Tadjikistan, where he and his wife, Ghodsie (Qudssíyyih Raḥímpúr),



had been living but a couple of months. His passing away at a pioneering post culminated a life of service to the Cause.

The Ostovars had resided in Colorado Springs, Colorado, since their emigration from Iran in 1970. Sa'adat served on the Local Spiritual Assembly there and was an assistant to an Auxiliary Board member. He was a loving father and a hard worker who was fulfilling a lifetime dream by pioneering to Russia after his retirement in September of 1995. Since that time the Ostovars had lived in Kiev, Moscow, and Astrakhan. Sa'adat's life ended abruptly with a heart attack, while he and a friend were taking a morning walk. Besides his wife, he left one son, Herald.

#### JEAN PLATT NWACHUKWU ?–1996

Jean Platt Nwachukwu became a Bahá'í in Connecticut in the United States in 1972. She then pioneered to Nigeria in 1975, where she lived for twelve years. She was a member of the National Spiritual Assembly for many of those years. During that time she met and married Adiele, a native of Enugu, Nigeria. Jean and her family settled in Ellington, Connecticut, in 1987. In that community Jean served as a member of the Local Spiritual Assembly, as a member of the District Teaching Committee, and on the New World Bahá'í School Committee. During her last bout with cancer, many were impressed with her equanimity and unshakable faith in God. Jean Nwachukwu passed away on September 13, 1996, in Ellington.

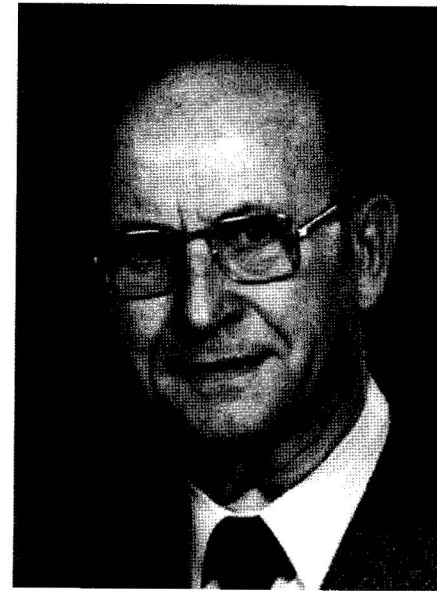
*Adapted from an obituary appearing in the American Bahá'í*

#### OTTO LIEDE 1904–1996

Otto Liede was born in Karlsruhe, Germany, in 1904. His professional life was characterized by diligence and perseverance. He left school with an elementary school certificate and trained as a bank clerk. After working for the Reichsbank for several years, he successfully passed the examinations for a secondary school diploma as an external candidate. Thereafter he entered public service and through further examinations qualified for work in the legal profession. As a judicial officer, Otto held posts in Radolfzell, Neustadt, and Baden-Baden. From 1933 until his retirement in 1970, he was employed by the Rheinische Hypothekbank and held a leading position from 1952 onward. During the Second World War he was called for military service and had the misfortune of becoming a prisoner of war, and it was not until 1948 that he was able to return home.

In 1933 Otto married Anna Liede, who bore him three children. The family moved to Heidelberg in 1935 and then to Mannheim in 1954. After the death of his wife in 1981, Otto continued to live in their private flat until 1994 when he moved to a home for the aged. Although he was able to celebrate his ninetieth birthday in full possession of his mental faculties, the last few years of his life were marked by failing health and loss of vitality. Because of injuries he sustained in a fall he needed several hospitalizations, but thankfully he was spared lengthy suffering.

I was one of Otto's friends from 1949 onward. He was an immensely lovable person of cheerful disposition and one who always knew how to make the best out of life. As a father, he set an excellent example for his children. He was admired and treasured by all those who knew him.



*Otto Liede*

He was intellectually and spiritually inclined. He loved music, and he played the piano. He was dedicated to whatever was good, beautiful, and true. Yet at the same time, Otto was a down-to-earth person, one with his feet set firmly on the ground. He had many interests. He was well read, intellectually alert, and concerned about the problems of our time. He knew that in this life both the body and the soul must be cared for. He liked to go hiking, and even when he was very old, he continued to practice yoga, with headstands every morning and jogging in the Luisenpark. But his activities were never centered solely on himself. Even in retirement Otto kept up his social interests and commitments. He worked as a volunteer for different social organizations such as the Good Templars and Alcoholics Anonymous.

Our departed friend was a seeker after truth; his spiritual home was the Bahá'í Faith, the most recent of the revealed religions. As early as 1926, together with his

wife, he entered the Bahá'í community. After the war Otto was a member of the Local Spiritual Assembly of Heidelberg, and later he served on the Assembly in Mannheim. The community benefited, not only from his sound legal knowledge and experience in economics, but also, and indeed most of all, from his objective and unprejudiced way of thinking that was directed toward the creation and maintenance of harmony. For many years he was active in the financial committee of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Germany—a meritorious service for which the Bahá'í community is deeply grateful.

Now his earthly life has reached its end.<sup>210</sup> Otto was a deeply religious person inspired by the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. He was convinced of the belief common to all religions that man is spiritual in essence, that the soul is an indestructible entity, that if one believes in God and with a pure heart tries to keep to the "straight path," he will be assured of the mercy of God in the next life and will be "led with honor into paradise" as it says in the Qu'ran. Every day he said a prayer that I, complying with Otto's wish, would like to share with you:

"O God! Make me to be humble and patient. Bestow upon me spiritual eyes and grant that I may enter Thy kingdom. Strengthen me through Thy might, refresh me by Thy love and redeem me by Thy mercy. Prepare me for Thine advent and grant that I may gaze on Thy grandeur."

We mourn the loss of a very dear friend. But it may comfort us to know that Otto Liede, who reached a biblical age, is now reunited with his wife, and, freed from the burdens of earthly life, is able to wander in

<sup>210</sup> Otto Liede passed away on September 25, 1996.

heavenly pastures, to dwell in exalted places, and to gaze upon the splendor of God.

*Translated from an oration given in German by Udo Schaefer*

### HENG ENG CHHOEURNG 1959–1996

The city of Phnom Penh was practically deserted during the five years of the Khmer Rouge reign of terror in Cambodia.<sup>211</sup> Most of those who left Cambodia fled to refugee camps in Thailand. One of those refugees was Mr. Heng Eng Chhoeurng.

While in a camp, he was one of sixteen participants training to become dental assistants. They were visited by Bahá'í friends such as Mr. Navarath, Ms. Sunapa Dithathanon, and Mr. Tim Shafter, and all sixteen eventually became Bahá'ís.

In 1993 after the Paris Peace Agreement was signed, the United Nations repatriated the refugees, and Mr. Heng went back to Cambodia and worked for the United Nations as an English-Khmer translator and interpreter. At the same time he was very active in Bahá'í activities. In 1994 he assisted in the formation of the National Spiritual Assembly of Cambodia and of new Local Spiritual Assemblies. He was later appointed as an Auxiliary Board member.

Dr. Lee Lee Loh-Ludher remembers:

He accepted the Faith while in the refugee camp at the border of Thailand, and he offered his home as the center. He was trained by the United Nations team there as a dental aide and rose to be the chief of the aides. As he was leaving the camp to return to Cambodia, his fellow friends asked [him] to take along the dental equipment. He refused [saying]

that it belonged to the UN and that he should not take it. He was given a high commendation by the United Nations Refugee Agency team (UNHCR) for his honesty and dedication to service.

I recalled vividly the time (1994) when I requested him to set up the Bahá'í inspired NGO, Cambodian Organization for Research, Development and Education (CORDE). He was then holding a job giving him a salary of US\$280 while the average salary in Cambodia was US\$100, and the government servants were not being paid owing to a tight cash flow. I said to him that I would understand if he would not work for CORDE but only assist, as CORDE was only able to pay an allowance of US\$150. He said he would resign his present job and work for CORDE as it was in service to the Cause.<sup>212</sup>

I requested him to consult with his family first before giving an answer, as a loss in income of US\$130 at that point in Cambodia was a drastic loss. He consulted with his family and told me that his family had agreed, and his six-year-old daughter had said, "Papa, it is now time we serve Bahá'u'lláh." Since then he had dedicated his energy and served selflessly for the development of the Faith—as Cambodia's first

<sup>212</sup> A group of seven Bahá'ís launched a development agency in Cambodia in 1994—the Cambodian Organization for Research, Development and Education (CORDE), an NGO that was registered with the Cambodian government. In its initial years CORDE's activities were largely focused on building wells in villages and promoting oral and dental health education for children, drawing on the resources of three of its founding members who were dental aides trained by the United Nations at a refugee camp. In 1994 there were only nine dental clinics for a population of nine million people. (<http://www.cordecambodia.org/aboutcorde.htm>)

<sup>211</sup> 1975–1979.

Auxiliary Board member, translator, external relations officer, first full-time co-coordinator of the Institute, and everything else that was asked of him.

He was a good husband, father, brother, and son, and he was a good teacher. He would teach children and youth no matter how small the classes were because they would like to learn. Each time I asked him to cut down the classes so he could rest or do other work, he would respond by saying that he would still complete his other assignments, but as long as there were people keen to learn, he would teach. "I can always work harder," was his response. He would always make an extra effort to make sure things were done to perfection and at the least cost to the Faith.

He was always smiling and cheering up others. He was a joy to all those around him. His love and concern for others had endeared him to them. He had only good words for others. It would be difficult even for the malicious to find fault with him. He was indeed an exemplary Bahá'í.

On this earthly plane, we have indeed lost a dedicated lover of Bahá'u'lláh in Cambodia, but I am confident this sacrifice at the prime of his life would inspire many others, especially his much-loved family members and friends, to do more for the Faith in memory of this spiritual giant of Cambodia.

While attending a conference on the Institute Program in the Philippines, Mr. Heng suffered a massive heart attack and died on October 25, 1996, at age thirty-seven. His wife and son attended his funeral together with many Bahá'ís from different countries. The National Spiritual Assembly

of the Bahá'ís of Cambodia received this message posted by the Department of the Secretariat on October 27:

The Universal House of Justice was saddened to receive from the Philippines the news of the sudden and untimely passing of Mr. Heng Eng Chhoeurng. He had achieved distinction for his courage and trust in God in circumstances of danger, his high abilities, his trustworthiness and dependability, and his commitment and effectiveness as a teacher of the Faith.

Kindly convey to the family and friends of Mr. Heng the deep sympathy of the House of Justice, and assure them of its prayers at the Sacred Threshold showering assistance on his Bahá'í colleagues in his native land.

### TOLE'AFOA LEULUPOAO TIPA'U 1914–1996

Tole'afua Leulupoao Tipa'u was born on May 27, 1914, in the village of Gataivai on Savai'i Island, Western Samoa. His father, Ulupoao Magele, was from the village of Papa-i-Palauli le Falefa, and his mother, Tufosa Mapoilesua, from the village of Gataivai.

Leulupoao Tipa'u attended the village pastor's school for children and pre-youth before he entered the London Missionary Society's<sup>213</sup> school in Tuasivi, Savai'i. It provided preparatory education for those training to become pastors and missionaries. He went on to enter Malua Theological College in Apia around 1948 but was expelled in his final year owing to marriage

<sup>213</sup> Presently the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa.

difficulties. His eldest daughter, Olotuli Maposua, commented that "Perhaps, it was not the will of God for my father to become a pastor, because we would have been deprived of these beautiful teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, a Priceless Pearl gifted unto us by our father."

As an adult he served his family well and was bestowed the high chief's title Tole'afao. His father's family is one of the royal families of Samoa—the Tuimaleali'ifano family in the district of Falelatai. His family and village had banned all religious activities with the exception of one church, the London Missionary Society, which Tole'afao served with distinction.

Tole'afao owned a large cocoa plantation that helped him to support his family. One day a school friend, Tanuvasa Seniolo from Nofolai'i, who had recently declared as a Bahá'í, visited him and shared with him his experience of the new religion as given to him by Mr. Suhayl 'Alá'í,<sup>214</sup> who was managing the A. G. Smyth store where people sold cocoa. Tole'afao was so impressed with his friend's story that in his next visit to Apia he made it a purpose to question Mr. 'Alá'í about the new religion. Mr. 'Alá'í gave him a book to read, a Bahá'í prayer book, and an invitation to return. During the second meeting Mr. 'Alá'í took Tole'afao home where he and his wife, Lilian, spent the evening sharing with their guest the teachings and history of the Faith. That evening Tole'afao accepted and enrolled. It was the start of a challenging life of opposition from his family and of many teaching trips around Samoa.

Tole'afao was staunch and courageous in his new faith. His family and community were shocked by his conversion, but he was able to cope effectively with them, and



*Tole'afao Leulupoao Tipa'u*

Bahá'í activities, including an early Bahá'í Summer School, were held in his village in the late 1950s.

Wherever he went he courageously shared the Faith openly with friends, relatives, and strangers, regardless of opposition. This was especially true with his extended family, which was large and spread throughout Samoa. Teaching the Faith became the preoccupation of his life, and he readily obeyed, with enthusiasm, calls from the National Teaching Committee to carry out teaching trips to different parts of the country. Serving as an Auxiliary Board member he also responded to the calls of the Counsellors.

Difficulties such as bad weather did not stop him from making visits to share the Message of Bahá'u'lláh. He is also remembered for attracting audiences when he spoke about the Faith at the public market in Apia, when he and his wife, Fa'afiu, were selling handicrafts there.

In due course his family and village banned his teaching activities and expelled

him from the village, but this did not stop him. Tole'afao moved to Fagali'i where he served on the Local Spiritual Assembly for many years. When he passed away on October 29, 1996, after a prolonged illness, the National Assembly advised the Universal House of Justice, describing Tole'afao as "a 'continuously teaching' believer."

His funeral service was attended by many of his extended family, guests of the family, friends, and his more than twenty children. A cabinet minister of the Samoan government came, as well as representatives of the business community. The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Samoa arranged the service, which included the reading of messages from the Universal House of Justice and from other institutions of the Faith. That of the Universal House of Justice, dated November 3, read:

We are saddened by the passing of Tole'afao Leulupoao Tipa'u who has a long and distinguished record of service to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh over many years, including membership of the Auxiliary Board for a period and a sustained commitment to the promotion of the teaching work. Kindly convey to his family and friends our condolences and the assurance of our prayers in the Holy Shrines for the progress of his soul.

As is common Samoan practice, his simple grave lies in front of his house at Fagali'i, close to the family he loved.

*From articles submitted by The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Samoa*

### MOHAMAD SHAIKHZADEH 1931–1996

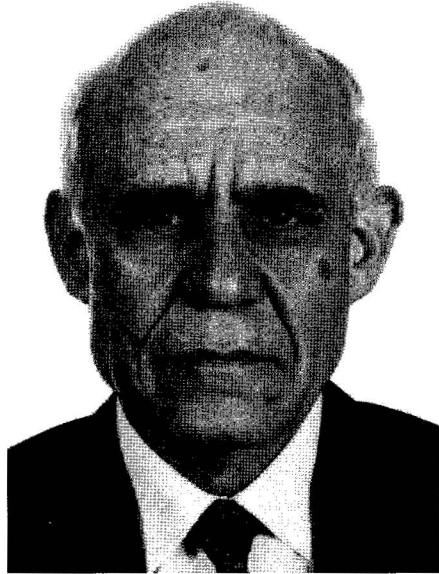
We are deeply saddened by the sudden loss of the sacrificial, devoted and steadfast pioneer of the Cause of God Mohamad Shaikhzadeh. His life of service and notable contributions in the teaching and administrative fields, especially during the last three decades on the Brazilian homefront, are warmly remembered. Kindly convey our loving condolences to the dear members of his distinguished family. Be assured of our ardent prayers in the Holy Shrines for the progress of his radiant soul in the Abhá Kingdom.

Universal House of Justice  
November 1, 1996

Mohamad Shaikhzadeh was born in Zavareh, Iran, on March 23, 1931, the youngest of eight children. Raised in the Iranian countryside by a first generation Bahá'í family, he witnessed during his early years the opposition presented by relatives who had not accepted the Cause. His parents died when he was nine years old, and his eldest sister took care of his education according to Bahá'í principles. This difficult period of his childhood resulted in a strong and independent personality that strove for excellence in all his endeavors.

With great effort and personal dedication he completed his basic studies and entered university to study chemical engineering. At this time he began to serve the Cause he loved so much by working in the administration of Bahá'í youth activities in Ábádán, in southwestern Iran, where he had pioneered. Shortly after graduating and beginning work in the petroleum industry, Mohamad married Shoghieh, and together they served as homefront

<sup>214</sup> See Suhayl 'Alá'í, pp. 234–37.



*Mohamad Shaikhzadeh*

pioneers. They also nurtured the desire to go as international pioneers during the Ten Year Crusade—a desire that was strengthened when they participated in the 1958 Intercontinental Conference in Frankfurt. That was when they offered to go to South America.

In early 1960 Mohamad and Shoghieh, along with two small children (Foad, then three years old, and Fariba, four months old), left Iran for Colombia. After a brief stop in Italy where they learned that they could not obtain entry visas for Colombia, they decided to go to Brazil, arriving there in April. After consulting the administrative bodies they established themselves in the state of São Paulo. For one year they lived in São Caetano do Sul, and in 1961 they moved to Santo André, where they participated in the election of its first Local Spiritual Assembly. Mohamad served that institution during the remaining years of his life. It was also in this city that his last daughter, Faezeh, was born some years later.

He managed to overcome the financial difficulties of settling his family in a new country, and through his dedication, application of character, and constant search for excellence, he was able to distinguish himself and to rise to leadership positions within the companies for which he worked.

Mohamad also demonstrated the same dedication, application of character, and constant search for excellence in his service to the Cause. Teaching the Faith during those early days was basically through firesides held in the homes, as well as visits to other Bahá'ís and pioneers in neighboring areas. In the early 1970s the spirit of mass teaching that had taken hold in many places in the world reached Brazil. Mohamad became enthused by this spirit, and in serving the National Teaching Committee he assisted in the administration of mass teaching projects, in the dispatch of homefront pioneers, and in the preparation of teaching and consolidation materials. The challenge of consolidation had always been a strong interest of his, and he was not satisfied with limited results. He wanted more.

In subsequent years Mohamad served the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Brazil where his desire to see an accelerated growth of the Cause intensified. He also served on the National Committee for Iranian Bahá'í refugees. He gave to this work a special dedication and to each of the Bahá'í refugees a deep love. In return he was loved by them, especially the youth who adopted him as a father.

In 1984 with the establishment of the Soltanieh Bahá'í Educational Center, Mohamad saw the birth of a great instrument for the fulfillment of his hopes. From its beginning he worked on the Center's administrative board, encouraging its growth and helping to coordinate its programs.

What a happiness he found in those gatherings of the friends who had come to the Center to study the Faith!

In the last days of October 1996, he prepared for a conference in Soltanieh that was to be held in early November. After ten years of proclamation activity, about twenty public school teachers from Santo André demonstrated an interest in participating in the event and in learning the principles of the Faith. This gave great pleasure to Mohamad.

The morning of October 31, 1996, radio and TV programming was suddenly interrupted by emergency bulletins broadcasting the news of an airplane crash at the São Paulo airport in which there were no survivors! Mohamad Shaikhzadeh's name appeared on the passenger list. In the days that followed, hundreds of condolence letters, telegrams, faxes, and telephone calls poured in from friends, relatives, and co-workers. Newspaper articles and memorials offered once again proclamations of the name of Bahá'u'lláh.

*Foad Shaikhzadeh*

#### RAY MEYER 1920–1996

Weep not for me for Death is  
but the vehicle that unites my soul  
with the Creative Essence, God.  
My spiritual Being, my love is  
still with you, where ever you are  
until forever.  
You will find me in the quiet moments  
in the trees, amidst the rocks,  
the cloud and beams of sunshine  
indeed, everywhere for I, too, am  
a part of the total essence of  
creation that radiates everywhere  
about you, eternally.

Life, after all, is just a  
passing phase.<sup>215</sup>

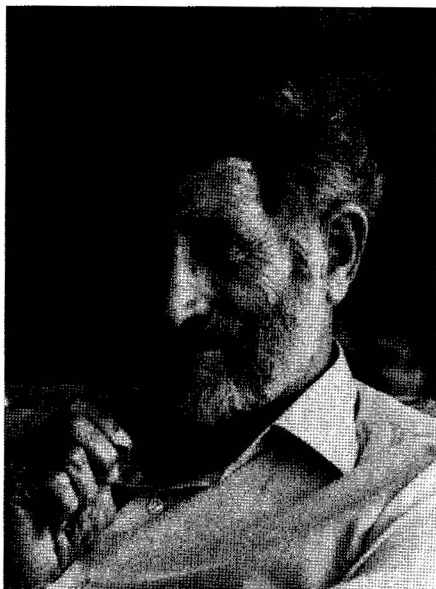
Letting Ray go, on a day like this with the trees swaying and the rain parting, this is what we have to do. Ray has gone with the trees and the rain and the copious words from his Beloved, which are uttered in his memory and for his happiness.

The achievements of his life are tangible and practical. Ray took the essence of education and knowledge seriously. He pursued the meaning of existence to the point where it could be savored, and he would then share his discoveries with everyone he communicated with.

Ray was born on July 13, 1920, and grew up in Bathurst, New South Wales, Australia. He was the school captain at Bathurst High School, where he grew to know and cherish his schoolyard sweetheart, Nancy (Nance) Coral Pratt. They were destined to marry and produce four wonderful children, Roslyn (Payne), John, Rick, and Alan. (Alan was tragically killed in a road accident in 1971.) Theirs was a close family, and in the eyes of their children, Ray and Nance were something unusual—a pair in harmony for fifty-three years of marriage.

Ray earned a bachelor's degree in economics and a master's in education from the University of Sydney. He then went to the University of California where he was awarded a doctoral degree with "High Distinction" in 1969. While undertaking his doctorate Ray was very ill, and for six months he was in and out of hospital.

<sup>215</sup> With permission the poem "Epitaph" is reproduced from *Black from the Edge* by Kevin Gilbert, Hyland House Publishing, Melbourne 1994. Kevin Gilbert is a well known Australian indigenous artist.



Ray Meyer

Nevertheless within fifteen months he completed his studies.

His profession commenced at North Sydney Technical High where he taught from 1940 to 1948. He then worked as sports-master at Gosford High from 1948 to 1954, and in 1955 he was the physical education (PE) and recreation adviser, Southern Region. In 1956 and for the next ten years, he was the senior lecturer in health and physical education at the Bathurst Teachers College.

Ray pioneered concepts in the fields of physical and health education, including those that contributed to the development of Colleges of Advanced Education (CAE) in Australia. In 1980 he retired as Head of the Department of Behavioural Sciences, Goulburn College of Advanced Education. Ray was also Fellow of the Australian College of Education.

While their daughter Roslyn was in hospital, she learned of the Bahá'í Faith from the girl in the next bed whose aunt, Pauline Mason, was a Bahá'í. Roslyn encouraged

her parents to look into the Faith, as it seemed so similar to their beliefs. As a result Pauline visited them in Bathurst, and the Meyers began to study the Faith. During their stay in Southern California they attended firesides and other activities which greatly attracted them to Bahá'u'lláh. On returning home to Australia in 1969 they realized their decision had been made. They knocked on the door at 2 Lang Road, Paddington, which in those days was the Bahá'í National Office, and they asked for Jim Heggie.

"No, Mr. Heggie<sup>216</sup> isn't here at the moment," said Pieter de Vogel,<sup>217</sup> "May I help you?"

"We've come to sign Bahá'í cards," stated the Meyers.

"Come in and sit down please," replied Mr. de Vogel faintly, as he now needed to sit down himself!

Ray served as a member of the National Bahá'í Teaching Committee from 1970 to 1971 and was a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia from 1971 to 1975. He resigned to take up an overseas fellowship, and after his return he was reelected and served that institution from 1980 to 1987, some years as its secretary or assistant secretary. He was also secretary of the National Teaching Committee for many years and chairman of the Organizing Committee for the Bahá'í International Conference held in Canberra.

Ray wrote *Bahá'í: Follower of the Light*, which has been used globally as an introduction to the Faith. He is well known for his contribution to children's education and curriculum development, for the training of teachers for children's classes, for his work as coordinator of the Children's Education Task Force, as well as for his

<sup>216</sup> See James Heggie, pp. 10–13.

<sup>217</sup> See Pieter de Vogel, pp. 202–4.

### CHAHABEDDINE 'ALÁ'Í 1911–1996

The Universal House of Justice is moved to convey to you, at this time of your grief, its loving condolences on the passing of your beloved father. His nobility of character coupled with his intense love for the Blessed Beauty, his steadfastness in the Cause and the devoted services he rendered to the communities of Iran and France are fondly remembered.

Department of the Secretariat  
November 8, 1996

initiative in collaborating with educators in other countries.

There were no enemies in his life, and aggression was of no account. If he needed to work out a problem, he would go out and pace around until he had it under control. He was a man equally at ease with all levels of society and rejoiced in all he met. To each he gave abounding love and a full measure of respect. On November 1, 1996, Ray passed out of this phase of life and into the next. Ray had sat with Nance, and they had read together. In another moment he had left this life, and she knew it. The book in his hands, *The Book of Certitude*, contained their last reflection together in this world.

On November 4, 1996, the Universal House of Justice respected his memory, writing:

We are saddened to learn of the passing of Ray Meyer, who rendered memorable services to the Faith in Australia over a lengthy period, including membership of the National Spiritual Assembly for more than ten years, and who will especially be remembered for his contributions to the development of Bahá'í education. Kindly convey our condolences to the members of his family and to his friends, and assure them of our prayers in the Holy Shrines for the progress of his luminous soul in the worlds beyond.

A long-standing pioneer, a scholar, a teacher, a man of aristocratic allure, yet humble, welcoming, and accessible, Chahabeddine 'Alá'í was a meteor of the Faith. A man of science, he was literate in Persian, Arabic, and French. He was the ninth child of Siyyid Muḥammad 'Alá'í, *Názímu'l-Hukamá*—a descendant of the Prophet Muḥammad and an eminent Bábí, blessed to have recognized the Blessed Beauty. The last son of Mohtaram *Khánúm*—the youngest of the Siyyid's three wives—"Chahab" was one of the last survivors to have a special place in the genealogy of an original Bahá'í family. The younger brother of the Hand of the Cause of God *Shu'a'u'lláh 'Alá'í*,<sup>218</sup> he was one of the last "living encyclopedias" of the Heroic Age of our Faith. Chahab entered the hospital in Saint-Julien-en-Genevois, France, on Sunday, November 3, 1996, and attained the abode of the Beloved twenty-four hours later, on the anniversary of the ascension of the beloved Guardian.

<sup>218</sup> See "In Memoriam", *The Bahá'í World*, vol. XIX, pp. 593–95.

Chahab was born in 1911 in Tíhrán, and after completing secondary school, he made his way to France, encouraged by the Guardian. He earned diplomas in Agricultural Engineering, Agricultural Industry Engineering, and Sugar Refinery Engineering in 1933, 1934, and 1935 respectively. He returned to Iran where he eventually became the director general of all the sugar factories in the country. During this time, he used his material resources to establish a school (Madrese Chahab). He returned to France in 1952 to study toward diplomas in sericulture (silkworm breeding).

In 1958, he was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly of France. That same year, he wed Arlette Barbanson, and from their marriage a daughter, Diane, was born. About this time, Chahab installed another sugar factory in Işfahán.

Chahab was again a member of the National Assembly of France from 1967 to 1970. He was proud to have attended the elections of the Universal House of Justice three times and to have been asked by it to be a chief teller in 1968. He was also asked by the House of Justice to collaborate with Salim Nounou in acquiring the archives of the French orientalist and scholar of the Babí dispensation, A. L. M. Nicolas. With Colonel John McHenry II<sup>219</sup> he was asked by the National Assembly to find a suitable location for the Mashriqu'l-Adhikár. He was also known to have aided Madame Laura Dreyfus-Barney in the organization of her documents and to have assisted Mademoiselle Lucienne Migette in her translations.

Settling in Paris in 1966, he assumed the position of director of the prestigious *Maison de l'Iran*—a display case of Iranian art and gastronomy on the Champs-Élysées.

He was awarded the Medal of the Legion of Honor of the Iranian Empire in 1975 and carried on this work until 1980. In the last years of his life, he and Arlette had moved to Le Cannet to reestablish the Local Assembly.

A friend recalls,

I have encountered few men possessed of such tranquility and childlike enthusiasm, combined with a skeptical realism. Characterized by a deep and unwavering faith, he was especially uplifted and vibrant when it came to the affairs of the community, whether regarding the remembrance of the Guardian, a decision of the Assembly, a message of the Universal House of Justice or a mission assigned to him by it. In consequence, he was never afflicted by disenchantment, even less by doubt. With regards to the affairs of the century, he demonstrated the greatest indifference to the tinkering and approximations of our secular contemporaries.

Another remembers how Chahab was a delegate at the election of the first International Convention and how he described to the friends the solemn and emotional moment when the names were called and the members of the Universal House of Justice, the hope of the entire Bahá'í world for which the Guardian had, for decades, cultivated anticipation, respect, and love, rose and assembled to face the delegates:

His eyes gleaming with happiness, Mr. 'Alá'í recalled,

At that moment, I considered the Hands of the Cause gathered for this occasion, from whom the Bahá'í world community had taken its direction since the passing of the Guardian six

years earlier. These Hands of the Cause, transported by joy, applauded with an energy and intensity surpassing the others, their faces beaming like that of a father who has seen his child take his first steps, but also with the joy of one relieved to pass on a precious, sacred and formidable responsibility that had been ever-present in their minds. At that moment, I reflected that in no part of the world, no one would have dared believe in a day when the powerful governments would pass, with such joy, happiness, and sincerity, the reins of power to an institution to which they themselves, with all wisdom, would defer.

Many of the friends remember with fondness and appreciation the weekly study groups he led for more than ten years on Friday evenings at 11 rue de la Pompe. One of them remembers the effect Chahab had on his development as a Bahá'í and gives tribute:

Mr. 'Alá'í had acquired a certain special quality that acted upon me and that I saw acting upon others. His words had influence, bringing to mind a key passage of Bahá'u'lláh: "Utterance must needs possess penetrating power. For if bereft of this quality it would fail to exert . . . And this penetrating influence dependeth on the spirit being pure and the heart stainless. Likewise it needeth moderation, without which the hearer would be unable to bear it . . . Thus when the essence of one's utterance is endowed with these two requisites it will prove highly effective and will be the prime factor in transforming the souls of men. This is the station of supreme victory and celestial dominion. Whoso attaineth thereto is invested with the power to teach the Cause of

God and to prevail over the hearts and minds of men."<sup>220</sup>

Such was the quality of the words of Chahab 'Alá'í. Such was his influence.

*Adapted in part from translations of memorial articles by Foad Sabéran, Houchiar Djoneidi, Saïd Rouhani, Jean-François Bourque, and The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of France*

### JEFFREY MONDSCHHEIN 1952–1996

We grieve at the passing of dearly loved Jeffrey Mondschein, who to the end proved himself a dedicated servant of Bahá'u'lláh.

His lifelong involvement in the teaching and administrative work, locally and nationally in the United States and at the international level, built up a continuous record of exemplary devotion to the Cause of God. With an unshakeable confidence and an indomitable will combined with a uniquely imaginative approach and a scintillating wit, he brought the ingenuity of his financial expertise to the service of the Bahá'í World Centre, particularly at critical phases of the most ambitious enterprise yet to be undertaken at the heart of the community. The enduring nature of what he so nobly achieved has won our boundless gratitude.

Universal House of Justice  
December 9, 1996

<sup>219</sup> See John McHenry II, pp. 170–73.

<sup>220</sup> *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed After the Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, pp. 198–99.

Jeff was born to Nancy (née Bowers), a nurse educator, and Morton (Mort) Mondschein, a New York City attorney, on February 9, 1952. Nancy had become a Bahá'í as a teenager, shortly after her parents had embraced the Faith having learned of it in Westchester, Pennsylvania. Mort would become a Bahá'í late in his life, but he had been a lover of Bahá'u'lláh years before, driving his wife and sons, Rick and Jeff, to Green Acre each summer. The boys grew up firm in the Faith as third generation American Bahá'ís.

By the time Jeff was in high school, the traits that defined him were already well developed: competitiveness, intellectual acuity, integrity, conscientiousness, and irascibility (at times), blended with an infectious wit. He was quicker than most but would always hold his tongue when becoming frustrated, and instead he would roll his eyes in a way so reminiscent of his father. Jeff excelled in school, academically, socially, and athletically. He played varsity baseball and basketball in high school and at Amherst College.

At Amherst, Jeff was studying to become a lawyer when he realized he was drawn to finance. When he let it be known that he was studying for a career in business, many well-meaning and prominent Bahá'ís tried to dissuade him from this course, saying that business concentrates on the materialistic nature of man and would not be a good career choice for a Bahá'í. At a time when there were few Bahá'í role models in this field, Jeff followed his instincts and his heart, gaining the expertise that allowed him to provide great service to the Faith.

After graduating from Amherst College in 1974, he spent a year working for the Amherst Athletic Department before going to New York University (NYU) to attend the Stern School of Business where he earned



Jeffrey Mondschein

his Master of Business Administration degree in 1977.

He began his finance career in the treasury department of the Continental Group. A portion of his time was spent on assignment in Brussels. Four years later he became a foreign exchange corporate advisor at Wells Fargo Bank. Subsequently he held senior positions in foreign exchange at Merrill Lynch and at the Continental Illinois National Bank and Trust Company; at the latter he was vice president and foreign exchange manager. During his ten years as a foreign exchange corporate advisor, Jeff was often quoted as a market expert in the *Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, and other publications. Jeff was also a shareholder and a director of Mottahedeh & Company,<sup>221</sup> and his

<sup>221</sup> Established in 1929 by Bahá'ís, Mildred Root and her husband Rafi Mottahedeh, the company designed and produced luxury porcelain and reproductions from the porcelain collections of well-known museums.

background in finance did not prevent him from commenting on design as a member of the self-proclaimed “Shadow Design Committee.”

Jeff drew upon his professional expertise to serve the Faith, first through years as a member of the Financial Advisory Committee to the treasurer of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States. Then, in 1992, at the age of forty and mid-stream in his career, Jeff answered the call of the Universal House of Justice to become the first chief financial officer (CFO) for the Bahá'í World Centre. He modernized the Department of Finance, updating systems and controls and developing managerial “best practices.” Jeff created policies and procedures for the functioning of the department that remained in place a decade after his passing. In addition he provided clear financial analyses to the House of Justice at a critical time in the Arc Project—the construction of buildings and development of gardens on Mount Carmel.

Jeff was diagnosed with esophageal cancer in September 1995. His fighting spirit was captured in a poem he wrote in February of 1996:

#### Body and Soul

My health ravaged  
My body attacked;  
“Cancer” the dreaded.  
God’s Love:  
The Supreme Body,  
The Friends,  
My family;  
My spirit feted.  
Blood; knives, chemicals and  
radiation  
inflicting material pain.  
My spirit refocused, transcending  
traveling in the realm of the  
Frequented Fane.  
Fear, doubt, disillusionment

Try to cloud the future.  
The Supreme Body’s “rest assured,”  
Detachment and prayer lead one to  
mature.

Assuredly death comes  
But not now!  
Much, much later  
Decidedly, life for now,  
But to different drums I’ll cater.

Jeff was as active as he could be while fighting his “disease of the week,” as he would say. He worked when possible and could be found writing a speech for the annual Bahá'í Conference on Social and Economic Development in Orlando in December 1995, attending a Mottahedeh Board Meeting, and making a final trip to Green Acre in the summer of 1996. His spirit was undaunted, his primary concern being that he would not be there for his family. He finally succumbed on December 8, 1996.

Jeff is survived by his soul mate Pam (Mathers)—they were married on November 27, 1982, and by their two children, Sabrina and Jared, both of whom have grown into wonderful young adults. He is also survived by his older brother, Rick, and by his many friends around the world who cherish their memories of him. As succinctly put by one of his Amherst classmates “Jeff accomplished much in his all too short life.”

Grant Kvalheim

**TOVE DELEURAN**  
Knight of Bahá'u'lláh  
?–1996

GRIEVED LEARN OF PASSING OF MRS. TOVE DELEURAN. IMMEDIATE AND WHOLEHEARTED RESPONSE OF MRS. DELEURAN AND HUSBAND, MR. JEAN DELEURAN, TO NEEDS OF TEN YEAR CRUSADE WON THEM IMMORTAL DISTINCTION KNIGHTS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH FOR BALEARIC ISLANDS. HER SERVICES TO CAUSE GOD AS ARDENT TEACHER FAITH, DEDICATED OVERSEAS PIONEER, MEMBER OF INSTITUTIONS IN MALLORCA, EAST PAKISTAN, DENMARK AND FRANCE WILL BE LONG REMEMBERED. ASSURED OUR FERVENT PRAYERS IN HOLY SHRINES PROGRESS OF HER SOUL ABHÁ KINGDOM. KINDLY EXTEND SYMPATHY TO DEAR HUSBAND, JEAN.

Universal House of Justice  
December 19, 1996

Tove Lillian Alice Adrian Larsen was the only child of Carl and Thyra Larsen, both Protestants who came from big families on Falster Island in the southern part of Denmark. Tove was born and grew up in Frederiksberg, a quiet residential area in the outskirts of Copenhagen. Her father worked for the Royal Danish Post, and her mother was a loving housewife. They went to church every Sunday, and Tove recalled how happily surprised she was when she discovered that God had chosen her to be a member of the true religion, but she often wondered whether it was not a little unjust to the others. Tove was a good pupil in school, but she spent much of her time drawing. At sixteen years of age, she could not see very well and learned



*Tove Deleuran*

that she should stop reading because of a rapidly advancing myopia. She was allowed to paint and to draw, however, and so she entered a small private academy of fine art. After graduation she entered the film industry as the first woman in Denmark to work in animation. Later she went to work for a well-known fashion designer. Tove had a very happy disposition and had many friends. She participated in artistic dancing, in singing, as well as in fencing. She was also a good golfer, tennis player, and swimmer.

Tove married Jean Pierre Louis Deleuran in 1944, a very extraordinary person who, at twenty-three, was polio-stricken and was somewhat paralyzed. Jean came from French Huguenot stock living in Copenhagen. He walked with the help of crutches, but the day they decided to marry, Tove threw one crutch into Tivoli Lake and said, "I will be your other crutch."

Tove and Jean made their home in Hellerup, the commune where the national center is situated. They loved antiques and

frequented many auctions, so when Jean had to work in the other end of Denmark for a year, they decided that they would let out their little flat to "ladies of a quiet disposition who did not drink alcohol." They contacted the American Embassy, which just happened to be looking for a flat for two women. This was the coincidence that let Bahá'u'lláh into their lives, so changing their future. The two women were American pioneers, Dagmar Dole<sup>222</sup> and Eleanor Hollibaugh.<sup>223</sup> After the last of three meetings, when they were supposed to count up the silverware and crystal glasses, Tove and Jean simply left them the key and went to Jutland with books under their arms. Their hearts and minds were taken up with the proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh.

Eleanor visited them in Malling, where they had rented a farm. Their thoughts and conversations circled round the Bahá'í Faith. Six months after their return to their flat in Hellerup, they declared their allegiance to this new religion. Dagmar and Eleanor had rented a flat in another small villa on the same road, only one house away. Many firesides took place, and many visitors came from all over the world. In 1949 they participated in the formation of the first Spiritual Assembly in Denmark.

With tremendous faith and enthusiasm, Tove threw herself courageously into all sorts of experiences. In the same year that Tove became a Bahá'í, she started the first children's class in Denmark for her daughter, Lillen Bente, some of Lillen's playmates and two of her cousins, and about five other children of Bahá'í friends. She made a Bahá'í ABC book that has since

been translated into English and French. Tove had the wonderful knack of making things very real and dramatic, and the children loved these afternoons.

Tove and Jean's parents were very sad that they had left the faith of their upbringing, though Jean's mother was to become a Bahá'í herself some years later. When, at the Intercontinental Conference in Stockholm in 1953, Tove and Jean offered to go anywhere as pioneers, the disappointment of their parents knew no limits.

Tove was such a strong person; she had so great a faith. She had a very handicapped husband and a daughter to educate. Jean had just obtained a wonderful position as an architect with a promising future, and yet Tove chose to say yes to service on a far-off island with an unknown language.

They left Denmark in a snowstorm and arrived at Mallorca<sup>224</sup> in December 1953 where they were met by Virginia Orbison,<sup>225</sup> a pioneer from the United States. Three years later the first Assembly<sup>226</sup> was formed after many difficulties; Spain was still a very closed country, and authorities maintained vigilant religious control. Tove was among the first Auxiliary Board members appointed in Europe<sup>227</sup> and traveled throughout Spain and Portugal, either alone or with the Hand of the Cause Ugo Giachery.

Jean was unable to work as an architect in Spain, and in 1957 the European

<sup>224</sup> Mallorca is the largest of the Spanish administered Balearic Islands. Tove and Jean arrived there on December 30th. Virginia Orbison had been there since August 11th, and Charles Monroe Ioas arrived in January of 1954. All were named Knights of Bahá'u'lláh.

<sup>225</sup> See "In Memoriam," *The Bahá'í World*, vol. XIX, pp. 691–97.

<sup>226</sup> The Assembly was formed in the capital city of Palma.

<sup>227</sup> She was among the first contingent of Auxiliary Board members appointed in 1956.

<sup>222</sup> See "In Memoriam," *The Bahá'í World*, vol. XII, pp. 701–2.

<sup>223</sup> See "In Memoriam," *The Bahá'í World*, vol. XX, pp. 868–71.



Teaching Committee was worried that he would lose his career. Three countries were interesting from a Bahá'í point of view—Uganda, Mexico, and Bangladesh (then East Pakistan). Jean's first offer came from Bangladesh, and the beloved Guardian cabled his acceptance of their move to the capital city of Dacca (Dhaka).

Tove courageously sold her belongings and crossed two continents to settle in Bangladesh. In Dacca she quickly made many friends and started an active career as a painter, mural designer, decorator, and art teacher. She sold many paintings to the United States, and a large painting was bought by the late President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto of Pakistan. With Jean she designed the first fountain ever built in the city. She also took part in welfare projects. Every two months she crossed the Indian subcontinent with Jean to attend meetings of the National Spiritual Assembly; she was the first woman elected to that institution.<sup>228</sup>

After representing Pakistan<sup>229</sup> at the first election of the Universal House of Justice in 1963 and participating in the First World Congress in London, they settled again in Denmark<sup>230</sup> as Jean needed a solid job. The following years were spent in service on the National Spiritual Assembly and on its different committees. Tove started adult evening courses in comparative religion in schools and in libraries, and she moved around the country following the needs of Local Assemblies or isolated groups. Eighteen times Tove packed up home

and reinstalled it elsewhere for her love of Bahá'u'lláh—a love that knew no bounds.

Jean's health worsened, and he needed the use of a wheelchair. Eventually he had to retire, and they decided to move to the Cévennes in the south of France. They helped form the first Local Assembly of Alès, and here Tove started another children's class with six children from Bahá'í families. Her ABC book was translated into French, and she started writing a book on how to educate children to become world citizens.

Because of age and health they moved to Le Mousteiret, near Digne, in Alpes-de-Haute-Provence. Tove suffered a serious heart attack and underwent several eye operations, and from 1990 Jean suffered from hemiplegia. Despite all of these handicaps a Bahá'í Association was formed, and Tove arranged for three Bahá'í books to be sent to each of about twenty libraries in the region. Undeterred by her failing eyesight she kept up an active correspondence, sustaining many isolated believers around the world.

The Guardian had assured Tove of his "loving prayers for your success in the service of our beloved Faith," and at dawn on December 16, 1996, Tove "plunged into the sea of the light in the world of mysteries" in the luminous southern Alps of France, thus terminating a physical life after a little more than forty-seven years of courageous service. Even in the afterlife Tove is a pioneer—the first Bahá'í to be buried in the Hautes Alpes in Mongardin, a small village on a hill surrounded by snow-peaked mountains.

*Jean and Bente Deleuran*

<sup>228</sup> The National Spiritual Assembly of Pakistan formed in 1957. Formerly it had been part of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of India, Pakistan and Burma which was formed in 1923.

<sup>229</sup> Bangladesh, the eastern wing of Pakistan after 1947, established its independence in 1971.

<sup>230</sup> The Delaurans returned to Denmark in 1964 after six years of service in Bangladesh.

ZORANA RINALDI  
1978–1996

Born into a bicultural family in Cali, Colombia, February 10, 1978, Zorana Rinaldi was the second of four children of Enidia Alfaro and Wiley Rinaldi, a pioneer from the United States.

Her parents met at a Bahá'í youth conference in Cali, were married in 1973, and were active in mass teaching efforts and in the development of the Ruhí Institute. When Zorana was only eight months old, she accompanied her parents and older sister, Kendra, on a four-month traveling teaching trip to Ecuador and Peru. Since they were constantly on the road, the car became their second home, and Zorana would slip down between her mother's legs to curl up and sleep on the floor. As a child she was taken to all the local and national Bahá'í events.

The spirit of the Faith touched her at an early age. When only four years old, while on the way home from a Bahá'í summer school, she joyfully sang the name of Bahá'u'lláh with a memorable melody she had made up. One day her mother said goodbye to her saying, "Que Bahá'u'lláh te acompañe!" (May Bahá'u'lláh accompany you!), and that phrase became Zorana's favorite farewell. From her early years Zorana sparkled with the lovely gems of devotion, love, joy, self-discipline, order, courtesy, respect, tenderness, and sacrifice.

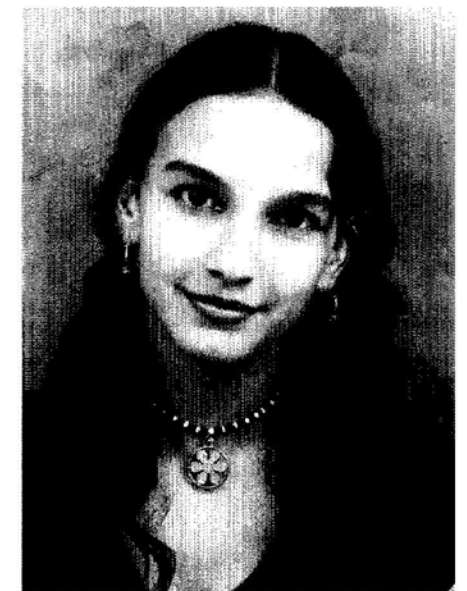
As a student, Zorana, besides earning the admiration of classmates and teachers, proved herself to be a conscientious and excellent student. She was advanced from the second to the fourth grade and was chosen for several years to represent the school in poetry festivals, despite her inherent shyness. After a year in Santa Monica, California, where she stayed with an aunt while finishing tenth grade, participating

in Bahá'í activities and building strong bonds of friendship, Zorana returned to Colombia with even more strength and certitude. An honor student respected for her individuality, one teacher remembered her "for her interest in bettering herself, for her capacity to work," and "for the tranquility transmitted in her face." She was "always very convinced about what she was doing, at times without caring if others understood or not."

Zorana put her heart into everything she did—Bahá'í youth activities, her work with the regional secretary in updating lists of Bahá'í communities, and an ecological project of making compost and developing a garden in a small Bahá'í elementary school.

She attended the Bahá'í World Congress in 1992 with her family and was so moved by the display on 'Abdu'l-Bahá that when she heard the recording of His voice, she fainted.

She participated in the 1993 International Youth Conference in Ecuador and stayed



*Zorana Rinaldi*

to participate in teaching projects. Zorana was a member of the committee organizing the 1996 Colombian National Youth Conference held at the Ruhí Institute. She designed the T-shirt and was in charge of many aspects of that event.

Zorana had a burning desire to give a year of service after graduating from high school and receiving her International Baccalaureate. She chose to follow in her older sister's footsteps by joining the Diversity Dance Workshop in August of 1996. This she felt was an exciting and dynamic way to serve the faith, so, as a volunteer dancer, she put all her energy into the work. She integrated herself into the group, learned its routines, and was featured in many of the dances which interpret such Bahá'í-inspired messages as unity in diversity, antiracism, the equality of men and women, and abstinence from drugs. The Diversity Dance Workshop toured the states of Washington, Oregon, and Utah. It was on December 17, 1996, after a performance for the local police department of Kent, Washington, that the automobile accident occurred in which Zorana was fatally injured.

Written testimonies of Diversity Dance Workshop staff and dancers reveal the deep appreciation they had for this dedicated Bahá'í youth:

Zorana, without fail, was always focused, attentive and reliable. She was also a gifted artist and moved many, many hearts with her radiant smile, and her powerful performance both as an actress and dancer.

She had achieved a level of spirituality I have rarely seen. Everyone wanted to be with her, to have a part of her. She gave everything she had, with all her heart, to all around her.

In those three months I came to know her as one of the most caring and loving persons I have ever met.

Zorana was the type of person that everybody had no choice but to love. She was the most kind-hearted person that I have ever known and don't think that it is possible for anybody to achieve her level of kindness. Her smile was enough to brighten the darkest of days.

Coming upon us like an angel  
from above  
You've taught us many things of  
reverence and love.  
We have been moved by your  
service and sacrifice,  
And in this short life, you have  
paid the highest price.

Zorana's family and friends in Colombia and elsewhere felt that her passing had touched hearts and stimulated teaching activity and receptivity to the Faith at that critical moment. They are privileged to have had her as part of their lives and look forward to that eternal reunion. On December 25, 1996, the Department of the Secretariat expressed the sympathy of the House of Justice:

The Universal House of Justice was grieved to learn of the recent automobile accident in which the members of the Diversity Dance Workshop were involved in the Seattle, Washington, area, and of the passing of Miss Zorana Rinaldi, a dedicated young maidservant of Bahá'u'lláh. Kindly assure Zorana's family of its ardent prayers at the Sacred Threshold for the progress of her soul in the Abhá Kingdom, and that their hearts may be comforted through the divine grace of

the Blessed Beauty. It will also offer prayers for healing and solace on behalf of the other youth who were injured in the accident.

*The Rinaldi Family: Enidia, Wiley, Kendra, Katherin, and Daniel Badi*

### FU'AD ASHRAF 1898-1997

DEEPLY SADDENED NEWS PASSING  
DEARLY LOVED HIGHLY DEDICATED  
PIONEER TEACHER FAITH,  
FU'AD ASHRAF. HIS DEVOTED  
SERVICES CRADLE FAITH AND  
PIONEER FIELD AFRICA FONDLY  
REMEMBERED. ASSURE LOVING  
PRAYERS HOLY SHRINES PROGRESS  
HIS RADIANT SOUL.

CONVEY RELATIVES HEARTFELT  
SYMPATHY.

Universal House of Justice  
January 19, 1997

Fu'ad Ashraf belonged to an old and eminent Bahá'í family in Iran that had embraced the Faith at the dawn of the Bábi dispensation. His father, Mírzá Faqlulláh, was the son of Mírzá Ashraf, brother of Mullá Báqir and Mullá Mihdí from Kan, near Tíhrán, who were martyred in the Tabarsí upheaval. His father was a very well-known and popular Bahá'í teacher.

Fu'ad Ashraf was born in Tíhrán, March 21, 1898. He completed his primary education in 1914 at the Tarbíyat School, a Bahá'í school. He then attended Darulfunun and received a high school diploma four years later. From 1918 to 1925 he taught science at the Tarbíyat and Elmiyeh Schools in Tíhrán.

Mr. Ashraf went to Marseilles, France, to be treated for his eyes in 1925. The following year he emigrated to the United

States. Taking up American citizenship, he proceeded to Detroit, Michigan, where in 1927 he found employment with the Ford Motor Company. Meanwhile he continued his studies at Detroit College, and in 1932 he received a bachelor of science degree in chemistry. He served on the Local Assembly of Detroit and was elected delegate to the National Convention of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada in 1930. Graduate studies followed at Oklahoma University, and he received a master's degree in petroleum engineering in 1934.

During Mr. Ashraf's time in the United States, he wrote to Shoghi Effendi asking for guidance. The Guardian assured him that he would soon be successful in rendering worthy services to the beloved Cause. Mr. Ashraf made two visits to the Holy Land and met the Guardian on both occasions.

He returned to Iran, and from 1934 to 1956 he served as a senior engineer at the Ábádán refinery of the Anglo-Iran Oil Company in Khuzistán. At the same time he was active in the Bahá'í community of Ábádán, serving as a member of the Local Assembly and as a member on various local committees. In 1942 Mr. Ashraf married Maqbouleh Arjomand, and they had three children.

Mr. Ashraf attended the Intercontinental Conference launching the Ten Year Crusade in 1953 and was so stirred that he resigned from his high position with the National Iranian Oil Company and left a rather comfortable life and good salary to enter the arena of international pioneering. In 1956 he and his family went to Ethiopia, settling in Addis Ababa where he took up work as a faculty member at the technical college. The Ashrafs joined the first group of pioneers in that country and stayed there until the end of the Crusade.

On his return to Tīhrán in 1963, Mr. Ashraf was invited to serve as the managing director of Esso, a privately owned motor oil company. In 1970 he left his job at Esso and proceeded to Nairobi, Kenya, to serve as an Auxiliary Board member and traveling teacher in East Africa. Ten years later, he went back to Iran and was appointed as an Auxiliary Board member for Protection. At the request of the Continental Board of Counsellors in Western Asia, he prepared a guidebook for the Auxiliary Board members and their assistants.

In 1977 Maqbouleh became ill, and Mr. Ashraf took her back to the United States. They settled in San Diego, California, where Mrs. Ashraf sought medical attention. Unfortunately the treatment was not successful, and she passed away in 1982.

Mr. Ashraf remained in San Diego and became a valuable collaborator to the Office of Persian-American Affairs at the US Bahá'í National Center where he was serving as a translator. His contributions included the preparation of the Persian translation of *Synopsis and Codification of the Laws and Ordinances of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas* as well as the translation of the International Bahá'í News Bulletin. Mr. Ashraf also produced a Persian translation of *Citadel of Faith*, which was published after his death. He passed away on January 17, 1997.

Fu'ad Ashraf is remembered for his devotion and enthusiasm to serve the Cause of God, for his humility, and for his jovial and friendly manner.

*From information provided by Hushiyar Ashraf and an article prepared by Iraj Ayman*

### ALAN "AL" DALE CANNON 1925-1997

The Universal House of Justice was saddened to learn of the passing of dear Al Cannon. His teaching and pioneer services are lovingly remembered. The House of Justice will offer prayers in the Holy Shrines for the progress of his soul in the Abhá Kingdom.

Department of the Secretariat  
January 24, 1997

The soul of devoted believer Al Cannon took flight easily and peacefully on January 21, 1997, after many years of service to the Faith in Bolivia, Puerto Rico, and Oregon.

While preparing to pioneer in 1971, Al made his pilgrimage to the Holy Land. En route back to Oregon, he stopped in London where he met Manigeh Shimyae. He later married her, and they pioneered together.

After seven years on the pioneering front, Al returned to the United States. By 1993 he was ready to pioneer again, and he settled in Mexico. His term of service there was short, and he returned the following year. However, as late as October 1996, at the age of seventy-one, Al was making plans for an extensive teaching trip.

*From an obituary appearing  
in The American Bahá'í*

### PATRICIA BOISCLAIR ?-1996



*Patricia Boisclair*

We were deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Patricia Boisclair, faithful and devoted maidservant of Bahá'u'lláh. Her many years of steadfast service to the Cause of God were crowned by her sacrificial efforts as a pioneer, along with her dear husband Jerry, in the Czech and Slovak Republics, where they made notable contributions to the teaching work among the Romany people. We extend our loving sympathy to the members of her family and assure them of our ardent prayers in the Holy Shrines for the progress of her soul throughout the Divine worlds.

Universal House of Justice  
July 19, 1996

Patricia "Patty" Boisclair, a devoted pioneer, died June 23, 1996, in California. After learning of the Faith in 1968, she committed herself to a life of service, pioneering with her husband, Jerry, to Santiago, Antofagasta, and Victoria, Chile; and to Gabarone, Francistown, and Mahalapi, Botswana; and most recently to Kosice and Medzev in the Slovak Republic where their teaching work became a development project under the Regional Spiritual Assembly of the Czech and Slovak Republics.

Despite living with few physical amenities, their love and perseverance led to the formation of the first Spiritual Assembly of Medzev, a unique institution in that country as it saw the consolidation under the Banner of Bahá'u'lláh of a community of Romany (Gypsy) believers.

While serving at her pioneering post, Patty was diagnosed with leukemia and returned to the United States for treatment.

### GERALD "JERRY" BOISCLAIR 1939-1997

Gerald "Jerry" Boisclair passed away in Escondido, California, on January 23, 1997. Born in 1939, Jerry declared his belief in Bahá'u'lláh in 1971. He served on several California Assemblies and settled as a homefront pioneer in the San Diego area.

In May 1975 he and his wife, Patty, pioneered to Chile and then in 1982 to Botswana. They returned to the United States in November 1983 but continued to work toward another pioneering post. By 1990 they had decided to pioneer to what was then Czechoslovakia. Jerry served on its first National Spiritual Assembly as well as the first Local Assemblies of Kosice and Medzev.

Jerry and Patty were the first pioneers in eastern Slovakia and the "spiritual parents" or "grandparents" of almost all those who accepted the Faith in that region. They



Gerald "Jerry" Boisclair

were especially successful in their work with the Romany people. Their plans to stay in Slovakia indefinitely were unexpectedly changed when they were forced to return to the United States by Patty's declining health. Patty passed away, and Jerry followed her, dying less than a year later after suffering two heart attacks. Jerry was buried on the Pala Indian Reservation in California where he had lived for years and had served as tribal chairman before pioneering to Eastern Europe. On February 4, 1997, the condolences of the Universal House of Justice were conveyed by its Department of the Secretariat:

The Universal House of Justice . . . was saddened to learn the news of the recent passing of Mr. Jerry Boisclair seven months after that of his wife, Mrs. Patty Boisclair. The House of Justice will offer ardent prayers in the Holy Shrines for the progress of their souls in the Abhá Kingdom.

*Adapted from obituaries appearing in The American Bahá'í*

### OLIVIA H. "LEE" BLACKWELL 1910—1997

The Universal House of Justice was deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Olivia H. Blackwell, whose life was distinguished by several decades of devoted service to the Cause of God, in various capacities and in different parts of the United States, very notably in New York City, where she contributed to the work of the Bahá'í International Community at the United Nations. Be assured of its ardent prayers at the Sacred Threshold for the progress of her radiant soul in the Abhá Kingdom.

Department of the Secretariat  
January 26, 1997

Little is known of the life of Olivia Blackwell. She was born on June 25, 1910, and at the age of thirty-three she declared her belief in Bahá'u'lláh. Soon after her declaration, she was elected to the newly formed Spiritual Assembly of New Orleans, Louisiana. Over the years she served that Assembly and at different times was its treasurer, chairman, and secretary. She also contributed to the activities of the Faith in Dallas, Texas, and in New York City.

It was in New York that Olivia distinguished herself. During the period of the Ten Year World Crusade she was one of four people accredited to the United Nations as observers for the Bahá'í Faith, joining the Hand of the Cause Ugo Giachery who represented the European community and Mildred R. Mottahedeh who was accredited as being an international representative. Olivia represented the United States.

In 1965 Olivia returned to New Orleans. Her service there, which continued until poor health intervened a

few years before her passing, is warmly remembered, especially the many years during which she was the effective and loving secretary of the Local Assembly. Olivia passed away January 25, 1997.

### HUSHANG AHDIEH 1929—1997

Born in August 1929 into a Bahá'í family, Hushang Ahdieh's parents, Mr. Eshagh Ahdieh and Mrs. Monireh Ahdieh (Farhoumand), were descendants of well-known Jewish families in Hamadán, Iran. His mother's grandparents embraced the Faith in the early years of their settlement in that city and were among the first families to accept the Faith there and to be persecuted for it. His father accepted the Faith while still a young man, along with his brother, cousins, and other members of the family.

Shortly after his birth, the family moved to Tíhrán. Hushang attended school there, and after completing high school, he

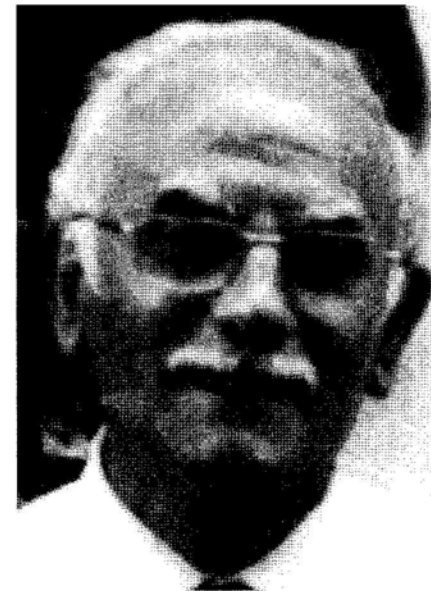
entered the Dental Faculty of the Tíhrán University, graduating in 1954.

In response to appeals of the beloved Guardian urging the believers in Iran to arise and fill the goals of the recently inaugurated first World Crusade, he left Iran to pioneer to Africa in May 1955. With the help of his maternal uncle Dr. Heshmatollah Farhoumand<sup>231</sup>—the first pioneer to settle in Eritrea during the Ten Year Crusade—Hushang settled in Asmara joining the first group of recently arrived pioneers. He established a private dental practice and lived there for twenty-three years, during which time he married Nahid Ettehadieh (formerly of Hamadán) with whom he had two children, Shahin and Nika. These years were rich, blessing him with unforgettable memories and historic pioneering experiences.

In 1956 he was elected to the Local Spiritual Assembly of Asmara, and in 1961, after the transfer of the seat of the Regional Spiritual Assembly of North East Africa from Cairo to Addis-Ababa, he served it for short periods as secretary and treasurer.

In 1968, after the establishment of the first Continental Boards of Counsellors, he was called to serve as an Auxiliary Board member for Protection in Central and East Africa. He continued in this capacity until 1973 when he was appointed by the Universal House of Justice to serve as a member of the Continental Board of Counsellors for that zone. Ten years later he was appointed as the Trustee of the Continental Fund for Africa.

Following the approval and guidance given him by the International Teaching Centre in 1978, he moved his residence from Asmara, Ethiopia, to Bangui in the Central African Republic.



Hushang Ahdieh

<sup>231</sup> See Heshmatollah Farhoumand, pp. 262–65.

In 1987, he was appointed as the Deputy of Ḥuqúqu'lláh for Central and East Africa by the Trustee of that institution, the Hand of the Cause of God Dr. 'Alí-Muḥammad Varqá. He carried out this responsible task with complete detachment and in a spirit of utmost dedication until 1996.

Hushang passed to the Abhá Kingdom in the early hours of February 6, 1997. The Universal House of Justice, the International Teaching Centre, and the Trustee of Ḥuqúqu'lláh sent messages of condolence to his dear family. Dr. Varqá wrote:

With the passing of Dr. Hushang Ahdieh to the Abhá Kingdom, the institution of Ḥuqúqu'lláh has lost one of its dearest friends and precious co-workers, whose exemplary life will serve as a model of detachment, dedication and love for the Faith. The memory of his membership in this institution as a Deputy of Ḥuqúqu'lláh in East Africa will adorn the golden page of our organization in that country.

On February 6, 1997, the Universal House of Justice wrote:

PROFOUNDLY GRIEVED PASSING DEARLY LOVED SERVANT FAITH, HUSHANG AHDIEH. HIS INDEFATIGABLE PIONEER SERVICES AFRICA, INCLUDING OVER TWO DECADES MEMBERSHIP CONTINENTAL BOARD COUNSELLORS THAT CONTINENT, AND TRUSTEE ITS FUND UNFORGETTABLE. HIS SELF-EFFACEMENT, HIS CAPACITY PROMOTE CONCORD, AND HIS WISDOM COMBINED WITH LOVE EXEMPLIFIED IN DISCHARGE HIS SACRED RESPONSIBILITIES WILL REMAIN SOURCE INSPIRATION HIS

COLLEAGUES AND FELLOW WORKERS GOD'S HOLY CAUSE.

CONVEY HIS BELOVED WIFE AND DEAR CHILDREN DEEPEST SYMPATHY AND ASSURANCE OUR FERVENT PRAYERS IN HOLY SHRINES PROGRESS HIS RADIANT SOUL ABHÁ KINGDOM.

ADVISING NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY UGANDA HOLD MEMORIAL GATHERING HIS HONOUR IN HOUSE WORSHIP KAMPALA, AND NATIONAL ASSEMBLIES THROUGHOUT AFRICA HOLD BEFITTING GATHERINGS THEIR COMMUNITIES.

### DARYOUSH MEHRABI

1927–1997

Daryoush was born in Kirmán, Iran, in January 1927. His family was originally Zoroastrian, but when his mother was a young girl and newly married, a friend gave her a book on the Bahá'í Faith to pass to her father, Dinyar Rabbani. Dinyar soon became a believer and wrote to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Who sent him a most beautiful and loving Tablet accepting his declaration of faith. The entire family became Bahá'ís, with the exception of Daryoush's father who remained Zoroastrian and eventually left Kirmán to work in London when Daryoush was a baby. Although, at his father's bidding, Daryoush attended a Zoroastrian school, his mother and grandfather brought him up and instilled in his heart a deep and abiding love for Bahá'u'lláh.

Stories of Daryoush, beginning with his early life, show his love for prayer and the history of the Faith, his strong sense of justice, his spiritual insight and understanding, combined with practical talents

and common sense, his warm hospitality and love of cooking, his sense of humor, and the strength of his character. All of these qualities were evident until the end of his life.

One story is especially poignant. When Daryoush was a child, the false accusations of a neighbor led to his imprisonment for two weeks in a Kirmán jail. He faithfully said his daily prayers although surrounded by frightening conditions; his food was taken from him by older boys, and even his shoes were stolen while he slept on the earth floor. Eventually, through the efforts of his grandfather and the confession of the true culprit, his innocence was proved, and he was released. The memory of this injustice was very painful, and he rarely spoke of it, but the experience reinforced his complete reliance on the power of prayer and the intimate feeling he always had of the closeness of Bahá'u'lláh.

When Daryoush was sixteen years old, he wanted to go to London to work for his father, but the National Spiritual Assembly of Iran advised him to wait until he was older. Daryoush obeyed, and when he was twenty-four, with the blessing of the National Assembly, he left and arrived in London in January 1951. Although they had corresponded, this was the first time he had properly met his father. During the next four years great pressure was put on Daryoush to leave the Faith, but this had the opposite effect and his faith became even stronger.

In 1956 he went to Nottingham. Then in February 1958 he pioneered to the Orkney Islands off the northern coast of Scotland to replace the Knight of Bahá'u'lláh, Charles Dunning, who had to leave because of ill health. Daryoush traveled the five hundred miles north to Aberdeen on his motorbike and from there caught the overnight boat to Orkney. When he arrived in Orkney, it

was snowing. He asked a man with a horse and cart if he would take his luggage to his lodgings, and he followed behind on his bike.

At first he did not know what he would do for work, but then he discovered there was no watch and clock repairer on the island. Being very practical, he quickly learned the trade and made a modest living. He married Jacqueline Thomas, a pioneer in Aberdeen, and they had three children, Kalim, Pari, and Vahid. In 1963, just four months before the birth of his youngest child, Daryoush suffered a serious accident while on a visit off the island. He broke his back in a fall that left him paralyzed and in a wheelchair for the rest of his life. However, after spending nine months in a hospital near London, he was back in Orkney, teaching the Faith and repairing watches and clocks from his house.

During the next few years Daryoush witnessed the embrace of the Faith by the first islanders, and in 1969 he participated in the election of the first Local Spiritual



*Daryoush Mehrabi*

Assembly of the Orkney Islands. Their house, "Carmel," became a center of Bahá'í activities and of hospitality to numerous traveling teachers. As well as being very involved with local activities, Daryoush was the coordinator of the Reviewing Panel for some time, and for many years he was the distributor of the *American Bahá'í News* in the United Kingdom.

By 1979 there was a strong and deepened Bahá'í community in Orkney, so, in consultation with the Local Spiritual Assembly and the National Teaching Committee, Daryoush and his family pioneered to Dumfries in the south of Scotland to help re-form the Assembly there. It was in Dumfries that he passed away on February 7, 1997.

Daryoush was blessed with having made four pilgrimages during his lifetime, and despite his disabilities he attended both World Congresses. In 1963, while still listed as "seriously ill," he persuaded the doctors to give him permission to be taken from hospital to attend the final day of the London Congress. His wife brought their youngest child (just twelve days old) to the conference, where Daryoush saw him for the first time. He and his wife also attended the Congress in New York City in 1992, and they had the great bounty of attending the centenary commemoration of the Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh at the World Centre earlier that year.

Perhaps the greatest legacy Daryoush left was his faith and fortitude in the face of the physical difficulties he suffered for thirty-four years. He was a practical person with great energy and drive, so his disabilities could have been more of a frustration to bear, but he accepted them philosophically and never complained about his condition. His thoughts were always focused on what more could be done for this Faith that he loved with every atom of his being.

On hearing news of the passing of this dear believer, the Universal House of Justice wrote on February 10, 1997:

GRIEVED NEWS PASSING DEARLY LOVED STALWART SERVANT BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, DARYOUSH MEHRABI. HIS EXEMPLARY DEDICATION CAUSE, HIS IMMEDIATE AND WHOLEHEARTED RESPONSE SUPPORTED BY DEAR WIFE TO NEEDS TEN YEAR CRUSADE AS PIONEER ORKNEY ISLANDS DESPITE SEVERE PHYSICAL DISABILITIES, AND HIS LONG YEARS DEVOTED SERVICE CAUSE BRITAIN CHARACTERIZED BY HIS STAUNCHNESS FAITH AND LOVING NATURE, FONDLY REMEMBERED.

ASSURE PRAYERS HOLY SHRINES PROGRESS HIS RADIANT SOUL ABHÁ KINGDOM. CONVEY OUR LOVING SYMPATHY HIS DEAR WIFE, CHILDREN AND MEMBERS HIS FAMILY.

*Jacqueline Mehrabi*

#### JAVAD KUCHANI SOLTANI 1919–1997

SADDENED NEWS PASSING DEARLY LOVED SERVANT BAHÁ'U'LLÁH JAVAD KUCHANI SOLTANI. HIS DEVOTED SERVICES CAUSE AS PIONEER TURKEY DURING TEN YEAR CRUSADE, HIS TEACHING ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIVITIES, CONTRIBUTED GREATLY ADVANCEMENT FAITH THAT COUNTRY. PRAYING HOLY SHRINES PROGRESS HIS NOBLE SOUL ABHÁ KINGDOM. CONVEY OUR LOVING CONDOLENCES HIS DEAR WIFE FAMILY.

Universal House of Justice  
February 24, 1997

#### THOMAS SOUSA 1924–1997

Thomas Sousa was born on April 29, 1924, in Mansfield, Ohio. He was the oldest of four children, having one sister and two brothers. He went to college in Wisconsin where he first heard about the Bahá'í Faith. The principle of unity in diversity particularly attracted him, and he was confirmed a Bahá'í sometime about 1946.

He went to Portugal as a Fulbright Scholar but could not openly teach the Faith there. He received a master's degree in Portuguese and a doctorate in Spanish, and he assisted with translations of Bahá'í books.

Tom's Bahá'í service included membership on several Local Spiritual Assemblies. He helped re-form the Assembly in Concord, New Hampshire, which helped to fulfill the Ten Year Crusade goal of having Assemblies in all of the state capitals. Many times he was elected as a delegate to the National Convention from Massachusetts, and he was appointed as an assistant to an Auxiliary Board member in New Hampshire. He also served on the Council of the Green Acre Bahá'í School and taught classes there.

Tom took many people into his home to help them. At one time there was an Ethiopian, three Iraqis, a Persian, and three Italians living with him. The neighbors asked him to put flags in the yard so they would know the countries of the people staying with him.

The Sousa family went on pilgrimage in 1972, Tom's father and stepmother having become Bahá'ís.

On July 8, 1985, after retiring, Tom pioneered to Puerto Rico. He served on the teaching and newsletter committees, as well as on his Local Spiritual Assembly. His

daughter, Katya, joined him, pioneering there for a short time. The InterAmerican University encouraged him to come out of retirement, and he worked there for several years until his health deteriorated.

His spirit was joyously freed from its cage in the world of creation to continue his eternal journey on March 4, 1997. A few days later the National Assembly received the following message:

The Universal House of Justice was saddened to learn of the passing of Dr. Thomas Sousa, long-time pioneer in Puerto Rico, whose years of faithful and devoted service will be long remembered. Kindly convey to his family and friends the condolences of the House of Justice and assure them of its fervent supplications at the Divine Threshold for the progress of his soul throughout the worlds of God.

Department of the Secretariat  
March 7, 1997

The Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Puerto Rico established a project to donate books in Dr. Sousa's name to the Arecibo campus library of the InterAmerican University of Puerto Rico.

*Submitted by The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Puerto Rico*

#### HELENE MAY "GAYLE" WITTEKIND 1908–1997

Helene May Burlingame was born in Chehalis, Washington, on May 5, 1908. She was twenty-seven years old when she declared her Faith in Los Angeles, California, in 1935.

She helped to form the Local Spiritual Assembly of Tacoma, Washington, and was

one of its members for thirteen years. She pioneered to Mexico in 1957, and during her three years there she helped in the formation of the first Local Spiritual Assembly of San Miguel Allende. Returning to the United States she pioneered on the home-front, helping to establish the Assembly of Escondido, California, which she served from 1961 to 1965. She moved to Olympia, Washington, and was on its first Local Assembly in 1967, serving it for five years.

Helene was a non-degreed physician's assistant, and she worked providing home care to invalids. She was married three times, but none of her marriages produced any children. Her first marriage, to Leslie Vaughn in the early 1930s, ended in divorce around 1936. They remained friends, and Helene helped Leslie choose his second wife. She married Leslie Ames sometime about 1940. It was after Leslie's passing in 1957 that Helene arose and pioneered to Mexico.

On May 7, 1971, in Orlando, Florida, sixty-three-year-old Helene married twenty-six-year-old Warren D. Wittekind, a soldier recently returned from Vietnam. She came out of retirement and went back to work to help her young husband complete a bachelor of science degree and then a doctorate. Despite the thirty-seven year difference in their ages, theirs was a happy union that lasted until Helene's death.

While they were together, Helene served on the Local Assembly of Laramie, Wyoming, from 1973 to 1978. She then helped form the first Assembly of Richland, Washington, to whose membership she contributed for a period of fifteen years (1978 to 1993). It was in Richland that Helene died on March 8, 1997, and hers was the first burial in the section of the cemetery recently allocated to the Bahá'ís. Her grave faces Bahjí from the center of thirty-six Bahá'í grave sites. Helene had

arranged for her estate to be donated to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States.

*From information provided  
by Warren D. Wittekind*

### ELIZABETH "BETTY" FILSTRUP 1916–1997

Your email message . . . has been received by the Universal House of Justice, which was saddened by the news of the passing of Mrs. Elizabeth M. Filstrup, staunch handmaiden of Bahá'u'lláh whose devoted services in Pakistan are remembered with deep gratitude.

Be assured of the prayers of the House of Justice in the Holy Shrines for the progress of her soul in the worlds of God. It will also pray for you and other members of your family, that your hearts may be solaced by the Blessed Beauty.

Department of the Secretariat  
March 23, 1997

Elizabeth (Betty) Filstrup and her husband Edward (Ed) arose to serve the Cause as pioneers in 1969. Their sole desire was to fulfill the goals of the Nine Year Plan. Through consultation with the Department of International Goals, they learned that two people were needed to go to Pakistan, where Ed had been offered a research position with the United Nations. Their bags packed and their affairs in order, they began their journey, arriving at their post in February 1970.

They spent four years in Pakistan—years characterized by their untiring devotion to teaching the Cause and their dedication to the raising up and consolidation of new Local Assemblies. Their home became the

Bahá'í center for the area where firesides, deepenings, and study sessions were available every night. Betty was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly, and she was a delegate to the International Convention in 1973.

Medical and family needs necessitated their return to the United States in 1974. They settled into their home community of St. Joseph, Michigan, with the hopes that they would return to the pioneering field. Although Betty was unable to realize her hopes, Ed returned for consulting work in 1980.

Betty faced decades of hospitalizations and acute physical suffering. However, she continued with her artwork that bore messages from the revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, and she continued to be instrumental in the organization of Bahá'í proclamations and events. She helped to establish the local chapter of the United Nations Association.

On March 12, 1997, Betty departed to the Abhá Kingdom at the age of eighty. Her life was a constant reflection of her devotion to her family, her community, and especially her beloved Faith that she had embraced in 1952.

*Based on an article appearing  
in The American Bahá'í*

### WANITA MONTGOMERY GEORGE 1906–1997

Wanita was born on June 30, 1906, into a large God-fearing Christian family on the midwestern plains of the United States. She remembered one morning sitting at the breakfast table when she was about six years of age, and her mother remarked on an article in that day's newspaper reporting that a man whom many believed to be the return of Christ was visiting the United States. She recalled

her mother saying, "What if it's true?" Looking back many decades later, it seemed that the article might have been about 'Abdu'l-Bahá's trip to the West, and she felt blessed to have been able to follow up on her mother's question.

When grown she had an uncommon ability to communicate with children and, like many others in the family, took an advanced degree in teaching. In that capacity she influenced many young lives over the course of a very long career, and a number of grateful students kept in touch with her for the rest of her life.

In early 1957 she was living in California, and on an impulse she walked into a health food store to ask if they had something that could help a dear friend with an alcohol addiction. The woman running the store said that she did not know of any herb or vitamin that was likely to help but that she knew of religious teachings that would. She was not a Bahá'í, but she made arrangements to take Wanita to a fireside.

Wanita was deeply touched by the teachings and by the local believers, and within a few months she enrolled in the Faith. The friend for whom she had been seeking help never responded to the Writings, but Wanita and her teenage daughter, Maralynn, along with four other believers formed the first Bahá'í group of Redondo Beach and taught the Faith there. In 1959 Maralynn graduated from secondary school, and Wanita obtained a teaching position in Honduras, and together they pioneered as participants in the Guardian's Ten Year Crusade.

She had been eager to promote literacy and was a very active supporter of Frank Laubach's "Each One Teach One" campaign. After becoming a believer, that same enthusiasm translated into teaching the Faith, and she did her best to mention Bahá'u'lláh and His principles everywhere

she went. She was a person of great energy and busied herself praying and teaching, attending conferences and administrative meetings, holding children's classes, and growing fruit and vegetable seedlings to take to the tribes' people, especially during times of famine. Weekends and vacation periods were also full of purposeful activity.

Wanita was the first to organize teaching trips to the indigenous Jicaques of La Montaña de la Flor, and over the years a number of tribal elders became as dear to her as the very brothers and sisters with whom she had grown up. Though the Jicaques were her main focus, she also visited many other tribes, as well as people in ordinary villages and hamlets throughout the country. In subsequent years, as the Faith penetrated the regions, other Bahá'ís in Honduras would often report that they had chosen some extremely remote place to take the teachings, and after the grueling trip to get there, when they began to explain about the Faith, someone in the little gathering would say, "Oh, you're a Bahá'í! Do you know doña Wanita?" They said that she seemed to have made her way to absolutely every settlement in the country in order to teach the Cause of God.

The trips she made over muddy mountain tracks and into the mosquito-infested jungle were often undertaken alone and were seldom easy, especially as she advanced into her sixties and seventies. On one steep mountainside the mule she was riding slipped and fell, pinning her leg underneath, but she got up and finished the journey on foot. Another time her mule fell into a river, soaking all her clothing as well as the sleeping bag. It was night by the time she reached the next village. The people of the countryside had very few amenities but were hospitable; a family member often vacated his or her own

quarters to give a guest a place to sleep. The bed she was offered was a bare wooden frame laced across with leather thongs in an open crisscross pattern. As she was so cold in her wet clothing, and her sleeping bag unusable, she took out a few candles she had brought along, set them up on the clay floor under the bed frame, and lit them before lying down on the bare thongs. The modest heat helped her to get through the night.

Wanita was elected to the first National Spiritual Assembly of Honduras (1961) and served it for many years, as well as the Local Assembly of Tegucigalpa. She taught at the American School in Tegucigalpa, and she and Maralynn held weekly firesides there for years.

While traveling to Haifa as a delegate to the Second International Convention in 1968, she was in an airliner that caught fire over London, costing several fellow passengers their lives. Owing to a bad fall from the wing during the evacuation from the burning plane, she spent months in hospital with a broken pelvis and severe concussion and never fully recovered her health. She was sixty-two, and the physicians told her that she could never ride a horse again. But she was determined, and upon returning to Honduras she went back to her position in the school and to the teaching trips she made on mule or horseback.

In spite of her indomitable spirit, growing frailties made it increasingly difficult for her to manage. She lived in the Bahá'í Center, and some of the wonderful believers in Honduras helped her to cope for a time, but after a break-in and unsuccessful attempts to find a live-in companion and assistant, her family encouraged her to return to California. She relented in 1981, but her heart yearned to be in Honduras.



*Wanita Montgomery George*

She returned at the age of seventy-six. The following year the National Assembly of Honduras announced a special teaching campaign among the Jicaques Indians to further her work.

Wanita's health continued to decline, and after twenty-seven years of pioneer service she needed full-time care. In 1986 her family helped her to settle in a convalescent hospital in Long Beach, California, where devoted Bahá'í friends helped to see to her needs.

For the next decade until her passing, she continued to speak of the teachings with those around her, and they would sometimes ask for reading material on the Faith. Her most precious possessions were her prayer book and a large photograph of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

She retained the deepest love for her pioneer post in Honduras and considered that her true home. Her house in Tegucigalpa was donated to the national community.

On March 23, 1997, the day after her passing, the Universal House of Justice sent the following message to the National Assemblies of the United States and Honduras:

Our hearts grieve at the passing of Wanita George, steadfast, devoted maidservant of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. Her long years of valiant pioneer services in Honduras have left indelible traces on the annals of the Cause of God. We fervently pray at the Holy Threshold that her radiant soul may eternally progress throughout the divine worlds.

*Maralynn Dunbar*